

SLAVERY, REMEMBRANCE, AND SITES OF HISTORICAL MEMORY [©]

The Case of Badagry

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ABSTRACT: Badagry, a lagoonside city in Lagos State, Nigeria, is of tremendous historical significance due to its long history of slave trading, which dates from the early sixteenth century and reached a peak in the 1720s. The city attracted prominent local and Portuguese slave merchants such as Felix de Souza, Domingo Martinez, and Ferman Gomez as pioneer slave merchants in the city. This paper argues that the trade in enslaved persons was a significant factor in the rise of Badagry as a prominent lagoonside city on the coast of West Africa. Today, Badagry is an important historical city because of its trans-Atlantic connections and sites of historical memory that vividly capture, preserve, and tell the story and experiences of the enslaved as essential dimensions of African, African diaspora, and world history. The barracoons, the Vlekete slave market that was, and still is, beside the shrine of the chief priest (Aplogan) of Badagry, the heritage museum, and the “point of no return” at Gberefu beach, constitute some of the remarkable sites of historical memory that still dot the city of Badagry.

In September 2018, the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo, declared and formally launched the “Year of Return, Ghana 2019,” in

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Washington, D.C., for Africans in the diaspora to return home. The “Year of Return” was organized under the theme: “Jamestown [U.S.] to Jamestown [Ghana]: 400 Years of the Slave Trade.” Accordingly, many U.S. celebrities, artists, media personnel, businesspeople, and activists—predominantly African American—arrived in Ghana in significant numbers to commemorate the “Year of Return.” The focal point of all the activities were the slave forts, castles, and dungeons on the coast of Ghana, notably, the Cape Coast and Elmina (*São Jorge da Mina*) slave castles and dungeons, which are UNESCO Heritage Sites. In July 2019, a delegation of the Congressional Black Caucus of the U.S. House of Representatives led by the speaker of the House, Ms. Nancy Pelosi, went on a visit to Ghana and the slave castles and dungeons of Cape Coast and Elmina. Ghana has received a preponderantly large share of attention and activities during this “Year of Return” and other diaspora-related events and activities, more than any other West Africa country. This is because the 250-mile coastline of Ghana once housed over 43 slave forts, castles and dungeons, and other smaller lodges built by various European countries during the 400 years of the Atlantic slave trade. Some of these structures, grim and forbidden against the skyline, still stand as a testimony to the Atlantic slave trade. Nowhere else in the world was there such a concentration of these slave forts, castles, and dungeons connected to the Atlantic slave trade as in the case of Ghana.

This paper asserts that aside from the slave forts, castles, and dungeons of Ghana, there are other important sites of historical memory related to the Atlantic slave trade that can be found on the Bights of Benin and Biafra coastline, a stretch of the West African coastline that was referred to as the “Slave Coast.” The most important of these include the slave ports of Ouidah and Badagry. While there are no slave forts, castles, and dungeons on the scale of those structures in Ghana, there are important sites of historical memory related to the Atlantic slave trade, and several monuments, museums, and artifacts speak to the once-vibrant slave trade on that coast.

Badagry, one of the major cities in Lagos State, Nigeria, is arguably a historically significant city and moreso because it became a major slave-trading center in the 1720s (see Figure 1). Besides, it was also crucial for the spread of Christianity and Western education in Nigeria. The first formal western-style school was started in Badagry in 1842 by the Wesleyan Missionary Society.¹ The first two-story building in Nigeria is also located in that city, and, in that building, the English Bible was translated into the Yoruba Language by Bishop Ajayi Crowther.² Badagry was also an important commercial center for merchants from Europe, first for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and subsequently for palm oil during the period of “legitimate trade.” Its commercial viability was a significant reason neighboring kingdoms such as Dahomey



Figure 1. Slave Port of Badagry

and the old Oyo Empire sought to exercise suzerainty over it.³ The city was a major center for trade in enslaved persons. Yussuf Babatunde notes that the name *Potagry* in the logbook of a ship captain from Nantes, who had about 267 enslaved persons on board his ship in 1736, was indeed Badagry, thus solidifying its significance as a slave port.⁴ Also, about 14 Portuguese ships from Badagry between 1760 and 1770 stopped at Princes Island for a fresh supply of needed items such as food and other necessities and for crew members to take some time off work.⁵ No fewer than 550,000 enslaved Africans left the slave port of Badagry for the United States during the 1787 American war of independence.⁶ Other destinations for enslaved Africans from Badagry were Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica.⁷

This paper argues that trade in enslaved persons was a crucial factor in the ascendancy of Badagry as a major lagoonside city on the coast of West Africa between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.⁸ It asserts that Badagry was a famous international city because of its Trans-Atlantic connection as a significant slave port on the West African coast, and it still houses some important historical sites of the slave trade. Therefore, it emphasizes that the city is an important site of historical memory because it captures and preserves the memory and route of enslaved Africans who were uprooted from Africa and sent to the New World in the eighteenth century. It affords heritage tourists as well as researchers the opportunity to connect to their roots and an essential dimension of African and African diaspora history.

Sites of Historical Memory

“Sites of Historical Memory” or places of “memory,” according to Stefan Csáky, “are generally understood as these locations—both topographical and metaphorical—which are assigned a collective ‘memory function’ by a given community.”⁹ Nora notes that the collective memory of communities is often linked to specific locations or places, and that these places are loaded with positive or even ambivalent memories.¹⁰ Monuments, images, ceremonies, and other similar artifacts, tangible and intangible, are used to memorialize important events and are vehicles that offer public and sometimes contested narratives of historical events. How or when they are presented can have implications for the way in which the past and even the present can be understood and conceptualized.¹¹ Sites of historical memories accordingly evoke a sense of the past and provide a framework for understanding what happened, together with artifacts, festivals, commemorations, and celebrations of all types. Thus important events in the history of a people are kept in the collective memory of the people.

The need to keep the memory of the slave trade in Badagry alive underpin the preservation of the heritage museum, the Chief Sunbu Mobee Royal Family Museum, the Chief Seriki Abass William Museum, the barracoons and other intangible artifacts like the Badagry Festival, songs, and proverbs relating to the slave trade. The question is: how do we remember the past? Historical memory is passed on through schools, via grandparents, parents, and other family members to children and in public commemorations. The related question is: how well have we done this in West Africa through our teaching and research on the slave trade? The jury is still out. Historical memories, encapsulated in commemorations, ceremonies, and dramatization, can look like widely-shared and accepted versions of history—but are they always that way?¹² Can the people in charge of these events or in charge of providing information privilege the winners over the losers, or even manipulate the version of history to reflect winners and losers?¹³

Heritage Tourism

The 2011 United States National Trust for Historic Preservation report states that “an area that develops for cultural heritage tourism creates new opportunities for tourists to gain and understand an unfamiliar place, people, or time.”¹⁴ Badagry, a city of importance because of its role as a significant slave site for trade in enslaved persons on the coast of West Africa, possesses numerous artifacts and monuments which survive to date and speak to an essential dimension of African and African Diaspora history. These artifacts

afford heritage visitors, especially diaspora Africans, the opportunity to learn something new about the people, their culture, the city, and its history. Major heritage tourist attractions in the city of Badagry include the slave museums and barracoons, the *Vlekete* slave market, and the annual Badagry festival.

The Gunn theory of “Functioning Tourism System” lists five significant criteria that are necessary for a place to be classified as a site of historical memory/heritage tourism.¹⁵ These include population (that is, a good number of people willing and able to visit the site), transportation, attractions, services, and information about a tourist system.¹⁶ Wilson, D. Fesenmaier, J. Fesenmaier, and Van Es have made use of the theory to underscore what makes a great tourist destination.¹⁷

Badagry, one of the major centers and routes for the trade in enslaved persons in West Africa, has tangible and intangible remains of the trade in the city. It is, therefore, an important site of historical memory or heritage tourism in Africa and globally. An active transportation network connects to the city of Badagry by water from Marina or any of the significant jetties at Apapa, Mile II, Ojo, Ikorodu, or Epe, and by road to any of the significant bus termini in the city. This network of transportation, together with the ongoing construction of the Lagos metro line, enhances access to the city and speeds up travel time and cater to a more significant number of people. Also, there are numerous sites of historical memory in the city, ranging from the barracoons, the slave museum, the point of no return at *Gberefu* beach, the *Vlekete* slave market, and the annual Badagry festival.

The city of Badagry rose to prominence in the eighteenth century, and a unique *Gun*, *Ogu*, or *Egun* ethnic group was found in the city after Dahomey overran Allada and Ouidah in 1724 and 1727 respectively. This Dahomey onslaught led to a major refugee crisis as the people fled eastward from Allada and Ouidah to present-day Badagry. Hendrik Hertogh, a Dutch national, established a slave-trading factory at Badagry in 1736 after he was sacked from Jakin, the slave port of Allada, as a result of the expansionist drive of Dahomey.¹⁸ Yussuf Babatunde similarly states that by 1740, Badagry comprised of *Hueda*, *Wemenu*, and *Gun* ethnic groups, who were all refugees.¹⁹ The stringent measures put in place by Dahomey to regulate the slave trade at Ouidah made many European and Brazilian traders opt for the slave port of Badagry instead. The measures also made Oyo re-route its supply of enslaved Africans to Badagry and Porto Novo over time, and by the late 1770s, Badagry had surpassed Ouidah as a significant outlet for the sale of enslaved persons (see Figures 2 and 3).²⁰

Posuko was one of the early centers of slave trading in Badagry. Another vital center was the *Vlekete* market. By the 1880s Posuko had declined due to the emergence of Obada, the market built at the cost of £50,000 by the

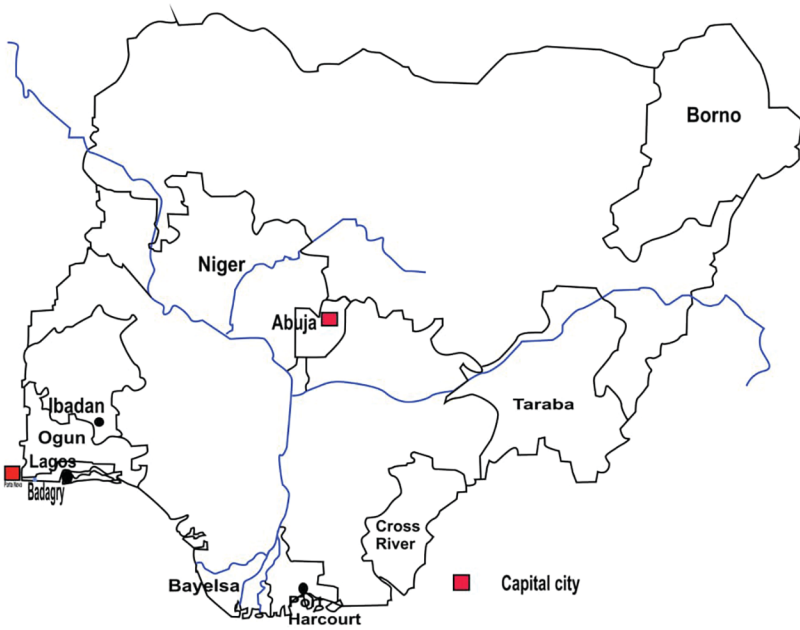


Figure 2. Map of Nigeria Showing the Location of Badagry
Source: *Badagry, located between metropolitan Lagos and the border of Benin Republic (formerly Dahomey)*. Map by Eric Afemikhe.

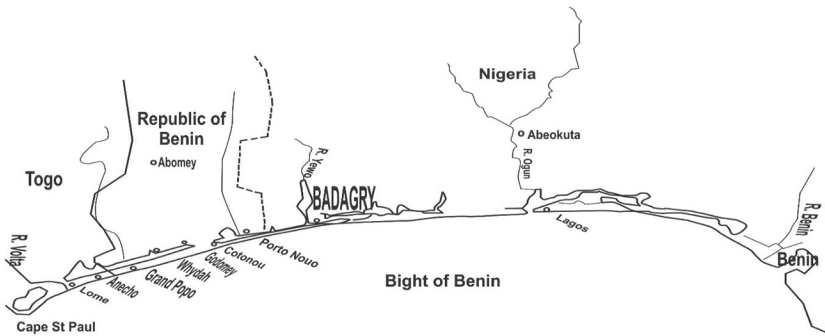


Figure 3. Map of the Bight of Benin Section of the Atlantic Coastline Showing the Location of Badagry
Source: *Map by Eric Afemikhe*.



Figure 4. Attenuation Well—enslaved made to drink water from the well as a religious rite.
Source: Photo by Samuel Oladebo.

British colonial administration and officially opened in July 1954 by Aholu-Jiwa II, the paramount ruler of Badagry.²¹ Osho, citing Toyin Falola, states that the market at Obada was moved to Agbalata by the colonial government due to congestion. The Obada market became too small to accommodate the people who trooped in daily for business transactions. The Agbalata market, however, was not known for trade in enslaved persons.²²

Overall, however, *Vlekete* was the most prominent slave market in Badagry. It was established around the sixteenth century. It was and, still is, located close to the shrine of the chief priest (*Aplogan*) of Badagry, and thus captured slaves were put through certain religious rites at the shrine before departure for the New World.²³ The rites of departure involved enslaved Africans drinking water from the attenuation well which was believed to possess magical powers that made enslaved Africans forget about their ancestral homeland, reduce aggression aboard ships to the New World and, ultimately, make the enslaved easily submit to their masters upon arrival in the New World (see Figure 4).²⁴

The *Vlekete* market is located at the Posuko quarters or sub-division of Badagry. It was initially a shrine, and the *Aplogan* was the chief priest in charge. It was named after the deity for wind and the sea. The *Wawu*, head of *Ahovikoh* quarters, states that *Vlekete* was the place of abode for the *Gun* ethnic group before they migrated to Badagry.²⁵ The shrine was initially used for public trials by practitioners of indigenous African religion. However, by 1502 it had become the venue for transactions in enslaved persons between



Figure 5. Artistic Work Depicting Items of Exchange in the Slave Trade

Source: Seriki Faremi William Abass Slave Museum, Badagry. Photo by Samuel Oadepo.

European slave merchants and African intermediaries. The market opened once every two days with about 100 enslaved people sold weekly in exchange for items such as iron bars, mirrors, cotton, dry gin, whiskey, cannons, and gun powder by merchants from Brazil, Portugal, and the Netherlands (see Figure 5).²⁶

Yussuf Babatunde citing Simpson states that the number of enslaved Africans sold on each market day was about 300.²⁷ In the course of the trade in enslaved persons at the market, a big cannon could be exchanged for 100 enslaved people while a small cannon could be exchanged for 40 (see Figure 6).

African slave merchants used the canons to enhance their safety and to raise their social status in society. Possession of canons gave them prestige and made them members of an exclusive club. However, it is worth noting that the canons could be used in some cases to facilitate enslavement, through firing and the attendant noise that could cause confusion and commotion.²⁹ The number of enslaved persons exchanged for other items was not fixed. The rate of exchange depended on the market forces of demand and supply and the negotiating prowess of the parties involved. However, a bottle of whiskey was commonly exchanged for two enslaved people.³⁰



Figure 6. Paintings of canons (one canon exchanged for 40 enslaved Africans)²⁸
 Source: Seriki Faremi Abbas Slave Museum, Badagry. Photo by Samuel Oladebo.

Enslaved persons were moved from the *Vlekete* market to either a barracoon (a slaveholding pen or cell, see Figure 7) with about 40 people crammed into a room or in the holding *fort* to await departure to the New World. They were poorly fed and were preferably moved from the slave market to barracoons and from the barracoons to board waiting ships at anchor via the point of no return at *Gberefu* beach (see Figure 8). This happened at night or under cover of darkness to hide the identity of the enslaved Africans and the traders involved in the exercise.³¹

The *Wawu*, who was a major indigenous slave trader, was in the habit of announcing his movement with the sound of a bell. The bell sounded a warning and alerted people about his presence. The warning was designed to prevent the *Wawu* from being seen and identified while he was on the way to and from the *Vlekete* market. This occurred either in the evening or at night.³²

The *Wawu* of *Ahovikoh* quarters and Seriki Abbas William, a former enslaved person who became a trading agent initially in Lagos but later at Badagry for William, his Brazilian master, were the major indigenous traders at this market.³³ Oral accounts put the number of enslaved Africans sold through the slave port of Badagry annually at about 17,000.³⁴ The primary source for the supply of enslaved Africans to Badagry was the Old Oyo Empire, and European merchants were able to buy enslaved Africans at



Figure 7. Picture of Brazilian Barracoon Where the Enslaved Were Kept before Departure from Badagry.

Source: Photo by Samuel Oladepo.

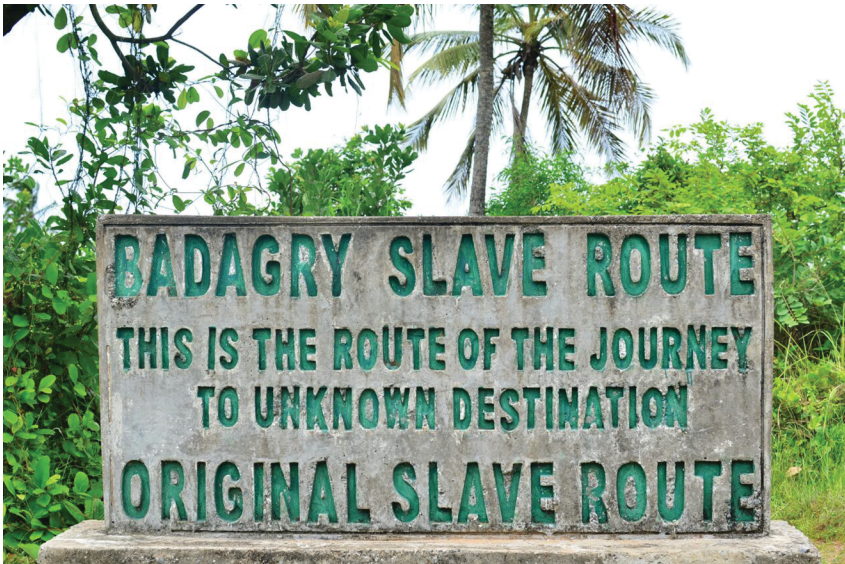


Figure 8. Photograph of the Point of No Return on Gberefu Beach, Badagry

Source: Photo by Samuel Oladepo.

cheaper rates at the market for enslaved persons at Badagry compared to other slave markets or ports such as Ouidah and Lagos. They could buy as many as five enslaved persons at Apa for five ounces of gold or £20, which would have sold for six ounces of gold or £24 at Jakin in 1732.³⁵ This move to Badagry happened because traders from the interior, that is, the old Oyo Empire, were allowed to deal directly with European slave merchants. In

addition, the levies paid at the Badagry slave port by slave merchants were lower than at other places.³⁶

Gilmour notes that the slave supply to Badagry was not limited to the interior. She states that T. J. Hutchinson, a member of the 1854 Niger expedition, wrote in his travelogue that by the 1850s, Dahomey and Isso were significant sources of enslaved Africans to Badagry.³⁷ In essence, Badagry relied on Oyo for the supply of enslaved persons from the interior while Dahomey and Isso supplied the city from the adjoining coast. That is, slave traders from Dahomey took advantage of the high demand for enslaved Africans and the comparably lower prices for enslaved Africans at the slave markets of Badagry in 1734 and sold their captives at the port of Badagry instead of Allada or Ouidah.³⁸ Available records reveal that Badagry had no strict process for slave trading; that is, trading in enslaved persons on the coast of Badagry was open to price haggling, in contrast to neighboring slave ports such as Allada and Ouidah. This is not far-fetched, given the various trading alliances and commercial interests which the various ward heads of Badagry represented, as well as the desire to outmaneuver each other in trade transactions.

During the slave trade, Badagry was not known as a slave-raiding city. Instead, it rose to prominence due to the intermediary role it played in the trade. Badagry engaged more in buying and reselling of enslaved people. This intermediary role was the source of its wealth and its importance during the slave trade.³⁹ Furthermore, Caroline Sorensen-Gilmour argues that slave-raiding parties left Badagry for Lagos and Porto Novo under the pretext that they were at war with these cities. However, the raids were not successful as raiding parties did not return with the desired number of men. Badagry, therefore, received its slave supply largely from the interior through the old Oyo Empire, Dahomey, and Isso during the 1850s.⁴⁰

One prominent slave raider in Badagry at this point was King Akitoye of Lagos, who was in exile in the city.⁴¹ Another was Domingo Martinez, who armed slave-raiding parties from Badagry.⁴² By 1846, Domingo Martinez was a slave merchant noted for notoriety to the east of Ouidah.⁴³ Between 1851 and 1852, the British Naval squadron carried out a successful blockade of the port of Ouidah as part of the effort to interdict slave merchants still involved in the Atlantic slave trade on the West African coast. The blockade made slave trading difficult and unprofitable at the port of Ouidah.⁴⁴ As a result, Domingo Martinez, Antonio “Kokoude” Souza (the son of Felix de Souza), and other Brazilian traders at the port of Ouidah were in a quandary as to whether to return to Brazil or not. A return to Brazil was problematic because it would have earned them arrest and prosecution for slave trading activities on the coast of West Africa.⁴⁵ Thus it was during this period that Domingo Martinez and other Brazilian compatriots moved to the slave port

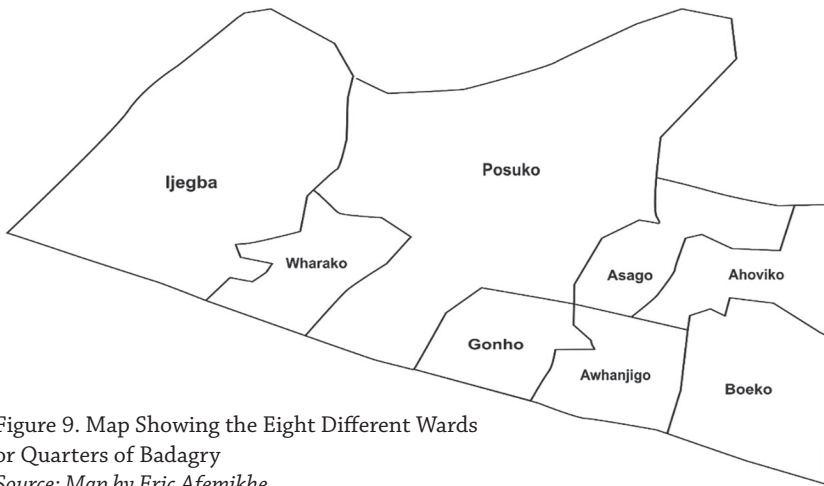


Figure 9. Map Showing the Eight Different Wards or Quarters of Badagry

Source: Map by Eric Afemikhe.

of Badagry to continue their nefarious trade in enslaved persons. Martinez died in Ouidah in 1864.⁴⁶

Badagry was and, still is, comprised of eight different wards or quarters headed by autonomous rulers or chiefs who were, and still are, equal in rank and power (see Figure 9).⁴⁷ The wards are *Jegba* headed by the *Akran*, *Ahovikoh* headed by the *Wawu*, *Awhanjigor* headed by the *Jengen*, *Boekoh* headed by the *Mobee*, *Asago* headed by the *Bala*, *Ganho* headed by the *Agoloto*, *Posuko* headed by the *Possu*, and *Whlako* headed by the *Finhento*. *Jegba* ward is responsible for producing the *Akran* of Badagry, who is the paramount chief of the city.⁴⁸ The cleavages and alliances of the various ward-heads to different European merchants made trade in the city very competitive. The various ward-heads pledged their allegiance to different European trade merchants as circumstances and interest dictated.⁴⁹ The *Wawu*, chief of *Ahovikoh* ward, was a British supporter. He represented British commercial interests in Badagry, while the *Akran* of *Jegba* ward superintended over Portuguese commercial interests. The *Posu* of *Posukoh* ward was at some point tied to the Portuguese but later switched allegiance to the Dutch. The same scenario applied to the *Mobi* or *Mobee*, who, by the eighteenth century, was a French trading partner but became an English trading agent in the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ These different interests led to a complex trade network in Badagry with each ward head owning and managing its Barracoon, such as those at *Posukoh*, *Ahovikoh*, *Awhajigor*, and *Jegba* quarters. These chiefs purchased enslaved people on behalf of European merchants for whom they acted as intermediaries.⁵¹



Figure 10. Chief Seriki Abass & Mobeeroal Family Museums, Badagry
 Source: Photo by Samuel Oladepo.

A major edifice of historical memory in Badagry is what is called the heritage museum. Some of the buildings of the heritage museum initially served as the offices of the colonial District Officer at the end of the slave trade but today they are managed by the Lagos State Government. The artifacts found at this historical site include a slave drinking pot, a painting of a slave ship, and sculptures of enslaved people (used domestically) and of a runaway slave captured by a slave-hunting dog,⁵² among others (see Figures 10 and 11). Portraits of Prince Henry the Navigator, Ferman Gomez, and the slave markets are also found in the museum. The drinking pot mentioned above was daily filled with water, and from this pot, which was undoubtedly most unhygienic at the best of times, enslaved Africans drank water while on their way to the point of no return at Gberefu beach.

Another edifice of historical significance that preserves and tells the story of the slave trade in Badagry is the Barracoons. These were buildings with small rooms and very little ventilation in which enslaved Africans were held in transit before the arrival of slave ships for onward shipment to the New World. The Barracoons were at most times overcrowded and insanitary. The enslaved people had to attend the call of nature in those rooms with very poor ventilation. These barracoons dotted all the eight quarters of Badagry and were owned by the European slave merchants associated with each quarter, but today only that of Seriki Abass William and a few others survive.⁵³

The *Barracoon of forty slaves* owned by Seriki Abass William was said to have been built around 1840 and Abbas lived there, together with his wives and numerous children. This building, where the enslaved were kept before transportation to the point of no return at *Gberefu* beach, was divided into different sections for male and female captives. It could be likened to the situation in *Sao Jorge da Mina Castle* at Elmina, Ghana, though smaller in

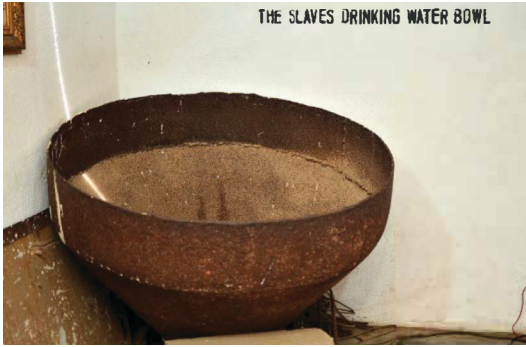


Figure 11. Photograph of the Slave Drinking Bowl

Source: Photo by Samuel Oladepo.

size. The *Barracoon of forty slaves* was comprised of 40 rooms, an inspection room, and two other small rooms used for administrative purposes. In the rooms are chains and drilling belts used for branding captives before they were shipped to the New World.⁵⁴

Other items of significant historical memory at the Badagry slave site include cannons, seventeenth-century wells, a Portuguese umbrella, pottery gifts, and a slave ship anchor (see Figure 12).⁵⁵ There are also in the Barracoon of Seriki Abass robes, porcelain plates and bowls—which reflect his social status—awards from Brazilian trade partners, sale invoices, letters of appreciation from trade partners, Bakelite phonograph records, photographs of Abass holding a meeting with international business partners—most likely from Brazil and Portugal—and original posters announcing the arrival of new consignments of enslaved people. At the entrance of the Barracoon is an ornate and well-preserved tomb.⁵⁶

Apart from the physical remains of the slave trade at this important historical site in Badagry, other pieces of evidence abound that show the lasting impact of the trade. One of these elements is the name of an individual, identified as *Soton*, which, translated from the indigenous *Egun* dialect into English, means “*the guns are out.*” The meaning of this name demonstrates the fact that the ward chief in question was a notorious slave trader well known for his slave-trading activities with guns.⁵⁷ Another important item of collective memory is about Ferman Gomez, a prominent Portuguese slave merchant who began slave trading on the coast of Badagry in about the fifteenth century. He was the pioneer European slave trader on the coast of Badagry whose slave-trading activities have been captured and preserved in the *Huntokonu* narrative, and, for this reason, he was popularly referred to as *Huntokonu*, that is “*the ship captain who smiles or the smiling ship captain.*”⁵⁸ Alaba Simpson rather interprets the term *Huntokonu* as “*the ship owner that smiles.*” Ferman Gomez became very influential in local affairs



Figure 12. Slave merchants provided gifts to officials and trading partners on the West African coast as part of a traditional form of greeting

Source: Photo by Samuel Oladepo.

and the politics of the city. Following his death, his remains were interred in the city.⁵⁹ In this case, the *Huntokonu* narrative is an important piece of oral history relating to the slave trade in Badagry.

Several local slave merchants were very prominent at the Badagry slave port. One of them was Seriki Abass Faremi William. He originally hailed from Dahomey in the present-day Republic of Benin. At birth, he was named *Faremilekun Fagbemi*.⁶⁰ He was captured at age six at *Ijoga Orile* (a community in present-day Ogun State, Nigeria) and sold to Abass, a slave trader from Dahomey.⁶¹ That was how he came by the name Abbas. Abbas, the African slave trader, subsequently resold him to a Brazilian slave merchant known as William, the name he later used as his middle name.⁶² Seriki Abass became his master's trading agent in Lagos after he acquired some level of proficiency in English, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese following his stay in Brazil for some time.⁶³ He exchanged 40 enslaved Africans for a large Portuguese umbrella, and, at another time, 20 enslaved people for a mirror and an unspecified number for items such as clothes, and porcelain.⁶⁴ Seriki Abass William rose to become a colonial administrator for the British and a politician of the Action Group, the political party founded in 1951 by Obafemi Awolowo, and played a vital role in the nationalist agitation in Nigeria and in post-colonial Nigeria up to the first republic in 1963.⁶⁵

Like Abbas, another prominent local or indigenous slave merchant at the port of Badagry was Chief Sunbu Mobee (see Figure 13). As a result of his slave-trading activities, the family owns and runs a slave museum in Badagry up to this day.⁶⁶ He was said to be a repentant slave trader who sold most of the items used for slave trading, such as his Barracoons, to Seriki Abass William after the abolition of the slave trade. He played a vital role in the coming of Christian missionaries to Badagry in the nineteenth century and allotted a portion of his land in 1842 to the missionaries for the construction



Figure 13. Photograph of Chief Sunbu Mobee and his tomb—Badagry

Source: Photo by Samuel Oladepo.

of the first story building in Nigeria. Its construction began in 1842 and was completed in 1845.⁶⁷

George Freemingo, a slave trader from Portugal, was one of the earliest European merchants to arrive at the coastal city of Badagry in the 1660s. His tomb is also located in the city.⁶⁸ Robin Law states that by the nineteenth century, Brazilians were the most prominent slave traders in Badagry.⁶⁹ Gilmour, on the other hand, argues that by the nineteenth century, the slave trade in Badagry was dominated by both Portuguese and Brazilian slave merchants.⁷⁰ George Freemingo and Hendrik Hertogh were murdered in 1720 and 1732, respectively, in Badagry by agents believed to be loyal to King Ajaga of Dahomey. They were murdered because their slave-trading activities were believed to be detrimental to the ports of Whydah and Allada. Slave merchants diverted their trade in enslaved persons from Whydah and Allada to Badagry. As a result of the death of Hertogh, Dutch presence and influence was drastically reduced on the coast of Badagry, and this gave rise to the manifest presence of Portuguese traders, followed by French, British and, finally, Brazilian traders who continued the trade in enslaved persons in Badagry even after the abolition of the trade.⁷¹

Of all the traders, Francisco Felix de Souza, a Brazilian slave trader, was the most notorious. In 1807, he left his fort at Whydah for a brief period because the fort, owned by the Portuguese at Whydah, was abandoned. The

Portuguese removal from Whydah was the result of a decline in the trade in enslaved persons arising from the presence of the British naval squadron. By 1820, however, merchants from Brazil and Portugal owned five slave factories (minor slave forts) in Badagry.⁷² Francisco Felix de Souza was also known as *Chacha* (a title for whoever was the head of his lineage even after his death) and firmly established the Brazilian community in Ouidah. He took over a Portuguese fort that had earlier been abandoned by authorities in Bahia. Born in Bahia, Brazil, in 1754, de Souza was an independent slave merchant who was initially at Badagry before returning to little Popo (Aneho in present-day Togo) in 1816, and Dahomey and Ouidah between 1818 and 1820.⁷³ He died in 1849.⁷⁴ This Portuguese-Brazilian connection accounts for why the Barracoon of Seriki Abass William is also called the Brazilian *Barracoon of forty slaves*.

Finally, one crucial intangible reminder of the importance of Badagry as a slave port is the Badagry festival, which is a significant event held annually to commemorate the history of the slave trade in the city. It is organized by the African Renaissance Foundation (AREFO) in the third week of August. In the course of the celebration, different activities are performed, such as Liberation Day Celebration, soccer competition, arts and craft festival, water sport, the *Vothun Henwhe* festival, the *Gbenepo* Royal Carnival, the International Day for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, carnival day, and a boat regatta. The most important of all these activities are the Liberation Day Celebration and the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.⁷⁵

The dance of freedom and drama performance are both staged during the Badagry Festival. In the course of the performance, young residents of Badagry play various roles such as that of enslaved captives in chains and shackles being shunted along in a coffle in pain and groaning to the slave market for examination and sale to European merchants.⁷⁶ This symbolic act reflects the sociological and psychological impact of the trade on the people of Badagry. It contributes to making slavery in their collective memory a critical dimension of the experience of every generation of residents, heritage tourists, and even of researchers.

Trade in enslaved persons at the port of Badagry was officially ended in 1843. The end of the trade was initiated by chief Mesi, the head of the Ahovikoh quarters of Badagry. In 1841, he wrote to the British colonial government requesting that the trade in enslaved persons be ended in the city of Badagry. The colonial government did not consider Badagry a strategic geographical location and trading center. However, it responded to the request and eventually the Wesleyan Missionaries, and specifically Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman, arrived in Badagry in 1842. By 1843, the slave trade

had been abolished in the city, partly due to the presence of the Gold Coast Corps dispatched by Captain George Maclean from Cape Coast to Badagry and largely due to the Royal Navy patrolling the Badagry lagoon creek and the Slave Coast generally.⁷⁷ The testament to this abolition is inscribed on the cannon at the palace of the *Wawu*, the head of the *Ahovikoh* quarters.⁷⁸ However, despite the desire of the *Wawu* to see the trade in enslaved persons brought to an end in Badagry, the trade continued beyond 1843 due to the activities of locals and Brazilian slave merchants who were responsible for the continued trade, albeit illegal, in enslaved persons.⁷⁹ Also, trade diversion from the ports of Lagos and Whydah, due to the presence of the British anti-slavery squadron, made it a lucrative enterprise in Badagry at this point. The 1843 treaty of abolition was not signed between the British colonial government and the *Wawu* until 1852 in Badagry.⁸⁰ It was during this period between 1843 and 1852 that Sunbu Mobee, head of *Ahovikoh* quarters and Seriki Abass William made their most considerable fortune from trading in enslaved persons at the slave port of Badagry.⁸¹

The exact date for the stoppage of the trade in enslaved persons at Badagry is not specified. However, certain events finally brought the trade to an end. One such event was the bombardment of Lagos in 1851 by the British. In that year, the *Relampago*, a Brazilian slave ship, left Lagos for the last time, en route to Bahia. Another significant contributor to the end of slavery in Badagry was the *euzeibio de Queiroz* law, which brought an end to the importation of enslaved Africans into Brazil in 1851.⁸² The signing of the treaty of cession by 1863 made Badagry a British colony, and the enactment of the *golden law* in 1888, which abolished the trade in Brazil, led to the founding of the *Agbalata* market in 1889. The *Agbalata* market became a significant center for legitimate commerce in Badagry.⁸³

In conclusion, Badagry is a significant city of historical memory in Nigeria and an essential one as far as the Bight of Benin and Biafra slave trade and slave routes are concerned. That city was a major center of trade in enslaved persons on the Atlantic coast of West Africa but also a strategic port city in the post-slavery period when the trade in commodities surpassed the trade in human beings on that coast and in that region. For this paper, however, the connection to the slave trade, and, more importantly, the artifacts and historical remains from the period—the barracoons, the Vlekete Slave market, the cannons used in the exchange for enslaved persons, the attenuation well from which the enslaved drank water, the point of no return on Gberefu beach—are all visible remains from a dark and hoary past that help us to reconstruct the history of that period and to understand the significance of that city. How was that period remembered, and what do the artifacts tell us? These artifacts help to retain and reconstruct the history

of that period and connect to the interests of diaspora Africans who desire to know more about the roots and routes that culminated in the journey to the New World during the Atlantic slave trade. In addition, the people of Badagry have kept the collective memory of the slave trade alive through the dramatization that occurs at the Badagry festival on the one hand and in oral forms such as songs, folklore, proverbs, poetry, and wise sayings among others. These elements of their history and collective memory they get to share with diaspora Africans who visit Badagry to learn more about their African heritage.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Alikor Oroma & Jerome Ibejika Wosu, "History of Education and the Development of Nigerian Society: An Analytical Approach," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* 2, no. 7 (July 2018): 166; J. F. Ade Ajayi, "The Development of Secondary Grammar School Education in Nigeria," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, 4 (December 1963): 517–35; Sunday Babalola Abolade & Ayotunde Francis Oyelade, "Historical Development of Private Secondary School Education in Nigeria: 1859–Present," *eJournal of Education Policy* <http://nau.edu/COE/eJournal/> (accessed 21 Feb. 2020); Abdullahi Mohammed Yamma & Danjuma YahuzaIzom, "Education Policy in Nigeria and the Genesis of Universal Basic Education (UBE), 1999–2018," *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration* 6, no. 3 (June 2018): 18; S. Ademola Ajayi, "Christian Missions and Evolution of the Culture of Mass Education in Western Nigeria," *Journal of Philosophy and Culture* 3, no. 2 (June 2006): 33–53; Monsuru Babatunde Muraina, "Historical Antecedents of Development and Management of Educational Resources in Nigeria: 1882–2013," *Historical Research Letter*, 23 (2015): 12–13.

2. Ango James Akeem Osho, "Seriki Abass: Slave Trade, Badagry, and the History That Refuses to Die," *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 21, no. 8, (Aug. 2016), 43. See also, Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District, 1868–1999*, 29–31.

3. Robin Law, "A Lagoonside Port on the Eighteenth-Century Slave Coast: The Early History of Badagry," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28, no. 1 (1994): 32–33.

4. Yussuf Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and The Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry from 1600 to 1889," *African Journal of International Affairs and Development* 18 (1 & 2), 9. See also Pierre Verger, *Bahia, and the West Coast Trade 1594–1851*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1964.

5. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market," 15.

6. Wale Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," in *Sea Ports and Sea Power, African Maritime Cultural Landscapes*, ed. Lynn Harris (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 16.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and The Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry from 1600 to 1889," 3.

9. Stefan Csáky, "Sites of Memory—Spaces of Memory," <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/ikt/research/sites-of-memory-spaces-of-memory/> (accessed 26 Feb. 2020).

10. See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations*, 26 (1989): 7–24. Also, Pierre Nora, "General Introduction," in *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Memoire* Vol. 1: The State, ed. P. Nora (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), vii–xxii.

11. See Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 4 (May 2002), 180; David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1989); 118; John Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship," in *Commemorations* ed. John Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

12. See Michael Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 13.

13. Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory*, 5.

14. Shelby R. Herrin, "Application of Heritage Tourism Development Framework to Jenkins County, Georgia." Georgia Southern University, *Honors College Theses*, 2015, 6.

15. *Ibid.*, 9.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Herrin, "Application of Heritage Tourism Development Framework to Jenkins County, Georgia," 10.

18. Kristin Mann, "The World the Slave Traders Made: Lagos, c. 1760–1850," in *Identifying Enslaved Africans: The Nigerian Hinterland and The African Diaspora*. Proceedings of the UNESCO/SSHRC Summer Institute, York University Toronto, Canada (July–Aug. 1997), 191. See also A. Babtunde Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District 1863–1999*. Ikeja-Lagos: Jonathan West Publications Ltd., 2001, x–xi; 1, 18–20. See also T. O Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*. Lagos, 1938.

19. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and The Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 1. See also, C. W. Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast, and Its Rulers* (London: The Clarendon Press, 1961).

20. Mann, "The World the Slave Traders Made: Lagos, c. 1760–1850," 191. See also Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District 1863–1999*, 6.

21. Osho, "Seriki Abass Slave Trade, Badagry, and the History," 45.

22. *Ibid.*, 45.

23. Alaba Simpson (ed.), *UNESCO Oral Tradition and Slave Trade in Nigeria, Ghana, and Benin* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2004), 19–20.

24. Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 20.
25. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and the Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 8.
26. Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 20. See also Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District 1863–1999*, 6.
27. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and the Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 14.
28. Why were the items of exchange preserved in the form of paintings rather than actual artifacts? What was going through the minds of the artists who did the paintings? Was this their story or their way of telling the story of the slave trade?
29. Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District 1863–1999*, 8.
30. Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 20.
31. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and the Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 13.
32. *Ibid.*, 13–14.
33. *Ibid.*, 11.
34. *Ibid.*, 14.
35. Law, "A Lagoonside Port on the Eighteenth-Century Slave Coast," 44–45. Apa was the original homeland for the earlier settlers of Badagry before the refugee crisis of 1724 and 1727, which occurred due to the expansionist policy of Dahomey which saw her overrun Allada and Ouidah and led to the emergence of a unique Gun, Ogu, or Egun ethnic group in Badagry today.
36. *Ibid.*, 46.
37. Caroline Sorensen Gilmour, "Slave Trading on the Lagoons of southwest Nigeria: The Case of Badagry," in *Identifying Enslaved Africans: The Nigerian Hinterland and the African Diaspora*. Proceedings of the UNESCO/SSHRC Summer Institute, York University Toronto, Canada. (Jul.–Aug. 1997), 264.
38. Gilmour, "Slave Trading on the Lagoons of southwest Nigeria: The Case of Badagry," 264; Law, "A Lagoonside Port on The Eighteenth-Century Slave Coast," 44.
39. Gilmour, "Slave Trading on the Lagoons of South West Nigeria: The Case of Badagry," 261.
40. *Ibid.*, 264. See also Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District 1863–1999*, 6.
41. Akitoye was a king of Lagos who was on exile in Badagry following dynastic struggles and British intervention in the politics of Lagos and eventual bombardment of the city in 1851.
42. *Ibid.*, 264–265.
43. Robin Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah," 28. Domingo Martinez was a prominent Brazilian slave trader at the Portuguese fort at Whydah/Ouidah, which was both used by both Portuguese and Brazilian slave merchants but left for Badagry due to a decline in trade at Whydah.
44. Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah," 29.
45. Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah," 29.
46. *Ibid.*, 28.

47. Wards/quarters in Badagry refers to various units/divisions within the city of Badagry headed by a chief.

48. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and The Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 6. The *Akran* of Badagry is today the traditional ruler of the entire city of Badagry. That is, he is *primus-inter-pares*. Wards or quarters in Badagry refer to various units or divisions within the city of Badagry headed by a chief.

49. Gilmour, "Slave Trading on the Lagoons of South West Nigeria: The Case of Badagry," 263.

50. *Ibid.*, 263. See also Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District 1863–1999*, 9–10.

51. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and The Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 12.

52. Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 18.

53. Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 16, 19.

54. *Ibid.*, 45.

55. Alaba Simpson, "Some Reflections on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the Historic Town of Badagry, Nigeria." *The African Diaspora Archaeology Network*, (June 2008 Newsletter), 2.

56. Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 18.

57. Osho, "Seriki Abass: Slave Trade, Badagry and The History," 8.

58. Oyediran, "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 15.

59. Simpson, ed., "UNESCO Oral tradition and slave trade in Nigeria, Ghana, and Benin," 21.

60. Oyediran: "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 18.

61. Interview with, a tour guide at the Seriki Abass Barracoons, Badagry on April 17, 2019.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Osho, "Seriki Abass: Slave Trade, Badagry and the History," 45.

64. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and The Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 12.

65. Osho, "Seriki Abass: Slave Trade, Badagry and the History," 45.

66. Simpson: "Some Reflections on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the Historic Town of Badagry," 6.

67. Oyediran: "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 17, 24.

68. Babatunde Olaide Mesewaku: "African Renaissance Badagry Festival Brochure 2013," n. p.

69. Law: "A Lagoonside Port on the Eighteenth-Century Slave Coast," 39. A slave factory is also, technically, a slave fort but likely without the full complement of cannons and other heavy guns needed for its fortification.

70. Gilmour: "Slave Trading on the Lagoons of South West Nigeria: The Case of Badagry," 259.

71. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and the Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 10–11.

72. Gilmour: "Slave Trading on the Lagoons of South West Nigeria: The Case of Badagry," 259.

73. Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian," 25–26. Aneho is a coastal community in the present-day Republic of Togo.

74. *Ibid.*, 28.

75. Oyediran: "Port of Badagry, A Point of No Return: Investigation of Maritime Slave Trade in Nigeria," 22.

76. Osho, "Seriki Abass: Slave Trade, Badagry and The History," 11–12.

77. Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District, 1868–1999*, 16–17, 26–27.

78. *Ibid.*, 17. The inscription on the cannon reads "seat of the British cannon donated to King/Aholu Wawu of Badagry for the abolition of the slave trade in 1843."

79. *Ibid.* See also, Olaide-Mesewaku, *Badagry District, 1868–1999*, 26–27.

80. Babatunde, "Vlekete Slave Market and the Atlantic Slave Trade in Badagry," 10–11. The instruction for the treaty of 1852 reads, "The export of slaves to foreign countries is forever abolished in the territories of the Chiefs of Badagry and all implements of the slave trade, and the barracoons or buildings exclusively used in the slave trade shall be forthwith destroyed."

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*, p 18. The *euzeibio de Queiroz* law spelled out stiff punishment for anyone involved in the buying and selling of enslaved persons in Brazil. The law was named after the then minister of Justice. This law brought an effective end to the sale of enslaved people in Brazil a few years after it was enacted. encyclopedia.com, accessed on 7 Nov. 2018.

83. *Ibid.* The *golden law* was assented to on 13 May 1888, by Princess Isabel. This law set free about 60,000 people who were still enslaved in Brazil. This law forced many plantation owners to hire formerly enslaved persons as either sharecroppers or wage laborers. encyclopedia.com, accessed on 7 Nov. 2018.