

TEARING DOWN THE STRONG MAN IN THE GOLD COAST: THE ASANTE EMPIRE, 1820-1901

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Abstract: The present article investigates the Asante Empire's transformation from a dominant power in West Africa to a vassalage. It examines the multifaceted causes of this decline, including military confrontations with European powers, internal political strife, economic disruptions, and evolving regional alliances in the nineteenth century. Through a historiographical approach, the study moves beyond the political centre of Kumase to include peripheral states and local dynamics often overlooked, enriching the understanding of its historical significance. This enables to construct a more nuanced narrative of Asante's history, underscoring the complexities of power, resistance, and cultural imperialism in nineteenth-century Africa, offering critical insights into the factors that led to the annexation of one of West Africa's most powerful empires. The article contextualises the decline within broader imperial rivalries and the shifting dynamics of Afro-European relations.

Keywords: Asante, Anglo-Asante Wars, British colonialism, Golden Stool

Introduction

The Asante Empire,¹ one of the most formidable pre-colonial states in West Africa, was an Akan state that lasted from 1701 to 1901. It rose to prominence through military prowess, centralised governance, and economic wealth, particularly in the gold and slave trade (Kwarteng 2024; Watt 2023; Hass 2017). However, by the late nineteenth century, this once-dominant polity experienced a dramatic decline, culminating in its colonisation by British forces in 1901. The present article provides a comprehensive account of the Asante Empire's rise and fall, emphasising the internal and external pressures that led to its transformation from a powerful African state to a subjugated colonial province.

1 The Europeans spelt Asante as Ashanti. As indigenes, the correct spelling is Asante.

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Historiographically, the study of Asante has evolved from a focus on the political centre—particularly Kumase and the Asantehene’s royal court—to more nuanced understandings that include peripheral states and regional dynamics. Scholars like Larry Yarak (1986) have criticised the synchronic-centric approach, which prioritises the perspectives of the ruling elite while overlooking local dissensions and regional variations. The present article adopts a broader analytical lens, combining archival evidence, oral traditions, and historiographical synthesis to reassess the narratives surrounding Asante’s trajectory. The decline of the Asante Empire is best understood through a multipronged approach: the expansion of British imperialism, the weakening of Asante’s economic base, internal succession disputes, and the failure to adapt to rapidly changing global and regional dynamics. Scholars such as Ivor Wilks (1975), who emphasised structural internal issues, and Kwame Arhin (1986), who underscored the violent disruption imposed by British colonial ambitions, enrich this historiographical narrative.

By examining the multifaceted factors contributing to the decline of one of West Africa’s most powerful empires, this research sheds light on the complex dynamics of power, resistance, and cultural imperialism in the nineteenth century. The study not only enriches the historiography of Asante but also provides critical insights into the broader implications of colonial encounters in Africa. Furthermore, it emphasises the necessity of re-evaluating established narratives by incorporating perspectives from both the political centre and the periphery, thereby fostering a more inclusive understanding of Asante’s historical context.

Methodology

Employing a historical approach, the author has used primary and secondary sources to unravel the multifaceted factors for the decline of the Asante empire in the nineteenth century. I utilise the qualitative method of historical research, combining archival research, oral history, and the review of rare books to understand the changes in Asante’s political status in the nineteenth century. To retrieve primary materials, the author has used traditional and digital archives, such as the National Archives of Ghana, the Internet Archives, and Google Scholar.

Primary archival documents were meticulously gathered from three main repositories: the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD. ADM.11/1731), the British National Archives’ online platform, and

the Internet Archive. Essential documents comprised government reports, correspondence, and publications detailing Asante and British interactions, the Asante-British Wars, and the broader context of Gold Coast affairs. These were critically analysed to unveil vital historical insights. The archival materials also encompass communication dispatches between Governors and the Colonial Government, accounts from colonial officers involved in military confrontations with the Asante, and the British Parliamentary Papers. Oral history enriches the research by capturing personal narratives and lived experiences often overlooked in archival documents, providing unique insights into the social and cultural contexts of the Asante Empire.² It amplifies marginalised voices and ensures a more nuanced understanding of the empire's decline and its historical significance. Secondary sources included academic articles and scholarly works that deepened the understanding of the subject matter.

The article employs historiographical synthesis and fabulation to identify patterns, trends, and differences in perspectives. The methods are selected to help engage with the archives and the silences, absences, and speculative possibilities that shape historical understanding. The first phase involved a critical historiographical synthesis, which entailed a systematic collection, review, and interpretative analysis of existing historiographies, archival materials, scholarly commentaries, and institutional records relevant to the study's period and theme. By synthesising the multiple sources, the article aims to uncover dominant discourses, contestation, and epistemic shifts in understanding Asante's political evolution.

The historiographical synthesis approach not only reconstructs events but also serves as a critical conduit to examine the evolutionary trajectory. Therefore, it foregrounds the multiplicity of historical voices and reveals how official accounts have been constructed, legitimised, or resisted over time. Also, in recognising the limitations and partialities of the archival records, the research employed fabulation as a decolonial and imaginative strategy. Here, there is a speculative narrative—not conjectured facts—that fills historical silences and discloses alternative epistemologies.

With fabulation, the lived experiences, dissenting voices, and submerged knowledge often excluded from formal historical records are made alive.

2 This research was conducted in accordance with standard academic and ethical guidelines for social research. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, methods, and potential uses of the data prior to participation. Each interviewee provided informed consent and explicitly agreed to be identified by name in this publication. No participant was coerced or offered inducements, and all responses were recorded and reported with accuracy and integrity.

Through fabulation, the article enacts a critical re-narration of Asante's decline in the nineteenth century while ensuring historical rigour to expand its creative and ethical possibilities. The triangulation of historiographical synthesis and fabulation enables the research to move beyond state-centric historical accounts, as it provides structural and evidentiary grounding. It interrogates the gaps and reconfigures the narrative terrain. This approach affirms that historical knowledge is both constructed and interpretative. As such, by triangulation, the article embraces critical synthesis and speculative reimagining, not only recovering lost or marginalised voices but also critiquing the epistemic foundation of Asante's decline.

Historical Context

Oral tradition, according to the Kokofuhene, Barima Offe Akwasi Okogyasuo, indicates that the Asante migrated from Asaremanke in the seventeenth century, settling at Asiakwa before finally settling at Santemanso under the leadership of Ankyewaa Nyame, the ancestress of the rulership of Kwaaman (interview, 26 August 2023). Due to population growth, the immigrants settled in Omanso and, later, Kokofu, building towns and villages; thus, they became known as Amansie. At Kokofu, Pinaman Panyin, the daughter of Ankyewaa Nyame, became the first chief, who later gave birth to Mmua Brayie and Manu Kotosie, the mother of Osai Tutu and his brother Gyami. By the beginning of the 18th century, the nation had become a kingdom with Osai Tutu as the first Asantehene and by the nineteenth century, the Asante territory had become an empire stretching beyond its present location and included all the geographical locations after the Asante region, the Fanteland, parts of Ivory Coast and then British Togoland. The Asante empire included Gyaman, Dagomba, Gonja, the former Brong-Ahafo region, Sehwi, Wassa, Asen, and Denkyira (Bosman 1705; Bowdich 1819; Ellis 1893: 108-10; Reindorf 1895; Freeman 1898).

Colonial Encounters and Early Conflicts, 1800–1872

By 1800, the Asante kingdom had its tributaries rebelling to reassert their independence due to unfair treatment by the Asantehene. Robert B. Edgerton (1995: 1) asserts that the decline of the Asante began in 1817 when the first British envoy met the Asantehene and in 1821 when the British Government took over direct affairs on the Gold Coast following the Treaty of Paris of 1783. In 1821, a dramatic episode unfolded when Opentri,

the de facto chief of Abora, beheaded a fugitive named Kwame Tettey at Moree. This violation enraged the British Governor John Hope Smith, who dispatched troops to arrest Opentri—only for his emissary, Mr. Colliver, to be murdered on 9 April 1821. This incident triggered diplomatic chaos (Ellis 1893: 144; Reindorf 1895: 179). Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwamena, enraged by the British interference, halted all trade with Cape Coast until August 1821 due to miscommunication. With the miscommunication cleared, the trade resumed, but British meddling only intensified.

Governor Charles MacCarthy began to meddle in local affairs and to instigate Fante citizens against their kings and chiefs as MacCarthy established the Royal African Colonial Corps of Light Infantry, which created friction. In November 1822, a mulatto sergeant of the corps, Kwadwo Otetefo, was kidnapped by Asante residents—Kwame Butuakwa, Amoa Bata, and Apemento—at Anomabo due to a quarrel in May 1822 and taken as a prisoner to Dunkwa (Reindorf 1895: 179-80). This outraged MacCarthy, who tried everything diplomatic to have the sergeant return to him, but to no avail. In January 1823, the Asantehene sent a state executioner, Kwame Butukwa, to Dunkwa in order to acquit Kwame Otetefo. However, the chiefs of Denkyira took the responsibility to put the sergeant to death and convey the skull and head to Kumase, the capital of Asante. The execution occurred in February 1823.

This incident began the first Anglo-Asante war (1823-1831). MacCarthy rallied the Fante, Wassa, and Denkyira kings and chiefs to throw off their allegiance to the Asantehene because these states had endured the suppression of the Asante residents in the Fantelands, convincing MacCarthy that war against the Asante was the best solution. Upon realising that the British wanted to involve themselves in this war, the Asantehene remarked, “If you, the British, dared to invade us, Asante, I will use your skull as a drinking cup and your jaw bones to beat my drums.” This statement showed the seriousness of Asantehene’s involvement with the British Governor, Sir Charles MacCarthy (Nana Kwame Ackom, interview, 24 January 2025).

On 21 February MacCarthy launched a campaign, only to be ambushed a day later. At this time, the Asantehene, Osei Tutu Kwamena, had become old and ill. The Asantehene, upon rehearing of the incident, sent emissaries led by the linguist Kwasi Apente with Prince Owusu Pra and Anoneano and Abam to Akra³ (Accra) to find out if the Ga Mantse would join the British to fight against the Asante. The Ga Mantse vowed that “no nation will dare

3 Akra is now anglicised as Accra.

to invade Kumase unless we rather make war against that nation. Whoever attempts to burn Kumase shall quench the fire with his own blood” (Reindorf 1895: 182). In April 1823, MacCarthy met with the Akra chiefs and the King to detach from the Asante alliance. After numerous meetings, the Ga state unanimously resolved to support the British. However, the Ga Mantse, Adama Akuredze, told the Asante prince, Owusu Pra, to return home speedily to inform his father that his country would be invaded (Ellis 1893: 148-9; Reindorf 1895: 182-5).

On 4 June 1823, the planned invasion of MacCarthy took place. The Asante marshalled 4,000 soldiers to engage MacCarthy in a palaver. Osei Yaw Akoto had succeeded as Asantehene, but Osei Assibey (Osei Tutu Kwamena) warned him never to take up arms against the white men at the coast before his death. He was a young man and inexperienced in war; thus, Boaten and Awua Yaw, chiefs of Kumase, took the opportunity and desired to kill the chiefs of Denkyira, Twifo, and Wassa—i.e., Kwadwo Tsibo, Owusu, and Animiri—respectively. Major John Chisholm, then acting Governor, sent a contingent of about 2,000 soldiers under Captain Liang to confront the Asante army at Anomabo, forcing the Asante army to retreat on 21 January 1824 (Ellis 1893: 165-70; MacDonald 1898: 302-3). The large contingent convinced the Fante states about the determination of the British forces to resist Asante; thus, Kwasi Amankwa, chief of Essikuma and the Fante states, refused to pay their tributes to the Asantehene. The Dutch in Akra, whom the British counted upon, refused to sell Asante guns under Captain Blenkare, who seized some Asante and sold them as slaves. The Asante army consisted of 10,000 strong men on the advance.

Upon seeing the large army, the Fante and Wassa soldiers fled, leaving their arms behind, leaving the unfortunate MacCarthy and his 500 men with the Denkyira forces to fight the Asante and Anomansa alliance. The bush was too thick for open fire against the Asante, providing the Asante with an advantage over the British and their allies. In the war, the Asante army shot and killed 9 British officers and 180 regular militia, including beheading Sir Charles MacCarthy, Ensign Wetherall, and Beresford Teddlie, who were sacrificed at Essaman (Reindorf 1895: 185-98).

In the wake of the death of MacCarthy, the Asante forces marched with determination to Cape Coast, arriving on 21 June 1824. The British response was decisive; James Chisholm was appointed as Governor and immediately began strategising to dismantle the Asante kingdom and restore British pride. Utilising his diplomatic acumen, Chisholm garnered the support of

European merchants, governors, and southern Asante states. Just two weeks later, on 5 July, he mobilised an impressive army of 15,000 men, leveraging the assistance of Major Johan Christopher de Richelieu, the Danish Governor stationed at Christiansborg Castle in Akra. This alliance brought on board the Akra, Akuapem, and Akyem states, fortifying the British stance against the Asante.

Between 7 and 12 July, 1824, the Asante camped strategically near Ketse Kokoado, which rose as a hill directly opposite the Cape Coast Castle. An intense confrontation ensued as they laid siege to Cape Coast town, initiating open fire against the 5,074-strong British and Fante defenders, with the Fante making up the bulk of these forces at 4,650. Amid these clashes, an errant cannonball from the Smith Towers struck the palanquin of the Asantehene, ultimately forcing the Asante to retreat. The retreat was exacerbated by the substantial losses they faced, particularly the annihilation of Osahene Kwaku Biri from Asante Akyem at the hands of Okuapehene, Addo Dankwa, combined with outbreaks of smallpox and dysentery among their ranks, insufficient food supplies, and dwindling ammunition (Ellis 1893: 174-7; Reindorf 1895: 197-9).

On 7 March 1826, seeking vengeance against the Ga state for their allegiance to the British during the Nsamankow (Essaman War), the Asante advanced towards Akra.⁴ However, in August 1826, the British rallied allied troops from southern nations—Osudoku, Krobo, Akwamu, Shai, Akuapem, and Akyem—to resist this aggressive incursion. According to intelligence from an Akuapem captive named Okai Koi, the Akra forces had assembled at Dodowa, gearing up for a confrontation. The Akra and their allies amassed around 11,380 soldiers compared to the Asante force of 10,000. On 4 August the Ga and their confederates established their camp at Oyeadufa (Oyarifa) under the leadership of Ga Mantse, Taki Kome I, and by 7 August the Asante army advanced towards Dodowa.

The confrontation at Dodowa was marked by intense fighting, with the British left-wing comprising Denkyira, Asen, Fante, and Agona forces commanded by Denkyirahene, Kwadwo Tsibo. Meanwhile, the right-wing, led by Akwamuhene Akoto Panyin, included troops from Akwamu, Akyem, Akuapem, as well as Ningo, Tema, and Dangme. In this harrowing battle, the Asantehene Osei Yaw Akoto was wounded, and the chief of Essikuma, Akwasi Amankwa, suffered a grim fate—cut to pieces and beheaded

4 Akra consisted of Tema, Dawhenya, Teshie, La, Ngleshie Alata, Osu, Akanmadjen, Otublohum, Sempe, Gbese, Abola and Asere Tsono.

by Asante forces. This conflict resulted in the Asantehene losing wives, daughters, and numerous relatives, alongside the confiscation of valuable royal treasures, including state umbrellas, gold-hilted swords, jewels, and a military chest filled with gold cartouches, the divine currency used in their Odwira celebrations.

The Akwamuhene and his Ada captured the Golden Stool, a profound symbol of Asante unity and strength. However, Nkuntrase Antwi and Boaten valiantly fought back to reclaim the Golden Stool, which was ultimately brought to the Dwabenhene and delivered back to the Asantehene. Tragically, the Asante suffered a devastating loss of sixty generals, chiefs, and captains, including notable figures such as Yaw Osei Kyere, Nsutahene, Atakora Manu of Mampon, Dominasehene of Kumase, and twenty other chiefs, marking the Dodowa War, or Akatamanso War, as a catastrophic defeat that shattered the power of the Asante kingdom since its inception in 1701 (Ellis 1893: 181-3; Reindorf 1895: 207-17; Rattray 1929: 240).

Following this devastating encounter, the British severed trade routes with the Asante for a year, exacerbating their food scarcity and forcing the Asantehene to seek peace. On 1 September 1827, emissaries, including linguist Okwakwa, Amankwa Kuma, Nkwantabisa, Kankam Kyekyere, Afaaboo, Princess Achiaa, and Mr. Amissa, a British official detained during the Akatamanso War, arrived in Cape Coast to negotiate a truce. There, the Asantehene agreed to a subservient position under British governance. Under Governor Sir Neil Campbell, initial peace talks commenced but were delayed until December 1827 due to objections from allies, notably the Akra. Eventually, on 27 April 1831, a peace treaty⁵ was signed by the British and their allies—including Fetu, Fante, Anomabo, Denkyira, Twifo, Wassa, and Asen, alongside chiefs Adwumako, Asikuma, Akumfi, Abora, Agya, and Appolonia—with Asante representatives Princess Achiaa and Okakwa.

To reaffirm his commitment to peace, Osei Yaw Akoto deposited 600 ounces of gold and offered two young Asante princes—Owusu Ansah and Nkwantabisa—as hostages for six years. The treaty reinstated open trade routes while asserting that the Asantehene would no longer seek tribute or homage from southern states under British or European protection. This significant treaty was formalised in the Great Hall of Cape Coast Castle in

5 The Maclean Treaty. This treaty was signed after the Battle of Akatamanso, 1826. It formally ended hostilities between the British-Fante alliance and Asante. Through this treaty, the influence of the British along the coast was recognised and the Asante sphere of influence in coastal affairs was restricted.

June 1831. Upon the treaty's expiration in 1837, the British returned the gold—a gesture of goodwill in a fraught relationship shaped by centuries of conflict, diplomacy, and shifting allegiances in the historical tapestry of West Africa.

The signing of a treaty ignited a fierce civil war between Kumase and Dwaben. Kwaku Boaten, the Dwabenhene, perceived the treaty as a sign of weakness from the Asante and seized upon the turmoil that arose, particularly due to a dispute with the Asantehene over the enstoolment of Nsutahene. The Asantehene's hesitance to release Yaw Odabo Akumi (Kotiaku), a native of Kubease, who had wronged Boaten by having relations with his three wives, further complicated this conflict. This bloody conflict persisted until 1836, after which Asante-British relations remained amicable for thirty years.

However, by 1862, under the governorship of Richard Pine, this cordiality deteriorated, culminating in war. The catalyst was Kwasi Gyanin, an Asante chief who sought sanctuary with the British. Asantehene Kwaku Dua demanded Gyanin's extradition over accusations of withholding gold nuggets due to the size of the amount they should have forfeited to Asantehene. Pine, fearing for Gyanin's life, demanded evidence of his guilt, ultimately leading to the Second Anglo-Asante War of 1863-64, wherein the Asante brought defeat to the British forces (Hay 1874: 56-7). This loss incited Pine's vow to dismantle the Asante military apparatus.

The aftermath of this war brought contempt for the British, particularly from figures like Kodwo Essien Egyir IV Oguaamanhene, who defied British authority by being insubordinate despite the 1844 Bond. Governor Pine's ire led to his exile (1865). The silence of kings and chiefs on the Gold Coast concerning the exile of Oguaamanhene served as the launch pad for the British to meddle in the affairs of the Gold Coasters long before colonialism. This absolute silence from other rulers strengthened the stance of the British influence to overthrow the kings and chiefs. Following Kwaku Dua's death in April 1868, his successor, Kofi Karikari, aligned with the Dutch in Anomansa to combat British influence, undertaking a bold invasion that included a failed assault on Krepi.

Following the outcome of the Asante expedition, the British Government changed policy. The British response was decisive, acquiring Dutch forts,⁶ with critical changes occurring on 25 February 1871, leading to the loss of

6 The Treaty of Exchange, 1867. This began the transfer of Dutch forts and settlements to the British but it was not actualised until 1871 due to the resistance of other states such as Denkyira and Anomabo. The actualisation of the treaty became known as The Gold Coast Treaty of 1871.

Elmina Castle—a pivotal stronghold for the Asante coastal authority (Snape 1874: 21; Manning 2021: 65). Kofi Karikari's protests regarding Elmina fell on deaf ears, revealing the precarious position of Asante amidst expanding British ambitions.

Expansion of British Influence and Internal Strife, 1873–90

The escalating tensions between the Asante Empire and British colonial powers during the early 1870s set the stage for a significant period of conflict that would reshape the region. At the centre of this tumultuous chapter was Kofi Karikari, whose approach to diplomacy with the British was heavily antagonistic. This stance alienated him from many Asante chiefs and advisors, particularly with the impending Akatamanso War on the horizon, thereby eroding his support base. His brutal actions—most notably the execution of 300 individuals as part of the final funeral rites for Kwaku Dua—further alienated crucial allies, including the influential Dwabenhene, who found his thirst for blood and vengeance unacceptable.

In October 1872, a pivotal moment occurred when the Dutch transferred their forts to British control. The British responded by removing Acheampon, the Asante Resident at Half Assini, to Cape Coast Castle before ultimately returning him to Kumase (Hay 1874: 66-7). Once back, Acheampon quickly rallied the Asantehene, urging a call to arms against their British adversaries. By December 1872, Kofi Karikari mobilised his forces, directing Adu Bofo to lead an assault with 5,000 soldiers against Wassa and Denkyira. Simultaneously, he tasked Bantamahene Amankwatia II with commanding a larger contingent of 12,000 warriors to strike at the southern coast. At the same time, Mawerehene was given a small force to secure the necessary territories of Akyem and prevent their defection to the Fante forces (Manning 2021: 76).

On 29 January 1873, the Asante forces launched an unexpected assault against the Fante, catching the British off guard. This began the Third Anglo-Asante War. While the local chiefs had alerted the British about the looming threat, they were unable to provide them with ammunition since no preparations had been made for such an invasion. As the Asante army triumphed over the Asen resistance at Nyankumase, occupying Fante Nyankumase by 9 February, the British Governor Robert William Harley was infuriated. In a swift response, he exiled Kobina Gyan, the King of Anomansa, whom he deemed a pivotal figure among pro-Asante sentiments along the coast.

In light of the ongoing conflict and its catastrophic consequences, particularly the ensuing famine, the British Government took action. On 10 March 1873, they dispatched rice and provisions to Cape Coast Castle, hoping to stabilise the dire situation (Hay 1874: 69-70). Meanwhile, British troops, led by Lieutenant Hopkin and his Hausa company from Lagos, joined forces with warriors from Asen and Denkyira to confront the invading Asante army that had breached Fanteland. This engagement forced the British to retreat to Cape Coast to regroup, consolidating their forces at Dunkwa by 8 April 1873. During this tumultuous period, Mankessimhene Kwasi Edu reached out to Britain, questioning the British Government's commitment to supporting the Fante Confederation, which he believed was under its jurisdiction (Hay 1874: 70-72).

As May 1873 unfolded, the British Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Colonial Office articulated a fierce resolve to subdue the Asante, advocating for a "severe lesson" to curb any aspirations of future aggression. Sir Garnet Joseph Wolseley was appointed as the new Governor, and shortly thereafter, on 5 June 1873, Asante forces achieved a significant victory, routing the opposition at Dwokwa and moving ahead to Effutu (British Parliamentary Papers 1874). The motives guiding British actions during this period were heavily intertwined with commercial interests, as emphasised by the Earl of Derby's assertion in October 1870 that trade thrived even in regions devoid of political control (Snape 1874: 16). In retaliation against the Asante, Governor Harley enacted martial law, and on 16 June, he ordered the incineration of the town, utilising firepower for a swift 20 minutes to reassert British dominance.

The situation escalated further when Governor Wolseley landed on the coast in October 1873, accompanied by notable military figures such as Captains Redvers Buller, George Huyshe, Colonel John McNeil VC, Evelyn Wood VC, and Lieutenant Arthur Eyre. Upon arrival, Wolseley imposed immediate restrictions on military engagements against the Asante until he could finalise a comprehensive strategy. He personally oversaw the surveying of key routes north of Anomansa's coast, enlisting Captain Huyshe and Lieutenant Hart for this critical task. However, the local coastal kings and chiefs exhibited wariness in supporting British efforts; the scars of the 1863-1864 War lingered heavily in their collective memory.

On 14 October, Wolseley led an imposing force of 600 European officers and 300 Hausa troops through Elmina, initiating a campaign against the Asante that resulted in the complete destruction of enemy camps located at

Essaman, Ankwana, Akyemfo, and Ampene. This decisive victory revitalised confidence in British superiority among the southern coastal chiefs and those from interior states. In response, Colonel Wood, Captain Glover, and Major Baker Russell began to train local militias, familiarising them with martial capabilities as they prepared for further engagements (Manning 2021: 103-13).

However, the tides of war shifted once more. On 27 October 1873, Colonel Festing launched an assault on the Asante camp at Asuboi. By November, unfavourable conditions, including illness that afflicted many European troops, including Garnet Wolseley, hampered British advances. The Asante defenders put up a fierce resistance at Abrakrampa. However, by 8 November, British forces advanced to Ahensan, facing a difficult battle where Fante warriors, particularly the Abora fighters, faced calamity, causing chaos, and the loss of life among their ranks.

As the year drew to a close, on 26 December 1873, Wolseley sent a missive to the Asantehene, demanding that the King sign a treaty laden with stipulations. However, the Asantehene, misled by Amankwatia regarding the realities of the British expedition, dismissed the urgency of Wolseley's demands, marking a critical moment in the continuous conflict between the Asante and British forces. Following a proper debriefing, Amankwatia was ordered to halt hostilities against the British forts, and he was directed to pay 50,000 ounces of gold (£200,000). Ignoring any diplomatic overtures from the Asantehene, Wolseley and his forces marched into Asante territory by 2 February 1874, through Praso (Colonial Office 1874). On 6 January, Wolseley issued an ultimatum for the immediate release of all captives, the gold payment, and the signing of a treaty in Kumase. As a gesture of goodwill, the Asantehene released Reverend Ramseyer and his wife on 12 January. By 13 January, they sent an envoy to Dompouse with a thousand ounces of gold, which the British received at Fomena.

Despite these efforts, Wolseley still presented the drafted treaty, which was met with resistance; the Asantehene rejected the renunciation of Adanse as the drafted treaty required the Asantehene to renounce the states of Adanse, Asen, Akyem, and Denkyira as tributaries. In a coded letter dated 29 January, Kofi Karikari cautioned against deceit. The decisive encounter occurred at Amofo, leading to a crushing defeat for the Asante, who lost a fifth of their forces. On 2 February, Wolseley captured Kumase, culminating in its destruction by 5 February. A peace treaty signed on 14 March mandated the Asantehene's renunciation of allegiance from Denkyira, Asen, Akyem,

Adansi, and Elmina and the payment of gold. The war's aftermath saw disunity within Asante leadership and upheaval in their political landscape (Colonial Office 1874; Ellis 1893: 342-3; Rattray 1929: 202; Headrick 1981; Manning 2021: 90).

One of the primary reasons for the British's triumph over the Asante was the disunity among the senior and Kumase chiefs. For instance, the Asantehene, Karikari, destooled the Kokofuhene, Kwame Appiagyei, on the allegation of plotting against him (Rattray 1929: 202). The intrusion of new weapons by the British tilted the battles in their favour, winning three battles and driving the Asantehene and his troops from Odasu to Akropon. The Asante used flintlock guns with an official range of 200 yards but with an efficiency of 80. The British utilised guns that used the violent explosive potassium chlorate as a detonating powder and a percussion lock, which could be fired in any weather, unlike the flintlock, which could not be used in rainy or damp weather, as experienced in November 1873. The British used 9lb rockets, 12-pounder mountain howitzers, 4,000 snider rifles and 3.2 million rounds of ammunition in that war against the Asante, who used spears, swords, bows, and arrows and the flintlock guns (Headrick 1981; Manning 2021: 90). The 1873 War resulted from a cultural clash that influenced how the British perceived Asante. For instance, Richard Freeman, a British Medical Doctor, described the welcoming ceremony in his honour by the Asantehene on 22 December 1888, as 'foolish ... and ... in imitation of an epileptic and waving a horsetail' (Freeman 1898: 99).

During the expedition, the British took away an Asante Stool—*Mpomponsu*⁷—to Britain, which Captain Jackson took. With the submission of the Asante to the dictates of the Fomena Treaty of 1874,⁸ the British

7 It is the state sword stool. The stool was returned in January 1986 after a succession negotiation between the Ghana Government and British Government. The stool was returned in an effort to improve cultural relations and acknowledge historical wrongdoings. The returned stool was received by the Asantehene Otumfuo Opoku Ware II through Nana Opuni Yankyimadu II, Dadeasoabahene of Agogo Traditional Area.

8 The Treaty of Fomena, 1874. This treaty was signed after the SAGRANTI War of the Anglo-Asante War (1873-74) following the British capture, looting, and burning of Kumasi under Sir Garnet Wolseley. The seat of the Asantehene was then at Pampaso and not present-day Manhyia. Through this treaty, the Asante agreed to renounce claims over other southern vassal states such as Denkyira, Akyem, Fante Confederacy States, Wassu, Asen, Sehwi and to pay an indemnity of £200,000 (50,000 ounces of gold) to the British; abolish all human sacrifices and certain traditional practices such as panyarring and slavery. The treaty was a massive blow to Asante's political hegemony and territorial influence and this marked the commencement of real British dominance. Following this treaty, the British in July 1874 declared the coastal areas and their immediate hinterlands as a colony.

began to influence states that previously paid tributes to the Asante to come under their protection. Such nation-states included Asante-Akyem, Akyem Abuakwa, and Akyem Kotoku. The Ahanta and Awuna came under British influence through a treaty. After 1873, the Asanteman Confederacy was dissolved, and most of the former vassals became autonomous (Freeman 1898: 37-52). On 17 December 1874, the British issued an edict that slavery and panyarring⁹ had been outlawed, decreed that no nation-state was to subject Kumasi hegemony, and stationed Hausa soldiers around the newly built palace at Manhyia in order to ensure there was no such attempt to rise again (Nana Kwame Amponsa, interview, 16 December 2024).

Following the Asante's defeat in the 1873-74 War, rebellions erupted in Gyaman, Atebubu, Kintampo, and Nkoranza, vital chiefdoms that served as economic links between the Asante Empire and the north. These areas were crucial trading hubs where Asante merchants resided after their northern expeditions, particularly in Kintampo, which was known for producing kola nuts, a major export of Asante. The Gyaman traders began to loot Asante goods, leading to a significant economic decline in Asante as vital trade routes were compromised. The Gyaman controlled two principal trunks passing through Bonduku and Salaga, which met at Kintampo on the west, while Timbuktu passed through Kong and Julasu. Kintampo, which produced the principal exports of Asante—kola nuts—began to levy Asante traders in 1875.

In 1875, the Gyaman state sought British protection, redirecting its trade to Kinjabo in modern Ivory Coast, exacerbating Asante's economic woes. The formal establishment of Gyaman as a British Protectorate on 25 January 1889, following the Peace Treaty between Nana Agyeman and the British, struck a severe blow to the Asante economy, particularly as Bonduku served as the principal rendezvous of the caravans from Kong, Timbuktu, and Western Sudan, which engaged in the Asante kola trade. At the time, Mo and Banda were tributaries of Gyaman (Freeman 1898: 204-6).

As trade threats increased, Asante traders faced harassment as they were molested by the Asen, Wassa, and Adanse people, necessitating British escorts (ADM.11/1731 1888: 5). By 1880, Atebubu had closed its routes, limiting Asante to trade with Kintampo only, which became the largest inland market (Boaten 1970: 43). Trade liberalisation after 1874 shifted the economic

9 It was the practising of seizing and holding people as collaterals until the repayment of a debt or a resolution of a conflict. The act developed from pawnship, where family members were pledged as collaterals to a debt when the debt was unpaid. It was officially banned following the 1831 Peace Treaty following the defeat of the Asante during the Akatamanso War (Dodowa War), but the Asante nation continued after the relapse of the Treaty.

power possessed by the Asantehene and his courtiers to Akonkofo,¹⁰ leading to an annual treasury loss of over £5,000, impacting the Asante economy significantly (Arhin 1974: 45). The lack of a common currency—the use of cowries and gold dust—affected trade and commerce as gold dust was more significant in Asante, while its trade neighbours valued cowries because it did not require specialised knowledge to exchange transactions (Boaten 1970: 49-50). The granting of independence to Nsoko, Denkyira, and Asen also affected the volume of gold dust available to Asante as these vassals contributed significantly to the gold volume of the state treasury (British Parliamentary Papers 1874). The decline in the volume of gold dust meant the dominant use of Asante's forbidden currency—cowries (Arhin 1974: 47).

The abolition of slavery further strained finances, as slave markets like Salaga, Edwera, and Kintampo were closed, causing a loss of approximately £20,000 annually and ceasing inter-regional commerce. Lastly, Kofi Karikari's lavish spending during customary rites and the desecration of past chiefs for gold further deteriorated the treasury. For instance, during each Adaye, the Asantehene dispensed over £500 (over forty peredwanes) to his visitors and the needy. According to Nana Kwame Ackom, during the Adaye of 1874, Kofi Karikari dispensed gold specks of dust valued at over £400 to the visitors and citizens, which further deteriorated the treasury of Asante, leading to his eventual destoolment amid the broader context of growing European imperial ambitions during the Berlin Conference of 1884-85.¹¹

In 1875, the Kotoko Council of Kumase came into conflict with the Dwaben state, which severed ties with Kumase and formed an alliance with Asokore, Afidwase, Nsuta, and other Oyoko chiefdoms to establish an independent kingdom (Prempeh 2003: 8-10). The conflict degenerated where traders were frequently abused, maimed, killed or imprisoned by the seceded state of Dwaben, forcing the Asantehene to respond with military operations. The actions of Dwaben and its allies caused Bekwai and Kokofu to declare their independence (Ellis 1893: 353-5).

10 Slaves, who served as tradesmen of chiefs.

11 Berlin Act (General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa), 26 February 1885, in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 76 (1885): 12. The 1880s saw colonial powers' deliberate interest in annexing the African continent, thus the Berlin Conference of November 1884 to February 1885. During the Berlin Conference, European powers negotiated territorial claims in Africa, leading to the formalisation of British control over the Gold Coast. This acquisition was driven by Britain's imperial ambitions and strategic interests in trade, allowing it to establish a foothold in a region rich in resources and trade potential. The Berlin Conference, which argued for a claim on African territories, saw a wave of military expeditions aimed at conquering and subjecting the Africans. Africa became the central focus of European diplomacy in the 1890s.

However, with the growing strength of Kumase supported by Asumegya, Mampon, and some factions in Dwaben, in August 1875, Kokofu and Bekwai returned their allegiance to Asantehene after the Asantehene had acquired Snider-Enfield rifles from a German merchant, Neilson, and formed an army of Hausa to help transform the Asante army (Ellis 1893: 353-7; Manning 2021: 159). The Asantehene, realising that Asante would never be strong enough to resist British invasion and the devastating nature of Dwaben, wrote to Governor Freeling to annexe Dwaben under its protection. The Governor rejected this proposal, for Britain was not ready for another Asante war. Mensa Bonsu established cordial relations with the various governors, such as sending 2,000 ounces of gold (£8280) as a sign of goodwill. However, many Asante chiefs in Kumase saw these actions as humiliating. These gifts were sent after Dr. Gouldsbury went to Dwaben and Kumase in order to resolve the impasse and received the indemnity, but in Kumase, a mob pelted emissaries with mud.

Between 1876 and 1880, the Asante, especially Bantamahene, Awua, and Bekwaehene Opoku, vowed to annexe Adanse, but the Asantehene, fearing that he would lose, greatly opposed the invasion. On 18 January 1881, a Gyaman prince, Owusu, having incurred the displeasure of the Asantehene, fled to the Elmina Castle for protection. The next day, an emissary arrived from Kumase with a golden axe, asking for his extradition. The golden axe was misconstrued as war instead of the matter being great; therefore, the Lieutenant-Governor, William Brandford Griffith, asked for reinforcement from Sierra Leone and from England (Ellis 1893: 363-5).

Upon hearing this, the Asantehene despatched emissaries to Cape Coast on 8 and 17 February 1881, to inform the Acting Governor, Griffith, of miscommunication. The Asante and British made peace on 29 April by asking the Asante to make an indemnity of 2,000 ounces of gold to cover the expenses, and Captain Rupert La Touche Lonsdale was made the British Officer Resident in Kumase. Even though the Asante paid, they considered it blackmail, and on 17 July, the Gyaman fugitive committed suicide. In February 1882, the Gyaman invaded Banda, which led the Asantehene to complain to the Governor since the Treaty of 1874 asked for non-interference; thus, the Governor commissioned Captain Lonsdale to embark to Bonduku in order to assess the situation. Captain Lonsdale reported that Kumase was responsible for the situation as the Asantehene had instructed the Bandahene and Nkoranzahene to rob and kill Gyaman traders and that it was in this response that the Gyaman nation had attacked.

With Mensa asking for the intervention of the British in the Gyaman-Banda issue, the Asante chiefs considered it a weakness and sought an opportunity to depose him. With Mensa deposed, Asante was thrown into chaos as some chiefs asked for the reinstatement of Kofi Karikari, and others supported Osei Mensa (Ellis 1893: 372-4). This led to a civil war that lasted almost a decade. The Asantehemaa, Yaa Akyiaa, after assessing the kingdom's state, convened a meeting of all chiefs. They agreed to elect and enstool an Asantehene, provided the British Official Resident, Captain John Glover Wilmot, approve the appointment in order to legitimise it. Asantehemaa proposed that her son, Kwesi Kissi, and an envoy were dispatched to Cape Coast in October 1884 to inform Governor William Alexander George Young. However, his death affected the recognition, and the British failed to act on it for two years. The failure to act was on the premise that, as Asante continued to find itself in political turmoil, its military threat was nullified.

In 1886, when Governor Brandford Griffith was reappointed, he sent an African interpreter, C. W. Badger, to assess the Asante situation. Two candidates emerged to be selected for the position: Asantehene—Kwabena Kyeretwie and Yaw Twereboanna. Kwabena Kyeretwie was the eldest son of Asantehemaa, and although she preferred her younger son, Kwaku Dua Asamu, to be Asantehene and Saamanhene, Akyampon Panin supported Yaw Twereboanna. With Kwabena Kyeretwie's rejection and Yaa Akyiaa's desire to have her son become Asantehene, she mooted Yaw Akyereboanda, the grandson of Asantehene Kwaku Dua I. The Asantehemaa preferred the young Kwaku Dua Asamu, and so she smeared the boy with white clay, insisting that the oracular shrine of Taa Kwadwo at Asokwa had revealed that Kwaku Dua Asamu was the Asantehene, therefore raising suspicions.

The issue polarised Asanteman, resulting in a meeting at Bekwae for reconciliation. Unfortunately, Akyampon Panin and his supporters were apprehended by Edwesohene, Kwasi Afrane, at the orders of the Asantehemaa and executed while Yaw Twereboanna was detained in Kumase. This action of Asantehemaa caused the chiefs of Kokofu and significant divisional chiefs of Kumase to organise Nsuta, Mampon, and Agona to support the cause of Twereboanna in May 1887. Yaa Akyiaa, on 5 March 1888, convened a meeting in Kumase with her supporters and enstooled Kwaku Dua Asamu as Agyeman Prempeh, the Asantehene, on Monday, 26 March 1888 (Prempeh 2003: 12-3). The proponents and supporters of Yaw Twereboanna—Kokofu, Mampon, Nsuta, Nkoranza, Ahafo and Kumase Gyaasehene, Asafo Boakye—fled across the Pra to seek refuge in the British Protectorate. It deepened the civil war in Asante, so Captain E. A. Barnett was sent to mediate the crisis.

While Asante tried to resolve its differences on who ought to be the Asantehene, the Gyaman, under Kwadwo Agyeman, sent an emissary to Cape Coast led by Kofi Dabi to entreat the British to annexe Gyaman. Gyaman formally became a British Protectorate on 25 January 1889. Although Osei Kwaku Dua III (Prempeh I) had been elected as Asantehene, he had not been placed on the Golden Stool. He was not officially recognised because the ceremony involved a considerable amount, and he could not meet these expenses. Therefore, he requested that the British Government extricate him by loaning him £400, which was made secretly (Freeman 1898: 2-3). The presence of Mamponhene, Owusu Sekyere II, and Kokofuhene, Osei Assibey, which validated the legitimacy of the Asantehene, was absent during the enstoolment of Prempeh.

The British had no interest in the affairs of the Asante after the 1873-4 War, but the incessant civil wars and political turmoil coupled with a growing interest of the French Government in penetrating and influencing Kong, Salaga, and Kintampo in 1886-89 and German's sudden impingement into Asante from Togo in the east influenced the British to salvage the Asante nation and put it under its protection. This event caused the British Colonial Office's fury as they saw this as a threat to their dominance, a violation of the treaty, and Asante's attempt to modernise its military.

The Path to Annexation, 1891-1901

In April 1891, the British Government on the Gold Coast invited Prempeh to submit Asanteman under British protection because "it was in danger of gradually falling into a decay," but Prempeh rejected the proposal and responded in a letter:

I am happy to say we have arrived at this conclusion that my Kingdom of Ashanti must remain independent as of old, at the same time to be friendly with all white men. Believe me, Governor, that I am happy to inform you that the cause of Ashanti is progressing (Colonial Office 1891; Prempeh 2003: 16).

Following this proposal, the British signed a treaty of friendship with Atebubu and concluded commerce with all nations that distanced themselves from Asanteman, including Nkoranza, Dwaben, and Agogo, in 1893. In 1894, when the Asante tried to reassert its influence on Atebubu and Nkoranza, Governor Griffith rejected it. He stationed a British Resident in these nation-

states while the Asantehene and his senior chiefs received stipends. On 11 June 1894, Kwaku Dua Asamu or Agyeman Prempeh officially became the Asantehene under the stool name Kwaku Dua III and, on 28 June, he responded to the proposal of the Governor that Asante would advance “a great farming and trading community ... and that trade ... may increase daily to the benefit of all interested in it” (British Parliamentary Papers 1894; Manning 2021: 166). The British Governor refused to recognise him as Asantehene and referred to him as “King of Kumase” on the suspicion that human sacrifices formed part of his enstoolment as Asantehene.

In April 1895, Governor William Edward Maxwell suggested that all Asante chiefdoms accept British protection with guarantees for free trade between the interior and the coast and the safety of all missionaries and abolish all forms of human sacrifices and failure to adhere to these proposals; there would be a lead in mustering (Freeman 1898: 123). In September 1895, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain instructed Governor Maxwell that the indemnity of the 1874 Treaty had not been honoured in full and Asante had not refrained from attacking its neighbouring chiefdoms and had refused to accept a British Resident, so an attack should be launched. This hatred came from the back of George Reckless, a wealthy businessman in London who signed an agreement with the Asante envoys to develop Asante (Prempeh 2003: 18). This resulted in the 1896 burnt down of Kumase.

On 17 January 1896, the British Special Service Corps, comprising 250 men and 800 Africans primarily of Hausa descent, arrived in Kumase. There, Asantehene Kwaku Dua III and his chiefs waited solemnly and with passive dignity. Governor Fredrick Mitchell Hodgson demanded the payment of the indemnity. He ordered the Asantehene and the Asantehemaa to embrace his feet, which they prostrated and embraced the feet of the Governor and his Commander, Francis Cunningham Scott, in a gesture of submission (Colonial Office 1896). Prempeh could only afford 6,800 ounces, which meant that Asante had paid 7,840 ounces of gold since the Third Anglo-Asante War of 1873-74. Asantehene asked for an instalment payment, but Hodgson announced that Kwaku Dua, with his mother, father, Kwesi Gyambiri, brother, Agyeman Badu, and two close relatives—John and Albert Owusu Ansa—would be detained alongside the kings of Mampon, Offinso, and Edweso—Kwamena Appia, Kwadwo Appia and Kofi Mensa Afrane, respectively. Also, Amankwatia Bantamahene, Asafo Boakye, Boakye Atansa, and Kwaku Owusu were arrested as prisoners; these were Kumase chiefs (Burleigh 1896: 546-7). The British forces destroyed the royal

mausoleum at Bantama and blew up the sacred kumnini trees¹² in Kumasi, aside from marauding the royal palace (Manning 2021: 169-78). Asantehene and his family were initially detained at the Cape Coast Castle, then at the Elmina Castle on 1 February 1896, before the final exile to Freetown and Seychelles (Prof. De-Valera Botchway, interview, 13 January 2025).

With Kwaku Dua detained and subsequently exiled, Asanteman became administered by a British Resident, Captain Donald Stewart, and Kumase was placed in the care of three chiefs—Opoku Mensa, Nantwi, a linguist and Afrifa of Atwemahene, whom many perceived as British puppets, forcing many chiefdoms to drift away from Kumase. The British signed separate treaties with all satellite chiefdoms, including Edweso, Kokofu and Mampon, to curtail the centralisation of power in Kumase.¹³ On 29 March 1900, the British forces under Governor Hodgson, with Cecil Hamilton Armitage and Arthur Forbes Montanaro, marched to Kumase to ask for the Golden Stool. The Colonial Secretary sanctioned this act. In Kumase, Governor Hodgson informed the Kumasi Council that Kwaku Dua III was never coming back and that, if he was to return, the Asante was to pay £12,500 and demanded the Golden Stool (House of Commons 1901).

The seeking of the Golden Stool was premised on the assertion that if the Golden Stool was in the possession of the British, the English need not fear that the Asante nation would ever have the political power of a king with which to focus their opposition. The demand for this was premised on the information given by Kwame Tua, the Gyaasewahene of Kumasi, to the British that the Golden Stool contained the soul and embodiment of the Asante. The demand for the Stool was seen as an insult to the supreme authority of the Asante. At the meeting, the Governor met the Mamponhene, Dwabenhene, Bekwaehene, Kumawuhene, Kokofuhene, Adansehene, Edwesohe-maa, and Agonahene with some Kumase chiefs (Armitage and Montanaro 1901: 1-4). During the meeting, Yaa Asantewaa remarked that it was silly of the Governor to ask for the Golden Stool from the Asante chiefs, as each chief knew only their own stools. Hence, she spat on the Governor after chewing a kola nut. This red saliva scared the Governor, resulting in Nana Yaa Asantewaa remarking that “even the spit of a woman scares

12 These trees were the planted trees that established Asanteman as a kingdom.

13 The Treaty of Exile or the 1896 Treaty, was signed after the unaware invasion of Asante by Governor William Maxwell and the abdication of the Asantehene. Through this treaty, the Asantehene was forced to renounce claims to sovereignty and other leaders were exiled to the Seychelles. Through this treaty, Asante became a protectorate. This treaty effectively ended Asante's independence.

the white man, so all men should get up.” In times past, a spit on a person meant war, hence the Yaa Asantewaa War (Nana Osei Bonsu II, interview, 16 September 2024).

After the departure of the Governor, the chiefs of Kumase, Edweso, Offinso, Atwema, Ahafo, Kokofu, Bechem, Nkwanta, and Adanse asked to declare war, but the chiefs of Mampon, Nsuta, Dwaben, and Agona stood against the proposal, arguing that the war risked the Golden Stool being captured and lost forever. This resulted in another battle in which Asante rebelled, resulting in another Anglo-Asante Battle—the Yaa Asantewaa War (1900)—which would later result in the annexation of Kumase and its surrounding territories, ending Asante sovereignty and subsequently declaring a colony. According to an interview with Nana Yaa Asantewaa Afrane II, this demand resulted in a meeting at Kumase to secure the return of Kwaku Dua III.

However, there was a disagreement on the matter. At the meeting, she remarked, “I have now seen how fearful many of you have become. Are there no men in Asanteman? Have all men become women? If this were in the brave days of Osei Tutu, Obiri komfo Anokye, Opoku Ware, Mensa Bonsu and Kofi Karikari, would the white man dare step foot in Asante to take Asantehene away while the chiefs stayed aloof to see their King taken away without gun exchanges?” She further retorted: “Tomorrow by this time, the graveyard would have established a town and all dead women who were unmarried would be married.” This implied a declaration of war. The Golden Stool was, therefore, hidden in the forests of Barekese before Wawase in Kwabre for over thirty years until the return of the Asantehene and the re-establishment of the Asanteman (Nana Yaa Akosua Akyiaa, interview 10 April 2022).

On 31 March 1900, the Asante forces fought gallantly against the British forces, but subsequently, the British vanquished them, and Kumase was burned on 25 April 1900. After the defeat of the Asante, the following nation-states were made Amanhene (Paramount Chiefs) for their loyalty to the British—Nkoransa, Bekwae, Mampon, Kumawu, Dwaben, Nsuta, Gyaman, Wam, Berekum, Wenchi, Takyiman, Atebubu, Manso Nkwanta, and Asumegya (Ward 1958: 310-1). Captain Cecil H. Armitage was appointed the new British Assistant, and later Asante became a colony. Following the defeat of Asante, the British Government exiled Yaa Asantewaa, Edwesohe-maa, and the chiefs of the following chiefdoms for rebellion: Offinso, Atwema, Ahafo, Bechem, Nkwanta, and Adansi, as well as some chiefs of Kokofu. The Asante was officially annexed in 1901 when the British Government nominated all chiefs.

Conclusion

The historical trajectory of the Asante Empire underscores a profound narrative of resilience amid the relentless pressures of colonial encroachment. The present study has illuminated the multifaceted causes behind the transition of Asante from a powerful empire to a British vassalage, revealing the intricate dynamics of internal governance and external confrontations that shaped its fate. The exploration of Asante's decline—rooted in military, political, and economic challenges—demonstrates how the interplay of local strife and European imperial ambitions ultimately culminated in the empire's annexation.

The complexity of this decline invites a re-evaluation of historical interpretations, advocating for an inclusive approach that acknowledges both the perspectives of the political centre in Kumase and the experiences of the marginalised periphery, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the empire's historical context. By integrating these varying viewpoints, this research not only enriches the historiography of the Asante Empire but also contributes to a broader understanding of colonial encounters in Africa.

The legacy of the Asante Empire serves as a poignant reminder of the intricacies of power, resistance, and adaptation in a rapidly changing world. As contemporary scholars continue to unpack the threads of this significant chapter in African history, let us remain cognizant of the importance of diverse narratives in shaping our understanding of the past, thereby ensuring that the voices of all those involved in this monumental era are heard and preserved. The present research not only adds to the existing body of knowledge on Asante but also serves as a critical examination of the broader implications of colonial encounters in Africa during the nineteenth century. The legacy of the Asante Empire remains a vital case study in the dynamics of power and cultural adaptation in the face of imperial expansion.

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