

1 » *Of Origins*

MAKING FAMILY, REGION, NATION

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Cape Coast and Elmina, although minor towns in a small West African country, were once essential sites in the Atlantic trade and, as such, had famed reputations in Europe. Elmina, as the site of the first European-style building in West Africa, earned the appellation *Aborekyir kaakra* or “little Europe” (Wartemberg 1950, 25). In the early part of the nineteenth century, Cape Coast was known as the “Athens of the Gold Coast” (Arhin 1995, 3). These appellations demonstrate the construction of both towns as central nodes in the Atlantic world. They also point to the processes through which Cape Coast and Elmina were remade through reference to Europe. Indeed, contemporary subjectivities in Cape Coast and Elmina must be understood within the context of the transformations wrought by the Atlantic trade and the encounter between coastal residents and European peoples, power, and practices.

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In contrast to most historical studies of this region, which attempt to define continuities within the large swath of geography that would become the Gold Coast, I focus on the continuities between two of its specific nodes.¹ As the headquarters of the British and Dutch, respectively, on the coast, Cape Coast and Elmina were the two most important port cities for Atlantic trade on the Gold Coast. They shared a status as cosmopolitan trading centers. For this reason, while they were separated in the past by their membership within different political alliances, the processes through which they came to understand their place in the Atlantic world were quite similar. Moreover, the focus on these urban spaces as opposed to the rural areas surrounding them is important because as Margaret Priestley notes, “Maritime towns

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rose to prominence around the forts and became the focal points of a wide, commercial network extending along the seaboard and into the hinterland” (1969, 12–13).

The inhabitants of these towns were truly “Atlantic creoles” (Berlin 1998). Their societies were formed through a complex interplay of race and gender that necessarily characterizes creole societies. These towns not only hosted European traders, they also became filled with traders and laborers of various kinds from other African regions, creating ethnically diverse populations. Many men understood the intricacies of doing business with both African traders from the hinterland and Europeans. Many women negotiated various types of romantic relationships with European men and were often involved in their own business dealings as well. Some of the residents of these towns attended European-style schools starting in the eighteenth century and converted to Christianity. In these ways, their encounter with Europeans defined their romantic, economic, and social relationships. It therefore played a key role in the formation of families, the emergence of an urban coastal identity, and the development of a larger national identity.

These past relationships with Europeans, furthermore, continue to define coastal residents’ understandings of these identities today. In particular, as I argue in this chapter, their intimacy with Europeans forced them to navigate European discourses about the slave trade, and ultimately led them to sequester it from constructions of their histories. For this reason, I will explore the history of this sequestering before turning to discussion of contemporary identity constructions. What follows makes no attempt to represent a complete history; rather it examines some key elements of the Atlantic and colonial eras that are central to the story that follows.

I begin here with a general discussion of the design of the Atlantic world from the point of view of coastal residents, followed by sections devoted to the making of notions of family, coastal identity, and national identity. These sections are meant to provide an historical background for the complementary chapters in part 1.

A Brief History of Two Slave Ports

Cape Coast and Elmina began as two small fishing villages named Oguaa and Edina, respectively. Oguaa was founded by the Guan people in the thirteenth or fourteenth century as part of the Fetu kingdom. Edina belonged to both the Fetu and Komenda kingdoms. During the fifteenth century, an

Akan-speaking² group migrated to the coast from Techiman, a northern town, and soon became the dominant group throughout the coast, including in Cape Coast and Elmina. Today known as the Fante, this group shares a language (also called Fante) as well as certain social institutions including the *abusua*, or matrilineal family, and the *asafo*, a set of military companies to which every member of a given society belonged and in which membership was passed down patrilineally. They also shared similar religious beliefs (Priestley 1969, 17–19).

It was also during the fifteenth century that the Portuguese began trading expeditions to what would later be known as the Gold Coast. They sought to seize control of trade in this region from Muslim traders in North Africa and to establish a new route to the Asante goldfields. Their first contact with the Gold Coast was at Edina, and there they discovered a vast supply of gold. They began trading guns, brass and copper objects, and cloth in exchange for gold and soon decided to establish trade in Edina, which they named *A Mina*, or “the mine,” which would later be transformed into “Elmina” (Lawrence 1964, 103). They chose a site between the Benya lagoon and the sea in Edina as the most strategic site on which to establish the base of their trading activities, and, in 1482, the Portuguese captain Don Diego d’Azambuja gained permission from a local king, Kwamena Ansa, to build a fort, which he named São Jorge da Mina, or Saint George of the Mine (Sarbah 1968b), on this piece of land that he rented annually.

The Portuguese soon discovered the existence of a burgeoning market for slaves in the Asante kingdom. They thus began importing slaves from the kingdom of Benin in present-day Nigeria as well as from the Congo to sell to Asante traders. These slaves were transported through São Tomé, which became a slave depot, to Elmina to exchange for gold. The Portuguese trade itself increased the demand for slaves because slaves were needed to serve as porters to transport trade goods between the coast and the Asante kingdom and to work in its gold mines (Vogt 1973). In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, slaves accounted for 10 percent of the Portuguese trade, involving the importation of 10,000–12,000 slaves between 1500 and 1535 alone (Wilks 1993, 24). The Asante also received slaves from the North from Hausa and Mossi traders. They had established a trade with northern territories prior to the arrival of the Portuguese. Before the increase in the demand for slaves, the majority of this trade involved salt, cloth, and brass and copper items. During the sixteenth century, northern groups like the Wangara traders began providing slaves to the Asante in greater numbers (Wilks 1993).

The Portuguese traders themselves also kept slaves to serve them at the castle and sent several of them to Lisbon in the early part of the sixteenth century. Some of these slaves were later shipped to the Spanish holdings in the Americas. In 1532, a Portuguese ship named *Santo Antonio* transported 201 Africans directly from São Tomé to the West Indies, marking one of the earliest Middle Passage voyages (Vogt 1973). Most of the slaves were bought in the kingdom of Benin and not in the Gold Coast because the Portuguese feared that their capturing of slaves would upset the gold trade there. To prevent this outcome, slave capture was forbidden within ten leagues of Elmina Castle (Rodney 1969, 14).

Other European nations soon followed the Portuguese in their desire to enter the trade on the Gold Coast. Dutch, Swedish, Bradenburghers, French, British, and Danish companies were all among the parties that eventually established forty-three principal forts and castles along the west coast of Africa, thirty-two of these on the Gold Coast (Lawrence 1964, 14–15).³ The Dutch established a fort at Mouri, ten miles east of Elmina, and sought to monopolize trade on the coast. After several attempts, they captured Elmina Castle from the Portuguese in 1637 and expanded the trade from Elmina (DeCorse 2001, 23). The rise of sugar plantations in the Dutch colonies in Brazil soon prompted the Dutch to enter the transatlantic slave trade, but they, like the Portuguese before them, took few slaves from the Gold Coast, preferring to secure slaves from the kingdom of Benin. They continued to emphasize the gold trade as their primary trade on the Gold Coast until competition with the British encouraged them to increase their participation in the slave trade.

Meanwhile, a little further down the coast, various European powers fought to establish a presence in Oguaa because of its strategic position on a cape jutting out into the sea. The Portuguese called this town Cabo Corso, meaning “short cape.” In the 1650s, the Swedes were granted land from the Fetu king to build a fort, which they named Fort Carolusburg after King Charles X of Sweden. After several exchanges, the fort ended up in the hands of the Dutch. The worldwide competition between the British and Dutch during this period included conflicts over their West African trading posts. A group of British merchants known as the Company of Royal Adventurers was the major competitor of the Dutch West India Company for control of trade on the coast, and in 1664, the British captured the fort and renamed it Cape Coast Castle, a corruption of the Portuguese Cabo Corso. In 1672, the Royal Africa Company took over the assets of the Royal Adventurers, who had been ruined financially by the war, and made the fort the headquarters

of their West African operations and expanded it into a true castle (Lawrence 1964, 183). Between 1700 and 1807, the British exported 408,460 slaves from the Gold Coast, accounting for approximately 13 percent of their total slave exports from West Africa (Richardson 1989, 13).

By the early eighteenth century, the two major slave-trading powers on the Gold Coast were the Dutch, who occupied fifteen forts with their headquarters at Elmina, and the British, who occupied nine forts with their headquarters at Cape Coast (Feinberg 1989, 41).⁴ These groups were aligned with the people in the towns who monopolized the African side of the trade. Both towns operated as independent city-states, although Cape Coast was closely allied with the Fante Coalition, an alliance of states that came to dominate the coastal region in the eighteenth century from the area just east of Elmina to just west of Accra. Elmina, on the other hand, remained wholly outside of the Fante Coalition and was allied instead with the Asante, an expansionist kingdom situated in the hinterland (McCarthy 1983).

Despite occasional cases, elites in Cape Coast and Elmina had little fear of enslavement. Not only were they granted protection from enslavement, but also some became prominent traders, serving as intermediaries between traders from the hinterland and the European companies. One example is Edward Barter, a native of Cape Coast and one of the most influential African traders. He was sent to England to be educated, sponsored by the Royal African Company. When he returned to Cape Coast in 1693, he was employed by the British. He soon gained in importance until all trade that was conducted in Cape Coast passed through him (Daaku 1970).

Birempon Kwadwo was another prominent member of the coastal African trading community. He was born in the 1700s and became one of the chief traders in Cape Coast. Known by the British as Cudjo Caboceer,⁵ he was often entrusted by them with large sums of money with which to buy slaves. One recorded story claims that Kwadwo would often retain some of the slaves he bought with this money as his domestic servants (Graham 1994). When the British asked for the slaves, he told them that some of the slaves had died and showed them recently filled graves where he claimed they were buried. In this way, Kwadwo peopled four villages that became part of Cape Coast. The British continued to hold Kwadwo in the highest regard, which attests to their ignorance with regard to his ruse, and in 1774, presented him with two silver goblets with an inscription that read, "A present from the committee of the company of Merchants Trading to Africa to Cudjoe, [*sic*] Caboceer for his faithful service and adherence to the subjects

of his most sacred Majesty King George III, Anno Domini 1774" (quoted in Graham 1994, 8).

In Elmina, the position of *makelaar*, or broker, was the official designation of the West India Company's African commercial agent. Abocan became *makelaar* around 1712. He became quite wealthy and owned a fleet of small boats, a salt village, and a body of retainers. Feinberg (1989) notes that he also paid the Dutch to free a number of slaves owned by the company. Jan Nieser of Elmina was a local merchant who established connections to Louyssen and Son, one of the largest commercial houses for slaves in the Netherlands, through which he was able to establish himself as a private trader. In 1794, he reported that he could obtain five hundred slaves per year (Lever 1970, 255). During this period, with the development of a small class of extremely wealthy African traders, the basis for social status shifted to being determined almost wholly by wealth. In addition to wealth generation, involvement in the slave trade clearly allowed local traders to control who was and was not enslaved.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Asante sought to wrest control of the trading route to the coast from the Fante Coalition, which led to a succession of wars between the Coalition, which fought on the side of Cape Coast with the support of the British on one side, and Elmina and the Asante, who were supported by the Dutch on the other.⁶

The British abolished the capture and transport of slaves in 1807, and the Dutch in 1814, but the slave trade continued long after this time. The year 1807 also marked the Asante invasion of the coast, which led to the destruction of many Fante villages, although Cape Coast was not directly attacked (McCarthy 1983). George Maclean was appointed governor by the British Committee of Merchants in 1830 and attempted to restore peace between the Fante and the Asante by treaty in 1831. He extended British judicial jurisdiction over parts the coast. During this same period, the Dutch began recruiting for soldiers from the Gold Coast to fight for them in Indonesia. Many of these recruits were slaves brought down from the hinterland. After they served their tour of duty, they were brought back to Elmina where many settled down in an area that became known as Java Hill, thereby adding to the coast's unique cultural mix.

In 1834, the British government abolished slavery in its colonies. During this time, an illegal slave trade continued that supplied slaves to Brazil and Cuba (Getz 2004, 32). In part to curb this trade, in 1844, the British Crown took control of the parts of the coast that had traditionally had a British presence, shifting what had been mostly a merchant presence to a limited colonial rule.

With the resultant slowdown of the slave trade, the Dutch were no longer able to remain profitable in their operations on the coast, so in 1872, they ceded Elmina Castle to the British and left the Gold Coast. The loss of these important allies would have dire consequences for the residents of Elmina. Throughout the Atlantic era, Elmina had been aligned with the Asante, who sought to wrest control of the trading route to the coast from the Fante Coalition, which had the support of the British. In 1873, the Asante defeated the Fante alliance, but soon afterward, the British in turn defeated the Asante kingdom during the Anglo-Asante war of 1873–74, after which the Gold Coast became a full-fledged colony. During a later expedition, the British imprisoned the *asantehe* (Asante king), Prempeh I, at the castle and later exiled him. In addition, because of Elmina's alliance with the Asante, they exiled the *omanhe* (Fante king) of Elmina, Nana Kobena Igyan, and burned the part of the Elmina township where the lower classes lived to the ground.

The displaced residents rebuilt their homes in another part of the town; however, they could not reconstruct their former status in the Atlantic order within the emerging British colonial order. Because of the opposition that its residents had staked against the British, the British had poor relations with Elmina after its defeat and the town slumped into decline. When the British declared all of southern Ghana their colony in 1874, they made Cape Coast its capital. The second half of the nineteenth century marked the era of legitimate trade based primarily on palm oil and gold. Cape Coast, which was the greatest benefactor of this trade, developed a class of merchant-princes during this era. It also established a professional class of doctors, lawyers, teachers, catechists, and civil servants who would form the basis of the Gold Coast intelligentsia of the various nationalist campaigns.

Making Families

MARRYING EUROPEANS

Over the course of the roughly four hundred years during which Cape Coast and Elmina were the center of various European projects on the Gold Coast, Europeans formed a distinct community with which local residents had numerous kinds of interactions. Most of this community consisted of employees of the major European trading companies. Between 1673 and 1713, the number of employees of the British Royal Africa Company stationed at Cape Coast fluctuated between thirty-nine and 115 (Davies 1957, 247–48). At Elmina, the Dutch West India Company had between seventy and one

hundred men stationed at the Castle during the eighteenth century (Feinberg 1989, 35), dropping to between five and twenty in the early nineteenth century (Yarak 1986, 34).⁷

A significant feature of the European community on the coast was that it was composed almost entirely of men. Few European women traveled with men to Cape Coast and Elmina. One Dutch official sent his wife back to the Netherlands because he feared the sexual advances of other European men with her being the only white woman there (Feinberg 1989, 86–87), and in fact, European companies discouraged their male employees from bringing their wives with them. A climate to which Europeans were unaccustomed as well as their susceptibility to tropical diseases were additional factors that dissuaded women from traveling to the coast.

Given the lack of European women, the fact that European men formed relationships with local women is not surprising. For many of these women, such relationships were quite attractive because they represented a major avenue to elite status. In addition to relationships of trade then, the creole nature of the coast is also exemplified by the sexual and romantic relationships between European men and African women. For the very reason that they demonstrate the marriage of African and European life-worlds, which is a key fact for thinking through coastal residents' contemporary ensnarement by European discourses, not only with respect to local families, but also with respect to their regional and national identities, I discuss these relationships at some length. Men formed these relationships either by purchasing women as slaves or by taking free women as mistresses or wives. Relationships between enslaved women and European men were founded on the condition of female powerlessness. Any man who had the means could buy a female slave and take up residence with her. Even if the European man gave her her freedom, that freedom was undoubtedly contingent on her continued relationship with him. As she was a slave, she likely would have been brought from a distant region and therefore have no family or means of protection. While these relationships can only be understood as being based on female subjugation, relationships between free women and European men, as demonstrated below, were much more complex.

These relationships were usually unofficial liaisons resembling common law marriages. This practice was encouraged by the Dutch West India Company. Ann Stoler describes a similar sanctioning by the Dutch East Indies Company in Indonesia, which viewed these relationships as "a prerequisite for quick acclimatization, as insulation from the ill-health that sexual abstention, isolation and boredom were thought to bring" (1989, 637).⁸

The British likewise encouraged relationships with local women, referring to this practice as “country marriage” (Priestley 1969). A nineteenth-century account of country marriage describes it as follows:

[W]ith some it appears to be a practice when they become settled in Business for any length of time to form a connection with some native Molatto Girls for the time they remain in the country. When they amass Wealth enough to retire to Europe they leave to the Girl a certain proportion to subsist upon thereafter, But as there are no laws, nor stated customs, to regulate this proportions, the matter entirely depends upon the liberality of the individual . . . Such Compacts are considered as long as the parties reside on the coast as sacred and valid as marriages with us, and I know of many instances after the parties living together for years and having children to have the compact sanctioned by marriage itself. (quoted in Brooks 1962, 76)

The nature of these “marriages” is difficult to ascertain. While one might assume that it was a form of sexual slavery, not only does it appear that women had some measure of control over whether or not to enter into these relationships, they also were about much more than sex. They entailed living together, raising children, and in all ways sharing their lives. Natalie Everts notes that for European men, “their African family was the only way to experience some family bliss” (1996, 50).

From the perspective of African women and their families, these marriages certainly did not conform to the most common form of Akan marriage in which arrangements are made by the families of the bride and groom and which requires the presentation of gifts or *consawment* to the bride’s family (Sarbah 1968a, 45). With regard to the Ewe of southeastern Ghana, Sandra Greene (1997) argues that because of the perceived risks involved, marriage to stranger men was considered most appropriate for slave women within local families who would be unwilling to allow their proper daughters to enter into such unions. In Cape Coast and Elmina, the daughters given by local families to European men may have been slaves. However, family histories suggest that at least some were free women (see chapter 2).

These relationships may have been understood as a version of *newewe awar*, or “lover marriage,” an indigenous Akan form of relationship similar to the Western notion of common law marriage, in which the husband does not present *consawment* to the family and therefore has no guarantee

of his wife's fidelity; however, he gains paternity rights to their children and the obligation to support them (Christensen 1954).⁹ In the case of such marriages to European men, African families were unlikely to protest the circumvention of their authority because of the benefits that such marriages bestowed on them.

Christensen (1954) argues that women (of free descent) benefited most from these lover marriages because they retained greater freedom within the relationship, as well as the power to end the relationship. Women may not have had full liberty to leave their European husbands, but given the support that her *abusua*, or matrilineal descent group, would provide, one can imagine that extrication from the relationship could be accomplished. At the same time, women were not guaranteed to inherit from their European husbands. Indeed, some European men made stipulations in their wills that their children inherit from them but that barred their wives and their wives' families from obtaining any of their estates (Everts 1996).

On the other hand, many European men provided financially for their country wives. Richard Brew, a European trader in Cape Coast, was married to a local woman, Effua Ansah, and had two children by her. On the death of Effua's mother, he made a contribution for the funeral expenses as demanded of family and friends, thus conducting himself as true husband in the local framework. In addition, Brew named Effua and their two children beneficiaries of his will. At his death, the executors of his will not only handed over his estate to his African family but also gave them a gift of four gallons of rum, in accordance with local practice for his funeral (Priestley 1969, 108). This example illustrates that despite the lack of compulsion, many men treated their marriages as serious and somewhat official relationships. Given this tendency, women who entered into relationships with European men most likely expected that they and their families would benefit financially from them. Indeed, Everts (1996) suggests that many mothers wanted their daughters to find European common law husbands because of the economic benefits that such marriages had for African families.

With regard to the emotional component of these relationships, at least some men appear to have felt true affection for their country wives. A letter written by Richard Miles suggests that his relationship with a local woman was one of more than mere convenience. A British trader who had returned to England, Miles expressed his desire to continue a relationship, not only with his children, but also with their mother. He returned with his son whom he sent to a boarding school that other members of his family had attended and told his coastal correspondent, "You may tell the mother but

as I am not yet settled I let her remain. Should I go to the Coast next year I can bring her of [*sic*] with me" (quoted in Priestley 1969, 107). Assuming that his desire to bring Sal, his country wife, to England is sincere, this letter suggests that at least some of these relationships were based on love and were not simply a means of sexual fulfillment for European men in the absence of European women.

Likewise, at least some women felt true affection for their country husbands. A nineteenth-century merchant observed one woman's reaction to the departure of her husband from the coast. He recounts her tearful good-byes on the beach before he boarded the ship, "William you must go quik [*sic*] God bring you back to your Mary William no stop long time in England if you no come back quick your poor Mary must go die' . . . I left the poor girl on the beach all suffused in tears and crying as if her heart would break" (quoted in Brooks 1962, 77).

On the other hand, there is evidence that at least some country wives had extramarital affairs with local men. The scope of this problem led the West India Company to take measures to protect Europeans against adultery by establishing penalties for such action (Feinberg 1989, 89). Their capacity to engage in outside relationships, even if this behavior was contested, suggests that country wives gained a measure of sexual freedom in contrast to wives of proper Akan marriage. While they gained legitimate paternity for their children, a life of relative wealth, and the potential to inherit that wealth from their husbands, they retained the ability to seek sexual and emotional intimacy elsewhere. In this way, they subverted both European and African men's attempts to control them and their bodies.

Certainly, as objects of simultaneous desire and disdain by European men, African women were often despised for the contradiction that they revealed in European racist logic. Thus, relationships between European men and African women made manifest what Stoler refers to as "the simultaneous confirmation and compromise of racial hierarchy" (Stoler 1989, 688). In other words, European men's sexual access to local women cemented notions of white male privilege, but their affection and desire for these women challenged notions of African inferiority.

Some African women became proper wives of European men, their marriages having been negotiated through their families and their husbands paying *consawment* to them. Feinberg (1989) identifies at least seven of these marriages in Elmina during the eighteenth century. These marriages sometimes involved women from important local families; thus, these unions served to create alliances between Europeans and the local elites (McCarthy

1983, 44). These women and their families gained wealth and entrance into the European trade, some wives even becoming partners in their husbands' business ventures. Many African wives, regardless of the legal status of their marriages, played an important role in their husbands' business affairs. One nineteenth-century observer remarked, "The Girls are very useful to the men in Business. Their knowledge of the native tongue renders them almost indispensable with every trading establishment" (Brooks 1962, 76). There is also evidence that these women were able to influence their husbands' views, sometimes swaying them to support local causes in opposition to European policies (McCarthy 1983, 47).

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest motivating factors for women to become country wives was the benefits that these marriages would have for their children. The matrilineal family structure of the Fante accounts for the ease with which these relationships were integrated into coastal society. The children of African women and European men (known as "Euro-Africans")¹⁰ were incorporated into the mother's *abusua* in exactly the same way as any other children would be and were not favored over non-European children (Everts 1996, 48). Mothers and their families were in charge of the upbringing of children. Fathers who sought to take control of their children's upbringing often found that they could not wrest control from the *abusua*. Because only the very wealthy could afford to send their children to school in Europe, the majority of fathers surrendered responsibility for their children's education to the mother's family. Nonetheless, mothers of Euro-African children had high hopes for their children's careers. Euro-African men often entered into service for the West India Company and some became successful traders. They had special status under Dutch law and formed the *Akrampa asafo* Company (Yarak 1989).

Perhaps because they were accustomed to being intimately involved in all aspects of their children's lives, some mothers felt emboldened to confront the West Indian Company concerning their sons' careers. One such woman approached the commander at the fort in Butri concerning her son's reassignment to a post at Shama, some distance away. She complained to the commander that she did not want her son sent away, and he agreed to send someone else in his place (Everts 1996). The boldness that mothers of Euro-African children exhibited as well as the apparent standing that they had with European companies suggests that bearing these children conferred upon them a special status with attendant privileges within the European order. These women had great influence over the lives of their children, who were often incorporated at least partially into the European

society, and such control over these liminal Europeans presented a threat to the European order. In successive generations of the trade, many of the children of European men and African women came to form an elite class on the coast. Indeed, many of the most prominent local traders on the coast were Euro-Africans.

Many Euro-African women became wives of European men as well. Having been raised within the cultural milieu of European society on the coast, marriage to European men provided a means to remain within that elite universe of wealth and influence. Elizabeth and Catherine Dawson were the daughters of a European trader and a local woman from Cape Coast. Elizabeth married James Jackson, an English merchant who was part of the Royal African Corps. They built a four-story house on a street that came to be named after them as one of the most prominent families in the town. Her sister, Catherine, married Frank Swanzy, who was the founder of the famous trading company, F&A Swanzy Brothers. After both her sister Elizabeth and her husband died, Catherine married her sister's widower, James Jackson. She continued to run Swanzy Brothers herself and became the wealthiest and most powerful woman in Cape Coast (Graham 1994). The power of Euro-African women to influence the European trading community derived from their own liminal positions, with their marriages providing entrance into European coastal society while they remained firmly entrenched in the local African community through their strong ties to their *abusua*. This dual position is illustrated by their dress; they dressed in a flamboyant style from the waist up and like other local African women from the waist down (Bosman 1967, 142).

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ebruary OWNING SLAVES

With the growing development of elite families, both those of European traders and those of African merchants, more and more individuals were retained on the coast as slaves to serve them. The estate of Carel Ruhle, an Elminan Euro-African trader, included 205 slaves, and his brother's estate included 112 slaves (Yarak 1989). Many slave owners were women and either wives of European men or Euro-Africans. Yarak (1989) notes that Carolina Huydecoper, a wealthy Euro-African woman, inherited six slaves from her father-in-law in 1818 after the death of her husband. Likewise, Jones (1995) notes that in 1873, Mrs. Swanzy owned up to eighty slave women.

Slavery existed among Fantes, and indeed throughout West Africa before

the arrival of Europeans; however, it was a very different institution from slavery in the Americas (see Perbi 2004 for an extended discussion). Many historians have argued that in West Africa, although they occupied positions at the lowest level of the status system, the basic humanity and membership of slaves in their masters' societies was rarely questioned before the advent of the Atlantic trade. R. S. Rattray argues that the rights of slaves in Asante "seem in many instances practically the ordinary privileges of any Ashanti free man, with whom, in these respects, his position did not seem to compare unfavourably" (1969, 42). In contrast to Asante, Fantes had a much less stratified society. Not only were there fewer persons of unfree status before the height of the Atlantic trade, but indigenous status had little significance. Thus, slaves had many rights, including the right to bear arms, the right to legal redress, and, most importantly, the right of incorporation into the families of their masters (Yarak 1989). A common understanding about slavery was that domestic slaves could be incorporated into the families that owned them, and their children were considered to be full-fledged members of those families. Female slaves usually married free men within the lineage, and their children had only to reckon their descent through their father's matrilineage to become incorporated into the family (Sarbah 1968a). Incorporation was more difficult for the descendants of male slaves, who in all likelihood would marry a slave woman and therefore have no claim on their owner's matrilineage. But male slaves had the right to inherit from their masters if there were no other appropriate heirs. Many male slaves became heads of the lineages that had owned them in this way (Klein 1981). Individuals often recount stories of slaves who became wealthier than their masters. Rattray notes that the Asante had a term for slaves who became wealthy: *ɔɔnkwɔ sene Kanis*, which means, "a slave who is more powerful than an Akan" (1969, 41). Regardless of the actual frequency of this occurrence, the continued mention of its existence by individuals today suggests a strong continuing belief in the notion of incorporation.

Before the height of the Atlantic trade, different terms had described people who sold themselves, people taken in lieu of debt, and bought people. As a result of the destabilization of northern regions, this last category, *nnɔnkwɔfo* (singular *ɔɔnkwɔ*), became the dominant type of slave during the nineteenth century (McSheffrey 1983) as victims of wars and raids in areas deep in the hinterland were brought to the coast and sold as slaves. The North became such an important source of slaves that the term "*ɔɔnkwɔ*" (plural *nnɔnkwɔfo*),¹¹ which originally referred to a bought person

came to mean a person from the North (Rattray 1969, 35). The incidence of domestic slavery on the coast increased during this time because many of these same captives were purchased by local elite families who, as a result of their trading activities, had the means to buy slaves. *Nnɔnkɔfo* served in many occupations: as agriculturalists, miners, skilled artisans, porters of trade goods along trade routes, soldiers, and household servants (Christensen 1954, 39). Some slaves, known as “garden slaves,” worked on plantations in outlying areas (Yarak 1989). Despite the increasing slave population on the coast, a plantation economy never developed on the coast, in part because of the resistance of slaves to the harsher discipline and treatment that plantation economies such as those found in the New World seemed to require (Yarak 1989).

Many slave women were bought for the express purpose of marriage, which gave the advantage for men in these unions in that their children would belong to their lineages and not to that of their wives, as is the normal practice in a matrilineal society (Rattray 1969). Claire Robertson and Martin Klein (1983) argue that the majority of domestic slaves in West Africa were women, desired for their domestic labor as well as their reproductive capabilities. In his study of the Euro-African population of Elmina, however, Yarak (1989) finds that the majority of the slaves in Elmina were men and concludes that instead of marrying slaves, a larger proportion of elite men in Elmina compared with other places may have sought to marry elite women.

The number of domestic slaves on the coast increased again with the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the beginnings of legitimate trade. With the termination of this trade, the price of slaves dropped dramatically, allowing African elites the opportunity to acquire slaves in large numbers (Klein and Lovejoy 1979; Lovejoy 1983). The increase in the slave population meant the need to formalize the procedure for dealing with them.

While the process of incorporation had long been necessary in order to absorb subsequent generations of slaves, as a result of increasing British judicial control over the course of the nineteenth century, assimilation was codified as a legal right. During this time, the British instituted customary law, which involved the codification of what they understood to be local customs. The right of slaves to incorporation was codified in the form of two key laws. The first stated that slaves who had been freed had the right to be incorporated into the families of their former owners. In 1871, the judicial assessor of Cape Coast consulted two local chiefs regarding the rights of slaves. In response to the query by the court, “Do persons who have been

made free retain any relationship to the family of which they were members?" the chiefs responded,

though the master had made them free, they retain relationship to their master, because they did not belong to the place where they were freed . . . If a slave was a Fanti, when he was freed by his master he goes to his relations; but if not a Fanti, but Donkor,¹² he retains his relationship to the master because he knew no one else and would not be able to find his way to his country, and if his master had any relations he sticks to them. Persons freed have the right to go where they like, but their master looks after them that they may not be molested. (Sarbah 1968a, 9)

This law recognizes the problem that arises from an individual's inability to identify his or her lineage. Slaves are considered to be kinless; their enslavement removes them permanently from their old lineages such that they lose the ability to identify themselves through any of the normal modes.

Among the Fante, individuals identify themselves as belonging to the Fante ethnic group, then by hometown, which is the place where the head of their lineage is situated, and then by clan, which refers to their matrilineage, including all those who trace their descent to a common female ancestor. If someone cannot identify these aspects of their identity, he or she cannot be incorporated into normal modes of relating (see Perbi 2004). Descendants of slaves fall into this category because knowledge of origins is quickly lost and therefore must be replaced with the origin stories of their families of incorporation. The chiefs' interpretation of customary law was accepted by the court, and subsequent decisions have upheld this interpretation. First-generation slaves were most vulnerable to discrimination because they bore what were known as tribal marks as a result of scarification practices that served to announce their foreign status. Because all northerners were associated with slavery, the marks of northern groups were considered to be marks of enslavement.

When the British declared the Gold Coast their colony in 1874, they outlawed domestic slavery. The notion of incorporation then became crucial in order to avoid a large population without familial support of any kind. Incorporating freed slaves into one's family, furthermore, was the only way to legally keep them in one's household after this time. Emancipation, therefore, further codified notions of the kinship of slaves by declaring all former slaves family members.

The second law that defined the right of slaves to incorporation within

the families of their owners is the law that forbids the disclosure of an individual's slave ancestry. Kwame Arhin (1983) traces this law back to the reign of Osei Tutu (1680–1717), the Asante ruler who, after conquering many lands and incorporating them into his kingdom, declared that the origins of people from those conquered lands were to be forgotten. Carl Reindorf describes this law: "Whoever dares tell his son: these people were from such and such a place, conquered and translocated to this or that town, was sure to pay for it with his life. Neither were such people themselves allowed to say where they had been transported from. Considering these captives as real citizens, any rank or honor was conferred freely on them according to merit, but not otherwise" (1950, 54). Bowdich (1873), Reindorf (1966), and Rattray (1929) note the popular expression of the prohibition against disclosing another person's origins, *obi nkyere obi ase* ('no one must disclose the origins of another'). Evidence from later lawsuits demonstrates that this principle remains part of contemporary law (see chapter 2). Thus, not only were freed slaves incorporated into families, but by this law, mention of their past slave status was forbidden. Freed slaves and their descendants, however, could not become chiefs and often were barred from inheriting land, suggesting that their slave ancestry was raised at key moments. Outside of these moments, however, the history of slavery within families became sequestered from public discourse.

Making Regional Identity

THE HINTERLAND

While domestic slavery shaped new definitions of family, the processes by which those slaves as well as slaves destined for export were acquired shaped new definitions of regional identities. In the early part of the Atlantic trade, as a result of the rise of the Denkyira and Akwamu kingdoms, their conquering of their neighbors, and the resultant production of war captives that could be sold to Europeans, members of coastal and near-coastal communities made up the bulk of those enslaved. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, residents of Cape Coast and Elmina as well as other Akan-speaking peoples remained involved in wars that produced slaves (Perbi 2004, 34).

After 1700, however, in addition to these individuals, many slaves originated from the northern savannahs. Asante traders traveled north to major slave markets where they could buy slaves from Mossi and Hausa traders in exchange for kola nuts and salt. In 1701, the Dutch presented the Asante

leader Osei Tutu with gifts as part of their request that he direct his traders to their forts. In 1703, the English also approached various inland traders in order to express the interest of the Royal African Company in trading with them (Daaku 1970, 33–34).

The expansionist policies of the Asante also led to their ability to provide large numbers of slaves for the transatlantic slave trade beginning in the eighteenth century. In 1732, the Asante invaded Gonja, a northern territory, and the Gonja were forced to pay tribute to the Asante in slaves. In 1751, the Kpembe became a vassal state of the Asante kingdom and were similarly forced to pay an annual tribute to the Asante of one thousand slaves, and the Dagomba became indebted to the Asante for two thousand slaves to secure the release of their chief (Der 1998, 10).

In order to fulfill the Asante demand for slaves, these groups in turn began raiding decentralized northern communities, including the Grunshi, Konkomba, LoDagaa, and Talensi. In his analysis of the northern savannahs, which became known under colonialism as the Northern Territories, Jack Goody notes that decentralized communities such as these became the source of slaves for raiders from centralized states like the Gonja and Kpembe who had the “means of destruction,” namely, guns and horses (1971).

The slave trade began a process by which many northern communities, which were already distant from the centers of the Atlantic order and therefore vulnerable to slave raiding, sought further distance from agents of the Atlantic trade in an attempt to reduce their vulnerability. As these communities sought to escape slave raiders, they retreated into remote areas, altering their relationship to the landscape. By moving to hiding places such as area caves, building walls surrounding their villages in order to protect themselves, like the wall around the village of Gwollu (Der 1998), and relocating to the hills that were less accessible by horseback (Goody 1971), they “produced” their remoteness (Ferme 2001).

In addition to physical remoteness, communities also sought distance from objects associated with the slave raiders as local shrines began to develop prohibitions designed to protect their communities. In the Tong Hills, horses and cloth were associated with Mossi raiders and were therefore considered to be ritually impure and were not allowed near ritual shrines (Allman and Parker 2005, 61–62). The shrine at Senyon also prohibited horses from entering the town because of their association with slave raiders (Goody 1971, 60). Goody (1971) notes that the village of Senyon was never raided by Samory, an infamous slave raider, purportedly because of the presence of the Senyon Kupo shrine, whose power Samory feared. He argues that

many centralized communities that engaged in slave raiding had been influenced by Islam, while the decentralized communities that were commonly raided worshiped earth shrines. Despite their profession of Muslim faith, many slave raiders continued to respect these shrines and attested to the spiritual superiority of the communities in which they were located. Thus, the technological inferiority of acephalous communities was balanced by their spiritual superiority (Goody 1971, 64–65). Indeed, spirituality formed perhaps the most important form of resistance to enslavement.

While the retreat of acephalous communities was certainly an important strategy for protection, at the same time it cut them off from the flow of goods and wealth emerging from this slave-trading economy, thereby further diminishing their chances to be incorporated into the Atlantic order as anything other than slaves.¹³ At the height of the slave trade, European companies stationed on the coast of Ghana came to view the hinterland as a vast pool of potential slaves. At the same time, European companies had codified coastal residents' immunity from enslavement in order to ensure their cooperation. In this context, Europeans and southern Ghanaians alike began to argue that these northern groups were not fit for anything but slavery. The remoteness of northerners from the point of view of Europeans, who rarely ventured from the coast, led the Europeans to view their enslavement as not just the result of geography or lack of weaponry but as the result of their status outside of the Christian, "civilized" Atlantic order that linked the West African coastal communities, Europe, and the New World. This Atlantic order was of course rooted in the savagery of the slave trade. Europeans, however, ignored the significance of their own "necropolitics" (Mbembe 2003) and concentrated all of the savagery of the slave trade onto a point outside of their direct influence, that of the acquisition of slaves in the North.

During the slave trade, Europeans on the coast described northerners as cannibals in the interior "whom one could hardly call human. They have a particularly wild nature, a physiognomy like that of a tiger" (Rømer 2000, 28). Such descriptions were used to explain the prevalence of slave raiding: after all, it was due to the "wild nature" of the North's inhabitants. Notions of their savagery also provided a convenient rationale for the enslavement of people from the North: as they were less than human, they were natural slaves. In this way, victims and perpetrators of slave raids were grouped together under the same stigmatized identity. They were all, it was argued, outside of the civilized world that Europeans were attempting to extend into West Africa.

Coastal elites, on the contrary, who were immediately incorporated into the Atlantic order, succeeded to a large extent in maintaining protection from enslavement through their further incorporation, a feat at which, from the point of view of Europeans, a point of view that would heavily influence coastal residents, northerners failed. While Europeans constructed narratives about northern inferiority, thereby further encouraging their retreat from the Atlantic order, they simultaneously constructed narratives about coastal superiority. Austen and Woodruff Smith identify a statement from the *Gentleman's Magazine* of London in 1792 that "Africans were stupid in proportion to their distance from the converse of coastal Negroes" (quoted in Austen and Smith 1969, 77). Brodie Cruickshank, a European official, writes of northerners, "They are naturally a very obstinate, perverse, and self-willed race, upon whom it is difficult to make any impression by kindness . . . It is only by comparing the native Fantee with these, that we are sensible of the great advancement of the former, who appears a very civilized being in comparison with this foreign race" (1966, 2:244–45). As these remarks reveal, enslavement served to mark for Europeans a radical distinction between northerners and coastal residents. Many coastal elites accepted European stereotypes of *nnɔnkɔfo*, a term that began to imply inferiority.

By supporting the logic that defined northerners as appropriate subjects to enslave, they further guaranteed their own immunity from enslavement. In 1823, a European observer remarked that the term *ɔɔnkɔ* "in the Fantee language, signifies stupid fellow, or ignorant man from the back country" (Adams 1966, 44). Those who were enslaved came to be viewed as deserving of their enslavement because of their backcountry status and unruly nature, while coastal elites' supposed higher level of civilization accounted for their immunity from enslavement. The 1841 remarks of the *asantehene* sum up well this unruliness. He is reported to have said, "The small tribes in the interior fight with each other, take prisoners and sell them for slaves; and as I know nothing about them, I allow my people to buy them as they please: they are of no use for any thing but slaves; they are stupid, and little better than beasts" (quoted in Allman and Parker 2005, 31). He paints a picture of northern savagery, but more specifically, he suggests that their *alien* nature, as people of which he knows nothing, justifies their enslavement. Discussions of northerners then became one arena in which southerners elaborated on the slave trade because it allowed them to define themselves in opposition to those enslaved.

After the Asante invasion of the coast in 1807, not just the North but also the South faced especial danger and violence, producing slaves for the

illegal trade. Although the British abolished the slave trade in the same year, ports east of Cape Coast and outside of the sphere of British influence remained active (Getz 2004, 31–32). Thousands of individuals fled to Cape Coast for protection. This town thus gained even greater importance as a haven within an environment of pervasive danger. By the time southern Ghana became a British colony in 1874, such dangers were largely quelled. The North, in contrast, remained a dangerous landscape. The last decades of the nineteenth century were in fact a time of great instability in the North. It was during these years that Babatu and Samory, two infamous figures in the history of the slave trade, undertook regular slave raids in the North to capture slaves both for domestic use in the Asante kingdom, until their defeat by European forces at the end of the nineteenth century (Der 1998, 25). Views of the North that developed during the Atlantic era set the stage for its exploitation during the colonial era as a labor reserve. This pattern, as I discuss in chapter 3, continues to have consequences today.

THE COAST

Throughout these different phases of the slave trade, despite the fact that the Europeans had granted coastal residents legal protection from enslavement, not only did rival Africans pay no heed to these laws, but Europeans themselves at times overlooked them as well. Feinberg's example of an incident of illegal enslavement on the coast illustrates this point. He recounts that on May 23, 1746, seven residents of Elmina who had been hired to paddle a canoe of slaves to a ship docked offshore were seized once on board and placed in chains along with the other slaves. An uproar arose in Elmina over the unlawful seizure of these men. Director General de Petersen assured their families that the men would be found and returned. In 1749, five of the men were finally found in Surinam. They were taken to the Netherlands at the expense of the West India Company and were returned to Elmina in 1750. The other two men had died in the interim, and their families were compensated in an official settlement (1989, 142).

Because of the dangers of their misrecognition as enslavable subjects, coastal residents stressed their identity as urban, cosmopolitan individuals. The adoption of outward signs of their special status vis-à-vis Europeans provided a measure of protection by distinguishing coastal residents from the *nnɔnkɔfo*.¹⁴ Cruickshank writes, "There are few houses now, however,

6 » *Slavery and the Making of Black Atlantic History*

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In 1997, former Ghanaian president Jerry Rawlings traveled to Jamaica on a state visit. While there, he observed the celebration of Emancipation Day.¹ Aware of the fact that many of those enslaved in Jamaica and elsewhere passed through the castles on Ghana's shore, he decided to inaugurate a similar celebration in Ghana. In doing so, he hoped to attract tourists from the African diaspora. He therefore called on the Ministry of Tourism to design the event, and on August 1, 1998, Emancipation Day was celebrated in Ghana, a commemoration of the emancipation of the slaves in the British colonies on the same day in 1834.

As a result of this event and the larger diaspora tourism industry in which it is situated, tourism represents one arena in which the slave trade is a central part of a very public discourse in Ghana. In this way, it contrasts sharply to the arenas discussed in part 1, in which the slave trade is sequestered. Clearly then, these arenas are largely undisturbed by diaspora tourism. Many local residents in fact dismiss diaspora tourism as something designed for tourists, not for them. Given their awareness of the ways in which the history of the slave trade has been used to discuss and denounce African families' ownership of slaves as well as rampant slave raiding as a feature of particular regions and of the nation as a whole, they are understandably wary of attempts at its commemoration.

Some local residents however, do tour the castles and participate in tourist events. For them, their constructions of history are forever altered by the castles, which either strengthen their resolve to forget the slave trade

or provide them with a new vision of history. For these reasons, diaspora tourism demands attention within the discussion of constructions of history on the coast. In this chapter, I explore the forces that led to the development of diaspora tourism out of a long conversation between Africa and the diaspora. I examine in particular the structure of its historical narratives in the castle museums, in tourist events, and on castles tours. This chapter provides a background for a discussion in the following chapter of the ways in which both African Americans and Ghanaians have interpreted these narratives by alternately confirming and combating the dominant discourses in place on the coast.

Making a Black Atlantic Discourse 4f397215e1675f94cf83ceb8c2f73f21 ebruary

The development of diaspora tourism has been the outcome of an extended conversation between Ghana and segments of the African diaspora, particularly African Americans. It is the product, in other words, of a black Atlantic conversation. I use the term black Atlantic here to refer to the *back and forth* traffic between Africa and the diaspora, similar to what J. Lorand Matory calls “Afro-Atlantic dialogues,” which “highlight the ways in which the mutual gaze between Africans and African Americans, multidirectional travel and migration between two hemispheres, the movement of publications, commerce and so forth have shaped African and African-American cultures in tandem, over time, and at the same time” (2005, 291). In this way, Matory departs somewhat from Paul Gilroy’s discussion of the black Atlantic. Gilroy uses this framework to discuss the deep engagement of black subjects with Western modernity. As the first part of this book has demonstrated, coastal residents are certainly part of Gilroy’s black Atlantic. Such an engagement, however, often takes particular routes, routes that link black subjects on different continents to each other. It is these routes that part 2 explores.

Unlike Ghana’s long conversation with Europe, which has often been about incongruity, or, in other words, the ways in which Africans are *not* like Europeans, its conversation with the African diaspora, like most Afro-Atlantic dialogues, is one in which various notions of connection are regularly mobilized. The relationship between Africa and the diaspora is usually viewed from the point of view of the latter. A growing body of literature has addressed the ways in which the African diaspora is a community and tradition that are “discursively constituted principally (though not exhaustively) in and through the mobilization of a common possession, namely, the historically constituted figures of ‘Africa’ and ‘Slavery’” (Scott 1999,

124). Kamari Clarke (2004) and Paulla Ebron (2002), for instance, provide examples of diasporic creations of an “African homeland imaginary.” Other scholars have noted the significance of one diasporic group, namely, African Americans, to another (see Brown 2005; Neptune 2003, 2007). Few scholars, however, have placed Africans at the center of such discussions. In doing so, we might begin to think about how African actors, as a result of conversations with diasporic ones, have come to mobilize the history of the slave trade.

In Ghana, conversations with the African diaspora have a long history. At earlier moments, as I discuss below, such mobilizations involved appeals to similar cultural frameworks or political agendas. In this way, the development of diaspora tourism represents a shift in black Atlantic discourse in that many Ghanaians now mobilize notions of the diaspora through discussions of the slave trade. As I argue below, these earlier invocations of the diaspora, however, set the stage for diaspora tourism’s construction of an international black community.

In 1911, J. E. Casely Hayford, a key figure in Fante cultural nationalism, published a book entitled *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*, which he dedicated “To the sons of Ethiopia the world wide over.” Inspired by Blyden, he writes, “Afro-Americans must bring themselves into touch with some of the general traditions and institutions of their ancestors, and, though sojourning in a strange land, endeavor to conserve the characteristics of the race” (1969 [1911], 165), arguing that Africa provided cultural grounding for African Americans and using more generally the notion of Ethiopianism to call for the unification of black people throughout the world.

Several decades later, Kwame Nkrumah would shift the emphasis in black Atlantic discourse from culture to development. When he visited the United States after becoming president of the newly independent Ghana, he invited African Americans, but specifically black professionals such as teachers, doctors, and dentists, to move to Ghana and to help develop the nation (Gaines 2006, 90). Rather than stressing African Americans’ connection to Ghana as a result of their African ancestry and forcible removal from the continent through the slave trade, Nkrumah focused on their potential future connections through a commitment to the goal of African development. The access that the African American professional class had had to American educational opportunities, in the same way that he himself had had such access in the United States, could, he argued, be put to use in the service of Ghanaian development. In this vein, in 1958, he also hosted in

Ghana the All African People's Conference. Many African Americans responded to this call, although Ghana never saw an organized back-to-Africa movement of African Americans like those to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, as a result of more individualized travel, since the late 1950s, Ghana has received the most African American expatriates of any African nation (Jenkins 1975, 151). Many prominent African Americans visited Ghana during this period as well, including Richard Wright, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, and Martin Luther King Jr.² In addition, W. E. B. Du Bois moved to Ghana late in life and was buried there.

The development of an African American expatriate community in Ghana led to well-known conflicts and suspicions on the part of Ghanaians (see Jenkins 1975; Gaines 2006). Nkrumah's efforts notwithstanding, their belonging to the nation was not a foregone conclusion. Despite the participation of some African thinkers in the construction of ties between Africa and the African diaspora, within the popular imagination in Ghana, it has often been trumped by other discourses.

For African American expatriates, not only did this period immediately follow Ghanaian independence, it also corresponded with the era of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, which led to their deep political engagement. In the midst of turmoil and violence in the United States, Ghana represented to them a land where black people could live in true freedom. Many African Americans were actively looking for an alternative to the discrimination that they faced in American society as well as a way to express their commitment to the liberation of all black people. Living in the midst of the violence of the Civil Rights era in the United States, this newly independent African nation gave these African American expatriates hope for the possibility of a free black community. It offered an escape from U.S. racism and the opportunity to realize a black nation. It also may have satisfied an idealized desire for a return to their homeland (Jenkins 1975; Lake 1997; Gaines 2006; Angelou 1986). Contributing to Ghana's development, as I discuss further below, was therefore a commitment that many readily embraced.

Despite Nkrumah's focus on economic development, other African nations focused more heavily during this period on black Atlantic cultural connections. In 1966, Senegal held the first world festival of *arts nègre*. This festival was followed by the grander Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, or FESTAC, which was held in Nigeria in 1977. Locating these festivals in Senegal in 1966 and in Nigeria in 1977 positioned them as the self-designated homelands of the black diaspora,

which makes sense in the context of shifting global economic and cultural influence among West African nations. In the 1960s, Léopold Senghor, the president of a newly independent Senegal, championed Negritude as a pan-African arts movement; thus, his hosting of a pan-African arts festival allowed him to celebrate the notion of a set of cultural orientations that he believed united African peoples throughout the world. FESTAC followed the oil boom in Nigeria, as result of which it became the richest African nation. Nigeria also became a key player in the Organization of African Unity, thereby cementing its position as the leading African nation (Apter 2005). In his monograph exploring the history of FESTAC and its connection to the oil economy in Nigeria, Andrew Apter describes the narratives of black unity that it produced in seeking to position Nigeria as the “exporting nation” of black culture. This notion worked through links supported by the historical record, like those to Cuba, as well as through contemporary processes of wealth. Nigeria continues to play an important role in diasporic conceptualizations of an African homeland. It is often considered to be the *locus classicus* of African diaspora studies, and many of the African-based religious beliefs and practices of African Americans are derived from Nigerian religions (Matory 1999, 2005). But despite its dominance in the realms of scholarship and religion, Nigeria’s political instability has discouraged diasporic travel to this popular religious homeland. If the oil boom positioned Nigeria at the center of the black Atlantic world, Apter argues, its bust left it clinging to the margins.

In 1977, the television miniseries *Roots* aired in the United States. As its title suggests, *Roots* stresses the African ancestry of African Americans and positions life in Africa as the prelude to the horrors of slavery. In large part as a result of this record-breaking series, the slave trade became the primary basis through which many African Americans started to view their connection to the African continent. The slave trade began then to do the work that had been done in the past by theories of cultural retentions and African development agendas. African Americans embraced their African ancestry and the history of their enslavement furthermore because, as Clarke notes, “*Roots* contributed to a narrative shift from what was popularly represented in schools as black Americans being victims of slavery who were *saved* by Abraham Lincoln, to blacks as noble survivors and agents of their own freedom” (2004, 140–41). While providing a more empowering image of slavery, like the narratives that described a savior Lincoln, it too was romantic in that it did not challenge the contemporary American power structure. African Americans may be agents in this story of the slave trade,

but it is nonetheless a triumphant tale that does not attend to continuing forms of oppression.

As a result of the scripting of this empowering yet nonthreatening view of slavery, after the airing of *Roots*, countless novels were written, films produced, and historic plantation sites marketed in which the history of slavery was explored (see Berlin 2004). Some of these, like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, provided alternative narratives of slavery. Through her vivid illustration of the "double-sidedness" of modernity (Bauman 1989) in which the terror of slavery is always a haunting presence, Morrison constructs a tragic story that challenges teleological narratives of black triumph and provides instead "an expression of the temporal experiences of African Americans, who are often denied a future and are therefore haunted by or retreat to the past" (Davis 1998, 256–57). Indeed, this description is strikingly similar to Scott's description of tragedy in which he discusses the "contingencies of the past" and "the uncanny ways in which its remains come back to usurp our hopes and subvert our ambitions" (2004, 220). At the same time, *Beloved* is also widely interpreted as a protest narrative³ similar to the protest narrative that Rodney's discussion of the slave trade provides. There are clearly then multiple narratives of the slave trade in the American public sphere that have made this history of interest to a diverse body of African Americans. The greater affordability of air travel as well as the expansion of the black middle class in the United States allowed more and more African Americans to travel to Ghana to explore this history once the market responded to their burgeoning interest with the development of what has come to be known as diaspora tourism.

4f397215e1675f94cf83ceb8c2f73f21 ebruary *Castle Histories*

The popularity of slavery narratives among African Americans was a major factor in the Ghanaian tourism industry's decision to focus on the slave trade, and there were few sites more fitting for this endeavor than Ghana's Cape Coast and Elmina castles. The sheer size and structural integrity of Cape Coast and Elmina castles provided the main arguments for their centrality to such narratives. They are massive structures, occupying nearly 100,000 square feet each, that sit on the shoreline of each town. They are made up of former storerooms, soldier's quarters, apartments for the governors, churches, courtyards, watchtowers, and ramparts that are still lined with canons trained at the sea. The *Maison des esclaves* on Gorée Island in Senegal as well as *La route de l'esclave* in Benin are other sites of such com-



7 Cape Coast Castle

memorative work. However, because these are French-speaking nations, undoubtedly many American tourists choose Ghana over Senegal and Benin to experience this history. The grand scale of Ghana's castles coupled with the nation's status as an English-speaking, politically stable West African nation has led to its emergence as a primary imagined homeland among African Americans, despite the fact that it accounted for only 13 percent of the British slave trade (Richardson 1989, 13). Since the growing instability in Nigeria, Ghana has been called "a model democracy—an oasis of peace and stability in turbulent West Africa." (*NPR Morning Edition*, May 26, 2005). Its remarkable stability and freedom from state violence, while surrounded on either side by the same in Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, have led many to consider it the leading nation of West Africa, if not of the continent as a whole, despite evidence of its economic troubles provided by examples like its joining the Highly Indebted Poor Nations Initiative.

Although they dominate the landscape of Cape Coast and Elmina, prior to the 1980s, the castles had not received a great deal of attention as important historical monuments. Before their conservation, they served primarily mundane functions including housing the post office and law court. An article in the *Ghana Teacher's Journal* in April 1958 suggests that students visit the castles as "places of historical interest," although no further information is given as to their specific significance. In 1970, the offices of the



8 Elmina Castle

Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) moved to Cape Coast Castle. In an effort to expand the castle's significance as a tourist site, the GMMB proposed the establishment of a museum of West African history within the castle. The idea for the museum had taken shape by 1970. Planners intended it to represent West African history as a whole, but at least one of the planners argued that the museum should focus on the slave trade. Dr. R. Hurl of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, wrote in a memorandum about the museum, "Although the final aim of the Project is to arrive at a comprehensive museum of West African History with a strong cultural base, it might be useful to articulate the phases of implementation so as to emphasize what may be the most unique and significant aspect of Cape Coast and the other castles built along the coast: The Slave Trade" (quoted in Simmonds 1972, 7).

In the end, the museum represented the long history of Cape Coast and not just the period of the slave trade. Several international organizations made donations to the museum project including the British Museum and the City Museum in Liverpool and the Department of Geography at the University of Copenhagen (Duah 2000). The museum, which was named the West African Historical Museum, opened in 1972 with an exhibit that

contained three main themes. The first display panel traced events in West Africa, North America, and Europe starting from 500 B.C. Next, several ancient African empires were addressed, along with Arab expansion in West Africa and the periods of Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, and French influence. Finally, the early history of West Africa including some aspects of the slave trade and other forms of trade, fishing, technology, the forts and castles, and warfare were addressed (Duah 2000, 119).

In his account of the creation of the museum, Francis Duah (2000) asserts that local people were receptive to its development and were involved in the process. He notes that one fisherman became a part-time model maker of fishing canoes at the museum and that several retired civil servants donated their own research materials or family documents on local history. Thus, although the museum was small in scale and consisted primarily of display cases placed against the walls of a long, narrow room, because of its at least partial focus on local history and culture, rather than focusing exclusively on the stigmatizing history of the slave trade, it appears to have been well received. In the same year, the dungeons at Cape Coast Castle were excavated. The dungeons had not been cleaned out since the last group of captives left; rather, the rubbish left by them was covered with a layer of sand and lime (Simmonds 1973, 268). During the excavation, eighteen inches of dirt and waste were removed from the floors.

Six thousand visitors were reported at Cape Coast Castle in 1972, including 1,487 school students from thirty-eight schools. The castle caretaker also served as a guide who would show visitors around, though there was no official interpretation of the site. Among international visitors, Richard Wright was one of the most famous. In his book *Black Power* he discusses his trip to Ghana, including his visit to Cape Coast and Elmina castles, which he suggests are vehicles for reconstructing the painful history of the slave trade (see chapter 7). In addition, a 1972 report of Cape Coast Castle notes that it received several international visitors including a parliamentary delegation from Barbados and forty-four members of the Morehouse College Glee Club, suggesting that even then, the castles were sites of sparse yet visible diaspora tourism (Simmonds 1972, 9–10).

Except for schoolchildren, local residents rarely took tours of the castles or viewed the structures as historic sites. Older Cape Coast residents with whom I spoke noted that during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, anyone could go into the castle and look around and usually did not do so with the guide. They would simply walk around while going to the post office or other offices within the castle. In addition, the castle courtyard was often

used for concerts and other events, functioning in many ways as the town civic center.

While their role in the slave trade did not lead to the treatment of the castles as special sites, they did have other important resonances. The site of Cape Coast Castle was once considered to be sacred space in the local cosmography. The rocks on which the castle was built form the shrine of Nana Tabir, one of the local deities of Cape Coast. Cape Coast has seventy-seven state gods (as opposed to household deities), and Nana Tabir is one of the most important of these. The god inhabits the rocks, and offerings are made there to him. In particular, Nana Tabir is responsible for the well-being of fishermen and traders (Graham 1994, 114). When the British built the castle on this site, local residents were forced to move the shrine to a different location. Thus, the building of the castle represented an act of immeasurable harm to local believers.

In 1977, the shrine was brought back to the castle, and the Traditional Council of Cape Coast hired a permanent priest to care for it. The shrine is located within the male slave dungeon, in front of one of its walls. The British built this wall once the slave trade was abolished to block off a tunnel leading from the dungeon to the point of departure where slaves were transported to the slave ship. The shrine is of particular importance during *Fetu Afahye*, the annual Cape Coast festival. *Fetu Afahye* takes place in September and celebrates the beginning of the fishing season as well as the yam harvest. During the festival, a bull is sacrificed at the Nana Tabir shrine. But because Cape Coast is heavily Christian, and many residents in fact eschew “traditional” religious practices, few people worship at the shrine during other times of the year. All the same, the castle simultaneously served as administrative space, tourist space, and sacred space during this period.

In 1979, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) named both castles World Heritage Sites as a result of their nomination by Kwesi Myles, a Ghanaian museum professional and the secretary general of the Organization for Museums, Monuments and Sites of Africa. The UNESCO list, which had begun one year previously, sought to encourage preservation of historic sites as well as to give them recognition and bolster tourism. Such a designation was considered to be quite fitting, not only because of the significance of the castles to the slave trade, but also even in terms of their impressive size for such ancient structures. In the end, however, neither the establishment of the West African Historical Museum nor UNESCO’s recognition of the castles led to the emergence of the slave trade within public history in Cape Coast and Elmina.

Indeed, up until quite recently, many local residents appear to have known little about the history of castles. They were not mentioned in any of the conventionalized narratives I describe in part 1 as places in which slaves were kept. Before the development of diaspora tourism, many men and women without formal education were in fact unaware of their significance to the slave trade. Indeed, even in 2001, when I asked an elderly woman with no formal education what one castle had been used for in the past, she stated it was the place where the post office was located. I then asked her what it had been used for before then, to which she replied that she had no idea. Ato, a young man and one of the tour guides at Elmina Castle who grew up in Elmina, confirmed that when he was growing up in the 1980s, before organized tours began, people often went to the castle to look around, but they knew nothing about its history. In most cases, the castles are viewed as profane spaces recognized primarily for their sheer size and beauty. Ato said of the level of interest of local people in the castle, "The only thing they want to see is the fact that it is so huge. That's it." He also said, "With the exception of the few who come to the castle to know what happened here, they will usually say, 'It's beautiful, I don't know how they built such a house in those days.'" Indeed, many people recited similar views of the castles. Yaw is a young entrepreneur in Elmina. I asked him if he ever wondered about the castles when he was young, to which he responded, "If there was anything to have actually made me to wonder it was the question how did they come by these huge buildings, structures here and there. They might have used a lot, you know, strength, energy, a whole lot, materials. How did they come by all these things at that time, about five hundred years ago and more." As these comments indicate, because of the reticence of previous generations to discuss the slave trade, the castles long remained profane structures within the landscapes of Cape Coast and Elmina, appreciated primarily for their size and beauty. As a result, while residents regularly entered the castles, they did not view them as important historical monuments, and if they were uneducated, did not associate them with the slave trade.

Conserving and Commemorating the Slave Trade

The significance of the castles and of the slave trade in general began to change in 1989 when the then regional minister Ato Austin traveled to the United States under the sponsorship of the Ministry for the Central Region to explore the options for the development of Cape Coast and Elmina castles as tourist sites. During this visit, he and his delegation met with vari-

ous organizations and were eventually awarded \$5.6 million from USAID for the implementation of the Natural Resource Conservation and Historic Preservation Project for the conservation of the castles. The Midwestern Universities Consortium for International Activities managed the grant, and several nongovernmental agencies served as subcontractors, including the Smithsonian Institution, Conservation International, the United States Committee for the International Council of Monuments and Sites, and the Debt for Development Foundation. This grant led to the castles becoming major tourist sites, with serious attention being paid to the history of the slave trade. As such, they became extremely popular destinations for diaspora tourists, and African Americans in particular.

Initially, however, neither a desire to commemorate the slave trade nor connections to the African diaspora were the driving forces behind the castles' conservation. A report on the conservation project describes the logic of their conservation as follows:

Cape Coast Castle is a Ghanaian landmark, huge and picturesque. One mighty wall overlooks the shore, where clumps of sea-washed rocks are interspersed by soft, brown sand. Fishing craft are drawn up on the beaches as they have been for hundreds of years. Another wall oversees the busy life of the town, hazed by the smoking of the day's catch. The interior of the fortress has plenty of room for a major display of the nation's life. And Elmina, a relic of the earliest Portuguese landings along this coast, has a history that certainly would be a draw. Columbus, as a young man, is said to have learned navigation here. Later as "Admiral of the Ocean Sea," he supposedly stopped here to take on provisions for his great voyage of discovery. (Hyatt 1997, 5)

This construction of the significance of the castles makes no mention of the slave trade and therefore does not appear to challenge the dominant historical discourses discussed in part I. On the contrary, the mention of Columbus invokes the age of exploration, a key romantic narrative of the modern age and an invocation as well of forms of connection between Africa and Europe.

Other projects during this period, however, explicitly invoked black Atlantic connections, particularly PANAFEST, a pan-African arts and culture festival that was the brainchild of Ghanaian playwright Efua Sutherland. In January 1991, an experimental national phase of PANAFEST was held in Cape Coast. Following its success, in 1992, the first official PANAFEST was

held in Cape Coast and Elmina. Since then, it has become a biannual festival that draws tourists and performers from throughout the African diaspora. Like earlier pan-African festivals, it was based on an idea of cultural connection among Africans throughout the world. Its highlights include a grand *durbar*, or procession of chiefs and people in Cape Coast. Hundreds of tourists gather to see the parade of chiefs in full regalia, to watch indigenous dances and musical performances, and to hear welcoming speeches by tourism and government officials. Entertainment events include a beach party and a concert of international performers that have included the Boys Choir of Harlem and the Uthingo Dance Company of South Africa. Finally, a major component of PANAFEST is a visual arts exhibition once held at the Center for National Culture in Cape Coast, where vendors rent booths to sell their goods. Tourists can buy all of their Ghanaian souvenirs, from African clothing to wooden sculptures, here in a one-stop shopping experience, which thus underscores the touristic nature of the event.

PANAFEST then represented a shift in the nature of pan-Africanism in Ghana. While in the 1960s and 1970s, pan-Africanism involved the permanent resettlement of Africans in the diaspora in Ghana, since the 1990s Ghana has witnessed the expression of pan-Africanism through their temporary travel. In addition, while in an earlier period African Americans linked colonialism in Ghana to their struggle for civil rights, today the slave trade is central to many African Americans' constructions of their connection of Ghana.

Both projects however have been heavily concerned with development, although as I discuss more fully in chapter 7, they have defined it in very different ways. PANAFEST has addressed development concerns through the convening of conferences that address the theme of the event. The themes in 1999 and 2001 were "Uniting the African Family: Youth—The Agenda for the New Millennium" and "Bridging the Technology Divide," respectively. Finally, the organizers of PANAFEST demonstrated a burgeoning interest in commemorating the slave trade by including tours of the castles. These three agendas are clearly articulated in the PANAFEST Foundation's statement of its goals as the desire to "[e]stablish the truth about African history and our experience, using the vehicle of African arts and culture; provide a forum for the promotion of unity between continental Africans and those in the Diaspora; and develop a framework for the identification of issues and needs central to Africa's development and the improvement of the quality of life" (Atafori 1999, 6).

PANAFEST served to increase African American interest in the castles

and their conservation. Two African American performers, Isaac Hayes and Dionne Warwick, who were part of a tour of the castles sponsored by the Nation of Islam, became interested in the conservation project. In 1992, the newly formed African American Society to Preserve Cape Coast Castle, represented by Isaac Hayes, pledged to raise \$10 million for the preservation of the castle, although this goal was never met (Kreamer 2006, 454–55). But more than tourists, the African American expatriate community had the largest impact on the conservation of the castles. Today, this community numbers approximately one thousand individuals (Zachary 2001), most of whom reside in Accra, with a handful in and around Cape Coast. Certainly at this post-*Roots* moment, these individuals view the castles as sacred sites. For this reason, they worried about the conservation plan's lack of emphasis on the slave trade. Many among them, furthermore, were generally distrustful of the United States (having chosen to expatriate for this reason). The involvement of U.S. institutions like the Smithsonian thus increased their suspicion.

Examples of the conflicts that resulted from this fear are numerous. When the castles' conservation began, in addition to stabilizing the castles and providing modern plumbing facilities, the preservation team applied a mixture of lime, sand, and cement to the castle walls to remove the black mold stains that result from exposure to the coastal salt air, a process known as whitewashing. Members of the African American community in Ghana immediately responded to this act, concerned that it was an attempt to beautify the castles and thereby erase all evidence of the slave trade. Some charged that the whitewashing of castle walls and other improvement efforts were an attempt to whitewash history and, essentially, to erase the history of the slave trade. In particular, plans to clean up the dungeons met with fierce opposition. Apart from their excavation in the 1970s, the dungeons in both castles had lain unused for centuries and were still filled with layers of earth, human waste, and remains from the captives who were kept there centuries ago. In addition to their excavation, which served to make the dungeons accessible to visitors, the conservation team placed lighting in the dungeons to allow visitors to see their way into them. Fear that the dungeons would be completely sanitized angered many members of the African American community in Ghana.

Imahküs Vienna Robinson, an African American resident of Cape Coast, published an article in the journal, *Uhuru*, entitled "Is the Black Man's History Being 'White Washed': The Castles/Dungeons of the African Holocaust" (1994) in which she asked,

Are flowers being planted in the ovens at Auschwitz where millions of Jews perished? Have the Death Chambers of horror been brightly painted to somehow camouflage or silence the cries and screams of people who were brutally tortured and murdered? Think about that and then think about the Cape Coast and Elmina Castle/Dungeons on the Gold Coast of West Africa, where you can still hear and feel the presence of our African Ancestors when you enter the dark Dungeons and tunnels. But will this still be true when they finish renovating the Castles and painting the insides of the Dungeons? (1994, 48)

False reports that the dungeons were to be painted a “festive yellow” sparked much of the anger on the part of the African American community (Kreamer 2006, 453). In her article on Cape Coast Castle, Christine Mullen Kreamer argues that concerns that the castles, and particularly the dungeons, be left in their original condition “had less to do with historical accuracy and more to do with a feeling of something old, dark, tragic, and, to some degree, terrifying” (2006, 452). Indeed, not only the dark, dank conditions of the dungeons but also the black stained exterior walls of the castles created a menacing image that many deemed appropriate for a site of mourning.

More serious concerns arose over the inappropriate usages of the castles, including the use of one of the dungeons in Elmina Castle as a gift shop. Planners argued that the room had essentially been used as a warehouse to store goods, but historical evidence showed that it had indeed at one point been used as a dungeon, which was enough for opponents to protest the placement of a gift shop there. Under intense pressure, the gift shop was finally moved to one of the upstairs rooms in the castle.⁴ Another controversy involved the placement of a restaurant over the male dungeon in Cape Coast Castle. Planners argued that as a tourist site, the castle should provide visitors with a place to buy refreshments. But opponents noted that the dungeons are equivalent to a cemetery, not an average tourist site, and argued that no one would ever dream of placing a restaurant in the middle of a cemetery.⁵ In a story featured in *U.S. News and World Report* about the debate entitled “Africa’s Cleaned-up Slave Castle,” Nana Okoko Iture Kweku I, a member of the African American community in Ghana, is quoted as saying, “You’re going to beautify it and tell my son there was no slavery” (Ransdell 1995, 33).

The debate surrounding this and other issues reached such monumental proportions that in 1994, a conference on the preservation of the castles as well as of a military fort in Elmina was held. Dr. Robert E. Lee, another

quite prominent member of the African American community in Ghana, delivered a paper entitled “On the Meaning of the Slave Forts and Castles of Ghana.” In it, he argued that Africans in the diaspora, as the descendants of slaves, some of whom passed through the castles, are the most important stakeholders in the matter of the castles’ conservation and interpretation:

These are the people who have a serious interest in the dungeons of the Slave Forts of Ghana. These slave forts are the clear outposts and last place seen before leaving—forever. To these descendants, coming back to Africa through the Slave forts is a necessary act of self realization; a recapturing of the “Lost Soul of Black Folk.” It is like lying on the psychiatrist’s couch and getting rid of a great burden which has been borne for centuries . . . Even today, the spirits of the diaspora are somehow tied to these historic structures and coming to stand under these forts and experience the feelings of walking in the damp, murky dungeons is a reminder of their ancestors’ anguish and despair. (1994, 2–3)

Lee eloquently expressed a view of the castles as sacred space and insisted that they be treated as such, and that they should not, as he feared tourist officials intended, become “disco houses or hotels for fun lovers.” He ended by strongly reiterating his view that the castles should be seen as the proper heritage of Africans in the diaspora: “the one deserving the most important consideration at this time is the slave himself; therefore, his/her descendants are the ones that this conference must address and keep in mind as we meet and decide on policy” (1994, 4).

In southern Ghana, where the slave trade invokes forms of discrimination against certain family members and particular regions, and where discussions of race have historically involved the condemnation of “Africans” as an undifferentiated category for their participation in the slave trade, the notion of commemorating the slave trade struck many to be a dangerous proposition. For this reason, several Ghanaian officials sought to reduce the amount of focus on the slave trade in the interpretation of the castles. In one report, they stressed the importance of representing the castles’ “total history” and not just the history of the slave trade, noting that the castles “started as trading posts, changed into slave castles and then into administration centers.”

An alternative interpretation of the castles as sacred space was addressed during the conference. In the report of the committee on philosophical and historical considerations, committee members listed the following as one of

its philosophical considerations: "The Committee views the monuments as places that are 'sacred' places of pilgrimage and high cultural and spiritual importance for Ghanaians, West Africans, and the African diaspora. The centres are not secular and mundane places and should thus be regarded as 'special places' when it comes to the matter of usage" (1994, 1). The committee also recognized the African American diaspora (a telling reduction of the African diaspora to African America), along with the local Ghanaian population, companies, and traditional authorities as important stakeholders in the conservation of the castles. The influence of African Americans in the interpretation of the castles as sacred space proved to be profound.

The committee concluded that the castles should be developed as tourist sites; they should be "an organic museum and not a cemetery." But while they decided that tourism should be encouraged, they agreed that a certain degree of sensitivity must be employed at the castles and that inappropriate activities and usages should be stopped, including the holding of "musical extravaganzas" and the existence of a restaurant above the male dungeon in Cape Coast Castle. They also agreed that the dungeons should be left intact. The committee compromised on the significance of the slave trade at the castles. Some members argued that the castles should be marketed for the slave dungeons. Of particular interest, some committee members noted that highlighting the history of the slave trade could remove the aura of fear that surrounds it in Ghana. The report includes a reference to this fear that states, "There was [*sic*] general concerns that among local Ghanaians and the African diaspora for a long time, the old people have tried to discourage the children from enquiring into the historic past of the slave trade. There was concern that the bitter truth about the past be ascertained, documented, and disseminated" (1994, 4). The effects of this project in the face of opposition will be the topic of the final chapter. Making the castles into sites of pilgrimage in a narrative of slavery, sites to construct the horrors of the slave trade and to evoke the suffering of black people, was conceived of by many African Americans as a prelude to the redemption figured in stories like *Roots*.

While the report expresses hope for what remembering the slave trade might mean for Ghana, the example of the United States should serve to temper it. Today, even more so than in the decades following the airing of *Roots*, slavery is well represented within mainstream films and museums in the United States. Indeed, Ira Berlin argues that "[s]lavery has a greater presence in American life now than at any time since the civil war" (2004, 1251). Many of these representations, however, paint slavery as a closed chapter in

American history. The 2004 film *Amistad* provides a key example. In telling the story of a shipboard slave revolt, it ultimately celebrates the American legal system. Clearly, interest in slavery does not mark a readiness to address the structural nature of racism. Within these arenas, rather, “the renaissance in interest in slavery . . . has become an emblem, sign, and metaphor for the failure to deal directly with the question of race and the long legacy of chattel bondage” (Berlin 2004, 1259). Similarly, in his discussion of the discomfort caused by the Disney Corporation’s plans to open an exhibit on slavery, Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, “To condemn slavery alone is the easy way out . . . What needs to be denounced here to restore authenticity is much less slavery than the racist present within which representations of slavery are produced” (1995, 148). As I argued in part 1, public representations of the slave trade in many ways do not serve the interests of Ghanaians. But neither, of course, do they always serve the interest of African Americans. Commemorating the slave trade is not a sign that a given society has overcome slavery’s horrors. Romantic or otherwise Disney-esque representations do not even always participate in the process of such a healing. At the same time, they hold a revolutionary yet rarely realized potential to critique the very foundations of contemporary forms of oppression. For this reason, the commemoration of the slave trade in Ghana has inspired both skepticism and hope. While diaspora tourism, as I discuss in the final section of this chapter, has opened a space for the construction of a protest narrative, many of the narratives told at the castles today are rather romantic narratives of black triumph. A prime example, to which I turn next, is the celebration of Emancipation Day. The highlight of the 1998 celebration was the reinterment of the remains of two slaves named Crystal and Samuel Carson from the United States and Jamaica. What better way to ensure that these conceptualizations take root, planners decided, than through the interment of diasporic bodies.

Little is known of Crystal, an unidentified slave from Jamaica who was given her name because of a crystal found on her body. In contrast, Sonny Carson, a black nationalist figure and community activist in New York, petitioned the U.S. government for permission to move the remains of his great-great-uncle Samuel Carson, who, according to him, became an officer in the United States Navy after he escaped his plantation in South Carolina after the Denmark Vesey rebellion. Sonny led a delegation of thirty individuals to Ghana to accompany the bodies.

The reinterment inscribed new meanings onto various sites in Ghana including Accra, Cape Coast, and Assin Manso, the three sites of the celebra-

tion, creating a sacred landscape that was recognized primarily by visitors from the diaspora. The program began in Accra, where the caskets were escorted by ten riders on horseback followed by members of the Ghana actors' guild enacting the march of slaves in chains. The caskets were then laid in state in front of the Nkrumah mausoleum where a vigil was held with performances by bands and traditional musical groups. Holding this event in Accra, and in particular at the Nkrumah Mausoleum, was an attempt to link the celebration of emancipation to the anticolonial struggle and to Ghana's proud status as the first sub-Saharan African nation to achieve independence. In addition, as "Rawlings's holiday," the opening of Emancipation Day at the mausoleum was an attempt to link Rawlings to the tradition of Nkrumah as a hero of Pan-Africanism. But without a clear political agenda, it remained an unconvincing link to many observers.

The next day, the remains were transported from Accra to Cape Coast Castle by sea. They were taken to shore on canoes and then carried through the Door of No Return, a reversal of their imagined departure. For many Africans in the diaspora, this reinterment represented the reestablishment of links between Africa and the diaspora. The physical transplantation of human remains from American soil to African soil was not only symbolic of this reconnection, it represented the achievement of the imagined dream of so many African slaves, to return to their own soil.

The spiritual nature of this reinterment was everywhere evident. One witness reported that as the caskets were being readied to be carried into the castle, they became so heavy that eight men could not lift them. He explains this strange occurrence as follows: "The ancestors resisted mightily . . . until we assured them that they were being returned through the dungeons this time, not taken away" (Kemp 2000, 21). After a ceremony at Cape Coast Castle, the remains were then transported to Assin Manso, the site of the Slave River, where they were finally buried. This river, located several kilometers inland from the coast, is reported to be the last place where slaves in transit to the castles had an opportunity to bathe. As such, it has become an important site in the reconstruction of the slave route in Ghana and is imagined as the last point in which enslaved individuals still held on to some measure of humanity by having the right to bathe before entering the wretchedness that characterized life at the castles and during the Middle Passage.

Now at the annual Emancipation Day celebration, a procession of chiefs walks to the river to perform burial rites, and children perform dancing and drumming while tourists approach the river in turn. At the riverbank, many tourists collect water or sand to carry home with them.



9 Tourists at Emancipation Day event, Assin Manso

This activity underscores the solemnity of the occasion in which the “celebration” of Emancipation takes on a tone more of reflection than of merriment. But the need to entertain tourists has led to certain incongruities from the perspective of tourists, including the Miss Emancipation Day beauty pageant held during the Emancipation Day program of 1999.

During this celebration, a Monument of Return was commissioned at the Assin Manso, and in 2001, a ceremony was held at the newly completed memorial, which consists of paved graves for the two “returnees” as well as an archway announcing the entrance to the path leading to the Slave River. The focus on return is designed to position Emancipation Day as the redemption of all African slaves, to recast the history of the slave trade from one of black wretchedness to one of black triumph. This notion of triumph is particularly evident during the candlelight vigil held at Cape Coast Castle every August 1, when names of important black ancestors on both sides of the Atlantic are read out to the assembled crowd, who sit packed together in the eerie atmosphere of the castle at night, each holding a candle against the encroaching dark. When midnight strikes, an announcer declares emancipation to raucous cheers, thereby celebrating the end of oppression by commemorating the 1834 emancipation of slaves and their own early-twenty-first-century catharsis.

This moment allows diaspora tourists to cast their own bodies in a ro-



10 Entrance to the Slave River, Assin Manso

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mantic narrative of black triumph. That August 1, 1834, particularly for African Americans, may not be the date of their specific ancestors' emancipation is of little concern. What matters is that emancipation is part of their history whenever and wherever it occurred. For Ghanaians, however, the emancipation of slaves in the diaspora means little. While the focus on the Slave River turns attention to the suffering of Atlantic slaves prior to their export, the ultimate focus of Emancipation Day is their redemption, which occurred off of the continent. In this way, Emancipation Day marginalizes African experiences and positions Ghana as merely the site of diaspora's birth and baptism into slavery.

In addition to this reduction, within the construction of black diasporic struggle by the tourism industry, southern Ghanaians have at times been placed in a position of blame. During the first PANAFEST, several Ghanaian chiefs gathered in Accra to perform a ceremonial washing of stools and skins, the symbols of chieftaincy in Ghana, and to ask forgiveness for the complicity of their predecessors.

As I discuss in chapter 4, there are certainly many local understandings of slave dealing as wrongdoing and indigenous means of addressing it in West Africa. Most commonly, however, the proper vehicle of expression for this transcript is ritual, a closed, private sphere, not the open, public sphere of discourse. Indeed, the most significant difference between these other

examples of ritual acknowledgment of the slave trade and the ceremony that took place during Emancipation Day is that while the meanings of the former may form part of an elite knowledge to which not everyone in the community has access (indeed those in charge of the knowledge may actively block its dissemination outside of the realm of ritual), in the case of the latter, the ceremony was accompanied by public discourses designed to ensure that the public had a clear understanding of its purpose.

In an article in the *Daily Graphic*, the major daily newspaper in Ghana, a tourism official described the purposes of the reinterment, as follows: "The current Ghanaian leadership believes that the pooling of the strength of the over one billion Africans scattered all over the globe is necessary for any meaningful development . . . We can only encourage further these Africans in the Diaspora to join forces with us if we can show remorse for our actions in the guilt of enslaving them. The repatriation and re-interment of these remains would signify our willingness to accept them" (Nunoo 1998, 5). Describing the passing through the Door of No Return, he stated, "This act, as is believed, would reverse all curses pronounced on us Africans by those enslaved African ancestors. But naturally and more physically, it will mean the living African's willingness for the return of all his brothers in the Diaspora. It would symbolize an acceptance of them as brothers and our preparedness to allow them to take part in the future development of this continent" (Nunoo 1998, 5). Not only did the celebration of Emancipation Day create new ritual acknowledgments of African responsibility for the slave trade, but it also placed this blame in the most public of forums, the press. The discourse of African culpability has gained even greater visibility since. There are more plans for chiefs to issue apologies for the slave trade during Emancipation Day in 2007 (see the conclusion). Diaspora tourism has thus opened Ghana up to the risk of the very censure that local demands for silence regarding the slave trade attempt to avoid.

In contrast to discussions of African culpability, during these same years, many African Americans were involved in attempts to hold Western nations accountable. In 1997, members of the United States Congress, led by Tony Hall, proposed the issuance of a formal statement of apology to African Americans on behalf of the U.S. government for slavery. Former president Clinton implied his support for the proposal but later decided to abandon it because of strong public and governmental opposition. But the following year, on his multination trip to Africa, Clinton, speaking in Uganda, stated, "Going back to the time before we were even a nation, European Americans received the fruits of the slave trade . . . and we were wrong in

that" (*Washington Post*, March 25, 1998, p. A01). This apparent apology, made on the African continent no less, stirred up much debate back in the United States, upsetting many government officials who no doubt feared that Clinton's apology would lend credence to African American demands for reparations.

Such demands demonstrate the use of the slave trade as a means to talk about oppression in clear-cut racial terms and to argue that racial oppression continues today. The fervent attacks on proposals for reparations and an official apology for slavery demonstrate a reluctance to address this interpretation of the slave trade. Indeed, while George W. Bush condemned slavery as "one of the greatest crimes in history" during a visit to Gorée Island (Berlin 2004, 1254), he did not apologize for the role of the United States in it, again disconnecting present-day problems from this past atrocity and thereby ignoring contemporary white privilege. The threatening nature of the notion of American and European culpability for the slave trade became painfully clear during the United Nations Summit on Racism, Xenophobia, Racial Discrimination, and Related Intolerance, which was held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. While Germany's foreign minister offered an apology for the slave trade on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany, other Western nations including the United States refused to follow suit (Constable 2001). The call from both diasporic and continental quarters for reparations during the summit strengthened the narrative of the slave trade as a story of black struggle against white oppression. The reparations discourse represents an example of a discourse about the slave trade that critiques continued Western domination and racial inequalities.

While arguments for reparations have been criticized by some as an unfeasible solution, they usefully provide a narrative of the slave trade as the creation of a system of oppression that has yet to be overcome. These arguments furthermore demonstrate that protest narratives that use the history of the slave trade are not solely the province of black literary figures like Morrison. On the contrary, such narratives have been embraced by a much larger swath of the African American public. During the Emancipation Day celebrations in 2001, which took place during the run-up to the Durban conference, there were many lively discussions in Ghana regarding the idea of reparations for the African continent for the slave trade, and these discussions regularly resurface each year. As a result, they provide an alternative narrative about the slave trade in Ghana that is focused on European culpability for African underdevelopment, recalling Rodney's text. However, as I discuss in the next chapter, such arguments must jockey for position

among more dominant narratives that position diasporic triumph at the center of discussion.

Exhibiting the Slave Trade

In contrast to the major focus within the celebration of Emancipation Day on diasporic redemption, other arenas of diaspora tourism have paid greater attention to Ghanaian history. In an attempt to make it more relevant to local residents, the Cape Coast Castle Museum parallels this story with the story of other historical struggles in Ghana. The development of this museum was part of the conservation project at the castles. The Smithsonian Institution in conjunction with the GMMB was charged with transforming the small West African Historical Museum at Cape Coast Castle into a major museum of national and international significance. The Smithsonian team was led by Vera Hyatt and also included Christine Mullen Kreamer, an art historian, and Fath Davis Ruffins from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. Despite the leadership of American museum professionals in the project, Hyatt sought to involve Ghanaians heavily in the process. But because Ghana lacked a class of museum professionals, she first had to train them. In 1992, the Smithsonian sponsored five Ghanaians to travel to the United States to train at the Smithsonian in various museum-related fields including architecture, graphic design, and carpentry (Hyatt 1997). James Anquandah, a professor of archaeology at the University of Ghana, Legon, led the content committee.

The committee decided that the main theme of the exhibit would be trade and entitled it "Crossroads of People, Crossroads of Trade," an attempt no doubt to reflect the "long history" of the region that local residents had so feared would be reduced to simply the stigmatizing history of the slave trade. Nonetheless, the final exhibit, which opened in December 1994, revealed the dominance of a narrative about the slave trade, and more specifically, a notably romantic one.

The exhibit has four sections, which cover the early history of Ghana and the coming of the Europeans, the transatlantic slave trade, the African diaspora, and the Central Region today.⁶ The first section includes archaeological evidence of Ghana's early history. The early European trade is represented with brass weights used to measure gold and European household items found on the coast. The exhibit then turns to the forts and castles and includes a model of Elmina Castle. In the next section, the slave trade is represented through large murals replicating European observers' de-

CHAPTER 1

- 1 Most studies of the Gold Coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries focus on either the Fante states (McCarthy 1983; Shumway 2004) or on what became the Gold Coast Protectorate, namely, the coastal areas of Ghana (Daaku 1970; Kea 1982; Reynolds 1974). Exceptions include Feinberg's (1989) and DeCorse's (2001) studies of Elmina and Graham's (1994) study of Cape Coast.
- 2 Akan is the language family dominant in southern Ghana and includes the Fante dialect.
- 3 Lawrence (1964) and van Dantzig (1980) provide further details on the histories of the forts and castles in Ghana.
- 4 The Danish traded from Christianborg Castle in Accra, but their trade remained on a much smaller scale.
- 5 *Caboceer* is a corruption of the Portuguese term, *caboceiro* or "captain" (McCarthy 1983, 15, n.5).
- 6 References to the Fantes during this period refer to members of the Fante Confederation, not more broadly to Fante speakers. Historians therefore refer to conflicts between the Fante and Elminans.
- 7 The European companies on the coast held a large number of slaves who worked for them at the castles. In 1816, the Royal African Company owned 454 slaves (McCarthy 1983, 48), and the West India Company maintained approximately six hundred slaves during the eighteenth century (DeCorse 2001, 35). Most of the men worked as carpenters, bricklayers, and other skilled artisans, while the women served as household servants and general laborers. Many of these slaves were imported from other areas in West Africa. Some local people became castle slaves after going to the castles to seek protection, particularly those who were impoverished or who had been disowned by their families (McCarthy 1983, 48), but the majority remained foreign-born slaves, which served to maintain distinctions between them and the townspeople (Reynolds 1974, 13).
In addition to protection, castle slaves also received payment for their services to buy food. They lived in a separate area adjacent to the castles and formed their own *asafó* company, which they named *Brofumba* or "white man's servants" (van den Nieuwenhof 1995, 18). What defined their status as slaves rather than as merely servants was that all of their actions were controlled by the companies, and if they acted without the consent of their company, they could be sold overseas (McCarthy 1983, 48). In 1822, when the Crown took over control of Cape Coast Castle, it freed the company slaves, but many of them continued to work for the British as servants (Feinberg 1989).
- 8 In the Indonesian situation to which she refers, distinctions between Europeans and locals were more significant because of the presence of a large colonial bureaucracy, suggesting that the Dutch on the Gold Coast would have been even more likely to embrace the idea of having relationships with local women.

- 9 Dutch law also necessitated that fathers provide for their children born to African mothers out of wedlock (DeCorse 2001, 37).
- 10 I use this term following Gocking (1999), who elaborates on the significance of the Euro-African class in coastal Ghana.
- 11 This term often appears in the historical literature as *donko* or *donkor*.
- 12 This term, which refers both to northerners and slaves, is discussed in chapter 4.
- 13 Ferme (2001) similarly discusses the “retrenchment from modernity” of the Mende of Sierra Leone as a response to encounters with the slave trade.
- 14 Lovejoy and Richardson (2003, 105) make a similar argument with regard to the Efik traders at Old Calabar, namely, that the development of European tastes served as cultural markers that helped to distinguish them from those they dealt in as slaves.
- 15 Translation: ‘People who wear native dress.’
- 16 The failure of the colonial system to reward coastal elites for their mimicking of the culture of the metropole is not only due to specific historical factors but also to the general design of colonialism in that it necessitates the continued subordination of its subjects. Bhabha’s (1994) phrase “not quite/not white” captures the colonial power’s requirement of the assimilation of its subjects, but also these subjects’ ultimate failure, in order to maintain the legitimacy of its power. He states, “The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure” (1994, 86). Thus, the colonial subject is perpetually striving toward an assimilation that she never achieves. This hypocrisy is, of course, at the heart of the colonial endeavor. As Comaroff and Comaroff describe it, “British colonialism, and colonial evangelism, was everywhere a double gesture. On one hand, it justified itself in terms of difference and inequality: the greater enlightenment of the colonizer legitimized his right to rule and civilize. On the other, that legitimacy was founded, ostensibly, on a commitment to the eventual erasure of difference in the name of a common humanity. Of course, had the difference actually been removed, the bases of overrule would themselves have disappeared. It was not; they did not” (1997, 396).
- 17 Sarbah along with many other prominent Fante nationalists like J. E. Casely Hayford (see 1969 [1911]) and Attoh Ahuma (see 1971) critiqued practices of European assimilation found in dress, speech, naming practices, and countless other arenas. But their attack on assimilation did not bear much fruit. Most of these individuals themselves failed to make such changes and ultimately embraced cultural nationalism as a literary project alone (Gocking 1984). Instead of a cultural renaissance, their critiques led only to greater awareness of Fante assimilation. Notions of Fante identity within the popular imagination of coastal residents at this time and, as I discuss in forthcoming chapters, in many ways since center around both their struggle for political autonomy from the British and their practices of assimilation. Their experiences of the slave trade, however, were not part of this equation.

- 18 Other scholars report his name as Caramansa. Although most scholars argue that Caramansa is a corruption of Kwamena Ansa, Claridge (1973) argues that the reverse is true.
- 19 The story of Kwamena Ansa was recorded by João de Barros, a Portuguese chronicler who was employed as a low-level officer at Elmina Castle in the 1520s. He wrote *Decades in Asia* in 1552 in which he describes the meeting between Ansa and D'Azambuja and the speeches given by each. P. E. H. Hair notes that it was not uncommon for historians of this era to invent the speeches of their subjects "expressing what might have been said, or at least silently thought, by the character on the occasion" (1994, 8). Sarbah relies on de Barros's account. For other discussions of this story, see Wartemburg (1950), Ellis (1964), Blake (1942), and Claridge (1915).
- 20 Christensen argues this point in his discussion of refusals of marriage proposals: "[T]he Fanti rarely use a direct negation on such an occasion, and resort to either a proverb or subterfuge to indicate refusal" (1954, 60).
- 21 Austen and Smith (1969) discuss the connection between arguments for abolition and the rise of colonial rule in West Africa imagined as the assumption of responsibility for those populations that had been demoralized by the slave trade.

CHAPTER 2

- 1 The names used in this text are pseudonyms, except for a few cases in which individuals requested that I use their real names. I use the terms "Auntie" and "Uncle" for many individuals because these are commonly used titles in Ghana for women and men who belong to the generation of one's parents and therefore titles that I frequently used when speaking to older individuals.
- 2 Cole (2001) similarly argues that memories of colonialism reemerge despite their submergence in Madagascar.
- 3 The *ɔmanhene* is chosen from a particular lineage. Within that lineage, only those who do not have slave ancestry are eligible.
- 4 See Antze and Lambek (1996) for a discussion of the connection between personal memory and social narrative.
- 5 Casely Hayford notes that in response to the question "'Who told you your family history?' the answer is often returned, 'My grandmother told me'" (1970, 79). Penningroth makes this point as well with regard to facts about ancestry (2003, 33).
- 6 Poku (1969) suggests that among the Asante, the taboos surrounding the discussion of slave ancestry have lessened since precolonial times. He describes the environment in which slave ancestry is discussed, "Only the simplest of precautions are taken before revealing secrets which 60 or 70 years ago might have proved fatal to the narrator—small children are chased away, and care is taken to see that no one of a discussed slave stock is likely to overhear" (1969, 36).
- 7 See Klein (1989). Also see Robertson (1983) for an example of a successful documentation of an oral history of slavery. In contrast, Poku (1969) notes that many individuals are willing to discuss their slave ancestry if approached privately.

backwardness in school textbooks written by British historians during colonialism.

- 3 See www.edughana.net for more information on schooling statistics.
- 4 The book to which I am referring and which was in use in 2001 when I conducted this research is *Social Studies for Junior Secondary Schools, Pupil's Book Two*. It was published by the Curriculum Research and Development Division of the Ghana Education Service in 1988. Since then, as I discuss in chapter 7, the social studies syllabus has changed.
- 5 There is a large body of literature on this subject. See, for instance, Sharp (2001, 2002) and Wertsch (2002).
- 6 The title of this section is meant to invoke Frederick Cooper's article, "The Problem of Slavery in African Studies," which addresses domestic slavery in Africa. I explore here, in contrast, the problems associated with the study of the Atlantic slave trade in Africa.
- 7 In his discussion of West Africa historiography, Fage (1971) writes that 1948 marks the beginning of its modern period.
- 8 Fage expounds upon this argument in his 1969 article for which he is perhaps most well known outside of Ghana. The article set off a firestorm of responses, most notable of which are those of Rodney (1982) Inikori (1982), and Wrigley (1971).
- 9 Rodney would later fully expound on the negative effects of the slave trade in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, which I discuss below.
- 10 See especially Inikori (1982), who argues with Rodney that Fage's argument cannot be supported.
- 11 Scott's description of tragedy points to this definition. He notes that "the colonial past may never let go" (2004, 220); at the same time, however, he writes, "The sense of the tragic for our postcolonial time is not the belief that we are likewise doomed, that change is futile, that in the end we are mere pawns of imperial tyranny" (2004, 221). He argues instead simply that our struggles must be tempered by knowledge of the contingencies of the past.
- 12 Similarly, in her discussion of the presentation of the history of the slave trade in Liverpool, England, Jacqueline Brown (2005) notes that some teachers fail to mention it at all and that even those who do may restrict their discussion to Liverpool, thereby limiting the scope of its significance and (inadvertently) providing a justification for its exclusion from the national consciousness.

CHAPTER 6

- 1 See Thomas (1999) for a discussion of the celebration of Emancipation Day in Jamaica.
- 2 See Gaines (1998, 2006), Jenkins (1975), Lake (1997), Meriwether (2002), and Walters (1993) for discussions of African Americans in Ghana during the independence era.
- 3 Davis writes that it constructs "an overt political agenda of social protest" (1998, 256–57).

- 4 Conversation with Albert Wuddah Martey, curator, Elmina Castle, May 2001.
- 5 See Bruner (1996), Singleton (1999), and Kreamer (2006) for other discussions of the debates surrounding the conservation of the castles.
- 6 There is also a film that is shown at the beginning of the exhibit that visitors can choose to watch. Here an image of contemporary Ghanaian culture is collapsed with its precontact culture, suggesting again that Ghana is merely the diaspora's past (see Richards 2005).
- 7 Richards argues that "administrators of these sites must devise a means of softening the horror by effecting a substitution in which a healthy actor or progress narrative stands in for the dehumanized body and tale of abjection" (2005, 632).
- 8 The exhibit, "Sighting Memories: An Exhibition of Poetry and Photographs Dedicated to All Those Who Resisted," was held at Cape Coast Castle from July 29 to August 3, 2001. The exhibit brochure states, "That our ancestors were enslaved does not make slavery our heritage. It is more reasonable and truer to the history to consider the ancestors' unbroken resistance to enslavement as our proper heritage."
- 9 I draw here on Tim Edensor's (1998) discussion of the Taj Mahal and of its interpretation by tourist officials and tourists in terms of specific symbolic realms, which he calls colonial space, sacred space, and national space. He thus applies Massey's (1994) formulation of the multiple and shifting meanings of place, by which she refers to larger locales such as towns and countries, to a particular structure, the Taj Mahal, a perspective that applies as well to the castles.
- 10 I brought soil back at my father's request, which he uses during Kwanzaa to pour libations in honor of our ancestors.
- 11 GMMB officials told me that they have plans to remove the wall blocking this tunnel so that visitors can walk through it and take the same path that male slaves took out of the castle, but for now, visitors must make do with walking over the top of the tunnel.
- 12 While some tour guides report that women who became pregnant in the castles were freed and occupied the large merchant houses in town, this was not likely the case. As I discuss in chapter 1, African women who married European men were more commonly from local, sometimes elite, families.

CHAPTER 7

- 1 I provide a further discussion of this comment and others responses to Emancipation and specifically, local critiques of its failure to bring economic development in Holsey (2004).

CONCLUSION

- 1 Early anthropologists created similar visions of Africa, as Johannes Fabian (1983) famously notes.