

**BEST COPY**

**AVAILABLE**

TEXT IN ORIGINAL IS  
CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF  
THE PAGE

THE COLONIAL FACTOR AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION ON THE  
GOLD COAST TO 1930

Raymond Carey Bush

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds, Department of Politics,  
March 1984

ABSTRACT

This thesis traces indigenous social and economic developments among the Akan and the incorporation of the territory known as the Gold Coast into the international world economy up to 1930. The focus for the thesis is threefold: developments and conflicts within the Akan social formation itself, pressures and demands by social classes in Europe calling for greater and new forms of contact with the Gold Coast and also, perhaps more importantly, processes which were the outcome of struggles and conflicts between the European colonisers and the indigenous residents on the Gold Coast.

To assess the full nature of the political, social and economic pressures linked to the incorporation of the Gold Coast into the economies of Europe, we begin the thesis by sketching in an account of the early contact indigenous Akan social formations. We then trace and try to characterise the different stages of colonisation and the different demands by Europe for gold, slaves and indigenous cash crop production, and how the outcome of these European demands were largely determined by the nature of indigenous class struggles, and not simply by the wishes of actors in the so-called 'centre'. The extent and nature of indigenous slavery is explored with specific focus both upon Akan state formation, and how the Atlantic slave trade represented a change in the demands of Europe from gold to labour to work in the Caribbean, and that at that stage of history to acquire sufficient labourers the Europeans were dependent upon indigenous forms of capture and reproduction of slave labour. We examine why, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Europe returned to demand gold and cash crop production from the Akan and how this led to the formation of formal colonialism, which in its early stages was dependent upon indigenous relations of production and reproduction. We then trace the development

of a colonial capitalist political economy on the Gold Coast; the 'policy' of indirect rule and the two processes of commercialisation and commoditisation of Akan land and labour.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page No.</u>
Abstract	ii
Maps	ix
Tables	x
Abbreviations	xi
Forward and Acknowledgements	xii
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
Anthropology and Colonialism	10
<u>CHAPTER ONE: EARLY CONTACT AKAN-ASANTE SOCIAL FORMATIONS</u>	
I    INTRODUCTION	19
II   THE GOLD COAST SOCIAL FORMATIONS	19
III  ON NON-CAPITALIST SOCIAL FORMATIONS	21
(a) Mode of Production	23
(b) Class in Non-Capitalist Societies	31
(i) Class and Rank Among the Asante	34
(ii) Kinship	41
(c) Land in Early Contact Akan-Asante Social Formations	46
IV   STATE FORMATION AND GOLD PRODUCTION	57
(a) Akan State Formation: Some Preliminary Observations	59
(b) Gold Production	64
(c) Slavery	77
V    CONCLUSION	81
<u>CHAPTER TWO: COLONIAL EXPANSION AND EARLY TRANSFORMATION ON THE GOLD COAST ca. 1400-1700</u>	82
I    INTRODUCTION	82
II   BEGINNINGS OF COLONIALISM	87
The World System	89
III  MERCHANT CAPITAL AND THE CIRCULATION OF CAPITAL	97
(a) Merchant Capital	98

(b)	The Demand for Gold	104
	(i) The Traders	106
	(ii) The Mercantilist State	109
	(iii) The English State	115
IV	GOLD IN THE AKAN SOCIAL FORMATION AND THE COLONIAL INCURSION OF THE GOLD COAST	119
(a)	Non Structural Changes on the Coast	126
(b)	Structural Changes on the Gold Coast	130
	(i) Violence as the basis for Colonial Transformation	130
	(ii) Firearms	140
	(iii) Middlemen and the Consolidation of Detribalisation	144
	(iv) Colonial rivalry	149
V	CONCLUSION	152
<u>CHAPTER THREE: A CENTURY OF SLAVE DEALING ca.1700-1800</u>		156
I	INTRODUCTION	156
II	STATE FORMATION I	158
	Internal Organisation of Akan-Asante Society	159
III	TRADE AND STATE DEVELOPMENT II	165
(a)	The Arguments	165
(b)	The Basis of Trade and the Dynamic of State Formation	171
	(i) Slave Labour and State Formation	172
	(ii) Slavery Re-examined	177
	Domestic Slavery	177
	Plantation Slavery	183
	(iii) Asante State Formation	188
IV	THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE	192

(a)	The Trade	193
(b)	The Impact of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade	206
	(i) Warfare	208
	(ii) Concentration of Wealth	210
V	CONCLUSION	211
	APPENDIX: Projected Exports of that portion of the French and English Slave Trade from the Gold Coast, 1711-1810	214
	<u>CHAPTER FOUR: 'LEGITIMATE' TRADE AND THE TRANSITION TO FORMAL COLONIALISM ca.1807-1874</u>	215
I	INTRODUCTION	215
II	FORMAL COLONIALISM	216
(a)	Early Expansion of British Jurisdiction	221
(b)	Legitimate Trade	235
	(i) The Dutch and Legitimate Trade	238
	(ii) British Legitimate Trade and African Merchants	242
(c)	Consolidation of British Control on the Coast	248
III	SOCIAL CHANGE IN ASANTE	253
(a)	Pre-colonial Asante	254
(b)	Pressures for Mercantilism and Imperialism in Asante	258
	(i) The Factions	258
	(ii) Asante and the British - An Introduction	269
	APPENDIX I: Recorded Trade to Europe and North America from Cape Coast and Accra for the Period 1831-1840	273
	APPENDIX II: Return of Exports 1827-1841	274
	APPENDIX III: Principal Exports from the Gold Coast 1850-1862	275
	APPENDIX IV: Principal Imports in the Gold Coast 1850-1862	276
	<u>CHAPTER FIVE: COMMODITISATION OF LAND AND LABOUR: ca.1874- 1930:I. THE COMMERCIALISATION OF LAND</u>	277
I	INTRODUCTION	277
II	MINING CONCESSIONS IN THE TARKWA AREA	280

(a)	The Companies and Inadequate Capital Accumulation	287
(b)	African Imposed Constraints on Mining Companies	290
III	LAND AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CONCESSIONS	297
(a)	A Struggle for Land	301
(b)	Pressures Towards Landlessness	317
IV	COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION AND MONETISATION OF THE GOLD COAST AND ASANTE	318
(a)	Indirect Rule	323
	(i) Sovereignty and the Formalisation of Colonialism	327
	(ii) The Protests	331
(b)	British Colonial Incursion into Asante	334
	British Occupation and the Monetisation of Asante	336
(c)	Cash Crop Production	342
V	CONCLUSION	344
	APPENDIX I: Illustration of Concession Agreements Between European Mining Company and Akan Group in the Western Region	347
	APPENDIX II: Examples of Colonial Attempts to Develop Forest Reserves and a Summary of Reasons for their Abandonment	348
	<u>CHAPTER SIX: COMMODITISATION OF LAND AND LABOUR: ca.1874-1930: II. THE COMMODITISATION OF LABOUR</u>	355
I	INTRODUCTION	355
II	CAPITALISM, LABOUR AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT	357
(a)	The Erosion of Slavery	359
(b)	Labour, the Mines and the Incorporation of the Northern Territories	370
	(i) Labour Recruitment	374
	(ii) Indirect Rule and the Subjugation of the North	386
	(iii) Dispossession of Land in the North and Colonial Violence	388
III	CONCESSIONS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LAND	395



	<u>Page No.</u>
(a) Cash Crop Production	405
(i) Palm Oil	406
(ii) Rubber	411
(b) Cocoa	416
Migration and Class Formation	420
IV INDIRECT RULE AND THE COLONIAL STATE	429
(a) Indirect Rule	433
(b) The Colonial State: Economic Expansion and Decline	440
V CONCLUSION	444
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	449
<u>GLOSSARY</u>	455
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	459

1	The Gold Coast - chief tribal divisions and the Northern Territories	xiv
2	The Akan Group on the Gold Coast	xv
3	The Gold Coast, its neighbours and the principal trade routes from North Africa to the Guinea Coast	xvi
4	Trade routes from Jenne to the Gold Coast	65
5	The European Forts on the Gold Coast	224
6	Gold Mining Concessions in 1879	282
7	Principal Alluvial Gold Mining Areas: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries	285
8	Gold Coast and Northern Territories: Port and Railway Development, 1850-1936	372
9	Plantations, 1900-1936	409
10	Gold Coast Cocoa Producing Areas	419

TABLES

1	Annual Average Gold Ore Receipts from Mina 1504-1545	105
2	Estimated Dutch Gold Takings for the Seventeenth Century	113
3	European Gold Takings from the Akan 1601-1650	118
4	Akan Gold Exports to the Northern Trade 1400-1900	127

ABBREVIATIONS

ARPS	Aborigines' Rights Protection Society
CCC	Cape Coast Castle
DC	District Commissioner
FC	Furley Collection
FCTS	Furley Collection Tribal States
GNA (A)	Ghana National Archives, Accra
GNA (CC)	Cape Coast
GNA (K)	Kumase
GNA (S)	Sekondi
JAH	Journal of African History
NLB	New Left Books
NLR	New Left Review
NT	Northern Territories
RAC	Royal African Company (English)
ROAPE	Review of African Political Economy
TGCTHS	Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society
THSG	Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana
WIC	West Indian Company (Dutch)

FORWARD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to a number of people who have influenced me in the preparation of this account of colonial and indigenous change among the Akan of the Gold Coast - see maps 1-3 for the geographic location of the area under study.

Thanks are due to the workers in the national and regional archives of Ghana; for their assistance and patience in uncovering materials in extremely difficult circumstances, usually by torchlight, and for putting up with an inquisitor who interrupted their tortuous search for food and worries about transport home. Thanks are also due to the Ghana Mines Department in Takoradi and Tarkwa and the staff at the Balme Library and Institute of African Studies Library, University of Ghana, Legon. I am grateful to the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana for affiliate status between May and November 1980.

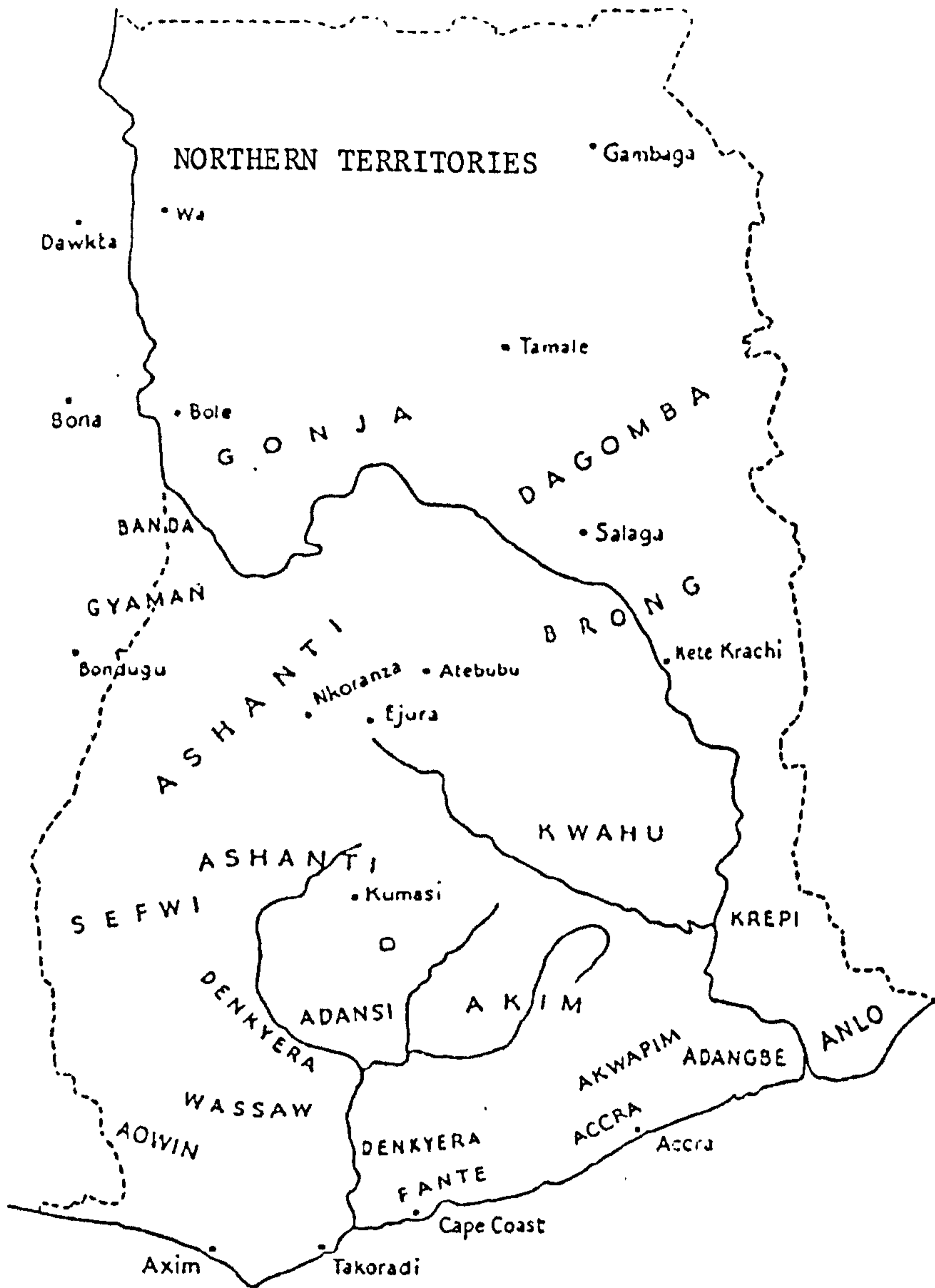
My six month visit to Ghana was funded by the Social Science Research Council. The collection of oral data was achieved with the assistance of the villagers, chiefs and elders of Abontiakoon, Aboso, Asaase, Ayanful and Kyikiwere. I am indebted to Kwame Asante who acted as my guide, translator and companion throughout my stay. Accommodation and hospitality was provided by three Aunts and Jude Arthur without whom my visit would have been much shorter and less comfortable.

I am grateful to the staff of the Brotherton and History libraries at the University of Leeds and especially to the inter-library loan section.

Morris Szeftel has offered encouragement at different stages of completion, so too have Hamza Alavi, Afia Bush, David Coates, Jeff Crisp, Tim Cross, Emmanuel Hansen and Gordon Johnston. Thanks are due to

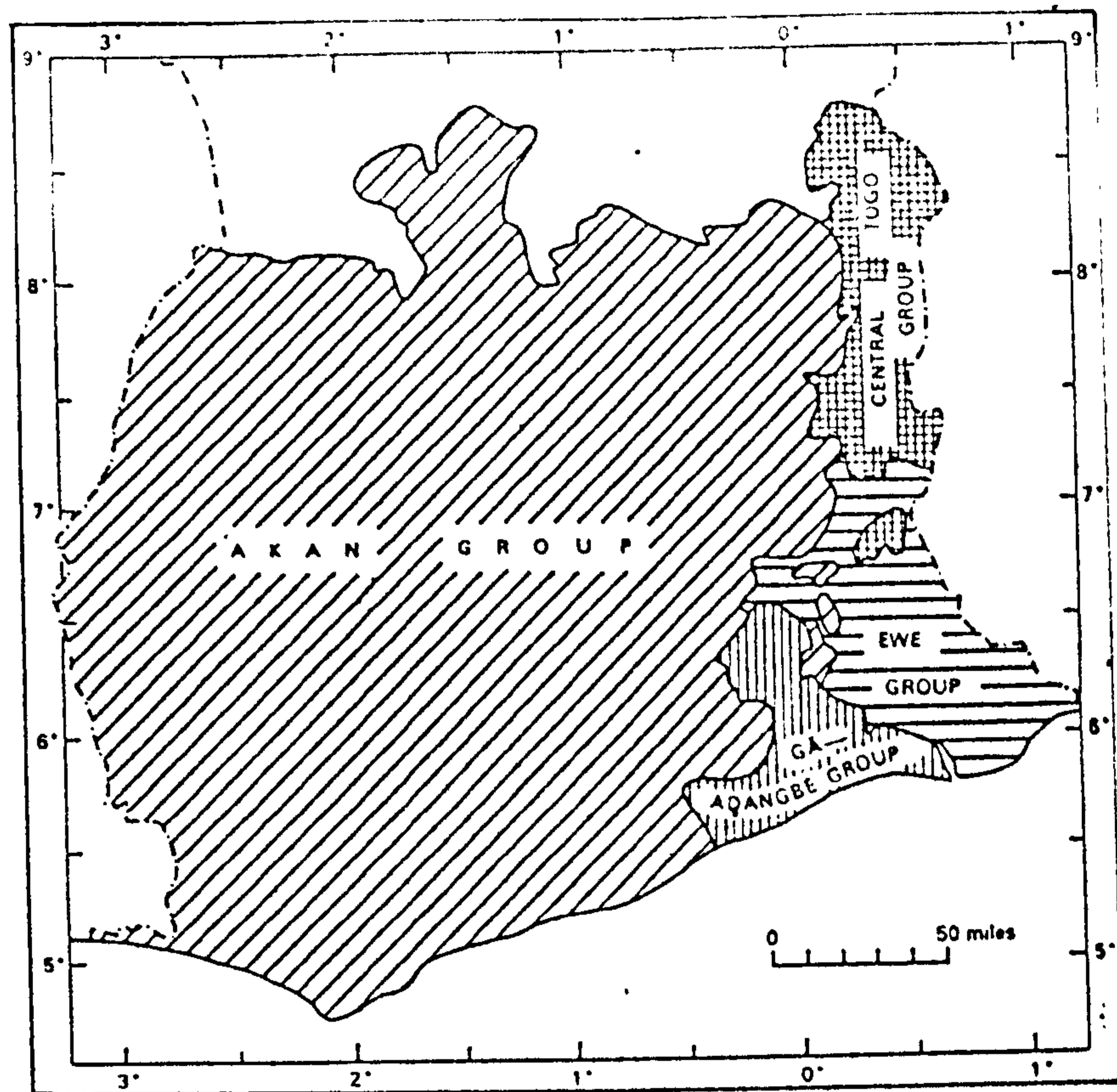
Val Grant for typing the thesis from a muddled manuscript.

By far my greatest intellectual debt is to my supervisor Lionel Cliffe whose rigorous and inciteful questioning, friendship and support has been and remains a constant inspiration to me. Bev Jowett has assiduously proof read the final typescript and my parents have offered constant emotional and financial support. Finally, I thank Bev who has supported me in very many different ways and has also suffered with me the threat from the sword of Damocles.



MAP ONE: The Gold Coast - chief tribal divisions and the Northern Territories

Source: Adapted from W.E.F. Ward, (1966)

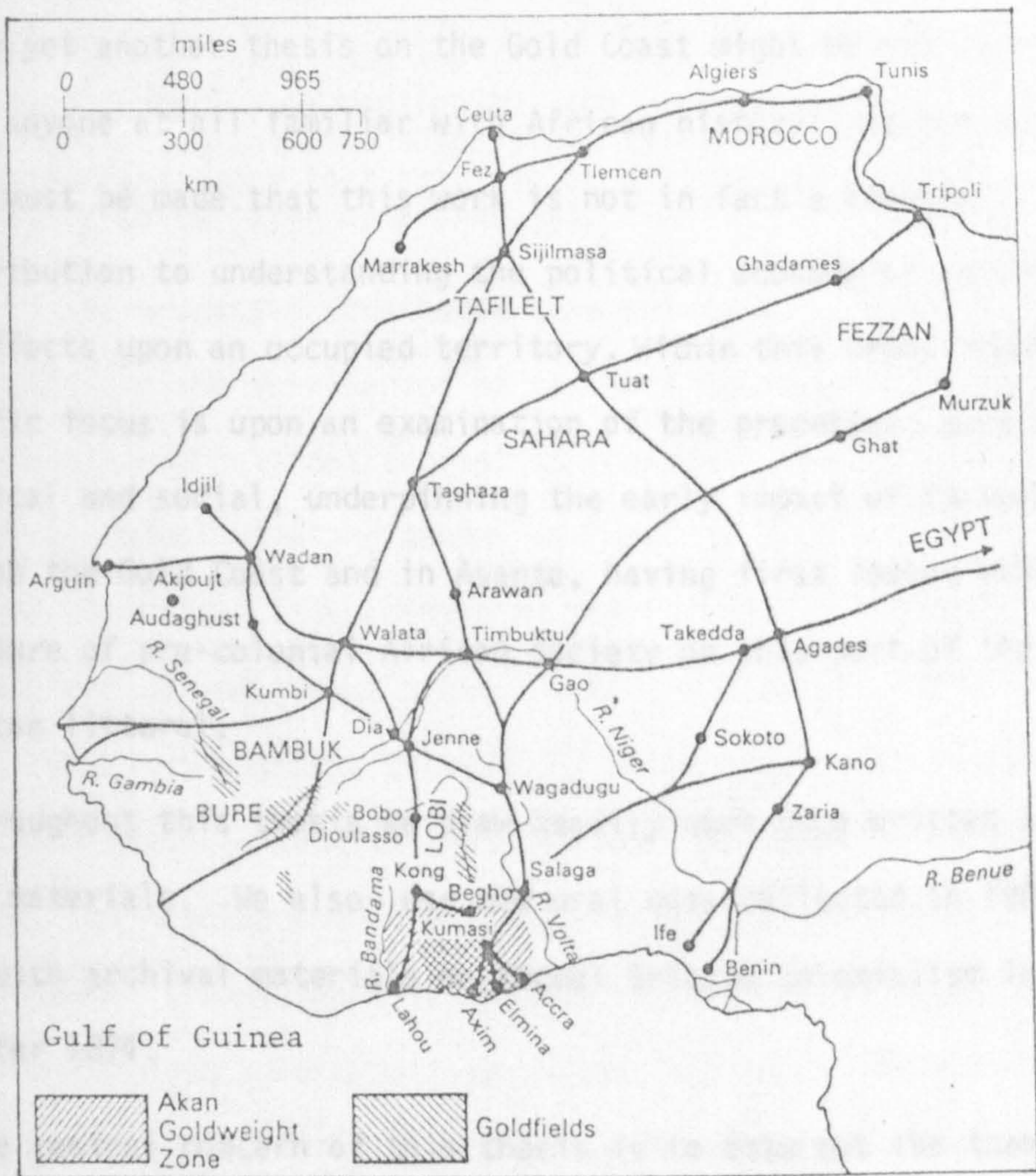


MAP TWO: The Akan Group on the Gold Coast

Source: K.B. Dickson, (1969).



INTRODUCTION



MAP THREE: The Gold Coast, its neighbours and the principal trade routes from North Africa to the Guinea Coast

Source: Adapted from Timothy F. Garrard, (1980)

[1] See Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Modernity* (1979), pp. 1-2. Translated by Marjorie Kochan, (London: Penguin, 1985).

INTRODUCTION

Why yet another thesis on the Gold Coast might be the question raised by anyone at all familiar with African history? At the outset the point must be made that this work is not in fact a history. This is a contribution to understanding the political economy of colonialism and its effects upon an occupied territory. Within this broad framework our specific focus is upon an examination of the processes, particularly the political and social, underpinning the early impact of European capital; on the Gold Coast and in Asante, having first looked briefly at the nature of pre-colonial African society on this part of the West African littoral.

Throughout this thesis we draw heavily upon much written and published materials. We also use new oral data collected in 1980 together with archival materials on formal British colonialism in the colony after 1874.

The central concern of this thesis is to draw out the themes and issues which for so long have either been neglected or left implicit in much of the written history of Ghana. We do this in two ways. First, by adopting the approach of 'longue durée' (1) and second, by situating our work within a materialist problematic. The *longue durée* in our study in fact covers six centuries. In doing so our intention is to place the minutiae of detailed political events backstage so that we may develop an understanding of the slow, long term changes that occurred on the Gold Coast. We try to uncover what one writer sees as underpinning the "shifts and changes of political events". We try in fact to:

---

(1) See Fernand Braudel, Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800, Translated by Marian Kochan, (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1973).

reveal the stable, almost undestructible system of checks and balances, the irreversible processes, the constant readjustments the underlying tendencies that gather force, and are then suddenly reversed after centuries of continuity, the movements of accumulation and slow saturation, the great silent motionless bases that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events (1).

The particular processes considered here are to do with the increased incorporation of the territories of the Gold Coast into an increasingly more dominant international capitalist economy. In tracing these processes we do not view indigenous Africans as passive objects of inevitable historical laws created by the Europeans. Instead, we look at the actions of indigenous groups in determining their own future. We also recognise, however, that as our main concern is with assessing the processes associated with the Gold Coast's increased contact with Europeans, the development of merchant capital and the later transition to 'legitimate' trade, there is an inbuilt bias to the thesis which links, and may even subordinate our understanding of indigenous social processes to colonial contact. This is not to say that the early informal colonisers or even later occupiers of the Gold Coast came with a grand design for a new Gold Coast society. It will soon become clear that no such blue-print for the territory ever existed. Instead, the tale of British colonial 'policy' on the Gold Coast was one of constant muddle and confusion resulting from a series of conflicts in Britain, and on the Coast, which largely reflected different class interests among the colonisers and the colonised. But this is to run ahead of the 'story'. Suffice to say here that the activities of the European merchants and colonisers on the Gold Coast reshaped what existed in the territory but this transformation owed as much to the

---

(1) Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974, p.3).

internal dynamic, actions, and reactions of the indigenous inhabitants as it did to European initiatives. We recognise, therefore, the need to assess the nature and composition of the indigenous social formation in acquiring a sufficiently clear idea of the impact of colonialism on the Gold Coast.

Thus we see the crucial need to combat any implicit Eurocentrism and focus on transformations within the Akan social formation. We do this historically by teasing out from the material in particular the processes of commoditisation of labour and land that occur and class formation. We seek a balance in the treatment of this material, between the processes at work underpinning merchant capital in Europe and its presence on the coast, with the indigenous African developments including the role of merchant capital in Asante. We begin the thesis with a tentative analysis of early state formation in Asante and a brief account of the possible way production was organised prior to and during the early contact with Europeans. This precedes an account of different views of the development of merchant capital in Europe and the earliest forms of the incorporation of the Gold Coast into a European dominated international economy.

The second way in which we examine the themes and issues in Akan political economy differently from previous Gold Coast historical writings is by working within an historical materialist problematic. We trace briefly what this means in a moment. African historiography has for a long time been concerned with elevating the 'events' of African society to the level of European history. This is to say the preoccupation of many writers has been to show that African societies have a past, and that it was as intricately complex and sophisticated as early European civilisations. The basis of this

position is empiricism and the method of 'counterfactualisation' (1). Thus writing about Asante history has persistently stressed the modernity of nineteenth century Kumase life and its similarity to life in Europe (2). This view of developments in Asante contrasts with the writings of nineteenth century colonial officials, who although they often recognised the intricacies of Asante life, nevertheless saw it as primitive, and in no way resembling the civilised worlds of London and Paris (3). How could it be that views of different writers, albeit writing in different ages, have two very dissimilar ideas on life in nineteenth century Asante? The answer lies with the method of the historian and to a lesser extent in the material she/he uses.

Scanty evidence on the Akan social formation has been supplemented in recent years with the help of new forms of data collection and analysis. These have included the use of oral tradition, archaeology and anthropology (4). Despite the increased collection and assimilation

---

(1) This extends also to what might be called Ghanaian nationalist history. See for example, Francis Agbodeka, African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast, 1868-1900: A study in the forms and force of protest (London: Longman, 1971) and also the more recent work by Ivor Wilks, especially the immense volume, Asante in the Nineteenth Century, the structure and evolution of political order, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). On 'counterfactualisation' see, H. Bernstein and J. Depelchin, 'The Object of African History: A Materialist Perspective', Part One, History in Africa, 5, 1978. On different conceptualisations of African historiography see inter alia, Thomas Hodgkin, 'Some Problems of African Historiography', History Workshop, 13, 1979, and Tore Linne Erikson, 'Modern African History: Some Historiographical Observations', Scandinavian Journal of History, 4, 1979.

(2) I. Wilks, op.cit.

(3) For example, J. Dupuis, Journal of a Residence in Ashantee, (London: Cass, 1824).

(4) See, for example, a selection of the large output of research and documentation on the Akan by staff and students at The Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, in the last twenty years.

of 'raw data' on the Akan, which has reduced the difficulties with working from a shortage of historical evidence, problems with recent writing on the Akan social formation still persist. The difficulty with much 'nationalist' writings and writers (1) has been the continued assumption that the material (albeit newly discovered) speaks for itself. In other words, there is an implicit assumption in recent historiography of the Akan that 'the historical evidence', and the working of it, is objective and unbiased. All an historian of Ghana has to do to write the history of colonialism in Ghana is to provide sufficient data to show that an event occurred or did not occur.

In contrast to this position, our position is that the writing of history and of political economy, is not a question of simply uncovering the historical facts which exist in the 'real' world divorced from, amongst other things, the ideological concerns of the author. In other words the historian or political economist brings to bear on the information which he/she gathers a set of ideas which have already shaped and determined the information and data she/he decides to collect, and those facts which are thought to be 'significant'

Previous writing on Asante and the Gold Coast (2) has been largely within a certain empiricist problematic. This is in contradistinction to the present work which locates its analysis within an

---

(1) A selection of these writers might include: F. Agbodeka, op.cit., J.K. Fynn, Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807, (London: Longman, 1971), E. Reynolds, Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast, 1807-1874, (London: Longman, 1974).

(2) The exception is the work done by E. Terray, which in fact relates to a neighbouring kingdom. For example, see, 'Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman', translated by Anne Bailey, in M. Bloch, (editor), Marxist Analysis and Social Anthropology, (London: Malaby Press, 1975).

historical and materialist framework. The term problematic (1) refers to the method of study:

Its components include both a set of concepts and a set of rules or procedures which govern both the construction of concepts and their employment in analysis (2).

The problematic of any social scientist determines the very questions which are posed, and thus the answers to them, which are not given solely by the 'facts' themselves or by the feelings of the researcher. In other words a problematic indicates the object of knowledge and also the concepts used in the study of it.

What bearing do these observations have on this piece of work? The importance of the term problematic lies with our comment that previous writings on the Gold Coast have as their object of study the reification of facts, which speak for themselves. A second characteristic of much writing on the Gold Coast is the concern with surface political phenomena, like institutions of government, rather than with the social production of life (3). In contrast, our analysis attempts to locate the workings of the Asante social formation, together with the development in European contact on the coast, within the production of material and human life together with an analysis of the consequent relationships between people: both areas of concern

---

(1) L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital, translated by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Review Editions, 1970), and, H. Bernstein and J. Depelchin, op.cit., and Part II, History in Africa, 6, 1979.

(2) H. Bernstein and J. Depelchin, op.cit., Part One, p. 9.

(3) This criticism of an emphasis upon political events and institutions may be extended to more recent nationalist historiography of the Gold Coast. In addition to the examples cited at footnote 1 page 4 above, see David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

are embodied in the Marxist concepts of mode of production and social formation. The concept mode of production is used at a level of abstraction that does not relate to any specific empirically observable phenomena but, "has a theoretical function and validity independent of any given set of concrete circumstances" (1). The premise of our position is that any analysis of society must begin with production in general because this is itself the premise of human existence. Our project is to apply the concept of mode of production to the period under study through the application of materialist categories of analysis which relate to the constitutive parts of the concept mode of production. Thus we speak of relations of production, productive forces and political and ideological relations between classes. These concepts are applicable to the concrete, historical entities of the Gold Coast and Asante social formations. The latter term denotes:

... the concrete complex whole comprising economic practice political practice and ideological practice at a certain place and stage of development. Historical materialism is the science of social formations (2).

Our criticism of much previous work on the Gold Coast and Asante is that its object of study has been superficial. The concern of historians of the Gold Coast has been largely to trace historical events divorced from any theoretical understanding of the social

- 
- (1) This point is made to differentiate the Marxist position from empiricism. See Bernstein and Depelchin op.cit., part 1, p.5. This follows from the method which Karl Marx employed in Capital volumes 1-3 where a theory of capitalist mode of production is provided which can be applied to capitalism in Europe and North America but which is not derived empirically from any one case study. Where empirical material is included in Marx's work it provides support for theoretical propositions of the work.
- (2) L. Althusser, Glossary. For Marx, (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969). The usefulness of the concept social formation is discussed further in Chapter One below.



processes linked to the dominant political economy of the period. Concern with telling the story of colonialism with more recently uncovered evidence has been the error also of so-called 'nationalist' historians. These writers have often reacted against colonial histories of their countries, and the tradition of European anthropological investigation, by resorting to the discovery of new historical facts of the period under study. Our point is that although it is clear on the one hand that much of the Gold Coast's past remains unwritten, it is equally true that in order to fill in the gaps, the author requires a method of analysis not simply rooted in counterfactualisation, but in the development of a theoretical framework which is grounded in the production and reproduction of the specific society being studied. This does not mean that all we have to do is reinterpret old data. On the contrary. Because much of the Gold Coast's history has been written from a non-materialist problematic much of the data will have been fetishized. Where information has been gleaned from anthropological material, for example, and relations between people are described the description more often than not refers to reified juridical or legal relationship rather than recognising that relationships are determined by the production of material life (1).

We will trace in a moment the other difficulties with the empirical material. For the moment though let us recap. This work of political economy distinguishes itself from previous histories of the Gold Coast and Asante because of its method of analysis and the extensive time period that it studies. The advantage of this combination

---

(1) See, Jacques Depelchin, 'Toward a Reconstruction of Pre-Colonial Central African History', Ufahamu, Journal of the African Activist Association, 9, 1, 1979.

comes to the fore in the opening chapters with an assessment of the acceleration of African Slavery and the development of the international slave trade on indigenous social formations. The slave trade has of course been the subject of numerous studies, but seldom has the transport of people across the Atlantic been combined with an analysis of the effects on specific indigenous social formations: of the undermining and strengthening of different indigenous relations of production, and the processes set in train like the eventual commoditisation of land and labour, which culminates in the development of colonial capitalism at the end of the nineteenth century (1). Slavery in Africa, moreover, is seldom discussed in relation to indigenous change and development not related to a global international dimension.

Although much of the documentary evidence available for this thesis is of the fetishezied kind, that is, a product of anthropological and historical writings, the conclusions of which have been ideologically prescribed, it would be wrong to discount the usefulness of all previous history and historiography of the Gold Coast. As two observers have recently commented:

while there is a radical break between the materialist problematic and those of bourgeois social thought, and while this break must be constantly reproduced from a materialist viewpoint, the relation to bourgeois thought cannot be one of comprehensive or uniform dismissal (2).

In other words bourgeois historiography and anthropology, does have something to contribute to our understanding of the Gold Coast's political economy. After all, bourgeois historiography is the product

---

(1) On this see Chapters 5 and 6.

(2) Bernstein and Depelchin, op.cit., Part 2, p. 31.

of numerous pressures and advances within social science apart from 'merely' the ideological elements of its problematic which we have mentioned above(1). By this we mean that we can use much information that has been documented as long as this is used within the questions posed by a materialist framework. In addition, we recognise throughout this thesis the ideas central to bourgeois work but these are reformulated and adopted within the concepts derived from a Marxist problematic (2). One of the difficulties in doing this is to be aware of the problems implicit in using the materials of bourgeois social science. In using the documentary evidence of early anthropology, for example, we have to be alert to several ideological and methodological issues which could affect our judgement of the nature of European impact on the Akan and of Akan indigenous developments.

### Anthropology and Colonialism

Throughout the early part of the thesis we refer to the data collected by anthropologists. There are two major difficulties which have to be recognised in using this kind of material. The first is its link with colonial officials and thus the tendency to reflect the prevailing balance of power and views of colonial authorities, in particular to support local chiefly structures; the second refers to the difficulties in which African institutions and way of life were understood and conceptualised by the investigators of European origin. The latter process in which one cultural substance is transformed into another, that is African culture as seen by Africans is documented and

---

(1) Ibid, p. 32.

(2) This is very different from accepting a notion of synthesis between materialist and bourgeois writings. See, M. Castells and E. de Ipola 'Epistemological Practice and the Social Sciences', Economy and Society, 5, 1976 especially pp. 140-41.

viewed by Europeans has been called 'transubstantiation' (1).

The relationship between early anthropology and the colonial authorities is well known and the point will not be laboured here. Briefly, the turn of the nineteenth century witnessed the increased desire by colonial authorities to perfect the institutions of indirect rule. It was recognised increasingly that the only way to do this was to have a better understanding of the 'natives'. This phase in the development of anthropology was marked in the Gold Coast with the appointment of R. Rattray as head of the Anthropology Department in Ashanti in 1921, and by the establishment of the Ministry of Native Affairs in 1928. Earlier, two phases existed in the history of the development of anthropology where 'primitive' societies verging on extinction had been studied in unison with, for example, anti slavery groups. A second phase was initiated where colonial authorities gradually recognised the importance of understanding local customs and mores. As Rattray was to comment having worked as government anthropologist in the Gold Coast for more than ten years:

Sometimes with little real knowledge of Africa's past, history, tradition, legal code, constitutions, religion we have attempted to build up working plans of government for various regions, which are ostensibly based on native institutions but in reality are sometimes only our own western ideas of constitutional government under a thin disguise (2).

The need to understand African society so as to be able to rule them more effectively, and better still to get them to rule themselves in line with colonial structures, was recognised in London as early as

---

(1) On this see, Theodore H. von Laue, 'Transubstantiation in the Study of African Reality', African Affairs, 74, 297, 1975, and on the relationship between anthropology and colonial authorities see von Laue, 'Anthropology and Power: R.S. Rattray among the Ashanti', African Affairs 75, 298, 1976, and A.F. Robertson 'Anthropology and Government in Ghana' African Affairs 74, 294, 1975.

(2) von Laue (1975), op.cit., p.42 quoting, The Leopard Priestess, (1935), p.2

1894. In this year the President of the Royal African Institute urged the organisation to become what one writer has called a "clearing house for information about foreign peoples and (to) make this knowledge available for imperial purposes of commerce and rule" (1).

As we have already mentioned, the use of anthropology in assisting government service in the Gold Coast became regularised with the appointment of R.S. Rattray to government service. It was from 1921, and in the host of published work which followed especially between 1923 and 1929, that the colonial presence in the Gold Coast was linked most strongly to the academic discipline of anthropology, a link which had its basis in the European notion that sufficient knowledge of their African subjects was needed to ensure the "workable articulation between traditional authorities and British administration" (2). It is to an awareness of the methodology of anthropology, however, that we have to turn to recognise the major changes and difficulties which exist in using anthropological sources in this study.

Rattray's major works are referred to throughout this thesis and they prove an invaluable source for early information on the ideology

(1) A. Mafeje, 'The Witchcraft of British Anthropology in Africa', Mimeo, n.d. p.5. The evidence to support the ideological and practical links between anthropology and the colonial authorities can be duplicated. For example, in 1903 a Professor Haddon of Cambridge and President of the IAS recognised that "... a full knowledge of the local conditions and a sympathetic treatment of native prejudices would materially lighten the burden of government by preventing many misunderstandings and by securing greater efficiency would make for economy", quoted in Mafeje, ibid., p.5. It might also be noted that the School of Oriental Studies, opened in London in 1917, changed its scope in 1938 to include African studies which increased links between academic anthropology and colonial administrators, on this point, see von Laue, (1976), op.cit., p.35.

(2) von Laue, (1976), op.cit., p. 36.

of Asante life (1). We say ideology because Rattray was open to many criticisms applicable to what has subsequently become known as the British school of social anthropology. These criticisms lay basically in the timelessness, the ahistorical treatment of societies by anthropologists and the reification of early African institutions. Rattray's observations on African life in Asante did not go further than a recognition of the dominant and prevalent ideas within Asante, which sustained and ensured the reproduction of a dominant class of chiefs and elders. Rattray's appreciation for Asante life, and his desire to comprehend the complexity of the institutions of the Akan, led to a glorification of a society which was in fact based upon conflictual relations between people in their struggle to sustain themselves (2).

This reification of the idyllic life of the Asantes, the supposed lack of private property and the communal bliss which this engendered, was based on the notion of the 'deity' in which the Asantes were seen to have so much faith. The reverence for the dead and for those as yet unborn was seen to consolidate the seeming lack of Asante concern for individual wealth.

As we will see in the opening chapters of this work, the Asante situation was quite different from how Rattray described it. Rather than an idealised communal bliss, Asante society was shot through with

- 
- (1) See in particular, R.S. Rattray, Ashanti, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1923) Religion and Art in Ashanti, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932) Ashanti Law and Constitution, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929).
- (2) Rattray therefore clearly did not reflect simply a colonial mentality. Indeed, his reification of different Asante institutions is very similar to that of later day 'nationalist' historians. See, for example, K.A. Busia, The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), J.E. Casely Hayford, The Truth About the West African Land Question, (London: Frank Cass Company, 1971).

conflicts between groups (classes) of chiefs and elders, who sought to sustain their positions of dominance which were located in their greater ability to accumulate wealth vis-à-vis commoners and women. Rattray gave support to the lie of harmonious family groups which was then transposed to greater social harmony at the level of the state (1). This is especially apparent in Rattray's work on Ashanti law and constitution (2) which could be utilised by the British in enhancing the latter's 'overlordship'. Rattray in fact concluded from this study, that the Asante had much to show the European about democratic relations between individual families and the state (3). What he did not do is thoroughly examine the relationships between people in Asante as relations between power holders. Society in Asante was perceived in terms of functional integration or what Durkheim called 'organic solidarity' (4). For Rattray, integration or a notion of social equilibrium was the norm in Asante society, and any conflict or disintegrative phenomena that might raise its ugly head was abnormal. In short, Rattray's work translated into print the dominant ideological and often practical 'realities' from the point of view of the colonialists of African society. Rattray's work reflected the prevailing balance of power. This was for two, often contradictory reasons. First, because of his links with the colonial regime and second the method and procedure for understanding Akan society.

---

(1) von Laue, (1976), op.cit., p.49.

(2) Rattray, (1929), op.cit.

(3) In doing so Rattray once more shows his ambivalent relationship between his role as a colonial official, and the need to impose colonial ideas of control, with his anthropological concern to recognise fully the nature of Asante society in its own terms. See ibid., p.49.

(4) See, for example, Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labour in Society, translated by G. Simpson, (London: Collier Macmillan, 1964).

The nature of Rattray's investigation into Asante life, largely through the use of informants, ensured the idealisation of Asante reality. Rattray's use of Twi did not wholly circumvent the use of translators and did not ensure that his informers would be free to comment about Asante society without restraint. Rattray, moreover, had a preoccupation with folklore (1) which resulted in a romanticisation of the Asante, a role which did not merge too easily with his colonial job of finding ways of incorporating Asante institutions more closely into the British regime.

Underpinning our criticisms of the writings of Rattray is the more fundamental difficulty that we recognise in understanding different cultures. This is that Rattray, like any outsider, inevitably failed to perceive the nuances of meaning present for the Asante in the areas which he documented, and what he did record was the ideological view presented by the dominant classes in Asante. Despite his use of the Twi language and his presence for many years in Asante, his position was always one of colonial official and this must inevitably have been perceived as such by the Asantes. Rattray's recorded observations were always those which he saw as important to record rather than those which the Asante themselves might have set special store in. This is not to say that Rattray's accounts of ceremonies and his understanding of the significance of them is not important. His accounts provide useful information for us. The point is that this information has then to be set within a different problematic. In addition, we are often concerned with different information from that which became the focus for Rattray. Our preoccupation is with discovering the way in which the Asante produced the means of subsistence and exchange and

---

(1) von Laue, (1976), op.cit., p.40.



how this production was organised. We focus on this in our early chapters. Our search for different information and our reworking of Rattray's material, leads us to focus on the relations of production and reproduction in the Akan social formation.

In levelling this criticism against Rattray we do not exempt ourselves from the problems involved in understanding non-European societies. The problems of transubstantiation are present in the work that follows. We hope, however, by premising our thesis with the observation that there has hitherto been little recorded African history, and much recording of 'events' in a westernised tradition, that some of the pitfalls of much of the published material can be avoided. By this we mean that no pretence is made here to tell the 'story' of Asante developments from the fourteenth century to the 1930's. Although at different times we try to pull the 'narrative' together, our major concern is with developing theoretically a framework within which to situate the process of the Gold Coast's relations with Britain. The result is that we move between a social historical account of the so-called major events of the Gold Coast's colonial past, and the development of a different theoretical position for understanding state and class formation in the Akan areas. An account of the interrelationship between the historical events and our theoretical understanding and situation of them is central to this thesis (1).

This is not to say, however, that the theorisation of different periods of the Gold Coast's history is unproblematic. There are a number

---

(1) For a similar recent attempt at reducing the boundaries between history and the development of a Marxist theory of underdevelopment see, G. Kitchen, Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie 1905-1970, (London:Yale University Press, 1980).

of debates within the tradition of historical materialism which are concerned, among other things, with providing the tools of analysis for understanding non-capitalist societies, the conceptualisation of slavery and the transition to capitalism in Europe and elsewhere. We examine many of these debates in this thesis, and indicate the contentious nature of the different positions within the Marxist traditions of scholarship. In Chapter One, we situate the need to understand early contact Akan relations of production within the debates about modes of production and 'social formation', as useful concepts for clarifying and uncovering the social 'realities' of non-capitalist societies. In Chapter Two, we examine in detail the controversy surrounding the emergence, periodisation and character of an international world economy. The third chapter raises once more the debate about slavery. This is examined not simply from the position of the Atlantic slave trade, and the question as to how many Africans were transported to the Caribbean, but rather from the position which slavery had within the indigenous Akan social formation and whether it is indeed useful to talk about a general category of slavery, or whether there were different forms of 'unfree' labour in Asante. In tracing the development of formal colonialism on the Gold Coast we show the inter-relation between legitimate trade and indigenous social movements within Asante. This discussion prepares the way for the final two chapters which discuss the commoditisation of land and labour in the Akan areas between ca. 1874 and 1930 and contributes to the debate about the role of colonialism in undermining, in a very uneven way, indigenous relations of production.

In other words, this thesis seeks to extract some of the central themes of Asante and Akan development in the five centuries between ca. 1450 and 1930. We locate them within a specific problematic. This

problematic provides the tools for an historical and materialist analysis of the increasing incorporation of sections of the West African littoral within the orbit of the British dominated international political economy. The processes specifically examined are class formation and erosion, and the changing relations of production within Asante with specific reference to gold mining and cash crop production.

## C H A P T E R   O N E

### EARLY CONTACT AKAN-ASANTE SOCIAL FORMATIONS

#### I.     INTRODUCTION

This opening chapter attempts to discuss further some of the issues raised in the Introduction as well as examine tentatively what might have been some of the factors associated with the emergence of state formation on the Gold Coast among the Akan.

The issues extended from the Introduction relate essentially to the methodology employed in this work and a discussion of some of the categories of analysis which are used throughout the thesis. Before we begin with this discussion however, we need first to try and define what we actually mean by the 'Gold Coast' throughout the long period up to 1930.

#### II.    THE GOLD COAST SOCIAL FORMATIONS

The Gold Coast in this study refers to the geographical area which became known as the Gold Coast Colony on the West African littoral bordered by the river Bandama to the West, the river Volta to the East and what became the forest kingdom of Asante in the North. Within this geographical area our focus of study are the people comprising the Akan. The Akan constitute what we have called above (1) a social formation, that is, "a historically concrete society whose structure, organisation, and historical development were conditioned by specific systems (modes) of material production" (2).

---

(1) Page 1.

(2) Ray A. Kea, Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 1.

Although the Gold Coast was marked by a degree of spatial heterogeneity - four principal linguistic groupings (1) and a number of political units - it also contained a degree of spatial homogeneity with regard to social structure, forms of production and technology. It is because of this degree of similarity in relations of production, extensive trade networks, the presence of markets, together with other factors of regional political economy that we view the Akan within the geographical area of the Gold Coast as a specific social formation. In addition we talk about an Asante social formation - which is also peopled by the Akan, see Map Two. We distinguish this socio-historic entity from the more general notion of the Akan because of the increasingly separate, but not unconnected, presence of the Asante forest kingdom in relations with the Gold Coast from circa 1700 (2). Despite the fact that the Asante social formation also shared common characteristics with the coastal Akan (Fante) the presence of the Asante state assumed such social, economic and military importance on the Gold Coast, both prior to and following formal British control, that we must and can only recognise its specificity by distinguishing it from the other Akan groups.

In later chapters we also discuss briefly the Northern Territories and the interplay of groups in this geographical area with the Asante - (see Map One). We look, for example, at the encroaching colonial forces especially following the development of formal colonial authority in the Gold Coast Colony in 1874 and the British occupation of Asante (Ashanti) in 1900.

---

(1) Volta Komoe', Gur, Central Togo (Ewe), Ga-Danme, see ibid, p. 2.

(2) The period around 1700 is widely seen to be important as reflecting the climax of the formation of the Asante state. See, for instance, J.K.Fynn, Asante and Its Neighbours 1700-1807, (London: Longman, 1971). I.Wilks, Asante in the nineteenth century; the structure and evolution of a political order. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

### III. ON NON-CAPITALIST SOCIAL FORMATIONS

There are a number of different, but nevertheless related marxist perspectives on how to understand the historical, political and economic composition of pre-colonial and non-capitalist societies (1). The debate on African 'modes of production' has largely developed from a critique of the pioneering work of British and North American anthropologists who saw the need to establish a specific field of economic anthropology, which did not simply use analytic concepts derived from neo-classical economic theory to study 'non-modern' society. Instead, Bohannan and Dalton (2) argued that notions of supply and demand and profit maximisation were inappropriate categories to understand African economies. Despite this, Bohannan and Dalton did recognise that one of the best ways in which we could conceptualise the development of 'non-modern societies' was by recognising the spread of the market and market exchanges throughout Africa.

In critically appraising this position a number of French authors attempted to move the debate away from a concern with understanding specific societies through the exchange of marketable products and distributive mechanisms generally. Instead, for a number of writers entrenched in what has been called the 'new economic anthropology' (3) the analysis of non-capitalist society has

- 
- (1) For an introduction to some of the debates see, Robin Law, 'In search of a marxist perspective on Pre-Colonial Tropical Africa', JAH, 19, 3, 1978.
- (2) See their jointly edited volume, Markets in Africa, (Chicago: North Western University Press, 1962).
- (3) See inter alia, J. Clammer, The New Economic Anthropology, (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), E. Terray, 'Long Distance Exchange and the Formation of the State: The Case of the Abon Kingdom of Gyaman', Economy and Society, 3, 3, 1974 and 'On Exploitation: Elements of an Autocritique', Critique of Anthropology 13-14, 1979. In the same volume see the pieces by C. Meillassoux, 'Historical Modalities of the Exploitation and Overexploitation of Labour' and P-P. Rey, 'Class Contradiction in Lineage Societies, also by Meillassoux, Maids, Meal and Money. Capitalism and the Domestic Community, (Cambridge: University Press, 1981). See also A. Foster-Carter 'The Modes of Production Controversy', NLR, 107, 1978.

been rooted in the concept of a mode of production - even though the concern has often been to understand the significance of exchange within this structural concept.

The concept of 'mode of production' has already been briefly discussed (1) and we are not going here simply to reinvolve the debates within marxism of the early 1970's about the abstract theoretical validity of the concept. These debates are alluded to at different times in this thesis and discussed in numerous review articles (2). Instead, what we want to do here is to indicate that there are a number of inadequacies with the explanatory value of the concept mode of production as it was classically conceived by Karl Marx (3). We will then introduce one aspect of the debate about the relevance of using a concept of modes of production in understanding non-capitalist societies and this will be with reference to the way in which pre-colonial and early-contact social formations ensured their reproduction. In other words we try to introduce here the notion that mode of production, conceived in simple economic terms, is an inadequate concept in itself if it does not incorporate also the social - as well as economic - reproduction of specific social formations. We then go on to look specifically at some of the debates within Akan studies as to how we can understand or conceptualise the relations between people in the early contact period of the Gold Coast between

---

(1) See page 7 above.

(2) For some of the more esoteric theoretical positions see, inter alia, B. Hindess & P. Hirst, Pre Capitalist Modes of Production, (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1975), and J.G. Taylor, From Modernisation to Modes of Production: A Critique of the Sociologies of Development and Underdevelopment, (London: Macmillan, 1979), see also J. Ennew, 'The Material of Reproduction: Anthropological Views on Historical Materialism and Kinship', Economy and Society, 8, 1, 1979.

(3) See for example, Karl Marx, Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp. 20-21.

circa 1600-1750.

(a) Mode of Production

The abstract concept which indicates a particular interaction between the development of the forces of production and reproduction on the one hand, with the social relations and the means of production on the other, is known in most marxist discourse as a mode of production. This concept was perhaps the most central organising principle of the work of Karl Marx. Indeed historical materialism became in large part the study of specific modes of production as they were translated in specific social formations. The premiss of most of Marx's analysis of historical societies, which were usually capitalist, was that the nature of the relationship between producers in the material production of life largely determined the character of a specific mode of production. Of particular importance for Marx was whether there was ownership or non-ownership of the means of production and by whom or what class was the surplus at any given historical moment appropriated and how?

Marx recognised the possible transition of a number of different modes of production from primitive, ancient, slave, feudal capitalist and socialist but this possible development of stages should not be seen as teleological or necessary in a deterministic sense. Most of Marx's analyses of concrete social formations were concerned with the capitalist mode or the transition to it from feudalism. The chief characteristic of a feudal mode of production for Marx was the access by the labourer to the means of production - that is land - which was possessed by a feudal lord, and the coercion of the labourer by the noble (lord) which facilitated the transfer of surplus by rent from a class of producers to a class of non-producers. In contrast, a



capitalist mode of production for Marx was most clearly defined in terms of the 'liberation' of the unfree labourer from access to the means of production. With capitalism, the labourer was usually separated from the land and he/she became a "free" wage labourer free to sell his/her labour power in the market place without political coercion from a dominant class, but under the economic duress that if labour power was not sold he/she would starve. Political coercion was replaced by the coercion of the market.

Although useful for understanding historical and social developments in Europe since the eighteenth century, Marx's concept of mode of production is fraught with difficulties if we want to apply it rigidly to non-capitalist pre-colonial Gold Coast societies. Indeed we will see throughout this thesis that a concern only with the ownership or non-ownership of the means of production is inadequate in locating the specific point of political power among the Akan. Instead, we will argue, inter alia that an understanding of relations between individuals in addition to the relations between individuals and the means of production is a more useful point of entry for examining the dynamics of political power in early contact Akan social formations. We will also suggest that relations of production are an inadequate guide in themselves to understanding the nature of non-capitalist social formations. Instead, we need to examine a whole range of relations of social reproduction, the appropriation of agricultural and gold surpluses and the changing political positions of office within an emerging Asante state - but this is to run ahead of the story.

The inadequacy of simply transposing Marx's discussion of the capitalist and feudal modes of production in understanding Africa's

past has been made by a number of French scholars, who in the 1960's began to re-examine Marx's own concept of the Asiatic mode (1). This was in fact renamed by S. Amin as resembling more a tributary mode (2). Briefly, these terms refer to societies where agricultural production was organised individually or communally - Marx used India as the case - but where property rights in the means of production were vested in a state. There was no landowning class as such. In addition surplus generated from agricultural production was appropriated by tax either in kind or as forms of tribute and not as rent (3).

Although there are similarities to be seen in the Akan social formation with this definition of the Asiatic or Tributary mode we will see shortly that there are also important differences. Indeed because of the differences largely relating to the specific relations of production on the Gold Coast, the specific site of production activities and the relations between a number of emerging states, and the direct producers, the Akan and Asante social formations can probably be best understood by talking about the articulation of a domestic mode of production with three servile modes (4).. We will argue, tentatively because the available material is limited and fragmentary, that there was a domestic mode of production which was

---

(1) See, J.Suret-Canale, 'Les Societes traditionnelles en Afrique tropicale et le concept de mode production asiatique', La Pensee, 14 April 1964, Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, translated and edited by Eric Hobsbawm, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964) and Umberto Melotti, Marx and the Third World, (London: Macmillan, 1977), and Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, (London:NLB, 1974).

(2) Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

(3) We can note here that this line of argument has been pursued by C.Coquery-Vidrovitch and an alternative formulation postulated, namely an African mode of production where a bureaucracy appropriates surplus not through actively engaging in production but by engaging in long distance trade - see, 'Research on an African Mode of Production', in, G.W.Johnson and M.Klein (editors), Perspectives on an African Past, (Boston: Little Brown, 1972).

(4) On articulation of modes of production see, A.Foster-Carter, op.cit.,

inserted into a hierarchical social order where a class of chiefs (nobles) extracted surplus from commoners and slaves. Domestic mode contrasts with tributary or asiatic modes of production mentioned above which we will argue focus too much upon the realm of distribution and exchange, rather than in the processes and relations of production and reproduction. The term domestic is used here essentially as a heuristic device to see more clearly the nature of the articulated structure of a number of different sites of material production within early contact Akan-Asante society (1).

The domestic mode of production was characterised as far as we can tell by agricultural and gold production performed by a class of commoners organised in 'household' and village units. Surplus labour was also appropriated at different times from these producers by a chiefly class in the form of cash - that is, gold - or products. This appropriation, and the origins of the chiefly class, needs to be located in these relations of production as well as three further modes of production based upon servile relations but which could often be distinguished from each other by the different origins of the slaves. In one, slaves were captured from outside the Akan-Asante

---

(1) This is not to be confused with 'domestic mode' as outlined by M. Sahlins in Stone Age Economics, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974) which is identified in societies where almost no surplus is produced and there is a non-hierarchical community of subsistence producing families. On the contrary, the Akan and Asante social formations seemed to have been characterised by a hierarchical social order where a class of chiefs (nobles) extracted surplus from commoners and slaves. We chose the term domestic mode of production because from what we know of pre-colonial Akan societies it situates the precise location of the site of production and the relations between the actors involved. It also gives us the proper framework within which to assess the process of the appropriation of surplus labour. In contrast, the term 'tributary' mode - see Samir Amin, op.cit., and R.A. Kea op.cit., focusses too much on the realm of distribution rather than production. We do not use the 'lineage' mode - compare P-P. Rey, 'The Lineage Mode of Production', Critique of Anthropology, 3, 1975, because, inter alia, it "locates the marriage system (as) the central means by which the dominant class exercises its power over the dominated", see also, P-P. Rey, 'Class Contradictions in Lineage Societies', op.cit.

social formation; in a second from within them through acts of banditry against neighbouring groups in the area, and in a third by commoners 'pawnd' within the social formation itself. Servile labour which became known to Europeans in the nineteenth century as 'domestic slaves' were probably recruited from 'odonko's - those purchased on Asante's northern border but also from pawns. It seems that prisoners of war were usually reserved for work on plantations (1).

Our use of slave modes of production here is rooted partly in the form of capture of the labourers who became 'unfree' workers in the Asante social formation, as well as in the nature of the specific servile relations of production which characterised slavery. We have now moved away from Karl Marx's original notion of a mode of production as based simply upon specific relations of production. By situating our analysis of slave modes of production in, inter alia, processes of capture which occurred between and within different communities, we are broadening our concern with modes of material production to include also structures which facilitate the reproduction of the forms of servile labour - a process which possibly established relations of exploitation between populations (2).

In this thesis therefore, although it often remains implicit, mode of production is not conceived in simplistic economic concerns of material production per se. Instead the concept includes discussion of the very reproduction of the social formations concerned. Indeed, this shift in the discussion leads us to recognise

---

(1) See Chapter Three below for greater discussion of the different categories of servile labour.

(2) See, C. Meillassoux, (1979), op. cit., p. 10.

the notion that for the concept of mode of production to have any useful explanatory value in understanding non-capitalist social formations<sup>2</sup> - and indeed also for understanding capitalist social formations too - mode of production must include within its theoretical framework the notion of its reproduction. It is here, in trying to add greater clarity and theoretical rigour to the concept that the work of Meillassoux is particularly useful (1). As with his work on slavery in West Africa, Meillassoux is at pains to show that the concept of mode of production is of little explanatory use unless it includes an appraisal of the way in which the mode is reproduced. In this way Meillassoux arguably shifts formalistic discussion of theoretical modes of production to an analysis of specific actors involved in the production and reproduction of the material conditions of existence in non-capitalist societies.

Meillassoux's work on the Gouro of West Africa has added a further dimension to marxist studies on non-capitalist society. In his study of the Gouro, Meillassoux explores the self-sustaining mechanism of the society to reproduce itself. In particular he recognised that the exchange of prestige goods secured the further social reproduction of the lineage-based society because such goods, unlike subsistence goods, were used to seal a marriage bond and thereby the control of women and young men by the village elders who controlled the access to such goods.

---

(1) See especially, C. Meillassoux, (1981), op.cit., but also, E. Terray, Marxism and Primitive Societies, (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972) Translated by M. Klopfer, p. 195. On understanding the conditions of the reproduction of modes of production see also the important Introduction to H. Wolpe (editor), op. cit.

Although his account might be ahistorical, and it is also unwarranted to simply transpose Meillassoux's observations of the Gouro to other non-capitalist societies, still his work does offer certain insights into how we might begin our analysis of the Akan in the Gold Coast and Asante. Instead of merely concerning ourselves with relations of production or juridical ownership or even control of the means of production - in our case land - or even modes of extraction of surplus labour, such as that by Akan chiefs Meillassoux suggests that we should perhaps consider as our premiss, the way in which the Akan social formation was reproduced: what were the mechanisms for social reproduction and what were the specific contributions to it from different groups (classes) in society? It must be stressed here that social reproduction does not refer solely to biological reproduction of society. A view of social relations that was based solely on that dimension would be biologically determinist (1). For instance, in discussing the role of women in non-capitalist Akan society - a focus of study so much neglected by recent writers - we do not simply explain the subordination of women to their role as producers and rearers of children or performers of domestic chores. Indeed, it might be argued that in non-industrial societies women very often divided and shared whatever domestic chores were performed with their

---

(1) This criticism is levelled at Meillassoux by Felicity Edholm, Olivia Harris, Kate Young, 'Conceptualising Women', Critique of Anthropology, 9 & 10, 3, 1977. Care has to be used in the use of biologicistic language associated with Meillassoux not least because it can draw us into a Darwinian or Spencerian problematic. For a critique of biologism and yet an attempt to situate women centre stage in the analysis of political economy see, Karen Sacks, Sisters and Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality, (London: Greenwood Press, 1979) especially Chapter One. See also, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 'Placing Women in History', N.L.R., 133, 1982.

menfolk (1). We will argue instead, albeit tentatively, because once again the data is sparse - that if women were exploited in Akan-Asante early contact social formations such exploitation was rooted in their role as material producers and reproducers of the Akan social formation: that is by producing gold along with their men but in some cases being denied access to the product of their labour.

Social reproduction in this context refers to "the specification of what structures have to be reproduced in order that social reproduction as a whole can take place" (2). Our focus of analysis in understanding the possible reproduction of the Akan social formation is not with biological reproduction of the Akan but of the social reproduction of the labour force - of slaves for example - an analysis of the relations of production of what we call the domestic mode of production, its relationship with chiefly authority and the presence of unfree labour in the Akan social formation.

Meillassoux's work has provided a useful intervention into the ongoing debate about how we can best refine or adapt the marxist concept of mode of production to understanding non-capitalist social formations. We are concerned less with how much of Karl Marx's limited nineteenth century discussion of modes of production we can apply to pre-colonial or early contact Gold Coast. Instead, by examining the contribution of Meillassoux's work we are alerted to

---

(1) Carmen Diana Deere, 'Rural Women's Subsistence Production in the Capitalist Periphery', in, R. Cohen, P. Gutkind, J. Brazier (editors) Peasants and Proletarians: the struggle of Third World Workers, (London: Hutchinson, 1979).

(2) F. Edholm, et al., op. cit., p. 105, emphasis added.

a discussion of the Akan modes of production which is predicated upon both economic and social production and reproduction of the Akan (1). We assess below not only the relations among the Akan at the level of chiefs/elders and commoner men and slaves in the social hierarchy comprising the Akan social formation but we also explore what could well have been the position of women in Akan relations of production and reproduction. Our focus of analysis in trying to uncover these relations is the production of gold. In addition we assess the importance of land and labour in Asante and the social controls over these 'factors' of production.

Before we proceed any further and discuss the relations of power between these groups in the Akan social formation and in particular what possible position they played in the formation of early contact indigenous states on the Gold Coast there is a further theoretical term we need to clarify. Social relations of production in a mode of production are normally discussed as representing antagonistic relations between "classes". Now that we have broadened out our concept of mode of production to include a range of relations of production and reproduction we need to take stock of what this does to our notion of social class.

(b) Class in Non-Capitalist Societies

The category of social class is used at different times throughout this thesis and is seen as a useful concept in understanding relations of power between the Akan. The concept of class

---

(1) For an interesting discussion of the need for a non-economistic conceptualisation of mode of production see also, I. Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, (London: Merlin Press, 1970), and N. Mouzelis, Modern Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment, (London: Macmillan Press, 1978).



is used because of its significance within an approach which uses historical materialism as its organisational framework. As P-P. Rey has commented recently, if we use concepts like relations and modes of production we must at the same time, because they are located within the same problematic, talk of social classes and exploitation (1). The discussion of classes in non-capitalist society is however fraught with difficulties and disagreement (2). This disagreement is both because of a suggested lack of any conceptual basis for the term as well as the absence of sufficient historical data on which to base judgements about pre-colonial Akan (or indeed other African) social formations.

Like the debate about modes of production, however, the French anthropologists have once again made useful and clarifying contributions to the issue of whether social class is a valid category for analysis of non-capitalist society. Beginning with a critique of Meillassoux's formulation of modes of production among the Gouro, P-P. Rey has stuck firmly to the notion that social class essentially identifies different relations of production. Rey has maintained that the elders in Meillassoux's study of the Gouro obtained the prestige goods, and thus the control of reproduction by appropriating the surplus labour of young men. Rey argued that this

- 
- (1) P-P. Rey, 'Class Contradictions in Lineage Societies', Critique of Anthropology, 13 and 14, 4, 1979, p. 42.
- (2) For some of the controversy see, inter alia, E. Terray, (1972), op. cit., P-P. Rey, (1979), op. cit., and, C. Meillassoux, (1979), op. cit. But see also the interesting discussion about the usefulness of the concept in Joel Samoff, 'On Class, Paridigm, and African Politics' in Africa Today, 29, 2, 1982 and Robin Cohen, 'Class in Africa: Analytical Problems and Perspectives' in The Socialist Register, 1972 (edited) by R. Miliband and J. Saville, (London: Merlin, 1972).

constituted exploitation and therefore elders and juniors constituted antagonistic social classes. In fact for Rey there are no classless societies (1).

Emmanuel Terray has also recognised the possibility of exploitation in non-capitalist societies although for him the appropriation of surplus labour does not necessarily ensure the presence of social classes, because fundamental to this concept is class consciousness (2). Rejoining the debate, Meillassoux has argued that exploitation and class cannot be so easily used in discussing lineage societies (3). Meillassoux recognises that the surplus labour of the juniors among the Gouro, that is beyond their own subsistence, goes to meet the subsistence needs of their offspring and the old but that over the period of a lifetime a man can expect to become the recipient of what is seen only as an exchange of surplus labour between generations of the future, present and past producers. Meillassoux reserves the term exploitation for the lineage members who produce surplus but cannot look forward to the exchange of it benefitting either themselves or their offspring. The groups (classes) who are denied the right to their own offspring and whose reproduction is not met by the community are those who remain foreigners - the slaves (4).

There are clearly a number of difficulties associated with trying to apply the term class to non-capitalist societies. We

---

(1) P-P. Rey, (1979), op. cit.

(2) E. Terray, (1979), op. cit.

(3) Meillassoux is also critical of the term "Lineage" - see C. Meillassoux, (1981), op. cit.

(4) C. Meillassoux, (1979), op. cit., and 'Correspondence', Economy and Society, 7, 3, 1978.

assess the particular position of slaves later. For the moment let us clarify what we will mean by class and exploitation in this thesis and let us briefly assess also much of the current debate in Akan studies about the most appropriate category for analysing power in early contact Gold Coast societies.

(i) Class and Rank Among the Asante

By exploitation in this thesis we mean the appropriation (the nature of which may change over time) of surplus labour, produce or cash by a non-producing group (class) which uses the appropriated products to sustain itself. We talk of a chiefly class (1), or class of headmen who appropriated the products of the labour of a commoner class of men and women and also of unfree slave labourers. This is what we might call the 'objective' criteria for defining groups of producers as a class of chiefs or elders. As Marx suggested, however, and Terray more recently, (2) there are also subjective factors in determining the development of classes. Marx asserted for example, that we could only suggest that a class existed 'for itself' if the members of that class developed a shared consciousness.

Because available data for the period on the Gold Coast is fragmentary it is difficult to assess even the objective let alone the 'subjective' criteria for establishing class relations. However, we could argue, as has been done recently by Kea (3), that a degree

---

(1) Our very use of the term class here situates our definition in relations of production.

(2) See, inter alia, The German Ideology, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), The Communist Manifesto (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972). E. Terray (1979) op.cit. For a general discussion of class see, R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (Oxford University Press, 1977), Ch.2.

(3) R.E.Kea, op.cit., pp.179-182. I.Wilks also argues that a degree of consciousness emerged for both the asikafo and Ahafo - the middle and lower classes respectively, see, Asante in the Nineteenth Century, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 705.

of class consciousness had manifested itself on the Gold Coast by the early seventeenth century. This was arguably the result of the forced movement of peasants from the countryside to the towns. This migration hastened the development of a social movement of banditry which emerged in reaction to the pressures of increased political and economic subordination to chiefly power. One of Kea's concerns in what is a major contribution to Akan studies is to show that the seventeenth century Gold Coast social formation was characterised by the presence of two modes of production: a tributary mode of production and a slave owning mode, where the principle relation between power holders and subordinates was the appropriation of surplus labour - or products - of food or gold - by nobles from commoners and slaves. Moreover, Kea recognises a significant economic and political differentiation not only between but also within both the powerholders and commoners (1). We return to an assessment of this work in a moment.

One other author who has focussed attention on the usefulness of the category of class for clarifying (or obscuring) power relations between the Akan - both Asante and coastal Fante - is Kwame Arhin (2). Although Arhin's observations are specifically related to the Akan in the nineteenth century it is useful for two reasons to discuss his work here in relation to understanding earlier non-capitalist Akan society. First, it highlights once more the difficulties of applying any categories rigidly to the Akan and Asante social formations and second, reference to it further situates the rest of our thesis within some of the current debates on power

---

(1) Kea, *op. cit.*, *inter alia*, p.5, 20, 46, 96, 98-99, 106.

(2) K. Arhin, 'Rank and Class Among the Asante and Fante in the Nineteenth Century', *Africa*, 53, 1, 1983. We discuss the senior 'Akanologist', I. Wilks below.

and authority in early Akan society.

Using a similar theoretical framework to that used in his analysis of Asante state formation (1), Arhin elevates politics, culture and ideology above the organisation of production and appropriation of surpluses as determinants in understanding power relations between the Asante, and in so doing is reluctant to use the term class at all. However, in discussing the coastal Fante he does talk about "incipient classes" (2) initiated largely by a degree of "commercialism" which is seen more as the result of external, European and neighbouring Akan trade activities rather than because of the relations of production between the Fante themselves (3). For Arhin, the social class categories of bourgeoisie, petit bourgeoisie and proletariat, likened by Wilks (4) to asikafo (wealthy men) youngman and ahiafo (the impoverished or underprivileged within society) are inappropriate for understanding the realities of nineteenth century society. This is largely because the term bourgeoisie was honed in the formative period of western capitalism, with connotations of the ownership of capital, and does not adequately convey the complexity of Akan society. For Arhin, the state in Akan society was seen as the "custodian of the community". Instead of individual economic ownership of the means of production there was only "community ownership" and because of this Wilks' social differentiation based upon economic roles is seen to be inaccurate (5).

---

(1) See pp. 164-69 below.

(2) Arhin, op. cit., p. 2.

(3) Ibid., pp. 15-18.

(4) Wilks, op. cit., and K. Arhin, op. cit., p. 3.

(5) Arhin, ibid., pp. 4-5.

Some of the issues which Arhin raises here are alluded to in the rest of the thesis. What was the role for instance of trade to state formation and what was the specific contribution of different social classes in this process? Particularly we are eager to assess how individuals within a specific lineage might have distinguished themselves and their descendents by becoming successful traders. In so doing it is argued that they "acquired prestige, respect and honour" and became eligible for "political and social mobility" (1). Such accounts imply that although individuals might initially distinguish themselves in Asante society in an economic sphere by showing themselves to be successful in the accumulation of wealth (2) it was often only in their elevation to a political position of power in the village or on the divisional council that "real" power and authority over commoners could be exercised and reproduced. For Arhin, in contrast to Wilks, it appears that it was an Asante's political position which also became an economic resource and not vice versa. "Men of enterprise acquired social distinction but did not form a separate rank unit. They were not numerous enough and in any case social ranking was an aspect of political ranking" (3). By rank Arhin refers specifically to "a position derived from status in a hierarchy of statuses" (4). This hierarchy existed both between different states - in order of the arrival of 'stools' to the area - as well as within each state and village where the village council members - the elders

---

(1) ibid, p. 5.

(2) See T. McCaskie 'State and Society, Marriage and Adultery: some consideration towards a social history of precolonial Asante', JAH, 22, 4, 1981, and Chapter 4 below.

(3) Arhin, op. cit., p. 5.

(4) Ibid.

and chiefs, were ranked in order of "real or presumed arrival of their forebears in the settlement of the village" (1). The order of this ranking could, however, be modified by changes in the relations between different states following wars or changes in marital connections between stools (2).

Although flawed - most importantly because Arhin reduces class almost solely to a political determinism, and he says little about the impact of the encroaching world economy upon the formation of ranks - this remains an important contribution to Akan studies. This is because of the recognition of certain political structures and processes in Asante in the nineteenth century. Arhin discusses for example, the significance of stool regalia and the different life styles which officeholders exhibited in nineteenth century Asante. He argues too, for instance, that it was only certain authority holders and not commoners or slaves who could exhibit wealth and who often received commissions on stately collections of tribute because of their position within 'palace associations'.

Our brief discussion here of whether class is a useful concept for understanding early-contact Akan society has highlighted two different positions. Kea (from a marxist perspective) argues that "Productive relations ... had primacy over exchange relations" (3). He further asserts that a recognition of who appropriated surplus labour within seventeenth century Gold Coast society is the most useful criterion for understanding who exercised both political and economic power and thus social class is a useful

---

(1) ibid, pp. 5-6.

(2) ibid

(3) Kea, op. cit., p. 173.

category for analysing non-capitalist Gold Coast society. In contrast, Arhin, in seeking to understand who wields power among the Asante focusses upon political, cultural and ideological factors removed in the first instance from the production process. Like Kea, who holds that production relations are the most important point of entry for analysis (1) we argue throughout this thesis for the need to base our analysis in the first instance on relations between producers and non-producers and on relations of reproduction among the Akan before we examine the changing nature of political processes among the Akan. Having said this however, we need to make the important point that neither class nor rank are mutually exclusive concepts, although one does take precedence as a heuristic device for clarifying our understanding of early Akan social formations. We say they are not mutually exclusive because in all societies, notions of personal esteem, self and culturally imposed worth are important guides to individual action, the exercise of political power and how people relate to each other. It will be the contention of this thesis that wealth, life styles and stately regalia and political paraphernalia contributed to the maintenance of the Asante state in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The impetus and underpinning structures of the state, however, and of the relations between chiefs, freemen and slave men and women, was the ability of a chiefly class through the state to extract surplus labour and therefore sustain itself as a dominant class. Relations of production determined the character of the state but were in turn subject to the machinations of a whole host of political and cultural

---

(1) But there is some doubt that he actually succeeds in this endeavour - focussing instead upon exchange relations - see below.



restrictions.

Ivor Wilks has documented many of the processes associated with the entrenchment of the Asante state (1). However, despite the use of terms like bourgeoisie, Wilks does not focus upon forms of surplus extraction in the consolidation of the state. Instead, a major focus are the institutional 'modernising' policies of different regions which lead to the development of a 'bureaucracy' in Asante (2). Like Arhin whose major concern is arguably with 'political' developments, Wilks builds an impressive picture of Asante's political structures in the nineteenth century. It is, however, only partial in its account of relations between power holders and commoners. We return to this in a moment. Suffice to say here, that we recognise the need for an analysis of political, ideological and cultural dynamics in early Akan societies. We stress however, that a starting point of analysis should be the realm of production and not with 'superstructural' political phenomenon alone. As Kea notes:

Landed property and agriculture constituted the central category of social production, dominating all other categories ... The social structure associated with landed property and agriculture had three principal elements: a class of overlords (the ahenfo and the abirempon), a rent paying peasantry, and slaves and bonded freemen engaged in various farming activities (for example, land

- 
- (1) Among these were the Odwira festivals and the use of symbols like the Golden stool to reflect - develop - unity among the Asante. See Wilks (1975), *op. cit.*
- (2) See especially, Wilks, *ibid.*, Chapters 14 and 15 and 'Aspects of Bureaucratisation in the nineteenth century', JAH, 7, 2, 1966.

clearance and cultivation (1).

(ii) Kinship

In contrast to the use of the category of class to understand power relations among the early contact Akan two major traditions in Akan studies have failed to recognise adequately the intricate web of power relations between Akan citizens based upon the exploitation of servile labour. We can now assess these alternative formulations of relations between the Akan before examining the possible path which state formation took among the Akan.

Relations between the Akan have been characterised as we saw in the Introduction within an 'anthropological' tradition which has been concerned with "kinship and synchronic social structure, with the jural domain, with religion and spirituality" (2). Another approach within Akan studies has been to reconstitute a finely textured Asante history with an eye to greater detail than previously

- 
- (1) Kea op. cit., p. 165. For Kea, a major shift occurred in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century where slaves and bonded freemen became principle producers of agricultural surplus instead of free commoners. This shift was linked to a change in the form of payment commoners made for the right to work land from the payment of gold to rent in kind (produce). In the seventeenth century peasants were under pressure of land revenue demands to sell part of this harvested produce in the town markets for gold - a portion of which went to revenue collectors as rent. Thus peasants were obliged to live in reasonable proximity to 'central townships'. With the conversion of money rent to rent in kind there was not the same necessity for peasant villages to be closely located to the towns. Hence a process of deurbanisation occurred about which more information is needed. The important point here, however, is the transition to a greater reliance by chiefs upon slave labour and a possible demonetisation of relations between towns and villages. Moreover, peasant farming communities took on a greater economic and military role and were reorganised to represent corporate administrative and juridical movements. See Kea, op.cit., pp.166-168.
- (2) For discussion of this perspective see, McCaskie, (1983) op.cit., p.24. This anthropological tradition is characterised by the work of R.S.Rattray see for example his, Ashanti, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) and M. Fortes, Kinship and Social Order. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969). See the Introduction above for further criticism of this anthropological perspective.

has been recorded. (1). A difficulty with this latter position has been that whereas historical detail about the Akan social formations is welcome it has seldom been cast in any explicit theoretical framework, and certainly not one that considers relations between the Akan to be based firmly in the appropriation by one class of the surplus labour of another. Akan social formations therefore have seldom been described as being dominated by class relations. The three analysts considered above are a partial exception to this but even Ivor Wilks in his important study of Asante (2) does not adequately explain the nature of relations of production. Instead, Wilks, when he comes down to it seems to organise his work around concerns of lineage and kinship which takes the discussion back to the anthropological concepts developed within a problematic unconcerned with power relations and more concerned with issues of symbolism and ritual, although he does use them within a temporal rather than a timeless frame. We intentionally simplify these two schools of thought about the Akan. They could be used as ideal types which have tried to reconstruct Akan social formations without posing the questions which we see need to be raised. The work of Kea, and earlier of Terray, has attempted to redress this imbalance and we try to pursue their varied approaches below. We do so by offering a critique of the way in which Akan social formations have hitherto been described in both anthropological and historical literature.

Common to both of the 'anthropological' and the more recent 'historical' literature on the Akan social formations is the notion

---

(1) See, for instance, I. Wilks, (1975) op.cit., K. Arhin, 'The Structure of Greater Ashanti 1700-1824', JAH, 8, 1, 1967.  
 (2) I. Wilks (1975) op.cit.

that kinship was the organizing principle for religious, political and economic activities. This view sees the lineage as a corporate descent group where the concept of abusua denoted those of a common matrilineal ancestry (1). For example:

In the most extensive topographical sense ...  
abusua denotes a dispersed economy made up of  
localised sections of which are believed to be  
connected by common matrilineal ancestry (2).

We do not deny that an understanding of kinship is important for recognising the composition and form of Akan society. However, the way that it has previously been conceptualised, as on the one hand a description of relations of consanguinity and alliance, and yet on the other as the basic structural element in terms of which all else is analysed is inadequate. This is because such a view of kinship is, as we will show, superficial and empiricist but also, possibly structuralist and idealist. In contrast, we want to try and recognise a basis to kinship itself. Attempts have been made recently to analyse the notion of kinship more thoroughly although they have often remained only at an abstract and theoretical level (3). For example, instead of locating kinship and lineage relations in an idealist notion that they merely emerged because of blood ties per se Godelier

- (1) Abusa bako mogya bako - One Abusua, one blood. See the Glossary for a brief explanation of principle Asante Twi terms.
- (2) M. Fortes, op. cit., p. 162. For a similar view to this of kinship see, George Balandier, Political Anthropology, (London: Allen Lane 1969), Chapter 3. See also the critical review by J. Ennew, op. cit.
- (3) M. Godelier, 'Modes of Production Kinship and Demographic Structures', in, M. Bloch, (editor) (1976) op. cit., and M. Godelier, Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology, (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

has suggested that the concept of kinship is one which informs our understanding of both the 'infrastructure' and 'superstructure' of a specific social formation. The previous focus of writers on the nature of corporate descent and the functions of family groups is relegated by him to having a dependency upon more fundamental relations of production. Godelier's position has certain theoretical difficulties. Not the least among these is that this formula for understanding kinship reflects a particular brand of economic reductionism. However, Godelier's concern with understanding kinship as being rooted in relations of production does have the merit of not simply focussing upon superstructural concerns alone. Moreover he does offer a way to explore the interaction of kinship ties and relation of production.

Following Godelier's theoretical contribution, together with historical investigations into the pre-1700 Akan social formations by Kea and others (1) we argue that it was indeed relations of production but also relations of reproduction too which determined the character of lineage relationships (2). In contrast to the work of Rattray who located the authority of Asante chiefs in their position as 'caretakers' of the whole Asante nation and people, Kea claims to situate the development of inequalities and social differentiation with the Akan in different social relations of production. For Kea, "commerce was a precondition for the emergence of an aristocratic tradition based on the ownership of merchant

---

(1) Godelier, *op. cit.*, Kea, *op. cit.*

(2) See also, C. Meillassoux (1981), *op. cit.*, where he suggests that "relations of dependence linked up and realized in production must ... be recreated by filiation or adoption within a kinship framework", p. 47.

capital and the employment of unfree labourers in productive activities" (1). This position moreover, is predicated upon a theoretical framework which locates societal development in terms of a relationship between simple and expanded reproduction which is dependent upon internal changes in the Akan relations of production and external influences - essentially through trade. Kea's analysis, therefore, contrasts markedly with those descriptive accounts of Akan state formation which tells a story of the migration of people in search of food, trade or both without adequately grasping the nature of the internal dynamic that drove these early societies and the form of social organisation. We return to his actual findings on processes at work in the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century below.

In contrast to the recent work done by Kea, the anthropological tradition on the formation of Akan states and the emergence of trade sees those processes as compatible with the persistence of an essentially non<sup>un</sup>conflictual and non-exploitative Akan social formation. The basis for saying this was seen to lie in the way the Asantehene and sub-chiefs in Asante were supposed to have powers vested in them by the nation as a whole rather than in any way reflecting a hierarchical exploitative social system based on the extraction of surplus labour from commoners and slaves. Illustrative of this non-conflictual social formation was seen to be the way land was allocated. Notwithstanding our earlier comments on the problem of reducing the nature or relations of production to the simple dichotomy of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production it is still a useful first step to look at these relations in our assessment of which group(s) within the Akan

---

(1) Kea, op. cit., p. 56.

and Asante social formations wielded political power. However, information relating to land for the early contact period with regard to how it was allocated and by whom, is not plentiful. Once again we are forced to draw a picture of early contact society from oral data and the accounts of European travellers with all of the difficulties that this entails.

(c) Land in Early Contact Akan-Asante Social Formations

For Rattray rights to land in the early contact period of Asante were dependent upon membership of the common ancestry - the abusua of segmentary Akan matrilineage which safeguarded reproduction by control over access to land and the ability to produce goods for consumption and trade (1).

We are told also that earth in Asante was referred to as 'Old Mother' and was revered for its importance to society enshrined in the idea that it represented fertility (2). Indeed the Asante said that "all power is in land" with the material basis for this reverence lying in the early productive activities of the Akan, presumably circa 1400-1600, which were based upon the collection of foodstuffs and production of gold in the forest and subforest region of the Gold Coast. Game was also abundant with monkeys, wild pig and the grass cutter rodent being hunted for food. Snails were collected, mostly by women and children and if not eaten immediately were dried and smoked for consumption later.

---

(1) See R.S. Rattray, (1923), op.cit., Chapter 3 for the classical exposition of matrilineal descent in the Akan. Strangers also had access to land, this is discussed below.

(2) On the importance of land in Ashanti, see, R.S.Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution (Oxford: 1919) Chapter 33. See also, A.A.Y. Kyerematen, Inter State Boundary Litigation in Ashanti; African Social Research Documents Vol.4. (Holland: Afrika Studicentrum Leiden, Holland and University of Cambridge 1971), and also R.S.Rattray (1923) op.cit., Chapter 21.

Agriculture became increasingly productive for the Akan especially following the greater use of iron, produced locally but augmented by European imports in the sixteenth century, which accompanied the influx of new crops like maize, cassava, tomatoes, oranges and groundnuts. The use of firearms also made the hunting of game easier, but the major activity was agriculture which was 'shifting', where vegetation was cleared by the slash and burn method, and the plentiful nature of land compared with the numbers of people often meant cultivated land was not returned to for long periods of time (1).

We may say that even in this agricultural phase, property relations to do with land did not become too entrenched; land was in fact exploited in two ways in Akan society, circa 1400-1600, both as a subject of labour, that is directly with no human energy being previously invested in it, as in hunting and gathering and as an instrument of labour, where labour was invested in the land for a delayed return of an agricultural product. Food production in the Akan social formation, even though it was <sup>based on</sup> shifting <sup>cultivation</sup> was still based upon people's regular access to new land as well as on cooperation within the specific productive unit. As we will see shortly the productive unit was probably the domestic community where an individual ensured access to land to sustain himself and kinspeople through the production of food in the form of either crop preparation or the mining of gold (2).

---

(1) M.D. McLeod, The Asante (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1981) p.15. See, also George Benneh, 'Systems of Agriculture in Tropical Africa', reprinted from Economic Geography, 48, 3, July 1972, and Kea, op. cit.

(2) The search for gold tended not to clash with the cultivation of foodstuffs because the former was carried out mainly in the dry seasons.



There is one oft-quoted statement that is usually brought out to prove that land was owned communally:

... land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless numbers are unborn (1).

This could refer to an early period that may have existed pre-contact, when agriculture was relatively new, still shifting and land was virtually a free good. Or could refer to a later period when an individual shared the right to work different pieces of 'family' land without alienating it as property. The term 'alienation' in fact probably does not accurately describe the nature of land holdings in Akan society in the pre-contact period. Instead we should perhaps examine the nature of control over the allocation and use of land when discussing the period both immediately preceding and following contact. We might nevertheless still tentatively ask who exercised the right of allocation of land and what were the relations that these 'controllers' had with those who did not exercise this allocative function? Even if we do not know enough about the empirical circumstances at this time to give a definitive picture it will become increasingly clear that an anthropological view of Asante society as representing some kind of communal bliss is false (2) and so too is a view that such relations were unchanging.

---

(1) Nana Sir Ofori Atta, Omanhene of Akim Abuakwa, quoted in N.A.Ollenn, 'Principles of Customary Law in Ghana', p.4, cited in G.Benneh, 'The Impact of Cocoa Cultivation on the Traditional Land Tenure System of the Akan of Ghana', Ghana Journal of Sociology, 6, 1, 1970, p.44. See also, R.S.Rattray, (1923) op.cit., p.216, and Kwame Y.Daaku, Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1729, (Oxford University Press, 1970).

(2) See, H.G. Jones, The Earth Goddess, quoted in S.Hymer, 'Economic Forms in Pre-colonial Ghana', Journal of Economic History, 30, 1970, see also A.N. Klein, 'The Cultural and Historical Contexts of Inequality in Akan-Asante Society', Unpublished Manuscript, 1979, p. 5.

Akan society seems to have become increasingly stratified with eventually a Paramount chief emerging at some stage as the head of an embryonic state. This process may well have owed something to a shift from gathering, previously, to shifting agriculture, which had to become increasingly structured as the abundance of land became less, and not just <sup>to</sup> the expansion of trade. We shall in fact argue that an emerging state structure was based upon two levels of surplus appropriation, even if we cannot date these processes precisely. The first was achieved nationally within Asante where the position of Asantehene and his immediate group of councillors and the adekurafis in the villages came to occupy positions of dominance by the appropriation of surplus created by captured slaves, working on the chief's plantations or gold pits, and a whole list of obligations which fell upon the ordinary commoner. These obligations included aids to pay for expenses of a chief's funeral, levies for the purpose of making purchases for the 'stool' and its regalia (1), war expenses (apeatoo) and 'communal' labour where all 'lesser important persons' would work on the chief's farm for a few days a year (2). A second level of surplus appropriation which sustained chiefly power was derived 'internationally'. This refers her to that area outside the purely Asante area (3) where first, tribute was

---

(1) The stool is the major symbol of a chief's authority and is seen as a symbol of a chiefdom's unity and cohesion. Stool land refers to land in the area and jurisdiction of a specific chief. For a discussion of the hierarchy between chiefs see, A.A.Y. Kyerematen, op.cit., Chapter 2.

(2) Rattray, (1923) op.cit., p.227. These mechanisms for sustaining chiefly power will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 4 below.

(3) This area is defined as outside the initial Amantoo states that is the larger and older aman, polity, within Asante, in particular the term Amantoo refers to 'the five aman of first rank' - Bekwae, Dwaben, Kokofu, Mampon and Nsuta - see I. Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 729.

exacted from conquered subordinated states but also trade established internally was expanded to include exchanges, often state directed, with the coastal and northern areas. The ideological paraphernalia to sustain the chiefly authority arguably grew out of the state building actions of Osei Tutu and his high priest Komfo Anotche and to a lesser extent their predecessors Twum and Antwi, Oti Akentem and Obiri Yeboah in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (1).

It is towards an understanding of the formation of the Akan state that we will concentrate in the last part of this Chapter. As a foretaste to this we can here examine briefly some further possible mechanisms whereby a chiefly class exercised control over a class of commoners and slaves. Indeed we can begin to lay out more clearly - although still tentatively - what we mean by a chiefly class among the Akan between circa 1400-1600, that is in the period immediately prior to and in the first, indirect stages of contact with European merchants.

Kea is particularly suggestive of the possible development of an Akan chiefly class in the seventeenth century. Talking about the Gold Coast social formation Kea locates the emergence of a class of 'nobles' which he calls great men - afahene - to the possession of wealth which "gave them the means of access to public office and allowed them to monopolise the means of administration" (2). In other words,

---

(1) Tradition has placed much emphasis upon the actions of these individuals. It is more likely that they represent a developing chiefly class the interests of which were shared by many others leading increasingly entrenched mercantile positions.

(2) Kea, op.cit., p.292

in contrast to the anthropological tradition in 'Akan studies' which if it concerns itself with process at all implies that chiefly structures have to be understood, and presumably emerge from, within a genealogical framework as evidenced in folklore and tradition, Kea posits the reverse. Individual ability to accumulate wealth through differential access to the means of production generated dominant classes which in turn consolidated their positions politically and in blood ties (1). Central to this process of differentiation was the control over access to land and as Kea argues too the use of slave labour.

Briefly, we are suggesting tentatively, because of the lack of available material for the pre-1700 period, that control over the allocation of land may have been crucial to the basis of the chiefly control of commoners and slaves - and that such processes were in train before 1700. In the case of Asante we have to work back from later, post 1700 observations and then try to reconstruct the process of state formation in the forest kingdom. For example, the later record suggests that on the national level among many of the chiefly powers there developed at the point when land became less of a free good, the ability to exact allegiance fees from 'strangers' wishing to farm on land to which they had no immediate rights of access. The stranger might then have become a migrant vassal who was expected to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Paramount chief on whose land he had settled. In doing this the migrant would also acknowledge his subordinate access to land compared with people in the

---

(1) Kea distinguishes three groups within the Afahene class which he calls a 'brotherhood' of nobles: these were the political-military group or ahenfo, the mercantile group or abirempon and the priestly group or asofo, see ibid., p.292.

local land holding abusua (1). We do know a little more certainly that later subordinate village headmen (adekurofo) exercised the right of decision whether a person could lease pieces of land to stranger farmers. It became a chief's function as so-called guardians of the land to allocate portions to stranger farmers:

If a stranger to this town wanted land to farm he first had to go and see the chief and inform him of his desire to cultivate ... At first after having made his intention known and also that he is a member of say the Nson, Agona or the Anona clan the chief would only introduce him to the head of that particular clan who would show him where he could farm (2).

Oral evidence pictures settlement of communities and the excess supply of land over the numbers working it possibly for the period circa 1700-1800 in these terms:

Those who were first to arrive could farm anywhere. What happened was that nobody was allowed to cut off his neighbour. Those who came had to present drinks to the chief before they could farm because there were certain places that is taboo to weed (3).

Although it is said repeatedly that chief's people shared in every interest of the stool land with him (4) it is very difficult for this to be demonstrated from the available evidence. Rather, as was declared in a state's Native Customary Laws at the start of the twentieth century:

- 
- (1) It should be noted that all persons were at one time 'strangers'. See Rattray (1923) op.cit., p.220 and Kyerematen, op.cit., p.17 and the discussion of land use and the rise of chiefdoms.
- (2) Interview: Village chief and elders Aboso, Western Region Ghana, 17 August, 1980. A copy of oral data collected in 1980 is deposited in The African Studies Unit, University of Leeds.
- (3) Interview: Village elders Asaase, Ashanti Region Ghana, 26 June, 1980.
- (4) See, J.E. Casely Hayford, The Truth About the West African Land Question, (Second Edition, first published 1903, London: Frank Cass Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 54.

The ownership of all lands throughout the division is vested in the stool, that is to say either the paramount stool or some subsidiary stool owing all allegiance thereto; the chief and Oman council of the stool in which the ownership is vested are regarded as caretakers or trustees of the land for the stool (1).

Reference to caretaker here is very different from the usual connotation of simply looking after something for somebody else. Caretaker here means someone with the right to seize the land of a family refusing among other things, to fulfil military service (2). It also refers to the village chiefs and elders and family heads who derived individual gain from their position as allocators (guardians) of the land. For example, Rattray noted in a study of Ashanti law, published in the 1920's, that there were a number of caveats central to the ceremony of disposing of stool land to Asante subjects. If the grantor of land, that is the chief, wanted the new land holder merely to be its possessor he would include in the ceremony the words: "I give this land to you, eat upon it" or "I give this land to you look after it for me". In payment for the use of the land the new occupier was subject to a number of prestations from the chief: labour rent and rent in kind. We discuss these in some detail below. Suffice to say here that the chief, as occupant of the stool imposed a number of obligations on those to whom he allocated land. An initial fee was imposed for the right to work the land but in addition there were a whole range of annual tributes and

- 
- (1) GNA(K) ADM D Box 1907: Native Customary Law 15/3/1927-30/7/32. This quote refers directly to the Mampon district of Asante.
- (2) See, Rattray, (1923) op.cit., p. 227. It must also be remembered that individuals did have the right to exclusive use of portions of the soil which became the prerogative of kindred groups. Kea, op.cit., p.108, uses the term caretaker for the seventeenth century to denote a group of state revenue collectors or 'marinos' who acted as overseers for the upper classes. Characteristically perhaps, Rattray, in noting the caretaker pattern offers little indication as to its origins.

royalties from any minerals dug in the area (1). On other occasions the allocator of land might say "I give this land to you as a present". In this last case the receiver of the land would have to pay the chief or elder an Aseda (offering) which reflected in some sense the value of the land (2). Hereditary possession of the land for the new occupant however was not guaranteed. Instead, the new producer remained simply the possessor of the land and never its owner - customary forms of rent were given to the owner - that is the allocator of the land. In other words a chief's 'caretaker' role in relation to land gave him a powerful political and economic position within the developing Akan and Asante states.

All land which was not farmed moreover, came under the political jurisdiction of a chief who demanded the allegiance of anyone tilling the land in the community. The Omanhene or Paramount chief was in an even stronger position in the sense that he had sovereign oversight of land although this again is not seen by commentators in the

---

(1) It has been suggested that the best way of conceptualising the nature of these relationships in pre-colonial Asante society is to call them feudal rather than communalist - that is to say a feudalism stripped of its European medieval connotations. See, 'Social relations in land in pre-colonial Asante'. African Study Group, No.7, n.d., p.8. While recognising the important job of clarifying some of the issues involved in Asante's pre-colonial relations of production we do not see the simple characterisation of the Asante as a feudal mode of production as very useful. Indeed, it will soon become clear that the either/or characterisation of the pre-colonial Akan social formation serves only to mystify and obscure the complexity of the indigenous relations of production. Instead, we prefer an assessment of the Akan and Asante social formation which recognises the presence of a whole range of relations of production which can be attributed to a domestic and three servile (slave) modes of production.

(2) Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution (Oxford, 1929), p.355. This payment to the chief by 'commoners' for use of the land is justified by many commentators of the Akan as simply to uphold the dignity of the stool. Compare, A.A.Y.Kyerematen op.cit., p.24. We will show later in this Chapter, and in the thesis as a whole, that the ability of the chiefs in the Akan social formation to accrue wealth as non-producers helped to elevate their position as a dominant class of exploiters.

55

twentieth century to have constituted private ownership (1). In contrast to these writers our position is that control of the allocation of stool land vested in the powers of chiefs and elders enhanced their dominance over commoners in the Akan and Asante social formation. Although on the surface it appears that chiefs and elders in the period circa 1600-1700 simply carried out the demands of the people for land within the jurisdiction of a stool, the transactions involved for commoners to get access to land necessitated them entering into an increased subordinate relationship with the chiefs. This relationship centred around the payment of tribute from the commoners to the allocators of the land. Tribute was in the form of labour services on the chiefs' land and with the appropriation by the chiefs of one third of the gold mined or crops grown on the commoners land.

Little contemporary evidence exists to clarify further the social processes which facilitated the emergence of chiefs and of their control over land, commoners and slaves or as to when this occurred beyond saying simply between 1500-1700. We are in the realm of what has recently been called 'conjectural history' (2). On one point however, recent debates on the emergence of chiefly classes in Asante are reasonably clear, although not in unanimous agreement (3). This is the increased differentiation within Akan society prompted by a process other than land allocation: uneven access to gold and trade goods as well as to slaves. We will see in a moment that the

---

(1) Hayford, op.cit., p.55. Compare also, Rattray, (1929), op.cit., p.348.

(2) McCaskie, (1983), op.cit., quoting J. Peel, p. 26.

(3) The possible significance of servile labour in state formation remains contentious. See, inter alia, E.Terray, (1983) op.cit., and R.Dumett. 'Pre-colonial Gold Mining and the State in the Akan Region: With a Critique of the Terray Hypothesis', in, G. Dalton, (editor), Research in Economic Anthropology, Vol.2, (London: JAI Press, 1979).



development of the gold trade among the Akan predates European demand for the product at the end of the fifteenth century. Indeed we would certainly agree that "gold (sika) ... is located conceptually and materially at the very core of the historical experience of their (Akan) society and culture" (1). The exchange of gold for slaves became a driving force in the development of Asante. Control over the mining and access to gold - particularly nuggets - was a universal mechanism for both developing and sustaining social differentiation in the period of Asante state formation. We may conjecture that it was the individual accumulation of surplus and the development of the 'big men' which promoted the formation of the Asante state. It may have been the disproportionately greater access to wealth accumulation through the appropriation of gold and other tribute initially, and not simply through trade as is suggested in Kea's analysis, and later of slave labour which created territorial dominance by a number of powerful individuals - and maybe it was these who consolidated a wealthy position through ritual, symbolism and political structures under a title of chief. Some such complex and multidimensional process occurred over a period of two hundred years or more wherein powerful families created the dominance of family lineages and the creation of a unitary state over which the Asantehene came to preside. This process, moreover, did not occur in isolation. We may add that increased European contact on the coast and inland, and the increased demand for gold which accompanied the contact tended to initially enhance indigenous, local relations of production and chiefly dominance (2).

---

(1) McCaskie, op.cit., see also Chapter 2 below.

(2) The possible initial reinforcement of indigenous relations of production during the first period of European contact is raised in more detail in Chapter 2 below.

We trace what might be called a 'culturalist' interpretation of this process in Chapter Four below. Suffice to say here, for the moment, that this interpretation of state formation among the Akan is somewhat different from that described by both anthropological and historical (Wilks) accounts of Akan studies. What we have tried to show here is that although the outcome of the formation of Asante might well have been a system of chiefly authority vested in them supposedly by the state's citizens, this is more of an ideology than an 'explanation' as to how this structure of chiefship developed. In contrast, our understanding of Asante state formation is rooted firmly in a historical materialist tradition which examines individuals differential access to the means of production and to surplus labour/product and the consolidation of this process through the development of ideological and political constraints to legitimate chiefly authority.

We may now conclude this Chapter with a more detailed discussion of recent contributions to understanding the period of Akan state formation and attempt to specify some of the relations of production - many to do with gold - which existed in the history of the Asante state circa 1500-1700.

#### IV STATE FORMATION AND GOLD PRODUCTION

It is very difficult to assess with any certainty what happened with regard to state formation among the Akan in the period between circa 1500-1700. This is because little data exists for this time span. In order to make any judgements about the period we thus have to extrapolate backwards from later accounts of Asante which might give us a glimpse of what life in the pre and early contact social formation may have been like. This also means that although we can,

as above, indicate processes that must have occurred prior to 1700 it is difficult to explain their causes, and in particular to assign a weight to external as opposed to internal processes - another issue of contention as we shall see below. In assessing the possible nature of relations of production in the extraction of gold from auriferous rock and its panning from the river beds in western Gold Coast we thus depend upon many eighteenth and nineteenth century European traveller accounts.

Of course, as we have seen in the Introduction, these European sources of information about the Gold Coast are plagued with difficulties of both a theoretical and empirical nature. We have shown, for example, the often timeless nature of anthropological accounts of the Akan and the preoccupation of more recent historical writing which stresses the accumulation of factual information often without an explicit theoretical framework within which to explain the issues which it raises. In contrast to these two positions this thesis attempts to offer an alternative perspective to understanding the early contact Akan and Asante social formations. Our perspective is one which uses an explicitly materialist and historical framework - one situated in the need to assess the transformation of the social formations over time. In short we use the notion of longue durée. We nevertheless are still confronted with problems of sources and data for understanding the transformation of the Akan and Asante social formations. We have to make use of oral data - with all of its inadequacies - and the use of the very anthropological and historical accounts of the period of which we are so critical. We can only hope that the combination of our more rigorous theoretical framework and the use of only discrete and critically appraised early European writings

and oral data alerts the reader to the difficulties involved in our assessment of the Gold Coast up to 1930. Our summary of the account of state formation is only suggestive of what might have been the course of historical development. We discuss much of the secondary material on Akan social formations in Chapter Three below and with it we advance the notion that we can only understand the possible trajectory that states took between circa 1500-1700 with an associated discussion of servile labour. Indeed we conclude this Chapter with a tentative preliminary account of this. For the moment though we can assess what has been a very recent assembling of a host of European accounts of what life might have been like on the Gold Coast between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

(a) Akan State Formation: Some Preliminary Observations

As we have already briefly mentioned, the significance of Kea's contribution to understanding Akan state formation is that he has substantially shifted the debate in Akan studies away from the less fruitful concerns with 'The Origins of the Akan' per se to an attempt at trying to understand the process of state formation. This is in contrast to earlier work which for many years has concerned itself with an ethnographical debate about the migration of 'the Akan' without doing much more than simply describe or suggest the geographical paths involved in the movement of peoples (1).

---

(1) Kea, op.cit. On some of the ethnographical debate see Adu Boahen, 'The Origins of the Akan', Ghana Notes and Queries, 8, 1966, and Ivor Wilks, 'The Mossi and Akan States, 1500-1800', in M.Crowder and J.A.Ajayi, (editors), History of West Africa, Two Volumes, Volume One (London: Longman 1971). An exception to this ethnographical position is the work of E.Terray, already cited, for the neighbouring state of the Abron, moreover, other work has attempted to draw a link between trade and Akan migration, see J.K.Fynn, Asante and its Neighbours, 1700-1824, (London: Longman, 1971), K.B.Dickson, A Historical Geography of Ghana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)

60

In addition to collecting in one place much of the European accounts of trade on the Gold Coast for the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Kea has attempted to use a historical materialist framework for understanding state formation among the Akan: that is at least as far as the historical evidence allows him so to do. In fact, it is perhaps more accurate to say that because the available data for the seventeenth century is largely concerned with trade and commercial relations between European merchants and local traders on the Gold Coast the vast amount of Kea's project too focusses upon a discussion of trade, commerce and the exchange of products. He is careful nevertheless to stress that discussion of the increasing volume of local trade and commerce - something he reviews in detail - must be rooted in, and indeed made subordinate to, "processes of social production based on slave, peasant, and artisanal labor" (1).

Kea has a threefold periodisation of the Gold Coast regional social formation. First, he mentions a period, date unspecified to the late fifteenth century which was characterised by what he sees as simple reproduction based upon mercantile-agrarian relations. The second period Kea talks about in more detail and dates from the fifteenth to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Finally, Kea speaks about a third period from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (2).

---

(1) Kea, *op.cit.*, p. 173. See also p. 172.

(2) Like Kea we say little about the first period - date unspecified to the late fifteenth century. This is because any observation on this period must be even more speculative and suggestive than our already tentative observations about the early contact period up to 1600-1700. More research clearly needs to be carried out on this area - we need to note though that the lack of information on this period makes it problematic for us to assess with any certainty the particular process of change between the two periods.

The second period which Kea discusses is characterised by expanded reproduction which he suggests is where rates of local surplus appropriation and accumulation increased and had the effect of reinforcing social stratification. The latter was characterised by nobles who appropriated surplus produce - agricultural and gold - from commoners and slaves. Kea's description of the sixteenth and seventeenth century on the Gold Coast is also marked by increased urbanisation, "'bursts' of reproduction on an extended scale" (1) and population growth. Kea continues:

From the fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries the region comprised a mosaic of sovereign, independent polities. No single oman was militarily stronger than any other, hence territorial conquests by military means were uncommon ... The "unity" of the region was not realised at the level of a politically and militarily dominant oman and a spatially extensive network of administrative seats subordinate to a paramount administrative center. It was realised at the level of a dominant regional trading center and dispersed networks of lower-level commercial central places and at the level of the mercantile "empire" of the Akani, which was based on trade towns (2).

We cannot possibly do full justice to Kea's contribution to Akan studies in the span of this Chapter especially as his contribution only appeared as the final drafts of this thesis were being prepared. We have however introduced his study of settlements, trade and state formation among the coastal Akan in the seventeenth century because it is particularly suggestive of alternative conceptualisations of the themes and issues that we have raised in this Chapter. Like much of what follows in the rest of this Chapter which relates to the early contact period of Akan politics, economics and history it is impossible to say with any certainty what 'actually happened' on the Gold Coast and in the formation of Akan states. All that we can do is to try and

---

(1) Kea, op.cit., p. 13.

(2) Ibid., p.322. Emphasis in original - compare his observation on the late seventeenth century - see footnote 1, p.41 above.

make use of the fragmentary historical material and situate it within a framework which for us makes sense of the world - that is which begins an analysis of society from the relations of production and reproduction. Kea tries to do just this by linking trade relations in the seventeenth century to the likely production relations which may have existed at that time and in turn to emerging political formations. Although exchange relations for Kea therefore become a focus of concern they are understood only by recognising the probable productive relations which facilitated the development of trade.

For example, Kea assembles, from fragmentary evidence for his 'second period', a picture of the development of indigenous merchant capital from the demands made upon free peasant producers and slaves:

The emergence and growth of major trading towns during the period was linked to the conversion of peasant agricultural surplus, realised as gold, to merchant capital. The process of urbanisation was partly rooted in the transfer of social wealth from the settlements of free cultivators to the towns (1).

This mercantile-agrarian period in the process of Akan state formation where the governing classes were seen to rely on the surpluses of their own subjects, gave way Kea suggests to an imperial-agrarian period of the eighteenth century which was marked by administrative/military units most notably those of Asante (2). We focus in this thesis mostly on this later period where according to Kea, a process of deurbanisation was set in train following a change in the payment of land rent by peasants from cash to rent in kind. This led to a reduction in peasant production for the market and an increased

---

(1) Kea, op.cit., p. 20.

(2) Ibid., pp. 324-5.

opportunity for peasant accumulation. These developments followed an increase in military organisation of an Asante state towards the end of the seventeenth century and the increased linking of merchant capital to landed property controlled by the political and military functionaries of the state in the eighteenth century.

Kea attributes an important position in the class structure of seventeenth century Akan society to slaves and bonded freemen or 'retainer labour' (1). It was from the group of unfree labourers that the nobles - elements within the class of afahene (great men) (2) - appropriated the products of surplus labour across a whole range of productive activities (3). What is significant about this retainer class is that:

Generally speaking (they) owned neither productive property nor the products of their own labour; they could not put the means of production into operation, and they were separated from their own means of subsistence. Their material welfare depended on those who owned them, the afahene (4).

We can now assess the possible role which slaves took in the likely formation of the Asante state by focussing upon the role of servile labour and the role of commoner men and women in the production of gold in early contact Akan society. We have already seen briefly one mechanism in which this domination was sustained - through the allocation of land. The argument here will be that a group (class) maintained a position of dominance over unfree labourers (slaves),

(1) Ibid., pp. 56, 165-66, 290, 296.

(2) Ibid., p. 292.

(3) Kea sees the diversity of slave (retainer) tasks as indicative of increased specialisation within the afahene's economy, see, ibid., p. 293. Retainers may have worked as domestic servants, attendants, gold miners and concubines etc.

(4) Ibid., p. 295.



commoner men and women.

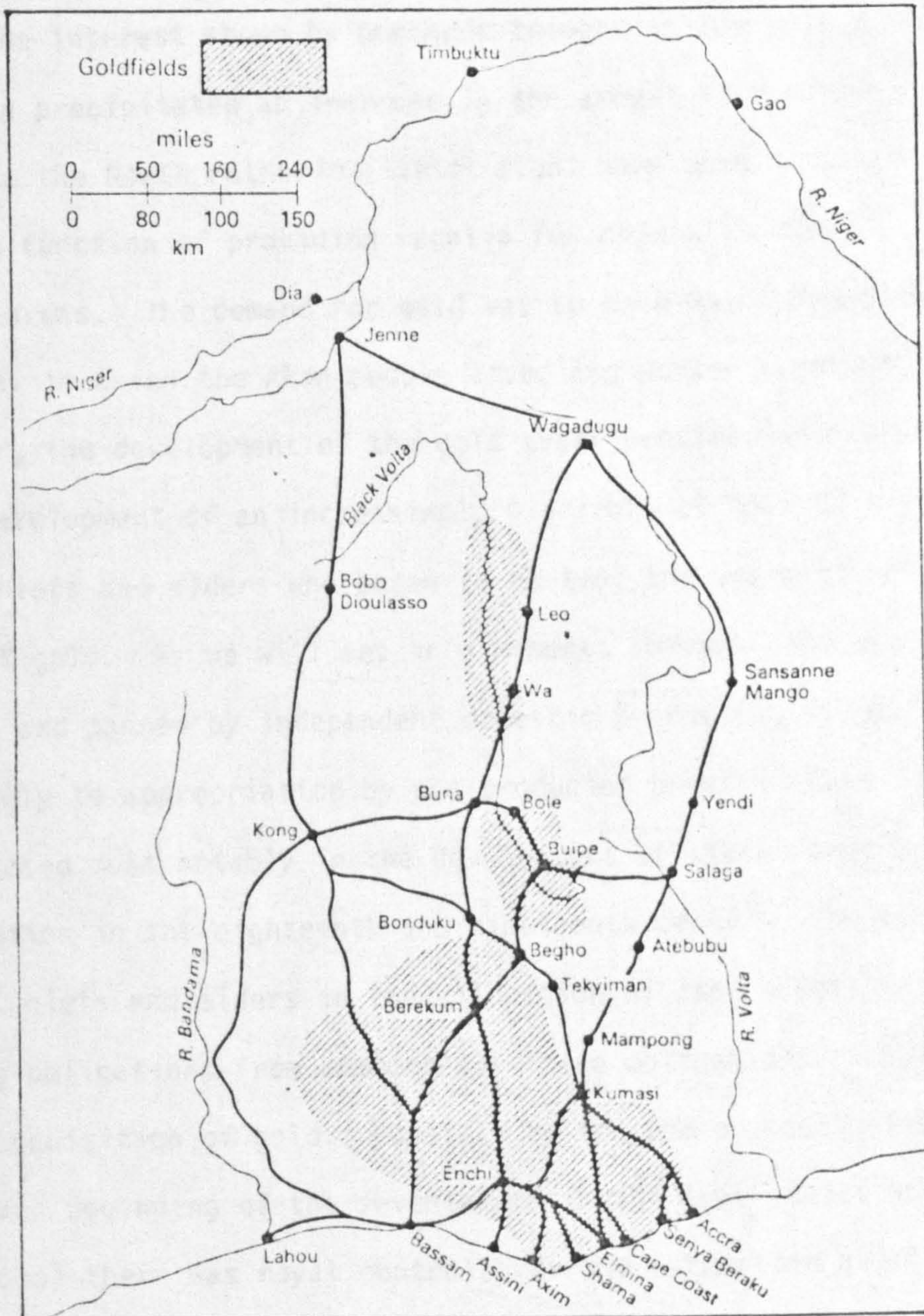
(b) Gold Production

Gold production was probably a major preoccupation of different Akan groups for many years especially following contact with Mande and Wangara traders from the Western Sudan around the fourteenth century. In addition to highlighting central relations of production among the Asante in the early contact period, it is useful to examine gold production at this early stage of European incursions on the West African littoral, because it helps us to try and assess more clearly the nature of the impact or collision between these social groups in relation to gold production (1).

There were two trade routes for gold at this time. A north west route through Bonna and Bobo-Dioulasso or a directly northern passage along the Black Volta river through Bole, Wa and Walembele. One destination of the gold was Jenne where it was exchanged for salt, textiles and other northern products. It is difficult to calculate the actual amounts of gold transported along the Northern route and of that later exported to Europe. Reliable sources for such data are unavailable. However, recent comprehensive recalculation of much of the documented material together with consultation of a host of oral traditions suggest that the Northern Trade in gold from the

---

(1) For the most recent examination of the Akan gold trade see, Timothy F. Garrard, Akan Weights and the Gold Trade, (London: Legon History Series Longman, 1980) and Chapter Two below. Unfortunately, Garrard's book often stops with the recalculation of the quantities of gold produced and does not examine in sufficient detail the nature of the relationships between the people of the Akan that are the basis of this productive activity. For attempts to look at the latter concern, see, E. Terray, (1974) op.cit., and 'Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abon Kingdom of Gyaman', Translated by Anne Bailey, in M. Bloch, (editor), op.cit. See also R.E. Dumett, (1979), op.cit., and the response by E. Terray (1983) op.cit.



MAP FOUR: Trade routes from Jenne to the Gold Coast  
Source: Timothy F. Garrard, (1980).

Akan between 1400 and 1700 was of the order of 3,200,000 ounces (1).

The interest shown by northern traders in the gold produced by the Akan precipitated an increase in the amount of gold being directed to the North, rather than to what might have been its main indigenous function of providing regalia for chiefs in the gold producing areas. The demand for gold was to have major repercussions for the way in which the Akan people lived and worked together. In particular, the development of the gold trade provided an added basis for the development of an increasingly hierarchical society presided over by chiefs and elders who began to control the extraction and trading of gold. As we will see in a moment, whereas gold was extracted and panned by independent domestic producers, it was liable increasingly to appropriation by non-producing chiefs. This process was reflected most notably in the development of state forms and their consolidation in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. We have already seen how chiefs and elders in the allocation of land benefitted from receiving obligations from commoners. These obligations included the chiefly acquisition of gold. Possibly by the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth in the Akan states of Bono-Manso (Bono) there was royal control over the extraction of alluvial gold from the banks of the Tain and Tano rivers. The people of Bono were expected to give one third of the gold that they collected to the king and one third for the village head with only the remainder being

---

(1) Garrard, *op.cit.*, p.163. See also Chapters Two and Three below. It might be interesting to note the total of 3,200,000 ounces exported northwards from Asante for the whole period 1400-1700 compares with recent South African gold production figures for 1981 and 1982 respectively of 655,755 kg and 662,516 kg. South Africa's revenue from gold exports in 1982 was R8,780 million. South African Digest, week ended 25 March 1982. That is, approximately 300 years of gold production on the Gold Coast was equivalent to about 1½ years of South African current gold production.

shared among the miners as long as they were not slaves (1). The monarch, assisted by the paraphernalia of chiefly power attracted greater numbers of traders from the western Sudan for the purchase of gold and kola nuts (2). Increased interest in gold production followed the recognition of the benefits that greater extraction brought. Benefits were especially felt by the heads of villages and their families and this led, in the period following the late fifteenth century, to the development in Bono-Manso of a royal treasury and perhaps the beginning of gold dust as currency and the introduction of metallic weights for the weighing of gold (3).

Gold production was clearly one basis upon which non-capitalist Akan states rested. Indeed, it might be suggested that the desire to increase the stock of gold proved to be a central motivating factor in the development of the most powerful Akan state of all. In Asante, Opoku Ware's drive northward, (circa. 1722-1723), might be seen as a concerted attempt to extend control

- (1) Garrard, op.cit., p.46, the usual case was for the miners to keep the gold dust and the chiefs to appropriate the nuggets. This form of chiefly appropriation also extended to foodstuffs collected by the commoners: "The chief of the village had a portion of any animal killed", see Interview, Abontiakoon, op.cit.
- (2) See Chapter Two below for the exchange of gold for northern products and European wares. On the kola trade see, Paul E. Lovejoy, The Hausa Kola Trade 1700-1900, (London and Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980).
- (3) Dumett, op.cit., pp. 40-41. On the importance of gold weights see Garrard, op.cit., and M.D.McLeod, op.cit., Chapter 8. With the onset of gold dust as currency and for trade a system of locally produced brass weights was developed to measure out units of gold dust. These remained in use until the end of the nineteenth century. They were of two forms: representational weights showing scenes from local life and geometric weights. The latter were the most popular.

over the gold resources of Bono-Techiman (1).

From at least the end of the sixteenth century (although probably before) the production of gold was important for the Akan states of the forest region and this importance mounted as a system of Asante beliefs about wealth and the need to satisfy the demands of royal display emerged. As one informant told us, "anytime the chief felt he needed gold for the stool regalia he asked the people to produce it" (2). But it is crucial to ask: how was this gold extracted both from the auriferous rock and from the miners whose labour procured it in the early contact Akan social formation? Moreover, to suggest that gold was a factor in state formation implies also that so were the relations of production involved in gold production.

The location of gold either in auriferous rock or on the beds of certain rivers determined the nature of the extractive labour process. Here is one of the many nineteenth century European accounts of Akan techniques for mining:

The shafts are dug by means of a small hoe, shaped somewhat like an Indian bassoolah, the iron being about 2 inches broad and 4 or 6 inches long. The workman squats on his hams and scrapes the sandy earth into a small calabash which, when filled, is drawn up to the surface by his companions. The shaft is just large enough to allow the miner to turn round in, and means of ascent and descent are afforded by holes cut in the sides, into which the miner inserts his toes, after the fashion of the old chimney-sweepers'

- 
- (1) Bono itself increased its wealth by defeating Banda, circa 1630-1640, and incorporating the latter's gold fields into the Bono production system. See Dumett, op.cit. As a prelude to the importance of gold in state formation see, Georges Niangoran-Bouah, 'Ideologie de l'or chez les Akan de Côte-d'Ivoire et du Ghana', Journal Des Africanistes, 48, 1, 1978.
- (2) Interview, Abontiakoon, op.cit. We trace chiefly control of gold production and trade in Chapter Four below.

boys when ascending a chimney. Of course having no pumps and baling, except on a very small scale, being impossible, operations have to be suspended as soon as water is reached and indeed but little can be done at all during and shortly after the rainy season (1).

And in 1732 the panning for gold was described when talking about the people of lower Ankobra:

They plunge and dive under the most rapid streams with a brass basin or wooden bowl on their heads, into which they gather all they can reach to at the bottom; and when full return to the banks of the river, with the basin on their head again, where other men and women are ready to receive and wash it, holding their basins or bowls against the stream till all the dross and earth is washed away; the gold if there is any in the basin, by its own weight sinking to the bottom. When thus cleaned and separated they turn it into another vessel till quite clear of sand or earth. The gold comes up some in small grains, some in little lumps as big as peas or beans, or in very fine dust. This is a very tedious and toilsome way of gathering gold; for I have been assured that the most dexterous diver cannot get above the value of two ducats a day, one day with another (2).

This description of the panning for gold suggests a sexual division of labour where members of the whole family were involved in the search for gold. Indeed:

whatever the scale it could be found that organisation of mining labour was done within the frame of domestic organisation (3).

The division of labour was sexual in the sense that the digging of the slanting pits was done by the men with the use of the short and long hoe,

---

(1) J.A. Skertchley, 'A visit to the gold fields of Wassaw, West Africa', Journal of Royal Geographical Society, 48, 1878, p. 278. The techniques of gold production were also explained to us in interviews with chiefs and elders of various villagers. See also, R. Addo-Fenning, 'The Gold Mining Industry in Akyem Abuakwa circa 1850-1910', Sankofa, 2, 1976.

(2) J. Barbot, 'A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, quoted in N.R. Junner, Gold in the Gold Coast, (Accra: Ghana Geological Survey Department Memoir, number 4, reprinted 1973), p.6.

(3) Kwame Arhin, 'Goldmining and Trading among the Asante of Ghana', Journal des Africanistes, 48, 1, 1978, p.93. See also E.Terray (1974), op.cit., p. 34.

families had "their piece of land on which they dug the gold" (1) with the women collecting the loosened earth in the respective wooden bowl which was then pulled to the surface assisted by young girls. Although the evidence is fragmentary we can here try to concretise some of our more general theoretical points that we made at the beginning of the chapter about reproducing the conditions of existence of the Akan social formation and the role of women. Specifically we are concerned here with the possible role that women played in both producing but also in controlling the products of their labour in gold production and agriculture.

Although a matrilineal society, in contrast to the view aired by Rattray, there is little evidence that women were less subordinated than men to the power of chiefly authority. For Rattray, the matrilineal nature of Asante society, the fact that women alone were seen to "transmit blood to descendents" placed women in a raised status in society (2). Moreover, women were not seen to stand alone in their relations with others; "for behind the women stands a united family bound by the tie of blood". This is supported by the concept of 'mother right' which "affords the women a protection and a status that is more than an adequate safeguard against the ill treatment by a male or group of males. Her children belong to her and her clan, not to that of her husband" (2). Despite the matrilineal nature of Akan-Asante society and the elevated status which Rattray attributed to the position of women, we can now demonstrate that women's relative control over their offspring was not translated into the control which they had over

---

(1) Interview: elders Ayanful, Ashanti Region, 26 June 1980.

(2) Rattray, (1923), op. cit., pp. 77-78.

(3) Ibid., p. 79.

the distribution and marketing of gold and other produce. Indeed, it is debatable even whether the elevated status which Rattray attributed to women is consistent with his own account. See, for example, his later comments which explain in more detail the nature of the relationship between a husband and a wife, and in particular the way in which the husband can control his wife's activities (1).

Although a sexual division of labour existed in the production of gold there does seem to be a question mark at least, and thus the potential for a debate, about the relative ability of women in Akan society circa 1500-1750 to control their access to the products of their labour. Evidence is again fragmentary and largely dependent upon oral data but one writer (2) recently has suggested that although women's labour was crucial to the production of gold it was not common for them to be similarly involved in its weighing and distribution through trade. Other evidence points to exceptions to this. A woman could at times through a position as market trader exchange *kerite nut* for gold (3). Women might also in exceptional circumstances inherit gold weights which could facilitate petty market trading. But it does seem to be the general rule, however, that women were denied access to the prestigious and financially rewarding occupation of a goldsmith (4). Garrard's view is borne out by oral evidence: -

Weights were owned by every adult man who traded.  
Women did not have weights; they had neither the

---

(1) Rattray, (1929), op.cit., p. 22.

(2) Garrard, op. cit.

(3) Diana Rey-Hulman, 'L'or et les différenciations sociales dans L'Anno, ou la création de l'espace politique de L'Anno', Journal Des Africanistes 38, 1, 1978, pp. 77-78 and Garrard op.cit., p. 177.

(4) See Garrard, "Women could never become goldsmiths and were forbidden to touch a goldsmith's equipment" op.cit., p. 117. See also, p. 138.



ingenuity nor the power. They sent the gold to the house where the men could weigh it, putting it into a little cloth packet (1).

Insofar as they were denied general access to gold weights, and thus the ability to trade in gold, women were denied control over the products of their labour. Garrard argues that this was so and sums up his view of the subordination of women in these terms:

Throughout the Akan parts of Ghana I found old people who assured me that women had not been allowed to use weights or scales, and some went so far as to say that women could not own them ... At Nchiraa an elder said that if a man dies his widow did not keep the weights but handed them to the successor. At Njau I was told that men did all the weighing and that although the chiefs, elders and family heads each had a bag of weights, women did not. In Debibi an old lady assured me that women did not have weights (2).

In addition to women's labour being used extensively in the mining of gold, women it seems also had to "help their husbands on the farms. After the men had cleared the land it was the women who did the planting of foodstuffs ..." (3). This was an activity necessary for the development of sufficient food items to sustain the community of which they were a part. "After all this they had to keep the home as expected of them" (4). Women's work in the domestic setting might be seen to be the third level of their possible exploitation in pre-colonial Asante. Like their husbands they worked for the production of gold and food and were subject to the exigencies of that activity as dictated within the Akan social formation (5). At the same time

---

(1) Information from Opanin Kojo Mensah of Nchiraa, Kwame Nsia of Njau, Akwia Addae of Debibi, Adwoa Asuama of Nsoko, 1973-75, quoted in Garrard op.cit., p.177. Emphasis added.

(2) Garrard op.cit., p.177.

(3) Interview, Aboso, op.cit.

(4) Ibid.

(5) For example, prestations from chiefs and elders.

however, they worked in the home in the preparation of foodstuffs to sustain their labour and family and consequently the reproduction of labourers who would ultimately continue to oppress them.

Of course the suggestions that women were subordinated at the place of work because they lost control of their product and in the domestic community because they perhaps worked longer hours than their menfolk and that they might be the subject of negotiation through the transaction of bride price (1) are tentative. Data might well be summoned to show that women did indeed pocket the gold that they mined or panned and that it is Eurocentric to see the Akan women subjected to domestic chores in the domestic community (or that there was not differentiation within the position of women) - after all did not their menfolk have to clear the land and build their houses - was not this also work and therefore joint participation in domestic duties?

This contentious debate cannot be solved here - or anywhere else for that matter until further research is conducted specifically into the sexual composition of work groups and the direction of surplus products in agriculture and gold. We merely suggest that this is a fruitful area for further work but that at the moment, perhaps on balance, Garrard's work on Akan gold production and our own oral data

---

(1) On bride price - the exercise of Aseda, see Rattray, (1929), op.cit., p.24, where it is acknowledged that the man purchases "sexual prerogative, coupled with the benefit of her services and later those of her children". See also Mader to Basel 21 April 1875, no. 182/Additional comments to Accompany Mohrs letter of 22 April 1875. From Correspondence Bound under the Title Africa, 1875 in Paul Jenkins, (editor). Abstracts from the Gold Coast correspondence of the Basel Mission (Ghana: Mimeo University of Ghana, Legon 1970) p. 54, where it is recognised that gold diggers organised their labour force for gold digging by augmenting their number of wives. For an illustration of the procedure associated with brideprice and an illustration of a chief's ability to use the transaction to increase his status see GNA(K) AMD D Box 1907, Native Customary Law, 15/3/27-30/7/32.

collection suggests the possible subordination of women by their denial of access to the gold which they helped to produce.

In addition to the specific place that women took in the production of gold there was also arguably a significant contingent of slave labourers involved in the labour process to produce gold. One of the most suggestive debates in recent years about the possible driving force underpinning the formation of Akan states has been between Terray and Dumett. Briefly, because the issues are touched on again in Chapter Three below, Terray has argued, from research on the Brong (Abron) state of Gyaman, that profits from long distance trade were an important source of income to the state in the pre-colonial period and were predicated upon the exploitation of gold by a subjugated mass of unfree (slave) labourers (1). In other words, Terray challenges a view furthered by certain writers in the early 1970's that there was a direct and simple one to one correlation between long distance trade per se and the creation of states. This is to say, Terray was critical of the notion, perhaps best articulated by Coquery-Vidrovitch (2) that the major function of pre-colonial states was to provide trade security in return for which the state would deduct profits from tradesman through taxation. Although on the one hand recognising the importance of long distance trade to state formation, Terray on the other hand, took his analysis one step backwards arguing that: "the sovereign, and the chiefs subordinate to them, (drew) the essential part of their wealth from the surplus labour supplied by their slaves and that the role of long distance trade is therefore above all to allow the realisation of the surplus thus extracted" (3). In addition, Terray's analysis of pre-

---

(1) E. Terray, (1983), op.cit.

(2) C. Coquery Vidrovitch, in (1972), op.cit.

(3) E. Terray, (1983), op.cit., p.96. My emphasis.

colonial Akan societies has been concerned with placing centre stage not only the slaves role in production but also the reproduction of the relations of captivity - both defined in terms of slave relations of production - and to a less extent the processes involved with the capturing of slaves - in understanding state formation among the Akan (1).

Terray's notion that it was the chiefly control of slaves which primarily determined the trajectory of state formation among the Abron, and that this 'model' might be extended to other cases, has been criticised by R. Dumett. Dumett is critical of Terray's sources of information for the formative period of state building among the Akan (2). In contrast to Terray, Dumett argues that gold production among the Akan in the period of state formation was not organised around the chiefly monopoly of slaves but rather around family work units - although he concedes that domestic slaves may have been involved (3). Moreover, rather than focus on the largely 'mythical' presence of unfree labourers, and their control by chiefs in the formation of states, the emergence of a ruling hierarchy among the Akan should instead focus on:

(i) the traditional obligation by family heads or farmer-occupiers to pay a portion of the usufruct to local stool authorities (amanhene); (ii) the direct power of states to tax, which derived from both the traditional territorial controls of the ruler as well as from the kinship obligation of the people to him (4).

As we have stressed throughout this Chapter available data for the formative period of state development which Dumett and Terray

---

(1) See also E. Terray, (1974), op.cit., p.334.

(2) Although Dumett does not exonerate himself from the selection of texts most suitable for his own argument. See Terray, (1983), op.cit., p.98.

(3) Dumett, (1979), op.cit., p. 45.

(4) Ibid., p. 49.

discuss is fragmentary. Largely because of this it will probably always be difficult to say with any certainty what the determining factors involved in the formation of the state among the Akan, actually were. What we can try and do here though - as with discussions earlier in this chapter - is to identify the theoretical framework which makes the limited data intelligible. In fact, having said this neither Terray or Dumett's contribution to understanding Akan state formation are mutually exclusive (1). Dumett's account of gold mining in Asante for example, illustrates an important political and economic dimension to the sources of state revenue in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Asante. Focussing mainly on state taxation and forms of obligation for labour service (2) Dumett reminds us of the indirect forms by which the established Asante state procured its sources of income. This is a crucial dimension to understanding the basis upon which the Asante state sustained itself. It does not however, attempt as Terray has done to locate the establishment of chiefly hierarchies upon direct extraction of surplus labour from increasing numbers of servile labourers and to a less extent the labour service of commoner men and women. In other words, Terray's account of one possible factor in the formation of Akan states is rooted in an account of the relations of production in the Gyaman (Abron) kingdom and is not fundamentally dissimilar to Kea's argument about the coastal Akan where it is recognised that:

In the fifteenth century slavery emerged as the principal form of social labour in such labour intensive activities as gold mining and forest clearance (3).

---

(1) For further discussion of this, see Chapter Three.

(2) Dumett, (1979), op.cit., pp. 56-60.

(3) Kea, op.cit., p. 197.

(c) Slavery

Whatever the 'real' nature of social relations in pre-colonial Akan-Asante social formations it should now be clearer that the social organisation of life became an increasingly antagonistic and hierarchical affair. Commoner men and women for instance could at any time be called upon to work for no reward on the farms and mines of village chiefs and Paramount chiefs.

Any time the chief felt he needed people's help he informed his elders who in turn informed the people stating when they were required to work on the chief's farm (1).

and

In the olden days the people always helped the chief on his farm. They did almost everything for him. They cleared the land did the planting and the harvesting. Not only this, they also weeded the farm when it became necessary (2).

Commoners were therefore summoned by the chief to work on the latter's farm lands. This communal labour acted to enhance a group of chiefs and elders who became increasingly detached from any notion of simply being the village or state representative. Nevertheless the acts of exploitation were justified continuously in terms of being necessary for the community. At the level of rhetoric chiefly power was meant to be used solely for developing the cohesiveness of an Akan and Asante social formation. The effect was to enhance the position of a separate class of chiefs and their dominance over commoner men and women.

However, we have seen that gold production was (probably) a matter of production by servile labour directly controlled by chiefs.

---

(1) Interview, Abontiakoon, op.cit.

(2) Interview, Aboso, op.cit.

Indeed, further development and enhancement of chiefly power came particularly after the emergence of the Asante Empire circa 1700 with the more positive involvement of chiefs and elders in the furthering of trade activities in gold and slaves. But chiefly power was already possibly by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, being enhanced by the increasing monopolisation of slaves which were used to farm and mine chiefs' land. We need therefore, to look more thoroughly at what was involved in the relation between slaves and their owners - those who commanded their labour - and how this relation was created and reproduced.

With the exception of other slaves, everyone could own a slave. There was, however, a structural limitation imposed upon the numbers owned by different groups in the community. The number of slaves in each domestic unit depended upon the resources which could be mobilised for the initial appropriation and the facility to incorporate them successfully within the domestic structure. As we have suggested slavery was perhaps already a significant form of social oppression in the fifteenth century in Akan society and trade in slaves was soon to displace the mining of gold as the dominant 'social' activity. As early as the fourteenth century in neighbouring parts too:

The trade in slaves ... was one of the major activities and one of the principle resources of the political and military formations that started in the Sudanic zone (1).

A full discussion of slavery and slave relations of production will be reserved for Chapter Three below. It suffices to offer here an outline of the mode of reproduction of slaves for in the process we will

---

(1) C. Meillassoux, 'The Role of Slavery in the Economic and Social History of the Sudanic Zones of West Africa', Paper presented to the Conference on the Economic History of the Savanna, Kano Nigeria, January 1976, Mimeo. Translated by R.J. Gavin.

realise that an analysis of the relations of reproduction will in fact involve an analysis of the links within the Akan social formation but also between it and other social formations (1). There were at least three sources of slaves. There were the slaves exchanged with traders to the north of Asante for gold and those that were seized from within Akan areas and from neighbouring territories. In addition there were also the 'local slaves' who were 'pawns' or had been 'panyarred' (especially in a later period) for the non-payment of debt.

Slaves who were captives were the result of an enslaving activity, the development of raiding parties into neighbouring Akan areas and beyond led to the increasing militarisation of the Akan state. This militarisation helped facilitate the increased recoverable value from the slaves activity through the seizure of greater numbers of slaves. The value of a slave has been seen not to lie only in the amount of labour activity that (s)he fulfills but in his/her ability to reproduce him/herself at a low cost of subsistence. It was this that the militarisation of the embryonic state facilitated. Meillassoux captures the essence of this when he says:

... the slave is deprived of his own means of reproduction. The reproduction of slavery depends on the capacity of the society to acquire slaves, i.e. on an apparatus which is not directly linked to the capacities of demographic reproduction (fecundity) of the enslaving population. The rate of accumulation depends on the number of slaves acquired, and not directly on their productivity (2).

This did not mean that the enslaving people were not concerned with the cheap reproduction of a group of unfree people. Indeed, we may assume that if captured women brought forth children they quickly

---

(1) See Meillassoux (1981), op.cit.

(2) Ibid, p. 11. Emphasis is original.



became the slaves of the chief alone (1). The chiefs in early contact Asante society appropriated most of the captives for work on their 'own' land but domestic slaves were also to be found in commoner households especially towards the end of the eighteenth century when the opportunities for accumulating slaves became more widespread (2). The domestic slave might be incorporated within the family productive unit. As time and generations progressed the 'slave' would sometimes be allocated his own piece of land and usufruct with which to grow crops. When captives were not immediately appropriated into the retinue of chiefs and elders when they worked on their land and reproduced more slave labour within that household, they worked within a domestic productive unit. Together with the commoner wife and children they augmented the labour force and assisted in the production of gold and food. Complete erosion of the slave title might not occur or be as easy to achieve however, and with part of the product from his land being directed to his/her 'former' master (s)he remained in an exploited and subordinated position. Only a partial picture was often conveyed later than by European observers when they remarked, that the domestic slave was:

little affected by his state of bondage inasmuch as he continued as a member of the same community, and had access to the same limited sphere of enjoyments within the reach of all (3).

---

(1) Interview, Ayanful, op.cit.

(2) We discuss the greater access to slaves and financial remuneration for commoners below, especially Chapters Four to Six.

(3) This comment is symptomatic of nineteenth century Eurocentrism see, Thomas J. Hutchinson, 'The Social and Domestic Slavery on Western Africa and its Evil Influence on Commercial Progress', Journal of Royal Society of Arts, 26.ii.1875, p. 316.

In contrast to this nineteenth century writer on Asante we have stressed throughout this Chapter that an understanding of the class relations of people in Asante does not depend solely upon an analysis of the differences in life styles of the individuals but in an analysis first and foremost of their relations of production.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This Chapter has served the purpose of trying to clarify the framework of analysis which we employ throughout this thesis in assessing processes of colonial transformation on the Gold Coast and in Asante. We have also raised issues linked to the formation of Akan states and appraised a number of different approaches to understanding what was a multidimensional process. In particular we have tried to understand some of the trends in the first period of informal colonial change - a tentative formulation given the difficulty of securing a clear picture of the pre-contact social formations.

Our major criticism has been levelled at an anthropological perspective of analysis which has situated unquestionably the emergence of power structures among the Akan in blood ties and forms of 'royal' descent without trying to explain the dominance of these structures. We have also assessed briefly an historical school of Akan studies, marked notably - although with substantial differences separating them - by Arhin and Wilks. What these authors share is a dominant concern with political and cultural processes to the almost total exclusion of economic production concerns. It is to the latter that we have looked in this Chapter notably in the work of Kea and will do so throughout this thesis. We nevertheless also recognise the need to appraise the position of political and institutional apparatuses which served to maintain state power among the Asante for these relations of production.

CHAPTER TWO

COLONIAL EXPANSION AND EARLY TRANSFORMATION ON  
THE GOLD COAST

ca. 1400-1700

Merchants capital, when it holds a position of dominance stands everywhere for a system of robbery, so that its development among the trading nations of old and modern times is always directly connected with plundering, piracy, kidnapping slaves, and colonial conquest; as in Carthage, Rome and later among the Venetians, Portuguese, Dutch etc.

Karl Marx, Capital, Volume Three

I INTRODUCTION

We can now begin to further assess the first stages of informal colonialism on the Gold Coast. Informal colonialism refers here to the period of colonial, that is European, incursion on the Gold Coast up to the formal legal establishment of the Gold Coast Colony in 1900. What impact did early European contact have upon the Akan? Were indigenous relations of production affected by European merchants demanding gold or were pre-contact forms of organisation able to cope with the increasing demand for this metal?

For one recent writer of Asante history, the transformatory effects of the European presence were minimal until 1806. Contact before this date was "chiefly commercial and perfunctory in any political sense" (1). In part we agree with this assessment. While merchant capital was busy promoting the consolidation of the

---

(1) T.C. McCaskie, 'Innovational Eclecticism: the Asante Empire and Europe in the nineteenth century', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 14, 1972. For a different view of the impact of colonialism on Africa and the nature of its transformation, see, P-P. Rey and G. Dupre, 'Reflections on the Pertinence of a Theory of the History of Exchange', Economy and Society, 3, 2, 1974.

transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe, chiefs and merchants in Asante enhanced their positions as office holders through increased trade to the coast, the hoarding of gold and the militarisation of the Asante state to conquer neighbouring territories. This does not mean to say that the increased European presence on the coast and the increased incursions inland did not have a dramatic affect upon the Akan. Rather, this European presence simply matched many of the disruptive incidents which were emanating at this time from Asantes' expansion (1). There were, however, a number of structural changes in store for the Akan as well as the less qualitative effects of increased European contact on the coast at this time.

We will examine what these structural effects were later. Before we do this we are going to see in more detail the way in which the Akan organised their economies. Data for this period, ca. 1471-1600, is limited. There is little documentation of this period and that which does exist was written mainly by Europeans. When we are discussing the early period of Akan developments up to ca. 1750 all that we can usefully do is hypothesise. We can raise the questions and issues that need to be posed in suggesting a historical and materialist account of Asante state formation. For example, we can extrapolate back in time from the written and documented sources to try and reconstruct the internal dynamics of Asantes' political economy. Consequently many of the conclusions of this chapter are exploratory and tentative. Before we build upon our assessment of the way in which the European demand for gold in particular affected the Akan we must first turn to examine the nature of European expansion to West

---

(1) See Chapter Three for an account of Asante state formation.

Africa. What was the impulse behind the voyaging of merchant adventurers to the Guinea Coast? What lay behind the seemingly insatiable demand for gold that had begun in the early fifteenth century with the systematic exploitation by the Portuguese, of the West African littoral, and led to the building of a fortress at Sao Jorge da Mina in 1481 specifically for the purpose of trading cloth and clothing for gold?

Did European merchants venture to the Guinea Coast solely for profit from general trading or was there a specific desire to locate quantities of gold? If it was the latter, what special quality did gold possess which was to distinguish it from other trading commodities and what was the impact upon European economies of increased quantities of gold? In order to answer these questions we will need to assess the character of the European economies from which traders to West Africa came. By making this assessment we will know more clearly the kind of effect that the European presence on the West African littoral had upon indigenous social structures. The character of the European economies is important for two reasons. The first of these is that the form of colonial contact varied according to the nature of the colonisers economy. Although different in a number of ways, the Portuguese and English political economies in the fifteenth and seventeenth century were characterised by a crisis ridden feudalism and an increasingly more dominant capitalist mode of production. We will show, with special reference to England, that it was merchant capital rather than industrial capital which began the process of underdevelopment on the Gold Coast. This view is in contradistinction to that proposed by many writers who view developments in sixteenth

century Europe as already reflecting a capitalist world economy (1).

The second reason why we examine the nature of European economies in this period is to see the kind of commodities which were being demanded to support mercantile expansion. We see throughout this thesis, that at different historical moments colonialism seeks to acquire different kinds of product which are produced by the Akan. In the early period, ca. 1400-1700, the product largely sought after in Europe was gold. From ca. 1700-1807 the products were slaves to work European owned plantations in the West Indies. In the nineteenth century 'legitimate' products like palm oil and rubber were substituted for the export of Africans.

By assessing the nature of the products demanded by Europe, together with the specific phases in the development of capital from Europe, we can see more clearly the effect that European contact had upon the Gold Coast. We can examine the change, for example, in the indigenous relations of production needed to produce the goods for Europe. More fundamentally we link the nature of European expansion to West Africa with the internal dynamic and organisation of Akan production. The Akan are no longer seen as merely victims of external colonial pressures but have an internal dynamic of their own which at different moments welcomes and opposes increased European contact on the coast. In particular, the internal processes, and form

---

(1) See, for example, Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century, Studies in Social Discontinuity, (New York and London: Academic Press International Edition, 1974). See also the series published by Sage, series editor, Immanuel Wallerstein, at present up to five volumes, especially volume 2, W. Goldfrank (editor), The World System of Capitalism: Past and Present, (1979) and volume 5, E. Friedman (editor), Ascent and Decline in the World System (London: Sage Publications, 1982).

of interaction with Europe, largely determined the possibility and nature of European contact with the Akan. In other words, the basis for our periodisation of this early period of contact and transformation is the nature of the extraction of different products and the pressures and responses to these that were set up. Our concern in this chapter is with the European demand for gold: the processes in Europe which created this demand, the Akan organisation of gold production which made the flow of gold to the coast possible and the nature of the dialectical relationship between these two dynamic processes. Our argument here will be that whereas no changes in Akan modes of production occurred in this early period of colonial incursion (ca. 1471-1700) the Gold Coast was incorporated into a developing global economy. We shall go on to argue that the processes linked to this incorporation, the 'structural presence' and impact of European merchant capital in the realm of circulation, in the increased purchasing of gold, and (later) slaves, acted as the essential prerequisite for the future subordination of the Akan social formation under different powers culminating in rule by the British (

In this Chapter we will look briefly at the needs of the European economies for gold and the significance this 'commodity' had for future European development and incursions on what was to become known as the Gold Coast, and whether the increased demand for gold exports necessitated a change in the relations between the Akan people who produced the mineral. Having assessed this aspect of European 'development' in the sixteenth and seventeenth century we will look at developments within

---

(1) For an expansion of the notion of 'structural presence' see, H. Alavi, 'The Structure of Peripheral Capitalism', in, Hamza Alavi and Teodor Shanin, (editors), Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies", (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982).

the Akan areas at this time. We close the chapter with an assessment of the structural and less qualitative affects on the Akan social formation which received the Portuguese, Dutch and English traders.

## II BEGINNINGS OF COLONIALISM

The development of embryonic commercial relationships in Europe can be dated from the eleventh century where feudal relations were in a process of consolidation. Greater concern with the development of trade and commerce were only witnessed at the time of the Crusades against Islam from the twelfth to the thirteenth century overseas and the early erosion of serfdom and the commutation of labour services at home. From the fourteenth century the Guinea Coast and the Sudan were seen as the 'Eldorado of Adventurers in the trading world' with Genoese traders going to the Tuareg and the Portuguese establishing a foothold at what they called Mina, literally the Mine, on the Gold Coast to obtain greater quantities of gold (1). Indeed a feature in this long transition from a European economy based upon feudal relations of production to the embryonic development of a capitalist economy (2) was the requirement of greater quantities of gold and silver to support the monetarisation of the economy (3).

---

(1) Marc Bloch, Land and Work in Medieval Europe, Selected Papers, Translated by J.E. Anderson, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 241.

(2) Feudal relations of production here refers to inter alia; unfree labour tied to the land and payment for produce through labour services, while capitalist economy refers to one predicated upon free wage labour and the commoditisation of relations between people.

(3) Money, for example, is the expression of a general social relationship of exchange between private economic agents. More will be said on the role of money and gold in the next section. See, Suzanne De Brunhoff, Marx on Money, (New York: Urizen Books, 1976), p. 21 where it is made abundantly clear that "The capitalist economy is necessarily a monetary economy" p. 21, Compare, Karl Marx, "the money economy is common to all commodity production", quoted in, ibid.



As one commentator has remarked, the Portuguese, Dutch and English political economies in the three hundred year period 1450-1750 were characterized by the:

transition from a system of social relations where monetary arrangements are secondary and subordinate, to one in which money (in the broadest sense) play(ed) a major role (1).

More will be said in the following section about the role of gold from the Guinea Coast in the formation of embryonic capitalist economies of Europe. It is worth remembering here though, by 1344, legal regulations were laid down in England that the principle of gold must be accepted, that it was legal tender between two merchants and could not be refused (2). This might possibly be the modern date from which we can see the character of money as a powerful possession and one which enhanced the already ascending position of a merchant class. Gold was to become more important for the economies of Europe and especially Portugal, Holland and England as these countries developed their trade networks and paid balances in gold and silver (3). If we can see the growing influence of monied merchant groups from the fourteenth century in England and the development of greater trading links from the long sixteenth century, ca. 1450-1640(4), what impact did this have upon countries outside the immediate European geographical area? Before we proceed we should also probe a little more carefully the basis for asserting that the development of capitalism, or more specifically of a 'world' capitalist economy, can be dated from 1450.

---

(1) Pierre Vilar, A History of Gold and Money 1450-1920, Translated by Judith White, (London: NLB, 1976), p. 25.

(2) Bloch, op. cit., p. 241.

(3) Vilar, op. cit., p. 74, for an example of sixteenth century distributions of payments in gold and silver.

(4) See Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis', hereafter cited as RFD, in, I. Wallerstein, The Capitalist World Economy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 25.

## The World System

Debates over the origin of a world (capitalist) economy distinguished by a hierarchy of countries into core, semi-periphery and periphery have captured the imagination of many social theorists (1). Indeed such an approach could at first glance have some explanatory value for our subject matter. Both the expansion of European influence from the fifteenth century and the 'incorporation' of the Gold Coast could be approached in terms of world system theory. We have no disagreement with the notion that a series of economies in the Americas, Africa and the Orient became increasingly tied to commercial and trading transactions in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth century thereby establishing an international economy (2). Our point of departure from 'world system theorists' however is that we do not characterise the fifteenth or sixteenth century global economy as capitalist. This criticism is discussed in further detail below. In addition we argue that the characterisation of the European economies as capitalist in the sixteenth century fails to recognise the specific processes at work in Europe at the time. This is because such an analysis does not emphasise the crucial way in which production was organised in Europe; instead the focus is upon the expansion of the global market. Moreover, it is the development and the spread of market relations throughout the globe which is seen as the dynamic factor in 'explaining' the processes of change at work in different indigenous 'peripheral' social formations. Incorporation into a world market is

- 
- (1) In addition to references cited at fn.1 p.65 see A.G. Frank, World Accumulation 1492-1789, (London: Macmillan, 1978a) and A.G. Frank Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment, (London: Macmillan, 1978b).
- (2) A.G. Frank, for example, sees the year 1492 as marking the continuity between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the political events which develop the conditions "that would revolutionise the world out of many and transform the many to create one". The specific factors symbolising sixteenth century expansion are seen to be the joining of the crowns of Castile and Aragon in 1469 which led to the development of the Spanish Empire and Columbia's four voyages between 1492 and 1502. In addition there were the development of new trade routes to the Orient and Spanish 'contact' with American Indians, (1978a), op.cit., p. 40.

seen to account for structural transformations in colonised countries instead of the threefold series of class conflicts in the indigenous national social formation, the European national terrain and the interrelation of these struggles resolved at the international level. At a more general level world system theories' method of analysis, where the emphasis is placed upon the increased circulation of products in Europe, fails to fully recognise the role and position of areas like the Gold Coast in the later development of European capitalism. Before we look at these criticisms of worldsystem theory in greater detail, we can quickly look at the position of the most authoritative advocate of this position, this is the work of Immanuel Wallerstein.

Wallerstein's position is premised upon the notion of a "social system" defined with reference to the circuit of commodities in it (1). Historically, two kinds of social system can be identified. The first was a closed self sufficient economic nodule. The second has been the world-system which has been of two types. The first of these is the "world empire", characterised by political centralisation and economic "flows from the periphery to the centre by force (tribute and taxation) and by monopolistic advantages in trade" (2). The downfall of the last such phase of the world system - The Holy Roman Empire - was due to the political centralisation and over-bureaucratisation that it engendered. In contrast, the capitalist world economy which developed in the sixteenth century in Europe offered an alternative and more lucrative source of surplus appropriation. In this phase of the world system the state became "less the central economic

---

(1) I. Wallerstein, quoted in H. Hülalp, 'Frank and Wallerstein Revisited: A Contribution to Brenner's Critique', Journal Contemporary Asia, 11, 1981, p. 175.

(2) I. Wallerstein, (1974), op. cit., p. 15.

enterprise than the means of assuring certain terms of trade in other economic transactions" (1). Moreover, it was the market which created the incentives to raise capitalist productivity.

It is with locating capitalist development in the market, rather than in the relations of production between classes in Europe, that we disagree with Wallerstein's conceptualisation of the world system. Wallerstein's view is that:

The essential feature of a capitalist world economy ... is production for sale in a market in which the object is to realise the maximum profit. In such a system production is constantly expanded as long as further production is profitable and men constantly innovate new ways of producing things that will expand the profit margin (2).

This characterisation of the capitalist world economy tells us very little about the dynamics of feudalism in Europe and of the transition to capitalism (3). Little is said, for example, about the processes linked with the development of the forces of production in Europe upon which this global expansion of the market in the sixteenth century depended (4). And indeed the 'spread' of the market is itself not explained. In contrast to Wallerstein, we do not see the expansion of the market as the essential feature of capitalism. Instead, we view the main dynamic of the development of embryonic capitalist relations of production from feudalism in Europe as class struggle. The major distinguishing feature of the development of capitalism in Europe was the development of 'free' wage labourers who were forced to sell their 'labour power' as a commodity resulting from the separation from their means of production. As Laclau has recently commented:

---

(1) Ibid., p. 16.

(2) I. Wallerstein, RFD, p. 15.

(3) This criticism is taken up particularly by Robert Brenner, 'The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo Smithian Marxism', NLR, 104, 1977.

(4) Theda Skocpol, 'Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique', American Journal of Sociology, 82, 2, 5, 1977, p. 1078.

The fundamental economic relationship of capitalism (is) ... constituted by the free labourers sale of his (her) labour power, whose necessary precondition is the loss by the direct producer of ownership of the means of production (1).

In this latter view of the transition to capitalism in Europe, free wage labour is seen to be the product of class struggle rather than a derivative of a world division of labour. This is not to say that world system theory does not recognise conflicts within feudal England, for example, between serfs and lords. It is to say rather that the significance of class struggle for Wallerstein is subordinated to a host of extraneous factors of a "cyclical secular and climatological order" (2). In short, world system theory as one observer has commented does not provide a:

Dynamic of internal relations into which the variables may be placed ... (there is) no theory of social change as an outgrowth of the crisis of the social relations that structure a social system " (3).

Wallerstein's version of the development of the world system therefore does not, in our view, adequately explain the development of capitalism in Europe. The emphasis lies with the development of an international world market rather than the relationship of this aspect of Europe's sixteenth century expansion with indigenous class struggles. In short, the dissolution of feudalism cannot simply be reduced to an expansion of trade but instead must be:

understandable only in terms of the conflictual processes, processes of class transformation and class struggle, which tend to emerge from the contradictory character of the pre-capitalist

- 
- (1) Ernesto Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, (London: NLB, 1977), p. 23.  
 (2) See for example, I. Wallerstein, RFD, pp. 18 and 25.  
 (3) See Stanley Aronowitz, 'A Metatheoretical Critique of Immanuel Wallerstein's 'The Modern World System'', Theory and Society, 10, 4, 1981, p. 508. See also Christopher Chase-Dunn and Richard Rubinson, 'Towards a Structural Perspective on the World System', Politics and Society, 7, 4, 1977.

social relations themselves (1).

This criticism of Wallerstein's characterisation of the transition to capitalism in Europe is important for two reasons. First, if we are to fully understand the nature of the early European contact with the Gold Coast we need to know the dominant social processes at work in the European economy which partly determine the European presence on the West African littoral. For Wallerstein this is simple:

"capitalism was from the beginning an affair of the world economy" (2).

He is too eager to link the emergence of a world economy to what he sees as the establishment of capitalism in Europe based upon the expansion of the world division of labour and the development of productive forces. Missing from this view of the transition from feudalism to capitalism is the recognition that the onset of capitalism there was predicated upon the qualitative expansion of labour productivity. This was linked to the appropriation by a class of owners and controllers of the means of producing relative rather than absolute surplus value (3).

If the latter was the case then the form of the expansion of trade to the Gold Coast and the contact with indigenous people there, will have been based upon the extraction of relative surplus value rather than the unequal exchange of commodities. In our view, the European contact with the Gold Coast in the period up to the end of the eighteenth century was in fact dominated by the expansion of

- 
- (1) This is the thrust of Brenner's critique, op. cit., p. 13. See also his comment that, "the development of underdevelopment was rooted in the class structure of production based on the extension of absolute surplus labour".
- (2) I. Wallerstein, RFD, p. 19.
- (3) Karl Marx, Capital, volume one, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970) part v, The Production of Absolute and of Relative Surplus Value, Chapter 16, Absolute and Relative Surplus Value, especially pp.477-481

merchant capital from Europe the principal of which was to exchange European made, or seized, products at a higher price than those which were purchased on the West African littoral. Our position is that rather than capitalism being established in Europe from the sixteenth century it is more accurate to see the period as one of transition to capitalism from feudalism. As Frank, someone with a similar perspective to that adopted by Wallerstein, has acknowledged, the sixteenth century can accurately be seen as reflecting the "development of capitalism in its mercantile stage and the first period of concentrated capital accumulation in Europe (1). By adopting this periodisation we can more fully understand the European merchants' demand for gold from the Gold Coast and the nature of the contact with the Akan social formation. As we show below, the demand for gold became the focus for Portuguese, Dutch and English traders to the Gold Coast and it becomes the merchandise which helped facilitate the primitive accumulation of capital for the development of capitalism in Europe.

The second reason why Wallerstein's characterisation of the development of the world economy is not very helpful, for our purposes, is that he indentifies the expansion of the market in Europe as the sole causal and explanatory factor in understanding the nature of the relationship which is established between countries in Europe and countries in the periphery. Wallerstein once again, therefore, leaves out the dynamic of class struggle in his analysis of the development of a capitalist world system. He not only ignores the processes of class struggle involved in the development of capitalism but also, and more importantly for our purposes, he fails to recognise the

---

(1) A.G. Frank, (1978a), op. cit., p. 52.

existence of class struggle on the periphery, and the role of this to the nature of colonial transformation and incorporation. Wallerstein also fails to see the dynamic between class struggles in Europe and the periphery and how these are resolved. Wallerstein's concern with the expansion of the European market therefore is not the best point of departure for the analysis of social change in either Europe or West Africa.

Our position is that the sixteenth century was the scene of a developing world economy and an understanding of this differential geographical spread of the market is important for understanding colonial transformation on the Gold Coast. However, the developing world economy was not yet a capitalist world system. Instead, the dynamics of the international economy in the sixteenth century as they affected the Gold Coast reflected the transitions in Holland, Portugal and England of the break up of feudalism and the development of merchant capital as the precursor to capitalism in Europe. It was only later, towards the middle of the eighteenth century, that the international economy could be seen to reflect the ascendancy of capitalist relations of production in Europe. As one commentator has remarked, in England:

The bourgeoisie resisted power in the 1640's, served a serious apprenticeship in the 1650's, made a profitable compromise in the 1670's and 1680's, came of age in the 1690's, and added to its already extraordinary history a new mode of faster and greater accumulation and circulation of wealth (1).

Our additional argument has been that the incorporation of countries on the periphery of European capitalism can only be fully assessed by examining social processes in the incorporated social

---

(1) Marvin Rosen, 'The Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie: England, 1688-1721', Science and Society, XLV, i, 1981, p. 35.



formation itself, and how they interact with the external market forces, rather than simply through the prism of European expansion. By this we mean that a comprehensive account of the incorporation of the Gold Coast into the economies of Europe requires an assessment of the political economy of the Gold Coast. We need to know more fully the indigenous structure of the Akan areas when considering the impact of the Dutch and English merchants clamouring for gold. Without this analysis of indigenous social structures incorporation for the Gold Coast into the world economy becomes solely the product of European endeavour. The Akan become simply victims of European trade when as we will see they were for many years equal partners.

We can now proceed to try and clarify our argument that the sixteenth century was a period of transition to a capitalist mode of production in Europe. Specifically, the English social formation at this time was characterised by the dominance of merchant capital, the circulation of capital which does not need, "the process of production itself to be organised upon a capitalist basis" (1). Our discussion will show that a notion of a world system of capitalism at this time does little to help us clarify the relationship between an increasingly dominant series of European economies over the societies of West Africa and certainly sheds little light on the former's transforming impact upon the latter. This brief excursion into the theoretical perspectives seen to underpin capitalist development and pre-capitalist underdevelopment will lead into a discussion of the reasons why gold was sought in Europe and the historical contact between Europe and the Gold Coast. This will especially highlight the fact that this period may well be seen to mark the early development

---

(1) G. Kay, Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis, (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 93.

towards the establishment of a world economy but this was not, for reasons already stated, one based upon capitalist production. Rather, certain European economies were developing from the hegemony of merchant capital's desire to secure greater quantities of gold and other precious metals for currency to finance mercantilist adventurers for the appropriation of greater amounts of alternative trade commodities. The sixteenth century witnessed the enormous development of international trade and growth of colonial conquest but this was based upon merchant classes in Europe during the period of primitive accumulation of capital.

### III MERCHANT CAPITAL AND THE CIRCULATION OF CAPITAL

Space does not allow us to examine in any great detail the intricacies of the importance of money and the development of capitalism with an in depth account of the historical 'events' which took place in Europe from the fourteenth century. All that we can do here is explain a little more clearly the nature of the processes underpinning embryonic capitalist development in Europe. In particular we can briefly get an understanding of merchant capital and European economies need for gold and thus their greater interest in the Gold Coast. By doing this, we will see that what world system theorists are talking about in the sixteenth century is really a period of transition to capitalism; a process they recognise, but one which they categorise as capitalist instead of seeing merchant capital as: "the historical form of capital long before capital established its own domination over production. It's existence and development to a certain level are in themselves historical premises for the development of capitalist production" (1).

---

(1) Karl Marx, Capital, Volume Three, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972), p. 327, Emphasis Added, see also, pp. 336-337.

(a) Merchant Capital

"Merchant capital is simply capital functioning in the sphere of circulation" (1), the first free state of existence of capital in general, it is a form of capital which only, "requires that part of the social product should regularly consist of commodities - i.e. goods for the express purpose of exchange and money" (2). These last two categories are essential for the survival of merchant capital because value here is expanded by unequal exchange - by buying commodities more cheaply than they are sold. Unlike later industrial capital, merchant capital has no direct control over the labour process and is dependant upon a social class which does. Merchant capital thus promotes the exchange of commodities, the merchant has a concentration of purchases and sales and seeks to sustain his profit from unequal exchange by maintaining a monopoly control of his market (3).

The organisation of trading companies in their incursion of the Gold Coast by merchant capital is an illustration of the attempts at the monopolisation of trade. Very often the Charters which inaugurated these companies specified the need to dissuade competition between the companies of Europe as well as among the people they were encroaching upon. For example, the Dutch Director General of the Coast of Africa in Guinea was instructed that he:

should try to convince the natives, with sweetness or with harshness, whatever may be required, that once they belong to our trading stations they should

---

(1) Ibid, p. 279.

(2) Kay, op. cit., p. 93.

(3) See, Karl Marx, (1972) op. cit., and Kay, op. cit., p. 96.

not trade with foreign ships, and in that way hamper our trade (1).

Monopoly was essential to the success of merchant capital and early colonial expansion from Europe. Briefly, monopoly power was used by trading companies to reduce the prices paid to the producers of exportable commodities and to increase the prices of imports into the Gold Coast. This monopoly was initiated and maintained with the help of the emerging absolutist state in feudal England. Merchants received support from their respective nation states while performing fiscal and diplomatic favours for the state (2). This is not to say that there were not difficulties and conflicts in trying to maintain the monopoly on trade. These difficulties emanated from rivalry on the Gold Coast and the ability of the Akan to play one set of European merchants off against the other. There was also rivalry between merchants in England. One such rivalry evolved around the ethic of only one company having a monopoly of trade. For example, arguing against the persistence of trading monopolies a famous English Protestant merchant protested:

All free subjects are born inheritable as to their lands so also to the free exercise of their industry and those trades whereto they apply themselves and whereby they are to live (3).

- 
- (1) West Indian Company (hereafter cited as WIC) 831: Article 16 Special Memorandum and Instruction for Heerman Abramsz, Director General of the Coast of Africa in Guinea, April 1675, in, A. Van Dantzig, compiler and translator, The Dutch and Guinea Coast 1674-1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague, (Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1978), p.12.
- (2) See S.B.D. de Silva, The Political Economy of Underdevelopment, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 419 and on the role of the state see below.
- (3) Edwin Sandys, quoted in William Appleman Williams, The Contours of American History. (New York: New Viewpoints, A Division of Franklin Watts Inc., 1973), p. 48.

The important point to note is that the focus in England around 1645, concerning the persistence of monopoly, was not against mercantilism per se. Although tighter controls were sought on the exercise of monopoly these were only called for to secure the greater safety of English merchants: to ensure greater access for England while penalising those fellow countrymen who abused the system.

In addition to monopoly control of markets, the other essential factor assisting the development of mercantilism was money. Moreover, this condition was also best guaranteed by the intervention of the state. Money became increasingly important in the development of the political economy of fifteenth to sixteenth century Europe. Briefly, money has three broad functions: as an intermediary of exchange and means of payment, an index of comparison between goods - that is as a means of value - and as a store of value (1). The merchant is concerned with all three of these characteristics as his wealth always existed," in the form of money and his money served as capital" (2). The merchant ensured a circulation of capital by advancing money for a commodity and then selling this commodity at a higher price (M-C-M1) where money, the independent form of exchange value, is the point of departure and increasing the exchange value an end in itself (3). Money is a social relation of production (4). The trade in it emanated from international commerce and increased the need for merchants to exchange their local national coins for other local national coins or simply to exchange

---

(1) See, Suzanne De Brunhoff, op. cit., and also P. Vilar, op. cit.

(2) Karl Marx, (1972) op. cit., p. 326.

(3) Ibid.

(4) De Brunhoff, op. cit., p. 19. The role of money is "determined by its functions within the entire pattern of capitalist economic relations", under capitalism money becomes part of the capitalist system of relations of production, ibid.

different coins for uncoined pure silver or gold - a commodity Marx was later to call world money (1). This exchange business was "one of the natural foundations of modern finance" (2) where increasingly:

National money discards its local character in the capacity of universal money; one national currency is expressed in another and thus all of them are finally reduced to their content of gold or silver, while the latter, being the two commodities circulating as world money, are simultaneously reduced to their reciprocal value ratio, which changes continually (3).

There was no a priori reason why gold played the role of money. Rather, it did so because of a combination of social historical reasons. This broader context will be referred to later but for one writer gold:

is able to play the role of money in relation to other commodities because it has already played the role of commodity in relation to them (4).

This follows from a recognition that gold, at one time a commodity metal, became the money commodity. It took the role as general equivalent of commodities or money and in so doing excluded "all other commodities from the character of general equivalent" (5). It is the "first metal to be discovered as metal" (6) and to be elevated to the position of exchange value. As a commodity gold became transformed into a general equivalent distinct from all commodities. This is an important point and indicates the time when "Money ... exists as the exchange value of all commodities alongside and outside them" (7) and

---

(1) K. Marx, (1972), op. cit., p. 317.

(2) Ibid, p. 317.

(3) Ibid, p. 318.

(4) De Brunhoff, op. cit., p. 23.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Karl Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, (Rough Draft), Translated with a forward by Martin Nicolaus, (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1977), p. 176. Emphasis in Original.

(7) Ibid, p. 188.

when during the fourteenth to sixteenth century in Europe gold for a short while, but more generally metallic circulation, became the dominant money form. When gold ceased to be a commodity only between the West Coast of Africa and European countries it began to be circulated as a medium of exchange of commodities, an instrument of circulation. This is the significance of gold to merchant capital and the later development of capitalist relations of production in Europe. Gold became first, simply a commodity but then a commodity's commodity. Gold took the form of money and thereby became the means in which greater amounts of commodities could be appropriated by a developing merchant class. The contradiction of course was that as gold became minted into coins, and thus transformed into currency, it demonetised itself: it lost its weight of metal and became a shadow of its own metallic substance.

The importance of gold to the economics of Europe can only be seen in the wider context of the link between the circulation of commodities and the circulation of money. Merchant capital in its desire to promote the exchange of commodities strived for greater monetary reward which, given the historical context of fourteenth to sixteenth century Europe and its relationship with other parts of the globe, became encapsulated within the demand for gold. What began as merchant forays to the West African littoral for exchange of commodities developed into the clamour for the commodity's commodity. Gold and later silver, became symbols of power between capitalists and societies in the mercantilist era and served as catalysts for state development and involvement in the expansion of Europe (1). As the

---

(1) As indeed the accumulation of gold nuggets and dust were increasingly becoming the symbols of power within the Akan social formation. See below.

demand and use of gold in Europe increased it is relatively easy to see that merchant capital became increasingly a fore-runner to the development of capitalist production. In contradistinction to the view of world system theorists, the sixteenth century was characterised by merchant capital, the process of obtaining profit from unequal exchange, which dominated instead of capitalism on an international (world) scale where profitability depended upon the exploitation of wage labour. This is important because it must be seen that what world system theorists have really done is simply indicate a period of transition to capitalist economies in Europe rather than describe a period there of already established capitalism. This transition was marked by the detachment of merchant capital from the production process but where increasingly "industrial capital comes into its own when the extensive forms of growth which merchant capital fosters are superceded by investment in depth" (1). Merchant capital laid the basis for the concentration of money wealth predicated upon the importation of gold and silver from an increasing number of 'informal colonies'.

We will see briefly below the close links which developed between the merchant state and merchant classes in this period of transition to capitalism. We can cite here though an early illustration of this link, together with the recognition of the need for gold in Europe to fund European expansion, by mentioning an early call for government assistance on the Gold Coast by Dutch traders:

---

(1) De Silva, op. cit., p. 421. On the specifics of transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe, see The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, introduction by Rodney Hilton, (London: NLB, 1976), see also Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, (London: NLB, 1974).



in countries subsisting on traffic as these lands do (i.e. Holland) an abundance of gold is peculiarly necessary, as in many places goods must be sought for not with other goods but with money, as is evident from the whole Eastern Trade which can only be driven from this side with money (1).

The sixteenth to seventeenth century marks the enormous development of international trade which is consolidated by the increased presence of money and its central place in merchant economies. These two developments lead towards the satisfaction of individual wants rather than as before where the merchant bought commodities for many buyers. As Karl Marx observed the:

development of merchants capital tends to give production more and more the character of production for exchange value and to turn products more and more into commodities (2).

In this later phase of merchant capital, a phase known as mercantilism, where the state became more actively involved in merchant trade, merchant capital developed as an agent of productive capital rather than as an autonomous 'independent' form of capital in its own right.

We can now look at the demand for gold in the period between ca. 1500 and 1700 in Europe. This examination will confirm the importance of gold in the period of merchant capital and will highlight the increasing help from the state to the formation of merchant capital expansion.

(b) The Demand for Gold

The sixteenth century has correctly been characterised as a period of economic expansion in Europe; of a change and transformation in the relations of production and:

---

(1) FC N1 1610-1623, request for government help 4 August 1611, pp. 24-25, emphasis added, Balme Library, University of Ghana, Legon.  
 (2) K. Marx, (1972), op. cit., p. 327.

the result of a long evolution in demography, agriculture technology and industry, of the exploitation of the commercial and financial techniques, and of the organisation of national economies by their rulers (1).

But what was the relationship between these developments in Europe, which facilitated the processes of primitive accumulation, and the increased merchant activity in West Africa? What impact, for example, did the increased amount of gold imports into Europe from the Gold Coast have upon the development of mercantilism and later the development of capitalism in England? From Mina, the annual ore receipts were as follows:

TABLE ONE (2)

Annual Average Receipts from Mina 1504-1545

<u>Years</u>	<u>Kgs</u>
1504-1507	433.366
1511-1513	413.922
1517-1519	443.676
1519-1522	411.864
1543-1545	371.578

Although these quantities of gold, as we will see, were crucial to the continued expansion of mercantilism in Portugal and later Holland and England they did not in themselves precipitate the development of capitalist modes of production in Europe. Rather, gold was brought back to Europe when there was a need for it, when there was a trade surplus and this became increasingly the case.

---

(1) Vilar, op. cit., p. 69.

(2) Ibid, p. 56.

As one commentator has remarked:

If an influx of gold is to have a profound economic meaning there must be a profound economic reason for it: it must correspond to an upsurge in exchange and in production, and cannot result simply from encirclement through war (1).

Gold became an invaluable commodity especially in balancing directly or indirectly a deficit in trade between western Europe and the Orient which provided some of the goods (spices) to pay for east European imports. To recognise that the upturn in European economies predated the influx of gold does not deny that an increase in gold imports did have a profound effect upon west European economies. Amongst other things there was a 'price revolution'. This followed the influx of American and African gold into Europe which resulted in the devaluation of gold relative to other commodities and the rise in general prices (2). Gold was not altogether unimportant in actually stimulating a trade revival and the increase in prices which encouraged business. Our argument in fact will be that the inflow of gold to the European economies in the sixteenth century helped facilitate the primitive accumulation of capital which later served to extend the embryonic development of capitalism on the continent.

(i) The Traders

Portugal was the first European country to discover gold on the Gold Coast reaching Mina in 1471. By 1540 however it was no

---

(1) Ibid, p. 35. Thus: "The minting of gold was ... a consequence of western economic development and not a cause ..." ibid., p. 36.

(2) Ibid., p. 76.

longer bringing gold into Europe (1). The Guinea trade was began by a Lisbon merchant Fernao Gomes and governed by the Mina company under strict instructions from the King of Portugal to enforce a monopoly of trade which received consolidation by Papal Bills issued by Eugene IV and Sixtus IV (2). The Portuguese were continually frustrated in their attempts to enforce such a monopoly. They were plagued by interlopers and restricted first to a floating trade, that is trade from boats which the crews did not leave, and later to coastal trade which led to the building of forts as trading centres. In return for gold, Portuguese traders initially exchanged cloth, textiles, canvas and copper, coral, glassware and shells with the Akan people (3). In this the Portuguese met a demand for fashions which had been established previously by Wangara traders. Increasingly, however, slaves were exchanged by the Portuguese for gold. The slaves served a function of carrying much of the export commodity from the hinterland to the waiting Europeans. Slaves were bought at Benin in 1479 by Eustache de la Fosse and by 1529 this was a well organised business (4).

The King of Portugal is said to have disliked this aspect of the trade but his concern lay more with attempts at continuing a

- 
- (1) Elmina Castle was built by the Portuguese in 1482 and Axim fort in western Gold Coast in 1503. A testimony to Portuguese contact with pre-state forms is given in J.K. Kumah, *Denkyira 1600-1730 AD*, MA Thesis, University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies, 1965, "It is likely that gold from Denkyira was coming down to the coast since the time of the Portuguese", p. 2.
- (2) See Vilar, *op. cit.*, p. 55 and T. Garrard, *Akan Weights and the Gold Trade*, (London: Legon History Series, Longman, 1980), pp. 72-73.
- (3) Vilar, *op. cit.*, p. 55 see also, D. Birmingham, 'The Regimento Da Mina', *T.H.S.G.*, xi, 1970.
- (4) Birmingham, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

monopoly of trade on the coast. The importance of gold for Portugal was already becoming apparent with the first minting of the 'escudos' in 1436 and 'cruzados' in 1457 as a medium of exchange and a new addition to Portuguese currency. The increased wealth which the gold content of the cruzado (3.54 grammes of fine gold) ensured, helped facilitate Portugal's ascendancy over the previously hegemonic commercial powers of the Mediterranean. It also served to enhance the increasing volume of Portuguese trade with the Far East following Vasco da Gama's circumnavigation of Africa (1). The importance of the Mina gold trade was thus located in the significance that this commodity had for the Kingdom of Portugal and the Portuguese economy in Europe hence the need to enforce and maintain a monopoly on trade. All gold entering the country was taken first to the mint where it was returned to individual owners in the form of money which in turn was used to develop increasing commercialisation of the Portuguese economy. The importance of gold for European economies was stressed to the King of Spain by the Lords States General of United Netherlands as early as 1609. Talking about the importance of the Guinea trade and the need to support the seafaring traders they stressed that:

The return cargoes of the same trade, being pure gold, which is brought to this country, is minted and further distributed amongst the participants (2).

On the Guinea Coast a Royal monopoly was ruthlessly enforced. No resident in the castle, for example, was allowed to own a set of scales which could be used to weigh quantities of gold. But Portugal

---

(1) Vilar, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

(2) FCN1, 1610-1623, p. 12. Translation of unsigned letter relating to the development of trade between the King of Spain and Archdukes and honourable high and Mighty Lords States General of the United Netherlands.

faced mounting competition from neighbouring European countries. In 1553 three English merchants financed three ships to the Gold Coast from which they acquired one hundred and fifty pounds of gold. A similar expedition took place in 1554 and between 1555 and 1557 an English trader called Towerson made three voyages. In all cases the exchange of goods on the coast was between European cloth and Akan gold (1). Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Dutch also became more involved in Guinea trade, a trade which they were to maintain an interest in, in one form or another, until well into the nineteenth century.

(ii) The Mercantilist State

We will talk later about the impact that 'colonial' rivalry had on the coast. It is now important for us to project our concern with some of the processes linked to European expansion to the seventeenth century. We can do this by tracing the greater interest and encouragement shown in the development of commerce at this time by the mercantilist states in Europe. Mercantilist state here refers in particular to the institutions of the monarchies of England and Holland and their respective groups of advisers and entourage which in a later period were to form a rising bourgeoisie. A brief look at the role of the state here is important as it will focus our attention on what became the main vehicle for informal colonialism on the Gold Coast - the formation of chartered companies. In doing this we also develop an earlier assertion that this period of European expansion was one based not on a capitalist world system but developing merchant capital bent on unequal exchange.

---

(1) For an interesting description of the trade see, T. Garrard, op. cit. and also J.W. Blake, (translator and editor), Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560, Volume II, series II, Vol LXXXVII, (London: The Hakluyt Society, Issued for 1942).

English and Dutch incursions on the Gold Coast occurred in a way not too dissimilar from those of the Portuguese before them. Merchant companies, syndicates or partnerships were formed to facilitate enough finance to make a trip to the Guinea Coast worthwhile (1). The usual process was for a group of merchants to finance a ship to bring back as much gold and treasure as possible. In 1562, for example, Sir William Garrard and other London merchants sent out two ships which returned with one hundred and fifty pounds of gold (2). The claim of the Portuguese to a legal monopoly of the coast meant that such voyages had to be furtive and secretive and if they were discovered, as was usually the case, the merchants were quick to demand help from their country of origin by way of protection.

We will look at two areas of this protection and state involvement in the trade to the Guinea Coast and more generally in the development of a mercantilist system to enhance the greater profitability of its national merchants. These will be the petitioning and the encouragement given to the minting of coins of the realm with the gold brought back from the coast and the development of state institutions in the form of a banking system (3).

- 
- (1) James A. Williamson, A Short History of British Expansion: I, The Old Colonial Empire, (London: Macmillan, 1930), p. 83.  
 (2) See, Blake (1942) op. cit., and Garrard, op. cit., p. 79.  
 (3) This help like all 'state' help was of its nature contradictory and alienated many groups (later to become known as 'factions'). For example, although a monarch would be called upon to raise the problem of its merchants with the Pope, many merchants were to resent the seemingly confiscatory nature of the 'mint' in ensuring only coins of the realm and not pure gold were allowed to stay with merchants. At the same time merchants would see the 'value' of increasing the monetarisation of the economy through the increasing influx of gold ...

As early as 1481 merchants had prevailed upon King Edward IV of England to petition the Pope to allow free trade in Africa:

As it is advantageous to the Christian religion that wealth and other things precious for their natural excellence, should be drawn into its power from the hands of the infidels, he willingly permits his subjects to pass over to any parts of Africa for traffic and the exchange of baser merchandise for nobler, provided this be sanctioned by the Pope's authority. He therefore prays his holiness that no suspicion may attach to this voyage and to grant letters for the aforesaid purpose ... (1).

And in 1555 merchants claimed to Queen Mary the freedom of the world to trade:

First we saye we be merchantes, who by the commune usage of the worlde do use traficque in all places of the worlde as well Asia and Africa as Europe, and have never be restreyued from resorte arive place wherunto we comme (2).

The most significant period for state assistance for merchant and trading causes came in the seventeenth century. As the sixteenth century is agreed to be a period of economic expansion so the seventeenth is a period of depression (3). It is a period of falling prices in Europe and a reduction in foreign trade. However, these aspects of economic and social depression are misleading. The seventeenth century may more clearly be seen as a period of realignments in western Europe and the development of powers which are to dominate trade and other activities in the Gold Coast for many years - in the case of the English until the twentieth century. The seventeenth century also sees

- 
- (1) Petition of King Edward IV of England to Pope Sixtus IV regarding A Voyage to Africa 27 February 1481, Document 107 in Blake, op. cit. p. 297.
- (2) Merchants of England claim right for Free Trade in Guinea 1555: Document 140, ibid., pp. 335-6.
- (3) I. Wallerstein, The Modern World System II, Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy, 1600-1750, (USA: Academic Press, 1980), see also, A.G. Frank, (1978a) op. cit., Chapter 2.



the Dutch seizure of the Portuguese fort at Elmina in 1637 and the driving of the Portuguese from the Gold Coast in 1642 (1). Despite the seeming depression of the seventeenth century for the Dutch it is also a golden age, one where they usurp power from the declining Portuguese and from 1618 are dedicated to an expansion in overseas markets by displacing the interests of weaker countries. The result of this activity is that there is a failure to develop a different productive base for further capitalist development. Dutch merchants instead were content to centralise existing money capital, rather than generate new opportunities for capital accumulation through a process of concentration. As one writer has observed:

while the seventeenth century down swing lasted, European mercantile capitalism expanded on its New World frontier but without significant productive impulse or investment or commercial success - and with frequent commercial failures of the colonising and/or trading companies (2).

One such company was the Dutch West Indian Company which was chartered in 1621 and began trading on the Gold Coast in 1623. This brought to Holland an estimated 40,461 marks of gold in the years up to 1636 (3). There were numerous difficulties in sustaining a continued return of gold to Holland. Partly this was because of difficulties in obtaining sufficient quantities of trade goods to exchange for gold, partly because of inland Akan wars and also because of continued and escalating competition for the metal especially from

- 
- (1) This coincided with Portugal's demise in Europe of which both Holland and England took advantage. Portugal separated from Spain in 1640 and the treaties of 1642, 1654 and 1662 which led to the Treaty of Methuen in 1703 between England and Portugal ensured British supremacy over Portugal. See Frank, (1978a), op. cit., p. 76.
- (2) A.G. Frank, (1978a), op. cit., p. 97. Compare, Vilar, op. cit., p. 196
- (3) Garrard, op. cit., p. 153. British and Dutch East India Company were chartered in 1601 and 1602. See Frank, (1978a), op. cit., p.67 who makes the point that they did not become profitable until the last part of the seventeenth century when there began the eighteenth century boom, see also Vilar, op. cit.

the British. The Dutch West Indian Company collapsed through bankruptcy in 1674. The decline in their gold takings can be seen from Table Two. Total Dutch receipts for the second half of the century were only 565,000 ounces.

TABLE TWO (1)

Estimated Dutch Gold Takings for the Seventeenth Century

	<u>Annual Average</u> (troy ozs)	<u>Total</u> (troy ozs)
1601-22	20,000	440,000
1623-36	23,000	325,000
1637-50	20,000	280,000
1651-67	17,500	300,000
1668-76	2,800	25,000
1677-1700	10,000	240,000
		<hr/> 1,610,000 <hr/>

Competition was a factor hastening Holland's decline of the gold trade. This competition from English interlopers became sizeable around 1631. Between 1632 and 1672 it accounted for the influx to England of an average of 5,000 ounces a year (2). The system of obtaining the gold was similar to the Dutch in the sense that chartered companies were formed often with only sufficient capital to enable one journey to the coast. The first was The Company of Adventurers of

---

(1) Garrard, op. cit., pp. 154-155.

(2) Ibid.

London in Africa formed in 1618 which was given a royal monopoly of trade for 1000 years. This millenium was short lived, however, following the outbreak of the Anglo-Dutch war of 1664-1665 which led to the formation of the Royal African Company of 1672. The latter was perhaps the most successful of the early English Companies. The Royal African Company had a better organisational structure but still faced the difficulties of appropriating greater quantities of gold. For instance, its bullion coined at the Royal Mint for the years 1673-1700 yielded only approximately 506,000 guineas (1). This company gave way to the African Company of Merchants formed in 1750 subsidised by a specific imperial government grant of £13,000.

We give this list of different companies to illustrate the fragility of the period for trade to West Africa. The trade was always under threat from interlopers who very often could undercut the prices of the companies which had established themselves on the coast and which consequently had the costs of maintaining their trading posts (2). This competition led the 'established' companies to call for state backed monopolies of trade because the interlopers were undermining the extent of their unequal exchange with the Akan. Moreover, the willingness and ability of the Akan to fraternise with interloper European traders, rather than 'official' companies, led the merchants to become actively engaged in indigenous politics. Company traders recognised increasingly that it was only by becoming cognisant with the internal affairs of the coastal Akan, and with interfering in the local affairs of the Fante in the vicinity of the European forts, that European trade could be safeguarded and expanded.

One of the main fillips to the expansion of the English companies was the development of banks and in particular the Bank of England, which was formed with the blessing of the state.

---

(1) Ibid., p.155.

(2) There was also wider competition from Swedish companies and the Brandenburgers. See, J.Reindorf, Scandinavians in Africa, Guide to Materials Relating to Ghana in the Danish National Archives, Supplemented by P.E. Olsen, J. Simenson (editor), (Oslo: Universitforlaget, 1980).

The Bank of Amsterdam however, was founded in 1609 (1) before the formation of the English bank, as an attempt to obviate the mushrooming of smaller private banks which were, "speculating in the disparity of silver content between different currencies, absorbing the strongest and putting the poorest back in circulation" (2). The banks' role was to regulate and redistribute the stocks of gold and silver used in international trade. The intention was to minimise the adverse inflationary effects of large quantities of these metals coming into Holland which were eroding fixed incomes. A national bank provided the chance to stabilise prices in the interests of traders, not only in Holland, but more generally in Europe as a whole.

(iii) The English State

Mercantilists in Elizabethan England had petitioned the state for help in achieving five tasks: the development of a political and economic framework to safeguard merchants' interests, to modify, centralise and consolidate the:

older but still useful units of society; encourage and direct the development of a new political economy; balance that evolution; and expand the resulting system abroad (3).

The result was parliamentary legislation in 1563 to inter alia: encourage food production, improve the navy and generally facilitate a "concerted effort to diversify and expand overseas trade and colonisation" (4).

These early state reforms laid the basis upon which an English

- (1) Vilar, op. cit., p.205, see also, K. Marx, (1972,) op.cit., pp.317-319.  
 (2) Vilar, op. cit., p.206.  
 (3) Appleman Williams, op. cit., pp.41-42.  
 (4) Ibid., p.42.

bourgeoisie could establish its hegemony by 1688 and by 1720 become "one of the world's great class dictatorships" (1).

Feudal barriers to accumulation in England were removed in the years between 1640 and 1720. The mercantilist state increasingly provided the rising bourgeoisie with the facilities to enhance accumulation at home and plunder abroad. Among the state provided institutions to hasten capital accumulation was the Bank of England, an efficient treasury, a rational taxing system and stock market security (2).

Although not without conflict, there was surprising uniformity between established political parties in parliament as to the direction which the mercantilist state should take. As one commentator has remarked, "Whigs and Tories differed about the pace of development, but both were taking the same road" (3). Perhaps the most important mercantilist state aid to the development and consolidation of the English bourgeoisie was the growth of long term national credit. This was facilitated by the formation of the Bank of England in 1694 but in actual fact the basis for this institution had been developed several years before (4).

- 
- (1) Rosen, op. cit., p. 25. Some of the additional mercantilist state aid can be located to 1703 with the Treaty of Methuen where England agreed to give Portugal political protection in return for commercial privileges: the Navigation Acts 1650-1651 assured the development of the English fleet which was at the forefront of hostilities with the Dutch in 1664, 1665, and their defeat in 1672.
- (2) Rosen, op. cit., p. 27.
- (3) Ibid., p. 29.
- (4) See, ibid., and the account of "carnival-like concern with money, stocks and schemes for creating fortunes in Darien and Dorchester", and the suggestion that "Even before creation of the Bank of England money for supply was collected in the City and lent to the treasury as soon as the Crown needs were known", ibid., p. 35.

The development of the Bank of England towards the end of the seventeenth century helped stabilise the adverse effects of the influx of large quantities of gold and silver to London. It was just one part of a complex series of measures which had been and were to be enacted by the English mercantilist state which sustained and increased the power of English traders.

The London gold market was no longer adequate or reliable to realise sufficient state funds to augment public finance in the form of taxes and loans to cope with the traumatic period following war with Louis XIV and the developing wars of Spanish succession, 1700-1704 (1). The earlier years of the seventeenth century had seen merchants deposit gold surpluses with the gold merchants in return for which they accepted exchange receipts, which although private did have a large circulation. The gold merchants were thus in a position to advance loans as they were confident that there would not be a call for all their money at any one time. The result of the system, however, was inevitable speculation and the use of only the worst coin for circulation in England while best coin went overseas for international commerce.

The possible monetary difficulties that this system of 'banking' posed had led the Crown and London merchants to jointly accuse:

the gold merchants of speculation, usury, clipping coin and even insolvency. In 1694 (then) when the

---

(1) Ibid, p. 215. It should be noted that Vilar overstresses the importance of wars at this time as the reason for the development of the Bank of England. See Rosen, op.cit., p.25. "The credit system, built between 1690 and 1720 came into being only after the process of basic accumulation of wealth had been secured and not as a result of wars. The wars on the contrary were financed successfully only because the owners of exchequer tallies knew adequate returns were safeguarded".

King had asked the merchants for a loan of £1,200,000 sterling, they used a new body to raise it. The Bank of England (1).

The development of this institution, and the monetary reforms which followed the immediate inflationary period, were to provide England with a monetary base from which to sustain the country's dominance of the seas and colonial expansion to the end of the nineteenth century (2). This was based, moreover, on the further discoveries of gold on the Gold Coast and also the seizure of silver from other parts of the globe. We have spoken little in fact about the relationship between gold and silver in this period as means whereby European economies facilitated the development of national industries and international trade and exchange. This relationship is documented well elsewhere (3). The point to be made here is that the appropriation of gold from the Gold Coast, up to the end of the seventeenth century, was important for the development of mercantilism in Europe. It is not insignificant that the 1630's in Europe, a marked period of depression within the general seventeenth century downturn, was also one of intense competition and rivalry on the Gold Coast and of a reduction in gold export from the West African littoral.

#### TABLE THREE (4)

##### European Gold Takings from the Akan 1601-1650

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Troy ounces</u>
Portuguese	1601-40	160,000
Dutch	1601-22	440,000
	1623-36	325,000
	1637-50	280,000
English	1632-50	95,000
Interlopers etc	1601-25	50,000
	1626-50	150,000
		<u>1,500,000</u>

(1) Ibid., p. 215.

(2) For details of the reforms of this period, see Vilar, op.cit., Chapter 2

(3) See Vilar, op. cit.

(4) Adapted from Garrard, op. cit., p. 156.

England emerged from the seventeenth century in a much stronger position than its European neighbours for the reasons already mentioned. Most crucial of these was the underlying importance, and different nature of the state in England and its expansion into areas which were previously spheres of activity solely reserved for merchants. In fact, merchants began from as early as the fifteenth century to enlist the help of the monarchy to develop international trade and the appropriation of profit from unequal exchange.

The seventeenth century can most easily be seen as a period of consolidation of gains achieved in the sixteenth century. In relation to the influx of gold this meant that the seventeenth century saw a slowing down in the rate of gold imports to Europe. This was only reversed in the eighteenth century when the source of gold was largely from Brazil (1).

Our discussion of the increasing use of gold in Europe and in particular that received from the Guinea Coast can now be extended. We can now look at how this gold was appropriated and exchanged for European trade goods and the impact that the European traders had upon the people of the coast and the inland Akan groups.

#### IV GOLD IN THE AKAN SOCIAL FORMATION AND THE COLONIAL INCURSION OF THE GOLD COAST

Before we examine specifically the structural and less qualitative impact of European contact with the Akan, we need to turn briefly to a closer look at the role of gold in the Akan social formation in the seventeenth century (2). This will be done briefly

---

(1) See Table Two where it can be seen that there was no increase in the quantities of gold for the second half of the seventeenth century. See also Vilar, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-198.

(2) The role of gold varied between the different Akan groups. Our emphasis here is on the forest kingdoms and the western states.



because we have already discussed in some detail the way in which gold was produced, and the trade routes through which much of it was exchanged for commodities in the territories bordering the North and the coastal region (1).

We are concerned here with the position of gold in the Akan economy. Was it a means of exchange, a currency, or did it simply have a use value or serve the function merely of decoration? In trying to answer these questions we are faced again with a lack of data. Most of the information that we have on the uses of gold by the Akan refer specifically to the Asante in the nineteenth century (2). A recent attempt has been made, however, to trace the origins of the Akan gold trade from which it has been noted that unlike the areas surrounding the Akan to the East and West, the Akan from an early stage had a currency of gold dust (3). The use of gold dust as a currency was pre-dated by iron until North African and Arab traders journeyed to West Africa. As early as 773 a Baghdad scholar referred to the ancient Kingdom of Ghana as, "the land of gold" which remained an important source of gold for north African traders until the development of the Mali Kingdom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (4).

It was not until well into the fifteenth century that the developing forest societies of the Gold Coast were more fully integrated into the gold trade emanating from the North. The sprawling and

---

(1) See Chapter One.

(2) On the more general issue of wealth and gold in Asante see, I. Wilks, 'The Golden Stool and the Elephant Tail: An Essay on Wealth in Asante', in, G. Dalton (editor) Research in Economic Anthropology, Volume 2, (London: JAI Press, 1979) see also, I. Wilks, Asante in the Nineteenth Century, The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

(3) I. Garrard, op. cit., p.2, see also Ivor Wilks, 'Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, I The Matter of Bitu', JAH 23, 3, 1982.

(4) Quoted in Garrard, op. cit., p. 10.

successful Mali kingdom established the trade in gold through Wangara merchants which was assisted by the development of Timbuktu and where a Tuareg settlement, in ca. 1100, attracted increasing numbers of traders from North Africa and the Sudan (1). The spread of Mande and Wangara traders and merchants into West Africa hastened the promotion of Akan gold production. Throughout the early period gold trade to the North equalled and sometimes outstripped exports to Europe (2). In 1513, for example, the Portuguese Governor of Elmina protested that gold was directed North instead of to the coast through; "this Mandiqua leak which was never so gaping as at present"(3). The Mande obtained gold from the Akan in the forest areas and traded for it with woven cloth from the north at Bonduku, which became important as a market town just north of the forest region.

By the late fourteenth century the influence of the northern trade upon the Akan was such that they began to weigh their gold on their own scales (4). We will see below that the expansion of Akan gold production to trade with merchants from the north, increased the rivalry for gold between the European merchants on the coast. As one trader commented in 1688 the Akyem:

do their main trade with the interior of Africa, with the Arabs and Moors of the Niger, and with their neighbours in gold, garments, cloths and other merchandise (5).

Akan political power grew as the trade in gold increased. We see in

---

(1) Ibid., p. 11. See maps pages xvi and 38.

(2) Compare Tables III and IV.

(3) Quoted in Garrard, op. cit., p. 26.

(4) On the significance of gold weighing and weights see Garrard, op. cit., and pp.

(5) See J. Barbot, A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, Volume V of Churchill's, Collection of Voyages and Travels, (London: 1746, 1st ed., Paris 1732).

the following chapter how the development of gold production and slave trade added to the wealth and position of sections of the Asante. The desire to secure trade routes which carried gold became one of the driving forces behind state formation. For example, while the British and Dutch were plundering and looting on the coast in an attempt to extend their informal colonial power, the Akan state of Gyaman was subordinated to Asante rule. Gyaman had become an important gold trading state during the late sixteenth century and had been attacked at different times by Tekyiman, Dormaa and Asante. In ca. 1730 the Asantehene, Opoku Ware, sacked Bonduku and made Gyaman a subject state. Similarly, later in the century the Asante army invaded Dagomba and Gonja subjecting them to actual tributes.

The presence of northern and particularly Muslim merchants facilitated the expansion of the Asante political economy. Gold which had previously been used for decorative purposes took on a new value. It became a vital trading commodity which could be exchanged for the products of the north and it was soon to become a universal currency; that is, money for use in exchange and for hoarding in the accumulation of wealth. Before interest in gold was generated by the northern traders iron was used as a currency. It is suggested however that from ca. 1700, and the establishment of the Asante Empire, gold dust was to be used for trade (1):

There was no gold for money before the Mande came. When they came the money was called som £. This was of iron, small like an axe; it was a rod about three inches long. It was the first money here (2).

---

(1) Garrard, op. cit., p. 3.

(2) See, T.F. Garrard, 'Notes on Begho', Department of Archaeology, Mimeo, University of Ghana, Legon, 1976, p. 8.

The changing role and importance of gold in the Akan political economy had a number of repercussions within Asante. The increased demand for gold from northern traders and also from Europeans on the coast led to an intensification of gold production. In all likelihood the labour intensity of the productive process of this period increased the need for slave labour (1). The two way development of trade also increased the opportunities for the accumulation of money wealth. This increased wealth, consolidated the position of Asante office holders who tried to direct the mining and trading of gold. A monopoly of trade for the Asantehene, however, was not always possible and the rise of an Akan class of merchants often posed a threat to established office holders. Such a threat emerged following the opening up of the gold trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century to private African merchants. By the nineteenth century the Asantehene had developed a form of state trading. A company was established which traded on behalf of the Asantehene. The merchants, or court representatives of this company, traded on specifically demarcated trade routes to the coast. When state trade was relaxed, such was the clamour for trade among private Asante, that a class of wage earning carriers developed to transport the goods from Kumase to the coast (2). The carriers of this trade came predominantly from the ranks of the Fante. This posed a threat to the Asante hierarchy who saw the position of middlemen as a potential obstacle to their authority and hitherto complete control of trade. Finally, in 1844, a decree was passed in Asante preventing the residence of coastal traders in Asante (3).

---

(1) See Chapter One above for techniques of gold mining.

(2) Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 195.

(3) Following this there was a revival of Asante carriers and state oriented trade.

From the use of gold merely to decorate and adorn the person the Asante developed an intricate economy based upon the use of gold dust as currency central to the successful trading of slaves, ivory and kola nuts. We talk later about the nature of the intricacies of the Akan economy, about the collection and payment of taxes in gold dust to the state treasury and how the Asantehene sought to control trade (1).

The point of mentioning here, the increased use of gold within the Akan economy, is to show that the Akan gold trade began in a northerly non European direction. Indeed, it took a long time before European interests dominated the gold trade. The direction of indigenous trade was only dominated by European demands in the phase of the Atlantic slave trade. In this sense, in the period up to ca. 1750, the Akan were equal partners in trade with Europe. They were exploited through unequal exchange of their goods with those from Europe but they controlled the supply of their products. Moreover, they determined what Daaku has called the terms of trade with the Europeans by specifying the colour and quality of the imported goods. The early Portuguese, for instance, had to trade in the already tested north African shawls from Morocco and Tunisia for Akan produced goods. The Portuguese in fact established factories elsewhere in Africa, for example in Benin, to import locally produced goods like cloth, leopard skins and slaves into the Gold Coast. Between 1633-1634 the Dutch alone imported about 12,641 pieces of Benin cloth to the Gold Coast (2).

---

(1) Chapter Four below.

(2) K.Y. Daaku, Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), Chapter Two.

The pull of trade to the south resulted in the increased production of gold within Asante. This did not however structurally transform the indigenous social formation. Instead, many embryonic relations of production and power were intensified. Hence indigenous slavery grew to satisfy the greater demand for gold and power holders extended their authority over commoners as the former acquired greater access to gold. Gold became the currency of the Asante. It was used in the payment of trade goods from the north. The latter in turn, because of their prestige status, enhanced the position of the office holders. At the same time, opportunities grew for merchants not directly in the control of the Asantehene to trade gold both northwards or south to the coast. However, whenever this increased commercial activity posed a threat, real or otherwise, to the Asantehene sanctions were imposed on trade from Kumase.

Now that we have briefly assessed the importance that gold played within the Akan economies we can turn again to a more detailed look at the effects of European merchants trading on the coast for Akan products and especially gold. We will argue that rather than European encroachment at this time, (ca. 1471-1700), having a transformatory affect upon the Akan social formation, its impact was largely felt simply through an intensification of indigenous relations of production that were developing from an essentially 'internal' dynamic. We will also argue, however, that the European presence on the Gold Coast can be seen to hasten later structural changes in the Akan social formation and future development. The changes result from the impact of colonial violence, the importation of firearms and the creation of a middleman class of African traders among the Fante.

(a) Non Structural Changes on the Coast

It has already been established that the basis for European contact with the Akan people of the Guinea Coast was trade and the chief vehicle for this was the Chartered Company. The instructions to the first General on the coast for the Dutch West Indian Company make this quite clear: "for the defence, help and assistance of the merchant ships of these lands, trafficking and drawing their trade there" (1). The main bulk of this trade was in gold and when the old company was liquidated in 1674 a new company kept this part of the charter "for the execution of a secret design to extract with little cost gold from earth and sand which may be invisibly contained in it" (2).

One aspect of European contact, and its impact upon gold exports, that needs examining is the suggestion that there was an immediate switch in the direction of gold exports from the Guinea hinterland from northern trade to the coast (3). This suggestion needs examining carefully because as can be seen from Table Four it is only after the period 1651-1700 that the trade to the North declined substantially.

---

(1) F.C.NI, 1610-1623, p. 35.

(2) W.I.C. 40. Secret Minutes of the Meetings of the Assembly of Ten 17, January 1675, contract with Jan Baptista Liefvinnck: cited in A. van Dantzig, op. cit., p. 20.

(3) The change in direction of trade is seen as one result of European contact on the coast and not the sole result as is alluded to by K.Y. Daaku, 'Trade and Trading Patterns of the Akan in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in C. Meillassoux (editor), The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971). See also Garrard (1980), op. cit., pp. 161-163.

TABLE FOUR (1)

Akan Gold Exports to the Northern Trade 1400-1900

	<u>Annual Average (oz)</u>	<u>Total (oz)</u>
1400-1450	5,000	250,000
1451-1500	10,000	500,000
1501-1550	12,000	600,000
1551-1600	17,000	850,000
1601-1650	10,000	500,000
1651-1700	10,000	500,000
1701-1750	8,000	400,000
1751-1800	8,000	400,000
1801-1850	4,000	200,000
1851-1900	1,000	50,000
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<u>1400-1900</u>	<u>85,000</u>	<u>4,250,000</u>

The above table shows clearly the difficulty facing the Portuguese in establishing European hegemony and a trading monopoly on the coast for Akan gold. It also implies that the Sudanic and Trans-Saharan trade remained the dominant direction of exports until the arrival of the Dutch who were more successful in encouraging the Akan traders to direct their gold to the coast. Akan gold production did not simply increase to cope with European demand but a change in the direction of trade occurred following a number of factors. One of these was the civil war in the Niger bend following the demise of the Songhai Empire after defeat by the Sultan of Morocco in 1591.

---

(1) Garrard, (1980), op. cit., p. 163.



There was a further reduction in the direction of gold to the north following the death of al-Mansur in 1603, and the ensuing outbreaks of civil war in North Africa. Trade did not suffer a complete slump however and later in the early eighteenth century it picked up to 8,000 ounces from the seventeenth century figures of 10,000 ounces a year (1).

The persistence of the northern trade is evidence to support an argument that European contact initially did little other than make available for the Akan people an extra outlet for trade, if the conditions for them were agreeable. Indeed, a notion that the Akan did little else than obey market forces for their commodity is tenable, given the often voiced complaint by merchants that apart from adulterating the gold with copper and sand, which they exchanged for clothes, the Akan quite easily closed trade routes and put a stop to trading in gold until the price of their goods rose. This does not mean that the Akan gold merchants were not subject to the unequal exchange of their products imposed by European traders. Moreover, Akan commoner and slave gold producers were also subject to unequal exchange. It is rather to say that the Akan were not totally made subject to the demands of European merchants. Indigenous Akan merchants, for example, still determined the rate and quantity of supply of gold dust to the coast.

The fluctuating demand for gold from the Europeans is just one aspect of exchange relations with the Akan. Another is the supply of goods from Europe to exchange for the gold. In addition to the clothes and beads which we have referred to, slaves, copper and kettles were exchanged for gold. Most important of all, however, was the European introduction and spread of firearms on the Guinea Coast. We

---

(1) Ibid.

will discuss the structural changes that this trade facilitated for the Akan in a moment (1). All that needs to be said now is that most of the large African and European trading nations on the coast used firearms as a means by which to secure the safety of their trading station from each other and also from indigenous disputes. In order to ensure the security of the trading post the Dutch and English companies relied increasingly on recruiting the assistance of inland people.

As we will see this became a forerunner to the system of indirect rule on the Gold Coast, and certainly represents the political form of subordination of the Akan people stemming from informal colonialism. Gifts were often exchanged between chiefs and those trading on the coast ostensibly as tokens of friendship but this 'agreement' became a basis for much conflict. For the Europeans it represented the right to purchase land on the coast and to demand allegiance and loyalty from the coastal people to secure a monopoly of trade. For the Akan, European token payments, which later became known as the 'notes', only reflected traditional payment to chiefs for temporary rights over land and certainly not property rights in land.

These introductory comments on the impact of European contact with the Akan social formation, in the period, ca. 1500-1700, have focussed on an increase in the demand for gold for circulation and hoarding in Europe. This gold was to form the basis for primitive accumulation in Europe, and led to merchants who were busy securing trading posts on the coast to protect their mercantile operations.

---

(1) This will include in Chapter Three the process of state formation.

The immediate impact of colonialism was to raise the intensity of production and extraction of gold among the Akan. European contact with the Akan hastened the development of indigenous merchant capital and the desire among the gold producers to satisfy the new demand for the metal on the coast. For the coastal people, opportunity was provided by the European presence for monetary gain, new employment and the production of new commodities. New skills were developed by the Fante who lived in the immediate vicinity of the European forts where food production was increased to satisfy the demand of European merchants together with artisanal skills needed by the Europeans (1).

The European clamour for Akan gold was accompanied by an influx of European products. Early colonial transformation of the Akan social formation may largely be associated with the nature of these products. We can now begin our assessment of colonial transformation in the period between 1500-1700 with a closer look at the colonial use of terror and violence.

(b) Structural Changes on the Gold Coast

(i) Violence as the basis for Colonial Transformation

The violence needed by merchant capital to impose itself upon non-capitalist society has only recently received broader discussion (2).

---

(1) Lynn Garrett, The Gold Coast Comprador in the Eighteenth Century, Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 1981.

(2) See, inter alia; P-P Rey, Colonialisme, Neo-colonialisme et Transition au Capitalisme: Exemple de la 'Camilog' au Congo-Brazzaville, (Paris: Maspéro, 1971), see also the discussion of Rey in Anthony Brewer, Marxist Theories of Imperialism, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980). B. Bradburn, 'The Destruction of natural economy', Economy and Society, 4,2, 1975, R. Luxemburg, The Accumulation of Capital, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951). Also the interesting material on Lusophone Africa: Gerald J. Bender, Angola under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality, (London: Heinemann, 1978), Allan F. Isaacman, The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique: A Colonial Activity in the Zambesi Valley 1850-1921, (London: Heinemann, 1976), G. Clarence Smith, Slaves, Peasants and Capitalists in Southern Angola 1840-1926, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, African Studies Series, Number 27, 1979).

The earliest account of the need for the violent subjugation of indigenous people's associated with the process of colonialism came in the nineteenth century. Karl Marx included in his analysis of primitive accumulation an assessment of Dutch mercantilism, the importance of colonies for Holland and the seizure of commodities:

The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, and murder, floated back to the mother-country and were there turned into capital. Holland which first fully developed the colonial system, in 1648 stood already in the acme of its commercial greatness (1).

Early colonial expansion was often based upon the role of force which was used to sustain European merchant capital's incursion into African non-capitalist social formations. Some of the earliest records relating to European incursions on the coast refer to the use of violence (2). The Dutch faced tough opposition from the inhabitants of Tacorady (Takoradi) to their increased presence and trading activities. Following an attack on a trading vessel a party of musketeers went ashore and "... set fire to the whole negro village so that the Blacks finally retired into the bush" (3). In retaking the fort, which in the meantime had been blown up, the Dutch carried out further acts of terror on the inhabitants of Tacorady. The local population were encouraged to attack the Dutch by the British who were attempting to extend their sphere of influence westwards along the littoral from Cape Coast Castle. The Akan resisted the Dutch landing at Tacorady but for their pains had a number of their villages set on fire (4).

---

(1) Karl Marx, (1974), *op. cit.*, p. 705.

(2) F.C.M 1610-1623, for examples of Portuguese aggression, 10 July 1610.

(3) F.C. N14 1665. Journal of the ship "Middelburgh Ad Coll Archief xxxvi Six Extracts.

(4) *Ibid.* Extracts from Vice-Admirals de Ruijters Letter Book, 1896, xcv 34.

There is a sense in which European violence was endemic in the process of colonising the Gold Coast. This is certainly the case if by violence we mean the process of establishing trading forts on the Gold Coast and thereby attempting to impose European trading patterns on the indigenous people. We need, however, to look at the notion of violence in less simplistic terms. A clearer understanding of this early phase of colonial transformation recognises the interrelationship between colonial violence and the political as well as economic subjugation that ensued. The process of fort building marked the 'penetration' of indigenous trade networks. Politically, however, the Akan traded as equals with European merchants in a whole range of products. Despite the unequal exchange of gold which benefitted European merchants on the coast, when it was used to mint currency in Europe, and generally assist in the process of capital accumulation there, indigenous political structures often managed to control the flow of the mineral to the colonial traders. When the flow of gold to the coast from the forest kingdoms stopped, for example, or slowed down, the price paid to the Akan for the product rose following an increased demand from the European merchants. This is not to say that the process of informal colonialism did not also witness immense violent acts of European looting which enhanced transactions of unequal exchange. Similarly, as we will see later in the thesis, at a more advanced time of colonial contact, merchants used violence to enforce extra or new productive activities on the Akan and ultimately to control indigenous states by waging war. The latter often went hand in hand with the establishment of 'indirect rule' and the political subjugation of the Akan to colonial rule.

Although there is no a priori reason for the use of violence

in the process of colonial expansion into a social formation, we can observe historically its use in the Gold Coast's incorporation into the international economy. Ultimately, the use of force was used in the mines and in railway construction at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The effect of European violence in the eighteenth century was to initiate the articulation, and ultimately the disarticulation, of the indigenous Akan social formation with European embryonic capitalist development. In fact European merchants sought to maintain peace around their newly established forts through a policy of 'detrribalisation' (1). This was a process whereby the merchants enforced an abrogation of traditional loyalties of those Akan in the immediate vicinity of the fort and substituted the suzerainty of the merchants. For example, when the Portuguese first arrived at Elmina they severed the dependence which the Elmina's had on the members of Fetu and Eguafo.. The area was turned instead into an independent municipality ruled by local headmen who became increasingly dependent upon the Portuguese. This process of detrribalisation was enacted by all the companies which traded from forts on the coast. It escalated the degree of competitiveness between merchants together with the intensity of feeling felt by the Akan people. Having suffered at the hands of the Portuguese the Elmina's became faithful (albeit temporarily) to their wishes to enforce a trading monopoly with them. They fought the Dutch for the Portuguese when this European competitor attempted to usurp Portugal's trading areas.

The importance of securing friendship among the Akan was continually asserted, and recognised by those trading on the coast:

---

(1) Daaku (1970), op. cit., p. 50. See also, L. Garrett, op. cit.

If we have the Natives on our side, and they work well with us (as we are confident) they can do us very considerable service, and help us in time of need (1).

The Dutch desire to reduce the Portuguese sphere of influence on the coast resulted in numerous internal agreements. In 1598 there was a trade agreement with the Asebu to bind them together for the purpose of trading. In 1624 a 'formal' link was established with the Fante who agreed that they would help the Dutch if the latter were attacked by the Portuguese.

The importance of this agreement extended beyond simply providing help against a Portuguese attack. It was of strategic importance for trade in the sense that the Fante people lay between the Dutch and inland traders and that they could, (and often did), to enhance this location place obstacles in the way of continuous trade between the Dutch and inland Akan. This powerful position of the Fante was astutely recognised later by the British Governor of Cape Coast Castle:

The Waterside Country people and several inland adjacent countries, through whose territories traders must come have no gold or elephants teeth and but a few slaves to part with of their own. Their business is to disturb trade, or to make the Dutch and us pay for it ... The Waterside Country people are desirous to have the traders give them their gold, teeth and slaves to bring us to sell, and then they give the upland people what they please for it; to which the traders are not willing; and this often causes contests and disappointments in trade (2).

---

(1) Copy of letter XIX, WIC to Gold Coast, Letter book WIC OV10 16 August 1656, FC N7 1656-1657, pp. 6-7.

(2) Cape Coast Castle 26 November 1709, Letter to R.A.C.EIO, p.103, in FCTS II 1707-1715, FCN38, p.103. See also Dalby Thomas's comments on separating inland people from coastal people because of the formers love of trade. "The coastal people have nothing and therefore it is in their interests to stop trade. The Royal African Company therefore must make friends with allies of the inland people and make their enemies the company's enemies." See FCTS I, p.228. Thomas also makes proposals for greater friendship between the RAC and the WIC.

The characterisation of the inland people as traders was reinforced by the Dutch who observed four classes of blacks among the coastal Akan (Fante). These were the inland negroes seen to be similar to European peasants; and also a group called 'Kabusaeus' who were likened to the nobility of Denmark. There was also a specifically merchant class, 'Klapilopers' or 'Meraderes' which was more clearly translated as brokers (Meklever). These were a group who came to the forts with the inland negroes to trade for them and act as their interpreters. The final division of the Akan as observed by the Dutch were the 'canoeman' who resembled European seamen who had a similarly good knowledge of paddling and sailing in the very rough surf (1). In identifying a division of labour within and between coastal people and inland Akan groups it was hoped that an intricate system of alliances could be developed whereby trade could be enhanced. This was done through a system of consent and coercion.

Attempts to develop alliances with the Akan, like the one tentatively forged by Britain to prevent increasing Dutch presence on the coast, became very popular and were developed not solely to exclude other established European powers from trading. The maintenance of peace on the coast to facilitate greater amounts of trade, and the constant haranging of indigenous people for not trading with the 'agreed' European companies were the biggest problems facing the merchants. The satisfaction of these two objectives was frustrated by the limited range and capability of European guns based in the forts.

The trading stations had become the focus for trading activities with the European merchants using their superior weaponry to support

---

(1) FCTS II 1767-1715 N38 Unsigned entry pp. 110-111 date 1709.



agreements made with local inhabitants. Constant attempts were made by different 'factors' to encourage the indigenous production of foodstuffs which would help the merchants living in the forts. Instructions to a 'factor' going to Ardra, for example, from the West Indian Company in 1687 suggested that alternative forms of trade might be sought with the natives and in particular any activity which might reduce the company's cost of subsistence on the coast:

He (the factor) should try to find out from the Natives whether trade in any new commodities could be opened there, and whether any such commodities like pepper or other agricultural products could be cultivated, and we should in particular encourage the natives as much as possible to cultivate rice, which would be extremely useful for the company (1).

The Dutch tried many plans in the 1690's to encourage indigenous production of cotton, indigo, coffee and sugar to supplement the gold trade and also the rapidly developing slave trade (2). There was a contradiction though in relation to the latter which limited the success or possibility of plantation agriculture. It was difficult to develop a labour force to both cultivate the land and at the same time export increasing numbers of these potential labourers as slaves. Moreover, it was more profitable for the merchant companies to sell the slaves to those with interests in the plantations of the New World where labour supply was short. This was already the period when the demands for slaves in particular, but the interests of the people trading on the Gold Coast more generally, were being subordinated to those with interests in the New World. This signals a further aspect

- 
- (1) WIC, 228 Instructions Book. Instructions for Martin Witte, who is going to Ardra as Commies (factor) dated 3 July 1687 sgd Isaac Jan Nys, in A. Van Danzig op. cit., p. 25.  
 (2) See also FCN46, 1747-1750, p. 39 for discussion of Dutch plantations at Saccondie in 1748.

of the Gold Coast's incorporation into a world economy (1). It became easier for European companies to concentrate less on the development of alternative forms of indigenous production on the coast, (in the hope of developing systems of agriculture comparable with those developing in the East Indies), and more on the exchange of slaves for goods from Europe. This trade was to take on giant proportions in the following century and is a reflection of difficulties encountered by the merchants in securing as complete a domination of the Gold Coast as they would have liked.

In short, the European difficulties in extending the authority of the fort beyond those already detribalised areas, arose from the strength of the indigenous social formation and Akan resistance to Dutch and English merchant advances. This resistance reduced the chances of success in the proposed alternative trading and European productive ventures. The Dutch merchant's made this difficulty abundantly clear when reporting back to their company in Amsterdam:

It is impossible to make progress in the cultivation of sugar cane and indigo in this country. The authority of the company does not extend beyond the range of the cannon. Such cultivation requires an extensive area of land. The malice and jealousy of the natives can destroy by fire in one night the long awaited harvest in the plantations. The slaves working in there are not under proper control and run away ... Such enterprises cannot be undertaken so long as the Company does not possess this country in full ownership ... The slaves imported for sugar cultivation are now employed in more useful work of cutting beams and sawing planks at Boutry for the upkeep of the forts (2).

- 
- (1) See Chapter Three for discussion of the slave trade.  
 (2) FCTS II N38 1707-1715 21 June 1711 (GC) Minute Letter The Gentlemen of the Direction of H. Harrig P. Holdennar and Ab Engelgrap Robbertoz to Ass X WIC Amsterdam, p. 156.

Conflicts between and within the Akan groups on the coast clearly adversely affected European traders' profits and the amounts of gold that they appropriated:

The highest interest of the company consists in the furtherance and prosecution of the trade on the coast and thereby to get gold into the chest and this is always stopped and prevented by wars and the disasters proceeding from them (1).

The European merchants were always faced with the difficulty of enforcing compliance of their agreements with the inland people. More often than not, despite the frequent harsh treatment inflicted on those groups which did not comply with the wishes of the Dutch and English companies, the indigenous traders would exchange their produce only with those who paid the highest price, thereby reducing European gains from unequal exchange. Moreover, these transactions were often not with established European merchants but with interlopers. The need to consolidate the existing trade, and develop further links with inland people's, was reiterated by the Royal African Company in London to English merchants at Cape Coast Castle:

... So often as you make reprisals on the Natives for negotiating contrary to their agreements and for giving encouragement to interlopers, you must endeavour to make them sensible of their injury done to the Trader in general. By dealing with interlopers they discourage the Company who otherwise would always support them against all their enemies (2).

The turn of the eighteenth century was a period of varying fortunes for the European traders and this was especially the case during the ascendancy of what was to become the Asante Empire following

- 
- (1) FCTS II Letter Ass, X. WIC., Amsterdam to Director General Harey and Councillors Elmina, 27 September 1712. (WIC 56), p. 174.  
 (2) FCTS II, T70/52 letter RAC London to C.C.C. 14 August 1713, p. 219.

the demise of Denkyira. Indeed, increasing numbers of 'internal' disputes severely restricted European trade:

It will always be constantly true that so long as these natives continue their uncivilised manners and customs, and the country is divided into so many small powers, plundering one another at the least quarrel, the company must have a stronghold on each country for carrying on its trade, as being so many entrances and gates to the larger countries which when they are in discord, close the paths and forbid traders to come to the seaside (1).

These continuous demands from the coast to the directors of the chartered companies in Europe for a more extensive incursion into the Gold Coast were not always met with enthusiasm. There were frequent calls not to become embroiled in internal wars which could inflict losses on the company. It became clear, however, to those in the forts on the coast, that without the development of closer links between themselves and the indigenous people trade would not be as profitable as it could be.

The two hundred year period 1500-1700 marked the increased incorporation of the Gold Coast into the economies of Europe. This last section has been important in tracing two of the processes through which this occurred. This was through trade and the violent incursion of the indigenous social formation by European merchants. In addition to outlining the nature of these processes on the Gold Coast this section has been particularly useful in building the picture of the nature of European expansion and the development of a global economy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In section three above we focussed upon domestic European developments which helped facilitate the expansion of mercantilism. We have now shown the other side to

---

(1) Ibid., pp. 220-221. WIC Letter Director General Harey, Elmina, to ASS X WIC Amsterdam, 11 June.

European expansion; that is the problems which were involved with establishing trading relations with the people of the Akan social formation. We have tried to show here that these relations were not always forged through peaceful means and that the presence of European merchants often meant the destruction of villages and certainly the playing of one group of Gold Coast inhabitants off against another. This form of colonial control of indigenous people was to be perfected by the establishment of 'indirect rule' in the nineteenth century. This forerunner to the later colonial period however was an essential prerequisite to what was to follow. We need now to look at a corollary to the early fort building and 'protection' of villages by European merchants and the means whereby this protection was offered. By this we are talking less about the Dutch and English suggestion that they would protect local inhabitants through the use of the castle's armoury, which had structural limitations, and more about the indirect method of the sale of firearms and powder to the Akan. The latter became a predominant aspect of the relations between Europeans and the Akan. This was a feature of course which could quite easily, and often did, 'back fire' on the Europeans who became targets of their own weaponry.

(ii) Firearms

Firearms were included in the earliest Portuguese and Dutch shipments of goods for exchange on the Gold Coast (1). European powers openly took part in the subjugation of rival groups on the coast at the call of their newly formed clients. In 1613 the King of Great Accra

---

(1) R.A. Kea, 'Firearms on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', JAH, 12, 2, 1971. It must be noted that for a short time the Portuguese banned the exchange of firearms.

asked for Dutch help against the Etsi and this was given willingly in the form of twenty five musketeers who assisted 1,000 Accras (1). Direct military intervention by the merchant companies to quell disturbances and secure trade routes however, was obviously not as agreeable as getting the Akan to police their own areas, and this became a major reason for the exchange of so many (albeit ageing) firearms. Chiefs who thought it was possible to control a trade route, or the activities of another state by force and military prowess received guns, often in exchange for commodities which they delivered to the coastal forts. Guns were thus used as a means of exchange for gold and the increasing number of slaves for which there was a growing demand in the New World.

Merchants on the coast called continually for larger quantities of firearms and powder to facilitate greater amounts of trade. For example:

I request that I may have the powder and sheets lately asked for with all speed, as at the end of this month I am expecting a party of Asjantyn traders. If there were good muskets here, I should receive as much gold in the company's chest as never before (2).

The importance of the firearms trade can be seen more clearly by recent estimates of the scale of the trade in guns. The period 1673-1704 saw the Royal African Company of England ship nearly 66,000 firearms and more than 9,000 barrels of gunpowder to West Africa. Between 1701 and 1704 32,954 small arms were sent (3). Although there is no break down of these figures between the Gold and Slave Coasts and the rest of the West African littoral, it is fair to assume

---

(1) Ibid., p. 188.

(2) FC NS I T/70/5 Letters received 6 September Letter from Factor Landman dd Axim l.ix.1706, p. 199.

(3) Kea, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

that the former two areas received the greater proportion of weaponry given their increasing importance to the economies of Europe. To these figures must be added those of Dutch firearm imports. In December 1687 there were 8,717 muskets at the Dutch establishments on the Gold Coast. The Director General requested a further 6,000 muskets in July 1704 and the West Indian Company had on hand at the Gold and Slave coasts a total of 7,741 guns (1). The Dutch and English desire to exchange firearms and powder for gold and slaves, or to often simply give them away as gifts, had immense consequences for the way in which the Akan people related to each other. This is because the use of guns became a way of developing and enhancing power relations (2).

We will be looking at the development of different states on the Gold Coast in a following chapter. It should be pointed out here though that the suzerainty of Denkyira, in the years up to its downfall at the hands of Asante, was partly predicated upon the influx of guns from the coast to support the Denkyira army. The Denkyira were supported by the Dutch in their war against the Asante (ca. 1690) and were supplied with muskets and powder together with three cannons (3).

The second half of the seventeenth century saw a transformation of indigenous military arrangements which stemmed from the influx of firearms. The coastal states reduced what had previously been four kinds of infantry to one armed simply with firearms and swords (4). This period also saw the development of the now renowned asafo system

---

(1) Ibid, p. 195.

(2) See, for example, Daaku (1971), op. cit., p. 19, "The greatest single disintegrating force in politics was the importation of firearms".

(3) Kumah, op. cit. When the Denkyira were defeated by Asante the Dutch changed allegiance and supported the Asante.

(4) The previous kinds of infantry were, Archers, spearmen with shields, swordsmen with battle axes and musketeers. The latter appeared especially in the 1620's and 1630's. See Kea op. cit., pp.207-208.

as the basis of military organisation on coastal or inland states where young men in a village were divided into companies (asafo) each with their own officers.

These developments were to cause much unrest on the Gold Coast within and between inland and coastal Akan, and between European merchant groups which had provided the people of the Gold Coast not only with the means for the securement of trade, but also weapons which could be used against further merchant encroachment. In 1706, Dalby Thomas, for example, the English resident at Cape Coast Castle pleaded with the Dutch not to provide the Kings of Saboe, Fetu and Commany with powder because the English were in dispute with them. This request was denied because it would have not been in the Dutch interests to stop satisfying this large demand through the agency of the West Indian Company (1).

The seventeenth century thus saw the proliferation of firearms which were used by merchants on the coast as a vehicle to make safe not only their own fortresses and trading installations but, through trade with the Akan, to keep open the trade routes to the hinterland and the sources of Akan gold. This process led to an increase in the number of internal battles because of the incentive to try and placate more powerful merchant forces on the coast. These forces demanded, but did not always receive, strict obedience in the form of a monopoly of trade from coastal people and through them access to inland traders.

The increase in the volume of firearms to the coast at the same time as raising conflicts between neighbouring states also added to the potential for antagonism between different groups within the

---

(1) See FC NS I op. cit., p. 6. Letter General Pieter Nayts to Ass X WIC dated 25 May 1707.



Akan. The end of the seventeenth century marks the period of transition to greater importance attached to the slave trade and the increase in the availability of firearms to inland slave traders, which in turn raised the chances of acquiring more captives. Moreover, before this transition, the increase in firearms ensured that potential for rebellion were reduced by those non-slave owning groups and those who did not control the appropriation of gold dust. Indeed, it is fair to say that the increased availability of guns and powder represented:

goods which ... (facilitated) the acquisition and exploitation of captives (and) ensure(d) a steady reproduction of the social relations upon which the power and prosperity of the dominant classes rest(ed).(1).

As we will see in a following chapter, the social processes which the importation of firearms helped to create led, at the start of the eighteenth century, to the development of the Asante State.

(iii) Middlemen and the consolidation of Detribalisation

A thread throughout the second part of this chapter has been the need to recognise the number of ways in which European merchants tried to sustain a favourable trading situation on the Gold Coast which led inevitably to them realising that they could not remain oblivious to political changes within the territory.

Following the forceful subjugation of rebellious states, which were not agreeable to European incursions on the coast, and help afforded to those states whose cooperation was necessary to uphold the interests of merchant capital, the Dutch and English sought to find more permanent ways of ensuring the smooth running of trade and

---

(1) E. Terray, 'Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman'; Translated by Anne Bailey in M. Bloch (editor), Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology, (London: Malaby Press, 1975), p. 98.

commerce. The method used to do this, not always successfully, was to support the development of a class of 'merchant princes'. These were people in local communities who became significant traders and arbiters between Europeans on the coast and inland gold and slave dealers. These merchant princes became increasingly associated with mulattoes - offspring of European men and Akan women who received a special attention in the community. As one observer has remarked:

The greatest problem that faced the Europeans was the education of the mulatto children, and how best to replenish their dwindling corps of personnel and improve the efficiency of the companies' servants (1).

An uneasy relationship developed resulting from European attempts to support local chiefs against enemies, who might disrupt trade, and support which was also given by Europeans to develop numbers of individuals who became challengers to chiefly power. The contradictory nature of this early period of informal colonial rule was that although the Dutch and English sought to support chiefs, who secured trade routes into the interior, the development of autonomous indigenous traders posed a potential challenge to chiefly power. For their trade to be successful the Europeans needed to have good relations with the local people and emerging states. They also attempted to erode the powers of the local chiefs (2).

We have already seen the way in which Europeans tried to develop greater trading links with the inland people through the use of violence and the importation of firearms. The system of detribalisation referred to earlier was the prerequisite to the development of special relations

---

(1) Daaku, (1970), op. cit., p.99, the development of merchant princes occurred specifically in the coastal areas.

(2) K.Y. Daaku, 'The Basis of Dutch Relations with Axim', Ghana Notes and Queries, 8, January 1966, p. 19.

with distinct groups in the communities. When the Dutch finally took over Portuguese possessions they sought to impose their judicial and political forms on the people of Axim (1). Subjugation of the Axim became of paramount importance to the Dutch. The Axim were involved in a carrying trade of cotton cloth from the Ivory Coast which posed an unfair threat to Dutch traders. Interference in local affairs reached a peak in Fetu where the Dutch insisted in choosing a woman for the stool - something which was quite unprecedented for the state (2). This meddling in the internal affairs of a state emanated from Dutch attempts to maintain a trading monopoly. Very often, however, such interference led to the depopulation of previously flourishing coastal towns as the inhabitants fled seeking safety elsewhere (3). This disruption added to the loss of traditional chiefly authority as communities were broken up and Kings were subordinated to a dependency upon European merchants on the coast. An English report of 1704, for example, suggested that "the king of Aguafo live(s) upon the charity of the Dutch and had not a slave to wait upon him" (4).

Although traditional rulers were still seen as people through whom control of the commoners could be exercised, increasingly, in the seventeenth century, Dutch and English merchants turned to the development of a new class of African merchants. The emergence of this group stemmed from increasing numbers of European trading establishments on the coast and the appropriation of:

- 
- (1) Judicial powers had previously been developed by the Portuguese. At Mina and Axim a Portuguese Captain, a ruler of a small fortress city, tried all civil cases whether they involved Portuguese or Africans. See D. Birmingham, op. cit., p. 1. See map p.204.
- (2) Daaku, (1970), op. cit.
- (3) Elmina's population, for example, is estimated to have fallen from 12,000 to 1,000 in 1702, ibid., p. 35.
- (4) Quoted in ibid, p. 95.

a common trading language (which) threw up a new class of middlemen who acted as a liaison between African and European traders (1).

The African/mulatto traders served as an invaluable link between the coast and inland states and received an elevated status in the form of regular salaries from the Europeans. It was those who were not in the direct pay of Europeans, however, which posed the greatest threat to the Dutch and English.

The merchant princes who often had served apprentices with European traders became powerful forces often playing one group of merchants off against another. The Akrosam brothers in 1640-1662 challenged the Dutch attempts at making Fetu the economic backwater of Asebu and Komenda. Perhaps the most renowned merchant prince was John Kabes who was accused of being a cheat by both the Dutch and English, especially when favouring the more lucrative interloper trade (2). Kabes was a person of immense power whose:

liberal commercial policy won him the respect and love of the inland traders, and enabled him to cultivate the friendship of the Asante king who was the most powerful ruler on the Gold Coast (3).

The influence which Kabes could bring to bear on the trade directed to the coast is reflected in the suggestion that the reduction in the flow of gold, to the English around 1705, was directly a result of a dispute between Kabes and Dalby Thomas. It was Kabes who helped the British take Takorady by force in 1707 much to the chagrin of the Dutch who had previously refused his services.

---

(1) Ibid, p:91. On the development of this new class of African merchants, see, Daaku (1970), op. cit., Ch.V. This is not to ignore the possibilities for indigenous wealth creating within the Akan social formation.

(2) See C. Darkwah, 'J. Kabes, the Dutch and the English, 1680-1716', Institute of African Studies, Mimeo, University of Ghana, Legon, March 1967.

(3) Daaku (1970), op. cit., p. 141.

The importance of Kabes to the English trade was not recognised by Dalby Thomas's successor, Baillie, whose arrogance in dealings with Kabes resulted in the latter doing little or nothing unless there was more than ample financial remuneration (1). These difficulties in Kabes' latter years stemmed from the English failure to recognise that Kabes was an independent trader.

The point of illustrating the power which the merchant princes possessed is to show a further area where European encroachment on the coast disrupted indigenous relationships. Before the advent of the whiteman gold and slaves had not been directed to the coast for trade in such large quantities. Moreover, any commodities which did move southwards did not become the prerogative of an increasingly specialised group of traders, which at the time of the European incursions onto the coast became separated from the power of the traditional chiefs and rulers.

Chiefs were now subordinated more and more to Dutch and English 'protection' with their power circumscribed by a European presence. Furthermore, as the volume of trade increased, and a brokerage system developed between internal and coastal states, a potentially contradictory situation mounted for the European traders. This was that although a system of intermediaries, that is, merchant princes, had developed, this same group which could facilitate trade could also act to obstruct its improvement. This could especially follow if it wished to inflate the price of its trading commodities by withholding their supply from the interior to the coast. This usually meant occasional short-term hoarding of gold until European ships came to

---

(1) Darkwah, op. cit., p. 10.

port thereby increasing the merchant princes' bargaining position.

(iv) Colonial rivalry

A further underpinning dynamic to this early period of informal colonialism on the Gold Coast was an often intense colonial rivalry and competition for gold and later slaves. It will be remembered that the basis for successful merchant capital accumulation was the monopolisation of trade and the exchange of goods at a price greater than that for which they were originally purchased. The nature of merchant capital's profitability meant that it was particularly susceptible to encroachment of its trade by interlopers, and foreign competitors who either imported goods at cheaper prices than their rivals, or forcibly cajoled the indigenous inhabitants into agreements whereby they would not patronise alternative sources of goods. On the one hand, therefore, interloper competition had the tendency to increase the volume of trade between the Gold Coast and Europe by breaking down company monopolies on trade. On the other hand, the competition served to reduce the profit margins gained by state backed monopoly companies through unequal exchange.

Disputes between different European merchant companies was a dominant theme throughout the seventeenth century and was inextricably linked to the nature of European mercantile presence on the coast. This presence was based upon coastal fortresses and commercial stations which imposed a number of limitations on increasing the rate at which gold was appropriated.

We have not discussed the often intricate way in which this exchange of Akan gold for European cloth took place. This is well documented elsewhere (1). Neither have we said much about indigenous

---

(1) K.Y. Daaku, (1970), op. cit.

rebelliousness to European incursions. Our contribution to understanding the nature of informal colonialism on the coast has rather focussed upon the disruptiveness caused by European traders, in their attempt to encourage an increase in Akan gold production. Part of this disruption was caused by the influx of certain European goods, namely, firearms, and the use made by developing a group of middlemen through which negotiation for trade could be made: but these dislocations of indigenous life were further aggravated by colonial rivalry. The development of client relationships with different coastal state leaders led inevitably to problems of defining spheres of influence between the Dutch and English merchants. There was also the earlier added presence of the Brandenburgers and the longer stay by Scandinavians (1). An example of the colonial rivalry was given in 1679:

In the territory of the King of Aguaffo we have a lodge at little Commany, which was erected in 1638. But we abandoned and reoccupied that lodge several times, the English did likewise ever since they started competing with us in that area. At Chama we have a small fort, where we get some gold from Adom, Wassa and Tjutter. At Sekondi for the English have crept in; in spite of promises to the contrary, the natives have allowed this (2).

Needless to say similar complaints were made regularly to the Dutch by the English, who on several occasions made overtures to the former requesting better relations on the coast to facilitate greater profits for their respective companies. Writing to the Royal African Company in London the English Director of the Gold Coast said:

The Dutch still goes on in giving us all the Affronts they can. They have panyarred our goods as was coming

---

(1) See J. Reindorf, op. cit.

(2) ARA: Rademacher Arch.No. 587: Heerman Abramsz to Assembly of Ten, 23 November 1679 (written after his return) in Van Danzig, op.cit., p. 13.

from commander by Traders and they will do it till they give our notes out. I don't know if your Hons are to trade under them or by their leave. When our affairs are a little better settled I believe I shall venture to make them an example for it (1).

The result of European competition and rivalry led to a greater influx of firearms on the coast which were used as weapons, not simply for merchant protection but as vehicles of trade with the Akan. Attempts to quell internal disquiet, and the demarcation of spheres of influence, added to incessant quarrels between merchants and also different inland people who were coerced into supporting either the Dutch or English. One such dispute occurred in 1748 over the allegiance of the villages of the town of Boutry, which the English had previously claimed as a sphere of influence only to find that Dutch merchants had usurped the former's dominant position:

... your chief of Boutry had corrupted the inhabitants of our town of Bushaw and have drawn from their duty and allegiance to us, and has dared to hoist a Dutch Flag in our Town, and supplied the people with two pieces of cannon to plant against us, and has induced ANTERRY, the Caboceer, of that place, to send a message to our chief, importing that it is by your order these things are done and without your order, they will not close hostilities. The Town of Bushaw is within our Guns, consequently the sole right and property of our masters, the Royal African Company of England (2).

These attempts by European merchants to secure the allegiance of different groups of coastal people, and in particular of the increasing numbers of middlemen which acted as intermediaries of trade between the European inland people, reflected the gradual awareness by the Dutch and English of the inadequacies of the fortress trade; and the need to develop indirect forms of political control within the Gold

- 
- (1) F.C. NSI c.1707 T70/175 Dalby Thomas to Royal African Company.  
 (2) Letter, Stockwell and Husband, 14 December 1748 Cape Coast Castle to van Voorst, p. 44, FC N46 1747-1750, Emphasis Original. For the location of the European forts on the coast, see map five.



Coast itself.

## V CONCLUSION

Conclusions to be drawn from this chapter are tentative and exploratory and may be divided into two sections.

The first of these refers to the need which merchant capital had to sustain or develop mercantilist economies based upon unequal exchange and the evolution of a monetary economy. We have seen quite clearly, in parts two and three, that the economies of Europe which came increasingly to dominate the world depended upon the use of gold as a basis for trade and primitive accumulation of capital. This particular metal was sought from the Guinea Coast because gold was already being produced by the Akan which was part of a well established African gold trade. The pre-existence of Akan gold mining facilitated the possibility for a trading relationship between the early European merchants to the Gold Coast and the Akan which led to the initial reinforcement of pre-colonial indigenous relations of production. The sixteenth and seventeenth century economies of Europe and especially England and Holland, were economies in transition to capitalism which required a 'world', that is, international, market for its produce but more especially territories from which it could plunder and seize specific products required for mercantilist development. The nature of this European contact with the Gold Coast has been the focus for the remainder of this chapter and forms the second section requiring some more extensive concluding comments.

A lack of historical data to provide a basis from which to assess the early Akan social formation, prior to European contact, makes a detailed account of the effect of European incursions difficult. We have reduced this difficulty in the previous chapter by trying to reconstruct

early contact relations of production by combining an examination of oral traditions with an assessment of the theoretical issues surrounding the construction and understanding of the Akan and Asante early contact social formations. It was concluded that the early contact Akan and Asante social formations comprised an articulation of a domestic mode of production and three servile modes of production. These forms of organising the production and the reproduction of the conditions of existence of the Akan social formation survived the early period of merchant contact on the coast but not wholly without modification.

It might be argued that the servile modes of production were generally reinforced (although not without contradictions, see below) in the way two writers have suggested (1). This was a possibility because of the greater demand for gold from the inland Akan groups which were dependent largely, but not exclusively, upon the use of slave labour. Moreover, the increased use of firearms towards the end of the period meant the greater likelihood of larger numbers of captives being seized from neighbouring areas to augment a very important supply of labour to produce gold. This may also have laid the basis for later state development and the enhancement of chiefly power and authority.

The organisation of production around the domestic unit perhaps took the greatest impact of merchant capital at this time. European demand for gold probably meant an intensification of the productivity of labour and the heightened need for labourers to extract gold from the auriferous rock. It is likely that the increased demand for gold from the coast enhanced already existing relations of production.

---

(1) P-P Rey (1971) op. cit., and G. Dupre and P-P Rey, 'Reflections on the Pertinence of a Theory of the History of Exchange', Economy and Society, 2, 1973.

At the same time the agents behind merchant capital on the coast set in motion processes which led to contradictions, between and within earlier Akan modes of production, together with the basis for opposition to and the negation of merchant capital's success. This dialectical relationship between merchant capital and Akan modes of production has best been seen at the political level through the impact that firearms and colonial violence had upon the indigenous social formation. The use of violence by European merchant companies on the coast was seen as the necessary basis from which an advantageous trading position could develop, and which in turn was used to subjugate the Akan immediately surrounding the coastal forts. In 'defensive' zones around the forts attempts were made to create a client group of villages, and ultimately states, which in the long run could assist in the furtherance of European trade to the inland gold producing areas.

However, there was also a contradictory aspect of this for the Europeans, in that it created the possibility for greater unrest among local states by vastly eroding the powers of the traditional rulers. The possibility of this occurring was hastened by the development of the merchant princes. This group became more powerful as time progressed, and certainly may be seen to represent a split from traditional authority holders and in so doing disrupted quite considerably the previously outlined domestic based mode of production (1). No longer were the chiefs and elders sole beneficiaries of the productive labour of families. The presence of strangers on the coast established an independent money making group whose concern was to facilitate trade between the hinterland and the coast, and to also

---

(1) It should be noted however that often chiefs combined a role of merchant princes with that of 'stool caretaker'.

increasingly set up as traders in their own right. When the latter occurred the indigenous traders position was enhanced vis-à-vis the Europeans and merchant princes could trade from a vantage point.

The influx of firearms, with which the inland traders and coastal people alike were meant ostensibly to keep the peace, also had adverse effects for European trade which generally followed an increase, rather than a reduction, in hostilities between the Akan.

We can now focus our attention on the most serious and violent aspects of European capital's presence on the Gold Coast and this is the Atlantic slave trade, which was ushered in by the English and Dutch who were concerned increasingly less with the appropriation of gold from the Akan, for which they found alternative supplies, and more with the procurement of labourers to work directly their more profitable plantations in the West and East Indies.

CHAPTER THREE

A CENTURY OF SLAVE DEALING: ca. 1700-1800

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation.

Karl Marx, Capital, Volume One

I INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth century was perhaps the most traumatic in economic and social terms for the inhabitants of the Gold Coast. This period witnessed the increased incorporation of the West African territory into the economies of Western Europe and the Americas through the demand made by the merchants of these countries for African labour. The gold trade which had flourished so much in the seventeenth century lost its earlier importance as western Europe demanded labour for possessions in Brazil, the Caribbean and the southern part of North America. It has been estimated that as many as one hundred million Africans were seized for this trade in human beings but of course a far smaller number reached their destination on the opposite side of the Atlantic (1).

It is not our intention to examine in any great detail the history of the Atlantic slave trade. This has already been the subject

---

(1) A.G. Frank, World Accumulation 1492-1789, (London: Macmillan, 1978a) The literature on the Atlantic slave trade is extensive, but, inter alia, see the recent collection, Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn, (editors), The Uncommon Market: Essays in Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, (New York: Academic Press, 1975), and J.E. Inikori, Forced Migration: the impact of the export trade slave trade in African societies, (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

of extensive study. Instead, we intend to locate the growing and changing interest in the Gold Coast, by western merchants and traders, with the period of state formation on the coast and the internal struggles which accompanied this many sided process. We need, for example, to continue our examination of European incursions into West Africa which take an increasingly more violent role in this period. A further question to ask is whether the Asante social formation could satisfy the growing demand for slaves on the coast without any change in their modes of production or, if structural transformations did occur, what were these changes and what precipitated them? We will turn our attention to the nature of Akan society and the pressures which it found itself under resulting from an increased European presence. We have already seen, for example, that the influx of firearms onto the coast by Europeans had a series of consequences for the Akan. Moreover, the European presence on the coast created a number of violent conflicts both between the traders and Africans and also within the respective groups themselves.

The seizure of huge numbers of Africans, to sustain the Atlantic slave trade, created further extensive conflicts and ensured the greater incorporation of the Guinea Coast into a series of what were to become internationally dominant economies. Britain, Holland, France and Portugal were the leading countries in promoting the slave trade which became the basis for a 'triangular' trade linking West Africa, the Caribbean and Europe (1). Before the eighteenth century was finished Britain was to command a dominant position in western Europe and enter a stage of capitalist development which was to make

---

(1) This term can only be used as a broad description of the directions of the bulk of the trade.

the country the forerunner of an industrial age. Eventually, West Africa was no longer required for the labour that it could provide for mercantilist interests and the plantation economies of the Caribbean. Instead, the Gold Coast was to be flooded with the commodities produced by a developing industrial power. Africans were to be shown the merits of increased indigenous production of suitable commodities for Europe, and to develop new industries from which a now hegemonic capitalist political economy could benefit. This period of 'legitimate' trade will be examined in the following chapter. We must now turn our attention to the Akan state formation and the inter-relationship and outcome that this had with different forms of colonial encroachment.

## II STATE FORMATION I

The early beginnings of the Asante state have already been briefly mentioned (1). We will not concentrate here on the different historical 'events' leading to the shedding of the power of Denkyira and the development of the Asante Union in 1701 (2). We will only refer to the historical data when explaining what was behind the development of the Asante Empire to illustrate the processes of class formation and likely areas of conflict reflected in the internal Akan power struggles and the growing desire for contact with European traders.

Three periods of Asante state development have recently been identified beginning with ca. 1000-1400 as the time of initial local

---

(1) See Chapter One.

(2) These events are covered by, inter alia, Adu Boahen, 'The Origin of the Akan', Ghana Notes and Queries, 9, 1966. See also Ivor Wilks, 'The Mossi and Akan States, 1500-1800', in M. Crowder and J.A. Ajayi, (editors), History of West Africa, Two Volumes, Volume One (London: Longman 1971).

development of proto Akan agricultural production based upon iron technology. There followed the development of urban settlements and small principalities between ca. 1400-1600, where improved metal technology aided the development of gold exploitation and a degree of militarisation which led to the development of long distance trade. Finally, the period ca. 1600-1850 has been seen to represent "the rise of large kingdoms stemming from the profitable long range international trade" (1).

The validity for laying so much stress on international trade is examined below. More importantly we need to examine the relations of production underpinning these developments. An account of Akan state formation needs to be formulated which breaks from previous pre-occupations which reify isolated emerging political institutions. We need to understand the development of these institutions but not simply as an idealistic expression of chieftainship (2).

#### Internal Organisation of Akan-Asante Society

The role of women and commoners in the daily life of Asante has already been discussed briefly. We can now focus upon an examination of unfree, (that is, slave), labour in early Asante society and assess its significance for the emergence of the powerful Asante Union. There are two important reasons for using the different forms of servitude as bases from which to evaluate Akan state formation.

First, by locating our analysis of state development within

- 
- (1) James Anquandah, 'State Formation Among the Akan of Ghana', Sankofa, The Legon Journal of Archaeological and Historical Studies, 1, 1975, p.57.
- (2) See, for example, Alfred Kofi Quarcoo, "The stool did not usher in a Republican Constitution, it gave a new dimension to a known monarchical system in which the ruler was not above but under the law which crystallised that object of art - the stool", 'The Akan Stool Polity: A Political Organisation', IAS, Mimeo, University of Ghana, Legon, n.d.



Asante in internal rather than wholly external factors we get a clearer picture of the role that labour of all kinds played in early Asante society. This analysis is located within an historical and materialist perspective which sees productive relations between people and nature as the basic social act of any society. Second, by examining forms of servile labour, we can see clearly the kind of impact that the more recognisable international slave trade had upon early Asante society. Was it this form of European contact, for example, which created indigenous unfree labour or did slavery exist within the Asante social formation before the European presence? If the latter was the case, what was the social position of the slave within the Asante hierarchy? Was there more than one form of slavery and what were slave relations with free Asantes?

For Rattray, relations between people in Asante were those of 'voluntary servitude'. Indeed, in "West Africa it was the masterless man and woman who ran the imminent danger of having ... 'their freedom' turned into involuntary bondage ..." (1). This notion among the Asante was seen to stem from the idea of indebtedness and communality within the lineage as the focus for the cohesiveness of Akan society. More recently, within an idealist framework, it has been stressed that:

Akan traditional society can be characterised by three key aims which follow from the social premis of Akan matriliney ... these aims are jural corporateness, economic classlessness and political rule by consent (2).

- 
- (1) R.S. Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 33. Compare similar comments by B. Cruikshank, Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa, (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., Second edition, 1966) Volume 1, p. 313.
- (2) A. Norman Klein, 'The Cultural and Historical Context' of Inequality in Akan-Asante Society', Unpublished paper, Mimeo, 1979.

Both these views seek to stress the existence of a non class society in which different groups coexisted without the exploitation of a ruling class of people who subordinated the interests of the majority of villagers to their wishes. This view of Asante society has been supported by seeing people's status in Asante as graded on a continuum between freeman and slave. A range of five categories, for example, has been identified between voluntary and involuntary labour (1). Voluntary servitude was the position of the Akoa, a condition of servitude in which every man and woman stood in relation to some other person or group. For example:

A man's nephew and niece are their uncle's nkoa, a man's wife is her uncle's akoa a man's children are their uncle's nkoa a subject of a small Chief again is the akoa of the greater, and so on in an ever ascending scale, until, at a later date, we reach the era of the great Amanhene (petty kings), who in turn became the nkoa of the central authority at Kumasi, the Asante Hene (King of Ashanti). He was the akoa of the 'samanfo (spirits) and of Nyame (the supreme God) (2).

There were increasingly more servile statuses ranging from a Pawn, that is any Awowa, to an Odonko - a purchased non Asante; a Donom - a prisoner of war from another state and an Akyere which was a slave found guilty of a capital offence but whose slaughter was delayed, often for years, until a suitable 'festive' occasion (3).

This classification of servitude in Asante has more recently been simplified into a three fold schema, with the intention of demonstrating the inability of a slave owning class to develop (4).

---

(1) Rattray, op. cit., p. 34.

(2) Ibid., p. 34, Emphasis in original.

(3) Ibid., pp. 35-43.

(4) A.N. Klein, 'West African Unfree Labour Before and After the Rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade', in, K. Foner and E.D. Genovese (editors) Slavery in the New World, (New York: Prentice Hall, 1969), p.85.

An Odonko, for example, a foreign born 'slave' was "indistinguishable from a freeman so far as his relation to the land and the product of his own labour was concerned" (1). This person might often be able to hold the usufruct to land and the product of his own labour (2). The possibility to accumulate such wealth has been seen to thwart the development of an Asante slave owning class as it has been suggested that:

There was no mechanism in Ashanti society for any group of slave owners to liberate themselves from preoccupation with the mundane problem of subsistence production in favour of intellectual and other noneconomic activities (3).

What then was the purpose of an Odonko? If s/he operated as his/her own economic agent in society, what prevented them from usurping the reins of power? For both these commentators it is the isolation of the slave from any Akan lineage that distinguishes an Odonko from a free Asante (4). Such a status, or lack of it, ensured that whenever human sacrifices were required the subjects were always those without a defence group to support their plea for life. This isolation also meant that there was great difficulty for the Odonko to organise any resistance to his/her fate (5).

The wholesale slaughter of large numbers of people, and therefore the withdrawal of their labour power from the economy, has also been given as a further argument denying the existence of a slave owning class. Who could imagine, for example, that a slave owning class would systematically kill off its labour force? (6).

---

(1) Ibid., p. 90.

(2) A.N. Klein does not explore the control in the hands of a female Odonko.

(3) A.N. Klein, (1969), op. cit., p. 90.

(4) Ibid., p. 90, Rattray, op. cit., p. 42.

(5) Interviews by the author with chiefs and elders of Chichiwere, Aboso and Abontiakoon.

(4) A.N. Klein, (1969), op. cit., p.90.

The second status in the simplified schema identified in Akan society is the Awowa or pawn. Pawning occurred, usually through indebtedness of an individual or lineage, when someone was 'leased' to a creditor. Whereas the Odonko would have access to their own products, a pawn would have to concede part or all of his/her productive efforts to the lessee-creditor but such a relationship was terminated when the debt had been repaid. This relationship has been seen as reflecting the increased incursion of the market into Asante lifestyles because of the risk involved for the lessee (1). Unfree status is seen only to exist for an Akoa-pa. An Akoa-pa was an unredeemed pawn who was sold outright to the creditor and whose status was most seen to resemble that of an American Negro slave because the new owner became a master for life. This last category of servile labour provides even the writers who deny the significance of unfree labour in Asante with a dilemma. It is logical that in recognising the category of Akoa-pa in Akan society, Klein should also, for example, recognise the presence of slave owners and the relationship between the two: namely the processes whereby the slave owners extracted surplus labour/produce from the slaves. This he does not do.

We have now established the backcloth of past and current debates on servile labour in Asante. Both the work of Rattray and Klein has been clouded by an anthropological desire to perceive early Akan society through the eyes and ears of indigenous people. The result is a 'reconstructed' Akan society drawn along the lines desired by anthropology and which reflect the controlling groups interests in

---

(1) The existence of a creditor at all needs explaining. We will see later, Chapters 4-6, how indigenous developments of commoditisation, the increased use and spread of money payments, is enhanced and advanced by the encroachment of colonial capitalism. Adultery payments were one of the earliest forms of commoditisation in Asante and this is described in detail by T.C. McCaskie, 'State and Society, Marriage and Adultery: Some Considerations Towards A Social History of Pre-Colonial Asante', JAH, 22, 1981.

eighteenth century Asante (1). These groups of chiefs and elders were those with most to lose if Asante life had been perceived as being not simply inegalitarian, but also based upon the exploitation of an 'unfree' labour force of captives as well as that of 'free' women and commoner men.

Plantation slaves are mentioned by one of the above commentators only to stress their non-importance in Asante (2) as if their non-existence is uncontroversial. We can now examine more clearly the presence of unfree labour in Asante. This is done not simply to describe its existence but also to present an alternative conceptualisation which locates the exploitation of servile labour in losing control over the products of its labour and of its progeny. Moreover, we examine the importance of servile labour within the broader framework of Asante state development and look more clearly at the different categories of slaves and their relations with the 'free' Akan members of Asante. It is not axiomatic, as one writer claims, that "Asante slaves did much the same work as free Asante's and that ... slave labour did not mark a departure from the traditional economic organisation" (3).

Our search for clarity, and the need to locate the nature of the relations between people living in Asante, precedes our assessment

- 
- (1) See the introduction for a detailed criticism of the role and position of anthropologists in interpreting early Asante society. The difficulty with the available literature of course is that it refers "implicitly" to late nineteenth and early twentieth century Asante.
- (2) A.N. Klein, (1969), op. cit., p. 92.
- (3) See, Kwame Arhin's 'Warfare and Economy in Asante: An essay in methodology', IAS, University of Ghana, Mimeo, 1977a, p.14, also his 'The Financing of the Ashanti Expansion', IAS, University of Ghana, Mimeo, 1965, p.17.

of the formation of the Asante state and the argument that it was the result of the exploitation of slaves performing different tasks, and that the product of their labour was usually appropriated by the chiefs and elders of Asante. In other words we concentrate in this first half of the chapter upon internal developments within Asante and especially those which can be identified as contributing to the formation of the Asante state. In the last section we draw out the importance of the relationship between internal Asante developments and those of the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, the contention throughout this thesis is that to achieve an understanding of the nature of colonial transformation, we need first to recognise indigenous developments and changes within the territory being colonised. We then need to turn to an assessment of the specific dynamic of the colonial contact and then back to see their (dialectical) impact on indigenous change. Only with this approach can we achieve a thorough examination of the dialectical relationship between colonialism and the colonised.

### III TRADE AND STATE DEVELOPMENT II

#### (a) The Arguments

Until recently the most forceful argument to account for Asante state development has been in terms of the desire to seek greater trade links on the coast and also northwards in the western Sudan (1). This view has been called "the barbaric or nonsense theory of Asante history" (2). That is to say it is wrong to see the formation of the Asante Union solely in terms of the inland peoples demand for trade

---

(1) See, Kwame Y. Daaku, Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600-1720, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) and Ivor Wilks, 'The Northern Factor in Ashanti History: Begho and the Mande', JAH, 11, 1, 1961.  
 (2) Kwame Arhin, 'The Structure of Greater Ashanti 1700-1824', JAH, 8, 1, 1967, see also his, 'The Structure of Greater Asante: A Restatement', IAS, University of Ghana, Mimeo, 1977b.

goods. Instead, for Arhin, the Asante wars which marked the beginning of the state's development, reflected a politically expansionary process which sought to include people with whom Asante's enjoyed a large degree of cultural homogeneity (1). Thus, European trade is seen as facilitating, and not causing, the organisation of Greater Asante (2). Arhin gives this account of Asante state formation to stress the existence of a political foundation upon which an economic superstructure was built. This contrasts with the alternative position mentioned above where the basis for Asante expansion was seen as largely economic. It is our intention here to show that it was an interrelation of internal political and economic considerations that prompted, and sustained, the Asante Union of 1701 interacting with the increasingly more pervasive European contact on the coast. It is crucial to recognise the dialectic between these forces for social change in eighteenth century Asante. In particular we will aim to show that the Asante Empire developed to secure greater trade opportunities, as a basis and outlet for the surplus produced by the exploitation of different groups in Asante society: women, commoner men and increasing numbers of slaves. The focus for this chapter is with slaves.

A major consideration for sections of the Akan seeking union in the later seventeenth century was to shed the oppressive yoke of Denkyira. This was achieved by Osei Tutu forming an alliance with Akwamu in the east and persuading the chiefs of Kokofu, Kumawu, Dwaben Bekwai and Nsuta to form a political union. The migration resulting from this union has been seen to lay in the desire for more land rather

---

(1) Arhin, (1967), op. cit.

(2) Ibid., p. 66.

than merely to control the Begho trade route (1). We will see shortly, however, by examining the relationship forged between the Asante states, within what has been called greater Asante, that a predominant relationship was trade.

A three fold classification of the Asante Union can be made identifying, first, some states as 'provinces' whose task it was to help Asante in times of war (2). Second, 'tributary' states which made annual contributions to the Asante economy and manpower, usually under threat from Asante if this contribution to the Union was not volunteered. These states were normally culturally and spatially different from the Asante. They nevertheless played a strategically important position economically and politically within the Union. An example of a state in this category was Dagomba (3). The third group of states in the Union were 'protectorates' which formed important economic entrepots on the coast as a safety valve to any difficulty occurring between Asante and the Fante states. As one writer has put it:

... the coastal towns were an economic counterpoise to the trade posts in the Fanti coastal stretch, and this accounts for the gentle nature of the pressure that was extracted on them (4).

These protectorates included Accra, Ada, Aowin and Elmina.

A basis for this threefold organisation of Greater Asante was a stately apparatus around which a degree of unity could be forged between both Akan and non Akan groups. The Asante national army formed part of this apparatus. This was not a regular unified army. Instead,

---

(1) J.K. Fynn, Asante and Its Neighbours 1700-1807, (London: Longmans, 1971) p. 29.

(2) Arhin, (1967) op. cit., p. 76.

(3) Ibid., p.77. See map on page xiv.

(4) Ibid., p. 77.



it was the responsibility of each divisional state within the 'union' to supply a quota of troops depending upon the requirement of different campaigns. Further unity was achieved with the notion of the 'Golden Stool' and Odwira festivals supported by broader inclusion of different areas within a constitution (1). The function of this paraphernalia was quite clear. The Golden Stool was specifically the innovation of Osei Tutu and his high priest Komfo Anotche. It symbolised the embodiment of the spirit and safety of the Union, while lack of attendance at the Odwira festivals was seen to be an act of disloyalty. There was, in addition to this already impressive array of state regalia, the development of songs representing traditional history with the aim of establishing common origins among the groups involved in the Union. Moreover, to mark the beginning of 'Asante' a new capital was established at Kumase. A degree of autonomy was allowed within the Union. The Omanhene or head for example, of different divisions, had to pay a war tax which represented a national levy imposed by the king for specific purposes. Nevertheless, they maintained control over their land which was seized before the Union. Trade regulations, however, had to be obeyed and to enhance the Asantehene's strength an administrative structure was developed whereby the Omanhene could only approach the Asantehene between the meetings of the Union through a representative (adamfo) in Kumase (2).

These were the events leading up to the middle period of Asante development based upon the charismatic leadership of Osei Tutu, and external coastal influences. The latter were in the form of increasing

---

(1) See R.S. Rattray, Ashanti, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

(2) The ultimate submission of the Omanhene in this way is controversial. See Fynn op. cit., p. 35, where it is suggested that such a move would have created too great a strain in the Union.

European desire to create friendly relations with the new force on the hinterland of the Gold Coast (1). The cohesiveness of Asante was severely tested following the death of Osei Tutu when a violent civil war broke out until Opoku Ware, (1720-1750), could secure his position as the new Asantehene. Internal strife was sufficient to allow Asante to be defeated by Akyem and to encourage rebellion from the provinces of Aowin, Sefwi, Wassa and Twifo (2).

It was only after these rebellions that the already mentioned sacred oath was invoked by the elders of Kumase. In addition there was the stationing of resident commissioners in the conquered areas to ensure the smoother running of affairs and the less likelihood of future rebellions.

A recent review of the duties of these residents, in fourteen areas from Accra to Salaga, shows quite clearly the reason for these innovations and in particular the benefits to be reaped from them (3). All the duties assigned to the commissioners involved ways and means of procuring greater financial remuneration for the Asante state either through the collection of taxes or with the promotion of trade and the securement of internal order. A commissioner was established at Elmina, for example, in 1765 with the precise instruction to act as an intermediary between the Asantehene and the Dutch to promote trade. In 1820 a travelling commissioner was appointed at Cape Coast to act as intermediary between the Asantehene and the British traders (4).

---

(1) See Fynn, op. cit., p. 52. For Europe's desire to maintain links with Asante especially the Dutch following a reduction in the power of Denkyira. See Chapter 2 above.

(2) There was also conflict at this time, 1721-22, between Asante and Techim the latter being opposed to Asantes expansion into the ivory rich areas of Brong.

(3) K. Arhin, (1977a), op. cit., pp.14-15.

(4) Ibid., p.14. It should be noted that Arhin makes the false distinction when referring to the duties of the commissioners between the functions of trade and political matters. This is once more symptomatic of reifying "the political" instead of attempting to see the interrelationship between 'economic' and 'political' considerations.

The purpose of outlining this period of Asante state development has been to look briefly at the reasons usually given for the development of Asante: the desire for more land, greater contact with people of a similar culture and to secure greater and safer access to trade routes with Europeans on the coast. None of these factors for the development of the most powerful west African state are wholly inoperative. There is an interrelationship between the increased desire by sections of the Akan for 'cultural homogeneity' and the formation of a new Akan state without the suzerainty of Denkyira and the security of trade with coastal Fante states which inevitably acted as brokers for goods from the hinterland. One writer, for example, has gone as far as to say that:

The success of the Asante in the early eighteenth century depended in considerable measure on the friendship of the influential African merchants on the coast, who saw their destinies inextricably interwoven with the fate of Ashanti (1).

Our position is that to understand the processes associated with Asante state formation we need to try and identify the actors, and their interests, within the Akan who facilitated the emergence of the Asante Empire. Our concern is therefore less with attempts to document a correspondence of different historical events with the 'facts' of Asante development and more to try and explain Asante state formation. We can only do this if we ask the questions who were the Akan that created the conditions for the Asante state and what were the relationships between them? This involves, among other things, a more detailed analysis of slavery.

---

(1) Daaku (1970), op. cit., p. 179.

(b) The Basis of Trade and the Dynamic of State Formation

The presence and importance of indigenous slavery to the Ancient Sudanic zone of West Africa, from the fourteenth century, has been downplayed as the crucial factor in determining the formation of the Asante Empire (1). Discussion about state formation has instead focussed upon the importance of long distance trade. This is related by one writer in particular to actual relations of production by suggesting that there was an 'African mode of production' where the state had the exclusive control of one group over long distance exchange (2). Little attempt has been made to isolate the foundation upon which groups of merchants acquired the goods which they traded so profitably. A further view has located the basis of state formation in the advances of technological inputs into different societies. For example, Jack Goody has told us that "With the introduction of metals, kingdoms are on the cards" (3). This is the case, moreover, because the influx of iron facilitated the transition from a society, where the bow and arrow was the most common weapon, to one where the firearm was used to secure

- 
- (1) Indeed Walter Rodney went so far as to suggest that slavery on the Guinea Coast was the product of European colonial encounter. See, W. Rodney, 'African Slavery and other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade'. JAH, 3, 1966. An exception to this view is the work of E. Terray, and C. Meillassoux. See Chapter One above and C. Meillassoux, 'The role of Slavery in the Economy and Social History of the Sudanic Zone of West Africa', Paper prepared for the Conference on the Economic History of the Savanna, Kano, Nigeria, January 1976, translated by R.J.Gavin, Mimeo.
- (2) Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Research on an African Mode of Production', in G.W. Johnson and M. Klein, (editors), Perspectives on the African Past, (Boston: Little Brown, 1972) and C. Coquery-Vidrovitch 'The Political Economy of the African Peasantry, and Modes of Production', in Peter C.W. Gutkind and Immanuel Wallerstein, (editors), The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, Volume 1, Sage Series on African Modernisation and Development, (New York: Sage, 1976).
- (3) Jack Goody, Technology, Tradition and the State, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 46.

law, order and peace to ensure more successful trading. The importance of technological inputs as a factor in the specific case of the Akan state formation has also been made:

The boost given to the agricultural aspect of the economy by iron technology and the stimulus given to the commercial aspect of the economy by the early gold mining industry and by the salt industry in the Etsi coastlands were aids to urbanisation and state formation (1).

Goody has recognised briefly the importance of acknowledging the relations between people as a first step in understanding early state formation. This is done by showing the relative shortage of manpower in relation to the abundance of land, which ensured a greater propensity for slave labour as a means of producing subsistence and subsequently trade. This argument, however, is a form of technological determinism. Goody's position subordinates the crucial recognition of the need to examine relations of production to a deterministic observation that it is the instruments and techniques of production, and/or the ecological balance, which determine the sequence of events. State formation in Africa becomes related to a dependency largely upon the commodities imported into the specific states rather than the interrelationship of embryonic, indigenous class forces with the social processes entering the indigenous social formation. We can now work towards this latter holistic approach to understanding state formation among the Asante by taking another look at the role of slave labour in sustaining the developing Akan social formation.

(i) Slave Labour and State Formation

In re-examining slave labour we recognise that access to political power in Asante, rested not on control of material factors of production or over long distance trade but with control over

---

(1) James Anquandah, op.cit., p.55.

people. By linking the productive activity of people in Asante with the formation of the state, we will show that Asante society was dominated by a ruling class of chiefs and elders, which rested upon the successful trading of the surplus extracted increasingly from groups of slave labourers (1). Control of long distance trade here does not represent the sole vehicle for the accumulation of wealth. Rather, long distance exchange and trade become the point at which surplus already extracted was realised. Production, in excess of indigenous consumption requirements of gold and agricultural products, could be exchanged for luxury products and firearms which could then be used to sustain the dominant position of chiefs and elders and ensure the capture of more slaves.

In a society where the number of dependents enhances the ability to accumulate wealth, the capacity to increase the number of people under one's control is crucial. At a clear advantage in the appropriation of people for their labour were the kings and chiefs of Asante who could use the captives from military forays while the 'free man' could only mobilise his immediate dependents (2).

The chiefs and elders of the domestic community extracted surpluses from commoner men and women. Women were exploited in the

---

(1) This argument is owed very much to the work of E. Terray. See, inter alia: 'Long Distance Exchange and the Formation of the State: The Case of the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman', Economy and Society, 3, 3, 1974, 'Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman', in M. Bloch (editor), Marxist Analysis and Social Anthropology, (London: Malaby Press, 1975).

(2) This situation was modified in time and most noticeably during the period of legitimate trade which involved the Akan, in amongst other things, becoming directly involved in the production of agricultural produce for exchange with European merchants. The overall effect of the increase in trade was the wider spread and decomposition of wealth within Asante. A result of this more frequent contact with the Europeans was that 'commoners' increased their opportunities for acquiring slaves.

'home' through their domestic production over and above that used to sustain themselves and also through their position in the reproduction of the lineage. Both sexes were compelled to perform communal labour for the chiefs at different times during the year (1). To recap: we suggest that the different forms of Asante commoner household, where although because of matriliney the married woman often resided away from her husband, (duolocal), the husband still tended to have exclusive sexual rights over the Asante woman. This is despite the fact that the Asante woman remained within her matrilineage. Indeed we recognise that the payment of:

tiri nsu gave the husband exclusive sexual rights in the wife, made him legal father of the woman's children during the period of the marriage, and obligated the wife to perform economic and domestic services (2).

This is not to say of course that Asante women were completely passive agents in a male directed society. Instead, we argue that the ideology of matriliney in Asante did not guarantee women freedom from exploitation as women: that is through their capacity to reproduce as well as their role in production (3).

Initially, domestic production tended to be organised around the family and kinship relations, mobilising as many as possible in the planting and harvesting of crops and in the mining of gold. But the

- 
- (1) The sexual exploitation of women as well as their exploitation in production is discussed more fully above. See Chapter One.
- (2) Harry W. Basehart, 'Ashanti', in, Matrilineal Kinship, D.M. Schneider and Kathleen Gough (editors) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), p. 290.
- (3) On matrilineage in Ashanti, see, inter alia; R.S. Rattray, (1929), op. cit., and M. Fortes 'Time and Social Structure: An Ashanti Case Study', in, Social Structure, Essays Presented to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, F. Eggan and M. Fortes (editors), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).

nature of the most profitable form of gold mining, with the need to sink a number of shafts deep into the ground, meant a degree of labour intensity which could not be supplied by ordinary family production units (1). The result was that power holders who received the captives taken in wars of expansion enhanced their wealth by setting to work slaves on plantations for agricultural production; in mines for the production of gold, and in their courts for domestic chores and where there was a need for especially dirty work to be performed (2). The increased use of slave production in turn released local aristocrats to raise their opportunities for trading in luxury goods of materials and alcohol, and also to appropriate the necessary firearms to gain access to greater numbers of slaves.

The view of the relations between people in Asante society that we have just outlined has recently been criticised. Briefly, Dumett has suggested that we should examine alternative sources of wealth for the chiefs (3). Chiefly power, it is argued, was inevitably sustained less through the use of slave labour, in plantations and mines, and more through the relationships within the 'abusua'; relating to land tenure and forms of taxation, albeit which were still under the control of a chiefly elite. To say this, however, is to miss the point. This is that the role of taxation and land tenure, as formulated during the development of the Asante Union, were integral parts in the creation of an unified Asante state. The latter was governed by groups of chiefs and military aristocrats whose power was based upon the exploitation of three groups of people, both Akan and non Akan; commoner men, women and

---

(1) See Chapter One.

(2) "Atantanie nti na ye to odonko" - Asante proverb, "We buy an odonko because of filthy work". Rattray, (1929), op.cit., p.44.

(3) R.E. Dumett, 'Precolonial Gold Mining and the State in the Akan Region: With a Critique of the Terray Hypothesis', in G. Dalton, (editor), Research in Economic Anthropology, Volume 2, (London: JAI Press, 1979).



captives. The exploitation of these groups was consolidated by the development of a series of politico/ideological instruments of government. The first of these was enshrined in judicial power where kings and chiefs had a monopoly as to what could be imposed for breach of conduct. Fines for misdemeanors were paid to chiefs in gold which allowed them to purchase greater numbers of slaves and guns. If fines could not be paid a pawn was taken in lieu of the debt until such time that the payment had been made or worked for. An increase in the frequency of pawning occurred for such things as being unable to pay for a trial. Slave, and periodically commoner labourers, worked on the kola farms of Asante chiefs in the expansion of a trade crop. The tendency was thus for the expansion of trade in some areas to be dominated by chiefly calculations or nominees of chiefs. It should be noted that this informal monopoly was not institutionalised as in the case of Dahomey (1). Instead, the monopolisation of trade activities occurred because of the increased de facto control that chiefs had over the control of human labour (2).

The second politico/ideological weapon used by chiefs in Asante was diplomatic in nature. The importance of resident commissioners in conquered territories was mentioned earlier. This strategy was used especially in the Asante drive towards the coast where military supremacy ensured that no rival could gain access to what was obviously a crucial aspect of Asante trading outlets and sources of supply for firearms.

- 
- (1) E. Terray, (1974), op.cit., p.331: See also P. Manning, Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960, African Studies Series 30, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- (2) This de facto control was nevertheless in the process of transition to de jure legitimation of chiefly subjugation of commoner activity.

(ii) Slavery Re-examined

The view that Asante state development was premised upon the extraction of surplus produced by slaves, places unfree labour at the centre of the analysis of Asante relations of production. It is in marked contrast to the earlier comments made about slavery attributed to Dumett's view of state formation. In contrast to Dumett, our conceptualisation of Asante state formation is predicated upon the chiefly exploitation of slave (and commoner) labour to produce goods for long distance exchange and also sustain internal food production (1). One such area of slave labour in Asante, at the turn of the nineteenth century was on chiefly plantations or at work in a mine. This was carried out primarily by a Donum - a prisoner of war captured or seized during an Asante war of expansion or from a raiding party. Work on plantations ran by the Asantehene (2) was also carried out by Odonko's who were purchased usually from the people on Asante's northern border. The Odonko also became domestic slaves (3). Both these groups of slaves were augmented at different times by Asante's pawned normally to wealthy councillors in lieu of repayment of debt.

Domestic Slavery

In addition to slave labour on plantations in Asante there was something which has become known as domestic slavery. We earlier paraphrased two writers of Asante history who saw domestic slavery akin to nothing more than the incorporation of a pawn, or the integration of a captive into the domestic community. So common was this view of

---

(1) Compare, Wilks, (1975), op. cit., pp. 176-177.

(2) See, J. Dupuis, Journal of a Residence in Ashantee, (London: Henry Colborn, 1824), pp. 59-60 and p. 65.

(3) A third form of slavery, those captured for the Atlantic slave trade is examined in Section IV below.

Asante society that early writers saw that:

there are hundreds of families in which it is quite impossible for even the members to discriminate who amongst them are slaves and who are free (1).

Similarly, it was stated about the same time of writing that distinct from those involved in the Atlantic slave trade, a 'domestic slave' was little affected by his:

state of bondage inasmuch as he continued as a member of the same community and has access to the same limited sphere of enjoyments within the reach of all (2).

This view of incorporation within the family for the unfree labourer tells us little about the real nature of his/her servility. More fundamentally, if such incorporation occurred, what was the basis for the category 'domestic slave'. Why were individuals so labelled in Akan society? In other words, despite the argument by nineteenth century European travellers, and later twentieth century anthropologists, that Akan society was egalitarian without exploitative social relations of production, the very use of the category slave implies a social subordination which is not in our mind adequately explained. For example, the price paid by the offspring of unfree women in Asante when they were 'assimilated' into the Asante lineage has been seen by Fortes to lie solely in private, personal and psychological issues: namely the threat of exposure for not being an Asante (3).

- 
- (1) Thomas J. Hutchinson, 'The Social and Domestic Slavery on Western Africa and its Evil Influence on Commerical Progress', Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, 26, ii, 1875, p.316.
- (2) B. Cruickshank, op. cit., volume one, p. 312.
- (3) See A. Norman Klein, 'The Two Asantes: Competing interpretations of "slavery" in Akan-Asante culture and Society', in, P.E. Lovejoy, (editor), The Ideology of Slavery in Africa, Volume six, Sage Series on African Modernisation and Development, (London: Sage 1981a).

Little mention is made about the work the new lineage recruits do and their relations with other members of the abusua.

The notion of domestic incorporation within the family suggests a conceptualisation of slavery as a process. By this is meant a slave is seen as passing along a sliding scale of servility from being an unfree slave to becoming a member of a kin group (1). A slave at the time of capture or purchase might, for example, be seen to have a status on the margins of the enslaving society (2), but become increasingly incorporated into the kinship structure of his/her master through 'formal' incorporation, (acceptance of legal rights and duties), and then of 'affective' incorporation through being held in greater esteem by his/her master's kin (3).

This explanation of slavery, whether in general or when talking about domestic slavery, does little more than simply duplicate the 'ideology' about slavery. This has been seen recently as "the fictitious quasi kinship relationship" meant to exist between the master's lineage and the slave who seeks constantly to be incorporated into kinship structures, thereby reducing his/her marginalised status. In fact, even this latter notion is misleading. 'Quasi' is quite clearly the wrong word to use when slaves bore the offspring of free men and women thereby establishing kinship relationships. Moreover,

- 
- (1) Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, 'African 'Slavery' as an institution of marginality' (hereafter cited as African slavery) in, I. Kopytoff and S. Miers, (editors), Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives, (USA: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977) and the critique of this position by J. Watson, 'Introduction', in, J. Watson, (editor), Asian and African Systems of Slavery, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1980).
- (2) Kopytoff and Miers, 'African Slavery', op. cit., p. 15.
- (3) Ibid, p. 19.

the incorporation of slaves taking generations rather than the life cycle of an individual has been documented (1). In extending the analysis of slavery and our understanding of slave relations of production, it is helpful to look at the wider dynamics employed by an enslaving society and in particular the degree of violence used to capture the future labour force. Indeed, it is to the broader context of the relationship which existed between the enslaving society, and the society being enslaved, that we can extend our discussion of Akan state formation, to show that it involved one dimension of the process of class conflict between masters and slaves. Connected to this on another level is the need to highlight more clearly the nature of the domestic slaves relationship with his/her master.

Although at pains to illustrate the integrative processes of domestic slavery, Rattray admitted that in Asante, despite marriage and property, "the status of a slave ... could never be lost" (2). This was the point even though, "in nine cases out of ten an Ashanti slave would merge and be intermarried within a specific group". The fact remained that when a human sacrifice was required, "an otherwise kind and considerate master would turn instinctively to the man who had no friend in the world" (3). Where slaves married female slaves the offspring would always remain slaves (4). Similarly, where a female slave married a free man, other than her master, the children remained the possession of the master. Slaves were denied control

---

(1) See A. Norman Klein, (1981), op. cit., and I. Wilks (1975), op.cit.  
 (2) Rattray, (1929), op. cit., p. 42.  
 (3) Ibid, p. 42.  
 (4) Ibid, pp. 38-39.

over their progeny despite their so-called integration into the domestic community. Such a denial might be seen to lay in the normal "rights in person" (1) but this was not the position of other indigenous members of the community. We are told that it was not uncommon for slaves to hold property and that large sums of wealth were amassed (2). This does not deny the existence of an exploitative and unfree relationship existing between master and servant especially as it was noted: "ultimately everything the slave possessed went to the master" (3). As such, it is not surprising that masters would allow their slaves to occupy and cultivate land by themselves to make full use of relations of production that might expand the stock of wealth for the owner of slaves.

A domestic slave was thus exploited, not only through the labour he/she performed surplus to that needed to reproduce his/her conditions of existence, but also through relations of reproduction established between the slaves and their masters. We might suggest that the incorporation of the slave into the families of slave owners served three important functions. First, incorporation into the abusua lessened the risk of organised slave rebellion against their social conditions. Second, the slave owners had control over the surplus generated by the unfree labourers. Finally, an invaluable source of further labour was safeguarded by control over the slaves' offspring.

---

(1) See, Kopytoff and Miers, 'African Slavery', op. cit.

(2) For example, Dutch Factor Landman at Axim wrote in November 1706, to the WIC, that a Prince Zaay had transferred his kingdom with its dependencies to his slave the caboceer Amaniquandjn. This disturbed the WIC because they feared trade might fall. Although the Caboceer was recognised as a great trader Zaay was seen to nevertheless place little importance on him, see, FCN37, 1706, p.200.

(3) Rattray, (1929), op. cit., p. 40.

Slaveowners of unfree labour on plantations were those villagers who had enough resources to facilitate either the capture or purchase of slaves. Inevitably they were the chiefs and elders, and not the 'ordinary' commoners, whose humble position barely allowed them sufficient income to sustain themselves satisfactorily (1). The system of pawning also helped those who got their income from trade and control over land. This was because they alone had the resources to lend 'money' as they claimed a pawn when debt was not paid.

What then was the nature of domestic slavery in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Asante? What have we seen as the difficulties involved in conceptualising this form of unfree labour and of slavery in general? In brief, we view domestic slavery as involving exploitative relations between master and servant although we recognise that over generations the servant may well become integrated fully into the master's household. The process of assimilation of the slave was lengthy. Moreover, before assimilation was complete the domestic slave, like other forms of slave labour, was prey to exploitation by the master. The slave was exploited by doing unpaid labour. The basis for this exploitation lay in the kinlessness of the slave: the slave lacked integration and also protection by the lineage. This precarious situation became particularly pronounced at times of human sacrifice. A further indicator of the exploitation of the slave by the master was the former's lack of control over its progeny and the insecurity of any

---

(1) Interview: Kyichiwere, "the elders of the town could go to the north to buy slaves". The use of slaves by commoners became more frequent in the mid nineteenth century. See Chapter Four on some of the effects of 'legitimate trade'.

of its wealth or property holding. These general characteristics of Asante slavery with specific bearing on domestic slavery can now be compared with what we know about plantation slavery at this time.

### Plantation Slavery

The use of unfree labour on the plantations of the Asantehene was an essential means for the Asante aristocracy to secure and consolidate its position as power holders in the Akan social formation. The major distinguishing feature that separated plantation slavery from domestic slavery was the different social relations of production and reproduction that were involved in the slaves captivity. Work on the plantations of the Asantehene was on a much larger scale than was experienced within the more established domestic community and crucially:

Work rhythms were no longer determined by the labourer in response to his and his family's needs and the seasonal flow of tasks, but were set by an owner attuned to changing demands of the market (1).

The slave generally worked here in gangs under supervision. The organisation and direction of the slave's surplus production was determined for him/her whereas in the situation of domestic slavery the slave might have worked on a plot of land in his own time.

Pawns might also have experienced this transformation in work routine and in the amount of work expected of them. The only comfort that they might have had was the prospect of being redeemed. A pawn was the only type of unfree labour that could resume his/her previous status but the likelihood of manumission always depended upon the financial fortunes of their families.

---

(1) Frederick Cooper, 'Review Article: The Problem of Slavery in African Studies', JAH, 20, 1, 1979, p. 115.



The presence of plantations in and around Asante, ca. 1780-1820, became an increasingly frequent sight (1). Labour was acquired from northern forays or it is likely from sections of neighbouring, more recently conquered territories. The odonkos or donums were therefore not simply the product of local raids. This is important because to continually seize labour, from areas recently brought into the Asante Union, would have been to sow the seeds of dissent and unrest before Asante suzerainty had been sustained (2). This lays down a parameter within which the continual expansion or raiding activities could not be exceeded. There was always a preference for captives from outside the Asante Union. This was because their 'integration' into a new work routine would generally be smoother, due to their geographical isolation from home, which made the likelihood of rebellion more remote (3). We can now extend this discussion by drawing on the recent work of Meillassoux (4). Although the suggestions are essentially theoretical, it is useful to develop our earlier point that the relations between an enslaving and an enslaved society informs our understanding of the plight of the slave in Asante and the slave's relationship with his/her new master.

The need to procure slaves from outside the immediate locality of Asante situates for us the first of three levels of exploitation

- 
- (1) See, Dupuis, op.cit., and T. Edward Bowditch, Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, (London: Frank Cass & Co, Ltd, Third Edition, 1966).
- (2) This general theoretical point is made by C. Meillassoux, 'Historical Modalities of the Exploitation and Overexploitation of Labour', Critique of Anthropology, 13-14, 4, 1979.
- (3) This is perhaps the reason for so few slave revolts. See Interviews. It is interesting to note that Asantehene Osei Kwame did not allow the export of captives originating from the kingdom. See, Terray, (1974 op. cit.
- (4) C. Meillassoux, (1976), op.cit., and, 'From reproduction to production a marxist approach to economic anthropology', Economy and Society, 1, 1, 1972, 'Correspondence', Economy and Society, 7, 1978, Maidens, Meal and Money, Capitalism and the Domestic Community, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

involved in the process of slavery in Asante (1). This is first, a relationship between a slave catching group and the raided population, the latter often being the target for ideological abuse which labels them as non human thereby justifying capture. When captured, by the increasing military organisation of the Asante state, the slaves would usually become the 'property' of Asante chiefs and military captains. Only when these officeholders had been placated would the elders, through the system of 'patrimony' be eligible, because of their status, to receive slaves for domestic use. The exploitation between the raiding and raided society was based upon the continued reduction of the labour force of the latter and its subsequent subjugation militarily of labour power.

A second social relationship which was involved in the increasing use of slaves was that between the master and slave which involved two forms of exploitation. By setting the slave to work on the plantations, or in the mines, Asante chiefs had access to surplus production in excess of that required to sustain the life of the slave. This involved the initial exploitation of the newly arrived slave. The second level was the control over the progeny of the slave that was exercised by the slave master and which might form a basis for 'domestic slavery'. Meillassoux offers the insight here that

Slaves are different from the other members of the community in that they are rightfully deprived of offspring. Their status as foreigner is permanent (2).

Control over the slaves' offspring became a way in which slave numbers could be sustained: the slave could be reproduced without the risk of constant military debacles that marked the early periods of enslavement.

---

(1) C. Meillassoux, (1979), op. cit.

The relationship between the domestic mode of production and the increasing development of unfree slave labour is important. The two forms of production necessarily co-existed, and indeed were integrated in the case of domestic slavery, as the stability of the state was jeopardised if indigenous plantation slavery became too dominant. There was a greater chance of rebellion against power holders if the balance between free men and captives was upset. The risks of slave rebellion were always present and none were more aware of these than the Asantehenes. Osei Bonsu slaughtered masses of slaves in 1818, following the abolition of the slave trade, because of the fear that if he did not kill them they would kill his subjects (1). This inbuilt political restriction to the increasing exploitation of slave labour, and the necessity for it to co-exist alongside domestic family based production was reinforced by economic factors. These refer to the substitution of slave labour for any productive activity that the chiefs and elders might have performed, (before the increased exploitation of slaves), which was not directed to the greater production of exchange value, but rather to the conspicuous consumption needs of the Asante dominant class. This meant that it was the needs of consumption which determined the volume of slave labour and not the need to realise commercial profit, at least at this pre-Atlantic slave trade stage of Asante development (2).

The use of slaves for the satisfaction of domestic needs has

---

(1) Dupuis, op. cit.

(2) This point is of its very nature tentative. This is because we do, in fact, know very little about the pre-nineteenth century period. Our suggestions are built upon fragments of data and the theoretical and empirical investigations of E. Terray's work on the Abron, op. cit.

thus been put forward as a reason for the lack of their more intense exploitation compared with that endured by slaves on the plantations in the Caribbean. It is also given as a reason for the continuation of the kin based domestic mode of production. The latter stabilised the development of Asante: its producers could not be allowed to be too discontented with their subordinated position to the dominant class of chiefs and elders. Tribute had to be kept at a 'reasonable' level. This reduced commoner disquiet and also facilitated commoner participation in the wars of enslavement. At the same time the ideological baggage of the Asante state consolidated the ruling groups dominant position by informing the people of the egalitarian nature of land holdings and the need to satisfy the wishes of the spiritual forebears (1).

Slavery in Asante was not used simply to "enlarge one's kin group, and the desire to have clients, dependent servants, and retainers"(2). Although these considerations were not inconsequential, to obtain a clearer picture of the role that unfree labour played in early Asante we need to locate it within the wider perspective of Asante political economy, and in the process of state formation. A preoccupation with examining legalistic notions of 'rights in people', or 'property relations', tells us little about the relations between the Akan other than that they were sanctioned by the society involved. We need to discern why they were sanctioned and indeed promoted by the Asante. This leads us to a view of Asante which sees a class of chiefs and elders exploiting commoners and slaves to sustain their dominant positions at the level of the Asante state. These

---

(1) This supports our contention in Chapter One that slavery always appears in association with other relations of production.  
 (2) Kopytoff and Miers, 'African Slavery', op. cit., p. 67.

chiefs and elders also, however, developed stately apparatuses which worked to incorporate commoner interests and stressed a uniting bond between all the Akan people. In this way we can best understand unfree labour in Asante if we see it within:

a complex network of social, economic, political, and military relations that must be first considered to understand the nature of its exploitation in relation with the master (1).

(iii) Asante State Formation

Any approach to understanding Asante state formation must be multi-dimensional. The developments between 1650 and 1800 should be situated within a framework which accounts for internal class struggles and external warfare.

Before looking briefly at the impact which the Atlantic slave trade had upon the formation of the Asante Union, we can here tie the earlier discussion of state formation together. This can be done by showing the precise means at the disposal of the Asante state power holders for consolidating their class position of dominance over Asante commoners and slaves. Some of these factors have already been examined: these have been the politico/ideological paraphernalia developed by Osei Tutu and Komfo Anotche. The Golden Stool and Odwira festivals went a long way to consolidate the formation of the Asante Union which was built upon the expansionary policies of warring aristocracies in Kumase. The Asante rulers were also the military leaders and as such directly acquired the plunders of war, together with the desired tributes imposed upon defeated and incorporated states (2). The massive seizing

---

(1) C. Meillassoux, (1978), op. cit., p. 322.

(2) K. Arhin, (1977a), op. cit., p.11.

of loot was accompanied by war indemnities like those from Akyem Abuakwa to Asante officials in 1730 of 2,000 benders or 4,000 ounces of gold: Gyaman, unspecified but large sums of gold in 1744; Akwapem, 436 slaves and Akyem 1,000 ounces of gold at the end of their rebellion in 1816 (1).

In addition to this financial remuneration from warfare and plunder which was appropriated by the Asantehene and councillors, there was a further significant input into the formation of the Asante Union. This was the influx of skilled manpower into Asante which is more difficult to quantify.

It has been noted that early European travellers were keen to describe central Asante as a hive of industrial activity (2). There were in fact various village specialisations: pot industries, gold smithing, wood work and cloth dyeing. There is also the suggestion that the development of these industries was very much based upon the 'political and military revolution' in Asante (3). Oral traditions, for example, have cited the transportation of goldsmiths, blacksmiths and weavers to Asante following the conquest of Bonsu Manso in 1722-1723. Moreover, the Asantehene, Osei Bonsu, (1800-1823) recruited carpenters from Elmina (4).

The importation of these skilled crafts people further enhanced the wealth of the Asante rulers, a wealth which was displayed increasingly

- 
- (1) Arhin, ibid., p.6. See p.147 above for the system by which Akan and non Akan states were differentially incorporated into the Asante Union.  
 (2) Arhin, (1977a), op.cit., p.10.  
 (3) Ibid, p. 10.  
 (4) Ibid, p. 11. The status of these new 'recruits' is not fully dealt with in the existing literature. For example, were they merely slave labour or was this the beginning of petty commodity production ..

more conspicuously. This was because warfare, and the wealth which the plunder of different states secured, became reified in seventeenth and eighteenth century Asante. The early Asante state rulers created the importance of warfare as a means of extending the state and producing wealth for its leaders. Such a process rendered impossible the ascendancy of an alternative social group that would produce wealth indigenously. Instead, a 'consumer view of wealth' was developed, common perhaps to pre-capitalist social formations, which located the object of wealth as something for consumption, and not investment, thereby constraining the development of the Asante economy (1).

With such conspicuous displays of wealth through the consumption of luxury goods we might assume the existence of greater stress and conflict within the Asante Union between those with and those without wealth. Such was not the case in Asante however. This was because of the partial incorporation of commoners and the communal ideology of the Asante polity (2). The latter was the myth, enshrined by the position of the Asantehene that he was the spokesman of the Asante state and that his actions, together with those of his councillors, were made in the interests of the Asante as a whole. As such, part of the dissipation of the amassed wealth of elders and chiefs was spent in the assertion of superior worth by way of consumption (3). Major office holders of the Asante state would enhance their regalia, fulfill

- 
- (1) Ibid. This situation did not last indefinitely. Indeed one of the major transformations within the Asante polity was the increasing spread and dispersion of wealth. We discuss this along with indigenous changes and new processes within the economy in this period, 1750-1850, in the following chapter. See also I. Wilks, (1975), op. cit., and T.C. McCaskie, 'Office, Land and Subjects in the History of the Manwere Fekuo of Kumase: An essay in the Political Economy of the Asante State'. JAH, 21, 1980, and T.C. McCaskie, (1981), op. cit.
- (2) Something referred to earlier as, amongst other things, economic classlessness. See p. 31 above.
- (3) See Arhin, (1977), op. cit., p. 13.

arrangements for obligatory hospitality and perform funeral rites consuming cattle and goats as sacrifices to the major deities. These actions were intended to be seen in the interests of all Asantes. In reality they reflected individual specific examples of wealth, wealth which distinguished the officers of state from the commoners and slaves. Nuggets of gold mined by commoners were appropriated by the Asantehene and although there was a limited amount of hoarding of gold dust there were no professional money lenders. Only rulers and functionaries did the lending of gold dust: they then used the interest on such loans to pay for war parties or prestige spending (1).

The position of the power holders in Asante was thus consolidated by the ideology and ritualistic practices that we have just alluded to. These practices formed the necessary corollary to the chiefs and elders appropriation of the means by which trade goods, that is, slaves, were produced and of the large scale production of gold. Attempts to reduce this 'institutionalised' monopoly of trade were resisted by the rulers of Asante well into the nineteenth century. Asantehene, Osei Kwame, for example, was destooled for favouring the development of Islam within Asante which might have undercut the dominant power base in Asante (2).

- 
- (1) Ibid., p. 14. Again, this system of money lending is modified during the nineteenth century and becomes more open. Interest rates, for example, could be as much as 33.1/3 per 40 days. Any private individual who lent money was often forcibly involved in actions in the courts to prevent the development/control of such 'private' lending. See, Bowditch, op. cit., pp.335-336. Arhin's analysis is very useful and clear here but he is equivocal on the role of slave labour: one moment he says they were not put to work as a separate category of workers (c.f. Dahomey) and that Asante slaves aided family labour to produce for consumption but he further says that they were put to work on farms and trade and that they became members of the chief's household
- (2) One reason given for this was the so-called levelling process of Islam which would have posed a threat to the 'great captains' in Kumase. See, Dupuis, op. cit., pp.238-239 and I. Wilks, (1975), op.cit., p. 253.



A more detailed examination of the mechanics of the way in which rulers in Asante sustained their power will follow in the next chapter. Suffice to say here that of all the 'formally accepted' means whereby the chiefs of Asante sustained their wealth, death duties were the greatest (1).

Death duties were exacted by the Paramount ruler over part of the estates of a deceased lower ranking in the polity. The latter might be an obrempon or panyin who was a head of a semi autonomous division of an oman state. In turn, the obrempon or panyin could then appropriate the estate of a subordinate odekro - that is the head of a village under the latter could do the same to a family or lineage head (Abusua-panyin).

This was one example of indirect appropriation which had its ideological disguise unmasked by the Akan people. At the level of rhetoric the system was meant to show that the Paramount ruler was indeed the caretaker for the interests of the Asante citizens. Attempts to avoid the tax however, were frequent although not often successful. Commoner tactics like the transference of property before death occurred and the burial of gold nuggets resulted simply in the 'tax collector' fabricating charges to facilitate access to the property. In addition, Paramount rulers seized caches of gold as 'ahumtuo' - treasure trove (2).

#### IV THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

It should now be apparent that to have concentrated solely on the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the period under review would have neglected crucial areas and issues in the development and consolidation of the Asante state. The history of colonial transformation in the eighteenth

---

(1) Formally accepted here refers to means other than the direct appropriation of surplus production.

(2) Arhin, (1977a), op. cit., pp.16-17.

century has warranted a close look at the internal Akan relationships before and during the initial stages of the European trade in slaves. It is not our intention here to repeat the debates over the quantities of slaves transported across the Atlantic. Instead, we want to examine the nature of the slave trade and its impact upon the developing Asante state.

(a) The Trade

Although European voyages to the Guinea Coast for slaves can be dated from the fifteenth century (1) the trade did not begin in earnest until the second quarter of the seventeenth century. It did not displace the European demand for gold there until the last quarter of the seventeenth century (2). There are a number of reasons behind the demand for slaves by Europeans. A simple explanation is that labour was needed to work the newly developing plantations and areas occupied by the Portuguese, Spanish, English, French and Danes in Brazil, Central America and the Caribbean Islands. The demand for slaves thus rose correspondingly with the increased amount of land cultivation in Barbados by the British for sugar (3).

The question might be raised here, however, why West Africa became the exporter of slaves and not the home of sugar production? In part the reason can be put down to unfavourable climatic conditions of the Gold Coast and the early development of sugar plantations in the Caribbean dating from 1650 (4). At the same time the sparsely populated Caribbean

- 
- (1) Elizabeth Donnan, Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, 2 volumes (Washington: Published by Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930), Volume 1, 1441-1700.
- (2) Basil Davidson with F.K. Buah and J.F.A. Ajayi, The Growth of African Civilisation: A History of West Africa, 1000-1800, (London: Longman, 1967) p.208, and , R.Bean, The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1650-1775, (Ph.D. University of Washington, 1971, Microfilms, 1974) and R.Bean, The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1650-1775, (New York: Arno Press, 1975).
- (3) The percentage of land under sugar increased from 40% in 1645 to 80% in 1667. See Bean, (1974), op. cit., p. 37.
- (4) Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery, Chapter One (London: Andre Deutsch, 1981)

proved ideal areas of plunder for white settlers intent on benefitting from the employment of forced labour. Territories in the Caribbean contrasted markedly with many social formations in Africa which were still in the process of being politically and militarily subjugated. The latter was an ongoing concern for the Europeans in West Africa, but because of indigenous protests the outcome was not certain to be settled in favour of European interests. An understanding of the Atlantic slave trade must take account of both European demand for slaves, (and of the European merchant interests in Europe and the Caribbean) as well as developments within indigenous African societies. The Atlantic slave trade was dependent upon the reproduction of slaves from the Guinea coast which was subject to internal constraints and conflicts. In assessing the multidimensional nature of the reasons for the Atlantic slave trade we must also not lose sight of the fact that the slave trade was a more profitable European business in itself. As one writer has said: "the slave trade was more than a means to an end it was also an end in itself" (1). The result was that British slave traders reaped the benefits of trading slaves not only to their own plantations but also to those of their competitors.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were to witness the increased incorporation of the Guinea Coast into the demands of the economies of western Europe. This process had began earlier with the demand for gold but now the merchant classes in England and Holland, aided by help from the state, transported in excess of half a million

---

(1) Ibid., p. 33.

Africans from the Gold Coast (1).

British and Dutch state help for the slave trade came in the form of Royal Charters for two of the leading companies of this period, as well as the recognition of the need to maintain a monopoly of trade for these concerns. A monopoly of trade was essential to secure the maximum profitability from a trade which was based ultimately on buying commodities more cheaply than for which they were sold. Although the eighteenth century saw the increased development of a dominant capitalist class in Europe, and this is translated increasingly into attempts to initiate agricultural development on the Gold Coast, we cannot talk about the demise of overt merchant capital interests until the turn of the nineteenth century. As such, monopoly remained the philosophy of the age allowing mercantilists greater security for their trade as the colonies were meant to supply their products to England with only English ships (2).

National monopolisation of the slave trade was most successful for the Dutch West Indian Company. This company had almost total Dutch control of the slave trade in the period between 1629 to the 1730's. The terms of the West Indian Company Charter were for commercial monopoly in Africa and on the American shores of the Atlantic. Their administration on the Gold Coast was at Elmina which had been siezed from the Portuguese in 1637.

The English participation in the slave trade had its equivalent

- 
- (1) The period between 1761-1810 alone yielded 172,049 Africans shipped by British slave traders on the Gold Coast and 1675-1795, 89,100 for the Dutch. See, Roger Anstey, 'The Volume and Profitability of the British Slave Trade, 1761-1807', in, S.L.Engerman and E.D.Genovese, (editors), Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p.13, see also, Johannes Postma, 'The Origins of the African Slaves: The Dutch Activities on the Guinea Coast 1675-1795', in, S.L.Engerman and E.D.Genovese, (editors), op. cit.
- (2) E. Williams, op.cit., p. 56.

of the West Indian Company in the Royal African Company. The latter was formed in 1672 following from the Company of Adventurers of London in Africa and the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa. All these companies had significant state and royal family backing for their exploits, and had considerable help from the political and economic climate resulting from the Glorious Revolution, the Ten Per Cent Act of 1698 and the Navigation Laws (1).

The presence of two strong European companies on the coast posed difficulties not only for the indigenous inhabitants but also for the respective Dutch and English traders. Both the Dutch and English traders became incensed at their competitors' incursions into what was seen as their own specific monopoly (2).

Such was the conflict in 1707 that Sir Dalby Thomas, in charge of the Royal African Company operations at Cape Coast Castle, drafted a letter to the Dutch factor at Elmina calling for greater cooperation between the two companies in an attempt to maximise profitability:

It will not be denied that if all the forts and lodges on this coast belong to one company it would be easy to subject the trade and people to its wishes. Therefore if both companies joined to subject the trade and people to the interests of both, then the two of them must take the same measures as if one of them had the coast alone; therefore in governing these people we must join together heartily and sincerely as if we were on land (3).

This offer was not accepted because although the Dutch were also suffering from interloper competition they still saw the need for

- 
- (1) See Chapter 2. The navigation laws were particularly directed at the Dutch and also to reduce the threat of an independent Scottish African Company developing. See Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 56.  
 (2) Colonial rivalry at this time and before is examined in Chapter 2 above.  
 (3) FCN 37, 1701-1706, p.235.

traditional company monopolies. With hindsight this rejection by the Dutch was justified as the West Indian Company did not have its monopoly on the western side of the Gold Coast eroded until the 1730's. By 1702 the Dutch had almost totally depopulated Elmina from 12,000 to "a mere 1000"; the behaviour of their Factors had severely alienated the local inhabitants and as a result the transportation of slaves to the coast had slowed down (1). This traffic increased by 1705 but the period since 1700 had seen attempts by the Dutch to generate the development of plantation agriculture as an alternative source of revenue. These attempts were not implemented successfully but reflected a search for a form of economic exploitation to either run parallel with, or displace the slave trade. They are in fact a foretaste of what was to be attempted on a large scale a hundred years later. A particular attempt to develop cotton and sugar cane was initiated by the West Indian Company in 1701 on the river banks near Chama Boutry and Axem. At first two hundred and fifty slaves were to be imported to work the project, but there is little doubt that use of this labour was to hopefully infect the indigenous people with the desire to initiate their own crop production on a large scale:

We may convince the natives, by our example, that the planting of cotton is profitable, and induce them to grow those plants to their own profit, because this work can only be profitable when done on a large scale; we will require an instrument like the mills which are in use on Curacao and other places in order to purify the cotton (2).

---

(1) Letter, W. de la Palma to Ass.of X, Elmina, 26 June 1702 in A. van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast 1674-1742, (Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Science, 1978), p. 81.

(2) W. de la Palma to Assistant of X, Elmina, 26 June 1702, quoted by van Dantzig, op.cit., p. 84.

Five years later there were English suggestions at developing the production of crops on the Gold Coast. This was the idea to make use of Scotland's incorporation into the Union and the offer to Scottish families of quick gain overseas. The intention was not to involve Africans with the planting of crops but for the settlers to plant indigo, tobacco, and cotton themselves. Moreover, these crops were not to be exported on their own behalf but the Royal African Company was to act as broker at moderate rates. The idea was for this influx of Europeans to act as a stabilising force for the Royal African Company. As the sub-Governor of the company said, the new Europeans would only be under obligation to act with the merchants "to suppress the insolences of the natives and to prevent any encroachment from the Dutch" (1). Suggestions like these, although not adopted until the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, represent European schemes to try and reduce the harmful effects of their trade in slaves. The latter suffered periodically throughout the eighteenth century because of internal conflicts and disagreements with the African merchants. Similarly the chartered companies could never quite deny themselves the chance of developing indigenous gold production or of directly mining it themselves. In 1706, for example, the Royal African Company suggested to Dalby Thomas that correct encouragement should be given to the natives to allow white men to help dig for gold, with the intention that long run profit might be similar to that gained by the Portuguese in Brazil (2).

---

(1) Letter, Thomas Pinder, Sub-Governor R.A.C. to Sir Dalby Thomas, C.C.C. London 16.10.1706, FCTS, 1, p.245.

(2) Letter, RAC to Dalby Thomas, C.C.C., London, 22.8.1706, in FCTS 1, p.243. It was noted that the Portuguese were gaining more than £1 million a year through their exploits in South America.

The Dutch too were concerned that trade in gold should not completely be eroded and that if the natives objected to the movement of the Dutch along the Ancober river, for the development of their own mineworkings, then defence installations should be built to protect the European miners. The Dutch wish to develop their own workings was to be disguised and that:

All possible kinds of precaution should be taken that our true intention of mining never be discovered, and it should always be said that our aim is to pursue our Trade with greater force (1).

The desire to extract gold from the Gold Coast in this period was nevertheless subordinated to the demand for slaves, and it is likely that the insecurity resulting from the turmoil of the slave trade also reduced the production of gold (2).

The procedure for acquiring slaves would vary. Often transactions were through middlemen on the coast whose interest it was to maintain constant supplies of slaves at a high price. When dealings were done direct with those who were trading the slaves, the hierarchical order through which the European buyers had to deal was very apparent:

Before one is allowed to start the trade, one is compelled to pay the King 720 lbs cowries customary duties, 200 lbs to the captains, and 30 to the town crier who announces when the traders are allowed

- 
- (1) W.I.C. 42: Secret Papers Assembly of Ten 20 November 1720 in Van Dantzig *op.cit.*, p.215. See also pp.184-185 and 196-197.  
 (2) Albert Van Dantzig, 'Effects of the Antlantic Slave Trade on Some West African Societies', Revue Francaise D'Histoire D'Outre- 226-227, 1975, p.263.



to sell their slaves. Subsequently one negotiates the price with the King, Carte and Ago, but one should be careful to exclude from this price what is paid to the King and the two aforesaid Captains, because to them one has always to give more than to the private traders; i.e. to the King 120 and to the Captains 100 lbs cowries (per slave) ... first one has to agree with them about the number they will furnish for that high price, because otherwise they will buy all the slaves from the private (persons). Furthermore, one has to pay 120 lbs cowries "for the tronk" (slave camp) with which they guarantee that the slaves will not run away. One has also to pay (the value of) one slave for the interpreter, before he is willing to announce your desires to the King, one dito for the watchman who receives and guards the goods when they are brought ashore, and 400 lbs cowries for the carrying of the goods from each ship (1).

From 1720 onwards the West Indian Company suffered increasing encroachment from interlopers on the Slave Coast and trade was further disrupted by the rise of the Dahomean state (2). This made trade more important on the Gold Coast as a source for slaves (3). Problems of maintaining a monopoly of trade were also present on the Gold Coast. Indeed, the competition for slaves increased the price above that which the West Indian Company saw itself able to pay. The result was that for a short time the West Indian Company sought its revenue by taxing the interlopers that it could catch. These were especially Portuguese and Brazilian ships carrying Brazilian gold, indigo cotton and tobacco for which the Dutch later sought

---

(1) Encl 4: "Short information about the manner of slave trade during the two and a half years that I have taken care of it" by J. Van den Broucke, 10 November 1705, quoted in Van Dantzig (1978), *op.cit.*, p.124.

(2) For the geography of the region see map on page xvi.

(3) Postma, *op.cit.*, p.36, where the point is made that by the 1740's, the Windward Coast had superseded the Gold Coast as a market for slaves.

to exchange slaves (1).

Eventually, the Dutch West Indian Company having already been reduced for many years to trade with whosoever it could, received official notification that its monopoly on the coast had been dissolved and the company was now officially directed:

to buy goods and acceptable slaves, and to sell them at liberty to either Dutch or French or English ships and to store trade goods acquired for them in their store houses, using those goods again for their trade (2).

Partly as a result of this, other Dutch companies developed on the Guinea Coast like the Middelburgsche Commercial Compagnie and Coopstad and Rochnsen. In this 'free trade' period the Gold Coast, and in particular Elmina, accounted for about 40% of all Dutch Free Trade purchases including those of the Slave Coast. This figure, however, does not include those slaves which passed through small trading stations at Akim, Shama, Kormantin and Accra (3).

By 1730, it was recognised that the Gold Coast had become almost exclusively a focus for slave trading. At the same time increasing unrest within the territory was making the prosecution of trade, in anything apart from slaves, extremely difficult and even the slave trade was hindered by the proliferation of inland wars precipitated by: "the great quantity of guns and powder which the Europeans have brought there" (4).

- (1) W.I.C. 41: Secret Minute, Ass of Ten, 3 December 1712, in, Van Dantzig, (1978), op.cit., pp.161-62, also, ibid., p.152.  
 (2) NBKG Journal 2 May 1740 in Van Dantzig, (1978), op.cit., p.351.  
 (3) Postma, op.cit., pp.37-40.  
 (4) ARA Rademacher Archives number 596; extracts from the minutes of the meeting of the Directors of the Chamber Zeeland held 7 February 1730, in, Van Dantzig, (1978), op.cit., p.240.

Triangular trade is the name given to the activities of mainly British merchants who sold goods produced in British colonies to West Africa. These goods were then exchanged for slaves on the Gold Coast and the slaves transported to work on the Caribbean sugar plantations. The produce of the plantations was then transported to England thus completing the triangle. The Royal African Company wrote to Dalby Thomas in 1706 explaining that the company wanted a quicker despatch of negroes to Barbados and Jamaica and the Company in London would satisfy the increased demand for goods on the West African Coast (1). This was a lucrative business for each cargo of six hundred Africans carried across the Atlantic resulted in a 100% mark up of the original £6,000 cargo shipped from England to West Africa (2).

The extent to which the triangular trade aided British industrial development is a contentious issue (3). In trying to work out such a calculation it is wrong to debate the possible profitability acquired by merchants in the slave trade, without locating the significance of slave labour to the triangular trade as a whole (4). In doing the latter not only are merchants' interests in the Caribbean recognised but so too is the fact of the added input that the two Atlantic legs of

---

(1) FCNS, II, RAC to Dalby Thomas, C.C.C., 22 August 1706.

(2) Ibid.

(3) See, inter alia; E. Williams, op. cit.

(4) Anstey assumes the profitability of the slave trade can be calculated without broader discussion of the trade as a whole. This is implicit in his calculation, op. cit., pp. 13-14. See also the complicated workings of H. Gemery and J. Hogendorn, 'The Economic Costs of West African Participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade. A preliminary sampling for the Eighteenth Century', in, Gemery and Hogendorn, (editors), (1975a), op. cit.

the trade had for promotion of trade in England, in wool, cotton, the refining of sugar and the development of metallurgical industries (1).

Indeed:

By 1750 there was hardly a trading or a manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade (2).

The importance of this trade was not lost on the members of the companies resident on the coast. They kept up a continual barrage of demands to the Royal African Company in London for additional supplies and firearms to satisfy what was thought to be an insatiable African demand for products:

If the Trade of Africa is to be carried on in earnest Forts and Castles must be increased as the Dutch increase, and how is it to be done by a Company that has no Stock and whose body consists of separate interests: people who will trade no longer than profit attends them ... (3).

Common to the wares taken to the Gold Coast in exchange for slaves were cotton and linen goods, silk handkerchiefs, copper kettles and hardware of all descriptions together with guns, powder and shot.

The trade in guns proved profitable for the Royal African Company which had the support of the London gun makers and the latter's eagerness for the former's monopoly of trade between 1700 and 1710 to continue. The Birmingham gun merchants, however, preferred the advantages to be gained from a broader distribution of their products

- 
- (1) Williams, op. cit., pp.51-84. This ignores the increase in banking and shipbuilding activities and the vessels needed to carry Africans to the Caribbean. Exports from Britain to West Africa alone in the eighteenth century rose by 100% between 1701-1712 (£76,750 p.a.) to £794,580 between 1793-1800, see, David Richardson, 'West African Consumption Patterns and their influence on the Eighteenth Century English Slave Trade', in, Gemery and Hogendorn, (editors), (1975a), op.cit., p.305.
- (2) Williams, op.cit., p.52.
- (3) FCTSII Letter C.C.C. to RAC 26 November 1709, p.102.

and consequently fought to reduce the Company's monopoly (1). Guns were not solely used for the capture of slaves by internal Akan groups, but the result of regular strategic (political) warfare was often the increased accumulation of slave labour (2). The increased demands for captives on the coast nevertheless acted as a fillip to the number of raiding activities ensuring that:

slave supply was enhanced since conquered provinces and tributary states were expected to provide annual slave quotas to the central government (3).

Slave raiding parties tended now to use infantry groups in their predatory pursuits when it was a matter of seizing captives alive (4). The case on the coast, however, was different. Here, where large armies were not the norm, it was often the practice to encourage regular wars paying for the captives with imported European firearms.

To sum up: the people of the Gold Coast were incorporated increasingly into a series of dominant European economies which demanded slaves on the West African littoral, in exchange for wares from Britain. The slaves were then transported across the Atlantic to work on sugar plantations in the Caribben and North America. The produce was later transported to Europe to enhance the development of merchant and capitalist interests.

As the eighteenth century progressed incorporation of the Gold

---

(1) This example of conflict over the desirability of monopoly demands was a foretaste of increasing disquiet and unrest between different sections of merchants and 'capitalist' producers about the benefits to be accrued from foreign trade.

(2) Van Dantzig, (1975), op.cit., p.262.

(3) P.E. Lovejoy and J.S. Hogendorn, 'Slave marketing in West Africa', in, H.A. Gemery and J.. Hogendorn, (editors)(1975a) op. cit., p. 223.

(4) Ibid., p. 262.

Coast into the world economy increased but the vehicles for this incorporation changed (1). From 1750, 'An Act for Extending and Improving the Trade to Africa (2) opened the English trade in Africa to all English subjects to be organised by the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa. The Royal African Company and its previous monopoly was dissolved and the responsibility for maintaining the Gold Coast establishments was left to a committee of nine people chosen annually (3). The development of this new arrangement for trade on the Gold Coast opened the way for more and more interlopers and hence greater competition. The Company of Merchants trading to Africa failed to prevent what was becoming the inexorable slide of the West African trade to a more open and less controlled commercial activity. Independent traders from Liverpool and the West Indies were less guarded in their slave dealings on the coast than the representatives of the Royal African Company had been, and for at least two years the old and the new Company traded side by side.

The limitation that the new company should only trade with Portugal on the coast was violently opposed (4). Perhaps the greatest difference resulting from this opening of trade, however, was a conflict between the company officials resident in England and those trading in Africa. The latter could carry on private trade while the former could not. This caused a great deal of animosity and abuse

- 
- (1) The form of incorporation changed following heightened debates in European countries of the role of competition and monopoly as the most profitable way to increase returns from the colonies. See the first part of Chapter 4.
- (2) Donnan, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 474.
- (3) Ibid., pp. 474-475, also, E.C. Martin, The British West Africa Settlements, 1750-1821, Imperial Studies No.2, (London:Longman 1927), pp.8-14.
- (4) Donnan, op.cit., Vol. 2, p. xlii.

from those resident on the coast. A large source of conflict persisted between the merchants of the cities involved in the trade in England. The centres of commerce in Bristol, Liverpool and London were continually vying for greater participation in the trade to Africa, and some members were calling for the development of a new Joint Stock Company for this purpose (1). The complaints about the organisation of trade on the Gold Coast and its repercussions for the demise of profit were raised again at the end of the eighteenth century following the influx of trade goods by Rhode Island merchants. It was now:

... alleged that this depression in profits was due to the rising prices of slaves on the Gold Coast which were attributed in turn to disruptions in the flow of slave supplies to the coast, changes in the character of the gold trade and the illegal dealings of factors residing at the forts of the company of merchants trading to Africa (2).

Increased competition on the Gold Coast for the attention of African merchants trading in slaves together with the underhand practices of those in charge of trading establishments on the coast, were now compounded by a heightened degree of conflict between mercantilists and manufacturing interests in England (3). We can now assess the impact on the Akan of the Dutch, English and interloper trade for slaves on the Gold Coast in the light of our examination of Asante state formation.

(b) The Impact of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

It is very difficult to fully assess the impact of the trans-

---

(1) There were, of course, additional obstacles to the furtherance of the slave trade like for example, English wars with the French and Spanish in 1744 and 1748.

(2) D. Richardson, op. cit., p. 326.

(3) This is looked at in more detail in the following chapter.

Atlantic slave trade on the Akan people of the Gold Coast. In part this is because of the need to situate the trade within the broader sociopolitical context of the development of the Asante Union, and in part it is also because of the lack of documentary evidence with which to achieve this.

We have dealt here less with the accounting issues involved in judging the number of slaves transported across the Atlantic, and more with the Atlantic slave trade as a further vehicle for the incorporation of the Gold Coast into a growing international world economy. Moreover, we have not looked at the Atlantic slave trade in isolation from the presence of indigenous slavery in Asante, and the power positions within the polity stemming from differential access to the surplus which accrued from this source of labour. It is now established:

that slavery and slave trade existed in West Africa ... before the fifteenth century and that much earlier slaves were already transported far from their place of origin (1).

We reject the thesis that slavery on the Gold Coast was solely the result of an external demand for slaves. The development of a plantation economy in the Caribbean and North America and the shortage of a labour force there, prompted Europeans to use slave labour transported from West Africa. The availability of the slaves from the Gold Coast, however, largely depended upon indigenous reproduction of unfree labourers and the interplay between indigenous power holders and their European merchant counterparts.

By suggesting that forms of slavery existed before the onset

---

(1) Van Dantzig, (1975), op. cit., p. 254.



of European contact on the Gold Coast we do not argue that a priori the indigenous Akan social formation was transformed by the Atlantic slave trade (1). Indeed, in talking about the hundred year period of the Gold Coast's history, ca. 1700-1800, it is essential to show that the internal organisation of production was geared towards, and power structures were largely dependent upon, forms of unfree labour. The domestic and slave modes of production in the Akan social formation could facilitate the extra production of slaves when the demand so arose. In itself the development of the Atlantic slave trade did not immediately and qualitatively transform indigenous relations of production. The transformatory nature of European contact on the Gold Coast only became apparent as the Atlantic slave trade intensified, and began to impose such quantitative (non structural) demands on the Akan that they eventually led to qualitative changes in the structure of power in Asante (2). There were, however, two areas where the Atlantic slave trade had some impact upon indigenous modes of production and we can, in conclusion, look at these briefly.

(i) Warfare

The accumulation of slaves in addition to the reproduction of existing stocks could only be facilitated by capture. The majority

- 
- (1) This is the thrust of Walter Rodney's account of the history of the Upper Guinea Coast. See, inter alia his, 'Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 10, 1969, and 'African slavery and other forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade', JAH, 3, 1966.
- (2) These are detailed in the following chapters and together with processes of commoditisation of land and labour form the basis of chapters 5 and 6 below. For a discussion of the resilience of 'lineage' (pre-capitalist modes of production) to the incursion of capitalism, see P-P Rey, Colonialism, néo colonialism et transition au capitalisme, (Paris: Maspéro, 1971), also his 'Historical materialism and Class Struggles (Materialism historique et luttes de classes)', Mimeo, n.d. The work of Rey is also discussed in Anthony Brewer, Marxist theories of Imperialism. A critical survey, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) Rey's ideas contrast markedly with those of Rodney on the impact of capitalism on pre-capitalist societies.

of slaves in the eighteenth century were of this latter type. If they were not captured through warfare then they were certainly the product of a previous war between the Asante Union and other territories, and came into the possession of the Asantehene and council of elders as tribute.

Warfare became increasingly common during the eighteenth century in the Asante region where the power of enslaving societies over those enslaved was enhanced by the influx of European firearms. We have already seen that the influx of guns increased tension and internal unrest within the Akan areas of the Gold Coast. It was observed that the possibility of wealth accruing to Asante's through warfare reduced their previous enthusiasm for the mining of gold. This recognition by European traders as the Atlantic slave trade increased, that the imported goods were partly transforming the nature of indigenous production activities, was soon seized upon and advantage taken. For example, in 1749, the West Indian Company reported to Amsterdam that the Asante King involved in disputes with his chiefs, was not maintaining the open trade routes especially with the people of Wassa. This was not too detrimental to Dutch trade for the Dutch 'Factor' was able to satisfy his slave requirements from those displaced by internal troubles caused by Wassa's disputes with its neighbours (1).

These disputes and wars created depopulated areas where villages that had been attacked for their labour often simply disappeared. If the village remained, community life was totally disrupted with the creation of a shortage in labour supply often resulting in chronic food shortages

---

(1) FC N46, 1747-1750, pp. 20-21.

and insecurity. Depopulation, however, was not felt everywhere for:

The slave trade not only led to the depopulation of certain areas it led also to the concentration of population in others (1).

(ii) Concentration of Wealth

The European demand for slaves thus increased the numbers of internal conflicts within the Guinea hinterland. A further effect, generated by the interrelationship of changing European demand for slaves and the already existing slave relations of production in Asante, was an enhancing and added fillip to the concentration of wealth into the hands of the chiefs and military aristocracies of Asante.

The Asante chiefs had already established themselves as power holders of a union based upon the politico-ideological paraphernalia of the original state builders Osei Tutu and Komfo Anotche. The basis for these accoutrements of state was the position of chiefs as exploiters of slave labour and the labour of commoners. With the advent of the slave trade, and the possibility of slaves for sale, there was now an added dimension to the possibility for accumulating wealth. This presented itself in the use of slaves as objects of exchange value as well as for the production of exchange value realised on the markets of long distance trade.

---

(1) Van Dantzig, (1975), op.cit., p. 266. Food shortages often resulted in people's 'voluntary' enslavement by sale to Europeans to be able to provide sufficient food for their families, see ibid. It is wrong to invoke a neoclassical notion that it was only those people who were 'surplus' to indigenous requirements that were the products of slave raiding parties. See J.D. Fage, 'Slave and the Slave Trade in the context of West African History', JAH, 10, 3, 1969, and C.C.Wrigley's seeming agreement in, 'Historicism in Africa Slavery and State Formation', African Affairs, 70, 1971, p. 114.

## V CONCLUSION

The foregoing has offered what can only be a partial and selective review of the period of eighteenth century Akan developments. We have not documented the intricacies of the Atlantic slave trade but have tried to show the need for an integrated analysis of the period which combines internal developments, especially the formation of the Asante state, with the new phase and form of European merchant contact on the Coast.

Our analysis has shown that the eighteenth century phase of European merchant expansion locked the people of the Gold Coast increasingly into a system of trade which was to enhance, and later undermine, indigenous relations of production and that the nature of the trade changed as well as intensified.

Gold production in the Asante region fell, to be replaced as the major export commodity by African slavery. In the process the ruling class of elders and chiefs in Asante increased their position of power which had developed since the end of the seventeenth century. The class position of chiefs and elders was based upon the exploitation of commoners and slave labour, together with the sale of gold and slaves through long distance trade to the coast. Both practices of trading slaves and gold had existed previously, mainly to the north across the Sahara, but now the wealthy aristocracies took advantage of the added demand for slaves by Europeans on the coast.

At the time that the early Akan relations of production were enhanced they were also undermined, albeit less tangibly, by the consolidation of the processes of merchant capital incursion on the Gold Coast. By this we mean the production activities of the Akan

groups became subordinated to, but also conserved by, the interests of European merchant demands. This was the forerunner of later neo-colonialism in politically independent Ghana where:

The rulers of West African states were transformed into the comprador class of European capitalism in the era when the system literally demanded flesh and blood from Africa (1).

This does not mean that the Akan already had prescribed for them their every activity (2). Rather, the interests of merchant capital, which in the eighteenth century were firmly set on the development of the Caribbean with African labour, were too strong for the African to resist. Indeed, our analysis here of the processes of change in the Gold Coast, between ca. 1700-1800, has shown that to achieve a fuller understanding of the impact of encroaching European demand for slaves, we need to recognise the internal composition of the Akan social formation. For example, by examining Asante state formation we have highlighted the importance of indigenous domestic and plantation slavery to the production and reproduction of the Akan. This examination of Asante state formation has served two further functions. First, we have stressed the hierarchical nature of the power structure in Asante, and we have suggested that the basis upon which the Asante powerholders maintained their positions of dominance was by appropriating the surplus labour of slaves and commoners. Second, our emphasis on the role of unfree labour in Asante has suggested that initial relations of production and reproduction existed within

---

(1) Rodney, (1966), op. cit., p. 22.

(2) Such a deterministic point is not made here. There is, for example, considerable indigenous opposition to the international slave trade because of the harm it was seen to cause; see, Basil Davidson, et al, op. cit., pp. 284-286.

the Akan social formation from which European slave traders could take advantage. The Atlantic slave trade in our analysis is not an episode of history determined solely by European demands for slaves to work in America. Instead, the Atlantic slave trade, and the shift from European demand for gold to the demand for slaves, is explained by the interaction and outcome of internal and external processes associated with colonial transformation on the Gold Coast.

We can now look at the impact which the intensification and then decline of the Atlantic slave trade had for the Asante. We can do this by examining the transition from a European informal colonialism, based upon the buying cheap and selling dear of products on the coast, to European colonial attempts at initiating indigenous production of commodities in the period of the nineteenth century, euphemistically called the period of 'legitimate trade'.

APPENDIX I TO CHAPTER THREE

Projected Exports of that Portion of the French and English Slave Trade from the Gold Coast, 1711-1810

	<u>1711-20</u>	<u>1721-30</u>	<u>1731-40</u>	<u>1741-50</u>	<u>1751-60</u>	<u>1761-70</u>	<u>1771-80</u>	<u>1781-90</u>	<u>1791-1800</u>	<u>1801-10</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Gold Coast	44,000	54,200	65,200	67,000	41,800	52,400	38,700	59,900	29,400	22,100	474,700

Source: Adapted from E. Reynolds, (1974b) op.cit., p. 11.

C H A P T E R   F O U R

'LEGITIMATE' TRADE AND THE TRANSITION TO  
FORMAL COLONIALISM ca. 1807-1874

I      INTRODUCTION

In examining further the integration of the Gold Coast into the international economies of western Europe and north America we are confronted in the nineteenth century with the political watershed of colonial rule. We examine in this chapter, some of the reasons which necessitate the change in direction of the colonial states' policy towards the Gold Coast and why formal colonialism is finally adopted as a strategy for continued British presence in the territory.

The process of incorporation of the Gold Coast in the nineteenth century is significant for the transformation of the territory into one dependent increasingly upon the export of 'natural' forest produce compared with the earlier eighteenth century demands for slaves. We review briefly what became known as legitimate trade (1) both in its meaning as commerce and the exchange with Europeans of products produced inland, and in the sense that trade increasingly involved new forms of indigenous productive activities which were encouraged by traders on the littoral.

Later in the chapter we examine the forms which British colonialism took in its interaction with indigenous social formations and in turn the changes which the Akan experienced. How did the Asante respond to the decline in the slave trade for instance? And

---

(1) See especially, A.G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London: Longman, 1973), E. Reynolds, Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast 1807-1874, (London: Longman, 1974b).



did the increased demand for cash crops change the lifestyles and relations between power holders and commoners within Asante?

## II FORMAL COLONIALISM

The transition from informal to formal British colonial rule on the Gold Coast occurred in the nineteenth century. The territory south of Asante became known as the Gold Coast Colony in 1874 but de facto colonial control was exercised much earlier. It is this form of colonial control that we are first going to examine and its link with the processes of legitimate trade. Before we do this we need to make an important theoretical point. This relates to the issues raised in our discussion above about the nature and impact on the Akan of European merchant capital on the Gold Coast (1). We have spoken specifically in terms of the impact being determined by the demand for different produce in the colony. We have examined the demand for gold and later for slaves which led us to an understanding of how these "commodities" were produced in the indigenous social formation. It is possible in the nineteenth century, like the period up to 1807, to periodise the nature of British colonial control on the Gold Coast by the kind of produce which it sought to exploit and profit by on its sale in Europe and elsewhere. The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the switch by British merchants from demanding slaves to work in the plantations of the West Indies to demanding cash crops, notably palm oil, which could be used to sustain economic development in Europe. This way of understanding the impact of British colonialism on the Gold Coast adds further specificity to our principal form of

---

(1) For a fuller discussion of merchant capital see Chapter Two.

characterising European contact through the transition of merchant to industrial capital. The nineteenth century marked the consolidation of capitalist development in Britain and witnessed the transition from the dominance of mercantilism to that of industrial capital. Because of this transition in Europe, there was a tendency for trading on the coast to become dominated less by the dynamics of merchant capital and more by the requirements of industrial capital.

We see below (1) what many of these new requirements involved on the Gold Coast: inter alia, the use by Europeans increasingly of free wage labour, greater access by colonialists to indigenous land resulting in its commoditisation, the spread of cash nexus and so on. The nineteenth century marks the early beginning of the transition of an economy characterised by these processes and the increased presence and investment by Europeans of fixed capital on the Gold Coast in plant and machinery. This investment sought to facilitate the cheap supply of raw materials and food for a growing demand in Britain while at the same time develop a market on the Gold Coast for European manufactured goods. These developments contrast with a previous European concern of simply buying commodities from Africans more cheaply than the price for which they were eventually sold.

This latter form of trading continued, however, and was eventually extended with the use of monopoly powers by the merchants which allowed them to depress the prices paid to producers of commodities for export and to raise the prices of the items of import. Simultaneously there was increasingly the transition to forms of capitalist production. This process was slow and piecemeal and arguably its incompleteness is

---

(1) Chapters Five and Six.

a measure of the persistent underdevelopment of Ghana's political economy (1).

As merchant capital had been the partial initiator of productive capital in Europe so Kay is probably right in arguing that it continued to be the agency through which newly hegemonic productive capital operated on the Gold Coast (2). As the nineteenth century progressed, this form of colonial expansion through merchant capital changed. Merchant capital, the trading of commodities in the realm of circulation rather than the active engagement by the merchant in transforming the way products were produced, gave way more and more to the direct intervention by Europeans in the production of African commodities, including the natural produce of the forest region. The earlier detachment of European merchant capital from the productive process lay in, amongst other things, the more profitable activities in the realm of circulation. This point is especially born out by the persistence of long distance trade in commodities with a particular high value and low bulk to weight ratio. As long as new lines of trade could be found, adequately secured by early British colonial adventurers, the dominance of merchant capital and the reluctance of merchants to become involved with investments in production itself continued (3). As the phase of the carving up of the territories of the world among the colonial powers grew to a

---

(1) See G. Kay, Development and Underdevelopment (London: Macmillan, 1977) and S.B.D. de Silva, The Political Economy of Underdevelopment (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, in association with the Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore 1982).

(2) See, G. Kay op. cit., compare the point made by de Silva, op. cit., that in England the capitalist industrial revolution had been initiated by the accumulation of capital by merchants and the role that this class played in concentrating wealth with profits gained through speculation and usury. Much of this wealth was directed as credit to producers. For example, the Manchester Cotton Industry in the sixteenth century depended upon credit given by Irish merchants, p. 417.

(3) de Silva, op. cit., p. 419.

close at the end of the nineteenth century the way in which European commercial gain was secured from the occupied territories had already begun to shift. From the period of purchasing slaves cheaply, and selling them more dearly in the Caribbean, West African merchants were forced to trade in 'legitimate' commodities. The latter were of increasing use to European economies in need of raw materials to fuel capitalist expansion. The increased dominance of productive capital in Europe was slowly transported to West Africa where colonial interests became focussed upon the exploitation of gold once again but this time through the establishment of European mining operations. Together with the interventions in the production of gold through concessions there also occurred the encouragement of cash crops through attempts at developing plantations. As one writer has recently commented:

Industrial capital comes into its own when the extensive forms of growth which merchant capital fosters are superceded by investment in depth (1).

These introductory comments serve two functions. First they reiterate the two ways in which we are seeking to understand colonial transformation on the Gold Coast. This is first through recognising the types of product colonialists demanded, which leads us to an analysis of the way in which the products were produced and whether colonial contact necessitated any change in the way that they were produced. Second, we understand the development from informal to formal colonialism by periodising expansion from Europe in terms of the transition from merchant capital to industrial capital and its effect upon the Akan social formation. Our brief assessment of the transition from merchant to industrial capital is crucial to our

---

(1) Ibid, p. 421.

understanding of the so called pragmatic approach of British foreign policy in the nineteenth century (1) and provides the second reason for these introductory remarks. It is only by understanding the changing balance of class forces within the British state in the nineteenth century that we can understand more fully the repeated calls for the abandonment of Britain's Gold Coast possessions and the stronger interests for the maintenance of colonial interests in this part of West Africa (2).

We talk later specifically about the nature of British investment in the colony and attempts to initiate a clearer pattern of production in the colony for the markets of western Europe (3). The process of cash crop production, however, predated the renewed British interest in gold mining in the area. Before we look at the development of legitimate trade we can now try and unravel the reasons for the creeping expanded jurisdiction of the British merchants and imperial government on the coast. We make this assessment before we examine the specifics of legitimate trade, because to do so is to situate the much documented economic expansion of trade between Africa and Europe within a framework of changing class interests in Britain (4).

---

(1) See Abu Boahen, 'Politics in Ghana 1800-1874', in, J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (editors), History of West Africa, vol. 2 (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1971).

(2) We do not have the space here to discuss in detail the class composition of the British nineteenth century state and the way it articulated interests of industrial capital over those of mercantilism. The following section will, however, show that 'traditional' historical accounts of the 'muddle' and 'confusion' of British imperial policy at this time did not reflect the pragmatism of British policy makers but a conflict of interests between different classes in Britain. For traditional views of colonial policy see, D.Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism 1850-1928, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), A.Boahen op.cit., Peter Mathias, The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914, (London: Methuen and Co Ltd 1974). Contrast these accounts with E. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (London: Penguin 1968).

(3) Chapters 5 and 6.

(4) The analysis of indigenous Gold Coast class relations is the focus for the second half of this chapter.

Direct responsibility for British possessions on the coast changed hands four times in forty years. This gives an indication of the three fold series of conflicts which helped shape Britain's foreign 'policy' at this time. These were the conflicts between, landed and developing capitalist interests in Britain, merchants on the coast and Members of Parliament in Britain and the conflicts of interests between indigenous African producers and European merchants. A review of this period is essential to examine the earliest moves of legitimating British control of the territory which they occupied on the coast and is a forerunner to the later consolidation of the colony.

(a) Early Expansion of British Jurisdiction

We dealt in an earlier chapter (1) with the development of mercantilism in Britain and the removal of feudal barriers to the accumulation of capital. The active involvement of the nineteenth century state in the British political economy was modified, at least on the surface, from its seventeenth to eighteenth century position. The nineteenth century was the period of laissez faire in Britain, the period of free trade and minimum government interference in the economy. This did not, and cannot mean that the British state abstained from any involvement in the development of industrial capitalism and the ascendancy of Britain by 1852 to the position of 'workshop of the world'. It must now be commonplace that all governments influence economic life (2).

The ethos of 'laissez faire' in nineteenth century Britain can better be understood as providing the dominant interests represented

---

(1) Chapter 2.

(2) This is even recognised by modern day monetarists who use the state to try and create the perfect market conditions.

in the apparatus of the state, with a framework for ensuring the best conditions for capitalist development. The first half of the nineteenth century saw the British state providing the conditions for an "essentially self regulating and self expanding system" (1). The priority of the British state at the turn of the nineteenth century was to thus create the conditions for industrial capitalist development. These conditions were not fully secured until the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1848 (2). The protectionism which these laws established for landed interests in Britain, reflected the still hegemonic position of agriculture over industry in the years which immediately followed the Napoleonic Wars. The ascendancy of an industrial middle class with interests opposed to the artificially high prices of food stuffs led to the erosion of policies formally associated with the age of mercantilism. The period of mercantilism, as we have seen was one where the state fostered 'national' wealth. The nineteenth century state was still to regulate the economy but this was often done in an uneven manner - reflecting among other things the persistence of conflicts of interest between different factions of industrial and landed capital. Britain, for example, was the only country where the state at this formative period of industrial capitalist development, refused any fiscal protection to national industry (3).

The conflicts between landed interests and those of industry and the questions surrounding a state policy of laissez faire had a number of consequences for the way in which representatives of the

---

(1) Hobsbawm, op. cit., p. 191.

(2) Ibid, Chapter 5 and 12.

(3) Ibid, p. 197. Britain was also the only country where the government did not build or help finance any part of the railway network. Two crucial areas of state involvement however, during this period of so-called 'laissez faire' occurred in taxation and currency regulation.

British state viewed Britain's colonial possessions. Indeed, the constant changing of the British possessions on the Gold Coast in the first half of the nineteenth century can only be understood with the knowledge of the conflicting and competing class interests in Britain. For example, there was in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, a dissatisfaction among emerging businessmen in Britain, with the persistence of monopoly trading powers by British companies on the Gold Coast. Such a practice was not in line with laissez faire and it was seen as necessary, perhaps ironically, for the government to intervene and take affairs out of the hands of the company. It was to be another fifty years, after the 1820's, before the British government finally established the Gold Coast colony and with it a colonial state. Already, however, a developing bourgeoisie in Britain reflecting industrial interests voiced strong concern that trade with the Gold Coast be put on a secure and open footing without the hitherto obstructive company monopolies.

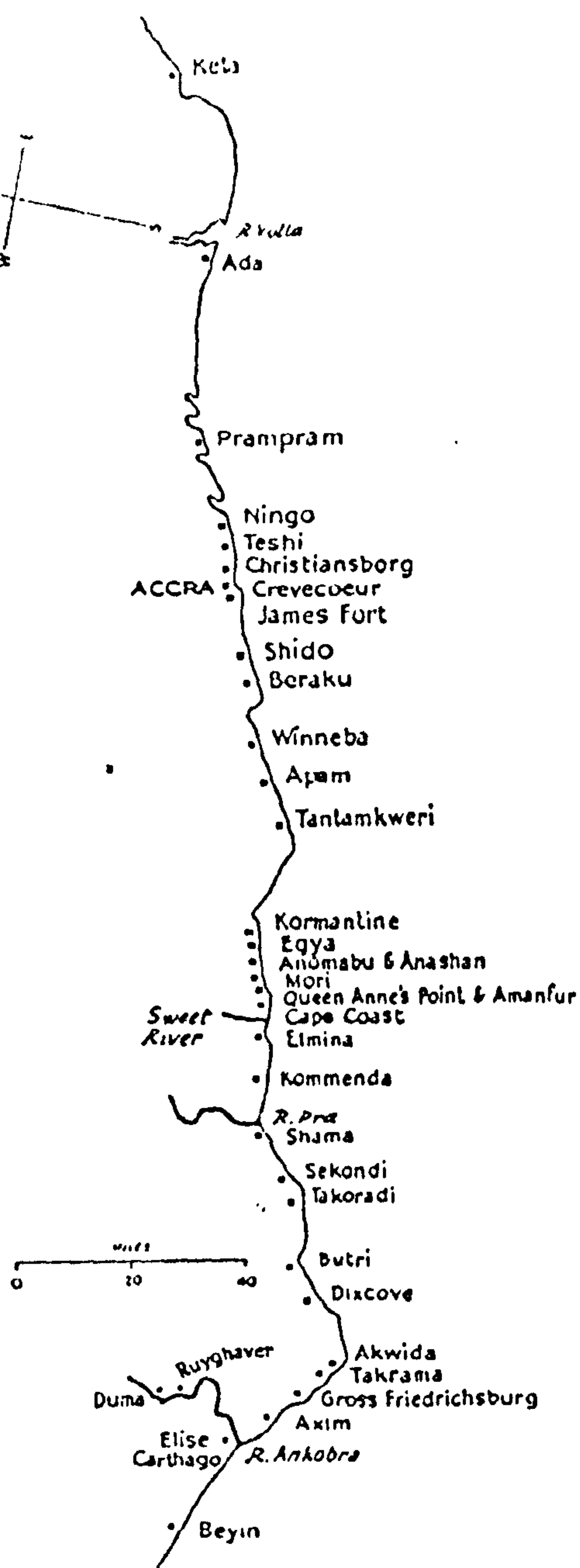
The abolition of the slave trade had rendered illegal approximately nine-tenths of the trade carried out by the British company of Merchants Trading to Africa (1). Representatives of the latter at this time had managed to prevail upon the British government to keep British forts on the Gold Coast. Promoters of abolition saw the need to actively pursue British trading interests in West Africa now that the export of slaves was illegal. But what was the basis on which this new trade was to be organised? What kind of exchange of commodities and what direct European participation in production was

---

(1) See Chapter 2 above for the development of British trading companies on the coast.



The European Forts on  
the Gold Coast.



MAP FIVE:

Source: W.E.F. Ward, (1967)

to be involved? For the Governor of Sierra Leone and a member of the Anti Slavery Society:

The forts on the Gold Coast, if properly employed might be made very important engines of promoting the mutual benefit of Great Britain and Africa (1).

Talking more generally about the West African coast the same person saw the need for British representatives to inform chiefs of:

the advantages from cultivating white instead of the red rice, because in that case a vent might be easily obtained for their surplus produce ... either in Great Britain or in the West Indies (2).

The shift to this new form of European trade and contact with the Gold Coast where the focus was on encouraging the African population to grow crops for export, was gradual and uneven. This was partly because of the shifting balance of class forces which affected British governments' attitudes but also because of indigenous African conflicts in the Gold Coast itself. For the moment, the Company traders won the day while a government commission was appointed to assess future trading prospects. The commission recognised a complaint by the merchants about the demise of the latter's livelihood. As a result the salaries of trading representatives on the coast were increased twofold. There was an overall increase in the British grant to the territory from £13,431 to £23,000 per annum.

British government reports in 1811 and 1816-1817 which examined British merchants' activities on the coast were highly critical of the

- 
- (1) Zachary Macaulay to Lord Castlereagh, 8 May 1807, document 2 quoted in G.E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1964), p. 6.
- (2) Ibid., Macaulay also suggested the possibility of cultivating indigo, cotton and coffee, p. 5.

way in which merchants carried out their trading activities. Moreover, they were surprised to see that the slave trade continued most notably by the Portuguese and Dutch traders (1). The Select Committees on African Ports of 1816-17 concluded that British interests should continue on the coast because of the need to instruct and improve the lot of the natives. This had not been accomplished hitherto by the Company hence greater government supervision was now to be exercised. The Company's main concern, however, had been the need to promote legitimate trade and it was recognised:

with very few exceptions that the natives would be easily induced to raise and cultivate the articles of tropical produce to which their climate and soil are suitable, if they had adequate encouragement by a demand and market for them (2).

By 1821 it became clear to trading interests in Britain that the Company on the coast was not adequately advancing their interests. Trade was not progressing in terms of exports from the forest region or through the Company promotion and engagement in production directly. An equally important issue of criticism was that the Company was seen to be unable to placate the demands of different indigenous groups, notably the Asante's. The Asante Empire claimed sovereignty over the Fante states and this resulted in a number of conflicts with different coastal groups at the turn of the century (3). In the attempt to reduce the conflicts a British representative, Bowditch, made a treaty with Asante which called for peace between Britain and Asante (4). This proved to be ineffectual. Provision was made for a British resident in

- 
- (1) Details of both reports are to be found in Metcalfe, op. cit., document 14 and 31, see also Reynolds, op. cit., Chapter 2.  
 (2) Metcalfe op. cit., document 31, p. 43.  
 (3) 1807, 1811, 1814-1816 and later 1823-1824, 1826, 1863. See Reynolds, op. cit., see also, J.K.Fynn, (1971a), 'Ghana-Asante', in M. Crowder (editor) West African Resistance, (London: Hutchinson, 1971).  
 (4) Metcalfe, op. cit., document 33, p. 46.

Asante and the division of jurisdiction of Africans under the British protectorate and those within the domain of the Asantehene. This treaty represented one of the earliest attempts to demarcate the respective jurisdiction of Britain and indigenous groups. A measure of the British governments dissatisfaction with the merchants on the coast was that the former appointed the Asante resident directly and not in consultation with the Company. The representative, however, assumed an independence which created many difficulties for the British. The new Consul in Kumase accepted, for example, the Asante's dissatisfaction with payments for the 'notes' held on the forts (1) but persuaded the Asantehene to accept a sacred oath of allegiance and fidelity to the Crown of Britain. Members of Parliament in Britain and merchants on the Gold Coast protested against these clauses. The merchants were further angered about the increased recognition by the British representatives of Asante's sovereignty over the people of Cape Coast. The inhabitants around the British fort at Cape Coast had for some years been allied with, and promoters of, British trade. Now however Britain recognised Asante claims to sovereignty over Cape Coast (2).

Conflict between interests in Britain calling for greater freedom with the Gold Coast trade, and the merchant company's representatives which wanted to maintain mercantilist monopolies came to a head in 1821. The failure of any dramatic increase in trade as we saw earlier was blamed by manufacturing interests in Britain upon the merchant company's monopoly position in trading (3)

---

(1) For explanation of these see below.

(2) For merchant criticism of this situation see, Metcalfe, op. cit., document 44. Commodore Sir G.R. Collier to J.W. Croker, 16 April 1820, p. 61.

(3) Ibid., document 48, p. 63.

and the waste of government resources as British competitors, most notably the Dutch and Americans, took advantage of the confusion.

The conflict of interests between the company on the coast, seeking to keep trade within its own domain, and a burgeoning capitalist class of free traders in London was resolved in the latter's favour. The British government was prevailed upon to dissolve the African Company and transfer the forts and possessions of the territory to the Crown. In 1821 the British possessions on the Gold Coast became dependencies of Sierra Leone under the command of its Governor. Trading conditions on the Gold Coast however remained difficult. Once more issues of sovereignty concerning coastal people and most notably those in the immediate vicinity of British forts at Cape Coast came to the fore. This issue was to remain unresolved and a matter of tension on the Gold Coast for years to come.

The Asantes claimed sovereignty over the people of Cape Coast while the British also sought the allegiance of these people and the latter's continued compliance with the requirements of British trade. This brief period of early direct British government involvement on the coast closed in 1828. The withdrawal of direct British government links in the area followed an encounter with the Asante which had been sparked off by the question of which country had the allegiance of a Fante sergeant killed by the Asante - the King of England or the Asantehene. Direct British government involvement on the territory had followed the death in battle of the Governor of Sierra Leone against the Asante. A war with Asante and the ensuing battles which erupted between Asante and indigenous states was not conducive to trade on the coast. The reduction in trade, together with the continued expense of maintaining British establishments on the coast

forced the withdrawal of a direct British government presence in the territory (1). Once again, however, in this continuously changing situation the merchant lobby on the coast and in Britain was strong enough to allow a nominal merchant presence on the coast; this time under the control, in the British capital, of a committee of three London merchants who had interests on the Gold Coast.

The committee ran the affairs of the Gold Coast Colony on a shoe-string budget of usually less than £4,000 per annum. This interregnum of what was to prove a brief return to merchant control on the Gold Coast was crucial for the history of the future Crown Colony. It was under this latest administration of merchants, led by President G. Maclean, that merchant jurisdiction in the form of developing British legal sanctions was extended.

The ten years immediately preceding 1843 on the Gold Coast were noted for their relative peacefulness. The effect of successive treaties and the 'martyrdom' of McCarthy (2) had the result of drawing the Fante, in the immediate vicinity of the coastal trading stations, more closely to the British traders. This increased dependence of the Fante upon the British was actively developed by Maclean. Maclean sought for the first time to regularise relations with neighbouring Africans through establishing, "a system of public law over and above the law of the tribe". As a later agreement was to put it, he sought to transform "the custom of the country to the general principles of British law" (3).

---

(1) The cost of repairing Cape Coast Castle and James Fort was estimated at £16,000 and £48,000 respectively.

(2) Kwame Arhin, 'The Akan, Mande and Mole Dagbane Peoples 1800-1880'. IAS, Mimeo, University of Ghana, Legon, 1976, p. 24.

(3) G.E. Metcalfe, 'Maclean of the Gold Coast', quoted in Margaret Priestley West African Trade and Coast Society A Family Study (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 45.

We focus upon later legal changes in the following chapter. This period, however, is important in that it represents the first time attempts were made to integrate indigenous groups more closely into a growing institutional apparatus for merchant exploitation. Conflicting interests in Britain between merchant companies, the gentry and a developing industrial bourgeoisie which sought freer trade with 'colonial' possessions were not fully resolved in 1828. A compromise agreement in this year had been for limited merchant activity on the Gold Coast with freer trade. The merchants though, overstepped their mark for a British government careful not to expand its territories without good reason. To ensure peace for their flourishing trade (1) the merchant administration had extended its jurisdiction beyond the forts and consequently beyond the terms of reference for which they received government assistance. Maclean sought treaties with the Asante, he interfered in disputes between different groups and led expeditions against chiefs who disrupted trade. He also held chiefs on bail for good behaviour and held for trial chiefs accused of murder (2). Maclean also sought to minimise the external slave trade and to reduce the instances of human sacrifice. In London, news that Maclean was extending jurisdiction of the merchants inland was heard with alarm. This increased with the rumours that foreign slavers used the Gold Coast to replenish their stocks of foodstuffs. Pressure from the anti slavery lobby for more British government supervision of the territory mounted. Once more the debate came to the fore as to whether the area should continue to receive government support.

---

(1) Imports through the British forts on the Gold Coast increased from £131,000 in 1830 to £423,000 in 1840 and exports for the same period rose from £90,000 to £325,000. See, J.D. Fage, 'Some General Considerations relevant to Historical Research in the Gold Coast', T G C T H S, 1,1,1952, p.118. Palm oil production was encouraged and by 1844 represented the Gold Coast's leading export.

(2) Ibid., p. 112.

Evidence was gathered at two Parliamentary Commissions in 1840 and 1842 where representations were taken from merchants. Opinions varied as to whether government intervention on the coast should increase, and thereby assist developing free trade at home, or whether the government had interfered enough on the Gold Coast and that in accord with laissez faire commercial interests should be self supportive. A debate about future government involvement hinged on the kind of Governor that would be appointed and how much control the merchants could exercise over this officer and the Judicial Assessor (1).

Crown rule resumed in 1843. The Gold Coast was separated from Sierra Leone in 1850 and a new Legislative Council was appointed with two merchant representatives compared with three from the government. The resumption of Crown rule was the last time that the official ruling body changed hands. Another Committee was established in 1865 to examine the continuing viability of British trade but it was resolved in the affirmative.

Although on the surface Crown rule in 1843 may seem to be the culmination of muddle and confusion said to have beset British foreign policy for hundreds of years, it would be a grave error to suggest, as one writer has, that the British:

... approach was mere pragmatism and the growth was ... an accidental product of the uncoordinated and at times illegal activities of officials, traders and missionaries on the coast (2).

Instead of this interpretation for the development of Britain's

- 
- (1) G.E. Metcalfe, 'After Maclean: some aspects of British Gold Coast Policy in the mid-nineteenth century', TGCHS, 1,5,1955. There was also debate within the government as to the likely expense of once more intervening on the coast.
- (2) A. Boahen, op. cit., p. 205.



colonial empire, we suggest that colonial possessions reflected the outcome of a series of ongoing and multidimensional class struggles in Britain. For instance, we have tried to show in the above discussion of the changing of hands of British possessions on the Gold Coast, that there was an underlying process accelerating, (albeit in a circuitous manner), the final placing of British territories in the hands of the British government. We have suggested that the early nineteenth century was a period in England of changing dominance of class forces, namely, the erosion of landed aristocratic power and the ascendancy of a bourgeois power bloc. The British state acted as an initial arbiter of these interests and then increasingly acted for a new hegemonic bloc of classes which had their basis in industrial as opposed to landed interests.

The British government now took full cognisance of industrial and trading pressures for the expansion of trade on the Gold Coast. Among these measures the British Crown established a local Chamber of Commerce on the Coast as a forum for merchant interests. However, merchants remained dissatisfied with the extent of their incorporation into the government to be established at Cape Coast. The merchants were more pleased with another aspect of the transfer of authority to the Crown. This was in the latter's continuation of some of Maclean's policies of expanded jurisdiction. The British government both criticised and respected much of what Maclean had sought to do. It was seen clearly that for trade to be extended peace and stability needed to be maintained in the immediate vicinity of the British forts. Maclean had sought to satisfy this prerequisite for trade by extending the laws of the fort to include neighbouring tribes. This had been condemned by the government in Britain because the merchants had no authority for so doing. Maclean had acted ultra vires and the House of

Commons' report of 1842 noted this. It had been recorded that Maclean had no authority to be concerned with the administration of justice at all (1). The British government acted to regularise this position by extending the jurisdiction of English law to include people outside British territory - as long as the local chiefs agreed. This was facilitated by the Foreign Jurisdiction Act in 1843 (2). Maclean was appointed as Judicial Assessor with specific instructions to uphold:

the exercise of that jurisdiction which has been established ... in the case of crimes and misdemeanours committed among neighbouring tribes (3).

Although Maclean had received much criticism for the extension of British jurisdiction preceding the Crown takeover in 1843, it had been accepted that he had usually obtained the permission of both the British government and indigenous people before introducing English legal precepts into the area. The procedure, however, whereby permission was received from indigenous power holders needed regularising. This was achieved with the Bond of 1844(4). The Bond was the name given to a series of treaties between Britain and the Fante chiefs where the latter accepted that:

(1) People living adjacent to the British forts acknowledged the power and jurisdiction of the Crown.

(2) Human sacrifice and panyarring "are abominations and contrary to law".

(3) Offences will be examined by Queens judicial offices "moulding

---

(1) Metcalfe, (1955), op. cit., p. 183.

(2) See, D. Kimble, op. cit., p.194 and W.E.F. Ward, A History of Ghana, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 195.

(3) Despatch of 16 December 1843, Stanley to Hill quoted in, ibid, p.194.

(4) Ibid, p. 194, Metcalfe, (1964), op. cit., p. 196.

the customs of the Country to the general principles of British law" (1).

The Bond was the first formal recognition by the Africans on the coast of British protection. It also reflected the British attempts at invoking a regularised and uniform set of institutions and legal paraphernalia which could greatly facilitate the development of trade on the coast. Protection of the Fante's was now extended in law, and chiefs recognised formally the "objects of law" as "the protection of individuals and property" (2). The Bond established de jure what had been the de facto position on the coast for years.

We have summarised here the importance of the first forty years of the nineteenth century for the consolidation of colonialism in West Africa. After an uncertain start to the century with the official end to the slave trade the British government became formally entrenched on the Gold Coast. The interests of British merchants came increasingly under the security of the British colonial umbrella on the coast, which itself became dependent upon the extension of a British juridical and military presence. British merchants were no longer allowed a simple monopoly of trade on the Gold Coast. Instead, representatives of the British state in London were prevailed upon by industrial interests there to open and regularise trade to and from

- 
- (1) Declaration of the Fante chiefs (the 'bond') 6 March 1844, document 145, in, Metcalfe, (1964), op. cit., p.196. Panyarring was where a creditor seized a person in any way connected with the debtor - or even a complete stranger to all concerned. "The kindred of the person thus made prisoner came down upon the debtor's family and compelled them to pay the debt, plus a sum ... to compensate the person seized in order that he might 'wash his soul'". R.S. Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1929), p.370. For further reference to Panyarring see Chapter One above.
- (2) Metcalfe, (1964), op. cit., p. 196.

the Gold Coast. Merchant companies were not now to exercise de jure authority and monopoly on the coast without the approval from a British Governor and Judicial assessor (1).

British merchants seeking the opening up of trade on the Gold Coast benefitted greatly from the establishment of British authority on the coast which gave added security to the operations of the merchants. This was to become more important as time progressed and as European commercial interests became more concerned with not simply facilitating additional trade (commerce) carried by Africans from the hinterland, but in becoming actively involved themselves in the production and extraction of the produce of the Gold Coast.

Before we look at later developments in detail, that is in the European productive activities in concessions bought for mining and agricultural production towards the end of the nineteenth century, which reflected the increasing dominance of industrial over merchant capital, we can look now at the early nineteenth century European commercial exploits on the coast. This is the activity called legitimate trade.

(b) Legitimate Trade

Following the abolition of the slave trade European traders were forced to find alternative commodities for export to sustain their commercial zeal. The trade in slaves did not end overnight. British merchants sought to clamp down on the trade, however, for while it continued it made the expansion of alternative trading goods difficult. This was because first, British merchants suffered

---

(1) We have also seen that these lines of conflict were not always straightforward. For example, it was while the coast was under merchant control, that is with Maclean, that indeed a regularisation of trade and day to day practices of law and order were started.

an economic disadvantage while their competitors, the French, Portuguese and Brazilians still traded in slaves. Second, while the inland indigenous people concerned themselves with the capture and seizure of slaves for export to the Caribbean, internal productive activity was being neglected. It was this latter activity which concerned British merchants most. Now that the British government had outlawed the export of slaves, and set up a naval control of the coast to prevent its continuation, alternative use had to be made of the trading establishments on the coast.

The early nineteenth century witnessed the gradual transformation of the relationship between the economies of Europe and those of the Gold Coast. As Hopkins rightly states, the development of the Legitimate Commerce represented a break with the past and signified a new phase in the growth of the market (1). It heralded the dawn of modern economic history in West Africa. It is to the changing fluctuation in the nature of the trade that we must turn to understand the partition of West Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

We can agree that legitimate trade comes to dominate the economies of West Africa in the nineteenth century, but we must remember that this was a gradual and uneven process. It was gradual in the sense that it overlapped with the slave trade; there was also much upheaval and conflict which emanated from the denial of a market for slaves which had previously been nurtured by Europe. It was uneven because of conflicting interests being represented in Britain, interests which sought to hang on to the slave trade (mercantilist) and those of a burgeoning industrial class which sought profitability

---

(1) A.G. Hopkins, op. cit., especially Chapter 4.

through the development of manufacturing industry in Britain based upon cheap raw materials from overseas territories. Some of the latter debate was resolved by 1850 but was to reappear with another Select Committee appointed to examine the viability of British possessions on the coast in 1874. By 1874 however legitimate trade was well developed. Indeed palm oil exports by 1841 had reached 42, 745 hundredweight and by 1862 this accounted for £85,910 in value (1).

British development of legitimate trade had a forerunner. The Dutch competed for the trading favours of the Akan (2). Before the Dutch finally gave up their possessions to the British they tried to develop trade in legitimate products and to initiate the export of agricultural products on a grand scale. It is illuminating in a number of ways to look briefly at the activities of Dutch competitors in these years. First, it highlights Dutch attempts to build stronger links with the Asante and thereby pose a threat to British interests on the Coast who also sought the friendship and trade of this inland power. Second, it clarifies the process through which the Europeans sought to initiate legitimate trade and thereby transform indigenous structures. One aspect of this process set in train by the Europeans was the early attempt at sustaining peace inland between warring indigenous groups so trade could flourish more easily. Dutch attempts to initiate legitimate trade through plantation agriculture also represented one early (albeit unsuccessful) attempt by colonial

---

(1) For detailed breakdown of import and export figures between Europe and the Gold Coast see tables 1-4 in the Appendixes to this Chapter. See also Reynolds (1974b), *op. cit.*, p. 133.

(2) The more general issue of colonial rivalry has been discussed above in Chapters 2-3.

groups to have greater access to land and to impose a particular labour process on African producers. It marked an early attempt by Europeans to initiate and hasten private ownership of land and property (1).

(i) The Dutch and Legitimate Trade

Following the laws to abolish the slave trade in 1816 Dutch traders and merchants were eager to seek alternative ways to exploit the Gold Coast. They were assisted in this by the Dutch government which specifically instructed the newly appointed Governor General of the Dutch possessions to seek peace, trade and conditions for increased indigenous agricultural production (2). Elsewhere on the coast, the British and Danes were trying to achieve similar conditions (3). Both the Danes and British were experiencing difficulties in imposing plantation forms of agricultural production. The main reason for this was the conflict between indigenous forms of agriculture - the use of bush fallow methods and the permanent systems associated with plantations. A further reason was that the labour force and indigenous relations of production were unused to the supervision associated with work on plantations (4)

The Dutch made every effort to secure the basis upon which a new kind of trade could develop. Instructions were given to the Governor

- 
- (1) These themes are only outlined here to show the premature nature of Dutch attempts at developing capitalism on the coast. See also Chapter 3, section IV above. We discuss them more fully below, Chapters 5-6.
- (2) Most of this section is drawn from H.W. Daendals, *Journal and Correspondence Part 1 November 1815-January 1817*, IAS Mimeo, University of Ghana, Legon, 1964.
- (3) The Danes first began developing plantations in 1788, see G. Nørregård, Danish Settlements in West Africa 1658-1850, translated by S. Mammen (Boston: 1964).
- (4) The permanent cultivation of plantation systems of agriculture contrasted sharply with bush fallow methods of the Akan. The direct producer, for example, lost control of his own labour. The British for the moment sought to emulate success in the West Indies. On the labour process used in plantations see, de Silva, op. cit., and Chapters 5 and 6 below.

General to inform local chiefs and kings that now the slave trade had officially ended they needed to encourage:

their people to cultivate sugar, coffee and other products by the exchange of which for European merchandise mutual accommodation is provided (1).

Unlike earlier periods of trading, monopoly was specifically outlawed although not always maintained. Trade on a wider scale was to be encouraged. Perhaps the most significant series of instructions issued to the new post of Governor General however was first; the need to use indigenous hired labour and second, to appropriate wherever possible tracts of land for colonial use.

The experiments in these early years of the nineteenth century precede the generalisation of later colonial moves to capitalist forms of production as the colonial regimes sought to reduce the importance to the economy of slave labour (2). The persistence of slavery and the Atlantic trade even after abolition, created much unrest in the hinterland among indigenous groups and seriously affected the prospects of initiating profitable legitimate trade. In reporting the plight of Dutch trade on the coast the Governor General frequently stressed the effects of the slave trade. The result on Dutch trade varied. On the one hand, trade suffered badly wherever the slave trade had been most active. Areas were depopulated, resulting in a lack of African products for exchange on the coast:

The slave trade has caused the trafficking of goods for gold and ivory to be very greatly diminished. It has extinguished industry and not only caused a reduction in the number of gold diggers, but also the regular work in the mines to cease in the dry season.

---

(1) Daendals, op. cit., Instructions for the Governor General, 1815, p.15.  
 (2) Ibid., p. 16.



and again:

The uncertainty of not any day being seized and sold to the ships extinguished the courage for all peaceful labour, and made the negro into an armed and restless robber ... (1).

On the other hand depopulation of certain areas meant that indigenous groups did not need access to so much land which became more and more at the disposal of the Dutch. The need to have greater access to indigenous land was crucial for the plans of the Dutch and in particular those of the Governor. Daendals wanted to appropriate land and make it available to his countrymen from the Netherlands. The idea was to establish a Dutch settlement with its own plantations. The need for private property was thought to be essential by the Governor:

I have been convinced by experience that no enterprise of any importance can be done upon ground which is not the property of the person undertaking them, because one thus rightly hesitates to incur expenditure for others (2).

This statement represents an early call for the commoditisation of land on the Gold Coast. The form of land appropriation was seen to be simple:

... only a very few formalities have to be observed with the King of Great Commany, or the Caboceer of another Crom, in order to warn the natives that they cannot take these lands for farming because they have been made over to private ownership. The expenses are some drink and if the piece of land is of any importance, some fathoms of cloth besides; so that a plantation of 100, yes of 200 acres can be obtained for f25 (3).

- 
- (1) Report to the Department of Trade and Colonies regarding the state of trade on this coast in, ibid., p.250. See also Report to the Department of Trade and colonies on the Cultivation of Colonial Products in the Dutch settlements on the Coast of Guinea, in ibid., p.255. Caution should be expressed, however, in assuming that slave dealing per se determined the nature of Asante's politics. See Chapters 1-3 above and later in this Chapter. See also, K.Arhin, 'Warfare and Economy in Asante: An essay in methodology' I.A.S., Mimeo, University of Ghana, Legon, 1977a.
- (2) Ibid., diary, 10 October 1816, p.186.
- (3) Ibid., despatch, Governor General to Director General of the Department of Trade and Colonies, 17 June 1816, p. 127.

This rush for land was to be monitored very carefully. Only the government was to be able to allow Dutch traders to enter agricultural ventures and a plantation would have to be registered. The new occupiers of land would also have to render services of road maintenance and partake in necessary taxation from the Netherlands (1).

The corollary to the Dutch plan of initiating agricultural plantations run by the Europeans was to encourage the indigenous cultivation of cash crops. Daenadals' vision was for Asante to become a second Java with the production of coffee, cotton and peppers which could then be sold to traders on the coast (2).

Dutch plans to emulate their success in the East Indies, however, came to nothing. This was partly due to a lack of financial resources because of an ailing domestic economy. More significantly the Dutch failed to establish successful plantations or initiate new forms of agricultural production on the Gold Coast because of the detrimental effects of the Atlantic slave trade (3). The Dutch had sought to remedy the disruptive effects to Akan agriculture resulting from the slave trade by initiating plantation agriculture. The latter was seen to be an efficient and more productive way of ensuring the flow of food stuffs and raw materials from the Gold Coast to Europe. The transport of approximately half a million Africans from the Gold Coast during the Atlantic slave trade meant that there was a shortage of labour to work on their newly introduced schemes.

- 
- (1) Ibid, p.127. The duty of paying taxes was soon dropped, ibid, p. 249.  
 (2) Despatch of Governor General to Director General of Trade and Colonies No.62, St George Del Mina, 6 December, ibid, p.249.  
 (3) We have already mentioned indigenous reaction to the imposition of different relations of production and labour process. These are discussed in more detail in Chapters 5-6 below.

(ii) British Legitimate Trade and African Merchants

The British were a great deal more persistent than the Dutch in their attempts at making their activities on the Gold Coast profitable. After the Napoleonic wars they were assisted by a stronger national and international base from which to work (1).

Legitimate trade paved the way for a new form of colonial contact with the people of the Gold Coast. Before ca. 1807, Europeans had stayed mainly on the coast venturing into the hinterland on occasion to 'pacify' warring African groups which were disturbing the flow of trade to the coast, and infrequently Europeans had sought to start their own mining operations. The early nineteenth century had seen Dutch attempts at developing plantation agriculture as a substitute for the decline of the slave trade but European attempts generally at this form of productive activity had been half-hearted (2). As the years progressed trade was to take a different form. There was to be a gradual decline in the floating trade and an increase in the use of European forts as 'factories' (3). The former was a more lucrative occupation for London traders who placed European and East Indian goods in the care of a captain who exchanged them on the coast for gold and ivory from the interior. Most trade was to be carried out through the forts, however, and was dispersed among three trading houses (4).

- 
- (1) For the changing fortunes of the Dutch and their decline from the international stage, see I. Wallerstein, The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century, (London: Academic Press, 1974) and The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy, 1600-1750, (London: Academic Press, 1980).
- (2) E. Reynolds, 'The Rise and Fall of an African Merchant Class on the Gold Coast, 1830-1874', Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 54,14,1974a,p.253.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid, Messrs Forster and Smith, Swanzy and T. Hutton. See also, R.Howard, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana, (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

Trade through the forts came to dominate British contact with the Gold Coast until later in the century when the nature of earlier legitimate trade changed. Trade in the old staples of ivory and gold dominated legitimate trade until the start of the exploitation of palm oil, which was concentrated mainly on the Eastern side of the colony.

As one writer has said:

If ivory was the genesis of British legitimate trade, it was the expanding market for palm oil which permitted the rapid growth and which occurred in the first decades of the nineteenth century (1).

It was not long, however, before competition for this product from other colonies outweighed the benefit to British industrialists of the Gold Coast trade:

By mid nineteenth century ... the silent imperialism of the steamship was beginning to bring vegetable oils and substitute products from other continents besides Africa (2).

Technological innovation, the development of other colonies, and later colonial rivalry all added to a change in the emphasis and direction of British contact with the Gold Coast. As we have already discussed it took a long time for industrial interests to prevail themselves upon the British government to ensure that the Gold Coast possessions be kept, and indeed expanded. Arguably, merchant pressure alone at the turn of the century ensured the continued British presence in the territory (3). By the end of the nineteenth century contact

---

(1) George E. Brooks, Jr, Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African Middlemen: A history of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century, African Research Studies No. 11, (Boston University Press 1970), p. 15.

(2) Hopkins, op. cit., p.131.

(3) Compare D. Coombs, The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands 1850-74 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) pp.3-4 and the suggestion that British presence on the Gold Coast was due solely to humanitarian feeling and not commercial interest.

with the Gold Coast was to take the form of increased colonial government assistance to merchant traders (working on behalf of industrial interests in Britain) to gain access to land for concessions to work for gold and agricultural products. These latter developments are the focus for the following two chapters. Here we can concentrate on a transitional period where more use was made of indigenous groups in facilitating trade inland. We can then look at the consolidation of this phase of British colonial contact before looking specifically at the developments within Asante at this time.

The emergence of an indigenous class of merchants on the Gold Coast has been traced elsewhere (1). Our concern is with the impact that the development of legitimate trade had upon developments already underway on the coast namely the effect of the presence of groups of African merchants. What was the result for the indigenous power holders of a group of African merchants linked more closely with the European traders on the coast? And what was the relation between European and African traders? African merchants were not new on the coast (2). The difference, however, between the African merchants of the nineteenth century compared with the Merchant Princes of the seventeenth and eighteenth century was that the former were not simultaneously indigenous rulers and the trade was not geared solely to benefit the state (3).

Opportunity for the development of merchants rose with the Administration of Maclean who prompted the integration and direct

- 
- (1) Kwame Y. Daaku, Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600-1720, (London Oxford University Press, 1970), E. Reynolds (1974a), (1974b), op.cit., M. Priestley, op. cit.
- (2) See, Daaku op. cit., and references to Kabes and Kenny above, Chapters 2 and 3.
- (3) Reynolds, (1974a), op. cit., p. 254.

participation of Africans on the coast. Indigenous traders were usually the offspring of an European father and had links with traditional powerholders. They also were educated to a higher level of learning than other Africans (1). These individuals were given similar treatment and favours on trade as their European counterparts. They became essentially low cost importers and specialists acting as either independent wholesalers and retailers or as agents who sold goods on commission for manufacturing firms in Europe (2). The role of credit in these transactions was essential and worked both ways. Not only did the Africans receive goods from Europe before making payment for them but European trading houses often received Gold Coast exports before financial transactions sealed the exchange. There were of course difficulties with the extension of credit. The result of a series of defaults by African merchants who preferred to invest their credit in conspicuous consumption, rather than buying more produce, led to the passing of a bankruptcy law in 1858. Despite these difficulties European merchant houses recognised the need to use local African merchants in the distribution and sale of western products. Greater opportunities for trade, provided by increased European contact and the development of trading houses on the coast, added to the number of African merchants drawn into international trade. The numbers of small scale African traders also rose with the advent of the African steamship Company in 1852 which helped increase the tonnage of West African shipping from 57,000 tons in 1854 to 504,000 in 1874 (3).

---

(1) Reynolds (1974b), op. cit.

(2) Hopkins, op. cit., Chapter 4. Some of these Africans who received goods on credit in the Maclean period from London were George Blankson Sr, and R.J. Gharthey, Reynolds (1974a), op.cit., p. 254.

(3) Reynolds, (1974b), op. cit.

The greater accessibility to trade in European goods, and the African traders to help facilitate this was accompanied by increased development of another social group in the mid nineteenth century. This was the group of so called 'educated' Africans which were to become a significant force for Gold Coast nationalism towards the end of the century. The educated African, often in fact with little formal education, frequently overlapped with the group of African merchants (1). They were the product usually of a Mission School and often sought jobs linked with European trade and consequently were grouped around the major towns of Cape Coast and Accra.

The increased importance of these two groups had a direct bearing upon the declining power of chiefs and elders. Inroads into the power of chiefs and elders followed disruption initiated by colonialism and the decline of the slave trade but:

whatever vestiges of the traditional rulers economic power and political influence remained by the middle of the nineteenth century were eclipsed by the emerging indigenous merchants (2).

The increase in the importance of indigenous merchants marked a hastening of the transformation of the African economies; from one where wealth accumulated by chiefs was located in their position as traditional stool holders, to an economy where positions of power and high regard became based upon individual assimilation of money wealth. One writer has summarised this transformation:

In Gold Coast society in old times, status was either inherited or attained by political skills, rhetorical eloquence, diplomatic ability or military prowess. By the middle of the nineteenth century

---

(1) The development of an 'educated elite' is discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

(2) Reynolds, (1974b), op.cit., p.118.

status was achieved through the creation of wealth by trade and production for market by a group whose commercial and political interests frequently overlapped (1).

The erosion of chiefly power is one of the most crucial transformations to occur in the period of colonial contact and we return to it in detail later (2). By way of linking the issues of the early nineteenth century with those that followed, however, we have begun here to draw out the increased differentiation of indigenous groups. The development of African merchants as a separate group from chiefs and elders was both prompted by and in turn helped further facilitate the expansion of European trade on the Gold Coast. Accompanying the European merchants' trading activity on the coast was the attempt, as we have already briefly seen, by the colonial government to secure its own political and legitimate presence on the littoral.

It was not coincidental that the process of increased merchant activity in the trade of products from the forest belt and later the direct involvement in production occurred in tandem with the extension of British authority on the coast. Since 1846 (the abolition of the Corn Laws in England) there was a growing recognition of the need for certain forms of government intervention in maintaining and regulating the British political economy, the philosophy of laissez faire notwithstanding. This increased Government involvement also included generating and safeguarding British interests overseas especially in

- 
- (1) Ibid., p.256. See also, I. Wilks, 'The Golden Stool and the Elephant Tail: An Essay on Wealth in Asante', in, G. Dalton, (editor) Research in Economic Anthropology, Volume 2, (London: JAI Press, 1979), p.8.
- (2) The process of declining chiefly power is dealt with in depth in Chapters 5 and 6 below.



securing products necessary for capitalist industry in Britain. We can now see how the Crown consolidated its activities on the coast and laid the political and institutional groundwork for later formal colonisation of the territory.

(c) Consolidation of British Control on the Coast

The British consolidated their position on the Gold Coast by separating, for administrative purposes, the territory from Sierra Leone in 1850. In the same year the British purchased the Danish castles at Osu in Accra and three others at Ningo, Ada and Keta. The major benefit that this flurry of activity was thought to bring for the British was a better opportunity for the collecting of duties from trade. This was not successful, however, because the Dutch refused to impose customs duties at their castle at Elmina and thereby attracted greater amounts of trade to their ports where merchants could escape the costs of trading at British enclaves. Also in 1850 the British introduced a Legislative Council which had two merchant representatives. The most important development at this time in the British attempts to consolidate their position on the coast, and to sustain later colonial development, was the plan to collect revenue from Africans and thereby to develop a money economy. In 1852 a Poll Tax was introduced of 1/- a head for any man, woman and child (1). It was to be applied in the area known collectively as the Protectorate and Governor Hill had made a provisional estimate that it would raise £20,000 per annum from a population of 400,000.

The Secretary of State Lord Grey's explicit calculation behind

---

(1) For the detail, see, Kimble, op. cit., Chapter 4.

the Poll Tax was that sufficient funds could be raised for the indigenous groups to provide for their own amenities and development. The British regime on the coast wanted indigenous people to provide the services which would facilitate the further expansion of British trading interests. Couched in terms of making the Protectorate pay for itself, the underlying effect of the Poll Tax was to help monetarise the Gold Coast economy and thereby make it more open to the transactions of European capitalists.

The chiefs of the Gold Coast met in assemblies organised by the British in April 1852 at Accra and elsewhere. The British administrators wanted the chiefs to constitute themselves into a Legislative Assembly. This would be recognised by the British Government and would have "full powers to enact such laws as it shall deem fit for the better government of those countries" (1). By organising the chiefs together the British on the coast hoped to get the African leaders to identify with the need for direct taxation and indeed to make its collection easier (2). The British informed the chiefs that the latter should contribute to the running of the government. A Poll Tax was agreed by the British administrators to be: "the most productive, the least burdensome, and the most equitable" form of taxation (3).

Governor Hill saw the establishment of a Legislative Council for the chiefs as the best way of drawing the indigenous holders more closely into the direct running of the government while also increasing

---

(1) Ibid., p.172.

(2) This does not mean that there was unanimity among the colonial regime as to the prudence of establishing an assembly for the chiefs. Cruickshank and Bannerman, for example, feared the development and presence of large organised bands of armed men in the assembly. See, ibid, p. 171.

(3) Ibid, p. 173.

the revenue of the colony and minimising British expenditure (1). Governor Hill had grand plans for the building of schools and other projects with the revenue from the tax but these were to come to nothing. Although collection of the tax began well, £7,567 in the first years, by 1860 only £1,725 was collected (2). There were inefficiencies in the collection of the tax but also mounting opposition from Africans who saw no benefit from payments and who reacted against the imposition of British authority (3).

As the British sought to draw the Fante chiefs and traders more closely into the running of the colony (something more satisfactorily achieved by Governor Pine after 1857 (4), the coastal people became increasingly dissatisfied. This was particularly noticeable after the exchange of territories with the Dutch in 1867. Hitherto the British had defended the people of the Gold Coast against Asante incursions, in 1853 and 1863. In 1864, however, the Fante were told by the British that they were meant to look after their own defence more (5). When the British exchanged territories with the Dutch without informing or consulting the people of the Protectorate they made the inhabitants of the latter feel betrayed. The exchange with the Dutch ensured the tightening British grip on the coast to the east of Sweet River and avoided the "inconvenience of having Dutch and British forts mixed together"(6). There was, however, local unrest relating to increased

- 
- (1) A clearer indication as to the services which might be provided by the Poll Tax followed in an amendment to the Poll Tax Ordinance 1858.  
 (2) Reynolds (1974b), op.cit., Chapter 4.  
 (3) For example, the Christiansborg Rebellion, 1854.  
 (4) See, Kimble, op. cit., p. 183, about the development of district councils in Cape Coast, Accra and Anomabu and a treasury to receive collections of the Poll Tax in Accra and Cape Coast.  
 (5) For these important observations see Arhin, (1976) op.cit., pp.27-29.  
 (6) Ward, op. cit., p. 236. See map on page 224 for the situation of European forts on the coast.

British control of the coast. Opposition manifested itself in the Eastern part of the Protectorate to the Poll Tax. In 1854, the Ga town of Labadi had been bombarded and in 1858 the Krobo had been subjected to attack from the British and incurred a fine (1).

Accompanying the opposition to the Poll Tax was the objection by the chiefs to the continued erosion of their status, power and authority. Already, the increased power of indigenous merchants and their links with European merchant houses drew economic power away from traditional authority holders. The establishment of the Legislative Council by the British was meant in part to obviate this erosion of chiefly status but the accompanying legal changes imposed by the British hastened the fall in chiefly power (2). The chiefs complained to the British in 1864 about the establishment of British courts and imprisonment for trivial cases. The chiefs also complained about being tried in the same courts as their own subjects (3).

Aggrey, the chief of Cape Coast was deported after he complained about this levelling process, the independent status of his own court and the legal basis of the Protectorate (4).

The culmination of Fante opposition to the British at this time was the Fante Confederation (5). Although at first it received support from the British authorities because it drew together Fante chiefs and the educated elite it was later seen as a threat to British

- 
- (1) Arhin, (1976), op.cit., p.28. Objection to the collection of the Poll Tax had been established in the Western part of the territory as well.  
 (2) For an outline of the legal changes see Chapters 5 and 6 below.  
 (3) Arhin, (1976) op. cit., p. 29.  
 (4) Ibid.  
 (5) F. Agbodeka, African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast, 1868-1900: A study in the forms and force of protest, (London: Longman, 1971) and D. Kimble, op. cit., Chapter 6.

authority. The Fante Confederation represents a preview of the role that the educated elite were to play in the struggle against the British and as such highlights the contradictory effect which colonialism had upon indigenous groups. The colonial presence hastened the development of the educated elite which simultaneously acted to reduce the power of British colonialism.

The cession of the last remaining Dutch settlements to the British in 1872 prepared the way for later control of inland states. The Asante had always claimed a right to Elmina and on the withdrawal of the Dutch the Asante renewed their claim to the states of Assin, Denkyera and Akyem. With the demise of the Fante Confederacy, and thereby the coastal peoples plan of self defence against the Asante, the attitude of the British to extending their authority was modified. If the Fante could not satisfactorily defend themselves against Asante attack then the British, in the interest of preserving peace and existing trade routes should protect them. There was no better way to do this than to strike at the heart of the invading force within Asante itself. To this end the British invaded Asante in 1874 and imposed the Treaty of Fomena, whereby Asante dropped their claims over the coastal Akan and promised to keep open the trade routes to and from the coast and Kumase.

We have now traced briefly a number of the processes initiated and assisted by British contact and increased control on the Gold Coast in the early part of the nineteenth century. These processes included the extension of British jurisdiction on the coast especially in the vicinity of the trading forts. In developing British control the 'colonial' regime sought to bolster the power of chiefs so that the latter may be used as an arm of British trading interests. The outcome

of extended British involvement however, was the increased differentiation within indigenous groups and a decline in the power of the chiefs. We have also seen the early attempts by the British to establish on a firmer footing a monetised economy through the inauguration of direct taxation. Indigenous opposition to this form of collecting revenue ensured that direct taxation was not to be placed on the colonial administrators agenda again until the close of the century.

Our concern in this chapter has been mainly with the coastal Akan Fante groups and their reactions to colonial contact, and how colonial administrators coped with the complex of indigenous social groups. We can now turn to examine in more detail the nature of social processes underpinning developments in Asante. Were social processes that we have touched on above, resulting in a decline in chiefly authority and growth of alternative powerful indigenous groups occurring in the Asante forest kingdom too? What kind of indigenous social structures were these processes undermining?

### III SOCIAL CHANGE IN ASANTE

Asante history is probably one of the most fully documented in Africa (1). As such we do not need here to recount in detail the events of the nineteenth century. Our focus is on two of the most interesting issues underpinning nineteenth century Asante which will help clarify the impact of the British presence upon indigenous society,

---

(1) Recent work includes inter alia: Ivor Wilks, Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of Political Order, (Cambridge: University Press 1975), Thomas J. Lewin, Asante 'Before the British: The Prempean Years, 1875-1900 (Kansas: The Regents Press, Lawrence, 1978), William Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs, 1888-1935 (London: Oxford University Press 1965), T.C. McCaskie, 'Office, Land and Subjects in the History of the Manware Fekuo of Kumase: An Essay in the Political Economy of the Asante State', JAH 21, 1980, and 'State and Society Marriage and Adultery: Some Considerations Towards A History of Pre Colonial Asante', JAH, 22, 1981.

and which will help us assess the transitions within the nature of colonial contact. The first of these issues to be examined is the accuracy of the premise upon which Asante political culture is said to have been based before European contact: the ideas of assimilation, classlessness and egalitarianism (1). We need to understand the validity of these characterisations of pre-colonial Asante society before examining the social processes at work during the period of European contact. The second theme we raise here is an assessment of the divisions which emerged within Asante in the nineteenth century as to the most appropriate form of Asante expansion: whether it should be based upon military endeavour to satisfy the demands of Asante power holders (imperialist) or whether the prosperity of Asante should be founded upon trade and commerce without the aid of militarism (mercantilism) (2).

(a) Pre-colonial Asante

The background to early Asante state formation has already been traced (3). So too has the nature of early social relations within Asante from which we concluded that Asante society was dominated by chiefly control of commoners, women and slaves.

Thomas McCaskie has suggested that there was a temporal correlation between the establishment of an agrarian Asante society and the emergence of chiefdoms which became "forged into the componential elements of an increasingly complex state centred on Kumase" (4). The

---

(1) This discussion is based around the two recent articles by McCaskie, (1980) and (1981), op. cit.

(2) For this division of interests see Wilks (1975), op. cit.

(3) See Chapters 1 and 3 above.

(4) McCaskie, (1981), op. cit., pp. 483-484.

demands for food and the ecological difficulties of sustaining agricultural production led, he asserts, to a number of accepted principles underpinning Asante relations of production. These were principles of cooperation and mutual assistance, consensual decision making and the right to arbitration, fraternity and sorority hospitality derived initially from the transactional needs of the work group, but since enshrined as the ideal or ur-parameters of folk behaviour (1).

The ability to produce food in the hostile environment of the forest also lay the terrain for what has been recognised as 'primordial' Asante perceptions of life as struggle (2). The antagonistic and inimical 'natural' surroundings of the forest needed to be subjected to demands of the Akan people; this could only be achieved by establishing the precepts above, but also by establishing a society of plentiful supplies of food: a society based upon maximisation and abundance which denied the forest its dominance over people (3).

The crucial point about this last observation is that attempts to maximise the production of forest products can lead to accumulation which as a social process may also result in social differentiation. There is here then a possible disjuncture and conflict between early Asante 'ideology' of communality, cooperation and fraternity and the patterns of accumulation which emanated from the material need to wrest from the forest the conditions to sustain life. It is this irreconcilable tendency "towards an equalising co-

---

(1) Ibid, p. 484.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Asante's recognition of the forest as a harsh environment becomes enshrined in ideology as a spiritual threat see, ibid, and R.S.Rattray, The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland (London: Oxford University Press 1932).



operation and a differentiating accumulation ... contained within the same ideology" that has been seen as "perhaps the fundamental fact of Asante history" (1).

This last point becomes clearer when we introduce the Asante state into our discussions. The Asante state (2) sustained the logically contradictory ideology relating to accumulation and assimilation, it resulted from, but also orchestrated the differentiation between and among the Asante's. The state elevated the processes of differentiation through the notion of the 'good citizen' (okaniba) which was based upon an individual's, (male), ability to accumulate wealth in land, gold dust and people (3). This accumulation of wealth was carefully monitored and sanctioned by the state so the power holders of the latter could not be too quickly or readily displaced. The Asante state raised the position of Kumase above that of the rest of Asante and in so doing distanced itself from the reality of village life (4). The state became a benefactor which had in its power the conferment of office and status increasingly regarded as desirable by Asante ideology. The state also had the right to facilitate access to trade; it had the power of taxation and was the mediator of a growing market in land and people (5). All these factors added to the internal dynamic within Asante towards a hierarchical society which

---

(1) McCaskie, (1981), op. cit., p. 485.

(2) See below

(3) McCaskie, (1981), op. cit., p.486, and (1980) op. cit., p.192. This was taken further with the 'ahenkwa ethic' - ie a ruling ideology "of competition, achievement accumulation and maximisation" McCaskie (1980) op. cit., p.487. Wealth in people did not simply mean slaves but also women. For this important point and discussion of matriliney in Asante see, McCaskie, (1981) op. cit., and Chapter 1 above. McCaskie argues the point convincingly that the accumulation of women became an indicator of differentiation "being qualitatively a prerogative of those participating in the power of the state" ibid, p.487. See also, I.Wilks (1979) op. cit.

(4) This separation of Kumase as the seat of power from greater Asante was to sow the seed for later unrest.

(5) McCaskie (1980), op. cit., p. 192.

had its apex in Kumase the seat of the power of the Asantehene, his elders and councillors and the subjects in greater Asante.

In contrast to the premise of communality and cooperation there developed an increasing differentiation centred around the role of the Asante state which was the agency that directed the struggle for survival against the 'natural' elements; but simultaneously enhanced the position of office holders above those of commoners in Asante.

The mechanisms of the Asante state were already established when the British became more concerned with pushing northwards into the hinterland. Indeed, the practices of the Asante state through its involvement in trade and the military forays of expansion, drew the attention of the British and the recognition by the latter of the need to disrupt many of the affairs of the Kumase hierarchy which were detrimental to British commercial gain. An Anglo-Asante treaty of 1831, for example, ended the hostilities of 1824 and 1826 between the two powers. The treaty served to consolidate British control over many areas previously recognised as within the domain of the Asante government (1). In return the British guaranteed Asante commercial access to Gold Coast coastal ports. As we will see in a moment, the development of different interests within Asante, especially following British interference in Asante affairs on the coast, led to innumerable internal disputes. Accompanying the ascendancy of the 'war' party in Asante during the 1870's were heavy debts, food shortages, the closure of trade routes and heavy taxation (2). In sustaining a war footing the Asantehene, Kofo Kakari, imposed

---

(1) Lewin, op.cit., p.42. Asante relinquished control over Accra, Adangme, Ahanta, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akyem, Aowin, Denkyira, Fante, Sehwi, Twifo and Wassa.

(2) Ibid, p. 45.

stringent measures on commoners who opposed the moves of war. The resulting defeat by the British in 1874 led the latter to support a centralised government in Kumase but ensured a fragmented and disjointed relationship between the Asante capital and its metropolitan areas.

On the one hand relations with Asante eroded the power of some chiefs in the attempt to encourage a greater freedom for all in trade. On the other hand the power of chiefs in the Protectorate were enhanced as long as an anti Kumase stance was adopted. As one writer has suggested:

The British, therefore, strove to maintain the integrity of the Asante Nation and keep the central government strong but intended to make absolutely certain that it never regained its earlier nineteenth century power (1).

The development of the Asante state was marked by a number of constraints imposed by office holders upon commoner participation in trade, and the purchase of commodities. This did not occur without a number of conflicts. Now that we have traced briefly two theses about some of the underpinnings to the development of the state we can look in more detail at the broad conflicts which emerged within the Asante in the nineteenth century. We will then continue in the concluding chapters to assess the impact of colonial presence in the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

(b) Pressures for Mercantilism and Imperialism in Asante.

(i) The factions

Two major pressure groups existed within the nineteenth century Asante social formation. Groups which sought Asante development through

---

(1) Ibid, p. 52.

war or peaceful means have been labelled imperialist and mercantilist respectively (1). The existence of these two groups was recognised as early as 1820 by Dupuis (2) and have been seen recently to have reflected serious political divisions within Asante society. The peace group, for example, was identified more specifically with mercantilist policies of expanding trade through the medium of the state while the war party subscribed to imperialist policies of expansion, where the role of the state was seen to lie more directly in the control of occupied territory and the appropriation of tribute.

Support for these two strategies for Asante development varied throughout the nineteenth century. They serve as an indicator of class forces and pressures for change from within and outside the forest kingdom. For example, at the turn of the nineteenth century we are told that the war party was on the ascendency in Kumase and was enhancing its position for maritime trade in slaves. When the abolition of the slave trade became effective, however, enthusiasm waned within Asante for the continual military endeavour in the Southern Provinces, which often provided the slaves for export to the Caribbean (3). As one writer has commented:

The decline in the maritime markets for slaves ... had the effect of making warfare less profitable and therefore less popular and the dominant position which the peace interest enjoyed in council between 1826 and 1863 was undoubtedly predicated in some measure upon this fact (4).

- 
- (1) I. Wilks, 'Dissidence in Asante Politics: Two Tracts from the Late Nineteenth Century', IAS Mimeo, University of Ghana, Legon 1974.  
 (2) J. Dupuis, Journal of a Residence in Ashante, (London: Cass, 1966).  
 (3) Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 680.  
 (4) Ibid., p. 681. The cost of continued military endeavours also mounted and was taken note of. See, ibid.

Although the imperialist faction came to the fore for a short while in the 1870's, developments in the nineteenth century Asante political economy were based essentially around attempts to sustain trade; based less on the sale of people and more on the trade in the products of the forest and its environs, resulting from increasing European demand on the coast. Yet this greater concentration upon 'legitimate' trade and production was to be channelled through the Asante state as the leading actor in commerce, its representatives receiving the protection of the state from the competition of private traders.

Increased contact with British traders on the coast raised the demand within Asante for a relaxation of the state monopoly of trade and the control of trade routes. Entrepreneurs within Asante, especially during the 1870's and 1880's, responded to greater demand on the coast for products of the forest like gold, kola, rubber and palm oil. Unlike previous traders closely associated with the state, the new group of asikafo (men of wealth) began to insist on a separation of trade from the state and a reduction in government taxation. Thus:

Asante's increasing participation in the world market and the development of new commercial activities in the metropolitan region constituted a major threat to the centralised economic power and control of the Asantehene's government in Kumase (1).

We need here to explore how this trend in the formation of a new class, and the ensuing conflict over the state and trade related to the 'policy' conflict between the 'war' and 'peace' parties within the state.

---

(1) Lewin, op.cit., p. 53.

A state monopoly of trade in Asante had not been welcomed by Dupuis, a European representative in Kumase who wanted to see greater numbers of Akan traders on the coast. To this end Dupuis urged the Asantehene Osei Bonsu, in 1820, to open trade to all Asante's rather than restrict trade transactions to those linked with the state. The argument used was that if this was done the Asantehene could raise the states' revenue by imposing a tax on all transactions. Osei Bonsu's reply was that "only kings and great men" trade in Asante (1). Another early European representative in Kumase, Bowditch, noted that the Asantehene's advisers had fears that a free for all in trade would inevitably develop a class of private entrepreneurs, something which we have noted was already occurring. The apprehension among Asante office holders was that profit alone would become the overriding concern of a class of traders while the nation's security would suffer. Moreover, "an uncontrolled merchant class would in time present a revolutionary threat to the chiefly establishment" (2). As Bowditch put it:

were they (the chiefs) to encourage commerce, pomp, the idol of which they are most jealous, would soon cease to be their prerogative, because it would be attainable by others; the traders, growing wealthy, would vie with them ... they would unite to repress the arbitrary power of the aristocracy (3).

Fearful of increased encroachment upon stately prerogatives of trade the Asantehene often used 'foreign' Muslim, rather than local

- 
- (1) Dupuis, op. cit., p. 167. See also, Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 685.  
 (2) Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 685.  
 (3) Bowditch, quoted in Wilks, ibid, pp. 685-686. For a detailed account of the development of the changes which Bowditch suggested were imminent see, Reynolds, (1974b), op. cit., especially Chapters 1-3 and for the development of African merchants Chapter 4; see also Reynolds (1974a), op. cit.

traders in Asante. Already, however, the seeds were sown through the development of the State Trading Company, (Bata Fekuo), for an increasingly more dominant group of traders to erode the powers of traditional authority holders (1). Traders in the Bata Fekuo were to use their privileged position within the state to develop opportunities for autonomous trading activities.

The dominant group in the Asante social formation (2) at the turn of the nineteenth century was a faction of chiefs and elders which represented interests for trade, through the organisation of the state and indigenous merchant capital, as opposed to those concerned with imperialist military expansion to safeguard the Asante Empire.

As the European presence on the coast increased and the nature of the contact changed from a demand for slaves back to a demand for gold and in the new direction of legitimate trade, additional pressures were brought to bear on the Asante state. These pressures were in the form of an increasing demand by Europeans for locally produced agricultural products, while leaving in Asante an excess number of slaves for which no immediate occupation could be found (3).

The official demise of the Atlantic slave trade did not mean that trading in slaves stopped completely. Slavery as such was not officially outlawed in the Gold Coast Colony until 1874 and until

---

(1) Wilks (1979), op. cit. calls this a bourgeoisie.

(2) Of course there were more than two groups in Asante as a whole - commoners, slaves, women etc. The two factions discussed here refer to the principle pressures on the state.

(3) Asantehene Opoku Frere commented in 1817 that there were too many slaves in the country and that they were a threat to public order. See, Wilks (1975), op. cit.

that date, and after, slavery and unfree relations of production persisted. Many of the slaves found work in the Gold Coast where there was a shortage of unskilled labour in and around European trading areas but many also continued to be exchanged on northern trade routes. Paradoxically there seems to have been an actual increase in slavery despite abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade in 1807 (1). The reasons for the end of the international slave trade were to satisfy the changing European demands for produce instead of labour (2). There was also the recognition following the transition to free wage labour in Europe that greater commercial benefit could be gained from employing labour power in the colony rather than ship it elsewhere to work on plantations (3). There was a gap in the time between the official ending of the slave trade and the development of alternative supplies of commodities to the Europeans on the coast. One reason for this resulted from the encouragement which the international slave trade had given to indigenous society to adapt to structures which facilitated the capture, trade and exploitation of slaves. Moreover, "the demand for tropical products made the exploitation of slave labour ... increasingly more remunerative" (4). Slave labour was set to work on plantations in Asante for example (5). Bowditch commented that slaves were used:

to create plantations in the more remote and stubborn tracts; from which their labour was first to produce appropriate supply to the household of their chief,

- 
- (1) M.Klein, 'The Study of Slavery in Africa: A Review Article', JAH, 19, 4, 1978.
- (2) For a fuller discussion see Chapter 3 above and Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1981).
- (3) As we have seen above, early European attempts at developing indigenous forms of production and trade on plantations, for example, were not successful. Benefits from putting indigenous labour to work instead of shipping it overseas are not reaped until later. See Chapters 5 & 6 below.
- (4) M.A. Klein, op. cit., p. 13.
- (5) Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 93 and Lewin, op.cit., pp.61-63.



and afterwards an existence for themselves (1).

Slaves were used in most aspects of nineteenth century Asante life. Much of the newly developing wealth among the asikafo was used to purchase slaves. But as we saw earlier, together with commoners, slaves created a part of the wealth for they constituted a section of the labour force. Slaves were used to clear forests and to plant and raise crops on plantations and farms which provided a supply of food to towns and villages (2). The largest plantations were worked by slaves of the Asantehene in and around Kumase. The market for this agricultural produce was essentially the royal household. Slaves also continued to be used in the mining of royal gold fields, and ivory collection. Slave labour was, moreover, invaluable in carrying the products of the newly lucrative local production of palm oil and kola to the Europeans on the coast.

In all these activities and others too, slaves were put to work following the end of the Atlantic slave trade. Some of the supplies of unfree labour went northwards. The rest were, after time absorbed, perhaps as domestic slaves, into newly commercial agricultural production. European demand for produce, palm oil, food stuffs and later rubber, all added to the importance to Britain of securing trade links with the Asante. The people in Asante to benefit most, and at first, from the change in nature of European contact with the hinterland

---

(1) Bowditch, quoted in Wilks (1975), op. cit., p. 52. See also Arhin's brief discussion of plantations in 'The Impact of Europe: Traditional Societies and the Constraints of Colonial Rule: The Pressures of Cash and its Political Consequences in Asante in the Colonial period 1900-1940'. African Studies Association, U.K. Conference, Mimeo September 1974, p.44. There was also a third reason why the presence of slavery did not decline immediately and this was because the Asante were continually improving their weapons and techniques of capture.

(2) Lewin, op. cit., p.61, see also Chapter 3 above.

were those linked directly with the apparatuses of the state: the Asantehene and his councillors and those Asantes seeking to attain higher status through stately recognition of trading and wealth accumulating achievements. The channels to achieve the latter in the first quarter of the nineteenth century were few. The Company of State Traders had the protection from commoner trade. The Asantehene Osei Bonsu, in 1816 and 1817, persuaded European merchants on the Gold Coast to give preferential treatment to the company thereby reducing the threat of competition from private entrepreneurs (1).

Although the ideology of Asante was therefore for everyone to seek wealth, the Asantehene protected his own trading interests and those of some of his councillors and chiefs against competition. The Company of Traders had similar assistance in trading northwards where the Asantehene would close roads at the beginning of a trading season until the state traders had taken advantage of the prevailing high prices in the northern markets. The Asante state also established its own markets where trading transactions occurred.

The Asante state here is seen as the "hierarchy of power holders and their councils and also the groups of asomfo, functionaries who were authority holders" (2). Sections of these established the policy for the state traders. Specifically the company revived guidelines from two legislative councils; the territorially representative

- 
- (1) Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p.689. Despite this many people traded to the coast saying they were the Asantehene's representatives when they were not. Osei Bonsu was later to insist that Europeans traded only with those Asante's who had his cane or a letter of introduction, ibid. For detailed discussion of the organisation of the Bata Fekuo see Wilks, ibid., and Lewin, op.cit.
- (2) K. Arhin, 'State intervention in the Asante Economy', Universitas, 3, 3, New Series, 1974c, p.40. Hierarchy of power holders ranges from heads of councils, adekrofo, village chiefs or headmen, abrempon or ahene, see ibid.

Asantemanhyiamu and the metropolitan based Council of Kumase. The Bata Fekuo also received specific instructions from the Exchequer in Kumase, the Gyaasewahene and his staff (1). The Asante state and its power holders thus controlled the majority of trading transactions in the mid nineteenth century but in the process set in train a series of contradictions which came to threaten the supremacy of its tendency to monopolise trade.

These contradictions were based around the increased provision for individuals within the state apparatuses to accumulate wealth and become rich men (asikafo) (2). The opportunity for accumulation, enshrined within the ideology of Asante society, increased as first; contact with the British extended and second, disquiet mounted among the asikafo because of the dominance of the Asante state in trading concerns. This disquiet was reflected in a groundswell of support from sections of the Asante ruling class for the imperial ideology. Many rich men who managed to accumulate wealth through trade whether surreptitiously or through their position in the stately hierarchy still recognised the need to finance the army if Asante was to remain intact.

Mid nineteenth century developments facilitated an increasingly powerful group of individuals with interests divergent from the pursuit of state directed mercantilism. Members of the company of state traders began to accumulate wealth in their own right. Early in the nineteenth century the company sent representatives to the coast and purchased commodities with monies (or forest produce) covered by the

---

(1) This is discussed in detail in Wilks, (1975), op. cit., and Wilks, (1974), op. cit.

(2) Wilks, (1979), op. cit.

Gyaasewahene (head of Exchequer personnel) and the Asante treasury (1). However, towards the end of the mid nineteenth century period the agents of the Company became a class of financiers, utilising loan capital provided by the Treasury but also their own resources to generate profit for the government and for themselves (2). More and more state representatives began to accumulate individual wealth which was also facilitated by the demand for new cash crops on the coast (3). Individuals working for the company traded more and more on their own account. In so doing, however, they were confronted by the monopoly of the state. Moreover, attempts by the wealthy class to transmit after their death, whatever monies or goods they accumulated while alive were frustrated by a whole series of state restrictions (4). The working together of the asikafo within the state company increased their recognition of a common interest. This was to throw off the yoke of mercantilism and to increase the freedom to trade on their own initiatives free from the oppressive burden of the state.

The whole nature of the Asante 'mercantilist system' was based upon the role of the state (and the prerogative (class position) of the Asantehene) in accumulation rather than in an individual's ability to accumulate. One such trusted method of the asikafo was the system of taxation. Taxes were put on hoards of gold dust, on slaves purchased for sale on the coast, on ivory, on the permitted increase in the number

---

(1) Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 700.

(2) Ibid.

(3) For discussion of these opportunities for wealth namely rubber and cocoa, see Chapter 6 below.

(4) We discuss some of these, namely death duties. On one occasion an asikafo, a wealthy Asante trader, tried to invest 170 ounces of gold, worth approximately £600, with a company in Cape Coast in 1881. The trader was discovered by the Asantehene and condemned to death. See, Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p.701 and (1979), op. cit.

of gold ornaments and of course the state was entitled to all gold nuggets (1). Opposition to these taxes had been present before but this took on an added dimension in the 1850's when death duties, and thus the failure of the asikafo to transmit their wealth after death, became a particular point of contention.

The rising groups of traders found greater scope to accumulate their own riches on the accession to power in 1863 of the war party. Asantehene, Kofi Kakari, tried to reduce the mounting bureaucratic nature of the state by encouraging private traders (2). War and subsequent defeat by the British in 1874 however, ensured the end of the brief return of the imperial power bloc in Asante. The deficit spending and erosion of trade plunged Asante into crisis. The new Asantehene, Mensa Bonsu, initiated a programme of 'modernisation' of the Asante infrastructure. The institutional structures of the state were to be transformed and a state bureaucracy to be rationalised. Infrastructural changes were to include the development of a professional civil service, a number of European expatriate advisers and a new armed police force known as the Hausa Regiment (3). These new reforms were expensive and necessitated increased taxation which began once more to alienate the rich. Such was the disquiet generated by the increase that the 1880's saw bloody internal conflicts within Asante (4).

---

(1) This list comes from Arhin, (1974), op. cit., p. 50. See also Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 701.

(2) Wilks, (1975), op. cit., p. 702.

(3) On the nature of the reforms and professionalisation - ascendancy to state positions by merit rather than lineage membership - see, I. Wilks, 'Aspects of Bureaucratisation in Ashanti in the Nineteenth Century', JAH 7, 2, 1966. See also, G.P. Hagan, 'Ashanti Bureaucracy: A Study of the Growth of Centralised Administration in Ashanti from the time of Osei Tutu to the time of Osei Tutu Kwamina Esike Bonsu', T.H.S.G., 12, 1971.

(4) For the detail see, Wilks (1975), op. cit.

In brief, the turmoil which developed into civil war in Asante in 1880 was prompted by independent trader opposition to the reforms of the state. Private trading had become more possible and profitable among sections of state representatives in the 1870's. This was especially notable in the newly productive export crop of rubber. Indeed, it has been suggested that it was the traders involved in rubber production which prompted the coup of 1883. This coup unseated Mensa Bonsu from the Golden Stool and opened up the possibility for Twerebana to seek the position of Asantehene (1). After much unrest a group of office holders seeking to renew a mercantile system of commerce were reinstated. On this last occasion the drive for mercantilism was assisted even more by the state, so much so that for one writer the Asante political economy took on the character of state capitalism:

By the last decade of the nineteenth century the Administration which was firmly in power in Asante was committed to policies which ultimately - through the catalytic participation of European money and skills - would have transformed the old mercantile system into essentially a state capitalist one (2).

(ii) Asante and the British - An Introduction

The above sketch of developments within Asante in the nineteenth century has three purposes. First, we have sought to show the kind of life which existed in Asante prior to European contact and that indigenous society had its own dynamic and conflicts. In this way we have built upon our earlier discussions about the early contact Akan and Asante social formations (3). Specifically, we have discussed in this chapter the principle, essentially an ideology, on which Asante culture has been said to be based.

---

(1) Wilks, (1974), op. cit.

(2) Ibid., p.9.

(3) See Chapters One and Three above.

Second, we have examined a number of contradictions and class conflicts which emerged during the nineteenth century to upset the ideological rhetoric that Asante society was characterised by egalitarianism and classlessness. We have used the two policy categories and pressures for 'mercantilism' and 'imperialism' as indicators of more deep seated class conflicts within nineteenth century Asante. By examining the nature of support for these two options of Asante expansion we have uncovered the demand for an opening of state trade, by state traders themselves, who wanted to trade on their own behalf without obstruction from the state. Finally, we have alluded to the fact that though we have stressed the need to examine indigenous developments within Asante, these cannot in any account of the area in the nineteenth century be separated completely from the European endeavours on the coast. Indeed, we have shown that it is not only necessary to recognise the existence of indigenous class conflicts and developments in understanding the process of Asante's incorporation into a world economy, but that we need to plot also the class conflicts within British colonialism before we can adequately assess the outcome of the contact between Asante and Britain on the coast.

Asante ideology which put increasing emphasis on the need for individual accumulation helped fuel, and was in turn fuelled by, the greater chance for such accumulation when the Europeans on the coast increased trading activities there and sought to extract in greater quantity the produce of the forest region. European contact also added great strains to the indigenous political economy. By facilitating greater amounts of trade between the coast and Asante, the Europeans strengthened the Asante state but also added to dissensions between the ranks of Asante power holders. The British sought to get the added

benefit from peaceful trading with the Asante but were dissatisfied with the restrictions placed upon trade by the Asantehene. As such the British were not averse to assisting the erosion of chiefly dominance of trade wherever possible, even if this meant in 1877 a wholesale invasion of Asante. This practice of colonial interference with internal class conflicts was common on the Gold Coast and became increasingly so in Asante, especially later in the nineteenth century when the Asante refused to accept Protectorate status from the British (1).

British policy towards Asante was unpredictable. During the Asante civil war the British had not allowed an Asante government in exile to use the Gold Coast colony as a base. Now that the Asantehene Prempe I, was seeking to reintroduce a concerted policy of mercantilism, which was to directly benefit specific concession companies, the British undermined the Asante state. It is possible that the British were fearful of an uncoordinated number of concessions going to unscrupulous companies without British vetting. The British were certainly unsure about the developments in Asante which might once more have flared up into violence and made trade with the coast difficult. As a result, the British withdrew their recognition of Asante Prempe as Asantehene of the whole Asante Empire and were later, in 1900, following the Yaa Asantewaa war to impose their own nominees as the head of the Asante. We look below at more of the issues surrounding this war, but it should be noted that the British took great advantage of opposition groups within Asante that opposed the rationalisation of the Asante state.

---

(1) The offer of Protectorate status was refused in 1888, 1891 and 1894. See Wilks, (1974) op. cit.



From a tentative start at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in initiating cash crop production and establishing clearer guidelines for colonial control, the British marked the end of the century with the occupation of Asante. Britain had established a firm footing on the coast and began to impose British juridical precepts in daily transactions there. By the 1890's the rush for concessions and the purchase of land had begun inland. This had been started apprehensively by the Dutch before them but British companies sought easier access to land which contained gold and the possibility of establishing European productive activities inland. The Asante obliged the earliest of these traders, most notably with the Herivel and Reckless Concession in 1892 and 1895 respectively. Both these agreements were made by the Asante government seeking a quarter of the net profits from the latter, and cooperation in establishing machinery and industry in Asante from the former. The Asante, together with the Akan in the western region were to realise that this new phase of colonial presence, where Europeans sought to work the land directly and establish plant and machinery, was to pose more difficult problems for them than the preceding period of colonial backing of legitimate trade.

Now that we have traced in outline the period of transition to formal colonialism on the Gold Coast, and the increased incursion into Asante, we can focus in our concluding two chapters upon the impact of Britain's attempts at consolidating its rule by introducing more rigorously the requirements of capitalist production.

APPENDIX I TO CHAPTER FOUR

Recorded Trade to Europe and North America from Cape Coast and Accra for the Period 1831-1840.

	<u>CAPE COAST</u>		
	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>
1831	£130,851	3s 11½d	£ 90,282 9s 6d
1832	£188,067	7s	£181,104
1833	£151,439	12s 4d	£124,147 10s
1834	£181,262	5s 7d	£182,737
1835	£175,985	3s 9d	£171,705 10s 3d
1836	£243,023		£174,832 10s 3d
1837	£264,990		£122,703
1838	£159,405		£124,207 5s 7d
1839	£354,460		£194,576 19s 1d
1840	£423,170		£325,008
	<u>ACCRA</u>		
	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>
1831	No returns		No returns
1832	£23,716	5s**	£62,474**
1833	£61,607	10s	£73,613 5s
1834	£18,359	16s 9d**	£87,299 10s**
1835	£20,638**		£12,435**
1836	£24,986**		£52,311**
1837	£28,957	6s 5½d**	£ 5,062 12s 10½d*
1838	No returns		£66,450 10s*
1839	No returns		No returns
1840	£65,000 to	£70,000	£85,000 to £95,000

\* For a three-month period      \*\* For a six-month period

Source: Adapted from E. Reynolds, (1974b) op. cit., p. 88.

APPENDIX II TO CHAPTER FOUR

Return of Exports 1827-1841

<u>Year</u>	<u>Barwood</u> tons	<u>Camwood</u> tons	<u>Coffee</u> lb	<u>Ebony</u> tons	<u>Guinea</u> <u>Grains</u> lb	<u>Gum</u> <u>Animi</u> <u>Zopat</u> cwt	<u>Palm</u> <u>Oil</u> cwt	<u>Pepper</u> lb	<u>Red or</u> <u>Guinea</u> <u>Wood</u> tons	<u>Rice</u> cwt	<u>Ginger</u> cwt	<u>Teeth,</u> <u>Elephant</u> cwt	<u>Teak</u> <u>Wood</u> loads	<u>Bees-</u> <u>wax</u> cwt	<u>Hides,</u> <u>un-</u> <u>tanned</u> cwt
1827	13	13	15,581	41	12,306	36	4,962	85				312		19	
1828			14,017	3	1,603	2	7,351	4		264		280		6	
1829					5,302	5	7,002	1,000				640			
1830		17		29	15,283	2	13,575	29,071	1			595	200		
1831	313		12,265	107	6,415	17	16,750	3,914		952		1,069	25	40	
1832	5	33		1	39,896	11	16,544	568				409		18	
1833	16	78	42,814		84,403	105	25,599	64	47	135		719		19	
1834	160	215	68,797	16	31,408	62	21,485	174	136			787		44	
1835	50	136	33,317	2	31,592	163	19,008	2,432				714	3	55	
1836	214	28	25,856	8	32,574	360	22,042	8,231	1	23		732	4	172	2
1837	82	220	130,949	58	6,241	2	21,986	5				451	3	16	
1838	335	84	64,696	70		9	35,673					615	34	12	
1839	208	75	2,994	3	16,635	7	40,332	5				609		16	
1840	276	70	58	53	13,351	34	46,778	6			1	938		77	
1841	170	175		10	6,482	81	42,745					851		72	

Source: Adapted from E. Reynolds, (1974b) op. cit., p. 94.

APPENDIX III TO CHAPTER FOUR

Principal Exports from the Gold Coast 1850-1862

Year	Gold oz	Gold £	Ivory tons	Ivory £	Palm Oil tons	Palm Oil £	Gum £	Monkey Skins £	Guinea Grains £	Ground- nuts £
1850	40,670	146,412	20	-	3,035	45,185	-	1,900	-	500
1851	46,000	175,600	13	-	1,464	39,500	1,900	-	-	-
1852	-	129,588	4	-	900	23,400	312	-	-	-
1853	10,000	36,000	142	-	1,750	70,000	3,000	-	-	-
1854	22,834	82,202	48	2,000	2,400	115,000	800	-	-	-
1855	-	33,104	-	1,000	-	80,000	1,721	-	700	2,068
1856	-	59,360	-	1,984	-	54,571	390	-	922	2,420
1857	-	68,913	-	1,538	-	50,402	1,250	-	174	38
1858	24,044	96,139	-	1,952	5,612	55,388	426	-	144	349
1859	20,427	73,544	-	2,941	1,125	38,346	991	-	35	-
1860	19,783	71,219	-	2,795	831	26,604	1,642	-	-	-
1861	24,772	84,358	-	1,032	-	52,398	2,342	-	-	-
1862	-	7,758	-	1,330	-	85,910	2,699	-	-	-

Source: Adapted from E. Reynolds, (1974b) op.cit., p. 133.

APPENDIX IV TO CHAPTER FOUR

Principal Imports into the Gold Coast  
Given total imports into the Gold Coast\*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Manchester goods in £</u>	<u>Beads £</u>	<u>Spirits and Wines in £s</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>£</u>
1850	40,960	5,060	7,142	1850	88,656
1851	28,360	5,325	15,060	1851	84,880
1852	14,000	4,880	17,000	1852	71,635
1853	16,000	3,220	16,580	1853	60,000
1854	38,000	6,600	21,200	1854	107,200
1855	68,187	4,033	11,330	1855	149,587
1856	30,837	6,179	37,491	1856	105,634
1857	36,838	2,083	13,011	1857	118,270
1858	42,050	2,563	29,924	1858	122,457
1859	43,060	2,910	23,704	1859	114,596
1860	35,089	1,497	3,156	1860	112,454
1861	74,628	1,006	39,991	1861	162,971
1862	68,000	-	40,773	1862	145,100

Source: Adapted from E. Reynolds, (1974b) op. cit., p. 137.

\* The figures of total imports given in the official records are at best very rough estimates because the itemised individual imports between 1850 and 1856 exceed the official totals.

C H A P T E R     F I V E

COMMODITISATION OF LAND AND LABOUR: ca.1874-1930: I  
THE COMMERCIALISATION OF LAND

I     INTRODUCTION

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the consolidation of British colonial control on the coast and its establishment in Asante. The departure of the Dutch in 1872 left Britain more firmly in control of the growth of legitimate trade. Moreover, the way now lay open for the British to assemble the legal and institutional paraphernalia which was by many seen as a necessary corollary to military and merchant occupation of the territory.

British Government 'policy' on the Gold Coast had been piecemeal and unclear throughout the period of contact. Arguably it was only the merchants' interest which persuaded the government in England to keep a foothold in the area in 1828. Another moment of decision for the British occurred in the 1860's when once again the Asante and southern districts came into conflict with each other. The result of the foray was the establishment in 1865 of a Select Committee to enquire into the West African settlements (1). The outcome was equivocal. The recommendation of the Committee was for no further extension of territory, the abolition of Executive Council Supreme Court and the placing of British settlements under one government, based in Sierra Leone. The feeling of British representatives on the coast was the reverse. Indeed, although in

---

(1) G.E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957, (London: Published for the University of Ghana, by Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1964), pp. 305-318.

principle a non extension of the territory was recognised by the Acting Governor in 1865 it was felt that within the existing boundaries stronger control should be exercised (1). This opinion was not sanctioned immediately but certain events on the coast did encourage the government in England to reconsider its recommendation. The Conservative government realised that with the withdrawal of the Dutch more revenue might be appropriated and directed towards Britain. The demise of the Fante confederation similarly made the colonial regime more confident of its sphere of influence and this was adequately demonstrated with the British defeat of the Asante in 1874. From tentative moves of withdrawal the colonial power, albeit slowly, recognised the more obvious benefits that could accrue from a prolonged stay on the Gold Coast - one which should nevertheless see the transfer of power increasingly to the indigenous people (2). The possibility of the latter, however, was very much reduced given that the British settlements were soon to be converted into a Crown Colony of the Gold Coast and the Southern States into a Protectorate in 1874.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the issues raised by the deeper involvement after the mid nineteenth century of the British in the Gold Coast and later in Asante. In particular our concern here, as with the following chapter, is to look at some of the affects for the people of the territory resulting from their increased

---

(1) Ibid., p.305.

(2) See Resolutions of the Select Committee, 26.6.1865., "the object of our policy should be to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more and more to transfer to them the administration of all the Governments, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all, except, probably Sierra Leone". Emphasis in Original. Quoted in ibid., p. 311.

incorporation into a developing world economy. We will not trace or simply catalogue the 'events' of the period. Instead, we examine the questions raised by the accelerating number of concessions in the territory, for they introduced a relatively new form of colonial exploitation of the land and people living on the Gold Coast whose effects will be our main focus. In particular did the alienation of land initiate any change in the way in which the Akan or coastal people related to each other? Was there a change in the relative positions of different groups already identified in the colony - women, commoners, chiefs and elders? What effect did the increased commoditisation of land have for Africans and was there an acceleration in the general monetarisation of the economy?

In looking at these questions we need once more to remember that this particular phase of colonial contact did not find a passive amorphous mass of indigenous inhabitants ready to accept, in whatever way, the transformation of their political economy. The traditions of resistance and protest have been well documented, not only for the Gold Coast, and mention must be made at least briefly of these activities (1). Our major concern in this and the following chapter is with assessing the impact of the numbers of concessions which mushroomed in this period, most particularly in mining and later in timber and agriculture, and to see the early beginnings of the development of a wage labour force. The demise of the slave trade had been officially celebrated in 1807 but the use of slaves in the colony persisted through the nineteenth century. The erosion of this activity was continually sought by the District Commissioners and

---

(1) See for example, Francis Agbodeka, African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast 1868-1900, A study in the forms and force of protest, (Illinois and London: Northwestern University Press, Longman, 1971) M. Crowder (editor) West African Resistance (London: Hutchinson, 1971) for comparison of South East Africa, see Allen F. Isaacman The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique Anti-Colonial Activity in the Zambesi Valley 1850-1921, (London: Heinemann, 1976).



Colonial authorities, and we can examine some of the results of this policy in readiness for the following chapter which will examine in more detail the problem of labour supply to an economy not used to the rigours and traumas of permanent wage employment. We also need here to recognise and also 'explain' the increased formalisation of British colonial control; the development of several legal initiatives which were used to both legitimate and advance colonial authority and to see what relationship existed, if any, between the entrenchment of formal colonialism and the mushrooming of concessions on the Gold Coast.

## II MINING CONCESSIONS IN THE TARKWA AREA

We have already seen the importance of the Gold Coast to the English economy as a supplier of inputs to an industrialising nation (1). United Kingdom imports of palm oil alone rose from 1,000 tons in 1810 to more than 40,000 tons in 1855 (2). European reliance upon items like these from legitimate trade on the Gold Coast declined as the boom in mid nineteenth century England drew to a close (3). It was again gold which at this time became a major concern to Europeans. Although the first 'modern mining' can be dated back to 1861 it is only really with the return of British soldiers from the Asante war, of 1873-4, that the cry went out that Asante and the western part of the country was riddled with gold (4). So impressed was Bonnat, for example, with the actual

---

(1) For more on this see Chapter 4 above.

(2) A.G.Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa, (London:Longman, 1973) p.128.

(3) There was, for example, a fall in the price of palm oil of 50% between 1862-1866, ibid.

(4) David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism 1850-1928, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) sees Thomas Hughes as the first to import modern mining equipment in 1861 which is destroyed by local chiefs in Western Wassaw. Bonnat, however, is usually recognised as the pioneer of the gold boom in 1877. See Kimble, ibid., and Jim Silver 'The Failure of European Mining Companies in the Nineteenth-Century Gold Coast', J.A.H., 22, 1981, p. 512.

and potential production of gold, something which he recognised during his four years as a captive in Asante, that he helped form the first joint stock mining company to exploit gold production on the coast (1). This was the African Gold Coast Company in 1878 shortly to be followed by the further entrenchment of Messrs Swanzy and Company in 1879 and the Effuenta Gold Mining Company and the Gold Coast Mining Company in 1880 (2). This increase in the number of companies, seven more were registered in 1881 and eleven in 1882, was at first welcomed but later became a source of concern for the colonial authorities on the coast (3).

We will look in a moment at the specific forms of legislation that the colonial regime tried to introduce to regulate the allocation of land. We will also assess whether the alienation of land in this way marked a new departure for the Akan. What needs to be stressed here is that having previously had a somewhat indifferent and uncertain attitude towards economic activity on the coast the British occupiers saw the gold boom, and the presence of joint stock companies, as a rational way of exploiting the resources of the Gold Coast but one which nevertheless did not warrant, at this stage, increased colonial state assistance. These companies represented a way of transforming solely trading entrepots into major concession areas and in the process creating a more productive wage labour force freed from the constraints of the pre-capitalist economy.

- 
- (1) See, Sir W.B.Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Papers Relating to H.M. Colonial Possessions. No.66 Gold Coast, Reports on Gold Mines 1889, No.1, Parliamentary Papers 1889, LIV, Accounts and Papers, London, HMSO 1889.
- (2) J.Silver, op.cit., p. 513. See also W.F.Holmes, 'Notes on the Early History of Tarkwa as a Gold Mining District', Gold Coast Review, II, i, 1926, and, N.R.Junner, Gold in the Gold Coast, (Accra: Ghana Geological Survey Department Memoir, No.4, Reprinted, 1973). See Map of Gold Mining Concessions in 1879, p.262.
- (3) J. Silver, op.cit., p. 513.



The colonial government was equivocal throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century as to the speed and extent of proletarianisation of the indigenous labour force. Moreover, the government was concerned with the pace at which expatriate companies began to purchase land, fearful that such alienation would too quickly disrupt indigenous relations of production. Indeed, the pace at which colonial capitalism was to be established and the extent of its incursion in creating a wage labour force becomes a crucial question for the colonial state. Unlike the suggestions of some authors we will see that the outcome of the establishment of formal colonial rule on the Gold Coast was neither the complete destruction, or the gradual dissolution of pre-capitalist modes of production (1). Instead, in furthering the establishment of capitalism on the Gold Coast the colonial regime was cautious not to completely disrupt indigenous relations of production because of the consequences it would have for the colonial state. This will become clearer as we examine the colonial moves to establish indigenous cash crop production and especially in the colonial attitudes to reducing the pace of capitalist relations of production in the formative period of the cocoa industry (2).

The 1890's saw the suggestion that the Crown alone should have the opportunity to approve concessions, although to the dismay of the companies European traders still had to negotiate with the chiefs and have

---

(1) On the former see, A.G.Frank, Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution? (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1969), and on the latter see P-P Rey, Colonialism, Neo-Colonialisme et Transition au Capitalisme: Exemple de la 'Comilog' au Congo-Brazzaville, (Paris: Maspero, 1971), G.Dupre and P-P Rey, 'Reflections on the pertinence of a theory of the history of exchange', Economy and Society, 2, 1973, and C.Meillassoux, 'From Reproduction to Production', Economy and Society, 1, 1972.

(2) See Chapter 6 below and B. Grier, 'Underdevelopment, Modes of Production and the State in Colonial Ghana', African Studies Review, 24, 1, 1981.

'respect' for 'customary law'. Before looking at the disputes specifically over land and the developing colonial states' apparatus to cope with these, we can now look briefly at some of the difficulties that were encountered by the concessionaires in acquiring their concessions and in beginning their business operations.

Principal alluvial gold deposits were situated in and around Tarkwa on the western side of the old Coast colony (1). For one official gold mining in Tarkwa had been a dominant form of local economic activity for many years before the 1880's. It was a place where:

a floating population ... move(d) from place to place as new surface workings for gold are discovered and opened up in different places (2).

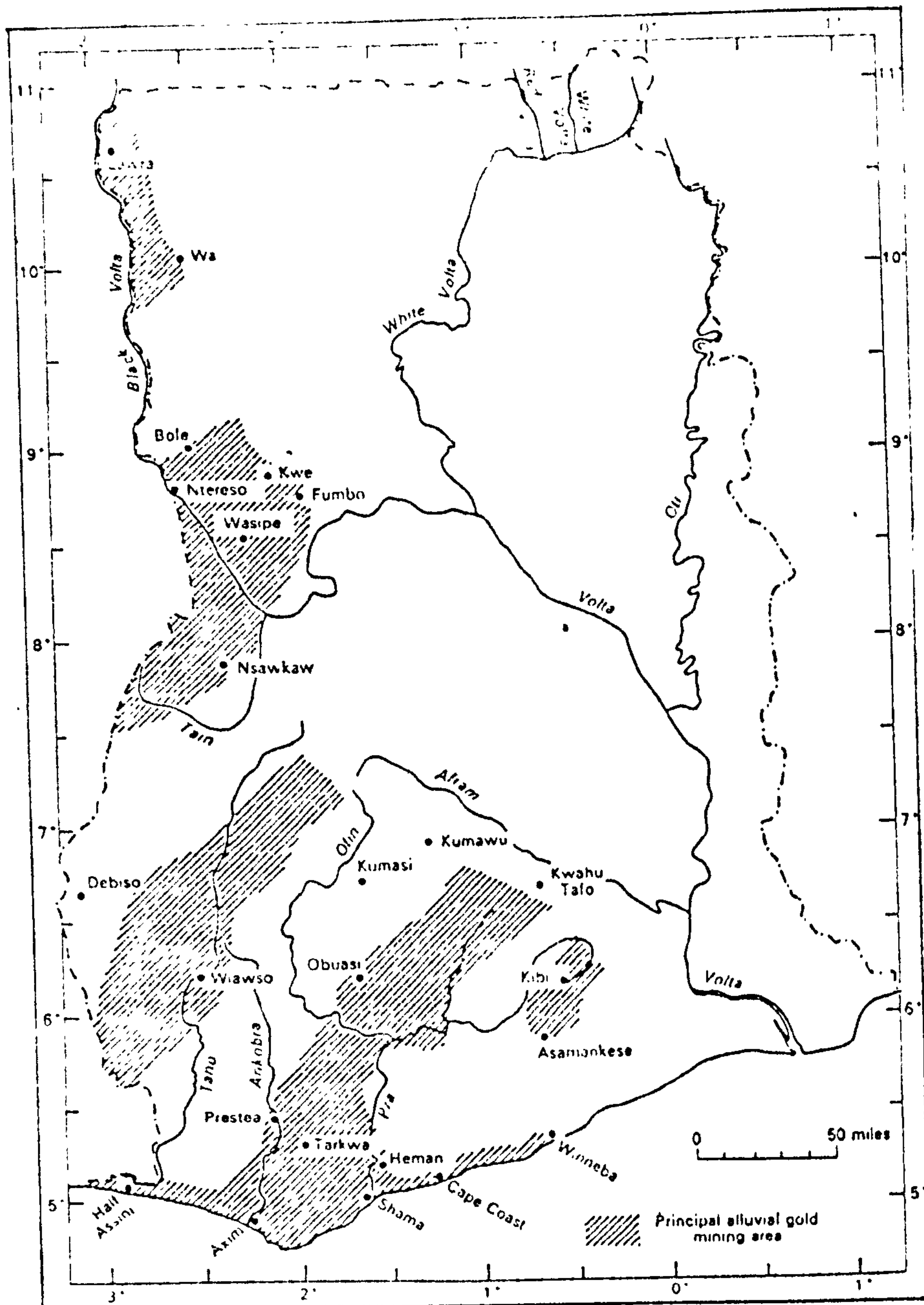
It was here that Bonnat began his mining in earnest. Local prospecting on the Ancobra River's existing workings in Tarkwa were to be further exploited. The bell shaped pits of indigenous prospectors had already reached the water table at sixty feet, and rather than simply sell them pumps to facilitate greater indigenous gold production Bonnat sought to exploit the area himself (3). Indeed in 1882 only 5 years after Bonnat arrived there were six other European companies established in the area. This rush, however, to gain access to the gold fields in Tarkwa was very uneven. The thought that a second Rand had been discovered was soon tempered as expectations were not met. This was reflected in the fact that after the buoyant start of eleven new companies being registered in

---

(1) See maps Six and Seven on pages 262 and 265.

(2) Papers relating to H.M. Colonial Possessions, op.cit., p.10. See also GNA(A) ADM 27/1/1 where it is recorded that there were more than 1000 men, women and children engaged in the washing of gold, in the late nineteenth century at Tarkwa.

(3) E.A. Boateng, 'The Tarkwa Gold Mining Industry - A Retrospect', Ghana Geographical Association Bulletin, 2, 1, 1957, see also GNA(A) ADM 27/1/1.



MAP SEVEN:

Principal Alluvial Gold Mining Areas: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Source: K.B. Dickson (1969).

1882 none were inaugurated in 1884, and although an estimated £1 million had been invested in the Gold Coast only about £27,000 had been recouped by 1901 with the shipment of seven thousand ounces of gold (1).

The poor return on monies invested certainly was not due to the unavailability of land, although the quality of the concessions can be questioned. The Civil Commissioner's reports for the Tarkwa area, for example, are filled with doubts about the prudence of so many concessions and so much land being alienated. For instance, the Ancobra concession covered much of the area and there was hardly a square mile in Apinto which had not been rented (2). This was seen to have a deleterious effect upon the indigenous people. It was observed that,

those kings and chiefs claim to rule the district in which the land is situated but they are completely in the hands of one or other of the European managers who by (costly) presents keep them in their pay (3).

This erosion of the independence of chiefs will be explored later.

Here we can look at some of the difficulties which were besetting the companies. These were problems both internal to the company and to the nature of the joint stock companies, and those external to the companies brought to bear on them by the people whose territory the companies sought to control and whose labour power it sought to appropriate.

---

(1) J. Silver, *op. cit.*, p. 515, quoting H. Louis, 'Gold Mining on the Gold Coast', *Mining Journal*, (1901), pp.1108-1109. The gold rush at this time or the 'Jungle Boom' was seen to have been based upon hysteria rather than economic rationality. See, S. Hymer, 'The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana', in, Gustav Ranis (editor), *Government and Economic Development*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1971).

(2) GNA(A) ADM 27/1/1 Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book March 1881-May 1884, report January 31, 1882.

(3) Report December 31, 1881 in *ibid.*, p. 84.

(a) The Companies and Inadequate Capital Accumulation

The problems associated with the internal organisation of the European mining companies and their financing which inhibited their successful presence on the Gold Coast has recently been documented (1). Briefly, blame for the failure of European gold mining companies in the nineteenth century is seen to lie first, in their inability to accumulate sufficient capital for them to move beyond even the "prior stage of so-called primitive accumulation" and second, because of their inability to secure an adequate supply on the Gold Coast of labourers to work in the mines (2).

In Tarkwa alone there were six companies working in 1882 but none of them had "an adequate amount of initial seed capital nor capital accumulated through the expropriation of surplus value" to facilitate "an accumulation of money capital in the hands of the owners of the means of production" (3). This lack of resources was reflected on the coast where Civil Commissioners observed as late as 1894 that:

All the mines are doing fairly well but the outlay is so great that they require to be extensively developed in order to make them pay (4).

Part of the reason why insufficient capital could be accumulated was

---

(1) J.Silver, op.cit., p.516, see also C.Illegbune, 'Concessions Scramble and Land Alienation in British Southern Ghana, 1885-1915', African Studies Review, 19, 3, 1976.

(2) J.Silver, op.cit., pp.516-517, the issue of primitive accumulation is discussed in Chapter Two above and more fully in Chapter Six below, see also Karl Marx, Capital, Volume One, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970).

(3) Silver, op.cit., p.516.

(4) GNA(A) 27/176 Duplicate Letter Book, Quarterly Report, July-September 1894. The nature of this 'outlay' in the form of infrastructure is examined below.



the pursuit of profit through speculation. Shares floated for Gold Coast mining concerns soon became known as 'Jungle shares'. This was because of the activities of 'share pushers' in the exchanges in London and Paris and 'concession mongers'. The latter's activities severely limited the amount of capital available by companies for gold extraction. Concession mongers would buy concessions from 'stool' holders cheaply only to sell to companies at vastly inflated rates. Severe debts were thereby imposed on companies that paid dearly for the purchase of land rights and who were consequently left with little money for equipment and running costs (1).

It was not only a question of being able to acquire sufficient machinery for the extraction of gold that posed problems for the European companies, but also what kind of machinery and how was it to be transported from the coast through the forest to the mines? The level of European technology was poor. Before the introduction of the Macarthur-Forrest cyanide process in 1895, the use of stamps to crush the ore and water and gravity to separate the gold had to be supplemented by the labour of African women using calabashes to pick the ore out by hand (2). This peculiar paradox, of the importance of pre-colonial forms of gold mining and extraction coexisting side by side with modern imported techniques was recognised early. The Civil Commissioner of Tarkwa in 1882 recorded that:

The native miner will for a long time to come be the real prospector of the mining wealth of the country and be very useful both to Europeans and native land owners (3).

---

(1) Silver, *op.cit.*, p.5.

(2) *Ibid.*, p.521. In addition there was considerable ignorance of geology.

(3) GNA (A) 27/1/1 January 31, 1882, p.94.

Great store was placed upon the use of machinery but there were immense problems of transportation associated with carrying very heavy equipment on often impassable roads, not to mention the obstacles to get reluctant employees used to such strange equipment (1). It took Abontiakoon mines two weeks, for example, to transport one and a half tons of machinery from Bonsah by truck (2).

A further factor which inhibited a successful rate of return to the companies was their own managerial inadequacies and lack of mining expertise. "The fault in the mine (Akantoo) appears to me to be that it has not been efficiently managed hitherto" (3) was the comment by one official on the coast. Indeed a recent observer has suggested that the inability of the mine managers to get the cooperation of Africans in transporting equipment inland was just part of the former's inadequacy in general management issues (3).

Many of the early concessionaires were clearly dilettantes - speculators trying to make a quick killing without being familiar with scientific mining techniques. This was partly because after the mining activity on the Rand 'took off' South Africa was seen to be a more engaging prospect than the intemperate and uneven possibilities in West Africa.

This section has emphasised the inadequacy of the mining companies to sustain a relatively new form of capitalist enterprise. The joint stock company had its roots in productive activities in Europe and was now increasingly used to sustain colonial interests overseas. The lack of enthusiasm showed by the colonial state in

---

(1) Papers relating H.M. Possessions, *op.cit.*, pp.3-4.

(2) GNA(A) 27/1/1 *op.cit.*, Report June 30, 1882. This road was built by indigenous commoners at the behest of the mines, see *ibid*, Report 30 September 1882, where the King of Wassaw is criticised for only bringing out 18 men.

(3) Papers relating to H.M. Possessions, *op.cit.*, p.3.

(4) P.Rosenblum, 'Gold Mining in Ghana, 1874-1900', Ph.D Columbia University, 1938.

entrusting and encouraging the exploitation of gold was a major stumbling block to the mining companies' success. The colonial regime on the coast had favoured the greater extension of British control in the area, but a change of emphasis away from peasant agricultural production of the nineteenth century to mining had not yet been fully sanctioned. A 'policy' of actively encouraging the mining companies would have meant higher expenditure by the colonial state on infrastructure like railways. This expenditure could only have been met with the imposition of taxation on the colony, but the backlash and opposition from such a move was not something the colonial authorities wanted to face (1). At the same time the greater alienation of land was needed for the security of the company which in turn would have separated the direct producer from the means of production thereby creating a freer wage labour force. This was to come, in fits and starts, but was not something the colonial state at the moment felt it wanted actively to engage in.

(b) African Imposed Constraints on Mining Companies

African resistance to wage employment and the rigours of regulated industrial work was a large constraint imposed on European mining companies in the nineteenth century (2). For much of the time (one estimate is until 1893 (3)) African gold production actually outproduced European companies, reflecting the persistence and greater

---

(1) Expenditure in the mining areas always seemed to exceed revenue: compare the figures in GNA(A) 27/1/5, and a major item of expenditure, the subsidy of roads by government for the first quarter of 1894; revenue = £219-10-2 while expenditure = £411-10-8.

(2) This contrasts with the view which sees colonial difficulties in getting labour rooted in the failure of individual people to respond to market conditions and in particular to a cash nexus. For an extended critique of this latter position see S.B.D. de Silva, The Political Economy of Underdevelopment, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with South East Asian Studies, Singapore, 1982.) On transforming indigenous labour processes see below Chapter 6 and on the theoretical debate, Theo Nichols (editor), Labour, A Marxist Primer (London: Fontana, 1980).

(3) Silver, op.cit., fn.65, p.523, compare figures given by R. Dumett quoted in ibid for the year of 1889.

suitability of African forms and relations of production in gold mining. Indeed one mining company showed a preference for using African relations of production choosing simply to appropriate one third of the employees production as rent and allow the Africans to keep two thirds (1).

The persistence of pre-colonial relations and organisation of gold production is a testament to the difficulties with which a number of undercapitalised mining companies could superimpose a different set of relations of production upon indigenous forms of production. This also alludes to the problem of labour shortage which faced the mines (2). The companies had to face and overcome a contradictory position. They needed more workers for the mine and at the same time they wanted to maintain the production of local foodstuffs for the sustenance of the workers. In time this contradiction imposed a tension between expatriate interests and the colonial state. The former wanted the speedy release of workers from pre-capitalist relations of production while the latter, although in agreement with the onset of supplies of wage labour, were unsure about its pace of development and the disruptive impact which the process of proletarianisation might have on indigenous authority structures.

The issue of food shortage was constantly being recorded. On one occasion Tarkwa was seen as "the most expensive and difficult station

---

(1) This company was Wassaw (GC) Gold Mining Company which leased its shafts to local producers. See Silver op.cit., p.523. This company also worked a variation of this. When automated, one third of gold stamped out went to all the indigenous work force. See GNA(A) 27/1/1 op.cit., entry, Report June 30, 1882; this company also used African managers.

(2) The issue of labour is examined more closely in Chapter 6 below.

to obtain food" (1). In later years the fears of dislocating food production by using immediately neighbouring labour were temporarily offset by the use of a migrant work force (2). Indeed, even at this stage local labour was not used as much as was desired, but this was for other reasons. For the Civil Commissioner of Tarkwa, for example, "The natives of these parts are bad workers and are employed as little as possible at the mines" (3). Consequently Kroo workers were imported from the Liberian coast but this proved a costly and unreliable affair as the workers rarely stayed more than a year at a time.

The poor responsiveness of local labour however, to the demands of European commercial activities was not universally recognised. For one writer the reluctance of local Africans to become involved in the European organisation of production was because of the brutality of the regime and the treatment of the workforce (4). European difficulty with African labour was clearly not a question of the perennial laziness of the Negro, oft quoted in Victorian England. Indigenous production of gold, as already stated, exceeded that of European companies for many years. Rather, it was the preference Africans had (at prevailing wages and in prevailing conditions) for Akan relations of production over capitalist wage employment which prevented a continuous flow of labour

---

(1) GNA(A) ADM 27/1/4 Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book 1891-1893, Report Quarter ending 30.6.1892.

(2) For the use of migrant labour in another context for cheap reproduction costs see H. Wolpe, in H. Wolpe (editor), Articulation of Modes of Production, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). It might tentatively be suggested here that the development, albeit uneven and uncertain of a migrant labour force on the Gold Coast was somewhat of a compromise between the companies and the colonial authorities in satisfying the labour requirement of the mines.

(3) GNA(A) ADM 27/1/1, Report 31.8.1882.

(4) E.D. Morel, Affairs of West Africa, (London: 2nd Edition, Frank Cass & Co Ltd., 1968) Appendix, The Gold Coast Mining Industry. We need only look at DC's court figures for a greater idea of the severity with which white miners treated black workers. See for example GNA(CC) Accra 146, 1965.

to the European mines (1). The constraints of regular time keeping and the appropriation of all the product of one's labour was new to the Akan gold producers. It was true that the chief appropriated, through the abusua system, all large nuggets of gold and in other ways regulated a labour force of commoners and women, but ways had been devised of trying to obviate the loss of much of the gold produced (2). Indeed, such was the development of ways of 'cheating' the chief of his 'rightful' amount of gold, the chief was more than willing to sell gold bearing land to Europeans so as to return to a steady income - one denied to him by the tricks of his previously reliable labour force.

Work discipline per se was not new to the Akan but it was an innovation to have it imposed under the rigours of capitalism. Throughout this period up to the end of the nineteenth century and beyond, the colonial authorities, acting almost at the behest of the mining companies, pleaded with the chiefs to ensure a constant flow of labour to the mines. After all it was seen to lie in:

the interests of your (King Enimil Kwow of Amantson) people as well as the company that the mining industry of this colony should thrive. I trust that you will use your utmost endeavour on behalf of your people by exercising all reasonable influence to induce them to work and not to take them away from this work (3).

This particular episode of pleading with local authorities was in direct response to the King of Amantson sending his linguist to the Tarkwa and Aboso mines. He instructed all Amantson workers there to "immediately vacate their respective employment"- a move which in the words of the mine manager "means the entire stoppage of the works" (4).

---

(1) Silver, op.cit., see also Rosenblum, op.cit.

(2) See Chapter 1 above.

(3) DC to King Enimil Kwow, February 16 1894, GNA(A) 27/1/5 p. 304.

(4) Ibid., January 31 1894, DC to King Enimil Kwow.

African resistance to imposed work routines in the mines was clearly potentially enormous and this was often realised. The form of this resistance tended to be sporadic and individualistic. There was no economic reason for Africans to work in the European companies because indigenous forms of gold and peasant production were financially more remunerative. Dissent with the wage system would come in the form of withholding the best forms of gold. There was also a riot in Prestea in 1895 following management attempts to withhold part of a five month outstanding wage bill for good behaviour (1).

The ability to acquire sufficient and suitable labour was perhaps the greatest problem which beset the mines. The difficulty grew steadily worse. Appealing for help the District Commissioner of Tarkwa wrote to the Under Secretary in London in 1901:

The labour question here everyday becomes more and more difficult (and I am afraid) that this will deter Europeans coming out moreover (I) believe that many a mine will shut down for the want of labourers or on account of the great expense attachable (2).

- 
- (1) Silver, *op.cit.*, p.528. The possibility of more riots because of overcrowding and the throwing together of people under conditions of capitalist enterprise was recognised by the DC of Tarkwa in 1901. Commenting to the Colonial Secretary he wanted some 'influential miners' to be granted ministerial powers. He recognised also that poor sanitary conditions promoted unrest. The DC wanted mine police with the power of arrest and a similar force for the railways. See GNA(A) 27/1/7. See also Jeff Crisp, 'Labour Resistance and Labour Control in the Ghanaian Gold Mining Industry, 1870-1980', Ph.D. University of Birmingham, 1980, especially Chapters One and Two on early forms of indigenous resistance to European mining ventures. There was a dispute in 1892, for example, at Gia Appantoo mine involving as many as 300-500 workers. I am grateful to Jeff Crisp for permission to cite this. See also Jeff Crisp, 'The Labour Question in the Gold Coast 1870-1906', SSRC/Third World Economic History Group, Liverpool Conference, 17-19 September 1982; on different forms of worker consciousness and resistance, see the interesting recent article by Robin Cohen, 'Resistance and Hidden Forms of Consciousness Amongst African Workers', ROAPE, 19, 1980.
- (2) GNA(A) ADM 27/1/7, pp.162-3.

In another communique the District Commissioner stressed the need:

For the mines to have cheaper and better labour  
I have the honour to ask his excellency's  
consultation to have imported labour from  
India or some one of his majesty's other  
colonies or China and to meet the expenses of  
their transport to this colony on employment a  
head Tax should be paid (1).

Issues relating to the mining companies' demand for labour will be picked up again in the following chapter (2). We have illustrated here the change in European capital's demand for labour in the years between ca. 1870-1910 as opposed solely to the production of cash crops which prevailed since 1807. The pressure for a free wage labour force was one part of the ongoing transformation of the Akan social formation, a transformation which saw increasing attempts to disengage sections of the work force from pre-colonial production activities and incorporate them within a developing capitalist circuit of production on the coast. This circuit of production was not autonomous or dependent solely upon the activities of people on the coast but was linked with developments in Europe. Moreover, the process of increased separation of Akan peasants from pre-capitalist relations of production was not without difficulties. Some of these presented themselves in the form of African resistance to incorporation in capitalist work practices but some were also the result of inter colonial conflicts as to the desirability of detaching a work force for the mines from pre-capitalist modes of production (3). We can now

---

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 163.

(2) In particular see section II. On attempts at colonial control of the reproduction of the work force for the mines and the pressures between the mine owners and colonial authorities over the viability of a 'migrant labour force system' see 11b.

(3) On some of these disagreements see section III below.



see some of the effects that Europe's greater interest in the Gold Coast had on issues associated with land and trade in the colony. The legal structure used to regulate the increased commoditisation of land and the struggle to implement the legislation occurred between 1894-1900. This followed the realisation by the colonial authorities, notably Carnavon in England and Governors on the coast, that the incorporation of the Gold Coast people into the developing capitalist economy in Europe had to be rationalised and sanctioned by legal paraphernalia. As late as 1899, for example, the Captain Resident on the coast wrote to the colonial Secretary in Accra condemning the lack of procedures to facilitate the orderly purchasing of concessions:

Now nearly all the prospectors who have lately been in Ashanti have been going about getting concessions from people who have no rights to the land at all, they have never been to Kumasi nor applied here to have their concessions filed (1).

The consolidation of the Gold Coast Colony (officially demarcated as such in 1874) was now to be enforced through a series of proclamations and ordinances in an attempt to impose English forms of legal control and authority upon traditional property rights (2). The desired impact was to control the development of concessions and to secure inter alia; the development of the gold mining industry. A stop had to be put to the sale of fraudulent worthless concessions as they:

---

(1) GNA(A) ADM 45/1/1 Letter Book for Mines, 30 March 1899-23 March 1901.

(2) See the quote by Carnavon, 1878, in Francis Agbodeka, op.cit., p.114. These concerns were finally contained in an Ordinance of June 1878. For example: a chief to be summoned and held responsible and the ability and right of Governors to subdivide villages and groups. Head chiefs and councillors to make bye laws subjects to Governors veto. Rights of appeal from native court to court commissioners.

will bring great losses to the general public who will be the sufferers, as well as driving away sound capitalists from investing their money in Ashanti (1).

### III LAND AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CONCESSIONS

The increase in the number of concessions which occurred at this time began both to impose and hasten several new facets to the Akan political economy which are associated with a developing capitalist economy. Most noticeably these were the alienation of land for 'private' use, the monetisation of the economy and the commoditisation of labour power. We are here going to concentrate on the impact of colonial incursion and the buying of concessions on land use. A little later we will see the impact of monetisation and legal structures upon indigenous inhabitants of the Gold Coast (2).

The colonial governments' attitude to the increased number of concessionaires was at first undecided. It was seen increasingly necessary to establish clear cut procedures whereby Europeans could acquire land to work gold deposits or begin agricultural development. Before a more organised strategy for dealing with the influx of concessions was developed colonial authorities relied upon informal contact with chiefs advising them, through the use of circulars, that it was up to the traditional authorities to safeguard their own allocation of concessions. A circular to a chief in 1891, for example, suggested that:

---

(1) GNA(A) ADM 45/1/1.

(2) The issue of land rights is clearly complex and has partly been dealt with in Chapter 1. We examine the monetisation and commoditisation of labour power in Chapter 6 below.

any contract, grant or concession which you make will be made entirely at your own risk and that the government can assume no responsibility whatever in respect of it (1).

As time wore on the granting of concessions was to cause enormous concern for both the colonial and indigenous groups. For the colonial authorities it was recognised that land grabbing by companies in a haphazard way would be disastrous to the long run attempt at capitalising upon cash crop production in the territory.

A consequence of European interest with gold mining, and concessions was the increased use of fuel and shaft props for the mines, a European industry began to be centred around the felling of trees in the forest. Demand for timber was also the product of more construction activity on the coast and the extension of the railway system (2). The expansion of European production activity into the forest areas placed an increased strain on relations between capitalist adventurers and indigenous inhabitants. This emanated from concessionaires recklessly 'purchasing' land without any controls on the size or procedure for appropriating areas on which to exploit minerals or other natural resources. Chiefs would be approached for the 'sale' of their land in ignorance of African forms of land tenure. But what was this form of tenure?

To recap what was said earlier (3), rights to land were dependent upon membership of the common ancestry, to the abusua or segmentary Akan matrilineage which safeguarded reproduction by control

---

(1) D.C. Vroom, Circular Letter to Chiefs of Wassaw September 16, 1891, GNA(A) 27/1/3 Emphasis in original.

(2) The construction of railways served other functions in addition to that of carrying mineral wealth to the coast. The development of a railway 'system' is one of the few examples of colonial capital input and serves as a form of economic expansion. The railways also served to extend British political and military expansion. There were conflicts in the development of a colonial transport policy. See Chapter 6 below.

(3) Chapter 1.

over access to land and the ability to produce goods for consumption and trade. Our argument has been that access to land was similarly crucial and the restriction of this imposed by chiefs, together with the greater 'allocation' (appropriation) of land to chiefs and elders, was one way of generating and sustaining political power over commoners and women. This view contrasts markedly with many observers' comments on the position and importance of land in Asante (1). Indeed the 'traditional' view of land, as made in declarations by indigenous groups themselves, sees interest in land vested in the stool rather than a specific person or group (class) of persons (2). We are told for instance that "no individual person owns any land or lands within the social division of Mampong" (3). Instead, allocation of land is made by the stool - albeit through the chief - and Oman council. We have argued earlier that it is precisely this sanctioning of the allocation of land by the chiefs and councillors for use by members of the polity and strangers moving into an area, that provides this group of notables with a position of power. In short, although earlier writers, including (especially) chiefs, in answer to colonial questionnaires, underplayed their part as individuals in allocating land, emphasising instead their official position as guardians and chiefs for the whole polity, their position as chiefs precisely enhanced and elevated a position of power. In theory ownership of land remained with the stool. No land could be transferred without a chief's consent and the sale of a farm or any land within the Mampong Division, for example, did not affect ultimate

---

(1) Compare D. Kimble op. cit.

(2) See the Declaration of Native Customary Law made under Section 76(1) Ordinance No. 4 of 1924 X (Mampong) Division, GNA(K) ADM D Box 1907 Customary Law 15/3/27-30/7/32.

(3) Ibid.

ownership which resided with the chiefs. No 'stranger' could sell or lease land without consent of the chief and anyone who was not a stranger, who had built a farm and wanted to use it as security against a debt, first had to notify the chief and Oman council of the stool in which land ownership existed (1).

This brief excursion into the 'accepted' notions of land ownership on the Gold Coast is used to once more dispel two opposing myths. The first is one of communal bliss and egalitarianism in early Akan society. The second is that the system of working the land through the abusua itself constituted a form of alienation. We will see shortly that it is precisely a new form of alienation that colonial authorities and concessionaires try and nurture because it is this which is seen to enhance colonial authority and secure higher levels of agricultural productivity.

We can now look more closely at the general impact of concessions mentioned in section one and of new moves to develop agricultural areas and forest reserves. What was the procedure for these concessionaires and what problems or difficulties were encountered in the relationship between the land hungry Europeans and the chiefs from whom they 'requested' land to work? We consequently are not concerned with tracing or documenting the series of concessions (2). Rather, we want to uncover the nature of the very many disputes which erupted at this time with Europeans and the colonial state. In doing so we will use a selection of new concessions to illustrate the argument that disputes over land,

(1) Ibid. The presence of debt here was itself the product of the increasing encroachment of European Capital.

(2) Although the extent of land parcelled out as concessions is important in terms of the availability of more land for Europeans. On the extent of European land alienation, see, Ilegbune, op.cit., who estimates a total of European land alienation in the period 1900-1913 in Western, Central and Eastern Provinces of 25,108 square miles.

the right to concede it and the resulting increased recognition of a money value in land, led inexorably towards the increased monetisation of the Asante and Gold Coast economies. The increased desire for money income was an inevitable corollary of the colonial 'political' presence on the coast and something which both forms a basis for and is the partial outcome of the implanting of a colonial capitalist economy.

(a) A Struggle for Land

The period between 1880 and 1930 witnessed an enormous influx of European concessionaires on the Gold Coast and Asante (1). These created a number of problems for indigenous inhabitants. For example, there was a marked increase in the number of recorded land disputes between the indigenous people. Part of the difficulty was that only now was there an added incentive to specifically demarcate land areas between different groups and individuals on the coast because money was being offered to appropriate its use in mining, agricultural land and timber felling. As the Civil Commissioner of Tarkwa observed in 1882, the problem was that a chiefly land owner when leasing a piece of land did not know whether he had over-reached his neighbour's land (2). One such dispute, among many, occurred in 1893 between chiefs of Attobra, Kuma, Brufoe, Fairbil and Kaye, after concessions had been made to a European merchant for gold mining and timber cutting rights (3). The havoc caused by the sudden increase in the leasing of land gave opportunities for both African and Europeans alike to cheat and swindle

(1) For a summary of British difficulties in developing reserves, which the colonial authorities tried to create in part as a result of the impact of the European concessions, see Appendix II to this Chapter.

(2) GNA(A) 27/1/1 Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book, March 1881-May 1884, Report 31.1.1882. The suggestion was made for a joint meeting in the Tarkwa mining area to inform each other of people's boundaries.

(3) GNA(A) 27/1/5 Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book 24.3.1893-26.6.94. Report ending quarter 31.3.1893.

their opposite number in business deals and for chiefs to enhance their position over commoners through increased financial remuneration (1). These double dealing activities seemed to extend to Africans co-opted to work for the colonial regime. The Colonial Office in 1902, for example, wrote to Akropong Concession Limited following the latter's complaint of being hoodwinked; "coloured colonial officials are in with the natives in the matter of worthless concessions". The colonial official, therefore, wanted to know how the company had "acquired rights of option over land which was found ... not to carry a trace of gold" (2).

This confusion continued the whole time that an anarchic system of acquiring concessions remained without any safeguards for concessionaires or Africans alike. These were to come later only after a long struggle between colonial and indigenous authorities over the classification of African land. Meanwhile this period of colonial extension on the Gold Coast increasingly imposed changing property relations on the Akan with regard to land. Traditional chiefly control in many areas declined. This was partly because of their own preoccupation with the selling of concessions, often the same one more than once (3). The extent of the manipulation and hoodwinking of

- 
- (1) See, for example, GNA(S), Acc No.2373 Horton's Aboso Concession Enquiry No. 211, where redrawing of boundaries was made to ensure land in the concession belonged to the chief who was entitled to the smaller proportion of rent. This chiefly enhancement of power was nevertheless uneven and arguably shortlived. It diminished as opportunities increased for commoners to earn cash incomes. See below.
- (2) GNA(A) ADM 11/1/2 Case No.100 MP 100/1900 Upper Wassaw - Native Affairs 1900.
- (3) Chiefs were duped as much as they managed to swindle concessionaires. In 1904 for example the King of Adansi lent £200 to a representative of Ashanti Gold Concessions. The King complained to the DC that the representative dissented in repaying the money. When the DC questioned the firm about the deal the latter denied all knowledge and informed him the representative was now in South Africa (!) GNA(K) 893.

indigenous people is perhaps best cited by the published claim of one company to mineral and timber rights over an area of 7,000 square miles conceded by chiefs for £90 - not all of which was paid (1). Chiefly control, moreover, was also subject to decline because of increasing possibilities of cash income to elders and commoners in newly established industries (2). In 1883 it was noticed that chiefs were becoming "particularly powerless" in Tarkwa, an area of concentrated European gold mining concessions:

As far as I have observed in no part of the Protectorate are the chiefs such non entities as they are here - their sole idea seems to be to sell gold lands' concessions and to mine and wash alluvial on their account, consequently their villages and roads are sadly neglected (3).

The concession boom on the Gold Coast was not centred solely around prospecting and mining areas but increasingly became focussed around the purchase of land for the felling of timber and the development of an industry based on forestry. The multiplicity of small, often opportunistic and undercapitalised concerns duplicated those of prospecting and mining for gold. The colonial government adopted an ad hoc view of the development of a timber industry as it had over the development of mining concerns, at least until it recognised formally the possibility of a viable export industry centred on the west of the colony. It was not until the passing of the Forest Ordinance in 1927 that a system of reserves was developed to protect the forest areas

- 
- (1) Kimble, op.cit., p.339. See also Oral Data deposited in the African Studies Unit, University of Leeds; especially the interview with Chief of Aboso, about the whites seizing as much land as possible for a bottle of Schnapps.
- (2) More about the increased access to cash later. See also Chapter 4 on Akan class formation.
- (3) GNA(A) ADM 27/1/1, 19 March 1883 to Assistant Colonial Secretary in Charge of Native Affairs.



from so-called indigenous 'abuse', but this was only after a long and often bitter struggle with local inhabitants and the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) (1).

The decline in chiefly power through disputes associated with concessions and the increase in cash economy posed a serious threat to the colonial state which sought to develop a capitalist economy on the Gold Coast but one initiated through the customary power holders. The pace at which the Gold Coast economies should develop in line with colonial wishes had to be gauged so as not to disrupt the political framework employed by the state. The colonial authorities on the coast recognised that if, as had happened in mining, European adventurers came to take what they wanted in their own way, without any guidelines, the disruptive effects upon indigenous people would possibly also disrupt the smooth imposition and transition to a formal colonial political economy, once more geared towards the export of indigenous products for the benefit of the colonial power in Europe.

It was earlier in the 1890's that a number of government suggestions were made to try and rationalise the use of land generally, and to do this by vesting any unoccupied land in the Crown with further concessions being made subject to government approval. In 1883 a Native Jurisdiction Ordinance had been passed with the concern of administering the Gold Coast colony by acting through the chiefs. The chiefs and sub chiefs were given the power to make certain bye laws but the Governor retained a substantial power of veto. We will say more about these measures below. Suffice to say here that given the increased commercialisation of land following the development of European concessions and

---

(1) See below.

concern with developing the resources of the Gold Coast, the colonial regime tried increasingly to ensure an institutional framework "to grapple with the problem of adjusting indigenous socio-political structures to alien rule and actual forces of social change" (1). Among these forces of change were increasing numbers of concessions following an increased presence of Europeans on the coast and their movement inland. It was in grappling with these European commercial interests and in directing them towards a coherent colonial policy, that the colonial regime got embroiled in attempts to demarcate the allocation and specification of indigenous land which in turn prompted vociferous opposition (2). The colonial regime recognised the need to both control the land and to determine its ownership in accordance with capitalist requirements of land as a commodity, but not always as an entirely free commodity. Although these concerns underscored the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1894, the pronounced reasons for government legislation on such a thorny issue was to protect African owners from unscrupulous speculators and to check ruthless exploitations.

Briefly, the Crown Lands Ordinance had three main pronounced concerns; to vest all rights in forest land and minerals in the Queen for the colonial government's use; future grants of waste land, minerals and timber to non natives were to be only at the agreement of the Governor; finally, "Native Rights" in land, grants of land by one native to another, were to continue as before (3). In the words of the Governor,

---

(1) Bjorn M. Edsman, Lawyers in Gold Coast Politics ca.1900-1945, (Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studies Historica Upsaliensia 111, 1979), p. 102.

(2) See Kimble, op. cit., and Agbodeka, op.cit.

(3) Agbodeka, op. cit.

the British government should be able to prevent the lands of the colony from "falling into the hands of concession mongers for a bottle of rum or a case of gin" (1). Although it was assumed by the Governor, Brandford Griffiths, that the piece of legislation would go through unopposed, the assumption that there was anything called 'waste land' was a grave error. Together with the Town Council's Ordinance this act of legislation was heavily petitioned against. There was of course no waste land. Instead, traditional forms of cultivation left areas unoccupied only to be returned to later for agricultural activity.

Opposition to the Bill reached a peak so that the colonial authorities themselves questioned the fruitfulness of such an act. Indeed, the Attorney General thought that the proposal to control concessions might frighten off speculative capitalists who after all were the chief hope for the future of the colony (2). The Crown Lands issue is, moreover, an illustration of the failure of the colonial state to act in a manner some writers have assumed was more or less rational. Apart from failing to understand indigenous land tenure the colonial regime was unsure of the benefits, rights and wrongs and likely outcome of interfering directly in indigenous affairs in the attempt at channelling European investments (3).

After much opposition by the ARPS in the form of a series of petitions to the Queen and pressure on parliament, Governor Maxwell proposed a revised ordinance. This new Bill was ostensibly to give

---

(1) Quoted in Kimble, *op.cit.*, p.334.

(2) Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 336. The form of the opposition is documented in *ibid.*, pp. 337.

(3) See G. Kay (editor) The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

the Crown rights of administration but not of ownership, for it was announced that the intention of vesting waste and forest land in the Queen had been abandoned (1). The 1897 Bill sought to regulate the transfer of land. No native land owner could grant land exceeding twenty acres without the consent of the Governor. Only the Governor could grant exclusive rights in land to companies, and annual payments in respect of land granted to companies or other bodies could be paid in whole or in part to any chief who had consented to the granting of such land (2).

Opposition to this new, proposed legislation was also fierce. The government could still declare a piece of land unoccupied and then authorise its occupation. Moreover, indigenous rights of ownership were no longer, if they ever had been, recognised automatically:

Occupiers to land would not be disturbed; but they 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 by the grant of a land certificate (3).

The colonial states' position was clear, although it took time for it to be articulated. It was crucial for the colonial state to enter into the complex issues of the control and administration of land on the colony. As government officials put it:

It is necessary that the permanent power should exercise concurrently with local chiefs where necessary the power of allocating land and interests in land to applicants (4).

---

(1) Kimble, op.cit., p.340.

(2) Agbodeka, op. cit., p. 140.

(3) Kimble, op. cit., p. 340.

(4) Government Gazette Extraordinary, No. 8, 1897, quoted in Agbodeka, op. cit., p. 140.

For the government this legislation would give greater security for the Gold Coast people over the land. Commercial transactions in land were to be regularised which would ensure greater colonial state control of the pace and nature of European incursions in land. For the chiefs and people living on the coast the Bill was yet another attempt to reduce their control over their own destiny. Transactions in land were now to be subject to a version of English law and a new concessions board.

Opposition to the bill mounted. This was orchestrated by newspapers on the Gold Coast especially the Gold Coast Chronicle. This paper maintained that the colonial government's intention in introducing the Bill was nothing to do with taking care of the poor African in the face of capitalist concessionaires. Instead, another interpretation on the legislation was made. They quoted a speech the Governor had made to the Chamber of Commerce in Liverpool, wherein he argued land laws if left to: "the exclusive disposal of the native authorities enabled the native to run up his rural hovel with its grass roof in immediate congruity to the stone house of the British trader importing thus the dangers of contamination of every kind" (1). This statement was reported together with rumours that land legislation was to be used to appropriate land for the building of 'country houses' on the coast. The result was that members of the Legislative Council met and formed an organisation specifically to oppose the legislation (2). The ARPS was formed in 1897 to stress the importance of indigenous institutions in the light of colonial attempts to erode traditional areas of culture. This group thought that it was also the right moment

---

(1) The Gold Coast Chronicle, 9 April 1897 quoted, in ibid., pp.140-1.  
 (2) Ibid.

to try and stress the needs for better forms of African representation, and in the process to stress African opposition to the Concessions Bill (1).

The measures adopted for opposition to the Bill were reflected by a statement given by the President of the ARPS at the start of a mission to England. They were going to get ... "assistance of able and eminent council in the first ranks of the English Bar" to press their case in open debate (2). Unlike other opposition movements this form of protest was not to be violent or to take on the character of attacking the institutions of the colonial state. Instead, the ARPS, led by African lawyers and professional men sought to use the legal channels at their disposal to prevent the decline in the chiefs' control of land. The protest movements concern with safeguarding traditional forms of land allocation reflected a desire in part to maintain the already hierarchised position of chiefs in relation to commoners and women (3). However, it was not always clear that the ARPS wanted simply to maintain an elevated position for chiefs in society (4). In their protests to the government the ARPS also sought greater opportunities for educated Africans. For instance, how could

---

(1) Agbodeka, *ibid.*

(2) Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 145.

(3) For one writer it marks also the inability to later develop the forces of production; R. Howard, Colonialism and Underdevelopment, (London: Croom Helm, 1978.)

(4) The notion that the ARPS sought solely to maintain the position of chiefs is of course debatable. In particular see Terence J. Johnson, 'Protest: Tradition and Change; An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots 1890-1920', Economy and Society, 1, 1972. In this article Johnson is careful to highlight the impact that the Asafo companies, dissident young men (commoners), made to the ARPS and their motive for so doing: to protest increasingly against the chiefs as the main agent of colonial control. See the final section to this chapter and Chapter 6 below for a brief discussion of splits within the ARPS and the Native Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA).

an indigenous group of businessmen develop if they were persistently inhibited and prevented from acquiring sufficient land, inputs and favourable market conditions by the colonial state? Why were Africans always penalised in their aspirations to develop their own resources and why instead were European concession companies encouraged to develop? The ARPS was later to write in protest against the Timber Protection Bill that they sympathised with the government's desire to restrict the cutting of immature timber but such a policy should not lead to penalties of imprisonment or fines on African businessmen. This measure along with others infringed upon:

the rights and enjoyment of private property namely that persons owning timber land or concessions are to be fined or imprisoned if they failed to attain the permission of a District Commissioner to cut timber on their own land ... (1).

The Bill of 1897 was seen to work against native investors laying them open to the mercy of the foreign speculator. Indeed, it was wrong for the colonial regime to focus solely upon export trades and the encouragement of foreign investment because:

Besides its expenditure, there are local needs for timber and a great many of the people use lumber made out of timber trees growing on their own property in the way of furniture etc. Carpenters, joiners and other cabinet makers also largely buy and use local lumber for trade purposes (2).

After a while, opposition to the 1897 Concession Bill intensified. For Maxwell this was orchestrated by African speculators. The leader of the ARPS had after all been linked with the Gold Coast Native Concession Purchasing Company Ltd which in turn was involved in negotiations for the Adansi Concessions, later to be owned by Ashanti

---

(1) GNA(CC) 150 Timber Industry 27/2/1907-29/11/1935 Letter form ARPS protesting against the Timber Protection Bill.

(2) Ibid.

Goldfields Limited (1). The culmination of the protest was a delegation to London in 1898 and a petition to Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary which outlined three reasons for African opposition to the Bill. The first was that there was no unoccupied land for the Crown to take control of in the colony. Second, any procedures linked to the Bill should be judicial and not administrative, and third, that this judicial procedure should be subject to native law and not English law. Chamberlain gave assurances to satisfy the ARPS on points two and three.(2) Despite these however a Lands Bill, in the form of a Concession Ordinance, was passed in 1900. This Ordinance was an attempt to limit the excesses of some unprincipled concessionaires while simultaneously aiding the development of the mining and timber industries. This 'new' Bill did not interfere with the right of landowners to make grants of land while a new judicial tribunal of the Supreme Court was to be established to investigate all concessions. Final approval was necessary however, before a concession was declared valid. A limit was to be placed upon the size of mining concessions of 5 square miles and of others to twenty. A specific time period was to be imposed on concessions rather than let pieces of land lie unworked, for purely speculative purposes (3).

This legislation and the debacle with African opposition finally resulted in greater security of title for the concession holders together

---

(1) Kimble, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 353. This volte face is suggested to be due to Chamberlain's realisation that West Africa was no place for permanent white settlement as in South Africa. As G. Padmore put it, quoted by Kimble *ibid.*, p. 354 "The mosquitoes saved the West Africans not the eloquence of the intellectuals".

(3) See Appendix I to this Chapter for an example of a concession with this new procedure and the various legal stages.



with a protection from fraudulent endeavours. Although the ARPS saw it as a great victory, and for one recent observer Africans remained in absolute possession of their lands, it was in name alone (1). A further inroad had been made into both real and potential forms of Gold Coast productive activities through a clarification of the framework within which expatriate firms were to operate on the Coast. The legal parameters established for continued under-development of the Gold Coast were established by the colonial regime as part of a 'development' policy to promote production for the export of gold and timber.

The concession court was certainly busy in the first quarter after it was established in Tarkwa by the Concession Ordinance of 1900. For example, there were 65 criminal and 47 civil cases resulting in a revenue for the exchequer of £98 (2). The call from some colonial officials increasingly came to reflect mining interests. The demand was for a concerted attempt at developing commercial activities linked with the land. The District Commissioner in Tarkwa, for instance, following the establishment of the Lands Bill in 1900, began talking about the need for chiefs to be compelled to cultivate a certain portion of their land for growing corn and food for the mines first and then for export; all at fixed market prices (3).

It (is) necessary that the chiefs be compelled to cultivate certain portion of their lands or some other means adopted whereby the resources of the country may be taken advantage of, at most of the mines European vegetables are a success and I believe it would increase the enthusiasm for the cultivation of vegetables if a competent gardener

---

(1) Agbodeka, *op.cit.*

(2) GNA(A) ADM 27/178, Duplicate Letter Book 1902-3, Report on Wassaw District for Quarter ended 30 June, 1902.

(3) Ibid.

from Aburi was stationed at Tarkwa to advise the laying out of suitable gardens (1).

Accompanying this increased interest by the colonial regime in promoting some African peasant production the colonial state sought to impose legislation limiting activities in the forests. A Timber Protection Ordinance was introduced in 1907 to prevent the cutting of immature trees. The advice of the Conservator of Forests in Nigeria was that African farming techniques were wasteful and there was a substantial overexploitation of the forests for timber and fuel. The recommendation was for the establishment of forest reserves in areas particularly prone to deforestation. A Forestry Department was established in 1909 to overview developments in the timber industry and legislation was drafted to place 'waste lands' in reserves. The colonial regime, blind to the earlier opposition that this kind of wording and terminology had had, now sparked off a further round of protest. For one protester, the people were with the stroke of a pen reduced to:

mere squatters, depending, in effect upon the foreign capitalist for a daily wage as hewers of wood and drawers of water (2).

An amended version of the Bill was drafted, making it clearer that ownership was not being affected. An owner remained in control of land until he failed to manage it properly. Supervision of the land passed to the Forestry Department. This was still an inadequate recognition of African land rights. The ARPS protested strongly and the Secretary of State took the opportunity to have a full inquiry into

- 
- (1) Ibid. Report on Wassaw District Quarter ended 30 September 1902. Colonial representatives at the Botanical Gardens at Aburi became an important pressure for apparent 'Scientific' and progressive forms of agricultural production and play a key role in the later development of colonial rule and policy.
- (2) J.E.Casely Hayford, Gold Coast Land Tenure and the Forest Bill, quoted in Kimble op.cit., for the latter this is seen as an emotional appeal. On the contrary this was an appeal which recognised the transformation of the Gold Coast economy into a monetarised and wage labour economy.

conditions governing the alienation of land (1). The Belfield Report of 1912 was unequivocal in its findings. The land was the property of the people and a concession was simply a contract to which the government was merely a supervisor. Too much advantage had been taken of inhabitants in the rush for concessions and the size of mining activities should be reduced from five to one mile.

It was clear that any system of reserves proposed by the Forestry Department would create unrest among the inhabitants of the Gold Coast. Later discussions and attempts at establishing a system of forest reserves were fraught with difficulties (2). These varied from disputes between and within different groups on the land, 'confusion' as to whose land it was and the attempts to impose a demarcated reserve where no farming was allowed on what would only ever be agricultural land. The 1911 Forest Ordinance was never enacted. It was not until 1926 in fact that a similar Bill was passed and we will see some of the effects of this in the following chapter.

The disputes discussed thus far have been between representatives of the African classes and colonial state, and also between various capitalist interests which attempted to gain the support of the colonial state in plantation and mining concessions. There were also increased disputes within different Akan groups reflected by the number of destoolments. The ability of a group to destool its chief has always been seen as a characteristic of democratic principles within the Akan. The frequency of these events rose dramatically with the onset of colonialism and the subsequent increase in debts incurred by individual chiefs,

---

(1) H.C. Belfield, Report on the Legislation Governing the Alienation of Native Lands in the Gold Coast Colony and Ashantis with some observations on the Forest Ordinance, 1911. (London: 1912), p. 366.

(2) See Appendix II to this chapter.

and brought by them within the rubric of the stool (1).

The increased disruption of the way of life of the indigenous African population was the product of an increasingly pervasive cash economy: not with the presence of cash per se but with the notion of the cash nexus instigated by the colonial authorities and European firms operating in the hinterland. Indigenous disruption also followed the rigours of the European supervised work discipline. One such expatriate firm which was relatively successful in its operation at this time was Mengel Mahogany logging company from Louisville, United States of America (2). This Company was the only exporter of mahogany and sought to cling to its monopoly. It had a substantial number of employees; approximately sixteen hundred Africans on the beach, rivers and in the logging camps. They began operations at the turn of the twentieth century. They also employed a selection of Africans in clerical work and as skilled labour. Their production figures compared very favourably with competitors. For example, in the nine month period

---

(1) Guggisberg gave the increase in destoolments as follows: 1904-08, = 7; 1909-13 = 23; 1914-18 = 38; 1919-24 = 41. See Grier op.cit., p.44, fn.7. The only acceptable debts which could be incurred collectively by the stool were for things like the building of stool houses or the burying of a chief. With the spread of concessions and cash economy chiefs incurred higher levels of indebtedness and presented them to the Oman for collective payment. The colonial authorities saw this as a destabilising effect. Stool debts were just one part of the increased malaise which afflicted Asante and the Akan following the bigger desire to earn money and to offer land to concessionaires. The vast majority of cases recorded in the Civil Record Book by colonial authorities were for indebtedness emanating from disputes between indigenous groups and between the Akan and concession companies. See for example, GNA(A) SCT 4/4/1 Civil Record Book. Added to these examples of indebtedness following the advance of colonialism should be numbers of criminal and civil cases after the development of concessions and mining companies. See inter alia GNA(A) ADM 27/1/14 Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book 1909-1910 and GNA(A) ADM 27/1/20 Duplicate Letter Book Prestea, 1911-12.

(2) GNA(S) 1973 Concessions, 8449 Bibiani Timber Concession 12/6/10-20/11/16.

January - September 1913 the company produced ca. 17891 logs from operations in Axim including Twin Rivers, Princes, Half Assini and Anabo (1). To try and maintain this rate of exploitation Mengel's supervised the drive of logs from the interior "all the way from the Bush to the Akanko boom and work goes on through the day till finished" (2). Other firms were less fortunate in their appropriation of the forest resources because they were dependent upon the driving of the logs by African traders. European timber firms saw the latter as unreliable. This was largely because sections of the African labour force were becoming 'freed' from pre-capitalist relations of production but this separation was still only partial. For example, African labour involved in the shipping of logs was based on a tribute system where it was only financially remunerative to ship logs if there was sufficient demand for them on the coast. In 1926, the demand for non contracted timber was small; consequently few logs were shipped inland by Africans. Those working in the tributary system were in a position where the alternatives were either to sell at a loss, leaving logs to rot below Enibil or of returning them at expense to fresh water. Here was a case where African producers had modified their relations of production to fit into an increasing market economy but, perhaps ironically a lack of demand had led to the withdrawal of the 'commodity' from the market. African labourers involved in the timber industry 'got bored' when insufficient rain fell to transport the logs. They

---

(1) GNA(S) 379 Timber Industry 30/4/13-29/11/30. While talking about Mengel's profitability it is interesting to note that it was not always obtained 'fairly and squarely'. They were not exempt from malpractice and non compliance with the regulations for concessionaires. Having paid the 'exorbitant'(!) consideration fee of £105 for fifteen years timber concession in May 1908 they were fined £17,000 for default. See, GNA(S) 1973 Concessions 8570 Kumasi Timber Concessions 19/12/12-14/1/13.

(2) Ibid. D.C. Tarkwa to Commissioner Western Province, 25/10/1926.

therefore left to do something else (1).

(b) Pressures Towards Landlessness

Together with the increased number of land disputes which resulted from the growing number of concessions and number of stool debts, mining and timber concessions also had the effect of drastically reducing the readily available amount of land traditionally used for cultivation. Most concessions had a clause allowing for the continuation of farming rights but a good many concessionaires ignored this proviso. The Ohin of Mansa, for example, complained in 1925 to the District Commissioner of Tarkwa that he was prevented, contrary to agreement, "from collecting firewood or cutting wood of any sort from the land" (2). This situation was to get worse later when a system of timber reserves was finally established which placed restrictions on the farming of land. The Ohene of Brakwa, for example, said that:

after my enstoolment, I could find no place to cultivate as a chief of the town of Brakwa, and for this reason beg to apply that a little portion should be granted to me for the purpose of farming (3).

It was in an attempt to prevent the continuation of a situation like this that a Lands Bill was introduced. The legislation was not intended to prevent the alienation of African land. It was rather intended to prevent its haphazard and uncoordinated appropriation. The Act took time to become operational and when it was enacted it was

- 
- (1) We discuss colonial difficulties with securing an indigenous labour force, separated (freed), from pre-capitalist relations of production in greater detail in Chapter Six below.
- (2) GNA(S) District Administration Office Tarkwa: 174 Timber Firms and Industry 19/6/1924-9/2/1948, quoted in letter Commissioner Western Provinces to DC Tarkwa 18 November, 1925.
- (3) GNA(CC) District Administration Office ADM 23/1/452 Forest Reserves and Forestry 19/7/1929-23/4/1946; The Ohene of Brakwa 24 August 1929 requesting part of Oboya Reserve.

not particularly effective. As late as 1930 British officials in Downing Street were telling one enquirer from Mexico, who wanted to work on the Ancobra river, that:

The land in the Gold Coast is regarded as the property of the Native tribes and that leasing it is a matter of arrangement with them subject to validation by the government (1).

However, it was still common in 1924 for timber to be cut without a certified concession being taken up. Payment in these cases was made for each tree felled and the district was then left as soon as the operator had two or three seasons in it (2).

#### IV. COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION AND MONETISATION OF THE GOLD COAST AND ASANTE

We can see already that the consolidation and drive to control the Gold Coast by the British, and the incursion of a capitalist money economy at the end of the nineteenth century had a number of consequences for the Akan. We will look specifically in this concluding section on the overall impact of the broader European capitalist presence on social relations of production in Asante and a number of reactions to it on the coast, specifically with regard to proposed colonial legislation to facilitate indirect rule. We shall first see what this legislation was and then what was its desired impact. We need in short to see more clearly the nature of the colonial capitalist impact at this time.

The thrust of our argument is that the period leading up to the Yaa Asantwaa war in 1900, and the early years of the twentieth

---

(1) GNA(S) Transferred District Sekondi 379: Timber Industry, 30/4/13-29/11/30

(2) GNA(S) 285 Timber Concession Reserves Ankobra and Sehwi District Provincial Commissioner Sekondi to Acting Conservator of Forests, 20/6/1924.

century, witnessed the increased development of commodity relations in Asante and the further supervision by the colonial state of the conditions for the greater exploitation of labour and land in the colony (1). One form of this 'supervision' was the development of legal measures to increase British formal colonial control over indigenous activities through policies of indirect rule (2). In turn these policies sought to further enhance the commercial viability of the colony and trade emanating from Asante but with the minimum of disruption for indigenous institutions.

The significance of legal changes during the period of colonial and capitalist incursion has been discussed at length (3). Briefly, although specific forms of capital penetration had different effects on different historical social formations a number of general observations can be made relating to the desired impact of the legal frameworks imposed by colonial authorities to facilitate the easier incursion of the colonised territory.

As British interests on the Gold Coast grew, especially following the separation of the colony from Sierra Leone in 1850 and the establishment of the colony in 1874, it was recognised that the

- 
- (1) The role of the colonial state and the processes whereby capitalism enters non-capitalist social formations has been conceptualised in one manner by H. Bernstein, 'Notes on Capital and Peasantry', ROAPE, 10, 1977.
- (2) See F.D. Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Imperial Africa (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1923).
- (3) Francis G. Snyder, Capitalism and Legal Change: An African Transformation, Studies on Law and Social Control (London: Academic Press, 1981), see also 'Labour Power and Legal Transformation in Senegal', ROAPE, 21, 1981. For a theoretical appraisal of the importance of law in capitalism, see Evgeny B. Pashukanis, Law and Marxism: A General Theory, Introduction C. Arthur, (London: Ink Links, 1978).  
C. Sumner (editor) Crime, Justice and Underdevelopment, (London: Heinemann, 1982).



interests of miners and concessionaires together with the colonial authorities could not be represented wholeheartedly by indigenous processes of decision making. If the colony was to develop satisfactorily, (that is, if, inter alia, the colony was to become more profitable), then a different legal framework would have to be imposed (1). This would lead to a rationalisation of decision making and a hierarchy of personnel leading to the entrenchment of the colonial state which could supervise all issues of law and order which had a bearing upon the further development of capitalism in the colony. Previous forms of social control, those imposed by chiefs in their own right were not wholly conducive to the further penetration of pre-capitalist forms by colonial capitalism. The development of capitalism in the colony; the monetisation of Asante and the coastal areas, the imposition of taxation for revenue and for the partial separation of the labourers from their means of production together with much needed *corvée* labour could best be achieved peacefully with the minimum amount of disruption to indigenous social activity. Legal changes were invoked which tried to capture the agreement of indigenous peoples - hence indirect rule (2). Whenever this tactic proved difficult to implement, however, there was always the ultimate use of force at the disposal of the colonial state.

Indirect rule was a strategy to utilise aspects of indigenous

---

(1) Moves towards a different legal framework began in fact in the nineteenth century; see Chapter 4 above.

(2) It was not as easy as simply invoking a policy of indirect rule as in the work of Lugard and there being general agreement on it. There was much disagreement as to the correct form of colonial administration and the pace of any change. These conflicts are discussed briefly below and in Chapter 6, they are dealt with more fully in Edsman, op.cit Chapter One and, J. Lonsdale and B. Berman, 'Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914', JAH, 20, 1979.

forms of control while at the same time initiating and then reifying something called 'customary law' (1). It has been suggested recently for example that:

Customary law was a concept and a legal form that originated in specific historical circumstances, namely the period in the transformation of pre-capitalist social relations that saw the consolidation of the colonial state (2).

In other words, customary law was derived specifically from the "subordination of (the) African social formation to capitalist relations" and was expressed through the state. We will see shortly, in our brief examination of the legal paraphernalia established by colonisation on the coast that customary law became a "framework for the insertion of rural classes into peripheral capitalist social formations" (3). It was part of the ideology of colonial domination and increasingly reflected the subordination of indigenous groups to an emerging local bourgeoisie and the even stronger metropolitan state and its representatives.

The point here is simple. For the next phase of colonialism to be successful: for the incursion and subordination of Asante and

- 
- (1) For one writer the "use of indigenous political institutions" for local government was dependent upon the modifications of these institutions which fall into two categories: "modifications of aspects of traditional government that were repugnant to European ideas of what constituted good government; and modifications that were designed to ensure the achievement of the main purpose of colonial rule, the exploitation of the colonised country". M.Crowder, West Africa Under Colonial Rule, (London: Hutchinson, 1968), p. 169. A further definition of indirect rule is given by Hailey, African Survey, p. 413, quoted in K.A. Busia, The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti, published for IAI, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 105, as "The system by which the tutelary power recognises existing African societies and assists them to adopt themselves to the functions of local government".
- (2) Snyder, (1982), op. cit., p. 40.
- (3) Ibid.

the hinterland, to reap the commercial rewards of trade and to break down the barriers of chiefly control by free market operations, a more substantial framework would have to be imposed by the colonial state. This framework was to be essentially juridical, but as in the past, military operations were not excluded from the achievement of colonial objectives. As the commercial stakes rose and the need for more organisation and systematic exploitation of the territory grew so too did the need to control and direct the impact of these changes; an impact which began to erode the previous power and positions of chiefs vis à vis commoners and elders as the remuneration for the latter increased opportunities for monetary gain (1).

We can now look at the nature of this juridical component to British colonialism on the Gold Coast. Unlike previous accounts of the establishment of 'indirect rule' (2) on the coast we situate the development of a legal infrastructure by the British within the broader developing strategy of subjugating the Akan economically as well as politically to the exigencies of metropolitan capital. However, as we have seen, the pace of the process of subjugation was to be carefully monitored and sanctioned wherever possible by the colonial state. Officials of the latter were becoming increasingly aware that to dissolve pre-colonial relations of production too quickly would disrupt whatever benefits could be gained from the development of capitalism inland. Pre-colonial modes of production still offered the cheapest

---

(1) The importance of a legal structure at a time when this process occurred was laid out in the nineteenth century and has more recently been discussed: "the juridical element in the regulation of human conduct enters where the isolation and opposition of interests begin." Editors introduction to Pashuskanis, op.cit., p.13, emphasis in original, and Karl Marx, (1970), op. cit.

(2) Compare Kimble, op.cit., W.E.F. Ward, A History of Ghana, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966).

form of reproducing labour, hence the use of migrant labour in the mines and the use of the Northern Territories as a labour reserve (1). Moreover, the colonial authorities were very cautious in helping to facilitate the alienation of land for cocoa producers and thereby assist in the erosion of pre-colonial forms of land tenure. This was because the price of Gold Coast produced cocoa was located largely in small costs of production on family or stool land. It was recognised that with the commercialisation of this land, costs for buyers and users of cocoa in Europe would rise.

(a) Indirect Rule

"Indirect rule" on the Gold Coast dates back to the 1830's when George Maclean, as second President of the Council of Merchants, interfered in the internal powers of the chiefs (2). This interference took the form of eroding the power of chiefs to try breaches of law. For example, in 1853 a Supreme Court Ordinance established regular courts within the forts and settlements to deal with civil and criminal cases, and in 1856 an Order in Council allowed the Supreme Court to hear cases arising from protected territories without the cooperation of any native chief or authority. These colonial manoeuvres to rationalise the law created opposition and unrest in the territory. African grievances were reflected in a memorandum from a number of chiefs to the British authorities in 1864 and also the establishment of the Fante Confederation 1868-1873 (3). Opposition to concerted British attempts at establishing a rigorous form of legal structure, however, reached a peak with the

---

(1) See for example, Nii-K Plange, 'Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana: Natural Causes or Colonial Capitalism?' ROAPE, 15/16, 1980, and Roger G. Thomas, 'Forced Labour in British West Africa: The Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1906-1927', JAH 14, 1, 1973.

(2) Some of this background is filled in by the preceding chapter.

(3) See Agbodeka, op.cit.

development of the ARPS and opposition to the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1883.

The problem for the colonial authorities, was to facilitate the smooth transition to capitalism on the colony. This was a transition which could only at first be piecemeal and considerably uneven but could nevertheless be assisted by the legitimation and consolidation afforded it by a European inspired legal framework. In short, the latter was needed for the legal introduction of capitalist property relations and the further development of free wage labour. For example, a number of criteria had to be fulfilled to ensure the greater efficiency of mining companies which, as we have seen were hopelessly ill-managed and lacked a permanent labour force. To meet the requirement of a wage labour force to work in the mines or in concession companies while retaining the advantages of reproducing this labour force cheaply, the colonial authorities sought the partial separation of the Akan from pre-capitalist means and relations of production. This incomplete 'release' of the Akan from pre-capitalist relations of production was needed to ensure a more permanent workforce, which had to rely increasingly on the opportunities for sustaining itself provided by the colonial authorities and metropolitan capital. The separation of the Akan wholly from their pre-capitalist social relations of production could not occur instantly. Indeed, if this had been the case there would have been a breakdown of indigenous forms of production - forms which were still needed to provide subsistence food production and to prevent large scale social upheaval. The production of food was also required to maintain the workers in the mines so a direct separation of producers from their means of production was not immediately sought. Slow changes occurred in indigenous relations of production often

in a very limited way because changes began at first in the techniques of production and imposed social changes in the conditions of production rather than directly in the relations of production (1).

The commoditisation of labour power was attempted in the Gold Coast as early as 1852 through the introduction of a Poll Tax. Although not implemented effectively the role of taxation was later to become an important aspect of colonial moves to undermine existing relations of production, and to force people into wage employment through the legal obligation to pay tax. The collection of taxes and revenue by chiefs was to form a large part of the thrust of the policy of indirect rule. Provision was made for direct taxation in the Kumasi Public Health Bill 1925, and by an Ordinance in 1928, but it was not until the 1930's that direct taxation became operable. The chiefs were to collect taxes which were likened to the collection of 'tribute' while unfree labour was to be discouraged:

By its means (i.e. taxation - RB) the upper classes can be paid salaries for public work; slavery, forced labour, and all other forms of exactions from the peasantry can be declared illegal without reducing the ruling classes to poverty (2).

The need was recognised by the colonial authorities to make the necessary alliance with the chiefly classes to enhance colonial control and to change the material basis of chiefs' position and rule. For example, one Governor commented that:

Ruling through the chiefs which is certainly the only manner possible of governing the remoter parts of the colony, necessarily involves making them responsible for keeping order among their people (3).

---

(1) Bernstein, op.cit., p. 61.

(2) Lugard, op.cit., p.233, see the following chapter for attempts at ending unfree labour and developing wage employment.

(3) GNA(A) ADM 11/1/2 Case No.100/1900, Upper Wassaw Native Affairs 1900, Governor Nathan to Chamberlain 4/2/1902.

In 1877, Governor Freeling wanted to increase the powers of chiefs to allow them to mobilise resources, including labour in the construction of roads. The use of *corvée* labour in public works became an important factor in facilitating the dominance of metropolitan capital in the territory. This form of labour, which received the euphemism 'communal labour', was needed to ensure the development of necessary infrastructure suitable for the transportation of commodities (1). The chiefs in the colony were frequently prevailed upon to fulfill their role under Native Jurisdiction and if they were not forthcoming in providing labour and in organising it satisfactorily for the completion of roads and clearing of paths, they were coerced. In 1901, for example, the Chief of Tarkwa was informed by the District Commissioner that one hundred men must be sent for 6 months to work on the railways. For this, the chief would receive £20/0/0. When the chief did not reply to this request the District Commissioner wrote again, this time in stronger language citing specifically the Chief's Ordinance Number 9 1895, sections 2, 3 and 4 which gave the chief power to call out for service "persons of the labouring class in his town and village" and that if such people refused or neglected to comply they were liable to punishment according to customary native law and on conviction before the District Commissioner of a fine of £10 or three months in prison. Similarly, the chief was eligible to the penalty of a fine but this time of £250 or six months in prison (2).

---

(1) Requests were also made to chiefs for recruits into the colonial army. GNA(A) ADM 27/1/1 Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book March 1881-May 1883; March 17, 1881 and a request from Civil Commissioner to the Chief of Tarquah for men to fight against Asante.

(2) GNA(A) ADM 27/1/7. Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book 3.11.1900-28.8.1901. In addition to the desire to ensure that the chiefs obeyed mounting legislation the DC of Tarkwa wanted to ensure the steady flow of labour to the mines by empowering mine managers to control local disturbances. A mines police was called for.

(i) Sovereignty and the Formalisation of Colonialism

The issues of native jurisprudence are complex. We do not need to examine them in great detail for this has been done adequately elsewhere (1). We need here only concern ourselves with the general thrust of the legislation introduced by the British colonial power and the rationale behind it. We need to look briefly at the general conflicts which the legislation initiated within and between Africans in the colony and in particular the uneasy alliance which had sprung up between the representatives of the ARPS and the chiefs. That is to say between the educated elite or developing bourgeoisie and the traditional power holders. These themes will be examined briefly within the overall framework of assessing the colonial strategy of opening the colony to capitalist incursion.

As we have seen already, the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (NJO) of 1883 proved unsuccessful in getting the registration of a significant number of chiefs. In that year only six head chiefs registered and by 1903 there were only eighteen who had accepted the conditions of the Ordinance (2). A lack of clarity remained between the areas of jurisdiction which were in the control of the chiefs and that which was in the control of the British. An attempt had been made at clarifying this in 1894 with an amendment to the 1883 Ordinance in which Governor Maxwell tried to stipulate that every native tribunal must be recognised by the Governor as a condition for exercising jurisdiction and that no native tribunal and chief except those so recognised could exercise jurisdiction. This amendment was withdrawn because of its exaggerated emphasis upon native tribunals and a lack of

---

(1) Edsman, op. cit.

(2) Those who did accept the Ordinance, however, seemed pleased to have been entrusted with powers from the Governor which were already chiefly concerns. See Letter from Chief Ennimil Coomah, 14 March 1883 to Governor, GNA(A) ADM 27/1/1.



concern with the role of the chiefs. No further attempt was made to rationalise the respective areas of interest until 1904 when a new chiefs' Ordinance was passed to strengthen the Governor's powers of control over the appointment of chiefs and was to be extended further in a Native Jurisdiction Bill of 1906. This only became law and then in an amended form, in 1910 (1).

Already in 1900 Governor Nathan had sought to bolster the power of chiefs and in 1902 a Department of Native Affairs was established to monitor developments in 'traditional' areas. The colonial 'strategy' was to place in the Governor, and not as had supposedly previously been the case in the Oman, the limits of the jurisdiction of native tribunals. The Governor was now to depose and dismiss chiefs. This clause in particular created much opposition to the Bill by the ARPS which at the same time was also fighting the colonial attempt to seize indigenous forest land. The educated elite in the ARPS were keen that some form of control was kept over the chiefs especially as their interests clashed with these holders of traditional authority. The importance of the ARPS objection was that control over the chiefs was necessary to ensure the smooth running of indigenous administration: but who should be responsible for ensuring this? Was it to be the uneducated chiefs or the literate and petty-bourgeois elite of lawyers and professionals on the coast? Which group could most ensure the transition to a market economy and the greater incursion by capital of a non-capitalist social formation? Hitherto, Governors had expressed the view that the development of western civilisation be implemented through the development of English law and justice on the coast,

---

(1) Edsman, op.cit., p. 39 and p. 43.

essentially through property laws. For the foreseeable future it was thought that these innovations would have to run side by side with traditional institutions and customs. It was not long in fact before consideration of upholding traditional institutions began to outweigh the former thoughts on initiating western legal forms. What has been called the Maclean approach of, "pushing forward Western civilisation by way of English law and justice and interventionist policies" was to be displaced by a government strategy of protecting traditional institutions and customs - of keeping traditional and western society clearly separated (1). There was to be some overlap however between 'traditional' and British jurisdiction, and this was to be the inevitable outcome of the intentions of a regime which sought to maintain stability and facilitate the controlled incursion of metropolitan and industrial commercial activities throughout the territory.

Financial and administrative constraints facing the British on the coast partly account for the change in the attitude of the colonial state away from the direct expansion of British jurisdiction towards greater rule through the chiefs. As one observer has commented, "the Maclean approach was risky and expensive" (2). There were too few British administrators to cope with the demands of direct rule. However, colonial opinion as to the fruitfulness of indirect rule was not unanimous. For instance, both Maclean and later Chief Justice Sir Brandford Griffith knew precisely the kind of society which they wanted to develop on the coast. Griffith had called for the abolition of Native Tribunals in 1887 in the steady march of progress towards western 'civilisation'. The promoters of indirect rule also wanted the onward

---

(1) Edsman, op. cit., p. 42.

(2) Edsman, ibid., p. 42.

march of western civilisation and particularly the imposition of British legal forms relating to property relations, but on the face of it the constraints on British domestic financing to the colony took precedence over direct rule. Instead, the chiefs and elders were to be encouraged to carry out much of the colonial states work (1). At the same time however, (the end of the nineteenth century) sufficient colonial resources were summoned to reduce the threat of Asante invasion of the southern Provinces which it was feared would reduce trade. Resources were also to be sought to help facilitate greater infrastructural development in the form of railway construction. The seeming contradiction here, is resolved if we recognise that the colonial regime was thinking through more clearly the nature of its role in being able to facilitate greater commercialisation of the Gold Coast. Administrative costs, wherever possible, were to be kept to a minimum principally by working through indigenous structures. Indigenous forms of political organisation were also to be used to control the pace of European economic expansion under the supervision of the colonial state. The latter was achieved by colonial attempts to regularise concessions and land sales as we have seen through the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance and Land Bill. In other words the effect of the colonial states' policies was to monitor and if possible avert the too sudden dissolution of indigenous relations of production.

A complex series of debates continued about how metropolitan industrial and commercial interests could best be served by the colonial

---

(1) Our view here contrasts with Edsman's position which tends to see the promoters of indirect rule as "driving at nothing", *ibid.*, p.43. The debate here between different groups within the colonial administration is similar to earlier conflicts between different interests in Europe and on the coast over the most appropriate form of colonial capitalist development in the territory. See above and Chapter Four.

state. In 1922 Governor Guggisberg introduced a redrafted Native Jurisdiction Bill. This Bill was an amended version of Clifford's attempts in 1919 to clarify the colonial authorities' position on British sovereignty on the coast. As will be remembered, an Ordinance in 1910 failed to distinguish jurisdiction between head chiefs, chiefs and subchiefs and this confusion had been made worse by the establishment of Native Tribunals as compulsory Courts of first instance, thereby increasing the judicial duty of the chiefs (1). This increased work load for the chiefs added to a number of malpractices which incensed different parties, and led to a clamour for greater clarification of the respective roles of traditional authorities. In an attempt to bolster the powers of chiefs the British had run up against increased unrest emanating from greater economic activity in the region which led to "political instability and frequent destoolments of chiefs (2). The redrafted Bill stated more clearly that British sovereignty was total; that Native Jurisdiction was derived from the Crown (3) and that the Governor had absolute power in either extending or reducing the authority of any tribunal. This was contested bitterly by the ARPS on behalf of the chiefs and by the latter themselves in a curious alliance which both attempted to restore the authority of chiefs, while simultaneously increasing the powers of the educated elite in a number of legal areas.

(ii) The Protests

British sovereignty was vehemently challenged as it was over

---

(1) Edsman, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

(2) *Ibid.*, p.44, the rising number of destoolments is traced by Kimble, *op.cit.*, pp.470.

(3) There was also a separation of Native Tribunals into Head Chief Tribunals and Divisional Chiefs Tribunals.

the legislation affecting land. The British were reminded that the Bond of 1844 was an agreement between chiefs and colonial authorities containing affairs relating to areas of civil and criminal jurisdiction and not of sovereignty. Protests were critical of Britain limiting traditional authority. The ARPS and petitioners to the colonial authority were against any erosion of lesser chiefs' tribunals as contained in the 1922 Bill. The ARPS also had another grievance. This was that indigenous lawyers were excluded from Native Tribunals at a time when their interests and those of local merchants; inter alia, the ability to hire wage labour and secure a stronger position and status within Akan society, were under threat from the persistence of non-capitalist forms of organisation in production. Merchants now wanted the opportunity to sue in British courts. The lawyers saw themselves as a force for progress; as a force which maintained stability and nurtured good citizenship in the spirit of English law. The lawyers were walking a tight rope. On the one hand they wanted to preserve Native Tribunals, as in their protests of 1919, to uphold the authority of the chiefs: on the other hand they insisted on the opportunity to choose between Native Tribunals and British Courts (1). The representation of these two seemingly contradictory interests reflected the lawyers desire to be respected by the colonial state as responsible arbiters of 'public' opinion, (which was still in effect that of the chiefs) while simultaneously recognising the need for the gradual transformation of the structure of Gold Coast society (2). To achieve the latter, the lawyers saw the need for a codified legal structure established by the Supreme Court: the British

---

(1) This latter desire would mean the dependence of traditional Authority upon the Supreme Court and English legal concepts.

(2) Edsman, op. cit., pp.48-49.

too wished for a codified uniform traditional legal structure but one not wholly influenced by English law per se. The essence of indirect rule meant that on the surface at least traditional authority was seen to exercise a minimum amount of jurisdiction hence the need for the chiefs themselves to establish, through written statements, the true nature of customary law which could then be codified by the British.

The colonial state was willing and anxious to allow the persistence of traditional forms of authority in decision making but they also wanted them to become uniform and be inaugurated by the colonial authorities. After establishing a 'traditional' framework within which certain issues would be examined British forms of law took over. On land disputes for example, the Provincial Commissioners Court was final unless leave of appeal was granted to the Divisional Court. Customary law had jurisdiction in areas of insignificance. In the debates of 1922 which considered Governor Guggisberg's revised Bill the Attorney General made the position clear:

the law of this colony only recognises ... native customary laws in so far as they are consistent with natural justice, equity and good conscience. Secondly, in so far that they are consistent with the enactments of the Colonial legislature and with such of the enactments of the Imperial Parliament which apply to this colony. These limitations already make a considerable inroad into any fanciful doctrine of the absolute sacrosanctity of native customary law in the Gold Coast Colony (1).

In short:

The sovereign power in law and in fact in this colony resides in the sovereignty of the British Crown (2).

British sovereignty was absolute. The chiefs now held their office

---

(1) Debates of the Gold Coast 30/11/22 p. 581, quoted in Edsman, ibid., p.50.  
 (2) Ibid., pp. 576-578, quoted in ibid., p. 51.

sanctioned by the British. The chiefs had in principle accepted the notion of some kind of regulation of their powers, but certainly did not accept the British proposition that the authority of the chiefs emanated from the colonial regime. The chiefs now became increasingly aware of their need to intervene actively in politics, not at the behest of the ARPS which saw themselves as alternative arbiters of indirect rule, but as a force in their own right. This became more apparent with the Native Affairs Ordinance of 1927 (1).

This review of the arguments behind opposition to British attempts at consolidation of indirect rule, through the imposition of legal instruments, has served to illustrate the development of different interests within the colony. A separation of interests was occurring between the chiefs and a new educated elite as opportunity for the enrichment of the latter, and local commercial interests improved. At the same time, attempts at creating a unified customary law provided for the subordination of these newly developing social forces to metropolitan capital through the colonial state. This will be pursued further in the following chapter. We can now turn our attention from the Gold Coast colony as such to events in Asante and British attempts at securing this territory for greater commercial gain.

(b) British Colonial Incursion into Asante

We saw earlier how the development of concessions in the western region on the Gold Coast drew increasingly upon the labour and resources of Asante. We have looked briefly at the demand, for example, of more foodstuffs from Asante as well as the attempts by those in charge of

---

(1) See Chapter Six below.

concession companies to erode the dominance of pre-colonial forms of gold production. We can now continue our examination of the major themes of the period: the monetisation and commoditisation of the political economy of Asante. In short, we will see that like the British 'policy' of indirect rule on the coast and in the colony, that is the attempts at seeking colonial control with the minimum amount of disruption, British activities in Asante were also unclear, equivocal and subject to constant revision following differences of opinion (and interests) among the British (1).

Once again the British walked a tightrope. They wanted to maintain traditional forms of control in Asante, between the chiefs and commoners, while at the same time facilitating more trade and commercial transactions. The latter areas of commercial activity, however, were precisely those which hitherto in Asante had been the domain of chiefs and elders. With increasing colonial contact these areas became more accessible to other classes in Asante and thereby threatened the political stability of the territory. The major groupings within the Asante polity have already been discussed (2). We need not repeat the exercise here. Instead, we want to stress the tensions which were imposed upon Asante by Britain's continuing presence on the coast and the mounting contradiction which emanated from Asante at this time of increasing monetisation of the Asante economy.

---

(1) We will not trace the specific details of the events in this period of Asante history. This has been covered adequately elsewhere. See, Ivor Wilks, Asante in the Nineteenth Century, The Structure and Evolution of Political Order, African Studies Series 13, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) and, Thomas J. Lewin, Asante Before the British: The Premean Years 1875-1900, (USA: The Regents Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 1978).

(2) Chapters One and Four.



### British Occupation and the Monetisation of Asante

British colonial interests in the Gold Coast colony could only be secured by minimising the threat of military invasion of the coast from the Asante, and by linking the Asante with the commercial concerns of the territory as a whole. In part the latter had always been achieved as some individuals from Asante were permitted to trade on the coast, and the latter made more tracts of land available for concessions and became involved in the use of cash crop production. The knitting together of commercial interests in Asante and those on the coast were not always successful as the events of the nineteenth century reflect. In 1807, for example, the Company of Merchants had wanted to extend its trade into the interior but this happened at the time of Asante's attempts to reassert its sovereignty over the Fante states. Hostilities in 1824 and 1826 were quietened with the Anglo-Asante treaty in 1831 which guaranteed Asante's access to certain gold routes. Hostilities in the southern provinces began again in the early 1860's reflecting the increased dominance of 'imperialistic' forces, that is the camp for war within Asante (1).

The war programme of the Asantehene Kakari and the disputes with Britain over Asante's occupation of the southern provinces imposed immense strains on the Asante social formation. Several stringent measures were imposed on Asante commoners by the Asante state. These included increased recruitment into the army, higher taxation and more supervision of trade routes, together with shortages of readily available foodstuffs (2).

---

(1) See Chapter 4 for the account of the Asante power blocs between mercantile (peace) and imperialistic (war) parties.

(2) See Lewin, op.cit., Chapter 3.

Asante's two defeats by the British in 1874, culminating in the sacking of Kumase and the Treaty of Fomena, and again in 1900 in the Yaa Asantwaa war reflected Britain's desire to control the troublesome Asante hinterland and to secure outlets for coastal trade northwards (1). Control of the Asante gave the British greater access to territories to the North which became increasingly more contentious areas of inter-colonial rivalry. It is true that the 'scramble' for Africa at this time was partly associated with; "The fundamental demand of African traders ... for ordered conditions for a profitable trade"(2). The demand for securer procedures for trading were also made by Europeans on the coast who wanted more than simple assurances that monies lent on credit would be returned. This could only be guaranteed at that time by the institutional apparatus of colonialism. At the same moment Britain's concern was with securing a broader environment of control into the hinterland of West Africa. This was translated into action only after the obstacle of the House of Commons Select Committee Report of 1865 was overcome. The findings of this Committee were for the non-expansion of British interests in West Africa. The position changed however following the flurry of French and German activity in the region. The French, for example, moved into the hinterlands of the Gold Coast from the Ivory Coast in the late 1880's and the Gold Coast Governor, Brandford Griffith was forced to send an envoy, George Ekem Ferguson, to make treaties with neighbouring areas for the British (3).

- 
- (1) Attempts to completely divert commercial concerns away from the Asantehene failed. See, Lewin, op.cit., Chapter 3.
- (2) J.D.Hargreaves, 'Towards a History of the Partition of Africa', JAH, 1, 1960, p.100.
- (3) See Boniface I. Obichere, West African States and European Expansion: The Dahomey-Niger Hinterland 1885-1898, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971). Chapter 5; Kwame Arhin, (editor) The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson A Fanti Official of the Government of the Gold Coast 1890-1897. African Social Research Documents, (Leiden & Cambridge, African Studiecentrum, Cambridge African Studies Centre, 1974).

The usefulness of this move by the British activities in the region became especially apparent after the annexation of the Asante (Ashanti) when the path lay open to 'colonise' areas which had already signed treaties with the British through the use of the envoy Ferguson (1).

As one observer has remarked:

Aware of the increasing international rivalry for West African markets and the resurgence of Asante governmental power and authority, the acting governor pushed Colonial Office officials for territorial expansion and the annexation of the Asanteman (2).

Following 1874 Britain favoured the rehabilitation of Kumase but not to its former glory. Instead, the states in the Protectorate which included, Denkyira, Fante, Sehwi, Twifo and Wassa (3), and anti Kumase groups, were supported by the British in the latter's attempts to reduce the threat of further military action against the colony (4).

Underlying the British tactics of expediency was the continuous desire to keep the commercial conduits open in order to placate British and African mercantile interests on the coast and of course, the ever present fears of Asante military actions (5).

Asante's increased incorporation into an ever expanding international economy posed an enormous threat to the centralised power of

(1) Crowder, (1968), op. cit., p. 150.

(2) Lewin, op.cit., p. 175.

(3) The remaining Southern Provinces which formed the British Protected territory were Accra, Adangme, Ahanta, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akyem and Aowin, ibid., p. 42.

(4) This is argued persuasively by Lewin, ibid., Chapter 3. Dissidents within Asante used Britain's presence to gain a greater voice in decision making after 1874. For example, the Bekwai and Adansi in 1886 used British support to shore up their separate causes, ibid., p.52. See also Chapter 8, especially pp.206, and the British strategy of dismantling the legitimacy of Kumase over Asante.

(5) Ibid., p.52.

Kumase (1) especially following the British decision to occupy Asante after Chamberlain's appointment to the Colonial Office in 1895. We will see shortly how the rush to become involved in the cash crop production of kola and rubber and the shortly to develop cocoa farming by individuals in Asante posed a serious threat to what had previously been the State Trading Company or Bata Fekuo (2). Britain's presence on the coast, and the concessionaires' attempts to seize more land in the hinterland, opened up the possibilities for cash income in Asante. To the concern of the Asantehene and certain elders a revolt was brewing within the Asante against the constraints imposed by the Asante state to the individual accumulation of wealth. These restrictions included high rates of taxation, lower death duties which hitherto had inhibited the accumulation of capital and high rates of interest on loans. The nineteenth century Asante political economy had always been geared to making the most of Asante's indigenous resources under the control of the central government. Following the trauma associated with the sacking of Kumase, the bolstering of opposition states and internal conflict within Kumase, space was created for the independent development of the rubber asikafo in the creation of a new industry and in the removal of government obstacles to individual accumulation of wealth (3).

A major area affected by Britain's greater incursion into Asante was the increased emphasis upon and presence of the 'cash nexus' in Kumase. The use of money in trading transactions was not a new

---

(1) See Crowder, (1968), op.cit., pp.149-150. In 1894 Acting Governor Hodgson had asked for London's permission to occupy Ashanti but Lord Ripon had turned this down, "I do not desire to annex Ashanti in name or in fact and thereby greatly to increase the responsibilities of the Gold Coast Government" in, ibid., p.149.

(2) See Chapter Two and Chapter Four and Wilks (1975), op.cit.

(3) See below on the development of the rubber industry.

innovation to people in Asante. Before ca. 1874 there had been opportunities for earning cash if an Asante had been associated with gold or palm oil production. There had also been limited scope for non state trading groups. In general however, payments made to chiefs for taxation or tribute had been paid in kind (1). The development of the rubber trade and cocoa later changed this. These developments signified "the use of capital as commercial capital, so ... production (was) no longer for use alone mediated more or less by money but for wholesale trade" (2). In part this was the result of indigenous activities but also in part of the result of colonial endeavour. The latter created the institutional framework for money making while also quickening the pressures for cash crop production. For the successful initiation of capitalist production and for the stabilisation of the territory colonial authorities required the monetisation of certain sectors of Asante's political economy. Without this the formal incorporation of Asante into the British sphere of influence with the exiling of Prempeh I and the establishment of the Protectorate was meaningless (3).

The immediate response of the British in bringing Asante under formal colonial rule was to establish an administration based upon a Chief Commissioner together with Provincial and District Commissioners. These administrators brought with them much of the paraphernalia of institutional control which had already been used in the Gold Coast

---

(1) See Chapter 1 above for examples of 'communal labour' on chiefs' farms.

(2) Karl Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft). Translated with a forward by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1977), p. 859.

(3) The specifics of the commoditisation and monetisation of labour is dealt with in Chapter 6 below.

colony. The British ensured that the movement of traders was not hampered as had previously been the case, and the traders position was enhanced by the added impetus that the British brought to bear on the development of roads and the urbanisation of Kumase (1). The development of infrastructure in the area not only facilitated the easier movement of traders and the influx of 'strangers' but also the easier access for the British to possible areas of conflict.

The introduction of an uniform currency deserves our attention. Increasingly, wealth in the form of cash became more apparent in Asante which in turn further induced the earning of cash (2). More opportunity to earn cash increasingly eroded previous orthodoxy where the chiefs were meant to be the only individuals who could both accumulate and display wealth. The result of Britain's presence in the Asante Protectorate and the relaxing of sanctions against individual trade further weakened the position of chiefs. For one writer:

Society in general was becoming more acquisitive, more money conscious, and more competitive (3).

In time the overall effect was for the redirection of Asante's energies previously used in the expansion of the Asante Empire towards commercial endeavour.

---

(1) "By the end of 1918 Ashanti had 383 miles of motor roads, this number had increased to 500 miles by 1922 and to 1,157 by 1929".  
W. Tordoff, Ashanti Under the Prempehs 1888-1935 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 189.

(2) K. Arhin, The Impact of Europe: Traditional Societies and the Constraints of Colonial Rule: The Pressure of Cash and its Political Consequences in Asante in the Colonial Period 1900-1940, African Studies Association, UK, Liverpool, Conference September 1974(b).

(3) W. Tordoff, op.cit., p. 190.

(c) Cash Crop Production

One such area of endeavour was in cash crop production. Colonial activity in the hinterland of Asante increased the demand for foodstuffs in the area and provided more incentive and opportunity for money making by Asante. In addition to the sale of foodstuffs for cash, sections of Asante responded to easier access to wider markets for cash crops of kola and rubber (ca. 1880-1920) and of course they were also to be involved in the initiation of cocoa which was to become the largest export earner of the colony (1). All these moves posed further threats to the stability of Asante traditional rulers and also to the stability of the newly imposed colonial rule. Among these threats was the increasing demand from commoners in Asante to be able to take part directly in the new opportunities for carrying cash crops rather than have their trading activities sanctioned by the Asantehene. The British, however, both wanted to encourage more commercial activities while at the same time not disrupt whatever peace could be achieved within Asante's pre-colonial social formation. The process of undermining the power of Asante chiefs was thus uneven. In some regards the growth of trade enhanced the power of the chiefs; they could take an advantageous position in cash crop trading but also the direction of people's energies into economic concerns meant that people tended to get less involved in issues of local discontent (2). The migration of 'strangers' into areas where different chiefs exercised power also enhanced chiefly authority over an increasing number of people. On the whole however:

---

(1) See Chapter 6 below for a discussion of cocoa. We will also look in more detail at the broader attempts to introduce a variety of cash crops.

(2) W. Tordoff, op. cit., p. 191.

Asantes increasing participation in the world market and the development of new commercial activities in the metropolitan region constituted a major threat to the centralised economic power and control of the Asantehene's government in Kumase (1).

Discontent with chiefs was reflected through an increasing number of destoolments and concern with the accumulation of chiefly wealth (2). Much of this was hastened by the onset of relatively new economic activities and the chaos caused through concessions (3). One cash crop which grew in importance at this time and which served to again reduce the authority of chiefly power was rubber (4). This crop became a means of trade and also a vehicle for accumulation of wealth. Its importance was described by one informant:

Asante middlemen sold rubber to the whites on the coast ... They were not chiefs ... All rubber from Asante and Ahafo passed through their hands. They traded with people all over Asante and the Akyem country. They lent money to other traders who carried rubber to the coast ... (these other traders had previously been gold dust dealers - R.B.). They knew the whites needed their services. The whites were after the rubber to take back to their countries. They made much money from this knowledge. The rubber trade was a new thing here. Asantes with money knew they could make much more money ... All the rubber traders feared that quick money would be taxed by Nana Prempe and the elders in Kumase (5).

The production of rubber became more important for the colony as we will see later. It served at this time to increase the degree of autonomy for independent, non state, traders in Asante. Greater

---

(1) Lewin, op. cit., p. 53.

(2) See earlier, and below also Tordoff, op. cit., pp. 192.

(3) GNA (CC) 23/1/230.

(4) Attempts at developing plantation rubber are dealt with in Chapter 6 below.

(5) Interview with Kwadwo Bo 3 September 1970 quoted from Lewin, Structure of Political Conflict in Asante 1875-1900, 2 vols, Vol. 2, Ph.D.Thesis North Western University 1974, quoted in Lewin op.cit., pp.143-144.



interest in rubber trading also served to reinforce the pressure of a 'cash nexus' in Asante and through this make commodities more readily available in the hinterland which hitherto had been available only to chiefs and elders. Consumer goods like imported cloths tended more and more to replace those produced locally and the same began to apply to building materials which hastened the development of modern urbanised Asante (1). Obligation and payments of taxes which were extensive were also paid less in kind as before the advent of the British and more by cash (2).

#### V CONCLUSION

The overall impact of colonialism in the last part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century on the Akan and Asante political economy was uneven. We have seen in this chapter a number of different, but interconnected processes employed by the developing colonial state in drawing the inhabitants of the Gold Coast more and more into the dominance of an European controlled international economy. The incorporation of the Akan into this economy in the period of formal colonialism began with the increased presence of European commercial interests in direct productive activities through the purchasing of concessions after 1850. Always ambivalent, and often contradictory, the officials of the colonial state sought to maximise the success of the European mining companies and the development of capitalist forms of production through increasing the legitimation and permanency of its presence on the colony. The result of this 'policy' of colonial entrenchment was the partial erosion but also support for indigenous modes of production rather than their absolute dissolution. The outcome

---

(1) See Arhin (1974b), *op. cit.*

(2) For example, see GNA(K) D Box 3, CCA-000 3/08 Case No. 113/1908  
Death Duties payable to chiefs.

of a British colonial presence towards the end of the nineteenth century was to lend support to indigenous political and economic structures wherever possible through a policy of 'indirect rule', rather than forcing ahead in the wholesale dissolution of indigenous relations of production.

The colonial impact in Asante hastened the development of a class of traders which did not need the sanction of the Asantehene or of the state trading company. Greater contact with coastal traders increased the demand for cash crops of the mid nineteenth century like palm oil and the demand for new economic activity, the development of rubber and the presence of concessions for gold, timber and rubber. A corollary to this increased economic activity which was to gain interest in Asante, and on the coast was the development of money in the hinterland. This bustling period of commerce and trade required the development of a uniform currency which was provided by the British. Parallel with greater opportunities for the earning of cash, however, went more opportunities for incurring debt. Both individual and stool debts rose in frequency as did the the number of legal cases brought to court in the period 1894-1922 (1).

We now have a clearer idea of the main processes enacted by the onset of a formal colonial presence on the Gold Coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and of the conflicts emanating from the increasing commercialisation of land through concessions in mining, timber and agriculture. Our attention can now focus specifically

---

(1) On the dramatic rise of recorded legal offences see inter alia:  
GNA(A) ADM 27/1/14 Tarkwa Duplicate Letter Book 1909-1910.

on the colonial impact on labour. In looking at this we will draw out further illustrations of the imperial 'strategy' of establishing a colony in West Africa which could become self sufficient through different agricultural and mining concerns.

APPENDIX I TO CHAPTER FIVEILLUSTRATION OF CONCESSION AGREEMENT BETWEEN EUROPEAN  
MINING COMPANY AND AKAN GROUP IN THE WESTERN REGION

ADAPTED FROM GNA (S) 1973 Concessions, 8449 Bibiani Timber Concession  
12/6/1910-20/11/1916 Concession Enquiry No. 1100 Secondee

The following is an illustration of a concession agreement which shows the degree of carte blanche that the European companies had over indigenous land holders despite the 'controls' of government through concession ordinances.

July 1910 The Bibiani Timber Concession was scheduled on land in Sefwi. A lease for 99 years was agreed for timber and surface rights with the payment of £100 consideration money. There was then negotiated rent for occupying the land, in this case £100 per annum, which took effect as soon as machinery was erected for cutting timber. On commencement of regular working £200 per annum would be paid. When this concession was granted by Chief Atta Quarinor of Sefwi a second stage had to be completed. This was the certificate of validity where a concession court would assess whether the terms of the concession were reasonable. In this particular case limitations were imposed on the Bibiani Mine Ltd to make compensation to those using the plot for cultivation. The final process was the indenture of the concession where final wording of the agreement was made. In this case giving the company power to "erect construct and make all such building works erections etc ... and to clear the land by burning or otherwise removing the forest trees or jungle for purpose of any planting or agricultural operations" as long as this did not destroy native houses.

APPENDIX II TO CHAPTER FIVE

Examples of colonial attempts at developing forest reserves in the Gold Coast in the 1920's. A summary of the reasons for their abandonment including indigenous protests and obstacles to their enactment.

SOURCE: GNA (CC) ADM 23/1/459

Schedule for Forest Reserves under Control of Assistant Conservator of Forests Cape Coast, from A.Bleasdel for Commissioner Central Province, 30 November 1926.

FOREST RESERVES DEFINITELY ABANDONED

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Proposed</u>	<u>Stools Owning Land</u>	<u>Date Abandoned</u>	<u>Reasons for Abandonment</u>
Esikuma	5. 1.23	Essikuma (Saltpond District)	15. 1.24	Numerous farms within the proposed boundaries and country too suitable for agriculture to be maintained permanently under forest.
Nsaba	23. 3.23	Nsaba (Winneba District)  Asamangkese	6.10.25	Information was given verbally as to the abandonment by the Conservator of Forests on 6.10.25. No special reason given D.C. Winneba previously reported on 23.3.23 that it was practically hopeless to get the Omanhene of Agona to set aside the land.
Supuna	24. 6.25	Kuntunase (under Esikuma) Odoben (under Ajumaku)	3. 4.26	The Chief of Kuntunase reported on 29.8.25 that the land had already been sold: the D.C. Saltpond confirmed this on 4.3.26.

FOREST RESERVES FOR WHICH BYE-LAWS HAVE BEEN PASSED

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of formation proposed</u>	<u>Proposed Area</u>	<u>Stools owning land</u>	<u>Bye-Laws passed by</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Final Area</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Birrim	19. 1.23	78 sq. miles	Akim Kotoku Akim Busumi Assen Apimanim Akim Abuakwa	Akim. Kotoku Assen Apimanim Apimanim (Gazette No. 70/1926)	2. 6.26 15. 6.26 27. 7.26	18 sq. miles	Original area reduced from 78 sq. to 50 sq. miles in February 1924 and later to 38 sq. miles. Proposal welcomed by Amanhin, who with exception of Akim Abuakwa, gave consent in May 1923 - the latter in August 1923. Consent in writing given by Akim Kotoku and Akim Busumi in June and July, 1924. Warakese (under Assen Apimanim) consented in October 1924. In April 1925 the boundaries were cut and later in the year the Special Survey Party surveyed the reserve. The boundary owing to the objections of the people of Eduase (Akan Abuakwa). No information as to whether Akim Abuakwa have passed the bye-laws.
Oboyow	23. 1.23	Approx. 63 sq. miles	Akim Busumi Akim Abuakwa Ajumaku	Akim Busumi	?	No record	All agreed 6.2.24. Formerly known as Asantemang. During June over 5,000 acres in heart of area alleged to have been sold to men from Akwapim. D.C. reported that it was sold previous to consent being given. Area modified to 36 sq. miles.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Formation</u>	<u>Proposed Area</u>	<u>Stools Owning Land</u>	<u>Bye-Laws Passed By</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Final Area</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
							Brakwa (under Ajumaku) and R.M.Korsah gave consent on 20.10.24. At the request of Omanhene of Akim Abuakwa on behalf of the Osorase people a further alteration was made. Bye-laws have been signed by Akim Busumi - Ajumaku has now signed. No record re Akim Abuakwa.
Essuboni	5. 3.25	10 sq. miles	Mansu Stool under Akim Kotoku	Akim Kotoku and Mansu	8. 4.26	10 sq. miles	Mansu agreed and Omanhene Akim Kotoku approved 26.3.25 Survey before May 1925. Bye-laws signed. No difficulty about this reserve.



RESERVES FOR WHICH NEGOTIATIONS ARE STILL IN PROGRESS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of formation proposed</u>	<u>Owners of the land</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Prah Suhien No.1	5. 6.24	Agona under Cape Coast Wassaw Fiase	35 sq. miles	Hon: C.W.P. informed us 30.10.24 Omanhene of Lower Wassaw refused to agree to the formation of this reserve. Omanhene of Cape Coast and Elders of Agona agreed 16.3.25. Omanhene of Lower Wassaw agreed 8.6.26 subject to a settlement of A.C.F. should have completed demarcation or be working on it now.
Prah Suhien	6. 9.24	Denkera Hemang Wassaw Fiase	47 sq. miles	Hemang gave a qualified consent on 6.9.24, making a proviso that they could refuse to agree if they desired after seeing the boundaries cut. Omanhene of Denkera agreed 1.12.24. It is uncertain whether any of the land required belongs to Wassaw Fiase. A.C.F. should be on this work now.
Kakum	10.11.24	Abura Denkera Hemang Assin Apimanim Assin Attandaso	142 sq.	Assin Apimanim agreed 13.1.25. Assin Attandaso agreed 14.1.25 subject to approval of boundaries cut. Abura agreed 16.2.25. Hemang agreed 2.3.25. Denkera agreed 4.3.25 - all consent provisional. Denkera refused to give more than one square mile - but after seeing D.C. said he would allow boundaries to be cut and then decide. Later in 1925 Assin Attandaso refused to give land north of line from Kwamatta to Hemang. This will mean a decrease in area of 57 sq. miles. C.C.P. visited Fanti Yankumase 29.1.26 but Regent refused to give more land than that to which he had agreed in October 1925. Assin Apimanim again agreed 26.4.26 - not of much value as Attandaso have refused Northern boundary. Denkera wanted to inspect boundaries before deciding finally. Abura states too much land has been taken, Mr Van Hien interviewed Assin Attandaso and they agreed to the boundary. A.C.F. started demarcation of Northern boundary and Assin Attandaso would only allow him to cut the line proposed in October 1925. Demarcation complete - final consents of Abura Denkera and Hemang required.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of formation proposed</u>	<u>Owners of the land</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Amissa River	17. 3.25	Andoe (Assin Apimanim) Ayinase	7 sq. miles	D.C. stated on 23.6.25 that Ayinase had agreed. Andoe agreed on 22.1.26 for boundaries to be cut for his approval. A.C.F. hopes to demarcate boundaries this year.
China	17. 3.25	Abura Assin Apimanim Kwaman Abeadzi	10 sq. miles	D.C. Cape Coast reported on 27.10.25 that Abura had agreed. Abeadzi and Kwamang agreed D.C.'s letter 25.11.25. Andoe (Assin Apimanim) agreed 22.1.26 provided boundaries are cut and he then approves. According to programme .A.C.F. will be unable to demarcate boundaries this year.
Amia Hill	17.3.25	Dunkwa (under Abakrampa (Abura Katchiase (under Ayeldu)	?	D.C. Saltpond reported on 25.11.25 that Ayeldu had agreed. Abakrampa has agreed (D.C.'s letter 6.1.25) but consent of Omanhene of Abura essential. Omanhene desires to inspect boundaries, as Dunkwa complains there are too many food farms included. Omanhene too ill to do so now.
Manso	17. 3.25	Assin Apimanim Assin Attandaso	?	D.C. Cape Coast reported on 27.10.25 Assin Attandaso refused to give any land near Manso Andoe(Assin Apimanim) agreed 22.1.26 but on 25.4.26 the Omanhene (Andoe being present) refused to set aside the land. It seems that this reserve should be abandoned.
Baku	16. 3.26	Baku (under Essikuma Aiyinasu (under Ajumaku) Baidum (under Denkyera)	12 sq. miles	Aiyenasu agreed end of April 1925. Dispute between Baidum and Baku about some of the land required for reserve Baku states he is willing to have a reserve, but wants to see the boundaries first. Baidum has given no decision yet. Some doubt as to obtaining consent of Amanhin - Baku has a dispute with Essikuma, Aiyenasu serves Ajumako through Besease who has a dispute with Omanhin, Baidum serves Essiem who do not acknowledge Denkyera.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of formation proposed</u>	<u>Owners of the land</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Obotumfo and Akrabong	8. 7.25	Akrabong (under Agona) Obutu (under Ga Manche)	45 sq. miles	Odefey of Obutu first interviews 30.9.25 - eventually agreed in February 1926. Akrabong in April 1926 states he will not allow any trees to be cut on proposed Reserve, but refuses to enter into a written agreement. Demarcation completed 10th May - area modified owing to farms and now only one one-third sq. miles. Akrabong now claims Obotumfu Hill - is willing to sign bye-laws. C. of F. desires to know if there is any accepted boundary between Obutu and Akrabong. D.C. Winneba has been unable to get in touch with Odefey of Obutu.
Akora Block I	8. 7.25	Agona (Nkum Nyakrome and Nsaba)	8.6 sq. miles	Omanhene of Nsaba interviewed 22.7.25 and Obene of Nyakrome 23.7.25 - no decision given. Action should be taken again now that a new Omanhene.
Akora Block II	29. 9.25	Manso (under Akim Kotoku) Asamangkesi	8 sq. miles	Mansu say they will agree if Asamangkesi, who own the greater part of the land will agree. The Hon: C.E.P. states that nothing can be done pending the settlement of a case in privy Council.
Nsuensa	3. 8.26	Akokoaso (Akim kotoku and possibly others)	22 sq. miles	No consent obtained yet.

CHAPTER SIX

COMMODITISATION OF LAND AND LABOUR: ca. 1874-1930, II  
THE COMMODITISATION OF LABOUR

"The transformation of working humanity into a "labour force", a "factor of production", an instrument of capital, is an incessant and unending process. The condition is repayment to the victims, whether their pay is high or low, because it violates human conditions of work; and since the workers are not destroyed as human beings but are simply utilised in inhuman ways, their critical intelligent, conceptual faculties no matter how deadened or diminished, always remain in some degree a threat to capital".

Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital

I INTRODUCTION

The early years of the twentieth century were to pose many problems for sections of the indigenous population in the Gold Coast Colony, Asante, and in the areas to become known as the Northern Territories. The experiences of these different groups of people were associated with an increasing British colonial presence: one which sought to maintain but also extend, in a very ad hoc manner, its political control over the territories while at the same time trying to gain financial reward for its presence in this part of West Africa (1). On the one hand, the lack of any clear cut 'policy' for the exploitation of the colony, and its surrounding territory, often placed the colonial state and its representatives in conflict with the interests of 'metropolitan' European capital on the

---

(1) For the purpose of this chapter 'colony' will refer to the three territories; the Gold Coast Colony, Asante and Northern Territories unless otherwise stated.

coast (1). On the other hand, the activities of the colonial state in seeking to consolidate certain political structures of 'indirect rule' and in trying half heartedly to initiate economic development along the lines, for example, of plantation agriculture entered into conflict with sections of the African population.

We will in this chapter look at some of these conflicts emanating from Britain's increased presence in the colony. Again we do not seek to trace all the 'events' of the opening years of the twentieth century. Instead, we are concerned with continuing our look at the nature of the social processes set in motion by the relationship between colonialism, European concessions and the indigenous people. We will do this by looking specifically at the growing demands of capitalist enterprise for wage labour in the gold mines at Tarkwa and Prestea. What was the impact of mine owners' attempts to secure a supply of labour upon the surrounding areas, and in particular upon the Northern Territories from where the bulk of labourers were drawn, often by force and without their families (2)? We examine here then the demands for wage labour of a developing capitalist sector of the Gold Coast economy. We need also, in under-

---

(1) The nature of these conflicts is discussed in IV below. On understanding the relationship between the state as an institution, its representative operating the apparatus of the state and the representation and articulation of interests between these groups see the debate between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas, 'The Problem of the Capitalist State' in, R. Blackburn (editor), Ideology in the Social Sciences; Readings in Critical Social Theory, (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1975). See also the contributions in J. Holloway and S. Picciotto (editors) State and Capital: A Marxist Debate, (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

(2) For a detailed examination of the nature of a migrant labour economy in an institutionalised racist setting see inter alia, H. Wolpe 'Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid', in, H. Wolpe (editor), The Articulation of Modes of Production, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 289-320.

standing this period more fully to examine processes at work within the indigenous economy. Amongst other things we will look at the migration of people to establish the production of cocoa. The development of what might be called the 'cocoa economy' is linked to the impact of colonialism because many of the new cocoa farmers acquired their wealth from the growth of cash crops initiated by the British. We need to look at the nature of the migration of farmers to cocoa areas and the kinds of relationships between Africans that were initiated and transformed in this process.

## II CAPITALISM, LABOUR AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

The turn of the twentieth century was the period of the Gold Coast's continued uneven incorporation into a growing capitalist world economy, a process began in the fifteenth century (1). This process was uneven both in its geographical spread and in the development of infrastructure and had an enormous impact upon the lives of Africans. While it can be agreed that the development of wage labour is crucial for the full development of capitalism (2), the pace of this process varies and so too does the degree to which the labour force is 'free' (divorced from its means of subsistence). In colonial conditions a continued link with pre-capitalist means of production reduced the costs involved for the capitalist employer to maintain his worker, for the latter can ensure the reproduction of his/her labour power by retreating to the relative haven of indigenous relations of production and repro-

---

(1) See Chapter Two above.

(2) See Karl Marx, Capital, Volume 1 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970) especially Chapter VI. We also recognise the possibility for capitalist development on the basis of unfree labour. For example, contract or indentured labour or on the basis of a 'controlled' peasantry.

duction. The persistence of pre-capitalist social relations assists the development of capitalist production not only in subsidising the costs of reproducing labour power in the rural areas, but possibly also with the invaluable provision of foodstuffs for the labour force at the capitalist enclaves (1). The persistence of pre-colonial social relations of production can also act as a fetter to capitalist development. In the Gold Coast conditions the persistence of 'unfree' labour in fact inhibited the free flow of labour to the mines and also the development of indigenous trading concerns. In an attempt to obviate these difficulties it was recognised early, by those associated with the mines, that if a labour force was not readily available or willing to work in the mines then one should be imported from elsewhere:

Native labour will, for many years at any rate have to be imported, as the Ashantis are, for the most part farmers pure and simple, and so far have not taken kindly to manual labour in the mines - still they can fulfill a very useful part in the development of the country by keeping up a good supply of foodstuffs for the mining population (2).

The demand for more workers in the mines followed the industry's increased activity after a slight downturn at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1901, Europe increased its demand for gold which was translated into a 'rush' on the colony and 2,825 concessions (3). This boom was shortlived in all but selected areas which now became the focus for expatriate enterprise. These were in Asante with the Ashanti Gold-

---

(1) See Fn. 2, p. 330 above for the literature on the classical South African example of this.

(2) GNA(A) ADM 45/1/1 Resident Kumasi to Colonial Secretary Accra, 23.7.1899, Letter Book for Mines 30 March 1899-23 March 1901.

(3) Extract from The Annual Report for the Gold Coast for 1902, quoted in G.E. Metcalfe, (editor), Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History 1807-1957, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1964).

fields Corporation at Obuasi, in Sefwi Awhiaso with Bibiani Gold Fields, and in the Wassaw area around Tarkwa and Prestea.

We can now look at the ways in which some of these gold mine managers and the colonial authorities began to deal with the shortages of labour which they faced, and the persistence of unfree relations of production which inhibited colonial and capitalist development on the coast.

(a) The Erosion of Slavery

We have already discussed the nature of slavery and the slave trade on the Gold Coast and Asante (1). In this later period we are concerned with the notion of 'domestic slavery' which interested colonial authorities at the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially in 1927 following an initiative by the League of Nations to ensure the eradication of slavery in all colonial territories. Officially, slaves received their emancipation in the Gold Coast in 1874, but vestiges of so-called 'domestic slavery' remained (2). Colonial attempts at ending domestic slavery were uneven. This was because of a seemingly contradictory stance adopted by different representatives of the European communities. For instance, the missionaries abhorred the persistence of any kind of unfree condition while the colonial authorities proper recognised that domestic slavery formed a basis for existing relations of production and were apprehensive to disrupt them too quickly. In contrast, the mine owners were keen

---

(1) See Chapter Three above.

(2) GNA(A) ADM 11/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast.



to draw African labour swiftly from their pre-colonial setting to work in the developing industrial enclaves. The colonial dilemma was that whereas it sought to undermine any form of labour exploitation not based upon the inducement of cash, it sought simultaneously not to upset too quickly the indigenous forms of social control as these often helped to enhance the interests of colonial capitalism. These interests included first, the maintenance of relative indigenous peace to enhance the security of trade and second, the preservation and reinforcement of an alliance between the colonial authorities and local chiefs to maintain indirect rule. Because of these constraints on simply disrupting indigenous relations of production, the picture of domestic slavery was normally painted by colonial authorities as being nothing but a natural state (1). Thus:

... domestic slaves are practically free people  
and have their farms (2)

And again, the domestic slave on the Gold Coast:

is invariably well treated and regarded rather as  
a member of the family than as a servant and not  
infrequently succeeds in accumulating a considerable  
amount of personal property (3).

This rosy picture, however, of the plight of domestic slaves was not shared by everyone (4). In highlighting the often appalling working conditions of domestic slaves and their relationship with their master the missionaries added weight to the colonial position

---

(1) This was arguably also the way in which Asante officials described slavery. See, R.S.Rattray, Ashanti, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923).

(2) GNA(A) 11/975 Domestic Slavery Case No.23/1927, Evidence from Minutes of Evidence taken before 'Committee on West African Lands 7 February 1913, Mr F. Crowder.

(3) GNA(A) ADM 11/975 Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs October 1927. See also GNA(K) 234, Armitage, Commissioner South West Ashanti, Remarks on Ramseyer.

(4) GNA(K) 234 Extract, letter from Ramseyer to Governor 31 October 1904.

that slave labour played an important part in bolstering the wealth and position of African chiefs and elders (1).

How much money have they (the chiefs and elders - R.B.) not extorted from their poor subjects! We have only to invest into how some of their houses in European style have been built; for instance the house of the chief of Agona or the house of chiefs Yaw Wuah (2).

It was precisely because domestic slaves continued to sustain the chiefs and their material position and maintain some kind of stability in the region, that the colonial officials were equivocal about hastening the demise of domestic slavery. As late as 1905, for example, senior colonial officials saw the need to recognise domestic slavery and pawning to avert a "chaotic condition of affairs and to avoid a too sudden and drastic change of the national polity" (3). Colonial representatives preferred a less hasty end to indigenous forms of servitude than were beginning to be demanded by the missionaries.

The need for 'patience' in dealing with such difficult and trying areas of colonial administration came out most clearly in colonial attitudes towards pawning. Pawning was one of two ways of guaranteeing payment for a debt in Asante. It was a system where usually a male family member of a debtor lived with the creditor of a loan agreement until the debt was paid (4). This arrangement was not seen by the colonial authorities as synonymous with domestic slavery. To reduce the onerous nature of the pawn creditor relationship the Chief Commissioner for Ashanti in 1905 suggested that the pawn should

---

(1) See Chapter 3 where it is argued that the exploitation of slave labour forms the main basis of chiefs' control.

(2) GNA(K) 234, 1904.

(3) Ibid.

(4) See Chapter 3 above: the other form of guarantee was 'surety' where a man of standing guaranteed the loan.

not keep his/her status for more than seven years (1). Any suggestion at reducing the system of pawning or of domestic slavery was resisted by the chiefs. In line with Ramseyer, and our notion that this form of unfree labour was crucial for the exercise of chiefly power, the Kings and chiefs of Adansi petitioned the Commissioner in Obuasi saying:

all our drum blowing horn and swords, elephants' tails, basket carrying and farming works are done by these (i.e. pawns and domestic slaves) as we have no money like Europeans to hire men to do necessaries for us, but if these are set free then no king or chief in this Ashanti have a slave ... how we Kings and chiefs can attend any calling by the government at Obuasi or Kumasi while we have no body to carry us, beat our drums blow our horns, carry our swords and other necessary things (2).

Allied with the petitioners was a strange bedfellow. It was the Commissioner Southern District who thought that although Commissioner Fuller's suggestion for reform was admirable, as part of Britain's civilising mission and of placating the increasing demand for free wage labour, for the sake of stability the preservation of a little "pomp and show - so dear to the native mind" (sic) should be safeguarded (3). The basis for this softly softly approach was the need to take away the old means whereby the chiefs and headmen got their wealth without adversely disrupting indigenous power structures. One way to do this was to educate the power holders in the manner of acquiring wealth through the production of cash crops, and new agricultural techniques; "industrial and commercial pursuits" which would eventually make the chiefs and headmen wealthy enough to

---

(1) GNA(K) 234, 1904.

(2) Ibid., petition from Kings and Chiefs and Headmen of Adansi Fomina 30 November 1906, to Commissioner Southern District Ashanti, Obuasi.

(3) Ibid., Letter Commissioner Southern District, Ashanti 11 December 1906, to Chief Commissioner Ashanti.

substitute paid servants and labourers for the domestic slaves and pawns. For Armitage, the Commissioner for Southern District, this process might take up to twenty years, but the pace at which Asante was already assimilating new forms of civilisation gave him hope of successful transition to a political economy which would resemble one more closely associated with practices of capitalism in Europe rather than of pre-colonial Asante (1).

Asante's transition to capitalist wage labour and other ways of the capitalist economy were seen by sections of colonial officials on the ground to be a necessarily gradual process. The colonial tactic suggested by Armitage, for example, at the turn of the twentieth century, was for the increasing non-recognition by the British of pawns for debts in English courts and the need to encourage wealthier groups in Asante not to lend money with pawns as guarantees. Legislation should also be passed to improve Native Courts and discourage large debts occurring at local disputes (Palavers) which were seen to be accountable for 99% of pawns (2).

In discouraging chiefs from persisting with the system of domestic slaves and of pawning, the colonial authorities refused to help indigenous power holders regain runaway slaves. The issue of reducing domestic slavery, however, was subordinated to that of ending pawning. In trying to achieve the latter the colonial authorities were intent on persevering with the necessary monetisation of the Asante

---

(1) Ibid. On the transition to capitalism in Europe and the processes of dispossession of labourers from their pre-capitalist means of production, see, The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, Introduced by Rodney Hilton, (London: NLB 1976).

(2) GNA(K) 234, 1904.

economy, and its increased incorporation within an economy dominated by the machinations of the colonial state and fluctuations in the international economy. It was hoped that by putting a ceiling on the rate of interest, which could be claimed on any debt, to less than 20%, the system of putting people in to pledge would diminish.

In 1892 the "placing or receiving of a person in pawn became a felony" (1), and in 1907 new rules regulating the conditions of pawns and slaves were issued by the Chief Commissioner of Kumase to all Ashanti provinces (2). The threat that these new regulations imposed upon indigenous power holders was that the "undesirable custom" of domestic slavery and pawning should be abolished "with as little disruption of the social identity of the Ashanti's and disturbance of the public peace as possible" (3). Masters of pawns could not now refuse the latter's wishes to redeem themselves, and the progeny of female pawns had to be redeemed by a monetary payment. Moreover, from the first of January 1908 all pawning was to be a criminal offence.

The official outlawing of pawning and of domestic slavery did not mean that both practices disappeared overnight. In some areas the proclamations to end slavery made no immediate difference as the colonial authorities refused to enforce the law, and people that were 'emancipated' seldom had other occupations with different employers to turn to. Although in some areas, there were changes towards a more orderly transformation of unfree to free wage labour (4), the more

---

(1) See GNA(K) 234 Memorandum and Memorandum from Acting Attorney General to Colonial Secretary Accra, 14.5.1907.

(2) *Ibid.*, Chief Commissioner Kumase to All Ashanti Provinces, 1 November 1907.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) Herman Rottman to Basel, Accra, 30 June 1875, in Paul Jenkins (editor). *Abstracts from the Gold Coast Correspondence of the Basel Mission*, Mimeo., University of Ghana, Legon, 1970, p. 585c.

common experience was for the legal status of slaves to be altered but their relations of production to remain unchanged. As was explained by a Basel Missionary in 1875;

Slave owners with large tracts of land would almost certainly rather see their ex-slaves remain on the land and pay them rent in kind than draw them off it (1).

A gradual transition occurred in areas where the emancipation laws were enforced towards the payment of work for wages, rather than solely in kind through the relationship of domestic slavery. This meant that the basis of power shifted very slowly from the ideology of a rightful traditional position atop a 'communal' society, to one based increasingly upon the possession of land. This in fact had been the reality of the position of the power holders since early in the sixteenth century, but the formalised colonial presence made the reality of the relative positions between people clearer.

The desired impact of emancipation for the colonial authorities was twofold. First, it was to release from pre-capitalist relations of production a labour force which could work in productive activities organised by encroaching European concessions. Second, it was to enhance earlier moves at establishing the cash nexus in Asante and elsewhere which was a basis upon which to build capitalism. Both these processes were made explicit by the colonial officials in Kumase who saw the objective of the reforms to pawning and domestic slavery as to:

transform labour hitherto classified under the name of 'Pawns' into the 'hired labour' known

---

(1) See *ibid.*, Asante, Mohr and Werner To the Slave Emancipation Commissioner of the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast 26 January 1875 and discussion about more than 100 slaves leaving their masters in Kibi and the Okyehene attempts at retrieving slaves by force.

to all modern civilised communities (1).

The need to transform the nature of exploitation within Asante and the colony from that based upon unfree coerced relations between master and slave to one based upon a wage payment, particularly in cash, was the thrust of the colonial regimes attack upon certain indigenous relations of production. The impersonal nature of the cash nexus and payment for work was seen by the colonial authorities, in the context of the Gold Coast, to be the least disruptive and most efficient way of developing a colonial capitalist economy (2).

Although gold had been used in Asante as a medium of exchange it was not practicable for everyday use on a large scale, and neither was it readily accessible to all social classes in the colony. To obviate these difficulties and to facilitate the easier demise of the institutions of pawning Armitage sought, amongst other things, to:

Introduce licensed Native Letter writers in Ashanti and the growing use of promissory notes (as the - R.B.) best guarantees for the ultimate disappearance of the pawn (3).

The use of promissory notes were seen as the forerunner to the development of hired labour. Instructing the Acting Commissioner of the Southern Province in Obuasi to explain this to the Chiefs of Mansu and N'Kwanta the Chief Commissioner of Kumase said that:

---

(1) GNA(K)234 Chief Commissioner Kumase to all Ashanti Provinces, 1 November 1907.

(2) This is not to say that the colonial regime was unanimous about this direction of the pace of the spread of capitalist relations of production. This lack of certainty is best drawn out by the conflicts between and within the colonial authorities and European capitalist interests relating to 'migrant labour'. See IIb(i) below.

(3) Ibid., Armitage, Kumase to Acting Governor Bryan, 5 January 1908.

by the payment of a very small monthly or yearly fee by the creditor to the debtor, the 'pawn' becomes a 'hired labourer' and as such the creditor will have a greater hold over the person so 'hired' than if such a person had been 'pawned'. The fee is a minor consideration for if a person agrees to hire himself out at a nominal wage it is no-one's concern but his own (1).

The use of hired wage labour took time before it became the basis for the relations of production between indigenous producers, owners and controllers of land. It took time also to become established in the European industrial enclaves. We will examine difficulties still facing the mine owners in a moment. On a different scale organisations like the Basel Mission also continued to experience difficulties from its work force. Persistent obstacles remained associated with maintaining sufficient discipline in the work place and even in the congregations (sic) (2). The process was, however, set in motion for the different European employing groups to have access to a free wage labour force. In the words of one mission worker they were no longer dependent upon the whims of individuals because increasingly, by 1875 a free labour force was developing and it should be possible to keep wages down (3). The emergence of a wage labour force nevertheless continued to be uneven with many examples remaining of the persistence of unfree labour (4).

- 
- (1) Ibid., Chief Commissioner to Assistant Commissioner Southern Province, Obuase 9 March 1908. It should be noted that this development of a hired labourer was based on the assumption by the colonial officials that the pawn was the debtor. See the mention of 'panyarring' above in Chapter 4.
- (2) See Jenkins, op.cit., A Report from Obrecht, 11 October 1899 (No.1899 11 199) "It's not only factory workers .. in Europe who know how to go on strike and cause their superiors sad and difficult hours, but also the Africans of this dark continent .. more than among the working masses of Europe, on the Gold Coast (and probably in the whole of Africa) there is everywhere the desire for more wages and less work; and this often exemplifies itself in insolent and careless behaviour", pp. 403-404.
- (3) Ibid., Asante, Mohr and Werner to the Slave Emancipation Commissioner of Basel Mission 26 June 1875, p. 585a.
- (4) See ibid., and GNA(K)249, Respecting Slave Dealing recently occurred at Sefhwi, and GNA(K)562 Pawning, and for the treatment of slave children in the care of the colonial authorities GNA(CC) ADM 23/1/126 Slave Children



Our examination of colonial attitudes towards the presence of 'unfree' indigenous relations of production is important because it highlights one of several trends in the development of capitalism in the territory. Karl Marx's model of primitive accumulation derived from the development of capitalism in Europe and included the premise of the 'freeing' of labour from its pre-capitalist means of production (1). This process ensured the necessity for the labourer to meet with an employer of labour (capitalist) in the market place, where the labourer had nothing to sell but his/her labour power and which thereby facilitated the development of capitalist relations of production based upon wage labour. As Marx put it:

For the conversion of his money (i.e. the capitalist - R.B.) into capital ... the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he had no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realisation of his labour-power (2).

Although an integral part of Marx's model for the development of capitalism in Europe, there is no a priori reason why labour in a pre-capitalist social formation automatically and rapidly becomes freed from unfree - in our case slave - relations of production in the development of capitalism. Indeed a major feature of the development of capitalism throughout the world has been the uneven detachment of indigenous labour from their means of production and reproduction. This process has been uneven because although capitalism as it developed in Europe, sought the development after time of a free wage labour force whose labour power could be bought and sold on a market place, and thereby commoditised, this was not an automatic

---

(1) Karl Marx, (1970), op.cit.

(2) Ibid., p. 166.

process. The separation of the labourer from his/her pre-capitalist means of production was subject inter alia to the nature of class conflict within the pre-capitalist social formation, to class struggles within the colonising power and the resolution of these struggles at the local and international level. We have shown that pre-colonial forms of labour remained on the Gold Coast throughout the period of formal colonialism and at times this was desired by different European commercial ventures and the colonial state when cheap migrant labour was 'recruited' to work in the mines (1). Wage labour, moreover, was resisted by African peasants because of their reluctance to be incorporated into a developing capitalist mode of production.

In brief, pre-colonial relations of production persisted in one form or another into the twentieth century in the colony because of the nature of class struggles between the encroaching colonial power and indigenous Akan groups. We have already mentioned that the British did not want to disrupt too quickly indigenous relations of production for fear of disintegrating local authority structures which the British were themselves trying to cultivate. The institution of chiefdomship was a means of maintaining indirect rule on the coast. Similarly we have shown above the protest from chiefs at losing a means of their own political and economic power base in different areas. A dilemma nevertheless remained for the colonial authorities in that they recognised the importance of the impersonal, 'free' relationship based upon the

---

(1) Similarly we will show in a moment that hired labour for indigenous owners of land during the development of cocoa was for a time discouraged by the colonial state because it added to the cost of producing cocoa. At different moments, however, both mining and the state system questioned the expense involved in operating a migrant labour system and argued for a permanent, urbanised work force.

spread of cash nexus and wage labour but were constrained in extending this among the Akan because of the uncertainty which might follow in terms of the absence of a class with which it might successfully align.

(b) Labour, the Mines and the Incorporation of the Northern Territories

Nowhere was the colonial dilemma of increasing the capitalist direction of the colony's economy, through the greater development of wage labour, while simultaneously trying to maintain indigenous pre-colonial power relations, more apparent than in the Northern Territories. The struggle for control of the area north of Asante had been brought to the fore by colonial rivalries between the French, Germans and British at the end of the nineteenth century (1). The Northern Territories became a separate administrative region in 1898 and a Protectorate in 1902. The colonial regime had mixed feelings about the potential for the new area brought within British control. The Governor in 1899 remarked that the Northern Territories:

possess no natural resources to develop. The country as far as is known is destitute of mineral wealth, it is destitute of valuable timbers, and does not produce either rubber or kola nuts indeed any product of trade value .. For the present I therefore cannot too strongly urge the employment of all available resources of the government upon the development of the country to the south of Kintampo leaving the Northern Territories to be dealt with in future years .. I would not at present spend upon the Northern Territories ... a single penny more than is absolutely necessary for their suitable administration and the encouragement of the transit trade (2).

- 
- (1) See, M. Crowder, West Africa Under Colonial Rule, (London: Hutchinson, 1968), G.E. Metcalfe, op.cit., and R.B. Bening, 'Colonial Development Policy in Northern Ghana 1898-1950', Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, 17, 1975 and map showing the Gold Coast and Northern Territories. See below for discussion of the developing rail network and harbour facilities.
- (2) PRO CO 96/346, Gold Coast Conference 20 December 1899, pp.1-4 Governor Hodgson talking about the potential of the Northern Territories, quoted in Bening, op.cit., p. 72.

This feeling was not shared by all parties concerned with the spread of European 'civilisation' in the area. In 1901, for example, a mining company, the Wa Syndicate Limited of London wanted to purchase land in the North for the exploitation of gold deposits in Western Gonja (1). Companies looking for concessions laid the inhabitants of the area open to the difficulties faced by Africans in the south and once more highlighted the British lack of understanding for indigenous titles to land. For example:

I find that the Dagarti people inhabiting that country are a wild naked tribe not using money and having no kings or central power of government. The mining rights in this country would not interfere with their lands or villages but would be a benefit to them if worked by a company (2).

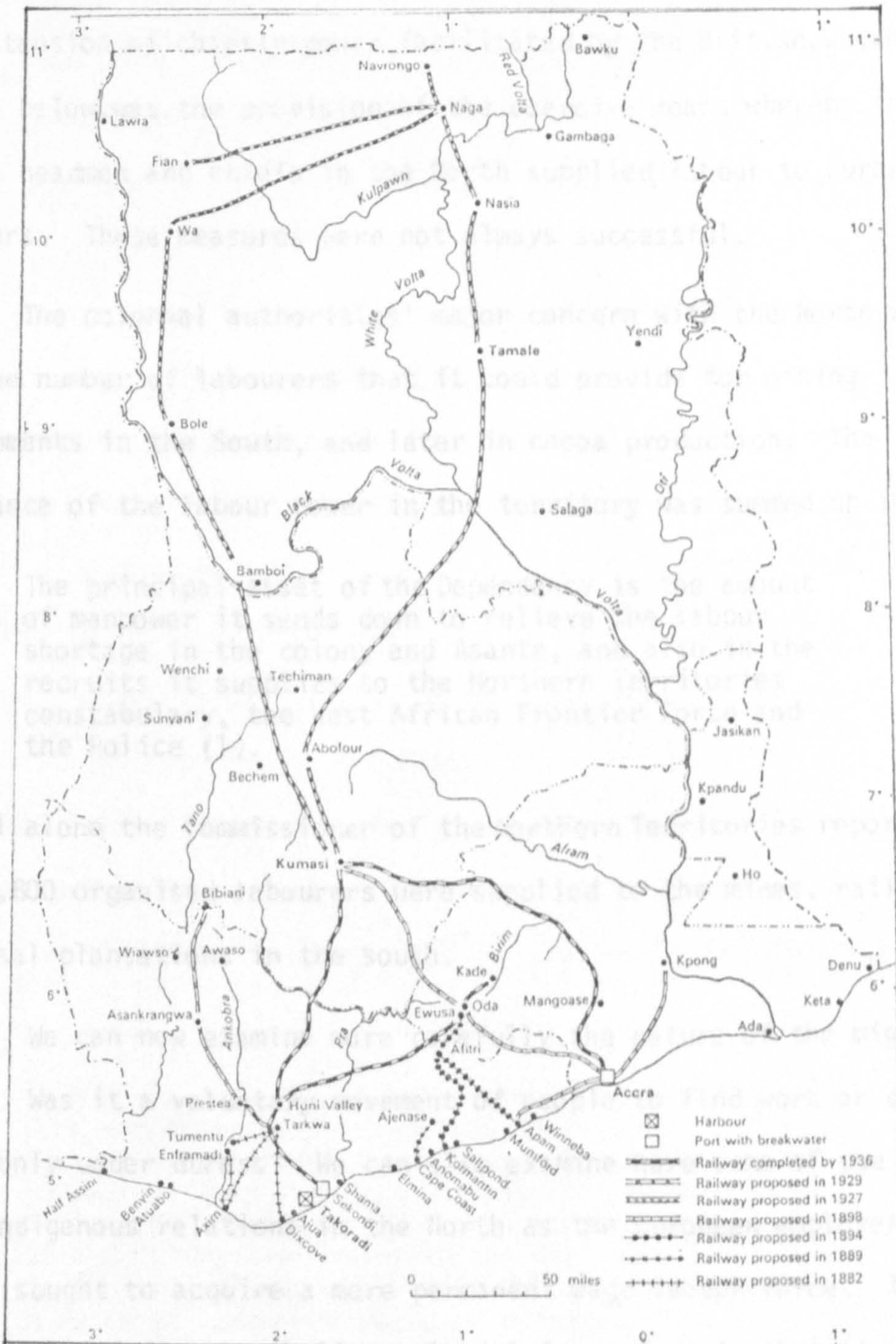
Increased colonial presence and European mining companies in the North were to pose problems for the colonial strategy of indirect rule. As more and more interest was shown in the potential supply of labour from the Northern Territories, the indigenous groups recognised increasingly that their chiefs were being seduced by colonial promises of financial reward for departing from previous land practices (3). Prior to European contact, social organisation of the Northern peoples was far more decentralised than that of the Akan groups which we have examined in Asante and on the coast: chiefs existed but in a less hierarchical and rigid structure than say among the Asante. In the process of establishing Indirect Rule in the North

---

(1) B.G.Der, 'Colonial Land Policy in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast 1900-1957', Universitas, 4, 2, 1975 An inter Faculty Journal published at the University of Ghana. See also, Nii K Plange, 'Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana: Natural Causes or Colonial Capitalism?' ROAPE, No. 15/16 May-December 1979, 1981.

(2) Chief Commissioner Major A.H.Morris, to Nathan, 18 May 1901 quoted in Der op.cit., p.130.

(3) See for example, Der op.cit., and Roger G. Thomas, 'The 1916 Bongo Riots and Their Background: Aspects of the Early Colonial Administration of Eastern Upper Ghana', Mimeo, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, 1975.



MAP EIGHT

Gold Coast and Northern Territories: Port and Railway Development, 1850-1936.

Source: K.B. Dickson (1969)

the British extended and modified the powers of the chiefs. One such extension of chiefly power facilitated by the British, which we examine below, was the provision of the coercive means whereby the village headmen and chiefs in the North supplied labour to European employers. These measures were not always successful.

The colonial authorities' major concern with the North was with the number of labourers that it could provide for mining developments in the South, and later in cocoa production. The importance of the labour power in the territory was summed up in 1922:

The principal asset of the Dependency is the amount of manpower it sends down to relieve the labour shortage in the colony and Asante, and also in the recruits it supplies to the Northern Territories constabulary, the West African Frontier Force and the Police (1).

In 1921 alone the Commissioner of the Northern Territories reported that 3,800 organised labourers were supplied to the mines, railways and sisal plantations in the south.

We can now examine more carefully the nature of the migration south. Was it a voluntary movement of people to find work or did it occur only under duress? We can also examine here some of the affects upon indigenous relations in the North as the European employers of labour sought to acquire a more permanent wage labour force. This process was similar to earlier colonial incursions in that it was to be a violent process.

---

(1) GNA(A) ADM 57/1/496 Annual Report on Northern Territories for 1921: Northern Territories Report for first quarter, 1922.

(i) Labour Recruitment

There were early demands by mining companies for labour. The colonial government at different times recruited labour from the villages for road clearing and road maintenance, and the mine owners asked if government recruitment practices would be applied to them. Careful not to upset the workers too much who were brought down from the north, under the protection of the colonial officials, the Chief Commissioner in the Northern Territories asked the mine owners to try and ensure that workers from the same village worked together (1). The need to encourage rather than to simply use coercion with the work force when it arrived at its new place of work was briefly and tentatively acknowledged by some of the mine owners. In 1906, for example, it was reported by the Mines Department that the visit of thirty labourers sent down by the government from the North, to see what the work was like "was a decided success, the people showing an interest in all that they saw" (2). At the same time it was recognised that:

In the event of any persons coming down to work from the Northern Territories, they would at first require very careful handling as they would probably go away if they received any severe treatment, and it must be remembered that when the labour supplies of the colony are exhausted the Northern Territories is the only place in the Gold Coast where large numbers of labourers could be obtained (3).

With this in mind the Chief Commissioner Northern Territories began a recruitment programme in the North by encouraging the chief to send

---

(1) See, Roger G. Thomas, 'Forced Labour in British West Africa; The Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast 1906-1927', JAH, 1, 14, 1973.  
 (2) Government of the Gold Coast Report on the Gold Mining Industry for 1906, (London: Waterlow and Sons Ltd., 1907), p.5.  
 (3) Ibid., p.5.

his fit villagers South. Attempts at imposing new alien work routines on the Northern labourers, however, were not successful. This was especially the case with regard to recruiting workers to toil underground (1). As an incentive to chiefs to recruit labour for the colonial regime and the mines, 5/- a head for headmen was suggested. For this payment the chief had to supply a labourer for a twelve month period and if the worker did not last that long the chief became eligible for the cost of the workers' subsistence while the latter had worked at the mine (2).

The degree of force which accompanied the encouragement given to the chiefs and labour by the colonial authorities has recently been documented (3). In one instance the District Commissioner of Tumu in August 1907, threatened to fine all Tumu headmen 30/- and the chief 40/- if 150 men did not come forward to work in the South for the mines (4). Shortages of labour in the mines became more apparent in the middle of 1908. In September 1907, there had been a serious outbreak of cerebo-spinal meningitis in the North West ending in a final death toll of eight thousand. Added to the specific problem facing the mine was an increase in infrastructural activity in the colony. The development of rail links from Tarkwa to Prestea and the construction of the Accra-Kumase link all demanded labour from the North, so too did the mushrooming cocoa industry.

---

(1) See for example, Report of Mining Department April 1923-March 1924, Accra Government Printer. The point is made here that there was a shortage of underground workers and that labourers preferred longer hours and lower wages as long as they worked on the surface, p. 5. Labour shortages were also being experienced in the North for road maintenance GNA(A) ADM 56/1/433, Annual Report Tamale District 1909.

(2) GNA(A) ADM 56/1/84 Native Labour Northern Territories 1909-1920.

(3) Thomas, (1973), op.cit.

(4) Quoted in ibid., pp. 81-82.



Dissatisfaction with their new work routines and conditions that greeted the Northern labourers was reflected by unrest in the North, and desertions en route to their new place of employment. Two hundred, for example, deserted from Mamprusi and Navrongo Districts out of a total of five hundred and forty before they reached Tamale, and the total number which finally reached the mine was only two hundred and fifty eight. A further two hundred and thirty one left the mine after a short while (1). In 1917 it was also recorded that labourers en route to the mines in Wassaw had tried to escape by jumping from the train at Obuasi having originally been told that they were going to work in Bekwai (2).

Although limited success had been achieved in the recruitment of labour and the development of a disciplined wage labour force problems in recruitment persisted. Difficulties continued in maintaining a permanent labour force which did not retreat back to the North after earning small sums of money. For example, the report of the Mines Department, 1923-24 repeated the sentiments and worries about labour which had been made by a Commission in Tarkwa in 1882:

Another disadvantage to progress is the necessity of getting fresh Kroomen; they will only engage for a year at a time, and nothing will induce them to remain longer, and the consequence is that about the time they are really becoming skilled and useful labourers, this period of service is up, and they take themselves off to their homes (3).

On another level the colonial authorities were not happy with the amount of unrest and resistance to labour recruitment that was apparent

---

(1) Ibid., p. 83. See map on page 346.

(2) GNA(K) 395 N25/1917, 7 March 1917-19 March 1917 Native labourers for the Mines, ill Treatment of. Compare, C. Van Onselen, Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933, (London: Pluto Press, 1976).

(3) Report on Mining Industry 1923, 1923-24, p. 5.

in the North. Having said this however, it is possible to argue that labour was looked for in the Northern Territories increasingly because of labour disputes in the South among a growing militant work force there (1).

In seeking to remedy the difficulties still faced by the mines, and increasingly so after 1909, a Barrister representing twelve mining companies suggested that a fillip could be given to labour recruitment if a system similar to that used in South Africa, of Pass laws and compounding native labour, was adopted (2). The establishment of a Native Labour Bureau was suggested which would be the sole supplier of labour to the mines and would be under the control of the companies, rather than directly that of the colonial government. In opposition to this, Governor Rodger saw the possibility of being able to placate more adequately the dissatisfaction of the migrant labourers, if they were controlled by the colonial authorities. Moreover, it was thought by the colonial authorities that the labour from the North would be more disciplined and remain longer in the jobs if they were accompanied by their wives; if they were not required to work underground as soon as they arrived at the mine and if they got food to which they were accustomed (3). These suggestions were not greeted with much enthusiasm

---

(1) This is argued by Jeff Crisp, 'Labour Resistance and Labour Control in the Ghanaian Gold Mining Industry, 1870-1980', Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 1980, Chapter 3.

(2) Thomas, (1973), op. cit., p. 85.

(3) Letter to Giles Hunt from Colonial Secretary 5.11.1909, GNA(A) ADM 56/1/84 Native Labour, Northern Territories, 1909-1920. It should also be noted that there was a degree of exploitation within the mine labour force, Southern workers' wives played a large part in providing both cooked and uncooked food for the single men from the North and took great advantage from their monopoly position.

by the mine authorities. To bring the wives of the workers down would cause greater expense not only in paying the men an increased family wage but also in the building of mixed family accommodation (1). Furthermore, the suggestion not to put the workers underground immediately defeated the whole object of recruiting workers from the North. The point was to satisfy the demand for work underground following the increased demand for gold which simultaneously would discipline the work force in the rigours of their new occupation.

After much discussion as to the possible legal and institutional changes which the colonial regime could enforce to facilitate the further recruitment of Northern Labour there was an amendment, in 1912, to the Master and Servants Ordinance. This legislation gave the courts greater power to penalise breaches of contract and the government power to inspect labour conditions. Rules on the provision of medical inspection were also included.

Mine owners continued labour recruitment without the governments direct assistance until the discovery of manganese in the colony in 1926. Manganese was an important ingredient for the war effort in Europe and so the colonial personnel were encouraged to entice the chiefs of the North to send labour south. It was advised, however, that this labour should not work underground and the reward for supporting the war

---

(1) Regulations and instructions issued by the colonial authorities with regard to labour recruitment from the North were equivocal as to who should bear the cost of womens' presence in the mines. For example, "Every encouragement will be given to men to bring their wives, who shall be provided with subsistence for the journey from their homes. This may be subsequently charged against their husbands' pay". Compare "If a mining company requires labourers to come by rail the company shall pay their railway fares and those of their wives". GNA(A) ADM 56/1/84 Native Labour N.T. Regulations and Instructions as to the Supply of Labourers from the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast to the Mine See Thomas, (1973), op.cit. This followed the government having been prevailed upon to accept, inter alia, coloured labourers Ordinance which would have imposed sentences of six months' hard labour for desertion et

effort should be 1/3 to 1/8 a day (1).

Developments in the colony especially following Guggisberg's Ten Year Development Plan in November 1919, continued to attract labour which could have worked in the mines. These developments together with the cocoa industry once more pressurised the West African Chamber of Mines, and the individual mine companies, to complain bitterly about the lack of sufficient workers. An influenza epidemic in 1918 added to the shortages and calls began again for labour recruitment from outside the colony:

The shortage resulting from the influenza epidemic in 1918 has not been made good, and with labour required for so many purposes in the colony it is difficult to see how a sufficient supply of labour to meet all requirements can be obtained unless a source of supply from outside the colony can be discovered (2).

As the labour requirements of the colony increased the Governor called a meeting to discuss possible schemes in the North. The mine owners were excluded from this meeting. The government decided upon a voluntary recruiting scheme without coercion but supervised by political officers who could encourage chiefs to enlist gangs of workers of about 25 who would become registered for specific tasks in the south. The mine

- 
- (1) Ibid., p.89. What Thomas sees as this 'patriotism' was not always forthcoming. While recruiting for the Gold Coast Regiment in 1917 the Chief Commissioner of Gambaga informed the Provincial Commissioner North Western Province of the "lack of patriotism" of some of the chiefs for "selecting the half lame and blind" to be soldiers when there were growing able bodies to choose from. At news of this Armitage replied, with typical aggression, that the chiefs "should be warned that they will be reported ... if they repeat the offence, then I shall seriously consider whether they are qualified to return to their positions after having them deliberately insulted the government." GNA(A) 56/1/219 Gold Coast Regiment Recruiting in Northern Territories 1917.
- (2) Mines Department Report, 1919, p.3. A number of workers already migrated for work at the mines from Liberia but it had become increasingly more difficult for them to pass through French West Africa. As late as 1921 however the Commissioner Northern Territories had been able to report "large numbers of French labourers passed through to obtain work in the South" GNA(A) ADM 56/1/496 Annual Report on Northern Territories 1921.

representatives were again unhappy about a scheme which did not involve them directly and they requested that a minimum of one third of the recruited labour should be directed to the mines. Guggisberg defended the government's form of labour recruitment by stressing that it must be on a voluntary basis. This was because to force labour to the mines would result in increased antagonism between workers and employers and already work in the mines was detested. To bear this out, mine recruiters could only get 400 men in July 1920 compared with the recruitment of 8,000 by the government (1). After little success in direct competition with government recruitment, the mines established recruitment depots in the North and used African ex Non Commissioned Officers to help the chiefs to provide mine labour. An added inducement was to be the payment of head money to the chiefs for the labour recruitment. Labourers were to receive 2/- a day for working underground but this money was not to be paid at the end of each day. Instead, to ensure that the labourer did not retreat home when he had earned enough to satisfy his own requirements, payment was staggered. A shilling paid immediately, half of the balance on completion of the contract and half when the labourer returned home (2). Added inducements were offered to the labourers to remain at work after the companies had trained them. These included improved living conditions:

To attract labour, the mining companies have contracted good houses for the labourers, installed water supplies, provided food at cost price, and raised the wages as high as they could afford (3).

---

(1) Ibid., p. 93. Although possibly an exaggerated figure, this does suggest that the proposal of working in the mines was not well received by Northern labourers. For more on the conflict between mine recruiters and government recruiters see, ibid., p. 96.

(2) Ibid., p.94.

(3) Mines Department Report 1920, (Accra: Government Printer, 1922), pp.3-4.

Despite these inducements the Mines Department still reported a decline in the numbers of African workers employed. An average of ten thousand four hundred and thirty nine Africans were employed by the mining industry in 1920 which was a decline of one thousand three hundred and three in the year (1). Moreover, the establishment of recruiting bureaux in the North were not seen to have been viable:

The cost of recruiting was out of all proportion to the number of recruits, and of those recruited many deserted before reaching the mines (2).

The mine owners still had some hope, however, that despite the continuous shortfall of labour, something experienced in Nigeria and the French Territories and even the South African mines, the anticipated collapse in the cocoa industry due to methods of cultivation and diseased trees would ensure more supplies to the mine. Once again the competition, not simply from government programmes but also indigenous production activities, provided too strong an incentive to African labour - not least because the cocoa industry could pay higher wages (3). In 1920-21 the government more overtly assisted the recruitment of labour to the mines. Between 1922-23 two thousand two hundred men were recruited for the mines while only nine hundred and thirty one went to the railways (4). This was appreciated by the mines' owners and was reflected in the Mines Department Annual Report, 1922-March 1923, which recognised the continuing serious nature of the

---

(1) Ibid. To get an idea of the relative labour requirements at a particular mine; Abontiakoon mines at Tarkwa in Wassaw employed 52 Europeans and 1,608 Africans in 1920. This was a decline in numbers of 19 whites and 260 Africans compared with 1919. Ibid.

(2) Ibid., p.7.

(3) See ibid., and for the hope of the collapse of cocoa to release labour to the mines see C.C.Tamale to S.H.Ford Esq, Supt Engineer Fanti Consolidated Mines Ltd Tarquah, 7 November 1916 in GNA(A) 56/1/84 Native Labour Northern Territories 1909-1920.

(4) Thomas, (1973), op.cit., p. 97.

labour shortage but also that it was:

very much easier owing to the vigorous recruiting of labour to increase the period of indenture from six to nine and in some cases to twelve months (1).

Rather than rely, as previously, upon simply the availability of labour the recruiting programme in the North now took the form of fixed quotas which had to be met by the chiefs, and which inevitably led to more forms of coercion.

The mines still did not receive the desired amount of labour. Labour did not stay long enough to make it profitable for the mines to train it in anything but the most alienating of routine jobs. Arguably also, the uncertain financial footing of the mines meant that their unpredictable future militated against the prospect of any durable long term presence on the Gold Coast. The treatment of workers, despite the mine owners' boast of improved conditions, remained appalling and there was amongst other things, an increase in 'social diseases' like venereal disease and drunkenness which permeated back to the Northern Territories and added to mounting lawlessness there (2). Such was the treatment of some workers by the mines that one government official commented:

I feel certain that there are very few races if any in this world who would have stood the treatment that the African has received from the hands of the old company (3).

The treatment of the workers did not go unnoticed by the chiefs

---

(1) Mines Department January 1922-March 1923 Report, Gold Coast Government Press, Accra, 1924, p. 3.

(2) GNA(S) District Administration Office Tarkwa, 561 Mining Complaints 1924-1931.

(3) GNA(S) District Administration Office Tarkwa 3 Quarterly Reports 31/3/23-31/12/30 Quarter ending September 1925, Talking about Prestea Block 'A', Ltd.

who showed both increasing reluctance to let labour go South and an inability to recruit increased numbers of workers. Deaths occurred through illness like tuberculosis and also through accident (1). Following a government enquiry into the death rates of African employers the mine managers insisted that the main cause of mortality was not the condition of the mines but of the workers themselves. Despite these protestations the Secretary of State ordered the supervision of recruiting until sanitary conditions in the mines improved (2). An inquiry found that the majority of the workers recruited to the mines were not in good health. This was because although the chiefs had been told to supply fixed numbers of employees to the mines, the most healthy and young showed a preference to work elsewhere (3). Many of the fittest workers did indeed migrate South for waged employment but their preference had not been for the traumas of the mines but for work in the railways, in harbour development and in cocoa. Forced recruitment of labour failed therefore to satisfy the demand for quality labour. Even using coercive measures the chiefs of the North could not round up the fit young men; only the infirm and unfit were available. This hindered the progress of the mines:

The labour question ... involves quality as well as quantity. It of necessity takes time for the recruit to accustom himself to the unwanted conditions he meets underground, and to absorb the training necessary to render him an efficient worker. At the beginning of the year, the labourer was indentured for six months only, with the result that very shortly

- 
- (1) For a breakdown of deaths through disease, April-September 1923 see Thomas, (1973,) op.cit., p.100. See also Mines Report 1923-1924, (Accra Government Printers, 1924,) p.25.
- (2) Ibid., p. 101. The outcome of a government enquiry into the health of the mine workers was a mining areas Health Ordinance.
- (3) Ibid., p.101. The colonial authorities, however, saw the lack of fit young men in gangs recruited by the chiefs as the fault of the latter because they were told to supply, "Their best people and find men who would go down to work and not to seize rabbits and wasters. Deserters are worse than useless and a nuisance to everyone." GNA(A) 56/1/319, Diary Commissioner Northern Province, 18/1/22-18/2/24.



after he had graduated from the learners' class the recruit was due to be repatriated. The labourers are now indentured with their own consent for nine months, and some gangs have agreed to sign on for twelve (1).

The other major reason why the mines did not get the desired amount of labour was that labour was needed in the Northern Territories by the chiefs in the maintenance of agricultural production. The maintenance of food production in the North was as vital to the colonial regime and the mine managers as it was to the indigenous inhabitants. Without adequate food production the colony would have to bear the cost of the reproduction of labour power. By keeping food production in the North at a sufficient level to feed the population there, the mining companies did not have to burden themselves with providing wages large enough to maintain the labourers when they returned to the North (2). Too much food production in the North would inhibit the flow of labour in the South. For these reasons the colonial authorities were concerned about the levels of food production in the North. As we will see below the colonial authorities did not approve of the migration of northerners to different agricultural, namely cocoa growing areas. These moves were seen as attempts to avoid recruitment to European initiated enterprise in the south and to blatantly challenge the authority of the chiefs. In the process the authority of the colonial regime was also challenged (3).

---

(1) Mines Department Report January 1922-March 1923, (Accra: Gold Coast Government Press, 1924), p.10.

(2) The other side of this is that the mine workers should have a minimum amount of money in their pockets to return to the North with, so as to continue the development of a cash economy. This would show other potential recruits that the whole exercise of going south to work in the mines was worthwhile. See, GNA(A)ADM 56/1/84, Chief Commissioner Tamale, comments on this to the engineer of Fanti Consolidated.

(3) This was especially the case as the chiefs were seen to have their authority vested in them by the colonial government. See GNA(A) 56/1/278, Migration of Natives from One District to Another, 1921-1930.

In November 1927 the mines ended their recruiting campaign in the north. The reason given was because of the expense involved for such a limited return. The process of forced labour which had existed off and on since the turn of the century, and which continued in different forms, was a forerunner to the formalisation of indirect rule in the north (1). The north, due partly to its remoteness and distance from the coast, (and thus the difficulty in the transportation of cash crops) together with its ecological, mainly savanna area, had become in twenty years a labour reserve for the colony and in particular for European commercial interests in the mining industry.

We have touched briefly some of the difficulties faced by the mines in satisfying their demand for labour. Significant among these was the failure to dispossess the indigenous labourers from their means of production, mainly land, in the North. In part we have seen that this helped the mines keep a low cost of reproducing their labour power. They only had to pay subsistence for the labourer while he was at the mine. At the same time, because the colonial regime did not give full backing to the open coercion of labour and its containment in compounds, the mines could not keep their costs sufficiently low to maintain a migrant labour system. In this case, as in many examples of a colonial regime trying to establish a system of wage labour, it became increasingly apparent at the turn of the twentieth century that the colonial regime would have to act to facilitate the separation of the labourer from his means of production. Such a separation would hasten the monetisation of northern society and thereby integrate it

---

(1) See (ii) below on the continued presence of forced labour and the distinction, often nebulous, with communal labour.

more fully into the capitalist commodity market already becoming entrenched in the south. Monetisation would hasten the emergence of a permanent wage labour force to satisfy the increased demand for labour in the south which was needed for rail and harbour development projects - as well as for the mines. The colonial desire for the emergence of a more permanent wage labour force, was as we have just seen subject to a number of checks and balances. Some of these were imposed by the mine owners who wanted the coercive 'recruitment' of labour. Other constraints on the speedy separation of northern labour from the means of production came from the reaction of indigenous groups in the north itself, and their refusal to be incorporated into new work patterns and a capitalist mode of production. The colonial regime was also on a tight rope concerning its attitudes towards the development of a wage labour force. This was because while it had a policy of increasingly introducing money and commercial relations into the Northern Territories, it sought to maintain political control in the region by supporting and often creating local chiefdoms. The commercialisation of social relations, however, tended to undermine the already fragmentary powers of northern chiefs. It is in the light of these pressures on the colonial authorities in the north, that we can now examine more closely how the colonial presence in the Northern Territories sought to further incorporate the region into the developing capitalist economy in the Gold Coast Colony, while not completely dissolving all pre-capitalist relations of production.

(ii) Indirect Rule and the Subjugation of the North

The development of the infrastructural potential of the Northern Territories, like elsewhere in the colony, was subordinated to the likelihood of colonial reward in the form of greater economic profitability

and political subjugation of the indigenous inhabitants. Little was done to change this situation even when, following years of northern labour working in European industries in the south and fighting for the British in the Gold Coast Regiment in World War One, Guggisberg announced that:

... The Career of the Northern Territories as the Cinderella of the Gold Coast is nearing its end; as Cinderella she has done good and unobtrusive work; her reward for that and the gallantry of her soldiers is in sight (1).

The geographic distance of the Northern Territories from the longer established Gold Coast Colony, and the resulting lack of an European oriented, commodity producing economy there gave the colonial regime little incentive to control the north. Indeed, initial control of the Northern Territories came only as a result of inter-colonial rivalry between Britain, France and Germany for territories bordering the North. Once a British colonial presence was established in the North, however, with a small number of staff, the potential labour resource of the region became increasingly apparent.

For a short while at the turn of the twentieth century the British thought that the north could be made economically viable with the minimum of colonial expense. The answer lay in the land of the North and the potential mineral resources there but also prospects for cotton and shea nut production. The British thought, that land could be appropriated by the colonial government, and then sold to mining companies and thereby realise payment for the trouble that the British went to in establishing an administration in the area. Coupled with

---

(1) Quoted in Der, op.cit., p. 135. See also Guggisberg's, 'Report on Northern Territories 1919', CO/96/614.

this was the desired impact that the commercial companies could bring to the area. In addition to the effects of the labour returning, with money (in reality, more often than not without it) the northerners could be forced into compliance with the work practices of twentieth century Europe right on their own doorstep. The political corollary for this was the imposition of 'indirect rule', where the colonial administration could help sustain chiefly controls in the area. If ever there was a breakdown of such control another chief could quite easily, with colonial help, be foisted upon the people. In this vein one colonial administrator used the simile of a ladder when talking about indigenous power holders and British administration in Yendi:

all headmen, village chiefs, district chiefs, District Commissioners, etc. being compared with rungs in it, hence all being trusted by the government each to do his duty, faulty execution thereof not jeopardising the ladder but only the rung in it;

He added:

The chiefs are calling a meeting to discuss their ability and divide up the responsibility for the collecting of labour (1).

Unfortunately for the British the execution of this policy was not as easy or as peaceful as they had hoped (2).

(iii) Dispossession of Land in the North and Colonial Violence

As we have already suggested the British colonial regime at the turn of the century recognised increasingly that the best way to satisfy

---

(1) GNA(A) ADM 56/1/259, Yendi Informal Diary, July 30, 1920.

(2) It should be noted that the 'pacification' of the north was an uneven process with regional differences of reaction between, for example, the North West and North East in terms of the willingness of labourers to work in the mines.

labour shortages in the south were to separate northern labourers from their means of production through the increased commercialisation and monetisation of the north. From an early date the colonial authorities rejected the mine owners' demands that the flow of labour to the industrial enclaves should be prompted largely by coercion and a system of migrant labour. Instead, because of the colonial authorities' desire not to disrupt too quickly indigenous relations of production, and local power structures, and because of African resistance to the incorporation into the capitalist mining industry (and agriculture) the British sought a slower and initially more partial dissolution of indigenous relations of production. The pace of the erosion of indigenous relations of production was crucial to the colonial administration and to the success of capitalist mining enterprises. The speed and also the degree of the dissolution of indigenous modes of production, remained an issue of discussion within the colonial regime over its policies towards the Northern Territories just as it was to come to the fore in the colonial states' handling of the developing cocoa industry at the turn of the twentieth century.

Legislation was the first method used by the colonial regime to separate people in the north from their means of production. The Mineral Rights Ordinance in 1904, denied the rights of northern power holders to allocate land in the granting of concessions. It will be remembered that in the south, following the furore against the proposed Lands Bill in 1898, and the Forest Bill in 1911, the colonial authorities conceded that granting of concessions should remain with the chiefs. In contrast, in the north this was to be carried out by the Governor. Moreover, the Governor was given the right in law to seize land for 'public utility' without compensation except where crops would be

damaged and improvements to the land had been carried out. The fee for concessions was set at very high rates. For example, the government sought at different stages of the concession being developed; £62 for issuing a prospecting license, £1250 per annum for the rights of option and £5000 per annum for a mining lease. These fees were reduced in 1904 but they still had the intension of raising revenue for the administration of the territory, and of limiting the sizes of the concessions (1). Again, unlike the Gold Coast Colony the need for a concession's court was disposed of by the Governor granting concessions direct.

The colonial administration rode roughshod over indigenous forms of land allocation like the role of the Tendana or Earth God in Northern society who, in collusion with the elders, allocated land and rights of occupation (2). Despite the seizure of land and the impression given in the Northern Territories that all rights in land were now held by the Crown, mining syndicates failed to be interested. The expense of establishing mines in the north for the mining of gold deposits weighted heavily upon the finances of the companies. This was especially the case following the imposition of high charges for the concessions by the British administration. In 1905, for example, the Wa syndicate was forced to close operations and for similar reasons the area taken up by Felicia Syndicate was never worked (3).

This side of colonial policy in the North and of seeking its easier incorporation into the colonial capitalist economy of the colony

---

(1) For more detail, see Der, op.cit., pp. 130-131.

(2) See M. Fortes, The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi, (London: 1943), and Der, op. cit.

(3) Der, op.cit.

was a failure. Insufficient encouragement was offered to get European companies to take up concessions in the area. In attempting to erode indigenous forms of land allocation the Governor was prevailed upon not to impose a land tax. The experienced Commissioner Armitage saw the prospect of too many problems if the power of indigenous authority holders was reduced too quickly (1). In fact, the tightrope involved in maintaining a system of indirect rule was already posing difficulties for the colonial administration.

Although the dispossessed in the north did not have the benefit of support from an organisation like the Aborigines Rights Protection Society, which had proved so effective in the south in the fight against colonial land policy, the northern people did not surrender meekly to the presence of colonial administration. In extending control in the north the British sought to minimise the expense of administration by using the already established powers of local chiefs. Indeed, in many areas chiefs' powers were extended. This process of bolstering chiefs' powers was not uncommon (2). It did, however, create much tension and unrest in the north.

It was recognised very early in the North East that chiefs were acting as pawns for the British (3). This became especially apparent when the chiefs were used for the recruitment of labour for World War One. People in Zwarangu and Navrongo, for example, refused to fight for the Gold Coast Regiment in Togo and the Chief of Sekofi in August 1915 complained to Chief Commissioner Armitage that prospective recruits were leaving the village (4). This incident gave the colonial administrator

---

(1) Compare his comments in Chapter 5 concerning the need for gradual change in Ashanti being more desirable than sudden change in the power structures

(2) See Chapter 5.

(3) Thomas, (1975), op. cit.

(4) Ibid.



in the north a motive for once again destroying a Tanzuga shrine in the Tong hills which for many years had been the hideout of resisters to the British.

Indigenous conflicts mounted following British attempts to increase recruitment for World War One and also in the imposed changes in the allocation of land. A land dispute of another kind, but hastened by colonial presence, provided the colonial authorities once again with the motive for violent incursions into the villages of the north.

The Bongo Riots in 1916 followed a land dispute between two groups (1). In trying to settle the incident a police officer was hurt and the British promptly demoted a chief who was seen to have little control over his villagers. This move by the British had little effect upon the dispute and so the colonial regime used more force. In a typical statement about how to quell unrest a Commissioner in the North East said:

... hostile parties ... should be fired on while the usual compound destroying and driving in of cattle belonging to the insurgents should follow (2).

This belligerent response by the colonial authorities to ending unrest was quite common. For instance, following the theft of a horse from a police constable in Boku the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories reported that as promised a headman's compound had been burnt down and that:

---

(1) Ibid.

(2) Acting Commissioner North East Province to Chief Commissioner Northern Territories 12 August 1916, in Governor Clifford to A. Bonar Law, 18 September 1966, PRO C096/750 quoted in ibid.

on my way back from Boku, I told the chief of Namogu to try and get word to the Boku people to return the horse and saddle in two days time or I might possibly burn down all the compounds in the section (1).

Fifty nine villagers were killed in Bongo by groups of government Non Commissioned Officers and their stock, including twenty four cattle, seventy seven sheep and goats and twelve donkeys were seized.

Following this expedition an official commented:

A few more expeditions like this and I think the native will once more realise that the white man still lives (2).

The colonial regime was seemingly unperturbed by the chaos which it was imposing upon the people of the North; the effect of seeking a transformation in the way in which land was allocated and in attempting to monetise the economy and separate a free labour force from the land. This overtly aggressive smashing of indigenous structures was seen by one official as the only way forward in the area:

I recommend ... nothing but a strong line of policy. In their present development it is too early to rule them successfully otherwise than by fear and the confident belief that punishment inevitably and swiftly follows insubordination. The "please" and warm pressure of the hand from the local representation of the dominant race which might do duty in places below the eighth parallel say, would merely excite derision among these engagingly primitive, but sufficiently truculent children of an earlier age (3).

This policy of controlling the north by force and some of the associated attempts at separating northerners from their means of

- 
- (1) GNA(A)ADM 56/1/177, Informal Diary Chief Commissioner Northern Territories Navarro District 15 April 1916.  
 (2) Castellan to Commissioner North Eastern Province 9 July 1916 Quoted in Thomas, (1975), op.cit., p.10.  
 (3) Acting Commissioner North Eastern Province to Chief Commissioner Northern Territories 12 June 1916, quoted by Thomas (1975), op.cit., p.10.

production did not go without criticism from within the ranks of the colonial administration itself. Governor Clifford, for example, threatened resignation if Armitage was not removed and some of the unrest caused by the Bongo riots was calmed down (1).

The reaction of indigenous groups in the Northern Territories to the activities of the colonial authorities and concessionaires' recruiting agencies led to an increased instability in the region. This was reflected by disputes over land allocation and unrest within and between Northern ethnic groups especially following the increase in the marketable value of land. British support for some chiefs and elders rather than for others, and the intervention into Northern political practice created more disquiet.

Unrest was marked by rebellions against the British and increased instances of lawlessness and attacks on chiefs who were identified as puppets of the British. The latter were especially identified as such following financial inducement offered to chiefs to round up gangs of workers to migrate South to work in the mines:

With the support of the British or the manipulation of the fear of such support these chiefs were able to supply the labour and other demands of the British while diverting some of these resources to their own use (2).

Work for which this labour was recruited was not popular and caused much hardship and disruption to the relations of production in the north, with the often forced withdrawal of the male member of the household southwards. Disruption to agricultural production followed

---

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid., p. 16.

which made the colonial desire for a cheap migrant labour force difficult to realise. It was a desire based upon the calculation that a migrant labourer could rely upon his place of origin for subsistence at different times of the year. Further major changes occurred following the ending of forced labour and the imposition of direct taxation in the north in the 1930's with the colonial policy of Native Administration. With the advent of this phase of colonialism the chief, hitherto a prop for colonial contact in the region, lost the responsibility for gathering labour for the south and with it the opportunity to financial gain and the abuse of his subjects.

### III CONCESSIONS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LAND

Now that we have looked at attempts by the colonial administration and European mining companies to develop a wage labour force in the colony and protected areas we can extend our earlier analysis of the impact of concessions and agricultural development (1).

The period around the turn of the twentieth century in the Gold Coast colony and Protected areas was one where the colonial authorities sought to build a unified economy geared towards the increased production of cash crops for the international market (2). The change in the economies of the area featured the substitution of produced goods for the naturally occurring commodities of the forest belt as the main content of export flows (3). Rather than the colonial authority take

---

(1) See Chapter 5.

(2) For developments in the economy see R. Szereszewski, Structural Changes in the History of Ghana, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965) and S. Hymer, 'The political economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana', in, Gustav Ranis, (editor) Government and Economic Development, (New York: Yale University Press, 1971).

(3) See Szereszewski, op. cit., Chapter 7.

the responsibility for this, the colonial regime wanted European firms and companies to get involved in cash crop production or plantation agriculture. As with British 'policy' throughout the years of contact, the greatest achievement in economic development and financial reward were sought through the minimum amount of expense. The major task of the colonial regime was to secure the political control of the area they occupied hoping that this would facilitate economic growth (1).

The period 1898 to 1920 in the colony was one of immense colonial activity. Essentially, it was a time when the colonial state sought to consolidate its hold over the colony (2). A minimum amount of infrastructural development was carried out most notably with the development of a number of rail links. These lines, which by 1920 totalled two hundred and fifty miles, were to facilitate the transportation of the colonies' mineral resources from Asante to the coast at Sekondi and Accra (3). The railways and the development of administration on the coast accounted for by far the largest amount of Government expenditure until the 1920's. The Guggisberg Ten Year Development Plan then sought to diversify the areas open for exploitation in the colony and to consolidate the areas already seen as most economically viable, until, that is, the international depression took its toll on the Gold Coast (4). The development of a transport network was not, however, without its problems. The colonial debate over transport and specifically the development of a railways network once more highlights the conflicts

---

(1) Hymer, in Ranis, op. cit.

(2) See below.

(3) G.B.Kay, (editor), The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972). Expenditure at this time on railways represented 24% of total government expenditure. Compare 2.4% of the total being spent on Health and Education. See, ibid. and Map on p. 346.

(4) See below.

and contradictions in the colonial regimes' actions during formal colonialism. The first railway line linked the gold bearing areas in the west of the Gold Coast with the nearest port at Sekondi. The role of the line was clear. To carry extracted gold as quickly and safely to the sea for transport to Europe. It was not until 1912 that the Accra-Koforidua line passed through the major cocoa producing areas. This last route facilitated the increased tonnage of cocoa exports; seventy seven per cent of which were carried by rail (1). Despite the increased importance of a transportation network to the developing cocoa industry the colonial state failed to meet the needs of the new flourishing indigenous farming activity. Instead, the colonial state clearly favoured expatriate mining interests. In 1920 it was agreed by the colonial regime that a deep water harbour be built at Takoradi in the west, rather than in Accra. Had the decision been for locating it in Accra it would have benefitted the export of cocoa and given greater incentive to Gold Coast farmers seeking an outlet for their production. Instead, expatriate capital favoured assisting the transport of gold and manganese to the nearest coastal area (2).

The decision to build the harbour in Takoradi clearly shows the dilemma of colonial investment on the Gold Coast. On the one hand it was crucial that the dues for using the harbour were paid in full by the users of the new facility, namely expatriate business. This would enable the loans for building the harbour to be paid off quickly.

---

(1) Kay (1972) *op.cit.*, p.20. Exports rose from 23,000 tons in 1910 to 52,000 in 1914.

(2) No detailed reason was given for the choice of Takoradi rather than Accra except that the former had 'natural' advantages with the Takoradi reef and rocky sea bed which reduced the expense of dredging. It was not reported that the Accra-Kumase line would have been cheaper to develop rather than the Sekondi-Kumase link because of the need to realign the latter. See *ibid.*, p. 21.

On the other hand the pressure for building the harbour had been from expatriate business for a subsidised transport network to export the mined minerals. The only immediate solution to this dilemma was seen to be the efficient use of the harbour by using all its facilities, thereby keeping costs down by reducing handling costs per unit. The difficulty with this solution was that the expatriate mining interests could not provide enough minerals to ensure the harbours full capacity (1). The result was for the colonial state to encourage cocoa production by building the Central Province Railway which just reached the cocoa belt at Kade. As one observer has suggested:

once again the colonial dilemma was fully represented: although built in British interests the harbour was dependent upon Ghanaian capital to discharge its aims fully (2).

However the colonial state had still not resolved the dilemma of the conflict of interest between satisfying the demands of financial orthodoxy or mining capital. Because the railway networks did not fully enter the cocoa growing areas and link them directly with the port at Takoradi a system of feeder roads became essential. Even before the Central Province Railway was finished in 1927 a system of road haulage had been established which effectively undercut the benefit of the railway extension. The ability of the Gold Coast farmers to get their cocoa crops to ports other than Takoradi, which became possible with the development of road haulage, ensured that Takoradi operated at a deficit (3).

---

(1) This argument is detailed by Kay in ibid., pp. 21-22.

(2) Ibid., p. 22.

(3) Ports in the Central Province at Cape Coast and Saltpond continued to be used.

In addition to the clamour of mining interests and the continued exploitation of the gold bearing areas of the colony, there was an increased European concern with the development of an export timber industry and the development of cash crop production of rubber, cotton and palm oil. In 1925, for example, there were fifty one Agricultural concessions accounted for by the Provincial Commissioners Office in Sekondi of which twenty one were for the cutting of timber, fourteen for palm oil and eight for timber and rubber exploitation (1). The increased importance to the colony of the forest region in providing cover and shade for cocoa plantations and as producer of valuable export crop (2) was recognised by the colonial regime - hence the attempts at developing forest reserves (3). The urgency to develop forest reserves was impressed upon the Forestry Department which was reorganised in 1919 following the effects of a free hand by many foreign timber concessions, and extensive denudation of forests by mining companies using timber for fuel (4).

- 
- (1) GNA(S) Disposal of Records Western Region, Records, Transferred District Sekondi, 333 Concessions 26/5/14-24/11/47: Provincial Commissioners Office, Sekondi 18.3.25 to D.C. Sekondi. For the attitude of foreign companies to timber concessions and the amounts paid for the exploitation of the land see *inter alia*: GNA(S) 1973 8570 Kumasi Timber Concession 19/12/1912-14/1/13; this last instance refers to the suing of C.C. Mengels and Brothers Company for default in complying with Concession Ordinance No.14 of 1900, for £7,600/0/0 for non payment of rent. For more on this last incident see Chapter 5 above.
- (2) Forestry exports 1925 for example amounted to 2,200,000 cubic feet valued at £286,000. This provided for invaluable revenue at 2d per cubic feet. See Report by Honorary W.G.A. Orsmy-Gore on his visit to West Africa during the year of 1926 Cmd 2744 1926, quoted in Kay, *op.cit.*, p. 211.
- (3) See Chapter 5 above for some of the difficulties associated with developing the reserves.
- (4) This latter activity forced the Acting Colonial Secretary Finley to suggest to the Commissioner Western Province that coal should be imported from Nigeria for fuel for the mines and that the more enlightened chiefs will consult the Commissioner Western Province before the granting of timber concessions so as to ensure new clauses to prevent further deforestation. See GNA(S) 333 Disposal of Records Western Region Records transferred District Sekondi.



One of the difficulties which faced the colonial regime linked with the increased deforestation, was the non-compliance of European firms with government Ordinances to lodge their concession with the government. Concessions would be taken up, timber cut and payment made for each tree. The operator would then leave the area within a season or two without the concession being certified (1). Alternatively, the European timber company would not work a concession directly but would purchase timber from indigenous concession holders (2). The government response to this was to increase the development of forest reserves. In 1923 there were two reserves covering one hundred and eleven square miles and by 1926 twelve reserves had been set up by the colonial regime covering four hundred and fifty miles - still less than half the desired number (3).

In addition to securing a common procedure for the development of timber and agricultural rights on the land within the colony, the system of reserves provided the government with the opportunity to impress upon the indigenous population the need not to cut trees until they had reached a size of maturity. In talking about the concession reserves in the Ankobra-Sehwi District, for example, the Conservator of Forests suggested the need in 1924 to reserve at least sixty to one hundred square miles of forest to enable the working in twenty years time of mature mahogany of more than 9 feet in girth. It was continually

---

(1) GNA(S) 285 Transferred District Sekondi, Timber Concession Reserves Ankobra and Sehwi District; Provincial Commissioner Sekondi to Acting Conservator Forests 20 June 1924. See also GNA(S)379 (as above) Conservator of Forests Office 5.7.20. "Concession Ordinance is evaded by a very large proportion of timber exporters and it is these people we are trying to deal with".

(2) See the list of concession holders GNA(S) 379 Records Transferred District Sekondi Timber Industry 30/4/13-29/11/30.

(3) See Ormsby Gore; quoted in Kay (1972), op. cit.

impressed upon the chiefs of the different divisions in the area that it was in their interest to maintain the reserve. This was especially the case following the Timber Protection Amendment Ordinance in 1930 where the organisation and export of mahogany was applied more generally to timber. Accepting reluctantly the need to control the exploitation of timber, the indigenous power holders had difficulty convincing their villagers of the need to reduce the availability of land for agricultural production and farming. Moreover, many chiefs continued to be cautious of government intentions to reserve areas of land. As a colonial official remarked:

I found him (the Omanhene in Wassaw Amanfi Division - R..B) to be suspicious of government intentions and indifferent to the progress and welfare of his Division (1).

The colonial argument was simple. Reserves and measures of forest conservation were seen as crucial:

... one of great importance to this Colony, to you and to the people who come after you. To them belong just as much as to you the natural resources of this country and it is your duty to look after the interests of those who come after you just as much as it is your duty to look after the interests of those alive at the present day. Land is yours and the timber is yours. The timber is there for your use. All we say is that you shall not waste this timber and that you shall provide timber for the future. If you will do this you will build up a flourishing timber industry in this country and those to come will bless the forethought of those who made that possible (2).

A year later it was suggested that the cost for developing the resources of the colony should be born by the indigenous people, and not by the colonial regime. The cost of the experimentation with

---

(1) GNA(S)285 Transferred District Sekondi Concessions Reserves Ankobra and Sehwi Deputy Provinces Commissioner Officer Wioso 24.12.1924 to Commissioner Western Province.

(2) GNA(CC) ADM 23/1/801 Timber 6/1/31-25/10/1947, Commissioner Central Province Address to Provincial/Council of Chiefs, 26 February 1934.

reserves could be born by the colonial administration:

but beyond that, since the states own the land and stand to benefit by the establishment of valuable forest crops it seems that the states should foot the bill (1).

We have re-examined the development of the forest reserves here because it helps us again focus our attention on the encroachments made into indigenous land holdings by European concessionaires and the colonial regime. The effect of this further European encroachment was to increase the market value of land. There was an increase in inter-state rivalry for land and an increase in the disputes between indigenous groups over which land belonged to whom. Land disputes now took on a previously unknown intensity. This was because the incursion of European capitalist concerns in the development of mining, and later the encouragement of cash crop production, raised the value of land. A two pronged attack on indigenous social relationships was occurring. The first was that chiefs in the Northern Territories and elsewhere were encouraged to recruit labour for European employers or to work with increased intensity for indigenous power holders to produce greater quantities of marketable produce in exchange for European merchandise (2). The second was that simultaneously indigenous institutions, like chieftancy, came under threat as attitudes towards land and its use were transformed. Land increasingly had a commercial value. Before the commercial revolution largely initiated by colonialism, rights over land were seen to lay with the stool, this now changed.

---

(1) GNA(CC)ADM 23/1/1038, Provincial Commissioner Cape Coast to Commissioner Central Province 26/10/4370.

(2) See, Document 441 in G.E. Metcalfe (editor) Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History 1807-1957, (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1964), State of Trade in 1904 Governors Statement to Legislative Council, 16 October 1905 "the natives are prosperous and have more money to spend on clothing, spirits ...", p. 531.

Hitherto the stool allocated land and it was meant to be returned to the stool after a user died. Even though in effect there operated a form of hereditary user right the increased value put on land following European concession hunting, "made land an immediate economic asset and the determinant of the now floating living standard of the owner and cultivator" (1). The effect of European concessions was recognised by the colonial authorities:

A strong demand exists for forest land and the native authorities appear either unable or unwilling to prevent alienation and subsequent deforestation. The rise in land values brings about interminable boundary disputes which further complicate matters ... (2).

The increase in land disputes, following the European presence has already been referred to (3). Unless a particular dispute could be used to colonial advantage the increase in unrest among, and between, indigenous power holders was something the colonial administration tried always to avoid. Wherever possible the colonial regime was intent upon preserving the powers of indigenous rulers but the regime was also faced increasingly with a conflict which emanated from its agricultural 'policies'. This was because the attempt to extend the number of forest reserves and to prevent access to these areas by indigenous people placed the chiefs in daily conflict with the villagers. The chiefs were, as in the recruitment drives in the Northern Territories, linked with the colonial regime and now with the increased shortage of land.

---

(1) Bjorn Edsman, Lawyers in Gold Coast Politics ca.1900-1945, From Mensah Sarbah to J.B. Danquah, (Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Historica Upsaliensis, Uppsala, 1979,) p. 104.

(2) GNA(CC)ADM 23/1/452 District Administrative Officer, Forest Reserves and Forestry 19/7/29-23/4/46 quoted from Report on Forestry Department 1930-31.

(3) Chapter 5 above. In connection with the later attempts to develop cash crop production see inter alia, GNA(K) 755, Land Dispute Between Nkoranza Tekiman.

Following the experience of border guards on the forest reserves preventing local inhabitants in the Central Province from having access to the reserved area, for innocent acts of collecting snails and felling dead trees, a colonial official echoed the feeling that colonial land and forestry policy was increasing the potential for indigenous unrest:

... the fear exists that if these people (the chiefs of Central Province - R.B.) are to be so deliberately deprived of such innocent uses of their lands set apart for agricultural development purposes, for some years to come the Ruling chiefs found that they seriously incur the displeasure of their peoples by leaving Forest restrictions in the hands of government to the extent of such restrictions being used to unnecessarily interfere even with their very livelihood (1).

Indigenous disputes arising from commercialisation of land varied in extent and across different lines. The kind of dispute within indigenous groups alluded to above, occurred when the chief was associated with the colonial authority. Another form of chiefly dispute occurred where the chief claimed ownership of the land held by a lesser power holder (2). Our argument throughout has been that what was seen as the traditional rights of the stoolholder to allocate land created in effect the basis for power, exercised by the chiefs and elders in a hierarchy above commoners and women. The commercialisation of land brought into focus the nature of power relationships blurred by the traditional ideology of the stool. With raising land values the head chiefs now overtly claimed the control (ownership) of land held by lesser power holders. Moreover, as land more clearly

---

(1) GNA(CC) ADM 23/1/80 Timber 6/1/31-25/10/1947 Commissioner Central Province September 1935.

(2) This vertical line of conflict is suggested by Edsman, op. cit., p. 104.

reflected wealth, because of its increased exchange value, individuals were keen not only to secure their positions over land worked by them for years but also to extend access and control over larger areas of land. There were also land disputes with 'westernised Africans' who often demanded greater access to land in repayment for duties performed. Here, land disputes were tried by the Supreme Court, unlike the disputes between Africans in the 'traditional setting', which were heard in Native Tribunals with revising powers exercised by the District and Provincial Commissioners.

The outcome of the whole range of disputes between and within indigenous groups and Europeans was that conflict over access and ownership to land became a major factor in the destooling of chiefs (1). The overall process at work in the Gold Coast Colony and Asante resulting from this aspect of the colonial presence has recently been summarised and is worth quoting at length:

According to old custom, the chief was entitled to one-third of what the land in his state yielded. Originally, this tribute was fairly small, paid in kind, and spent on communal rituals, celebrations and festivities. Now however the tribute became quite substantial and obtainable in cash. The chief grew rich, and chiefship became attractive. From being a kind of honorary president, the chief became (or could become) a wealthy landlord. Chiefship turned into a rewarding business attracted an increasing number of people, and became the centre of fierce conflicts and disputes. As any successful claimant could most likely generously reward his supporters, factionalism inspired by bidding flourished (2).

(a) Cash Crop Production

In addition to the general discussion above concerning the

---

(1) See Chapter 5.

(2) Edsman, op. cit., p.105. Our point of course is that even in the earlier period chiefs and elders were able to accumulate wealth as well as spend on communal rights.

impact of the commercialisation of land and the demand for African labour at European industrial enclaves, we can now look briefly at the specific colonial attempts at developing an agricultural export industry and the impact that this had upon the people of the Gold Coast and Protected areas.

Apart from palm oil production which reached a peak in the mid nineteenth century, colonial policies with regard to expanding cash crop production had been negligible. Indeed, it was not until the years following 1922 that the government accepted the "responsibility for a policy of development of local agricultural resources" (1). Even after this commitment however, the government's attitude to developing agricultural resources of the territories for internal consumption, especially concerning indigenous food production, were poor and uneven. The attention of government interests continued to be with bolstering the development of products for export.

(i) Palm Oil

One of the products which the government encouraged was the growth of oil palms. In the nineteenth century the export of this crop had helped lubricate the wheels of the European industrial revolution. Exports of both palm oil and palm kernels had fallen since 1910 (2). An Ordinance of 1913 sought to revitalise the industry (3). The Colonial Administration encouraged the presence of

---

(1) The Commission on Agricultural policy and Organisation 1928, quoted in Kay (1972,) op.cit., p.199. This commission identified 4 phases in the history of the Department of Agriculture: (i) 1889-1905: work limited to import of plants and examination of their behaviour under local conditions: (ii) 1905-1915, development of instructional and demonstrational work, (iii) 1915-1922, instruction organisation on provincial basis, (iv) 1922: see ibid.

(2) H.J.Bevin, 'Some Notes on Gold Coast Exports 1886-1912', The Economic Bulletin of Ghana, 14, 1, 1961.

(3) Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 540.

European firms in the areas where palm oil was grown so the pulping of the kernels could be done more efficiently and greater amounts of oil could be acquired for export. This was the crux of the Ordinance of 1913 which sought also to establish reserves where palm oil could be grown (1). The colonial authorities insisted that indigenous activities would not be interfered with, only that specifically demarcated areas for the growing of palm nuts could be established and European machinery imported to express the oil. The Colonial authorities in effect sought to encourage the concentration of palm nut production while trying to ensure a reduced price being paid to the producers because of the European control of purchasing. In short, European firms in the palm oil industry were given an oligopoly following government attempts to increase the mechanisation of the industry (2). European firms needed an incentive to establish themselves overseas and the Palm Oil Ordinance provided just this:

to grant to any person, with such area not exceeding a mile with a 10 mile radius and for such period not exceeding 21 years ... the exclusive right to construct and work mills, to be operated by mechanical power for expressing or extracting oils from the pericarp of palm oil (3).

Apart from increasing the amount of palm oil exported the colonial regime hoped that the use of European machinery, and a different labour process in getting the oil, would release labour in the colony to work elsewhere (4). The indigenous method of expressing oil from

- 
- (1) See also government attempts to subsidise the development of an European oil palm industry with the United Africa Company, 1929. Kay (1972), op.cit., p. 216.
- (2) For a detailed examination of the oligopolisation of the Gold Coast economy, see Howard op.cit., Chapter 4.
- (3) Governor to Gold Coast Legislative Committee 20.2.31 quoted in ibid., p.77
- (4) The Colonial Secretary moving the second reading of the ordinance of the Legislative Council, 28 January 1913, document 445 quoted in Metcalfe, op.cit., pp.540-541.



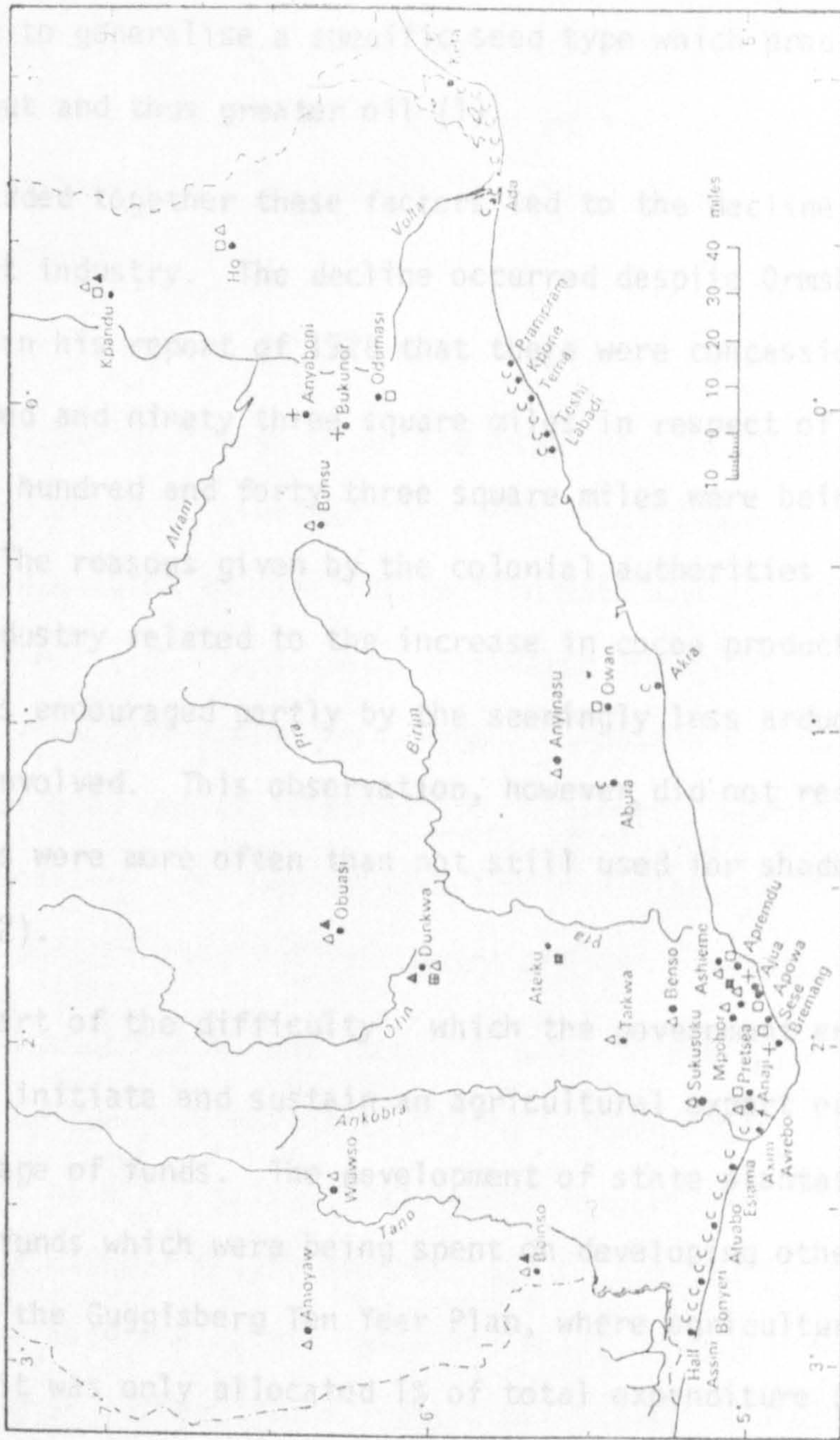
the kernel was extremely labour intensive. It involved the pulping of the palm nuts in small shallow pits lined with stones. Water was then poured onto the pulped mass to increase the flow of oil (1).

Another concern of the colonial regime was that the indigenous labour process used for getting oil from the oil palms tended to dilute the quality of the palm oil.

Despite the measures imposed by the government, attempts at revitalising palm oil production on a plantation basis failed. Ideally, the development of plantation agriculture was not only meant to raise the productivity of an export crop, but it also sought to discipline an indigenous work force not yet accustomed to the routines and rigours established by capitalist forms of production. The Agricultural Department could not impress upon the producers of palm nuts, that a plantation system of working would greatly benefit all concerned because of the concentrated nature of production and the easier cultivation and processing of the crop. Indigenous petty commodity palm nut producers resisted colonial attempts at being incorporated as wage labourers into colonial plantation experiments. African preference - given prevailing wage rates and working conditions in the 'colonial sector' - was for the pre-capitalist relations of production. As such Africans once again raised the question as to the viability and prudence of the colonial regime's attempt to completely break down indigenous relations of production, or whether they should be allowed to persist - at least in the short term - while the colonial authorities sought other ways of breaking down local barriers to capitalist forms of agriculture.

---

(1) GNA(A) ADM 11/1/24 Oil Palm Trees Cultivation of, Letter, M. Sarbah, 1 January, 1909 to Secretary Native Affairs C.C.C.



**MAP NINE**  
**Plantations, 1900-1936**

**Key:**

■	Bananas	▲	Cocoa
c	Coconut	◻	Coffee
◻	Oil Palm	+	Palm Oil Factory
△	Rubber		

Source: K.B. Dickson, (1969)

(1) GNA(S) District Administration Tarkwa 52, Palm Products 1926-1931.  
 (2) Another reason offered by the government for the decline of the industry and which prompted the Palm Wine Ordinance in 1930, was the use of the crop by Africans as an alcoholic drink which "like other alcoholic beverages is a luxury and is as such a proper subject for taxation". J. de Hunt, Acting Attorney General, 20 August 1930 GNA(S)62.  
 (3) Kay (1972), op. cit., p.199.

Difficulties were similarly encountered by the Department of Agriculture in trying to generalise a specific seed type which produced a thin shelled nut and thus greater oil (1).

Added together these factors led to the decline of the palm oil export industry. The decline occurred despite Ormsby Gore's comments in his report of 1928 that there were concessions totalling one hundred and ninety three square miles in respect of oil palms of which one hundred and forty three square miles were being effectively worked. The reasons given by the colonial authorities for the decline of the industry related to the increase in cocoa production. The latter was encouraged partly by the seemingly less arduous labour process involved. This observation, however, did not recognise that palm trees were more often than not still used for shade by the cocoa farmers (2).

Part of the difficulty which the government encountered in trying to initiate and sustain an agricultural export economy was the shortage of funds. The development of state plantations needed valuable funds which were being spent on developing other activities. Even with the Guggisberg Ten Year Plan, where agriculture got a belated mention, it was only allocated 1% of total expenditure (3). The government programmes still concentrated more on areas of infrastructural development which facilitated the evacuation of mineral deposits and

---

(1) GNA(S) District Administration Tarkwa 62, Palm Products 1926-1931.

(2) Another reason offered by the government for the decline of the industry and which prompted the Palm Wine Ordinance in 1930, was the use of the crop by Africans as an alcoholic drink which "like other alcoholic beverages is a luxury and is as such a proper subject for taxation". J. de Hunt, Acting Attorney General, 28 August 1930 GNA(S)62.

(3) Kay (1972), op. cit., p.199.

lumber to Europe. Hence earlier, when the idea was floated to encourage the development of cotton on a larger scale, little money or enthusiasm was forthcoming from the Department of Agriculture to establish the required demonstration centres which were used to initiate new forms of crop production (1).

(ii) Rubber

Another cash crop which the colonial administration tried to develop was rubber. Like palm oil this product was indigenous to much of the colonial area and was transported into the hinterland in pre-colonial times (2). Indigenous production, however, did not meet the demands of the government and European companies for regular and constant supplies of good quality rubber. The high point for rubber exports from the Gold Coast was the period 1890-1904 when the area became the largest rubber producer in the British Empire and the fourth in the world (3).

Throughout the late 1880's greater interest in rubber had been expressed by European merchants trying to hedge their bets against fluctuating palm oil prices. The export market was dominated by the companies Alexander Miller Brothers and F. & H. Swanzy. These companies would invariably employ middlemen and agents on the coast who promoted the tapping of rubber inland. The links between the company on the coast and the brokers inland were strengthened by the increased predominance of cash in indigenous economies and facilities for credit. The former gave incentive to producers inland to develop rubber to

---

(1) GNA(A) ADM 11/1/415 Cotton Cultivation Gold Coast and its Dependencies 1912: see petition of the department by British Cotton Growing Association and plantations.

(2) R.E. Dumett, 'The Rubber Trade of the Gold Coast and Asante in the Nineteenth Century: African Innovation and Responsiveness', JAH 12, 1, 1971.

(3) In the year, 4,104 units of rubber: i.e x1000lbs with a value of £360,644 were exported, see Bevin op.cit., p. 19.

brokers and receive cash in exchange to facilitate the purchase of greater quantities of imported merchandise. The development of credit sustained this process by ensuring that producers were obliged to supply rubber to brokers at different times or remain in debt (1).

This was one result of the impact of the Gold Coasts increased incorporation into the demands of an international economy for rubber. This product was much needed in Europe and elsewhere as an input into many new production cycles. There were, however, many problems associated with the rubber trade which became particularly apparent at the turn of the twentieth century when better quality rubber was demanded by European firms (2). Indigenous rubber was of the wild Funtamie variety and was frequently diluted by African producers much to the annoyance of their European clients on the coast. In response, the colonial administration imported quantities of para rubber seeds from Ceylon (3), thereby seeking to take advantage of the climatic conditions of West Africa in the hope of furthering interests in indigenous rubber production. Reason for the demise of the rubber industry was given as the dilution of the latex. It became more profitable for British firms to use South East Asia where plantations proved more successful (4) for the production of rubber than to use West Africa.

This brief look at the rubber industry on the Gold Coast

---

(1) Dumett, op. cit.  
(2) Rubber of poorest quality tended to be exported for a time to the United States of America and Russia where 'inferior' rubber goods were made. See GNA(A)ADM 11/1/189 Rubber Preparation of for European Markets.  
(3) GNA(A)ADM 11/1/233.  
(4) See Dumett op.cit. This does not mean plantations were not developed on the Gold Coast. See, GNA(S) 1973 8494 Dunkwa Rubber Concession 19/9/10-15/3/11, and GNA(S) 1973 8574 Wassaw Timber and Rubber Concession.

serves as a further illustration of the way in which the territory was drawn into an international economy dominated by the interests of European manufacturing concerns, which sought to develop the Gold Coast political economy insofar as it supplied invaluable products for developments in the capitalist world. It also illustrates that the process of incorporation was not smooth and that when the constraints imposed by indigenous relations of production, or of the African labour process, became too inhibitive for the shipments of rubber to Europe to be profitable British firms switched their demand for rubber to the Far East (1). Fortunately for the Africans involved in rubber production this fall in demand by Europe was not too problematic, many of them switched to cocoa production.

The spread of the cash economy, was hastened by rubber producers and the greater contact that this engendered for inland traders with the coast. Rubber attracted greater numbers of people into a system of cash nexus than hitherto associated with kola, gold dust or ivory trading (2). The result of this increased involvement in trading and commodity production was to further break down the barriers to 'commoner' trading in Asante and to also facilitate more opportunities for the accumulation of capital (3). This last process often provided the funds for the indigenous development of a cocoa industry on the colony which was so dependent upon the purchase of extra land outside that used solely by the family; and in the employment of labour. Before we look at this development several points need clarifying.

---

(1) For a detailed analysis of 'successful' plantation agriculture particularly linked with rubber production in the Far East, see S.B.D. de Silva, op.cit.

(2) Dumett, op. cit.

(3) On the changed attitudes to trade in Asante in the nineteenth century, see Chapter 4.

First, this review of developments in cash crop production in rubber and palm oil is not intended to be anything other than piecemeal. Our point is not to write the history of these two areas of colonial and indigenous trading concerns (1). Rather, we have sought to build on the earlier analysis in this and the preceding chapter, concerning the processes underpinning the consolidation of formal colonialism on the Gold Coast. We looked earlier at the monetisation of the indigenous economy, the changes in social structure and the problems which this brought in its wake for African production activities. These continued in rubber and palm oil production and added the further dynamic of a developing European oligopolisation of trade.

The government sought to encourage the presence of European firms on the coast as exporters of the colonial resources and attempted to make this easier wherever possible: to hasten the export of palm oil and rubber with the development of plantations. Attempts were also made at developing other plantations for producing sisal, bananas and copra (2). All failed. Colonial funds for these were limited. Moreover, the colonial regime faced resistance in imposing alien work practices and labour processes which for the African amounted to unacceptable forms of appropriating crops. This is not to say that the African did not respond to inducements of the market, they clearly

---

(1) It might be noted in passing however that to my knowledge these areas have not been dealt with in this manner before.

(2) At one time it was suggested that the development of a copra industry should be promoted by children: they should be encouraged "to plant coconuts as a kind of organised useful, instructive and lucrative play" (sic) GNA(S) 368 Disposal of Records Western Region Records Transferred from District Administration Office, Tarkwa, 368 Agriculture Misc. 18/1/26-4/7/33.

did and this is born out by developments in the petty commodity production of palm oil and rubber. Rather, our point is that the moment colonial incursions occurred in trying to organise the capitalist production of forest produce, as opposed to being merely involved in its marketing, alien work processes acted to inhibit increases in productivity. More fundamentally, we can argue that African peasants resisted the transformation of their pre-capitalist social formation: in addition to rejecting an alien work discipline peasants rebelled against the process of incorporation into a developing capitalist form of plantation agriculture where they were to become agricultural labourers.

Colonial attempts to develop plantations and reserved areas solely for the production of produce for the needs of Europe represented a concerted European attempt to initiate capitalist agriculture. Although these practices were never successful on a wide scale, they nevertheless aided the disruption occurring among indigenous groups over the access to land which was rising steadily in value. These disruptions curiously had two different effects on the fortunes of colonialism. The first was that the indigenous groups were increasingly getting access to a cash economy and commodity production which aided colonial capitalist expansion by breaking down indigenous barriers to trade. The second effect was that this process hastened the demise of the authority of the chiefs upon which the colonial regime was so dependent for the extension of its authority.

Added to problems of labour recruitment and the organisation of export agriculture was the impending international financial crisis of 1930. This denied at a stroke, any possibility for plans of diversifying the colonial economy. Before we examine this last point in detail we



can now assess briefly the impact of cocoa production and the migration of cocoa producers upon indigenous relations of production.

(b) Cocoa

The extraordinary development of cocoa as an export cash crop in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is heralded as an illustration of indigenous productive practices and ingenuity. The cocoa industry for one writer is seen to have grown "in spite of, rather than because of government policy" (1). In large part this was true. Colonial attitudes to cocoa production were at best equivocal and at worst antagonistic. The explanation for this is that the movement of labour into the cocoa industry reduced the supply of labour to colonial projects and those which the government thought were more beneficial to the colony as a whole: that is gold production, railways and harbour expansion and also palm and rubber production (2).

On two important counts, however, the development of a cocoa industry did not wholly depend upon indigenous practices. The first of these is the trend towards the higher value of land and the importance vested in control over land rather than in 'rights in people' following the development of rubber and palm oil for cash crop production. Accompanying this process was the increased monetisation of the economies of Ashanti and the Gold Coast Colony following the introduction of the British silver coin in the 1890's and the demotisation of gold dust and nuggets in 1889. The sellers of produce increasingly demanded

---

(1) Hymer, in Ranis (1971), op. cit., p. 134.

(2) The development of cocoa also reduced in colonial eyes the production of food for workers at the mines. Thus in 1935; "Advantage is not taken of the potential market arising out of the mining industry. There is a shortage of food for the mines and it is estimated that it costs a mine labourer between 8d and 1/6 per day to live" GNA(A) ADM 27/5/3, Tarkwa District Record Book, 1900-1939 DC, Tarkwa.

cash in payment for products grown in the forest which provided an opportunity for the accumulation of capital and facilitated the development of cocoa. The second process underpinning the development of cocoa production for export was the demand for cocoa by the economies of Europe, which had merchants willing to purchase the product in the colony. Thus the economies of the area were further incorporated into the dominant capitalist economies of the world. For one observer it was a matter where:

What internal growth occurred in Ghana was a function of its position in the world capitalist market as a primary producer (1).

However, while locating the colony's position in the world economy we must not eclipse the existence of conflicts between international capital and developing embryonic cocoa producers on the Gold Coast and the nature of the transformation of indigenous relations of production: it is to some of these that we have already alluded and can here see more clearly.

There is no need to detail the events of the development of cocoa (2). Instead, we shall merely first: assess one of the issues involved in this specific process of Gold Coast history, namely the nature of the migration by people involved in the production of cocoa and second, we will enquire into the particular kind of social differentiation that the production of cocoa engendered. Finally, while looking at both these issues we will stress how they fit within

---

(1) Howard, op.cit., p. 85.

(2) This has been done elsewhere but still with shortcomings: see inter alia: Polly Hill, 'Social Factors in Cocoa Farming', in, J. Brian Wills (editor) Agriculture and Land Use (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) Studies in Rural Capitalism, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), W.H. Beckett, Akokoaso, A Survey of a Gold Coast Village, Monographs on Social Anthropology No. 10 Published for L.S.E. by Perry Land, (London, Humphries and Company Limited, 1944) B. Beckman, Organising the Farmers, (Sweden: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1976).

the broader nature of colonial transformation and in particular how cocoa production was facilitated by general conditions of colonialism.

Colonial authorities did not immediately welcome the development of an industry based on cocoa production. The colonial regime was much more concerned with the development of alternative cash crops at the time that cocoa production increased in popularity at the end of the nineteenth century. It was not until the 1920's that the colonial regime, through the Department of Agriculture, actively sought to 'develop' the industry on their department's terms with Eurocentric ideas of farming. In 1910, when cocoa production had established itself on a large scale, the Department of Agriculture began a campaign against the industry spelling out an impending disaster for the colony if cocoa production continued to expand, and if other agricultural initiatives were neglected. The precise criticism of the Department was that unsuitable farming techniques were being used by African farmers. In particular Europeans insisted on the need for techniques of production associated with land scarce temperate climates. Conditions on the Gold Coast were the opposite of this: there were plentiful supplies of land but shortages of labour (1). The latter condition led to the movement of farmers from one area to another if crops were attacked by pests or diseased and thus led the Director of Agriculture to fear the spread of diseases elsewhere (2).

- 
- (1) The antagonistic attitude towards the cocoa industry was not shared by all colonialists, see GNA(A) ADM 27/1/8 Duplicate Letter Book 1902-1903, and acceptance by the District Commissioner of the conditions for cocoa production.
- (2) Director of Agriculture concerned about the future of the cocoa industry: measures of control proposed 1918; extract from W.S.D. Tudhope, (Director of Agriculture) Enquiry into G.C. Cocoa industry 1918-1919 document 29 in Kay (1972) op.cit., p.243. For the attitudes of colonial officials to developing cocoa see R.H.Green & S.H.Hymer, 'Cocoa in the Gold Coast: A Study in the Relations between African Farmers and Agricultural Experts', Journal of Economic History, 26, 1, March 1966.



As the cocoa industry developed from its initial eighty pounds of production in 1891 to more than one hundred thousand tonnes in 1918, the Department of Agriculture saw the need to intervene in the industry to control and direct its development. The way to do this lay in the control of production and marketing but this would have to occur without creating too many conflicts with the indigenous producers. As one observer has commented on the period:

The Governor was aiming to placate the Department of Agriculture by permitting legislation, but at the same time was preventing the Department from obtaining the blanket measures it sought and which, he feared, would lead to a serious political confrontation between the administration and the cocoa farmers (1).

For Governor Clifford the way to capitalise on cocoa production was to increase the facilities available for transporting the crop to European manufacturers on the coast. Unfortunately, however, all rail links in the colony had been developed solely for the transportation of gold from the gold bearing areas. These links were not, therefore, useful in transporting cocoa. This crop had to wait the development of road networks (2).

### Migration and Class Formation

Unlike the forced migration of labourers from the North, to work in the mines of Western Gold Coast, the massive migration of farmers from the Akwapim Hills to what is now the Eastern Region, and of the farmers from central Ashanti west to the forests in Ahafo occurred without coercion (3). It has been established that

---

(1) Kay, op.cit., p.239.

(2) Perhaps the biggest impact made by the government was in the development of marketing boards. For discussion of this see, Beckman, op.cit. This latter development in many ways provides the backdrop to the period up to independence and is outside the scope of this thesis.

(3) See Map Ten. Although Akwapims initiated the migration other farmers in the south of the forest zone "where there was little or no land fit for cocoa growing soon joined the race to acquire suitable land". These people included the Krobo, Shai and varieties of Adangme. See, Hill (1962), op.cit., p. 281.

the migration involving the residents of central to northern and western Akwapim began ca. 1892 when the farmers there began to plant cocoa and coffee on land over which they already had control, or newly acquired control, perhaps through a sharecropping arrangement (1).

The notion of migration was not new to these people. They had already been involved in the production of oil palms on land over which they had secured control from the Akwapims (2). In fact, as one of the earliest writers on cocoa has commented:

oil palm not only provided most of the finance required for the cocoa migration, but was also a forerunner as a planted perennial tree crop (3).

The other cash crop which provided the financial basis upon which Akwapim and Ashanti farmers could migrate to new land to establish cocoa farms was rubber (4). In 1890 the high price of rubber meant that values of rubber exports exceeded the value of exports of palm oil and kernels (5). In addition to these overtly colonial oriented export productive activities, informants in Akwapim told one writer that general trading in items like salt, parrots, skins and blankets from the north also facilitated the capital for the purchase of new land (6). These improved opportunities for cash earnings increased the

---

(1) More on sharecropping or the 'abusa' below. See A.F. Robertson, 'Abusa: The Structural History of an Economic Contract', Journal of Development Studies, 18, 4, 1982.

(2) HITT (1962), op. cit., p. 281.

(3) Ibid.

(4) HITT, (1963), op.cit., pp.164-165, see also Green and Hymer, op.cit.

(5) Hill, (1963), op.cit., p.164.

(6) Ibid., p.166. The purchase of land in new areas was not unproblematic for migrants. We will assess this briefly below in regard to processes of class formation and changes in relations of production initiated by migration. The promise of concessions in the newly populated areas made indigenous land owners not always willing to part with the land because of the possibility of alternative financial remuneration. In one instance colonial officials in Tarkwa commented late in 1929, where migrants had come to start cocoa cultivation, "Akwapim farmers have bought land rights through the district but the local peoples prefer to hope for fat concession rents than to make extensive cacao farms." GNA(A) ADM 27/5/3 Tarkwa District Record Book 1900-1939.

numbers of people who could get involved in new productive activities and added to the long term demise of the power of the chiefs. For instance, people involved in cocoa production and marketing, like money lenders and brokers, all added to the numbers of people which hitherto had not been involved in the appropriation of cash.

Of course the chiefs and power holders also gained in some ways from the development of cocoa. This was the case when those involved in growing the crop were 'stranger farmers' (1). These migrants made a tribute payment to the chief of the areas into which they moved which usually was one third of the cocoa grown or sold thus bolstering the wealth of the chief (2).

This system of payment for the right to use land has been called an abusa contract (3). Earlier in the thesis we stressed that chiefly control over the allocation of land was a source of chiefly

(1) According to Hill, (1962), op.cit., p.279, this category was the norm and not the native or sedentary farmer. See also A.F. Robertson, op.cit., p.458.

(2) In some areas this payment of tribute acted to deter new farmers. Because of this the tribute payment also incurred the wrath of colonial authorities sections of which thought that a system of rent should be developed for cocoa farms per acre.

"While ancient custom may govern the proportion of such demands on account of uncultivated or native products no-such custom can exist in the case of cocoa; a new form of cultivation only introduced into the Gold Coast within the last few years"

and

"should these excessive rates of tribute continue, His Excellency will be compelled to consider the adoption of legislative measures very considerably to reduce, if not abolish, all payments by tribal landholders in respect of their cultivated land"

See, GNA(A) ADM 11/1/184, Cocoa Farming Tribute Payable by Farmers to Chiefs, Laws As To.No scheme of rent was imposed because the colonial regime accepted that it had no power of compulsion or interference in private contractual agreements. Ibid.

(3) Robertson, op.cit.

authority. While land remained plentiful, relative to the numbers of people wanting to work it, chiefs were willing to grant the use of land to newly arriving farmers for a single lump sum. As land became more scarce with the growth of the cocoa economy, what had began as the 'alienation' of land for a lump sum payment was transformed into the right of migrant farmers to work land for regular payments of tribute to chiefs (1). The outcome of this latter development was the transformation of "stranger tenure into something resembling fixed rent tenancies" (2). However, despite the increasing heritable nature of the land lease it remained difficult for the stranger to sub-lease the land. Instead we tend to agree with the statement that:

a stranger's tenancy ... is(was) really an indefinite license assuring rights of beneficial user in consideration for periodic payments (3).

These payments began in kind but were commuted into money as the spread of cash nexus increased.

In contrast to labour recruited to the mines, the 'stranger farmer' was the person who in years leading up to the development of the cocoa economy had access to money making opportunities, linked usually with cash crop production of oil palms and rubber. Again in stark contrast to the Northern labourers, the stranger farmer migrant was able largely to establish the conditions of work for himself and was also to become the employer of labour, rather than be subject to

---

(1) Ibid., p.457.

(2) Ibid., p.458.

(3) S.B.K. Asante, Property Law and Social Goals in Ghana, 1844-1966, quoted in Robertson, op.cit., p. 458.



routines imposed by somebody else. There were two kinds of migrants both of which usually moved in groups rather than as individuals (1). The first was the family group "which was the typical means of migration of the matrilineal Akwapim" (2). The second was the 'company'. This last category consisted of a group of people, not necessarily relatives, and which became the "usual means of migration of certain patrilineal Akwapim" (3). In this last system of migration land was divided among the members in strips each getting the amount corresponding to his contribution. Under the family system the largest piece of land was usually kept by the leader. The remaining land was then worked by other family members.

Polly Hill has identified four forms of labour hire in the Ghanaian cocoa economy. We have been concerned thus far with the abusa, crop sharing category where migrant farmers paid chiefs for the right to use land to grow cocoa, although increasingly the right of use was transformed into an inheritable right for the cocoa producers' family (4). The development of cocoa also accelerated the development of a rural wage labour force, which were often migrants from the North, who found increasingly that they could earn more cash by selling labour power, or by making abusa payments in the Gold Coast Colony and Ashanti, than if they cultivated their own land or went to the mines. This situation was enhanced as regional inequalities in the climate and soil fertility added to the dimension of social differentiation and class formation. Cocoa could be grown only in the natural conditions of the tropical forest. This resulted in the increase in the value of

---

(1) These categories are given by Hill, (1963), op.cit.

(2) Hill, (1962), op.cit., p.282.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Hill, (1962), (1963), op.cit.

forest land compared with that of the savannah and the emergence of a labour hiring economy based around the production of cocoa. Migrants from the North often became 'daily or casual' labourers on farms worked by abusa men but especially on newly developing farms. Polly Hill also identified a third category of labour (i.e. in addition to the abusa) which was the 'seasonal worker' who would be employed for weeding or picking the cocoa pods. Finally, there developed a system of 'annual contract' workers who were normally employed by farmers who had well established farms and who, therefore, had sufficient funds to employ labour for a full year. This category of labour had the most restrictions placed upon it and generally felt that it was at the beck and call of the farm owner (1).

The system of migration to cocoa growing areas became self perpetuating, again in contrast with the migration of mine workers from the North. Increasingly, farmers would invest parts of their surplus from one piece of land to purchase new land. Land increasingly had a commercial value and the working of land was seen as a useful area of investment. The production of cocoa also became a pre-occupation for people who did not migrate but who incorporated this new crop among older farming practices. This production of cocoa within the family unit at home led to a process of unrest initiated earlier within different areas by rubber and oil palm production. In short, the changing organisation of production and the higher esteem in which land was perceived following increases in cash crop production, but accelerated and enhanced by cocoa production, added to indigenous conflict.

---

(1) Robertson, op.cit., p.46.

The production of cocoa was creating a number of tensions. The first was between the indigenous producers of cocoa and the encroaching European companies involved in sustaining the international capitalist economies. The European companies which purchased cocoa for manufacture in Europe were soon to realise that the primary producers could not be as easily subjugated to the capitalist market as at first was thought (1). A second tension associated with the commercialisation of land which in part initiated, but more clearly accelerated, processes set in train earlier by cash crop production had a number of effects. As we have already suggested above:

New relations were ... created over land and labour replacing a system dominated by family production for the individual household within a framework of communal land tenure. Private or semi private property rights in land were extended throughout the cocoa areas. Land was bought and sold. Farms were mortgaged, auctioned (2).

A further effect of the development of cocoa were the processes of class formation emanating from the development of a rural wage labour force. Pressures brought to the fore by these developments were exacerbated by difficulties of obtaining credit and the need to be in an area where transport was available to move the crop to the coast. Hence there developed a 'sub strata' of farmers, traders, money lenders

---

(1) This later period is not covered here. On the nature of conflict at the international level and on the local level through hold-ups the first of which occurred in 1903, see, John Miles, 'Rural Protest in the Gold Coast: The Cocoa Hold-ups, 1908-1938', in Clive Dewey and A.G. Hopkins (editors), The Imperial Impact, Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India, (London: Athlone Press for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies University of London, 1978), J.F. Milburn, British Business and Ghanaian Independence, (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 1977). T.J. Johnson, 'Protest: Tradition and Change: An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots 1890-1920', Economy and Society, 1, 1972.

(2) Beckman, op. cit., p. 37.

and transport owners within the farming community itself (1). Perhaps the most important development associated with the emergence of cocoa production which we have traced in here was the rural wage labour force and the transformation of people's relationship with the land.

Cocoa is a tree crop which yields continuously but with diminishing productivity for about fifty years. A young farm starts bearing after 3-5 years. The perennial nature of the cocoa crop and the fact that it is a long term investment and asset helped revise rights of land inheritance in Asante. Hitherto, with the growth of subsistence crops, communal land rights to control or use the same piece of land were less important. This changed with the growth of tree crop production (2). Land was now occupied by individuals for an indefinite period ensuring that rights of inheritance were transformed. Moreover, the semi-capitalist mode of production of cocoa where abusa men in particular had resources to employ labour, contrasted to previous cash crop production based upon petty commodity production. In addition, the labour process involved in producing cocoa required the farm owner to draw on a pool of migrant, non-family labour to complete a number of work tasks. These included pruning, weeding and the provision of temporary shade. It was in carrying out these tasks that the farmers hired labour. It is this process that has been called capitalist farming (3). The owner of the farm ensured a regular minimal income while employing labour to keep the farm producing. This went on while the owners visited

---

(1) Ibid., pp.37-38.

(2) See ibid., p. 38 and Robertson, op.cit.

(3) This form of production has perhaps more accurately been called 'peasant capitalism' - capitalist farming with a strong peasant element for the role of "family labour and distinct from cash investment in capital formation, and in the landlord tenant aspect of share crop labour", Beckman; op.cit., p.36.

their other farms.

In looking briefly at some of the issues associated with the development of the cocoa industry in the Gold Coast we have highlighted the transformatory affects of the interaction between colonial contact and indigenous African activities. The demand in Europe for cash crops, that had not hitherto been grown in the Gold Coast, hastened the process in the colony towards the more overt alienation of land for money payments and a system of wealth which lay less in the possession of people as slaves or pawns, and more in the ownership of land and payment for labour services with cash. But the forms of commodity production induced by European demand did not take on an overt form of the capitalist mode of production classically conceived with the premise of free wage labour. The trend towards this had begun, however, and we have traced this development in the burgeoning cocoa economy and in the demand for mine labour. The particular form of capitalism which developed on the Gold Coast was, as we have seen, subject to a number of social forces, pressures and conflicts: these were both within the colonising power, over the type of administration to be developed on the coast and with the European mine owners for labour and developing companies in Europe which demanded cash crops for home consumption. In addition there were conflicts within the Akan and northern social formations over the assimilation into an increasing commercial economy where old values and traditions were being eroded. Arguably many of these processes were in motion, in an embryonic form, during the incursion of colonial interests into the hinterland in the 1860's and 1870's. The Asante had for years used a form of gold currency and the power holders in Kumase and elsewhere in the Gold Coast colony had the basis of their power in the allocation of

land, (de facto ownership), and appropriation of crops. Ostensibly these chiefly functions were for use as stool regalia. In 'reality' they served to increase personal accumulation. As colonialism extended into the hinterland and the presence of a cash nexus became all important, this form of accumulation of wealth was transformed.

We have seen how the colonial authorities sought at times to hasten, and at others to slow down, the development of wage labour and reduce the instances of slavery to facilitate the development of a capitalist mode of production in the colony more closely attuned to that in Europe. This was attempted by reducing constraints against indigenous economic development of the colony. We can now look briefly as to how such measures interacted with other compelling needs of state; that is, at the way in which the colonial state sought to enhance the position of its authority on the colony and the measures it set under way, to increase the incorporation of the Colony within an increasing dominant international capitalist economy. How did the colonial state seek to maintain legitimacy in the colony? By what means did it seek to redress the marked unrest occurring within indigenous authorities caused through mounting colonial and commercial incursions? What structures did the regime establish, linked to the need to advance its policy of indirect rule, to placate the desires of the chiefs to be more actively involved in the running of the colony; and how did the colonial state manage to appease the chiefs, while having simultaneously to placate the interests of the educated elite and other social strata on the colony?

#### IV INDIRECT RULE AND THE COLONIAL STATE

We shall argue that the role of the colonial state on the Gold

Coast in the twentieth century was essentially to placate the financial interests of European trading companies on the coast and mining and timber concerns, while simultaneously securing a stable political climate in the relations between the states' representatives and colonised people. In general, it could be said that, the colonial state acted:

on behalf of the metropolitan bourgeoisie insofar as the interests of that bourgeoisie did not conflict with the interests of the state itself (1).

The character of the colonial state cannot therefore be "reduced simply to that of a loyal minister to capital's needs" (2). We have traced above for instance a series of conflicts between political interests of the colonial state and the economic concerns of mining and finance capital.

Although an arbiter of capitalist interests, the colonial state, at times of dissension and conflicts between European capitalists, which we have examined, often acted directly as an instrument of the dominant class or some of its fractions. In other words, the degree of relative autonomy was temporarily eroded (3).

- 
- (1) Howard, op.cit., p.46. The classical debate on relative autonomy and the inadequacies of an infrastructural analysis of the state are found in the exchanges between R.Miliband and N.Poulantzas, op.cit. For a discussion of this debate and the explanations for relative autonomy see also E.Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, (London: N.L.B. 1977). See also R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- (2) J. Lonsdale and B. Berman, 'Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914, JAH 20, 1979, pp.489 and also 487. This point applies equally to our general understanding of the state in capitalist societies. This is to say the state is relatively autonomous from acting at the direct behest of capitalist interests. Individual capitalists, left to their own devices would fail to guarantee the conditions for securing capital accumulation. The result historically has been that the maintenance of "the hierarchy of class domination (has) been abstracted from the economic to the political level within each national social order". See also the Miliband and Poulantzas debate, op.cit.
- (3) Lonsdale and Berman, op. cit., p.490.

This occurred when representatives of the colonial state were busy fulfilling their role of securing social order on the Gold Coast which was often required after the "dislocative consequences of the expansion of the capitalist mode" (1). These theoretical points support the bulk of our analysis of the way in which the Gold Coast colonial state sought at times to brake, but at other times to hasten, the spread of proletarianisation in the colony. As two writers have recently commented:

The colonial state straddled not one but two levels of articulation between the metropole and the colony as a whole as well as within the colony itself. It therefore bore a dual character: it was at once a subordinate agent in its restructuring of local production to meet metropolitan demand, yet also the local factor of cohesion over the heterogenous fragmented and contradictory social forces jostling within (2).

The major role of the colonial state on the Gold Coast, and arguably elsewhere in Africa, was to legitimate a presence which began as largely naked force. For this process to be completed the state required the acceptance of the African population which was secured through the use of 'indirect rule' - the creation and use by the colonial regime of so-called indigenous traditional power structures. The second major role of the colonial state was one which largely drew it in conflict with satisfying its first activity. This was to ensure that "imported capital (was) converted from a lifeless factor of production into an active social relation" (3). The contradiction of this latter process manifested itself in the requirements of a developing colonial capitalist economy which began to slowly erode

---

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid., p.490.

(3) Ibid., p. 491.



the very traditional forms of social structure on which the colonial state vested so much hope for maintaining its control. In other words, the processes of indigenous class formation, often began prior to colonial contact, but accelerated during the development of European gold mining and the purchasing of concessions, eventually undermined the control and authority of the colonial state.

We do not want here to engage in the theoretical debates about the role of the state on the periphery of international capitalism. These debates are legion (1). Nevertheless, we can and have raised some of the questions associated with the relationship of the state to society and of the relationships between the state and the interests represented on the Gold Coast among Europeans and Africans.

The significance of the colonial state was in the establishment of colonial rule through an apparatus capable of suppressing all indigenous classes in the colony:

It might be said that the 'superstructure' in the colony is therefore 'overdeveloped' in relation to the structure of the colony; for its basis lies in the metropolitan structure itself, from which it is later separated at the time of independence (2).

Superstructure here refers to the areas of state activity which facilitated control and acceptance of the alien regime (3).

- (1) Inter alia: W. Ziemann and M. Lanzendorfer, 'The State in Peripheral Societies', in R. Miliband and J. Saville, (editors) The Socialist Register 1977. (London: Merlin Press, 1977). Most discussion however is concerned with post colonial rather than colonial society.
- (2) Hamza, Alavi, 'The State in Post Colonial Societies, Pakistan and Bangladesh,' NLR, 74 1972, p. 61.
- (3) In itself however, the reification of the superstructure of the developing colonial state must not eclipse the need to analyse more fully the precise relationship between the state and society. Neither must it take our focus away from recognising the conflicts within the colonial regime as to policies which should be adopted for the colonial administration. These criticisms are taken from Ziemann and Lanzendorfer, op.cit; for further criticisms of Alavi's position see C. Leys 'The 'Overdeveloped' Post Colonial State: a Re-evaluation' R.O.A.P.E. No.5, 1976, and John Saul, 'The State in Post-Colonial Societies - Tanzania', in R. Miliband and J. Saville (editors), The Socialist Register 1974, (London: Merlin Press 1974).

We may now summarise some of the attempts employed by the colonial state in hoping to offset the disintegrative aspects of the colonial presence on the coast before concluding with the eventual demise, partly caused by economic depression, of colonial plans for economic reform.

(a) Indirect Rule

The years between 1900 and 1930 saw various attempts by the colonial regime to consolidate its political control over the Gold Coast. We have already seen that the British 'tactic' for controlling the colony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was for political control to be exercised wherever possible through indigenous power holders (1). The position of the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) had been that the educated Africans' role was to be the representatives of the Government and spokesmen for the people. This position was adopted because the traditional authority holders were seen to have the position of rulers vested in them only through the "wishes" and consent of the people. The colonial administration, however, rejected this position (2). Indeed the extent to which this position could be extended was to cause a split within the ARPS itself.

In 1920 a section of the ARPS formed the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA). The NCBWA stressed the need for a greater rapport between the colonial state and African communities but that it was the role of the natural rulers, that is, the chiefs, and not the educated young men to initiate this.

---

(1) See Chapter 5 above.

(2) In 1924 Guggisberg was to suggest that the elite "are lacking conspicuously in qualities of leadership and responsibility", quoted in Edsman, op.cit., p.84.

The introduction in 1916 of a new constitution helped initiate the NCBWA. Governor Clifford introduced measures to increase the size of the Legislative Council which was now to include six Africans - three chiefs and three educated Africans. The ARPS saw the move to have chiefs on the Council as unconstitutional. This was because the chiefs were seen not to be able to make any decisions without consulting their councillors and elders (1). The position of the ARPS had always been that the educated elite should be in government as the intermediary between the chiefs and colonial government. Increasingly, however, sections of the ARPS, notably Casely Hayford and the NCBWA, moved from the earlier position of bolstering the status of the chiefs to one of substituting the chiefs by the educated elite as leaders of the people (2). This position was seen as both an attack against the colonial state and the chiefs; it also increased the wrath of sections of the educated elite. The representatives of the colonial state recognised that the Congress section of the educated elite sought to undo previous colonial policy of working through traditional institutions. We have already made the point that processes accompanying the Gold Coast's increased incorporation into the international economy served to erode traditional authority structures. In large part these processes had facilitated the development of an active educated elite of Africans, a section of which now sought to increase their representation in the procedures of government but also to usurp the authority

---

(1) Edsman, *op. cit.*, p.61.

(2) *Ibid.*, p.65. For more detail on the split within the ARPS see *ibid.*, Chapters 2-4. One result of this change of line by the Congress was the narrowing of its own political base: it lay itself open to attack from traditionalists within the ARPS and from the chiefs. The result was the demise of Congress especially following the wrath of Ofori Atta.

of the chiefs. This was counter to colonial state policy of bolstering the powers of the chief and to use them increasingly as the vehicle for colonial control (1).

The eventual outcome of the split within the ranks of the ARPS was to be the strengthening of the role of the chiefs and the elimination of the position that the educated elite had managed to achieve over the years. In brief, the 'traditional authority' of the chiefs was bolstered by the government's recognition of the Head Chiefs' Council which Governor Guggisberg saw as an opportunity of "preserving and strengthening traditional authority" and of helping "the chiefs to adjust their rule to changing circumstances" (2). In addition chiefly authority was supported by the Native Affairs Ordinance of 1927 which followed the development of a new constitution in 1925. In preparation for the new constitution the establishment of three Provincial Councils of head chiefs was provided for. From these provincial members would be drawn the new Legislative Council (3).

The reaction to this improved provision for chiefly representation varied (4). Many chiefs responded positively to reducing the power of the educated elite. The Congress group within the ARPS saw the new constitution as a retrograde step and protested that the educated elite become the leaders of the African community. The ARPS

(1) This view reinforces the lack of support of the Congress proposals for Municipal Corporation Ordinance 1924, see Edsman, op. cit., pp. 67-81.

(2) Ibid., p. 83.

(3) Kimble, op. cit., pp.446-448 and Edsman, op. cit., p. 83.

(4) Edsman, op. cit., p. 83. The order constituted a legislative council of 30 members, 16 official and 14 unofficial including 9 Africans and 6 chiefs elected by 3 Provincial Councils of Head chiefs and 3 Municipal members. Provincial eligibility was restricted to head chiefs.

protested also that the Provincial Councils should be able to elect commoners as well as head chiefs. There was much opposition to the new constitution. The ARPS-Congress petitioned the government and tried to encourage the chiefs not to implement or be involved with it. Unfortunately for the ARPS discussion within its ranks as to which critical perspective should be adopted: one of ARPS traditionalism - the ARPS as arbiters between the government and chiefs, or Congress modernism - the westernisation of government and direct African representation through the educated elite, obscured an overt assault on the lack of 'educated' African participation in government (1). Unable to develop support for the position of direct African representation Casely Hayford recognised increasingly the need to try and work from within the constitution. This disquiet continued until, as with the rest of the ARPS, the need to mobilise against the colonial state once more came to a head. This later occasion was the Native Affairs Ordinance 1927 which along with previous attempts at imposing colonial rule received a stormy passage.

Since 1922 attempts had been made at imposing a Native Affairs Bill which could regularise and codify the powers and jurisdiction of indigenous power holders (2). There now began another attempt to specify the nature of native jurisdiction in the desire to minimise the amount of unrest among Africans. Part of this unrest was translated into dissatisfaction with head chiefs who were destooled (3). The position of traditional authorities had come increasingly under attack. We have seen, for example, the effects of increasing

---

(1) For the specific differences, Edsman op.cit., pp.85-90.

(2) Chapter 5.

(3) The recorded number of chiefs destooled rose from 7 in 1904-8 to 41 in 1919-24.

monetisation and the colonial demand for permanent wage labour and the disruption that this, together with changes in indigenous relations of production emanating from the development of cocoa, caused for traditional power holders. On the more overtly political front, as the processes of incorporation into the international economy progressed, chiefs saw their authority threatened daily and the successor to them was the educated elite. The ARPS had become particularly threatening in their campaign against the chiefs' presence at Provincial Councils. Governor Guggisberg now decided not to initiate a Native Jurisdiction Ordinance. Instead, the view was adopted that because of previous constant opposition the chiefs must introduce ideas themselves for codifying the position of traditional power holders (1). Such a Bill was initiated by Ofori Atta in 1927 following consultation with other chiefs. The proposed Native Affairs Ordinance (N.A.O.) has been seen as a way of trying to reconcile traditional authority structures with changing economic conditions through safeguarding the institution of chieftaincy. In short, the Bill was to provide for the strengthening of the institution of chieftainship and consequently was seen by the educated elite as an attack on the rights of 'ordinary Africans' especially themselves (2). Although the chiefs now accepted the doctrine of 'derived jurisdiction', that is, in the last analysis chiefly power was vested in the Crown, the institutions of government facilitated greater representation in the administration of the country, particularly on the local level. The colonial state had managed to extend the policy of indirect rule by getting the chiefs to initiate legislation themselves

---

(1) Kimble, op.cit., p.491.

(2) For details of the provisions see Metcalfe, op.cit., Document 472, p.629; Kimble, op. cit., pp. 106-123.

and thereby let the latter take the brunt of whatever criticism might develop.

Briefly, the main conditions of the Bill were for the State Council to become the senior authority within each state for deciding disputes between stools and for the Provincial Councils to receive formal administrative and judicial powers. The important point in connection with the State Council is that although its powers were specifically increased, appeals and a number of specific cases lay with the new colonial state. In this way the "Native Affairs Ordinance was the final outcome of a long series of attempts to regulate the chiefs' jurisdiction and its relationship to British executive and judicial authority"(1). For example, the State Council now had the authority to examine disputes arising from elections and the deposition of chiefs. If the issue was not resolved the case would go to the Provincial Council where the Governor had the final word. The situation led to a Gold Coast leader writer to comment that:

The time is coming when a chief once installed will sit firmly on the neck of the people like the old man of the sea, and rule in his own way without any lawful means of getting rid of him (2).

Whatever power lay in the hands of commoners and the educated elite in limiting the authority of the chiefs was now being eroded. The colonial state was ensuring the 'stability' of the society by supporting chiefs against the newly emerging groups of educated Africans and embryonic wage workers. Another example of the Administration's authority to

---

(1) Edsman, op. cit., p. 12.

(2) Gold Coast Times, 19.3.1927 quoted in Kimble, op.cit., p.94.

sanction or be involved in matters of hitherto traditional business was the right of formal appeal to the Governor by parties involved in disputes of a political or constitutional nature between chiefs of similar rank in the same state (1).

The passing of the NAO marked another defeat for the educated elite which sought greater representation and control over what were seen to be increasingly undemocratic institutions; the colonial and the 'traditional'. Although the ARPS petitioned against the Bill on the grounds that only twenty four Paramount chiefs out of sixty one had accepted the Provincial Council the Bill was passed and marked the further demise of the ARPS. The Act reflected the consolidation of the authority of the colonial state. This was facilitated importantly by a clause giving the chiefs the right to assemble and codify traditional law. As we have already mentioned (2) the reification of 'traditional law' was initiated by the colonial authorities in their attempt to sanction the development of a legal structure with which to control indigenous activity. This process now came to the fore: It was an aspect of the Bill which the ARPS rightly argued against as it was seen that first: "a head chief has no power to make, or join in the making of laws for his people" and second; that any such codification gave to the "said Paramount chief the bulk of the rights for which he was contending". As another writer has said, "the chief could easily frame as 'customary law' the measures necessary to make himself an autocrat" (3).

This further move at indirect rule by the colonial state

---

(1) For further examples of colonial state control see Edsman, op.cit., p.109  
 (2) Chapter 5.  
 (3) ARPS petition 13/2/1928 section 13, quoted in Edsman, op. cit., p. 118.



withdrew British political activities from local African politics and administration, but left the British administrators with the right to interfere with indigenous disputes when so requested by the chiefs. The authority of the chiefs was vested in the Crown but the opportunity was given for the traditional office holders to help mediate the effects of increasing European commercial presence. Instead of allowing the traditional positions to be usurped by the educated elite the colonial administration provided for the establishment of 'indigenous' institutions to cope with increasing disputes emanating from the British presence (1).

The British colonial administrations support for the chiefs against a developing educated elite was in keeping with the practice of indirect rule. With an impending international financial crisis and the perennial shortage of funds on the Gold Coast the British felt that it was financially and politically more stable to support the chiefs. The British were wary of the dislocative effects of the emerging class of educated Africans and the impact of an increasing wage labour force. In short, the imperatives of depression and political control, together with the fear of an emerging new class and the underlying racism upon which these positions were based led the British to support ailing and struggling chiefly authority.

(b) The Colonial State: Economic Expansion and Decline

A corollary to the political consolidation of the British states' presence on the Gold Coast was its direct expanded involvement in developing the infrastructure of the colony. We have already made

---

(1) The increased separation of chiefs from colonial administration at least on paper resulting from these measures of indirect rule also had the effect of putting the onus of good government on the chiefs and not the colonial regime, thereby laying the chiefs open for attacks on any level of abuse.

the point that the intention of the colonial state was to facilitate the increased presence of European capital on the coast when this did not conflict with maintaining order there. We have also seen that this position was not without inevitable conflicts. We can now look briefly at the biggest colonial plan for developments of certain areas of the colony and the reason behind this.

The Guggisberg administration, 1920-30, introduced measures which were conceived to try and tie the Gold Coast economies more closely to the economy of Britain and in a new way: one linked to increased fixed capital expenditures in the colony. Praised as the most integrated plan of development ever imposed by the British on the Gold Coast, Guggisberg sought to capitalise on the economic growth of the colony since the turn of the century and to develop ways in which it could be extended. In particular this meant raising expenditure on infrastructural development, notably transport, to facilitate the easier evacuation of cash crops and minerals produced in the hinterland of the colony (1). Out of a total expenditure of twenty five million pounds for example, £2 million was set aside for the construction of Takoradi harbour, fourteen and a half million pounds for railways and £1 million for roads. There was also a concerted attempt to try and diversify the Gold Coast agricultural industry. The development of the cocoa industry had been encouraged, albeit tentatively, through the provision of better transport facilities especially railways but now feeder roads were built to

---

(1) For discussion of Guggisberg's Ten Year Plan, see, Hymer, in Ranis op.cit. We have already discussed in some detail the conflicts of interest which presented themselves to the colonial state especially with regard to investment in transport.

get the cocoa to the coast. Plans were also set in motion to revive the palm oil industry and sisal plantations near Takoradi. Accompanying these initiatives was also the Forestry Ordinance Act of 1927.

The implementation of these measures was not easy. There were difficulties due to a lack of skilled manpower, mainly because colonial authorities had neglected the training of personnel. There was also fierce competition for labour between the colonial regime and commercial interests in mining and agriculture. In addition to these constraints in initiating a change in the direction of government spending there was a shortage of funds available to raise the infrastructure of the colony. Since 1891 and the gold rush in the western part of the colony, mining concerns had called for the easier access to gold bearing areas so greater amounts of machinery could be imported and greater amounts of gold exported. A similar argument was made for a deep water harbour at Takoradi (1). It was thought that the development of rail links would simultaneously satisfy private European commercial interests exploiting the resources of the Gold Coast forest and the colonial regime which sought to raise revenue wherever possible. Monies received for the use of government developed rail routes, for example, between 1904-1925 averaged twenty six per cent of total government revenue (2). European interests were well represented in the administration of the colony. In 1926 the Gold Coast Legislative Council included 5 European unofficial members together with a member

---

(1) We have seen that this does not mean it was built without some difficulties and indeed opposition. The latter came especially from a selection of colonial officials who doubted the prudence of financing the exercise from a £4 million loan at 6% raised in London.

(2) Howard, *op.cit.*, p.170. This did not last for long as competition from African Torry drivers reduced revenue in 1927 to 3% and 1928-38 the government received no revenue from railways at all.

elected by a mercantile electorate nominated by firms working on the colony recognised by the Chamber of Commerce. This mercantile representation in the administration was supported by similar representatives in England where Royal Commissions were ensured business participation (1). This merchant support among the ranks of colonial officials in the colony and at home in England did not preclude conflict within the colonial state as to the correct direction for colonial policy. Mining interests, for example, were opposed to government assistance in the cocoa industry as it drew labour away from work underground to more profitable and healthy agricultural pursuits above ground (2).

Guggisberg's Ten Year Plan allowed for the greater diversification of agricultural activities as well as the placating of European industrial commercial interests through improved transport links and harbour facilities. Unfortunately for Guggisberg, and for the people of the colony, the attempts made to increase the colonies' links with the international capitalist economy were themselves subject to the vagaries of the international capitalist economy. As financial disaster in Europe and North America approached with the crash of 1929-30 so too did the opportunities for securing a more profitable economy on the coast. Exports failed to improve because of diminishing prices in real value of the country's commodities. The 1940's were to bring little change with increases in prices of imports. In fact, the financial crash in Europe hit the colonial regime so hard that

---

(1) See ibid., for example, Commission of Trade and Taxation (1921).

(2) This has been pursued further by Green and Hymer op.cit., see also Miles, op.cit., for the development of oligopolisation in agriculture and the conflict between big and small expatriate agricultural concerns.

Guggisberg's plans had to be curtailed because of lack of revenue. The contradiction of being linked to the increasingly more powerful world economy came to the fore as Gold Coast producers were helpless to obviate falling international demand for cocoa, rubber and other cash crops. The colonial state had sought to turn the Gold Coast economy ever more outward towards Europe, to satisfy the demands of capitalist development there, but at the time when this was done with greater vigour the world economy disintegrated and took the Gold Coast economy with it.

## V CONCLUSION

This chapter has concluded our examination of the processes involved in the British colonial incursion of the Gold Coast. We have traced in some detail the ways in which the British attempted to legitimise formal colonial rule on the coast. Coercive, ideological and administrative measures were adopted by the colonial regime to ensure the entrenchment of the colonial state. We have examined the development of 'indirect rule' through which the British sought to build upon and often create the power of 'traditional' authority holders so that the colonial authorities might work through indigenous power structures. On the surface this colonial strategy was prompted by a lack of funds. It was cheaper and required less manpower for the colonial regime to work through indigenous power holders, rather than establish a whole new complex of administration and then have the additional job of encouraging the Gold Coast inhabitants into accepting alien legal practices. The reality of indirect rule of course as we showed earlier (1), was that the colonial regime actually established

---

(1) Chapter 5.

not only a colonial form of judicial and political administration on the coast but also imposed new forms of 'native', legal paraphernalia on the local people. In stressing the need to work through local structures the colonial state often created their own chiefs and frequently imposed alien 'indigenous' forms of native customary law.

Underlying the discussion of colonial attempts to legitimise its rule we have examined in detail processes set in motion by the colonial presence linked with the proletarianisation of an indigenous work force. In addition to the process of class formation relating to the forced migration of northern labourers, to work in the gold mines in Tarkwa and Prestea, we have traced briefly the emergence of an indigenous cocoa economy. The latter was based largely upon the 'voluntary' migration of northern people, to work on the cocoa farms in Ashanti and elsewhere, and the workers formed the basis for a developing rural wage labour force. The employers of labour were themselves usually migrants who entered the forest belt of central Gold Coast to purchase the right to farm land by giving chiefs a lump sum payment. After a short while and a mounting shortage of land, this once only payment for the right to cultivate land was transformed into a regular abusa tribute payment.

A feature of the colonial presence in the colony had been the degree of conflict and lack of unanimity of 'policy' in relation to the pace and nature of European commercial incursions inland. We saw in Chapter Five, with the development of mining concessions and operations in the western part of the Gold Coast Colony, that there was no clear cut colonial policy relating to the desired impact of drawing African labour away from its pre-colonial modes of production. The same degree of ambivalence was shown by the colonial authorities

in relation to European incursion into the Northern Territories and to the development of an indigenous cocoa industry. Unsure of the economic benefit of allowing the persistence of pre-colonial modes of production, the colonial state was wary of facilitating the wholesale and permanent migration of labourers from the Northern Territories to the mines in the western part of the colony. This, as we have seen, led to conflicts between the colonial administration and the European mine owners who lacked sufficient supplies of labour to mine gold. In time the British administration in the Northern Territories became more brutal. Local chiefs were encouraged, often forcefully, to recruit labour for the mines and later for the railways and the military. This form of indirect rule led to increased local insurrection against the British and indigenous chiefs who were identified as working with the colonial power.

Our examination of British activities in the north, together with the assessment of the development of cash crops like rubber, palm oil and later cocoa, has reinforced our earlier suggestion that colonialism on the Gold Coast did not have the effect of immediately dissolving local modes of production. Instead our point throughout has been that colonial actions were beset by both internal conflicts of interest and conflicts with indigenous Akan and Northern groups. On the one hand, immediate economic gain was sought from the colony and this would best be achieved by allowing the European capitalist firms carte blanche, with the subsequent tendency to erode indigenous forms of production. On the other hand, the reality of colonial rule was that law and order had also to be maintained for economic plunder to be facilitated. Indirect rule became the instrument for ensuring different degrees of law and order although invariably the coercive

arm of the colonial state was always ready and frequently used, as a means to ensure British legitimacy. Indirect rule meant the propping up of indigenous power relations and modes of production. The contradiction for the colonial state was that acts of ensuring the continued viability of indigenous modes of production, coincided with the latter suffering from the disintegrating impact of capitalist incursion like the cash nexus, and proletarianisation of peasant producers.

A culmination of the difficulties for the colonial authorities in this regard became evident in the 1930's and was confirmed by the Nowell Commission (1). This Commission recognised the development of a 'capitalist' class of cocoa farmers and all that this meant for the colonial authorities. This was namely that the achievement of the hitherto small petty commodity producers was eroded. This class had previously grown some cash crops together with subsistence crops. The success of this was now minimised by the development of a distinct class involved mainly with cash crop production and also involved in utilising the labour of others. We have traced briefly the development of a labour hiring economy in the cocoa growing areas. The emerging class of cocoa farmers now also challenged the authority of large European trading firms which had previously managed to manipulate the smaller class of peasant producers (2). In addition to the threat posed to the European trading companies, by the development of an indigenous class of cocoa growers who possessed the means of production in their own right, such a development also challenged the authority of local power holders. An additional threat to the dominance of chiefly

---

(1) Nowell Commission Report, 1938, quoted in Grier op.cit., p. 39.

(2) Grier, op.cit., p. 39.



authority came from the increasingly more powerful educated elite of Africans who used the ARPS and the NCBWA as a vehicle for expressing their desire for greater Africa participation in Government. This section of lawyers and professional men were to become a running sore in the side of the colonial administration for years to come. On many occasions the chiefs themselves entered into cash crop production and in so doing strengthened their position of power and authority over the Oman. Where this did not occur, however, individual wealth and authority began to outweigh that of the chiefs. This development similar in effect to the development of an educated elite in the nineteenth century, also hastened the demise of chiefly authority and now posed a threat to the way in which the colonial regime channelled its authority through indigenous structures. Throughout the nineteenth century indirect rule had been based on supporting the most powerful traditional indigenous groups against likely contenders for local power. The twentieth century now saw the culmination of the processes set in train by colonial transformation and provided the conditions for chiefly authority to be challenged. The scene was now set for conflicts to emerge within a nationalist movement eager to take power and authority from the British.

### CONCLUSION

We have traced the interplay between indigenous development within the Gold Coast and the incorporation of the territory from ca. 1471 into the growing capitalist international economy of the twentieth century. Early European interest with plundering the economies of the inhabitants on the Gold Coast was twofold: first, with the exploitation of gold dust, a substance that had been produced by the Akan for centuries, for which there was an increasing demand in Europe, and second, the appropriation and seizure of African slaves to work plantations in the Caribbean which produced crops demanded by newly industrialising Britain. We have traced the impact of the Atlantic slave trade upon the Akan and distinguished this externally initiated trade from indigenous slave trading and categories of local unfree labour.

In the last part of the nineteenth century, four hundred years after the first Portuguese visit to the Guinea Coast, Europeans on the littoral still sought to appropriate gold from western Gold Coast but the techniques used for so doing, (and thus the labour process and impact upon Gold Coast society), were quite different. The early informal colonialism of the Portuguese, Dutch and English had been based upon merchant capital; the buying cheap and selling dear of commodities (for the most part) already produced. Only infrequently had Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries sought to intervene directly in the appropriation of the commodities of the Gold Coast by establishing their own productive enclaves. As European demand for gold rose so too did the European desire to become actively involved in its extraction. This, together with nineteenth and later

twentieth century attempts at encouraging indigenous cash crop production partly destroyed, but also acted to maintain, certain indigenous relations of production.

Our view of understanding colonial transformation on the Gold Coast has not located the dynamic for change simply upon 'external' or 'internal' pressures. Indeed it has been our contention throughout this thesis, that such a dualistic formulation for understanding the processes for social change on the Gold Coast, between ca. 1400-1930, is both unhelpful and obfuscatory. Instead, we have stressed the need to recognise the dialectical interaction between the Akan, (and the whole complex of their relations of production) and the colonial incursions on the coast and the dynamic for colonial expansion from Europe to West Africa.

Power in pre-colonial Akan areas was dependent upon the allocation of land and the control over slaves. We have stressed that chiefs and headmen were atop a hierarchy within each pre-colonial state because of inter alia: the rights invested in them to allocate land to the landless, and because of their ability to appropriate greater numbers of unfree labourers to work on their own disproportionately large tracts of land. In addition to slaves, chiefs also had the power to call on the labour of 'free' men and women to work their land. Commoner men in the hierarchy of power appropriated the labour of their wives and their children. The sexual division of labour in the Akan social formation ensured that women worked both in the fields and in the home of the domestic productive unit.

As the colonial institutional presence on the coast increased so too did European commercial merchants' demands for greater security in their trading activities. Conflicts existed throughout the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries between European merchants and the British administration on the coast and the state in Europe. These conflicts centred around the most appropriate form or pace of commercial links between Europeans and indigenous traders. We have seen in chapters 3-4, how British traders, and then government, entrenched their position on the coast only after numerous conflicts between themselves and with the local inhabitants. The impact of developing a form of 'legitimate' commerce with the Akan, following the end of the international slave trade, was to disrupt indigenous relations of production. European contact had not, and was never up to, completely eroding indigenous relations of production. Early attempts at formalising 'colonial' rule, however, of regularising commercial trading practices, led to armed conflicts and certainly imposed strains on the indigenous social formation. In the early nineteenth century, the British administration on the coast sought to end some local African relations of production which were seen to inhibit the free development of a capitalism known in Europe; a capitalism which existed on the basis of free wage labour and the sanctity of private property. But these early measures were largely equivocal and fragmentary. It was not until the establishment of formal colonial rule in 1874, that the British attempted to impose a structure upon Gold Coast inhabitants which was intended to ensure the smoother incursion of colonial capitalism in the colony.

The particular political framework for ensuring the establishment of a political economy in tandem with the wishes of the colonial authorities was 'indirect rule'. Indirect rule provided the political and administrative umbrella, under which the developing colonial state sought to create the pre-conditions for the particular form of capitalist development on the coast, but also to control the pace and nature of

capitalist development on the colony. This is not to say that the colonial state, in the late nineteenth century was even then a monolithic unit. The degree of class and fractional conflict and confusion emanating from Whitehall, Cape Coast and Accra, concerning amongst other things, the best form that colonialism should take suggests that at no time was such a cohesion state organisation present on the Gold Coast. All that existed, towards the end of the nineteenth century were a set of emerging institutional apparatuses which were used by colonial administrators in a period of colonial state formation and which were the outcome of a compromise between different competing factions of a British bourgeoisie.

The British 'policy' of indirect rule sought to ensure government by local inhabitants with the minimum of expenditure and the maximum of effective control. We have seen that the colonial administration however, was not always able to impose its will on the local populace, indeed, much of the colonial states' actions can be seen to come as a reaction to indigenous conflicts. Indirect rule was in one sense a policy to lessen some of the destabilising effects of increasing capitalist incursions on the coast and inland. We have argued that instead of colonial capitalist development dissolving indigenous modes of production their erosion was partial and piecemeal. This resulted in part from (or was reflected in) the ambivalent attitude of the colonial authorities towards indigenous relations of production. On the one hand, indirect rule propped up local power holders, and thereby maintained indigenous relations of power which we discussed in Chapter 1. On the other hand, the increased presence of European colonial commercial practices, the proletarianisation of the local work force, the increase in the 'cash nexus' and opportunity for private trading acted to undermine

the very indigenous power structures upon which the colonial regime laid so much store for maintaining law and order. It was this contradiction which persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in varying degrees of intensity which beset the colonial state. In safeguarding colonial capitalism the colonial authorities were never wholeheartedly committed to the complete erosion of local modes of production. Instead, colonial 'policy' with regard to transforming indigenous forms of production was ad hoc and confused. Foremost in the colonial administrators' minds was the need to provide the conditions for making the colony pay for itself, but the cost involved in facilitating this was too high if it meant a constant military solution to subjugate the local inhabitants.

We have traced in some detail the particular vacillation of colonial policy in 'pacifying' the people of the Gold Coast, Asante and the Northern Territories. We have located the reasons for these vacillations in three and closely dialectically interrelated areas. First, we examined the conflicts between and within European class and national interests for establishing a colony on the West African littoral, (Chapters 2-3). Second, we have looked at internal conflicts between the Akan which affected the nature of colonial transformation in the territory, (Chapters 3-4). Finally, we have tried throughout the thesis to show that it is only in examining the interrelationship of local and international social forces that a fuller, and more complete, picture of colonial transformation on the Gold Coast can be obtained, (Chapters 4-6). In other words, colonial transformation may not have been a one way process and certainly not the acting out of the colonial 'will', (it was vacillating as we have stressed), but there was a process - whose dynamic it has been the task of this thesis to uncover.

The focus of analysis for this thesis has therefore contrasted with previous work on the Gold Coast, and indeed with much writing on colonialism. We have integrated an examination of the social processes for European expansion to the Gold Coast with an understanding of pre-colonial relations of production in the incorporated territory and the way they shaped changed. Having established the latter, we have been able to see more clearly the kind of impact that colonialism had upon the way in which the Akan produced their means of subsistence and of trade.

We await a similar analysis of the later period of formal colonialism on the Gold Coast and the transition to political independence.

GLOSSARY  
OF MAIN ASANTE TWI TERMS

This glossary presents the principal Asante Twi terms that appear in the text. It is constructed on the basis of preferred Asante orthography although for reasons of simplicity this practice has not been followed in the text. The Asante Twi "ɔ" therefore appears as "o" and the "ɛ" as "e" in personal and place names in the text. Moreover, this glossary has been alphabetized by omitting the initial vowel or initial nasal "m" and "n". ɔman therefore appears under "m" and Asantehene under "s" below.

See Lewin (1978) and Wilks (1975) for a fuller listing of Asante Twi terms.



B

abusua, ..... matriclan or matrilineage; the head of an abusua is  
 pl. mmusua abusua-panin, pl. abusua-mpanifo.

D

odekuro ..... a lesser ranked chief; usually the head of a town or  
 pl. adekurofo village.

dommum, ..... a captive taken in times of war  
 pl. nnommum

ɔdɔnkɔ ..... a person who is bought; usually a slave;  
 pl. nnɔnkɔfo unfree plantation labourer

Odwira ..... The most significant annual Asante festival; held both  
 in Kumase and the outlying districts; has political and  
 religious importance.

E

fekuo ..... literally, a "grouping" of persons with something in  
 common; used to refer to the main divisions or departments  
 of government of officeholders in Kumase.

G

Gyaase ..... refers to the fekuo responsible for the maintenance of  
 Asantehene's royal household; led by the Gyaasehene

H

ɔhene, ..... ruler, head, or leader of a polity, district, or  
 pl. ahene organization

K

akoa ..... literally, "a subject" of the Asantehene and thus  
 pl. nkoa a citizen of the Asante Nation.

kontihene ..... The military title of the Bantomahene of Kumase.

Akwamuhene ..... Second-in-command of an army after the Kontihene;  
 title held by the Asafohene of Kumase.

kyeame ..... linguist, secretary, spokesman, or adviser to the  
 pl. akyeame Asantehene and his councillors; participated in  
 decision-making, and member of Council of Kumase.

M

man ..... a situational and functional term referring to  
 pl. aman district, territorial division, state, or nation,  
 depending upon the context used; hence Asanteman.

Amansie ..... literally, "origin of nation", refers to the southern  
 region of metropolitan Asante, including the districts  
 of Amofo, Bekwae, Dadiase, Danyase and Kokofu.

amanto ..... the five largest and oldest territorial districts  
 of the metropolitan region: Bekwae, Dwaben, Kokofu,  
 Mampon and Nsuta.

P

panin ..... literally, "the older".

apeato ..... A special purpose tax, levied to cover the costs  
 of military operations.

S

asafo ..... a unit or company organized for communal or military  
 purposes; hence, asafohene or asahene, a military  
 leader or commander

Asantehene	.....	the head of the Asante Nation and a male member of the royal Oyoko dynasty.
Asanteman	.....	literally, "the Asante Nation"; refers to the Asante Union in contrast to the Asante Nkabom, or Asante Confederacy.
sika	.....	gold, money.
sika futuro	.....	gold dust
sikani	.....	a person of wealth in the community; a "rich man"
pl. askiafo or asikafo		
<u>W</u>		
awowa	.....	a pawn; person sold for a debt; unfree status.

BIBLIOGRAPHYPRIMARY AND ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Papers relating to H.M. Colonial Possessions. No. 66, Gold Coast, Reports on Gold Mines 1889, No. 1. Parliamentary Papers 1889, LIV, Accounts and Papers, London, HMSO, 1889.

H.C. Belfield, Report on the Legislation Governing the of Native Lands in the Gold Coast Colony and Ashanti: with some observations on the Forest Ordinance, 1911. (London, 1912.)

Furley Collection, Balme Library, University of Ghana, Legon.

Annual Reports on the Mines Department, Gold Coast.

Ghana National Archives, Accra.

Ghana Regional Archives, Cape Coast.

Ghana Regional Archives, Sekondi.

Ghana Regional Archives, Kumase.

BIBLIOGRAPHYSECONDARY SOURCES

- ADDO-FENNING, R. 'The Gold Mining Industry in Akyem Abuakwa, 1850-1910, Sankofa, 2, (1976).
- AFRICAN STUDY GROUP 'Social relations in land in pre-colonial Asante', African Study Group, 7, n.d.
- AGBODEKA, F. 'The Fanti Confederacy 1865-1869', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 8, (1964).
- AGBODEKA, F. African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast 1868-1900: A Study in the forms and force of protest. London: Longman, 1971.
- AJAYI, J. and CROWDER, C. (editors) History of West Africa. 2 volumes, London: Longman, 1971.
- ALAVI, H. 'The State in Post Colonial Societies Pakistan and Bangladesh', New Left Review, 74, (1972).
- ALAVI, H. 'The Structure of Peripheral Capitalism', in H. Alavi and T. Shanin (editors), 1982.
- ALAVI, H. and SHANIN, T. (editors) Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies". London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1982.
- ALTHUSSER, L. For Marx. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969.
- ALTHUSSER, L. and BALIBAR, E. Reading Capital. London: New Left Review Editions, 1970.
- AMIN, S. Accumulation on a World Scale, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973.
- AMPENE, E. 'Obuasi and Its Miners', Ghana Journal of Sociology, 3, 2, (1967).

ANDERSON, P.

Lineages of the Absolutist State.  
London: New Left Books, 1974.

ANSTEY, R.

'Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique',  
The Economic History Review, 2nd  
Series, 21, (1968).

ANSTEY, R.

'The Volume and Profitability of the  
British Slave Trade, 1761-1807', in  
S.L. Engerman and E.D. Genovese (editors),  
1975.

ANSTEY, R.

'The Slave Trade of the Continental  
Powers, 1760-1810', The Economic  
History Review, 2nd Series, 30, 2, (1977.)

ANQUANDAH, J.

'State Formation Among the Akan of  
Ghana', Sankofa, 1, (1975).

APPLEMAN WILLIAMS, J.

The Contours of American History.  
New York: New Viewpoints, A Division  
of Franklin Watts Inc., 1973.

ARRHIN, K.

'The Financing of the Ashanti Expansion',  
Institute of African Studies, Legon,  
University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1965a).

ARRHIN, K.

'Market Settlements in North-Western  
Ashanti: Kintampo', in J. Goody and  
K. Arrhin, (editors), 1965b.

ARRHIN, K.

'The Structure of Greater Ashanti,  
1700-1824', Journal of African History,  
8, 1, (1967).

ARRHIN, K.

'The Missionary Role on the Gold Coast  
and in Ashanti: Reverend F.A. Ramsayer  
and the Takeover of Ashanti, 1869-1894'  
Institute of African Studies, Legon,  
University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1969).

ARRHIN, K.

'Aspects of the Ashanti Northern Trade  
in the Nineteenth Century', Africa, XL,  
4, (1970).

- ARHIN, K. 'Strangers and Hosts: Study in the Political Organisation and History of Atebubu Town', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 12, (1971).
- ARHIN, K. 'Aspects of Colonial District Administration: The Case of the Northwestern District of Ashanti, 1904-1911', Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1972).
- ARHIN, K. 'The Ashanti Rubber Trade with the Gold Coast in the Eighteen-Nineties', Africa 42,1,(1972a).
- ARHIN, K. (editor) 'Seminar on Asante and Brono', Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1973).
- ARHIN, K. (editor) The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson, A Fanti Official of the Government of the Gold Coast, 1890-1897. Leiden: African Social Research Documents, Afrika Studicentrum, Cambridge African Studies Centre, 1974a.
- ARHIN, K. 'The Impact of Europe: Traditional Societies and the Constraints of Colonial Rule. The Pressures of Cash and Its Political Consequences in Asante in the Colonial Period 1900-1940', Paper presented to the African Studies Association, United Kingdom Liverpool Conference, (1974b).
- ARHIN, K. 'State Intervention in the Asante Economy', Universitas, 3, 3, New Series, (1974c).
- ARHIN, K. 'The Akan, Mande and Mole Dagbane Peoples 1800-1880', Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1976).
- ARHIN, K. 'Warfare and Economy in Asante: An Essay in Methodology', Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1977a).
- ARHIN, K. 'The Structure of Greater Asante: A Restatement', Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1977b).
- ARHIN, K. 'Gold Mining and Trading Among the Asante of Ghana', Journal des Africanistes, 48, 1, (1978).

- ARHIN, K. 'Asante Military Institutions', Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1979a).
- ARHIN, K. West African Traders in Ghana in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. London: Longman, 1979b.
- ARHIN, K. 'The Economic and Social Significance of Rubber Production and Exchange on the Gold and Ivory Coast', 1880-1900', Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 20, 77-8, 1-2, 1980.
- ARHIN, K. 'Rank and Class Among the Asante and Fante in the Nineteenth Century', Africa, 53, 1, 1983.
- ARONOWITZ, S. 'A Metatheoretical Critique of Immanuel Wallerstein's 'The Modern World System'', Theory and Society, 10, 4, (1981).
- BALANDIER, G. Political Anthropology. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969.
- BARBOT, J. A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, Vol.V of Churchill's Collection of Voyages and Travels. London, 1746 (1st edition Paris 1732).
- BASEHART, H. 'Ashanti', in D.Schneider and K.Gough (editors), 1962.
- BEAN, R. 'A Note on the Relative Importance of Slaves and Gold in West African Exports', Journal of African History, 15, 3, (1974a).
- BEAN, R. 'The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1650-1775', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Washington (1971), University Microfilms, (1974b).
- BEAN, R. The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1650-1775. New York: Arno Press, 1975.
- BECKETT, W. Akokoaso: A Survey of a Gold Coast Village. (Monographs on Social Anthropology No.10, London:Percy Land, Humphries and Company Limited, 1944.
- BECKMAN, B. Organising the Farmers. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976.



- BENDER, G. Angola under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality. London: Heinemann, 1978
- BENING, R. 'Colonial Development Policy in Northern Ghana 1898-1950', Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association, 17, (1975).
- BENNEH, G. 'The Impact of Cocoa Cultivation on the Traditional Land Tenure System of the Akan of Ghana', Ghana Journal of Sociology 5, 1, (1970).
- BENNEH, G. 'Systems of Agriculture in Tropical Africa', Economic Geography, 48, 3, (1972)
- BERNSTEIN, H. 'Notes on Capital and Peasantry', Review of African Political Economy, 10, (1977).
- BERNSTEIN, H. and DEPELCHIN, J. 'The Object of African History: A Materialist Perspective, Part One', History in Africa, 5, (1978).
- BERNSTEIN, H. and DEPELCHIN, J. 'The Object of African History: A Materialist Perspective, Part Two', History in Africa, 6, (1979).
- BEVIN, H. 'The Gold Coast Economy About 1880', Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, 2, 2, (1956).
- BEVIN, H. 'Some Notes on Gold Coast Exports 1886-1913', Economic Bulletin of Ghana, 4, 1, (1960a).
- BEVIN, H. 'M.J. Bonnat: Trader and Mining Promoter', Economic Bulletin of Ghana, 4, 7, (1960b).
- BIRMINGHAM, D. 'The Regimento da Mina', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 11, (1970)
- BLACKBURN, R. (editor) Ideology in Social Science: Readings in Critical Social Theory. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1975.

- BLAKE, J. (editor) Europeans in West Africa 1450-1560. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1942.
- BLOCH, M. Land and Work in Medieval Europe, Selected Papers. Translated by J.E. Anderson. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967.
- BLOCH, M. Marxist Analysis and Social Anthropology. London: Malaby Press, 1975.
- BOAHEN, A. 'The Origins of the Akan', Ghana Notes and Queries, 9, (1966a).
- BOAHEN, A. Topics in West African History. London: Longman, 1966.
- BOAHEN, A. 'Politics in Ghana, 1800-1874', in M. Crowder and J. Ajayi (editors), 1971.
- BOATEN, K. 'Trade among the Asante of Ghana up to the end of the eighteenth century', Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana Research Review, Legon, 7, 1, (1970).
- BOATEN, K. 'Traditional and Modern Economics of the Brong District', in K. Arhin, (editor), 1973.
- BOATENG, E. 'The Tarkwa Gold Mining Industry - A Retrospect', Ghana Geographical Association Bulletin, 2, 1, (1957).
- BOHANNAN, P. and DALTON, G. (editors) Markets in Africa, Chicago. Northwestern University Press, 1962.
- BOOGAART, van don, E. and EMMER, P. 'The Dutch Participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1596-1650', in H. Gemery and J. Hogendorn (editors), 1979a.
- BOSMAN, W. A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea. London, 1705.
- BOWDITCH, E. Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, Third Edition, 1966.

- BRADBY, B. 'The Destruction of Natural Economy'  
Economy and Society, 2, (1975).
- BRAUDEL, F. Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800  
Translated by M. Kochan. London:  
Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1973.
- BRENNER, R. 'The Origins of Capitalist Development:  
A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism,'  
New Left Review, 104, (1977).
- BREWER, A. Marxist Theories of Imperialism. London:  
Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.
- BROOKS, G. Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African  
Middlemen: A History of American  
Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the  
Nineteenth Century. Africa Research  
Studies Number 11, Boston: Boston  
University Press, 1970.
- BURTON, R. and CAMERON, V. To The Gold Coast for Gold. London: Chatto  
and Windus, 1883.
- BUSIA, K.A. The Position of the Chief in the Modern  
Political System of Ashanti. London:  
Oxford University Press, 1958.
- CASELY HAYFORD, J.E. The Truth about the West African Land  
Question. London: Frank Cass Company  
Ltd., Second Edition, 1971.
- CASTELLS, M. and IPOLA, E. de 'Epistemological Practice and the  
Social Sciences', Economy and Society,  
5, (1976).
- CHASE-DUNN, C. and  
RUBINSON, R. 'Towards a Structural Perspective on  
the World System', Politics and Society,  
7, 4, (1977).
- CHAUVENU, P. J-P. 'Contribution à la géographie histoique  
de l'a en pays baule (Côte d'Ivoire)',  
Journal des Africanistes, 48, 1, (1978).
- CLARENCE-SMITH, G. Slaves, Peasants and Capitalists in  
Southern Angola 1840-1926. Cambridge:  
Cambridge University Press, 1979.

- CLARIDGE, W.W. A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti. Two Volumes. London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., Second Edition, 1964.
- CLAMMER, J. The New Economic Anthropology. London: Macmillan Press, 1978.
- COHEN, R. 'Class in Africa: Analytical Problems and Perspectives', in R. Miliband and J. Saville (editors) 1972.
- COHEN, R. GUTKIND, P. and BRAZIER, J. (editors) Peasants and Proletarians: The Struggle of Third World Workers. London: Hutchinson, 1979.
- COHEN, R. 'Resistance and Hidden Forms of Consciousness Amongst African Workers', Review of African Political Economy, 19, (1980).
- COLLINS, E. 'The Panic Element in Nineteenth-Century British Relations with Ashanti', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 4, part 2, (1962).
- COOK, R. 'Colonial Rule and Political Culture in Ashanti', Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 9, (1973).
- COOK, S. 'Beyond the Formen: Towards a Revised Marxist Theory of Pre Capitalist Formations and the Transition to Capitalism', Journal of Peasant Studies, 4, 4, (1977).
- COOMBS, D. The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands 1850-1874. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- COOPER, F. 'Review Article: The Problem of Slavery in African Studies', Journal of African History, 20, 1, (1979).
- COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, C. 'Research on an African Mode of Production', in G.W. Johnson and M. Klein (editors).
- COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, C. 'The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Modes of Production', in P.W. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein, (editors), 1976.
- CRISP, J. 'Labour Resistance and Labour Control in the Ghanaian Gold Mining Industry 1870-1980'. Ph.D. Thesis University of Birmingham (1980).

- CRISP, J. 'The Labour Question in the Gold Coast 1870-1906', Conference Paper, SSRC/Third World Economic History Group Liverpool Conference, 17-19 September 1982.
- CROWDER, M. West Africa Under Colonial Rule. London: Hutchinson, 1968.
- CROWDER, M. (editor) West African Resistance. London: Hutchinson, 1971.
- CRUICKSHANK, B. Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa. Two Volumes. London: Frank Cass and Company. Second Edition, 1966.
- CURTIN, P.D. 'Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade Once Again: A Comment', Journal of African History, 17, 4, (1976).
- DAAKU, K.Y. 'The Basis of Dutch Relations with Axim', Ghana Notes and Queries, 8, (1966).
- DAAKU, K.Y. Oral Traditions of Adanse, Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, 1969.
- DAAKU, K.Y. Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600-1720. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- DAAKU, K.Y. 'Trade and Trading Patterns of the Akan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in C. Meillassoux (editor), 1971.
- DAENDALS, H.W. Journal and Correspondence, Part 1, November 1815-January 1817, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Mimeo, (1964).
- DALTON, G. (editor) Research in Economic Anthropology. Volume 2. London: JAI Press, 1979.
- DALTON, G. (editor) Research in Economic Anthropology. Volume 5, London: JAI Press, 1983.

- DANQUAH, J.B. Akan Laws and Customs. London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1928.
- DARKWAH, C. 'John Kabes, The Dutch and the English 1680-1716', Institute of African Studies, Legon, University of Ghana, Mimeo, (1967).
- DAVIDSON, B. Black Mother. Africa: The Years of Trial. London: Gollancz, 1961.
- DAVIDSON, B. with BUAH, F.K. and AJAYI, J. The Growth of African Civilisation: A History of West Africa 1000-1800. London: Longman, 1967.
- DAVIES, K.G. The Royal African Company. London: Longmans, 1967.
- DAVIES, P.N. The Trade Makers. Elder Dempster in West Africa 1852-1972. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973.
- DAVIES, P.N. (editor) Trading in West Africa. London: Croom Helm, 1976.
- DE BRUNHOFF, S. Marx on Money. New York: Urizen Books, 1976.
- DEERE, C.D. 'Rural Women's Subsistence Production in the Capitalist Periphery', in, R.Cohen, P.Gutkind, J. Brazier (editors) 1979.
- DE SILVA, S.B.D. The Political Economy of Underdevelopment. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul in association with the Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, 1982.
- DEPELCHIN, J. 'Towards a Reconstruction of Pre-Colonial Central African History', Ufhamu, 9, 1, (1979).
- DER, B.G. 'Colonial Land Policy in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast 1900-1957', Universitas, 4, 2, (1975).
- DEWEY, C. and HOPKINS, A.G. (editors) The Imperial Impact. Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India. London: Athlone Press for Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1978.

- DICKSON, K.B. A Historical Geography of Ghana.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- DICKSON, K.B. 'Trade Patterns in Ghana at the beginning of the eighteenth century', in Z.A. and J.M. Konczacki (editors), 1977.
- DONNAN, E. Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America. Two volumes, volume one, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930.
- DUIGNAN, P. and GANN, L.H. Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- DUIGNAN, P. and GANN, L.H. The Pre Colonial Economies of Sub-Saharan Africa, in P. Duignan, and L.H. Gann (editors), 1975.
- DUMETT, R.E. 'The Rubber Trade of the Gold Coast and Asante in the Nineteenth Century: African Innovation and Responsiveness', Journal of African History, 12, 1, (1971).
- DUMETT, R.E. 'The Social Impact of the European Liquor Trade on the Akan of Ghana 1875-1910', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 5, 1, (1974).
- DUMETT, R.E. 'Precolonial Gold Mining and the State in the Akan Region: With a Critique of the Terray Hypothesis', in, G. Dalton (editor), 1979.
- DUPRE, G. and REY, P-P. 'Reflections on the Pertinence of a Theory of the History of Exchange', Economy and Society, 2, (1973).
- DUPUIS, J. Journal of a Residence in Ashantee. London: Henry Colburn, 1824.
- DURKHEIM, E. The Division of Labour in Society, translated by G. Simpson, London: Collier Macmillan, 1964.

EDHOLM, F., HARRIS, O. and  
YOUNG, K.

'Conceptualising Women', Critique of Anthropology, 9 & 10, 3, (1979).

EDSMAN, B.M.

Lawyers in Gold Coast Politics  
c. 1900-1945, from Mensah Sarbah to  
J.B. Danquah. Sweden: Acta Universitatis  
Upsaliensis, Studies Historica Upsaliensi  
Uppsala, 1979.

EGGAN, F. and FORTES, M.

Social Structure, Essays presented to  
A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. Oxford: Oxford  
University Press, 1949.

ENGERMAN, S.L.

'The Slave Trade and British Capital  
Formation in the Eighteenth Century:  
A Comment on the Williams Thesis',  
Business History Review, 46, (1972).

ENGERMAN, S.L. and  
GENOVESE, E.D. (editors)

Race and Slavery in the Western  
Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press,  
1975.

ENNEW, J.

'The Material of Reproduction:  
Anthropological Views on Historical  
Materialism and Kinship', Economy  
and Society, 8, 1, (1979).

ERIKSON, T.L.

'Modern African History: Some  
Historiographical Observations',  
Scandinavian Journal of History, 4, (1979)

FAGE, J.D.

'Some General Considerations Relevant to  
Historical Research in the Gold Coast',  
Transactions of the Gold Coast and  
Togoland Historical Society, 1, 1, (1952).

FAGE, J.D.

'Slavery and the Slave Trade in the  
Context of West African History',  
Journal of African History, 10, 3, (1969).

FORTES, M.

The Dynamics of Clanship among the  
Tallensi. London: Oxford University  
Press, 1945.

FORTES, M.

'Time and Social Structure: An Ashanti  
Case Study', in F. Egan and M. Fortes  
(editors), 1949.



- FORTES, M. Kinship and the Social Order. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
- FONER, K. and GENOVESE, E.D. (editors) Slavery in the New World. New York: Prentice Hall, 1969.
- FOSTER-CARTER, A. 'The Modes of Production Controversy', New Left Review, 107, (1978).
- FOUCAULT, M. The Archaeology of Knowledge. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock Publications, 1974.
- FOX-GENOVESE, E. 'Placing Women in History', New Left Review, 133, (1982).
- FRANK, A.G. Latin America, Underdevelopment or Revolution? New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1969.
- FRANK, A.G. World Accumulation 1492-1789. London: Macmillan, 1978a.
- FRANK, A.G. Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment London: Macmillan, 1978b.
- FREEMAN, A.R. Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman. Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1898.
- FRIEDMAN, E. (editor) Ascent and Decline in the World System. London: Sage Publications, 1982.
- FRIEDMAN, J. and ROWLANDS, M. (editors) Evolution of Social Systems. London: Duckworth, 1978.
- FYFE, C. (editor) African Studies Since 1945: A tribute to Basil Davidson, proceedings of a seminar in honour of Basil Davidson's sixtieth birthday at the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh. London: Longman, 1976.
- FYNN, J.K. Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700-1807. London: Longman, 1971.

- FYNN, J.K. 'Ghana - Asante (Ashanti)', in M. Crowder (editor), 1971.
- GANN, L.H. and DUIGNAN, P. (editors) Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960. Volumes two and four, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970 and 1975.
- GARRARD, T.F. 'Notes on Begho'. Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon, Mimeo, 1976.
- GARRARD, T.F. Akan Weights and the Gold Trade. London: Legon History Series, Longman, 1980.
- GARRETT, L. 'The Comprador on the Gold Coast: A study of Merchant entrepreneurs during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1981.
- GEMERY, H.A. and HOGENDORN, J.S. (editors) The Uncommon Market. Essays in Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade. New York: Academic Press, 1979a.
- GEMERY, H.A. and HOGENDORN, J.S. 'The Economic Costs of West African Participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade: A preliminary sampling for the eighteenth century', 1979b in H.A. Gemery and J.S. Hogendorn (editors), 1979a.
- GESHIERE, P. 'The Articulation of Different Modes of Production Old and New Inequalities in Maka Villages, S.E. Cameroon', African Perspectives, Leiden, Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1978.
- GESHIERE, P. Village Communities and the State. Changing Relations Among the Maka of Southeastern Cameroons since the Colonial Conquest. Monographs from the African Studies Centre, Leiden. (London: Kegan Paul International Ltd., 1982).
- GODELIER, M. 'On the Definition of a Social Formation. The example of the Incas', Critique of Anthropology, 1, (1974).

- GODELIER, M. 'Modes of Production, Kinship and Demographic Structures', in M. Bloch, 1975.
- GODELIER, M. Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology. Translated by R. Brain. London: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- GOLDFRANK, W. (editor) The World System of Capitalism: Past and Present. London: Sage Publications, 1979.
- GOODY, J. and ARHIN, K. 'Ashanti and the Northwest', Research Review Supplement Number 1, Ashanti Research Project, Institute of African Studies, Legon, University Of Ghana, Mimeo, 1965.
- GOODY, J. Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- GRAY, R. and BIRMINGHAM, D. (editors) Pre Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa Before 1900. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- GRAY, R. and BIRMINGHAM, D. 'Some Economic and Political Consequences of Trade in Central and Eastern Africa in the Pre Colonial Period', in R. Gray and D. Birmingham (editors), 1970.
- GREEN, R.H. and HYMER, S. 'Cocoa in the Gold Coast: A study in the relations between African farmers and Agricultural Experts', Journal of Economic History, 26, 1, (1966).
- GRIER, B. 'Underdevelopment Modes of Production and the State in Colonial Ghana', The African Studies Review, 24, 1, (1981).
- GULALP, H. 'Frank and Wallerstein Revisited: A Contribution to Brenner's Critique', Journal of Contemporary Asia, 11, (1981).
- GUTKIND, C.W.P. and WALLERSTEIN, I. (editors) The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa. New York: Sage, 1976.

- HAGAN, G.P. 'Ashanti Bureacracy: A study of the growth of centralised administration in Ashanti from the time of Osei Tutu to the time of Osei Tutu Kwamina Esike Bonsu', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 12, (1971).
- HARGREAVES, J.D. 'Towards a History of the Partition of Africa', Journal of African History, 1, 1, (1960).
- HARROP, S. 'The Economy of the West African Coast in the Sixteenth Century', Part One and Two, Economic Bulletin of Ghana, 8, 3 and 4, (1964).
- HILL, P. 'Social Factors in Cocoa Farming', in J. Brian Wills, (editor), 1962.
- HILL, P. Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana. London: Cambridge University Press, 1963.
- HILL, P. Studies in Rural Capitalism in West Africa. London: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- HILTON, R. (editor) The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism. London: New Left Books, 1976.
- HINDESS, B. and HIRST, P.Q. Pre Capitalist Modes of Production. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.
- HINDESS, B. and HIRST, P.Q. Mode of Production and Social Formation: An auto-critique. London: Macmillan, 1977.
- HOBBSBAWM, E. Industry and Empire. London: Penguin, 1961.
- HODDER, B.W. 'Some comments on the origins of traditional markets in Africa south of the Sahara', Institute of British Geographers, transactions, 36, (1965).
- HODDER, B.W. and UKWU, V.I. Markets in West Africa. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1969.

- HODGKIN, T. 'Some Problems of African Historiography', History Workshop, 13, (1979).
- HOGENDORN, J.S. 'Economic Initiative and African Cash Farming: Pre Colonial Origins and Early Colonial Developments', in P. Duignan and L.H. Gann (editors), volume four, 1975
- HOLLOWAY, J. and PICCIOTTO, S. (editors) State and Capital: A Marxist Debate. London: Edward Arnold, 1978.
- HOLMES, W.F. 'Notes on the Early History of Tarkwa as a Gold Mining District', Gold Coast Review, 2, 1, (1926).
- HOPKINS, A.G. An Economic History of West Africa. London: Longman, 1973.
- HOWARD, R. Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana. London: Croom Helm, 1978.
- HUTCHINSON, T.J. 'The Social and Domestic Slavery on Western Africa and Its Evil Influence on Commercial Progress', Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, 26, February 1875.
- HYMER, S. 'Economic Forms in Pre Colonial Ghana', Journal of Economic History, 30, (1970).
- HYMER, S. 'The Political Economy of the Gold Coast and Ghana', in G. Ranis (editor), 1971.
- ILEGBUNE, C. 'Concessions Scramble and Land Alienation in British Southern Ghana, 1885-1915', African Studies Review, 19, 3, (1976).
- INIKORI, J.E. Forced Migration: the impact of the export slave trade on African societies. London: Hutchinson, 1982.
- ISAACMAN, A.F. The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique: Anti Colonial Activity in the Zambesi Valley, 1850-1921. London: Heinemann, 1976

- JENKINS, P. (editor) Abstracts from the Gold Coast Correspondence of the Basel Mission. Legon: University of Ghana, Mimeo, 1970.
- JOHNSON, G.W. and KLEIN, M. (editors) Perspectives on the African Past. Boston: Little Brown, 1972.
- JOHNSON, T.J. 'Protest: Tradition and Change. An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots 1890-1920', Economy and Society, 1, (1972).
- JUNNER, N.R. Gold in the Gold Coast. Accra: Ghana Geological Survey Department. Memoir Number 4, reprinted 1973.
- KAPLOW, S. 'African Merchants of the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Columbia, published by University Microfilms International, 1971.
- KAY, G. The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana. London: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- KAY, G. Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis. London: Macmillan, 1977.
- KEA, R.A. 'Osei Kwame's Interdiction on Danish Trade, 1788-1789', Ghana Notes and Queries, 11, (1970).
- KEA, R.A. 'Firearms and Warfare on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', Journal of African History, 12, 2, (1971).
- KEA, R.A. Settlements, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- KIMBLE, D. A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- KITCHING, G. Class and Economic Change in Kenya. The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie 1905-1970; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980.

- KJEKSHUS, H. Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History. The Case of Tanganyika. London: Heinemann, 1977.
- KLEIN, M. 'The Study of Slavery in Africa: A Review Article', Journal of African History, 19, 4, (1978).
- KLEIN, N.A. The Cultural and Historical Contexts of Inequality in Akan-Asante Society, Unpublished Mimeo, n.d.
- KLEIN, N.A. 'West African Unfree Labour Before and After the Rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade', in L. Forna and E.D. Genovese (editors), 1969.
- KLEIN, N.A. 'The Two Asantes: Competing Interpretations of "slavery" in Akan-Asante Culture and Society', in, P.E. Lovejoy (editor), 1981a.
- KOPYTOFF, I. and MIERS, S. (editors) Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives. U.S.A.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977a.
- KOPYTOFF, I. and MIERS, S. 'African' Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality', 1977b, in, I. Kopytoff and S. Miers, (editors), 1977a.
- KOTEI, S.I.A. 'Economy of the Gold Coast Under British Colonial Administration', Institute of African Studies, Legon, Mimeo, Seminar in Economic Development of West Africa, 1965.
- KONCZACKI, Z.A. and J.M. (editors) An Economic History of Tropical Africa: Pre Colonial Period, Volume One, London: Frank Cass, 1977.
- KONCZACKI, Z.A. and J.M. (editors) An Economic History of Tropical Africa: Colonial Period, Volume Two, London: Frank Cass, 1977.

- KRADER, L. Dialectics of Civil Society. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Assen, 1976.
- KUMAH, J.K. 'Denkyira: 1600-1730 A.D.', M.A. Thesis University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies, Legon, 1965.
- KYEREMATEN, A.A.Y. Inter State Boundary Litigation in Ashanti: Social Research Documents Volume 4, Holland: Afrika Studicentrum, Leiden and University of Cambridge, 1971.
- LACLAU, E. Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory. London: New Left Books, 1977.
- LAW, R. 'In Search of a Marxist Perspective on Pre Colonial Tropical Africa', Journal of African History, 19, 3, (1978).
- LAW, R. 'How not to be a Marxist historian: the Althusserian threat to African history', History Workshop, 13, (1979).
- LEWIN, T.J. Asante Before the British: The Prempean Years, 1875-1900. U.S.A.: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978.
- LEYS, C. 'The 'overdeveloped' post colonial state: A revaluation. Review of African Political Economy, 5, (1975).
- LIMBERG, L. 'The Economy of the Fanti Confederation', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 11, 1963.
- LONSDALE, J. and BERMAN, B. 'Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the State in Kenya, 1895-1914', Journal of African History, 20, (1979).
- LOVEJOY, P.E. Caravans of Kola. Hausa Trade with Asante, 1700-1900. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980.
- LOVEJOY, P.E. (editor) The Ideology of Slavery in Africa. Sage Series on African Modernisation and Development, Volume Six, London: Sage, 1981.



- LOVEJOY, P.E. 'Slavery in the Context of Ideology', (1981b) in, P.E. Lovejoy (editor), 1981a.
- LOVEJOY, P.E. and HOGENDORN, J.S. 'Slave Marketing in West Africa', in H.A. Gemery and J.S. Hogendorn (editors) 1979a.
- LUGARD, F.D. The Dual Mandate in British Imperial Africa. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1923.
- LUXEMBURG, R. The Accumulation of Capital. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951.
- MAFEJE, A. 'The Witchcraft of British Anthropology in Africa', Mimeo, n.d.
- MANNING, P. 'Slaves, Palm Oil, and Political Power on the West African Coast', African Historical Studies, 2, 2, (1969).
- MANNING, P. 'The Slave Trade in the Bight of Benin, 1640-1890', in, H.A. Gemery and J.S. Hogendorn, (editors), 1979a.
- MANNING, P. Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960. African Studies Series, 30, London: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- MANOUKIAN, M. Akan and Ga Peoples of the Gold Coast. London: International African Institute, London, 1950.
- MANOUKIAN, M. Tribes of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. London: International African Institute, 1952.
- MARTIN, E.C. The British West Africa Settlements 1750-1821. Imperial Studies, Number 2, London: Longman, 1927.
- MARX, K. Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations. Translated by J. Cohen, edited, with an introduction by E. Hobsbawm, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964.

- MARX, K. Capital, Volume One, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970.
- MARX, K. The German Ideology. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970.
- MARX, K. Preface, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.
- MARX, K. Capital, Volume Three. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972.
- MARX, K. The Communist Manifesto. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972.
- MARX, K. Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, (Rough Draft). Translated with a forward by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1977.
- MATHIAS, P. The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1914. London: Methuen and Company Ltd., 1974.
- McCASKIE, T.C. 'Innovational Eclecticism: The Asante Empire and Europe in the Nineteenth Century', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 14, (1972).
- McCASKIE, T.C. 'Office, Land and Subjects in the History of the Manwere Fekuo of Kumase: An essay in the political economy of the Asante State', Journal of African History, 21, (1980).
- McCASKIE, T.C. 'State and Society, Marriage and Adultery: Some Considerations Towards a Social History of Pre-Colonial Asante', Journal of African History, (1981)
- McCASKIE, T.C. 'Accumulation, Wealth and Belief in Asante History', Africa, 53, 1, 1983.
- McLEOD, M.D. The Asante. Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, London: British Museum Publications, 1981.
- MEILLASSOUX, C. (editor) The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa. London: Oxford University Press, 1971a.
- MEILLASSOUX, C. 'Reactions and Adaptions in West Africa to Changes in the Slave Trade', 1971b, in, C. Meillassoux (editor), 1971a.

- MEILLASSOUX, C. 'From reproduction to production. A Marxist approach to economic anthropology' Economy and Society, 1, 1, (1972).
- MEILLASSOUX, C. 'The Role of Slavery in the Economy and Social History of the Sudanic Zone of West Africa', Paper for the Conference on the Economic History of the Savanna, Mimeo, Kano, Nigeria, translated by R.J. Gavin, January 1976.
- MEILLASSOUX, C. 'Correspondence', Economy and Society, 7, (1978).
- MEILLASSOUX, C. 'Historical Modalities of the Exploitation and Overexploitation of Labour', Critique of Anthropology, 13-14, 4, (1979).
- MEILLASSOUX, C. Maidens, Meal and Money. Capitalism and the Domestic Community. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- MESZAROS, I. Marx's Theory of Alienation. London: Merlin Press, 1970.
- METCALFE, G.E. 'After Maclean: Some aspects of British Gold Coast Policy in the mid nineteenth century', Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, 1, 5, (1955).
- METCALFE, G.E. (editor) Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History 1807-1957. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964.
- MEYEROWITZ, E.L.R. The Sacred State of the Akan. London: Faber and Faber, 1951.
- MEYEROWITZ, E.L.R. Akan Traditions of Origin. London: Faber and Faber, 1952.
- MEYEROWITZ, E.L.R. The Akan of Ghana. London: Faber and Faber, 1958.
- MEYEROWITZ, E.L.R. At the Court of an African King. London: Faber and Faber, 1962.

- MILES, J. 'Rural protest in the Gold Coast: The cocoa hold-ups, 1908-1938', in C.Dewey and A.G.Hopkins (editors), 1978.
- MILIBAND, R. 'The Problem of the Capitalist State', in, R. Blackburn (editor), 1975.
- MILIBAND, R. and SAVILLE, J. (editors) The Socialist Register 1972. London: Merlin Press, 1972.
- MILIBAND, R. and SAVILLE, J. (editors) The Socialist Register 1974. London: Merlin Press, 1974.
- MILIBAND, R. and SAVILLE, J. (editors) The Socialist Register 1977. London: Merlin Press, 1977.
- MOREL, E.D. Affairs of West Africa. London: Second Edition, Frank Cass and Company, 1968.
- MOUZELIS, N.P. Modern Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment. London: Macmillan Press, 1978.
- MUNRO, J.F. 'Monopolists and Speculators: British Investment in West African Rubber, 1905-1914'. Journal of African History, 22, 1981.
- NIANGORAN-BONAH, P.G. 'Ideologie de l'or chez les Akan de Cote d'Ivoire et du Ghana', Journal des Africanistes, 48, 1, (1978).
- NICHOLS, T. (editor) Labour, A Marxist Primer. London: Fontana, 1980.
- NORREGARD, G. Danish Settlements in West Africa 1658-1850, translated by S. Mammen Boston, 1966.
- NORTHRUP, D. Trade Without Rulers. London: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1979.
- OBICHERE, B.I. West African and European Expansion, The Dahomey-Niger Hinterland 1885-1898. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971.
- OZANNE, P. 'Early History of Archaeology of Accra', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 6, (1963).
- PASHUKANIS, E.B. Law and Marxism. Translated by B.Einhorn, Edited and introduced by C.Arthur. London: Ink Links, 1978.

- PATTERSON, O. 'On Slavery and Slave Formations', New Left Review, 117 (1979).
- PLANGE, N-K. 'Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana: Natural Causes or Colonial Capitalism?' Review of African Political Economy, 15-16, (1979).
- POSTMA, J. 'The Origins of African Slaves: The Dutch Activities on the Guinea Coast, 1675-1795', in S.L. Engerman and E.D. Genovese, (editors), 1975.
- POULANTZAS, N. Political Power and Social Classes. London: New Left Books, 1973.
- POULANTZAS, N. 'The Problem of the Capitalist State', in, R. Blackburn (editor), 1975.
- PRIESTLEY, M. West African Trade and Coast Society. A Family Study. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- QUARCOO, A.K. 'The Akan Stool Polity'. A Political Organisation, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Mimeo, n.d.
- RAMSEYER, F.A. and KUHNE, J. Four Years in Ashantee. New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1875.
- RANIS, G. (editor) Government and Economic Development. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.
- RANGER, T.O. 'Towards a Usable African Past', in, C. Fyfe (editor) 1976.
- RATTRAY, R.S. Ashanti. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923.
- RATTRAY, R.S. Religion and Art in Ashanti. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927.
- RATTRAY, R.S. Ashanti Law and Constitution. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929.

- RATTRAY, R.S. The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932.
- REINDORF, J. Scandinavians in Africa. Guide to materials relating to Ghana in the Danish National Archives. Supplemented by P.E. Olsen, edited by J. Simenson. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1980.
- REY, P-P. Colonialism, Neo-colonialisme et Transition au capitalisme: Exemple de la 'Comilog' au Congo-Brazzaville. Paris: Maspero, 1971.
- REY, P-P. 'The Lineage Mode of Production', Critique of Anthropology, 3, (1975).
- REY, P-P. 'Historical Materialism and Class Struggles', Mimeo, n.d.
- REYNOLDS, E. 'The Rise and Fall of an African Merchant Class on the Gold Coast, 1830-1974', Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 54, 14, (1974a)
- REYNOLDS, E. Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast 1807-1874. London: Longman, 1974b.
- RICHARDSON, D. 'West African Consumption Patterns and Their Influence on the Eighteenth Century English Slave Trade', in, H.A. Gemery and J.S. Hogendorn (editors) 1979a.
- ROBERTSON, A.F. 'Anthropology and Government in Ghana', African Affairs, 74, 294, (1975).
- RODNEY, W. 'African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade', Journal of African History, 7, 3, (1966).
- RODNEY, W. 'Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast', Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 10, (1969).

- ROSEN, M. 'The Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie: England, 1688-1721', Science and Society, XLV, 1, (1981).
- ROSENBLUM, J. 'Gold Mining in Ghana, 1874-1900', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Columbia, (1972).
- SACKS, K. Sisters and Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality. U.S.A. Greenwood Press, 1979.
- SAHLINS, M. Stone Age Economics. London: Tavistock Publications, 1974.
- SAMOFF, J. 'On Class, Paradigm, and African Politics' Africa Today, 29, 2, 1982.
- SAMUEL, R. (editor) People's History and Socialist Theory. History Workshop Series, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.
- SANDERS, J. 'The Expansion of the Fante and the Emergence of Asante in the Eighteenth Century'. Journal of African History, 10, 3, (1979).
- SAUL, J. 'The State in Post-Colonial Societies - Tanzania', in R.Miliband and J.Saville (editors) 1974.
- SCHNEIDER, D.M. and GOUGH, K. Matrilineal Kinship. Berkeley and Los Angeles University of California Press, 1962.
- SEDDON, D. (editor) Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology. London: Frank Cass, 1962.
- SEDDON, D. 'Approaches to the Analysis of Pre-Capitalist Formations in the Maghreb', in, J. Clammer (editor) 1978.
- SILVER, J. 'The Failure of European Mining Companies in the Nineteenth Century Gold Coast', Journal of African History, 22, (1981).
- SKETCHLEY, J.A. 'A visit to the gold fields of Wassaw, West Africa', Journal of Royal Geographical Society, 48, (1878).
- SKOCPOL, T. 'Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique', American Journal of Sociology, 82, 2, 5, (1977).

- SNYDER, F.G. Capitalism and Legal Change: An African Transformation. London: Academic Press, 1981a.
- SNYDER, F.G. 'Labour Power and Legal Transformation in Senegal', Review of African Political Economy 21, (1981b).
- STONE, R. 'Colonial Administration and Rural Politics in South Central Ghana 1919-1951', Ph.D. Thesis Cambridge University, (1974).
- STONE, R. 'Correspondence: Protest: Tradition and Change - A Critique of Terence J. Johnson's Article', Economy and Society, 3, (1974).
- SUMNER, C. (editor) Crime, Justice and Underdevelopment. London: Heinemann, 1982.
- SURET-CANALE, J. 'Les Societes traditionnelles en Afrique tropicale et le concept de mode production asiatique', La Pensee, 14, April 1964.
- SZERESZEWSKI, R. 'The Inter-sectoral Structure of the Economy of Ghana 1960', The Economic Bulletin of Ghana, 7, 2, (1963).
- SZERESZEWSKI, R. Structural Changes in the Economy of Ghana, 1891-1911. London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965.
- TAYLOR, J. 'Marxism and Anthropology, Review Article of E. Terray Primitive Societies', Economy and Society, 1, (1972).
- TAYLOR, J. From Moderisation to Modes of Production. London: Macmillan, 1979.
- TERRAY, E. 'Technology, Tradition and the State', Critique of Anthropology, 3, (1975).
- TERRAY, E. Marxism and 'Primitive' Societies. Translated by M. Klopffer, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- TERRAY, E. 'Long Distance Exchange and the Formation of the State: The Case of the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman', Economy and Society, 3, 3, (1974).



- TERRAY, E. 'Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman', translated by Anne Bailey, in M. Bloch (editor) 1975.
- TERRAY, E. 'On Exploitation: Elements of an Autocritique'. Critique of Anthropology, 13-14, (1979).
- TERRAY, E. 'Gold Production, Slave Labour, and State Intervention in Pre-Colonial Akan Societies: A Reply to Raymond Dumett', in George Dalton, (editor), 1983.
- THOMAS, R.G. 'Forced Labour in British West Africa: The Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1906-1927', Journal of African History, 14, 1, (1973).
- THOMAS, R.G. 'The 1916 Bongo Riots and their Background Aspects of the Early Colonial Administration of Eastern Upper Ghana', Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Mimeo, (1975).
- TORDOFF, W. Ashanti under the Prempehs 1888-1935. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- TRIULZI, A. 'Decolonising African History', in R. Samuel (editor) 1981.
- VAN DANTZIG, A. 'Effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade on some West African Societies', Revue Francaise d'Histoire d'Outre Mer, 226-227, (1975).
- VAN DANTZIG, A. The Dutch and the Guinea Coast 1674-1742. A collection of documents from the General State Archive at The Hague. Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1978.
- VON LAUE, T.H. 'Transubstantiation in the Study of African Reality', African Affairs, 74, 297, (1975).

- VON LAUE, T.H. 'Anthropology and Power: R.S. Rattray Among the Ashantis', African Affairs, 75, 298, (1976).
- VAN ONSELEN, C. Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933, London: Pluto Press, 1976.
- VILAR, P. A History of Gold and Money, 1450-1920. Translated by Judith White. London: New Left Books, 1976.
- WALLERSTEIN, I. The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century. Studies in Social Discontinuity. New York and London: Academic Press International Edition, 1974.
- WALLERSTEIN, I. The Capitalist World Economy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979a.
- WALLERSTEIN, I. 'From Feudalism to Capitalism: Transition or Transitions?', in I. Wallerstein, 1979a
- WALLERSTEIN, I. 'Three paths of national development in sixteenth century Europe', in I. Wallerstein 1979a.
- WALLERSTEIN, I. 'The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis', in I. Wallerstein, 1979a.
- WALLERSTEIN, I. The Modern World - System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy, 1600-1750. New York and London: Academic Press, 1980.
- WARD, W.E.F. A History of Ghana. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966.
- WATSON, J.C.(editor) Asian and African Systems of Slavery. London: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- WILKS, I. 'The Northern Factor in Ashanti History: Begho and the Mande', Journal of African History, 2, 1, (1961).

- WILKS, I. 'A Medieval Trade Route from the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea', Journal of African History, 3, 2, (1962).
- WILKS, I. 'Ashanti Government in the Nineteenth Century', Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Mimeo (1964).
- WILKS, I. 'Aspects of Bureacratism in Ashanti in the Nineteenth Century', Journal of African History, 7, 2, (1966).
- WILKS, I. 'Political B-polarity in Nineteenth Century Asante', Ninth Melville J. Herskovits Memorial Lecture under the Auspices of the Centre for African Studies, Edinburgh University, 1970.
- WILKS, I. 'The Mossi and Akan States 1500-1800', in, M. Crowder and J. Ajayi (editors) 1971.
- WILKS, I. 'Dissidence in Asante Politics: Two Tracts from the Late Nineteenth Century', Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Mimeo, (1974).
- WILKS, I. Asante in the Nineteenth Century. The Structure and Evolution of Political Order. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- WILKS, I. 'Land, Labour, Capital and the Forest Kingdom of Asante: A Model of Early Change', in J. Friedman and M. Rowlands (editors) 1978.
- WILKS, I. 'The Golden Stool and the Elephant Tail: An Essay on Wealth in Asante', in, George Dalton (editor) 1979.
- WILKS, I. 'Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, I The Matter of Bitu', Journal of African History, 23, 3, (1982).
- WILLIAMS, E. Capitalism and Slavery. London: Andre Deutsch, 1981.

- WILLIAMSON, J.A. A Short History of British Expansion: I  
The Old Colonial Empire. London:  
Macmillan, 1930.
- WILLS, J.B. (editor) Agriculture and Land Use. London:  
Oxford University Press, 1962.
- WOLPE, H. (editor) Articulation of Modes of Production.  
London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1981.
- WOLPE, H. 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in  
South Africa: From Segregation to  
Apartheid' 1981a in H.Wolpe (editor) 1981
- WRIGLEY, C.C. 'Historicism in Africa: Slavery and  
State Formation', African Affairs, 70,  
(1971).
- ZIEMANN, W. and  
LANZENDORFER, M. 'The State in Peripheral Societies',  
in R. Miliband and J. Saville (editors)  
1977.