

# Asante Rule as a Factor in the Emergence of the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana

Kwame Adum-Kyeremeh, PhD

Department of History, University of Ghana, PO box 12, Legon, Accra, Ghana

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## Abstract

This paper is a study of the nature of Asante's relations with states in the Bono part of the Bono Ahafo Region. The paper also examines the consequences of Asante rule on its vassal states. The study reveals that prior to the Asante invasion of the Bono states in 1712, Asante traders bought kola, livestock and pottery from settlements in Bono. The Asante invasion of 1712 notwithstanding, economic relations between the two increased. During the nineteenth century, Atebubu and Bonduku, Kintampo and Wankyi became important market centres visited on a regular basis by Asante traders. Politically however, Asante conquest of Bono soured relations between Asante and the Bono states as a result of the capture and often, the murder of Bono chiefs and their subjects; looting of gold resources of the states and the replacement of legitimate Bono rulers by persons without any claim to legitimacy. Asante rule resulted in the polarization of Bono society, between pro-Bono and pro-Asante states. These factions became antagonistic towards each other and fought each other on a number of occasions. Anti-Asante sentiment grew in intensity from the late nineteenth century. In pursuit of freedom and independence from Asante rule, the Bono identified with the Convention People's Party (CPP) in the 1950s. In consideration of their support for the CPP in the general elections of 1954 and 1956, the Nkrumah regime rewarded the Bono by constituting their states into an autonomous administrative region in 1959. Though the Bono states were significant in the disintegration of the Asante kingdom, scholars have given little attention to studying how they contributed to Asante's disintegration and that is what this paper seeks to study.

**Keywords:** Bono, Asante, North-western District, Asantehene, Vassal, ahwesofoo

## 1. Introduction

Originally "Bono" referred to the peoples of the Manso chiefdom. Subsequently, it became applied to speakers of the Twi – Bono dialect. Today, the noun, Bono, is used as a geographical term to describe the peoples of the Bono section of the Bono-Ahafo Region of modern Ghana. The Bono area lies between the Savanna region in the north, and the thick forest of Asante in the south, and has a very congenial climate. The area is well drained by the Tano, Bia, Tain, Pru and other rivers. There are also innumerable streams including Fia, Bisa and Awora. The rivers and streams serve as important sources of water supply for the people in the area. The Bono area is also endowed with large cultivable, fertile land which comprises of semi-deciduous forest with different species of timber. The soils of the area are rich in gold and other precious mineral resources with luxuriant vegetation which favours farming and rearing of animals. The area currently comprises fifteen administrative districts in the northern half of the Bono Ahafo Region of modern Ghana (PRAAD" Adm. 1309 and 1482, Accra: Letters from the Chief Commissioner's Office to the Commissioner, Western Province of Asante). It is estimated that the Bono region has an area of about 9624 square miles (Annual Report, Western Province of Ashante- 1934-1935, ARG 1/20/20/4/81, PRAAD, Kumasi).

The Bono area had many settlements created in very early times. The earliest of these settlements were Bono Manso, Nsuatre, Nkoran-Nkwanta, Duayaw Nkwanta, Asekye, Hani, Amomam, Nsoko and Wankyi (Nana Kofi Aboagye, interview by author, Tekyiman, 6 July 1999). The Wankyi, Hani, Bono and Nsoko claim to be aborigines. They assert that their ancestors emerged from the Amuowi cave in the modern Nkoranza district (Eva L. Meyerowitz, *The Akan Traditions of Origin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 43, 62). Between the thirteenth and the late seventeenth Centuries, Gyaman, Mo, Nkoranza and Dormaa settled among these aborigines. By the seventeenth Centuries, the Bono Manso, Nsoko (Begho), Wankyi and the Gyaman settlements had expanded their territories. They became well-known states in the Bono area, the entire country and beyond. These states lived as independent states, cherished their independence and never formed a Bono union or a Bono confederacy due to their varying backgrounds and traditions of origin. The most famous of the Bono states was Bono Manso (Kwame Arhin, "Aspects of Colonial Administration: The Case of Northwestern District of Ashanti 1904-1911," *Research Review* 7, no.1 (1970), 34).

The history of the relations between the Bono states and Asante is the history of the Bono struggles for autonomy from Asante. Struggles between the Asante and the states in Bono date back to the seventeenth century when the Oyoko dynasty of the emerging Asante state fought the Dormaa people in the Kwaman area of modern Kumasi. This forced the Dormaa people to migrate in the early eighteenth century to settle among their kinsmen in Gyaman in modern Bono territory. There was relative peace between Dormaa and other states in Bono and Asante, until the early eighteenth century when an Asante army attacked Ahwenekoko the Wankyi

capital and destroyed it. Ten years later, (1722/23) Asante defeated Bono Manso. In 1731, they defeated Gyaman. Between 1744 and 1747, Banda, Atebubu and other chiefdoms in the Bono area were similarly brought under Asante subjection (Boahen, 1975, 24).

The main reason for these conquests was economic. The Bono markets at Bonduku and Bono Manso had become important centre of trade since the thirteenth century. The states in the north-western part of Bono were rich in gold, Kola and other resources. Gyaman was particularly famous in the production of cotton. The Bono people were also noted for their manufacture of iron implements, cloth and pottery. Although the north-eastern part of Bono was not rich in gold and other natural resources, their position on the Mampong-Highway – the main trade route to Yendi, Salaga and other important market centres in northern Ghana – put them in a position to regulate Asante trade to the north. They could close the route, and thus deprive Asante access to the northern markets. From the northern markets, Asante traders exchanged kola for handiworks like pottery, leather products, clothing and blankets. Other trade goods Asante obtained from the northern markets were slaves, livestock, sheep and salt. Naturally, Asante wanted to integrate the Bono states into their economic system. Hence Asante attacked them and reduced them to dependency between 1750 and 1900.

### Sources and Methodology

The long period of Asante rule notwithstanding, very little documentary information is available about relations between the two peoples. Gyaman is the only state whose relations with Asante has been partially studied and documented by K. A. Britwum, McCaskie and Agyeman E.A. These works are respectively “Kwadwo Adinkra of Gyaman” in *A Profile of Brong Kyempim*, a book edited by Kwame Arhin, Ashanti Empire and its northern neighbours 1700-1874 (Legon M.A. Thesis, 1969 in Balme Library, University of Ghana, and Gyaman and its Relations with Ashanti (1720-1820) also a Legon M. A. Thesis – 1965. These works focus on Kwadwo Adinkra’s reign which lasted from 1801 to 1818. In his book titled *Ghana’s Brong Ahafo Region, Story of an African Society in the heart of the World*, Anane-Agyei’s sought to write the history of the Bono people to preserve the legacy which he deemed to be at the verge of extinction. He sought to assist in showcasing the endowments of the Brong-Ahafo Region and to highlight its huge potential for investment, especially in agriculture and tourism. The book presents a photo narration of some of the remarkable events that have taken place in the Brong-Ahafo Region since Ghana’s independence in 1957; including visits of heads of state, high-ranking state officials, eminent traditional rulers and celebrities. He provides a short history of the Bono states, but failed to discuss the Bono states’ relation with Asante. Similarly, Fynn (1971) devoted his book, *Asante and its Neighbours 1700-1807* to discuss Asante’s rise and expansion over one century. Although the Bono states were an integral part of Asante in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he mentioned only Atebubu, Dormaa, Nkoranza and Takyiman in passing and did not discuss them. A popular researcher of Takyiman history, Eva Meyerowitz was among the earliest scholars to write a history of the rise of the Bono people. Even so, her interest was on Takyiman only. In her book *At the Court of An African King*, she wrote to commemorate the heroic fight of Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III, king of the Bono-Takyiman state and his people for independence from Asante and the restoration of the nine villages which they had lost to Asante in 1935. She did not do an extensive discussion of either the Bono states as a whole or Takyiman in particular with Asante.

Another important book on Asante was written by William Tordoff, titled *Ashanti Under the Prempehs, 1888-1935*. Tordoff tells the story of the Ashanti Confederacy which included the Bono states but emphasizes more on Kumasi and its rise to prominence. His book looked at Asante’s position and development during the reign of the Prempehs, two kings of Asante. When he mentioned any of the Bono states, he did so to reinforce his position about Asante’s power and authority and not their total relations with their Asante neighbours. Of all the Books on Asante, Ivor Wilks’ *Asante in the Nineteenth Century, the Structure and evolution of a political Order* is the one that mentions and occasionally discusses Asante’s relations with Takyiman, Nkoranza and other Bono neighbours. This was in fulfilment of his objective – to synthesize the extant evidence on the spatial structure and demography of 19<sup>th</sup> century Asante. The factors he discussed included communication and relative population size to government, stating an account of the central government’s conduct of provincial and foreign affairs, and presenting a contrast between Asante’s role as a coastal power on the one hand and as a savannah power on the other hand. He devotes part of the book to a description of the structure of the Asante dynasty, of the two legislative councils of Asante, and of the major executive agencies. Considering the fact that his study covered a hundred years of Asante history, it is strange why Wilks did a short discussion of the various Bono states’ relations with Asante. Jean Allman has written a comprehensive study on the National Liberation Movement (NLM) in her book *Quills of the Porcupine (Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana)*. She sought to depart from studies on Ghana in the mid-1950s which focused their attention on the Convention People’s Party (CPP), the party which was to lead Ghana to independence. She aimed therefore to understand the NLM on its own terms, and study it as part and parcel of Asante history and not as a brief aberration in the national history of Ghana. Despite the fact that the NLM-CPP dispute caused the destruction of lives and property and forced migration, the author only briefly discussed the Asanteman’s reaction to the CPP’s relation with the Bono

chiefs movement. When Busia wrote his book, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti*, the Bono area was under the rule of Asante and so like several historians on Asante treated the Bono states as part of the Asante kingdom. He set as his objective, the reconstruction of the political system of Asante at the close of the nineteenth century on the basis of what remained of the old culture, from tapping the memories of old informants and from studying historical records. He thought it necessary also to study the important constitutional developments in Asante. In the end, like several other histories of Asante, his work mentioned the states in the Bono area in passing. In 2008, George Agyekum 'Asante and Brong Ahafo regions Chieftaincy Affairs, Underlying causes diagnosed'. The book is a compilation of the Justice Coussey Commission's Report which he deemed reasonable to publish to guide posterity to resolve the impasse between the Asante and the Brong Ahafo chiefs. For him, the simmering disagreement was a potential threat for peaceful co-existence between the chiefs and peoples of the two regions. His aim was to help solve a purely traditional problem which politicians had since the colonial period used for their own selfish ends; to gain political victory or to play the ostrich. He therefore re-produced the archival data and the Commissions hearings and Report without analysis on the actual Bono states relations with Asante.

This paper is therefore an attempt to provide a history of the relations of a wide range of states in the Bono area with Asante and how the bitter past of the Bono states contributed to the emergence of the Brong-Ahafo Region. It argues that the indignities the Bono states suffered under Asante rule contributed significantly to speed-up the emergence of the Brong-Ahafo Region in Ghana in the Twentieth century.

This study relied extensively on archival data deposited at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) office at Sunyani, the Brong Ahafo Regional capital. This method was appropriate because the author considered, Archival data the most appropriate in dealing with two disputing parties to avoid biases on the two divisions' claims to traditional authority. Additionally, the author obtained information from secondary sources, to solidify the Archival Source and oral traditions. The author first read the secondary sources to know the information they contain. Upon realizing that vital information was missing, I then proceeded to the Regional Archives to verify the records available on the topic under study. More than thirty files were scrutinized and the necessary information was collected. Since this matter concerned chiefs and their elders, efforts were made to interview as many chiefs as possible. Oral interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed. These sources facilitated the discussion and analysis of the research topic. The draft copy was revised several times to make the ideas meaningful and coherent. This method of research and writing was considered necessary for the author's conclusions to synchronize with the questions set for the investigation. Historical research on this sensitive area was difficult. Not only were chiefs and their elders unwilling to divulge vital information, most prospective respondents declined my request for interviews.

More importantly the Brong-Ahafo region was created in 1959, after the Bono area had been part of the Asante kingdom for nearly three centuries. Colonial reports on individual Bono states were not available as the colonial authorities saw them Asantes. Also secondary data on the Bono states was scanty or missing. The author had to painstakingly collect as much information as possible from the PRAAD offices in the Brong-Ahafo and Ashanti Regions to construct the history of the Bono states' relations with Asante. Although a citizen of the Bono Ahafo region, the research was self-financed and with its academic orientation the author managed to be neutral in the analysis of the data from the field and from the archives.

This study is important as it will help explain the current Asante influences in the Brong-Ahafo region. It will also explain the numerous recurrent inter and intra-state friction in the Brong-Ahafo region. Governments have so far failed to resolve issues of political allegiance between chiefs in Brong-Ahafo and Asante. This study may serve as an important source for Commissions of Enquiry set up to investigate the Bono and Asante disputes. This paper is organized into four sections namely, the 'Introduction,' which introduces the reader to the data collection methods and the approaches for analysis; the next section studies the Bono states' relations with Asante. The third section is a study of the position of the Bono states in the Asante Empire and the last session considers the BKC-CPP alliance and its effect on the creation of the Brong-Ahafo Region in 1959.

### **The era of peaceful relations c. 1690-1712**

Before c1712, a peaceful political, social and economic relations existed between Asante and the Bono states. Politically, the Bono chiefs had peaceful interactions with Asante chiefs. Nana Ameyaw Kwakye (c. 1690 – 1723) the Bono Omanhene was believed to have established friendly relations with the Asantehene, Osei Tutu (c. 1697-1717). Because of the trust and confidence the Bono and Asante had in each other, Bafour Twum, a Kumasi Amakom royal popularly known in the historical record as Bafo Pim who had been granted land for settlement at Nkoranza became the Asantehene's ambassador to the Bono state. Through him, Osei Tutu and Kwakye Ameyaw became friends. He usually accompanied Bono messengers to send regular gifts of gold and Kola nuts to the Asantehene to strengthen the Bono-Asante friendship. This created cordial relations between the two states.

The social relations between the Bono and Asante were also friendly. Asante farmers settled on

Bonoland where they created permanent settlements in modern Odomase, Nkoranza, Nsuatre and Takyiman. These Asante hunters and traders were not disturbed while going about their hunting and trading activities. Many such immigrants intermarried with the Bono people. Traditions assert that Asante citizens also consulted Bono deities such as Guakro, Taa Kora, Botene and many others. Bono citizens also consulted Asante deities such as Aninhwe, Nyamaa, Ampento and others

Asante and Bono traditions assert that Asante obtained the first yam seeds from Nana Kwakye Ameyaw during the reign of Osei Tutu. In the same period, Asante traders freely exchanged their products in the Bono markets of Manso, Ahwenekoko, Bonduku and Kintampo without hindrance. Bono traders sold their wares of pottery, cloth, kola and the *kyem* (shield of baboon skin), in the Kumasi market. From Tafo, Kaase, Ofinso and Ohwim in Asante, the Bono obtained European cloths, salt and kola. Kintampo, Atebubu and Donkoro Nkwanta which were located along the trade routes from Asante to the northern markets served as resting places for Asante traders. The Bono of Takyiman assert also that the Asante were permitted to dig for gold on Bonoland. They sent the gold they obtained to the Bono chiefs who gave them the one-sixth portion given to all non-Bono miners.

### 1.1.1 Subjugation of the Bono states

Asante's strategies to incorporate states into the emerging Asante Empire included invasions. The first Asante invasion of the Bono states occurred in 1712 with an attack on Old Wankyi. The Asante considered the attack as an unfortunate accident caused by her advance guard which mistook Wankyi for Dormaa Ahankro. Wankyi tradition claims that Old Wankyi was attacked because it was conveniently situated to exploit both forest and savanna resources. Old Wankyi also lay on the Begho-Sudan trade route. The land was endowed with gold, ivory and kola resources which were important items of trade in the Trans-Saharan Trade. The strategic position of Wankyi enabled her to participate fully in the trade and thus become prosperous. Ameyaw-Nuamah asserts that the position and the abundance of natural resources made Wankyi a right subject of attack. (Ameyaw-Nuamah, 1973: 23)

Certain Wankyi sources say that the Asante deliberately attacked on a Thursday afternoon when most people were on their farms. Others assert that three months to the fateful Thursday, the Asantehene sent messengers to slaughter sheep unto the sacred Ahwenedwa. The Wankyi believe that this was an attempt to locate the stool. On the advice of the Gyanso Mensa shrine the Wankyi chief wisely rejected the offer. The people managed to hide their stool at the confluence of the rivers Trome and Tain. In any case, in or around 1712, the Wankyi capital, Ahwenekoko was destroyed by the Asante army and the inhabitants of the town were scattered. The queenmother's *ahwenedwa* (royal stool of pure gold beads) and other stool regalia are believed to have been captured by the Asante. Reports of the attack reached as far as the coast. In October 1715, Van Hearsen, the Dutch Factor at Axim, reported: "a few years ago, the Zaay had sent an army of 3000 men against an inland country called Affindiecoco". Nana Gyan, the Wankyihene and the queenmother Afowaa Dankoto were taken captive to Kumasi. (Daaku in *Transactions of the Historical Society*, 1968:44).

In or around 1722, Asante attacked Takyiman, capital of the Bono Manso state. However, Asante met a greater challenge in their attempt to subdue the Bono state. At the time of the attack on Bono, Asante was not as militarily strong as before. Fynn points out that

...Asante which had been defeated by Akyem in 1717 and had lost most of its troops in its war with Sehwi and Nzima in 1721/22 was militarily incapable of threatening the territorial integrity of a more populous and powerful state of Tekyiman. (Fynn, 1975:103).

To enable her defeat the Bono, Bafour Twum was asked to study the Bono state and devise strategies for its capture when the Bono state was faced with internal dynastic problems. Bafour persuaded the disgruntled faction of the Bono people not to fight for Ameyaw in case of War. In 1722, Bafour is said to have detained Bono messengers who were visiting Kumasi to present the monthly gift of gold by Bono to the Asantehene, compelling them to spend the night in Bafour's palace. Bafour stole the gold gift and filled the sacks with *atuduro* (gunpowder), which the Bono messengers delivered to the Asantehene. By custom this meant a declaration of war. The Bono messengers were tortured and sent back to Manso to inform Nana Ameyaw to prepare for war. A combined Asante and Nkoranza force attacked Bono at a time the state was not prepared for war. (Warren and Brempong 1973:84).

The two important towns of the Bono state, Manso and Takyiman, were sacked and burnt down. At Manso the confusion is said to have been so great that people fled across the Volta. Some Takyiman people are said to have joined their kinsmen who had migrated to the coast of Ghana some centuries earlier. The majority of the Bono however migrated to neighbouring Gyaman under one Guogya, a son of Kwakye Ameyaw, where they founded a settlement known today as Anno. Some of the Bono are also said to have settled further away from Manso including Abease, Berekum and Wankyi. Nana Ameyaw and Ohemaa Dwamenawaa Akenten were taken



captive to Kumasi and the Asante army plundered Bono gold resources (Reindorf, 1923:84). The defeat of the Bono state enabled Asante to station its forces in Nkoranza, and from there, the Asante army attacked and defeated Gyaman around 1731. Gyaman was attacked because the city lay on the trade route to the northern markets, and was a rival of Asante in the trade to the north (Wilks, 1975: 171).

Opoku Ware's army in 1747 attacked the eastern Bono state of Atebubu which lay on the Asante Trade Route to the Salaga market. Dawia, the chief of Atebubu refused to surrender peacefully to Asante and his state was attacked and defeated by the Asante army led by one Asaman Ankra. Reindorf says that the defeat of Atebubu marked the end of Opoku Ware's conquests of the Bono states. Asante kept its forces in Atebubu to check counter attacks from the defeated states. In 1750 most of the Asante army returned to Kumasi but Asaman Ankra and a small Asante force remained in Atebubu to supervise affairs of the Banda and the Atebubu states (Hay, 1874:23).

### 1.1.2 The Bono states as Asante vassals

From 1750, the Bono states became subjects of Asante. Asante set up a strong administrative machinery in Bono following the conquests. Some of the war commanders were appointed as *ahwesofoo* (supervisors) and were settled in the conquered state. For example, Bafour Twum was appointed to oversee the Nkoranza and Takyiman areas. Ade Kusi and Asaman Ankra were given responsibility for Hani (Nsoko), and Atebubu states respectively. Under the Adamfo system of the Asante kingdom, the Akyeamehene (chief Linguist), of Kumasi had oversight responsibility for Takyiman. Abu Bakr Bamba was made resident commissioner by Asante in Banda and he travelled regularly between Kumasi and the Banda state. Wankyi, Dormaa Ahenkro and Berekum were placed under the Nsumankwaahene, Brehmanhene and the Ankobeahene respectively. Similarly, Adum-Atta was Adamfo to Nsoko and Nsuta Takyiman. Atebubu was under the Asante Oyoko Brehmanhene and the Namasa were placed under the Akyempimhene. Yeji approached the Asantehene through the Gyasawahene and Amanten served through the Kumasi Nsumankwaahene. Pran and Sampa were under the Ankobeahene and the Akyempem stools respectively (Wilks, 1964:39).

In some cases, the Asantehene replaced Bono chiefs with his own nominees. Nketia Kwasi was enstooled chief of Wankyi after the state was defeated in 1712 even though he was not a royal. After Gyaman was defeated in 1731, the Asante killed the Gyamanhene. Similarly in Nkoranza Kwaku Fokuo was enstooled by the Asante as Nkoranzahene in 1894 to replace Nana Effa Kofi after the Nkoranza-Asante war of 1893. In Berekum, the stool elders refused to cooperate with Nana Kofi Banie whom Asante enstooled as Berekumhene in 1895. Thus during the nineteenth century, the Asantehene arrogated to himself the right to enstool and destool chiefs in the Bono area.

In addition, Asante created security posts which were settled by Asante soldiers to check Bono rebellions. Some of the Security posts were at Berekum, Odumase-Sunyani and Tuobodom. Both the individual *ahwesofoo*, and the soldiers in the security posts were expected to mount close surveillance on the traditional authorities of the Bono states to prevent revolts. Cruickshank asserts that the Asante overlords in the Asante provincial states communicated to the subject chief the will of the Asantehene. He asserts that the representatives, as in the other parts of the Asante kingdom

exercised a general superintendence over their subjects. They guarded against, and spied out any conspiracies that sub-chiefs might form to recover their independence (Cruickshank 1966:320).

The Adamfo and the *Ahwesofoo* could disapprove of decisions of Bono state councils. Besides, Bono chiefs were obliged to give the third portion of *bopono* (large animals), and *ahudee* (treasure trove) to the Asantehene. Also before they were recognized, newly installed Bono Amanhene swore to the Adamfo and the Asantehene in Kumasi. Moreover the Asantehene's court heard appeals from the Bono Amanhene courts although the Bono hardly appealed to the Asantehene's court because it was tiresome and expensive to travel to Kumasi to await the decision of the Asanteman court. The Asantehene's court also allegedly delayed cases involving Asante and Bono citizens and their decisions always favoured the Asante. The Bono alleged also that they paid heavy fines in the Asantehene's court.

The Bono states also paid tribute and market tolls to the Asante Treasury. Bono tributes included slaves, animal products, gold and textiles. Takyiman for example paid an annual tribute of slaves, cows, sheep, cotton cloth, and some silk products. Wankyi sent gifts of food and meat to the Asantehene during the Odwira festival.

### The case of the Bono Gyaman state

Gyaman opposed Asante rule in the nineteenth century when it led the protests and revolts against Asante in 1752, 1756 1801. After Asante crushed the Gyaman revolts, Gyaman became loyal to Asante in the payment of its tribute. Robertson asserts that before the Asante-Gyaman war of 1818, Adinkra Kwadwo, the Gyamanhene paid an annual tribute of about 1000 *predwan*, besides large pieces of rock gold, slaves and farm products. He

described Adinkra as a tool of the court of Comassey, and a king who received consular directives and transmitted the revenues to Akomassey as they are received from those states which are under their control (Bowdich 1819:321).

The Gyaman state supported Asante despite the significant cases of indignities and subordination. Adinkra, their chief, established friendly relations with Osei Bonsu of Asante. In 1801, Gyaman claims to have been led by Adinkra to help Asante to fight Gonja and Bouna who were part of Asante's northwestern territories, but revolted to restore Asantehene Osei Kwame to the Asante throne. In the campaign against Bouna, Abu Bakr as-Sadik, himself a witness, reports that Adinkra played a remarkable role in ensuring Asante's success in the war. Adinkra distinguished himself as a courageous and a brilliant fighter for Asante which displeased his own people. A section of the Gyaman people took advantage of Adinkra's absence from Gyaman and attempted an unsuccessful revolt to destool him as he appeared to this faction to have betrayed the course of Gyaman's independence and nationalism by supporting Asante, especially when Adinkra's predecessors had persistently resisted Asante rule. Because of this the Gyaman Elders invited Ben Kompi II who was Adinkra's rival to occupy the Gyaman throne. The revolt was however crushed by Adinkra with the support offered by Asante troops.

This military co-operation between Adinkra and Osei Bonsu provides sufficient proof of the very cordial relations between the two states of Gyaman and Asante in the period before 1818. Osei Bonsu needed Adinkra to help him crush Bouna, and other north western states; on his part, Adinkra needed Asante military co-operation to enable him maintain his position on the Gyaman throne. Britwim suggests that as a result of this military co-operation, it is possible that Adinkra fought in the Asante war with the Fante in 1807-1817. Indeed for a greater part of his reign, Adinkra remained a loyal vassal of the Asante state (Britwim in Arhin (ed) 1975: 71).

Asante-Gyaman cooperation however, came under strain in late 1817. In September, 1817, Bowdich reports that the relations between Asante and Gyaman rulers were cold. Gyaman eventually revolted in December of that year. The revolt against Asante which resulted in a war known as Adinkra war, was the result of two factors. First, Adinkra reneged on payment of the Gyaman tribute to Kumasi, because in addition to the tribute, Asante demanded Gyaman's Golden Stool. Secondly, Adinkra was confident of military support from Kong and therefore diverted to Kong the tribute he was to pay to Asante. To strengthen their friendship a dynastic marriage was made between Gyaman and Kong. Osei Bonsu regarded Adinkra's refusal to pay tribute to Asante and his alleged offer of the tribute to the Sultan of Kong as defiance of Asante authority. The alleged alliance between Gyaman and Kong threatened Asante because Kong and Asante were rivals.

More seriously, Asante detested Adinkra having a golden stool which Bowdich describes as being thickly plated and embossed with gold. According to him, the stool was "greater in splendor and value and in every way superior to that used by the Asantee chief." According to Bowdich, the Asante stool was carved out of common wood of the country and encased in golden plates. The Gyaman stool had a far greater meaning and significance for Asante than its reported superior quality. Asante regarded the fabrication of the Gyaman stool as an act of gross arrogance by Adinkra and a proof of his ambition to become as great and powerful as the Asantehene. In the Asante Confederacy, the Asantehene was the only king permitted to possess and sit on a stool decorated with gold. The carving of the golden stool, and Adinkra's refusal to pay tribute violated the Asante constitution. Asante therefore took steps to dispossess Gyaman of the stool (Bowdich 1823:244).

In 1818, Adinkra surrendered the stool to Kwame Butuakwa, an Asante Commissioner who was sent to demand it. This displeased some of Adinkra's subjects, and according to Bowdich, Adinkra's sister who was away when the Gyaman stool was surrendered became enraged on her return. She considered Adinkra a coward and reprimanded him severely. Adinkra sought to placate her by ordering another golden stool to be made to replace the one surrendered to Asante. When news of the new Golden Stool reached Kumasi, the Asantehene again sent messengers to demand it together with an accumulated tribute of about 1000 ounces of gold. This second demand is said to have infuriated Adinkra who refused to surrender the stool and placed the Asantehene's messengers under arrest. Adinkra is said to have addressed his council of elders in the presence of the Asante messengers in these words;

Akyekyedee wotwa nkontompo, Akyekyedee wotwa nyariyiya,  
wo baakofoo yi wosie basa, wo sie sre, wotua dua, woto kosua  
– na wo mma yi bedi deeben? Asante Kotoko se wogye apem...  
yenya nea ebeba mmra (Arhin (ed) 1975:78).

This is literally translated, "you tortoise you are a liar and a cheat. You alone you have limbs, you possess a tail, and you lay eggs. What shall your children eat? Asante Kotoko says she is demanding a thousand ounces of gold. From where shall we get it... We cannot afford it. Come what may!"

In describing the Asante as *akyekyedee* (tortoise), Adinkra emphasized Bono view that the Asante were liars, double-faced, and cheats. Like the tortoise which possesses the features of a mammal and a bird, Asante made two different demands namely, tributes and the Gyaman golden stool. Adinkra considered these demands

unreasonable, and said that Gyaman could not afford them. The state was prepared to face the consequences. In anger, Adinkra ordered the ears of the Asante messengers to be cut off and all Asante in Gyaman to be thrown into Gyaman gold pits.

By 1818, both Asante and Gyaman had made preparations for war. In Asante, Osei Bonsu is reported to have ordered military uniforms, guns and gunpowder from the English, the Dutch and the Danes for himself and his army during late 1817 and early 1818. Sacrifices were made to the Asante deities to solicit their help and support for the war. Muslims in Kumasi were asked to pray for the king's success in the Gyaman campaign. Adinkra could only obtain a limited quantity of arms and ammunition from the English in Cape Coast, and failed to obtain supplies from the other Europeans. These European traders had established very good relations with Asante and were not prepared to assist the Gyaman to fight Asante. Consequently, Adinkra is believed to have made a last minute attempt to negotiate for a peaceful settlement with Asante, but Asante turned down the Gyaman offer of 400 bendas, an equivalent of £3200 (Roughly 1600 Ghana Cedis in today's value). Adinkra was able to recruit about 140,000 men from Gyaman, Kong, Bouna and other neighbouring states. This army was prepared to fight an equally large army of 80,000 men from metropolitan Asante, Akuapim, Akwamu, Akyem Bosome and Akyem Kotoku and several thousand others mobilized by the Muslims in Asante and put under Baba, the spiritual head of Muslims in Kumasi (Hutchison in Bowdich 1819:381-446, Reindorf 1923:165).

Hutchison states that the Asante army first encountered the Gyaman army on the Gyaman frontier in February 1818. (Bowdich, 1819:440). The two forces fought on the banks of river Tain. The Gyaman army fought gallantly and showed that they were skillful and courageous fighters. They are said to have attacked and killed several of the Asante forces, and successfully pushed the rest away from the Gyaman territory although the Asante army under Amankwaatia Kwame routed the Gyaman forces. When it seemed that Gyaman had won the war, Bantamahene Amankwaatia, Asante the war commander is said to have consulted with Kokofu, Dwaben and Bosome chiefs to adopt a new strategy. With the help of their armies, the Asante crossed the Tain and routed the Gyaman forces. Some were killed; some managed to escape from the battle front to Kong; and about five thousand others including Tamia, Adinkra's sister, and Appau, his son were taken captive to Kumasi (Agyeman, 'Suma Traditions' Appendix III, Arhin, 1965:16).

The fate of the Gyamanhene Adinkra is not certain. The Asantehene Osei Bonsu is reported to have told Dupuis that Adinkra was killed, his skull broken and his gold taken away. The Gyaman stool is said to have been captured and the state completely defeated. Oral traditions of the people of Suma Ahenkro assert that, although Adinkra was defeated, the Gyaman stool was not captured, and Adinkra was not killed by the Asante army. The traditions allege that when Adinkra realized that the state would be defeated, he asked his wife to hide their stool regalia and then committed suicide. Adinkra's son, Appau who was put under severe torture, showed a different body to the Asante war commanders.

Adinkra's death did not end the Asante-Gyaman war. The Gyaman men who took refuge in Kong territory reorganized and returned immediately with troops sent by Kong to fight the Asante forces. This compelled Asante to remain in Gyaman till 1819, when they returned to Kumasi. By then the political atmosphere in Gyaman had returned to normal. However, Asante tightened its control over the state. Gyaman was made a province in lieu of the tributary rank it enjoyed before. Asante assumed full and undisputed control over the sovereignty of Gyaman. Asante stationed permanent troops at Amanaha, on the banks of the Assin river in Gyaman. The object was to prevent the Gyaman inhabitants from trading or having direct communications with the European traders along the coast. The Dutch diaries and correspondence of 1815-1823 record that Asante appointed a Caboceer as king of Bontooko. The Caboceer became an *Ohwesoni* (personal representative) of the Asantehene who from then jointly ruled Gyaman with Adinkra's successor, who was chosen, according to custom from the Zanzan ruling house (Dupuis 1821:263).

The maintenance of an Asante army to supervise Gyaman, and its neighbours and the appointment of an Asante resident official after the 1818 war shows the firm grip that Asante instituted in Gyaman. It shows that Asante was not satisfied with the previous administrative arrangement in Gyaman which allowed greater power and freedom in the hands of local rulers. In view of these security measures it is very likely also that contrary to the assertion by Gyan Duah and Arhin, Berekum was established as a security post after the Adinkra war rather than in 1731 (Gyan-Duah, Diss., 1988:69).

### 1.1.3 The Bono as Asante vassal states

Asante celebrated the Gyaman defeat with the Bono states which fought on her side. Among them was Takyiman whose king was in Kumasi with all his sub chiefs. After the celebration of the Asante victory had ended, Asante announced that it had seized seven Takyiman villages of the Tano/Tain basin, namely, Branam, Nkyiraa, Nwoase, Ofuman, Tanoboase, Tanoso and Tuobododom. The reason for the seizure appears to be Asante's admiration of their valour, and the spiritual power of their deities. Takyiman lost absolute control of these villages which had rich and fertile lands. In addition, the Asantehene installed Asante chiefs to rule the Asante residents who had settled in Bono after the 1723 Bono Manso-Asante war. These Asante chiefs became

rivals of the Bono chiefs.

Henceforth a system of dual chiefship was established in the Takyiman traditional area. As was to be expected, the two chiefs became rivals and during the nineteenth century, they continually litigated over the ownership of Takyiman land. The Ofuman township was for instance divided into Ofuman I and Ofuman II sections. The former had an Asante chief, and the latter, a Bono chief. The two sections frequently quarreled over the ownership of Ofuman lands. The Asante faction argued that since Takyiman was defeated by Asante, the land belonged to the Asantehene, and they should have full access to every part of Takyiman land. The Takyiman people held that they were the original settlers of Takyiman and should be recognized as the rightful owners of the land. By the close of the nineteenth century, the Bono of Takyiman had been unsuccessful in their attempts to reclaim ownership and total control of the resources of the nine villages seized by Asante (Kyeremeh, interview, 1998).

Available records show that from time to time the Bono dutifully provided large numbers of able-bodied men to join the Asante army. Bowdich asserts that Nkoranza supplied about one thousand men to the Asante army. Abesim sent 1,500 men, and Takyiman provided between 6,000 and 12,000 men. Nana Atta Effa of Nkoranza is believed to have commanded the left wing of the Asante army of about 10,000 Bono troops during the 1874 war. Other Bono men in the Asante army were captives, who, according to Lewin and Wilks, were captured by Asante from Banda, Gyaman and other states in the Bono area during Asante wars against the Bono in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

Bono troops contributed greatly to Asante successes in war. Troops under Amankwaatia, the famous Asante war commander for instance, included captives from Banda, Berekum, Dormaa and Nsuatre. Berekum traditions assert that the state fought for Asante in the 1806-1807 Fante war. According to Busia, Wankyi men contributed to the Asante victory in the Asante-Gyaman war of 1818-1819, and the Asante Awuna war of 1838-1867. Bono troops were placed within the Adonten division of the Asante army a position in which they were used as shock troops. In the 1874 war for instance, Kofi Karikari is believed to have placed Bono troops at the hottest parts of the battlefields at Abakrampa and Odaso. The intention was to punish the Bono for consulting the Krakye Dente shrine which advised them against fighting in the 1873/74 war. The Bono lost many men fighting in this war and other Asante wars (Wilks 1975: 279). The Bono were ill-treated by Asante which developed a superiority complex towards them, and generally regarded them as slaves. This is exemplified by an interview Osei Bonsu had with Apau, the son of Adinkra in 1819. Nana Osei Bonsu is reported to have said: "your father was a rebel, he was full of pride and wanted to be king. He forgot he was a slave. He forgot I was his master." (Dupius 1824:165).

The Bono believe also that Asante sold most of the Bono captives into slavery. In 1760 and 1818 for example, Asante is said to have sold the adult captives from Gyaman into slavery. Others like Nana Dwamenawaa, the Takyimanhemaa was said to have been made to sweep the Kumasi market and other stinking places in the Asante capital. Bono rulers were in addition marginalized in the administration of the confederacy. Out of the two hundred (200) members of the *Asantemanhyiamu* (Asanteman Council), only Nkoranza and Takyiman were occasionally invited. The Bono resented this exclusion, and in the 1890s when the British established their presence in Bono, its chiefs complained to the colonial government about the concentration of administrative power in the hands of the Asante in the council.

The Bono were so disenchanted with Asante rule that they wanted the fall of that nation. They used the opportunity offered them by the *apuo* festival celebrated mainly by the people of Takyiman and Wankyi to point out Asante's ungratefulness, and to express their delight at Asante's troubles. In an apparent claim that it was the Bono who introduced the *nsenee* (gold weights) to Asante, Takyiman *apuo* songs for example taunted; "we made scales for the Asante porcupines, they only used them to cheat us. The Asante chiefs may have bought them but he did not buy us" (Rattray, 1932:104). Again when the British captured Nana Prempeh I in 1896, Takyiman *apuo* songs taunted Asante by saying; "They know nothing about guns, had they known about guns, would they have let the Whiteman to seize their king Prempeh and Yaa Akyaa without firing a gun?". It is obvious that the Bono never reconciled themselves to their political subordination to Asante. However all attempts to secure their independence were suppressed by the Asante army. The Bono appear to have been overawed by the superior military power of the Asante army and therefore acquiesced. They had to bide their time till 1874 when Asante itself was defeated by the British in the "Sagranti" war.

#### 1.1.4 The Colonial Era

The active participation of the British in Bono states' affairs in the immediate post-Sagranti war period contributed to Bono defiance. The chiefs of Wiase, Gyaman, Atebubu and Takyiman in 1874, 1889, 1890 and 1897 respectively, entered into treaties of friendship and freedom of trade with British Government officials (Wilks, 1975:280). Nkoranza, Abease, Amantin, Boase, Ofuman, Nkra, Wankyi and Nsoko also entered into a treaty of friendship and trade with the British in February 1894 (Tordoff, 1965: 49, 145). British Colonial authorities' main interest in Bono was economic and political. In 1895, Prempeh was told by the British to



refrain from attacking his neighbours especially those of Nkoranza which had asked and were being given British protection. In early 1896, Lt Col. Piggot, a British official is said to have supplied Nkoranza and other neighbouring towns with guns and gunpowder as a means of protecting themselves against attacks from Samory although Samory was in far-away Gyaman along the present La Cote d'Ivoire border. It is not surprising that most Bono states fought for the British or remained neutral during the Yaa Asantewaa war of 1900. The Asante defeat enabled Bono to secure a temporary relief from Asante rule (Lewin, 178).

British interest in Bono states' affairs threatened Asante in three main ways. First, Asante needed a peaceful atmosphere and support of the Bono states because of the immense economic benefits Asante derived from the Bono area, second, Asante needed to keep the north-western territory of Asante intact, and third to prevent break-up of the Asante empire weakened by the destoolment of Osei Bonsu in 1883 and enstoolment of Prempeh I in 1888. Asante kings first resorted to negotiations with the Gyaman authorities to restore friendly relations. In 1877, an Asante mission led by a Fante diplomat Huydecoper was in Bonduku to negotiate with the Gyaman king to restore friendship between Asante and Gyaman. The work of the mission was a spectacular success. By late 1877, most divisional chiefs of Gyaman continued to owe allegiance to Asante. Agbodeka asserts that the mission supported Agyeman's opponents to enstool Kokorbo, a supporter of Asante as king of Gyaman. Thereafter, Gyaman opened the trade route for free trade between Asante and Bonduku, the Gyaman capital although Gyaman-Asante political relations remained fragile. In appreciation of Nkoranza's support Asante conferred upon the Effa, court decorations and insignia comprising state umbrellas and accoutrements, gold sandals and other articles, although the Asante confederacy did not permit any provincial chief to possess such items (Agbodeka, 1971:87-89).

Firstly, the Asante kings were infuriated Nkoranza, its most trusted provincial state had revolted after 1874. Asante resorted to attacks and war to compel obedience of that particular state. For example when Effa's successor refused to swear allegiance to Asante, Asante threatened to attack Nkoranza although the attack was postponed as the destoolment of Mensa Bonsu and enstoolment of Prempeh I caused several years of instability in metropolitan Asante. When later, Nkoranza pledged support to Asante, this was welcome news to Asante because disagreements with Nkoranza had resulted in deaths and destruction of property to both sides (Wilks, 1975:280, 296).

Secondly Asante circulated rumours in metropolitan Asante and in its provincial states for several reasons. Arhin asserts that it was because the Asante northern trade provided her with substantial revenue. Atebubu's closure of the trade route from Kumasi to northern Ghana severed contacts between Asante, the Dyula and the Hausa traders, hence Prempeh and his supporters used rumours to reassert Asante's authority over the Bono states. In early 1888 for instance some Asante citizens circulated rumours in the Asante kingdom that the British government had accepted gold valued at about 8,000 pounds sterling from Asante to invade and defeat Atebubu and other Bono states. The motive behind this rumour, according to Ferguson, a British trade agent, was to lower the prestige of the British government so that the people in northern Asante would lose confidence in the British and serve Asante. Because of this, the Asantehene was pleased when in late 1888 the Nkoranzahene pledged his loyalty to Asante. Like Kofi Karkari, Prempeh presented Opoku with a gold sword and other paraphernalia (Ward 1958: 284).

Asante also attempted to reconcile with rebellious states including Mampong. Consequently, when Prempeh was enstooled, he used the strained relations between Nkoranza and Kumasi as an opportunity to reconcile with Mamponghene Owusu Sekyere who had settled away in the Bono area. Having assured Prempeh of working for the re-annexation of the Bono people, Sekyere became a close ally of Prempeh. Henceforth Prempeh received every information about the Bono chiefs through him. Ferguson claims that Sekyere informed Prempeh that only Atebubu had signed a treaty with the British. He is said to have revealed that Asante invasion would succeed if Prempeh could exclude Atebubu when fighting the Bono since Atebubu was in close alliance with the British. Sekyere also tried to entice Krakye Dente who was revered in Eastern Bono not to interfere in the Asante-Nkoranza conflict. He is said to have requested the Dente Priest to predict the defeat of Kofi Fa if he fought against Asante and for the priest to advise Nkoranza to yield to Asante subjection and rule (Ferguson, 1970:16).

Despite these negotiations Nkoranza and Asante prepared for war in 1893. Before the war, Amankwaatia Kwame, the Bantamahene who led the Asante army assured the Asantehene on oath that he would go to Nkoranza or wherever the king of Nkoranza might be, and bring him as a captive to the Asantehene. He is believed to have said; "I will visit Brumasi. I will take my Osen to the king of Prang, Yeji and Dwan. I will encamp at Atebubu where the shady trees will give shelter to my troops, and on my return, I will bring Atebubu, Nkoranza and all the Bono nations with me to you as part of your kingdom by conquest (Lewin 1890:171)."

In some cases, Asante used intimidation to compel subordinate states to support the Asante kingdom. For example, when the chiefs of Nkoranza revolted, the Asantehene's message to their chiefs which was sent through his messengers Akwa and Opoku read; "Tell the king of Mampong and the king of Atebubu that the king of Ashanti sends his compliments. That the king wishes to inform them that he is at war with Nkoranza, and

cautions the king of Atebubu not to aid the Nkoranza; should Atebubuhene Kwabena Asante do so, Prempeh would destroy Atebubu. Prempeh cautions other Brong not to join the war. If the king of Atebubu is for peace, Prempeh is for peace” (Ferguson 1970:19).

When the Asantehene failed to persuade the Atebubuhene, the Asantehene sent another message to the Amantinhene, an Atebubu sub-chief, in December 1893 reminding him that his ancestors served the Asante and he should do the same. Prempeh regretted the Ohene’s attitude in running to Atebubu anytime there was a dispute between Asante and Nkoranza. Amantin was urged to refrain from the practice or face the wrath of Asante after the white man had left the shores of the Gold Coast (Wilks 1975:299-300). With respect to Atebubu, Prempeh’s message to the chief was also calculated to intimidate the chief. The message to the chief read; “The King of Ashanti presents his compliments to you all. He has heard that the people of Atebubu and the Brong people are asserting their country. If they like peace, Prempeh is for peace. If they like war they will have it. Prempeh desires that the king of Nkoranza, the king of Atebubu, and the King of Mampong should return to serve him and they should eat fetish with him, should they not do so, they are not for peace with Ashanti. If they are for peace, the king of Ashanti is for peace. If the messengers return with unfavourable reply, the army at Abease shall proceed against Atebubu and the Brong people. Should the invasion of Atebubu and the Brong people, as well as the capture of the Nkoranza King not be feasible now, the army would retire to Kintampo and wait till it can fight them” (Tordoff, 1950: 63).

Five days were given to Atebubu to consider the message though Asante might have realized its inability to fight a confederation of the Bono states who were supported by government troops of 300 men stationed in the Atebubu territory. When the Asante messengers heard that Kofi Effa was in Atebubu territory, they left for Kumasi without proceeding to Atebubu. The expected attack never came and in October 1894, Akwa and Opoku, the Asantehene’s messengers delivered a message to the Atebubuhene in which Prempeh stated that he had the most-friendly intentions towards the Bono people. Nevertheless Prempeh did not relinquish his plans to recapture the Bono states. He is believed to have sent about 300 officials and retainers in October 1895 with a gift of gold to Samory, the slave raider, to solicit his military assistance to defeat the Bono states, but this did not materialize. The relations between Bono and Asante therefore remained volatile until 1896 when the British weakened Asante leadership by the capture and arrest of Prempeh and other Asante royals. After 1896 it became impossible for Asante to re-organize and attack the Bono states again. The presence of the British enabled the Bono states to enjoy three decades of autonomy from Asante rule (Wilks 1975:388).

Available data suggests that some Bono chiefs including the Nkoranzahene remained largely loyal to Asante after 1874. According to Ferguson, Nana Atta Effa, the Nkoranzahene refused to join the Eastern Bono Federation which was formed after the Sagranti War to throw off the Asante yoke. He continued to owe allegiance to Asantehene and sent chiefs to participate in the Asanteman Council’s meetings in Kumasi. This friendly relations between Nkoranza and Asante also created a peaceful atmosphere in Nkoranza, which enabled Asante market representatives to continue to stay in Kintampo to collect the one-third portion of the market tolls paid by all traders (Arhin 1981:71, PRAAD Adm 1482 No 5773, Accra).

Nana Opoku Katakryera who was enstooled as king by Asante also pledged his support for Prempeh I. When in 1888 the Asantehene asked him to drink Fetish by taking the oath of allegiance, Opoku in addition swore to recover for Prempeh Asante’s authority over Bono tribes which was lost in 1874, when those tribes asserted their independence. As proof of his loyalty, Opoku is said to have refused to give up to Owusu Sekyere II, the Mamponghene (who had himself settled in Nkoranza territory) Prempeh’s supporters in the Nkoranza township. This resulted in a conflict between Owusu Sekyere and the Nkoranzahene (Dickenson in Arhin 1981:34). When Mampong attempted secession from Asanteman, Opoku sought the help of Kwabena Asante, the Atebubuhene against Mampong but was denied because of his refusal to join the confederation of the Eastern Bono states. Asante rule has undoubtedly divided the Bono into pro-Asante and pro-Bono divisions.

This division among the Bono favoured Asante. It was Asante’s desire for Bono to remain divided to be dealt with as individual states. The division of the Bono states significantly favoured Asante as Bono states could not mobilize for any effective resistance to Asante rule. For example, in the Nkoranza-Asante war, the expected support from the Eastern Bono states did not come. Only Kintampo and Abease supported Nkoranza probably out of sympathy for Nkoranza or because the states shared borders with Nkoranza. As a result, the Nkoranza people crossed the Pru river and settled in Worawora in present-day Volta Region. The Asante Security Posts of Asokore-Berekum and its allies in Odomase and Nsuatre became targets of destruction by their Bono neighbours. Since their creation, the posts fought on Asante’s side in wars fought by the Asante against Bono. Berekum, for example, was instrumental in the Asante defeat of Gyaman in 1818. The chief and his people are believed to have fought so courageously that as a mark of his appreciation, the Asantehene Osei Bonsu presented Nana Kwaku Diawuo, the then Berekumhene, with a sword to signify his bravery in the war. The establishment of Berekum was regarded by Gyaman in particular and other Bono as a threat to their sovereignty. Gyaman and their cousins at Dormaa looked for an opportunity to attack the state to liberate Berekum neighbours from the Asante yoke. The British defeat of Asante in 1874, and the inter-state conflicts that followed in metropolitan

Asante provided the opportunity for Gyaman to attack her (Arhin, (ed), 1975:126).

In or around 1883, Dormaa and Gyaman formed an alliance and jointly attacked and sacked Berekum and its pro-Asante allied states of Nsuatre and Bosomtwe Odomase. The immediate cause of the Berekum-Gyaman war was the killing of some Gyaman traders in Berekum, and the refusal of Nana Kwasi Diawuo to surrender the culprits for trial. The remote cause for the war was that the pro-Asante states of Berekum, Nsuatre and Odomase had refused to ally with Gyaman to rebel against the Asantehene after the 1874 war. Gyaman, like the other Bono states had rebelled because of the desire for independence from Asante. It needed the support of neighbouring states to enable her defeat the Asante army. When Gyaman failed to persuade Berekum and its allies to support her, the former used the killing of its traders in Berekum as a pretext to attack Berekum.

The war which became known as the Nkyibena (sacred Tuesday), disorganized the Berekum state. Berekum citizens fled to Wankyi, Duayaw-Nkwanta and other pro-Asante States. Many other Berekum citizens were captured and sent to Bonduku, the Gyaman capital, until Diawuo's successor, Nana Kwaku Datte successfully negotiated for their return about 1885. Just before Nana Datte died, he instituted the oath of Nkyibena in remembrance of the war. The refusal of Asante to assist Berekum in the Nkyibena war marred the friendly relations between Berekum and Asante. In 1890, during the reign of Nana Kwabena Owusu (1882-1920), Berekum accepted the colonial government's protection and control.

### **1.1.7 The impact of the British presence and rule**

The Bono states intensified their struggle for autonomy following the British defeat of Asante in 1874. For instance in 1875, Gyasehene Paimpi, regent of Gyaman informed Mensa Bonsu's messengers that Gyaman was no longer the "wife" of the Asantehene but was now "married" to the British. The Takyiman people refused to send troops to Kumasi to quell a rebellion by Dwaben. This attitude of Takyiman resulted in a war with Asante in which Takyiman was defeated. Takyiman is said to have secured a twenty year refuge in Gyaman, and returned in 1897 when Asante had been defeated by the British and its king, Prempeh I arrested. Nkoranza posed the greatest challenge to Asante rule in the post 1874 era. Although Nkoranza related well with Asante, it waited for the right moment to assert its independence. In 1883, when Kofi Kakari was killed in Kumasi, Nkoranza accused Mensa Bonsu of masterminding the murder and used that as a pretext to defy the Kumasi chiefs.

First, Ata Effa granted refuge to Mensa Bonsu's opponents. He also protested to the Asantehene against the huge tolls imposed on Nkoranza and other Bono citizens. Nana Atta Effa teamed up with Kwaku Gyan, Atebubuhene, Kwabena Fofie of Takyiman, Bekwi of Seikwa and Kwadwo Agyeman II of Gyaman and refused to release the Asante fugitives who fled to the area as a result of the succession dispute in Kumasi (Sorkpor, 1966:8-9). This worsened the already strained relations between Nkoranza and Kumasi. Nana Effa declined the invitation from Asante to swear the oath of allegiance to the Asantehene. He rather wanted Nkoranza and Kumasi to become "friends apart." He was not willing also to release to Prempeh the citizens of Kokofu, Mampong, Nsuta and Kumasi who had opposed Prempeh and had fled to settle in Nkoranza territory. (Ferguson in Arhin, 1970: 22-23).

By June 1892, both Nkoranza and Asante had made preparations for war. Nana Kofi Effa sent twelve slaves and gold to pledge Nkoranza's allegiance to the traditional priest of Krakye, indicating preparedness to join the Eastern Bono confederacy. In response, the priest is said to have sent charms and gunpowder to Kofi Effa and pledged the confederation's preparedness to assist Nkoranza. Nkoranza also sent four ivory tusks and twelve predwan of gold valued at £86/.8 shillings sterling to the British government in an attempt to persuade it to support the cause of Nkoranza. Nkoranza's plight worsened when Asante forces occupied the Mo-Nkoranza border, and prevented the Mo from moving in to Nkoranza territory to help the Nkoranza state. Nkoranza was burnt down but they are said to have won the encounter which took place in the swamp and mashes of Kumfa near Kintampo. Asante is believed to have lost about 300 men who were killed or taken as captives, forcing the Asante army to retire to Kumasi. (Gouldsbury to your Excellency, 1876, IAS, Legon).

Kwasi Gyantradu, the Dente priest supported Nkoranza's appeal for help. He addressed the Mampong messengers in these words; "your king has fought with the king of Ashanti, he also fought with the king of Nkoranza. What sympathy has he with either Nkoranza or Kumasi, or what interest has he in their reconciliation?" As demonstration of his support for Nkoranza, the Dente priest arrested the Mamponghene's messengers numbering about twenty three, seized their guns, twelve kegs of gunpowder and an amount of £7/.4 shillings. (Ferguson, 1970:20-21). When Asante attacked, Nkoranza moved early to settle on the Nkoranza-Mo border to avoid a surprise attack by Asante from that direction. The southern trade route to Asante was also closed to prevent Asante traders from selling in the Kintampo market and a surprise attack from the south.

Unfortunately for Nkoranza, the Atebubu Council was divided over their support for her, because of a clause in the Atebubu-British treaty of 1890 which debarred Atebubu from fighting with a foreign country. Hence, with the exception of Abeasehene Kwabena Kru, the entire council of Eastern Bono states declined to support Nkoranza. The message compelled the Atebubu chiefs to meet again. At the meeting, members expressed the view that although they disagreed on certain issues, they were not unmindful of Asante mischiefs,

and the possibility of Asante attacking them as well. The council declared; “. . . we know the artfulness of the Ashantis, we were once ourselves members of the kingdom before. In some cases while negotiations are being conducted, their forces are being disposed to the best advantage. In other cases though you may keep perfect neutrality, yet when the Ashanti army attacks, they invariably include you in the war.” (Lewin, 1897:178).

As a result of this perception about Asante, the council pledged their support for Nkoranza. Kwabena Asante, the Atebubuhene replied the Asantehene through his messengers Akwa and Opoku in these words: “I have never received messengers from Kumasi since I severed my connections with them, and now that Prempeh is at war with Nkoranza why should he send to me. Prempeh knows that we are all one member of the Bono tribe. If Prempeh desires peace. He should offer to make peace with the king of Nkoranza. I understand that the king of Nkoranza has asked for the protection of the Governor of Accra. In that case he is my brother and if Prempeh desires peace, he should offer it to my brother, but if Prempeh fights him, notwithstanding, then it is possible his operations may be extended to the other members of the Brong tribe” (Ferguson, 1970: 23).

When all efforts to negotiate with the Bono failed, Asante attacked Nkoranza in late December 1893. The expected support from the Eastern Bono states did not come, obviously because of the Atebubu-British Treaty. Only Kintampo and Abease supported Nkoranza probably out of sympathy for Nkoranza or because the states shared borders with Nkoranza. When Atebubu and Krakye belatedly sent military support to Nkoranza the state had already been destroyed. Nkoranza claimed to have lost five of its men, in addition to about five thousand (5000) women and children taken captive to Kumasi. The Nkoranza stool and regalia were looted. Some of the Nkoranza people crossed the Pru river and settled in Worawora in present-day Volta Region (Sarkodie:20-21).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Bono chiefs of Dormaa, Bosomtwe Odomase, Takyiman, Wankyi, Seikwa, Suma and Seketia continued to regard Kumasi chiefs as their overlords *Amanhene* (Paramount chiefs). The people of Bosomtwe Odomase continued to provide chiefs for the Bantamahene's stool. In 1900 for instance, Kwabena Kyere was enstooled chief of Bantama; and in 1930, Nana Kwame Koran chief of Odomase abdicated his stool to become the Bantamahene with the title Kwame Gyau II. (PRAAD, ARG 1/2/20/11, Kumasi). Suma and Seketia who were displeased with their subordinate status under the Gyamanhene in the early 1900s, referred most enstoolment and destoolment cases, oath swearing and other customary issues to the Asante native authority.

The British colonial authorities' policies from the 1920s rather increased Asante's power and worsened the plight of Bono chiefs and their people. This was the case especially following the return and installation of Prempeh I as Asantehene in 1924. His installation enabled Asante chiefs to once again interfere in Bono states affairs. For example in 1924, Nana Kwame Akowua, the Akwamuhene of Kumasi invited the Wankyi chief to join Asante chiefs to welcome Prempeh I from exile, because of the so-called immemorial loyal service rendered by Wankyi to the Asante monarchy (PRAAD, BRG.28/1/1, Sunyani). Shortly before his re-instatement as Kumasihene on November 12 1926, Prempeh was also reported to have sent gunpowder to the chiefs of Nsuatre, Subonpan and Wankyi to kill elephants for personal consumption. The Wankyihene was prepared to send the elephant because he had done so in the past (PRAAD, RAO 2/8, Sunyani) In the same year, the Dormaahene sent some chiefs to represent him and the state at Prempeh's installation in Kumasi and in June 1927, the Kumasi Akwamuhene accepted to arbitrate in a case involving two youngmen and their *Odikro* (chief) at Wamahinso (Tordoff 1965:208,209). Since the incident occurred in the Dormaa state, it was expected that the Akwamuhene of Asante would allow it to be handled by the Dormaahene's council. Accordingly, Mr. Ballentine, the Provincial Commissioner of Sunyani informed the Akwamuhene that he had no business interfering with affairs in the Dormaa division (PRAAD, BRG 28/1/1, Sunyani).

Similarly, in 1924, nineteen Asante chiefs were made to sign a document prepared by the British government, which stated that Prempeh I would remain a private citizen, hold no official status and exercise no authority over the Bono states (PRAAD'S BRG 28/1/1 “Secret File” W.P. 1/1925, Sunyani). This notwithstanding, Asante chiefs assumed that Prempeh's return meant the restoration of the pre-colonial Kingdom of Asante and so continued to assume control over the Bono states. In October 1929 for instance, the Antepim division reported to the Sunyani D.C. about the continuing interference of the Bantamahene in Odomase affairs (PRAAD'S BRG 28/1/1 “Secret File” W.P. 1/1925, Sunyani). Agyeman Prempeh II, the Asantehene also perceived that the ancient Asante Confederacy had been restored. In the last paragraph of his address, Prempeh declared, “We are serving the British government because they fought and conquered us, in the same way, you too are serving me because I fought and conquered you, therefore be submissive and help me to serve the British government peacefully” (PRAAD'S RAO 2/104 BKF File).

Some of the Bono chiefs and their youngmen revived their Asafo organizations to deal with any Asante threat to re-subjugate them. Between 1924 and 1936, (when the Asafo companies were disbanded in the Asante Confederacy), the various Bono Asafo companies destooled pro-Asante chiefs at Nkoranza, Tanoso, Takyiman and Tuobodom (PRAAD, ARG 1/2/17/2, Kumasi). Writing about them in his 1924/25 report, the Wankyi D.C. observed that: “. . . there is a gradual and an almost imperceptible change coming over Native Affairs in Ashanti,



the Ashanti chiefs have tried cases from time immemorial, and with the power of life and death, they demanded blind obedience. The blind obedience is no longer the order of the day, because the youngmen are no longer ignorant. They do not fear torture of death at the hands of a more or less barbaric tyrant. The former fear had been displaced by a feeling of independence and safety which gives vent to criticism of their elders, and a desire when dissatisfied to take the law into their own hands” (PRAAD, BRG, 28/20/15 Sunyani).

Bono states protested against the British government’s proposal to restore the Asante Confederacy. Some of these states anticipated a change in their status from paramountcy to ordinary chiefs (PRAAD, RAO 2/106, Sunyani). Others feared a return to another period of Asante tyranny and oppression. Notable among these states was Berekum. After the 1900 war, the British colonial government introduced certain political changes in Bono. Chiefs who fought for them in the 1900 war were elevated to the status of paramount while paramount chiefs who supported Asante were demoted to the rank of ordinary chiefs. Berekum under Nana Kwabena Owusu fought for the British in 1900, and was elevated to paramountcy in 1903. The colonial government placed Duayaw Nkwanta, Bekyem, Bosomtwe Odomase and Nsoatre who were Amanhene (paramount chiefs) in the pre-colonial period but backed Asante in the 1900 war under the jurisdiction of Berekum (PRAAD RAO 2/106 and DAO 1/101, Sunyani).

As a paramount chief, under the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (NJO), the Berekumhene was vested with powers to destool his sub-chiefs for insubordination. The Berekum paramount chief exercised this power in 1930 when Nana Kofi Mensa, the Bekyemhene was destooled for carrying to a durbar of chiefs a Golden Stick which was the prerogative of the Berekumhene (Tordoff 1965:210, 324-328). The Omanhene of Berekum, Nana Kwame Boaten was not prepared to forfeit these privileges, hence he and his elders, and the sixteen *Asafoakye* (leaders of an Asafo organization), of the state led a series of formal protests from Bono against the proposed restoration of the Asante Confederacy. In 1933, they complained to the D.C. at Sunyani that Asante may resume their tyrannical, atrocious, cruel and inhuman acts; and that they did not share in the opinion that Asante should once again return to the olden dynastic regime of central government (PRAAD, BRG 28/2/24). Abease, Atebubu, Drobo, Dormaa, Gyaman and Takyiman also protested against the restoration of the confederacy. Wankyi and Nkoranza were neutral, while Banda and Kintampo favoured the restoration. Takyiman, Wankyi, Abease and Dormaa which in 1924 had pledged to contribute one hundred pounds Sterling (£100) yearly, towards Prempeh’s restoration reneged on their pledges (Tordoff, 1960:388).

These protests threatened the success of the British policy of indirect rule and other administrative policies. In an attempt to overcome Bono protests, the District Commissioner (DC) at Sunyani assured the Bono states that in the restored confederacy, the domestic affairs of properly constituted divisions would not be interfered with”. The Bono were also assured that the restoration would not imperil the enjoyment of their individual liberty and their freedom of thought, a high standard of justice would be maintained in the confederacy and Bono states could secede when they so wished (PRAAD, RAO 2/104, Sunyani). By 1935, the British had successfully persuaded the Bono states to join the confederacy. Most Bono chiefs willingly took the oath of allegiance to the Asantehene during the durbar for the restoration of the confederacy on January 31 1935. The entire chiefs of the Berekum state, and their counterparts in the Drobo and Wam Pamu (Dormaa) states pledged their loyalty to the Asantehene. Other chiefs were Kofi Wiawe of Nkoranza, Fosu Gyeabuor II, Takyimanhene, Kwasi Boakye of Wankyi and Kwasi Appia of Odumase (Wallace-Johnson, 1935:38-39).

The hidden intention of the British government however became clear at the restoration durbar when the chief Commissioner of Asante declared at the durbar that it was an occasion to restore what Asante lost due to their defeat by the British. The Chief Commission emphasized: “the British government met the Ashanti people under the administration of a sort of monarchy according to their natural rights and customs with the late Prempeh as their king. It battled the people, subdued them . . . smashed up their kingdom. If it now turned out that the very government having realized its faults in the above respect and the wrongs it had done to the people, is desirous to make amends by the restoration of their natural rights, in the form of a confederacy, I see no reason why there should be any objection whatever to its inauguration or why the question of petition from the Amanhene should have any bearing on the subject” (Wallace-Johnson, 1935:38-39).

The fear of Asante re-subjugation of the Bono also encouraged antagonism between supporters of Bono and Asante. In Odomasi for example the pro-Bono Antepim division in 1929 sought to sever all links the Asante in the state had with those in metropolitan Asante when the pro-Asante Bosomtwe stool became vacant. The Antepim division attempted to prevent the installation of another pro-Asante chief in the town following the appointment of Nana Kwame Koran as Bantamahene by the Asantehene in 1929 (PRAAD’A, Adm 1312, Berekum Native Affairs, 1924-1930). The local arrangement in Odomase was that a newly-chosen chief should be introduced to the entire Odomase community. The Antepim (Bono) section under the leadership of Nana Kwasi Apraku disagreed with the nomination of Kwaku Fokuo as the new Bosomtwe (Asante) chief. They suspected him to continue with his allegiance to the Asantehene. When youngmen of Bosomtwe led by Kwasi Amankwa carried Fokuo as the new chief, it resulted in a conflict between the two divisions. The conflict attracted the Asafo sympathizers from neighbouring pro-Bono states of Fiapre, Nsuatre and Sunyani who

supported the Antepim division to fight the Bosomtwe division. Kwaku Gyau died in the conflict and twenty-four others were seriously wounded and treated at the Sunyani hospital. (PRAAD'A, Adm 1312, Berekum Native Affairs, 1924-1930).

S Warring, the Acting Provincial Commissioner (A.P.C.) of the Western Province of Asante (W.P.A.) dispatched a police force to restore peace and order in the town. Chiefs of the two divisions were also made to deposit an unspecified amount as surety, and to promise to be of good behavior till the actual bond was signed. Nananom Kofi Ansu and Kwasi Sabi, the respective Adikro of Sunyani and Fiapre were fined 100 pounds and 50 pounds respectively (PRAAD, BRG. 23/2/31). This however could not stop the rivalry between the two divisions; neither did it prevent the Asante chiefs from interfering in Odomase's traditional affairs.

By early 1930, the protests of Bono youngmen had had some effect on the friendly relationship between Bosomtwe and Kumasi chiefs. On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1930, Kwaku Fokuo, the Bosomtwehene swore the oath of allegiance to Nana Kwadwo Baanie, Omanhene of Berekum instead of the Bantamahene. The new chief promised to keep peace in Odomase, and to sever all connections with the Bantamahene whose influence, the chief observed, "...usually brought disturbances to Odomase township" (PRAAD, Adm. 1312, Sunyani).

It must be said that the open declaration of support by the British government enabled the Asantehene to resume his position as the leader of an Asante kingdom. More importantly, the people in the Bono states had suffered long period of indignities under Asante rule. In 1951, the chiefs of Takyiman, Drobo, Abease, Sunyani, Dormaa and Suma regretted their decision to rejoin the confederacy and declared their secession from it to form the Bono Kyempim Federation (Federation of Bono chiefs) (Wallace-Johnson, 1935:39). The Federation ably supported Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP in their struggles with the Asante-based NLM. In recognition of their support, Ghana's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah carved the Brong Ahafo Region from the Asante Region in April 1979. Henceforth the traditional states in the Bono area were constituted into an autonomous region with an autonomous Regional House of Chiefs.

## Conclusion

The Bono rightly believed that the Asante attacked them in the eighteenth century to secure control of their gold, ivory and other resources. Following the Asante conquests, the Bono chiefs and their citizens became vassals of Asante. They paid huge annual tributes and provided men for the Asante army. Asante appointed *ahwesofoo* (overseers), to settle in Bono to supervise the subject states. Asante administrative policies undermined the authority of the Bono chiefs but Bono states could not secure autonomy because Asante was militarily superior. Bono states, including Gyaman and Nkoranza, which defied Asante power were attacked and defeated anytime they rebelled. More often than not, stubborn Bono chiefs were captured and killed and their gold resources looted. To throw off the Asante yoke, certain Bono states entered into treaties of friendship and protection with the British in the late nineteenth century. However it was the British government's policies in the early twentieth century which greatly undermined the Bono states' sovereignty. After 1900, most Bono states severed relations with Asante and this gave them temporary relief. To ensure the successful implementation of the Indirect Rule policy in Asante, the British restored Asante as a confederacy and reinforce the position of chiefs in local government administration. By 1930 however, the "direct rule" of Asante and the introduction and spread of formal education in Ghana had produced a politically conscious class of literates. The restoration of the Asante Confederacy however intensified the dispute between Asante chiefs and their Bono counterparts. The Bono states formed the Bono chiefs Movement, in 1948 and openly supported the CPP in their struggle with the NLM. In recognition for voting massively for him, the CPP created the Brong-Ahafo region as a reward in 1959.

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