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Shit, Blood, Artifacts, and Tears: Interrogating Visitor Perceptions and Archaeological Residues at Ghana's Cape Coast Castle Slave Dungeon

Wazi Apoh, James Anquandah[†] and Seyram Amenyoxa

Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

ABSTRACT

Involuntary servitude, trade, and exchange in humans occurred among communities in parts of what is today known as Ghana before the advent of European involvement. However, with Europeans' involvement and subsequent colonialism, this practice rapidly evolved into the heinous transatlantic chattel slave trade. Scholars studying slavery know that the material vestiges and memories of this phenomenon persist in the present. Yet, how public audiences engage with slavery's past is determined by more than the transmission of such academic expertise. Visitors arrive to slave-related heritage sites typically having already had significant exposure to histories of slavery through public discourse and their own schooling. Public tours at such sites also may not relay all types of relevant evidence equally. Historical evidence may be given more attention than archaeological evidence. A monument's architecture may be given more attention than less obvious material residues. This article explores visitor experiences at Ghana's Cape Coast Castle, with particular attention given to visitor perceptions of the monument and of the history of slavery. We analyze how these perceptions are affected by visitors' exposure to information on archaeological residues identified in Cape Coast Castle's dungeons and in broader historical contextualization of the site.

KEYWORDS

Slavery; slave heritage; Ghana; archaeology; tourism; visitor perceptions

Enslavement, human bondage, slavery, and the slave trade – these are age-old human practices that took many forms in different times and places. Because “slavery” encompasses variable practices, the term's ambiguity has caused divergent views and perceptions of the indigenous or external origins of slavery as well as the character of the monuments of slavery (Cooper 1979; Bruner 1996; Anquandah 2007, 25). With the trans-Atlantic chattel slave trade, the subordination and exploitation of humans expanded into a widespread complex global system with repercussions that reverberate today. Analyses of slavery, whether in popular media or academic publications, often focus on the large-scale history of the practice. For example, historical evidence demonstrates Europeans'

CONTACT Wazi Apoh ✉ WApoh@ug.edu.gh 📧 Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, P.O. Box LG 25, Legon, Accra, Ghana

[†]James Anquandah, recently deceased, served as professor of archaeology at the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

increasing dependence on free human labor and the related growth of the slave industry which required capital investments in the form of forts, slave dungeons, holding pens, chains, branding irons, and ocean-going cargo vessels (Kopytoff and Miers 1977; Rodriguez 1997; Hernaes and Iversen 2002; Davis 2006; Lindsay 2008; Adu-Boahen 2012; Stevenson 2015).

At the Cape Coast Castle and other slave monuments, these public narratives shape visitors' perceptions of slavery as much as the actual tours they undertake. That is, visitors come to such monuments with much of their understanding of slavery already formed. Typically, this existing understanding is little influenced by archaeological research on slavery. Indeed, even when visitors have prior knowledge of Cape Coast Castle itself, public discourse about the site is little influenced by the archaeological residues of slavery associated with the monument. Moreover, tours of the monument do not always include attention to archaeology. Thus, visitors may form their perceptions of the site with limited or no knowledge of such material evidence. In interrogating the history of slavery at Cape Coast Castle, the nature of the physical monument, and the archaeological residues in the Cape Coast Castle's slave dungeons, this paper considers how visitor perceptions form. Specifically, we analyze visitors' experience in the dungeons and how tangible and more intangible evidence from the dungeons affects visitors' relative level of empathy for or detachment from victims of slavery in the past. In this focus, the paper contributes to a growing literature on how visitors' perceptions of slave monuments are either influenced or not by the different forms of evidence with which they are confronted (see Hartman 2002; 2007; Osei-Tutu 2006; Schramm 2010).

Contemporary emotional ambivalence about slavery at the Cape Coast Castle

The Cape Coast Castle consistently registers a large number of visitors every year (Bruner 1996; Osei-Tutu 2004). In order to interrogate their varied perceptions of the monuments and landscapes of slavery, we designed a visitor survey. The objective was to understand



Figure 1. The residues on the floor of the dungeon at Cape Coast Castle. Photograph by author.

the extent to which the knowledge gained about material residues of slavery in the Cape Coast Castle dungeons influenced their perceptions. Notably, archaeological residues are less obvious than the physical structures and features in the dungeons (Figure 1). Thus, until and unless these residues are pointed out during tours, their presence in such hallowed grounds will not be known to most tourists. We administered the questionnaire to interested visitors at the Castle in November 2016. Because of our particular concern with the power of archaeological information to shape visitor perceptions, we instructed the tour guides and educators at the Castle to focus explicit attention on hidden material residues at the site and how they contribute to our understanding of the site’s historical complexity.

Fifty questionnaires were distributed to visitors who expressed willingness to provide feedback after their tour of the dungeons; these questionnaires were distributed over a period of five days (Thursday 17 November to Monday 21 November 2016) during the working hours of 10:00am to 4:00pm. Beyond demographic information (that is, gender and nationality), the single posed question was as follows:

After going on the guided tour of the castle, including the slave dungeons, and experiencing it firsthand, what are your sentiments/opinions/feelings concerning the narratives that the slaves ate, slept and survived in their own urine and faecal matter (faeces/excreta) for several days, weeks and months?

The visitors were expected to fill out the questionnaire only after the guided tour of the castle. Forty-three of the fifty questionnaires were returned. Eighteen of these had responses that indicated ambivalence in visitors’ feelings or avoidance of the question. For example, instead of answering the question posed, visitors related compliments to the tour guide or urged greater attention to the Castle’s physical upkeep. The written

Table 1. Responses to the 2016 visitor survey that were ambivalent.

Country	Respondent	Responses
Ghana	7	Male: Wonderful delivery. Informed guide. Good Male: Dungeons need more light to show structural detail Male: Very good guide. Thank you Female: The place needs to be renovated and painted. Very good guide Female: Very hot in the dungeons and very dark Female: Thank you for the history Female: This is really an eye opener
Nigeria	5	Male: The guide is very good. Keep it up Male: Officials must take better care of this place with the entrance fees Male: More must be done in maintenance Male: Deep history. Very necessary that we know this Female: The tour is nice and informative. Thank you
Denmark	1	Female: How were these dungeons constructed? I’d like to know that
Liberia	3	Female: History for everybody. Thank you Male: Everyone must see this place. Incredible Female: A lot more must be done to keep this place well for the future
Spain	1	Male: Interesting information
Netherlands	1	Male: Will be good to know how the dungeons were also constructed

comments of the 18 respondents, comprising 10 males and 8 females and representing 6 nationalities, have been reproduced in [Table 1](#).

The other 25 questionnaires that were returned included responses that were deeply emotional compared to those in [Table 1](#). These focused on visitors' feelings of sadness, shame, and shock. Some comments were also explicitly empathetic or sympathetic to the plight of enslaved captives. For example, one Ghanaian man wrote simply "Sadness and sorrow. Putting myself in their shoes." A Dutch woman noted "Particularly sorry for female slaves." The responses of the 25 respondents, comprising 12 males and 13 females and representing 10 nationalities, have been reproduced in [Table 2](#). The feedback from the visitors to the Cape Coast Castle dungeons reflects visitors' variable emotional

Table 2. Responses to the 2016 visitor survey that responded directly to the question posed.

Country	Respondent	Responses
Ghana	7	Male: Worst form of maltreatment Female: Pathetic and disheartening Male: Very sad experience. Ill treatment Male: Sadness and sorrow. Putting myself in their shoes. Can't get the right words for the experience Male: Bad experience. Should never happen again. Need to look out for signs of control, suppression and discrimination and stop it Female: Very appalled and saddened. Disheartening Male: Appalled at treatment fellow humans went through
Norway	2	Male: Saddened and emotional Female: Horrible story. Feel disgusted and ashamed of being a white person
Netherlands	1	Female: Particularly sorry for female slaves
USA	2	Male: One of most sombre experiences of my life Female: Sad and embarrassed our ancestors did this
Hong Kong	1	Male: Condition of slaves is inhumane. Slavery has ended but new form of slavery has started. We are slaves of our own greed.
UK	2	Male: Shocked but also amazed that they survived the dungeons and across the Atlantic on the ships Female: Feelings of sympathy and confusion. How such activities can occur between humans
Canada	2	Female: Conditions of slaves inhumane Female: Horrifying story
Denmark	1	Male: Inhumane and horrible
Germany	5	Female: Shocked about the circumstances under which slaves had to live. Incredible and horrible how bad humans can treat humans. History of slaves very similar to that of the Jews during the Second World War Female: Dark history and shame for the Western world that things like this was "normal business". Sad and emotionally touched Female: Hard to understand that this really happened Female: Very disturbed by the conditions in which slaves were held. Deeply shaken by the discrepancy between Christian values and the behavior of the English colonialists Male: Feel guilty about what my European ancestors did to African people
Finland	1	Female: Horrible and amazing history of thousands of people
Australia	1	Male: Repulsive that humans could treat other humans this way. An eternal shame on European culture that permitted this.

responses to their tours. On the one hand, some visitors reported an emotional toll from the tour (Table 2) while responses from others reflected more persistent emotional detachment from the complex inhumane histories of slavery at Cape Coast (Table 1).

The dungeon tours were not directly observed by us to monitor tour guides' relative attention to archaeological residues. In addition, our questionnaire responses relied on visitors' willingness to complete them and so they do not necessarily form a representative sample of all visitors to the Cape Coast Castle. Despite these methodological limitations, this study has clearly identified that visitors are variably influenced by the information that they receive through tours of the dungeon. Not all visitors achieve emotional engagement with the history of slavery at the site. Archaeologists have a role to play in deepening public engagement at Cape Coast Castle.

In addition to analyzing the findings from the questionnaire, this article reviews previous archaeological research at the Castle carried out by Simmonds (1973). Parts of this paper are also based on a presentation by the late Professor James Anquandah at the 2003 National Conference of the Slave Route Project held in Ghana. It is thus appropriate that credit is posthumously given for his contributions to this paper as an author, since he passed on before its publication. The purpose of reviewing archaeological evidence is to reveal the potential for material residues to help create a more complex and complete narrative of the victims of slavery at the site. That is, the artifacts and biofacts, including excrement, that make up the palimpsest layers on the dungeon floor can help remind visitors of the humanness of the victims of enslavement. Just as academic language (for example, "excrement" instead of "shit") can distance readers from the realities of the slave trade, so too can a slave heritage site that is perceived as *empty* – indeed, so divorced from its historical context that one visitor's response began "The place needs to be renovated and painted" (Table 1). The challenge is to remind visitors that the dungeon was not the empty space that now presents itself (Figures 2 and 3), but rather full of people who were incarcerated either until their death or until their shipment into perpetual bondage overseas. Indeed, while able-bodied survivors were made to cross the Middle Passage, many weaker or more feeble dungeon captives succumbed to the heinous enslavement



Figure 2. Section of the female slave dungeon, Cape Coast Castle. Photograph by author.



Figure 3. Section of the male slave dungeon, Cape Coast Castle. Photograph by author.

process in the Castle and were subsequently buried in unmarked graves or dumped into the sea (Anquandah 1997, 43). Archaeological residues make such suffering more tangible – for example, in the form of the excrement in which captives were forced to sleep and survive. This type of evidence can also serve to remind the visitor of other less tangible residues – of blood and death, of urine and toil, of the bodily suffering of the enslaved. By reviewing the nature and implications of the intangible narratives and tangible residues ensconced in the Cape Coast Castle dungeons, we explore the contexts of enslavement and the slave trade and how such holding forts and castles become the main theaters and landscapes of capitalist exchanges and the dehumanization of African people.

As Schramm (2010, 130) has previously noted, tours of slave-related heritage sites in West Africa are determined by what she calls “domains of representational significance.” That is, those themes deemed significant are dominant in tour narratives while others remain marginal or absent. For example, in Schramm’s (2010, 103–132) earlier analysis of visitor tours at the Cape Coast Castle, she noted that only marginal attention was given to Nana Tabiri’s ancestral shrine. Nana Tabiri is a deity that is understood by some locals “to reside on the very rock that Cape Coast Castle was built on” (Schramm 2010, 124). Yet, despite its significance to many local people, it remains of only marginal importance in guided tours. Because the shrine departs from the site’s exclusionary focus on slavery, tour guides have little to say about it. Building on Schramm’s observations, we argue that the Castle’s “domain of representational significance” is restricted not just to slavery but to certain types of evidence about slavery. Those archaeological residues that have the power to evoke slaves’ embodied suffering in the dungeons have not been given adequate attention in tours at the Cape Coast Castle. In this article, our visitor survey and review of previous archaeological findings at the Cape Coast Castle set the stage for a deeper interrogation of slavery in the region – from its earliest practice within indigenous communities in the Gold Coast to its transformation and globalization in the modern era. Such deep knowledge, if shared in tours, can help shape visitors’ understanding and perceptions of the complex history represented at such slave monument sites.

The contexts of enslavement in the Gold Coast and the global slave trade

Slavery has a long history in what is now known as Ghana. Oral accounts from most indigenous communities are rife with insight into the nature of this socio-economic and cultural practice, which occurred in most areas of pre-European Ghana (Perbi 2002). In the Akan language, a form of domestic or local slavery was separated into two distinct practices as *akoa* and *donko*. According to Adu-Boahen (2012, 177), while *donko* can be equated to the familiar western form of chattel slavery by way of lack of rights, slaves under *akoa* were of a higher status than those in *donko* but still unfree. While the precise origin of the *donko* system is uncertain, some scholars trace it to the quasi-feudal rights over land and people that took the form of *corvée*, “state slavery,” or “statute labor” in the ancient Gold Coast (Dumett 1987, 219, 233; Perbi 1995).

People could be enslaved in *akoa* or *donko* in many ways. These include being criminals, violators of societal taboos, women accused of adultery or witchcraft, orphans, transferable property, missing persons, outcasts, strangers, prisoners of war, and tributes of vassal societies. Captives might be the victims of bartering and pawning, forced capture, kidnapping, raids, theft, deceit, debt bondage, or self-imposed servitude in times of drought and famine, when people might sell themselves into slavery as a means of survival. Individuals might also be born enslaved as a result of slave breeding, though this practice was not as institutionalized or widespread as it became under chattel slavery. The motivations of those who acquired slaves varied. Some perceived enslaved people as a resource for debt repayment; other slaves might be acquired by childless women and men or as converts of missions and churches. Slaves’ roles included acting as a bride price or dowry, improving the prestige of individual slave owners or their families, and working as porters or wage-less artisans. Slaves also entered harems and acted as concubines, they served as eunuchs, they worked as army recruits, and they suffered as victims of human ritual sacrifice. Sometimes captives helped to sustain the societies that enslaved them as population additives to stem dwindling numbers (Thornton 1998; Perbi 2002).

Domestic servitude in pre-European Ghana included not just slaves but also pawns and war captives (Perbi 1997, 2002). While these individuals were generally involuntarily subordinate (Rattray 1929, 33), they also “were invariably integrated into the kin of their owners to become part of the family, lineage and clan” (Perbi 2002, 171). Such integration was relatively easy to practice in the past societies because “the indigenous institution of slavery fitted neatly into Ghana’s precolonial social structure” (Perbi 2002, 171). While enslaved people in pre-colonial Ghana clearly suffered, this sort of domestic enslavement was less heinous than European chattel slavery: even *donko*, who maintained a reduced social status and fewer rights than *akoa*, could still inherit property, marry and raise a family and petition a chief’s court for protection from a cruel master. In this regard, their fundamental human rights were enshrined in customary law and humane societal norms even though they were not free to determine their own destiny (Anquandah 2007, 29).

While slavery in the region clearly predates European involvement, slavery was fundamentally changed over the centuries, expanding into a widespread complex system that transformed so-called “domestic” servitude or slavery into a global slave-master capitalist business. The Cape Coast Castle itself is evidence of this fundamental transformation. The globalization of the slave trade in the Gold Coast began in the fourteenth century. Then,

the gold-rich Akan forests were more articulated with the international trans-Saharan gold trade through the initiative of *Wangara* and *Mande Dyula* merchants. A *corvée* type of domestic labor was used by the pioneers of Akan gold industry. In addition to trade items such as gold, *goro* (kola), *karite* (shea nut oil) and ivory, some of these *corvée* captives and laborers were sold to the *Wangara* and *Mande Dyula* merchants. In exchange, Akan forest traders received prized imported Moroccan textiles, salt, horses, brassware, among other trade commodities (Inikori 1996; Walvin 2006).

However, the globalization of the Gold Coast's slave trade hastened considerably with Portuguese involvement in the fifteenth century. With the Portuguese came a new kind of African bondage that propelled what had still been fundamentally a local trade into the international economic sphere. What emerged was a global and transformed capitalist business of slavery (Lovejoy 1983). As early as the 1440s, early Portuguese sailors like Antonio Gonzalves and Nuno Tristan started transporting enslaved human cargo across the Atlantic to the slave markets of Mercado de Escravos in Portugal (Nguah and Kugbey 2015, 15; Ashun 2017, 67). Concurrent with their increased investment in the slave trade, the Portuguese also initiated large-scale gold exportation from Elmina Fort St. Jorge in the late fifteenth century. These trades, of gold and of slaves, were intertwined. To promote the gold export trade, the Portuguese imported large numbers of African slaves from the "Grain Coast" (Liberia, Sierra Leone), the "Slave Coast" (Ardra, Benin, Warri), Sao Tome, Congo, Angola, and other obscure areas under the East India Company. That is, during the period of 1485–1540, about 12,000 slaves were *imported* and sold at Elmina Castle to Akan, Abrem, Ahanta, Etsi, and Mande Dyula gold merchants. Here, we see more movement toward greater industrialization and dehumanization in the slave trade. Yet, though translocated from their original societies and kin groups, such slaves achieved independence that would later become impossible under the European chattel system. For example, some were employed as waged labor force in the gold mines or as porters that conveyed heavy loads of European imported goods from the coastal forts to the hinterland (Kea 1982).

This inter-West African trade known as *cabotage* or the coasting trade was adopted and perfected by the Dutch in the early to mid-seventeenth century. European goods, large numbers of slaves, and indigenous textiles formed the basis of trade with West African societies such as Ardra, Benin, and Warri. The Dutch sold their goods to local merchants from the gold mining areas of Aowin, Wassaw, Tafo, Ankobra, Efutu, and Eguafo. In describing this trade, a Dutch observer noted that, "a great multitude of slaves, like mules, served as porters of the African caravan brokers and carried sacks of merchandise on their backs" (Kea 1982, 254). Later, Danish, Swedish, and English chartered companies also participated in and profited by the *cabotage* trade system initiated by the Portuguese and the Dutch. In addition, Mande Dyula horsemen are known to have carried out "slave raids" into the Gur-speaking lands north of the forest (between the Black and White Volta Rivers); such raids eventually depopulated these lands for two centuries (Stahl 2001).

From the 1620s onwards, the economies of the Americas deepened their dependence on slavery. Mineral production as well as sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantation agriculture created a massive and urgent demand for a cheap and permanent gang labor force. To solve this labor problem, western capitalists embarked on a policy of large-scale human "commoditization" in which indigenes of West Africa were enslaved and exported to work as chattel and gang slaves. Enslaved Africans could better serve the interests of

western capitalists than European indentured labor (Inikori 1996). In no uncertain terms, this was when the cultural genocide of African slaves was heightened and inhumanely practiced. In this period, slavery was driven by capitalist inebriations with profit; captives swallowed up in this system were without recourse to uphold their fundamental human rights. In this way, slavery in this period departs from earlier indigenous forms of the practice, like donko and akoo.

Raw materials produced by enslaved labor on American plantations were exported in a triangular trade to Europe to facilitate the production of manufactured goods for the West African market. For example, cotton picked by the hands of enslaved Africans in the Americas was woven into cloth in Europe; following production in European factories, these very textiles were among the goods exported to West Africa in exchange for enslaved captives and gold. Other goods exchanged include ceramics, sugar, brassware, ironware, beads, tobacco and tobacco pipes, matchlock and firelock muskets, and ammunition. The capitalist mercantile economy that developed based on slavery demanded heavy investment in the acquisition, maintenance, and victualing of ships, the employment of crews, the purchase of trade goods, and – most significant for us – the construction and maintenance of trade forts and castles. European nations rose to meet these challenges; they funded or subsidized their chartered companies to invest in landscapes of slavery that mechanized the extraction and enslavement of captives. The capitalist slave economy underlay the development of major European cities, including London, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Southampton, Nantes, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam. Banks also profited. As Beckles (2002, 166) notes, “two English banks, Barclays and Lloyds, both developed out of profits from the slave trade and by the 18th century functioned as global institutions, both of them being important sources of credit for British industry.”

As more and more European goods, especially firearms, flooded African markets, local merchants and brokers developed tastes for wealth, consumerism, and power, which they sustained with firearms. Over 1.6 million guns were exported from England alone to West Africa in the decade of 1796–1805 (Inikori 2002). Thus, violence escalated, as did slave raids, wars, and incidents of kidnapping. Many millions of local captives were exported to the New World. The discovery of better-quality and cheaper gold in Brazil led to the diminishment of the gold trade in the Gold Coast and a concurrent upsurge there in the chattel slave trade. In need of more slaves to operate in Brazilian mines, the Portuguese increasingly sent ships directly to the coasts of Guinea and Gold Coast to exchange Brazilian gold and tobacco for slaves.

While gold continued to be exported – especially from the Ankobra/Axim area and especially by the Dutch – slaves soon usurped gold’s primacy as an export product (Römer 1995, 32–33). In a letter written in 1705, Willem de la Palma, Director-General of the Dutch West India Company at Elmina, complained:

[C]oncerning the trade on this coast, it has completely changed into a slave coast. Nowadays, the natives no longer occupy themselves with the search for gold, but rather make war on each other in order to furnish slaves, and they go to the extent of violating the public roads ... the gold coast has completely changed into a slave coast. (Van Dantzig 1978, 112)

By the end of the eighteenth century, the lust for the slave trade had reached its apex in West Africa, Europe, and the New World. Demand for enslaved captives did not abate

with the new century. In spite of the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, some historians have suggested that many more slaves were smuggled across the Atlantic in the relatively short period from 1807 to 1850 than in the whole era of “legal” British slave trade. Van Dantzig (1978, 124) characterizes nineteenth-century efforts to stem the slave trade thus: “it was, as one of the (anti-slave) crusaders, expressed it, like trying to build a dam across the mouth of a river. Once a stretch of coast was under control, the slave smugglers diverted their activities elsewhere.”

Europeans’ demand and pursuit of this human trade item shaped West African landscapes not just by the castles and forts that were erected to manage the trade, but also by the lasting effects that slaving left on targeted regions. European traders armed local expansionist militarized kingdoms like the Denkyira, Akyim, Akwamu, Fante, and Asante from the seventeenth century onwards. The influx of firearms created developmental instability in many vulnerable interior Gold Coast localities and encouraged residents to strategically mobilize to defensible mountain tops and caves for safety. Even when they avoided enslavement, West Africans found that the pursuit of physical safety itself came a spiritual and cultural cost. That is, being forced to abandon heritage sites and the landscapes of their ancestors made cultural preservation harder. Forced migration denied some societies the peace they needed to sustain their indigenous knowledge systems, local technologies, and craft development. The slaves from the north and Volta areas of Krepiin Ghana, for instance, were “highly valued in the Caribbean as hardworking reliable slaves, hence they fetched very high prices on the international market” (Anquandah 2007, 32). It is no wonder that these areas of Krepi did not achieve sustainable development until after the Asante and Akwamu imperial wars of enslavement in the 1870s (ApoH 2014). In contrast to the destabilization of raided populations, the local economies of the militarized states (e.g., Asante, Akwame, and Akyim) developed in relative peace. Here we see how the global system of slavery shaped local realities: we observe the rise of West African merchant families and individuals who fed the demands of the European traders of the transatlantic slave trade (Fynn 1971, 20; Kea 1982, 106; Anquandah 2007, 30).

From this brief overview, we can now begin to understand Cape Coast Castle as embedded in a long and complex history of slavery in the region – including domestic African slavery and the transatlantic and trans-Saharan chattel slave trade systems. Importantly, these trades and types of slavery co-existed from the sixteenth century until the abolishment of the slave trade. Cape Coast Castle did not represent the beginning of the slave trade in Ghana; it did not even represent the only type of slavery or the only slave trade that existed during the Castle’s occupation and use. However, the site does reflect the increasing globalization and mechanization of this heinous business practice, one of many similar tangible vestiges across the globe (Perbi 2004).

Castles, forts, and lodges

Even though tourism of slave-related heritage sites in Ghana is well developed, many Ghanaians have yet to grapple with the full and continuing impact of the slave trade. The transformations brought about by the slave trade were not limited to the disruption of societies and families but also encompassed physical alterations of coastal and interior landscapes of the Gold Coast. Such “difficult heritage” or “heritage that hurts” (Foote 1997, 5; Uzzell and Ballantyne 1998; Morgan and Pallascio 2015) is memorialized most

explicitly in monumental forms like the Cape Coast Castle and other large commercial forts tied to the slave trade.

In our experience, however, most tours of Cape Coast Castle and similar sites give more explicit attention to their architectural and administrative histories than to the deeper histories of slavery (see Schramm 2010, 119). This focus on historical minutiae relates to what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) has identified as the “banalization” of history, in which historical silences can persist through inattention to larger questions of cause and consequence. Just as inattention to archaeology may promote emotional disassociation in visitors at Cape Coast Castle so too may tours that overemphasize the building’s physical history and the dates of occupation by various European powers. Cape Coast Castle’s importance extends beyond its administrative and architectural history; it is also wrapped up in larger regional and global developments in the slave trade, and this larger history deserves more attention in tours. Part of the paucity of the narratives presented to visitors relates to tangibility: while the Cape Coast Castle persists in the present, more knowledge of and attention to missing pieces on the Ghanaian slave landscape would bolster informed perceptions of extant slave monuments like Cape Coast Castle.

Between 1482 and the 1780s, European nations erected about 80 fortifications at various locations along a 500 km stretch of Ghana’s coastal territory from Beyin in the west to Keta in the east (Lawrence 1963; Van Dantzig 1980; Anquandah 1997, 2000). During these three centuries of European fort construction in precolonial Ghana, there emerged a hierarchy of structures, designated as “castle,” “fort,” and “lodge.” These structures differed in terms of time of establishment, size, content, structural features, and functional capacity. For instance, lodges were made of less durable material such as wood, clay, and straw; they typically served as temporary and small trade posts. A lodge structure was often a precursor to a fort. Forts were more permanent architecture built of stone, wood, and brick. They were also generally larger and had several inner structures for use by trade, military, medical, architectural, and technical European staff; they typically maintained a garrison and a warehouse as well as spaces for African servants and dungeons for African captives and slaves.

The first Portuguese fort, São Jorge da Mina (Fort St. George of the Mine), was built in 1482 and modeled on medieval European castles in Germany, England, and France. It had an inner rectangular keep surrounded by massive curtain walls with round towers at opposite corners. It was equipped with cannons, while gun ports were erected in loopholes used in medieval castles for the archers’ arrows (Wellington and Biveridge 2014, 185). During the Dutch period, Fort St. George was equipped with heavy bastions linked by thick curtain walls as well as parapets with slits to facilitate musket firing. Fort St. George is unique in being surrounded on the landward side by a water-filled moat typical of medieval castles. Conflict and violence are written into the particulars of its construction. From the 1660s, when European rivalry intensified along the coast, the Dutch found it necessary to redesign the fort’s architecture by surrounding the inner keep with an outer demi-bastion and curtain complex that run parallel to the main inner bastion-curtain complex. This new fort design was also introduced at the forts of St. Jago (Coenraadsburg), St. Antonio at Axim, and the Dutch forts at Komenda, Senya Beraku, Kormantin, Shama, and Butri (Varley 1952).

While violence is written into the construction of forts, capitalist inebriation with the profits of the slave trade can be seen in the construction of those complexes deemed

“castles.” Three extant large-scale structures – two in the Central Accra region and one in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana – are classified as castles; namely Elmina (once Fort St. George), Cape Coast Castle, and Christiansborg Castle. Castles differed from forts in their capacity for a large population, including up to 1500 slaves. In terms of size, a castle encompassed a complex network of buildings and, indeed, was like two or three forts put together. Each castle maintained a large garrison, and separate spaces for European officials, African servants, and African slaves. For its defense, it was equipped with up to 100 guns and cannons, whereas a fort would have only about a quarter of that number.

The slave prisons of forts and castles

The overriding purpose of a fort was economic: to enable its owners to secure a trading foothold on the West African coast, to keep competitors at bay, and to secure accommodation that would enable the particular European nation’s commercial and military staff to develop and expand its commerce. As the European presence and participation in trade developed, castles became preferred over forts due to their larger capacity for holding slaves and other goods as well as providing rooms for residences and for security against local and foreign enemies (Hyland 1995). Extant historical works indicate that most of the forts of the slave trade era (excepting purely military forts like Fort St. Jago/Fort Coenraadsburg) had one or more bastions or rooms that were specially designed as slave “warehouses.” These areas were given various names by different national trading companies including slave prisons, slave barracoons, slave rooms, slave dungeons, and slave holes, among many others. For example, the Danish Christiansborg Castle in Accra had “slave boxes” installed, through which passed a traffic of captives destined for the West Indian Islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix (Hansen 1967).

In the period prior to the 1630s and 1640s, European forts on the Gold Coast were designed solely for trade in material products such as gold and ivory. Human chattel was hardly taken into account in the design and construction of forts. Soon, however, a shift in trade priorities would necessitate changes in fort architecture. The Dutch West India Company decided to initiate trade in slaves in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1646, when a Dutch ship from Arda arrived at Elmina Castle with 40 enslaved captives, the captain was advised to keep them on board until a number of special slave-huysjens (barracoons) had been built to accommodate them. Indeed, at the onset of Dutch slave trading at Elmina, because of the absence of such barracoons, the Dutch were similarly overwhelmed when receiving large numbers of prisoners. Hence, until appropriate slave prisons were built, captives awaiting export were kept in ground floor rooms normally used for warehousing goods (Van Dantzig 1980).

Subsequently, Elmina castle was equipped with large slave prisons; females were kept under the governor’s apartment and males were kept in dungeons under the seaward end of the castle (Lawrence 1963; Van Dantzig 1980, 67). At Kormantin in the Central Region of Ghana, the English Fort Kormantin (later Fort Amsterdam when under the Dutch West India Company), a hollow bastion with a grated ventilation hole in the roof was constructed in 1640. Thus equipped, it was used to accommodate captives awaiting export to the Western Hemisphere. Van Dantzig suggests that this was probably the first slave prison built on the West African coast (Van Dantzig 1980, 22). Thereafter, it became the practice for the English to refer to all slaves exported by them to the

Western Hemisphere as “Kormantin Negroes.” Thus, the dungeons that visitors tour at Cape Coast Castle are part of a regional shift toward making the slave trade more efficient, dehumanized, and globalized. Extant documentation confirms the existence of slave prisons at other Gold Coast forts listed in [Table 3](#) (see also [Varley 1952](#); [Lawrence 1963](#); [Van Dantzig 1980](#); [Anquandah 1999, 1993a, 1993b](#)).

Enslaved captives constituted an economic asset and investment. Hence, captives’ security, relative health, and safety were a matter of concern to their owners, especially the chartered companies who sought to maximize profits from their approaching sale. Historical archives of European trading companies provide some insight into conditions faced by captives in fort prisons. As indicated above, slave prisons were usually located in high and thick-walled bastions that were often vaulted and securely gated to prevent escape. As slaves were often overcrowded in these spaces, it was necessary to ensure that the prisons were reasonably ventilated. And, indeed, fort site-plans show that ventilators were provided in the prisons. For instance, Lawrence notes that at Fort St. Sebastian in Shama, “high above the doorways of the slave prison were round holes (2ft in diameter) to ensure ventilation and admit a subdued light” (Lawrence 1963, 278). Similarly, at Fort William in Anomabu, there were also “ventilating shafts opened beneath louvered hatches to give a modicum of air and light to slaves imprisoned below” (Lawrence 1963, 352). These architectural adjustments, of course, should be understood as fundamentally economically motivated by traders who did not want to lose their human merchandise to death. Both slavers’ concern with their economic investment and their unconcern with human suffering can be read through Cape Coast Castle’s spatial organization and archaeological remains.

The archaeology of Ghana’s forts and castles

Those narratives that we impart to visitors about the Gold Coast’s landscapes of slavery should not be limited to the tangible structures of incarceration examined above.

Table 3. The locations of a selection of European forts in Ghana and their year of establishment.

Name	Builder/owner	Location	Date
Sebastiao	Dutch	Shama	1638
Crevecoeur	Dutch	Accra	1649
Kormantin/Amsterdam	English/Dutch	Kormantse (Abandze)	1665
Orange	Dutch	Sekondi	1670s
Dorothea	Brandenburg/Dutch	Akwida	1685
Metalenkruis	English	Dixcove (Mfuma)	1692
Lijzaamheid (Patience)	Dutch	Apam	1697
Batenstein	Swedish/Dutch	Butre	1705
Komenda	English	Komenda	1708
De Goed Hoop	Dutch	Senya Beraku	1715
Groot Friedrichsburg	Brandenburg + Dutch	Princesstown (Pokesu)	1682/1725
Fredensborg	Danish	Ningo	1741
William	English	Anomabu	1753
Appolonia/Willem III	Dutch/English	Beyin	1660/1768
Eliza Carthago	Dutch	Ankobra	1702
Duma	Portuguese	Ankobra	1623
Ruyghaver	Dutch	Ankobra	1653
Sophie/Maria Louise	Brandenburg + Dutch	Takrama	1690
Dixcove	English/Ahanta/Dutch	Dixcove	1692
Bushan	English	Butre	1663
Witzen	Swedish/Danes/Dutch	Takpradi	1650

Indeed, the longing that many visitors feel for more intangible narratives is reflected in Columbia Professor Saidiya Hartman's (2007, 115–116) account of her visit to the dungeons at Cape Coast Castle:

The only part of my past that I could put my hands on was the filth from which I recoiled, layers of organic material pressed hard against a stone floor ... Inside the dungeon, there were remains but no stories that could resurrect the dead except the stories I invented. (Figures 4 and 5)

Some tour guides' overemphasis on the Cape Coast Castle's architecture contributes to historical de-contextualization of the monument and the common misperception of the dungeons as an empty space. Greater attention to the archaeological residues at Cape Coast Castle, and the inhumane conditions they reveal, can enhance visitors' understanding of the lives of enslaved people and the landscapes of slavery that they navigated.

Historically, two distinct approaches have been employed in conducting archaeological research on Ghana's historic forts and castles and their slave dungeons. These are (1) broad reconnaissance surveys and (2) archaeological excavations in the vicinity of the forts and within the slave dungeons. A. W. Lawrence, Professor of Archaeology at the University College of the Gold Coast, conducted large-scale research under the first category in the early 1950s. Lawrence applied his expertise in European classical architecture in his inquiry. His seminal publication, entitled *Trade Castles and Forts of West Africa* (1963), is a product of meticulous investigation of several extant castles and forts and their slave prisons. His descriptions of these sites were often accompanied by annotated cartographic illustrations drawn to scale in addition to photographs and sketches (Lawrence 1963).

Actual archaeological excavations in the dungeons and the environs of castles, ground the second research approach. Some of the early examples of this approach include research by David Calvocoressi at Bantama near Elmina (Calvocoressi 1977) and Doig Simmonds's excavations in the male dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle in the early 1970s (Simmonds 1973). The Scottish Kirkdale Expedition also excavated a part of the Cape Coast Castle in 1991 (Kirkdale 1991). More recent excavations include work by James Anquandah at the Cape Coast Castle under a joint program by Ghana's Central



Figure 4. Unexcavated floor of the Cape Coast Castle slave dungeon. Photograph by author.



Figure 5. Excavated floor of the Cape Coast Castle slave dungeon. Photograph by author.

Regional Development Commission (CEDECOM) and the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (MUCIA) in the U.S.A.; this program advances research and conservation of the Central Region's forts and castles as well as museum development (CEDECOM 1992; Anquandah 1997). In the 1990s, Anquandah also undertook archaeological excavations at Fort St. Jago (Fort Coenraadsburg) in Elmina as well as James Fort and Fort Crevecoeur in Accra. Other projects include excavations by Chris DeCorse (1989, 1992) and his collaborators around Elmina Castle; James Boachie-Ansah (2008) at Fort Amsterdam in Kormantin; Fritz Biveridge (2015) at Fort Battenstein in Butre; Samuel Gyam (2008) at Fort Anthony at Axim; and Rachel Engmann and crew at the Christiansborg Castle in Accra (Christiansborg Archaeological Heritage Project 2018).

A review of the history and archaeology of Cape Coast Castle

Cabo Corso (Short Cape) was the initial Portuguese name given to a landing place on the coast of Oguaa; the British later corrupted this name to Cape Coast (Lawrence 1963). The location of Cape Coast Castle has a deep local history that extends far beyond the history of the structure itself. The indigenous people of Cape Coast, or Oguaa as it is locally called, are of Guan (Winneba, Senya Bereku, Feteh) and Akan (Fante, Agona, Assin, Denkyira) origins (Yeboah 2010). The Oguaa coastal communities were fishing towns and market centers before the arrival of the Portuguese in the area in 1471; other Europeans followed. The English built a post here in 1649 but were expelled by the Swedes in 1650 (Fage et al. 1959). Cape Coast Castle began in 1653 as the Swedish Fort Carolusborg. It was later captured, first by the Danish Company of Guinea under Heinrich Karloff in 1658 and then by the Fetu people of Cape Coast in 1661. The Dutch occupied it again in 1663 but relinquished it to the British in 1665 following the Anglo-Dutch war. The Royal Adventurers of England (later known as the Royal African Company) upgraded the fort in stages to a castle under Admiral Sir Robert Holmes using local and foreign labor and local materials. The Royal African Company continued to enlarge the castle through trade in human cargo and African raw materials until 1750 (Fage et al. 1959; Lawrence 1963).

Jean Barbot, who visited Cape Coast Castle in 1679 and 1682, described the female and male prisons thus:

The castle is the largest and most beautiful on the coast next to St. George of Elmina. There is a spacious mansion underneath to keep the slaves in, cut out of the rocky ground, arched and divided into several rooms; so that it will conveniently contain a thousand blacks, let down at an opening made for the purpose. The keeping of the slaves thus underground is a good security to the garrison against any insurrection. There is a huge battery facing out to sea; a ramp leads beneath the platform to an enormous vaulted slave prison of several bays, doubtless more wholesome than the former prison under the courtyard and the southeast battery. (Barbot 1732, 170, quoted in Lawrence 1963, 184–185)

Between 1750 and 1820, the African Company of Merchants controlled activities in the Cape Coast Castle under the subsidy of the Crown. From 1821, however, the British Government took direct control of the British Settlements on the Gold Coast and placed them under the British colonial government of Sierra Leone. The Committee of London Merchants took charge over the Castle in 1828 under George Maclean, who began governor of Cape Coast in 1830. Though the headquarters of the British colonial administration moved from the castle in Cape Coast to Accra in 1877, the structure was still held as a British possession until 1960 when Ghana became a republic (Yeboah 2010). Cape Coast Castle currently serves as a World Heritage site for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It is also a tourist site, a site of remembrance, and a tangible and intangible landscape of slavery, colonialism, emancipation, and commodification.

During Cape Coast Castle's lifetime, it has been occupied by a succession of administrators, governors, treasurers, medical officers, warehouse keepers, accountants, auditors, soldiers, skilled artisans, and mercantile staff as well as chaplains and clerks of the English Chapel. For example, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), operated on top of the dungeon beginning in the 1750s. In addition to these varied European occupants, the castle additionally housed local servants and up to about 1000 male and 300 female enslaved captives, making a total of 1500 occupants who were accommodated in the castle during peak seasons (Lawrence 1963). All of these owners, workers, and inmates left material residues in the castle and its dungeons. These residues serve as the archaeological backdrop from which we can better understand the lifeways of enslaved inmates, the structural development of the castle, and the inhumane treatment meted out to its vulnerable occupants.

To investigate the real nature of the Atlantic trade in goods and slaves, Simmonds (1973) excavated five rooms in the male dungeons of the Cape Coast Castle in 1972. There, he recovered material remains including architectural data, fauna, bead ornaments, smoking pipes, cowries, and floor debris. Simmonds (1973) noted several phases of use for the dungeon spaces he investigated. They were first constructed in 1777 and used extensively as slave prisons until 1807, when the British abolition of the slave trade bolstered the trade in so-called "legitimate" goods. From 1807 until Ghana's independence in 1960, Simmonds argued that the dungeons were used for multiple purposes. These included acting as storage space and workshop for making barrels of gunpowder, shots, and gunflints during the period of the Ashanti wars (1824–1901). The space was also used as a bonded warehouse of valuable goods and as an arsenal (Simmonds 1973, 267). Simmonds' conclusions about the dungeons' varied functions were based in part on the

presence of gun-making rushing irons and large amounts of sealing wax he recovered in excavations there (Simmonds 1973). In the twentieth century, historical records indicate the dungeon was used in similarly varied ways; it served as a military store during the periods of the first and second world wars (1914–1918 and 1939–1945) and, later, as a store for the Public Works Department until the end of the colonial era.

The 1991 Kirkdale archaeological investigations in the Cape Coast Castle revealed a number of findings. According to the report (Kirkdale 1991), test-trenching was conducted at 15 locations within and outside the castle. These areas included the male dungeons, female dungeons, the courtyard and areas near the south battery. The report indicates that the finds include eighteenth- and nineteenth-century local pottery and European imported glass beads, ceramics, Dutch smoking pipes and gin bottles and fragments. They also developed a sketch plan of the courtyard features through resistivity electrical method. These test excavations and sketch plan served as a foundation of knowledge for archaeological work by Professor Anquandah. In 1996, as part of the Central Regional Development Commission's (CEDECOM) integrated survey program, Anquandah undertook an archaeological survey at the Cape Coast Castle. We are unable to publish the key findings from his report (Anquandah 1997) since he was under contract with the funders not to publish them. Unfortunately, we were not able revisit this issue with the funders to secure permission due to Professor Anquandah's demise. We would like to keep to the spirit of that agreement and the wishes of his family in this article irrespective of the void it may create in the deep analyses for now. That notwithstanding, Anquandah published a brief overview of his second archaeological project at the Cape Coast Castle in a chapter in one his edited volumes (Anquandah 2007, 42). A part of it is quoted here to give substance to our arguments:

In 1996, as part of the USAID/Ghana Government Project for conservation and restoration of Cape Coast and Elmina Castle/Forts, Anquandah conducted a test excavation at Cape Coast Castle, but this time the research was conducted in a female slave prison. The biota food remains retrieved included bones of cattle, sheep or goats, birds, rodents and abundant remains of edible shell fish such as *Thais haemastoma*, *Donax rugosus*, *Ostrea denticulate* and *Arcasenilis*. The cultural debris retrieved included polychrome glass beads of the period 1750–75, perfume or ointment glass jars, liquor glass bottles, English pottery of the 18th century, and some 48 fragments of smoking pipes of Dutch or English manufacture dating to the period 1670–1790. There were also extant gun-parts from the firearms of the slave-prison guards (Anquandah 1997) ... Among the striking findings of the Cape Coast excavation was a giant indigenous stone milling equipment probably used for preparing food for the slaves. (Anquandah 2007, 42)

Just like Anquandah, Simmonds (1973) worked to further our understanding of the castle's deep history. His key objective was to bring to light whatever remains survived from the Anglo-Swedish Fort Carolusburg, the earliest fort from which the Cape Coast Castle eventually emerged. Most striking are the similarities between European material culture found at Cape Coast Castle and European material culture recovered at other global sites of colonialism. That is, a diverse range of European imported goods identified at Cape Coast Castle have also been identified in early historic and colonial sites in North America, the Caribbean, and even South Africa. These cross-regional material similarities reflect not only the increasingly global nature of trade from the seventeenth century onward but also the increased mechanization of such trade: it appears that certain types

of cultural materials (for example, glass beads, smoking pipes, and liquor bottles) were produced in Europe en masse for export to colonial centers in Africa and the Americas.

Material culture recovered from Cape Coast Castle reflects the long and complex history of the site. The archaeological record, particularly in the slave dungeons, also reflects the bodily suffering of the enslaved captives who were imprisoned there. For example, Doig Simmonds' 1970s excavations of the male dungeon yielded evidence for the management of biological residues from captives, including excrement as well as possibly blood, vomit, and urine, that were wrenched from the bodies of those imprisoned there. Simmonds (1973, 267) reported that "excavation in the most westerly ends of the five rooms revealed a carefully laid brick floor with gutters for rain water which entered through the air vents, and also expedited the seasonal washing out of human excrement and food debris." Simmonds' research provided a wide variety of data on architecture, fauna, bead ornaments, smoking pipes, cowries, and floor debris; these data allowed for an elucidation of patterns of food, leisure, clothing, body ornamentation, money and the hygiene conditions in the castle upon which later researchers built (Anquandah 2007). However, it is Simmonds' attention to hygiene and captives' bodily suffering that provides the most visceral access to what survival entailed in the dungeons.

Archaeological evidence of hygiene conditions is captured in Simmonds' description of the castle midden. He observed:

Evidence so far suggests that the rubbish left by the last batch of slaves to be transported was not cleared out but was covered with a layer of sand followed by a layer of "tarras" or locally made lime from oyster shells collected off this coast. The "tarras" had two effects; one as a form of sterilization and the other to resist rising damp. (Simmonds 1973, 268)

According to Yeboah (2010, 37), during the continuing excavation in the dungeons in 1974, "several dried and packed feces were removed and buried." In hindsight, this preserved feces could have provided ample samples for coprolitic analysis to obtain better insight into the alimentary conditions and foodways that inmates experienced in incarceration. However, the mere presence of captives' excrement as well as architectural features designed to manage its removal provide direct insight into the dungeon's inhumane conditions.

The fact that slaves had to defecate in the floor gutters of the dungeon posed a serious health hazard in Cape Coast Castle. Schramm (2010, 121) recounts her visit to Cape Coast Castle dungeons thus: "inside the first room the guide points out a narrow gutter that is said to have served as the slave's sewage system. We are told that the dungeons were not regularly cleaned." Certainly, as Simmonds (1973, 268) notes, the

cleaning out of slave dungeons ... was a much feared operation [by Europeans and their African staff] as it was not only disgustingly smelly but was thought to be a likely chance to catch disease such as smallpox [or] intestinal infection.

Consequently, diseases often spread rapidly among slave prisoners. Even some material culture seemingly unrelated to hygiene may be understood as reactions to the unsanitary and crowded conditions among slave prison inmates. For example, to ameliorate tension and stress induced by these conditions, some fort companies gave weekly supplies of tobacco and tobacco pipes to prisoners, especially to women. This practice is historically recorded in archival records related to Danish fort slave-prisons at Fort Fredensburg at

Ningo, for instance (Svalesen 2000; Anquandah 2007, 42). Such a practice is similarly materially revealed at Cape Coast Castle by the number of smoking pipe remnants retrieved from the female dungeons in excavations by Simmonds (1973, 268). The social context in which these pipes are found allow us to read them not simply as item of recreation but as being received and used by enslaved people in a broader context of their subjugation, suffering, and loss of dignity.

Conclusion

After U.S. President Barak Obama toured the Cape Coast Castle on 11 July 2009, he wrote, “Thank you for an incredible experience” in the visitors’ comment book. His more extensive remarks, which were published online, stated in part,

Michelle, the children, as well as other members of my family, just got an extraordinary tour of this castle. It is reminiscent of the trip I took to [the Nazi Germany concentration camp] Buchenwald because it reminds us of the capacity of human beings to commit great evil. (Obama 2009)

Taking an educative stance, he further remarked:

You know, I think it was particularly important for Malia and Sasha, who are growing up in such a blessed way, to be reminded that history can take very cruel turns, and hopefully one of the things that was imparted to them during this trip is their sense of obligation to fight oppression and cruelty wherever it appears, and that any group of people who are degrading another group of people have to be fought against with whatever tools we have available to us. (Obama 2009)

As an African American, President Obama’s comments reflect his sensitivity and attachment to the history of the site. His reaction is similar to that of American First Lady, Michelle Obama, who is also African American and descendant from enslaved Africans. In the Cape Coast Castle visitor comment book, she wrote “Thank you for giving our family the important lesson about our culture and our people. All the best.” This comment was also endorsed and signed by her daughters, Sasha and Malia. The Obamas’ comments about the historic monument reflect deep sympathy for the enslaved captives once imprisoned there. However, such a response to Cape Coast Castle is not seen in all visitors. Indeed, as Schramm (2010, 129) notes, slave castles and dungeons are places “where meaning is grounded and continuously produced” (see also Rodman 1992, 643). Each visitor who tours a slave castle departs the place with varied impressions and perceptions that are shaped by his or her own prior educational and personal experiences as well as the types of information imparted on the tour.

Today, all slave forts and castles in Ghana have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites (Osei-Tutu 2007a). Such sites are meant for use by all of humanity, which means that no individual, state, or group can lay absolute claim over them. Nonetheless, these sites’ appropriation, commodification, refurbishment, and use are often shrouded in controversy among the many stakeholders that have ancestral ties to the sites. These stakeholders include Ghanaian, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch, English, Swedish, Norwegian, and African American people. The basic conflict is over whose needs these sites serve and what histories are told. For example, in 1972, Ghana Lands Department reached an agreement to restore and lease Fort Amsterdam at Abandze

with the Ghana-based African Descendants Association Foundation (ADAF), which was comprised mostly of African Americans. This project, however, was the subject of uproar by many Ghanaians given the ADAF's plan to use the site as a shrine and site of pilgrimage for Africans in the diaspora (Osei-Tutu 2004; Schramm 2010, 82). In essence, the conflict arose when ancestral stakeholders disagreed with each other about Fort Amsterdam's appropriate use and commemoration.

The perceptions of visitors to Cape Coast Castle are only partly shaped by the narratives tour guides provide. They are also, again, only partly determined by popular culture or academic publications about the slave trade that visitors may have consumed prior to arriving at the site. The varied perceptions about Ghana's landscapes and monuments of slavery are also determined by visitors' own subject positions and their state of mind while visiting slave-related sites. Indeed, the power of one's subject position to shape one's tour experience is exemplified in our 2016 survey of visitors to Cape Coast Castle. Here, we observed that survey responses did not invariably reveal emotional engagement or empathy for captives enslaved at the castle. Some visitors' disengagement persisted despite a conscious effort of tour guides to emphasize archaeological evidence that revealed the humanity and suffering of enslaved captives.

The baggage of the transatlantic slave trade undergirds the uneasiness and suspicion that often permeates interactions between Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora and between Black people and white people during tours of the dungeons. Such histories of distant cordiality and underlying friction between African Americans and Ghanaians are especially evoked during tours of slave-related heritage sites (Falola 2001, 172; Osei-Tutu 2007b, 327). Such simmering tension resonates in the rhetorical view of Richard Wright (1975, 89–90 cited in Osei-Tutu 2007b, 335) when he posed the question: "What would my feelings be when I looked into the black face of an African feeling that maybe his great-great-great-grandfather had sold my great-great-great-grandfather into slavery?" Though it may be a "legacy of reciprocal ignorance" (Levitt 1999, 35), Africans in the diaspora and on the continent need to forge positive expectations and unconditional integration into indigenous African economies and lifestyles. They need to strive to learn from each other so as to overcome such negative perceptions (see Osei-Tutu 2007b, 335).

Outward cordiality and underlying friction also continue to shape interactions between white people and continental Africans along with other people of African descent during tours of the castles and forts. Indeed, feelings of hate, racial inequality, remorse, and blame are sometimes perceived by both white and Black visitors when grouped together during tours. As Schramm (2010, 118) notes, during her research in the early 2000s, the

separation of groups was an often-repeated demand in the visitors' comments [at Cape Coast Castle] ... partly in reaction to verbal and even physical attacks that are said to have occurred when Black and White visitors went on a joint tour.

Violent confrontations have simmered down in the more recent past due to the implementation of measures such as more explicit education at Cape Coast Castle on the need for visitors to respect each other's opinions and racial differences. At the site, we also see the continuing separation of visitors of different races who are unknown to each other during tours. The discord and feelings of blame that can arise in interaction between visitors of different races at Cape Coast Castle reflect continuing repercussions of the complex

global history of slavery; we are still living with the repercussions and reverberations of the transatlantic slave trade today. Whites, continental Africans, and Africans in the diaspora may perceive or practice stereotypical agendas (e.g., racism or violence) in their interactions with other visitors as a way of coming to terms with the historical injustices of the past.

A few visitors understand Cape Coast Castle as a place not just to come to terms with the past but also to re-envision the future. Despite being saddened by his experiences visiting the Cape Coast Castle slave dungeon, President Barak Obama didn't forgo the opportunity to remind us to leave the past behind and be optimistic about the future. He remarked that:

I think, as Americans, and as African Americans, obviously there's a special sense that on the one hand this place was a place of profound sadness; on the other hand, it is here where the journey of much of the African American experience began. And symbolically, to be able to come back with my family, with Michelle and our children, and see the portal through which the diaspora began, but also to be able to come back here in celebration with the people of Ghana of the extraordinary progress that we've made because of the courage of so many, black and white, to abolish slavery and ultimately win civil rights for all people, I think is a source of hope. It reminds us that as bad as history can be, it's also possible to overcome. (Obama 2009)

President Barak Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama were not the only recent high-profile visitors from the U.S. White House to visit the Cape Coast Castle. In October 2018, First Lady Melania Trump, wife of current U.S. President Donald Trump came to Ghana as part of her first trip to Africa. At the close of her visit to the Cape Coast Castle and its dungeons on 3 October 2018, she wrote in the visitors' comment book, "Thank you for your warm welcome!" Mrs. Trump's initial comments, though lacking evidence of empathetic engagement with the castle's dark history, were complementary of Ghanaian hospitality like those of her predecessor First Lady Michelle Obama. First Lady Melania Trump also later described her visit to the press as "very emotional" and she further specifically remarked that the "dungeon is really something that people should see and experience" (Naadi 2018).

Though we are limited in our access to her further thoughts, perceptions, and impressions, Trump's visit to the dungeons as the First Lady of the United States, just like President Obama in 2008, was not without incident. Prior to her arrival at the castle, a meeting was scheduled between representatives of Ghana's state security, the U.S. security detail of the First Lady, and the management of Cape Coast Castle. Cape Coast Castle staff agreed to vacate their offices, unlock their doors, and hand over the castle's security to the security detail of the First Lady from 4:30pm on 2 October until Mrs. Trump's visit concluded by midday 3 October 2018. The castle was thus a no-go area for all staff and other visitors throughout the duration of Melania Trump's visit. Only accredited persons, who had given prior notice to the U.S. security detail, were allowed into the castle.

The very grounds upon which inhumanity was orchestrated in the dungeons centuries ago were the site of neo-imperialist action this year. Analytically, it is interesting to unpack how a site that bears physical testimony of imperialism, cruelty, racism, and oppression could transmogrify into a site of neo-imperialism through the actions of U.S. security staff. In this case, the whole Cape Coast Castle was temporarily "colonized" by the security

agency of another foreign power, the United States, for almost a day. Thus, the sovereignty and freedom of movement of the custodians of the castle were suspended in order to facilitate a visit by the President of America and his wife and on another occasion, by the First Lady of the United States in the slave dungeons of Cape Coast Castle. Clearly, as with other visitors, the subject position of Melania Trump influenced her tour experience at the castle.

The trauma, disenchantment, bewilderment, anguish, diseases, and humiliations meted out to slaves by their captors in Ghana's slave castles and dungeons are frequently likened by castle visitors to the treatment that Jewish people faced under the Nazi regime in Germany. As such, African Americans, for example, are usually against any form of restoration that will whitewash or deface the spiritual essence of the dungeons that imprisoned their ancestors (Robinson 1994; Bruner 1996; Osei-Tutu 2004, 2006). These descendants still relate to the site's authentic experiences and memories. Nzingah Okofu (1999), an expatriate African American in Ghana, exemplifies this perspective. She considers the transatlantic slave trade as an African Holocaust; thus, any attempt to "restore" the slave castles at Cape Coast and Elmina is an exercise in the destruction of monuments of this holocaust (Okofu 1999; Osei-Tutu 2004). Given this outlook, the "slave castles" of Ghana, especially at Elmina and Cape Coast, are perceived and used by most African Americans as shrines and sites of pilgrimage rather than as voyeuristic touristic destinations. In sensitively perceiving and treating these dungeons as hallowed grounds, sanctuaries, shrines, and sites for "Door-of-no-Return" and homecoming rituals, African American visitors complicate the simple commodification of such castles and forts in Ghana (Okofu 1999; Osei-Tutu 2006; Schramm 2009). The question that remains is how to consistently impart this empathetic visitor experience – one that recognizes the human suffering of enslaved captives – to visitors with other subject positions and backgrounds. It is here that archaeology's utility becomes clear.

A focus on archaeology helps tour guides move beyond architectural and administrative histories of Cape Coast Castle by highlighting material evidence of slaves' bodily suffering. However they appear, the dungeons at Cape Coast Castle are not empty. Rather, every square inch of their walls and floors has been bathed in the suffering of the captives they imprisoned. This suffering is materially marked by human excrement and artifacts such as tobacco pipes given to captives as a means of distraction from heinous hygienic conditions. Surely, captives also urinated, bled, and cried in the dungeons, though the residues of such acts – urine, blood and tears – are less easily identified today. In talking through the tangible and intangible testimonies of the dungeon's heinous past as revealed by archaeology, visitors gain a more historically contextualized and emotionally deeper understanding of the space. Clearly, as shown in our survey, not all visitors achieve equal emotional engagement with the history of slavery even when tour guides are explicitly instructed to emphasize archaeological research at the site. Of course, visitors' experiences at and understanding of Cape Coast Castle are also shaped by their prior knowledge of the slave trade and their prior life experiences. Indeed, as Schramm (2010, 103) has observed, "the castle is a living place where memory is at the same time mirrored and formed." Yet, while not a panacea, archaeology has a role to play in deepening public engagement at the castle's dungeons. By reviewing the material evidence recovered at Cape Coast Castle, tour guides can impart a more complete and complex understanding of the history and study of slavery at the site. They can also

powerfully remind visitors of the high human cost of suffering, disease, and death that is reflected in residues persisting on the dungeon walls and floors.

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Notes on contributors

Dr. *Wazi Apoh* is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. He specializes in the archaeology of German colonization and missionization of Togoland as well as on the archaeology of slavery in the southern Volta areas of Ghana.

The late Professor *James Anquandah* was professor of archaeology at the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. He specialized in the archaeology of slavery at the forts and castles of Ghana, the Shai-Hills Ga-Dangbe research as well as the archaeology of Komaland terracotta figurines sites of northern Ghana.

Seyram Amenyo-Xa is a doctoral candidate of Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana. He is also a museum curator who works with the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board and is stationed at the Elmina Castle.

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