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towns which interested Weber, and their historical origins, functions, social and political organization and relations with what I call the 'host-authorities' show that they were peculiarly commercial settlements.

In the following pages, I shall examine these aspects of the towns and then discuss the extent to which they approximate to both Weber's and the Akan model of an urban community: Bonduku and Kintampo operated within, and Salaga on the periphery, of Akan political systems.

I. Situation and Origin of Bonduku, Kintampo and Salaga

Bonduku and Kintampo were (and still are) situated in the Savanna-forest fringes of northwestern Asante, and Salaga in the savanna woodlands of the northeast. They all lay within short distances of 8° north of the equator, in a vegetation zone that permitted the passage of the beasts of burden (mules, donkeys and horses) used by caravan traders in the Sudan, principally the Dyula, the Mossi and the Hausa. Bonduku and Kintampo also lay in what has been called an ecological contrasting zone in which it was possible to grow both savanna and forest food crops. Farming in the area satisfied the food requirements of the inhabitants of the settlements of 'many races', as the trading settlements were called. (Goody 1954: 17, Wilks 1961; Posnansky 1979: 23; El-Wakkad 1961, 1962). Freeman, an English Surgeon who accompanied a British official on a mission to Bonduku in 1888-89, noted that these towns shared common characteristics which also indicated the source of their origin and growth. He wrote of Bonduku that it was a principal 'rendezvous' of caravans from Kong and Timbuktu and the western Sudan which engaged in the 'kola traffic' of Asante, and that it held in fact, the same relation to the great western caravan road that Salaga does to the eastern route, and it shares with the latter city the peculiarity that its inhabitants are mostly immigrants from a foreign district and its level of civilization and its general character differ widely from those which obtain in any of the contiguous towns. (Freeman, 1898: 206).

Freeman was describing what Fage has called the northwestern and northeastern trade axis along which itinerant and sedentary traders contributed to the growth of towns. (Page 1965: 41).

Trading by Mande-speaking peoples in the northwest developed between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries in response to demands for gold, at first by the medieval western Sudanese kingdoms of Ghana and Mali, and then by western Europe. (Goody 1954: 17; Wilks 1961, 1962). Trade between the Mande and the Yarse, and the Akan northern state of Bono-Manso was at first conducted through itinerant Mande and Mossi caravans.
But in the fifteenth century, at any rate, before the Portuguese established themselves at Elmina on the Gold Coast in 1482 (Wilks 1962), the Mande-speaking Numu and Ligby (Goody op.cit.) founded the first trade settlement, and an attached market, at Begho which became the model of trading settlements in the Asante hinterland. According to Posnansky, summarizing the archaeology of Begho and its neighbourhood, the town consisted of 'three major geographically distinct quarters of the Brong; the Kramo or Muslim trading community; and the Numu blacksmiths.' (Posnansky 1979, 24). It was not a 'twin-city' (Fage op.cit. 43) unless one draws a distinction between the autochthonous Brong as a host-community and the rest of the population as the stranger-community (Wilks 1962; Arhin 1979b, ch.vii).

The Mande traded copper-and brass-ware, beads, blankets and slaves for gold dust and kola nuts from the Brong, the inhabitants of Tafo (now a suburb of Kumasi) and what in the late seventeenth century became the central Asante district. Begho was destroyed through civil wars c.1640 and the Mande-speaking groups migrated to Bona, Kong, Bobo-Dioulasso and Bonduku. By 1740 Bonduku had succeeded Begho as the principal Dyula trading town in the Asante northwest (Fell op.cit; Fage 1965: 43; Terray 1980).

There were parallel developments in the northeast. Trade routes between Bornu and northern Nigeria and 'Gwanja' or Gonja are said to have been opened in 1433-54, when Beriberi (Hausa) traders settled in the Gonja districts (Mabogunje 1968: 54). It was kola nuts which attracted the Beriberi traders; and the area of trade exchanges and settlements was not the modern Gonja area, north of the Volta river, where kola does not grow, but south of the river in the Gbuipe-Kintampo area. In the eighteenth century, Hausa trade centres were Gbuipe, Kafaba, Umfaha and Yendi (Goody, 1954; Johnson, acc. no.sal/22/1; Arhin, 1979: 5). In the early nineteenth century, Salaga became the 'grand Market of the Inta Kingdom' or of the Gonja state (Bowdich, 1819: 172), probably at the instance of the Asante who had conquered eastern Gonja in 1751. (Lonsdale 1881; Wilks 1971: 127-128). Salaga received an influx of immigrants from Katsina during the Fulani jihad under Othman Dan Fodio, 1806-10 (El-Wakkhad 1961, 1962). It remained the principal Asante market town in the north until, after the British invasion of Kumase in 1874, the revolt of the Gonja forced the Asante to establish Kintampo as an alternative trading centre (Lonsdale 1882; Arhin 1965; 1979: 47-48). Kintampo functioned in the eighteenth century only as a small kola depot (Binger 1892: 137). Founded close to Nwase, an Nkoranza security post established after the Asante conquest of
Bono-Manso in 1722/23, it was known in the early nineteenth century as 'Koonquonque' (Bowdich, 1819: 483) and 'Katano (Dupuis 1824: xxxvi, xcv). Both of these names may have been a wrong rendering of 'Kwantenponmu', the great junction or settlement at the cross-roads, by which Kintampo is still known to the people of Asante. Bowdich placed Kintampo as the eighth town on the Kumasi route to Gbuipe, Daboia, Segou, and Jenne, and Dupuis stated that, as the capital of Banna, it was 'a city a little inferior in size and population to [Kumase] itself' (Dupuis 1824: xxxvi, xcv.). Early in the reign of Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame, 1800-1823, the forces of Daboia and Gbuipe over-ran the Banda districts including Kintampo which, though situated in Nkoranza territory, was predominantly Ligby (Dupuis op. cit. 248; Goody, 1965). Kintampo then ceased to be a major trading town until it was resettled by Hausa from Kunso and, under the political and commercial patronage of the Asante polity, outstripped Salaga between 1874 and 1889 as the major kola nut depot which attracted traders from all over the West African coast (Lonsdale 1882; Kirby 1884; Arhin 1965).

In summary, the three settlements were units in the networks of trading settlements that stretched from the kola-producing areas of northern, western and central Asante to the kola consuming areas of the middle Niger, the central and western Sudan. Trade routes connected Kintampo and Bonduku with Begho, Bona, Kong, Bobo-Diculasso, Segou, Jenne, Timbuktu and through the Moors of the Sahara to the Barbary Coast and the Maghrib; and Salaga with Yendi and Nikki, Youri, Zaria and Kano; and through Yendi and Gambaga to Wagadugu (Fage 1958; 40; Wilks 1962).

II. The Functions of the Trading Towns:

The origin and growth of the towns both determined and reflected their functions. They were the locations of "transit markets", so distinguished in that the trade staples were brought from, and also largely consumed outside, the localities of the markets. In origin it was not the productive activities of the inhabitants but the geographical and political position, coupled with the entrepreneurial skills of the immigrants, that fostered the growth of the towns and markets. The towns then functioned as collection and storage centres; and the inhabitants as hosts or landlords, mediators between the traders of many "races", who also established a framework of order for the conduct of exchange in the transit markets (Arhin 1971: chs. 1 and 4). I shall now describe the markets, the modes and media of exchange and auxiliary economic activities in the towns, in order to demonstrate their urban status, and also their position as linkages between the various regions of west and northwestern Africa.
All the towns had small and big daily markets. Both were places for the purchase of subsistence items, local produce and imported goods; food-crops, vegetables, meat, oil, salt, fire-wood and water. Subsistence items also included cooked porridge, cakes and brewed beer for refreshment (Binger acc.no./19/1-12 and other papers, in Johnson n.d.; Freeman 1898: 234-24; Arhin 1979: ch. 4). These were 'consumer' goods.

The second type of goods consisted of the trade staples: kola nuts from the forest areas, and slaves, asses, donkeys, cattle and sheep brought by the "moving markets" of the Hausa and Mossi caravans. These were traders' goods or exchange values since they were obtained as capital investment and for re-exchange (Meillassoux 1971: 67).

The third type of goods consisted of manufactures from the Hausa, Mossi, and Middle Niger countries, the Barbary and Mediterranean coasts, and the European commercial houses on the Guinea coast. They included cotton and silk threads, blankets, beads, leather goods, brass and copper ware, and iron tools. These were variously prestige items, manufacturers' goods and also traders' goods: they were used as raw materials by craftsmen in local industries and also for re-exchange by professional traders (Papers in Johnson op. cit.).

The supply of the second and third types of goods was seasonal; they were most plentiful in the peak trade season, November to March, when the markets took on an appearance of fairs (Kirby 1884; Binger op. cit; Weber 1958: 66).

Barter was the principal means of exchange for the staples and manufactured goods. Cowries were used mainly for purchasing subsistence items, and also as units of accounting in barter exchanges, and gold dust was used in direct purchases. Gold was brought from the Gbuipe, Bona and Lobi districts and not from the forest areas, where traders bartered kola for the major northern trade staples and considered the northern markets as sources of gold.

Various European coins were found in the markets. They included the Maria Theresa dollar, the Mexican and United States silver dollar and the English florin, shilling, six-penny and three-penny pieces. But they were acquired for ornamental and not monetary purposes (Papers in Johnson op. cit.).

Beside their continuous marketing activities, the towns also acquired to a great extent the kind of economic versatility which Weber stated was a characteristic of all commercial settlements (Weber 1958: 66). The residents included farmers, who used family, 'client',(7) and slave labour for the production of subsistence goods for the markets; women and young females who hawked firewood and water, especially at Salaga, where water became a commodity in the dry, marketing season; artisans - tailors, cloth-dyers, gold-smiths (makers of the
scales, weights, and spoons for the gold dust trade), blacksmiths (makers of farm tools), carpenters or joiners, basket and mat-weavers (who catered for the kola nut carrying trade) and leather workers; prostitutes; Muslim clerics or marabouts who ran 'public' and private schools; and touts, boys and youths - who solicited guests for the masters of households, owners of compound houses, who let rooms as landlords (Papers in Johnson; Binger 1892: 135ff, and 167ff.).

The economic versatility and ethnic heterogeneity of the population gave such appearance and character to the settlements as to make them distinctive from the purely indigenous settlements in their neighbourhoods. These were what the Akan called nkuro, towns, though they were not the seats of major rulers. They were, above all, bearers of cultural innovation to the host-communities.

III. The Trading Towns as Bearers of Wealth, Skills and Islam

From the mediaval period to the end of the nineteenth century when the colonial regimes in West Africa restricted the movement of traders, the trading towns in the Asante hinterland mediated between the central and northern parts of Greater Asante and the Sudan, the Sahara, the Barbary and the Mediterranean coasts; just as the European castles and forts on the Gold Coast mediated between the central and southern parts of modern Ghana and Europe. Both commercial store-houses were centres for the diffusion of wealth, skills and religious ideas from Christian Europe and Muslim Africa.

The northern trade offered more valuable returns than the European trade, in the form of durable assets. In exchange for slaves, gold and ivory, the only durable goods that European trade offered were arms and a means of state-building. The rest of the trade returns such as drinks, salt and some cloth were perishable goods. In contrast, the northern trade yielded Akan traders what their culture defined as wealth ahonya; manpower in the form of slaves; gold dust; such durable consumer items as the highly-prized bomo, Hausa blankets, distinguished as a wealthy man's heirloom; craftsmen's raw materials such as silk and cotton threads used in making the kente, (the cloth of kings) and the ordinary cloth, kyekye; and the smelted iron of the blacksmith; finally substantial traders' goods, including livestock (Bowdich 1819: ###); Arhin 1979: ch. 1).

The terms of the northern trade were, in one other respect, more favourable to Akan society than those of the European trade. Akan traders obtained the northern goods mainly with kola nuts, which could be gathered from the trees in the farms or the adjoining forests by most adults. Therefore, the means for the northern trade was within the capacity of rulers and commoners alike, whereas the war captives, gold dust and ivory, which were
exchanged in trade with the Europeans were in the main, a monopoly of the rulers. The general involvement in the northern trade made for a more widespread diffusion of material wealth within the whole society; and the northern trading towns were the earliest training ground in the acquisition of commercial skills, as well as the birth-places of capitalistic enterprise in northern and central Ghana.

The inhabitants of the northern trading towns were the purveyors of craft skills: black and goldsmithery; leather working - sandals, ceremonial sword sheaths, handles of ceremonial whisks and cushions, weaving and cloth-dyeing and umbrella making. Rattray (1927) wrote that a technological revolution accompanied the establishment of the Asante union at the end of the seventeenth century. The revolution did not occur from radical changes in the use of tools or changes in materials. It resulted from the assembling of craftsmen from all parts of Greater Asante, including the trading towns, and the consequential cross-fertilization of the skills imported from the different sources. The enriched products were seen in the brilliant pageant of the Asantehene's welcome to the European visitors to Kumase early in the nineteenth century. Asante 'genius' consisted essentially in fusing the various elements and adapting the result for political purposes. *(9)*

Asante culture was particularly influenced by that of Bono-Manso, the northern Akan kingdom that first experienced contact with the savanna dwellers. Reindorf was informed that on the Asante conquest of Bono-Manso in 1722/23, Opoku Ware the Asantehene (1720-50) brought to Kumase the treasurer of the latter state who taught him 'to use gold and silver weights' (Reindorf 1895: 75). *(10)* Garrard has suggested that the Akan goldweights were heavily influenced by those of the Dyula at Begho (Garrard 1972); and Posnansky, that brassware imported into Begho 'may have been one of the stimulants of the later growth of the Asante brass working traditions' (Posnansky 1979:30). Akan court culture, in particular, mirrored the diverse culture of the trading towns, themselves the 'outliers' of Sudanic civilizations.

Islam, the dominant religion of the trading towns (Dupuis 1824: xxxiv; Odoom 1979: 43), also represented in the Muslim community established early in the nineteenth century in Kumase, made no converts in the Akan host-communities. The Asantehene, Osei Kwan, 1777-1803/4 was said to have flirted with it and got himself removed from office partly for that reason (Dupuis 1824: x).

There was general demand for the 'Talismanic charms fabricated by the Moslems' which were said to be effective cures for 'gun-shot wounds, others for the thrust or laceration of steel weapons, and the poisoned barbs of javelins or arrows'. *(Dupuis,
Some made the wearer invulnerable in the field of battle, and hence are worn as a preservative against the casualties of war (Dupuis ibid). Also in demand were 'cabalistical scraps for averting the evils of natural life; these may be sub-divided into separate classes: some, for instance, are specific nostrums in certain diseases of the human frame, some for their prevention, and some are calculated either to ward off an impending stroke of fortune, or to raise the proprietor to wealth, happiness and distinction' (Dupuis, ibid) see also (Bowdich 1819: 271).

The 'search for security' among the central and northern Akan clearly ante-dates the colonial period; and the anxieties portrayed by Dupuis, which forced recourse to the Muslim clerics of Kumase and the trading towns, were much the same as those described by Field (Field 1960). They indicate a society in the grip of change which may have been of the same intensity as that in the colonial period.

At the same time the rulers regarded Islam as dangerously subversive. It was believed to promote the levelling 'of all ranks and orders of men and place them at the arbitrary discretion of the sovereign' (Dupuis 1824: 245), and the sovereign had to be prevented from conversion to it. The fear of massive Islamic invasion that could accompany the establishment of northern trade centres in the Asante capital towns was, in part, the reason for keeping the trade settlements away from those towns. (Freeman 1898; passim, also Arhin 1979: 47-48).

IV. The Physical and Social Framework

Expectedly, then, the market towns differed both physically and socially from the neighbouring settlements. The variety of dwelling types and their arrangements and the ethnic and occupational heterogeneity of the towns made them landmarks on the cultural landscape of the Asante hinterland.

Compared even with the capital towns of the chiefdoms in which they were situated, the estimated populations of the trading towns were impressive. Yet, except in the case of Kintampo at the time of Kirby's visit in 1884, the towns were in decline as the locations of regional markets. Freeman put the population of Bonduku at 7,800 (Freeman 1898: 222) and Binger at 2,500-3,000 (Binger 1892: 165). For Kintampo, Kirby 1884 gave the figure of 40,000 which, certainly, included the floating market crowds; Binger thought it was about 3,000 (1892: 139). Estimates of the population of Salaga ranged from that by Bonnat (1876) at 12,000-15,000 (Johnson Sal/1/3), by Von Francois (1888) at 10,000 (Johnson Sal/18/1), to that of 3,000 (1889) by Binger (Johnson Sal/19/5).

The estimates were possibly exaggerated by visitors who, in
addition to the wish to impress official and commercial audiences, may also have confused resident with transient market crowds. Even so, viewed against the background of the scattered hamlets along the routes, Bondouku, Kintampo and Salaga ought to have looked urban.

The towns had similar lay-outs as aggregations of wards, each of them inhabited predominantly by members of the same ethnic group. There were no sharp physical cleavages between the wards, which merged into each other. But the different ethnic groups had distinctive types of dwellings. Also, as a rule, the wards of the principal traders ringed the market-place, while the wards of the indigene were located on the outskirts of the towns, and shaded into the cultivated plots.

According to Binger's account, Bondouku and Salaga (Johnson Sal/19/2 and Binger 1982: 162) looked alike as jumbles of irregularly located compound houses, with only small and tortuous lanes between them. In Kintampo, on the other hand, the compound houses were separated from each other with hedges which enclosed cultivated plots of maize, bananas and pear trees (1892: 137). There was no pretence at organized public health in the first two towns which were distinguished by their unsanitary conditions. But Kintampo was free from the filth and stench of the two towns (Binger 1892: 137), because in the 1880's it was under the supervision of appointed market officials (Arhin 1965), whose duties included enforcing sanitation measures.

In all the three towns, each ethnic group had preserved its original building type. T. Opoku, an Akwapim evangelist, thus described what Binger called the Mande and Dagomba type of compound dwellings. It consisted of round conical huts, of which more or fewer (than) ten to twenty huts, according to the size of the family and its possessions, are built together and separated from the rest by a wall or fence. These compounds are enclosed. The entrance is usually a larger hut, quite empty with two openings, one giving on the court, and the other to the street. The arrangement of huts in the compound is often haphazard; without much attention to regularity or beauty (Johnson Sal/8/1).

The Hausa type of dwelling found in all the three towns was large and rectangular with straw roofs. It predominated in Bondouku where Freeman reported long regularly built, flat-topped houses rising tier upon tier on the slope of a hill like the benches of an amphitheatre. The horizontal lines of the long built walls were broken by ranges of slender pinnacles, while out of the mass of buildings rose spires and pointed turrets of mosques, which at first had the appearance of small Gothic cathedrals (1898: 216-217).
But Binger saw Bonduku as a mass of ruins, though with suggestions of a vanished glory. The mosques were in the style of those of Kong and Bole. Only the house of Sittafa Wattara, Binger's host, mud-built but in an Arabesque style, was distinguished.

As Binger portrayed it, Kintampo presented a greater variety of building types. The three main ones included the Mande and Dagomba types, as in Salaga, and the Asante or Akan type of bamboo structure with white-washed wattle-and-daub. The Hausa, in particular, were distinguished by their architecture. Besides being among the most comfortable of African dwelling-houses they deserved the name of 'houses'.

Three buildings were outstanding. First, the mosque, a vast rectangular structure, was a kind of a hall with several doors and a circular gallery of the width of 1.50m. forming a veranda. Second the house of Mahama, the sarkin sango, looked like the villas of Goree or Dakar with its little wooden staircase, which led on to a narrow veranda protected from the sun's rays by mats hung on a pillar. Third, was the house of Seidu, Binger's host. It was a mud structure, like the two earlier-mentioned buildings and consisted of two parts: a huge thatched cottage which formed the eastern part and the women's quarters; and a single great hall, with several air-vents near the ceiling and which one entered by some kind of an ante-chamber constructed in the Arabic style (Binger 1892: 138).

The earliest Dyula settlers were members of corporations of Dyula traders (Caillie 1830 i: 140); Hausa residents, of the Haussa fatauce (Mustapha and Goody, 1966); Mossi residents, of Mossi caravans (Skinner, 1962); and Akan residents, individual batadifo (Arhin, 1979: 6-7). Dyula, House and Mossi residents were first established in the trading towns as agents of merchants in Dyula towns in the middle Niger, in Zaria, Katsina or Kano in northern Nigeria and the Mossi capitals, including Wagadugu; or they were resident merchants in their own right. They set up homes with their families and dependants, slaves, journeymen, and apprentice traders, and became the nuclei of settlements of members of their ethnic groups. New arrivals called on them for boarding and lodging, and either did their trading or sought for residential space through them.

Ethnicity was the first principle of spatial and social organization in the trading towns, a pattern of settlement continued with twentieth century migrations from the savannah to the forest areas of West Africa (Rouch 1956; Cohen 1969: 14-15; Arhin 1979 ch.7); and the role of the landlord became a pivotal institution in the trading towns or 'diasporas' and the attached transit markets (Hill 1966: ch.3; Arhin 1979: ch.4).

The role of the landlord (Akan ofitwara, Hausa maigida) was multiple. He provided boarding and lodging for incoming traders:
gave them information on the market situation; found them buyers or sellers and acted as interpreter for them; and witnessed the more substantial exchange transactions, such as the sale and purchase of slaves, cloth and kola. Landlords also owned cattle kraals for keeping livestock before sale, an entrepreneurial activity, and kept wells in Salaga for water supplies.

A landlord acted as an agent for merchants in other towns, receiving and despatching goods on demand. A landlord was also a trader and speculator in his own right. In the capacity of agent or merchant, he helped visiting traders with timely disposal of their goods and thus facilitated the exchange process (Levtzion 1965: 99-119; ch.11). Binger and Freeman emphasized that the houses of the merchants were the scenes of the most important exchange transactions (Binger 1892 ii; 141; Freeman 1898: 237). A trading town was, therefore, itself as much a market institution as the market-place: the latter, indeed, catered for subsistence needs, served as space for advertising samples of trade staples - slaves were tethered in the market-place, but not sold there - and as points of contact between potential buyer and sellers. These activities, including the gossip reported by Binger, were all activities in aid of commercial exchanges, indicating that the market-places in the trading towns differed from the multifunctional market-places found in so-called subsistence economies (Bohannan and Dalton 1962: 2-3).

Landlords were the principal managers of the trading towns, and groups of landlords, representing the various resident ethnic groups, were links in the social organization of the towns. My enquiries at Kintampo show that the influence of landlords cut across ethnic cleavages. In that town, the dependants, journeymen and apprentice traders (or "clients", as some may prefer to call them) of well-established merchants included members of other ethnic groups than their own. A trading town was an economic association of which the executive body consisted of the landlords: Cohen put the point succinctly in his comment on Sabo in Ibadan:

Sabo social organization is based on the position and manifold economic and political activities of nearly 30 business landlords, known to all, Hausa and non-Hausa alike, by the Hausa term Maigida (Cohen 1969: 71).

The interests of the ordinary members of the association, the client-traders, that is, debtors to the landlords and the landlord's families and dependants, were bound up with those of the executive members, and the social consequence was an association united against incoming traders as well as the host-authorities: one can see the informal organization of landlords as the starting-point of the organization of the trading towns as informal polities.
Besides ethnic differentiation, the populations of the trading towns were distinguished on the basis of occupation: commerce, farming and crafts. Differentiation on the basis of ethnicity and occupation was vertical. There was, in addition, horizontal differentiation within the various occupations: in the commercial groups, master, journeymen and apprentice traders; in farming, farm owners and dependant labour, including slaves; and in crafts, master craftsmen, journeymen and apprentices. Journeymen and apprentices in commerce and crafts were not necessarily relatives and co-members, with the masters, of the same ethnic groups but drawn from different groups. The commercial and craft occupations therefore, provided further associational linkages between the various ethnic groups, and journeymen and apprentice attachments to master traders and craftsmen were means for the circulation of capital and skills within the trading community as a whole (Arhin 1979: ch.4).

It follows that there were status, if not class, distinctions in terms of occupational role and wealth in the trading towns. Known landlords, who were also master traders, farmers and craftsmen, were socially ranked above others and respected throughout the community: at Atubu, for example, wealth was also the basis of authority-holding (Arhin 1979: ch.7). At Kintampo a Hausa madugu house-owner or mercant, known as Seidu, reputed for his wealth, which included a large slave-holding, was far more influential in the Hausa quarters of Kintampo than Mahama, the sarkin zongo, or head man of the traders' settlement.

Differential religious affiliation ostensibly provided the basis for a sharper social divide in the trading towns, between the Muslims and adherents of the particularistic religions. The mosques, built close to the market-place, indicated Islam as the religion of the traders (the Islamic faith was said to provide a 'password') along the trade routes (Dupuis 1824: ch.2; Meillassoux 1971: 56; Trimingham 1958: 28). The traders were Muslim while the Akan, the Guang and Senufo groups were 'animists'. But, from as far south as Kumase, animists resorted to Muslim clerics, in particular the Al-hadj, who had visited Mecca and thus acquired extra spiritual potency, for saffis or talismans which were believed to afford protection against diseases, bullets, misfortunes and the diverse malevolent spirits postulated, for example, by the Akan religion.(12) Muslim clerics, therefore, commanded influence that transcended their co-religionists; and they may be seen as additional linkages in the social organization of the towns.

I conclude that social heterogeneity as an index of urban-ness (Kuper 1965: 13) must be seen as having relative content. An administrative capital is socially differentiated on the basis of political and administrative roles; an industrial town, of
the complex of skills required by industrial development; and trading towns, of what Cohen calls the strategy of pre-industrial trading diasporas (Cohen 1971).

V. The Political Organization of the Trading Towns:

The next, and rather interesting, question is the extent to which the economic association was politically organized as a political entity.

Like the social, the political organization of the trading towns was adapted to its trading functions: that is, to the interest of the association of traders which also had to be reconciled with the interests of the wider community with which they interacted. Internally, the interests of traders apparently required the absence of a single dominant, and it goes without saying, exploitative local authority. But the absence of a strong local authority also served the interest of the host-authorities for whom it was a condition for the effective collection of levies, tolls and rent, the price at which the host-authorities permitted the strangers to settle.

Members of the various ethnic groups lived under the authority of their own headmen, the descendants of the earliest settlers, who were also often the oldest Muslim clerics. Headmen settled disputes within their own ethnic groups and provided informal linkages with other groups. It is not known for certain whether or not the towns had even informally constituted urban councils which, among other duties, acted as courts. But this is unlikely since it would have meant a centralization of authority which would be unwelcome to the host-authorities. In Salaga and Kintampo the different ethnic communities lived under their own headmen (Binger 1892: 135 ff, 165 ff); though there were a 'Salaga Massa' and a sarkin zongo at Kintampo, their authority was limited to members of their own ethnic groups located in their own quarters or wards where they were, in fact, sometimes less authoritative than eminent clerics and wealthy landlords. A Mande sheriff represented Bonduku at a meeting between the Gyaman state council and a British mission, which suggests that the sheriff was either officially recognized by the host-authority as the head of the town, or that he had widely acknowledged, though informal, authority in it (Freeman 1898: 206). The host-authorities normally recognized unofficial linkages between themselves and the trading towns as a whole (Arhin 1979: ch.7).

Non-clerical headmen had authority of the patriarchal type: that is, authority supported by customary usages and sanctions of the diffuse variety, while the sanctions of the authority of the clerks, as headmen, included those of the mystical sort; even today, in Ghana, Mallams or Muslim clerics are widely feared as possessing controlling power, derived from their special knowledge of the Koran, over both benevolent and
malevolent mystical forces. But, generally, peace in the trading communities must be regarded as an institutionalized aspect of the established trading community; it only lacked formally organized instrument of adjudication.

The politico-judicial arrangement for the maintenance of market peace in Kintampo in the 1870's may well have held for Bonduku and Salaga, when the Gyaman kingdom and eastern Gonja were under Asante domination before the Brong and Gonja revolts in 1874. In Kintampo, three officials representing Nkoranzahene and the Asantehene supervised market exchanges and maintained order through the use of the Asantehene's Great Oath, a formula for starting judicial proceedings in Greater Asante. The parties to a dispute, in which the oath was sworn, had the case adjudicated, in the first instance, before the three officials, in the second before the Nkoranzahene (the immediate overlord of Kintampo) and, in the third, before the Asantehene, an extremity that was probably never reached. Asante officials in Salaga may have performed similar duties, while in Bonduku the Gyamanhene's court probably served as a court of judicial resort with a formal right of appeal to the Asantehene.

Even so, the system of fragmented authority in the trading towns, all of which were situated in highly organized polities, of which every settlement had a centralized form of administration, requires explanation. Of this there were, possibly, two kinds. The first was internal to the trading towns. Aspects of their cultural diversity operated as barriers to the evolution of a centralized municipal authority. Linguistic differences were overcome by the adoption of Hausa as lingua franca, notably at Salaga and Kintampo. But differences in descent systems (generally matriline for the forest peoples and patriline for the savannah peoples) and in life styles prevented intermarriages, as I discovered at Atebubu and Kintampo (Arhin 1979: ch.7). Yet the creation of marital and correlative affinal ties is a significant factor in the evolution of centralized authority systems. Again, the religious divide in the towns prevented the acceptance of common magico-religious institutions in which are embedded some of the major sanctions of authority in African polities (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940: Introduction; Arhin op. cit.).

The second kind of explanation may be sought in the relationship of the trading towns to the host-authorities. 'Host-authority' here means the super-ordinate authority in the territory in which a trading town was situated. The host-authority of Bonduku was the Gyamanhene; that of Salaga was the Epembewura, a subordinate of the Yaqumbuwura; and that of Kintampo was the Nkoranzahene. I call them 'intermediary host-authorities' since they were all subject to the Asantehene who had interests in the regional markets within Greater Asante, as
sources of wealth and foreign skills (Wilks 1971).

The host-authorities allowed the establishment of the trading towns as the purveyors of wealth in the forms of levies, tolls and rents, in cash and foreign goods and of skills. But they also kept the towns at a distance as the bearers of what were considered as subversive foreign influences, including the allegedly egalitarian Islamic doctrines, held to be potentially corrosive of the established political order (Dupuis 1824: 245). The absence of centralized municipal authorities facilitated the collection of tolls, levies and rents by the intermediary authorities and by officials of the Asantehene. In Salaga and Kintampo, where the Asantehene's goods were sold under the condition of enforced temporary monopoly in the market (Arhin 1979: 6), it was an advantage not to have an established focus of resistance to what Binger called the 'exactions of the Asante rulers' (Binger op.cit.: 140).

From the point of view of their political organization, the trading towns must, therefore, be considered as having some of the characteristics of 'trade enclaves', the land equivalents of the 'port of trade' or kinds of caravan cities (Polanyi 1963; Rostovtseff 1932) which operated best in conditions of political neutrality guaranteed by a superordinate political sovereign. In the days of its political supremacy in its hinterland, Asante guaranteed the political neutrality of the trading towns, so that Bonduku, Salaga and Kintampo declined as a major entrepots when Asante entered a period of gradual decline in 1874-96. It was not only that, as a bard sang of the Asantehene,

You slew the highwayman and the paths became safe;

that Asante military power made the paths safe for the caravan traders; it was also that the maintenance of order in the market situations of the trading towns ultimately depended on Asante military renown. Therefore the fragmentation of political authority in the trading towns must be related to the political structure of Greater Asante: as sources of wealth and skills the towns had to be kept politically weak and manageable.

In the absence of centralized political authority systems in the trading towns, the interesting question arises of whether or not they can be regarded as full urban communities, in either Weber's usage or in that of the Akan. According to Weber:

To constitute a full urban community a settlement must display a relative predominance of trade-commercial relations, with the settlement as a whole displaying the following features: (1) fortification; (2) a market; (3) a court of its own and at least partially autonomous law; (4) related form of association; and (5) at least partial autonomy and autocephaly, thus the administration by
authorities in the election of whom the burghers participated (1958: 81).

Akan regarded a settlement as a kuro, town, as distinct from akuru, village, if it had the following features: it was not 'fortified' but had a common defence force constituted by the adult males of the settlement; it had a market-place; it was headed by an obene, a quasi-hereditary political head in whose election the members of council of the settlement participated. The members of council were heads of the constituent lineages of the settlement which constituted the body responsible for taking decisions. The kuro levied its own fighting force as a contingent of the state fighting force; it raised its own public revenues and performed collective public works, such as building the obene's house, ahernie, the houses of public deities and clearing public paths. It had an adampan, a hall located in the obene's house which was regarded as the "town office". The council formed a judicial council which adjudicated afisea, household cases on the basis of what was, in effect, local custom or law. In sum, the Akan kuro was a semi-autonomous politically organized community linked to the state or oman through the obene (See Rattray 1929: also Sarbah 1897, and 1906).

The trading towns were urban neither in Weber's nor in the Akan sense. They were neither fortified nor had a common defence force. They consisted of separate semi-autonomous communities, informally linked through market and other kinds of economic activities and through their separate heads. They did not have common political heads and, hence no common judicial systems.

Yet, there were inhabitants of Bonduku, Kintampo and Salaga who had only vague ideas of their ancestral natal homes and claimed dual identities as Hausa, Mande or Mossi of Bonduku, Kintampo or Salaga. The denial to these of citizenship by the modern state of Ghana, through the passage of the Aliens Compliance Order (1970) on the basis of their ethnic tags, was of dubious validity. Their citizenship of the trading towns was established in a period of unsettled population movement and before the birth of the modern state-nations.

Like the British colonial authorities, the government of Ghana ought to have incorporated them into the new state by endorsing their allegiance to the indigenous local authorities (Arhin 1979: ch.8).

Conclusion

I conclude that the trading towns were urban communities of a special sort. They were commercial outposts and potentially transient. Their major economic functions was not based on local production but on favourable external political circumstances; and it was this economic and political dependence on external
factors that inhibited their development as corporate bodies. (14)

Notes

1. This paper was first written for a Symposium on Indigenous African Towns at University of California at Los Angeles, 30th December, 1980.
3. Yarse are Dyula traders naturalized as Mossi.
4. See T.E. Fell, Notes on the History of Banda, e. 15,7.13, in File D.216, Ghana National Archives, Kumasi; Fell wrote:
   "The present WOTOGOOGU originated from BANDA. In the XITh century a large town called BEGO (Bitou of the Hausas) was founded on the site of the present BANDA. It is traditionally stated to have been more than five times the size of the present BONTORGU and was settled by a tribe known as the HUELLAS who originated from the neighbourhood of JENNE on the Niger.

   A large trade was carried on in gold and slaves and it appears to have been a town of enlightened Mohammedans with considerable architectural features in the way of ornamented mosques etc. It is said that even now the ruins of ancient BEGO can be seen in the neighbourhood of BANDA.

   About the XVth century a quarrel arose about two women which divided the town into factions. Serious fighting took place - peace was not made and the town divided itself into sections and left to build their own towns. About this date BONTOGOU was founded by one portion of the BEGO population and other traces of them are to be found in the villages of NAMASA (Western Province) KIMINI (Western Province) and one or two other places.

   The BANDAs of the present day then resident at or near MENGKE and on the division of BEGO by civil war occupied the site of the ancient BEGO where they have remained till the present day.

   Information supplied to me by French Officers at BONTORGU and by the ALIMAMI of BONTORGU."

5. Also Binger (1892: 164) believes on the authority of Ahmed Baba, see Dubois (1897), that Bonduku pre-dated Jenne, whose wealth grew because it was the place of exchange of the salt of Teghaza for the gold of Bonduku. Baba apparently mistook Bonduku for Begho.

5. Nana Kwakye Ameyaw, the present Omehene of Takyiman, states that the fighting forces of Bono-Manso drove the Gonja people across the Volta in an unspecified period (Ameyaw,
the country as much as 1,276,509 hectares of land had been
cropped with grains by 1977. (1) A similar scramble for land has
occurred in response to the oil palm boom where a total of
384,729 hectares of farm land had been planted with oil palm by
1984.(2)

During the 1980s another wave of scramble for farm land,
complementing what has been in motion as a result of the boom in
the oil palm and grains industries, has also been in progress.
Individuals and organisations have been attracted by the
favourable investment climate created by the PNDC government’s
Economic Recovery Programme to rush into the timber, gold and
diamond mining industries. These industries are among the key
sectors of the economy. The government has therefore been
providing investors in such sectors with considerable credit and
technical support as a way of stimulating production for export.

The effect of these measures in terms of economic activity has
been impressive. For example, by September 30, 1988, as many as
39 Ghanaian and 18 foreign companies had been granted gold
prospecting licences by the appropriate government agency. The
data on the total size of land that has been granted to the
various companies is incomplete. But based on the available data
the smallest land size is 13.31 square kilometers while the
largest is 163.17 square kilometers. The data for timber
concessions is much less complete as the initial evaluation of
application for timber concession is done at the regional level
where the particular concession is situated. However, the
fragments of evidence available suggest that investments in this
industry also picked up in response to the government’s economic
recovery programmes. For example, during the 1980–84 period only
7 concessions were recorded. Between 1985 and October 1988 as
many as 192 timber concessions had been granted.3 As indicated
earlier, these figures are incomplete because of the fact that
the granting of concessions has not just been regionalised, but
it has also been highly bureaucratised. Accordingly, the
register for land concessions does not reflect the total
transactions on timber concessions. Nonetheless, the trend, as
shown by these figures, should be highly revealing.

These developments on the land have boosted land values
considerably. Land transactions have therefore become very
profitable and rampant. In a number of cases, the land that has
been sold or leased has been developed already by either some
members of the communal group or by some tenant farmers.
Accordingly, a growing number of peasant farmers are falling
victim to such rampant alienation of communal lands: some are
ejected; and others are incessantly harassed. Reported cases of
loss of the usufructuary right in land, and even of the right of
access to alienated lands for the purpose of cutting firewood
seems to be on the increase. It would appear that even though


