

TRADE AND POLITICS ON THE GOLD COAST :

1640 - 1720

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ABSTRACT

Between 1640 and 1720 the Gold Coast coastline witnessed attempts on an unprecedented scale by Europeans to establish their trading posts. Conditions governing the grants of land on which their forts were built, examined here, have so far remained unknown. The seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries saw great changes in the relations between the Africans and the Europeans. There were commercial, social and political repercussions which greatly affected the Gold Coast.

Commercially, not only were the locally made goods such as cotton cloths and beads superseded by European manufactured goods but gold, which had formerly been the main produce, began to be scarce. The inordinate demand for slaves by the European traders made gold mining unsafe. The slave trade gradually ate into all aspects of life on the Gold Coast. Even attempts to introduce plantations could not succeed, for, ironically, there were not enough farm hands to work them.

Politically, the theory of state formation which had been based on kindred groupings collapsed. The greatest single factor which hastened the disintegration of the old order was the gun-running, in which the newcomers, unlike the Portuguese, indulged. This gave a strong push to ambitious states to conquer and subjugate the weaker ones. After 1700 state diplomacy on the Gold Coast was dictated by a desire to ally with others to isolate unfriendly neighbours.



Socially, the change in the direction of trade from the north to the south made the coastal towns which had hitherto been mere fishing and salt-making villages into important centres. In these towns there grew up a new class of middlemen traders, artisans and wage earners whose existence was the direct result of the Afro-European confrontation on the Gold Coast.



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## PREFACE

By 1720 the Gold Coast coastline had become what has been described as a 'Kolonial Fossile'. Not only the Portuguese, but practically all the Western European nations, had erected forts or castles there. Its gold reached Branden<sup>N</sup>burg Prussia, Denmark, England, France and Portugal. Some of its people were sent as slaves to work on the European plantations in the New World. It had had nearly two and a half centuries of contact with Europe.

From 1602, when de Marees<sup>1</sup> wrote his Description of the Gold Coast, the country became known to a wider world. In 1668 another Dutch writer, Olfert Dapper<sup>2</sup>, published a widely read work on Africa in which the Gold Coast featured prominently. But the eighteenth century saw a great increase in the literary sources with the publication of works by Bosman<sup>3</sup>, Barbot<sup>4</sup>, Atkins<sup>5</sup>, Smith<sup>6</sup>, Phillips<sup>7</sup>, Loyer<sup>8</sup> and others. These early

<sup>1</sup>P. de Marees: "Beschrijvinge van de Gout Kust 1602" in Linschoten Vereening, ed. Naber ('S-Gravenhage 1912).

<sup>2</sup>O. Dapper: Naukeurige Beschrifvinge de Afrikaense Gewenten (Amsterdam 1668).

<sup>3</sup>W. Bosman: Nauwkeurige Beschrijving van de Guinese Gout-Tand-en Slaven Kust (2nd Amsterdam 1707) of English edition (London 1721).

<sup>4</sup>J. Barbot: "A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea" in Churchill's Collections Vol. V. 1732.

<sup>5</sup>J. Atkins: A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil and West Indies (London 1753), also in Astley's Collections, Vol. II.

<sup>6</sup>W. Smith: "A Voyage to Guinea in 1726" in Astley's Collections, Vol. II.

<sup>7</sup>T. Phillips: "Abstract of a Voyage along the Coast of Guinea to Whidaw etc. 1693-1694" in Astley's Collections, Vol. II.

<sup>8</sup>G. Loyer: "Abstract of a voyage to Issine in 1701". Astley's Collections Vol. II.



published works have formed the basis for secondary works by historians like Ellis<sup>1</sup>, Macdonald<sup>2</sup>, Reindorf<sup>3</sup>, Claridge<sup>4</sup>, Ward<sup>5</sup> and Page<sup>6</sup>. Except for Reindorf, Ward and Page, these historians did not consider any aspects of traditional history of the Gold Coast. But none of the books, with or without traditional history, are without limitations in their use of the materials at their disposal.

Although de Marees' book is excellent in depicting life on the Gold Coast at the beginning of the seventeenth century, apart from an abridged translation of parts into English by Purchas<sup>7</sup>, the work has remained unavailable to other writers on the Gold Coast. This however appears to have formed the basis of other Dutch works such as that of Dapper. But these Dutch books have not been extensively used. Ogilby's<sup>8</sup> trans-

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<sup>1</sup>A. B. Ellis: History of the Gold Coast of West Africa (London 1893).

<sup>2</sup>G. Macdonald: The Gold Coast Past and Present (London 1898).

<sup>3</sup>C. C. Reindorf: The History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti (Basel 1895).

<sup>4</sup>W. W. Claridge: History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti (London 1915 2 vols).

<sup>5</sup>W. E. F. Ward: A History of Ghana (Leicester 1958).

<sup>6</sup>J. D. Page: Ghana (Madison 1961).

<sup>7</sup>Purchas: His Pilgrims Vol. VI, pp. 247-353.

<sup>8</sup>J. Ogilby: Africa (London 1670).



lation of Dapper's original Dutch book falls short of expectation because of his poor rendering of the Dutch. Bosman and Barbot, whose works appeared in the first half of the eighteenth century, substantiated whatever they had read from the known books with their personal experiences on the Gold Coast. Of the two authors, Bosman's observations could be more accurate since, unlike Barbot who made voyages to the Coast, he was resident as a Dutch official on the Gold Coast. But even Bosman's work has its limitations. Both are fond of using superlatives in describing states and events on the Gold Coast. But both were not impartial observers of events since they were seeking the interests of the various Companies they served. In 1706, for instance, Charles Hayes, an English employee on the Gold Coast, accused Bosman of "disingenuity, partiality and malice against the English".<sup>1</sup> But his enthusiasm to write an impartial account to refute Bosman's claims soon cooled. Bosman's and Barbot's descriptions of states on the Coast depended on their relationship with the particular European companies at the material time.

The historians on the Gold Coast who have used these accounts of resident or visiting Europeans on the coast have had to accept many of the conclusions they reached. There are many limitations of the use of such works as the authority of the statements cannot be checked from other sources. The works of Ellis and Claridge, which have been mainly based on these books, may at best be described as accounts of "European

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/18/1st March 1706. Charles Hayes from C.C.C. to R.A.C.



military and diplomatic relations with the Gold Coast" rather than as "a history of the Gold Coast and its peoples"<sup>1</sup>. Even in this respect they could have improved them considerably if they had taken the trouble to consult the documents of the English companies. Instead Claridge, who sought to better the work of Ellis, depended more on a few printed primary sources.

Reindorf's book is no more than a collection of traditional history. But as the author points out, his main intention was to set down the traditions of the Ga tribe. In this regard the book provides excellent materials. His attempt, however, to write the history of the other states cannot be said to have been as good as his treatment of his main objective - namely the History of the Ga. If he had consulted any of the European documents or read widely any of the published works some of his claims might have been modified. It is difficult to believe, for example, the assertion that at the beginning, about the 1620's, the Ashantis did not use gold but iron as currency.<sup>2</sup> But his book has much to commend it. As much as was within his reach, he set down the traditional history of the states known at his time. By using his work as a starting point one is able to check any new materials that may come to light.

Ward has tried to combine both the European sources with traditional history. Besides he has endeavoured to use other monographs on particular

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<sup>1</sup>J. D. Fage, "Historical Research in the Gold Coast", T.G.C.T.H.S., Vol.1 1952-1955, pp.24-29

<sup>2</sup>C. C. Reindorf: The History of the Gold Coast and Asante (Basel 1895), p.50.



aspects of the Gold Coast to help explain his points. But his treatment of events has been superficial, most of his claims unsubstantiated. His work could have been vastly helpful if he had consulted the documentary sources of the English. Fage's recent book on Ghana, as the author points out in his preface, lays no claim to any originality. His work is to achieve a historical perspective for both ancient and modern Ghana by interpreting "what other people have discovered and have made known either in their published work, or in course of personal discussion or correspondence".<sup>1</sup> Like all before him, therefore, some of the mistaken and unchecked assertions have been repeated in this work. Except for Coombs' recent work<sup>2</sup>, all the other historians of the Gold Coast have accepted as a fact the assertion that the Denkyira state came into possession of the 'Elmina Note' by defeating Komenda sometime in the seventeenth century. When the event took place is unknown. It is also surprising that, if that was really the case, nobody has, so far, attempted to find out why the English never paid any rent for their fort at Komenda to either Denkyira or Ashanti.

Most of the research so far on unpublished sources on the history of the Gold Coast has been mainly concerned with political developments in the 19th century. And the sources which have been consulted are the

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<sup>1</sup>J. D. Fage: Ghana (Madison, 1961), p. XI.

<sup>2</sup>D. Coombs: The Gold Coast Britain and the Netherlands 1850-1874 (Oxford, 1963) p.11.



English documents. The only exception is Ivor Wilks,<sup>1</sup> work on Akwamu for which he has used some Danish, Dutch, English and traditional sources. He is also trying to reconstruct the history of Ashanti by using Arabic documents. Although his work on Akwamu is excellent in many respects it still has some limitations. As he points out in his preface he has used the Furley collections of Dutch documents now deposited at the Ghana University Library. Although these documents have hitherto been unused, they cannot be strictly regarded as the original documents. Furley collected and translated what he considered to be relevant to the history of the Gold Coast. While such documents may be helpful in many respects their accuracy could be checked from the original documents in Holland. By going through some of the State-General Resolutions one is able to understand many things which help to put some of the actions of the Dutch in the correct perspective. Besides the work is concerned with the rise and fall of the Akwamu empire. It is interesting to note that in the heyday of Akwamu power, its influence was exerted more on the western part of the Slave Coast which is sparsely populated. As far as the coastline between Assine and Accra was concerned whatever influence Akwamu might have had was indirect and negligible.

Apart from Wilks, others have used the records of the Dutch and English trading companies. On the English side Davies has used the records of the Royal African Company. But his objective was to write the history

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<sup>1</sup>I. Wilks: Akwamu, 1650-1750 (M.A. Cardiff 1958).



of the English trading company and not the history of the Gold Coast. By one interested in the history of the Gold Coast his book may be used as a guide to the documents relevant to African history rather than a contribution to the history of Africa. Similarly Cousins<sup>1</sup> has used the documents of the first West India Company to trace the Company's history on West Africa in general. For the purely African History, it is Ratelband's publication of Five Day registers of Elmina Castle<sup>2</sup> between 1645 and 1647, which are very helpful. But his aim was not to write the history of the Gold Coast or even Elmina, but to preserve, for future historians, the records of the Company which had long been neglected. To the Dutch historians as a whole the history of the Dutch East India Company is more interesting than that of the West India Company, which dealt in slaves. Those who attempt to write on the Company are more interested in its activities in the New World than on the coast of Guinea. In Menkman's<sup>3</sup> book, for instance, the West Coast of Africa is summarily dismissed in three pages.

On the purely Gold Coast history nothing has been written in any detail about how the Africans organised the trade in gold, ivory and slaves. Discussions about political, social and economic effects which the trans-Atlantic trade had on the Gold Coast have been confined to a few, often

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<sup>1</sup>A. Cousins: The Dutch West India Company on the West Coast of Africa up to 1660 (M.A. Belfast, 1953).

<sup>2</sup>K. Ratelband: Sao Jorge Da Mina 1645-1647 ('S-Gravenhage 1953).

<sup>3</sup>W. R. Menkman: De West Indische Compagnie (Amsterdam 1947).



ill-supported, generalisations. It is with a view to filling the gap in the historical knowledge that this work has been undertaken.

In this work I have depended mainly on the records of the Dutch and the English trading companies which were established on the Gold Coast. The records of the Dutch West India Companies are deposited at the Algemeen Rijksarchief at The Hague. These consist of three main groups, namely, those of the Old West India Company (1621-1674), the second West India Company (1674-1791) and the Dutch Settlements on the Guinea Coast. The last group consists mainly of duplications of the records of the two companies but in the last series are to be found some documents dated as early as 1624, and others as late as 1816.<sup>1</sup>

Of the documents of the first Company not much remains. Lack of interests in the Company's activities combined with ill-fate have led to the destruction of many of them. In 1821, for instance, about a thousand of the Company's records were sold to the paper mills. Twenty-three years later a fire which broke out in the Department of Marine destroyed many of the remaining documents.<sup>2</sup> But the few extant ones are very helpful in reconstructing the history of the Gold Coast in the first half of the seventeenth century. The most important of these are the Day Registers of the Director General and his Council on the Gold Coast. They contain accounts of every day occurrences at headquarters, as well

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<sup>1</sup>P. Carsons: Materials for West Africa History in ... Belgium and Holland (London, 1962).

<sup>2</sup>K. Ratelband: op.cit., p. xxv.



as reports from the outposts. Some also contain copies of treaties and contracts which were signed between the Dutch and the local rulers.

Of the documents of the second West India Company the ones most directly relevant to the history of the Gold Coast are the Castle Journals which are similar to the Day registers of the old Company. The third group of documents contains, in addition to duplications of the first two, records which, probably inadvertently, had remained unclassified.

Occasionally there are some documents to be discovered among those described as Miscellaneous which provide some missing links between the main groups. The collection of old maps and charts classified under the 'Luepen collections' is also helpful.

Unlike the Dutch, the early English Companies' records are missing. The main extant records on seventeenth century English activities are those grouped under the T.70 series in the Treasury records. But the earlier ones, which deal with the Company of Royal Adventure<sup>s</sup>, are ill-kept and scrappy. Their main use is to throw light on Anglo-Dutch rivalries on the Gold Coast at the time immediately before and after the 2nd Anglo-Dutch War (1664-1665). The records of the Royal African Company, though not as informative as those of the Dutch, provide important information for the reconstruction of political, social and economic history of the Gold Coast in the early period. The most informative of these are the Letters from the Gold Coast to the company in London. But the account and Warehouse journals also do, at times, provide some useful information.



What is lacking in the records of the English may be occasionally made up by correlating pieces of information from the Dutch sources. While, for instance, there are no extant documents in the English records containing the exact terms under which grants of land were made to the English, the details about payments to the local people help to give an idea of the nature of the agreements.

Another group of documents in the Public Records Office from which occasional information may be had is in the Colonial Office series. The C.O.I. series in this set deals with Africa and the New World. They are also, in some respects, duplications of the few extant records of the Company of Royal Adventurers. They are, however, improperly indexed and their use for purely African history is limited.

I have also made use of modern legal and anthropological studies on the Gold Coast in so far as they help to throw light on the comments of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century observers. Busia and Rattray's works on Ashanti as well as Meyerowitz's on the Akans have been found very helpful.

The main objective in using these documentary sources and the published works on the Gold Coast is to reconstruct the historical picture of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Without a proper understanding of the history of the Gold Coast at this period, one cannot fully appreciate the social, economic and political changes which took place in the subsequent centuries. The events which gradually shaped the history of the Gold Coast until it eventually emerged into the modern state



of Ghana have their beginnings in the 17th century.

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My thanks are due to the staff of the Public Records Office, London, and the Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, for all their help. I am also deeply grateful to my supervisor, Professor Roland Oliver, for his advice and encouragement.



ABBREVIATIONS

C.O.	Colonial Office.
E.H.J.	Economisch-Historisch Jaarbook.
G.C.R.	Gold Coast Review.
G.N.O.	Ghana Notes and Queries.
J.A.H.	Journal of African History.
J.A.S.	Journal of African Society.
J.S.A.	Journal of the Society of Arts.
N.B.K.G.	Nederlandische Bezittingen ter Kust Van Guinea.
O.W.I.C.	Oude West Indische Compagnie.
R.A.C.	The Royal African Company.
T.	Treasury.
T.G.C.T.H.S.	Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society.
T.H.S.G.	Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana.
V.R.O.A.	Verslagen omtrent 's Rijks Oude Archieven.
T.H.S.N.	Transactions of the Historical Society of Nigeria.
V.W.I.S.	Verspreide West Indische Stukken.
W.I.C.	(de Tweede) West Indische Compagnie.



## Chapter I

### THE GOLD COAST AND A WIDER WORLD

Two streams stemming from different sources and flowing in different directions have influenced the history of the Gold Coast. From across the Atlantic seaboard came influence of Europe. This was the outcome of the systematic exploration of the Atlantic coast of Africa by the Portuguese. And from the North, the rise and decline of the Sudanese empires on the Niger Bend touched on the Gold Coast. Common with both movements were the commercial rippings which were set into motion. These eventually had political repercussions that changed the status quo. The history of the Gold Coast up to 1720, therefore, cannot be isolated from these two movements.

The Portuguese exploration of the Atlantic seaboard opened new vistas of trade for Europe and West Africa. Various and varied reasons have been adduced for the motives which lay behind the Portuguese undertaking. A desire to outflank the Arabs in the gold trade, a proselytising zeal, a crusading urge to ally with the mythical Prester John for a joint assault on the Muslims, all these, to mention but a few, have been found among the motives.<sup>1</sup> But which of these took precedence over

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Blake; European Beginnings in West Africa (London 1947), pp.4-5; Azurara, "The Chronicle and Conquest of Guinea", ed. G. H. Kimble Hakluyt Soc. Publ. Vol. 1, p. 28; C. R. Boxer: Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415-1825, (Johannesburg, 1961), pp. 5-8; J. D. Fage: Introduction to the History of West Africa (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 46-47.



the other is a matter for debate. For the history of West Africa in general, and for that of the Gold Coast in particular, however, the desire for Guinea gold, and the discovery of the metal at Mina by Joao de Santerem and Pero de Escobar in 1471, was an event of great historical moment.

The importance which was attached to the Mina may be seen from the developments which its discovery set into motion. The exploration which had hitherto owed much to government initiative and support, as personified in the activities of Dom Henrique<sup>1</sup> had been allowed to languish for nearly a decade after his death in 1460. After the discovery of Mina, however, West Africa once more attracted attention of the Crown. This may be seen from the fact that the contract of Fernao Gomes, to whom the enterprise had been farmed out, was not renewed in 1474. Instead the Guinea trade became a royal monopoly, under the charge of Dom Joao. Eight years later Dom Joao, now King, caused a castle to be built at Mina. This was partly to protect the gold trade from interlopers and hostile Africans and partly and more importantly, to ensure that the Crown was not cheated out of it.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps to give a legal stamp to the Crown's monopoly, the "Lord of Guinea" was added to the Portuguese royal titles, and Mina was raised to City status. Although the discovery of the East Indies tended to draw the emphasis away from Guinea to the spices of

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<sup>1</sup>C. R. Boxer, op.cit., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>J. W. Blake, op.cit., p. 41. J. D. Fage, op.cit., p. 49. C. R. Boxer, op.cit., p.25.



India, the East never completely overshadowed the importance of Guinea.

Until 1642, when the Dutch succeeded in despoiling Portugal of the Guinea section of its "Thalassocracy",<sup>1</sup> the only permanent European establishments on the Gold Coast were the Portuguese forts at Elmina, Chama and Axim. In fact, however, the Portuguese did not succeed in maintaining a commercial monopoly for nearly as long a period. From 1530 on other European nations began to interest themselves in the gold and ivory trade, but the Portuguese interest nevertheless remained predominant until the end of the 16th century at least. At the heyday of the Portuguese trade in the early 16th century it is estimated that the annual total of gold out-put was about 24,000 oz. (about £100,000) which equalled about one-tenth of the total world supply.<sup>2</sup> Even after this period Portugal continued to derive considerable gain from the trade. In 1552 Joao de Barros was to write "As far as the increase of the royal patrimony is concerned I do not know in Portugal of any land-tax, toll, tithe, transfer-tax or any crown tax more certain or one which yields more regular annual revenue with no tenant alleging drought or loss, than

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<sup>1</sup>C. R. Boxer, Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415-1825 (Oxford 1963), p.2. C. P. Lucas: Historical Geography of the British Colonies, Vol. III, West Africa (Oxford 1900), p. 45. The Accra post was burnt down by the townsmen in 1576. See J. D. Fage, "A New Check List of the forts and castles of Ghana" in T.H.S.G., Vol. IV, pt. 1, p.64.

<sup>2</sup>P. D. Pacheco: Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis trans. by G. H. T. Kimble. Hakluyt Society 2nd Ser. 1936, p. 120. Blake, Europeans in West Africa 1, pp. 92-93. Blake, European Beginnings in West Africa, pp. 83-84. J. D. Fage, Ghana, Madison, 1961, pp. 41-43, 100.



what is yielded by the trade of Guinea".<sup>1</sup> Although the source of the gold was never bared to the Portuguese, there is no doubt that the gold supply from Guinea was an important asset to the Portuguese economy in the sixteenth century.

Portugal's claim to Guinea was increasingly challenged by other European nations. The first of such powers was France. In 1542 a French ship which visited Cape Three Points carried back to France one thousand pounds of gold. Although French activities were mainly confined to Upper Guinea, the Portuguese were forced to establish a system of patrolling on the Mina Coast to check intrusion into their preserve.<sup>2</sup> Since trade at the Upper Guinea satisfied the French ships, their activities on the Mina Coast eventually died out only to be followed by those of English.

Direct English connections with the Gold Coast go back to 1554. In that year three English ships, the Primrose, the Lion and the Moon, were fitted out by some London merchants to trade at Mina and Benin. Following upon this came William Towerson who traded in some parts of the Mina Coast, including Chama. Here he described the people as using the "bark of certain trees" for their "clothes cordles, girdles and fishing lines"<sup>3</sup>. In the course of time not only individual merchants, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Joao de Barros. Quoted by C. R. Boxer, Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, pp.26-27.

<sup>2</sup>Blake, op.cit., p.3.

<sup>3</sup>W. Towerson, First Voyage to Guinea, ed. by J. W. Blake, Hak. Soc. 2nd Ser. Vol. LXXVII, p.379



court also took an interest in the Guinea trade. Queen Elizabeth was said to have helped in the financing of an expedition to Guinea by providing a ship and money.<sup>1</sup> But apart from this evidence, direct court encouragement of, and participation in, the Guinea trade was to await the time of the Later Stuarts.

English activities up to 1618 were unorganised. They were of a hit and run kind in which people depended more on luck than any consistency of purpose. The reign of James I saw a significant attempt to organise the English trade to Guinea. This is seen in the formation of the company of Adventurers of London trading into parts of Africa. But this company confined its activities principally to the Upper Guinea, thus failing to exploit the sources of the gold supply. This neglect was to be remedied in 1631 when another company was formed. This was to encourage the "Guinean merchants to take a hand in the gold trade of the Gold Coast", which was being monopolized, it was pointed out, by the Dutch<sup>2</sup>. The Adventurers were granted a monopoly of the trade for thirty years. Their sphere of trade was defined as the lands between Cape Blanco and the Cape of Good Hope.

What had been argued against the 1618 company with regard to the failure to prosecute the Gold trade was also brought up against the 1631

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<sup>1</sup> J. F. Zook. The Company of Royal Adventurers trading into Africa (Washington 1919), p.4.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Blake, "Farm of the Guinea Trade", Essays in British and Irish History London, 1949, p.89.



company. A petition submitted to Whitehall in 1649 accused the company for failing to discover the sources of the Guinea gold. It held that they had waited in their fort at Kormantin for "the Moorish traders to bring down the gold".<sup>1</sup> Even the company of Royal Adventurers which was incorporated in 1660 and which was given a monopoly of the trade for one thousand years, had but a short life. Its fortunes were ruined by the Anglo-Dutch war of 1664-1665. In 1672, the Royal African Company which was much larger and better organised succeeded it.

But, before the seventeenth century was out, the monopoly of the Royal African Company had been successfully challenged by other English traders who felt that they were being cheated out of the lucrative trade on the Guinea Coast.<sup>2</sup> In 1698, therefore, the trade was opened to all Englishmen. Individual traders wishing to partake of the Guinea trade were to pay a duty of ten per cent on exports. This duty was to assist the company to maintain the charges of the forts. In 1712, when the Ten Per-cent. Act expired, the Guinea trade was thrown open to all without restriction.<sup>3</sup> The weary groping of the English to put their West African trade on a better footing, and the inevitable failure that dogged

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<sup>1</sup>C.O. 1/11/13. Remonstrance .... to the Hon. Council of State. C. Dec. 1649.

<sup>2</sup>G. F. Zook, op.cit., p. 111, 30; K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company, (London, 1957), p. 44.

G. F. Zook, op.cit., p. 44.  
(London, 1957), p. 44, p. 46.



their steps may partly be accounted for by the activities of the Dutch.

The Dutch were later on the Gold Coast scene than either the French or the English, but they were better organised and equipped for the trade than any of their predecessors. It was their persistence which finally ejected the Portuguese from the Gold Coast in 1642. Dutch connections with the Guinea coast go back to the last decade of the sixteenth century. One Benard Erecksz is reputed to have been the person who popularised the Guinea trade in Holland. While a prisoner on the Portuguese island of Sao Thome, he learnt of the lucrative trade in gold and ivory which the Portuguese had obtained from the Gold Coast. When he returned home in <sup>1563</sup>1693, he not only passed on the news to his countrymen but fitted out expeditions to Guinea.<sup>1</sup>

Erecksz's example was quickly followed by his countrymen who were encouraged officially to take a hand in the Guinea trade. The states of Holland attempted to provide incentives for the trade by exempting ships which took part in it from certain duties. Zeeland soon followed the example of Holland. But as interest in the trade grew so did the hazards and dangers which were encountered from the Portuguese. It was with a view to lessening these dangers that in 1597 two companies were founded in Middleburg by de Moucheron and the Burgomaster. Interest in the trade was further rekindled by the publication of the works of Jan Huyghen van Linschoten between 1597 and 1598. In 1600 a company to trade in

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<sup>1</sup>P. de Marees, Beschrijvinge.....1601, p. LVI, J. K. J. de Jong: De Oorsprong van Neerland Bezittingen op de Kust van Guinea (S-Gravenhage 1871), p. 9. K. Ratelband, Vijf Dagregisters... Sao Jorge da Mina (S-Graven, 1953), p. LXVI, p. LXXXII. A. Cousins: The Dutch West India Company on the West Coast of Africa up to 1660 (unpublished M.A.Thesis, (cont.)



Guinea was founded in Amsterdam. After these developments people began to appeal to the States-General to provide protection for those who traded to Guinea.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the Guinea trade to the economy of the United Provinces may be seen from the volume of trade which was passing between them and West Africa. Fifteen years after the first Dutch expedition to the Guinea coast there was a yearly average of twenty ships engaged in the trade. The cargo usually consisted of about 200,000 yards of linen, 40,000 lb of copper basins, kettles and other hardware, 100,000 lbs of beads, blankets and sheets,<sup>2</sup> to mention but a few. Besides ivory, wax and grain, about 2,000 lbs of pure gold reached the United Provinces annually from Guinea.<sup>3</sup> The quantity of gold which continued to arrive from Guinea was a matter of great concern to the authorities who sought ways and means to regulate it. It has been estimated that until about 1630 almost all the gold used for the coinage in the United Provinces came from Guinea.<sup>4</sup> Efforts to get a chartered company to undertake the Guinea trade remained unsuccessful until 1621.

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(cont.) Belfast 1953), p.16.

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<sup>1</sup>J. K. J. de Jonge, op.cit., p.13. A. Cousins, op.cit. p.18.

<sup>2</sup>P. de Marees, op.cit.p. 51-55. de Jonge, op.cit., pp.33-39.

<sup>3</sup>J. K. J. de Jonge, op.cit., p.30.

<sup>4</sup>C. R. Boxer, The Dutch in Brazil (Oxford 1957), p.6.



Official reluctance to permit the formation of the company may be accounted for by the internal politics of the United Provinces at this time. Between 1555 and 1609 they were engaged in a costly war with Spain for their independence. It was this war which changed the commercial and financial centre of Europe from Antwerp to Amsterdam. This was because many of the people who fled from the southern provinces took refuge in the latter. Together with their know-how they carried with them their capital. Both were to be used for the development of their adopted homeland.<sup>1</sup> It was at the time of the struggle with Spain that the crowns of Aragon and Castile were united. Thus officially Portugal became the enemy of the United Provinces. To the Dutch traders, therefore, an attack on Portugal in Guinea was an extension of the legitimate war with Spain. Despite this state of war the States-General would not allow the company to be formed. The greatest single obstacle in this regard was the Truce of 1609. The Advocate Oldenbarnvelt used the truce to veto the idea of a chartered company because it was felt that granting the permission would be an infringement of the terms of the Truce. But as far as the Guinea trade was concerned the Truce tended to exacerbate rather than abate the dangers of the Dutch. In 1609, for instance, the Portuguese secured Spanish help in guarding their Guinea possessions. It was at this time that a sloop of Elias Trip to Amsterdam was attacked and its crew murdered at Elmina.<sup>2</sup> The insistence of the

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<sup>1</sup>V. Barbour: Capitalism in Amsterdam in the 17th Century (Baltimore, 1950), p.23.

<sup>2</sup>de Jonge, op.cit., p.15. A. Cousins, op.cit., p.64.



Guinea merchants on official support mounted. Three years after the incident at Elmina, two representatives from the king of Sabu arrived in Holland to request Dutch help against the Portuguese who had begun to molest them for their trade with the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> This mission apparently initiated and financed by the Dutch traders to Guinea, was successful. The direct outcome was the building of Fort Nassau at Moure in Sabu by the States-General in 1612.<sup>2</sup> The incorporation of a Guinea company, however, was to wait until 1621. In addition to the expiry of the Truce the execution of the Advocate Oldenbarnvelt in 1619 removed the main official obstacle to the company.

Count Maurice of Nassau who succeeded the Advocate at the head of the militant party in the United Provinces gave a ready support to the formation of the company. But the company which was chartered in June 1621 differed in all essentials from what had been advocated by Willem Usselinx, the spiritual grandfather of the Dutch West India Company. His main aims were, among other things, the formation of Dutch agricultural colonies in the new world. He singled out Brazil as an example of the type of colonies he envisaged. Unlike Peru and Mexico, the wealth of Brazil depended on products such as sugar, cotton and Brazilian wood. He also advocated the teaching of the "true Christian religion" to the inhabitants of such colonies.<sup>3</sup> But when the company was eventually

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<sup>1</sup> de Jonge, op.cit., p.64.

<sup>2</sup> 'Deductie van Valkenburg' in de Jong, op.cit., p.64. K. Ratelband, op.cit., p. XXIV, N.B.K.G. 222/198/Reply of Valkenburg to the English Principal, L. Stavely, 30 Nov. 1656.

<sup>3</sup> W. R. Menkman, Der West Indisch Compagnie (Amsterdam 1947), p.30. C. R. Boxer, The Dutch in Brazil, p. 7. A. Cousins, op.cit., p.22. B.M.H.Vlekke, Evolution of the Dutch Nation (New York 1945), p.213.



chartered it diverged from what Usselinckx had for so long advocated.

The vigorous policy adopted by Count Maurice gave a completely new stamp to the West India Company when it came to be incorporated. From the beginning it was thought of as "an instrument of doing Spain as much damage as possible" and thus "to contribute its share"<sup>1</sup>. towards the complete liberation of the United Provinces. The company became a semi-official, semi-independent commercial and naval enterprise. It was given the monopoly of the trade and navigation between the Tropic of Cancer and the Cape of Good Hope. It was empowered to make alliances for and on behalf of the State-General, and to appoint governors, officials and justices, and to maintain troops and garrisons. In time of war troops and necessary war materials for the defence of the projected colonies were to be supplied by the States-General.<sup>2</sup>

Administratively the Company had a complicated system of organisation. The provincialism of the United Provinces of the time was brought to bear on it. Although the principal shareholders were in the province of Holland there were many other individual merchants who wanted their provinces to share in the profits of the Guinea trade. The highest administrative

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<sup>1</sup>W. J. van Hoboken: "The West India Company: A Political Background" Britain and Netherland, Oxford Netherland Historical Conference, 1959, p.42. C. R. Boxer: The Dutch in Brazil p.9. P. Geyl: The Netherlands Divided (London 1936) p. 189. Edmundson, "Dutch Power in Brazil", E.H.R. XI (1896) p. 233-235. J. de Laet, op.cit. pp.8-40. Boxer, op.cit., p.7.

<sup>2</sup>Cousins, op.cit., p.38; Menkman, op.cit., pp. 44, 127, 162. In 1647, the Charter of the first Company expired, but it was renewed without any substantial changes in the administration. It was in 1674 that the XIX was changed to the Council of the X.



body of the Company was vested in the council of nineteen directors known as the Heeren XIX. The Company was divided into five different<sup>r</sup> chambers. These were proportionately represented in the Heeren XIX. Amsterdam with the largest number of shareholders had four-ninths of the seats: Zeeland was given two-ninths, the Maas (Rotterdam) one-ninth, the North Quarter one-ninth, Town and Country one-ninth. The nineteenth member of the Council was chosen by the States-General. He was to be the president of the council. Unlike the English companies, which found it difficult to raise substantial capital for their enterprises, the West India Company did not experience this difficulty. The incorporation of the Company was followed by the grant of a subsidy of one million florins from the State-General.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Company was to run into financial difficulties in the course of time, its setting in Holland was ideal for raising loans; for Amsterdam became the financial centre of Europe in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> From there loans could be raised at a low rate of interest. Although the administrative regionalisation appears to have made the functioning cumbersome, in practice it was workable. For all practical

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<sup>1</sup>J. de Laet, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 8-40. Boxer, op.cit., p.7. A. Cousins, op.cit., p.38.

<sup>2</sup>For more about the working of the West India Comp, its finances etc. see Menkman, op.cit., pp. 44, 127, 162. A. Cousins, op.cit., pp. 46-48. Boxer, op.cit., p.9. In 1647 the charter of the first Company expired but it was renewed without any substantial changes in the administration. It was in 1674 that the Company re-organised its directorate. Instead of the Heeren XIX, was substituted the Heeren X.



purposes the Company remained a single unit. There was a Company capital; profits and losses were equally divided among the share-holders regardless of chambers. But the fitting and sending of ships, cargoes and military forces were divided among the chambers.

On the Guinea coast the headquarters of the Dutch were moved from Mouree to Elmina in 1637. With the Portuguese finally driven off the coast in 1642, the Dutch divided their West African possessions into three districts: the Northern, the Southern and the Sao Thome Districts. The most important of them was the Northern district which extended along the Gold and Slave Coasts to Cape Lopes Goncalves.<sup>1</sup> The head of the district was the Director-General who had charge of all military, commercial and ecclesiastical affairs. He was assisted in his work by a Council of which he was the president. Matters affecting the day to day administration were discussed by a Council composed of the fiscal, the chief factor, the ensign and the accountant general. But in extraordinary councils the chief factors of the outposts attended the meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Where there were no forts or lodges, the Dutch instituted the Legger<sup>3</sup> system. All goods for the coast first went to Elmina where they were redistributed to the various forts according to their particular needs.

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. 9. 19 June 1642.

<sup>2</sup>Willem Bosman: A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea (London 1721). Let VII, pp.92-102.

<sup>3</sup>A. Legger was a ship that was permanently stationed at a place to trade with the people. This was different from the cruisers, which moved from place to place.



In the same way commodities purchased at the outposts were sent to Elmina,<sup>1</sup> except slaves who were picked up by ships on their way to the Slave Coast. The first thirteen years of the Company's existence saw the ~~importance~~<sup>ation</sup> of an appreciable volume of commodities from Guinea into the United Provinces. About 40,461 marks of gold, estimated about 17,733,899 florins and about 1,137,430 lbs. of Ivory, estimated at about 1,178,688 florins were imported.<sup>2</sup>

Dutch claims to the Gold Coast were, however, to be challenged by other European powers. Apparently the English efforts to find the sources of the Gold Coast trade had not been successful. They regretted the fact that the Dutch should enjoy most of the Gold Coast trade. The English were soon to set out in "a conscious imitation of the Dutch" in order to say "good night to Amsterdam".<sup>3</sup> Luckily for them, in the seventeenth century national loyalties mattered little to the various employees of the Companies. The English success on the Gold Coast in the early years was due to the efforts of Arent de Groot. Formerly an employee of the Dutch, he went over to the English in the early 1630's "at the request of certain London merchants .... about the African trade".

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<sup>1</sup>K. Ratelband, op.cit., p. LXXX. A Cousins, op.cit., p.114.

<sup>2</sup>J. K. J. de Jong, op.cit., p.15.

<sup>3</sup>Sir George Downing, quoted by Cousins, in op.cit., p.10.



In August 1632, he arrived at the Gold Coast in the service of the English, and finally succeeded in winning Anomabo and Kormantine for them.<sup>1</sup> Between 1642 and 1650 the struggle on the coast appeared a straight fight between the Dutch and the English. This was to undergo a drastic change in the second half of the seventeenth century with the Sugar Revolution in the New World and its resultant demands for West African slaves.<sup>2</sup> The Gold Coast which would have been a gold mine both literally and figuratively<sup>3</sup> for the Dutch now became a gold and slave mine for Western Europe. The Swedes, the Danes and the Brandenburgers now came in for their share while the French occasionally reappeared on the scene.

All these new states whose Companies traded on the Gold Coast owed part of their capital and their success in establishing themselves on the Gold Coast partly to Dutch capital and Dutch servants.<sup>4</sup> Some of the Companies, however, could not survive the highly competitive atmosphere of the Gold Coast trade. Eventually the Swedes and the Brandenburgers were squeezed out of it. The 'Slave Rush' and the 'Scramble for the Gold Coast' affected the political and economic systems of the Gold Coast.

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.13/Protest of Arent de Groot to the Dutch 26 Aug. 1640, J.W.Blake, "The Farm of the Guinea Trade", Essays in the British and Irish History (London 1949), p.89, notes. A. Cousins, op.cit., p.82.

<sup>2</sup>James Bandinel, Some Account of the trade in Slaves from Africa (London 1842), p.47; J. D. Fage, Ghana, p.46.

<sup>3</sup>A. Cousins, op.cit., p.114.

<sup>4</sup>V. Barbour, op.cit., pp.130-142. E. Donnan: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to Africa (Washington 1930-35), Vol. I, pp. 77-78.



The Gold Coast in the 17th century may be defined as that stretch of coastline from Assine in the West to the River Volta in the east. It extended northwards to an indeterminate boundary but it may conveniently be taken to be in the region of the modern state of Gonja, and north-westwards to Bon-Mansu. A great part of this region falls within the area of thickly wooded rainforest which gradually thins northwards and eastwards into scrubland. Its south-western tip falls into the belt of heavy annual rainfall of over eighty-two inches. From Accra westwards the coastline is characterised by a series of tertiary rocks which jut into the sea to form promontories.<sup>1</sup>

The area is inhabited principally by two groups of people, who although both negro, trace their origins from two different directions. The Akan<sup>2</sup> are found principally in the Forest Zone and the Gas occupy the coastal scrubland in the Accra region. Both groups of peoples had established themselves on the Gold Coast prior to the Portuguese contact. Akan traditions of origin record that they migrated from the North. The exact location of the 'north' has not been firmly established. There are two main schools regarding the nature of the Akan movements to the south.

There are the protagonists of a direct Akan descent from the

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<sup>1</sup>E. A. Boateng: A Geography of Ghana (Cambridge 1959), passim, J. D. Fage, Ghana, pp. 4-5.



Sudanese Empires<sup>1</sup> of the Niger Bend which rose and fell between the tenth and the sixteenth centuries. Those of the other school however see the relationship between the Akans and those northern kingdoms as merely cultural and commercial.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of positive archaeological and historical proofs it would be historically unwise to base any claims of a direct descent on cultural resemblances. What may not be disputed, however, is that the Akans were not originally inhabitants of the forest regions of the Gold Coast. And however near or distant the 'north' might have been from which they came, there is no denying that their commercial relations with the Sudanese Empires had an important political influence on the Akans.

The fame and prosperity of the Empires of the Niger Bend depended, among other things, on their wealth in gold. This gold was reputed to have been obtained from the Wangara country. Which country was really

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<sup>1</sup>W. T. Balmer: A History of the Akan Peoples (London & Cape Coast 1925) p.27, makes a cautious assertion that "it is very probable that the Fanti, Ashanti, Ahanta and the Akan people in general formed originally part of this (Ghana) ancient negro kingdom dwelling in districts more remote from the central city of government". This is the first remark of a connection between the Akans and the Northern Kingdoms.  
J. B. Danquah "The Akan claim to origin from Ghana", W.A.R., Vol. XXVI, Nov.-Dec. 1955, pp.968-97, 1107-111.  
E. Meyerowitz: Akan Traditions of Origin (London 1952), pp. 23-25.  
W. E. F. Ward: History of Ghana (Leicester 1959), p.49.

<sup>2</sup>R. Mauny: Africa XXIV, 1954, pp. 208-211; J. D. Fage: Introduction to the History of West Africa, Cambridge 1956, p. 95; "Ancient Ghana: A Review of Evidence"; T.H.S.G., Vol. III, p. 2, 1957, pp. 92-96.



known as Wangara is now a matter of historical conjecture. It is however believed that the mines of Bambok and Bour<sup>el</sup> on the upper reaches of the Senegal provided most of the gold which passed through these Kingdoms. At the same time, however, it is conceded that gold from the Gold Coast was also sent northwards to these Empires. The search for this metal and other produce of the forest drew the states to the south into commercial, cultural and political contact.

Prior to the change of the direction of the Gold Coast trade from the north to the south, the Akans had been trading with the northern kingdoms. To the north-east and the north-west were established two of the most important southern termini of the trade routes. There was the Gonja market at Salaga and the Mande one at Begho. The first was the southern-most market where the Hausa Traders from the north-east came. Here goods from the north, such as Kano cloths and other things from across the Sahara were exchanged mainly for Kola nuts. As far back as the fifteenth century Hausa traders were known to have been coming to Salaga for this valuable forest produce. In the Islamic world Kola nuts were extensively used as stimulants in the dry and hot areas.<sup>2</sup> If the forest produce travelled along the north-eastern route was principally

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<sup>1</sup>E. W. Bovill, The Golden Trade of the Moors (London 1958), pp.93-94; J. D. Fage, Ghana, p.42.

<sup>2</sup>E. W. Bovill: The Golden Trade of the Moors (London 1958), p.240.  
A. A. Boahen: British Penetration of the Sahara (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1959), pp. 317-320. Fage: West Africa, pp.38-39.  
H. R. Palmer: Sudanese Memoirs III (Lagos 1928), pp. 92-109, 132.  
J. D. Fage, Ghana, p.20.



kola nuts, the north-west market to the north west collected much of the gold from the Gold Coast.

The town of Begho in Banda was contiguous to the Akan state of Bono. The capital, Bono-Mansu, which was established in the first half of the fourteenth century became famous for its gold market. Many of the Akans in the forest region of the Gold Coast trace their line of emigration to Takyiman in Bono and beyond to the Kong mountains.<sup>1</sup> By the time of the Portuguese arrival on the Gold Coast the Akans had gradually spread themselves south and south-eastwards through the whole of the forest region behind the coast line. Their knowledge of the trade to the north gave them a great advantage, for soon they were able to turn their attention to the southern markets to the disadvantage of the north. By virtue of their control of the gold-bearing regions of the Gold Coast they became the greatest traders with the Europeans.

On the eastern seaboard to the Volta are the Ga and the Adangme of the modern Accra plains. Like the Ewe to the east of the Volta, their traditions of origin are traced eastwards to the Yoruba country. They are said to have emigrated from their original homeland around 1300. The line of migration is traced to Nuatsi (Nuatje) which lies about fifty

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dupuis: A Journal of Residence in Ashanti (London 1824), p.224  
 T. Beecham: Ashantee and the Gold Coast (London 1841), p.5.  
 I. Wilks: "The Northern Factor in Ashanti History", J.A.H., Vol. II, pt. 1 (1961), p.31.  
 E. Meyerowitz: Akan Traditions of Origin (London, 1952), p.91.  
 E. Meyerowitz: The Sacred State of Akan (London, 1951), p.25.  
 W. E. F. Ward: op.cit., pp.49-50.



miles north of Lome. One group, the Adangbe, may have arrived by land, but Ga traditions suggest a migration by both land and sea.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Akan and Ga-Adangbe migrations came from different directions both had one thing in common. They moved into a comparatively sparsely populated region where they established themselves over the autochthons. Along the coast, for instance, both the Ga and the Fanti assert that there were some Guan-speaking people, such as the Aseibu (Sabu), Efutu (Fetu) and Etsi already occupying their present homes on their arrival.<sup>2</sup> Whatever might have been the extra-state influence on the former inhabitants, there can be no doubt that the successive waves of migrations from both the east and the north brought the Gold Coast into the mainstream of developments in the Sudanese kingdoms. Nowhere are the influences as clearly seen as in the political and the commercial fields.

Politically, the influence which came from the north was far reaching. The formation and disintegration of states in the Niger bend kept pushing peoples down through the open grassland country into the forest zone. This is seen in the formation of states such as Bono and Banda as

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<sup>1</sup>C. C. Reindorf: The History of the Gold Coast and Asante (Basle n.d.)  
J. D. Fage: Ghana, pp. 23-24; Ward: op.cit., p.57.

<sup>2</sup>Eva Meyerowitz: Akan Traditions of Origin, pp. 63-69. Ward: op.cit., p.39; J. D. Fage: Ghana, p.25.



well as the Gonja to the north east. But while mobility in the open region allowed for the formation of bigger states the situation in the forest zone was different. Until the European era, the Akan political practice had been based on government by kindred groups. Although widely scattered throughout the forest zone, the Akans had easily identifiable characteristics in matters of government. Each state was an association of loosely united family groups who traced descent to a common ancestry. Each family had its own system of organisation under its own head. But each town within the state had a chief who was usually a head of one of the families. Even though a chief's power was raised from the position of a family head to give him jurisdiction over the town, he was only the first among equals and not a master. The internal affairs of each family fell within the jurisdiction of the family heads. But the chief was required to see to the provision of a harmonious and a workable relationship between the various families which composed the town. In the same way as the chief stood to the family heads so also was the head of the state to the individual towns. The whole idea of state was based on the blood ties. On account of the nature of the state no group could opt out of the organisation since membership was not by choice but by virtue of birth.<sup>1</sup> Although state boundaries were limited there was a wide range of mobility between families. This was because people from the various Akan states traced descent to some common ancestor. There

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<sup>1</sup>For more about Akan societies see, R.A.Lystad, The Ashanti, (New Brunswick), 1958, pp, 16, 106-110.

E. Meyrowitz, The Sacred State of Akan (London 1951), pp. 27-36.



were clan heads as opposed to family heads. Anyone moving from his own state into another found ready welcome with members of his own clan. Although there were wars and skirmishes over boundaries, wars for territorial aggrandisement appear to have been unknown.<sup>1</sup> The most significant feature of the Afro-European confrontation on the Guinea coast was the change in the theory of government through kinship ties. In the second half of the seventeenth century the gun-running which followed the wake of the concentration of many European forts shook the foundations of the society. The great proliferation of firearms made possible a forcible inclusion of other weaker states into the power complex. The later part of the seventeenth century, therefore, witnessed the formation of sizable empires in the hinterland of the coast. The desire for territorial expansion by force of arms in order to be economically viable in the new situation was first shown by Denkyira, to be followed by Akwamu and Ashanti.<sup>2</sup>

Not only in the political sphere is the seventeenth century important in the history of the Gold Coast; commercially it brought innovations which affected the social systems of the country. The European contact not only increased the volume of trade but diversified it. Before the European era, the Gold Coast trade was directed mainly to the north. It has been asserted that the Europeans did not have to create trade by introducing new crops, for, due to the long association with northern kingdoms, "a European demand existed or could be easily created from the

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<sup>1</sup> Meyerowitz., The Sacred State, p.34. Also see Chapter IV.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter VI.



commodities it produced".<sup>1</sup> Indeed before the arrival of the Europeans on the Coast there were other traders to whom the forest proved no barrier. They bought and carried the salt from the coast far into the interior where that commodity was in short supply.<sup>2</sup> Salt was one of the rarest commodities in the whole of the Western Sudan. Apart from the small salt works around Daboya, in the Gonja district, the whole of the Gold Coast depended on the salt from the coast. Although it is not known for certain how far north it was carried, it was not unlikely that the Akani traders who bought the coastal salt carried some of it into the southern termini of the Sudanese markets, especially to Begho. In this fortified city, Akan traders were known to have bought cotton cloths, carpets and other articles. These articles were likely to have been paid for in gold, salt and kola nuts.

The most important commercial ties between the Gold Coast and its neighbours were forged by the extensive trade in cotton cloths. The cloth trade which had long existed gave the Portuguese a ready market. They not only brought cloth from North Africa for which demand already existed, but acted as carriers in the inter West African trade. In these the articles carried were cloths, leopard skin, and beads from the east of the Gold Coast.<sup>3</sup> Benin was where they were readily obtained. Later on cloth

<sup>1</sup>K. G. Davies: The Royal African Company, p.4.

<sup>2</sup>P. de Marees: op.cit., pp.207-208.

<sup>3</sup>J. W. Blake: European Beginnings in West Africa, p.93. J. D. Fage: Ghana, p.42. J. D. Fage: "Bead Trade", J.A.H., III, No. 2, p. 345. I. Wilks, "Medieval Trade Routes..." , J.A.H., III, No. 2, p. 337.



from Whidah was also imported into the Gold Coast. When the Portuguese first began to carry cloths from the Ivory Coast to the Gold Coast is not known. Pacheco summarily dismissed the area as "treacherous .... and of no trade".<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of the seventeenth century opinion about the economic benefits of the area had undergone a great change. The same place was found to be inhabited by people who were "experienced in making cotton cloths which ... sell on the Gold Coast".<sup>2</sup> The desire of some of the Europeans to oust the African middlemen from this trade was to cause some frequent friction in the seventeenth century. It was not only to the Gold Coast that the Ivory Coast cloth, or the Quaqua cloth, as it was commonly known, found a ready market. Some was sent to the northern markets where it was bought by the Mande traders. Barbot tells us that traders on horses bought and carried some of the cloth to the north.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the competition of the Atlantic trade, trade between the north and the forest zone continued to be carried on side by side with it for a long time. A Dutch cartographer in 1629 had learnt of a lucrative trade in cloths between the Akans and the interior. The most famous

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<sup>1</sup>Pacheco, quoted in European beginnings in West Africa, p.39 by J. W. Blake.

<sup>2</sup>P. de Marees, op.cit., p.15, he asserts that "dit vock zijn mede seer cloec in cottoenen cleeden te maken, ende die op de Gout Custe te vercopen, sij handelen veel met die van de Mina ..."

<sup>3</sup>J. Barbot: A description of North and South Guinea in Churchill, Collections, Vol. VI, p. 433.



places for the cloth trade were Wankyi, Incassa and Insoko (Begho).<sup>1</sup> At the turn of the century Loyer was to be told of the great market of 'Inzoko' from where Turkish carpets, fine cotton cloths, strip red and blue silk and other articles were brought to Assini.<sup>2</sup> There is reason to believe that in the course of time some of the West African cloths found their way to Europe and to the New World. In 1686, for instance, a complaint was lodged with the Royal African Company from Barbados. In this it was alleged that some Ardra cloths .... seized out of the Prosperous and the Orange Tree were short of several pieces". When they opened one "of these 50 pieces ... they were told and believed the other 7 bundles were alike and 19 odd pieces there were besides which made up the quantity mentioned in the inventory."<sup>3</sup> It is likely that the cloths were to be used by the many Ardra slaves who were arriving there in large numbers at this time.

Another equally important West African article of trade which was brought to the Gold Coast was beads. The Portuguese started carrying these beads "called Coris" from Benin to the Gold Coast. These beads were described in 1601 as made of blue, green and black stones which were obtained from the River Forcados. Later on the places where they were

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<sup>1</sup>Leupen Collection (The Hague) No. 743. Caerte des Lantschapen van de Gout Kust ..... 25 Dec. 1629.

<sup>2</sup>Loyer "Abstract of Voyage to Issini" in Astley's Collections.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1433/7/Letter from Barbadoes to the R.A.C. 14 August 1686.



obtained were extended to include the Cameroons, and the Whydah Coast. Indeed the whole of the region from Accra to the Cameroons came to be associated with it. In 1649, for instance, the King of Accra promised the Dutch that he would not permit his subjects to exchange their beads and gold with any other European nationals than with them.<sup>1</sup> The beads were variously known as Akori, or Aggrey beads conte de terra by the European traders on the Gold Coast. On the Gold Coast itself there developed a type of bead industry which put the finishing touches to the imported ones to give the required local specifications.<sup>2</sup> Although the local markets were swamped with European manufactured beads, the desire for the locally made ones did not languish. Apart from their ornamental value beads were used in some places as a medium of exchange. Loyer observed that the "locally made beads serve for money in Assini".<sup>3</sup> In the same way as the concentration of European forts on the Gold Coast affected the political institutions so were the old commercial relations with the other states affected. Soon the taste for cheap European manufactured goods was to submerge most of the local craftsmen. But above all it was the great demand for slaves which greatly changed the political and commercial status quo.

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/140/Elmina Journal 18 March 1647. O.W.I.C.12/Agreement between the Director General J. V. d Wel and the King of Great Accra, 4 Aug. 1649, Clause 3.

<sup>2</sup>P. de Marees: op.cit., p.55 asserts that "de beviesen of Coralen die doen sy oock veel copen, ende laten die door hun slaven ende Negros breecken ende slypen, ende die ghebruycken sy om hunne victualie te coopen....."

<sup>3</sup>Loyer in Astley's Collections, p.423.



The concentration of many European forts on the Gold Coast drew the African and the Europeans into each others' struggles. European competition was so keen in the Gold Coast trade. The Swedish Company which appeared on the Gold Coast scene in 1650 had a very rapid success. From their modest settlement at Cape Coast they spread their influence until by 1655 they had established themselves at Boutry, Annema<sup>b</sup>do, Orsu, Takoradi, Jumore and Cape Appolonia.<sup>1</sup> But the life span of the Company on the Gold Coast was short. By 1664 they had faded away from the Gold Coast scene. The Danes, who, like the Swedes, established themselves first at Cape Coast were forced by the competition of the English and the Dutch to abandon their headquarters at Cape Coast, Carolusborg, in 1684. Henceforth Danish activities were concentrated on the eastern seaboard from Accra to Keta.

Of all the European competitors of the seventeenth century on the Gold Coast, the most persistent rivals were the English and the Dutch. Their commercial rivalries in Europe were transferred to the Gold Coast. From the early beginnings they sought to outbid each other by resorting to economic measures. Each tried to damage trade for the other by under-selling. This method was ineffective. At times they doled out presents, threats and promises to the African rulers to get their rivals ejected

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<sup>1</sup> O.W.I.C.13/La Ab/199 Protest van Ruychaver aan Hend-Caarlof, 22 July 1651. O.W.I.C.13/29 June 1650; O.W.I.C.13/24 Nov. 1650. O.W.I.C.7/ Deductie van J. Valkenburg tegen de Zweedische Africaanshe Comp. 1656. O.W.I.C.13/AB/236-243/Reply and counter protest of Valkenburg to Kruisensten, 5 Sept. 1656. See A. Cousins, op.cit., pp. 180-200.



from their posts. In some instances they resorted to direct attacks on one another. In the 1640s, Anglo-Dutch struggles were concentrated in Fetu and Fantin. When the English succeeded in obtaining a foothold at Kormantin the Dutch stationed a ship on the coast expressly to spoil the trade for the English.<sup>1</sup> In 1640 there were charges and countercharges against both sides. While the English put the blame for the burning of their lodge at Kormantine on the Dutch, the latter blamed the former for the forcible seizure of their flag by the people of Anomabo.<sup>2</sup> In 1645 the fear of the English gaining a foothold at Accra led the Dutch to suggest building a school there in order, apparently, to win the support and sympathy of the local people.<sup>3</sup>

The relations between them were however punctuated with occasional friendliness. During the first Anglo-Dutch war, the two companies on the Gold Coast entered into a gentleman's agreement whereby they promised not to attack one another. The two chief officials, Ruychaver on behalf of the Dutch and George Middleton, the English Chief at Kormantine, agreed that in the absence of directives from Europe they would pursue free trade. In case orders came from Europe to attack each other ten days' grace was to

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. 9. From Ruychaver to the XIX. 13 Dec. 1644.  
O.W.I.C. Attestation against the English. 20 Nov. 1645.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C. 13. Arend Jacobss to the XIX 30 March, 1640, 16 April 1640.

<sup>3</sup>The Dutch accused the English of persuading the King of Sabu "had" versough behulpzaam te zijn on heft Fort Nassau af te kopen". O.W.I.C.13/1/14/July 1640.



be given.<sup>1</sup> But this spirit of friendly co-existence was temporary. In the 1660's there was a progressive deterioration in Anglo-Dutch relations which culminated in the second Anglo-Dutch war of 1663-1664.<sup>5</sup> Between 1661 and 1662, the English reported that six of their ships had been seized by the Dutch. The seizures, which may be taken as part of a general Dutch policy to engross the whole of the Gold Coast trade, were now the direct outcome of Dutch struggles with the Fanti and Fetu states. In 1660 Cape Coast fort fell to the Fetu people who captured it from the Dutch. The friendship of the Fetu with the English led the Dutch to place a blockade along the whole coast from Komenda to Kormantin. When the English disregarded it their ships were seized or driven off the coast.<sup>2</sup> In 1663, the Royal Adventurers, who had recently obtained a monopoly of the Gold Coast trade, sought and obtained help from Charles II. This led to the despatch of Captain Holmes to Guinea; he was instructed, among other things, in consultation with other commanders:

"if .... you judge yourself strong enough to maintain the right of his Ma ties subjects by force, you are to do it,<sup>3</sup> and to kill sink, take and destroy such as oppose you..."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C.13/226-229/Agreement between Ruyschaver and Middleton 6 Jan.1653.

<sup>2</sup>For the circumstances leading to the 2nd Anglo-Dutch War see G.F.Zook: op.cit., pp. 42-62; C.P. Lucas, op.cit., pp. 98-99; D. Ogg: England in the Reign of Charles II (Lond. 1934), pp. 283-4; K. Feiling: British Foreign Policy 1660-1672 (Lond. 1930), p. 125; C.O.I/23/6 Letter of Director General D. Wilree to the English Captain of the ship St. James, 8 Nov. 1662.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Zook in op.cit., p.42.



The attacks and counter-attacks of Holmes and Admiral de Ruyter were the first direct open conflict supported by the governments of both Companies. The outcome of this war was entrenched in the Treaty of Breda in 1667, which gave either side the fruits of conquests.<sup>1</sup> On the Gold Coast the outcome of the war was that the English lost Kormantin and gained Cape Coast. But of ~~the~~ immediate result in Afro-European relationship was the debt which the Dutch contracted. To enable them to capture Kormantin from the English the Dutch were forced to hire the services of the Fanti state. The promise to pay about one mark of gold on all Dutch ships which docked at Fanti, in recognition of the Fanti<sup>h</sup> help, proved a bone of contention between the Dutch and Fanti.<sup>2</sup>

After the war there were brief spells of peace and at times a 'get together' of the Dutch and the English. The re-appearance of the French on the Gold Coast at the beginning of the eighteenth century for a time provided a unifying force. During the war of the Spanish Succession the Dutch alerted their officials on the Gold Coast to prevent the French from gaining a foothold there.<sup>3</sup> It was during this time that a French projected plan to build a fort at Assinie was undertaken. Indeed the fear that the French would succeed in winning the King of Akwamu to their side was

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<sup>1</sup> V.W.I. Stukken: 1166 Agreement of Peace between Great Britain and the United Provinces at Breda. C. P. Lucas: Historical Geography, Vol. III, p.99

<sup>2</sup> W.I.C. 917: Report of Wm. de la Palma to the Ten, 25 Sept. 1702.

<sup>3</sup> W.I.C. 917: Report by J. V. Sevenhuysen, 30 May 1701.



one of the main reasons for the Akwamu-Dutch agreement of 1703. The Dutch reported that it was "necessary to prevent French ventures of friendship to the new King by keeping him in their friendship".<sup>1</sup> In 1710 the two rival companies made an agreement to help curb the power of the Fanti state which had been terrorising their servants by seizures and other threats.<sup>2</sup> The Fetu River Convention a year later saw them joining forces to attack John Konny of Pokoso. Distrust on both sides was too deep rooted to allow for any lasting concerted efforts. Both sides supported rival states and helped prolong the Dutch-Kormanda War of 1694 to 1700.<sup>3</sup> Whatever the official policies between the Governments of the various trading companies, the traders on the coast found it difficult to agree on many issues. Although Postlethwayt was writing about the eighteenth century, his idea about the importance of the Guinea trade to the economy of Britain is applicable to the conditions of the seventeenth century, especially the latter part of it. He described the situation as follows:

"The first principle and the foundation of all the rest, the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion ..... the African trade is so very beneficial

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 917. Report by de la Palma, 10 Oct. 1703.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 124/2/Agreement between the Dutch and the English concerning Fanti. 4 April 1710. W.I.C.124/Agreement between the Dutch and the English. Fetu River Convention, 20 Sept. 1711.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 4.



to Great Britain, so essentially necessary to the very being of her colonies, that without it neither could we flourish nor they subsist".<sup>1</sup>

Because of the importance attached ~~to~~ it both sides employed all methods not excluding war to obtain the lion's share of it. And both sides acknowledged the impossibility of agreeing to live together. One English official on the coast recounting Dutch activities which he described as "undermining and dishonourable proceedings" concluded that "they are in all times unchangeable and the same". The redoubtable Sir Dalby Thomas unmincingly called them "the greatest Amboina Rogues in the World".<sup>2</sup> It was one Dutch General who succinctly diagnosed the trouble and arrived at the conclusion that their identical interest on the Coast made it difficult to live together in peace.<sup>3</sup>

If on the European sides relations were constantly strained as a result of the keen competition, their relations with the local states were not by any means better. From the Portuguese period onwards, the Europeans followed the pattern of contracting treaties with the Chiefs within whose territories they established their forts. These treaties and contracts were given various interpretations according to the understandings of the

<sup>1</sup>M. Postlethwayt quoted by E. C. Martin, "English Establishments on the Gold Coast", T.R.H.S., 4 ser. Vol. V (1922), p.170.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/18 Charles Hayes on the History of the Affairs of Africa from 1689-1694 - 1 March 1706. T. 70/5/29 Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C. 16 June 1706.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C. 917. Report by Willem de la Palma 10 Oct. 1703 asked whether "twee compagnien die een interest beogen, ontrent de commercie vrinden kunnen blijven.."



contracting parties. The Europeans sought to monopolise all the trade in the neighbourhood of their forts.

Since almost invariably in contracting the agreements presents were given to the local chiefs and their elders, the real significance of their relations occasioned some misunderstandings. While these presents were considered by the Africans as mere tokens of friendship, the Europeans at times used them as claims that they had purchased the lands on which their forts stood. Some of the rulers could not understand the temerity of their European friends in preventing them from granting lands to all other Europeans who so desired. Along the coastline the multiplicity of petty states seeking to benefit from the European trade, as well as the different European nationals looking for places to establish their trading posts on the Gold Coast, sharpened rivalries on both sides. The struggles on both sides affected the fortunes of the European Companies and the coastal states. The greatest single disintegrating force on politics was the importation of firearms. These weapons helped to pursue policies of territorial aggrandisement which in turn fed the slave marts with the victims of wars and raids. In the Gold Coast situation, whether there was war or peace, the end product was commercially profitable, for wars produced slaves, while gold could be worked in peace-time. But although gold was desired, the emphasis came to be placed on slaves. It was estimated in 1701, for instance, that carbines, grease and other articles costing 7,200 florins in Holland could be sold for 20,700 florins



on the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup> A few years later it was estimated that the Company could buy 6,000 slaves annually at 45 florins per head and sell them in the New World at 210 florins each. Slaves obtained on the Guinea Coast for 270,000 florins fetched 1,260,000 florins in the New World. All expenses including equipage, death in the middle passage were estimated as 390,000 fl. The net gain of the Company on the slaves was <sup>600,000</sup> 6,000,000 florins.<sup>2</sup> While this number of slaves from Guinea may include those obtained on the Slave Coast, it can be maintained that the Gold Coast settlements were not merely collecting points from which trade goods from other parts of Guinea were collected. The Dutch estimated that even their least paying posts yielded profits in the long run. In 1717, for instance, the Council of the Dutch Director General drew up a balance sheet for the forts at Moure, Cormantine, Boutry, Komenda and Sekondi, for the twelve years from 1705 to 1716. It was calculated that a profit of 239,742 florins had been made on goods worth 7,755,965 florins that had passed through them. The commodities which had been obtained from these forts included 67,299 lbs of ivory, 1,025 slaves, 1,983 marks 5 oz. of gold.<sup>3</sup> Together with these, were what was obtained by the English, Danes, Brandenburgers, Ten Percent men and other interlopers.

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 484. Report of J. V. Sevenhuyzen to the Ten 15 Jan. 1701.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 484/300: Idem 917/50. Report of W. de la Palma to the Ten. 4 Oct. 1704 - 9 June 1705.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C. 124. Resolution of the Direct. Gen. and Council, 8 April 1717.



Not only in the commercial and political fields did the events arising from the concentration of many European forts affect the Gold Coast, there were social effects also. Conditions on the Gold Coast confined the Europeans to the immediate vicinity of their forts. To enable them to secure trade they depended on the African servants and middlemen. In and around all the European forts there were Africans on whose co-operation the Europeans counted for their success. Some of these were in direct employment of the Europeans. Others set up their own business as middlemen who conducted traders from the inland states into the European forts. There **was** also a group of artisans who were the direct creation of the Afro-European contact. The rise of this New Group had started from the Portuguese era, but it was greatly increased in the seventeenth century. It may be said that the growth of new towns along the coast and the emergence of the New Class of salaries<sup>d</sup> and wage earners was one of the many significant developments of the change in the direction of the flow of trade from the north to the south.



Chapter IIAFRO- EUROPEAN RELATIONS ON THE GOLD COAST

The seventeenth, like the nineteenth century, witnessed remarkable European attempts to establish themselves in Africa. But while the attempts of the latter century virtually embraced the whole of continental Africa, those of the former were mainly confined to West Africa. Unlike the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution necessitated an expansion of old markets and the acquisition of new sources of raw material which, in turn, involved the political status of the principal European powers, the propelling forces in the seventeenth century were mainly commercial. This is not to say that purely political considerations were absent. In that century the dividing line between politics and economics was very faint. If the boundaries which criss-crossed the face of that continent until the second half of the twentieth century were the permanent scars of the nineteenth century expansion, the seventeenth century could also boast of impressive physical remains. On the Gold Coast coastline of less than three hundred miles, twenty one forts and castles of five different European nations proudly commanded the roads into the interior. The waving flags of Brandenburg~~ers~~, Danes, Dutch, English and Swedes proclaimed the new acquisitions of the companies of the states.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nathan, M. "The Dutch and the English on the Gold Coast in the eighteenth Century." Journal of African Society, Vol. LIV 1904, pp.33-43.



The efforts made by them to obtain and to maintain their possessions on the Guinea coast in general and on the Gold Coast in particular, were indicative of the economic importance attached to them. That they were prepared to apply all available methods to impress themselves on the rulers of the coast to win their support in their commercial designs meant that a relationship of compromise was bound to be evolved.

Both in approach and methods adopted, those of the seventeenth century were by no means dissimilar from those of the nineteenth. The nineteenth century treaty contractors like Stanley, Lugard, and Kirk had their seventeenth century counterparts in men like de Groot, Caarlof, Crisp and Ruyschaver, to mention but a few. As in the nineteenth century, it was not long before it was discovered that mere treaties unbacked by a show of power were unacceptable to the contending powers. The frequency of enactment and re-enactment of these treaties shows the lack of observance of the terms, but above all it indicates that they were a novelty on the coast. That these treaties by themselves had little value in the estimation of the local rulers is seen in the willingness with which they were prepared to open their shores to all and sundry irrespective of their previous undertakings with other powers. The reasons for the non-compliance must be looked for in the different background of the two groups of people.

Coming as they did from countries with widely varying political and economic development, it was inevitable that each European nation



would view its relationship with the people of the Gold Coast in a different light. Their conceptions of ownership of and title to land, as well as their ideas about monetary transactions, were all conditioned by their environment in the Europe of their time. The differences in the European outlook apart, the African's own conceptions of tenure and ownership, his strongly communalistic life as opposed to the individualistic development of the newcomers, meant that the whole atmosphere was bound to be charged with mistrust and suspicion. The 17th century was a time of experiment and readjustment of relations on the Gold Coast.

Throughout Western Europe the seventeenth century was a period of remarkable economic growth. This was particularly noticeable in the United Provinces and England. It was the Golden Age in the history of the young nations. Their ships visited all parts of the world, carrying and selling. Thanks to their early monopoly in the trade to the Baltic, the Dutch were no strangers to the sea. The inflow of money from these early trading activities had provided them with capital which was of a great help in a century of active oversea trade. The seventeenth century saw the birth of both the East and the West India Companies. These companies served as the backbone of the new long distance trade. The accumulation of wealth made possible new developments at home.<sup>1</sup> Everything in Holland assumed economic dimensions.

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<sup>1</sup>Barbour, V. Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century, (Baltimore, 1950). (This is an up to date work on the rise of Holland as a great sea nation.)



Largely by monies supplied by the capitalists in the towns, reclamation of land and the development of agriculture were given new impetus. In Holland and Zeeland about 80,000 acres of land were reclaimed.<sup>1</sup> To pay for the capital invested and to make an appreciable profit on these ventures, it was imperative that the best scientific methods available should be adopted. In a land where a living had to be made by wresting land from the sea by means of dykes and polders, communal ownership of land was out of the question. Land was a scarce commodity the least bit of which must be economically employed. Title to land was considered as a private matter which could be disposed of at will.

In England land had been for a long time of prime importance. Prior to the seventeenth century the country had been undergoing a series of agrarian changes. Payment in money had superseded payments in kind. Ever since the fifteenth century the number of displaced farmers had been on the increase. These problems became insistent in the Tudor period. But it has been remarked that the attempts to grapple with the problems of enclosures and vagrancy were the last stand of the old order against the new. The enclosures were, it has been suggested, the necessary corollary to the monied economy. Shut up within the walls of his new farm the landlord developed the land as he saw fit. Little or no room remained for poor farmers. In order

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<sup>1</sup>Clough, S. B. & Cole, C. W., Economic History of Europe (Boston 1952), p.193.



to derive the maximum gain landlords found it worth their while in most cases to evict tenants who were a liability on them. In the seventeenth century land quickly changed hands. Thanks to the rise of the middle class, rich merchants and industrialists bought much of the land.

It can be seen that in both The United Provinces and in England land had become, like all the other aspects of economic life, a good field for investment. The individuals and companies whose money went into developing it had complete control over the land so developed. They could and did alienate their titles as often as it was economically profitable. In the same way as the individual could dispose of his right to property, so also could his rights to his land be disposed of. This whole idea of the individual's absolute right to land was contrary to the concepts of land ownership in the Gold Coast.

On the Gold Coast land was, and still is, collectively owned. As one chief succinctly remarked, land is owned "by a vast family of whom many are dead, a few are living and a countless host are still unborn".<sup>1</sup> The observation is carried still farther by Rattray, who points out that the soil is held to be a deity, a goddess, and deities could not be bought and sold.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly land ownership in the Gold Coast admitted of both corporate and individual ownership and titles,

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<sup>1</sup>Ofori Atta, Sir Nana. Quoted by Ollenu, N.A, Principles of Customary Land Law, (London 1962), p.5.

<sup>2</sup>Rattray, R. S., Ashanti Law and Constitution (London 1929), p.342.



but never in the same way as obtained in Europe. Title to land is vested in the community, the absolute ownership of which is symbolised in a stool. The occupant of the stool or the head of the family is only a trustee for the vast community embracing the past, the present, and the future. This absolute ownership could be subdivided into sub-paramountcies in places where there were many other stools owing allegiance to a paramount stool. Within this subdivision the various families who made up the division had their family holdings. Any member of the family who so desired had a right to farm any portion of the land which had not been cultivated by any other member. Individuals in taking up such ownership come into possession of what is termed a determinable ownership. This type of ownership is inheritable and alienable. But this is the case only as long as the duties and obligations attendant upon the ownership were performed in accordance with customary laws which every member of the community is expected to perform. Though the right to land could never be taken away, it must be emphasised that this right was very different from the rights which an individual could possess in Europe. Its nearest equivalent, it has been observed, was that of usufruct. In other words an individual's title to land did not extend beyond the things that accrued to him as a result of his labours. The land and all that are beneath it were and still are owned by the family and the community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ollenu, N. A., op.cit., p.52.



Perhaps the most interesting aspect of West African land ownership is the title obtained by a stranger when a land transaction is undertaken. It has often been asserted that that alienation of land was completely foreign to the Gold Coast Africans' conception of land tenure. This statement does not bear with the reality of the situation. In fact every citizen has a right to alienate the determinable right to land which he possesses. Moreover, customary law allows even the alienation of the absolute right between one state and another state. But it must be emphasised that, apart from states within whose competence such a right falls, and who in effect undertake the transaction for and on behalf of the stools concerned, no such alienation is permissible. The reason for this is not far to find. Since no individual has an absolute title to land it is obvious that a transaction involving such a right could not be undertaken. A stranger who either purchases or rents land possesses nothing but the use of the land. What happens when such an undertaking comes into operation is that the stranger acquires the right of a citizen. All the rights and duties of the other members of the state are thereby conferred on him. There is, however, an exception to the above statement. While his citizenship rights allow him in theory to partake of all customary ceremonies, the new citizen may have his duties commuted to payments in kind. The reason for this is that it "may be undesirable, indeed sacrilegious for such a person to take active part in some customary rites".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ollenu, N. A., op.cit., p.50.



Equally interesting is the question of land purchase which not unnaturally brought about some complications in the relationship between the Africans and the Europeans in the seventeenth century. Indeed it must be emphasised that outright purchase of land seems never to have taken place so far as the local people were concerned. As has already been stated, only the community as a whole could lay claim to absolute ownership of land. Granting that some of the European nations had to pay money before they could undertake to build the forts and castles in which they lived and did their trading, the payments never conferred on them the rights to the land as they understood it. Whatever payments were made were but part-payment for customary services due to the stool.<sup>1</sup> As long as the purchaser remained in possession of the right to that piece of land he was expected to partake in all the customary ceremonies. Exemption from such services could only be granted by the recipient of the services.

While customarily a permanent ownership is only possible after it has been shown that the determinable title of the families concerned extended that far, the claim that persons of a particular locality determined its allegiance needs to be qualified. It was not unknown for the Dutch to make claims to other parts of the Gold Coast on the grounds that the area concerned had been inhabited by fishermen from Elmina. While it might be easy for such a claim to be made along the boundaries

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<sup>1</sup>Ollenu, N. A., op.cit., p. 53; Saba, J. M., Fanti Customary Laws (London, 1897), p.38.



of adjacent territories, it would have been against custom for a group of people who settled in the midst of another territory to have brought such a place within the jurisdiction of their former states from which they had emigrated. At best such a group could have claim to a double nationality. As long as they remained in their new territory they became citizens of the new state within which they resided. But as outright immigration was alien to the Gold Coast, such settlers on going back to their former state had to comply with the rules and regulations obtaining in the old state. Indeed it was not customary for individuals or a group of individual-strangers settled in the midst of another state to create pockets of independent states within the jurisdiction of another state.<sup>1</sup>

The different outlook in economic matters, the dissimilarity in the basic law with regard to land ownership and tenure between the Gold Coast Africans and Europeans became evident when they first met on the coast. Unlike the Congo, where the Portuguese undertook a friendly mission with the view of helping a friendly potentate, the exact relationship which was first established between them and the rulers on the Gold Coast has not as yet been found out. The surviving documents do not show sufficient circumstantial evidence to postulate a claim that the local rulers on the coast were initially accorded respect as equals. When the Portuguese decided to erect a permanent

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<sup>1</sup>"Deductiye van Valkenburgh" in J. K. Jde Jonge, Oosprong van Neederland Bezitting ter Kust van Guinea (St~~et~~ Gravenhage 1864), p.64. The Dutch claimed that fishermen who settled in Annamabo brought that area within their jurisdiction.



fortress on the coast they first sought a formal permission from the king at Elmina. Previous to the establishment of the castle they seemed to have traded with the people who brought their goods in canoes to the new comers in their ships. Whatever might have been the intentions of the Portuguese, they were not long in discovering that things would not go according to their plans. When d'Azambuja, the leader of the expedition, laid the plans for the project before Caramansa, the local king, he could not get a ready answer as he had expected. After the leader had related all the benefits which would accrue to the local people, and had described the splendours of the court of his master, the king of Portugal, Caramansa tried to put off the project. The king expressed his opposition and fears by drawing the attention of his visitors to the constant struggle between the sea and the land in an effort to win part of the other's possession.<sup>1</sup> To him things would be better if they remained as they were formerly.

It was unthinkable that the carefully prepared Portuguese plans would be allowed to go to pieces on account of the verbal opposition of the local ruler. The newly discovered source of gold must be protected through thick and thin. As Pacheco points out, "despite much trouble with the negroes, who wished to prevent the work, it was finally

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<sup>1</sup>Blake, J. W., Europeans in West Africa, Vol. I, p.64.



finished".<sup>1</sup> The building of the castle was one thing, the establishment of a friendly and a workable relationship with the local people was another. For the leader of the expedition to return home with his commission unfulfilled would have lost him face with his master. Presents not unaccompanied by force were doled out to the king and his people. Indeed, for the opposition encountered, the Portuguese did not hesitate to show the people the price that goes with disobedience. The local village was burnt down to serve as a lesson.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly the relations between the Portuguese and the Gold Coast people were not as cordial as their relations with those of Upper Guinea. For, whereas peaceful penetration and miscegenation were practised in Upper Guinea, force and fraud were not infrequently used on the Gold Coast.<sup>3</sup> We can see however that from the early times the newcomers had to make payments to local rulers on whose territory the castle was constructed. The origin of the payments may be traced to very early times. During the governorship of d'Azambuja in the castle, he "made other ordinances and agreements with the negroes".<sup>4</sup> Though the fact that the Portuguese

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<sup>1</sup>Pacheco Periera, Esmerado de Situ Orbis, circa 1505-8, Trans. and ed. by G. H. T. Kimble, Hakluyt Society 2nd Series no. 79, (London 1936), Chapter 5. Blake, J. W., op.cit., p.43.

<sup>2</sup>Blake, J. W., op.cit., p.54, Document 49.

<sup>3</sup>Black, J. W., op.cit., p.43.

<sup>4</sup>Dapper, O., Naukeurige Beschrijving der Afrikaensche Gewesten, (Amsterdam 1668), p.283.



employed force in the initial stages of their arrival on the Gold Coast never endeared them to the local people, it must be pointed out that Afro-Portuguese relationship was not one long drawn out struggle.

Of the ownership of the land on which the castle stood, Dapper asserts that "it has been anciently owned by the kings of Commany and Fetu"<sup>1</sup> and that payments for the privilege of building on the land were equally distributed between the kings of the two states. In the year 1503, for instance, the captain of the Castle Sao Jorge da Mina, sent Diogo d'Alvarenga to confirm the friendship with the king of Commany. Seventeen years later Pacheco ordered a present to be given to the knights of Fetu "because this would advance the service of the king of Portugal". On the face of it one may infer that the payments were made in furtherance of trade. When taken in conjunction with Dapper's later observation, one cannot but agree with Blake that the payments were annual tributes due to the rulers as rent for the land on which the castle stood. The exact time from which this custom originated has not been established for sure. If it did not start from the agreement between d'Azambuja and Caramansa, it probably started soon afterwards. The origin of such payments to local people became of great importance when in the nineteenth century the Dutch decided to hand over their possessions on the Gold Coast to the English. The

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<sup>1</sup>Blake, J. W., op.cit., p.45.



nature and origin of some of the payments on the coast will be well understood when the relationship between the Dutch and the other Europeans who came after the Portuguese comes to be discussed.

Tribute to the local potentates was not all, however, For both external and internal attacks the Portuguese were to discover that they had to depend on the support of their local allies. They saw the need of a trained and a reliable force. The Portuguese adopted a policy of detribalisation with the people who came to settle around their castle. The people of Elmina were made free from all their allegiance to the rulers of both Commenda and Fetu. Elmina was granted a system of municipal government in which they had freedom to govern themselves as their headmen desired. There grew up a state of interdependence between the town and the castle. In return for the protection given them by the Portuguese, the townsmen remained faithful and helpful. It was due to the spirited defence which the people of Elmina undertook in 1625 that the Dutch attempt to drive the Portuguese from their castle in that year was foiled. It was not until the Dutch had succeeded in winning the friendship of a counterbalancing force of local people that they became a real threat to the Portuguese. The Dutch success in taking Elmina castle in 1637 was a joint effort between them and the local people whom van Iperen won over to his side.<sup>1</sup>

If payments to the rulers on the coast were rents for the land on

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<sup>1</sup>Blake, op.cit., p.45; J. K. J. de Jonge, op.cit., p.18; Claridge, W. W. A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, 2 vols. (London 1925), p.89.



which the castle stood, the same cannot be said for those paid to the rulers in the interior of the country. Just as the friendly co-operation of the coastal people was needed, so that of the rulers in the interior could not be lost sight of. It was not long before they learned to cultivate the friendship of such rulers. In 1520 for instance gifts were ordered to be sent to the king of the Accanes, as "this was the custom and they had to be given by order of our lord, the king, upon the arrival of his captains at this city".<sup>1</sup> That this payment can be safely described as presents in furtherance of trade cannot be doubted. Since the territory of the Accanes never extended to the coast, and as Accane was known for the quality of its gold, and as the gold mines were not controlled by the coastal states, the object of the payment was to induce the king to encourage trade to the coast. That this had been developed into a custom to be followed at every time is evident from the statement made by Pacheco. From this it can be asserted that from the very early times the Portuguese learnt that the trade on the Gold Coast was a complicated system depending more on mutual trust than mere economic necessity. It was the abandonment of this policy of trust that was to cost them their hold on the Gold Coast in 1637. Reduced to desperate straits by the activities

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<sup>1</sup>Blake, op.cit., p.55. It is to be noted that the English also adopted a similar method. In July 1684 presents were sent to Akanny. T70/370/14 Accane variously spelt Arcany, Akani, Arccany, was one of the interior states of the Gold Coast. Its exact extent and origin had not been established yet. It was one of the richest countries throughout the 17th century.



of interlopers and the fierce competition of other nations the Portuguese adopted a policy of force. It was not unknown for them to have sent armed galleys to the coast to burn both the canoes and houses of recalcitrant people. Indeed it was the frequent attacks on the Sabou people after they had traded with the Dutch in the last decade of the sixteenth century which helped the cause of the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> In many respects it can be asserted that the Dutch adopted the methods of the Portuguese whom they claimed to have succeeded. Like their predecessors, they entered into treaties and other agreements when it was deemed necessary and did not hesitate to employ threats and force if these could well serve their purpose.

If any European nation in the seventeenth century was loud in professing what was termed its legitimate claims to places and people on the coast, it was the Dutch. They not infrequently claimed that by defeating the Portuguese in a rightful war they had come into possession of the places where the Portuguese had formerly exercised sovereignty. Whether such sovereignty had ever been exercised over the people was a question which they alone seemed to have had the answer to for, when it suited them, they did not fail to produce oral evidence in support of their claims. In November 1656, for instance, representatives of the Dutch Director-General managed to get the chiefs and the headmen of Lower and Upper Axim to show that "from time immemorial the inhabitants

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<sup>1</sup>J. K. J. de Jonge, op.cit., p.64; Blake, op.cit., p.55.



of the land stretching from Assine to Axim had been vassals of the Portuguese".<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly the same people in the nineteenth century could not find the bases on which their Gold Coast possessions rested. This understandably enough was when they were making efforts to hand over their Gold Coast possessions which, to all intents and purposes, had become a liability owing to their inability to find an alternative trade to the slave trade which had been abolished in that century.<sup>2</sup>

Of the relationship between the Dutch and the people with whom they traded in the sixteenth century little is known. It is said that as far back as 1598 they had entered into a treaty with the State of Sabou on the Gold Coast. The exact terms of this agreement have not yet been discovered. Judging from subsequent agreements, however, it seems that nothing but a promise to trade with each other may have been agreed on. It was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that a definitive agreement was signed between the Dutch and the King of Sabou. Of this treaty more hereafter. It is however true that the first state on the Gold Coast with whom the Dutch came into friendly relations was that of Sabou. In 1611 ambassadors from the king of Sabou arrived in Holland to request the assistance of the States-General against the attacks of the Portuguese.<sup>3</sup> That the mission of Carvalho and Marinho

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<sup>1</sup> O.W.I.C./13/f432-437/Bewijs van der landen Axieme of Axems Jurisdictie./ 25 Nov. 1656.

<sup>2</sup> For the circumstances leading to the final withdrawal of the Dutch from the Gold Coast the most up to date work published in English is The Gold Coast Britain and Netherlands, 1850-1874, by Douglas Coombs (London 1963)

<sup>3</sup> Deductie van Valkenburgh in de Jonge, op.cit., p.64; K. Ratelband, Vijf Dagregisters van het Kasteel Sao Jorge da Mina ('s Gravenhage), 1953, p.xxiv.



bore fruits is seen from the fact that the first Dutch fort was built in their territory in 1612. Until 1656 when the basis of Dutch-Sabou relations was defined by a written agreement, the two states seem to have enjoyed a merely informal alliance. With the arrival of many competing nations on the coast it became imperative that the Dutch should get their claims to the state or part of that state in which they had their interest well defined.

The first extant contract which the Dutch made was with the Braffo of Fanti. In 1624 General Amersfoort entered into an agreement with Ambro, Braffo of Fanti, in which the former sought the help of the Fanti against the Portuguese. It must be remembered that it was only a year after that, that the Dutch made their disastrous attack on Elmina castle. It was stipulated in the agreement that all possible damage should be done to the Portuguese both by land and sea.<sup>1</sup> The simplicity of the treaty is not surprising when it is remembered that the main preoccupation of the Dutch at this time was how to secure Elmina from the Portuguese. It was not until after 1637, when that ambition had been fulfilled, that they allowed themselves to be drawn into making more complicated agreements. Before the Portuguese defeat the Dutch were, as it were, trying to find out how far they could go in their relations with both the Europeans and Africans on the Coast. This is seen from a series of questions they sent

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G./No.222/f314/dd 31 March 1624. Deed of Agreement made by Ambro, Braffo of Fanti with General Amersfoot.



to the States General in 1633. They wanted to find out the extent of the jurisdiction of the company on the coast. It was claimed in this document that the king of Sabou had made a binding agreement with the Dutch; so also had the kings of Fanti and Accra. Besides these, oral agreements had been secured from the kings of Fetu and Commenda. The company asked to know whether, in the light of the foregoing agreements, they were to oppose the English and the French when they came to those places.

The document next touches on Dutch relations with the local people. Has the company any right to forbid the merchants of Moure, and the people living in the other ports, to trade with the English and the French?<sup>1</sup> From the little information that the document affords, it can be seen that the Dutch at this juncture were not sure of the powers that their agreements with the local people conferred on them. But, more than that, it is evident from the questions asked that neither the Dutch nor the local people were living up to the terms of the agreements. Even as far as the Dutch were concerned, one wonders whether they themselves took any serious view of the agreements they contracted at this time. Whatever truth might be attached to their claims, their subsequent behaviour towards some of the states mentioned shows that they had either forgotten or chosen to ignore their former agreements. In October 1633

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from the register of the States-General, f.191, dated 16 August 1632. A. Cousins, The Dutch West India Company on the West Coast of Africa up to 1660, M.A. Thesis 1953 (Belfast), p.85.



for instance, they made an agreement with the king of Accra to have the privilege of trading on the coast of that state to the exclusion of all other nations. For the permission they consented to pay the king two marks of gold and one red cloth.<sup>1</sup> One expects that a reference to this treaty would be made when in 1641 the Dutch made another treaty with the king of Accra. Regarding the claim to Fanti it cannot be denied that as far back as 1624 an agreement had been made with the ruler of that state. But that contract, as has been pointed out, was merely an alliance to help the Dutch to attack the Portuguese. Whether the claim that they had been given the exclusive trade was taken seriously by any of the contracting parties must be answered by later events. It must be pointed out however that it was not until 1638 that the Dutch were granted leave to erect a lodge at <sup>o</sup> Annemabo. The fact that in 1632 Arent de Groot on behalf of the English succeeded in gaining a foothold in Fanti shows how little store the king and the people of this place set by the Dutch-Fanti treaty of 1624.

Everything considered, one comes to the conclusion that the purpose of the document was to find out how far the States-General would go to assist the company on the Gold Coast.<sup>2</sup> Serious claims to the coast were to await the arrival of other European companies each claiming a monopoly

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.11/dated 16 October 1638.

Deductie van Valkenburgh in J.K.J. de Jong, op.cit., p.64.

<sup>2</sup>Cousins, A. supra. p 69



of the trade on the coast. It then became imperative that each contending party should seek to establish its claims in a properly defined way. In the 1640's many other nations came to secure for themselves the lucrative trade on the Gold Coast. Treaties and agreements became common. Up to the 1640's the Dutch, who were the earliest of the new competitors, concentrated their attention on the problem of defeating the Portuguese. It is therefore not surprising that they should have confined their activities to the region in which the Portuguese had entrenched themselves. Except for the treaty with the king of Accra in 1642, all treaties made by them were with the western region of the Gold Coast. In 1642 the last stronghold of the Portuguese on the Gold Coast was captured. Contrary to the claim often postulated by the Dutch, the defeat did not per se impose the power of the conquerors on the local people. At best it gave the Dutch a free hand to make their alliance with the states concerned without any interference from the Portuguese. The conquerors realised this advantage and made ready use of it. In February 1642 the Director-General Jacob Ruychaver made an agreement with the state of Axim. Among other things it asked that all things that had been owned by the Portuguese should be handed over to the Dutch. The people swore that they would be enemies to the King of Spain and friends to the Dutch, and that they would not carry on any trade with any other power, without the permission of the Dutch. In the event of any war the two contracting parties promised to help each other.



The Axim people agreed to pay one-fifth on their fish as tolls to the Dutch. When any new ship arrived from Holland the chiefs of Axim were to enjoy one ounce of gold. For every benda of gold which was received at Axim the chiefs of Axim were to enjoy a bonus of five new pieces of linen. In all cases, both criminal and civil, there was to be a court composed of the elders and the representative of the company who was to be the president.<sup>1</sup> In the previous year the general had entered into agreements with Accra, Kommenda and Jabi. The Accra treaty was made by the representatives of the general with Ochi (Okai) king of that state. By this treaty the village of Little Accra was handed over to the Dutch for the erection of a fort; for the privilege the king received eight bendas of gold and thereafter two ounces every month.<sup>2</sup> Another agreement of note contracted at this time was between the Dutch and the king of Kommenda. The first part of the agreement is concerned with <sup>the</sup> murder of an Elmina woman for which the Dutch demanded and received a compensation. The king and his elders promised that no other nation would be allowed to erect a lodge, a fort or any house on their coast, not even the French who had already paid money for that purpose. No person was to be panyarred<sup>3</sup> on account of debt. Dutch traders and ser-

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<sup>1</sup> Agreement made between General Ruychaver and the Caboceers of Axim. dated 17 Feb. 1642 in O.W.I.C. no. 12, Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> W.I.C. 12 dated 20 August 1642. Contract with the King of Accra. One benda of gold was worth about £7.4s. Rattray, Ashanti (London, 1923), p.360. P. de Marees Beschrijving..... Gout Kust, Pub. S.P.L. Honore Naber. Linschot. Veern. No. 5 ('s-Gravenhage 1912), p.380.

<sup>3</sup> Panyarring was the custom whereby debtors or their relatives and friends were seized by creditors until the debts had been redeemed.



vants who came there were to be well treated. The Director General promised not to meddle himself in the war between Kommenda and Adom. The general also promised not to allow any trading to be conducted on the roads. Finally it was agreed that the king should be given tolls on any new ship that came to the shore.<sup>1</sup> Another Ruychavean treaty worthy of note was made with the state of Jabi. This agreement seems to have been made to restore friendly relationship after a period of quarrels. Baqua Quita, the king, agreed with Laurens Fiddelman and Hendrick Foren, representatives of the Director-General, that quarrels and disagreements between the two nations should be forgotten, except in the case of the Captain of Chama and the Fiscal Visser who were not to be allowed to live at Jabi. That the fish collectors should not be molested, but be allowed to receive the appropriate toll, namely, one-fifth part of the fish. That the people should not close the rivers on any trivial excuse and that no Tie-Ties<sup>2</sup> should be called in to deprive the Dutch of the provisions. That all merchants from Elmina, especially the son of one Raposa, should be allowed to pursue their trade in peace. Finally the kings of Jabi and Chama promised to abide by the terms of the treaty in default of which they should be punished as an example to all.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. No. 13, f. 63. N.B.K.G. No. 222, f. 44. Contract between Ruychaver and the King of Aguaffo. This contract is undated and unsigned.

<sup>2</sup>Tie-ties - heralds and fan bearers of chiefs employed on many duties such as collection of tolls.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G. No. 222, f.48-49. Contract with the country of Jabi. Dated Ano. 1643. The original in the O.W.I.C. No. 12 has no date. The date 1643 which the contract bears is likely to have been a mistake since the agreements were supposed to have been made between 1641 and 1642.



It is interesting to note the close similarity between all the contracts made by General Ruychaver or the agents who worked on his behalf. All afford sufficient evidence, both explicit and implicit, of the interdependence that was growing between the local people and the Europeans. While in the Accra treaty it is clearly stated that the king was to enjoy a monthly sum of two ounces, which may be interpreted as payment made for the rent of the piece of land on which the fort was erected, the other rulers were to enjoy tolls on all new ships that arrived on their shores. Admittedly the fact that some of the payments were described as gifts, instead of being specifically called rents, has not infrequently led to the assertion that the payments may have been in furtherance of trade. A closer look at the terms of the contract shows that, apart from the eight bendas of gold that were given outright to the king and his elders, the two ounces were to be paid as monthly rent. While the other states were not granted this privilege, by allowing them to collect tolls on all new ships that arrived on their coast the Dutch accepted the authority of the rulers over them. There is however the question of the payment of tolls on fish, which the people of Axim and Chama agreed to make to the Dutch. Although the reasons for the payments were not given for certain, the Dutch later used them as proof that those states were their vassals. In origin this seems to have developed as the local people's contribution to the burden of the defence which the Portuguese accorded people who settled around their forts and castles. This was pointed out by the Dutch in 1657. They argued that the



people living between Axim and Assine paid tolls to their predecessors because the Portuguese gave them help against their enemies.<sup>1</sup> Another equally interesting aspect of the agreements, especially that of Axim, is the fact that the local people agreed to make the Dutch representative at Axim the president in judicial matters. It cannot be doubted that this indicates the growing power of the Dutch over the local people. This however must not be taken as a proof of acknowledgment of vassalage. If anything, it shows the establishment of the system of mutual trust, which was essential for the trade on the coast. Indeed, the English were later to achieve such a power with the people of Fetu. Barbot tells us that the king of Fetu holds<sup>2</sup> a yearly festival at a town called Abramboe for dancing and merry making. At the same time there was a general court at which the English-Agent-General was expected to send two representatives. Far from it being a privilege, it seems to have been a liability on the English, since they were expected to clothe their envoys decently for the occasion. He estimates it to have cost them about £300.<sup>2</sup> Despite the anomalies inherent in some of the Ruychervian treaties, they are interesting as providing the basis on which later treaties and agreements were formulated. They show above all the need for compromise which both sides recognised as essential to the trade on the Gold Coast. The post Ruychervian treaties became clearer and more comprehensive.

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. 13/432/Proof of the vassalage of Axim, dated 25 Nov. 1656; Treaty with Jumore in O.W.I.C. No. 12 dated 16 January 1657.

<sup>2</sup>Barbot, J., "A description of North and South Guinea," London 1726. in Churchill Collections, p.172.



Towards, and in the second half of, the seventeenth century it became fashionable to trace claims to states as far back as possible. This, it must be emphasised, was considered necessary in order to bolster up claims against rival claimants. In 1649 the Dutch renewed their treaty with the king of Accra. Van der Wel, the Dutch general, bound himself to abide by the treaty of 1641, namely to pay the gifts and presents promised to the king and his elders. This agreement, however, went farther by stipulating that no other foreign nation should be permitted to trade on the coast of Accra. Should any of the king's subjects infringe the above clause, all the goods that would be bought must be impounded and shared equally between the king and the Dutch. Once again the Dutch gave presents to the king and all the important people of that state. In all as much as eight marks five ounces and twelve engels of gold were expended on the presents.<sup>1</sup> This giving of presents which seemed to have accompanied the transaction between the Europeans and the Africans at times brought about some misunderstandings regarding the exact nature of the whole negotiations. In 1659, for example, the Dutch in an attempt to prevent other nations from getting a foothold on that coast, claimed to the astonished king of Accra that they had bought that coast.<sup>2</sup> When and who bought the place was not specified, but it is probable that the commissioner had the 1649 agreement in mind. The English

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. no. 12. Agreement between J. v. d. Wel and... King of Accra.  
 4 Aug. 1649  
 M.B.K.G. 222 " " " " " "  
 The English at times differentiated between presents and rents. In



were also to put forward such a claim with regard to Fetu.

In the Gold Coast trade it soon became evident that treaties alone would not form a satisfactory base on which to depend. For both the Africans and the Europeans these agreements amounted, at best, to claims by Europeans to a share in the local trade. Unless the Europeans backed their claims by the use of force, the local people were ever ready to welcome all traders irrespective of their nationality. The merchants were not long in learning that the more the number of the contending powers who came to their coast to trade, the cheaper the goods to be purchased. The Director-General, van der Wel, always complained to his superiors in Amsterdam that the Accanisten would not sell their gold until there were many traders on the coast.<sup>1</sup> The chiefs also did not find it worth their while to adhere to the parts of the agreements which held that no other nation should be allowed to trade or build in their states. Despite the 1642 agreement which the elders of Axim made with the Dutch, the English had by 1647 so succeeded in ingratiating themselves into the good books of the local people that the Dutch Director-General found it necessary to advise the directors

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<sup>1</sup>(cont.)

1702 presents of 60 ounces of coraal, 20 blue perpetuans, 4 cases spirits, 4 gallons brandy and 3 yards of blue cloth were sent to the King of Akwamu. This was "a gratuity for his civility in permitting a settlement at Allampo". T70/377/13 May 1702.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G. No. 81 dated 2 Feb. 1659. Interrogation done on behalf of the Director-General by the commissioner at Accra.

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. No. 11. Letters from the Guinea Coast, dated 21 October 1645 K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.43.



in Holland that it was expedient for all Dutch ships coming to Axim to fly the English flag.<sup>1</sup> The whole idea of granting the monopoly of the trade of a particular area to one nation seemed to have not infrequently baffled the local rulers. Granting that the payment of rents was a strong economic reason for granting the permission to more newcomers, the prestige element which the erection of the fortified houses added to the states concerned was an irresistible incentive to treaty-making. Moreover, the fact that the Europeans themselves did not mind much whether a place they visited had been granted already to another nation, allowed for more confusion. Apart from the Dutch deception of the Axim people in the matter of the English already referred to, they seemed to have been acting when it so suited them on the principle that the local rulers, as the possessors of the states concerned, could do as they thought fit in the matter of deciding whom to allow into their states. When in 1639 the French protested that the Dutch activities at Kommenda were an infringement of their claim to that state, the latter dismissed it by asserting that the place belonged to the king of Kommenda and not the King of France.<sup>2</sup> When the Swedes raised a similar protest in the time of General Valkenburgh concerning Boutry, they were answered in the same way. The Dutch asserted that they were not trading with the vassals of the Swedes but rather with a free people.<sup>3</sup> Had the

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. No. 11. Letters from the Guinea Coast. Dated August 1647.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C. No. 13. Dated 1 July 1639. Van Iperen's Report to the States-General.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G. 222 Reply of Valkenburgh to the Swedish General f.245. Feb. 1657.



Europeans respected the agreements among themselves, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the local people to have dishonoured such agreements.

As has been already pointed out, the economic gain and the prestige attendant upon the building of such houses might have loomed large in the considerations of the local rulers. There is however another aspect of the whole matter which needs to be considered. The accordance of real hospitality to the newcomers seemed to have been also the reason why the rulers admitted all the Europeans. This point was brought home to the Dutch by the Braffo of Fanti. Pressed on by the importunities of the Dutch not to allow any other power apart from themselves to trade on his coast, he made it clear to them that Fanti belonged to the people, and so they were free to trade with whomever they liked. He reduced everything to his own phraseology by saying that he was prepared to marry two white wives and love each equally dearly.<sup>1</sup> A similar answer was given in 1659 by the king of Accra, who told the Dutch that he was not going to drive them away from his state, but would not mind granting permission to whomsoever he desired.<sup>2</sup> Another ruler who expressed his desire to do what he liked with his state was King Akkafiny of Assine. When he was approached in 1701 by the Dutch to help drive away the French from his coast, he made it clear that he would have nothing to do with the

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<sup>1</sup>Cousins, A., op.cit., p. 118. O.W.I.C.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G. No. 81. Dated 2 Feb. 1659. Interrogations..... King of Accra. In 1707 the elders of Ahanta made a similar assertion to the Dutch. When the latter sought to hinder the English from collecting oyster shells at Takoradi, they opposed them by declaring that "the ground belong neither



whole project. The French were his guests he pointed out to them. Anyhow, he could not visualise, let alone understand, how the Dutch alone would be able to control the whole trade from Assini to Accra.<sup>1</sup>

Another reason for confusion in the Gold Coast trade was the fact that national loyalty sat very lightly on some of the officials who came down to the coast in the service of the various companies. It was not an unusual feature to find some of the servants changing their allegiance from one company to another. The precise terms under which the Fanti state gave Arent de Groot permission to build a lodge at their coast are not known. But de Groot being an old hand in the trading activities of the coast, was not new to the methods to be employed. In answer to the Dutch claims to Fanti, De Groot pointed out that when he came to the coast he first enquired of the power any other nation had on that coast, but he was assured that none had any claims on the place. He had asked the Fanti whether they had made any agreement with the Dutch, but they answered that nothing of that nature existed. He concluded his argument by saying that the fact that a Dutch ship had followed them in an attempt to prevent the <sup>English?</sup> Fanti from getting a foothold on the coast showed that no such claims existed.<sup>2</sup> Whether de Groot made a deliberate

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(cont.)

to the English or Dutch (sic) but either of them should have what oyster shells they wanted, paying for them." T70/5/32. Sir Thomas Dalby to R.A.C. 25 April 1707.

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<sup>1</sup> N.B.K.G. No. 69/6. A Journey to Ancobra by Willem de la Palma. 14 Oct - 10 Nov. 1702.

<sup>2</sup> O.W.I.C. 11/Report to the XIX from Fort Nassau, 1 July 1634. V.W.I.S.1162, Arent de Groot's protest on behalf of the English, 26 Aug. 1640. A. Cousins, op.cit., p.80



attempt to forget the Dutch-Fanti agreement of 1624 or was ignorant of it cannot be known. One thing however is clear. In the Gold Coast trade the most important rule, that seemed to have been observed by all, was the ability to win and to maintain the goodwill of the local people. If the local ruler and his men were prepared to trade with any other power, it was up to them to risk the displeasure of old friends to win new ones. De Groot was not long in realising that the Fanti were determined to remain independent. His claim that the whole coast from Annemabo to Cormantine had been granted exclusively to the English was made hollow when other nations were given permission to trade on the same coast. In 1650 Hendrick Caarlof, another veteran of the Gold Coast trade, a former Dutch official now in the service of the Swedish African Company, arrived on the coast. By 1655 the Swedes had gained footholds <sup>at</sup> ~~on~~ Cape Coast, Annemabo, Osu, Takoradi and Jumore.

Caarlof's agreement with the king of Fetu shows how the employees on changing sides became a real threat to the interest of their former employers. In the treaty the king, Boodema, and his chief lord, one Hennequa, ceded the coast to the Swedish company to build forts, lodges and houses. Tolls on all new ships that came to the coast were to be collected by the king. The English fort on that coast was to remain there for six months, after which time the permission of the Swedes should be obtained if they wished to be there any longer.<sup>1</sup> A strange

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G./No. 222, f. 1330-312. The Cession of Cabo Corso to the Swedish African Comp. The agreement was signed by Caarlof and King Bredewa and his Elders.



Fetu?

clause this, when it is compared with the desire of the Fanti that their coast should be free for all. Anyhow if this was to confer the exclusive right to the trade on that coast on the Swedes, they were not long in losing their favourable position to the English at Cape Coast.

Prior to the arrival of the Swedes on that coast, Fetu had been a bone of contention between the Dutch and the English. The English success in gaining a foothold on Fetu was a real threat to the Dutch interest. Cape Coast was sandwiched in between the Dutch possessions of Moure in Sabou, and Elmina Castle. It therefore became the main pre-occupation of the Dutch to prevent the English from establishing themselves on that sector of the coast. It must be realised that the Dutch themselves had already abandoned that place on the plea that it was too near to their two settlements.<sup>1</sup> In this desperate struggle to prevent the English from controlling Fetu, they adopted both economic pressure and an outright show of force not uncharacteristic of the Portuguese whom they had succeeded in 1637. They made it clear that if the English were allowed in they would move their trade from Elmina to Moure. In such a case they would cease to pay any money to the king. Failing this kind of threat, they warned the king that they would set fire to Cape Coast if the English were granted a place there. - a method reminiscent of the early Portuguese attempts to build their castle at

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G. 222/227/ Deductie van Valkenburgh, Sept.1659.



Elmina. The king gave in at first to the Dutch threats. Despite the Dutch the English eventually gained a foothold in Fetu. This achievement was due to the help which two of the influential local merchants, John Hennequah and John Claesz, offered them.

From the fact that the influence of the merchants helped in the establishment of the rivals of one European power on virtually the same place where the other had been granted permission to stay, one begins to see another aspect of the forces which went together to make a success of any workable relationship on the coast. To gain the cooperation of the rulers was essential, but not enough. They had to take into account the interest of the local merchants. This influence stemmed from different sources. It was not unusual for some of the chief merchants to be directly connected with the government of the places concerned. This fact was due to the practice whereby some of the immediate heirs to the stool were actively engaged in all types of occupation. In 1679 one Ahen Donimo, who had once been in the pay of the English, became the Dey or the chief minister of Fetu.<sup>1</sup>

Another equally influential factor in the stabilisation of friendly relations was the degree to which the terms of the treaties were observed. In the same way as the European nations sought the control of the whole trade on the coast as evidenced by their charters, so also

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/365/fl.21 September 1679. Accounts, Cape Coast Castle, See Chapter V.



did it become the wish of the local people to engross as much of the European trade for their own particular states. In a situation like this, it was the concern of most of the rulers to get it stipulated in the agreements that a suitable fortress should be erected within a period of time of the grant of the permission. Failure to do as stipulated provided a cause whereby the privilege was revoked. This is seen very clearly in the struggle between the Dutch and the Swedes for Boutry. In a long correspondence which was exchanged between the two heads of the contending companies on the Gold Coast, this argument was developed by the Dutch. The Dutch general argued, in effect, that whatever the truth of the Swedish claims, they were lost through their inability to provide help to the Ahanta people in their war against the Encasser state. The privilege which once was enjoyed by the Swedes had been transferred to the Dutch, who were able to give the necessary help at the time that it was needed.<sup>1</sup> When the Swedes adopted the same argument in regard to the Dutch claims to Cape Coast, the latter asserted that economic considerations should be taken into account when deciding to abide by the agreements. Though the argument was not put in such terms, that was what was implied. Valkenburgh answered the Swedes that their claim that the Dutch had no fortification in Cape Coast was futile, since it was not possible to build such houses in all places on the coast. He claimed that they had already established themselves at Moure

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G. no. 222/201. 16 December 1656. Reply of J. Valkenburgh to Philip Kruysens, Commandant of the Swedish African Company.



and Elmina. This claim was not satisfactory to all the contending nations on the coast. The 19th century principle of effective occupation enunciated in the scramble for Africa, was also used in this era. While the willingness and the ability to provide help to the local rulers were assets for the Europeans in gaining the goodwill of the local states, this by itself never conferred unqualified claims on the recipients. Contrary to the Dutch claims that they had won the Ahanta state by arms, the help they accorded them in their war with the Encassars, which they quoted, did not by itself give them the right as conquerors. Anyhow they seemed to have postulated this before other European rivals, to justify their claims to the area involved. In the treaty which was signed between them and the people of Ahanta in 1653, there was nothing to show that one side to the agreement considered itself as the conqueror and the other as the conquered. What happened was that the Ahanta people, in recognition of the services they had received from the Dutch, were willing to grant their coast to them for their trade. But indebtedness did not make them give the permission without stipulating under what terms the Dutch could hold the place. They gave the permission with the proviso that a proper fortification should be erected to protect them against their enemies.<sup>1</sup> It was the inability of the Swedes to provide the necessary help which, according to the Dutch, lost them their claims to that state.

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G./222/fl. 260 dated 27 August 1656. "Deed of vassalage of Ahanta."



The Dutch themselves were to learn the lesson that the people would insist on being protected. When it was rumoured in 1683 that the Adoms were planning an attack on the Ahanta, the Dutch hastened to safeguard what they considered to be their interests. They took the requisite precautions to prevent their goods from falling into enemy hands. The rumours however never became a reality and, therefore, the Dutch decided to return to Takoradi, from which they had taken away their goods. Enquiries were made to find out whether the local people would be more inclined to the Dutch interest. It was however pointed out that unless sufficient cannon were mounted on their fortification to afford Takoradi ample protection, the permission could not be granted.<sup>1</sup> When two small ones were brought, the people protested and the Dutch had to give way. In 1685 the people of Takoradi entered into an agreement with the Brandenburgers in which the latter promised protection and help to the former.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the meaning which each side read into the grant of protection, it cannot be denied that it brought about some misunderstandings on both sides. To the Dutch this provision of help placed the recipients in the category of vassals. They sought to establish that it had been in practice on the coast since the time of the Portuguese. In 1657 representatives of the Dutch director general sought to prove

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 124/8 Oct., 1683.

<sup>2</sup>C. W. Welman, The Native States of the Gold Coast Ahanta (London, 1930), p.24.



that all the states from Assine in the west to Axim had been under the jurisdiction of their predecessors, the Portuguese. In that year the elders of both Upper and Lower Ahanta stated that from time immemorial the states had been receiving help from the Portuguese. By conquering the Portuguese, therefore, they maintained that all the privileges had passed to them. Whether the Dutch attached much value to their historical claims or not, the rulers seemed never to have thought of it in the same light. The fact that the Swedes by this time had been granted permission in the area shows that the legality of the said Portuguese sovereignty was not seriously taken by the local people. And the fact that the Dutch themselves had to enter into treaties with these states shows that the Portuguese rights, which they considered themselves to have inherited, were forgotten or disregarded by those states. Between 1656 and 1674 agreements were reached with states such as Jumore, Abripiquam, Axim, Ahanta in general and some towns such as Sakondi and Takoradi in that district.<sup>1</sup>

That these states might have been receiving help from the Portuguese did not place them on the level of vassals in the way in which the Europeans sought to interpret it. If anything, the local people might have thought of the help provided as the newcomers' contribution to the defence which every citizens of a state was to contribute as the

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<sup>1</sup> Agreement with Jumore was signed on 16 Jan. 1657, O.W.C./12, Proof of lands under the Jurisdiction of Axim, in O.W.I.C./no.13/f.432/25 Nov. 1656. Deed of cession of the coast of Saconde. O.W.I.C./f.629-32/dated 26 April 1674. N.B.K.G. No. 22, f. 376-8. Cession of Takoradi O.W.I.C. No. 13, f.627 dated 25 Jan. 1674.



need arose. Nowhere is this misunderstanding so evident as in Dutch-Sabou relations. Despite the long relationship which had been established between the two states there was no clearly defined agreement between them. The subsequent misunderstanding which arose was due to the differences in the implications of the provision of help against enemies. In the preamble of the agreement made in 1657 this point is brought out. The king and his elders asserted that the Dutch had been claiming sovereignty over their coast because of the help they had accorded them in their attacks <sup>on</sup> ~~from~~ the Portuguese. To avoid probable rupture they had consented with the Dutch general to come to an agreement. In return for a complete cession of their rights to the coast they were to receive fifteen bendas of gold and to collect tolls on all new ships that came on that coast. They renounced their right to grant the coast to any other nation either for trade or for the erection of forts and lodges. Perhaps because little faith was attached to the sincerity of the king and his elders in keeping the agreement, the Dutch demanded and received a hostage.<sup>1</sup> One would expect that after taking such precautions to see that the agreement was kept this would be the end of any further treaties with the same state. Thirty-one years later another agreement was to be made. In this the then Director-general,

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./no.12/f.58 dated 21 March 1657. A Contract made with the King of Sabou. It is commonly asserted that the Dutch in 1594 entered into an agreement with the State of Sabou by which the latter promised to trade only with the former. The true nature of this contract has not been established but it can be assumed to have been of little or no significance to both sides since no mention of it is made in any of the subsequent agreements.



Sweerts, confirmed the terms of the 1657 agreement. It was stipulated in this contract that the ruler would receive eight engels of gold or goods to that value except in October when it was specified that payments were to be made in zayes and brandy wine.<sup>1</sup> Each side promised the other help in times of need.

The clause stipulating that the payments to the king should be in zayes and brandy is interesting, as showing the basis of some of the payments made to the local rulers. Throughout the Gold Coast it was customary for states to celebrate festivals in which all the citizens took part. The festivities comprised dancing and merry-making. On these occasions the subjects of the states renewed their allegiance

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<sup>1</sup>Verspreid W.I.C.Stukken/no. 1163/dated 17 Feb. 1688. The agreement was signed by the Director-General Sweerts and Ampe Abban, the representative of king Enpeteir of Sabou. 2 W.I.C. no. 122 f.30/14 Jan. 1688. Agreement between Nichlass Sweerts and the king and Elders of Aguaffo. Payment of zay and brandy at festival promised. In Sept. 1683 the English gave presents to the Dey, King and other important people of Fetu. They consisted of gallons of brandy, cases of spirits and perpetuans. They were given as "dashee" as customary at dancing time. T.70/369/CCC.Journal, 8 Sept. 1683. 37 gallons of Rum, 1 broad chints, 1 half barrel gunpowder, 1 silk longee were sent to the King and Elders of Fetu "at their general dancing". The King, Sabu, was also sent 6 gallons of Rum, 2 cases Spirits, 1 half barrel gunpowder, 3 silk longees. T.70/377/CCC.Journal, Sept. 1701. Not only this, the Europeans took part, or paid their contributions for all other festivities. In 1683, for instance, nine gallons of brandy were sent to the king and elders of Aguaffo. The reason given was that it was "customary at putting the corne into the ground". T.70/368/95/28 March 1683.



to their rulers. Though in theory the kings were expected to treat the visitors to drinks and other suchlike hospitable acts, in practice the expenses were usually borne by the subjects. They brought tributes and gifts to the king, out of which he was to entertain the visitors. In effect, therefore, the payments were what customary law required of all the members of each state. It was not uncommon for the contributions to be asked to be made according to the products and the capacities of the citizens. In the seventeenth century this differentiation was made between the presents that were made to the local rulers. Indeed, some of the rulers demanded from and received all the payments that were customarily due to them from their European settlers. While the purpose of the payment that was to be made in the form of drinks and zayes is not mentioned in the document, it is clear from payments made by other European nations that it is meant to be the contribution of the Dutch to the annual festival.

From the English it is seen that they were not opposed to performing their share of the customary obligations. They made a clear distinction between the rents which were paid for the grounds on which their castles and forts stood and the other payments that were made during the festivals of the states in which they had established themselves. Though no treaties and agreements in the form of the Dutch ones have been seen on the side of the English, they appear to have been taking part in the treaty making of the time. In their struggle to prove which of them was the rightful possessor of the ground on which the Danish Castle of Groot



Fredricksborg was built, the English produced an attestation from one Crisp, who asserted that he was given the ground, indeed had bought it, in 1650 from the king of Fetu. The document avers that he, Crisp, went to Cape Coast at the invitation of the king and his elders. After all the necessary transactions had been made the English entered into an agreement with the king in which it was agreed that payments of tolls on their ships should be made to the king.<sup>1</sup> Payments were made throughout the century. In May 1674 the Fetu king received pieces of "sayes" on three ships as "customs". The journal books contain quite a lot of such payments. In May 1681 the Fetu king received 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> yards of scarlet cloth as custome on two English ships, while six years after the English paid goods to the value of over 5 marks to the Dey of Fetu "for seven months ground rent for Cape Coast Castle at six ounces per month".<sup>2</sup> The Company in June of the same year gave out three and a half dozen knives to the king "for a dashy it being usual for cutting corn".<sup>3</sup> At their annual dancing and merry-making it was not only expected of the English to send representatives to sit on the council to help in administering justice, as ~~Beeman~~<sup>Barbot</sup> points out,<sup>4</sup> but they had to provide the

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/169/34 dated 21 Jan. 1685. Abstracts ..... Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/372/194/12 March 1687. The goods consisted of 8 pieces sayes, 6 barrels Powder, 6 Boysadoes, 12 perpetuaans, 22 iron barrs, 16 paper Brawles, 18 gallons Brandy, 30 Matchlock musketts.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/386/22 June 1681. Abstracts ..... Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>4</sup>~~Beeman~~<sup>Barbot J.</sup>, op.cit., p.172



king and his elders with drinks as custom demanded from all the citizens and inhabitants of the state. In 1690, for instance, the king and his elders received as much as twenty-two gallons of brandy "for their dancing".<sup>1</sup> That the payment was in accordance with the privilege of building on their territory can be seen from the reasons given for the payments made to the state of Aguaffo or Kommenda. In 1683 the king and the elders of the state received various goods consisting of "brandy, looking glasses and perpetuans". This was made as a dashy according to the "agreement at dancing times for the settling of the factory at Comenda".<sup>2</sup> The above statements leave no room for doubt that, in as far as the coastal states were concerned, there was an explicit acceptance by the Europeans who built forts on the coasts of the obligations which the granting of their request of them. There is however room for confusion when the Europeans happened to be disputing their claims among themselves. It was a feature of the contending parties to assert that they had bought the land from the local rulers. That there were some monetary transactions and the distribution of substantial presents had already been referred to. Perhaps the word "bought" was used in a limited sense in the Gold Coast to mean rented. It is hard to see how compatible it would have been to their ideas of purchase, and the undeniable fact is that they not only continued to pay rent, but

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/369/11th July 1683. For expenditure on rents see Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/369/11th July 1683. For expenditure on rents see Appendix II.



performed the customary obligations that were expected from all the citizens of the states on whose territory they had their forts and lodges. One cannot but assert that this strange feature was the outcome of the lack of understanding of the fundamental conceptions of political and economic questions as was practised by the people of the Gold Coast.

If along the coastal belt a relationship of enaction and re-enaction of contracts which involved the payment of rents and the performance of customary obligations was developed, the picture in the interior of the country was different. In the same way as the Portuguese found it worth their while to cultivate the friendship of the powerful rulers of the interior in the interest of their trade, so also did the other nations which followed them adopt the same attitude. As Bosman pointed out, the Europeans were, unlike the Spanish in the New World, not in control of the sources of the gold mines. In a situation of this nature it was highly advisable that those who owned the mines and the sources of the ivory and slave supplies, should always be induced to be well disposed to trade. The seventeenth century was also a time of growth of sizeable, politically organised states in the interior. States such as Akwamu, Denkyira, Akim and Ashanti, besides the host of smaller ones, had to cooperate to make the trade on the coast a success. In the course of time some of them came to be regarded as coastal powers, thanks to the successful expansionist policies. As controllers of the trade-routes from the interior and as owners of the



pieces of land on which the castles and forts stood, their friendly cooperation and good disposition to the Europeans became of prime concern to the contending parties. Akwamu of all the powers was the one which combined the rights to rents on the European possessions in Accra with privileges which the other powerful states in the interior received as inducement to profitable trade.

The power of the Akwamu state and the respect it commanded from the European traders on the coast can be seen from the favourable agreement which it was able to make with the Dutch at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1703 the Dutch made an agreement with Akonno the Akwamu king. In exchange for the promise to allow the traders from the interior to pass freely through his state the Dutch promised to provide him with one hundred armed men, three hundred pounds of gunpowder and three hundred pounds of bullets.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this treaty was the events leading to the arrival of the king on the coast for the signing of the treaty. Ordinarily the European powers contented themselves with entrusting the work of going to and from the interior states to deliver messages to trusted local officials in their service. King Akonno however would not come out from his capital until the Dutch commissioner at Accra and the secretary had gone up there to make the request to the king. The friendship of the influential

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G. 69/3 April 1703. A contract with the king of Akuamboe. Journal of Elmina. On the Dutch Akwamu relations the best and most authoritative, indeed the only work, is ~~the~~ Ivor Wilk's Thesis on that state.



local rulers stood those who were able to secure it in good stead. For instance, in 1706 the Dutch exploited their good relations with the Akwamu king to their advantage. When messengers from the king of Ardra arrived at Akwamu court to ask why the king had not sent people to collect his annual presents, the Dutch used the occasion to get the king to warn the Ardra that they should not ill-treat the Dutch who were his friends but should rather be allowed to trade on their coast. To demonstrate the friendship and their gratefulness the Dutch offered to convey the king's messengers to collect the presents.

The origin and nature of Denkyira relations with the coastal states and, indirectly, with the Europeans, have not yet been firmly established. But it is generally believed that there was a Dutch-Denkyira agreement, by which the former paid the ground rents for Elmina Castle to the latter. Denkyira is said to have secured the "Elmina Note" from the Kommenda, who had captured it from the Elminas.<sup>1</sup> The "Elmina Note" became significant in the nineteenth century, when Ashanti-Dutch relations proved the bugbear in the negotiations for the cession of the Dutch possessions. The Ashanti claims over Elmina were put forward by the Ashantihene, Kofi Karikari, who asserted that his great ancestor, Osei Tutu, received the 'Book' for Elmina from the Denkyiras. And that the Dutch, on the strength of the Note, had ever afterwards continued to pay monthly rents to Ashanti

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<sup>1</sup>T. E. Bowdich, Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantes (London, 1819), pp. 76-81. J. Dupuis, Journal of a Residence in Ashantee....1824 p. 131. F. C. Fuller, A Vanished Dynasty, Ashanti (London, 1921), p.18. A. B. Ellis, History, pp. 270-73. Claridge, op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 198, 600. G. C. Reindorf, op.cit., p.59. Ward, op.cit., p.122. Fage, Ghana, pp. 55, 103, 63 n.



in recognition of their rights over the forts.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that the Ashantihene's claims have helped to sustain the current opinion of direct relationship between the Dutch and the Denkyira. While it cannot be denied that a sort of friendly relationship once existed between them, it is difficult to find positive proof to support the claim that Denkyira enjoyed the rents for the Elmina forts. Events immediately before and after Denkyira defeat by Ashanti do not lend support to the popular belief. The assertion that Denkyira was paid the rents for the Elmina Castle presupposes its control over Komenda. True, by the end of the seventeenth century, Komenda had subjugated Fetu and thereby could claim the sole right to collect the rentals for the Elmina forts.<sup>2</sup> But there is no evidence to suggest that Denkyira ever

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<sup>1</sup>Dupuis, op.cit., p.131; D. Coombs, The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands, London, 1963, p.10.

The indiscriminate use of the word "Note" in the Gold Coast history has given rise to many misunderstandings and confusions. There is the need to differentiate between it and the "Treaties and Contracts" which were signed between the Europeans and the local rulers. The "Note" in its strict sense must be used to cover the Dutch word "Kostbrief". The Kostbrief was a document which was given to stewards and other employees on the Coast when they were engaged. This is different from the "Accorden Overeenkomst and Contracts" to which numerous references are found in Dutch documents. The latter were Contracts and agreements entered into with local rulers for the enjoyment of special privileges. The Dutch, like the English, described monies paid to their men directly or indirectly in their service, as kostgeld which may be conveniently understood to be what was covered by the Kostbrief. The kostgeld covered their expenditure on the local servants while the Europeans received what was known as "Soldij" pay. See Coombs, op.cit. (II) for more about the notes. In 1702 when 19 Canoemen were trusted with goods of more than 2 marks worth, they were to work by a special "Stewards Noat". T.70/378/9 Oct. 1702.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.33. Claridge, op.cit., p.153.



was the overlord of Komenda. The nearest approach to any political relationship between the two states was in 1698 when a messenger came to the English from the king of Denkyira "to be informed into the reason for deposing the king of Aguaaffo".<sup>1</sup> No mention was made of Komenda among the states which the Dutch enumerated as being anxious for the downfall of Denkyira. And neither the French cartographer, D'Anville, who inserted the names of states subdued by Denkyira,<sup>2</sup> nor the subsequent early eighteenth century writers, included Komenda among such states. Nor can this claim be substantiated by events on the coast immediately before the fall of Denkyira.<sup>3</sup> Whatever might have been the relationship between the two states, the fact that Denkyira was willing to fight Komenda on behalf of the Dutch shows that both were independent by the 1690's. If Komenda was powerful enough to fight against the Dutch and their allies, one would expect ~~them~~<sup>it is</sup> to be in the position to collect the rentals from the Dutch and later from the English. All payments made by the English for Komenda were to Komenda and not to Denkyira.<sup>4</sup> For the origin of ~~the~~<sup>the</sup> Dutch-Denkyira relationship, therefore, one must look elsewhere for an explanation.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/374/2 November, 1698.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G. 57/18/Report of Jan van Sevenhuysen to the Ten. 30 May 1701. M. D'Anville, A Map of the Gold Coast 1729 English Edition. The states were Akany, Wassa, Adom and Awowin.

<sup>3</sup>For the accounts of the Dutch Komenda War see Chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup>See p. 89 notes.



While there is no evidence to support the Denkyira-Dutch alliance arising from the former's control over the land on which Elmina castle was built, there is enough circumstantial evidence to support the claim that the Dutch were friendly with Denkyira. On the defeat of Denkyira in 1700 the Dutch accepted an Akany suggestion that an embassy be sent to the king of Ashanti. In 1701, the sub-factor, David van Nyendaal, arrived in Denkyira with presents, to congratulate the Ashantis on their victory. At the same time he was instructed to explain Dutch relations with Denkyira and to kill rumours about the alleged aid to Denkyira to overthrow Akany. Among other things, Nyendaal was to point out that the amount of one hundred bendas (£800) which was loaned to Denkyira was meant to enlist support for the war against Abbe Takyi, king of Komenda and not to attack any other nation. The Dutch were to be excused for not coming to the aid of Akany against Denkyira on the grounds that they had not been asked for help. In relation to Ashanti, the factor was to show the list of current prices of goods to the king and to persuade him to urge his traders to come to the Dutch establishments.<sup>1</sup>

While it is understandable for the Dutch to hasten to make friends with Ashanti in the interest of trade, the lengths to which they went to explain their relations with Denkyira and its neighbours make one suspicious of what they were trying to hide. This leaves room to think that Denkyira's relations with the Dutch were closer than the latter would

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<sup>1</sup> N.B.K.G. 233/Instructions to Nyendaal. 9 Oct. 1701.  
W.I.C.917. 16 Nov. 1701; N.B.K.G. 57 Report of Jan van Sevenhuysen  
15 April 1700 - 16 Nov. 1701.



have one believe. It is likely that the Dutch had greater interest in the political and commercial stability of Denkyira.

Denkyira was before its fall the greatest state in the hinterland of the coastline from Axim to Cape Coast. Its gold was said to have satisfied the demands of the European establishments on that coastline.<sup>1</sup> At the height of its power it controlled the gold-bearing lands of Awowin, Wassa, Akany and parts of Ashanti. It was therefore commercially advisable for the trading companies to seek its alliance and friendship. In 1690, for instance, messengers from the Brandenburg and Dutch Companies on separate and independent missions, met at the court of Denkyira with presents. These were meant to preserve the king, described as "a friend of the Europeans" in the interest of the two companies.<sup>2</sup> In the same year the king used his good offices to compose differences that had arisen between the states of Sabu, Aguaffo and Fetu. In recognition of his useful services the English sent him presents consisting of satin, perpetuans and carpets.<sup>3</sup> Eight years after, delegates from Denkyira accompanied by English messengers carrying two cases of spirits, two white blankets and two blue perpetuans, went to Akwamu "to acquaint the king, Addoe, of our

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<sup>1</sup>Willem Bosman, op.cit., p.64. Ward, op.cit., p.120.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Letter XIII, p.218.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/365/21/Sept. 1690. CC Castle Account Bk.



(English) designe to settle at Allampo". In the same way as the Europeans on the coast attached a great importance to the friendship with the Denkyira king, he also highly regarded the trade with the Europeans. This is seen from the fact that his representative was established on the coast to keep watch over the trade to his kingdom. In 1698 presents of gunpowder, rum and blue cloth were sent to the king "to interr Arpim his resident at Cape Coast. (sic)".<sup>1</sup>

The commercial importance of Denkyira made it easy for her to raise loans from the Europeans to pursue her expansionist policies. In 1699 the English credited Denkyira goods to the value of over two marks when it was going to attack Akany. This was to be paid for in slaves.<sup>2</sup> At the close of the war the debt remained unpaid. In such a situation, there is little wonder that in the war between Denkyira and Ashanti the former would look more to the Dutch for help in arms and ammunition. At the end of the war the Ashanti were said to have inherited both the "Elmina Note" and Denkyira debt of about seven thousand pounds.<sup>3</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/364/23 Nov. 1698. CCC Journal.  
T.70/373 Nov. 1698. CC Castle Account Bk.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/375/25 March 1699. CCC Account Bk.

<sup>3</sup>Claridge, op.cit., Vol. I, p.603. Reindorf, op.cit., p.59. Claridge says that the debt amounted to £9,000. It is also a fact that the Ashantis took as part of their booty three field cannon from the Denkyiras. These were said to have been given them by the Dutch. Bowdich, op.cit., p.332.



there is enough evidence to suggest that the Dutch traded extensively with the Denkyira, there is nothing to show that by the time of their defeat Denkyira owed anything to the Dutch. Its name does not feature in the list of people and states which owed the Dutch at the close of the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> One would expect mention of the debt and the "Note" to be made either in the correspondence between the Company and its directors in Holland, or in the instructions given to Nyendaal on his mission to Ashanti. But this is not the case. Indeed Dutch preoccupations at the time were concerned with trade and normal political stability on the Gold Coast. They first sought to ingratiate themselves with the king of Ashanti to ensure that the rising power would trade with them. Their immediate complaints were that trade had come to a standstill because "Ashantis are so much taking up with plundering the riches of Denkyira and with their daily<sup>2</sup> celebrations of their victory that they were in no mind for trade". In fact, it is difficult to visualise that, in the competitive trade on the Gold Coast at this time, the Dutch would have been so thoughtless as to press the victorious Ashantis for any debts which were owed by Denkyira. Admitting that there had existed friendly relationship between Denkyira and the Dutch born of mutual commercial interests, the common assertion that the Denkyira defeat ipso facto conferred its assets and

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 484, Outstanding Debts, August 1698, Sept. 1704.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G. 57/97, W.I.C.917, Report of Jan van Sevenhuysen, 16 Nov. 1701. Bosman asserts that it took the Ashantis 15 days to gather the wealth of Denkyira. Bosman, op.cit., p.65.



liabilities on Ashanti is difficult to reconcile with events of the period. In the same way as the commercial importance of Denkyira had led to closer links with the Dutch, so also did the shrewd Dutch traders on the coast see in the rising Ashanti a commercial and political giant whose friendship was to be cultivated.

The origins of the Ashanti relations with the Dutch must, therefore, be sought for in the events which developed after the war between Ashanti and Denkyira. Admittedly, it is difficult to say what were the exact effects of Nyendaal's mission to Ashanti. This is because his papers were lost and he returned to the coast seriously ill.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, however, it is reasonable to suppose that a residence of one year in Ashanti Capital was not barren of good results. Perhaps it was on account of the fact that the first Dutch direct contact had been so fruitful, that they could complacently discountenance Sir Dalby Thomas's attempts to win over the king in 1707.<sup>2</sup> Whatever agreement might have been made between the two sides, might have been made to ensure good and workable trade relationship. What the defeat of Denkyira conferred on Ashanti was primarily an opportunity to come into direct contact with the Europeans. The origin of any payments to Ashanti was accurately described by Nagtglas as a means "to encourage the trade for slaves gold dust and ivory".<sup>3</sup> The presumption that such a relationship was advantageous to

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<sup>1</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.67. W.I.C.917, Report of Willem de la Palma, 16 Nov.1702.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G. 59/236 Report of Direct Gen. and Council, 28 Oct. 1707.

<sup>3</sup>Claridge, op.cit., p.602.



the Dutch and the Ashantis is strengthened by the fact that it gave both of them a strong chance to protect the Elminas, on whom the Dutch had much depended, and who traditionally claimed a "blood relationship" with the Ashantis. While the Dutch needed no promptings from the Elminas to ally themselves with Ashanti, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the latter were instrumental in bringing about the Ashanti-Dutch relationship.<sup>1</sup>

The death blow which the Ashanti dealt to the Denkyira was a signal that a new power had made its appearance on the coast. To allow the Dutch alone to enjoy the favours of the Ashanti would be a gross dereliction of duty on the part of the other trading powers. That, in effect, would have meant a complete trade stagnation for them, for, it was not long before the new nation began to overshadow all the others politically and economically. Sir Dalby Thomas, the English general on the coast did not allow himself to be cheated out of this. He alerted his superior officers in London that if adequate presents were not given to important chiefs and rulers by the company, the Dutch who did not fail to give such presents would soon engross the whole trade to themselves. He singled out the kings of Akwamu and Ashanti as particularly deserving of such favours. He suggested that "the fine broad cloth deep glossy colour, scarlet and best glossy blue to be three yards long each" were to be sent for the greatest kings only at Quambo and Ashanti".<sup>2</sup> Sir Dalby's efforts

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<sup>1</sup>D. Coombs, op.cit., p.11. Of the Ashanti relations with the states on the Gold Coast and their effects on trade in general, see Chapter 6.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/f.57/8 May 1709. Sir Dalby reminds the Comp. that the trade with Ashanti is so important and the king's friendship so valuable that they can never be too generous with him. Asks that a present of a bed be sent. T.70/5/f.11/dd 1 Jan. 1706. Complains of the English being outshone by the Dutch on account of the fact that they give presents to the kings.



seemed not to have been fruitless. He commended the king as the only one who exchanged<sup>1</sup> presents for presents.

Though the whole basis of the Afro-European relations was an interdependence born of a realisation of mutual benefits accruing from trade, it soon became obvious that the ultimate power rested on the local chiefs and their peoples. The fact that they not only controlled the sources of the commodities but also the trade-routes, meant that in the last analysis their economic sanctions would be much more effective. Despite the enthusiasm displayed by the Europeans in winning the support of Ashanti they were not unaware of the danger and risks involved. If the petty states could threaten to cripple trade by not opening up the routes then the rising Gold Coast giant, Ashanti, would be easily able to have all at its beck and call. The fear of such a situation was expressed by Sir Dalby Thomas. Unlike Hippisley in 1766, who was exasperated by the multiplicity of petty states that were to be given presents, and who lamented the absence of a strong power on the coast, Sir Dalby was the upholder of the political status quo since that was conducive to trade on the coast. The Dutch however learnt that in the interest of trade all other matters should be relegated to second place in order to have the continuous friendship and support of the local people. This can be seen in their relations with Fetu and Ashanti. In 1682, for instance, the Dutch made a complaint to the Fetu king about the seizure of their boat and

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/f.17/dated 6 March 1706. Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C.



trade goods. It was averred that this had been done by the Danes with the overt assistance of one Alexander, a relation of the king. At first it was the intention of the Dutch to demand compensation from either the relation or the king or both. Better counsel, however, prevailed in the interest of trade. In order not to antagonise the king and bring about a closure of the trade-routes, it was considered that whatever complaints and demands of restitution that should be made must be to the Danes rather than to the king and his relative.<sup>1</sup> A similar situation was to arise in the first decade of the eighteenth century with Ashanti. Messengers from ~~Geei Tata~~, the Ashanti king, arrived at the Dutch headquarters in 1708 complaining that the previous general on the coast, Sevenhuysen, had insufficiently paid for eighty pieces of ivory which the king had despatched to the castle. The servants of the general were called in to ascertain the truth of the matter. It was discovered that the whole thing was untrue, and that in the time of the previous general a similar complaint had been<sup>1</sup>made. Ashanti was, however, the rising commercial and political power on the Gold Coast. To incur the displeasure of the king would have been cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. It was therefore decided that the king's demands should be satisfied.<sup>2</sup> In the interest of good trade one could see the interdependence which had been built up between the Europeans

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./no 124/dd 17 May 1682. Resolutions of the Director and his Council, No.1.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C./125/20th March 1708. Resolutions of the Director and his Council, No. 2.



and the local people swaying on the delicate balance with the increase in the power of the parties concerned. The need for protection had led to the dependence of the weaker states on the coast and their giving most of their power to the Europeans whose fortified houses served as the bulwark of protection against enemies. It was on account of this that the Dutch were able to increase their power on the Gold Coast more than any other European nation. This became the envy of the English. Sir Dalby Thomas never ceased to complain that the English had less power over their people than the Dutch. The Dutch writer Bosman was to wonder over the basis of the Dutch prerogative on the coast. He attributed the lack of power of the other nations over their people principally to their own fault. That the Dutch should levy tolls on the inhabitants of Moure was something he could hardly understand. Whatever claims of conquest or trade they might put forward for the collection of tolls in other places, the position of Moure was different since the people of Moure had for a long time been the friends of the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch right therefore could well be said to have grown from the power which their fortress gave them over the people who settled near the fort. While the castle guns enticed many of the weaker states to seek protection from the traders, the changed mode of warfare which was the result of the arrival of the Europeans led to the rush for guns and powder. A treaty which the Dutch made with the ruler of Twifu in 1713 shows how firearms influenced

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., (London), 1720, p.48.



the considerations of some local rulers. The king Akuffo, whose state was growing weaker at this time, sought a loan of about four hundred and fifty pounds (£450) from the Dutch in order to strengthen him for a war with Akany state. After providing securities in the form of such valuable articles as gold chains and beads and giving up his nephew as a hostage, he not only promised to trade only with the Dutch, but was to persuade all traders passing through his state to send their goods to their forts.<sup>1</sup> But perhaps an even more interesting agreement was one which the Dutch made with the elders of Moure in 1707. In a nutshell the elders now threw themselves completely under the Dutch, their reason being that the king of Sabou had been defeated in war by Fanti. They claimed that hitherto they had been serving the Sabou king and the Dutch but now that the king's power over them had ceased to exist, as a result of the war with Fanti, they considered all their obligations to Sabou as having been terminated. They could not serve two masters, they said. Even were a rightful heir to take over the rule of Sabou they would never go back to their former allegiance to him.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of time the meeting of the two groups of people on the coast underwent changes principally because of the need for protection. The desire for political protection sent the petty rulers into the arms

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./No. 122/f.72/dd 30th July 1713. Condition of Agreement with Accaffou the head chief of t'Jufferse.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. no. 122/f.36/16 Jan. 1690. Nicolaas Sweerts had entered into an agreement with the state of Twifu, in which that state was to come to the assistance of the Dutch at any time. For such help the Dutch were to pay 80 bendas.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C./No. 122/f.69/dd 10 Nov. 1707. Agreement made with the Director general Pieter Nuits and the Elders of Moure.



of the Europeans on the coast while the need for the protection of trade led the latter to depend more and more on the power of the local rulers.

To establish themselves on the coast it was necessary that the permission of the local rulers should be obtained. In expectation of trade the local merchants had to be drawn always to the side of the traders. But there was still another factor which remained highly essential in ensuring that smooth relations always obtained between the two groups. This third side of the triangle was the class of middlemen who went to and from the different states with messages. The Europeans seldom left their forts and castles to settle differences. The work devolved on the trusted men who were drawn into their service. On these ambassadors-at-large, friendly relations between the two groups mostly stood or fell. It was essential that they should be able to carry across to the various courts the appropriate message. It therefore became a matter of prime concern of the representatives on the coast to attract the most influential of these people into their service. The paybook of the English company abounds with names such as Abban, Akinsan, Coffee Acqua, Affra, Anim, John Kabes and Nimfa. The Dutch had their Raposas, Pieter Passops, John Kabes and Anims. The Brandenburgers enlisted their John Konnys. In August 1698 a case of spirits, four sheets and six blue perpetuans were given to Afra "for his expense in his journey to Dankaras to resettle the country and antient masketts for trade".<sup>1</sup> Sam, the second

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/374 dd 31 August 1698.



of the Accanys who was in the service of the English, and Hanseco, received twelve gallons of rum, and one green perpetuan. These were in recognition of services. They were to use them "for their Expençe in going to make a pallavara with the country people about stopping traders in comeing downe". Another important man in the English service was one Griffin. In September 1686 he received 15 gallons of rum "for his expence and to treat the king of Sabou, he being to compose the difference between the king of Sabou and Fettue". For the same mission Hanseco was given 8 gallons of rum.<sup>1</sup> When permission to build a house at Komenda was being sought, the English entrusted the work to one of their servants named Quao. He was sent with two cases of spirits to the king and the chief minister of the place to ask for "a lycence to build a factory".<sup>2</sup> The need to get a well trained corps of such servants was keenly felt by Sir Dalby Thomas, who at the beginning of the eighteenth century suggested that some of the company's servants should be chosen to learn the English language, so that they would be able to discharge their duties efficiently. He advised that it would be useful to have "at least twenty of the company's negroes learnt to speak English to prole up and down the country to become familiar with the people". If he had about six or more slaves "who can read and write English they would be of great use in the upland country in reading letters and giving account

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/372/f.94/dd 1st Sept. 1686. In February 1684 the same Griffin undertook a successful peace making mission in the towns of Aguaffo and Komenda. For his services he received three gallons brandy and twelve blue cloths. T.70/369/9 Feb. 1684.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/372/29 Sept. 1686.



of their transactions".<sup>1</sup>

Since competition for the favours of the local rulers remained always very keen in the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was highly necessary that all the servants who were sent to undertake the missions at the courts of the rulers should be of proven faithfulness to the companies under whom they served. This was not always the case. When Sir Dalby decided to win the friendship of the Awowin people he was disappointed in his hopes. That his efforts were fruitless were due to the men who undertook the work on his behalf. On 6th June 1706 he sent a slave to the "Awawee-country" to deliver presents to the king. It seems that the slave at this time weighed the chances of freedom and faithful service and chose the former. Undaunted, another one was dispatched in February of the following year. This second messenger allowed himself to be guided by the behaviour of the first one and took a leaf out of his book.<sup>2</sup>

Of the roving ambassadors on the Dutch side the most important towards the end of the seventeenth century was Pieter Passop. He was brother-in-law of Akonno, king of Akwamu. He was a member of the Dutch delegation which went up to Akwamu to bring down the king in 1703. In 1693, when the Dutch were trying to ensure that the Danish castle which had been siezed by the Akwamu might not fall into the hands of the French

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/f.2/21 Sept. 1705. Abstract of letters received by the Royal African Company.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/f.53. 22 Feb. 1709. Abstract of letters received by the Royal African Company.



or any other power, the same Passop was with the messengers and white soldiers who were sent to Akwamu.<sup>1</sup> The same Passop in 1690 was sent into Abokro and Igwira to renew the allegiance of the states for the Dutch.

But perhaps the best way to ensure a better relationship was to be able to have the foremost traders of the various states to settle around the forts and castles. These people acted as representatives of their various states. It was the practice of the inland merchants to go first to people they knew and trusted. Aware of this all the agents in the various forts tried to gain the goodwill of these leading men. In 1645, for instance, the Dutch tried to get one Bediako, the foremost trader from Accany, to settle at Elmina. They were prepared to build a house for him if he would consent to come.<sup>2</sup> The English also adopted the same method. They had in their service men like Nimfa, captain of the Accany, as well as Sam, his second. These people enjoyed a monthly salary from the company. In 1708 Sir Dalby Thomas happily reported that he "hath endeavoured to penetrate into every country (of trade) to get a cabeshire or chief trader of every country to live at our factories".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G./no. 81/dd 14 August 1695. Journal of St. George d'Elmina 1658-1709. In the agreement between Nicolaas Sweerte and the king and people of Aguaffo on 14 Jan. 1688, two local merchants, Herman Aban and Cofitan, residing at Elmina witnessed it. W.I.C. No. 122, f. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Rattelband, K. Viif Dagregisters.....Sao Jorge Da Mina. 1645-1647. The Hage, 1953. Linschoten-Vereeniging LV, p.76.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/47/dd 14 Jan. 1708. Abstract of letters received by the Royal African Company. In August 1679 presents in the form of zayes were given to Sam "towards the building him a house". T.70/365/31 Aug. 1679. Abstracts of letters from Cape Coast Castle.



If the Europeans sought to ensure that trade went on well by inviting traders from all states to settle near them, the local rulers also felt that it was in their own interest to settle their representatives on the coast. This aspect of the relations can be well understood when the organisation of the trade on the coast is treated. When Ashanti became the most important trading state most of their prominent traders who came down to the coast seemed to have been directly connected with the king. In October 1701 the son of the king was given presents to the value of about seven ounces of gold for his father when he was returning after he had come down to trade. Four months after he was again loaded with presents after he had come down on a similar purpose.<sup>1</sup>

When in July 1703 Affado, one of the company's servants, was dispatched to Denkyira on a mission to persuade the traders to come down to Cape Coast he returned after three months accompanied by "a great many traders among whome is one who is to succeed the king of Dankera".<sup>2</sup> These important men who came to trade on the coast must be seen as the high premium which the local rulers began to place on the trade. By sending the relations to take active part in the trade the rulers could always have trusted information on what they discovered on their way to and from the coast. If such men later came to rule in their states they could bring their personal influence to bear on the relationship between them and the traders on the coast.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/377/Dated 15 Oct. 1701, 15 Jan. 1702. Cape Coast Castle Journal.  
T.70/373/Nov. 1689.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1463/dd 26 Nov. 1703. Cape Coast Castle Memorandum.



The seventeenth century can well be described as a period when the foundation of the relationship between the Africans and the Europeans was laid. The Dutch, acting in accordance with Article Two of their charter which empowered them to make treaties for, and on behalf of, the States-General, left no stone unturned to use this special privilege to increase their influence on the coast.<sup>1</sup> These treaties were always to be made to the advantage of the company in order to keep out other rivals. The arrival of many other nations on the coast seeking the same privileges from the same rulers meant that mere treaties would not be enough to ensure a nation's monopolistic rights as they had wished to obtain. Little wonder that these treaties became subject to constant renewals. Whatever the new traders might desire to do the prospect of gaining rents from the various nations, coupled with the prestige and the protection which the forts provided at times, was too good to be missed by the local rulers. But, more often than not, the numerical superiority of the Africans, their control of the routes to and from the sources of the commodities needed by the Europeans, gave them a great advantage. But where the states were weak they theoretically exercised a sovereignty which in practice was in the hands of the Europeans. Though the local rulers received payments in the form of rents for the lands on which the European forts and castles stood, their real power over the latter remained shadowy. Admittedly all customary payments due them as

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<sup>1</sup>J. de Leat, Het Jaerlijck Verhael...II, Linschoten-Vereeniging XXXIV, p.8.



rulers such as rents and customary gifts on festive occasions were collected; their ability to be very compelling paled before that of the states that developed in the interior. Little wonder that Sir Dalby Thomas became apprehensive of the rising power of Ashanti. Perhaps this fear was due to their experience with such powerful states as Akwamu. Bosman writing about it said that the king of that state could compel all the three European nations, English, Dutch and Danes, who had possessions on his territory to provide satisfaction for all injuries whether real or imagined. Should the Europeans pit their strength against Akwamu, it "would certainly end in our destruction".<sup>1</sup> However arbitrary a local state might have wished to be, the interdependence which grew gradually between the Africans and Europeans restrained their passions. The rising commercial class like John Kabes and Baxter, even though over-mighty for both sides, were all conscious of the need and benefits of friendly cooperation. To understand the political and social developments of the Gold Coast which flowed from the relations of the meeting of seventeenth century Europe and Africa one needs to know of the organisation and nature of the trade.

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., p.62.



### Chapter III

#### THE GOLD COAST TRADE.

From the time of the Portuguese until the end of the seventeenth century gold - above all else - was the principal export and, indeed, the bait which attracted European nations and made them establish forts and castles on the Gold Coast. True, the intensive cultivation of sugar in the New World in the seventeenth century created an inordinate demand for West African slaves. Like the Portuguese before them, the other European nations made the Gold Coast the nerve centre of their trade. Gold, ivory and other West African commodities were traded side by side with slaves. The methods of trade established by the Portuguese were adopted by the late-comers.

By the end of the seventeenth century the Guinea Coast line had been roughly delineated by the Europeans. The names adopted were those that mainly suited the commercial mind and they may even be termed a European traders' guide to the West African Coast. From west to east such names were given as the Grain Coast, the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast. The seventeenth century Dutch traders, who were adept in commercial matters, still subdivided the Ivory Coast into what they sometimes called the Quaqua, Five and Six Bands Coast after the cotton cloth which was obtained in that region.<sup>1</sup> Though the areas

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<sup>1</sup> O. Dapper, Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaense Gewesten. Amsterdam 1668. The bands were the description of the cotton cloth that was bought here and sold on the Gold Coast.



so designated yielded a large proportion of the commodities by which they were known, it must be pointed out that the West African Trade admitted of no rigid divisions. Whatever might have been the degree of overlapping of these different commodities with different regions, it can be asserted that the Gold Coast was the principal, if not the only source, of the gold trade. In February 1705, for instance, when the Opmeer arrived at Elmina from Benin it brought 17,924 lbs of ivory, 4,000 lbs of wax and 15,015 lbs of rice, but only 4 marks 6 ozs 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> engels of gold.<sup>1</sup> With the Valk's cargo from Angola in the same year there was only the paltry sum of 7 ozs 10 engels of gold. In the same year the Company sent about 651 marks 6 ozs from the Guinea Coast.<sup>2</sup> Of all the commodities to be traded for by cruisers sent from Elmina to the various parts of the Guinea Coast, gold is never mentioned, except when those ships included part of the Gold Coast on the scheduled journey. In 1699, when the ship The Nupture was dispatched to the Gold, Grain and Ivory Coasts, it was specified that a carbine of three feet long should have an exchange value of 10 lb. of ivory, 250 lb. grain or 12 carbines for 32 engels of gold.<sup>3</sup> In 1701 when the ships

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G. 58/f.123/12 Feb. 1705.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 917/Feb. 1705-Sept. 1705.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.233/29 July 1699.Instructions to the shipper Cornelis Prue and the under-Commissioner David van Nyendaal. 10 June 1701, Price list for the Journey of Jan Assis Geelboom and Jan Snoek ... In 1718 the Dutch instructed the General on the coast to find out whether reports about gold in Benin were true, and whether it was pure gold. W.I.C. 9171/1 April 1718.



Anna and the Jacoba were dispatched to the Grain and Ivory Coast only, no mention of gold was made. Thus it can be maintained that most of the gold which reached Europe during the time of the <sup>Don</sup>Portuguese ascendancy originated from the Gold Coast.

By 1538 when the Portuguese monopoly of the gold export was on the wane, other European nations were just beginning or about to begin to make their debut on the Gold Coast. The Dutch, who were the most persistent rivals for the Gold Coast trade, made their appearance on the West African scene in the last decade of the sixteenth century. By 1607 Dutch West African trade had become so substantial that it was felt necessary by the traders to ask for special protection from the States General. Impressive figures of goods exported to Guinea were quoted. It was pointed out that a large quantity of hides, gum, ivory, gold and other West African goods had been imported into the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup>

Gold from the Gold Coast played an important part in the economy of the United Provinces throughout the seventeenth century. The difficulties regarding the fair distribution of the gold may be discerned from the number of laws that were made to regulate the use of Guinea gold. It was difficult to prevent Guinea gold from being exported outside the country or from being sold privately in the country contrary to

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<sup>1</sup>De Jonge, J.K.J., Coorsprong ... Kust van Guinea, p.30, Verloog van Bewind - hebbers en handelaars op de Westkust van Africa, handel drijvende van de Staten Generaal, waarin de toestand van dien handel worde beschreven. C. 1607.



the mint regulations. In 1612 the Mintmaster at Amsterdam complained that the Mint in Zeeland gave more than the 256 florins which was the price fixed for one mark of Guinea gold. In 1628 the Mint complained to the States General that the Bank at Amsterdam had sold unminted gold to the East India Company and requested that this practice should be forbidden.<sup>1</sup> When in 1666 two thousand two hundred marks of gold arrived from Guinea, the Mintmasters requested the States General to forbid the Bank to sell raw gold except to the Mint. In the eighties the problem of Guinea gold took another turn. To prevent any provincial mint from gaining a monopoly over it, it was stipulated that the gold from Guinea should not be sold wholesale but distributed among all the Mints. The fear of the gold being sold to other countries was always present in the minds of the Dutch Mints. In 1691 a thousand marks of gold arrived from Guinea; the Masters of the Mint hastened to ask the States General to prevent the West India Company from selling the gold to the Spanish Netherlands. They asked that the Company should be compelled to sell the money to the provinces of the Republic. Despite these measures, gold found its way not only to the United Provinces and the East Indies, but to other European States, while some went to finance Dutch enterprises in Brazil.

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<sup>1</sup>J. G. van Dillen, Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der wisselbanken, Den Haag, 1925, p.69: dated 1st Nov. 1612; Staten-Generaal, No. 5368, 1628 30 December; Resoluties Vroedschap 15, f.256/27 March 1637. Staten General 5372, 20 July 1666; 8 Oct. 1668; Staten Generaal 5373, 25 April 1682.



From the 2,101 marks obtained at Elmina in 1646, 360 marks were sent to pay for the services of the company servants in Brazil.<sup>1</sup> In addition to gold, commodities such as lime juice, ivory and other goods were exported to Europe.

The English also took their share of the Gold Coast trade. From 1618 to the end of the seventeenth century they established as many as four different trading Companies for the African trade. The importance attached to the trade is seen from the fact that the failure of one company was followed immediately by the formation of a new one out of the wreckage of the old. That the gold trade was the most important single consideration in the formation of the first two Companies is clear from the argument of the traders who sought to be granted the monopoly of the trade. It was argued in 1649, for instance, that Crispe's Company had failed to exploit the sources of the gold trade and had allowed the Dutch to gain all the gold.<sup>2</sup> When financial exigencies forced the second English Company to lease out its forts on the Gold Coast to the East India Company, the latter found the Gold

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<sup>1</sup> O.W.I.C. No. 11/marked 19/23 March 1646. Throughout the 17th century ~~lime~~ <sup>lime</sup> juice continued to be sent to Holland. It is reported that from the beginning, because of its scarcity, this commodity was specially reserved for the use of the Directors of the W.I.C. See K. Ratelband, Vijf Dagregisters ... Elmina, p.      later on the juice was used on slave ships to prevent scurvy.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Blake, "The Form of the Guinea Trade", Essays in British and Irish History, London 1949, p.88. C.O.I./No.11/f.13, Dec. 1649: In the long remonstrance to the Council of trade no mention was made of the slaves. It was specified that "...since which grant they have never yet sought into the land for the discovery of the mines ... but yearly make their private benefits by wood, elephants teeth, hides... and small quantities of gold..."



Coast a useful economic investment. From here gold could be taken direct by the Company for its India trade. But for the strong court pressures and royal interest in the formation of the Company of Royal Adventurers in 1660, the East India Company would gladly have extended its trade to the Gold Coast. Having <sup>failed</sup> filed in the contest for the charter, the Company suggested that it be allowed to keep its West African possessions until 1664 or that it should be given a share in the African trade. Both requests were refused.<sup>1</sup>

It is debatable how far the gold imported by English African Companies from the Gold Coast formed a significant proportion of all the gold arriving in England. If the assertion of the Royal Company is to be believed the Gold Coast trade was profitable for the Company. It claimed that the Company of Royal Adventurers since incorporation had, among other things, brought gold to the value of £200,000 and slaves to the value of £100,000 annually. Whatever the amount was, it was a welcome addition. As many as 548,327 guineas were coined from gold imported into England from the Gold Coast in the thirty years from 1674 to 1714. These guinea coins bore the Company's stamp of an elephant. This and the fact that these coins were called guineas shows how highly guinea gold was esteemed.<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that not

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<sup>1</sup>E. Donnan, Documents illustrative of the slave trade, Vol. 1, p.83.

<sup>2</sup>K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company, London 1957, p.181. Davies asserts that between 1677 and 1689 when the Company brought more gold than at any other time, it was responsible for about 70/o of the total gold coined at the Mint. W. Claridge, op.cit., p.116.



only the English and the Dutch were trading for the Gold Coast gold. The Danes, the Brandenburgers, the French, the Portuguese and other interlopers whose receipts may never be found, were involved in the trade. It was estimated by the Dutch chief factor, Bosman, at the end of the seventeenth century that the annual total receipt of gold from the Gold Coast amounted to 7,000 marks or £200,000.<sup>1</sup>

Torn between the demand for slaves and that for gold, the Company officials often advised their superiors in Europe that they should not expect to have better trade in both at one and the same time. In 1706 one official succinctly put the problem thus: ".... gold is as easy to be got as slaves, and slaves as gold, but if there are no cargoes for both, and your orders are for slaves, your return must be in slaves not gold".<sup>2</sup>

Trade on the Gold Coast was a complicated business. Besides the variety of goods and methods to be adopted, a seasoned European trader had to take the conservative but selective tastes of the consumers into constant consideration. Writing what must be termed a critical trade report on the Gold Coast, John Snow described the people as "extremely tenacious in any thing that has been a custome".<sup>3</sup> Though the volume

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<sup>1</sup>Willem Bosman, A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, London 1705, p.85; J. D. Fage, op.cit., p.47.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/f.27/19 Feb. 1706.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/102/ pp. 47-50/31 July 1705. Printed in K. G. Davies, op.cit. Appendix V.



of trade had increased considerably since the time of the Portuguese its character had changed little. Old and tried goods were preferred to new. The consumers insisted on their own specifications regarding colour and quantity of goods. Quick at discerning this local characteristic and anxious for profitable trade, the Portuguese had first adopted, and then gradually adapted, the West African system of trade to their needs. Even at their first coming, long distance trade had not been a new feature on the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup> Mande traders from the Niger bend had long preceded them and created new demands.

The arrival of the Portuguese on the Coast did not stop the flow of trade to the northern countries. Both markets existed side by side until better means of communication and a more abundant supply of manufactured goods gradually enabled the Europeans to wrest most of the trade from the northern markets. It was noted that around Axim gold could be exchanged for such things as shawls from the North African states, Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>2</sup> On the Guinea Coast itself there was much carrying trade to be done by the Portuguese. As early as 1487 they established a factory at Gwato, the port of Benin. From here they carried cotton cloth, leopard skins, beads, as well as slaves, to the Gold Coast and exchanged them for gold.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I. Wilks, "A Medieval Trade Route from Niger to Gulf of Guinea", J.A.H., Vol. III, No. 2, p.337.

<sup>2</sup>D. P. Pacheco, "Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis" ed. G. H. T. Kimble, Hakluyt Soc., No. LXXIX, 1936, p.116.

<sup>3</sup>J. W. Blake, op.cit., p.93; Pacheco, op.cit., p.127.



West of the Gold Coast they brought cloths from Cape Verde. Later on cloths were brought from the Ivory Coast.<sup>1</sup> The centres to the west and to the east latterly extended to include Ardra (Whydah). These places remained important sources for cloths throughout the seventeenth century.

Though the Europeans seemed to have done much of the carrying trade in the seventeenth century, part still remained in African hands. Of the Quaqua or Ivory Coast cloth, Barbot asserts that both European and African middlemen were involved, for the weavers lived inland.<sup>2</sup> In 1647 when the Dutch attempted to stop the Axim people from trading in the Quaqua cloth they touched on a very sensitive part of the peoples' livelihood. This occasioned a revolt in which a Dutch soldier was killed. The people could only be appeased by a compromise solution, by which they sold all the cloths they brought from the Ivory Coast to the Dutch.<sup>3</sup> The cloth and bead trade from Benin and later from Ardra was not allowed to languish by either the Dutch or the English. In 1633 and 1634 the Dutch carried as much as 12,461 pieces of cloth from Benin to the Gold Coast.<sup>4</sup> In 1647 the Dutch reported that the English had collected on

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<sup>1</sup>P. de Marees, Beschrijvinge van de Gout Kust. In Linschoten Vereeniging, Ed. by H. Naber, 1912, Vol. V, p.84. Pecheco, in Blake, op.cit., p.39.

<sup>2</sup>J. Barbot, in Churchill's Collections, Vol. VII, p.143.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C./11/204 and 159/dated 3 July and 11 Oct. 1647.

<sup>4</sup>O.W.I.C./11/6 Sept. 1633; idem/4/dated 1634.



one occasion 2,000 pieces of Ardra cloths. The demand on the Gold Coast, and the competition between the English and the Dutch were such that the Directors of the Dutch Company were informed that a tried and experienced commissioner should always be appointed to take charge of the Dutch trade in Benin. In 1715, they negotiated a treaty with the Benin king, by which the latter promised to supply 1,700 pieces of cloth on credit to the Dutch at each visit.<sup>1</sup>

From the same place highly prized beads variously known as Akory, Conte de terra, and aggry, were sent to the Gold Coast. Loyer described these beads as having "neither lustre nor beauty, and look like out glass beads but the people esteem it so much that they give in exchange its weight in gold".<sup>2</sup> One Dutchman described the beads at the beginning of the eighteenth century as the jewels of the negroes. A bead industry was firmly established on the Gold Coast in the course of the seventeenth century and the areas associated with the Acory beads spread westward to the region of modern Akwamu and Accra. In the 1649 treaty with the King of Accra, for instance, it was stipulated among other things, that the inland traders should sell their gold and Akori only to the Dutch. There was evidence of a bead industry on the Gold Coast. People broke

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<sup>1</sup> N.B.K.G./82/45/10 Jan. 1716. In 1686 the English reported that they had 3,925 pieces of Benen cloths of all kinds at Cape Coast. T.70/372/76. 3 Aug. 1686.

<sup>2</sup> Loyer, Abstract of a Voyage to Assini, in Astley's Collections, Vol. II, p.432.



beads into smaller pieces and shaped them in accordance with their own tastes. In 1713, the English reported that "the natives understand the false coral and can harden wax in imitation of it".<sup>1</sup>

On the Gold Coast a lucrative trade in salt which had been carried on in pre-European times still existed to be incorporated into the African-European trade. Salt was a very important trading commodity throughout the Western Sudan. Arab travellers noticed that salt from the Sahara desert was highly welcome in the Sudanese markets. This commodity was also in demand by the gold producers, who lived to the south of western Sudan. They exchanged salt for its worth in gold.<sup>2</sup> The German explorer, Barth, noticed throughout his journey from Bornu to Tumbuktu that the people always used salt imported from the north. On the Gold Coast, too, salt remained a highly valuable commodity in the trade with the Africans. It was observed that "vast quantities (of salt) were sent to Akkany, for which that nation pays a certain duty in gold to those of

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/91/26 Jan. 1713. Report of Grosvenor & Council to R.A.E. In 1668 Dapper had this to say of the beads "de veneetsche bevesen of kralen, die zij in grote meeningen verslijten zij vier of vijf stukjes, en slijpen die op een steen, gelijk de kinderen de kersse stenen hier te landen slijpen, en dragen ze geregen aen basten van bomen, om den hals handen en veoten". Dapper, op.cit., Amsterdam, 1668, p.481.

<sup>2</sup>Bovill, op.cit., p.67, 236; he asserts that the "African salt was so infinitely the more important that it is no overstatement to say that gold was valued by the Sudanese almost for its purchasing power in salt." The importance of salt among the Akans of the Gold Coast may be seen from the fact that it was a common phrase of praise and generosity to describe a man as having freely given out salt. This was because salt was a scarce and valuable commodity. It was not infrequent for people who settled in places farther away from towns and villages to name their cottages "Ahiamankyene", meaning literally that salt is the only thing which is needed.



Fantin".<sup>1</sup> Barbot observed that the "blacks all along the coast are enriched by boiling or making of salt ... because the inland people from very remote parts must fetch it from the coast".<sup>2</sup>

There were two main methods employed in the salt industry. The first was the natural process in which sea water was collected in artificial pits or "pans"; here the sun evaporated the water and left pure salt. But "where the land is so high and the sea or salt waters cannot overflow it, the natives boil salt water so long in coppers, or earthen pots or pans".<sup>3</sup> In early years the salt trade seems to have been left as the monopoly of local manufacturers and the Akan traders. When demand increased with the growing number of inland traders, mostly Ashantis, the European traders soon began to take a hand in the trade.<sup>4</sup>

Though salt could be obtained from the Gonja Country to the north of Ashanti, salt from the north appears not to have been greatly relished by the Ashantis. An 18th century Arab chronicler of Gonja wrote that "all people bought this salt except the people of Asante", who, it was noted, "preferred the salt which came from the coast".<sup>5</sup> This fact is borne

<sup>1</sup>Barbot, op.cit., Astleys, p.607.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p. 288; Barbot, op.cit., p.205.

<sup>3</sup>Barbot, op.cit., p.205.

<sup>4</sup>Dapper, Afrikaense Gewesten: Amsterdam 1668, p.466. Verschiede aen-zee-gelegen dorpen hebben zout pannen, als Anten, Labbedo sinko en endere, maer de zout-rijkste en beste pannen zijn te Anten en Sinko van waer het zout, dat zin Inkin neemen, daer te lande inde pannen gewonen...

<sup>5</sup>El-Wakkad Mahmoud "Qissatu Salga Tarikhu Gonja", translated by Wilks in Ghana Notes and Queries, Sept.-Dec. 1961.



out by the frequent mention of Ashanti salt traders on the Coast by the Europeans. In 1709 Sir Dalby Thomas complained that the "Dutch Coopman at Moure draws away the traders by coming into the salt trade".<sup>1</sup> The salt particularly in demand by the Ashantis was that made in and around Accra. The English reported that "salt merchants had arrived from Ashantee" and that "Accra salt is the commanding commodity with the Ashanti trade".<sup>2</sup> All the Europeans were competing in the salt trade. Regular ships were sent from Elmina and Cape Coast to collect Accra salt. It was a matter of regret when in August 1709 Sir Dalby could not "get captain Greaves of the Olive to go down to Accra for Salt",<sup>3</sup> because "at that time the Dutch there had a shipload of salt". To the people of Accra this trade was so important that they were unwilling to be interrupted for other business. In 1716 the Dutch complained that although they stood in need of shells they could not get the Accra people to collect any for them, for they were busy collecting their salt. Later in the year the Accra people were credited with guns to the value of about £120, which they were to pay for in salt. The same report held that an English ship at Accra was taking on about 500 bags of salt.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/f.50/8 Jan. 1709/f.58/May 1709.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/57/8 May 1709.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/21 August 1709.

<sup>4</sup>N.B.K.G./No.82/7 Jan. 1716; 19 April 1716. Letter from the Book-keeper at Accra to Elmina.



Salt making was a seasonal occupation. The best time was "the end of November till the beginning of March (when) the sun being then in the zenith and ... his force greater than at any time of the year".<sup>1</sup> For the off-season, other sources of salt supply were sought. When it was mentioned to Sir Dalby Thomas that "salt may be got at an Island near Antequa for nothing" the latter recommended to the officials in London "to take up this trade" as he anticipated that "it may be the chief article for trade".<sup>2</sup>

But the Europeans, though they competed increasingly in the salt trade, never gained a monopoly of it. Even at the very end of the 17th century there were men like John Kabes of Komenda, a veteran salt merchant, who in 1694 invited the English to build a fort in his town and accommodated them "in one of his salt pans about four miles from the Dutch fort".<sup>3</sup> Despite the European competition he had not been ousted from the trade by the second decade of the eighteenth century. In 1715, for instance, when inland traders arrived at Komenda for salt, Kabes was described as having "disposed of a great quantity".<sup>4</sup> Soon the Euro-

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<sup>1</sup>Barbot, op.cit., p.205.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/58/9 June 1709. T.70/5/111/16 July 1712: Have laid in a stock of salt for the King of Ashanti.

<sup>3</sup>Barbot in Astley, op.cit., p.586.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/1464/f.10/11 Feb. 1715 Komenda Diary.



peans were to try to ensure their supply of this commodity by exercising some control over the sources. This seems to have been successful in the 1720's. When Atkins visited Accra in 1721 he reported that the English, Danes (whom he mistook for French) and the Dutch "make here great quantities (of salt)".<sup>1</sup> Smith later reported that "there are salt ponds belonging to the fort (James fort) sufficient to supply not only all the Gold Coast but the ships that trade there".<sup>2</sup>

The seventeenth century was a turning point in the Gold Coast trade. The seaboard, which had hitherto been the remote southern end of the northern trading system, now became the principal place of exchange for a whole variety of goods from all parts of the world. Formerly the long, hazardous journey from the north through the savannah and the forest regions meant that few goods came to the Gold Coast. Now the problem was solved and European goods began to flow northwards through the forest region. Not only individuals but states had to increase their purchasing power in order to be able actively to participate in the European trade. More gold, ivory and slaves were needed to satisfy the inexhaustible demands made by the newcomers. This called for the extension of new organizations and the revival of old ones. Admittedly financial matters did not loom large in the day to day deliberations of

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<sup>1</sup>J. Atkins, "A Voyage to Guinea," in Astley, op.cit., p.616.

<sup>2</sup>W. Smith, "Thirty different Draughts of Guinea" in Astley, op.cit., p.617.



the states of the Gold Coast, since there were no paid officials in the administrative set up.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, money was needed to buy arms for the defence of the state, and for luxuries to maintain the dignity of the chiefly class. With the "Slave Rush" in the seventeenth century state-defence became of supreme importance for survival.

State revenues were raised in various ways - by direct taxation and by tolls on trade. As far back as the beginning of the seventeenth century De Marees had noticed that the traders coming from the interior paid tolls to the kings through whose country they passed.<sup>2</sup> On the coast the kings received tolls on all fish caught by the inhabitants. It was this privilege of the local rulers that the Portuguese, and later the Dutch, arrogated to themselves in Elmina and Axim.<sup>3</sup> Tolls apart, state participation in trade was part of the state system of the Gold Coast. Indeed, it was observed that, in Assine, trade with the Europeans was virtually a monopoly of the King and his elders. To them "alone belongs the privilege of trading or buying goods". This was, however, not the whole picture. The truth was that trade, like other crafts and professions, was organised. To be admitted into the profession, a man had to have a good knowledge of the art. And so it was near the truth, as Loyer observed,

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<sup>1</sup>K. A. Busia, The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti, p.78.

<sup>2</sup>P. de Marees in Purchase, op.cit., p.283. Barbot in Astley, op.cit., p.627.

<sup>3</sup>"Deductive van Valkenburgh" in J. K. J. de Jonge, op.cit., p.64.

<sup>4</sup>Loyer, op.cit., p. 443.



that when any member of the state was able to "lay up some little wealth he gets his friends to apply ... to the King to be made a merchant or a Nobleman". In the Gold Coast society, where the family embraced a larger group than it does in Western Europe, there was no dichotomy between family and politics and politics and trade. A trader, though pursuing his own private trade, was in practice working for the family, to which he belonged. This system that was observed in Ashanti in the eighteenth century appears to have been basically applicable in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It was part of the Ashanti state system to encourage trade. "The King, once in every fourty days .... distributed among a number of chiefs various sums of gold dust ... to turn same to good account".<sup>1</sup> Interest on the money was not demanded immediately. Bowdich asserts that "rising captains" were given sums of gold "without requiring from them for two or three years". Within this period it was expected of the recipient to make the best possible use of the gold. At the end of these years the king expected the captain "not only to restore the principal but to prove that he has acquired sufficient of his own ... to support the greater dignity the King would confer on him!"<sup>2</sup>

The gold given by the King to the captains was variously obtained. Ashanti gold was never collected by a professional class. The miners and gold washers combined the work as farmers, soldiers and hunters with

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<sup>1</sup>Caseley Hayford, Gold Coast Native Institutions, p.95.

<sup>2</sup>Bowdich, Mission to Asantee (London 1819), p.295.



the gold prospecting. Throughout the seventeenth century and indeed up to the nineteenth, no Europeans had access to the sources of gold supply. Apart from a few unsuccessful European attempts to mine the gold themselves, the supply of gold depended entirely on the Africans. An early Dutch attempt at Egwira, a few miles north of Axim, where fort Ruychaver was built, was abandoned because of local opposition. In 1673 the W.I.C. gave a special concession to Jan Baptiste Lieferinck to prospect for gold on the beaches of the Gold Coast. Nothing came of it.<sup>1</sup> In 1718 one Coster was dispatched to the Gold Coast, to prospect for minerals in the neighbourhood of Axim.<sup>2</sup> This too was fruitless. In 1705, obviously discouraged by the frequent wars and the fluctuations in the gold trade, Sir Dalby reported he was sending white miners to Akany. This attempt, too, seemed to have gone the way of the Dutch enterprises.<sup>3</sup> The gold which came into European hands was brought from the inland states.<sup>4</sup>

Little wonder, then, that at times the Europeans had to wait fruitlessly on the coast for supplies which never came. Inland wars interrupted the free flow of trade. So also could excessive rainfall.

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./10+/1673.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.463/27 Dec. 1718.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/2/ Aug-Sept. 1705.

<sup>4</sup>Bosman remarked that they were not in the same position as the Spaniards in Peru, for here on the Gold Coast the Europeans did not own the mines.



When Denkyira and Ashanti were at war at the close of the century, the Dutch complained that the foremost producers of gold were not bringing down the commodity due to their wars.<sup>1</sup> Later on it was discovered that the wars had taken heavy toll on the older and more experienced traders. The young ones, it was averred, were inexperienced in trade. They promised that, when things returned to normal they would come down and trade.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the century this was a recurrent complaint of both the Dutch and the English traders. In October 1647 the Director General at Elmina reported that he had 746 marks 5 ounces  $13\frac{1}{2}$  engels of gold but that he was afraid that he would not have so much the next time, on account of the war that had broken out.<sup>3</sup> Again in 1682, the English agent expressed the fear "of war which will make gold scarce...".<sup>4</sup> Between 1668 and 1676, a period which the Dutch described as full of wars on the Gold Coast, they reported that they had been able to send home only 3,150 marks gold.<sup>5</sup>

Three main methods were used for collecting gold. First it could be collected from the beaches and along banks of rivers and rivulets. Secondly, it was collected from the beds of rivers and thirdly there was

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.917/20/38 May 1701.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.484/236/Oct.1703-Feb.1704.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C.11/159/17 Oct. 1647.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/10/f.51/29 Dec. 1652.

<sup>5</sup>W.I.C.917/15 April 1700.



the actual mining for gold. Of the first two methods the European writers on the coast afford ample information. After heavy rains, people were seen walking along the beaches where rivers that passed through gold bearing areas washed into the sea searching for gold. This method was employed in areas like Elmina, Appolonia, and Axim.<sup>1</sup> In the inland regions people adopted the same method. In Akim people, especially children, went out after the rains to look for gold that had been washed down.<sup>2</sup> But such a method was beset by change. Most of the gold that was exported was obtained by the other two methods, namely by diving to scoop up gold from the beds of rivers, and by mining. It was observed that at Egwira and along the Akobra river this was the method usually adopted. "Divers with brass basons or wooden bowls on their heads ... plunge and dive under the most rapid streams." The containers were brought to the banks where "other men and women washed the earth away from the gold".<sup>3</sup>

That gold was mined in the inland states was believed in the seventeenth century to be true. But how it was done remained a mystery to the European traders. The mines were invested with religious beliefs. They were sacred and so foreigners were to be prevented from viewing

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<sup>1</sup>Barbot, op.cit., p.228; Bosman, op.cit., Letter VI, p.80. Dapper, op.cit., p.466.

<sup>2</sup>J. B. Danquah, Akim Abuakwa Handbook, London 1928, p.8.

<sup>3</sup>J. Barbot, op.cit., p.230.



them. But that was not the only reason. State security required that they should be carefully guarded. It was feared that should the mines become known the Europeans might seize them.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Sir Dalby's desire to send European miners into Akkani country originated from information he received about the mines in that state. He asserted that he had been "informed by one Quomino who lately came from there and hath seen such mines and given an account how they work them. Sir Thomas designs to see what they will do about him proposing 3 or 4 white men to work at the mines with them".<sup>2</sup> The Africans always expressed surprise at the great desire evinced by the Europeans for gold and asked whether "god was their god".<sup>3</sup> The Akanis, despite their reticence, assured the Europeans that they had mines in their country. This was substantiated by a Danish official, who told Barbot that he had seen mines in the country of Akani. When Dupuis was in Ashanti he was informed that there were gold mines in <sup>Gyaman</sup>~~Gann~~, in the north west of Ashanti, Denkyira and Wassa, where principally the ore was dug out of large pits ranging from nine to twenty-two feet in depth. He noticed

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., p.80. Dapper, op.cit., p.468.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/f.2/20th July - 15th August 1705.

<sup>3</sup>Barbot in Churchill's Collections p. 234



gold from ~~G~~<sup>J</sup>aman sometimes brought down to Ashanti in solid lumps embedded in loam and rock.<sup>1</sup>

It can be safely asserted, therefore, that the knowledge of gold mining was not introduced to the Gold Coast for the first time in the nineteenth century. Bosman writes that the people dug in hills for gold and the method of mining does not appear to have undergone any change throughout the centuries, though it was not until the 1870's that Europeans were able to observe the local people at work mining gold. The first European prospectors for gold who arrived at Tarkwa saw shafts sunk to lengths ranging from eighteen to sixty feet and about fifteen feet in width. It was estimated that there were over one thousand people engaged in mining at Tarkwa. The men who went down the pits brought up the gold, encrusted in stones, to the women and children who busied themselves in crushing and washing. Despite the sorry tools at their disposal and sometimes the falling in and flooding of pits, they were reported to be doing very well.<sup>2</sup> This can be assumed to have been the practice for centuries. In 1629 a Dutch cartographer was informed that the people of Wassa, the state

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<sup>1</sup>J. Dupuis, Journal of Residence in Ashantee, London 1824, Part II, p.LVI.

<sup>2</sup>For more information about this see the following reports:

- I M. Bonnat and General Wray, 1877.
- II M. Bonnat, 12 Jan. 1879.
- III Extract from the Report of Major Gen. Wray 1879.
- IV Report by F. J. Harvey, 18 May 1878, in  
The Gold Coast Review, Vol. II, No. 1, Jan./June 1926,  
pp. 78-92.



in which Tarkwa is situated, did nothing but mine gold.<sup>1</sup> As well, mines were said to be owned by the rulers. It was reported that in Akane "anybody who discovered a gold mine gave half of the profits to the King".<sup>2</sup>

The sharing of the proceeds between the discoverer<sup>5</sup> and owner of the mines was customary in all the states. It has been observed in the previous chapter that the responsibilities of land ownership did not go beyond whatever it was the worker earned by his own labours. Anything under the land belonged to the landlord. Thus, as the King was the theoretical overlord of all the lands in his state, he was entitled to receive a share of the natural resources. The amount allowed to the discoverer as asserted by the Danish traveller was, however, quite out of proportion to what is normally known to have been given on such occasions. Although the land was, in theory, owned by the King it was the individual family who possessed it. In Ashanti, for instance, it was observed that "the tenant or owner on whose land gold pits were worked received one third of the proceeds. The rest of the amount went to the stool."<sup>3</sup> Everybody who so desired could prospect for gold. Servants and slaves in the Chief's household were also employed in this work. Apart from mining directly for and on behalf of the Chief, messengers

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<sup>1</sup> Carte 743, dd. December 1629; O. Dapper, op.cit., p.457.

<sup>2</sup> Barbot, op.cit., 230.

<sup>3</sup> Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, p.122.



were sent by the rulers to the scene of operations. These men collected the "Abranto"<sup>1</sup> or the Chief's share of the gold thus obtained. Not all gold collected was sold. For Africans, as for Europeans, it was a precious metal. It formed the basis of their currency. Gold was used ornamentally by the rulers; it was also used for rings and trinkets by ordinary people.

If gold collecting was a universal occupation, this cannot be said of ivory and slaves. Hunting elephants was the specialised activity of very experienced hunters. On the Gold Coast elephants were not very easy to find in the thick forests. They were mainly found on the woodland fringes between the savannah and the high forest. Most of the ivory that came to the coast from Ashanti, for instance, was bought by Ashanti merchants from Gaman and other places to the north.<sup>2</sup> When in 1718 a Dutch agent travelled from Wydah to Accra, he was informed at Awuna "that they had regular intercourse with inland negroes ... that plenty of ivory and slaves are obtained along the river from the Quahoes".<sup>3</sup>

Whenever an elephant was killed, not only part of the meat but a share in the tusks went to the rulers. Thus in trade ivory became in-

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<sup>1</sup>In some regions such as Wassa, no special levies were instituted but there were days on which all gold dug went out of the stool. I am indebted to Nana Anomako, the Ohene of Asuoso in Wassa State for this piece of information.

<sup>2</sup>Bowdich, *op.cit.*, 332, asserts that the "Ashantis procure most of their ivory from Kong". It was considered a source of respect to be counted among elephant hunters. Indeed in the hunting profession to be known as "Esono bommofo" was the highest position to which one aspired.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.124/d.17 Feb.1718. Account of the Journey from Fidata Accra, by P. Eijtzen. The Quahoes (Kwahu) occupied and had access to the present day Afram plains where hunting is still the main occupation.



variably associated with the rulers, since they had a share in all the tusks collected in the state. Ivory however was not as readily available on the Gold Coast as it was in either the Ivory Coast or eastwards to the regions of Benin, Camer~~ons~~<sup>9</sup> and Angola. But there were times when large quantities of the commodity arrived on the Coast, and this seems to have been so at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. In March 1706 Sir Dalby Thomas enthusiastically wrote that he "had shipped 339 teeth of 27 lbs. each which quantity (you) never saw before from the Gold Coast".<sup>1</sup>

The following year another English official reported that "he would use his best endeavour to promote the teeth trade which he doubts not will improve yearly".<sup>2</sup> This optimistic mood was soon to cool a few years later. In 1706 Sir Dalby traced the source of the English failure to get more ivory to its right place. He had "been disappointed in the trade for teeth by the Brandenburgers sending up into Ashanti country to buy up all the teeth". When a little later, it was suggested that the Dutch should abandon five of their forts on the Gold Coast because of poor trade returns, the Council at Elmina compiled figures to show that these places had not been a liability to the Company, for it was argued that within a period of twelve years, they had bought among other

<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/16/6 March 1706.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/f.20/5 Feb. 1707.



commodities, 67,299 lb. of ivory.<sup>1</sup> When it is observed that these forts and lodges were the least paying of all the eleven Dutch possessions, one must conclude that a considerable quantity of ivory was being obtained at this time. The total quantity may never be known, for, except for one particular piece of evidence ivory from all parts of Guinea was designated as Gold Coast commodities. In 1693 the Postilian returned from its coastal cruise laden with 34,865 lb. of grain, 2,027 lb. of ivory, 448 lb. crevel\* and 2,852 lb. wax. The whole was sent over to Holland described as goods from the Gold Coast.<sup>2</sup>

It was observed that Kings and nobles alone were permitted to buy and sell slaves on the Gold Coast. There were many ways whereby slaves were procured. The greatest slave producing method, however, was war. Criminals could be sold into slavery; for instance, John Cables was said to have sent to the English agent at Cape Coast two people, who, it was claimed, were the cause of disturbances in Seccondi.<sup>3</sup> The desire to get rid of surplus mouths in times of famine does not seem to have been a common motive. It was reported of slaves brought to the Portuguese, "some... have been captured in battle, others were sent by their parents who think they are doing their children the best service

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<sup>1</sup> IHe W.I.C./124/8th April 1717. The twelve years covered were from 1705 to 1716.

<sup>2</sup> IHe W.I.C./124/28 Jan. 1693.

<sup>3</sup> T.70/5/f.20/5 Feb. 1707.

\* Crevel was a ~~name~~ <sup>term</sup> the Dutch gave to ivory of less than 14 lb. in weight. N.B.K.G.233 - 10 June 1701.



in the world by sending them to be sold in this way to other lands where is abundance of provisions".<sup>1</sup> Whatever the observations of the writers might have been, the later seventeenth and eighteenth century writers and the European traders on the Coast observed that people were sold as slaves for a variety of reasons, but they do not mention among them the desire to prevent relations from starving to death. The circumstances leading to slavery were explained by the King of Dahomey. He bitterly resented what he described as a false representation by Europeans: "Some people have maliciously represented us in books ... that we sell our wives and children for the sake of a few kegs of brandy". This he denied. The truth was this: "We do indeed sell to white men a part of our prisoners (of war)".<sup>2</sup> This was applicable to conditions on the Gold Coast. An English official on the Coast reported that "slaves shipped from Africa are almost all prisoners of war and brought by the inland traders".<sup>3</sup> Barbot discovered on the Gold Coast that the trade in slaves depended largely on the state of relations between states. At Lay, east of Accra, he reported that about 4-500 blacks could be shipped off at a time "in a fortnight or three weeks" but it "sometimes happens when the inland country is at peace

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Blake, op.cit., p.152; Lawrence, A.W., Trade Castles and Forts of West Africa, London 1963, p.33.

<sup>2</sup>A. Dalzel, The History of Dahomey (London 1793), p.219.

<sup>3</sup>A copy of John Hippisly's Pamphlet on the Gold Coast Trade, 1767; A hand copy made by the Dutch W.I.C. official on the Gold Coast. In W.I.C./116/f.1181.



that there are none at all". Company officials on the coast substantiate this statement. In 1687, it was reported from Cape Coast Castle that the "wars will make gold scarce but negroes plenty".<sup>1</sup>

When two years later the Adoms engaged the Ahanta people in war, the expectation of good trade in slaves was high among the English. It was reported that the "Adom war will make slaves plentiful".<sup>2</sup> But war, though productive of slaves, did not guarantee that people who invested in them would be handsomely rewarded.

The Europeans learnt this. In 1689, for instance, the English assisted the Fetu people with six field pieces and sixty whites (soldiers), but later reported that "the wars do not produce slaves to the water-side but they go another way".<sup>3</sup> In 1706 it was reported from Annamabo that "They are in daily expectation of the Arcanians coming to fight the Cabesterrapeople which if they beat there will be a glorious trade both of slaves and gold".<sup>4</sup>

The never-ending demand for slaves in the New World, the fact that more than four European Companies had permanent trading representatives on the Gold Coast, and the keenness of private traders to participate in the Gold Coast trade all militated against control by any party. This state of affairs called for a ready supply of goods on the part of

<sup>1</sup>T.70/10/51/29 December 1682. T.70/11/13/14 November 1684.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.484/f.144/30 May 1701. Report of Director-General and Council.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/11/35/27 May 1689; T.70/11/37/31 July 1689.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/5/31/July-August 1706.



of the Europeans and a willingness to be friendly towards the local merchants.

From the mid-1640's the Dutch began to complain that the English resorted to what they termed "cladding" in which they suddenly flooded the markets with large quantities of the goods being sold by their rivals and at cheaper prices. This practice had been earlier adopted in fact by the Dutch on the Coast against the Portuguese. In 1634 the Dutch wrote from Nassau, Moure, that they stood in need of a large quantity of goods in order to be able to give gifts to the Kings and also establish themselves on the Coast by means of cladding.<sup>1</sup> The Akani people who were described by all the seventeenth century writers as great traders, were not long in recognising the advantages which the Dutch method held for them. Soon the Dutch were to learn to their embarrassment that they could not persuade these traders against what they considered their own advantage. In December 1645 they pointed out that they had had only about 1,516 marks gold because the "Accanisten hold up their gold against the arrival of the English".<sup>2</sup> At the close of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the situation regarding "cladding" had intensified, due to the activities of the interlopers. To be able to hold their own within such a competitive trade the English advised their superiors in London that the only

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/ Feb. 1634.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/3/22 Dec. 1645; Idem/112/21 May 1946.



remedy was to have their warehouses well stocked with all goods.<sup>1</sup>

In later years the Dutch pointed out that they could not increase their trade in gold because they were not the only Europeans on the Coast. They asserted that "every European nation" took part in the Gold Coast trade.<sup>2</sup>

Trade on the Gold Coast was a combination of official and private effort. It was official in that the stools took active part in promoting trade in order to dispose of both their own goods and those of the State. But besides the professional traders, there were amateurs who came into the trade seasonally. For the trade to be conducted smoothly peace was a prerequisite. This duty fell on the rulers. Strange as it seems, the slave trade which dominated commerce during the second half of the seventeenth century thrived best on wars and discord. But in the heat of war actual trade was virtually dead. Slaves were the end product of wars. In 1645 the Dutch complained that the war in the neighbourhood of Axim had affected the trade. They attributed the meagre gold returns to the wars.<sup>3</sup> When it was reported that the inland people were at war with the sea-coast people in May 1680, one would expect that at least the slave trade would flourish. This however was not the case. The English asserted that there were no slaves

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/9/1 Jan. 1706.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 124/4/28 March 1692; W.I.C. 917/21 June 1700/N.B.K.G.  
W.I.C. 124/4/April 1704.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C. 11/3/Jan. 1645.



"notwithstanding the wars". In June the Council at Cape Coast echoed their complaint with the comment that "slaves are extraordinary scarce upon the Gold Coast".<sup>1</sup> Similarly at the end of the century the Dutch never ceased to blame their poor trade on the local wars. To counteract this the Dutch embarked on a bold plan. Special messengers were dispatched into the inland states "Dinkria, Twifu, Ashanti" with presents for the rulers. A few months after they proudly reported that they had been able to get the "three kings of Comenda, Fetu and Sabu, together with the elders of Cabesterra, T'juffer (Twifu) and Adom" to agree to put down their arms and bind them in the interest of the Company.<sup>2</sup>

It was no accident that the rulers were always sought after and presented with gifts to encourage trade. By virtue of their offices they were the greatest traders. The proceeds of war, the produce of the special stool lands, tolls and fines at courts, all were means whereby stools became wealthy. In purchasing power, therefore, they stood higher. Loyer's observation that trade was in the hands of a few elders in the state may be said to be broadly true. But with the rider that individuals could be promoted into the special group.<sup>3</sup> His observations, taken together with those of other seventeenth

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/10/45 26 April 1680; T.70/20/51/28 June, 1650.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 917/22 Sept. 1702.

<sup>3</sup>Rattray, op.cit., p.109.



and early eighteenth century writers who wrote that the traders who came to the Coast were mostly slaves in the service of their masters,<sup>1</sup> explain the manner in which the trade was organised. That the people undertook to trade for chiefs and nobles who stayed at home cannot be denied. But it was not necessarily the job of slaves to trade for their masters. In a place where all transportation depended on portage over long distances, it was to be expected that many carriers would be employed. This led to the importation of slaves from Benin by the Portuguese, who sold them to the merchants on the Gold Coast.<sup>3</sup> A late observation of the system of organisation in Ashanti, may explain the true nature and status of some of the traders; for it is unlikely that the system was any different in the seventeenth century. It was seen that along with the Gyase who were in permanent service at the Court, ordinary members of the state vied with each other to carry the goods of the King. This was because the carriers were protected by rules which did not cover the ordinary trader. It was permissible for anybody carrying the ruler's goods to carry his own load as well if he could. Such personal goods could be sold at the same time as the King's.<sup>4</sup> And, by custom, the market was opened first to the King's men. Thus a

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<sup>1</sup>Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, p.110.

<sup>2</sup>Barbot, op.cit., p.42; Bosman, op.cit., p.92; De Marees, op.cit., p.279.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, p.122

<sup>4</sup>R. R. Rattray, op.cit., p.109-112; K. A. Busia, Ashanti, p.79.



carrier disposed of his goods without paying tolls and at a time when many traders had not flooded the market with their goods.

The need to win the goodwill of the rulers was therefore a necessary asset for the Gold Coast trade. What had been introduced by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century was carried on by all the European nations. In 1703 the main reason why the English sent gifts to "three of the principal cabossers of Arcany" was stated as "to confirm (them) to the interest of the Royal African Company, and to encourage them to increase the trade between their country and this (Cape Coast) Castle".<sup>1</sup> From the nature of the things the Kings could easily influence the traders by directing them on where they should sell special goods. It was with this in view, no doubt, that the Dutch hastened to the King of Ashanti when the Kingdom of Denkyira crumbled before the Ashanti onslaught at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Nyendaal, the Dutch ambassador to Osei Tutu, was not only expected to clear the relationship between Denkyira and the Dutch but to win over the Ashanti traders.

The Kings at times undertook high level negotiations in order that their traders might have easy passage to the coast. In 1715 the King of Akim agreed to pay 200 bendas of gold to the Akwamu King so that Akim traders might be allowed to trade along the coast. A similar

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1463/24 Feb. 1703, Cape Coast Castle Memoir.



arrangement was planned with the Agonas but was upset by their exorbitant demand for 200 bendas as the price for negotiating.<sup>1</sup>

Although much trade seemed to have been confined to the chiefly class and a few others, the ideal was that every member of the society should take interest in trade. That the King distributed gold at frequent intervals to employ in trade was because state safety depended on how quickly the members of society could take to the field. Unlike Whydah, where trade in arms was the special preserve of the King, every citizen of the Gold Coast seems to have been free to buy anything he could afford. In 1692 the King of Ardra attacked and destroyed the Dutch lodge for supplying arms to his enemies, the people of Ijakin.<sup>2</sup> But in the Gold Coast Bosman noticed that despite the fact that the King of Ashanti was preparing to attack Denkyira, the latter allowed traders to pass freely with ammunition to Ashanti.<sup>3</sup> It was expected of divisional chiefs to be able to arm their men when the need arose. It was also expected of family heads to provide their members with means of defence. What was required of the rulers was to supplement the guns that were available and to provide

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.233/9 Oct. 1701. It must be observed that the Dutch adopted the same method in trade with the Whydah. Here the King and his immediate elders were given higher prices for their goods in order to win their support. In the instructions given to a captain going to Whydah it was expressly stipulated that the King and his elders' goods should cost a "fourth \*fifth or a sixth higher than the other traders". N.B.K.G.233/10 March 1700, W.I.C. 917/4/10 Oct. 1705.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.463/9 December 1962.

<sup>3</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.75. On the 15th August 1715 the French Director at Whydah was reported by the King on the grounds that he had sold guns to Jacquin. N.B.K.G./82/17/15 August 1715.



powder for the army. Little wonder than that in 1660 the King of Accra was anxious to demand better terms for his subjects. He pointed out to the Dutch that since he could not assure his subjects of a better price from the Dutch, he could hardly ask them not to trade with another nation.<sup>1</sup> Later at the beginning of the 18th century Sir Dalby Thomas was to echo the King of Accra's claim in relation to the Ashanti. He reported that, since the Ashantihene had forbidden his subjects to trade with the Dutch, it was to be expected that goods would be cheaper on the English side.

That guns were sold to anybody who could afford them may be seen from these observations. In 1668 an English ship arrived at the coast with, among other goods, 200 muskets which were sold on the coast for two slaves, five marks and one ounce of gold.<sup>2</sup> Some of the guns went to people as gifts. 157 muskets were given out in April 1680 to the "Ardra slaves and blacks of Cape Coast which are to remain in their hands upon any occasion to defend the castle". In November of the same "the captain of the Arcanies and his people were given 30 muskets".<sup>3</sup> If these guns may be accounted for as having been given out as gifts, this cannot be said in all cases regarding the disposal of the guns

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.8/81/6 June 1660.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/635/6/20 August 1668. It must be observed that it was customary for the Akans to fire a volley of guns at funeral-celebrations. On such occasions the head of the family of the bereaved provided only the powder, whilst members who owned guns were expected to bring them. It was customary also for fathers to provide guns for their sons when they came of age.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/635/f.6/20th August, 1668.



which arrived on the coast. In May 1680, 55 guns were accounted for as having been sold in Accra.<sup>1</sup> It is not known to whom they were sold. One may suppose they were put on an "open market". Sir Dalby Thomas in 1707 reported from Cape Coast that "the present demand throughout the coast is powder, gun, and lead". There were instances however when representatives or messengers bought guns for their rulers. In 1714, it was reported that the drummer of the King of Ashanti had arrived offering to buy guns.<sup>2</sup>

In order to supply this valuable article of trade, the English were prepared to import them from anywhere. They are even said to have imported guns from Holland in the eighties. This elicited protests from the gunmakers in England. But the English traders on the coast explained that the Africans "totally declined and rejected all English guns and would buy now but what came from Holland".<sup>3</sup> The Dutch seemed to have made very lucrative sales in guns towards the end of the seventeenth century. Out of 2,266 guns sent from Amsterdam between 1699 and 1700, 1268 were sold on the coast for gold. Along with them was sold 13,390 lbs. of gunpowder.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/365/60/30 April 1680.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/365/69/31 May 1680.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1464/7/8 Dec. 1714.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/169/f.28-29/17 Oct. 1684. W.I.C.484/7/1 Dec. 1699 - 30 Nov. 1700.



With the concentration of manufactured goods from Europe on the Coast, it became inevitable that the states along the coast would be in an advantageous position compared with those farther inland. Since almost all the commodities needed to buy the European goods came from the inland states, the traders from inland were forced to befriend the coastal people. The latter assumed the status of middlemen for those who came from inland. De Marees observed that already by the beginning of the seventeenth century this state of affairs was developing. The inland people entrusted their goods to the middlemen who took them to the ships and charged commission for their service.<sup>1</sup> This situation however did not continue for long. Barbot reports that some of the inland people keep their families (at Mouree)" who act .... as brokers of many of their countrymen"<sup>2</sup> That such men were indispensable in the trade on the coast must be seen from the efforts of the Europeans to entice leading inland traders to settle around their forts and castles. In 1647 the Dutch despairingly reported that though they had lent a house for the Accanists to settle in at Elmina, free of charge, they rather went to Cormantine. In the early eighteenth century the English reported that they had succeeded in getting caboceers from all the important places of trade to settle at Cape Coast.<sup>3</sup> This system was very helpful since the inland

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<sup>1</sup>De Marees in Purchas, op.cit., p.276.

<sup>2</sup>Barbot, op.cit., p.174

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C. 11 March 1647; T.70/5/47/28 Oct. 1708.



traders depended a good deal on the advice they received from these local representatives. It must also be noticed that in a place where there were no inns, these men who came down to the coast also looked to their friends or representatives to provide them with lodging. Tylleman asserts that by a special agreement "the Acanies are allowed to have their own merchants living there (around the forts) who understand the Acanian language".<sup>1</sup>

It was not only the ability to speak the local language which mattered. The association with the Europeans had created a type of trading language which needed to be understood by those who wanted to take an active part in the trade. Thus a class of middlemen was born out of this association. "Trading", it was remarked, "is only carried on by those who have some kind of learning, (who) can speak a little of the country Portuguese and know the weights."<sup>2</sup> This observation can only apply to the trade between Europeans and Africans. For in the interior trade was carried on in the local dialects and by time honoured means of exchange.

Buying and selling on the Gold Coast was a complicated procedure. It has often been asserted that trade was by barter. This seems to have been far from the truth. Admittedly there was no minted currency on the coast. There was, however, a standardised weight which was current

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<sup>1</sup>M. Nathan, "The Gold Coast at the end of the 17th century under the Danes and the Dutch". A translation of Tylleman, J.A.S., Vol. IV, 1904-5, p.31.

<sup>2</sup>Nathan, op.cit., p.29.



throughout the seventeenth century, except in the region east of Accra where cowry shells were used. This had been noticed as far back as 1555 when an English sailor visited the Gold Coast. John Lok remarked that the people "used weights and measures". At the beginning of the seventeenth century another European traveller noticed that gold weights were in use as far eastwards as Accra.<sup>1</sup> These weights were made of copper or tin. The highest was the benda which equalled two ounces troy weight. The lowest denomination, the "puwa", equalled about one farthing. Though the weights were divided "in a manner quite different from ours, but being reduced are brought to agree exactly with them".<sup>2</sup> This was noticed by the seventeenth century European writers on the Gold Coast. The use was not confined to the coastal markets. The exact nature of the inland weights, however, like everything in the interior, is uncertain. It was nonetheless known that the inland people used "weights of a yellow sort of wood".<sup>3</sup>

Originally these weights, it must be emphasised, were used by the Africans. They came, however, to be used eventually by the Europeans in their direct dealings with the African on the local markets. In 1708 the English general on the coast requested that "taccoe and damboy weights"

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<sup>1</sup>De Marees in Purchas, op.cit., p.285.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.86; Barbot, op.cit., p.234.

<sup>3</sup>Dapper, op.cit., p.482; Rattray, op.cit., p.304. Dapper asserts that "de boeren, binnen slants, hebben tot hun - behulp, gewichten van hout gemaekt; en daer-en-boven van rode on swarte bonen".



should be sent them.<sup>1</sup> Weights brought the goldsmith a special prestige in the ~~Akan~~<sup>Akan</sup> society. It was they who possessed complete sets of gold weights and therefore acted as buyers and sellers of gold dust.<sup>2</sup> The use of the weights requested by the English was not specified. It was however the practice of the Europeans to pay their Company servants in local gold to enable them to buy on the local markets. The "Dambar" and "Taku", it was later pointed out, were "used in weighing the gold for paying the natives their wages and their merchandise such as fish, eggs .."<sup>3</sup>

To purchase those commodities markets were held in all the villages. Early in the seventeenth century it was noticed that "Everie towns hath market daies, specially appointed .... and everie towne hath his market upon such a day as the other have it not ... they have two daies markets one after the other".<sup>4</sup> Apart from Cape Coast where an early European engraving depicts a market in which the Europeans sold some of their wares,<sup>5</sup> these markets served mainly as places of retail trade. It was in the local markets that some of the Europeans manufactured goods were sold.

<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/44/11 Oct. 1708.

<sup>2</sup>G. MacDonald, The Gold Coast Past and Present, London 1899, p.100.

<sup>3</sup>Nathan, op.cit., p.31.

<sup>4</sup>De Marees, op.cit., p.286; Astley, Vol. II, p.651.

<sup>5</sup>P. de Maree, op.cit., p.62.



Bulk sales and purchases were conducted on a different plane. The castles and forts as well as the cruising ships served for this purpose. Though trade was open to both men and women, there was a clear distinction as to what was expected of each. This is apparent in an Akan aphorism: "a woman sells vegetables but not gun-powder". It was therefore no accident that the European observers saw only women in the markets. Both Barbot and Bosman observed the women awaiting the fishermen who had gone to the sea, in order to collect their catch for the markets. These women, it was observed, "were very expert in buying and selling and extremely industrious".<sup>1</sup> They did not confine their trading activities to their own towns, but made use of the various markets in the different towns. But the more arduous and hazardous task of travelling long distances through unfriendly states, in some cases, fell within the province of the men. Admittedly, in 1708, it was reported that the Ashanti traders who arrived on the coast included a wife of the King.<sup>2</sup> This however seems to have been an exception rather than the rule.<sup>2</sup> In general, women contented themselves with the patient and painstaking job of trading in the local markets.

There was a marked difference between the castle trade and the trade in the local markets. While it has been observed that the latter involved the exchange of goods through accepted local means of currency

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<sup>1</sup> Artus in Astley, Collections, Vol. II, p.652.

<sup>2</sup> T.70/1464/20 April 1715.



this cannot be said of the bulk trade. In the markets of northern Ashanti it was observed that the trade was carried on by the Ashanti merchants who first converted all their goods into cowry shells, which served as the medium of exchange. "All goods it was observed had to be sold first for cowry shells before the slaves, shea butter and other produce from there were bought".<sup>1</sup> On the ships and in the forts things were sold for their worth in manufactured goods. There were however some isolated instances in which local traders were reported to have demanded payment for their goods in gold. In 1715 for instance when the Dutch were expecting to drive a lucrative trade with the "great number of Ashanti traders" who arrived at Kommenda they seemed to have been disappointed in that hope "since they (the Ashantis) asked for gold in place of goods".<sup>2</sup> A similar practice had been adopted by the Akwamu as early as 1705. Around 1712 Akwamu traders were selling their slaves for Brazilian gold.<sup>3</sup> The situation was growing so acute that the Company advised its representatives on the coast not to pay any gold to the Africans. If they would not accept goods, they could keep their slaves, the report ended.

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<sup>1</sup>R. S. Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, Oxford 1929, p.110.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G. 82/13 Oct. 1715. T.70/5/11 Oct. 1706, Sir Dalby reported that he had sometimes been forced to part with gold for slaves.

<sup>3</sup>I. Wilks, Akwamu, M.A. Thesis 1958, p.77.



Unlike the northern trade in which the cowry shells were spent in the payment of goods purchased on the same market, the gold asked for was not immediately used to purchase European merchandise. On the face of it one is tempted to describe the transactions as barter, but a closer look reveals complicated arithmetical calculations. All purchases, even though done by means of goods, were in effect, standardised. As gold above all else was the original commodity which was first traded for on the Gold Coast, it remained the basis for all the calculations in the trade. In the course of time however ivory, slaves and other commodities came to be used.

From the European side guns, cotton cloth, iron bars, brandy, tobacco and other manufactured goods were sold to the African traders. The Dutch drew up a list of prices of all their goods in their headquarters before they were sent to the outposts. When the ship Postpart set out on a cruise to the Grain and Ivory Coast and to the coast of Assine in 1645, it carried a price list at which the goods were to be sold. Among other examples, one ell of French linen was priced at one and half lb. of ivory; 128 ells cost one benda of gold. One piece of bed sheet cost two engels of gold.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Dutch sold 32 pieces of sheets, 16 printed sheets, 5 large and 10 small perpetuans, 9 carbines (large), 13 short carbines, 48 black

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/253/30 July - 5 March 1646.



looking glasses and 20 pieces iron for a benda of gold per item.<sup>1</sup>

These prices had frequently to be changed in the face of consumers' reactions. When the Dutch raised the price of linen in the early 40's the local merchants refused to sell their gold to them. In order to win back the merchants, the foremost traders of Elmina and Mouree received presents to the value of ten ounces of gold. This was made purposely, as it was expressed, "in order that the price list drawn by the Director and his council should stand".<sup>2</sup>

Whether prices stood or fell, however, did not so much depend on one single factor. Though the local traders were not reluctant in accepting promises and gifts from the European traders, they never willingly gave up their freedom to carry trade to where they could get better prices for their goods. And in the seventeenth century, when demand tended always to run ahead of supply, orthodox methods could not win traders to the side of the Europeans. This may be noticed on the coast from the number of different nations who were allowed to build in the towns. As far back as 1624 the Dutch reported that they had succeeded in signing an agreement with the king of Accra in which the latter had promised not to allow any other nation to build or to trade on this coast. By the end of the century the English, the Danes and the French, not to mention the Portuguese, were all active on that

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G./233"9 Oct. 1701. 1 benda equalled about £8 and the engal or ackey equalled about 5s. T.70/5/Table of Gold Weights - Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C. 7 Oct. 1706. 12 Takus = 1 ackey (5/-), 16 ackeys = 1 oz.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/3/21 Jan. 1645 - 9 Feb. 1646.



coast. The real attitude of these local people could well be summed up in the assertion of the Braffo of Fanti. In the heat of the Anglo-Dutch struggle for the control of the trade of his state, it was made clear that he would like to trade with both of them and that his coast would be free to all. Similarly, in 1647, the Dutch reported that the Fetu people used their "knife on both the English and the Dutch". This was because they too were willing to trade with both European Companies.<sup>1</sup> It is significant that despite the treaties and the payment of money to the rulers, no nation was able to gain any great control over any one particular district. The most interesting feature of the Gold Coast trade in the seventeenth century is the nearness of the European possessions to each other. The Dutch fort at Axim was counterbalanced by the English at Dixcove and the Brandenburgers at Pokoso. Commenda at the end of the century had both English and Dutch forts. A few miles eastwards of Elmina Castle was erected the English headquarters at Cape Coast, which was itself dangerously threatened by the not-so-impressive Danish fort of Fredriksborg. In Fanti the Dutch and the English forts were interspersed. The Dutch expressly sought to build a lodge at Breku in order to counteract the English influence at Winneba. In Accra the Danes, the Dutch and the English all had their forts.<sup>2</sup> In a situation like this, the most probable outcome was discord and dissension. To the local traders it was an ideal situation in which they could sell

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/209/3 July 1647. O.W.I.C. 11/140/18 March 1647.

<sup>2</sup>For more about the various forts on the Gold Coast see Lawrence, A.W., Trade Castles and Forts of West Africa, London 1963.



their goods at higher prices. Had the European nations been able to agree among themselves, they might have been able to control matters but their desire for the same commodities meant that they would hardly agree to put aside their competition.

In trying to hold their own in the Gold Coast trade, the Europeans got themselves involved in the politics of the country. Profitable trade depended on many factors. The degree of trust reposed in the coastal representatives by the local traders, the extent to which the representatives were prepared to go in order to win the support and the confidence of the traders, the influence of the middlemen in the service of the various companies, and the political stability of the different states, all contributed to the success or failure of trade. In the years between 1641 and 1646, when Ruyschaver was the Dutch director general, the Dutch enjoyed a period of profitable trade. The personality of the general and the political situation both contributed to the great success. Between 1640 and 1641 gold to the value of about 1,300,000 florins was sent from the Gold Coast to Holland.<sup>1</sup>

In the three years of 1645 to 1647 the total export of gold to Holland amounted to about 8,664 marks. An annual average of 2,881 marks. Besides gold, other West African commodities such as Ivory and Slaves were exported in quantity. It was estimated in 1645 that the Company

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<sup>1</sup>K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.XLV.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C.11/36/19 Jan. 1645 amount of 1702 mks. 7 ozs. 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> engels.  
 O.W.I.C.32/24 May 1645 amount of 1251 " 2 " 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> " E  
 O.W.I.C.11/31/22 Dec. 1645 amount of 1742 " 3 " 6 "  
 O.W.I.C./11/14/22 April 1646, 14 Aug. 1646; O.W.I.C./11/145/8 March 1647.  
 O.W.I.C. 27 Aug. 1647.



needed manufactured goods to the value of 72,000 fl. annually. Although the requisition was made in the name of the Gold Coast, it may be assumed that the goods were needed for both the gold and the slave trade. This may be seen from the requisition made by the Director-General two years later. In January and in October 1647 goods worth 169,894 fl. and 189,475 fl. respectively were requested.<sup>1</sup> Thus taking the conservative estimate of one mark of gold as worth 271 florins, as it was in 1637, the average export of gold amounted to 780,751 fl. which by itself exceeded the cost of all the goods exported from Holland.

It must be pointed out, however, that the Dutch were not allowed to enjoy the profitable trade in gold alone. Soon competition from other powers cut down their total gold export. Dutch gains in the trade subsequently owe much to the methods adopted by their general. The confidence reposed in him by the local middlemen may be noticed from the fact that the foremost Accany traders gathered together to honour him when he was leaving the coast in 1646. This was because he was not reluctant in spending money to win the support of the important local traders. Between 1641 and 1646 a total amount of about 187 marks of gold was spent in presents and gifts to the rulers and the chief traders on the coast.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/221/15 Jan. 1647; Idem/224/120.ct. 1647.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/3/2 Jan. 1646. According to Ratelband 1 ~~16~~ lb of gold equalled 2 mark. In 1646 1 lb equalled 650 fl. in Holland. Thus one mark equalled 325 fl. The average annual gold arriving in Holland amounted to 938,933 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> fl.



Unlike Ruyschaver, his immediate successor Van der Wel found it difficult to be so generous with the Company's goods. As a result we find directors of the Company complaining to the general on the coast of the paucity of gold returns from the Gold Coast. In 1647 a complaint to this effect by the Heeren XIX reached the coast. The answer given was that the company lacked the goods currently demanded by the African traders. This may indeed have been one reason. There were, however, some other important and equally weighty reasons for the fall in the supply. When in 1648 the leader of the Akan traders arrived at Elmina to settle disputes that had arisen between them and the Dutch, the general was more concerned about the immediate expenses than the ultimate profit that would accrue to the Company. This policy was, to all intents and purposes, contrary to the methods adopted by Ruyschaver. The former was not long in realising that in a competitive trade it was essential to trust the local merchants.

For the system of "cladding" which had been instituted by the Dutch to operate efficiently, it was found convenient to establish a network of commercial espionage. As soon as an English ship arrived at Kormantin, African traders in the service of the Dutch quickly came by land to inform the traders in Elmina castle of the nature and sometimes the exact prices of the goods. This enabled the Dutch to lower or increase the prices of their goods as the case might be. In June 1646 one Asante, a trusted servant in the service of the Dutch arrived



from Kormantin" by land with the news that the English had no linen.<sup>1</sup> The practice became an established feature of the Gold Coast trade.

The local merchants and servants were not only to remain in or around the European settlements to act as middlemen and interpreters, they were soon to be dispatched on missions to the interior. The interlopers and the English Ten Per Cent men depended mostly on the goodwill of the African merchants. To be able to hold one's own, it was necessary to have, above all else, an abundant supply of goods in store, and to have trusted men in the company's service. As Sir Dalby Thomas succinctly put it at the beginning of the 18th century, the only trade secret that could be offered was to have an abundant supply of all types of goods. He also observed that a good man would be able to turn a bad place to good use in the same way as a bad man would drive trade away from a good place.<sup>2</sup> This advice is best exemplified in the activities of some of the generals on the coast. At the end of the directorate of Staphorst a long indictment of his administration was drawn up by his successor. It was pointed out that not only the local wars, but the ill-treatment of the Africans, had contributed to the fallen trade returns. He was accused among other things of having scared away a man like John Kabes from the Dutch. His

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/3 June 1646; Ratelband, K., op.cit., p.XL.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/9/16 Oct. 1706; T.70/5/34.



immediate successor, Sevenhuysen, was also accused of high-handedness towards the African servants. It was alleged that, with the assistance of his trusted servant, one Akim, various sums of money had been extorted from as many as twenty different people. Thus it was claimed, the inland traders had diverted their trade to other places. Not even Sir Dalby, who realised the need for "civile treatment" of the Africans, escaped the accusation of interfering in local matters in a way that was prejudicial to the interest of the English trader. It was reported from Cape Coast that by forcing his own candidate on the Fetu chieftaincy he had brought about a local war which had been costly to the English.<sup>1</sup>

As the trade throve much on the goodwill of the local personnel and their ability to draw the inland traders to the coast, it was they, in effect, who controlled the trade on the Gold Coast. It was necessary to secure their friendship. To alienate them meant that the company would be at a disadvantage, for there were other traders equally interested in the commodities they were able to bring to the forts. It was the realisation of the important role played by these men which assisted the rise of the merchant princes like Assemani of Akwamu, John Kabes of Kommenda and John Konny/of Ahanta, who played important parts in the commercial development of the Gold Coast in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Of the activities of these men more will be said in the next chapter. But what can be said at once is that John

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./484/30 May 1701, Report on the administration of Staphorst.  
 W.I.C./917/26 June 1702 " " " " " Sevenhuysen.  
 T.70/5/37/3 Aug. 1706.



Kabes never hesitated to sell his services to either the Dutch or the English whenever a favourable opportunity presented itself. When the English general succeeded in patching-up his differences with Kabes, it was reported to the directors in London that "(they) need not be concerned in the wars of Africa now that John Kabes is in (their) interest the rest becoming inconsiderable".<sup>1</sup> The ill-treatment given to the same man by the Dutch general in 1696 cost the company dearly. Nine years later the new general Pieter Nuyts promised that he would use his utmost endeavour to bring about an understanding between him and the Dutch.<sup>2</sup> The importance of Kabes in the Gold Coast trade can be assessed from his connections with rulers and traders in the inland states. When war broke out between the Aguaffo and Abrambo an attempt was made by the English to restore peace. This, however, could not be achieved until John Kabes used his influence. In 1711 the agent at Kommenda reported that "the palaver between the Abrambos and the Aguaffo and Cuffors are left to be decided by the English officials". "This" it was added "will be much to our reputation." It was pointed out that "John Kabes has been much serviceable in bringing this about and is very ready to do any service."<sup>3</sup> In Ahanta the Dutch had to struggle for more than

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/23/10 May 1706. Report by Hicks, Kommenda.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C./917/13 Nov. 1705. Report of Direct. Gen. and Council, Elmina.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/80/24 July 1711. From Kommenda to Cape Coast Castle.



ten years for the control of the Brandenburg fort at Pokoso. John Konny, a former broker in the service of the Brandenburg company, stoutly and successfully opposed all the Dutch attempts. Since he could not be dislodged from the fortress by force, the Dutch were in 1722 forced to enter into a treaty with him, whereby Konny maintained the power to refuse the appointment of a commissioner to Great Fredricksborg.<sup>1</sup> During the period of struggle the trade at this fortress was opened to all who paid duties to Konny.

The help of influential merchants was essential but more than this was needed for successful trading. It was also essential to have the requisite goods. Frequent changes in local taste had to be met. Variations of length, colour and texture were demanded of the manufacturers. It was also required of the European representatives to take some calculated risks in disposing of the goods in their warehouses. The old procedure, which required that trade could only be done in the castles, forts and cruising ships, had to be modified to suit the changes that came with the concentration of many Europeans on the coast. Perhaps the most difficult of all these was to be able to keep track of local demand. In 1645 it was reported that the most saleable goods on the coast were linen, knives, sayes, beads and iron bars.<sup>2</sup> The copper rings which arrived at that time were found to be

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./122/80/22 Nov. 1722. An Agreement between the Director-General and John Konny.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/Jan. 1645.



handy because the Accany traders were beginning to ask for them.<sup>1</sup>

Unless the trader was constantly alive to local demands goods arriving from Europe might already be out of fashion by the time they landed on the coast. While in the 1680's the great demand evinced by the Africans had led to the importation of Dutch guns by the English, the demand at the beginning of the eighteenth century was for English guns. When the Ashantis arrived at Komenda in 1715, they asked for nothing but English guns. They bought powder from the Dutch, and left Komenda for Cape Coast to buy English guns. It was a matter of regret to the Dutch that, at this time, John Kabes of Kommenda assured the traders at Sakondi that he could supply them with all the English guns they needed.<sup>2</sup> Aware of the transitory nature of the demands, the English agent carefully advised the directors how best to hold their own in the trade. It was reported that "the present great demand throughout the coast is for powder, guns, and lead (but) it may happen when you send a quantity of these goods they may be out of demand. The goods that were constant ~~were~~ constant were "blue perpetts, sheets, tallow, iron bars and knives".

A month later a report was sent to London asking for more trade goods. The list of goods gives an idea of the nature of the trade.

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./11/Jan. 1647 and March 1647.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82/13 Jan. 1715, Report of H. Harring.  
N.B.K.G.82/Report Rm. Kommenda. 25 June 1715.



"It is true we are well supplied with perpetts and sheets, which are the two staple commodities, but we humbly conceive that it would be most for your interest always to supply us with some of every sort of more current commodities as gune, gunpowder, tallow, knives, sayes, blankets, carpets, pewter basons, lead barrs, iron bars, India and Guinea stuffs, niconees, brawles, and tapseels, which will quickly contribute to the dispatch of your ships."

The Dutch had pointed out to the directors that on the coast the longest time in which one commodity remained current did not exceed six months.<sup>1</sup> Later on an English official on the coast was reporting that with the proper goods they could win all the trade from the hands of the Ten Per Cent men. The reason adduced for this was that the Ten Per Cent men could not keep up with the rate of change on the local markets, "One sort of goods being in demand this month, another sort the next".<sup>2</sup>

When proper goods arrived on the coast, it was essential for the Europeans to distribute them carefully to the forts. For even within the Gold Coast itself people from different states had their own favourite colours, designs and measurements. In 1708 in a note headed "Remarks on the scheme of trade" it was shown that the "red perpetts the Ashantis inquire after, the yellowish green are bought by Ashanti and Akims, the deep green by the Quamboes, the blue are bought by everybody". A month later it was observed that the Awowin

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/22/30 Sept. 1707. Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.D., Hwm. Oct. 1707, Messrs. Hayes.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.917/31 Aug. 1704. T/70.5./31 July-Aug. 1707.



traders would buy only the red and green perpetts.<sup>1</sup> The traders from Ashanti were soon to add more goods to their list of preferences. In September 1709 it was again reported that the Ashantis "now much enquire after corall, rangoes, cowries, red and yellow Welsh plains, .... things they did not use to ask for." The reason for the change in the demand was learned to be that the Ashanti market was expanding. "They have made up a peace with a country beyond them and used to buy much of them." In 1718 the English asked that no silver should be sent "for no negroes buy but the Ashantees" who had not been coming up to the coast because of their war with Akim.<sup>2</sup>

Neglect of changes in taste cost the traders not only money but prestige. It was difficult, if not impossible, to persuade the traders to change their minds. In 1707 the English observed that the Africans would not have fuzees "that have not the brass gon the left side". While in 1713, the goods current in Accra were said to be cowries, sheets etc.<sup>3</sup> When the Dutch directors informed their coastal representatives

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/22/Feb. 1708. Idem/March 1708. W.I.C.917/16/Sevenhuysen's Report/15 Jan. 1701. Have about 90,000 pieces. Sayes could only be disposed of by underselling. Interlopers sell 12-13 for an engel. We must sell ours at 16 for an engel. Kabij's and smeer - sell as soon as they are landed. From it we disposed of £7,200 worth for £20,700. W.I.C./917, July 1700 - Sevenhuysen reports 12 ells but must be 15 ells. In 1701 de la Palma had this to say of the trade "Het is hemelyk, dat er order alle buitenlands negotie geen soo enseker is, als die van de Goud Kust.." W.I.C.91& 31st Aug. 1704 - Wm. de la Palma.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/22/Report of W.Johnson to R.A.C. 20th March 1718.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/93/Hicks & Blau. 2 Nov. 1713.



that they should use their utmost endeavours to dispose of all the goods sent to the coast, they were told that traders would not accept damaged goods even as gifts. Whatever might have been the chances of imposing their goods on the traders in the early years, long and close association with each other taught both sides in time to be wary in accepting goods. De Marees had observed in 1602 that formerly "broken and patched basons, rusty knives and under sized linnens" could pass among the local traders but now by use and experience, are almost able to surpass us therein".<sup>1</sup> Goods brought to the coast were therefore remeasured by the local traders before they bought them. A picture in an early seventeenth century book showing the arrangement of the market at Cape Coast depicts a Dutch trader measuring cloth on the local market. The same book asserts that the local people had their own measurements for linen, which they were very expert in using.<sup>2</sup> In 1647 the Dutch complained to the directors that the blankets sent to the coast fell short of the local measure. In 1700 it was also mentioned that the perpetts measuring 12 yards were out of demand, the 15 yard ones being asked for.<sup>3</sup> In 1678 the agents reported that in opening bales of Perpetts "for the satisfaction of the Acanies", they found they would suddenly want more. They complained that the Acanies would not take unbaled goods.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>de Marees in Purchas, op.cit., p.282.

<sup>2</sup>de Marees Beschrijvinge, pp. 61-62.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C. 11/Jan.1647; K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.295; W.I.C.917/17 July 1700.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/20/2. From Nat Bradly and Council to R.A.C. 16 August 1678.



Both the African and the European traders tried every possible means to sell their goods at all costs. It was noted for example that the Africans were experts in falsifying gold. Gold was mixed with other metals such as tin and copper. Writing about Ahanta, Bosman pointed out that Dixcove merited the name "the false mint of Guinea". Here it was the practice of the local traders to sell false gold to the Europeans. Two small English ships were reported to have been sold false gold to the value of about £1,700 at the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch found it necessary to prohibit all their employees from selling materials used in adulterating gold on the coast. Nevertheless, the practice continued. In 1715, the Dutch factor at Sekondi warned his nationals to be on the look out for adulterated gold from the Ashantis.<sup>2</sup> Nor, on their part, were the local merchants able to avoid receiving inferior quality goods. The English observed that the Dutch guns "are good for nothing for service" but they could be sold all the same for "they make them so showish that they tempt the blacks to buy them though they will burst in their hands. Three years later English guns were reported to be "busting like the Dutch guns, and some have broke (sic) as the blacks have being firing ..... they are second hand guns vampt up."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., p.13 and also p.73.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G./82/25 June 1715.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/22/6 March 1706. T.70/22 Report of Sir Dalby Thomas, 28 April 1709.



Trade in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth called for bolder efforts on the part of the Europeans as well as the Africans. While it had been customary for the Europeans to wait for traders from the interior to come to the forts with their goods, it now became the practice to send people farther inland to conduct the traders to the forts. Some did even more; goods were dispatched inland carried by trusted servants of the companies. In 1708 Sir Dalby Thomas discovered that the Dutch successes in trade were due to their readiness to change their methods. They not only "outdo" the English "in having a stock of goods which will gain them the trade" but they "have a bolder way of trading ... their chiefs send their boys up with goods".<sup>1</sup>

It was this same method which the Brandenburgers adopted in the ivory trade. When the English were waiting at the coast in the hope that trade would come to them, servants employed by the Brandenburgers had scoured the country in search of the commodity. The English discovered too late that the Ashantis had already sold the ivory to servants of the other Company who were sent "up into Ashanti country to buy up all the teeth".<sup>2</sup> But perhaps the boldest of all the traders in entrusting goods to the local people were the Interlopers and the Ten Per Cent men. This policy on the part of the last two groups is

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/34/30 Sept. 1708.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/53/22 Feb. 1709.



understandable when it is remembered that they had no warehouses in which to keep their goods and commodities. Their trade had therefore to be conducted as quickly as possible. Both the Dutch and the English found that their greatest rivals in the trade were these men. The Dutch made it a matter of policy to capture all ships of unauthorised traders on the coast. As far back as 1634, the company's representative on the coast had written home for instructions regarding the treatment of interlopers. At the close of the century they contracted an agreement with the English on the coast, whereby Dutch interlopers who sought protection under the English would be returned. In 1715 it was stipulated that ten per cent of the cargoes in all captured interlopers' ships should go to the captain of the ship which had intercepted the interloper.<sup>1</sup> Interlopers, in fact, brought better goods to the coast and the English private traders, who became known as the Ten Per Cent men, were reported to be underselling the Company most of the time. In 1714 it was reported from Accra that the "interlopers give such great prices that the natives stick at no mischief to procure slaves".<sup>2</sup> Earlier on, it had been observed that the Ten Per Cent men "trust goods to the value of four to five thousand pounds sterling (to the) Blacks in goods to buy slaves with."<sup>3</sup> Anamobo, in Fanti, was noted as the

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./463/8 Jan. 1715. From the Ten to Elmina Castle.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/99/12 April 1714.

<sup>3</sup>Idem/66/12 Feb. 1709.



haven of the free traders. The insistence of the Braffo and his people on keeping their coast open to all gave the Fantis a great share in the middlemen trade. When the English general attempted to by-pass them by dealing direct with the Ashanti traders, they expressed their disapproval of his methods. Of the actions taken to maintain their status as middlemen, more will be said subsequently but, in brief, the Fantis "settled a correspondence in the Guiffero country, and by giving more for slaves than we (English) do, intercept the Ashanti trade".<sup>1</sup>

The policy of crediting goods to the local merchants involved great risk. At best, payment took a long time. And not infrequently the amount due found its way into the column headed "bad debts". It must be emphasised that this was not a new development. In places where companies had no forts they used to carry on the trade in the houses of trusted local friends. In 1645 the Dutch had as their friend in Kormantine one Koffi Bruni in whose house all transactions were carried out.<sup>2</sup> The English also reported in 1683 that "they had settled at Komenda but the house is not yet built". They confessed that "even if they had constructed a house, they lacked the necessary personnel to be able to take charge of it. Meantime they had devised a compromise solution. They entrusted goods to the "captain of the town

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/66/12 Feb.1709.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/9/15 Dec. 1645.



(whom we know to be very honest and responsible person) with a very considerable particle of your honour's goods for which he punctually sends us returns as soon as he hath received them". His house became not only the storehouse of English goods; it also became the residence of the English representative. The report concludes that there was a "whiteman with him".<sup>1</sup> Although both the Dutch and the English ruled that the system of giving goods on credit should be stopped, the practice seemed to have caught on. The indictment of Staphorst's administration accused him of having credited goods to the tune of 1,232 marks.<sup>2</sup> When Sir Dalby Thomas made one Agua Braffo the Queen of Fetu he determined to make her rich by trade. The queen was advised to trade "like an English woman" Pay her debt and then go on again "she must consider that taking yams and corn for goods ought never to pay for beforehand. She must sell for Arkania gold and slaves .... She will make herself rich..... Tho' I must pay for all I trust her if any accident should happen to prevent being paid .... The Company having ordered me to trust nobody and I will trust none but her."<sup>3</sup>

Both Companies recorded cases, not surprisingly, of non-payment

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/16/53/27 Jan. 1683.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C./484/30 May 1704.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1463/July 1704.



for goods credited. In 1699 as much as £4,000 was owed by twenty-one Gold Coast notables to the English. The King of Accany's debt amounted to £1,000 while that of the King of Eguafu was quoted as £2,000.<sup>1</sup> In 1713 as much as £43,140 was <sup>owed</sup> in debt to the Company. Of this, £3,420 was classified as "Account of supposed bad debts due by sundry natives".<sup>2</sup> In 1697 the Dutch recorded that they had 1,774 florins outstanding in debt. By 1704 the amount stood at 1,355 florins. But perhaps the most fascinating feature about the debts is the commentaries which went with them. Of the 104 florins owed by Assemeni and his servant Akrofi it was noted that "nothing is to be hoped from both of them". Pieter Passop, however, who owed 720 fl. had a favourable comment. "Payment is hoped for but at present nothing has been received".<sup>3</sup> Some of the money could no doubt have been recovered had the Europeans so desired, but there were times when its recovery was judged unwise, and prejudicial to trade. There were instances, too, when the Africans gave security for payment in the form of relations and friends. 13 marks of gold advanced to the chief of Twifu were secured by two bead chains, one gold chain, a woman and two young boys.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> T.70/661 in Davies, K.G, op.cit., p.285.

<sup>2</sup> T.70/380/24 May 1713.

<sup>3</sup> W.I.C.484/278/1704.

<sup>4</sup> W.I.C.122/72/Agreement with Accafo and his chief elders. 30th July 1713.



When de la Palma, the Dutch general, was reported to have shipped a gold chain belonging to the King of Akwamu, which had been deposited with the Company against goods loaned to him, it caused great consternation among the servants on the coast. It was thought the action might arouse the anger of the king, thereby endangering their interests. In 1681, the English accused the agent Greenhill of hindering trade by attempting to seize the King of Accra's pledges.<sup>1</sup> In 1684 the Dutch made it clear that the expense of feeding the people who were given as security was not worth the trouble. A directive went out that gold and beads should be taken instead of men.<sup>2</sup>

The coastal people who contracted debts with the Companies could be forced to pay what they owed. "For want of trade at Annamabo and Agya", Sir Dalby Thomas wrote, he had "refused the Braffo of Fanteens ground rent".<sup>3</sup> Again, from the 1680's, the Dutch found that they had made too expensive a promise to the Fantis. When in the 1660's the exigencies of war forced Admiral de Ruyter to engage the latter in the attack on Kormantine for one mark of gold to be paid on every Dutch ship which docked at their shores, the Fantis had seen their opportunity very clearly. In 1702 the Director General tried to settle the affair by arranging for a lump payment but the Braffo excused himself by saying "he was forbidden by custom to see the sea". The director accordingly

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.917/Lae/26 Oct. 1705; T.70/1/106/7 Dec. 1681.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C./124/3 July 1684.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/49/11 Oct. 1708.



sought to solve the problem in his own way. It was discovered that the Braffo owed 80 marks to the Company. This was the amount paid him by Staphorst for the help of the Fantis in the Dutch war against Kommenda. The services were never rendered. The amount was therefore deducted from the tolls on Dutch ships.<sup>1</sup>

The disadvantages inherent in such a policy are obvious since it gave the debtors reason to ally themselves with the other rival traders on the coast. In January 1696 the English reported that "Cabosser Abban, a great trader (had) gone from Elmina to dwell at Cape Coast". The report ran that "he had not yet paid the money lent him but (he was) courted by the Dutch to return to Elmina". Four months afterwards the English wrote that he had been "entered into the Company's pay".<sup>2</sup> The English were to have a similar experience soon afterwards. In 1709 the Agent general at Cape Coast complained that "the King of Aguaffo who received great favours from the Company stops the trade".<sup>3</sup> John Snow, who carefully diagnosed the European methods of trade on the Gold Coast, prescribed, among other things, that "the settling of old debts (were not) less injurious to your (the English) interests ..... to get them pay (old) debt by deductions

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.917/25 Sept. 1702.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/11/118-119/5 Jan. & 11 May 1696.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/63/11 Dec. 1709.



occasions only ill natured disputes". He observed that the Dutch had long learnt this important lesson. "The Dutch was under this very dilemma once, but they struck the talleys clear and made Little Tagee, late King of Aquaffoe, their friend by it, who was made King at your charge but never durst trust himself with us lest he should be detained for the debt!"<sup>1</sup>

From all this it is apparent that trade on the Gold Coast called for great patience. Both the local traders and the Europeans grew to rely on one another. The rulers had to encourage it. The local economy became geared to it. The Europeans could not afford to lose trade to their rivals. The New World stood in need of West African slaves, the Western European nations who participated in the trade could ill-afford to lose the lucrative returns made on the Gold Coast. Gold and slaves could be taken conveniently from the same place.

The beginning of the eighteenth century witnessed intensive efforts on the part of both the English and the Dutch to exploit the other potentialities of the Gold Coast. The Dutch in the latter part of the 1690's started the plantation of cotton, indigo, coffee and sugar. The plantation of sugar and cotton was mooted in 1691 but <sup>not until</sup> it was only six years later that the idea was seriously taken up.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/102/47-50/31 July 1705. Davies, op.cit. Appendix V, p.367.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.63/30 April 1697.



In 1702 the general reported that, on account of the bad trade, it was better to concentrate on the plantations. The idea was to use their plantations to show the Africans that cotton and sugar cultivation could be profitably taken up. To help facilitate the picking of cotton one Black Pieter arrived from Curacao with a cotton mill in 1703.<sup>1</sup> These new ventures were not confined to the Dutch alone. In 1706 Sir Dalby Thomas advised that he "would bring indigo to as great perfection as in the West Indies". He informed the directors in London that "everything that thrives in the West Indies will thrive here". He requested that "all sorts of seeds should be sent from the West Indies". Four months later he proudly announced that he had "two acres of indigo growing .... and the next year may have twenty".<sup>2</sup> The English general reported in 1709 that the "Dutch cotton and sugar plantation had come to nothing". The reason for the failure was suggested. "Indigo", he stated, "is a common weed in the country and is used by the natives."<sup>3</sup>

This does not square with the records. If the first attempts failed, the idea nevertheless was soon revived. In 1710 two bags of cotton seeds arrived from Holland to be planted. Three years later

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.58/19/W. de la Palma to the Ten, June 1702.  
W.I.C.917/10 Oct. 1703. Report of W. de la Palma to the Ten.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/29 Aug. 1706. N.B.K.G.70/Report of Wm. de la Palma, 16 May 1705.  
"Wij hebben Heir 't, aller schoonste cottoen, dat ooijt in Oesten of in Westen Valt, en die rivier van Chama extreme en schoone bleekeringen zoude connen geven....."

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/64/29 Oct. 1709.



it was reported from Amsterdam that the Cotton sent from the coast had been readily sold. To increase the cultivation of indigo the Dutch appointed a special commissioner in 1712, who was to utilise his knowledge of indigo cultivation gained at Curacao in the service of the Company on the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup> But he was not long in discovering the flaw in the policy of the Company. The farm labourer or the slave who had to be kept and fed at the Company's expense on the Gold Coast was a better and more profitable commodity, if sold to the hungry markets of the New World. But once sold, the plantations were left short-handed. Trade, therefore, flourished but the subsidiary enterprises failed. This was because plantations on the Gold Coast were against the interests of the West Indian Colonies.

Sir Dalby Thomas' reply to the Company in London shows that the plantation system was opposed by official policies. He declared "the clause to prevent the growing of sugar in Africa" as an amusement and assured his superiors that "there has never been a sugar cane in the Company's grounds". As for the Dutch enterprise in sugar cultivation, he suspiciously saw the whole thing as "making rum in order to beat us out that trade". Other English representatives on the coast did not approve much of Sir Dalby Thomas' extra-commercial activities. They claimed in 1707, for instance, that by putting the slaves to work "on planting" the agent general had neglected the forts and castles and

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 463, 30 June 1712. From the Heeren X to Elmina. T.70/6/31/7 June 1716. Reported that the man sent from Curacao to make indigo has "failed in it".



had put the Company to a "great deal of charge to little purpose". It is therefore reasonable to expect that after Sir Dalby's death this aspect was allowed to fade in importance.

It is difficult to say with any degree of certainty how great a contribution the Gold Coast made to the overall economy of either the Dutch or the English companies. Judged by the number of forts erected on that coast in the seventeenth century, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the prize was great. In most cases the companies did not separate their commodities regionally. And the number of slaves sent from the Gold Coast, alone, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century may never be known. It is however estimated that in the eight months, April to December 1678, 1,146 slaves were shipped from Cape Coast by the English. From September 1701 to April 1704, 2,320 slaves were carried away by the English. In 1706 the English agent at Annamabo reported that "the trade for slaves increased wonderfully" and he believed he could ship 5,000 slaves per annum.<sup>2</sup> At the same time it was reported from Cape Coast that in two and a half years 10,198 slaves had been purchased.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch were also buying their share of the slaves. In a report of the Director General dated October

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<sup>1</sup>Davies, K.G., op.cit., p.226.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/31/12 July & 1 Aug. 1706.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/19/Feb.1706.



1704 to June 1705, it was asserted that the Company could be supplied with 6,000 slaves yearly, provided that trade goods were available.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it was due to such reports that the Directors asked to know the number of slaves with whom they should supply the Portuguese in exchange for Brazilian tobacco. They wanted to know if all the slaves could be supplied from the Gold Coast or from the Slave Coast.<sup>2</sup> The records also make it difficult to assess the total amount of gold taken from the Coast. Bosman put the annual takings of all the traders on the coast at 7,000 marks at the end of the seventeenth century. The part taken by the Dutch was estimated to be 1,500 marks in a good year. But it must be noted that the end of the century was never devoid of wars. It was the time of the Ashanti defeat of Denkyira and a period of political regrouping on the Gold Coast. Even so, there were times when the gold approached Bosman's estimate. Too many gaps exist in the records to make possible any better estimate. In the twelve months from February 1690 to January 1691 the gold intake amounted to 2,200 Marks. In the seven years of 1699 to 1706 the gold intake, calculated from the irregular records, amounted to 6,274 Marks, an average of 886 marks per annum.<sup>3</sup> In order to be able to gain much of the Gold Coast trade, the Europeans became heavily involved in local politics.

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./917/300/4 Oct. 1704 - 9 June 1705.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C./463/19 Aug. 1717. From Amsterdam to Elmina.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C. 124/Jan.1690 - Jan. 1691.



#### Chapter IV

##### THE PERIOD OF INVOLVEMENT.

Commerce was the main, even the sole, interest that bound Europe to Africa. Europeans came to Africa to trade, not to settle. From the early beginning till the latter part of the nineteenth century the Europeans preferred not to involve themselves in matters of culture and politics. The basis of the Afro-European relationship was one of partnership in which the Europeans paid rents for the lands on which their forts and castles were erected.<sup>1</sup> These, to mention but a few, are the popular conceptions of the attitude of European on West Africa until the 19th century. There was nothing like the Arab penetration of Africa via the north along the trans-Saharan route and the cultural and political changes that followed it.<sup>2</sup> Nor could it be said that there was any territorial aggrandisement on the part of the Europeans who traded on the Guinea coast on the model of what happened in the New World. Taking the whole Guinea coast these statements are generally true. Along a large part of the Guinea coastline European-African contacts were slight, for the degree of mobility which characterised the relationship did not admit of any lasting influences.

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<sup>1</sup> K. O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta (Oxford 1956), p.4. J. D. Fage, Ghana (Madison, 1961), p.49. K. G. Davies, The Royal African Company (London 1958), p.6.

<sup>2</sup> K. O. Dike, op.cit., p.5.



When one considers the three hundred miles of coastline which came to be known as the Gold Coast, however, one needs to qualify the broad generalizations. For, as Priestly<sup>e</sup> rightly observes, "the Europeans could not remain indifferent to changes in the balance of power which would affect trade routes from the interior to the forts".<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly the death rate, at a time when knowledge of tropical diseases was in its infancy, was high. Life expectation among the European personnel along the coast was low. At the same time, however, the erection of fortified houses brought about a continuity of purpose. Even though the rate at which some of these houses changed hands was almost incredibly high, after the Holmes-de Ruyter excursions to the Gold Coast in the 1660's it could be said that the English and the Dutch had dug themselves in at some places.<sup>2</sup> Elmina and Axim were indisputably within the sphere of Dutch influence while Cape Coast remained in English hands. It was essential that there should be relative peace to assist trade. Had the Gold Coast been under the con-

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<sup>1</sup>M. Priestly, "The Ashanti Question and the British", J.A.H., Vol. II, 1, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Cape Coast Castle has an interesting history. Almost all the principal European trading nations on the coast at one time or another claimed to have established a house at the place. So also was Takoradi where the English, the Swedes, Dutch and Brandenburgers had their turn of forts. W.I.C. 917, Report of J. van Sevenhuysen, July 1700. By 1700 the Dutch had altogether 218 men for 11 forts. W.I.C. 917. Wm. de la Palma's Report. 31st August 1704. 105 men for 11 forts. Without arms, provisions. Miraculous the French have not gained possession of the Coast.



trol of only one European nation matters might have been different. After the European commodities had been adapted to the locally produced goods, trade would have easily come into the castles and forts. But the keen European competition which was created by the sugar culture in the New World made a "wait and see" policy unworkable. Seventeenth century conditions on the Gold Coast therefore gave birth to a policy of involvement in local matters.

By no European nation on the Coast was a policy of interference so clearly practised as it was by the Dutch. This was because their relatively superior strength gave them an advantage in the seventeenth century over all other trading nations.<sup>1</sup> And their strength stemmed from the fact that the Dutch West India Company was better organised and financed. When towards the end of the century the Royal African Company found itself firmly established, it did not scruple to imitate the Dutch. In the seventeenth century the Dutch policy, which began with a cautious non-involvement gradually gave way to a policy of interference aimed at creating better trade conditions, a policy which reached its apogee in the Dutch-Komenda and then later <sup>the</sup> English-Komenda War.

Before the mid-forties, the Dutch practised a policy of cautious non-involvement because they were not firmly established. It was there-

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<sup>1</sup>It is significant to note that while the English entrusted their trade to three different companies in the seventeenth century, the Dutch West India Company remained in charge of Dutch activities all through the century. Admittedly there were periods of reorganisation and change of directorate yet the Company in all essentials remained the same as W.I.C.



fore found convenient to use their good offices to settle local disputes. At no time was this policy so much put to the test as it was in 1634. Early in that year the Dutch ally - Sabu - requested help to avenge the death of a number of their nationals reported to have been murdered by some Fanti. The Dutch prevented a war by prevailing upon the King of Sabu to ask for compensation rather than to go to war on the issue.<sup>1</sup> The reason obviously was that war would prejudice trade. It should be remembered that at this time the Dutch had not succeeded in driving away the Portuguese from Elmina. The fear of the Portuguese was clearly demonstrated in a war which broke out between Sabu and Atti. Away from the realities of the Gold Coast situation, the Directors could not understand why the General on the Coast could not bring an end to the war which was crippling trade. However, as the General knew, a rash action would drive the Dutch away from the coast altogether. It was pointed out that, although in the interest of trade it might seem better to help Atti since they were a trading nation, it was more important for the Dutch to have firm allies on the Coast and, therefore, help should be given to Sabu. The claim of old friendship apart, if Sabu sought a Portuguese alliance in their difficulties, the Dutch could easily be driven away from the Coast. Arms were supplied to Sabu when it was learnt that <sup>the</sup> Atti were coming to

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/2/3/Feb. 1634.



attack the former. The help tipped the scales in favour of Sabu and, to avoid defeat, the Atti eventually withdrew.<sup>1</sup> In the same year a dynastic war broke out in Komenda. It soon involved the state of Fetu. Both states were allies of the Dutch. When Fetu requested help from the Dutch it was refused on the grounds that both contestants were friends, and that it was better to stand aloof as in fact the Portuguese were doing.<sup>2</sup>

How far help was granted to states in the interior in early times is not known. This is because only the reports of the wars and their results were recorded. Nothing, for instance, about the Akany-Abramboe war of 1634 is known except the fact that the Dutch expected to have better trading as a result of the Akany victory.<sup>3</sup> When one remembers that Akany was the most important state which traded in gold at this time one would have expected the Dutch to try to help the state and its nationals whenever possible, and, perhaps, unknown to us, they did so. In 1646, after the foremost Akany merchants in Fetu, Quao and Hennequa, had taken part in an unsuccessful war to depose the King of Komenda, the latter banned them from coming to trade in his territory. When an appeal was sent to the Dutch, messengers were sent to the King with an injunction from the General that he desired the King to live in friendly terms with the Akany.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/1/15 Feb. 1634.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/4/15 Aug. 1634.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C./8/16 Dec. 1639. Report of Van Iperen to XIX.

<sup>4</sup>O.W.I.C./11/43/17 Nov. 1646 in K. Ratelband, Vijf Dagregisters, p.263.



Both the Dutch and English courted the friendship of the Akany state and people. This was clearly shown when the representatives of both nations used their influence in <sup>1658</sup>1568 to persuade the Akany residents on the coast to obey the summons of their ruler and his council in the interior. When war broke out in that year between the Akany and Twifu, the King and Council requested that all Akany people who had left their state should return to defend their country. The man whose services were in great demand was one Yuboa who happened to be living at Kormantin at the time. To enforce his summons on his nationals the King instituted a trade embargo. Thus the English and the Dutch were forced to ask Yuboa to go. When Yuboa visited Elmina, even though the Dutch refused to grant his request for a loan of 2 bendas (£20), he was given sufficient gifts to make him promise to open the way for the Dutch. Soon the Dutch reported that the paths were open.<sup>1</sup>

Although his help given to the allies of the Europeans in the early part of this century might appear to be insignificant, it was nevertheless enough to make a real impact on local politics. It may be remembered that there had not previously been many Europeans on the coast, and so the access to firearms had been very limited. Little wonder, then, that the help provided by the Dutch to Sabu in 1634 was

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G. 81/6 Jan. 1660.



enough to scare Atti into withdrawal. In the frequent troubles in Komenda there was always the fear that the Dutch might give help to Komenda's enemies. It was to guard against this that a definite clause regarding help was inserted in the 1641 Dutch-Komenda agreement. It was stated that the Dutch should not allow themselves to be brought into the war between Adom and Komenda.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere is the desire to gain control over local affairs so clearly shown in the 1640's as at Axim. When the Dutch captured it in 1642, it was asserted that the people voluntarily promised to be vassals of the Dutch.<sup>2</sup> Whether it was by the aid of, or irrespective of the help of, the Axim people that the Dutch were able to capture the place from the Portuguese in 1642, Dutch relations with the people were established by a treaty agreement with Axim in 1642. But Axim-Dutch troubles were inherent in the treaty. For our present purpose the most interesting clauses were numbers four and six. The former made the Dutch representative the president of the court dealing with all the criminal and civil matters, while the latter gave them a right to levy tolls on the fish caught by the local fishermen. It was not long before troubles arose out of the Dutch claims to be the overlords. In 1647 the Director General requested that troops should be sent to the coast in order to help his Company to defend itself against the unfriendly Axim people. Without such reinforcements, it was pointed out, the Dutch would not

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./13/f.67/1641. Agreement between the Director General and the King of Aguaffo. Clause 7. It is stipulated that the General should not intrude in the war between Aguaffo and Cormantine (a mistake for Commenda).

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./12/17 Feb. 1642. Also in de Jonge, J.K.G., op.cit., pp. 21 and 65.



be able to withstand the five hundred people "who want to attack us".<sup>1</sup>

In the same year the General had to hasten from St. Thome to quell a revolt which had arisen in Axim. The cause of the trouble was the desire of the Dutch to prevent the Axim from taking part in the carrying trade between the Gold and the Ivory Coasts. To put an end to these troubles, the Dutch took advantage of local dissensions. The Axim people were at war with their neighbours of Encassar. The Dutch therefore arranged for the armies of Encassar to seal off the approaches to the North of Axim. At the same time the ship t'Hooft van Holland landed soldiers on the coast of Axim. Caught between two fires, Axim submitted to the Dutch.<sup>2</sup> Scarcely was this problem accommodated than another trouble arose. It was reported that Axim had refused to pay tolls on fish.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch did not hesitate to place the causes of their misfortunes at Axim on the English. The revolt was English inspired, it was claimed. The truth of this cannot be established, since there are no documents on the English side to support or disprove the accusation. It is interesting to note however that the Dutch attempted to solve the problem of their strained relationship with Axim by advising that all Dutch ships approaching Axim should fly the English

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./11/209/3 July 1647.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/210/26 Sept. 1647.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C./11/30 Nov. 1646: K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.270.



flag.<sup>1</sup> Despite the local opposition the Dutch succeeded in imposing their rule on Axim. At the end of the Century Bosman, who was himself once in charge of Axim fort, reported that all cases were brought to the fort and that the people continued to pay tolls on their fish. The point was clearly described by Barbot who pointed out that Axim was completely dominated by the Dutch, and that the elders did not dare to settle any dispute without the Dutch factor.<sup>2</sup>

If Axim-Dutch relations were strained by the accumulation of powers in Dutch hands, the latter's relations with Komenda were no better. In the 1640's dynastic trouble broke out once again in Komenda. One Edwan succeeded in driving away his brother Takyi, from the stool. The deposed ruler took refuge in Fetu from where he tried to work his way back. As soon as news of this reached Elmina, the Dutch sent messengers to Komenda. Apparently the mission was to try and get Takyi back as the ruler of the Eguaffo state. Obviously irritated by Dutch interference in their local affairs, the elders asked whether in case of the death of a Dutch General, the latter would agree that an Englishman or a Frenchman should be chosen in his place. Having failed in this mission to restore Takyi, who might have been a friend of the Dutch, the help of the King of Fetu was sought and he agreed to do what he could for Takyi.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C. 10/From J. v. J. Wel to the XIX, 26 Oct. 1648.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, W., op.cit., Let. 11, p.140. Barbot, J., op.cit., London 1746, p.150.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C. 11/9/9 March 1645. K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.23.



A year later Takyi was back as King of Komenda. The imposition of Takyi on the elders of Komenda created new difficulties which resulted in another war with Fetu. The area of interference was widened to include the Abramboe state which came to assist Takyi. And in the confusion that ensued the English got a footing at Cape Coast. It was this Fetu-Komenda struggle which led the Komenda King to ban some of the Akany traders from Komenda. This ban was only lifted because of Dutch intervention.<sup>1</sup>

Theoretically Fetu was at liberty to trade with any state. At least that was what the Dutch had told the French earlier on. When the French protested that they had been given a previous right over Komenda, the Dutch pointed out to them that the country belonged to the King of Komenda and not the King of France.<sup>2</sup> The argument was not to be applied in the same way with Fetu. When news reached Elmina that the English had been allowed to establish themselves at Cape Coast a protest was quickly sent to the King of Fetu. The King was reminded of his previous agreement with the Dutch and shown that it was not proper for him to cede the same coastline to the English. Should the English be allowed to trade in his state, he would lose all payments he received from the Dutch. When the elders and traders at Cape Coast were approached, they made it clear "that they were no slaves to the Dutch". If the Dutch still wanted to trade they would divide their gold equally between the two European

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p.188

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/Aug. 1639.



nationals. Persuasion having failed to achieve the desired effect, the General, accompanied by armed soldiers and slaves went to the place to give effect to the Dutch protestations. Finally, the threat to set the town on fire and to station a Dutch ship along the coast to prevent the fishermen from catching any fish was successful.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch had demonstrated their strength.

It must be admitted that, in the 1640's, at least, the Dutch did not always employ force and threats to achieve their ends. Further to the east they used their influence very astutely at this time to create conditions which were favourable to trade. This is clearly seen in their relations with Accra. Dutch connections with Accra go back to the 1630's. In 1639, they claimed that they had made an oral agreement with the King of Accra which gave them the monopoly of the trade in that state. This agreement was put on a firmer basis in the 40's when a written contract was made.<sup>2</sup> That Accra was a very important post in the forties may be seen from the trade returns made from the factory there. In the month of December 1646, 329 marks of gold were received from that area.<sup>3</sup> Two months earlier the Dutch had made

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C.11/45/25-29 Nov. 1646 also in K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.276-279.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./11/Report of the Director general van Iperen 1639. O.W.I.C./12/20 Aug. 1642: "An agreement with the King of Accra"; another agreement was signed 4th Aug. 1649.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C.11/10 Dec. 1646 in K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.271.



a very good purchase in slaves. It was reported that in a war between Accra and Lateby, a country to the North East, as many as one thousand slaves were sold to the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> The war, however, blocked the passage of inland traders to Accra. To safeguard the trade it was found essential to help maintain peace. Between November and December of 1646, the Dutch representative in Accra undertook two missions into the interior with the object of settling local disputes. In November Caarlof, on behalf of the Dutch Director, visited the courts of both the Kings of Accra and Oquy (a state of the Akwamu Kingdom) to negotiate an agreement whereby free passage in each King's state would be allowed to traders from both sides. In December another meeting was arranged. This time the King of Oquy came to the court of the Accra King. A misunderstanding had arisen between Aquamina, a dependent state of Oquy, and Accra. In the troubles the King of Aquamina lost his life. This led to the closing of the trade routes to the coast for the Aquamina traders. At the meeting between both rulers and Caarlof it was agreed however that the Aquamina traders should be allowed to proceed to the coast to sell their goods.<sup>2</sup>

To whatever extent the Dutch might have had intended to occupy themselves with nothing but trade, they soon learnt that their new power

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C.11/10 Dec. 1646 in K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.252.

<sup>2</sup>I.W.I.C.11/42/16 Nov. 1646: Idem: 15 Dec. 1646. K. Ratelband, op.cit., pp. 262 and 269.



to levy tolls on fish constantly brought them into disputes with the local people. It is apparent from the Dutch-Jaby-Chama agreement in 1642 that matters were not going as smoothly as had been expected. Although there is no mention earlier on of any struggles between the Dutch and the contracting local states, one is left in no doubt that the agreement was made in order to stop what appeared to have been a long struggle. It was stipulated that all differences that had arisen on both sides should not only be forgiven but forgotten. Collectors of tolls should be allowed to go about their business, unmolested by the local people. The officers of the kings should not, on some trivial pretext, close the river to people who supplied foodstuffs to the Dutch. The most interesting aspect of it all was the demand by the Dutch that the ringleaders and troublemakers should be prevented from staying in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the agreement and the fact that the Dutch succeeded in getting the principal troublemakers banned, things seem not to have gone well. Sixteen years later another agreement, which gave still more powers to the Dutch, was signed. This second agreement stipulated among other things, that all canoes returning from sea should first come to Dutch fort to pay their tolls. Henceforward the tolls were to be collected by soldiers who were given powers to break up the canoes of

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C.12/N.d./Contract with Jaby and Chama. N.B.K.G. 222/48/1643.



all fishermen who attempted to escape. If anybody defaulted, the whole catch was to be forfeited and the fish shared evenly between the elders and the Dutch.<sup>1</sup>

The revolts were not confined to Chama and Axim. In 1645 it was reported that the fishermen at Moure had refused to pay anything more than a single fish on any boat, irrespective of the size of the catch. The general commented that the people should be punished for their disobedience.<sup>2</sup> The struggle to control the local people, and to levy what the Dutch considered their lawful toll, proved a recurrent problem. Whilst the reports of one European nation on their rivals are obviously exaggerated at times, one cannot ignore the main points in some of these statements. When Barbot was on the coast in 1681, he reported that <sup>1Ka</sup>Elmina people had taken arms against the Dutch because of the latter's oppressive actions. At this time the Dutch were <sup>ie</sup>beseiged for several months by combined forces of Elmina and Komenda. It was reported that the Dutch lost four men against the eighty dead on the side of the attackers. The cause is said to have been due to Dutch claims to tolls and their exercise of judicial powers over the local people.<sup>3</sup>

In the second half of the seventeenth century abstention from local politics seemed to have been difficult, if not impossible, for the European nationals on the Coast. In the struggle between the Dutch

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.222/315/1659: "An Agreement between van Heusien and the Elders of Chama".

<sup>2</sup>K. Ratelband, op.cit., p. 55, 12 June 1645.

<sup>3</sup>Barbot, J., op.cit., p.167; Claridge, W.W., A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti (2 vols., London 1915).



and the Axim in the 1640's, the former achieved their objective by inciting the Encassar people against the Axim. One would expect a lasting friendly to have ensued between the Encassar and the Dutch. This was however not the case. By siding with the Ahanta in their war against the Encassar in the 1650's, the Dutch were granted permission to build a fort at Boutry. This was to be erected in order to protect Ahanta against any further attacks from Encassar. It was this help afforded to Ahanta which the Dutch quoted in their struggle with the Swedes over the land on which their fort was built. Thus the Dutch enunciated the theory that it was a European nation's ability and readiness to assist a local state in its struggles against other states that constituted the basic claim to the land on which forts were built.<sup>1</sup>

Getting involved in local politics was not always to the advantage of the European nation. This was learnt by the Dutch in the 1660's. Early in their stay they pushed farther inland in an attempt to reach the gold at its source. A Dutch fort, Ruychaver, was built thirty miles inland on the River Ancobra in the rich gold producing state of Iguira. All went well until the Dutch became involved with one of the local elders of Iguira. Claridge asserts that even the erection of the fort was carried on in face of local opposition and that the Dutch had to drive out the original people and to populate the area with some friendly Ahanta nationals.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G./222/259/O.W.I.C./13/322a/25 Nov. 1656. Idem v/201-241/16 Dec. 1656 "Deductie van J. Valkenburg", also in J.K.J. de Jong, op.cit., p.67.

<sup>2</sup>Claridge, W.W., op.cit., Vol. I, p.130.



Whatever the conditions under which it was built, the Dutch soon came into trouble with the local people. When early in 1659 the commissioner in Fort Ruy<sup>s</sup>chaver sent his monthly returns of gold, it was added that all was well at Iquira.<sup>1</sup> But it was not long before all was anything but peaceful. Later in January it was reported that, because of a siege of the fort by Adom and Iquira people, no communication could be received from there. It was not long afterwards that it was learnt that the commissioner had perished and the whole Dutch establishment had been blown up.

From the conflicting reports which were later brought to the coast, it seemed that the commissioner, although far away from help, did not scruple to involve himself in local matters. The immediate cause of the attack was given as the seizure of some local people by the commissioner, for debts owed him. On the death of a local captain, one Janticon, the commissioner, failing to get satisfaction ~~from~~<sup>for</sup> a debt of nine bendas (£72) owed by the deceased, seized and imprisoned the wife and three other relations. The people rose in revolt and bes<sup>ieged</sup>~~sieged~~ the fort until the prisoners were released. As the prisoners were considered to be of high birth, the local people demanded a compensation of twenty bendas (£160). This was refused. In the second attack on the fort, the commissioner was said to have blown himself up with gunpowder.<sup>2</sup> The Adom came into

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.81/1 Jan. 1659, Dag Register van Elmina.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G./81/1 Jan. 1659, Dagregister van Elmina.



the struggle because they already bore a grudge against the Dutch. It was alleged that the Dutch had supplied arms to their enemies, the Ahanta people, in their local struggles.<sup>1</sup> Even other states which were supposed to be allies of the Dutch showed their resentment of the high-handedness with which they were treated. When the other lucky Dutchmen who escaped the attack on account of their absence from the scene later fell into the hands of the Ahanta people, they were held in captivity, because, it was alleged, the former general Ruy<sup>S</sup>chaver had allowed his servants to ill-treat Ahanta people.<sup>2</sup>

Nowhere on the Gold Coast did the Europeans become so involved in local politics as at Komenda. Throughout the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth dynastic troubles were endemic in that state. The source of the trouble is the fact that it was never left alone by the European traders on the coast. Its geographical position made its coast attractive to all the Europeans. Both Barbot and Bosman described its market as the best for fruits of all kinds.<sup>3</sup> It also commanded the routes from such gold bearing lands as

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.81/7 Feb. 1659. Historians give no details about the causes of the trouble in Egwira. Nor are they helpful regarding the details of the destruction. Beyond a mere mention that the Dutch once had a fort in Egwira which was destroyed by the natives "sometime ago" Ward has nothing about it. Nor are we helped even by Bosman who claims that the fort was blown up by a local chieftain who lured the commissioner into it after he had captured it and blew up himself and the Dutchmen. Claridge is however non-committal in this. He gives two versions of the story, one which shows that the fort was blown up by the Dutch, and another which attributes the action to the local people. From the Dutch document there seems to be no doubt about the fact that it was blown up at the command of the commissioner who, it may be surmised, preferred death to falling into the hands of Adom-Iguira troops. Ward, W.E.F., A History of Ghana, London 1958, p.90. Claridge, W.W., op.cit., Vol. I, p.130. Bosman, W., op.cit., Let 2, p.21. Ward gives the date for the capture as 1680, p.93.



Akany and Twifu. Later in the century and at the beginning of the eighteenth, it was the regular resort of both salt and gold merchants from Ashanti. Added to all this, it had, by the end of the century, extended its influence over such states as Fetu and Chama. Thus it controlled the approach<sup>s</sup> to the Pra, which provided fresh water and served as a waterway for bringing down the firewood needed by the European.

Dutch-Komenda troubles began as far back as the thirties. Instead of building a house there, the Dutch first established a "legger"<sup>1</sup> on the beach to transact business with the local traders. In 1637 a drunken Dutch sailor accidentally caused the death of an old man on the beach. In the confusion that followed, the sailor was killed and the captain of the ship Brunswick was wounded. The Dutch owed their lives to a French ship which lay at anchor there; the crew of which came to assist them. The legger was withdrawn. Later on, when the people appealed to the General to return to Komenda, the request was granted only on condition that the murderer of the sailor be given up, and all those who took part in the fight punished. After some people had been punished, and compensation had been paid to the General, the Dutch began

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(cont.)

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G./81/18 Feb. 1659.

<sup>3</sup>Barbot in Astley, Collections, p.585.

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<sup>1</sup>A "Legger" was the expression for a ship which was stationed at a place to buy and sell goods - a moving warehouse. Unlike the cruising ships, leggers were allotted to particular posts, where they remained stationary for a long time.



to build a lodge there in 1639.<sup>1</sup>

It was however not until two years later that the Dutch made a written agreement with the King and his elders. One of the most important features of the agreement was the political clauses inserted. It was agreed that the Dutch should refrain from helping any of the contending factions in the Adom-Komenda struggles. But perhaps the most interesting was the extent of Dutch interference in local affairs. It was stipulated that the deposed King of Komenda, Takyi, should be allowed to stay at any place of his choice within the state and that in all matters he should be considered second in rank in the state.<sup>2</sup> In the intervening years between the forties and the eighties Komenda remained comparatively quiet. There were however attempts by both the English and the French to secure a place in that state. It was with a view to preventing both of these nations from getting a footing at Komenda, that another agreement was reached between Komenda and the Dutch in 1659. In 1647 the post at Komenda was abandoned by the Dutch on the grounds that the place was unhealthy.<sup>3</sup> The second Dutch-Komenda

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./13/La.B/74/1 July 1939. Report of van Iperen.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./13/67/1641 "Agreement between Ruychaver and the King of Aguafu". The last clause dealing with Takyi went against the customary practice of the people. It was not unknown among the Akani people to banish a deposed King from parts of the country. This was because it was afraid that his presence, especially if he was considered to be particularly bad ruler, would not be in the interest of the state.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C./11/140/18 March 1647. "Report of van der Wel".



agreement was to make sure that no other European nationals would be allowed in that state. The extent of the coastline given to the Dutch was delineated as starting from River Benja in the east to River Bosumpra in the west.<sup>1</sup> When a year later, it was rumoured that Komenda had not only requested the English to come and build a fort in their state but had also given hostages to that effect, the Dutch appeared not to have taken the matter seriously.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly enough, they never resorted to their usual practice of hurrying to remind the rulers of their old alliances, and of warning them of the consequences of allowing another nation to take possession of their "rightful possession".

The Dutch having obviously failed to exploit their advantage to the full, other European nationals were given permission to come and trade in the state. Barbot asserts that the people of Komenda always showed a particular liking for the French. It must be remembered that as far back as 1639 the French had laid prior claim to Komenda. This had been dismissed by the Dutch. But the fact that in their 1641 agreement with that state it was found necessary to insert a clause to prevent the French from building at Komenda, shows that French relations go back earlier than the 1640's. In the 1660's the Komenda renewed their friendship with the French. One Kukumi was said to have been sent by

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C./13/455/18 Aug. 1659.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G./81/23 May 1660 "Dagregister".



the King of Komenda to France to request the French King to come and trade in his state.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is known about the outcome of the mission, beyond the fact that when Barbot was on the coast in the 1680's he mentioned Great Komenda as the residence of Kukumi.

In 1668 the Dutch Director General sent a strong protest to the English agent to ask him to desist from erecting a fort at Little Komenda. They were asked to pull down whatever had been built. This appears to have been ineffective.<sup>2</sup> On Barbot's visit he was invited by the King at Great Komenda to come to his capital to negotiate for a French return to Komenda. It was six years after his visit before the French reappeared on the coast. In the meantime the English had also been "invited" to build at Komenda. The Dutch seemed to have been supercilious in their attitude to the Komenda people who, like the Fantis, were determined to make their place available to all traders. It was this "hatred for the Dutch", according to the English, which led to the people to ask them to come and establish a factory in their state.<sup>3</sup> The English had no sooner established themselves at Little Komenda than the Dutch moved into action. This time no direct methods were employed. Instead they fomented troubles between the coastal town of Little Komenda and Great Komenda where the King lived.<sup>4</sup> The English

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<sup>1</sup>Barbot, J., In Astley's Vol. II, p.586.

<sup>2</sup>C.O.I./23/2 Feb. 1668: O. W. Ired's letter to T. Pearson.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/10/49/28 Sept. 1681.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/11/12/11 July 1685.



reported in 1688 that on account of the civil wars they had temporarily withdrawn from Komenda in the hope that when matters returned to normal they could go back and re-establish themselves. This however was not to be the case. Three years after the incident the English factory was burnt down.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch action, or rather the action of the supporters of the Dutch, was a signal for the troubles that were to plague the politics of Komenda for many years to come. It meant an atmosphere of instability, which invited interference.

In 1688, six years after Barbot's visit, a French expedition headed by a M. du Cassa arrived at Komenda to establish a French fort in the state. Drawing on their own practical experience the English expressed doubts of the outcome of the French venture. It was forecast that the Dutch would drive them away from their new post. In this they were right. As soon as the leader left, another civil war broke out in the state. Both English and Dutch observers admitted that the trouble was caused by the Dutch general. His desire to remove the French, it was argued, was the cause of the unrest.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the Dutch attempts, not only were the French removed but the King of Komenda also lost his life. The price of independence without the requisite force to back it had been effectively demonstrated. On the death of the King many of his supporters had to seek refuge in other

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/12/11 July 1685.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/11/31/9 Jan. 1688. W.I.C.917/15 April 1700. "Report of the Director General and his Council....", Bosman, op.cit., p.27.



states.<sup>1</sup> As far as the French were concerned, it was the last time they were heard of in the seventeenth century at Komenda.

By means of superior force and astuteness the Dutch had succeeded in establishing themselves for a while at Komenda. Soon afterwards their lodge was converted into a fort. This gave a great advantage to the Dutch.<sup>2</sup> To safeguard their claim and to prevent any repetition of the previous incident, it was deemed necessary to enter into a new agreement with the rulers. This still further divested the ruler and his elders of their powers to lay claim to parts of the coast which were so much sought after by the contending European nations. It was stipulated among other things that the coast line between the Rivers Benya in the east and Bosompra in the west was not to be given over to any European national other than the Dutch. For, it was contended, by the new agreement the Chief and his elders had lost control of the area.<sup>3</sup> But at best the Dutch had only succeeded in submerging, and not in solving, the Komenda problem. The people patiently awaited a favourable opportunity to free themselves from the Dutch imposition.

By the 1680's the area of combat was small. In most cases the people who became involved in local affairs became much more numerous.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/32/12 May 1688.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Let. 3, p.28. W.I.C./122/30/4 Jan.1688, "Agreement between the Director General Nicolas Sweerts..... The King and Elders of Aguaffo".



Trade had brought about many alliances which gave wars a more than national significance. The Dutch were not slow in recognising this important aspect of local politics. They were also not slow in availing themselves of the opportunities which the new changes promised. Thus Dutch alliances reached out into some of the powerful states in the interior. These treaties and agreements differed in some measures from the earlier ones. Whereas the latter had been contracted primarily in the interests of trade, the former were for defence. In 1688 the Dutch made an agreement with Fetu. The novelty about the contract was the specific mention that "in case of an attack Fetu was to come to the assistance of the Dutch". Were the new allies themselves to be attacked, protection was to be provided for them in the Dutch headquarters at Elmina.<sup>1</sup> The agreement also provided that the Dutch were to give help to the extent of forty-five bendas to Fetu in the event of an attack. When one looks at the contents of this agreement, it is difficult to understand what were the precise intentions of the Dutch in drawing it up. It must be remembered that after the building of the fort at Komenda, it was reported that the Dutch had succeeded in bringing all the affairs there under their control. This appears to have been a hollow claim. The Dutch-Fetu contract of 1688 leads one to the conclusion that the Dutch were anticipating a Komenda attack.

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<sup>1</sup> W.I.C./122/31 June 1688, "Agreement between N. Sweerts ... and Aduafo Ahinakwa, King and Elders of Fetu".



The new agreement with Fetu did not have to wait long before being tested. While the Dutch were attempting to establish their control over Komenda, the English, their biggest opponents on the coast, were also trying to subjugate Fetu. The Dutch agreement was no doubt an attempt to countermine the efforts of the English at Fetu. It is not known for certain whether the new alliance emboldened the Fetu, or whether the Dutch persuaded the Fetu to attack, as was asserted. In the event, the King of Fetu besieged the English in their castle. The King demanded about one hundred and twenty pounds. This was refused. After some time the siege was raised and the Fetu army marched to Elmina where they were welcomed by the Dutch.<sup>1</sup>

The Dutch continued in their efforts to gain as many allies as possible, in order to protect themselves against attacks, which they seemed to have been constantly expecting. Soon after their defence agreement with Fetu, another one of similar type was made with the Twifu state. There were only two clauses in this agreement. Should the Dutch be attacked by African or European forces, the Twifu, with their whole fighting force were to come to their assistance. For that help they were to be paid the sum of eighty bendas of gold. Should Twifu itself be attacked, ammunition of all kinds would be sold to them by the Dutch. Protection for their women, children and properties would also be accorded them in the Castle at Elmina.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/35/12 Feb. 1689.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C./122/36/16 Jan. 1690. "An agreement of friendship and mutual assistance between N. Sweerts and Joel Smit ..... and Amakon, King, Teuba and Ako Dampo, Elders of Jueffer (Twifu)".



While the Dutch were seeking alliances to buttress their position on the coast, the English were seeking a similar series of alliances. By 1690 the English could count for support on such states as Akany, Komenda and Sabu. Although the student searches in vain for the exact terms of agreement between the English and their allies, there is enough circumstantial evidence to conclude that they closely followed the Dutch pattern. In 1689, for instance, powder to the value of thirty bendas was given as a gift to the Braffo of Fanti. At the same time the King of Sabu received "presents" of the same articles to the value of twenty-four bendas.<sup>1</sup> Not long after the receipt of these "presents" it was reported that "the Quifferos (Twifu) and the Fetuers (Fetu) had burnt down the town of Sabu".<sup>2</sup> That these presents were given to further this local unrest may be seen from the report of the English, whose representatives on the coast noted that, although the wars were at an end, the Company would not be able to retrieve the money they had given out.<sup>3</sup> The reported conclusion of the wars was in fact nothing but a respite. Far worse struggles were about to begin.

In 1693 a seemingly unimportant trade war between the Fetu and the Akany State grew into one of very great political consequence for

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/38/19 Nov. 1689.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/11/21 Aug. 1690. T.70/11/15/4 Oct. 1690. T.70/1433/4 Oct. 1690, Report of J. Bloom, Chief of Anishen.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/11/45/6 April 1692.



the Fetu state. In order to force the inland traders to send their gold and other commodities to the Dutch at Elmina castle, the Dutch managed to bring their allies to close the trade routes to all merchants who would not send their commodities to their establishments. This was a direct challenge to the English. In the war that broke out, the allies which the various European<sup>1</sup> nationals had succeeded in gaining as the result of their trading interests, assembled to fight on behalf of the Europeans. Things even went farther than the simple division of states against their neighbours. Rivalries between the rulers of the state weakened their resistance. While the King of Fetu became a staunch friend and ally of the Dutch, the next in authority in the state, the Dey of Fetu, was won over to the English side.<sup>1</sup> Weakened by internal dissension, Fetu was easily over-run. The King eventually took refuge with the Dutch. Early in March the English elatedly reported that their general, one Nympha from Akany, was pursuing the King of Fetu. As a result of this they felt that they were bound to continue to give money<sup>2</sup> to their allies, in order to finish the work they had taken in hand. Their efforts were well rewarded. The King was not allowed to return to his state. It was thought better in the interest of the English to instal one who would act as the English desired. In 1693, when Phillips was at Cape Coast Castle, he recorded that the

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/45/6 April 1692.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



Akany general had returned to the castle, victorious. Not long afterwards the new King of Fetu, who had doubtless been chosen in the interest of the English, followed. For the first time, Fetu acknowledged the overlordship of the English. In the castle, the King "took the fetish (oath) to be at constant enmity with his brother, and to be ever true to the English".<sup>1</sup> This precedent was followed by similar incidents in the next few years, to the embarrassment of both the English and the Fetu state.

Far reaching occurrences in Komenda were soon to outweigh the events in Fetu. Although the Dutch had forced their will on the Komenda people and had established their fort in 1689, they needed to employ all the diplomacy at their disposal to calm the affronted people. When reports reached them that the Twifu people were preparing an attack on the Komenda people in 1693, the council at Elmina was hurriedly convened. It was discovered that Komenda had seized goods belonging to some merchants from Twifu on the grounds that the goods had been purchased from the English fort. The precise motives of the Komenda are not known. One is led to the conclusion that they not unnaturally expected trouble to follow their actions, for it was learnt that the goods had been distributed among the neighbouring states with the condition that the recipient would come to their assist-

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/112 & 113/10 & 12 March 1694.



ance in the event of an attack from Twifu. If this was to be used to embarrass the Dutch, the plan miscarried. The council quickly moved into action by loaning goods to the same value to the Twifu trader.<sup>1</sup> But that was not enough. Two years later the Director-General reported to his council that the Komenda people would not be pacified. Not only had an amount of about twenty-four marks been spent to no purpose, but a plan to end the stipulation that the fishermen of Little Komenda should pay tolls on their fish had not met with any appreciable success. More than that, it had been noticed that the Komenda people were in daily communication with the English, with a view to ousting the Dutch from their fort. In the light of all the events it was decided that allies should be sought to deter the Komenda from their designs.<sup>2</sup>

The English were no less deeply involved in Komenda affairs than the Dutch. In 1694 they reported that they had advanced thirty bendas of goods to Komenda with the express purpose of "promoting trade and peace". Not long afterwards the hope was expressed that the English were likely to profit from the differences between the Dutch and the Komenda people.<sup>3</sup> This hope might have been strengthened by the help

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.124/24 Nov. 1693 "Report of the meeting of the director and his council".

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.124/24 Jan. 1695.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/11/2 March 1694. Ibid/2 Aug. 1694.



that they gave to the Komenda "in the interest of trade". The suspicion that the English had designs on Komenda is strengthened by the reports and accusations which were levelled against them by the Dutch. It was discovered that the English had also sent ~~at~~ messengers to enlist support for the Komenda State. For instance, when the Dutch offered guns to their allies, the Twifu, in return for their assistance, it was learned that the English and the King of Komenda had also offered the Twifu state 300 bendas of gold to be their ally. The Twifu, however, adhered to their 1690 agreement with the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch had to pay them two hundred and seventy six bendas of gold and goods to fight on their side against Komenda.

It was in this atmosphere of suspicion and rumour of war, that the Dutch sent a number of miners to prospect for gold in Komenda and without the permission of the King. The expedition was either due to ignorance of the local practices, or was simply designed to precipitate an attack which would give the Dutch a pretext for curbing the Komenda people. The European miners were attacked and some imprisoned. The general immediately marched on Komenda and attacked the village of the local merchant, John Kabes, who was said to have been behind the attack on the miners.<sup>2</sup> A skirmish ensued in which the two sides

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./124/9 Jan. 1695. Report of the Director and Council.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/11/117/Jan. 1695. Bosman, op.cit., p.28. Claridge, op.cit., p.147. Ward, op.cit. All the general works on the Gold Coast have something on the Dutch-Komenda War. But all have depended on the work of Bosman who was himself an interested party in the whole struggle. It is therefore the object of this chapter to clarify the points that were made by Bosman.



suffered a few casualties. Both sides then prepared for open war to decide the issue.

In the war that took place soon after the clash with John Kabes the Fanti and the Sabu states fought on the side of the Komenda. Bosman, the Dutch historian, who took part in the Dutch-Komenda war, asserts that the Fanti and the Sabu were drawn into the struggles on account of the pronouncements of the Dutch general. A closer look at the events, however, shows that the threats, whatever they might have been, were not in themselves enough to draw these two states into the struggle. It is true that they might have felt the need to close their ranks in the interest of the security of their states. But it is also significant that in the struggle between the English and the Fetu, Fanti and Sabu had always supported the English. Although we are not told for certain which states were called in by the English on this occasion to help Komenda, there is not much doubt that these old allies were employed to help Komenda in the war. In May 1695 the English reported that the Dutch had brought down the Twifu and their allies to fight the Komenda people, who had asked for help. The report concluded that "a powerful army was raised and so the Kabestera and the Quifferos had been beaten". Since Bosman reports that the Fanti and the Sabu fought at the side of the Komenda in the first Dutch-Komenda war, one can certainly conclude that the English were more the cause of the part played by the two states than the threats made by the Dutch General.



Soon after their defeat the Dutch set to work to repair their losses. Despite the attempts of the English to prevent the Dutch from driving a wedge between their allies, the Dutch succeeded in winning over the brother of the King of Fetu and his supporters to their side. With the help of their new ally, Takyi Ankan and the Adoms, the scene was set for another encounter. But in the second engagement the Dutch and their allies again suffered defeat.<sup>1</sup> It was after these two reverses that the Dutch resorted to arbitrary methods to improve their fortunes. Many of the Company's servants were imprisoned for real or supposed debts. One of them, the brother of the King of Komenda, was first imprisoned and later deported to Suriname. The charge against him was that he had allowed his slaves to fight on the side of Komenda, despite the fact that he himself was in the Company's pay.<sup>2</sup> In their effects these arbitrary methods gave advantage to the English. One of the most important local merchants, who had been in the service of the Dutch for a long time, Abban by name, was at this time driven to the side of the English. Nor were the English themselves ignorant of their opportunities at this very important time in their struggle to gain the upper hand in the seventeenth century contests with the Dutch. They reported at this time that they had incurred great expenses in their efforts

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/118/14 May 1695. Bosman, op.cit., Let. 3, p.28.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.484/144/30 May 1701. "Report of Willen de la Palma and Council".



to bring about peace on the coast.<sup>1</sup>

Dutch-Komenda relations had entered this stage when the general on the coast was relieved of his post. It needed a tactful man to restore relations. The new director was aware of what was expected of him. He soon set to work to retrieve the fortunes of the Dutch. Soon the English were remarking that the general was making overtures to the King of Aguaffo (Komenda). Four months after his appointment he succeeded in making a highly favourable agreement with that state. But the agreement failed to achieve the desired effect. As usual the Dutch blamed their ill-fortune on the English who, it is claimed, made the Komenda people realise that they had been cheated by the Dutch in agreeing to such a one sided contract. But, even without the English, one wonders whether the Dutch-Komenda agreement of 1696 was not a dead letter. from its very inception. After the defeat and the expense in which they had been involved, one would expect the Dutch to have been satisfied with easy terms. But far from it. The Dutch seemed to have acted on the assumption that they had invariably been right, and that the Komenda people had been the offenders and that they could act on this assumption. This is clearly seen from the terms of the 1696 agreement. Not one clause of the whole contract was impartial. It was meant to punish, not conciliate. To show the degree to which the Dutch were prepared to go to circumscribe the rights of the Komenda people,

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/119/11 May 1696. In April of the same year the English gave as much as seventy five gallons of brandy to the Kings of Sabu, Aguaffo and John Kabes of Komenda "to distribute among their soldiers of their first coming down". T.70/374/24 April 1696.



it is well worth examining the agreement in full. There were eleven clauses in all. Clause one held that the King should pay compensation of two ounces of gold for each of the twenty-one Company slaves captured in the war. The second demanded the return of the cannon and ammunition captured by the Komenda from Takyi Ankan and his army; failing that, the King was to pay fifty bendas of gold to the Dutch. Thirdly, the King was to pay two hundred and fifty marks of gold to the Dutch for having brought about an unlawful war in which six white men had lost their lives and in which the Company had incurred great expense. Fourthly, it was demanded ~~that~~ half the sum was to be paid at once, the remaining half to be paid in three months. In addition the Akany auxiliary forces were to be disbanded. Fifthly, the King and his elders were to swear on their own behalf and on behalf of their successors never to grant permission to any other nation to erect a house in their state, let alone to assist any nation with arms against the Dutch. Sixth, free passage should be granted to the traders from Denkyira and other inland states on their way to Elmina and Komenda. The seventh clause held that cases arising of debts involving people living at Elmina and Little Komenda were to be brought before the Director-General and his Council. The eighth clause stated that the King was to live in peace with his brother, Takyi Ankan, who was to be allowed to live anywhere he chose in the Kingdom. Nine stipulated that the King and all his fighting force were to come to the assistance of the Dutch



in the event of an attack. Should Komenda be attacked, the General promised assistance to the King providing that such assistance would not be prejudicial to trade. Clause ten held that all goods that were purchased from interlopers were to be impounded. Finally, the King and all his elders promised to abide by the terms of the agreement.<sup>1</sup> By this agreement the Komenda King was to pay about seven thousand pounds sterling for wars in which they had been consistently victorious against the Dutch. It is no wonder then that Bosman considered the settlement as an occasion "which was very much to be wished for".<sup>2</sup>

At this very period when the Dutch were forging a better relationship with Komenda the English were undergoing financial difficulties. While in May the English were complaining that the Dutch were "tampering" with the King of Komenda, they confessed their inability to offer any effective help. The Company reported disconsolately in October that "(they) had but twenty six marks of gold and no goods".<sup>3</sup> When this is taken in conjunction with the war-weariness that the struggles over the Komenda had probably brought, then the Komenda's acceptance of the

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C./122/24 Oct. 1696. "An Agreement between Sevenhuysen and the King and Elders of Komenda". There is much confusion regarding the general who made this agreement. The whole thing is the outcome of Bosman's care not to embarrass any of the Dutch generals who participated in the wars since the book was written not long after the event. When Claridge sought to clarify the situation, he confused the activities of the Staphorst with those of Sevenhuysen and erroneously attributed the signing of this treaty to Staphorst.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.30.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/11/119/11 May 1696; T.70/11/120/1 Oct. 1696.



crushing terms of the Dutch agreement becomes understandable. They agreed not only to pay compensation to the Dutch, but they also consented to allow Ankan, who had taken the side of the Dutch against his own state, to stay where he chose in the realm. There is no doubt that this was done to satisfy the interest of the Dutch, who dictated the terms of the agreement to suit their purpose. Less than a year after the agreement had been made, however, it was a dead letter. It needed no promptings from the English for the King to throw overboard the heavy burden that was imposed upon him as the result of his victories over the Dutch. It is safe to assume that the whole thing was accepted by the Komenda merely as a means of buying time. It would have been surprising if it had proved a lasting agreement in the Gold Coast of the seventeenth century, where many other European nationals were trying to gain footholds for their trading posts.

Bosman asserts that, after the English had made the Komenda dishonour the agreement, the latter proved very headstrong and began openly to attack and to insult the Dutch. Not only were they advised to disregard the terms of the 1696 agreement but they were also promised help if the Dutch should decide to attack them. It was the fear that the Dutch would be forced to sue for peace in a way that might be to the advantage of the Komenda that determined their subsequent actions. In face of the frequent defiance from the Komenda, the Dutch felt that it was necessary for them to "chastise" the "rebels" and to preserve their character and honour with the remaining nations and states of the Gold



Coast. In other words, they were to force the Komenda into their rightful place and to prevent any other nation from imitating their actions.<sup>1</sup>

It was in this frame of mind that they set out to win the support of many other states and to help them in their designs to assert their power over the Komenda. It was considered to be to the advantage of the Company to depose the recalcitrant King and to enstool another one who would be more pliable to Dutch interest. In 1697 therefore the Fanti state was approached. By August of the same year the Dutch had succeeded in winning that state, which had been the ally of the English in the earlier struggles, to their side. This act of friendship was sealed with a treaty in which Fanti agreed to come to the assistance of the Dutch. The contract stipulated among other things that the Fanti should join forces, together with the armies of Akany and Kabestera, to attack the Komenda state. After that, the King's brother Takyi Ankan was to be made King of Komenda. For their services the Fanti were to be paid the sum of eighty bendas of gold.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.30. W.I.C.124/12/10 March 1700. Bosman's Report.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.122/44/15 Aug. 1697. "Agreement between Sevenhuysen and the Braffo Aprobi and the Elders of Fanti". Like most of the Komenda Wars there has been many inaccurate statements regarding the true sum involved in the transaction. Bosman, who was himself a signatory of the agreement, quotes the amount as £900. While the report of the Dutch general on the affairs of the coast put the sum at eighty marks. Taking a mark to be £32 at the beginning of the century the amount involved would be about £2,560. There can be no doubt that the sum involved was eighty bendas, rather than eighty marks. Perhaps, the sum came to be reckoned as £900 because of the



To ensure that they would honour their part of the agreement, the Fanti were asked to hand over some of the important people in the state as hostages. Despite all the precautions, the services of the Fanti were never given to the Dutch. Nor did the Dutch achieve any better success with the other states that were paid to come to their help. The Adoms, Akany and the Kabestera and finally the Denkyira, were all paid various sums totalling about one thousand three hundred pounds, but all to no purpose. One cannot establish for certain the reason why the promised help never came. For the Denkyiras the reason given was that they were forced by events around them to defend themselves, and so they could not afford to send their forces to assist the Dutch. Nor is the excuse given by the Adoms anything but flimsy. They were said to have quarrelled over how the amount was to be divided with the Kabestera.<sup>1</sup>

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(cont.) difference between the sterling and the gold value on the Gold Coast. It is likely that the benda which was normally valued at £8 was worth more than that at the close of the seventeenth century. It appears to have been valued at £11 at this time.

T.70/374/30 Oct. 1697. Upon the report that the Akany and other states were to fight the king of Aguaffo and his men, the English credited them with "6 barrels of gun-powder, and 11 lead barrs".

W.I.C. 124/12/10 March 1700. Report of W. Bosman in accordance with the Resolution of 23 Feb. 1700.

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<sup>1</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.31. Claridge, op.cit., p.150.



When the reasons why the Fanti stayed away from the war are examined, it becomes clear that there were other compelling reasons. Whatever the nature of the struggles on the coast, they had by now passed the simple stage of a struggle for the control of trading posts. The entire fortunes of the states along the coast were now bound up with the European traders.

There seems to have been some truth in the charge made by Bosman against the English that they persuaded and forced the Fanti into deserting the Dutch. It is however not known for certain whether the English paid the same amount of money that had been offered to the Fanti by the Dutch, to remain "Neuter" as Bosman put it. There is nevertheless enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that this might have taken place. The assertion is further made that when the Braffo of Fanti disagreed with the English plans, he was deposed and a more pliable one put in his place. That the English at least encouraged this action may be seen from the accounts from Cape Coast Castle. In September of 1697 presents consisting of lead bars, gun powder and other ammunition were given to the Dey (chief minister) of Fanti to "carry his design in deposing the Braffo". Nor was this particular work left to the Dey alone. Other allies of the English were encouraged to go to the assistance of the Dey. The same report contained accounts of presents for the "King of Aguaffo's soldiers who went to assist the Captain of Abra".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/122/9 Sept. 1697. T.70/374/1 & 18 Sept. 1697, Bosman, op.cit., p.31.



It was in the time of alliances and counter-alliances which left things in exactly the same state as before that the Dutch were eventually saved from the necessity of having to submit to the terms of the Komenda by the timely return of the deported brother of the King of Komenda from Surinam~~g~~. He was usefully employed by the Dutch to advise his brother to live in peace with them. This was easily effected because both sides were by this time tired of the wars. The Dutch-Komenda struggles were to all intents and purposes ended. But any form of peace had to be in the interest of their respective companies and not in that of their rivals. This is clearly shown by the behaviour of the English.

To the English, any peace between the Dutch and the Komenda was not what they expected. Since they had all the time assisted the Komenda in their struggle against the Dutch, they formed the opinion that the King of that state should always accept their direction. For the King to have agreed for the second time within less than two years to live at peace with the Dutch was an unpardonable mistake. To rectify this mistake they resorted to means that were bound to create more troubles in the unstable politics of Komenda. With the help of Takyi Ankan, who had defected to the Dutch side after the first war, they managed to get the king murdered when he was invited into the castle at Cape Coast.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 917/July 1700. "Report of the Director General and his Council". Bosman, op.cit., p.33. Claridge, op.cit., p.150.



By this act the Komenda people became the enemies of the English. This sparked off another war, which was fought with the express purpose of avenging the death of the King. An English supported contingent led by Ankan was defeated in November of 1698.<sup>1</sup> Thus Takyi Ankan, the pretender to the Komenda stool, lost his bid to be made king. While the English were thus hard put to defend their interest, the Dutch now stood in a better position to make good their misfortunes at Komenda.

It was not long, however, before the Dutch lost all the advantages that they now possessed. Like Staphorst before him, Sevenhuysen, the Dutch general, also fell to the process of purging the Company's servants of what he considered to be undesirable elements. In this work he employed one Akim as his chief agent. The excesses of Akim soon brought the Dutch into troubles again. The occasion this time was an attack on Fetu traders who came to Elmina. Whether this was planned to involve the Dutch in any further troubles, as they would have us believe, is not known. Soon, however, the Komenda were in arms against the Dutch for the attack on the traders, because Fetu at this time was said to have been under the overlordship of the Komenda state.<sup>2</sup> Nor did

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/377/13 May 1702. Bosman, op.cit., p.33. In April 1698, the English reported "an accident in the Aguaffo Camp, likely to create trouble if not prevent which will cost money.." It is likely that this was occasioned by the murder of the King of Aguaffo. T.70/11/125 Nich. Buckeridge and Council, 6 April 1698.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.124/12 Report of Willem Bosman to the Director and Council. Elmina, 10 March 1700. N.B.K.G./69/18/April 1702. "Report of Willem de la Palma on Sevenhuysen's administration". W.I.C./917/April 1702; Bosman, op.cit., p.33. Claridge, op.cit., p.153. N.B.K.G.58.



the armies of the English supporting Ankan stand aloof from the struggle. In effect another war involving the Dutch, English and Komenda ensued. In the battle the supporters of the murdered King and his Dutch allies were defeated by the pretender, Ankan, in September 1699.<sup>1</sup>

With Ankan on the stool, the long drawn out struggle in Komenda came to an end. But this did not completely stop the dynastic troubles that had plagued the central authority in the state. The division of the state into "English-Komenda" and "Dutch-Komenda" seemed to have begun at this time. Whenever it suited them, the two European companies on the coast moved in to support their own candidates. What came to an end when Takyi Ankan was put on the stool was active war.

For years after the close of the war, the death of the King offered yet another invitation to the English and the Dutch to intervene in Komenda politics. In 1704 the Council at Elmina Castle, reporting the death of the King, added that they were trying to get one Takyi Addico to occupy the stool. They made no secret of their intention on making their new proposals. They were undertaking that course of action because they knew that he would help to give the company wider scope and advance their trade at Komenda.<sup>2</sup> At the time the Dutch were planning to put their candidate on the stool, the English were also hard at work to establish themselves at Komenda. The English took an extraordinary step in relation

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.917. Report of Sevenhuysen, 30 July 1700.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G./124. W.I.C./484. W.I.C./917 add dated 4 Oct. 1704.  
N.B.K.G.57/Sevenhuysen's Report 31. July 1700.



to the question of the Komenda succession. Messengers were dispatched to the rulers of Sabu and Fetu, as well as <sup>to</sup> the most important men of Komenda State, to tell them that they should not proceed to elect a King to the vacant Komenda stool without the wishes of the English general at Cape Coast being consulted. With the approval of their ally, John Kabes, the English came to the same conclusion that their interest would be better served if Takyi Addico became the ruler of the Komenda state. At this time one would have thought that the two contending European nations would sink their differences to help bring peace to the strife torn Komenda. It seemed however that the candidate was inclined more to the English than to the Dutch. His accession to the stool was to carry one stipulation, namely that the English "would pay no rent to the King for their fort at Komenda if trade was not encouraged to their fort".<sup>1</sup> That the King should have agreed to the English stranglehold on his economic interests shows the helplessness to which the acceptance of European assistance reduced such rulers. It is very difficult to follow the troubled politics of Komenda at this time. But certainly the English soon lost their hold on the King. On the death of the new King, nevertheless, the English appear to have succeeded again in getting their candidate accepted for the Chieftaincy of Komenda. But they had to learn the lesson over and over again, that their excessive desire to intrude in the politics of the state was not in the

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<sup>1</sup>T. 70/1463/16 & 21 Aug. 1704.



interest of either their Company or their candidates. In 1703, for instance, they found it necessary to remind the then King that they were as capable of doing him harm as they had been in doing him good.<sup>1</sup> These threats were issued because it was realised that the King was turning more to the Dutch than to them. In 1703 the same thing occurred in their relations with Takyi Kuma. After incurring debts to the English, he found it worth his while to turn to the Dutch. After all, although the wars were fought under the cover of installing rulers, basically they were in the interest of the European supporters. It was the English Agent, John Snow, who saw the remedy for this immersion in the political struggles on the Gold Coast. He wisely advised that there was no need to press the rulers for debts that were contracted as a result of the European wars. It was the mistaken belief that by concerning themselves in local politics, the helpers would reap advantages, that drove the rulers away from the English.<sup>2</sup>

In the second decade of the eighteenth century the Dutch made concerted efforts to get an acceptable candidate on to the Komenda stool. Apparently the English had succeeded in getting the King Abbe Takyi Kuma, who had secured their help but then turned to the Dutch,

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1463/20 March 1703.

<sup>2</sup>Report of John Snow in K.G. Davies, op.cit. , Appendix IV.



destooled. To be able to achieve this they were once again prepared to foster local wars with Komenda. Thus they persuaded the Fanti and the neighbouring states to come to the assistance of their candidate. Between 1714 and 1716 several attempts were made to reinstate Takyi Kuma. At the instigation of the Dutch, an ultimatum was sent to the Elders of Komenda to the effect that they should be prepared to accept Abbe Takyi, otherwise they would be forced to use their army to achieve their desired objective.<sup>1</sup> It was to counter-balance this and to protect themselves against any attack, that the English were quick to break the news to John Kabes of Komenda. In face of the impending attack, he was asked to help restore the English fort at Little Komenda.<sup>2</sup> It may be seen from this that both the Dutch and the English had become heavily involved in the politics of Komenda. All this, it must be admitted, was done in the interest of trade. But it cannot be denied that such practices were detrimental to the smooth running of the government of the state.

Nor was political interference confined to Komenda. Fetu also had its share of it. As it has already been noted, in 1693, the English had assumed the right to instal rulers of that state. This was to be repeated again in succeeding years. In 1703 the election of a new king of Fetu came up again. It must be remarked that the action of the

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G./82/28 Sept. 1715. Ibid/8 Oct. - 5 Nov. 1715.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1464/9 July 1915.



English in 1693 had been very effective. On this occasion the Elders found that it was useless for them to proceed to choose any successor without consulting the English at Cape Coast. On the death of the King, therefore, messengers were sent to inform Sir Dalby Thomas. The English hurriedly took council with the rulers of Sabu and John Kabes of Komenda to select a new ruler for the state.<sup>1</sup> As if consultation over the heads of the elders of Fetu were not enough, the English took the unprecedented step of disregarding the established practices of the Fetu state. A woman, one Aquaba Braffo, was chosen to be queen of the state.<sup>2</sup> This action was the prelude of further trouble. In 1706 the Dutch were reporting that the English general was engaged in wars with the Fetu and Sabu states.<sup>3</sup> This was not propaganda placing the blame on their rivals. The English themselves realised that the general was the cause of the unrest and discontent on the Gold Coast. In a rather interesting report headed "Reflections on Sir Dalby's conduct in making the wars", it was noticed that by making Aquaba Braffo queen contrary to the custom of that country and usage of the people, the general had jeopardised the interest of the Company. It is interesting to observe that although the writers of the report

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<sup>1</sup> It is difficult at first sight to understand why the English should take council with people who were themselves not citizens of Fetu in a matter which was mainly a Fetu affair. But there is no doubt that these were themselves people in the pay of the English who would come to their assistance in the event of a war. Bosman, op.cit., Let. 1 p. 7. <sup>claims that they</sup> Brandenburgers, For some time past their commanders and servants, except common soldiers, have been most part Dutch, who in imitation of our nation have always aimed at an absolute Dominion over the Blacks.



seemed to have been against the whole administration of the general, they did not say anything against the fact that the English took it upon themselves to elect a successor to the King of Fetu. Their objection in this case was to acting "contrary to the usage of the people". The English at this time simply considered the selection of the ruler of the state to fall within their jurisdiction. Seeing in political control of Fetu a means to capture all the trade coming from the interior, and also as a step towards still wider influence, Sir Dalby was determined that nothing should come between him and his plans. Finding the opponents of his plan determined to resist, he wished for about one hundred and fifty trained soldiers to be able to force the state into accepting all his measures. An opportunity seemed to occur in 1706. That was the time when it was reported that Fetu and its allies had been completely defeated. The hope was expressed that, as a result of the defeat, Sir Dalby's plan, which had been expensive to the Company, would now succeed.<sup>1</sup> In this they were proved right. In 1708 the general could proudly announce his achievements with the Fetu state. It was reported that permission had been granted

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<sup>2</sup>T.70/1643/12 & 17 April 1704.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G. 59/114/Report of Direct Gen. to the Ten. April 1706.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/40/7 March 1707.



for the town of Cimbi in Fetu to be settled, and that the inhabitants would pay a fifth of their produce of corn. This power to collect tolls, which the Dutch had exercised at places from as far back as the 1640's, was the special envy of the English. They had always wished to control the local states as did the Dutch. It was therefore with a feeling of pride that Sir Dalby reported his great achievement in the Fetu state. It was hoped that soon many states would be brought under the English in the same way as Fetu.

Sir Dalby sought also to spread his influence further to the east. When the Dutch were granted permission to build a fort at Breku he threatened to send down his soldiers to fight the Agona people. First he demanded that one Prince, alias Wericoe, who was alleged to have invited the Dutch, should be surrendered to him. In April Sir Dalby sent one Quao to the Queen and elders of Agona to tell them that if "they do not turn away the Dutch ... and deliver up Prince he would make war against them". When this was disregarded, the Braffo of Fanti was approached to "remove the Dutch from Sanya". Sir Dalby again threatened to ask Akwamu to attack Agona. Although the Dutch were not driven from the site, Sir Dalby's attempts show the extent to which the Europeans would go to secure their commercial interests.<sup>1</sup> As long as

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1463/C.C.C. Memo. 12 April 1703. T.70/379 C.C.C. Jan. 30 April 1707. It appears the Dutch were also threatening other states for favours shown to the English. In 1707, the English paid 1 mark 9 ackies 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> takoes to defray charges of an expedition to Sakonde<sup>(Sakonde)</sup> to encourage our friends in the Anta country and to protect them from the Dutch who threatened them with war for suffering the English to get oystershells at Taqueradoe.



Sir Dalby lived, and provided the necessary help to the rulers, they deferred to the wishes of the English company.<sup>1</sup> When the Chief trader at Kabestera was said to be disturbing the trade to Cape Coast, the English-controlled Queen of Fetu sought leave from her "master" at Cape Coast to wage war on that state. The general ordered that Kwamina Koffee, who was accused of disturbing the trade, should be seized and brought over to the castle. Having made the ruler of Fetu a terror to the neighbouring states who had not lost their independence to the English, it became apparent that when the help was not forthcoming the state would be attacked. This is exactly what happened on the death of Sir Dalby Thomas in 1711. It was reported that on Sir Dalby's death the Fanti fell on Fetu and devastated the country "because the Fetuers were in the Company's interest".<sup>2</sup>

Nor were the Fetus themselves happy about the loss of their independence. But what seemed an opportunity to reassert it drove them rather into the hands of the Dutch. Six years after the death of the energetic Sir Dalby Thomas, the Fetus were reported to have "destroyed those officers and other that were in the <sup>Co's</sup> ~~Co's~~ (English) interest". They elected a new Dey (Chief Minister) who was said to have been to Holland and had formerly lived at Elmina. This is an obvious implication that the Dutch influence had gained ascendancy in that state. The Eng-

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1463/4 Nov. 1709. T.70/5/50/22-25 Oct. 1708. C.C.C.J.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/74/10 Jan. 1711.



lish would not countenance this loss of influence. The same report<sup>1</sup> ended that the Fantis had been hired to "chastise" the Fetu people with fire and sword. It was not until 1720, however, that the Fantis took up arms against Fetu. A year after, the report held that peace had been established. It does not however make it clear whether the English achieved their aim of re-establishing men of their own choice.<sup>1</sup>

The first attempt of the Portuguese to establish themselves on the coast was the development of Elmina into an independent city which owed allegiance to neither the King of Fetu nor Komenda. Although the town was never completely brought under the Portuguese, the section <sup>action?</sup> was their first real - ~~and only~~ - step in interference in local political matters. That they never carried the policy further than they did at Elmina was less a desire not to interfere in African politics than an admission of weakness. But if the spread of their resources along the Atlantic seaboard, and later their interest in India, made it impossible for Portugal to take part in the political affairs of the Gold Coast, the Dutch and the English, who followed them in the century of keen European economic competition, felt that to be able to achieve their primary objective, they needed an atmosphere conducive to trade. In pursuing this they felt also the need to bend the local political systems to suit their individual interests. From the start, the policy

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/6/48/J. Phipps and R. Bleau to the R.A.C. 6 Feb. 1717, p.84 - 11 Oct. 1718. T. 70/7/12: Phipps and Dodson to R.A.C., 2 Nov. 1720, f. 18 8 April 1721.



took the form of employing their good offices in settling local disputes which appeared to be disruptive of their trading interests. When persuasion failed to achieve the desired effect, they did not hesitate to employ force, by turning their local allies against other states. By the end of the seventeenth century the English were recommending the Dutch policy as the best in the context of the Gold Coast trade. This was "to hire other nations to fall upon them that are false, and to cut them to pieces".<sup>1</sup> But while this practice was generally true with the Dutch at the time when the English companies were not firmly established, by the 1680's the method was applicable to both the Dutch and the English. Admittedly the Dutch began earlier than the English in seeking to control the local states, as may be seen from the levy of tolls in such states as Axim, Elmina, Komenda and Sabu. It is also true that the Dutch considered their defeat of the Portuguese as conferring a special right on them. When that right stood in danger from other European nations, they used all the means at their command to remind the local rulers of their "rights by conquest". The desire to enforce these rights caused many local wars. The Dutch-Axim struggles in the 1640's, and above all their attacks on Komenda, showed the degree of control to which they were prepared to go to enforce their claims. Writing on the effects of the Komenda War, one Dutch general asserted that by their high-handed actions, a

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/6 Oct. 1705 - 1 Jan. 1706.



place like Elmina which could formerly furnish about 12,000 men, could <sup>now have no more than</sup> ~~no more~~ have 1,000 men.<sup>1</sup> An English report of 1714, uncharitable though it appears, shows the state of dependency to which Komenda was reduced. In 1714 it was noted that "the present King of Aguaaffo live upon the charity of the Dutch and had not a slave to wait upon him".<sup>2</sup>

In the struggle for control the English were not prepared to allow the Dutch to take all the important trading centres. In the same way as they had been prepared to fight the Dutch to gain their position on the coast, they stood ready to impose their will on the local states when it was deemed proper in the interest of trade. Their underhand dealings with the Dutch in the Komenda War helped to prolong the struggle. Nor was their murder of the King of Komenda in 1698 a mere commercial act in its consequences. It contributed to political instability and also frightened the local rulers. In 1704 one Kwamina Koffee of Kabestera made it plain to the English that the fear of suffering the same fate as "Grate (sic) Taggee himself, who was a grate friend to the English", prevented him from coming into the Cape Coast Castle. True the English policy of controlling the local states, as was symbolised in the relations of Sir Dalby Thomas and the Fetu, suffered a great reverse on the death of the general, but

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.58/6. Report of the Director General Wm. de la Palma and Council, 27. June 1702.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/3/100/Report of G. Gove, Phipps and Bleau dd 23 March 1714.



this does not in any way detract from the assertion that, whenever the European nationals on the coast felt strong enough, they did not hesitate to adopt methods which were designed to get "trade to follow the flags on the castles and the forts". The assertion that the Europeans adopted a policy of abstention in the politics of the state along the Guinea Coast until the nineteenth century is not applicable to the Gold Coast between 1640 and 1720.



## Chapter V

### THE RISE OF THE NEW CLASS

The concentration of peoples and forts along the coastal belt of the Gold Coast opened new vistas for commercial and political advancement. Towns and villages, hitherto unimportant, became centres of flourishing trade. The settlements soon took on a cosmopolitan outlook. There were those who came to sell their commodities and then returned to their states. There were also a number of people with nothing to sell but their services and skills. While for the first hundred and fifty years there was no need to learn any language other than Portuguese, the arrival of different European nationals on the coast in the seventeenth century intensified the need for a common trading language. This in turn made inevitable the emergence of a class of middlemen who acted as a liaison between the African and the European traders. Side by side with the rise of a new class was the rise of a new group of people. The coming together of the two races created the mulatto people who were the offspring of Afro-European miscegenation. The mulattoes were the products of the commercial age.

The Europeans on the coast seemed, however, to have placed very little confidence in this new group of people. One writer described them as possessing "whatever is in its own nature worse in the Europeans and the



Negroes..... so that they are the sink of both".<sup>1</sup> But along with the vices, some did combine the virtues of both races, and some rose to positions of trust in the services of the European companies and others too exercised influence in the local towns which sprang up around the castles and forts. It is true the mulattoes were not the decisive factor in Gold Coast trade, but their role can be understated. Difficulties arise in finding out the exact nationality of most of the people whose names appeared in the trading records. The writers tended to "europeanise" the names of some of the Africans they came to deal with. And some of the Africans fancifully assumed European names. In 1645, for instance, a certain Henryco was said to be the most influential caboceer of Elmina. He is found accompanying a Dutch Commissioner on a mission to the King of Fetu.<sup>2</sup> If one were to guess his nationality, one would doubtlessly place him as a mulatto of Portuguese origin. Reasonable though this appears, it would be rash so to conclude, for it was not uncommon for pure Africans to assume European names, names of their favourite friends and masters. The name of one Affomba, popularly known as Ruy<sup>s</sup>chaver, maybe cited as an example.<sup>3</sup> There were other names such as Jan and Hans Raposa in Dutch records which may be classified as

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<sup>1</sup> Willem Bosman, A New and Accurate Description, Let. IX, p. 119. Astley, Collections, p. 634.

<sup>2</sup> K. Ratelband, Vijf Dagregisters, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 49.



being among a group of Portuguese mulattoes. Toward the end of the seventeenth century the English had in their service a Doctor Griffin. His name appears to be English and his title places him in a category apart from the ordinary African. His jobs and emolument, however, make it difficult to know for certain his true nationality. His name constantly appears with such Africans as Quansa, Peter Panin, Quao, Coffee and others, who received not more than eight ackies (£1 sterling) a month.<sup>1</sup> His status makes it difficult to place him among the pure English. If he was not an African, then he was probably a mulatto.

There were however some whose identities could not be hidden. Geelendonck who rose to be a commissioner in 1647 was described as a mulatto. In the difficult days of Anglo-Dutch rivalry to establish themselves in the state of Fetu (Efutu) the Dutch posted Geelendonck to Cape Coast where he first stayed in a Negro's house to carry on his duties.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly Cape Coast, lying between the Dutch possessions at Moure and Elmina, was not very profitable commercially. Strategically however it was of immense importance because an English fort there would have meant difficulties in direct communications between the two posts. That Geelendonck was entrusted with this work must be seen as

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/368/Nov. 1682, T.70/380/22 Feb. 1714, T.70/1463/16 Dec. 1704. C.C. Castle Memorandum, and Account Books. T.70/374/28 August 1697, Dr. Griffin was given 1 sheet, 1 English carpet, among other things, to bury his mother.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C. 11/18 Feb. 1645, K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.267.



a reflection of the importance attached to the influence of such men as negotiators at critical times. In the Dutch struggle with John Konny to gain possession of the former Brandenburg possessions on the coast between 1718 and 1724, the Directors in Holland suggested that their agents should work through a Dutch mulatto - Bosman - who was in the service of Konny.<sup>1</sup> Though there was no immediate effect, Bosman not infrequently reported Konny's dealings with other European nationals to the Dutch. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the eventual Dutch success in driving away Konny in 1724 was due to the help given them by Bosman.

But perhaps the most important and influential of all the seventeenth century mulattoes was Edward Barter. Towards the end of the century he was said to have become virtually the ruler of both the town of Cape Coast and the English Castle as well. A man of Afro-English parentage, Barter had the rarest of good fortunes in getting a good education in England. He returned and set up in private trade. But there is some indication that he might have worked, if not for, then at least closely, with the English. His long residence on the coast gave him the advantage which the directors of the English establishment never possessed. On account of this he was consulted on commercial and political matters. His power and wealth may be guessed from his aristocratic way of life. He was said to have built himself a fort on which he hoisted

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 463, Letter from the Council of the Ten to Willem Butter.  
27 December 1718. Of the Dutch struggle with Konny more hereafter.



the English flag and mounted a few cannons. All trade which came to the English Castle passed through the hands of Barter.<sup>1</sup> He commanded a sizeable army of his own which was composed of his slaves and freemen. He seems to have placed this quite often at the disposal of the English. He deployed the army in 1699 for the release of Anomabo fort.<sup>2</sup> And in the English attempts to gain control over Fetu, Barter seems to have played a very important part. The account books of Cape Coast show twenty-nine gallons of brandy as having been given to Edward Barter "to distribute among the caboceers at the Camp".<sup>3</sup> At the end of the century Barter's services and influences ended when he fell from grace with the English. His wealth and influence ironically were the cause of his fall. With the arrival of Sir Dalby Thomas on the Coast in 1701 to assume the generalship of the English company, such over-mighty allies became suspect. In the last two years of his life Barter became a refugee in Komenda. Because of his activities on the Coast the Company asked that he should be returned to England, Barter being a "naturalised" Englishman. His escape to the Dutch therefore was not surprising. The protection which Barter was granted was seen by the Dutch as one of the main causes of disagreement between them and the English. The Council of Ten therefore demanded his expulsion from Elmina. Barter moved into a

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., p.45; J. Barbot, op.cit., p.444, W. W. Claridge, op.cit., p.169.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/376/21 December 1699.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/376/36/31 April 1700.



safer place. He sought refuge at the court of the King of Komenda.<sup>1</sup> In January 1702 the English dispatched messengers to the King to "negotiate on Barter's coming down".<sup>2</sup> He died a few months later, having made the Dutch the executors of his will and the King of Komenda his legatee. The problem of how to dispose of his goods even after his death became a bone of contention between the English and the Dutch.<sup>3</sup>

The life and career of Edward Barter was a unique example of the influence which could be enjoyed by a mulatto in English trading circles in the seventeenth century. Though there were many of his kind, few had the advantages of education and wealth. Some were employed in a minor position as soldiers and middlemen, but the era of mulatto influence on Gold Coast trade and politics had not yet dawned. But the problem of mulattoes and, indirectly, the problem of recruiting competent local servants were persistent difficulties for the European trading Companies on the Gold Coast. Had there been a desire to convert people to Christianity, it is likely that formal education might have been the by-product of such a policy. Whatever might have been the original motives to save the souls of the Africans, commerce and exploitation soon

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C. 917. De la Palma's Report, 18. Jan. 1701 - 10 Oct. 1703.  
N.B.K.G. 58/71/Report of the Director Gen. and Council. 1703.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/377/7 Jan.1702.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.917/De la Palma's Report, 31 August 1704.



submerged, if they did not completely obliterate, the ideal but impracticable motives. From the very early beginnings references were made to baptism and erection of chapels in Fetu by the Portuguese, but soon any Christian motives which survived were confined to the Castle at Elmina. Apparently reporting on the evangelical successes at Afutu in 1503, Diogo d'Alvaranga, recommended that it would be for the glory of God and the service of the King of Portugal to celebrate a high mass once in two weeks at Fetu.<sup>1</sup> In 1555 Martin Frobisher, who spent a few months as a prisoner at Elmina Castle, saw that religion had been relegated into the background of the Portuguese activities. He observed that "except it be that they have masse nowe and then within the castell, to which a verrey fewe of the said enhabitantes who have been trayned up of children doo sometyme come, there is no other preest nor preacher to convert or instruct anyone of the Christian faith".<sup>2</sup> This observation was at Elmina which was the Portuguese headquarters. One would expect the enthusiasm to be higher here than at the outposts. But after nearly one and a half centuries only about half of the eight hundred inhabitants in the immediate vicinity of Elmina were Christians by the 1620's.<sup>3</sup> The situation was in no way improved by the concentration of many European nationalities on the Coast. Although Barbot's remark about the Dutch and other Europeans may be an overstatement, it was broadly true, certainly at the time when he was on the Coast. He asserts

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Blake, Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, Vol. I, London, 1942. in Hakluyt Soc. Ser., II Vol., LXXXVI, p.96.

<sup>2</sup>J. W. Blake, op.cit., Vol. II, p.360.

<sup>3</sup>C. R. Boxer, Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415-1825, (Oxford 1963), pp. 7, 12.



that "the great concern of the Dutch on this Coast as well as of all the Europeans settled or trading there, is the gold, and not the welfare of those souls".<sup>1</sup> Human problems such as that of the children born from the Afro-European intermingling, and the mere desire to win the favours of the local people led, at times, to the establishment of schools, albeit half-heartedly persevered with.

From the outset the Dutch seemed to have considered it important to appoint chaplains to the Gold Coast. These however seemed to have been principally concerned with the spiritual needs of their Dutch personnel and not with the Africans. In 1628, a certain Wilhemeus Laijrelius was appointed chaplain at Elmina castle for three years.<sup>2</sup> Nothing is known of his activities during his tenure of office. Six years after his appointment, however, a school for the education of African children was reported at Moure. They were to be taught something about the Christian religion. It was soon written off as a failure because of the lack of interest shown by the Africans. The teacher's job was changed to that of surgeon, and nothing more was heard of the official plan.<sup>3</sup> It was eleven years later before anything was heard of a school

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<sup>1</sup>J. Barbot, op.cit., p.157.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C., 20/85/25 July 1628.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C. 11/2/3 Feb. 1634. Report from Fort Nassau.



on the Gold Coast. But even then, it is rather doubtful whether the Dutch were in earnest about the plans. The site for the school at Accra shows that it was merely a pretence, meant to curry favour. In 1644, at a time when there was keen Anglo-Dutch rivalry over the control of the Coast of Accra, a suggestion was made for the building of a school at Accra, to cater for the interests of the mulatto and African children. Instruction was to be in Dutch and the emphasis was to be religious. But the plan never proceeded beyond the stage of a suggestion.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from those two attempts, nothing was heard of a school throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Preachers continued to be sent to the coast, but they appear to have limited any religious functions they performed to their countrymen. In the middle of the century the problem which exercised the minds of some of the preachers was how best to prevent the procreation of mulatto children. In 1668, for instance, the priest suggested that wives should be allowed to accompany their husbands to the Gold Coast, and that unmarried women should be encouraged to come to the coast.<sup>2</sup> The appeal fell on deaf ears. The problem remained unsolved. Indeed, if anything, it seemed to have increased. Rules preventing Dutch men from bringing African women to the forts and boats were disregarded. Even attempts to force them to attend religious services had little success, judging from the number of times instructions

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<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C.9/159/14 Jan. 1644.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C.15/37/30 July 1688.



had to be re-issued. A compromise solution was suggested. Dutchmen who had children with African women should send the children to Holland so that they might not mingle and degenerate into heathenism.<sup>1</sup> This was a sure indication that, whatever the attempts made to educate them, any attempt at winning the Africans over to the Christian religion had been a failure.

The English were late in establishing any institution to train people on the coast. What was attempted in 1694 quickly disintegrated when the school teacher died two years after his arrival. In 1694 a teacher was sent to the coast to establish a school for African and mulatto children at Cape Coast.<sup>2</sup> This project, which had been described as the company's sense of responsibility towards the inhabitants of its towns, was soon abandoned. The only suggestion relating to education was that made by Sir Dalby Thomas in 1705. The General suggested that some of the company's slaves should be taught to read and write English. This would enable them to carry messages to and from the inland states.<sup>3</sup> There was no indication as to where they were to be trained. Perhaps they were to form the nucleus of a school on the coast. An entry in the General's journal of 1704, however, seemed to suggest how it ought

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.124. Regulations of Direct.-Gen. Joel Smit and Council. 23 June 1693. W.I.C.917. Resolution of Direct.-Gen. and Council. Instructions to the forts, Sevenhuysen, Willem de la Palma, 1702. W.I.C. 124/December Report, 16 Oct. 1706. N.B.K.G. 234, Regulations drawn by the Council, 16 May 1702. Bosman asserts that in the administrative hierarchy the Preacher was next to the Director General, Bosman, op.cit., p.98.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/50/139 Oct. 1694, K. G. Davies, op.cit., p. 280. Barbot in Astley, Collections, p.600.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/2/21 Sept. 1705: Abstract of Letters from C.C.Castle.



to be done. In that year cloth costing about two ounces of gold was earmarked for use "to make cloathes for eight black boys sent to England".<sup>1</sup> A year after Sir Dalby's death in 1711, another attempt at establishing a school was made, but that lasted only a year until the death of the teacher spelt the death of the project.

The lack of a school made impossible the education of the children of either Europeans or Africans. Those parents, like Barter's, who could afford it, sent their children to be educated in Europe. But most of the local personnel had to content themselves with learning to speak the trading language. Although the art of writing was the ideal qualification it was not a sine qua non of successful trade on the Coast. Indeed most of the Europeans in the companies' service were themselves virtually uneducated. It would therefore have been unlikely that they would have shown any interest in an art which they did not possess.<sup>2</sup> The efficiency with which the African traders did their work won the admiration of most of the European observers. The ease with which the traders calculated and paid for goods on the market was a source of amazement even to many of the Europeans who were used to writing. Little wonder that with their own ready way of trade some of the Africans on the coast amassed appreciable sums of money and were described as successful businessmen. They became a vital connecting

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/378/4 Feb. 1704: C.C.Castle Journal.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.94.



link between the Europeans on the coast and the local producers in the inland states. But apart from these independent and semi-independent local traders there grew up a class who became very much dependent on the fortunes of the European trading companies. These were people who became the full time employees of the company. They enjoyed a status never before known in the Gold Coast society, namely, men who received regular and fixed salaries for their services.

The erection and maintenance of the European establishments needed more local hands. There was therefore the need for masons, carpenters, bricklayers, among others, to cater for the European needs. There was also a demand for men to sail the canoes which were used for communication between the various European headquarters and their outposts. Admittedly the work could be done by the visiting ships but for permanence a fleet of canoes ready to be deployed at any given moment was much the more useful. The need for canoes by the Europeans provided employment for a number of canoe builders to add to that of their traditional customers, the local fishermen. (All the coastal towns provided fish for the local markets, and Bosman could at times count as many as over five hundred such canoes busy at work every morning in some of the important towns.<sup>1</sup>) Canoes were required not only by the Europeans who were resident on the coast, but by ships on their way to the Slave Coast. In 1683 the English accounts show an amount of

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<sup>1</sup>Bosman, Astley Collections, p.589. Astley ibid, places the number at Elmina at over 700.



over six ounces as having been used to buy canoes.<sup>1</sup> It was for the command over these flotillas of canoes belonging to the company that men like Peter Panin and Coffee received regular salaries as "caboceers of Canoemen".<sup>2</sup> In 1703, the Dutch described one Intim as "Captain of the canoes".<sup>2</sup> Side by side with these company canoes were some which were hired for specific purposes. In 1702, some small blue perpetuans were given out "for canoe hire to Mina".<sup>3</sup> The Dutch claimed that in the war against John Konny in 1711 thirteen ounces of gold were used on canoe hire.<sup>4</sup> While in 1715 the English pointed out to John Kabes that on the strength of their agreement with him they expected that he "shall always provide the company with three canoemen at two ackies each per month".<sup>5</sup>

There was also the need to fill such jobs as gold takers and interpreters. Some of the gold takers were employed in the forts; others were on board the ships which cruised the coasts to trade at places where there were no permanent settlements. For his services on the ship which went on a trading cruise, one Amo "a black gold taker" was paid four and a half ackies of gold.<sup>6</sup> In 1703 Sir Dalby Thomas promoted two of the

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<sup>1</sup> T.70/368/75/23 Feb. 1683. Axim, Boutry, Takoradi, Kommenda, Kormantin and Winneba were noted for canoes. Barbot asserts that the "natives there make and vend great numbers of them yearly, ....., both to Europeans and their neighbours". Barbot, Churchill's Collection, Vol. 5, p.266. These canoes are used to transport goods from place to place. The Elmina people were said to be so adept in handling them "over the most dangerous bars and raging waters and venture to sail in the largest all about the bight of Guinea, and even to Angola". Barbot, Ibid., p.266.

<sup>2</sup> T.70/378/9 Feb. 1703, T.70/380/Feb. 1714. N.B.K.G.69. Report of Wm. de la Palma, 10. June 1702.



company slaves to fill the posts of gold takers. Coffee was sent from Cape Coast to Accra and one Brabo became the gold taker on the Mary Brigantine.<sup>1</sup>

But by far the most important of all the companies' employees were those who undertook what could perhaps be described as the jobs of advertising agents or market researchers. They were not only expected to popularise the company's goods and to induce traders to send their commodities to the respective forts, but they were to detect probable changes on the markets. Combined with these duties they were not infrequently assigned to the promotion of both peace and war. Payment was not unreasonable. In 1683, fifteen or so gallons of brandy were given to Captain Quao for his "expence in passing through the up-land country for encouragement of trade".<sup>2</sup> The English had such names as Afra Yanka, Dr. Griffin, Hansico, while the Dutch employed people like Abban, Pieter Passop, Affo and Anim, among others, in these important duties. In 1682, Hansico spent about sixty days in Fetu settling disputes,

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(cont.)

<sup>3</sup>T.70/378/85/5 August 1702.

<sup>4</sup>W.I.C.124: Expenses of the war against John Konny. 17 August 1711-28 Feb. 1712.

<sup>5</sup>T.O.70/1464, Komenda Diary, 26 April 1715.

<sup>6</sup>T.70/368/23 June 1683. C.C.C.Acct. A gold taker was a man employed by the Europeans to conduct the gold merchants to the fort and to help them in weighing it.

<sup>1</sup>T.70/1463/10 12 Feb. 1703.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/368/89/15 March 1683.



apparently over trade routes, between Fetu and Accany. He was engaged in a similar mission at Aguaffo a year later.<sup>1</sup>

Although some of the men employed on these political missions owed their position to their family connections, most rose to positions of trust by virtue of their honesty and diligence. Hansico was said to be the nephew of the King of Fetu (and understandably spent a long time in settling a dispute between his and another state). But men like Quamino and Affado could not boast of such high connections. When Sir Dalby Thomas's chosen queen of Fetu was threatened with war by the King of Kabesterra, the men sent to negotiate for a peaceful settlement, Quamino and Affado, were described as "company slaves".<sup>2</sup> A few days later Affado was seen in Abramboe settling a dispute over passage, which had arisen among Denkyira, Twifu and Akania and that state. In December both men went on separate missions to Denkyira.<sup>3</sup>

The Dutch had also some very serviceable employees. One of them was called Aban. His name appears in Dutch records as far back as 1676. In 1683 he warned the Dutch of an impending attack by Adom on Ahanta. This led the Dutch to hasten to collect what goods they had at Takoradi and to remove their factor to safety.<sup>4</sup> Described as the Company's great

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/367/208/22 Aug. 1682. T.70/318/27 April 1683.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1463/6 July 1704. C.C.C.Memorandum.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1464/18 July 1704, 16 December 1704.

<sup>4</sup>W.I.C. 124/3 August 1683. N.B.K.G. 9. 81/Aug. 1683. Meeting of the Director-General and Council.



broker at Elmina, he fell on evil days under General Staphorst. He was imprisoned for debt but, through the help of another Dutchman, he was able to pay off the amount.<sup>1</sup> He spent the last days of his life at Cape Coast in the service of the English. Obviously considered as a big catch in the Anglo-Dutch struggle for power on the Gold Coast, the English were willing to "enter" the "great trader lately arrived from Del Mina in the Company's pay".<sup>2</sup> One Accameny, described by Bosman as a brother of the King of Aguaffo, was another of the influential men in the service of the Dutch. He was deported in 1695 by General Staphorst to Suriname for allowing his men to fight on the side of Aguaffo against the Dutch in their war against Komenda. He it was who used his good offices on his return from exile, to save the Dutch from fighting against Komenda in 1698.<sup>3</sup>

In their effort to establish peace on the coast in the interest of trade, the Dutch at the beginning of the eighteenth century, relied mainly on two men, Affo and Pieter Passop. For a time after the Ashanti defeat of Denkyira, the immediate hinterland of the coast was in turmoil. Wars and rumours of wars were prevalent. In 1702 when the director was alarmed at the poor state of trade, he decided to send Affo, described

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.484/143/30 May 1701. Sevenhuysen's Report.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/11/118/6 Jan. 1696, Ibid/119/1 1 May 1696.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.917/10 Oct. 1703 - 25 Feb. 1704. Report of W de la Palma  
W.I.C. 484 Willem Bosman, op.cit., p.



as one who had been in the company's service for twenty years, to negotiate for peace. He was to pass through Fetu, Abrambo, Akany and on to Ashanti, settling disputes and encouraging traders to come to the Dutch forts and finally to deliver a message to the Assistant-Commissioner, Nyendaal, at Kumasi.<sup>1</sup> But Pieter Passop was exceptional in the number of his rôles.

Passop's exact nationality is not known. What is certain, however, is that he was connected with the Akwamu Royal house by marriage and his brother was one of the Elders of the Court of Akwamu. Sometimes described as a broker and on other occasions simply as a company's servant, he was employed on diplomatic, trade and military missions. In 1693 he was one of the people who were sent by the Dutch to persuade the King of Akwamu not to give the Danish fort of Christianborg, which had been captured by Akwamu, to any other nation.<sup>2</sup> His influence, probably, was one of the principal factors which helped the Dutch in their successful negotiation for the return of the fort to the Danies in 1693. In 1703 he was the interpreter to the Dutch delegation composed of Branke and de Bois sent to the Court of Akwamu to invite the King to Accra. The Akwamu-Dutch Agreement of 1703 was the direct result of this mission.<sup>3</sup> It is not certain whether he was at

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.917/Report of Willem de la Palma. 25 Sept. 1702. Wilks asserts that Pieter Passop was the Otu who established the Otu bulongu quarter at Accra. He is said to have been the Akwamu representative at Accra. See Wilks, M.A. Thesis, also "Akwamu and Otublohum" Africa Vol XXIX No 4. Oct. 1959

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.81/14 August 1693. Letter from Accra.

<sup>3</sup>For the terms of this Agreement see Chap. II, p.94 N.B.K.G.69/2/Report of J. van Branke and Wm. de Bois on the mission to Akwamu. 22 March 1703.



first based at Accra. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, he was described as "a black caboceer of Elmina". His power over Elmina and the whole coast may be inferred from his boldness. In 1703 his messenger arrived at Cape Coast to warn the elders that Passop intended to seize anybody from that town if "a rowl of tobacco" which had been taken away from his servant by a Cape Coast caboceer was not returned immediately to him. This caused alarm among the Cape Coast people who immediately asked the help of the English general in the Castle.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch provided similar evidence of Passop whom they hoped to employ to keep the peace on the coast. In their report of 1704, the council referred to him as "our (Dutch) great broker who is respected and feared by the natives". They singled out his connections with the great King of Akwamu and his courage in war, as factors which had earned him respect in the country. When the King of Whydah asked the Dutch to persuade the Akwamu King to send a canoe to collect his presents, Pieter Passop was entrusted with the task.<sup>2</sup> In the Anglo-Dutch joint attack on John Konny in 1711, Pieter Passop led a contingent of soldiers from Elmina to fight at Akoda. The deference with which other local caboceers treated him may be seen from the fact that Appre, who was one of the original contestants in the struggle, requested that the Elmina soldiers should first "drink fetish" (take the oath of allegiance)

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1463/April 1703. C.C.C.Memorandum.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.484/237/Report of Director and Council 10 Oct. 1703. N.B.K.G. 59/146/25 May 1705. Report of the Director and Council.



to Passop.<sup>1</sup> Unlike others, about whom the Dutch commented sadly that the debts they owed the Company might never be paid, Passop, who was the only individual to owe more than £72 sterling, was still considered to be trustworthy, and his debt to be recoverable.<sup>2</sup>

Though Passop was variously called a broker and a company servant, there is no doubt that he was one of the many who depended greatly on the companies he served. His English counterparts may be seen in men like Captain Coffee, Hansco, and Dr. Griffin who were employed by, and remained at the beck and call of, their employers. These were the new class of salaried men and full time employees. In 1682, for instance, the English entered such names as Captain Quao, Quacuba, Hansco and others as receiving salaries of an acky a week.<sup>3</sup> There were others whose salaries were lower though, apart from the monthly payments, there were incidental expenses borne by the companies. In 1682 for instance, Dr. Griffin was paid fourteen ackies "for his expence in going to Fantin on the Company's business".<sup>4</sup> Payment of an acky a week would appear small, but some of the European soldiers and artisans fared no better financially, and when it is also remembered that the payments

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.124/14 December 1711, Report from Axim to Elmina.  
W.I.C.124/Expenses of the War against John Konny, 17 Aug. 1711 - 28 Feb. 1712.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 484 Outstanding Debts: August 1697, Sept. 1704.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/367/127/29 April 1682. T.70/372/11 May 1686.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/368/Nov. 1682. C.C.C.Account Bk. In Bosman's time twopence could be used in a day, p.123.



were regular, one is able to appreciate the new position in which the recipients were placed. In 1680, for instance, Dr. Griffin was able to provide accommodation in his house for "the Queen of Komenda" and her entourage when they came to Cape Coast,<sup>1</sup> a striking indication of the prosperity of some of the new class.

Apart from the emergence of the salaried class, the most important development on the Gold Coast was the rise of the "African Merchant Princes". Some appear to have been first employed in the services of one or other of the European nations. Others seem to have built up their businesses independent<sup>24</sup> of European help. All became strong enough to exert far-reaching influences on the economic and political developments of their states. Indeed some possessed influence far beyond their immediate neighbourhood. Of these men the activities of John Classen, John Hennequa, Assemani, John Kabes and John Konny are fairly typical.

In the 1640's and 1650's the Akrosang brothers, Jan Claßsen, and Jan Hennequa, were powerful enough to be the virtual rulers of Fetu. Described as the friends of the Dutch, they were suspected of having been the men who invited the English to come to Cape Coast at that time.<sup>2</sup> Though they were defeated in their endeavour to attract traders other than the Dutch in 1646, they persevered in their efforts to make Fetu economically viable. Their complaint, as was echoed by the King, was that by concentrating activities on Elmina and Moure, the Dutch were neglecting

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/365/38/Jan. 1680. C.C.C. Acc.

T.70/1426, Charles Kiston, a soldier to receive £12 per ann and ackey money for diet.

T.70/1463/29 May 1703. Ichean, a Black, entered himself in the Company's service for one year to teach some young Company slaves to be Horn Boys and to have 3 ackies (about 7s 6d) per month. (cont.)



Cape Coast.<sup>1</sup> An opportunity to break with the Dutch came in 1650. Henry Carloøf, a one time employee of the Dutch on the Coast, arrived to look for posts for the Swedish company. It is not known for certain why Carloøf chose to concentrate his efforts on Cape Coast. His prior knowledge of the two traders and the fact that they had once attempted to invite the English to Cape Coast, appears to have been the main reason behind Carloøf's venture. He succeeded, and with their help a Swedish post, built of Swish, was put up at Cape Coast in 1650.<sup>2</sup> The name of one of the two brothers features prominently in a Fetu-Swedish agreement of 1650. Jan Hennequa, described as the foremost Caboceer of Fetu, was a witness to the treaty.<sup>3</sup> On Hennequa's death in 1656, the Dutch tried to win back Classen to their former good relationship, a plan which appears to have succeeded for, in January 1659, "one of the servants of Jan Classen" was sent to settle a dispute over free passage between the Twifu and Accany.<sup>4</sup> Like most of the Africans whose names appeared in the European documents little is known of their background and early careers.

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<sup>2</sup>K. Ratelband, op.cit., pp. 14-15, 55.

<sup>1</sup>O.W.I.C.11/45/25 Nov. 1646, K. Ratelband, op.cit., p.267. Report of Hoogenhoek places the responsibility of the English arrival on Jan Classen and Jan Hennequa. A report of 6 December 1646, however, suggests that the two brothers did not approve of the project, K. Ratelband, p.271.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C.13/Protest of Hendrick Carloøf..... dated May 1650.

<sup>3</sup>O.W.I.C.13/Agreement between Carloøf and Boedema, 28 May 1650.

<sup>4</sup>N.B.K.G. 81/18 Jan.1659.



This was true of Assamani of Akwamu. Assemani rose to prominence when the Danish Castle at Osu was captured by Akwamu in 1693. He was said to have been a cook in the English fort at Accra.<sup>1</sup> Later in his career, after learning of the "white man's ways" he set up his own establishment at Accra. His main duty was to act as a broker for traders who came into the Danish fort. He was chosen to carry out Akwamu revenge on the Danes. He succeeded and became the first Akwamu governor of the Castle in 1693.

Akwamu-Danish estrangement had started at the end of the 1670's when the Danes helped the Accras to repulse an Akwamu attack. The Akwamu had planned revenge on the Danes ever since. In 1693, Assemani, whose business in the castle had made him familiar with the strength and the weakness of the Danes, led a group of eighty Akwamu men into the Castle. Ostensibly the Danes were led to believe that the men were traders who had come to purchase guns. By a clever ruse they were able to load the guns with bullets which had been "concealed in the folds of their cloths".<sup>2</sup> The guns were quickly turned on the Danes who were forced to surrender. The governor of the Castle escaped with his life, but his less fortunate neighbours were captured and led captive to the Akwamu capital.

Assemani now became the Governor of the Castle. Like other possessors of forts and castles, Akwamu policy, embodied in the activities of

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<sup>1</sup>For an account of Assemani's early life see: W. W. Claridge, History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, 2 vols., Vol. I, p.257; Ward, Ghana; pp. 93-5; Bosman, op.cit., Let. V., p.60. Phillip's account in Astley's Collections, Vol. Vi, pp. 211-3.

<sup>2</sup>Ivor Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire", T.H.G., Vol. III, pt. 2, Achimota 1957, Bosman, op.cit., Let. V., p.60.



Assemani, was to attract trade. With that aim in view, Akwamu extended his friendship to all traders who came to the coast. The governor "thundered at all the English and Zealand interlopers by way of salute with his cannon". Captain Phillip who was invited to dinner by Assemani in 1693 was impressed by his comportment and hospitality. The host, taking control over all the affairs of the Castle, did not forget to take over the dress of the Danish Governor, a behaviour which lent a ludicrous impression to the whole occasion. But while Assemani was obviously enjoying the duties and rights of a governor in the Castle, negotiations were opened between the Dutch and the King of Akwamu.

In August, the Dutch director at Elmina asked his representative at Accra to investigate the possibilities of purchasing the castle from the King. The Dutch promised to pay the rent and to fulfil all the obligations as had been done by the Danes. The farthest the King would go was to allow the Danish captives in Akwamu to be ransomed and to promise not to sell the Castle to any other nation except the Dutch or the Danes.<sup>2</sup> At long last, however, the King allowed himself to be persuaded into returning the Castle to the Danes. Together with the booty of goods and gold to the value of fifty marks, and the ransome price of the captives, the successful Akwamu attack brought over one hundred marks of

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<sup>1</sup>Bosman, op.cit. ~~idem~~. p60

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.81. 3-15 August 1693. Instructions from Elmina to Accra.



gold into the Akwamu treasury. The Danes paid another fifty marks to Akwamu before the Castle was returned to them.<sup>1</sup> This ended the months of Assemani's governorship, but not his private activities.

Relying on the friendships and the contacts he had made during the period of his public life, Assemani set up his private business six years later at Labadi. The Danes resented his boldness, for Labadi was only a few miles distant from Christiansborg castle. An attempt to dislodge him by force, in 1700, was defeated. It was the pressure from Akwamu which led him to move his business farther eastwards to Ningo.<sup>2</sup> He later on wound up his business and returned to Akwamu. He soon after became a chief of Ouma on the road between Akwamu and Accra. Far from any European establishment, Assemani seems to have lived a comfortable and relatively quiet life. He was able however to mount a few cannon in front of his palace and indulge his favourite pastime. He fired a few shots of welcome to a Dutch delegation on its way to Akwamu Capital in 1703.<sup>3</sup> The last mention of him was in 1704 when his name appears in the Dutch records as owing about ten pounds to the West India Company.<sup>4</sup> With this the curtain falls on the activities of one of the

<sup>1</sup>Ivor Wilks, Akwamu, p.121. Claridge, op.cit., p.127, Bosman, op.cit., p.61.

<sup>2</sup>Wilks, op.cit., p.122.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.69/Report on the Journey from Accra to Akwamu, 22 March 1703. W.I.C.484/278/Sept. 1704. "Outstanding debts to the Company."

<sup>4</sup>W.I.C.484/278/Sept. 1704. "Outstanding debts to the Company". It is significant to note that the exploits of Assemani are still remembered in Akwamu by a bunch of twenty keys from the Castle which is still kept in the Capital. See - Lawrence, op.cit., pl.41 b.



most important Akwamu men whose career helped to advance the powers of his state. His life stands out among the other "merchant princes" of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in so far as his concern was less with private wealth and ambition than with the growth and power of his native state.

The career of John Kabes of Komenda affords another important and interesting study. Ruler, trader, farmer, owner of important salt pans and a successful broker, his services were keenly sought for by both the Dutch and the English. He served both companies at one time or another but for the most part he remained independent. Of all his contemporaries John Kabes's character is the most difficult to analyse. Differing relations with each company and each factor, words like famous, faithful, rogue and tricky were probably equally applicable and certainly applied.

Of his early life and career little is known. The Dutch described him as a nephew of "our great broker Abban". His uncle's career and the fact that Kabes was said to have been first employed in the service of the Dutch may be a clue. His uncle's influence might have been used in securing a position for Kabes under the Dutch. But when <sup>he</sup> enlisted in the Dutch service, and in what capacity are unknown. His active life appears to have been over by 1715 when he was described as "growing old and infirm, and unlikely to live for long".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/29 May 1715. Report from Baillie at Komenda.



When Kabes' name appeared in 1683 he had already established himself as a trader. In that year he was reported to have sold six slaves to the English.<sup>1</sup> Twelve years later he was the most influential single trader at Komenda. It was the Dutch miscalculation in rashly attacking him which led Kabes to invite the English to settle at Komenda. That despite his relative youth, he was able to provide them with accommodation is proof of his influence in a society in which age more than any other consideration formed the basis of power. Kabes was probably in his mid or late twenties in 1683 when he was able to sell slaves on his own account. By 1694, when the Dutch-Komenda war broke out, he would have been about thirty-six. When Kabes was described as ageing and sickly in 1715 he was then in his middle fifties, an age which may be considered old enough in the rough and ready time on the coast. It is not known for certain when he died. But his grave was robbed in 1734 and one may assume that the perpetrators were seeking gold which they knew had been recently buried with him.<sup>2</sup>

Bosman's account of John Kabes does not say when he was in active service with the Dutch. He was said only to be living near the Dutch fort and that he traded considerably with them.<sup>3</sup> Claridge, obviously

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/379/28 Feb. 1683. C.C.Castle Journal.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/54/150/12 December 1734. From London to C.C.C.

<sup>3</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Letter III, p.26.



misquoting Bosman, alleges ~~that~~ Kabes had already been in the service of both the Dutch and the English by the beginning of the war in 1694. There is no evidence that the English had had any direct connections with Kabes prior to 1694. It must be remembered that all English attempts to establish themselves at Komenda before the war had met stiff opposition from the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> English opportunities to win over Kabes to their side and to establish themselves at Komenda came in 1695. Bosman, regretting the alienation of John Kabes and its effects on their trade, commented that the invitation extended to the English had given "the Dutch a nice bone to pick" and that it had "injured.... trade".<sup>2</sup> Kabes did not content himself with a mere invitation. He did what was within his power to help establish English influence at Komenda. He personally undertook the supervision of the building of the English fort. In 1697 three gallons of brandy sent from Cape Coast to John Kabes was "to encourage him to look after our people and to forward the building of the fort".<sup>3</sup> A year later the English were happily reporting that the fort had been completed.

The Dutch never forgot, though they seemed to have forgiven, the part played by Kabes in depriving them of their interests and power at

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 4, pp 213 - 215

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Let. III, p.27.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/374/12 May 1697.



Komenda. The Director General's report of 1702, regretting the loss, promised to do everything possible to win him back to Dutch interest.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, they blamed Staphorst and Willem Bosman for their threats to shoot Kabes. But their determination to win him back seems to have underrated the English desire to keep ~~to keep~~, and efforts to hold, an ally thought of as "the faithfulest Black and one of the greatest power in the company's service". Conscious of the fact that an affront from them might lose him to the Dutch, the English insisted on the greatest circumspection in dealing with him.<sup>2</sup> For disregarding this important warning one of the English agents at Komenda, a Mr. Franscia, was relieved of his post "to keep from insulting John Kabes and to keep our interest with the upcountry traders".<sup>3</sup>

The Dutch, nevertheless, got their opportunity. This was in 1705 when it was reported that the English were not on good terms with the state of Fetu and with John Kabes. Early in 1706 the English General reported attempts made by the Dutch to win Kabes' friendship. The Director General was said to have entertained him at Elmina.<sup>4</sup> The exact reason for the difficulties between Kabes and Sir Dalby Thomas was

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.917/26 June 1702. Report of Director and Council.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1184/1/ Miscellaneous Entries. Jan. 1702. T.70/6, 11 March 1715, Phipps and Council to R.A.C.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C. 917/Pieter Nuyts Report. 13 Nov. 1705, T.70/5/7, 1. Jan. 1706.

<sup>4</sup>The Dutch reported that they had been visited by John Kabes. He was there in their own words "Op den 3 Feb. a<sup>o</sup> passado... in het Casteel ... zijnded geaccompagneert met den Coning van Commany en verdere rijkgrooten, die wij zeer minnelyk hebben ontfangen.

Soodra den Engelsche Hr. Gen. DalbyThomas dit aan Cabo Corso <sup>D</sup>naar verstaan  
(cont.)



not given, but other observers on the coast did not hesitate to place the blame on the English general who was accused of interfering in the local politics. Additionally, Sir Dalby accused Kabes of avoiding his debts. But whatever impression the Dutch might have made on Kabes was temporary however. The English appointed a man, one William Hicks, who was said to be better qualified and knew how to treat the Africans, to head their establishment at Komenda. This proved <sup>1</sup>shrewd choice. Not long afterwards, Hicks reported that Kabes, who had not been to the English fort for the past eighteen months, had visited him and promised his friendship.<sup>1</sup> "A perfect peace had been made with John Kabes." From Cape Coast the Governor immediately ordered that Kabes "should be given a dinner". With this difficulty apparently settled, Sir Dalby Thomas optimistically reported to the Company that "they should not be concerned with the Wars of Africa".... since the remaining chiefs were "inconsiderable".<sup>2</sup> Kabes, adding action to words, was in fact reported to have started building a large town around the fort.

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(cont.)

had dat gemelde Jan Cabes bij ons in het Casteel was geweest, schreef ons een brief ..... onder een frivool pretext dat den gem. Jan Cabes een groote somma aan de R. A. Comp. zoude schuldig zijn..... The Dutch however replied that "wij aan alle de negotianten zonder aanzren van perzoon access en recess tot onze fortressen verleenten. N.B.K.G. 59/31. 14 April 1706. Report of Pieter Nuyts.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/23/28 March 1706. Report from Hicks, Komenda.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/25/28 March 1706. T.70/5/28/10 May 1706.



John Kabes owed his success to a combination of factors. His town was better sited, since Komenda commanded the approaches of the routes which led to such important states as Twifu, Wassa, Denkyira and Ashanti. As a ruler of the new town he had a virtual control not only of the settlers but over the immigrant traders. His possession of salt pans provided added incentives for the inland traders to visit his town. Above all, the fact that two competing trade companies had their forts at Komenda, and his own comparatively easy access to both, afforded him an opportunity to know the prices of goods in both places. As a broker therefore no one could be better placed than he. He was not unaware of the opportunities, nor was he slow to use them. By 1704, he was recognised as possessing a stranglehold on trade at Komenda. The English confessed that "whatever trade that comes to this fort (English) comes through the hands of John Kabes".<sup>1</sup> By 1715 his political and commercial power was so complete that the agent conceded that "nobody in Komenda, not even the Company's own slaves could say anything but what was pleasing to John Kabes".<sup>2</sup> His desire to extend his commercial influence into wider areas other than Komenda obviously met the opposition and complaints of the Europeans. It was a matter of great concern to the Dutch when in June 1715, he assured the Takoradi people that he would always be able to supply them with English firelocks and powder.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T. 70/1184/Miscellaneous Entries. Jan. 1704. C.C.Castle.

<sup>2</sup>T. 70/1464/ Komenda Diary, 20.Nov. 1715.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.82/25 June 1715, Report from Landman.



It is difficult to judge how much confidence Kabes placed in his connections with one company or another. By the end of the seventeenth century he seems to have depended more on his own resources than on any payments he received from the English. In 1697 he was said to have been "advanced" one ounce of gold per month for "being serviceable to the Company".<sup>1</sup> Two years later the allowance was still being paid. But in 1711, the agent at Komenda commented that although he was helpful he "received no pay".<sup>2</sup> It would seem, therefore, that he was not in any way dependent on the Company's payments to him. Indeed he devoted his attention more to his private matters than to the affairs of the company.

As a shrewd trader he explored means of better trade. Crop farming, especially the cultivation of maize, was very profitable. It provided food for both the local population and slaves on the Middle Passage. The Europeans on the Coast also grew to relish the local foods made of corn. In 1712 the English notified the company in London that "other provisions in place of bread" should be sent because, it was claimed, "the company servants liked better this country's bread made of Indian corn".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/125/3 Nov. 1697. T.70/376/28 Dec. 1699.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/80/4 July 1711.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/26/4 May 1712: Grosvenor & Council to R.A.C. At times people from the inland states came to the coast to buy corn. In May 1680 it was reported that "the upland Blacks come down to clear the corn of the waterside people". T.70/1/55. Letter from Nathaniel Bradley to R.A.C. 3 May 1680.



John Kabes added the cultivation of corn to his many interests.

In May 1715 it was reported from Komenda that "John was so much taken up about his corn that although sent for.... he went out early in the morning to see his .... plantation". Earlier on he had promised the English to supply them with corn. This was in March when corn was said to be scarce along the entire coast. It was therefore a matter of disappointment and annoyance that John was reported to have sent two canoe loads of corn to Accra,<sup>1</sup> apparently to be sold to other Europeans. His wide connections with other local states placed him in a good position to collect and sell corn when it was in great demand. It was noticed that his supplies were received at times from Abramboe. In the following year he was reported to have asked permission to sell corn to a Ten Percent ship. When the English refused permission, he went ahead as he had planned, because he preferred to exchange his corn for guns than use it in payment of the debt he owed the Company.<sup>2</sup>

He had a lucrative trade in salt. The beginning of the eighteenth century was a period when the European Companies on the coast began to direct their attention to selling salt. Despite the use of their ships in collecting the commodity from Accra, Kabes stood his ground against this pressure of competition. His salt industry never crumbled in face

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/17/5 March 1715. Komenda Diary.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1464/9 January 1716.



of the European interests in the trade. When in 1715 some salt merchants arrived from Ashanti, Kabes was reported to have disposed of a great quantity. In the same year he attempted to monopolise all the salt trade by even carrying his salt to be sold under the Dutch fort.<sup>1</sup> This led the Dutch to seize the baskets of salt he sent. He lodged a complaint at Elmina and demanded the restitution of the commodity.<sup>2</sup> Both the Dutch and the English frequently referred to salt merchants from the inland states who arrived at Komenda. While their main preference was said to be for Accra salt, salt from elsewhere on the coast was almost as welcome to the salt-hungry people of the interior. Thus men like John Kabes could make their fortune by applying themselves to salt making.

Alongside these occupations, he supplemented his income by hiring out canoes. Mention has already been made of an agreement whereby Kabes contracted to provide three canoemen to the English for "two ackies each per month".<sup>3</sup> The English at Komenda depended a great deal on the readiness with which Kabes made his canoes available to them. It was a matter of real concern to the factor at Komenda when Kabes chose to treat lightly what the factor considered needed doing

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/10/11 Feb. 1715. T.70/1464/;8 May 1715.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82/Heyman's letter to Elmina. 12 Jan. 1715.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1464/26 April 1715, Komenda Diary.



without delay. With the news that the Dutch were hiring the Fantis to attack Komenda in July of 1715, they requested Kabes to make his boats available for the collection of shells at Takoradi. The shells were needed to "burn lime to repair the fort". He summarily dismissed the report as "proceeding only from the timorous temper of the whitemen". But if the English insisted on the use of his canoes and men to collect the shells he indicated that they would only be made available if the company paid for the full cost of the canoe hire.<sup>1</sup> On another occasion he was known to have charged an extra three ackies of gold when the English hired his canoes to convey their goods from Komenda to Cape Coast. Not unnaturally the agent Baillie, who seemingly never understood the basis of Kabes' relationship with the Company, became exasperated at his "continued roguery and averseness to serve the company" and recommended a reappraisal of their relationship, demanding to know whether such a man "deserves pay under them".<sup>2</sup>

But if commercially the English found much <sup>left</sup> to be desired in Kabes, the political influence he exerted on their part was undeniably rewarding. The instability of the ruling dynasty had been greatly worsened by the Dutch Komenda War 1694-1700. Subsequently, the rulers became puppets in the hands of the Europeans. Kabes was the single exception. From the time he invited the English to settle at Komenda till his death

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/23 July 1715, Komenda Diary.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1464/8 May 1715, 23 July 1715.



he was always the de facto ruler of the state. His political powers as well as his success in trade gave him the status to act independently. Thus his relationship gradually passed from that of the Company's "servant" to being an overmighty ally. This was accepted implicitly by the English. When Tagee Kuma (Little Tagee) who had been made King by the English chose nevertheless to ally himself with the Dutch, it was realised that Kabes was the only person who could win him back.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence in fact to show that Tagee was ever won back. But it is known that Kabes accompanied a two-man English delegation to the King's court to persuade him not to cede a hillock, to the east of the Dutch fort, to the Dutch.<sup>2</sup> The death of the King in 1704 afforded the English and Kabes their chance to carry out their designs on Komenda. Takyi Adico who was made the new King had to promise that he would direct trade to the English fort. Unless there was sufficient trade, the English were to be exempted from paying any rent to the new King. It was John Kabes who was entrusted with conveying these stipulations and with persuading the King to agree to them.<sup>3</sup> By 1715, the Dutch had virtually accepted the fact that they could not turn back Kabes. When it was reported that the King of Twifu was to meet him, they could not find a

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1184/ Miscellaneous Entries: R.A.C. 1 Jan. 1704.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1463/26 Feb. 1703. C.C.C.Journal.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1463/21 August 1704. C.C.C.Journal.



method of discovering what might happen between them. They therefore suggested that one Amma, the Bomba, apparently Kabes' friend, should be asked to try to get to know what had been discussed.<sup>1</sup>

Although John's influence was most felt in Komenda, he commanded enough respect to have a say in matters of other states as well. There are many instances of his using his influence on behalf of the English. When the Anomabo people seized the crew of a Ten Percent ship and held them to ransom for one of their men, who had been enticed and stolen by a Captain Hamlin, it was John Kabes who intervened on behalf of the English.<sup>2</sup> In 1704 he was one of the two people who took council with Sir Dalby Thomas to make Aquaba Braffo the Queen of Fetu,<sup>3</sup> a project which proved costly in the long run, but gave the English control in that state in a way which had never been achieved by them in any other state on the Coast. In 1711 the English acknowledged the help which they received from Kabes. The states of Twifu, Aguaffo and Abrambo consented to have their differences settled by the company. This was considered to be something "which will be much to our reputation". They conceded, however, that their success was due to John Kabes' who had been "serviceable

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82/Letter from H. Haring to Factor, Heyman at Komenda, 12 October 1715.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1463/25 Feb. 1703.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1463/12 and 17 April 1704. T.70/5/37 Aug. 1707, C.C.C.Journal, Chap. 3, p.28.



in bringing this about".<sup>1</sup>

It must be admitted, however, that at times Kabes' relations with some of the inland traders disrupted the normal trade to the coast. Nowhere was this more clearly seen than in his dealings with Twifu between 1715 and 1716. There were times when both took recourse to seizing others as a means of forcing redress for their grievances. The trouble originated from bad treatment of some Twifu people who were sent to Komenda for safekeeping when Twifu was at war with Akim at the beginning of 1714. One of them in particular, a boy who was given to Appea, described as a cousin of John Kabes, quickly changed hands until he was given as a form of security to a man at Cape Coast. At the close of the war when the boy was being claimed, messengers sent from Twifu to John Kabes, who was asked to look into the matter, were abusively handled. Negotiations broke down.<sup>2</sup> Both sides resorted to force. In November 1714, the Twifu people ambushed and seized some people from Kabes' town. Kabes quickly got ready for a reprisal. Not long afterwards trade came to a standstill at Komenda, for the Ashanti and Wassa traders would not risk their lives and goods

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/80/Agent's Report, 16.Sept. 1711. In June 1715 it was reported that John Kabes had given back a string of Aggrey beads "Conte de terra" which belonged to the King of Ashanti. This was alleged to have been seized two years earlier and appeared to have caused friction between Kabes and the Dutch and the Ashantihene. When the matter was settled the Dutch reported that the Ashantihene had again given orders to his men to trade at Komenda.N.B.K.G.82. Report from Landman at Komenda, 22n June 1715.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1464/5 April 1715. Komenda Diary.



in the journey through the troubled region.<sup>1</sup> At the insistence of the English, Kabes agreed to exercise restraint on his men and also consented to allow a neutral person to attempt a reconciliation. One Antibene, an Ashanti trader resident at Komenda, was entrusted with the job and was sent to Twifu to effect a settlement. Less than a fortnight later he sent down a report that everything had been arranged. The Twifu had been pacified with the payment of one benda of gold (£8 sterling) and one live sheep.<sup>2</sup> The terms were too easy to be true, and the agent became sceptical over the whole negotiation. His scepticism was justified by subsequent events.

The trade interruptions occasioned by the struggle were felt in the Ashanti capital. At the request of the Ashanti traders, the Ashanti-hene stepped in to use his influence to settle the dispute. The King sent messengers to both Akuffo, King of Twifu, and to John Kabes to find an acceptable settlement. He gave force to his message by returning a present of "a sheep with four horns" which Kabes had sent him and indicated that it would be acceptable after the latter had settled his differences with Twifu. He intimated to the Twifu that "if it is their

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/4, 10 & 13 November 1714. Komenda Diary.

<sup>2</sup>The Dutch appear to have given a different interpretation of the cause of the struggle. This, they allege, originated from the murder of the nephew of the King of Twifu. The Twifu told Kabes that "de neger over eenige dagen doof't volk van voorn: Jan Cabes 't hooft afgeslagen, een neef van't Jufferze Opperhooft, Acaffo is geweest..." T.70/1464 20 Nov. 1714. Komenda Diary; N.B.K.G.82, Report from sub-factor Heyman, 16 Jan. 1715.



fault that the palaver (be) not made up, he would oblige them to accept any terms".<sup>1</sup> It was not until April of 1715 that the disagreement was settled. The part played by the King of Ashanti in the settlement was fully appreciated. A quarter of the fine of the four bendas paid by Kabes was sent to the King in acknowledgment of "his trouble therein".<sup>2</sup> However, the bad blood between Komenda and Twifu was never completely removed, even though the matter never assumed a scale where the Ashantis were forced to step in to effect a settlement. At the beginning of 1716, for instance, John Kabes' men went in pursuit of some Twifu people who were said to have seized some women from Komenda.<sup>3</sup>

The agent Baillie at Komenda appears to have read too much into the return of Kabes' gift by the Ashantihene. He used it, together with the fact that the traders not infrequently chose to sell their goods to whichever company they desired, to assert that Kabes' influence at Kumasi was small. In addition he felt that the merchants had had enough of Kabes' practice of selling goods to them at a high price. Perhaps Kabes' influence was declining. Nevertheless Baillie underestimated an important factor which bound the inland traders and middlemen who were resident on the coast, namely the coastman's advice on standard

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464 23 Nov. 1714, Ibid., 29 March 1715.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5 April, 1715. N.B.K.G.82/Landman's Report 12 Oct. 1715.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1464/12 Jan. 1716. Komenda Diary.



prices and their ability to offer them accommodation. As Sir Dalby Thomas had observed earlier on, the inland traders always preferred old acquaintances to new ones.<sup>1</sup> By 1715, therefore, John Kabes' experience in trade and in handling the Ashantis, who constantly came to Komenda, had made him an ally who could not easily be dispensed with. Indeed his influence over the traders had been demonstrated even during Baillie's agency. In 1715 when some angry Ashanti traders whose goods had been panyarred by one Richardson,<sup>2</sup> attempted to blow up the gates of the English fort with gunpowder, it was John Kabes whose services were called in to help the English. The Ashantis failed to retrieve their goods and left the town in anger. The English became afraid that in future their messengers would be ill-treated and their trade, too, might be adversely affected. John Kabes undertook to return the goods to the traders and to calm them.<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but only two months before this incident, at a time when the struggles between the Twifu and Kabes seemed likely at any moment to burst into an open war, the Ashantis elected to buy guns in the fort for John Kabes "to fill him for wars".<sup>4</sup> From this it may be inferred that whatever Kabes'

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/47/29 July 1708

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Report from Heyman, Komenda, 17th Jan. 1715.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1464/9/10 Jan. 1715.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/1464/14 Nov. 1714. Komenda Diary. The English factor observed that "John's policy... (was) to buy slaves, teeth etc... of traders whenever they came to town for very little and least..... These slaves and teeth he offers to me at an extravagant rate, even 50<sup>o</sup>/o more than he knows I can give." T.70/1464/23 November 1714.



image at Kumasi might have been, his power at Komenda was accepted. Not infrequently some of the Ashanti traders complained against his method of trade whereby he sought to make great profits on the goods he sold to them. But it must be remembered that the avenues of trade with interlopers were never closed to him. This gave him opportunities to procure cheaper goods and also dispose of his wares within a short time.

Kabes' association with the English has received many different comments. From 1694 to 1720 he was mainly connected with the English. Over this long period of more than a quarter of a century, he appears to have been best remembered because of his activities and because of the comments he drew from Baillie between 1714 and 1716. The agent refused to accept that John Kabes should be placed in a completely different category from all the other Africans who came to seek their fortune in the English service. But in fact Kabes' fortune and power did not depend on his association with the English. When he invited them to Komenda in 1695, he was already a successful businessman. Although he appears to have suffered some reverses in his fortune during the Komenda war, he soon set about restoring it. By 1706 he had succeeded in building a large town around the English fort. And his "new house" to which he moved in that year<sup>1</sup> appears to have been large and

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/29/16 June. 1706. From Hicks at Komenda. Kabes' influence and confidence reposed in him by the English may be seen from the fact that he stood surety for other traders. When two Accany caboceers were credited with 68 blue perpetuans and two barrels gunpowder, it was agreed that if the amount was not paid in six months' time "it would be plac'd... John Cabes account by agreement". T.70/378/C.C.C.Journal, 6 Jan. 1704.



strong enough to merit the description of a small fort.<sup>1</sup> Eventually he succeeded in mounting not less than twenty-four guns on the house. And yet by 1715, the agent was recommending a review of the one ounce (£4) of gold which the company paid him. It is difficult to visualise the effect which the withdrawal or reduction of the amount might have had on Kabes. Judging from his diversified occupations, one cannot but infer that the action would have been ineffective. Above all Baillie overlooked the fact that Kabes could have easily associated himself with the Dutch. His refusal to see him in any light other than that of the Company's servant and his lack of restraint in using the word rogue for the man whose help, after all, had enabled the English to gain a foothold on Komenda, has tended to submerge a most interesting aspect of Kabes' life. An old historian following the footsteps of Baillie refers to him as the "notorious John Kabes".<sup>2</sup> Nor is the picture in any way helped by subsequent works. Disregarding his earlier services, he is described as one "who for twenty years or more... served one side or the other and quarrelled with both".<sup>3</sup> That Kabes associated with both the Dutch and the English at different times is a fact. But there is no evidence to indicate that he ended up by quarrelling with the English.

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<sup>1</sup>Claridge, op.cit., p.164.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>K.C.Davies, op.cit., p.281.



Except for the brief period of eighteen months when he was said not to have stepped into the English fort at Komenda, the indication is that Kabes remained associated with the English. True, he refused to be dictated to in matters of trade. It is also a fact that he did not consider it an obligation to lend his canoes to the English without receiving due payment. Occasionally he even threatened to remove himself from the English fort and to go and live in the bush.<sup>1</sup> But all these things which occurred mainly in the period of two years of Baillie's administration cannot be taken as the measure of an association stretching over twenty five years. The very fact that Kabes was buried in the English fort and the shock and surprise evinced in London over the robbery of his grave may be taken as the best assessment of his life and career with the Royal African Company. When the news reached London, the Directors immediately wrote to Cape Coast that they were "much concerned that any of our servants could be guilty of so base and inhuman an action as that of digging up and robbing the grave of John Kabes who was buried in our fort of Komenda".<sup>2</sup> It is reasonable to assert that the indignant shock was partly due to the disrespect shown to a man whose political powers had been consistently used to further English interests and partly due to the unfavourable impressions the deed was likely to create on both the Africans in the English service as well as on the local population.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/12 August 1715, ibid., 12 Sept. 1715.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/50/.R.A.C. to C.C.Castle. 12 December 1734.



A contemporary of John Kabes and equally powerful economically and politically was John Konny. He ignored Dutch threats, defied them and successfully pitted his power against an Anglo-Dutch alliance in 1711. For nearly a decade and a half he baffled the calculations and torpedoed the designs of the Dutch. A ruler with connections stretching as far as Ashanti, his attempts to inject life into the crumbling fortunes of the Brandenburg African Company won him enthusiastic acclaim in Prussia. He faithfully supported a flag the limits of whose power he could neither know nor visualise. For this he won for himself the appellation "The last Prussian Negro Prince".<sup>1</sup> His memorial for the defence of the fort, Great Fredricksburg, was the fact that after his expulsion it became known as "Connie's Castle".<sup>2</sup>

Like all other Africans of his time, Konny's early life and career is obscure. His name appeared in a period of crisis and remained as long as it lasted. An English surgeon, John Atkins, who visited him in 1721, described him as "a strong made man of about fifty".<sup>3</sup> It may be seen from this observation that Konny might have seen everything, from the beginning to the end of the Brandenburg activities on the Gold Coast.

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<sup>1</sup>Welman: Native States of the Gold Coast, Ahanta, (London), p.34.

<sup>2</sup>W. Smith, "A Voyage to Guinea in 1726", Astley Collections, p.477.

<sup>3</sup>J. Atkins, in Astley Collections, Vol. II, p. 449.



He appears to have been born some time around 1671. He was then at the impressionable age of twelve when the Brandenburgers made their debut and was twenty two years old when the main work on their Castle Great Fredricksburg was started in 1693.<sup>1</sup> It may be surmised that Konny helped in one way or another in the erection of the Castle which he was later to command. Beyond whatever apprenticeship or trade he might have learnt from the inmates of the castle, there is no indication that he had any formal education. He was known to "understand English enough to swear in it"<sup>2</sup> but that was about all. Later on he depended on the Mulatto Bosman for reading and answering his correspondence. Against his name is appended "His Mark"<sup>3</sup> under an agreement he concluded with the Dutch in 1722, a sign that the art of writing remained a mystery to him.

Konny's name was first associated with a revolt in the Brandenburg headquarters which deposed the General, de Lange, and placed one Stockhoff at the head of the administration. An Anglo-Dutch delegation sent to "compose matters" mentioned him as accusing the former general for his arbitrariness.<sup>4</sup> Both the English and the Dutch protested against the

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<sup>1</sup>For more information about the history of the Brandenburg forts see A.W.Lawrence, Trade, Castles and Forts, p.225.

<sup>2</sup>Atkins in Astley Collections, p.449.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.122/85/22 Nov. 1722.

<sup>4</sup>W.I.C.124/Report of Seth Grosvenor & Willem Butler, 3 Jan. 1711. T.70/5/75/24 Jan. 1711 Grosvenor & Phipps.



deposition but nothing could be done. It is important to understand the value of Cape Three Points in the Gold Coast trade. The three Brandenburg possessions at Pokoso, Takrama and Akoda, were better placed to tap the products of the rich gold bearing states of Awawin and Ashanti. But the progressive decline of the Company's fortunes which was hastened by Prussian commitments in the War of Spanish Succession in Europe, forced it to depend more on interlopers. Both the English and the Dutch resented it, but above all, each feared the effect it would have on its trade if the place was ever to fall into the hands of its rival. As far back as 1706, Sir Dalby Thomas had suggested that, in order to preserve English trade to the windward, the Company should have Cape Three Points. If that was not done the place might go to the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later it was being reported that "John Konny at Cape Three Points gives encouragement to interlopers which hurt the trade at Dixcove".<sup>2</sup> Both companies desired a means to get possession of the place. This became more acute when it was feared that John Konny's ambition would not stop at becoming a ruler at Cape Three Points but would seek the overlordship of the whole of Ahanta. In mid-1711, the opportunity offered itself to cut short "Konny's ambitions".

The cause was a dispute between Konny and one Appre, an elder at Axim, over the status of one Adjeiba. Appre claimed her to be his slave, but Konny, with whom she had sought and obtained protection, countered that

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/28/16 June 1706. Sir Dalby Thomas' Report. C.C.C.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/6/45/20 Oct. 1716. Johnston's report.



with a claim that the woman was his relative.<sup>1</sup> Helped by the Dutch, Appre collected a force and marched on Konny to demand her release. But the attack was repulsed and Konny pursued Appre. The inhabitants at Dixcove who had lent a hand to Appre were attacked and defeated. Both the Dutch and the English became restive. The Dutch General hurriedly convened his council where it was unanimously agreed that a prompt and decisive action was needed. They therefore made a presentation and obtained the approval and cooperation of the English for a joint assault on Konny.<sup>2</sup> At an Anglo-Dutch convention on the 20th September 1711, it was agreed "to raise an army.... to repel the insolences of the said Negro..... and to reduce Konny to a temper and a desire of peace".<sup>3</sup>

The Anglo-Dutch forces and their African allies caught up with Konny at Akoda. Messengers sent by the allies to Konny were contemptuously seized, three of them were sent back with nothing to show but their hands tied behind them, while the remaining one was kept in captivity. An indecisive battle ensued. The allied forces, however, concentrated their efforts on the Brandenburg fort from where, it was alleged, shots had been fired. Eventually the inmates capitulated. But soon after the allies were forced to beat an ignominious retreat to Dixcove, for, the

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<sup>1</sup>Welman, op.cit., p.35. W.I.C.124/5/28 July 1711. Butler, Axim W.I.C.124/5/21 Oct. 1711. Reply of Stockhoff to Harring and Phipps.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 124, Resolution of the Director-Gen. and Council, 11 Aug. 1711.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C. 124/23 Sept. 1711. Accounts of events at Akoda, T.70/5/80/14 Oct. 1711. Report. Grosvenor. T.70/1184/118/25 Oct. 1716. "Protest of the English to Nicolas du Bois". W.I.C.124. Articles of Agreement concluded between James Phipps... and H. Harring. 20th Sept. 1711 and 6 October 1711.



"negroe army suddenly and precipitately left".<sup>1</sup> Their only prize was the capture of "two whites and an Indian", who were the sole garrison in Fort Dorothea at Akoda.

The War which began in August went on spasmodically for nearly six and a half months. It assumed wider ramifications and soon many local states were brought in. John Konny was supported by the forces of Wassa under one Buo Kofi. The Ashantis, under one Nyakoba, also joined him besides several other elders of Ahanta and the neighbouring states. By December Konny had mustered about nine hundred well armed troops. The Dutch at Axim requested that the Elmina and Komenda auxiliaries under PieterPassop and John Kabes respectively be quickly dispatched to their aid.<sup>2</sup> On the allied side were assembled an array of impressive leaders and states. The Dutch freely distributed money, ammunition and the inseparable Gold Coast "weapon", brandy, to such men as PieterPassop, Jan Amsterdam, Akim, Abbecon and their followers. States like Akim, Ancobra, Abrambo, Adom, Aguaffo and Twifu, to mention but a few, came to their aid. Even messengers with "presents and bribes" were sent to various states including Wassa. In all, between the months of August 1711 and February 1712, the Dutch War expenses came to 60 Marks (£2,000). While the English contented themselves by the war "fought at a great expense and

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.124/La.J./17/23 Sept. 1711 Haring's Report, *ibid* 14 Sept. 1711. Account of John Green, a 10<sup>0</sup>/<sub>0</sub> man who happened to be at Akoda, T.70/5/16 Sept. 1711. Grosvenor and Phipps. C.C.C. T.70/5/81/25 March 1712, C.C.C.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C. 124/14 December 1711. From Willem Butler. Axim.



a considerable loss".<sup>1</sup>

It was in the heat of these struggles that Nicolas du Bois arrived to take up his duties as the provisional director of the Brandenburg African Company. He quickly concluded a defence agreement with John Konny and the other Elders and King of Ahanta. They promised, among other things, to provide labour and materials to repair the Castle, Great Fredricksburg. The General on his part promised assistance in powder and muskets "in the event of a hostile invasion of their lands".<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it was on the strength of this agreement that, later in the year, du Bois concluded an agreement with the Dutch and the English which terminated the troubles between them and John Konny. Judging from the terms and subsequent developments, however, it is difficult to avoid the inference that the side which General du Bois was supposed to have represented either knew nothing of the negotiations or refused to be bound by the terms. The clauses were honoured more in their non-observance

In all, there were seven clauses in the agreement. The first bound the three European nationals, the Brandenburgers, Dutch and English to live in peace and friendship. The second held that John Konny and his allies should pay the sum of eighty bendas (£640) "under the name of purchasing peace". Half of the amount was to be paid to the Dutch and

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/81/15 March 1712, W.I.C. 124. List of expenses in the War against John Konny, 17 Aug. 1711-28 Feb. 1712.

<sup>2</sup>Welman, *Ahanta*, p.40; Lawrence, *op.cit.* p.233. Agreement between John Konny and others .... with du Bois, 3 March 1712.



the remaining half to the English in four instalments. The question between Konny and Appre (which was the original cause of the War) should be left to be decided by the Elders of Axim and Pokoso, in accordance with the country's custom. Among others, the Brandenburg General agreed to prevail on Konny to return the slaves he had captured at Dixcove. Both the Dutch and the Brandenburg generals promised to restrain people living near their settlements from attacking each other. Finally du Bois promised to assist the others to force John Konny to abide by the terms of the agreements by all possible means, not excluding the use of force.<sup>1</sup>

The flaw in the agreement was the presumption that Konny could be constrained in any way to abide by its terms. In the Gold Coast situation, the most significant thing about the whole Anglo-Dutch attack on Konny was the fact that the fear of his capacities forced the two rival companies on the coast to sink their differences and to join in a common assault. That these two nations who had competed keenly undersold each other, secretly undermined each other's actions and openly attacked and captured one another's forts, at one time or another in the seventeenth century, could combine their resources naturally impressed the Africans, on whose soil, and at times with whose assistance, the English and Dutch pursued their policies. Nor did the English fail to notice the effects for, it was reported that "the Dutch and our joining is very

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1184/63 Agreement between the Dutch, the English and the Brandenburg Generals. 20 Oct. 1712, W.I.C./24/5 Oct. 1712.



surprising to the natives who did never see the like before".<sup>1</sup> Not long afterwards, however, the unity gave way to suspicion and divisions born out of the similar desires and attempts to get control over Great Fredricksburg. The agreement became a dead letter. Neither the Dutch nor the English were paid any money by Konny.

Konny remained and, indeed, grew stronger as time went by. He became in all but name the ruler of Ahanta and able to bring a strong force into the field within a short time. In 1714 when the inhabitants of Boutri, for reasons that are unknown, murdered Konny's friend and ally, Obin, he took up arms to avenge the death.<sup>2</sup> But the Dutch quickly moved in to prevent another expensive show of force with Konny. When the town was beseiged by Konny's men, the Dutch ordered the arrest of the leaders of the Adjaase group who were known to have committed the crime, and arranged for a compensation for the family of the deceased. They even went further. All debts owed them by Obin were written off. Eventually in June 1717 an agreement for a settlement was reached between the Adjaase and Konny with the mediation of the Dutch.<sup>3</sup>

But if the Dutch quickly moved in to find a convenient means to remove the casus belli, in the Konny struggle with the Adjaase, in subse-

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/80/14 October 1711. Grosvenor to R.A.C.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.124/Resolution of Direct.-Gen. and Council 19 & 27 June 1714. Ibid/25 July 1714. Report of v.d. Poele and others. In May 1714 the English reported that "Acquadah which are all the king of Prussia's Forts on that coast. The King of Prussia's power and interest are small there, his people being in a manner subject to John Conny, a negro Cabeshire. If those forts were in the Company's hands and the said Cabeshire brought



quent developments their policy was different. Indeed the indications are that they did all they could to prolong and exacerbate the situation. Early in 1715, two servants of Konny, his Bosum and Kra, as they are referred to, made their escape to one Pinga, of Ancobra.<sup>1</sup>

But fearing the consequences of his keeping the men, he surrendered them to the Dutch Commissioner at Axim for safe-keeping. Konny demanded their surrender and threatened to march his men on Axim to attack the fort. He backed this up by seizing eight men from the town.<sup>2</sup> But the Dutch saw this as an opportunity to force Konny to pay the debt arising from the 1712 Agreement. They made the payment of the sum the condition for the surrender of the Bosum and Kra. In a war of nerves which ensued Konny began to assemble his forces together again. The Wassa, led by their chief Intwan, crossed over to Pokoso to reinforce Konny's fighting force. Rumours took the place of an open conflict. It was reported that Konny had staked about £1,600 on the Capture of Pinga and the Elders of Axim as well as the Dutch Commission. The Elders then approached the Dutch to have the prisoners released.<sup>3</sup> The wrangling over the payment of

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(cont.)

over or reduced, either of which will be very chargeable it would be very advantageous and a disappointment to interlopers." T.70/5/99/Report by Grosvenor, Hayes and Bleau, 24 May 1714.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.124/15 Sept. 1716, W.I.C.124/17 Aug. 1717. Report from Boutri.

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82 Van. Naarsen's Report. Axim 19 Jan. 1715.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82 Van. Naarsen's Report. Axim 22 Jan. 1715.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.82 Van. Naarsen's Report. Axim 6 & 13 Feb. 1715.



Konny's debt went on for more than three months without either side attacking. Konny sorely tried the nerves of his enemies. His army held daily parades which were obviously calculated to impress. His alliance with Wassa began to tell on the Ancobra and Axim people for the sources of their food supply were sealed off. The youth rebelled against their elders, and made it plain that they would not be drawn into a war over Konny's demand for his men. But the Dutch refused to take any representations made to them seriously. At last the Elders of Axim and Ancobra stood surety by delivering three hostages for the release of Konny's men.<sup>1</sup> But when the Dutch demanded an extra eighteen bendas from Konny on the grounds that he had broken the terms of the 1712 Agreement, "by seizing men from Axim" Konny refused to negotiate for any payment. Both sides again prepared for war.

Shortly after a disagreement broke out between Konny and his Wassa allies over an amount of money. Events developed into an open break. Konny seized and imprisoned Buo Kofi and a few of his followers. Before anything could be done however the services of Wassa were called for by their overlord, the Ashanti, for a war in Awawin.<sup>2</sup> After the war, Intwan returned to demand the release of his men. But meanwhile Konny had stolen a march on him by releasing them in return for a few slaves. The Dutch hopes that they could eventually join in the Wassa-Konny difficulties to punish the latter were disappointed. They pinned their hopes

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<sup>1</sup> N.B.K.G.82. 5 June 1715, 25 June 1715, 12 Sept. 1715. Axim.

<sup>2</sup> N.B.K.G.82. Letter from Axim 11 Oct. 1715.



however to further complications which were rumoured to be developing. It was said that during the absence of Intwan at Awawin, Konny hired the Twifu to attack Wassa. In December of 1715, a Wassa-Ashanti army arrived at Pokoso to demand explanation from Konny on his relations with his Twifu. But whatever the truths in the accusations, Konny soon extricated himself by sending a delegation with gifts to the King of Ashanti to protest his innocence and to confirm his friendship.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the arrival of the Wassa Ashanti army in the neighbourhood of Axim assumed a completely different purpose. First they concentrated their efforts on demanding Awawin refugees who were said to have taken shelter at Ancobra. The man who appeared to be greatly sought for was one Enoe, an Ancobra born trader, who was living at Awawin. After they had forced him to pay a ransom of several slaves, they turned their attention to the troubles in Ancobra.<sup>2</sup> A meeting to reconcile the two sides was held between the Wassa and Ashanti delegates, and representatives of Axim and the Dutch Commissioner. It was the hope that after everything had been settled the army would help in a joint assault of Konny.<sup>3</sup> But everything was brought to a sudden end. Pinga, the chief

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82/21, 31 December 1715, 14 Jan. 1716. Letter from Axim.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.83/2 Feb. 1716.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.82/14 & 24 Jan. 1716.



of Ancobra, was forced to pay thirty bendas to the Ashanti and Wassa. Immediately after that the Ashantis prepared to return home, without having done anything about Konny.<sup>1</sup>

The sudden departure of the Ashantis gave birth to two conflicting speculations. The first, and the much more plausible one, makes the influence of the Ashanti traders resident at Pokoso responsible for the departure of their compatriots. This was adduced in 1716 soon before the Ashantis left. It was held that because of the fear that a defeat of Konny would be the end of the profitable trade with interlopers, the traders had pointed out to the King the adverse effect which the attack was likely to bring. This, backed by Konny "who knows how to make use of money" led the King to call off the attack.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, Butler, who had become sceptical about any negotiations with John Konny, put up a completely different explanation. Indeed, to him the whole question of the arrival of the Ashanti and Wassa soldiers was a ruse invented by Konny to deceive the Dutch and their friends. He pointed out that Konny had bribed a group of Ashanti and Wassa soldiers on their way to Awawin, to stage a mock reconciliation.<sup>3</sup> If Konny was capable of such an action, he felt that there were no lengths

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<sup>1</sup> N.B.K.G.82/8 & 10 March 1716.

<sup>2</sup> N.B.K.G.82/8 March 1716. Report from Axim.

<sup>3</sup> W.I.C.124/ Butler's Report on mission to Axim. 13 June 1718.



to which he would not go to achieve his ends. He therefore suggested that it would be unwise to press such a man for payment of his debts, since he could place all the Dutch possessions of Axim and Boutri in danger and stifle all trade.

A further examination of these two points, however, shows that the latter explanation is unsatisfactory. If the Dutch accepted the Ashanti Awawin war as something which happened, which they did by sheltering Enoe,<sup>1</sup> who fled from Awawin, it is difficult to see how the Ashantis would have allowed themselves to be used in this way. The presumption was that the people hired on this could work without anything ever reaching the King of Ashanti. This secrecy would not have been possible in a place where there were frequent contacts through trade with Kumasi and the coast. Supposing Konny did frame up everything, it would be difficult to understand why he ordered a constant vigil of the approaches to his town, and asked that any Ashanti or Wassa who came with offensive weapons should be seized.<sup>2</sup> Nor was his offer of shelter to Enoe, who was sought after by the Ashantis, an action calculated to endear him to either Ashanti or Wassas.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the first explanation was feasible. In 1715, Agent Baillie observed at Komenda that Ashanti traders would go wherever they were likely to

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82/2 Feb. 1716.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82/19 Jan. 1716. Report from Axim.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.82/2 Feb. 1716. Report from Axim.



gain better prices for their commodities. While earlier on the English had observed that traders preferred to sell their goods to John Konny and the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> Both the Dutch and the English agreed that the Brandenburgers were able to sustain themselves on the coast on account of their trade with interlopers. And interlopers, it was generally accepted, undersold the companies. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the Ashanti traders preferred to trade with Konny. Indeed by 1721 it had been observed that the best place for a quick and profitable trade was at Pokoso, for, anxious to make his port open to all, Konny did not forget to provide incentives for trade. It was observed that he had cut down traders' profit by twenty per cent.<sup>2</sup> This, coupled with the fact that Konny was not averse to sending gifts, shows that the fear that trade might be spoilt by attacking Konny was the reason which led to the recall of the Ashanti army. It can therefore be seen that by making Pokoso the best market on the Gold Coast for the African traders John Konny was able to secure the friendship of the greatest and most powerful of all the states of the Gold Coast.

But if Konny sought to keep an open and cheapmarket by befriending the most important traders on the African side, he was not unaware of the necessity to maintain law and order in the Brandenburg possessions of which he had become the virtual head. In 1715 he quickly asserted his

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/ Komenda Diary 29 May 1715. T.70/6/25 Feb 1714.  
T.70/6/10 June 1715.

<sup>2</sup>Atkins in Astley Collections, p.450.



power to halt the confusion that was developing at Great Fredricksburg. When the mulatto Bosman and the surgeon were discovered to have caused the death of the chief factor by poisoning, Konny threw both of them into prison and put the General, du Bois, under his command. In fact when early in November 1715 the English expressed the fear that Great Fredricksburg would fall into the hands of Konny, they admitted that "his servile governor" could not be counted upon.<sup>1</sup> This really was a belated acknowledgment of what had already taken place nearly five months before.

In the light of the foregoing developments, it is difficult to find the basis for the popular notion that the "Negro chief" took possession of the fort as soon as the Brandenburg general left for Europe. Nor is the other which holds that the General left the fort in the protection of Konny<sup>2</sup> in accordance with the facts. The explanation is neither of the two. Indeed, the indications are that the governor left the coast with the consent of Konny as both were anxious to maintain Brandenburg possessions and authority on the Coast. In October 1716, the English reported that the Governor had obtained leave of Konny "to come off the Coast". But they rather had the impression that the general was escaping from the authority of Konny for, having refused offers to

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G. 82/11 June 1715. T.70/6/19/3 Nov. 1715.

<sup>2</sup>A.B.Ellis, A History of the Gold Coast of West Africa (London 1893), p.91. Claridge, op.cit., Vol. I, p.204 suggests that Konny was installed as caretaker pending further negotiations. Welman and Lawrence hold the second view. Welman, Ahanta, p.42, Lawrence, op.cit., p. 223.



help reduce Konny, they surmised he could no longer have any powers of his own.<sup>1</sup> In December 1716 a month after the general's departure, Konny resorted to economy drives to reduce the servants of the fort to the barest minimum. Originally he had promised to keep the fort for fourteen months for the King of Prussia after which, if nothing was heard or done, he would be at liberty to dispose of it. He dismissed all the white men who "could not maintain themselves". This action reported by the English is more likely to be true for it was they who employed the Brandenburg servants who were dismissed. The report also shows that it was Konny, and not du Bois, who left a commandant and a sergeant in the fort.<sup>2</sup>

John Konny was reported to have declared that he would sell the fort to the French. This was enough to make both the Dutch and the English start scheming to obtain the place. The English were convinced that any other European nationals except themselves and the Dutch, who obtained the Brandenburg possessions, would not only fail to keep away interlopers, but would be "subservient"<sup>3</sup> to Konny. This would in no way solve the problems which they had faced since 1711. But to the English, it was commercially unwise to defer to the Dutch. Both approached Konny with offers but failed, presumably because he had in mind his promise to allow the Brandenburgs fourteen months' grace. While matters

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/6/39/26 Oct. 1716. Phipps and Council to R.A.C.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/6/39/26 Oct. 1716. Phipps. T.70/6/48/12 December 1716.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 26 Oct. 1716.



thus stood on the coast, in Europe things were moving faster than Konny could have expected. Eventually in November 1717, the Dutch succeeded in purchasing the forts for 6,000 ducats and twelve negro boys.<sup>1</sup> To pay the money and the boys proved easier than to take possession. They met stiff resistance from Konny who kept them at bay for seven years. When they approached him, Konny refused to recognise the transaction and pointed out to them that the King had no right to sell property which stood on his (Konny's) land to anybody.<sup>2</sup>

The Dutch prepared to take the fort by force. Their efforts to secure allies on the Coast failed. They realised, in the neighbourhood, of Axim, for instance, that the mere mention of Konny's name was enough to make people quail, let alone want to fight him. This lack of local support ruled out all possibilities of an assault by land. They therefore determined on a frontal attack by sea. Three ships, fully laden with soldiers armed with carbines, pistols and heavy arms set sail to take possession of Great Fredricksburg. It was a disastrous failure. The Dutch elaborately planned to set fire to the local houses, in order to demoralise Konny's men. In the resulting confusion they hoped to take the fort. It was a miscalculation, for, scarcely had the advance guard landed on the shores, than they were cut into pieces with a "hail of fire" and with a bravery which did not fail to win their admiration.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.124. Butler's Report on Fredricksburg 13 June 1718. Welman, Ahanta, p.43.

<sup>2</sup>J. Atkins, Astley Collections, II, p. 449; Welman, op.cit., p.43.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.124. Butler's Report on Fredricksburg. 13. June 1718.



They themselves now became the victims of confusion. Thirty seven Dutchmen, including a lieutenant, were left dead<sup>1</sup> on the shore.

Though in fulfilment of the terms of the purchase six of the twelve negro boys arrived in Amsterdam at the end of 1718 on their way to the Brandenburg court<sup>2</sup>, the Dutch had still six years of contest with Konny before they could take over the Brandenburg forts. In August 1718 the Council at Elmina expressed the hopelessness of achieving their end by force without the help and cooperation of the local allies. Meanwhile they asked for sufficient goods which they could use to buy help.<sup>3</sup> This found a ready and sympathetic official support. The Council of Ten, regretting the abortive attempt of June, suggested that Konny should be approached in a friendly and peaceful way. He should be assured of full compensation for the surrender of the fort and a cancellation of his debts to the Dutch. They went on to suggest that the Dutch Mulatto, Bosman, who was serving in Fredricksburg, should be secretly approached and promised a commission as an underfactor with prospects for promotion in the Company's service if he would help to gain Great Fredricksburg. Failing all peaceful

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/6/80/ Messrs. Phipps & Council. 12 July 1718. Unfortunately apart from reporting the loss of their commissioner at Boutri, the Dutch did not give the number of their dead. But the English who reported a few days later are likely to have had the almost exact number which they placed at 37. Strangely enough Ellis, Clarridge and Welman erroneously date the attack in 1720 instead of 1718.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.463. From the Council of Ten to Elmina, 27 December 1718. The request for the boys was contained in a letter from the Ten dated 12 December 1717. W.I.C.463.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.124. Resolution of Direct.-Gen. and Council. 16 August 1718.



methods, they should then have recourse to force. In furtherance of the last stipulation two heavy mortars, with a promise of two more, were dispatched to the Coast.<sup>1</sup>

The Dutch plans could not be easily put into practice for, simultaneously with their devising ways and means to execute them, the English decided they would try to get the "propriety of the forts that belonged to the Prussians".<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, Dutch efforts appeared to be yielding results. After another unsuccessful effort to enlist local help for an attack in 1719,<sup>3</sup> they made an offer to Konny for Cape Three Points.<sup>4</sup> The negotiations, however, failed because Konny was not prepared for an outright sale. In June 1721, five Dutch ships arrived on the Coast to attack Konny. But the English forced them to change their tactics. As soon as news of the plan was divulged to them they sent Konny an offer of protection. But the Dutch moved quicker and turned the tables on the English by electing, instead of an attack, to send a friendly delegation on a courtesy visit, well equipped with gifts, to Konny. But Konny insisted that his place "should be a free port for all nations to trade but none to settle".<sup>5</sup> As if this stipulation was not enough

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.463: Council of Ten to Elmina, 27 Dec. 1718.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/6/85/16 December 1718.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/6/86/14 Jan. 1719.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/7/13. Abstracts of Letters from C.C.C. 2 Nov. 1720. W.I.C./124/ Director-Gen. and Council. 19 May 1721.

<sup>5</sup>T.70/7/23/ Abstracts of Letters from C.C.C. 28 June 1721.



to frighten the Dutch, in September of the same year, the "Portuguese from Brazil sent a ship of war with gifts to Konny and a request to be given permission to settle."<sup>1</sup> The English devised a new approach which seemed a better means to impress and to win Konny. To circumvent what they described as "Konny's suspicion and distrust of white men" one Thomas Awishee was delegated to advocate their cause. But in the long tussle it was the Dutch and not the English who temporarily succeeded.

For the first time since their arrival on the Gold Coast, the Dutch were prepared to make many concessions to a local chief to achieve their end. In November of 1722, they concluded an agreement with John Konny. Even though the Agreement lasted for only two years it was, above all, a tacit acceptance on the part of the Dutch of Konny's power, and his capacity to harm their trade. In the first three clauses Konny agreed to cede the former Brandenburg forts at Pokoso, Takrama and Akoda to the Dutch. Clause four reserved for Konny the right to nominate the governor of Great Fredricksburg. Five promised a monthly rental of two ounces of gold and a yearly 'gift' of six bendas gold to Konny, in recognition of his right over the land. Six, Konny was to receive thirty bendas (£240) for his expenses over the slaves in the castle. Trade goods not exceeding twenty four bendas (£192) would always be credited to Konny. Konny promised to give up all his rights over the watering places, and to stop trade with interlopers. Traders were to be encouraged

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/7/31 Abstracts of Letters from C.C.C. 30 Sept. 1721.



to come to trade in the fort. Finally Konny promised to help in restoring Great Fredricksburg.<sup>1</sup> But the life of the agreement proved short.

At best, the agreement was a time-buying device. There is no doubt that the English and Portuguese threats were a compelling factor which operated on the side of the Dutch. Indeed, looking at the terms of the agreement, one wonders whether the Dutch had completely forgotten their claim, through purchase, over the Brandenburg forts. That they chose not to press the point with Konny may be taken as their acceptance of the 1717 transactions as dead and lost. But if they did not mean to use their purchase as a convenient means to claim eventual over-lordship, it is difficult to understand why they should concede to Konny the right to nominate the Governor. On the other hand, it is difficult to explain why John Konny who had been in possession of the fort for the past six years should fall in with the Dutch at a time when other Europeans were anxious to secure the place. That he would give up all the long enjoyed rights and even that over the watering places seems dubious. When all these are considered one explanation fairly safely suggests itself. Konny might have been out-manoeuvred. Subsequent events point to this possibility. The Dutch had to force Konny out of the castle. In October 1724, the English reported that the Dutch preparations were afoot to attack John Konny, an undertaking

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/7/92 Report from C.C.C. to R. .C./21 Oct. 1724.



in which they felt it necessary to keep themselves "neuter".<sup>1</sup> A month later Great Fredricksburg fell and John Konny was forced to take refuge on an island in the River Ancobra.<sup>2</sup> It was after another month that the Dutch General who went "in pursuit of Konny" finally succeeded in driving him away from Ahanta.<sup>3</sup> After thirteen years of rule and extension of his influence in Ahanta including eight years of control over Great Fredricksburg, John Konny's power was shattered by the Dutch. He eventually became a refuge in Fanti.<sup>4</sup> Thus ended the active career of the greatest and most powerful merchant prince on the Gold Coast.

A child of the age of keen European contests for rights on the Gold Coast, Konny studied and adopted the commercial diplomacy of his time. His active career from 1711 to 1724 was faithfully devoted to the service of the Brandenburg African Company. He sought to inject an element of order and stability into its crumbling fortunes. At the same time he made Great Fredricksburg the frequent and profitable resort of traders from the interior. He understood their needs for cheaper goods which could best be satisfied by an open market. In pursuit of which he declared his port free to all who cared to

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/7/92/ Report from C.C.C. to R.A.C./21 Oct. 1724.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/7/95/ Report from C.C.C. to R. .C./27 Nov. 1724.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/7/96/ Report from C.C.C. to R.A.C./31 Jan. 1725.

<sup>4</sup>A.B.Ellis, History, p.92. Claridge, op.cit., p.206. C. W. Welman, op.cit., p.44.



trade there. One of the greatest drawbacks in his careers was his ignorance of the intricacies of European politics. He could neither believe nor understand why the Dutch should negotiate, let alone why his allies should agree to sell the fort over his head. Although his alliances with Ashanti and Wassa, as well as his faithful service to the Brandenburgers contributed to his successes, Konny's own character and personality were major factors which helped him to carry his aims to their logical end.

Firm in exacting his due and insisting on his rights, he was not cruel. He differentiated the sources of power from the executors of duty. When an English crew were tardy in paying him tolls he did not hesitate to show them ~~that~~ he was the "King over his water", by ordering their arrest. Yet power did not blunt the finer and human part of him. He regaled his captives with food and drinks and bade them "drink what his house could afford".<sup>1</sup> Decorous in his manners, he open-handedly received his guests with due ceremony and dignity. When he played host to Atkins and his friends in 1721 Konny "stood on the shores to receive them with a guard of over twenty men under bright arms who conducted them to his house".<sup>2</sup> His general propriety elicited the admiration of his guest who above all things described the host as "an upright and just ... in all bargains who does not want

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<sup>1</sup> Atkins, Astley Collections, II, p.445. Welman, Ahanta, p.45.

<sup>2</sup> Atkins, Astley Collections, II, p.450.



what the others are thieving..... it is below his game".<sup>1</sup> Yet Konny's commonest memorial seems to have been that of a "Native usurper" of Great Fredricksburg, a man who paved the approaches of his house with Dutchmen's skulls and drank punch from a decorated skull of unusual size.<sup>2</sup> An unfortunate memorial of the man who not long after his victory decently interred his "trophies" in accordance with his country's custom and magnanimously asserted that "all malice should be forgotten".<sup>3</sup>

The Gold Coast trade of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries depended for its success mainly on the efforts of a host of local personnel. They served as the connecting link between the Europeans on the Coast and the producers in the inland states. While others remained permanently in the service of the European companies and depended on wages, some grew to set up viable trading concerns. Of the last group the careers of Assemani of Akwamu, John Kabes of Komenda and John Konny of Pokoso towered over the others in this period. One common denominator of all three was their command of forts or castles, their not infrequent struggles with European trading companies.

<sup>1</sup>Welman, Ahanta, p.48.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, Astley Collections, p. 477. Ellis, op.cit., p.91. Claridge, History, Vol. I, p.206.

3 Atkins Op Cit p 450



They all became chiefs of their towns. They all faithfully served different local states. Assemani became the hero of the successful Akwamu capture of the Christiansburg Castle, John Kabes helped the English to establish themselves at Komenda, and for some time became the adviser to the English on customary matters. Konny ruled not only his town of Pokoso and lower Ahanta, he was also the staunchest prop of the Brandenburg Company. But above all they were rulers who fought better trading terms for themselves and their followers. They were "Merchant Princes".



## Chapter VI

### EFFECT OF TRADE ON POLITICS

At the turn of the seventeenth century Ashanti conquered Denkyira and made a dramatic entry into the politics of the Gold Coast. From 1701 this hitherto unknown state became the most important single state, politically and economically. Both African and European commercial and political diplomacy were geared to this rising nation, which was soon to dominate the affairs of the Gold Coast. Virtually the history of the country became the history of the relations of Ashanti with its neighbours. In 1701, it became the first inland state to receive an accredited European representative at its capital. In that year the Dutch sent the sub-factor David van Nyendaal "to congratulate Zaay, King of Ashante". It was not until mid 1702 that he returned to the coast.

But although 1701 was a significant landmark in the history of the Gold Coast, it did not immediately establish Ashanti hegemony in all the states that had formerly been under Denkyira. There were wars still to be fought, and some system of control evolved to suit the extending frontiers. But the basis of contact between Ashanti and the Coast was well established. It also completely changed the political status quo by hastening the emergence of some far-reaching alliances, which were born out of fear of Ashanti. Admittedly some had their



roots in pre-Ashanti times, but it can be safely asserted that the fear of Ashanti led to the revival of old alliances and to the contracting of some new ones. But above all, it led to the sinking of some internal differences of states like Fanti and Akim and made them become of more importance in the politics of the Gold Coast.

Although the political boundaries on the map of the Gold Coast remained to a large extent as they had been at the beginning of the seventeenth century, most of them appeared only in name. In power and substance most of the smaller states were now mere satellites of the big ones, States such as Assine, Ahanta, Aguafo, Fetu, Sabu, Accra, and others which had been mentioned by De Marees in 1601, still existed along the coast.<sup>1</sup> The 1629 Dutch cartographer gives a clearer sketch of the states along the coast and those in the interior. To De Marres' coastal states he added some unknown inland ones, Inkassa, Wassa, Wanqui, Bono, Twifu, Accany, Akwamu, Kwahu, Inta and Insoko.<sup>2</sup> This 1629 map appears to have formed the basis of Dapper's work in 1668.<sup>3</sup> But neither of these two works mentions two of the states that were to rise to power by the end of the seven-

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<sup>1</sup>P. de Marees, Beschrijvinge Van de Gout Kust, 1601. Ed. S.P. l'Honore Naber 'S-Gravenhage 1912, pp.211-213.

<sup>2</sup>Leupen, No. 743, "Caerte des Lantschapen van de Gout Kust", 25 Dec. 1629.

<sup>3</sup>O. Dapper, Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaense Gowesten, Amsterdam 1668, pp. 433-458.



teenth century - namely Ashanti and Denkyira. Barbot a little later reported that Inta was alleged to be Asiante (Ashanti)<sup>1</sup>, an assertion which he seemed not to have been prepared to deny or to confirm. It is true that Ashanti was later to extend its power into the territory of the Inta. But there is no evidence to support the claim that Inta and Ashanti were one and the same thing.

Of the important inland states which appeared on the 1629 map Akim and Akwamu grew into great powers in the course of the seventeenth century. But by 1629 Akwamu could be summarily discounted as a "predatory nation" which had little by way of trade.<sup>2</sup> It was only Akim (Ahim, Great Akany, Akan) that was to receive the generous description of a "delijcaet volck en rijk van slaven".<sup>3</sup> But it appears to have concentrated its efforts more on trading with the inland states than with the coast. The farthest south Akim traded was the "A.b.c.", Abonce of the 1629 map which was described as the market of Accra. In fact the confusion surrounding the extent of Akim territory and its power was not resolved by the end of the seventeenth century.

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<sup>1</sup>J. Barbot in Churchill, Collections, Vol. 5, p.189.

<sup>2</sup>Map 743, Dapper, op.cit., p.458.

<sup>3</sup>Map 743, ibid., p. 459.



Barbot asserts that it was known to extend far inland to the Barbary (North Africa). He however would not place its boundary beyond the River Niger. According to Bosman, Akim was thought to extend to the Mandinga territory.<sup>1</sup> Both statements have two things in common, ignorance of what was in the interior, and acceptance of Akim as a large state.

But of all the Gold Coast states, it was Acany (Accany, Akani, Acames) which was given the greatest attention. Its fame goes back to the Portuguese era. In 1520, for instance, the Portuguese repeated their practice of sending presents to the king of Accany at the installation of a new captain.<sup>2</sup> This system of enticing inland traders to the coast was used in the subsequent centuries by the other European companies. Accany was particularly singled out for favours because of the great reputation of its traders and the purity of its gold. Its traders travelled far and wide to all the important trading centres, exchanging European goods for gold and locally manufactured cotton cloths. It was known in the Gold Coast trade as the greatest exporter of fine gold, so that pure and unadulterated gold was known as (Acany Chica, Sika) Akani gold. In the 1660's, the Acanis were still considered the greatest producers of gold. Dapper asserts that they supplied more than two-thirds of all the gold exported from the Gold

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<sup>1</sup>Barbot in Churchill, Collections, p.189; Bosman, op.cit., Let. VI, p.185.

<sup>2</sup>Blake, Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, Vol. 1, p.55.



Coast.<sup>1</sup> The commercial importance attached to the Akany traders tended to result in exaggeration of the political importance of the state. The European traders on the coast were apt to designate all the inland traders who came to the forts, from Moure in the east to Chama in the west, as Akany traders even though they came from different states.

There is a belief current among historians, which originated from Claridge, that the present day Assin<sup>2</sup> states were the Akany of the seventeenth century writers. It may not be denied that the Assins formerly formed part of a great Akan state in the forest zone. But by correlating traditional with documentary sources one is inclined to place Akany more with Adansi than with Assin. Indeed, the Dutch historian Ratelband/ appears to be nearer the truth when he described Akany as the parent state of states like Fanti and most of the Twi speaking (the Akans) people. He described it as a confederation of states in the interior of the Gold Coast.<sup>3</sup> Tradition has it that Adansi was the first organised Akan state in the interior from which other states learnt the art of government.<sup>4</sup> This state, Bosman's

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<sup>1</sup>Dapper, op.cit., p.458.

<sup>2</sup>Claridge, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 144; Ivor Wilks, "The Northern Factor....", J.A.H., Vol. II, 1961, p.28.

<sup>3</sup>K. Ratelband, Vijf Dagregisters... Sao Jorge Da Mina 1645-1647. (S-Gravenhage 1953,) p. XCII, also see notes.

<sup>4</sup>C. C. Reindorf, History, Basel (nd) p.48.



Ananse, which was described together with Ashanti as "lately known" on the coast was, and still is, the most important source of the gold from the Gold Coast.<sup>1</sup>

That the name Adansi should remain unknown may be understood from the fact that the language of the people and all with whom they claimed common descent was known as the Akan language. Ignorant of the true nature of things in the interior, the European traders could easily substitute the linguistic for the generic term. This would be helped on by the fact that originally the state was known by the name of its important town, Akyekyere (Akorekere). It was not until the break-up of the Akyekyere state in the first half of the 17th century that the survivors moved to Adansemanso, to be known as Adansi.<sup>2</sup> To the Europeans on the coast the change in the political system would make no difference as long as it did not have any adverse effects on trade.

If anything, the early cartographers helped to intensify the confusion, since they placed most of the states in a haphazard fashion. The 1629 Map, for instance, places Insoko well to the east while later writers placed it to the North west. It is reasonable to assert that the seventeenth century Acany of the European records was part of the state which later became known as Adansi.

Commercially Adansi and its kindred states had a great advantage

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., Let. VI, p.69.

<sup>2</sup>Eva Meyerowitz, Akan Traditions of Origin, London 1953, p.94.



over the other states. It occupied the most important sources of gold, which were not far from the southern terminus of the trade routes from the Kingdoms of the Niger bend. Traders from the region had access to the markets of Begho to which the Mande traders brought goods from the Northern markets. When later the direction of the flow of trade became more orientated to the south, Adansi did not lose its position of vantage. Whether by accident or design, it found itself almost equidistant from the markets of the Bono Kingdom, and the European establishments on the coast. Thus its markets became the clearing house of the goods and new ideas from both the north and the south.<sup>1</sup> The gold from Adansi enabled that state to increase its consumption of foreign goods. But it was the power to purchase these goods which eventually led to the fall of the Adansi state. The great change took place in the mid-seventeenth century when the demand for firearms eventually superseded that for other European goods. The increased supply of these weapons revolutionised the social system and ideas of state building.

Prior to the rise of Denkyira as a powerful state, state building had not rested on force of arms. It was based on kinship groups who settled together for mutual benefit. But the theory of blood relationship could not stand in the face of the new demands from the coast.

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<sup>1</sup>E. Meyerowitz, op.cit., p.99. I. Wilks, "The Northern Factor", J.A.H. Wilks does not mention the extent of the activities of the (Akany) Adansi, traders but he accepts the commercial importance played by Begho in the economic and political set up of the G. Coast.



The change in the emphasis of the European demand from gold to slaves ate into the social fabric and broke down the established system. Adansi, for instance, is traditionally known to have based its fame on the "wisdom of its great state god" and not on force.<sup>1</sup> Around the 1630's this theory received its greatest setback by the successful revolt of the group which set up the Denkyira kingdom. But what had started as a splinter group was later to be built up into a great and powerful nation principally on account of its access to fire-arms. This is not to say that before the increase in the number of firearms there were no wars on the Gold Coast. From 1637 onwards there were increasing reports of wars in the interior. There was frequent mention of wars between the Acany and other states which disrupted the trade on the coast. Indeed there is evidence of cases in which the Europeans had lent a few guns to friendly states.<sup>2</sup> But these wars appear to have been mere trade wars disputing rights of way, or civil wars over succession disputes. Their political effects were inconsequential, their duration short. There is reason to believe that the political stability enjoyed by the Gold Coast states up to the second half of the seventeenth century was due to the comparative <sup>scarcity</sup> ~~scarcity~~ of firearms imported to the coast. Indeed there is no evidence to show that the Portuguese engaged in this trade.

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<sup>1</sup>C. C. Reindorf, op.cit., p.49.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter IV.



The change in the emphasis of trade goods from cloth and a few necessities of life to firearms in the latter part of the seventeenth century was revolutionary. Its repercussions affected the length and breadth of the Gold Coast. The evidence suggests that the Dutch did <sup>not</sup> at first trade in these weapons. The inventory of goods handed over by General Ruyschaver to Van der Wel, his successor, in 1645, makes no mention of guns. The column headed "ammunitions of war" showed a great lack of ammunition. At Moure and Axim the total number of muskets did not exceed seventy-five pieces; Chama and Accra between them, had only eleven muskets. The only materials which might be described as "offensive weapons" were the 13,767 knives and cutlasses of all sorts which appeared in the goods requisition<sup>d</sup> for the Gold Coast in 1647.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis was on pewter basins, cotton prints, and such luxury goods as looking glasses, beads and carpets.

Although Dapper could write in 1668 that the iron bars which were sent to the Gold Coast were used in manufacturing traditional weapons such as knives, daggers and swords,<sup>2</sup> it can be said that these were made to supplement the European supply of firearms that were by now finding their way into African hands in large quantities. On board the ship The Arcany Merchant sent from London to the Gold Coast in the same year there were 2,000 pieces of iron bars and 200

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<sup>1</sup>K. Ratelband, op.cit., Appendix J, pp. 361-384.

<sup>2</sup>Dapper, op.cit., p.481.



muskets.<sup>1</sup> There were also 929 "old and damaged muskets", 38 carbines, 66 musket barrels and 110 barrels of gunpowder remaining at the Cape Coast warehouse in 1679. In 1681 the Warehouse journal showed remaining firearms to be 148 carbines, 104 musket barrels, 2,116 muskets and 600 small barrels of gunpowder. The 1687 list showed among other things, 576 firelock muskets and 3,037 matchlock muskets.<sup>2</sup>

That the local taste for firearms had increased may also be seen from the fact that it became fashionable to send them as presents to the local rulers, and for some of the rulers to demand the payment of the rents for the forts in guns and gunpowder. In 1687 the King of Fetu received 26 matchlock muskets while his elders were given the same item of goods together with barrels of gunpowder, for Cape Coast Castle rentals.<sup>3</sup> Some went to provide loans for the local traders and rulers, who used the proceeds accruing from the use of the guns to pay off their debts. In 1680, for instance, 100 muskets, 6 fuzees and 4 barrels of gun powder were "trusted to the Caboceer Hensaw... to be paid for in slaves".<sup>4</sup> The gun running had reached

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/365/R.A.C. to C.C. Castle 12. Aug. 1679.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/372. C.C. Act. Feb. 1687; T.70/367/C.C.C. Act. Nov. 1681.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/372/194/Acct. for March 1687; T.70/372/129/10 Nov. 1686. Elders of Cape Coast were paid 66 matchlocks for customs on ships; in April 1687 the King of Fetu got an advance payment for rent for 3 months in muskets and barrels of gunpowder. T.70/372/206/26 April.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/365/92 Sept. 168; f. 51 March 1680 f. 80 July 1680.



such a pitch that the end of 1680 the English reported that "powder has late grown a mighty drug".<sup>1</sup> But this was a temporary affair for, there is no indication that its importation either ceased or ~~or~~ dwindled in the course of time. In the 1680's the most significant change was the increase in Dutch manufactured guns. These were in such great demand that the Royal African Company was prepared to import Dutch guns to the great indignation of "the English shotgun makers".<sup>2</sup>

At the turn of the century guns were the articles in greatest demand. The Dutch Director General's report of 1,700 mentioned the wars and rumours of wars in the inland states. He appealed to the Directors in Holland for firearms of all sorts.<sup>3</sup> This demand appeared to have been favourably considered, for at the beginning of the seventeenth century the English were reporting that the Dutch could sell over 20,000 tons of gunpowder and asked for an increase in their stock. They estimated that they would need about 500 carbines, 100 blunderbusses, 10,000 flints, 5,000 knives, 50 sword hangers, 800 half-barrels of gun-powder, 50 cases of spirits and 200 tuns of Barbados rum "to purchase slaves and gold".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/20/70 Agent Bradley and Council to R.A.C. 7 Dec. 1680.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/169/28/Petition against the Importation of Dutch guns. 17 Oct. 1684.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.57/37/21 June 1700, W.I.C./21 June 1700. Report by Jan van Sevenhuysen to The Ten.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/22/1/Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C. 26 Aug. 1705. T.70/5/57/8 May 1709.



The use of the firearms had become so familiar to the local people that Bosman, at the close of the century, could describe them as "wonderful dexterous". Local soldiers on drill exhibited a magnificent display of ability which won the admiration of the Europeans for the same author asserts that "'tis not unpleasant to see them exercise their army, they handled their arms so cleverly, discharging them several ways, one sitting, the second creeping or lying...."<sup>1</sup> But not only at drill were they familiar with firearms, but their smiths were able to repair them. Loyer points out that "by new tempering of the lock as to exceed what it was before... old guns sold them that would not fire, ... (are) brought to such perfection as scarcely ever to miss, keeping them as bright as silver".<sup>2</sup> Some local chiefs and influential traders were even known to possess a few cannon. These were, however, not generally used in warfare; they were used for ceremonial purposes such as salutes.<sup>3</sup> The Kings of Sabu, Akwamu and Denkyira, for example, traders such as John Kabes of Komenda, John Konny of Pokoso and Assemani of Akwamu also were known to have possessed some cannon.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., . . . Let XI p. 156.

<sup>2</sup>Loyer, in Churchill, Collections, Vol. II, p. 436.

<sup>3</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Let. XI, p. 159.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter V.



With such a massive array of firearms and the willingness of the Europeans to vie with one another in supplying them, warfare underwent great changes. It led to the disintegration of the political system and hastened the era of the growth of politically and economically viable states. The irony of the situation however, is that it was not those people who first became acquainted with the firearms who led in the empire-building on the Gold Coast. For most of the coastal states the increased use of firearms tended to deepen their local rivalries and made them unable to unite on their own.

There were two main reasons why state-building on the Gold Coast began from the inland and not from the coast. In the first place, the forest zone especially, the areas where gold was readily obtainable, were, for a long time, in constant communication with the Kingdoms of the Niger Bend by means of trade. To be able to control the long distance trade it was imperative that people should be grouped into larger units. This factor helped in the rise to power of such states as Adansi, Gonja, Ashanti and others.<sup>1</sup> There was in effect the political know-how; what was lacking was the capacity to hold large stretches of land under one influence. On the coast, on the other hand, the petty states became so involved in the European commercial struggle that their fortunes became tied up with those of their foreign friends and allies. Unless a

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<sup>1</sup>I. Wilks, "The Northern Factor in Ashanti History", op.cit., p. 28-34.



state was supposed to be "friendly" to a European power, it became the policy of the trading companies to make it "friendly". They used their influence to engineer troubles to depose "unfriendly" rulers. Sir Dalby Thomas succinctly put a point about the Dutch which, in effect, was applicable to all the European Companies on the Gold Coast. The method adopted by the Dutch was "to hire the natives to destroy those who opposed them".<sup>1</sup> In the inland states, beyond the reach of such coastal interferences, state building was more easily possible. The process was greatly facilitated by the use of firearms. The conquerors were able to present a fait accompli to the Europeans who could do nothing but change their policies to support the state which emerged victorious. Of all the coastal states it was only Fanti which was able to maintain its independence and to exercise a great political control over its neighbours at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Of the political developments on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century it was the growth of the Akwamu state which received most attention from the European powers. This was because the area which first came under the Akwamu Empire was Accra. Because Akwamu became a coastal power, its activities with other states had direct effects on the fortunes of the European Companies. Hence the sufficient coverage it

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/9 Report of Sir Dalby Thomas 16 Oct.1705-Jan.1706. For more about the involvement of the Europeans in local politics see Chapter IV. It is also significant that Anglo-Dutch war with John Konny was planned to cut short his political powers. See Chapter V.



received. Akwamu had been mentioned in 1629 as a predatory nation.<sup>1</sup> Its activities with the neighbouring states had led to a great disruption in the Accra trade, which in 1646 forced the Dutch to intervene to settle disputes between them and Accra.<sup>2</sup> But its struggles with Accra could not always be settled by the Europeans on the coast. It appears that by the middle of the seventeenth century Akwamu had succeeded in bringing the states which lay across the trade routes to Accra within its sphere of influence. With the help of the new tributary states, it was able to embark on the campaign of territorial aggrandisement that was to extend its power far to the east by the first decade of the eighteenth century.

Akwamu's hold over the trade routes to Accra was a constant cause of disagreement between the two states. While it was the desire of Akwamu to get a share in the European trade, the policy of Accra had been to reserve direct contact with the forts to its nationals. As far back as 1629, Abonce was noted as "de marckt van Acara". Here, Dapper asserts, was the southern limit to which foreign traders could carry on trade.<sup>3</sup> But if commerce provided a great incentive for Akwamu attacks on Accra, practical politics made it almost the only place

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<sup>1</sup>Map 743, op.cit., 29 December 1629.

<sup>2</sup>O.W.I.C./42/16 November 1646; 15 Dec. 1646; Also see Ratelband, op.cit., p.262, 279; Wilks, Akwamu, op.cit.

<sup>3</sup>Map 743, op.cit., dd. 29 Dec. 1629; O. Dapper, Africaensche Gewesten, p.549.



to which it could turn its attention. On its North Western frontier was Akim and to the south west was Fanti. Accra therefore appeared to have been the only place where resistance to its power would be feeble.

In 1677 Akwamu attacked Great Accra, the inland capital of the state. In this the Accras lost their King, but not their independence. One of the princes made his escape to Little Accra where he established his Court. Two years later Akwamu launched another attack on Ofori, the King of Accra. The Akwamus were repulsed by the Accras with the assistance of the Danes. But the fortunes of war turned a year later, when Accra was overrun by the Akwamu.<sup>1</sup> It appears that the English also had lent support to Accra in 1679, for in that year the ship Isabella was sent from Cape Coast "towards the releasing of Affori (Ofori) King of Accra".<sup>2</sup> But accurately sensing the fortunes of war, the English changed sides and began to support Akwamu in 1680. In September 1680 they lent 100 muskets and 4 barrels of gunpowder to Hensaw. While the same man was in Comboe (Akwamu) in July they had sent him 6 fuzees as presents. If they had thought that a speedy termination of the war would lead to normal trade relations, they were deceived for they had to wait longer than they had expected. Three years later they were complaining that "Ahensa's continual wars in those

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<sup>1</sup>For the Accra Akwamu struggle see I. Wilks, T.H.S.G., Vol. III, II, 1957, p.106.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/635/12/C.C.C.Account. Bradley to R.A.C. 1679.



parts (around Accra)" had disturbed the trade.<sup>1</sup> But when the wars ended they hastened to put their relationship with Akwamu on a firmer footing by sending presents of scarlet cloth, a case of spirits and other articles to "congratulate Ahensaw the conqueror of Accra".<sup>2</sup> This policy of supporting the side likely to win the war was also adopted by the English at the beginning of the 18th century. In 1709 Sir Thomas Dalby bluntly put it that although the Danes and the Dutch were supporting the Accras against Akwamu, he would back the latter "who is likely to obtain the better and who promises great things in our favour".<sup>3</sup>

The defeat of Accra by Akwamu in 1680 established the latter as a coastal power. With the settlements of three European companies established at Accra, Akwamu was able to secure help to pursue its imperial designs. Its capacity to get firearms was only limited by its purchasing power. The fact that it collected monthly rentals from the Danes, the Dutch and the English gave it a better purchasing power, or at least, boosted its credit worthiness. By the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century Akwamu had extended its power as far

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/365/51/31 March 1680; f.80, July 1680, f. 92 Sept. 1680; T.70/16/76/27 Oct. 1783. Reports from H. Grenhill and Council to R.A.C. (Hensaw, Ahensa Hensaw, may be identified with the Akwamu King Ansa Sasraku who conquered Accra in 1680). See Wilks, Akwamu

<sup>2</sup>T.70/370/16/12 July 1684.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/50/Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C. 8 Jan. 1709.



east as Whydah. Its northern frontiers touched on Kwahu which was reduced to being its tributary state in 1710.<sup>1</sup> On the western frontier it had subjugated Agona and allied itself with Fanti. Its friendship with Ashanti to the north west of Akim, and the Ashantis' enmity with Akim, gave Akwamu the relative peace in which to consolidate its empire.

Antedating the rise of Akwamu was that of Denkyira. Its rise to greatness was one of the most significant political changes in the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century. It discovered the weakness in the traditional system as a result of the new economic pressures brought to bear on it by the European trade along the coast. It is not known for certain when the break took place. Neither the 1629 map, nor Dapper's work, which appeared in 1668, mentioned Denkyira. Meyerowitz, however, asserts that the break from the (Akyekyere) Adansi Kingdom took place in 1620.<sup>2</sup> This may well be the case. Tradition asserts that there were eight Kings of Denkyira before 1701.<sup>3</sup> Taking conservatively, an average reign to be ten years, the foundations of the state go back to the 1620's. It is true that Bosman, writing at the time of the fall of Denkyira, described it as a small compass of land which

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/70/9 April 1710. See Wilks "Akwamu", op.cit., p.108.

<sup>2</sup>E. Meyerowitz, Akan Traditions, pp. 93-95. Meyerowitz asserts that the state organisation on clan basis broke down in the Akwamu kingdom in about 1600. This is difficult to reconcile with the historical events of the time. In the 1620's Akwamu was an insignificant state. Their rise to fame was not until the last two decades of the 17th century. E. Meyerowitz, The Sacred State of the Akan, p.33.

<sup>3</sup>C.C.Reindorf, History, pp. 48-50, gives names of 6 kings after the first two.



had risen to power in "the past fifteen or sixteen years".<sup>1</sup> This assertion, however, may be taken to refer to the last phase of Denkyira empire building, when it directed its attention southwards and thus came within closer contact with the Europeans. For it was during this phase of its expansion that Twifu, Awawin and Accany were brought into its power complex. Had Denkyira had such a short time for its expansion it could hardly have exercised the power and influence it did during the last years of the seventeenth century.

Since the first phase of its development was directed to the north, European sources are not helpful in dealing with the first and most glorious phase of Denkyira history. But what is lacking in documentary evidence is well supplied by traditional sources. Denkyira's early years appear to have been devoted to establishing its influence in the area which had previously been under Adansi power. Together with Adansi itself, the Amanse states, which later came to form the nucleus of the Ashanti state, were brought under it. Its influence over Ashanti remained until 1701 when Denkyira suffered its first great defeat. It is interesting to observe the line of expansion of Denkyira power. Its third King, Owusu Bore, whose last name denotes a successful warrior, is said to have extended Denkyira power to bring

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, Gout Kust, Amsterdam 1709, p.73. He asserts that "Het Dinkirase landschap is zedert vijftien a sestien jaren door deselfs volks dapperheijd, sodaning in magt en vermogen aangegroeyd..." Incidentally the English edition does not quote the years. See Bosman, op.cit., London, 1721, Let. ~~XI~~, p.64.



within it states like Wassa, Twifu, Encassar and Sefwi. Calculating by the ten year average reign, Owusu Bore's exploits might have taken place at the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century. His expansionist policy gave Denkyira a stranglehold on all the important gold-producing states to the west except Awawin. Wassa, for instance, has been noted as far back as 1629 as a state whose inhabitants concentrated on gold mining to the neglect of even cultivation of food crops.<sup>1</sup> Encassa, which later became part of Sefwi, was famous for its extensive cloth trade with its neighbouring states. The wealth of Ashanti and Adanse gold mines has already been noted. By the time of Owusu Bore, therefore, Denkyira was qualified for Bosman's assertion that gold from its own mines, besides what was obtained by her neighbours, made it the supplier of large quantities of gold for the windward forts.<sup>2</sup>

This firm foundation laid by Owusu Bore, allowed his followers to devote themselves to enriching the material and cultural life of their courts by creating many external manifestations of wealth. In addition to its successes in war, Owusu is said to have added new gold ornaments to the royal regalia. Each of his successors added something more. While one is said to have instituted a band of singers to glorify

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<sup>1</sup> Map 743, Notes on Wassa; Dapper, op.cit., p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> W. Bosman, op.cit., Let. VI, p.64. Barbot, Churchill Collections, op.cit., p.189.



and perpetuate the memories of their heroes, another is believed to have made new stools and swords of gold.<sup>1</sup> With its wealth and power, the court of Denkyira became the regular resort of young princes from the tributary states, who came to their apprenticeship in the art of government and court manners. One of such young princely students who came to the court at ~~Abankesiaso~~, the Denkyira capital, was the famous Osei Tutu of Ashanti. Tradition asserts that Obiri Yeboah, the uncle of Osei Tutu, sent his nephew and heir as a sword bearer to the King of Denkyira.<sup>2</sup> From the documentary sources one is able to reconstruct with fair confidence when this event is likely to have taken place.

While at Denkyira, Tutu is said to have intrigued with a lady of the Denkyira royal family and made his escape to Akwamu. This same Tutu was the Ashantihene whose forces defeated Denkyira in 1701.<sup>3</sup> It is not known for certain when Osei Tutu passed his earlier life ~~at~~<sup>in</sup> Denkyira and Akwamu. How long he stayed at any of these places is also unknown. What is known, however, is that by 1706, the King was said to be

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<sup>1</sup>Reindorf, op.cit., pp. 49-50. Bore, the appellation of the Denkyira King, Owusu, means poison or python. This goes to indicate the terror he struck in the other states by his successes in war.

<sup>2</sup>Reindorf, op.cit., p.51. Fuller, Ashanti: A Vanished Dynasty, London 1921, p.16.

<sup>3</sup>E. B. Ellis, History, p. ~~85~~<sup>87</sup>, Claridge, op.cit. Vol. I, p.142  
Ward, op.cit., p.122. N.B.K.G./57/97/16 Nov. 1701. Report by J. V. Sevenhuysen.



old and was making arrangements for a regency in Ashanti. A Dutch report of the time says that the King had given his sword and power to his Kontihene, one of his divisional chiefs, the general Amankwatia.<sup>1</sup> The English reported six years later that "the Ashantee traders desist from coming, because of the death of their King, but hopes after the funeral ceremony is over trade will revive".<sup>2</sup> This event was not reported by the Dutch until three years later.

Correlating the traditions of his early life and career with the reports by both the Dutch and the English, one point stands out clearly. Five years after the defeat of Denkyira Osei Tutu could not lead his armies to wars because of oldage. Allowing for the strains of the many wars which the King had to fight to establish the power of the new Ashanti nation, one may place the King's age by the time of his death in the late fifties. From this one may place the date of Osei Tutu's birth in the early 1650's. Granting that the young heir apparent to the Ashanti throne would not have started his court education until he was mature enough to hold his own in an African court, where there would be many others of his age from different parts of the empire, Osei Tutu is likely

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<sup>1</sup>V.R.O.A.115. Diary of Pieter Nuyts. Letter from Landman Axim to Director Gen. 4 Nov. 1706. Also see Priestley and Wilks "Ashanti Kings in the 18th Century", J.A.H., Vol. I, 1960, pp. 87-88.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/81/15 March 1712 Grosvenor & Phipps to R.A.C., N.B.K.G.82/Letter from Butler, Axim to H. Haring, Elmina. 16 Dec. 1715.



to have come to Denkyira in his middle teens. His court studies at Denkyira then might have started at the beginning of the 1670's.<sup>1</sup>

The last twenty years of the seventeenth century saw the extension of Denkyira power to the south and south-west. This brought its fame more to the attention of the Europeans. By the end of the century it had established its power over Awawin and south westwards to Assine. Bosman asserts that Assine, which had previously been an important place for the gold trade was "conquered and almost devastated" by Denkyira. The result was that commerce "ran at a low ebb"<sup>2</sup> by the end of the century because of Denkyira exactions. Denkyira's last war was fought with the state of Acany. Bosman asserts that the state was completely ruined and the people obliged to strip themselves of whatever they possessed". The state was reduced to the "utmost poverty and inability to defend itself".<sup>3</sup> This war brought Accany heavily in debt to the English, who granted substantial help to the defeated state. By 1699 the King and country of Accany owed as much as 40 marks of gold to the English. Some of the amount had been granted them "to redeem their country from the hands of Denkyira".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This will support the traditional claim that Ntim Gyakari the King of Denkyira who was defeated and killed in 1701, was the son of Osei Tutu by a woman of the Denkyira Royal family. Fuller dismissed it as incredible because of Osei Tutu's young age. If the son was born when Osei was about 22, Ntim would be in his early twenties by 1701. This supports the claim that the King of Denkyira who fought Ashanti was a young man. Bosman, op.cit., p.65

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit. Let. I, p.4, Let VI, p.70. T.70/11/125/Buckridge & Council to R.A.C. 28 May 1698.

<sup>3</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Lev. VI, p.68.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/374/A.C.C.Act. Jan. 1699.



At the close of the seventeenth century Denkyira was the greatest single state behind the European forts to the west of Cape Coast Castle. Its influence spread over two hundred miles westwards from across the Pra to the river ~~Tain~~<sup>Tano</sup>.<sup>1</sup> It buttressed the defences of its eastern districts by pushing its frontiers to touch those of Akim, its friendly ally. Northwards it had an indeterminate boundary which enclosed much of the present day Ashanti. Its wealth increased its power for it was able to purchase the firearms needed for the power struggle in the latter part of the seventeenth century. If politically Denkyira was a great power, commercially it established itself with the European forts as a power to be courted in the interest of trade. Official Denkyira policy was to encourage free trade between the forts and its capital; to make the pathssafe for all traders.

Although Akany was established as a great trading nation "long before Denkyira", by the last decade of the seventeenth century it was more to Denkyira than to Akany that the Europeans were directing their efforts. In 1694, for instance, representatives from three European companies, the Brandenburgers, the Dutch and the English went to Denkyira to the King, "who desired to live in good understanding with the Europeans". The first two companies, though acting independently, converged on Abenkesiesu at the same time.<sup>2</sup> But Denkyira did not content

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<sup>1</sup>Bosman, op.cit., pp.64, 70. Reindorf, op.cit., p.49.

<sup>2</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Let XIII, p.219.



itself with sitting back to receive European representatives with presents. It took positive steps to ensure that its merchants were not cheated out of the trade; and that its ruler received due attention from the companies. It therefore established "trade consuls" at the important trading centres along the coast. In November 1698, for instance, the English were found sending presents of rum, gunpowder and blue cloth to the King of Denkyira to "interr Arpim his resident here ... whose body was carried up".<sup>1</sup> Its market, which was described as "antient", had to be kept always open in order not to disturb the flow of trade to the forts. In 1698 the English felt it necessary to intervene to settle disputes between Denkyira and its neighbours in the interest of trade. In pursuit of this policy of attracting the Denkyira merchants, they sent their middlemen expressly to settle "this antient market place".<sup>2</sup> That Denkyira should fight other states in the interest of trade shows the importance officials attached to commerce. Its war with Accany in 1697 could be said to have originated from trade disputes. For, although the English had provided financial help to the latter, they jubilantly reported that the Akany had been justly rewarded in their defeat and hoped "what expenses they had been at ... free trade will compensate". Four months after the war Denkyira was still reported to be determined that "nothing shall stop trade

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/373/.C.C.Castle November Accounts.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/374/C.C.C. Acct. 22 June 1698.



which they will encourage".<sup>1</sup> Fourteen years after its defeat the Dutch could still be nostalgic at times about the "Pax Denkyira" which encouraged trade. In 1715 they were uncertain about any beneficial commercial results that were likely to follow an Ashanti attack on Awawin. They took a lesson from the defeat of Denkyira since "whose ruin the whole of the windward Coast has languished for several years".<sup>2</sup>

The desire to be a great commercial nation, however, proved fatal to the Denkyira Empire and occasioned its eventual defeat by Ashanti. By the end of the seventeenth century its commercial importance was obtained from its own mines together with tribute from tributary states. But the burden placed on the tributary states appears to have become heavier in the course of time. Money was needed to fight wars of territorial expansion and to suppress revolts in the subsidiary states. But apart from opening its court as a place of apprenticeship, there is no indication to suggest that the states which came under it benefitted from the domination of Denkyira. It is arguable that the peace it was able to establish made commerce flourish and so indirectly benefitted the tributary states. What was gained in trade was lost again in tributes to the court of Denkyira. Therefore, the evidence suggests that Denkyira became richer at the expense of its tributary states. Denkyira was said to have grown "arrogant" as a result of its victories

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/11/125/N. Buckenridge and Council to R.A.E. 28 May 1698. T.70/11/126, 1st Sept. 1698.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G. 82 Report of Direct.-Gen. Haring and Council 9 Sept. 1715.



and riches. It "looked upon all other negroes with a contemptible eye".<sup>1</sup> Another Dutchman gave a report not dissimilar from Bosman's. Denkyira was described as "warlike and overbearing"; its wars had ruined states such as Awowin, Twifu, Akany, Adom and Wassa.<sup>2</sup>

Tributary states which prevaricated in the payment of their tributes were visited by Denkyira armies. In 1700 for instance, apparently needing more money for its war against Ashanti, Denkyira was said to have invaded Twifu with a large army and have demanded about £800 from Acaffo, the King.<sup>3</sup> This kind of treatment did not endear it to the subordinate states who "impatiently wished its downfall".<sup>4</sup> Tradition also has it that the Denkyira war with Ashanti was caused by the excessive and insulting tribute which was imposed on Ashanti. By 1700 Ashanti had grown sufficiently strong to be able to defy Denkyira and to force the latter into the "Ashanti war of independence".

Like Denkyira, when Ashanti became known to the European companies on the coast it had already established its power over most of its near neighbours. When it burst the boundaries of the states familiar to the Europeans, the foundations of a strong empire had been firmly laid. By 1700, Ashanti was "but lately known" to the coast but it was known

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., Let. IV, p.65; Claridge, op.cit., Vol. I, p.143

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.917, Report of Direct.-Gen. Sevenhuysen and Council, 30 May 1701.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.124 Willem Bosman's report to Direct.-Gen. Elmina, 10 March 1700.

<sup>4</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Let. VI, p.66.



to "possess more gold than Dinkira".<sup>1</sup> There is no indication that when Barbot was on the coast in the 1680's Ashanti was known to the Europeans, for neither the Dutch nor the English who were established there had any idea about that state. Indeed his reference to "Inta as Ashanti"<sup>2</sup> may be said to refer to Ashanti after the Denkyira defeat. Bosman's assertion that all the neighbouring states of Denkyira had been taught to fear it "but Asiante and Akim who are yet stronger", appears to have been an <sup>et</sup> post facto assertion inapplicable to events that occurred before 1701. Not until the defeat of Denkyira was information about that state known on the coast, even though it had long been establishing itself as a strong power in the interior.

The foundation of the powerful Ashanti nation is associated with Osei Tutu. It is not known for certain when he ascended the Ashanti throne but it could not be any time after the last twenty years of the seventeenth century. Prior to this time Ashanti was a small state of kinship groups who had moved northwards from Adansi when the theory of government by blood relationship collapsed under Denkyira's assertion of independence. Settling first in the strategically secluded area of <sup>6</sup> A~~a~~ntemanso, they began to extend their power northwards.

This northwards expansion provided both political and economic advantages. To the south and south-east were the powerful states

<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., Let VI., p.69.

<sup>2</sup>Barbot, op.cit., Churchill, Collections, p.189.



of Denkyira and Akim. The approaches to the trade on the coast were under the control of these two powers. To the north and north-west the picture was different. Trade to the north-east, to the Kola nut market of Gonja, lay open to the rising Ashanti power. To the north-west was Begho, the southerly terminus of the Mande trade from the states of the Niger Bend. The first phase of the Ashanti policy of extension was directed to gaining control over the approaches to these valuable northern markets.<sup>1</sup> It was in pursuit of this policy that the Kumasihene, Obiri Yeboah, lost his life and Osei Tutu was recalled from his place of refuge in Akwamu to become king.

Of all the people called upon to build a nation in the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, none appears to have been better prepared for the job of Kingship than Osei Tutu. He combined the advantages of a courtly education with courage and levelheaded planning. When he escaped from Denkyira, he continued his education at Akwamu, another rising Akan state. At both places he studied the intricacies of the duties and obligations of Kingship. Apart from the personal experience he gained from his stay in "foreign" lands, he formed a friendship with the famous Okomfo Anokye who became his adviser and close friend. When he was called to be King, Anokye followed him to Kumasi. Between them, Osei Tutu, the courageous and youthful King, and Anokye, the wise planner and "the cardinal Wolsey of Ashanti"<sup>2</sup>, laid the foundations of an Empire, that was to increase

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<sup>1</sup>I. Wilks, "The Northern Factor in Ashanti History", J.A.H., Vol. 11 (1961), p.33.

<sup>2</sup>For more about the activities of Osei Tutu and Okomfo Anokye see Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, pp. 273-5; Idem, Ashanti, p.290. Fuller, op.cit., pp.91-10, Meyerowitz, Akan, p.102, 110.



in power, fame and wealth for nearly two centuries.

The two most important and lasting achievements ascribed to Osei Tutu and Okomfo Anokye, are the creation of a unified Ashanti nation and the assertion of Ashanti independence of Denkyira. Osei Tutu continued his uncle's war by extending Ashanti power into the Doma states to the north. But it was still left to create and maintain a viable independent nation. The Denkyira war provided the cause for achieving both. The need to fight Denkyira served to unite all the confederated states of Ashanti. But there was also the desire to provide a strong and unified nation. It was in this respect that the resources of Okomfo Anokye, the priestly adviser of Tutu, were brought into use. Tradition asserts that at a meeting of the Ashanti chiefs, Okomfo Anokye caused a stool to descend from the heavens. After which every member of the assembled rulers was asked to provide cuttings from his nails to be made into medicine for the consecration of the stool. This stool which became known as the "Golden Stool of Ashanti" was then presented as the "soul of the Ashanti nation". The King of Kumasi was granted custody of it.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in addition to the duties as the King of Kumasi, he became, by virtue of the Golden Stool, the head of the new nation whose external manifestation of unity was symbolised by the stool.

Whatever the details of the tradition, its historical implications are clear. From about 1690, the states which had been associated with each other principally for self preservation, became united into one nation.

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<sup>1</sup>Ward, History, pp. 117-119. Rattray, Ashanti, p. 290; K.A. Busia, The Position of Chiefs, pp. 96-99. J. D. Fage, Ghana, p. 54.



The new nation required the allegiance hitherto owed to individual states. Henceforth the most important single consideration was to fight for, and on behalf of, the Golden Stool. In about 1699 the new nation was called upon to put its unity to test in the war against Denkyira.

Apart from the unity of the Ashanti nation other external forces helped towards the defeat of Denkyira. To most of the tributary states of Denkyira, the Ashanti attack provided an opportunity to settle old scores with their overlord. Most of them shared with Ashanti the desire to be independent. Tradition asserts that Ntim Gyakari of Denkyira sent a large brass basin to Kumasi and demanded that Osei Tutu and his elders fill it with gold.<sup>1</sup> This increased tribute might have been an attempt by Denkyira to force a show down with its powerful tributary state. For, at this time, Denkyira's influence over some of the northern states was on the wane. Adansi, for instance, had come under the influence of Ashanti.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the original motives of the Denkyiras, they succeeded in providing an immediate cause for Ashanti to fight for its independence. The tribute was refused and Ashanti prepared for war.

Bosman's picture of a Denkyira which did nothing to prevent Ashanti from accumulating arms oversimplifies the true picture of the Gold Coast politics at the turn of the seventeenth century. He asserts that the

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<sup>1</sup>Reindorf, op.cit., p.55; Meyerowitz, Akan Traditions, p.95; Ward, op.cit., p.120. It is also said they were asked to surrender some of their wives. Bosman gives what might have been some of the remote causes of the war. He asserts the Bosiante, the King of Denkyira, misused one of the wives of Osei Tutu when they were sent on a mission to Denkyira. This led the enraged King to prepare for war. Bosman, op.cit., Let VI, p.65.

<sup>2</sup>Reindorf, op.cit., pp. 55-56.



Ashantis bought large quantities of gunpowder "which the Dinkiras suffered .. to pass ... uninterrupted through their country".<sup>1</sup> The Dutch official reports from the Coast at this time show the exact opposite of this assertion. States like Accany, Twifu, Adom and Wassa which had been ruined by Denkyira now considered that it was its turn to fall. But they did more than wish. All paths leading to Denkyira were shut to prevent the Denkyiras from getting a supply of arms.<sup>2</sup> Not only to the windward side but in and around Accra, the Akims, who were allied with Denkyira, experienced the same difficulties. The result was that while Akwamu and the other friendly states like Accany were in a good position to supply arms to Ashanti, Denkyira was able to obtain only small supplies. Denkyira, Akim and other allies were thus at a disadvantage. After an initial setback, the Ashantis defeated Denkyira at Feyiase in about 1700. Finally in 1701 the Ashantis took the offensive and carried their victorious arms into the heart of Denkyira. In mid-1701 Denkyira with its allies was defeated. Bosman put the Akim loss alone at 30,000 men.<sup>3</sup> Besides the losses, Akim incurred the enmity of Ashanti, an enmity which was to cost it dearly in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup>Bosman, op.cit., p.66.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.917; N.B.K.G.57. Report of J. V. Sevenhuysen 30 May 1701.

<sup>3</sup>Bosman, op.cit., Let. VI, p.67. Reindorf, op.cit., p.56.



Contrary to the common assertion that the Dutch provided considerable material support to Denkyira in this war,<sup>1</sup> one discovers that the Dutch were prepared to do anything rather than become involved in the wars of the interior of the Gold Coast. This was because experience had taught them that it was impossible to get control over all the trade. The reports at this time depict them as people completely at their wits end. The Director-General reported he would steer completely clear of the troubles. It was realised that if Denkyira was victorious "as it had always been", that would mean a complete ruin for the rebellious states and an end to profitable trade. But, if anything, the sharp commercial minds of the Dutch placed their sympathies with the Ashantis. The reason, as may be inferred from Bosman, was that they had lately discovered that Ashanti had more gold than Denkyira. This covert support of Ashanti is discerned from the report sent from the coast in 1701. It held that, "as they had hoped for", the Ashanti had gained a complete victory over Denkyira.<sup>2</sup> Scarcely were the reports written, than they dispatched an emissary to the "gevreede Asjantiynse Caboceer Zaay"<sup>3</sup> with presents and messages of congratulation. That Ashanti had come to be regarded as the greatest power at this time may

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<sup>1</sup>Reindorf, op.cit., p.59. Claridge, op.cit., Vol. I, p.198.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.917. Report of J. V. Sevenhuysen, 30 May 1701.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.57/97/16 Nov. 1701. W.I.C.917/16 Nov. 1701, Sevenhuysen's Report. N.B.K.G./233: Instructions to David van Nyendael, 9 Oct. 1701.



be seen from the remarks of Sir Dalby Thomas who arrived at the coast a few years after the fall of Denkyira. He described the King of Ashanti as "a great governing man in these parts who was worth your honours preserving in your interest".<sup>1</sup>

1701 did not establish Ashanti as a coastal power, however, nor did the defeat of Denkyira even give direct control over states formerly tributary to Denkyira. Its political effects were however very far reaching. It led to the revival of old alliances and the formation of new ones. A few were initiated by the European traders but all were motivated by the fear of the fighting capacity of the new Ashanti nation. In 1700, when the wars had brought normal trade to a standstill, the Dutch reported they had succeeded in getting the states of Sabu, Aguaaffo, Twifu, Accany, Kabestera and Denkyira together to promise to sink their differences and encourage the passage of traders unmolested through their states.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the traders in mind here were the Ashantis who were now appearing on the coast in large numbers. A year later, when the Dutch were in direct contact with the King of Ashanti, the English were seeking to gain a diplomatic victory over their rivals. They invited representatives of Sabu and Fetu to Cape Coast "to hold a pallaver to have a firm alliance with the King of Ashanti"<sup>3</sup>. There is no doubt that

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/26 Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C. 22 Oct. 1708.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.57; W.I.C.917. Report of J. V. Sevenhuysen, 25 July 1700.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/377/C.C.C. Acct. 17 Nov. 1701.



the unions of states which both the Dutch and the English were seeking to foster were in the interest of trade. Their political effects were incidental. They were not long in falling apart, however, since their stimuli were external.

On the other hand the alliances effected through mutual desire for self preservation between neighbouring states became more beneficial and lasting. It will be true to say that at one time or another practically all the states on the Gold Coast were involved in some form of alliance. Some of the most significant ones were between Akim and Denkyira, Akwamu and Fanti, and Ashanti and Akwamu. On the coast the most significant development between 1700 and 1720 was the rise of Fanti as a powerful state. Bosman had deprecated the disunity among the Fanti state which atrophied its latent power. It was noted that if the Fanti were to be united, "the circumjacent countries could soon find their power by the irruptions into their territory". Earlier on Barbot had also observed that the tendency whereby "a chief sometimes would scarce own the Braffo for his superior" impeded the unity of the state. But both were unanimous in asserting that, militarily, Fanti was stronger than most of the other states. It could bring about ten thousand well-armed men into the field.<sup>1</sup> At no time was this disunity of the state more clearly seen than during the Dutch-Komenda war. The factions in the state were cleverly used against each other by both the Dutch and the Eng-

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bosman, op.cit., Let. IV, p.49; J. Barbot, op.cit., Churchill, Collections, Vol. 5, p.175.



lish. When, in 1697, the Dutch entered into an agreement with the Braffo to enlist the services of Fanti, the English were able to bribe the Dey, the head caboceer, to fight against the Braffo. The result was that the Fanti forces were never brought to the help of the Dutch.<sup>1</sup> The picture had completely changed by 1706.

The reason for the change can easily be attributed to the change in the political situation on the Gold Coast. Fanti now became what may safely be described as "a professional military state". Apart from the fear of Ashanti which provided the external stimulus, Fanti's rise to power was partly due to its trade with the interlopers. As far back as the 1640's the Braffo of Fanti had plainly pointed out that he desired his coast to be free for all traders. This policy was consistently pursued by subsequent rulers. With the increase in interlopers' trade in the second half of the seventeenth century, Fanti stood to gain much. By the turn of the century Annomabo had grown into a great port of call for the English Ten Percent men and other interlopers. Because of their wealth, they were able to stand on their own, and in most cases, applied their own laws stringently against the European traders who defied them. In 1699 the revolt of the people of Annamabo brought a large contingent of English troops from Cape Coast to attempt to punish the people.<sup>2</sup> In this they were unsuccessful. Bosman pithily pointed out the relations

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<sup>1</sup>T. 70/11/22/9 Sept. 1697; T. 70/374/18 Sept. 1696; W. Bosman, op.cit., Let. II, p.31.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/372/21 Dec. 1699. C.C.Castle Journal.



between the Fanti and the European traders to be that "both the Fanti and the English have an equal power in Fantin; that is none at all" and Sir Dalby Thomas found them to be "very troublesome".<sup>1</sup>

To be able to stand on its own and maintain its favourable position as a great trading state, Fanti began to extend its power inland to counteract the possible Ashanti inroads into its trading position. In this work it found an ally in the Accany whose position was also threatened. The opportunity came in 1706 when the Accany state was threatened by the combined forces of Fetu, Kabestera and Sabu. Fanti gave its support to Accany. This proved a great help, for, in 1707, it was reported that "the Fanteens have routed Sabu and cut off the King of Sabu's head and taken Ahenico Pompa, King of Fetu, prisoner."<sup>2</sup> But this was not done without the Fanti-Akany alliance first experiencing a temporary setback. In the earlier encounter, Fanti, treacherously allowed the Sabu people and their allies to rout part of the Akany army and took many Akany people as slaves.<sup>3</sup> But such lukewarm support of allies could not continue in the face of so many threatening matters. By 1710, therefore, Fanti policy towards Akany had altered, for it was felt necessary to use Akany as a buffer against other powerful states.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/63/Sir Dalby Thomas R.A.E. 21 Aug. 1709; Bosman, op.cit., p.49.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/40/23 Dec. 1707. f. 44, March 1708. Hayes Chaigneau and Hicks to R.A.C.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/5/38/13/24 Feb. 1704.



In the first decade of the eighteenth century Fanti felt strong enough to threaten the English. It resented the fall of its profits on trade. The dwindling returns were attributed to the English, whose enthusiasm to win the support of the Ashanti led them to deprive Fanti of its sources of income. To prevent this, Fanti used its political power. It realised that Sir Dalby Thomas's ambition to establish English control over Fetu could not be done without Fanti support. In 1709, after its defeat of Fetu, Fanti installed the "rightful heir" as King of the state. This met the disapproval of the English who alleged that the new chief had Dutch sympathies. Resentful of the English general's direct commercial transactions with the Ashantis, Fanti warned the English that unless they ended the practice "they would put a new King into Fetu".<sup>1</sup> This threat could easily be put into practice, for Fanti influence reached wider than Fetu. In 1715, for instance, it was able to issue threats to the elders of Aguaffo state to reinstate their deposed King, Abbe Tekki, or be prepared to have him imposed on them by force.<sup>2</sup>

But it was not Fanti's ability to use force on other coastal states which signified its new found unity: it also had some power in the interior. Between 1713 and 1720 its capital Abora became the regular resort of representatives from different states seeking alliance with Fanti.

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/64 Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C. 11 Dec. 1709.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Letter from Cormantine to Elmina 6 Dec. 1715.  
T.70/1464/Baillie's Report from Komenda.



Fanti relations with Akany drew it increasingly into the struggles with other states. The favourable commercial position which Akany had enjoyed for more than century was greatly threatened at the beginning of the eighteenth century. But the fame of its traders made it easier to secure help in its struggles with other states. The fear of what influence Akany could have on Ashanti had led the Dutch in 1701 to exonerate themselves before the Ashanti and to explain their relationship with states that had been unfriendly to Akany. It was to show their good faith in Akany, and for that matter to win the friendship of Ashanti, that the Dutch had promised in 1701 not to support any state against it, and to provide it with all the necessary help in time of need.<sup>1</sup> This policy was to cause the Dutch some embarrassment in 1713. As far back as 1690 the Dutch had entered into an agreement with Twifu in which both sides had agreed to help each other should the necessity arise.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it was with this agreement in mind that in 1713 the Twifu king approached the Dutch for help.

Trouble had broken out between Twifu and Accany in which the latter had secured the help of its ally, Fanti. Akaffo of Twifu approached the Dutch for a loan of about £800 to be able to engage the services of Akim, Ashanti and some Denkyira soldiers. This placed the Dutch in a difficult position. They realised that, apart from their obligations which the treaty of 1690 demanded, Twifu was in a position to close the trade routes

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.233. 9 Oct. 1701. Instructions to David van Nyendaël.

<sup>2</sup>W.I.C.122/36/16 Jan. 1690. An agreement between N. Sweerts and the King of Twifu.



to all traders if it was not granted the help asked for. They, however, felt reluctant to comply with the wish, for it was feared that they might lose both their outlay and any interest which Twifu victory was likely to bring, because interlopers were likely to take a larger share of the trade. But their main cause for fear was Fanti. It was pointed out that, should the Fanti get to know anything of the loan, the Dutch would certainly be turned out of their forts in Fanti. Being uncertain of the issue, they felt that trade should be insured. They therefore agreed to help Twifu. They insisted, however, that surely should not be provided in men, for that was likely to come to the notice of the Fanti.<sup>1</sup> This shows how the fear of displeasing Fanti affected European relations with some of the states after 1700.

Scarcely two years after the agreement with Twifu, troubles sprang up between Twifu's ally, Akim, and Accany. This had wider political ramifications. Even in 1668 Dapper had remarked that there was a constant friction between the two states, because Akim "pretended an overlordship over Accany". Besides a common boundary, both states had a common interest. They were long distant traders who carried their goods far into the interior.<sup>2</sup> Their rivalry was further exemplified in the fact that at the turn of the century they opposed each other in the Ashanti-Denkyira war. Accany favoured Ashanti while Akim supported Denkyira. These

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<sup>1</sup>W.I.C.124/27 July 1713. From Engelgraaf Robertz at Chama to H. Harring. Hem 27th July 1713. From Harring to Roberts. W.I.C.122/72/30 July 1713. Agreement between Accafo of Twifo and Engelgraaf Robertz.

<sup>2</sup>Dapper, op.cit., p.459. Also see Barbot, op.cit. in Churchills Collections, Vol. 6, p. 189.



rivalries were carried on through the first two decades of the eighteenth century. A direct struggle between the two states came into the open in 1715.

In April of that year the Akany had fled from their country to seek refuge with their women and children at Cabesterra. This flight was caused by rumours of an attack by Akim.<sup>1</sup> Before the truth of Akim movements could be established the Fanti had quickly given their support to Akany. At the meeting of the Fanti chiefs at Abora, it was decided that Akany should be given help because it was probable that after Akany the Akims would seek to attack Fanti. This move was dictated primarily by the rumour that the Ashantis were helping the Akims.<sup>2</sup> Even though Akany stood greatly in need of Fanti help, it was not over enthusiastic about placing itself irrevocably into Fanti hands. It still suspected the two-faced nature of the Fanti, which had been demonstrated in the war with Cabesterra in 1707, when their treachery had cost Akany many lives. The threat from Akim, however, was so great that Fanti was willing to do everything to ensure its good faith. After several meetings and consultations, the two sides met at Abora and "drank fetish" to stand by each other. Nor was Fanti the only coastal state to feel its safety threatened. Fetu also felt the same, and turned to Fanti. At a meeting of the Fanti chiefs, Ahen Domie, the Dey of Fetu, attended and pledged

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Letter from Cormantine to Elmina, 19 April 1715. 5 May 1715.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Cormantine to Elmina 12 July 1715, 28th Sept. 1715. It is difficult to accept the Ashanti help since both states were not on friendly terms by 1715.



the Fetu state to support Fanti and its allies.<sup>1</sup> Akim too sent its representative to Abora; but not to enlist Fanti support. It was rather to ask the Abora council to refrain from giving any active support to the Akany. They assured the Fanti state that the struggle was between them and Akany and not with Fanti. But the latter would not be easily put off. The council recounted the long relationship with Akany and warned Akim that an attack on Akany would be strongly repulsed with Fanti help.<sup>2</sup>

Already Fanti had drawn Agona into its power. Akim attempts to enlist Agona support failed, because Agona made it plain that it had a long-standing alliance with Fanti which it must respect. Because of this friendship, the son of the King of Agona was resident at Abora.<sup>3</sup> Apart from a report of Akim advance into Akany in mid-1715, the projected Akim attack was allowed to peter out. Notwithstanding, the alliances that were forged in this struggle point to the changed nature of warfare and politics on the Gold Coast. Henceforth attacks on one state involved many others, who joined in to assist allies, in the hope that they would also be helped in times of need. Although the Dutch were willing to concede that Akim was a great power, they were sceptical about

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Letter from Cormantine to Elmina, 5th June 1715.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Letter from Cormantine to Elmina, 28 Sept. 1715.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Letter from Apam to Elmina, 21 June 1715.



the outcome of their struggle with Akany. The scepticism stemmed from the realisation that apart from Adom and Cabbesterra who allied with Akim, states like Fanti, Fetu, Akrong, Agona and Akwamu were ready to assist Akany.<sup>1</sup>

The inclusion of Akwamu among the allies of Akany is interesting in many respects. Indeed, it was the struggle between Akwamu and Akim which drew the latter's attention from Akany.

Relations between Akim and Akwamu had been frequent power struggles punctuated by periods of uneasy truce. Their rivalry dates back to the early period of Akwamu expansion. In the 1680's Akwamu had quickly moved in to prevent a probable alliance between Akim and Agona. To ensure that its western border was safe Akwamu attacked and reduced Agona to a tributary status.<sup>2</sup> This assured her that Akim merchants would not be able to take an active part in the gun running which was necessary for empire building. Apparently anxious to prevent an Akim alliance with Ashanti, Akwamu allied itself with the latter and thus safeguarded its north-western frontiers from any sudden attack. By bringing Agona under its power, Akim was practically sealed off from direct contact with the coastline between Winneba and the Volta. Its merchants could only trade so long as they were tolerated by Akwamu.

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82. From d'Outreau to Elmina, 5 Nov. 1715. On the 24 June it was reported from Cormantine that Akim armies had marched into Accany but finding no opposition had returned home.

<sup>2</sup>For more about the relationship between Akwamu and Akim see I. Wilks, "The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650-1710", T.H.S.G., Vol. III, part 2 (1957), pp. 102-132. Bosman, op.cit., Let V., p.61.



Akwamu policy towards Akim not unnaturally irritated the European traders on the coast. It may be said that the Akwamu-Dutch Agreement of 1703 was reached principally because of the Dutch desire to have direct trading contacts with the inland traders, not least, with the Akims.<sup>1</sup> But Akwamu hardly respected the clauses asking for free trade and preventing it from waging wars that might interfere with trade. In 1705, Sir Dalby Thomas with his characteristic impetuosity, wished that a way would be found to "bring the Akims on the young hairbrained king of Akwamu". This he considered, "would be the best thing done on this coast for several years".<sup>2</sup> A few years later another Englishman optimistically expressed the hope that the King would "soon be humbled (because) the inland people are about to make war on him".<sup>3</sup> But the Akim defeat of Akwamu was to be delayed for another twenty years.

In view of the history of struggles behind the two states it was not to be expected that either of them would not let slip an opportunity to embarrass the other. Akwamu had its chance in 1715. It was no accident that in the struggle between Akany and Akim, Akwamu arraigned itself on the side of the former. That Akwamu should be particularly concerned

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.69/3 April 1703; Ibid., 98/3 April 1703. For the terms see Chap. II.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1184/4/Abstract of Letters to R.A.C. 1 Jan. 1703.

<sup>3</sup>T./70/5/63/22 Oct. 1709; f. 68 30 Jan. 1710, Abstracts ... to R.A.C.



with her safety at this time may be partly, if not wholly, accounted for by the unity between the various Akim states. By the end of the seventeenth century, though Akim was accepted as a great power, like Fanti, it was riddled with internal dissensions. Barbot noted that the "several changes and revolutions in the government .... renders it less formidable to its neighbours", Bosman echoing the same idea added that the "King (of Akwamu) is subtle enough to know how by fair words and presents to sow Dissentions betwixt the governing men of Akim".<sup>1</sup> These crippling political disabilities were to be removed, thanks to the emergence of Ashanti as a great power. Towards the end of 1715, the divisions between the Akims were healed. The two Akim Kings, Apentin and Ofori, pooled their forces together. They determined to attack Agona and Akwamu. Obviously unaware of the background diplomatic discussions and the changing phase of the Gold Coast politics, the Dutch expressed great surprise at the news of the union. Apentin, one of the contracting Akim rulers, was reported to have sent back the Akwamuhene's daughter, presumably his wife, to her father.<sup>2</sup> His action was tantamount to a

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<sup>1</sup>J. Barbot in Churchill, Collections, Vol, VI, p.189. W. Bosman, op.cit., Let. V, p.61, Let. VI, p.69. Bosman traced the cause of Akim-Akwamu struggles to the fact that Akim pretended to a feudal right over Akwamu, and demanded an annual tribute. Although Wilks does not see this as the cause, Bosman's assertion substantiates the traditional view expressed by Reindorf that Ansah Sasaraku of Twifu was forced to flee eastwards by Denkyira. It is significant to note that the founder of the Akwamu state was Ansa Sasaraku. It is not unreasonable to suppose that earlier on Asamankese which was the first Akwamu capital was under Akim. Reindorf, op.cit. p.49. Ivor Wilks, "Akwamu", T.H.S.G., Vol. II, II, p.123.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Letter from D'Outreau at Apam to Elmina 5 Nov. 1715.



declaration of war. Before the war could take place, however, other matters pressing from the northern borders of Akim had forced it to seek a truce with Akwamu and Agona. Ashanti armies were getting ready to attack Akim.

The first open breach between Ashanti and Akim was in 1701 when, as it has been noticed, the latter supported Denkyira against Ashanti. The deed not only cost Akim many lives, but established it as the enemy of Ashanti. A year later another Denkyira-Akim alliance had inflicted a temporary defeat on Ashanti forces.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, however, Ashanti subjugated Akim and imposed a heavy fine on it.<sup>2</sup> But the fine was not only ignored, Ashanti traders who passed through Akim were molested, Ashanti therefore decided to attack. Around this time, however, Ashanti relations with Akwamu had begun to experience some setbacks. The Agonas resenting their subjection to Akwamu began to look to Ashanti for help. Ashanti promised help to Agona in her struggles with her neighbours and thereby earned Akwamu displeasure. Smarting under a sense of injured national pride, Akwamu temporarily relaxed its policy of economic control over Akim.<sup>3</sup> In December 1715 the two states entered into an agreement which allowed Akim traders to trade directly with the Europeans. For

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<sup>1</sup>I. Wilks, "Akwamu", op.cit., p.125.

<sup>2</sup>Claridge, op.cit., Vol I, p. ; Ward, op.cit., p.123; Reindorf, op.cit. p.66.

<sup>3</sup>M. Priestley and J. Wilks, "Ashanti Kings", J.A.H.N., i, 1960, p.88.



the privilege Akim paid (200 bendas) £1,600, to Akonno of Akwamu. For well over ten months the Akims were able to have free access to the forts. In October about two hundred traders arrived at Accra and would buy nothing but guns. They intimated to the Dutch that they were preparing to attack the King of Ashanti.<sup>1</sup>

Before long however Akim's uneasy truce with Akwamu had ended. Akwamu once again began troop movements against Akim in the south east. In March 1716 troops from Fanti, Akany and Akwamu converged on Agona to attack Akim.<sup>2</sup> Once again normal trade to the leeward was interrupted, and the Europeans hoped that the war would yield good results.<sup>3</sup> This was the old belief that Akim would be able to defeat Akwamu. They considered it would be the beginning of better trade. Perhaps it was with this aim in view that the Accras refused to assist Akwamu in the struggle. Not only that, but the Dutch equivocated with the Akwamuhene's request for help from Amo. This great broker, who was an Akwamu, was by this time in the service of the Dutch. When the war broke out, he was told that he was at liberty to support Akwamu, but if the Akim should be victorious, he should not expect to be protected should his surrender be requested.<sup>4</sup> After an indecisive battle the Akims beat an ignominious retreat

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82. From J van Dijk to Elmina, 10 Oct. 1715, 13 Oct. 1715, 31 Dec. 1715.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Boehaven at Brekoe to Haring, Elmina 10 March 1716.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/6/35/Phipps and Bleau to R.A.C. 30 March 1716.  
N.B.K.G.82. Letter from J. v. Dijk to Elmina, 13 March; from Elmina to Accra 21 April 1716.



This gave Akwamu and her allies cause to celebrate what they considered a great victory. It also led the European observers to speculate on the real motives behind the Akims' sudden departure.

Some felt it was a clever ruse to steal a march on Akwamu, for it was strongly believed that after the rainy season and the planting of new corn Akim would again attack. Others guessed that they were now prepared to fight the Ashanti.<sup>1</sup> Of all the speculators Agent Baillie at Komenda made the best guess at Ashanti and Akim intentions. As far back as mid-1715 he had suspected the motives behind the great desire for guns by the Ashanti merchants. His enquiries about the state against whom they were preparing an attack were not satisfactorily answered. He however correlated it with the great desire for arms at the forts to the east by the Akim traders, and concluded the two nations were likely to be preparing for war.<sup>2</sup> The Dutch chief-factor Butler had also discovered that the Ashantihene had recalled his troops under Amankwatia from an attack on Awowin because of Akim threats.<sup>3</sup> It was not until 1717 that Ashanti attacked Akim. Towards the end of 1716, signs of struggles between the two states were becoming noticeable. In October, for instance, traders from Ashanti were intercepted by the Akims. Both sides increased their purchase of arms. The English remarked early in 1717 that "Ashantis and Akims are resolved on a war with each other".<sup>4</sup> In October 1717, the

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82. 26 March 1716. From Hendricks, Apam to Haring, Elmina; 6 April 1716. 10th April 1716.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/1464 Komenda Diary, 27 April 1715.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.82. From Butler, Axim, to Haring, Elmina; 13 Dec. 1715. Direct.-Gen.'s Report 15 Dec. 1715.

<sup>4</sup>T.70/6/48/Philpps to R.A.C. 6 Feb. 1717; f. 53, 25 Sept. 1717.  
T.70/6/75/Johnston to R.A.C. 26 May 1718.



Akims inflicted the greatest disaster on the Ashanti nation when their King was ambushed and killed in Ashanti attack on them.<sup>1</sup>

It was not only against the Akims that the Ashantis directed their attention. From 1701 Ashanti was committed to several wars. Some appear to have been punitive wars against Denkyira supporters; a few were waged to secure free passage for traders; and most were in pursuit of a policy of territorial expansion, while the purely expansionist wars did not have much immediate effect on trade, the punitive ones did. Of those in the latter category the most important was the war against Awawin in 1715. In October 1715 rumours became current that the Awawins had defeated the Ashantis, who had retreated to collect a new force.<sup>2</sup> This was the outcome of a struggle in which Ashanti had been involved for a long time. In August 1715, for instance, Ashanti traders who came to Komenda reported that "the slaves they have caught in their battel (sic) with Gingebrá, a country beyond Ashantee..." were too weak to walk to the coast.<sup>3</sup> An earlier report from Axim held that the Ashantis with 3,000 men had also waged war against Affin Coco a state between Ashanti and Awawin.<sup>4</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.84. 30 Oct. 1717. Letter from Accra to Elmina; 4 March 1718. Report of Direct.-Gen. and Council. Bowdich, op.cit., p.233. Depuis, op.cit., pp. 231-3, Reindorf, op.cit., p.68. M. Priestly and I. Wilks, "Ashanti Kings", J.A.H.I., 1960, pp.88-90.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Butler's Report from Axim 28 Oct. 1715. T.70/1464/Komenda Diary, 7 Oct. 1715.

<sup>3</sup>T.70/1464. Baillie, Komenda, 4 Aug. 1715.

<sup>4</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Butler, Axim/10 Oct. 1715.



the first mentioned war may be taken as part of Ashanti policy of controlling the trade routes to the northern markets, and therefore of less immediate significance to the trade on the coast, the repercussions of the war with Affin Coco reached far to the coast. The "Offin de Coco" of the Dutch may be identified with part of modern Sefwi which lies west of the River Offin. Sefwi had been one of the tributary states whose troops had aided Denkyira against Ashanti.<sup>1</sup> A war against Sefwi may therefore be seen as a continuation of an Ashanti policy to gain control over all the former tributary states of Denkyira.

After the war with Sefwi sometime before 1715, a large number of Ashanti troops defected with their booty to Awowin. Here they received protection. Apart from these Ashantis who settled in Awowin, it appears that the refugees from all the states which were being brought under Ashanti control found refuge there.<sup>2</sup> The report shows that there were some Akany as well as Denkyira people at Awowin. This, as the Dutch rightly averred, constituted a valid reason for an Ashanti attack. The Awowin campaign was entrusted to the Ashanti General Amankwatia. In conjunction with Intwan, the King of Wassa, Ashanti launched a series of attack on Awowin. After initial reverses in October 1715 in which the Ashanti-Wassa troops were forced to retreat, more troops were collected from Twifu to

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<sup>1</sup>Reindorf, op.cit., p.56. It is also traditionally known that Osei Tutu's wars took his against the Ofenso state.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82/Butler's Report. 10/11 Oct. 1715. Another version of the war was given by Butler. That after the death of Ashantihene there arose a succession dispute and that the war was undertaken to decide the succession. The rivals were to divide the Kingdom. This does not seem to be true.



defeat Awawin.<sup>1</sup> In mid-November Amankwatia had plundered the defeated state. For sheltering Ashanti refugees, the Awowins were forced to pay a fine of £2,400 (300 bendas).<sup>2</sup>

For the first time in Ashanti history part of its army came to the Coast. Cape Appolonia was the next to be attacked. This, like the origins of the Awawin war, was a punitive measure. The Cape Appolonia people were accused of sheltering refugees from Awawin and also of selling firearms to them.<sup>3</sup> The Appolonians were forced to flee to Assine. Indeed it was not only the Cape Appolonia people who came in for a share of Ashanti displeasure. At one time it was being rumoured that the Ashantis were intending to attack the whole area to the west of Axim.<sup>4</sup> With their armies camped at Egwira, they threw the whole of the windward coast into fright. But before long, the General Amankwatia and his men were on their way back to Ashanti. Threats from Akim on its south eastern borders led the Ashantihene to recall his troops.<sup>5</sup>

Although gone, the scare of Ashanti attack persisted for a long time on the Windward coast. It was reported that trade from Axim to Cape Palmas had been brought to a halt because all the states were afraid of a

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<sup>1</sup>N.B.K.G.82/Buttler's Report, 5th & 27th Nov. 1715. Letter from Landman, Komenda 12 & 28 Oct. 1715. T.70/1464/Komenda Diary 13 Oct. 1715. Reported that "Zaay had asked Akaffo of Twifu to be ready to join in the war with Awawin". N.B.K.G.82 Report from H. Blenke at Sekondi 7 Sept. 1715.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82 Buttler's Report. Axim, 24 Jan. 1716.

<sup>3</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Report from Axim 9, 11, 12 Dec. 1715. T.70/1464/From Komenda to C.C.C. 5 Jan. 1716.

<sup>4</sup>N.B.K.G.82/39/Buttler's Repors from Axim to Elmina dd. 12 & 13 Dec. 1715. 3, 5, 7 & 14th Jan. 1716.

<sup>5</sup>N.B.K.G.82. Butler's Report from Axim to Elmina dd. 12 & 15 Dec. 1715. 8 March 1716.



probable attack and since none knew whose turn it would be next.<sup>1</sup>

The situation persisted for a long time. In 1718, for instance, the Dutch were unable to secure the services of local states in their campaign against John Konny. The reason was that all were getting ready to defend themselves against the Ashantis.<sup>2</sup> In 1721, the Ashanti armies again attacked and drove the Cape Appolonia people to Assine. Atkins found the refugees in Assine getting ready to attack John Konny, who was blamed for their misfortunes. They accused him of having intrigued with the Ashantis against them.<sup>3</sup>

The first two decades of the 18th century were a period of wars for the young Ashanti nation. To carry on its policy of extension and consolidation it needed to maintain regular contact with the coast. In this it depended more in its fame, and the fear of what it could do, than what it actually did. More often than not, it relied on the goodwill of its friendly neighbours and allies to protect its traders. On some occasions the King issued threats which were unbacked by force. For instance, in 1708, the King was seeking the approval of the English at Cape Coast for action against some states known to have been disturbing the safety of the routes. He wanted to know from Sir Dalby Thomas "whether he should open the ways (of trade) by destroying those <sup>who</sup> opposed it". The general equivocated in his reply with the result that nothing effective

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<sup>1</sup> N.B.K.G. From Heyman, Chama to Elmina, 3 Jan. 1716. From Butler 13 Nov. 1715.

<sup>2</sup> W.I.C.124 Direct. Gen. Butler's Report to the Ten. 16 Aug. 1718.

<sup>3</sup> J. Atkins, "A Voyage to Guinea" in Astley Collections, Vol. II, p.554.



appeared to have been done. Two months later troubles in the inland resulted in the "Ashanti trade falling off".<sup>1</sup> In 1715 the King had to use his good offices to effect a reconciliation between John Kabes of Komenda and the King of Twifu.<sup>2</sup> This was particularly found necessary since it was a time of massive Ashanti preparations against Sefwi and Awawin. Had the King remained unconcerned about trade, it would have been difficult for the Ashantis to purchase sufficient arms for the wars.

In the same way as the European Companies sought to win the friendship of the Ashantihene in the interest of trade, so did he make acquaintances on the coast to safeguard his own interests. Of the most important African middlemen of the time, two, John Kabes and John Konny, may be said to have had connections with the Ashanti Court. In 1711, for instance, some Ashantis, under Nyakoba, fought on the side of Konny.<sup>3</sup> In 1716 when the Wassas were planning to attack Konny, they were dissuaded from such action by the influence exerted by Ashanti traders through their King; they pointed out the evil effects Konny's ruin would have on their trade.<sup>4</sup> At Komenda, John Kabes' town became the frequent resort of Ashanti traders who always expected him to get European goods

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/5/35/30 Sept. 1708. T.70/70/29 Dec. 1709. Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C.

<sup>2</sup>N.B.K.G.82/Report from Landman to Harring. 12 Oct. 1715. T.70/1464/23 Nov. 1715; 29 Mar. 1715; 5 April 1715. Baillie to C.C.

<sup>3</sup>W.I.C.124/17/23 Sept. 1711. Report of H. Harring to the Ten. T.70/16 Sept. 1711. Grosvenor and Phipps to R.A.C.

<sup>4</sup>N.B.K.G.82/14 & 24 Jan. 1716. Report from Axim to Elmina. N.B.K.G.82/8 Mar. 1716. Butler to Harring.



for them at reasonable prices.<sup>1</sup>

But commercially Ashanti had not been able to establish itself firmly enough to exclude the activities of the coastal middlemen, even though its traders were arriving at the coast in large numbers. The salt trade, for instance, became so important with the advent of the Ashanti to the coast, that the Europeans began to take a share in it. The history of the Gold Coast after 1720 was the struggle between the powerful Ashanti and the coastal states which had been established as middlemen since the Portuguese times.

The latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century may, in sum, be described as a period of great commercial advance, which greatly affected the political systems of the Gold Coast. It witnessed the rise and, in some cases, the fall of larger political units. Of these the most important were Denkyira, Akwamu and Ashanti, which rose from obscurity to great imperial powers. The rise of Ashanti submerged not only Denkyira's political but also its commercial influence. While, before 1701, Denkyira was a state to be courted, by 1709 Sir Dalby Thomas could uncharitably dismiss its promises to provide trade as a "brag (which) they made on purpose to draw (him) to trust them which he will not do".<sup>2</sup> Instead, he was recommending such gifts as plumed helmets, field bed, scarlet and blue cloth embroidered with gold and silver for the King of

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/1464/9/10 Jan. 1715. Komenda Diary.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/5/66/12 Feb. 1709. Sir Dalby to R.A.C.



Ashanti and others.<sup>1</sup>

The breakthrough of the Ashanti greatly upset the political equilibrium. The unprecedented arms "deal" made possible the disintegration of the old political theory of government by blood and kinship ties. This change led also to the formation of alliances born of a desire for self preservation, for the inordinate demands for slaves and its resultant inter-state wars and raids meant that the weaker would always be pressed to the wall. State diplomacy was influenced by a desire to secure allies. With Akim serving as a constant threat on its western borders, Akwamu sought and obtained the friendship of states like Fanti and Ashanti, which provided her with a feeling of security when it was engaged in her territorial expansion eastwards. The alliances with Fetu, Akany and Agona made it possible for Fanti to grow sufficiently strong to resist Ashanti in the subsequent years. Ashanti, the unknown state of the 1680's, was able to carry its victorious arms as far down as the Windward coast by 1715. Some of these alliances were to fall apart in course of time. By 1726, the Ashanti alliance with Wassa had reached breaking-point, for Wassa could not remain in unequal partnership in which Ashanti dictated the terms. In 1716 Wassa's desire to punish Konny of Pokosu, who had affronted her, could not be carried out because of the sudden departure of her Ashanti neighbours. This situation was to worsen until, by 1726, the King of Wassa was forced out of his country by the Ashantis. The King took refuge

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/26/Acct. of Jan. 1707. Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 22 Oct. 1708.



with the English - an act which led to two days' fighting between the Ashanti and the English.<sup>1</sup> Akwamu's treachery to Ashanti, which in 1717 cost the latter the life of its King, was avenged in 1730, when, with Ashanti connivance, Akim overran Akwamu.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T.70/7/122/6 May 1726. Franklin & Ross to R.A.C.

<sup>2</sup>T.70/7/170/30 Nov. 1730. For the circumstances leading to the Akim defeat of Akwamu see I. Wilks, "Akwamu", Unpublished M.A. thesis, 1958. University of Wales. Cardiff.







alle de Gijzen, 1 Gijzen, en 1 cracht, by de Portuigische  
 voor dese beset, sulst van gese, so wel alst fort van  
 toebereyde, en duwolyk daer af naer eygel goet vinder  
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 weynich. En moyls te doel.

22 en yd. mijn ship, uyt vaderlande met Cargosot vande  
Goetkunt comen, en de Sabiceros voocht gesamen  
Aen niet, voocht een Once goede, twee naar de  
Lustangst: En mindert, ofter En mindert sal merde.

So wann der du darwartt gies einig guld comme copst, zull  
 zach das du dar off geniestt gell den Minna, te wistt  
 elck vanda was elck ein linn. Zull jnsich  
 gicandt yn vourne an elck mit in soepman, als oec d'and  
 blantt yn alle vicia. vrientschap sonder ein baccith  
 ad. te stult, te leutz.

[illegible]

*Come, vada! Se garantiste op' 9 Nov. e fizem  
Quinta, 18 Jaci, endagá, ale bobô. Pêrecha*

Proble van 1415 = 1415

3 mile from Peter [unclear]



Naarder Contract

De  
Instructie gemaect tusschen de Generaal  
Jacob Vander Aal & de Coninck van  
roet Arad

In <sup>der</sup> Instructie staat ~~te~~ dat ten vden uere de Voorsijde maande  
 Derin plaatsge roeg mit witer of Accoijon daar te ~~hantelen~~ hij is geroect  
 derde oijt moge de ~~Land~~ guseman ~~klappe~~, ondt ~~bedenning~~ roepre niet  
 den ~~verdunde~~ nati, te ~~nijotiv~~ ~~de~~ maar ~~at~~ ~~in~~ ~~de~~ ~~comptoir~~  
 van ~~comptoir~~

In Conincke vol oft in wiste mit solden neder dede dat zi mi niet  
in minnen mit. Sal gevoegen niet tot slaan. vintse vintse natly of die  
Engelsche Sonst den, giet tot lande vande of Orygins coninc dynt, of vintse  
In Coninc slacht of 4 coninc vintse vintse. Orygins 10 maachen  
of vintse 10 vintse, dat hi n. vintse sonde Stabilyt vintse, dat vintse  
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vintse vintse of vintse. mit vintse vintse vintse vintse vintse vintse  
vintse vintse vintse vintse vintse. tot hi vintse vintse vintse vintse  
vintse vintse vintse vintse vintse. In vintse vintse, sonde dat  
vintse vintse vintse vintse vintse. Daermit te vintse

me



In dit voors. Art. oecloot den Council, dat of genv. gver vringel vraden  
 bespelen wurde xoorde gnamd te Ankers, tot gvermied van con-  
 In Acvri, Gyn omdand, gaardarmidde velle begel, soo staet yn doe dat  
 den hie leiggen. Conyl. Hie tydael dan mach gver, met syn son a  
 Ode gverde gver, van syn omdand en sal jn gver adingels Gte  
 Conil gver, 2 den gver con protyle vande conil. O dnyar gver voor  
 syn gver den de Gado gver

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1649 Inb. ~~Contractum~~ ~~Aggar~~ ~~revers~~ Adf. 4<sup>th</sup> August  
 1649 Inb. ~~Contractum~~ ~~Aggar~~ ~~revers~~ Adf. 4<sup>th</sup> August

J. A. Vander Wel 3  
Herrn mecht. Landts Council  
Hendrick Broon  
Jan van Nijverdrin



Contract Met de Vrijen Landen  
Jabij en Chama

Ons godesgheve, Loois fidele, Hendrick Loois  
Janszoon en Janszoon, geaccordeert te 1664, Van wegen de  
Gedachte Vrijen Landen, Compagnie door de Jansz  
Generaal Jacob Ruyter, met de Coninc van Jabij, geve  
Bajia qualita, Sijn Sabotiro, als ook om de Sabotiro  
en Chama, in forme in maniere, als volgt

En dat de Coninc als gheschiedt, gnaat tractieren, in ontvande  
Van Jabij en Chama, te aengedaan, salve ook alle gheschiede  
Daar van hemant, gheschiede, Ende Compagnie, Soudt mogen  
Aen gedaen, salve, salve, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede

Mits ons optien, in de Coninc, Soudt Sijn, Soudt Sijn, Soudt Sijn  
Als een, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
Soudt ons, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
Als Soudt, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
Soudt ons, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede

Ons, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
gnaat, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
Als, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede

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gnaat, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
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Soudt ons, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
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Ons, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
gnaat, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede  
Als, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede, in de gheschiede

Bajia qualita  
Olin' ouiere  
Aur Agnein  
Bijma  
Adan  
Adan



het Directie binnen gelyke voorwaarden haar Majest.  
leids recht te prijndicieren en zig wel zal wagen.

Verloft dehalve dat de gewapende Procedure  
in billijkheid & Redelykheid mogen wesen gematigd  
opdat geen Leiden mogen hebben haar Voorlichtigste  
Majest. & by de Landen die daar Comp<sup>te</sup> met de  
Sufficanten octrooy en Privilegien als haar H<sup>og</sup>h. Mg.  
de Nederlanden hebben bevestigd en belooft te  
maintineren, klagtig te vallen van ongelijk aan  
deze kant, neemt de hier gemelde het Directie  
laasloff aan niet alleen de Vriendschap en alliantie  
allerzins te onderhouden maar ook met wegnemingen  
van alle misverstand den deelde deelde te wesen.

Antwoord en of gezonden  
den 25 May 1630 aande E.  
Hendrik Doedens oft  
Cassiel de Lina.

Terordonnantie Vanden  
Vrocht: het Directie gesen  
Kant

J. V. Mentzingen

Opdragt Van Sabo Cors aande  
Similare Ludeese Africaanische  
Comp<sup>te</sup>

Wy Bredene Koning Van Tatta endas aangehoort  
vande Landen en Provintien, mitsgaders Hemeg  
vermoed haar Successor Van't voorn. L<sup>yk</sup> intgelyk  
Acorisangh, offer Veltheer Van gemelde heeren den  
Koningen L<sup>yk</sup> Landen de.

Schiffen en verklaaren by onse Koninklyke  
waarde, hoe waar is dat wy der een opdragt  
gen hebben gelyk wy volkomen opdragen aen  
en transporteren by deken Instrumenten aan  
den eersten het Hendrik laasloff Directie  
Generaal Weynd Van haare Majest. en voorn  
Van Tweeden goetrijvende Comp<sup>te</sup> het dorp Sabo  
Cors mitsgaders deelde aangehoorde Landen, haren  
en Leiden, invogen en maniere als volgt.

Gerichtelyk draghem als geselagte met name  
Van haare Majest. Van Tweeden op de vrocht: ten



plaats Cabo Corst benefften de aangehoorige landen en  
 ziele omme int vervelen. Hooggeachte Majesteits  
 naam de zelve plaats te Theophrastus, aldaar  
 fortificaties, Logien ofte huizen te maken, Loodanige  
 en in zulken wegen als te bescherminge van Zyn  
 Goederen personen en ziele die duchtig worden.

Als mede het te verzoeken Majesteit opgedragen  
 en gecedeert de Jurisdictien en gerechtigheiden  
 van voorsz. plaats om by den gemelten he. Directeur  
 Loutel te laten toe verredgerechtigheit de ziele Strick  
 alsook te Lande tot op oeverkeij plaatsen toe de Juris  
 dictie te defendieren en int naam van meergemelde  
 Majest. te handhaven, Londer dat buiten Zyn toe  
 stemming Zie vermogen enig Schip ofte Scheepen van  
 Andere Natie te Ride te komen an te komen veel  
 min dat buiten Zyn intelligen ofte toelatinge enige  
 hande Logien van andere Natie aan Land Londer  
 mogen opgerecht worden en getimmerd.

Reserverende alleenig voor ons, dat van alle  
 aan komende Schapen de behoorlyke tollen volgens  
 voorgaande Conct. aan onse tollenaar zal mede  
 intgereikt.

Als mede dat de Engelsche Logie aldaar staande  
 den tyd van zes maanden zal verblijven, om zoo den  
 Engelschen loopman overtuiffchen met den voorn  
 he. Directeur Caarloff zig niet konnen vereenigen  
 om met Zyn Conct. aldaar te blyven, als dan de  
 plaatsen zal hebben te ruimen.

Alle welke wy voorsz. bevooren by ons Koninglyke  
 Woord en waarkheit zoo voor ons als onse Succes,  
 saken, voor goed, vast, getade, van waerde ende  
 onverbrekelyk sal allen dagen te houden en te doen  
 onderhouden, In alle gevallen de zelve mainti  
 , neeren, en in onse vijfentie neemen met onse  
 Koninglyke magt en authoriteit tegens alle de  
 genen zoo hun in genoemde plaatsen vyandelyk  
 Londe willen attagueren inden handen of anderhand  
 enig belet zal doen defendieren, der waarkheit  
 hebben ons hand doen toeren zelve met onzen



Koninglyken Name vassens Den h<sup>o</sup> Remegua en  
Acorisanghi int Duitsoor Onderstaakend, gedaan in  
onze teventie ende hoof plaatsse Futtu, Deere  
28 May A<sup>o</sup> 1650.

Bredema

kyra

Adi

Alom gearrestleerd en getransportleerd te presidentie  
van ons ondergeschreevene Leden van Zyne Majes-  
teit, dato int Supra

Adi mation

Waelson

Adie

Wij ondergeschreeven attesteren ende verklaren  
gelijk wij attesteren ende Verklaren by deuren op  
onze manne Haardheid in plaatsse van gettaafse en  
die wij altoos des noodig en gerinqureerd Zynde  
belooren dedoen Waar en Waaragtig te Zyn Loodet  
in onze presentie en tegenwoordigheid, Bredema  
Koning van Futtu mitsgaders de andere heeren  
Zyn Leden, naar genome Deliberatie, volkomen  
opdragt hebben gedaan.

Na de Erentfeste heer Hendrik Caroloff  
Directeur Generaal Wegens Die van de hooglofelyke  
Majesteit en Kroon Tweeden geotroyerde afri-  
caandche Comp<sup>ie</sup>.

Ochandel plaatsse Sabo for mitsgaders des  
zelfs reide Jurisdictionen privilegien ende penden-  
lien vanden in debita forma ende in alles  
als in hunne eigen Certification en opdrage  
in ons byzijn geteekent wed vermeld.

Tecorconde hebben dit met ons eigen handen  
Onderteeckent, gedaan tot Sabo for, den 29 Junij  
A<sup>o</sup> 1650.

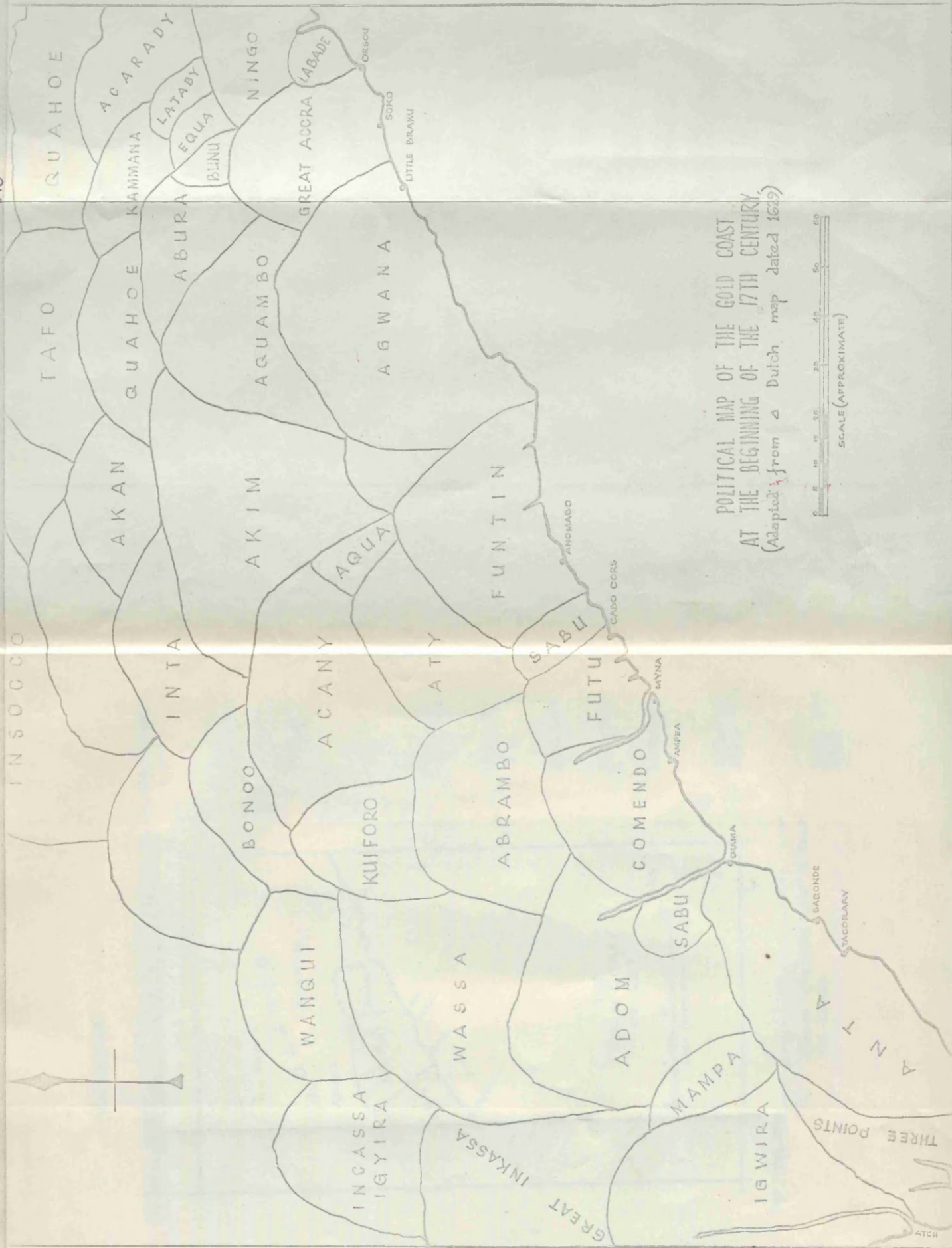
Samuel Smit  
J. V. Ment Singh



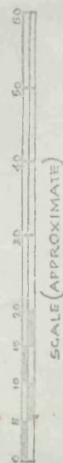
APPENDIX IIAN ACCOUNT OF THE COMPANY'S ANNUALEXPENSES - T.70/1183/140 AUG. 1715.

	<u>Place</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Ground Rent, Customs &amp; Repairs</u>
1.	Cape Coast Castle	£6,713	£1,500
2.	Queen Anne Point	334	120
3.	Dixcove	832	200
4.	Succondee	700	200
5.	Commenda	624	150
6.	Anamabo	606	150
7.	Tantumquerry	256	50
8.	Winneba	720	150
9.	Shidoe	190	50
10.	Accra	1,034	150
11.	Whidah	1,421	300
		<u>£13,430</u>	<u>£3,120</u>

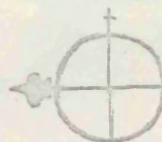
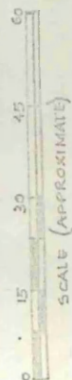




POLITICAL MAP OF THE GOLD COAST  
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY.  
(Adapted from a Dutch map dated 1629)









BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. PRIMARY SOURCES: All these Dutch Documents are in the Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague.

(a) Archieven van de Oude West Indische Compagnie

Inventory No. 8	Brieven van en uit guinea	1629-1642
O.W.I.C. " 9	-do-	1642-1647
" " 10	-do-	1644-1657
" " 10+	Contract met Jan Baptiste Lieferinck betreffende het afscheiden van goud uit zand en aarde van de Kust van Guinea	1573
" " 11	Brieven en Papieren uit Kust van Guinea	1634, 1645- 1647, 1648
" " 12	Contracten en Accorden met de Naturellen	1642-1673
" " 13	Register der contracten en accorden met de naturellen met protesten en contra-protesten	1640-1674
" " 14/ 17	Minuut Amsterdam Kamer	1635-1674
" " 20/ 38	Minuut Zeeland Kamer	1624-1674
" " 39/ 40	Resolutien van de Staten-General wegen de W.I.C.	1623-1646 1644; 1652

(b) 2nd West Indische Compagnie

54	Minuut - brieven naar de Kust van Guinea	1652; 1687 1704.
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(b) 2nd West Indische Compagnie (cont.)

97/ 105	Brieven en Papieren van de Kust van Guinea	1699-1723
122/ 127	Contracten met de Naturellen van Guinea	1659-1755
124/ 127	Resolutien van de Directeur General en Raden	1682-1730
137	Plakaten van de Kust van Guinea	1684-1693
330/ 360	Kamer Amsterdam Minuut-brieven	1674-1723
463	Kamer Amsterdam Minuut-brieven nearde Kust van Vuinea	1687-1720
484/ 485	Brieven en papieren van de Kust Guinea	1699-1728
914	Verhaal van de Commissie near Engeland inzake de Engels - Africaanse Comp.	1700-1726
1008/ 1012	Soldijboeken van Guinea	1679-1735

(c) Archieven van de Nederlandische Bezittingen ter Kust van  
Guinea (Dutch settlements on the Guinea Coast)

1/ 3	Van de Directeur-General en Raden aan de Tien	1702-1725
17	Minuut van de Direct.-Gen en Raden	1705-1706
57 59	Register van brieven uit Guinea aan de Tien	1700-1725
81	Journal van d'Elmina	1658-1709



## (c) (cont.)

82	Dagregisters van d'Elmina	1709-1717
83	-do-	1717-1724
218	Correspondentie met de Bradenburg Africaan Comp.	1690
222	Copie. Contracten en Papieren bettefende het jurisdictie over het Noord Kust van Afrika	1624-1474
224	Inrichting van de 2nd W.I.C.	1674-1766
228	Instructie van officieelen op Guinea	1664-1702

(d) J. Rijks Oude Archieven

115	Dagboek van Pieter Nuyts	1706-1707
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(e) Archieven van de Staten-General  
Registers van ordinaris Resolutien

24	Resolutien betreffende de Guineese Handel	1598
25	Resolutien betreffende de Guineese Handel	1599
3228 3232	Resolutien betreffende de W.I.C.	
5369	Bettefende Guineese Gout aan de Munt meester	1636
5372	Brief van Willem Boreel .. Guineese Gout	1666
5373	Brief van de Munt aan de Staten- General	1682-1683
5374	Bettefende 1000 marken Guineese Gout	1690.



(f) Verzamelling Verspreide W. Ind. Stukken

1162	Register van contracten en Accorden met de Naturellen	1624-1674
1007	Memorandum van Amdterdam Kamer aan de Staten-General betref- fende de geschillen met Branden- burg. W.I.C.	1686
1163	Accorden tusschen de W.I.C. en Ampe Abpan opperhoofd van Sabu	1688

(g) Verzameling Kaarten (Leupen Collectie)

147	Caerte van de Gout Kust 17e Eeuw
743	Caerte des Landschapen van de Gout Kust in Guinea. 25 December 1629.

2. PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE - LONDON(a) Treasury Records. Records of the African Companies T.70.

T.70/	No.	1	Extracts of Letters from Africa and the West Indies	1678-1681
		2-4	Extracts of Letters from Africa and the West Indies	1707-1713; 1712-1715; 1720-1732.
		5-7	Abstracts of Letters from Africa to R.A.C.	1705-1722
		10	Abstracts of Letters from Africa and W. Indies	1678-1682
		11	Abstracts of Letters from Africa	1683-1694
		13	Letters from Africa and West Indies	1703-1704
		15/ 17	" " " " " "	1678-1693



(a) (cont.)

18	Letters from Africa, West Indies and Amsterdam	1704-1715
19	Letters from Africa, West Indies and Amsterdam	1714-1719
20	Letters from Africa and West Indies and Amsterdam	1678-1681
21	Letters from Africa and West Indies and Amsterdam	1694-1714
22	Letters from Africa	1705-1719
23	Letters from Africa and the Indies	1719-1724
26	Letters from Africa and the Indies	1706-1720
50-52	Letters from Africa	1685-1715
75	Company of Royal Adventurers	1664-1672
365/ 385	Cape Coast Castle Accounts Journal	1679-1691; 1720.
599/ 617	African Comp. Account Ledgers	1663-1720
635	The Ship Arcanie	1668
656/ 670	Cape Coast Castle Ledger	1673-1675
920	Payments of men going to Africa	1686-1696
1183 1184	Miscellaneous entries relating to R.A.C.	1702-1719
1229	Cape Coast Castle Warehouse Book	1685-1689



## (a) (cont.)

1251	Gold Book at Cape Coast Castle	1703-1706
1260	Gold and Ivory Received	1677
1463	Cape Coast Castle Memorandum Book	1703-1704
1464	Komenda Diary and Accounts	1704-1718

(b) Colonial Office Papers. C.O.I. Series 1.\*

C.O.I.	No.	5	Narrative of the Trade of the Comp. of Roy. Adventurers	
		11	Petition of the Comp. of Royal Adventurers circa	1652
		13	Petition of the Guiney Company to Whitehall	1653
		14	The Case of the Guiney Company	1657
		15	Committee on the improvement of trade Report	1661
		16	Affidavit of the Commander of the <u>Charles</u>	1662
		17	Protests and Counter-Protests to the Dutch	1663
		18	Council of War in 1664 in the Road of Cape Coast Castle	1664
		19	De Ruyter's attack	1665
		20	Humble Petition of the Royal Adventurers	1668
		22	Humble Petition of the Royal Adventurers	1668
		23	Correspondence between the Dutch Gen. Dirck Wilreex and Agent Thomas Pearson	1668

\* There are no titles in the inventory. I have used these as an indication of some of the things each contains.



(b) (cont.)

29	Declaration of H.R.H. the Duke of York	1672
31	Proclamation about the Guiney Trade	1675
34	Ships entertained by the Royal African Comp.	1675
35	Anglo-Dutch struggle for Danish fort Fredricksborg circa	1675
36	Complaints against the Dutch	1656

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