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### Symposium Title

#### *Archaeology of Slavery In West Africa*

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#### **Abstract**

Archaeological research on the European contact period in West Africa has focused on European settlements. In recent years, attempts have been made to widen the scope of research by examining some of the associated African settlements. However, there is an important aspect of the European contact period missing in West African archaeology. This missing link is the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on indigenous populations. In this paper, the writer adds his voice to the call on Africanist archaeologists to direct their research efforts to studying the archaeology of slavery in the sub-region. Also the writer presents the results of research he has conducted at some slave sites on the Gold Coast (Ghana) to demonstrate the potential of archaeology to provide insights into the consequences of the slave trade on West African societies.

**Key words:** archaeology, slavery, West Africa, European contact period.

#### **Introduction: The European contact in West Africa**

In West African archaeology, an area which is increasingly becoming a major focus for research is the European contact period. Beginning in the fifteenth century, this period which spanned over five hundred years was initially characterised by trade in the natural and human resources of Africa for European manufactured goods, but in

the nineteenth century European territorial claims led to the colonization of the continent.

The quest for precious minerals such as gold and alternative routes to the Far East had pushed Portuguese explorers towards the west coast of Africa, colonizing the islands of Azores, Madeira, Cape Verde and Sao Tome in the Atlantic ( Richardson 1994:17 ). In 1482 they established their major trade base, the Castle São Jorge da Mina at Elmina on the Gold Coast. From the Elmina base, the Portuguese monopolised the African

trade in gold for over a century ( Hernæs 1998:130,1996:168 ). By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese monopoly had diminished due to the growing trade competition of other European nations.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch, Danes, French, English, Swedes and Bradenburgers struggled to gain domination in West Africa. In the event, several fortified European trading stations were established in the coastal areas or their immediate hinterlands in West Africa ( Fig.1). In the Senegambia, English and French trading posts were established along the Senegal and Gambia river valleys. The English established James Fort on the Gambia in 1661 ( Richardson 1994:22 ) and in the 1670s the French established trading stations in the vicinity of Senegal. The coastal region of Ghana, historically known as the Gold Coast had the highest concentration of fortified European trading stations than any other part of Africa during the European contact period ( DeCorse 1997:564, Hernæs 1996:167 ). There are more than 50 European trading stations scattered along the 240-kilometer-long coastline of Ghana ( Lawrence 1963, Van Dantzing 1980, Posnansky and DeCorse 1986 ). The Gold Coast, as the name implies was rich in gold. The various European nations therefore, struggled to gain permanent foothold on the Gold Coast

to have their share in the gold trade. In the end, three survived, the Danes, Dutch and English. By the turn of the seventeenth century, these three European establishments conducted their trading activities from their respective headquarters at Christiansborg (Accra), Elmina and Cape Coast. Each headquarter functioned as a co-ordinating nucleus that controlled a number of satellite trading stations ( Hernæs 1996:168 ). The Bight of Benin which is the geographical area stretching from Togo to western Nigeria, formerly known as the Slave Coast also witnessed intense European trading activities as from the mid-seventeenth century to the nineteenth century ( Law 1989, Van Dantzig and Jones 1987, Van Dantzig 1978 ). In contrast to the Gold Coast with its many trading stations, the Slave Coast had only one major point of departure, the present day Ouidah, known by the local people as Glewe ( Kelly 1997:358 ). Ouidah, located 3 km from the sea and connected to the narrow sand spit beaches by a muddy track that crosses through a lagoon system became an important trading port where the Dutch, English, French and Portuguese built their trading stations to control the trade with the kingdoms of Alladah, Whydah and later Dahomey and Oyo. It was from these trading stations that the Europeans interacted with the coastal African communities and their hinterland resource areas ( Bredwa- Mensah 1996:445 ).

The European contact gave rise to the emergence and growth of African settlements and states in West Africa. On the coast where European trading stations were established, African towns of varying size such as Accra, Cape Coast and Elmina grew up under the fort walls. In the interior regions sizeable towns like Kumase, Savi, Notse and Ife grew up when the powerful kingdoms of Asante, Whydah , Dahomey and Oyo emerged due to their trading activities with the Europeans.

Gold was the primary objective of trade during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but other African trade commodities such as ivory, wax, pepper and hides were sought for by the Europeans (Boahen 1981:107). However, by the eighteenth century, slaves had become the main trade commodities due to the growth of slave-based agricultural economies of the Caribbean and the Americas (Fage 1986:252, Farnie 1962:205). Millions of men and women either kidnapped or victims of warfare were sold on an increased scale to the various European traders in West Africa. After years of scholarly research and debate, views on the number of Africans exported across the Atlantic are divergent. However, many scholars agree that an estimated 12 - 13 million Africans were enslaved and brought to the New World (Lovejoy 1989, Hernæs 1996:171, 1998:134).

The trade in slaves was abolished by the Europeans and replaced by the so-called 'legitimate trade' in the nineteenth century. In West Africa, this trade involved the old legitimate commodities such as gold and ivory as well as new products principally, palm oil and groundnuts (Law 1995:1, Justesen 1979 :21). Another initiative taken by the Europeans in some parts of West Africa after the abolition was to encourage the production of colonial products on plantations. On the Gold Coast, the Danish plantations which were set up along the estuary of the Volta River and in the interior, along the foothills of the Akuapem Ridge (Fig. 2) are described and illustrated in documentary records (Dickson 1971:128, Van Dantzig 1980:80). Labour was provided by public and privately-owned slaves who were settled on the plantations to cultivate colonial products such as coffee, cotton and dye plants as well as local provisions like maize and a variety of vegetables and fruits (Adams 1957, Jeppesen 1966). The 'legitimate trade' conditioned a continued European commercial presence which in turn provoked imperialist intervention. To promote their interest in this

trade, Europeans were gradually drawn into political interference in West Africa culminating in the late nineteenth century with the partition of the sub-region into spheres of influence and the onset of colonial rule.

The preceding discussion though not exhaustive, illustrates the far-reaching effects of the European expansion in West Africa. The long contact affected settlement patterns, exchange systems, socio-political organisation, demographic patterns, agricultural and architectural landscapes of the West African sub-region. A survey of historical and anthropological studies of the European contact period in West Africa reveals that various aspects of these wide ranging consequences have been investigated ( e.g Austin 1987, Curtin 1975, Daaku 1970, Davidson 1961, Dike 1966, Fynn 1971, Hernæs 1995, Hopkins 1973, Jones 1983, Kea 1982, Kwamena- Poh 1973, Law 1991, 1995, Polanyi 1966, Priestly 1969, Reynolds 1974, Rodney 1982 ). These studies and many others not listed here, have generated abundant literature which allows for fruitful insights into the transformations which took place in West Africa during the period of encounter with Europe.

Archaeologists have also contributed to our understanding of the changes and developments which occurred in West Africa during the contact period. It is therefore useful to examine the nature of research undertaken on West African archaeological sites of the past five hundred years.

### **Archaeological Study of the European contact in West Africa**

The archaeological study of the European contact period in West Africa started with the survey of European trading posts ( Lawrence 1963, 1969; Varley 1952; Wood 1967 ), identification and documentation of extant colonial buildings ( Bech 1989; Hyland 1970), and heritage management concerns ( Bech and Hyland 1978; Van Dantzig 1980; Diop 1993 ).

A detailed survey and documentation of European trading posts in West Africa was undertaken by A.W. Lawrence between 1951 and 1957. Lawrence elaborately documented the architectural history of the European trading posts in West Africa by combining architectural and historical data from European archives and field survey data. The information he provided on social life in the forts was however limited. He treated the fort slaves who constituted the major social group in the forts as passive participants in the social and economic interactions in the forts. Lawrence's work reflected the Eurocentric attitude and studies of imperialism practised by the classical European school of African history before the 1960s. Wood ( 1969 ) also provided information on the history, architectural construction and occupation of European settlements on the Senegal and Gambia Rivers. In addition, he assessed the archaeological potential of these settlements.

Research on many other European trading posts has been conducted in the context of heritage management. The Cape Coast Castle, Castle São Jorge da Mina and Fort St. Jago in Ghana have been declared as World Heritage Monuments by Unesco ( Unesco 1982 ). In recent years these buildings have undergone massive renovations with funding from international sources. Small scale excavations have been undertaken at the Cape Coast Castle and Fort St. Jago as a by product of the restoration work ( Anquandah 1992 ). Artefacts recovered from the dig have been incorporated into the sites' museum. The Portugese factory at Ouidah in Benin and Fort d'Estrees on Goree Island in Senegal have also been restored ( Sinou 1992; Diop 1993 ). These European structures increasingly attract international tourists particularly those of African descent in the Diaspora. Restoration work has been carried out to preserve these buildings as tourist destinations.

Colonial buildings in some West African countries particularly Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have been studied by architectural historians. In Ghana, nineteenth century buildings of European origin in Elmina, Cape Coast and Christiansborg ( Danish Accra ) have been studied ( Bech 1989; Hyland 1995 ). These buildings belonged to European and Afro - European merchants who were beneficiaries of the European trade. Regrettably, the studies were mostly descriptive and concerned with the documentation of architectural history. They did not relate the architectural features to their social functions.

Exceptional to the studies noted above are problem-oriented archaeological projects conducted by archaeologists at a limited number of European trading posts. One of such projects was the excavation at Fort Ruycaver, a seventeenth century Dutch outpost built on the Ankobra River in Ghana ( Posnansky and Van Dantzing 1976 ). Fort Ruycaver existed for only four years and was destroyed by an explosion planted by its own commandant. The full architectural plan of the fort was unearthed, although the archaeological materials were frustratingly insubstantial. Apart from the scatter of vitrified roof tiles, no other material goods were recovered. Evidence found in the Dutch archives confirmed the short life span of the fort and its violent destruction. The explosion was planned to destroy the Dutch factor and local African chiefs called in for a meeting to resolve a trade dispute. This episode demonstrates the tension, mistrust and misunderstanding which sometimes characterised the social and economic interactions between Europeans and Africans during the contact period. Another project in this category was a brief excavation conducted at Bantama, near Elmina by David Calvocoressi ( 1968; 1977 ) to test oral traditions which indicated that an early Norman fort had been built there. Analysis of artefacts which included trade goods such as glass beads, ceramics, drink bottles, glass and clay smoking pipes

indicated that the ruins represented a nineteenth century Dutch redoubt. Although locally produced African materials like ceramics, marine shell fish, items of copper alloys, gold, shell and bone beads were obtained and described, their significance in relation to interactions was not discussed.

In order to obtain a more balanced interpretation of the interactions initiated in West Africa during the period of European expansion, recent archaeological research has focused on African settlements. These new research programmes have concentrated on socio-cultural change associated with the European presence. Christopher Decorse (1989;1992a; 1992b; 1997; 1998), took this new approach when he excavated the old town site of Elmina destroyed by the English in 1873. When the Portuguese reached Elmina in 1482 and built Castle São Jorge da Mina, the settlement was a village of only several hundred Africans. By the nineteenth century, it had grown to a relatively large town of between 15,000 to 20,000 people. Employing a vast array of European trade goods as well as African material culture, he examined the general lifeways of the towns inhabitants, their dietary patterns, the exchange system and the changes and continuities experienced by the African community as a consequence of the European presence. His research revealed that Elmina played a significant role in the trade with Europe thereby receiving trade goods from different parts of the world. As a result the people of Elmina enjoyed foreign luxury goods such as assorted bottled drinks, ceramics, smoking pipes and glass ware. In addition, wealthy Elmina merchants lived in multi-layered stone constructed houses. Despite these adopted new behaviour patterns the towns folk maintained an African lifestyle in their belief system by keeping household shrines and burying the dead beneath house floors. Also the foodways indicated by grindstones, faunal remains as well as locally-manufactured ceramics point to strong African lifestyle.

In Benin, Savi the capital of the kingdom of Whydah has been excavated by Ken Kelly (1997). Savi was destroyed by Dahomey in 1727 and was never reoccupied. The Whydah kingdom centered about 60 km from the coast of Benin grew to international fame in the late seventeenth century and Savi became an important trading port in the European trade. European traders particularly, the Dutch, English, French and Portuguese established trading posts at Savi. Slaves from the interior and coastal regions of the Bight of Benin purchased by European traders from Savi market were shipped to Brazil and other parts of the New World. Archaeological investigation at Savi revealed that the settlement extended more than 2 km across. The on-site surface configuration was characterised by mounds of varying dimensions representing domestic refuse dumps and former buildings and a system of substantial ditches and embankments. Excavation showed that Savi was divided into two distinct sectors : the royal district and the commoner district. The royal district was confined within the ditch system whilst the ordinary people lived outside of it. A palace complex of long narrow rooms with Dutch brick lined floors arranged to enclose a large rectilinear compound was excavated within the elite zone. Kelly combined documentary evidence, oral traditions and archaeological data to investigate the political and social meanings of the trade contact between the Whydah society and European traders who lived at Savi. The emerging picture in this contact setting is one in which the Whydah king has exploited the benefits accrued from the European trade to enhance his status. The European trading posts at Savi were built within the enclosure of the royal palace. The European presence was therefore circumscribed with walls and royal regulations. This indeed was very unique in contrast to other regions on the coast where European trading posts were placed directly on the

shore overlooking the African towns. The market at Savi was located in the elite district and very close to the palace complex where trade interactions could be scrutinised and controlled by the ruling elite.

In the interior regions, the work of Ann Stahl ( 1994 ), in the Banda area of west-central Ghana, has focused on the site of Makala Kataa. The research examined patterns of continuity and change in the lifeways of the local people, during the colonial era of the European contact. The Banda area came under British control in the 1890s when Asante hegemony over other ethnic groups in the forest and interior savanna regions was broken by British invasion of Asante in 1874. Excavation revealed two occupation phases : an early nineteenth century phase which coincided with Asante control and a terminal, late nineteenth century to early twentieth century phase dating to a period of British influence. The research showed that the communities in the Banda area depended heavily on local resources for subsistence, building, craft production and trading during the early occupation. The only imports recovered from the early phase were a few glass beads. According to Ann Stahl, the paucity of imports is an indication of the effective Asante control of the long-distance exchange networks in the hinterland areas. In the later phase, there was an increased reliance on European manufactured goods including luxury goods such as kaolin smoking pipes, glass beads and drink bottles, some of which probably contained alcoholic beverages. Also there was greater reliance on maize, a New World food crop and a decline in the consumption of sorghum, an indigenous African cereal during the later phase when the Banda area was under British control.

### **Archaeology of Slavery in West Africa**

Although these new research programmes by focusing on African settlements and adopting different research approach, have provided new and valuable information on

the contact period, there are still large areas that have been only cursorily investigated, or not researched at all. One important area of the European contact that has rarely been studied by archaeologists is the slave trade and its impact on West African societies. Commenting on the neglect of this important area of research in his article, *Toward an Archaeology of the Black Diaspora*,

Posnansky (1984:96) wrote:

One problem that African archaeologists initially have to face is that we have rarely studied Africa's greatest migration; yet, we have been attracted to far smaller movements that we are not even sure were folk movements at all. We have concentrated our attention on the pre-European contact period and unconsciously accepted as more significant, at least in West Africa, those societies that demonstrated the least effects of European contact. Archaeologists have not tried to study the impact of the slave trade, except for noting the dramatic increase of various categories of imports, such as guns. We have left to historians to deal with the demographic effects of the slave trade. Historians in recent years have, however, provided a large amount of evidence relating to the numbers of slaves exported and their points of departure if not necessarily their ethnic origin...but as archaeologists we have contributed virtually nothing to the important dialogues among historians in Europe, Africa, and America, and between historians and sociologists.

At the time Posnansky wrote this article, only one out of the number of archaeological projects undertaken at sites related to the European contact period was concerned with investigating a problem on slavery. Doig Simmons ( 1973 ), excavated the fortified dungeons of the Cape Coast Castle. The excavation was aimed at obtaining material culture to examine the condition of slaves at the points of departure to the New World. The inventory of recovered artefacts demonstrated the meagre possessions of the slaves as they awaited shipment across the Atlantic for the African Diaspora.

In West Africa, sites related to slave occupation developed as a result of the European contact and the slave trade. Slave sites took three main forms: slave quarters located in the African towns; the fortified dungeons in European forts and slave settlements on plantations. These sites present a wide range of research potentialities in slave archaeology from both historical and theoretical view points.

Since 1992, I have been involved in archaeological research at some of the Danish plantations in Ghana ( Bredwa-Mensah 1994; 1996; 1998, Bredwa-Mensah and Crossland 1997 ). So far two of the sites namely, Bibease and Frederiksgave have been investigated. These sites (Fig.2) afford a unique opportunity to examine slave lifeways and also demonstrate the potential and relevance of historical archaeology to the study of the impact of the slave trade on West African societies. The sites were relatively small in size, therefore a holistic examination was possible. Also, because they are located far away from the coastal settlements, one would be sure of assessing the recovered artefacts from here, as the material indicators of either the plantation owner`s life or that of the African slaves. Written sources also throw some light on the structure, organisation and management of the Danish plantation system ( Adams 1957; Jeppesen 1966; Justesen 1979; Kea 1995; Norregård 1966 )

### **Slave lifeways : the case of the Bibease plantation workers**

In this section documentary sources and archaeological data are used to examine slave lifeways on the Bibease plantation site ( Fig 3 ). The ruins of this plantation are located near the village of Abokobi, about 26 km away from Accra. The plantation was started by Peder Meyer, a Danish merchant in the early years of the nineteenth century when he purchased the right to use a piece of land from the people of Berekuso ( Norregård 1966 : 182 ). A house built of cut stones from the Akuapem mountains was located there. The plantation was linked to the so-called King`s High

Road ( a tree-lined road ) built from Christiansborg ( Danish Accra ) on the coast, across Legon Hill to the plantation sites in the Akuapem mountains. Meyer cultivated coffee, cotton, oranges, lemons and tamarinds on his plantation. The workforce on the plantation was made up of fort slaves and Meyer's own private slaves. In 1804, there were 15 fort slaves ; nine men, four women and two children employed on the plantation ( Berg 1997 : 81 ). In 1807, seven of the workers were listed as debtors in Christiansborg debt-book and nine years later, the workforce consisted almost solely of purchased slaves and pawns ( Kea 1995: 137). The slaves lived in a village on the plantation.

Excavation of a large rubbish mound at the slave village yielded

European trade goods and locally produced artefacts. Locally produced materials outnumbered European imports. The locally produced materials included : pottery, stone milling equipment, pieces of clay daub with pole impressions, iron slag, a single stone bead and faunal remains. European trade artefacts consisted of : clay smoking pipes, bottle glass, cowry shells, ceramics, glass beads, gun flints, knives, a single metal button and a metal door hinge.

The archaeological data, coupled with written historical evidence, allows us to examine slave lifeways on the plantation. The range of archaeological data listed above represents tangible evidence of the daily activities, subsistence, clothing, exchange system, settlement pattern and architecture, 'leisure' and general lifeways of the slaves who cultivated the Bibease plantation.

Early nineteenth century European accounts on the agricultural settlements in the Akuapem mountains mentioned that " the plantations had a small village by each " ( Kea 1995 : 133 ). As already mentioned there was an African slave settlement on the Bibease plantation. A ground survey revealed that the slave village was relatively

small and occupied an area not more than 0.5 ha . The extent of the village was roughly defined by the distribution of baobab trees and surface artefact scatter at the site ( Fig. 4 ). Although no physical traces of buildings were found the pieces of clay daub with pole impressions recovered from the dig may be building debris. This archaeological evidence collaborates with the descriptions of slave dwellings by Balthasar Christensen, a Danish official which said, the plantation slaves lived in “ cottages of clay, battened in wood and thatched with grass ” ( Kea 1995 : 136 ).

The major task of the slaves on the Bibease plantation was the cultivation of colonial products for export. The labour management system on the plantation was that slaves had to work for their master three or four days a week under the supervision of an overseer or foreman in the field. The required slave duty included bush clearing, planting, hoeing, harvesting, smoke-drying coffee beans and transporting harvests by head portage to the coast as well as conveying provisions to the plantations ( Norregård 1964: 44- 5 ).

The rest of the days in the week was for the slaves. Slaves spent their ‘free’ times attending to household chores, fishing, trading, smoking, hunting, collecting and cultivating their own food.

Hunting and collecting were important ‘free’ time activities of the Bibease slaves. Christensen quoted by Kea ( 1995 : 136 ) observed that a Danish plantation owner provided his slave with a wife, as well as tools, household goods, a flintlock musket etc. The gunflints recovered during the excavations indicate that the slaves probably owned firearms. They used either flint-guns provided by their master or various traps to collect wild animals such as antelopes, giant rats, grasscutters, ground squirrels and small birds like francolins, remains of which were excavated. The slaves also collected fresh-water shellfish and two kinds of giant land snails for food. The land snails,

*Achatina achatina* and *Archachatina*, today occur in the gallery forest along the banks of the nearby Daccubie stream.

Another aspect of the 'free' time pursuits of the Bibease plantation slaves was fishing. Remains of mud-fish and various species of marine and estuarine shell fish were recovered. Fish resources were important component of the slaves' diet. The mud-fish might have been caught with basket traps in the Daccubie stream whilst the marine and estuarine resources could have been obtained whenever the slaves visited Accra on the coast or went to the nearby market town of Dodowa. The slaves probably kept poultry, pigs and goats. These were perhaps allowed free range to roam the neighbourhood during the day time returning to their owners in the slave village at nightfall. The eggs of chicken and turkey raised supplemented slave diet. Some of the animals raised by the slaves may have been sold to get money to buy needed items such as salt and trade goods.

Information on the subsistence base of the Bibease slaves is provided by both written sources and the archaeological data. The practice was that the slaves were responsible for their own subsistence. They were therefore allocated plots of land to cultivate maize, yams, cassava, plantain and a variety of vegetables which they required for their daily subsistence. The archaeological data recovered included food processing equipment and food remains. Most of the animal bones excavated were broken and only a few showed butchering marks. Also some of the bones were charred indicating that meat was roasted. These observed conditions of the bones are consistent with the food practices in Ghana today. Meat is roasted to keep from going bad. Bones are often cracked during consumption to extract marrow. Soups probably consisted of a mixture of pulverised vegetables combined with meat, fish

and snails in varying degrees. Cooked yams, cassava, plantains and maize were perhaps combined in different ways and eaten with soups, stews and sauces.

Among the ceramics recovered, both locally made and imported were bowls related to the processing, serving and consumption of food. The utensils of the Bibease slaves included locally made cooking pots (*buetswoi*), eating bowls (*ka*), grating bowls (*pui kpom ka*) and soup preparation bowls (*pobue*). The imported pottery were deep bowls and drinking mugs. These suggest that the slaves prepared African meals which were eaten out of bowls with the hand. This is a common consumption pattern among contemporary traditional societies in Ghana.

There is archaeological evidence that the Bibease plantation slaves enjoyed liquor and tobacco. Among the bottle glass recovered from the excavation were olive green bottles and a square-bodied case bottle suggesting that the slaves drank intoxicating beverages and schnapps. Pieces of kaolin clay smoking pipes excavated also indicate tobacco smoking. Norregård (1966:161), wrote that “the natives (on the Accra coast) were fond of the good Danish liquor. They were prepared to do almost anything to get hold of a bottle of it and it was the greatest treat at local banquets”. About smoking he observed that “there was also a market for tobacco and pipes. Tobacco was one of the articles which the

Christiansborg traders preferred to purchase from the Portuguese or from Dutch interlopers”.

Evidence of slave clothing was provided by a metal button and a variety of beads. The presence of beads tells of the slaves expression of a rich and complex African cultural and social identity. The use of beads in West

Africa pre-dates the arrival of Europeans to the coast. Beads have been used in West Africa not only for body adornment but also as essential features in various rites of

passage ( Kumeckpor et. al 1995 : 16 ). The composition of the Bibease plantation beads shows that they were individual pieces sporadically lost and swept away as part of household trash. It seems that these beads featured as constant and regular items of body adornment among the Bibease slaves.

The material evidence from Bibease reveal the nature of both local and imported trade items acquired by slaves. The diversity of exotic goods obtained from the excavations is an indication of the incorporation of the coastal settlements on the Gold Coast and their immediate hinterland counterparts into the European dominated world economic system of the nineteenth century. Also, the presence on the plantation of pottery probably manufactured by potters in the Dangbe-Shai area or Densu Valley, two pottery producing centres about 30 km away and the remains of marine food resources from the Accra coast suggest an active internal trade system. Slaves on the plantation probably acquired their material possessions either by direct barter of commodities or by purchase using cowry shells as currency. The two species of cowry shells ( *Cypraea annulus and moneta* ) obtained during the excavation are known to have been used as money in West Africa particularly, as from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century ( Johnson 1970; Shaw 1977 : 86, York 1972 ).

### **Conclusion**

The impact of the European contact in West Africa has been painted in broad, wide strokes by anthropologists and historians. West African societies responded to and interacted with Europeans in different ways. The nature of the contact setting was therefore dynamic and complex. The paper has drawn attention to these issues and has also demonstrated that archaeology is very relevant to the study of the impact of the slave trade in West Africa. It is true that archaeologists have not made significant contribution to the study of Africa's greatest migration. There is therefore the need for

archaeologists working in West Africa to direct their research efforts to this very important aspect of the European contact.

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