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"Links to the Present": The Long History of Contested Heritage in Ghana's Slave Castles

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The rise in African American heritage tourism to the castles has produced an abundance of scholarly books and articles. These works often try to place African American tourism to Ghana in the context of global heritage tourism or the Black Atlantic. Most of these works are anthropological, covering the sometimes volatile encounter between African Americans and Ghanaians at the castles. These ethnographies show some consistent themes: African American tourists can feel anger toward the commercialization of the forts, and feel as though Ghanaians dodge their own complicity in the slave trade. Their Ghanaian hosts react angrily to the accusation, and feel the castles are equally part of their heritage.

History as a discipline has lagged behind in investigating these encounters. Although some works discuss the castles in the era of the slave trade, no studies I have come across have looked at how the castles were understood from the 1830s to Ghana's independence in 1957. This lacuna is unsurprising. The recent rise in tourism to the Ghanaian slave castles is so current, and the theoretical issues so contemporary, that history appears to have little to say about these ideas. But the use and misuse of these slave castles as sites of heritage is much older than these studies will grant. Of course, an idea's past does

not always control how the idea operates in the present. Sometimes, though, the past grabs hold of an idea's structure, and stubbornly refuses to let it go. The politics of heritage remains the platform on which anthropologists, with their presentist concerns, stage the debate over the castles. The anthropological literature seems content with presuming that the heritage of these castles must "belong" to one of the two groups, African Americans or Ghanaians, and assigning their true value to one group or the other, or both.

A historical perspective, however, shows how this debate is much older than it seems. Such a perspective demonstrates how its construction still unnecessarily influences the false choice that "owning" heritage represents. This paper will first review the theory that underlies anthropological critiques of Ghanaian heritage tourism in order to explain how the current anthropological literature leads to a dead-end. Instead of looking for ways to move beyond the debate over heritage, anthropologists have been more interesting in blaming one side or the other for lacking sensitivity or interest. This approach, I contend, is unproductive. Then, I examine the transformations in how the forts were understood and incorporated into travel writing, first in British colonial travel literature, and then

in African American autobiography. These historical examples show that in understanding what the castles mean we have not moved beyond a discussion of ownership and control over heritage. When we ignore the more sordid ways the politics of heritage has been used, we fail to see how ineffective the terms of the current debate are for diffusing the tensions surrounding the castles. If we want to change the way these contestations over heritage play out, then anthropologists will have to think past the traditional terms of the debate.

Anthropological Approaches to Castle Tourism

Though diasporan tourists, local Ghanaians, and anthropologists contest the significance of the castles' histories, the facts about those histories are less controversial. European forts in Ghana (then called the Gold Coast) were tiny pockets of uncertain authority in a large coastal area of closely linked Fante polities. The Fante are an Akan-speaking ethnic group on the central Ghanaian coast, who had a prominent role in Atlantic commerce even before the rise of the transatlantic slave trade. European traders paid customs, duties, and rent in exchange for permission to build the forts.[1] Though the African-European trade relation suffered periods of instability and war, it was durable enough to last from the fifteenth century through to the nineteenth.

The castles, and some small trading posts, were the only permanent European structures along the coast. European sovereignty was limited to the confines of the castle. Fante merchants were their necessary middlemen for procuring slaves. As the slave trade escalated in the eighteenth century, the power of the Fante merchants to dictate the terms of trade grew, keeping slave prices high and commodity prices low.[2] The importance of the forts and the middlemen declined after the British abolished the slave trade in 1807 and the Asante Kingdom conquered the coastal forts in the 1820s.[3]

The most famous of the three main castles is Elmina Castle, founded by the Portuguese in 1482, conquered by the Dutch in 1637, and sold to the British in 1872. Cape Coast Castle was built by the Swedish in 1653 and changed hands a few times, until the British secured it in 1665. The Danish built Christianborg Castle in 1661, sold it to the Portuguese, bought it back in 1683, and held onto it until selling it to the British in 1850. Following the defeat of the Asante in 1874, the Gold Coast was reformed into a British colony. The colonial government converted the castles to official buildings. Cape Coast and Christianborg became government offices. Elmina was turned into a hospital and prison.[4]

Tourism to the coastal forts is not new. Although diseases such as malaria and yellow fever limited travel to West Africa in the nineteenth century, some European travelers survived the trip, particularly after the use of quinine improved mortality rates. The forts themselves were designated as historical monuments only upon independence, and Ghana's government continued to use them as offices and military training. Tourism to Ghana actually declined between the 1960s and the 1990s, reaching a historic low in 1983.[5] Later on, Ghana invested more attention in the forts in the 1990s, turning them into full state museums in collaboration with American conservation institutions and UNESCO.[6]

Ghana's Museums and Monuments Board and its international partners altered the sites in their restoration. They installed gift shops and concessions stands and removed a great deal of the colonial additions from the main castles. Most controversially, they painted the castles white, launching what Katharina Schramm, an anthropologist, has called "the whitewashing debate."[7] Whitewashing was not simply an attempt to make the castles presentable to tourists. It was actually a historically informed preservation decision. Many travelers throughout the nineteenth century remarked on the castles' well-maintained white paint, which was essential to prevent coastal erosion. Nonetheless, this preservation provoked anger among African American commentators (and anthropologists), who decried the commodification of trauma. That the word "whitewash" has a secondary meaning of "conceal" or "cover up" is an unfortunate coincidence. It led to the debate being even more emotionally charged. Besides the problem of marketing heritage, the lack of preservation had made the experience of the slave castles more powerful for the tourists. The decrepit slave dungeons looked especially grim, symbolizing the horrors of the slave trade. The look of age in a building is itself enough to provoke a meaningful response in tourism the world over.[8] Whitewashing and renovation made diasporan tourists feel deprived of that fundamental experience.

Anthropologists usually see tourism to the castles as an example of contemporary "heritage" tourism. "Heritage" has many definitions. One of the most cited among anthropologists today is Laurajane Smith's definition. Heritage, according to Smith, is "a cultural or social process" that "creates ways to understand and engage with the present" through memory.[9] This definition builds on an enormous literature on the relationship between heritage, memory and history. The discus-

1 William St. Clair, *The Grand Slave Emporium: Cape Coast Castle and the British slave trade* (London: Profile, 2006), 39-44.
2 Ty Reese, "'Eating' Luxury: Fante Middlemen, British Goods, and Changing Dependencies on the Gold Coast, 1750-1821," *William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 4: 2009, 851-872
3 William St. Clair, 249-251.
4 Kwesi J. Aquandah, *Castles and Forts of Ghana* (Accra: Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, 1999).
5 Information Services Department, *An Official Handbook of Ghana* (Accra: New Times Corp, 1991), 72.
6 Katharina Schramm, *African Homecoming*, 79.
7 Katharina Schramm, *African Homecoming*, 82.
8 Katharina Schramm, *African Homecoming*, 86-101.
9 Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

sion is old, dating back to Maurice Halbwach's 1920s theory of social memory. The essential work nowadays, cited thousands of times by scholars of heritage, is Pierra Nora's *Between Memory and History*. Nora argues that memory is a living social fact, which societies use for a variety of ends, whereas history is a reconstruction of "what is no longer."[10] In the view of Nora and later scholars who have applied his ideas to many different contexts, the purpose of memory is to use images and ideas of the past to give meaning to present situations. This allows people considerable freedom in the way the past is manipulated as a discourse. Nations, ethnic groups, and other institutions share their own memories and can exclude others from them. Using Nora, one can look at the Ghanaian slave castles as sites of memory for African American tourists. When the Ghanaian government preserves the castles in a way that block the tourists from accessing their preferred pasts, controversy erupts.

The tours can provide some moments of deep discomfort for the African American tourists, especially when they talk with Ghanaians about the slave trade. Living through the memory of their ancestors forces the tourists to recall that the ancestors of Ghanaians "betrayed" them by selling and trading them as slaves.[11] When these tourists see the legacy of the slave trade as part of their heritage, this betrayal can feel quite real. These tensions are particularly distressing because, as Schramm notes, many of these tourists travel to Ghana with the hope of reclaiming and "reconfiguring" their African "essence."[12] When African American tourists accuse Ghanaians of treating the slave trade frivolously, their belief in Ghanaian moral responsibility and the failure of Ghanaians to acknowledge that responsibility often underlies those accusations.

There is some truth to this criticism. Ghanaian history textbooks have often neglected the role of African middlemen in the slave trade Elmina and Cape Coast. Ghanaians often lack interest in Atlantic slavery, and feel as though African American tourists become "too emotional" on tours.[13] Ghanaians are aware of the historical relevance these castles have outside the slave trade context. They are proud of the castles' history as trading centers and for their role in the Asante wars. As Edward Bruner points out, there is a fight over who owns the castle: Ghanaians or African Americans.[14] When the past is made living through collective memory, abstract notions of history morph into fights over "ownership." Nor is it easy to divide the politics over the slave castles to one between Ghanaians and diasporan tourists, though most of the scholarship prefers this dichotomous approach. In taking control of the forts, the Monuments Board demanded that local Elminians

and Cape Coasters pay a fee to visit the castle and prevented customary ceremonies such as funerals from taking place on the castle ground. As a result, the Board has shut out local Ghanaians from memorializing their heritage for the benefit of the diasporan tourists. [15] The controversies surrounding the castles are therefore not as two-sided as they may seem.

This is a highly emotional debate, but it is nonetheless one that anthropologists are willing to enter. Anthropologists like Bayo Holsey, for example, have joined these contestations, at least partially turning their analysis into criticism. Holsey accuses Ghanaians of "sequestering" the slave trade so they can forget its powerful imagery. She admits Holsey that some African leaders have actually apologized for their ancestors' slave trading at the ceremonies.[16] She does not consider this progress. In her view, the Emancipation Day ceremonies emphasize African American experiences at the expense of "marginalizing" African ones. Holsey seems satisfied with neither group, and her inability to arrive any sort of solution reveals a flaw in the anthropological literature when it becomes critical rather than analytical. Schramm and Bruner go to great lengths to explore the shared heritage, and therefore shared ownership, of African Americans and Africans in the Diaspora, but are not willing to grant the castles to one side or the other, and as a result they simply add ammunition to both. This scholarly detachment may seem prudent given the emotions these discussions provoke. But reifying the debate in terms of ownership to consistently point out the differences between African American tourists and local Ghanaians simply reinforces the issue. In constantly rehashing debates about blame and deception, and refusing to resolve those debates, scholars of diasporan tourism perpetuate the angry accusations of those involved. For example, the historical archaeologist Theresa Singleton aptly breaks down the categories of "Ghanaian" and "diasporan," but she still concludes by arguing that the rituals of the castle favor one group over the other.

Anthropologists investigating castle tourism draw on the literature of the African Diaspora in addition to the theory of heritage. The two bodies of literature seem to lead them to contradictory impulses. There are two contexts for scholarship on the "African Diaspora:" a historical context, which looks at the historic ties between African and Afro-Descendant populations, and an analaytical one, which looks at Diasporic identities in the present. The analytical approach has some enshrined questions and debates. The field is often said to have begun with Melville Herskovitz's 1947 book *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Herskovitz discovered shared customs between West Africans and Afro-Descendant populations in Suriname and argued that those customs had been preserved across the Atlantic. The sociologist E. Franklin Frazier took the opposite view in a 1939 work *The Negro in the United States*. He argued that African

10 Pierra Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26: 1989, 7-24.
11 Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008): 122-123.
12 Katharina Schramm, *African Homecoming*.
13 Edward Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana," 293.
14 Edward Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana," 292.

15 Theresa Singleton, "The slave trade remembered on the former gold and slave coasts," *Slavery and Abolition* 20, no. 1: 1999, 150-169.
16 Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance*, 172.

American institutions were born out of poverty and oppression, not a diasporic link. The anthropologist Roger Bastide synthesized these two arguments in the 1960s, and suggested that the two lied along a spectrum of the "African community" on one end and the "Negro community" on the other.[17]

As Christine Chivallon notes, three standard prescriptive arguments made by historians and anthropologists regarding the maintenance of African customs in the diaspora have emerged from this base. One side, following Frazier and Stanley Elkins, argued that the horrors of the slave trade and slavery created an empty void which descendants of slaves filled. The second approach owes its current form to Sidney Mintz and Richard Price's 1976 book *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past*. This is the so-called "creolization" thesis, which holds that African ethnic groups, upon being mixed together on plantations and forced into non-African cultural customs, invented new traditions. The third argument suggests that African ethnic groups were not as disparate in some of their "core" traditions as it may seem. They argue those core traditions survived (through "resistance") largely intact.[18]

These arguments intersect with prescriptive approaches in the sense that both, to some degree, are normative. After all, scholars lay "creolization" or "core beliefs" over the same archaeological record. And as Chivallon points out, there are also three categories to classifying how cultural theorists believe Afro-Descendant populations should feel about the Diaspora. There are those who see themselves as ethnically tied to Africans ("Pan-Africanism"); those who see the Diaspora as a hybrid, with many, equally valuable combinations of cultural customs and historical influences from both Europe and Africa (put forward by Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy); and those for whom the Diaspora has and should have no meaning as an identity.[19] The three prescriptive approaches map onto the three analytical categories well, yet the connections are often forgotten.

The connection that anthropologists of heritage have with Nora and other scholars of memory and heritage leads them to be coldly precise in analyzing the politics of memory in the Ghanaian slave castles. They explore the manipulations of these "sites of memory" and what underlies their controversies. But their connection to diasporic theory, and in particular Hall and Gilroy, leads them to normative judgments about how the memory of the slave forts should be divided up. Their work becomes about the politics of identity: who is African, who is American, and to what extent do shared historical ties entitle a group to control the memory of a castle? They fail to move past notions of heritage "belonging" to an essentialized ethnic group. In doing so, they trap themselves in a politics of memory that one can criticize infinitely. A look at travel literature from the slave castles from two periods shows some of the ways groups have incorporated the slave castles into their understanding of heritage. It suggests that we should perhaps be wary of reproducing those understandings, and question how much can be overcome if we simply use their logic.

The Meaning of Cape Coast Castles from the Victorian Period to the Interwar Era

The notion of castles as being part of a historical heritage began after the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, when their use as factories was significantly diminished. This does not mean that the castles provoked deep reflection. Before the 1920s, the slave castles were merely architectural marvels and hostels for travelers to West Africa. Victorian travelers were aware of the castles' slave dungeons, but they seemed uninterested. Only tourists who "enjoy mild morbidities" would bother visiting them, said Richard Burton.[20] And the dungeons were not necessarily morbid: Mary Kingsley praised what she thought must have been the "commodious accommodation" for the slaves at Elmina.[21] There seems to have been some confusion about the purpose of the dungeons themselves. Burton's remark suggests the dungeons were known to hold slaves. A later traveler, Alfred Ellis, confirms this view, noting the "closely packed two-thousand beings" in the dungeons.[22] But William Claridge, in his massive 1915 history of the Gold Coast, argued that they kept prisoners of war. In Claridge's view, slavers packed the slaves into the courtyard.[23] The travelers lacked interest, and their ignorance never seemed to bother them. Nearly every traveler to the Gold Coast remarked on the impressive forts and their interiors, but only Ellis and Kingsley described the dungeons, and only as very brief asides[24].

William St. Clair argues that eighteenth century travelers to the castles were relatively silent about its dungeons. Though that observation is correct, it does not compare to the silence of the late nineteenth century.[25] Even after the British abolished the trade in 1807 and turned their coastal forts into bases for fighting the trade, negative remarks about the slaving forts persisted until several decades after the abolition of slavery itself. Josiah Conder, repeating a famous comment made in

17 Christine Chivallon, "Can One Diaspora Hide Another? Interpretations of a Black Culture in the Americas." *Social and Economic Studies* 54, no. 2 (2005), 71-105.

18 Chivallon, 74-93; Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13-20.

19 Chivallon, 93-102.

20 Richard Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1863), 71.

21 Mary Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa: Congo Francais, Corisco and Cameroons* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897), 27.

22 Alfred Burdon Ellis, *West African Sketches* (London: Samuel Tinsley and Co., 1881), 5.

23 William Walton Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti from the earliest times to the commencement of the twentieth century* (London: J. Murray, 1915), 156.

24 For example, see: John Whitford's *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa* (1877) and Anna Badlam's *Views in Africa* (1895).

25 William St. Clair, *The Grand Slave Emporium,* 81.

1812 by Henry Meredith, depicted the Gold Coast as a "grand emporium" for the slave trade in the 1830s, and Joshua Carnes, an American traveler, decried the forts as depots for the "horrid traffic."[26]

This association disappeared surprisingly quickly. British involvement in the slave trade no longer captivated the interest of the travelers. This remained the case even during the height of Britain's grand imperialism in Africa. This was a time when "African slavery" was a rallying cry for British intervention, but such concern apparently did not spark reflection in travelers visiting the symbols of their nation's involvement in slavery. Perhaps the horrors of the dungeons affected Burton, but he felt no need to reflect further.

This is not to suggest that nineteenth century writers made no association between the coastal forts and slavery. The salient point is that these references were confined to historical writing, rather than travel writing. Nora's distinction between living memory and history is useful here. Histories such as Claridge's could mention the forts as being slave depots because it was historically relevant, but the travel literature could neglect such details as distant and irrelevant. Many more travelers noted the tombstone of Letitia Elizabeth Landon, interred at Cape Coast Castle, instead of the castle's slave dungeons. William Reade, for example, said that Landon's tombstone was the only thing of interest at Cape Coast Castle.[27] For other travelers, there was plenty to marvel at architecturally in the old towns of Elmina and Cape Coast, and the travelers did describe the town's charming stone houses. The castles were often glowingly described, their tall, whitewashed walls being especially impressive. Many of them visited the gardens, but not the dungeons underneath them.

This lack of interest seems to have shifted again in the interwar era with an equally surprising speed. Gaunt, writing in 1912, only a year before the war, worried that the ghosts of slaves were haunting the dungeon, but there was little moral concern in her writing. Tourism in the castle dungeons seems to have grown immediately after the war, however, and by the 1920s most of Cape Coast Castle had converted into a tourist destination. This is hard to glean from the historiography, and one can get the impression that the castles fell into obscurity after their military use became obsolete. This was not the case. Caroline Singer wrote in 1929 that some of the rooms were in fact placarded, and colonial officials had set up a guided tour.[28] Frank Gray, another traveler, visited the castle in the mid-1920s, where a tour guide led him to the slave dungeons.[29] Over the course of a decade, the dungeons became incorporated within the total experience of the coastal forts. In the tour itself as well as in the travel writing, a discourse had been forged. It even received an imperial seal. A travel book recounting the trip of Prince Edward throughout the British Domains describes his visit to the "horrible" slave dungeons of Cape Coast Castle.[30]

During the interwar period there was a general transition in the way many British writers viewed the Gold Coast.[31] An elite group of Fante merchants had emerged during the era of the slave trade on the Coast. Their relationship with British governing authority had always been contested and uncertain. In 1844, Fante leaders signed a "Bond" with the British lieutenant governor. The legal authority over the Fante states was unclear until the transfer of Dutch Gold Coast possessions to Britain inspired Fante leaders to form an independent Confederacy in 1868 with authority to oppose such transfers. The British quickly ended on the Confederacy. By then, British interests over the interior Asante Empire had been clarified, and the newly organized Gold Coast Colony subsumed the coastal states.[32] The Constitution of the Fante Confederacy had been the first salvo of anti-colonial nationalism that by the 1920s had fully emerged as a threat to British governance. These Gold Coasters included intellectuals such as J.E. Casely Hayford, who would later strongly influence Pan-Africanism in the United States.

In the interwar period there was a delicate balance between British paternalistic attitude toward African institutions and the need to deal with increasingly agitated coastal elites. In 1921, the Governor of the Gold Coast initiated a plan for the gradual replacement of African officials in government service with British ones, a pattern that was mirrored throughout colonial Africa in this period.[33] On the other hand local colonial subjects both used and undermined the British regime everywhere in the Empire, and the Gold Coast was no exception. In fact, the Gold Coast had highly politicized elites,

26 Josiah Conder, *Africa* (London: J. Duncan, 1830), 246; Joshua Carnes, *Journal of a voyage from Boston to the west coast of Africa : with a full description of the manner of trading with the natives on the coast* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1853), 122.

27 William Reade, *Savage Africa; being the narrative of a tour in equatorial, southwestern and northwestern Africa* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1864), 42.

28 Caroline Singer, *White Africans and Black* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1929), 114.

29 Frank Gray, *My Two African Journeys* (London: Metheun and Co., 1928), 144.

30 Ralph Deakin, *Southward Ho! With the Prince in Africa and South America* (London: Metheun and Co., 1925), 29.

31 I take seriously Frederick Cooper's argument that evidence should inform periodization in African history, not the other way around. I use the traditional distinctions between the interwar period and the post war period because I argue that they indeed reflect changes in the sources. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley. CA: University of California Press, 2005), 12-16,

32 David Owusu-Ansah, *Historical Dictionary of Ghana* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005).

33 David Owusu-Ansah, *Historical Dictionary of Ghana*. For the general pattern, see: Vivian Bickford-Smith, "The Betrayal of Creole Elites, 1880–1920," in Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, eds., *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 194–227.

that the historian Carina Ray points out in a recent article were "readying [themselves] to lay claim to political power."[34] Having been disenfranchised and barred from office, African elites took to the then unregulated press, circulating their call for regional autonomy in papers like *The Gold Coast Leader*. The British colonial government was aware of this agitation and saw it as dangerous to its continued authority.[35] The usual British strategy was to reject petitions from Gold Coast elites on the grounds that they did not represent the interest of "native chiefs," (as they told a delegation explicitly in 1920).[36] The result was an uneasy compromise, both politically and intellectually, that incorporated rhetoric of both inclusion and exclusion for "detribalized" Africans.[37]

It is likely that sudden interest in the British over these slave dungeons was part of this rhetoric. The dungeons, which to Victorian travelers were merely morbidities, now provided powerful moments of reflection, and became the focal point of a visit to the castle. Frank Gray's account of his trip to Cape Coast Castle was completely dominated by his being led to the dungeons, as was Caroline Singer's. For Gray, it provoked reflection. "Here were the slaves driven so that they might be hustled into the surf boats and the holds of the ships for a life's servitude," he noted. "And from this scene we immediately returned to the offices housed within the castle of modern administration and British freedom." The contrast between a British legacy of slavery and "modern administration and British freedom" is clear: Britain's anti-slavery ideals, Gray argued, were part of its modernization.

The contrast between civilization and the barbarousness of slavery shows up in another book mentioning the castles, by Lady Dorothy Mills. Mills, a professional adventuress and staunch exponent of the civilizing mission, still had the slave castles lead her into a discussion of the horrors of slavery. The castles, Mills argued, were where Africans learned "all that was ill in white civilization," setting Africans on a path toward self-destruction.[38]   The white American journalist Alexander Jacob Reynolds remarked ruefully on how the once noble military establishments "had denigrated into mere prisons for thousands" of slaves bound for the New World. One travel book described the irony of Cape Coast Castle's Tudor architectural motifs and its function as slave depot. The Castle "must have seen as much misery as any place in the world." Now its impressive whitewashed walls seemed much less noble:

"As we look at these clean, white-washed walls today it is difficult to imagine the suffering they have witnessed."[39]

The British discourse surrounding the slave castles bears the hallmarks of later heritage tourism. The castles were personal structures whose history was tangible and living. Gray said that the castle was a "link to the present," and the powerful sense of guilt runs through these passages. Whereas the Victorian travelers approached the castles and their dungeons as being emotionally distant, the structure of the castles themselves provoked instant reflection on the part of the travelers of the interwar period. The authors pointed out that the bitter irony of British involvement in the business suddenly came to the fore, and reported on the stark juxtaposition between the beauty of the castles and their whitewashed walls with the horrors of the trade for the first time. Certainly this was not the first time anyone had noticed. But it had become useful for authors to make this epiphany known to their readers.

This was hardly the work of a few marginal travel writers. It was intimately wrapped up with the work of empire maintenance. Tour guides led these travelers and placards guided them. The buildings were mainly used for British government offices. And the visit of Prince Edward shows that these motifs became incorporated into the highest levels of state. In the one spare reference to the Cape Coast Castle, the journalist accompanying the Prince mentioned only the dungeons, saying that "the horrible memories chilled you even now." The mention that a government building bore the legacy of a terrible historical event shows the extent to which the British were willing to incorporate their sordid past into their conception of tropical Africa.

What explains this change of tone? That contemporary scholars do not remark on the shifting emphasis should suggest how little the writers in the 1920s were aware of it. There are some strong reasons for why they might have found it expedient to bring in their personal experience of guilt into their description of the castles. The attempt to justify proto-development theories against the backdrop of industrial warfare in the First World War played a part. It was dangerous to the British colonial regime that, after the First World War, being modern was often equated with being culturally anti-rational and anti-positivistic.[40] The British could hardly have expected their colonial subjects to reform their institutions without first acknowledging their own historical "backwardness." Slavery had been a strong motivator for the colonial intervention in Africa, and if abandoning slavery was part of the long trajectory toward advancement that all societies were supposed to reach for, then it could only have helped to show the moral growth of British civilization. Hence Frank Gray's journey from cold slave dungeons to modern British offices was a literalization of man's path to enlightenment.

34 Carina Ray, "Decrying White Peril: Interracial Sex and the Rise of Anticolonial Nationalism on the Gold Coast," *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 1: 2014, 78-110, 85.

35 Carina Ray, "Decrying White Peril," 92.

36 Vivian Bickford-Smith, "The Betrayal of Creole Elites," 214.

37 Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

38 Dorothy Rachel Melissa Walpole Mills, *The Golden Land: A Record of Travel in West Africa* (London: Duckworth, 1929), 88-9.

39 Paul Redmayne, *The Gold Coast Yesterday and Today,* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938), 64.

40 Mark Roseman, "National Socialism and the End of Modernity," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 697.

It was also clear that flashes of uncertainty had begun to take root, particularly when imperial thought considered educated elites. The 1919 First Pan-African Congress, designed to unite African and African-Americans under one agenda, petitioned for home rule and autonomy, and a quick transition to independence.[41] The goal of ethnic self-determination had come to the fore in dividing up Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, but Allied Powers attempted to prevent this goal from animating independence movements in their own domains. The British, French, and Americans fought, successfully, to keep anti-racist language out of the Treaty of Versailles, despite the nascent Pan-African (as well as Pan-Arab and Pan-Slavic) movements that the language of ethnic self-determination had in part engendered.[42] Anticolonial sentiments in West Africa also took inspiration from Leninism, and this alignment led to the galvanizing of underground labor movements opposed to economic projects and the colonial governments that sponsored them.[43] It was a concession, and acknowledgement meant to avoid any undermining of moral authority. It avoided hypocrisy, which the Gold Coasters were adept at spotting.

The Western travel writers laid the foundation for a kind of discourse, but its motifs were elaborated on by African American travel writers in the 1960s and 1970s. Whether these writers read works of British travel writing is not known, and it is certainly possible that the influence was indirect. As I will argue, a very different set of concerns motivated these postcolonial expatriates, and the castles are as a part of their heritage for different reasons. If the incorporation of the castles as heritage was not a direct transfer, then its logic was similar. This is especially true of the double-sided rhetoric of exclusion and inclusion. The African American travel writing cast the castles as a physical embodiment of the writers' willingness to include and exclude themselves from what they considered an African heritage.

African Americans in Ghana and the Politics of Heritage

The sense of shared identity between Africans and African Americans precedes decolonization. There were "fathers" of Pan-Africanism: Blyden and Martin Delany in the nineteenth century, for example, and W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey in the early twentieth century. Their work had an uneasy relationship with African livelihoods. Blyden and Delany both said, consistent with their time, that non-Western Afri-

cans lacked "civilization."[44] They called for civilizing missions, and Blyden viewed the "enlightenment" of Africans to be the goal of African American repatriation. DuBois and his protégés were less critical, but DuBois's travel writing from the 1920s has come to be criticized for its apparent racist overtones. He characterized the rural village as a "gift" from Africa to the world, along with "beginnings" and "beauty." This essentialized Africans as sensual and simplistic.[45]

The Gold Coast, renamed upon independence to Ghana, was the first nation in British Africa to gain independence, in 1957. Independence leader Kwame Nkrumah's pronouncements of freedom for Africans caused bitter reflection among African Americans, especially those living in the South. One story told of Vice President Richard Nixon approaching a group of people at Ghana's independence celebration. When Nixon asked the group how it felt to be free, they replied, "We wouldn't know. We're from Alabama."[46] Though possibly apocryphal, the story captures the mood of African American visitors to Ghana well. Ghana's promise as a positive racial example provided a foil for African Americans in the still divided and repressive United States. This explains why leading civil rights figures such as Martin Luther King and A. Philip Randolph attended the new nation's independence ceremony.

From 1957 to the mid-1960s, hundreds of African Americans traveled to Accra. Some, like DuBois, intended to live the rest of their life in Ghana as a spiritual homecoming and a rejection of American racism.[47] Others were affiliated with socialist or Communist organizations, and were fleeing McCarthy-era persecution. Others still, like Malcolm X, took shorter trips to Ghana to pay respect to the transnational struggles of Afro-Descendant people. It would be a mistake to flatten their decision to go to Ghana under one ideology or one notion of Pan-African self-identification . Some of the expatriates, like Julian Mayfield, embraced their identity as African entirely as a symbol of "global citizenship" in the diaspora.[48] Others were more disillusioned. But all their journeys, and the books they wrote about them, coalesced around the same question. Did they, racially, ethnically, spiritually, belong? Richard Wright's *Black Power*, published in 1954, was the first book-length travelogue of an African American to Ghana in the period of decolonization, and one of the most influential. In the opening chapter of the book, he discusses emigrating with

41 Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Production of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 387.

42 Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 387.

43 Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

44 Martin Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (Philadelphia: the author, 1852), 160; Edward Blyden, *The Origin and Purpose of African Colonization* (Washington: The American Colonization Society, 1883).

45 James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 242.

46 Kevin Gaines, *African Americans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7.

47 Kevin Gaines, *African Americans in Ghana*, 8.

48 Kevin Gaines, *African Americans in Ghana,* 26.

Dorothy Padmore, and ponders, "*But Am I African*?"[49] The space and time where these contemplations became restated in many of these books was on a trip to the slave castles.

As the Africanist literary critic Wendy Belcher points out, twentieth century travel literature to Africa is often formulaic. This certainly includes the writing on slave castles.[50] A number of standard literary motifs, set forth by Wright, can be found in other autobiographies. The tourist infrastructure seems to have disappeared by the 1950s, as most of the writers visited the dungeons themselves or paid local guards to take them. This set the stage for a highly personal visit, one that involved intense emotional anguish and reckoning. They began their descriptions the way that the British interwar travel literature had, by noticing the "damp" and "dark" walls of the dungeons. Then the travelers often moved to the auction rooms, where African "chiefs" were said to have watched, behind a curtain, the slaves they brought to be sold at the castle. At any point in his or her tour of the castle, the autobiographer would point out the role of the European slave traders angrily. But in the auction house, the author would have an agonizing revelation (in contemporary heritage tours, the dungeons are supposed to be the most meaningful part of the castle). Here they staged their epiphany: they discovered the participation of Africans in the slave trade.

Their realization did not start with the description of the auction courtrooms themselves. To Wright, the rooms were "lofty" and "spacious," bearing the hallmarks of "luxury."[51] In her article "What is Africa to Me?" Pauli Murray, described them as "high-ceilinged."[52] The attractiveness of the room was set up in contrast to the activities that took place, the awareness of which crept up on them. The expatriate Leslie Lacy, for example, noticed "something sinister" in an otherwise innocent room.[53] Then, the revelation. Imagining themselves as slaves on the market, they pictured their slave raiders hiding in the peepholes. They "didn't want their victims to know who was selling them."[54] The account of the trip ends with reeling and out-of-body experiences. Lacy passed out on the beach by the castle; Wright's mind was paralyzed in terror.

The slave raider in these accounts is always a "chief," although Fante slave traders were not necessarily chiefs. The choice of a chief as the antagonist of these stories is an evocative one, however. As a political leader, a chief has direct responsibility for the fate of his people. In hiding behind a screen, the authors were portraying this cowardly chief as hiding from that important responsibility. The slave-selling chief was thus served as a personification for the guilt born by the slaves' fellow Africans. Murray made this connection explicit. She argued that African Americans would find it difficult to embrace an African identity so long as Ghanaians failed to acknowledge their guilt in the trade. For Wright, the metaphor of the chief was not clearly stated, but it comes toward the end of his travel account, where he found answering the question "But am I African?" more difficult. Wright exoticizes the chief using the common orientalist tropes of being decked out in gold. The chief stands out as horrendous and greedy, in comparison to the humble and miserable slaves.

There is often an uneasy feeling when these memoirs discuss the moral responsibility felt by the local Ghanaians. The West Indian writer E.R. Braithwaite was not allowed in Christianburg Castle due to repair work, but a Ghanaian friend gave him a tour of the outside by car. Braithwaite noted with amusement that for his companion the Castle was a "source of pride" and that he saw it as part of his heritage as an African.[55] Pauli Murray was appalled by the "glib" tone of her tour guide, and used her experience to call for African American disengagement from anticolonial struggles. The protagonist of Julian Mayfield's autobiographic story "Black on Black" menaces a Ghanaian chief, saying that he looked like the sort of African leader who might have sold his ancestors into slavery.[56] These accounts reflect the ambiguity of the homecoming experience. The Nkrumah-era expatriates wanted to march in the global struggle for black liberation, but instead found themselves overcome by what Maya Angelou described, regarding the years she spent in Ghana, as "the centuries of cruel betrayals."[57] In Rosa Claudette Anderson's didactic autobiography, *River, Face Northward*, she discusses the slave castles with a Ghanaian woman, Mrs. Da. Anderson depicts Mrs. Da as a model Ghanaian who views the slave castles as "a reminder never to let this happen again." By comparison Anderson damned other Ghanaians for being ignorant of their moral responsibility. Through this portrayal, Anderson idealized what she saw as progress: guilt on the part of Ghanaians.[58]

The writers portray Ghanaians as being glib about the slave trade because it occurred far in the past. As if to counter this argument, many of the autobiographies contain references to ghosts and living bodies still haunting the castles grounds. Dorothy Hunton, the wife of leading American anticolonial scholar W. Alphaeus Hunton, said that one could still smell the

49 Richard Wright, *Black Power* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 18.

50 Wendy Belcher, "Out of Africa." *Salon*, July 28, 1999. http://www.salon.com/1999/07/28/africa/ (accessed March 6, 2014).

51 Wright, *Black Power*, 339.

52 Puali Murray, 1960, "What is Africa to Me?" *Pauli Murray Papers*, Box 85, folder 1478. Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, MA. The above quotes from the article can also be found excerpted in her autobiography.

53 Leslie Lacy, *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 144.

54 Wright, *Black Power*, 339.

55 E.R. Braithwaite, *A Kind of Homecoming* (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 230.

56 Julian Mayfield, "Black on Black: A Political Love Story," in Julian Mayfield, *Ten Times Black* (Toronto: Pathfinder, 1972), 211.

57 Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (New York: Random House, 1986), 105.

58 Rosa Claudette Anderson*, River, Face Homeward* (New York: Exposition Press, 1966), 74.

"aroma of blood, sweat and breath" at Elmina.[59] Wright said that the "natives" who remembered the "horrible tales" of the slave castles preferred instead to speak of a legend that gold was buried under the castles. Wright responded that the real "treasures" were the tears the castles had accumulated of mothers who were separated from the children.[60] In a complementary motif, the memoirists described the experience of imagining themselves as slaves to appreciate the horror of the dungeons. Through this mental exercise, the experiences of their forefathers became their own experiences. With these two strategies, the slave trade became a living memory, and the blithe attitudes of the Ghanaians, an insult.

This antagonistic tone might sound difficult to reconcile with Pan-Africanist sentiment. After all, these autobiographies were to some extent records of Pan-Africanism. Without that ideological identification, the authors would not have visited Africa or perhaps would have under a different political milieu. Shared literary tropes notwithstanding, a few of the books were otherwise optimistic about the possibility of a strong intellectual connection between African Americans and Africans.[61] Others were written after the Nkrumah regime had begun censoring the press and shutting out political opposition. Others still after the Nkrumah regime was deposed in a military coup, in 1966. By then, many of the African Americans in Accra had left Ghana, partly due to the oppressive regime, partly due to the antipathy that Nkrumah's replacement, Joseph Ankrah, showed toward them, and partly due to the lack of acceptance among Ghanaians in Accra. African American emigration to Ghana had failed to establish durable connections across the Atlantic.

If the African Americans who immigrated to Ghana had not felt incorporated, they often blamed Ghanaian (and by extension "African") society. For some, this was due to a lack of maturity on the part of Africans. Wright wrote in an open letter to Nkrumah, published in *Black Power*, that "African life must be militarized!"[62] What Wright meant by this comment was that "Africans" had become lax and weak, unprepared for the show of strength necessary to support the modern nation state. Others, such as Murray, felt that the American slave experience had led to a history "that had not been shared by Africans" that had "produced a new identity."[63] Murray inscribed this onto the souls of Africans, argued that one could see this lack of shared experience in the "spirits" of Ghanaians she encountered in a rural greeting ritual. These texts show an uneasy relationship to the Pan-Africans identities that many of the authors had held so dear. This discomfort congealed around their experiences with the slave castles. If the interwar British travel accounts incorporated the slave castles into their heritage, the African American writers used them to shut Africans out of it. Their heritage was a pain owned by them alone.

Infinite Scholarship

Here we can see the two intellectual foundations on which the discourse of diasporan heritage is based. British interwar travel literature incorporated the memory of the slave castles into the narrative of the slave trade first. African American expatriate autobiographies translated this narrative of the slave trade into one of living memory. These are the sorts of stories that are informing contemporary diasporan travel, and they are also informing its politics of ownership. They show that the social utility of memory is not a fiction of the academy but really does structure the way historical actors have approached these castles. Memory in these accounts is wrapped up in questions of modernity and belonging. The purpose of exploring these two case studies is not to by association damn the current memorialization of slave castles in Ghana; that would be unfair. But a historical perspective aids in understanding the interests behind turning places into heritage, and heritage into something that can be associated with a particular group, and therefore owned.

Clearly these sites are powerful for diasporan tourists, as they are for Ghanaians and for scholars of both. There is danger in reducing the emotional power of this memory to groups of disparate people, with different interests. If the heritage of these slave castles is as complicated and historically specific as this history suggests, then why do scholars continue to insist there are ways to divvy it up? Perhaps the thought of no one owning heritage is more horrible than the politics that ownership produces. Certainly the castles themselves need some agency or group to maintain them, but that does not address who owns what the castles symbolize, and who should ultimately decide what happens to them. Questions of preservation and aesthetics are no doubt difficult, but it is hard to see how these questions are answered by resorting to battles over identity. This is particularly so when the scholarship of identity shows how hybrid and complex those identities can be.

As diasporan tourism continues to grow, studies of diasporan tourism grow along with it. The first articles on the travel to Ghana were written over twenty years ago, and recent books and articles have tended to repeat those arguments, making note of the progress that has been made but suggesting that it has not been enough. There could be no end to this publishing. So long as the castles are tied to essence of identities and their heritage, debates over issues of ownership will continue. The essentialisms are thrown out and replaced with new essentialisms, only to be critiqued, and then refashioned, and critiqued once more. To what end is this scholarship? As much as these scholars criticize our relationship to heritage and memory, these familiar political boundaries continue to motivate their work. Perhaps we cannot part with a strong sense of ownership over our constructed pasts. That argument seems to be the implicit conclusion of these articles, even though it is not necessarily true. It is not necessarily a desirable outcome

59 Dorothy Hunton, *Alphaeus Hunton: The Unsung Valiant* (Richmond Hill, NY: the author, 1986), 129.
60 Wright, *Black Power*, 341.
61 Lacy's *Rise and Fall* and Hunton's *Unsung Valiant* are examples of this.
62 Richard Wright, *Black Power*, 414.
63 Pauli Murray, "What is Africa to Me?"

either. It is, however, a challenging conclusion. Hiding away from this stark claim, the authors invest their energy into ascribing the castles to one group of their construction or to another, or simply throw up their hands and say it could very well belong to both. Meanwhile, the unproductive anger over the fate of these castles continues, from the origins it has grown out of, the politics of heritage.

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