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AUTHOR’S NOTE

Please note that Ivory Coast, used throughout, is simply an English translation of La Côte d’Ivoire.

Preface

The book has been written to meet a long-felt need of the general reader and of students in schools and colleges. It traces, in outline, the history of Ghana from the beginning to 1980. An important feature of this work is that, while it gives due account of political and diplomatic developments and the causes and consequences of wars which have influenced the course of the country’s history, it also provides a departure from many of its predecessors by giving ample space to the cultural, social, economic and other institutions, the foundations upon which the people’s past was built.

Ghana’s history covered by the book has passed through four phases. The first was the pre-colonial period starting well before the people came into contact with the Europeans and others. During this period the country’s present territorial frontiers enclosed many independent kingdoms and states which developed their own culture and civilisation and maintained their other national institutions. Masters of their own lands, these states later established relations of trade and commerce with European merchants as equal partners. As time wore on, however, the foreigners gradually gained ground and exercised some political and social influence upon the indigenous society.

The second phase of Ghana’s history was the period of the loss of independence of the various states when they were annexed either by force or through what were described as treaties of friendship and protection, and were brought together under the British imperial system. For nearly a century, the British colonial powers not only ruled the people but also encouraged their nationalism to exploit fully the rich material and human resources of the territory. The colonial system also steadily replaced Ghana’s ancestral institutions with the Western culture and values, and made the people disregard their own rich heritage. The harm resulting from this process dwarfed the advantages which ensued from our people’s relationship with the white men.

The oppressive colonial system could not be suffered indefinitely, and the third phase of the country’s history commenced with the struggle of the people against the colonial rule. Along hazardous paths, enlightened and courageous leaders led the country to regain independence on 6th March 1957. This revolution, the first ever throw of European colonial rule in the
'Black World', introduced the new nation into the fourth and present phase of the country's history. The period has seen how through determination and self-reliance, and despite varied problems during the teething period, the country has become, in the words of the founder of independent Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, 'masters of our own fate', both at home and in our international relations.

One of the colonial legacies is anglicised forms of place and personal names. With the departure of the white man, these foreign forms have outlived their usefulness. Throughout the book the indigenous forms have generally been used. Thus, instead of forms like Annah, Kojo, Ashanti, Sefwi, Wassaw, Kwasib and Aawin, the book uses the more accurate forms Anaa, Kwaabi, Asante, Sefwi, Waa, Kwasu and Aawin respectively.

The author owes a great debt to the 'pioneers' of Ghana's written history and to the old folks, repositories of our history as recorded by word of mouth, many of whom he constantly consulted with rewarding results. He is also grateful to Professor K.B. Dickson and Mr. Samuel B. Dodoo, both of the Department of Geography, University of Ghana, who prepared most of the maps, and to Miss Felicia Okoe and Miss Gladys Apronti for their willing and efficient clerical assistance. Finally, he wishes to record his indebtedness to several scholars who read the book in proof and suggested improvement in substance, presentation and expression.

F.K. Busi
6th March 1980

Preface to the Second Edition

Advantage has been taken of the new edition to make textual corrections, to rewrite the final chapter on Lessons of the Past, and to add two new chapters which expand the history of the country to 1995. The accounts continue to be based mainly on the careers of leaders who, with the people, wove the thread of Ghana's history.

FABS
F.K. Busi
1st July 1996

Introduction

Prehistory

Primarily concerned with the past, history focuses on people and their achievements and failures, and on the events and developments which contributed to their heritage. The causes, results and consequences of things which happened in the past are also studied.

MAIN SOURCES OF HISTORY

There are three main sources for our knowledge of what happened in the past. The first is oral history, or information handed down by word of mouth or other non-written media from generation to generation. The second are written records which provide accounts of past events. The third are what scholars call historical remains.

Oral history

In very early societies, before the art of writing was invented, and in modern societies with widespread illiteracy, oral history was and is the principal way of preserving the stories of the past. The accounts, depending on people's memory, were handed down in several ways. Most common of these was by word of mouth. Oral history is passed down in many forms, for example in ancient proverbial sayings, songs, dirges, royal titles and appellations, state emblems, national and local myths, language of the palace drums, songs and trumpets, legends and fables, state taboons, place names, as well as special titles which some rulers assumed. The importance of all these derives from the fact that they originated from real incidents in the country's history.

In spite of their value as a foundation of our knowledge of history, oral records as described above, suffer serious drawbacks. First, being dependent on human memory, the accounts undergo substantial changes in the course of being repeated. Quite apart from deliberate omissions and exaggerations of the facts for nationalistic reasons, certain vital information may, by the nature of oral history, be missed out. These details include dates, how the people lived, the motives for why the very early peoples acted in the ways they did. Notwithstanding these and other drawbacks, the historian needs to
Chapter 1

The Land and People

The present boundaries of Ghana, enclosing an area of about 240,000 km² and with a population, in 1995, of over 15 million, were carved out in stages from the nineteenth century, by foreign powers when they began spreading their spheres of influence in West Africa. Until the country's present frontiers took shape, what is today the Republic of Ghana comprised very many independent states and kingdoms, some of which will be described in the next two chapters of this book. Through a series of treaties of 'friendship' and forced annexations, the independent states were merged as one territory under the British imperial rule.

In 1874, after a long period of loose association with the people, the British formally proclaimed as a Crown Colony the southern part of the country, from then on called the Gold Coast Colony. Two years later, the British moved the headquarters from Cape Coast to Accra, which has since remained the capital of the country. On 1st January 1902, both Asante (then comprising present-day Ashanti and Bono-Abiafo Regions) and what became known as the Northern Territories (comprising the greater part of the present Northern and the two Upper Regions) were annexed by the British as a Crown Colony and a Protectorate Territory respectively. After World War I (1914-18), the western portion of the former German colony of Togoland was ceded to the British under the mandate system of the League of Nations. This territory later became known as the Trans-Volta Togoland. Thus, by 1920, the present frontiers of the country had taken complete shape. The Colony, Asante, the Northern Territories and the Mandate Territory of British Togoland, though each was administered differently under the imperial system, were all under the Governor resident in Accra.

THE GEOGRAPHY

Almost oblong in shape and situated about midway on what was known as the Guinea Coast, Ghana lies roughly between Longitudes 1° East and 3° West along the Atlantic Coast, and stretches inland from about Latitude 5° to 11° North of the Equator. The country is thus truly a tropical land, and its
The Land and People

2 A History of Ghana

Ghana is geographically one of the smallest countries in Africa, yet it is densely populated. The country is divided into three main regions: the northern savanna, the central forest, and the southern coastal belt. The northern savanna region is characterized by a hot, dry climate and is home to nomadic herders. The central forest region, with its dense rainforest, supports a large number of people who rely on agriculture. The southern coastal belt is the most urbanized and industrialized region, with a mix of coastal agriculture and fishing communities.

Vegetation varies greatly across Ghana, with tropical rainforests in the south, savanna in the north, and a mix of both in the central region. The country's diverse geography supports a wide range of wildlife, including elephants, lions, and giraffes.

The People

The peoples of Ghana are distinguished largely by language and economic activity. The Akan language is spoken by the largest group, followed by the Ewe, Ga, and Ashanti. Cultural practices vary widely, with traditional festivals and rituals playing a significant role in daily life.

The economy of Ghana is based on agriculture, with cocoa, coffee, and oil palms being the main exports. Fishing and manufacturing are also important industries.

As knowledge of the art of writing developed late in our history, and the state of the written record was constantly changing, the word 'written' may be ambiguous. There are cases where what we refer to as writing was not always the same as what is referred to as 'written'.
different groups of people in the country often moved from one settlement to another in the course of their long history, generally as a result of wars or growth of population. These movements resulted either in a mixture of population or replacement of peoples, their culture and history. In addition the European trade on the coast attracted inland people to settle among the coastal population near the trading posts, either as middlemen or as workers for the foreign merchants. A notable example of such settlements is Abola, a district in Accra which, because of the new inhabitants' association with the English merchants, was named English.

**The Wealth**

For its size, Ghana has always been one of the richest countries both in material and in human resources in the history of developing countries. The country's material wealth derived mainly from its abundant mineral resources and the rich land which favoured the country with valuable forest resources, such as timber, plantation cash crops and a variety of food crops.

Among the mineral wealth of the country, the richest in terms of its market value has always been gold. Indeed, it was most appropriate that from the days of Portuguese adventurers in the fifteenth century right up to independence, the country was called The Gold Coast. The next important mineral wealth of the country are diamonds. Two other valuable minerals which have supported the economy of the country are manganese ore and bauxite. Although only about a third of the country's land constitutes the forest zone, Ghana derives much income from raw and sawn timber produced both for domestic use and for export. But, since about 1925, the greatest source of foreign earning for the country has been the cocoa cultivated by farmers in the forest zone.

Endowed by these rich natural resources, Ghana has equally been fortunate in her human resources, producing men who played significant roles at different stages of the nation's history. Indeed, the country's history abounds in examples of men of wisdom, ability and foresight, who not only became a pride of their people but also protected their ancestral sovereign rights.

Among these illustrious sons were patriots like Nana Kwame Anu, a fifteenth century king of Elimina, whose wisdom and foresight amazed the early Portuguese when they sought his permission to build the present castle, St. George, on his land. Another ruler among many others worth mentioning was King Aggrey who, in the nineteenth century, suffered hardship in exile because of his firm stand against the attempts made by the British authorities to divest him of his constitutional rights as the sovereign ruler of Cape Coast.

Long before King Aggrey, a Ghanaian, a native of Axim, had placed Africa on the map of world scholarship. He was Anthony William Amo, who made history as the first black African to pursue advanced studies in German uni-
A History of Ghana

University, where he crowned his academic work with a doctorate degree in philosophy in 1974. Part of the address made by his supervisor, Professor Martin Loescher of the University of Wittenberg, when Amo was being awarded the degree is worth quoting:

We proclaim Africa and its region of Guinea .... The Golden Coast, so called by Europeans on account of its abundant and copious yield of gold .... the mother not only of many good things and the treasures of nature but also of the most successful minds: we proclaim her quite deservedly. Among these auspicious minds, your [referring to Amo's] genius stands out particularly, most noble and most distinguished Sir, seeing that you have excellently proved the felicity and superiority of your genius, the solidity and refinement of your learning and teaching, in countless examples up to now and even in this our University with great honour in all worthy things, and now also in your present dissertation.

It was but the natural sequel that Anthony William Amo was appointed to teach at the highest centres of learning in Europe, the first known African south of the Sahara to do so.

In the pre-colonial days, Ghana also produced evangelists like Christien Prooten (1715-1769), the son of a Danish father and a Ghanian mother from Otu, Accra. Another distinguished evangelist was Philip Quaquah (d. 1816), the first West African to be ordained a priest of the Anglican Church, and the first native to become a headmaster at Cape Coast Castle School on the Guinea Coast.

Along with men of achievements in the field of evangelization in the country, were others who distinguished themselves in trade, commerce, and industry. These 'Merchant Princes' as they were called included two great men, John Kabes of Komenda in the Central Region, and John Koom, native of Prince Town on the coast of the Western Region. A man of outstanding talent and of many parts, John Kabes became a magistrate in trade, commerce and industry. His accomplishments have been well summed up by the distinguished Ghanian historian, the late Dr. Kwame Dasu, in the following words: 'Ruler, trader, farmer, owner of a vast sugar house, and a successful broker, his services were keenly sought for by both the English and the Dutch.'

Equally renowned in the economic, social and political pre-colonial history of Ghana was John Koony (sometimes referred to as Koon or Kony). Like his eighteenth century contemporary John Kabes, the summit of John Koony's career has been described in the following words of Kwame Dasu: A man of strong personality and character, he ignored Dutch threats, openly defied them, and successfully pitted his powers against an Anglo-Dutch alliance in 1711. John Koony was a ruler with connections reaching as far inland as Asante. His attempts to inject life into the Brandenburg African Company won him an enthusiastic acclaim in Germany. For his efforts he won the appellation 'the last Prussian Negro Prince'.

As European imperialism grew in the country from the nineteenth century onwards, patriots emerged who asserted the ancestral rights of the people. We have already mentioned King Aggrey of Cape Coast. Soon after the king's death, the leaders of the Fante Confederation emerged and led a nationalist movement which is described in Chapter 7. Later, as we shall see in the same chapter, other patriots like John Menah Sarbah took over the baton in the defence of the people's ancestral lands against the white man's attempts to invest in the British Crown all lands in the country not in visible use. In the present century, there were important patriots like Joseph Casely Hayford, the originator of and the spirit behind the National Congress of British West Africa which, as we shall see on pages 145 to 146, was the first organized interterritorial nationalist movement against the British imperial system in West Africa.

From the 1920s, Ghana continued to be blessed with other patriots like Kobina Sekyi, the last president of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. Equally important in the political history of the country were men like Dr. J.B. Danquah, who earned the appellation 'of the Dozen Gold Coast politicians'. It was Danquah and his colleagues who soared the event of what were described as 'Youth Movements', precursor to the later effective national-wide fight which eventually ended the British rule, with the country achieving independence in 1957.

Finally, Ghana's colonial history took a decisive turn when Kwame Nkrumah entered the nationalist cause. On the occasion of his death in 1972, the Military Government headed by General I.K. Acheampong paid Nkrumah the following deserving tribute: 'His place in history is assured'. Nkrumah shook the very foundations of the imperial system by being the first in the 'Black World' to lead his country to overthrow the colonial rule. In this way, not only did he place his own country and the entire black people on the world map, but what was more, he lit a torch which inspired and led other peoples under the yoke of colonial rule to sovereign independence of their own nations.

The great men described above, and many others who equally made a name in the pre-independence history of Ghana, emerged from communities rich in heritage and comprising different indigenous states and kingdoms whose origins, growth and institutions are described in the following three chapters.
Chapter 2

The Akan I

The Akan are the largest group in Ghana, totalling over half of the people of Ghana, and occupying five of the ten administrative regions of the country, and part of the sixth. This people comprise a number of divisions which include the Bono, Asante, Adane, Twifo, Akan, Fanté, Akwapem, Akyem, Akwamu, Kwahu, Sefwi, Awaso, Niiama and Ahanta. As kinmen, they have in common many political, social religious and cultural institutions, though there are local varieties.

The Akan speak dialects of a common language also called Akan, which is enriched by local varieties of vocabulary, expression and idiom. The two main varieties of the Akan language are Twi and Fanté, which are very closely related. Fanté is spoken in the coastal parts of the country, and Twi by most of the Akan in the hinterland. In addition to these two major variants of the Akan language there are four other inter-related dialects which differ significantly from Twi and Fanté. These are Nizama, Nkansa, Assawon and Sefwi, all spoken in the Western Region of the country.

Apart from having a common parent language, the different groups of the Akan share a number of social and political institutions. Throughout Akan society there are seven or eight matrilineal 'clans', called abusua; and seven patrilineal groupings, called ntono or kru. An Akan by birth belongs to the abusua of his mother, but inherits the ntono or kru (the animating spirit) of his father. In respect of all institutions proper to men, like the military organisation called the asafo, the Akan belongs to his father's group. Wherever an Akan travels, these bonds of maternal and paternal affinity follow him. He is received as a member of the local abusua or the extended family, enjoying all privileges and rights, and sharing in the customary obligations with his 'brothers' and 'sisters' there. He also, in a true sense, looks to the protection and embraces the rights and duties, of his paternal ntono in the area. One other peculiar practice among the Akan is inheritance through the maternal lineage. Inter-marriage among members of the same abusua, even those hailing from different Akan states, is strictly forbidden, but an Akan could marry and often entered into wedlock with a paternal cousin.

Chapter 3 provides an account of some of the important political, social and religious institutions which Akan society developed. Most of these institutions were indeed common to the non-Akan people in the country as well.

THE BONO

The oral traditions of many Akan groups agree that Bono, now the Bono-Ashanti Region, emerged as the cradle of the Akan people. Indeed, nearly all the different groups of the Akan trace their original homes to Bonoland, but the traditions are not clear about the origins of the Bono Kingdom itself, nor about the circumstances leading to the immigration of the Bono people into the kingdom and the foundation of the kingdom within present-day Ghana.

The first ruler remembered in the traditions seems to have been King Assaman; he led his people southwards from the 'north', possibly from the south-west region of the present-day Republic of Burkina Faso. We do not know when this immigration took place, but by about the beginning of the fourteenth century the kingdom's capital at Bono-Manso was growing as the capital of an important kingdom and the centre of the Akan civilization.

Under the great ruler, Akumfi Anyewy I (c. 1328–63) Bono-Manso expanded into a prosperous kingdom. He exploited the gold mines which abounded in the kingdom, and he is said to have been the first ruler in Akan-land to introduce gold dust as currency and the gold weight as a measure of value. This system of measuring value by gold weight as a medium of exchange was later developed by the Asante and other Akan states. Akumfi Anyewy I is also credited with the acquisition of much of the gold regalia which have been preserved in the royal court at Takyimans, the later capital of the Bono established after the defeat and destruction of Bono-Manso by King Opoku Ware I of Asante in 1723. The many fabulous legends regarding the wealth of King Anyewy I, such as the story that he supported yams in the royal garden with sticks made of pure gold, indicate how prosperous Bono became through trade, commerce, toils and tributes received from vassal kingdoms, before the kingdom declined in the mid-eighteenth century. Before this time, population expansion and internal struggles, together with the desire for independent existence, compelled several Akan units within the kingdom to emigrate southwards to found new settlements. Some of these new Denkyira, Twifo Akwamu, Asante, Akryem and Fanté.

THE DENKYIRA

Denkyira, in the Central Region, is today split in two: Upper Denkyira and Lower Denkyira. The two parts are separated by two other Akan states, Twifo and Heman. It was as a result of wars with Asante that a section of the Denkyira moved southwards with their king beyond Twifo and Heman, and established a new capital at Jukwaa, about twenty kilometres south-west of
Cape Coast. At the time, it suffered its initial defeat by the Asante at the Battle of Assin (1701), which resulted in the loss of several key leaders and the ascendancy of Tansi Bin Aku as Chief. The Asante, under the leadership of Osei Kofu I, gradually expanded their control over the region, incorporating the Anlo, the Fanti, and the Ga into their empire.

The period from 1650 to 1701 is often referred to as the Asante Golden Age, a time when the empire reached its peak of power and wealth. However, it was also a time of internal strife and division, which would eventually lead to the decline of the Asante Empire. The internal power struggles and the attempts to maintain control over the empire's vast territories made the Asante rulers more vulnerable to external pressures.

In the late 17th century, the Asante Empire faced increasing challenges from the European traders and the British, who were keen to establish closer ties with the African kingdoms. The Asante rulers, under the leadership of Osei Mensah II (1725-1792), sought to balance the demands of their European allies with the need to maintain their traditional values and way of life.

The influence of Islam, Christianity, and European culture had a significant impact on the Asante Empire during this period. The Asante rulers welcomed some of the European traders, who were interested in the gold and other resources of the empire. However, they also resisted the efforts of the European powers to exert more control over the Asante territories.

The Asante Empire reached its peak of power and wealth in the late 17th century, but the internal divisions and external pressures would eventually lead to its decline. The period from 1650 to 1701 marks a significant phase in the history of the Asante Empire, characterized by both growth and challenges that would shape the empire's future.
The Asante, Heman, and Assin

The Asante Empire was a major power in West Africa, notable for its gold trade and military prowess. The Asante state was known for its well-organized military, the Fante, which was feared throughout the region. The empire was centered around the city of Kumasi, which served as both a political and religious center. The Asante Empire reached its peak in the 19th century, but declined in the 20th century due to internal strife and external pressure.

Heman and Assin were regions known for their agricultural productivity. Heman was a coastal region famous for its gold trade, while Assin was a fertile inland region known for its rice and coffee production. These regions played a significant role in the Asante economy and were a source of wealth and prosperity for the Asante state.

The fall of the Asante Empire in 1901 marked the end of an era in West African history. The empire留下了 a legacy of cultural and political influence that continues to this day.
having to change alliances often, at one time with Ayovu, at another with the Akon. In their dealings with the Europeans, they were often divided and it was their failure to form a united, coherent front that enabled the Europeans to exploit them.

The State of the Akan

The Akan states were a number of traditional states located along the coast of Ghana. They were known for their powerful armies and their wealth, which was derived from the trade in gold, ivory, and slaves. The Akan states were ruled by powerful kings who had the power to control the trade routes and levy taxes on the merchants. The Akan states were also known for their military prowess and their ability to organize large armies to defend their territories.

The kingdom of the Ashanti was the largest and most powerful of the Akan states. It was located in the southern part of Ghana and was ruled by a king who was known as the Asantehene. The Ashanti kingdom was founded by Osei Tutu, who was a brave and skilled king. He was able to unite the various Akan states under his rule and to expand the kingdom's territory.

In the 18th century, the Ashanti kingdom reached its peak, and it became one of the most powerful states in the region. It was able to resist the advances of the European powers, who were trying to establish trading posts in the area. However, in the 19th century, the Ashanti kingdom began to decline, and it eventually fell to the British in 1874.

The Fante

The Fante were a people who lived along the coast of Ghana, from the modern-day cities of Accra to Cape Coast. They were known for their seafaring traditions and their skill as fishermen. The Fante were also known for their wealth, which was derived from the trade in gold, ivory, and slaves. The Fante were ruled by a powerful chief who was known as the Fante Asafo. The Fante Asafo was able to control the trade routes and to levy taxes on the merchants.

The Fante were also known for their military prowess and their ability to organize large armies to defend their territories. They were able to resist the advances of the European powers, who were trying to establish trading posts in the area. However, in the 19th century, the Fante kingdom began to decline, and it eventually fell to the British in 1901.

The Akan and the Europeans

The Akan states were able to resist the advances of the European powers, who were trying to establish trading posts in the area. However, in the 19th century, the Akan states began to decline, and they eventually fell to the British. The British were able to exploit the divisions within the Akan states and to establish trading posts in the area. They were able to take advantage of the Akan states' inability to organize a united, coherent front.
all knowledgable and powerful; the oracles at the shrine were consulted by people from all parts of Fantoland.

Living on the coast, the Fante were the first group of people in what is now Ghana to come into contact with the European merchants. The coastal trade benefited them in several ways. They became wealthy both from selling their own wares, and from transactions as middlemen. Many inland people migrated to swell the population of the coastal towns like Abandoe, which means “at the foot of the European fort”. As a result of the coastal-European trade, there also emerged a new class, the merchant class (including the mulattoes), whose wealth enabled them to become the elite of society and to give their children formal education both locally and overseas. It became fashionable for the new class to intermarry and thus perpetuate their upper class affluent position, and to exercise a great influence on the political, economic and social life of society. This largely explains why, right up to the eve of Ghana’s independence, the Fante played a leading role in the affairs of the nation, particularly in respect of nationalist movements.

Notes
1. Oral tradition has, however, persisted to this day that Asante (see page 17) in the present Asante Region was the home and centre of Fante dispersion, and indeed is reputed in the legends to be the place where God started the creation of the world.
2. Present-day Obuasi, which has currently one of the world’s richest gold mines, was an area within metropolitan Denkyira.

Chapter 3

The Akan II

In addition to the Akan people and states described in the previous chapter, there were several other important ones. These included Adanse, Akwamu and Asante. In the south-western part of the country were others whose language differed substantially from the main Akan tongue: Awowin, Sekwi, Nima, etc.

THE ADANSE

Today, the Adanse state is part of Asante and owes allegiance to the Golden Stool. Historically, however, Adanse emerged as a state earlier than their one-time vassals, Denkyira and Asante. Indeed, as we noted in the footnote on page 16, our oral history supports the legend that Adanse was the place where the creation of the world started. This legend would seem to point to the likelihood, as some historians maintain, that Adanse was the original centre of Akan dispersion to different areas, and that it was here that Akan institutions, the creation of the office of the Okyenhene, or “linguist” as it is called, took shape.

Before the sixteenth century, Adanse consisted of several independent city-states, Fomenu, Ayiaase, Edubiase, Akimkum, etc., which formed a loose confederation. This fact seemed to be the origin of the popular Adanse saying, “Adanse nkiotse, adwen na ne bon ano”, meaning that the Adanse city-states were like little crabs, each of which controlled its own hole.

In the sixteenth century, however, the powerful ruler, Awulade Bassa made an attempt to unite the Adanse. He created a mystical sword, the Aforwbe which, like the later Asante of Denkyira or the Golden Stool of Asante, served as the symbol and embodiment of Adanse unity. Unlike the Denkyira and Asante symbols of unity, the Adanse Aforwbe passed on from father to son, and because of the Adanse and its matrilineal descent system, the sword passed on from one stood to another, whenever the holder had a son by a woman from another state. But the significant thing about the sword was that whoever held it at the time of war led the combined Adanse men to the battlefield. In time of peace, however, the holder of the sword was nothing more than a custodian, and was not recognized as the supreme ruler over the other kings.
In the eighteenth century, the ruler of Fomena, Bonser Afriyie's stool, kept the sword permanently in its state. This happened partly because he did not marry outside Fomena and partly because rulers who followed him were powerful and could enforce their retention of the sword in their state. In spite of this, the other rulers of Adanase continued to maintain their own autonomy up to the beginning of the twentieth century, when Great Britain annexed Asante (including Adanase). Fomena's political leadership became crystallized and from that time, the ruler was recognized as the paramount chief of all Adanase.

Although they enjoyed separate existence, the Adanase maintained close links as one people. Their common allegiance to the Akan beliefs that they had one tutelary god, the Adanase Bonze, said to reside in a cave in a grove between Akrogye and Pakakro. People from all parts of Adanase worshipped together and consulted the oracles at the shrine. At the annual grand festival, the chief priest of Bonumasi at Pakakro sent the Ameriawo (that is, water from the Bow caves) to all the chiefs of Adanase to be used in the purification of their stools and states. To this day, other Akan people who originated from Adanase have kept the practice of receiving Ameriawo (Bonumasi's shrine) in front of the chief's house.

The territory included the present-day rich gold mines at Otumfuo, and Adanase derived its wealth and prosperity from the abundant gold which the area possessed and from its central location as market. For centuries Edahwase grew as a very important market centre and entrepôt serving merchants from the north and from the coast. But Adanase's economically advantageous location attracted the envy of neighboring states, notably Denkyira and later Asante. In the course of their relations with these powerful states, Adanase suffered defeats in several wars. Resulting from these wars, sections of the people emigrated to other lands. Some, like the Akwamu, moved eastwards; others crossed the Pra southwards and established themselves into kingdoms like those of Asen Apenanan.

**THE AKWAMU**

Oral traditions affirm that the Akwamans were among the first of the Akan to emigrate from Bonoboland in search of new homes. Leaving Bonoboland, they made for the south and, crossing the Ofu and the Pra Rivers, settled at Twifo-Heaven, some sixty-five kilometres north-west of Cape Coast. About the time the Akwamans were establishing their position in their new settlement among the Eti and in the area, another Akan group, the Twifo, emigrated from Bonoboland and settled on both sides of the River Pra. The traditions indicate that after a time Twifo gained ascendency over and became overlord of her southern neighbours, the Akwamans in Heaven. Situated close to the coast, the Twifo...
and Akwamu established trading links with the European merchants at Shama, Komenda, Elmina and Cape Coast. They also served as middlemen in the coastal-inland trade, gained much wealth, and became powerful states.

It is not certain when the Akwamu settled at Heman, but about the beginning of the seventeenth century a succession dispute compelled a section of the community led by one of the rival candidates, later known as Onumfo Asare, to leave Twifo-Heman. They halted in west Akwamu, and built a town which they named Asene-man (also after their leader (meaning ‘Asene’s large state’) now known as Assaman.1 Diving largely to the absence of Akwamu’s neighbouring kingdoms and their own resourcefulness, the Akwamu steadily expanded their new territory, and soon began to control the trade routes between European posts in Winneba and Accra districts and the inland states. They were able to buy arms and munitions for wars of expansion. Winning the support of the Europeans on the coast and led by able rulers, the Akwamu spread their sphere of influence down to Accra and the neighbouring countries.

Because of the pressures exerted on them later by the Akyem, their neighbours and traditional enemies, and possibly because of their desire to shift their entire influence close to the European trading posts in Accra and the neighboring coastal town, the Akwamu moved their capital to Nyanran, and later to Nsuei, about twenty kilometers from Accra. After years of warfare, they suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of the Akyem. They crossed the Volta River and settled in a new capital, Akwumofu, (meaning ‘Akwamu’s home’) near the present-day hydro-electric dam at Akosombo. By about 1710, when Osei Tutu was consolidating the nucleus of the future Asante empire, Akwamu had become the largest Akan empire, embracing under its sphere of influence Agona, the Ga state on the Akwapem ridge, Galam, Latebi (present-day Adangbe) and parts of Akyem and Kwawan.

Much of Akwamu’s success derived from the ability and bravery of its leaders. The best of the great rulers of Akwamu, after the founder, Osei Tutu, was King Ansar Saraku who ruled from 1660 to 1689. He fought many wars of expansion and subdued, among other peoples, the Ga and the Ashanti. By the time of his death, Asa Saraku had established friendly and prosperous trading relations with European merchants in what is today Greater Accra Region, whose kingdoms remained Akwamu vassal states up to 1730. After Asa Saraku’s death, two rival members of the royal family, Basua and Adu, became joint rulers of Akwamu. During this period, Akwamu became so powerful that Asante, one of its leaders, was able to oust the Danish Governor from the famous Christiansborg Castle in Accra and to occupy it for a time before it was redeemed at a handsome price. On the death of Basua, Adu became the sole ruler of the kingdom, and continued with the wars of expansion and the promotion of trade with the white men, Akwamu, an able ruler, succeeded Adu and reigned from 1702 to 1725. He annexed Kpando and parts of the Afram plains in Kwawan. Akoono cultivated friendly relations with the Anglo on the coast, an alliance which brought to them the benefits of trade with the Danes in Keta and the neighbourhood.

The annexations outlined above helped the Akwamu to control the rich trade with the Europeans. They became middlemen in the trade of gold and slaves which passed through their territories from Asante to the eastern coast. The tributes paid into the royal treasury by the vassal states, and the rents and tolls imposed on European traders during the period when Ga-Adangbe came under the control of the Akwamu, added much to the state revenue. The wealth they commanded not only boosted local power and prestige, but also helped the rulers to maintain an effective system of administration and an efficient army.

Some historians give the impression that, by 1730, following her defeat by Akyem, Akwamu had vanished as a powerful kingdom. This is not entirely true. The Danish governor of Christiansborg in Accra, writing in 1744, affirmed that “the Akwamu are still as belligerent as their ancestors and they have sold up the largest number of slaves (war captives) which are traded inland.” The Akwamu seemed to have held their own until the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, under two of their able kings, Dzoku (r. 1781) and Akoono (r. 1792), Akwamu was able to annex Foki, their eastern neighbour, a state exercising overlordship over a large area.

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1. The exact date is uncertain. Akwamu's expansion is often cited as occurring in the 17th century. However, the specific dates vary among different sources. The dates provided here are illustrative of the period when the Akwamu gained significant power and influence. The Akwamu's capital was moved from Heman to Nyanran, then to Nsuei. This transition is significant as it marked a shift in the center of Akwamu's power and influence.
In spite of her apparent state of strength, however, it seemed that by the third decade of the eighteenth century, Akwamu had lost much of its former size, influence and prestige. A number of factors including the following were responsible for the decline of Akwamu. Lack of effective communication throughout the vast empire and her later failure to weld together the many vassal states into an integrated whole encouraged many vassal kingdoms to entertain pronounced consciousness of their separate existence and led to the desire to assert their independence at the appropriate time. It is also believed that the Akwamans ruled generally treated their conquered and vassal states harshly and oppressively; this was particularly true of Akono. This attitude invited persistent resistance and rebellions. A third reason was the continued hostility of her traditional enemy, the Akyem. Envious of her wealth and prosperity, and determined to get direct access to the coastal trade, Akwamu’s western neighbours like the Akyem mobilized most of the subject-states of Akwamu and attacked her. The combined forces, under Frempom Maso II, King of Akyem Kotosho, inflicted a crushing defeat on the kingdom in 1730. Following this upset, many Akwamu vassal states either asserted their own independence or switched their allegiance to other powerful states. Thus began the decline of Akwamu as an empire.

Akwamu has had an important and lasting impact on the states which came under her. The Ga adopted some Akwamu institutions, such as the Asafo organisation and songs and the Akan institution of kingship, which have all survived to this day. Indeed, Akwamu’s influence crossed northwards throughout Akanland right to Asante. The creation of a special Akwamu stool in Asante and in many other Akan lands owes its origins to the Akwamu. Historians also believe that Asante and other states owed much of their effective military strategy to what Osei Tutu and Okomfo Anunkye learned from Akwamu.

THE ASANTE

A number of factors account for the important place which Asante has occupied throughout the history of Ghana. Firstly, the Asante empire became far more extensive than the other important Akan kingdoms, such as Bono, Denkyira, Akwamu and Fante. At its peak, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the empire covered more than seventy per cent of the land area of modern Ghana, and its influence extended beyond the present frontiers of the country. Secondly, the Asante empire and influence lasted longer than all the other Akan states. Emerging as a great kingdom under Osei Tutu in the early eighteenth century, its greatness lasted up to the end of the nineteenth century when it was finally crippled and annexed by the British colonial powers. Thirdly, because over the years the people maintained their culture and other institutions in their pure form, Asante has remained the central focus of Akan culture and civilisation.

Fig 6 Gold mask from the treasure of the Asante, ©, Samsi Kofi Kakari

There are a number of legends about the origins of the different sections of the Asante. What seems certain is that the Asante as a united people started with a nucleus of the Oyoko clan which began to expand around Asanteman (which means ‘original home of the Asante’). In due course, the petty settle-ments grew in size as separate states, but they were all under the overlordship of Denkyira. In time, they developed into a strong union, whose foundations were laid by the early rulers about whom the accounts are not clear. The first remembered ruler was Twum Antwi (thought to have been probably two joint rulers, Twum and Antwi). Next was Kobia Amantw (c. 1621–43). He was succeeded by Otu Akenten who reigned from about 1644 to 1669. During his long reign, lasting from 1669 to 1695, the next ruler, Okyir Yobea established his capital at Kwaman and annexed lands through wars of expansion. In an attempt to remove the threats to his kingdom by its formidable neighbours, he was killed in an expedition against Dorma.

Osei Tutu

The expansion of Asante into an empire started with Osei Tutu (c. 1695–1717). In keeping with the custom at the time Osei Tutu as a youth, was sent to the court of Denkyira, then overlord of the Asante. From here he later led to Akwamu to escape the consequences of his intimate affairs with the sister of the king of Denkyira. His sojourn in Akwamu was a blessing for the Asante
in the following ways. In addition to the knowledge he had acquired at the Denkyira royal court, Osei Tutu probably also learned about the institutions and military organisation upon which Akwamu's strength and greatness rested. What was more, in Akwamu he met and made his permanent friend Okomfo Anokye, the great priest who later accompanied him to Asante and became his great advisor, guide and protector in peace and war.

On the death of his uncle, Chiri Yecho, Osei Tutu returned to Asante and was installed as king. To this day, Osei Tutu is revered as perhaps the greatest ruler of Asante. He is credited with many important achievements which helped to lay the foundation of Asante as an empire. With the advice of Okomfo Anokye and aided by the aura of the priest's reputed magical powers, Osei Tutu united the states of the Oyoko clan and shifted his capital from Kwaama to the central site of present-day Kumase. A legend has persisted to this day claiming that to ascertain the best site for the capital Okomfo Anokye planted three trees at different places. Two died, the surviving tree being at Kumase. This story may not have any historical foundation but what is of great importance for the union of Asante states was that from that time, attracted by the spell of the apparent magical powers of Okomfo Anokye, all sections of Asante looked upon Kumase as their capital and all kings, though sovereign, accepted the king of Kumase as the overlord or paramount ruler of the entire Asante, to whom they offered reverence as Asantehene.

To seal the Asante union, Okomfo Anokye created for the nation the magic of the 'Golden Stool'. At a gathering of the great personalities of Asante, Okomfo Anokye caused a wooden stool plated with gold to 'descend from heaven' among thick smoke, encircled by a magical display of the priest, the people became convinced that the stool indeed came from 'heaven', and that the soul and spirit of the people was embodied in the stool in the same way, it was to be guarded at all costs. This belief generated in the Asante not only a sense of unity, but also a source of strength; this was one of the secrets of their courage and success in war.

With the help of Okomfo Anokye, Osei Tutu also instituted a special annual festival, the Okrofo, which he probably copied from the Denkyira. On the occasion of the Okrofo, all the Asante kings assembled in Kumase for elaborate rituals, and renewed their loyalty and allegiance to the Golden Stool and the Asantehene. The importance of this festival was that, at least once a year, all the member states of the Asante confirmed their solidarity as one people with a common destiny.

To strengthen the Asante union further, Osei Tutu took three other important measures. He made a law forbidding any person under pain of death, to disclose or make any reference to the former independence or conquest of any state within the Asante union. Furthermore, as they were one people, on no account could one member state go to war against another without reference to the supreme ruler. Thirdly, Osei Tutu enshrined the supreme power of the empire in a hierarchy of authority, with the Asantehene at the apex. Next in importance were the other kings in metropolitan Asante, later with Mans ponhohe ranking immediately after the Asantehene. The second group were the tribal kings in the provinces. Another development from the days of Osei Tutu was the creation of more partrilineal stools in the Kumase division; this was to ensure the personal protection of the Asantehene by the 'sons' of the occupants of the Golden Stool. Each of the tribal rulers maintained communication with the Asantehene through an important king in the Kumase division.

It is also believed that Okomfo Anokye helped Osei Tutu to adopt the effective military organisation of both Denkyira and Akwamu. As in Denkyira and Akwamu, the kings were also grouped into military divisions or wings: the van, the rear, the right, the left and the bodyguard. The tribal kings were given places in these military metropolitan divisions. Strengthened by the institutions described above, and inspired by Okomfo Anokye and by the unshakable faith in the popularly accepted magical power of the great priest, Osei Tutu embarked upon several wars of expansion. The greatest of these wars was his conquest of Denkyira. As we noted on page 12, two facts moved Osei Tutu to free Asante as a result of Denkyira. The first was the harsh rule and the oppressive taxation which Denkyira imposed upon Asante. The second reason was Asante's desire to have direct access to the

Fig 7 Asante artillery crossing the Pra
Ozymandias had fashioned a grand palace, craggy and vast, with statues of himself standing all around it. The people who lived there knew him as their king and builder. His subjects saw him as a god, and they feared him. They believed that he could do anything he wanted. But then, one day, something unexpected happened. A great storm came, and it destroyed everything in its path. The palace was destroyed, and the statues were toppled. All that was left was a pile of rubble. The people who lived there were left without a leader, and they lived in fear and confusion. They knew that Ozymandias was gone, but they didn't know where he had gone or what he had become. They wondered if he was still alive, and if so, what had happened to him. The people who lived there had lost their faith in Ozymandias, and they had lost their way. They were lost, and they were alone.
With the accumulation of wealth, the Asante developed the skill of making "gold weights", used for measuring monetary values and the rate of exchange to a degree unknown in any other Akan state. This enormous wealth, along with other factors, also helped the Asante to develop their empire into one of the greatest in the history of Africa. To this day, the Asante stand out as the leading custodians of Ghana's cultural heritage.

THE AKYEM

In present-day Eastern Region of the country there are three traditional states of the Akyem people who, according to their traditions, were originally kinmen. These states are Abuaawku, Kotoku and Bosome, and their traditional headquarters are Kyebi, Odoo and Akyem Nsawo respectively. Because of their early close relationship, and probably because the early Europeans who recorded bits of their history did not appreciate that the three groups of the Akyem had developed separate histories, the early records confuse to confuse the accounts relating to these people.

All the three Akyem states trace their original home from Asante, now in the Asante Ashanti region. Like the other Akan groups, they probably formed part of the nucleus of the Bon Creatures. Indeed, the Bosome tradition of origin seem to confirm this. Some authorities believe that the Akyem commenced their emigration from their original home as early as the days of Ntim Gyakari of Denkyira, towards the close of the seventeenth century. But their migration, like that of the other Akan groups now in the southern parts of the country, was not a sudden move. They dispersed in small bands; by the mid-eighteenth century, however, the three Akyem groups had become firmly established into strong kingdoms in their present territories.

The first ruler of the Akyem Abuaawku who is said to have led his people from Asante was Kuantoo-umun. He was preceded, in Asante, by about four other rulers, about whom not much is clearly remembered in the traditions of the people. Having established the nucleus of the new Abuaawku state, Kuantoo-umun was succeeded by Ofori Pampus. It was this ruler's kinsman, Ofori Kuma, who led a section of the Abuaawku up the hills to establish for themselves the Akuapem kingdom. Ofori Kuma and his people met an aboriginal people on the hills, said to belong to the Osei group who to this day have preserved their original language, Kwekrow. These include the people of Larteh, Awutu, Asikrom, Aperade and a few other villages.

During their dispersion from somewhere in present-day Asante, the Kotoku are said to have first settled for a time in the area of present-day Edina, about twenty kilometres east of Kumasi. Their next sojourn was in present-day Asante Akyem, where their principal town was old Kotoku. From here they finally settled in their present territory, with new Kotoku as their capital. In due course, Odoo replaced new Kotoku as capital.

Unlike the Kotoku, the Bosome seemed to have emigrated without any hint to their present territory. This is understandable for, as can be seen from the map of Ghana, the Bosome state borders closely to the frontiers of Asante, their original home.

Having found new homes, the three groups of Akyem maintained their hold in their territories. To this end, they adopted an important twofold policy; they constantly defended their territories against their then strong neighbours, the Asante and the Akwamu, and also made attempts at wars of expansion. In pursuit of these policies, they found strong allies in the Denkyira, the traditional enemies of the Asante, and the Ga-Adangbe, who in turn needed allies against their overlords, the Akwamu. It was in the course of one of their defensive wars that the Akyem killed Osei Tutu of Asante in 1717 when he was crossing the Pra River, ostensibly to punish the Akyem who had supported the Denkyira in several of their engagements against the Asante.

The rivalry between the Akyem and the Asante persisted right into the nineteenth century. This could be easily understood; when in 1834 the Dwoaben, a state within the Asante federation of states, decided to seek refuge and go into temporary exile, they readily obtained lands from the Akuawku. On the second occasion, in 1874, the Dwoaben emigrants remained permanently in what is today New Dwoaben, with their capital at Kofoorikua.

Awoodin, Nizima, Sehwi and Wasa

In the south-western part of the country are groups of Akan, who although their inter-related dialects belong basically to the parental language, are markedly different from the main Akan dialect of Twi-Fante. These people are the Awoodi, Nizima, Evale, Awoodin, and Sehwi. In between these and Twi-Fante are the Wasa. Despite pronounced differences in dialects, however, the institutions of these south-western people have much in common with those of the other main Akan groups and are considered as truly part of the Akan culture.

Like nearly all other Akan south of the Pra and Ofe Rivers, the Awoodin, Evale and Nizima trace their origin in the 'north', most probably in Bono or Asante land. The nucleus of the immigrants were settled in their present homes certainly before the fifteenth century. This is clear from the records of the Portuguese, who had trading intercourses with the white people when they arrived in the country in the second half of the fifteenth century. Indeed, from the days of the early white traders on the coast, the whole area of what is today Western Nizima was shown on the maps as Apollonia, a name which is said to have been given to the place because the white men first set foot on the shores of Benin on the feast of St. Apollonia.

According to oral tradition, the first important Nizima ruler who is said to