

Memories Live: How Ghana's Upper East Villages
Remember Slavery

Abstract

As an African American, I have always wondered if the memory of slavery and the memory of enslaved African Americans have been kept in the hearts and minds of Africa. My research sought to determine if and how the collective memory of slavery is kept in Ghana's Upper East Region, specifically in the villages of Chiana, Katiu, Nakong, Kayoro, and Paga and Pikworo Slave Camp. During my stay, several individuals conveyed to me that many Ghanaians would be reluctant to talk about the history of the slave trade in Ghana due to the painful aspect of slavery itself, in addition to Ghanaian involvement in it. Based on such statements, I proposed that various methods of collective memory of the slave trade exist.

Introduction

When most people think of slavery in Ghana, coastal slave forts and castles such as Elmina and Cape Coast Castle come to mind. Estimates of deported slaves range from six to more than twenty million during Trans-Atlantic slavery. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade began in 1518, but despite poorly enforced laws to discontinue it, such as the British attempt in 1807, slavery did not officially cease in Ghana until British colonialism began in 1874. During this period slaves were taken from the European-controlled coastal castles and forts to the Americas, where they were subjected to forced labor, physical abuse, cultural attack, and psychological trauma.¹

While the history of slave departure from Ghana's coast cannot be underestimated, a history of slavery in northern Ghana, specifically of the Upper East Region, also exists. Due to a lack of high volumes of scholarly publications and perhaps an uncommon trend in speaking of it, knowledge of this history is not commonplace both within Ghana and outside of it. B. G. Der is one of the few scholars to do extensive research into the history of slavery in northern Ghana. In his book The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana, Der traces the course of slavery in Northern Ghana before 1732, and during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Special attention is given to the concept of domestic slavery and how the term "slave" changed significantly with Trans-Atlantic slavery, the perpetrators of the slave trade, and its effects on the African population.²

To understand Northern Ghana's history of slavery, one must first understand the evolution of the term "slave" and the ramifications of that term. "The buying and selling

¹ Dr. R. Addo-Fening, "Colonial History of Ghana," lecture, 27 September 2004, notes taken manually by author, University of Cape Coast.

² B.G. Der. The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana. (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998), 1.

of human beings was not a common feature in Northern Societies of Ghana before the eighteenth century.”³ In the New World, the word slave referred to chattel, meaning property. The term defined a commodity and outsider who was in bondage. However, within Africa, domestic slaves were not defined as such and were able to achieve some integration into the community in which they served.

Different categories of slaves existed within African society. Slaves in the domestic capacity were either servants, or *akua*; pawns, called *awowa*; war captives, *domum*; criminals who committed serious crimes, *akyere*; or slaves par excellence known as *donkos*. Pawns were sent to known families to work temporarily for monetary compensation. A *donko*, or slave par excellence, tended to be of foreign origin.⁴

Slavery could sometimes result from inheritance, known as *gbandiruru*. In this instance, a man could inherit the wife and children of his dead relative. The relatives now in his possession became his *gbandi bome*. The Sisala used the term *yomo* to refer to a domestic servant. The *yomo* worked for a creditor in order to pay a debt. The Dagara and Dagomba acquired *gbangaa*, or domestic slaves, through the playing of a game. The game, *gbang*, was played in marketplaces and homes. The men playing staked their cowries and sometimes cattle, sheep, goats, and poultry. If a man playing lost all rounds, he could become so angry as to stake his own children and wife. The person he chose to stake went to the other player as his *ghangbaa*. Among the Tallensi, *da-abre* (singular) and *da-aba* (plural) referred to servants. None of the aforementioned words served as references to purchased individuals.

³ B.G. Der. *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*. (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998), 1.

⁴ Dr. R. Addo-Fening, “Colonial History of Ghana,” lecture, 27 September 2004, notes taken manually by author.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade solicited northern Ghana during the first half of the nineteenth century. Slave raiding was carried out primarily as a result of an enforced Ashanti tribute on the Dagomba and Gonja tribes. The Dagomba had to redeem a debt to the Ashanti while the Gonja had to pay the Ashanti a tribute in slaves annually.⁵ As a result of the tribute, slave raiding in Northern Ghana intensified during the mid to late 1800's. Northern raids were executed by Zabarima raiders Alfa Hanno, Gazari, Babatu, and Samori Toure.

This study intends to examine which types of collective memory exist in present-day Ghana's Upper East Region, specifically the villages of Kayoro, Chiana, Paga and Pikworo Slave Camp, Nakong, and Katiu. Despite the widely given impression to the author that present-day Ghanaians are reluctant to discuss Ghana's involvement in the slave trade, this study will furthermore hypothesize that various methods of collective memory exist in these areas due to the sensitive nature of slavery.

⁵ B.G. Der. *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*. (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998), 1.

Methodology

Interviews were completed during my ten-day stay in Navrongo. Informants were interviewed by appointment, which were scheduled by friends of my advisor. I formally interviewed informants in Kayoro, Katiu, Navrongo, Nakong, Paga, and Chiana.

Informants were interviewed once. I was also able to visit a slave camp at Pikworo.

All interviews were tape-recorded while notes were simultaneously taken.

All informants were told the nature of my research prior to the interview and asked permission to have the interview tape-recorded.

Specific questions were asked to retrieve information about the village's history pertaining to slavery, collective knowledge of slave raiders and their methods of raiding, stories about the villages' defense from slavery, captured villagers, and the methods for the remembrance of slavery. Nineteen questions were asked. Based on the responses given during the first interview, questions were revised to be more direct and readily comprehensive to informants.

Because I did not speak the main language spoken in the areas of study, friends of my advisor served as primary translators. The tape-recorded interviews were translated by a student at the local university. A song that could not be translated by student was translated by friends of my advisor. Secondary sources such as books, reports, and maps were also used for the analysis of collected data.

The limitations of my study, although minimal, included language and time constraints. Although two of the informants interviewed spoke English, there were times when questions were misunderstood due to my accent and pronunciation. During those times, my translators would rephrase the question in Kassim, one of the local languages.

Background to the Upper East Region

The Upper East Region is one of the two northernmost regions of Ghana. Burkina Faso borders it to the north, Togo borders it to the east, and Ghana's Northern Region borders it to the south. Prior to Ghana's independence in 1957, the Upper East and Upper West were apart of the Northern Territory, covering a large portion of northern Ghana.

When Ghana became a republic on 1 July 1960, the Upper Region of Ghana was divided for administrative convenience. Again, in 1983 the Upper Region was divided into the Upper East and Upper West regions for administrative purposes. The administrative capital of the Upper East Region is Bolgatanga.

Main towns of the Upper East are Sandema, Bawku, Zuarungu, Zebilla, and Navrongo. The district capital of the Upper East Region is Navrongo, which belongs to the Kassena-Nankani District. The Kassena-Nankani District has a population estimated at 175,000. Most of the people live in rural dispersed villages. Nearly 51 percent of the district's population speaks Kassim, and the remaining mainly speaks Buili. The people of the Kassena-Nankani District belong to the Mole-Dagbani cultural groups, one of the major ethno-linguistic groups of the northern regions of Ghana and neighboring Burkina Faso. Due to these cultural and ethnic similarities, the Kassena-Nankana are more closely related to the cultures of neighboring Sahelian countries, such as Burkina Faso, than to peoples of coastal Ghanaian regions. The majority of the people of the district capital of Navrongo are involved in subsistence farming.

The Coming of the Raiders and Their Impact on Solicited Locations: The Raiders

Northern Ghana experienced heavy slave raiding particularly during the latter half of the 19th century. The most notorious raiders were the Zabarima. Believed to have come from south-east of Niamey in Niger, the Zabarima came to Dagomba as traders, malams, and mercenaries. During their stay, Alfa Hanno became their leader, carrying out numerous slave raids in Grunshiland. After achieving success in raiding, the Zabarima moved to Grunshi land to become raiders for local chiefs.

Alfo Hanno died after leading the Zabarima for four years. At the time of his death, the Zabarima were too powerful to be controlled by Dagomba chiefs. The chief of Savelugu, Na Andani, attempted to stop Zabarima raids in Grunshi to bring the Zabarima back under Dagomba control. Due to the recruited support of a local Sisala chief, Musa of Seti, the Zabarima defeated the Dagomba.

After the defeat of the Dagomba, Gazari emerged as leader of the Zabarima. During his direction, the Zabarima established a camp at Kassana, near Tumu. Now allied with Musa, they raided Sisala and Builsa villages. The slaves captured were either sold at Kassana or Salaga, which had become a thriving slave market of Northern Ghana. Between 1884 and 1885, Gazari died and was succeeded by Babatu.⁶

Babatu is regarded as one of the most notorious slave raiders of Northern Ghana. In the Upper West and Upper East Regions, oral traditions make mention of him and the raids he carried out on local populations. Zabarima slave raids were at their height during the direction of Babatu. Babatu killed Musa in a dispute at an established slave camp at

⁶ B.G. Der. *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*. (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998), 20.

Sati. From there, his raids extended to the Dagara and Wala areas in the Upper West, and to the Kasena, Frafra and Tellensi towns of the Upper East Region.

Raids were carried out in a variety of ways. One area was usually raided, then others, and then raiders returned to the previously raided villages. In addition to slaves, Zabarima took with them sheep, cattle, goats, poultry and other foodstuffs for their caravan of raiders and followers. The raiders only captured and sold the able-bodied. Slaves were sold at Kassana, Sati, Yagaba, Daboya and Salaga. Slaves here were often exchanged for millet, salt, and horses by Yarse and Mande traders who settled nearby. Gunpowder, guns, kola, and horses were common mediums of exchange for slaves.

Babatu eventually was driven by the French to Yendi, where he settled until his death. By the time of Babatu's death, Samori had replaced him as leader of the Zabarima. Samori and his son, Sarantieni Mori, continued raiding areas of Northern Ghana. However, during their conquests, their years were characterized by meeting, attacking, and retreating from British and French forces who sought to end Zabarima raids in an effort to colonize present-day Ghana and Burkina Faso. Zabarima slave trade and raids ended in 1897. The British forced Samori to withdraw his troops from Western Gonja and the Upper West Region. Simultaneously, Britain, France, and Germany partitioned the middle Volta basin. This ended Mossi and Hausa slave trade in Northern Ghana.⁷

The Escapees and Those Who Have Yet to Return

⁷ Ibid, 20.

Many informants were able to recall situations where villagers were taken away by slave raids. The following are excerpts from stories collected during my stay in the Upper East region.

The following interview was conducted with John Kaba Balua, a resident of Navrongo on 4 November 2004. John Kaba Balua, an elderly man regaining his strength after recent health complications, told me the story of how his family ended up in Navrongo due to the slave trade. The story he told me was passed down to him by his father.

Balua's grandfather came from Kunu, a famous small village in Burkina Faso. His grandfather was a "big" fetish priest who, due to his powers, was cause for his village to be conquered by slave raiders. Balua's grandfather's powers as a fetish priest were displayed during attacks or wars on Kunu. During an attack he would lead the village soldiers to an open field where they would face the enemy.

The soldiers were armed with bows and arrows. During the battle, Balua's grandfather's testicles would swell to a large size. The arrows of the enemy were shot into his testicles. This enabled his soldiers to take the arrows from his testicles and use them against the enemy. When raiders came to Kunu, they acquired spies who eventually revealed Balua's grandfather's secret powers. This enabled them to conquer Kunu. The raiders captured Balua's grandfather, tied his hands to a large stick, tied him to a large tree trunk and left him in the sun for several days. Due to such treatment, Balua's father died soon after.

Once Balua's grandfather was defeated, the strong young men and women of Kunu were rounded up and taken. Slave raiders came to the village armed with guns

called slinks and on horseback. Approximately 10-40 raiders came by surprise. Raiders tied villagers' hands behind their backs, and linked villagers together with ropes to keep them in batches to prevent escape. From Kunu, villagers were taken across the Tumu District. From there, they were taken into Laribanga. Balua did not know how many slaves were taken from Kunu.

In Laribanga Balua's father, who had been captured from Kunu, managed to escape. The treatment he received while captured was poor and "not pleasant to remember." After escaping Laribanga, Balua's father was arrested. At the time of his arrest, slavery had been abolished and he was set free. After reacquiring his freedom, Balua's father relocated in Tamale. In Tamale he was recruited by the Gold Coast Constabulary. He soon became sergeant and was transferred to Navrongo. In 1924 he resigned from the Constabulary and went to Kunu for some time. Finding the Kunu environment difficult to adjust to because he had been removed from it for such an extensive period, he moved with his brothers to Kayoro. While in Kayoro, the District Commissioner asked him to come to Navrongo to aid in its development and to oversee the road construction. Because of the necessities of the road construction, Balua's father gradually settled in the area between Kayoro and Navrongo and raised his children.⁸

It should be noted that although John Kaba Balua's story is not specific to Navrongo, it represents the migratory effect of slavery. Balua's family was from Kunu in Burkina Faso, but the nature of the slave trade routes and the circumstances slaves faced, if they were fortunate enough to escape, necessitated them to settle in areas that were not

⁸ John Kaba Balua, interview by author, 4 November 2004, Navrongo, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

indigenous to. The location of John Balua's family was in a section of Navrongo with a large population of people who came to settle from Burkina Faso. It is probable that the reasons for their settlement are due to the slave trade.

Stories of escapees from slavery were also told to me by a group of elders in Nakong. In Nakong, a young woman was taken by raiders to Kumasi. A number of years later, a relative went searching for her there. Miraculously, they were able to locate her and take her and her belongings back to Nakong.

Another woman returned to Nakong after capture. Awhile after the raiders captured her, they became thirsty and went to the riverside for water. While the raiders drank from the river, she escaped and returned to Nakong.⁹ Although he did not return, another villager of Nakong whose name was not recalled, escaped bondage. After his escape, he settled around Paga. There, he had a son named Abiaga, who was able to trace his lineage back to Nakong.¹⁰

Although some villagers were able to flee the destructive clutches of slavery, most did not. The majority of slaves were sold throughout Ghana, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the New World.¹¹ Due to the scattered nature of slavery, villagers have little knowledge of where slaves were taken.

Devices of Remembrance: Keeping the Memory of Slavery Alive

There are many methods for remembering slavery. Methods found during my research include storytelling, names, songs, dance, spiritual practices, and historical sites.

⁹ Nakong Elders, interview by author, 9 November 2004, Nakong, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

¹⁰ Kayira, interview by author, 6 November 2004, Navrongo, tape recording, possession of author and SIT

¹¹ B.G. Der, conversation, 19 November 2004, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.

All the informants I interviewed were aware of the effects of the slave trade on their communities by means of stories told to them by their elders, like the one just told. The stories were orated to the informants at different times of their lives and for different reasons, via specific storytelling times for the entire village, or when they requested information about their village's history.

In addition to storytelling, personal names reveal a historical aspect of the slave trade. Examples of name meanings that were told to me include "slave," you have gone through hardships," and "the raiders have failed." One informant was reluctant to give the true meaning of his name which translated from the local language into "slave," perhaps out of shame.

Songs

Before I begin to describe one of the song's recited to me, it needs to be said that songs are simply another way of telling stories; in this case, telling the story of slavery. Three informants were able to recall songs speaking specifically of the slave raids and their impact on the village. The songs are sung primarily during festivals and are sometimes accompanied by reenactments of raids and battles against the slave raiders. Certain villagers are designated to sing and reenact. During my interview with the chief of Chiana, I was informed that as a chief, he could only recite part of a song, because certain villagers are designated for the singing.

In Chiana, a victorious war song against the notorious Babatu translates as such:

Adunia Kaba, listen to the people of Sanaa.
 Could the warriors defeat the people of Chiana?
 Kasanga people, could they defeat the people of Chiana?
 But for Basu, the warriors would have entered Chiana.

If you are warriors, let's meet at Chichuliga.
Warriors, let's meet at Chichuliga

Adunia Kaba was the chief of Chiana at the time of the battle. Sanaa is a part of Chiana and Basu is the chief's section of Chiana. In the song's second line reference is made to warriors. These warriors refer to Babatu's raiders. Chichuliga is a nearby village. Throughout the song, the question is being posed to the chief of Chiana and to the Kasanga people: "Could Babatu defeat the people of Chiana?" The villagers of course know that it is a rhetorical question and that Chiana was triumphant over the Zabarima. It goes on to say that had it not been for the chief's part of Chiana, Babatu would have been successful in his attack. The song then proceeds in a taunting manner to Babatu and his raiders, "If you are warriors, let's meet at Chichuliga." The people of Chiana in the song tell their enemies to meet at Chichuliga, outside of Chiana, because they don't want them inside of Chiana's parameters.¹²

Dance

In Kayoro, a war dance is performed to tell the story of villagers' bravery in fighting the raiders and also of their defeat. The war dance is normally performed at an old man's funeral. During a particular war dance, a baby is placed on a path. The baby is named Gwale-gi. While the baby lies on the path, a villager poses as a slave raider. The slave raider rides a horse and jumps over the baby three times. While this is performed, a chant is said that belittles the raider for not being able to conquer a small baby.¹³

¹² Chiana-Pio (Chief of Chiana, Pe-Growland Adiali Ayagitam II), interview by author, 8 November 2004, Chiana, tape recording, translated by Joseph Banapeh Afagachie and Sebastian A. Doragia, possession of author and SIT.

¹³ Kayoro Elders, interview by author, 12 November 2004, Kayoro, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

Nakong also has funeral performances that reenact the history of slavery. When an elderly man dies, a war dance is performed to symbolize that the man will now become an ancestor. As an ancestor, this man is expected to prevent slave raids and other misfortunes from happening in Nakong.¹⁴

Spiritual Practices

Spiritual practices pertaining to slavery were particularly evident in Kayoro. Before slave raiding came to Kayoro, the people made sacrifices to their gods and a traditional tree found in the area. The tree growth, Tangom is believed works in spiritual tandem with the Kukula River. During sacrifices, guinea fowls were sacrificed in thanks of the ancestors and the river was consulted by the tree growth. Villagers told the name of the slave raiders to the tree growth so that when the raiders came, the villagers would be protected from them. When raiding in Kayoro began and the villagers were successful in warding off raiders, more sacrifices were made.

There is a story of how the spiritual powers of the Kukula River helped the villagers of Kayoro to defeat the slave raiders. It is said that the route of the raiders and their captured villagers went from the slave base in Siti to Kayoro across the Kukula River, then to Siti, and on to Sili in Burkina Faso. Raiders were on their way from Siti to capture slaves from Kayoro. After they had captured slaves, they went to re-cross the Kukula River with their slaves. When the slaves crossed, they found no water in the river. When the raiders crossed however, the river became full of water and drowned them. This defeat of the slave raiders is attributed to the powers of the Kukula River.¹⁵

¹⁴ Nakong Elders, interview by author, 9 November 2004, Nakong, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

¹⁵ Kayoro Elders, interview by author, 12 November 2004, Kayoro, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

In Nakong, there is a special practice for pouring libations. The libation is poured on images of village deities. It is believed that by paying homage to the ancestors by libation, the ancestors in turn should try to prevent any future misfortunes from happening through their collaboration.¹⁶

Site

The final method for remembering slavery that I will discuss is through historical site. The continual existence of each village as a location serves as a memory device for slavery and its impact in the various villages. Raiders came either to or passed through Nakong, Paga, Katiu, Chiana, and Kayoro. Although their success differs by each location, the villagers remember the effects of slavery on their village for the sheer fact that they continue to exist there.

For example, in Chiana, a nearby battlefield at Viba serves as a constant reminder of Chiana's defeat of Babatu. When Babatu brought his caravan of raiders to Viba, he had his captured female slaves prepare soup from the surrounding dawadowa trees' seeds for him. During the battle between Babatu and Chiana, the captured women who carried the seeds were able to escape. Along their path to freedom, the dawadowa seeds were scattered throughout the battlefield. Today, although the dawadowa trees are dying and decreasing in number, the people who inhabit Viba know the story of the battle and are reminded of it by the dawadowa trees.¹⁷

¹⁶ Nakong Elders, interview by author, 9 November 2004, Nakong, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

¹⁷ Chiana-Pio (Chief of Chiana, Pe-Growland Adiali Ayagitam II), interview by author, 8 November 2004, Chiana, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

Conclusion

The Zabarima raids in northern Ghana heavily impacted populations in the region during the second half of Dagomba in their tribute to the Ashanti, but evolved into a quest for power and wealth.

Babatu is commonly referred to as one of the main Zabarima raiders who solicited villagers from the Upper East. Babatu and his successors, Gazari, Samori and Sarantieni Mori, captured villagers, foodstuffs, and livestock during their raids. Sometimes they raided the same villages more than once. They captured only the prime members of communities—the strong, healthy, beautiful, and skilled.

The Upper East Regions of Nakong, Chiana, Katiu, Paga and Pikworo, and Kayoro experienced and witnessed the impact of the Zabarima raids during the 19th century. The villages of Nakong, Chiana, Katiu, and Kayoro mobilized in defense of their populations from the future uncertainty that slavery held. Unfortunately, Chiana was the only village successful in defeating the Zabarima.

The effects of the slave trade have numerous and disturbing complexities that continue to be felt in Ghana and throughout the African Diaspora. Due to the astronomical number of captured slaves who were sold throughout Ghana, other parts of Africa, and the New World, the post-raided communities of Northern Ghana were left devastated.

In addition, the connotations of being a slave changed with the emergence of Trans-Atlantic slavery. Slave status changed from the domestic and more integrative social capacity, to one of chattel. This meant that Trans-Atlantic slavery was characterized by the mental and physical brutalization of slaves from their masters.

During my research, it was repeatedly stressed that knowledge of the slave trade is known today only through hearsay because the present-day Ghanaians weren't there to experience it. While this is true, other methods for remembering slavery exist. These methods include song, dance, festivals, and spiritual practices. While all the details of the devices for preserving the memory of slavery were not disclosed to me, it can be assumed that they each are a vital part to Ghanaians of the Upper East as they are used to educate future generations of their history.

Various reasons for remembrance of slavery were disclosed during interviews in the villages. Informants from Nakong stated that although slavery was a painful aspect of their history, it is a history that is difficult to forget and that is why it continually is passed down through the generations.¹⁸ The elders of Katiu stated that oral tradition pertaining to slavery is important because they want to keep their history.¹⁹ The informant from Paga added that slavery's history still pertains to, and is relevant today.²⁰

In Kayoro, responses on slavery's relevance to today and the importance of remembering it were more hesitant. Elders addressed the fact that slavery is something no one wants to speak of freely today.²¹ A similar response was given in Navrongo.²² This perhaps stems from villagers not wanting to make colloquial mention of such devastating circumstances. However, because slavery is not talked about freely, the history is passed down during designated storytelling events pertaining to the village

¹⁸ Kayoro Elders, interview by author, 12 November 2004, Kayoro, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

¹⁹ Katiu Elders, interview by author, 7 November 2004, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

²⁰ Yiredwore Alira, interview by author, 6 November 2004, Paga, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

²¹ Kayoro Elders, interview by author, 12 November 2004, Kayoro, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

²² John Kaba Balua, interview by author, 4 November 2004, Navrongo, tape recording, possession of author and SIT.

history. Similarly in Nakong, the act of speaking informally of slavery is viewed as taboo. Thus, it is addressed during formal sacrifices.²³

In raiding pursuits, slave raiders sought to destroy the spirit of those they raided. Captured slaves were forced to march along routes that took them in a scattered direction away from their native villages. Raiders did this to confuse those they captured so, if they did manage to escape, return would be impossible. Miraculously however, some slaves managed to escape and continue their lives in freedom. Their stories, and the history of slavery, have been remembered by villagers and passed down throughout the generations, adding to the collective memory and history of their community.

Suggestions for Further Study

As previously noted, there has not been much research focusing on slavery in Northern Ghana. Book unavailable to the author (due to time constraints) that relate to the history of slavery in Northern Ghana are as follows: The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana by J.J. Holden; A Brief History of the Dagomba People by E.F. Tamakloe; and Salaga Papers, Vol. 1 by M. Johnson. These books give further information on the subject.

During the author's field research, additional characteristics of the slave trade and its history were noted. Such characteristics include tribal markings and architecture of Northern Ghana as a means of both remembering and resisting the slave trade.

Dr. A.H.K. Abasi notes that the complex and intricate architecture of the houses of Northern Ghana served as a means of protecting local communities from the attack of

²³ Nakong Elders, interview by author, 9 November 2004, Nakong, tape recording, possession of author and SIT

slave raiders.²⁴ Such elaborate architecture was witnessed by the author during her field research. The sheer existence of these homes today serves as evidence of slavery and its effect in the region.

The author also witnessed many inhabitants of the Upper East Region who had tribal marking on their faces. The reasons for tribal marking vary from serving as a means of identification of fellow clansmen to transforming on into “undesirable” for capture by slave raiders. Nonetheless, these markings seem to have a connection with the coming the slave trade.

²⁴ Dr. A.H.K. Abasi, “Architecture of Northern Ghana,” lecture, 5 October 2004, Wa, notes taken manually by author.

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