BLEEDING PALIMPSESTS:
HERITAGE TOURISM AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF INDIGENOUS MEMORY IN NORTHERN GHANA

by

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ABSTRACT

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Bleeding Palimpsests: Heritage Tourism and the Commodification of Indigenous Memory in Northern Ghana

Dissertation co-directed by Associate Professor Arturo Aldama and Associate Professor Cheryl Higashida

This dissertation's overarching thesis is that continental Bulsa histories and epistemologies complicate discourses of heritage tourism and scholarship of the slave trade. Through applying critical Africana and decolonial indigenous studies lenses, I make three overarching claims. First, I disrupt the artificial boundaries or epistemic apartheid (Rabaka 1-5) imposed on indigenous knowledge while challenging the colonial frameworks embedded in heritage tourism, which divide Ghana into the coast and the "hinterland" or "bush" in Northern Ghana. Secondly, I argue that cultural knowledge about the people's lived experience during this horrific time of kidnapping and genocide are distorted by people who come looking for overt narrativization and memorialization of traumatic history. Thirdly, I show that it is essential to understand that different groups of people in Ghana today are navigating this history's legacy as part of the daily struggles against racism and neo-colonialism.

I develop a method of reading between the cracks to recover indigenous Bulsa epistemology, which shows that the people were fighting genocide and destruction and not the slave trade as dominant history suggests. I conclude that what the Bulsa history and epistemology offer is an opportunity to examine what happened in the past but even more profoundly, an opportunity for true dialogue in the present.

For
Eric Ayienab

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CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL AND NARRATIVE FRAMEWORKS

This dissertation is about how story makes and unmakes a people. Story is central to human struggle and agency. Indeed, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie states, "power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person but to make it the definitive story of that person" (00:10:12-00:10:18). The enslavement and colonization of African peoples came with fantastic narratives about Africans that suggested they deserved to be enslaved and colonized in order to be saved from themselves. The enslavement and colonization of groups of people often spins a narrative that defines the particular group as not belonging and as a result, undeserving of the same humanity afforded insiders.[1] The power behind a story makes it true and thus sets it to become the stereotype for that group of people. In other words, no group of people is subject to systemic dehumanization without an accompanying narrative that seeks to explain their natural status of belonging to that caste.[2]

As I show in this dissertation, the above was true for certain groups of people in Northern Ghana from the mid-1700s to late 1800s who were targeted for kidnapping during the trade in enslaved Africans. During this time, an increase in the need for enslaved African labor on plantations across the Atlantic, the Sahara Desert, and within West Africa led to a demand for captives further from the coastal regions of West Africa (Der 9). Particular groups of people in

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[1] In the PBS documentary *Africans in America: America's Journey through Slavery,* Historian David Blight talks about the power of the narrative of the outsider as a central part of enslavement noting that "throughout the world, slavery has taken root, especially where people are considered outsiders and can be put in a permanent status of slavery" (21:00-21:55).

[2] In the historical work of fiction *Farming of Bones,* Edwidge Danticat shows how Dominican dictator Trujillo and his regime used fictionalized narratives about Haitians to create hostility towards them and facilitate and justify genocide in the 1937 Parsley massacre.

various regions across West Africa known as "acephalous groups" became targets of kidnapping raids (Diouf xxi). The acephalous groups were defined by living in village and town communities without shared community leadership instead of a single hierarchical leader at the top. In other words, the absence of a single leader such as a king or queen explains why these groups were described as "stateless," and at times "decentralized communities" by some anthropologists (Howell "Personal Interview"). I prefer the term "acephalous communities" rather than "stateless" or "decentralized communities" because both terms assume that northerners were without political organizational apparatus as stateless societies and were living as decentralized communities of a larger political entity. Lastly, the acephalous groups were not expansionist and did not maintain permanent armies. The latter explains why they were targeted by their more powerful empire neighbors and roving bands of kidnappers for the trade in enslaved Africans (Der 12).

In the Upper East and Upper West regions of present-day Ghana, acephalous communities were targets of raids and kidnaping to the point where one British colonial official wrote that "Gurunshi towns" were "the happy hunting grounds for the Moshi, Mamprussi and Dagomba, when in search of slaves" (Our Lady of Seven Sorrows). As I show, a narrative originating from the Atlantic Coast—then Gold Coast—framed people from acephalous communities as "northerners, backward, rural, bush hinterland," and placed them in a caste designed for enslavement. As Bayo Hosley writes, the Akan word "ɔdɔnkɔ" for a bought person became synonymous over time with the term for a Northerner (Hosley, "Black Atlantic" 511).

Furthermore, I argue that in contemporary Ghana, different groups of people are still navigating the effects of this history at the individual and communal level. Heritage tourism makes this history a marketplace commodity by using people's survival strategies as cultural

capital. I claim that slavery tourism in Ghana reifies colonial narratives and diminishes avenues of true connection and relationship building between Ghanaians and Africans from the diaspora. Lastly, I suggest that indigenous epistemology embedded in landmarks, earthshines, and songs from the Bulsa is that the acephalous communities of the Upper East and West regions of Ghana were faced with genocide, violence, and destruction of their communities. The critical questions are "why and what for?" The answer is, because a world that relied on enslaved African to produce its goods and profits, be it dates across the Sahara, palm kernel plantations across West Africa, or on plantations in the Americas judged that at this point in time the acephalous groups with their small communities and lack of standing armies were the most vulnerable.

By the late 1800s, there had been multiple abolition and emancipation proclamations ending enslavement in different parts of the world. However, as the oral tradition shows in these parts of Northern Ghana, human beings were still being hunted down and kidnapped in raids and wars for the illegal slave trade across the Atlantic, largely for the domestic slave trade across West Africa, and for the Arab slave trade across the Sahara. The resistance stories from oral traditions are not stories of people being taken away to be placed on ships on the Coast but of fighting destruction and dehumanization imposed on them as targets of brutality, violence, and kidnapping. The absence of the image of slave ships in oral tradition accounts of this time does not mean that many people from these regions were not kidnapped, shackled, and marched down to the coast. The oral accounts speak to the fact that from the people's perspective they were fighting a world that relied on their enslaved labor in captivity for its products.[3]

[3] The second slavery emerged during the 19th century, exactly in the era of the abolition of slave trade and slavery. Despite abolition policy, officially 3,444,500 million African slaves were sold between1801and1867 by slave traders of different nations to the Americas (Eltis).

I make the case that earthshrines such as Azaksuk and Pikworo in the Upper East region serving as destination points for slavery tourism of Atlantic enslavement teach more about a continuation than a past. In fact, the time period memorialized by some of the earthshines among the Bulsa and Kasena mark the experience of the people during what has been described as the second slavery. [4] In March 1807, the British ended their own trans-Atlantic slave trade followed by the United States the following year but there is evidence that both still received enslaved Africans in north America and in the British colonies (Williams). The British abolished slavery in their colonies in 1834, and the United States passed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 but didn't abolish wage slave labor based on palm kernel and sugar production. The sacred sites marking the trade in enslaved Africans in the Bulsa and Kasena communities mark a period of racial capitalism where the communities were targeted for slave labor, coerced labor, and peonage to build the infrastructure for the colonial economy of extraction. The continuation of the system of racial capitalism and what it visits on Africana peoples is more the point of connection and resistance than an imposed imaginary.

I discuss the thesis above through a methodology grounded in indigenous storytelling as resistance. Additionally, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing phenomena from the Black radical tradition which holds that Africana knowledge systems and ways of analyzing phenomena ought to be derived from African lived experience and on African perspectives (Cedric Robinson 1-8). In this context, the analysis of African cultural phenomena ought to hold African values in the center of those analysis (Ngugi wa Thiongo, Asante). It is simply not a question of locating African values in the center but using that location as place to interrogate

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[4] See footnote above.

and disrupt the oppression of Western cultural imperialism and colonization. Ngugi wa Thiongo calls this the language of struggle which describes African lived experience from the place of struggle and resistance (1-4). In this dissertation I use indigenous Bulsa storytelling and African centered epistemology to unearth narratives that speak to the people's experience from a vantage point that is often overshadowed by the dominant narrative of heritage tourism. To show that the earthshrines memorializing the people lived experience in the late 1800s among the Bulsa and the Kasena mark a continuation of a global racial capitalist system rather than a history that is now past that gone as heritage tourism claims, I examine the power behind story in three different but interconnected layers of this dissertation. The first interconnected layer is the power of story to unmake a people by freezing them into a narrative that sets them apart, and then using their separate status as rationale for their enslavement and dehumanization.[5] Prior to the British ending their own trade in enslaved Africans, they had established a ranking order from the coast to what was called the hinterland (Hosley, "Black Atlantic" 511*)*. As I show later in this dissertation, the memory of the trade in enslaved Africans in West Africa and some of the social constructs created as a result are still alive and impact people's lives to this day, even if not in overt ways. When this memory and lived reality are flattened into a commercialized travel experience in the context of heritage tourism, it commodifies and stereotypes people as well as their histories and indigenous epistemologies.

The second interconnected layer I examine is the power of story to rescue and reconstruct silenced histories and indigenous epistemologies. I do this by developing a method of reading between the cracks of popular knowledge on the trade in enslaved Africans to reveal indigenous epistemology in the oral tradition, physical landscape, and narrativizations.

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[5] See Blight and the previous discussion of the power of the narrative of the outsider.

The third interconnected layer I examine is the power of story as an expressive resistance act that uses what is rescued from the history to construct an epistemology of resistance.[6] I do this by critically examining the time period that is memorialized in the communal history of the acephalous groups. I argue that the people's experience in the late 1800s shows a people faced with violence, kidnapping, and enslavement due to the demands for enslaved labor, first across the ocean in the Americans, and now on African lands. Indeed, the people's epistemology of resistance by the early 1900s showed that they had systems in place and evacuated and regrouped on the approach of strangers. As explain in detail in chapter three, they learned to use the landscape and their architecture to engage in a multifaceted offensive, defensive, and protective resistance against slave raiders. It is important to note that the oral tradition speaks of them resisting raids for domestic and not Atlantic enslavement in the 1890s.

Lastly, story is also central to knowledge production. Among the Kasena, (neighbors of the Bulsa who share similar cultural traits) Awedoba explains that "knowledge and wisdom are perceived as transmissible by oral tradition from generation to generation (173). The oral tradition includes proverbs that not only serves as source of knowledge and wisdom gained over the years but also shed light on the wider lived experience of the people. The Buli proverb below speaks both the production of knowledge but also the specific knowledge gained from practice and the daily lived experience.

The Buli word for *knowledge* is *sebka*, and the verb, *to know* is *seba.* The Buli proverb,

Se paala ale vaari a nala, allege se kpagsanya ale seba dinanga gugottannya meena (Wangara 14).

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[6] I agree with Ghanaian and African Diasporan scholars in Ghana such as Jemima Pierre and Naana Opoku-Agyemang who believe that sacred sites ought not to be coopted into slavery tourism sites and should be maintained for educational purposes. I believe this idea lays a framework for real discourse between African peoples (Opoku-Agyemang 211; Pierre 127).

The new broom sweeps nicely, but the old broom knows the corners of the room.

This proverb teaching that the acquisition of knowledge is based on the lived experience, which then informs theory and praxis. The proverb shows that knowledge derived from the lived experience over time is nuanced and provides intersectional (*know the corners of the room*) solutions to social problems. The history of knowledge production shows a tension between the indigenous people and the colonizers whose mission in northern Ghana was driven by "the endeavor to invent, appropriate, and regulate its subjects" (Hawkins,10). This tension is evident in early accounts of the people of northern Ghana and discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. In the present day where indigenous knowledge is appropriated and made to fit the heritage tourism narrative, we see yet another example of epistemic colonization.

I have struggled with this tension in my own work, including patronizing dismissal of indigenous epistemologies and by some faculty and the industry. As a graduate student of Western education, I moved from being impressed by the all the knowledge of the academy to wondering if this is the place where the rational for colonization continues to be minted.

As a Ghanaian and a Bulsa I have struggled with this tension and epistemic colonization in my own work. In my education in Universities in the USA, especially in graduate school I came to the realization that much as higher learning offers the opportunity for liberatory education the academy is steeped in caste and class in the American context. My personal experience as a student and instructor who is Black and speaks with an African accent has been one that tells me I do not belong to this institution. I have seen how graduate school education traumatizes first generation students of color and supports the reproduction of privileged White males for tenure track positions. I have seen great teachers get penalized for engaging in liberatory education.

.

The Acephalous Groups of Upper East Ghana

From the late 1600s to the late 1800s, groups in Northern Ghana such as the Bulsa were targeted by their more powerful neighbors and roving bands of kidnappers and their armies for the Arab European and domestic trades in enslaved Africans (Case 311-314). Northern Ghana fits into the upper most part of the map of Ghana with the Bulsa neighboring and other former acephalous communities located in the Upper East and Upper West Regions (see fig.1).

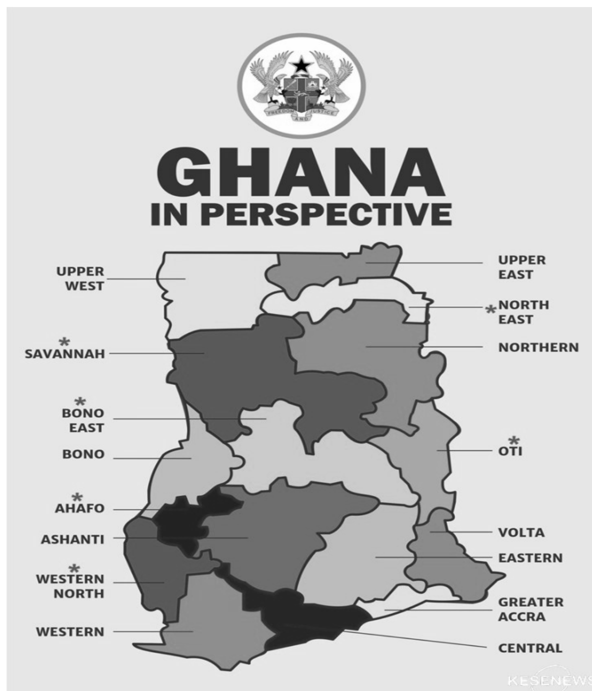

Fig 1 Map of Ghana, kesenews.com, *kesenews.com/regions-Ghana-regions-and-capitals-Ghana-regions/*

Fig 2. Map of Northern Ghana, https://liveworklearnbrianinghana.wordpress.com/2010/10/02/life-changing-experience/

The reason these groups were targeted was due to their vulnerability. In most of West Africa at this time, groups such as the Bulsa and their Gurunsi neighbors lived in what anthropologists describe as acephalous societies, meaning they were not organized as empires or nations. Acephalous groups lived in small village communities and were governed by councils of elders (Wundengba). They were not empire-building and did not invest in military build ups in the 1600 to 1800s. In West Africa, such groups became targets for raids and kidnapping by their more powerful empire-building neighbors as was the case with the Bulsa and the Kasena (Der 16-25). Today, some of the same acephalous groups are being targeted for heritage tourism because of their intimate history with kidnapping and enslavement. However, their collective memory is different from and at times runs counter to the narrative of heritage tourism.

As heritage tourism continues to expand to all parts of Ghana, the Bulsa and their neighbors such as the Kasena and Sisala are being added to the commercial heritage or pilgrimage tour route. Some of their rituals dealing with the memory of an unspeakable past are

at risk of being co-opted into commercial narratives that begin from the slave dungeons on the Atlantic Coast (Schramm 97). Whereas the records and artefacts of the dungeons have been most informative on commercial aspects of the trade in enslaved Africans, the repository of how our ancestors walked this land as free persons, and the accounts of the unspeakable that happened on these lands from the perspective of the people who lived there remain in the oral accounts and rituals of the communities impacted such as the Bulsa and the Kasena (Saboro 71).

After 1700, an increasing number of enslaved persons in what is now Ghana came from the north. Some of them were bought by local people in Southern Ghana and became domestic slaves (Hosley, “Black Atlantic” 510). At the same time, European slavers and colonizers created narratives to justify the enslavement of persons from the former acephalous communities of Northern Ghana. This narrative framing of people from the north versus the south of Ghana was captured in the words of one European observer, Brodie Cruickshank, who wrote about Northerners in 1853, “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” (244–245).

The oral tradition in communities of the Bulsa and Kasena peoples challenges the oversimplifications of heritage tourism. Heritage tourism in Ghana focuses on the slave trade but what the acephalous communities faced specifically were kidnapping and raids, which is not any kind of trade. Communities were regularly raided for over a century and people were kidnapped and killed for the Arab, European, and domestic enslavement of Africans. The oral accounts speak of African complicity and bear witness to the location where the severance and snatching of family members took place. These accounts run counter to the narratives of heritage tourism,

dominated by the European slave trade and commercial aspects, which at best mute on African complicity. In this narrative, tours to Northern Ghana are coastal and Atlantic-centered and depict the north as the hinterland and the "land of barbarians," "crudeness and poverty," and "the heartland of slavery" (Hartman 178).

There are also differences in approaches to dealing with historical trauma. Heritage tourism is involved in the showing and telling of the historical trauma of enslavement. The local people's approach is more nuanced and intimate, and often serves as a strategy for dealing with historic trauma. As this dissertation shows, the Bulsas' memory of the trade in enslaved Africans and its impact is enacted through metaphor, song, and ritual. This way of memorializing the slave trade seeps into West African literature and plays out in metaphorical and symbolic ways (Murphy 3).

In order to understand the violence and terror that vulnerable groups faced one has to look "over narrativization, archiving, even explicit discourse" to uncover the memory of loss and mourning that continues to cast a shadow over affected communities such as the Gurunsi (Murphy 3). The impact of the interests and greed of global capitalists across the Sahara and the Atlantic in concert with the greed and avarice of local powerful men created genocide and terror in the lives of people in Northern Ghana.

Review of Literature

Ghana continues to be a leading heritage tourism destination for Africans of the Diaspora and the continent (Reed 16). Heritage tourism is promoted by the government to serve a dual purpose of fostering relations between Ghanaians and Africans in the Diaspora—especially African Americans—while boosting the local tourism industry. The growth of heritage tourism has

attracted critique on the impact of relations between Ghanaians and Africans from the Diaspora (Teye et. al 169). The Ghanaian government's intention to promote relations between Ghanaians and Africans from the Diaspora is not only failing but may be achieving the opposite. In Ghana, heritage tourism continues to be centered on the history of the trade in enslaved Africans with the former slave dungeons on the coast as the highlight of most tours. As a result, it is also referred to as "slavery tourism or dark tourism," and "the slave route tour" (Chancellor and Mowat 1410; Hartman 178-204). My own experience as a Ghanaian living in the USA and in Ghana has been that heritage tourism focused on historical sites and narratives perpetuates a stereotype that fixes Ghanaians in a certain frame in history. Additionally, such framing also bolsters a stereotyping of Ghanaians in the United States. Indeed, as Kirstie Kwarteng surmises the official Ghanaian government calls for African Americans to return to Ghana is now less motivated by African liberation and solidarity and more by profit incentives" (Kwarteng et al.).

Centering the trade in enslaved Africans as the point of connection between Ghanaian and African Americans may be the default for heritage tourism, but what is not addressed is that the way the two communities approach this memory and the trauma it brings up are different and for varying reasons. Research on the views of Ghanaians who live near heritage tourism sites reveals tensions and misunderstandings between Ghanaians and Africans from the Diaspora on heritage tours when it comes to the memorialization of the trade in enslaved Africans. As Jesse Shipley writes, the way Ghanaians choose to associate or distance themselves from the history of the trade in enslaved Africans often reflects their contemporary managing of historical oppressions that follow certain groups to this day (646). In other words, people whose ancestors were victims of kidnapping and enslavement, as well as people from communities known to have been victimized by the trade in enslaved Africans are still stigmatized to this day as a result of that

history in Ghana. As a result, some people may be unwilling to share the history of their families or communities' enslavement to outsiders.

Indeed, I make the case that heritage tourism, driven solely by a business promotion and so-called development, is writing over narratives and narrativizations that might offer the opportunity for a critical and nuanced understanding of the history of the trade in enslaved Africans from a continental African perspective. I agree with Katharina Schramm and Saidiya Hartman that the narrative of heritage tourism, which predominantly focuses on the Atlantic components of the trade in enslaved Africans, does not fully capture the experience of some of the communities further from the coast in Northern Ghana.

A key text on the history of the trade in enslaved Africans Northern Ghana based on research in both written and oral sources is Benedict Der's *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana.* This book is critical to this dissertation because of the centrality of the history of the trade in enslaved Africans from a Northern Ghanaian perspective and the resistance of local communities. In Slavery Studies in Ghana, Der's 1998 work arrived at the time when there was a critical need for information about the trade in enslaved African in Northern Ghana. Indeed, Der gives credit to the administrators of the W.E.B. Du Bois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture (located in the former home of the Du Bois in Accra) for support in his publication for this very reason. This short historical text covers three significant periods in the history of the trade in enslaved African in Northern Ghana. The first period begins with the Asante expansion northwards before 1732. The second period starts with the Asante invasion of the powerful Northern Ghana Gonja empire and the rest of the eighteenth century. The third period covers the nineteenth century and the activities of the slave raiders amongst the acephalous groups of Northern Ghana. In this work, Der uses archival records and interviews and historical methods to

trace the history of the acephalous communities called the "Gurunsi" at the time. The term Gurunshi sometimes spelled Grusi was used to describe groups of people that spoke the Gurunshi language but were not necessarily culturally homogenous. In the Upper East region of Ghana, the Kasena and Nankana people who are neighbors of the Bulsa were among the groups called the Gurunshi. Today, the people do not use that term for their ethnic group. They use Kasena and Nankana. Even though the Bulsa were not part of the Gurunshi people, it is believed that their proximity to the latter and intermarriages led colonizers to mistakenly categorize the Bulsa among the Gurunshi peoples. It is no longer the case today with the Bulsa, Kasena and Nankana people in their own districts in the Upper East region of Ghana. In this dissertation I use the term Gurunshi in its historical context therefore to describe the Bulsa and Kasena, and in the contemporary context I use Bulsa and Kasena. Lastly, and most importantly, Der underscores the fact that as late as the 1890s, some acephalous groups such as the Bulsa and Kasena were still fighting against slave raiders.

Sylviane Diouf's *Fighting the slave trade: West African strategies*, reiterates the critical need for a continental African-centered approach. Diouf disrupts dominant frames of resistance, which only focus on pitched battles against slave traders. Instead, she offers a more holistic approach, which identifies three major forms of resistance; protective resistance, defensive resistance, and offensive resistance. This dissertation builds on these African-centered epistemic frames to understand the historical realities of specific acephalous communities in West Africa. In the case of the Bulsa and Kasena resistance against slave raiders Diouf's frames allow this work to unearth the multi-faced nature of their resistance beyond pitched battles. These frames unearth the agency of the acephalous communities and disrupt dominant representations of them as victims.

Scholars of West African literature and the oral tradition have shown it is of critical importance to look beyond Western frames of overt narrativization when it comes to studying the indigenous accounts of what happened in the past. Ghanaian literary critique Ato Quayson explains, in West Africa "communal response to trauma often involves a compulsion to representation in symbolization signaled in the form of an insistent straying of the literal into the metaphorical, the metaphorical into the metalogician and vice versa" (213). Quayson's analysis provides an epistemic framework for studying how the traumatic history of the trade in enslaved Africans is memorialized in different West African communities. The framework shows how communal memorialization of their ancestors' experience during the trade in enslaved Africans is manifest in multiple forms beyond overt narrativization. As Quayson explains, memorialization of communal trauma such as the trade in enslaved Africans reflects not only what is historic but is also indicative of how history bleeds into the present, leaving its representation sometime in little spaces, at times speaking by a silence, other times carried in the name of a newborn, or via earthshines and other sanctified spaces. In the Upper East regions of Ghana, scholars found out that some communities use various means of representation in the oral tradition to understand and deal with trauma of the past including songs, proverbs, naming and naming practices, and the landscape.

Driven by the sole purpose of expansion of business opportunities, heritage tourism in Ghana is often blind to the fact that in some communities, the memorialization of ancestors' experience, be it in words, dance, song, or even structured silences are living strategies of cultural resistance against systemic oppression. Heritage tourism freezes present-day Ghanaians into a cultural commodity from the past with promises of taking travelers back to Africa. Quayson's analysis provides a framework that suggests the metaphorical return of Africans from

the Diaspora to continental Africa has its place, but that should not be conflated with an actual journey back into history.

It is equally essential in researching the memorialization of the trade in enslaved Africans in different communities to take into account the fact that this history continues to live simultaneously in the oral and written traditions. In *Ghanaian Literatures*, Richard Priebe argues that the oral and written traditions function side by side and influence each other in West Africa (5). Priebe explains that scholars who approach the oral tradition as a past version of the present-day literature will be missing a critical component. Priebe's argument speaks critically to this dissertation because heritage tourism in its attempt to present a memory of the past sometimes frames present-day Ghanaians in the past. In other words, heritage tourism fails to complicate Ghanaians present day Ghanaian lived realities in dealing with the history of the slave trade. The rituals and the people who conduct the rituals relating to the trade in enslaved Africans are often presented as emerging from the past rather that as the past living in the present through ritual.

When it comes to narrativization of the memory of the trade in enslaved Africans in West Africa, Laura T. Murphy's *Metaphor and the Slave Trade in West African Literature* analyzes representations of the trade in enslaved Africans in the works of several West African authors. Murphy's work is critical to this dissertation because, among other things, it calls for a conscious continental African-centered approach to understanding the violence and terror that the slave trade imposed upon the African continent. Murphy's call for an engagement with West African modes of representation to access "the memory of loss and mourning that continues to shape West African life in the long shadow of the slave trade" (3). Murphy analyses the various codes through which West African writers of fiction autobiography, drama and poetry, and the oral tradition represent the memory of the trade in enslaved Africans. Her analysis shows that West

African writers, including Ghanaian authors such as Ama Ata Aidoo and Ayi Kwei Armah, adopt the narrative symbols that exist in the oral tradition in writing about the history of the trade in enslaved Africans from West African perspectives.

Saidiya Hartman's literary nonfiction work, *Lose Your Mother* engages the tension between the expectations raised by heritage tourism for Africans from the Diaspora regarding what they will see and experience on tour and the lived realities of the communities that serve as tour sites. In this book Hartman shares her experience on the slave tourism route in Ghana, including Northern Ghana. At the same time, Hartman admits that this project has special meaning for her as a person of African descent of African American and African Caribbean roots. A turning point in the book serves as an especially telling moment about the problems associated with heritage tourism and the narrativization of the history of the trade in enslaved Africans in northern Ghana. Hartman writes about traveling the slave route in Northern Ghana in search of stories about the people who were taken away (205-235). She assumed that she would find this information because heritage tourism promised a linear narrative that would connect her with her African ancestors. However, the expectations came short because she did not find that knowledge in the official heritage tourism presentations. When Hartman finally finds the information about the taken-away people, it is from the oral tradition. It was from the words of the song of a group of girls playing while the official presentation was going on at Gwollu, one of the former acephalous communities. Hartman is one of the rare scholars documenting travel on the slavery tourism route all the way into Northern Ghana. This book is important because it reveals discrepancies between the message of heritage tourism, the origin story, and some of the information from the locations.

Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* is a powerful work of fiction by a Ghanaian author at the intersection of the Continental African Atlantic and the African American experiences. The novel is based on the Atlantic Coast. Although there are sympathetic Northern Ghanaian characters, some portrayals are still steeped into a Southern Ghanaian perspective of the north. As stated, "northerners, who were most frequently captured, could have upwards of 20 scars on their faces, making them too ugly to sell" (64). This quote reflects a European colonizer's view that implies that the process of scarification is an act of "uglification." It also obscures the aesthetic value of facial marks held prior to the trade in enslaved Africans in some communities in Northern Ghana. Even further, this quote illustrates how Atlantic framings write over local meanings and epistemologies. An understanding of the oral tradition shows a different side of the story. Facial markings differed according to ethnicity among various acephalous groups. During the trade in enslaved Africans, Northern Ghanaian captives also used the facial marks to their advantage to be able to find their way back to their communities if they escaped (Awedoba *The Peoples* 1). It is important to recognize and critique these Southern Ghanaian and Eurocentric framings because they wield the narrative power to write over indigenous epistemology in Northern Ghana.

In critical cultural studies, Ann Reed's *Pilgrimage Tourism of Diaspora Africans to Ghana* complicates the history between Ghanaians and African from the Diaspora in the context of heritage tourism. The author makes the case that what is at the center of heritage tourism is memory and the making of meaning out of the heritage tourism experience. In this case, the heritage tourism has both an experiential and an existential component for people who undertake the tour. However, Reed's research also unveils the selective use of memories and meaning making by different interest groups. Her ethnographic fieldwork reveals not only how

this memory is contested, but also how this memory is made, narrated, and reenacted by the state, local and diasporic culture brokers, tourists, and Ghanaians living near the heritage sites. Reed's work is crucial to this dissertation because it includes the voices of Ghanaian actors and people living near the tourism sites. It is also important because it features a group of African Americans in Ghana who found great meaning in responding to the call to return to Ghana as a pilgrimage home (41-42). Lastly, her research provides data for consciously managing heritage tourism in a way that addresses the needs of Diasporan and continental Africans instead of letting the industry decide. Reed cites Jamaican poet and musician Mutabaruka during a PANAFEST celebration in Ghana in 1997 to make the point that for most Diasporan Africans, heritage tourism is more than a tourist experience. As stated, '"How can you tour your own home? We should not be treated like European and American tourists. They are the people who come to experience the culture of another land. So, they are tourists. To all people of African descent, they own the land, the culture, the resources, and they deserve to be here and treated as children of the land"' (59-60).

This aspect of heritage tourism is discussed at length in chapter three of this dissertation, but it is important to state that there is a place for conscious relations building between Diasporan and continental Africans. However, it is not to be assumed that this would occur on its own. In summary, the idea behind framing heritage tourism in Ghana as pilgrimage experience could be of symbolic importance in the way such narrative could have potential meaning for Africans from the Diaspora in the context of the roots of their African identity, but if not done with caution it lead to a stereotyping and romanticizing of local lived realities.

Bayo Holsey in "Black Atlantic Visions: History, Race, and Transnationalism in Ghana" makes significant points of intervention critical to this dissertation by urging "Atlantic scholars

to pay attention not only to the presence or absence of cultural memories of slavery in various societies but to the problem that slavery may represent within many of them" (504). As this dissertation further shows, Ghanaians are still navigating the effects of this history at the individual and communal levels in ways not obvious to scholars from the West.

How I Came to this Work

I am a Bulsa from Ghana, West Africa, who grew up in rural Northern Ghana in the town of Sandem. I had a rich childhood with loving parents and a nurturing community of other mothers, and external family all within several miles' radius of the town I grew up in. I had exceptional teachers and never once was made to feel I was incapable in my learning in anyway. The other side of my education was home and community-grown. It came from stories I heard from elders and others in the community about the history and the ways of the Bulsa people.

It was only after I turned thirteen and left my village to continue my pursuit of Western education in a boarding school in the city of Tamale, that I started to see how my background was defined not by who I was as Bulsa teenager from a nurturing community, but by what I did not have, in other words by deficiencies. For instance, my mother was one of many other mothers of my peers in Sandem who had not had the opportunity to learn to read and write. There were other mothers and aunties, some of whom were our teachers who were literate, but it was not a big deal. The further I progressed in school the more I encountered stereotypes about illiterate women, rural women, and market women such as my mother and about people from Northern Ghana. It created a dissonance in me to be told that my mother and women like her were not smart, yet I saw how my mother was exceptionally intelligent. She ran a business and kept all her records in her head. She could argue, philosophize, create, brainstorm, intellectualize, nurture, and provide.

She balanced the family budget and her business budget without any written records. She negotiated with bank managers, CEOs, tax collectors and others to keep her business growing.

I turned to African literature where I encountered complex, well-rounded characters of African market women like my mother who could not read and write but whose lives and humanity did not seem minimized by this lack of Western education. African writers such as Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Buchi Emecheta humanized rural African women in their writing and that drew me to their work and the work of other African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiongo. As I delved more into the work of Ngugi, Achebe, Kofi Awoonor, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Peter Abrahams, I slowly developed a racial consciousness.

Today, I am a decolonial racial justice educator who teaches undergraduate Africana Studies courses. As a person of color in Colorado, I encounter anti-black racism daily, in my life and in my work. I have been physically and verbally attacked and called the “N” word on the bus from Boulder to Denver. In the twenty years that I have lived in North City Park in Denver, the neighborhood has been gentrified to the point where a neighbor felt the need to play vigilante, follow, and watch me in broad day light as I was taking a walk while writing this dissertation. Sometimes the only immediate source of strength in these encounters is what my mother taught me. She said, “know who you are, and know that you are no better than anyone else as a human being but remember always that no other human being is better than you.” This project is about Africana people’s struggle and agency for the liberation of their full complex humanity from those power structures, systems, and narratives that continue to make it important to remind the world that Black Lives Matter.

In sum, my position is that I am a Bulsa writing about the history and indigenous epistemology of the Bulsa dating back to the late 1890s. I draw from the Bulsa storytelling

tradition of *Biisitieroa* defined in the Buli English dictionary as *(biisi* to speak*, tiero* to give*)* speaker talker, interpreter who simplifies the sentences of speech so that the contents can be understood by everybody (Kroeger *Buli-English* 62).

The story below is situated in a boarding school in Northern Ghana but outside the former acephalous communities. It details a coming of age to the social construct of a certain kind of ethnic and geographical racism in Ghana, one that was established from the time of the trade in enslaved Africans and cemented through colonization. At the core, however it is a story about coming to the realization of not only how cruel the world is, but how complicated and yet precise that cruelty stabs. I place this story here because I believe it bears the root of a major arch in this dissertation in two ways. First, how it speaks to how narratives have the power to bear the life blood of dehumanization. And second, that a central part of our resistance and self-determination involves the rescuing and deconstruction of dehumanizing narratives, and reconstruction of our own narratives.

The Disposable Peoples?

One early morning before the sun was up and you could still see stars, standing in the opened roof bathhouse of my secondary school next to my bucket of water and surrounded by other teenage dormitory mates it seemed like any other morning.

We had all been woken up about half an hour earlier by the school bell. The highlight in waking up was listening to the morning call for prayer. Yusuf was the Muezzin for the mosque on our side of the campus and also happened to be in our dormitory. There was something about his bearing and personality that was very scholarly, almost in an old way. He excelled in geography especially, and he was fluent in Arabic and the Koran. This morning, like other mornings it was not the bell that pulled me out of the bed but Yusuf's voice. It did not matter if

you were Muslim or not, Yusuf's call to prayer made you want to wake up and do something positive, almost bigger than yourself. It was the way he landed each verse in call. Even though it was almost always dark when he called, you could picture him. He was lean and tall, but his call begun slowly and deep and then rising as it narrows and by the time he lands each verse of the call for prayer you felt he was speaking directly to you.

This particular morning, I still heard Yusuf's voice in my head as I contemplated the first splash of cold water on my body. In the bathhouse, I could hear splashes of water and boys taking gushes of breath when the cold water first hits the body. It was still dark, and the only way you could see someone was because of the white soapy form all over their body. Suddenly two boys washing next to each other got into an argument over a few cups of bathwater.

Musah said Hardy stole a few scoops of water from his bucket when he thought he was not watching. Hardy said in the semi-darkness of the bathhouse he could not distinguish between his bucket and Musah's bucket as he stooped to scoop and may have dipped a few times into the wrong bucket of water, but so what?

Musah said Hardy did it on purpose and was feigning a mistake, but not only that, Hardy was a habitual dorm thief and guilty of stealing other things that had gone missing. The argument heated up. Musah dropped everything he was holding, soapy sponge, soap, and the little plastic bowl he was using to scoop his bathwater, he stepped back and charged, naked except for white frothy foam, at a similarly clad Hardy. Other boys in the bathhouse came between them. They held Musah back. In his retreat, he flung an insult at Hardy that I had not heard before. "Kanjarga banza! /You worthless Bulsa! Useless disposable Bulsa person. The person the insult was directed at was not a Bulsa, but everyone could see why Hardy would object to being described as a useless anything.

What I could not get was how to react as the only Bulsa person in the bathhouse that morning. I was suddenly alone in a way that I had not experienced before. Being Bulsa was the closest to a useless disposable person that Musah could come up with. In his attempt to verbally reduce Hardy to the status of a worthless human being, he was shamming Hardy for acting like a Bulsa person. Where did that place all Bulsa people? I was astonished but mostly surprised because up till that minute I never knew such an insult existed. It became apparent I did not know about a commonly shared knowledge about my humanity in the most intimate way. I was unaware such an insult existed and connected with something already widely understood to make a particular kind of sense. I was particularly shocked because the insult was coming from my friend Musah who knew of course I was Bulsa. Musah and I sat next to each other and shared notes, and school supplies in class. His family lived in the same city our school was located in. He had invited me to his home. His mom fed us. Sent us back to school giving us each bus fare. Why would he say a Bulsa is the same as useless? How come I did not know this? Had I been protected all along? Before boarding school at age 13, most of my life had been with other Bulsa people in northern Ghana. Even when we traveled to Kumasi and other big cities and I saw Bulsa migrants doing menial jobs, I also saw and knew Bulsa people, including my parents and relations and friends, families all who held strong professional positions.

A few of the boys returned to their buckets, but the bathhouse was silent. Until that moment, it had never dawned on me that I was the only Bulsa in my dormitory of thirty-six teenage boys. Perhaps it is the shock of coming to the realization of a particular open vulnerability you bear that everyone except you, knew about and understood.

As soon as the boys let go of him, he turned to me and apologized. “I did not mean it that way. I did not mean to insult your people. It is just something that I grew up hearing.”

Musah and I remain friends and stay connected to this day. Even though Musah did not call Hardy the direct word of a “slave,” the moment started my gradual discovery that certain groups of people in Northern Ghana, the acephalous communities referred to as the Gurunsi dating back from historic victimization of kidnapping for enslavement in other parts of West Africa, across the Atlantic and the Sahara desert, placed them in a certain racialized context whose effects did not die with the end of kidnapping for enslavement. The results were, in many ways, perpetuated by colonization and the coastal and bigger cities in the colonies as sources of development progress and civilization associated with the rural-urban dynamics and politics as per Atlantic ranking.

Later in work and travel within Ghana and in the cash crop growing regions as a rural journalist, I would meet people whose ancestors were from Northern Ghana, and who were now generations away from ancestors who were enslaved as well as in other forms of servitude, working in agriculture and never returning home, a type of internal Diaspora. Not much is written about these displacements and this time period. As the other chapters show, the lived experience of Bulsa communities and their neighbors in this particular time in the late 1890s to early 1900s is often silenced or overshadowed by dominant and linear narratives focused solely on the Atlantic slave trade. In this dissertation I make the case that this epistemic silencing obscures a critical window when the atrocities against vulnerable groups intensified for the purpose of laying the framework for the colonial cash crop economy of the then Gold Coast colony.

Next, the three short narratives below challenge the marginalization of African women’s knowledge and contribution. In the first two stories bear witness to a mother who is a strong advocate and supporter of children’s education, as she herself imagines what it would be like to

be able to read and write. The third story presents an insider's view of one educator, Mrs. Angabey, who taught her pupils under the shade of a tree. She continued to be a teacher through several generations of children until her retirement. She has since seen some of her former pupils grow to become professionals contributing to their community.

Fighting for the Right to Education Without Abuse

For my daughters, a story about your grandmother from Sandem.

Mama Akos believed in the right to education and fought for it like the day she confronted your uncle Theodore's teacher. When Theodore was eleven years old, there was a new teacher in the school who was physically abusive to the children. Teachers were allowed to use corporal punishment, and they did, but Mr. K would get mad and go at children like they were adults. One afternoon Theodore returned from school with a swollen eye because the teacher went mad and physically attacked him for wearing something that was not school uniform.

Your Grandma went into the storeroom of her shop, and she pulled out her tamba/ the string that goes around woman's waist to hold her *lappa* to firmly in place. She quietly secured her *tamba*, looked in the mirror she hung on the wall, and loosened, and then firmly tied back her head wrap into place.

By this time, the school was over for the day, and teachers and students had returned home. Your Grandma took off with your Grandpa in tow to the teacher's house.

Are you the man who beat my child?

Yes, I am, and what are you going to do about it? He said.

Your Grandma walked up,

grabbed him by the collar of his shirt with her left hand

and slapped him on the cheek with the right.

She then stepped back, ready to charge.

Then she noticed all this time

the teacher had his hands to his side and did not move.

She stared at him hard,

He stared back and finally said something to the effect of he was too much of a man to lift his hand against a woman.

"But you would against an eleven-year-old child?"

She sucked the air through her teeth, turned around, your Grandpa in tow walked back to her shop in the market.

Gradually Gradually We Shall Say Goodbye to Illiteracy

Mama Akos asked me to write her name in chalk on the backroom wall she took breaks from tending her bar. She requested that I write each letter clearly and not too close to each other so she could copy over and over to master signing her name.

Mama Akos used to say how amazing it must be to be able just to open a book and enter into conversation with characters and ideas from the book. She was a thinker, and I can't imagine what it would have meant for her to be able to have conversations with books. Above all, I can't imagine what it meant to carry around all those ideas, counter-arguments, numbers, proverbs, tapes of her own thoughts, Catholic prayers, Islamic chants, songs, and cash register tapes of her sales all in her head all the time.

She tried to learn to read and write as an adult, but often other things in life, such as taking care of her family and business, took over. In the end, she understood way more English

than she showed and spoke very little but was adept at inserting specific words from multiple languages for her rhetorical goals. If a person showed a pattern of anti-social behavior, she might describe that in Buli or Hausa, but she would insert the English word "habits" to emphasize that pattern of what needs to change in the person's ways. For hypocrisy, she reserved the Hausa word," muna funci". The way she said it gave the word razor-sharp exactitude with just the right amount of judgment in the tone to drive home that hypocrisy is nothing other than just plain demonic!

One of Mama Akos' favorite songs in the 70s was by Prince Nico Mbarga of Nigeria. Her favorite lyrics were *free education is not a privilege but a right.....* She would sing along and emphasize "*but a right"* as a testament to rights denied and rights she knew had to be fought for. And then when the song went,

gradually, gradually we shall say good-bye to illiteracy, and say welcome to literacy ohh,

she would wave her hands with the "gradually, gradually" as if to wave illiteracy away for good. And she did. She never spoke about it to us children. She sponsored children, especially in their teens, and attending boarding school far away. Behind the scenes, she supported parents so they could help their children.

Mrs. Angabey's Primary 1 Class

The earth was always swept clean in broomstick designs. On this ground, where the shade shifts with the sun and the entire classroom moves around with the shade, several children from this part of the town attended school for the first time. We would scoot on our bottoms and jostle for a place in the shade. When the sun moved onto our teacher, Mrs. Angabey's desk, two big boys would come from the upper classes to move the desk, chair, and easel, and all the students rotated to face the mobile teacher station. You could begin class facing one direction

and by the end of the day facing the opposite direction. One of those children in that classroom without borders walls was Paschal Avabey, who is a building contractor credited with building several schools and educational facilities in the Upper East region today.

In her seventies, Mrs. Angabey still stays in touch with some of her students from fifty years ago. Her students have now spread all over Ghana and the African Diaspora. Mrs. Angabey visits her daughter's family in Atlanta, Georgia. On each visit, she makes it a point to call each one of her students in North America.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter two examines the history of relations between Ghana and the African Diaspora, especially African Americans, following independence in 1957. I make the case that the primary players behind the initiation of the heritage tourism industry in Ghana took advantage of these earlier roots and relations to commodify the history of slavery in a way that no one could have foretold. I examine the narrative that developed along with the establishment of heritage tourism and complicate how these narratives position Ghanaians and Africans from the Diaspora. I conclude that even though I disagree with the Ghanaian government's position on heritage tourism, it is more important to look at the opportunity for true dialogue between Ghanaians and Africans from the Diaspora.

Chapter three analyzes how heritage tourism in Ghana fixes Ghanaians in the past and writes over their present-day strategies of dealing with the history of their ancestors' enslavement. I make the case that heritage tourism imposes a singular and commodified narrative that turns different peoples' memorialization, and their present day strategies of dealing with the effects of their ancestors' experience during the trade in enslaved Africans, into barely visible

traces on a curated palimpsest of the history of slavery in Ghana. I argue that even though well-intentioned, heritage tourism in Ghana is based on Atlantic perspectives and a re-writing of what happened on the African continent, far away from the coast. Through my analysis of the history and memorizations of kidnapping and enslavement in Northern Ghana, I show how heritage tourism leaves out the history and experience of those devastated by the trade in enslaved Africans but who remained on the African continent.

Chapter four discusses the Feok festival to develop further the dissertation's overarching thesis that continental Bulsa histories and epistemologies complicate discourses of heritage tourism and scholarship of the slave trade. Through autoethnography of the 2015 festival, I complicate heritage tourism's reduction of Babatu wars to pitched battles against slave raiders that relegate Bulsa oral traditions and performance to fossilized re-enactments of the past. I recover Bulsa histories, memories, and knowledge that are commemorated through Feok, and show how they emerge from and generate new meanings in the present through the performers.

In chapter five, I adapt autoethnography and creative nonfiction rather than social science to develop another mode of countering the silence of official narratives for Bulsa space, culture, and epistemology to emerge. Lastly, I am a storyteller, and storytelling it is what my community gave me. I use the stories of everyday people in their daily lives to loop this work back to the community for which it emerges.

CHAPTER 2: HERITAGE TOURISM: COMMODIFYING THE ORIGIN STORY AND SLAVERY TOURISM IN GHANA

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the history of relations between Ghana and Africans from the Diaspora to recover the multiple bases of the Pan-African relationship that heritage tourism reduced to slavery. I trace the history of heritage tourism and some of the players behind its development in Ghana to show how heritage tourism takes advantage of past relations with Africans from the Diaspora and the origin story to produce a singular narrative of slavery that silences the indigenous memorialization of kidnapping and enslavement in Northern Ghana.

Heritage or cultural tourism is a branch of tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring (Mowatt and Chancellor). In Ghana, heritage tourism, sometimes called pilgrimage tourism or slavery tourism, is directed at the African diaspora community. The history and monuments of the Atlantic slave trade serve as the physical and metaphorical location of tours (de Jong 320). Heritage tourism was initiated by the government with active support from USAID, UNESCO, and multinational donors between the late 1980s and the early 1990s (Mowatt and Chancellor 1410-1434). To this day, heritage tourism promoted by the government is an important source of revenue and an opportunity to build relations between Ghana and the African diaspora.

The idea of Africans in the Diaspora traveling to Africa in search of roots or heritage is a trope that predates Alex Haley's *Roots* on US television, but the concept was certainly popularized by the series. In Ghana, this type of travel has been capitalized upon by heritage tourism centered around the history of the trade in enslaved Africans on the Atlantic Coast. However, the continental African experience of captivity and enslavement differed so much from

one community to the next that it is impossible to frame it as a single narrative. Likewise, the ways in which different communities choose to engage the memory of the experience of their ancestors also differs from one part of Ghana to the other (Hosley 27-68). In certain areas such as the communities under study in Northern Ghana, heritage tourism arrives from the coast with a script that is often counter to local narrative, and one that is dismissive of indigenous knowledge and epistemologies. There are also instances where heritage tourist guides demand performances of rituals that are only held at certain times and under specific conditions (Opoku-Ageymang "African Resistance"). Similarly, there is growing pressure on earth priests and elders to meet the demands of heritage tourism since the Ghanaian government and international NGOs position tourism as the way for development.

Ghana is a country with a history of relations with Africans from the Diaspora, especially African Americans, as exemplified by the Pan-Africanist era of the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, it is greatly problematic that the basis of this Pan-Africanist connection has shifted to center on the commodification of the trade in enslaved Africans. When one looks at the history between Ghana and the African Diaspora, there was no foretelling that commerce and slavery tourism was going to be the center and the primary underwriter of bonds between these groups. As Reed concludes in *Pilgrimage Tourism of Diaspora Africans to Ghana*, "In Ghana today, the concept of diaspora is more likely to be raised in the context of pilgrimage tourism than in promoting Nkrumah's version of Pan-Africanism" (42). In other words, the history of Pan-Africanism has become a palimpsest. Even more critical to the intervention of this dissertation is the fact that heritage tourism comes with a real danger. Continental African narratives and modes of narrativity, which at times are strategies for dealing with a traumatic past, face erasure in light of the commanding narratives of heritage tourism. For instance, Schramm writes about the Pikoro

earthshrine; "[…] It is a representation that is reimagined and reinterpreted from all kinds of different sources, including TV series such as Roots, scanty schoolbook knowledge of the transatlantic slave trade […]" (p. 106).

Epistemically speaking, the erasure of continental African narratives to be replaced by Atlantic based perceptions is suggesting that Africana lived experiences can be understood in limited terms. It creates unnecessary competition between narratives that not only need to be heard on their own terms but also narratives that need to be heard in complementarity in order to express the full humanity of Africana people.

The History of Relations Between Ghana and the African Diaspora

For African Americans, Ghana following independence, was the place for global Pan Africanism from the African continent. Ghana offered a new political space where Jim Crow was dissolved and where iconic moments took place (Angelou). The Nkrumah administration of the newly independent Ghana was actively welcoming African American professionals to Ghana to engage collectively in seeking solutions for Africana people's emancipation (see fig.3, fig.4, fig.5, and fig.6).

Fig 3 Fathia Nkrumah, W.E.B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, and Shirley Du Bois in August 1963. Pan African News Wire,*10 July 2011, panafricannews.blogspot.com/2011/07/kwame-nkrumah-essay-on-african.html*

Fig 4 W. E. B. Du Bois outside his home in Accra , Ghana Lazarus, Ruth. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312) Special Collections and University Archives*, ca. Jan. 1963, University of Massachusetts, Amherst Libraries.*

Fig 5 Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, Julian Mayfield and Others in Ghana-1963 Ghanaian American Journal*, 5 Feb. 2009,* *gajreport.com/malcolm-x-and-julian-mayfield-the-sojourn-to-ghana/*

Fig 6 Malcolm X and Maya Angelou in Ghana (Circa 1964). Ghanaian American Journal, 5 Feb. 2009, ***gajreport.com/malcolm-x-and-julian-mayfield-the-sojourn-to-ghana/***

On the evening of March 6, 1957, African, West Indian, and African American dignitaries were invited as the Ghanaian Prime Minister's guests (PMGs). As Gaines states, "[They] held as prominent a place in the independence festivities as the Duchess of York who

represented the British royal family, and shared the limelight with Vice President Richard Nixon, the head of the official US delegation" (5). Among the PMGs were: George Padmore, CLR James, Norman Manley future prime minister of Jamaica; Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell; United Nations official and Nobel Laureate Ralph Bunche; Lucile Armstrong, A. Philip Randolph, and Maida Springer, as well as, educators Mordecai Johnson of Howard University and Horace Mann Bond of Lincoln University; and Coretta Scott and Martin Luther King. Jr. An important figure in the Pan-African world, W.E.B. Du Bois who along with Shirley Graham would later move permanently to Ghana, could not attend the independence event because the United States government refused him a visa (Gaines 5). During the event, the two-faced racist hypocrisy of the United States government was exposed in a side happenstance between members of the African American delegation and Richard Nixon (see fig. 7).[7] It captured the "bittersweet" nature of the celebration for African Americans when Nixon turned to a "jubilant group of people and asked, 'How does it feel to be free?' 'We don't know,' they replied, 'We are from Alabama.'" (Hartman 35-36).

[7] Dorothy Davis, daughter of the photographer, states, "My dad, Griff Davis, was a boyhood friend of Martin Luther King Jr. […] Dad, who was both an international photojournalist and U.S. Foreign Service officer, captured a famous photo of a rising "M.L.," as they called him in Atlanta, and Vice President Richard Nixon meeting for the first time in newly independent Ghana in 1957. That photo couldn't have been made in America at the time."

Fig 7 Richard Nixon, Martin Luther King Jr., Patricia Nixon, and Coretta Scott King in Ghana in 1957 Davis, J. Griffith. Tampa Bay Times, 17 Jan. 2020, http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2020/01/17/how-my-dad-captured-this-famous-photo-of-martin-luther-

An example of the Ghanaian and Diasporan African Pan-Africanist efforts of this time involved African American contributions to the development of Ghanaian television, broadcasting, healthcare and other areas (Gaines 27-120). Speaking of Shirley Du Bois, Azikiwe mentions that, "Not only was she involved in the development of the first national television network in Ghana, Shirley Graham Du Bois worked on a high level within the CPP government as an administrator within the state publishing house. She worked directly with President Nkrumah and was a part of his inner circle of advisors." Shirley as well as W.E.B. Du Bois are buried in Ghana (see fig.8)

Fig 8 Mausoleum of Shirley and WEB Du Bois next to their former home, now The W.E.B. Du Bois Centre for Pan African Culture. ComeSeeGhana.com, 3 April 2017comeseeghana.com/w-e-b-dubois-memorial-centre-pan-african-culture/

Another iconic example of relationships between Africans of the diaspora and Ghanaians was the Bolgatanga Library built in 1967 (see fig.9). It was designed by the notable African American architect and educator Max Bond Jr. as part of Ghana's literacy efforts. It featured a reference, adult, and children's section, and a literacy classroom. Bond adapted the local architecture, incorporating four separate buildings under a reinforced concrete "umbrella," with a ventilating space under to allow for natural cooling in the local hot dry climate. His use of "softened corners of each of the four buildings, and the sequence of multiple-use spaces are all related to local building practice" (Bond Brody).

Fig 9 Bolgatanga Library in 1967. Bond Brody, Davis. "Bolgatanga Library (1967)."1967. Davisbrodybond.com, Ghana National Construction Corporation Bolgatanga, Ghana, 2020, www.davisbrodybond.com/bolgatanga

The relationship between Ghana and African Americans dwindled in the later years of the Nkrumah administration and after. There however still remained links between Ghanaians and African Americans, which became revitalized during the Rawlings administration from the late 1980s and the early 1990s onward. Ghana under the Rawlings administration revitalized Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist invitation to Diasporan Africans to return to Ghana in the spirit of pan Africanism. In addition, the Rawlings administration's invitation included a new program to promote a specialized brand of tourism focused on slavery heritage and development. The presence of 36 of the 52 remaining West African slave castles along the coast of Ghana, and the UNESCO designation of Ghana's Cape Coast and Elmina slave castles as World heritage sites in 2002 provided both local reasons and global attention to help promote Ghana's new heritage (Reed 37). In essence, through heritage tourism the Ghanaian government used these infrastructures as well Ghana's intimate history with the trade in enslaved Africans as the foundation for this initiative.

It is important to note that at the initial stages of this revitalization of relations under Rawlings between Ghana and the African Diaspora, the focus was on Pan-African culture,

education, and liberation. Some of the key figures included Ghanaian intellectuals and educators such as Esi Sutherland, Kofi Anyidoho, and many others who gave lectures and organized symposia at the *W.E.B. DU Bois Center.* As a student in Accra from 1985 to 1989, I recall attending free public lectures at *the W.E.B. Du Bois Center* by international Pan-African scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiongo and Abdias do Nascimento, discussions of Pan-African documentaries such as Ali Mazrui's *The Africans*, and Black feminist texts such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

The Rawlings administration's invitation, however, included a new program to promote a specialized brand of tourism focusing on slavery heritage and development. Due to this central positioning of heritage tourism to reconnect the Africana family on African soil, it is sometimes referred to as pilgrimage tourism or roots tourism. Under this program, diaspora Africans were encouraged to think of their homecoming beyond nostalgia but also as an effort to collectively work for the development of Africa and to raise the dignity of people of Africana people all over the world. This latter part of the invitation was translated into the establishment of heritage tourism with the history of slavery as a special focus. The Ghanaian government sought to attain the above two interconnected goals through heritage tourism. From the very beginning, the decision was made that the focus of the heritage tourism experience for visitors was going to be the Atlantic slave trade. It was a "deliberate choice by the various social actors" and funding sources as well as the dominant discourses in the "cultural and political landscapes of those sources" (Reed 40). Some of the highlights included renovations of former slave dungeons and the re-discovery of slavery sites. Ghana took advantage of its history of the trade in enslaved Africans, as well as the presence of over fifty or so ruins of former slave dungeons along the coast, three of which had already been declared World Heritage site status back in 1979. Figure

10 shows the Cape Coast Slave fort, which was featured in an article titled, "How Ghana is Cashing in on Slave Heritage Tourism" (Reuters).

Fig 10 Foreign tourists listen to a guide at the Cape Coast Slave Castle. Sibeko, Siphiwe. Uk.reuters.com, 20 Aug. 2019, uk.reuters.com/article/uk-africa-slavery-tourism/ghana-cashes-in-on-slave-heritage-tourism-idUKKCN1VA11V

Although this theme of pilgrimage continued in symbolic form with high visibility, events such as PANAFEST, business generation remains the primary purpose of heritage tourism.[8] As such, the local tourism industry responded with re-enactments, re-naming and welcoming ceremonies, as well as the symbolic crowning of Kings and Queens in towns and villages along the coast as part of the packaged experience for Africans from the diaspora.

The development of heritage tourism in Ghana would not have been possible without the investment of external funders from the West. The external institutions, including public and private entities in the USA, the UNDP, and USAID provided funding and technical assistance totaling almost 90 million in the development of the Ghana tourism industry with a heavy

[8] PANAFEST: The Pan African Historical Theatre Project, now known as PANAFEST is a cultural event held in Ghana every two years for Africans and people of African descent. It was first held in 1992. The idea of this festival is to promote and enhance unity, Pan-Africanism, and the development of the continent of Africa (Reed 59-60).

emphasis on African diaspora heritage tourism to Ghana (Reed 39-40).[9] The project brought together investors from historic restoration and conservation groups, the travel and hospitality industry, development agencies, and the US government and United Nations agencies who all found purpose in one or more aspects of the project.

The interests of the external funders and the Ghanaian government came together to adopt the origin story as the narrative to drive the business of heritage tourism. The origin story holds that Africans in the Diaspora are the descendants of Africans betrayed by their own people or kidnapped by Europeans, who were held in the dungeons and underwent the horrific journey across the Atlantic. Whereas this is true for the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans beginning from the dungeons on the coast to the Americas, it is not necessarily the entire history of the continental African experience. From the beginning, the context of heritage tourism was Western driven, and the effects as I will show in some parts of Northern Ghana reify Atlantic rankings. The latter contribute to the dehistoricization of the slave trade and the commodification of memory, among the former acephalous communities.

The Origin Story

The Ghanaian government was quick to focus heritage tourism on the Atlantic slave trade by highlighting the pilgrimage aspect of the experience and connecting it with its origin story. In this story, heritage tourism was promoted not merely as a travel learning experience for Africans from the diaspora to sacred sites of historical significance but as a returning to the motherland

[9] USAID- 7.8m, infrastructure, and tourism facilities. Some of these founders include MUCIA, the US chapter of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS), The Smithsonian Institution, (SI0, Conservation International (CI) and the Debt for Development Foundation (DDF)UNDP 3.6 in technical assistance, Private and public sectors $75 towards infrastructure and tourism facilities (Reed 40)

(Reed 54). The origin story casts the affected communities in Northern Ghana as a source of enslaved persons rather than as whole communities that faced and resisted violence, kidnapping, and enslavement.

The Ghanaian government promoted the origin story with special tourism programming such as the Joseph project. Ghana's minister of Tourism Mr. Obetsebi-Lamptey described the Joseph Project of the Ghana Tourism Board in a NPR Interview of 2007: "Joseph comes from the Bible and the Koran - because Joseph is also in the Koran - who was sold into slavery by his brethren, rose in the land of his slavery and then when the brethren reached to him, he reached back" (NPR). To this end Ghana uses the history of the Atlantic slave trade as the way of providing living proof of the origin of the African diaspora. It does this by promoting the Atlantic slave trade as the connecting point between Ghanaians and Africans from the diaspora. However, Ghanaians and African Americans experience heritage tourism differently than the government projects. The views of Ghanaians living near Atlantic slave trade heritage sites show they would rather connect with Africans from the diaspora in cosmopolitan Africana contexts instead of the history of slavery (Hosley, "Black Atlantic" 504).[10] On the other hand, many African Americans courted by the Ghana Ministry of Tourism resist being described as tourists (Reed 41).

It is problematic to commodify a horrific and problematic history, whose effects Ghanaians are still navigating to this day. In other words, the commodification of the memory of the trade in enslaved Africans raises multiple problems. The memory of the slave trade is not an archival experience or a resolved issue; it is a kind of memory that is simultaneously distant and very

[10] Cosmopolitan is defined as a modern black context, both continental and Diasporan African.

close because it looms over many aspects of what has become Ghanaian subjectivity. It can best be described as a kind of living-with memory. The memory is alive but not in ways easily perceptible. As Opoku-Agyemang writes, "memory always settles on the surface of daily living making its presence felt in non-controversial ways; this memory includes the memory of the slave trade" (212.) In addition, the history of the trade in enslaved Africans is memorialized differently in different communities in Ghana. Ghanaians have tried to live with and deal with the memory of this traumatic history since becoming one country in 1957. It is not a forgotten history but people have learned to live with it in a way that allows them to live with each other and move on in peace, even if in unresolved peace (Yeboah). Heritage tourism is blind to this tension by attempting to place present-day Ghanaians at a certain point in history, centuries ago based on their specific history and role; whether they were a targeted group for enslavement or were complicit in kidnapping other people.

The problem with the origin story is not just that it is untrue in some cases, but it is not the entire story, nor does it capture the history of some the communities in Northern Ghana such as the former acephalous groups. What the communities that were targets of kidnapping and raids memorialized by ancestral shrines such as Pikworo and Azaksuk in the Upper East region of Ghana were faced with was the establishment of European colonization and cash crop economies in West Africa at in the last decade of the 1800s (Schramm 96-100). That people in the Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana were targeted was a continuation of Atlantic-ranked African subjectivities. I use this term to refer to a hierarchical order placed on Ghanaians during the Colonial era by the British, which projected proximity to Europeans, in this case nearness to the Atlantic coast of Ghana, as the basis of a social ranking order. In this order, the people farthest from the coast, were placed in the lowest ranking. As explained in detail in Chapter 4,

effects of this ranking still exist to this day in ways not necessarily overt but with real-life implications. I discuss in specific terms how these European and Atlantic rankings of West Africans play out in heritage tourism later in this chapter.

Heritage Tourism Travels North in Ghana

Once established, it was only a matter of time for heritage tourism to extend to locations in Northern Ghana. Northern Ghana, known as the place where the enslaved Africans were kidnapped from, was incorporated in the tours and in a way that fit the origin story (Hartman 178-185). In this narrative, Africans were kidnapped from the "hinterland," meaning the northernmost part of Ghana bordering Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire (the Upper East and Upper West regions) where the former acephalous groups live (see fig.11).

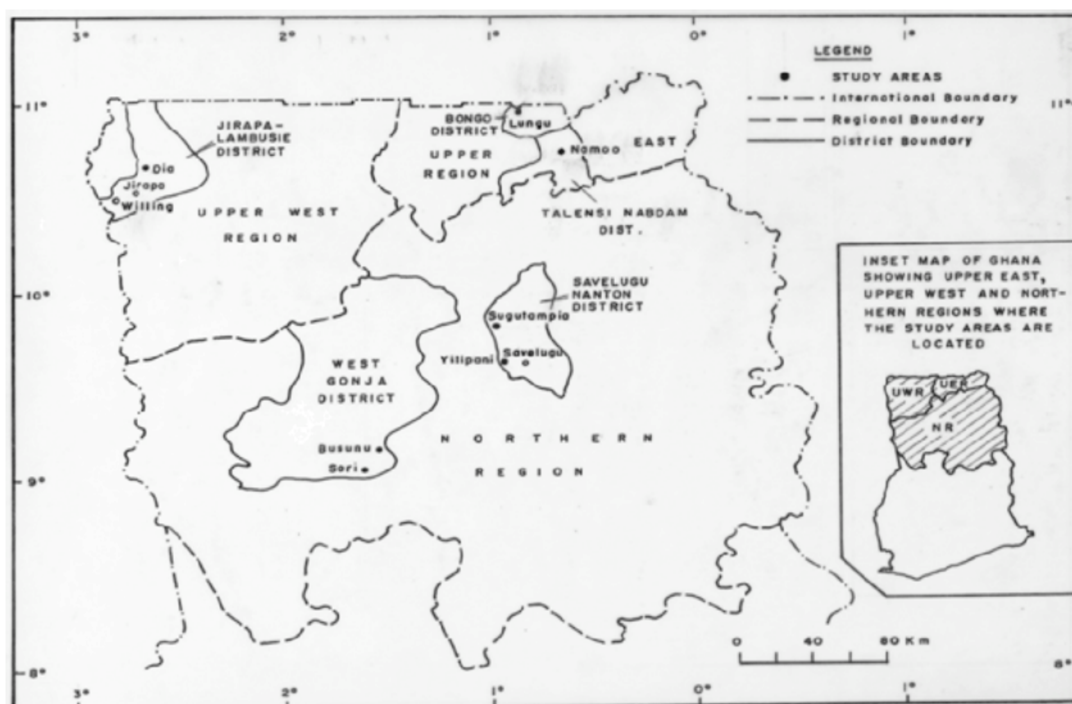

Fig 11 Map of Northern Ghana showing the Upper East and Upper West regions. Marchetta, Franscesca. "On the Move Livelihood Strategies in Northern Ghana." 2011, halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/file/index/docid/591137/filename/2011.13.pdf

The origin story is also connected to a narrative which I term the Savannah binary of slavery tourism in the Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana. In this binary the people's

intimate history with kidnapping and raids during the trade in enslaved Africans is often depicted in the binary frames of victims or warriors against Atlantic slavery (Schramm 106). I adopt "Savannah" because in everyday Ghanaian language, the Savannah often refers to the North.

The origin story, which positions the West African experience solely within the context of Atlantic slavery, however, comes into sharp question as heritage tourism pushes into these communities in Northern Ghana where there still exist sacred sites and memorabilia of the people's resistance against slave raiders as late as 1890s (e.g., Pikworo, Azaksuk, Posuk, and other earthshrines in the Bulsa area). Therefore, a major area of concern is the promotion and commodification of sacred sites as tourist destinations and the eventual result for both native and tourist. In some of the communities and sites identified to serve as tourist stops are actually living attempts and strategies of those communities to deal with historical trauma of kidnapping (Kröeger).

Another critical issue with the origin story is that the concept of returning to a past diminishes the fact that what happened there was not something that came to an abrupt end but was a continuation of capitalism's demand for labor and profits that created violence and terror in certain communities. In earlier centuries, that labor was on plantations across the Atlantic but by the last decade of the 1800s, the labor was to work plantations in colonized West Africa for formal European colonies following the Berlin conference of the 1884-1885.

Heritage tourism fulfills its goal of the origin story for Diasporan Africans by narrating on location how their ancestors were taken from those dungeons to across the Atlantic. The attempt of heritage tourism to expand inland and into those communities targeted and offer the same linear narrative does not work because it uses one selective truth to stand for the whole. Specifically, the origin story of heritage tourism represents the former acephalous communities

as the place where the enslaved were taken from. Whereas this is partly true, to make it the entire story is to exceptionalize the trade in enslaved Africans and to obscure its key role in the global institutionalization of capitalism and imperialism. Indeed, limiting the experience of the former acephalous groups to the trade in enslaved Africans, particularly the Atlantic and commercial parts, obscures the continued displacement and exploitation of northern communities. It also suggests that with the abolition of the British slave trade, came an end of the people's experience when in reality they were still being targeted for kidnapping for the domestic trade in enslaved Africans.

Although Ghanaians today may not reveal how the legacy of these narratives affects their daily lives to outsiders, they continue to navigate them daily. As Hosley writes, "category of bought persons carried a special stigma that attached not just to individuals but, as well, to their communities of origin" ("Black Atlantic" 510). Some of that stigma both at the individual and communal level continues to this day, but heritage tourism operates in a way that is blind to these strategies by carrying a singular narrative and by placing Ghanaian's present lived realities in the past. Initiatives such as *the Joseph Project of the Ghana Tourism Board* suggest that problems associated with the trade in enslaved Africans have ended with abolition. Therefore, the slave trade and its impact on West African communities is something with "a dimension too large to measure and with an effect so devastating that even after 500 years, it still ripples. To go in and romanticize the facts is to do a disservice to the communities whose direct history is related and to discredit humanity" (Opoku-Agyemang 222).

The development of slavery tourism in Ghana has not however, been without growing criticism. Opoku-Agyemang said, "There are times when we need to look back and determine if in the balance, it has all been worthwhile; in other words, while we calculate how much revenue

is coming in, to also be mindful of the true costs involved. These must be part of our considerations as we look at areas with tourist potential," (211). Opoku-Agyemang herself is a part of growing Ghanaian intellectuals, including Efua Sutherland Kofi Ayindoho and many more who led the charge in building relations between Ghana and the African diaspora, gave lectures, and perhaps sadly saw their dream being turned into another commodity. At the same time ~~as~~ Jemima Pierre cautions, "it is often easy for some in intellectual and political circles to dismiss Ghana's state actions (when it comes to slavery tourism,) as self-serving, politically and culturally trivial or misguided" (135).

Even though I believe some of the criticism of the Ghanaian government's approach to heritage tourism is justified, I agree with Pierre that dismissal of the Ghanaian state's position on slavery tourism does not lead to much. The goal of this dissertation is to contribute to Pierre's suggestion that we move beyond and embrace the fact that heritage tourism and slavery tourism have opened up the "space not only for broad dialogue about tourism, but also for expanding the terrain for the development of racial consciousness, the reconstruction of lost histories, and, ultimately, the formation of new political subjectivities" (135-136). Rather than attacking slavery tourism, perhaps we need to reflect on the reason why there is a market for slavery tourism to Ghana from the African diaspora. If this is the case, then it calls for us to do the difficult work of unmuting the narratives and narrativization of the continental African experience in its complexity for Africana people, continental and Diasporan, to gain a critical understanding of this history. This is one of the primary goals of this dissertation. Perhaps slavery tourism offers in the words of bell hooks, a "radical possibility" (15), an opportunity to turn silencing and flattening master narratives of commodified memory into an open place for Africana discourse and possibly healing.

CHAPTER 3: READING BETWEEN THE CRACKS: SILENCED NARRATIVES, HERITAGE TOURISM'S DEHISTORICIZATION OF TRADE IN ENSLAVED AFRICANS, AND COMMODIFICATION OF MEMORY IN NORTHERN GHANA

It hurts to walk barefoot
on cowrie shells

Harryette Mullen, from the poem *Exploring the Dark Content*

Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze how heritage tourism in Ghana fixes Ghanaians in the past and writes over their present-day strategies of dealing with the history of their ancestors' enslavement. My analysis shows that heritage tourism uses a singular and convenient narrative to turn different peoples' memorialization, and their present day strategies of dealing with the effects of their ancestors' experience during the trade in enslaved Africans, into barely visible traces on a curated palimpsest of the history of slavery in Ghana. I argue that well-intentioned heritage tourism in Ghana is based on Atlantic perspectives and a re-writing of what happened on the African continent, far away from the coast. Through my analysis of the history and memorizations of kidnapping and enslavement in Northern Ghana, I show how heritage tourism leaves out the history and experience of those devastated by the trade in enslaved Africans but who remained on the African continent.

In the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, I cite a couplet from Harryette Mullen's poem *Exploring the Dark Content* because it speaks evocatively to the past but also presents the experience of the former acephalous groups. As Mullen explained, "cowries were currency valued especially in the interior, where most people had never seen the ocean. The first time some of those captive Africans ever saw the ocean was when they were boarded onto slave

ships" (Henning 12). Cowries were used in West Africa, including Northern Ghana, as a medium of exchange for the trade in enslaved Africans (Schramm 102). The poem so precisely captures the experience of the acephalous groups because it acknowledges the precise moment when human beings were turned into living commodities, and from then on stripped of their humanity, similar to a social death.[11] To me it is a stark visualization of persons stripped "bare" of their humanity and forced to walk "barefoot" on their way to the desired destination of the captor while walking on the sharp edged "cowrie shells" that their human worth has been reduced to. Additionally, the poem shows that from that moment of captivity, the enslaved became a commodity forever valued on the basis of an economic arrangement in which persons are stripped of any benefit of that exchange. Where these two lines speak to heritage tourism, especially in the former acephalous communities, is that it connects the past to the present and is another powerful reminder that what is there to learn is not something that ended, but something that continues.

As mentioned in the opening, heritage tourism uses the power behind a singular and convenient narrative to turn different peoples' memorialization, as well as their present day strategies of dealing with the effects of their ancestors' experience during the trade in enslaved Africans, into barely visible traces on a curated palimpsest of the history of slavery in Ghana. The powerful actors behind heritage tourism in Ghana includes the Ghanaian government's investment in tourism (particularly the travel of Africans in the diaspora to Ghana), the international private travel and tourism industry in Ghana and the United States, and

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[11] The term is credited to sociologist Orlando Patterson who in his text *Slavery and Social Death*, explained the phrase "social death" to describe the lived experience of persons not accepted as fully human by wider society. Patterson specifically related the term to the condition of the enslaved the convey the permanent mark of "disposable status" in social ordering.

international bodies such as UNESCO (instrumental in the development of former slave dungeons on the coast). Since the establishment of heritage tourism about two decades ago, there continues to be differences and tensions in the way Ghanaians represent themselves, and the way heritage tourism positions natives who live near the tourist sites. For example, Hosley concluded that even though the Ghanaian government centers the history of slavery as the point of connection between Ghanaians and Africans from the diaspora most Ghanaians prefer a connection based on a modern cosmopolitan Black identity ("Black Atlantic" 504). The reason for this difference is that whereas heritage tourism focuses on a past that is uncomfortable for Ghanaians to speak openly about, most Ghanaians prefer to be part of a modern world of blackness and see the discourse of heritage tourism as one that freezes them in the past.

Furthermore, I show that the singular narrative of heritage tourism in Ghana misses the critical differences of experience and memorialization of this horrific time from region to region and people to people. I demonstrate that some Northern Ghanaians' ways of memorializing this horrific time are erased by today's heritage tourism. This is mostly because heritage tourism is not only shaped by Western and Atlantic perspectives but also expectations of overt narrativity. I offer a method of unearthing and reading these silenced histories from between the cracks of dominant narratives. I show that alongside selective sites and curated presentations, there exist in the landscape, in ritual, and in the oral tradition multiple ways of reading narratives of this history that lives in ways of the people. I conclude that sacred sites connected to the history of the trade in enslaved people from Northern Ghana should be used strictly for educational purposes, and that a great part of that education will occur when we first recognize such sacred sites as part of living social strategies of dealing with and navigating historical trauma.

Historical Context

By the end of the 1600s, there were several small groupings of people commonly known as the Gurunsi living in farming communities scattered around the northernmost parts of what is Ghana today. The Bulsa and some of their Gurunsi neighbors lived without standing armies in these arid lowlands as farmers and hunters. According to Howell, anthropologists have referred to the organizational structure of communities such as the Bulsa as stateless communities, and others have argued for the term acephalous as more appropriate" ("Personal Interview"). I will use the term acephalous to describe the organizational structure of the Bulsa and their neighbors because stateless communities suggests they lacked something when in many ways they were not only democratic but based on a way of living in which their communities did not need to conquer other groups, expand, or impose dominance. Additionally, I prefer to avoid the term "stateless," because the term is used to suggest mass disorder in reference to some African nations in the media.

Beginning in the mid 1700s and continued for the next century and a half, a significant determinant of life among the acephalous communities was the fact they that were organized along communal power sharing structures rather than as states, empires, or kingdoms. In effect, they lived in small communities that were not part of an empire, and they did not have standing armies (Der 11; Diouf 15-30). When the Arab and European slave trades expanded from the ocean into the northern parts of Ghana and beyond, the acephalous communities became the targets of kidnapping by their surrounding empire-building neighbors such as the Mossi, Dagomba and Gonja, as well as roving bands of mercenary slave raiding armies (Howell). Studies have shown that throughout West Africa, most of the groups targeted and depopulated the most included the acephalous groups of people (Hawthorne 153). In his account of the time, one European writer referred to these northern communities as "fishpond of the Mossi" (Howell

191). Even though the people never defined themselves as living in the fishpond of anyone in the past or present, there is much to be learned from what has been retained from those times that could teach about what it meant to live and struggle in such circumstances. Indeed, the work of some Ghanaian scholars have shown that the careful study of oral tradition customs can unravel specific information that could add to Critical Slavery Studies (Opoku-Agyemang 211-223; Howell 190-205; Kröeger,"Raids" 25; Saboro, "MEMORIALI-SING" 71). As Hartman experienced in nearby Gwollu during a stop on the slavery route, it takes more than a formal heritage tourism stop for the narrative to become visible.

Ann C. Bailey explains how pre-existing forms of African servitude morphed from a bushfire to a raging fire, thanks to the Atlantic and Arab slave trade. Building on this metaphor, this bushfire grew into new forms of domestic enslavement in 1890s. It was into this later inferno that the Bulsa and their Gurunsi neighbors, as did other acephalous groups all over West Africa, found themselves and loved ones running away from, disappearing into, and fighting against (Bailey 153-186).

Northern Ghana was not drawn into the trans-Atlantic slave trade until the early 1700s when wars and European guns progressed from the coast northwards. In 1732, the Asante army invaded the Gonja. In 1745, the Asante army faced fierce resistance from the Dagomba when they attempted to invade them. The Asante army was able to make a successful retreat mainly due to their superior weaponry of Danish guns or "Dane guns" over the bows and arrows of the Dagomba warriors. However, the Asante also managed to capture hundreds of prisoners and the Dagomba King Na Garibia. The Asante finally released the King only on the condition that the Dagombas pay a quota of captives to the Asante annually, a practice that continued from the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s (Der 2-3). In figure 12, the Dagomba and Gonja regions cover the

grey (Northern) to the north of Asante, and the Gurunsi areas are located in the Upper East and Upper West regions even further north. In figure 13, the Bulsa region is featured.

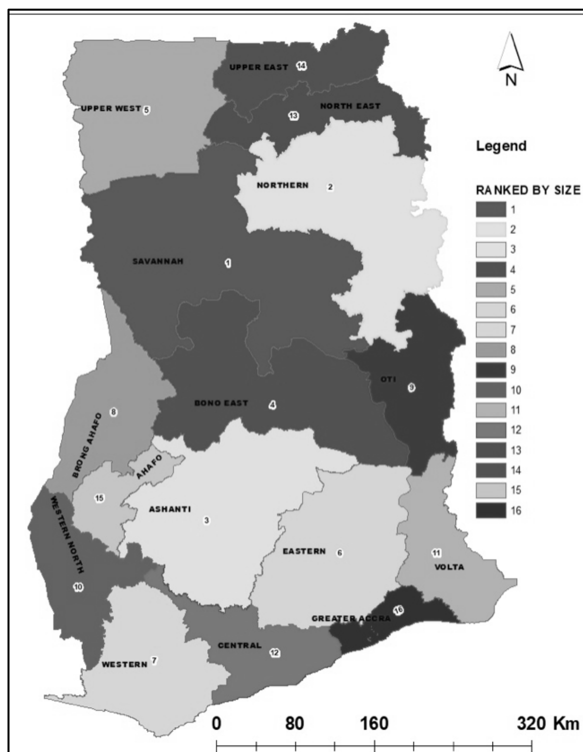

Fig 12 Map of Ghana after referendum. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_Ghana - /media/File:NEW_GHANA_REGIONS.jpg

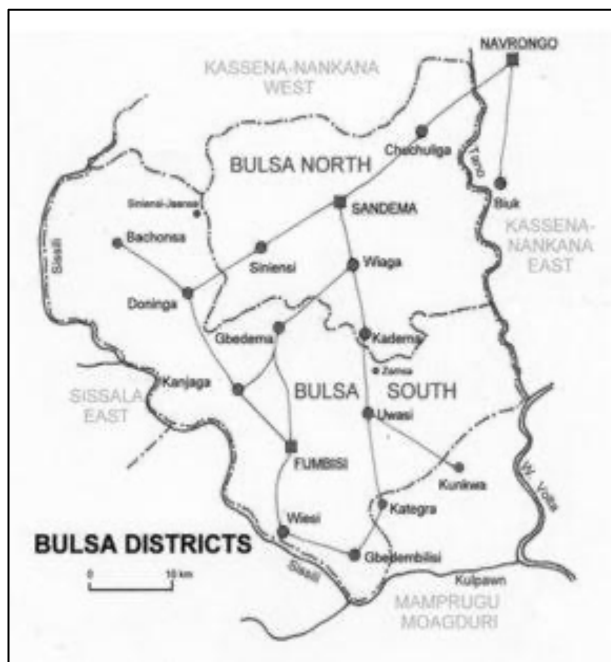

Fig 13 Map of Bulsa North and South Districts of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Kröeger, Franz. Buluk.de, www.buluk.de/Buluk10/SouthernNorthern3.htm

The Gurunsi whose lands bordered the Dagomba and the Gonja never could have imagined how their world was going to change as Zambarima mercenaries descended on villages at night or even during the day on horseback and armed with superior weaponry carrying away men women and children and property including livestock" (Der 11-12).The Zambarima mercenaries may have started as mercenaries, but soon some of them became independent slave raiders, roving and kidnapping villagers, and taking their captives to sell in the slave markets, including Salaga. Some of the Zambarima mercenaries who invaded Gurunsi villages included Alfa Hanno, Gazari, and Babatu. In the latter half of the 1800s, Babatu and his troops tormented Bulsa and other villages for several decades, and the people fought countless wars against him. The Azaksuk earthshrine memorializes the historic battle in which Babatu was finally defeated and driven for good by a combined force of all Bulsa villages and some of their Kasena neighbors (Kröeger 29).

This battle against Babatu took place in 1896 (Kröeger 30). According to Kröeger, Babatu had intensified attacks on the Bulsa for about three months, and once again raided many Bulsa villages to the south with the people fleeing northward only to gather in Sandema where they decide to defeat the enemy or die. However, Babatu confident of his victory and superior weaponry of Danish guns went ahead and attacked Sandem, but he had made two fundamental miscalculations. One, he could not win this way because what he desired most was human captives, but the people had made a collective resolve to die fighting or defeat the enemy. There would be no surrender and no prisoners of war. This act of choosing to die rather than be enslaved is recounted in most narratives about Africans in captivity.

Secondly, Babatu and his army were not aware that the Bulsa warriors had learned that the superior weaponry of Babatu's army, "the Dane guns," were useless and Babatu's soldiers

were rendered helpless while reloading (Kröeger). Taking advantage of this critical window, the warriors directed by flute, drum and horn signals would unleash thousands of poisoned arrows on Babatu's army. This strategy has been described by Allison M. Howell as the "showers of arrows" (189). I would add to this idea by stating that it was a strategy of literally fighting from between the cracks of gunfire. Additionally, I would point out that this key decisive act further speaks to the need to look between the cracks when it comes to history and memory.

In the next section, I discuss the iconography of heritage tourism, and specifically slavery tourism, from the coast to Northern Ghana to provide a wider context of how historic sites are framed into a nation-wide programming. Next, I center my discourse on one such sacred site, the earthshine of Azaksuk to show how slavery tourism in Northern Ghana reifies Atlantic rankings, which contributes to the dehistoricization of the slave trade and the commodification of memory.

Iconography of Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism in Ghana is centered around the trade in enslaved Africans with an iconography that is replete with memorabilia of the violence, terror, and murder of Africans in captivity. Even though attempts have been made especially by tour guides at the Cape coast and Elmina slave dungeons to speak about the ways in which people resisted while in captivity, the majority of sites operate on the principle of offering shocking details of the horror and dehumanization. It comes as no surprise because the relics of slavery tourism are the remains of the tools of torture and captivity.

At the same time, the dungeons, chains, metal gates, tools of torture, at the sites of heritage tourism from the coast to Northern Ghana speak to the fact that Africans in captivity not only fought for their freedom but continued to devise news ways to escape bondage. The shocking violence that quietly resides in tools of torture displayed in Elmina (see fig.14., fig.15

fig.16 and fig.17) or Salaga also speak to the unimaginable efforts people took to seek their freedom

Fig 14 Edifice of Elmina slave fort. Hill, Bryan. Ancient-origins.net, 23 July 2018, www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-africa/elmina-castle-and-its-dark-history-enslavement-torture-and-death-003450

Fig 15 Cell where freedom fighters were left to starve to death . Smith, Anitra, melaninmajority.com/stories/dont-trip-travel-shares-highlights-ghanas-cape-coast/

Fig 16 Ghanaian theatre group reenacting the kidnapping of Africans in the edifice of Cape Coast Slave fort. Atuire, Anbegwon, 2006.

Fig 17 Tourists visiting the slave dungeons of Cape Coast. Savage, Joel, modernghana.com, 09 Jan. 2018, http://www.modernghana.com/news/879278/exploring-slave-dungeons-at-cape-coast-castle.html

The Assin Manso slave river site (see fig. 18) marks the place where Africans in captivity were made to wash after the long trek from places of kidnapping and or purchase before reaching

the barracoons on the coast for sale, imprisonment, and force migration across the Atlantic. The site also marks a moment in Ghanaian and African diaspora relations where the remains of two Africans from the diaspora (Samuel Carson and Crystal) were returned and buried on that site.

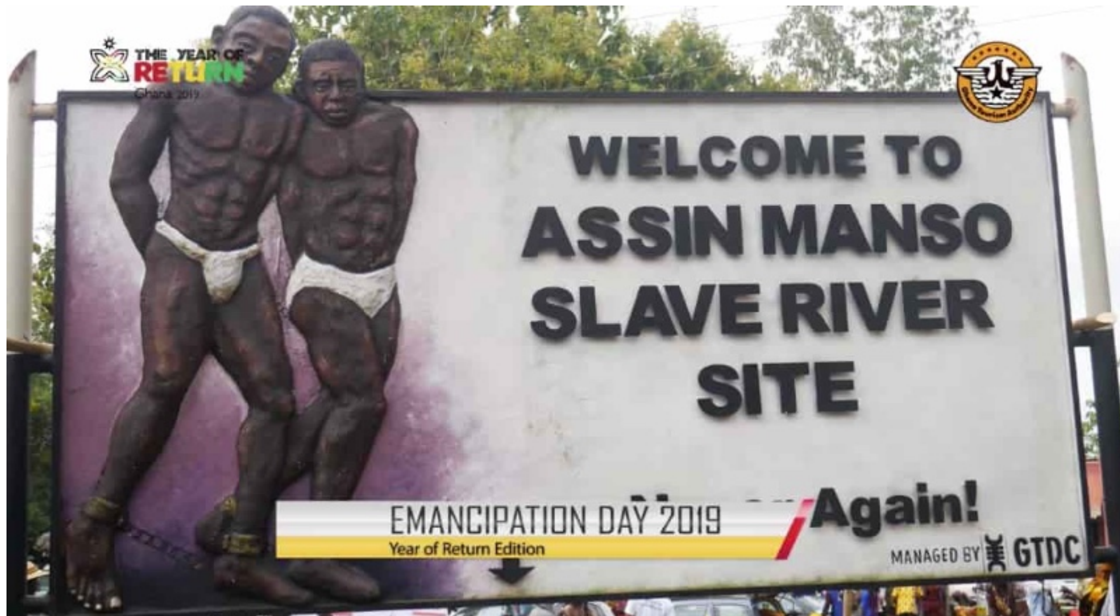

Fig 18 Assin Manso slave river site sign welcoming visitors, Visitghana.com, visitghana.com/attractions/assin-manso-ancestral-slave-river-site/

In Northern Ghana, the popular stops include the Salaga slave market, the wells dug by Africans in captivity, the Gwollu walls, and Pikworo slave camp. With the exception of the Gwollu walls, most of the stops memorialize the people's victimization and dehumanization and showcase the tools of their captivity such as the chains in Salaga. Gwollu stands out as one place that memorializes how the people built walls in defense and shot back at slave raiders from holes made in the walls for that purpose (see fig. 19).

Fig 19 Remains of the Gwollu wall built by people in the town of Gwollu in the late 1890s to defend against slave raiders, afrotourism.com, afrotourism.com/attraction/slave-defense-wall/

A typical slavery tourism trip starting out from the dungeons of the coast will make the first stop in Northern Ghana at the site of the Salaga slave market (see fig.20). This site is the predominant slavery tour site in Northern Ghana, as it served as a place where Africans in captivity were held, sold, and marched off to different destinations for centuries (Johnson 341-342). Salaga served as a regional center of commerce with a well-established economy based on enslavement, from warehouses to loans and investors. African captives were made to dig wells by hand (see fig.21).

Fig 20 Welcome sign to the site of the former Salaga market of African in captivity, *upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Slave_Market_-_Salaga%281%29.JPG*

Fig 21 Wells dug by hand by Africans in captivity in Salaga, maintained for tourism and education. Iddrisu, stolaf.edu, Jan.10 2019, pages.stolaf.edu/interiminghana2019/2019/01/12/in-salaga-a-famous-west-african-slave-market-jan-10/

In the origin story of heritage tourism, tourists are told they will be travelling further North, about 200 miles to the lands where the slaves were from, when they leave Salaga. This is true especially among the former acephalous communities described in the literature as the Gurunsi communities. The impact of raids on people and their communities was beyond devastating. Heritage tourism is right in saying there lies lots of evidence and memory in the former acephalous communities, but it goes further to co-opt this history into the linear origin

story. The latter is not only inaccurate but also distorts the historical fact that it was not necessarily the Atlantic slave trade that these sites memorialized. For the most part, memorialization among the former acephalous communities referred to the late 1800s raidings and kidnappings for the domestic trade in enslaved Africans. By the time tourists leave Salaga for the journey to the former acephalous communities, what they are going to see is a palimpsest already curated to fit neatly into the origin story of heritage tourism**.** In these lands to be visited, whole communities were devastated and town disappeared to the point where "it is reflected in settlement patterns and housing structures, leaving distinct traces of depopulation in abandoned compounds identifiable by slight elevation of the earth or groups of trees and crop plats nearby former villages. In addition, there are landmarks (trees, streams, caves, groves,) that local people still associate with the activities of the slave raiders and the resistance that was put against them" (Schramm 101-102).

All of the above is capitalized upon by heritage tourism and placed on the linear narrative of the European Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. However, what these memories hold are the people fighting kidnapping for the domestic trade in enslaved Africans, and the remnants of the European slave trade that still existed in the late 1800s (Holden 66-86). In fact, some scholars argue that most of the people taken captive from Northern Ghana at this time remained on the African continent (Hosley). This distortion creates a situation where Atlantic narratives write over and make palimpsests of local histories.

It is important to point out again that the Atlantic focus in the narrative of heritage tourism is supported by the Ghanaian government, local tourism industry, and sometimes local communities. The Upper East regional manager of the Ghana Tourist board whose jurisdiction includes the former acephalous communities where the Pikworo slave camp and Azaksuk

earthshrine are located echoed widely help opinion that has currency but is historically distorting when he said, “It is therefore right that if our brothers and sisters from the Diaspora are tracing their roots in Ghana, they must start from Northern Ghana because I believe most of them are from here. The view that African from the Diaspora ought to seek their roots in Northern Ghana fits into the origin story of heritage tourism. It is however troubling because the sites that have been identified as tourist stops to show living proof of this origination are sites that from the indigenous history commemorate the late 1890s raids and kidnapping for the domestic trade in enslaved Africans. What is more, and I will demonstrate in this chapter, it diminishes and silences the voices without power (i.e., the silent voices emanating from landscape).

The Pikworo slave camp is the closest slavery tourist site to the Azaksuk earthshine. Located thirty or so miles north toward the Burkina Faso border, the Pikworo slave camp site was developed as a project for community-based ecotourism (see fig.22 and fig.23).

Fig 22 Sign welcoming visitors to the Pikworo slave camp[mapio.net/images-p/20470521.jpg]

Fig 23 Tour guide at Pikworo narrates how Africans in captivity were forced to dig shallow cavities in the rock to serve as bowls for the scant feeding. Leavens, Anderson, flickr.com, 21 Oct.2008, www.flickr.com/photos/30141554@N05/2962955266/in/album-7215760

Pikworo seems to have all the key players, community, and a nonprofit organization supporting local tourism. However, the tour is tailored to fit neatly into the Atlantic narrative. In this frame, captives held at the camp were sold in Salaga, held in the dungeons on the coast, taken across the Atlantic, with their descendants returning to the site today. The tour completely leaves out the domestic trade and conflates the time period of the late 1800s, which the relics commemorate, with earlier centuries. Indeed, the whole narrative and the interpretations take on new Atlantic-focused meanings because heritage tourism is based on the idea that the people who will invest in tours are brothers and sisters from the Diaspora.

Another issue is that the narrative of pilgrimage and return of heritage tourism includes a narrative of putting the past to rest. By stressing that this horror has ended, diaspora tourism often in fact reifies popular narratives that paint the slave trade as a "prelude to modern freedom in the West," and as "an indelible stain on the African continent" (Hosley 15).

I agree with Hartman that the issue is not a denial of the connection between continental and Diasporan Africans but perhaps a short circuiting that actually impedes the real lessons offered to both groups. For Hartman, it was not necessarily a genealogical origin story that connected her to the people of northern Ghana but the "possibility of solidarity" among the "[…progeny of slaves and the children of commoners" (232, 204). Perhaps in the attempt to present a "living memory" crated for those interested in the history of the Atlantic slave trade, the industry failed to see that the connection lies in continued systems of oppression.

As we consider the iconography of heritage tourism in Northern Ghana, the Azaksuk earthshine however bears the traces of pitched battels against slave raiders. I later complicate this idea by critically examining what resistance meant for acephalous groups such as the Bulsa and show how their indigenous epistemologies could further inform our understanding of the continental African experience of the trade in enslaved Africans.

Complicating the Iconography of Heritage Tourism: Azaksuk Tanggbain

The Azaksuk earthshrine is located in the village of Fiisa in the town of Sandem, located in the Bulsa north district (see fig.24).

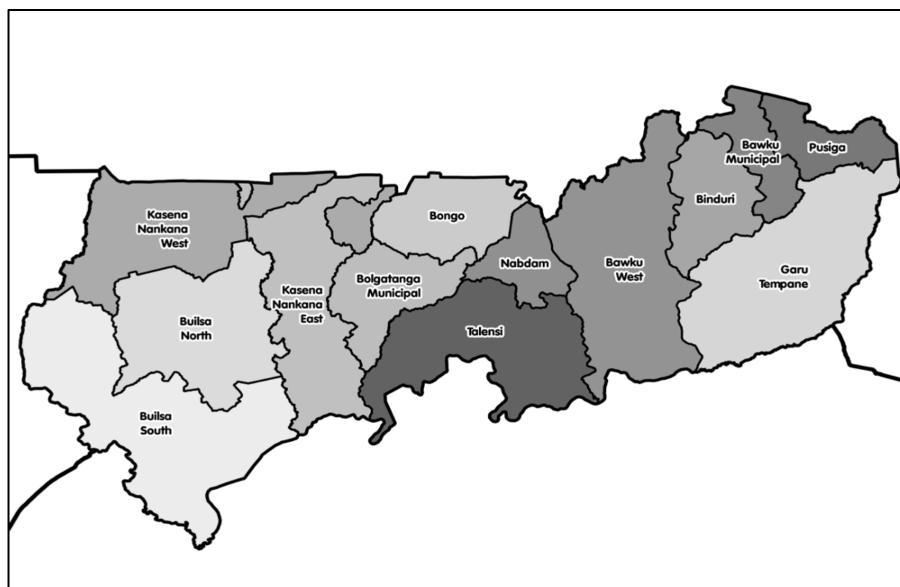

Fig 24 Map of the Upper East Region of Northern Ghana
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Districts_of_the_Upper_East_Region_(2012).svg

In the iconography of slavery tourism, the Azaksuk earthshrine tells a story of battle and resistance against slave raiders. However, what an earthshrine such as Azaksuk teaches moves beyond the Atlantic and Western-driven binaries of victim or warrior that heritage tourism places on the continental African experience. Further, I make the case that if heritage tourism is open to reading the landscape and letting go of expectations of overt narrativity, this could contribute to a nuanced understanding of the continental African experience. I understand that some of the propositions for creating slavery tourism sites in Northern Ghana come from official bodies in this location.[12] However, I do not wish to engage the argument of where slavery tourism should be expanded in Ghana. My intention is to discuss the particular risks to the local history and memorialization and the epistemic silencing of the continental African experience as the expansion of heritage tourism to places of spiritual communal significance continues. Schramm writes about the expansion of slavery tourism sites to Northern Ghana in this passage;

[12] A Ghanaian Tourism official in Northern Ghana made the argument that Northern Ghana needs to be at the center of heritage tourism since there is evidence that the people captured and taken across the Atlantic were mostly from Northern Ghana as opposed to Southern Ghana (Slave Trade Associated).

> Northern slave sites were incorporated into this narrative in a specific way, as authentic sites of "living memory." The themes that were emphasized in those representations were first, the victim status of northerners; second, the resistance that some communities put up against slave raiders; and, third, their ancestral connection to present-day African Americans. Markets such as Salaga, walled townships such as Gwollu, hideouts such as the Sankana caves, and finally camp sites such as Pikworo were among those landmarks that were chosen as potential places of interest. All of them bear local meaning, often framed in religious and spiritual terms. However, in the cause of this incorporation into the wider framework of (pilgrimage) tourism, this local significance becomes thoroughly transformed through the dominance of the transatlantic narrative and the interpretations that go along with it (96).

Like other sacred sites of historic significance to the people mentioned in the Schramm excerpt above, I will show how Azaksuk is at risk of being incorporated into the narrative of heritage tourism as a living memory in the wider frame of heritage tourism, which silences the local histories.

I use the narrative of Azaksuk to complicate these binaries and show that the Azaksuk earthshrine and what it teaches is beyond the binaries of victim and warrior. I provide a method of reading between the cracks that shows that the people were fighting more than the Atlantic slave trade, they were fighting against kidnapping for domestic Arab and European slave trades. I will demonstrate that in reading from between the cracks, the horror and violence experienced in these regions cannot be encapsulated in a single story or dominant historical narrative. The indigenous epistemology begs for an examination of timelines unaccounted for in the Atlantic narrative. In the years following the official abolition of the trade by the Royal African

Company, cash crops spread across West Africa. Persons kidnapped in the 1800s onward mostly remained on the African continent. Some were forced to join he colonial armies. In this narrative, the British become heroes by emphasizing their efforts to stop the trade in enslaved Africans in Northern Ghana in the later 1890s. This view essentializes the trade in enslaved Africans, and suggests that even though the British were originally involved in the trade in enslaved Africans, they came to recognize what it was, abolished it, and came back to stop the Africans who were now addicted to the slave trade, including Babatu the slave raider. This is how an Atlantic-dominated timeline distorts the history of the former acephalous groups. According to Ferme (qtd. in Hartman 205), there is a haunting presence of the trade for those who can read the landscape. I suggest that this haunting is reminiscent of the past but also of the present. Anywhere and anytime, people are forced to walk barefoot on the cowrie shells of the time'' there is a haunting presence of why humanity chose to enslave for greed, power, profit, and avarice (Mullen 28).

I will begin with a brief background on earthshrines and Azaksuk before going into my unearthing and analysis of silenced histories from between the cracks. For many years the Azaksuk earthshrine had been on the radar of mainly scholars and researchers studying the history of the acephalous communities in Northern Ghana.[13] As heritage tourism and the discourse of the origin story gained traction in Ghana in the early 1990s, it was only a matter of time before tours would extend to Northern Ghana and to the communities where the "slaves" were taken from. The shrine continues to draw the interest of researchers and student groups but

[13] In 2008, among the names listed in the visitor's handbook at the Azaksuk earthshrine were the scholars Kofi Anyidoho, Saidiya Hartman, Franz Kröeger, and Alison Howell to name a few ("Visitor's Handbook").

with its proximity to a popular stop on the slavery route, Pikworo slave camp[14], there have been several attempts to incorporate it as a tourist stop.

First of all, the process of turning a sacred site or earthshrine such as Azaksuk into a tourist attraction in and of itself overwrites the role and meaning it holds in the community and secondly, further distorts what an earthshine such as Azaksuk teaches. Known as *Tanggbain* in Buli (language of the Bulsa people), an earthshrine refers both to the spirit as well as the sacred place inhabited by an earth-spirit who receives regular sacrifices from the custodian(s). The role of custodian of the earthshrine has been passed down through generations of ancestors since the time of the Babatu slave wars. The location of the earthshrine "may be a sacred grove, tree, rock, hill, river" (Kröeger 346). Even though earthshrines serve different purposes, they are generally a place where people come together to pay homage, pray, hold rituals, and express their spirituality. Earthshrines also represent tangible peoples, lands, and events and "larger abstractions and powerful currents of meaning that are vital parts of a people's belief and faith" (Aniah and Yelfaanibe 2). Earthshrines function as sacred spaces in their various communities on "an ontological principle of containment by which people protect themselves, act and dwell in the world" (Douny 167). In other words, earthshrines in Northern Ghana as Carol Lentz describes, serve to "consolidate" the community in material and spiritual terms (18).

In specific terms, the Azaksuk earthshrine is both a physical and spiritual habitat of the memory of the people's resistance and courageous battles that led to the defeat of the notorious slave raider Babatu in the late 1800s (Kröeger *Raids and Refuge* 10). The elders of the village of Fiisa where the earthshrine is located, have the responsibility of attending to the spiritual and

[14] Located in the town of Nania near Paga in the Kasena District, the Pikworo slave camp is advertised as a community based ecotourism project located at a camp that was once used to hold African captives from nearby villages.

material matters pertaining to the earthshrine by performing rituals. On special ritual occasions, the elders bring out the remaining pieces of weapons, knives, and parts of rifles that were captured from Babatu's soldiers (see fig.25).

Fig 25 An elder shows pieces of weapons captured from slave raiders during the wars against Babatu, Leavens, Anderson, flickr.com, 21 Oct.2008, www.flickr.com/photos/30141554@N05/2962955254/in/album-72157607432099427/

Although there are other sites that mark the battle of the Bulsa warriors with Babatu including the Bulsa a spot named Akumcham near the town of Wiaga, and another location in the town of Kanjarga probably indicating that Babatu was defeated on three different occasions, the Azaksuk earthshine is the predominant location for the communal commemoration of Babatu's defeat. (Kröeger 112).

Although elders have been welcoming visitors for decades at the Azaksuk earthshrine, and as with other earthshrines of the Bulsa people, there were no signs leading to the earthshrine in 2009. There is no structure, fence, or any demarcation designating the space as an earthshrine. As my analysis will show in this chapter, this lack of signage or demarcation from the secular use of space, shows the need for indigenous Bulsa ways of reading space to recover the histories

of genocide and resistance that are overwritten by dominant histories of slavery. According to Bulsa tradition, earthshrines ought to be treated with "respect and reverence," but could also serve "secular purposes" in the way that every day is also sacred (Kröeger 18). Thus, the Bulsa worldview complicates the narrative of heritage tourism by maintaining a balance or seamless significance of the sacred and the secular. Additionally, earthshrines represent communal ownership of history and epistemology. When heritage tourism takes over an earthshine even if well-meaning such as in the case of the Pikworo slave camp, the function and history represented get reinterpreted through an Atlantic framing (Schramm, "The Slaves" 102-104).

Most visitors coming to the Azaksuk earthshine are looking for the "living memory" in the form of the pieces of weapons that the elders bring out to serve as "irrefutable evidence" Visitors listen and record the custodian of the earthshine recounting the narrative of the Babatu wars, in effect a "show and tell." However, an indigenous Afrocentric reading speaks to how the communities maintain the history of this time as well as incorporate the past into the present in seamless ways. For example, in addition to the fact that there are no signs leading to the earthshrine, it is also normal practice that most visitors often have to be led there by a native who knows the place and the people. It is accessible via community members rather than a sign on the road leading anyone to it. Secondly, once visitors arrive, often in the reception area outside of the elder's home, there is no indication that the hill on the side of the elder's compound is the habitat of the earthshrine. This is because the earthshrine also has a secular use. Children play on the rocks and it fits into the landscape. The process of visiting the earthshrine to seek information is indicative of an epistemology that suggests people cannot just come to the spot and acquire the information they need about the people's experience during the trade in enslaved Africans. As I

will show, it is an experience that not only exists on the tourist route but in the everyday lives of the people.

Part of the blame for turning sacred sites into pilgrimage tourism destinations has been placed on the Ghanaian government's promotion of heritage tourism. While acknowledging that there are "numerous contradictions inherent in the state's deployment of Ghana's pan African history" for pilgrimage tourism, Pierre suggests that we move "beyond discussions of intentionality" and consider "instead that the state's actions can also be read as reflecting in part, the country's marginalized position within the global political economy" (134). What I find especially compelling is Pierre's conclusion is that the problems with pilgrimage tourism in Ghana offer an opportunity "for expanding the terrain for the development of radical consciousness, the reconstruction of lost histories, and, ultimately, the formation of new political subjective" (136).

As I demonstrate in this section, the Azaksuk earthshrine complicates the iconography of heritage tourism in Northern Ghana. It calls for a reading between the cracks of Bulsa landscape and historiography in order to uncover the multi-faceted epistemology of resistance against kidnapping and enslavement. Such a reading lays bare a more holistic epistemology of resistance, including the multiple and combined offensive, defensive and protective strategies that Bulsa people used against their social death and physical genocide.

Broadening the Context of Resistance in Heritage Tourism

Who needs proof that any human being or groups of people would accept kidnapping, torture and enslavement without resistance? Or better why do we need proof that Africans fought back? The iconography of slave tourism operates along a binary representation of history. From

the dungeons to the Assin Manso river, to the site of the Salaga slave market in Northern Ghana, and the Pikworo slave camp, the one-dimensional status of victimhood is repeatedly shown. When there is mention of resistance, it is often to show what was done to those who resisted by the enslavers such as the dungeon for the condemned at the Cape Coast and Elmina dungeons. As living proof of the acephalous people's resistance, the remaining wall at the Gwollu site showcase the people's efforts to protect their town. The other group is the Bulsa and they are portrayed as the people who fought the slave raiders with their bows and arrows, the living proof of this is often the Azaksuk shrine where there is an earthshine dedicated to the battle and where remain pieces of the weapons of the soldiers. Before going any further, I would like to point out that this binary framing of victims or resisters is incomplete. The fact and the extent to which people resisted all the way from capture to final destination is evident in the tools of bondage and implements of torture of the oppressor. The iconography of victimhood also bears the deafening silence of the resistance of Africans in captivity.

However, the iconography that positions the acephalous communities, particularly the Bulsa war against Babatu solely within the context of the Atlantic slave trade, is wrong because the date of the March 1897 battle shows people were fighting against slave raiders, and not necessarily for the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. It was a fight against the remaining so-called illegal slave trade, forceful conscription to colonial armies, and plantation labor in West Africa. This labor was used to establish the official colonization following the Berlin conference in 1884/85.

It is true that Bulsa people were kidnapped and taken across the Atlantic long before the Babatu war that the Azaksuk earth shrine commemorates. Perhaps this is one reason why the tourism narratives seek to conflate the Babatu war with battles against kidnapping and

enslavement for the Atlantic slave trade in prior centuries. For example, Koelle interviewed two Bulsa people who had been released in Brazil in 1850 after being kidnapped for five to six years prior in their native villages: " Atiim . born in the district (Kandsare) (Kanjarga), where he lived until his eighteenth year… and Adsumano, …born in Nyasa.." (Koelle 6). By the time of the Babatu war of 1896, the Bulsa resistance was fighting the combined and often desperate demands of legal and illegal European ships on the coast and the Arab and the domestic slave trades with most captives taken and enslaved on agricultural plantations in West Africa (Der 28-32).

Resistance Beyond Pitched Battles

Pilgrimage tourists coming to the Azaksuk earthshrine are looking for evidence of the people's resistance only in the context of pitched battles against slave raiders, thus focusing on one dimension. Focusing only on the battles and wars as evidence of resistance, diminishes and makes invisible the other forms of resistance that people used interchangeably and simultaneously. As Diouf noted, the resistance strategies of acephalous groups of people throughout West Africa at the time included defense, offense, and protection (xix-xxi). Defensive strategies included fortifying settlements, deploying swift evacuation methods, building caverns to hide in, planting of poisonous plants and thorny bushes, re-designing architecture to make it difficult for raiders attacking at night to reach people in their bedrooms or as the sleep on their roofs, and using body art such as facial marks to help people who escaped slave caravans miles away from home to trace their way back home. Protective strategies included efforts to "redeem those who had been captured" and offensive strategies focused on "shipboard revolts" (Diouf xx, xxi). if we are willing to let go of narrow definitions of what resistance is, it might help understand that the people used multifaceted means to protect

themselves from kidnapping and enslavement, since the assault on these communities were multidimensional.

Fortifying Settlements and Architecture

Tili pa Yue te Gbong
The Ladder Gave the Roof its Name
- Buli Proverb 103 (Wangara 22).

Part of the protective resistance strategies of Bulsa communities involved taking advantage of the architecture of the homes to provide additional levels of security against slave raiders. The people used the intricate passageways of the compound to stall slave raiders attacking in the night. They shifted to using the "gbong" or mud roofs instead of thatch roofs to prevent kidnappers from setting fire to their roofs while they slept (Opoku-Agyemang J.A "African Resistance"). They also took advantage of the use of portable ladders to access the gbong to elude raiders. Finally, they sounded an alarm from the gbong to warn people several houses away of an attack (see fig.26). As the Buli proverb above teaches, looking beyond the roof to the ladders is another form of reading between the cracks and understanding how the built environment of Bulsa homes instantiate continental African epistemologies of resistance. To limit the people's resistance to only pitched battle overshadows much of their resistance on a daily basis. It is like looking at the roof to find the entire story of how it came to be without looking at the various strands of the ladder that gave the roof its name.

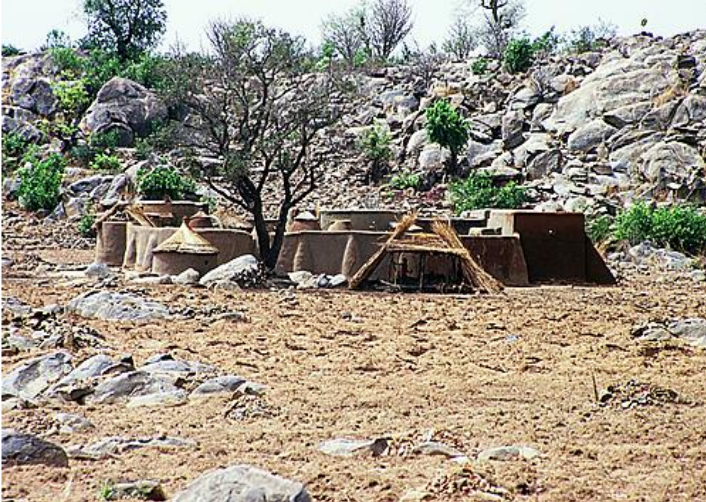

Fig 26 A traditional Bulsa compound showing the Gbong, buluk.de, https://www.buluk.de/

Swift Evacuation and Regrouping

The practice of evacuating homes and settlements and regrouping in safe predesignated locations to evade kidnapping armies illustrates a major defensive aspect of the multifaceted Bulsa epistemology of resistance. It is yet another form of resistance often overlooked because there are no records of battle and the focus is solely on offensive resistance. A reading that defines resistance from the perspective of the communities affected shows a carefully orchestrated alarm system that warned the villages of strangers approaching so they could evacuate to the hills and caverns. At the approach of the raiders, “the villagers fled their homes and sought safety in the bush, in caves, where these existed, or in the hills where the Zambarima cavalry could not operate; they returned to their homes only when the raiders had departed.” (Kröeger 34). In fact, five years after the last Babatu war, British colonizer Lieutenant- Colonel Morris reported on March 22 1902, “I went to Sinlieh (Sandem) with the same force as yesterday ...with the intention of ...destroying as many compounds as possible. No signs of the enemy were seen, the whole district about twenty square miles was abandoned” (“Report on the Expedition into the Tiansi (Bulsa) County 1902).

Some of the caverns that people took refuge in serve as earthshrines to this day. A few of these caverns are similar in structure, layout, and even have hidden shafts that connected them to each other. The Posuk cavern, Kröeger surmised, could hold about twenty people at a time. Others also show signs of people digging and adding to existing caverns to serve their purposes (33). Again, it is important to point out that the caverns were multifunctional, including serving overtime as residences of early ancestors, shelters for shepherds and hunters and, above all, places of refuge during all types of conflict" (Kröeger *Raids* 10). The images below were recorded by social anthropologist Kröeger in his research on slave raids and refuge of the Bulsa during the trade in enslaved Africans (see fig.27 and fig.28). The images indicate that there was a conscious well-planned and coordinated effort in this sort of defensive resistance against raids.

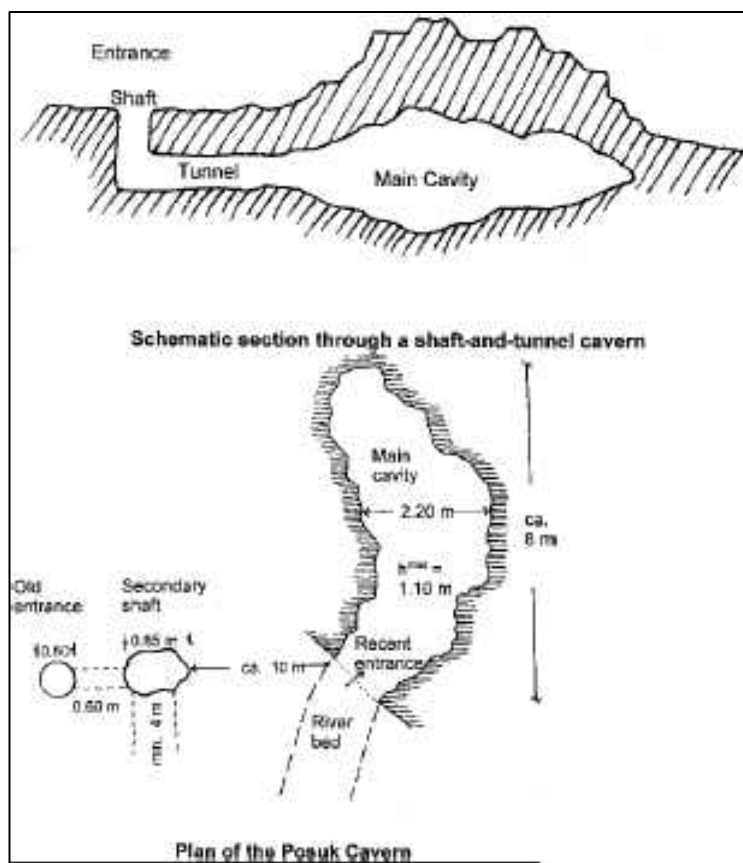

Fig 27 Layout of cavern, *html1-f.scribdassets.com/w9jnxa39c7cbocd/images/8-701d275927.jpg*

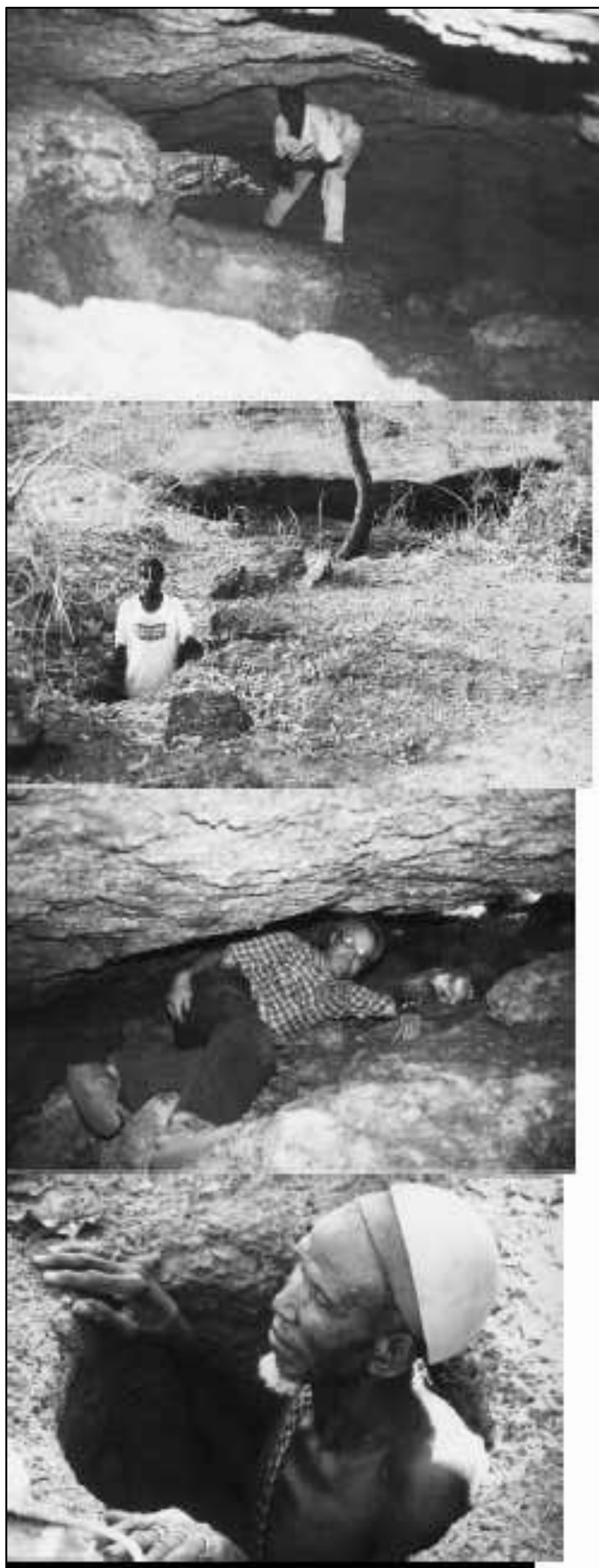

Fig 28. Posuk and Zamsa Caverns. From top: Interior of Posuk Cavern with new entrance, old entrance of Posuk cavern, main cavity of Posuk cavern, Mr. Agbandem at the entrance of the Zamsa cavern. Kröeger, Frantz. "Raids and Refuge: The Bulsa in Babatu's Slave Wars." Institute of African Studies, Research Review, vol. 24, no. 2, 2008, pp.25-38.

They Almost Finished Us: A May 2008 Vignette

On the rocks of Azaksuk earthshrine, the elders and one youth stand in a semi-circle. The lead elder is in meditation. He whispers something to the young man. The young man takes off, leaping across chunks and protrusions of rock and disappears into a cave. A few minutes later, he returns with a sack filled with clanging bits and parts of guns, knives, and broken axes. The lead elder receives the satchel and spreads out the contents. There are more clanging sounds, rusted pieces of guns, swords, and broken axes. He makes an invocation asking for permission from the ancestors to bring out the artifacts and to recount the story that was passed down to him to pass down to future generations.

By the time of the battle

We were almost finished

They finished our people

They finished us, they captured us, they killed us, they almost finished us.

It was the son of Azaksuk, Atankabe who went to the ancestors and made a huge sacrifice. He was offered medicine, which he took. The ancestors promised that his people would be victorious but told Atankabe that he would lose his life in the battle.

They asked our father if he was willing to undertake the ultimate sacrifice and he said yes, and the night before the battle he went out one more time to complete his communication with the spirits of the ancestors.

The next day all of Bulsa came together, they were joined by the Chana people and together they chased Babatu and his soldiers to this valley. It was here that the battle was pithed again leading to the defeat and chasing away of Babatu.

We used to have more weapons from the battle, but over the years, people came and stole pieces of them, so we have kept the remainder and only bring out a few for ceremony and rites.

Even though the earth shrine is not designated as a business, visitors often arrive with or at times without an appointment. They ask to hear the narrative of the Babatu war connected to the earthshrine and are taken to the sacred hill. The elders offer prayers and libation and bring out the remaining pieces of weapons from the battle of 1896. The elders with the assistance of other elders and youth perform a ritual of bringing out and returning the evidence. Then one elder narrates the account battle of defeating Babatu, the slave raider. Visitors make recordings, ask questions, offer their thanks and leave a gift (combinations of cash, drinks, tobacco, and kola nuts) before leaving.

Typically, the tourists take what they heard and captured in audio and photo from places like the Azaksuk earthshrine and fit it into a master narrative. Reed names this master narrative of pilgrimage tourism in Ghana a memoryscape which she defines as, "the ideas, images, and embodiments associated with the past that are selective in nature and subject to the dialectics of remembering and forgetting over time and space" (Reed 13). One major disconnect between the memoryscape of heritage tourism is that it makes no difference whether that memoryscape is being deployed at a sacred site, a tourist center, a chief's compound, or a hustler space established by a hustler of slavery tourism (Hartman 28). The commodified narrative therefore positions Ghanaians as subjects willing to sell any story, and African Americans as consumers willing to buy the story they came to hear.

As I show through my reading between the cracks of the landscape, the story of the people's resistance to kidnapping and enslavement is embedded in the collective memory and

can be perceived in the living culture, architecture, proverbs, songs, naming, and cultural practices among other modes of reckoning. (Opoku-Agyemang 212.) These resistance strategies can be found in the way the people adapted all components of their everyday lives into resistance strategies.

Chapter Conclusion

The elders of the Azaksuk earthshrine are cautious about arrangements that could turn the earthshrine into a business, but they have not necessarily been against the context of developing the place for mutual benefit to community and to visitors. To understand "how a site of history gets made into a successful tourist destination of a remembered past" Paula Ebron suggests examining the relationship between "identity formation, global politics and the culture of capitalism" (910). In the case of heritage tourism in Ghana, we need to understand how cultural capitalism draws from a convergence of national and global imaginings to first identify, commodify and re-package local lived social strategies of dealing with historical trauma into a consumer product. The global imaginings of what happened on the African continent are shaped by Atlantic perceptions, and the local Ghanaian tourism industry panders to these imaginings in rewriting local histories for tourist consumption. Some of the opposition to the promotion and commodification of sacred sites as tourist destinations argue the sites should be used strictly for educational purposes (Pierre 127, Opoku-Agyemang 210). I not only agree with this position, I add that a great part of that education will occur when we first recognize such sacred sites not just as a location but as part of living social strategies of dealing with and navigating local communities' historical trauma.

In the case of Northern Ghana, the language and context of tours to the north need to be decolonized. Even Ghanaian scholars refer to the north as the "hinterland," a term from the colonial era (Kankpeyeng 209). Hinterland in the English dictionary means the often-uncharted areas beyond a coastal district or a river's banks. It is true that Northern Ghana lies beyond the coastal areas of Ghana, but to equate it with "uncharted" territory by the same tourist industry that makes countless tours to the north is problematic. We are not a safari, and the memory of what happened there is not a safari. In addition to dehumanizing classifications about the inhabitants that are conjured up by such descriptions, the memoryscape that is sold is a travel back in time. In heritage tourism, it is neither the traveler nor the custodian of a living culture that determines what is shared and exchanged, but an industry that makes that determination. When visitors come to the earthshrine, it causes an interruption into the workday of everyone involved. Most of the elders are self-employed farmers. Time away from their crops is time not paid for. Although all the visitors offer a thank you gift in combinations of kola nuts, tobacco, cash, and gin, there is no fee for visiting the earthshrine. The elders shared that it is against tradition to turn away visitors, but they also have set times in the year when they make sacrifices to the earthshrine. It makes it difficult when visitors insist on seeing the remains from the battle, because each time the elders bring them out, they have to perform the whole ritual. One elder shared in conversation that the earthshrine is not a thing for sale, and their role as being custodians of the earthshrine is not a money-making role.

As Paulla Ebron writes, pilgrimage tourism in West Africa has a primary way "in which culture can be produced as a commodified object and, in the process, made available for ritual framing and appropriation" (910). In Northern Ghana, this process of commodification and reframing is erasing indigenous histories and epistemologies about the people's lived experience

during the trade in enslaved Africans. I conclude it takes a reading between the cracks to uncover how heritage tourism is overwriting history. The cracks live not on the main route of heritage tourism but in the everyday lives of the people. This epistemology is narrated in non-overt forms and allow for the excavation of the Bulsa epistemologies and narratives that are buried by heritage tourism.

In the case of the Azaksuk earthshrine (and other sacred sites of this nature), the earthshrine actively serves the people and is embedded in the daily lived-experience, both material and spiritual. What pilgrimage tourism is doing is identifying sites and co-opting them into a linear narrative that begins with people being kidnapped in the “bushes” of Northern Ghana, marched to Salaga, sold and marched to Kumasi, taken to the coast, and forced across the middle passage. Not only does this narrative not reflect the specific role and teaching from sacred sites such as the Azaksuk earthshine, but it also creates a commodified narrative that co-opts, generalizes, and derails the people’s lived strategies in navigating the historical trauma of kidnapping and enslavement.

CHAPTER 4: BEYOND FOSSILIZED REENACTMENTS OF THE PAST: THE BULSA FEOK FESTIVAL AS BRIDGE BETWEEN PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Introduction

Through applying critical Africana and decolonial indigenous studies lenses to the Bulsa Feok festival, this chapter develops the three overarching claims of my dissertation. To reiterate, the interventions of my dissertation are that first, it disrupts the artificial boundaries of "epistemic apartheid" imposed on indigenous knowledge (Rabaka 1-5). It also challenges the colonial frameworks embedded in heritage tourism, which divide Ghana into the coast and the "hinterland" or "bush" being in Northern Ghana. Secondly, this chapter makes the case that cultural knowledge about the people's lived experience during this horrific time of kidnapping and genocide may not be obvious to people who come looking for overt narrativization and memorialization of this traumatic history. Thirdly, I conclude that If we are to learn anything from the oral accounts dating back to the time of enslavement, we need to move from a framework of trade to a framework of genocide and kidnapping.

I bring into close analysis aspects of the Bulsa Feok festival that draw on the memory of the people's struggles against slave raiders in the late nineteenth century, popularly known as the Babatu slave wars. I discuss the Feok festival to further develop the dissertation's overarching thesis that continental Bulsa histories and epistemologies complicate discourses of heritage tourism and scholarship of the slave trade. Through autoethnography of the 2015 festival, I complicate heritage tourism's reduction of Babatu wars to (pitched battles) against slave raiders that relegate Bulsa oral traditions and performance to fossilized re-enactments of the past. I recover Bulsa histories, memories, and knowledges that are commemorated through Feok, and show how they emerge from and generate new meanings in the present through the performers.

For instance, the moment of the warrior hunter who wraps a band with Pan-African colors around his helmet's horns, and Ayuekambe's welcome of his niece form the Diaspora.

I provide a reading between the cracks to make the case that the indigenous epistemology of the Bulsa shows that the wars were about fighting genocide and destruction rather than any kind of trade. The oral tradition indicates that people were rounded up at gunpoint, burned out of their homes, hunted down, caught bound and held captive, and killed *en masse*. In sum, the pain of severance, and the trauma of forceful separation is what is repeatedly emphasized in the oral tradition, and not trade. Secondly, I show that the association of the Bulsa Feok with the wars against Babatu in the 1890s memorialize the people's resistance against kidnapping and enslavement for the domestic enslavement in West Africa and not the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans, as popular discourse in heritage tourism in Ghana assumes. As I show in the previous chapter, the 1890s was an era when the domestic trade in enslaved Africans and forced and coercive labor in West Africa was connected with the establishment of formal colonies by the British, French, and Germans. Heritage tourism leaps over this history by framing the people's experience within the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans to make it fit the origin story for Africans from the Diaspora. I discussed in chapter three how this absence distorts, greatly obscures, and writes over indigenous experience and epistemology.

Thirdly, I suggest the lessons embedded in the oral tradition seek to restore the humanity of enslaved Africans in the slave/heritage tourism route in Ghana especially, and Slavery Studies as a whole. Along the slavery tourism route in Ghana from the dungeons of the enslaved on the coast to the Salaga market of the enslaved and beyond, the stops on the heritage and slavery tourism route are replete with memories and accounts of victimized Africans in captivity. Part of the culturally specific knowledge of the Bulsa Feok and oral tradition is a crack in the wide field

of Slavery Studies and heritage tourism in Ghana to examine the original point and moment of Africana people's severance. The oral tradition shows how people were dealing with a different kind of genocide that brought physical, social and cultural death to the community, and offer glimpses into their struggle for over a century and half at the very least.

I engage this discourse in three overlapping and intersectional narratives. One follows the autoethnographic portrait of the late Ayuekambe (the war dancer), a warrior/hunter in the Bulsa Feok festival of 2015. A second narrative analyzes the oral tradition for cultural epistemology of the people's resistance against kidnapping and genocide. The third brings in scholarly discourse and analysis to show that what happened there marked the beginning of how specific groups of Africana peoples became commodities. In other words, I seek to understand how people were made to move from living normal lives to a life of social death, how they resisted, and what lessons or epistemology emerge from their own little-researched narratives. I ask how the lessons that emerge can inform heritage tourism, and most importantly how they can contribute to building relations between African peoples on the continent and in the diaspora in a constructive way.

History and Context of the Bulsa Feok Festival

According to oral tradition and literature, the Bulsa Feok is a traditional harvest festival held at the end of the planting and harvest period as a form of thanksgiving ritual (Apen). Initially, *feok* was held at the individual household level where prayers of thanks were offered to the gods and ancestors in appreciation for a successful farming, planting, and harvesting season (see fig.29). It included prayers for protection and blessing, and renewed goodwill among family, friends and community (Apen).

Fig 29 Symbolic feeding of the gods during the feast of feok at the family level. Apen, Mathias, buluk.de, 2014, *https://www.buluk.de*

Even though the feok is still practiced at the household level among many Bulsa families to this day, it was in 1974 that the annual festival of the Feok was introduced into Bulsa as an expression of Bulsa culture and history as well as a way to spread unity and goodwill among all Bulsa people (Apen). The reason for this establishment was multi-faceted. The actors behind its creation included the Bulsa Traditional Chiefs and elders, the Bulsa District Administration, and the Bulsa Youth Association. This collaboration brought together the major bodies from Buluk at the time including representation from the custodians of Bulsa culture, the national and local government administration, and the Bulsa youth made up of students and professionals. The primary reasons for the creation of this event included the need for a major annual event similar to other annual harvest festivals in other parts of Ghana, but one that was truly unique to Bulsa culture and history. The overarching drive was that such a major annual festival would promote unity, celebrate Bulsa history and culture and serve as a platform for Bulsa development. It is important to note that even though the founders of the Bulsa Feok named tourism as one of their objectives it was not necessarily in the specific context of slavery tourism. The official objectives of the Bulsa Feok festival established in 1974 included the following:

> To give thanks to God and the ancestors of the land [*tanggbana*] for a successful farming session.

To bring Bulsa at home and abroad together to fraternize

To be a forum for the propagation of government policy

To serve as a launch pad for development projects

To attract tourists to the district

To showcase traditional Bulsa culture

To revive the history of Buluk (Apen).

Held over several days, some of the major events include: archery, wrestling, soccer, singing, drumming and dancing and occasionally drama, climaxing with a grand durbar chaired by the Paramount Chief of the Bulsa people (see fig.30 and fig.31).

Fig 30 Warrior/hunters at Feok festival, northalive.com, 28 April 2016, www.northalive.com/pull-him-down-phd-a-defeat-to-the-northern-pride/

Fig 31 Warriors/dancers wearing smocks with talismans. Jolinaiko Eco Tours, [*www.picuki.com/media/1939162492043499176*](www.picuki.com/media/1939162492043499176)

As stated in the beginning of this chapter the Bulsa Feok and *leelik* in particular have histories and meanings that exceed the trade in enslaved Africans and wars of resistance. The *leelik* is a ritual dance performed by warrior hunters in war regalia that historically "signifies a call to war" (Apen). In Bulsa cultural tradition, *leelik* is performed as part of the ritual to honor a high profile elder during the final funeral rites of the said elder. However, because of the popularity of the *leelik* and the visual representations of how the Bulsa fought against slave raiders, the entire Feok is sometimes mistaken as a celebration solely focused on re-enacting the wars against slave raiders. This not only strips the Feok and *leelik* out of the original meanings, it makes one part of the history of the people the entire narrative. Additionally, with the growth of heritage tourism in Northern Ghana, the Bulsa Feok is now being cast as a memorization of the fight against the Atlantic slave trade (Bailey).

The need to frame the Bulsa Feok strictly within the context of wars against the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans deserves further comment. Heritage tourism in Ghana operates on a binary representation of the continental African history of the trade in enslaved Africans. As discussed in the previous chapter, most of the heritage tourist sites are focused on the victimization and brutalization of Africans in captivity with only a handful of sites such as the Gwollu walls showcasing how people resisted against capture. This has resulted in an artificial crisis for heritage tourism in lacking sites that show how the people fought back. I call this an artificial crisis because the same iconography that shows the brutality and victimization of Africans in captivity also is evidence of how they fought for their freedom at all points. The shackles, chains and holding cells on the coast, implements of torture and torturous bondage at Salaga, guard posts and punishment rock of Pikworo, and all speak of the inhumanity of the enslaver, but most clearly each also silently speaks to the extent to which Africans in bondage fought at each moment to obtain their humanity and freedom. Some of the extreme measures to conceal captives at holding camps such as Pikworo among the former acephalous groups in particular, also reflect the extent to which communities resisted through search and rescue resistance efforts.

Indeed, the inability of heritage tourism to simultaneously articulate African resistance in each site falls into dominant misunderstanding that the trade in enslaved Africans succeeded because people did not fight back. I suggest that perhaps it was because people fought back that it was not millions more taken captive and lives lost in the process. Indeed, as I show in this chapter, there is much more to learn from the specific context of *leelik* and the wars against Babatu's slave raiders re-enacted at the Feok (see fig.32). It can increase our understanding of

the experience of the acephalous communities within the cracks of dominant representations of heritage tourism.

Fig 32 2002 Feok: Babatu caught. Apen, Mathias, buluk.de, 2014, www.buluk.de/Buluk8/ApenBabatu.jpg

Historically, the *leelik* war dance was adopted into the Feok festival for three main reasons; entertainment, a showcasing and preservation of the culture of the Bulsa, and lastly, to revive the historic past of the brave Bulsa warriors who fought and defeated the notorious Zambarima slave raiders on three occasions (twice in battles at Kanjak /Kanjarga and once at Sandem (Apen; Kröeger). To memorialize the latter at the Feok festival Bulsa, men dressed in warrior/hunter regalia from all towns and villages in Buluk accompanied by drummers and other musicians engage in slow maneuvering *leelik*, known as the war dance in modern times (see fig.33).

Fig 33 Bulsa warrior /hunters performing the leelik war dance at Feok festival. Thesavannaonline.com

It is a showing up of warrior hunters from all Bulsa towns and villages in their troops to participate in the festival on behalf of their representative population for the entire community. Unlike other re-enactments from similar time periods held in other parts of Ghana such as the coast, the Bulsa war dance has maintained its original form, which predates the slave wars and does not include dramatizations of kidnapping and victimization of Africana in captivity by their slave trading captors.

The War Dancer Moves When the Soundtrack of Resistance Calls

And we the people accept the dancer's role as the center of our lives
—in subtle flexion of hands and fingers, our prayers;
in his thrusting arms—our thanksgiving;
in his stamp and pause; our indignation;
in his leap and turns—our defiance;
in his bow—our allegiance,
his halting Steps—our reverence.
Thus, he dances, not alone, but with us and we with him.

We are not spectators but co-creators and participants in the dramas of the African way of life.
Albert Mawere Opoku

"For dancing, he said, to keep his bloodlines open."
Sixo in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

An important component of the Bulsa Feok which also serves as source of indigenous epistemology is songs dating back to the time of the slave wars (see fig.34). Again, it is important to note that all of the songs are sung and performed on various occasions, rituals, and at events outside of the Feok festival. I make the case that these songs not only serve as soundtrack of the people's lived experience of the time, their continued performance in everyday rituals and cultural practices map their descendants' ongoing strategies in dealing with this traumatizing history.

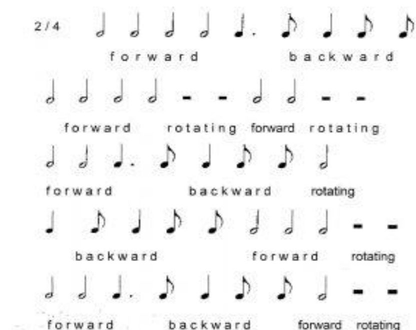

Fig 34 Sound and movement of the Bulsa leelik war dance. Kröeger, Franz, buluk.de, https://www.buluk.de/

I analyze some of the songs to unearth hidden Bulsa epistemology of resistance as related to the trade in enslaved Africans in the late 1890s. In doing so, I disrupt the discourse of slavery in heritage tourism among the former acephalous groups of Northern Ghana. In addition, I apply autoethnography centering on the Feok festival of 2015 and the character of one of the leading warrior hunters also known as war dancers, Ayuekambe, to reflect the significance of the feok to the communal life from which it emerges. I do this by presenting a background on Ayuekambe

and showing the significance of the feok to the communal life from which it emerges. Additionally, I contextualize leelik within the lives of the people by honoring Ayuekambe's life, who was a young elder when he died. As with all Bulsa elders the leelik is performed to honor the elder of the funeral rites. For Ayuekambe the war dancer, this section also represents humble textual leelik in his honor.

Vignette One: Feok Festival Grounds (December 18, 2015)

Some people's warriors march in straight lines, turn in sharp angles and come to a stop by the command of the whistle, but if you want your warriors to rotate in the landscape like bushes in the savannah, if you want your warriors to move like the caterpillar, to dance, bend, crawl and meld into the landscape like a herd of the west African savannah buffalo, you need the critical nuance of the flute song. The flute song sounds like a little shepherd blowing out her soul as she moves with her herd, yet it conveys the intricate notes of the tonal Buli language offering precise directions to warriors. In Buli the flute is called a *wiik* (singular) and (*wiiksa)* plural, and the ones that accompany the war dancers are the lead speakers of ancestral lyrics coming from the ensemble of horns, drums, bells, and other instruments. As I stood at the durbar grounds waiting for the Feok festival to begin, I heard the drumming approaching from a distance. Next, a single flute wail is joined by an ensemble of small and mid-size drums and horns. The double bell *(sinleng)* insists in ear-scrapping tone lighthearted at times other times deep, slow and desperate keeping forward the dance, keeping the steady the beat.

Four quick steps forward

Backwards slowly one, two steps

Sideways the warriors turn

In a single motion the entire troop crouches

horns ready to lock

It is either victory

or death

but death fighting.

This is a gathering of warrior hunters

camouflaged like a dusty marauding

of the un-domesticate-able

West Africa savannah buffalo

Vignette Two: Ayuekambe, Custodian of the War Dance

Ayuekambe walks down a familiar path onto the sandy main road leading into the center of town. It is harmattan season in Northern Ghana where the rising sun absorbs the last of the dew from the wings of sleepy grasshoppers. At fifty, Ayuekambe walks with the spring of his youthful years even if a bit hunched over. Amidst the drumming coming from different groups at the durbar grounds, Ayuekambe makes out the distinct lyrics of the buffalo horn. Some of the lyrics date back to over two hundred years. It is the day of the annual Feok festival in Northern Ghana, bringing together the Bulsa community from all towns and villages of the Bulsa area, from various parts of Ghana, and the diasporas to celebrate community and reaffirm a unity of purpose for the development for Buluk.

Ayuekambe continues to walk toward the central part of town. He soon finds his fellow warriors from his village of Kalbiisa gathered at his cousin's house and he changes into his warrior/ hunter regalia passed down from generations of his ancestors. He completes his regalia

with the *namarik*-quiver on his upper left arm and the *zukchiak*/horned helmet, but not before picking up and adjusting his bow. Attached to the front and back of his smock, are several leather amulets and talismans symbolizing spiritual protection.

Ayuekambe leads his troop of warrior hunters toward the durbar ground. The drumbeat is brisk. The double bell carries the overarching sense of purpose by keeping a faster beat. The horn and the flute work interchangeably to sing out the lyrics of one of the old songs of wars of resistance:

My yuen ni zak gbaninya tan jam de

ni zak gbaninya tan jam de

Ku dan pai tonka ni tong

Ku k an pai tongka ni bas

I said bring the protection here

Bring the shields right here.

If the sign is given to release the shower of arrows, then shoot away

If the sign is not given, hold off.

(from Bulsa oral tradition and translated by author)

The messages embedded in the lyrics speak to one of the most decisive reasons for victory of the Babatu slave wars. Taking advantage of the window where Babatu's army of slave raiders were re-loading their guns, the Bulsa warriors unleashed thousands of arrows during the enemy's powerless moment, leading to victory (Howell 189). As explained in the previous chapter, even though Babatu and his army had superior weaponry, they were not aware that the Bulsa warriors had gained the critical intelligence that their Danish guns were useless when they were reloading. Directed by messages embedded in the lyrics of flutes and horns, the Bulsa

warriors would unleash thousands of poisoned arrows on Babatu's army at the precise moment they were reloading. Allison Howell named this resistance strategy as "showers of arrows" in a most apt visualization of the maneuver. As an epistemology of resistance, the *showers of arrows* of the Bulsa warriors teaches the importance of looking between the cracks of dominant narratives to access the peoples' agency during the trade in enslaved Africans.

Ayuekambe feels the weight of his regalia on his shoulders as he leads his clan's warrior hunters in the dance strides and rotation movement known as the *leelik/*war dance. Above the line of warriors, a cloud of dust wavers as if propelled by the vibration of drums, horns, flutes, and bells. Ayuekambe moves at a slow pace. He pauses now, and then, to keenly everything and everyone in sight, continues the march. His goal is to lead the warrior troop to their location for the event.

Ayuekambe's heartbeat is in sync with the double bell. Each war dancer has their specific twist to the dance, some move like the antelope, others pounce like the lion, but the most experienced dancers, stalk in stealth and spring from the tip toes as they bend, crouch, they aim and they wait, listening for a horn blowing from afar that will signal the release of the shower of arrows. For Ayuekambe it is his responsibility to keep as leader of the troupe to count the number of steps backwards, forwards and in rotation with bows and arrows drawn and taught. Now the horn blows the lyrics of another old song:

Ba taam yaku ŋaa ŋnyiŋ daasi lonsi.

Ba taam yaku ŋaa ŋnyiŋ daasi lonsi

Ba nak yaku, a nak yanku

Ba taam yaku ŋaa ŋnyiŋ

Le kua siŋ kama, be taam

Yaku ŋaaŋnyiŋ daasi lonsi

(Saboro, Buli Song Text #44, *Slavery*)

They should go behind the elephant and push it down

They should go behind the elephant and push it down

They should defeat the elephant

Defeat the elephant

They should go behind it for it will go down

They should go behind the elephant and push it down

(Translation in Saboro, Buli Song Text #44, *Slavery*)

Targeted because they were not organized in military form, the acephalous communities such as the Bulsa learned very quickly how to engage the enemy with guerilla strategies (Kröeger). They used language the slave raider did not understand, rendering messages via drum horn and flute code to warriors, using landmarks, codified flute and horn commands and messages to warriors and to community members in refuge of caves and baobab grooves. The lyrics are in a language that the slave raiders do not understand, and even if they had hostages to interpret for them, then the code would come to play. The imagery shows that they acknowledge the might of the enemy the "elephant," but it is only going to be with a guerilla strategy that can defeat the enemy.

Ayuekambe came to lead this dance from watching elders before him leading the dance each year. His charge is to lead in the spirit of his ancestors before him and on behalf of the living members of his clan, and for the benefit of generations to come, so the narrative continues, and the story continues to be the repository for cultural knowledge. His ancestors used to the

maximum what they had at hand, their knowledge of the land, and ability to blend into the landscape. In his imagination he visualizes his ancestors in earth tone colors, moving across the landscape. He recalls stories of warriors learning to sit quietly and softly anthills without being bitten by the ants. Ayuekambe's reflection is taken over when some from the crowd join the musicians communal singing, chanting, and stomping.

A boni chaaba, ti boni chaab yoo,

Fidan chiiba zaani ti boni chaab

A boni chaaba, ti boni chaab yoo,

Fi dan chiib zaani ti boni chaab,

Nankoŋbaliiuk la nak ku a chali,

Naara katuak, fi dan togsi

Yegyega, ku gebi keribi, tama

Me siaya, ni dan chiib zaani ti boni chaab.

(Saboro, Buli Song Text 34)

Let's chop each other into pieces

If you are brave and stand

We will chop each other into pieces

If you stand, we will chop each other into pieces

We are like the millipede, even if we

Are wounded, we will fight on and not surrender.

We are like vinegar made from the stalks of early millet

If you put so much in your soup, it will be too

Concentrated and you will not be able to eat it

We have agreed that if you are brave

To fight us; we will chop each other into pieces

(Translation. Saboro, Buli Song Text #34)

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It was a time when the people agreed that they had no other choice than bring everything to bear in their fight against the enemy. The metaphor of the millipede is one that warriors could immediately relate to, because it is still not uncommon to slice a millipede into two during hoeing, but unlike other creatures even a sliced-up millipede continues to struggle and fight even when segmented. On the surface level, this song speaks to the courage and resolve of warriors to never surrender. On another level it is a reference to the possibility of separation, the courage to continue fighting no matter where one is taken, no matter how faraway one is severed from the community to not lose the resolve to struggle till freedom or death. Separation from family, clan, and loved ones continue to be a motif in the Bulsa song texts, attesting to the fact that this is one area of studies that has not been sufficiently dealt with in Slavery Studies on the African continent. That area is the lived experience of those on the African continent, the different peoples and how the trade in enslaved Africans impacted them sometimes in drastically different ways.

The Bulsa song cited above, *A boni chaaba, ti boni chaab yoo***,** popularized for its rhythm and horrific imagery continues to be sung in both rituals and as well as in everyday life. In some Ghanaian contexts, this song is sometimes used to profile the Bulsa as "savages" or "a fighting people." The lessons of this song recorded as one of the songs dating back from the time of raids

and kidnapping[15] speak to the resolve to fight till victory or death. There was not going to be defeat or retreat, only death or victory. Additionally, it calls to question as to why a small community of town and villages found themselves in this place where they were faced with death on all sides; social death if kidnapped, physical death while fighting, or a life of always fighting the above which could happen at any time or moment.

As the warriors approach the durbar grounds, the horns on the helmet of one of the warriors stands out from the rest with a little strip of the Pan-African colors wrapped around their base. The horns move up and down. They seem to symbolize a connection in their silent movement. The wars were to fight the Babatu slave raiders, but what binds Africana communities is the collective struggle for Black liberation, and specifically the struggle for black people to have the right to their full humanity anywhere on this planet. In this struggle I see a connection between the warriors' resistance dance to keep the narrative and epistemology alive and a library thirty-six miles away designed by a world-renown African American architect who came to Ghana and contributed his skill in the context of Pan-Africanism.

Max Bond combined indigenous architecture to build a library to meet local needs in Bolgatanga in1967, far away from the capital of Ghana in the Upper East region of the former acephalous communities. To this day, the library serves its purpose. In the warriors horns, I see a connection between the conclusion of the scholar Hartman whose signature in the guest books of the Azaksuk earthshrine placed her in Buluk in the early 2000s. After following the heritage tourism route, Hartman concluded that the historical connection she felt with the former acephalous communities as an African American did not have to do with the origin story or a

[15] See Saboro for Buli song text 34.

linear search to where African ancestors were taken from but with the present oppressions facing African peoples.

Ayuekambe continue to lead his troop moving majestically with a faraway look in his eyes. He lurches his axe forward, bow on the side, and quiver of arrows on his left upper arm. His smock is cooked in herbs and the talismans and amulets dance about as he rotates in shaking motion. His pants are made of the same rich traditional mud cloth, huge at the waist and narrow at the ankle giving each step and his overall movement a certain arc of graceful precision. Ayuekambe takes a half turn to the side. His helmet with buffalo horns moves in rhythm to the left and to the right.[16] Behind him comes in single file thirty-six warriors, each representing their clan or household. Next, come the musicians, drumming, blowing horn and flute, several women flanking the sides, some holding fans and waving at the warriors, one woman on carries a water jar.

In the kind of side dramatization of the leelik that often happens while people are waiting for the festival to begin Ayuekambe and his troop go into performance. Ayuekambe's steps are in sync with the line of warrior dancers behind him. They go in stealth, as he goes on tip toe, with the troop's waving horns mimicking the powerful movement of a herd of buffalo breaking through thicket. With their smocks fading into the surrounding shrub and brown earth, each warrior is positioned with poisoned arrows ready to unleash but must listen attentively for the sign to unleash the shower of arrows. A false alarm, Ayuekambe decides. Now it is time to fan the troop out to surround the *kanbong/colonizer/kidnapper.* Take advantage of the bush and brush, the brown earth and fan out, the buffalo horn repeats. Stretch like the cat. The crowd cheers.

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[16]There is suggestion that the helmet may be a later aesthetic addition as it may not have been practical for war (See buluk.de)

Then the flutes and horns take up the song:

Ŋooma poom de kook

Ŋooma poom de kook

Poom de kook

Poom de kook

Dogbiak laa pa ŋanta

(Saboro Buli Song Text 43)

Even if the mice are a hundred

Even if the mice are a hundred

Even a hundred

Even a hundred

The cat can stretch itself and catch them all

(Translation. Saboro, Buli Song Text #43)

When it comes to the limited study of family separation as a result of the trade in enslaved Africans on the African continent, I can only speculate that African complicity in the kidnapping, sale, and enslavement of other Africans make this a difficult topic to research. From the viewpoint of targeted acephalous groups, it did not matter whether it was Babatu with Danish guns, Asante, Moshi, or Gonja kidnappers or mercenaries. The acephalous groups such as the Bulsa were fighting for their very lives against the *kanbong*—colonizer—sometimes including the people to the south, strangers, people from other lands, or simply non-neighbors. The Bulsa were in a fight against genocide, kidnapping and separation of family. This point is particularly

important because it speaks to the same oppression by different shape-shifters playing sometimes conflicting roles depending on what was most convenient over the course of time.

Let me clarify; for instance, the British were known to have been responsible for the creation of the Royal African Company and profited from the forced transportation of enslaved Africans to the Americas in the millions. By the time of the Babatu wars in 1890s, the same British were defenders of the people against kidnapping and enslavement for the remaining European, Arab and Domestic slave trades. The British and the French at this time were more interested in gaining territory in the scramble for and partitioning of Africa than criminalizing slave raiders. The notorious slave raider Babatu is reported to have been arrested and then freed by the British on the promise that he would no longer engage in slave raiding. He lived in the town of Yendi in Northern Ghana, then officially under a protectorate of the British crown as a free man until his death (Der 23).

Again, it is crucial to consider the driving forces behind the victimization of acephalous groups such as the Bulsa. Those forces in the 1890s in Northern Ghana, as this dissertation shows, were specifically the British's growing agricultural and mining industries to the south. The labor of kidnapped people was exploited on plantations in West Africa, and across the Sahara Desert to the north. Perhaps the song from this time has something to say about present day separations and forced labor. At this time in the late 1800s, the coastal regions of Ghana constituted the British colony of the Gold Coast. The primary goal was trade in gold and agricultural products of palm kernel but with industrialization in Europe in the 19th century including the mechanization of chocolate production came the need for more cocoa (Shillington 337). British colonial rule in Ghana is deeply connected to cocoa production (see fig.35).

> In 1879 a blacksmith, Tetteh Quarshie, took some cocoa seeds from Spanish Fernando Po home to the Gold Coast where, once planted, they flourished. By the 1890s, with the active support of the British administration, thousands of cocoa tree seedlings had been sold to local African farmers. (Shillington 337).

The cocoa growing industry grew so fast that by 1911, Ghana, then the Gold Coast, was the world’s greatest producer of cocoa (Iliffe 203).

Fig 35. 1889 British advertisement for Cadbury’s cocoa

The connection between the domestic trade in enslavement has to do with this stage in the development of the cash crop economy of European colonization in the late 1800s to the early 1900s. The unheard and the unseen in the force at that time is the lives and labor for those kidnapped exploited, enslaved, coerced, and whose labor was exploited to grow those products. It would be remiss not to make the connection that today’s Cocoa farms in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana still use child labor, and sometimes in circumstances akin to enslavement to this day. The line of people who profit directly can be traced from local bank accounts to global giants of the cocoa industry like Nestle. Families are still being separated according to the arrangement of

the global industry. There are also many human rights abuses behind the products of many present-day big-name industries. The songs are not simply artefacts but voices of the ancestors teaching about human greed and avarice that led to the unspeakable for other humans, not just as history but reminders that those patterns follow us to this day.

Chapter Closing Vignette: Sandema, Durbar Grounds, December 18, 2015

"When a griot dies it is as though a library has burned down"
Amadou Hampate Ba

Ayuekambe the Nurturer Warrior

I close this chapter with a dedication to my late cousin Ayuekambe Atuire, a dear brother I last saw in war dance at the Feok festival of December 2015. As a child it was evident that Ayuekambe would grow up to be a wonderful male mother.[17] From a very early age he earned the nickname *At Once*. Someone felt that was the most descriptive phrase to capture Ayuekambe's exceptional emotional intelligence. He was the kind of friend you wanted around if you had to receive some really bad news because he would know how to reach out and basically hold you. We called Ayuekambe "At Once" because once someone fell off a tree, or sprained their ankle while playing, Ayuekambe immediately knew what to do, and which adult to run to for help. He was still like that in adulthood. A farmer by profession, he was a father of two and stepdad of one. He took over the leadership role of his clan from his uncle who was now too old to take on the responsibilities. He was the sole provider for his household comprising his wife, three children and his mother. He lived in the same compound that his father built, which adjoined the living space of others from his clan.

[17] In the Bulsa tradition, a man is supposed to be nurturing in a motherly way towards his sister's children.

Having arrived at the durbar grounds a few minutes before the warrior dancers festivities begun, my daughter and I heard the announcement of the arrival of the first group of war dancers to the grounds over the microphones- the Kalbiisa war dancers led by Ayuekambe Atuire. Then he emerged, amidst drum and horns and flute music, he led his troop danced forward, backwards, and then in rotation. As he turned, Ayuekambe recognized my daughter Atengle (his daughter in the Bulsa context). He had not seen her in eight years since she last visited, and he led the warriors to surround her. As they welcomed her back home, one of the drummers placed his drumstick on her shoulder- tia tia tia nlewa tiaaa, welcome, welcome my daughter, and then they did a half rotation and just like that they moved on.

Ayuekambe always seems to show up just when you least expect him and when you need him the most. Many years before this day, I had returned home to Kalbiisa from Denver, Colorado after my mother died. I still recall very distinctly when I got out of the car at the village and there was a crowd of mourners gathered outside the house. Ayuekambe shot straight through the crowd as I was trying to figure out how to hold it together as I recognized some of my other mothers (my late mother friends) and it suddenly hit home for the first time that my mother was no longer among these mothers that I have always seen together. Ayuekambe walked straight to me and without a word stretched out his long arms, held me close and repeated my name three times. Just as I was about to melt into this soft energy he said in a very manly voice "Yi fi dek," "Man, you got to hold it together," but still held me for a few moments before letting go. Somehow after that, I was able to greet the crowd without falling apart. There was a way Ayuekambe always knew how you felt and what you needed and was never hesitant to offer his help.

I believe Ayuekambe's ability to embrace sharp edges into roundness earned him the nickname "At Once." That someone who always seems to know how and when and offers a soft place for others in times of distress. He is the embodiment of the someone who holds in balance the concept of male mothers. In other words, he is good at fulfilling the role of an uncle who offers maternal love to his sisters' children. In Buli tradition, a child expects love that is nurturing and motherly from all of the relatives (male and female) of the child's mother. And the child expects paternal love that is tough love combined with a provider role from all relatives of the child's father. So, the same man who offers a maternal kind of love to his sister's children is expected to turn around and offer paternal kind of love to his brother's children. When it comes to taking care of children in the community, gender roles are determined not so much by sex as by the attempt to make sure that all children receive a wrapped-around kind of love (maternal and paternal) from the adult community.

The day after we saw Ayuekambe at the feok festival, we found out he had won the bow and arrow shooting completion of the showers of arrow shooting completion. He was the winning marksman for the 2015 Feok competition. Ayuekambe was in his prime, a farmer hunter, warrior provider.

But less than two years later I received one of those calls people living far away from home dread receiving in the middle of the night. Ayuekambe had passed after a short illness. May your life, your work, your gentle energy, your teaching, and love of humanity, and your dancing continue to flourish in the lives of all those you have touched, and those touched by your work.

If Could Leelik, I would leelik in your honor.

Yaa yiri Nwoa- may the Ancestors accept this humble prayer.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: BETWEEN THE CRACKS OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT THEY WANT US TO BE

"You cannot compromise my humanity in order that you explore your own ambiguity. I cannot accept that. My humanity is not to be debated, nor is it to be used simply to illustrate European problems" Chinua Achebe (qtd. in Clarke and Porter 206).

I have shown in the preceding chapters how heritage tourism produces a singular narrative of slavery that silences popular memorialization of kidnapping and enslavement in Northern Ghana. Additionally, I developed a method for reading between the cracks of the spaces where these counter histories are reproduced and lived through sacred sites and commemorative events in chapters three and four. This final chapter is informed by the storytelling traditions of the Bulsa. I use autoethnography and creative nonfiction to challenge destructive stereotypes of people from Northern Ghana. I adapt autoethnography and creative nonfiction rather than social science to develop another mode of countering the silence of official narratives for Bulsa space, culture and epistemology to emerge. Lastly, I am a storyteller, it is what my community gave me. I use the stories of everyday people in their daily lives as attempt to loop this work back to the community.

The first story is about the composite character, Akpilima, a custodian of the earth whose shrine is under pressure to be turned into a heritage tourist site in the Upper East region of Ghana. The story focuses on his relationship with the earth to make a statement about direct land tenure as it existed in many parts of Ghana prior to the British colonization and the need for land

for use in cash crop farming. It is an ongoing story of displacement and in physical sense as well about narrative displacement due to heritage tourism and continued Atlantic rankings of West African subjectivities. As a Tengnyono, Akpilima follows the epistemology of taking care of the earth as passed down by his ancestors. The Buli concept of "Nyono" means custodian and is sometimes translated as owner. It is important to point out that the term of "custodian" in West Africa involves quite a different notion from the English word. It does not mean the custodian has control or full command over the thing but that the custodian is responsible for it towards the community of the living and the dead to which the "owner" belongs" (Schott,95).

A custodian of the earth in Bulsa communities as in other West African cultural traditions is an earth-priest as in Achebe's Ezeulu in Arrow of God. The tengnyono has a unique role in performing spiritual rites on behalf of the community (Kröeger 349). The role of the tengnyono involves responsibilities of maintaining peaceful relations between the needs and wishes of the ancestors, the living, and the yet unborn. A tengnyono is therefore not only a custodian of the earth but also a custodian of the ways of the community and therefore is a custodian of culture and a person who loves this earth upon which their community lives.

Custodian of the Earth Shrine - Atenngyono Baba Akpilima

Teng-kan-kpi-n-kan-kpi / I will exist as long as the earth exists.

Buli Proverb (Kröeger 349)

Hoe snug on his left shoulder, walking staff in right hand, Baba Akpilima cuts the early morning dew into his millet field. He lays down his walking stick under the shea nut tree and

surveys the young crop. Next, Akpilima takes a couple of steps, bends over and wedges the blade of his hoe between little mounds of earth bearing young millet, sorghum, and squash plants. He draws back in one motion while navigating around the plants. Rolls of uprooted sod and weeds circle out of his blade and fall upside down in neat brown clumps around the base of the young crop. As Akpilima takes one step after the other a luxurious carpet of moist earth unfolds behind him. He draws, tugs, and turns over his hoe to break big clumps of sod. Akpilima keeps weeding and moving forward.

The sound of his hoe scrapping the still moist earth and his drawn-out breaths tell their own story in tones familiar with each other. From one spot, he turns left and hoes to the right until he covers a full 180 degrees. He takes the next step, repeats the same action in the opposite direction. Some Bulsa farmers like to weed in a straight line, others prefer a zigzag progression, but Akpilima's hoe eats the weeds of this field in semi-circles.

Like other Bulsa farmers of this part of northern Ghana Akpilima's fields that are closest to his compound also serve as the family burial grounds. For Akpilima, weeding among his crop involves the responsibility of clearing around the graves.

"Nur biik ka tintanta"/ humankind is the sand of the earth.

Baba Akpilima mutters to himself as he pauses to replace a broken piece that rolled off a headstone. Akpilima's movement creates patterns on the thin layer of white powder covering the leaves of the supple sorghum plants as he brushes past. It is not known how long people have been growing sorghum in these specific lands, but it was first domesticated in the Sahel regions in Africa as a grass plant that yields grains, and it holds its place among the world most important crops along with rice, wheat, barley and maize (Winchell, Frank, et al. 483). Akpilima grew up knowing the red and white varieties of sorghum bicolor as a staple that is not only

exceptionally heat and drought resistant but also grows so fast it towers above all the other crops just weeks after sprouting. A longtime cross-planter, Akpilima appreciates the ability of the sorghum roots to reach deeper into the earth leaving the nutrients close to the surface for other sister-compound plants. Everything about the sorghum plant, leaf, stem, and final golden tassels of grain speaks an abundance most welcoming to Akpilima. Even the dry stems gathered long after the grain has been harvested serve as good kindle wood. Each year, Akpilima grows extra fields of the red variety to sell to local brewers who ferment vast piles of the fresh grain to make local beer.

Akpilima grasps a handful of vines in his left palm and tugs apart the clinging stem roots from the weeds. He lays the bunch down to his side. His hoe goes precisely where the vine was and turns up weeds and wet soil. Next, Akpilima picks and drops the bunch of vines where they lay before. The leaves wiggle back to position right side up to the sky. Akpilima keeps weeding.

When Akpilima stands up again, he is facing a rocky hill that slopes into the landscape of farms and homes of this part of his village of Beliwŋazuk. Goats and sheep scamper about the rocks on top. The hill slopes into a valley of plots covered with young crops, shrubs, and termite hills with little patches of bare earth in-between. This hill itself, a cluster of boulders on a rocky formation serves as the habitat of the Zurgalulamkanbe earthshrine of the Bulsa people. On a given day Akpilima passes by the earthshrine several times riding his bicycle along any one of the paths that go around the hill connecting different homes in the neighborhood to the main road leading into town. The village is where the earthshrine is located, and Akpilima's clan have the responsibility of performing the needed rituals for the earth shrine, and for attending to the spiritual and material matters pertaining to the earth-shrine. The role of custodian of the earthshrine has been passed down through generations of Akpilima's clan. As the current

custodian, Akpilima serves as earth-priest of the Zurgalulamkanbe earthshrine along with a council of elders.

Akpilima pauses for a few moments lost in thought while looking directly at the hill that habits the earthshrine. With his back to the rising sun, Akpilima looks like he is standing on a canvas of sheer golden sunshine. His face turns grave as he reflects on his role as custodian of the Zurgalulamkanbe earthshrine, and new pressures to turn it into a tourist destination. Akpilima continues to hoe and dress the graves among his crop in this landscape of sand and rock, dotted by baobab, shea nut, and clusters of mango and teak trees.

I remember Baba Akpilima from when I was a child growing up in the town of Sandem, where Akpilima's village of Beliwŋazuk is located. I recall seeing him often on his way to and from the health department where he worked. I remember he smiled a lot, had beautiful teeth, and was always with a chewing stick which he used to scrub his teeth. Back then all the bicycles that were available in the market came in one size. Baba Akpilima's bicycle was too tall for him, so he was forced to lean over either side as he pedaled, making him look like he was dancing on the throne of his bicycle when he pedaled at a fast pace. I recall the first time I tasted the nectar from the flower of a baobab fruit was when my father and I came upon Akpilima back then in his millet fields. We stopped, and my father introduced Akpilima as one of my uncles in the extended family. Akpilima smiled and asked "*Ku baasa*?"/ "Is your life soft" "*Ku baasa, Baba*" / it is soft, father, I responded. Then he walked over to a baobab tree bursting with buds of white flowers sprouting out of the fruit pods. Baba Akpilima stood on his toes, reached up and delicately plucked one fruit. He placed the fruit in my hands and asked me to tilt it slowly and sip the nectar dripping from the nucleus of the flower. I had eaten baobab fruit on many occasions before and always enjoyed the superfood, but this was the first time I ever tasted the

nectar. I recall Akpilima looked down and beamed at my happy face and continued talking with my father while I sipped and sipped all the nectar out of the from between the petals of baobab.

A little over three decades have passed since my childhood baobab nectar encounter with Baba Akpilima. He still has the same smile but is generally more somber in outlook. His concern is that a sacred earthshine is not a thing to be commodified. Akpilima worries that he will have to counter the argument from other elders and the local government official that opening up the earthshine to visitors will bring about development and generate business for the community.

The Story of a Name

The second story, *The Story of a Name* is about names in Buli. In Northern Ghana, naming is an important part of the society that represent "socio-cultural emblems" (Saboro "Memoriali-sing" 73). Awedoba writes that "name giving" among the Kasena offers an opportunity for the giver to "coin a proverb" (57). Even though Bulsa names are not always proverbs, Awedoba's statement holds true especially when one looks at circumstances surrounding the naming of a child. A name is not always a proverb but tends to carry intentional messages and even grand statements. Other times a name may just serve as witnessing and documenting of the seasons. This story complicates the social construct placed on women with regards to childbirth. It is a story about how social constructs operate through the imposition of labels, and how one woman claims her agency through the naming of her children. It speaks to the rescue of agency from a black feminist perspective. First by using the very spaces that patriarchy seeks to limit to women to of childbirth and motherhood (the maternity ward and nursing room) the mother in this story claims her place as a self-definer. She does this by reminding her oppressors through her own story telling they may hold one view of her, but she

knows differently and would not be ashamed. The story also speaks to the question of identity navigation in Ghana with legacy of colonization and cultural imperialism. One educator becomes successful in a simple decolonial effort to instill cultural pride in his students. In the end the names in this story together tell their own story of the community and times.

It all started with Mr. Abolisi. He disrupted the norm which said, go to church, if you already have a Christian name, then baptism made you earn the name, if you did not have a Christian name, you got one and henceforth went through pains to make it known to all that your Christian name was your name. And so, it went until we had Mr. Abolisi as out teacher in primary six.

Mr. Abolisi rode an old bicycle. He would dismount and roll the bicycle to walk alongside and to speak with his pupils or his friends. People said he was a difficult person, but we his students knew him as a dedicated teacher who never missed school like some of the other teachers. He made it clear he expected nothing less than the very best from each pupil in his class. Needless to say, we worked hard and learned to be proud of our work from penmanship, to science experiments, to math calculations Abolisi expected excellence from his students.

He also did unexpected things, like go on a rant about our school headmaster. He would tell us that as the people who did the labor on our school farm, the students, deserved accountability from the headteacher who held the funds from the proceeds of sales from the harvest. Sometimes he just plain accused the headmaster of misappropriation of school funds. Mr. Abolisi was exact with people and did not shy from asking for accountability where others thought it was polite to be silent. For this reason, some people said he was living out the meaning of his name, Abolisi, which literally means to take apart, strip off or to defoliate leaves or

feathers, to lay make bare. Behind his back they called him “book long”, meaning “too intellectual” or too “critical”. They referred to him as “too much” and “overbearing”, and one who wanted to follow every issue to the minute truth.

For us his pupils, Mr. Abolisi stood out especially because he opened our eyes to the possibility that we each had some things we could call our own beginning with our own persons.

One day he was taking attendance in class as usual:

Assibi! “Present Sir!”

Barnabas, “Present Sir!”

Teni, “Present Sir!”

Benedicta, “Present Sir!”

Charles, no response.

Charles! OK, absent!

Emmanuella, Edward, Gifty, John Paul, Mary, Margaret, Paschal, Pontius Pilate, Roger and the list went on till he ended at” Zachary”.

Some of us had names in our native languages, many did not, but even those with Buli suppressed names at time shifting for a nick name or a Christian name. It made sense. Our Christian names were names of westernization and social connection of the literate, they were names associated with attainment, baptism, new birth. Our Buli names on the other hand, given to us when we were born, and out of no effort of our own as far as we could remember. We did not have to work for Buli names, we thought. Unlike with our Christian names, we did not have to take classes in catechism to earn those names, and we were not baptized into anything except life to earn our Buli names. Maybe that is why some kids in school referred to native names as generic "botanical names". The majority of us attended the Catholic church near our school.

Others, like Emmanuel, went to a different church, (Protestant) but were told we were all Christians.

So, Mr. Abolisi stopped in the middle of taking attendance and sat quietly for a few moments. We wondered in silence what was coming next.

"One week," he said. "I give you all one week. You come to school with your native name. Your name in your native language. You should know your name, and you should memorize how to spell it before coming to class on Monday. From next week onwards we will only use our native names in class, no exceptions."

So Paschal went home and returned Avabey - Solution seeker

Emmanuel went to his parents and returned Aboktemi- Seek me divination

Mary went home and returned Awontiirim- God's gift

Margaret went home and returned Awariminopo- Your story remains safe in my mouth

Pontius Pilate went home and returned Asaaloa- Humanity

Mary Magdalen went home and returned Apolaala- Deep inner laughter (joy)

Benedicta went home and returned Awonanya- God is watching

As a child Awonanya's name always conjured up this visual of God's huge eyes watching everyone and every move. I must not have been the only one who felt this way about the name because it soon the name became a term that we used to remind bullies, and other children who were doing bad things- Awonanya. Abolisi explained that our names had a surface meaning and a deeper meaning. He said Awonanya- God is watching meant a person's quality as a human being was defined not by their title or position but by the honesty and tenderness of their interaction with those vulnerable when no one watching. We felt he was talking about the

headmaster, but it also sounded like something that was said in Church but Abolisi never went to church. He was not Christian. He was complicated like Abolisi.

And then there was Anamubiak- named from birth by his mother after a particularly difficult and precarious pregnancy. Hs mother therefore named him Anamu- Biak- to mark his preciousness as someone might not have made it through birth. Well, Buli is a tonal language so when spoken fast Anamubiak becomes Anam'biak, but when the second 'a' sound in the name is so slightly pitched higher it becomes Ana'n'biak- which means bad luck. By the time we all started school and met our classmates we all thought his name was the latter, and we wondered why his parents will give him a name that sounds like a curse. Later we found out he had grown tired of correcting people and just went along responding to the name- Bad luck.

A new development in Mr. Abolisi's class roster was that all the names begun with the letter "A' because all Buli names begin with the sound' a'. The preceding 'a' sound denotes it is the name of a person. Because we had studied our place on the class register with the previous names, we now learned to use not just the first letter of a person's name but the first three letters to determine our place on the roster. This was important for several reasons including figuring out who would be in your study group and making sure you don't miss responding when attendance was called and end up with an absent for the day. Listening to our names being called on class roster that was entirely Bulsa names, and us responding to the class roster somewhat affirmed our humanity just like our grandmothers did at home when they called us by our Bulsa names. It will take many years later for me to go back and look at this moment in Mr. Abolisi's class when he was taking attendance and recognize it as a humanity affirming *call and response* experience in Africana epistemology.

Some of us with Buli names before Mr. Abolisi class were named mostly by parents, grandparents, or other adult family members. There was often a story to go with the name. It could range from being part of a social discourse, to a maker of the times, season, or any situation around one's birth. In my case, my mother chose a name that was in response to a social construct that was placed on women like her. In my name lies my mother's anxieties and her gratitude to providence, but it was also a response to her enemies, the people that cast the social construct of a barren woman on her. She recounted the story of how she had been married for years to my father and they still did not conceive. As each year came by the expectations rose, and the rumor was set loose. A woman who was cursed to not be able to do what other women of her age and marital status did. Conceive and give birth. A loud silence, a sadness, and gapping vulnerability, and an emptiness in a world filled with children to remind her each time of what women had that she did not have. It had to be her fault; she was told. Anyway, when she finally after three or four years of marriage became pregnant, my mother decided that my name would be "Anbegwon," *You did not ask God*, an abbreviated version of her full discourse to her enemies that- you arrive at you conclusions that I would never have a child but you were wrong, and you know why? *Because you did not ask God before arriving at your conclusions!*

Three years later when she had her second child, she decided that the name she would give my brother a will be a continuation of the discourse to those who shamed her. He gave him the name- Aliminsinya- *Wait and see*, or more accurately to her enemies she said, *in your face, you ain't seen nothing yet!* Seven years later she had her third child, this time she let go of her discourse with her enemies, and instead showed gratitude to providence. Perhaps she realized this was going to be her last child, and she named him-Awonboro-*God Lives* or more accurately

God is omnipresent, or *look at God's work*? She was showing gratitude, but the enemies were never too far away even in her prayers.

It was as if Mr. Abolisi opened a window to consciousness that was embodied in our beings that we managed to not connect with all this time. The way things worked out with our names following Mr. Abolisi's class is testament to something important. It has been over four decades since. Some people have reverted to their Christian names, others have taken on other names but to this day we still refer to each other by our Buli names from Abolisi's class. And those of our classmates who have passed maintain their Buli names in our memory.

Aguri - A Custodian of Story

Aguri - A Custodian of Story is about a bicycle mechanic who told stories to children each evening as he worked on his last job of the day. He created a community classroom where children had their imaginations stretched through his through his stories. In the process he created a space for story, passing down an old epistemology where the children get to practice being storytellers.

His name was Aguri. He was one several bicycle mechanics in town. He worked seven days a week, but his busiest days were market days which occurred every third day. We came to Aguri's shop after school but in the evenings after chores. We would watch and ask questions as he worked. Sometimes he explained things. Other times he just worked quietly. He would take apart the bicycle, hold up and examine damaged part. He would then contemplate, walk to his toolbox, and rummage through and pick up bits and pieces of metal. We would watch him walk slowly back, lay the pieces down and go to work manufacturing his own spare part from scraps.

Sometimes Aguri simply banged the metal until it turned hot and soft and then he would take measured bangs to get it into whatever molding he wanted out if. He then would cut and make it fit. Other bicycle repairers rumored that he abused bicycles with too much banging but Aguri's workshop had its own music, between cutting metal, telling a part of story, letting the plot turn in or heads while he is cutting, then return, forget where he left off, as we eagerly offer prompts and plead with him to continue..

Aguri told us stories while working but the greatest privilege was to get to be a sayer. A sayer is someone who echoes the storyteller. The storyteller speaks in sentences and comes to a pause, and the sayer echoes what the storyteller said in meaning but not in exact words. As a sayer you have permission to add flavor, but it is also an opportunity to develop your skills as a budding storyteller. Like live translators, a sayer has to measure the tone, cadence, and length of each sentence, and tell it in the same amount of time or less, because a sayer can't be taking more time than allotted time to relay what the storyteller just said. In short, a sayer needs to make very creative summary within a limited amount of time. A sayer's art is based on nuance, measurement, and flow. You watch listen, and you co-create along.

Aguri never told a story that was not filled with proverbs. Sometimes he would respond to our questions with proverbs and listen as we work to decipher the meaning and context of the proverb. Other times, he would teach us through proverbs. Over time we got to know what lessons was associated with what proverb.

Naju kaai ale kan a wom sinsaga la le va kpio a sin vorub po (Wangara 4).

The fly that does not listen to advise will follow a corpse to the grave.

Conveyed Aguri's caution to the children about greed, and gluttony.

Fi ji fi nyuvuri a densi (Wangara 8).

You are carrying your life on your head handsfree.

Aguri said that everyday our actions such as going to school, not joining children who stole from the market was going to determine how our lives would be in the future.

When another bicycle mechanic opened a new repair shop in same area as Aguri and the other repairers, and was a bit too loud about his new shiny tools, Aguri said to the children,

Se paala ale vaari a nala, allege se kpagsanya ale seba diinanya gogottannya meena (Wangara 14)

The new broom sweeps nicely, but the old broom is perfectly worn to lick clean the corners of the room.

As he explained, this meant that when he Aguri repaired your bicycle it would take you a much longer time to between repairs compared to others who worked fast and slapped on parts that would just fall off when you hit the first pothole.

Teng da yalima ka choa bo ning (Buli oral tradition)

If you think a certain town is far away there is always another even much further way

Aguri said the earth was an endless stretch with all kinds of people and their stories. If you try to walk to every town and village in the world, Aguri said you will end up where you started.

The most dependent source of Aguri's income came from fixing flat tires. It was not much but it could always be counted upon. No one was ever known to factor in the time lost in fixing a flat tire on a bicycle trip mile long, no one perhaps except Aguri because they ended up at his shop during the day and at his door step all times of the day or night. Aguri was a bicycle mechanic but when it came to fix punctured tires, he fixed car, truck, motorcycle and even

tractor tires. Given that he lived closet to the market square and lorry park, frustrated drivers will often wake him up to fix their flat tires all times of the night. But even with tips and extra fee fixing flat tires was never going to rase enough income for Aguri. This times when he made the most money was when he got to build and sell a bicycle from parts, he bought or battered for. It was not uncommon to see Aguri returning from a day-long trip with a load of bicycle parts joined into a kind of train with odd parts loaded on top and bouncing his way back from buying foraging bicycle paths in the nearby villages. I also distinctly remember that his packing and tying was always tight. Aguri was one of those people who tied their load so firm they were no way of it falling ever falling off. He loved to ride fast and bounce and rick on one solid form. He sometimes however had problems untied stuff because he tied it so firm. In such situations he simple cut across the endless string of tire tubing that recycled for bungee string.

As mentioned earlier the one time when Aguri made the most income at a time was when he successfully rebuilt a whole bicycle and sold it. He always finished off such projects with a paint job. If he had a buyer soon enough, he included painting the buyer's motto on the bicycle as part of the deal. For all his rebuilt bicycle projects as well as when he simple repaired and painted a customer's bicycle, Aguri always called on his fiend the artist, Hey Man. Hey Man was the name he went by. He maintained a cool presence and could always be seen with a paint brush and a radio and at supplies. He painted everything. From buildings, to murals, posters, bicycles and even mother bikes. When he worked with Aguri did not speak much to us children but was not bothered so long as we stayed from the wet paint. Hey Man took great pride in his work and when he finished painting a bicycle we all stood at a distance and marvel at the how his hand could be so steady and even to bring such smooth finish to the job just like a brand new bicycle. He had a specific flair wishes, messages, slogans, and mottos on he wrote on people's bicycles.

His work could be seen on bicycles in the daily lives of the town. They included such sayings as:

Paddle your Own Canoe

Friends today, Enemies tomorrow

Who knows tomorrow?

Nothing is Permanent in life

Show Boy

Allahu Akbar

Zurigaluu Lam kan be/ United We Win

Money is the Root of All Evil

Sweet Mama

A favorite among young bicycle owners was *No Where Cool*. When I think of this saying which I understand to mean nowhere is just alright for some people no matter where they go. I think of Black people all over the world fighting one form of colonized space or the other. Not free in Africa and not free on any other continent. There was another saying, that seemed to respond to the *No Where Cool* saying. It was written in Hausa and not on a bicycle but on an old Peugeot car driven by an even older looking Mossi man that serves as the town's taxi. It simply shade:

Inuwa! Meaning- Shade in Hausa.

This also came to be the name given to the car. So, people would ask if Inuwa is back from the trip to the nearby town. Inuwa, a beat up, slow, a little too smoky, one too many shakes and creaks, but always made the rip remined me of an old man and his car that made their own shade in place where transportation was sometimes a challenge to find.

Aguri had his consistent group of children from homes in the center of town and those whose mothers had shops along the main street. As the sun went down, we assembled in sat around silently watching Aguri repair his last bicycle for the day and we knew a story was coming and one of us would get to be a teller for the evening.

The Story of Ayauk the elephant and Asuem the rabbit

Aguri told us the story of the elephant and the rabbit, Ayauk and Asuem. In the story both animals take on human characteristics. In Buli, the names of people always begin with the 'A' sound. In this story therefore, the animal names of *suem* rabbit and *yauk* elephant become Ayauk and Asuem. In this way they are able to function both as human beings and as animals in the story.

Dila po, dilapo! In the long ago, of the long ago! Aguri said. The children responded by securing their positions on the floor for the story that was about to come.

Aguri continued, "it was a time of drought and famine. Most animals were without food. Only the big and strong animals had their stocks of food secured and locked away for themselves and their families. One of the few animals with stores full of grain and dried vegetables was Ayauk the elephant. Among the starving animals on the other hand was Asuem the rabbit. Asuem had heard that Ayauk was not sharing, not loaning, or talking to anyone about his stores of food. People said Ayauk was adamant that the other animals simply had no clue as to how much grain, vegetables, and dried fruit he and his family needed on a given day to survive. Ayauk guarded his barns and stores of food and vowed to crush anyone seen lingering near his storage.

Asuem on the other hand had exhausted all means of finding d food for his family. Any possible means he could think of acquiring produce always ended on Ayauk's stores of food.

Asuem went from being hungry to salivating nonstop just thinking about Ayauk's store of grain. Asuem plotted different ways he could get Ayauk's to part with some of his grain. He finally decided that since Ayauk was so found of his mother who was very old and who was going to soon die, he would make a proposition that Ayauk could not refuse. So, one morning as Asuem walked towards Ayauk's home he noticed that the fields hand long been cleaned and ready for planting, but he rains did not come yet. The earth looked hot dry, and the wind stood still just like it sometimes does before it rains, except this time it had been that way for weeks with no rain. Even though it was still early in the morning the heat was already building up and Asuem felt hot, dusty and out of breath. He was thankful when he reached the baobab grove. He climbed onto the soft trunk and sat down for a little break. How interesting that even in time of drought he thought, some tree like the baobab remain green and stay so all year. Asuem reflected, as he relaxed on the trunk and imagined its insides all soft and filled with water and sponge. Asuem spread out and let the soft fur of his underside hug the smooth baobab skin. He let go relaxed. The grove was quiet. He looked up and wondered about the world created by just one curling baobab. A canopy grand enough to nurture a mini forest underneath with moist top layer of earth in the dry season. Then it occurred to him the power of the baobab to survive is not merely because it is one tree that is known to live for hundreds of years but because it has outwitted humankind in its softness. In these arid lands where every dry kindle of wood is spoken for, and where poaching of fresh wood is common, and where there is always a scarcity of wood for building, the baobab remains one tree that is abundant in flesh yet the flesh is so soft and filled with water at any given time, it cannot be used for timber or firewood. The baobab is like the core where the impossible can happen. Asuem recalled the story about a hunter who once was being chased by a lioness. He ran until he got to the baobab grove. He found a cave in

the trunk and went and hid in the darkness. Then it occurred to him he was safer up the tree than in the cave, but it was too late for him to come out. The lioness was right on his heels as went into the grove. So, he tried to play dead. After a while it became very quiet. He could hear the lioness breathing outside the opening of the hollow. He knew the lioness had smelt him, but he was too afraid to even open his eyes. Then, he felt the lioness go away. When he opened his eyes, he saw why the lioness had not come into the hollow to attack him. While he was in the hollow a thick and old looking spiderweb had miraculously appeared and covered the entire entrance of the hollow. The lioness figured there was no way the hunter who had just gotten into the grove could hide behind a spiderweb so old, and left, so the story went. For a few minutes, Asuem felt his hunger diminish and he was filled with a soft heart. He even forgot of his mission for a while and just relaxed into the grove. Slowly as he took in the smell of the baobab leaves, his hunger returned. If only he had grain, these leaves were just the perfect greens- *tukorok*- that would go very well with a dish of *saab*. The more Asuem thought about *tukoruk* the hungrier he got. Tukorok is like okra. You either like it well or you don't at all. Asuem fell into the group of people who really like *tukorok*, and okra, even that special mix of fresh bean leaf and fresh okra mixed together. The only problem Asuem thought, was how to get some millet grain. Asuem concluded he was going to carry forth his plan no matter what.

Rejuvenated from his little break he arrived at Ayauk's house and called out.

Ku baasa? How are you? Literal translation- *is there softness in your life?*

Aba, base te ba ten fi nyiam be te beg

Ayauk replied, "please wait, till you have had a drink of water first before we inquire about eachother's health."

After Asuem had a drink of water he continued,

Ku baaasa?/ is there softness in your life*?*

Ku basa / there softness.

Fi dok dem ma? Ku Baasa Your family? Is there softness in their life?

Ku Basa.

After they talked about the lateness of the rains and other current issues in their lives Asuem finally broached his topic.

“So how is our mother?”

“She is getting along as best as can be.”

“I was thinking she is such a great elder when she passes, we should honor her with a grave carved into the rock where her remains will be kept forever,” Asuem finally said.

Ayauk perked up. “That is a great idea, but how will I ever get such grave dug into hard rock?”

Asuem said “I have an idea. I can help you and you can help me?”

“You mean the two of us dig the grave?”

“No, no, you are too busy. Listen, it is no secret that a lot of us are struggling right now, you know, no food to feed our families.”

Ayauk looks suspiciously at Asuem,” Go on”.

“Well, I know that you have some grain, and I mean, I know that you and your family need mountains of grain to get by, so I am not saying you have extra grain.”

“ Ah ha” Ayauk was getting impatient.

“Well, if you could squeeze and spare me five bags of grain then I will make a deal with you to dig the grave in the rock for your mom when she passes.”

“Just how will you do that?”

"I will work all day and night till I get it completely dug."

Ayauk sat silently for a few seconds, and for the first time actually considered the possibility of parting with some of his food supplies. He took a deep breath and said, "I will think about your offer".

After Asuem left, Ayauk wondered why the possibility of burying his mother in a grave carved out of rock did not occur to him before. After all, there was just such hill near his house that would make a perfect final resting place for his mother. Ayauk concluded that it never occurred to him because he knew he would never be able to afford such a grave. Now the possibility seemed real with Asuem's proposition. His biggest concern, however, was Asuem's reputation. He knew Asuem was the most cunning person on the face of the earth. Asuem was the type of person that never broke a contract but always managed to find ways to not do his part and still remain guilty-free of violating the terms of the contract. So, Ayauk thought to himself "before I agree to this deal I would have to think of all of the possible ways Asuem could try to get out of the deal after he got his grain, and I have to put things in place to stop him from coming up with any excuses when the time comes for him to pay." It was at this moment that Ayauk felt he had landed upon Asuem's secret plan. He figured Asuem was planning to take the loan of grain and then when the time comes for him to dig the grave out of the rock he would simply he would work so slowly Ayauk will have no choice but find an alternative to grave to bury his mother because a corpse can only lay there for so long before you have to bury it. Ayauk smiled when he realized what he had cracked Asuem's plan. "I will go ahead with the deal, but I will find a way to make him dig the grave and finish it. The only way to do that is to pretend that my mom is dead, then Asuem would have to dig day and night until the grave was done, and no matter how many days it takes him I will wait." Ayauk concluded to himself.

So, the next day, Ayauk waited for Asuem. He knew that hunger and need would drive Asuem back to him. As he predicted, even before the sun was up there was Asuem walking by Ayauk's house pretending that he was on his way to his mother-in-law's house located along the same path.

Ku baasa?

Ayauk responded, and after their greeting Asuem casually asked if Ayauk had made a decision about the proposition from the previous day.

"Indeed, indeed," Ayauk said. "I will loan you the five bags of grain but as soon as my mother dies you need to start digging right away until you are done."

"No problem" Asuem said and loaded the grain onto his donkey cart.

A few weeks later Ayauk's mother was getting ready to go and visit her daughter in a nearby town who was about to give birth to her first child. Before she left Ayauk told her his plan and asked for her help. He asked his mother to lay down and pretend to be dead when he returned to the house with Asuem. Ayauk then went to Asuem looking all dejected with cocodile tears on his face. He told Asuem his old mother died in her sleep, and he wanted him to start digging the grave right away as they had agreed upon.

Asuem offered his condolence and picked up his *kur*- hoe, and *liak,* axe, and followed Ayauk back to his house. Ayauk pointed to his mom laying down al covered up, and then asked Asuem to begin digging into the rocky hill next to his home. Asuem, poured water on the earth and said a prayer for Ayauk's mother before taking a deep drink. He then proceeded to the hill and began digging into the surface with his axe. After a few strikes, he dropped his axe and shouted,

"yeeees?"

Ayauk said

"I did not call you."

"I know you did not call me; I heard my wife calling out to me." Asuem replied.

Before Ayauk could say anything Asuem went on to complain,

"My wife, she calls, each time I have something important to do, she keeps interrupting me."

"I think you should go and find out. I am sure there is a good reason she is calling you back home." Ayauk said.

So Asuem, looking annoyed at being interrupted by his wife, promised Ayauk he would resolve whatever the issue was and return to digging promptly.

Asuem returned after a little while and worked this time for a while longer than the first time. Again, pretending to be even more annoyed at being interrupted again, Asuem yelled

"Ahhh, pleeeaasse why do you keep calling me, don't you know I have important work to do?"

Again, he left promising to return promptly. This time he got home, took a deep drink of *zom* beverage of millet flour in water, and took a short nap.

Upon his return as he neared Ayauk's' house he walked fast and looked very upset, muttering to himself but just loud enough so Ayauk could hear him.

"I am tired of this kind of woman palaver, interrupting me because of some strangers arrived in town."

Ayauk heard Asuem but did not want to begin a conversation that would take further time away from grave digging, so he simply said,

"I hope all is well with your wife."

Asuem said, "my wife is alright. I just don't appreciate her interrupting my work because some little hunters have come to town"

At the mention of hunters Ayauk became very alert.

"Who, what little hunters, and what do they want?"

Asuem ignored Ayauk and picked up his axe and proceed to dig. Ayauk went away a little disturbed at what he heard but glad that Asuem was finally working. A few moments later much as Ayauk tried to stay clam he was now in panic mode about what he heard. Ayauk and his family did like the sound of hunters. To Ayauk hunters were a species of animals who took the life force of other animals to put into their own. There were murderers who saw elephants as having the most of everything they wanted, life, ivory, flesh and blood. No longer able to mask his overwhelming anxiety Ayauk finally went and interrupted Asuem.

"What kind of hunters did you say arrived at your house?"

Asuem paused, "hm, they were four big game hunters and there were each carrying *kanbongdiota*/ guns (literal translation*, the sticks of the colonizer*)

Ayauk had heard enough. He went and woke his mother and off they went leaving their home and stores of food. They fled to Ayauk's siser's village. Asuem and the other little animals moved in and distributed the stockpiles of food and most of them were able to ride out the famine and drought with what they got.

Teng da yalima ka choa bo ning!

Aguri conclude with one of his favorite proverbs.

We all responded, *Tena da yalima Ka choa bo ning!*

In this story I present certain aspects of Bulsa culture and epistemology to complicate stereotypes. In dominant discourse in Ghana the Bulsa are known as a warrior people. Whereas this is certainly true of the Bulsa to the extent that it is true of any people who had to go to war to defend themselves, this overshadows other aspects Bulsa epistemology. In Bulsa architecture and that of their surrounding neighbors, a lot of curves and soft edges are used. I believe that this shows a certain aesthetic approach to life. When I bring that into consideration alongside Bulsa greeting which insists on softness of lived experience I see an epistemology that is complex and nuanced in the way that soft edges and soft approaches can be more embracing of life when compared to an epistemology of sharp angles. By softness I do not mean a luxurious lived experience but a spiritual peace in lived experience and overall soft approach to life.

In addition, in this story, I complicate the landscape with the imagery and presentation of the baobab. As a tree that lives for hundreds of years most people credit the existence of many baobab trees in Northern Ghana to their resilience and longevity, both of which are true. The other side of the story however is that trees that the baobabs are left standing and not turned into products of the timber industry because they are not wood trees. They are made of sponge and water. Their softness is their strength. This is the epistemology that people looking for signs of strength in levels of brute force and hard stances do not realize. It is interesting that elephants and baobabs have a certain similarity in their size and majesty appearance. The elephant is soft like the baobab, but the elephant has a hard part, and for this part the hunters kill elephants to near extinction. Their hardest part has become strength had become the source of their destruction.

A Daughter Returns (in Buli and English)

A Daughter Returns complicates the idea of the diaspora and what it means for Bulsa to leave and to Europe and North America and return. It also asks the critical question why are all these people from former colonies on the move to Babylon? What relocations, forced, and coerced migrations continue to be imposed on colonized communities all over the world? What little spaces and solutions do we seek to create in individual migrations? What is the cost?

Ti Liewa Gam ya

Anaamlie jam Sandem ale foruk ta ayiak jangsa

Sukiri a nag ase di a di yogi nyini

Nangsa agalisi chaab se biik la zamsi gokta la

Wa ginggelung ku mwan baga labri Bu'ni

Tue nya a wom ale ge noai ni n' baga suali mu

Suik kuuy la cheng Beli-mwazuk la mwan karo

Kok tiib siy le jan va mampalni la mwan karo

Naapierik ka kpaampunku ya a siaka yalayala

Anaamlie ale ga paare yeri kusun ku la

Nisoamoa yen ka

Ayen ba te wa nyiam

Ayen kuun ni nya dek li piisi

Ni pobsi wa, ni pobsi wa.

Anaamlie arrives in Sandema with bags promising to drive away poverty

And a heartbeat so violent it is ready to jump out of her chest

Footsteps out of rhythm and tripping like a baby learning to dance

A tongue that can no longer turn over the Buli language
An ear that hears but a mouth that can no longer versify/ narrate/

The footpath that used to lead to the riverbank is no more
The mahogany trees that used to adorn the paved road are no more
The reed flute song of the shepherd is now a faint cry in the far away distance

Anaamlie arrives at the house
To meet the lone elder sitting in the hut outside
Bring her water, he says
The funerals have been too many he says
Please blow the ashes, blow the ashes.

All Talk and No Food Aid

All Talk and No Food Aid presents an insiders' perspective on the effects of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Structural Adjustments Policies (SAP) on the ground. It shows how the people at the bottom ended up getting none of the aid as promised. Instead they got empty words and a performance. In the Upper East regions of northern Ghana in the late 1980s and early 190s the Structural Adjustment Policy existed in fancy acronyms and in the swift movement of gleaming SUV with various acronyms such as PAMSCAD (Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment). From the number of programs and plans of action it seemed like planners of SAP had thought of everything. They would be a structural and a social cost of the Adjustment. But there was a plan in place to catch the people who faced the cost of those adjustments, we thought.

Later it became evident that the planners of SAP had actually thought about everything. They had devised a plant to squeeze whole countries beginning with the most impoverished, one more time.

We arrived in Nongod in a convoy of SUVs and a cloud of brown reddish dust.
The villagers were already waiting under the scanty shade of the village durbar grounds when we arrived. Each villager had a receptacle. Some brought basins. Many turned over large bowls and pans and sat on them.

As soon as the convoy arrived, the crowd became active and lively. People started to line up. Technicians quickly hooked up microphones while the guests went up the stage and sat in their reserved seats. The stage was adorned in faded red, green, and gold garlands. The guests shifted uncomfortably in their seats when they noticed the crowd of villages with no prompting forming a tight single line with receptables in hand. Someone needed to handle this situation before it got too embarrassing. It was clear in order to entice the villagers to attend the event someone had lied to them that food aid was going to be distributed after the speeches. If it had been a delegation of lesser standing there could have been the risk of an angry crowd storming the visiting delegation once they realized they had been deceived. This time it was more the embarrassment and a moral indictment that the delegation was afraid of. The head of the delegation was the Deputy Minster himself. No one would dare disrupt the event.

The PR guy took one look at the situation and went over and whispered something in the ear of the local representative. The latter yelled at the people to get out of line and spread around the durbar grounds and form an orderly an audience for the VIPS on stage. The look on the villagers' faces was one of betrayal than disappointment. They should have known better than leave their farms and foraging and come and wait half of the day for the promise of food aid.

Slowly, the villagers got out line, formed a semi-circle around the stage and waited. Some waited in the direct hot sun.

Deputy as we all called him was a man in his early forties. He wore a northern Ghana smock, and a pair of jeans sitting atop gleaming smart black shoes. He was a likeable guy and made much of being simple and accessible. He sported an afro and looked dignified as he stood over the microphone. The speech lasted a good thirty minutes. No applause in between, not breaks, no laughter. The people listened in silence. I scribbled away fast. The television camera moved at several angles while focused on Deputy. Now and then a panoramic shot was made of the villagers, faces, grim, eyes squinting in the hot sun as they listened to the minister's words through an interpreter. Even the elders resisted the habitual grunts of *call and response* when the interpreter invoked proverbs in the oral tradition to give more power to Deputy's words. Some of the elders leaned on their walking sticks, in silence.

I listened for catch phrases in Deputy's speech. He called on the people to eschew laziness, and the men specially to stop drinking away the money gained from the harvest. There hadn't really been a harvest because of the drought which led to the famine which was why we were there, but Deputy continued. He encouraged the people to take full advantage of field officer who were there to provide advice of modern farming techniques. The people needed to abandon the old ways of farming that yielded little or no results. When he finally came to mention the fund that he oversaw for the region, he made it clear that the money was not for food aid, it was to build against future famine. He did not say how that was going to be done. When he was done talking the people on the stage started clapping with much enthusiasm, the villagers seem reluctant to join in. The PR guy pulled out his microphone and said sharply in the local language" Clap hands for him! Clap hands for him Now! The people responded. A few villagers

crowd who still had a little bit of hope stood up and stared to form a line for food aid. Again the local representative said something to them, and they dispersed and formed an audience.

There were more speeches. The field officer, a confused white man who seem to not know why he had been invited to the event found himself on the agenda without prior warning. He made a very short speech, about the goals of his NGO to study the long-term effects of famine on children in the region and quickly sat down.

As swiftly as we arrived, we all got back in our vehicles as soon as the Deputy got up after the last speech and headed to his car. As the convoy took off the villagers stood looking, with their empty bowls and basins. It was a familiar look on the faces of communities as we departed these events.

They convoy drove fast building much dust and spinning off little pebbles onto the villagers who stepped into the fields to let the convoy pass. We cut through more villages and arrived at the palace of a chief who wore a red cap, and a much-dignified smock. We were served rice and beans and pieces of fried guinea fowl lunch. The minister and VIPs dined inside the palace with the chief. A little over one hour later we drove back the same we had come. We passed a few villagers still carrying their reply basins. Some waved in slow motion as if it was a requirement but none them smiled. We passed their farms. Most of the crop were wilted from the drought.

Still Walking and Rolling

Many times, I saw him quietly give the last of anything he had to anyone that asked. In a boarding school where supplies were scarce, and hoarding was the order of the day, there was no doubt much borrowing, begging, and advantage taking. Rob was one of few people you knew you only went to when you absolutely had nowhere else to turn because he would come through

for you without a word. You did not want to mess that. There was something he seem to know, slight build, powerful gaze, with the roll of a lion in his walk. It lingered in his deep eyes. It was not just that he shared his supplies, he embodied a knowing kindness that was beyond his peers. He did not hold back anything for himself to use later if someone needed it at the moment.

We were but 13 to 14-year-olds. The men that murdered his father accused him and other officials of corruption. Those same leaders of the nation lived and ruled and wrecked corruption of unimaginable proportions and over decades and still walk to this day in Accra.

Rob's father was 38 years old. News of his horrific killing took the life of his grandmother who died of a heart attack.

Some people are survivors like that. Rob is one of them. You would not know what he survived. They had to leave but he did his work, and he returned. You would not know resistance when you look it in the eye.

Conclusion

As stated in the first chapter, this dissertation is about story, and how story is used to make and unmake a people. I go further to show that story can also be used to rescue and reconstruct a people. My overarching thesis is that continental Bulsa histories and epistemologies complicate discourses of heritage tourism and scholarship of the slave trade. I adopt a method to uncover indigenous Bulsa epistemology from within the cracks of dominant narratives. I show how the oral tradition, culture, and even the landscape serves as repository of knowledge about the lived experience of Bulsa people during the last decade of the 1800s.

In the first three chapters, I examine the history of relations between Ghanaians and Africans from the Diaspora, especially African Americans. I examine how this history was rekindled during the late 1980s and early 1990s through Rawling's government but with a new

added agenda called heritage tourism. I trace the development of heritage tourism to show that the decision to center the story on the slave trade and the origin story as the focus of heritage tourism in Ghana was a deliberate choice of the primary actors, mainly, the Ghanaian government and external funders.

I show how just as the people in Northern Ghana were being targeted, stories were created by Europeans on the coast to place them in a lower caste that seem to suggest they deserved to be enslaved. Today's heritage tourism is creating its own narrative to fit their history into the origin story. I make the case that in a way heritage tourism is doing the same with indigenous history and epistemologies by coming to impose narratives that cast the people into the binary of victims or warriors. Nonetheless I agree with Pierre that heritage tourism is well-intentioned and could open up great opportunities for dialogue (135). I suggest that the push to frame the entire lived experience of people on Atlantic perceptions distorts the reason why people were kidnapped in Northern Ghana in the late 1890s. I show that most of that labor was for domestic plantations in West Africa. I show how the development of the formal colonial economy was based on enslaved and coerced labor of Northerners. More importantly, this work makes the case that what connects people in Northern Ghana with Africans from the diaspora is not genealogy but the continued anti-black racist capitalism of the past and the present.

In the second part of the dissertation, I uncover Bulsa epistemology through an autoethnography of the Feok festival of 2015. In this chapter, I adopt autoethnography and creative nonfiction in this chapter to effectively counter the silence of indigenous epitenon in the dominant narrative and official narratives. I show that the people's narrative is multifaceted, not overt, and lends itself to a reading from within the cracks rather than from the dominant frame of heritage tourism. In the last chapter I continue with creative nonfiction to showcase Bulsa people

in everyday life situations. I use this as a way the show that at the end of the day, African struggle is for self-determination and for having a space for our full and complex humanity to flourish on this earth.

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