A Vanished Dynasty Ashanti

Sir Francis Fuller

With a new introduction by W.E.F. Ward

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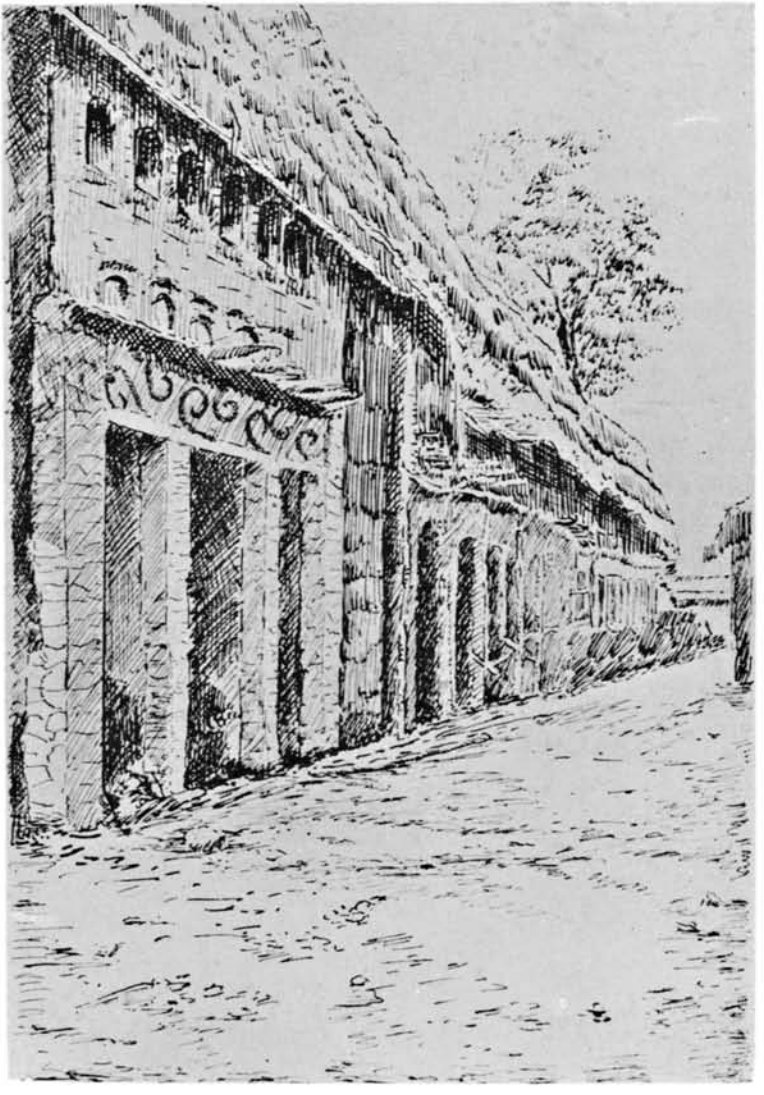

A STREET IN OLD COOMASSIE.
From a pen-and-ink drawing by Lady Fuller.

Frontispiece

A VANISHED DYNASTY

ASHANTI

BY

SIR FRANCIS FULLER

SECOND EDITION

With an Introduction and Notes
by
W. E. F. WARD

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TO ALL THOSE OF MY COLLEAGUES WHO SO LOYALLY AND ABLY ASSISTED ME TO CONVERT A SULLEN AND SUSPICIOUS RACE, STILL SMARTING FROM DEFEAT, INTO A CONTENTED AND PROSPEROUS PEOPLE, I GRATEFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

F. C. FULLER.

London,
July 22nd, 1920.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MAP

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE task of editing Fuller's book should really have been entrusted to an African historian. Fuller was trying to write from an African point of view, and an African editor's comments would have been more penetrating than mine can possibly be. But I began collecting Ashanti traditions only four years after Fuller's book was published, and, like Fuller himself and so many others, put down deep roots of friendship among the kindly and hospitable Ashanti people; so it has been a pleasant task for me to revive my Ashanti memories.

In annotating Fuller's text, I have borne in mind that many readers will have no personal knowledge of Ghana and its customs. The spelling of names is always a problem. I have generally followed Rattray, though when quoting from original documents I have naturally retained their spelling: Coomassie, Ashantee, Dwabin, and so forth. Reindorf spelt the country's name Asante, and modern fashion is to return to that form; but I am conservative enough to think that what was good enough for Fuller and Rattray is good enough for me, and I stick to the form Ashanti.

I have tried to set Fuller's work against that of other writers on Ghanaian history. In particular, I have collated his Kumasi traditions with the tradi-

tions of other Ashanti divisions, published by Rattray in his *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, and with the extremely interesting material given by Reindorf in his *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*. Page references to Reindorf are to the second edition: Claridge, the 1964 edition: Bowdich, Dupuis and Ward to the editions of 1966. In the introduction I have made some transcripts of Crown-copyright records in the Public Record Office; they appear by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office, and I am grateful to the Record Office staff for their help.

W. E. F. W.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

Sir Francis Fuller entered the Colonial Service as an administrative cadet in 1884 when barely eighteen, and was posted to Fiji. In 1892, after eight years in Fiji, he was appointed district commissioner of Lagos, and five years later was promoted to be Resident of Ibadan. In 1902 he became assistant secretary to the government of Malta, and in 1905 he succeeded Sir Donald Stewart as Chief Commissioner of Ashanti. Fuller remained in Ashanti for the rest of his career, from 1905 to 1920. It is clear that he developed a great respect and affection for the Ashanti people. The chief commissionership must have been a deeply satisfying job, the more so for being in those days comparatively free from paper work.

Fuller's work as chief commissioner must have been thought well of at the Colonial Office: he received the C.M.G. in 1906 and a K.B.E. in 1919, a year before his retirement. The award of such decorations in colonial times was governed by unwritten but well understood conventions. The Order of St. Michael and St. George ranked higher than the Order of the British Empire, and a knighthood of course ranked higher than a companionate. Thus a K.C.M.G. ranked higher than a K.B.E., but a K.B.E. higher than a C.M.G. Fuller's appoint-

ment as chief commissioner entitled him, by convention, to a C.M.G. when a vacancy occurred in the order; it would have been a mark of disapprobation had the C.M.G. been unduly delayed. But the K.B.E. was a very different matter. Knighthoods of any kind were conferred sparingly. Any governorship would carry with it a knighthood in one of the orders, if not immediately, then within a year or two: a K.B.E. for a small colony like St. Helena, a K.C.M.G. for a big colony like the Gold Coast. A chief justice was normally knighted as a " knight bachelor ", with no letters after his name, ranking below a K.C.M.G. and a K.B.E. But it was rare for any knighthood to be given elsewhere in the service. Heads of technical departments and senior administrative officers normally had to be content with a C.B.E. or a C.M.G. Thus, Fuller's K.B.E. after fourteen years as chief commissioner had a plain meaning.

Fifteen years is a long time to spend in one post. Many an administrative officer since Fuller's day has bewailed the way in which his government transferred him from one district to another, without giving him time to get to know the people and to get the threads of the district properly into his hands. Continuity, continuity, continuity: the recommendation comes over and over again in official conferences, but seldom indeed was a colonial government able to act on it. Fuller was lucky in having so much time to learn to know the Ashanti and to gain their confidence. When I first visited Ashanti in 1925, I found his memory very much alive; several times I heard him mentioned with respect and affection.

As Fuller implies in his dedication, he held his

post through an important and difficult time. Claridge's book appeared in 1915, and Claridge learned little about the early history of Ashanti; his sources are Bowdich and Dupuis. He had read Reindorf, and Okomfo Anokye appears in Reindorf, but not in Claridge. Fuller's Ashanti friends told him much more. He is the first writer to mention the creation of the Golden Stool, and to give Okomfo Anokye credit for his statesmanship. During Fuller's last years in Ashanti, Rattray (originally one of his district commissioners) was working there as Government anthropologist. Rattray's book *Ashanti*, with its intimate revelations of Ashanti thought and custom, appeared in 1921 along with Fuller's. That same year, there occurred the ticklish affair of the Golden Stool, which Fuller's successor Charles Harper had to handle. The Stool was hidden underground, and a Government working-party was building a road on a line which led directly towards its hiding-place. All Ashanti thought that 1900 had come again: that the Government had somehow learned where the Stool was hidden and was determined to dig it up and take possession of it. The Stool's guardians hastily dug it up by night and carried it off to a place of safety; but they were false to their trust, and stripped off some of the gold ornaments. The desecration was discovered; the culprits were put on trial; and the Government wisely declared that it had no wish to get hold of the Stool, and that this was an exclusively Ashanti affair.[1] This incident, which might have had very serious consequences, in fact led to a great improvement in confidence

[1] Except that it would not sanction the death penalty for the criminals.

between the Ashanti and the Government: an improvement which undoubtedly helped Rattray, but was too late to help Fuller.

As far as the early history of Ashanti is concerned, Fuller's book is based on the traditions of Kumasi. It was left for Rattray to work in other Ashanti states and collect their traditions. In the early period, Fuller adds little to what had already been recorded by Bowdich, Dupuis and Reindorf; but his contribution to our knowledge is threefold. First, though he relates no important new episodes, he does add a number of new details which give the story life and colour. Second, he adds his weight to one side or the other when previous authorities disagree. Third, he does not hesitate to correct his predecessors when he is told they are wrong.

It is to Fuller that we owe the charming story of the infant Opoku Ware's shaking fits and Okomfo Anokye's prophecy (p. 25); the death of Okomfo Anokye (p. 29); and Osei Kwamina's assertion of power against the regent Kwamin Pete—in which we are reminded of the way Richard II took over the government of England.

There are sundry minor discrepancies between our authorities. On page 37, Fuller gives the name of the Juaben princess as Ejei Bedu. This is the name given by Reindorf (134), but Claridge (i, 224) follows Bowdich in calling the lady Gyawa. Reindorf (131, 132) describes a successful war which Osei Kojo fought against Worosa of Banda. Bowdich (237, 238) places the Banda war in Osei Kwamina's time, and calls the Bandahene Odrasee. Dupuis (244), always eager to get in a dig at Bowdich, says that Bowdich is quite wrong here: there was no war against Banda in Osei Kwamina's

time, but there was a Banda war in the reign of Kwasi Obodum; he does not give the name of the Bandahene. In this muddle, Fuller supports Reindorf, and adds elsewhere (30) a remark that several campaigns which have been attributed to Kwasi Obodum really occurred in later reigns. Again, there is a good deal of doubt over the date when the Ashanti defeated the Dagomba and made them tributary. Dupuis says nothing about it. Bowdich (235) gives the credit to Opoku Ware. Reindorf (84, 85, 132, 133) says that there were two Dagomba wars: Opoku Ware certainly defeated the Dagomba, but it was Osei Kojo who imposed the annual tribute on them. Claridge (i, 209) follows Reindorf exactly. Fuller too follows Reindorf, but he gives the name of the Ashanti general as Kwamin Pete, whereas Reindorf calls him Koranteng Pete.

I have already referred to Fuller's remark that some wars which have been ascribed to Kwasi Obodum really occurred in later reigns. On the same page 30 he corrects a statement of Reindorf about a certain conspiracy. Again, Bowdich (234, 244), Dupuis (233, 249), and Reindorf (83, 164) all mention two Gyaman wars, one in Opoku Ware's time and one in Osei Bonsu's. According to Bowdich and Reindorf, Osei Bonsu's war was provoked by the audacity of the Gyamanhene Adinkera in making himself a golden stool in imitation of the one at Kumasi. Claridge (i, 210, 300) follows Reindorf and Bowdich. Fuller on the other hand has no hesitation in saying that both wars were brought about in the same way: that both Kings of Gyaman tried this gesture of defiance. Fuller may be right or wrong; at all events he shows his independence.

In this early Ashanti history, then, Fuller appears as an independent authority, in broad agreement with the older works of Bowdich, Dupuis and Reindorf, but ready to take his own line when they disagree, and ready to set any of them right if his informants think they have gone astray. The Kumasi traditions which he records need to be compared with the traditions of other Ashanti states; and in spite of the additional details which he contributes, there can be no doubt that there was much that he was not told.

When he comes to deal with the relationships between the Ashanti and the Europeans, Fuller relies almost entirely on the published authorities. Now and again he gives us a gleam of authentic Ashanti tradition, such as the account on p. 87 of the court intrigue: the short casualty list on p. 138: and the names of the Ashanti generals in the 1875 Juaben war on p. 148.

A few gleams; but we are disappointed that there are not more. Fuller's last four chapters are too much a summary of Claridge and other authors, written from the British point of view. There must have been materials in his day for the African story of the Yaa Asantewa war and of the long negotiations with Prempeh and with Agyeman of Gyaman. Granted, the Asantehene and many of the leading actors of the Ashanti side were in exile. But there were plenty of Jacobites in England in the early eighteenth century who could have told the tale of the Revolution and the Fifteen from the point of view of the king over the water. Likewise, there must have been Ashanti leaders still available in Fuller's day who could have told him what they thought at the time about Lees, Gouldsbury,

Firminger, Badger, Barnett, Vroom and the other British envoys. The fact that Fuller knew all about the British side of the case should have helped him in drawing out the Ashanti side. You learn something by asking, "Will you tell me what you know . . . ?": you learn far more by asking, "I have been told thus; I don't know whether you agree?" It does not seem as if Fuller can have pressed his informants very hard in this sort of way.

As for British policy towards Ashanti, it is not merely cynical to doubt whether there was such a thing. There was the Colonial Office far away in London; there was the Gold Coast Government, often in the hands of a mediocrity because no capable man would risk his life and career on the West Coast;[1] there was the British commercial community in England, anxiously watching the graph of overseas trade. We might indeed add another element: the British officials and traders in the bush, three or four days journey from headquarters (it was a week or ten days march from Cape Coast to Kumasi) and always apt to despise the ignorance of their superiors. It took two or three weeks for a despatch to reach London. How could there be one consistent British policy when any policy must be the resultant of such various forces and interests? The Gold Coast never had a Rhodes, a Goldie, a Johnston or a Lugard to impose a policy by the force of his personality, or to create by his impetuous action a situation which left the Government no choice. The British Governors on the whole were timid and cautious; and after 1886, when direct cable communication was opened with

[1] See Claridge, ii, 160.

England,[1] it became still more difficult for them to take the initiative. In 1876, Governor Strahan was censured for demanding (and obtaining) a further instalment of the war indemnity: in 1879 Governor Ussher for supporting Adansi against the Asantehene: and in 1890 Governor Brandford Griffith for offering Ashanti a treaty of protection.

Most British writers have held that in fact there was no one consistent British policy towards Ashanti from 1874 to 1896. Their view is somewhat as follows. At first, the Government in London was anxious to have nothing to do with Ashanti affairs; but in or about 1888 it adopted a forward policy, which resulted in the annexation of Ashanti and the Yaa Asantewa war.

The Gold Coast Government could not afford to take quite such a detached view. It still regarded the Asantehene as a despot. Like the Government in London, it thought that Ashanti, though defeated, was still dangerous; as early as 1881 it got into a state of panic over another expected Ashanti invasion. When not merely individuals like Owusu Tasiamandi but whole tribes, like Juaben or Adansi, asked for British protection against the tyranny of Kumasi, the Gold Coast Government found it hard to say no. The Government had two incompatible desires. It wanted peace and trade, but it also wanted safety from the age-old Ashanti danger. It tried not to interfere in Ashanti politics, but by allowing subjects of Ashanti to throw off their allegiance and take refuge in the Colony, it did interfere; and its interference was always in the direction of weakening the central power, never of

[1] Before then, messages could be sent by ship to Madeira and cabled from Madeira to England.

strengthening it. This on the other hand helped to bring about civil war in Ashanti and ruined all prospects of trade.

The decline in trade naturally annoyed the business men in England. In 1883 and again in 1887 the Manchester Chamber of Commerce protested to the Secretary of State at the way Ashanti affairs were being mishandled. In 1883 their protest was in vain; Gladstone was prime minister, and he had no belief whatever in a forward policy in Africa. Things were different in 1887. Salisbury was in office, the scramble for Africa was well under way, and the Germans and French were rapidly extending their claims on both sides of the Gold Coast. This time, the Manchester plea that British trading prospects in the hinterland should be safeguarded found a ready response.

To sum up: British writers generally hold that Britain made a muddle of Ashanti affairs from 1874 onwards through not having any consistent or intelligible policy. In various places, notably on pages 145, 149 and 165, this seems to be Fuller's view.

This has recently been challenged by African historians. Dr. Adu Boahen writes,[1]

> " This view is totally wrong. The British did everything to encourage even members of the original union to break away, particularly Juaben and Adansi. In July 1874, for instance, they sent an official, Lees, to force the Asantehene to grant complete independence to the Juabenhene and presented him with a gold-plated stool . . . British policy towards Asante after 1874 was clearly stated by the Governor of the Gold Coast in his dispatch to the Colonial Office in October 1875 to be that of ' breaking up of Ashanti into two or more tribes

[1] In the symposium *A Thousand Years of West African History*, pp. 352, 353. (Ibadan, Nelson, 1965).

who would be independent of each other ', thereby ' preventing Kumasi from establishing itself in its former power.' It was clearly with this in view that Lees and Gouldsbury were sent to Asante, and the British pursued that policy throughout the 1870s and early 1880s."

Thus, according to Dr. Boahen, there was no fundamental change in London, some time in the 1880s, from a policy of non-intervention to a forward policy. He thinks that all the time from 1874 onwards, the Government in London and the Government on the Gold Coast were in agreement on a forward policy, and were doing all they could to break up the Ashanti state.

The despatches and Colonial Office minutes preserved in the Public Record Office do not seem to me to support Dr. Boahen's view. The whole tone of the correspondence in the 1870s seems to me to show the Colonial Office and the Governor agreed that the British policy must be one of non-interference; but the Governor was uneasy, seeing the dangers both in an Ashanti which was reunited and restored to its old military strength, and in an Ashanti which had fallen apart and was in constant disorder.

In July 1874[1] Governor Strahan reports the seven-hour palaver in which both the Kumasi and the Juaben ambassadors begged him to send a mediator, which he was most unwilling to do. He says,

"... The mere fact of the Ashantis being again at war would be noised throughout the interior, while a momentary success on their side would lead to a renewal of the prestige they have lost and revive among the Western tribes of the Protectorate a spirit of disaffection which has now been successfully overcome.

[1] C.O. 96/112.

There is no doubt also that a collision between the Ashantis and Juabins at the present moment would lead to a general outbreak, into which some of the tribes of the Protectorate would inevitably be drawn, the Juabins being in alliance on the East of the Protectorate with the Akims, who now hold Juabin hostages; while the Adansis are in alliance with the Denkeras on the West of the Protectorate.

After much consideration I came to the conclusion that I was not justified in allowing hostilities to break out if any influence I could exert would prevent it."

So, he says, he discussed the matter with Captain Lees, who had been present throughout the seven-hour debate, and " Captain Lees volunteered to go to Coomassie and Juabin and endeavour to arrange matters between them."

The Governor informed the ambassadors of this, and he pointed out

" that this was an exceptional case, in which I was acting as a mediator to preserve peace between two tribes in a critical state of affairs where a collision was said to be imminent, and that in future I could only undertake to communicate with the tribes through messengers sent by themselves. . . ."

Lees's report on his mission is dated 31 August 1874. It is printed, along with Strahan's covering despatch, in C.O. 879/7/69. Lees says that he went first to Kumasi, and at an interview with the Asantehene and the Kumasi chiefs on 24 July, he reminded them

" that I could not bring any pressure to bear upon those tribes which had thrown off their allegiance, to again return to it, that it was only on the assurance of the Ambassadors that I should not be asked to do more than endeavour to prevent a war that I had been sent to Coomassie, that I could not allow myself to become involved in the palavers of tribes over whom the Government possessed no authority nor desired to possess any, and that I could only endeavour to find out the causes which had led to the present state of affairs, and exert my influence to bring about such mutual

> concessions as would lead to an amicable settlement and prevent, in the interests of commerce and civilization, an outbreak of hostilities. Notwithstanding my repeated assurances as to the extent to which I was authorized to act, the King continued so persistent in requesting me to bring back the tribes, towns and villages that I threatened to discontinue further negotiations and to return to Cape Coast. As he seemed by no means to desire this, I suggested that as he was powerless to coerce the people of Juabin, he had better secure peace and his own safety by recognizing their independence. After several interviews with the King, the King's mother, and the influential Chiefs, the King accepted my suggestion. . . ."

Lees goes on to say that Kofi Karikari admitted that there was a desire to dethrone him and that the tributary tribes had deserted him; but said that the Kumasi chiefs had sworn to fight to maintain him on the throne. Lees then went to Juaben with the good news that the Asantehene had sworn to recognize Juaben's independence. The Juabenhene, swearing an oath to keep the peace, " assured me that his oath would determine the conduct of Sootah, Becquai and Kokofoo, upon whom it would be equally binding. . . ."

Strahan's covering despatch of 3 September comments:

> " The Juabins, who of all the Ashantee tribes appear to be the most given to trade, will probably now become the most powerful; but however this may be, I believe that, adhering to the broad principle of non-interference, the wisest policy in the altered state of affairs in Ashantee since the date when the Treaty was signed will be to watch the course of events and take advantage of our prestige to turn them to the best account in the interests of peace and civilization."

I can see no mention in the Colonial Office papers of the gold-plated stool which Dr. Boahen says the Government presented to Juaben. But never

mind this; we must admit the essential fact that Lees seems to have left Cape Coast convinced that there could be no question of persuading Juaben to return to its allegiance. He did not go to Juaben to try; he went straight to Kumasi and persuaded the Asantehene that the best thing to do would be to recognize Juaben as a independent state.

But it is wrong to describe this as a deliberate British attempt to break up Ashanti. From the point of view of Lees and Strahan, it was a matter of persuading Kofi Karikari to face the facts of the situation; and the situation as Fuller describes it at the bottom of page 144 was grim enough. The British did not intrigue to induce Juaben to rebel; Juaben was already in rebellion. Kofi Karikari's personal position was insecure, and he had only the Kumasi chiefs to rely on, whereas the Juabenhene reckoned that he could count on the support of Bekwai, Kokofu and Nsuta. The situation became quite different when the great chiefs of the Abrempon rallied round Mensa Bonsu, and Juaben was isolated. Lees and Strahan may be blamed for not foreseeing the likelihood of some such development. But on the basis of the history as they knew it, they may be excused for regarding it as an open question whether Juaben ought to serve Ashanti or be recognized as an independent power.

Juaben had first come under British notice in Bowdich's day. Bowdich reported that the " King of Dwabin " signed his treaty as the equal of the Asantehene. He also reported (p. 232) that a few Ashanti informants had admitted to him that Juaben " had formerly the pre-eminence ", and (p. 245) that the Asantehene was trying to reduce Juaben " from an independent ally to a tributary."

This attempt succeeded. Two years later, Dupuis tried to obtain a meeting with the Juabenhene, but the Asantehene would have none of it (p. 138): " The king, who is he? Am not I the king? Is there another king then besides me? "

Juaben is not mentioned in the 1831 treaty; but in 1834 there occurred the bitter war between Juaben and Kumasi, and the Juaben people for the first time took refuge in Akim, where they stayed until Maclean and the Danish Governor arranged peace (Claridge, i, 422–424). The Juaben men served with Amankwa Tia in his invasion of 1873, but they took no part in defending Ashanti against the British counter-invasion. They were to have provided a force of 12,000 men to make a left-handed sweep and capture the bridge at Prasu when the British force had been decoyed well inside Ashanti. But they did nothing at all: perhaps because they were afraid of Captain Glover and his eleven hundred men—but can this really be the only reason? (Claridge, ii, 116, 138, 139). The Juabenhene Asafo Agyei submitted to Glover, and the moment the war was over he threw over his allegiance to Kumasi and asked the Governor to recognize his independence.

As matters stood in the latter half of 1874, Strahan and Lees may be excused for thinking that Juaben may have had some right on his side. If he really had the support of several other powerful chiefs in saying that he was finished with Kumasi, there could be no question of compelling him to renew his allegiance. Strahan and Lees, after hearing the palaver at great length, judged that he was beyond persuasion; and who is to say that they were wrong?

Oath or no oath, no Asantehene could be expected to acquiesce permanently in Juaben's independence. Within a few weeks Kofi Karikari was destooled, and succeeded by Mensa Bonsu. On 8 January and again on 14 February 1875[1] Strahan wrote to the Colonial Office about the Juaben affair. In January he says that the ambassadors sent down by Mensa Bonsu have again been giving him a long account of the iniquities still being committed by Juaben. This may mean that the Asantehene wants him to interfere, or it may mean that he is being prepared to hear the news of an attack being made on Juaben. But he has not yet made up his mind, and is not saying anything to commit himself.

In the February despatch, Strahan reports that the Asantehene's ambassadors are pressing him to give his opinion on the conduct of the Juabenhene. This, he says,

> " I purposely avoided giving, being of the opinion that although I have always in my interviews with both the Coomassie and the Juabin messengers shown them that non-interference is our policy, there is no harm done in leaving the parties somewhat dubious as to what action may be taken towards the party who first breaks the oath which was taken before Captain Lees at Coomassie and Juabin."

In the summer of 1875 the indefatigable M. Bonnat went to Ashanti in the hope of opening up a trade route to Salaga. The Governor was afraid of misunderstandings. On 5 June[2] he writes to the Colonial Office,

> " I saw M. Bonnat on several occasions before his departure with reference to his project, and fearing that advantage might be taken by the King of Coomassie of the presence of

[1] C.O. 96/115 and 116.
[2] Cmd. 1402/1876.

> Europeans in the capital to spread rumours that they were there to bring back the defected tribes, and as I attach the utmost importance to its being thoroughly understood that there will continue to be a strict adherence on the part of this Government to the policy of non-interference, so far as exercising any influence over the several tribes of Ashantee to induce them *either to throw off or to return to their allegiance to Coomassie,*[1] I impressed upon M. Bonnat . . ."

that he was to be careful not to give any such impression.

It was of course a hopeless policy: let us do nothing, but contrive as long as we can to keep both parties under the impression that there is a chance that we might do something. Mensa Bonsu was quite justified when he commented in a letter to the British merchants at Cape Coast in July 1875:[2] he says that he could easily have retaliated long ago against Juaben, but so far he had not done so: partly

> " to show the English Government my good faith and wishes for peace; another reason also was, I thought and believed firmly that the English Government, after having assured the independency to the Chief of Djuabin, and made laws insuring peace and tranquillity—I believed, I say, that they would be able and willing to make the law they made between us respected and observed strictly. . . ."

Strahan's despatch of 25 October 1875,[3] from which Dr. Boahen has quoted, was written after Bonnat returned. It shows no clear policy, but uncertainty and indecision.

> " To have free intercourse with Salaga through Ashanti would doubtless be of a great advantage to this Colony, but to my mind the question arises, would not Coomassie, if allowed to establish itself in its former power, act as a barrier to the opening up of trade with the interior, reimposing

[1] Editor's italics.
[2] Cmd. 1402/1876.
[3] C.O. 96/116.

perhaps to fourfold the extent the tribute which was exacted from the interior tribes? I think such would be the result.

Again, would not the breaking up of Ashanti into two or more tribes who would be independent of each other lead to constant raids which would prevent commerce? "

He adds a melancholy reflection on the prevalence of tribal warfare all over Africa, and continues,

" It would be premature as yet to attempt to judge how far it might be possible to have two tribes of Ashanti, like Coomassie and Juabin, rivalling one another in the peaceful development of trade between the interior and the Coast. I fear such a state of things is not, at least for the present, to be expected."

Strahan here is clearly not advocating " the breaking up of Ashanti into two or more tribes who would be independent of each other." Far from it: he is pointing out that this policy, like the alternative policy of allowing Kumasi " to establish itself in its former power ", involves grave dangers.

In that same month of October, Strahan sent Dr. Gouldsbury to Akim to warn both the Akim Abuakwa and the Akim Kotoku that if fighting did break out between Kumasi and Juaben, they were not to take part in it as allies of Juaben. For what it is worth, this is a help to Kumasi; but in his instructions to Gouldsbury, Strahan writes (C.O. 96/116),

" I can only state, as a general principle of policy which you will bear in mind in so far as it may have relation to any matters upon which you may have opportunity of bringing your influence to bear, that the reinstatement of Coomassie in its former power and position would be prejudicial to the interests of this Colony, and that the reduction of Juabin to a state of a dependency of Ashanti would go far to restore Coomassie to its former place among the tribes."

In Strahan's mind there were two incompatible ideas of policy: keep the Asantehene weak so that

he cannot again threaten the Coast; but keep him strong so that he can maintain peace and further trade. In his despatch of 25 October we see the Governor hesitating between the two, in his instructions to Gouldsbury the idea of weakening the Asantehene is for the moment on top. To that extent Dr. Boahen is right. But this was after Lees's mission. The Asantehene had recognized Juaben's independence, and for him now to reduce Juaben again to submission seemed to the Governor an act of aggression.

Gouldsbury himself advocated a forward policy. With his despatch to London, the Governor enclosed a letter which Gouldsbury wrote from Kumasi on 16 November:

> "... I also believe that had the recent struggle been prevented by my mediation, the evil would only again have been postponed for a limited period . . . and that a war between Ashantee and Juabin was inevitable, that is unless we assured a more direct action and, if necessary, coercive influence than that of mere mediation; and Your Excellency will have learnt from my letter of the 6th instant that I am an advocate for such interference even now, believing that it would be conducive to the welfare of the Colony as well as that of civilization and humanity. . . ."

Gouldsbury agreed with Mensa Bonsu that having made Kumasi and Juaben come to terms, the Government should make them keep to their agreement. But the Governor would not hear of it; and anyway, as Claridge says (ii, 199) Juaben was now defeated, the town burnt, its people in exile. It was too late for anything like that.

A few weeks later, on 3 January 1876, Mr. Meade in the Colonial Office (C.O. 96/116) minuted,

> " I shall be glad to see Dr. Gouldsbury out of Ashantee. We are not prepared to enforce obedience by arms, and therefore

I am inclined to think that our interference with Ashantee should be as slight as possible."

Mr. Herbert and Lord Carnarvon concurred.

Before this minute was written, Governor Strahan had interfered more decisively in Ashanti affairs. He had made up his mind that in spite of the provocation it had received, Kumasi was more to be blamed for the war than Juaben, and he instructed Gouldsbury[1] to demand 500 ounces of gold as a fine for breach of the agreement.

The Colonial Office was horrified, particularly as the Governor had explained to the Asantehene that this gold was an instalment of the war indemnity imposed by the Treaty of Fomena. The office minutes point out that since the gold was already due under the treaty, it was injudicious to demand it as a penalty for the new offence of breaking a subsequent agreement. While waiting to hear whether the demand would be complied with, Lord Carnarvon struck out of the draft reply the passage in which this was to be pointed out to the Governor. But he minuted,

" The justification of this policy is success. If this is not had it is a serious mistake."

The 500 ounces, then worth about £1,900, were paid, not without difficulty. It was a lucky windfall; the Colonial Office thought it would be a pity to pay it meekly over to the Exchequer. Mr. Herbert minuted,

" It was, I think, pretty clearly understood by H.M. Government that we did not expect to get any further instalments of this indemnity; and we may equitably urge the Treasury to let us have this and future instalments to cover the cost of missions to Coomassie, etc.

[1] C.O. 96/116 and 118.

And this, after Lord Carnarvon had spoken to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir Stafford Northcote) was agreed.[1]

All the same, the Governor must be told not to run this sort of risk; and on 31 March Lord Carnarvon wrote to him and pointed out the embarrassing situation that would have arisen if the money had not been forthcoming. He must not do this sort of thing without authority from England.

In 1876 Strahan came on leave. In January 1877[2] the lieutenant-governor, Sandford Freeling, writes another despatch relating an interminable palaver between Kumasi and Juaben ambassadors, whom he has told that he positively will not send another European officer to Ashanti. He adds,

> " I think it my duty to inform all embassies from without the Protectorate that Government cannot interfere with their quarrels, that it deplores them, as their countries will never prosper as long as they continue, and that it recommends them to live peaceably. . . ."

This is not the place for a fully documented narrative of British policy towards Ashanti for the whole period from 1874 to 1896. The traditional view, shared by Fuller, is that it was muddled and incoherent; and it deserves the strictures which Claridge and others have made on it. It seems to me that these quotations support the traditional view, and there seems so far no reason to abandon it in favour of the alternative theory that throughout the 1870s and early 1880s the British had a

[1] This is an interesting minute. It shows that the Government never expected to get the full sum of 50,000 ounces of gold laid down in the Treaty of Fomena, or anything like it. It is another item in the count against Governor Hodgson, who demanded huge annual payments of interest on the unpaid balance. (Claridge, ii, 438, Ward, 304).

[1] C.O. 96/120