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The SHA Newsletter

Quarterly News on Historical Archaeology from Around the Globe

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Africa

Ghana

Christiansborg Archaeological Heritage Project (*submitted by Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, Critical Social Inquiry, Hampshire College, USA*): Christiansborg Castle in Accra, Ghana was strategically situated on the West African coast, formerly—and notoriously—known as the ‘Coast of Guinea’ and ‘White Man’s Grave.’ A 17th-century former trading post, Danish and British colonial seat of government, and Office of the President of the Republic of Ghana, Christiansborg Castle is a national monument and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, it is locally known as simply ‘Osu Castle’ or ‘The Castle.’

Archaeological fieldwork undertaken at the castle in October 2014, July 2016, and August 2017 involved archaeological survey and excavations under the auspices of the Christiansborg Archaeological Heritage Project (CAHP). Fieldwork involved over fifty participants, including the principal investigator, local community members, and graduate students and faculty from the University of Ghana, as well as employees from the castle. Fieldwork was supported by grants from the Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation, Rappaport Foundation, Martha Joukowsky Foundation, and Wenner-Gren Foundation. The project was undertaken with the permission of Ghana’s Presidents, the Ghana Government, Osu Traditional Council, and the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board. Fieldwork was under the direction of Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, as principal investigator, whose current research project is tentatively entitled, ‘Slavers in the Family: The Archaeology of the Slaver in the C18th Gold Coast.’

History

Christiansborg Castle’s origins began as a trading lodge built by the Swedes in 1652. Eight years later, Denmark appropriated the site, and in 1661 purchased the land beneath the lodge from the paramount Chief of Accra for 100 oz. of gold, constructing a stone fort and naming it Christiansborg (Christian’s Fortress), after the King of Denmark, Christian V. Over time, Christiansborg was enlarged and converted from a fort into a castle to provide more storage and living space, as well as to meet the need for stronger defenses in order to compete with Dutch and English coastal trade. In 1685, the castle became the Danish headquarters, and along with nine other forts and lodges, enabled Denmark to acquire a near monopoly of trade on the west coast. An impregnable imperial fortification, Christiansborg Castle contained a courtyard, cistern, chapel, ‘mulatto school,’ storerooms, living quarters, bell tower, and 28 cannon. A cistern was inscribed with the name of the Danish Governor Carl Gustav Engmann (1752–1757), and two structures bore inscriptions with the ciphers of Danish Kings Christian VI and Christian VII. Between 1694 and 1803, the Danes conducted trade

with Africans at the castle, exchanging gold for flintlock guns, powder and bullets, liquor, cloth, iron knives and tools, and brass bracelets and bowls, in addition to glass beads. Enslaved Africans were sent to the Danish Virgin Islands, namely St. Croix, St. Johns, and St. Thomas. In fact, Christiansborg Castle was so vital to Denmark’s economy that from 1688 until 1747, Danish ducats and double ducats bore an image of the castle and the word ‘Christiansborg.’ Denmark occupied the castle apart from a few brief periods: between 1679 and 1683, it was sold to and occupied by the Portuguese (and was renamed Fort Sao Francis Xavier); in 1685 and 1689, it was remortgaged to the British; and in 1693, Asameni, an Akwamu trader and chief, gained possession of the castle through subterfuge, but sold it back to the Danes in 1694. The Danish Edict of 16 March 1792 officially marked the end of the Danish transatlantic slave trade (though the edict was not enforced until 1803). In 1849, Christiansborg Castle, along with the forts Augustaborg, Fredensborg, Kongensten, Prinsenstein, and Prøvesten and the plantations in the Akuapem Mountains, were sold to the British for £10,000 (Lawrence 1963; Van Dantzig and Priddy 1971).

In 1873, Christiansborg Castle became the British seat of



FIGURE 1. 2014 fieldwork. (Photo by the author.)



FIGURE 2. Documentary filming in 2016. (Photo by the author.)



FIGURE 3. 2016 survey. (Photo by the author.)

colonial government on the Gold Coast, following structural reconstructions due to damage caused by the 1862 earthquake. From 1876 onwards, British colonial governors resided in the castle, temporarily abandoning it between 1890 and 1901, during which time it functioned as a constabulary mess and later as a lunatic asylum. In 1902, it reverted to being the British colonial seat of government.

With Ghana's independence in 1957, Christiansborg Castle was renamed Government House. From 1960 onwards, under President Kwame Nkrumah, the castle continued as the seat of government and the president's official residence. A large piece of ground surrounding the castle had been enclosed in 1847, which extended along the entire north side and which corresponds roughly with the present terrace. The modern presidential residence was subsequently built in these grounds. President F. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings continued this arrangement. In 2008 President John Agyekum Kufour

moved the seat of government to Flagstaff House; in 2009 President John Atta Mills reversed this decision. Four years later President John Dramani Mahama returned to Flagstaff House. In 2017, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo announced plans to convert the castle into a Heads of State Museum.

Archaeological Survey, Excavations, and Materials

Christiansborg Castle is situated in Osu, which is located in Ghana's capital, Accra, and is on a cliff on the coast overlooking the sea. Archaeological work was conducted in 2014, 2016, and 2017 (Figure 1). Hitherto, no archaeology had been conducted at the site, owing to its continued occupation, in particular its significant role as the seat of government for the Republic of Ghana. That said, in 1960 Cabinet Secretariat building reconstruction by the Public Works Department discovered English clay and local smoking pipes, a small decorated gold-dust pot, a silver horn ornament, swords of state, groundnuts, European knives, and local and European bead necklaces. During the recent fieldwork, digital photographs were taken and descriptions noted in a field notebook. Select artifacts were illustrated on-site. Documentary filming also recorded the archaeological fieldwork process (Figure 2). Team members, many of whom are from the local community, were also interviewed on film in order to document their views on the work and interpretations of the findings.

Survey: In 2006 a reconnaissance survey was conducted to better understand the scope and characteristics of the site, such as its size, parameters, and possible areas for excavation. This type of survey was essential since many areas were still in use. One key finding was the determination of the site's structural layout (or: the layout of the site's struc-

tures), which was critical for the archival work of examining maps and architectural plans to be conducted in Denmark and the United Kingdom. In addition, survey was vital to the design of a fieldwork methodology that would produce significant results within the necessary time frame.

The surface survey in 2014 focused on the castle building inside the castle walls and exterior area underneath, comprising the bank down to the beach. A winding stairway leading down to the beach was discovered, and an abundance of materials were retrieved. For the most part, these date to the recent past, and include objects associated with the site's postindependence period, such as glassware and other small finds associated with the government's office administration. The castle currently holds eight cannons on a five-step platform facing out to sea. Two large cannons (not of the same size; one was slightly smaller) that had fallen from the castle could be seen from the castle balcony, alongside a single cannon mount; the smaller of the two was only partially visible, as it was largely submerged in the sand. The smaller cannon was excavated with the assistance of local fishermen. The second, larger cannon was visible during high tide, resting on the rocks. It was not possible to retrieve this cannon by human power alone, and so was left in situ with the intention of acquiring mechanical equipment to remove it and transport it up the steep bank to the castle in the following season. What was first believed to be part of a stairway covered in aquatic moss was later found to be a cannon support by examining the cannon still in place. A corroded square metal plate buried in the sand was also retrieved from the beach. A shrine was noted opposite the castle walls. Inside the castle walls, survey focused on the area in its entirety, with the exception of the building's offices, since they are still in use by the government. An underground tunnel on the west side of the castle was explored. The area to the east side, including the swimming pool, residential area surroundings, and gardens, was also examined. The garden contains former President Flt Lt. Jerry John Rawlings' vehicles, both his personal car and those of his bodyguards. It also contains a garden feature including a water fountain, yet to be dated. A second shrine was noted.

In 2016, spatial data collection using a GPS was conducted (Figure 3). Site analysis revolved around detailing the main archaeological features: the castle, official residence, and gardens, including the car park area, bird sanctuary, and public toilet facilities. This survey gave us a better idea of the site geology and geomorphology. Surface finds included numerous faunal remains of large domestic animals, namely goat and cow, together with an abundance of high-quality glazed European ceramics and glass. Near to the castle wall on the east side several cow horns were found. In the former castle kitchen, a large teapot, a teapot lid, and a soup tureen were retrieved.

Excavation: In 2014 test pit excavations were conducted, confirming the need for further excavations. Therefore, prior to the 2016 excavations, Osu traditional authorities performed the necessary rituals in order to ensure fieldwork would continue with Osu ancestral support. Artifacts recovered to date (2014, 2016, and 2017) include local beads



FIGURE 4. Excavated ceramic artifact. (Photo by the author.)



FIGURE 5. Horn surface finds. (Photo by the author.)



FIGURE 6. Excavated shells from 2014. (Photo by the author.)



FIGURE 7. The 2016 field team. (Photo by the author.)

and pottery, European smoking pipes, and glassware and glazed ceramics, as well as other small finds, such as faunal remains, seeds, cowrie and other shells, slate, stone, daub, charcoal, plastic, and plaster and metal fragments (Figures 4–6).

In 2017, archaeological excavations unearthed what has been tentatively proposed to be the walls of a precolonial settlement dating to the Danish transatlantic slave trade period. These walls extend to the north, south, east, and west, and might possibly represent rooms; they contain traces of white limestone. Inside one of the ‘rooms,’ a large stone initially thought to be a stone pillar, comprising a vertical stone with a horizontal stone placed atop, was exposed. At present its function is unclear.

Salvage: Inside the castle, the former dining hall, balcony, and kitchen and pantry were explored. A large collection of ‘Western style’ objects, namely tea and coffee cups, saucers, plates, and a cake serving dish, was salvaged from the kitchen, pantry, and chef’s living areas. European ceramics dating to the postindependence period were also retrieved, as illustrated by the Ghana Coat of Arms, depicting Christiansborg Castle, renamed ‘Osu Castle,’ the national motto “Freedom and justice,” and the coat of arms designed by the Ghanaian artist Amon Kotei. British firms such as Wedgwood and Royal Doulton produced these ceramics. Cutlery, mostly silver, also reflected the same dates and designs. These discarded objects were retrieved and documented. Objects associated with Ghana’s presidency, which were found in a room formerly used for the reception of official guests, were left in situ.

Conclusion

The Christiansborg Castle archaeological survey and excavations have recovered a large amount of archaeological materials dating to the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods. A significant amount of African and European material evidence has been excavated. What is more, the collection illustrates a large degree of assemblage variability. Further archaeological investigations will be

conducted in upcoming years. The excavated archaeological materials will contribute to the plans of the Ghana government and Osu Traditional Council to convert Christiansborg Castle into a museum. Further information is available in English, Ga, and Twi at: <http://christiansborgarchaeologicalheritageproject.org>. (Figure 7).

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Canada - Québec

Hedley Lodge: Everyday Life at a 19th-Century Farmhouse in Québec City (submitted by Raphaëlle Lussier-Piette and Thïéfaïne Terrier): The Université Laval archaeology field school took place in Québec City from 15 May to 16 June 2017 at the Anderson site (CeEt-950), situated in the neighborhood of Limoilou. It was believed that Hedley Lodge, the house of gentleman-farmer Anthony Anderson, and later of his son William Hedley Anderson, stood on