

The Burden of Memory: Oral and Material Evidence of Human Kidnapping for Enslavement and Resistance Strategies among the Balsa and Kasena of Ghana

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Abstract

European narratives about the slave trade in Africa has often attempted to underestimate, overlook or sometimes forget completely the role of African indigenous resistance to human kidnapping for enslavement. This paper examines ways in which the Balsa and Kasena in northern Ghana were under the constant threats of enslavement and how they adapted and resisted the threats of violence and enslavement by exploiting their unique landscape and topography, local architecture and flight as strategies against captivity from slave raiders. Drawing from field work through recording of songs and oral accounts, the paper contributes to the broader discussion of the transatlantic European designed slave trade within the historiography on how communities who were devastated by the threats of violence and human kidnapping for enslavement continue to relive events of the past. The paper reveals that individual and communal flight from slave raiders as well as exploitation of the landscape and their building patterns reveal a compelling story about a people who do not always want to be perceived as victims, but as agents in reconstructing a narrative of endurance, skill, ingenuity and toughness. That is, although human raiding and threats of enslavement threatened their central communality and tampered with group cohesion, these communities still managed to adapt to their plight by devising strategies that sought to keep them safe, secure and helped to ensure their survival.

Introduction

Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay...
Some things you forget. Other things you never do...
Places, places are still there.

Beloved (1987)-Toni Morrison

This paper adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in exploring how the kidnapping and selling of people, and especially the threats and violence of predation and enslavement, among the Balsa and Kasena of Ghana during the latter part of the nineteenth century continues to linger in their cultural memory. The paper also discusses how these subaltern groups continue to survive the legacy of a traumatic remembrance, an experience associated with human kidnapping for enslavement. But more importantly, the paper pays particular attention to how these two communities adapted and resisted the threats of violence and enslavement through flight and the exploiting of their unique landscape and topography, and local architecture as strategies against the violence of predation and captivity from kidnapping for enslavement.

Although African struggles against their enslavement were often varied and multifaceted, the role of Africans themselves in masterminding their resistance to human kidnapping has often been either deliberately overlooked or grossly misrepresented or even sometimes forgotten. And although historical sources have provided some useful accounts of African resistance strategies to enslavement, greater attention ought to be paid to the oral traditions of victims of the slave trade within the interior of Africa where people were abducted as slaves in order to better understand the internal dynamics of slave trafficking and indigenous community resistance. Indeed, scholars of the slave trade have shown that armed struggle though constituted significant means of resistance within Africa, was neither the best nor the only strategy. As Diouf (2003) has reminded us, “the acts-of fear of armed struggle may have seemed the most dreadful to the Europeans, but the African struggle encompasses more than a physical fight. This struggle Diouf has argued, “was based on strategies in which not only men who could bear arms, but women, children, the elderly, entire families, and communities had a role” (xii). And as this paper, attempts to show, other long term and innovative strategies were used to protect people from the predatory activities of enslavers. Earthworks were constructed to frustrate slave raiders and kidnappers while some communities surrounded their towns with thick walls. Better still, others often deserted vulnerable environments to inaccessible locations such as hills, caves and thick grooves. Taken together, these varied strategies offer another window into the inner world of cultures hitherto unexplored within the literature which is why attention to the experiences of the Balsa and Kasena is relevant, especially how these social groups continue to relive their experiences of not only predation but also triumph.

Thus, attempting to piece together a cultural space, a historical time and an experience that does not otherwise feature within conventional historical sources, I argue that oral tradition provides a promising approach that we can use to better understand the subtle nuances inherent in cultures that were devastated by the threats of violence and enslavement within their collective memories. Although oral tradition is limited in terms of how it negotiates and in what is passed on from generation to generation, because more often than not, the amount of data is circumscribed (Klein, 1989), nonetheless, it still provides some useful leads into communal memories of the past.

Human kidnapping for enslavement and tribute paying were common practices in most parts of pre-colonial Africa. The Yoruba of Nigeria and the Sokoto Caliphate, for example, exacted tribute from their subjects. Perbi (2004) has for example, suggested that in Ghana, almost all the states the Asante conquered from 1700 to 1896, paid annual tributes with enslaved people and other goods to the Asante Kingdom. The Asante and Zabarima hegemony over northern Ghana through decades of systematic predation and pillage and enslavement has left a legacy of pain and traumatic experiences that continue to haunt the descendants of the enslaved. The trauma of human raiding and enslavement was not an event that was directly experienced by many of the subjects of this study. However, its remembrance and representation have become central in their attempt to forge a new collective identity: an identity predicated on a strong and resilient people whose ancestors triumphed over tragedy.

This attempt to forge a new collective identity by these social groups is done through negotiated, mediated and selective recollections of the past. The past as a collectively shaped reference point for these communities is not only sometimes recollected and represented through a variety of means, including songs, names and naming practices, but also recalled and imagined through association with the landscape, local architecture and the topography.

A Synopsis of Related Literature

Although the wealth and diversity of discourse surrounding the European coached slave trade and enslavement is enormous, there is still a lot more we do not know. A lot more is buried within the memories and cultural landscape of cultures which were devastated by enslavement. And as novelist Toni Morrison has reminded us, “some things “pass on” and “some things you forget”, “other things you never do”. Indeed, there are still “residual traces” of the history and legacy of enslavement within the cultural productions of communities devastated by predation and enslavement, in general, and in northern Ghana, in particular.

What do these cultures remember and what do they forget? Why do they choose to forget others and yet remember some? “...The forgetting of violence,” Robben (2005) has reminded us, “is linked to the remembrance of violence because traumatic experiences are characterized by the inability to be either completely recalled or completely forgotten”.

“It is precisely this obstruction to either total recall or total erasure, and the unending search for comprehensive understanding,” Robben has noted, “that makes trauma so indigestible and memory so obsessive” The obsessive nature of memory and the dilemma to forget or to remember then makes memory a burden. Yet remembering is sometimes self-empowering. This is especially the case for these communities who through their constant remembering of the experience of enslavement of their ancestors are able to draw strength from the memories of survival even in the midst of what is often referred to as the tragedy of enslavement and captivity within their collective history.

There is a large body of studies on slavery, the transatlantic European designed slave trade and, more importantly, on how decentralized societies have come to terms with the memories and legacies of the devastating consequences of enslavement. And there are also studies that have discussed how communities resisted the threats of enslavement within Africa. The majority of these previous studies have, however, focused on the transatlantic slave experience with marginal focus on internal slave trafficking (see Bah, 2003; Cordell, 2003; Klein, 2003; and Beckles, 2007). Copious evidence in the literature however suggests that after the British had abolished the enslavement of people, the trade continued in most areas of West Africa and memories of the activities of slave raiders still resonate within certain communities (Bellangamba et al 2013). Indeed, there is now a growing body of literature on how some communities in Ghana, devised various strategies to adapt and resist the violence and threats of enslavement (Opoku-Agyemang, 2007; Saboro, 2013). The story of resistance to the slave trade, Opoku-Agyemang has reminded us, “begun much, earlier before the enslaved ended in the castles and onto the ocean” (p. 213).

What memory pointers exist to show what communities often did to lessen the impact and prevent an annihilation of their communities and culture? What strategies did they adopt to limit the impact of surprise attackers from slave raiders? What environmental, topographical and cultural weapons did they employ to survive the threats of enslavement and captivity?

Although previous studies on the transatlantic European designed slave trade and resistance strategies within Africa, and some areas in Ghana have been insightful and have enhanced our understanding of the dynamics of the trade, there is still much we can learn from the experiences of the communities of the present study.

This paper, thus, contributes to the general body of literature within the historiography by focusing on the dynamics of how people survived the threats and violence of captivity within late nineteenth century African internal slave trafficking and even sometimes transatlantic enslavement.

Conceptual Framework

Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was one of the earliest scholars to have conceptualized the nature of memory and its relation to the collectivity, especially on how memory is carried out by social groups and societies (Halbwachs, 1925). Building on Halbwachs' concept of *collective memory*, various scholars have shown how memory is a collectively shared experience and particularly how collective memory is not only related to individual or personal experience of recollection about events of the past, but also includes ways by which a group lives again in the present and how groups make sense of the past (Araujo, 2012). This connection of the past and present, Cubbit (2007) has suggested, is embedded in the cultural practices of a people and encoded through rituals, symbols, cultural artefacts, and mnemonic devices.

Hence, I draw on Halbwach's notion of collective memory, a mode of remembrance carried out by social groups and which focuses on how the landscape and architecture are significant cultural mnemonic devices with the potential of enhancing our understanding of the cultural and historical dynamics of enslavement, captivity and resistance among groups often perceived as victims of the transatlantic European fashioned slave trade.

Reflecting on the dynamics of making slavery visible in public spaces, Araujo (2012) has reminded us that, "...in societies marked by traumatic events like the transatlantic slave trade and in which transmission of past experiences was interrupted, collective memory gives way to historical memory which to some extent can be 'crystallized' in more permanent forms, including museums, monuments, and memorials, in processes that have been defined as memorialization and heritagization" (p. 1).

I also argue that although the landscape and local architecture herein discussed are not memorials and monuments in the *formal sense*, they have nonetheless come to represent significant historical memory within these cultures and evoke complex emotional and psychological responses. The collective memory within the context of these groups is the memories of human kidnapping for enslavement from the descendants of those who were raided. Memories of the transatlantic European designed trade in enslaved people within these subaltern groups sometimes are repressed (Agamba, 2005), and these social actors sometimes live in conditions of 'amnesia' in which silence and intentional forgetfulness occur (Araujo 1989).

Data and Method of Analysis

The data presented in this paper forms part of a broader effort at documenting memories of human kidnapping for enslavement and the threats of enslavement within some communities in northern Ghana. In a project I began in 2005, I have recorded songs and collected first person oral accounts from community elders and informants versed in oral history about their experiences of enslavement and the threats and violence of captivity. During interviews and song recordings, informants often recounted memories of slave raids and how their communities adapted and resisted slave raiders. One particular informant in Navrongo, Joseph Kujye Pwadura told me during an interview:

...The slave trade is an event we can never forget. Once upon a time, a certain man emerged called Mamatu(sic) (Babatu). He and his people were involved in capturing and selling people they captured from raids (Pwadura, 2012).

This informant went further to suggest that “Most people ran away and left their homes and the communities. Most were also captured and sold” (Pwadura, 2012). Oral accounts of this nature often alluded to people running and leaving their homes while others also fought. However, I limit the discussion to three significant resistance strategies: flight, the exploitation of the topography, and the use of local architecture.

The transatlantic European designed/controlled slave trade and enslavement are often subtle constructs that are not easily discernible to the outsider. However, underneath the environmental and cultural spaces, local architecture and songs among the cultures herein studied are embedded community memories of enslavement, captivity and triumph. Hence, a close symbiosis of approaches is crucial to our understanding of the often subtle nuances inherent within these cultures. In the section that follows, I attempt to contextualize and historicize the slave experience within the Bulsa and Kasena with the aim of providing an appropriate context for the discussion.

Study Areas and Context

Found in the Upper East Region of Ghana and bordered by Burkina Faso, the Bulsa (Saboro, 2013) and Kasena are all believed to have migrated from various places to settle in their present locations (the dotted areas on the map below shows the specific areas where research was conducted). The Kasena are sometimes referred to as “Gurushi” or “Awunaa”. The term ‘Gurushi’ later became a generic term earlier anthropologists used in describing most of the decentralized states that sometimes included the Bulsa and Frafra. The Bulsa and Kasena are predominantly peasant farmers who cultivate crops such as millet, beans, rice, and sorghum. Hunting is predominantly a male activity in these communities and it is used to supplement the family protein requirements in addition to the rearing of animals like sheep, cattle, goats and fowls.

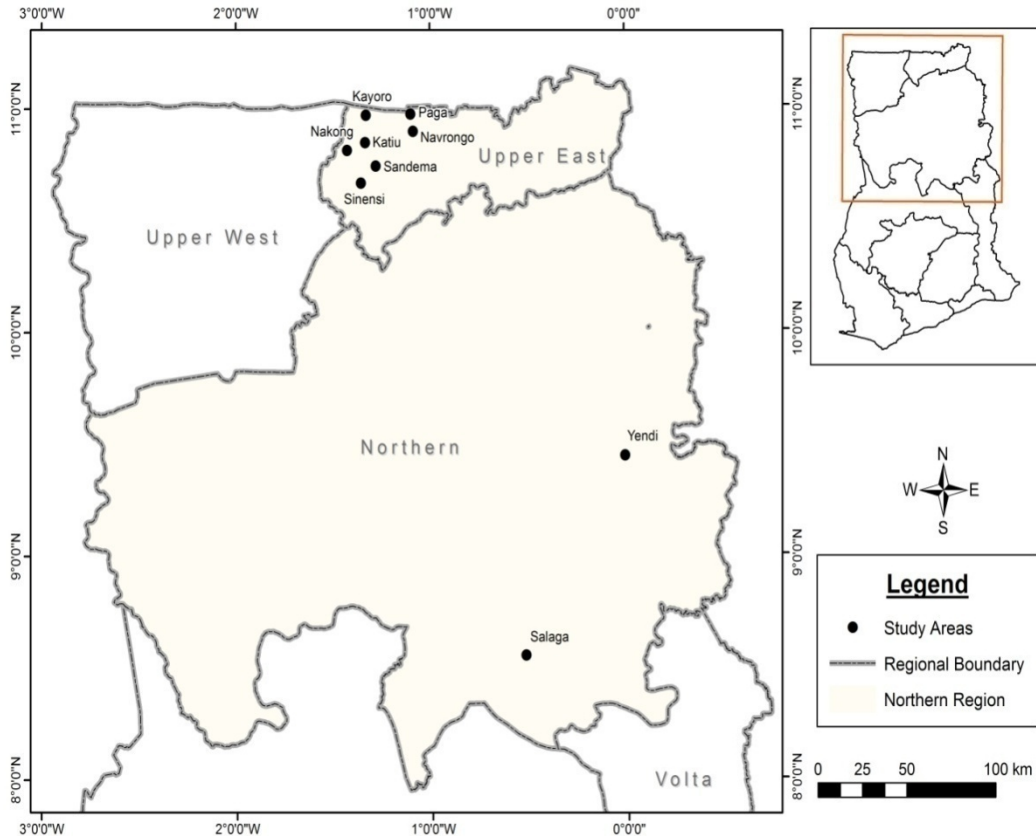


Fig. 1. Map showing the study areas. Source: Cartographic Unit, University of Cape Coast.

The latter part of the 18th century and the second half of the 19th century had a decisive impact on most communities in northern Ghana (Der, 1998). Oral accounts elicited through interviews reveal Babatu, Gazare, and to a lesser degree Samori, as notable slave raiders. One of my informants noted during an interview in Chiana Katiu that:

Our people knew of slavery and the transatlantic European designed slave trade. The Zabarima people came in as kidnappers into our communities. ... They were Babatri, (sic) Babatu, Gazari, and Samori, and when they came, they caught a lot of people in the process because they had guns. We were helped in our resistance efforts by our deity Zambao. When these raiders entered Katiu, Zambao ensured that they could not harm anybody. There are songs we use in remembering these events (Ademena, 2012).

The Zabarima first entered northern Ghana in the early 1860s as merchants and traders who dealt in the sale and purchase of horses. Given their immense experience in warfare, they were hired by the Dagomba as mercenaries to help provide the annual tribute in enslaved people it owned the Asante Kingdom.

This resulted in a series of organized raids and surprise attacks among less centralized groups like the Kasena, Balsa, Sissala and Frafra. Of all the kidnapers for enslavement to have emerged in these areas, Babatu is often remembered as the one whose activities had the most devastating impact. People were captured during raids, and were often sold at Salaga, a major slave market in the northern region of Ghana.

The arrival of the French, British and German troops in the late 1890s in the area severely impeded Babatu's ability to carry out attacks on the communities; he was finally defeated through local resistance efforts and by the French in 1897, and fled to Yendi where he died in 1907 (Lovejoy, 1982; Der, 1998). As a result of the predatory activities of these kidnapers for enslavement within the cultures herein studied, local communities often devised several strategies to either fight back or to survive the effects of the threats of captivity and enslavement. These resistance strategies deployed by these cultures are the focus of the next section.

Flight as a Survival and Resistance Strategy

As a survival and resistance strategy, flight is a recurrent motif in the literature of oppressed people who have had to deal with the harassment of captivity and enslavement. Within the African-American experience, for example, flight occurs as a dominant theme. Slave holders were often confronted with not only open revolts from the enslaved, but also from others who fled the plantations and formed isolated groups in swamps and mountainous regions and waged guerrilla warfare against their enslavers, and constituted themselves into what became known as maroon communities.

Jamaica and Suriname, for instance, are known to have produced the most famous of these maroons, even though other places like Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela were also known to have maroon societies (Genovese, 1979). Maroon communities thus became symbols of hope to the enslaved who fled to them, as they provided shelter and a defence community for their members. The mountainous nature of the Caribbean topography, coupled with a landscape of swamps and jungles, served as ideal conduits through which maroon communities could operate against their enslavers unencumbered. Maroon settlements often raided isolated plantations and organized armed resistance against slaveholders.

There is evidence that suggests the establishment of maroon communities by the Akan of the Gold Coast (Ghana) in Jamaica under the leadership of their chief Cudjoe (Okon, 1992). Okon has, for instance, suggested that "like Jamaica, the Suriname maroons were mainly Akan" (pp. 158-159). Reflecting on the nature of flight as a resistance strategy, Herbert Aptheker has pointed out that, "Flight was an act of extraordinary resistance for the slave, and the fact that so many thousands accomplished it or even attempted it is a prime indication of the irresistible will for freedom that never left the Afro-America people" (Aptheker, 1971).

In Africa, there is evidence to suggest that victims of slave raids often fled from their oppressors sometimes into caves and rocky outgrowths to escape from their enslavers. Lovejoy (1986) has indeed affirmed that, “flight could be –and was in Africa—a major form of resistance, largely unconnected with the violence of armed struggle”. Indeed, within the specific cases of the Balsa and the Kasena, there are songs that make explicit reference to the theme of flight from slave raiders. Through specific lines of these songs, we see cultures reflecting on how individuals and the collectivity often expressed their sense of desperation over the predatory activities of the enslaver. For example we have lines in some Balsa songs that say: “The slave raider has come to attack me and I am running”, “ I am running away for my dear life”, “we are running away from the slave raider”, “ we have suffered, really suffered, we have ran, ran a lot”, “I am walking and running”, while another line in a Kasena song says “ When Gazare removes a cutlass and shows it up, people run into hiding”.¹

The central animating metaphor in all the examples above is the subject of “running”, one that gives an indication of a people always in motion. And as one of my informants earlier on alluded to, “Most people ran away and left their homes and the communities. Most were also captured and sold” (Pwadura, 2012). These raided communities had no directional control or no directional map to guide them; hence, from capture to destination, they were at the mercy of their captors. Although the songs and oral accounts are often silent and oblivious on the direction of victims, community memories always pointed to the rocky outgrowths and caves as possible places where people sometimes sought refuge. Therefore, the landscape within these cultures has become an important site of memory because it conveys images of cultures that survived predation in the midst of tragedy.

The Landscape

The significance of the landscape as a cultural and symbolic space – a significant site of memory and a key element in the building and preservation of collective identity – (Claval, 2007) is not entirely new within the literature (Moore & Whelan, 2007). Indeed, scholars have also shown how the landscape is a powerful mnemonic device for recalling, reconfiguring and reinterpreting history (Vansina, 1985). And as Niamh and Whelan, have pointed out, “The cultural landscape is now conceived of as an emblematic site of representation, a locus of both power and resistance, and a key element in the heritage process” (p.x). Indeed, these “emblematic sites of representation” and how they underpin the concepts of power and resistance are significant. But also, more importantly is the fact that the landscape is not only significant because of its role in the heritage process, but because it also provides a significant window into our understanding of how communities who were under attack often exploited it in order to survive predation and enslavement as this work attempts to show.

When I first began recording songs about the experience of human kidnapping for enslavement among the Balsa in 2005 and later the Kasena areas in 2012-2013, there were always instances where informants recounted memories of how local communities adapted to the threats of human raiding by exploiting the topography. Significant portions of the topography of the Balsa and Kasena area are undulating. Some parts of the land are rocky, the soil is lateritic and most of the rocks in the environment have caves.

Indeed, the sense of slave raiders pursuing and capturing people while these victims will be “running” and “leaving their houses” is a recurrent motif in the oral traditions of the people herein studied. While informants were often oblivious of any sense of direction of those pursued, they often recounted how rocks within the environment served as safe havens where people often ran to and sought refuge during slave raids. There are memories of how the slave raiders were often on horseback and armed with guns. Part of the strategy of victims to elude capture was to retreat into these rocks; thereby making it difficult (if not impossible) for slave raiders to pursue them. One informant Dickson Adiale, for example, pointed to some of the rocks shown in the picture below (Fig.2) and recounted how he heard from his elders and late father (who was the chief of Chiana) of stories how slave raiders often pursued people from the communities, making them run into the rocks/caves to seek refuge (Adiale, 2012).

As earlier on alluded to, some songs among these cultures point to how communities were often running away from slave raiders. These individual and communal flights are usually not seen as signs of cowardice but as effective strategies against enslavement. Communities usually retreated into inaccessible settings and easy to defend areas. For example, there is a song among the Balsa that alludes to running and retreating as a strategy. The song says “Let someone be deceived to follow, and he will surely remain and die in the bush”.

Let someone be deceived to follow and die in the bush
Let someone be deceived to follow and die in the bush
Remain and die in the bush
They will deceive someone
And he will remain and die in the bush

They say that the people of Sandema are finished
If you sit down and believe it
They will deceive someone
And he will die and remain in the bush (Song text).²

It does appear that, this song suggests how a victim could pretend to be running away into the bush, but in so doing, lures a slave raider into an unfamiliar terrain. The basic point in this strategy, as informants recounted, is that victims were often more familiar with the topography than their predators. The memories of these strategies suggest that subaltern groups did not always remain passive but devised innovative strategies to lessen the impact of captivity and to ensure that their entire people and cultures were not completely obliterated. In addition to the landscape, local architecture facilitated resistance against enslavement within these cultures.



Fig.2. a view of the topography showing the undulating nature of the landscape, making the pursuit of slave raiders on horses difficult. Photo by the author



Fig. 3.A photo showing part of the topography.Photo by the author.

Local Architecture

The significance of local architecture as a defensive strategy against the harsh realities of nature and especially against enslavement was common in most parts of Africa. Klein (2003) has, for example, noted that an important defensive strategy against slave raiders in much of West Africa was the construction of walls and the development of architecture that made it difficult for invaders to capture people, even if the raiders succeeded in having access to a fortified community. This was much the case for most communities within northern Ghana who were often confronted with the experiences of captivity and the constant threats of enslavement.

Although it is difficult to say that these buildings were designed as a direct response to enslavement and the transatlantic European designed slave trade, what is certain is that, communities who were under the threats of enslavement often used local architecture as a safeguard by reconfiguring its design and general layout to confuse and thwart the efforts of their enslavers. For example, the case of Gwollu and Sankana communities in the Upper West region of Ghana is a case in point where the local people constructed a wall around the community and used caves as defensive strategies against the predatory activities of the slave raiders: Gazari, Samori and Babatu (Opoku-Agyemang, 2007).

The architecture motif is significant in that we see a similar pattern within Balsa and Kasena cultures, as it became one of the defensive strategies in how they resisted human kidnapping for enslavement. The chief of Nakong, Joseph Banape Afagache, from whose compound the photo in Figure 4 below was taken, recounted how, as a child, he was told of how raiders who terrorized their community were resisted by the innovative use of these building strategies. According to him, their houses were constructed such that they were practically impregnable and difficult for attackers to access. Although people are now beginning to design houses using modern models, in the past, the main building material was sand and clay mixed with cow dung, dry grass and water. These materials were mixed together and kneaded thoroughly before being used to build. A particular compound could comprise between three and six round shaped houses connected by a wall and a small entrance (as shown in Fig. 4).



Fig. 4.A photo showing a household compound. Photo: Author

A significant feature of these houses that I observed was that entrances to a room were often very narrow such that one had to bend down significantly to be able to enter while sometimes some compounds had several entry points. Rooms in these buildings had very narrow windows just to allow minimal light. The reason for having these peculiar features as an integral part of the house, the interviews revealed, was to make it difficult for slave raiders to succeed in capturing their people in the event where they pursued them into their houses.

Chief Afagache pointed out that because of the threats posed by slave raiders, some members of a household would normally lie hidden at the entrance with bow and arrows to ward off any attack while others would stand on top of the building to alert others of approaching raiders.

The chief intimated further that his name ‘Afagache’ in the Kasem language means, “be alert” or to “be on guard”. He went further to suggest that his father gave him the name not only as a way of remembering the tragedy of human kidnapping for enslavement, but also, to memorialize how enslaved communities always saw the need to be responsive to the threats of enslavement by constantly remaining vigilant.



Fig.5 A photo showing how people were posted on roof tops to alert the community on the approach of slave raiders. Photo by the author.



Fig. 6. A photo showing a narrow entrance designed to make entry difficult for people not familiar with the environment. Photo by the author.

Conclusion

This paper set out to explore how two communities in northern Ghana: the Bulsa and Kasena who were victims of systematic slave raids and human kidnapping continue to memorialize resistance to the slave trade, within their oral traditions. This work was premised on the overriding assumption that European narratives about the slave trade in Africa has often attempted to underestimate, overlook or sometimes forget completely the role of African indigenous resistance to human kidnapping for enslavement. African resistance to the slave trade only gets reported when slave ships and crew are attacked but acts of active resistance to the trade according to scholars, took place far from the coast. And as the case of the Bulsa and Kasena of Ghana has shown, the story of the European orchestrated slave trade and enslavement still constitutes a living wound in most parts of Africa, especially in communities that were devastated by predation.

The memory of the traumatic effects of enslavement are still alive within the cultural productions of most social groups, but also more importantly are community memories of how people transcended the tragedy of enslavement and survived. Although the oral sources I have examined in this paper do not tell us about numbers as sometimes historical sources do, the sources and evidence reveal how a people remember how their ancestors subverted the power structure of slaving empires by turning images of victimhood into a narrative of communal triumph.

Individual and communal flight from slave raiders as well as exploitation of the landscape and their building patterns reveal a great deal of information. These memory pointers reveal a compelling story about a people who do not always want to be perceived as victims, but as agents in reconstructing a narrative of endurance, skill, ingenuity and toughness. That is, although human raiding and the violence and threats of enslavement threatened their central communality and tampered with group cohesion, these communities still managed to adapt to their plight by devising strategies that sought to keep them safe, secure and helped to ensure their survival. These strategies reveal the strength and resilience of a people and the endurance of culture. The sources explored also reveal that these people who were oppressed by human kidnapping for enslavement activities did not remain passive, but chose to challenge their oppression through innovative strategies to not only ensure their survival, but also the survival of their culture.

Although Levine (2007) was reflecting on the African-American experience in his work, it will not be far-fetched for one to use his formulations to inform other realms of experience, especially about the resilience of culture within the context of oppression. Levine has pointed out for example that, "Culture is not a fixed condition but a process: the product of the interaction between the past and present. Its toughness and resiliency are determined not by a culture's ability to withstand change... but by its ability to react creatively and responsibly to the realities of a new situation" (Levine, 2007). Indeed today, the Balsa and Kasena have remained strong because of how their forebears reacted innovatively and strategically to the situation of human kidnapping for enslavement by exploiting their environment to resist the threats of violence on themselves and their culture.

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End Notes

¹ These songs form part of the collective repertoire of songs I recorded on the field in 2005 among the Balsa of Sandema and surrounding villages. The Kasena songs were recorded between 2012/2013 in Navrongo and surrounding villages. The songs I have referred to in this paper can be found in the appendix of my PhD thesis: "Slavery, Memory and Orality: Analysis of Songs Texts from Northern Ghana", University of Hull, England, pp. 200-249.

² This is song # 33 of the Balsa song texts.