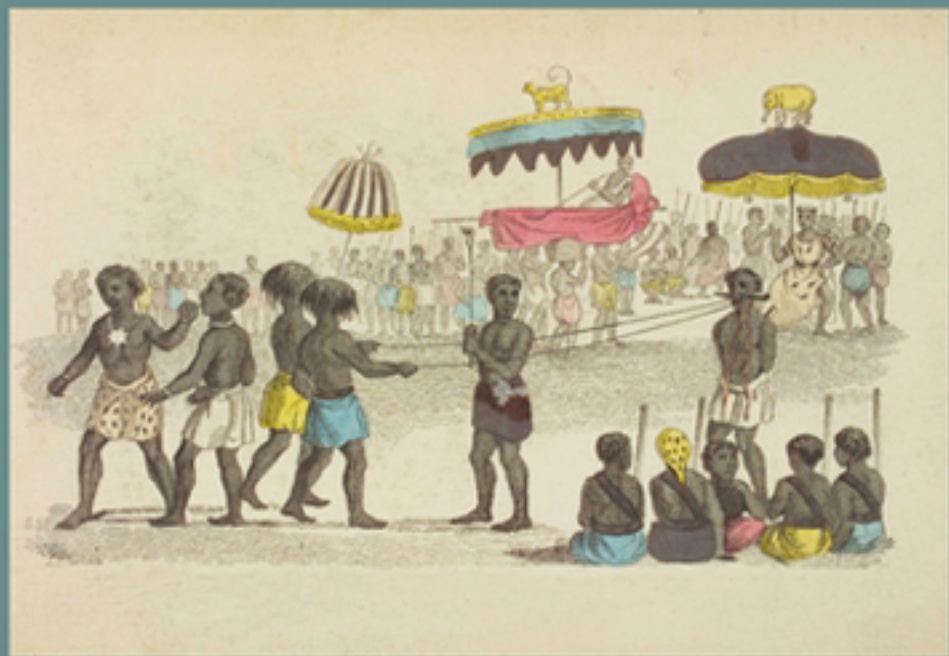


# Slavery and its Legacy in Ghana and the Diaspora

Edited by  
Rebecca Shumway & Trevor R. Getz



B L O O M S B U R Y



# Slavery and its Legacy in Ghana and the Diaspora



# Slavery and its Legacy in Ghana and the Diaspora

Edited by  
Rebecca Shumway and Trevor R. Getz

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC  
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC  
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc  
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK  
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo  
are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published 2017  
Paperback edition published 2019

© Rebecca Shumway, Trevor R. Getz and Contributors, 2017

Cover image courtesy of Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg  
Centre for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and  
Tilden Foundations.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or  
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,  
including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval  
system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for,  
any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses  
given in this book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and  
publisher regret any inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites  
have ceased to exist, but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4742-5663-6  
PB: 978-1-3501-0902-5  
ePDF: 978-1-4742-5665-0  
eBook: 978-1-4742-5664-3

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

To find out more about our authors and books visit  
[www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com) and sign up for our newsletters.

# Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
Introduction <i>Rebecca Shumway and Trevor R. Getz</i>	1
Part 1 The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery before Colonial Rule	
1 Ghana and the Transatlantic Slave Trade <i>Rebecca Shumway</i>	29
2 “Tied Up”: Slave Relics in Traditional Political Leadership in Burugu, Northern Ghana <i>Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu</i>	46
3 “Earth from a Dead Negro’s Grave”: Ritual Technologies and Mortuary Realms in the Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast Diaspora <i>Walter C. Rucker</i>	62
4 Anti-Slavery in Nineteenth Century Fanteland <i>Rebecca Shumway</i>	85
Part 2 Slavery and Abolition Under British Colonial Rule (1874–1957)	
5 The Claims Wives Made: Slavery and Marriage in the Late- Nineteenth-Century Gold Coast Colony and Protectorate <i>Trevor R. Getz</i>	107
6 Signs of an African Emancipation? Slavery and its Resolution in the Reports (1868–1900) of a Ghanaian Pastor—Kofi Theophilus Opoku <i>Paul Jenkins</i>	126
7 An African Abolitionist on the Gold Coast: The Case of Francis P. Fearon <i>Steffen Runkel</i>	156

Part 3	Memory, Heritage, and the Legacy of Slavery	
8	Slavery and the Slave Trade: A Shared History or Shared Heritage? <i>Wilhelmina J. Donkoh</i>	181
9	The Legacy of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana <i>Akosua Adoma Perbi</i>	202
10	Charged Memories: The Slave Trade in Contemporary Political Discourse <i>Bayo Holsey</i>	219
	Afterword <i>Ray A. Kea</i>	238
	Select Bibliography	249
	Index	261



# List of Illustrations

## Figures

- Figure 1 Roadside sign directing heritage tourists to the Garden of Reverence, Assin Manso. Credit: Photograph by Rebecca Shumway, 2009. 10
- Figure 2 A message to U.S. President Barack Obama left inside Cape Coast Castle. Credit: Photograph by Rebecca Shumway, 2009. 194
- Figure 3 U.S. President Barack Obama and family visit Cape Coast Castle, July 2009. Credit: REUTERS / Alamy Stock Photo. 221
- Figure 4 Plaque inside Cape Coast Castle commemorating U.S. President Barack Obama's visit. Credit: Photograph by Rebecca Shumway, 2009. 221

## Maps

- Map 1 Important Slave Sites and Centers in Ghana. Credit: Redrawn from Perbi, Akosua Adoma. 2004. 22
- Map 2 Slave Markets and Slave Routes in Precolonial Ghana. Credit: Redrawn from Perbi, Akosua Adoma. 2004. 23
- Map 3 Administrative Divisions of Colonial Ghana. Credit: Redrawn from Perbi, Akosua Adoma. 2004. 24
- Map 4 Administrative Regions and Major Ethnic Groups of Modern Ghana. Credit: Redrawn from Perbi, Akosua Adoma. 2004. 25



# Introduction

Rebecca Shumway and Trevor R. Getz

This book brings together the dynamic scholarly fields of slavery studies and Ghana studies in order to broaden and deepen knowledge in both fields. Recent scholarship on the history of slavery has revealed the incalculable variations in systems of servitude over time and in every corner of the globe, while reaffirming and clarifying the monumental shared experience of the Middle Passage and the creation of the African diaspora. It has also moved beyond questioning the influence and survival of African cultures in the New World to filling in the rich details of how African ways of life were transplanted and renewed within innumerable societies across the Americas and beyond. And the study of slavery in Africa has progressed from broad studies seeking to quantify the scale of slavery or the changing nature of slavery over time to much more focused local studies that point to the entanglement between slavery and other social institutions and analyze the experiences of particular enslaved individuals through the study of oral sources, the arts, and memory.

Meanwhile, scholars of Ghana have branched out from what was once a nearly exclusive concern with Asante history and culture to examine the complex relationships between various ethnic and cultural groups within Ghana over time, and to appreciate the profound and enduring connections between the people of Ghana and societies around the Atlantic World, particularly those of the African diaspora. Thanks largely to the pioneering work of Akosua Adoma Perbi on the history of slavery in Ghana, scholars of Ghana are increasingly treating slavery and servitude as important and embedded aspects of Ghanaian life, past and present. The recent growth of Ghana's economy and the expansion of heritage tourism have also increased scholarly interest in the historical connections between Ghanaians and the descendants of enslaved Africans for whom Ghana is a homeland. This book brings together experts on slavery, African history, and the African diaspora to further these research agendas with a particular focus on Ghana.

The authors are indebted to the organizers of an international conference entitled “Slavery in Africa: Past, Heritage, Present,” which was planned to take place in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2014. The conference organizers called for new scholarship that would redress the imbalance in scholarly work on parts of the world affected by slavery. They noted that scholars of African studies have produced far less scholarship centered on slavery than those of other world regions such as the Americas and Caribbean islands. They also sought to rectify the widespread neglect of the links between historical experiences of slavery in Africa and African nation-building. When Rebecca Shumway circulated a request for papers to comprise a panel for this conference that would deal specifically with Ghana, it became clear that scholars of Ghana had a keen interest in these topics. Eight paper proposals were submitted. Sadly, the terrorist attack on Nairobi’s Westgate shopping mall in September 2013 and other problems in Kenya at that time disrupted plans for the conference and made it impossible for many scholars to travel to Kenya.

The energy around the topic of slavery and its legacy in Ghana was channeled instead into plans for an edited collection, which has culminated in the present book. We organized a meeting of interested scholars, and a panel, at the 2014 African Studies Association Annual Conference. We then sponsored two panels and met again at the 2015 African Studies Association. At that meeting, we discussed many of the papers and identified key themes for the book. Some of our ideas built upon the themes proposed for the Nairobi conference, while others were unique to Ghana studies. We wholeheartedly embraced the importance of slavery as both a historical practice and a problem with ongoing impacts within Ghanaian society. One of the major contributions of this book is that it brings together experts on the history of Ghana and the diaspora with experts on contemporary Ghana. Having three contributors who are based in Ghana has also very much enriched our conversations and thinking about the legacy of slavery in Ghana. Not least among their contributions have been reminders that what we present in this book could potentially have legal ramifications for the authors and other Ghanaian citizens. This reminder in itself speaks to the continued importance of slavery’s legacy in Ghana and to the highly sensitive nature of the topic.

This book broadens the geographic scope of analysis beyond that of the Nairobi conference, which focused almost exclusively on Africa, in order to treat Ghana and the vast African diaspora as a unitary realm of study. Each of the contributors to this book has defined her or his previous work, at least in part,

as centered on Ghana. And of course like any other nation, Ghana deserves to be the subject of scholarly inquiry for its own sake. But it is now obvious that it would be both inaccurate and irresponsible for any historian to ignore the profound impacts of Ghana's centuries-old relationship with Europe and the Americas on the country's history and its contemporary conditions.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the historiography of Ghana has too often represented historical developments in Ghana as though they were unaffected by external forces—particularly the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>2</sup> This book reverses this trend. Treating slavery and its legacy in Ghana as part of the broader history of the African diaspora, and vice versa, is not meant to give undue agency to European or other non-African actors. Rather, it is a means of demonstrating the broad geographical impact Ghanaian actors have had on world history and the innovative ways in which the people of Ghana have for centuries incorporated elements of European, American, and African American culture into their own.

Several questions were central to this project. First, we asked what *slavery* means in the Ghanaian context. Can this European term be naturalized to historical institutions and experiences in the societies that now constitute Ghana? How did Ghanaian institutions of servitude and dependency vary across space and change over time? How were they experienced? Also, how were these institutions and experiences intertwined with the Atlantic slave trade, and how did this system change them? Similarly, how did Ghanaian understandings of the world survive or morph through the Atlantic slaving system and into the Americas? How did the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and the progressive criminalization of slavery in the nineteenth century affect these understandings and experiences? And how did Ghanaians shape and influence these changes, which are normally understood as “European” in origin? Finally, how and to what degree did abolition and emancipation transform the institutions and experiences of slavery in Ghana? And what is their ongoing legacy in Ghana today?

Throughout, we have developed the project with the hope that it will serve as both a benchmark of the state of research on slavery and its legacy in Ghana and the diaspora and as a starting point for further research. We have endeavored to reference as much as possible the relevant works upon which we are building and to assess the strengths and shortcomings of the existing scholarship. We also try to point the way toward future projects that might engage areas of enquiry that still lack sufficient attention. The works presented here converge around three central themes: slavery in Africa, Ghana and the diaspora, and the legacy of slavery.

## Slavery in Africa

It is important at the start to acknowledge that the topic of slavery has different meanings to different readers, and that it is a sensitive and politically charged topic. Among scholars and students based in the United States, slavery is often envisioned as something that is fundamentally connected to Africa and Africans because of the tremendous impact the forced migration, known as the transatlantic slave trade, has had on American life. Meanwhile, for many scholars and students based in African countries, the notion of racially determined chattel slavery is entirely American and bears no relationship to forms of servitude in Africa's history and cultures. Indeed, what non-African scholars have often referred to as *slavery* in Africa usually goes by another, local name in the African context and bears little comparison to American plantation slavery. For this reason and others, scholars have long debated whether the term *slavery* is even applicable to the forms of servitude found in African contexts.<sup>3</sup> The lack of consensus on the meaning of the term *slavery* explains why an African scholar might respond to a scholarly presentation on the subject of "slavery in Ghana" by insisting that the presenter is mistaken, that there never was "slavery" in Ghana and that the presenter misunderstands, and misrepresents, African culture.<sup>4</sup>

The contention that slavery never existed in Ghana has its roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when colonial officials in what was then called the Gold Coast Colony faced the daunting task of enforcing abolition in societies that had long practiced various forms of servitude, including slavery. Since many forms of dependency and servitude existed in Ghanaian societies and many of them were based on real or fictive kinship, colonial officials frequently argued that so-called domestic slavery was not in fact slavery at all. One clear example of this comes from a 1927 report written by J. C. De Graft-Johnson, an African civil servant in the colonial Native Affairs bureaucracy.<sup>5</sup> Although the report was meant to establish the success of the administration's efforts in eradicating slavery in the face of parliamentary enquiry, de Graft-Johnson developed a chain of arguments that instead focused on the theme that servitude in the Gold Coast had never really been slavery, writing that "except in name," it "cannot be called slavery by a long stretch." De Graft-Johnson distinguished between a "European" and an "African" sense of slavery. Quoting both cultural nationalist John Mensah Sarbah and British medical officer W. Walton Claridge, he contrasted the European system of atrocities and conditions

of perpetual service against the much more benign *domestic slavery* and *pawning* practices in Africa, which were wrapped up in systems of family obligations and chieftainship.<sup>6</sup> “As a rule,” he wrote, “both male and female slaves were well treated” in the latter. Therefore they rarely liberated themselves even when given the opportunity to do so, but instead “remain attached to the house where they had been brought up.” Thus, he concluded, slavery in the European sense did not exist in the Gold Coast. Domestic slavery existed, but tended to be “in name only” and would, “entirely die out within a generation.”

In the colonial period, this claim worked in officials’ own interests because it relieved them of the responsibility of actually dealing with slavery as a legal problem under British colonial rule. It has been taken up by later generations, however, for other reasons. Slavery is a blemish on the history of any society that has practiced it. Documents such as de Graft-Johnson’s have provided a sort of historical evidence for minimizing slavery or denying that slavery existed.<sup>7</sup> The scholarship of a growing number of historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists simply proves otherwise.<sup>8</sup>

In this book, we seek to acknowledge the complexity and variability of forms of servitude in Ghana and the diaspora while nevertheless using the term *slavery* to refer to those instances where an individual is constrained by a lack of freedom in a way that is comparable to the unfree status of slaves in other global contexts. For our purposes, a person can be considered a slave if she or he is the property of another person (or persons), and can be sold or purchased. It should be taken as a starting point that all human societies exhibit inequality, and the most marginalized people often have little or no access to the highest status within the society. In Africa, as elsewhere across the globe, many forms of servitude have existed over the course of past millennia. In general, people who have occupied the lowest rungs of African society or entered into an African society as a captive or refugee could at least expect to be assimilated over time and to be “bound in a mutually obligatory relationship to some corporate group.”<sup>9</sup> This social assimilation is perhaps the greatest difference between African and New World slavery. Unlike slaves in many of the slave societies of the Americas, slaves in Ghana were always regarded as human beings and entitled to certain rights as such, although these were perhaps not uniformly honored.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, as Martin Klein and Claire Robertson have shown, it would be a mistake to see slavery in Africa as anything other than a type of servility and exploitation.<sup>11</sup> As Perbi has explained, slavery in Ghana resembled Western forms of slavery in that a slave was regarded as a commodity that could be bought or sold, or

given away as a gift. In this respect, the status of a slave in precolonial Ghana was similar to that of slaves in ancient Mesopotamia, China, the Islamic world, and Europe.<sup>12</sup>

Any particular servile relationship is best understood within its local cultural and temporal context, and by the indigenous vocabulary used to name it. In Ghana, there are at least five separate terms, translatable into several Ghanaian languages, that relate to unfree people. In the Akan language, Twi, a servant was called *akoa*; a pawn was *awowa*; a slave was *donko*; a war captive was *dommum*; and a slave condemned to capital punishment was *akyere*.<sup>13</sup> Servants could be people who served within a household, but the term was also used to distinguish a lesser chief from a superior one, in the sense that a subchief “serves” a paramount chief. Pawns were people held as security for a debt and were to be returned to the debtor’s family upon payment of the debt.<sup>14</sup> A slave was someone who had been purchased or otherwise acquired by another person and usually had been physically removed from his or her family and homeland. War captives held a slightly different position from slaves in that they might be redeemed in the peacemaking process that followed war. A slave under capital punishment had been found guilty of an offense and awaited execution.<sup>15</sup> This taxonomy marked differences within a broader dependency system of relationships between subordinates and superiors (*akua-awora*) that nevertheless provided a unified frame for all of them.

While it is essential to distinguish among these local forms of slavery and servitude and to comprehend the broader social system and rules in which they existed, it is also important to understand how and why these forms changed over time.<sup>16</sup> To do so requires looking beyond Ghana and Africa to the history of the Atlantic basin and, to a lesser extent, the globe. As Joseph Miller has argued, the general pattern of change in slaving in Africa was that slaving, “first . . . served as a strategy of creating and maintaining an ethos of community, and then, in the last few centuries, increasingly in ways that implemented the same militarizing strategies of Muslim and then European slavers, effectively outsourcing Asian and European militarization and violence to people in Africa.”<sup>17</sup> Ghana and West Africa evolved over the past five hundred years as participants in what John K. Thornton has called “the making of the Atlantic world.”<sup>18</sup> Societies along the western coast of Africa did not merely trade with passing ships from Europe and the Americas during the so-called age of sail. Like all major Atlantic ports in the early modern period, the coastal towns of West Africa also brought people from four continents together to share and exchange languages, culture, microbes, and genetic material.<sup>19</sup>



The development of transatlantic trade affected West African political and commercial systems by creating new opportunities for powerful individuals to gain wealth and influence. And as the transatlantic slave trade wore on, many African societies that previously might have included only a few slaves began to use slaves extensively in production, political power, or domestic servitude, as Lovejoy and Manning have demonstrated.<sup>20</sup> The buying and selling of enslaved people increased within Africa, and the percentage of enslaved people within African societies also increased. In other words, the growth of the transatlantic slave trade and the expansion of slavery within Africa happened simultaneously and symbiotically.

That is not to suggest that the forms of slavery that existed in the Americas were the same as those in Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they were not. But practices of enslavement, slave owning, and slave trading on both sides of the Atlantic changed in tandem over the long course of the transatlantic slave trade. When abolitionists from Europe came to West Africa in the nineteenth century to stamp out what they viewed as barbaric “African” practices of slavery and slave trading, they were very much taking on a problem that they themselves had played a great part in making. Slavery in nineteenth-century Africa would have looked very different had European colonization of the Americas, and thus the transatlantic slave trade, never occurred.

In using the term “*slavery*” with regard to the history of Ghana, then, we seek to intentionally link the practice of slavery in Ghana with the history of slavery in the Atlantic World, even as we emphasize that it is an umbrella term encompassing many different individual experiences. Doing so will help to clarify the ways in which indigenous forms of servitude have persisted over time while identifying the ways in which they also have changed in response to external factors.

The interconnectedness of indigenous slavery and the transatlantic slave system can perhaps best be understood from the point of view of someone taken captive in Ghana during the era of the slave trade (roughly 1650–1850). She or he might face several outcomes, including becoming a slave in Asante or another part of Ghana, or becoming a *saltwater slave* bound for the Americas. Manu Herbstein’s *Ama* tells a story of a young woman who experienced both.<sup>21</sup>

After the passage of the Abolition Act in Britain in 1807, the volume of the slave trade from the Ghana coast declined rapidly, but indigenous slavery did not revert to its prior state. Slavery in Ghana continued to be shaped by economic and ideological forces from across the Atlantic throughout the nineteenth century. The immediate change was the drop in the price of an enslaved person after 1807.

This enabled and perhaps encouraged Ghana's elites to acquire greater numbers of slaves. Markets for palm oil developed in Europe in the early nineteenth century and created new incentives for the use of slave labor in Ghana, as slaves were used to produce and carry palm oil down footpaths to the coast. In a few regions in Ghana, European-owned, slave-worked plantations emerged that somewhat resembled those in the American colonies.<sup>22</sup> The nature and scale of slavery in Ghana during the nineteenth century bore a greater resemblance to American slavery than ever before, as large numbers of slaves worked to grow, harvest, refine, and transport a cash crop to the coast for export.<sup>23</sup>

The ending and abolition of slavery in Ghana was also a story of indigenous practices changing in ways connected to Atlantic slavery. Emancipation was not a clear straightforward process anywhere, including West Africa. As several important studies of African slavery and emancipation have shown, even in societies where emancipation was declared by law, freedom was always relative.<sup>24</sup> In societies where there was no clear act of emancipation, the distinction between people of slave origin and other members of society simply disappeared.

When considering the history of Ghana, it becomes more difficult to determine who was a slave and who was free after 1807. Beginning with the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, the British government pursued a policy of criminalizing slave trading and slavery throughout the British Empire, essentially reversing their economic motives in West Africa. British traders and administrators on the coast of Ghana, who created most of the documentary evidence, increasingly used ambiguous language to describe the forms of servitude they witnessed and in which they participated. This was partly intentional because slavery and slave trading was illegal for them as British subjects, but many were still very much involved in the slave trade as direct participants and as creditors. Often, the ambiguous language regarding slavery that appears in nineteenth century documents reflects the fact that British personnel honestly did not know whether someone was a slave or a wife, a slave or a dependent child, a slave or a pawn, a slave or a client. These ambiguities are discussed in the chapters by Getz and Jenkins in this book.

After the abolition of slavery in the Gold Coast Colony (by order of the British colonial government in 1874), slave owners sometimes redefined their slaves as wives or kin in order to avoid losing their property in British-administered courts. Enslaved people sought to use the laws to rewrite their status as full members of society and also to negotiate new rights and living situations. In

other cases, they insisted on their slave status in order to gain freedom in the courts. The laws against slavery were based on a British definition of slavery that did not match the much more variable forms of servitude in Ghana. Thus the ending of slavery was conditioned in part by Ghana's many ties to the Atlantic economy and particularly the British Empire.

## Ghana and its Diaspora

While slavery and its legacy in Ghana have been inextricably linked to social, political, and economic developments in the Atlantic world as a whole, there are particular ways in which Ghanaians are linked to the descendants of captives taken from Ghana who are now living in the Americas. Roughly one million people departed the coast of Ghana aboard slave ships.<sup>25</sup> Many of them died at sea, and many more became unfree members of Caribbean, South American, and North American societies. Although it is, sadly, impossible to trace the precise African locations from which most of these captives and their descendants originated, the historical memory of Africa as a homeland remains a powerful and essential element of identity for millions of people in the African diaspora.<sup>26</sup> In recent decades, scholarship focusing on this African diaspora has made a major contribution to refashioning the prevailing view of world history by undermining Eurocentric paradigms and better explaining the historical connections between Africa and the Americas, and indeed the global African diaspora.<sup>27</sup>

Two recent books about the Ghanaian diaspora, specifically, have launched Ghana studies into this field.<sup>28</sup> Kwasi Konadu's *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* argues that Akan spiritual culture formed a solid core for social and cultural reconstruction of West African life among captives in the Americas.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, in *Gold Coast Diasporas*, Walter C. Rucker develops the argument that slaves from the Gold Coast (and those grouped with them by Europeans) developed from Ghanaian roots a common set of weapons, including gendered ideas and performances, potions and charms, as well as a group ideology, as tools for resisting dehumanization and opposing systemic slavery in the Euro-Caribbean model.<sup>30</sup>

The links between Ghanaians and the African diaspora only grew stronger after the end of transatlantic slaving, as nineteenth century Ghanaians developed plans for modern, self-governing states within an international political and economic climate that was infused with racism toward black people. By the

late nineteenth century, African or black identity—concepts originating among African-descended activists in the diaspora—was central to Ghana’s anti-colonial nationalist movement.<sup>31</sup>

## Slavery and its Legacy

This book answers the call articulated by the organizers of the Nairobi conference for deeper examination and consideration of both slavery and its legacy in Africa. The chapters assembled here address both the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and the legacy of the practice of slavery within Ghana, sometimes referred to as *domestic slavery*.<sup>32</sup> We are indebted to Professor Akosua Adoma Perbi for her bold initiative in laying the groundwork for this kind of research and analysis.<sup>33</sup> It is well known in Ghana and among historians of Ghana that the laws of the land have prohibited anyone from even mentioning another person’s origins—including whether or not they had slave ancestry. This prohibition was apparently ordered by Asantehene Osei Tutu as far back as the late seventeenth century, in an effort to facilitate the incorporation of several newly conquered populations into a unitary Asante state.<sup>34</sup> Slavery’s legacy has long been intentionally denied and/or obscured in Ghanaian society, creating tremendous hurdles for researchers interested in this topic. Nevertheless, Perbi



**Figure 1** Roadside sign directing heritage tourists to the Garden of Reverence, Assin Manso.

Credit: Photograph by Rebecca Shumway, 2009.

as well as Ray Kea, Sandra Greene, Larry Yarak, Ray Dummett, Kofi Baku, and the many authors contributing to this collection have made important inroads.<sup>35</sup>

As noted above, the expansion of slavery within Ghana was itself part of the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the transatlantic slave trade directly affected the political climate as well as the economic systems within Ghana, as the work of Ray Kea, Kwame Daaku, Kwame Arhin, Margaret Priestley, and others showed decades ago.<sup>36</sup> Market demand for enslaved Africans, represented on the coast of Ghana by a near-constant stream of slaving vessels, changed the meaning and value of wealth, property, and status in Ghana's societies, as it did throughout Atlantic Africa.<sup>37</sup> The emergence of organized slaving that resulted from European demand for captives was fundamental to the evolution and expansion of slaveholding and slaving in Ghana. Moreover, the increased violence, loss of family members, and long-term economic damage stemming from the transatlantic slave trade necessitated the rise of powerful militarized states like Asante and protective shrines like *Nananom Mpow* on the coast and *Tongnaab* in the northern savanna.<sup>38</sup> These transformations in Ghanaian societies, as well as the expansion of indigenous slavery, set the stage for the particular kinds of relationships formed between the British and various groups within Ghana in the nineteenth century and beyond.

In the nineteenth century, the expansion of slavery and slave trading within Ghana coincided with the development of anti-slavery ideology and the criminalization of slavery. Policy-makers in Great Britain justified progressive incursions on autonomous polities in Ghana, including colonial rule, in part by insisting that they were pursuing the moral cause of abolishing slavery. However transparent and hypocritical this claim may have been is evidence of the historical links between slavery and colonialism and the interconnected legacies of both. As some of the chapters in this collection demonstrate, the issue of slavery was often central to the negotiation of African rights in British colonial courts.<sup>39</sup> Several studies have shown the particular ramifications of Britain's declaration of emancipation for women, both as slaves and slaveholders. Claire Robertson suggests that enslaved women in post-emancipation Accra found new opportunities to liberate themselves only to then find new living and working situations especially limited.<sup>40</sup> Kwabena Adu-Boahen, meanwhile, suggests that women played an increasing role as slaveholders in Ghana over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Trevor R. Getz and Lindsay Ehrisman have suggested that that British anti-slavery courts may have provided a forum for at least some women to contest or transform their social status and lifestyle.<sup>42</sup>

In contemporary Ghana, the legacy of slavery is most pronounced in the ways descendants of slaves experience limitations on their rights. Perbi's extensive research within communities across Ghana confirms the ongoing discrimination confronting Ghanaians who are identified as having slave ancestry across the country. Drawing on some 375 interviews and discussions, and mobilizing proverbs and stories, Perbi's research reveals a dynamic and assimilative system of servility and clientage within the context of kinship systems. She uses oral histories to depict the modes of acquisition, employment, and to some degree social experiences of the enslaved in Ghana's recent history. Sandra Greene's work has also begun to reveal more about the experiences of the enslaved and about African ideas of slavery and abolition.<sup>43</sup>

Another legacy is the common belief, particularly among Ghanaians in the south of the country, that historically, slaves were people from the northern part of Ghana. Even as historical research has increasingly demonstrated that Akan and other southern ethnic groups were enslaved in large numbers, particularly in the era of the transatlantic slave trade, the stereotype of northerners as slaves persists. This phenomenon has recently been examined by Susan Benson and Benjamin Kankpeyeng.<sup>44</sup>

The legacy of slavery is also a central issue in modern Ghana's relationship with the African diaspora. Edward Bruner's 1996 "Tourism in Ghana: The representation of slavery and the return of the black diaspora" was a landmark study in this field, depicting the contests and complementarities between the views of visitors and pilgrims and local understandings of the slave trade and its heritage around Cape Coast Castle.<sup>45</sup> As Bayo Holsey has described, Ghanaians' historical memory of the transatlantic slave trade is intricately intertwined with historical memory of local forms of slavery. As she and other researchers interested in the history of the transatlantic slave trade have found, when coastal Ghanaians are asked about the transatlantic slave trade they often respond by speaking about local slaveholding practices, or more likely by expressing an unwillingness to speak about local slaveholding practices.<sup>46</sup> For visitors from the diaspora, the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade is of primary concern, and heritage tourists often encounter difficulty finding common ground with Ghanaians on the meaning of slavery and its repercussions.<sup>47</sup>

We hope that looking at slavery as a historical phenomenon *and* as a root cause of problems facing contemporary Ghana will open up and facilitate new conversations within Ghana and beyond, in scholarly and non-scholarly circles. As Wilhelmina Donkoh's chapter implores, the history and legacy of slavery in

Ghana and elsewhere should be viewed as a shared inheritance among all the inhabitants of the modern world.

## The Book and its Authors

This book brings together leading experts in Ghanaian and diaspora history and anthropology from three continents and six countries. The chapters are organized into three parts in roughly chronological order. Part One consists of chapters that focus on the precolonial period, including the transatlantic slave trade, enslaved people from Ghana living in the diaspora, and political ideology in the immediate post-abolition era. The chapters in Part Two primarily treat the colonial period, focusing particularly on Ghanaians' struggle for freedom and the roles of European missions and colonial courts. Part Three includes chapters that examine contemporary Ghana with an emphasis on the legacy of slavery and the slave trade.

Because our aim in this project was to intentionally cross boundaries that have previously limited scholarship on this complex topic, many of the chapters incorporate analyses of more than one of these chronological periods. They examine change over time but also the continuities over the past few centuries. They also intentionally consider matters related to the transatlantic slave trade and indigenous slavery in dynamic relation to one another.

The first part of this book focuses on the era of the transatlantic slave trade and on what we know of institutions and experiences of slavery and slaving in precolonial Ghana. The first chapter, from Rebecca Shumway, surveys the trends and trajectories of scholarship on the transatlantic slave trade in this region. Through a historiographic lens, Shumway introduces core debates and findings of more than fifty years of scholarship. Chapter 2, from Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu, takes this analysis far into northern Ghana and deep into culture and politics. Like many chapters in this book, Ntewusu's work connects the experiences and manifestations of the slave trading era with contemporary identity and political culture. The next chapter, from Walter C. Rucker, crosses the Atlantic to the eighteenth-century Americas. Rucker argues that Ghanaian culture formed the groundwork for technologies of resistance in the diasporic setting. The part concludes with a chapter focused on a different kind of resistance. Shumway turns our attention to southern Ghana in this period by analyzing abolitionism in Fanteland, a subject sorely neglected by histories of the abolition movement that emphasize only American and European actors.



The second part shifts the focus to colonial rule following the Anglo–Asante War of 1874 (“the Sagrenti War”) and the formal establishment of the British Crown Colony and Protectorate of the Gold Coast. Questions of slavery were inextricably tied to this transformative event, for the new administration was explicitly abolitionist but also hesitated to undertake enforcement that would result in real transformations. In Chapter 5, Trevor R. Getz argues that this situation created a forum for women who were both slaves and wives to make claims for a higher status and better situation, both through official hearings in British anti-slavery courts and less formal processes. Getz argues that these opportunities represented a new arena for a renegotiation of status, but one based on a much older recognized process of amelioration. Paul Jenkins, too, sees a hidden history of renegotiation in the wake of the 1874 criminalization of slavery. In Chapter 6, Jenkins uses the reports of Theophilus Opoku as a frame for understanding the transformation of slave status into relationships of patronage and “wished-for dependency” outside of the official gaze. In the final chapter in this part, Steffen Runkel turns us to the case of Francis P. Fearon. Echoing Shumway’s chapter, Runkel identifies Fearon as an African (and diasporic) abolitionist and the key actor in a dramatic episode that forced the colonial authorities to turn their attention to the sub rosa continued existence of relationships of slavery after the acts of 1874.

The final part of this book deals with the heritage, memory, and legacy of slavery in postcolonial Ghana. In Chapter 8, Wilhelmina Donkoh tackles the difficulties of reconciling Ghanaian and diasporic imperatives of commemorating the transatlantic slave trade. Her chapter raises issues around the representation and responsibilities of various stakeholders, but it also highlights successful commemorative collaborations. In Chapter 9, Akosua Adoma Perbi similarly addresses the long legacy of indigenous slavery in Ghana. Perbi identifies this legacy in conflicts over political institutions, tenure rights, and inheritance as well as everyday social interactions. In the final chapter (Chapter 10), Bayo Holsey turns the focus to political discourse, especially in terms of issues of development. Holsey argues that the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on Ghanaian society continues to be minimized. Western leaders, while acknowledging the system as a tragedy, have largely sought to defuse any history or acknowledgment that would serve as a critique of contemporary global power inequalities. Holsey also implicates Ghanaian politicians, including President John Kufuor, in this minimization. Together, these three chapters demonstrate the continued relevance of the study of slavery and its legacy in Ghana and the diaspora.



## Notes

- 1 In the 1960s and 1970s, when many of the classic works on Ghana history were written, there was a dire need for African history from an African point of view to counterbalance the Eurocentric colonial histories that shaped contemporary thinking about the African past. It was also important in those days to combat the pernicious Western view of precolonial Africa as nothing more than a source of enslaved people brought to the Americas.
- 2 An important exception is Falola, Toyin (ed.), 2003. *Ghana in Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Adu Boahen*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- 3 For a review of this debate and several case studies, see Beswick, Stephanie, and Jay Spaulding (eds.), 2010. *African Systems of Slavery*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- 4 This is precisely what happened at one of the panels organized in preparation for this book at the African Studies Association meeting in 2014.
- 5 PRAAD ADM 11/975, "Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast," J. C. de Graft-Johnson, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs, Accra, October 1927. Not to be confused with John Coleman de Graft-Johnson, Jr., author of *African Glory: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations*.
- 6 Sarbah, John Mensah, 1897. *Fanti Customary Laws: A Brief Introduction to the Principles of the Native Laws and Customs of the Fanti and Akan Sections of the Gold Coast*. London: William Clowes, 6. Claridge, W. Walton, 1915. *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti from the Earliest Times to the Commencement of the Twentieth Century*. London: John Murray.
- 7 One legacy of the minimization of slavery in colonial-era sources has been to render research into slave use in production and the social dynamics of life for economic slaves relatively difficult.
- 8 Important works on slavery in Ghana to date include Adu-Boahen, Kwabena, 2011. *Post-abolition Slaveholding in the Gold Coast: Slave Mistresses of Coastal Fante, 1807-1874*. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing; Venkatachalam, Meera, 2015. *Slavery, Memory and Religion in Southeastern Ghana, c.1850-Present, The International African Library*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Kea, Ray A., 2012. *A Cultural and Social History of Ghana from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: The Gold Coast in the Age of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*. 2 vols. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen; Bailey, Anne C., 2005. *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press; Greene, Sandra E., 2011. *West African Narratives of Slavery Texts from Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Ghana*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; Akurang-Parry, Kwabena O., 2003. "To Wasse Fiase for Gold: Rethinking Colonial Rule, El Dorado, Antislavery, and Chieftaincy in the Gold Coast (Ghana), 1874-1895." *History in Africa* 30: 11-36; Getz, Trevor R., 2003. "Mechanisms of Slave

- Acquisition and Exchange in Late Eighteenth Century Anomabu: Reconsidering a Cross-section of the Atlantic Slave Trade." *African Economic History* 31: 75–89;
- Getz, Trevor R., 2004. *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Toward Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and the Gold Coast*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press;
- Akurang-Parry, Kwabena O., 2004. "We Shall Rejoice to see the Day when Slavery Shall Cease to Exist: The *Gold Coast Times*, the African Intelligentsia, and Abolition in the Gold Coast." *History in Africa* 31: 19–42;
- Der, Benedict G., 1998. *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*. Accra, Ghana: Woeli Publishing Services;
- Haenger, Peter., 2000. *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa*. Basel, Switzerland: P. Schlettwein;
- Kwabena, Opare-Akurang, 1998. "The Administration of the Abolition Laws, African Responses, and Post-proclamation Slavery in the Gold Coast, 1874–1940." *Slavery and Abolition* 19(2): 149–66.
- Saboro, Emmanuel, 2013. "Songs of Sorrow, Songs of Triumph: Memories of the Slave Trade among the Bula of Ghana." In Martin Klein, Alice Bellagamba, and Sandra Greene (eds.), *The Bitter Legacy: African Slavery Past and Present*, 133–47. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener;
- Akyeampong, Emmanuel, 2001. "History, Memory, Slave-trade and Slavery in Anlo (Ghana)." *Slavery and Abolition* 22(3): 1–24;
- Johnson, Marion, 1986. "The Slaves of Salaga." *Journal of African History* 27(2): 341–62;
- Jones, Adam, 1995. "Female Slave-owners on the Gold Coast: Just a Matter of Money?" In Stephan Palmié (ed.), *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery*, 100–11. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press;
- Yarak, Larry W., 1989. "West African Coastal Slavery in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the Afro-European Slaveowners of Elmina." *Ethnohistory* 36(1): 44–60;
- Schramm, Katharina, 2011. "The Slaves of Pikworo: Local Histories, Transatlantic Perspectives." *History & Memory* 23(1): 96–130.
- 9 Smallwood, Stephanie E., 2007. *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 30. The classic work on this subject is Miers, Suzanne, and Igor Kopytoff, 1977. *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. During the period when foreign slave ships frequented the Ghana coast representing the Atlantic market for enslaved people, captives and other disenfranchised people were vulnerable to further involuntary displacement that severed all their social connections and physically removed them from the continent of their birth. On the difference between indigenous African slavery and American slavery, see Lovejoy, Paul, Igor Kopytoff, and Frederick Cooper, 1979. "Indigenous African Slavery." In Michael Craton (ed.), *Roots and Branches*, 19–83. Toronto, Canada: Pergamon Press.
- 10 On the differences between African slavery and New World slavery, see Cooper Frederick, 1979. "The Problem of Slavery in Africa." *Journal of African History* 20(1): 103–25.

- 11 Robertson, Claire, and Martin Klein (eds.), 1997. *Women and Slavery in Africa*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Perbi, Akosua Adoma, 2004. *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15th to the 19th Centuries*. Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 3. In Ewe, the corresponding terms are *subövi/suböla*, *awubame*, *kluvi*, *avalélea*, and *kluvisi wotso kufiana*. In Ga, they are *abaawa* (female) and *tsulö* (male), *awoba*, *nyön*, *gboklefonyo*, and *nyön ni abaa gbe le*. In Dagbani, they are *tumo/bilchin*, *talima pabu*, *dabli*, *tuhugbaaii*, and *dabli kuba*.
- 14 On pawnship in Ghana, see Austin, Gareth, 1994. "Human Pawning in Asante, 1800–1940: Markets and Coercion, Gender and Cocoa." In Toyin Falola and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Pawnship in Africa*, 119–59. Boulder, CO: Westview Press; Allman, Jean Marie, and Victoria B. Tashjian, 2000. *I Will Not Eat Stone: A Women's History of Colonial Asante*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann; Coe, Cati, 2012. "How Debt became Care: Child Pawning and its Transformations in Akuapem, the Gold Coast, 1874–1929." *Africa* 82(02): 287–311; Adu-Boahen, Kwabena, 2013. "Friendly Assistance: Archetypal Pawnship in Pre-colonial Akan Society." *African Journal of History and Culture* 5: 160–70.
- 15 Perbi, Akosua Adoma, 2004. *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15th to the 19th Centuries*. Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 3.
- 16 Joseph Miller has recently emphasized the importance of viewing slavery in a historical way, as something that changed over time according to local conditions around the globe. Miller, Joseph C., 2012. *The Problem of Slavery As History: A Global Approach*. Cumberland, RI: Yale University Press. Accessed June 3, 2016, ProQuest ebrary.
- 17 Miller, *The Problem of Slavery As History*, 73–74. See also Fage, J. D., 1969. "Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History." *Journal of African History* 10(3): 393–404; Van Dantzig, Albert, 1982. "Effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade on some West African Societies." In Joseph Inikori (ed.), *Forced Migration*. New York: Africana Publishing Company.
- 18 Thornton, John Kelly, 1998. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*. Second ed. New York: Cambridge.
- 19 On intermarriage and sexual relations between Europeans and Africans on the Gold Coast, see Ipsen, Pernille, 2015. *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press; Akyeampong, Emmanuel, 1997. "Sexuality and Prostitution among the Akan of the Gold Coast c.1650–1950." *Past and Present* 156: 144–73; Priestley, Margaret, 1969. *West African Trade and Coast Society: A Family Study*. London: Oxford.
- 20 Lovejoy, Paul E., 2000. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge. Manning, Patrick, 1990. *Slavery and African life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

- 21 Herbstein, Manu. 2005. *Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Picador Africa.
- 22 Bredwa-Mensah, Yaw, 2008. "Slavery and Resistance on Nineteenth Century Danish Plantations in Southeastern Gold Coast, Ghana." *African Study Monographs* 29(3): 133–45; Kea, Ray A., 1995. "Plantations and Labour in the South-East Gold Coast from the Late Eighteenth to the Mid Nineteenth Century." In Robin Law (ed.), *From Slave Trade to "Legitimate" Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa*, 119–43. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge; Haenger, Peter, 2000. *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa*. Basel, Switzerland: P. Schlettwein Publishing.
- 23 On slavery and the palm oil industry in nineteenth-century Ghana, see Kea, Ray A., 1995. "Plantations and Labour in the South-east Gold Coast from the Late Eighteenth to the Mid nineteenth Century." In Robin Law (ed.), *From Slave Trade to "Legitimate" Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa*, 119–43. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge; Reynolds, Edward, 1974. *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast, 1807–1874*, 18–19. London: Longman.
- 24 Miers, Suzanne, and Richard L. Roberts, 1988. *The End of Slavery in Africa*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. On Ghana, see Getz, Trevor R., 2000. "The case for Africans: The Role of Slaves and Masters in Emancipation on the Gold Coast, 1874–1900." *Slavery and Abolition* 21(1): 128–45.
- 25 See [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)
- 26 The notion of an African diaspora originated in North America, particularly with W. E. B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson. Du Bois, W. E. B., 2007. *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870 (The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois)* at <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1657794>; Woodson, Carter Godwin, and Rayford Whittingham Logan, 1916. *The Journal of Negro History* (internet resource). Washington Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/00222992.html>
- 27 Major works include Barry, Boubacar, Elisee Soumonni, and Livio Sansone, 2008. *Africa, Brazil, and the Construction of Trans-Atlantic Black Identities*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press; Falola, Toyin, and Matt D. Childs (eds.), 2004. *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World, Blacks in the diaspora*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; Gomez, Michael A., 2004. *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; Heywood, Linda, and John K. Thornton, 2007. *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*. New York: Cambridge; Heywood, Linda Marinda, ed. 2002. *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*. New York: Cambridge; Law, Robin, and Kristin Mann, 1999. "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast." *William and Mary Quarterly* LVI(2): 307–34; Thornton, John Kelly, 1998. *Africa and*