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PREMPEH I IN EXILE

(A paper read on Saturday, 19th August 1972 at the National Cultural Centre, Kumasi during the National Festival of Arts)

* By A. Adu Boahen

The reign of Prempeh I, or to give him proper stool name, Nana Kwaku Dua III, which lasted from 1888 to 1931, is probably the most dramatic, the most eventful but the most tragic of any of the reigns in the history of the Asante Empire. That reign was ushered in by a bloody civil war; it saw the arrest and exile of Prempeh himself, his mother then the Queen of Asante, his father, his brother and a number of leading Kumasi and other Asante kings. That reign saw the last of the bitter wars between Asante and the British imperialists. This war, popularly known as the Yaa Asantewaa War, was the final heroic but unsuccessful attempt of the Asante people to preserve their sovereignty and patrimony. The reign saw the complete dismantling not only of the Asante Empire but even of Asante Confederacy itself, that hard core of the empire which had survived in the face of all vicissitudes since its creation towards the end of the seventeenth century by Osei Tutu and Okomfo Anokye. It saw easily the most melancholy and the most sacriligeous of all the episodes in Asante history, namely the desecration of the Golden Stool, that great and sacred symbol of the soul, the unity, the survival and the vitality of the Asante nation. Finally, it saw the conversion of Asante from an ancient traditional-bound kingdom into a modern progressive

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* Professor and Head of History Department, Legon.

kingdom with railways, motor-cars, a monetary economy, schools and christian churches.

The history of a reign full of such historic, dramatic and calamitous events cannot be dealt with in a single lecture. What I intend to do here today is to treat only one of the episodes mentioned already, namely, what happened to Prempeh and his group during their exile on the Seychelles Islands where they arrived on 11th September, 1900 and from where they were not to be repatriated until 1924. I have chosen this particular episode because it is the one that has never been treated by any historian 1.

But before we move over to the Seychelles Islands far away in the Indian Ocean off the coastline of East Africa, let us first look very briefly at a few biographical details of our principal actor and the circumstances that led to his being exiled to those islands. According to information supplied by Prempeh I himself as well as a number of people whom I have interviewed in Kumasi, [2] his mother was Nana Yaa Akyaa, the then Asantehemaa and the sister of both Kofi Karikari and Mensa Bonsu, the kings of Asante from 1867–1874 and 1874–1883 respectively. One of his sisters from the same mother was Nana Akua Abakoma, the mother of Kwame Kyeretwie who succeeded Prempeh I as Asantehene in 1931 under the stool name of Nana Agyeman Prempeh II and who died only two years ago. Prempeh I's father was Nana Kwasi Gyambibi, who was himself the son of Kwaku Dua I, the Asantehene from 1834–1867, and also a member of the royal families of Antoa and the Kumasi Adonten Stool.

When was Prempeh I born? I have not as yet been able to find a positive answer to this question. Prempeh I himself says that he was 'about 16' when he was made King in 1888[3]-. In a census of the population of the Asante camp, in August 1915, Prempeh was stated as being about 44 years old [4]. Finally on the eve of his departure from the Seychelles, he was said to be 54 years of age. From all this, it seems to me at the moment that Prempeh was born in either 1870 or 1871 or 1872. It is, however, generally agreed that Prempeh I succeeded to the throne at a rather tender age, probably of 16 or 17, and the circumstances that led to this are fairly well-known [5] and can only be touched upon very briefly here. The first was the death of his elder brother Kwaku Dua II, who had succeeded Mensa Bonsu in 1884 after a reign of only 6 weeks. The second was yet another unexpected death of Kwasi Kusi, who had been nominated to succeed Kwaku Dua. This death led to a contest for the stool between Prempeh I, the brother of Kwaku Dua II, and Yaw Atwereboana, the first cousin of Kwasi Kusi (their mothers Akosua Ode and Yaa Afere being sisters [6]). Prempeh was supported by the Amanhene of Bekwai, Dwaben, Offinso and Edweso as well as the Asantehemaa his mother, and some of the Kumasi chiefs while Atwereboana had the backing of the Amanhene of Kokofu, Mampong and Nsuta. This political impasse could only be resolved by a civil war and it was the victory won by the Prempeh party coupled with the assistance given by the local British administration that led to the

enstoolment of Prempeh in the presence of an English officer, Captain E. A. Barnett in 1888. Why then did this same British administration arrest and exile Prempeh only eight years later? The usual answer given by many historians is that, the British got alarmed that if they did not take over Asante either the French or the Germans who were driving inland from Ivory Coast and Lome respectively would do so[7]. If this were the only answer, it is most unlikely that Prempeh would have been deposed let alone exiled. After all, though it is true, as we shall see presently, that Prempeh resisted the British, he did capitulate in the end in 1896 and indeed without fighting. No, the British found it necessary not merely to depose but even to exile Prempeh simply because Prempeh's activities and achievements within the first few years of his accession posed a positive threat to the policies that the British had been pursuing towards Asante and her hinterland since the 1873–4 or Sagrenti War. These policies were to prevent the revival of the Asante Empire, to keep the confederacy itself weak economically and divided politically and to attract the trade with hinterland of Asante down the Volta to the coast.

Prempeh's achievements within that short period were truly remarkable[8]. By a shrewd mixture of diplomacy and force he had been able by 1894 to repress the Kokofu rebellion, win the support of Mampong, Nsuta and even Dwaben and had begun negotiations for the return home of the Kokofu and Adansi refugees. He had also secretly began to revive and strengthen the ancient alliance with Kwahu and Akyem Abuakwa and what is even more interesting still he had began to form an offensive and defensive alliance with Samori Ture, that great Mandingo warrior who had by then conquered Gyaman and part of Northern Ghana. Furthermore, with a view to strengthening the Confederacy economically and also reviving the northern part of the empire, Prempeh had attacked and conquered Nkoranza in 1892, renewed the alliance with Salaga and invaded Atebubu, the capital of the anti-Asante Dente Federation in 1893. Indeed so confident was Prempeh of success in his efforts to revive and strengthen the Asante Empire that when in 1891 the British offered to take Asante under their protection, Prempeh replied,

> "I may say this is a matter of a very serious consideration and which I am happy to say we have arrived at this conclusion, that my kingdom of Ashanti will never commit itself to any such policy; Ashanti must remain independent as of old, at the same time being friendly with all white men"[9].

Any scepticism about Prempeh's success at reuniting the Confederacy was dispelled when on 4 June 1894, he was installed as the Asantehene at a ceremony attended by all the great Amanhene of Asante or their representatives except the Omanhene of Kokofu.

It was this very success of Prempeh which alarmed the British officials on the spot and forced them to take counter-measures. These included send-

ing a force into Akyem, Kwahu and Atebubu in 1893; and requesting the Asantehene to accept a British Resident in 1894 and again in 1895, requests which Prempeh politely but firmly turned down. Indeed, not only did Prempeh reject these requests but he despatched a delegation to Britain consisting of John and Albert Owusu-Ansah and the chiefs Fokuo and Boaten to put his case directly to the British government. The failure of the Stewart mission of 1895 and the news which reached the British authorities on the coast towards the end of 1895 that Prempeh was about to receive military aid from Samori finally broke the back of the British authorities [10]. It had then become obvious to them that unless Prempeh, the centre of the resistance was deposed and deported, not only the Confederacy but even the Asante Empire would be revived and the British drive to the markets of Northern Ghana halted altogether. What was needed now was an excuse, and the failure of the Asante to pay the heavy indemnity imposed on them as far back as 1874 after the Sagrenti War was seized upon. An army was dispatched to Kumasi under Sir Francis Scott and Baden Powell. Although at the public meeting held in Kumasi Prempeh readily offered *his submission*, undertook to pay 700 oz. of the 50,000 oz. of gold of the indem*nity* and the rest by instalment, and to accept British protection, he was not only deposed but arrested and exiled together with his mother then Asantehemaa, his father, his brother Agyeman Badu, Asafo Boakye the Akwamuhene, Kwame Boaten the Dominasehene, Kwame Amankwaatia the Krontihene, Kwame Appiah, the Mamponghene, Kwadwo Appiah, the Offinsohene, and Kwame Afrani, the Edwesohene and others.

The last question to be considered before turning to the events in Seychelles is why the Asante did not forcefully resist the British in 1896. I put this question to a number of people in Kumasi and their answer was that preparations were indeed made for war against the British but Prempeh himself advised against it and offered to go into exile rather than risk the complete destruction of the Asante Kingdom in general and Kumasi in particular. Fortunately, I have come across an answer to this very question given by Prempeh himself whilst he was in the Seychelles and I would like to quote him here:

"Everybody in Kumasi knew that they were going to capture King Prempeh. The Ashanti chiefs were in opinion to fight the English to defend their king, and if they were not successful then it would not be their fault. The chiefs then requested King Prempeh and Queen Yaa Achaa to retire from Kumasi to Breman village and to remain only the chiefs in town to wait for the arrival of the English Army.

King Prempeh thanked them for their kind offer and then addressed them as follows:—

'My chiefs, I would ask you to remember in the past days of civil war in Kumasi how it was very difficult to restore peace.

The chiefs finding themselves much handicapped, Queen Yaa Chia,

Asafu Boachie and other chiefs sent an ambassador to the British Government at the coast asking the Governor to help restore peace at Kumasi, and to put some one on the throne.

The Government sent 3 English officers and soldiers to Kumasi and when peace was restored, the officers asked the chiefs whom they wish to be made king and all the chiefs asked for me (Prempeh). The officers also adjoined to the choice and I was thus proclaimed King of Ashanti. And through this favour received in the hands of the English Government, I am not prepared to fight the British troops in spite I am to be captured by them — secondly, I would rather surrender to secure the lives and tranquility of my people and countrymen.'

The chiefs and people were deeply touched with the speech of King Prempeh and which Kwami Appia of Mampong seconded, and so there was no war" [13]. Prempeh's own explanation clearly confirms the recently collected oral traditions that it was Prempeh himself who vetoed armed resistance and who chose deposition and exile rather than his own safety.

Prempeh and his fellow prisoners were first despatched to the Elmina Castle, then in 1897 to Freetown in Sierra Leone and finally to the Seychelles Islands where they arrived on 11th September, 1900. On their arrival, the party consisted of Prempeh himself, 14 chiefs, 13 women, 13 children, and 12 attendants. In 1901, another group consisting of Yaa Asantewaa, 15 chiefs, 2 women and 4 attendants, captives from the Yaa Asantewaa War, joined the first group. Thus by 1901, there was a total of 75 Asante people in Seychelles [14].

Where did these people live in the Seychelles? They lived in what became known as the 'Asante Camp', situated on Mahe, the largest of the group of 90 islands that are collectively known as Seychelles Islands [15]. That camp used to be an estate or plantation of about 27 acres known as 'Le Rocher' and owned by a Frenchman called Thomy Adam [16]. To the east of the estate was the sea and part of it was covered with coconut and some fruit trees such as mango, bread fruit, oranges and jack fruit. In the estate was a very imposing two-storey villa or country house with beautiful lawns and gardens built by the owner. The estate was about 2½ miles from Victoria, the main town on the Mahe Island and the capital town of the Seychelles group of islands. It was this estate which the British Government leased from its owner for the Asante political prisoners at a rent of about 125 Rupees or £8.7/-. a month. Prempeh was of course assigned the villa, and 16 new wooden houses with sandy floors and roofed with corrugated iron-sheets were erected and allocated to the chiefs and their dependants. All the political prisoners were paid monthly stipends or allowances according to their ranks. Thus, Prempeh was paid 225 Rupees or £15 a month while the Akwamuhene and Agyeman Badu were each given 56.10 Rupees or £3 15/- [17]. In addition, they were allowed to share the proceeds from the coconut trees on the estate in the proportion of one half for the King and Queen and the remaining half for the rest of the chiefs.

It would appear that every effort was made by the Government to make life in the camp as comfortable as possible. For instance, the camp was provided with water supply and later with electricity [18]. The houses and the Villa were kept in constant repairs and occasionally renovated and redecorated. In March 1904, the 16 huts were all painted at a cost of 851.09 Rupees [19] In 1912, Prempeh's house was completely renovated by Mr. Charles Morgan, a contractor of Victoria, at a cost of 550 Rupees. These repairs included the repapering of the drawing room, and wiring of the small room on the upper storey and its partitioning with a door in the centre: the flooring of two small rooms in the upper storey, the provision of a few shelves in the dining room and the pantry, the repairing of the roof of the house and its replace ment by sheets of corrugated iron the repair of the floor and inside of the meeting room and its door, and finally the provision of a new door for the kitchen [20].

How was the camp governed? In the first place, a Senior Police Officer was put in charge of the Asante Political Prisoners, and it was through him that the inmates could communicate with the Governors of the Seychelles Islands and of Ghana. For a considerable length of time, the officer was called L. A. Tonnet. He could send police constable round the camp at any time to see that peace and discipline were maintained in the camp. Inside the camp Prempeh and his followers were left to administer their own affairs. For this purpose what is referred to in the records as the Committee but which may be more appropriately called the King's Council was instituted. It was composed of Prempeh and the leading chiefs. This Committee met quite often to make bye-laws and regulations for the camp and to settle disputes and quarrels that arose. For instance, the Committee met on 5th July, 1912 at about 9.00 a.m. in the Committee Room and made the following order:

> "That since we arrived here, we meet in this property several fruits trees bearing fruits good for eat. But now there is none at all in the property on account that we don't wait full ripe of the said fruits before plunder. In this we the undersigned Chiefs in Committee agreed that from this date we (must) wait full ripe of the fruits and share among us same as we share coconuts. And if any one found cut or plunder bread fruits, mango, oranges and jack fruits without order so to do, will be fined Rs.11" [21].

This order was signed or witnessed to by Prempeh, Elizabeth Yaa Kyaa, George Asibe (Kokofuhene) Asafu Boache (Adumhene), Henry Boatin (Dominasehene of Kumasi), Paul Akroma, Albert Agyeman Badu, Kwame Jansah, Adu Kofi, Yaa Asantewaa, Kwantabisa, Kofi Kofia and Osei Kojo Krome. In March, 1913, the Committee passed a law that anybody who allowed his pig to destroy any one's farm should pay a fine of 1.50 Rupees (2/-), and on 30th December 1920, the Committee met at about 7.00 a.m. "to improve the coconut law in the camp" [22]. But it would appear that a great deal of the time of the Committee was taken up with settling quarrels

between man and wife, between the chiefs and among families, and settling problems arising from the death of the inmates of the camp and the raising and payment of loans.

From all accounts, the Political Prisoners and their dependants led perfectly normal lives in the Camp. Most of them made farms in which they grew plantain, potatoes, vegetables and above all sugar-cane. It would appear that Prempeh I had quite a large farm. In 1914, he certainly asked for 2,000 Vanilla vine and rubber seedlings to be planted "on our property" [23]. Some of the inmates especially the wives also reared pigs and hens for consumption as well as for sale [24]. The wives, children and dependants were also free to go to the market and the shops in Victoria to buy their daily needs and to sell their produce. Indeed, relations between the inmates and the towns people appear to have been friendly and at least two of the Asante's married Seychelles women.

The food of the inmates consisted of plantain, rice, sweet potato, pawpaw, and vegetables such as garden eggs, beans and pepper [25]. It would appear that rice was the staple food and the letters of Prempeh to the administration are full of complaints about the rising cost of rice and the need therefore for a salary increase. A typical letter dated 3rd July, 1912 and addressed directly to the Governor read:

> "I beg to submit most respectfully to H. E. the Governor for His Excellency to note that when we first arrived into this Colony the price of rice per bag was Rs. 9 and afterwards Rs.10 maximum. Even at that time when the price of rice was cheap, we applied for an increment of our allowances. Now the cost of rice had rapidly increased from Rs.15 to Rs.16, and we are still drawing the same salary. And I hereby submit these few lines to H. E. the Governor to ask H.E. to be good enough to order for us bags of rice. The number will be sent at H.E.'s approval" [26].

Family life also went on normally in the camp, and indeed the population of the camp grew at a rate which would have alarmed any modern demographer. Though about 34 persons were sent back home in 1907 leaving 40 people, this number had increased to 84 by 1915. In other words, the population more than doubled in a matter of eight years and this through natural increase indeed 32 of the 84 born in the camp [27]. It should be noted that an Infant School was established in the Camp for the children of the Prisoners. In June 1909, the Government voted an amount of 6,000 Rupees for the running of that school. When this grant ran out in 1918, it was renewed. After leaving this school, the children could go either to the Government Free School or if their parents could afford it, to the King's College both in Victoria. [29] Some of the children such as John Badu did win scholarships to attend these schools. On graduating from these schools, some of them were able to obtain employment. Frederic Prempeh was for instance employed as a typist in the Police Department and later as Gate-keeper, Victoria Prison; Alfred Prempeh was employed as Chief Clerk, Victoria Town Board

and Richard Kuffour as Messenger by the Eastern Telegraph Company while Paul Boaten was employed first as a Cook-steward by a European and later as a clerk in the P.W.D. [30] As one would expect, the normal human problem of death also did occur there. When anybody died, he was given a proper funeral in accordance with ancient custom or christian rites depending on whether the party had become a convert or not. The dead were buried in the public cemetery and all funeral expenses were borne by the Government. For instance when Chief Osei Kojo Krome died in 1913, the following expenses were incurred:—

> Coffin 12 Rps. Tea 1 Rs. Coffee 1.50 Rps. 3 Litres Rum 6 Rs. 1. doz. Condensed milk 3.06, Sugar 2.44, Carriage fee 1.50, cemetery fee 2 Rs. and fee for 8 bearers 8 Rs. making a total of Rs. 42.86 or £2.17s. [31].

The Governor did pay the total expenses though he asked the officer-in-charge to let the Asante know that in future the Government would not "pay for a feast" but only "for the actual cost of funeral expenses." The letter ended: "In future, I will only grant cost of coffin and burial and such cognate charges and that any utieshments must be paid by themselves" [32]. It was a rule in the camp that whenever any political prisoner died, his wives, children and attendants were to be repatriated. In all 49 people died on that island, 24 of whom were chiefs including Yaa Asantewaa who died on 5th October 1921. In 1920, Prempeh built a special vault with the permission of the Seychelles government in which the bones of most of the chiefs were exhumed from the public cemetery and kept and these bones were repatriated to Kumasi in January 1930 and handed over to their respective states [34]. (Incidentally I was told in one of the interviews that one of the chiefs who was about 65 at the time of his arrest said he would live till he returned home and he did. He was Asafo Boachie the Akwamuhene who returned to Kumasi and died in April, 1925 at the age of 96). It would appear then that life went on as normally as possible in this camp.

What about Prempeh I himself? What were his position, status and role and how was he treated by the Seychelles authorities? To take the last question first. Though the Seychelles authorities officially and in theory regarded and referred to him as Ex-King Prempeh I, they did in practice regard him as king, and did treat him with every respect and dignity, and accepted him as the natural leader of the inmates of the Camp. Complaints made directly to the Officer-in-Charge of the Camp were often redirected to Prempeh for settlement and he was regarded in practice as the main medium of communication between the inmates of the camp and the government. He was invited to official reception by the Governor and there he was treated with every decorum. After one of those receptions held in August, 1912, Prempeh not only wrote "to thank Your Excellency gratefully for the hearty reception which I and my chiefs received from Your Excellency on Saturday afternoon" but he also sent him "two jewelleries of our pure native gold and native work for your Excellency's two daughters for a souvenir towards me" [35].

Prempeh was supplied with stationery free of charge every six months, [36] and he was allowed to communicate with the members of his family and with the members of the Kumasi Oyoko clan in particular. He was allowed to attend the Church in Victoria every Sunday, and he could on prior application visit some of the neighbouring estates and the places of interest.

In the camp itself, he was recognised by all as of course the Asantehene. This is evident, for instance, from the way in which the proceeds from the coconut trees or fruit trees were shared. Again, whenever the Committee met he presided over its deliberations.

How did Prempeh spend his time and what were his main preoccupations? Prempeh's first concern was to educate himself and to see that the others especially the children did have some education, some professional training and employment. His second concern was to become a good christian and to see to it that not only the inmates of the camp but even his subjects and relatives at home in Asante embraced the christian religion. His third main task was to promote the health, welfare and happiness of the inmates of the camp, and to see that peace and order reigned. His fourth concern was to keep in touch with events in Asante and to keep his followers informed of them. His fifth concern was to see that healthy relations existed between the inmates of the camp and the local administration and the British Government. His last and probably his most important preoccupation was to see that they were all repatriated to Ghana. Let us look at each of these activities.

EDUCATION:

It seems clear from the records that having secured accommodation for himself and his followers, his first immediate concern was to make himself literate. For this purpose, his first teacher was Mr. Timothy E. Korsah, a Fante who was employed in Freetown by the British Government as Interpreter for the political prisoners. It appears that Prempeh made quite rapid progress, for Korsah on his return to Ghana in 1904 reported that "Ex-Prempeh now read and write fair well and sign his own voucher of payment. And so do by some of the chiefs also." As can be seen, Korsah's English was weak and the foundation he gave Prempeh must have been extremely shaky. Prempeh however, continued his studies and on 10th June 1913 he wrote to G. Mackay, Principal of King's College, Victoria as follows:—

> "As regarding to my study which I received your assistance I am now anxious to improve in my learning and I should be grateful to you if you be so kind to aid me as formerly with the necessary books and copy book free of charge" [39].

It seems the Principal sent him the copy book with some instructions, for three days later Prempeh acknowledged receipt of both in his letter of 14th June and promised to "send for your perusal each time I finish a copy

book." It was also with a view to seeing to the education of the children that he got the Government to establish the Infant school in the camp and also sought admission for the boys from that school in the higher schools in town. Prempeh followed the progress of the camp school with great interest. In March, 1912, for instance, he wrote to inform the authorities that the floor of the Infant School Room was very bad and needed urgent repair and he also asked for an extra chair for visitors [40]. He also protested to the Principal of King's College and to Inspector Tonnet about the increase of fees. In his letter to Tonnet, he contended:—

> "Mr. Mackay does not give us any slight encouragement to help our children in their study. We are here as political Prisoners and we do get only small allowances from Government and we have no other extra work to get money. We have often applied for an increase of allowance, for our allowance getting now is very little for us.
>
> On the other day, I received a note from Mr. Mackay to pay for four months schools fees; and I wrote him that an arrangement has been made before you to pay him every month instead of every four months and so it was settled to pay Rs.2.25 every month. When I wrote him this note, he sent me word that I must pay now Rs. 4 for both James and John. Kindly see Mr. Mackay on this subject that I can't pay 4 Rs. for two children in one month" [41].

It was probably because of these high fees coupled with the inadequacy of the allowances given to the chiefs that those of their children who were able to gain admission into those schools were removed at the earliest opportunity and placed in some employment.

CHRISTIANITY:

Probably second to Prempeh's concern for education was his anxiety to become a good christian and to win as many of his followers as possible over to christianity. Soon on their arrival, Prempeh and some of his followers began to receive religious instructions from some chaplains of the Church Missionary Society. As one of them reported in his Annual Letter of November 1900:

> "King Prempeh seems to look forward to my visit with pleasure. He certainly listens most attentively and by his questions and remarks I gather that he is trying, and not unsuccessfully, to take in what he hears. I find also that he talks about it afterwards.....The next time I went his mother came and seated herself by me. It was clear he had been telling her what I had said, for when I got up to leave, he said, "Explain to me again "For Jesus Christ's sake." He was anxious that she should hear. The next week, his father, brother and another old chief came to listen....." [42].

In February 1902, Prempeh in fact requested that the Civil Chaplain of Seychelles, Rev. F. Fuller, should be employed to give religious instructions to the Political Prisoners on a salary of 500 rupees per annum [43]. Though this request was rejected by the Ghana Government, it would appear that the instructions continued for on 29th May 1904, Prempeh, his mother and some of the other inmates were baptised by Rev. Johnson [44]. Prempeh's interest in religious education did not abate after his baptism in April 1912. He reapplied for "a goodly teacher to teach because formerly we had a gospel teacher..... but there are about two and a half years since we have had no teacher" [45]. This request was granted and Archdeacon G. A. Newton was appointed. In January 1914, he wrote to Archdeacon Newton to ask for 'one Church Almanac for the year 1914 to carrying out my usual even prayer" [46]. It was however not until 24th December 1920 that Prempeh was confirmed, a delay which was most probably due to the issue of a polygamous or monogamous marriage for him, quite an interesting issue which I cannot go into here. There is no doubt that Prempeh returned to Kumasi a confirmed and convinced christian gentleman. Prempeh also saw to it that any member of the camp who needed baptism received it and many of the inmates including his mother, his brother, Yaa Asantewaa and many of the chiefs and their wives did become converts. Furthermore, Prempeh persuaded his son John to embark on a clergical career, and he sent him to train in Mauritius as a chaplain. John Prempeh successfully completed this training and returned home in 1930 or 1931 where he worked as chaplain till his death [47]. What is even more interesting still is the fact that in his letters to his wives, children, sisters and other relatives in Kumasi, Prempeh urged them all to embrace the christian religion as well as western education then being introduced into Asante. Some of his relatives did join the church while some of his young nephews and cousins were sent to school.

HEALTH AND WELFARE:

Prempeh did not see only to the spiritual welfare of his followers but also to their physical well-being their health and happiness. It was he who reported the sickness of every inmate of the camp to the Medical Officer of Health and saw that he was given treatment. In many letters to the Seychelles authorities, he drew attention to any repairs that had to be done to any of the houses or to the water-supply and saw to it that they were carried out. In May 1912, he asked the Governor to send him the 'Magic Lantern' with many views of the British Isles for he "wished to show the view of the British Isles to my people in the Camp" [48]. In January 1921, he asked for a football park and cricket pitch to be made in the Ashanti Camp 'for games and amusement." This request was of course readily granted and an amount of 600 rupees was voted for the project. [49] He also saw to it that all quarrels and disputes that occurred in the Camp were amicably settled either by

himself or by the Committee or at times at his own request by the Officer-in-Charge of the Prisoners. Above all, he constantly drew the attention of the Government to the inadequacy of their allowance and Prempeh's correspondence books are full of such letters of appeal. Typical of these is the one he wrote to the Governor on 24th October 1918:—

> "I the undersigned ex-King Prempeh and followers beg to lay down the following for your Excellency's consideration; that when we newly came into this colony, every thing was quite cheap and we had not as many children and we the political prisoners were all still alive and as a matter of fact we were not more miserable than we were longing to see our country once more. But now as to your Excellency's The Honourable Sirs knowledge the price of goods have risen at a very high percentage so we pray Y.E. the Hon. Sir would find out that the allowances we are receiving could not be met with our expenses. Thirdly, all our children have grown up and must be well attended to on their education. 'Governor Dadson sanctioned an increment of 5% to our allowances which we are still drawing, but this is even a minor increment to withstand the present high price of markets" [50].

All this is more than enough to convince us that Prempeh did indeed show concern for the spiritual and physical welfare, happiness and comfort of his subjects in the Camp.

EVENTS IN ASANTE:

His fourth principal preoccupation was to keep in touch with events in Asante and to pass the information on to his followers. Thus he kept up regular correspondence with his wives Akua Morbi and Amma Kwahan, with his sisters Adwoa Jantuo and Ammah Dussa, and with such chiefs of Kumasi as Kwaku Brenya, Kwaku Fin, Akwasi Ampong of Asokwa, and finally with the Rev. G.W. Morrison, the Anglican Chaplain of Kumasi. Let me quote just one letter written by Akua Morbi to Prempeh dated 15th November, 1915 and Prempeh's reply to illustrate the point at issue. In her letter, Akua Morbi informed Prempeh that Amma Kwaham and all the children were well, that his daughter Yaa Akyea had passed 'the flower of her seed and her menstruation last 30th October' and then continued: "News: Yaw Sapon, Omanhene of Dwaben is dead long ago about 1907 or 1908 and his brother Kofie Siribour is in his place; Akwessie Sechile or Seckin is the present Omanhene of Mampong, Attia Yaw is the Omanhin of Bekwai now. Your late uncle Kwame Buachie's successor is his half maternal brother Akwassie Achampon. Sampenny Jauberaim is dead lately in the month of October at Ejura Tia. Your sub-chief Kweku Wuo Assumfu head of sword bearers died three days ago at Korhorba....." [51]. In his reply dated 22nd January 1916, Prempeh wrote inter alia:—

> "Very pleased to see the first letter of my son Kwame Attensa and with

his own handwriting, it is rather fairly well for the beginning. I fairly understood all what he meant. I should thank you for your guidance but tell him to write continually for more often he writes, sooner will he learn.

Kindly tell my sisters Amah Dussah and Adjua Jantuo that I have twice received reports on my brother Fredua Adjuman from Arch-Deacon Morrison that the boy is doing pretty well and in much progressing; so ask my sisters why I have never heard so on my nephews and nieces? Is it wrong what Fredua Adjuman is doing? What do they not send my nephews and nieces to do the same — I should like a report from them concerning my nephews and nieces.

Kindly let me know whether the said Akwasi Akyeampong Omahin of Agona is the very one who was dethroned in my absence. He was on the stool of Agona when I was at Kumasi and in my absence I heard he was dethroned. So I wish to know whether it is he who has been recalled to take his place. Let me know who is on the stool of Kokofu.

Many thanks that you have informed me of the death of my niece, daughter of Amah Adjiman. Let me know how is aunt Akua Afriyie getting on with her eyes." [52].

In addition to such letters, he asked for copies of the annual reports written on Asante by the Ghana Government and also for Newspapers published in Ghana so as "to follow all new changes taking place" [53]. Through all these means, Prempeh did keep himself and his followers informed of the events and the admittedly phenomenal changes then taking place in Ghana in general and in Asante in particular. Tordoff's view that Prempeh and his people in exile "must soon have lost touch with events at home" [54], is quite clearly not borne out by the facts.

REPATRIATION

The last of Prempeh's activities in Seychelles that I would touch on here, and the one activity that occupied his attention most centred on the issue of the repatriation of himself and his followers to Kumasi. Prempeh sent his first petition for repatriation only a year after his arrival in Seychelles, on 31st October 1901. A second one followed in November 1902, and a third in July 1904 [55]. All these petitions were of course rejected outright, and probably discouraged by this rebuff, it was not until 1910 that he sent in another petition. This was followed by similar petitions and letters in 1911, 1912, 1913, 1917, 1918, 1920 and finally in 1921. Of all these petitons, the most moving was the petition sent by Prempeh on 21st January, 1918, and this merits quotation:

"I beg Your Excellency grace to convey to his Right Honourable the Secretary of State and from him to the Majesty the King, to ask his Majesty to pardon us for our serious offences which our ancestors have

committed to our knowledge or beyond our knowledge against the sovereign of Great Britain; and most reverently to ask His Majesty to look no more over our offences but with pity and mercy to cast a glance over his captives and by His Majesty's great mercy send us word to release us to our native land.

Praying His Majesty to consider how wretched I am, for I was being taken prisoner together with father, mother, brother and chiefs for now 22 years; and now how miserable to see that father, mother, brother and nearly 3/4 of the chiefs are dead. The remainder 1/4, some are blind, some worn out with old age — and the rest being attacked of diverse diseases. And now I do not find where to glance and where to comfort myself. And my sole hope and comfort is by going myself wholly to God by whom all things are comfort and to His Majesty by whose mercy and Love I would be released from sorrow and captivity. I end by earnestly beseeching His Majesty to take my humble petition into consideration and to submit for release to my native land where I swear by my whole strength and truth to remain a true and ready servant of our King and Empire" [56].

That Prempeh should sound so desolate and downcast is not at all surprising because in September 1917, he lost not only his mother Nana Yaa Akyaa but what shocked him even more his brother Agyeman Badu, the former on 3rd September 1917 and the latter on 29th September 1917. It should be pointed out that in August 1917 Prempeh had petitioned not even for the repatriation but rather for a transfer "from Seychelles to any of the British Colonies in Africa either to Sierra Leone or to any other Colony in West Africa." And the plea he advanced for this was that he was "actually in deep sorrow to find that the only brother who is near by me has fallen ill." He continued:—

"In Kumasi, my mother the Queenmother of Ashanti had altogether thirteen children, males and females, of whom two died before my leaving Ashanti, and since I had been captured they all died and it now remains at Kumasi a brother and two sisters.

My only brother Albert Adjiman Badu who came with me as a fellow prisoner has fallen ill since the last four years and yet he had received the best treatments of the Chief Medical Officer-in-Charge but his health is declining day by day.

I suppose that it is God's will that he would not die here in an entire isolated land from his country, and his relatives. So with all humillity submit that Your Honour would kindly consider my position and be please to grant my request. My option of applying for transfer to bring my brother close to our native land is to try and summon my sole brother and 2 sisters at Kumasi to see his face once more before any bad event happens and such is the daily supplication of the patient. And, even he dies, his death might not be so broken hearted both to himself and us" [57].

Such was the petition he submitted a year before the death of his brother. Is it surprising then that the petition he submitted after his death should have

been so melancholy and so heart-rendering? It was this pathetic petition coupled with similar petitions presented by the leading Kings of Asante and Kumasi also precipitated by the news of the death of Nana Yaa Akyaa, the pressure from the members of the Legislative Council of Ghana such as Nana Ofori Atta, J. E. Casely-Hayford, Dr. Quartey-Papafio, Nene Mate Kole, and Nana Essandoh III, [58] the pressure from the Asante Kotoko Society formed in 1916 with the primary purpose of bringing about the repatriation of Prempeh and his followers, [59] the understanding and sympathy of that most famous and most understanding of Ghana's Governors, Sir Gordon Guggisberg, and the conviction on the part of the British Government of the loyalty of the Asante to the British Crown following their activities during the First World War and of the changed nature of Prempeh himself — it was all these factors that led the British Government to agree to the repatriation of Prempeh to Kumasi in 1924.

Following this decision, Prempeh and a party of 54 people left the Seychelles on 12th September, 1924 in the R.M.S. Karoa first for Bombay, from there to Liverpool via Port Sudan, Port Said, Marseilles and Gibraltar on board the S.S. Olympia on 22nd September, and finally from Liverpool on board the S.S. Abinsi on 29th October, [60] Prempeh and his party reached Sekondi on 11th November and entered Kumasi by rail at 6.00 a.m. on 12th November, 1924 after an absence of 28 solid years. What he did on his arrival until his death on 12th May, 1931 is another tale which will be told later.

FOOTNOTES

1. Neither W.W. Claridge, *History of Gold Coast and Asante* nor
   F. Fuller, *'A Vanished Dynasty'*, nor
   W. F. Ward, *History of Ghana* nor more surprising still
   W. Tordoff, *Ashanti Under the Prempeh's* who have dealt with the reign of Prempeh touches on this episode.

2. A History of Asante dictated by Prempeh I in Seychelles in 1907. Interviews with Nana Owusu Ansah and Nana Afodoo.

3. Prempeh I, to H.E. the Governor of Seychelles October 1913, in correspondence Book of King Prempeh I, alias Nana Kwaku Duah III (Nana Agyeman Duah) whilst in Seychelles Island (1912 — 1921), Manhyia Archives, Volume I, p. 80

4. Ibid. pp. 166–167

5. See Tordoff, Claridge, Ward, Agbodeka op. cit.

6. See the geneological Table of certain Asante Kings, Tordoff, op. cit. p. 29

7. Ward, op. cit. p. 297

8. For details, see Tordoff, op. cit. pp. 31–81; Agbodeka, F. *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast, 1868–1900*, pp. 157–166

9. King of Ashanti to Governor, 7 May 1891 quoted by Tordoff, op. cit. pp. 43–44.

10. Agbodeka, op. cit. pp. 169–170

11. Tordoff, op. cit. pp. 68–69

12. Evidence of Nana Owusu Ansah, Nana Afodoo, Mrs. Alice Wiredu etc.

13. History relating to the capture of Prempeh, Encl. P. in Duncan-Johnstone to C.C.A. n.d., File No. 13/16/251 G.N.A.

14. A History of Nana Prempeh's adventure during his 30 years of captivity, namely, Elmina, Sierra Leone and Seychelles.
    To Amanhin, Chiefs, Elders and People of Ashanti, 1924 or 1925 (?) by Prempeh I, Manhyia Archives, Kumasi.

15. Seychelles Islands were first settled by the French in the eighteenth century, they were ceded to the British in 1814 and they became a Crown Colony in 1903.

16. Enclosure E. in Duncan-Johnstone to C.C.A., op. cit.

17. Nominal Roll of Ashanti Political Prisoners showing their allowances, Encl. in Duncan-Johnstone to C.C.A. op. cit Correspondence Book, Volume II, p. 60

18. Correspondence Book, Volume II, op. cit. p. 114

19. Sweet to Governor of Gold Coast, 7th March, 1904, A.D.M. 11/1499. Board 78A G.N.A.

20. Correspondence Book Volume I, op. cit. pp. 26–27

21. Ibid, p. 42

22. Ibid, pp. 58–60 and Volume II, p. 142

23. Ibid. p. 109

24. Evidence of Paul Boaten, Harold Boaten and Mrs. Alice Prempeh

25. Ibid.

26. Correspondence Book, Volume II p. 30.

27. Ashanti Camp Census, 1915 Correspondence Book, op. cit. Volume I, pp. 166–167

28. The Administrator Seychelles to the Governor Gold Coast, 27th September 1918, File No. 1878.

29. Correspondence Book, Volume II, pp. 39, 60, 70–71

30. Ibid Volume II, p. 40; Evidence of Paul and Harold Boaten

31. Correspondence Book, Volume I, p. 73

32. Ibid. p. 83

33. A history of Nana Prempeh's Adventures. op. cit.

34. Kumasi Chiefs to C.S.A., 8th September, 1928;
A.A. Slater to H.E. Governor of Seychelles, 4th September, 1929
G.N.A. Case No. 826/24 ACC. No. 1509/57.
Commissioner, E. P. A. to C.C.A. 27th January, 1930.

35. Correspondence Book, Volume I, p. 45

36. Correspondence Book, Volume I, p. 95, Volume II, pp. 21, 116–7, 119.

37. Correspondence Book, Volume I, pp. 2–9

38. Korsah to Colonial Secretary, 4th July, 1904, Volume II, p. 84

39. Correspondence Book, Volume I, pp. 64–5.

40. Ibid. Volume I, p. 29.

41. Ibid. Volume I, pp. 18–19.
42. Quoted by Tordoff, op. cit. pp. 167–168
43. Gold Coast Government to Administrator, Seychelles, 21st May 1902.
44. A History of Nana Prempeh's Adventures, op. cit.
45. Book of Correspondence, Volume I, pp. 17–18, 95.
46. Evidence of Harold Boaten and Paul Boaten.
47. Book of Correspondence, Vol. I p.118.
48. Ibid, Volume I. p.24
49. Prempeh to Fiennes, 1st January, 1921.
File D. 1182 Kumasi National Archives.
50. Book of Correspondence, Volume II p.18.
51. Akua Morbi to Prempeh I, 5th November, 1951.
Correspondence Book, Volume II, pp.145 – 146.
52. Prempeh to Akua Morbi, 22nd January, 1916.
Correspondence Book, Volume II, pp.151 – 153.
He also correspondence between Prempeh and Rev. Morrison, Volume I, pp.118 – 119, 130 – 131.
53. Correspondence Book, Volume II, p.6.
54. Tordoff, op. cit. p.173.
55. Ibid, pp.168 – 169.
56. Correspondence Book, Volume II, pp.51 – 52.
57. Ibid, Volume II, p.30.
58. Legislative Council Debates.
59. Minutes of the Asante Kotoko Society,
Interview with I. K. Agyeman.
60. Duncan-Johnstone to C. C. A. op. cit.