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## ASANTE AND AKYEM RELATIONS 1700 — 1831

By J. K. Fynn \*

During the second half of the seventeenth century, the Gold Coast (Ghana) hinterland was dominated by three Akan states, namely, Denkyera, Akyem and Akwamu. These states produced gold, ivory, slaves and kola nuts which they traded not only with the cities of Mande and the Hausalands but also with the European trading establishments on the coastal seaboard.

Akyem and Denkyera were particularly important as sources of gold during this period. The Dane Tilleman notes that the bulk of the gold received at Accra and neighbouring beaches came from 'Acania which lies west, north-west of Aquamboe (Akwamu), and that there were numerous gold pits in Akyem which were worked by slave labour 1 W. Bosman, a Dutch factor who was on the coast at the end of the seventeenth century, also comments that Akyem 'furnishes as large quantities of gold as any land I Know.'<sup>2</sup> By 1700, Denkyera not only had numerous gold pits but also was in control of the gold rich states of Aowin, Gwira, Wassa, Twifo, Adanse and Asante. Thus Denkyera virtually monopolized the gold resources in the upper reaches of the Tano, Ankobra, Ofin and Pra rivers.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in 1704, a Dutch Director-General of Elmina Castle described Denkyera and Akyem as "the only two states on the Gold Coast which possess gold from its origin."<sup>4</sup>

Akwamu, on the other hand, was not particularly noted as a source of pure gold during that period. But by extending its dominion over the Kwawu, the Krepi, the Akuapem, the Ga and the Adangbe during the period 1680-1710, the Akwamu secured effective control over the trade routes in the hinterland of the eastern Gold Coast. Again, by making Accra and the neighbouring beaches economically dependent on them, the Akwamu reaped fixed revenues such as the rents from the European forts and variable revenues such as the tolls which they exacted from the Akyem and other inland traders. Bosman notes that the gold which reached the Dutch fort at Pomni came from "Quahoe which abounds in that metal" and that Kwawu traders passed through "Aquamboe to Accra where they drive the greatest part of their trade."<sup>5</sup> Also, the Akwamu controlled the movement of traffic on the lower Volta. According to the Dane Lind, the Akwamuhene had a customs officer stationed at Asutware (Asjotiale). "The King of Akwamu," he writes "charges customs duties here on all goods which pass along

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\* Senior Research Fellow, Institute of African Studies, Legon.

1. Erich Tilleman, *En liden, enfoldig beretning om det landskab Guinea* (Kjølbenhaven, 1697) pp. 115—116.
2. W. Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1705) p. 78.
3. W.I.C. Vol. 99 D/G, Willem de la Palma, Elmina, 9th April, 1704. African Studies, Legon, 1965).
4. W.I.C. Vol. 99 D/G, Willem de la Palma, Elmina, 9th April, 1704.
5. Bosman, 1705, p. 326.

the river and to ensure that these are paid, he has employed an official to take care of his interest.<sup>6</sup>

The character of the association among the Denkyera, Akyem and Akwamu was one of intense rivalry and hostility. Undoubtedly, inter-state rivalry and dynastic disputes were contributory factors. However, the fact that all these states were neighbours aiming at economic and political expansion was bound to raise problems which could lead to wars. The struggle for gold, ivory, kola nuts and slaves may have led to extravagant claims which gave an additional impulse to power politics in the Gold Coast interior.

The available evidence indicates that Akyem and Denkyera usually acted together against Akwamu. It has been suggested that the friendship of Akyem and Denkyera stems from the fact that the Denkyera regarded Akyem as a sister-state because the Akyem state was founded by a branch of the Denkyera royal family.<sup>7</sup> Be that as it may, the Akyem-Denkyera alliance was essentially military in character. Tillemann cynically notes that "when the Akwamu on their oath and fetish say they are going to make war in the east, it is then they will generally turn to the west."<sup>8</sup>

Wilks has also suggested that Akwamu directed its expansionist aims to the east and north-east largely because of Akyem opposition in the west.<sup>9</sup>

It was against this background that Ansa Sasraku, the Akwamuhene, assisted Osei Tutu in the creation of the Asante Union to counter-balance the military might of Akwamu's traditional enemies — Denkyera and Akyem. The Akwamu must have been prepared to support any move which might lead to a weakening of the Denkyera and Akyem coalition. Osei Tutu, on the other hand, saw in Ansa Sasraku an effective ally in the apparently inevitable struggle against Denkyera political and economic exploitation. It seems reasonable to conclude therefore, as some versions of Asante and Denkyera tradition relate, that when Osei Tutu was working out the broad outlines of his future policy he received the active co-operation of the Akwamu court.<sup>10</sup>

The consolidation and rise of Asante, however, intensified the struggle for political and economic power in the Gold Coast hinterland since the ultimate ambition of the new Asante state was to control the gold,

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6. "Linds Rapport on Undersoegelserne paa Volta" in Guineske Kopiboger 1816—50.

7. J. K. Kumah, 1965, op.cit. p. 52.

8. E. Tillemann. 1697, p. 14

9. I. Wilks, 'The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650—1710' in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*. Vol. VIII, 2, (Legon 1957) p. 102

10. On the Rise of Asante see, eg. I. Wilks, *The Northern Factor in Ashanti History* (Institute of African Studies, Legon. 1961). J. K. Fynn, 'The Rise of Ashanti' in *Ghana Notes and Queries*, 9, (Legon 1966). J. Kumah, 1965, op.cit.

Akwamuhene hurried back to his capital only to discover that the Asante set back was temporary and that Akwamu was not likely to be attacked.<sup>14</sup>

Again, armed bands from Denkyera prevented Asante traders from passing through their country to the coast. In July 1706, Jan Landman, the Dutch factor at Axim, was advised not to send an embassy to the Asante court as he planned because "the remnant of the Dinkirans are still mauling in the ways with strong armed bands". In August the same year, the report was that "the small remnant of Dinqiras are making the ways so unsafe by their robberies that Prince Zaay has again been obliged to station soldiers in that country in order to protect passing traders from attack.<sup>15</sup> Osei Tutu, in fact, despatched Amankwatia, the first Kontihene, Senior divisional chief and commander-in-chief of the Kumasi armies, to complete the pacification of Denkyera. But Amankwatia failed to fulfil his mission of 'extirpating the Dinqiras entirely', since the Denkyera "withdrew themselves from subordination to Asjantijn", and fled with all they held dear to Akim"<sup>16</sup>

By giving the Denkyerahene and his people protection, Akyem, in fact, assumed the leadership of states such as Wassa, Aowin and Twifo which were determined to destroy Asante. Indeed, in 1712, Akyem took certain actions which were clearly intended to provoke Asante into instant war. Apart from the offer of political asylum to the King of Denkyera and his subjects, the Akyem declared their support and schemed to restore to his people the Twifohehene who had been deposed by the Asantehene. The Akyem, in fact, promised to go to the aid of the people of Cebes Terra, in whose country the King of Twifo had sought refuge in the event of their being attacked by the Asante.<sup>17</sup>

The Dutch Director-General, H. Haring, who believed that there were sufficient reasons for an Asante invasion of Akyem, declared that in the event of war the European traders should adopt a neutral policy. He pointed out that if the Asante were defeated, 'the best and most powerful traders on the west coast' would be ruined and the peoples from small states such as Twifo would not only plunder traders who might pass through their countries but they would also demand expensive presents from Europeans. On the other hand, an Akyem defeat could result in an end being put to the gold trade on the Gold Coast because Akyem was the most important source of that commodity.<sup>18</sup>

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14. Vgk. Day-Journal 1698—1703. Entries from 4 May to 9 August, 1702.

15. W. I. C. Jan Landman, Axim, 28 July 1706 and Nuyt's reply, Elmina, 16 August, 1706.

16. J. K. Kumah, 1965, pp. 84-85.

17. N. B. K. G. 82. Jan Visbeek, Kormantse, to D/G. H. Haring, Elmina, 12 July, 1712.  
Jan van Alzen, Senya Bereku, to same. 6 Sept. 1712.

18. W. I. C. 102. D/G. H. Haring, Elmina, 28 April, 1715.

The Asante, however, must have realised that a war with the Akyem demanded careful preparation so they decided to force their way to the west coast in order to acquire an uninterrupted supply of firearms. Thus between 1713 and 1715 the Asante, in alliance with the Wassa, defeated the Twifo and the Aowin, who were opposed to Asante traders having free access to the European establishments on the coast. The Twifohehe was killed and by December, 1714, the Twifo had returned to their Asante allegiance. Amankwatia and the Wassa also inflicted a series of defeats on the Aowin and forced them to pay 300 bendas as tribute.<sup>19</sup>

The Akyem also needed plenty of firearms if they were to make good their intention to fight the Asante. They therefore started negotiations with the Agona chief Nyarko Eku through whose country the Akyem traders must pass to Winneba, Apam and Senya Bereku in their quest for guns and gunpowder. The Agona were then under Akwamu overlordship and so Nyarko Eku and his chiefs refused to accede to the Akyem request for a passage through their country. The Akyem thereupon decided to fight the Agona and the Akwamu. On 30 October, 1715, the Dutch factor at Accra reported that the Akyem had sworn an oath "to march next Sunday against the Agona and the Akwamu: and that the Caboceers Apintin and Ofori, have agreed to act together." Early in the following year the report from Accra was that the Akyem had been fighting the Agona and the Akwamu and that the latter were being assisted by the Fante.<sup>20</sup>

The Asante were apparently aware that the Akyem invasion of Agona and Akwamu was a preliminary to an invasion of their own country, for on 10 October, 1715, some two hundred Akyem traders who arrived at Dutch Crevecoeur (Ussher Fort), blurted out that "the Akim Caboceer Apintin" thinks himself strong enough to fight the Zaay of Asjanjin.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in December, 1715, the news from Axim was that Amankwatia's troops and the Wassa forces had been recalled to Kumasi because "the Zaay have summoned them very urgently as the Akims are threatening the Zaay with a decisive battle"<sup>22</sup>

This knowledge coupled with the fact that the Akyem had attacked their Akwamu allies, decided the Asante to seize upon an Agona invitation to enter the war. The British, Dutch and Danish records provide plenty of evidence in respect of this Asante and Akyem conflict in 1717. In January,

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19. J. K. Fynn, 1971, pp. 42-45. Benda was worth about £8 sterling.

20. N. B. K. G. 82. Jan Boahaven, Senya Bereku, to D/G. H. Haring Elmina, 20 May 1715.  
G. Hendrix, Apam, to same, 24 July 1715.

21. Ibid. J. Doutreleau, Accra, to D/G. H. Haring. 10th and 30th Oct., 1715. By the early eighteenth century Akyem had been constituted into the modern states of Akyem Abuakwa and Akyem Kotoku under Ofori Panin and Ofosehene Apenten respectively. See J. K. Fynn, 1971, p. 29 and Ibid 'Akyem Abuakwa Kings of the Eighteenth Century' forthcoming in *Social Science Journal*.

22. N. B. K. G. 82. W. Butler, Axim, to D/G. H. Haring, Elmina, 13 Dec., 1710.

1716, rumours were current at Komenda, that "the Zaay of Asjantjin had taken the field with the greater part of his army"; that the Asante were supported by the Wassa and that "this war was against Akim and Dinkira".<sup>23</sup>

Early in 1717, the British at Cape Coast reported that the "Ashantees and the Ackims are resolved on a war with each other"; in September, that "a decisive battle was likely between the Ashantees and the Ackims by which the trade will be opened"<sup>24</sup> In October of the same year the Dutch factor at Apam, reported that "the Zaay was dead and that the Asjantjin have been defeated by the Ackims."<sup>25</sup> Five days latter, another Dutch report confirmed the defeat of the Asante by the Akyem, adding that smallpox had broken out among the Asante army causing considerable mortality. The report also noted that the dead included the Asante "headchief, the Zaay, which caused the Asjantjin to decide to avoid battle with the Akims and to retire quietly" to their own country.<sup>26</sup> The Danes also noted, in November 1717, that the two kingdoms, Asante and Akyem, had embarked upon a decisive war and that that accounted for the lack of trade at Accra, because Asante and Akyem were the main sources of gold, ivory and slaves on the Gold Coast.<sup>27</sup>

These contemporary European accounts are clearly references to the same circumstances as those which Asante traditional accounts associate with the death of Osei Tutu on the river Pra during a campaign against the Akyem. In 1817, Bowdich was informed at Kumasi that Osei Tutu had been shot while in his hammock.<sup>28</sup> Three years later, Joseph Dupuis was also told that the Asantehene, with some two or three hundred retainers to the rear of the main Asante army, had been suddenly attacked by the Akyem as he was crossing the river Pra. He further recorded that the king's retinue was annihilated and added that after the king's death the main Asante army "returned home, bringing in their train a considerable number of prisoners, who were doomed to be immolated to his shade; for as to the body of the king, it was never recovered."<sup>29</sup>

The defeat on the Pra was perhaps one of the most disastrous in eighteenth century Asante history. Apart from the death of Osei Tutu, described by one scholar at "the most venerated person in Ashanti"<sup>30</sup> the Akyem sold large numbers of Asante prisoners of war to the European slavers on the coast.

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23. Ibid. Jan Ladman, Komenda, to Haring, Elmina, 13 January, 1716. Zaay, Sey, or Say can safely be taken as European renderings of the Akan name Osei.

24. T7 /6 Letters from Cape Coast Castle to the Royal African 6 February, 25 September, and 25 October, 1717.

25. N. B. K. G. 84. G. Hendrix, Apam, 25 October, 1717.

26. Ibid. Jan van Alzen, Accra, to D/G Egelgraaf Robertz, Elmina 30 October, 1717 and H. Blenke, Axim, to same 10 November, 1717.

27. V. G. K. Knud Rost, Accra, 27 November, 1717 and 30 June, 1718

28. T. E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, (London 1819), p. 233.

29. Joseph Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London 1824) pp. 231-33

30. K. A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (Oxford, 1951) p. 76.

Indeed, the disaster which befell the Asante on the banks of the river Pra so shook the foundations of the Asante Union that only the sagacity and martial genius of Opoku Ware, Osei Tutu's successor, prevented it from dissolving into its component parts. Opoku Ware not only stamped out civil disturbances in Asante but also he instituted the Great Oath of Asante, perhaps one of the greatest instruments for keeping the Asante Union intact.

The Akyem victory also had repercussions in the outlying provinces. The Dutch factor at Acera reported in 1718, that "the Akyem Cabocser Offory, having become proud through this victory, now demanded redress of every wrong done Akim by Akwamu." Thus, soon after the war, Akonno, the Akwamuhene, sought refuge in the European forts at Accra.<sup>31</sup>

On the west coast, the former tributaries of Denkyera, namely, Aowin, Wassa, Sefwi and Twifo wreaked vengeance on Asante. In March 1718, it was stated that "districts situate further to windward are patiently waiting to see if the Asjantjin will be defeated when they will throw themselves upon the fugitives and get booty".<sup>32</sup> Another report states that the Aowin attacked and burnt several Asante towns and villages and massacred many Asante people. The Asante themselves say that whilst the Asante army were still fighting the Akyem after Osei Tutu had been killed, the Sefwi, led by their chief Ebirim Moro, seized the opportunity to sack Kumasi. They killed Nyarko, the Queenmother. Indeed, only two members of Asante royal family, who were captured and sent to Sefwi as prisoners, survived.<sup>33</sup>

By November 1718, however, hostilities had stopped and peace had been established between the two states. A Dutch report in that year noted that the two erstwhile enemies had agreed, for the first time, to aid each other against Akwamu because they found that they were "so miserably and knavishly duped by the Aquamboes".<sup>34</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Asante-Akyem war of 1717 ended on a note of joint hostility towards Akwamu. Both nations fell a prey to Akwamu treachery. First of all, the Akwamu hindered traders from both Asante and Akyem who travelled through Akwamu dominated territory to the coastal trading settlements at Accra and the outlying beaches. In 1709, for example, Samson Walter, the British factor at Accra, declared that trade at Accra and the neighbouring beaches was bad because of "the King of Quomboe hindering the inland traders, but is in hopes he'll soon be humbled, the inland people being about to make war upon him."<sup>35</sup> Secondly, according to a Dutch report, the great disaster which befell the Asante army on the banks of the river Pra was largely the

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31. N. B. K. G. 84, Jan van Alzen, Accra, 30 October, 1717.

32. W. I. C. 103, D/G, Engelgraaf Robertz and Council, Elmina, 4 March, 1718.

33. J. K. Fynn, 1971, pp. 43-44.

34. N. B. K. G. 84, Letter from W. Butler, Axim, 3 November 1718 in D/G H. Haring's Diary.

35. T. 70/5 Samson Walter, James Fort, Accra, to Governor of Cape Coast Castle, 31 January, 1709.

responsibility of Akonno. The Akwamuhene suggested to Osei Tutu that a section of the Asante army should pass through Akwamu to attack the Akyem where they would least expect it. Akonno then had the Akyem informed of the line the Asante must take. As a result, part of Asante army was surprised and surrounded; the troops were unable to procure food and soon smallpox broke out in the Asante camp. The Akyem then attacked vigorously and inflicted heavy losses.<sup>36</sup> Thirdly, it appears that as a result of a secret understanding between Akwamu and Akyem before the war with the Asante, the Akyem sent a number of their noble women and children to Akwamu for safe-keeping. But, after the war, the Akwamu refused to surrender these Akyem royals. A Danish report in 1725 revealed that messengers sent to Akwamu to bring back the Akyem people discovered that the Akwamuhene had given some of the women in marriage to his sub-chiefs, and sold several others to European slave traders, and that Akonno himself was keeping the Akyem King's sister as his slave.<sup>37</sup>

It was probably for some such reasons that Opoku Ware decided to co-operate with the Akyem to punish the Akwamu. As early as 1724, a Dutch report noted that since the war with Takyiman was over, the Asante might declare war on the Akwamu because the latter had "very badly treated the Akims who are now the great friends of the Asanjin."<sup>38</sup> Also in 1727, a Danish report held that the Asante, the Fante, the Akyem and the Kwawu had resolved to invade Akwamu and that there was confusion in Akwamu. The report added that many of the Akwamu were fleeing to seek refuge in the coastal towns.<sup>39</sup> The Dane Roemer gives a much fuller account. He states that when the Akyem decided to attack Akwamu, they sent messengers to Opoku Ware promising him 500 slaves if he would assure them that Asante would not invade Akyem in their absence. The Asantehene agreed to the Akyem request but allowed them only five months to finish the war.<sup>40</sup> Whatever credence may be given to these reports, the important point to notice is that when Akyem eventually attacked the Akwamu, Asante did nothing to help her ally.

The Akyem conquest of Akwamu in 1730 was one of the most decisive victories in Gold Coast history. The event was described by contemporaries as the greatest revolution that had taken place in that part of the world

36. N. B. K. G. 82 Van Alzen, Accra, to D/G. H. Haring, Elmina, 30 October 1717, N. B. K. G. D/G. E. Robertz and Council, Elmina, 4 March, 1718.

37. V. G. K. A Suhm, Accra, 20 September, 1725.  
It appears that the Akwamu-Akyem rapprochement took place in the early months of 1716. See V. G. K. Frans Boye, Accra, 16 May, 1716.

38. W. I. C. 105. L. Beuns, Elmina, 8 January, 1724,

39. V. G. K. Pahl, Accra, 10 September, 1727.

40. L. F. Roemer *Efterretning om Negotien paa Kysten Guinea* Copenhagen, 1760). p. 153.

since the Akwamu themselves destroyed the old Ga kingdom in the late seventeenth century.<sup>41</sup>

The Akwamu were expelled from their homeland and pushed across the river Volta where the present Akwamu capital, Akwamufoe, was established in the Volta gorge. The Akyem Kotoku gained control of a number of Akwamu towns and villages while the greater part of the western half of the Akwamu empire fell to Akyem Abuakwa. The Akyem Abuakwa also created the modern Akan state of Akuapem out of the Aburi, Berekuso, Abiritw, Apirede and Larte, the majority of whom were Guan and Kyerepon-speaking peoples. Ofori Dua, a young brother of Ofori Panin, was enstooled Omahhene of the new state. He located his capital at Amanprobi and his Akyem followers founded the important Akuapem towns of Akuropon and Amanokrom. Also, the two Akyem Chiefs, Frimpong Manso of Kotoku and Ba Kwante of Abuakwa shared authority over Accra and the Adangbe area. The Kotokuhene became the political overlord of the Osu district of Accra in which stood the Danish Christiansborg Castle. The Okyenhene, on the other hand, had charge of the Accra townships in which stood Dutch Crevecoeur and British James Fort. Thus, the Akyem chiefs, like the Akwamu kings before them, received ground rents from the three European settlements and thereby secured a permanent, regular means of purchasing muskets and powder which were essential for Akyem political and economic expansion. Finally, Owusu Akyem, described as "a sister's son" of Okyenhene, became the administrator of the Adangbe area and received the ground rent for the European fort at Ada.<sup>42</sup>

This rapid build up of Akyem power, which was clearly not expected, greatly alarmed the Asante. Although they had wished for the humiliation of Akwamu, Asante had probably not envisaged a complete break-up of Akwamu power. Moreover, since the Asante were at that time engaged in a protracted war with the Wassa whose chief, Intsiful, had renounced his allegiance to the Asantehene, it was generally believed on the coast that the political balance of power in the Gold Coast hinterland was dangerously tilted in favour of the Akyem. The consternation in Asante must have been very great since it was known that the rebel Wassa chief had been to Akyem, presumably to talk the Akyem chiefs into joining a coalition against Asante.<sup>43</sup>

Asante, however, could not immediately declare war on Akyem. But their hostile intentions became known even before the Akyem had had time to

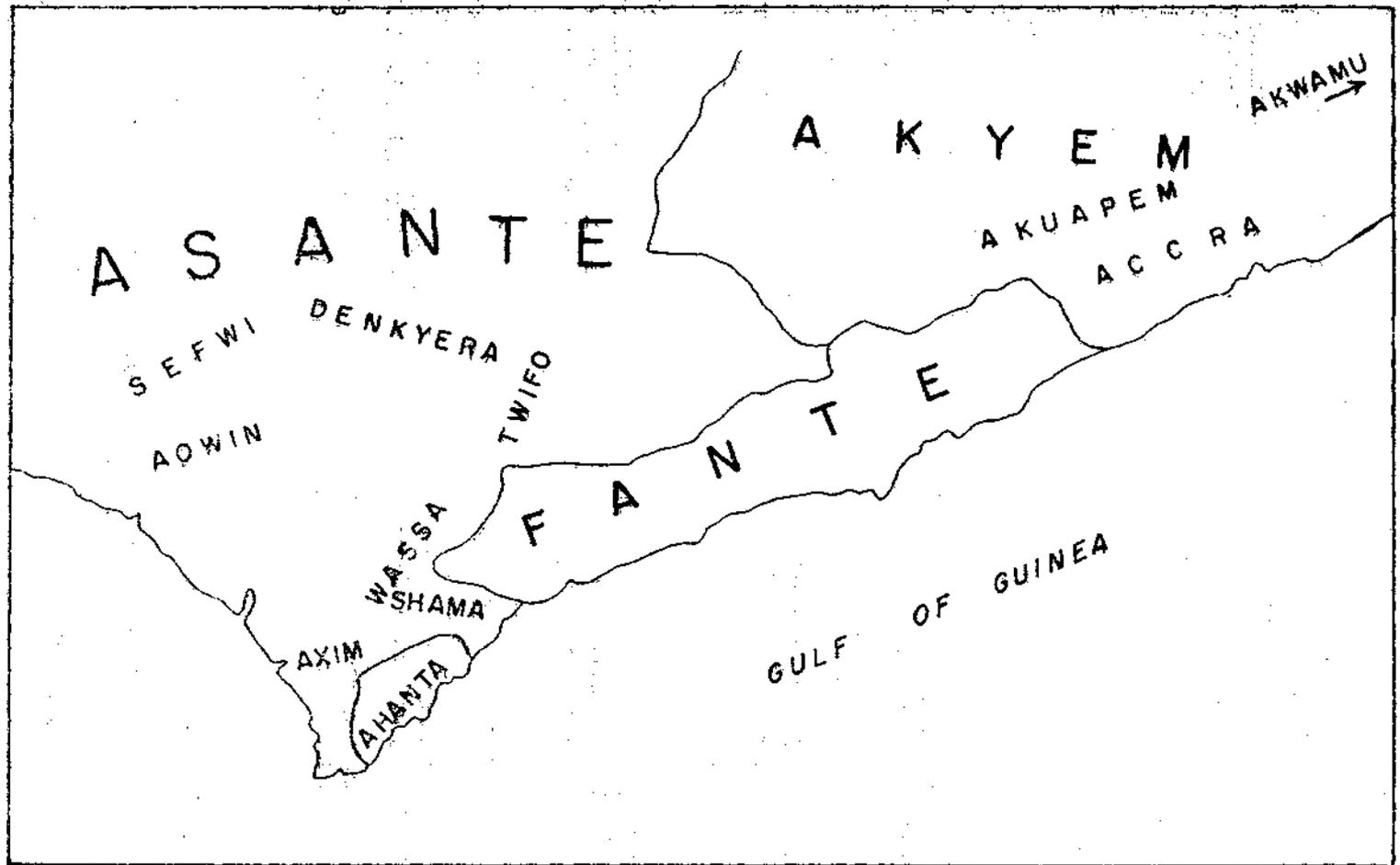
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41. V. G. K. A.P. Waeroe, Accra, 28 December, 1730.

42. See for example, Fynn, 1971, pp. 70—72.  
and A. R. Biorn, *Beretning om de Danske Forter og Negerter*,  
F. Thaarup ed., (Trondhjem, 1788) p. 203

43. On Asante-Wassa conflict during the reign of Opoku Ware  
see, J. K. Fynn, 1971, *op. cit.* chpt. 3.

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consolidate their gains. As early as December, 1730, the Danes expressed the hope that trade at Accra would flourish since the Akwamu had been destroyed. They remarked, however, that this would only be possible if the Akyem were spared an attack by the Asante "who are stronger than the Akyem". It was also believed that the Akyem had refused to sell many of the prisoners of war because they feared an attack by Asante and hoped to use the captured Akwamu against Asante.<sup>44</sup>

It is clear, then, that from 1730 onwards the Akyem feared an Asante invasion of their country and in that period they should have concerted their efforts to maintain the territorial integrity of their state. But soon after the common objective of defeating the Akwamu had been achieved, the Kotoku and Abuakwa coalition began to disintegrate. The Akyem Abuakwa, who apparently did much of the fighting, must have claimed the greatest part of the war booty. In particular, the Okyenhene wanted absolute control over the Ga and the Adangbe areas instead of sharing it with the Kotokuhene. To this end, Ba Kwante demanded, and was paid, the ground rent for Christiansborg Castle which had hitherto been paid to Frempong Manso. In February, 1733, the Danes noted that they were paying the monthly ground rent of 2 rix dollars to Ba Kwante, and that they had already advanced twenty-two months' rent to the Okyenhene because "Frempong has surrounded his monthly custom to Bang Qvantijn"<sup>45</sup>

The result of these dissensions in Akyem was a civil war between the two states. In 1737, the Danes reported that Akyem was in a very disturbed state because there was fighting between "Frempungs and Bangs people."<sup>46</sup> Hostility soon ceased however, because of renewed Asante threat to invade Akyem. In March, 1739, there was a palaver between Akyem and Asante.<sup>47</sup> Also, the Akwamu in their new homeland were boasting that Opoku Ware would soon give them Accra as a present after the Asante had defeated Akyem. And in anticipation of the Asante invasion, the Akwamu were reported to be lying in the bush around Accra and seizing every one they could lay hands on so that 'the Accra people were obliged to go armed whenever they went to fetch water.'<sup>48</sup> In fact, by 1740, Akyem traders who went to Accra and the neighbouring beaches asked for nothing but guns and gunpowder.

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44. V. G. K. A.P. Waeroe, Accra, 24 and 28 December, 1730.

45. Ibid 18 February, 24 April, 1733 and 30 April 1734.

46. V.G.K. E. N. Boris, Accra, 12 July, and 30 Sept, 1737.

47. V.G.K. E. N. Boris, Accra, 10 March, 1739,

48. I. Wilks, *The Rise and Fall of a West African Empire: Akwamu 1650-1750*  
M. A. Thesis (University of Wales, 1959) p. 127.

The expected Asante invasion of Akyem took place in the early months of 1742. After several severe engagements, the Asante emerged victorious. Apau, the new Kotokuhene; Ba Kwante, the Okyenhene; Owusu Akyem, the heir-apparent to the Abuakwa stool and Daako, the Otublohum Mantse, were all slain.<sup>49</sup> After plundering the Akyem, the Asante army, in April, 1742, moved in the direction of Accra and were soon reported to have "spread over the whole leeward coast; and have assured us (the Dutch) that they have orders to commit not the least hostility..."<sup>50</sup> Danish Governor Dorph gives an account of his meeting with the Asante army. 'On the 25th of April, I was besieged by 8000 Assiante Negroes at Fort Fredensborg; these Negroes in the month of March had driven cut and entirely repulsed the Akkenists (the Akyem) I gave large presents to the Assiante Caboceers which amounted to at least 1,800 rix dollars. After that they left Fredensborg on the 29th of April and went up to besiege Accra, and forced an entry into the English Fort Prampram and the Dutch Fort at Temma, where they completely and entirely ruined and carried away everything that belonged to the Forts.'<sup>51</sup>

Some messengers from the Asantehene also reached Accra soon afterwards. The business of these Asante envoys was formally to announce the defeat of Akyem, and to receive recognition of that fact from the European merchants and the coastal peoples from Accra to the Volta by the payment of ground rents, indemnities and the swearing of new oaths of allegiance. Roemer made reference to the same event and wrote that 'we Danes were troubled with about 20,000 Assiante men, when an Assiante caboccer Ursue Afric (Owusu Afriyle) commanded and who plagued us, until he got a considerable amount of goods from us.'<sup>52</sup> The Dutch had to pay 260 bendas because they had allowed their chief broker, Daako, 'to go with his people to Akim to join the Akims to fight the Ashantees'<sup>53</sup>

The Akyem defeat left the Asante the dominant political and economic power in the interior of the Gold Coast. The Asante annexed parts of Akyem and Kwawu while maintaining their hold on Denkyera, Akwamu, Wassa, Sefwi, Assin, Aowin, Twifo, Akuapem and Ga-Adangbe. Indeed, when Opoku Ware died, in 1750, the only independent country in the south was the Fante group of states. Economically, this meant that Asante controlled the sources

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49. T. 70/1515. Richard Graves, Cape Coast Castle, 3 April, 1742.  
V.G.K. P. N. Jorgensen, Accra, 19 March, 2 April, 1742.  
Ibid. Billesen, Accra, 21 July 1744.  
N.B.K.G. 85. Kujil, Accra, 22, 28 March and 11 April, 1742.  
Frimpong Manso of Kotoku died towards the end of 1741.

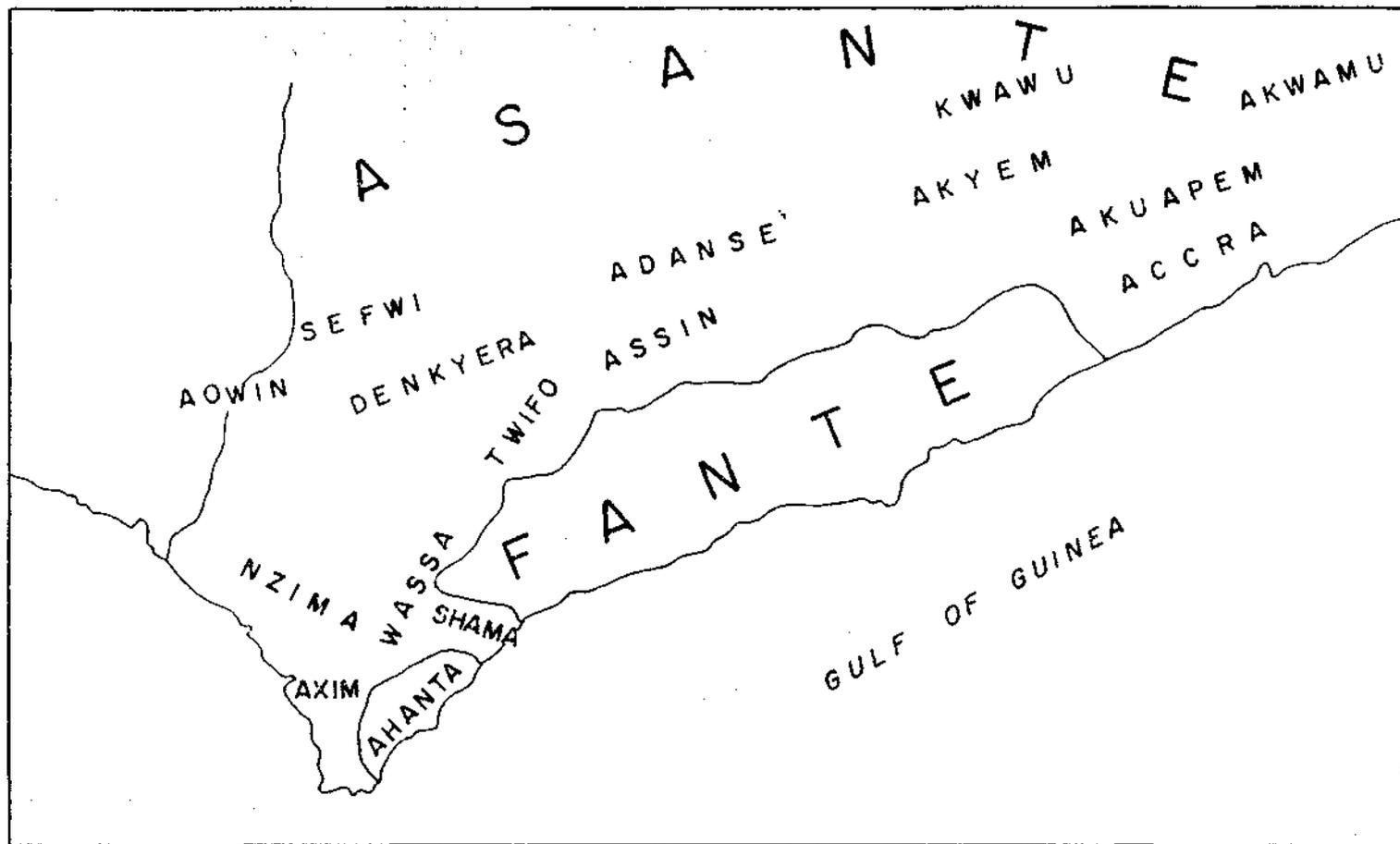
50. W.I.C. III Narrative of Hendrik Raems and P. B. Verscheuren, Accra entries dated 9th and 16th April, 1742.

51. V.G.K. G.G. Dorph, Accra, 4 May, 1745.

52. Roemer, 1760, p. 312.

53. T70/1515. Richard Graves, Cape Coast Castle, 3rd April, 1742.  
V.G.K. G. G. Dorph, Accra, 11 July, 1745.

# THE EXTENT OF ASANTE - 1800



of gold, ivory, kola and slaves in the Gold Coast interior also, Asante was in a position to ensure effective control of the northward movement of guns and gunpowder. The purpose of this embargo was to ensure Asante superiority over the bow and arrow-wielding peoples of the northern Gold Coast.<sup>54</sup>

## II

Asante government of the conquered states during the reigns of Osei Tutu and Opoku Ware followed quite closely Akan traditional usage and practices. The first two kings of Asante were content to make the conquered states tribute paying vassals and to rely on the undamaged economic and military resources of these peoples. Thus when Akyem was defeated in 1742 no radical changes were made in their traditional government because the murdered Akyem chiefs were succeeded by members of their own families. Pobi succeeded Ba Kwante as the Okyenhene whereas Buroni became the new Kotokuhene. What happened was that the Asante kings appointed one of the Asante chiefs to take charge of the tributaries. 'Every subject state,' wrote Bowdich, 'was placed under the immediate care of an Ashantee chief, generally resident in the capital who seldom visited it, but to receive the tribute from the ruler, for whose conduct he was in a reasonable degree responsible.'<sup>55</sup>

But this kind of 'indirect rule,' had one fundamental defect: it enabled the conquered states to regain power quickly and to revolt whenever opportunity offered. Such an opportune moment arrived in the last years of Opoku Ware's reign. Opoku Ware, who had added so many provinces to the Asante kingdom, saw the need for radical changes in Asante government of the provinces. The Asante kings obviously did not wish to create over-mighty subjects and so Opoku's reforms were calculated to strengthen the Asante monarchy at the expense of the Kumasi chiefs who, as governors of the provinces, could muster sufficient forces to meet aggression from other Asante divisions.

The Kumasi chiefs, however, had grown so powerful that they were in a position to defy the king and even challenge his authority. In August 1746, the Danes reported that there were 'great disputes in the Assianthee country', and they expressed the fear that the quarrels might lead to civil war.<sup>56</sup> The fear of the Danes materialised, for, in the early nineteenth century Dupuis was informed at Kumasi that Opoku Ware 'enacted new codes of laws, adapted for the government of the various departments of the state'; that these changes were opposed 'by the chiefs of the army, whose object was to preserve the old constitution, and that they carried their resistance as far as civil war.'<sup>57</sup>

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54. As Bowdich (p. 355) points out, 'guns and powder are never allowed to be exported from Ashantee.'

55. Bowdich, 1819, p. 235.

56. V.G.K. Joost Plattfues, L. F. Roemer and Hachenberg, Accra, 20 August, 1746

57. J. Dupuis, *Journal*, 1824. p. 235.

The Akyem seized on the commotion in Asante to throw off its allegiance to Asante. In September 1746, the Danes reported that the Akyem had repudiated Asante overlordship; that they had left their own country and that some had retired into Fante country and others to Kwawu and Little Popo. A few months later it was known that the Akyem had entered into an alliance with the powerful coastal Fante; and, in the following year, it was reported that the Denkyera, Wassa and the Twifo had joined the Akyem-Fante alliance.<sup>58</sup> The primary objective of this 'Grand Alliance' was (a) to maintain their political independence of Asante by cutting off the Asante from supplies of firearms and powder in appreciable quantities and (b) to preserve a lucrative middleman interest in the inland trade.

The blockade of these allies was so effective that, in 1751, the Dutch fiscal at Elmina noted that "the little trade that now and then is carried on among the forts is only with the natives living on the beach or a little way inland except Accra. There, sometimes but seldom, a small caravan still comes, but along distant and difficult ways, and most times accompanied with danger, so that this deters the Ashantees". A British report of the same period also refers to the "inconsiderable number of slaves brought from the great kingdom of Ashantee in a very difficult and dangerous way, by the traders of that country", in order to purchase guns and powder at the British, Dutch and Danish forts at Accra.<sup>59</sup>

The Europeans on the Gold Coast whose trade was badly affected by the stoppage of the trading paths, speculated that the Asantehene, Kusi Obodum, (1750-1764) would adopt a forward policy aimed at defeating the allies. But Kusi Obodum became the ruler of a divided nation largely as a result of the policies pursued by his illustrious predecessor, and so he had to bide his time and hope for the disintegration of the alliance.<sup>60</sup> In 1764, however, the Asantehene had to act when he learnt that the allies had appealed to the Yoruba state of Oyo for help. This campaign proved disastrous when the Asante army, numbering between 10,000 and 12,000 fell into an ambush and died to a man. The dead included Dankwa, the Dwabenhene and head of the Oyoko clan, who led the Asante forces.

The result of this Dankwa debacle was the deposition of the aged Kusi Obodum and the accession of the youthful Osei Kwadwo (1764-1777) who was determined to follow in the footsteps of Opoku Ware.

In a sense, Osei Kwadwo was fortunate, for he had a united nation behind him. But, most importantly, he became Asantehene when the alliance against Asante had disintegrated. The Fante and the Denkyera had withdrawn from the alliance and were supporting the Asante to defeat the allies. The Akyem

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58. V.G.K. Joost Plafues et al, 9th September, 1746, 18 January, 1747, and 26 November, 1749.

59. W.I.C. Fiscal Dadebeck, Elmina, 16 September, 1751.  
E. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the slave trade to America*. (Washington, D.C., 1930-35) 4 Volumes, Vol. II p. 18.

60. For a detailed comment see J.K. Fynn, 'The Reign and Times of Kusi Obodum' in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. VIII (1965).

and the Wassa were quarelling among themselves and so there could not be any concerted action against the Asante.

It was against this background that Asante invaded these allied countries in 1765. In May of that year, the Asante army advanced from the north to join the Fante forces from the south. The Wassa and the Twifo, apparently because of their feud with the Akyem but most certainly because they shuddered at the prospect of fighting the combined forces of Asante and Fante, deserted the Akyem and moved into Twifo country, where they pitched their camp at "Ahiman, about fifty or sixty miles to the Northwest of this" (Cape Coast Castle).

Thus the Akyem forces, led by the Okyenhene, Pobi, had to bear the brunt of the fighting. According to a British report, "the Akims were half starved for want of provisions and in a manner surrounded by an army of Ashantees commanded by Sey Cooma, King of Ashantee and another of Fantees," and so they fell an easy prey to the enemy. King Pobi and other important Akyem chiefs chose to blow themselves up with gunpowder rather than fall into the hands of the enemy.<sup>61</sup>

After the defeat of Akyem, the Asante were eager to follow up their victory by extending the campaign into Twifo in order to defeat the Twifo and the Wassa but, because the rains had then set in, Osei Kwadwo decided to stay in the Fante country until the rains stopped. He came to an understanding with his Fante allies and the Asante pitched their camp near Abora, one of the principal Fante towns. To demonstrate his peaceful intentions, Osei Kwadwo gave the Fante one of his own close relatives as a hostage as well as many valuable presents. In addition, the Asante and the Fante both swore an oath to live in harmony with one another.

Nevertheless, the Fante were suspicious. Their decision to co-operate with Asante to defeat the allies had been taken in special circumstances, because of their joint opposition to the trading paths being closed for so long. Therefore, when the Akyem were defeated and the Wassa and the Twifo sought refuge in flight, the Fante felt that common objectives had been achieved. The Fante also must have disliked the prospect of having the Asantehene and his army at such close quarters for a long period. Osei Kwadwo might emphasize that his purpose was to punish his rebellious subjects and to re-open the trade routes; the Fante, however, believed that the Asante aimed at the domination of the coastal states.

The result was that fighting broke out between the Fante and the Asante which led to (a) the precipitate withdrawal of the Asante Army and (b) the establishment of a new alliance based on Fante-Wassa-Twifo co-operation. John Hippisley, the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, realised the importance of this new political alignment and noted that since the Akyem had been defeated, the Fante had entered into 'an alliance offensive and defensive with the Warsaws and Tufferoes to which Ammoniah, King of Appollonia has acceded.' in order to guard against the

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61. W.I.C. 116. D/G J.P.T. Huydecooper, Elmina, 8 May 1765  
T70/31 W. Mutter, Gilbert Petrie and John Crossle 10 and 20 July, 1765.  
Osei Kwadwo was also referred to in the European records as Osei Kuma,  
Osei the younger.

dangers arising from the Akyem defeat.<sup>62</sup> However, largely as a result of the intervention of the European traders at Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, Osei Kwadwo could not fulfil his promise of invading the coast with "a fiercer and better conducted irruption."<sup>63</sup> In fact, by early 1766, peace had been established between the Fante and the Asante whereas the Wassa and the Twifo had returned to their Asante allegiance.

The cessation of hostilities, however, proved short-lived. The Akyems revolted again. In September, 1766, envoys from the Asantehene arrived at Accra, ostensibly to collect the arrears of rent due to the King as the over-lord of the European settlements there. But in reality, the object of the Asante envoys was 'to receive the subjugation or at least to make peace with the residue of the Akim nation and the several other states inhabiting the country between Accra and Ashantee and thereby to open a communication with the Europeans by a more direct and a much shorter road than that hitherto used by the Ashantees on account of the late power and opposition of their enemies, the Akims.'<sup>64</sup>

Whatever the outcome of the discussions in Akyem, the available evidence suggests that the Akyem Abuakwa were not satisfied with the peace terms imposed by the Asante. Apart from the heavy sums of gold exacted by the Asante as tributes, the Akyem Abuakwa did not like the support which the Asante gave to the Akwamu and the Anlo in the lower Volta area during this period. With Asante backing, these two nations who were political and commercial allies, were able to dominate the lower Volta trade in dried fish, red earth, salt, ivory and slaves. John Lytzen, a Dutch factor, learned that the Anlos sailed up the Volta for a month and traded with the riverside communities in slaves and ivory in exchange for salt and dried fish.<sup>65</sup> Roemer also notes that there was a thriving trade between the Krobo, the Akwamu, Akuapem and the Anlo at Keta. 'The mountain negroes' he wrote 'who border on Rio Volta, carry a considerable trade with their red earth and come with goods loaded in negro canoes on the aforesaid river to Augna and Quitta. The Quitta negroes use the red earth as powder in their hair...'<sup>66</sup>

The Akwamu-Anlo domination of the Volta trade, however, was disputed by the Ada and the Little Popo who were the political and commercial allies of the Akyem, the Krobo and the Akuapem. Moreover, the Akyem must have resented the fact that the Asante received large quantities of firearms through Anlo and Akwamu middlemen whenever the trading paths west of Accra were blocked to Asante traders.

It was for some such reasons that 'the new Akim King Obre Coran' (Obirikoran) together with the Krobo, and the Akuapem marched across the Volta, in 1767, to attack the Akwamu and the Anlo who were fighting the Ada,

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62. T70/31 John Hippisley, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July, 1766.

63. Ibid. same. 20 March ed. 13 July, 1766.

64. Ibid. Gilbert Petrie, Cape Coast Castle, 13 September, 1766

65. W.I.C. 124. Minutes of meeting of Council at which the following Report was read of Johan P. Lytzen's Journey from Fida (Whydah) to Accra. Entries for 22 and 24 December, 1718.

66. Roemer, 1760 p. 286. On Akwamu-Anlo Relations during this period see for example, R.A. Kea, 'Akwamu-Anlo Relations c.1750—1813' in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*. Vol.X (Legon, 1969) pp. 29—61.

In March that year, it was reported that there had been a severe engagement between the Akyem and the Akwamu and that there were many dead and wounded on either side.<sup>67</sup> Since both Akyem Abuakwa and Akwamu were Asante dependencies, the Asantehene decided to intervene. Osei Kwadwo ordered Obirikoran, the Okyenhene, and Daako, the Akwamuhene, to proceed to Kumasi presumably to discover the reasons for the conflict. Daako concurred but Obirikoran refused to go. Instead, he decided "to abandon his country and to take sanctuary on the other side of the Volta with Ashampoe, King of Papoe."<sup>68</sup> The Asantehene feared that Obirikoran would create a new alliance based on Akyem-Wassa-Twifo co-operation so he dispatched "two armed bodies to hinder the Akims in their design" and to bring the Okyenhene to Kumasi. Obirikoran, however, continued to defy the Asantehene; he persuaded the Akuapem and the Krobo to join the Abuakwa in renewing the military conflicts along the lower Volta. In 1770, an English report noted that there was heavy fighting between these allies and the Anlo, who were assisted 'in cognito' by the Akwamu; and that the aim of the allies was to defeat the Anlo. The war in the Ewe country caused a great deal of confusion and trade was badly affected. In particular, the slave and the ivory trade from the Krepi country was interrupted and the Akyem, the Akuapem and the Krobo began 'to intercept Assianthee traders'.<sup>69</sup>

In view of the continued flouting of his authority by his vassals in 1772, Osei Kwadwo appeared in Akyem and Akuapem at the head of 20,000 men. The Asante army were later joined by King Daako of Akwamu, and they began to attack Akyem Abuakwa and its allies. The Asante were defeated in the early stages of the campaign but the Okyenhene, fearing that the Asante would bring in more reinforcements, sent the Abuakwa women and children to Krobo and kept them 'in places made by nature defensible'. Obirikoran and his troops then moved into the Accra area but did not enter Accra. He rather reached an understanding with the Fante to pitch his camp in their country and after giving them "many presents for liberty to retire into their country" the Abuakwa army encamped in an area between Senya Bereku and Accra.

The Asante must have realised that the pursuit of the Abuakwa forces into Fanteland could involve the Fante in the war, so they turned their attention to the Krobo, 'into whose hands the Akim King had deposited part of his women', and who had 'for many years past been his auxiliaries'. There was heavy fighting between the Asante and the Krobo armies but because 'the Croboes inhabit a hill of great natural strength', the Asante army was defeated and had to retire in disorder into their own country. Nevertheless, before he returned to Kumasi, Osei Kwadwo deposed Obirikoran and imposed Twum Ampoforo on the Akyem Abuakwa as their king.<sup>70</sup>

The accession of Twum Ampoforo marked the beginning of the effective incorporation of Akyem Abuakwa and Akuapem into the Asante Empire. It

67. W.I.C. 166. Pieter Woortman, Accra. 28 February, and 21 March, 1767.

68. T.70/31. Gilbert Petrie, Cape Coast Castle. 20 August, 1767.

69. J. K. Fynn, 1971, p. 110.

70. W.I.C. 118. Pieter Woortman and Laefdeal. Elmina 30 August, 1770  
T.70/31. David Mill, Cape Coast Castle, 30 January, 1773 and  
4 December, 1773.

is probable that partly as a result of the constant bids for freedom but mainly to ensure good government of the tributary states, Osei Kwadwo and his chiefs radically reformed the administration of the conquered states. "The King," wrote Brodie Cruickshank, "was not content to have the government entirely in the hands of the native chiefs who might possibly in the course of time rally the prostrate energies of the country, and combine to throw off his yoke." In consequence of this suspicion... he appointed pro-consuls of the Ashantee race, men of trust and confidence, to reside with the fallen chiefs, to notify to them the royal will, to exercise a general superintendence over them, and especially to guard against and to spy out any conspiracies that might be formed to recover their independence."<sup>71</sup>

It appears both Akyem Abuakwa and Akuapem received their "pro-consuls" in 1776, for in that year the ruler of Akuapem, Atiemo together with 'a great lieutenant' from the Asantehene arrived at Christiansborg Castle to swear an oath in the presence of the Danes to the effect that from now on he recognised the Asantehene as his overlord and friend.<sup>72</sup> Again, in 1788, Biorn noted that "the king of Assiantce retains a great lieutenant in Aquapim for his subjects protection from insult."<sup>73</sup> In 1812, Henry Meredith wrote that the natural ruler of Akyem Abuakwa, Atta Wusu Yiakosa governed his country "in conjunction with Tando".<sup>74</sup>

Be that as it may, Twum Ampoforo clearly enjoyed the protection of the Asante court for he was still reigning in the 1790s. In January, 1791, Biorn, noted that "the Akim king Ampoforo" had asked the Danes to loan him goods to the value of six slaves against which he promised to settle peacefully the affairs in Crepe" (Krepi). In the following month, the report was that the Danes would send a present consisting of goods valued at 12 slaves and which amounted to 2,000 rixdalers to Ampoforo in order to enlist his help against the enemies of the Danes east of the river Volta. But Osei Kwame, the then Asantehene, refused to grant permission to the Okyenhene to campaign in the lower Volta area because it was rumoured that if the Okyenhene crossed the Volta, he might not return to Akyem again.<sup>75</sup>

Twum Ampoforo is said to have been deposed and executed because he was tyrannical in his rule. It would seem, however, that the Akyem destooled him because they regarded him as a puppet of the Asante court. This event most probably occurred in 1797 because the Akyem appeared to have taken advantage of civil disturbance in Asante in that year.

The Asantehene obviously did not approve of the deposition and execution of his protegy, so he sent troops into Akyem and defeated them. Ofofu Apraku, the successor of Twum Ampoforo, was among the slain. This Asante

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71. B. Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast*, (London 1859), 2 Vols. Vol. 1, pp. 340-41.

72. Ole Justesen, 'Aspects of Eighteenth Century Ghanaian History as revealed by Danish Sources' in *Ghana Notes and Queries*, No. 12 (June 1972) p. 12.

73. Biorn, 1788, op.cit. p. 204.

74. H. Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, (London, 1912) p. 169

75. V.G.K. *The Guinea Journal* No. 25. Entry by A. Biorn Accra, 6 February. 1791 ed. 15 May, 1794.

Invasion appears to have taken place in 1798, for a Danish report of that year notes that the rebellion against the Asantehene which took place in 1797 had ended and that the parties had come to an agreement.<sup>76</sup>

### I I I

The next Akyem Abuakwa ruler was Atta Wusu Yiakosa. He was evidently enstooled Okyenhene with the consent and approval of the Asantehene and he appears initially, to have been an obedient servant of the Asante King for he "served with distinction" in the Asante-Fante war of 1807.

In 1811, the Fante revolted again and the Asantehene "sent two armies down to the coast, one a force of 25,000 men under Opoku Fiefre, was to reinforce the men of Accra, and a smaller force, only 4,000 strong, was sent to relieve Elmina". Atta was instructed by his overlord, Osei Bonsu, to lead 'an Akim contingent to join Appia Dankwa, the Asante general who was marching towards Elmina.'<sup>77</sup>

The Okyenhene, who apparently did not consider himself properly rewarded for his contribution towards the defeat of the Fante, refused to comply with Osei Bonsu's request. Instead, 'he hanged, murdered and pillaged several thousand Assianthee traders'. Opoku's army was therefore directed to Akyem 'to redress this evil.'<sup>78</sup> The Akyem were joined by the Akuapem under their king, Kwao Safrotwi, and so the rebels 'defended themselves bravely, but had to yield to the superior force. . . . many thousands fell on both sides.'<sup>79</sup>

Atta Wusu, in fact, was a great warrior and his able leadership made it possible for the Akyem and the Akuapem to inflict heavy punishments on Opoku's army which withdrew to Kumasi in November 1811. Unfortunately Atta died of smallpox whilst still engaged in ridding the coast of the Asante menace.<sup>80</sup>

Meredith states that Atta's refusal to join the Asante army "produced a dispute between himself and Tando who drove him out of Akim....."<sup>81</sup> It seems to me, however, that Atta Wusu threw off his allegiance to Asantehene largely because of the harsh and irresponsible manner Asante Residents and officials dealt with the conquered peoples. Three such high-ranking Asante stayed at Osu to the chagrin of the Danes at Christiansborg Castle. They were "sent down from their King in order to remedy all disorders:

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76. V.G.K. Ibid No. 369. Governor Wriesberg, Accra, 6 November and 14 December 1798.

77. Bowdich, 1819, p. 241.

78. V.G.K. *The Guinea Journal* No. 1309. C. Schioning. Accra, 5 June, 1811.

79. Ibid. See also C.C. Reindorf, *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (Basle 1897) p. 153.

80. Bowdich (p. 242) noted that 'Atta whose name was as redoubtable as his disposition rapacious subdued his (Appia Dankwa's) firmness, and under the pleas of prudence, hurried him back to the interior'. The day on which, and the place at which Atta Wusu died gave the Akyem Abuakwa one of their greatest oaths "Wukuada ne Kwanyako". See W.E.F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*. (London 1958) p. 159.

81. H. Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*. (London, 1812) pp. 168-9.

however, they fail to fulfil this mission, but on the contrary, do incredible harm and injury to the inhabitants without either the forts or others preventing it."82 Cruickshank also saw the Asante government of the provinces as 'a systematic course of oppression and spoliation practised by the King's officers.'83

Tando, who ruled Akyem Abuakwa with the Okyenhene, was a particularly arrogant character of whom Bowdich could write that he moved "in great pomp, never going the shortest distance, but in his taffeta hammock, covered with a gorgeous umbrella, and surrounded by flatterers who even wiped the ground before he trod on it."84 Indeed, although the Okyenhene was adjudged to be guilty for disobeying the orders of his superior, Tando was recalled to Kumasi and was never allowed to set foot in Akyem Abuakwa again apparently because of his conceit.

In spite of the death of Atta and the recall of Tando to Kumasi, the Akyem Abuakwa continued to defy the Asantehene. In 1813, Danish Governor Schioning remarked that 'all roads were unsafe and all trade was at a standstill except at Fort Frødensborg, where the Akwamu and the Asante traded.'85 Osei Bonsu, therefore, made another attempt to stamp out the revolt of the Akyem, the Akuapem, the Fante and the Wassa. In August, 1815, the Danes stated that "two mighty Assianthee armies have come down to the coast in order to seek out the Akim King Coffy Assianthee and another important Akim".86 This Asante punitive force was sent under the joint command of Amankwa Abinowa and Appia Dankwa. According to Bowdich, Amankwa was charged 'to offer no violence nor to commit hostility unless provoked by attack, but to receive the submission of the Akims and Aquapims, and merely to exact a tax to seal it'87.

Amankwa's troops encountered the Akyem and it was soon reported that '10,000 Ashantees had driven away and destroyed the Akims . . .' In Akuapem, too "a general engagement took place.....and after six hours' fighting the Ashantees were victorious and sent a jawbone and a slave to each of the Accra towns." However, the Abuakwa and the Akuapem chiefs were not captured but took refuge with the Fante 'who had given them protection.....'88

Since the Fante were in no position to resist the Asante advance the royal fugitives from Akyem and Akuapem found themselves compelled to flee from the Fante country. They fled eastwards but, in October 1818, the Dutch reported that 'the Ashantees have got the Aquapim king and his two successors into their hands, and have killed them'. The Okyenhene, Kofi Asante,

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82. V.G.K. *The Guinea Journal*, No. 1034, Entry by J. Colet, Accra, 27 April. 1808

83 B. Cruickshank, 1853, pp. 341-45.

84. Bowdich 1819, p. 123.

85. V.G.K. *The Guinea Journal* No. 1348. C. Schioning, Accra, 27 August 1813

86. Bowdich. 1819, p. 243. ...

87. V.G.K. *The Guinea Journal* No. 1460. J. Wriesberg, Accra  
1st August, 1815.

88. W.I.C. Roelessen, Accra, to H. W. Daendels, Elmina, 22 October, 1816.  
Bowdich, 1819, pp. 116-17. Also J. K. Fynn. 1971, pp. 149-151.

was apprehended and killed. Bowdich, who was in Kumasi in 1817, recorded that the head of an Akim Caboceer arrived in Coomassie about this time. The King and the Ashantee government had proposed that every croom of Akim should pay 20 perequins of gold as an atonement for their late revolt. 10 perequins were advanced immediately by each, and the moiety was excused until after the harvest..."<sup>89</sup>

Thus by the end of 1816, the revolt of the Akyem and the Akuapem had been crushed. Indeed, the conquered states came to feel "the ascendancy of the Ashantees so well," that Danish Governor Svanekiaer could write in 1819 "the surrounding Negro tribes live in peace with their neighbours", mainly because they fear Asante "threats" and "oppression".<sup>90</sup>

The truth was that the establishment of this kind of a **Pax Asantica** was the result of a strengthening of the Asante provincial administration. Dupuis wrote that the Asantehene ruled over his dominions "with unrivalled sway: every King, chief, viceroy, or caboceer, being his absolute and unconditional vassal, as tributaries or not, and most of them holding their governments by virtue of an appointment from the court."<sup>91</sup> In 1821, Danish Governor Steffens described Asante "oppression" of Akyem and Akuapem and noted that "all the smaller Negro nations are still...subdued by the Assiantees, so they do not play any role..."<sup>92</sup> This Asante hold on the conquered provinces was maintained in part by administrators and emissaries who were referred to by the Danes as "wandering Assiantees."<sup>93</sup>

But, as I have already indicated, the harsh treatment meted out to the tributaries by the Asante officials was a fundamental reason why the conquered states frequently revolted against Asante hegemony. In 1826, the Akyem, the Denkyera, the Wassa, the Akwamu<sup>94</sup> and the coastal states, backed by the British and the Danes, defeated the Asante in a hotly contested battle near Dodowa, a few miles north-west of Accra.

The battle of Dodowa marked the beginning of the decline of Asante power on the Gold Coast. The Maclean Treaty of 27 April 1831, not only enabled the southern states to enjoy long years of peace but also it ensured that "the King of Ashantee...renounced all right or title to any tribute or homage from the kings of Dinkira, Assin and others formerly his subject....."<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, from that time on Akyem fortunes became inextricably bound up with those of the coastal states and their British allies.

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89 V.G.K. *The Guinea Journal* No. 1833, Svanikiaer, Accra, 17 July, 1819

90 Dupuis, 1824, op. cit. p. XXVI.

91. V.G.K. *The Guinea Journal* No. 63. Steffens, Accra, 6 February, 1821.

92. *Ibid.* No. 83. Steffens, Accra, 18 March 1821.

93. *Ibid.*

94. After 1811, Akwamu became disenchanted with Asante rule. In particular, Asante imperial claims in the lower Volta area threatened the semi autonomous existence of Akwamu. See R. A. Kea, 'Akwamu-Anlo Relations (1750-1831) in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*. Vol. X (Legon, 1969) pp. 53-61.

95. G.E. Metcalfe. *Maclean of the Gold Coast*. (London, 1962) Chapter 5.

W. F. Ward, 1958, pp. 187-88.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear, then, that Asante, which at the beginning of the eighteenth century was but lately known<sup>95</sup> had become 'indisputably the greatest and the rising power of western Africa'<sup>96</sup> in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The Asante bid for supremacy, however, was violently opposed by the older Akan states whose kings refused to accept the pretensions and claims of what they considered an upstart dynasty. Of these Akan states, Akyem resistance to Asante political domination was not only persistent but also it was nearly the most successful.

Furthermore, Asante's struggles with the older Akan states clearly illustrate the point that the Asante wars of expansion cannot be explained away in terms of any simple theory or hypothesis which ignores obvious historical facts.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, in seeking to account for the origins of the Asante wars of conquest, it behoves one to direct one's attention to what Edward Bowdich calls "the necessities and designs of the Ashantee government". This, in effect, means that Asante's priorities especially in political, economic, commercial and geographical context must be recognised.<sup>98</sup>

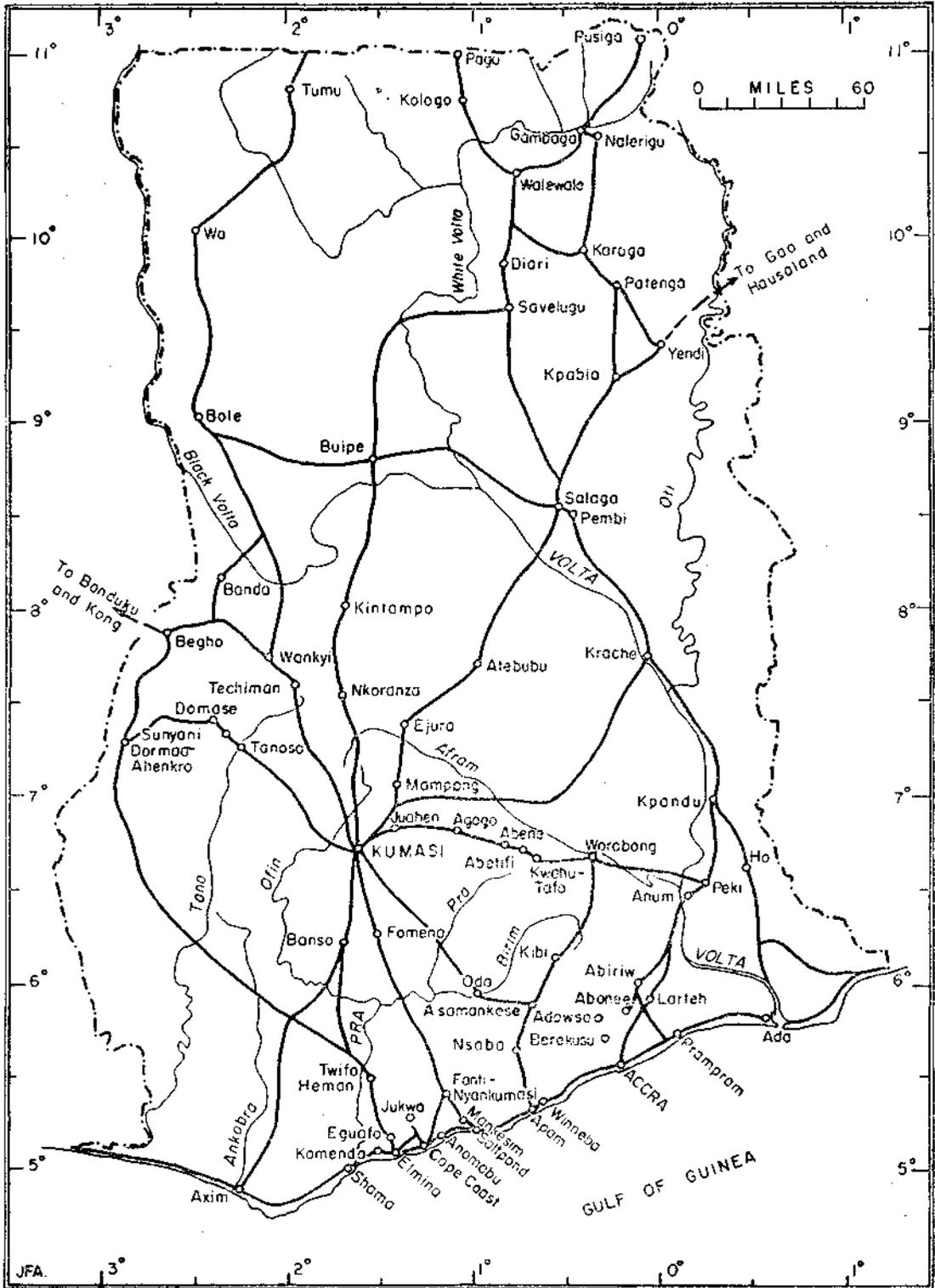
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95. Bosman, 1705, p. 76

96. Bowdich, 1819, p. 341.

97. See, for example, Kwame Arhin, 'The structure of Greater Ashanti, 1700 - 1824' in *Journal of African History* VIII, 1, (1967) pp. 65 - 85.

98. For a detailed comment see J. K. Fynn, 'The Origins of the Asante wars. Another view' forthcoming in the *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*.



TRADE ROUTES IN GHANA, c 1702 After K. B. Dickson

# THE EXTENT OF ASANTE

c 1820

