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ACCUMULATION, WEALTH AND BELIEF
IN ASANTE HISTORY

I. To the close of the nineteenth century

T. C. McCaskie

I

The present article is intended as the first of two contributions to the economic and social – but above all to the intellectual – history of the West African forest kingdom of Asante or Ashanti (now located in the Republic of Ghana). Both papers will attempt to pull together and to situate in a 'mentalistic' framework a number of recent and confessedly disparate research findings concerning a cluster of concepts, ideas and beliefs that, merely for the sake of brevity at this point, I will assign simply to the embracing 'neutral' rubric of general transformations in the ideology (or ideologies) of wealth. The first article will be concerned with developments in Asante society up to the close of the nineteenth century (defined here interpretatively rather than in strictly chronological terms); its successor will concentrate on a highly detailed examination of a sequence of crucially telling events in the early colonial period, and upon selected developments thereafter in the twentieth century. The articles are designed and intended to be read sequentially; the first, it is hoped, will assist in making sense of the significantly denser context (and more detailed content) of the second.

Now to be a little more specific about my general reasoning and purposes. Firstly, it is by now a generally subscribed-to commonplace that African economic history has travelled a long way over the past twenty years. Its several achievements are notable cause for congratulation, but in one significant respect at least it remains obdurately underdeveloped. Perhaps the most summarily convenient way of indicating this deficiency is to say that African economic history (representatively for the case of West Africa, say, Hopkins, 1973; Hill, 1972 and 1977; Curtin, 1975; Lovejoy, 1980; Baier, 1980; Freund, 1981) on the whole, fails, in the most general sociological and anthropological senses, to locate discrete historical actors and actresses in any explicitly documented continuum of indigenous ideas and beliefs; crudely and simply, what is lacking is generic intellectual history, the matrix of \textit{l'ouï dire}, the resonant complexities of allusion and of metaphor (Ortony, 1979), the fluid and vertiginous densities of symbolic constructs (compare, for example, from a different but relevant perspective, Gernet, 1968; Vernant, 1965, 1968 and 1974; Vidal-Naquet, 1968; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 1972; Detienne, 1972; Detienne and Vernant, 1974; Clastres, 1974; Humphreys, 1978).

Accordingly, what I am interested in here is an attempt to engage Asante thought and thinking (not necessarily the same thing) and their manifest and implicit representations on their own terms. My argument is empiricist in the sense that its primary orientation is towards the dense or 'thick' (Geertz, 1973 and 1980) content of Asante philosophy and ideology, rather than being derived in any fundamental sense from imported categorical abstractions (although the latter are occasionally discussed). Most simply, I am principally concerned with the specifically Asante comprehension(s) of the nature and meaning of wealth, and of contingent or related
matters. This, then, is at one level an essay in African economic history – but of a
discrete or particularly ‘intellectualist’ kind.

Secondly, I think it apposite, and indeed incumbent in the present context, to
offer some summary review of the current situation and trajectory of that which
constitutes Asante historiography. So at the outset I must register a sensation of
pressing disquiet – a confessional imperative prompted and compounded by
consciousness of my own implication in the generation of what I see as being a grave
difficulty. The simple fact of the matter is that the scholarly literature on Asante,
arguably the densest body of work representing any single sub-Saharan African
social formation, is polarised in its objectives and, at the moment of writing,
seriously (and perhaps irreconcilably) bifurcated.

On the one hand there exists a venerable, voluminous and richly detailed
‘anthropological’ tradition (Rattray, 1923, 1927, 1929 and Mss.; Fortes, 1969, 1970
and Mss.; Busia, 1951 and 1954; Kyerematen, 1966 and 1969). This literature is
concerned with kinship and synchronic social structure, with the jural domain, with
religion and spirituality, with cognition and symbolism, with the fluid boundaries of
the rational and the irrational (although the authors involved would not employ these
terms). It is hardly concerned at all with the issues of diachrony and historical
process, and it has been criticised by historians for these evident deficiencies
(McCaskie, 1981a).

On the other hand, there is now extant a chronologically younger, highly disparate
1979; McCaskie, 1972, 1974 and 1980a; Wilks and McCaskie, 1973–79; Lewin, 1974
and 1978; Arhin, 1979; Aidoo, 1972, 1975, 1977a and b); this body of work is often
impressively detailed and sensitive in its historical reconstructions. But what
increasingly worries me here is a tendency – mostly latent but often explicit –
contained within this historiography.

The legitimate desire to impose meaning upon Asante historical process – and for
that, in reality, read elite political process – treads a very fine line; it can elide very
rapidly into the generation of, and the reliance upon, a crude explanatory
mechanism or formula. That is, the search for meaning (for explanation) can
overreach itself to the point where it can – and often does – produce a consistent, but
consistently reductionist, framework of pseudo-rationality. The consequences of
this tendency are more easily described than its actual operation. Simply put, the
Asante of the historiography can all too often convey the impression to the reader of
being little more than programmed material realists or behavioural calculating
machines – a species of two-dimensional men and women.

Let me put the matter at its most extreme. Seemingly never bereft of conscious
and understood motive, the historiographical Asante sometimes appear to traverse
existence as if it was nothing more than a consensually agreed calculus of reason and
logic; they seem to be the automatons of materialist rationalism (our perception of
materialist rationalism?) – clear-headed, single-minded and eminently sane in their
unrelenting pursuit of the perceived rewards (our perceived rewards?) of secular
advantage.

The foregoing is an overstatement, but the tendency certainly exists, and the
question arises as to whether the Asante were always as coherent, as logical and as
rational in their dealings with the world as the historiography would seem to suggest.
More pertinently, it seems to me that Asante historiography is in danger of becoming a ‘closed system’ in the sense that it restricts itself to posing those categories of questions to which (apparently) reasoned and logical answers can be supplied. Thus, for example, in the immense and exhaustive index to Wilks’s magisterial Asante in the nineteenth century (1975) – a masterwork of a certain kind of political reconstruction – the interested reader will search in vain for a particular category of entries; these concern the issues of cognition, of mental processes, of speculation, of unknowing, of uncertainty, of reason, of doubt and confusion – the ‘classic’ anthropological questions – ‘nature’, ‘culture’, ‘religion’, ‘spirit’, ‘god’, ‘selfhood’, and all the rest. It seems to me that Asante historiography is in some considerable danger of – and the metaphor is hackneyed but precise – throwing the babies of thought and belief out with the bath water of apparent or inexplicable ‘illogicality’.

I should like to pose and to attempt to answer two questions. Why and how has this situation arisen? And what is to be done?

I think that there are two general reasons that account for the emergence of the tendency described above. Firstly, Asante is a leading instance of a common phenomenon in the modern historiography of Africa. In the political climate of the 1950s and the 1960s, it was perhaps necessary – and most certainly comprehensible – for practitioners of this infant discipline to attempt to dispel ignorant condescension towards their subject by countering widespread assumptions about the impenetrable and seamless ‘unreason’ of Africans. All well and good. But to persist in this now is to transform a usable but essentially finite doctrine into something of an infantile disorder. Surely it is the case that a confident and adult historiography must eventually confront and come to terms with the limitations of mechanistic rationality, the boundaries of the strictly predictable and ‘knowable’; nineteenth and twentieth-century Africans, after all, possess as much human claim to be perplexingly incoherent as, say, sixteenth-century Italians (Ginzburg, 1976), or, indeed, anybody else. Secondly, I think that for the specific case of Asante, the historiography has – very self-consciously – been ‘written out from under’ the precedent and formidably dense ‘anthropological’ tradition. In terms of explanation it is perhaps most helpful to stand the matter on its head; the anthropologists were patently and sometimes proudly ahistorical (McCskkie, forthcoming), and so it was reflexively assumed that we – the historians – need not concern ourselves with their questions. I feel that this is simply another species of infantilism. We have to concern ourselves with their questions, for, in the attempt to construct a three-dimensional human (Asante) totality, the pursuit of the anthropological line of enquiry (summarily indicated above) is complementary rather than inimical to the historiographical enterprise.

In accounting for what is to be done for the specific case of Asante, I must immediately confess some limited obligation to another author. Klein (1981) sees very clearly the pressing need for the reconciliation of the existing ‘anthropological’ and ‘historical’ traditions; unfortunately, his is a very slight piece – in reality, little more than an acutely perceptive programmatic statement – and the force of his argument is further vitiated by an uncertain grasp of the potentialities of the best contemporary historiography.

So, it may reasonably be enquired, what kind of history am I trying to write in these two papers? Let me attempt to answer this query by borrowing a term from a
fellow West Africanist; but then permit me to gloss or deliberately to structure the term’s intentional meaning. In reconstructing the past of Ilesha – capital of the Yoruba kingdom of Ijesh – Peel (1979) has defined his approach as being a species of ‘conjectural, history’. What he means by this – and I quote him – is that he is conscious of dealing with a case for which ‘there is absolutely no positive contemporary evidence’; this is clearly ‘conjectural’ in the O.E.D. sense of ‘induction on scanty grounds’. Asante is, of course and by contrast, very abundantly supplied with ‘contemporary evidence’, but the word ‘conjectural’ can also mean, more broadly or generically, ‘guessing, guess-work, a guess’ (Latin *jacio*, ‘to throw’) – and it is precisely in this sense that I employ it here. Thus, at the most significant level, I hope to present an intuitive counterweight to the prevailing historiographical positivism that I have already described and anatomised. I intend to ‘conjecture’ or to ‘guess at’ the ‘illogical’ cultural densities that underpin Asante material reality. And I trust that I will discharge this commission in an informed manner. But, whether I manage this or not – and, I greatly fear, the appropriate *ficciones* (and that is the appropriate noun) fit incongruously with the received conventions of much historiography – I strenuously defend the intention and the effort involved. To state the matter cursorily but not, I trust, obscurely: Michelet is a greater historian of nineteenth-century France than Guizot – but Flaubert is a greater ‘historian’ than either of them.

II

Historical periodicity, as is well understood, is a notoriously slippery business. I think, however, that in terms of Asante ideas and conceptions about wealth and plenty, much recent research has indicated a discernible line of continuity – a processual amplification and elaboration – that runs from before the creation of the state in the late seventeenth century to the reign of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin (1834–67). Thereafter, it seems to me, matters change, so let me commence by considering this first – and very long – period. I should perhaps add here that the sheer complexity of the material precludes anything other than the most abbreviated summary of the relevant historical data. However, I think that a number of defining parameters are now apparent, and these can be enumerated.

The Asante have always been and continue to be acutely aware that gold (*sika*) – alluvially derived as dust, or mined in the form of nuggets – is located conceptually and materially at the very core of the historical experience of their society and culture (Garrard, 1980; McLeod, 1981). And in this fundamental perception of matters they are absolutely correct. Permit me at this point to dispose of one important consideration, for vital though it is in other respects it is contingent to my present purposes. There can be no doubt that it was the exportation of gold that first situated ‘proto-Asante’ (and indeed Akan) society in the world economic system; and it was the continuing presence and availability of gold that guaranteed to the developed Asante state some limited flexibility within the constraints imposed by the condition of peripheral capitalism (Yarak and Rice, 1977).

More germanely, it is now becoming apparent that it was the exchange of gold for supplies of unfree labour that fuelled the transformation in ‘proto-Asante’ society from a hunting and gathering to an agricultural mode of production; it was the
command of gold as a disposable resource that permitted the accumulation of convertible surpluses in labour and produce (Wilks, 1978; compare Kea, 1971, 1974, 1978, 1979, 1980, and Atkinson, 1980). And, perhaps, most significantly, it was the entrepreneurial deployment of gold that initiated, and then embedded and accelerated, crucial processes of differentiation in Asante society. Here we might point to three major stages: firstly, the individual accumulator of surplus or 'big man' (abirempn; pl., abirempn); secondly, the phenomenon of aggrandised and territorially competitive petty chiefships (the consolidation and institutionalisation through ritual of the most successful abirempn); and thirdly, the unitary state presided over by the Asantehene (construed in this aspect as the superordinate abirempn).

The developments summarised above spanned some two hundred years – from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries – and in their gestation they imparted to the Asante social formation some of its most basic ethical imperatives, its most enduring grundnorms. The characteristics and values involved are voluminously evidenced – in creation myths, traditions, genealogical charters, proverbs, folk tales, praise names, mnemonics, metaphors, and other lexical items – and by means of a close textual reading they can be distilled out and identified (Christaller, 1879 and 1881; Rattray, 1916, 1923, 1927 and 1929; Van Dyck, 1967; Pelton, 1980; Prempe I, 1907; Prempe II, n.d.).

The root of my remarks thus far has been located in the evident value placed by the Asante on gold as substance. This perception is historically incontrovertible. Indeed, we know a considerable amount respecting the systemic monetary reification of gold as substance (Wilks, 1975; McCaskie, 1980a; and compare Codere, 1968, and Crump, 1978). But beyond these considerations, ratiocination must give place to conjecture. That is, at the most fundamental ethical and intellectualist levels we simply do not comprehend the 'meaning' of gold in historic Asante society. My own interpretation of the matter would hinge upon the substantive mutability of gold. It is a transerential agent – something that readily transgresses and conquers the vitally important Asante boundaries between 'nature' and 'culture' (Douglas, 1966 and 1975). Its ready mutability (its ambiguity?) is shared by other substances – notably, I think, excrement; and associatively, the Asantehene Mensa Bonsu (1874–83) was only the most prominent citizen to deposit hoarded gold in a latrine (Prempe II, n.d.). But I will return to the questions of 'nature' and 'culture' and gold and excrement below.

III

The crucial figure in all of the foregoing is the abirempn. It was his (and her?) achievement – proclaimed through visible accumulation and public display – that lay at the historic root of the social order. This was a seminally powerful, a demiurgic model of attainment, and, as the texts make abundantly clear, it served throughout much of Asante history as the primary referent that defined the conceptualisation of the 'good' or 'admirable' citizen (okaniba). To be an abirempn – at the level of social thought – was all at once to preside over society and to be responsible for its maintenance and continuity. And, as I have already briefly indicated, processes of accumulation were crucial to the definition of this status.
There can be little doubt that the societal value placed upon the idea (as opposed to the process) of accumulation was underwritten and reinforced by a pervasive negative psychology, a constituent pessimism about the world and its workings. I have written about this matter elsewhere, and, while I have yet to pursue all the ramifications of its detailed elaboration over time, its specificity seems clear in outline (McCaskie, 1980b, 1981a and b).

The Asante were and are acutely aware that their culture, in the most literal sense, was hacked out of nature. And this understanding (which is historically and materially accurate) engendered the abiding fear that, without unremitting application and effort, the fragile defensible space called culture would simply be overwhelmed or reclaimed by an irruptive and anarchic nature. Thus the determination of culture, its preservation and enlargement, was construed as being about the domestication of the object – the wresting of control from nature.

As a direct consequence of this view, the embrace of accumulation aspired to the universal – the endlessly indiscriminate as well as the objectively or identifiably valuable. In the former category, the ultimate reification was constituted by the incidental manufactures and artifacts of Europe, an enormous gallery of the haphazard, the trivial, the broken and the arcane. These were sedulously garnered irrespective of any primary considerations of utility or intentional function. Once acquired and hoarded, these (and other) objects might be safely ignored but never discarded; their assimilated presence was part of the most fundamental equation, the strengthening of culture (the realm of man) against nature (the realm of non-man).

And we may note that at this most basic cognitive level the processes of accumulation were intellectually indivisible.

The most prominent expression of the foregoing idea was the aban in Kumase – the stone house built by the Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame (1804–23). Wilks has referred to this building as being ‘The Palace of Culture’, but I think this characterisation misleading in that it conveys quite insupportable notions of detached or objective intentionality (Wilks, 1975). The aban was, in fact, an iconic representation of Culture (and the capitalisation here is deliberately emphatic) as an idea. That is, intentionality was subordinated to the precedent or embracing understanding that nothing might be discarded; and this is why Europeans habitually reported their impression of a building that appeared to be a baffling monument to indiscriminate accumulation – a combination of treasure house and junkyard. The building quite literally embodied its own ‘reason’ – and that is why, certainly in the 1840s, the Asante appeared to have no directed ‘use’ for it. The same imperative obtained at humbler or individual levels; thus in 1882, but more modestly, the sleeping room of the Kumase Akomfodehene and Nyameanihene sheneba Kwaku Bosommur Dwira was reported to be a shrine to the indiscriminate assimilation of the object into culture.

But, of course, the imperative to accumulate found its most potent socio-political expression in the realm of the explicitly or objectively valuable. And the objects of accumulation in this sphere were endlessly elaborated over time: gold, subjects, land, women, guns, clothing, alcohol, and all the rest (Rice, 1975; McCaskie, 1981a). Constantly underpinning this great edifice of accumulation was gold, the demiurgic substance, the yardstick of social attainment, the nonpareil of wealth, the measure of ultimate ‘value’ into which all other objects – at least notionally in
material terms – might be converted.

Thus far I have attempted to offer some explanation for the impetus to accumulation in what might be termed the ‘proto-historic’ period. When we come to the ‘historic’ period – from the creation of the state onwards – we can see the matter in great and ever increasing detail. To review the contingent evidence is in effect to review much of Asante history, and so I will restrict my ensuing remarks to considerations of the most immediate relevance.

IV

It is now very well understood that throughout the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth the Asante state became increasingly complex – enlarging the number of its personnel, developing and embedding novel specialisations of function, and greatly extending its affective competence and range. The state’s capacity to intervene in the social formation, to command it and to shape it, was institutionalised in an explicitly formulated ideology; and one of the most fundamental components of this was a directed and purposeful rationalisation of the societal ethic of accumulation. The nature of the matter in question is best explicated, perhaps, by a consideration of the meanings of its symbolic representations – a complementary but unequal dualism embracing the objects known as the Golden Stool (sika dwa kofi) and the Golden Elephant Tail (sika mena or alternatively sika mmra).

Before I proceed I must pay tribute to the pioneering work of Wilks on this subject (Wilks, 1979). I must also briefly explain – although I trust that this will become clear as I progress – the ways in which I feel Wilks’s argument to be too limited in its secular rationality. It seems to me that Wilks views the matter as ideology qua ideology – as a fully ‘reasoned’ mechanism logically designed to enforce and to guarantee the implementation of power. This element is certainly present (although not omnipresent) in the equation, but what I think remains to be explored (and this is an extension of my strictures respecting Asante historiography) is the ways in which this ideology of power partook of and spilled over into cultural ethics and religious belief. Most simply at this point, I feel that the argument requires to be extended to embrace a range of implications not bounded by the notion of the strictly political. Let me begin my exploration of these implications with a consideration of the Golden Stool.

The Golden Stool of Asante was (and is) replete with symbolic densities, but I am concerned here only with its two primary meanings, its two most fundamental resonances.

Firstly and inescapably – although so obviously that historians have tended to gloss over its importance – the Golden Stool was understood to be of other-worldly provenance; it descended from the sky on kofi, Friday (Prempe I, 1907; Prempe II, n.d.). It was held to embody the corporate essence or ‘soul’ (sunsum) of those beings who were, are and will be Asante, and in direct and obvious consequence it was revered as a hallowed or sacred object. In this aspect or mode the Golden Stool was a construct that framed individual and collective identity, and that mediated – through its singularity, its uniqueness – the basic referents of cultural discourse. It did this by furnishing an ur-vocabulary, by defining essential ontologies; the
distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – the notion of a unique ‘Asanteness’ that united the ancestors, the living and the unborn in an exclusive and seamless communion; and, in refinement of this, the idea of a bounded and ordered culture (a legislated cultural space), the people or nation (Asanteman) presided over by the Asantehene as the juridically sanctioned custodian of the Golden Stool. At this level, then, the Golden Stool was the irreducible medium, the vessel, of human (that is, Asante) identity and culture, and as such its enabling involvement was deemed to be indispensable to the most crucial passages of Asante ritual dramaturgy.

Secondly, the Golden Stool was not solely the repository of a religious doctrine or objectified charter of cultural identity. By direct extension of these features it was also promulgated as being essential to the translation of that identity into the historic structures of authority and power, the juridical calculus of differentiation. Thus, from its very inception in the reign of the first Asantehene Osei Tutu (d. 1712 or 1717), it was deliberately constructed and construed as being the enabling instrument, the representation, that all at once underpinned, validated and guaranteed the legal exercise of sovereign right. In Asante political philosophy, the Golden Stool – and the following apt locution derives from Wilks – was understood to be symbolic of the highest level at which power might be exercised (otumi); thus the Asantehene, as the sanctioned custodian (and this is a better word in the circumstances than occupant) of the Golden Stool, was he who legitimately exercised that power – ‘the powerful one’ (otumfo). The formulation of this equation is evidenced in the most authoritative recensions of tradition. Thus, and in this context it is of the most telling significance, at the appearance of the Golden Stool, all pre-existing, older symbols that might have laid claim to a superordinate authority were deliberately and systematically liquidated. By extension, and we need only note this briefly, a predictably insistent theme running throughout Asante history is that of recurrent struggle over the Golden Stool as object, for it was the very fact of physical possession – and ineluctably that fact – that granted to the individual the right to command.  

Anthropologists have tended to concentrate on the implications of the first meaning of the Golden Stool adduced above; historians, thus far at least, have tended to look to the second meaning. I should like to argue, however, that the two meanings are complementary and – at the intellectualist level – indissoluble.

Thus, in its two primary meanings, the Golden Stool all at once conferred identity, defined cultural space, and imposed authority. Metaphorically, we might say that it conjugated all of the ‘transitive verbs’ of Asante existence. And we might note that in so doing it generated a fearful – because total – logic of existence. Thus to repudiate the ordained competencies of the Golden Stool was at one level an act of political rebellion; but it was also an act of social marginalisation that diminished the components of the human by placing the individual outside culture (and the implications of being outside culture have already been noted). Most specifically, in terms of this second consequence, to reject the authority of the Golden Stool was a decision that carried for the individual the consciously perceived implication of a severely damaged integrity, a dissolved or wrecked identity. But, for the moment, let us note one thing that is at once entirely apposite and completely comprehensible: political rebels throughout Asante history might and did suffer a fate that was deemed to be worse than execution – exile, the expulsion from village to bush. the
ejection from culture into nature.\textsuperscript{6}

In metaphysical terms the Asante conceptualised the Golden Elephant Tail as ‘enfolding’ or ‘being wrapped around’ (\textit{nnuraho}) the Golden Stool. This species of metaphorical conceit is common in Asante thought, and I think that it is intended to express the notion of support or enabling assistance. That is to say, the Golden Elephant Tail was construed as being the ‘helper’ of the Golden Stool. This relationship encapsulated and reflected socio-historical perception; that is, just as the antecedent social order was interpreted as having been ‘assisted’ into being by processes of accumulation (and, as we have noted, a concomitant differentiation), so it was clearly understood in extension that political power and authority (and the hierarchy presided over by the state) were rooted in and rested upon effective controls over the right to amass and to dispose of wealth. We might frame the matter in terms of a simple metaphor. The Golden Stool was about the shape of the completed building; the Golden Elephant Tail was about the most effective method of procuring the constituent bricks.

Why a Golden Elephant Tail? It must be confessed at the outset that, from the perspective of twentieth-century Asante informants, the symbolism of the elephant (\textit{esono}) is opaque in the present context. However, from other areas of discourse we might adduce evident considerations of size, of weight, of bulk, of density, of substance.\textsuperscript{7} But I think that we can take conjectural interpretation a stage beyond these general observations. As indicated, we are dealing with a single and very precise anatomical feature – the tail. And to anyone who has observed the process it will be readily apparent that in the structural sense the elephant’s tail ‘presides’ over the discharge or production of excrement. We might also note that within the Asante cognitive universe this was – volumetrically – the largest such ‘transaction’. Let me reiterate my conjecture about the association in the Asante mind between excrement and wealth. Both ‘substances’ are mediated, uncertain or ambiguous by nature; they possess clearly parallel associations – through evident processes of convertibility – with ranges of other substances (that is, different constituents of reality). It might be added (although it is something well known to anthropologists), that the volatility of both wealth and excrement – their capacity to transgress and to rupture categorical boundaries by conversion – exists cognitively in cultures other than Asante.

Be that as it may, the Golden Elephant Tail was symbolic of the highest level at which wealth was appropriated (\textit{ogye}); thus, in addition to being \textit{otumfo}, the Asantehene was also \textit{ogyefo} – ‘the taking one’.

It can be argued – and indeed it has been by Wilks – that the systems of authority and wealth were complementary homologues, that together they constituted a unitary and indivisible sovereignty personified in the Asantehene. In actual or expressive terms this is evidently correct but it does not seem to me to imply a corresponding equivalence between the two symbolic artifacts in the realm of thought. Indeed, I would urge that the very concept of \textit{nnuraho} evidences the lesser status of the Golden Elephant Tail. It constitutes – in the most strictly formal analysis – nothing more than the elaborated articulation of the Golden Stool’s superordinate authority in the discrete and circumscribed arena of wealth, revenue and finance.

Pertinently, the Golden Stool was understood to possess resonances in the realms of the spirit and of culture that were entirely lacking in its junior symbolic partner.
We might say that the Golden Stool was both transcendental and indispensable, a unique affirmation of spiritual and socio-political coherence. By significant contrast, the Golden Elephant Tail was not held to be located in the realm of the transcendental. Lacking uniqueness—successive Asantehenes were enjoined to and did create their own—it was in ultimate definition an artifact located in historical time, and, as such, it was dispensable rather than immutable.\(^8\) Indeed, and for reasons that I will explore below, the Golden Elephant Tail ‘withered away’ in the later nineteenth century; and this is perhaps the major reason why, in the last quarter of the twentieth, so few Asante know anything at all about it.\(^9\)

V

We now possess a considerable body of highly detailed historical evidence respecting the precise articulations of the state’s exercise of authority, and its several structured modes of appropriating wealth (notably in the form of gold). We might take preliminary note of the fact that the Asante made (and make) a categorical distinction between office holders and titled functionaries (amansohwefo) on the one hand, and men of wealth (asikafo) on the other. But in the period under immediate review (say, between 1700 and 1850) this categorical distinction was fundamentally an illusion. To an almost totally exclusive extent the state commanded and mediated access to wealth; in consequence, it was the state’s servants—office holders, lesser functionaries, nhenkwaal or asomfo of whatever specialist service group—who were in effect the asikafo. Participation in government was the principal and in effect the only serious road to great riches.

For its own purposes, and on its own terms, the state sedulously encouraged, structured and rewarded the pursuit of the primary and fundamentally ingrained social ethic of achievement through accumulation. It effectively institutionalised and controlled the quintessential definition of the okaniba by reserving to itself the right to grant the scalar titles that indicated ever more vertiginous levels of success in amassing wealth. The ultimate accolade—and here, as will be readily evident, all the constituent symbols and signifiers fuse together—was the award of the ur-title of \(\text{abiremp\(\text{\rm n}\}}\). This distinction was commemorated in a complex public ceremonial that was deliberately characterised by mnemonic anachronisms; and it was symbolised by the conferment of a—non-golden because derived—elephant tail whisk or switch (\(\text{mena or mmra}\)).\(^10\) The cultural logic involved in all of the foregoing will be apparent. In terms of expressed Asante thought, the matter is perhaps most conveniently stated in the summary locution ‘The Asantehene sitting in state with his (and the number is notional and variable because it is symbolic) thousand \(\text{abiremp\(\text{\rm n}\}}\); this formula is surely intended to convey all at once the concepts of authority and of essential ethical rectitude.

It is incontrovertible that in comparative terms very few office-holding asikafo ever attained to—or could even realistically aspire to attain to—this level of publicly acknowledged achievement.\(^11\) The bestowal of the mena signified the accumulation of wealth in the highest degree. And while it would appear that no fixed total was prescribed by the state, it remains the case that the objective of becoming an \(\text{abiremp\(\text{\rm n}\}}\) enjoined a lifetime of assiduous devotion to the idea and principle of accumulation.
It is perhaps appropriate to note at this point that while the principle of accumulation remained a constant factor, the sources of great wealth shifted over time.

The eighteenth century was a period that was characterised by expansionist wars of conquest (Fynn, 1971). In consequence, achievement and accumulation were gauged with respect to military prowess – captured regalia and numerous other forms of loot and impounded goods, tributary exactions, and above all, resalable captive slaves. Thus representative figures – for example, the Bantamahene Amankwatia Panin (fl. 1690–1720) or the Akyememhene Ḥeneba Owusu Afriyie (fl. 1690–1750) – were above all else successful generals, and the designated commanders of the state’s armies.12

But – and I will put the matter here in the most cursory terms – conquest reached its logistic limits, and, in the early nineteenth century, the European powers abandoned the transatlantic slave trade. Thus, as early as the 1820s, the Nsuhene Yaw Sekyere effectively bankrupted himself in a futile attempt to realise wealth through warfare; the lucrative external market in slaves had been curtailed to the point of liquidation.13 And by the 1860s the Gyaasewahene Adu Bofo’s trans-Volta expedition – the karem sa – degenerated into a quixotic anachronism that was endlessly prolonged in pursuit of illusory profit and military glory; indeed, this particular campaign – the last of its kind – was racked by quarrels among the subordinate commanders over the meagre pickings, and it was eventually terminated in the enslavement of Asante’s own allies.14

In fact, from the late eighteenth century onwards, warfare as the primary source of enrichment was being inexcusably supplanted by commerce – the characteristic of the matured polity – and by the reinvestment of trading profit in the state-mediated market in land and subjects. Thus the Kyidomhene Yamoa Ponko (c. 1730–85) – whose commercial acumen and investment skills ultimately earned him the title of ḥirempn – was an early pioneer in this regard. And, as we can clearly see in retrospect, he was representative of the wave of the future.15 Thus, by the reign of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin, and most especially following the commercial boom of the early 1830s, great wealth was to be accumulated almost exclusively through trade, investment and the deployment of gold in interest-yielding loans; indeed, it is significant in this context that the enormously wealthy Manwerehene and ḥirempn Kwasi Brantuo (c. 1791–1865), who was arguably Kwaku Dua Panin’s single richest subject, probably never fired a shot in anger.16

VI

It is appropriate at this point to recapitulate and to take stock. Let us look once more at the purposes of accumulation and of wealth. What was it all for?

As I have tried to indicate, the primary answer to this question can be located only in the realms of thought, philosophy and psychology, and by historic extension in the context of an evolved and formalised world view. It is to be traced to the matrix of beliefs, values and social ethics that was first crystallised in the creation of the social order; that was subsequently arrogated, refined and institutionalised by the state; and that, as we have just seen, was articulated through and mediated by the binary symbolism of the Golden Stool and the Golden Elephant Tail.
Most exactly, the accumulation of wealth is to be understood in direct relation to two matters already adumbrated. These are, firstly, the Asante construction of the nature of human culture ('Asanteness'), and, secondly, the Asante understanding of the logic of the historical process (the indivisibility of the continuum of ancestors-living-unborn).

Within the foregoing intellectualist framework, the ultimate meaning of accumulation and of wealth was construed as being social rather than individual. That is, all accumulation constituted an act of societal rather than individual increase — an obligatory aggrandisement or enlargement of the stock of human (Asante) capital, undertaken in conscious discharge of duties towards the achievement of the ancestors and of responsibilities towards the 'historic' future represented by the unborn. Thus, at its most fundamental, the accumulation of wealth was basically about the amplification of cultural space over historical time. And, at the level of the state's reification of this world view, the rationalisations and mechanisms involved are extensively documented, and the general operational principles are becoming understood.

As indicated, during his lifetime the individual accumulator of wealth received public or social acknowledgement of his achievement on behalf of society — ultimately and at the highest level by being invested with the title of obirenpon. However, at his death, his accumulated wealth — the evidence of his capacity for and his skill at increase, the benchmark of his social responsibility — passed from his individual purview into culture; it belonged to the nation (Asanteman) in the symbolic personage of the Asantehene, the custodian of the Golden Stool — which, in turn, was the quintessential embodiment of the continuity of historic culture (sunsum).

In specific terms, self-acquired movable property (and most notably gold) was appropriated at death via the institutional mechanism known as awumnyade.17 It is customary to gloss awumnyade as 'death duties', but I think that this translation is limited by its obstinately secular connotations. In fact, the practice of awumnyade is essentially to be understood as a settling of accounts with history, the final item in the ledger that indicated the relative degree of the individual's success in contributing beyond his own gratification to the maintenance, enlargement and continuity of the realm of culture.

Following death and burial, portions of the deceased's appropriated estate might be redistributed by the Asantehene to the heirs (hereditary or appointed), or indeed to other personages entirely. This process of reallocation (which was sometimes marked by a further levy — ayibaude — on the deceased's immovable property in houses and land) was always accompanied by a restatement of the crucial injunction to accumulate and to increase. Thus the ethics of the cultural system were reinforced and replicated through successive generations.

The liens of the foregoing system are absolutely clear and explicit. From the point of view of the Asante state, what we have here — in its affective range, its sheer embrace — is a hegemonic instrument through which the interests of hierarchical power were realised (in assumed perpetuity) by means of the colonisation, incorporation and rationalisation of the parameters of culture and the components of history. However, it should be noted that it is exceedingly difficult to establish the nature of the relationship between the means of coercion and the boundaries of
consensus in all this. Of course, force was the ultimate guarantor of the system; furthermore there existed individual dissidents – tax evaders and the rest. But what of collective mentalities? Well, as Freeman presciently pointed out in the 1840s, in Asante – as elsewhere – there were degrees of belief and agnosticism with respect to received norms and canons. However, and I wish to stress this point, the evidence is obdurately and significantly silent with regard to sustained critiques of – far less revolts against – the fundamental premises of the relationship. If there existed widespread disbelief and dissent, then it was individually and privately held rather than being articulated at the level of the social. But this, as we shall see, was to be changed – and changed for ever – in the course of the reign of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin.

VII

It must be accounted something of an irony that it was just at the historic juncture when this system achieved its most comprehensive elaboration and its deepest embedding – during the reign of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin (1834-67) – that it began to be called into question, to falter and to break down. A readily identifiable combination of circumstances conspired to this effect.

In the first place the state under Kwaku Dua Panin seriously, consistently and publicly breached the understood parameters of its relationship with the social order. The government of Kwaku Dua Panin was notable for an extreme and partisan interpretation of its rights over society; for the sanctioned and legitimate processes that culminated in the mechanism of awunnyade there was substituted, to a quite unprecedented extent, the machinery and practices of a police state – informing and accusation, seizure, sequestration and confiscation, arbitrary trial and execution (McCaskie, 1974 and 1980a). No one except the state’s most favoured servants, and frequently not even them, was safe. The consequence of all this was that the state was seen to be overreaching itself. It was clearly guilty of illegitimate behaviour; it was liquidating its historic right to command society; and, in the process, it was devaluing received belief and behaviour.

In the second place – and notably after 1831, but for reasons that I cannot explore here – there was an historically unprecedented explosion in the range of opportunities to acquire wealth through trade with the Fante to the south of Asante, and more precisely with the British and Dutch commercial entrepôts that were situated along the Gold Coast littoral. In line with Asante practice, the agents of the state were the principal beneficiaries of these developments; but, at this time, large numbers of lesser functionaries and a host of private individuals had their horizons lifted to the vision of the man of wealth. Thus, at the very moment when the state was applying the death penalty in order to practise and to facilitate quite illegitimate levels of appropriation, there were rapidly increasing numbers of people in Asante with something significant to lose.

And in the third place – and least obviously, but perhaps in the long term most significantly – the growth of a widespread resentment at the Asante state’s illegal interpretations of the historic compact governing the accumulation and disposition of wealth was complemented, for the very first time in any serious or generalised sense, by an increasing awareness of, and familiarity with, an alternative model of
social and economic development, a contrary pattern of historical evolution. This was the intensely competitive, free-market and highly individualistic (Christian) capitalism of the area of the southern Gold Coast presided over by the British.\(^{20}\) Indeed, from the point of view of dissident Asante (and incrementally so as the century wore on), it is perhaps most sensible and suggestive to see in the area of British influence—a semi-formal Protectorate, and later still the Gold Coast Colony—not an outpost of an alien power (and, retrospectively, an encroaching colonialism) but rather another ‘indigenous African’ state, an alternative blueprint of the future.

I think that we may sum up the influence of these developments at two related levels.

Firstly, there is the level of identifiable action—the level of the historical record. There can be no doubt that it was in the later years of the reign of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin that harassed and, so we may well imagine, increasingly alarmed \textit{asikafo}—private citizens now as well as servants of the state—began to take stock of their exposed political situation, and to contemplate flight with their movable property into the area of British jurisdiction. In this context the well known case of the Manso Nkwanta man of wealth Kwasi Gyani is as significant as it is instructive. In 1862 he fled—with a reported minimum of eighty others—into British-protected territory. He represented a trickle that was to become a flood. And, very significantly, the Asante government immediately recognised the crucial implications of Kwasi Gyani’s decision; a very large military expedition was sent into Fante with the express—but unsuccessful—object of securing his repatriation.\(^{21}\)

Secondly, there is the level of conjectural interpretation. In reading through the sources for this period—and, most notably, the voluminous missionary records—I think that one can glean intimations of a society on the cusp of long-term, even revolutionary, change. It is in the 1840s, the 1850s and the 1860s that one can identify the faint beginnings of a seismic shift in values and beliefs. Of course, to historians of other times and places—nineteenth-century Buganda, say, or Meiji Japan—the process is a familiar one. I would urge that until the reign of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin, Asante—at very significant levels—was a ‘closed’ society. Thus, for example, as late as the reign of the Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame (1804–23), the state consciously and successfully mediated external access to the Asante social formation. This much is very well understood by historians.

But in the mid-nineteenth century, and for the economic and political reasons outlined above, Asante society became much less confined, and much more permeable and accessible. I think that it would be missing the point to see this matter in the short term, and to interpret it from the viewpoint of—for example—formal conversion to Christianity or numbers of political or economic refugees. What, I think, is of paramount importance is that it was in this period that Asante became massively exposed to novel options, to different (and even contradictory) ways of looking at the world. These influences would take a long time to germinate and to bear fruit, but in retrospect we can see that this period represented a watershed in the understanding of values and beliefs. In cognitive terms—and we can see this prosopographically—the ‘generation’ of 1880 was further removed from that of 1830 than that ‘generation’ had been from any of its predecessors throughout Asante history (Wilks and McCaskie, 1973–79).
ACCUMULATION, WEALTH AND BELief

VIII

The years between the death of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin in 1867 and the arrest and deportation by the British of the Asantehene Agyeman Prempe in 1896 are the most richly documented and fully analysed period in Asante political history. But, in terms of the matters that have been discussed in this article, these years represent a period of derangement, of innovation, of compromises and confusion, of false starts and hopes, and, ultimately, of a decisive cognitive and material shift that was beyond the control of a much weakened state.

Firstly and most fundamentally, it should be noted that in these years the Asante state progressively and inexorably lost the secure basis of its autonomous action, and, ultimately, any control over its own destiny. As is well known, it was insistently and increasingly subjected to a disfiguring and highly disruptive pressure from the British (Lewin, 1978). The political facts of this process are severally recorded, and it would be otiose to rehearse the details here. But let us consider these years from the perspective of the ideas about accumulation and wealth that historically governed a crucial area of discourse between the state and society.

To begin with, the Asantehene Kofi Kakari (1867–74) was enstooled with a clear mandate to dismantle the illegitimate authoritarianism of his predecessor Kwaku Dua Panin. In the realm of accumulation and wealth, this meant an attempt at the restitution of the compact or historically accorded-to equilibrium that ordained the sanctioned appropriation of property at death via the instrument of awumnyade. Once again, the astikafa were to be guaranteed the secure enjoyment of the fruits of their achievement in their lifetimes; once again, they were to receive sanctioned and graded levels of social recognition from the state.

There is some evidence to suggest that the Asantehene Kofi Kakari made at least intermittent efforts to moderate the extreme fiscal interventionism of the state. But his initiatives were mediated through, and ultimately negated by, the nature of his own personality. Pliant and personally generous, he was a notorious spendthrift who squandered the state’s resources (so assiduously if illegally amassed by Kwaku Dua Panin) on himself, on women, and on a succession of personal favourites. His stewardship of the Golden Stool and his performance as first citizen of the state stood in all too visible diametric opposition to the concepts of the social accumulation of wealth and of the received behaviour of the okaniba. In fact the accusation of extreme fiscal irresponsibility was one of the major charges that led to his removal from office in 1874 (Prempe II, n.d.).

But is this the whole story? I think not, but once more it must be confessed that we are in the realm of conjecture. Albeit, in this particular case I think that it is highly informed conjecture – the personality and behaviour of Kofi Kakari are intimately known to us from the voluminous manuscript diaries of the captive Europeans Ramseyer and Bonnat, and from the testimony of twentieth-century (in some cases eye-witness) Asante informants. When I first thought about this matter (McCaskie, 1974) I construed Kofi Kakari in terms of weakness, indecisiveness and malleability; he seemed to be a ‘disintegrative’ personality who dissolved under the stress of the British invasion of 1874.

I now think that another gloss can be placed on the evidence. The contradictions that are apparent in the behaviour of Kofi Kakari seem to me to arise from the fact
that he is a ‘transitional’ figure. Put bluntly, a reasonably exhaustive review of the
data suggests to me that Kofi Kakari was enstooled to restore a cognitive world (and a
political order) in which he did not fully believe. In this interpretation, one might
suggest that he is symptomatic of his age – a man caught between doubts respecting
comfortable and received certainties and apprehensions concerning future and
largely unknown possibilities. I fully realise that I have constructed Kofi Kakari as a
metaphor rather than as an individual, but I do not think that I am overstating the
case. This was an era of severe cognitive dissonance. And I think, moreover, that
these contradictions – latent for the most part in Kofi Kakari – become fully explicit
in the 1880s. It was then, to paraphrase and adapt Yeats, that the centre of belief
finally would not hold.

But before I pursue this matter, let me briefly say something about the strictly
political history of the reign of the Asantehene Mensa Bonsu (1874–83), Kofi
Kakari’s younger brother and successor. In fact, we possess a considerable body of
received wisdom respecting the extremely complex political events of this reign and
its disastrous aftermath (Wilks, 1975; Lewin, 1974 and 1978). This material is
summarised below, with especial regard to the subject matter of this article.

There can be no serious doubt that the Asantehene Mensa Bonsu made a
concerted but ultimately disastrous attempt at restructuring and rationalising the
human and fiscal resources of Asante. Unfortunately, in political terms, he found
himself in something of a cleft stick. Briefly, the financing of his ambitious but
expensive programme of reform and reconstruction proved an insupportable burden
for the Asante state’s much depleted and diminished resource base. The needs of his
government eventually forced upon him – it is difficult to assess with what degree of
personal willingness or reluctance – a return to something resembling the exactions
of Kwaku Dua Panin. The later years of his reign were characterised by the familiar
pattern of accusation, arrest and confiscation as he struggled with the problem of
deficit budgeting. But quite unlike Kwaku Dua Panin, Mensa Bonsu was never in a
political position to impose his will upon or to control the state and society over
which he presided. As unprecedented numbers of asikafuo turned their backs on
Asante, Mensa Bonsu’s own government, worried all at once for their lives, their
wealth, and at the state’s weakening control over events, brought charges against
him and destooled him. Asante then descended into a period (1883–88) of disastrous
civil war; and, in clear retrospect, we can see that the removal from office of the
Asantehene Mensa Bonsu signalled the conclusion of any serious or realistic attempt
to revive and to affirm the status quo ante that had obtained in the early nineteenth
century.

In terms of a coherent world view and an integrated belief system, the nineteenth
century – together with all antecedent Asante history – effectively ended in the
1880s. I have argued that the roots of this dissolution go back to the reign of the
Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin, and that they are composed of a combination of
external pressure and exposure to novel ideas and influences, together with an
increasing – and ultimately fatal – cynicism in the state’s attitude towards society.

This last factor achieved its apotheosis in the course of the civil war, when
the state ruptured its compact with society to the point of being openly and
ruthlessly predatory towards it. A significant consequence of this development is
that, in retrospect, the politicians and policies of the 1880s and early 1890s seem
curiously irrelevant at both the social and intellectual levels. The ‘conservatives’ – most notably the Akyempemhene \textit{sheneba} Owusu Koko – were attempting (ultimately and desperately through violence) to turn the clock back to a world that was fatally compromised and beyond restitution. By contrast, the ‘modernisers’ – notably the English-educated \textit{sheneba} Owusu Ansa and his two sons – were trying to build a brave new world from a European blueprint that, being eclectic and makeshift, commanded only the most limited understanding and support throughout Asante society.\textsuperscript{23} Socially and practically, the great majority of Asante in this period were much more concerned with simple physical survival than with the machinations of the state and its office holders; indeed, one might argue with considerable justification that the Asante state inflicted more violence on its own citizenry in the 1880s than ever the British state did in the annexation of the 1890s (or, indeed, in the war of 1900–01). Intellectually and in terms of belief, the 1880s and 1890s were a period when the tensions engendered by cognitive dissonance became insupportable. And in this context it is highly significant that the majority of Asante who forged a new intellectual framework and belief structure for their lives did so as refugees in the Gold Coast Colony. The future in fact lay with such people, but they are properly the subject of a second paper.

IX

Let me try briefly to sum up, and to anticipate matters to come. I have argued throughout this article that the notions of accumulation and of increase – most highly reified as convertible wealth – are fundamental and indispensable to the historic Asante construction of social reality and belief. I have attempted to trace the way in which, in terms of wealth, state and society interacted within the consensual framework of an agreed system of cultural assumptions and priorities. I have tried to indicate in outline the ways in which I think this social coherence came under threat, broke down and dissolved. And I have essayed a number of – I trust – informed and reasonable conjectures about the nature of Asante thought.

I think it incontrovertible that intellectual and cognitive shifts of the first magnitude overtook Asante society in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. In terms of the matters that have formed the substance of this article, let us summarise the issue from the perspective of some of the key symbols and values adduced above.

The Golden Elephant Tail passed into desuetude together with the cognitive system of which it had been a symbol. Significantly in this context, the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin was the last ruler of the nineteenth century to create his own Golden Elephant Tail in commemoration of his singular achievement in aggrandising society, culture and the state – and I have already indicated the specious nature of the methods by which he attained to this distinction.

The Golden Stool did not share the same fate as the Golden Elephant Tail. Its sacrality continued – and continues – to command very widespread allegiance throughout all levels of Asante society. But from the late nineteenth century onwards – although, it should be emphasised, only among a very small minority – attitudes
began subtly to shift with respect to the conceptualisation of the indispensable socio-cultural role of the Golden Stool. The earliest sustained questioning came from *asikafo* in the Gold Coast Colony, but the crux of the drama was to be played out in Asante itself in the early colonial period. And attitudes altered as well with respect to the understanding and definition of the role of the *shirempom*. But the twentieth century history of these matters also properly belongs to another paper.

NOTES

1 This paper was originally presented in February 1982 before a seminar in the Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool. I am grateful to all who participated, and most especially to L. Brydon, J. D. Y. Peel and P. Roberts. I have also profited from general discussions with S. Benson, M. Fortes and A. G. Hopkins. Above all, I must record my gratitude to I. Wilks, with whom I have discussed Asante history on more occasions than either of us can possibly remember.

2 In my summary of both the 'anthropological' and 'historical' traditions I list only representative works. The full range of the relevant material is much larger; but its extent can be readily adduced from the bibliographies appended to the items that I have cited.

3 Wilks (1978) is particularly detailed on the material considerations. For the background see the essay collected in Wills (1962). Some penetrating insights are to be found in McLeod (1976 and 1978). A general overview of the background to all of this is Anquandah (1982).

4 For a list of references to the *aban* see note 18 in McCaskie (1980a). Some additional material is to be found in General State Archives, The Hague, series NBKG 351. For the case of Kwaku Bosommpuru Dwira see Basel Mission Archives, Basel, Ramseyer to Basel, dd. October 1882.


7 An interesting and illuminating parallel is to be found in National Archives of Ghana, Accra, SNA/517, J. R. Wallis, 'Hunting an Elephant on the Afram Plains', n.d. (but c. 1950).


9 Idem.

10 A detailed nineteenth-century description of these events is to be found in Methodist Mission Archives, London, West to General Secretaries, dd. Cape Coast, 9 June 1862.

11 See McCaskie (1980a). But – and I have yet to work out the details – some of the attributions and the chronology will have to be revised in the light of the data contained within the recently discovered diary of the Methodist missionary G. Chapman (1843–44).

12 The biographies of both of these office holders are in course of active preparation by the Asante Collective Biography project.

13 See McCaskie (1974), pp. 40–2, for the details.

14 I am currently preparing a paper on the military aspects of this campaign. I should like to record my gratitude here to D. Maier for profitable exchanges respecting the *kwem sa*.

15 See ACPB/pcs/60: Yomo Ponko in *Asantesem*, 9, June 1978, pp. 28–32.


17 I am grateful to I. Wilks for discussions of the concept of *awunnyade*.

18 See Freeman (1843 and c. 1860).

19 I am led to understand that the forthcoming Ph.D. thesis of L. Yarak (Northwestern) will explore these matters in some detail.

20 An early – but extremely revealing – account of the whole matter is to be found in Cruickshank (1853).

21 For a contemporary account in Twi of this expedition see McCaskie and Wiafe (1979). Interesting material is to be found in Horton (1870).

22 The diary of Ramseyer – at least in one authoritative recension – is held by the Basel Mission Archives, Basel. A copy of the diary of Bonnat is in the possession of the present author.

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Résumé

Accumulation, richesse et croyance en histoire Asante

I. Vers la fin du dix-neuvième siècle

L'article tend à réconcilier les vues 'anthropologiques' et 'historiques' du passé des Asante. Il se concentre sur les discrets – mais essentiellement importants – ensembles d'attitudes envers la richesse, l'accumulation et 'l'argent' en général. La substance de l'article est une revue générale des attitudes des Asante à l'égard de ces sujets entre la période 'proto-Asante' (disons, 

Suite à p. 79
NOTES AND NEWS

Sudan Studies Association
The second annual conference of the Sudan Studies Association will be held at Howard University's Armour J. Blackburn University Center during the weekend of 25–27 March 1983. The conference is expected to attract a wide range of scholars, diplomats and people of Sudanese origin from throughout the world. The theme of the conference is The Sudan: perspectives on diversity and change. Arrangements for housing accommodation should be made through the Howard Inn, 2225 Georgia Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20001; telephone (202) 462-5400. All prospective papers, proposals, suggestions and enquiries should be addressed c/o Ms Joanne Zellers, PO box 3385, Falls Church, Virginia 22043. The deadline for submission of abstracts is 15 December 1982.

Marketing boards
The African Studies Centre in Leiden intends to organise an international seminar on ‘Marketing Boards in Tropical Africa’ in autumn 1983. Further particulars and registration forms may be obtained from Dr H. L. van der Laan, African Studies Centre, PO box 9507, 2300 RA Leiden, Netherlands.

Yves Personne
As we go to press we are saddened to learn of the death of Yves Personne. A formal obituary notice will appear in a forthcoming issue.

_YouTube de p. 43_
au seizième siècle), et durant la conquête britannique en 1896. La plupart de l’article est 'conjuctural', au sens très précis de 'deviner' ce qui vraiment eu lieu; tout cela, l’auteur espère, est fondé sur l’appréciation réaliste de la dynamique de l’histoire Asante, et la substance de l’article cherche à contrebalancer le positivisme si prédominant en historiographie tant africaine que plus spécialement Asante. L’auteur ne cherche pas à s’excuser de ses ‘hypothèses’, mais, au contraire, suggère que cette sorte d’approche – sensiblement suggestive, et à la fois bien informée – pourrait être une direction nouvelle à l’égard des études historiques africaines.