

A History of
Ghana

Revised and Updated

F.K. Buah
M.A., Ed.D (Hon)





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'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 treasures of nature but also of the most successful minds.'

Martin Gothelf Loescher
University of Wittenberg, 1734

DEDICATION

To my teacher
 Kwame Nkrumah
 Founder of modern Ghana

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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 nationals 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 repressive 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 re-gain independence on 6th March 1957. This revolution, the first over-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 are 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 Ansah, Kojo, Ashanti, Sefwi, Wassaw, Kwahu and Aowin, the book uses the more accurate forms Ansa, Kwadwo, Asante, Sehwi, Wasa, Kwawu and Awowin 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. Duodu, 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. Buah

6th March 1980

Preface to the Second Edition

Advantage has been taken of the new edition to make textual corrections, to re-write 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. Buah

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 oaths, language of the palace drums, gongs and trumpets, legends and fables, state taboos, place names, as well as special titles which some rulers assumed.¹ 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 made 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

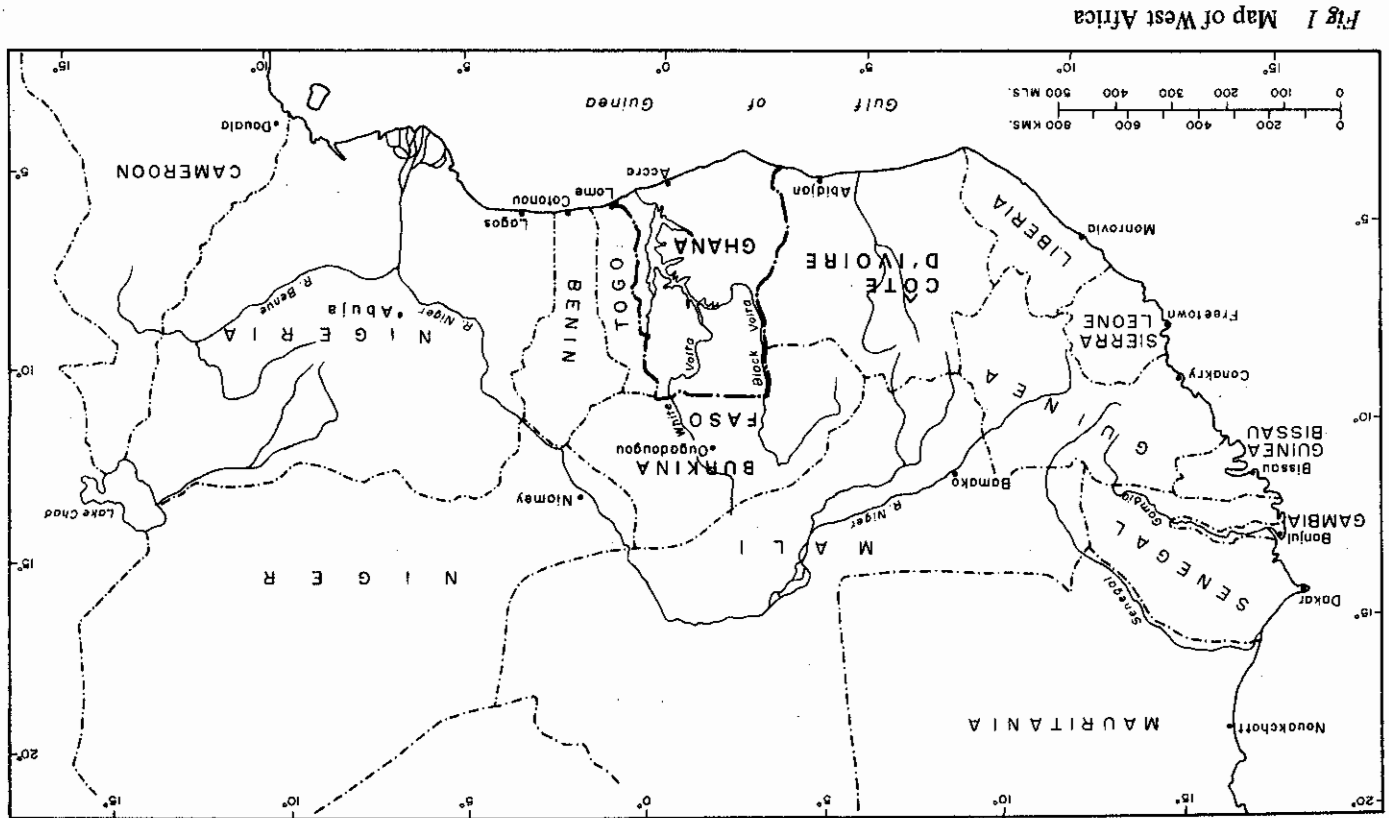
The Land and People

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 sphere 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 Asante and Bono-Ahafo 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 mid-way 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



geography, like that of most other lands, has very much influenced the course of Ghana's history.

Ghana is generally a flat land, with one main continuous upland range which cuts across the country north-westwards from the frontiers of the Republic of Togo through the Volta Region, Akuapem, Akyem, Kwawu and Asante to Kintampo in the Bono-Ahafo Region. The range is broken up by the River Volta by a gorge at Akosombo, where a hydro-electric dam has been built, about eighty kilometres north-west of Accra. The most prominent peaks of the range are concentrated north-east of the gorge, in the Volta Region; the highest of these peaks, Mount Afadjuto, is about 886 metres above sea level. In many ways, the scarp is an important geographical feature, dividing the country into two main zones of land: the savannah to the north, and the rich forest lands to the south. The existence of the scarp also explains the pattern of early settlements of the various people in the country, and the differences in the economic and historical developments within the two zones.

As the map on page 175 illustrates, Ghana is blessed because of its many rivers, most of which flow into the sea. The largest of these rivers is the Volta which has formed into the world's largest artificial lake as a result of construction of the dam at Akosombo. The rivers not only helped the fertility of the land but also promoted fresh water industry. In early days some of these rivers, like the Tano, Ankobra and the Pra, were the only means of ferrying timber logs downstream to the coast for shipment overseas.

The country enjoys two main seasons: the dry season lasting from about October to March, and the wet season consisting of the heavy rains from about April to the end of July, followed by light rains in August and September. The south-western part is the wettest zone of the country with an annual rainfall of about 1,000 mm. The Greater Accra Region is the area with the least rainfall: the annual average seldom exceeds 600 mm. The north is dry during a greater part of the year.

Differences in the amount and duration of annual rainfall have largely been responsible for the country's three main vegetational zones, and this, together with other geographical factors, has influenced the economic and social history of the different parts of the country. The savannah grassland to the north of the Volta-Kintampo scarp, with low annual rainfall, has no forest products and lacks mineral resources which have considerably influenced the economic history of the country. Until very recently, the standard of living of people living in this zone did not keep pace with that of the people in the southern part of the country. On the other hand, the savannah lands have always been very fertile for crops like yam and have supported animal husbandry. Lately, with the introduction of mechanised farming, this zone has become the most important area for the cultivation of cereals, including rice and the guinea corn.

Stretching along the coastal belt are the plains, with thickets interspersed in the low grassland. This zone has areas of swamps, especially near the mouths of the rivers entering the sea; these swamps feed the growth of the raffia trees, providing raw materials for some rural industries, and the man-grove vegetation. The plains, however, are not fertile enough to grow crops which thrive in the forest. On the other hand, the coastal belt sustains abundant yield of vegetables like onions, peppers, tomatoes, okros and the garden eggs. The land is also fertile enough for the coconut palm and oil palm plantations, resulting in related industries.

Between the savannah and the coastal lands is the third vegetational zone, the thick tropical forest, which occupies about a third of the land surface of the country. This zone enjoys heavy rainfall and has, therefore, much growth and vegetation. It is the area which has provided nearly all the rich timber and mineral wealth of the country, the principal crops of cocoa and coffee, as well as the principal staple foodstuffs — the plantain, yam and the cocoyam.

A tropical country close to the Equator, Ghana's average monthly temperature ranges between 20°C and 30°C. The hot climate and the high humidity have had an important influence on the history of the country. Because of these factors, the white men were deterred from making permanent settlements in West Africa, as they had done in part of Eastern Africa. Some authorities have attributed this fortunate feature of our history to the mosquito and the malaria fever, but since the use of anti-malaria drugs was spreading widely by the beginning of the nineteenth century, it could be argued that West Africa, including Ghana, became 'the white man's grave' largely because of the climate, which did not favour permanent settlement of the territory by white men.

THE PEOPLE

The main groups of the people of Ghana are distinguished largely by language and, to a lesser degree, by their political, social and other cultural institutions. The Akan constitute more than half the country's population. The Ga-Adangbe and the Ewe both inhabit the south-eastern part of the country, while in the northern half of the country are the Mole-Dagbani, comprising the Mamprusi, Mossi, Dagomba and Gonja. Other groups in the north include the Dagaba, Sisala, Kusasi, Lobi, Konkomba, and Nanumba.

Some of these peoples grew into strong kingdoms or even empires through conquests and immigration; others remained smaller states and indeed, at one time or the other, were annexed as vassals by the more powerful states like Denkyira, Akwamu and Asante.

As knowledge of the art of writing developed late in our history, and the historian has to depend very much upon oral traditions which tend to be less and less reliable as one goes far back into the past, many of the accounts of

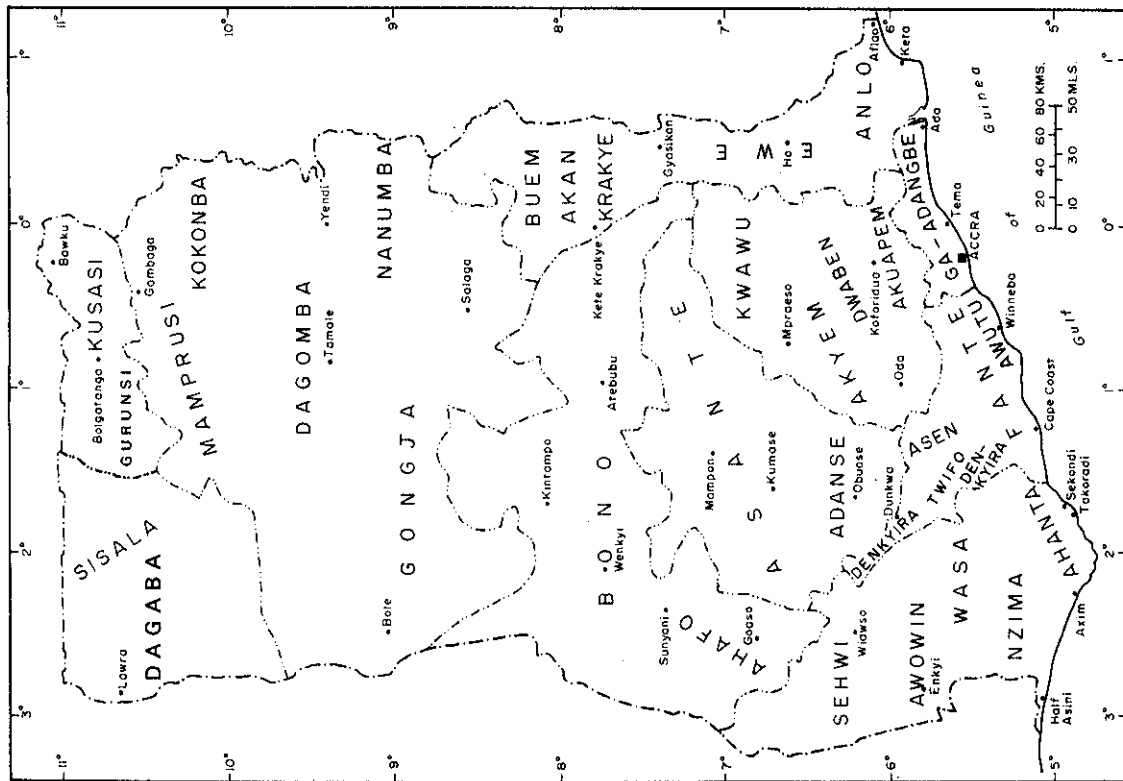


Fig 2 Map showing the main groups of the people of Ghana

the early history of the people told by word of mouth tend to be shrouded in myths and legends. This fact must be borne in mind when considering the stories of origins of the kingdoms described in the following three chapters. Furthermore, the problems relating to the very early history of our people are complicated by the fact that, like most other peoples in early history, the

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 Englishi.

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 Kwamena Ansa, a fifteenth century king of Elmina, 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-

versities, where he crowned his academic work with a doctorate degree in philosophy in 1734. 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 Chretien Protten (1715-1769), the son of a Danish father and a Ghanaian mother from Osu, Accra. Another distinguished evangelist was Philip Quaque (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 of Castle School on the Guinea Coast.

Along with men of achievements in the field of evangelisation 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 Konny, native of Prince Town on the coast of the Western Region. A man of outstanding talent and of many parts, John Kabes became a magnate in trade, commerce and industry. His accomplishments have been well summed up by the distinguished Ghanaian historian, the late Dr. Kwame Daaku, in the following words: 'Ruler, trader, farmer, owner of lucrative salt pans, 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 Konny (sometimes referred to as Counie or Kony). Like his eighteenth century contemporary John Kabes, the summit of John Konny's career has been best described in the following words of Kwame Daaku:

A man of strong personality and character, he ignored Dutch threats, openly defiled them, and successfully pitted his powers against an Anglo-Dutch alliance in 1711. John Konny was a ruler with connections reaching as far inland as Asante. His attempts to inject life into the Brandenberg 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 Mensah 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 organised inter-territorial 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 Doyen of Gold Coast politics'. It was Danquah and his colleagues who sowed the seeds of what were described as 'Youth Movements', precursors to the later effective nationwide 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 scene. 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 well 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, Adanse, Twifo, Asen, Fante, Akuapem, Akyem, Akwamu, Kwawu, Sehwi, Awowin, Nzima and Ahanta. As kinsmen, 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 Fante, which are very closely related. Fante 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 Fante. These are Nzima, Ahanta, Awowin and Sehwi, 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 *ntoro* or *kra*. An Akan by birth belongs to the *abusua* of his mother, but inherits the *ntoro* or *kra* (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 *ntoro* 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 5 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-Ahafo Region, emerged as the cradle of the Akan people.¹ 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 Asaaman; 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 civilisation.

Under the great ruler, Akumfi Ameyaw 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 weights 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 Ameyaw I is also credited with the acquisition of much of the gold regalia which have been preserved in the royal court at Takyiman, 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 Ameyaw I, such as the story that he supported yarns in the royal garden with sticks made of pure gold, indicate how prosperous Bono became through trade, commerce, tolls 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 were Denkyira, Twifo Akwamu, Asante, Akyem and Fante.

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 north-west of

Cape Coast. At the time it suffered its fateful defeat by the Asante at the Battle of Feyiase (1701), Denkyira's sphere of influence extended to many Akan states, including Asante, Bono, Sehwi, Awowin, Wasa, Twifo, Heman, Eguafu and Komenda.

Like the other Akan groups, the traditions of the Denkyira trace their original home, vaguely, to the 'north'. But before they moved down to settle at the new capital, Abankesieso (now in the Asante Region), the Denkyira lived in the neighbourhood of Nkyiraa, in the Bono kingdom.

The traditions indicate that the eighth king of Denkyira, after they had settled at Abankesieso, was Boa Amponsem I (c. 1670-92), about whom historians have fairly certain accounts. However, the foundations of the future empire of Denkyira were laid long before him. Among his predecessors, perhaps the most famous was Boadu Akafo Brempon (c. 1657-68), one of whose great achievements was his success in freeing Denkyira from their overlord, Adanse. Having won independence, Akafo Brempon launched successful wars of expansion in all directions. By the end of his reign, Boadu Akafo Brempon is said to have incorporated into his expanding empire neighbouring kingdoms like Sehwi, Wasa and Twifo. Boa Amponsem continued the expansionist traditions of his great predecessor. In the interior, he annexed Awowin and most of the early petty states which later became united as members of the Asante union. On the coast, he is credited with the conquest of Eguafu and Komenda, then very important European trading centres.

The conquest of Twifo, Eguafu and Komenda cleared the way for the Denkyira to have direct trade with the European merchants on the coast, and this was to foster Denkyira's economic prosperity. Furthermore, as a result of the conquest of Eguafu, then overlord of Elmina, Denkyira was believed to have acquired the 'Notes' (or documents) relating to the Elmina Castle, which enabled her to collect rents on the castle. Recently this theory has been disputed, perhaps unconvincingly.

Boa Amponsem also established trading contacts with the Bono kingdom and beyond, reaching as far as the important commercial centre of Begho in the north-eastern part of the present-day Republic of the Ivory Coast. He also introduced a form of government which was later copied by other Akan states, including Akwamu and Asante. Among these institutions was the creation of divisional rulers who commanded different wings of the Denkyira army and the introduction of the *Odwiwa* Festival.

King Boa Amponsem was succeeded by Ntim Gyakari (c. 1692-1701), whose reign saw the peak and also the decline of the Denkyira empire. He annexed Asen and thus opened another route to the coast. At the height of Ntim Gyakari's power the Denkyira empire commanded an area, the extent of which was only to be surpassed by Asante. Rulers who followed Ntim Gyakari's successor, Owusu Bore I, did not appear to have been as successful as their predecessors, probably because the Denkyira empire had been severely

weakened by the Asante defeat of the kingdom in 1701. From that time, Asante assumed ascendancy in Akan-speaking areas.

The authority of the Denkyira kings was symbolised in the *Abankwaadwa*, the mythical stool of beads, and the executioner's sword which was called *Sasatia*. The beads-stool is believed to have descended from heaven; in it resided the spirit of the Denkyira. It is probable that this idea was copied by Okonfo Anokye for the Asante when he created a similar myth connected with the Golden Stool.

The empire of Denkyira comprised two regions set up for the purpose of both political administration and military organisation, namely metropolitan Denkyira and provincial Denkyira which included all the vassal states. Once a year all the leading vassal rulers assembled at the capital for the celebration of the great *Odwiwa* festival, during which they renewed their oaths of loyalty and allegiance to the king.

The vassal kingdoms enjoyed a great measure of local autonomy as long as they remained loyal to the king of metropolitan Denkyira. Officers were sent round these kingdoms annually to collect tribute money, which not only replenished the royal treasury but also confirmed the allegiance of the vassal kingdoms to the king of Denkyira. As we shall see later, it was one of these attempts to exact exorbitant tributes in the form of gold and men which was the immediate occasion for the Asante rebellion against and defeat of the Denkyira at Feyiase in 1701.

It was customary for heirs of vassal kingdoms to serve as pages at the Denkyira royal court. A notable example was Osei Tutu, who was to become the founder of the Asante empire. Apart from the tutelage and training which these princes received, their presence at the metropolitan royal household served also as a security against rebellion in the vassal states, since any revolt would result in the princes being killed or kept as hostages.

Denkyira became a vast, powerful empire not only because of the many vassal states it annexed through the wars of expansion, but also because of the wealth it obtained from three main sources: the gold mines in the empire, revenue from trade and receipts from tributes, taxes and tolls.² In addition to the very rich deposits of gold in metropolitan Denkyira itself, nearly all the important tributary states, including Asante, Sehwi, Awowin, Adanse, Twifo and Wasa, were rich in alluvial gold. The numerous vassal states also paid tribute in the form of slaves and gold to the Denkyira king. Another source of wealth was the lucrative trade which Denkyira engaged in both with the merchants on the coast and with her northern neighbours as far as Begho and Kong in the north-west, thus linking Denkyira with the Western Sudan.

Endowed with so many advantages, Denkyira's power increased tremendously. However, as often happens in history when a kingdom or an empire becomes wealthy and powerful, the rulers became tyrannical, and this together with other causes led to the decline and fall of the empire, following their

decisive defeat at Feyiase in 1701 at the hands of Asante, her tributary state. The long-term cause of this was the long-standing desire of the Asante not only to free herself from Denkyira's repressive rule, but also, when independent, to get direct access to the coastal trade with the European merchants. In 1699, the Asante could no longer suffer Denkyira's oppressive rule when in an attempt to replenish the royal treasury which was becoming empty as a result of Denkyira's incessant wars, Ntim Gyakari of Denkyira sent envoys to Asante with three crippling and humiliating demands. The Asante king was to fill a large pan with pure gold-dust; each vassal king in Asante and the ruler of the Asante capital himself were to send to Ntim Gyakari the wife the Asante ruler loved best; and thirdly, each Asante ruler was to send up his finger to the king of Denkyira. In the past, the Asante had been called upon to pay heavy tribute in gold and slaves; in the present case, while the Asante was used to the first demand, they looked upon the second and third demands with disgust, as a manifestation of Denkyira's oppressive rule over them. The Asante accordingly refused to comply with the Denkyira demands, and both parties rose in arms. Many non-Asante vassal states under Denkyira's oppressive rule, like Asen, offered support to Osei Tutu.

After several reverses, the Asante inflicted a decisive blow, in 1701, on Denkyira at Feyiase (near Bekwai) where they routed the Denkyira forces. The war continued for some time, until eventually Asante gained her independence. Among some of the war spoils which the Asante have treasured to this day were the skull of King Ntim Gyakari, who was surprised and beheaded when playing the game of *Ware* in his camp with the wife of his general commander, and the brass pan sent by the king of Denkyira in which to collect gold from the Asante kings. Her defeat at Feyiase did not completely end the power of Denkyira, but it led to the disintegration of the empire. Many vassal states took advantage of the weakened state of Denkyira and asserted their own independence.

In the reign of Owusu Bore I, who succeeded Ntim Gyakari, the Asante launched an offensive against the Denkyira on their own soil. Unable to resist the Asante trust, many Denkyira crossed the Ofe River, southwards, leaving their original home at Abankesieso which became a vassal state of Asante. Later, the Denkyira gathered forces and helped the Akyem, their traditional allies, to fight against Opoku Ware I, successor of Osei Tutu, but they were unsuccessful in their bid to regain their former power. Denkyira's subsequent attempts to help the Gyaaman and Wasa against Osei Kwadwo of Asante met with a similar fate.

As a result of these wars, Denkyira was reduced to being an Asante vassal kingdom. It remained in this subordinate state until 1831 when the Asante signed a treaty with the British governor, George Maclean, by which Asante renounced sovereignty over the states in the southern part of the country, including Denkyira.

TWIFO, HEMAN AND ASEN

The oral traditions of Twifo, now with stool headquarters at Mampon in the Central Region, are not clear. Perhaps in an attempt to indicate that their present home is more ancient than many other Akan states, the Twifo claim that their founding fathers came 'from the ground'; the place is said to have been in the Apagyahina forest, about twenty kilometres south of present Denkyira town of Dunkwa. A more likely version maintains that the Twifo, like their kinsmen the Denkyira, immigrated from Bono, and were led south by Mfotee Anoa. Considering the fact that the Omanhene Nana Amponsifi II, when interviewed in 1975, remembered at least 26 rulers before him, and the fact that the remembered geneology was incomplete, it is probable that the Twifo arrived from the 'north' well over three hundred years ago.

The oral traditions add that from their first settlement south of the Ofe River, Owusu Koko led the Twifo to the Wasa from where they later returned to Twifo, their present home on both sides of the Pra, having settled for some time at Abrem.

When the Twifo settled in their present location, they met three groups of settlers, Mokwaa, Heman and Afutuakwa. The traditions of these people claim that they were descendants of the Etsii scattered in different parts of present-day Central Region, a people whom the Fante also met when they arrived from the 'north'. Because these Etsii settlers were in small communities, the more powerful Twifo were able to reduce them into vassal states. This seems to be supported by the saying that the Twifohene sat on a fire grate made of three cornerstones comprising these three minor states at the time.

The oral traditions of Heman trace the origin of the people to Bono. They came down under their leader, Agyan Kokobo, via Nkonya to their present home where they must have merged as one people with settlers of Etsii origin.

Heman also established itself as a state long before other Akan kingdoms like Akwamu. Indeed, it was during the reign of Otumfuo Asare, the fifth remembered ruler of the state that, as we shall see on pages 19-22, a section of the Heman emigrated eastwards and founded the Akwamu kingdom at Asamankese now in Akyem Abuakwa.

The eastern neighbours of the Twifo and Heman are the two states of Asen, Apemanim and Atandasu. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, scattered settlements of the Etsii were already established in the present-day Asen towns of Anow and Bosomadwe in the south, and Akropon, Worakese and Akenkansu to the north. Owing to population movements and state formation, groups of Akan began to cross the Pra southwards to settle among the Etsii. One such group were immigrants from Dwaaso in Asante Akyem. This movement increased from the beginning of the eighteenth century, following the fall of Denkyira. From then on, the Asen had a generally checkered history,

having to change alliances often, at one time with Akyem, at another with the Fante, in their anxiety to meet Asante threats. The pressures on them from the Asante and the need to move their settlements to a welcome new place, explain why the two Asen states are interspersed in between one another, and thus it is that, for example, the capital of Atandasu in the extreme south has the *Kronti* Division with its capital at *Kuhyia* in the extreme north.

Asen towns like *Manso*, capital of *Apemanim*, located on the main trade route from the coast to Asante and beyond, became entrepôt, and *Asen's* wealth and prosperity rested very much upon this role.

THE FANTE

Today, when we use the term 'the Fante' we refer to a section of the Akan in a number of traditional states found in the coastal belt of Ghana, from roughly the Pra on the west to about twenty-five kilometres west of the capital, *Accra*. Originally, however, the name Fante was used to refer to a few petty states within a fifty kilometre radius of the ancient Fante capital of *Mankesim*, near *Saltpond*. These included *Kurentasi*, *Abora*, *Anyan*, *Akumfi*, *Nkusukum*, *Adwumako* and *Gomoa*. Their important neighbours, who are today also referred to as Fante, were *Eguafo*, *Shama*, *Akitakyi* (*Komenda*), *Dena* (*Elmina*), *Efutu*, then capital of present-day *Oguuaa* state (*Cape Coast*), *Asebu*, *Etsii*, *Agona* and *Afutu* (*Winneba*).

Before their arrival in the Central Region, parts of their present lands were occupied by more ancient people, the *Etsii*, *Asebu* and *Moree*. These groups are said to have immigrated into Ghana from the direction of the sea, possibly somewhere in *Nigeria*.

Like most other groups of the Akan, the Fante trace their original home to *Bono*. Their immigration to the coast must have taken place well before the fifteenth century. This is evident from the records of the early Portuguese merchants on the coast. The Fante traditions maintain that the founders of these coastal states, three in number, were priests: *Obunumankuma*, *Odapagyan* and *Oson*. They first settled in *Mankesim* with their people. Out of this original settlement grew a number of city states, which in due course expanded into independent kingdoms. Some of these kingdoms absorbed the aboriginal settlements such as the *Etsii* and *Asebu*, settlements which perhaps date back to the pre-Christian era.

Among the reasons behind the emigration of the Fante from *Mankesim* to neighbouring lands were the following. By about the middle of the seventeenth century, population growth had made it necessary for sections of the people to settle elsewhere. The first group to do this were the *Abora*. The records also confirm that at about the same time, civil war compelled some other groups to move away from *Mankesim* to establish peaceful settlements elsewhere for themselves. Another reason for the dispersion seemed to be that

those leaving *Mankesim* saw they would benefit more from trading with European merchants if they made independent settlements in the immediate hinterland or close to the coastal towns with European trading posts. In their new homes in the hinterland, they hoped to control the trade routes and serve as middlemen between the white traders and people far inland.

At *Mankesim*, the Fante grouped themselves into different quarters of the town. Each quarter had a leader whom the early Europeans referred to as the *Brafo*. Presiding over these petty rulers was the king of the Fante. The city states which were established later had a similar political organisation. Each *Brafo* was responsible for the general welfare of people under his charge, and was the captain of the *Aszfo* company, a military body which also undertook communal work and provided social as well as emergency services. A later development was the creation of the *Supi*, whose duty it was to co-ordinate all the *Aszfo* companies in the town or locality. Under the supreme command of the king, the *Supi* led all the army units in time of war. As leader of the military forces, the *Supi* occupied an important place in the royal court.

Later in their history, when the different city states grew into kingdoms, each state exercised local autonomy, though a sort of confederation emerged with the king of *Mankesim* as the acknowledged head of all Fante people. From time to time, however, conflicts arose among different states, resulting in disunity among the Fante as a people. Even though the Fante never really became one empire as did, for example, the *Denkyira* and the *Asante*, in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, certain external forces compelled the rival states to bury their differences and present a united front against their common enemy.

Following the fall of *Denkyira* (see page 12), the way became open for the *Asante* to pursue vigorously their policy of pushing down to the coast in order to have direct trade with the European merchants. To meet the danger which could bring about their subjugation to the *Asante* and the loss of the profits they gained from their middlemen role, the Fante firmly united as one people, with *Abora* as the new headquarters of the union of Fante states. However, when the *Asante* threat faded as a result of their own internal troubles in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Fante once again split into disunity. This state of affairs persisted intermittently throughout the colonial era. Their lack of unity under one strong leadership was a major reason why the Fante, unlike *Denkyira*, *Akwamu* or *Asante*, were unable to develop a formidable empire, a situation which was exploited to the full by both *Asante* and the Europeans.

Even though disunited most of the time, the Fante had one national deity which kept them, at least loosely, together. When the three founding fathers of *Mankesim* died, they were buried near the Fante capital. Their burial place was preserved as a sacred shrine, called *Nananompow*, meaning 'the grave of our fathers', which became the seat of the Fante gods who were revered as

all-knowledgeable and powerful; the oracles at the shrine were consulted by people from all parts of Fanteland.

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 Abandze, 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 inter-marry 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 movement.

Notes

1. Oral tradition has, however, persisted to this day that Adanse (see page 17) in the present Asante Region was the home and centre of Akan dispersion, and indeed is reputed in the legends to be the place where God started the creation of the world.
2. Present-day Obuase, 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, Sehwi, Nzima, 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 Adanseland 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 *Okyeame*, or 'linguist' as it is called, took shape.

Before the sixteenth century, Adanse consisted of several independent city-states, Fomena, Ayaase, Edubiase, Akrokyere, etc., which formed a loose confederation. This fact seemed to be the origin of the popular Adanse saying, '*Adanse nko to wa, obiara da 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, Awirade Basa made an attempt to unite the Adanse. He created a mystical sword, the *Afenakwa* which, like the later *Sasatia* 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 *Afenakwa* passed on from father to son, and because of the Akan and its matrilineal descent system, the sword passed on from one stool 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 recognised as the supreme ruler over the other kings.

In the eighteenth century, the ruler of Fomena, Bonsra Afriyie's stool, kept the sword permanently in his 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 Adanse continued to maintain their own autonomy up to the beginning of the twentieth century, when Great Britain annexed Asantie (including Adanse). Fomena's political leadership became crystalized and from that time, the ruler was recognised as the paramount chief of all Adanse.

Although they enjoyed separate existence, the Adanse maintained close links as one people. Their common allegiance to the *Afenakwa* aside, they had one tutelary god, the Adanse *Bona*, said to reside in a cave in a grove between Akrokyere and Patakoro. People from all parts of Adanse worshipped together and consulted the oracles at the shrine. At the annual grand festival, the chief priest of Bonsam at Patakoro sent the *Bonsasuo* (that is, water from the *Bona* cave) to all the chiefs of Adanse to be used in the purification of their stools and states. To this day, other Akan people who originated from Adanse have kept the practice of erecting *Bonsambu* (Bonsam's shrine) in front of the chief's house.

The territory included the present-day rich gold mines at Obuase, and Adanse derived its wealth and prosperity from the abundant gold which the

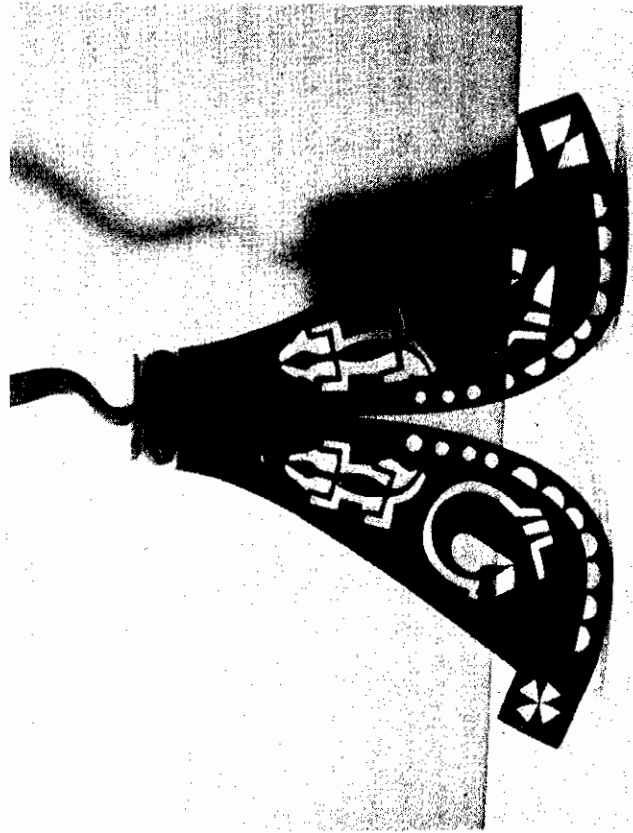


Fig 3 The double blade of a ceremonial sword

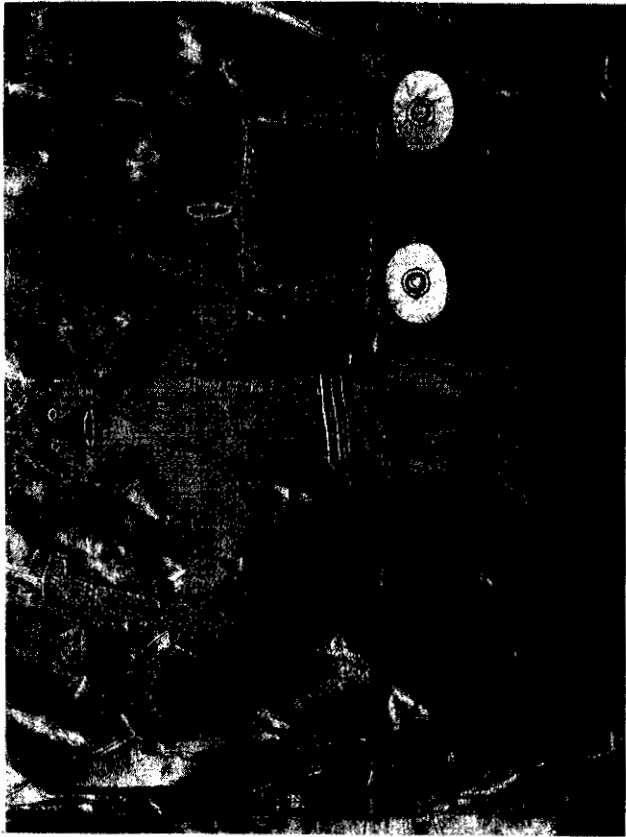


Fig 4 An Akan weighing gold dust

area possessed and from its central location as market. For centuries Edubiase grew as a very important market centre and entrepôt serving merchants from the north and from the coast. But Adanse's economically advantageous location attracted the envy of neighbouring states, notably Denkyira and later Asante. In the course of their relations with these powerful states, Adanse suffered defeats in several wars. Resulting from these wars, sections of the people emigrated to other lands. Some, like the Akyem, moved eastwards; others crossed the Pra southwards and established themselves into kingdoms like those of Asen Apemanim.

THE AKWAMU

Oral tradition affirms that the Akwamu were among the first of the Akan to emigrate from Bonoland in search of new homes. Leaving Bonoland, they made for the south and, crossing the Ofe and the Pra Rivers, settled at Twifo-Heman, some sixty-five kilometres north-west of Cape Coast. About the time the Akwamu were consolidating their position in their new settlement among the Etsii in the area, another Akan group, the Twifo, emigrated from Bonoland and settled on both sides of the River Pra. The traditions indicate that after a time Twifo gained ascendancy over and became overlord of her southern neighbours, the Akwamu in Heman. 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 Otumfuo Asare, to leave Twifo-Heman. They halted in west Abuakwa, and built a town which they named Asare-man-kese after their leader (meaning 'Asare's large state') now known as Asamankese.¹ Owing largely to the absence of strong neighbouring kingdoms and their own resourcefulness, the Akwamu steadily expanded their new territory, and soon began to control the trade routes between European forts 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 centre of influence close to the European trading posts in Accra and the neighbouring coastal towns, the Akwamu moved their capital to Nyanooase, and later to Nsaki, about twenty kilometres 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, Akwamufie, (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 Guan state on the Akuapem ridge, Galand, Latebi (present-day Adangbe) and parts of Akyem and Kwawu.

Much of Akwamu's success derived from the ability and bravery of her leaders. The first of the great rulers of Akwamu, after the founder, Otumfuo Asare, was King Ansa Sasraku who ruled from 1660 to 1689. He fought many wars of expansion and subdued, among other peoples, the Ga and the Adangbe. By the time of his death, Ansa Sasraku 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 Ansa Sasraku's death, two rival members of the royal family, Busua and Ado, became joint rulers of Akwamu. During this period, Akwamu became so powerful that Asomani, 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 Busua, Ado became the sole ruler of the kingdom, and continued with the wars of expansion and the promotion of trade with the white men. Akono, an able ruler, succeeded Ado and reigned from 1702 to 1725. He annexed

Kpandu and parts of the Afram plains in Kwawu. Akono 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 gain control of 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 Adangbe came under the control of the Akwamu, added much to the state revenue. The wealth she commanded not only boosted her 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 bellicose as their ancestors and they have sold us 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, Darko (d. 1781) and Akoto (d. 1792), Akwamu was able to annex Peki, their eastern neighbour, a state exercising overlordship over a large area.



Fig 5 Christiansborg Castle, Accra, in the eighteenth century

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 Akwamu rulers 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 mobilised most of the subject-states of Akwamu and attacked her. The combined forces, under Frempong Manso I, king of Akyem Kotoku, 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 Anokye 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 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 her 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.

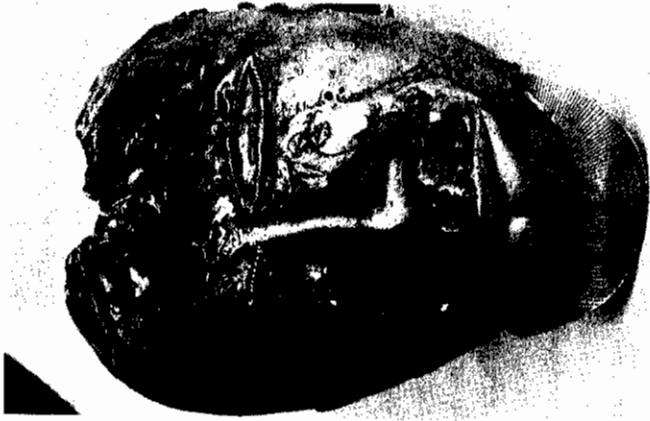


Fig 6 Gold mask from the treasure of the Asantehene, Nana Kofi Kakari

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 Asantemanso (which means 'original home of the Asante'). In due course, the petty settlements 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 Amanfi (c. 1621-43). He was succeeded by Oti Akenten who reigned from about 1644 to 1668. During his long reign, lasting from 1669 to 1695, the next ruler, Obiri Yeboa established his capital at Kwaaman 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 Doma.

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 fled 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 Anokye², the great priest who later accompanied him to Asante and became his great adviser, guide and prompter in peace and war.

On the death of his uncle, Obiri Yeboa, 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 Kwaaaman 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. Entranced 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 enshrined in the stool and as such, it was to be guarded at all costs.³ 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 *Odwira*, which he probably copied from the Denkyira. On the occasion of the *Odwira*, 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.⁴

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 Mamponhene ranking immediately after the Asantehene. The second group were the tributary 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 tributary 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 tributary kings were given places in these military metropolitan divisions.

Strengthened by the institutions described above, and inspired by Okomfo Anokye and by the unshaken 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 vassal 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

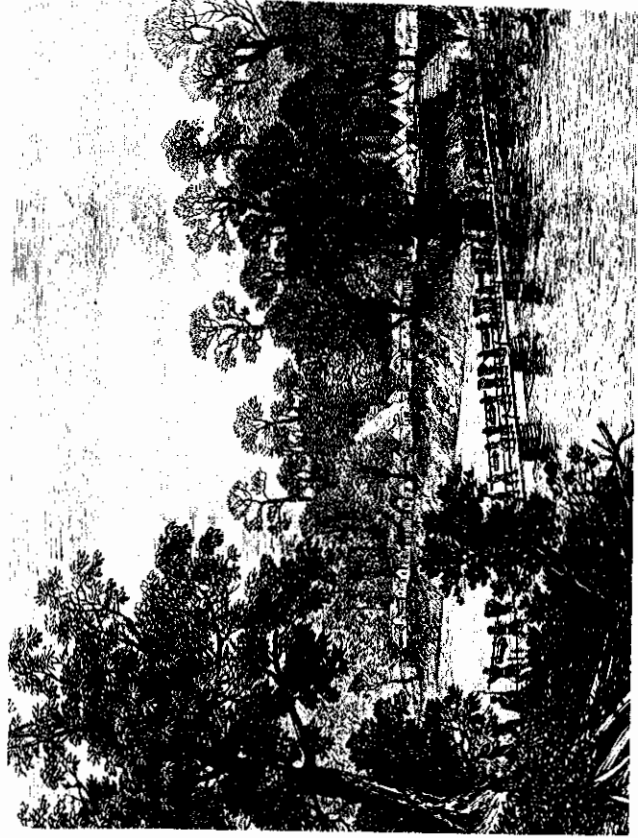


Fig 7 Asante artillery crossing the Pra

coastal trade. The war lasted from 1699 to 1701. After several reverses, the Asante inflicted a decisive blow, in 1701, on Denkyira at Feyiase, killing the Denkyirahene himself, Ntim Gyakari.

In an attempt to extend his conquest to Akyem, Osei Tutu was killed by snipers when crossing the Pra. It was to forestall the repetition of this tragedy that, until Prempe II, it was a taboo for the Asante King to cross the Pra. Osei Tutu left behind strong foundations upon which his successors built a great empire. Important leaders among these successors were Opoku Ware I, Osei Kwadwo and Osei Bonsu.

Opoku Ware I and Other Rulers

After Osei Tutu's tragic death in 1717, there was a period of unrest in Asante; this period has been glossed over in the traditions. However, it is certain that Osei Tutu's grand-nephew Opoku Ware I, ascended the Golden Stool in 1720 and reigned until 1750. His importance in Asante history lay in his great success in expanding the Asante empire to most of the Akan states, gaining direct trading contact with European merchants on the coast.

Helped by Okomfo Anokye, Opoku Ware's first achievement was the curbing of the internal unrest which persisted at the time he ascended the Golden Stool. Having strengthened the Asante unity, he embarked upon wars of expansion in all directions. He first subdued the Bono in 1723-4, and in 1726 subjugated the Wasa who had assisted the Denkyira against his grand-uncle, Osei Tutu. He next halted the Akyem threat in two campaigns. Not only did his men inflict a humiliating defeat on the enemy, but actually killed two rulers of Akyem, thus avenging the tragic death of his predecessor, Osei Tutu. His campaigns in the south, between 1741 and 1744, extended his conquests to Akwamu and Ga-Adangbe lands. As a result, he acquired the 'notes' or documents relating to the European possessions in that coastal area, and the right to collect rents on the European forts and establish direct trade in the Greater Accra.

Opoku Ware I next turned his attention to Sehwi who, while the Asante were occupied with the Akyem wars, had attacked them from the rear, killing the Asantehene's mother. The Asante army, led by Amankwatia I of Bantama, totally defeated the Sehwi, who left their homes and moved southwards to the area they occupy today. It is believed that the Asantehene turned the original Sehwi homeland into a royal hunting reserve, hence the present-day name of the area, Ahafo, meaning 'hunters'. Having defeated the people of Gyaaman who dispersed to present-day Ivory Coast, Opoku Ware's warriors invaded the north, Gonja and Dagomba lands, as well as Krakye in present-day Volta Region. The map on page 4 gives an idea of the extent of the Asante empire when Opoku Ware I died in 1750.

Opoku Ware I was succeeded by his aged uncle, Kusi Obodom (1750-64). Because of troubles in the empire, this ruler contented himself in working



Fig 8 Brass weight for weighing gold dust in the form of an executioner

for peace within the empire rather than make further conquests. He was followed by his cousin, Osei Kwadwo (1764-77). Among his other achievements, he initiated the practice of posting resident officers who were not only charged with the collection of levies and tributes, but also served as the king's representatives in the vassal states.

Osei Kwadwo and the next great Asantehene, Osei Bonsu (1801-24), have been credited with initiating the policy of creating a number of stools for the sons of the Asantehene which were appointative rather than hereditary, in order to counteract the powers of the hereditary rulers. However, this view has been ably questioned by historians who argue that most of the so-called Kwadwoan institutions had their origins in the reigns of Osei Tutu and Opoku Ware I.

Besides the institutions described in this section and the sagacious and able leadership the empire enjoyed, Asante owed its greatness to its wealth. Two factors helped Asante to become perhaps the wealthiest of all the Akan kingdoms. The first was the position of the capital, Kumase, from where trade routes radiated out in all directions. The second factor was that, in addition to the gold mines within metropolitan territory itself, most of the tributary states, such as Wasa, Sehwi, Denkyira, Adanse and Twifo abounded in rich mineral resources, especially gold. Tributes from these vassal states replenished the Asante royal treasury.

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 kinsmen. These states are Abuakwa, Kotoku and Bosome, and their traditional headquarters are Kyebe, Odaa and Akyem Soadro 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 tend to confuse the accounts relating to these people.

All the three Akyem states trace their original home from Adanse, now in the Asante Region of the country. Like the other Akan groups, they probably formed part of the nucleus of the Bono empire. Indeed, the Bosome traditions 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 emigration, 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 Abuakwa who is said to have led his people from Adanse was Kuntunkrunku. He was preceded, in Adanse, 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 Abuakwa state, Kuntunkrunku was succeeded by Ofori Panin. It was this ruler's kinsman, Ofori Kuma, who led a section of the Abuakwa 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 Guan group who to this day have preserved their original language, *Kyerapon*. These include the people of Larteh, Abirwi, Adukrom, 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 Edweso, about twenty kilometres east of Kumase. 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, Odaa replaced new Kotoku as capital.

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

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

AWOWIN, NZIMA, 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 parent language, are markedly different from the main Akan dialect of Twi-Fante. These people are the Ahanta, Nzima, Evalue, Awowin, and Shwi. 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 Ahanta, Evalue and Nzima trace their origin in the 'north', most probably in Bono or Adanse 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 intercourse 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 Nzima 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 Beyin on the feast of St. Apollonia.

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