

MODES OF RESISTANCE: COLONIALISM, MARITIME CULTURE
AND CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN
GOLD COAST, 1860–1932

By

Kwaku Nti

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

African American and African Studies

2011

ABSTRACT

MODES OF RESISTANCE: COLONIALISM, MARITIME CULTURE AND CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN GOLD COAST, 1860–1932

By

Kwaku Nti

Between the period 1860 – 1932 coastal Southern Gold Coast communities, particularly the Fanti, demonstrated that they were willing and able to resist the colonial government in its project of controlling their lives. To this end, they pursued the means and mechanisms readily available to them; and were also quick to take advantage of whatever opportunities that opened up. These communities acted on their own by drawing on ideas from their maritime culture. They also collaborated with the Western-educated elite. Together they openly resisted the colonial administration through demonstrations, discussions with government through delegations, official letters of protest, use of newspaper articles and editorials, and also took advantage of confusion and inaction of colonial officers as the main modes of resistance to colonial rule.

Some of the issues on which their resistance centered included entrenchment of British power, weakening of the position of chiefs, colonial government attempt to take over “waste lands,” and controversial 1932 legislative council elections. For instance, communities in this region conceptualized land as a cultural and religious resource, among others, whereas the colonial government saw it a resource the possession of which secured political and economic clout. This situation set the stage for a protracted resistance as colonial militarism was confronted by an equally militant people. Furthermore, the indecision and lack of action on the part of local colonial officers in

critical moments portrayed them as taking a stand in support of one group in a dispute. This for instance presented an opportunity for a disgruntled majority to resist colonial government orders. In all of these experiences coastal Southern Gold Coast chiefs and their people organized under indigenous organizations sought and did get help from their Western-educated compatriots to navigate the complex bureaucracy of colonial governance. Yet, even this collaboration had its own challenges. This dissertation, explores the issues and events around which resistance to colonial rule in coastal Southern Gold Coast revolved, as well as the means and mechanisms by which they did so.

Copyright © by

KWAKU NTI

2011

To: my children, as a call to discipline and hard work; and my teachers for all their
instruction

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Certainly, by the grace of God, I received so much help from so many people in the production of this work that I cannot thank them well enough. There will be no end to thanking them. I am obliged to them for life. Acknowledging them on these pages is just but one of the ways.

To this end, I acknowledge every teacher at whose feet I have sat since I reached school-going age. They nurtured me in the classroom with encouraging words and patience for an often unsure and faltering learner. I might have forgotten one or two, but I still remember many of them. I thank them all. I say a simple thank you to the teachers whose input, supervision, direction, and approval directly led to the production of this dissertation. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my Ph.D. Committee, which was made up of Nwando Achebe, Professor of History, Professor Gordon Stewart, Laura Fair, Associate Professor of History, and Pero G. Dagbovie, Associate Professor of History. I have been encouraged by their individual and collective scholarship. Together, they have given me a challenging model worthy of emulation. I had opportunities to know them as individual scholars, and this helped me to become familiar with their work: the effect was quite an epiphany for me. My committee functioned together as an efficient and encouraging team and thus enhanced my progress. For this and many informal ways of encouragement, I am grateful. I am very much aware that it took great goodwill, commitment, and enormous sacrifice on their part. For this, I will always remember them and be grateful. I thank Dr. Peter Limb for all his help and encouragement. He was always ready to offer help. I should also thank Dr. Gloria Smith, Dr. John McClendon III, Dr. Geneva Smitherman, and Dr. Rita Kiki Edozie for all the help and encouragement

they gave me. Jane Krause and Dr. Ella Howard gave me so much help with formatting this document. You have no idea how I appreciate you.

I also must thank all the people who gave me so much help during my field work and archival research in Ghana. To the many men and women, young and old, who collaborated with me by giving me so much of their time during the interview sessions, I appreciate all their efforts. They reached beyond themselves to draw from their knowledge and memory to give me so much information that, in addition to other sources, shaped this work. Their help did not come without personal stories most of which brought tears to their eyes. I will acknowledge all of them elsewhere in this work. However, it behooves me to mention the following for their particular dedication and commitment: Supi Kobina Minnah, *Obaahinmaa* Nana Amba Ayiaba, *Odomankoma Kyerema* Kwamina Prah, Taufik Ebo Labaran, and Kobina Ebo Fynn. I also received help while in the field from the following in various forms and at different times: Ebenezer Otu Walker, Kofi Atta, Ebenezer Krampah Aidoo, Daniel Nkrumah, Godfred Ahianyo, Festus N. A. Owoo, Joseph Nana Kofi Adomako Addae, Eric Kwaku Boakye Frimpong, Emmanuel Kofi Boadi, Anthony Kweku Arthur, Kingsley Obeng Amoako, Dr. Paul Kafui Kosie Kekesie, Dr. Yaw Ayewubo, and Dr. Michael Acquah. I also thank the librarians at the University of Ghana, Legon, particularly at Balme Library and the Institute of African Studies Library. I received considerable help from the librarians at the University of Cape Coast library complex. The archival staff at the National Archives, Kew-Richmond, Great Britain, and the Public Records and Archives Administration Department offices, in Accra and Cape Coast, was very helpful. I particularly thank William Otoo in this regard. In various ways, I received so much encouragement and

instruction from Professor R. Addo-Fenning, Professor Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, Dr. Kofi Baku, Dr. Irene Odotei, Dr. Akosua Perbi and others.

To Alfred Kuranchie, Samuel Kwadjei Rockson, and Ampah, I owe a debt of gratitude for their moral support. The old guards of St. Mary's Secondary School, Apowa, Takoradi, namely Victor Atsu Dzikunu, Ahmed Nunoo, James Allou, Christopher Allou, and Kenneth Asare (who was also with me at St. John's School) commended and encouraged me. I thank them so much. They have a portion of this honor. I also received so much help and support from my colleagues at Michigan State University. I particularly cite Dr. Assan Sarr, Dr. Harry Nii Koney Odamtten, Dr. Bayyinah Jefferies, Darcia Grant, Bala Saho, Leonard Ndubueze Mbah, and Tracy Robison. I thank them so much for all their help. Dr. Ebenezer Ayesu and Kwame Adum Kyeremeh were quite liberal in their support.

My siblings at home in Ghana were encouraging and offered ready and warm help. I thank Elizabeth, Jemimah, and Eric sincerely for all they did. They have been supportive since infancy and especially at this time as I seek a terminal degree. Maa and Daa would have been so proud of you for your support. Finally, I must of necessity thank Bessie and the children, Ed and Nana Pomaa, for their moral support. They have been there for me through it all, in both challenging and happy times in my pursuit of this degree. I am grateful for their patience with me, when I became testy and disagreeable. Bessie is the most excellent woman any man could be lucky enough to have in his life. Ed and Nana Pomaa have continued to make us proud. To all whose help I have been able recognize, as well as those who, for the sake of brevity, I have seemingly failed to acknowledge, I say thank you most sincerely and may the Almighty God bless you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Socio-historical context | 8 |
| Historiography | 10 |
| Theoretical Framework | 24 |
| Preparation and Methodology | 28 |
| Research Activity and Evaluation of Sources | 29 |
| Situating Myself in My Work | 36 |
| Chapter Outline | 37 |
| Conclusion | 41 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 1 | |
| THE SETTING: SETTLEMENT AND NASCENT RESISTANCE | 42 |
| Western Education and Official Resistance | 55 |
| The Growth of British Power and Resistance by the Chiefs | 63 |
| Conclusion | 82 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 2 | |
| <i>EBUSUA</i> AND <i>ASAFO</i> SYSTEMS: GENDER, COMPLEMENTARITY, AND CONFLICT AMONG THE FANTI OF SOUTHERN GOLD COAST | 85 |
| <i>Ebusua</i> : Women, Blood and Lineage | 89 |
| <i>Asafo</i> : Men, Spirit, and Power | 96 |
| <i>Asafo</i> , <i>Ebusua</i> , Conflict and Resistance | 119 |
| Conclusion | 129 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 3 | |
| <i>ASAFO</i> , CONFLICT AND RESISTANCE: AN OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTERPRETATION | 130 |
| Affinity with the Sea and the Acquisition of Fishing Skill | 132 |
| The Beach: Groups and Activities | 137 |
| The High Sea Experiences | 140 |
| Indigenous Organizations: <i>Asafo</i> , Fisher Folk, and Resistance | 145 |
| Conclusion | 169 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 4 | |
| ENCROACHMENT CONFRONTED: CHIEFS, COLONIAL MILITARISM, AND RESISTANCE | 171 |
| Resistance to Entrenchment of the Colonial Administration | 174 |
| <i>Omanhin</i> Aggery and Resistance to British Power | 178 |
| The Clash of Courts | 181 |
| Colonial Militarism and Aggery's Resistance | 187 |
| Punitive Measure: Removal of Colonial Capital to Accra | 199 |
| Another Punitive Measure: Exclusion from Railroad Infrastructure | 208 |
| Conclusion | 226 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 5 | |
| <i>HENARA HEN ASASE NI</i> (THIS IS OUR LAND): | |
| CAPE COAST AND RESISTANCE TO THE CROWN LANDS BILL OF | |
| COLONIAL SOUTHERN GOLD COAST | 227 |
| The Crown Lands Bill of 1894 and “Waste Lands” | 232 |
| The Crown Lands Bill of 1897 and “Public Lands” | 242 |
| Conclusion | 260 |
| CHAPTER 6 | |
| “WE WON’T COOPERATE”: MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS, | |
| RESISTANCE TO COLONIAL AUTHORITY AND THE 1932 CONFLICT | 262 |
| Introduction of Colonial Institutions of Governance | 262 |
| Resistance to the Order-in-Council | 266 |
| The Split within the Society | 276 |
| The Tufuhin Inquiry | 289 |
| Asafo Clashes in the Saltpond District | 293 |
| Omanhin Kojo Mbra III and Internal Resistance | 297 |
| Global Depression, Income Tax Proposal, Resistance and Gold Coast Riots | 301 |
| The 1932 Cape Coast Conflict | 308 |
| Conclusion | 323 |
| CONCLUSION | 326 |
| GLOSSARY | 336 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 340 |

Introduction

Coastal Akan¹ societies of Southern Gold Coast drew on ideas of resistance from their maritime culture in their dealings with the colonial government. They and their chiefs also collaborated with the Western-educated elite to resist the colonial administration through demonstrations, discussions with the government by delegations, use of newspaper articles and editorials, and official letters of protest. In some cases, they took advantage of the confusion, inaction, and indecision of colonial officers. This dissertation explores these modes of resistance by focusing on a series of events in Southern Gold Coast. These events included the questioning of British authority by indigenous chiefs, the colonial government's attempt to take over "waste lands," and the controversial 1932 Municipal Council elections. To this end, I develop this work around three levels of conflict and resistance: 1) cultural ideas on conflict (which would serve as a basis for the understanding of resistance to colonialism in Southern Ghana, particularly in the 1930s); 2) conflict and resistance among indigenous political organizations; and 3) resistance to the colonial government.

This study focuses on the period between 1860 and 1932; however, I consider the periods of settlement and expansion that took place before the arrival of the Europeans in the late fifteenth century. In 1932, the colonial governor of the Gold Coast, T. S. W.

¹ "Akan" is used here to refer to a group of people and a language. They can be divided into Coastal Akan and Interior Akan. They are believed to have originated from Pra and Ofin confluence. Constituting 45% of the population, the Akan are the largest group of people in the Gold Coast. See A. Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Educational Publishers, 2000), 1.

The Akan are divided into eleven groups: The Ashanti, Fanti, Ahanta, Guan, Bono Ahafo, Akyem, Akwapim, Akwamu, Kwahu, Sefwi and Nzima.

Thomas, stated that “[i]t is not an injustice to say that for many years the people of Cape Coast had been regarded by colonial political officers as probably the most difficult to deal with in the whole colony.”² Why? As early as 1860, one of the chiefs in Cape Coast—*Omanhin* (King) Aggery—became a political and ethical check on the British attempts to extend their power in Cape Coast. He touted his sovereignty and did not mince words in condemning British military brutality. Governor Thomas’s assessment of the difficult character of the Cape Coast indigene was correct. He failed to acknowledge, however, the conflict potential of the colonial enterprise itself, and the resistance it engenders as some of the principal factors; the present account examines the broader implications.

This dissertation makes the following contributions to Gold Coast and African historiography. First, besides showing the strategies and processes by which Southern Gold communities resisted colonial government’s attempt to control their daily lives, it also shows how chiefs in Southern Gold Coast resisted the weakening of their power and authority in the early nineteenth century. It is my contention that this was the beginning of a trend that was to be replicated throughout the nation during the colonial and postcolonial periods. What was the basis of the chiefs’ indigenous power and authority, which was usurped and undermined by the fledgling colonial government? What were the modes of resistance available to the chiefs in dealing with the British? I show that they collaborated with their people organized under indigenous social and political institutions; and also with their Western-educated compatriots. While doing this, this work shows that this kind of collaboration had its complications.

² PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to the Secretary of State, 5 July 1932 – December 1933, 20.

Second, my work examines of the processes by which Cape Coast resisted British attempts to seize land in the Gold Coast and stresses the political cost of this resistance to Cape Coast. What were the larger implications of the land policy and African resistance to it? My study shows that the resistance led by Cape Coast links it to the histories of all other societies in Southern Gold Coast. Again, my work shows that the resistance in this context was based on land, not only as an economic and political resource, but also as a cultural and religious resource. This helps us to appreciate the degree of the resistance and the enormity of its cost to Cape Coast.

Third, my dissertation shows that the seven *Asafo*³ (patrilineal) and the seven *Ebusua*⁴ (matrilineal) systems—major features of Southern Gold Coast maritime culture—are necessary for the understanding of the history of Cape Coast. I argue that as indigenous social organizations their membership embraced the entire society. This

³ “Asa” means “war,” and “fo” means “people.” “Asafo” therefore denotes the the indigenous Akan political and military organizations responsible for the protection and defense of their respective societies. To this end, it emphasized bravery and daring nature among members. Consequently, *Asafo* groups encouraged confrontation, conflict, resistance, and competition among themselves. As a patrilineal organization, every man, woman or youth joined their father’s group. Among the coastal Akan the base of the *Asafo* organization was made up of fishermen and women.

In general an Akan town or village might have one or two of these companies, but in coastal Southern Gold Coast some villages and towns had many of them. In Cape Coast, for instance, there were seven: *Bentsir* (No. 1), *Anafo* (No. 2), *Ntsin* (No. 3), *Nkum* (No. 4), *Abrofonkoa* (No. 5), *Akrampa* (No. 6) and *Amanfur* (No. 7). Officers and leaders were addressed by such titles as: *Tufuhin*, *Supifo*, *Kwatekyirefo*, *Asafohinfo*, *Asafoakyirefo*, *Kyirema*, *Frankaakitanyi*, *Asikanmba*, *Bombaa* and *Asafo Akomfo*.

⁴ This term refers to the system among the Akan where individual identity, belongingness, inheritance, rights and responsibilities are determined along one’s mother’s line. *Ebusua* also refers to the various groups into which the Akan divide this system. All told, there were seven principal groups: *Nsona*, *Bretuo-Twidan*, *Konna-Ebiradzi*, *Anona*, *Aduana-Aboradzi*, *Ntwea*, and *Adwindadze*.

makes the *Asafo* and the *Ebusua* systems representative of the entire society and, therefore essential for understanding it and its motivations. How did these groups influence resistance? Insofar as the *Asafo* and *Ebusua* systems dealt with relationships, they possess the potential for deepening our understanding of resistance in Cape Coast and other places in Southern Gold Coast. In addition, my project hypothesizes that the *Ebusua* and *Asafo* had implications for issues of gender balance. In a predominantly matrilineal Akan society, there were avenues for the strong expression of patrilineal systems. This is an important contribution to knowledge, especially when feminist scholars have the tendency to emphasize predominant patriarchal structures in which matrilineal concerns were relegated to the background.⁵ My dissertation will emphasize a

⁵ Feminist scholars, particularly anthropologists, who have worked on some of these issues include Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990). In this work Linnekin focuses on women in Hawaiian society. Annette B. Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976). Weiner expresses the concept of symmetrical and complementary oppositions in her examination of women's and men's power in the Trobriands. Kamene Okonjo, "The Dual Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria," in *Women in Africa*, ed. Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna Bay (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 45 – 58. Okonjo highlights the term "dual-sex political system" among West African traditional societies. Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). Silverblatt uses the terms "sexual parallelism," "parallel hierarchy," "parallel line," and "gender parallelism." Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988). She is critical of anthropological models of male and female domains, and opts for a concept in which "gender demarcates different types of agency" and one in which gender imagery differentiates sociality, which is consequently conceived as always taking one of two forms. Jane F. Collier and Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "Politics and Gender in Simple Societies," in *Sexual Meanings*, eds. Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 275 – 329. They argue that gender conceptions grow from, even as they shape, social, and political processes. Karla Poewe, *Matrilineal Ideology* (New York: Academic Press, 1981). She also explores male-female dynamics in Luapula, Zambia, and discusses the relationship between kinship and gender, specifically a matrilineal system, and identifies a fundamental contradiction between the essence of matrilineality and the essence of

situation in which a predominantly matrilineal society gave prominence to patrilineal systems.

Fourth, my examination of indigenous political institutions shows how “typical” *Asafo* rivalry became part of national political resistance against the colonial establishment. This study shows how the core members of the seven *Asafo* groups had a relationship that thrived on resistance. These tendencies eventually became excuses to resist Legislative Council elections in 1932, much to the frustration of local colonial officers. What kind of structures and strategies facilitated this? And how did the people of Cape Coast exploit their opportunities? Again, my work emphasizes that, like the Crown land policy, Legislative Council election became a national issue that ignited resistance in Cape Coast and complicated the relationship between its people and the colonial government. Thus, I demonstrate the existence of an evolutionary process that changed “old” *Asafo* conflicts into “new” *Asafo* resistance.

Fifth, this project shows that the colonial process of urbanization caused the people of Cape Coast to resist because it crossed cultural confluences. For example, I show that when the British moved their capital from Cape Coast to Accra, they used

individuality. Gender parallelism is also explored in works on African ritual and religion. See for example Caroline Bledsoe, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980). Bledsoe examines parallelism in ritual authority. Benetta Jules-Rosette, *The New Religions of Africa* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1979). She identifies the complex relationship between priests and priestesses by exploring the mystical power of women through mediumship and ceremonial authority. Helga Fink, *Religion, Disease, and Healing in Ghana: A Case Study of Traditional Dormaa Medicine* (Munich: Trickster Verlag, 1990). Fink focuses on ethnomedicine among the Dormaa, and consistently places the roles of queen mothers and priestesses in separate parallel positions. Niara Sudarkasa, “The Status of Women in Indigenous African Societies,” in *Women in Africa and the Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1987), 25 – 41. She argues for a “neutral” complementarity rather than a “subordinate”/“superordination” in her description of the relation between female and male roles in various pre-colonial African societies.

sanitation as an excuse rather than admitting that the move was at least partly punitive. My work shows that the move added tension to the already strained relations between the people of Cape Coast and the local colonial officers. This gave the people of Cape Coast a good cause to intensify their resistance to the colonial government. Here, I show a significant contrast with other places in Africa (e.g., South Africa) where cases of disease and sanitation were used as excuses to exclude people from certain places in the city, rather than moving the colonial government machinery to a “safe haven.”⁶

Sixth, I explore the collaboration between the Western-educated elite of Cape Coast and the indigenous political system as one of the major modes of resistance to colonial rule in Southern Gold Coast. How different was this from collaborations elsewhere in the colony? Were the elite exploiting the indigenous people? Were the elite merely taking advantage of the indigenous political structures? My study shows that given the relationship between Western-educated elite and the ordinary people elsewhere in the country, the one in Cape Coast worked to great advantage.⁷ My work shows that a Western education did not necessarily mean a rejection of culture or of the uneducated people of Cape Coast. This challenges the accepted notion that the Western-educated

⁶ Maynard W. Swanson, “The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900 – 1909,” *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387; K. David Patterson, “Disease and Medicine in African History,” *History in Africa* 1 (1974): 142; M. W. Swanson, “Urban Origins of Separate Development,” *Race* 10 (1968): 31.

⁷ See for instance the relationship between the Western-educated elite and the ordinary people in the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast in Li Ashan, “Social Protest in the Gold Coast: A Study of the Eastern Province in the Colonial Period” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, Canada, 1993).

elite and the masses did not work together during the period of early nationalism in West Africa.⁸

Finally, my dissertation is important because it shows that the indecision and inaction of local colonial officers in Cape Coast vis-à-vis the implementation of policies and actions during critical times exacerbated conflict among *Asafo* groups. This weakness was exploited by *Asafo* groups as one of the modes of resistance to colonial government orders. What do the indecision and inaction tell us about the generally accepted notion of the unflinching commitment of colonial officers to the colonial enterprise? Did this indecision and inaction arise because of the mounting tension as a result of the conflict among the *Asafo*? Or was this an instance of reluctance regarding official duty on the part of local colonial officers? My study complicates the simple resistor-collaborator interpretation in the history of the Gold Coast. I do this by showing that those relationships had their own challenges.⁹ Southern Gold Coast communities that were

⁸ See David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 61 – 167. See also Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 143 – 165. For instance, this also became an issue in the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast. In some of their debates, Governor Gordon Guggisberg and Nana Sir Ofori Atta (King/Omanhin of Akyim Abuakwa) accused the Western educated elite and the professionals of neglecting the uneducated people. They only dealt with them in the practice of their professions. According to Guggisberg and Ofori Atta, the educated elite were so ignorant about the nature and lives of the uneducated that they could not even make practical contributions regarding their ways of life. See PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letters of Governor Guggisberg to the Right Honorable L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 9 November 1926 – 14 July 1927, 2; and Nana Sir Ofori Atta, Legislative Council Debates, 22 February 1926, 450.

⁹ Robert O. Collins, ed., *Historical Problems of Imperial Africa* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2000), 57 – 100. See also Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa*, 83 – 110; Albert Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

described as collaborators had an uneasy relationship with the British colonial administration. That collaboration had its own complications, challenges, and difficulties, and must be accounted for in the rigid division between resisters and collaborators.

Socio-historical Context

Gold Coast was divided into Southern and Northern sections during the first phase of colonialism (i.e., when there was a distinction between the “Colony,” and the “Protectorate”). The Northern Gold Coast was synonymous with the Protectorate, whereas the Southern Gold Coast was synonymous with the Colony. In this study, “Southern Gold Coast” refers to the area from Brong Ahafo, Ashanti,¹⁰ and Volta down to Greater Accra and the eastern, western, and central administrative regions of the country (as they are currently constituted). Southern Gold Coast was further divided into interior and coastal Southern Gold Coast. Coastal Southern Ghana included Volta, Greater Accra, and the central and western regions.¹¹ For most of the country’s history, more than 75 percent of its population lived in Southern Gold Coast, and this reflected in its level of infrastructural development.

¹⁰ The Ashanti (also spelled “Asante”) are an interior Akan Twi people. They are the largest of the Akan groups. In my study, I use the “Ashanti” spelling, which is the way the people were referred to by the colonial government.

¹¹ This does not preclude a further division of these “coastal regions” into their own respective interior and coastal areas.

Cape Coast, the capital city of the central province of the Gold Coast, covered 43.6 square miles of land and has a long history.¹² It was settled by the Etsii, Effutu, and Fanti¹³ (the larger Fanti population made it overwhelmingly Akan). The name “Cape Coast” was the Anglicized rendering of the Portuguese term *Cabo Corso*.¹⁴ Also known in indigenous parlance as *Oguaa* (*Guaa*, *Dwaa*, or *Guae*), Cape Coast had about thirty-six satellite towns under its ambit as the nerve center of the area.¹⁵ It was one of the starting points of Southern Gold Coast’s contact with Europeans.¹⁶ With the expansion of European trade, Cape Coast traders became middlemen in the commercial transactions between coastal and interior states, which led to the expansion of the town. Yet, trading was not the only important part of its economy. Fishing was one of the occupations that

¹² Approximately 112.924 square kilometers: Geological Survey Department, Regional Office, Cape Coast, Report No. 50, 1.

¹³ The word is spelled both: “Fanti” and “Fante.” The Twi speaking Akan peoples would refer to their coastal neighbors as “Fante,” but coastal Akan would refer to themselves as “Fanti.” For the sake of consistency, I prefer to use “Fanti” because that is how they refer to themselves; and are also referred to in the archival records.

¹⁴ W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), 57.

¹⁵ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1634: Schedule of Documents with reference to Cape Coast, 9. These include Efutu (Fetu), Tandokrom, Kubekyir, Bebianeha, Berase, Agona, Essiam, Sarman, Ankwase, Ekon, Amama (Amamoma), Apewosika, Kwesibra, Kokwadu, Siwdu, Abora, Kakumdu, Mpeasem, Akotokyir, Ebrobonko, Amiyao, Dankokrom, Bisakrom, Oguakrom, Kyirakomfo (Buelah), Yayakwana, Pedu, Kwapro, Ankafro, Esuekyir, Anto-Esuekyir, Sorafo, Mampong, Adisadar, Nkamfua, and Amoanda.

¹⁶ Its immediate neighbor to the west, Elmina, was the first.

supported the indigenous economy, and also determined the character and attitude of the town.¹⁷

As one of the first points of contact with Europeans, Cape Coast became the cradle of Western education and, ultimately, the colonial capital of the Gold Coast (until Accra supplanted it in 1877). But this did not curtail the importance of Cape Coast as a political hotbed. Cape Coast became one of the first places where early colonial rule began its assault on the indigenous culture and institutions, making it a veritable theater for the battle of political ideas and cultures, as well as resistance.

Historiography

Gold Coast historiography, like that of Africa in general, has come a long way. The first generation of Gold Coast academic historians followed W. E. F. Ward, Thomas Edward Bowdich, John Fage, Brodie Cruickshank, E. B. Ellis, R. S. Rattray, David Kimble, Dennis Austin, Eva L. R. Meyerowitz, and others in second half of the twentieth century.¹⁸ In addition to writing a general history of the Gold Coast from its origins to

¹⁷ Kobinah Minnah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009; Nana Amba Ayiaba, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009; Ebo Johnson, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June, 2009; Kweku Botse, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 22 June 2009; Kobina Yallow, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009.

¹⁸ These were European historians, specifically British and Dutch, who documented the history of Ghana during and immediately after colonial rule before the field admitted its first generation of Ghanaian academic historians. They wrote about stories of origin of the various peoples, described the various ethnic groups, their interaction with Europeans, and their trade with Europeans. Some of these include: W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*; John Fage, *Ghana: A Historical Interpretation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959); Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1966); E. B. Ellis, *A History of the Gold Coast of West Africa*

the struggle for independence and after, this generation of academic historians also ventured into the local histories of the various peoples of the Gold Coast and encouraged their students to do likewise. From the 1970s to the present day, historical writing on the Gold Coast has been vibrant in theme, scope, and style. Scholarly historical research has been done mainly in four of the ten administrative regions of the Gold Coast (e.g., Ashanti, including Brong Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, and Volta). For instance, historical research and writing on the Ashanti, which has been the most prolific, has dealt with such subjects as kinship, the Ashanti kingdom, trade, the cocoa industry, institutions, and culture.¹⁹ The Ashanti also dominate scholarly efforts to account for and give recognition to women's perspectives in Gold Coast historiography.²⁰ Work on Ga

(New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969); Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946 – 1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); Eva Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958); Eva Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions of Origin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952); David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*.

¹⁹ Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Ivor Wilks, *Forest of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993); Ivor Wilks, *Political bi-Polarity in Nineteenth Century Asante* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1970); Larry W. Yarak, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744 – 1873* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Jean Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Kwame Arhin, *Papers on the Symposium on the City of Kumasi: The Historical Background* (Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, 1990); Kwame Arhin, *Minutes of the Ashanti Farmers Association, 1934 – 1936* (Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, 1978); R. S. Rattray, *Akan-Ashanti Folktales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956); R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

²⁰ Jean Allman, *"I Will Not Eat Stone:" A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000); A. Adu Boahen, *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante-British War of 1900-1* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003); Asirifi Danquah, *Yaa Asantewaa: An African Queen Who Led an Army to Fight the British* (Kumasi: Asirifi Danquah Books, 2002).

women has also been increasing.²¹ Where does the present work fit in with these developments?

In focusing on Cape Coast in particular, and coastal Southern Gold Coast in general, this work contributes to the Fanti aspect of Gold Coast historiography. To this end, I highlight their strategies in resisting the colonial government attempt to control their everyday life. Thus this work shifts emphasis from national resistance to colonial rule to that of everyday people organized under indigenous political institutions in their localities. Social history is another emerging genre in Gold Coast academic history. For instance, Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong has made two important contributions to the field, aspects of which inform my work. In his social history of alcohol in the Gold Coast, he considers how this “powerful fluid,” functioning as a metaphor for power, informed intergenerational and gender conflicts in pre-colonial Gold Coast, as well as urban social formation and temperance movements in early colonial Gold Coast.²² The present work, in part, follows in this tradition by looking at the use and abuse of alcohol in resistance to colonial rule in Cape Coast. In this context, I not only focus on how immoderate alcohol consumption caused and/or facilitated resistance among *Asafo* groups in Cape Coast, but also how the local colonial officers used alcohol in conflict resolution efforts as *asomdwee nsa* (peace drink). Again, in his insightful work on environmental history of

²¹ See, for instance, Claire Robertson, *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socio-Economic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Deborah Pellow, *Women in Accra: Options for Autonomy* (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, 1977).

²² Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996), xv.

Anlo,²³ Akyeampong helps lay the foundation for the field. He examines the dynamic relationship between the Anlo and their environment, and how this reflected through social structures and processes, economy and livelihood, accumulation, social differentiation, marriage, and family, knowledge, belief and power, modernity and social change, and the sustainability of development. I, too, include an environmental discussion in this dissertation.

I stress that an examination of environmental factors is critical in the history of the people of Cape Coast, who, like the Anlos, live in close proximity to the coast. The relationship between Cape Coast and the sea has not been explored in previous historical research. I explore the dynamic relationship between the fishing or coastal community of Cape Coast and the sea. To what extent can it be said that living so close to the sea and making a livelihood from it (as they say, *ye fow epo dabiara* [we climb the sea everyday]) shaped the nature and conduct of these people?²⁴ And to what extent can some of these influences explain the frequency of resistance among members of this community as expressed through their indigenous organizations? And how do these conflicts illustrate the larger theme of resistance to colonial rule? In all of these, I stress how coastal Southern Gold Coast communities under their indigenous organizations resisted colonial rule. In situations which were beyond them, they and their chiefs collaborated with the Western educated elite. They resisted colonialism through

²³ Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-Social History of the Anlo of Southern Ghana c. 1850 to Recent Times* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001), 4.

²⁴ Kobinah Minnah, interview; Nana Amba Ayiaba, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kobina Yallow, interview.

demonstrations, riots, delegations, official letters of protest, and the use of newspaper articles and editorials. In some cases they took advantage of the confusion, inaction and indecision of colonial officers to resist colonial rule. What were the issues? My dissertation shows how the questioning of British authority by indigenous chiefs, attempt by the colonial government to take over “waste lands,” and the controversial 1932 Municipal Council elections, among others became major issues in the resistance of coastal Southern Gold Coast to colonial rule.

Aspects of resistance have turned up in Gold Coast and Cape Coast historiography, particularly with respect to the *Asafo*, as a major component of Maritime Culture.²⁵ These have been discussed in footnotes, passing comments, slight references

²⁵ R. Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa c. 1874–1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997); J. A. Aggrey, *Asafo* (Tema: Ghana Publishing, 1978); F. Agbodeka, “The Fanti Confederation, 1865–1869,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8 (1965): 82–123; Jean M. Allman, “The Youngmen and the Porcupine: Class, Nationalism and Asante Struggle for Self-Determination, 1945–1957,” *Journal of African History* 31, no. 2 (1990): 50–70; Kofi A. Busia, *Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951); I. Chukwukere, *Cultural Resilience: The Asafo Company System of the Fanti* (Cape Coast, Ghana: Cape Coast University Press, 1970); I. Chukwukere, “Perspectives on the Asafo Institution in Southern Ghana,” *Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 1 (1980): 50 - 75; A. K. Datta, “The Fanti Asafo: A Re-Examination,” *Africa* 42 (1972): 45 - 67. Harvey M. Feinberg, “Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast during the Eighteenth Century,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 79, no. 7 (1989): 104 - 120. This includes some references to Elmina wards and the Asafo on pages 104 to 109. There is also a reference to ward conflicts on pages 118 to 120. M. J. Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People* (London: Crown Agents for Colonies, 1940), 118 - 120; D. Fortesque, “The Accra Crowd and Opposition to the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1920–1924,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 115 - 135; George P. Hagan, “An Analytical Study of Fanti Kinship,” *Research Review* 4, no. 1 (1967): 35–57; J. E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Frank Cass, 1970); Per Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1995); J. C. DeGraft Johnson, “The Fanti Asafo,” *Africa* 5, no. 3 (1932): 307–22; T. J. Johnson, “Protest, Challenge and Change: An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots, 1890–1920,” *Economy and Society*

in chapters, or, at best, in articles and other short “write-ups.” They are not discussed within the context of resistance to colonial rule. My dissertation takes resistance a step further by exploring the ways and means, as well as the processes, by which the *Asafo* resisted colonial rule.

To ground my discussion of indigenous social institutions, I explore the beliefs, origins, emblems, and paraphernalia of the *Asafo*, as well as its nature and function, and

1, no. 2 (1972): 164–193; R. A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins, 1982); L. I. Anshan, “Asafo and Destoolment in Colonial Southern Ghana, 1900–1953,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995): 327–57; Mary McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast: The Fante State* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 105 - 106. This has a short reference to the Asafo on pages 105–106, particularly with respect to a British governor’s attempt to regulate that institution. I. Odotei, “The Ga and Their Neighbors” (Ph.D. diss., University of Ghana, 1972). This has a short description of the Asafo among the Ga. Frazer Ofori Atta, “Amantoomiensa in the Political and Administrative Set-Up of Akyem Abuakwa” (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1978); John K. Osei-Tutu, *The Asafoi (Socio-Military Groups) in the History and Politics of Accra (Ghana) from the Seventeenth to Mid Twentieth Century* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000); Maxwell Owusu, *Uses and Abuses of Political Power: A Case Study of Community and Change in the Politics of Ghana* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); R. Porter, “The Cape Coast Conflict of 1803,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 11 (1970): 30 - 45; J. M. Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 25–32; J. M. Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 99 – 100; S. Shaloff, “The Income Tax, Indirect Rule and the Depression: The Gold Coast Riot of 1931,” *International Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 4 (1974): 591–607; J. Simenson, “Commoners, Chiefs and Colonial Government: British Policy and Local Politics in Akyem Abuakwa, Ghana under Colonial Rule” (PhD diss., University of Trondheim, Norway, 1975); J. Simenson, “Nationalism from Below: The Akyem Abuakwa Example,” *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1975): 31–57; J. Simensen, “Crisis in Akim Abuakwa: The Native Administrative Revenue Measure of 1932,” *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1975): 99–104; J. Simensen, “Rural Mass Action in the Context of Anti-Colonial Protest: The Asafo Movement of Akim Abuakwa, Ghana,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8 (1974): 25–41; A. K. Datta and R. Porter, “The Asafo System in Historical Perspective: An Inquiry into the Origin and Development of a Ghanaian Institution,” *Journal of African History* 12, no. 2 (1971): 279–297; John Argyle, “Kalela, Beni, Asafo, Ingoma and the Rural Urban Dichotomy,” *African Studies* 50 (1991): 65–86.

how these became useful in their resistance to colonial rule.²⁶ This aspect of my dissertation is partly based on a study of archival sources, which I compare with the oral tradition I collected during my fieldwork. However, to the extent that previous works are mere descriptions of the *Asafo* institution, this study takes the arguments of earlier scholars further by looking at the institution's defiance of British colonial administration, their interaction and collaboration with the Western-educated elite, inter-*Asafo* relations, and the evolution and change of these relations, which were used to further resistance to colonial rule. J. A. Aggrey sees the *Asafo* system as an essential component of Fanti and Akan culture as well as political and military organization.²⁷ He describes the anatomy of the system by looking at its essence: the beliefs about the origins of the *Asafo* among the Fanti, as well as the system's emblems, paraphernalia, and songs. The depth of detail reflects Aggrey's intimacy with the system. However, he does not discuss *Asafo* resistance and experience of colonial rule. Moreover, the wealth of information contained in Aggrey's work on the *Asafo*, regrettably, has had limited circulation because he wrote it in Fanti (an Akan language that is spoken predominantly along the coast of Southern Gold Coast).²⁸

²⁶ J. A. Aggrey, I. Chukwukere, and J. M. Sarbah deal with these issues. See: Aggrey, *Asafo*, 1-2; Chukwukere, *Cultural Resilience*, 10; Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution*, 57.

²⁷ Aggrey, *Asafo*, 1.

²⁸ J. B. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fanti Languages called Twi* (Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933), 100. See also F. Migeod, *Languages of West Africa* (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1911), 13.

I. B. Chukwukere, on the other hand, attempts an anthropological interpretation of the nature and function of the *Asafo* companies in some Fanti communities.²⁹ He establishes the importance of the institution among the Fanti and indicates that it was deeply rooted in their social fabric and indispensable to the society's proper functioning. In spite of its interesting and enlightening nature, his work is only a general study of the *Asafo* system and does not include a discussion of resistance of colonial rule.

J. C. DeGraft Johnson's work on the Fanti *Asafo* is widely referenced. Writing against a background of serious criticisms from colonial political officers vis-à-vis *Asafo* resistance and disturbances, he presents the institution as germane to the sociopolitical fabric of the indigenous state.³⁰ In order to justify the place of the *Asafo*, Johnson attempts an analysis of the warrior organization by discussing its origins, just as Aggrey does, along with its history, development, and scope. He focuses on the Cape Coast *Asafo* system. Johnson insists that the *Asafo* is a dignified and formidable force in spite of its close association with Southern Gold Coast conflicts. According to Johnson, removing these excesses—as well as the introduction of necessary reforms—will make its social, political, and economic relevance obvious. The motive for writing this article did not allow for a thorough analysis of *Asafo* resistance nor did it allow for an assessment of *Asafo* modes of resistance in the context of colonialism.³¹

²⁹ Chukwukere, *Cultural Resilience*, 10.

³⁰ Johnson, "The Fanti Asafu," 311.

³¹ J. C. DeGraft Johnson was one of the few indigenes admitted into the colonial administration as officers. Johnson was commissioned by the colonial authorities to do a study of *Asafo*. As an indigene in defense of an indigenous institution, his defensiveness is understandable.

In his pioneering work on traditional Fanti law and the Fanti national constitution, John Mensah Sarbah also mentions the *Asafo*.³² He traces the broad outlines of Akan-Fanti communities and explains the principles controlling and regulating their governance. The *Asafo* system, despite being a vital component of Akan-Fanti culture, is only given intermittent treatment. With respect to his work on traditional Fanti law and practice, Sarbah mentions the *Asafo* as part of the Fanti tribunal system. Given his background as a legal practitioner, Sarbah was concerned mainly with the basic forms of the Fanti society's constitution and indigenous legal arrangements and not with their involvement in resistance to colonial rule.³³

The work on the *Asafo* system by Ansu K. Datta and R. Porter also looks at the special nature and origins of the Fanti *Asafo*. The authors point out that anyone visiting a coastal town in central or western Gold Coast at the right time is likely to see men and women marching in animated processions, singing, beating drums, and dressed in colorful uniforms.³⁴ Some of the marchers will be carrying, if not firing, obsolete guns, and there will be flag-bearers displaying a variety of flags embroidered with different motifs. In towns with several *Asafo* companies, they are distinguished from each other by the colors of their uniforms and flags, and by their emblems.³⁵ In addition, they discuss

³² Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution*, 25.

³³ Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law*, 100.

³⁴ Datta and Porter, "The *Asafo* System in Historical Perspective," 279.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

its development over different periods; the *Asafo* and resistance are mentioned, albeit briefly. Datta and Porter point out that intercompany fights and disputes used to be one of the most characteristic features of the system. There is often an element of rivalry between various companies of the same town or state. The competitive coexistence of companies may, indeed, be considered a basic feature of the *Asafo* system. In spite of this rivalry, however, *Asafo* companies did cooperate against common enemies.³⁶ Datta and Porter do not, however, explore *Asafo* resistance to colonial rule in much detail. They mention the songs, parades, proverbs, and skits that were common among the *Asafo*.³⁷ But, they stop short of showing how these were used in resistance.

In an article, Ansu Datta refers to the inadequacies of works by DeGraft Johnson and Christensen.³⁸ He points out that their silence on certain salient features of the Fanti *Asafo* system is a serious weakness.³⁹ Datta expresses the hope that his work, based on materials collected through field investigations over a period of several years in various Fanti towns, will complement their studies. Once again, however, the *Asafo* role in resistance to colonial rule in Southern Gold Coast is barely discussed.

John Argyle produces what appears to be the first scholarly effort to compare indigenous social organizations across the continent from East and South Africa to West

³⁶ Ibid., 281.

³⁷ Ibid., 282

³⁸ Datta, "The Fanti *Asafo*: A Re-Examination," 45.

³⁹ Ibid., 58.

Africa.⁴⁰ He does his analysis using the modes of locality, competition, display, innovation, prestige, status, and mutual aid. He cites the close connection between a particular dance association and the part of a town in which its members lived. The division of older Swahili towns into two distinct local sections, sometimes called “moieties” in the literature, was a fundamental feature of their political and military responsibilities.⁴¹ Moreover, Argyle points out that the internal vibrancy of these sections and that of the wider society was fostered and expressed in various forms of competition in which success was achieved through new styles of dress, dance, music, and song.⁴² Such innovation was, therefore, an essential feature of these organizations. Referring to Ranger, Argyle argues that these organizations were a way of recasting the network of relationships within a moiety. Where do the *Asafo* figure in all this? It is this competitive spirit that underlies most of the inter-*Asafo* resistance that is an important aspect of my study. To this end, my study contends that the element of competition or rivalry among the *Asafo* became a base upon which resistance to the Legislative Council elections evolved. The scholarly significance of Argyle’s work cannot be gainsaid. His analysis of the eastern and southern African case studies, however, overshadows his discussion the *Asafo* of West Africa. Furthermore, relationships among the *Asafo* and their resistance to colonial rule are not discussed.

⁴⁰ Argyle, “Kalela, Beni, Asafo, Ingoma and the Rural: Urban Dichotomy,” 65.

⁴¹ Ibid., 69.

⁴² Ibid., 70.

Roger Gocking's monumental work on Cape Coast suggests that the British policy of indirect rule caused the Western-educated elite of Cape Coast to attempt to exploit indigenous political institutions for personal gain.⁴³ He sets his study between 1843 and 1948, and reexamines the British policy of indirect rule and its effects in the Gold Coast. Gocking demonstrates that that policy exhibited much more complex results than has traditionally been ascribed to it, especially in the politics of the Gold Coast's coastal polities.⁴⁴ He suggests that indirect rule fuelled unprecedented competition for office in the "native" states among people who had little or no claim to legitimacy. According to Gocking, indirect rule gave indigenous political institutions and their affairs a new importance.⁴⁵ Thus, some educated elite entered into the indigenous political order to compete as candidates for its offices. Gocking focuses on the *Asafo* in Cape Coast as an indigenous political institution that offered members of the Western-educated elite an opportunity to fulfill their political aspirations.⁴⁶

In another work,⁴⁷ he focuses on what he calls the creation of coastal societies in Southern Gold Coast. To this end, Gocking identifies two major factors that influenced

⁴³ Roger Gocking, "The Historic Akoto: A Social History of Cape Coast, Ghana, 1848–1948" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, Stanford, 1981), 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁷ Roger Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities under Colonial Rule* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 6.

the emergence of these societies: “Akanization” and “Europeanization” (or, more specifically, “Anglicization”).⁴⁸ He asserts that by analyzing cultural interaction in the manner that he outlines, his study moves beyond a focus on the form and force of protest to colonial rule.⁴⁹ Consequently, he concentrates on the extent to which nineteenth- and twentieth-century Southern Gold Coast communities had become Euro-African environments whose members were linked across putatively traditional and Westernized boundaries by their participation in common activities and affiliations to indigenous institutions.⁵⁰

My work challenges aspects of Gocking’s conclusions. I suggest that the Western-educated elite did not take advantage of institutions such as the *Asafo*. Far from taking advantage, they participated in indigenous political activities on the basis of their patrilineal associations in Cape Coast, which was a fundamental element of *Asafo* membership (i.e., men and women became members of their fathers’ *Asafo* companies). In addition, whereas Gocking focuses on the Western-educated elite (who he specifically described as “Creoles”) in his analysis of the “Akanization” and “Anglicization” process in Cape Coast, I highlight the activities of ordinary men and women and their collaboration with the intellectuals in the resistance to colonial rule.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 7

Other scholars have looked at varying aspects of inter-*Asafo* relations, and their conclusions have been important for my work.⁵¹ S. Shaloff's work on the 1932 Cape Coast *Asafo* conflict falls to some extent within the purview of this dissertation. He attributes the outbreak of the 1932 conflict to a division of opinion at Cape Coast regarding the Gold Coast Colony Order-in-Council in 1925, with respect to the Legislative Council elections. He states that the 1932 conflict was not a manifestation of the "traditional" violence between rival military formations in the frequently turbulent precincts of Cape Coast.⁵² Although I agree with his argument regarding the Legislative Council elections, my work extends Shaloff's interpretation by suggesting that the resistance was also a manifestation of the political turbulence that was characteristic of Cape Coast in particular, and Southern Gold Coast in general. Furthermore, my project not only focuses on the 1932 conflict, it connects its trends with those of earlier periods to contextualize political decisions and actions in Cape Coast. Thus, my work provides the much-needed background of antecedent nineteenth-century happenings.

Although I draw on the above literature on Cape Coast and *Asafo*, I also extend it by indicating that the incidences of conflict and confrontation eventually transcended the usual "traditional" *casus belli* and moved into national political resistance against colonial rule. This dissertation further demonstrates that the relationship between the people of Cape Coast, the Southern Gold Coast, and the colonial government was an

⁵¹ Porter, "The Cape Coast Riot of 1803," 30 - 45; Johnson, "The Fante *Asafo*," 307-22; J. B. Christensen, "The Role of Proverbs in Fante Culture," *Journal of the International African Institute* 28, no. 6 (1958), 232 - 43.

⁵² Shaloff, "The Cape Coast *Asafo* Company Riot of 1932," 591.

uneasy one. It had its own challenges and difficulties, especially within the contest of resistance to colonial rule. Finally, the fact that the *Asafo* were instrumental in everyday Southern Gold Coast life makes their study indispensable for understanding its history.

Theoretical Framework

“Modes of resistance” in this work refers to the means and mechanisms coastal Southern Ghana communities adopted when dealing with colonialism. It refers to those means and mechanisms adopted by those communities to express discontentment and disapproval of the manner in which the colonial government and its officers interfered with everyday life. Writing about power and resistance in twentieth century Ciskei Xhosa, Les Switzer observed that dominating and accommodating ideologies of the Apartheid policy were continually contested by ideologies of resistance.⁵³ Africans resisted the world they were forced to live in, drawing on concrete social practices that challenged their respective experiences.⁵⁴ Resistance, moreover, occurred within and without the fabric of organized African politics; and was experienced in the protocol, etiquettes, rituals, ceremonies, festivals, and other routines of everyday life.⁵⁵ Isolated instances of ritual and protocol turned up in resistance to colonial rule in Southern Gold Coast.

Thus modes of resistance refer to the variety of ways by which people in coastal Southern Ghana sought to checkmate the colonial government, so that they could live

⁵³ Les Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an Africa Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 10.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

their lives as they preferred. For instance fishermen and women sometimes took their own actions in their bid to resist the colonial government. In these situations they drew from their indigenous conception of resistance. However, at other times, they collaborated with indigenous political leaders and the Western-educated elite. With the help of this group they were able to write official letters of protest, use newspaper articles and editorials and also send delegations to put their cases across to the colonial government. These modes were in essence very different than the primary resistance in which some African societies used military means to resist conquest by the advancing colonial forces.⁵⁶ Even though these modes of resistance come close to David Robinson's accommodation, they are not the kind that sought a balance between resistance and resignation.⁵⁷ Rather coastal communities in Southern Gold Coast sought

⁵⁶ Philip Curtin for instance establishes three major forms and sources of African resistance to colonial rule. One, some form of African resistance to colonial rule was present from the beginning – first of all as military resistance to conquest. This is sometimes referred to as “primary resistance.” Two, there was the creation of new political structures, for example, ‘Abd al-Qadir’ in Algeria, the ‘Maji-Maji’ revolt in Tanganyika, Shona and Ndebele “rebellions” in Rhodesia. Three, the ultimate victory for African independence, however, had its roots in modern nationalism – a form of political organization borrowed from the West or adapted from other non-Western countries (like India) with the goal of taking over the colonial state as the framework for a renewed and independent African political life. See Philip Curtin et al., *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence* (London: Longman, 1995), 540 – 546. See also T. O. Ranger, “Connexions Between ‘Primary Resistance’ Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa,” *Journal of African History* 9, no. 3 (1968): 437 – 53.

⁵⁷ David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880 – 1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000). In his discussion of “Paths of Accommodation” within Muslim societies in Senegal and Mauritania, Robinson examines their choices between resistance and resignation. He presents the tactics of leaders like Saad Buh, Sidiyya Baba, Malik Sy, and Amadu Bamba.

a kind of balance between living under colonial rule and being able to live their lives as they preferred.

The idea of resistance was common in Akan social philosophy, and was expressed in proverbs. *Puntusiee, puntusiee, se ehom hendu, annhum hendu ye tar nsu enyiwaaoo!* (We are like the cork or the calabash! Whether you suppress us or not, we resist by floating so easily) Thus, it was not surprising that the *Asafo* of Southern Gold Coast were frequently engaged in resistance. Yet, this was not the only indication of the philosophy of resistance. For example, appellative expressions of Cape Coast provided a smattering of confrontation and resistance. The most well-known of its appellations is as follows:

Oguaa

Oguaa Akoto

Akoto gywir gywirba a

Wogu hontu ano

Eduasa a won ye apemkoe a

Apem enntum hon

Ye Oguaa den na

Oguaa annye wo bi?

[Cape Coast

Cape Coast crabs

Quick and nimble crabs which

Lie close by their holes

The seventy that fought with a thousand

And were not annihilated

What was it that you did to Cape Coast

That Cape Coast did not retaliate?]

This appellation amounted to a cryptic expression of the town's strength, nature, and character. Its inhabitants were quick to seek redress, and when push came to shove, they did not hesitate to retaliate. Thus, there was no hesitation on the part of Cape Coast to meet confrontation with confrontation, aggression with aggression, and defiance with defiance, and that provided a sure recipe for resistance. Moreover, the appellation was said to be powerful enough to make the Cape Coast nation make good their threats.⁵⁸

Thus, this brief statement was a powerful statement of origin, history, and the sacred; its significance was deep and grave. Its recitation threw a challenge. It was a challenge to the individual, in particular, and the nation, in general, to uphold and stand in defense of the beliefs expressed therein. The master divine drummers of Cape Coast asserted that when the appellation was sounded on the drum, its sacred element was invoked. In a typical war situation or resistance to colonial rule, men and women were charged to acquit themselves in the manner that the appellation instructed them.⁵⁹ It is against this background that my dissertation studies the ways in which these ideas were used and

⁵⁸ Odomankoma Kyerema Kwamena Prah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 19 May 2009. The title Odomankoma Kyerema means "the master divine drummer." According to Kwamena Prah, this is the highest honor ever to be conferred on a drummer in the Oguaa State. It has to do with one's dexterity, the number of years playing of the drums, and the ability to use the drums to communicate with the spiritual world. Other collaborators include: Kweku Boste, interview; Kobina Yallow, interview.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

shaped in Cape Coast and the Southern Gold Coast, and how these in turn shaped their political character and nature.⁶⁰ It specifically shows the various ways in the people of Southern Gold Coast resisted colonial rule.

Preparation and Methodology

Before going to the field, I took dissertation seminars taught by Professor David Wiley and benefited from the commitment of the chair of my dissertation committee, Professor Nwando Achebe, as well as the comments and suggestions of the other members.

Together they gave me advice, guidance, and tools with which to fine-tune my project.

While in the field, practical issues and ideas that I had read in a number of works from various methodology literatures facilitated my work.⁶¹ These were complemented by

other oral history techniques, such as the unscripted oral interviews approved by the

Michigan State University Institutional Review Board.

⁶⁰ My proposition in this context is given great credibility and seriousness by Rev. W. T. Balmer's brief reference to the relationship between the people of Cape Coast and Elmina. He does this within the context of showing the superiority and power of the Fanti language and cultural, which spread widely along the coast. He writes, "Even the people of Elmina, who for centuries maintained an attitude of enmity and antagonism to the Fanti, nevertheless adopted their language." See W. T. Balmer, *A History of the Akan Peoples of the Gold Coast* (New York: Greenwood, 1969), 66.

⁶¹ Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965); David P. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); Jan Vansina and Carolyn Keyes Adenaike, *In Pursuit of History: Fieldwork in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996); Lusie White, Stephan F. Meischer, and David W. Cohen, eds., *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Nwando Achebe, "Nwando Achebe—Daughter, Wife, and Guest—A Researcher at Crossroads," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no.3 (2002), 9–31; Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, eds., *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

This dissertation focuses on everyday men and women and their role in the past of Southern Gold Coast, so it falls within the domain of popular history. Thus, I draw heavily on oral sources as well as archival documents. Even though this is not a feminist study, I find feminist methodology as attractive as it is meaningful: It is practical and results oriented. As articulated by Nwando Achebe in her description of her research methods among the Nsukka Igbo, I sought at all times to negotiate meaning. I allowed the people I interviewed to take control of the process. This empowered them to provide me with whatever information they deemed relevant, and, therefore, they actively participated in the creation and interpretation of their own history. This methodological model enabled me to practice history from below. I sought to ensure that whatever notes I took during the interview process and the transcription were read and interpreted back to those who were not literate. This in turn empowered the respondents to correct misunderstood or misinterpreted evidence. Literate participants had the opportunity to read the notes as well as some of the initial writing I did during field research.⁶²

Research Activity and Evaluation of Sources

With funding from the Michigan State University Summer Support Fellowship and other sources, I was able to spend seven months (May–November 2009) in Ghana. At the University of Ghana, Legon, and the University of Cape Coast, I spent two months consulting with faculty and reviewing B.A., M.A., and M. Phil. theses on Cape Coast, Southern Gold Coast, and related issues. Reviewing these theses produced interesting

⁶² Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900 – 1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005), 6.

leads as well as curious bibliographic references. My consultation and discussion with faculty and colleague graduate students yielded significant ideas.

My search for written records took me to the head office of the Public Record and Archives Administration Department in Accra and its regional office in Cape Coast. I spent a month in each of these offices doing extensive searches, which produced crucial files relevant to my project. These include the SCT series, i.e., judicial records of the transactions of the Gold Coast Supreme Court that used to exist in Cape Coast. The series covers SCT 5/1/11 to 40, SCT 5/4/151 to 229, and SCT 5/8/1 to 17, covering February 11, 1864 to November 25, 1940. These include such items as miscellaneous letter books (concessions and confidential), memo books, and civil record books. A search of the card index register and guide heads came up with files on medical and sanitation issues such as infectious diseases and general sanitation. The Harbors and Waterways file had information on the Cape Coast port and other such facilities elsewhere in Southern Gold Coast. The municipalities and townships file had interesting information on the Cape Coast Town Council. And, under the card index and register guide, the “native” affairs section revealed records of disturbances, riots, chiefs and agreement of chiefs with *Asafo* companies and others.

The CSO documents with the series CSO 21/21/16–CSO 21/21/110, covering the period September 25, 1931–34, came up with a wealth of information. These include the report on *Asafo* organizations by Mr. J. C. DeGraft Johnson, riots and disturbances, Cape Coast Native Affairs, the threatened company fight at Cape Coast, the riot at Cape Coast, representations by the *Oguaahin* for an enquiry to be held in connection with the 1932 riot at Cape Coast, and a breach of bond under section 13 (1) of Cap 112 by No. 3

Company. The search through the ADM series ranging from ADM 11/1/586 to ADM 11/1/1763 and ADM 23/1/16 to ADM 23/1/100, covering the period 1898–1929, was very rewarding. Among the issues located in some of these files include SNA (Secretary for Native Affairs) papers and reports, a duplicate letter book for the Cape Coast District, a memo book for the Cape Coast District, a minute paper book and memo book, a motion book for the Cape Coast District, information on the riot at Cape Coast, Case #29/1915, the riot at Cape Coast, Case # 42/1915, Cape Coast Native Affairs, the origin and the power of the *Asafo*, notes on Cape Coast *Asafo* company emblems, Central Province Railway Rates and Treatment of the ports of Cape Coast and Saltpond on the opening of Takoradi Harbor, reports and correspondence on Acting District Commissioner G. E. Skene and his responsibility for Cape Coast Riot 1932, and Native Affairs enquiries from 1916 to 1929.

An intensive two-week search in December, 2009, at the National Archives, Kew Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom, was also fruitful. I was able to go through a great deal of original correspondence located in the CO 96 and CO 267 series. This search uncovered rare materials. These included confidential letters and reports on Cape Coast, the *Asafo*, the Western-educated elite, and some local colonial officers who were investigated because of the riots. CO 343 provided interesting clues on conflict and resistance in Cape Coast. The Registers also helped with references to conflicts in other parts of Southern Gold Coast. CO 1069/34, CO 1069/41, CO 1069/53, CO 1069/68, CO 448/36, CO 700/Gold Coast 39, CO 700/Gold Coast 48, CO 1047, and CO 28/266 turned up photographs of *Asafo* companies and parts of the Cape Coast town, all of which provided ideas about the town's development and expansion.

Nevertheless, archival documents are not without problems. One important category of documents that came up in the Cape Coast archives was written by the Western-educated elite of Cape Coast. The notable ones were those written by J. C. DeGraft, Kwesi Johnston, and John Mensah Sarbah. As noted earlier, these documents provided insights into matters of custom and the nature of the *Asafo*, as well as other aspects of Cape Coast history in particular and that of Southern Gold Coast in general. These were Western-educated members of that institution and were well-placed to record events. However, the documents rarely went into significant depth on the conflicts among the *Asafo* companies. Many, if not all, were written in response to the colonial government's hostile attitude towards the institution. Hence, they tended to be overtly apologetic. Were the *Asafo* what these Western-educated scholars portrayed them to be? Did they have no faults or excesses? These are some of the critical questions that are bound to come up with the use of these documents.

Contrary to the common suspicion about the understanding and attitude of colonial officers towards African customs, institutions, beliefs, and practices, it was gratifying to know that at least some understood and revered the system. For instance, letters and comments from British colonial commissioners such as Captain Lynch and James Crowther reflected the understanding of fair-minded and hardworking officers who lived and worked in Cape Coast. They, at least, were there long enough to be able to speak Fanti, know the culture, and were able to appreciate the *Asafo* institution.⁶³ Of course, they were also critical of it when its conduct called for censure. On the other hand, there were officers of the colonial administration who consistently saw nothing

⁶³ Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law*, ii.

good in the *Asafo*.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it is sometimes helpful to consider the common attitude of colonial officers towards African institutions and practices.

Most of the Gold Coast newspapers, which were for a considerable period published in Cape Coast, also constituted another source of information and material for this work. Reports, comments, articles, and editorials threw light on Gold Coast politics in general and Cape Coast in particular. It is important to point out that these newspapers to a large extent represented the views of the Western-educated elite. As a result, the newspapers provided insight into their political aims and attitudes in their dealing with the colonial administration, particularly with respect to resistance, especially beginning with the creation of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society in 1897. The presence of bias in the patrons of these newspapers raises questions as to the extent to which their contents can be accepted as objective historical sources. Among those newspapers systematically consulted were the *Gold Coast Times*,⁶⁵ *Gold Coast Aborigines*,⁶⁶ *Gold Coast Leader*,⁶⁷ *Gold Coast Methodist Times*,⁶⁸ *West African Herald*,⁶⁹ *Christian Messenger and Examiner*,⁷⁰ and *Western Echo*.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Some of these included officers like Governor Maxwell, W. C. Wellman, Secretary for Native Affairs, A. Duncan-Johnstone, and H. A. Blair.

⁶⁵ *The Gold Coast Times* was edited by James Hutton Brew. It was established in 1874.

⁶⁶ The *Gold Coast Aborigines* was established by the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society in 1897. It was edited by Attoh Ahuma and Reverend Egyir Asaam.

⁶⁷ The *Gold Coast Leader* was published from 1902 to 1934. It was edited by J. E. Casely Hayford, Herbert Brown and Dr. Savage.

⁶⁸ The *Gold Coast Methodist Times* was founded by Rev. S. R. B. Solomon.

The *Legislative Council Debates*⁷² collection made interesting reading. They gave vivid accounts of proceedings in the Council as members pressed their points for and against issues on the floor of the house. Events in Cape Coast were given prime attention and this helped provide a balanced perspective. Census Reports, the British Parliamentary Papers, and the *Gold Coast Gazette* (and its Trade Supplements) were also consulted concerning trade in Cape Coast and other parts of coastal Southern Gold Coast.

My quest to contribute to popular history obliged me to balance the written documentation with the vast oral tradition. *Ye tuwa tuwa adwen ansa ya bo po* is an Akan-Twi proverb that emphasizes the wisdom in piecing pieces of thoughts in order to arrive at an acceptable and respectable conclusion. Consequently, I interviewed men and women of the *Asafo* in Cape Coast for their perspective on the history of Cape Coast, the *Asafo* system, and the king list of the town. I recorded oral tradition about the origins of the Fanti, Cape Coast, and the *Asafo*. These constitute rich historical sources that were used to complement written documentation. The interviews also focused on indigenous perspectives on conflict, the place of men and women in the *Asafo*, the social institutions of Cape Coast (in particular, the *Asafo* and the *Ebusua* systems and other social structures among the Akan), and resistance to colonial rule in Cape Coast. I spent two months in the fishing community of Cape Coast interviewing men and women. As already indicated,

⁶⁹ The *West African Herald* was edited by Charles and Edmund Bannerman.

⁷⁰ The *Christian Messenger and Examiner* was edited by J. B. Freeman and the Reverend H. Wharton.

⁷¹ The *Western Echo* was established in 1874 and was edited by J. H. Hutton Brew. He was assisted by his nephew J. E. Casely Hayford.

⁷² *Gold Coast Legislative Council Debates* series from 1925 to 1933.

the *Asafo* institution thrived on conflict and resistance. The people who give the *Asafo* institution majority of its membership, and its vitality and spirit, were the men and women of the fishing community. As a littoral town, one of the mainstays of its economy is fishing. My discussions here focused on conflict and resistance as an occupationally and environmentally generated phenomenon and how these affected *Asafo* dynamics in their dealing with the colonial government.

Oral evidence has much to offer, particularly when one locates well-informed and enthusiastic collaborators who possess good memories and fair judgment. My field work revealed, however, that such people were few and far between. Some people were unwilling to talk for personal reasons. This was made worse by my having to administer the documentation as part of the Michigan State University IRB human subject research requirement. Those who were willing to do the paperwork and append their signatures, thumbprints, or initials acquiesced only after many explanations and assurances that they were not signing their lives away. Some of the most earnest and enthusiastic informants had, however, scanty information and knowledge to offer so far as specific events were concerned. Chronology was also a difficult thing for most of them: some managed it by referencing dates or years with some common events in the community or their families. It is also pertinent to point out that an element of bias cannot be ruled out. Many of my collaborators were important office holders in *Asafo* companies.⁷³ Their commitment and attachment to the traditional area and its institutions made them less than candid in their

⁷³ These include Supi J. A. Hayfron of the Bentsir company; Supi Kojo Nunoo, Anafo company; Supi Ebo Johnson, Ntsin company; Supi Insaideo, Nkum company; Supi Kobinah Minnah, Akrampa company; Safohen Kweku Botse, Abrofonkoa company and Supi Yallow of the Amanfur company. Nana Amba Ayiaba, Queen Mother of the Oguaa Traditional Area. These were the most important office holders.

responses to my follow-up questions, remarks, or comments.⁷⁴ When these tended to be critical of Cape Coast in general, or their respective *Asafo* in particular, they equivocated in their responses. This notwithstanding, the time spent with them was helpful.

Situating Myself in My Work

Nwando Achebe has written about her relative insider/outsider status in her community of research.⁷⁵ And this informs my view here. In the field, I, too, exploited my “insider” and “outsider” status in Cape Coast to facilitate my interviews. I am a Fanti, because like all other Akan, I trace my lineage and identity through my mother’s family. My mother was from Cape Coast, so I am considered a Cape Coast indigene. This makes me an “insider.” I frequently referred to this status in my discussions with collaborators on the *Ebusua* system. This made them open up to me because I was seen as one of them. They discussed issues that under normal circumstances they might not want to tell strangers or outsiders. These included issues that were seen as *Ebusua* secrets, shame, or stigma. Because my father was not from Cape Coast, I was seen as an “outsider” to the *Asafo* institution. This was because membership of the *Asafo* was determined along fathers’ line. I therefore did not belong to any of the Cape Coast *Asafo*. Collaborators on the *Asafo* dealt with me as such. However, when I wanted to know some of the deeper issues, I appealed to them as one whose mother was from Cape Coast, trying to use my partial “insider” status. It worked in some cases, and not in others. In discussions on chiefs,

⁷⁴ For instance both Supi Kobinah Minnah and Nana Amba Ayiaba are important members of the Oguaa Fetu Afehye Planning Committee.

⁷⁵ Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings*, 4- 5.

fishermen, the Western-educated elite, and their resistance to colonialism, I appealed to them as an insider.

Although my outsider status can help me, for instance, to write about the *Asafo* with some kind of detachment, my being an “insider” also has its own problems. I am invariably able to do a culture-specific analysis of the information or evidence. I am a native speaker of Akan (Twi and Fanti) and did not need the services of an interpreter. I did all the transcriptions myself. In addition, knowing Cape Coast, Accra, Sekondi, and other places in Southern Ghana (formerly Southern Gold Coast), I am able to do a critique of the published works on their lived colonial experience. However, my closeness and sensitivity to the culture might restrict my ability to do an objective discussion of certain unpleasant issues. However, this might not be so much of an issue, for as Nwando Achebe observed, “selectivity is not a problem that is unique only for so-called insiders. All researchers play an editorial role, which involves some degree of data selection.”⁷⁶

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 looks at the beginnings of Cape Coast as a settlement, its expansion, and its contact with the agency from beyond the Atlantic that was to introduce colonialism. It discusses the various theories of origin and beginnings of the town up to 1874. Thus, this chapter establishes the social, economic, and political milieu within which resistance to colonial rule unfolded. This discussion takes cognizance of the developing tension occasioned by the expanding town, and the struggle for control between the emerging force, i.e., colonialism, and the established indigenous order.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 5.

Chapter 2 is an analysis of the *Asafo* vis-à-vis the *Ebusua* systems of the Fanti of Cape Coast as major aspects of their maritime culture. This will not only help with the understanding of the social organization, issues of identity, inheritance, rights, and responsibility of the Fanti of Cape Coast, but will also provide an appreciation of the nature of the *Asafo* and its propensity to conflict. Most of these elements would be drawn into the general resistance to colonial rule.

Chapter 3 looks at the base of the *Asafo* membership and the predominant occupation in which they are involved—fishing. It takes serious account of what they say about themselves, their occupation, attitudes, and the environment in which they live. The relevance of accounts of the oral traditions and interviews to this section cannot be overemphasized. The chapter contends that these must to be brought to bear on the narrative if the *Asafo* propensity for resistance, which helped to shape major historical occurrences in Southern Gold Coast, is to be understood. There is also an analysis of the causes of *Asafo* group conflict between 1860 and 1909 with an emphasis on their “traditional” nature. The repetitive nature of the causes is highlighted. Most of these conflicts, as will be seen, were later to be drawn into the general resistance against colonial rule. Consequently, the *Asafo* use of alcohol, the role of alcohol in fights, provocative drum messages, taunting songs, display of offensive flags, insults, and the role of women are analyzed. All of these give us an idea of indigenous modes of resistance most of which became useful in their resistance to colonial rule. Chapter 3 focuses on two *Asafo* companies, *Bentsir* and *Ntsin*, which become the principal belligerents of the 1932 conflict that eventually involved all the other *Asafo* groups in the resistance to colonial rule.

Chapter 4 is devoted to what is aptly described as the mother of all the resistance to colonial rule in which Cape Coast was involved. The chapter considers *Omanhin* Aggery's efforts to resist the British in their bid to entrench their growing power as one of the events that made the latter wary of the town. It was the event that set the tone for the uneasy relations among Cape Coast, the colonial administration, and its local officers. The chapter argues that *Omanhin* Aggery's confrontation was the culmination of the growing tension between the indigenous political institutions and the encroaching colonial forces in the Gold Coast. This chapter among other things also shows how he acted on his, collaborated with the Western-educated elite in writing official letters of protest.

Chapter 5 is about colonial government's attempt to implement the Crown Lands Bill, which sought, among other things, the possession of all "waste lands," particularly between 1894 and 1897. The focus is on the resistance of the people of Cape Coast, in which the Aborigines' Rights Protect Society (ARPS) played a leading role on behalf of Southern Gold Coast. The chapter holds this up as yet another precedent to the build-up of tension between the people of Cape Coast and the colonial establishment. There is also a discussion of the reluctance of some colonial officers to enforce the policy. This allows for an examination of the alarums and ramblings within a colonial administration that pushed through its policies against a background of resistance on the ground. Chapter 5 also gives yet another example of collaboration between the Western-educated elite and the people of coastal Southern Gold Coast in resisting the colonial government. In this instance they wrote official letters protests, used newspaper articles and editorials,

demonstrations, and sent delegations to the colonial government in their effort to resist the colonial government's attempt to take over "waste lands."

Chapter 6 examines the political developments in Southern Gold Coast in general and that of Cape Coast in particular prior to the 1932 clash. The elections were meant to constitute the Municipal Membership of the new Gold Coast Legislative Council. In this chapter, I focus on the complications emanating from colonial policies such as indirect rule, the Native Administrative Measure, and the Order-in-Council 1925, all of which, to varying degrees, formed the underlying cause of the 1932 conflict, which was used by some of the people to resist the colonial government. The chapter also focuses on the actual course of events in the conflict, placing particular emphasis on the occurrences that are described as the factors that triggered the clash. The powerlessness of the local colonial officers in the face of mounting pressure and tension resulting in their reluctance, indecision, and inaction is emphasized as a factor that complicated the conflict. This was exploited by the *Asafo* groups in their resistance to colonial rule. Here we see yet another instance of the collaboration between indigenous political institutions and the Western-educated elite, albeit amidst their own difficulties and challenges. Chapter 6 also highlights other modes of resistance such as the writing of official letters of protest, demonstrations, and use of the newspapers.

The conclusion is an analysis of the various arguments and findings, reemphasizing the argument that coastal Southern Gold Coast chiefs and people were willing and able to resist the colonial government. They also collaborated with the Western-educated elite in this resistance, drawing on their culture, and taking advantage of the confusion and inaction of colonial officers. In most cases, they did this openly

through demonstrations, used newspaper articles and editorials, delegations, and official letters of protest.

Conclusion

My dissertation does old things in new ways and makes a significant contribution to history of the region. I have sought to write about the Cape Coast people of Southern Gold Coast, examining their lived experience, mainly during colonial period, and the modes of resistance they fashioned to either stop or frustrate the colonial government in its bid to control their lives. In the process, the maritime culture of Southern Gold Coast is highlighted, as well as how they and their ancestors conceptualized resistance to the colonial world in which they lived. I have sought, where possible, to connect the Southern Gold Coast experience to that of others in Africa. This is a critical need, for as David Henige observes, little occurs anywhere that has no analog elsewhere.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ David Henige, "Packaging Scholarship," in *Africanizing Knowledge: African Studies across the Disciplines*, eds. Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions, 2002), 415.

Chapter 1

The Setting: Settlement and Nascent Resistance

The people of Cape Coast like most of their coastal neighbors were of Akan origin. The Akan constituted the largest nation in the Gold Coast.¹ They were believed to have spread to their present locations from the confluence of the Pra and Ofin rivers long before the fifteenth century when the Europeans started arriving at the Gold Coast.² The actual date of settlement in Cape Coast is hard to determine, but there are many traditions of origin. Three traditions are most common: the Fetu hunter tradition, the Kwamina Nimfa claim, and the tradition that traces origins from Yabiw near Sima (or Shama).³ The second and third traditions are not as popular as the first one, which also has two different variants. These contentious traditions notwithstanding, the credibility of the Fetu-Cape Coast connection remains indisputable. A critical study of origin stories shows a common reference to the Fetu kingdom as the place from which the original settlers of

¹ Albert Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Educational Publishers, 2000), 1. He has estimated that the Akan constituted about 45 percent of the entire population of the Gold Coast. In all there are eleven groups these include the: Ashanti, Fanti, Ahanta, Guan, Bono Ahafo, Akyim, Akwamu, Kwahu, Akwapim, Sefwi and Nzima.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ For a detailed account of these traditions see J. E. Tachie Mensah, "A History of Cape Coast" (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1972), 2 - 23; J. Tetteh-Addy, "The History of Cape Coast: From the Earliest Times to the Nineteenth Century" (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1975), 6 - 14; Faustina D. Barnes, "The Fetu Afahye Festival of the People of Oguaa State" (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1971), 1 - 20; A. K. E. Quansah, "The History of Cape Coast before the Transfer of the Capital to Accra" (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1980), 10 - 15; and Benjamin Adu-Poku, "History and Constitution of the Oguaa State" (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1979), 6 - 18.

Cape Coast came.⁴ For instance, before the arrival of the Portuguese (the first Europeans to sail the Atlantic to West Africa, and therefore the first to get to the land that was to be called Gold Coast), Cape Coast was a fishing village that belonged to Fetu.⁵ There is also evidence that when the Europeans began to trade in the town, they recognized the king of Fetu's authority over Cape Coast. For instance, in May 1674, the king of Fetu was given some pieces of cloth as payment for three ships that landed at Cape Coast. At times the king allowed several months to elapse before collecting ground rent in order to allow a large sum of money to build up.⁶

⁴ Fetu Kingdom was located in the interior, in the northern reaches of Cape Coast. Formerly a great kingdom, it declined over the years and is now one of the thirty-six satellite towns and villages under the jurisdiction of Cape Coast.

⁵ K. Arhin, *The Cape Coast and Elmina Handbook: Past, Present and Future* (Legon, Ghana: IAS, 1995), 1.

⁶ K. Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 65. Kwame Ninson also contributes to this argument and adds to our understanding of the relationship between Fetu and Cape Coast. For instance, he writes that the king of the State of Fetu asserted political control over the Cape Coast settlement simply because it happened to be in his territory. He also points out that the exact power of the ancestral State of Fetu is unknown. The reference to Fetu as an ancestral state shows that it was the place of origin of Cape Coast. Ninson asserts, however, that considering the fact that it was within the present geographical extent of Oguaa Traditional area (i.e., Cape Coast and its rural affiliates), it would appear that Fetu was nothing more than a city state whose rise to power and eminence was probably based on trade rather than military prowess. He points out that this is supported by Blankson's observation that Cape Coast came to be regarded as the commercial capital whereas Fetu city was the political capital of the state. Ninson adds that it could be argued that Fetu's eventual decline was largely due to its military weakness; while the eventual succession of Cape Coast as the dominant economic entity in the region, was based on the wealth and power derived from the Afro-European trade. Ninson argues that the reported migration of the king of Fetu to Cape Coast could be more than a symbolic admission of the Fetu kingdom's loss of power and eminence to Cape Coast. None of these traditions referred to any European factor as having occasioned the beginnings of Oguaa. Historians such as W. F. Ward have stated that the settlement of the coastal towns in the Gold Coast

W. T. Balmer's assertion concerning the coming of the Akan Fanti to the coast lends additional credence to the Fetu beginnings of Cape Coast.⁷ When the Fanti reached the coast they found remnants of weaker peoples, the Asebu and the Etsii, who were part of a larger group known in the Gold Coast today as the Guan. At Oguaa they met the Etsii, who were said to have originally come from Fetu (or Effutu) in the interior.⁸ This assertion, in most cases, is supported by oral tradition and popular opinion in Cape Coast, which also gives credence to the view that the original people of Cape Coast were a

occurred at the same time as the coming of the Europeans. This argument, however, has been shown to be untenable by Ghanaian historians such as Daaku. Certainly, the coming of the Europeans aided the growth and expansion of most of the coastal towns, but had nothing to do with the creation of the settlements. These were created as a result of local or internal, political, social, and economic factors operating separately or together in varying degrees. For a detailed discussion of the issues see the following: Kwame A. Ninson, *Politics, Local Administration, and Community Development in Ghana, 1951–1966: A Case Study of Community Power and its Impact on Socio-Economic Development at Cape Coast* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1977), 31. W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967), 1. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast*, 20.

⁷ W. T. Balmer, *History of the Akan Peoples* (New York: Greenwood, 1969), 65.

⁸ Ibid. Eva Meyerowitz however tells a different story. Her work acknowledges the various groups which Balmer discusses; but she sees them as entirely different groups which did interact with each other over time as and when they met. That is, the Asebu, Fanti, Effutu (or Afutu), Etsii, and the Guan. These are different peoples who shared a history of meeting and interaction in the course of history. Meyerowitz, however, also confirms the popular assertion that the people of Cape Coast are a mixture of Etsii and Fanti, and also the fact that the Etsii were a weaker people. She writes, "The Etsii who were not warriors, were conquered in the course of centuries by Afutu, Asebu and Fanti on the coast, and when they moved into the forest region, largely by Fanti. Those who are now under the rule of the Fanti are afraid to call themselves Etsii." See E. Meyerowitz, *The Early History of the Akan States of Ghana* (London: Red Candle Press, 1970), 72.

mixed group of Etsii and Fanti, with the latter eventually establishing political control over the former by reason of their numbers and a relatively superior way of life.⁹

In terms of the European presence in Cape Coast, the Portuguese were the first to arrive.¹⁰ In time, their power waned and was challenged by the Dutch, the French, the English, and the Danish. When the dust of challenge and competition settled, it was the English who established exclusive trading rights in Cape Coast.¹¹ Their trade in this town initially consisted of the exchange of linen cloth, small basins, brass pans, rum, assorted spirits, ammunition, and guns for gold, corn, fish, and other provisions. J. J. Crooks asserts that most of the guns were old: many of them were totally unserviceable and the remainder fit for little more than firing salutes.¹² Before the commerce with Europeans began, there was trade between the Fetu kingdom and the town of Oguaa. Traders from the former carried corn, oil, and palm wine to the latter in exchange for fish and salt.¹³ The arrival of Europeans not only increased the volume of trade, but also diversified it.

⁹ Kobinah Minnah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009; Nana Amba Ayiaba, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009; Ebo Johnson, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June, 2009; Kobina Yallow, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana. Regarding some aspects of the superiority of Fanti culture, it was believed that they (the Fanti) at the time, had developed or acquired the dignity of hair grooming, which the Etsii had no idea about.

¹⁰ Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast*, 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹² J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements: From 1750 to 1974* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 156.

Thus, Cape Coast, like all other coastal communities in the Gold Coast, was settled long before the coming of the Europeans. It was the sighting of these towns and villages that attracted European trading ships. Indeed, it was the existence of a complex trading infrastructure already established by the Fanti that first attracted the English to that part of the coast.¹⁴ Starting as a tiny fishing village, the number of houses in the settlement was said to have increased to over twenty by the sixteenth century.¹⁵ By the middle of the seventeenth century, the number of houses had increased to about 500.¹⁶ This was as a result of the fact that Cape Coast played the middleman role in the trade between Europeans and the interior regions of the Gold Coast.¹⁷ The introduction of new articles of trade and the resulting diversification of trade caused an influx of people from the immediate vicinity of Cape Coast and beyond. Moreover, with the increase of European activity, especially that of the English, starting in the mid-seventeenth century, Cape Coast gradually became the most beautiful coastal town.¹⁸ It grew in importance with its position as a market that linked European trade with that of traders from the

¹³ W. Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea: Divided into the Gold, the Slave and the Ivory Coasts* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 48.

¹⁴ Mary McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast: The Fante States, 1807–1874* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), ix.

¹⁵ W. W. Claridge, *History of Gold Coast and Ashanti* (London: Frank Cass, 1964), 65.

¹⁶ Arhin, *Cape Coast and Elmina Handbook*, 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ A. D. C. Hyland, “Architectural History of Cape Coast,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16, no. 2 (1995): 164.

interior, the forest, the savanna, and beyond to the Niger and the Sahel.¹⁹ For this they incurred the displeasure of their interior neighbors.

The relationship between coastal Akan communities and interior Akan communities in Southern Gold Coast had its own challenges on the economic and political front. For instance, most of the wars between the Ashanti in the interior and the Fanti on the coast had to do with trade.²⁰ The Fanti used their proximity to Europeans on the coast to become great middlemen. They formed a buffer between Europeans and the interior Southern Gold Coast peoples in the interior. To this end the Fanti bought European goods and sold them in the interior and vice versa.²¹ As these goods became expensive, the interior Akan, particularly the Ashanti, demanded direct access to European traders on the coast.²² This started most of the wars between the Fanti and Ashanti. According to Albert Adu Boahen, it was partly as a result of the Ashanti desire to have direct access to the trade on the coast that led to the growth and expansion of that kingdom.²³ Politically, the Fanti also supported states such as Denkyira and Assin which broke away from the Ashanti kingdom. And this was another reason that set the Ashanti against the Fanti. Adu Boahen has indicated that before the nineteenth century the Fanti

¹⁹ Arhin, *Cape Coast and Elmina Handbook*, 2.

²⁰ Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change*, 17.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 18.

²³ Ibid.

and Ashanti fought in 1726, 1765 and 1777.²⁴ In 1807, the Ashanti and Fanti fought the first of four wars. The Ashanti also invaded Akyim Abuakwa, Akuapim, Cape Coast and Accra in the nineteenth century.²⁵

From 1482 to the late eighteenth century, Europeans erected trade posts, lodges, and forts, as strongholds for their commercial and residential purposes.²⁶ Most of these were further developed into slave trading castles. At Cape Coast in 1630, the Dutch sought the use of a rocky promontory at the beach on which the Portuguese had started a building project that would later be owned by the English.²⁷ Mostly referred to in historical records as the Cape Coast Castle, it was described as the most beautiful building on the coast.²⁸ It had well-built, fine, and well-furnished rooms. As part of its security arrangements during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, the castle had high circular towers and high, thick walls, which added to its imposing look. It was reinforced with heavy cannon which faced the Atlantic Ocean.²⁹ Obviously, the armaments were intended to ward off enemy European maritime attacks as well as discourage unwanted intrusions from competing traders. There were two other forts, Victoria and William,

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast*, xviii. See also James Anquandah, *Castles and Forts of Ghana* (Atlante: Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, 1999), 15; Albert Van Dantzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana* (Accra: Sedco Publishers, 1980), 20.

²⁷ Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast*, 1.

²⁸ Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast*, 7.

²⁹ Ibid.

erected on higher ground, which offered a commanding view of the ocean, the town, and the interior approaches towards it. The forts were garrisoned and had round towers with cannons. William Bosman, who provides detailed descriptions of these forts and the castle, surmises that they were intended to awe the inhabitants of the town as well as defend them from their interior neighbors.³⁰

The fortifications in Cape Coast eventually came to acquire references in local parlance, which were based on their unusual sizes as well as the political system that was run in them. *Aban* (or *ban*) in Fanti means “wall.” Yet the walls of these structures were no ordinary ones. They were huge, thick, and high. Thus, the use of the word *Aban* for the castle is a metaphor for its size and impregnable nature. Moreover, *Aban* has another meaning. It is a metonymy for the political system that was eventually run in the castle.³¹ The system sought to regulate daily lives of the coastal communities in many ways, adapting to which required considerable effort on their part. This became uncomfortable

³⁰ Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, 14. Bosman was a chief factor for the Dutch at the Castle of St. George d’Elmina. Of the twenty-one to thirty-two European forts and castles that were erected in the Gold Coast, fifteen still stand in Ghana today. These include the Christianborg Castle (Accra), Fort Good Hope (Senya Bereku), Fort Patience (Apam), Fort Amsterdam (Kromantse and Abandze), Fort William (Anomabu), Cape Coast Castle (Cape Coast), St. Jorge (George) Castle (Elmina), Fort St. Sebastian (Shama), Fort Orange (Sekondi), Fort Batesstein (Butre), Fort Metal Cross (Discove), Gross Friedrichsburg (Princesstown), Fort St. Anthony (Axim), and Fort Appolonia (Beyin). The list of forts and castles in this context are in the order of the towns in which they are found if one travels along the coast from Accra in the west to Beyin in the east. See Anquandah, *Castles and Forts of Ghana*, 17.

³¹ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 1 June 2009; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009; J. A. Hayfron, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009.

for the townspeople, and was viewed as evidence of a cultural project of control.³² The nature and depth of control that the system in the castle exhibited was hegemonic. It exploited the coercive arm of government in order to ensure law and order, which with time became the idea of the nature of government in Cape Coast before and during colonial rule.³³

The initial relationship between the people of Cape Coast and the English (as well as other Europeans) was governed simply by commercial imperatives. The Europeans paid rent on their forts and depended on the goodwill of the hosts for peaceful trade.³⁴ They often cooperated with the people of Cape Coast to ward off invaders, again, for the purpose of sustaining trade. Margaret Priestley's work on the initial relationship between Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast is revealing. Because of commercial imperatives, the relationship was marked by an appreciable degree of European dependence on the Africans. The Europeans relied on the local people for a wide range of services, such as those of canoe men, laborers, and domestic servants, as well as for necessities such as food, water, and fuel wood.³⁵ And the degree of European commercial competition offered a strong bargaining power to the local traders, which

³² Nicholas B. Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 3.

³³ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

³⁴ Margaret Priestley, *West African Trade and Coast Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 7.

³⁵ Ibid.

enabled them to play one European rival off against the other; just as the Europeans exploited local political divisions to their advantage. In view of the considerations imposed by the exigencies of trade on the coast, the use of force, initially, had little application.³⁶

By the end eighteenth century, Cape Coast had become one of the few termini of the great trade that brought the wealth of the Gold Coast interior to the coast.³⁷ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was described as a prosperous town. Cape Coast became the headquarters of English possessions on the Gold Coast. As the main point of call, and in the absence of harbors, sailing ships anchored some safe distance at sea, while canoes battled their way through breakers to reach them.³⁸ This created a lucrative venture for fishermen as well as for people who had expertise in conveying exports and imports to and from waiting ships. Nor was that all: In the absence of paved roads and vehicular transport, goods had to be carried on the head over narrow bush paths for long distances.³⁹ This provided financial rewards for the people of Cape Coast and their neighbors. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the introduction of legitimate trade led to commercial farming in the interior of the Gold Coast, Cape Coast

³⁶ Ibid., 8.

³⁷ K. B. Dickson, *Historical Geography of Ghana* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 65.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 67.

also benefited.⁴⁰ Many of these exports were carried through Cape Coast.⁴¹ The boom in the cocoa industry in the first two decades of the twentieth century also intensified activities in the ports. Some of the imports into the Gold Coast were also carried through the Cape Coast port within the same period.⁴² It was the fourth principal port and about 5 percent of Gold Coast imports and exports were carried through it in the 1920s.⁴³

People from the neighboring coastal towns and the interior came to seek employment, mainly as carriers. The 1901 population census documented a large number of people “in a district like Cape Coast where so many carriers are employed.”⁴⁴ Further

⁴⁰ “Legitimate trade” was the term used to describe the trade in palm oil, rubber, cocoa, palm kernel, animal skins, kola nuts, and other agricultural produce which came into vogue after the abolition of the slave trade.

⁴¹ There were nine main port towns in the Gold Coast: Half Assini, Axim, Sekondi, Cape Coast, Saltpond, Winneba, Accra, and Ada and Keta. The exports carried through Cape Coast included gold dust, ivory, dye woods, palm oil, ground nuts, kola nuts, skins, palm kernel, rubber, and cocoa: See Gold Coast Gazette, Trade Supplement, 1922, 1923, 1924, and 1928, 102 – 129.

⁴² These imports included agricultural and gardening implements, ale, beer and porter, apparels and boots, shoes, caps, and hats, bags, sacks, beads, beef and pork, brass and copperware, bread and biscuits, building materials, cement and lime, enamelware, flour; firearms (flintlock guns and ammunition), furniture, glassware, hardware, and cutlery. There were also machinery, mineral and aerated waters, oils, kerosene and other lubricating oils, perfumery, provisions, rice, silk goods, spirits, tobacco, cigarettes, cigars, vehicles (motor cars and lorry parts), and wines. See Gold Coast Gazette, Trade Supplement, 1922, 1923, 1924, and 1928, 102 – 129. Other items imported into the Cape Coast port included lead, pipes, rum, iron and copper bars, soap, tallow, perfumery, and Manchester goods.

⁴³ Trade Statistics—Principal articles exported from/imported into each port of the Gold Coast Colony, 1922, 1923, 1924, and 1928. Gold Coast Gazette, Trade Supplement 1922–1928, 112.

⁴⁴ Gold Coast 1901 Census Report, 6.

evidence of trade in Cape Coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be seen in the presence of commercial firms such as Royal African Company, F and A Swanzy, and the Elder Dempster Shipping Lines, all of which did business in the town.⁴⁵ This period in the development of Cape Coast, as it became one of the trading posts on the West African coast, has been described as the phase of “mercantile capitalism.”⁴⁶ In addition to the European commercial presence, there were also government departments and local commercial firms. Trade increasingly became the main occupation of the people of Cape Coast. For instance, the 1891 Census Report indicated that of the acquired occupations of the people, trading was the predominant element. Cape Coast the oldest civilized town, led the list with the highest percentage of people involved in trade: 30.29 percent, followed by Accra with 24.04 percent.⁴⁷

As a result of this trade and the introduction of Western education,⁴⁸ a new element of the coastal community began to emerge, which can be referred to as the bearers of commercial and intellectual power. They formed a growing alternative to the indigenous political elite, if not necessarily an opposition as occurred elsewhere in Southern Gold Coast. The commercial elite were initially small indigenous traders who

⁴⁵ Henry Swanzy, “A Trading Family in the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast,” *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 2, no. 2 (1965): 87.

⁴⁶ J. Hinderink, and J. Sterkenburg, *Anatomy of an African Town: A Socio-Economic Study of Cape Coast, Ghana* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: State University of Utrecht, 1975), 16.

⁴⁷ Gold Coast 1891 Census Report, 13.

⁴⁸ Priestley, *West African Trade*, 15. This is discussed fully later in this chapter.

seized the new opportunities proffered by trade with Europeans. They were the men and women who possessed the capacity and the resources requisite for obtaining European credit.⁴⁹ Some of these gained great political advancement, supported by their connections with European traders. Priestly refers to this phenomenon as the “politico-economic process.”⁵⁰ *Obrempong* Kojo is a good example of this process.⁵¹ As a stepson of the king of the inland kingdom of Effutu, he rose in importance by becoming an influential interpreter at the English Castle in Cape Coast. He supported British trade in Cape Coast against that of the French.⁵² In this capacity, *Obrempong* Kojo was quick to grasp personal opportunities for trade. His accumulation of immense wealth is expressed in the title *Obrempong* (a man of great and evident substance). Apparently, this is what made him legendary in the traditions of the town. His rise to political significance culminated in his elevation to *Caboceer* (Captain of Cape Coast).⁵³ There were local women who also became influential in European trade. Most of them exploited kinship connections to benefit from the commercial interests of their European partners. And some of them were actual business assets. They were adept at trading as well as keeping

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁵¹ *Obrempong* was an indigenous title given to men of great and evident wealth. These in many cases translated into political power as well. People of this description were well-known in their societies because of their economic and political standing. Literally, *Obrempong* means the greatest among the rich and famous.

⁵² Priestley, *West African Trade*, 16.

⁵³ Ibid., 13–16. See also E. J. P. Brown, *Gold Coast and Ashanti Reader* (London: Frank Cass, 1929), 122.

accounts. For instance, these women were entrusted with all the property of their partners, and were sometimes left in charge for months, while their merchant partners visited England.⁵⁴

Western Education and Official Resistance

It was the indigenous commercial elite who encouraged their children to get a Western education and all the benefits that came with it.⁵⁵ This became even more imperative after the international economic depression of 1858–1860 hit the palm oil trade, a major component of the coastal commerce. The situation was worsened by the increasing difficulty of obtaining credit from British exporters.⁵⁶ Western education, however, was not the preserve of only children of the local trade elite. Most, if not all, of the European traders resident in Cape Coast also provided that kind of education for their children from unions and cohabitation with local women.

The introduction of Western education in Cape Coast was to lay the foundation for that of the entire Gold Coast.⁵⁷ It started as an incidental part of the missionary

⁵⁴ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Journal of an African Cruiser* (New York: Wiley and Putman, 1845), 141.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Ninson, *Politics, Local Administration*, 31; Priestley, *West African Trade*, 151–65; David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850–1928* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 6; H. J. Bevin, “The Gold Coast Economy in about 1800,” *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 2, no. 2 (1956): 68.; G. E. Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 116.

⁵⁷ F. L. Bartels, “Philip Quaque, 1741–1814,” *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 1, no. 5 (1955): 153.; F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 21.

efforts. For converts to be effective Christians, literacy became imperative. Thus, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) sent Philip Quaque, a Cape Coast indigene, to England to be educated as a missionary to work in his country and among his people.⁵⁸ He was sent in the company of two others who died abroad. Quaque returned as the first non-European (at least since the Reformation) to receive ordination in the Anglican establishment in the Gold Coast.⁵⁹ He laid the foundation for formal education in Cape Coast. Philip Quaque's outstanding contribution was in the reestablishment of the Castle School, which collapsed after it had been started in 1750 by Rev. Thomas Thompson, the first resident English minister in Cape Coast.⁶⁰ After many initial difficulties, Quaque's sacrifices bore fruit. The number of schools increased in the nineteenth century with the commencement of missionary work by the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1835.⁶¹ Their commitment to educational work resulted in the establishment of the Wesleyan Collegiate School in 1876.⁶²

The first generation of the beneficiaries of Western education in Cape Coast, though insignificant in terms of numbers, was impressive in its achievement and influence. The most outstanding of this group was John Mensah Sarbah. He became the

⁵⁸ Bartels, "Philip Quaque," 153.

⁵⁹ Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 22.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 24.

⁶² Ibid., 37.

first trained lawyer in Cape Coast, and all of the Gold Coast in 1887.⁶³ This set the pace for the next generation of Western-educated individuals. For instance, Joseph E. Casley Hayford and W. E. G. Sekyi (otherwise referred to as Kobina Sekyi) both became lawyers. The growing interest in legal studies opened a new avenue for social mobility, partly because of the lack of restrictions. The only relevant conditions were one's aptitude and ability to pay for the education.⁶⁴ Most of these, like Mensah Sarbah, were called to the English bar because the growing Western education tradition in the Gold Coast was not advanced enough for professional development.⁶⁵ With their growing numbers and legal knowledge these Western-educated Africans were well placed to raise questions and engage violations common agreement on the part of colonial government. This capacity enhanced the degree of their resistance to colonial rule. Legal training honed their critical analysis of documents, gazettes, and correspondences. Furthermore, their training, social standing, and reputation afforded them ample confidence in all those circumstances. Against this background, the encroaching British presence in Cape Coast was bound to be resisted.

The Western-educated elite of Cape Coast also had a larger scheme for their society. This had to do with education as a purveyor of indigenous culture.⁶⁶ Even though part of their education took place outside the Gold Coast (i.e., mostly in England),

⁶³ Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change*, 141.

⁶⁴ Ninson, *Politics, Local Administration*, 31.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

they came to realize that they had to take the lead in devising a system of education that would suit their society's specific needs.⁶⁷ They believed that education had great importance for cultural transmission; thus an indiscriminate adoption of a foreign educational system would do a great disservice to their culture.⁶⁸ In 1902, John Mensah Sarbah and other members of the Western-educated elite of Cape Coast founded the Mfantasi National Educational Fund for the purpose of establishing secondary schools, where both liberal arts and technical subjects would be studied.⁶⁹ Indigenous studies would also be important aspects of the curriculum.⁷⁰ This meant that students were to be taught to read and write in Fanti, and it was hoped that this would lead to the eventual creation of a Fanti literature.⁷¹ There was also supposed to be instruction in Gold Coast history, its literature, and social institutions.⁷² Three years after creating the educational fund, Mensah Sarbah and his colleagues succeeded in opening a school in Cape Coast in 1905. This was amalgamated with the Wesleyan Collegiate School under the new name

⁶⁷ Ibid., 54.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ J. M. Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), xvi.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 7.

of Mfantshipim School.⁷³ By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the town had the highest student population in the Gold Coast.⁷⁴

The intellectual ferment was to lead to the growth of other things. There was a proliferation of clubs and societies for the enhancement of social commingling and common interests.⁷⁵ A typical instance was the formation of the Try Company, a private literary club, in 1859 by E. J. P. Brown and some of his friends.⁷⁶ The Reading Room Club, the first of its kind on the coast, opened in 1860.⁷⁷ The Gold Coast Debating Society was formed with the goal of educating members on the principles and tenets of the science and art of cogent argumentation and criticism.⁷⁸ Some groups were inspired by ideas of self-help and mutual improvement. For example, in 1895, a small study circle of youth in Cape Coast, the Star of Peace Society, was formed.⁷⁹ Women's social groups

⁷³ A. A. Boahen, *Mfantshipim and the Making of Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa, 1996), 119.

⁷⁴ In 1901, there were 1,620 students in Cape Coast compared to Accra's 858. See the Gold Coast 1901 Census Report, 140.

⁷⁵ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 147.

⁷⁶ Solomon Mensah, "Gold Coast Literacy," *Gold Coast Nation*, April 8, 1915.

⁷⁷ J. B. Anaman, *The Gold Coast Guide* (London: Frank Cass, 1902), 165.

⁷⁸ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 190.

⁷⁹ Attoh Ahuma, "The Gold Coast Youth," *Gold Coast Aborigines*, April 1899, 3. Stephanie Newell, who provides a comprehensive study of literary culture in colonial Ghana, discusses other groups that developed in Cape Coast. These include William DeGraft's Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, J. P. Brown's Private Literary Club, Party of Gentlemen's Literary Club, Gold Coast Union Association, Mfantshipim

were also formed. These included the Young Ladies' Christian Association and the Ladies' Mutual Club of Cape Coast, created in 1904.⁸⁰ A further signifier of this intellectual ferment is seen in the practice of book borrowing.⁸¹ A small number of people were able to acquire personal book collections. The rest were left with no option but to resort to borrowing personal copies of popular and rare books of those who had them.⁸² For a long time, these private collections remained great resources for the burgeoning intellectual atmosphere in Southern Gold Coast.⁸³

Another factor that enhanced and encouraged social interaction—and thereby increased the level of awareness—was the creation of newspapers.⁸⁴ Among the noteworthy ones were the *West African Herald*, founded by Charles and Edmund Bannerman;⁸⁵ the *Christian Messenger and Examiner*, edited by J. B. Freeman and the

Amanbuhu Fekuw, Three Wise Men Society, City Club, Gold Coast National Research Association, Gold Coast Young Men's Christian Association, and the Eureka Club. See Stephanie Newell, *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana: How to Play the Game of Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 33–34.

⁸⁰ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 134.

⁸¹ Newell, *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana*, 27.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 29.

⁸⁴ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 150.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 162.

Reverend H. Wharton;⁸⁶ the *Gold Coast Times*, which was launched by James Hutton Brew in March 28, 1874;⁸⁷ the *Western Echo* was the second journalistic effort of J. H. Brew, who was the editor and assisted by his nephew, J. E. Casley-Hayford;⁸⁸ and the *Gold Coast Aborigines*, which was founded by the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (ARPS).⁸⁹ It was managed and edited by Attoh Ahuma and the Rev. Egyir Asaam. The *Gold Coast Leader* was identified with J. E. Casely-Hayford in conjunction with Herbert Brown and Dr. Savage.⁹⁰ As one of the most popular newspapers, the *Gold Coast Leader* was published between December 1902 and 1934. The other newspapers included the *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, the *Gold Coast Methodist*, the *Gold Coast People*, and the *Gold Coast Nation*.⁹¹ Most if not all, were published in Cape Coast. These functioned as the voice of popular opinion in Cape Coast and all of Southern Gold Coast in their resistance to colonial rule. The motives for the proliferation of these newspapers are best expressed in the following words:

We shall always offer our adherence to the popular view of matters in so far as we can conscientiously believe that we are acting in their interest, advocating their rights but in instances where these rights and interests of the people are disregarded, and attempts are made to tamper with them,

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 167.

⁹¹ Ibid.

and to put them down with a high hand, we shall be found at our post, prepared to perform our duty fearlessly and independently, regardless of the frowns of the King or Kaiser.⁹²

This warning should be interpreted as an uncompromising protection of revered indigenous customs and institutions from interference by colonial officials. These developments engendered a strong sense of cultural consciousness among many of the Western-educated Fanti. This attitude also found great support among the larger portion of the population of Cape Coast, most of whom never had the benefit of a Western education.⁹³ Consequently, the *Mfantasi Amanbu Fekuw* (Fanti National Political Society) was formed in 1902 as an expression of resistance to “the demoralizing effects of certain European influences.”⁹⁴ In furtherance of this, there were attempts by the Western-educated Fanti at the collection, discussion, and compilation of proverbs, customs, laws, and institutions.⁹⁵ Series of articles on these subjects were published in the newspapers. The identification of the Western-educated elite with the customs and institutions of the Gold Coast helped them win the trust of their unlettered compatriots. This enhanced their authority and reputation. For instance, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

⁹² Editorial, “Our Mission Statement,” *Gold Coast Times*, 28 March 1874.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution*, vii.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

all the seven *Asafo* companies⁹⁶ of Cape Coast had Western-educated men as active members, including some in prominent leadership positions.⁹⁷

The Growth of British Power and Resistance by the Chiefs

Trading had deep roots in the history of Cape Coast, so it was not surprising that it went a long way in shaping its political fortunes and eventually that of Southern Gold Coast. The expansion of British power from 1874 in this town was facilitated by the trade imperative.⁹⁸ There was no incidence of war between the people of Cape Coast and the British.⁹⁹ Therefore there were no victors and vanquished as in other places in Africa, and elsewhere in Southern Gold Coast.

Thus the imperative of maintaining the existing peace was paramount in this regard. It was around this maintenance of peace that the expansion of British power in Cape Coast played out. Captain George Maclean was the protagonist in this drama. He started his tenure in Cape Coast as an employee of the British merchants. His mandate was to seek their interest by ensuring uninterrupted trade. Maclean's plans were in consonance with his mandate, but spelled doom for the indigenous political system of Cape Coast—and laid the basis for the eventual buildup of tension and the concomitant resistance. His diplomatic skills were impressive, but he had limited means and ill-

⁹⁶ See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of the *Asafo* and other indigenous Akan organizations in the Gold Coast.

⁹⁷ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of Omanhin Codjoe Imbra to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, 31 December 1904, 1 – 2.

⁹⁸ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 144.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

defined—or, better yet, undefined—powers.¹⁰⁰ Maclean as an individual had a charming, charismatic personality. Because war was not conducive to trade, and the Ashanti were good at waging it, Maclean brokered a peace treaty with them.¹⁰¹ To complete the equation, he turned his attention to petty squabbles among the coastal societies, and Maclean got them to sign a peace treaty. The treaty revolved around issues of “rules and regulations for the better protection of commerce.”¹⁰² The crucial point was that the governor of the castle would be the arbiter in all matters between or among the signatory chiefs.¹⁰³ It was against this background of keeping the peace (for the express purpose of maintaining trade), that Maclean laid the foundation for what would become full British control of the Gold Coast. What he did was to weaken chiefly power by substituting an alternative system of justice that circumvented chiefs.¹⁰⁴ This would be the main issue of resistance to the fledgling colonial administration by *Omnahin* Aggeri in the future.

As a realist and pragmatist, Maclean drew upon his prior experience of the Gold Coast. For instance, in 1827, as an officer of the Third West Indian Regiment, he had

¹⁰⁰ PRO CO 267/36: Letter of Maclean to the Committee of Merchants, dated 4 March 1844; See also G. E. Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History 1807–1957* (London: Ipswich Book Company, 1964), 147.

¹⁰¹ Long before this time, the Ashanti had finished their many wars of expansion in the Gold Coast. At this time they had to deal with the recalcitrant elements of the states, such as Denkyira, Akyim, and Assin under their jurisdiction. Economically, they also rallied against those states whose activities frustrated their direct access to the coastal trade with the Europeans. See Adu Boahen, *Ghana*, 20 – 27.

¹⁰² McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 144.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

accompanied Colonel Lumley (a commander in charge of British forces) to the interior of the Gold Coast as his military secretary.¹⁰⁵ Based on his knowledge and experience of the Gold Coast, Maclean understood how a single threat to peace could escalate, get out of hand, and create a complex conflict among the peoples of the Gold Coast.¹⁰⁶ Using a small troop from the Gold Coast Corps, he gathered intelligence on any potential disputes, no matter how small, that could disrupt trade.¹⁰⁷ Maclean wasted no time in inviting the disputing parties to have the issue settled—in some cases, he even allowed commandants of other forts to handle cases in their areas.¹⁰⁸ Even though this arrangement had long-term benefits for the British, it was viewed with great disapproval, particularly regarding hearing cases that occurred outside the forts and castles. A British parliamentary select committee report, suspecting that that could be problematic, observed:

A kind of irregular jurisdiction has grown up extending itself far beyond the limits of the forts . . . and that magistrates are strictly prohibited from exercising jurisdiction even over the natives and districts immediately under the influence and protection of the forts. . . . All jurisdiction over the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 150.

¹⁰⁶ This was in the domain of commercial relations; particularly where the Fanti had entrenched themselves in their roles as middlemen in the trade between Europeans and the Gold Coast interior. States within the interior of the Gold Coast, the Ashanti for instance wanted so much to have direct access to the European trade and would want to use any little excuse to wage war on the Fanti.

¹⁰⁷ W. H. Gillespie, *The Gold Coast Police 1844–1938* (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1955), 129. See also PRO CO 96/4: Maclean to Stanley, Cape Coast Castle 5 February 1844, 40; and G. E. Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 107–108.

¹⁰⁸ Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast*, 108.

natives beyond that point must, therefore, be considered as optional, and should be made the subject of distinct agreement, as to its nature and limits, with the native chiefs.¹⁰⁹

Maclean's administration and political career were stalled by accusations and counter-accusations that came from within the small group of British officials on the Gold Coast. The select committee that investigated his administration, however, gave him a strong commendation. It reported:

We fully admit the merits of that administration, whether we look to the officer employed, Captain Maclean, or to the Committee under whom he had acted, which, with the miserable pittance of between £3,500 and £4,000 a year, has exercised from the four . . . forts . . . manned by a few ill-paid . . . soldiers, a very wholesome influence over . . . coast, and to considerable distance inland . . . maintaining peace and security. . . . We would give full weight to the doubts which Captain Maclean entertained as to his authority . . .¹¹⁰

The committee, however, had some caveats. They observed that the initial jurisdiction of British law was exclusively within the forts.¹¹¹ As a result, the Maclean arrangement was irregular. But he was able to get the consent and cooperation of the chiefs without the "interposition of force."¹¹² It further warned that the extension of British jurisdiction on people outside the forts must be considered optional and that should be a matter of expressed agreement with the chiefs and must be conducive to the

¹⁰⁹ British Parliamentary Papers, Report of the Select Committee 1842, 212 - 213. See also Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 180–181; and McCarthy, *Social Change and Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 145.

¹¹⁰ Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 180.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 181.

conditions of the respective peoples and their settlements.¹¹³ Thus, the committee suspected that any violation of its recommendations would unleash a new system that was bound to suffer resistance on the part of the people.

On the basis of the committee's report, the British government appointed Maclean judicial officer to exercise jurisdiction outside the forts, but appointed Commander H. W. Hill as lieutenant governor over the castle.¹¹⁴ This meant that Maclean was subordinated to Hill, and, worse, still consigned to the background.¹¹⁵ Commander Hill took advantage of a courtesy call from some chiefs to get them to sign what is referred to in the history of the Gold Coast history as the Bond of 1844.¹¹⁶ In principle, it was nothing more than a revisitation of a similar one that they signed with Maclean. In essence, the agreement stated that all weighty cases would be tried in the presence of the judicial officers and chiefs, which suggested cooperation and collaboration.¹¹⁷ There was no sense that this would mean a loss or yielding of sovereignty by the chiefs. The Bond was only concerned with ensuring peace for the purpose of maintaining trade. The chiefs

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 182.

¹¹⁵ Metcalfe reports that Maclean was, however, given a special allowance of £120 in addition to the stipulated salary of his new position in order to forestall a loss of income from the change of status. See Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 182.

¹¹⁶ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 145. See Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 196, for the full text of the Bond of 1844.

¹¹⁷ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 145.

never gave up their responsibility and duty to hold their own courts, and, in fact, they continued to do so.¹¹⁸ The pertinent questions in this context are: If the British, through the judicial officers, acquired rights of protection over the chiefs and their people, what would be the consequence if a chief repudiated the British rights of protection? What was the precise extent of the rights conceded to the British (if any rights were, in fact, conceded)? Did the treaties of agreement, trade, and protection mean surrendering the rights of the chiefs to govern their states according to accepted indigenous norms and practices?

Though the system introduced by Maclean eventually did a great disservice to the power of chiefs, its beginnings were innocuous. With the exception of King Joseph Aggeri of Cape Coast, in whose territory the British operated, the other chiefs of the Gold Coast appreciated Maclean's efforts at ensuring peace.¹¹⁹ Another aspect of the system that appealed to the chiefs was that most of the magistrates used by the British judicial officers were Africans who understood indigenous laws, beliefs, and practices.¹²⁰ Most of the Europeans who acted as magistrates were long-time residents of the coast who had learned to speak Fanti and had significant varying degrees of competence in indigenous laws, beliefs, and practices.¹²¹ Again, initially, British

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 146.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Swanzy's testimony before the Parliamentary Select Committee as in Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 146.

officials showed respect for chiefs who sat with them on cases, and were willing to listen and learn from the chiefs. For instance, Francis Swanzy, a resident European merchant in the Gold Coast, indicated that when he learned Fanti language and law, it became common knowledge among the people, along with his competence as a magistrate; so many cases were brought to him.¹²² Brodie Cruickshank observes that a demonstrably good knowledge of Fanti law and language was crucial. It was necessary for one to be familiar with the intricacies and nuances, if one was to understand testimony. And because Fanti men and women were well-versed in their indigenous laws and customs, they were able to measure the competence—or lack thereof—of the European magistrates.¹²³

The progress made by these African and European magistrates under the British judicial officers—and ordinary people's patronage of English courts—encouraged the British to move into other areas of local life. The result was a deepening encroachment of chiefly power. Still using the assurance of peace as a trump card, British judicial officers and their magistrates began to interfere in the everyday life of the ordinary people. This was done through the English courts, which, unlike indigenous courts, were inexpensive and convenient. Indigenous courts demanded the strict observance of the local etiquette of gift-giving to the chief and his palace officials in the form of drinks and other things. This was exclusive of fees and fines that were demanded in the form of money, drinks,

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa: Including an Account of the Native Tribes and their Intercourse with Europeans* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 285.

sheep, or chicken.¹²⁴ In comparison, English courts charged the costs of summons only, which invariably amounted to a small sum.¹²⁵ As one might expect, this made the English courts attractive, particularly to the poor.¹²⁶ G. E. Metcalfe, in a review of cases at Cape Coast and Anomabu, reports that in addition to the initial agreement on weighty cases, there were an overwhelming number of cases dealing with minor disputes, especially in the matter of debt settlement.¹²⁷ For example, in one year there were eighty-eight cases, and only seven involved serious crimes—sixty-one involved debts. In a subsequent year, the number of cases increased to 128, and 91 of these involved debts, nearly all of which involved small amounts of money.¹²⁸ According to the initial agreement with Maclean, such cases were supposed to be tried in the indigenous courts. In addition, there were domestic complaints, minor assaults, and disputes over *adonkofo na mbaawa* (people held in one form of bondage and servitude or another) and complaints by some of these people against their *ewuranom* (owners, lords, or masters) for ill-treatment.¹²⁹ Francis Swanzy argued before the Parliamentary Select Committee

¹²⁴ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 146.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 147.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 148.

¹²⁹ Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009.

that ordinary people preferred this alternative means of justice, the result of which was the growth of English court. He stated emphatically, “in fact, they forced it [the trial of local cases in English courts] upon us.”¹³⁰ Swanzy was obviously trying to make it appear that British officials could be absolved from blame as they did nothing out of their own volition to ensure the growth of the English court system on the coast.

With the appointment of new British magistrates under Commander Hill, the good will and mutual respect among African and European magistrates deteriorated.¹³¹ The new magistrates lacked the local experience that had been a crucial characteristic of the earlier ones. To make matters worse, they were overzealous in attempting to do their duty and they were constantly extending British power.¹³² Cruickshank was one of the first magistrates to describe the emerging system as a “new British establishment.”¹³³ Thus, with an increasing number of cases and the growing popularity of the English courts, this new establishment knew no bounds. For instance, Mary McCarthy argues that with the arrival of Colonial Office personnel and the departure of most of the old British residents, the English courts became more colonial in character.¹³⁴ Snippets of evidence in support

¹³⁰ Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 149.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ PRO CO 96/22: Letter of James Bannerman to Earl Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 14 January 1851, 1.

¹³⁴ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 147.

of this can be gleaned from James Bannerman's letter to Earl Grey.¹³⁵ He pointed out that whereas in the past English magistrates sat in judgment with the chiefs and assisted each other in the administration of justice, in the present dispensation a new and troubling system emerged. The judicial officers, instead of being assistants and advisors, have, owing to the deference paid them, elevated themselves into supreme judicial authority, even where purely indigenous customary laws were administered.¹³⁶ With that as the emerging practice, the magistrates frequently held their courts without the presence of a single chief or indigenous ruler.¹³⁷ This was a brash usurpation and a sure recipe for resistance. The Draft Report of the British Parliamentary Select Committee on Africa is also instructive in this matter. It elaborated the curious shift from the original intention of the office of the judicial officers, i.e., assisting the chiefs in the administration of justice.¹³⁸ The Report pointed out that the magistrates had superseded the authority of the chiefs through their sole decisions and judgments. The Report lamented that that office, initiated with the best of intentions, seemed to have led to the gradual introduction of needless technicalities and expense, e.g., the hiring of attorneys, when the people were

¹³⁵ PRO CO 96/22: Letter of James Bannerman to Earl Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 14 January 1851, 5.

¹³⁶ James Bannerman was one of the few prominent mulatto officials of the Gold Coast who became indispensable to the budgeoning British colonial administration. Earl Grey was the Secretary of State in charge of Colonies in the Colonial Office, London. See Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 179.

¹³⁷ PRO CO 96/22: Letter of James Bannerman to Earl Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 6 May 1851, 3. See also Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 229.

¹³⁸ Draft Report of the British Parliamentary Select Committee on Africa (Western Court) as cited in Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Document of Ghana History*, 247.

better off speaking for themselves.¹³⁹ This eventually made the British courts as expensive as the indigenous ones from which ordinary people were running. It recommended that the chiefs should be left to exercise their own jurisdiction, with only an appeal to the English courts when called for.¹⁴⁰ The Report further stated that the use of Queen's Advocates seemed wholly unnecessary and trials by jury were inappropriate in many cases.¹⁴¹ It seems that these recommendations were not taken seriously, let alone implemented. Swanzy, who had served as a magistrate under Maclean, was later to confirm the shift in operation, observing that, during his tenure, he was considered an assistant to the chief. But, unfortunately, the new dispensation was "taking . . . all power from the chiefs."¹⁴² Swanzy opined that the reason for this was a desire for power coupled with ignorance of the rights of chiefs on the part of the new group of British officials.¹⁴³

Another occurrence that was later to mar the relationship between British officials and the chiefs and people of Cape Coast was the vexed question of a poll tax. It brought a general uproar that affected everyone in the Gold Coast.¹⁴⁴ However, for the people of

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 312.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 148.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 149.

Cape Coast it was worse because they were marked by the colonial government as being instrumental in the resistance and subsequent abandonment of the tax.¹⁴⁵ To regularize and systematize his administration, Governor Hill got the coastal chiefs, along with others from the immediate interior, to agree to the levying of a tax of 1 shilling per individual: men and women.¹⁴⁶ This was understood as part of their responsibility for the protection under Her Majesty the Queen and also for investment in infrastructural developments in transportation, ports, education, and the health sector. It was the promise of development that persuaded the chiefs to give their consent to the proposal.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, they were made to understand that the power to create the tax, determine the amount, and even its collection was to be in their hands with minimal support from the governor.¹⁴⁸ The chiefs were also to receive a small percentage for their efforts and support in the administration of the tax regime.¹⁴⁹ But, for many of them, the most crucial clause was that the net fund would be:

. . . devoted to the public good in education of the people, in the general improvement and extension of the judicial system, in affording greater facilities of internal communication, increased medical aid, and in such other measures of improvement and utility as the state of social progress

¹⁴⁵ PRO CO 96/25: The Poll Tax Ordinance, April 19, 1852, signed by S. J. Hill and Chiefs of the Gold Coast. See also Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 181; and 330 – 332.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 334.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 335.

¹⁴⁹ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 161.

may render necessary, and that the chiefs be informed of the mode of its application, and entitled to offer suggestions on this point as they may consider necessary.¹⁵⁰

The idea of a poll tax was fraught with problems even before it started; and when it did in earnest, it was beset by many difficulties. For instance, Governor Hill had envisaged an annual total revenue of £15,000. The tax managed, in its best years, to rope in something in the neighborhood of £7,567. At times, this dwindled to £3,625, and was reduced to a trickle in its worst years.¹⁵¹ Because what came in fell far below the expected income, it was woefully eroded by collection expenses and compensation payments to chiefs.¹⁵² Furthermore, the governor and his officials took over the actual administration of the fund.¹⁵³ This was a clear violation of the rights and responsibilities of the chiefs as stipulated in the Poll Tax Ordinance. And this was bound to be resisted. The clause stated that “the chiefs be informed of the mode of application, and be entitled to offer suggestions on this point as they may consider necessary.”¹⁵⁴ The governor

¹⁵⁰ PRO CO 96/25: The Poll Tax Ordinance, 19 April 1852, signed by S. J. Hill and Chiefs of the Gold Coast. See also Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 230–232.

¹⁵¹ PRO CO 96/25: Letter of S. J. Hill to Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 24 April 1852. PRO C. O. 96 / 30: Letter of S. J. Hill to the Duke of Newcastle 31 May 1854. See also Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 176–177; and 187; and McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 161.

¹⁵² Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 232.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 233.

assumed sole responsibility and only informed the colonial office on the expenditures.¹⁵⁵ Compensations to chiefs fell behind schedule and the fund did not have much to show in terms of the promised development.

It is important to note that the participation and attitude of the chiefs were crucial for the sustainability of the poll tax. They were the ones whose consent started the tax regime. They were to become the first to offer resistance to both the maladministration of the tax, and, eventually, to the very principle of taxation.¹⁵⁶ Thus, when the leadership of the chiefs of Cape Coast refused to pay the tax, the other chiefs of the Gold Coast followed suit.¹⁵⁷ Admitting that they had originally supported it, they pointed out that they did so with the hope that it would be beneficial. As it stood, they argued, the public good had not been served. The chiefs proceeded to list the failures of the tax regime, and reemphasized the withdrawal of their participation in its collection.¹⁵⁸ As a result of the influence of Cape Coast over the other parts of the Gold Coast, their action was followed by similar resistance all over the country. This was distasteful to Governor Andrew, whose reaction did not escape the notice of the chiefs. In a letter to the Secretary of State for Colonies, the chiefs observed “because the whole country have reason to object to pay the Poll Tax anymore, the Governor is angry with us. . . . But we will take care this time

¹⁵⁵ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 190.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 148.

¹⁵⁸ PRO CO 96/52: Letter of the King, Chiefs and other Residents of Cape Coast to Governor Andrew, Cape Coast, 3 April 1861, 3.

that no Governor makes us fools.”¹⁵⁹ As though to tell the administration that it had been exposed in its failure to deliver on the numerous promises, they questioned:

Where are the new streets that have been built of stone and lime? What had been the state of the roads between Cape Coast and Anomabu and their adjacent villages? Where is the European schoolmaster and his wife? How many . . . have learnt to become physicians; and how many have been sent to England for education? What are the names of the chiefs and captains who were present before the proceeds of the taxes were distributed to the officers and commandants? Where is the wharf built and where is the crane?¹⁶⁰

Nor was this the end of the growing list of problems. The eventual creation of a Supreme Court in Cape Coast, for the purpose of dealing with British maritime cases and those between and among British citizens on the coast, aggravated the situation. This was due to the appointment of Chief Justice Henry Connor, who had little knowledge of Fanti laws or customary practice. Under his watch, people living in Cape Coast were hauled before the Supreme Court and tried according to British law.¹⁶¹ This made the administration of the area more problematic on account of the fact that it “occasioned discontent . . . there were native cases brought before our courts which purely British tribunals ought not to entertain.”¹⁶² Thus, the two systems of British justice in Cape

¹⁵⁹ PRO CO 96/58: Letter of Chiefs of Cape Coast to Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for the Colonies, Cape Coast, 11 April 1862, 4.

¹⁶⁰ PRO CO 96/52: Letter of the King, Chiefs and other Residents of Cape Coast, 18 April 1861, 5.

¹⁶¹ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 148.

¹⁶² PRO CO 96/41: Letter of Benjamin Pine to Labouchere, Cape Coast Castle, 31 August 1857, 8. See also McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 148.

Coast had become muddied and indistinct. As a result, the indigenous courts were starved of cases. Not only did the chiefs suffer a dent on their prestige, but a loss of income as well. The seriousness of this for Cape Coast chiefs was alluded to by Bannerman in his letter to Earl Grey. Because the town was host to British judicial officers and the Supreme Court, as well as several magistrates; the people had ample choices in where to take their cases. This meant fewer cases for the indigenous courts, and dwindling sources of revenue for the chiefs. He points out that in the course of time the chief “suffered a very trifling and irregular addition from fees and extortions in his judicial capacity.”¹⁶³

Added to this was the general attitude of the new crop of British officials. As already indicated, they were notable for their lack of interest and willingness to learn. They had no time to mesh the customs of the country with British laws, as had been envisaged by the signatories of the Bond of 1844. These officials were business-like in the promotion of British laws. To this end, the indigenous culture was considered irrelevant. In a sense, they held themselves out as intolerant administrators whose interests must hold sway over that of others.¹⁶⁴ This was pushed to the point that McCarthy argues “through the proclamation of a series of ordinances for the town, the governors sometimes tried to regulate practices which only they or other officials personally found to be unsuitable or annoying.”¹⁶⁵ How was this personal element manifested? A typical example is seen in William Hackett’s case.

¹⁶³ PRO CO 96/22: Letter of James Bannerman to Earl Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 6 May 1851, 4.

¹⁶⁴ McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast*, 149.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

William Hackett's choice of residence as acting governor was to provide a catalyst for this kind of conflict. He moved from the English castle in Cape Coast to live in the town proper.¹⁶⁶ This was symbolic. It could be taken as a physical and spatial expression of the expansion of British power. Hitherto, the British authority had been confined within the castle walls. Hackett relocated the British establishment as well.¹⁶⁷ He was aware of the conflicted nature of the relocation and the complex problems it was going to create, which included: the propriety of his action, clear violation of the initial agreement which confined British influence within the castle and the resistance from the chiefs, indigenous political authorities and the western-educated elite. In a letter to his superiors in London, he observed that even though the relocation was questionable, it was expedient not to seek the consent of the chiefs, who he described as "naturally suspicious."¹⁶⁸ What was particularly revealing was his comment that "[g]overnors of these settlements have for a series of years considered the lands of Cape Coast to be the property of the Crown."¹⁶⁹

The relocation of the British establishment in the town proper created an opportunity for officials to deal with aspects of the indigenous ways of life that they regarded as repugnant. What were some of these practices? As an example, funeral rites,

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ PRO CO 96/64: Letter of Hackett to Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast Castle, 12 May 1864, 1.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

which were seen by some British officials as “noisy and rowdy,”¹⁷⁰ came in for sharp criticism and regulation. Funerals were celebrated with pomp and mourning. The duration of these were determined by the status and standing of the deceased, and that of the bereaved family.¹⁷¹ This could mean three to seven days of mourning, drumming, singing, dancing, and even a gun salute, particularly if the deceased was a royal, palace official, or a member of an *Asafo* company.¹⁷² When this became frustrating enough for Governor Pine, he set out to reduce “noise making” by applying rules and regulations to the organization of funerals. The funeral for an important chief, he insisted, should not exceed three days. A subordinate chief was allotted two days. An ordinary person’s funeral was to be held in one day and no more.¹⁷³ Regarding time duration, Pine decreed that the written permission of a British senior officer “shall be obtained . . . and no custom shall be made after 8 o’clock at night or before 5 o’clock in the morning.”¹⁷⁴ The people of Cape Coast were not perturbed by the Pine proclamation. Their way of celebrating funerals was so revered that a single stroke of the pen was not going to be enough to undo it. The celebrations went on with impunity. The chiefs unleashed a

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Kweku Botse, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 22 June 2009.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ PRO CO 96/43/11: Proclamation by Sir Benjamin Pine, Governor James Town Accra, 22 March 1858, 2.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

barrage of criticism against Governor Pine. The latter did not consult the former. They wrote that Pine “got it [the proclamation] printed without our mutual agreement.”¹⁷⁵ Regarding Hackett’s attempt to enforce these regulations, the chiefs noted that it was motivated not as a matter of law but by a personal attack on his part. This was because Hackett had elected to live in the town proper instead of within the walls of the castle and was “disturbed at night in his sleep . . . he would enforce what he calls the law against us.”¹⁷⁶

The British reaction amounted to a definite degradation of the chiefs’ power and authority. This was achieved through a number of actions. When it was convenient, the local officers ignored the chiefs. In time, the chiefs began to be subpoenaed before English courts just like ordinary people, even upon excusable charges.¹⁷⁷ This practice was frowned upon by Governor Benjamin Pine, who observed that it was not only an assault on their persons, but an undue interference with their authority as well, especially when the offences were trivial.¹⁷⁸ When this treatment persisted, the chiefs again massed up in their resistance. They indicated their displeasure not only at being hauled before the courts, but also “for very trifling cause now and then [being] cast into prison by the officials which insures [*sic*] to them great disgrace, and places them on a par with their

¹⁷⁵ PRO CO 96/58: Letter of the Chiefs of Cape Coast to Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for Colonies, Cape Coast Castle, 11 April 1862, 4.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ PRO CO 96/41: Letter of Benjamin Pine to Labouchere, Sierra Leone, 31 August 1857, 5.

subjects.”¹⁷⁹ In 1862, Governor Ross ordered the arrest of some of chiefs of Cape Coast because they flouted the “law” by allowing funeral rites to go beyond the stipulated times. For this offense “they were confined in one of the filthiest dungeons in the castle.”¹⁸⁰

Conclusion

The sighting of the Fanti and Fetu fishing villages attracted the first Europeans to Cape Coast in about 1471. That was the beginning of an economic, social, and, eventually, political relationship between them. The forts and castles served as the European bases of operation. The Bond of 1844, which served as a basis for the political relationship, established a general understanding of mutual respect and cooperation. The chiefs and English magistrates cooperated and collaborated in the trial of cases that came before them. The early corps of magistrates showed their cooperation by their willingness to learn from the chiefs. By 1860, a new inflexible and capricious establishment replaced the initial arrangement. This began with the emergence of an intolerant group of officials and governors who chose to live in the town proper instead of the castle, which had hitherto been the nerve center of British power and influence. Under this new regime, the chiefs, who had been revered in times past, became “playthings” in the hands of officials, who more often than not followed their whims and caprices. In fact, Adu Boahen argues

¹⁷⁹ PRO CO 96/54: Grievances of the Gold Coast Chiefs, Cape Coast, 9 August 1864, 7.

¹⁸⁰ PRO CO 96/58: Petition of Chiefs of Cape Coast in Letter of Ross to Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast, 10 May 1862, 1.

that by 1858 the authority of the chiefs had virtually collapsed in the main coastal towns.¹⁸¹ And they were sure to resist this.

The introduction of direct taxation in the form of the Poll Tax Ordinance, accompanied by the failure to honor the promises associated with it was to begin a period of resistance on the part of the chiefs. The chiefs of Cape Coast were seen as instrumental in this matter as their eventual resistance to the tax was emulated by other chiefs elsewhere in the Gold Coast. The proliferation of English courts took cases away from the chiefs, causing a loss of revenue for them, and, worst of all, the chiefs themselves were hauled before the English courts.

The foregoing reveals a developing struggle. This gives the Cape Coast situation a *locum* in the theory of the “urban problematique” in African history as espoused by John Parker and Akin Mabogunje. In his work on the Ga state and society in early colonial Accra, Parker describes the active participation of the Ga people against what he calls perceived marginalization in the making of the town. He notes that that process involved a struggle with outside forces and with each other to retain control over the center.¹⁸² Like Accra and other major places in Africa, Cape Coast was the epicenter of the indigenous political system as well as the capital of the colonial order. Thus, the tension between these two identities came up in all the issues that had to be dealt with in Cape

¹⁸¹ A. Adu Boahen, “Politics in Ghana,” in *History of West Africa*, ed. J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 216.

¹⁸² John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 9.

Coast as a site of (what Parker refers to as) exchange, transaction, and power.¹⁸³ He adds that as a locus of exchange and transaction, the city has always had conflict over who controls these exchanges and transactions. That was the kind of politics Cape Coast was exposed to in the interaction between the chiefs and the people, on the one hand, and the colonial officials, on the other. In the same vein, Mabogunje's statement of the "urban problematique" is an apt description of the situation in Cape Coast. He states that in Africa the "problematique" "revolves around the issue of who shapes the city, in what image, by what means and against what resistance?"¹⁸⁴ Certainly, the relationship between the chiefs and people of Cape Coast and the emerging colonial order in Cape Coast substantiates the issues raised by Mabogunje in many ways. Thus, by the time *Omanhin* Aggergy came onto the scene, the battle lines had been drawn.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Akin Mabogunje, "Overview of Research Priorities in Africa," *Urban Research in the Developing World 2* (1994): 22.

Chapter 2

***Ebusua* and *Asafo* Systems: Gender, Complementarity, and Conflict among the Fanti of Southern Gold Coast**

The nineteenth and twentieth century Akan of Southern Gold Coast were a large, homogenous group, yet there were internal, sub social groupings that signified identity and belongingness (necessary conditions for inheritance), with requisite rights and responsibilities. The Akan *Ebusua* (matrilinal clan) was illustrative of this concept. However, in Southern Gold Coast, and particularly among the coastal Fanti, this was carried to a different level by the existence of *Ebusua* and *Asafo* as visible aspects of maritime culture. As noted previously, the former was matrilineal and the latter was patrilineal. The two systems were an expression of the Akan belief in the productiveness of the collaboration of the female and male principles.¹ Not only were these two systems complementary, but also their impact on society was complex: they made indigenous conflicts complicated; yet they also exhibited the ability to hold the society together in harmonious ways.

¹ See Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900 – 1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005), 27. This idea of female and male principle is borrowed from Nwando Achebe who explains the female principle as an embodiment of all aspects female involvement in Society. Accordingly, the female principle, therefore, encompasses women’s activities within the human or physical/ visible realm as well as female involvement in the nonhuman or spiritual/invisible realm. According to Achebe, in the human or physical/visible, this presence is revealed in the types of roles women assume, such as their “work” as mothers, wives, traders, and farmers. To this extent that aspects of the definition may apply in my work. In addition, I also use the term female and male principles to mean the female and male “element.”

J. B. Christensen writing on the nineteenth century coastal Akan described this arrangement as a system of double descent.² His study was motivated by the curious “function of the paternal line in a society where kinship, inheritance of land and property, collective responsibility and chiefly succession are reckoned through the maternal line.”³ He defines “double descent” as an indigenous social arrangement in which the “individual is simultaneously a member of two distinct exogamous lineages.”⁴ In his work on twentieth century Afikpo, Simon Ottenberg referred to similar practices in Nigeria; even though he acknowledges that it was an unusual occurrence.⁵ In these isolated cases there are differences of activities between the matrilineal and patrilineal spheres, and relationships between them also occurred. Ottenberg argued that any definition of double descent would fit the Afikpo practice because they possessed it in its

² J. B. Christensen, *Double Descent among the Fanti* (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, 1954), 3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. Other equally instructive works on this system among the Akan in general include R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 56 – 83; R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 34 – 51; R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 101 – 133; M. J. Herskovits, “The Ashanti Ntoro: A Re-Examination,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 47 (1937): 102 – 137; Meyer Fortes, *Social Structure* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 71 – 95; Meyer Fortes, “Kinship and Marriage Among the Ashanti,” in *African Systems of Marriage and Kinship*, ed. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde (London: International African Institute, 1950), 10 – 31; Eva L. Meyerowitz, “Concept of the Soul among the Akan of the Gold Coast,” *Africa* 21, no. 1 (1950): 22 – 37; Eva L. Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 20 – 48.

⁵ Simon Ottenberg, *Double Descent in an African Society: The Afikpo Village-Group* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 3.

fullest form.⁶ There were named, organized, matrilineal groupings with well-established patterns of leadership and authority. A complementary system also existed for agnatic ties. Both sides were property owning and controlling; and both played very important roles in the lives of individuals.⁷ Such ideas have also been expressed in recent research on gender, in which gender parallelisms and complementarities have been identified and examined. For instance, in her work Nwando Achebe affirmed the existence of parallels or complementarities in indigenous Northern Igboland religion. Most of these were eventually undermined. She showed the processes by which colonialism and/or Christianity elevated that of males over females in the twentieth century.⁸ Nsukka cosmology endowed the female principle in religion with powers and women filled major leadership roles in the religious life of their towns. As goddesses, the female principle filled the spiritual, political and sometimes economic needs of particular Nsukka division societies.⁹ With colonialism came a new male-centered Christian religion. Nsukka women lost a great deal of religious authority, as they were removed from positions of power that they had previously occupied in the pre-Christian order.¹⁰ Nsukka priestesses, diviners, and healers were replaced by a male-centered religion, which only recognized

⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings*, 53 – 107.

⁹ Ibid., 96.

¹⁰ Ibid.

the leadership potential of male priests.¹¹ Beverly Stoeltje writing about the twentieth century Ashanti society has also observed that the terms “duality” and “parallel” do not necessarily imply equality, but could indicate complementarity.¹² These represented something lacking in each other. A society that utilizes complementarity balances the interests of the different parts, or gives weight to one or another part, depending on how social relations are organized. Nevertheless, each part will receive social recognition and will have some form of expression.¹³ All of these amount to cogent descriptions of twentieth and nineteenth century coastal Fanti society of Southern Gold Coast.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Beverly J. Stoeltje, “Asante Queen Mothers: A Study in Female Authority,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1 (2000): 44.

¹³ Ibid., 44. Feminist scholars, particularly anthropologists, who have done work on these concepts include Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990). In this work Linnekin focuses on women in Hawaiian society. Annette B. Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976). Weiner expresses the concept of symmetrical and complementary oppositions in her examination of women’s and men’s power in the Trobriands. Kamene Okonjo, “The Dual Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria,” in *Women in Africa*, ed. Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna Bay (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 45 – 58. Okonjo highlights the term “dual-sex political system” among West African traditional societies. Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Silverblatt uses the terms “sexual parallelism,” “parallel hierarchy,” “parallel line,” and “gender parallelism.” Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). She is critical of anthropological models of male and female domains, and opts for a concept in which “gender demarcates different types of agency” and one in which gender imagery differentiates sociality, which is consequently conceived as always taking one of two forms. Jane F. Collier and Michelle Z. Rosaldo, “Politics and Gender in Simple Societies,” in *Sexual Meanings*, eds. Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 275 – 329. They argue that gender conceptions grow from, even as they shape, social, and political processes. Karla Poewe, *Matrilineal Ideology* (New York: Academic Press, 1981). She also explores male-female dynamics in Luapula, Zambia, and discusses the relationship between kinship and gender,

Ebusua: Women, Blood, and Lineage

The nineteenth and twentieth century matrilineal social structure of Cape Coast, like that of all Gold Coast Akan, was based on the *Ebusua*. The *Ebusua* was formed by women, men, youth, and children whose lineage could be traced to a common ancestress. Because the original source was a female, every individual accessed this lineage through their mother. It was believed that *mogya ye dur sen nsu* (blood is thicker and heavier than water). Inherent in this simple statement was the Akan conception of blood. It was sacred because it was the source of life and therefore life sustaining.¹⁴ Thus, the *Ebusua* system

specifically a matrilineal system, and identifies a fundamental contradiction between the essence of matrilineality and the essence of individuality. Gender parallelism is also explored in works on African ritual and religion. See for example Caroline Bledsoe, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980). Bledsoe examines parallelism in ritual authority. Benetta Jules-Rosette, *The New Religions of Africa* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1979). She identifies the complex relationship between priests and priestesses by exploring the mystical power of women through mediumship and ceremonial authority. Helga Fink, *Religion, Disease, and Healing in Ghana: A Case Study of Traditional Dormaa Medicine* (Munich: Trickster Verlag, 1990). Fink focuses on ethnomedicine among the Dormaa, and consistently places the roles of queen mothers and priestesses in separate parallel positions. Niara Sudarkasa, "The Status of Women in Indigenous African Societies," in *Women in Africa and the Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1987), 25 – 41. She argues for a "neutral" complementarity rather than a "subordinate"/"superordination" in her description of the relation between female and male roles in various pre-colonial African societies.

¹⁴ Nana Kwahin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 16 June 2009; Kwesi Ababio, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 10 June 2009; Kojo Nunoo, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 17 June 2009; Maame Adjoa, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 August 2009; Aba Nyanyonaa, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 11 August 2009; Adjoa Atta, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 20 July 2009; Araba Sukwei, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 11 June 2009.

was sacred, and it had the semblance of a covenant. This covenant connected people who traced their origins to a single, common source and undertook to support their collective well-being. They believed that they were one and the same people. They were bound to stand or fall together. What affected the individual affected the group and vice versa.¹⁵

The sacredness of the *Ebusua* was further expressed in totems. It was common that the group was identified through the use of a representative animal or symbol. The totem was believed to depict the soul of the group. It was, therefore, seen as sacred and revered by members of the group. The idea was not that they descended from these totems, but that the totems possessed certain attributes and characteristics that were discernible in the respective *Ebusua* groups. At the most visible level, each group had its totem carved atop a staff, which was displayed at formal gatherings by designated individuals.¹⁶ At the behavioral level, the group and the individual were supposed to live in a reverential relationship with the totem.¹⁷ In this case, if the totem happened to be an animal that was considered a delicacy for others, the members of that *Ebusua* were not supposed to eat it. And should they chance upon the animal dead, they were supposed to bury it with the full rites they would provide any important member.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Though the idea of *Ebusua* was broad, it could be conceptualized at three basic levels: 1) general *Ebuasuakuw*, 2) the local *Ebusua*, and 3) the extended family *Ebusua*. The first category referred to the general concept that existed among the Akan of the Gold Coast and some parts of the Ivory Coast.¹⁹ They accepted the idea that they (as members of a particular *Ebusua*) were related (or even siblings) and that their source could be traced to an imaginary or putative ancestress, unknown to any living relatives or even those long dead.²⁰ The local *Ebusua* was town or community based.²¹ At this level, membership was still traceable to that legendary ancestress, yet unknown to any of the members, living or dead. Again, membership was open to all other Akan who professed to be members and acknowledged the same totem.²² Thus, any Akan from the Ivory Coast or the Gold Coast could go to an Akan enclave and find members of their *Ebusua*

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Other scholars who have studied the various levels in the *Ebusua* system include Lystad, who refers to the local or town *Ebusua* as a lineage; See Robert Lystad, *The Ashanti: A Proud People* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1958), 55. Meyer Fortes, *Social Structure*, 71. He refers to the *Ebusua* as a “localized matrilineage.” See also Eva Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 1.; Eva Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions of Origin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 5.; Eva Meyerowitz, *The Early History of the Akan States of Ghana* (London: Candle Press, 1974), 1; K. A. Busia, *The Position of a Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 20.; R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) and M. J. Field, *Akim-Kotoku: An Oman of the Gold Coast* (London: Crown Agents, 1948), 30. Field uses the term “clan.” See also Christensen, *Double Descent*, 25.

and they would be accorded the appropriate welcome and acceptance.²³ The final level of the *Ebusua* was the extended family that operated at the epistemological level. At this level, membership was based on having so many generations of descendants from a known common ancestress and her sister siblings.²⁴ She—or better still, they—were said to be known to some of those living and even some of the dead.²⁵ At this level, there was often a reference to an *ebusuafie* (family house).²⁶ This was invariably the center of all *Ebusua* activity, e.g., gatherings, funerals, marriage, and naming.²⁷ Among the largest and most important families, there was an elaborate hierarchy. The *ebusuahin* (*Ebusua* chief) was complemented by the *ebusuahinmaa* (*Ebusua* queen), the *ebusuapanyin* (the most elderly or honorable man), the *ebusua obaa panyin* (the most elderly or honorable woman), the *ebusua aberewatia* (the oldest surviving woman [*aberewa*], who was usually bent over and short [*tia*]), and the *ebusuampanyinfo* (the council of elderly and honorable representatives of the various families within the extended family).²⁸ The *ebusuahin* and *ebusuapanyin* were specifically in charge of the men whereas the

²³ Nana Kwahin, interview; Kwesi Ababio, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; Maame Adjoa, interview; Aba Nyanyonoa, interview; Adjoa Atta, interview; Araba Sukwei, interview.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

ebusuahinmaa, *obaapanyin*, and *aberewatia* were in charge of the women.²⁹ There was, however, a constant flurry of consultation among them as part of the general direction of the entire group. To this end, the *aberewatia* was seen as the sure repository of *Ebusua* knowledge and wisdom. She, by her longevity, was said to know nearly all the principal female personalities of the past, their history, and all the descendants who constituted the extended family.³⁰ Thus, she knew who belonged where. There was a moral obligation among the entire *Ebusua* to accord the women at the top of the hierarchy the same deference given their male counterparts. Some women in these positions, largely through the strength of their personalities and their tenacity of purpose, exerted considerable influence.³¹

It was at this level that the *Ebusua* assumed the role of a social or mutual support network. The members exhibited a strong sense of collective responsibility, which was close to being mandatory. Because of this, they were able to redeem members who stood in need of help due to such events as debt, sickness, becoming an orphan, or death.³² Consequently, some strict definitions of the extended family *Ebusua* system described it

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 1 June 2009; Kobina Minnah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009; J. A. Hayfron, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009.

as a single unit of people who shared funeral expenses.³³ The network and scope of the extended family system was so wide, deep and far-reaching; to the extent that individual members, knowingly or unknowingly, benefited from it in some way or other. To this end, they were obliged to “pay back to the fund,” as it were.³⁴ Those who neglected their obligation were seen as selfish and ungrateful. Because the *Ebusua* system considered members to be siblings and relations; and believed they had a common ancestress, the ideal practice vis-à-vis marriage was exogamy. In other words, members were encouraged to marry outside their *Ebusua*, extended family, and even their *Ebusuakuw*. Any marriage among members was regarded as incestuous, which demanded a ritual pacification of the ancestors. It was also the local *Ebusua* and the extended family *Ebusua* which had the responsibility of ensuring veneration of the ancestors, known and unknown. This ordinarily included the offering of libation, and, in some cases, sacrificing animals such as sheep and cows. In rare cases, aspects of this veneration could blossom into full-fledged festivals.³⁵

The seven Cape Coast *Ebusuakuw* included *Nsona*, *Bretuo-Twidan*, *Konna-Ebiradzi*, *Anona*, *Aduana-Aboradzi*, *Ntwea*, and *Adwindadze*.³⁶ Their totems presented

³³ Christensen, *Double Descent*, 20.

³⁴ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ordinarily, these were referred to as the core Akan *Ebusua* groups. However, scholars such as Christensen, *Double Descent*, Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 10.; J. B. Danquah, *Akan Society* (London: Bureau of Current Affairs, 1951), 1.; J. B. Danquah, *Gold Coast: Akan Laws and Customs* (London: Lutherworth

an interesting array of plants and animals. The *Nsona* were identified by a crow or, in some cases, a fox.³⁷ The *Bretuo-Twidan Ebusua* were represented by a corn stalk.³⁸ *Koona-Ebiradzi* had the buffalo or bush cow.³⁹ The *Anona* used a parrot or hawk. The *Aduana-Aburadzi* used the plantain, or, in some instances, an antelope. The *Ntwea Ebusua* used a dog. And the *Adwindadze* were represented by a fish.⁴⁰ In each case, there were specific appellations, greetings, and responses used by members, both collectively and individually. A variety of origin stories—which were often confusing and/or contradictory—for the various coastal *Ebusua* abounded.⁴¹ However, the general story

Press, 1945), 9.. They have all noted that as a result of growth, expansion, and the resulting dispersal of the Akan to the various places where they are now found, there are now a number of lineages. These use different names other than the core ones, and sometimes the same (or different) totems. Interestingly, aspects of these variations also appear in spellings as in *Kwona, Kona, Konna; Ekuana; Eburutu, Eburotu, Beretuo, Bretuo; Yoko, Ayoko, Oyoko, Yokuo, Yokoo; Anona* and *Anana*. The totems, however, for nearly all these variants remain the same.

³⁷ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ For a detailed account of these traditions see the following long essays presented to the Department of History, University of Ghana, Legon, in partial fulfilment for the award of Bachelor of Arts Degree by J. E. Tachie Mensah, “A History of Cape Coast” (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1972), 2 - 23; J. Tetteh-Addy, “The History of Cape Coast: From the Earliest Times to the Nineteenth Century” (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1975), 6 - 14; Faustina D. Barnes, “The Fetu Afahye Festival of the People of Oguaa State” (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1971), 1 - 20; A. K. E. Quansah, “The History of Cape Coast before the Transfer of the Capital to Accra” (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1980), 10 - 15; and Benjamin Adu-Poku, “History and Constitution of the Oguaa State” (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1979), 6 - 18.

line normally traced them to the movement of the larger Akan groups from their known enclaves.⁴² In spite of the contradictions, these stories established the fact that the Akan were a single, large, homogenous group.

Asafo: Men, Spirit, and Power

The idea of *Asafo* was important among the Akan in general, but research has shown that it was paramount among the coastal Akan.⁴³ All towns and villages in the Fanti enclave in Southern Gold Coast had two or more *Asafo* units (generally referred to as companies by Europeans) but in Cape Coast there were as many as seven. Again, the idea had an added significance because it complemented the *Ebusua* system. As an indigenous patrilineal organization, the father-children relationship was pertinent to the *Asafo*.⁴⁴ Thus, membership was determined along patrilineal lines. Among the Akan, it was believed that children got their *sunsum* (spirit) from their fathers.⁴⁵ It was this that eventually determined the latter's personality and character.⁴⁶ To the extent that the Akan

⁴² According to A. Adu Boahen these enclaves included the Pra and Ofin confluence.

⁴³ As noted previously, the coastal Akan are normally referred to as the Fanti. It is interesting to point out that Albert Adu Boahen did not include the Denkyira among the Akan. The Denkyira are part of the Akan-speaking people. See Albert Adu Boahen, *Ghana Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishers, 2000), 1.

⁴⁴ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

believed the spiritual was stronger than the physical, it also endowed traits such as boldness, bravery, courage, and resoluteness.⁴⁷ All of these were necessary conditions of resistance. And that was what the *Asafo* was quintessentially about. Etymologically, the word *Asafo* could be said to comprise two Fanti-Twi words, *asa* (or *sa*) and *fo*. The former meant “war” whereas the latter referred to “people,” thus *Asafo* meant “war people.” Consequently, it was sometimes referred to as an indigenous military institution that represented the main means of organized defense in time of war.⁴⁸ To this end, the *Asafo*, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, had an armory of guns owned by the individual members.⁴⁹ Though individuals could acquire their own guns, the onus was on fathers to provide them for their children, whereas the *Omanhin* was responsible for supplying gunpowder.⁵⁰ This militancy facilitated their resistance to colonial rule, especially in the 1900s.

An inquiry conducted by the colonial government on the *Asafo* in the twentieth century showed their war formation.⁵¹ There was the *Twafo* (advance army), *Benkum*

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1634: Cape Coast Stool Enquiry, 18 April 1920. The military formation of the Akan was similar. It consisted of scouts (*Akwansrafo*), and an advance guard (*Twafo/Tuafo*), followed by the main body (*Adontsin*), the chief’s bodyguards (*Gyase*), a rear guard (*Kyidom*), with the right (*Nifa*) and left (*Benkum*) wings. In addition to the political and military functions, these divisions also had religious and judicial implications. In Cape Coast, for instance, the *Akomfodzi* were in charge of the religious

(left wing), *Dontsin* (main army), and *Nimfa* (right wing). All of these went before the *Omanhin*. Then the *Nkyidom* (rear guard) took charge of protecting the army from behind.⁵² And being, in part, a military group, young, brave, and daring men and women were prominent members. Thus, in some documents and works the *Asafo* were referred to as *mbrantse* (youth or hotheads).⁵³ However, elderly men and women also constituted important parts of the *Asafo*.⁵⁴

The terms “young men” and “youth” were also used to distinguish the three-tier indigenous political strata made up of the *Omanhin*, his elders, and the *Asafo*.⁵⁵ *Ohin na ne Mpanyinfo na Asafo* (the *Omanhin*, his elders, and the *Asafo*) was an indigenous political statement that demonstrated the pride of place that *Asafo* had in the indigenous political structure. The *Asafo* formed the “third estate” without which no legally constituted form of indigenous government was possible. Because of the presence of the

rites (*Akomfo* means “indigenous priests and priestesses”). The *Akrampa*, who stood for peace, as the original Portuguese meaning indicated, were in charge of judicial functions.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ J. C. DeGraft Johnson, “The Fanti Asafo,” *Africa* 5, no. 3 (1932): 308. See also Christensen, *Double Descent*, 118; and E. A. Asiamah, *The Mass Factor in Rural Politics: The Case of the Asafo Revolution in Kwahu Political History* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2000), 1.

⁵⁴ Afua Oyeman, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 October 2009; Esi Nyaneba, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 October 2009; Nana Kwamina Nyimfa, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 7 September 2009; Nana Atta, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 September 2009; Kofi Ewusi, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 22 July 2009.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

youth or young men, the *Asafo* formed the largest base of society—and the most articulate and influential in all resistance efforts. This conferred civil responsibility on the *Asafo*: They had what amounted to the last word regarding the installation or removal of chiefs.⁵⁶ Thus, the *Asafo* acted as a check on the *Ebusua* or royal families' prerogative of choosing the *Omanhin*.⁵⁷ During installations, it was the *Asafo* that carried the prospective chief shoulder-high in a procession marked by drumming, singing, and the firing of musketry.⁵⁸ Given this responsibility, the *Asafo* were influential in the determination of who became king, even though they were not kingmakers. The opprobrium associated with their refusal to carry a prospective chief always compelled the royal family to seek *Asafo* consent before the final choice was made.⁵⁹ In the unfortunate event of an *Omanhin* being found guilty of a crime and sentenced to be deposed, the execution of that order was the sole preserve of the *Asafo*. These roles in the indigenous political processes enhanced their influence over the *Omanhin*.⁶⁰

The *Asafo* had other responsibilities also. For instance, in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were also expected to be in charge of policing the community, maintaining peace and security in markets, and helping with public building projects and

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

other construction work in their respective quarters.⁶¹ In the colonial era, the *Asafo* bore the brunt of ordinances enacted by the government to enforce public works.⁶² In emergencies, criminal occurrences, or disasters they were called upon to enter the forest in order to capture a murderer or highway robber, and, if necessary, in search of a would-be suicide. They also hunted and put down any wild animal that became a menace to the community.⁶³ In coastal Southern Gold Coast, there were occasional accidents on the sea such as capsizing of canoes and drowning of amateur swimmers. The *Asafo* had the responsibility of saving survivors and retrieving bodies from the sea.⁶⁴

This formidable usefulness and relevance notwithstanding, there were indications of negative, conflicting, and even derogatory images of the *Asafo*, stemming from its inherent rowdiness and “hotheadedness,” as they were described at times within the colonial administration.⁶⁵ The *Asafo* found it difficult to shake off the demeaning tag of gross irresponsibility. Some indications of this can be found in Akan proverbs. *Eka nea onni ntoma nkoa nka ye gur Asafo a yennwie da*⁶⁶ (playing *Asafo* was an excuse for the

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ J. Simensen, “Rural Mass Action in the Context of Anti-Colonial Protest: The *Asafo* Movement of Akim Abuakwa, Ghana,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7 (1974): 31.

⁶⁶ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

poor and irresponsible young man who was unable to find the wherewithal to provide descent clothing for himself). This was because *Asafo* activities did not require the elaborate clothing that, under normal circumstances, provided a visible distinction between rich and poor. The *Asafo* required that everybody donned the company uniform or simple clothing to facilitate swift movements. Furthermore, *wo gur Asafo a woko fie*⁶⁷ (if we perform *Asafo* we must also mind our families at home) indicated that *Asafo* membership was no excuse for one to neglect his domestic responsibilities. Members were encouraged to fulfill filial obligations and expectations. Furthermore, in everyday Akan parlance “playing *Asafo*” with one’s responsibilities meant being negligent.⁶⁸ If one was taunted for “playing *Asafo*” with one’s life, one was seen as being adrift and purposeless: He was just a happy-go-lucky individual who put a premium on indulging in buffoonery with his equally shiftless friends.⁶⁹

Just as the *Ebusua* had its *ebusua fie*, the *Asafo* was marked by its quarter system. The entire town was divided among the seven companies. The security, peace, and development of these quarters were in the hands of the respective *Asafo*. Although individuals came and went at will in any of the quarters, there were strict protocols associated with group entry. For instance, no *Asafo* group could traverse the quarter of

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

another *Asafo* without express permission.⁷⁰ The protocol arrangement involved the requesting group presenting drinks to whoever owned the quarter. Violations of these arrangements were usually resisted and became the cause of disturbances during the early nineteenth century.⁷¹

The seven *Asafo* companies of Cape Coast were *Bentsir* (No. 1), *Anafo* (No. 2), *Ntsin* (No. 3), *Nkum* (No. 4), *Abrofonkoa* (No. 5), *Akrampa* (No. 6), and *Amanfur* (No. 7).⁷² The *Bentsir* company was mentioned in popular accounts as one of the earliest and largest.⁷³ This was one group that felt itself superior to the rest.⁷⁴ For its emblem, *Bentsir* used a flag made of a piece of blanket, which members said signified that in times past they used to feed and clothe the men and women of the other companies.⁷⁵ Their primary color was red, with black and white as the secondary ones. The red color, according to elders of the company, was a mark of their ability to resist danger. It also

⁷⁰ PRAAD Adm. 11/1439. Case No. 43/1923: Petition from Supi, Asafohinfo and Elders of the *Bentsir* company of Cape Coast to the Hon. Secretary of Native Affairs, 23 January 1928, 1.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 2.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁵ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview. See also PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to meanings of Customs, 13 – 16.

showed that the *Bentsir* company was not intimidated by blood and deadly situations.⁷⁶ It was claimed by the *Supi, Asafohenfo*, (leaders) and elders of *Bentsir* company that their red ensign and flag staff was given to them by Governor Charles McCarthy prior to the fateful battle of 1824.⁷⁷ This was because they were the first to volunteer to go with the governor to the ill-fated battle at Nsamanko with the Ashanti, in which they suffered a loss of ninety-nine men.⁷⁸ The *Anafo* company was believed to have sprung from *Bentsir*.⁷⁹ This lineage explained the sense of kinship and cooperation between them, although it did not preclude disagreements and clashes.⁸⁰ However, they more often than not rallied behind each other in the event of conflict with other companies.⁸¹ Like other companies, *Anafo* had its colors. The primary one was light blue with violet as secondary.⁸² Among the emblems approved for the exclusive use of this company were

⁷⁶ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Petition of the *Supi, Asafohinfo* and Elders of the *Bentsir* company to the Hon. Secretary of Native Affairs, 23 January 1928, 44 – 48.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* This was also confirmed by Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ PRAAD Adm. 11/1586: Gold Coast Telegraph from Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province to Hon. Colonial Secretary on the subject, Fight at Cape Coast, dated 27 February 1915.

⁸¹ Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

⁸² *Ibid.*

three gongs, a pistol, a long-necked bird, a serpent, a man with his hands inside a pot, and a man on horseback.⁸³ These emblems, which were printed on their flags, commemorated their history as an *Asafo*.⁸⁴ The *Ntsin* company was believed to be the largest of all the Cape Coast *Asafo*. It was believed to have been formed at the instance of *Nana Aggery I*.⁸⁵ He created this group to commemorate the settlement of a dispute between his rich stepson, *Obrempong* Kojo, and a prominent woman in Cape Coast.⁸⁶ Many of the members were drawn from the *Nkum Asafo*, whereas the rest were made up of *Obrempong* Kojo's large retinue of servants and friends.⁸⁷ The *Ntsin* company was also referred to as the *Abrempong Asafo* (company of the rich and famous).⁸⁸ Obviously, this name was as a result of the *Obrempong* Kojo's status and connection with this particular *Asafo*. This was also because many of the chiefs of Cape Coast were associated

⁸³ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to meanings of Customs, 7 – 10.

⁸⁴ Leaders of this company indicated that these emblems together told all about their exploits in the past with other companies in Cape Coast as well as outside Cape Coast. They indicated fights fought and won, their superiority as well as humiliation of other companies.

⁸⁵ *Nana Kwesi Atta II*, interview; *Kobina Minnah*, interview; *Nana Kobina Arhin*, interview; *J. A. Hayfron*, interview. As the first of all the *Egyirs* (anglicized as *Aggery*), he was also known as “*Kojo Egyir Panyin*” or “*Nana Kwaewo*.”

⁸⁶ *Obrempong* was a title given to people of great wealth. Normally because of their wealth they assumed political and social significance. *Afua Oyeman*, interview; *Esi Nyaneba*, interview; *Nana Kwamina Nyimfa*, interview; *Nana Atta*, interview; *Kofi Ewusi*, interview.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

with it. This also made the members have an uncompromising sense of superiority. The company had black as its primary color with dark green and purple as the secondary ones.⁸⁹

According to popular account, the *Nkum* company was the first of all the *Asafo* of Cape Coast and was one of the largest.⁹⁰ The members claimed that their ancestors were the first settlers who cleared the virgin bush in the place where Cape Coast began. Thus, they were regarded as the land owners of the original settlement.⁹¹ This was emphasized by the emblems approved for their exclusive use. A typical illustration included an elephant, a castle, and a palm tree. These emblems signified the fact that the *Nkum Asafo* company originally owned the land on which the Cape Coast castle stood.⁹² Their colors were red and white or yellow and white.⁹³ The *Abrofonkoa Asafo* company was one of the smaller companies, if not the smallest. Otherwise known as the “artificers” or “builders of the castle,” the *Abrofonkoa* company was originally made up of servants, indigenous as well as those brought from neighboring West African countries, by the Europeans for the construction of the castle. The Swedes, especially, brought many of

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to meanings of Customs, 8.

⁹¹ PRAAD SCT Vol. 5, Part 1: In the matter of land acquired at Cape Coast for the extension of African Hospital Grounds—Plan No. Z1649, 74 – 76.

⁹² PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to meanings of Customs, 9.

⁹³ Ibid.

these men and women to the coast. They acquired others from Cape Coast itself. They trained the men as masons, carpenters, bricklayers, and the other crafts needed for the building of the castle.⁹⁴ In order to be near their masters, the servants, workers, and artisans were assigned plots of land close to the castle. Some of those who remained in the town after their duty constituted themselves into an *Asafo*, hence *Abrofonkoa* (servant of the White men).⁹⁵ The company's color was light green;⁹⁶ their emblems were the implements they used for the construction of the castle. Their motto was *Yen Na Yesi Aban Yi* (We Built this Castle). The *Akrampa Asafo* company, like the *Anaafo* and *Abrofonkoa*, was one of the small ones. It was originally made up of mulattoes (i.e., the children of African and European parentage), their direct descendants, and even their

⁹⁴ Afua Oyeman, interview; Esi Nyaneba, interview; Nana Kwamina Nyimfa, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kofi Ewusi, interview.

⁹⁵ Their history is similar to that of the occupants of the Alata quarters of other coastal towns, such as Accra and Elmina. In the Gold Coast, word "Alatafo" referred to the people of Lagos, Nigeria: Afua Oyeman, interview; Esi Nyaneba, interview; Nana Kwamina Nyimfa, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kofi Ewusi, interview. They suggested a preponderance of men and women from Lagos among the workmen of the castle. According to E. J. P. Brown, the Castle was originally built as a lodge by the Portuguese in the early part of the seventeenth century and named Carbo Corso. The Dutch rebuilt it in about 1630. They abandoned it and in 1658, the Swedes rebuilt, fortified, and renamed it "Carolusburg" (Charles Town). It was again recaptured by the Dutch in 1659, but it was besieged and taken by the Fetu Kingdom in 1660. The Swedes regained possession of it until 1663, when the king of Fetu surrendered the Castle to the Dutch. In 1664, Admiral Sir Robert Holmes attacked Cape Coast and took it from the Dutch. See E. J. P. Brown, *Gold Coast and Ashanti Reader* (London: Frank Cass, 1929), 122–123.

⁹⁶ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to meanings of Customs, 12.

servants.⁹⁷ The company was founded in 1665 by Thomas Edward Barter, also known as Tom Ewusi.⁹⁸ He was, himself, a mulatto who, because of his administrative and business acumen, was given the right to oversee some aspects of British trade interests on the Gold Coast by the Company of Merchants.⁹⁹ As marriage and cohabitation became rampant among African women and European men on the coast, a sizable mulatto population began to grow, and Barter organized them into the *Akrampa Asafo*.¹⁰⁰ Their motto was “Defense and Not Defiance,” which was intended to accentuate their peaceful disposition as well as their readiness to serve and promote the interests of the town.¹⁰¹ The *Akrampa* served as the bodyguards of Sir Charles McCarthy in the battle of 1824 against the Ashanti.¹⁰² Some of their officers were granted military commissions by King George IV after the Katamansu War (1826).¹⁰³ Their European connections were seen in their uniforms, as well as emblems. These included the use of regimental dresses consisting of green tunics with cummerbunds and helmets, white drill patrol jackets,

⁹⁷ Afua Oyeman, interview; Esi Nyaneba, interview; Nana Kwamina Nyimfa, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kofi Ewusi, interview.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ R. A. Kea, *Settlement, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 41.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 43.

black trousers with red side strips, green coats, and forage caps. Instead of the typical African drums, they used European side drums to summon their members.¹⁰⁴ This was one of the European influences on indigenous practices which occurred in the Gold Coast. The final company was *Amanfur Asafo*. It was created by some of the artisans who were said to have been brought over by the Danes to assist in the building of Fort Fredericksborg on a hill in the eastern approaches to Cape Coast. It is believed that these workmen were mainly from the eastern parts of the Bights of Guinea. Among the craftsmen in Amanfur were blacksmiths, goldsmiths, hat and cap makers, carpenters, bark cloth makers, iron workers, and woodcarvers. By the late 1660s, this new settlement made up of artisans had a population of about 1,500.¹⁰⁵ Among the emblems registered for their exclusive use were those that referred to their history as artisans: The hammer, drill, file, saw paper, and pot of polish denote the fact that they used these in the construction of the fort. Furthermore, the use of the whale and the tortoise indicated that they came by sea. Some of the inhabitants of Amanfur claimed that they came from Ga or Accra, which would explain the use of the crocodile.¹⁰⁶ The company's primary color was gold or yellow.

Some of the *Asafo* companies had pacts or cooperative arrangements among them. These were formed around the total number of the satellite villages of Cape Coast. The

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 44.

¹⁰⁶ The following asserted that the crocodile was sacred to most Ga-speaking people: Nana Kwesi Atta II, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kobina Arhin, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

thirty-six towns and villages that constituted the indigenous political area were unevenly distributed among the *Bentsir*, *Ntsin*, *Nkum*, and *Amanfur*. The *Omanhin* also had some villages under his control. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these outlying towns and villages were inhabited mainly by members of the controlling *Asafo* company, though some members of other companies lived there as well. The *Bentsir* had control over five towns: Ekon, Amama (or Amamoma), Apewosika, Kwesibra, and Kokwaadu. The *Ntsin* controlled twelve towns: Siwdu, Abora, Kakumdu, Mpeasem, Akotokyir, Ebrobonko, Amiyao, Dankokrom, Bisakrom, Oguakrom, Kyirakomfo (Beulah), and Yayakwana. The *Nkum Asafo* had eight towns and villages: Pedu, Kwaaprao, Ankafur, Esuekyir, Anto-Esuekyir, Saforo, Mampong, and Adisadel. The *Amanfur* controlled the villages of Nkamfua and Amoanda. The remaining nine villages and towns—Effutu, Tandokrom, Kubekyir, Bibianeha, Berase, Agona, Essiam, Sarman, and Ankwase—were directly under the *Omanhin*.¹⁰⁷ The *Anaafo*, *Abrofonkoa*, and *Akrampa* companies had no villages under their direct control. However, as noted above, they did have some members living in these outlying towns and villages. What was the significance of this distribution of towns and villages? Did these companies and towns derive any practical benefits from these arrangements? And to what extent did these satellite town and village arrangements affect conflict situations?

It has been alleged that an obvious advantage for the *Asafo* was the existence of unwritten pacts of cooperation in defensive (and sometimes offensive) maneuvers. These pacts were reinforced and given a mystical aspect by the “drinking of fetish,” which was

¹⁰⁷ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1634: Cape Coast Stool Enquiry, 14April 1914, 14.

as binding as oath swearing.¹⁰⁸ Any affront to the principal company in the Cape Coast town was seen as a direct attack on the allied companies in the outlying towns and villages, and vice versa.¹⁰⁹ Thus, allied companies were ready to respond to emergency situations in support of one another. The victory (or defeat) of one company was seen as a victory (or defeat) of the alliance, which would be celebrated (or avenged).¹¹⁰ As one can imagine, these alliances had the potential to aggravate simple—and sometimes avoidable—conflicts. These arrangements also became useful in their resistance to colonial rule. In addition, it should also be pointed out that the strength of the principal companies in Cape Coast depended on the number of towns and villages they controlled.¹¹¹ The stronger companies were frequently the most belligerent because they were always ready to exploit their numerical strength. A careful study of the company system of Cape Coast shows that the *Bentsir*, *Anaafo*, *Ntsin*, and *Nkum* companies were the most fractious. Indeed, *Ntsin* was involved in nearly every conflict and resistance to colonial rule. Nevertheless, some companies were surprising. For example, even though

¹⁰⁸ All collaborators were in agreement regarding the significance of this. They included Nana Amba Ayiaba, interview; Kobinah Minnah, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kobina Yallow, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* These outlying towns and villages were referred to in local parlance as *nkoandom* (servile group of followers) or *habanasidom* (rural [or village] groups [or followers]).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

the *Anafo* company was small and had no direct control over any outlying town or village, it was one of the most bellicose.¹¹²

By the first quarter of the twentieth century *Asafo* hierarchy was quite impressive.¹¹³ It had chiefs, elders, and officers. The *Tufuhin* was the supreme head of all the seven *Asafo* companies and was responsible for their general conduct in the *oman* (state).¹¹⁴ *Tufuhin* literally meant *Tu* (gun), *Fu* (people), and *hin* (king or chief). This made the occupant of that position the king of the people who bore guns; significantly, every member of an *Asafo* company was supposed to own a gun. The *Tufuhin* was next in rank to the *Omanhin*, and represented the *Asafo* companies on the *Oman* Council.¹¹⁵ The significance of this office was revealed in the fact that there was a royal stool for the occupant like one would find for any high-ranking indigenous Akan position. The position of *Tufuhin* was supposed to be an inherited one, through the female line of the *Kwamina Edu* family. Thus, it was the preserve of a particular family in Cape Coast.¹¹⁶ In 1932 for instance, this was, however, disputed by some sections of the society.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/58: Tufuhin Inquiry, 27 September 1929, 3.

¹¹⁷ In 1932 *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III and the Coker family insisted that it was not the preserve of any one family and could be given to any one as the indigenous state pleased. See Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Next in the *Asafo* hierarchy were the *Supifo*.¹¹⁸ These were the respective heads of the various *Asafo* companies.¹¹⁹ Each *Supi* was responsible for the general conduct of their respective groups and reported to the *Tufuhin*.¹²⁰ Together the *Supifo* and the *Tufuhin* formed the high council of the *Asafo*.¹²¹ Below the *Supifo* were the *Kwatekyirefo*.¹²² These were the officers who were supposed to assist the *Supifo* in their administration of the various groups.¹²³ Next in the hierarchy were the chiefs of the *Asafo*—the *Asafohinfo* (male) and their female counterparts, the *Asafoakyirefo*.¹²⁴ Each *Asafo* had its own subdivision and were under the charge of their officers. The number of *Asafohinfo* and *Asafoakyirefo* depended on the size of the company.¹²⁵ Like all officers, the *Asafohinfo* and *Asafoakyirefo* were supposed to be the embodiments of the soul and spirit of the

¹¹⁸ This is the plural form. The singular form is *Supi*. Nana Amba Ayiaba, interview; Kobinah Minnah, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kobina Yallow, interview.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

Asafo.¹²⁶ They were supposed to be fearless, daring, exhibit the capacity to make bold decisions, and lead by example. By this they were supposed to inspire these qualities in their members.¹²⁷ This was the surest way of commanding the respect and trust of the entire group.¹²⁸ The *Asafohinfo* and the *Asafoakyirefo* had the responsibility for the general discipline of their respective subdivisions within the company.¹²⁹

The less-prominent officers—but by no means insignificant positions—included the *Kyirema* (the master-divine drummer).¹³⁰ His place was crucial to the function and survival of the *Asafo* as an indigenous institution. The *Kyirema* was well-versed, gifted, and schooled in the science, art, and language of drumming. He knew the ordinary drum language that was understood by all members: upon instructions from his superiors he was able to communicate summons in emergencies (and for scheduled gatherings). And he was able to play ordinary beats of *Asafo* songs. Furthermore, the master-divine drummer was distinguished by his ability to play drum poetry and other esoteric sound combinations,¹³¹ which were so powerful that they allowed one to commune with the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Afua Oyeman, interview; Esi Nyaneba, interview; Nana Kwamina Nyimfa, interview; Nana Atta; Kofi Ewusi, interview; Kwamina Prah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 19 May 2009.

¹³¹ Ibid.

world of spirits on land and sea.¹³² The *Frankaakitanyi* was the bearer of the *Asafo* flag.¹³³ He was skillful in the intricate *Asafo* dance, which he did with the flag. In conjunction with other officers, he was supposed to guard the flag, which epitomized the honor of his group.¹³⁴ *Asikanmbahin* was the chief of the group, and he was in charge of bearing swords and knives.¹³⁵ The *Bombaa* was in charge of the whip bearers.¹³⁶ Next were the *Asafo Akomfo*, priests and priestesses who, together with the divine drummers, were responsible for the spiritual dimension of the group.¹³⁷ They were the links between the physical and spiritual worlds.¹³⁸ Together, the various officers worked to preserve the honor, pride, and spirit of the *Asafo*. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the colonial authorities sought to portray the *Asafo* as a base institution whose existence was for nothing but the promotion of excessive recklessness

¹³² This was made possible by the Kyirema's knowledge of the precise times when spirits could be invoked. Afua Oyeman, interview; Esi Nyaneba, interview; Nana Kwamina Nyimfa, interview; Nana Atta; Kofi Ewusi, interview; Kwamina Prah, interview.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Nana Amba Ayiaba, interview; Kobinah Minnah, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Kwaku Botse, interview; Kobina Yallow, interview.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

and disorderly behavior.¹³⁹ The *Asafo* commitment to ensuring law and order, and the proper conduct of the institution rendered that view untenable. Nevertheless, this did not completely absolve the *Asafo* from the stigma of conflict and excesses.¹⁴⁰

Again in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a great deal of discussion on the issue of resistance among the *Asafo* institution in Southern Gold Coast, particularly among the coastal Fanti states.¹⁴¹ It was undoubtedly one of its most

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ R. Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa c. 1874–1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Trondheim, Norway: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997); J. A. Aggrey, *Asafo* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1978); F. Agbodeka, “The Fanti Confederation, 1865–1869,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8 (1965): 82–123; Jean M. Allman, “The Youngmen and the Porcupine: Class, Nationalism and Asante Struggle for Self-Determination, 1945–1957,” *Journal of African History* 31, no. 2 (1990): 50–70; Kofi A. Busia, *Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951); I. Chukwukere, *Cultural Resilience: The Asafo Company System of the Fanti* (Cape Coast, Ghana: Cape Coast University Press, 1970); I. Chukwukere, “Perspectives on the Asafo Institution in Southern Ghana,” *Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 1 (1980): 50 - 75; A. K. Datta, “The Fanti Asafo: A Re-Examination,” *Africa* 42 (1972): 45 - 67. Harvey M. Feinberg, “Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast during the Eighteenth Century,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 79, no. 7 (1989): 104 - 120. This includes some references to Elmina wards and the Asafo on pages 104 to 109. There is also a reference to ward conflicts on pages 118 to 120. M. J. Field, *Social Organization of the Ga People* (London: Crown Agents for Colonies, 1940), 118 - 120; D. Fortesque, “The Accra Crowd and Opposition to the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1920–1924,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 115 - 135; George P. Hagan, “An Analytical Study of Fanti Kinship,” *Research Review* 4, no. 1 (1967): 35–57; J. E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Frank Cass, 1970); Per Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1995); J. C. DeGraft Johnson, “The Fanti Asafo,” *Africa* 5, no. 3 (1932): 307–22; T. J. Johnson, “Protest, Challenge and Change: An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots, 1890–1920,” *Economy and Society* 1, no. 2 (1972): 164–193; R. A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins, 1982); L. I. Anshan, “Asafo and Destoolment in Colonial Southern Ghana, 1900–1953,” *International Journal of African*

conspicuous features. Nearly every detailed work on the *Asafo* among the Akan of coastal Southern Gold Coast makes reference to the incidence of conflict. Jarle Simensen, comparing the *Asafo* system in Akyem Abuakwa (an inland state) and that of the coastal states, indicated that, “the new form of the *Asafo* organization in Akim in some ways approach the system in the coastal towns, but there was a significant difference in that the traditional company units in a town were weaker and inter-company bickering was absent in Akim.”¹⁴² This implies that “inter-company bickering” was prevalent among the

Historical Studies 28, no. 2 (1995): 327–57; Mary McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast: The Fante State* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 105 - 106. This has a short reference to the *Asafo* on pages 105–106, particularly with respect to a British governor’s attempt to regulate that institution. I. Odotei, “The Ga and Their Neighbors” (Ph.D. diss., University of Ghana, 1972). This has a short description of the *Asafo* among the Ga. Frazer Ofori Atta, “Amantoomiensa in the Political and Administrative Set-Up of Akyem Abuakwa” (B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1978); John K. Osei-Tutu, *The Asafoi (Socio-Military Groups) in the History and Politics of Accra (Ghana) from the Seventeenth to Mid Twentieth Century* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000); Maxwell Owusu, *Uses and Abuses of Political Power: A Case Study of Community and Change in the Politics of Ghana* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); R. Porter, “The Cape Coast Conflict of 1803,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 11 (1970): 30 - 45; John Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 25–32; J. M. Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 99 – 100; S. Shaloff, “The Income Tax, Indirect Rule and the Depression: The Gold Coast Riot of 1931,” *International Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 4 (1974): 591–607; J. Simenson, “Commoners, Chiefs and Colonial Government: British Policy and Local Politics in Akyem Abuakwa, Ghana under Colonial Rule” (Ph.D. diss., University of Trondheim, 1975); J. Simenson, “Nationalism from Below: The Akyem Abuakwa Example,” *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1975): 31–57; J. Simensen, “Crisis in Akim Abuakwa: The Native Administrative Revenue Measure of 1932,” *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1975): 99–104; J. Simensen, “Rural Mass Action in the Context of Anti-Colonial Protest: The *Asafo* Movement of Akim Abuakwa, Ghana,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8 (1974): 25–41; A. K. Datta and R. Porter, “The *Asafo* System in Historical Perspective: An Inquiry into the Origin and Development of a Ghanaian Institution,” *Journal of African History* 12, no. 2 (1971): 279–297; John Argyle, “Kalela, Beni, *Asafo*, Ingoma and the Rural Urban Dichotomy,” *African Studies* 50 (1991): 65–86.

¹⁴² Simensen, “Rural Mass Action in the Context of Anti-Colonial Protest,” 31.

coastal *Asafo*. Simensen went on to indicate that there was a company clash in Apam, a coastal town, in 1930, which caused the colonial administration to commission J. C. DeGraft Johnson to write a report on the *Asafo* institution on the coast, Akyem Abuakwa, Kwahu, and Ashanti.¹⁴³ His recommendations were so repugnant to the chief commissioner of Ashanti, who “refused to consider efforts to introduce “mob rule” on the model of the Fanti system where the *Asafo* had been allowed to get out of hand.”¹⁴⁴ Obviously, the chief commissioner’s reaction was a quintessential example of the “civilized versus savage” interpretation of the colonial encounter. In the battle for the hearts and minds of Africans, the forces of colonialism and evangelism were quick to see intolerant and uncooperative sections of Africans as representing a savage resistance to civilization. In the same vein, African military resistance to colonial occupation was dismissed in equally derogatory terms: “the irregular marching and skirmishing of barbarous hordes.”¹⁴⁵

A. K. Datta and R. Porter also see intercompany resistance and fights as “semblances of the military role of the *Asafo*.”¹⁴⁶ They observe that, “there is a strong element of rivalry in relations between various companies of the same town or state; this manifests itself in the way members of one company will provoke those of another by

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Crowder, ed., *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 11.

¹⁴⁶ Datta and Porter, “The *Asafo* System in Historical Perspective,” 2.

making oblique references, in songs and proverbs, to the past humiliations of the other company.”¹⁴⁷ According to I. Chukwukere, there are many documentary sources that “implicitly stressed the theme of rivalry, conflict, and unstable harmony characteristic of the institution.”¹⁴⁸ His assertion is supported by archival evidence. The Public Records and Archives Administration Department has numerous files with reports of inter- and intra-*Asafo* conflicts, as well as resistance to colonial rule.¹⁴⁹ In addition, the National Archives of Britain has files on *Asafo* resistance to colonial rule.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, documentary evidence is not the only source of information on the *Asafo* propensity for resistance. A great deal of information about this are preserved in the oral tradition, as well as in *Asafo* songs, proverbs, and flags.¹⁵¹ This has led, to some extent, to the stigmatization of the *Asafo*. These and certain stereotypical references have forestalled serious consideration of the *Asafo* as a window through which Cape Coast and other

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Chukwukere, *Cultural Resilience*, 12.

¹⁴⁹ These include the SCT series such as SCT 5/1/11 to 40; SCT 5/4/151 to 229; and the SCT 5/8/1 to 17 over the period 11 February 1864 to 25 November 1940, ADM 11/1/586 – ADM 11/1/1763, and ADM 23/1/16 – ADM 23/1/100.

¹⁵⁰ These include the series PRO CO 1069/34, PRO CO 1069/41, PRO CO 96 Gold Coast Original Correspondence, and PRO CO 879 Confidential Prints.

¹⁵¹ Some of these are expressed in proverbs like “*abofra a onyim ne nsaho huhur nye mpanyinfo dzidzi*,” (the child who knows how to wash their hands eats with elder), “*Abofra a omma ne na nnda anofa no bontua mpa no tum*” (the child that will not let its mother sleep at night will also endure a regime of medication for the period), and “*Se etwa da wo nan ho a nndzi epirpra gur*” (If you have scars on your legs you avoid dangerous fights). Songs which also express *Asafo* propensity for conflict include “*Ntwea mba*” (Children of wild dogs), “*Abontuabontua*,” and “*Nyaa asaaba hye ne tun no nnhuruw gya*”(One who has flammable cotton in his anus does not jump over fire).

places in Southern Gold Coast can be studied. The *Asafo* were often referred to in colonial records as rowdy young men, hot-heads, and a potential for mob rule.¹⁵² And, indeed, some of these descriptions seeped into aspects of popular thought. Yet, the *Asafo* was the only large indigenous group representing the majority of the people of Cape Coast. This makes the *Asafo* a useful and ready referent for the study of Cape Coast. This is in ample consonance with the principle of individual—or group life—histories possessing the potential of providing insights into the lives and times of their generation in particular, and that of the society in general. The *Asafo* and other sociocultural indigenous groups have organic relationships with their societies, so much that they and their societies are seen as one and the same.

Asafo, Ebusua, Conflict and Resistance

Conflict is conceptualized here as a time-honored social phenomenon, the inevitability of which is variously expressed. It can take the form of a misunderstanding, ideas and actions in opposition to each other, or divergent views. These might be latent, implied, or unspoken. But when the causative agents persist and deepen, they degenerate into confrontation. At this stage, there is an expression and assertion of divergent stances that, when pushed further can degenerate into clashes. Thus, a conflict situation begins with confrontation and escalates into clashes. As a process, conflict, confrontation, and clashes occur on the same scale with varying degrees of intensity. Furthermore, conflict is not

¹⁵² Simensen, “Rural Mass Action in the Context of Anti-Colonial Protest,” 31.

just a case of divergent views, ideas, and actions acting in opposition to one another, but on this continuum it can assume different purposes and applications.¹⁵³

Georg Simmel, for instance, has indicated that there was probably no social unit in which convergent and divergent currents among its members were not interwoven. Conflict provided a dynamic by which some were drawn together and others were driven away from each other into those combinations we call groups.¹⁵⁴ The Cape Coast and Southern Gold Coast resistance to colonial rule manifested this conflict phenomenon in interesting ways. On the unavoidability of conflict, Simmel argued that just as the universe needed “love and hate” (i.e., attractive and repulsive forces) in order to have any form at all, so human society, in order to attain a determinate shape, required a quantitative ration of harmony and disharmony, association and competition, and favorable and unfavorable tendencies.¹⁵⁵ Kenneth Boulding also defined conflict as an activity that was found almost everywhere, and although conflicts might be different in the details, there were general common elements. He suggested that a general theory of conflict could be derived from many different sources and disciplines. Boulding identified two broad types of general model of conflict: static and dynamic.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ This apparently is what makes Simmel argue that in contrast to “pure negativity, conflict contains something positive. Its positive and negative aspects . . . are integrated.” Georg Simmel, *Conflict and Group Affiliations*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix (New York: Free Press, 1966), 14.

¹⁵⁴ Simmel, *Conflict and Group Affiliations*, 15.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁵⁶ Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 1–2.

Max Gluckman, like Simmel, held that quarrels and conflicts existed in all groups and could not be wished out of existence.¹⁵⁷ Yet he complicated conflict in ways that mimicked the situation among the indigenous Akan institutions being discussed in this context. He suggested that people in societies quarrelled over certain aspects of their customary practices, but were restrained from violence through other allegiances.¹⁵⁸ Anthropology, among other disciplines, emphasized the great complexity that developed in the relations between human beings. According to Gluckman, some of these complexities arose from human nature itself, with its varied organic and individual needs. But the customs of each society exacerbated this complexity. Customary forms for developing relations of kinship, for establishing friendships, and for compelling the observance of right relations with the universe, first divided and then reunited men. Communities of people, regardless of size, whether developed or developing, were always divided and further divided by customary allegiances. These were aggravated by religion and ritual.¹⁵⁹ Gluckman affirmed that conflicts were a part of social life; and custom appeared to exacerbate these conflicts. But in doing so, custom also restrained these conflicts from destroying the wider social order.¹⁶⁰ The Ebusua and Asafo systems

¹⁵⁷ Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 25.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

of the coastal Akan in operation, on one hand caused conflicts, and on the other also restrained these conflicts from dismantling the entire social order.

In his bid to create a general theory of power and conflict, Hubert M. Blalock expressed a view that was consistent with some of the conflicts in Akan societies. He defined social conflict as an intentional mutual exchange of negative sanctions (i.e., punitive behaviors) by two or more parties, who might be individuals, corporate actions, or more loosely knit quasi-groups.¹⁶¹ Blalock observed that the world was filled with powerful groups and individuals who tended to dominate and exploit others. In such instances, conflict might be the only mechanism through which subordinated parties could hope to turn the tables, gain a measure of freedom, or seek redress from exploitative relationships. Many conflicts were initiated by weaker parties, often with the hope that the mere threat of conflict would be sufficient to achieve their objectives.¹⁶² Blalock pointed out that sometimes such threats were effective in inducing the stronger party to “back off” and treat the subordinate party more favorably.¹⁶³ On the other hand, the kind of conflicts being examined in this dissertation would show that sometimes the stronger party would not quietly “back off.” Or if they were resisted fiercely, they did so; and found ways in which to punish those subordinates. Blalock, like all other theorists on

¹⁶¹ Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., *Power and Conflict: Toward a General Theory* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), vii.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 7.

conflict, recognized the ubiquity of social conflicts and added that they came in many forms.¹⁶⁴

In Akan social philosophy, the idea of resistance was common. These were expressed in proverbs and everyday language. *Puntusiee, puntusiee, se ehom hendu, annhum hendu ye tar nsu enyiwaaoo!* (We are like the cork or the calabash! Whether you suppress us or not, we resist you by floating so easily). Thus, it was not surprising that the *Asafo* of Southern Gold Coast were frequently engaged in resistance. Yet, this was not the only indication of the philosophy of resistance. For example, appellative expressions of Cape Coast provided a smattering of confrontation, and resistance. The most well-known of its appellations is as follows:

Oguaa

Oguaa Akoto

Akoto gywir gywirba a

Wogu hontu ano

Eduasa a won ye apemkoe a

Apem enntum hon

Ye Oguaa den na

Oguaa annye wo bi?

[Cape Coast

Cape Coast crabs

Quick and nimble crabs which

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

Lie close by their holes
The seventy that fought with a thousand
And were not annihilated
What was it that you did to Cape Coast
That Cape Coast did not retaliate?]

This appellation amounted to a cryptic expression of the town's strength, nature, and character. Its inhabitants were quick to seek redress, and when a push became a shove, they did not hesitate to retaliate. Thus, there was no hesitation on the part of Cape Coast to meet confrontation with confrontation, aggression with aggression, and defiance with defiance, and that provided a sure recipe for resistance. Moreover, the appellation was said to be potent enough to make the Cape Coast nation act on their threats.¹⁶⁵ Thus, this brief statement was a powerful statement of origin, history, and the sacred; its significance was deep and grave. Its recitation threw a challenge. It was a challenge to the individual, in particular, and the nation, in general, to uphold and stand in defense of the beliefs expressed therein. The master divine drummers of Cape Coast asserted that when the appellation was sounded on the drum, its sacred element was invoked. In a typical war situation or resistance, men and women were charged to acquit themselves in ways

¹⁶⁵ Odomankoma Kyerema Kwamena Prah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 19 May 2009. The title Odomankoma Kyerema means "the master divine drummer." According to Kwamena Prah, this was the highest honor ever to be conferred on a drummer in the Oguaa State. It had to do with one's dexterity, the number of years one had spent playing of the drums, and one's ability to use the drums to communicate with the spiritual world. Other collaborators include: Kweku Boste, interview; Kobina Yallow, interview.

that reflected the appellation.¹⁶⁶ It was, therefore, not surprising that the *Asafo* of Southern Gold Coast frequently engaged in resistance and conflicts.¹⁶⁷

The functions of the *Asafo* and *Ebusua* systems often created social conflicts and resistance. The patrilineal nature of the former vis-à-vis the matrilineal orientation of the latter presented difficult situations for men and women. A person belonged to the *Asafo* of his or her father. If a man held allegiance to the *Bentsir Asafo* company, his sons and daughters became members of that group. Thus, a typical patrilineal household would consist exclusively of members of one *Asafo*, even if each of the children belonged to different mothers or were begotten in multiple marriages. This was in contrast to the *Ebusua* system, which was determined along matrilineal lines. Thus, in a matrilineal household one was sure to find a complex network of *Asafo* membership.¹⁶⁸ And given the total number of *Asafo* companies in Cape Coast, the network could be even more complicated. The reason, as noted earlier, was that the children of the women of a matrilineal household would be members of their respective fathers' companies, because the fathers were not likely to belong to the same *Asafo*. Children from the same womb or mother, but of different fathers, belonged to different *Asafo*.¹⁶⁹ The problems presented

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Nana Amba Ayiaba, interview; Kobinah Minnah, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; Kojo Insaidoo, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Supi Yallow, interview.

¹⁶⁸ George P. Hagan, "An Analytical Study of Fante Kinship," *Research Review* 4, no. 1 (1967): 35 – 57.

¹⁶⁹ G. P. Hagan, "Aspects of Social Change among the Effutu" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1974), 15. See also G. P. Hagan, *Divided We Stand: A Study of Social*

by this situation were obvious to the critical observer: Conflicts among *Asafo* companies had serious repercussions on matrilineal group solidarity. How was this possible? The *Asafo* united men and women with their fathers' brothers and fathers' sisters, which often created conflict among mothers' brothers and mothers' sisters; and, obviously, between mothers and their children. Thus, although the *Asafo* enforced patrilineal group solidarity, it weakened the bonds between matrilineal kinsmen and created conflicts among them.¹⁷⁰ This was confirmed by Christensen, who observed that among the Fanti, the attachment and commitment of the individual to his *Asafo* company membership took precedence over all other affiliations. Thus, one might take arms against his matrilineal kinsmen.¹⁷¹

The potential for conflict due to *Asafo* and *Ebusua* dynamics often appeared in cases of inheritance. In a town that paid nearly equal attention to both matrilineal and patrilineal alliances, a father was often confronted with the conflict of his obligations to his *Ebusua* (mainly to his sisters' sons and daughters) and his obligation to his own children. The bond that tied him to his sons and daughters was one of affection as well as a spiritual bond, but indigenous laws stipulated that his property must, upon his death, go to his sisters' sons. This difficult situation for men was further illustrated by Emile

Change among the Effutu of Coastal Ghana (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000), 130.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Christensen, *Double Descent*, 4.

Vercrujisse in his examination of the dynamics of Fanti domestic organization.¹⁷² He observed that it was normal practice for members of households in Fanti—as well as the larger Akan communities—to be related by kinship or marriage. In effect, it should be a single kin group, which the men should bring into being by acquiring or constituting their own house upon marriage; so that they could live with their wives and children. In contrast to this arrangement, men were supposed to offer lodging to their maternal kin, notably their sisters' children, whereas their wives were in some situations expected to live with their mothers and sisters.¹⁷³ Vercrujisse argued that this was tantamount to saying that men had to solve contradictory requirements for loyalty toward their own children and their sisters' children.¹⁷⁴ The fathers were not alone in this dilemma. Though sons lived with their fathers and served them all the time, their economic obligations and responsibilities, as well as their crucial filial ties, lay with their *Ebusua*. They were supposed to ensure the collective good of their *Ebusua* where they were deemed to belong. Wives were also entangled in this complex web of social and cultural conflicts. They were bound to their brothers because of the *Ebusua* system and in critical times had to look up to them for security.¹⁷⁵ Thus, women were torn between their husbands and their kin, particularly their mothers and brothers. As a result, there was

¹⁷² Emile V. W. Vercrujisse, *The Dynamics of Fanti Domestic Organization: A Comparison with Fortes' Ashanti Survey* (The Hague, Netherlands: Institute of Social Studies, 1972), 1.

¹⁷³ Hagan, *Divided We Stand*, 130.

¹⁷⁴ Vercrujisse, *The Dynamics of Fanti Domestic Organization*, 1.

¹⁷⁵ Christensen, *Double Descent*, 4–5.

often tremendous conflict and mistrust between a man's sons and his sisters' sons, as well as between his wife (or wives) and his sisters and their daughters.¹⁷⁶

Although these kinds of conflicts were common to the Akan in general; but they were pushed to a critical extent among the coastal sections of this group. And in Cape Coast it was worse because of the heavy concentration of *Asafo* and *Ebusua* groups. This was at the heart of petty squabbles and serious political conflicts, most of which have been described in documents and/or the oral tradition. To the extent that this was true of Cape Coast, there was an everyday or casual expression, *Guae wonnye*” (the people of Cape Coast are not trustworthy), which captured the tendency to fan conflicts and resistance, push them to the extremes, and grin at the mishaps and failures of others. This was further captured in the image of crabs in a bucket. In an effort to overcome the confinement of a bucket, crabs climbed on each other's back. But when the first one was on the verge of reaching the top, the one at the bottom got out of place, thus dropping the whole lot back into the bucket. The incidence of petty squabbles, tension, mistrust, and resistance was evident in this imagery. However, in view of the Fanti philosophical expressions of the unavoidability of conflicts among siblings, and even within the individual human being, this should not be surprising. It illuminated the nuances of custom and tradition in conflict with each other, yet it exhibited their ability to hold society together. Indeed, the larger Akan society, by its sociocultural arrangements,

¹⁷⁶ It is important to note that most of these tensions and conflicts with respect to inheritance are abating. These are due to a variety of factors, including education, internal family factors (especially the conduct and behavior of individuals), and government regulation as a result of generations of women suffering under traditional practices.

ensured that every individual was taken care of by affiliations through his or her mother's line.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed at length the Asafo (patrilineal) and Ebusua (matrilineal) as an aspect of nineteenth and twentieth century maritime culture of the Fanti speaking Akan people. The Asafo and Ebusua among other things expressed the coastal Akan idea of gender complementarity. It was observed that this complementarity did not preclude conflicts in its operation. Yet they were able to keep the society together at the same time. The indigenous perspective of conflict offers an appreciation of their tendency to resist whatever stood in their way. To this end they used old conflicts among themselves, in their bid to resist the colonial government in its efforts to control their ways of life. By the 1900s the Asafo had gone down in the records as a group that thrived on resistance and conflict.

Chapter 3

Asafo, Conflict and Resistance: An Occupational and Environmental Interpretation

I subscribe to the argument that littoral societies exist; and that one can travel the shores of oceans and identify societies that have something in common with other littoral societies. Living on the shore transcends the various influences of a geographically and culturally diverse inland.¹ Understanding this will afford us a better appreciation of how men and women lived in relation to the sea and how the influence of the ocean is transferred to other, non-sea-related activities. This is in consonance with the Fernand Braudel's analytical approach in which natural and social processes are assumed to have an intimate interconnection.²

During my period of investigation, the fishing community in Cape Coast described itself as a strong and proud one. Their respect for each other was cemented by their connection to the sea: the Atlantic Ocean south of Gold Coast. And for the people of Cape Coast, it had served as an economic resource and a highway by which Western contact arrived in the late fifteenth. Alfred Crosby and William Beinart have emphasized the essentially biological nature of human beings, whose interaction with the environment (as well as their exploitation of natural resources without which there is no life) must be a

¹ Michael N. Pearson, "Littoral Societies: The Concept and the Problems," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (2006): 353.

² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World: The Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 111.

focal element in history.³ Stating this earlier and in a somewhat different rendition, Lucien Febvre emphasized that studying human history must be done “with a totality of the natural environment or upon geography as an element of history.”⁴ Emmanuel Akyeampong has built on this by arguing that a major limitation in the literature on African environmental history was the focus on land—as a factor of production and historical space—to the neglect of water resources.⁵ Consequently, he draws heavily on the relationship between the sea and the people who lived close to it, particularly in terms of the sea’s influence in shaping social identities. Thus, he defines “eco-social” as the emphasis on “the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between people and their environment, and how this mutualism is the focus of analysis.”⁶ With this emphasis on “social,” Akyeampong defines “ecology” as “context” and not as “method,” because “a sustained work on ecology requires a familiarity with the natural sciences.”⁷ Rainer Buschmann has suggested the amazing fact of how much exploration of the world’s ocean remained to be done; and how important the “recognition of oceans and seas as

³ Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972); William Beinart, “African History and Environmental History,” *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 269.

⁴ Lucien Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History* (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925), 137.

⁵ Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-Social History of the Anlo of Southern Ghana c. 1850 to Recent Times* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001), 12. He, however, cites a couple of exceptions: see 12, fn. 26.

⁶ Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon*, 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

valid categories of historical analysis” are.⁸ Furthermore, different genres of environmental and ecological histories (e.g., landscape history, in which the landscape denoted both the physical land surface and the social construction of it) are relevant. For instance, David Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo have argued that the “landscape means existence and this encompasses the physical land, the people on it, and the culture through which people work out the possibilities of land.”⁹ Alternatively, it is argued here that the coast means existence. It encompasses the physical land, the people on it, and the culture by which they are able to function as masters of their world. To this end, this chapter seeks to examine the dynamic relationship between the people of Southern Gold Coast and their environment and how this was reflected in their social structures and processes, e.g., economy and livelihood, knowledge, belief, power, ideas of bravery, and defiance: all of which informed their modes of resistance to colonial rule.

Affinity with the Sea and the Acquisition of Fishing Skill

The sea in relation to the land mass is a vast world that affects those who live by it in many ways. The *Afarfohin* (chief fisherman) and others were emphatic about this during my interview session with them on the beach in Cape Coast. *Afarfohin* was a man whose physique and age accentuated his experience and position. The chief fisherman was thoughtful and confident as he patiently drew from his memory all he had to say about living close to the sea and living from it. He conceptualized this phenomenon in religious

⁸ Bernard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, “Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean,” *Journal of World History* 16 (2005): 102.

⁹ David W. Cohen, and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (London: James Currey, 1989), 114 – 115.

terms: *Nana Bosompo a oda ho yi, ye nye no tse ha. Okyere hen dza yen nye, na hen nso ye ye n'atow mu adze ma no.* ([pointing in the direction of the sea] We live with the sea god who lies over there. He shows us what to do and we in turn perform the necessary rituals.)¹⁰ These fisher folk live by the sea and close to the shore, so for most of the time they faced the sea and looked to it for their livelihood. It fed them and provided the wherewithal with which men and women were able to meet their family and other social obligations. The sea itself appeared boundless and the range of its beneficence to the people who lived by it was equally so. For instance, more often than not, it served as a sanctuary. Fisher folk and their families, who had a brush with the law, often took refuge on the sea when warrant-bearing police officers attempted to arrest them.¹¹ Thus, “facing the sea” and the “sea being their all in all” as the chief fisherman and others put it, was an appropriate characterization of the relationship.¹² This was because to go out to sea, the culture must provide the requisite dispositions to enable fishermen to endure the experience. That culture invariably transcended the context of going to sea and permeated their other ways of life on land. Discussing their activity on the sea would be helpful for the understanding the issues under consideration.

¹⁰ Nana Afarfohin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 July 2009; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 August 2009; Nana Atta, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 September 2009; Kweku Adu, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 6 July 2009; Kofi Atta, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 July 2009.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Even though the coastal stretch of Cape Coast today was from Amanfur to a little way beyond Ola, the original theatre of fishing in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was confined to the distance between Amanfur and the castle.¹³ This section of the coast served as the takeoff and the landing points for the boats and canoes.¹⁴ The fishing community settlement was marked in the past by round wattle and daub huts with thatched roofs; some of the roofs were also made of coconut fronds.¹⁵ In time, particularly in the late nineteenth century the round huts were supplanted by four-sided structures, and with expansion and urbanization home-owners started using corrugated iron roofing sheets.¹⁶ Most of the mud houses were reinforced in the early twentieth century with cement mortar, and some new ones were constructed with cement blocks. However, the cracks in these buildings as well as the varying degrees and shades of rust were evidence of living close to the sea with its salt breeze.

An inquiry into how they acquired the expertise to become fishermen was difficult. The chief fisherman and his council, as well as nearly every fisherman, had the same response: *Hen nananom na wokyere hen apoko* (It was our ancestors who taught us how to go to sea and fish).¹⁷ But this hardly explained the original acquisition of the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ William Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea: Divided into the Gold, the Slave, Ivory Coasts* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 47.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview.

skills in question. At best, it acknowledged subsequent acquisitions, which were done along the lines of an apprenticeship that emphasized observation and participation. Akyeampong has offered some insightful explanations which might be possible for Cape Coast's initial acquisition of sea-going knowledge and expertise. In his study of the Anlos of Southern Ghana in the 1850s he examined their relationship with the sea. He argued that lagoons and other smaller inland water bodies served as sites for experimentation in canoe and fishing technique, which were later transferred to the sea.¹⁸ This was not to deny the significant differences between the lagoon and maritime navigation, because the currents and heavy surf of the coasts required distinctive types of canoes. But these inland and calmer water bodies promoted an increasing familiarity with the water world, and the Anlo became strong sea swimmers even before they acquired marine navigational skills.¹⁹ For the Anlos, the Keta lagoon's economic importance ran through their history. Lagoon fishing and salt making supplemented other economic occupations, and the experience and capital garnered in lagoon exploits were later invested in sea fishing.²⁰ From earliest times to the late fifteenth century, the Cape Coast experience might not have been any different from that of the Anlo.

No attempt is being made here to compare the complex ecology of Keta with that of Cape Coast. But the latter had a lagoon as well. The Fosu Lagoon in Cape Coast was a short distance to the west of the fishing settlement and flowed into the sea. This was also

¹⁸ Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon*, 8.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

the case for Elmina, Cape Coast's westward neighbor. It seemed credible that the Fosu lagoon with its stable and temperate waters, like all lagoons, provided basic water body maneuvers to inquisitive and would-be sea goers and fishermen in Cape Coast. Yet, for the people of Cape Coast, as for all other Fanti of Southern Gold Coast, their knowledge and experience with bodies of water went far back into the past and from faraway places as well. According to Eva Meyerowitz, this knowledge came to them from the Etsii, who were believed to have first inhabited the Southern Gold Coast shoreline from Keta to Elmina.²¹ They arrived by the late thirteenth century from the Niger Bend.²² The group benefited from their experience of the Niger River as well as other smaller bodies of water in that part of West Africa. The Etsii were compelled to move from the Niger Bend as a result of war and famine, and settled on the land abutting the Benue, a tributary of the Niger River.²³ Here they settled down to a quiet and peaceable life, fishing and sailing to nearby places. In addition to fishing, the Etsii also acquired the indigenous technology for traversing large bodies of water.²⁴ For instance, the Etsii learnt how to build large canoes from huge pieces of wood, which was an improvement on an earlier practice of making canoes from two pieces of wood and laboriously connecting them.

²¹ Ibid., 9.

²² Eva L. Meyerowitz, *The Early History of the Akan States of Ghana* (London: Red Candle Press, 1970), 71–72.

²³ Ibid., 72.

²⁴ Ibid.

They made sails from bark cloth fiber fashioned into mats and fastened to bamboo poles. The introduction of triangular oars came in handy.²⁵

With these skills and technological know-how, their eventual settlement on the Southern Gold Coast shoreline, in about the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, was beneficial and they seized the opportunity to transfer these skills to the sea. The later-arriving Fanti learned fishing and sea-going from the Etsii.²⁶ By the early eighteenth century, the Cape Coast fishermen, as part of the larger Fanti group, had come into their own as formidable fishermen; and had earned a place in the oral tradition of the Ga of Accra, their eastern neighbors, as masters of the fishing craft who taught the people of Labadi to fish.²⁷

The Beach: Groups and Activities

During my period of investigation, most of the canoes and boats used along the coastal stretch of Gold Coast were made of a white soft wood known in local parlance as *wawa*. In Cape Coast, the canoes were parked on the beach. To get the canoes across the sand into the seas, fishermen used wide cylindrical metallic rollers, two or three in most cases, were placed under the canoe, which was maneuvered by groups of men in the front and rear. As the canoe moved, rollers were taken from behind and replaced in the front. The process was repeated till the canoe was in the water. The earliest group of fishermen left

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ A. P. Brown, *The Fishes and Fisheries of the Gold Coast* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1930), 23. The Ga were east of the Fanti, whose settlements were in the western part of Southern Gold Coast.

a couple of hours after *essuem* (midnight).²⁸ Thereafter, fleets left at different times up to *don nkron* (9 A.M). Depending on what kind of fish they pursued, a fleet could be away from anywhere between a few hours to some days. Likewise, the kind of fish a fleet wanted determined the techniques used. These included net casting and line fishing.²⁹ For instance, during the *eban* (herring) season, the former technique was used, whereas the latter was practiced when the fleet was bent on catching *wiwwiriw* (red fish).³⁰ Yet, some fishermen practiced shore fishing using drag nets. This was the most visible method of fishing to the casual visitor at the beach, and was carried out at different spots between the castle and the area close to where the Sweet River entered the sea. Even with this method, fishermen would still have to “climb the sea” (*wo fow po*, i.e., get over the high waters of the sea) and cast the net, which was then dragged in from the beach.³¹

This was done to the accompaniment of songs from a small group with various indigenous and improvised musical instruments.³² The combination of songs and yells might sound like cacophony to the untrained ear, but for the indigene, it was merry melody meant to add rhythm to the otherwise arduous task of the dragging crew. The songs tended to be an admixture of popular indigenous songs and religious tunes. Most of

²⁸ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

the men who dragged the net on the beach would be bare-chested, wearing only a *djokoto* (big and often baggy underwear). Though this was the main activity, it was by no means the only one.³³ There were petty traders, who sought to turn the beach into a market. Their shouts and cries to draw attention to what they had to sell added to the din. Also present on the beach were women who dealt in fish, either as traders or carriers. This group was largely made up of the wives, concubines, relatives, and friends of the fishermen. The women, as processors and distributors, ready themselves for the arrival of the day's catch, thus enhancing their roles as active agents in the commercial and artisanal fisheries.³⁴ Writing about late twentieth century fishmongers and big dealers, Emile Vercrujssse identified two significant groups of women whose activities present the fishermen with a conundrum. These included the fishwives, who were related to the fishermen by marriage, and the big fish dealers, who were not relatives but could be considered business partners.³⁵ Vercrujssse showed that these individuals were indispensable in the processing, distribution, and marketing of fish.³⁶ However, the big dealers possessed an added advantage: their capacity to offer loans, cash, and credit to the fishermen, a service that many in the fishing community were unable to provide. In addition, they were able to handle larger quantities of fish than the fishwives during the

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Emile Vercrujssse, "Fishmongers, Big Dealers, and Fishermen: Co-operation and Conflict between the Sexes in Ghanaian Canoe Fishing," in *Female and Male in West Africa*, ed. Christine Oppong (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 188.

³⁶ Ibid.

peak fishing season, because they were able to sell to distant markets.³⁷ Vercruijsse argued that the average fisherman was constantly confronted with the dilemma of choosing between doing business with the big dealer, who provided ready cash, and his wife, who took at least several days, if not weeks, to give him his share of the sale for a particular catch.³⁸ Consequently, he always had to turn to the big dealer for credit. According to Vercruijsse, the consequence of this credit relationship was that not only did it give big dealers a hold on the supply of fresh fish, but also it turned the terms of trade against the fishermen.³⁹

The High Sea Experiences

After the experience of talking with fishermen, one would appreciate maritime realities, e.g., tempestuous seas and its equally tempestuous workers. The fishermen described high sea fishing during my period of investigation as “desperate and fearful business,” “deadly,” “dangerous,” and “difficult.”⁴⁰ Moreover, a number of men were hemmed in together in small canoes and boats with only enough room to allow them to paddle. Their “confinement” was even more constricting when the accoutrements carried in the canoes and boats were taken into account. These included massive fishing nets, fuel, gallons of water, coal pots, pots and pans, and food. Thus, there was serious competition in the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 189.

⁴⁰ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamna Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview.

quest for space away from the shore.⁴¹ In his examination of some of the psychological effects of occupational conditions on men of the sea, Pablo Perez-Mallaina, writing about sixteenth century Spanish fishermen, introduced the “paradoxes and contradictions” of a fisherman’s life—issues that would have been central to the lives of the Cape Coast fisherman of my study. He argued that for sixteenth century fishermen, as for all men of the sea, there were two basic paradoxes. First, living crammed together with other men, yet collectively isolated from the rest of humanity; second, men travelling on the sea while confined in what amounted to a wooden prison.⁴² In other words, a fisherman could feel himself separated from the world while also feeling physically crushed by the presence of his co-workers and he could see a panoramic view of landscapes and not have the chance of experiencing any of them. According to Perez-Mallaina, “these circumstances constitute today, the character and burden of life at sea, providing the keys to understanding the mentality of those who love it.”⁴³ The circumstances of late nineteenth and early twentieth century fishing communities of colonial Gold Coast and Cape Coast were probably not any different.

No sooner had they made their way up the high seas than they encountered yet more. Both experienced and amateur fishermen always had to battle seasickness, which was an unavoidable malaise. For the inexperienced fishermen, it was an unpleasant experience. When this was compounded by lack of sleep and/or rest, it could make the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Pablo E. Perez-Mallaina, *Spain’s Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 224.

⁴³ Ibid.

fisherman a bundle of testy trouble. He can nag as much as he is nagged.⁴⁴ Petty fights among fishermen in a canoe at sea stemmed from the impatience associated with group work, which could be productive only when all members of the group were “in sync.” Thus, when the rhythm was broken, the men were poised to be at one another’s throat. This was preceded by empty words and threats that were acted upon in the spur of the moment. The fishermen unleashed a barrage of insults at one another, and then it degenerated from words to action. In the process, they shouted profanities not only at whoever it was that annoyed them, but also at their parents, wives, and other relatives. Sarcastic statements were often introduced into the fray.⁴⁵

Violent and tempestuous conditions often plagued the work of fishermen at sea. They were frequently at the mercy of dreadful and howling winds. Encountering these normally left them with bitter experiences as a result of the work-related accidents that followed. Some canoes capsized; others sank.⁴⁶ At best, canoes would run adrift and fishermen would be left with the choice of maneuvering to change course or getting it back on course in spite of the violent winds.⁴⁷ They also had to endure storms amid thunder and lightning in the middle of the ocean. In that case, fishermen had to battle to

⁴⁴ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamna Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 1 August 2009; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Ghana, 15 August 2009.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

keep their canoes afloat. They worked against time to empty their canoes as it filled with rain and sea water.⁴⁸ Writing about the eighteenth century sea experience in the Anglo-American maritime world, Marcus Redicker argued that “the omnipotence of the elements and the fragility of human life marked the consciousness of every . . . seaman.”⁴⁹ Moreover, he observes that the battle against the elements, like conflicts among men, was at the bottom of cooperative and collective undertakings. And those confrontations, like so much of maritime life, were informed by the character of maritime work and the workers.⁵⁰

Furthermore, Christopher Lloyd, in his discussion of authority, lack of discipline, disrespect, mutinies, and desertions among British seamen traveling between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, pointed out that fishermen and other men of the sea possessed a spirit that did not easily stoop to complying with the orders of command structures.⁵¹ The experience of the Southern Gold Coast fishermen and women who formed the core of the Asafo was not any different during the period under investigation. It was, therefore, not surprising that Redicker described sailors as one of the purest

⁴⁸ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

⁴⁹ Marcus Redicker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ Christopher Lloyd, *The British Seamen, 1200–1860: A Social Survey* (London: Collins, 1968), 22.

expressions of the spirit of rebellion in human beings.⁵² Moreover, Knut Weibust argued that eighteenth century British men of the sea were considered especially predisposed to instigate strikes and labor conflicts with the same tendency as other workers such as miners, who also labored in difficult physical conditions that isolated them from the rest of society.⁵³ For the fishermen of Southern Gold Coast theirs, among other things, also included resistance especially during colonial rule.

The general effects of these work conditions on fishermen and the fishing community were well-known in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Southern Gold Coast. Fishermen were known to be aggressive, fractious, daring, and not easily overcome.⁵⁴ They could not be taken for granted because they saw themselves as part of one of the few groups whose undertakings exposed them to fatalities all the time. This experience put them a shade above average men and women, and, therefore, they would not suffer “weaklings” to trifle with their lives.⁵⁵ This attitude and mentality followed

⁵² Redicker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 10.

⁵³ Knut Weibust, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology* (Stockholm, Sweden: V. Petterson, 1969), 453. Indeed, Perez-Mallaina, quoting Redicker, explains that this propensity towards conflict and resistance has an interesting proof in the English language. The word “strike,” which now means a cessation of work, has maritime origins: it once meant to take down a sail. Its meaning to designate cessation of work became general from 1768 onwards when English sailors frequently immobilized merchant ships by taking down the sails. See Perez-Mallaina, *Spain’s Men of the Sea*, 453 – 54.

⁵⁴ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

fishermen into their daily lives on land and in their interaction with people outside the fishing occupation. Most of the fishermen and women provided the Asafo with its core membership. And this attitude showed up among the various groups and also in their dealings with the colonial government, especially in the early twentieth century.

Indigenous Organizations: *Asafo*, Fisher Folk, and Resistance

It is to the causal analysis of the history of resistance involving the *Asafo* and colonial authorities and those among themselves in Southern Gold Coast that we now turn. Examination of archival records on Cape Coast, Accra, and Apam showed recurring instances of fights and resistance arising out of *Asafo* company activities.⁵⁶ For instance, from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth-century colonial authorities in Southern Gold Coast woke up to the reality of *Asafo* conflicts and disturbances which were also used as a basis for resistance to colonial rule. They were overwhelmed by the nature and frequency of these conflicts, not only in Cape Coast (where there were so many of them), but also with *Asafo* activities in Accra, Apam, and other places on the coast.⁵⁷ During 1924–25, the Accra *Asafo* led a sustained resistance to the introduction of a fully elected and self-financing town council.⁵⁸ They were quick to detect the inherent financial constraints of the new scheme on the already overburdened urban poor. Basic rates were supposed to go up by 20 percent and the tax

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Dominic Fortescue, “The Accra Crowd, the Asafo, and Opposition to the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924–1925,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 24, no.3 (1990): 357.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 358.

was to be extended to include drummers who were to be licensed for the purposes of facilitating the collection.⁵⁹ For traders, including those who had stalls in markets and hawkers, licenses were to go up by 50 percent.⁶⁰ The Accra *Asafo* took cognizance of the economic circumstances of the period and its effects on the ordinary people in its resistance to the new plan. They were correct, for, as H. S. Newlands stated in a report on the issue, “the financial condition of the inhabitants of the town of Accra is such that they are unable to assume . . . the fresh burdens or hardship . . . of carrying out the new scheme of municipal government.”⁶¹ The Accra economy was reeling from some kind of depression. Most people in Accra were in arrears on their taxes and nearly all the major activities at Salaga, one of its many markets, were slowing down.⁶² Dominic Fortescue pointed out that the colonial government was partly to blame for the difficult economic situation. For instance, instead of allowing indigenous women to continue providing Accra’s prisons meals for fees, it decided to cut cost by making the prisoners prepare their own meals.⁶³ This affected many women who were making bare profit from the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Gold Coast 1926A: The Gold Coast: A Review of the Events of 1925–1926 and the Prospects of 1926–1927 (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1928), 111.

⁶¹ Ibid., 112.

⁶² Gold Coast 1926B: Report on the Objection Lodged with the Colonial Secretary against the Application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924 to the Town of Accra, with enclosures including Minutes of Evidence. Session Papers, No. 1, 1925–1926 (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1927), 17.

⁶³ Fortescue, “The Accra Crowd,” 357.

previous arrangement. This government plan of excluding indigenous female workers was also extended to men in building projects and construction works.⁶⁴ This affected those who worked as bricklayers and carpenters.⁶⁵ The *Asafo* were quick to point out these unfortunate occurrences and attempted to resist them.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the growing number of European—and even Levantine—export and import businesses affected Accra’s men and women, who hitherto dominated that sector.⁶⁷ *Asafoatse* (*Asafo* leader) Nettey’s observation was instructive in this context. He stated that in the early days, the young men went to the bush, bought the cocoa, and resold it to the firms, thereby making their profit. The Europeans started going directly to the farmers in the bush, thereby excluding the indigenous middlemen.⁶⁸ The European and Levantine traders made inroads, as the Great Britain Annual Report for 1919 reveals: “The trader had continued his penetrating course gradually setting up European stores in every village of importance, and in some of no importance at all throughout the colony.”⁶⁹ Women in the business of buying and selling were dealt a severe blow. *Asafoatse* Nettey revealed that

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 358.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gold Coast 1926B: Report on the Objection Lodged with the Colonial Secretary against the Application of Municipal Corporations Ordinance, March 1924, 12 - 14.

⁶⁹ Great Britain: Command Paper 1103–9, 1921. Gold Coast Report for 1919 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office [HMSO]), 60 – 63.

“women formerly bought cloths at say 10/- took them up the railway line and resold them at 11/6. Nowadays [i.e. in the 1920s] they find the European firms in the bush selling the same cloth at 9/-. The women get into debt with the firms and the latter sell their goods to get their money back.”⁷⁰ Fortescue argued that in spite of this the women continued to trade in cloth and beads, albeit at the expense of their independence, because they were increasingly beholden to European and Levantine firms.⁷¹ The *Asafo* also took cognizance of growing unemployment, which was worsened by the introduction of vehicular conveyance of goods to and from Accra’s railway terminuses and the beach.⁷² Hitherto this had been a booming business for men and women, who used carts, and others who carried goods on their heads. With the loss of that income-earning opportunity, they and their families, as well as their dependents, became worse off.⁷³ Moreover, the population of Accra doubled within the period and this pushed the unemployment problem to critical proportions.⁷⁴ To this end, the *Asafo* leaders blamed the government and European firms for the impoverishment of the ordinary inhabitants of Accra. How did they resist these measures?

⁷⁰ Gold Coast 1926B: Report on the Objection Lodged with the Colonial Secretary against the Application of Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924.

⁷¹ Fortescue, “The Accra Crowd,” 350.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Gold Coast 1922: Municipal Annual Reports for the Year 1921 (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1922), 25 – 26.

In view of all these developments, the *Asafo* took the position that it was preposterous for the government to impose the new measures; for this to be done to an already overburdened people was tantamount to a punitive act.⁷⁵ This attitude was extended to perceived collaborators of the new municipal and town council arrangement and its financial impositions: chiefs and the educated elite.⁷⁶ The *Asafo* gained considerable support of disparate inhabitants of Accra and staged a highly effective resistance to the new measures. J. D. Garshong, one of the *Asafo* captains, laid hands on a copy of the Ordinance in question and submitted it to the other *Asafo* captains, all of who supported the idea of immediate resistance on their own.⁷⁷ Consequently, at a large public gathering, Garshong reiterated what by then was common knowledge: “A law has been passed which seems to be too severe.”⁷⁸ He proceeded to read it to the meeting in the Ga language, drawing attention to the harsh and oppressive provisions.⁷⁹ They refused a suggestion from the *Ga Mantse* (the Accra landlord/landowner or *Omanhin* of Accra) to consult with the Accra branch of the Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society (ARPS), with the explanation that some of them—specifically, the Western educated elite

⁷⁵ Fortescue, “The Accra Crowd,” 350.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Gold Coast 1926C: Report on the Enquiry held by the Honorable C. W. Welman, Secretary for Native Affairs on a Commission by His Excellency the Governor issued under the Commissions of Enquiry Ordinance and dated February 26, 1925. Session Paper, No. 10, 1925–1926 (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1926), 41 – 42.

⁷⁸ Fortescue, “The Accra Crowd,” 352.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

who formed that group—had a history of supporting the municipal arrangement.⁸⁰ Accordingly, feelings began to rise. The more rowdy among the gathering started pushing for harsh responses.⁸¹ The *Asafo* leaders counseled in favor of a more official approach, at least to begin with, and recommended an immediate dispatch of a telegram to the Secretary of State for Colonies in London.⁸² The *Ga Mantse* refused to endorse the telegram; the *Asafo* leaders, unperturbed, did so themselves and sent it.⁸³ They “felt that not a moment must be lost in protesting in any and every way against the Ordinance in any shape and form.”⁸⁴ Judging the sentiments of the people at meetings, the leaders of the *Asafo* saw themselves empowered “to take all necessary steps to prevent the application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance 1924 to the town of Accra.”⁸⁵ Between August and October 1924, the Accra *Asafo* dispatched three more petitions to the Secretary of State for Colonies’ office. They brought pressure on two other prominent chiefs of Accra, the *Osu* and James Town *Mantse*s, to do likewise.⁸⁶ The aggregate

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 532

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 354.

⁸⁵ Ibid. See also PRO CO 96/665/10: Petition to King George V from the Asafoi of Accra, 9 May 1925, 14.

⁸⁶ Gold Coast 1926B: Report on the Objection lodged with the Colonial Secretary against the Application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924, 15.

effect of this was the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry under H. S. Newlands to assess the acceptability or otherwise of the Ordinance.⁸⁷ The *Asafo* leaders were unrelenting in their resistance and reiterated that “we entirely refuse this Corporations Ordinance to operate; we do not want it at all.”⁸⁸

In addition to using official means to achieve their motives, the Accra *Asafo* employed radical moves when they were called for. They dealt with the *Ga Mantse*, whose ambivalent conduct with respect to the issue was not in doubt. He was known among official colonial circles for being “personally . . . anxious for the success of the municipalities.”⁸⁹ Like the Western educated-elite of Accra, the *Ga Mantse* was also known to have indicated his approval of the municipal plans in the past.⁹⁰ His failure to endorse any of the petitions presented by the *Asafo* gave him up as being on the side of the colonial government. Thus, the feeling that the *Ga Mantse* had sold his town to be prey to an iniquitous law grew by the minute.⁹¹ The *Asafo* leaders decided to work against his authority. They proclaimed that the town should boycott any meeting called by the *Ga Mantse*. In other words, people should attend only meetings called by the

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁹ Gold Coast 1923C: Report by the Town Councils’ Committee on the Constitution and working of existing Town Councils of the Colony. Session Paper, No. 17, 1922–1923 (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1924), 20.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁹¹ Ibid., 23.

Asafoatsemei (Asafo leadership). After the *Ga Mantse* refused to give his consent to the petitions, the *Asafo* had him suspended. He responded by attempting to bring a lawsuit against the *Asafo* leaders. They responded by announcing (with gongs) that he had been ousted as king.⁹² The colonial government came to the *Ga Mantse*'s aid by creating a commission of inquiry to go into the matter.⁹³ The secretary of native affairs, C. W. Welman, who chaired the commission, predictably reported that the ousting was not "in accordance with native custom."⁹⁴ The colonial government, therefore, attempted to reinstate the *Ga Mantse*, and this provoked general resistance as the *Asafo* mobilized immediately⁹⁵ and agreed on their next line of action. They demonstrated along the road from Accra to Christianborg, shouting insults and singing songs of defiance.⁹⁶ The *Asafo* proceeded to make a violent demonstration at the gate of the Christianborg Castle beneath the windows of the governor's office, with the women singing and dancing, while they and the men proclaimed that no matter what the governor said or did they (the *Asafo*) would not serve Tackie Yaoboi as *Ga Mantse*.⁹⁷ It took a contingent of eighty

⁹² PRO CO 96/665/10: Petition to King George from the Asafoi of Accra, 30 April 1926.

⁹³ Gold Coast 1926B: Report on the Objection lodged with the Colonial Secretary against the Application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924, 34.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹⁷ PRO CO 96/654/18836: Memorandum by the Secretary of Native Affairs (SNA), 4 April 1925.

policemen to disperse the men and women of the *Asafo*. Fifty-five of them were arrested and charged for illegally entering the precincts of the Christianborg Castle.⁹⁸ The judge kept them in custody for a little over a month, refusing them bail because of the general “temper of the town.”⁹⁹ The political stability of Accra was “badly shaken.”¹⁰⁰ Still pursuing their radical strategy, the *Asafo* got some of Accra’s market women incensed, telling them that “taxes were never pleasant to contemplate.”¹⁰¹ The women came out in large numbers in resistance to the colonial government for imposing taxes on them; and the ensuing commotion was no small matter.¹⁰² The official letters of protests, petitions, and demonstrations which the Accra *Asafo* used in resistance to the proposed town council had dramatic results. Governor Guggisberg came to understand the inadvisability of pushing for the new measure. In light of the numerous and massive *Asafo* resistance, he abandoned the plan, albeit for a season.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ PRO CO 96/655/32858: Inspector General of Police versus Asafoatse Djator and Others. Record of Proceedings in the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast Colony, Eastern Province, 27 June 1925, 5.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁰ PRO CO 96/654/18836: Memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA), 4 April 1925, 10.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰² Gold Coast 1926B: Report on the Objection lodged with the Colonial Secretary against the Application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924.

¹⁰³ For Guggisberg, being compelled to shelve one of his most important schemes was “the only real disappointment” of his tenure as governor. R. E. Wraith, *Guggisberg* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 212.

Asafo aggression in Cape Coast had complex manifestations, due to the fact that the town has seven companies. Thus, their resistance to the colonial government was, on the one hand, a reflection of that which pertained in other places in Southern Gold Coast and; on the other; it was a manifestation of the uniqueness of Cape Coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Nearly all the seven *Asafo* companies of Cape Coast had at one time or another been responsible for or involved in at least some kind of resistance to colonial rule. The archival records on the town were replete with instances of riots and bloodshed arising out of company feuds.¹⁰⁴ Colonial officers often had to deal with dangerous situations emanating from inter-company engagements. Most of these were in turn used to resist the colonial government or even even refuse cooperation with them. These engagements and disturbances were also reminiscent of indigenous expressions of resistance among the *Asafo*. By 1909, these disturbances had persisted for over fifty years and were a threat to the internal peace of Cape Coast.¹⁰⁵ For instance, in 1859, there was a serious affray between the *Bentsir* and *Ntsin* companies. In 1869, yet another serious conflict broke out between them. In 1877, a conflict occurred between the *Bentsir* and *Anafo* companies. The severity of the punishment meted out to the leading rioters gave an inkling of the

¹⁰⁴ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: The Voluntary surrender of Objectionable Flags and Emblems by Cape Coast Companies: Opening Address by Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 1 - 9. Also Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹⁰⁵ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: The Voluntary surrender of Objectionable Flags and Emblems by Cape Coast Companies: Opening Address by Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 1.

seriousness of the riot. About fifty men were tried; four of them were sentenced to death by hanging.¹⁰⁶ The year 1885 saw yet another conflict in which the *Anaafo*, *Ntsin*, and *Nkum* companies were arrayed against *Bentsir*. And there was a riot between the *Ntsin* and *Nkum* companies in October, 1899. These disturbances continued well into the twentieth century. In 1904, there was a serious scuffle, with considerable bloodshed, between the *Bentsir* and *Ntsin* companies.¹⁰⁷ In December, 1905, there was a four-day disturbance between the *Anaafo* and *Ntsin* companies;¹⁰⁸ and on February 27, 1915, the *Ntsin* and *Nkum* companies fought again, resulting in the former losing a member and leaving seven people wounded.¹⁰⁹ What were the causes of these disturbances?

First, there was a constant and blatant exhibition of objectionable flags. *Asafo* flags were representations of the honor and spirit of each group. The flags were the “faces” of the companies, which must always be held high and defended in any situation. During parades, these were displayed by members specially trained to wield them. The flags often had signs and symbols that recapitulated their history as well as images

¹⁰⁶ E. B. Ellis, *The Tshi Speaking People of the Gold Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language, etc.* (Oosterhout, The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1966), 275.

¹⁰⁷ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: The Voluntary surrender of Objectionable Flags and Emblems by Cape Coast Companies: Opening Address by Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 9. Also Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: The Voluntary surrender of Objectionable Flags and Emblems by Cape Coast Companies: Opening Address by Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 5.

emblematic of their perceived superiority in relation to other companies. If a flag was seized or distorted, it was deemed to be the seizure and distortion of the company's honor.¹¹⁰ Likewise, flags were often created in resistance to objectionable actions and provocation of rival companies.¹¹¹ The language of a flag was understood by all the groups. Just as companies used flags to preserve their honor, just as often flags were used to demean that of other companies. They were as provocative as verbal insults.¹¹² The riots of 1859 between the *Bentsir* and *Ntsin* companies, and that of 1885 in which *Anafo*, *Ntsin*, and *Nkum* companies were arrayed against the *Bentsir*, were caused by the use of objectionable flags.¹¹³ In the latter case, the *Bentsir* company was angered by taunts of the other *Asafo*, especially the *Anafo*, *Ntsin*, and *Nkum* companies. Together, these companies touted their superiority in provocative ways. *Bentsir*, the aggrieved company, exhibited an unusual flag made of a piece of blanket. They explained its significance by saying that they (the *Bentsir*) used to feed and clothe the members of the other companies, just as mothers often used blankets to cuddle and take care of their

¹¹⁰ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to Meanings of Customs, 10. Also Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹¹³ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to Meanings of Customs, 12.

babies.¹¹⁴ The other faction took exception to that. To them, it sought to demean their dignity and compromise their sense of achievement and history.¹¹⁵

A second cause of inter-*Asafo* resistance was the singing of defiant and insulting songs.¹¹⁶ The use of songs by the *Asafo* companies was interesting. In addition to their repertoire, *Asafo* companies were able to improvise songs on the spur of the moment to deal with their opponents, as well as to goad its own members on to resist situations as they occurred. Esi Sutherland-Addy, in her work on twentieth century *Asafo* songs, indicated that their lyrics were by no means soft. They were arranged to send taunting, defiant, and insulting remarks at enemy companies. The songs were characterized by non-phonemic Akan vocatives (e.g., *ayee, yee, ooo, eee, nyoo, awoo*), which were used as refrains or fillers to create suspense and to heighten the emotional effects.¹¹⁷ She pointed out that closely related to this were elements of prosody, voice quality, and timbre. The songs, whether drummed or sung, were highly spirited.¹¹⁸ In the 1885 conflict in which the blanket was displayed, the *Bentsir* company not only spoke by the devices and emblems etched on it, but also went berserk repeating the meanings and implications of

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Esi Sutherland Addy, "Discourse and *Asafo*: The Place of Oral Literature," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 2 (1998): 87.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 90.

the flag in songs.¹¹⁹ This produced a militaristic atmosphere conducive to the operation of the *Asafo* as a massed unit of men ready for action. Against this background, the *Bentsir* company reminded the allied companies, in songs, that they had been beneficiaries of their (*Bentsir*) benevolence; and should therefore know how to conduct themselves as leeches.¹²⁰ In addition to these songs, the *Bentsir* company also extolled their own deeds of valor. In the forefront of the demonstration were members of *Bentsir* who indulged in obscenities and vulgarity against the allied companies.¹²¹ These actions helped to send the intended message home to the targeted companies and achieved the desired effect of challenging them to act.¹²² The targeted companies resisted those actions in their own ways. The rights and pride of these *Asafo* companies were jealously guarded by respective members, who as a rule, not only had the capacity to recognize an insult, but were also quick to either resist or avenge it.¹²³

¹¹⁹ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems and Notes as to Meanings of Customs, 13. Also Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: The Voluntary surrender of Objectionable Flags and Emblems by Cape Coast Companies: Opening Address by Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 5.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview. See also PRAAD Adm. 11/1439 Case No. 11/1931: Letter of Acting Secretary of Native Affairs to Hon. Colonial Secretary, 17 January 1931, 20.

Third, as mentioned earlier, there was the issue of companies disregarding due process when it came to entering the wards of rival companies.¹²⁴ Violation of the rules regarding crossing another *Asafo*'s ward frequently called for resistance against the offending group. And this was exactly what happened in 1904 between the *Bentsir* and the *Ntsin* companies on Friday, September 30.¹²⁵ Presentation of the notification drink was overlooked by the Supi of the *Bentsir* company. He presented it to all but the *Ntsin*, and indicated his company's intent to parade through their respective quarters.¹²⁶ The Supi went ahead to pay the token fees that normally accompanied the drinks. On the day of their march, the *Bentsir* company apparently changed their route, deliberately by going through Commercial Road, which was within *Ntsin* territory.¹²⁷ The ensuing clash lasted for only twenty minutes, due to promptness of the police.¹²⁸ However, the fury between the companies was so considerable that many people were injured in the clash. *Omanhin* Mbra, who rushed to the scene with his men to prevent the disturbance from getting out of hand, was violently thrown on the ground several times.¹²⁹ The police arrested

¹²⁴ Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹²⁵ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of Sub-Assistant Commissioner of Police, Police Office, Cape Coast, to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, 4 October 1904, 5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

nineteen rioters. Those who sustained injuries were admitted to the hospital.¹³⁰ The underlying cause of this fight was that the *Bentsir* company still felt irritated about the 1885 conflict in which the other companies rejected their claim to superiority.¹³¹ Why was *Ntsin* the only one to be singled out for this treatment? *Ntsin* was the largest and *Bentsir* decided to spite them by taking them for granted. Furthermore, they sought to prove themselves stronger by resisting the largest company.¹³²

Fourth, insults via drum language also provoked *Asafo* conflicts.¹³³ The poetry of the *Asafo kyen* (the *Asafo* drum) was highly revered—and widely understood—by company members. Drum beats and sounds were considered a language in their own right. Every sound had a meaning and implication, and these were enhanced by the tonal differences of the female and male drums. The different animal skins and wood used to make these drums added to the nuances of the *Asafo* drum language.¹³⁴ A company might use these beats to extol itself. They could also be used to offend and annoy other companies, and even resist them. In the 1904 riot between the *Bentsir* and *Ntsin*

¹³⁰ PRAAD Adm. 1/1/1473: Letter of Sub-Assistant Commissioner of Police, Police Office, Cape Coast, to the Commissioner of Police, Accra, 4 October 1904, 9.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Nana Afarfohin, interview; Ato Kwamina Panyin, interview; Nana Atta, interview; Kweku Adu, interview; Kofi Atta, interview; Kojo Idun, interview; Nana Kofi Arhinful, interview.

¹³³ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of Sub-Assistant Commissioner of Police, Police Office, Cape Coast, to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, 4 October 1904, 12.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

companies, the drummers of the former kept beating the battle charge, and the peculiar beating of the latter called the former cowards.¹³⁵ And this was an insult no worthy *Asafo* company would countenance. It was a blatant call to action because inaction was taken as a confirmation of the insult. Moreover, the *Bentsir* company vilified the members of the *Ntsin* company, calling them leeches, effeminate, and ungrateful. All of this was done using the drum language. This ignited an already volatile atmosphere. Immediately, the young men of the companies attacked one another wielding old guns, knives, clubs, and sticks.¹³⁶ Others engaged in a fight with stones.¹³⁷

Fifth, excessive consumption of alcohol also influenced *Asafo* scuffles and rows.¹³⁸ Alcohol was vital to the functioning of the *Asafo* system. The indispensability of this powerful liquid found expression in the saying, *Asafo wodze nsa bo* (it takes alcohol to play or perform *Asafo*).¹³⁹ The fundamental meaning of the *Asafo* was an

¹³⁵ Ibid., 14.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of Aborigines Rights Protection Society, Cape Coast, to the Hon. Colonial, Accra, October, 1904, 5.

¹³⁸ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of Sub-Assistant Commissioner of Police, Police Office, Cape Coast, to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, 4 October 1904.

¹³⁹ Kobina Yallow, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009; Kobina Minnah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009; Kweku Botse, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 22 June 2009; Kojo Insaideo, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009; Ebo Johnson, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009; Kojo Nunoo, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 17 June 2009; J. A. Hayfron,

emphasis on war. This implied bravery, fortitude, resoluteness, and even manliness. Alcohol was seen as the king of all drinks. It was a sharp fluid that stimulated the aggression, and desire for dominance necessary for war,¹⁴⁰ both of which were reminiscent of power. The *Asafo* in its essence was a metaphor for power. Alcohol was also a metaphor for power because it encapsulated the spectrum of power relations.¹⁴¹ Given its nature as a sharp fluid, alcohol was seen as a potentially dangerous substance. And as a liquid that possess the power vital in communicating with the spiritual realm, paradoxically it dethroned reason.¹⁴² The power dynamics of alcohol also entailed its potential to give one the ability to do what one would ordinarily not be able do. Warfare, one of the crucial essences of the *Asafo* spiritual dimension, emphasized blood offerings and the ritual use of alcohol. As purveyors of war, *Asafo* companies acquired specific “war medicines” (i.e., religious strongholds and objects), which required rituals involving the use of alcohol.¹⁴³ Ritual use of alcohol hinged on its perceived potential to make the physical world confer with the spiritual. In line with Akan social and religious belief systems, the *Asafo* members believed that success in their activities as an institution could

interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996), xxi.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 8.

¹⁴³ C. C.Reindorf, *The History of Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Traditions and Historical Facts comprising more than Three Centuries from about 1500 to 1860* (Basel, Switzerland: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1951), 122.

be enhanced through the cultivation of the supernatural forces that inhabit the spiritual realm.¹⁴⁴ For the *Asafo*, these included the spirits of their war medicines and the spirits of their *mpanyinfo* (departed leaders) or *nananom* (ancestors). The spirit in alcohol was its intoxicating essence. Because the ancestors and war medicines were both spirits, alcohol provided the link between them and the *Asafo* through the performance of libation. When the ritual use of alcohol was properly observed, the members indulged themselves liberally to revive their individual and collective spirits. The ensuing group drinking was done in an orderly manner with the passing round of a single (or a couple of tumblers) for each member to gratify themselves, according to individual taste and strength. Sometimes individual members were commended as unusual men for their impressive consumption.¹⁴⁵ The consequences of these “manly acts” in most cases caused trouble. Yet, alcohol use among the *Asafo* had a paradoxical dimension. As much as it had a notorious association with conflict, alcohol also had a prominent role in facilitating the settlement of conflict.¹⁴⁶ Thus, on the one hand, it was the cause of conflicts; on the other, it became useful in conflict resolution. After the requisite deliberations at such gatherings, alcohol was passed round as *asomdwee nsa* (peace drink) to cement the new bond of good feeling among hitherto disputing companies.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ KobinaYallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Excessive consumption of alcohol was involved in all the riots referred to between 1859 and 1915. For instance, the 1905 conflict between the *Anaafo* and *Ntsin* companies could have been avoided but for the excessive consumption of liquor by the young men, which had become a common phenomenon in the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁸ On Tuesday, December 5, a considerable number of the *Anaafo* young men with “rum inside them” advanced up the *Ntsin* Street, thereby trespassing on the *Ntsin* company quarter.¹⁴⁹ They desecrated an *Ntsin* company religious stronghold and retired with an iron emblem (*dadzikur*) and a bamboo fiber belonging to *Ntsin*.¹⁵⁰ Earlier in the day, the *Ntsin* company had resisted passage by the *Anaafo* through their quarter for the purpose of burying a dead colleague. This was because the *Anaafo* company had insisted on practicing the custom of dancing on the coffin.¹⁵¹ The *Ntsin* company objected because it gave the company performing it the opportunity to offend people along the road with covert terms and signs of abuse. This was mostly done by the use of gestures, which

¹⁴⁸ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Confidential letter from District Commissioner, Cape Coast Castle, to Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast, 12 December 1905, 4 - 5. See also Kwaku Nti, “The Role of Alcohol in the 1905 Conflict between the *Anaafo* and *Ntsin* Companies of Cape Coast,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 2 (1998): 53.

¹⁴⁹ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Opening Address by the Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 6 March 1909, 5.

¹⁵⁰ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Confidential letter from District Commissioner, Cape Coast Castle, to Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast, 12 December 1905, 2.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

were, as usual, understood among the various companies.¹⁵² Thus, *Ntsin* allowed only the bereaved family to pass through their quarter on their way to the cemetery. This treatment was considered an affront to the pride and reputation of the *Anafo* company, particularly because the deceased was an old drummer and therefore an important member. “With rum inside them,” the release of aggressive impulses found expression in the acts of desecration referred to earlier.¹⁵³ It was an attack orchestrated to disparage the pride and reputation of the *Ntsin* company. This provoked *Ntsin* to resist because company religious strongholds were highly sensitive places for the *Asafo*. And that particular one was deemed to be special and powerful because the *Ntsin* built it on the remains of a member of the *Bentsir* company which they captured in 1869 on *Ntsin* Street.¹⁵⁴ The police, under the command of Superintendent Webb, as well as J. P. Brown, *Safohin* O. Cromwell, and *Safohin* Thomas Aggrey, had a difficult time containing the situation each day of the clash.¹⁵⁵ The tension generated did not subside until 1909, when local colonial officers decided to ensure peaceful coexistence among

¹⁵² Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview.

¹⁵³ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Confidential letter from District Commissioner, Cape Coast Castle, to Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast, 12 December 1905, 9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

companies. Between 1869 and 1909 there were several near clashes.¹⁵⁶ At a *durbar* of companies on March 6, 1909, at the Victoria Park, Commissioner Eliot spoke critically of young men and their drinking habits. He intimated that they were foolish with “rum inside them,” and when excited by company customs they became all the more foolish.¹⁵⁷ He explained that excessive drinking caused the young men to lose their heads. They got carried away, which led to the loosening of their tongues. In this state, they spoke excitedly and commit acts that constituted insults to other companies. As a result, the insulted company was swift to conclude that the unseemly action on the part of a few was an insult intended for the company as a whole.¹⁵⁸

Sixth, women of *Asafo* companies also played important roles in the outbreak of conflicts between 1859 and 1915.¹⁵⁹ They stood with their men, and supported them in victory and defeat. What was it about women in *Asafo* conflicts that made their role so inflammatory? To begin with, the culture was intolerant of women insulting men. It was ignoble for a man to bear a woman’s insult.¹⁶⁰ *Asafo* Women also possessed a special

¹⁵⁶ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Confidential Letter from District Commissioner, Cape Coast, to Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 4 August 1908, 3.

¹⁵⁷ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Opening Address by the Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 6 March 1909, 5.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁹ Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaadoo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview. Also Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009; Nana Kwahin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 16 June 2009.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

ability to come up with bitter and piercing words, expressions, and imagery. Besides their ability to compose songs of insult that vividly conveyed blunt messages on the spur of the moment—and thereby taunt and incite men to fight—they were to a large extent responsible for most of the conflicts.¹⁶¹ Farcical skits featuring women in which they would often wear costumes that exaggerated visible faults or deformities among members of rival *Asafo* companies were the immediate cause of many serious fights.¹⁶² The role of women was demonstrated in a 1904 scuffle between the *Bentsir* and *Ntsin Asafo* companies. The *Bentsir Asafo* were urged on by their women when their quarter was being traversed.¹⁶³ In the following year, there was a conflict between the *Anafo* and *Ntsin* that degenerated into a dangerous fight in which the women of both factions

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² See Esi Sutherland-Addy, “Speaking War and Peace,” a paper presented at the Asafo History Program Workshop 1997 at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, December 17–18, 1997.

See also David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism 1850 – 1928* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), 228. He, for instance writes:

But while the siege of Elmina was quietly proceeding, some of the beleaguered townsmen counter-attacked an outlying Cape Coast village, killed and captured several inhabitants. This was signal for the men of Cape Coast, led by their Headman, Quassie Attah, to take up arms despite the strict instructions and threats they received. Horton tells how they “flew to arms and marched into the field, amidst the hurrahs of their women and children.”

Ussher described them as “incited by their women, ever the instigators of mischief here.” (CO 96/76: Confidential Dispatch No. 32 of 6 April 1868, 9. See also Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 228)

¹⁶³ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of District Commissioner, Cape Coast, to the Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 3 October 1904, 2.

supplied stones for their men.¹⁶⁴ The power, courage, or ability to prosecute war, though considered a masculine prerogative, was matched by its feminine component. Just as the complementarity of male and female was vital to a community's survival, power was also conceived as both male and female.¹⁶⁵ Besides the few women who got to be at war fronts with their men, the majority left behind also performed *mmomomme* (the female form of spiritual warfare) at home. This involved singing and chanting from one end of the town to the other in partial nudity.¹⁶⁶ It was done till the men got back home from the war. This female form of spiritual warfare provided protection for their male counterparts as well as goaded them on to victory.¹⁶⁷

Seventh, the overwhelming superiority complex among the *Asafo* also caused resistance.¹⁶⁸ This manifested itself in unnecessary displays of bravado, rivalry, and uncompromising attempts to outdo one another. In expressing this, bravery and cowardice were juxtaposed. This attitude also emphasized the concept of the "self" and the "other" within the context of conflict. The "self and bravery" were set in opposition to

¹⁶⁴ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of District Commissioner, Cape Coast, to the Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, 11 December 1905, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change*, 24.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. See also Adam Jones, "'My Arse for Akou': A Wartime Ritual of Women in the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 132 (1992): 545.; A. B. Ellis, *The Tshi Speaking People of the Gold Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language, etc.* (Oosterhout, The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1966), 226.; Ernest E. Obeng, *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1986), 20.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

the “other and cowardice.”¹⁶⁹ Bravery was seen in terms of an individual’s prowess as well as a group achievement. It was seen as a quality by which the identity of the “self” was established. Feats of bravery were depicted in the present tense even if they occurred in the past. Boasting was manifested in rallying calls, appellations, and designs on flags and these were normally done with an implied competitive relationship with other companies.¹⁷⁰ This was exactly the case in the 1877 conflict between the *Bentsir* and *Anafo* companies discussed earlier.¹⁷¹

Conclusion

Fishermen and women organized under *Asafo* companies in nineteenth and twentieth century Southern Ghana demonstrated propensity for resistance. On-shore and high-sea fishing experiences, particularly the latter, were important in the development of an aggressive culture among the fishermen. Fishermen and women provided the *Asafo* with its core membership, as a result, the institution known for its aggressive nature and resistance. This attitude was not confined to the fishing communities, but was lived out in their dealings with other people. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this propensity for aggression became evident in the coastal people’s resistance of colonial rule. In most cases they acted on their own writing official letters of protests, petitions and demonstrations. There was also inter-group resistance which in most cases was used as occasion to equally resist colonial officers or refuse cooperation with them.

¹⁶⁹ Sutherland-Addy, “Speaking War and Peace,” 21–22.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷¹ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1439: letter of Acting Secretary of Native Affairs to the Hon. Colonial Secretary, 17 January 1931, 1- 2.

They were able to disregard their differences, and unite in the face of common threats.

Thus any endeavor to study the people of the sea, must take cognizance of the influences of the environment in which they live and operate.

Chapter 4

Encroachment Confronted: Chiefs, Colonial Militarism, and Resistance

The emergence of colonial rule in Cape Coast, as well as other places of Southern Gold Coast, was shaped by subtle alternation between British merchants and officials rather than by an abrupt rupture.¹ Thus, the point at which Southern Gold Coast began to conceptualize their encounter with Europeans as colonial subjugation was difficult to determine, though it is generally said to have taken place in 1874.² Virtually every move worked to the benefit of the British until *Omanhin* Aggergy came onto the scene as king of Cape Coast. The timing was critical for the burgeoning colonial administration.

There was increasing restlessness and dissatisfaction, not only with a variety of minor judicial matters, but also with economic issues. Therefore, in 1853, the Western-educated elite convinced *Omanhin* Kofi Amissah (Aggergy's predecessor) to create a single overriding indigenous court in place of the numerous ones which operated in his name in private houses throughout Cape Coast.³ The purpose of this single court was to give his numerous and scattered courts genuine and formidable power. It was hoped that this would also establish some uniformity in the administration of indigenous justice. J. R. Thompson was put in charge of this court.⁴ In the course of the year, when the

¹ John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), xviii.

² Ibid.

³ PRO CO 96/3/1: Dispatch No. 94 Letters of Connor to Sir G. Grey, 8 December 1864, 1.

⁴ Ibid., 3.

Omanhin was hauled before Fitzpatrick, judicial assessor of the English court, a group of traders and the Western-educated elite submitted a “most numerously signed”⁵ petition in resistance to that action. The judicial assessor’s action in bringing the *Omanhin* to trial in a civil action was, according to them, tantamount to gross disrespect, not only to the person, but also to the highest indigenous office.⁶ The acting governor showed his soft side in sympathizing with the *Omanhin* and the petitioners. He suspended the judicial assessor (to the chagrin of the Colonial Office in London).⁷ In 1854, the *Omanhin* got into trouble with indigenous law and was charged with disorderly conduct. He attempted suicide. This was regarded as inappropriate and therefore improper for him to continue as *Omanhin*; consequently, some of the lesser chiefs in Cape Coast decided to depose him.⁸ *Omanhin* Kofi Amissah would not go without a fight. He summoned them (his accusers)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ KobinaYallow, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009 ; Kobina Minnah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009; Kweku Botse, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 22 June 2009; Kojo Insaideoo, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009; Ebo Johnson, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009; Kojo Nunoo, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 17 June 2009; J. A. Hayfron, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009; Nana Kwahin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 16 June 2009.

⁷ PRO CO 96/28/1: Dispatch No. 72 Cruickshank to Newcastle, 7 September 1853, 8.

⁸ KobinaYallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaideoo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview.

and Thompson before the British court. As noted earlier, the British courts were established amidst general condemnation by the *Omanhin* himself, the lesser chiefs, and some of the Western-educated elite. Now, having nowhere to seek redress, the *Omanhin* appealed to the very court whose jurisdiction he and others had previously resisted. In any event, the chief justice ruled in favor of Amissah, and declared that a “King could not be removed without the consent of the Governor.”⁹ Thus, the colonial government did not recognize the deposition. The judgment also sought to question the authority of the indigenous court that declared *Omanhin* Amissah deposed. He was generally seen to be in “a good odor”¹⁰ with the administration. On the whole, the governor found him to be cooperative and amenable. It was, therefore, not surprising that the governor trivialized the charges made against Amissah, and accused the people bringing the charges of being guilty of over-indulgence in alcohol.¹¹ Yet, so deep and widespread was the resistance against *Omanhin* Amissah that the people were not deterred by the government’s stand. A demonstration resisting the government’s recognition of Amissah turned into a riot, which compelled the governor to commission a special inquiry.¹² In his attempt to defuse tense feelings among the people, he made a quick *volte-face* and declared Amissah

⁹ PRO CO 96/28/1: Dispatch No. 72 Cruickshank to Newcastle, 7 September 1853, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ PRO CO 96/31: Letter of Connor to George Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 2 February 1856, 10.

¹² Ibid.

deposed, but he would not let the chief rioters go unpunished. The governor fined them and used the money to compensate those who suffered because of the riots.¹³

Resistance to Entrenchment of the Colonial Administration

Although the colonial government was increasingly pushing its power and jurisdiction beyond the forts and castle, it was slacking on its responsibilities for the protection of those areas.¹⁴ This became obvious when the Ashanti invaded the Fanti coast in 1863. The Fanti suffered heavy losses; as a result, their confidence in British protection waned.¹⁵ The problem was that the governor's promise of protection in the face of the attack was thwarted by the Colonial Office's insistence that he should "not . . . interfere in any quarrels with the King of Ashantee [*sic*], and that the Kings and Chiefs should be left to settle their own differences."¹⁶ As if that was not provocative enough, the local British authorities decided to impose an annual license fee of £2 on all wine and spirit traders. It was intended to check the traffic of those commodities rather than increase revenue for the government.¹⁷ However, like all histories of taxes across Africa,

¹³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴ Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ PRO CO 96/94: Preamble to the Fanti Confederation Scheme of 1872, 5 – 8. See also Cardwell, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 20 May 1864, 121; J. A. B. Horton, *Letters on the Political Condition of the Gold Coast* (London, Frank Cass, 1970), 20.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

it was seen by the people as a way of providing revenue for a government that was widely perceived to be doing little and/or nothing to protect them.¹⁸ The chiefs and people of Cape Coast resisted this by arguing that they were not British citizens and therefore could not be taxed. Moreover, they could not be taxed without prior consultation.¹⁹ In his defense, the governor insisted that he had observed due process by consulting some of the chiefs and even a council, made up of men of influence, traders, and others who were required to consult with their constituents. Investigations revealed, however, that the governor had overstepped his bounds by not properly seeking the explicit consent of the chiefs.²⁰ However, the secretary of state, in his decision to disallow the license fee on wine and spirit traders, took steps to save face. He delayed implementation of the decision, thus leaving the proposed license fee hanging.²¹ These were the immediate circumstances preceding the first major confrontation between the

¹⁸ PRO CO 96/94: Report of the Select Committee on Africa (Western Coast): Evidence of Ord in reply to Question 932, 112.

¹⁹ Editorial, "The Governor and the Chiefs," *African Times*, 23 December 1864. See also PRO CO 96/95: Petition of 25 October 1864 from Chiefs, Headmen and Other inhabitants of Cape Coast to the Governor.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ PRO CO 96/94: Report of the Select Committee on Africa (Western Coast): Evidence of Ord in reply to Question 932, 113.

burgeoning colonial administration and the indigenous people, which eventually led to the administration's decision to move the capital from Cape Coast.²²

In spite of the occasional confusion and uncertainty that plagued the colonial administration, its power in Cape Coast posed a formidable challenge to the indigenous political order.²³ Through sheer tenacity, however, the indigenous people met this challenge. This was not without consequences for both parties. The one to lead the resistance for Cape Coast was *Omanhin* John Agger, who came to office with a deep commitment to the indigenous mandate he had taken upon himself.²⁴ As king, he was the ultimate embodiment of the indigenous political order and was required by oath to maintain it.²⁵

²² Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaadoo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Though referred to in colonial records as "John Agger," his indigenous name was Nana Egyir. Apparently the Agger spelling is a corruption or Anglicization of Egyir. A careful pronunciation of the Anglicized Agger will still sound as the indigenous name Egyir. Unfortunately, Agger has been confused with Aggrey and is pronounced as such.

²⁵ Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaadoo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview; Nana Ababio, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 19 June 2009. Growing as a young man, Omanhin Agger, was said to have taken pride in the achievement of his ancestors. Through it all he proved himself committed to the protection and independence of Cape Coast. His resolve was made firm by the oath, which among other things, enjoined him to do whatever to his peril, to maintain the standards set by his ancestors, add to them, and protect his people.

Aggergy has thus gone down into history as probably one of the earliest and loudest challengers of British power in West Africa.²⁶ David Kimble found him comparable to King Ja-Ja of Opobo, Nigeria, in his confrontation with British power, but different in their circumstances and purposes.²⁷ Although King Ja-Ja was a more dominant character and had stronger economic reasons for his stand, King Aggergy stood in defense of the indigenous political order.

The political history of post independence West Africa is filled with diverse experiences of military rule and military brutalities, and there is a temptation to limit it to that period. But *Omanhin* Aggergy's description of British colonial rule in West Africa suggested that its use and application of military power during that phase of governance in Africa provided a precedent, if not a causal agency, for the later use of military force. It is also pertinent to take note of the support Aggergy received from the growing Western-educated community in Cape Coast.²⁸ Some of them became the main pillars of his short reign in the nineteenth century. It was a kind of cooperation that was to be replicated by the middle of the twentieth century at the high noon of colonialism. *Omanhin* Aggergy was not the first to see the threat of British colonial encroachment, but he was the first, by

²⁶ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850–1928* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), particularly in chapter 5, 192.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

²⁸ Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview; Nana Ababio, interview.

virtue of his position as *Omanhin*, to loudly condemn and resist the covert and overt moves.²⁹

Omanhin Aggery and Resistance to British Power

Aggery became king of Cape Coast under interesting circumstances. After the requisite indigenous procedures, British authorities in Cape Coast decided to hold a coronation ceremony for him.³⁰ This was significant. To King Aggery, it accentuated his claim to independence and sovereignty, which made him equal with his counterpart in Britain.³¹ British troops in Cape Coast fired a twenty-one gun salute; and Aggery was given the privilege of inspecting a guard of honor.³² What was even more significant was the omission of the oath of allegiance to the British queen. Not only did the arrangement of the ceremony convince him of his status as an ally of the queen, but it also confirmed Aggery's belief that the prominent kings in the Gold Coast were to ready themselves for self-government to "relieve the British Government of a task which they seemed so anxious to get rid of."³³ *Omanhin* Aggery was a well-informed man. He had followed

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 201.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ PRO CO 96/74: Unsigned Petition from Aggery to Carnarvon, enclosed in Dispatch No. 66, 23 January 1867 to Blackhall, 6.

political debates on colonies in Britain through the *African Times*, a journal of the African Aid Society in London.³⁴

Public opinion in England, fed by pressure from anti-colonial advocates and African Advancement groups, had managed to force the government to insert a clause on eventual self-government for colonized peoples into the British Parliamentary Report of 1865.³⁵ Among some of the considerations that led the Select Committee to its conclusion were that the protectorates on the Gold Coast had become an indefinite responsibility to Britain without presenting any adequate advantage to the people.³⁶ The prevailing arrangement had weakened the chiefs and given them the inclination to depend on Britain and also to resist their efforts as well. According to the committee, the most reasonable thing to do in these circumstances was to halt all further extensions of territory or the assumption of government in West Africa.³⁷ In its final report, the committee resolved that the object of British policy should be to encourage the inhabitants to exercise those qualities that may render it possible for Britain to transfer the administration of governmental functions to them with a view to Britain's ultimate withdrawal.³⁸ Aggrey, therefore, was prepared for the eventual withdrawal of colonial

³⁴ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 202.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ G. E. Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History 1807–1957* (London: Ipswich Book, 1964), 305.

³⁷ Ibid., 307.

³⁸ Ibid., 311.

administration, which would pave the way for chiefs and kings to assume complete control. After the ceremony, *Omanhin* Aggery was received at the Government House as a “Christian King” by the governor.³⁹

No sooner had the “red-carpet” treatment ended than the first tremors of confrontation were felt. Long before he became *Omanhin*, Aggery had set himself to resist the colonial administration in nearly every move.⁴⁰ Thus, as *Omanhin*, he lost no time in taking a stand. Initially he just gave counter orders to all those given by the governor and also confronted him directly whenever he had the opportunity to do so. In 1865, he and Governor Colonel Conran clashed over the issue of the limits of *Asafo* displays and their firing of musketry. Conran insisted that these must be done within the confines of either the military parade grounds or the salt making compound in the town, both of which were of reasonable distances from the town center.⁴¹ *Omanhin* Aggery objected to this, arguing that those spots had ill-feelings associated with them because they had served as battlegrounds for the *Asafo* companies. Aggery ordered that the displays and firing should not be done at all. The companies obeyed the *Omanhin* rather than the governor.⁴² He resisted Conran on other issues. The governor decreed that

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview; Nana Ababio, interview.

⁴¹ Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 307.

⁴² PRO CO 96/72: Petition of King Aggery, Cape Coast, to Governor Colonel Conran, September 1866, 5.

markets should not be open on Sundays. He also banned the free-range animal rearing in order to rid the streets of major towns of the Gold Coast, particularly Cape Coast, Accra, and Anomabu, of the pigs, cattle, and fowls.⁴³ *Omanhin* Aggery, in what appeared to be his sworn resistance to the governor, countered that the decree with respect to animal rearing was “a great injury to the poorer classes who raise them as their only means of livelihood.”⁴⁴ Conran also extended his power to regulating the activities of fishermen. He did not want any fishing operation in the vicinity of the Castle. *Omanhin* Aggery resisted Conran’s effort in this matter and accused him of confiscating the fishermen’s canoes and appropriating the space for his own purposes. He averred that the beach near the Castle had, from time immemorial, been one of the fishing grounds of Cape Coast.⁴⁵

The Clash of Courts

The most far-reaching conflicts between *Omanhin* Aggery and the colonial administration concerned judicial matters, which meant a clash of the two opposing courts and their respective jurisdictions.⁴⁶ It appeared that, either by design or coincidence, the ordinary people, particularly the poor, were taking advantage of the tension produced by the existence of the two courts. For example, a certain man was sentenced to imprisonment by the indigenous court for attempting to poison his neighbor.

⁴³ PRO CO 96/70: Letter of Colonel Conran to Cardwell, Cape Coast, 11 January 1866.

⁴⁴ PRO CO 96/72: Petition of King Aggery, Cape Coast, September 1866, enclosed in Blackall to Carnarvon, Sierra Leone, 17 October 1866, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶ Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 308.

He escaped and appealed to the English court in the Castle.⁴⁷ At its sitting, the magistrate of the former court, Joseph Martin, was found guilty of “technical assault” and fined £5 for the treatment meted out to the man.⁴⁸ The *Omanhin* was compelled to settle that fine on behalf of the magistrate of his court. Again in 1865, Blankson Wood, a clerk in the employ of W. C. Finlason, a Jamaican resident in Cape Coast, was sentenced by Martin on account of disrespectful language and blatant contempt of the indigenous court.⁴⁹ Wood’s employer reported the matter to the governor with the explanation that his “clerk does not acknowledge any authority, save that exercised by Her Majesty, the Queen of England; and to that power he now appeals through me for redress.”⁵⁰ Such tendencies might have been due to the urban nature of Cape Coast at the time as the seat of the colonial administration, as well as its cosmopolitan appeal. As a result of the booming trade, merchants and individuals from all over the world had some sort of business to attend to in Cape Coast. Thus, Finlason’s action on Wood’s behalf was an obvious snub, and showed his contempt for the indigenous court.⁵¹

Governor Pine lambasted the proceedings of the indigenous court, which he claimed he had studied for almost two and a half years. He accused it of cruelty and

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 202.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ PRO CO 96/67: Letter of W. C. Finlason, Cape Coast, to Acting Colonial Secretary, 11 March 1865, 6.

⁵¹ Ibid.

injustice. He stated, “I have now been here nearly two and a half years, and I have watched these country courts very narrowly, and not until now could I ever prove a case where cruelty and injustice had been done.”⁵² Pine described its operations as “unlawful, unconstitutional, and unwarrantable,” which was in conflict with “the compact understanding, spirit, and usages” existing between the government and the people under its protection.⁵³ He further charged that the indigenous court was irresponsible and could not be recognized, because, above all, it was not malleable to appeal to the British judiciary. Pine ordered an annulment of all proceedings and an immediate transfer of pending cases to the English court.⁵⁴ *Omanhin* Aggery was requested to hold discussions with the governor on the constitution of a court, the operations of which could be recognized and found acceptable by the colonial administration.⁵⁵ Aggery would not accept these terms, which he viewed as an insult to his person and office.

In reaction to complaints and accusations of the governor, Aggery unleashed a vitriolic attack on what he saw as an establishment that sought to arrogate more power to itself than was reasonably due it. He claimed that the nature of the British jurisdiction had become so nebulous and nondescript that he, as the king, was left in grave doubt: “The compact, understanding, spirit, and usages spoken of, are left still so undefined and in the dark, that I’m no wiser today than I was yesterday. . . . I trust Your Excellency is not

⁵² PRP CO 96/67: Executive Council Minutes of 25 March 1865.

⁵³ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 203.

⁵⁴ PRO CO 96/67: Letter of R. Pine, Cape Coast, to Omanhin Aggery, 14 March 1865, 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

unprepared to set bounds to my jurisdiction as King and point out where I should go and where I should not go.”⁵⁶ Apparently, it was unacceptable—even unthinkable—to *Omanhin* Aggery that as a king on his own land he should be directed regarding what he could and could not do.⁵⁷

Consequently, Aggery expressed his disapproval of the questionable Bond of 1844 (the supposed basis of British power and authority in Southern Gold Coast), which George Maclean and his successor administered to a group of chiefs from Southern Gold Coast.⁵⁸ According to Aggery, the Bond had been created in a peculiar manner that took power from the hands of the king, the chiefs and other indigenous political leaders. Maclean came in for critical censure as the architect of the bond. Aggery charged that Maclean:

in a very peculiar, imperceptible, and unheard-of manner, wrested from the hands of our Kings, Chiefs, and head men, their power to govern their own subjects. The Governor, placing himself at the head of a handful of soldiers, had been known himself to travel to the remotest parts of the interior, for the purpose of compelling Kings, Chiefs, and head men (through fear of man or other feeling) to obey his Excellency’s summons or to comply with His Excellency’s decrees. A blow was thus firmly, slowly, and persistently struck. . . . A white face, a red jacket was, in countenanced to throw off with impunity their very allegiance, an allegiance which could not well be disowned and ignored and denied without endangering the security of the King.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ PRO CO 96/67: Letter of *Omanhin* Aggery, Cape Coast, to Governor R. Pine, 13 March 1865, 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

The import of Aggery's perception of power under the British colonial enterprise has not been given sufficient consideration. It has to do with the application of force, fear, and intimidation through the use of soldiers. Who were these soldiers at the disposal of the colonial administration?

Colonial Militarism and Aggery's Resistance

The soldiers came from a long line of men who started the two small bodies of troops, specifically, the Gold Coast Corps and the Militia and Police in the early nineteenth century.⁶⁰ The Gold Coast Corps were a formidable group. They were drawn from a detachment of the West Indian Regiment and did not know the local languages and customs. As a result, they were ruthless in the discharge of their duties as they faithfully carried out instructions given them. They were the government's intelligence service, kept the population in check, suppressed rebellions and riots.⁶¹ In time, the need for effective communication with the people became necessary. This led to renaming the old Corps the "Militia and Police," which was mainly composed of local men and others who could barely speak the local languages. They were clothed in duck uniforms with coatees, forage caps, and half-boots, which were eventually augmented by blue trousers, red coats, blue collars, and the standard forage caps.⁶² Their brass buttons were etched with the crown and the inscription, "Gold Coast Militia and Police." To accentuate their

⁶⁰ W. H. Gillespie, *The Gold Coast Police 1844–1938* (Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1955), 2.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

power and authority they carried muskets, bayonets, and truncheons.⁶³ According to William Gillespie, detachments of police and militia were stationed in the Cape Coast Castle.

The creation of the Gold Coast Artillery, on account of its military training and composition, raised the level of terror these government forces could inspire. Given that military discipline was, at the time, an anathema to people of prestigious social background; those who elected to join the artillery were people who had been freed from diverse forms of servitude and bondage. The artillery force became a haven for them to express their newly found freedom. Consequently, it was with great difficulty that discipline could be preserved in the artillery, even in the presence of their officers.⁶⁴ They were put in positions of power and authority, which enabled them to enforce the law on their former masters.⁶⁵ Because most of the chiefs happened to own many persons in bondage and servitude, they found themselves at the receiving end as enforcers of the law used the slightest excuse to settle personal scores.⁶⁶ But there were other issues.

⁶³ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁵ PRO CO 96/41: Letter of Freeman to R. Pine, Cape Coast, 25 June 1857, 4.

⁶⁶ Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaidoo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview; Nana Ababio, interview.

First, the use of persons freed from servitude and bondage ran into severe problems. They were just too ruthless in the discharge of their duties, which created considerable bad press for the government. Furthermore, their perceived low social status made it impossible for people who considered themselves free and of reputable standing to obey them.⁶⁷ These free people thus resisted them in most of their activities as much as possible. Second, the existing police force, made up of local men, in part, was not only ill-trained but unreliable. In June 1868, giving evidence before the Legislative Council, the acting inspector general of police described the police as unable to keep order in Cape Coast on account of “their small numbers, their being natives, and related to the towns people . . . timidity and prejudice mixed rendered them inefficient, and they are beyond the age for active or extraordinary duty.”⁶⁸

It was anticipated that the creation of a police force would help the government keep order and, as a result, save the use of the soldiers for the most critical situations. The colonial administration, further justifying the necessity of a police force, suggested that a police force would be more in keeping with the character of the Gold Coast than soldiers.⁶⁹ This was because the people of the Gold Coast were sure to resist the aggressive tendencies of the soldiers. Troops of soldiers had been used to perform police duties because the government had no police force at its disposal—and this often created disagreement between the War Office in London and the commanding officer. Thus, the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gillespie, *The Gold Coast Police*, 9.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 10.

colonial government saw great convenience in establishing a semi-military force under its exclusive control.⁷⁰

In 1860 the Gold Coast Armed Police Force was established. Given their prior experiences of troop composition, the colonial government decided to limit membership of this force to the Hausa. The success of the Hausa troops in Lagos, Nigeria, was to provide a model for the Gold Coast.⁷¹ “Hausa,” apart from referring to a language, was a generic term for those peoples who came from the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their intelligence, relative martial and aggressive habits, and their uncompromising commitment to the execution of given orders were considered particularly suitable for the task of keeping law and order in Southern Gold Coast.⁷² The conduct and bearing of the Hausa made a most favorable impression, increasing the belief, already held in many quarters, of the virtues of these people.⁷³ Their origins in the northern sector of the country also assured the government that they did not have any filial relations or cultural connections with most of the people in the south. The police force was reinforced with more Hausas from Lagos, Nigeria. Their uniforms consisted of blue baft with red facings, blue fezzes with a red band, blucher boots, and a band. Others wore flannel shirts and trousers with a suave jacket, a red woolen sash, a fez with blue tassels copied from the Lagos Hausa, and black leather. The uniform for the officers was

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 11.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

blue flannel, with a Norfolk jacket, Hausa trousers, a red silk sash, a white helmet with a red *puggarree* (or a fez), and brown leather belts.⁷⁴

By 1875, the Police Force was being referred to as the Constabulary; and was given the additional duties of constant patrols and minor skirmishes. Eventually, the Gold Coast was largely covered by the Constabulary. Gillespie refers to Colonel McInnis as one of the well-known inspector-generals of the Constabulary.⁷⁵ He was a man of strong character, impatient with opposition, and ruthless in dealing resistance. After his term of command, the governor wrote of the courage, loyalty, efficiency, and success that he brought to the Constabulary. This, according to him, completely changed the establishment from an armed Police Force to an Irregular Regiment, thus laying the foundation for the eventual formation of the West African Frontier Force Battalions.⁷⁶ It is instructive to note that in the history of the military and police forces in the Gold Coast, there were frequent references to cases of lack of discipline, drunkenness, terror, and extortion. The mere introduction of these regimented colonial institutions characterized by these negative tendencies presented great potentials for conflict and resistance. Their lack of discipline, terror, heavy handedness, extortion, and even drunkenness acted as catalysts to the frequent clashes with the people.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

According to *Omanhin* Aggery, fear and intimidation were inherent in a white face and a red jacket, which were a terror not only for his people in Cape Coast and the surrounding villages, but for also the entire Gold Coast.⁷⁸ As a result, many a peace-loving subject was compelled to throw off, with impunity, their allegiance to the indigenous authorities, which could not be denied without endangering the security of the king.⁷⁹ The essence of Aggery's statement point to militarism insofar as British colonial rule was concerned. He charged that it was military rule, pure and simple. The red jacket was suggestive of military uniform. Colonial rule according to him thrived on troops of soldiers and battalions of policemen who were swift to carry out not only the governor's bidding, but also the larger colonial agenda. For instance, Governor Pine made a statement that, more than anything else, confirmed aspects, if not everything, that *Omanhin* Aggery implied in his classic statement. Pine, in his reaction to Aggery's comments on the Blankson Wood issue, retorted that if it had occurred in Governor George Maclean's days, the matter would have been settled by sending a few troops, but "now I can do no such thing."⁸⁰ Aggery accused the colonial administration of arrogating to itself what was not given in the Bond of 1844. He observed that though he was a minor when the Bond was signed, he understood the altercations between the representatives of indigenous political authority on the one hand, and the governor, on the

⁷⁸ PRO CO 96/67: Letter of *Omanhin* Aggery, Cape Coast, to Governor R. Pine, 13 March 1865.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ PRO CO 96/67: *Executive Council Minutes* of 25 March 1865, 212.

other.⁸¹ Aggery indicated that the people of the Gold Coast were not subjects of the queen of England. With respect to territory, he averred that the British were limited to the buildings within the walls of the castle and two other forts. Given the expansion of British influence beyond the original agreement, he charged that the colonial administration had, through sheer use of force – military and mechanical might – overstepped its bounds.⁸²

Omanhin Aggery served notice that further correspondence between him and the administration would be unproductive until he received redress from the British government in England.⁸³ Governor Pine was apparently not moved by this threat. He warned Aggery that he could withdraw official recognition from him as the king of Cape Coast on account of his “insolent and offensive communication.”⁸⁴ Perhaps to show the resoluteness of the colonial administration, the English Court went ahead to award Blankson Wood damages and costs, which Martin was to pay in spite of the vehement resistance of *Omanhin* Aggery and his supporters.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ibid., 214.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 216.

⁸⁴ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 204.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

In September 1865, yet another incident offered Aggery the opportunity to call the military bluff of the colonial administration.⁸⁶ It was a clash between the West Indian soldiers stationed in Cape Coast and some young men. The former had gone on a drinking spree in the town when the clash occurred. Two of the young men lost their lives and one soldier went missing. As usual, the soldiers were wont to show their military and mechanical might. *Omanhin* Aggery protested officially to Conran, that

[a] frightful tragedy has been enacted in this town . . . soldiers of the garrison have suddenly issued forth at night with some officers, and have treated this town as if they had taken it by assault in time of war . . . we have a right to expect that the government will cause the most searching and complete judiciary inquiry to be made . . . how it came to pass that the troops in garrison at Cape Coast were rushing about the town in detached bodies, some with, some without officers, armed with muskets, bayonets and clubs, forcibly entering houses of sleeping persons, slaughtering the “Queen’s subjects,” taking away property, beating peaceful citizens dragging human beings about like dead cattle, and creating such terror and confusion as will never be forgotten here . . . it was not a riot on the part of the people; it was an attack on the town by the garrison.⁸⁷

It is instructive that the militaristic nature of the colonial administration and its penchant for the use of force kept coming up in Cape Coast and other places on Gold Coast. The display of muskets and bayonets by soldiers who had gone amok, with and without officers, was enough to send frightening signals to people. However, these developments were to make the people of Cape Coast further averse to the very presence of the colonial administration.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., 206.

⁸⁷ PRO CO 96/68: Letter of *Omanhin* Aggery, Cape Coast, to Governor Colonel Conran; enclosed in Dispatch No. 123, 23 October 1865, to Cardwell, 2.

⁸⁸ Kobina Yallow, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Kweku Botse, interview; Kojo Insaideo, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview; Kojo Nunoo, interview; J. A. Hayfron,

The administration was conciliatory and protective of a private soldier who was found culpable of the murders in the clash, and had been consequently sentenced to death by the acting chief justice. The governor, exercising his executive prerogative, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment with hard labor, on the advice of the Executive Council. According to them, the soldier was on duty trying to suppress a riot.⁸⁹ The governor criticized *Omanhin* Aggery and his advisors for wanting to use the incident, as well as the funerals of the victims of the clash, to incite the town against the British. Apparently, the *Asafo* of the town had paraded the coffins of the deceased persons through the town with drumming and singing within the precincts of the Castle where the colonial administration held most of its deliberations and operations. The governor used this as an excuse to blame the *Omanhin*.⁹⁰

Aggery, suspecting that the colonial officials were using foul means to have their way, wrote a letter to Sir William Blackall, the governor-in-chief of Sierra Leone, who was visiting the Gold Coast.⁹¹ He was asked, as a superior officer to Governor Colonel Conran, to “respectfully define the relationship between the *Omanhin*’s court and the English court, between the King and the Governor, and between the King and his brother

interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview; Nana Ababio, interview.

⁸⁹ PRO CO 96/67: *Executive Council Minutes* of 16 October 1865, 221.

⁹⁰ PRO CO 96/41: Letter of Freeman to R. Pine, Cape Coast, 25 June 1857, 2.

⁹¹ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 214.

Kings on the Gold Coast.”⁹² Apparently Aggery was fed up with undue interference in his power as the head of the indigenous political order from the colonial administration. He felt that, in comparison with other kings, chiefs, and leaders of the indigenous political order in the Gold Coast, his efforts to do his duty were being constantly frustrated because the seat of the colonial government was in his town.⁹³ It also incapacitated his rule by stifling its financial base. The government collected all customs, excise, and other revenues that were originally due his ancestors. Besides giving a litany of past grievances, *Omanhin* Aggery served notice that in view of the unnecessary show of force on the part of the colonial administration, he will be compelled to constitute his own army for the purposes of resistance to the colonial government and self-defense.⁹⁴ He intended to transform the *Asafo* into a professional and well-armed band of fighting men to meet the army of the colonial administration boot for boot. The government’s response was characteristic of military regimes intolerant of the slightest resistance to their rule. It described Aggery’s language as seditious.⁹⁵ Colonel Coran took serious exception to it and requested Blackall’s support in putting down this “insolent, ignorant, and stubborn man” whom he suspected of wanting to overthrow British rule and

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 216.

⁹⁴ PRO CO 96/68: Letter of Omanhin Aggery, Cape Coast, to Governor Colonel Conran; enclosed in Dispatch No. 123, 23 October 1865, 6.

⁹⁵ PRO CO 96/71: Dispatch No. 1 from Blackall to Cardwell, 19 April 1866, 5.

substituting his own.⁹⁶ When reports of these developments reached England through the regular correspondences, dispatches, and telegrams, they ignited debate as to the whether the colony was worth all the problems given the high annual costs. It was determined that if plans to take over Southern Gold Coast were pursued, colonial officers would suffer perpetual resistance from the chiefs and kings who were always quick to do that.⁹⁷ Moreover, in the event of the colonial agenda being pushed forward, kings, such as Aggery, would have to be prevented from setting up armed forces, which would “certainly be made up of the worst of characters, who would be difficult to control.”⁹⁸ Blackall was intolerant of Aggery’s resistance to the colonial administration and showed strong support for Conran. He saw *Omanhin* Aggery’s warning as mischievous and his claim to a share of the revenue as inadmissible. In view of this, his “pretentions” must be effectively checkmated. It is instructive to note that although the British were proving adamant in dealing with *Omanhin* Aggery, they were also working frantically to either avoid—or at least minimize—the possibility of local resistance in Cape Coast. As a result, the seat of judicial authority was moved to Freetown, Sierra Leone.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, enough bad blood had developed between the colonial administration and *Omanhin* Aggery, so much so, that this effort was too little, too late.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 215.

In July 1866, Conran refused to have anything to do with Thomas Hughes, who was chosen as an official of *Omanhin* Aggery, with a special dispensation to assist the indigenous political establishment with order, improvement, and welfare of the people.¹⁰⁰ This became a full-blown crisis as protests became rife. These were led by the leaders of the seven *Asafo* companies of Cape Coast.¹⁰¹ Aggery unleashed yet another condemnation of the colonial government. He described the government's refusal to cooperate with Hughes as an attempt to "withhold civil liberties of the people in a manner unheard-of in any civilized country no matter how despotic the sovereign may be."¹⁰² Conran released a number of people committed to prison by the indigenous court following submission of private petitions. According to him, the sentences were cruel and repugnant to the letter and spirit of British law.¹⁰³ *Omanhin* Aggery, encouraged by a large public meeting of his supporters, sent an even more scathing official letter of protest than usual to Conran:

The time has now come for me to record a solemn protest against the perpetual annoyances and insults that you persistently and perseveringly continue to practice on me in my capacity as legally constituted King of Cape Coast. I presume your object is . . . to incite me and my people to enact more of those fearful things that took place in Jamaica that I have heard of . . . however much you may wish to have me and my people

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ PRO CO 96/72: Letter of Chiefs Cudjoe Ayee, Cofie Atta, and others, Cape Coast, 8 August 1866, 1.

¹⁰² PRO CO 96/72: Letter of Omanhin Aggery, Cape Coast, to Hamilton, 9 August 1866, 3.

¹⁰³ PRO CO 96/74: Letter from Colonial Secretary to Omanhin Aggery, enclosed in Dispatch No. 2, from Blackall to Carnarvan, 15 January 1866, 4.

under martial law, you will never have that pleasure . . . the Earl of Carnarvon has laid it down in his speech on the 2nd August last, that we are all entitled to redress at his hands as the Colonial Minister. To that quarter I shall appeal for the last time, and then if some tangible satisfaction is not accorded to me and those whose interest I am bound to protect, it will be time enough for me to adopt those measures which will ensure to me and my people something unlike the slavery that you are endeavoring to place us in.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, *Omanhin* Aggerly referred to previous grievances, particularly those dealing with his people's suffering at the hands of the colonial forces. He recalled instances when his subjects were "butchered" by colonial soldiers under the supervision of officers and, sometimes, the governor.¹⁰⁵ He reiterated his knowledge of the British government's plans to give self-government to kings and chiefs of the Gold Coast. He lambasted the governor for what he called his (the governor's) personal attack.¹⁰⁶ Aggerly charged that he would no longer endure colonial tyranny, annoyances, and abuses, nor would he suffer the disunity that the officers were endeavoring to create.¹⁰⁷

Interestingly, both combatants had reached their limits. Conran felt that rather than let Aggerly act he would stop him first. What was of grave concern to the colonial administration was Aggerly's reference to the Jamaican revolution. Conran insisted that *Omanhin* Aggerly must be made to answer questions relating to his unguarded reference to the Jamaican revolution, fearing that the threat could mean an end to British authority

¹⁰⁴ PRO CO 96/72: Letter of *Omanhin* Aggerly, Cape Coast, to Governor Colonel Conran, enclosed in Dispatch No. 109, to Blackall, 7 December 1866, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

over the Gold Coast. This was viewed as a criminal threat that must be dealt with before it was carried out. Aggery was arrested after he failed to honor the governor's summons. He retorted that he did not know who Coran was, and that he (Aggery) was king of Cape Coast who had nothing to do with the queen's representative. The colonial administration declared him deposed as king of Cape Coast and declared the indigenous court closed. Aggery was seized and put on a departing mail boat to Sierra Leone. Justifying his swift action in the Aggery deposition, Conran indignantly explained:

From the moment King Aggery's Commissioners arrived from England, in September 1865, with the news of their being trained for self-government, I experienced from King Aggery much insubordinate and abusive language, indicating throughout his whole conduct the mad desire to govern, not only Cape Coast itself, but the whole Gold Coast, having lately adopted the title King of Cape Coast and its dependencies. . . . I received a production from him full of rebellious and insubordinate language, threatening me with the repetition of the late Jamaican scenes.¹⁰⁸

With *Omanhin* Aggery off the scene, the colonial authorities, mindful of the incessant resistance to the administration, took some preventive measures. They quickly declared the office and title of king abolished. In its place, the colonial administration insisted on that of a headman who was to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen of England and obey the governor as the former's representative.¹⁰⁹ When the *Asafo* and the Western-educated elite of Cape Coast resisted these conditions, the colonial administration came

¹⁰⁸ PRO CO 96/74: Address by Governor Colonel Conran, Cape Coast, December 10, 1866, enclosed in Dispatch No. 112 to Blackall, 31 December 1866, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History*, 365.

to the realization that Aggery's removal might not end the seemingly interminable resistance.¹¹⁰

Punitive Measure: Removal of Colonial Capital to Accra

Thus, it was not surprising that as early as 1874 plans were afoot to abandon Cape Coast Castle as the seat of government.¹¹¹ References were made in the Earl of Carnarvon's speech before the House of Lords in London.¹¹² He identified three considerations that must go into the choice of a seat of government. These included the military factor, commercial concern and the sanitation situation. These considerations, as well as their timing, made the decision to abandon the Cape Coast Castle curious. Cape Coast had remained the seat of British operations since they arrived at the Gold Coast. It remained the seat of the administration for a long time. After the altercation with the combined forces of *Omanhin* Aggery, the *Asafo*, and the Western-educated elite, Accra and Elmina were considered as alternatives for the seat of government.¹¹³ It was argued that as far as the military consideration was concerned, Cape Coast had no significant advantages. Accra, to the east of Cape Coast, was said to be a desirable place in terms of

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 367.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

health.¹¹⁴ And with the proposed consolidation of the Lagos and Gold Coast settlements, Accra was seen as a strategic location between the two. Elmina, to the west of Cape Coast, had a hilly district, a good water supply, and a port with the capacity to admit crafts of 40–50 tons.¹¹⁵ Although either Accra or Elmina could be the nominal seat of the colonial government, the Earl of Carnarvon's opinion was that the colonial government's real seat in time of war should be a strategic place in the hills to which the governor and his staff would be able to retreat. Simple buildings, such as a stockade, could be connected with the seat of government on the coast by roads and other systems of communication. Accra was about 30 miles from Aburi on the Akwapim ridge, which served as a base for many European missionaries and their families. Thus, popular opinion among the colonial administration favored Accra, even though it was a relatively bad coastal landing place.¹¹⁶

Cape Coast, which, as noted earlier, had served as the seat of the colonial administration, was to be abandoned on account of its alleged sanitation problem. But the health and sanitation history of Southern Gold Coast, in principle, neither absolved Cape Coast, nor supported the clean bill of health issued to Accra and Elmina by the colonial administration.¹¹⁷ The Earl of Carnarvon charged that as far as the sanitation of Cape

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 368.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ PRO CO 96/202: Petition of Principal Inhabitants of Cape Coast to the Secretary of State, 5 June 1889, enclosed in Dispatch No. 180, from Brandford Griffith to Knutsford, 18 June 1889, 2.

Coast was concerned, it was “perhaps one of the worst places that could have been selected. According to him the soil was saturated through and through with sewage. There was decaying vegetable matter everywhere about, and the houses were crowded on one another. . . . Even cattle could exist at Cape Coast. It deserved more than perhaps any other place the appellation of the White man’s grave.”¹¹⁸ Although these observations were greeted with shouts of “hear, hear,” in the House of Lords in England, public opinion in Cape Coast dismissed them as sour grapes, particularly when the town had served for many years as the seat of the colonial government and the residence of many Europeans.¹¹⁹ They also did their best to keep the town clean.¹²⁰

Sanitation in Cape Coast was not markedly different than that of any major town or city in Southern Gold Coast. The practice of free range animals rearing was common in Southern Gold Coast.¹²¹ European residents and visitors to the Gold Coast left accounts of the disregard for proper planning that affected sanitation and health. Charles Alexander Gordon, an army surgeon, had this to say about Cape Coast:

The part of the town occupied by the poorer classes consist of houses terribly huddled together, along the opposite faces of what is a deep valley, along which, in the rainy season, a considerable torrent runs, and where, during the dry, all kinds of filth the most abominable accumulate. From this ravine offshoots extend in various directions among the houses; myriads of frogs domesticate themselves. . . . In the parts of the town where European merchants or wealthy natives reside the houses are of a

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 11.

superior kind, being composed of brick, flat-roofed, and well white-washed. . . . The two principal streets are wide . . . like boulevards. On an eminence at one end of the principal street, directly facing the Castle stands the Chapel of the Wesleyan Missionaries.¹²²

These descriptions were corroborated by Brodie Cruickshank, who indicated that houses in Cape Coast were “huddled together in the most crowded manner . . . without the slightest regard to light . . . air, or the convenience of approach.”¹²³ The lack of proper planning had nothing to do with the cultural imperative.¹²⁴ It was a direct result of the stalemate between the colonial administration and the indigenous political authority. This situation was exacerbated by the incidence of growing population, not only from increasing birth, but also from the influx of people bent on taking advantage of opportunities in trade and education.¹²⁵ The colonial administration tended to overshadow and suppress the power and authority of the chiefs, who, in their own ways, also frustrated the former. This scenario presented a situation where institutions under these two conflicting powers were rendered weak, dysfunctional, and thereby inefficient. The indigenous political system, under the aegis of the *Asafo* institution, had a system of municipal administration responsible for sanitation, town planning, public works, and

¹²² Charles Alexander Gordon, *Life on the Gold Coast* (London: Bailliere, Tindall, and Cox, 1874), 4.

¹²³ Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa: Including an Account of the Native Tribes and their Intercourse with Europeans* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 23.

¹²⁴ J. E. Casely-Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), 109.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

other communal necessities.¹²⁶ This was effectively managed through the *Asafo* ward system. The colonial government's constant interference and attempts at regulating the *Asafo* led to a near abandonment of most of these concerns. The *Asafo* could do nothing but struggle for survival under colonial pressure. Lamenting this situation, John Mensah Sarbah alleged, "Today we are being ruled as if we had no indigenous institutions, no language, no national characteristics, and no homes."¹²⁷ In the same vein, Gold Coast lawyer and nationalist Joseph Casely-Hayford also observed that, "the effect of intercourse with Europeans on the part of the people of the coastal towns has been to disorganize their own former municipal arrangements and to throw them back upon such haphazard provisions as the colonial government has felt inclined to make."¹²⁸ Is it any wonder that *Omanhin* Aggery charged that the British interfered so much with chiefs and their people that although they (the British) were unable to govern them, they also ended up preventing them (the chiefs and their people) from governing themselves?

As towns in Southern Gold Coast expanded, they brought overcrowding, dirt, trash, and squalor, which in some cases caused diseases. The Town Council was criticized as a sanitary failure when Accra recorded an outbreak of the bubonic

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ PRO CO 96/202: Petition of Principal Inhabitants of Cape Coast to the Secretary of State, June 5, 1889, enclosed in Dispatch No. 180, from Brandford Griffith to Knutsford, 18 June 1889, 8.

¹²⁸ Casely-Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, 111.

plague.¹²⁹ It was also censured in the Legislative Council for the filthy state of the town.¹³⁰ And the Gold Coast press also took up the issue of lack of a drainage system.¹³¹ The politics of sanitation is not uncommon in the history of colonial urban Africa, and has been given a considerable press. A survey of these issues revealed that “studies of colonial medical efforts could tell us much about the attitudes, objectives, and priorities of European rulers” in Africa.¹³² David Patterson, for instance, refers to what he calls a major project of social engineering, in which colonial governments embarked upon relocations of people deemed undesirable in certain prestigious places.¹³³ Maynard Swanson, writing about the Cape Colony of the early twentieth century, refers to the powerful sanitation, disease, and epidemiological metaphors that shaped perceptions, influenced and justified behaviors in most places in colonial Africa.¹³⁴ In some of these places, colonial authorities acted on the supposed sense of medical menace posed by the African presence in certain towns. Thus, a pattern emerged that set African and European

¹²⁹ W. J. Simpson, *Sanitary Matters in various West African Colonies and the Outbreak of Plagues in the Gold Coast* (London: Crown Agents, 1909), 10.

¹³⁰ *Legislative Council Debates*, statement by W. H. Grey, 6 November 1911, 343.

¹³¹ Editorial, “Gold Coast Drainage and Sanitation,” *Gold Coast Independent*, 20 July 1918.

¹³² K. David Patterson, “Disease and Medicine in African History: A Bibliographical Essay,” *History in Africa* 1 (1974): 142.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹³⁴ Maynard W. Swanson, “The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in Cape Colony, 1900–1909,” *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 388.

urban communities physically apart. To ensure a foolproof system, in some cases, colonial medical authorities ensured that there was a sanitary cordon of uninhabited space between those communities to forestall the spread of African diseases into European residential areas.¹³⁵ Sometimes the outbreak of epidemics provided a justification for the suddenness with which segregation was imposed and relocations established. Thus, the bubonic plague in Dakar, Senegal, justified the abrupt manner in which the policy of residential segregation supplanted the earlier pattern of coexistence. Upon the advice of medical authorities, the colonial government created Medina as a separate African quarter.¹³⁶ Again, the bubonic plague, cholera, and small pox in South Africa, particularly in the Transvaal and Natal, provided the justification for segregating Indians and Africans living in municipal locations.¹³⁷ Swanson indicates that this was not a strategy peculiar to Africa. There were precedents. He surmises that it is reasonable to expect that the European background formed a major source of inspiration for the White response to social problems in Africa.¹³⁸

However, in Cape Coast, the sanitation situation was to provide justification for a different action. Instead of the colonial government building a sanitary cordon to offset

¹³⁵ J. S. Lafontaine, *City Politics: A Study of Leopoldville, 1962–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 19.

¹³⁶ Raymond F. Betts, “The Problem of the Medina in the Urban Planning of Dakar, Senegal, 1914,” *Urban African Notes* 4, no. 3 (1969): 5; Raymond F. Betts, “The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar, Senegal, 1914,” *Africa* 41, no. 1 (1971): 143.

¹³⁷ Swanson, “The Sanitation Syndrome,” 390.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 390.

the threat of an epidemic, it elected, in 1877, to relocate itself to a place where the sanitation was not markedly different than that of Cape Coast. This action thus lent credibility to the suspicion that it was more political than sanitary or medical. In their correspondences, colonial officers had repeatedly referred to the congestion of the town, and from which all other sanitation problems emanated. The congestion was apparently due to the fact that Cape Coast, as the capital of the colony, was the place of choice for many.¹³⁹ Colonial medical officers also drew attention to the danger arising from overcrowding. Instances were given of attempts to create new settlements and the reluctance of people to take advantage of them.¹⁴⁰ For instance, old Cape Coast families which were conventional in their ideas showed no great desire to move into new suburbs. Others complained about the distance between the town center and the new settlements. For instance, in another attempt at relieving the congestion, a site was selected for a Hausa Zongo. At a distance of two miles along the Saltpond Road, it was found to be too far from Cape Coast to suit the convenience of a trading community.¹⁴¹

The congestion brought in its wake the erection of illegal structures (e.g., wooden sheds and wooden additions and extensions to houses).¹⁴² These were done without consulting the colonial engineering authorities. Some unscrupulous sanitary inspectors

¹³⁹ PRAAD Adm. 23/1/435: Letter from Acting Deputy Director of Health, Accra to the Hon. A. F. E. Fieldgate, Esq., Commissioner, Central Province, Cape Coast, 27 September 1943, 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴² Ibid.

added to this fray by demanding payments of what were essentially bribes.¹⁴³ These illegal actions hampered the proper supervision of new buildings. The increasing population, which created the congestion, also exceeded the capacities of the facilities. The number of public bathrooms and latrines were insufficient for the number of people in the town.¹⁴⁴ At that time, it was not mandatory for house owners to provide bathrooms and/or latrines, so everybody had to depend on what was available in public places. As the population outstripped available facilities, people were compelled to use portions of the beach as open latrines and as dumping grounds for rubbish. This irregularity was not only caused by inadequate facilities, but also the derelict state of some of the public latrines. Large drains with outlets to the sea were silted with sand and were being used for other purposes. Furthermore, the out fall of drains into the lagoon was choked with vegetation and badly in need of clearing.¹⁴⁵

The extent of these sanitary problems was made worse by official and fiscal issues. Colonial correspondence always referred to shortage of staff. As a result, the small number available had to be shifted around, thus creating situations where some places were left without medical officers or sanitation inspectors over long periods.¹⁴⁶ They also referred to inadequate funds for hiring laborers to clear bushes and remove silt, or the employment of scavengers for other sanitary services. In view of the fact that an

¹⁴³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 15.

outbreak of a contagious disease in a place like Cape Coast could prove disastrous, the provincial engineer recommended that the proposed schemes to relieve overcrowding should receive financial assistance from the colonial government. He further recommended a budget of £10,000 spread over two years, which he felt would probably be enough to effect a great change in the state of the town. In the end, the colonial administration used the supposed sanitary situation in Cape Coast as one of the official justifications for abandoning Cape Coast as the colonial capital. It relocated in Accra to the east in 1877.¹⁴⁷

Another Punitive Measure: Exclusion from Railroad Infrastructure

Ultimately, sanitation became the deciding factor in the choice of a new colonial capital for the Gold Coast. Yet, Accra was chosen over Cape Coast in spite of the fact that its sanitary situation was not significantly better than that of the latter. This strengthened the suspicion that the relocation was a punitive action in retaliation to the town's "troublesome" character. Apparently this relocation was not the only punitive measure against Cape Coast. It was denied economic and infrastructural developments which were embarked upon in the early twentieth century by the colonial government especially during the boom in the Gold Coast cocoa industry. The history of Cape Coast was closely connected with its position as a market that linked European trading establishments with traders from inland territories, the forest, savannah regions, and beyond to the Niger and the Sahel.¹⁴⁸ This is confirmed by the vernacular name of Cape

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ K. Arhin, *The Cape Coast and Elmina Handbook: Past, Present and Future* (Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, Legon, 1995), 2.

Coast, i.e., *Oguaa*. The name, *Oguaa*, was derived from the Akan words *gua* or *dwa* (market). It is believed that this name was given to Cape Coast because it was a small but important market that developed into a major trading center. Before the trade with Europeans, there was some form of trade between the Great Fetu Kingdom in the interior and the town of *Ooegwa*. Traders from the former carried corn, oil, and palm wine to the latter in exchange for fish and salt.¹⁴⁹ The arrival of Europeans not only increased the volume of trade, but also diversified it. In 1652, a Swedish company built a fortified lodge near the site of the present Castle, but shortly afterwards they were driven out by the Danes, who, in turn, lost their position to the English in 1662.¹⁵⁰ The Company of Royal African Merchants, who took over the site from the Danes, decided to make Cape Coast its main center of operation. The company expanded the building's fortifications and eventually their Cape Coast headquarters became a Castle. However, it soon went bankrupt, but its successor, the Royal African Company, continued to use Cape Coast as the center of English trading operations on the coast.¹⁵¹

Until the eighteenth century, gold was the principal export; the shipment of slaves was added later.¹⁵² These were exchanged for textiles, metals, metal work, cutlery,

¹⁴⁹ W. Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea: Divided into the Gold, the Slave and the Ivory Coasts* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 48.

¹⁵⁰ W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 81.

¹⁵¹ R. Gocking, "The Historic Akoto: A Social History of Cape Coast, Ghana, 1848–1948" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1981), 44.

¹⁵² R. A. Kea, *Settlements Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 207.

weapons, and other miscellaneous goods.¹⁵³ The wealth derived from slave shipments provided the opportunity for enterprising individuals to enhance their standing at the expense of the king of Fetu. Of this group, the most notable was Edward William Barter, a mulatto who was able to acquire control all the trade of the town.¹⁵⁴ The number of merchants who could engage in the trade was restricted by chartered companies, which enjoyed a monopoly on the coast. This began to change in 1750 in the British areas when Parliament revoked the charter of the Royal African Company.¹⁵⁵ From that point, merchants could trade on the coast so long as they paid the British a small tax. Many among this new generation of traders settled for long periods on the coast. They lived with local women and had families there as well.¹⁵⁶ In 1828, when the British

¹⁵³ These included: Textiles: thin silk cloths or taffetas, nap or pile cloths, linen, woolen cloths of different kinds, carpets, etc. Metal and metalwork: iron bars, axes and hatchets, spades, copper basins of different forms and sizes, copper pots and buckets, tin ware (pots, pans, etc). Cutlery and weapons: match lock and firelock, muskets, gunpowder, knives of different sorts, cutlasses. Miscellaneous: beads and corals, earthenware, mirrors, hats, shirts and leather bags, etc. See Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast*, 207.

¹⁵⁴ Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, 51. His career was very similar to that of his counterparts John Kabes and John Konny of Komenda, 18 miles to the west of Cape Coast. For a fuller account see K. Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720* (London: Clarendon Press, 1970), 115. See also David Henige, “John Kabes of Kommenda: An Early African Entrepreneur and Early State Builder,” *Journal of African History* 17, no. 1 (1977): 1.

¹⁵⁵ Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 144.

¹⁵⁶ The best known of these coastal families with European fathers or relations were the Brews, originally from Anomabu. They have been studied in detail by M. Priestley, *West African Trade and Coast Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). The Swanzy family was another important one. See also H. Swanzy, “A Trading Family in the

Government decided to abandon the Gold Coast settlements, British merchants who traded in this area protested and were permitted to take over the management. They also received a small grant from the government to help with the cost of administration. This group was responsible for the appointment of Captain George Maclean in 1830 as president of the council that was to undertake the local administration. He remained in office until the British government took over full control of the area in 1843.¹⁵⁷ By the late 1840s, the European merchants had been replaced by others in Cape Coast, who in most cases had children with local women. Many members of this generation of traders were Christians who had been educated at the schools in the Castle. Some of these traders inherited their businesses from European fathers, others, however, entered trade on their own initiative. Many took advantage of their Western education and contact with European society to become local agents for London firms expanding their operations on the Gold Coast.¹⁵⁸

By the late nineteenth century, Cape Coast had become one of the few centers of trade that delivered the wealth of both local and international trade with Europe. It was, by all accounts, a prosperous town. In the absence of a developed harbor, trade vessels anchored some considerable distance out, and canoes maneuvered in and out to reach them. This offered brisk business for the fishermen and others who were willing and able

Nineteenth Century Gold Coast," *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 2, no. 1 (1956): 87.

¹⁵⁷ J. J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 251.

¹⁵⁸ E. Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast, 1807–1874* (London: Longmans, 1974), 80.

to convey goods to and from the vessels. Furthermore, in the absence of modern infrastructure (e.g., roads, and railways), goods had to be carried on the head or rolled over bush paths.¹⁵⁹ Again, this brought considerable money into the economy of Cape Coast as its young men and women endured the tedium of these journeys in and out of the town. By the middle of the nineteenth century (and after the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade), the expanded trade in agricultural produce added to the enormous economic advantages of the town. The boom in the cocoa industry during the first and second decades of the twentieth century also helped the economic development of this coastal town. It was one of the principal ports of the Gold Coast. People from neighboring coastal towns as well as the interior came to seek employment, mainly as carriers and general laborers.¹⁶⁰ Evidence of the strong economic standing of Cape Coast was seen in the presence of commercial firms such as the Royal African Company, F and A Swanzy, and the Elder Dempster Shipping Lines, each of which did highly successful business. This period in the economic development of Cape Coast has been described as the phase of “mercantile capitalism” as it developed into one of the notable trading posts along the West African coast.¹⁶¹ Cape Coast, as well as other major towns of Southern Gold Coast, benefitted a great deal from the emerging economy. Many people took advantage of it. This situation almost gave substance to the view that “the commercial spirit is very strong

¹⁵⁹ Gold Coast 1901 *Population Census Report*, 6.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ J. Hinderink and J. Sterkenburg, *Anatomy of an African Town: A Socio-Economic Study of Cape Coast, Ghana* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: State University of Utrecht, 1975), 16.

in the African.”¹⁶² Of this group, women were more enthusiastic. They constituted an essential and effective connection in the chain of distribution. Operating as petty traders, they handled the bulk of the retail trade in the country. Women in trade generally operated as wholesale-retailers, wholesalers, and retailers.¹⁶³ Wholesale-retailers and wholesalers bought in bulk from the warehouses of importing firms or individual merchants. These women had their own regular customers who also received these goods on credit. It was some of these women retailers who sold their wares in the regular markets. Others sold them as hawkers from street to street, door to door, and even from one neighborhood to the other. Their importance in the chain of distribution was due to the fact that they took trade to the doorstep of their customers, and allowed bargaining, as opposed to the fixed prices of the regular shops. They also gave convenient terms of payment.¹⁶⁴

However, this progress was not to last forever. The introduction of railroad into Southern Gold Coast became an opportunity for the colonial government to deal a deadly blow to Cape Coast. In 1894, the British Chamber of Commerce started pushing for better railways and roads in the Gold Coast. The Railway Ordinance, enacted in 1898, empowered the colonial administration to acquire land for tracks and stations.¹⁶⁵ That

¹⁶² Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, 28.

¹⁶³ Ione Acquah, *Accra Survey: A Social Survey of the capital of Ghana, formerly called the Gold Coast 1953–1956* (London: University of London Press, 1958), 69.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ PRAAD Adm. 14/12/52: Report of the Central Province Trade Routes Committee, Vol. 6, 1928–1929, 30.

year, railway construction began at Sekondi. Further expansion of the infrastructure took place in the 1920s under Governor Gordon Guggisberg with the goal of providing transport and harbor facilities. The construction of the Central Province Railroad, from Huni Valley to Kade, in 1927 stirred suspicions in Cape Coast. When that phase was proposed in 1922, the chiefs and people of Cape Coast, as well as the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, demanded that the line be either linked to Cape Coast or that Cape Coast should be made the major terminus.¹⁶⁶ They expressed their foreboding that if their town was left behind the line (or side-stepped), it would ruin that "ancient commercial center."¹⁶⁷ *Omanhin* Nana Mbra III, with consent of his chiefs, leaders, headmen, and elders presented a petition to the secretary of state for colonies in London over the issue. They called for a reconsideration of Guggisberg's decision not to construct a railway with its base at Cape Coast.¹⁶⁸ Guggisberg had stated categorically that he was unable to grant the request because he was bound to consider the interest of other towns up-country through whose districts the proposed Central Province Railway would have to pass. He pointed out that the construction of a railway with its base in Cape Coast would adversely affect towns such as Winneba and Saltpond.¹⁶⁹ Guggisberg further indicated that the exclusion of Cape Coast was not a personal decision, because he was acting upon

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 32.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

the express advice of his council of experts. He argued that if any more extensions and inclusions were made to the Central Province Railway scheme, it would cost an additional £30,000 per annum in maintenance, plus about 50 percent more locomotives and rolling stock.¹⁷⁰ *Omanhin* Mbra and his council countered that the inhabitants of Cape Coast, below the proposed Central Province Railway line, were as much the responsibility of the colonial government as the inhabitants of the districts through which the railway would pass. Thus, they were entitled to the consideration of the government.¹⁷¹ As to the issue of maintenance costs, the *Omanhin* and his council were quick to point out that the expected revenue from the line advocated by Cape Coast would take care of all expenses. To support this argument in detail, they reminded Guggisberg of some of his own statements regarding the economy of rail transport.¹⁷² In his address to the Legislative Council on March 1, 1923, he observed that a railway was the cheapest form of transportation, which covered all the expenses of maintenance and capital. Guggisberg was further reminded about his assertion that the sections of lines opened earlier in the Gold Coast had brought increasing revenue. He pointed out that there was no fear that these lines, like any other line that may be built in the country, will easily earn more than enough to cover expenditures on maintenance, capital outlays, and renewals.¹⁷³ The *Omanhin* and other petitioners argued that they could not comprehend

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

how these optimistic observations would not apply in the case of a line having its base at Cape Coast. Moreover, they wondered why, of the three provinces into which the country had been divided by an Order-in-Council, two should be made to have all the benefits (including that which the third has), and the third denied what the two had.¹⁷⁴

Concerning the colonial government's fear that the Cape Coast district might not have enough produce to feed the railway line, the petitioners argued that by the time the line was fully laid, there would be more than enough for the railway to handle.¹⁷⁵

Guggisberg himself was deemed to have indicated that the farmers living far away from the railroads with loads of unsold cocoa would have no justifiable incentive to extend their farms until they knew that the government was going to provide the necessary infrastructure.¹⁷⁶ Once it became certain that a railroad was going to be constructed in a particular district, cocoa farms would begin to increase in number. For instance, owing to the rumor that a Central Province Railroad was to be built in Western Akim, farmers in the neighborhood of Nsuaem, Akim Swedru, and Akyease started increasing their production. This, the petitioners argued, was sure to be replicated in the Cape Coast district.¹⁷⁷ *Omanhin* Mbra and others insisted that it was preposterous for Guggisberg to argue that he was acting on expert counsel to exclude Cape Coast. This was because two

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

of his predecessors, J. P. Rodger and A. R. Slater, had made promises of railroad to Cape Coast.¹⁷⁸ These earlier governors were also advised by experts, who gave the matter serious consideration before they uttered their promises. For instance, Slater raised taxes on cocoa in order to help provide funds for carrying out necessary important works, which, he indicated, included a railroad for Cape Coast. He was emphatic in his assurances when he said these “are needs which for the most part were urged on us years ago, and have been well thrashed out, but which have been perforce hung up for the last 5 years.”¹⁷⁹ Building upon this, the *Omanhin* and his council went ahead to give economic reasons for asking for a railroad in Cape Coast. In the past, the town was the principal port in the Gold Coast, trading with the inland kingdoms such as Ashanti and Gyaman, from where large quantities of gold dust came and were exported to Europe and the United States. In time, monkey skins, guinea grains, maize, and other items were included. Rubber was added later on, for which even some traders from Accra came up to Cape Coast to buy in order to increase their shipments.¹⁸⁰ At that time, the nature of these commodities did not call for a railroad. To help the mining industry in the Tarkwa district, the colonial government constructed a railroad from Sekondi to Tarkwa. That did not interfere with the trade of Cape Coast. When the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation started its operation in Ashanti, every bit of their machinery was landed in Cape Coast

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Governor A. R. Slater, *Legislative Council Debates*, No. 7, 1918–1919, 4 July 1919, 240.

¹⁸⁰ PRAAD Adm. 14/12/52: Report of the Central Province Trade Routes Committee, Vol. 6, 1928–1929, 12.

and carried in parts by laborers on their head to the interior.¹⁸¹ With labor plentifully supplied from the coast and supplemented by that sent down from the interior, Cape Coast kept in touch with the interior and its trade was at an all-time high. Subsequently, the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation entered into an arrangement with the government and the railroad was extended from Tarkwa to Kumasi. When the cocoa industry in the east of the farther districts of the Accra port became vibrant, the government contemplated the construction of a railroad.¹⁸²

Governor Rodger, in sympathy with Cape Coast, and bearing in mind the effects of infrastructural developments in other parts of the country expressed fears that trade depression and other complaints on the subject were not altogether unfounded.¹⁸³ For instance, owing to the fact that Kumasi had become an important trading center, and that a railroad had been connected to it and the Sekondi port, he expressed the concern that Cape Coast would never again have the same practical monopoly over the Ashanti trade that it had enjoyed in the past. However, Rodger asserted that with courage, resolution, and determination, Cape Coast would find the economic resilience to replace its share of the hinterland trade that it may have lost by developing other resources.¹⁸⁴ These included increasing cocoa cultivation in the fertile planting districts close to Cape Coast. These could be supplemented with cotton, sugarcane, maize, improvements and

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

extensions of oil-palm plantations, kola nut, and further development of trade in rubber and timber. Furthermore, within the immediate neighborhood of Cape Coast, there were prospects for poultry and other livestock, and the cultivation of fruit and vegetables.¹⁸⁵ It was anticipated that all of these could be traded as provisions for ships calling at the Cape Coast port, as well as for local markets. Alternatively, it was anticipated that fruit trade, especially in bananas and pineapples, could be established with Europe as it had with West Indies.¹⁸⁶ Turning his attention to the question of transportation, Rodger was said to have acknowledged the difficulties of the few roads in the Central Province suitable for motor traffic. As a temporary solution, he suggested the increased use of barrels as was done in the Eastern Province (for rolling produce down to the coast from the interior). For a long-term solution, Rodger hoped to improve and extend the road network in 1908.¹⁸⁷ He promised that if the planting developments warranted the necessary expenditure, a government railroad would eventually be constructed to connect Cape Coast and the planting districts of the interior, like the one that was about to be constructed from Accra. This promise according to *Omanhin* Mbra was seconded by Provincial Commissioners W. C. F. Robertson, H. C. Grimshaw, and E. C. Eliot, all of who travelled the district informing the chiefs and the people.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

When the people noticed a steady growth in the production of cocoa, they thought it necessary to remind the colonial government of the various promises of a railroad. Governor Clifford pointed out that he had just arrived and had much unfinished business on his desk that must be attended to.¹⁸⁹ This included harbor construction, water supply and other infrastructural projects in Accra and Sekondi. Governor Clifford noted that it would, therefore, be unwise for him to take up more in the circumstances. By the end of Clifford's tenure, a promisory bill on the issue of a railroad for Cape Coast had been passed as Ordinance No. 7 of 1919.¹⁹⁰ Naturally, this made the people happy because they felt reassured that what they desired was about to be accomplished. Initially, when Governor Guggisberg took over the reins of government, he gave indications of action being taken on the proposed projects for Cape Coast. On his first visit to the town, he held a *durbar* at the Castle, where he announced his policy regarding the needs of the colony. It was on this occasion that he made his "Cape Coast will not be forgotten" statement.¹⁹¹ Even though he was not specific about what he meant by that, it filled the people with hope concerning the realization of their expectations of a railroad and water supply system. Guggisberg had occasion to repeat these words, which again greatly heightened the expectation of the town.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 20.

However, when his program for the improvement of the colony was announced it showed a Central Province Railroad that would exclude Cape Coast. The people protested, seeing it as a calculated attempt to ruin their town.¹⁹³ The line would take away the produce that would have come to Cape Coast, particularly from the districts where, on the strength of a promise by Rodger, people had exerted enormous energy, time, and resources in cultivating.¹⁹⁴ The protests were repeated in official letters to and interviews with Guggisberg, but he was unfazed. He described the people's eagerness to have a railroad based at Cape Coast as a narrow-minded attitude because the importance in their mind of an ancient capital overshadowed everything else. The *Omanhin* and his council did not hide the fact that they and their people were deeply hurt by the governor's comments and other strongly disparaging remarks in reference to Cape Coast.¹⁹⁵

Furthermore, Chief Coker, the *Tufuhin* of Cape Coast, at a meeting with the governor in 1922, indicated that in the event of the town being sidetracked or bypassed by the proposed Central Province Railroad, the population of Cape Coast would be decimated and this was sure to ruin trade: "Because all our principal cocoa comes from Anyinabrim and Fosu . . . the distance between Yankumasi and Anyinabrim will not enable the Yankumasi people to bring in their cocoa to Cape Coast. So that unless the line starts from Cape Coast and ends at Cape Coast; Cape Coast will certainly be

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 25.

ruined.”¹⁹⁶ The governor’s response to these concerns was his insistence that the proposed railroad scheme would pass so far north of Cape Coast that it would not appreciably injure its trade.¹⁹⁷

Contrary to these assurances from the governor, the line was completed in 1927, and the consequences for Cape Coast were crippling. All the cocoa from Nsuaem and Kade were lifted by rail to Sekondi.¹⁹⁸ The carriers who carted cocoa to Cape Coast, as well as the boatmen who sent them to the waiting vessels, lost their jobs. And because cocoa was the most profitable item shipped through Cape Coast, this situation started a gradual decline in the fortunes of the town.¹⁹⁹ Many of the firms that thrived on the export and import operations of the port had to go where the economic pendulum swung. And these were the ports of Accra and Sekondi, which were doing brisk business. The Customs Department’s regional office headquarters was transferred to Sekondi, as was the Elder Dempster Shipping Line Agency.²⁰⁰ Some merchants began moving; others closed down. Money became scanty and artisans of all types, as well as educated young men and women moved out of Cape Coast; while most of the inhabitants were deprived

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Hinderink and Sterkenburg, *Anatomy of an African Town*, 38.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

of their means of livelihood.²⁰¹ This also compelled some of them to move to Tarkwa, Sekondi, and Kumasi in search of work. Cape Coast quickly lost its once profitable import and export trade. This had a telling effect on its population. Between 1891 and 1911, the population stagnated.²⁰² Even though subsequent reports indicated some increase, the population growth rate of Cape Coast lagged behind that of Accra, Kumasi, and Sekondi-Takoradi.²⁰³

Undoubtedly, the neglect of Cape Coast during the modernization of the Gold Coast economic infrastructure did not improve relations between the colonial government and the people of Cape Coast. The exclusion of the town from the benefits of the Railroad Ordinance was seen as a punishment of sorts for Cape Coast on the part of the colonial government in general and that of Governor Guggisberg in particular. The *Asafo* also complained of unemployment among the young men, most of who were from poor families. For instance, *Tufuhin* Coker claimed that Rodger, while in office, promised Cape Coast a railroad at the Agricultural Show held at Cape Coast in 1907.²⁰⁴ However, Guggisberg stood his ground and maintained that it was solely economic considerations

²⁰¹ Ibid., 39.

²⁰² In 1891, the population was 11,614; and in 1911 it was 11,269. See the Gold Coast *Population Census Reports* from 1891 to 1911, 150 – 155.

²⁰³ Hinderink and Sterkenburg, *Anatomy of an African Town*, 39.

²⁰⁴ PRO CO 96/54/12: Extraordinary Gazette 40, 29 June 1907, 64.

that dictated the exclusion of Cape Coast.²⁰⁵ This created ill-feelings on the part of the people of Cape Coast against the colonial government. These feelings were expressed in the town's resistance to the idea of direct local taxation, proposed in 1929–30.²⁰⁶ The people's resistance was seen as an expression of their reaction to what they saw as a betrayal on the part of the colonial government.²⁰⁷ This tax proposal was part of a comprehensive plan for the reform of local administration as worked out by Governors Slater and Jones.²⁰⁸ The need to raise money came as a result of pressure from London to get the colonies to bear a larger share of the financial burdens of the empire. Expenditures on local development were increasing, particularly in education and sanitation, and it was argued that part of such burdens should be directly borne by local populations.²⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that even by the end of the 1920s, the Gold Coast was the only British colony in Africa without any form of direct taxation; introducing it was crucial for the government, and yet still completely unacceptable to the people.²¹⁰ At first, the Income Tax Ordinance covered all persons with incomes of above £40 a year, partly in order to

²⁰⁵ PRAAD Adm. 14/12/52: Report of the Central Province Trade Routes Committee, Vol. 6, 1928–1929, 35.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

bring some money to the treasury, caused the entire proposal to backfire. The other reason for beginning with such a proposal was that the resistance to the taxation could be split by singling out the wealthy first. This failed, because the resistance remained adamant. A majority of the people of the Gold Coast banded together to fight the tax.²¹¹ The coastal Western-educated elite, who would have been hit the hardest, led the campaign with slogans that caught on with the ordinary poor, condemning taxation without representation as exploitation and oppression. There were violent protests from all the provincial councils; in some coastal towns, the chiefs not only mobilized their people for demonstrations with gong-gongs, but also joined delegations to the local colonial commissioners.²¹² The campaign gained currency when it was joined by members of the European mercantile community. The climax came at the end of October 1931 when violent riots occurred in Cape Coast and Sekondi. Governor T. S. W. Thomas, in his frustration, intimated that it was not an injustice to say that for many years the people of Cape Coast had been regarded by colonial political officers as probably the most difficult people to deal with in the whole of the colony. This was because their resistance to government measures and policies was seen to be unhelpful.²¹³

²¹¹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to the Secretary of State, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933, 12.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

Conclusion

The gradual growth and expansion of British power in Southern Gold Coast during the nineteenth century, encountered a major resistance in Cape Coast. It was led by Omanhin Aggeri, with the support of the Western-educated elite. British courts which were initially set up to deal with cases involving English men on the coast eventually usurped the jurisdiction of the indigenous court system. It started trying indigenous cases and even prosecuted kings and chiefs. Omanhin Aggeri pointed out the impropriety of this turn of affairs, and also took the British on for the manner in which they employed the fledgling military and police force. His threats of a Jamaican style insurrection against the administration cost him his position. This setback did not cause the resistance in Cape Coast to relent in anyway. The colonial government reacted by eventually moving the colonial capital from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877, citing medical and sanitation factors as the main reasons. In addition, Cape Coast was curiously left out of the railroad infrastructural development. What was interesting was that Accra was not in any way relatively better in terms of sanitation than Cape Coast which had been the colonial capital for so many years. It appeared that the colonial government was taking punitive action against Cape Coast for resisting most of its policies and actions.

Chapter 5

Henara Hen Asase Ni [This is Our Land]: Cape Coast and Resistance to the Crown Lands Bill of Colonial Southern Gold Coast

Among the Akan, land was not an exclusively economic and political entity. It was also a cultural and religious resource. However, its essential elements, like other African cultural practices and institutions, were fluid and dynamic. Land was generally seen as communal property, and the right to occupy, farm, or develop a particular plot was derived from membership in a particular society.¹ Other types of land ownership and concomitant rights were determined along family, *Ebusua*, and stool (i.e., royal) lines. Communal, *Ebusua*, and family ownerships of land had their internal systems and arrangements to ensure equity and justice. Stool lands were, in indigenous political and economic wisdom, made available to enhance the upkeep of kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers to accentuate their power, authority, and dignity.²

All these types of land ownership were regulated by indigenous authorities, whose powers had changed through a history of colonial and post-colonial administrative

¹ Kojo Idun, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 1 August 2009; Kweku Abeiku, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 6 September 2009; Ato Osam, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central, Ghana, 17 September 2009; Nana Adjoa Panyin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 20 September 2009; Mina Esi Akyere, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 2 July 2009; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009; Kobina Minnah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009; Nana Kwahin, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 16 June 2009; Ebo Johnson, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009.

² Robert Addo-Fenning, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700 – 1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Trondheim, Norway: Norwegian University of Science & Technology, 1997), 143.

interventions.³ Furthermore, as a result of population pressure, development of a monetary economy, and the ever-increasing built environment, individual land ownership with its attendant problems such as outright sales became rife.⁴ Yet, one aspect of the history of land dealing in Southern Gold Coast that seemed to remain a constant factor was dispute. Even so, the nature of land disputes experienced amazing levels of change. The tendency of land ownership and control to generate conflicts has deep roots. The colonial authorities in Southern Gold Coast were not spared this trouble when they attempted to implement economic and political control of land as part of the larger scheme of empire building (despite the advice of a couple of perceptive officers).⁵ This was because they wanted to support foreign enterprise in the economy of the Gold Coast, particularly the gold mining industry. According to the colonial government, the Gold Coast, like most African countries, had auriferous lands with considerable natural resources.⁶ What was lacking was capital and enterprise, and that could be obtained from foreign entrepreneurs. For instance, Joseph Chamberlain, the British secretary of state for

³ Kojo Idun, interview; Kweku Abeiku, interview; Ato Osam, interview; Nana Adjoa Panyin, interview; Mina Esi Akyere, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview.

⁴ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "The Process of Urbanization," *African Studies Review* 34 (1991): 1. See also: Sara Berry, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power, and the Past in Asante, 1896 – 1996* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001) and Sara Berry, *No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

⁵ Berry, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries*, 12.

⁶ Stephen Hymer, *The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana, Economic Growth* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1969), 4.

colonies, noted that all the colonies were underdeveloped land estates that could never be developed without imperial assistance.⁷ In the late nineteenth century, the colonial government sought to remove obstacles to a fruitful exchange between the Gold Coast and England. It hoped to accomplish this by the provision of infrastructure and basic services, as well as creating a favorable atmosphere for private foreign investment. This approach led the government to overemphasize foreign capital to the neglect of internal and indigenous enterprise.⁸ Much was done to encourage foreign investment in the gold industry. The industry thrived on land concessions, and that was where the trouble was to come from. The Gold Coast had a long history as a gold producer.⁹ Gold mining was a formidable sector of its economy from ancient times; the Gold Coast even contributed to the gold pool that supplied the Trans-Saharan Caravan Trade network.¹⁰ The colonial government assumed that because indigenous methods were inefficient for working deep mines, modern machinery was necessary to develop the gold industry. It was the contention of the government that gold was in great demand on the world market, but it required mechanization and capital that could only be supplied by foreigners.¹¹

⁷ PRO CO 96/12/3: Statement by Joseph Chamberlain, secretary of state for the colonies, at the House of Commons, 22 August 1895, 1.

⁸ Hymer, *The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana*, 4.

⁹ K. Arhin, *The Cape Coast and Elmina Handbook: Past, Present and Future* (Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, 1995), 1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hymer, *Political Economy of Gold Coast and Ghana*, 4.

The colonial government survey and geological reports, as well as the annual government reports of 1898, forecast that £40 million worth of gold could be extracted over ten years.¹² In all these projections, the assistance of the colonial government was emphasized as indispensable in supporting mechanical gold mining in the Gold Coast.¹³ In the early 1870s and 1880s, initial attempts by Europeans to establish gold mining industries in the Gold Coast were frustrated by several factors, particularly by the scanty infrastructure. It was difficult and expensive to transport machinery by head loads, which was the only way to transport material due to the lack of an extensive railroad system before the nineteenth century. The industry became successful only after the construction of railroad had made cheap transportation possible.¹⁴ The government also assisted Europeans who had the requisite capital to obtain labor, though not to the extent that was occurring in other parts of colonial Africa. Most colonial governments, by policy and action, considered it essential to interfere in the labor market to ensure an adequate supply for the export sector of the economy.¹⁵ The colonial government of the Gold Coast began with the usual excuse, which stated that “one of the most serious problems connected with the Gold Coast is the dearth of labor to which the character of the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Eric Berg, “Backward-Sloping Labor Supply Functions in Dual Economies: The African Case,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 15, no. 4 (1961): 468.

inhabitants largely contributes.”¹⁶ But it could be argued that it did not, in fact, take as strong measures to increase the labor supply, as was the case in other African colonies.¹⁷ When the simultaneous demands for labor in gold mining, railroad construction, and cocoa production caused a shortage of labor in Southern Gold Coast, the colonial government established a Transport Department with the aim of alleviating the conditions under which “exorbitant rates had for some time been demanded by the carriers; and paid to them by the mining agents.”¹⁸ Efforts were also made by the colonial government to import Asian laborers, but only a small number were brought in.¹⁹ Finally, the government helped the gold mining industry with its recruiting ventures by arranging meetings between company recruiters and chiefs. Again, it could be argued that the government did not use coercion, but what could be described as benign pressure.²⁰ The colonial government, however, could not do much in this direction because it had a

¹⁶ PRAAD Adm. 12/2/59: Precise of Information Concerning the Colony of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, 1904, 1-2.

¹⁷ Authors such as Charles Van-Onselen and James Ferguson have in various ways in their works showed how the British particularly in East and Southern Africa did strategize to provide Euro-American companies with cheap labor during what was called the modernization or capitalist phase of the economies in that part of Africa. See Charles Van-Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand, 1886 – 1914* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2001) and James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁸ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/57: Report of the Transport Department, 1901, 20.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hymer, *The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana*, 10.

limited political control of the colony and therefore lacked the power to control the labor market.²¹ Moreover, the colonial government was unable to help European companies by seizing mineral rights, which were worked out through private negotiations between prospectors and local chiefs, who were custodians of the lands.²² It was in the effort to be part of this concession-granting process; and thereby assume total control (for the greater benefit of European gold prospectors), that the Crown Lands Bill was introduced under the guise of governmental control of the so-called “waste lands” (i.e., uncultivated forests).²³

The Crown Lands Bill of 1894 and “Waste Lands”

In essence, the bill would deprive kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and headmen of the right to make grants and repose all such powers over concessions of “waste lands,” minerals, and forests solely in the Crown.²⁴ The colonial government also hoped that the bill would put an end to protracted land disputes as a result of rival kings, chiefs, or queen-mothers conceding mining and/or timber rights over vast and ill-defined tracts of land without strict regulations. It was hoped that a new land regime would accurately

²¹ Ibid.

²² PRO CO 96/121: Letter of Governor Freeling to Lord Carnarvon, 29 May 1877, 2.

²³ Hymer, *The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana*, 10.

²⁴ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850 – 1928* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 342.

define concessions and require concessionaires to work them within reasonable time frames.²⁵

The government justified the proposed bill by indicating that, given the rate at which European mining companies (and, in some cases, timber companies) were securing land concessions from kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers of the Gold Coast, it was necessary to bring order and sanity into the situation.²⁶ Long before 1894, when the colonial government attempted to pass the Crown Lands Bill, a more cautious Governor S. Freeling had warned the Colonial Office in London about his fears should the British attempt to claim ownership of Gold Coast lands.²⁷ Apparently Freeling had grown in his knowledge of indigenous customs in Southern Gold Coast. He was a bit cautious about the declaration of mechanical gold mining in the colony as “a new field for European enterprise.” In his fears and concerns about that idea, Freeling gave an excellent understanding of Gold Coast custom and usage with respect to land. Even though he was hardly exhaustive on the subject, he did give a good account of himself. In April 1877, Lord Carnarvon inquired whether, in the changed circumstances of the protectorate, some encouragement might not be given to the mining enterprise.²⁸ Freeling warned, “There is

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Hymer, *The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana*, 11.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ PRO CO 96/121: Letter of Lord Carnarvon to Governor S. Freeling, 21 April 1877, 3.

the need for great caution in promoting the mining enterprise.”²⁹ According to him, the influx of Europeans into the Gold Coast for the purposes of mining was going to necessitate some form of land takeover by the colonial government, if the industry was to be successful. Freeling noted that in the indigenous culture, land was inalienable, and there was no subject that gave rise to disputes with so much acrimony as disagreements over land. He further explained:

The rightful owners of the soil in the Protectorate are the Kings and Chiefs and their people, and not the colonial government. I consider that her Majesty’s Government have no territorial rights whatsoever over the various districts of the Protectorate. The limits of British territory are even now somewhat indefinite, and had better remain so. . . . The right of jurisdiction exercised by the Crown does not rest upon any claim of sovereignty, but upon a course of long-continued general and undisturbed usages and acquiescence and no similar usage has established in the Crown any seigniorial rights over land.³⁰

Freeling’s insight was a bright spot in the history of British colonial rule in Southern Gold Coast. He was aware of the nature of British authority in the colony. The colonial administration had no rights to the land because of the kindness and friendship of the kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and their people. What was more significant was the fact that there was no such thing as “waste land.”³¹ Land was either the property of the occupant of the stool or it was held in trust for the people and the departed ancestors by certain chiefs and headmen. Chiefs may allow others to occupy the land, following

²⁹ PRO CO 96/121: Letter of Governor Freeling to Lord Carnarvon, 29 May 1877, 9.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 10.

payment of a certain portion of the yield in gold or agricultural produce.³² The occupier obtained no fixed tenure, and duration of his occupancy was entirely up to the owner. Land was always associated with the stool, the possessor of which can lease or dispose of it as he or she willed, during their tenure on the stool. Upon their death or removal, the land reverted to the stool and was inherited by the successor.³³ Freeling raised certain pertinent issues. Government takeover of land in support of the gold industry would mean protecting the mines and securing the rights of ground and water for working the mines. He also pointed to the need for facilities and protecting the working of the gold mine against beyond the caprice of an aggrieved king, chief, or queen-mother.³⁴

Freeling must have set the Colonial Office wondering as to his propriety, or, worse still, how he got to be governor in the first place. The British government made serious attempts to get the bill through the Legislative Council, indicating that Freeling's pleas went unheeded.³⁵ In the 1890s, official opinion favored the vesting of all "waste lands" in the Crown. The new governor, under whose watch the implementation was to take place, was Maxwell, a typical empire builder in the service of Her Majesty's Government.³⁶

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 11.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 342.

³⁶ Ibid.

Discussions within the government circles leaked into the Gold Coast community as rumors. These were taken seriously, given the relevance of land, and so were the preparations to resist the colonial government. As soon as the bill was introduced in the Legislative Council, it sparked immediate resistance from the people.³⁷ The intellectuals were in the forefront of these protests. James Hutton Brew was a solicitor, editor of the *Western Echo* newspaper, and the assistant secretary of the Fanti Confederation. He was then living in London, so he made representations to the Colonial Office on the behalf of the people. Like Freeling, he was quick to remind the British government about the unique nature of the relationship between it and the Gold Coast. In a letter to the Marquis of Ripon, Brew wrote:

It is historically true to say that the Gold Coast Protectorate stands on a footing different from that of any dependency of the British Crown. Its position is unique. It has not been acquired either by conquest, cession, or treaty; and although the British Government have exercised certain powers and jurisdictions, it possesses no inherent legal right to deprive us of our lands, as is contemplated in the proposed Bill, whatever it may have done in countries such as South Africa, Tasmania, New Zealand, East Africa, and elsewhere.³⁸

He proved that he and other Gold Coast intellectuals were aware of the plans of the British at home and elsewhere in their empire. The references to British dealings in other places regarding land were not enough to let the colonial administration know that the people of the Gold Coast were serious and could not be taken for granted. Brew more or less indicated that the people of the Gold Coast were willing and able to manage their

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ PRO CO 96/267: Letter of J. H. Brew to the Marquis of Ripon, London, 22 March 1895, 3.

land. The people did not stand in need of British supervision, direction, or legislation. He pointed out that they had not proved themselves incapable of doing business with their land. They could handle their clients, as well as collect whatever rents due them.³⁹ Brew referred to a remark purported to have been made by Governor Griffith, that “in 1874 . . . the whole of the lands of the Gold Coast colony became the property of the government by right of conquest.”⁴⁰ This remark, according to him, was an absurd one that should not have been made in earnest by a high officer of the caliber of Sir Bradford Griffith. Again, Brew was quick to point out that “up to now, not an inch of our land is owned by the British Government . . . although it does own some land by purchase.”⁴¹ The jurisdiction, rights, and power hitherto exercised by the government over the Protectorate had been by usage, sufferance, or usurpation, and not by cession, treaty, or by conquest.⁴² Resistance to the bill was not limited to individual intellectuals.

The newspapers, most of which were published in Cape Coast, were overwhelmed with reports of meetings, strategies, and petitions; they also featured articles, letters, and editorials on the Crown Lands Bill.⁴³ The issue was of such importance that the *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, edited by Reverend Attoh Ahuma, an

³⁹ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 341.

⁴⁰ PRO CO 96/267: Letter of J. H. Brew to the Marquis of Ripon, London, 22 March 1895, 4.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 5.

⁴³ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 341.

originally missionary newspaper, decided not to restrict its publication to religious matters because of the “fiery indignation likely to devour the Colony, on account of the Bill entitled Crown Land Ordinance.”⁴⁴ The *Gold Coast Chronicle*, on the other hand, reported that if the bill was pushed in the form as it stood, the people of the Gold Coast would not consent for twenty-four hours to remain at home. They would leave the Colony *en masse*.⁴⁵ These and other newspapers charged that the clauses of the bill, which sought to vest “waste” and forest lands in the queen, claimed all these “for the use of the Government of the Colony.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, the colonial government was generally seen not to have identified itself with the indigenous people and therefore the intent of the bill was “to take away from the people all their lands.”⁴⁷ The newspapers charged that the colonial authorities “appear to be desirous of concealing their real motives.”⁴⁸ Resistance to the bill was far more widespread than had been imagined by the colonial government.

The indigenous political authorities in the central and western parts of Southern Gold Coast also made their voices heard in resistance to the land bill. For instance, the

⁴⁴ Editorial, “Gold Coast Lands and the Crown Lands Ordinance,” *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, February, 1895.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Editorial, “This Is Our Land,” *Gold Coast Chronicle*, March, 1895; and Editorial, “Gold Coast Lands and the Crown Lands Ordinance,” *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, February, 1895.

chiefs, queen-mothers, and people of Elmina sent delegations to the governor in Accra with official protests respectfully declining to consent to the bill.⁴⁹ The king of Abura, with his chiefs, headmen, and councilors, went to Cape Coast to confer with the district commissioner on the issue. According to him, other good and great governors in the past who lived with their ancestors for a long time never made any such propositions with respect to land.⁵⁰ In their petition to the secretary of state for colonies in London, the chiefs, queen-mothers, and people of Cape Coast referenced the details of the Bond of 1844 and the 1874 Proclamation that defined colonial jurisdiction in the Gold Coast.⁵¹ According to them, neither of these historic documents explicitly stated that the land was the property of the queen of England. Thus, they had been repeatedly told that the queen did not have any claim to any land whatsoever outside the walls of the forts and castles.⁵² The chiefs, queen-mothers, and people of Cape Coast averred that with the booming of the gold industry and the consequent appreciation in the value of land, the bill being pushed was going to deprive them of property for the benefit of the colonial government: the creation of which the indigenous people had no say and over whose policy and

⁴⁹ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 346.

⁵⁰ PRO CO 96/257: Petition from the King, Chiefs, Headmen and Councilors of Abura to Governor Maxwell, February 23, 1895, enclosed in Dispatch No. 196, from Governor Maxwell to Ripon, 11 May 1895, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

conduct they had no control.⁵³ Other petitions intent on resisting the land bill were sent by the kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers of Anomabu, Tarkwa, and Heman.⁵⁴ For instance, the chief and headmen of Heman complained that, to the best of their understanding, the bill would orchestrate their ousting and that of their men and their families from the land of their ancestors.⁵⁵ Nearly all the petitioners argued at various times that the Public Lands Ordinance of 1876, which was still applicable, gave the colonial government adequate allowance to acquire land for legitimate public uses.⁵⁶ In effect, any new land legislation was unnecessary. In various ways, the petitioners affirmed that there was no such thing as “waste” land. All land belonged to kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, headmen, family heads, families, and individuals.⁵⁷

Governor Maxwell had strong views about the barrage of resistance. He was of the view that chiefs who enjoyed British protection would have to give up some of their rights over land as price for the benefits of same: “they should not receive everything and yield nothing.”⁵⁸ According to him, “the very theory of a Protectorate seems to imply

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁶ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 346.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ PRO CO 96/257: Letter of Governor Maxwell to Ripon, 9 May 1895, 2.

something in the nature of sovereign rights in the protecting power.”⁵⁹ Maxwell was quick to draw upon the British experience on the Malay Peninsula. He was resentful of the fact that the colonial government had made sacrifices in freeing the Protectorate from Ashanti invasion (1873–74) and that “petty chiefs” were going to be the sole beneficiaries of the claims to full sovereign rights over forests, “waste lands,” and minerals.⁶⁰ What Maxwell forgot in his resentment was the fact that the British used armies of men drawn from the Gold Coast: therefore these people also had paid for the war in more ways than one.⁶¹ He had no doubt that it was right and politic to restrict the powers of certain kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers to grant concessions to European mining prospectors. The colonial government would have to be privy to any concession deal. The governor was also frustrated by what he called the “ridiculous position” in which the colonial government was put by having to “go through a tedious legal process, concluding [the] payment” of some compensation. Maxwell was obviously not happy that he, as governor, and Her Majesty’s governor at that, could not get land “without applying to some native authority for permission!”⁶² He vented his displeasure on the African and his agricultural practices, i.e., shifting cultivation like that practiced in India “by most

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 3.

⁶² Ibid.

backward tribes.”⁶³ Obviously, Maxwell was frowning on practices which were unfamiliar to him. And even so, how strange was shifting cultivation in a place where land abounded, especially when it was meant to make the land regain its nutrients and potency after long periods of use? It was interesting to note that the governor could not make those remarks against indigenous cultivation practices when he referred to it in a speech at the Legislative Council. On the whole, however, it was felt within government circles that all the petitioners had stated their cases so convincingly that the government had to withdraw the bill with the hope of coming back with a formidable legislation.⁶⁴ To this end, it was up to the colonial government to state its case to the people of the Gold Coast.

The Crown Lands Bill of 1897 and “Public Lands”

The colonial government, unrelenting in its desire to have control of land in Southern Gold Coast, took some account of the resistance and modified the controversial bill. The new one, the Lands Bill of 1897, was different in letter but same in spirit. It was sent to the Legislative Council in March 1897.⁶⁵ It stated that the intent of vesting ‘waste land’ and forest land in the queen had been dropped. The Crown now had rights of administration but not ownership. The bill indicated that “public land” was to be

⁶³ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 349.

administered by the colonial government “for the general advantage.”⁶⁶ Chiefs were still to have all reasonable authority, but the colonial government would ensure that private rights were not improvidently created over so-called public land.⁶⁷ The right of the people of the Gold Coast to ownership of land was no longer automatically recognized. As a result, present occupiers of land would be entitled only to a “settler’s right,” a permanent heritable right of occupancy, which could be transformed into an absolute right on application to the governor, who would issue a grant of land certificate.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the new land bill gave the colonial government the right to declare that a piece of land had no owner and then authorize its occupation.⁶⁹ The people of the Gold Coast could make land grants and concessions to other Africans, but not to Europeans except by express permission of the governor.⁷⁰

If the colonial government thought it could change the letter of the first bill and let it pass for new, it was in for a rude shock. The Gold Coast intellectuals realized that both bills were, in light of the wide powers given to the governor, the same.⁷¹ They were

⁶⁶ PRO CO 96/54/12: Gold Coast Government Gazette (Extraordinary), 10 March 1897, no. 4, 45.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 46

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁷¹ Ibid.

not going to be taken in by the superficial offers made to the inhabitants in the new bill. Newspaper editors and contributors were among the first to resist the new bill. They were unanimous stating that it still placed far too much power in the hands of the governor.⁷² With screaming editorials, the *Gold Coast Methodist Times* and the *Gold Coast Chronicle*, for instance, called upon the people of the Gold Coast to give the new bill their most “unremitting” resistance.⁷³ Back in the Legislative Council, the new bill was similarly resisted, even though Maxwell did his best to get it passed.⁷⁴ Mr. C. J. Bannerman was the lead counsel in resistance to the bill. He reiterated that the kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers had “immemorial” rights to their land, and were therefore well within their rights to do as they pleased with it.⁷⁵ He further observed that the Supreme Court had always recognized the right of the kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers to grant land to whosoever they wished. The new bill sought to take away that right, and that amounted to a “violation on the part of the government of the trust reposed in it by the people.”⁷⁶ Bannerman pointed out to Maxwell that far from the old bill being abandoned, “we cannot say that this Ordinance of 1897 is not the same, in form, as the old one. I say

⁷² Editorial, “This Is Our Land,” *Gold Coast Chronicle*, March, 1895; and Editorial, “Gold Coast Lands and the Crown Lands Ordinance,” *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, February, 1895.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ C. J. Bannerman, *Legislative Council Debate*, Accra, 29 June 1897, 498.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

this is another way of getting into the room through the window, if the doors are closed.”⁷⁷

Maxwell was his characteristic self in defense of the new bill. He insisted that it was not taking away the rights of the kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers; it only made a distinction between public and private rights. He averred that stool lands were public lands that ought to be administered for the benefit of the people.⁷⁸ The bill only gave the governor concurrent rights with the kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers. According to Maxwell, the indigenous authorities still had their power to authorize the occupation of public lands as a site of habitation or for permanent agricultural purposes.⁷⁹ He observed that it was in their dealing with Europeans in the matter of concession granting that it could be said their rights had been curtailed. That is, the kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers had no right to grant a foreigner private rights in public lands without the express written consent of the governor.⁸⁰ Maxwell insisted that it was ridiculous that the practice of shifting cultivation, which resulted in land being left to fallow for some time, could be used as a claim to ownership. He argued that “it would be monstrous if it were laid down by law.”⁸¹ In this regard, the governor sought to superimpose English laws over the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Governor Maxwell, Legislative Council Debates, Accra, 29 June 1897, 500.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 501.

⁸¹ Ibid.

customary practice of the Gold Coast. For example, shifting cultivation was an established practice of laying claim to land.⁸² Thus, various pieces of land belonging to different owners might, at a given time, be found lying idle; the owners might be working on a couple of plots in different locations. Thus, the “idle lands” were not really idle but properly owned. It was instructive that the complaints against this practice came not from the people of Southern Gold Coast, but from the colonial authorities.

The Land Bill of 1897 was to add to the worsening of relations between the colonial administration and the people of Cape Coast. It became an opportunity for the people of Cape Coast to seek “payback” for the many ways in which they felt denied what should have come to them. Thus, the bill led to the formation of the Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society.⁸³ The intellectuals of Cape Coast managed to get a copy of the bill after it was laid before the Legislative Council. This started a general agitation and resistance. A meeting was called and those who attended included John Mensah Sarbah, J. W. DeGraft Johnson, J. D. Abraham, and J. P. Brown, all of who were Western-educated, and thus, people of great social influence in Cape Coast. They decided to start a resistance movement against the Land Bill of 1897.⁸⁴ Interestingly, other intellectuals began similar movements all over Southern Gold Coast. This movement became known throughout the Gold Coast, and it was decided to affiliate the various groups to the one that had been formed in Cape Coast. This single large organization became known as the

⁸² Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 350.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society.⁸⁵ The members set themselves the task of helping the indigenous population of the Gold Coast come to understand the import of the actions of the colonial government.⁸⁶ This was the first movement in the colony that could be described as a "national" organization, even though it did not do much to make the ordinary folk effective members. Their first public statement, which was critical of the colonial government, is worth quoting at length:

Whereas in former times, all measures intended by the Government for the whole Protectorate were brought before a meeting of the various Kings and Chiefs of the Protectorate convened for the purpose, and who in turn communicated them to the people of their respective districts by gong-gong. And whereas the time-honored and effective custom has for some time been set aside and superseded by the Gazette. And whereas a very large majority of the population of the Gold Coast Protectorate are still unable to read, and whereas even the greater part of those able to read cannot well comprehend the meaning of the Bill passed from time to time by the Government, the above Society of which natives and residents alike can be members, has been formed to discuss the various Bills intended to be passed by the Government from time to time, with a view to fully understand the meaning, purport, object and effect thereof that every person may have the opportunity of understanding the same.⁸⁷

This was enough to let the colonial government know that it was dealing with a different kind of political force. The Society pointed out that, contrary to the practices that had undergirded the cordial relationship between the people of the Gold Coast and the colonial government, the latter was introducing an infamous bill. This was enough to make the people suspicious of the intentions of the colonial government. In the past, all

⁸⁵ Ibid., 351.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Editorial, "ARPS Mission Statement," *Gold Coast Express*, 22 April 1897; Editorial, "It has come to stay," *Gold Coast Independent*, 1 May 1897.

of the colonial government's policy proposals were brought before a meeting of the various kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers. That was what used to be called the palavers.⁸⁸ After discussions with the government, the chiefs would inform their people. The Society observed how the colonial government was gradually replacing that "time-honored and effective custom with the publication of Gazettes."⁸⁹ It noted with concern that the new system was ineffective, given the low literacy rate of the Gold Coast at that time. Those who could read were sometimes unable to grasp the nuances of the legal language in which the bills and gazettes were written.⁹⁰ To this end, its mission was to help the people of the Gold Coast understand the bills that were passed by holding informative discussion sessions.⁹¹

The essence of the Society's mission statement raises certain issues. Did it amount to a usurpation of the roles of kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and other leaders of the indigenous political authorities? Was the mission statement an attempt by the intellectuals to impose themselves on the colonial establishment as the rightful representatives of the people by taking undue advantage of their Western education? To what extent could personal interests be cast as the public good? The colonial

⁸⁸ Palavers were formal meetings arranged between Kings, Queens, Chiefs, Headmen, and other representatives of the indigenous political order and the colonial government to discuss matters of governance, government policy, etc. At some of these meetings treaties, agreements, and other issues of mutual interests were discussed.

⁸⁹ Editorial, "ARPS Mission Statement," *Gold Coast Express*, 22 April 1897; Editorial, "It has come to stay," *Gold Coast Independent*, 1 May 1897.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 345.

administration had long been suspicious of the Western-educated elite and had refused to deal with them.⁹² For instance, in 1866, Governor Conran, who was concerned about the growing influence of the intellectuals, referred to them as the “so-called scholars (those “natives” who can read and write) and petty “native” lawyers who cling like leeches to the skirts of their ignorant Kings and Chiefs.”⁹³ He claimed that he saw a mixture of aptitude and foolishness in a couple of them. For example, he referred to Charles Bannerman as “a native advocate possessing much talent, but totally devoid of principle.”⁹⁴ Conran also saw the intellectuals as the real sponsors of resistance in Cape Coast. He insisted that the British government would never agree to hand over power to “a few designing, needy, half-educated natives.”⁹⁵ Sir William Blackhall, the governor-in-chief of Sierra Leone, expressing his views on the intellectuals, stated that they were the real culprits in all the difficulties, including resistance, which the British had to deal with in the Gold Coast Colony. They were the “artful” men who had always made some chiefs a “source of constant danger.”⁹⁶ The intellectuals were also been seen by some as political schemers, who attempted to use the indigenous political establishment to be able

⁹² Ibid., 346

⁹³ PRO C.O. 96/294: Letter of Governor Conran to the Secretary of State for Colonies, 15 August 1867, 1.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁶ PRO C.O. 96/296: Letter of Sir William Blackhall to the Secretary of State for Colonies, 20 October 1897, 4.

to take advantage of the British policy of indirect rule.⁹⁷ Contrary to such claims, there was overwhelming evidence of a long history of cooperation between the intellectuals and the indigenous political authorities in Cape Coast.⁹⁸ This relationship stood out in comparison to others elsewhere in the Gold Coast.⁹⁹

In Cape Coast, some market women and fishmongers, who were infuriated by the reluctance of the colonial government to heed the numerous petitions regarding its land policy, took matters a step further in their own way.¹⁰⁰ When Maxwell arrived at Cape Coast on a routine tour, they held furious demonstrations. The women at the head of the demonstration bore a red banner, which signified their anger and seriousness, with the inscription, “We protest against the Land Bill!” They were followed by a long procession of women chanting dirges and singing hymns.¹⁰¹ Maxwell was later to dismiss the demonstrators as “a noisy crowd of women and boys” who had displayed a banner bearing words of resistance. He suspected that they had been employed by men who were “too prudent to risk anything” themselves.¹⁰² The accusation of being simple stooges

⁹⁷ See R. Gocking, “The Historic Akoto: A Social History of Cape Coast, Ghana, 1848–1948” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1981), 102.

⁹⁸ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 345.

⁹⁹ At least in Accra and Akim Abuakwa there were instances where the two groups had mutual suspicions and pursued different agendas.

¹⁰⁰ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 345.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 346.

¹⁰² PRO CO 96/295: Dispatch from Governor Maxwell to Lord Chamberlain, 1 July 1897, 3.

was one that the market women and fishmongers would have vehemently disputed if they heard it. Fortunately for the governor, and unfortunately for the women, it was made in writing to the former's superiors from the comfort of his office in Accra.

Maxwell accused some of the intellectuals of pursuing private business interests in their resistance to the Lands Bill of 1897.¹⁰³ According to him, most of them were land speculators who felt threatened by the idea of sanctions that would render concessions invalid.¹⁰⁴ For instance, Sey, the president of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, and Brew, the most outspoken critics of the bill, were connected with the Gold Coast Native Concessions Purchasing Company of 1882.¹⁰⁵ Also, J. P. Brown, the vice president of the Society, was among those who had helped to negotiate the lucrative Adansi concession, which later became the property of the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation.¹⁰⁶ However, David Kimble has pointed out that no matter what these men got for their roles in the deals, there was no reason to suppose that African brokers stood to gain as much from such transactions as European concessionaires. They were also well within their rights in resisting the Bill on behalf of the public interest.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore,

¹⁰³ PRO CO 96/292: Dispatch No. 169 from Governor Maxwell to Chamberlain, 4 May 1897, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 347.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

the kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers preferred to have land dealings negotiated on their behalf by the intellectuals, rather than have them handled by the colonial administration, which was seen as remote and foreign.¹⁰⁸ The governor was chastised by the Gold Coast press for his personal aspersions against the intellectuals. Maxwell was said to have made statements such as “scholars like these” and “men like J. P. Brown,” and denounced them by name “as veritable firebrands in the popular movement against the intolerable Land Bill.”¹⁰⁹

The Society remained undaunted by the aspersions and innuendoes. It went ahead to provide a centralizing stage for the scattered resistance in the Gold Coast against the land bill. The executive members did this first by using private contacts with prominent kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers.¹¹⁰ They also made use of newspaper publications. The *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, for instance, continued the campaign and defied rumors of what was going to amount to press censorship. It taunted and warned the colonial government with statements such as “Thank God we are not in Russia . . . if the Legislature so far forgets itself as to descend against public rights conceded to us by the Constitution of England, we will resist unto blood.”¹¹¹ The newspaper further encouraged the people by stating, “While we have breath and while the Governor is bent on forcing this measure on us, we must not tire in our efforts to destroy the pernicious

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 348.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Editorial, “We Won’t Cooperate,” *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, 31 July 1897.

Bill.”¹¹² The Society relied heavily on the *Gold Coast Methodist Times* until it was able to publish its own newspaper, the *Gold Coast Aborigines*. Before the new land bill went for a second reading in the Legislative Council, its resistance grew to unprecedented levels. At the second reading John Mensah Sarbah was lead counsel for the Gold Coast kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers. Like Bannerman before him, Mensah Sarbah also pointed out that there was no significant difference between the bills of 1894 and 1897.

He stated:

I am specifically instructed to say that this Lands Bill is an elaborate and expanded form of the Crown Lands Bill of 1894. That Bill refers only to what is termed waste and forest lands whereas this Bill refers to the whole land of this country, depriving the aborigines of their rights in the soil of their native land.¹¹³

In making his arguments, he referred to the 1895 report on land tenure. He insisted that every plot of land in the Gold Coast had an owner, irrespective of the government’s vague description of some as “waste.” For example, family land remained the property of the family at all times and in all conditions, whether cultivated or not.¹¹⁴ According to Mensah Sarbah, the only condition under which a family might lose their land was in the unlikely event of the failure of its successors to maintain it properly.¹¹⁵ In that case, the land would fall back into the common property of the village, community, or town, which

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

is subject to the control of kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, headmen, and elders.¹¹⁶ He pointed out that the Gold Coast indigenous political authorities were unanimous in their resistance to a bill that sought to change their inalienable natural rights of absolute ownership into that of helpless holders and settlers. Furthermore, the bill's removal of the generally accepted distinction between individual, family, and communal lands would tamper with the time-honored control hitherto exercised by the indigenous political authorities over families, villages, and towns.¹¹⁷ Consequently, Mensah Sarbah observed, "not only are the bonds of society to be snapped but family ties are to be broken and family relationships destroyed."¹¹⁸ He briefed the Council on some of the issues as well as the unforeseen consequences of the bill. For instance, the fact that the bill sought to forfeit an owner's right after three years of nonuse of his or her property would bring untold hardship on people such as clerks, artisans, and traders. People in this category, by the nature of their jobs, had to travel over long distances—sometimes for years.¹¹⁹ Absences from their villages, extending into the stipulated three years, would cause them to lose their title and interest in individual and family lands. Mensah Sarbah also raised objections to the bill's definition of "natives," which excluded mulattoes.¹²⁰ The bill took away their rights as reputable members of the community. Failure of the bill

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ John Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Law* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 120.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 121.

to recognize the practice of shifting cultivation as a title or claim of land ownership was also resisted.¹²¹

As a religious resource, Mensah Sarbah pointed out that, land had deep implications for the Akan. It connected them to the ancestors in many ways. It was part of the heritage bequeathed them by their departed and revered forebears. This in essence elevated land to an equally revered entity.¹²² The ancestors acquired their land allocations through first settlement, war, and the shedding of blood. Thus, it was so dear to the ancestors; which in turn enjoins the living to treat land as they would any other family heirloom. In this case any alienation of land was bound to incur the displeasure and curse of the ancestors, who were seen as vindictive, like most spirits.¹²³

Furthermore, land was also seen as the resting place of the ancestors. This also signified its sacredness. The Akan practice of libation (the pouring of drink: water and alcohol) on the ground was their main means of communicating with the ancestors.¹²⁴ In addition, the ancestors in their beneficence also gave treasure troves through deposits on and in the land. Thus the Akan, like most peoples in Southern Gold Coast had cogent reasons to not

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 123. Also confirmed by Kojo Idun, interview; Uncle Kweku Abeiku, interview; Ato Osam, interview; Nana Adjoa Panyin, interview; Mina Esi Akyere, interview; Nana Amba Eyiaba, interview; Kobina Minnah, interview; Nana Kwahin, interview; Ebo Johnson, interview.

¹²³ Editorial, "The Land Question," *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, 20 July 1897.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

relent in their bid to prevent the colonial government from going ahead with its Crown Lands Bill.¹²⁵

What brought Mensah Sarbah into the limelight was his refusal to take the retainer fee of 400 guineas, which the Society had offered him for his services as a lawyer. He was encouraged to do what he did because there was a general determination on the part of the people of the Gold Coast to ensure that their right to land was not taken away. He stated, “When . . . I was fully convinced in my own mind that they were never so determined in all parts of the country, I left home to do their bidding.”¹²⁶

Various attempts by Maxwell and the colonial administration to rework and get the bill passed provided additional fuel to its resistance. When he died at sea, in 1889, on his way to London, the Gold Coast press shed no tear for him. One paper referred to Maxwell’s ability, energy, and advanced views in pushing “the grasping tyrannical land grabbing and rotten policy marked out for him.”¹²⁷ He was alleged to have pursued that goal with a cold, unsympathetic spirit and with “contempt for natives characterizing most of his measures.”¹²⁸ The kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers of the Fanti people, at a

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 344. Mensah Sarbah wanted every individual in the Gold Coast to be educated in the “correct and true knowledge of the constitutional history of his dear native land.” He was among the first scholars to make efforts in that direction. Eventually he wrote two books dealing with the history, custom, practice, and usage of the Fanti and Akan peoples of the Gold Coast.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ PRO CO 96/306: Telegram from Fanti Kings, Chiefs, etc., to Queen Victoria and the Colonial Office, 13 December 1897, 1.

meeting in Cape Coast, also sent a telegram on the occasion of Maxwell's death to Queen Victoria asking for a new governor who would be sympathetic and careful to understand their cause.¹²⁹ They had no such luck. Maxwell was succeeded by F. M. Hodgson, who was equally enthusiastic to get the bill passed.

In his assessment of the situation, Governor Hodgson thought that the indigenous political authorities had become resigned to the inevitability of the bill becoming law. Thus, he sought to get it quickly through after the necessary changes "before the feeling begins to work off."¹³⁰ With the Colonial Office gradually waking up to the enormity of the resistance to the Lands Bill and the need to critically assess the situation, it took advantage of the Maxwell's death to temporarily stay the passing of the bill. And because a Gold Coast delegation was on its way to London to resist the bill, the Colonial Office elected to be doubly cautious.¹³¹

The Society continued to encourage kings and chiefs to continue to attend regular meetings to sustain the resistance. It advocated for branches to be opened in other parts of the Gold Coast further away from Cape Coast so that the government would be compelled to recognize it as the real voice of the nation.¹³² It also sought legal advice in London. To this end, Casely-Hayford was charged with gathering legal and historical evidence to be used by the counsel in London. He and others were able to

¹²⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹³⁰ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 345.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

collect more than thirty Parliamentary Reports, Legislative Council Debates, and government Blue Books, which were sent to their London solicitors to help them prepare their case.¹³³ The Society managed eventually to raise funds through solicitations and contributions from the kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and people of the Gold Coast. This was used to pay for the cost of sending the delegation to London.¹³⁴ The delegation was made up of three prominent merchants, who bore indigenous state swords and the insignia of kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers of the Gold Coast. This was to accentuate their authority as accredited representatives, and to emphasize the cultural and religious significance of land. With the aid of the British legal counsel, they were granted audience by Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office.¹³⁵ Represented by their lead counsel, the delegation argued that the Lands Bill of 1897 was flawed in its entirety because of the premise, on which it was based, i.e., unoccupied lands in the colony do not belong to anyone.¹³⁶ They reiterated that this was a premise widely challenged in the Gold Coast, but the governor denied them the opportunity to argue their position. The delegation affirmed that all those lands belonged to kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, towns, villages, and, in some cases, individuals. Indigenous land ownership and administration was structured in such a way that no one (whether they came from another family, different ethnic group, or foreigners) could occupy any of it without the express consent and

¹³³ PRO C.O. 96/310: Report of the Proceedings of the Deputation, 1898, 115.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 117.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

permission of kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers.¹³⁷ In other words, the vast expanses of land were all completely owned, with each and every owner in full knowledge of their boundaries. The delegation also found fault with the proposal that “commissioners” appointed by the governor were to have the power of dealing with every concession without any specific procedures or regulations.¹³⁸ They argued that this was absolutely arbitrary, and that a workable option could be achieved by making the whole procedure a judicial one, and not administrative.¹³⁹ Another important objection concerned a proposal in the bill that “everyone who obtains land by land certificate should take it subject to English law, instead of subject to native law.”¹⁴⁰ The delegation insisted that all such certificates should be based on indigenous laws, which were culturally acceptable to the people of the Gold Coast. They also pointed out that the kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and others had no problem with giving up land for public purposes.¹⁴¹ However, the public purposes for which the supposed unoccupied lands could be taken were defined too loosely in the bill. They demanded that these be limited to a specific list. Moreover, a notice in the *Government Gazette* would not secure the meaningful consent of owners of lands affected by concession procedures. The delegation demanded that

¹³⁷ Ibid., 116.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

there should be proper notifications personally delivered to the kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, families, and individuals concerned by competent interpreters.¹⁴²

To the delight of the delegation, Chamberlain could not but agree with the soundness of their concerns and arguments. He declared, “I think I can give you the assurance which you wish for. . . . I am willing that in all cases where the natives are concerned the native law shall remain and prevail . . . with regard to the devolution of land. And I am also willing that the court which is to decide upon these questions should be a judicial court.”¹⁴³ To tone down any suggestion that the colonial government had been defeated—and to provide a much-needed face-saving gesture—the Colonial Office used Maxwell’s death to signify the absence of a major hindrance and called for its withdrawal.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

While the people of Southern Gold Coast saw land as an important cultural and religious resource, the colonial government saw it as part of the trappings of political and economic power. Thus when the government, as part of its modernization and mechanization of the gold mining sector, started efforts to support European private sector investment in the nineteenth century, it was bound to suffer resistance from the people of Southern Gold Coast. First, the introduction of the Crown Lands Bill of 1894 sought to declare all unoccupied lands as “waste lands.” Second, the Crown Lands Bill of 1897 rather declared unoccupied lands as “public lands.” The people of the Gold Coast

¹⁴² Ibid., 120.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

led by the ARPS, based in Cape Coast, saw both bills as one and the same thing. They countered that they got their land from their ancestors who acquired it variously by first settlement, war, and blood. There was nothing like idle land as every piece had an owner or owners who knew its boundaries. The land also connected them to their ancestors. They resisted through demonstrations, newspaper editorials and the use of delegations that held discussions with officials in the Colonial Office. The tenacious resistance caused the colonial government to abandoned plans to claim “waste lands” in Gold Coast.

Chapter 6

“We Won’t Cooperate:” Municipal Council Elections, Resistance to Colonial Authority, and the 1932 Conflict

By the middle of the twentieth century, the political situation in Southern Gold Coast had become a complex one. As noted earlier, colonial officers saw the inhabitants of Cape Coast as probably the most difficult to deal with in the colony: Residents of Cape Coast were said to have critical and unhelpful attitudes toward government policies. In fact, this made sense insofar as colonial interests were concerned. The *Omanhin* and his council were cited as almost always refusing to cooperate and offering either passive or active resistance instead.¹ It was against this background that the political undercurrents of the 1932 conflict emerged; a development which was further exploited in resistance to the colonial government.

Introduction of Colonial Institutions of Governance

As part of the process of “Westernizing” the people of Southern Gold Coast, the colonial administration implemented certain basic governance mechanisms that were convenient responses to the dual problem of lack of officials and money.² That process was, in part, a “rationalization” of the indigenous political set-up. Among other things, it involved their fuller incorporation into the overall machinery of government with intent to

¹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: The Hon Justice J. Aitken, Report by . . . into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast. Enclosure 1 in Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33, 10.

² J. Simensen, “Crisis in Akyem Abuakwa: The Native Administration Revenue Measure of 1932: Akyem Abuakwa and the Politics of the Inter-War Period in Ghana,” *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1995): 110.

achieving greater centralized control.³ Bills and ordinances were to become the foundations upon which political institutions were to function. One of these was the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance, which was conceived as an instrument of control to be used to enhance the indigenous powers of chiefs under the policy of indirect rule.⁴ The main principle of indirect rule was defined as:

Adapting for the purposes of local government the institutions which native peoples have evolved for themselves, so that they may develop in a constitutional manner from their own past, guided and restrained by the traditions and sanctions which they have inherited (molded or modified as they may be on the advice of British Officers) and by general advice and control of those officers.⁵

It was an attempt to make kings, chiefs, and queen-mothers “a living part of the machinery of government.”⁶ Subject to the guidance and advice of colonial political officers, the leaders of the indigenous political institutions were to be given greater responsibilities for implementing the policies of the central government, and were to be

³ Ibid., 119.

⁴ The Native Jurisdiction Ordinance has been described as a “double purpose” instrument of control, which was used, on the one hand, to bolster the indigenous authority of docile “protected” chiefs, and, on the other hand, to hamstring chiefs deemed to be intractable and independent-minded. See R. Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700–1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997), 157.

⁵ H. F. Morris and James S. Read, *Indirect Rule and the Search for Justice: Essays in East Africa Legal History* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1972), 3.

⁶ Ibid.

encouraged to initiate local development.⁷ It is evident that while attempting to introduce a new and all-inclusive system of governance, the British acknowledged the indispensability of the indigenous political elite. But this did not include the intellectuals. They were either sidelined or considered unimportant.⁸ In 1902, the colonial government formalized these new arrangements by the creation of a Secretariat for Native Affairs. The governor appointed a secretary of native affairs and provided him with a small staff of travelling assistants. The responsibility of this new agency was to represent the government in its dealings with the indigenous states and to help settle succession questions and chieftaincy disputes as well as matters relating to the proper ordering of indigenous authority.⁹ In 1904, the government placed provincial commissioners in charge of the three provinces into which Southern Gold Coast had been divided. Cape Coast was the administrative capital of what became the Central Province, and a provincial commissioner took up residence in the town.¹⁰ As part of the process of structuring local government, colonial officers were ordered to use indigenous titles to

⁷ R. L. Stone, "Rural Politics in Ghana in the Inter-War Period: Some Comparisons between Akyem Abuakwa and the States of the Central Province," *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1995): 120.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The others were the Eastern and Western Provinces, with administrative capitals in Koforidua and Sekondi, respectively.

refer to office holders in the indigenous political establishment.¹¹ During this early stage of indirect rule, colonial officers sought to use the indigenous political establishment to maintain discipline among the unruly inhabitants of the towns and villages in Southern Gold Coast.¹² Furthermore, in 1916, the king of England enhanced the colonial top hierarchy with formal recognition of the office of the governor as commander-in-chief of the Southern Gold Coast colony.¹³ He also provided for the establishment of a legislative council for the colony, to make all necessary laws for peace, order, and good governance.¹⁴

In Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi, the three major coastal towns, where the Municipal Corporations Ordinance (1924) was in force, provisions were made for each representative to be elected by accredited electorate. To address doubts, disputes, or grievances relating to the elections, the Order-in-Council (1925) allowed for the

¹¹ R. Gocking, "The Historic Akoto: A Social History of Cape Coast, Ghana, 1848–1948" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1981), 184.

¹² Stone described indirect rule as having two stages. He argued that in the noninterventionist stage, government officials were concerned with regulating the native states, whereas during the interventionist stage, they were concerned with implementing colonial policy through the chiefs "to make the native order a living part of the machinery of government." See R. L. Stone, "Colonial Administration and Rural Politics in South Central Ghana, 1919–1951" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1974), 67 - 90. Actually, this was how Governor Slater described this new policy in 1930. See A. R. Slater, *Native Administration in the Gold Coast and its Dependencies: Confidential Minutes* (Accra, Ghana: Government Printing Office, 1930), 150.

¹³ The Gold Coast Colony (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council, 1925, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

presentation of petitions.¹⁵ A petition of complaint about a disputed election of a member of the Council was to be lodged within one month from the date of publication of the results of the election with a Divisional Court of the Supreme Court of the Colony.¹⁶ The Order-in-Council also provided for the establishment of provincial councils. Among other responsibilities, the provincial councils were vested with the powers of discharging functions occasionally assigned them by the ordinance.¹⁷

Resistance to the Order-in-Council

When the ordinance was published in the *Gold Coast Colony Gazette* at the end of 1925, it was met with a barrage of resistance not just from Cape Coast, but other major towns of the Gold Coast.¹⁸ The major outcry was against the composition of the unofficial African representation and the method of its election. The Council was to have a total membership of thirty.¹⁹ Broken into its constituent parts, it would be made up of sixteen officials, including the governor as president, and fourteen unofficial members.²⁰ Of the latter category, five were to be Europeans and nine elected Africans. The African

¹⁵ Ibid., Clause XXXII., 35.

¹⁶ Ibid. The relevance of this clause to the 1932 conflict will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., Clauses XVI–XVII., 27.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 28.

representation was to be made up of three municipal members, who were to be elected directly from each of the main coastal towns of Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi. There were to be six provincial members. These, as noted above, were to be elected from the three provincial councils of chiefs.²¹ The councils themselves consisted of the head chiefs (i.e., paramount chiefs), who had many chiefs under them. The Western Province was to be represented by one member, the Central Province by two, and the Eastern Province was to have three members, on account of its linguistic composition.²² It was the composition of the provincial members that made the intellectual and professional elite of the Gold Coast resist the entire Order-in-Council. They organized mass demonstrations at Cape Coast, Sekondi, and Elmina. At these gatherings, the intellectuals argued that it was contrary to cultural practice for the so-called natural rulers (i.e., kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and headmen) to attend provincial councils at all, let alone represent their people in legislative councils. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the ordinance insisted on proficiency in English to allow for “an active and intelligent part in the proceedings of the Council,”²³ the intellectuals complained that the natural rulers who were actually qualified by education to sit effectively on the Legislative Council could almost be counted on the fingers of one hand.²⁴ They feared that this would enable

²¹ Ibid.

²² The Eastern Province was the only one that had three different major ethnic groups: Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, and Akan.

²³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Summary of Notes on the Petition of the Gold Coast Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society, 28 September 1926, 5.

²⁴ The Gold Coast Colony (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council, 1925, 19.

colonial officers to manipulate them and turn them into mere tools in the hands of the government.

The intellectuals also criticized the Order-in-Council for its divisiveness.²⁵ They saw it as a deliberate attempt on the part of the colonial government to sow seeds of division between natural rulers and the intellectuals.²⁶ To prove this point, they referred to the government's description of the former as "the true and accredited representatives of the illiterate masses," and the latter as some "foreign breed imported into the colony."²⁷ The intellectuals insisted that they would cooperate with the colonial government, only if it allowed the *Oman* (indigenous state councils) to elect suitable, competent, and progressive men other than—or in addition to—the kings and chiefs.²⁸ The essence of their stand against the Order-in-Council was that the intellectuals and the professionals were an important element in colonial Southern Gold Coast who could not be ignored. They had long cooperated with the kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and headmen, as well as other representatives of the indigenous political establishment in the interest of their people.²⁹ Not only did the intellectuals and professionals have the

²⁵ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Summary of Notes on the Petition of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, 28 September 1926, 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

requisite higher education and legal training, but also, in most cases, they were financially well-off. Summing up their position, they stated:

We and others have pointed out over and over again that the root objection to the present Provincial Councils lies in its being restricted to the *Amanhin* [plural of *Omanhin*] who have the right to vote for members to the Legislative Council from their ranks only. In other words . . . freedom of choice as to the persons to serve in the Legislative Council would remove all the difficulties.³⁰

The colonial government lost no time in reacting to the resistance to the Order-in-Council by intellectuals and professionals. The questioning of the educational qualification of the kings and chiefs was rejected as a “sweeping and unnatural accusation by Africans against their natural rulers.”³¹ The government intimated that it was a mere political argument. Governor Guggisberg indicated:

One cannot help being struck by the probability that the Natural Rulers of this country should not be allowed to take a greater right to unite in consultation on the welfare of the people they administer than the Head Chiefs and their Councilors. And what people have a greater right to form the majority of the African Members of this Council than the Head Chiefs who rule over the vast bulk of the people of this country? It is true that the majority of the Head Chiefs in this country are not educated; but on the other hand there are a sufficient number with education enough to enable them take part in the proceedings of the Council. Naturally, if the Head Chiefs and their Councilors wish to retain the opportunities and the positions which the Government has given them, they will see to it that future generations of Chiefs and Councilors are educated.³²

Indeed, in his attempt to justify the presence of the kings and chiefs on the Council, the governor pointed out that with its composition as it stood, the only African whose debate

³⁰ Editorial, “Petition of the G.C.A.R.P.S.,” *Gold Coast Leader*, 26 March 1927.

³¹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Summary of Notes on the Petition of the Gold Coast Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society, 28 September 1926, 3.

³² Governor Guggisberg, *Legislative Council Debates*, 22 February 1926, 455.

was cogent and formidable; who was best informed about international events and capable of drawing inferences from them was a chief.³³ He was no doubt referring to Nana Sir Ofori Atta, *Omanhin* of Akyem Abuakwa in the Eastern Province. According to Guggisberg “the chief possessed a sound knowledge of the English Language, ability to express his thought in appropriate language, aptitude for debates, and wide knowledge of the affairs of the world in the highest degree.”³⁴ He emphasized that his experience on the Council revealed that the contributions made by the chiefs were more helpful and informative than those of the other African members.³⁵ Guggisberg observed that the criticisms of the other African members were academic and consequently somewhat sterile, whereas those of the chiefs were essentially practical.³⁶ Regarding the accusation of the chiefs’ inability to perform in debates at the Council, Guggisberg argued that debating power was valuable, but not sacrosanct. He pointed out that he himself was yet to know any African member of the Legislative Council, chief or educated, who could hold his own in debates against the senior colonial political officers such as the colonial secretary, the attorney general, or the secretary of native affairs.³⁷ The intellectuals were compelled to respond to the accusation that their sole intent was to replace the kings,

³³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Summary of Notes on the Petition of the Gold Coast Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society, 28 September 1926, 4.

³⁴ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letters of Governor Guggisberg to the Right Honorable L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 9 November 1926– 14 July 1927, 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

chiefs, headmen, and others on the Legislative Council with their own members. They admitted that some of the chiefs had education, but reiterated that they did not believe there were sufficient numbers of those.³⁸ Other senior colonial political officers chided that a similar argument could be made regarding the intellectuals and professionals themselves.³⁹ In other words, if there were insufficient numbers of highly educated individuals, then it was safer for the majority of the elected Africans on the Council to be drawn from a body that was close to the daily life and needs of the majority of the people of Southern Gold Coast.⁴⁰

The colonial government argued that the Order-in-Council was not divisive. It was rather the the intellectuals and professionals who were hiding behind the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society.⁴¹ The government insisted that the Order-in-Council had the potential of bringing the indigenous states together. Moreover, the government argued that there was no question of division between the paramount chiefs and their sub-chiefs. It pointed out that everything indicated that the chiefs and their people would welcome the provincial councils.⁴² The governor observed that bringing together the head chiefs and their advisers in a Council would help remove petty jealousies and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letter of H. S. Newlands, Acting Secretary of Native Affairs to the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 5.

⁴² Ibid.

misunderstandings between them, and that could promote cooperation and goodwill.⁴³

The governor argued that if any potential for division existed, then it was from the claim of the intellectuals that they were entitled to speak on behalf of the chiefs and people of the Gold Coast colony. He pointed out that this was diametrically opposed to the generally accepted knowledge that the chiefs were the natural rulers of their people.⁴⁴

A further attempt to discredit the petition was attempted by H. S. Newlands, the acting secretary of native affairs.⁴⁵ He charged that the document was a minority view. According to Newlands, the petition was the work of the executive committee of the Cape Coast branch of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, which represented just a few intellectuals of the coastal community.⁴⁶ Newlands dismissed the claim that the Order-in-Council was a violation of native custom by arguing that it was rather the Society that was to blame. It held itself out as the political institution that must represent the people. This infringed "native" custom; especially by its assertion of authority over the prerogatives of the indigenous political establishment. He was also quick to point out that the Society was losing support. Newlands inferred this from what he called the

⁴³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letter of Governor Guggisberg to the Right Honorable L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 21 April 1927, 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letter of H. S. Newlands, Acting Secretary of Native Affairs to the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

“dwindling signatures” on the Society’s documents and petitions.⁴⁷ He insisted that instead of signatures, one saw marks, and he suggested that the Society was appealing mainly to the uneducated kings, chiefs, queen-mothers, and headmen who could not fathom what they were being made to thumbprint. Thus, the petition did not have the support of all those who mattered within the indigenous political establishment.⁴⁸ In concluding his remarks, Newlands observed that the document showed that neither the Society as a whole nor its diehard adherents took their constitution, by-laws, rules, and regulations as being strictly binding on them. The petition, he pointed out, contained many contradictions and misrepresentations, as well as a lack of consistency in its submissions.⁴⁹ He therefore cited a confusion of thought and policy on the part of the Society regarding the status of kings, chiefs, and headmen under the indigenous political constitution.⁵⁰ For instance, the sole signatory of the petition, J. E. Casely-Hayford, had himself portrayed the constitutional position and powers of these indigenous leaders in 1903 as follows:

At the head of the native state stands pre-eminently the *Ohin* [king], who is chief magistrate and chief military leader of the state. He is first in the council of the country and the first executive officer. His influence is only measured by the strength of his character. He it is who represents the state in all its dealings with the outside world, he is supreme in his world, and, so long as he keeps within his own state.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁵¹ J. E. Casely-Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), 50.

It was obviously ironic that the man who was championing the cause of the Society had entangled himself in so much contradiction. Thus, Newlands argued that the petition gave currency to a conception of customary law that was not in harmony with what the main signatory himself once published as the “truth presented in the most authentic way.”⁵²

On 24 February 1924, Casely-Hayford had intimated his approval of the provincial councils in these words:

In Your Excellency’s message reference was made to the protection of Amanhin (Head Chiefs) by what is known as Provincial Councils. Sir, if they are to serve the purpose of enabling the Head Chiefs to select and elect from among themselves some of their numbers to represent them in the Legislative Council, I say, Sir, it would be an excellent scheme.⁵³

From all indications, it was probable that Casely-Hayford had in mind the words of John Mensah Sarbah, the greatest exponent of Fanti customary laws and national constitution. Mensah Sarbah’s opinion was that if the policy of elective representation was introduced, “the most important rulers should possess the right to elect two or three representatives of their own order as members of the Legislative and Executive Councils.”⁵⁴

The quotations cited above exposed the Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society’s position on the power vested in the provincial councils to elect members to the

⁵² PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letter of H. S. Newlands, Acting Secretary of Native Affairs to the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 1 – 2.

⁵³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: *Gold Coast Hansard*, 1925–26, 282.

⁵⁴ J. M. Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 101.

Legislative Council “from the ranks of chiefs only.”⁵⁵ On the basis of this and other arguments, it became clear that the Society had shot itself in the foot. To make matters worse, most of the kings, chiefs, and headmen in other parts of Southern Gold Coast lent their full support to the colonial government’s proposal.⁵⁶ For instance, on the issue of representation of the people, Nana Sir Ofori Atta indicated that it was rather the paramount chiefs who knew their people thoroughly and were acquainted with their true needs. Thus, they were well-placed to bring these to the notice of the colonial government.⁵⁷ The intellectuals, he pointed out, were not so privileged. They did not travel extensively, but were confined to places on the railways and roads, where the duties of their profession took them. Nana Sir Ofori Atta warned that it would be “criminal to leave the matter of representation of the people’s needs to a class of people who never took pains themselves to ascertain those needs in the people’s daily life.”⁵⁸ It is, however, important to note that he was one of the few leaders of the indigenous political establishment who were in the good books with the colonial government and who fully cooperated with the administration.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Nana Sir Ofori Atta, *Legislative Council Debates*, 22 February 1926, 344.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 346.

The Split within the Society

The reconstituted Legislative Council had its first meeting in August 1926.⁵⁹ It was obvious that the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society had not only failed to persuade the colonial government to consider its petition, but was also unable to achieve its prime objective of preventing indigenous representatives from taking seats on the Council. The success of the new Legislative Council, and the growing interest that it generated, dealt a severe blow to the Society. It produced divided opinions that eventually developed into two factions.⁶⁰ First, there were the die-hards who would never back down nor relent on their insistence that the colonial government should respect their views on reforms regarding the provincial councils and the Legislative Council. They held the view that without this, cooperation with the government was unthinkable. Among this group, were people such as Kobina Sekyi, G. E. Moore, and *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III, all of Cape Coast.⁶¹ Second, there was the other group that conceded that the trend of affairs and the thinking of the times called for a change of strategy. They came to believe that it was only at the center (i.e., in the Legislative Council) that they had any hope of influencing government policy, and possibly demanding further reforms. This view was represented by intellectuals like J. E. Casely-Hayford, J. Glover-Addo, and Kobina Arku Korsah.⁶² It

⁵⁹ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850–1928* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 447.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 448.

⁶² Ibid.

is important to point out that Guggisberg expressed a similar view. This second group, which eventually came to describe itself as “progressive,” also believed that although the constitution had fallen short of their expectations, the new electoral system should be recognized as a first step towards the fuller representation that they were seeking.⁶³ Again, Casely-Hayford and others realized that the new Legislative Council and the provincial councils had become institutions of governance that had come to stay. In addition, there was not going to be any lack of indigenous individuals willing to seek election, if they fail to offer themselves.⁶⁴ In light of this, they argued that the Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society’s stand was self-defeating. Thus, the proposal to boycott the Legislative Council was rejected by the second group.⁶⁵

The split had significant implications for Cape Coast. As already noted, the town was very important. It was the nerve center of the opposition to colonial government policies. Moreover, Cape Coast was the headquarters of the Society, the main political body that led organized and sustained resistance of the government. Since 1897, when it was formed, the Society had strengthened its hold and influence on Cape Coast.⁶⁶ It had accomplished this by identifying itself with the leaders of the indigenous political establishment. Not only had it won the confidence of those leaders, but it also managed to

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Editorial, “The Legislative Council Elections and the New Order,” *Gold Coast Leader*, 18 June 1927.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kimble, *A Political History Of Ghana*, 448.

command respect among a considerable number of the populace. The polarization within the Society developed into an open split in 1927.⁶⁷ This brought in its wake serious repercussions for Cape Coast. The colonial government's rejection of the Society's petition filled the die-hards at Cape Coast with bitterness and rancor. They became even more determined than ever that the town should never be seen to be cooperating with the colonial government.⁶⁸ However, the views of Casely-Hayford and his group also gained currency and garnered a great deal of support. The Legislative Council had come to stay and was working in spite of the relentless resistance from Cape Coast.⁶⁹ And it was gradually becoming more attractive. It seemed more reasonable to many that they should work for the reform of the constitution from within the Council. Yet the die-hards, whether because of philosophy or bitterness, refused to reconsider their attitude.⁷⁰ The elections of municipal council members from Accra and Sekondi to the Legislative Council were held separately in 1927; Glover-Addo and Casely-Hayford were elected, respectively. The *Gold Coast Leader* praised these elections as a "triumph of common sense."⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Editorial, "The Legislative Council Elections and the New Order," *Gold Coast Leader*, 18 June 1927.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Editorial, "The Triumph of Common Sense," *Gold Coast Leader*, September, 1927.

Consequently, a drama in which the progressives were pitted against the die-hards began to unfold. The colonial government, though determined to let the Legislative Council function even in the teeth of the resistance, was at the same time anxious to get a fuller representation by having a Cape Coast representative on it. In November 1927, Governor Sir Ransford Slater met with the *Omanhin*, chiefs, and people of Cape Coast.⁷² He attempted to reason with them on the need to be represented on the Legislative Council so their views on important matters would be heard. As example, the governor mentioned two crucial issues: the water rate and the proposed closing of the local port, both of which could be effectively discussed at the Council level.⁷³ However, no practical steps were taken by the people to submit an application to the colonial government through the office of the *Omanhin* for the elections to be held.⁷⁴

In July 1928, a certain section of the town – the Cape Coast Rate-Payers' Association – did apply for elections to be held.⁷⁵ The *Omanhin* and others sought to frustrate this group in their bid to make the application. They were advised at a town meeting to wait until the leaders of the indigenous political establishment had decided on

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

a position. There was so much local resistance to the Association's action that the case ended up at the Supreme Court.⁷⁶

The Cape Coast Rate-Payers' Association emerged as the voice of the progressives, who identified with the view of changing the town's attitude towards the Legislative Council. The Association believed that "self-injurious conservatism" had ruined Cape Coast, and that the town needed to change with the times.⁷⁷ They believed that the development of Cape Coast, as well as any desirable change to the constitution, could be done effectively only from within the Legislative Council. The Association explained the clauses of the Order-in-Council and other regulations that appertained to the election of municipal members to the Legislative Council.⁷⁸ By so doing, it dispelled some of the ignorance many a prospective uneducated voter had concerning their legal rights under the provisions of the Order-in-Council. The Association also managed to convince some educated people who had a mere nodding acquaintance of their rights.⁷⁹ Membership of the Association grew, and it eventually drew a considerable following from prominent members of the town, who identified closely with its activities.⁸⁰ These included such people as Kobina Arku Korsah, Henry Van Hien, Daniel Sackey, and

⁷⁶ Judgment Book, SCT 5/6/3, 28 July 1926 – 17 January 1934: Decision of Woolhouse Bannerman—Re: Election of a Municipal Member, 28 November 1928, 213.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 214.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 215.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 216.

William Ward Brew, who was himself a vice president of the local chapter of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society.⁸¹ The president of the Association was *Tufuhin* Chief W. Z. Coker, the supreme leader of the seven *Asafo* companies of Cape Coast, and an *ex-officio* member of the *Oman* Council.⁸²

William Zacheus Coker became *Tufuhin* of the seven *Asafo* companies of Cape Coast in 1888. Prior to his installation, Coker served as chief registrar in the Supreme Court.⁸³ He was convicted in 1889 of embezzlement, and served a six-year jail term at the Elmina Castle.⁸⁴ Upon his release in 1894, despite his tarnished image, Coker set out almost immediately to demonstrate to local officials that as *Tufuhin* he was indispensable in the town's affairs.⁸⁵ He took advantage of the Ashanti War (1895–96) to regain favor with the government by supplying the military with carriers. After the war, he continued as a labor supplier to both the government and private companies. (He evidently made a great deal of money from this.) He was also an important personality associated with the

⁸¹ All of these men were part of the Western educated elite, most of who had become lawyers. They were obviously very important in their communities.

⁸² PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1109: Minute Paper No. 3478/88 from Chief Justice to His Excellency, the Governor, 10 July 1888, 10.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1109: Letter of District Commissioner, Cape Coast, to the Hon. Colonial Secretary, 10 September 1902.

⁸⁵ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1109: The Coker File, 1931, 2.

indigenous judicial establishment. By the turn of the century, *Tufuhin* Coker was one of the wealthiest and most educated people of Cape Coast.⁸⁶

Another prominent member of the progressives who made up the Cape Coast Rate-Payers' Association was Kobina Arku Korsah (later to be known as Sir K. A. Korsah). He eventually became the first indigenous chief justice of the Gold Coast and also the first chief justice of independent Ghana. He was educated at the Mfantipim School, Cape Coast, and at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1915.⁸⁷ He later entered the Durham University in England and graduated with a Bachelor of Civil Law in 1917. In 1919, Korsah received a Bachelor of Laws from London University and was called to the bar at the Middle Temple.⁸⁸ While a student in England he took part in anti-colonial politics. From 1917 onwards, when J. E. Casely-Hayford started working to form the National Congress of British West Africa, Korsah entered Gold Coast politics. He was appointed assistant secretary to the Cape Coast branch of the Congress and an executive member of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society 1922.⁸⁹

The diehard conservatives of the Society included equally prominent people, such as *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III and William Essuman Gwira Sekyi (commonly called Kobina

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ L. H. Oforu Appiah, ed., *The Encyclopedia Africana: Dictionary of African Biography, Ethiopia–Ghana* (New York: Reference Publications, 1977), 261.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 263.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Sekyi). The former became *Omanhin* in 1920. His ascension to the stool of Cape Coast was not an easy one. *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III had to contend with opposition from a section of the royal family. As a result of the division, he was denied the royal stool as well as the performance of certain rites relevant to the dignity of a properly constituted chief. Even though these rites were eventually performed, the rift was never mended.⁹⁰ Like *Omanhin* Aggery, *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III actively sought, and was led by, the advice of intellectual confidants. The most prominent among them was Kobina Sekyi. Official accounts state that Kojo Mbra III was a tool in the hands of Kobina Sekyi, who was unquestionably the gray eminence behind the Society.⁹¹ His attitude towards the colonial administration was anything but helpful. Be that as it may, *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra's relationship with the colonial government could also have been as much an expression of his personal sentiments as it was that of the conservative section of the Society.

Kobina Sekyi was one of the most remarkable nationalists of the second and third decades of the twentieth century Gold Coast. He was president of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society from 1927 until its political demise in the 1950s.⁹² Kobina Sekyi distinguished himself as a statesman, lawyer, philosopher, educationist, and journalist. He was educated at the Cape Coast Wesleyan Primary School and the Mfantshipim School.

⁹⁰ PRAAD Adm. 1/2/172: J. L. Atterbury, Acting Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast Stool Affairs Enquiry, 25 November 1920, 2.

⁹¹ PRAAD Adm. 1/2/172: Letter from Governor Slater to Cunliffe-Lister, 22 April 1932, 1.

⁹² Ibid.

He was one of the celebrated “Faithful Eight” of the latter school. Kobina Sekyi left Mfantshipim as a student in 1908, and taught there until 1910.⁹³ He left for England to study at the University College of London. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy in 1914 and returned to Cape Coast the next year. True to his cause as a philosopher, he considered the events affecting the affairs of his country Gold Coast, in general and Cape Coast, his hometown, in particular.⁹⁴ In 1918, Kobina Sekyi went back to England, where he worked for a Master of Arts degree in philosophy. He also pursued legal studies at the Inner Temple, London, and was called to the bar in 1919.⁹⁵ Kobina Sekyi enrolled as a legal practitioner of the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast and entered into private practice. He was also a prolific writer and a social reformer. He became a member of the National Congress of British West Africa and was one of its assistant secretaries.⁹⁶ Governor Slater described Kobina Sekyi as a “very able but virulently anti-government lawyer.”⁹⁷ Governor Shanton Thomas also saw him as “an extremist . . . always in opposition to the government.”⁹⁸ He was also described in certain circles as a

⁹³ I. S. Ephson, *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities 1632–1968* (Accra, Ghana: Ilen Publications, 1969), 123. See also, Appiah, ed., *Encyclopedia Africana*, 315.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ PRAAD Adm. 1/2/172: Letter from Governor Slater to Cunliffe-Lister, 22 April 1932, 1.

⁹⁸ PRO CO 96/717/21750: Letter from Shanton Thomas to Cunliffe-Lister, 23 June 1934, 3.

radical and a conservative.⁹⁹ Kobina Sekyi was a man eager to bring about progressive change, but only so long as indigenous culture was protected from the ravages of Westernization. He was described as a man who became more African, the more he studied Western philosophy.¹⁰⁰

Another important personality in the drama that was to unfold in Cape Coast was George E. Moore. He also belonged to the conservative section of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. He was born at Cape Coast and educated at the Government Boys' School from 1886 to 1895. Moore first worked as a treasury clerk at Cape Coast.¹⁰¹ He later became a clerical officer in the West African Frontier Force at Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Moore returned home in 1900 to become chief storekeeper in the service of the British expedition to Ashanti during the Yaa Asantewaa War in the same year, for which he received the Ashanti Medal.¹⁰² Moore later became a cocoa broker at Akuapim, Eastern Province, in early 1920. He entered politics in 1924 as an uncompromising nationalist. He served in the executive committee of the Society for many years. Moore

⁹⁹ K. A. B. Jones-Quartey, "Kobina Sekyi: A Fragment of Biography," *Research Review* 4, no. 1(1967), 78.

¹⁰⁰ J. Ayo Langley, "Modernization and its Malcontents: Kobina Sekyi of Ghana and the Re-Statement of African Political Theory, 1892–1956," *Research Review* 6, no. 3 (1970), 89

¹⁰¹ Appiah, ed., *Encyclopedia Africana*, 269.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

and Kobina Sekyi were great friends.¹⁰³ The former helped the latter to secure a lucrative case in which Odikro Kwame Kuma and Kwaku Amoa of Asamankese challenged Nana Sir Ofori Atta's claim to ownership of Asamankese and Akwatia lands. Again, both Moore and Kobina Sekyi were in the anti-government wing of the Society after the Guggisberg constitution of 1925 led to the split in its leadership.¹⁰⁴

The situation in which the prominent men of Cape Coast were uncompromisingly divided between conservatives and progressives did not augur well for the town. When W. J. A. Jones became commissioner of the Central Province in January 1928, he and other political officers stationed there made a special effort to persuade the Cape Coast municipal voters to elect a member to represent them in the Legislative Council.¹⁰⁵ The Rate-Payers' Association sent a delegation led by Van Hien to seek audience with Nana Mbra III and his councilors, including Kobina Sekyi, J. P. Brown, Chief Kwamina Ninfa V, Chief Kweku Arhin, and Chief J. H. Dadzie. They refused to forward the application to the colonial government.¹⁰⁶

In June 1928, the acting governor, on an official visit to Cape Coast, appealed to the young men to be amenable to the changing times rather than "commit constitutional

¹⁰³ PRAAD Adm. 1/2/99: Letter from Northcote to Cunliffe-Lister, 14 October 1932.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to Secretary of State for Colonies, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933, Enclosure 1, 10. In Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33. Report by the Hon. Mr. Justice J. Aitken into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 11.

suicide.”¹⁰⁷ After a further meeting with the district commissioner, the enthusiastic municipal voters concluded that there was no legal obligation on their part to submit their application through the *Omanhin* or the *Oman*’s council. They also came to understand that the indigenous political authorities had no legal right to control the actions of the voters with respect to the nomination of candidates. This was because the political franchise was, by law, conferred on the voters of Cape Coast and not the *Omanhin* or the *Oman*’s council.¹⁰⁸ It was also pointed out that any person resident in the town could vote, provided he or she satisfied the stipulations of the law.¹⁰⁹ The district commissioner emphasized that any qualified resident of Cape Coast could be nominated and elected to represent the town and its interests in the Legislative Council. In the end, it became clear that the choice rested with the electorate, and that customary law did not apply in the matter of nomination or election, both of which were foreign to local practice.¹¹⁰

These interpretations of the electoral law empowered *Tufuhin* Coker and the progressive section of the Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society, most of whom also constituted the membership of the Cape Coast Rate-Payers’ Association, to formally

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

request a proclamation of an election date.¹¹¹ As a result a day was fixed by the acting governor and a notification to that effect was published in the *Gold Coast Gazette*.¹¹² The Rate Payers' Association, with the support of Casely-Hayford, nominated K. A. Korsah as their candidate. In the eyes of *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III and his councilors, *Tufuhin* Coker had gone too far, he needed to be cut down to size. *Tufuhin* Coker's action was seen as a clear case of collaboration with the colonial government; an accusation which he had long been suspected of. He was summoned to a gathering of the *Asafo* companies at the insistence of *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III on 31 July 1928, to account for his apparent cooperation with the government.¹¹³ *Tufuhin* Coker refused to attend. The representatives of the *Anafo*, *Ntsin*, *Nkum*, *Abrofonkoa*, *Akrampa*, and *Amanfur Asafo* companies present at the meeting passed a resolution deposing him as *Tufuhin* of Cape Coast. His refusal to appear before the high gathering was considered an unpardonable breach of trust and a violation of the oath he swore upon his installation. George Moore was made *Tufuhin* by popular acclamation. This was apparently done with

¹¹¹ Tufuhin W. Z. Coker, "The Truth about the Cape Coast Municipal Election," *Gold Coast Leader*, September, 1928.

¹¹² PRO CO 96/67/3: *Gold Coast Gazette*, 64 (1928), 30.

¹¹³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to Secretary of State for Colonies, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933, Enclosure 1 in Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33. Report by the Hon. Mr. Justice J. Aitken into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast.

the approval of all the *Asafo* companies except *Bentsir*. This action against *Tufuhin* Coker heightened tension at Cape Coast.¹¹⁴

The *Tufuhin* Inquiry

The colonial government lost no time in constituting an inquiry into the question of who was the bona fide *Tufuhin* of Cape Coast. This was because the *Bentsir Asafo* to which Coker belonged contested Moore's elevation on the grounds that the office of *Tufuhin* was a hereditary one: the *Tufuhin* must be chosen from among the descendants of a Kwamina Edu, and Moore was not known to be one of them.¹¹⁵ They further argued that they should have been approached by the other companies to suggest a successor to Coker. The *Bentsir* company accused the *Omanhin* of hiding behind the other companies to depose Coker.¹¹⁶ They claimed that he had not been given the benefit of a fair trial in accordance with customary practice. The other companies rejected these claims and accusations, whereupon the *Bentsir* company unanimously rallied in support of Coker. They refused to recognize his deposition and refused to acknowledge Moore's elevation. A bitter quarrel ensued between the contending parties, which came to be known as the

¹¹⁴ Ebo Johnson, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009; Kwesi Ababio, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 10 June 2009; Kobina Minnah, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009; Kojo Nunoo, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 17 June 2009; Kojo Insaidoo, interview by author, digital voice recording, Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to Secretary of State for Colonies, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933, Enclosure 1, 11. In Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33. Report by the Hon. Mr. Justice J. Aitken into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast, 11.

Coker Party and the *Omanhin* Party. These two groups in actual fact were by common knowledge formed along the very split in Cape Coast; that is the progressives and diehard conservatives. Practically everybody in Cape Coast became involved on one side or the other. Charges and counter-charges followed, including some against the *Omanhin* himself.¹¹⁷

H. W. Thomas, the deputy secretary for native affairs, who was appointed to hold the inquiry, found that the office of *Tufuhin* was limited to the Kwamina Edu family.¹¹⁸ Coker was properly deposed, but he declared Moore's elevation as improper. Slater accepted two of the Thomas Enquiry findings, but rejected the finding concerning Coker's deposition for reasons connected with customary law. His reaction to the findings made it appear that he was in favor of the Coker Party. When his views were communicated to all concerned, it exacerbated the conflict.¹¹⁹ The *Omanhin* and his councilors insisted that Cape Coast had never held that the office of *Tufuhin* was hereditary to any section of the community nor did the history of succession to that office support the claim that it did so.¹²⁰ They further explained that in addition to that history, there was no such thing as a permanent hereditary right inherent in any family or clan to that public office. It was clear at the outset that colonial government officials stood by Coker as *Tufuhin*. For instance, W. J. A. Jones informed the *Omanhin* that under no

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

circumstances would a permit for the parading of Moore, in the capacity as *Tufuhin*, be granted to the companies.¹²¹ The colonial government informed the companies that its private investigations revealed that Moore was not the right candidate for consideration as *Tufuhin* because he had a West Indian father and his mother was believed to have descended from servitude.¹²² However, the *Omanhin*, his councilors, and other supporters countered that by saying Moore was born in Cape Coast and was made *Tufuhin* by popular acclamation on account of his services to the town. When Skene became provincial commissioner of the Central Province in 1929, he also adopted the same attitude.¹²³ This led to furious complaints and protests on the part of the *Omanhin* Party against the local colonial officers, who were accused of bias and partiality. This did have effect. For instance, Slater wrote the following minute to the provincial commissioner at Cape Coast:

I confess that the impression I get from every paper about Cape Coast Native Affairs that comes before me is that, however annoying it may be to the Provincial Commissioner whom the *Omanhin* so stubbornly opposed over the election and the Native Administration Ordinance, . . . the *Omanhin* has a substantial (and as far as I know influential) following at his back; in any case, it is very desirable that Government should avoid all semblances of taking sides in Cape Coast political affairs. Mbra III's opponents must work out their own salvation. . . . Unless of course he commits any offense against the law, which he certainly hasn't done yet so far as I know.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid., 15.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Minute Paper, No. 10, 2.

The governor's concern for a show of impartiality in the dispute of who was the *de jure Tufuhin* of Cape Coast was based on serious considerations. The 1920s were difficult years for the Gold Coast colonial administration. The government was short on cash as a result of the global economic slump, which came at a time when there was increasing pressure from London for the colonies to bear a large share of their financial burden.¹²⁵ Given this situation, direct taxation presented itself as a ready means to provide financial relief for the colonial government. In this case, the cooperation of the indigenous political authorities was crucial.¹²⁶ Therefore, the governor and the colonial officers in Accra wanted absolute neutrality. The grant of a permit to parade Moore anywhere in the town was consistently refused by the district and provincial commissioners resident in Cape Coast. Fortunately or unfortunately, on 3 March 1932, Coker died.¹²⁷ Moore was left as the only person with any claim to the position of *Tufuhin*. However, the Coker Party did not relent in their resistance to his claim, which made the situation more delicate. They insisted that Coker's demise did not change their resistance to the elevation of Moore to the office of *Tufuhin*. Coker's death did not mean a transfer or abrogation of what they saw as their right of inheritance.¹²⁸ This was certainly a difficult situation for the colonial

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 446.

¹²⁷ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to Secretary of State for Colonies, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933, Enclosure 1 in Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33. Report by the Hon. Mr. Justice J. Aitken into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast, 16.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

administration, especially when it was weighed against cases involving *Asafo* companies elsewhere in coastal Central Province. Apparently, there were increasing number of cases involving conflicts and clashes among the *Asafo* in so many other places in the Gold Coast. The colonial officers certainly had the best of reasons in seeking to check the increasing number of these disturbances. The one developing in Cape Coast when weighed against those in other places in the Central Province did put the colonial government in a bad position as being unable to keep law and order.

***Asafo* Clashes in the Saltpond District**

Political developments in Southern Gold Coast in general and coastal Central Province in particular also made the colonial administration worry about the Cape Coast situation getting out of hand.¹²⁹ Elsewhere in the Central Province, colonial officials and the police had to deal with *Asafo* conflicts and clashes. Reports of these disturbances had been communicated to the Colonial Office in London through confidential correspondences and dispatches.¹³⁰ In return, the Colonial Office ordered caution and great discretion in the handling of such cases. Thus, the colonial administration, reeling under pressure from London, brought equal pressure to bear on local colonial officers and the police to either control *Asafo* disturbances, or, if possible, end them altogether.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

For example, in 1931, there were serious disturbances and fatal clashes between the *Asafo* companies of Narkwa and Ekumpuano in the Saltpond District.¹³² This developed from a crucial dispute over fishing rights in a lagoon. Apparently, there was a history of disturbances between these villages over fishing rights. On 27 September, a small conflict arose between some Narkwa and Ekumpuano boys who were fishing in the Narkwa lagoon. The next day boys from both villages went fishing again in the same place. This time, the boys from Ekumpuano were bigger, and had apparently been sent for the express purpose of picking a quarrel.¹³³ One of these boys paddled his canoe over to the spot where the Narkwa boys were fishing. He was ordered to turn back. A quarrel ensued, and insults were exchanged. A Narkwa boy insulted one of the *Asafo* company captains of Ekumpuano, whereupon the big boys from Ekumpuano tied him up and beat him. A boy from Narkwa rushed back to inform his people; both parties left the lagoon to inform their respective people.¹³⁴

Soon the men of Ekumpuano arrived armed with guns, cutlasses, and sticks, and put themselves in battle formation at a nearby village so as to be able to see anyone approaching from Narkwa. As usual, they started beating war drums and singing war songs. The people of Narkwa came as far as the outskirts of their village to see what was happening. The men of Ekumpuano fired one shot into the lagoon and another one into

¹³² S.N.A. File No. 322/31: Sub File No. 1 C.S.O. 21/21/48: Narkwa-Ekumpuano Riot, 28 September 1931, 1.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 3.

the sea as a challenge.¹³⁵ The people of Narkwa understood the import of the songs and the implications of Ekumpuano actions. They collected their weapons, reinforced their position with more men, and charged on the men Ekumpuano. The men of Ekumpuano retreated as far as Assarekwa, about a quarter of a mile towards their village.¹³⁶ They lay ambush in a coconut plantation on the seaward side at Assarekwa. When the armed men of Narkwa appeared and did not find their opponents, they set fire to a small nearby hut thinking some may be hiding inside it. At that point, the men of Ekumpuano fired on them and fighting ensued. Taken by surprise, the men of Narkwa were put to flight.¹³⁷ Three men lost their lives as a result of gunshot wounds and one died from cutlass wounds. Two of those killed by gunfire were from Narkwa and one was from Ekumpuano. One old man from Narkwa succumbed to a cutlass wound when his side was put to flight. Obviously, he could not run faster enough.¹³⁸

Reports about the riot at Saltpond got to the office of the district commissioner late at night on 28 September.¹³⁹ The district commissioner and other local colonial officers, together with the assistant commissioner of police and a police detachment from Saltpond, set out at about 2:30 A.M. and arrived at Narkwa just before daybreak. The men of both villages had gone into hiding in the bush and neighboring villages. The women of

¹³⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 6.

both villages were left to make up stories of their own upon inquiry, and of course, putting the blame on either side.¹⁴⁰ After a thorough investigation of nearly all the principal witnesses, five men from Narkwa and six from Ekumpuano were charged with rioting. The Ekumpuano village hired lawyers, namely Kobina Sekyi and his counterpart from Cape Coast. A total of £100 was collected from the inhabitants to defray the lawyers' fees.¹⁴¹ The chief of Narkwa refused to get a lawyer, insisting that his men acted in self-defense and under extreme provocation. He and his men also felt justified because Assarekwa was under Narkwa jurisdiction.¹⁴²

When the case went before Assistant District Commissioner Henry Arthur Bonavia, sitting in the exercise of his criminal jurisdiction at Saltpond on 17 October 1931, the following points of law arose for the determination of the court.¹⁴³ First, whether the accused persons of Narkwa acted appropriately in physically responding to an unlawful fight? Second, whether it was not advisable to have reported the incident to the police rather than taking the law into their own hands? Third, whether the men of Ekumpuano were right in perpetrating the actions of extreme provocation as well as arming themselves and daring Narkwa to fight? The histories of previous fights between them were discounted.¹⁴⁴ The court found all the accused persons guilty of taking part in

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

a riot that caused a loss of lives. They were each sentenced to two months of imprisonment in hard labor, and a fine of £20. In default of payment, an additional two months and two weeks of hard labor would be added to the sentence.¹⁴⁵ Given this background of clashes in Saltpond, the colonial authorities in the Central Province reeled under so much pressure with the developing situation in Cape Coast.

***Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III and Internal Resistance**

The year 1931 in Cape Coast was a difficult one politically, and it added to the increasing tension unleashed by the dispute over whether or not Cape Coast should elect a representative to the Legislative Council. The deposition of *Tufuhin* Coker in 1928 left his supporters looking for an opportunity for revenge, and the occasion came in November 1931. A judgment was given in a tribunal against a certain Cooke, an elder and supporter of the late *Tufuhin* Coker, in a land case, which was in no way connected with the *Tufuhin* case. The case went in favor of Chief Sakyiama, a member of *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III's inner circle.¹⁴⁶ Cooke and his supporters went off to have a discussion with the *Omanhin* in the *Ahinfie* (palace). When he and his entourage found out that the *Omanhin* was absent, they took away a stool and other royal paraphernalia (i.e., drums and umbrellas) to Cooke's house. They justified their actions by indicating that they were only moving the paraphernalia to its proper place of housing for safety, because when

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ S.N.A. File No. 1414 / 31/ 11 S. 1 and 1414 /31 / 18: Stool Disturbances in Cape Coast, Enquiry dated November–December, 1931, 36.

they visited the *Omanhin* on a lawful occasion, they found no one in charge.¹⁴⁷ Cooke placed a guard around his house made up of a crowd of his supporters armed with axes, clubs and cutlasses. This was apparently in readiness for defense against an anticipated attack by six *Asafo* companies, which supported *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III.¹⁴⁸

Upon receipt of this intelligence, C. E. Skene, commissioner of the Central Province, in the company of Captain Lynch, Major Hamilton, Dawson, and Morris, all of them local colonial officers, rushed to the scene. After quieting the crowd, Skene and the district commissioner went to the *Ahinfie* (palace) where feverish preparations were being made to retrieve the royal property. After heated discussions, the *Omanhin* and his elders were persuaded to leave the matter in the hands of the colonial government and also to instruct their followers not to take any hostile action against Cooke's house.¹⁴⁹ This was after they had received an assurance that local colonial officers would post a strong police cordon around the house to prevent any of the property being removed.¹⁵⁰ Skene and the district commissioner also managed to disperse Cooke's supporters. After further entreaties from the colonial authorities, Cooke favored handing over the matter to the acting commissioner of Central Province for settlement. However, this would only

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 38

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

happen after further consultations with his elders from the distant villages.¹⁵¹ He consulted them in the morning. By 1 P.M., rumors of the paraphernalia being removed caused great disquiet. About 500 young men who supported Cooke, armed with guns and other weapons, moved to his house again. Upon receiving news of this gathering, *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III ordered the *Asafo* company drums to be beaten for those on his side to gather and fight Cooke's supporters. The police detachment in Cape Coast also started mobilizing.¹⁵² Its leadership conferred on whether they could get reinforcements from Winneba and Sekondi in order to secure a quiet night in Cape Coast. Following the swift intervention of the district commissioner, the *Omanhin* called off the company mobilization and Cooke agreed to deliver the royal paraphernalia into the custody of Skene, upon a guarantee of an inquiry into the matter. These were loaded in lorries and conveyed under a strong police escort. The paraphernalia were placed in a storeroom in the castle prison.¹⁵³

The *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III refused to attend the inquiry into the matter, even after persistent appeals from local colonial officers. He suspected some kind of collusion between Cooke and the colonial authorities. The *Omanhin* insisted that the *Ahinfie* (palace) was the proper place to house royal property and not the houses of individuals, whether or not they were members of the royal family. He promised cooperation with the inquiry only after the paraphernalia had been returned to him. Whereupon the colonial

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 39

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 40.

officers countered that those things had been handed over to them on the promise of an inquiry and they would not violate that.¹⁵⁴ And, in any event, the colonial government could not be expected to act as bailiff for the *Omanhin* by simply retrieving property, the ownership of which was in dispute; without offering the opposing party an opportunity to state its claim. After a detailed explanation of these positions, the *Omanhin* and his elders acquiesced in government retaining possession of the royal paraphernalia for the time being. They were, however, offered alternatives in lieu of the inquiry, which they continued to boycott: a judicial action against Cooke and his family, an indigenous state council meeting, and, finally, a voluntary compromise.¹⁵⁵ The implications of these alternatives presented tricky issues. For instance, a court case would not succeed, because it would be difficult to determine what crime Cooke and his part of the royal family had committed. The *Ahinfie* (palace) was owned by the entire royal family and they had a claim to the ownership of the paraphernalia. Furthermore, they did not use violence in removing them. The second was undoubtedly out of question as it was impractical to convene a properly constituted indigenous state council in Cape Coast, given all the tension, division, and bad blood. The final alternative—a private reconciliation between the parties—looked more promising, but unfortunately it was as gloomy as the second alternative.¹⁵⁶ However, the quick inquiry done by the colonial government concluded that it was only right and proper that the paraphernalia in contention, like all other royal

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 43.

property, be kept in the *Ahinfie* (palace). In all these deliberations, the governor, through the secretary for native affairs, W. J. A. Jones, advised that under no circumstances should colonial political officers interest themselves in the internal affairs of Cape Coast and must at all times content themselves with preserving the peace.¹⁵⁷ These local issues were not the only ones that took the attention of the colonial government in Cape Coast. There were others bordering on the larger Gold Coast political scene.

Global Depression, Income Tax Proposal, Resistance and Gold Coast Riots

The colonial government reeled under enormous economic and political pressure in 1931. It had to contend with resistance from a large section of people including, but not limited to, the intellectuals, common people from the Gold Coast shoreline and interior, chiefs, and headmen. All of these groups operated under the aegis of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society.¹⁵⁸ The onset of a global economic depression in late 1929 led to a slump in the world market for cocoa. This had serious implications for the Gold Coast, because cocoa was the mainstay of its economy. The depression also affected trade, which consequently led to dwindling revenue from customs duties.¹⁵⁹ Although Governor Slater was aware of the history of violent resistance to direct taxation in the colony, he had no option but to risk the consideration of income tax as an immediate solution to the crippling economic situation. This measure, which was encouraged by the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 454.

¹⁵⁹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/54: Letter from Governor Sir Ransford Slater to Lord Passfield, 16 August 1931, 4 – 5.

Northern Nigerian model, was also a necessary precedent in the process of grafting the indigenous political establishment onto the colonial structure.¹⁶⁰

Slater was aware of the volatile nature of this new fiscal proposal. He conceded that there was the likelihood of “insuperable obstacles to the eventual achievement of the policy,” particularly in the coastal towns of Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi.¹⁶¹ He observed that “education on European lines” had led to an “era of sophistication” that had “aggrandized the commoner at the expense of the influence of the local chief.”¹⁶² Consequently, this had encouraged “both a democratic outlook, restiveness and the negation of native ideas of Government.”¹⁶³ Having received the “green light” from London to proceed, Slater declared his intention at a Legislative Council session for “an Ordinance to regulate the Levying and Collection of an Income Tax in the Colony.” According to him, “The necessity for direct taxation . . . had been recognized by every Government in British tropical Africa with the exception of the Gold Coast.”¹⁶⁴ And it was long overdue “when the Gold Coast Government also must in the interests of the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶¹ PRO CO 96/693/6599: Confidential Letter from Governor Sir Ransford Slater to Lord Passfield, 18 February 1930, 1.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

people themselves fall in line with the other administrations.” And, as if to spite them, the governor averred that income tax was the “common burden of civilization.”¹⁶⁵

The Legislative Council representatives for the coastal cities, particularly those of Accra, warned that the general economic depression had cast an “irritant militant spirit” over the people.¹⁶⁶ The new tax bill was not only ill-timed, but also ill-advised. It was unwise to even discuss the idea that ordinary men and women should be burdened economically by being asked to bail out the government, especially when their own welfare responsibilities had been stretched to the limits.¹⁶⁷ The general economic situation was so bad for the people; it made necessary projects seem distasteful. Frederick Victor Nanka Bruce, the representative from Accra, reiterated that the colonial government would be better advised to balance its budget by cutting official salaries and using the Government Reserve Fund than resorting to the imposition of income tax.¹⁶⁸ In response to the colonial government’s view that it was every citizen’s responsibility to bear, to the extent that their means would allow, the maintenance of government; Nanka Bruce argued that the colonial administration was alien and therefore an imposition.¹⁶⁹ In view of this, there was an overwhelming absence of popular good will on the part of

¹⁶⁵ Governor Slater, *Legislative Council Debates*, 24 September 1931, 275.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁶⁷ Stanley Shallof, “The Income Tax, Indirect Rule, and the Depression: The Gold Coast Riots of 1931,” *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 14, no. 54 (1974), 362.

¹⁶⁸ Victor Nanka Bruce, *Legislative Council Debates*, 24 September 1931, 379.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 380.

the ordinary men and women to sacrifice on its behalf. And because the government was equally unwilling to do much for the people, Nanka Bruce closed with the argument that “we remain where we are and try to balance our budget in some other way.”¹⁷⁰

While these debates were going on in the Legislative Council, the Southern Gold Coast press was having a field day lambasting the colonial government, and calling for a popular resistance to the income tax measure. The newspapers that took up the crusade included the *Times of West Africa*, *Gold Coast Leader*, *Gold Coast Spectator*, and *Gold Coast Independent*.¹⁷¹ They criticized what they called the insensitivity of the colonial government, its profligacy, the diversion of untold revenue for the payment of official salaries and allowances, and their negligence in failing to consider the varying circumstances of potential taxpayers. They called for a withdrawal of the bill, and if the government persisted, the men and women of the colony should resist its implementation.¹⁷²

The colonial government would not budge in the face of these resistance, criticisms, and appeals. On 27 October 1931, in Sekondi, a large gathering of youth, men, and women took matters into their hands. They beat empty tins, sang, and danced. The group also displayed placards with inscriptions such as “Down! Down! Down! With

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 384.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Editorial, “This is not the Time,” *The Times of West Africa*, April 1930; Editorial, “No Taxation Here,” April 1930 *Gold Coast Leader*, Editorial, “Government Must Save Itself,” April 1930; Editorial, “Down With Income Tax,” *Gold Coast Spectator*, April 1930; and Editorial, “Already Burdened,” *Gold Coast Independent*, April 1930.

Income Tax,” “Income Tax is akin to Slavery,” “If the Country Can’t Pay, it Simply Can’t Pay,” “Away with Allowances,” and “Practice Intensive Pruning.”¹⁷³ The initially peaceful demonstration became violent when the conduct of the overly boisterous protestors got out of control. Some of them uprooted ornamental plants, whereas others threw stones, hurting people in the process. The targets were banks, government offices, and European bungalows.¹⁷⁴ In Shama, when the acting provincial commissioner of the Western Province, Sumner Wilson, arrived to explain the proposed Income Tax Bill, the *Omanhin* preempted him by handing over a petition resisting the “introduction of such an anomaly as the income tax.”¹⁷⁵ The petition also demanded, instead, a 10 percent cut in the remuneration of colonial government officials.¹⁷⁶ Here as in Sekondi, women and children demonstrated in the town square. They beat empty cans and other hollow metallic objects while singing and dancing, and, at the same time, shouting insults and hurling stones. The *Omanhin* escorted the acting provincial commissioner to his car through the noisy demonstrators who sought to manhandle him.¹⁷⁷ In the end, the colonial government blamed the *Omanhin* of Shama for having covertly stirred up

¹⁷³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/55: Dispatch from H. J. O’Connor, Commissioner of Police, to the Inspector General of Police, Accra, 27 October 1931, 1 – 2.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁵ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/55: Petition from the Office of the *Omanhin*, Shama, to the Acting Provincial Commission of the Western Province, 29 October 1931, enclosed in Northcote to J. H. Thomas, 3 November 1931, 1.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/55: Letter from Sumner Wilson, Acting Provincial Commissioner of the Western Province, Sekondi, to the Colonial Secretary, 30 October 1931, 1.

“roughs” who had indulged themselves in “a cheap display of impertinence.”¹⁷⁸ The governor described Shama to the Colonial Office as “a notoriously ill-disciplined place.”¹⁷⁹ This was an attempt to explain away the humiliating resistance to the Income Tax Bill. The demonstrators were referred to as “roughs,” “hooligans,” and “cowboys” in official dispatches. Occasionally, they were described a hopeless lot, perpetually misled by ignorant chiefs and incorrigible agent provocateurs.¹⁸⁰

In Cape Coast, where anti-colonial feelings were always strong, the resistance to the Income Tax Bill was a turbulent affair. Market women and their counterparts from the fishing community responded in large numbers to the gong-gong summons of *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III early in the morning on 28 October 1931.¹⁸¹ He forbade people to work and encouraged them to be on the streets to show their contempt for the proposed income tax measure.¹⁸² The usual noisy attitude that marked agitated groups such as these was much in evidence. They hurled stones at cars driven by European residents, and destroyed public property such as lamp post fixtures.¹⁸³ The men among the

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁹ PRAAD Adm. 12/5/171: Confidential Dispatch from Northcote to Fiddian, 2 November 1931, 1.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/55: Dispatch from H. Pilgrim Morris, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Cape Coast, to the Colonial Secretary, 2 November 1931, enclosed in Slater to Cunliffe-Lister, 7 December 1931, 3.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

demonstrators, whom the colonial government referred to as “riff-raff” and “boat-boys,” vented their anger on the police station. This was referred to as a disgraceful attack.¹⁸⁴

The demonstrators then clashed with a police detachment that was on protection duty at the High Court.¹⁸⁵ It was after nearly eight hours that the gong-gongs were sounded again to end the violent resistance. Some of the close associates of the *Omanhin*, namely, Moore and Chief Sakyiama, persuaded the angry mob to repair to their homes. Although there were no life-threatening injuries, the open threat to the good order of the colony was serious. By all accounts, it was more frightening to the colonial administration than anything else.¹⁸⁶ As they were wont to do, senior colonial officers condemned *Omanhin* Mbra III. He was referred to as “the tool of W. E. G. Sekyi . . . a notorious extremist.”¹⁸⁷

The men and women who demonstrated were described as “hooligans” who in no way represented the general populace of the town. Although no one in Sekondi and Shama was prosecuted, thirteen demonstrators were arrested and processed for the courts in Cape Coast. Two were freed, two escaped from custody, eight were slapped with sentences of three months of hard labor each, and one was fined £5, in default of which

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁶ Shallof, “The Income Tax, Indirect Rule, and the Depression: The Gold Coast Riots of 1931,” 368.

¹⁸⁷ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/55: Dispatch from H. Pilgrim Morris, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Cape Coast, to the Colonial Secretary, 2 November 1931, enclosed in Slater to Cunliffe-Lister, 7 December 1931, 5.

he was to get one month of hard labor in prison.¹⁸⁸ Fearing a general spread of these violent resistance throughout the colony, Slater was compelled to authorize a postponement of the Income Tax Bill at an Executive Council meeting. At the same meeting, he agreed to consider the popular call for cuts in official salaries and allowances.¹⁸⁹ Discontented colonial officials variously referred to these actions as a “humiliating capitulation,” “an awful example of weakness,” and a “weak-willed surrender to the shouts of agitators.”¹⁹⁰ The violent resistance engendered the opinion among government officials that the response had been overly lenient. Although some thought that the forbearance of the police was a necessary means for restoring order, others saw it as an ill-advised show of weakness, which was an open invitation to others elsewhere in the colony to demonstrate. All of these added to the apprehensions of local colonial officers, who feared another outbreak of disturbances in Cape Coast.¹⁹¹

The 1932 Cape Coast Conflict

The tense situation that had been created in Cape Coast by Coker’s death never abated, but became even more serious. On 20 July 1932, against the background of mounting tension, the *Supi* of the *Ntsin Asafo* company applied to the district commissioner for a permit to allow him hold a ceremony in connection with the installation of company

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

captains. These had been elected within the previous ten or more years.¹⁹² The *Supi* attached a program that showed the principal features of the ceremony. These included the public exhibition of the captains of *Ntisin Asafo* company in a procession to be led by the *Tufuhin*, amidst firing of musketry, drumming, singing, and dancing.¹⁹³ In local parlance, this ceremony was called *Atiran*. It involved many activities, which cost a lot of money, not only for the individual captains involved, but for the company as a whole.¹⁹⁴ However, colonial officials had been consistent in denying permits to the *Ntsin* company for the ceremonial procession of its captains. Captain Lynch maintained this attitude, especially because the *Ntsin* company insisted on G. E. Moore parading with the group in his official capacity as *Tufuhin*. Captain Lynch also kept the acting secretary of native affairs, Skene, informed of events. This was all the more important because the latter was to return to the province as provincial commissioner, when he was relieved of his duty in the Secretariat.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59 Confidential Dispatches to the Secretary of State, 7 July 1933 to 19 December 1933; Enclosure 3 Schedule of Documents No. 1. Letter of A. B. Josiah, Supi, No. 3 Company to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, through Nana Mbra III, 20 July 1932, 6.

¹⁹³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to the Secretary of State, 5 July 1933 to 19 December 1933; Enclosure 3 Schedule of Documents No. 2 Amended Program of the installation of *Asafohin* of No. 3 Company, Cape Coast on the 16th, 17th, 19th and 24th of September, 1932, Signed by A. B. Josiah. Letter of A. B. Josiah, Supi, No. 3 Company to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, through Nana Mbra III, 20 July 1932, 9.

¹⁹⁴ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 16: Mr. J. C. DeGraft Johnson's Minute to Mr. Skene, August, 1932.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

This caused a flurry of correspondence between the *Omanhin* and the colonial officials. The infuriated *Omanhin* occasionally ignored the acting commissioner of the Central Province and dealt directly with the acting secretary of native affairs and the acting colonial secretary. On 12 September 1932, Captain Lynch wrote to the *Omanhin* to remind him about the findings of the *Tufuhin* inquiry. He drew particular attention to the fact that Moore was not one of the descendants of Kwamina Edu and was consequently ineligible to succeed to the office of *Tufuhin*. He pointed out that the procedure adopted for his alleged election and installation breached customary practice.¹⁹⁶ Lynch warned that Moore's participation in the intended ceremony would cause serious offence to a large portion of the public. The indeterminate nature of the company boundaries, he feared, would also make the situation precarious.¹⁹⁷

In a reply to the commissioner of the Central Province, *Omanhin* Mbra III sought to assuage his fears while rebuking him at the same time. He stated that five *Asafo* companies had unanimously agreed to give *Ntsin* free passage through their quarters. The *Omanhin* added that the commissioner of police, "the *Tufuhin*-elect," G. E. Moore, the *Supis*, and the captains of the companies had rehearsed their walk along the route to be traversed by the procession. This had been settled to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.¹⁹⁸ The *Omanhin* had a stern rebuke for the commissioner:

¹⁹⁶ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 7: Confidential Letter of Acting Commissioner of the Central Province to Nana Mbra III, 12 September 1932, 38.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 40.

With the foregoing facts, especially the fact that the five companies, whose quarters will be traversed by the *Ntsin* Company, have given the latter permission to pass with the Tufuhin G. E. Moore, I cannot imagine the grounds for your apprehension. And I should think that if you were dealing impartially in the matter, your duty should be to warn such person or persons who are bent on making mischief and to force him or them to enter into a bond. People who threaten a breach of peace are those who should be restrained and not those who like the *Ntsin* Company are peacefully disposed.

If on the face of the facts stated above, you insist upon refusing *Ntsin* Company that permit, we can only conclude that either certain people are working on your fears or you are encouraging them in their attitude to frustrate the function of the company. I should be glad to have an immediate reply to this letter as the company has undergone considerable expense in their preparation for this ceremony and it would be difficult to cancel the function.¹⁹⁹

The letter, which contained credible arguments, put the colonial government in the proverbial bind between the devil and the deep blue sea. And, if this pressure from the *Omanhin* Party was not enough, the Coker Party also remained adamant. Coker's sister, as the representative of the Coker family, and the *Supi* of the *Bentsir* company did not budge in their refusal to recognize Moore and took steps to resist the *Omanhin*'s determination to have him recognized as *Tufuhin* through the *Atiran* ceremony of the *Ntsin Asafo* company.²⁰⁰ They protested against the parading of Moore in the streets of Cape Coast, and warned that if it was not prevented by the colonial government, there would be a serious breach of the peace. This was because acquiescing in the public parade of Moore in the streets in front of a company of which he was not a member

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 6: Affidavit of Nancy Coker, September, 1932, 2.

would mean giving tacit recognition to him as *Tufuhin*.²⁰¹ The Coker Party reiterated that because the government did not recognize Moore as *Tufuhin*, it would be unconstitutional for him to go in front of the *Ntish Asafo* company. The *Supi* of the *Bentsir Asafo* company warned that it would be an act of great provocation to the him and his members, as well as their allies in the villages of Queen Anne's Point or Ekon, Amamoma, Apewosika, Kwesi Ibra, Kwakusyiabima, and that was sure to spark a disturbance.²⁰²

The complex politics of Southern Gold Coast made things difficult for Skene, who was by then acting as the secretary of native affairs in Accra.²⁰³ Cape Coast, under his administration had seen a major violent resistance following the Gold Coast Income Tax proposal of 1931; and Skene wanted very much to prevent yet another disturbing situation. He therefore decided to manage this one at the local level and if possible keep his superiors out of it. Too much trouble during his tenure was certainly not good for him as a colonial officer.²⁰⁴ His experiences in Cape Coast helped him understand the unavoidable clash in light of the issue at hand. Skene saw his temporary absence from the town as a godsend opportunity. He loathed the idea of violence breaking out on his watch

²⁰¹ Ibid., 3.

²⁰² PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 13: Grounds of Protest; enclosed in No. 12, Letter of Kwesi Sekyi, Acting for the *Supi* of the *Bentsir* (No. 1) *Asafo* Company, to Secretary of Native Affairs, 13 September 1932, 1.

²⁰³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 20: Extracts from Confidential Diary on Cape Coast District for the month of September, 1932, 15.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

as the commissioner of the Central Province while stationed in Cape Coast.²⁰⁵ The dilemma in which he found himself was reflected in contradictory statements he made to a pair of officers in the Central Province. When he was in Accra to attend a session of the Legislative Council, he told Captain Lynch that he might issue a permit to the *Ntsin Asafo* company with the understanding that Moore would take no part in the procession.²⁰⁶ Lynch brought the *Omanhin*'s original letter with him and discussed it with Skene. Bewes, the acting deputy provincial commissioner of the Central Province, stationed in Cape Coast, was also informed that a permit might be issued for the *Ntsin Asafo* company to hold their ceremony and to exhibit Moore in an official capacity in their own quarter. This was communicated to Dawson, the acting district commissioner.²⁰⁷ And Dawson made a phone call to Captain Lynch, who was still in Accra for confirmation. Lynch replied that he had not been consulted on the matter, but if that was the acting secretary of native affairs' advice, it should be carried out. Skene hoped that the worst would be over by the time he returned to Cape Coast, thus shielding himself from blame.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 16.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁰⁷ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 21: Mr. Bewes' Note to Mr. Dawson recording the instructions received from Mr. C. E. Skene, 15.

²⁰⁸ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to Secretary of State for Colonies, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933, Enclosure 1 in Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33. Report by the Hon. Mr. Justice J. Aitken into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast.

The two factions got to know about these separate instructions and tempers began to rise. The impending trouble caused an “epidemic of agitation” in Cape Coast.²⁰⁹ In the closing days of September 1932, large reinforcement of police detachments were sent to the Central Province in preparation for the likelihood of a fight. They were quartered in Elmina, Saltpond, and Winneba. These detachments were put on alert to proceed to Cape Coast at any time, given the tensed situation.²¹⁰ Even though Skene had given instructions for the permit to be issued, the acting district commissioner still tried to forestall any untoward action. He informed the *Supi* of *Ntsin* that the permit would be issued only on condition that the company either confined the performance of the ceremony to their quarter or proceeded with Moore as an ordinary man, if they wished to pass through the quarters of *Anafo*, *Nkum*, *Abrofonkoa*, *Akrampa*, and *Amanfur Asafo* companies. The acting district commissioner added that a parade that practically embraced the whole of the town and involving an official display of any person whose position was a matter in dispute posed a threat to the public peace.²¹¹ The *Omanhin* insisted that the indigenous Cape Coast constitution stipulated that the *Tufuhin* was responsible to him and the *Oman* for the conduct of the companies. It was, therefore, not his intention to keep him (Moore) from his proper place in such an important

²⁰⁹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 21: Mr. Bewes’ Note to Mr. Dawson recording the instructions received from Mr. C. E. Skene, 16.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹¹ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 27: Letter from Acting District Commissioner, Cape Coast, to Nana Mbra III, *Omanhin* of Oguaa, 20 September 1932, 16.

ceremony.²¹² It became clear that the *Omanhin* had spoken his mind, and that any further discussion on the issue would be unproductive. The imperatives of security and that of customary practice presented difficult administrative problem for the colonial officers.

On 26 September, the much-delayed permit for the celebration of the *Atiran* ceremony was issued after the signing of the requisite bond.²¹³ This was very much to the relief of the *Omanhin* party and unfortunately to the chagrin of the Coker party. By this bond, Alfred Donald Dawson, acting district commissioner of Cape Coast, gave permission to the *Ntsin Asafo* company of Cape Coast to exhibit company flags and emblems, and to fire guns on the occasion of the installation of their new *Asafohinfo* (captains) on Friday, 30 September; Saturday, 1 October; Monday, 3 October; Tuesday, 4 October; Thursday, 6 October; Friday, 7 October; and Saturday, 8 October.²¹⁴ The procession on 1 October was to follow a prescribed route, specifically, from Aboom Wells, Kotokoraba Road, Jerusalem Street, Lighthouse Road, Jackson Street (via the Bread and Fruit Market) to Papratem, Ntsin Street, Ashanti Road, Governor Rowe Road back to Kotokoraba and then to the headquarters of the company.²¹⁵ The route described

²¹² PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 7: Letter of Omanhin Mbra III to Acting Commissioner of the Central Province, 12 September 1932, 14.

²¹³ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 28: Form 3, Bond by . . . Application for Permission to Celebrate Native Custom or Exhibit Company Flags, Section 13, 10.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

in the permit was entirely confined to the quarter of the *Ntsin Asafo* company.²¹⁶ On 28 September, captains of the *Bentsir Asafo* company went to see the district commissioner and were shown the flags that the *Ntsin* company proposed to exhibit. They were also informed about the proposed route for the procession; the *Bentsir* company raised no objections.²¹⁷ *Atiran*, as already intimated, was a ceremony that involved great expenditure both for the company, in general, and the elected captains, in particular. It was customary for the elected captains to make a large provision of alcohol for the rites and the entertainment of the entire company.²¹⁸ On the night of 30 September, the *Ntsin* company kept vigil at the beach, played drums, and sang songs. Those who were skillful and knew how to do the intricate *Asafo* dance did so to the admiration of the gathering amidst much drinking and contagious camaraderie.²¹⁹

When the procession started at 9 A.M. or thereabouts the next day, it did not include Moore. The procession commenced under the supervision of the police.²²⁰

²¹⁶ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 42: Letter from Lynch and Dawson, District Commissioner and Assistant District Commissioner, respectively, to the Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast, 19 November 1932.

²¹⁷ PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 33: Letter from Acting Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast, to the Hon. Secretary of Native Affairs, Victoriaborg, Accra, 2 October 1932, 14.

²¹⁸ J. C. DeGraft Johnson, "The Fanti Asafu," *Africa* 5, no.3 (1932): 322.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/243: Letter from G. A. S. Northcote, Acting Governor to Right Honorable Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, 14 October 1932. See also letter from Acting Commissioner of the Central Province to the Hon. Secretary of Native Affairs, Victoriaborg, Accra, 2 October 1932, 10.

Moore subsequently joined the procession in his supposed capacity as *Tufuhin*. This got to the *Bentsir Asafo* company (apparently through a few of their spies who were scouting the procession). Their captains quickly warned the local colonial officers and the police that they would have great difficulty restraining the more turbulent members of their company from causing a riot if Moore remained at the head of the procession while it passed down Jackson Street.²²¹ The captains of the *Bentsir Asafo* company explained that although that street was included in the permit, it ran through territories claimed by both companies.²²² A section of the Coker Party got ready to fire on Moore, if he was found in the procession as it passed down Jerusalem Street. They had enlisted the help of the boisterous members of the fishing community in the *Bentsir Asafo* company. They armed themselves and occupied various strategic points to attack the procession—and defend their quarters.²²³

In order to avert the imminent danger, the commissioner of police tried to divert the procession away from Jackson Street through another lane.²²⁴ With just about seventy police men, it was practically impossible for him to get the consent of the company, whose conduct at the time had been made unmanageable by the excitement of

²²¹ Ibid., 11.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 13.

²²⁴ Ibid.

company custom, and with “rum inside them.”²²⁵ Not even the threat of forfeiture of a £500 peace bond could restrain and help divert the over 350 swaggering *Ntsin Asafo* company young men and their captains from their intended route and the looming danger.²²⁶ The other side of the aggressive *Asafo* spirit was in full play. Their pride and bravery urged them on and they responded by surging forward. And because meekness was not their style, they boldly hurled barbed insults at their enemies.²²⁷ The local colonial officers and the police had virtually lost control over the situation. When the procession reached the intersection of the Jackson Street and the Lighthouse Hill, where the company boundaries met, Moore was still at the head of the procession in his capacity as *Tufuhin*.

The presence of certain women in the procession also aggravated the situation. Their taunts, barbed insults, and innuendoes conveyed a clear message to the *Bentsir Asafo* company.²²⁸ The *Bentsir* company could not contain the situation any longer and the first gun went off, signaling the beginning of an open assault. This dispersed the procession; the men of the *Ntsin* took cover and fired back.²²⁹ There was general gunfire

²²⁵ Ibid., 14.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/234: Schedule of Documents No. 43: Letter from Hon. Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast, to Hon. Colonial Secretary, Victoriaborg, Accra, 19 November 1932, 18.

²²⁹ Ibid.

throughout the *Bentsir* quarter. The intensity of the shooting lasted for about thirty minutes and then became sporadic for about two hours.²³⁰ Attempts to persuade the men to disperse were unsuccessful, so the commissioner of police ordered his men to clear the streets by force. Neither the *Omanhin* nor his elders gave any assistance in suppressing the fight and the consequences were severe.²³¹

All told, five men lost their lives. Twenty-eight men and women were wounded.²³² Given the widespread use of guns, the colonial authorities declared a search for arms.²³³ For this purpose, a company from the Royal West African Frontier Force was posted at Cape Coast to cordon off areas that the police were to comb for arms. A systematic house to house search was carried out and a considerable number of weapons were retrieved.²³⁴ The Force began to arrest people known or suspected of being responsible for the clash. Rumor was rife that yet more troops had arrived and that the colonial government was determined to arrest as many culprits as possible. This was to serve as a deterrent against further clashes; and help curtail the incessant *Asafo* clashes

²³⁰ PRAAD Adm. 11/1/222: Letter from Acting Commissioner of the Central Province to the Hon. Secretary of Native Affairs, Victoriaborg, Accra, 2 October 1932, 1.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

and resistance to government authority in Cape Coast.²³⁵ These clashes had become an increasing source of embarrassment to local colonial officers. Nearly all the men and women who were involved in the clash had good reason to avoid being picked up by the police. A number fled with the retreating companies to outlying villages, most of which were situated some distance from the law. Some braved the situation by remaining in the town, but not without taking precautions, such as taking refuge in houses other than their own. Some of the fishermen fled to sea in their canoes, sailing away from trouble with the law.²³⁶ Yet, the police had a field day apprehending those who turned themselves in, as well as those whose hideouts were revealed by informants. Overall, about 475 men and women were placed in jail. Many of them, however, gave themselves up to the police and admitted taking part in the fight.²³⁷ In the trial that followed, the chief justice had to arrange for additional police magistrates to be posted to Cape Coast to assist in the disposal of cases. One significant arrest was that of George Moore, who was charged with disobeying the conditions stipulated by the district commissioner in the permit granted to the *Ntsin Asafo* company.²³⁸

The correspondence among colonial officials after the 1932 conflict painted *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III and his councilors as security threats who should be dealt in the

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid., 11.

²³⁷ Ibid. See also PRAAD Adm. 11/1/435: letter from Acting Commissioner of the Central Province to the Hon. Secretary of Native Affairs, Victoriaborg, Accra, 2 October 1932, 2.

²³⁸ Ibid.

same way as *Omanhin* Aggery.²³⁹ They were accused of a consistent willful misunderstanding of the instructions regarding Moore's participation. The *Omanhin* also, in his report after the clash, accused local colonial officers of exhibiting double standards.²⁴⁰ Moore had exercised the functions of his office as *Tufuhin* on many public occasions. He led the procession at the Empire Day celebrations that paraded about the town, including the *Bentsir Asafo* company's quarter.²⁴¹ At the all-important funeral of J. P. Brown in that same year, Moore, as *Tufuhin*, was in charge of six companies and the procession passed through Jackson Street, Chapel Square, and, again, *Bentsir's* quarters to the cemetery. *Omanhin* Mbra III questioned the government's duplicity in which Moore was allowed to appear on some occasions as *Tufuhin* and forbidden as such in others.²⁴²

The local colonial officers intimated that the attitude of the *Omanhin* towards the government, as reflected in his letters and bearing, ranged from passive insolence to open resistance. He had arrogated to himself and a small cabal of councilors the control of Cape Coast affairs, without consulting the other persons who were entitled by customary

²³⁹ S.N.A. File No. 5: Sub. File No. 470 C.S.O. 21/21/56 Relations between Oguua State and Government, Central Province Confidential, From Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast to the Governor, Accra, 22 October 1932, 5.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

law to have a voice in the administration of the town.²⁴³ His small coterie was made up entirely of members of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, who resolutely resisted any measure suggested by the government, apparently as a matter of principle. Furthermore, they continually suborned chiefs, and by means of threats, falsehoods, and half-truths attempted to usurp control of the town's affairs.²⁴⁴ *Omanhin* Kojo Mbra III was further accused of throwing himself wholeheartedly into this camp, ignoring his responsibility as a natural ruler; and being content to accept the subversive orders of the conservative executive committee of the Society.²⁴⁵ They were also suspected of being responsible for the writing of his official letters.²⁴⁶ *Omanhin* Mbra III was also accused of instigating the demonstrations against the Income Tax Bill in October 1931, which resulted in a disgraceful attack upon the police station and Europeans in Cape Coast.²⁴⁷

In view of these accusations against the *Omanhin*, the colonial government considered deposing him by means of special legislation.²⁴⁸ As a complete solution, he was to be deported, along with those councilors who had openly resisted government authority. The government observed, however, that the difficulty in handling that group

²⁴³ Ibid., 7.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 9.

would be the lack of incriminating acts of subversion, because they had always hidden behind the *Omanhin*. Alternatively, colonial government officials hoped that the removal of *Omanhin* Mbra III would create constitutional problems in Cape Coast that could play to the administration's advantage. They were certain that if he was removed, no other candidate presented by the royal family would be acceptable to the councilors.²⁴⁹ This was sure to create an impasse leading to the automatic legal closing of the indigenous Cape Coast tribunal after a year's interregnum; whereupon the district commissioner would assume its duties. None of these could be implemented because it was sure to make it obvious that the colonial government was being vindictive in view of the recurrent resistance to its efforts in Cape Coast.

Conclusion

The provisions of the Order-in-Council 1925 did not go down well with the educated elite. Their formal resistance to this was led by the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. They submitted the Petition of 1926 to the colonial government in resistance to the Order-in-Council. The colonial government debunked it and went ahead to implement the new Legislative Council. In Cape Coast, this led to a split: The reformists and the conformists. The Cape Coast Rate Payers' Association, headed by *Tufuhin* Coker, elected K. A. Korsah as municipal member for Cape Coast. All the Asafo companies of Cape Coast except *Bentsir* declared *Tufuhin* Coker deposed (for his role in the election) at the instigation of the *Omanhin* and his councillors. Mr. G. E. Moore's election as *Tufuhin* was resisted. The Commission of Inquiry report did not diffuse the tension but influenced the formation of what could be called the Coker supporters and the *Omanhin* supporters.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

Practically everyone in Cape Coast came to belong to one side or the other. Accusations of partiality against the local political officers did not go down well with the central administration. Meanwhile the financial needs of the colonial government predisposed it to seek the co-operation of the chiefs in its efforts to introduce direct taxation. This created a complex situation on the ground for the colonial administration. The situation became volatile when, notwithstanding Coker's demise his supporters refused to recognize Moore as *Tufuhin*. Events in other places in the Gold Coast added to the pressure and tension on the colonial administration to be concerned about keeping peace, law, and order. These included violent resistance to the 1931 income tax measure and other clashes within the Saltpond district.

Back in Cape Coast, the permit granted to *Ntsin Asafo* company to hold the Atiran ceremony aggravated an already tensed situation. The senior police officer in granting the permit was aware of the risk of a fight breaking out considering the explosive political situation in Cape Coast. His efforts to avert disturbance failed and Cape Coast was plunged into a turbulent riot. The 1932 riot was significant given the nature of the development that led to its outbreak. The colonial officers did all in their power—imposing restrictions and limitations on the procession—to avert the outbreak of a clash, yet the Asafo had their own way. These events underscored some of the problems of the colonial administration: the dilemma of a political officer caught in the crossfire of unbending colonial policy and the determination of traditional political authority. The degree of resistance to colonial authority in this scenario was remarkable. It was symptomatic of the contempt in which the colonial government was held for its handling of the impasse. The aggrieved section in Cape Coast wrote official letters of protest, used

demonstrations and took advantage of the indecision and inaction of local colonial officers to resist the government.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored the various means and mechanisms by which communities of coastal Southern Gold Coast—through their indigenous social and political organizations—attempted to resist the colonial government in its efforts to control everyday life and entrench itself. In some instances, they acted on their own. In situations that were beyond their abilities—cases where legalities and the navigation of the complex colonial bureaucracy were required—they collaborated with their Western-educated compatriots. They also drew on their cultural practices, exploited conflict situations, and took advantage of the indecision and inaction of local colonial officers. Together they openly resisted the colonial administration through demonstrations, discussions with government through delegations, newspaper articles and editorials, and official letters of protest. All of these were done in response to colonial government policies and actions regarding encroachment on chiefly authority, regulation of everyday life, the Crown Lands Bill and the controversial 1932 Municipal Council elections.

In the late nineteenth century, the nascent British authority, desirous of expanding its power, was quick to disregard the stipulations of bonds, treaties, and cooperative agreements that they had signed with the people of Southern Gold Coast. The jurisdiction of the newly created British courts, which was originally limited to cases involving Englishmen on the Southern Gold Coast shoreline, was expanded to include cases involving ordinary indigenous men and women. Eventually kings, chiefs, and other leaders of the indigenous political institutions were hauled before British courts.

By the early twentieth century, the establishment of British courts deepened the assault on the authority of kings and chiefs, pushing them into the background and

leading to the emergence of a central government controlled by the British. Roger Gockings, in his expatiation of what he calls “linking different judicial traditions” and “linking different legal systems,” observes that “with increasing frequency many of the cases that came before the courts involved issues in which customary law and English common law were in competition with each other; and it seemed as though one legal system had to supersede the other.”¹ This dissertation has shown that this process came at a high cost for the custodians of traditional law, as they fiercely resisted it by writing official letters of protest, holding discussions with government and also by defying some of its rulings. To curtail this resistance, the British administration used military and police force. Although the British colonial administration was established in spasms of alternation between the British government and British merchants, it is pertinent to observe that government’s tools—military and police force—remained constant. Yet, there was constant resistance by the people of coastal Southern Gold Coast. The colonial authorities had their way in some instances, but it was different in other situations. This lends credence to Terence Ranger’s proposition that although colonialism can be seen as a single system, it was also “a giddy variety of existentialist experience.”² Kings and other prominent political figures were penalized with exile for their resistance to the emerging system either through acting on their own, or in collaboration with the Western-educated elite. And that was the ultimate strategy of the British colonial administration in

¹ Roger S. Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana’s Coastal Communities under Colonial Rule* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 219.

² T. O. Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern and Central Africa, 1890–1970: The Beni Ngoma* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 2.

their African possessions for dealing with allegedly treacherous individuals, and indigenous rulers in particular.

Colonialism unleashed an officious bureaucratic regime; and although kings, chiefs, and ordinary men and women had their own ways of resisting colonialism, by and large, it became obvious that to resist it on all fronts they had to be able to fight within the official culture. The Western educated elite were able to facilitate this. Thus, this dissertation proved that Western education did not cause those who had it to neglect or forsake the ordinary men and women who did not. Although Gocking did not specifically refer to the cooperation between the Western-educated elite and the uneducated in resistance to colonial rule at the local level, he at least acknowledged the fact that Western education did not occasion a neglect of the uneducated. The Western-educated elite, he argues, were never cut off geographically from their places of origin.³ Referring to Ranger's investigation of the invention of customary law in British colonies, Gocking opines that Western-educated Africans in the Gold Coast took advantage of their links to their own societies to manipulate and modify its institutions (e.g., the *Asafo* and chieftaincy) to suit their purposes.⁴ This cannot be denied, in view of the complexity of human motives. However, this dissertation demonstrated that the Western-educated elite participated in the indigenous political institutions, particularly the *Asafo*, on the basis of the patrilineal associations and lineages in their various communities in coastal Southern Gold Coast.

³ Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

Most of the ordinary men and women in coastal Southern Gold Coast lived in their own world, influenced by their environment and occupation. In these coastal communities, most people were involved in the *Asafo*. Its concept of bravery, group pride, and militancy added fuel to the resistance during the period under investigation. With a propensity for intergroup conflict due to their operational dynamics, *Asafo* participation in resistance to the colonial government policies and actions led to old local conflicts being pursued within that context. Likewise, the *Asafo* and *Ebusua* systems, as important aspects of Southern Gold Coast maritime culture, represented unique manifestations of the idea of the complementary roles of gender among coastal Akan communities. This did not, however, rule out tensions because these two indigenous concepts dealt with issues of identity, belongingness, inheritance, rights, and their attendant responsibilities. Thus, the *Asafo* and *Ebusua* systems often presented a point of convergence for social conflicts because of their differing orientations. For example, the *Asafo* united men and women with their fathers' brothers and fathers' sisters, which often created conflict between mothers' brothers and mothers' sisters, and, curiously, between mothers and their children. Thus, while enforcing patrilineal group solidarity, the *Asafo* weakened matrilineal kinsmen and created conflicts among them. Yet, these two systems worked to hold the society together by ensuring that everybody was catered for along matrilineal lines.

The colonial government policy on land was resisted. In Southern Gold Coast, land was seen as a cultural and religious resource beyond its economic and political significance. The protracted resistance to the Crown Lands Bill by the Southern Gold Coast led by the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, based in Cape Coast, illustrated

the cultural and religious significance of land. Unlike elsewhere in East Africa and Southern Africa, where people mainly resorted to gun battles and guerilla warfare, the resistance in Southern Gold Coast involved protests, demonstrations, policy withdrawal and revisions, delegations holding discussions with the Colonial Office, use of newspaper editorials, and the submission of petitions. The people of the Gold Coast, led by the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, exploited all the opportunities and processes available to them, eventually leading to the abandonment of the Crown Lands Bill.

The colonial administration was often accused of bias in disputes involving indigenous parties. These accusations appeared credible in situations where colonial officers were seen as equivocating—or even confused—when they were expected to act swiftly and resolutely. More often than not, it made the administration seem weak. For the people of Cape Coast, as with most of Southern Gold Coast, resistance to colonial rule, its institutions, and everything it stood for created the idea that modern government was an entity that should be held in great suspicion. *Aban wo twuw n'adze wonnsua no bi* (the institution of modern government is an unbearable burden that must be dragged and treated with contempt. It must not be worshipped or adored in anyway) was an adage that developed as a result of that experience. This attitude to modern government, in essence, was corroborated by Governor Slater, albeit in a different context. He observed that “education on European lines” had led to an “era of sophistication” that had “aggrandized the commoner at the expense of the influence of the local chief.”⁵ Consequently, this train of events had encouraged “both a democratic outlook, restiveness and the negation

⁵ Ibid.

of native ideas of Government.”⁶ Indeed, the recurrent resistance to colonial rule through demonstrations, official letters of protests, exploiting the indecision and inaction of local colonial officials, to the extent that this work has shown, amounted to a negative attitude towards government. The nature of colonial power and authority, as well as the creation of a professional standing army and police force at the disposal of the colonial administration, was different from what the people of coastal Southern Ghana were used to. The processes and stages by which this happened were seen as clandestine and a betrayal by most people in Southern Gold Coast because of the manner in which it was carried out. The British broke treaties and bonds of friendship to suit their convenience. Interaction with Europeans in general, and the British in particular, was initially conceptualized in Southern Gold Coast as a simple alliance and the cooperation of equals. This was formalized by the signing of treaties and bonds, most of which turned out to have different meanings for the parties involved. For example, although the British saw bonds and treaties as claims to power over indigenous coastal communities, these communities, as stated earlier, saw them as expressions of friendship between equals. The administration quickly violated the treaties and bonds and commenced a subtle encroachment on the power and authority of the indigenous political system. These actions amounted to a betrayal that caused people of coastal Southern Gold Coast to be suspicious of the colonial government, and they responded by resisting nearly every plan, policy, or action of the emerging colonial establishment. This they did both by acting on their own and in collaboration with their Western educated compatriots. Together they demonstrated, sent delegations to hold discussions with government, resisted through

⁶ Ibid.

newspaper articles and editorials, and also wrote official letters of protests. In the indigenous political system there was transparency and aggrieved individuals had avenues through which they could seek redress. In the pre-colonial system, when things became critical, individuals or groups could empower themselves and take control. As these pre-colonial modes of resistance became inadmissible in the new system, it gave the people of Cape Coast cause for alarm. And because the colonial system proved adamant, it opened itself up to resistance.

The resistance that the colonial administration had to endure was rampant in coastal Southern Gold Coast, particularly in Cape Coast. As a result, colonial political officers branded the town and its people as the most difficult to deal in the colony. The people's attitude towards government measures and policies was said to be critical and unhelpful. This deepened the anti-government feeling in Cape Coast. Despite attempts by local colonial officers to diffuse the resistance and regain the confidence of the people, the situation did not improve. The 1932 *Asafo* clash in Cape Coast constituted an occasion to exploit conflict to resist colonial authority. The belligerent *Asafo* companies drew on their past internal conflicts and antagonisms in order to refuse cooperation with local colonial officers. The colonial government had had its way with so many things (e.g., the use of the police and military to regulate their daily lives), and for so long, that the *Asafo* saw the looming clash in 1932 as an opportunity to have things *their* way. The action amounted to the pursuit of internal conflicts within the contest of resistance to colonial rule. On this occasion the *Asafo* resisted by taking advantage of the indecision and inaction of local political officers by going ahead with the parade that led to a fight.

In his discussion of the cultural interaction between “Anglicization” and “Akanization” in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Gold Coast, Gocking indicates that he moved “beyond a focus on the form and force of protest to colonial rule.”⁷ With an emphasis on modes of resistance (i.e., the means and mechanisms that coastal Southern Ghana communities adopted to express their disapproval of the manner in which the colonial government and its officers interfered with everyday life), this dissertation took a different approach. Rather than giving prominence to the Western-educated elite, it focused on the role played by ordinary men and women, organized through indigenous social and political institutions. This method of resistance offers us an opportunity to appreciate the importance of group action when we consider the importance of ordinary people in history. Whereas Gocking’s discussion of “Anglicization” and “Akanization,” with an emphasis on the role of the Western educated, denied us a complete understanding of the complexities of the two processes.

The resistance of the people of Southern Gold Coast to the British colonial government raises the need for a reconsideration of the rigid resistor-collaborator dichotomy, not only in the history of Gold Coast, but elsewhere in Africa. In the narrative of reactions to colonial rule in Southern Gold Coast, the Ashanti have always been seen as fierce resisters, whereas the Fanti and other coastal peoples have been tagged as collaborators.⁸ The present work demonstrates that Fanti responses to colonial rule were

⁷ Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*, 6.

⁸ Robert O. Collins, ed., *Historical Problems of Imperial Africa* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2000), 57–100. See also Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

more diverse and complex than the resistor-collaborator paradigm would have us believe. Relationships of collaboration and resistance had their own complex nuances. Thus, the alleged Fanti collaboration with the colonial system must be discussed within the context of the recurrent resistance (as discussed in this dissertation).

In the examination of the means and mechanisms which coastal Southern Gold Coast communities used to express disapproval of the manner in which the colonial government and its officers interfered with everyday life, this dissertation did the following: It reiterated that the chiefs and people of coastal Akan societies of Southern Gold Coast acted on their own. They also cooperated with their Western-educated compatriots, exploited internal conflicts as well as the indecision and inaction of colonial officers in their resistance to colonial rule. In addition the people of Southern Gold Coast openly resisted the colonial administration through demonstrations, discussions with government through official delegations, indigenous Asafo parades, use of newspapers editorials, and official letters of protest. These these modes of resistance were utilized to deal with events and issues in Southern Gold Coast. These included: questioning of British authority by indigenous chiefs, attempt by the colonial government to take over “waste lands,” and the controversial 1932 Municipal Council elections.

1984), 83–110; Albert Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

Aberewatia *Aberewa* = old woman; *tia* = short. Thus, *Aberewatia* is the oldest surviving woman, who is usually bent over and short. She is reputed to be wise and knowledgeable.

Asafo *Asa* = war; *fo* = people. *Asafo* denotes the indigenous Akan political and military organizations responsible for the protection and defense of their respective societies. To this end, it emphasizes bravery among members. Consequently, *Asafo* groups encouraged confrontation, conflict, and competition among themselves. As a patrilineal organization, every man, woman, or youth joined their father's group. Among the coastal Akan, the base of the *Asafo* organization was made up of fishermen and women.

Asafo Akomfo *Asafo* priests and priestesses

Asafoatse *Asafo* leader

Asafohinfo Leaders of the *Asafo* groups

Asikanmba *Asikan* = sword or knives; *mba* = people. *Asikanmba* therefore means "sword/knife people."

Asomdwee nsa Peace drink

Atiran A kind of initiation and parading ceremony of new leaders of the *Asafo* companies. It involved a considerable expenditure on the part of the new individual leaders and the entire company.

Bombaa Whip wielders

Don Nkron 9 a.m.

Eban Herring

Ebusua The system among the Akan in which individual identity, belongingness, inheritance, rights, and responsibilities are determined along one's mother's line. The word also refers to the various groups into which the Akan divide this system. There are seven principal groups: *Nsona*, *Bretuo-Twidan*, *Konna-Ebiradzi*, *Anona*, *Aduana-Aboradzi*, *Ntwea*, and *Adwindadze*.

Ebusuafie *Ebusua* house

Ebusuahinmaa *Ebusua* queen mother

Ebusuahin *Ebusua* chief

Ebusuakuw *Ebusua* groups

Ebusuampanyinfo Council of elders and honorable representatives of the *Ebusua*

Ebusuapanyin *Ebusua* elder

Essuem Midnight

Ewuranom Lords and masters

Frankaakitanyi *Frankaa* = flag; *kitanyi* = bearer; thus, *frankaakitanyi* means bearer of the flag

Kwatekyirefo Wearers of the feather hats

Kyirema Divine drummer

Maritime culture The worldview, thoughts, and expressions of the people of coastal Southern Gold Coast that enabled them to function as masters of their communities near the sea.

Matrilineal A sociocultural system among the Akan of Southern Gold Coast in which identity, belongingness, inheritance, rights, and responsibilities were determined along one's mother's line.

Mmomomme Female form of spiritual warfare

Nananom Ancestors

Obrempong A title given to a man of great and evident wealth, which usually translated into political power. *Obrempong* literally means the greatest among the rich and famous. *Abrempong* is the plural form of Obrempong.

Oman State, nation, people, and/or land ruled by a king, chief, queen mother, or other leaders of the indigenous political establishment among the Akan.

Omanhin *Oman* = state, nation, people, or land' *Ohin* = king or chief. *Omanhin* therefore means king of the state, nation, people, or land. The plural form is *Amanhin*.

Patrilineal A sociocultural system among the Akan of Southern Gold Coast in which identity, belongingness, inheritance, rights, and responsibilities were determined along one's father's line.

Po Sea

Supifo Supreme leaders of the *Asafo* groups

Tufuhin *Tu* = gun; *fu* = people; *hin* = king or leader; *Tufuhin* therefore means king or leader of the gun-bearers.

Wawa White wood

Wiiwiriw Red fish

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Archival Material / Documents

The National Archives, United Kingdom of Great Britain

PRO CO 267 / 36: Letter of Maclean to the Committee of Merchants.

PRO CO 96 / 22: Letter of James Bannerman to Earl Grey, Cape Coast Castle, 14 January 1851.

PRO CO 96/665/10: Petition to King George V from the Asafoi of Accra, 9 May 1925.

PRO CO 96/654/18836: Memorandum by the Secretary of Native Affairs (SNA), 4 April 1925.

PRO CO 96/655/32858: Inspector General of Police versus Asafoatse Djator and Others. Record of Proceedings in the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast Colony, Eastern Province, 27 June 1925.

PRO CO 96/94: Preamble to the Fanti Confederation Scheme of 1872.

PRO CO 96/72: Petition of King Aggery, Cape Coast, September 1866, enclosed in Blackall to Carnarvon, Sierra Leone, 17 October 1866.

Public Record Administration and Archives Department (PRAAD), Accra

PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to the Secretary of State, 5 July 1932–December 1933.

PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1473: Letter of Omanhin Codjoe Imbra to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, 31 December 1904.

PRAAD Adm. 11/1/1634: Cape Coast Stool Enquiry.

PRAAD Adm. 12/3/58 Tufuhin Enquiry, 1929.

Gold Coast 1926A: The Gold Coast: A Review of the Events of 1925–1926 and the Prospects of 1926–1927.

Gold Coast 1926B: Report on the Objection Lodged with the Colonial Secretary against the Application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924 to the Town of Accra, with enclosures including Minutes of Evidence. Session Papers, No. 1, 1925–1926.

- Gold Coast 1926C: Report on the Enquiry held by the Honorable C. W. Welman, Secretary for Native Affairs on a Commission by His Excellency the Governor issued under the Commissions of Enquiry Ordinance, dated 26 February 1925. Session Paper, No. 10, 1925–1926.
- PRAAD Adm. 23/1/435: Letter from Acting Deputy Director of Health, Accra to the Hon. A. F. E. Fieldgate, Esq., Commissioner, Central Province, Cape Coast, 27 September 1943.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to the Secretary of State, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: The Hon Justice J. Aitken, Report by . . . into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast. Enclosure 1 in Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Summary of Notes on the Petition of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, 28 September 1926.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letters of Governor Guggisberg to the Right Honorable L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 9 November 1926– 14 July 1927; 21 April 1927.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/45: Letter of H. S. Newlands, Acting Secretary of Native Affairs to the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, MP, Secretary of State for Colonies.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Confidential Dispatches to Secretary of State for Colonies, 5 July 1933 to 29 December 1933, Enclosure 1 in Gold Coast Confidential of 30.11.33. Report by the Hon. Mr. Justice J. Aitken into certain charges of official misconduct preferred against Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner, Gold Coast.
- S.N.A. File No. 322/31: Sub File No. 1 C.S.O. 21/21/48 Narkwa-Ekumpuano Riot, 28 September 1931.
- S.N.A. File No. 1414 / 31/ 11 S. 1 and 1414 /31 / 18: Stool Disturbances in Cape Coast, Enquiry dated November–December, 1931.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/54: Letter from Governor Sir Ransford Slater to Lord Passfield, 16 August 1931.
- PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59 Confidential Dispatches to the Secretary of State, 5 July 1933 to 19 December 1933; Enclosure 3 Schedule of Documents No. 2 Amended Program of the installation of *Asafohin* of No. 3 Company, Cape Coast on the 16th, 17th, 19th and 24th of September 1932, Signed by A. B. Josiah. Letter of A. B. Josiah, Supi, No. 3 Company to the District Commissioner, Cape Coast, through Nana Mbra III, 20 July 1932.
- Judgment Book, SCT 5/6/3, 28 July 1926–17 January 1934: Decision of Woolhouse Bannerman—Re: Election of a Municipal Member, 28 November 1928.

PRAAD Adm. 12/3/59: Schedule of Documents No. 33: Letter from Acting Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast, to the Hon. Secretary of Native Affairs, Victoriaborg, Accra, 2 October 1932.

S.N.A. File No. 5: Sub. File No. 470 C.S.O. 21/21/56 Relations between Oguaa State and Government, Central Province Confidential, From Mr. C. E. Skene, Provincial Commissioner of the Central Province, Cape Coast to the Governor, Accra, 22 October 1932.

Newspapers

Ahuma, Attoh. "The Gold Coast Youth." *Gold Coast Aborigines*, 3 April 1899.

Coker, W. Z. "The Truth about the Cape Coast Municipal Election." *Gold Coast Leader*, September, 1928.

Editorial. "Already Burdened." *Gold Coast Independent*, April 1930.

Editorial. "ARPS Mission Statement." *Gold Coast Express*, 22 April 1897.

Editorial. "Down With Income Tax." *Gold Coast Spectator*, April 1930.

Editorial. "Gold Coast Drainage and Sanitation." *Gold Coast Independent*, 20 July 1918.

Editorial. "Gold Coast Lands and the Crown Lands Ordinance." *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, February, 1895.

Editorial. "It Has Come To Stay." *Gold Coast Independent*, 1 May 1897.

Editorial. "No Taxation Here." *Gold Coast Leader*, April 1930.

Editorial. "Our Mission Statement." *Gold Coast Times*, 28 March 1874.

Editorial. "Petition of the G.C.A.R.P.S." *Gold Coast Leader*, 26 March 1927.

Editorial. "The Governor and the Chiefs." *African Times*, 23 December 1864.

Editorial. "The Land Question." *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, 20 July 1897.

Editorial. "The Legislative Council Elections and the New Order." *Gold Coast Leader*, 18 June 1927.

Editorial. "This Is Our Land." *Gold Coast Chronicle*, March 1895.

Editorial. "This is not the Time." *The Times of West Africa*, April 1930.

Editorial. "The Triumph of Common Sense." *Gold Coast Leader*, 3 September 1927.

Editorial. "We Won't Cooperate." *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, 31 July 1897.

Mensah, Solomon. "Gold Coast Literacy." *Gold Coast Nation*, 8 April 1915.

Interviews

Ababio, Kwesi. Senior spokesman for the Omanhin of Cape Coast. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 10 June 2009.

Abeiku, Kweku. Retired teacher. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 6 September 2009.

Adjoa, Maame. Petty trader. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 August 2009.

Adu, Kweku. Retired civil servant and community leader. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 6 July 2009.

Afarfohin, Nana. Elder and chief fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 July 2009.

Aidoo, Nana. Petty trader and fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 10 September 2009.

Akyere, Esi Mina. Trader and asafoakyere. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 2 July 2009.

Arhinful, Nana Kofi. Boat owner and fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 15 August 2009.

Arhin, Nana Kobina. Retired headmaster and opinion leader. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009.

Arthur, Kweku. Retired civil servant. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 15 September 2009.

Atta, Adjoa. Market woman and asafoakyere. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 20 July 2009.

Atta, Kofi. Canoe owner and retired civil servant. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 July 2009.

Atta, Nana Kwesi. Omanhin of Oguaa. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 1 June 2009.

Atta, Nana. Fish seller. Interviewed by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 September 2009.

Botse, Kweku. Safohin of Abrofonkoa Asafo (No. 5) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 22 June 2009.

Dadzie, Egya Payin. Fisherman and asafo elder. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 3 August 2009.

Essoun, Akua. Obaapayin and market woman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 6 October 2009.

Eyiaba, Nana Amba. Queenmother of Effutu. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009.

Ewusi, Kofi. Elder and opinion leader. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 22 July 2009.

Fynn, Ebo Kobina. Headmaster and community leader. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 29 July 2009.

Hayfron, J. A. Supi of Bentsir Asafo (No. 1) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 13 June 2009.

Hweaseambo, Adwoa. Trader and wife of a fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 3 July 2009.

Idun, Kojo. Retired headteacher. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 1 August 2009.

Insaidoo, Kojo. Supi of Nkum Asafo (No. 4) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009.

Kwahin, Nana. Asafoakyere of Bentsir Asafo (No. 1) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 16 June 2009.

Johnson, Ebo. Supi of Ntsin Asafo (No. 3) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 June 2009.

Mansa, Esi. Asafokyere. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 10 October 2009.

Minnah, Kobina. Supi of Akrampa Asafo (No. 6) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 June 2009.

Nunoo, Kojo. Supi of Anafo Asafo (No. 2) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 17 June 2009.

Nyaneba, Esi. Fish seller and asafoakyere. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 October 2009.

Nyanyanoa, Aba. Fish seller and wife of a fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 11 August 2009.

Nyimfa, Nana Kwamina. Chief and Nimfahin of Oguaa. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 7 September 2009.

Osam, Ato. Fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 17 September 2009.

- Otu, Kwesi. Retired fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 30 June 2009.
- Oyemam, Afua. Market queenmother. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 12 October 2009.
- Panyin, Ato Kwamina. Canoe owner and fisherman. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 5 August 2009.
- Panyin, Nana Adjoa. Fish seller. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 20 September 2009.
- Prah, Kwamina. Odomankoma kyerema (master divine drummer). Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 19 May 2009.
- Quansah, Nana Esi. Retired nurse. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Regional, Ghana, 9 August 2009.
- Sukwei, Araba. Fish seller. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 11 June 2009.
- Yallow, Kobina. Supi of Amanfur Asafo (No. 7) company. Interview by author. Digital voice recording. Cape Coast, Central Region, Ghana, 4 June 2009.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Theses, Dissertations, and Other Unpublished Works

- Addy, Esi Sutherland. "Speaking War and Peace." A paper presented at the Asafo History Program Workshop 1997 at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, 17 – 18 December 1997.
- Adu Poku, B. "History and Constitution of the Oguaa State." B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1979.
- Anshan, Li. "Social Protest in the Gold Coast: A Study of the Eastern Province in the Colonial Period." Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, Canada, 1993.
- Baku, D. E. K. "An Intellectual in National Politics: The Contribution of Kobinah Sekyi to the Evolution of Ghanaian National Consciousness." Ph.D. diss., University of Sussex, UK, 1987.
- Barnes, F. D. "The Fetu Afahye of the People of Oguaa State." B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1971.
- Cawson, A. "Local Politics and Indirect Rule in Cape Coast, Ghana, 1928–1957." Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, Oxford, 1975.

- Gocking, R. "The Historic Akoto: A Social History of Cape Coast, Ghana, 1848–1948." Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, California, 1981.
- Hagan, G. P. "Aspects of Social Change among the Effutu of Winneba." Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, Oxford, 1974.
- Odotei, I. "The Ga and Their Neighbors." Ph.D. diss., University of Ghana, Legon, 1972.
- Ofori-Atta, F. "Amantoomiensa in the Political and Administrative Set-Up of Akyem Abuakwa." B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1978.
- Osei-Tutu, J. K. "Local Protest under Colonial Rule c. 1900–1950: The Asafo Movement of Kwahu." M.Phil. thesis, University of Trondheim, Norway, 1994.
- Quansah, A. K. E. "The History of Cape Coast before the Transfer of the Capital to Accra." B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1980.
- Sanders, J. "The Political Development of the Fante in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: A Study of a West African Merchant Society." Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, Chicago, 1980.
- Simenson, J. "Commoners, Chiefs, and Colonial Government: British Policy and Local Politics in Akim Abuakwa, Ghana, under Colonial Rule." Ph.D. diss., University of Trondheim, Norway, 1975.
- Stone, R. L. "Colonial Administration and Rural Politics in South Central Ghana, 1919–1951." Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, Cambridge, 1974.
- Tachie Mensah, J. A. "A History of Cape Coast." B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1972.
- Tetteh Addy, J. "The History of Cape Coast from the Earliest Times to the Nineteenth Century." B.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1975.

Articles

- Achebe, Nwando. "Nwando Achebe—Daughter, Wife, and Guest—A Researcher at Crossroads." *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 9–31.
- Addy, Esi Sutherland. "Discourse and Asafo: The Place of Oral Literature." *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 2 (1998): 87–100.
- Agbodeka, Francis. "The Fanti Confederation, 1865–1969." *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8 (1964): 82–123.
- Allman, Jean M. "The Young Men and the Porcupine: Class Nationalism and Asante Struggle for Self-Determination, 1954–1957." *Journal of African History* 31, no. 2 (1990): 50–70.

- Anshan, L. I. "Asafo and Destoolment in Colonial Southern Ghana, 1900–1953." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995): 327–57.
- Argyle, John. "Kalela, Beni, Asafo, Ingoma and the Rural: Urban Dichotomy." *African Studies* 50 (1991): 65–86.
- Arhin, Kwame. "Diffuse Authority among the Coastal Fanti." *Ghana Notes and Queries* 9 (1966): 20 – 35.
- Bartels, F. L. "Philip Quaake, 1741–1816." *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 1, no. 5 (1955): 153 – 77.
- Beinart, William. "African History and Environmental History." *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 269–302.
- Berg, Eric. "Backward-Sloping Labor Supply Functions in Dual Economies: The African Case." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 15, no. 4 (1961): 468–92.
- Betts, Raymond F. "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar, Senegal, 1914." *Africa* 41, no. 1 (1971): 143–52.
- . "The Problem of the Medina in the Urban Planning of Dakar, Senegal, 1914." *Urban African Notes* 4, no. 3 (1969): 5–15.
- Bevin, H. J. "The Gold Coast Economy in about 1800." *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 2, no. 2 (1956): 68–80.
- Birmingham, David. "A Note on the Kingdom of Fetu." *Ghana Notes and Queries* 9, no. 1 (1966): 102 – 25.
- Boahen, Albert A. "The Origins of the Akan." *Ghana Notes and Queries* 9, no. 1 (1966): 15 - 35
- Christensen, J. B. "The Role of Proverbs in Fante Culture." *Journal of the International African Institute* 28, no. 6 (1958): 232–43.
- Chukwukere, I. B. "Perspectives on the Asafo Institution in Southern Ghana." *Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 1 (1980): 50 – 75.
- Collier, J. F., and Michelle Z. Rosaldo. "Politics and Gender in Simple Societies." In *Sexual Meanings*, ed. Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, 275 – 29. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine. "The Process of Urbanization." *African Studies Review* 34 (1991): 1- 98.
- Data, A. K. "The Fante Asafo: A Re-Examination." *Africa* 42 (1972): 45 – 67.
- Datta, A. K., and R. Porter. "The Asafo System in Historical Perspectives: An Inquiry into the Origin and Development of a Ghana Institution." *Journal of African History* 12, no. 2 (1971): 279–97.

- Davis, Dona L., and Jane Nadel-Klein. "Gender, Culture and the Sea: Contemporary Theoretical Approaches." *Society and Natural Resources* 5 (1992): 135–45.
- Fage, John D. "The Administration of George Maclean on the Gold Coast, 1830–1844." *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 1, no. 4 (1955): 54 – 71.
- Feinberg, Harvey M. "Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast during the Eighteenth Century." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 79, no. 7 (1989): 104 – 20.
- Ffoulkes, Arthur. "The Company System in the Cape Coast Castle." *Journal of African Society* 7, no. 25 (1907): 36 – 51.
- Fortes, Meyer. "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti." In *African Systems of Marriage and Kinship*, ed. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, 10 – 31. London: International African Institute, 1950.
- Fortescue, Dominic. "The Accra Crowd: The Asafo and the Opposition to the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1924–1925." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 348 – 75.
- Gocking, Roger S. "Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast: Competition for Office and the Invention of Tradition." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28, no. 3 (1994): 421–47.
- Hagan, George P. "An Analytical Study of Fanti Kinship." *Research Review* 4, no. 1 (1967): 35 – 57.
- Henige, David. "John Kabes of Kommenda: An Early African Entrepreneur and Early State Builder." *Journal of African History* 17, no. 1 (1977): 1 – 19.
- . "Abrem Stool: A Contribution to the History and Historiography of Southern Ghana." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6 (1973): 1–18.
- . "The Problem of Feedback in Oral Traditions: Four Examples from the Fante Coastlands." *Journal African History* 14, no. 21 (1978): 223–35.
- . "Kingship in Elmina before 1869: A Study in Feedback and the Traditional Idealization of the Past." *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 55, no. 3 (1974): 499–520.
- . "Akan Stool Succession under Colonial Rule: Continuity or Change?" *Journal of African History* 14, no. 2 (1977): 203–26.
- . "Packaging Scholarship." In *Africanizing Knowledge: African Studies across the Disciplines*, eds. Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, 400 – 15. New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions, 2002.
- Herskovits, Meville J. "The Ashanti Ntoro: A Re-Examination." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 47 (1937): 102 – 37.

- Hyland, A. D. C. "Architectural History of Cape Coast." *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16, no. 2 (1995): 135 – 69.
- Johnson, J. C. DeGraft. "The Fanti Asafu." *Africa* 5, no. 3 (1932): 307–22.
- Johnson, T. J. "Protest, Challenge, and Change: An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots, 1890–1920." *Economy and Society* 1, no. 2 (1972): 164–93.
- Jones, Adam. "'My Arse for Akou:' A Wartime Ritual of Women in the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast." *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 132 (1992): 545 – 66.
- Jones-Quartey, K. A. B. "Kobinah Sekyi: A Fragment of Biography." *Research Review* 4, no. 1 (1967): 89 – 102.
- Klein B., and G. Mackenthun. "Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean." *Journal of World History* 16 (2005): 102–07.
- Lalu, Premesh. "The Grammar of Domination and the Subjection of Agency: Colonial Texts and Modes of Evidence." *History and Theory* 39, no. 4 (2000): 45–68.
- Langley, J. A. "Modernization and its Malcontents: Kobina Sekyi of Ghana and the Restatement of African Political Theory, 1892–1956." *Research Review* 6, no. 3 (1970): 76 – 102.
- Mabogunje, Akin. "Overview of Research Priorities in Africa." *Urban Research in the Developing World* 2 (1994): 22–43.
- Maylam, Paul. "Dead Horses, the Baby and the Bathwater: 'Post-Theory' and the Historian's Practice." *South African Historical Journal* 42 (2000): 121–35.
- Meyerowitz, Eva L. "Concept of the Soul among the Akan of the Gold Coast." *Africa* 21, no. 1 (1950): 22 – 37.
- Miller, Joseph C. "History and Africa/Africa and History." *American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (1999): 1–32.
- Ninson, Kwame. "Economic Modernization and Social Change: Evidence from Mumford, a Ghanaian Fishing Village." *Africa* 61, no. 1 (1991): 98–116.
- Nti, Kwaku. "The Role of Alcohol in the 1905 Conflict between the Anafo and Ntsin Asafo Companies of Cape Coast." *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 2 (1998): 49–55.
- . "Action and Reaction: An Overview of the Ding-Dong Relationships between the Colonial Government and the People of Cape Coast." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002): 1–37.
- . "King Agger's Loud Voice: Whose Voice?" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 7 (2003): 253–70.

- Okonjo, Kamene. "The Dual Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria." In *Women in Africa*, eds. Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna Bay, 45 – 58. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.
- Pearson, M. N. "Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems." *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (2006): 353–74.
- Patterson, K. D. "Disease and Medicine in African History: A Bibliographical Essay." *History in Africa* 1 (1974): 141–48.
- Peterson, B. "Culture, Resistance and Representation." *SADET: The Road to Democracy in South Africa* 2 (2006): 161–85.
- Porter, R. "The Cape Coast Riot of 1803." *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 11 (1970): 30 – 45.
- Price, Roy. "Caribbean Fishing and Fishermen: A Historical Sketch." *American Anthropologist* 86, no. 6 (1989): 104 – 25.
- Ranger, T. O. "Connexions Between 'Primary Resistance' Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa." *Journal of African History* 9, no. 3 (1968): 437 – 53
- Shallof, S. "The Income Tax, Indirect Rule and the Depression: The Cape Coast Riots of 1931." *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 14, no. 54 (1974): 359–76.
- . "The Cape Coast Asafo Company Riot of 1932." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7, no. 4 (1974): 591–607.
- Simensen, Jarle. "Crisis in Akyem Abuakwa: The Native Administration Revenue Measure of 1932, Akyem Abuakwa and the Politics of Inter-War Period in Ghana." *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1995): 110 – 25.
- . "Nationalism from Below: The Akyem Abuakwa Example." *Mitteilugen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1975): 31–57.
- . "Rural Mass Action in the Context of Anti-Colonial Protest: The Asafo Movement of Akim Abuakwa Ghana." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7 (1974): 25–41.
- . "The Asafo of Kwahu, Ghana: A Mass Movement for Local Reform under Colonial Rule." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8 (1975): 383–406.
- Smith, R. "The Canoe in West Africa." *Journal of African History* 11, no. 4 (1970): 515–33.
- Stoeltje, Beverly J. "Asante Queen Mothers: A Study in Female Authority." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1 (2000): 44 – 71.

- Stone, R. L. "Rural Politics in the Inter-War Period: Some comparisons between Akyem Abuakwa and the States of the Central Province." *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1975): 91 – 115.
- Sudarkasa, Niara. "The Status of Women in Indigenous African Societies." In *Women in Africa and the Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, 25 – 41. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1987.
- Swanson, M. W. "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900–1909." *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387–410.
- . "Urban Origins of Separate Development." *Race* 10 (1968): 31 – 40.
- Swanzy, Henry. "A Trading Family in the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast." *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* 2, no. 1 (1956): 87–120.
- Vercrujssse, Emile. "Fishmongers, Big Dealers, and Fishermen: Co-operation and Conflict between the Sexes in Ghanaian Canoe Fishing." In *Female and Male in West Africa*, ed. Christine Opong, 188 – 201. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983.
- Books**
- Achebe, Nwando. *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900–1960*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006.
- Acquah, Ione. *A Social Survey of Accra the Capital of Ghana, formerly called the Gold Coast 1953–1956*. London: University of London, 1958.
- Acquaah, Gaddiel R. *Oguaa Aban*. London: Longmans, 1968.
- Addo-Fenning, Robert. *Akyem Abuakwa 1700–1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta*. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997.
- Adler, P., and N. Barnard. *ASAFO: African Flags of the Fante*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1993.
- Agbodeka, Francis. *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971.
- Aggrey, J. A. *Asafo*. Tema: Ghana Publishing, 1978.
- Akyeampong, Emmanuel K. *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-Social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana c. 1850 to Recent Times*. Oxford: James Currey, 2001.
- . *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times*. Oxford: James Currey, 1996.
- , ed. *Themes in West Africa's History*. Oxford: James Currey, 2006.

- Allman, Jean. *"I Will Not Eat Stone:" A Women's History of Colonial Asante*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000.
- . *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.
- Anaman, J. B. *The Gold Coast Guide*. London, 1902.
- Andersen, D. *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*. New York: Norton, 2005.
- Anquandah, James. *Castles and Forts of Ghana*. Atlante: Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, 1999.
- Appiah Ofori, L. H., ed. *The Encyclopedia Africana: Dictionary of African Biography Ethiopia-Ghana*. New York: Reference Publications, New York, 1977.
- Apter, David. *The Gold Coast in Transition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955.
- Arhin, Kwame. *The Cape Coast and Elmina Handbook: Past, Present and Future*. Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, 1995.
- . *Minutes of the Ashanti Farmers Association, 1934 –1936*. Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, 1978.
- . *Papers on the Symposium on the City of Kumasi: The Historical Background*. Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, 1990.
- . *Traditional Rule in Ghana: Past and Present*. Accra, Ghana: Sedco Publishing, 1985.
- Asiamah, A. E. A. *The Mass Factor in Rural Politics: The Case of the Asafo Revolution in Kwahu Political History*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2000.
- Austin, Dennis. *Politics in Ghana 1946 – 1960*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Ayittey, George B. N. *Indigenous African Institutions*. New York: Transnational Publishers, 2006.
- Balmer, W. T. *A History of the Akan Peoples of the Gold Coast*. New York: Greenwood, 1969.
- Barbot, J. *A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea*. London: Frank Cass, 1723.
- Bartels, Francis L. *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

- Berry, Sara. *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power, and the Past in Asante, 1896–1996*. Oxford: James Currey, 2001.
- . *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.
- Blalock, H. M. *Power and Conflict: Toward a General Theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989.
- Blankson, S. *Fetu Afahye*. Cape Coast, Ghana: University of Cape Coast Press, 1973.
- Bledsoe, C. *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980.
- Boahen, Albert A. *African Perspectives on Colonialism*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- . *Mfantipim and the Making of Ghana*. Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishers, 1996.
- . *Topics in West African History*. London: Longman, 1966.
- . *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante-British War of 1900-1*. Oxford: James Currey, 2003.
- Bohannon, Paul. *Africa and Africans*. New York: Natural History Press, 1964.
- Bosman, William. *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea: Divided into the Gold, the Slave and the Ivory Coasts*. London: Frank Cass, 1967.
- Boulding, Kenneth E. *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962.
- Bowdich, E. T. *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*. London: Frank Cass, 1966.
- Bozzoli, Belinda, ed. *Labor, Township and Protest*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Ravan, 1979.
- Braudel, F. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World: The Age of Philip II*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.
- . *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*. New York: Harper and Row, 1981.
- Brokensha, D., D. M. Warren, and O. Werner, eds. *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Development*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1970.

- Brown, A. P. *The Fishes and Fisheries of the Gold Coast*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1930.
- Brown, E. J. P. *The Gold Coast and Ashanti Reader*. London: Frank Cass, 1929.
- Busia, Kofi A. *Report on Social Survey of Sekondi-Takoradi on behalf of the Government of the Gold Coast*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1950.
- . *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti*. London: Frank Cass, 1968.
- Cardinall, A. W. *The Gold Coast*. Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1931.
- Carlston, K. S. *Social Theory and African Tribal Organization*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968.
- Casely-Hayford, J. E. *Gold Coast Native Institutions*. London: Frank Cass, 1970.
- Christaller, J. B. *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Languages Called Twi*. Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1993.
- Christensen, J. B. *Double Descent among the Fanti*. New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, 1954.
- Chukwukere, I. B. *Cultural Resilience: The Asafo Company System of the Fante*. Cape Coast, Ghana: University of Cape Coast Press, 1970.
- Claridge, W. W. *History of Gold Coast and Ashanti*. London: Frank Cass, 1964.
- Cohen, David W., and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo. *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of An African Landscape*. London: James Currey, 1989.
- Collier, J. F., and S. J. Yanagisako, eds. *Gender and Kinship: Essays toward a Unified Analysis*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.
- Collins, Robert O., ed. *Historical Problems of Imperial Africa*. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2000.
- Crooks, J. J. *Records Relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874*. London: Frank Cass, 1973.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972.

- Crowder, M., and I. Obaro, eds. *West African Chiefs*. New York: African Publishing, 1970.
- Crowder, M. *West Africa under Colonial Rule*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968.
- , ed. *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation*. London: Hutchinson, 1971.
- Cruickshank, Brodie. *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa: Including an Account of the Native Tribes and Their Intercourse with Europeans*. London: Frank Cass, 1966.
- Curtin, Philip, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina. *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence*. London: Longman, 1995.
- Daaku, Kwame Y. *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720*. London: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Daniel, Ebo. *A Tale of Cape Coast*. Accra, Ghana: Woeli Publications Services, 2006.
- Danquah, Asirifi. *Yaa Asantewaa: An African Queen who led an Army to Fight the British*. Kumasi: Asirifi Danquah Books, 2002.
- Danquah, J. B. *Akan Society*. London: Bureau of Current Affairs, 1950.
- . *The Gold Coast: Akan Laws and Customs*. London: Lutherworth Press, 1945.
- Dickson, Kwamina B. *Historical Geography of Ghana*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Dirks, N. B., ed. *Colonialism and Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.
- Edsman, B. M. *Lawyers in Gold Coast Politics c. 1900–1945: From Mensah Sarbah to J. B. Danquah*. Uppsala, Stockholm: Uppsala University, 1979.
- Ellis, E. B. *A History of the Gold Coast of West Africa*. New York: Greenwood, 1969.
- . *The Tshi Speaking People of the Gold Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language, etc.* Oosterhout, The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1966.
- Ephson, Isaac S. *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities, 1632–1968*. Accra, Ghana: Ilen Publications, 1969.

- Epstein, A. L. *The Administration of Justice and the Urban African*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1953.
- Fage, John. *Ghana: A Historical Interpretation*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959.
- Fair, Laura. *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001.
- Falola, Toyin, and Christian Jennings, eds. *Africanizing Knowledge: African Studies across the Disciplines*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002.
- . *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003.
- Fanon, Franz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
- Farias, P. F. de Moraes, and Karin Barber, eds. *Self-Assertion and Brokerage: Early Cultural Nationalism in West Africa*. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham, 1990.
- Febvre, L. *A Geographical Introduction to History*. London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925.
- Ferguson, James. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.
- Field, M. J. *Akim-Kotoku: An Oman of the Gold Coast*. London: Crown Agents, 1948.
- . *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*. London: Oxford University Press, 1937.
- . *Social Organization of the Ga People*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1940.
- Fink, H. *Religion, Disease and Healing in Ghana: A Case Study of Traditional Dormaa Medicine*. Munich: Trickster Verlag, 1990.
- Fisher, R. *Dealing with Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1983.
- Forde, C. D., ed. *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Fortes, M., and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, eds. *African Political Systems*. London: Oxford University Press, 1940.

- Fortes, M. *Social Structure*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949.
- . *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*. London: Oxford University Press, 1946.
- Freund, Bill. *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Fynn, John K. *Oral Tradition of the Fante States Abrem*. Legon: University of Ghana, 1974.
- . *Oral Tradition of the Fante States Eguafu*. Legon: University of Ghana, 1974.
- . *Oral Tradition of the Fante States Kommenda*. Legon: University of Ghana, 1974.
- . *Oral Tradition of the Fante States Edina/Elmina*. Legon: University of Ghana, 1974.
- . *Oral Tradition of the Fante States Abeadze*. Legon: University of Ghana, 1975.
- Gillespie, William H. *The Gold Coast Police 1844–1938*. Accra, Ghana: Government Printer, 1955.
- Glazier, J. *Land and the Uses of Tradition among the Mbere of Kenya*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985.
- Gluckman, Max. *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959.
- Gocking, Roger. *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities under Colonial Rule*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999.
- Gordon, C. A. *Life on the Gold Coast*. London: Bailliere, Tindall, and Cox, 1874.
- Hafkin, N. J., and E. G. Bay, eds. *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976.
- Hagan, George P. *Divided We Stand: A Study of Social Change among the Effutu of Coastal Ghana*. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000.
- Hawthorne, N. *Journal of an African Cruiser*. New York: Wiley and Putman, 1845.
- Henige, David P. *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.
- Hernaes, Per. *Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society*. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1995.

- Hinderink, J., and J. Sterkenburg. *Anatomy of an African Town: A Socio-Economic Study of Cape Coast, Ghana*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: State University of Utrecht, 1975.
- Hopkins, A. G. *An Economic History of West Africa*. London: Longman, 1973.
- Horton, J. A. B. *Letters on the Political Condition of the Gold Coast*. London, Frank Cass, 1970.
- Hymer, S. *The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana, Economic Growth*. New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1969.
- Irvine, F. R. *The Fishes and Fisheries of the Gold Coast*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1947.
- Jones-Quartey, K. A. B. *A Summary History of the Ghana Press, 1822–1960*. Accra: Ghana Information Services Department, 1974.
- Kea, Ray A. *Settlements Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth- Century Gold Coast*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Kimble, David. *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850–1928*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Lafontaine, J. S. *City Politics: A Study of Leopoldville 1962–1963*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Linnekin, Jocelyn. *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990.
- Little, K. *West African Urbanization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Lloyd, C. *The British Seamen, 1200–1860: A Social Survey*. London: Collins, 1968.
- Lystad, R. *The Ashanti: A Proud People*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1958.
- MacDonald, G. *The Gold Coast*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.
- Manoukian, M. *Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples of the Gold Coast*. London: Oxford Press, 1950.
- Maxwell, J. *The Gold Coast Handbook*. London: Government of the Gold Coast, 1928.
- McCarthy, Mary. *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast: The Fante States, 1807–1874*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983.

- McPhee, A. *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa*. London: Frank Cass, 1926.
- Merton, R. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957.
- Metcalfe, G. E. *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History 1807–1957*. UK, London: Ipswich Book, 1964.
- . *Maclean of the Gold Coast*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Meyerowitz, E. L. R. *Akan Traditions of Origin*. London: Faber and Faber, 1952.
- . *The Akan of Ghana*. London: Faber and Faber, 1958.
- . *The Early History of the Akan States of Ghana*. London: Red Candle Press, 1970.
- . *The Sacred State of the Akan*. London: Faber and Faber, 1951.
- Migeod, F. *Languages of West Africa*. London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1911.
- Morris, H. F., and J. S. Read. *Indirect Rule and the Search for Justice: Essays in East Africa Legal History*. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Newell, Stephanie. *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana: How to Play the Game of Life*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Ninson, Kwame A. *Politics, Local Administration, and Community Development in Ghana, 1951–1966: A Case Study of Community Power and its Impact on Socio-Economic Development at Cape Coast*. Boston: Boston University Press, 1977.
- Nkansah-Kyeremateng, K. *Akan Heritage*. Accra, Ghana: Sebewie Publishers, 1999.
- Obeng, E. E. *Ancient Ashanti Chieftaincy*. Tema: Ghana Publishing, 1986.
- Odotei, Irene K. *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development*. Legon, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006.
- . “Man-Woman,” *Gender and Management: A Case Study of Women Canoe Owners at the Tema Fishing Harbor*. Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 2003.
- . *Sea Power, Money Power: Ghanaian Migrant Fishermen and Women in the Republic of Benin*. Legon: University of Ghana, 2002.

- . *There is Money in the Sea: Ghanaian Migrant Fishermen and Women in the Ivory Coast*. Legon: University of Ghana, 2002.
- Opoku-Agyeman, K. *Cape Coast Castle: A Collection of Poems*. Accra, Ghana: Afram Publications, 1996.
- Oppong, Christine. *Female and Male in West Africa*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983.
- Ortner, S., and H. Whitehead, eds. *Sexual Meanings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Osei-Tutu, J. K. *The Asafoi (Socio-Military Groups) in the History and Politics of Accra (Ghana) from the Seventeenth to Mid Twentieth Century*. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000.
- Ottenberg, Simon. *Double Descent in an African Society: The Afipko Village-Group*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968.
- Parker, John. *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in early Colonial Accra*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000.
- Peil, M. *Cities and Suburbs: Urban Life in West Africa*. New York: African Publishing, 1981.
- Pellow, D. *Women in Accra: Options for Autonomy*. Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, 1977.
- Perez-Mallaina, P. E. *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Philips, J. E. *Writing African History*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005.
- Phillips, A., L. M., and L. Harries. *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life*. London: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Poewe, K. *Matrilineal Ideology*. New York: Academic Press, 1981.
- Priestley, M. *West African Trade and Coast Society*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Prins, A. H. J. *Sailing from Lamu: A Study of Maritime Culture in Islamic East Africa*. Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1965.

- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R., and D. Forde, eds. *African Systems of Marriage and Kinship*. London: International African Institute, 1950.
- Ranger, Terence O. *Dance and Society in Eastern and Central Africa, 1890–1970: The Beni Ngoma*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- Rattray, R. S. *Akan-Ashanti Folktales*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- . *Ashanti*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923.
- . *Ashanti Law and Constitution*. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- . *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Rediker, Marcus. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Reindorff, Christian C. *The History of Gold Coast and Asante: Based on Traditions and Historical Facts comprising more than Three Centuries from about 1500 to 1860*. Basel: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1951.
- Reynolds, Edward. *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast 1807–1874*. London: Longmans, 1974.
- Robertson, Claire. *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socio-economic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Robinson, David. *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880 – 1920*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000.
- Rude, G. *The Crowd in History*. London: Wiley, 1964.
- Sampson, M. J. *Gold Coast Men of Affairs*. London: Dawson, 1937.
- Sarbah, John M. *Fanti Customary Laws*. London: Frank Cass, 1968.
- . *Fanti National Constitution*. London: Frank Cass, 1968.
- Silverblatt, Irene. *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Simmel, Georg. *Conflict and Group Affiliations*. Translated by Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix. New York: Free Press, 1966.

- Simpson, W. J. *Sanitary Matters in various West African Colonies and the Outbreak of Plagues in the Gold Coast*. London: Crown Agents, 1909.
- Skinner, E. P. *Peoples and Cultures of Africa*. New York: Natural History Press, 1961.
- Slater, A. R. *Native Administration in the Gold Coast and its Dependencies: Confidential Minutes*. Accra, Ghana: Government Printing Office, 1930.
- Smith, M. E. *Those Who Live from the Sea: A Study in Maritime Anthropology*. New York: West, 1977.
- Stone, J. C. *Africa and the Sea: Proceedings of a Colloquium at the University of Aberdeen*. Aberdeen, Scotland: Aberdeen University, 1985.
- Strathern, Marilyn. *The Gender of the Gift*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.
- Switzer, Les. *Power and Resistance in an Africa Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.
- Szereszewski, R. *Structural Changes in the Economy of Ghana, 1891–1911*. London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1965.
- Tropp, J. A. *Natures of Colonial Change: Environmental Relations in the Making of the Transkei*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- Van Dantzig, A. *Forts and Castles of Ghana*. Accra: Sedco Publishers, 1980.
- Van-Onselen, Charles. *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand, 1886–1914*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2001.
- Vansina, Jan. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Chicago: Aldine, 1965.
- Vansina, Jan, and Carolyn Keyes Adenaike. *In Pursuit of History: Fieldwork in Africa*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1996.
- Vercrujssse, Emile. *The Dynamics of Fanti Domestic Organization: A Comparison with Fortes' Ashanti Survey*. Cape Coast, Ghana: University of Cape Coast, 1972.
- Vercrujssse, E. V. W., Lydi M. Vercrujssse-Dopheide, and Kwasi J. A. Boakye. *Composition of Households in Fante Communities: A Study of the Framework of Social Integration*. Cape Coast, Ghana: University of Cape Coast, 1972.
- Ward, W. E. F. *A History of Ghana*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1967.

- Warren, D. M. *The Akan of Ghana: An Overview of Ethnographic Literature*. Accra, Ghana: Pointer Limited, 1973.
- Weibust, Knut. *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*. Stockholm, Sweden: V. Petterson, 1969.
- Weiner, A. B. *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.
- White, L. Stephan, F. Meischer, and David W. Cohen, eds. *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Wilks, I. *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- . *Forest of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993.
- . *Political bi-Polarity in Nineteenth Century Asante*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1970.
- Wilson, G. *The Analysis of Social Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945.
- Wraith, R. E. *Guggisberg*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Yarak, L. W. *Asante and the Dutch, 1744 – 1873*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.