

**School for International Training**  
**College Semester Abroad – Ghana**  
**Arts and Culture Program**  
**Spring 1998**

**On Uneven Ground: Tracing a Slave Route**  
**from Salaga to Cape Coast**

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**11 May98**

## **ABSTRACT**

The project I have completed consists of two elements. First of all, I traced a slave route from Salaga to Cape Coast. While following this route, I stopped in towns' which were historically slave markets, in an effort to interview members of the community about the current affects of slavery. Secondly, I attempted to walk from Atebubu to Cape Coast in order to have a concrete comprehension for the distance covered by those who were forced to walk the distance before me, in addition to having a better understanding of Ghana.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction	1
Map I	5
Methodology	6
Journey to Salaga	9
Journey to Atebubu	15
Walking from Atebubu to Assin Manso	17
Map II	21
Journey to Assin Manso	22
Walking from Assin Manso to Cape Coast	25
Map III	28
Journey Cape Coast	29
Conclusion	31
References	34

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The completion and success of this project relied on numerous individuals:

Elsie Kagan, who, through the course of this journey, has shared a brain with me for an entire month and has lived to tell the tale.

Vincent Assumang, National Ace Walker, who took us and our project under his wing, and provided us with an endless amount of patience, suggestions, and encouragement.

Tijani Sanni, our guide and permanent bass line, who had the miserable job of putting up with mine and Elsie's mind melding.

Dr. Akosua Perbi, for advising me on both my plan and my paper, as well as providing the basis for my study.

The Ghana Police Service, for taking such good care of us despite the fact that we were unbelievably sappy, sappy, hoppy, and happy.

Edwin Annor, of Voltic Mineral Water, for keeping us happily hydrated and equipped with freshie duds.

Our friends at Atebubu's Ministry of Agriculture for giving us the warmest send off imaginable, in addition to being the source of much needed comic relief throughout the journey.

Mr. Baba and Yaw Amoako for being hospitable and outgoing tour guides

To all the chiefs who made us feel welcome to their communities and to their culture

The La'Vikus Hotel for the wonderful gift of relaxation when we needed it the most

Abraham, the District Executive of Assin, for helping us to feel at home, even when we were on the road.

Jack for the selfless act of making us sandwiches for our journey

The South Labadi House for making a home for us

Ann for your support of our project and your sympathy for our pains

Yemi for keeping any situation from growing too serious

My parents for aging more than I did during this semester.

Jason for sending the world's greatest mail

Xander for having so much enthusiasm for everything and anything I was up to and for continuing to laugh at all my jokes from halfway around the world

The Fan Industry for being my source of gluttony throughout the semester

## **INTRODUCTION**

Slavery is an issue that has affected Ghanaians both in the past and in the present. Slavery tore families apart, depleted part of the Ghanaian population, drained a physically capable generation, instigated social stagnation, and yet provided an income for many Europeans and Ghanaians alike (Onwubiko 1982: 390). After learning of the political, economic, social and emotional stigmas attached to slavery, I found myself frustrated with my inability to have the full picture of what slavery was, and the effect slavery continues to have in Ghana. In America, the books on slavery that I was assigned to read involved only the American slavery experience, but that is only a small portion of the truth. In addition, many Ghanaians described their education of slavery consisting only of what occurred in Ghana. As a result, I believed it was important to complete the picture and to understand that before and during the American and European slave experience, there existed a Ghanaian slave experience.

Dr. Akosua Perbi of the University of Ghana, Legon, wrote her Ph.D. thesis on *Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 18th to the 19th Centuries* (1997). One of the chapters dealt with the indigenous slave routes and markets. After reading through that chapter and consequent ones, I came to realize that these slave markets did not only exist during the indigenous slave trade, but continued to exist and, in fact, increased in popularity with the

introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It was at this point that I decided I wanted to walk the length of two of the slave routes discovered. The routes I chose, labeled Routes IV and VI on map 1, began in Salaga and ended in Cape Coast, where the captured slaves were then held until they boarded the ships headed to Europe and America.

The aim of my study was to gather information, through primary and secondary sources, regarding the story of slavery and its present effects. By journeying from Salaga to Cape Coast, I hoped to feel the distance that the slaves had walked, in addition to having an intimate understanding for Ghana as a country.

The problems I encountered in this project are several. First of all, since I had no African lineage in my family, I realized that I was tracing a family history that was not my own and therefore had a difficult time rationalizing my desire to complete this project. Secondly, I realized that by walking a slave route, I was not at all experiencing what millions of slaves endured hundreds of years ago. I walked along a paved road, in my Asics running shoes, I knew what was ahead of me, and most importantly, I walked this distance by choice. I could only imagine the pain, suffering, hunger, and humiliation those who walked these routes went through. Thirdly, with only three weeks to complete this project, I was not able to build solid relationships and trust with the members of the communities in

which I stayed. These problems did not prevent me from continuing with the project.

Being a sociology major, I have been taught that slavery is the basis for much of the racial tension that exists in America; therefore, I believe it is important to understand that slavery is a part of every American's history. Consequently, I became convinced that the project was relevant to my background and it was necessary to complete it.

The fact that I had only three weeks to complete this project definitely limited what I was able to learn. In fact, I don't believe three years would have been enough time. I was only in village, towns, and cities for an average of 36 hours when I arrived with the intention of conducting research, and only rested for approximately 20 hours otherwise. As a result, I was only able to interview those who were most accessible and eager to speak with me. I am aware of the fact that those who are most willing to offer information are usually those who are the most concerned with their opinions being known; therefore, I was not able to gather the average Ghanaian's opinion on slavery. In addition, I must be aware of who I am, and what that means to the individuals that I am interviewing. I am a 21 year-old, white American, female, college student, collecting research in order to write a paper. In addition, slavery is a heavy subject which carries with it many painful emotions. The fact that I was a stranger to those I interviewed may have deterred them from supplying me with detailed personal information. Any one of



these factors could, and probably did influence the feedback I would receive.

I realize that the information I collected may not all have been factual, and may not all have been honest, but the results are interesting regardless. What I have collected is information gathered by a white-American woman, who, in a limited amount of time, asked questions from Ghanaians about the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The results of this study are valid in expressing what a stranger of my description is told when asking questions regarding slavery. As a result of this study, I hope to have a better idea of what slavery has meant to Ghanaians over the years, and how slavery continues to affect Ghanaians today.



## **METHODOLOGY**

I concentrated mainly on the collection of primary sources through fieldwork. I also read some relevant primary and secondary material. The fieldwork I conducted involved interviews with local people, personal observations, and human |: interactions. The first informal interview I conducted, which served as the key to every connection I would need to make, was with Vincent Assumang, Ace Walker. Vincent not only taught me the subtleties of walking, and helped me to create the itinerary I would follow, but also introduced me to Tijani Sanni, who guided the walk and translated interviews throughout the project. Tijani Sanni is not only a student at Cape Coast Poly-technical Institute, and a bread baker, but also the second fastest walker in Ghana, or so I have been told. Vincent also familiarized Elsie (my classmate and walking partner) and myself with the Ghana Police Service Headquarters in Accra, who provided us with a letter that requested police protection for the duration of our study. From 13 April to 30 April 1998, Elsie and I, with the company of Tijani, conducted fieldwork and embarked on the walk.

Upon entering every city, town, and village, in which I was planning to spend an extended period of time, we went to the local police station. When I entered the police station, I was interested in the response I would receive from the police when I told them of my mission. I did not have the time, nor did the

police, for a formal interview, but their reactions proved noteworthy. In addition, I had a constant informal interview with Tijani regarding the observations I was making and the information I was receiving. Tijani was a valuable resource in terms of better comprehending what I was learning.

I was also able to conduct more formal interviews when I reached towns that Dr. Perbi described as historical slave markets. In Salaga, Atebubu, and Cape Coast, I was able to interview chiefs, elders, and other members of the community and ask them of their reactions to and memories of the history of slavery. It is important to note, however, that the affects of slavery on current day Ghana are more numerous than what I have written. The basis for this paper was the research I conducted.

I had a difficult time understanding what exactly I was studying while I was walking. For the most part, I was not convinced that I was observing much at all because it often appeared that I was the one being observed. We walked an average of 27.5 kilometers per day, but throughout that distance, Tijani, Elsie, and I were the center of attention for every tro-tro and taxi rider, farmer, seller, child, and elder who passed us; therefore, it was impossible for me to make any non-participant observations of the people. In fact, the only non-participant observations I was able to make involved only the landscapes, weather patterns, and, on occasion, wildlife. However, I consider myself a participant observer in terms of the experience of walking the distance from Atebubu to Cape Coast. The act of

walking every day was perhaps the most emotional aspect of this project. Without being able to experience the physical and mental demands of walking every day, I would not have been able to comprehend what walking a large distance could have meant historically, or today.

## JOURNEY TO SALAGA

The first day of the journey was spent on a large tro-tro from Tamale to Salaga. The unpaved road was covered with bumps and dips, and the tro-tro I was on was more crowded than I would have thought possible. I arrived in the town covered with dust, sweat, and the stench of being surrounded by fifty other people who were also covered with dust and sweat. When the tro-tro pulled into the lorry park, all of the patrons filed out of the vehicle without any acknowledgement of the land on which they stepped. I was ignorant of the fact that the lorry park I was so happy to have reached had once served as a slave market. In fact, the spot where the tro-tro stopped was exactly over the well, which is now buried deep beneath the dusty ground, that was used to hydrate the slaves before their journey to the coast.

When we reached town, Elsie, Tijani, and I headed directly for the police station. When I told the police of my mission in Salaga, and my interest in the slave route, they did not show any surprise or interest. Instead, they were shocked that we knew enough Twi to conduct a brief conversation, and astounded that we thought we were strong enough to walk our proposed route from Atebubu to Cape Coast.

Salaga began as a hunting community and was historically consistently a trading center as a result of its location (Salifu: 14 April 1998). As Dr. Perbi states, "Salaga had a great advantage over all the slave markets in Ghana as a result

of its strategic position. It was linked to the western and central branches of the trans-Saharan trade routes and was consequently connected to two of the four main routes linking West Africa to the Sahara and North Africa" (Perbi 1997:79). Before the Europeans arrived, a slave route existed; however, the slave trade increased dramatically with the involvement of the White Man. When slavery became the main focus of attention in Salaga, people would sell their family members for food, while others were captured and sold. Other slaves included war captives, law-breakers, and those who would volunteer themselves in an effort to help bring an extra income to their families.

One Elder continued to describe the treatment of slaves, "Europeans and Ghanaians treated slaves equally...Those who were stubborn were weaned out...If you are not stubborn, you get some liberties...if you acted like an animal you were treated like an animal." But differences between the indigenous slave trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade did exist, according to the Elders. First of all, the slaves who were traded during the indigenous slave trade maintained the ability to trace their home, while the majority of those who traveled overseas were not able to maintain contact with or knowledge of their families. As a result, the history of the slave trade is becoming more and more interesting to tourists attempting to retrace their roots.

Currently, the Ghanaian government, in conjunction with other Western governments, envisions erecting a monument on slavery in the center of Salaga. I was fascinated by the fact

that slavery has become the focus of many tourist attractions in Ghana and was interested to hear how the people of Salaga reacted to this phenomenon. The Elders believe that it is important not only to recognize the role of Salaga in the history of the slave trade in Ghana, but also to preserve its history through a fitting monument. Mr. Baba agreed that the preservation of history was important as well, but also voiced his enthusiasm for the idea that tourism would bring in a much needed income. Salaga is not a wealthy community, and the Elders were not shy in voicing their desperation for funding which would provide aid from the current water and power shortage. Taking this into consideration, there is no doubt that the idea of tourism in Salaga would be an eagerly embraced proposition.

Mr. Baba gave the three of us a guided tour around Salaga, which began with the holding space that was used to house slaves until they were purchased or taken away by traders. The cement building is now dilapidated and is used to hold large amounts of yams. The central lorry park of Salaga is what was once the slave market. In the 1970's, rainstorm uprooted the Baobab tree, to which the slaves were chained when they were displayed on the trading block (Perbi: 7 May 1998). However, in an attempt to preserve the history, a new commemorative tree was planted and has grown strong and tall.

While the people of Salaga are attempting to maintain some relics of slavery, I learned from Nassar Fuseini that some socially destructive remnants of slavery refuse to fade. Mr.



Fuseini is known throughout the town as a well-trusted historian on the topic of slavery. He told me that he learnt about slavery from his great-grandfather who was a slave raider and trader. After hearing these stories, he grew up to meet descendants of slaves and later read all he could on the topic of slavery. Previous to the seventeenth century, slaves were sold indigenously. Slaves were obtained by ambush men, referred to as "highway men," and by conquerors of tribal wars. Often, foodstuffs and animals were traded for slaves. However, Mr. Fuseini did mention that the slave trade increased dramatically with the introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Often times White men would trade goods for slaves including beads, alcoholic beverages, and guns. The alcoholic beverages were another incentive to promote the slave trade because chiefs who tried the intoxicating drinks were enticed by the side effects and would often crave for more. Alcohol was not widely distributed and was instead a scarce and coveted commodity. As Bill Freund writes, "Contrary to later stereotype, only a moderate amount of alcohol was sold to Africans; it became par excellence a ruling class token of hospitality and prestige" (Freund 1984: 50). The Europeans, however, did not come to Salaga directly, instead they traded only with the Asante who continued to fight wars in order to obtain more slaves, which was perpetuated by the introduction of guns (Freund 1984: 51). K.B.C. Onwubiko gives further information on the disunity that the trans-Atlantic slave trade caused. He writes, "The wars

which European traders introduced in West Africa during that age were not only more destructive of life and limb with European weapons of warfare, but also more demoralizing because they were motivated by greed for gain and material wealth. This greed weakened all loyalty to truth and honesty, family, race, and state (Onwubiko 1982: 269).

In addition, the town of Salaga was divided. All slave raiders and traders opened camps in Salaga and each camp represented a section in Salaga. To this day, people still know of Salaga's divided sections. Many slaves who were brought to Salaga were removed from their families. As a result, numerous descendents of slaves, who currently live in Salaga, are unaware of their ancestral backgrounds. Currently in Salaga, a prerequisite to becoming a chief is the knowledge of one's heritage. Consequently, often times those whose family members were once slaves cannot aspire or obtain high political offices. Also, because of the size of Salaga's community (approximately 20,000), those families who were involved in the slave trade, either as traders or slaves, can be identified.

In the early nineteenth century, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished because the Europeans decided slavery was evil. The British Colonial government abolished the slave trade after 1908 (Perbi 1997: 237, 278, 287). When the slaves were released in Salaga, many of them remained. In addition, many traders settled in Salaga as well. As a result of this blending of social classes, the identity of slaves is not to be discussed

in an attempt to protect those who were slaves from further discrimination and ridicule. Nonetheless, the topic of slavery continues to resurface, especially in the context of an argument. Many times when a disagreement occurs, it is not uncommon for someone to mention the history of slavery in a rival's heritage as a means to win his/her case (Salifu: 14 April 1998). Nonetheless, to this day, slavery-related songs are not to be sung and folktales are not to be told because they may reveal who was a part of the slave trade (Fuseini: 14 April 1998). Whether the topic of slavery is spoken, silenced, displayed, or hidden, it is still very much alive in Salaga.

## JOURNEY TO ATEBUBU

We left Salaga early in the morning on 15 April in an attempt to reach Atebubu by early afternoon. After a series of transportation mishaps, we arrived in Atebubu at approximately 9:30pm, and therefore were not able to build any relationships that evening (with the exception of those employed by the Ministry of Agriculture who were kind enough to give us a ride). The following morning, we rushed to the police station where the police then brought us to the Krontihene (caretaker chief) of Atebubu, Nana Kwaku Amofa. Again, we received no mention of our proposed topic of study, except for the comment, "You will be tired." During my stay in Atebubu, a chieftaincy dispute was occurring, and therefore much of the information gathered was collected under stressful and unusual circumstances.

The Krontihene described how Atebubu was settled as a result of several tribal wars, caused by a division of chiefs. Two chiefs, the left wing chief and the Jassibene (sub-chief) started a dispute concerning betrayal and extra-marital affairs. As a result, a series of fights broke out resulting in the loss of many lives. Eventually, a compromise was reached and the two sides lived in unity. During the slave trade, Atebubu was a location frequented by slaves and slave traders alike, due to its proximity to Salaga. He, like the citizens of Salaga, told us of the popularity of slavery, which increased with the introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. He believed that the

Europeans were to blame for the popularity of slavery, and he admitted that the disgust he felt towards the act of slavery. "It is not good to sell another human being," he remarked. Currently, court disputes have grown in popularity in Atebubu as members in the community are suing others if they have been called a descendent of a slave (Amofa: 16 April 1998).

In addition, a schoolteacher at the Assin Manso secondary school, Kwaku Addo, provided more information regarding the chieftaincy dispute, which is causing much confusion in Atebubu. He explained that the argument revolved around the fact that the two contesting chiefs were plagued with an inability to trace their backgrounds, and therefore the entitlement to the stool could not be declared (Addo: 28 April 1998). In fact, there have been several instances of chiefs who were denied the stool under the same circumstances. For example, "in the greater Accra area, there was a dispute with respect to the Prampram and Otublohum stools. The families insisted that slaves had no right to succession" (Perbi 1997: 214). In addition, Adrienne Clay alludes to a discussion with Dr. Perbi who described a trial involving the ex-Omanhene of Mampong. The entitlement to the throne was in question when it was discovered that his great-grandmother was purchased as a slave (Clay 1996: 18). The people of Atebubu are not alone in dealing with the current ramifications of slavery.

## WALKING FROM ATEBUBU TO ASSIN MANSO

17 APRIL - 28 APRIL

- Day 1: Walk from Atebubu to Amanten (34km)
- Day 2: Walk from Amanten to Ejura (36km)
- Day 3: Drive from Ejura to Mampong
- Day 4: Walk from Mampong to Agona (18km)
- Day 5: Drive from Agona to Kumasi
- Day 6&7: Rest in Kumasi
- Day 8: Walk from Kumasi to Kuntanase (22km)
- Day 9: Walk from Bekwai to Fomena (24km)
- Day 10: Walk from Fomena to New Edubiase (36km)
- Day 11: Walk from New Edubiase to Assin Breku (26km)
- Day 12: Walk from Assin Foso to Assin Manso (26km)
- Day 13: Research in Assin Manso (see map II)

My first day of walking began with an ironic enthusiasm. I had awoken at approximately 3:30am and was on the road by 4:30. Elsie, Tijani, and I began our walk in darkness and I was thrilled to feel as if we were the first people awake in the morning. We walked along a dirt road, enjoying the songs that came to our lips, and the excitement of a new adventure. I tried to convince myself that I had something in common with those who had walked this distance before me, but it just did not make sense to me. I was happy to be getting the exercise, amazed with the sounds that the animals made along side my feet, and

awed by the passing scenery. I became fascinated with the flock of small birds that were tiny enough to rest on a single blade of grass. Even more remarkable was the fact that all of these details would be overlooked had I not been walking. In every village we passed, the air filled with shouts of "Buroni, how are you?" and "Where are you going?" as both adults and children stopped their activities to stare at us and extend their welcome.

As the hours of the day passed, and the sun grew hotter, I began to realize that this trip would not be as easy as I had predicted. By the middle of the morning, my feet were covered in blisters and my back ached from the weight of my backpack. My enthusiasm for the first day, however, was slow to falter. Even after 34 kilometers, I was filled with a sense of pride that I would have the strength to commit to such an endeavor and was determined to find the pleasure in the trip. The pleasure faded the second day.

After spending a night in the chief's palace in Amanten, we were walking again by 4:30am. My energy and enthusiasm was squelched by the excruciating pain I was suffering in my feet, and I felt myself on the verge of tears until we were safely in the town of Ejura. Along the walk today, I had a better idea of what this tremendous distance meant. I was interested in seeing the different faces we passed, and those we did pass were definitely interested in seeing mine. I began to grow more comfortable in my surroundings, and I was able to overlook the awkwardness of being the center of attention. I was no longer

concerned with snakes, which had previously been my greatest, all-consuming fear, and I began to focus on the issue at hand, and that was reaching Ejura. The 36 kilometers today felt as if they would never end, and I was even tempted once or twice to throw myself before a passing car because the pain was so unbearable. The conversation between Elsie, Tijani, and I revolved around the sharp pains we felt in our feet and backs. When we arrived in Ejura, the police stared at us with amazement. For two women who were planning to walk across the country, we couldn't walk across the street. I was convinced, as thoroughly as the officers, that we could not walk the following day.

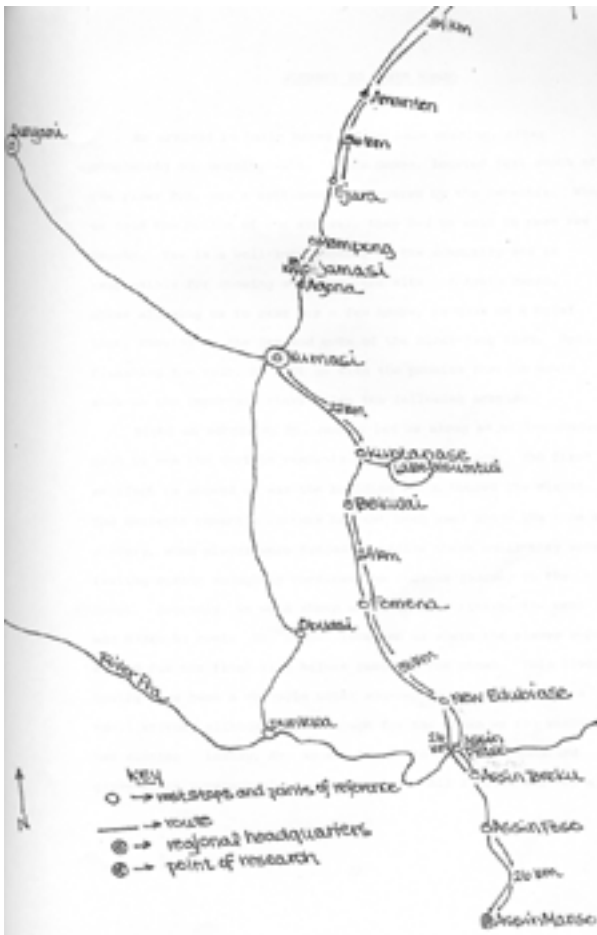
The next walking day took us from Mampong to Jamasi, a beautiful walk through the rainforest. The canyons and lush trees, which bordered the walk, were breathtaking, but unfortunately we were not capable of enjoying the scenery. The mere 18 kilometers I walked today was the hardest of the entire trip. I spent the hours grinding my teeth and fighting tears. I attempted to sing in order to take my mind off the distance, and I consciously thought of home, where I could be taken care of and feel comfortable.

Halfway through this walk, I realized what I was experiencing was not unique. I am not implying that my experience is at all comparable to the experience of the slaves who originally walked this route, and it would be a mistake to do so. My need to sing and to think of those who support me were coping methods, and I couldn't help but think that the thought



process I was going through must be similar to anyone who had walked this route before me.

After resting for a few days in Kumasi, the three of us were ready to walk again. The pain had subsided almost entirely and I was appreciative of every step I took. The three of us increased our enthusiasm as well as our musical repertoire in order to ease the monotony of walking all day, but walking had once again become a pleasure. I spent the next three days walking in complacency and exhaustion, watching the scenery and eager to reach my bed every evening.



MAP II: WALKING FROM ATTERUBULU TO CAPE COAST

## JOURNEY TO ASSIN MANSO

We arrived in Assin Manso in the late morning, after completing our morning walk. Assin Manso, located just south of the river Pra, was a settlement discovered by the Ashantis. When we told the police of our arrival, they had us wait to meet Yaw Amoako. Yaw is a well-known member of the community and is responsible for showing strangers the sites of Assin Manso. After allowing us to rest for a few hours, he gave us a brief tour, showing us the ins and outs of the block-long town. Upon finishing the tour, he left us with the promise that he would show us the important slave sites the following morning.

Right on schedule, Mr. Amoako led us along a well-traveled path to see the various remnants of the slave trade. The first artifact he showed us was the building, which housed the slaves. The decrepit cement structure had not been used since the time of slavery, when slaves were forced to reside there until they were feeling strong enough to continue the arduous journey to the coast. Secondly, we were shown where the two rivers, the Ochi and Nonko Su meet. The scenic location is where the slaves were washed for the final time before reaching the ocean. This river, having once been a valuable water source, was now reduced to a small stream, although ample enough for the woman we saw washing her clothes. Lastly, Mr. Amoako led us to the mass, unmarked grave where numerous slaves were buried. All I could see was a

plot of land that was overgrown with numerous trees and bushes, but the knowledge of what was beneath my feet made my skin crawl.

After the tour, Mr. Amoako took us to meet Opanin Kwadwo Saara, and Elder of Assin Manso. Mr. Saara described how Assin Manso was a natural resting point before the coast and that is how it became the location for the final slave market. However, the people of Assin Manso were against the slave trade, and were known for treating all slaves with the utmost respect. Perhaps most saddening is that once the slaves were taken away, nothing was heard from them again. As Mr. Saara said, "today we learn history with pain." Again, the legacy of slavery has left much behind.

The third person I spoke to in Assin Manso was Kwaku Addo, a junior secondary school teacher, who had many opinions of the effects of slavery. He explained his frustration with the textbooks he is required to teach from, and the "softened" picture of slavery these books present. As a result, he believed that many members of the present generation do not know much about how slavery started or how the slaves were treated. However, with the increase of tourism in Assin Manso, the attention of the children, in addition to those traveling to Ghana from abroad, will be drawn to the subject of slavery. Mr. Addo also described left over emotions that reside within him as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. He confided that there "is a tender spot, especially with the British" as a result of slavery, but that "these emotions must be set aside because we

are all interdependent." This proves that the social and political divisions that were created during the slave trade continue to divide today.

Tourism is becoming a source of income for Assin Manso, and will only continue to do so. However, judging from the overwhelming amount of attention we received from the children of Assin Manso, I would be willing to guess that tourists are not a common occurrence at this point in time. There is a tourist committee in the town that is responsive to the Ghanaian government's desire to turn Assin Manso into a tourist center for those who want to study slavery. The general opinion of the community, from what I can tell, is that tourism is a good idea.

The preservation of history, especially tragic history, is important to insure that such a mistake, such as slavery, will not be repeated. I have learned to look at tourism, especially tourism relevant to slavery, with a certain amount of cynicism. Adrienne Clay, in her paper regarding the preservation of Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, reflects on this point after an interview with Naana Opoku-Agyemang. She recalls Naana arguing "that visitors should not leave the castle thinking of celebration, but with the firm understanding that there is more work to be done. (I want) people to be moved to further contemplation, not to 'think you've paid five dollars and you've done your job'" (Clay 1996: 11). I am skeptical as to where the history will come from and who will reap the benefits of this newly obtained income.

## WALKING FROM ASSIN MANSO TO CAPE COAST

29 APRIL-30 APRIL

Day 14: Walk from Assin Manso to Abora Dunkwa (22km) Day 15: Walk from Abora Dunkwa to Cape Coast (31km) (see map III)

The final two days of the walk had a different feel to them. My body was used to the schedule of walking at this point, and the knowledge that I was down to my last two days of walking was exciting. On 29 April, I again awoke at approximately 3:00am in Assin Manso and was ready to begin the final leg of the trip. The 22km were relatively painless, and the noises that the frogs and birds made this morning seemed louder than ever before. The day was mostly spent in anticipation for tomorrow, and our long walk into Cape Coast. The amount of excitement that was building around reaching Cape Coast made me uncomfortable. I was worried that I had lost all contact with my focus, because walking into Cape Coast inspired joy instead of catastrophe.

The final day of walking was filled with mixed emotions. For the first time, it began to rain while we were walking, and it just continued to rain all day. The rain felt magical, as if it was raining just for us. My clothes were soaked, my hands were purple with cold, and my feet were blistered, but it was nothing less than a cleansing experience. I have learned that, in Ghana, people do not go out in the rain. Sellers close up their stands and the streets are suddenly empty. For a threesome

who usually attracted a lot of attention, we were captivating today.

My legs and feet refused tire today, I felt as if I could have walked forever. We began our walk at 3:00am and we completed the journey at 10:30am. When we reached Cape Coast, the entire city was muddy, and we were warmly received by the series of buckets placed on the sidewalk in an attempt to catch the falling rain. The city felt vaguely familiar from when I had previously visited Cape Coast, but walking into the city was definitely a new experience.

When we reached Cape Coast Castle, we were swelling with a sense of accomplishment. However, the walk was not completed until we were able to see the ocean. With a quickness in our steps, we approached the admission window to ask if we would be allowed to see the water. The woman at the window looked at me with a blank expression on her face and told me I had to pay 5,000 cedis to enter the Castle. Distressed, I explained to her that I did not have 5,000 cedis, but only wanted to see the water. She again repeated her previous response. By this point, I was in shock. My tone of voice was escalating and my eyes began to tear. I tried to express to her that I had been walking the past two weeks, following a SLAVE ROUTE, in an attempt to reach THIS VERY POINT, but she had no sympathy. The irony of this situation was overwhelming. Never before was it as clear to me that tourism revolves around money. The rationale for slavery-related tourism in Ghana has appeared to be a mixture of

financial and educational, but when it came down to the final day of walking, at Cape Coast Castle, at 10:30am, in the rain, it was only about money.

Admitting my defeat, I walked outside of the Castle and around the corner until the ocean was clearly in view. The ocean is a monster. I had walked 275 kilometers to see the Atlantic, and suddenly I was terrified. The sky was dark as a result of the storm, and the waves were crashing with anger and without remorse. There were no fishing boats out on the water today, and it was apparent that the sea would be merciless with anyone who dared to enter. At this point, I felt reconnected with my focus. I had lost my excitement and suddenly I was tired, cold, my legs were raw from walking in the rain, and I was afraid.





- Key
- → rest stops and points of reference
  - → route
  - ⊙ → regional headquarters
  - ⊕ → point of research

## JOURNEY TO CAPE COAST

Tourists from around the world visit Cape Coast in an effort to learn more about slavery, to have a better sense of history, or to retrace their roots, among other reasons. However, Cape Coast did not begin as a tourist attraction. Cape Coast was originally settled as a result of its proximity to the sea, which provided fishing opportunities, and fertile soil, which enticed many farmers and hunters (Tachie-Menson 1972: 5). With the discovery of gold in Cape Coast, an international trade began. The Portuguese were the first to trade with Cape Coast, but other Europeans were soon to follow. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Europeans built castles "which became the headquarters of the English trade on the coast" (Tachie-Menson 1972: 10). Most infamous of Cape Coast's history, is its involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Throughout the four hundred years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slaves from all over the country were brought to the castles by traders and raiders. It was in these castles that the slaves were kept, awaiting the ships that would take them across the ocean to an unknown fate.

Cape Coast Castle, built by the English in 1665, and Elmina Castle, built by the Portuguese in 1482, have both become West African historical museums (Dantzig 1980: viii). As Maya Angelou describes, "Cape Coast Castle and the nearby Elmina Castle had been holding forts for captured slaves. The captives had been

imprisoned in dungeons beneath massive buildings and friends of mine who had felt called upon to make the trek reported that they felt the thick stone walls still echoed with old cries" (Angelou 1986: 97). The preservation of the Castles evoke different emotions in everyone who enters them. Adrienne Clay in her thesis, Searching for a Middle Passage: Voices On the Preservation and Presentation of History at Cape Coast and Elmina Castles (1996, Legon), studies the reactions to these castles and what it meant to them. She collected a variety of comments from the sign-in books at both Cape Coast and Elmina Castles. Some of the comments vary from "Nice architecture," to "The most important experience of my life," to "From what I can see the white race are the most wicked on God's Earth, without a doubt history has shown" (Clay 1996: 40-42). These comments are only a small sample of the responses to the tourist attractions in Cape Coast. However, it is important to recognize that the emotions that the trans-Atlantic slave trade inspires, still exist and are still strong. Whether it be presented in the forms of chieftaincy disputes, resentment, or an increase in tourism, slavery continues to play an active role in Ghanaian culture.

## CONCLUSION

The necessity to draw a conclusion based on this study is perhaps my most difficult task. In speaking with members of different communities, specifically those communities which were once slave markets, I collected evidence supporting the hypothesis that the effects of slavery are still pertinent to current Ghanaian society. In addition, by learning of the Ghanaian aspect of slavery, I was able to form a more complete notion of what the slave experience consisted of.

The most obvious example of the residuals of slavery, which was pointed out by those I interviewed, is tourism. Over the past ten years or so, there has been a heightened interest in the topic of slavery. The opening of Cape Coast and Elmina Castles have proven that there is a market for slavery-related tourism. Assin Manso and Salaga are soon to follow in the footsteps in an attempt to increase awareness of the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, in addition to reaping the financial benefits that the flow of traffic will bring.

In addition, many legal cases that are brought to court are results of unhealed wounds left by the slave trade. The harmful and humiliating history of slavery has been the basis for chieftaincy disputes and personal rivalries.

Walking 275 kilometers between Atebubu Cape Coast was less of an attempt to feel slavery than it was an effort to feel the distance. As I walked, however, I came to realize that there

were elements of my experience that may be similar to the experience slaves suffered through hundreds of years ago. I watched the sun rise every morning, I longed for the shade and breeze that passing clouds would provide, I sang songs to keep myself entertained, and I filled my head with thought of familiarity. In this respect, some aspects of this project, although ridiculously minor, may be similar to what any individual crossing the same distance could have observed.

However, there are many stones that were left unturned from this project. First of all, I would encourage anyone to spend more time in any of the towns I stayed in. The people along this route are amazing sources of information and I have found them happy to answer any questions to anyone who is willing to ask. Also, I would have liked to have conducted more research at Cape Coast and Elmina Castles. These attractions are the concrete evidence of how slavery is presented as a tourist attraction. Also, in order to feel the entire length of the Ghanaian slave route, I would have walked from Paga to Cape Coast. As a result of time constraints, I was not able to complete the entire walk, but I hope to be able to do so in the future.

I came away from this project with an increased understanding for the Ghanaian way of life. I gained a newly found appreciation for drinking liquid substances out of plastic bags, I heard religious singing before daybreak, I watched farmers walk into the rainforest at dawn, I witnessed the markets being set up for the day, and I cherished the stars in the sky

every night. In the process of learning more about the trans-Atlantic slave trade, I learned an enormous amount about Ghana, and an endless amount about my own capabilities.

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