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Archaeological Investigation of Historic Kormantse: Cultural Identities

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Abstract

An archaeological project launched as part of Kofi Agorsah's Fulbright Scholar program at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana in 2007, aimed at investigating the cultural formation and transformation of the historic Kormantse settlement on the Gold Coast, in response to changes occurring through colonial times. It sought to explain, by use of ethnographic and archaeological material, the processes and cultural manifestations by which the settlement's population, including those who passed through Kormantse during the trans-Atlantic slave trade between the 16th and 20th centuries, negotiated their survival and identities. Preliminary studies in 1999 and 2007 indicate that Kormantse embraced the colonial slave trade and had access to abundant mass-produced local and foreign trade material and culture, while serving as a rallying point and an outlet for both the trans-Saharan and Atlantic trades. Bringing together archaeological assemblage, ethnographic and historical data to depict, explain and represent the numerous African populations identified under varying "Africa-named groups" in the colonial encounter in West Africa and their implications for the New World African cultures was the main challenge of this project.

Specific issues addressed included identifying recognized material traces indicative of internal and external trade contacts and exchanges, migration routes and patterns of market traffic and, ultimately, the different groups represented in the colonial encounter with Kormantse and surrounding areas as the connecting links. It was expected that evidence of changing burial and other social practices as indices of the community's shifting identity, would help determine how the communities in and around Kormantse adjusted to changing conditions of the colonial encounter. Artifact differentiation and sources of goods and "people," travel routes, makers and makers' marks on artifacts and scientific dates were main means of identifying and establishing how they related to emerging and continuing social distinctions within communities in and around Kormantse.

Archaeological Investigation of Historic Kormantse, Ghana: Cultural Identities

Introduction

In the summer of 2007 an archaeological project aimed at investigating the cultural formation and transformation of the Kormantse settlement in coastal Ghana and the response of its population to changes occurring through colonial times was launched.

Specifically, the project sought to explain, by use of ethnographic and archaeological evidence, the processes and cultural manifestations by which the settlement's population, including enslaved African, who passed through during the trans-Atlantic slave trade between the 16th and 20th centuries, negotiated their survival and identities. Preliminary studies carried out since an earlier visit to the site in 1999 and the 2007 indicate that Kormantse embraced the colonial slave trade and had access to abundance of mass-produced local and foreign trade material and culture, while serving as a rallying point and an outlet for both the trans-Saharan and Atlantic trade. Evidence from activities from both the interior and the coastal areas connecting with Kormantse settlement was considered as crucial in this endeavor. Challenges of the project included how to bring together archaeological, ethnographic and historical data to depict, explain and represent the numerous African populations identified under varying "Africa-named groups" in the colonial encounter in West Africa and their implications for the New World African cultures. This preliminary project searched to identify material traces indicative of internal and external trade contacts and exchanges, migration routes, patterns of market traffic and, ultimately, the different groups represented in the colonial encounter with Kormantse and surrounding area as the connecting links. Key questions included: what was the nature, content and extent of the cultural transition and how would such material culture reflect populations or ethnicities involved. What were the general and specific origins or sources of the populations and the cultural paraphernalia deposited at Kormantse as the last point of the interior slave route and first point in the ocean-borne journey to the New World? These questions required that the nature of international cultural and other exchanges facilitated by the colonial and post-colonial encounter linking the coastal areas around Kormantse and the interior be investigated.

It was expected that the outcome of these questions would help to identify the impact of Kormantse as a major port of embarkation of the enslaved, on the formation and transformation patterns, cultural identities and associated adaptations to changing conditions as depicted by the

material remains. Historical and site maps and distribution of individual structural features along the trade and contact routes and family lands as represented by the boundaries of the site of Kormantse and adjoining areas such as the British administrative post at the near-by Anomabo settlement were also to be examined. Indications of changing burial and other social practices as an indications of the community's shifting identity was to help determine how the communities in and around Kormantse adjusted to changing conditions created by the colonial encounter. Artifact differentiation and sources of goods and "people," travel routes, makers and makers' marks and dating focus our attention on identifying and establishing the ways by which those spaces related to emerging and continuing social distinctions within communities in and around Kormantse over time. These would also provide means toward understanding the development of family and clan areas, affiliations, as well as other activity areas, to explain social differentiation, organization and relationships and how the local societies negotiated the changing socio-economic and political conditions.

Kormantse and the problem of Cultural Identity

"Kormantse," as the modern people of the village call it, was and is still a small fishing settlement located on a hill approximately a kilometer north of fort Amsterdam at Abandze on the Accra-Cape Coast main road. The village, which has always been considered as Fante-speaking, constituted a landmark in its role in the trans-Atlantic English and Dutch slave trade. The name, although very powerful and connotes bravery, power and the best of the African, has created considerable ambiguity in the identity and interpretation of the history and culture of Africa and the African Diaspora. Although the location of the fort changed to its new site of Abandze and re-named it Fort Amsterdam, the name "Kormantse" has become stuck to the groups of people, who passed through that location. This has resulted in cultural definitions that cut across ethnicity, art and artistic expression, stereotypical behaviors and other forms of cultural identity. "Kormantse" has been used in its various forms to refer to the origins of a group of enslaved Akan people of the then Gold Coast and most often with the Asante, who constitute one of the many Akan groups in modern Ghana, Ivory Coast (Cote D'Ivoire) and to their cultural practices such as religious worship, drums, drumming and songs. Some people go as far as to refer to a Kormantse "nation." Although very important in the reconstruction of African cultural identities in the African Diaspora, Kormantse has remained archaeologically

unexamined until now. Its various references and meanings in historical and archaeological record of the African Diaspora are many.

In addition, numerous references Kormantse and the claims of societies in the African Diaspora as their “homeland” or “culture” in Africa, and its recognized central role in the search for African identities, with their attendant ambiguities and interpretations that follow, demonstrate the need to explain its historical importance by use of tangible evidence. Carey Robinson, a Jamaican journalist writes that: “Many of the captives came from war-like tribes which were called ‘Coromantins’ by Europeans. They were described as fierce, bold, proud and courageous; possessing ‘an elevation of soul, which prompts them to enterprises of difficulty and danger, and enables them to meet death, in its most horrid shape, without flinching’; despite their dangerous reputation, the British planters preferred Coromantins because of their strength and ability to work hard” (1994:89). Colonel C. L. G. Harris, a former chief of the Moore Town Maroons of Jamaica, refers to original language of the Moore Town Maroons as “Kramanti, spoken freely among them until about the 1930s.” According to him a very specialized ceremony was also called “Kramanti play, a hybrid of Twi, the Asante language of the Gold Coast.” He provides many examples of phrases and words of the language and claims Kormantse as his African ancestral home (Harris 1994:35). Kenneth Bilby, an Ethnomusicologist, who has done a substantial research on the Maroons in Jamaica and Suriname also refers to it as “an esoteric language of the Maroons known as Kromanti to which several of African languages have contributed . . . now functions only as a liturgical language . . . repertoire of Kromanti songs” (Bilby 1994:70); Charles Johnson and Patricia Smith writing in *Africans in America*, in describing the enslaved, notes that the main captives “were Fulani, Malinke, and Wolof, members of tribes with names like ringing bells . . . they were the Whydahs, Asante, Fanti, Coromantees, pride filling their faces” (1998:62); Wim Hoogbergen a prominent Dutch historian refers to names of 18th century locations and rivers in Suriname, bearing such names as “Cromotibo, Kromoti-Kodjogron” (Hoogbergen 1990). Richard Hart, a prominent Jamaican Historian has used the term with varied spellings such as “Kromantine, Kormantine, Cromantee, Coromantis, Kromatis.” Thoden van Velzen and W. Wetering in their most detailed exposition of the religion and culture of Maroons in French Guiana describe “Kumanti deity or spirits associated with the sky . . . Kumanti medicine men said to have formed the backbone of resistance against planters -- among the Aluku -- Kumanti spiritual medium.”

Beverley Carey, a notable Jamaican born Maroon and an authority on Moore Town Maroons writes about “Koromanti or Karamanti drum and language” as well as refers to “Kramanti songs said to be derived from Twi tongue.” Many writers in the Diaspora have even gone as far as referring to a “Koromantyn nation,” carrying forward the notion and reference to the site far beyond its connection with the formation of the populations of the African Diaspora. These historical references appear to be heading toward the perpetuation of the ambiguities and confusion that exist about identities of Africans in the Diaspora. Many enslaved Africans, coming from that point of embarkation to the New World, were referred to as “Coromantin slaves” (Agorsah, 1994) leaving unclear their specific cultural affiliations or identities. Douglas Chambers (2001), writing about ten years ago very rightly noted that: “There is abundance of evidence that, throughout the Atlantic World in the era of the slave trade, many enslaved people identified themselves or were so identified by others, as members of Africa-derived named groups,” and rightly adds that “much of this evidence is ascriptive.”

As one of the last stop points of the slave routes from the interior and a major port of departure to the African Diaspora, identities derived from their material culture, help define and identify it as one of the major geographical and cultural entities that could help define the embryonic stages of the formation of the African Diaspora. It is important to use archaeological evidence rather than mere ascriptive definitions and unexplainable “ethnonyms” or “ethnies” to identify the components of the populations, their material culture, cultural and geographical origins and routes in the colonial encounter. But a project of this nature poses a real challenge. How do you pin down pin down, through the study of the archaeological remains such as local and foreign trade items, faunal and floral remains, burials, activity areas and other relevant data on material remains and extraction of DNA and ethnographic data, specific cultural identities or ethnicities of groups from both the interior and coastal regions, who consisted of the populations that played major roles on the colonial encounter?

Preliminary Investigation of the Kormantse

Kormantse (05° 12' 256" N and 01° 04' 85" W) (Fig. 1) was the original site of the first fort the British attempted to build on the Gold Coast (Ghana) in the 1630s, to facilitate the shipment of enslaved Africans to the New World. The 2007 project was to prepare the grounds for the current proposed project in the region. The project commenced with the study of the

original location, physical characteristics, followed by test excavations to reveal aspects of the material culture in its relation to the colonial trans-Atlantic cultural exchanges. In an earlier visit to the site in 1999 the location of the original fort the construction of which the British had to abandon owing to harassment from the Etsi, the original inhabitants was identified. Broken pieces of blocks of the original fort had been rolled down into the deep valley to the west of the site; there was widespread distribution of ceramics, and burial areas were still intact although in disuse. Also majority of the almost hundred year old house structures of the site still stood precariously as the village experienced migration to a newer Kormantse site located along the Atlantic waterfront.

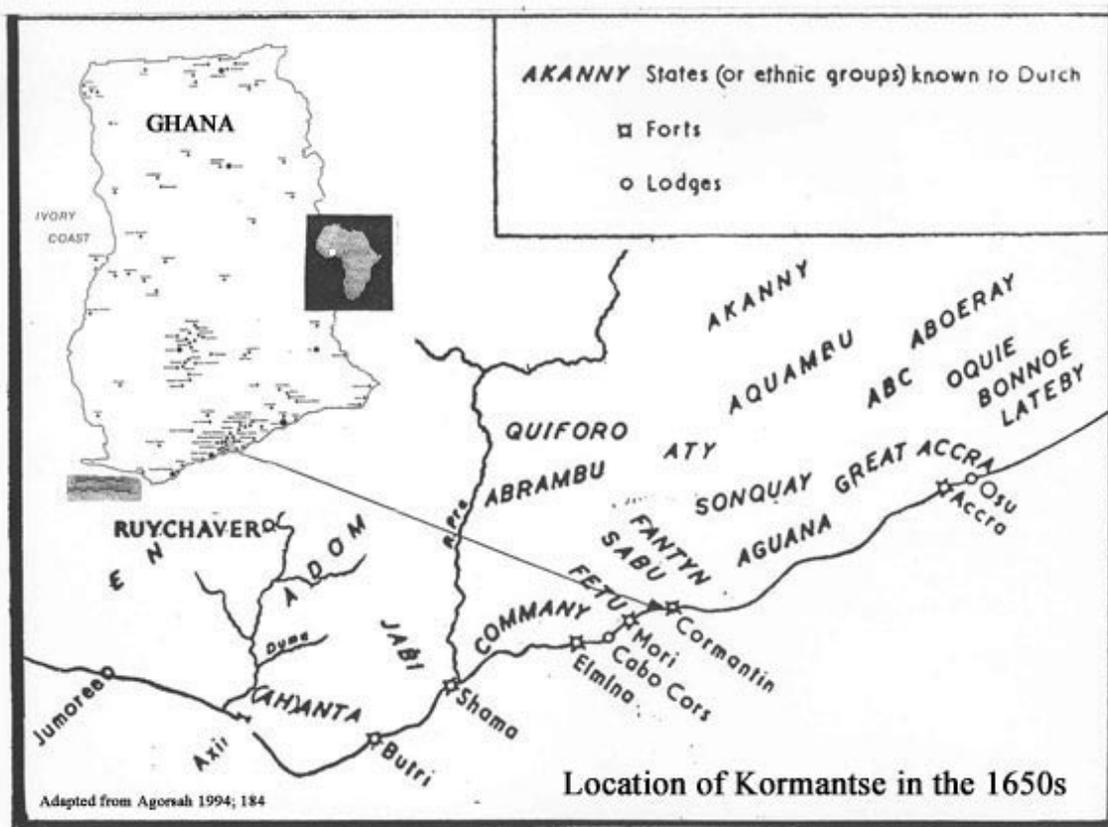


Figure 1: Location of Kormantse from Colonial Maps.

Interviews conducted during subsequent visits indicated varying traditions about the origin of the village and its role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It was clear that the two major ethnic groups, who played a major role in the colonial contact, were the Fante and the Etsi, the latter being the earlier inhabitants. The 2007 preliminary fieldwork made possible through my

Fulbright fellowship opportunity at the University of Cape Coast (UCC), surveyed the site and its surroundings, mapped the main physical features and identified activity areas such as shrines, burial grounds, house structures and abandoned grinding stones and delineation of the site boundaries. It opened the way for a collaborative endeavor supported by the University of Cape Coast, the U.S. Embassy in Ghana and the Cape Coast Castle Historical Museum, which was already contemplating a rescue project at Kormantse to take the site away from the local alluvial gold miners, who were pillaging the site in search of valuable colonial trade items for antique dealers. The collaborative fieldwork, which included the local community, halted the illicit mining and paved the way for planning a larger-scale project, funding available.

The Settlement

Kormantse is protected on all sides except the northeastern side by deep depressions. To the south and west of Kormantse and on another hill on the coast is fort Amsterdam, which was a new location given by the Etsi for a new British Fort which bore the name Kormantse until the Dutch took it from the British, renovated and renamed it Fort Amsterdam. This set off the development of the village surrounding the fort called Abandze, meaning “under the fort.” Kormantse featured as a major contact point in the coastal trade activities that occurred between the three major coastal kingdoms of Eguafu, Asebu and Efutu and the chiefdoms in the immediate interior (Agorsah 1975, 1993). Today, more than half the population of old Kormantse has moved to the new village along the coastline referred to as No: 1 or No: 2 Down, referring to the Fante and the Etsi areas of the Old Kormantse respectively. Much of the old site is in ruins although still inhabited. Thus one can see the historic Kormantse rotting away while a new sprawling new settlement emerges with a common denominator of families of the old. Kormantse appears to pre-exist the colonial arrival in the area and not only contributed to the trans-Atlantic slave trade but became an integral part of the elements that sustained the trade and did not only contribute but redistributed the ethnicities of the region and those, who passed through that site to the African Diaspora. The material culture and identities of these populations continue to be central to the study.

Located on top of one of the major hills in the area, Kormantse commands a complete view of the coastline fishing harbor and surrounding areas making it a logical spot selected by the British for a fort that never materialized. Approximate area of one kilometer long and half

wide the settlement is traditionally divided into two: the Etsi area (Kormantse No. 2), occupied by the Etsi ethnic group considered the indigenous or original pre-colonial inhabitants, and the Fante area (Kormantse No. 1), later arrivals, who occupy more than 60% of the settlement. Each group claims ownership and control of one of two areas of the settlement.

Material Culture

The preliminary survey and reconnaissance inventoried surface collections to coincide with these areas to allow material differentiation relative to the two major groups of the settlement. Several piles of iron ore and slag mark the outside corners of many of the older buildings, while mounds and depressions in and around are linked to events of the oral traditions of the settlement. At the spot of the first British fort stands a recently constructed water tank. Several shrines, most of them active during the colonial era, are located in open areas of the settlement, while family and individual altars and shrines are visible in the ruins of the abandoned houses. At the northern and eastern outskirts are mounds of mud and piles of ceramics created as a result of alluvial gold mining that has plagued the area recently and led to the disturbance and also burial grounds one of which appears to have been used only in colonial times. Colonial maps and records mention Kormantse as an important outlet for enslaved Africans and although archaeologists recognize its major role in the history of Africa and the African Diaspora, there has never been any archaeological exploration. It indicates how significantly this project will impact evidence and our thinking and interpretations of the encounter of cultures and cultural identities the understanding of which has eluded many historians and archaeologists on both sides of the Atlantic. Historical maps and descriptions and local oral traditions indicate that the site has been the same old settlement encountered by the early British colonials in the 1630s. Data on observed surface and subsurface material would indicate both local and foreign artifacts and geographical segmentation representing family and clan areas.

The Kormantse site was divided into three major areas for archaeological purposes. Areas 1 and 2 coincide with the area inhabited by the Etsi, said to be the indigenous to the settlement and Area 3 the area in and around an individual's garden and a very small area. The west end of Area 1 which is the highest point of the settlement was the location of the British fort that was never completed; to the west of it was the local burial area of the original site. Area 2

consisted of the eastern half of the site and is occupied by many old mud and wattle and daub houses, mostly in ruins, several piles of iron ore and slag, family and community shrines and abandoned large grinding stones. This is the open center of the site. Area 3 is to the extreme south east of the settlement and is a garden area preserved by one of the elders of the Etsi clan of the old village. These divisions are significant in terms of distribution of structural features, family houses, activity areas, and other features at the site. All the disturbed and current burial areas of the site were mapped and will be avoided as much as possible. However, owing to the past tradition of burying in family houses and rooms the chances of encountering burial features appear to be very high and may provide the relevant material for bio-anthropological analysis and identification.

Local topographical sheets, maps, colonial records, oral tradition and ethnographic information helped to conduct reconnaissance, survey and mapping of the old site of the site. In small crews (2 or 3) the site's geographical limits (boundaries) based on the distribution of artifacts and surface features such as collapsed wall structures, burial areas, mounds, hearths and shrines were documented. An augur was used to locate sub-surface features to determine site boundaries and to identify areas suspected to be disturbed by illicit alluvial gold mining. Soil samples from specific areas of selected sites were collected for soil chemical analysis in the laboratories of Portland State University for phosphorus (P), magnesium (mg), calcium (Ca) and pH to differentiate, define and delimit activity areas of sites to help as pre-excavation site differentiation. Mapping of the site commenced by use of global positioning system (GPS), plane table alidade, cross-staff and other surveying equipment made available by the Cape Coast Castle Historical Museum, to establish a temporary bench mark (TBM) against which all measurements and reading were made. Collection of data relating to various environmental/ecological and observed physical features and other characteristics of site and its surroundings such as topography, soils, drainage patterns, site modification, vegetation or plant resources as well as accessibility also commenced. Shovel tests based on natural levels for the stratigraphic and soil texture, content and color, using the Munsell color chart, and standard field techniques yielded artifact assemblages that provide an idea of what to expect in the large-scale excavation, funding available (Figs. 2 and 3). Skeletal remains uncovered during the preliminary are still being analyzed by William Schaffer of the Anthropology Department of the University of Arkansas.



Figure 2: Assorted beads from Kromantse Burials.

The ethnographic study observed 71 family, individual and community shrines and 58 grinding stones distributed all over the settlement. The shrines appear to have been in use since colonial times and still bear colonial names associated with them according to the local traditions. The majority of the grinding stones located in the open outside the houses, is no more in use. In the next project, these will be mapped and placed in categories such as type of material, size, wear pattern the grinding surface, to determine whether they were used solely for grinding food stuff or as part of the iron working or some other process. The type and source of stones and how they may have been brought to the area will also be of interest and could help identify some of the trade connections.

The human and other skeletal remains from the preliminary study show high promise of providing important evidence about the populations passing through Kormantse to the Diaspora and, like the African Burial Ground of New York evidence, will become very useful evidence for reconstruction of aspects of African cultural identities in colonial times. Additional assemblage from later field seasons of field work should bring substantial substantive evidence to bear on

our interpretation of the populations interacting in Kormantse and their connection(s). However, it is obvious from the preliminary study that much evidence awaits the archaeologist at Kormantse that will become most significant for our interpretation of the encounter of cultures during the colonial era in Africa and the African Diaspora.



Figure 3: Assorted local smoking pipes.

The Future

The completion of the inventory and initial data entries of the preliminary work, to be organized by location and provenience will be grouped by levels within grid units or features. This will be capable of producing summary statistics on artifact counts and percentages within contexts and then later into artifact categories; soil chemical analysis for site use differentiation and mapping of the site and adjoining areas also remains to be completed. Identification of human skeletal and other faunal remains collected during the preliminaries -- surface collection and the excavation will be completed as the results can hint the project and give an idea of what we might expect in the major excavation. Collection and consolidation of historical traditions, clan histories and related colonial documents, maps and reports will continue while the field excavation is in progress.

The preliminary reconnaissance and survey clearly indicated the prevalence of piles of iron ore and slag all over the settlement mainly located in the corner of houses and considered s shrines, while bigger piles are located outside the settlement and within two kilometers of the outskirts. Although there is a figure of an ironsmith as part of one of the community shrine sculptures (Fig. 4), the inhabitants of the settlement insisted that there has never been an iron working industry in the settlement and that there was no such a link in the past. This suggests that if there were such an industry at all, its existence did not come down into the memories of the current or the immediately preceding generation of inhabitants at Kormantse. Who were the iron workers? How did several piles come to the area? What are the artifact associations? The piles definitely suggest antiquity of the tradition in the area. It is also possible that such an industry existed to support the European colonial trade or for manufacturing chains and other objects used in the maintaining the colonial vessels. Fragments of burnt clay objects, yet to be identified, recovered from disturbed area to the



Figure 4: Asafo Shrine showing metal (iron) smithing.

north of the settlement appear to be those of furnaces or burnt clay resulting from the iron working process. The distribution of iron ore and slag piles in and around the entire settlement will also be mapped and selected ones will be excavated to obtain a dateable stratigraphic context, artifact associations and for features related to iron working and to help place the development of the settlement history in context of the colonial encounter.

Researched and published ceramic studies undertaken for many parts of the interior, particularly regarding areas known to be related to the colonial slave routes and focused on selected areas -- Begho (Posnansky 1971, Crossland 1989), Salaga area (Okoro 2007), Banda area (Stahl 2007) and DeCorse (2001) -- would be very useful references for identifying trade and other material culture of the hinterland as they relate to the colonial encounter involving the coastal regions, around Kormantse. Oral traditions in Kormantse claim that almost all of their ceramic supplies came from outside the area and from the southern Asante-speaking areas to the north and remains so even till today. This will also be considered in the attempt to identify sources of supply of the ceramics. Evidence to be derived from the human skeletal remains will be one of the most important in any future reconstruction of the African Diaspora. The preliminary study and test excavations undoubtedly indicate that a substantial amount of human skeletal remains will be encountered at Kormantse. The distribution and the patterns of burial could also suggest the contours of ritual that can be compared to what can be observed from ethnographic and obtained from the historical records.

Challenges of the Kormantse Project

The wealth, magnitude and relevance of archaeological work and writings by Chris DeCorse on Elmina on the coastal Ghana (DeCorse 2001) and Ann Stahl (2001, 2007) Akin Ogundiran (2007), Aribidesi Usman (2007) and Ako Okoro (2006) on the hinterland areas of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and routes, have moved archaeological endeavors in the region to very high and commendable levels bringing Africa and the African Diaspora into a single historical focus. Archaeological study of the Kormantse archaeological site, as a focal point and outlet for the movement of populations from the interior and the coastal areas into New World covered in these studies, will considerably add to and move these research endeavors even further forward. Many scholarly discussions about Africa and the African Diaspora have referred to Kormantse as a place of pride of many diaspora societies to associate with, but little is known about its material

culture, colonial population and how they negotiated their survival in the colonial encounter. “Kormantse” continues to be a challenge, and to many, an “imaginary” reference population. As the population catchment and dispersal point for those passing through into the African Diaspora, Kormantse becomes the starting point, where the Diaspora cultural formation and bonding began and constitutes the location which we need to examine in our search of those cultural and population identities, the issue of which weaves through almost all discussions of the history and culture of Africa and the African Diaspora.

Also reconstruction of the nature of the formation and bonding of the true players in the trans-Atlantic encounter as depicted in the material remains will provide a data base that can help answer some of the unanswered questions of population and cultural identities posed by the recently published Du Bois Database by David Eltis and others (1999) on the thousands of trans-Atlantic voyages since the 1600 AD. Who were and are the Kormantse people? What was the nature of their material culture and what were the mechanisms and process of their sharing during the trans-Atlantic encounter on the Gold Coast? This research will star off a more critical examination of the available population data known to support the operations of the coastal ports of departure from West Africa including Kormantse. These ports of departure represent locations where the formations of the African populations that played a major role in the related colonial encounter of cultures, were conceived to be later hatched in the African Diaspora. Consequently the impact of the Kormantse study should be positively significant and reflective of individual and interactive identities of the local populations and cultural formations of the encounter using material culture that would look at both sides of the Atlantic in the process.

Questions raised in the Kormantse project are linked to ongoing concerns about cultural identities often confused with African-derived named groups in the Diaspora, either ascribed by Europeans, by the populations themselves or by those in the African Diaspora in search of an African identity in excellent discussions by scholars such as Warner-Lewis (2003), Chambers (2001) and Lovejoy (1997) among others, that have generated questions that require data on the nature of the populations and their material culture at the local African sources of the voyages. Further, the richness of the material assembled in the preliminaries signifies a promising viable and substantive database on the material culture that will help identify the diversity of populations that passed through the Gold Coast in colonial times to the new World, the degree of diversity and how the diverse communal and individual ethnic identities are expressed through

material culture. Archaeological evidence from Kormantse will hold a special place in the reconstructions of the roots and colonial connections of Diaspora populations. Introduction of forensic techniques and bio-anthropological techniques into archaeology of the area for the first time is a challenge but will help identify individuals recovered from the burials to be used with other pathological procedures for the identification of the sex, age, and other physical features of individuals. The bio-archaeological evidence from Kormantse will, of course, be more meaningful in the context of the other evidence from such sites as Elmina (DeCorse 2001), Begho (Posnansky 1971, 1973), Efutu (Agorsah 1975), and even materials from the African Diaspora such as material from Jamaica (Armstrong 1990; Armstrong and Fleischman 1993; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005) and of the African Burial Ground (Blakey 2006).

That the Kormantse site is rich is undeniable. But it is its contribution to the greater understanding of how its populations responded to changing economic, social and other conditions in the colonial experience that make it special. The bio-anthropological evidence along with the material culture will extend the geographical mandate of other studies such as those related to Efutu and Elmina in the coastal region and Begho and Salaga in the interior and also the African Burial Ground Project of New York, in complementary levels although the Kormantse material may not be the same in scope and size. But one thing is clear: the Kormantse material will provide a strong bonding that would bring all these together to establish strong base for our understanding of the colonial encounters. Scientific analysis of the soil, fauna, flora and other material will contribute useful data to the scientific data pool of University of Cape Coast and University of Ghana and afford them additional knowledge that would otherwise not be available to them. Results of these analyses will also be available to the African Burial Ground of New York, boosting its comparative capacity in the study of skeletal and other material from the excavations. This will in turn enrich the Kormantse finds and interpretations. The exchange will also open the way for future further collaboration as well as expand the range of inter-disciplinary contributions to the quality of the evidence, placing Kormantse in a clearer perspective as we examine the link between the two areas of the Atlantic encounter.

For the local communities, archaeological investigation of Kormantse will convert the site of Kormantse from its present imaginary historic site to a de facto site with material culture and role in the colonial encounter, to show, educate and expand knowledge of its real worth and restore it to its well-deserved historical importance. The project will also contribute to

international capacity-building by providing exchange and research opportunities to students of the Portland State University (PSU) and those of the universities in Ghana, particularly the University of Ghana (UG) and University of Cape Coast (UCC). The partnership between the UCC and PSU solidified by Agorsah's 2007 Fulbright and the participation of UCC students in the Kormantse project has prepared the way for more substantive cultural and educational exchanges in this current project. In addition, while the project will continue to afford training and experience opportunities for students in the rudiments of archaeological and historical field investigation, it will also promote the much desired collaboration and partnerships with local Museums that will solidify public outreach and positive impact on community understanding of the region's colonial history and link with the Diaspora. In this project the investigator, community leaders, local participants, students, the researcher and the researched, as well as participating institutions, will all operate on equal and mutually reinforcing basis. Further, participation of local and American students brings this project to them as an opportunity for educational exchanges as it will provide the main framework within which the dynamics of educational partnership and exchange programs will operate. One goal of this project is to effectively build and expand field approaches that will enable us to identify the roots of the emergence of cultural identities in the African Diaspora.

The current local Assembly in Kormantse and its surroundings led by its chairperson, Mr. Aduyaw Kwame Sasah, who was instrumental in the successful take-off of the preliminary field work, is already in the process of obtaining permission through the Ghana Tourist Board and the Regional office to erect a roadside signboard titled "Historic Site of Kormantse" as a first step to draw public attention to the site. The assembly's next step will be to obtain permission from the Ghana Museums and to fund to incorporate material from the Kormantse excavations in the permanent exhibition of the UNESCO Slave Route at the Cape Coast Historical Museum. That brings this project to a direct impact on both local and international communities, not to mention the benefits to educational institutions. Kormantse will become a major site for Portland State University's Senior Capstone and Diversity experience programs implemented through the Black Studies and International Studies Departments in collaboration with the Ghana Museums' Board and the Cape Coast Castle Historical Museum, for students training in rudiments of archaeological and historical field investigation, local experience and educational exchange programs.

Archaeological study of the Kormantse site, as a focal point and outlet for the movement of populations from the interior and the coastal areas into New World covered in these studies, will considerably connect and align studies of the colonial period along the coast and the interior. Many scholarly discussions about Africa and the African Diaspora have referred to Kormantse as a place of pride of many Diaspora societies to associate with, but little is known about its material culture, colonial population and how they negotiated their survival in the colonial encounter and continues to be a challenge, and too many, an “imaginary” reference population. As the population catchment and dispersal point for those passing through to the African Diaspora, Kormantse site as one of the starting points, where the Diaspora cultural formation and bonding began needs to be more closely examined in our search for those cultural and population identities as we reconstruct the colonial history of Africa and the African Diaspora.

The reconstruction of the nature of the formation and bonding of Kormantse as a true player in the trans-Atlantic encounter as depicted in the material remains, will provide a data base that can help tackle some of the additional unanswered questions of population and cultural identities posed by the recently published Du Bois Database by David Eltis and others (1999) on the thousands of trans-Atlantic voyages since the 1600 AD. Introduction of forensic and bio-anthropological techniques into archaeology of the area for the first time is a challenge and will help identify individuals recovered from the burials and their possible “ethnic” or cultural affiliation(s). This will permit other pathological identifications (sex, age), and other physical features of individuals. Consequently, bio-archaeological evidence from Kormantse will become more meaningful in the context of the other evidence from such sites as Elmina, Begho, Efutu, Salaga and materials from the African Diaspora as that evidence along with the material culture will provide possibilities of comparison with material from those sites as well as the African Burial Ground Project of New York at complementary levels. Scientific analysis of the soil, fauna, flora and other material will contribute useful data to the scientific data pool of participating institutions on both sides of the Atlantic through increase in comparative capacity in skeletal evidence and open opportunities for further collaboration and expansion of the range of inter-disciplinary contributions.

More broadly, this research will convert the site of Kormantse from its present imaginary historic site to a *de facto* site with material culture depicting its role in the colonial encounter, educate and expand knowledge of its real worth and restore it to its well-deserved historical

importance. In addition to contribution to international student collaborative capacity-building, exchange, training, experience and research opportunities and strengthen developing partnerships with local Museums and cultural institutions and solidify public outreach, it will also open up more tourist activities. Local efforts and dream about converting the project site into a permanent field laboratory and site Museum for student capstone courses and exchanges for scientific, educational experience and research will become a reality.

Observed locations and distribution of piles of iron ore and slag in and around the Kormantse settlement in the preliminary studies suggests a past local iron working industry, the antiquity of which will be investigated through more thorough examination and excavation of selected iron working landmarks to the north and northwest of Kormantse designated as Area 4 in the schedule. To be determined here are the nature and date of the iron smelting or working evidence and how does it explains the area's settlement history and the colonial encounter. Past work on iron working societies indicate significance of memories of the industry among African societies (Goucher 1999, 2001). Search for traditions about iron working will be intensified as the sites are being studied and test-excavated. Petrographic and other material characterization processes will be applied to identity sources of the ceramics, iron ore, slag and other metallic artifacts and their distribution across the area. The result will also help to speculate about community interaction and interactive trade network, movements or migrations and their cultural consequences; radiocarbon, thermo-luminescence (TL) and other dates will be used to reconstruct the chronology and process of cultural formation and transformations of Kormantse as a main port in the trans-Atlantic colonial encounter.

Finally, data from the identified activity areas (courtyards, rubbish dumps, shrines and altars, kitchens etc) of the site will be used to develop a detailed overview of the material conditions of life in the settlement and possibly adjoining areas, the main goal being to determine the shared and distinguishing patterns of activities between and within different locales or divisions of the settlement and to aid speculations about the populations and social categories or divisions and identities. Artifacts assembled in the process will be merged in varying clusters and categories to address aspects of each of these questions through bringing together archaeological and ethno-historical data on a complementary basis.

Note

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