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## Princes Town & Akwidaa, Ghana. Early ›Shared Heritage‹ of German-African Interactions: The Brandenburg-Prussian Forts on the West Coast of Ghana and their Local Communities. Research in 2023 and 2024

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# Princes Town & Akwidaa, Ghana

## Early ›Shared Heritage‹ of German-African Interactions: The Brandenburg-Prussian Forts on the West Coast of Ghana and their Local Communities

### Research in 2023 and 2024

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Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures  
of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI)

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### ABSTRACT

While the German colonial period in parts of Africa has increasingly become a subject of archaeological investigations, less attention has been paid to the earlier ›shared heritage‹ of German involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Brandenburg-Prussia entered the race for trading posts on the West African coast in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, establishing strongholds in what is today the Western Region of Ghana. Among the most prominent material manifestations of this endeavour are the two forts Gross Friedrichsburg and Dorothea. The German trading venture was short-lived, however. It ended after roughly 30 years when the forts were sold to the Dutch. Nevertheless, during the colonial period in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Brandenburg-Prussian attempt at profiting from the transatlantic slave trade was celebrated by some as the nucleus of German colonial rule in Africa. The Brandenburg-Prussian forts are today part of the serial UNESCO World Heritage site ›Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions‹, which recognises the difficult heritage of the transatlantic slave trade. However, the fortified trading posts also play an important role in local heritage landscapes. At the invitation of the local communities

of Princes Town and Akwidaa, a new Ghanaian-German archaeological research and heritage preservation project is focusing on the Brandenburg-Prussian forts in their local contexts, highlighting the agency of local actors in the Early Modern period.

### KEYWORDS

African Archaeology, building archaeology, colonialism, (Early) Modern age, Modern-world Archaeology, Transatlantic slave trade

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Während die deutsche Kolonialzeit in Teilen Afrikas zunehmend zum Gegenstand archäologischer Untersuchungen geworden ist, wurde dem früheren »gemeinsamen Erbe« der deutschen Beteiligung am transatlantischen Versklavungshandel weniger Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Brandenburg-Preußen stieg im späten 17. Jahrhundert in den Wettlauf um Handelsposten an der westafrikanischen Küste ein und errichtete Stützpunkte in der heutigen Western Region von Ghana. Zu den bedeutendsten materiellen Zeugnissen dieser Bestrebungen gehören die Befestigungen Gross Friedrichsburg und Dorothea. Die deutsche Handelsunternehmung endete bereits nach etwas mehr als 30 Jahren, als die Festungen an die Niederländer verkauft wurden. Dennoch wurde der brandenburgisch-preußische Versuch, vom transatlantischen Versklavungshandel zu profitieren, in der Kolonialzeit des späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts von manchen als Keimzelle der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika angesehen. Die brandenburgisch-preußischen Festungsanlagen sind heute Teil der seriellen UNESCO-Welterbestätte »Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions«, die dem schwierigen Erbe des transatlantischen Versklavungshandels gewidmet ist. Aber die befestigten Handelsstützpunkte spielen auch eine wichtige Rolle in der lokalen Kulturlandschaft. Auf Einladung der lokalen Gemeinschaften von Princes Town und Akwidaa konzentriert sich ein neues ghanaisch-deutsches archäologisches Forschungs- und Denkmalschutzprojekt daher auf die brandenburgisch-preußischen Festungen in ihrem lokalen Kontext und beleuchtet die Rolle(n) der lokalen Akteure in der Frühen Neuzeit.

### SCHLAGWÖRTER

Afrikanische Archäologie, Baugeschichte, Kolonialismus, (Frühe) Neuzeit, Neuzeitarchäologie, Transatlantischer Versklavungshandel



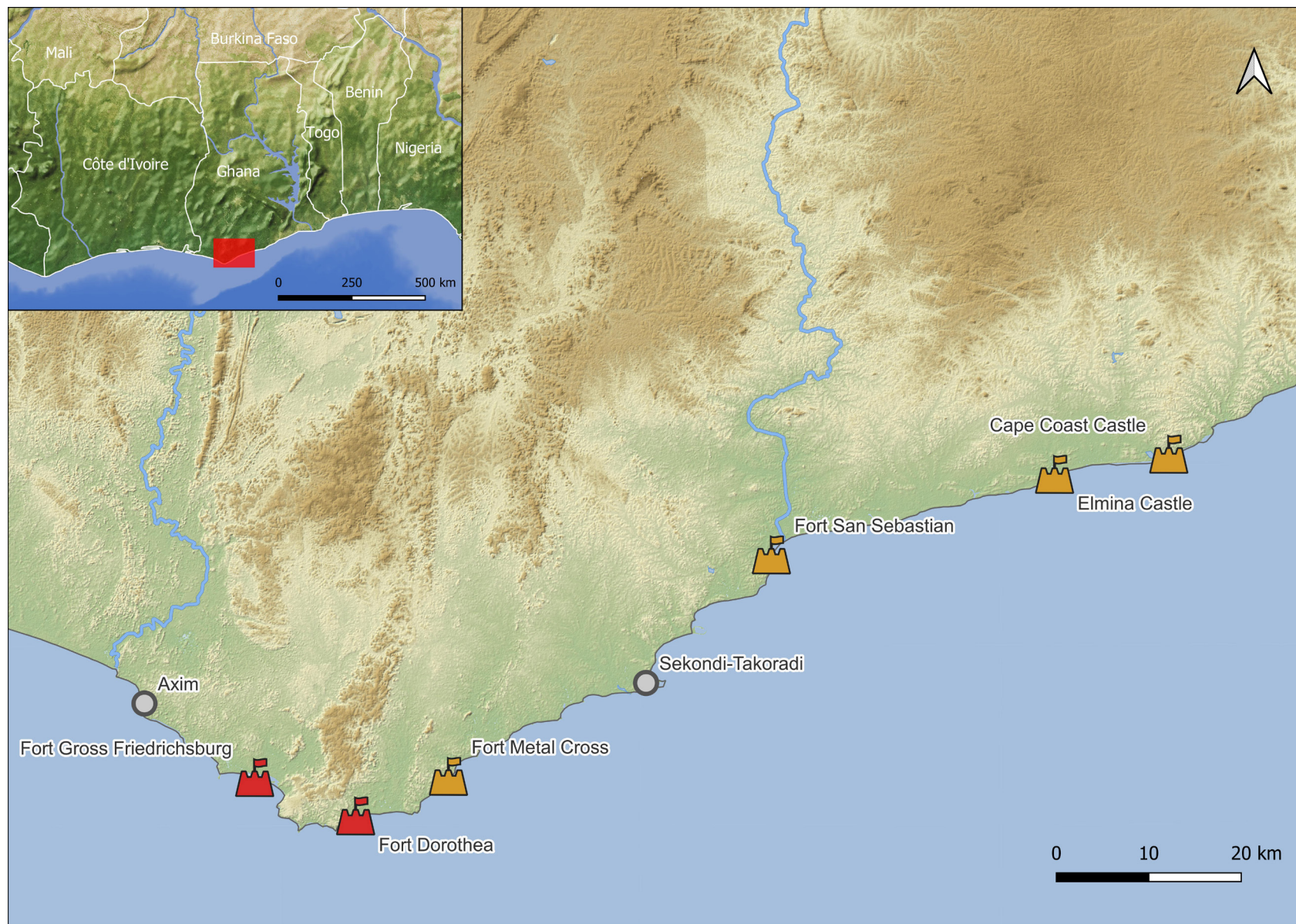


Fig. 1: Location of the Brandenburg-Prussian forts Gross Friedrichsburg and Dorothea at the coast of Ghana





Fig. 2: Princes Town, Ghana. Fort Gross Friedrichsburg, as seen from the south



Fig. 3: Akwidaa, Ghana. Fort Dorothea, as seen from the west

## Introduction

1 The west coast of [Ghana](#) was the scene of an important prelude to German colonial interventions in Africa. Here, Brandenburg-Prussia established a series of fortifications in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, which served as trading posts for the transatlantic slave trade (Fig. 1). The German presence was short-lived, ending already in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when the strongholds were sold to the Dutch. Nevertheless, about 20,000 slaves were transported to the Americas over a period of about three decades on Brandenburg-Prussian ships.

2 Material traces of this commercial endeavour include the well-preserved Fort Gross Friedrichsburg at Princes Town, formerly Kpokesu, as well as the ruin of Fort Dorothea (Dorotheen-Schanze) at Akwidaa (Figs. 2. 3). Since 1979, these coastal strongholds have been part of the serial UNESCO World Heritage entry »Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions«, representing the difficult heritage of the transatlantic slave trade along the coast of Ghana.

3 While the Brandenburg-Prussian venture into the transatlantic slave trade has received ample attention from historians, its material traces have not been explored archaeologically. Understanding the Brandenburg-Prussian forts as part of the »shared heritage« of Ghana and Germany, our project aims to contribute to research on European-African interactions and entanglements in the Early Modern period. In particular, we are interested in exploring relations between the forts and their local communities, which may have left a variety of traces in the archaeological record. As the extant written sources, to a great part, represent the views and voices of the European crews and administrators as well as visitors to the forts, archaeological research may add an important facet to grasping the agency of African individuals and communities in the Atlantic trade system.

4 The work presented here includes a brief introduction to historical sources on the Brandenburg-Prussian trading posts on the West African coast, followed by a discussion of the materialities of this early »shared heritage«. Subsequently, the new Ghanaian-German research project on the heritage landscapes of Princes Town and Akwidaa is presented together with first insights into our fieldwork in early 2024. An outlook focusing on the preservation, presentation and promotion of the

complex heritage of the Brandenburg-Prussian forts and their local communities in the framework of our project closes this short paper.

## Brandenburg-Prussia on the African Coast: A Historical Perspective

5 The transatlantic slave trade was dominated by the Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, and Dutch, with other European powers, such as the Danes and Swedes, also involved<sup>1</sup>. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, a German power entered the race: Brandenburg-Prussia, part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, under its Great Elector Frederick William (Friedrich Wilhelm, 1640–1688). After an initial venture to the West African coast in 1680/81, a trading company was set up in 1682, the Brandenburg-African Company (BAC). In the same year, two frigates were sent under the command of Major Otto Friedrich von der Groeben to establish a trading post at the so-called Gold Coast close to the Cape of Three Points in what is today Ghana.

6 In the first days of 1683, the construction of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg began on a rocky outcrop close to the village of Kpokeso. Two years later, Fort Do-  
rothea was established at Akwidaa, some 12 km to the east of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg. A smaller fortification, the Sophie-Louise-Schanze, was built between these two strongholds. Its location is not known today. Lastly, a small and short-lived fortification was constructed at Takoradi, about 50 km to the east of Gross Friedrichsburg<sup>2</sup>.

7 Von der Groeben's travel description in his »Guineische Reise-Beschreibung« provides an account of the fierce competition among the European powers vying for control of stretches of the coast and access to local trade partners<sup>3</sup>. In this context, he describes in some detail how favourable locations for a

Brandenburg-Prussian stronghold were identified in late 1682 and how terms and conditions for the use of the site were negotiated with local community leaders. In respect to the construction of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg, he stresses the important role that local men and women played in sourcing building materials for the first set of fortifications and barracks, which were erected from wood and »earth«. The construction and running of the fort would not have been possible without the involvement of the local community (Figs. 4. 5).

8 A further travel account describes the situation at the fort ten years later, at the height of the Brandenburg-Prussian involvement in the transatlantic slave trade<sup>4</sup>. Having embarked on the frigate »Friedrich Wilhelm« at the German port of Emden, the barber-surgeon Johann Peter Oettinger spent roughly two months at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg in late 1692 and early 1693. In this instance, the fort served as a waystation at which trade wares were unloaded and stored in warehouses. In turn, provisions were loaded, and the ships prepared for transporting hundreds of slaves, who at that time were bought further to the east along the so-called Slave Coast. From the perspective of a ship's surgeon, J. P. Oettinger describes the brutality of buying and transporting enslaved Africans. Of the 738 enslaved men, women and children on board the »Friedrich Wilhelm«, 682 survived the »Middle Passage«. They were disembarked and sold on the Danish island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean, where Brandenburg-Prussia had established a trading station. The ship was then loaded with sugar, cocoa, rum, tobacco, indigo, cotton, hides, and other goods to be sold at great profit in Europe.

9 J. P. Oettinger's account gives insights into the logic of the triangular Atlantic slave trade system that connected Europe, Africa and the Americas and that the Brandenburg-Prussian fortifications at the Gold Coast were an element of. Other written sources give further insights into the establishment and running of the forts. They include treaties and agreements with local leaders, letters, reports and meeting minutes, as well as accounting and inventory lists<sup>5</sup>. From the perspective of archaeology, there is ample information in these sources on material aspects of early German-African interactions.

1 See detailed entries in <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>.

2 See van der Heyden 2001 for a comprehensive history of the Brandenburg-Prussian »colony« in West Africa.

3 Von der Groeben 1694.

4 Koslofsky – Zaugg 2020.

5 Compiled and translated by Jones 1985.





Fig. 4: Princes Town, Ghana. Fort Gross Friedrichsburg



Fig. 5: Princes Town, Ghana. Central courtyard at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg as seen from the north with ›commanders‹ building and other residential and warehouse structures

10 Brandenburg-Prussia was only for a short time involved in the transatlantic slave trade. Due to shifting interests under the Great Elector's successors and a lack of profitability, its strongholds on the West African coast were sold already in 1717. Nevertheless, during German colonial rule in parts of Africa nearly 200 years later, the Brandenburg-Prussian attempt at profiting from the transatlantic slave trade was celebrated as the nucleus of German colonialism on the African continent<sup>6</sup>. In the context of German colonial ambitions, the Brandenburg-Prussian forts on the West African coast became a site of memory from the perspective of imperial Germany.

## Forts Gross Friedrichsburg and Dorothea: Materialities of Early ›Shared Heritage‹

11 The often difficult ›shared heritage‹ of German colonialism in Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries has been the subject of an increasing number of archaeological investigations in the recent past. Less attention has been paid to a critical investigation of the earlier ›shared heritage‹ of German-African interactions in the context of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade.

12 Among the most prominent material traces of German (slave) trading ventures in Africa during the Early Modern period are the Brandenburg-Prussian forts on the coast of modern Ghana. On the basis of designs by Dutch and German engineers, Fort Gross Friedrichsburg was developed from modest beginnings into a fortified, stone-clad square enclosure with four bastions and a number of residential and utilitarian buildings, such as warehouses and workshops (see Fig. 4). Fort Dorothea was planned according to a triangular design. Building materials – wood, earth, stones, sea shells for lime, and plant materials for roofing – were sourced locally; some were imported from Europe. Construction crews combined very different sets of knowledge and skill, comprising European engineers and craftsmen, members of the local population, as well as ›castle slaves‹<sup>7</sup>.

6 E. g. Klose 1899; Zaugg 2018.

7 Van der Heyden 2001.





Fig. 6: Akwidaa, Ghana. At the ruin of Fort Dorothea



Fig. 7: Akwidaa, Ghana. Discussions with members of the local community on the preservation and presentation of the ruin of Fort Dorothea

13 After the forts were sold to the Dutch in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, they were structurally modified and adapted to the needs of the new owners, adding new layers to the buildings' histories. While Fort Dorothea is a heavily overgrown ruin (Fig. 6. 7) today, Fort Gross Friedrichsburg is, to a great extent, well-preserved. It lost two bastions as well as most buildings in its northern and eastern parts, but its western and southern sections are in good condition, having undergone restoration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Fig. 5).

14 In terms of movable objects, various administrative and travel accounts list the wares that passed through the forts<sup>8</sup>. Among the wares stored at the fort's warehouses – sourced from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas – were various cloth, beads, mirrors, pipes, tobacco, alcohol, guns, gunpowder, knives, earthen- and stoneware vessels as well as copper and pewter vessels, and iron and copper bars. These were sold on to other traders as well as to members of the forts' crews and local communities – entering local material culture. Provisions were acquired locally for the day-to-day running of the fort as well as for the ships travelling on to the slave trading hubs further to the east.

15 While most trade items arrived at and left the forts, broken or lost personal items, household items and furniture, as well as tools, will have stayed behind. They bear witness to the life of the mixed crews of the forts, which included individuals of European (mostly German and Dutch), African and American heritage<sup>9</sup>. Among the longer-term crews were enslaved individuals, referred to as ›castle slaves‹, who had to serve a variety of tasks at the forts. Movable material remains may also represent the belongings of ships' crews as well as of local and European traders and customers who temporarily used the forts' various facilities. Some of the foreigners never left the sites of the forts: Some who succumbed to a variety of diseases at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg are reported to have been buried at the foot of the fortified hill<sup>10</sup>.

16 Local settlements in the immediate vicinity of the forts existed already at the time of the first arrival of Brandenburg-Prussian ships. They may have grown

8 See Jones 1985, passim.

9 Zaugg 2018.

10 Koslofsky – Zaugg 2020, 36.





Fig. 8: Princes Town, Ghana. Ruin of the Jan Conny/Gyan Kwaw building



Fig. 9: Princes Town, Ghana. Jan Conny's building in the foreground (marked in red) at the foot of Manfro Hill with Fort Gross Friedrichsburg

due to the development of the forts as trading posts and the increase in commerce this entailed. Community leaders are mentioned in travel and administrative accounts as well as in the various contracts that were drafted between Brandenburg-Prussian officials and the coastal communities<sup>11</sup>.

17 Most prominently remembered among these local leaders is Jan Conny – locally referred to as Gyan Kwaw – who acted as a middleman or ›broker‹ for the Brandenburg-Prussian crews. After the forts were sold in 1717, J. Conny/G. Kwaw resisted the Dutch takeover for several years, mobilising a force of several thousand fighters. Material remains of J. Conny/G. Kwaw's presence include the ruins of what is said to have been his mansion at the foot of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg (Figs. 8. 9). Today, little is left of the structure apart from the staircase that must have led to an upper floor of this representative stone building and which seems reminiscent of the commander's house at the fort.

## An Archaeology of the Brandenburg-Prussian Forts and their Local Heritage Landscapes

### Developing a Collaborative Project

18 Archaeological excavations were first undertaken at the foot of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg in 2012 as part of Edward A. Nyarko's MPhil research at the University of Ghana titled ›Archaeology of Prince's Town (Ghana)‹<sup>12</sup>. Using the example of Kpokeso/Princes Town and its fort, this research aimed to better understand the diachronic nature of contacts and interactions between Africans and Europeans as well as their effects on local communities during the transatlantic slave trade era. Objects and materials recovered include imported ceramics, smoking pipes, local pottery, glass bottles, metal objects, beads, mollusc shells, oil palm nuts, and red tiles. Apart from archaeological survey, excavation, and object analysis,

11 See Jones 1985, passim.

12 Edward Adum Nyarko (2013), *Archaeology of Prince's Town (Ghana)*. Unpublished MPhil Thesis, Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana.





Fig. 10: Princes Town, Ghana. Even though parts of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg seem well preserved, a lack of regular maintenance measures is apparent. Damage to roofs, windows, doors, walking surfaces and water drainage systems is accelerating, leading to structural damage in the buildings and fortifications, such as the western bastion



Fig. 11: Princes Town, Ghana. Remains of what is said to have been a defensive wall built by Jan Conny with materials from Fort Gross Friedrichsburg

the study also involved ethnographic research, including the documentation of oral traditions and archival research. The first results indicated African-European cross-cultural interactions as well as local power and resilience.

19 After disputes within the local community of Princes Town had made it difficult to undertake on-site research since then, our team was invited in 2023 to develop a new project on the heritage of Princes Town. At the same time, community leaders at Akwidaa had extended an invitation for us to focus our research on their heritage. On the basis of extensive consultations with members of the local communities at both locations in 2023 and early 2024, a new Ghanaian-German project on the past and present heritage landscapes at and around Princes Town and Akwidaa was developed. This project has two strands: The first focuses on joint research on the archaeology of local heritage landscapes, including the Brandenburg-Prussian forts, and the second focuses on the protection, presentation and promotion of this early ›shared heritage‹ (Fig. 10). Both strands cater for a variety of perspectives, including those of the local communities.

20 We appreciate the invaluable support of our colleagues at the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) both in Accra (especially Mahmoud Malik Saako, Natalyn Oye Addo and Gérard Chouin) and on-site at Princes Town (Ebenezer Nii Addo Acquaye and John B. Quarm), without whom this project would not have taken shape. At Princes Town, we would like to acknowledge the input and support of the Regent Divisional Chief Nana Aka Wonza III, Divisional Chiefs and Elders, the family head of the Royal Family Augustine Yaw, as well as the Honorable Assemblyman (Mr. Lord Owusu Mensah), Unit Committee members and all supporting stakeholders. At Akwidaa, we are indebted to Chief Nana Ewiamanle VI and Elders for their inspiring engagement with us and support.

## Learning about the Local Heritage Landscape

21 The views of the local communities were at the centre of initial fieldwork in February 2024. Team members from Ghana and Germany – Ernest K. Fiador, Cornelia Kleinitz and Christian Hartl-Reiter – participated in community-led visits to local heritage sites at Princes Town and Akwidaa, learning about local heritage locales and narratives (Fig. 11). As E. A. Nyarko had previously demonstrated, the



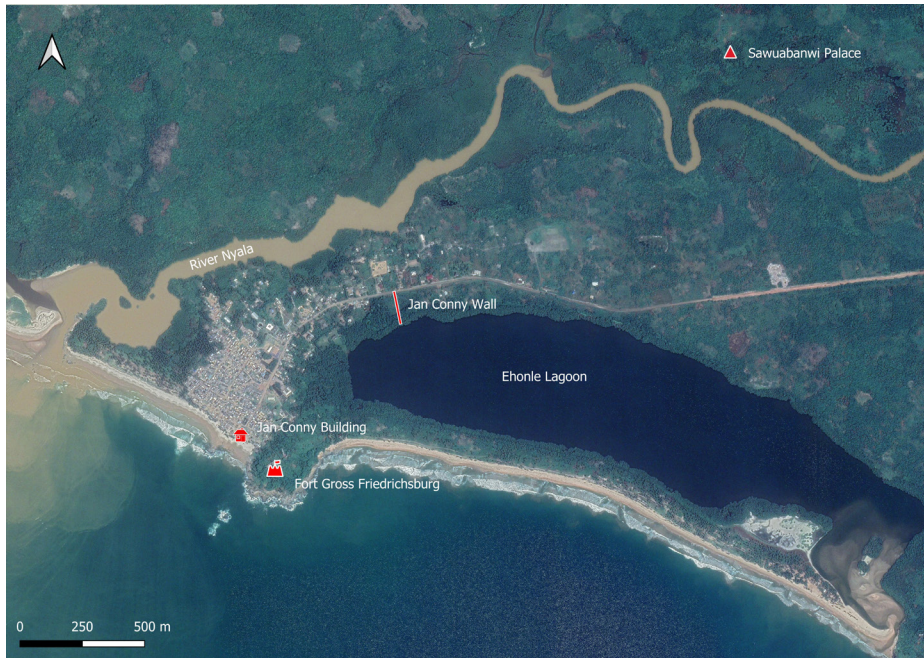


Fig. 12: Princes Town, Ghana. Aspects of the heritage landscape of Princes Town

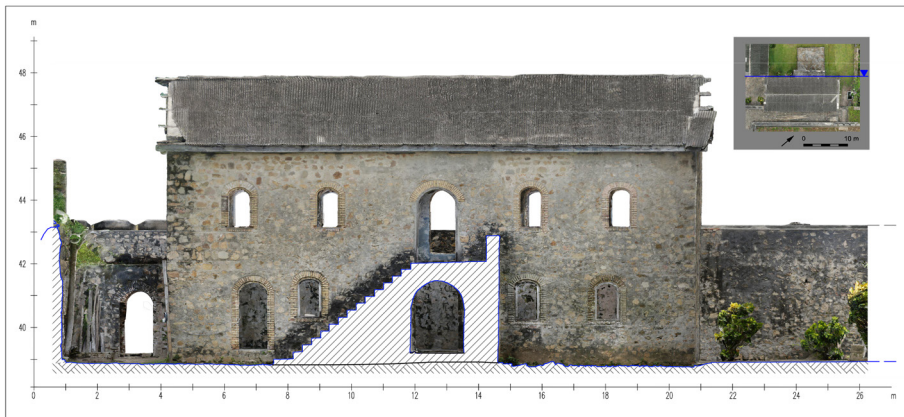


Fig. 13: Princes Town, Ghana. Orthophoto from a 3D model of a building at Gross Friedrichsburg

material heritage of the forts only represents part of a rich living heritage landscape of the coastal communities of Princes Town and Akwidaa.

22 Among the elements of this living heritage landscape are (the remains of) built structures as well as natural features that are attributed special significance and power. At Princes Town, this concerns the Ehonle Lagoon, for example, which is considered the seat of a powerful spirit that is tied to local historical and supernatural events. In terms of built structures, the ruin of J. Conny/G. Kwaw's building is not the only testimony to the important role this local leader played during the various interactions with the Germans and Dutch. Additionally, the remains of a drystone wall in the east of Princes Town are said to have been constructed during J. Conny/G. Kwaw's armed resistance against the Dutch after the Brandenburg-Prussian forts had been sold. A further site – located some distance upriver – is linked to events at or around the Brandenburg-Prussian forts, adding a further local perspective to the history of these strongholds: The ›palace‹ of Nana Saa-wu Abaewi, who is said to have used his special powers to aid J. Conny/G. Kwaw in times of need.

23 Today, local families claim ties to these past leaders, providing a more complex narrative of the history of the forts and their local communities. Through descent and the observation of traditional rituals, local families are intricately tied to the history of the Brandenburg-Prussian forts and their local communities. A heritage GIS was developed to support the documentation, mapping and visualisation of the local heritage landscape (Fig. 12).

### Capturing the Built Structures

24 On the basis of drone-based and hand-held photography, a number of georeferenced 3D models and orthophotos were calculated by C. Hartl-Reiter (DAI-KAAK) using Structure-from-Motion (SFM) in preparation for future work at Princes Town and Akwidaa. Apart from the sites of the forts, detailed orthophotos were created for Fort Gross Friedrichsburg (see Fig. 4), as well as the ruins of the building of J. Conny/G. Kwaw and the neighbouring former royal palace. By capturing one of the buildings at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg in its entirety, we successfully tested the feasibility of creating a full 3D model of the fort in the future (Fig. 13).





Fig. 14: Princes Town, Ghana. Location of test pits of the 2012 (in yellow) and early 2024 excavations (in red)





Fig. 15: Princes Town, Ghana. Excavation at Test Pit 7 at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg

Such 3D-model documents the current state of a building and can serve as a base for future building archaeological research as well as site management planning.

### Test Excavations at the Fort and in the Community

25 Building on the results of the first excavations in 2012, a series of test excavations were undertaken in April and May 2024 as part of our new research project at Princes Town (Fig. 14). They were led by Eward A. Nyarko and supported by Ernest K. Fiador and Kelvin Asare from the University of Ghana, George Anorchie from the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) as well as a local team. All in all, eight 1 × 1 m test pits were dug at the fort and in its surroundings, as well as the settlement at the foot of the fort.

26 The six test pits at the fort and in its immediate vicinity aimed at discovering material evidence of the cultural exchanges between the various occupants of the fort and the local population. These test pits were situated at various strategic locations of the fort based on the observation of the surface configuration of artefacts in the area and brief insight from written sources on the historical usage of the various spaces within the fort. This includes the courtyard of the fort, a ›workshop area‹ just to the east of the fortified structure and possible rubbish disposal areas at the slopes of the fortified hill (Fig. 15). The remaining two test pits were excavated in the town along the beach. One was dug about 2 m to the western side of the remnants of J. Conny/G. Kwaw's building. The other test pit was situated to the west of the old royal palace. Both locations are historically linked to interactions of local leaders with the fort's occupants.

27 The test pits were systematically excavated along natural layers down to sterile levels (Fig. 16). The cultural assemblages were meticulously documented, photographed and packaged with distinct labels from layers of each excavated unit. Among the more than 5000 finds recovered are imported ceramics, smoking pipes, local pottery, glass objects, faunal remains, palm kernels, beads, metal objects, grinding and polishing stones, and a stone axe. Faunal remains – assessed in the lab by Johanna Sigl of the DAI-KAAK – include maritime and freshwater species of fish and molluscs, birds, domesticated animals, and wild mammals.



Fig. 16: Princes Town, Ghana. Test Pit 8, located in the northern corner of the courtyard of the fort





Fig. 17: Princes Town, Ghana. Clay smoking pipes from Fort Gross Friedrichsburg



Fig. 18: Princes Town, Ghana. Early imported ceramics from Test Pit 4 at the fort

Predominant among the more than 400 fragments are small domesticated ruminants, such as sheep/goats, cattle as well as pigs.

28 While the finds date to different moments during the past centuries, some objects date early in the sequence. This includes imported clay smoking pipes, of which more than 200 fragments were found in test pits 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8 at the fort as well as at its foot (Fig. 17). Judging from their characteristics, many of these were produced in the Netherlands. Clay pipes might have been part of the personal belongings of the crews manning the fort and the ships, but they were also popular among coastal populations, judging from written and pictorial evidence.

29 Besides more than 400 pieces of local pottery, 20 sherds of imported ceramics were found in the trenches at the fort. Among the imported ceramics were European table wares, such as a brown German stoneware jar (Fig. 18), Delftware plates, sauce dishes and a cup. They were probably used for dining and storage, showing that the occupants of the fort maintained aspects of a European lifestyle on site. The presence of local pottery in early layers at and in the immediate vicinity of the fort might suggest that local foodways were followed by some of its occupants.

30 The test excavations in early 2024 have shown the potential of archaeological investigations into the Brandenburg-Prussian forts and the local settlements in their vicinity. The analysis of the finds, together with results from further excavations, will enrich our understanding of the interactions between the various occupants of the forts and their local communities.

### Outlook: Telling the (Hi)Stories of the Forts and their Local Communities

31 The second strand of our project concerns the protection, presentation and promotion of the (World) heritage of Princes Town and Akwidaa in close cooperation with the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB). Currently, there is no information material available locally about the history of the forts, either for visitors or for local communities. While there are caretakers and curators of the GMMB providing tours for visitors at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg, there are

none at Fort Dorothea. In the latter case, members of the local community take on guiding and guarding duties. There seems to be little awareness locally of the UNESCO World Heritage status of the forts.

32 The narrative that is being conveyed to visitors at Gross Friedrichsburg is modelled on that of Cape Coast Castle, where guides are being trained. This powerful narrative outlines the functions of the forts and castles in the transatlantic slave trade and includes visits to the ›slave dungeons‹ and the ›door of no return‹<sup>13</sup>. Specifics of the history of the forts are tangential to this ›normative‹ narrative of the forts, however. While it gives every visitor an introduction to the atrocities of the transatlantic slave trade and highlights the role of coastal forts, it also creates an interchangeable story that fits the forts into a standard narrative regardless of specific historical and physical evidence. Additionally, local heritage narratives and local views of this difficult heritage have not been included in most of the (hi-)stories of the forts.

33 With funding granted from the Culture Preservation Fund (KEP) of the German Federal Foreign Office and coordinated by C. Kleinitz (DAI-KAAK), our project plans to develop information materials for visitors and local communities at both Princes Town and Akwidaa. At Princes Town, an exhibition is planned to be installed at the fort, with information panels at other sites of interest in the town, such as the Jan Conny/Gyan Kwaw building. The exhibition will mainly comprise information panels in freely accessible parts of the fort but also, hopefully, include a room with showcases presenting recent archaeological finds and findings from the site. At Akwidaa, information panels are planned for the site of the ruined fort as well as for the Community Centre in town. Apart from historical and archaeological information, local (hi)stories of the heritage of Princes Town and Akwidaa are planned to be represented.

34 The development of the information materials will be accompanied by an improvement of the visitor infrastructure at the sites. This includes addressing the problems of functioning visitor facilities as well as rubbish deposition at the sites. Local community leaders hope for an increase in visitor numbers to their

towns on the basis of an improved visitor experience at the forts and their surroundings. Ideally, the project will also contribute to an increased valuation of the traditional local heritage landscapes in all their complexities, both by visitors and the local communities.

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13 Osei-Tutu 2014.



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