

**Sights/Sites of Spectacle:
Anglo/Asante Appropriations, Diplomacy
and Displays of Power 1816-1820**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, Captain Charles Sheales and my mother, Barbara who both engendered in me a love of knowledge and an appreciation of other cultures and peoples.

Abstract

Between May 1816 and March 1820 the paramount chief of Asante Osei Tutu Kwame Asibey Bonsu (r.1800-24) received no less than nine representatives of the British and Dutch trading companies at his capital Kumase. Of these, seven wrote detailed accounts of their experiences but the first and the most historically important was *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* published by Thomas Edward Bowdich (1791?-1824) in 1819. Besides containing vivid descriptions of Bowdich's experiences as the Conductor of the first British Mission it is also supplemented with maps, diagrams and ten colour illustrations, the majority of which depict everyday activities and important locations in Kumase. The largest illustration, entitled 'The First Day of the Yam Custom,' differs significantly from the others, however, in respect of its size and its subject matter, as it documents the appropriation of conventions, material culture and symbolism by Asante, Islamic and European representatives during an important diplomatic ceremony.

This thesis focuses on Bowdich's published account and this illustration in particular, in order to explore the hypothesis that such spectacles played an instrumental role in Anglo/Asante appropriations and diplomatic negotiations during this period. As part of this analysis Bowdich's descriptions will be compared and contrasted with other envoys' accounts that were written between 1816 and 1820 in order that systematic practices and procedures and consistent patterns of behaviour can be identified and interrogated. The adoption of this historical ethnographic approach demonstrates the value of analyzing and re-assessing individual accounts that complement, but also contrast with, the *longue duree* perspective adopted by the majority of studies that examine culture contact and appropriation. Furthermore, it also facilitates the introduction and development of a new theoretical concept that has the potential for wide-spread applicability in the analysis of other cultural encounters.

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Preface

Throughout my academic career I have been interested in historical ethnography and in the past I have written about the impact European colonization has had on the art and art production practices of West African communities in Cameroon and Nigeria during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My doctoral thesis continues to engage with inter-disciplinary debates concerning appropriation, display and representations of power and legitimacy. However, in an effort to broaden the scale and scope of my research, this thesis concentrates on analyzing an early nineteenth century pre-colonial case-study from the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana).

In 2009 I conducted a three-month research trip to Ghana during which I visited locations of historical importance including Cape Coast Castle, Elmina Castle and Anomabu Fort as well as Manhyia Palace Museum, the royal mausoleum at Bantama and the Asante Cultural Centre in Kumase. I also inspected artefacts and archival material held in the collections of Legon University Library, the National Museum of Ghana and discovered previously unexamined documentation deposited in the Public Record and Archive Department (PRAAD) in Accra. During my visit I was fortunate enough to attend the tenth jubilee celebrations of the enstoolment of Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, an experience that engendered valuable insights into some of the historical descriptions and imagery that I was researching for this thesis.

On my return to the UK I located and photographed previously unrecorded art works that are the property of living descendants of Thomas Edward Bowdich but, despite my best efforts, I was unable to trace others owned by relatives who live in Australia. As part of my research I also visited Bristol, in particular the Grammar School, the Public Records Office and St Stephen's Church where I unearthed baptismal records and I also spent many hours at the British Museum and National Archives piecing together information that has not featured in previous studies. The identification of this new historical evidence has significantly contributed to my thesis project as it has enabled me to compile a more comprehensive and detailed analysis than any that has gone before.

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I am also deeply indebted to Mr Tony Francis for sharing details of his family ancestry and history with me and for allowing me to photograph and reproduce original watercolour sketches by Sarah Bowdich Lee and Jane Landseer as part of this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the help of the staff at the Bristol Public Records Office and Anne Bradley, Archivist at Bristol Grammar School. Thanks also go to Julie Hudson, Cynthia McGowan and James Hamill of The British Museum, Joy Wheeler, Assistant Picture Librarian at the Royal Geographical Society, Jacek Wajer of the Natural History Museum, Frank Bowles, Superintendent of the Manuscripts Reading Room at Cambridge University Library and the staff of the National Archives at Kew.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the inestimable contribution that has been made by my partner Leon Savage, who provided me with a peaceful environment in which to work, distractions when I needed them and his unconditional love and support throughout.

Introduction

The Research Context

On Sunday the 26th April 2009 I sat under the covered stand of Kumase football stadium alongside hundreds of prominent Ghanaian citizens and guests of all nationalities to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the enstoolment of Otumfuo Osei Tutu II as Asantehene. Arranged around the perimeter of the football pitch were hundreds of brightly coloured canopies under which sat the chiefs and elders of every Ghanaian community with their attendants. Everywhere I looked the glint of gold reflected back at me from the jewellery and regalia that they wore and carried, and the colours and patterns of thousands of Kente cloths and fancy wax prints oscillated in the heat haze. The drone of the restless crowd was occasionally punctuated by sharp bursts of gunfire, the booming of drums and the bellowing of elephant horns as they announced the arrival of a new retinue. At the heart of all this pomp and ceremony, secreted in the deepest and darkest recess sat the enigmatic figure of the Asantehene.

As I looked on I was amazed at how closely the scene before me resembled that which Thomas Edward Bowdich had so vividly described and depicted in his account *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (1819). This was very apt as his publication and its associated imagery were directly responsible for my visit to Ghana and my presence at the anniversary celebration. Prior to 2007 I had concentrated on researching how colonial authority figures and European commodities had been appropriated by the Yoruba of Nigeria and incorporated into their artistic and symbolic repertoires. When I was thinking about a topic for my doctoral thesis I decided to broaden the scale and scope of my previous enquiry and focus on Bowdich's pre-colonial account of the first British Mission to Kumase.

Having read Bowdich's account of the Mission's journey into the interior I decided to base my own research itinerary around it, and, as a consequence, on the morning of the 22nd April 2009, Abass Idrissu and I drove along the same approximate route stopping at as many of the villages and towns that were mentioned as possible. In

contrast to the Mission our journey was accomplished in a matter of hours and our arrival in Kumase went un-noticed. The anniversary celebration was, in effect, the nearest I could get, in terms of importance and size, to the reception that Bowdich and his three companions experienced on their entry into the Asante capital 192 years earlier.

The scene in the football stadium certainly brought Bowdich's description of the Mission's reception and the image of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' to life for me. Before coming to Ghana I had been intrigued by the public display of European and Islamic items depicted in this image. Their incongruous presence at the Yam Custom suggested that they not only symbolised personal and political relationships and served to differentiate rank and status in Asante culture but also played an integral part in the socio-ritual proceedings. During the state ceremony that I attended in 2009 mobile phones and video cameras featured prominently throughout the proceedings, but displayed alongside these twenty-first-century appliances were items that Bowdich had described and illustrated.

Rationale

Since Bowdich's account was first published in 1819 it has regularly been used by anthropologists and cultural historians to provide references on discrete aspects of Asante art and culture and to furnish eye-witness descriptions of fabulous displays of wealth during public ceremonies (see Cole and Ross (1977), Garrard (1980), McLeod (1981, 75-77) and Ross (2002). Likewise, heavily edited versions of Bowdich's illustrations, in particular 'The First Day of the Yam Custom,' have also routinely been used to illustrate these and other publications (see Curtin 1964, front cover; Fraser 1972, 146-147; McLeod 1977, 81; 1981, 10-11; Wilks 1993, 117; McCaskie 1995, dust jacket/268-271 and Blier 1998, 140). I believe that over time this piecemeal extraction of descriptive and visual material has contributed to Bowdich's account being neglected as a subject of study in and of itself.

I, therefore, propose to make Bowdich's account and imagery the prime focus of this thesis because it contains important evidence of a specific cultural encounter that is associated with a number of historical firsts. To begin with, Bowdich's account documents the first attempt by Britons to explore the interior of the Gold Coast. It

also records the events of the first British diplomatic Mission to be sent to Asante, an enterprise that was also one of the first to have both commercial and scientific objectives enshrined in its remit. Finally, Bowdich was the first person to re-present the Asante using artefacts, words and imagery to British and European audiences. As such, his account, with its detailed eye-witness observations and wide-ranging scale of enquiry, is an important historical source of information on pre-colonial Asante culture and the development of diplomacy and exploration on the Gold Coast of West Africa during the early nineteenth century. To date, however, his travel narrative, illustrations and assemblage of artefacts have attracted limited scholarly attention (Ward 1966, 11-71, McLeod, 1977, 1981, 1987).

In contrast to previous assessments that take at face value Bowdich's authorship of these sites of knowledge production, I will explore the evidence that suggests that he appropriated the literary talents and artistic products of his wife, Sarah and Asante gifts and artefacts that were presented to her and others in order to promote himself and his personal ambitions. In light of this the illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' has been selected as the visual *leitmotif* of this study as it not only depicts several examples of Anglo-Asante inter-cultural appropriation but is itself the product of appropriation. In this way, the image not only promotes itself as the ideal object of analysis but also provides a departure point for the wider exploration of this individual and collective practice.

Definitions

Appropriation is an inadequate, slippery and politically-loaded term that is commonly used to describe a vast array of actions that range from innocuous individual borrowings at one end of the scale to collective political exploitation at the other. In the past, the surveys of Ghanaian art and culture produced by Cole and Ross (1977), Ross and Garrard (1983), Posnansky (1987) and Ross (2002) credit many of the major artistic, socio-economic, political and religious developments in Asante culture as originating from contact with Sudanic and sub-Saharan peoples located to the north, east and west and Europeans located to the south. Prolonged Asante contact with these communities is also cited as a significant influence in the historiographies of the Gold Coast published by Arhin (1987, 51-59); Bravmann and Silverman (1987, 93-108), Wilks (1993), DeCorse (1992, 1996) and McCaskie (1983, 1986, 1995) and

ethnographic studies published by Rattray (1923, 1927, 1929) and McLeod (1981). Despite the fact that an isolated reference to European appropriations of Asante artefacts and motifs appears in Ross and Garrard (1983, 73-81) most studies choose to ignore the mutual nature of appropriation. This results in an essentially dynamic process being reduced to a primarily uni-dimensional and uni-directional one (see also Burland 1969, Malbert 1991). This scholastic myopia may have resulted, in part, from the fact that the subject of appropriation has been studied from a variety of different perspectives that reflect theoretical and methodological biases associated with distinct academic disciplines.

The study of appropriation is currently split between the four overlapping humanities disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, cultural studies and history. However, as evidence of appropriation is often associated with artefacts and objects, art history, material culture studies and museology also have a stake in this subject area. During the last sixty years or so a vast literature on appropriation has built up, especially within the realm of anthropology (see bibliography in Brown 2003). Notably, the work of Kroeber (1952, 1969), Geertz (1973), Sahlins (2000), Thomas (1991) and Taussig (1993) have contributed to the development of a wide-range of theoretical and methodological approaches for studying aspects of cultural appropriation. Much of this work focuses on analysing specific instances of encounter which enables acts of appropriation to be contextualised in terms of the unique economic, political and social circumstances that pertained at the time.

I propose to use the term ‘inter-cultural appropriation’ in this thesis to describe the simultaneous mutual borrowings that occur when cultures come in direct contact with one another. This term has three separate elements as part of its make-up, each one of which will be independently defined before a conjoined definition is offered. The Oxford English Dictionary (hereafter O.E.D.) supplies a definition of the prefix ‘inter’ as denoting: between, among, mutual, reciprocal. The same source defines the noun ‘culture’ as the civilisation, customs, artistic achievements etc,’ of a particular group or people. The O.E.D. also defines the verb, ‘appropriation’ as the making and/or taking of a thing for one’s own use without permission. This definition describes appropriation in terms of an individual act of unauthorised possession and usage.

When defining ‘inter-cultural appropriation’ it is tempting simply to scale-up this definition so that it describes a collective act of possession and/or usage. However, this generates an equally blunt tool for analysis as the members of a culture have differing access to, and control over, externally-derived elements and use them in a wide variety of contexts and in wildly divergent ways. As a result, gender, status and power relations are also implicated and these perspectives must be taken into account when analysing specific instances of appropriation. I will therefore use the term ‘inter-cultural appropriation’ in this thesis to describe the mutual exchange of material that has an external origin, by two or more groups of individuals who occupy different levels in their respective hierarchies but who, despite these differences, share a significant set of traits which, along with others, are identified with a specific culture.

Critical Concepts and Theoretical Framework

In this thesis I will adopt an inter-disciplinary approach to the analysis of inter-cultural appropriation as it significantly increases the theoretical and methodological scope for identifying and interrogating the assimilative, correlative, dialogic and synthetic aspects of such practices. Every culture develops its own framing devices that form and inform actions, beliefs and perceptions. I believe that these constructs also play a determinative role in the appropriation and integration of artefacts, conventions and practices that originate from beyond a specific cultural *milieu*. Of necessity, these constructs are deeply conservative by nature and form the basis of custom and tradition but they are also receptive and responsive to changing circumstances, developments and requirements and are therefore inherently adaptive.

Joy Hendry developed the concept of ‘social wrapping’ to describe physical and temporal modes of presentation in her publication entitled *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and other Societies* (1993).

In this study Hendry theorized that ‘social wrapping’ is a universal cultural phenomenon, which manifests itself in culturally-specific ways. In order to analyse different types of wrapping practice, she introduced broad mutually-inclusive and over-lapping categories such as bodily wrapping, linguistic wrapping, spatial wrapping and temporal wrapping as part of her analysis. Despite focussing primarily on Japanese culture, Hendry hypothesised that European explorers and empire-builders impressed certain African chiefs, particularly those with recognisable

‘Kingdoms,’ through different types and layers of wrapping such as clothing, jewellery and retinues of attendants and servants (Hendry 1993, 93). She suggested that because these trappings of power and status correlated to similar systems of signification operating in Europe, it enabled vanguards of diplomats and envoys to colonise the courts of African princes, thereby paving the way for the eventual colonisation of their territories (*ibid*, 135). Hendry did not develop this supposition further and cited no specific examples, so I propose to take this opportunity to apply her wrapping principle to a historical pre-colonial West African case study and expand on it by exploring the role that material and immaterial wrappings may have played in Anglo/Asante inter-cultural appropriations, diplomatic displays and representations of power.

My analysis will also touch on concepts developed by Mary Douglas in her seminal work *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (1966 [2004]). As part of my analysis I aim to expand on Douglas’s structural hypothesis that form = symbolism and structure, and non-form or un-formed = psychic forces and disorder, by factoring in another significant element which has not been adequately identified or addressed in her analysis. I will argue that, whether permanent or temporary, literal or metaphorical, real or virtual, junctures that exist between mutually-exclusive entities are where dynamic interactions, transactions and transformations take place. Therefore, instead of focussing exclusively on the pairing of dichotomies as Douglas does, I propose to concentrate my analysis on the role ambiguity and liminality plays in appropriation. As a result, I will re-appraise the part certain physical sites such as artefacts, bodies, shrines and museums as well as virtual ones such as accounts, narratives and imagery, play in the appropriation of material and immaterial elements of other cultures.

Research Questions

My analysis will be framed using the following three research questions:

1. How were Asante and European artefacts, social conventions and culture appropriated in 1817?
2. Where and in what contexts did acts of appropriation take place and what external and internal factors were motivating them?

3. To what functions and roles were appropriated objects prescribed in new cultural contexts?

Together, these research questions will provide a basis for the introduction and development of a new theoretical concept that will have wide-spread applicability in the analysis of other instances of cultural encounter and inter-cultural appropriation.

Research Methodology

As valid deductions about matters such as appropriative actions and cultural practices cannot be drawn from the evidence of a single participant-observer, I propose to corroborate the evidence contained in Bowdich's account with others that document essentially the same encounter experience. Within a four-year period between May 1816 and March 1820, Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame Asibey Bonsu (r.1800-24) and his court were visited at Kumase by no less than nine agents of the British and Dutch trading companies based on the Gold Coast. Of these, seven wrote detailed accounts: Willem Huydecoper (1816), Frederick James (1817), Thomas E. Bowdich (1817), William Hutchison (1817-1818), Henry Tedlie (1817), William Hutton (1821) and Joseph Dupuis (1824). Together, they form a discrete cluster of records that document inter-cultural encounters between Asante, European and Muslim representatives. As a result of this, I have deliberately decided to limit the scope of my thesis to this four-year period as I want to produce a fine-grain analysis that will complement, but also contrast with, the *longue durée* approach adopted by the majority of studies that look at culture contact and appropriation in West African contexts.

The journal written by Dutch Governor-General Herman W. Daendels (November 1815 to January 1817 [1964]) will also be quoted as will extracts from the official correspondence of the Mission which is preserved in the National Archives at Kew (C.O.2/11, T.70/40, T.70/41, T.70/42, T.70/1601, T.70/1605) and the unpublished official report (ADM 5/3/1-1817) that was written by Bowdich and rediscovered by me in the Public Records and Archives Department in Accra (PRAAD) in April 2009 whilst conducting fieldwork for this thesis. It is deeply regretted that I have been unable to trace any oral accounts of the first British Mission to Kumase that would have provided an Asante perspective on this momentous event. Occasional references

to the published works of Archibald Dalziel (1793 [1966]), Henry Meredith (1812 [1966]), Hugh Clapperton and Richard Lander (1829) will be cited in order to situate Anglo/Asante encounters and inter-cultural appropriations within a wider chronological and geographical context. Evidence contained in the notes and illustrations of Bowdich's widow, Sarah Bowdich Lee, that were subsequently published under the title, *Stories of Strange Lands and Fragments from the Notes of a Traveller* (1835), will contribute additional evidence that has been overlooked in previous studies. When writing this account of her experiences, Sarah drew on experiences that occurred between 6th September 1816 and March 1818, when she was a resident living at Anomabu Fort and Cape Coast Castle. Her publication contains many references to Bowdich and his Mission companions as well as providing details regarding customs and practices that are either partially or completely omitted in her husband's account. Furthermore, Sarah also illustrated her text with sketches which depict similar ceremonies and events to those Bowdich described and documented in his publication. I have provided a chronological list of key dates and events which appears at the end of this work, under the heading Appendix 1, in order to aid the reader.

When citing or quoting directly from any of these sources I have preserved the grammar, punctuation and spellings used in the original manuscript or publication. By comparing and contrasting the evidence contained in these accounts, circumstantial and corroborative evidence of systematic practices and procedures and consistent patterns of behaviour and response over a four-year period will be identified and interrogated. In order to avoid the *faux pas* of essentialising the Asante people and their culture I will intermittently refer to the seminal works of Rattray (1923, 1927, 1929), McLeod (1981) and McCaskie (1995) in order to discuss shifts in cultural perceptions and practices that have occurred during the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Thesis Structure

This thesis has been subdivided into five chapters which will cover a range of topics. The first chapter, entitled 'Better the Devil You Know: Thomas E. Bowdich, The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and the first British Mission to Kumase,' will be used to introduce Bowdich, provide a biographical sketch of his early life and

career, review the major events of the Mission and analyse how he compiled his account. Chapter Two, entitled 'Processing the Alien: Anglo/Asante Encounters in Kumase,' concentrates primarily on Bowdich's description of the state reception of the Mission in the Asante capital and considers the role that certain ritual sites played in mediating and processing external sources of power. As part of this analysis I will introduce a new concept, the 'hyper-environment' that describes a temporary phenomenon that facilitates physical and meta-physical interactions, reactions and transactions to occur between mutually-exclusive entities. Chapter Three, entitled 'Tokens, Trappings and Trophies: Anglo/Asante Appropriations, Displays and Presentations of Guns, Swords, Canes, Chairs and Silver Plate,' will expand on the analysis of the previous chapter by examining artefacts that Bowdich describes and illustrates as being appropriated within ritual, royal and social contexts. Chapter Four, entitled 'Stitching the Flesh, Spinning the Skin: Anglo/Asante Appropriations, Displays and Presentations of Flags, Canopies and Clothing' will concentrate predominantly on Bowdich's descriptions and representations of canopies, flags and uniforms and will discuss how these items, and some of the conventions surrounding their use, were appropriated by both the Asante and the British during diplomatic negotiations and displays of power. Finally, Chapter Five, entitled 'Aggravated Barbarity and Splendid Novelties: Thomas E. Bowdich's Re-presentations of Asante,' will examine how Bowdich appropriated his, and others, experiences as well as words, imagery and artefacts to construct a popular image of Asante for consumption by European audiences. In the conclusion all the strands of my analysis and the main points of my argument will be brought together, reviewed and summarised.

I

Better the Devil You Know: Thomas E. Bowdich, the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and the first British Mission to Kumase

Outline, Aims and Structure of Chapter

Since Thomas Edward Bowdich published his account in 1819 several scholars have re-appraised him and the historical importance of his work (Collins 1962, Ward 1966, McLeod 1977,1981, Barley 2003, McCaskie 2009). In the majority of these publications Bowdich is represented as being an ambitious, proud and unprincipled self-promoter. The best example of this is provided by the historian W. E. F. Ward who, in his introduction to the third edition of Bowdich's account, stated that he was 'an individualist, [who] was eaten up with vanity' (Ward 1966, 46). Ward's criticism echoes similar sentiments that were originally published by Joseph Dupuis, one of Bowdich's contemporaneous rivals, in his narrative of the second British Mission to Kumase entitled *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (1824). Similar views were also expressed some years later in the work of Malcolm McLeod, who described Bowdich as 'a brash and ambitious young man, eager for fame and gifted with a useful disregard for the niceties of truth' (McLeod 1977, 79). Whilst I do not dispute that these assessments of Bowdich's character have worth, I am concerned that he may have fallen foul of historical prejudices and modern standards which have confused our understanding of his character, his motivations and his actions.

In order that a contextualized and objective assessment can be made of Bowdich, the events of the 1817 British Mission to Kumase and the publication of his account, I felt it was important to re-construct the chronological time-line of his life and populate it with information gleaned from all of the primary and secondary sources that were available. Despite the fact that this chapter will primarily be descriptive in content a number of analytical points will be made as part of the review which has been sub-divided into three

parts. In the first part, which is entitled ‘T. E. Bowdich’s Early Life and Career (1791-1817),’ I will introduce Bowdich and explore the circumstances surrounding his birth, education, marriage and early career in The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa. This information has been compiled from baptismal registers, obituary notices, personal and official correspondence and entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004-2010). By concentrating on these events I will demonstrate that some of Bowdich’s actions, attitudes and values were shaped by early experiences of disempowerment and disappointment that ultimately reflected larger socio-economic and political changes that were revolutionizing British society during the last decade of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth centuries.

In Part Two entitled ‘The Mission (22nd April – 3rd October 1817),’ I will examine the circumstances that led to the decision to send the first British Mission to Kumase and review the major events that occurred during its execution. This sequence of events has been reconstructed using Bowdich’s published account, the official correspondence preserved in the National Archives at Kew (T.70 series) and his unpublished handwritten official report (ADM 5/3/1-1817). I have also used notes that appear in Sarah Bowdich Lee’s publication (1835). As part of this analysis I will demonstrate that the events of the Mission were shaped by conflicting personal, political and professional tensions that existed between individuals, institutions and nation states. I will also argue that the demographic composition of the Mission mirrored generational and ideological divides between the old conservative regime that was trying to strengthen and preserve an entrenched hierarchy based on rank, and the young liberals who wanted to institute a meritocracy based on personal achievement and industry. In effect, I will contend that the public rupture between Bowdich and his superiors was indicative of a wider shift in social attitudes and aspirations that, within a few years, would culminate in the abolition of The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and the birth of colonialism.

In the third and final part entitled ‘Bowdich’s Account of the Mission,’ I will discuss what his motivations were for gathering, recording and publishing his experiences, what methodology he used, how he structured his account and what models he drew on when

composing it. As part of this examination I will present the results of a comparative analysis I conducted on Bowdich's publication, the official correspondence of the Mission and his unpublished official report that throws new light on how he went about constructing his text. Finally, I will review the historical value of Bowdich's account in respect of the potential evidence it contains of Anglo/Asante inter-cultural appropriations.

Part One: T. E. Bowdich's Early Life and Career (1791-1817)

The majority of the biographical information regarding Bowdich's childhood and early adult life are contained in three published documents. On the 20th March 1824, an anonymous one page obituary entitled 'Mr Bowdich, the African Traveller' appeared in the *Literary Gazette* alongside an engraving of him (c.1819) by J. Thomson (fig. 1.0). The first four paragraphs contain details about his birth, schooling and early career in the Africa Company. An introduction to the second edition of Bowdich's account (1873) which was written by his eldest daughter, Mrs Tedlie Hutchison Hale, provides more information concerning her father's employment in the family business and his appointment as a writer, but the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Westby-Gibson 2004-2010, hereafter *D.N.B.*) contains the fullest account of Bowdich's early years. It is worth noting that the lack of early biographical information may have resulted from a deliberate strategy on the part of Bowdich's widow, relations and friends to obscure his relatively humble lower middle-class origins. It also reflects the fact that many people saw Bowdich's life as effectively starting in 1817 as a consequence of his appointment to the first British Mission to Kumase.

Thomas Edward Bowdich (also spelt variously as Bowdick and Bowditch) was probably born on 20th June 1791, (though birth dates of 1790 and 1792 have also been suggested) in Clare Street, Bristol. His father, Thomas Bowdich, was a hatter and merchant in the firm of Bowdich and Co, and his mother, Elizabeth (née Milward), was related to the Vaughans of Painscastle, Radnorshire in Wales. On the 21st August 1792, Thomas Edward was christened at the local parish church of St Stephen's (fig. 1.1) close to his father's business premises which were situated in the most affluent and fashionable part



Figure 1.0: A portrait of Thomas Edward Bowdich (c.1791?-1824)
(Thomson, J. stipple (after W. Derby c.1819)
reproduced in *The Literary Gazette* (1824)



Figure 1.1: An engraving of St Stephen's Parish Church, Bristol
(Nicholls and Taylor 1882, Plate 14)

of Bristol's commercial quarter (fig. 1.2) at the point where Broad Quay penetrated deep into the heart of the city (Baptism Register, 1792, fol. Za1). Evidence suggests that Thomas Edward may also have had at least one sister although it is not known whether she, or any other siblings, survived into adulthood.

In 1797, Thomas Edward started to attend Bristol Grammar School which was located on Unity Street, in buildings formerly belonging to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (fig. 1.3). Unfortunately no extant records documenting his time at the school have survived to the present day but it seems likely that he was educated there until he was around nine years old (Bradley, personal communication 2009). Ward states that it was during this period that Bowdich first became interested in geography, natural history and all branches of science (Ward 1966, 11). Interestingly, he neglected to mention Bowdich's study of the classics which the school was renowned for and which both his entry in the *D.N.B* and his obituary specifically highlight. Sometime in 1800 Bowdich's parents removed him from the Grammar School in Bristol and placed him at Corsham Free Grammar School (1540-1835), a Church of England charitable establishment in Wiltshire that had a high classical reputation. By all accounts Bowdich thrived here and, according to the *D.N.B*, '[...] being fond of the classics, he soon became head boy' (Westby-Gibson 2004/10, 3027). The same source also states that he was noted for his clever *jeux d'esprit* in magazines and his skill as a rider, but what he knew of mathematics he was 'flogged through' (*ibid*). It is clear then, that by fourteen or fifteen years of age Bowdich had already, through his own diligence and natural ability, acquired a taste of early leadership and success. Despite this, however, it appears that in later life he thought his education to have been essentially deficient, something he later alluded to by way of apology in the introduction to the first edition of his account (Bowdich 1819, v).

This hard-done-by attitude may also have resulted in part from other disappointments which occurred early on in his youth. A detail which appears only in the *D.N.B* states that Bowdich was 'originally intended for the bar, [and] it was much against his wishes that his father put him to his own trade' (Westby-Gibson 2004/10-3027). Further light is

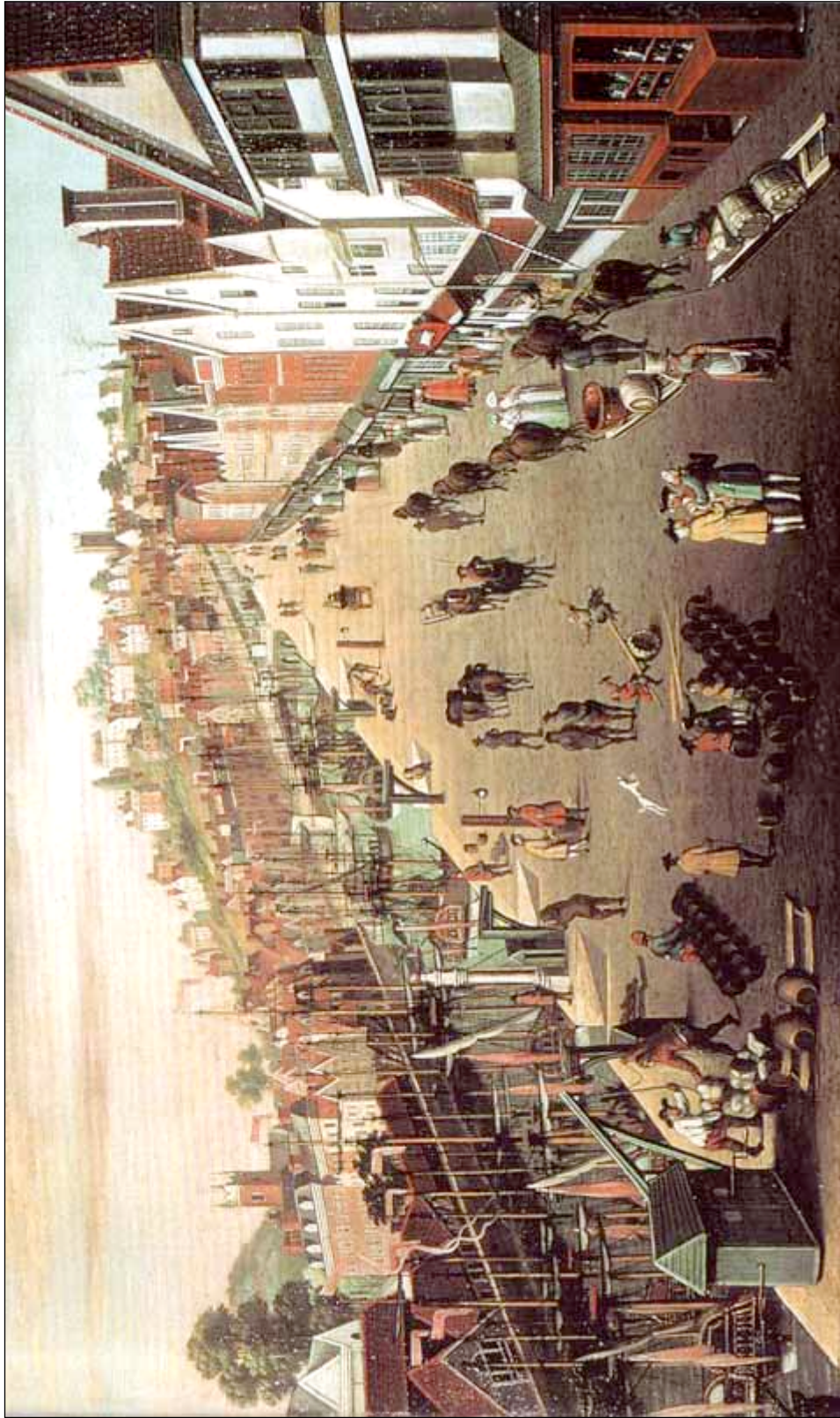


Figure 1.2: Bristol in the late eighteenth century
(Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery)

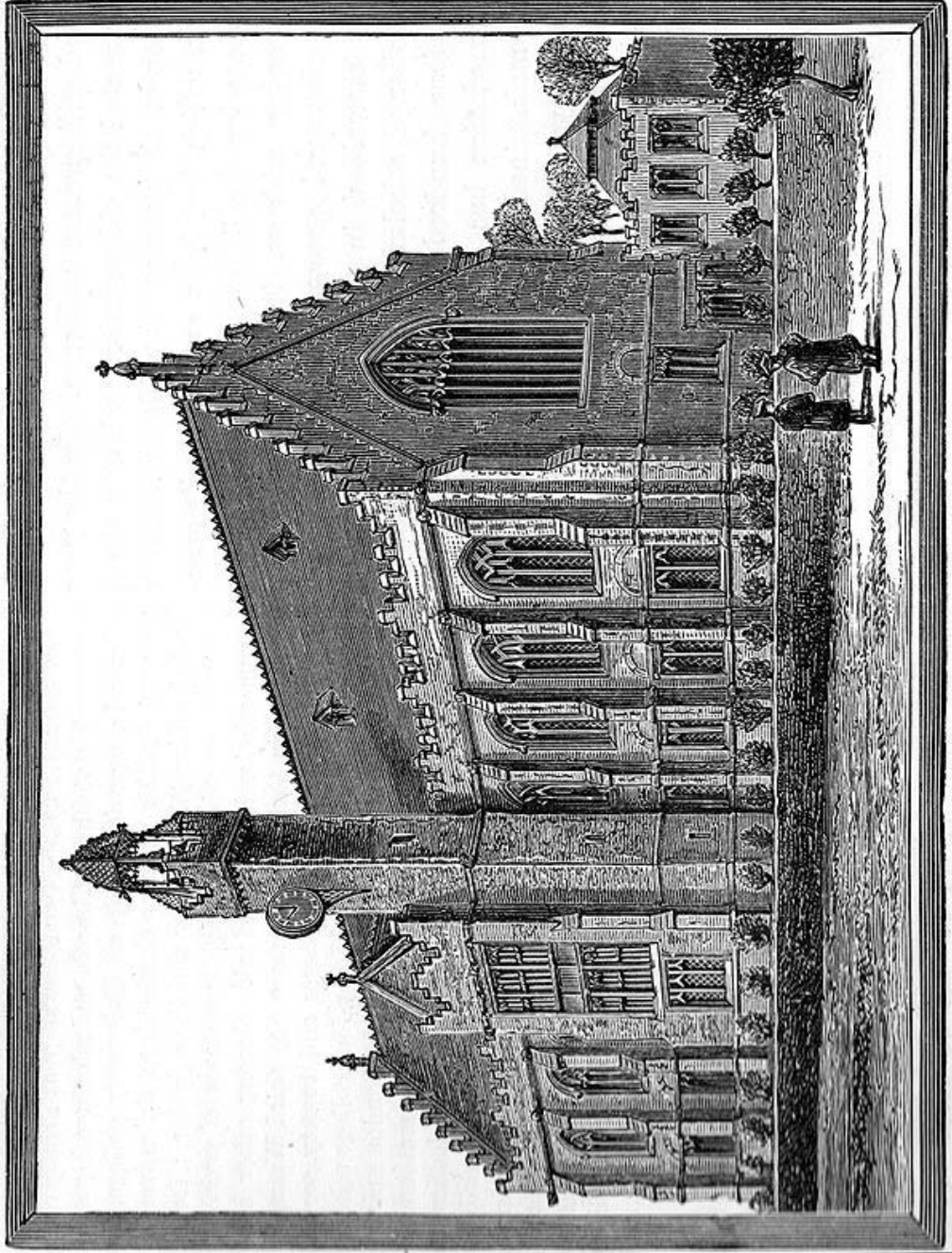


Figure 1.3: An engraving of Bristol Grammar School
(Nicholls and Taylor 1882, Plate 25)

shed on this by his daughter, who stated in her introduction to the second edition that, ‘[...] it was natural that his father should wish him to enter his business, but Mr Bowdich’s career is one of the many instances which show how impossible it is, if not wrong, to endeavour to turn into an uncongenial channel the talents, the tastes for another, and in this case nobler sphere’ (Hale 1873, vi).

This extract implies that Thomas Bowdich (Snr) was a somewhat dictatorial father who forced his son to sacrifice his personal and professional ambitions to join him in the family business. It is also interesting to note that Mrs Hale was not explicit about how long her father was employed by Bowdich & Co. The *D.N.B* simply states that ‘[...] for one year (1813) he was a partner’ (Westby-Gibson 2004/10, 3027). However, the obituary notice in the *Literary Gazette* claims that he remained ‘[...] for some years resident in Bristol participating in his father’s business’ (1824, n.p.). Evidence suggests that he spent some of the time between 1806 and 1812 in London, as this is where he met Sarah Wallis (1791-1856), whom he married on the 9th January 1813, at the church of St Mary Newington, Surrey (Marriage Register 1813, fol. 21). Like Bowdich, little is known of Sarah’s childhood and youth, the fullest account of which occurs in her own entry in the *D.N.B*. She was the third of four children and the only daughter of John Eglington Wallis (c.1766-1833), a grocer and linen draper of Colchester, Essex. She was named after her mother Sarah (née Snell c. 1770-1839) and the family, who were Nonconformist, owned considerable property and enjoyed comfortable circumstances until her father went bankrupt in 1802 (deB.Beaver 2004/10, 16310). Sometime during 1806 or 1807, the family moved to London where she later met Bowdich. Given these circumstances, this was not the most advantageous match that Bowdich could have made as his bride almost certainly had no dowry. Indeed, the sudden need to provide an income on which two people could live may well have prompted the one-year partnership in his father’s business.

According to Sarah’s entry in the *D.N.B*, the newlyweds travelled more than 800 miles through Wales on horseback studying foreign languages as they rode (deB.Beaver 2004/10, 16310). On their return, it appears Bowdich became attached to or entered

himself for a short time at an un-named Hall in Oxford, though he never matriculated (*Literary Gazette* 1824, n.p., Westby-Gibson 2004/10, 3027). It is noteworthy that this information appears at different points in his obituary notice and in his entry in the *D.N.B.* If we accept that the biographical details are designed to follow a chronological timeline then the obituary notice, published in 1824, is written in such a way that the reader is given the impression that Bowdich went to Oxford after leaving Corsham Grammar School probably in 1805 or 1806. However, in the *D.N.B.* this information appears after the details of his marriage which suggests that he entered Oxford several years later in 1813 or 1814. Also, we do not know who supplied this information but they must have been aware that without naming the Oxford College or giving specific dates of attendance this statement could not be verified. Furthermore, the source also ensured that no-one could dispute this claim as they added the disclaimer that Bowdich ‘did not matriculate’ hence his name would not appear on the University’s enrolment records (*Literary Gazette* 1824, npn; Westby-Gibson 2004/10, 3027). This lack of tangible evidence points to the probability that Bowdich did not in fact attend Oxford University and, I suggest this misinformation originated with his widow Sarah who, in 1824, had good reasons for enhancing her recently deceased husband’s academic credentials.

Despite their lack of financial security, Thomas and Sarah appear to have been well-matched as they found in each other a mate who had not only suffered similar disappointments and setbacks but who, as a result, shared their partner’s determination to overcome the disadvantages and prejudice which inevitably resulted. Happily, it seems they were both driven by the same desire for self-improvement, money and public recognition. This joint vision eventually led to joint adventures, which saw Sarah accompany her husband on his travels and combine her considerable talents with his in order to realize their dreams. In 1813, however, having been disappointed in his choice of profession and having married for love rather than money, it is probably safe to assume that Bowdich was under pressure to succeed at something.

Sometime in September or October 1814, he applied in writing to the Governing Committee of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa (the African Company) for an appointment to the lowest rank of junior writer. The Company had been established in 1750 by Act of Parliament to administer the British forts and factories on the Gold Coast of West Africa. The Committee was comprised of six members: two from Bristol, two from Liverpool and two from London who were responsible for administering the annual subsidy paid by the Government and enrolling new members who could join upon payment of a fee of 40 shillings. On the Gold Coast the Governor-in-Chief was President of the Council who was responsible for the day-to-day running of all the British settlements. The Council also included the Governors of the main forts of Anomabu, Accra, Whydah, Winnebah, and Tantomquerry (Tantamkweri) along with the senior staff of Cape Coast Castle. Fortunately, Bowdich named John Hope Smith, the Governor of Tantomkweri Fort as a sponsor on his application. Little is known about this man prior to his entry into the Africa Company's service on the 5th June 1800 and despite the assertion that he was Bowdich's uncle, the precise nature of the relationship has not been definitively established. On paper, the Africa Company was a good prospect for Bowdich as it offered its officer recruits the possibility of a full career from writer to Governor-in-Chief. Furthermore, he fulfilled all of the criteria laid down in the 1750 Officer Recruitment Act which stated that prospective candidates should be 'between the ages of 18 and 25, come from the middle class of life, have respectable connections, and be very well educated' (St Clair 2007, 85).

Bowdich's decision to apply to the Africa Company had no doubt been influenced by the fact that Sarah was expecting their first child Florence, who was born sometime in April or May 1815. Despite being accepted by the Committee in October 1814, Bowdich waited for approximately a year before he received his commission. Lapses such as this were not uncommon as the Africa Company kept several 'supernumerary writers' in hand. These were young men for whom there was no vacancy at the time they were accepted in London, but who could, with reasonable confidence and a high turnover of staff, expect that there would be one soon (St Clair 2007, 85). This does not appear to have been the case with Bowdich though, as in August 1815 he angrily wrote to Simon

Cock, the Secretary of the Africa Committee, complaining that he had been passed over in favour of someone who was lower on the commission list but who having '[...] a mercantile interest which I had not, had a memorandum placed against his name to secure him the appointment by favour, to which I was entitled by pledge' (Bowdich 1819b, 2). This was the first, but sadly not the last time, that Bowdich was over-looked by the Africa Committee. His somewhat petulant reaction can be explained by the fact that he possessed an immature and over-sensitive nature which caused him to take quick offence at real and imagined slights.

In October 1815, having waited for approximately a year, Bowdich finally received his commission which came just a few weeks before he was expected to depart. In his pamphlet entitled *The Africa Committee* (1819) he admitted that he had hoped to obtain permission to take Sarah, and possibly his infant daughter Florence, with him but 'I was unexpectedly told, that I could not be allowed to take my wife' (Bowdich 1819b, 3-4). This must have been a bitter blow as he now faced being separated from his family for several years. We do not know the precise date he left England or when he arrived on the Gold Coast but he probably sailed aboard the store ship '*Lord Mulgrave*' that left London annually in October, in order to replenish supplies at Cape Coast Castle every January.

Unknowingly, Bowdich had joined the Africa Company just as its future was hanging in the balance. The most profitable commodity shipped by the Company had been slaves but with the abolition of the trans-Atlantic trade in 1807 and the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the Government was in the process of debating whether to abandon all the British forts and disband the Company, reform it, or take over its administration. In the previous ten years there had been widespread dissatisfaction with various aspects of the Company's conduct including the trading system which, it was felt, was incompatible with the interests of independent merchants (C.O.2/11). There was also discontent at the Company's slow progress with regard to improving African agriculture, education and exploration.

The Company had responded to these criticisms by implementing several new projects beginning in 1809, with the re-establishment of the so-called 'Governor's Garden' located approximately five miles from Cape Coast Castle which was used experimentally to cultivate New World strains of cotton and other crops (C.O.2/11). Secondly, in 1815, the Committee had belatedly appointed a teacher to instruct children in the arts of reading, writing and arithmetic and promote the benefits of education in a purpose-built school room at Cape Coast Castle (*ibid*). Finally, on the 15th December 1816, the Committee wrote to Lord Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary, stating that they were seriously debating the merits of sending representatives into the interior for the purpose of making discoveries (*ibid*).

On at least two other occasions in the ten years prior to 1816, the Africa Committee had been on the brink of dispatching personnel to explore the inland regions of the Gold Coast. In 1807 Governor George Torrane had first proposed the idea of sending a Resident to the Asante capital of Kumase. This idea had originated with Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame who, during the first Anglo/Asante Conference held in 1807 following the siege of Anomabu Fort, had requested it as a way of avoiding future conflict. It appears that this suggestion was initially approved as in December 1807 Sir James Yeo, the senior naval commander on the Coast, had witnessed an un-named officer making preparations to travel to the Asante capital, but the sudden death of Governor Torrane subsequently prevented his departure (Ward 1966, 21).

The decision to send an officer to Kumase at this time had been influenced by several pressing factors. Firstly, in the previous thirty years Asante had firmly established itself as the pre-eminent political power on the Gold Coast. Repeated incursions by its armies into neighbouring coastal states had adversely affected trade and, on one occasion, had resulted in an attack on a British fort. As a result the Company was keen to limit conflicts, protect the communities living under the walls of its forts and establish diplomatic relations with the Asantehene and his court. Secondly, the abolition of trans-Atlantic slavery necessitated a rapid switch to new and legitimate commodities such as gold, hardwoods, ivory and palm oil. Finally, the British, Danish and Dutch merchant

companies were competing with one another to secure trade monopolies with the *Asantehene* who now controlled the routes to lucrative markets situated in the interior to the north, east and west.

A revised version of this idea resurfaced nine years later following unilateral discussions between the British and Dutch Governors. In a letter dated 20th April 1816, Governor-General Herman Daendels outlined to his superiors a joint proposal to send a European Envoy to Kumase (Daendels 1815–1817 [1964], 111). The Envoy would be responsible for negotiating a general peace on a solid basis under guarantee of the English and Netherlands Governments, to open the paths to all English and Netherlands Establishments on the Coast and to ask the King of Asante's opinion on establishing an Anglo/Dutch factory on the river Ancobra (*ibid*). However, the Dutch Governor did not wait for a reply, or for the British before acting on this proposal and on Wednesday 24th April 1816, he dispatched Willem Huydecoper, a mulatto officer of Dutch/Fante parentage, to Kumase with instructions to negotiate for the Dutch only. Huydecoper arrived in Kumase on the 22nd of May 1816, and after six months of negotiations General Daendels was able to report on the 3rd December to the Dutch Director General of the Department of Trade and Colonies that;

‘[...] my ideas about the means of extending the geographical knowledge of the interior, trade, civilisation, &c, the establishment of two Lodges up the Ancobra River, and the construction of a great road to the capital of the King of Ashantee, appear to have found acceptance and to have been a matter of deliberation in England’ (*ibid*, 242).

By April 1816 Bowdich had nearly completed three months of service as a writer, but it appears that he found the enforced separation from his wife unbearable. Records show that on the 6th May, barely four months after his arrival on the Gold Coast, he applied for leave to return to England which was granted two days later. In a pamphlet published several years later he explained that ‘I could not reconcile myself to the separation from my wife, and after I had staid long enough on the coast to prove that my conduct as an officer deserved better treatment, I came home’ (Bowdich 1819(b), 4). This cannot have

been the real reason for his sudden departure, however, as in her publication of 1835 Sarah stated that she and Florence had already sailed from Liverpool in early May, aboard a trading vessel '*The Lancaster*' in order to join Bowdich on the Gold Coast. This would have resulted in husband and wife passing each other on the high seas sometime in late June or early July 1816.

Consulting the official correspondence only deepens the mystery as a letter written on the 9th May 1816, by Acting-Governor Dawson and his second in Command, Hope Smith, gives a completely different reason as to why Bowdich was required to return so suddenly.

'Mr Bowdich, a few days ago received a letter via Sierra Leone from his friends, which informed him that his presence was indispensably necessary in England. We trust, Gentlemen, you will sanction our granting him his discharge, and beg leave to recommend him in very strong terms, as he would be a desirable officer in your service. It is his intention to return to this country immediately after he gets his affairs arranged. We hope, Gentlemen, you will be favourable to him' (T.70/1601).

It is surprising therefore that there is no mention of a letter in any official correspondence or in any of Bowdich's published or unpublished documentation. Ward stated in his introduction to the third edition that 'the wording [of this letter] rather suggests that [Bowdich] was given exceptional treatment, and that the Committee might conceivably hold that he was vacating his post' (Ward 1966, 25). I suggest however, that Ward has been taken in by a dispatch that was intended, like a smokescreen, to mislead the Committee about the real reason Bowdich was granted leave to return to England.

Circumstantial evidence firmly points to the possibility that he was sent back on the pretext of having to put his private affairs in order so that he could fulfill four important objectives. Firstly, he would be able to inform the Committee in London about the dispatch of the Dutch Envoy to Kumase less than a month before. Secondly, he could be on-hand to give evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee that was gathering evidence on the future viability of the Africa Company. Thirdly, he would be able to

advance his uncle's ambitions of being promoted to Governor-in-Chief; and finally, he could further his own desire to be included in any Mission that the Committee might be persuaded to send into the interior. On his return to England in late June/early July he lost no time in making himself useful to the Secretary of the Africa Committee, who wrote to him on the 19th August, requesting information about the Dutch trade in arms and gunpowder on the Coast. Bowdich immediately complied with this and other requests which appear to have earned him a special and unprecedented minute in the records of the Africa Committee, something that the Secretary assured him would be of benefit to him in the future. Was this a veiled reference to the fact that Bowdich was in the running to be appointed a member of a British Mission?

On the 2nd September 1816, Bowdich attended the Parliamentary Select Committee and gave evidence regarding the organization of the Africa Company and his opinion of the prospective candidates for the post of Governor-in-Chief. Ten days later, on the 12th September, the Africa Committee appointed William Mollan to be Vice-President of the Council and to the command of the fort at Anomabu, positions which had previously been held by Hope Smith. This appointment suggests that the decision to promote Hope Smith had already been taken but it was not until the 18th October, that the Committee formally announced his appointment as Governor of Cape Coast Castle and Governor-in-Chief of its settlements on the Gold Coast.

Nearly one month later, on the 15th November, the decision to send a British Mission to Kumase was announced by the Committee and instructions to Governor Hope Smith were issued (see Appendix 2). Evidence suggests that Bowdich was consulted about the content of these instructions as in his pamphlet he stated that:

‘[...] the Secretary had read the instructions for this Mission to me whilst in England, and when I urged the necessity of associating something like scientific views in so novel and rich a field, not only to exculpate the Committee and to improve the character of the service, but in justice to the public, he willingly received my suggestions, and requested me to take the

instructions home and insert anything improving them upon that point'
(Bowdich 1819b, 10).

If this is correct, then Bowdich's involvement at such an early stage in shaping some of these objectives suggests that he may have already been appointed as either a member or as leader of the Mission whilst still in London. His obituary notice in the *Literary Gazette* stated that '[he] promptly sought permission to lead or accompany it [the Mission]; but the circumstances of his being a husband and a father was felt to present a reason for refusing his request, till at the urgency of his solicitation and the recollection of his talents prevailed, and he was appointed to the perilous enterprise' (1824, n.p.). Ward argued in his introduction to the third edition that '[...] it seems improbable that the Company would appoint such a very junior officer to such a difficult and responsible position as the command of the very first Embassy it had ever sent into the interior' (Ward 1966, 11/12). Ward's comment suggests that Bowdich's lack of rank alone presented the biggest obstacle to his appointment as leader; but he fails to take into account the possibility that the Africa Committee was influenced in its choice by the Africa Association, whose President Sir Joseph Banks supported ambitious and energetic young men who showed an interest in the natural sciences, languages and geography.

The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa had been founded on the 9th June 1788. The members of the Association were, like Banks, wealthy and influential men, who had a direct interest in Africa. In particular, they were keen to find new plants that could profit agriculturalists and to discover new markets that could be exploited by British manufacturers as well as gain knowledge of new products and the strange peoples who inhabited the interior (see Hallett 1964). Since its inception the Association had been instrumental in funding, organizing and promoting several expeditions to the interior of Africa starting with that of Lucas and Ledyard in 1788/89 and followed by Houghton (1790), Browne (1792), Park (1795/1805), Hornemann (1796), Nicholls (1805) and Burckhardt (1808). In Government circles the most influential advocate of exploration was the Second Secretary of the Admiralty, Sir John Barrow, an intimate friend of Banks. Barrow's enthusiasm for exploration was shared, or at least not discouraged, by Lord Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary and Henry Goulburn,

the Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office (Hallett 1964, 230). In consultation with the Africa Association two ambitious Government-funded expeditions were planned in 1815 both of which were designed to establish the course and direction of flow of the River Niger. One was organised by the Admiralty and commanded by a naval officer, Captain Tuckey, who attempted to sail up the Congo. The other, arranged by the Colonial Office and led by Major John Peddie and Captain Thomas Campbell, was to strike eastwards towards the Niger from the region of Senegambia. The timing of these two expeditions and that of the Africa Company's Mission to Kumase suggests that they may have formed a coordinated penetration of the interior of West Africa from several points of entry in much the same way as the earlier North African expeditions of Lucas and Ledyard had.

The news of Hope Smith's promotion reached the Gold Coast via the store-ship in mid-January 1817. Also on-board were the Company gifts, worth in total £335.7.0, that were to be presented by the members of the British Mission to the Asantehene on arrival in Kumase. Bowdich arrived back at Cape Coast Castle around the same time to be reunited with his wife Sarah and their daughter Florence after a separation of nearly a year and a half. Their joy was short-lived however, as Bowdich was confronted almost immediately with a disappointing setback. The *D.N.B.* simply states that 'the Council thought Bowdich too young [to lead the Mission,] it being too great a responsibility' (Westby-Gibson 2004/10, 3037). Again, it appears that Bowdich's youth and lack of experience were the sticking points. However, this belies the fact he had almost certainly fallen victim to the intrigues, politics and partisan rivalries that divided not only the Africa Committee in England but also the Council on the coast. This may go some way towards explaining why Governor Hope Smith chose four men to man the Mission instead of the three which the Committee stipulated. In effect, having seen his nephew disenfranchised of his appointment he may have added another post so as not to deprive him of his chance to be part of the Mission.

At some point in the intervening period between Bowdich's return in late January/early February and the 8th April 1817, Frederick James, Governor of James Fort, Accra wrote

to Hope Smith volunteering to lead the Mission to Kumase. It appears that James lived to regret this as on the 21st May he is reported to have said ‘[...] well if I had not been an ass I would not have volunteered on this expedition after having been advised against it’ (T.70/41). He went on to state that he had two very good reasons for offering his services: ‘The first is, I have been very badly used by the Committee, [...] and they want to take Accra Fort from me’ and the second that, ‘the Governor wished to bring the Ashantee trade to Cape Coast, and wants a direct path’ which James felt was unjust as he had been very unfortunate and wanted to bring it to his own fort at Accra (T.70/41). This evidence clearly reveals that personal interest alone motivated James to volunteer his services to lead the Mission. In contrast to Bowdich, however, he was considered to be very experienced by the members of the Council, having spent the majority of the preceding fifteen years of active service on the Gold Coast. He was also credited with having acquired extensive experience of dealing with Asante merchants who regularly traded at his fort.

The Governor-in-chief formally accepted James’s offer on the 9th April 1817, just 13 days before the Mission was due to depart for Kumase. Enclosed with his letter of acceptance were the Company’s written instructions (see Appendix 3) which reflect the overtly commercial and scientific interests which underpinned the Mission. These instructions did not include any mention of the payment of ground rent, known as a ‘note’ for the fort at Anomabu and Cape Coast Castle that had devolved to the Asantehene as a result of the defeat of Amonu, Chief of Anomabu and Adoko, Chief of Abora (also known as Chief of the Braffoes) in the invasion of 1816. This omission by the Governor implies that he knew in advance that discrepancies regarding the amount payable on these two notes had the potential to undermine the entire Mission and, as a consequence he chose to instruct James verbally and confidentially concerning his negotiations on this point. The clandestine nature of this and other orders, however, were to form the basis of the rift that later developed between James and the junior officers.

Ward correctly pointed out that the Governor did not consult James in the nomination and appointment of his Mission colleagues, something which suggests that he already

anticipated difficulties with this officer. Ward went on to argue that ‘[...] it was strange he [the Governor] should have selected Hutchison a young man, rather than someone with a good deal more than eighteen months experience on the Coast to fill the important post of Resident at Kumase’ (Ward 1966, 26). It is true that Hutchison had been commissioned in October 1815, the same time as Bowdich, but unlike him, he had been stationed since his arrival at Dixcove Fort where, within a few months he had been forced to take over as Acting-Governor due to his superior being taken ill. He had therefore gained considerable experience and proved himself in the eyes of the Council as a competent and talented employee. Henry Tedlie, the Irish assistant surgeon, was also far from being inexperienced as he had previously accompanied an expedition to Kandy [Kandi] in Sri Lanka, now modern-day Ceylon. Given this evidence, Bowdich was in effect the only appointee to the Mission who was truly untried and untested. As the Scientific Officer, he was charged with collecting information on geography, language, customs, history, music, art and architecture and therefore carried the burden of responsibility for reporting back in writing to the Council and Committee on these subjects. Despite this, however, Bowdich probably felt that he had a prior claim to lead the Mission and may well have believed it was his destiny. Ironically, he must have found comfort in the thought that as the ‘scientific officer’ he still had an important role to fulfill, one in fact which he had not only been instrumental in urging upon the Africa Committee but had written into the Mission’s objectives himself.

Part Two: The Mission (22nd April – 3rd October 1817)

At 10 o’clock on the morning of 22nd April 1817, the Mission departed from Cape Coast Castle. Accompanying the four British officers were two Company soldiers, a carpenter, bricklayer, cooper, an Asante guide, three linguists, forty-eight hammock men and eighty porters who, as well as transporting the Mission’s supplies, also carried the Company gifts intended for the Asantehene. It appears that, due to circumstances beyond the Council’s control, the Mission had been dispatched late in the season and in haste without the observance of the usual diplomatic protocols dictated by the Committee and expected by the Asante court. James admitted in a letter written well after the event on the 7th

May 1819, that he had ‘deep reservations at proceeding in such a precipitous fashion, but the Mission had been ordered to proceed without previous communication with the King even though the probable success of the undertaking depended on it’ (T.70/42). These inauspicious circumstances formed the back-drop for a difficult 28-day march into the interior (fig. 1.4), which featured two enforced halts, on days 1 and 2 at the fort of Anomabu and day 14 at Akrofrom, as the rains had made the path impassable. Occasional desertions by the porters, some of whom had been pressed into service, and frequent disagreements with the remaining number as to how far they would travel each day and the length of rest breaks, also punctuated their journey. Furthermore, Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie appear to have been capable of travelling faster and further than James and as a consequence they were periodically forced to wait for him. James ordered halts on day 4 at Paintree (Abura Dunkwa), on day 11 at Kickiwherree, and on day 17 at Doompassee, where the Mission remained for six nights to enable him to recover from an attack of fever. Whilst encamped here Bowdich observed an eclipse of Jupiter’s first satellite and a messenger was dispatched to Kumase to announce the approach of the Mission. Bowdich later accused James of keeping the content of this message and the subsequent reply secret. Whatever the truth of the matter, it appears that this incident, coupled with the frustrations of repeated delays and slow progress marked the start of the deterioration in the relationship between James and the junior officers. The Mission continued its journey into the interior stopping once more on day 25 at Assiminia before finally entering Kumase at around 2 o’clock on the afternoon of Monday 19th May.

After being welcomed by the Asantehene and his court at a magnificent state reception the members of the Mission settled into the house allotted to them. The following morning they attended their first public audience which was held in the great market place. Here, they publicly stated the purpose of their visit and James requested, as per the Governor’s instructions, that the Asantehene consider the establishment of a permanent Residency and a direct path to Cape Coast Castle. The matter of the Anomabu and Cape Coast Castle notes was raised by the Asantehene but not pressed at this meeting. Later the same day the officers were summoned to the palace in order to present the Asantehene with the Company’s gifts. On the following day (21st May), no public

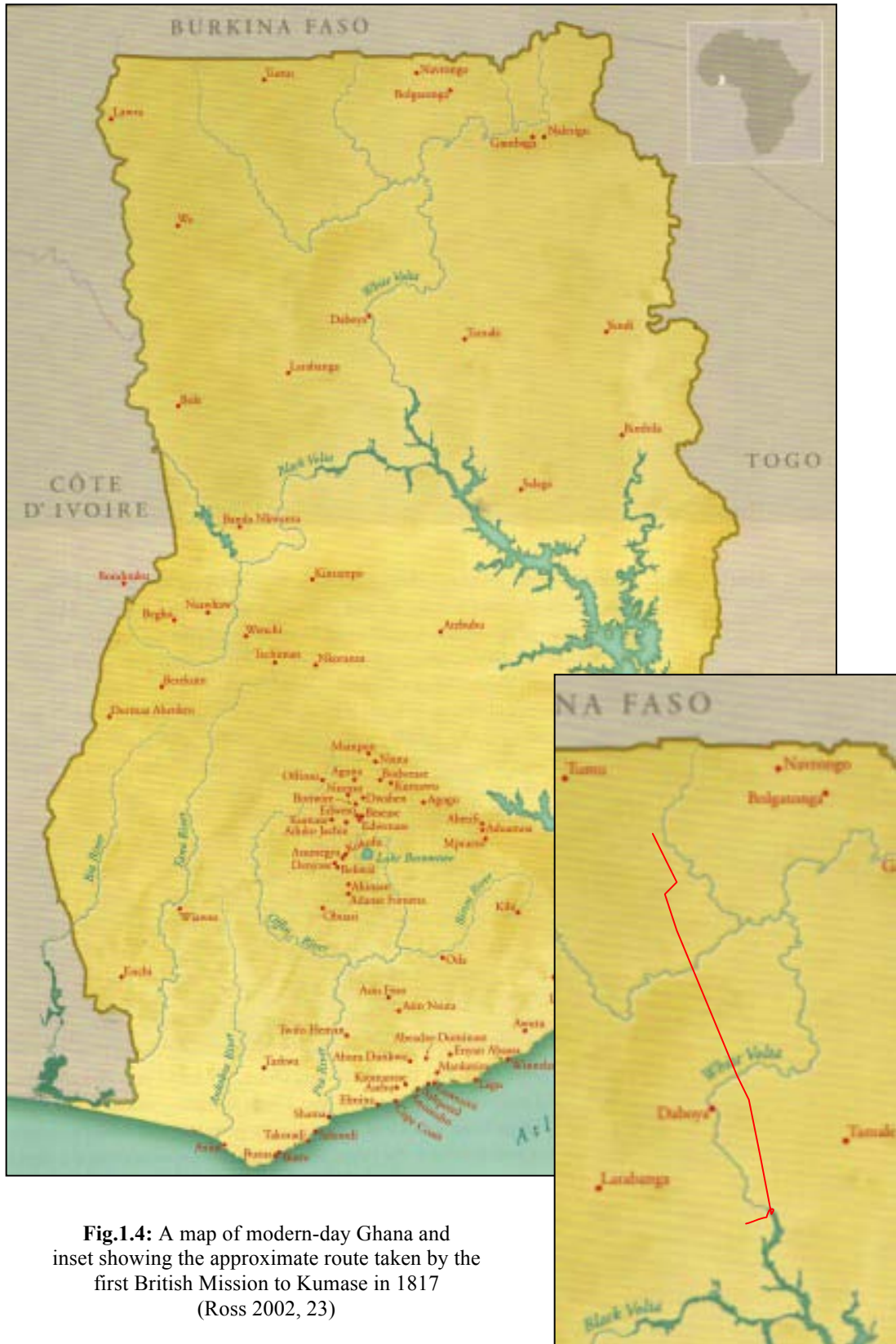


Fig.1.4: A map of modern-day Ghana and inset showing the approximate route taken by the first British Mission to Kumase in 1817 (Ross 2002, 23)

business was conducted but the Asantehene's sisters paid the officers a visit during which James gave them personal gifts of silk handkerchiefs. He later wrote to the Governor stating his intention to ask for a loan of gold from the Asantehene as the prolonged march to Kumase had exhausted the Mission's supply. Mr Tedlie informed Bowdich and Hutchison that during a private conversation with himself, James admitted that he regretted having volunteered to lead the Mission, that he was endeavouring to get a private interview with the King in order to thwart the Governor's plans to bring the Asante trade to Cape Coast Castle and he did not think they were going to accomplish a single objective as the people were very suspicious of them (T.70/41).

McLeod argued that James's ability to follow the Governor's instructions was weakened by fears for his own position and being tired, sick and irresolute he was unable to separate the Kumase expedition from his personal concerns and the possibility of gain (McLeod 1977, 86). He went on to make the point that, '[...] in this and his subsequent actions he appears much as an eighteenth-century figure, mixing personal profit and public action, willing to work a system of relationships which had evolved slowly over the years but unwilling to initiate any new arrangement of power and influence' (*ibid*). These are very important points which are equally applicable to the junior as well as the senior employees of the Africa Company as they too were forced to operate within the restrictions imposed by the same slightly corrupt system. Given this, I argue that personal and professional rivalries were replicated in microcosm in the membership of the Mission, making it an inherently unstable vehicle of diplomacy. This begs the question as to whether the Governor intentionally chose officers who were personally and professionally loyal to him and, therefore, could be relied upon to act as a check upon James and his ambitions?

During the afternoon of Thursday 22nd May, the Mission was summoned to the palace, where the Asantehene asked James to explain the two notes written by the Governor making over to him a fraction of the Company pay that had formally been received by the Chief of Anomabu, and the Chief of the Braffoes. This provoked a general uproar of the Asante assembly who called for the immediate reinvasion of the Fante states. James

failed to convince them that it was not the Governor, but the chiefs who had requested these notes to be made out and deducted from their pay. At first James offered simply to convey the Asantehene's objections back to the Governor but, when this suggestion was ignored he reluctantly proposed sending a messenger. At this point Bowdich intervened and accused James of keeping him and his colleagues in the dark regarding this and other instructions and declared that he would take it upon himself to act in the affair. He stated that, in contrast to James who wanted to return to the coast as quickly as possible, he and his colleagues would remain until the affair was settled to the Asantehene's satisfaction.

Following this dramatic turn of events, Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie immediately wrote a co-authored dispatch to the Governor and Council informing them of James's duplicity and of his stated intention to return as soon as possible without securing any of the Mission's objectives. They also accused him of deliberately delaying the Mission's arrival at Kumase, of treating them as pawns and of painting a misleadingly grey picture of their hopes of success. Other passages betray anxieties about what James might report of their conduct and in justifying their actions they attempted to head off any possible charge of mutiny by retrospectively seeking approval of their actions. Finally, they concluded by soliciting their recall in order to preserve their honour as officers and gentlemen (T.70/41).

James also wrote separately to the Governor on the 22nd May giving his version of the day's events. He referred openly in his correspondence to the verbal instructions he received regarding the two notes and stated that as a consequence of knowing Hope Smith's feelings on the subject, he had not offered to write officially to the Governor. He went on to ask for clarification about how much the Council intended he should consult the junior officers accompanying the Mission and declared emphatically that he could not act under Mr Bowdich. James finished his report by issuing a grim warning that nothing would satisfy the Asantehene but the full amount of the notes and a refusal on the Governor's part to reissue them would not only result in the defeat of every object of the Mission but would put their lives in danger (T.70/41).

Sometime during the evening the officers were summoned again to the palace and asked if they would swear an oath as to their friendly intentions towards the Asantehene which they agreed to do. In her publication of 1835 Sarah claimed that they were actually led out to execution; but a friendly voice warned Mr Bowdich of their danger (Lee 1835, 175). Interestingly, Bowdich made no mention of this tip-off either in his published account, official correspondence or his final report which suggests that it may be a fabrication. Since their arrival in Kumase the officers had been the subjects of intense and mounting suspicion. However, tensions were to some extent ameliorated on the 23rd of May when they swore an oath (by laying their hands three times on the Koran) in front of the Asantehene, his linguists and his Muslim advisors, that they meant no harm and had good intentions.

At a morning meeting held on Saturday 24th May the subject of the notes was discussed again. In a co-authored dispatch written by the junior officers to the Governor they reported that another stormy scene occurred during which Bowdich for the second time felt compelled to intervene after an ineffective attempt at appeasement by James. In the afternoon James and his colleagues had a private audience with the Asantehene, during which negotiations continued. During this meeting James tried to reason with the Asantehene but to no avail and so Bowdich announced that the members of the Mission would swear again, but this time on their swords, that they had good intentions. He followed up this dramatic act with a long speech in which he reassured the Asantehene that the Governor would settle the issue of the notes. This speech was reportedly received with approbation and applause by those in attendance and from this point on Bowdich effectively assumed command of the Mission. In hindsight it appears that James's personal ineffectiveness, corruption and torpor provided Bowdich with the perfect opportunity to seize the initiative not only for expediency's sake, but possibly as a means of showing the Council how wrong they had been to have deprived him of the command in the first place. In effect, his actions were motivated by a personal bid to save their lives, to save the Mission and to save face.

Having experienced several delays the dispatches written by the officers from the date of their arrival were finally sent on the 29th May 1817. In the interim period little in terms of diplomatic activity took place. On the 1st of June, James suffered a severe relapse of fever which lasted several days and on the 11th Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie attended the *Adae* Custom without him. This was an important public rite that occurred twice in every successive period of 42 days. The two ceremonies were known as the Big or Sunday *Adae* (*Adae kese* or *Adae Kwesidae*) and the Wednesday *Adae* (*Wukudae* also sometimes known as *Kupadakuo*). During these events the Asantehene sat in state to greet his chiefs and captains and dispense royal *largesse*. Despite receiving regular gifts of food, gold dust and palm wine from the Asantehene and members of his court, it appears that James still applied to him for a loan of 12oz of gold to meet subsistence needs, something that Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie only became aware of on or around the 3rd of June. Late during the night of the 13th June the Asantehene sent for the officers, but only Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie attended as James was still reportedly unwell. During this meeting the Asantehene requested them to write a letter on his behalf asking the Governor for the price of guns and other trade goods. This was probably a diversion, as in their absence James was clandestinely attended by the Asantehene's chief linguist who discussed terms with him for the loan of gold.

Preserved copies of the official correspondence show that the negotiations surrounding this loan were protracted and on the 15th of June James had another private interview with the Asantehene in order to repeat his request for a loan. This meeting and a subsequent one held at night on the same day, aroused considerable suspicion among the junior officers and provoked a written protest from them in which they accused James of 'dishonourable purposes, and acting unfaithful to an honourable trust' (T.70/41). This alluded to the fact that they thought James's request of a loan unjustified and hints at their suspicions that he had used the occasion to discuss diverting Asante trade to Accra instead of Cape Coast. As a consequence of the renewed accusations, James again wrote to the Governor explaining his actions, complaining about the insupportable situation he found himself in and requesting that he urgently recall either Bowdich or himself.

A series of internal memoranda written during this period attests to the deteriorating and increasingly acrimonious state of relations between James and the junior officers. A row blew up after the junior officers requested he dismiss the hammock men who were a considerable drain on the Mission's resources. James refused stating that it was contrary to the Governor's instructions. Timing alone suggests that this request was probably aimed at preventing James from returning to Cape Coast prematurely. Evidence also indicates that the strained relations between James and the other officers may have contributed to him requesting a personal loan of gold. A dispatch written by Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie to the Governor on the 3rd June 1817 contains the following statement, '[...] we continue to subsist ourselves of the gold the King dashed us, which is reduced by Mr James having borrowed Mr Tedlie's tho' he declined our general offer' (T.70/41). This indicates that either James had been perverse in refusing to use the gold that was offered or the junior officers were actively manipulating the situation in Kumase in order to make James's position as leader untenable.

At 1 o'clock in the afternoon of the 16th June the Mission was summoned to attend the Asantehene. The junior officers sat apart from James and publicly accused him of being a traitor and of not consulting them about the loan of gold. Passages in the official correspondence make clear that Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie had gathered evidence of James's actions by spying on him. A journal entry dated 19th June demonstrates that James was aware that his fellow officers were undertaking unauthorized excursions, as he mentions that Hutchison inexplicably went out after dark on the 16th June. These covert observations stopped abruptly, however, when two days later Tedlie was arrested and taken to the palace by an Asante captain who stated that he had found him a good distance on the road to Cape Coast (T.70/41). When questioned by the Asantehene about whether he had a compass on his person Tedlie truthfully asserted that he did not and the matter was dropped. Given the circumstances, I believe that Hutchison and Tedlie were both clandestinely meeting Asante traders in order to pass correspondence to them for delivery to the Governor at Cape Coast. This possibility is also strengthened by the fact that the Governor alerted Bowdich in a letter written on the 21st June, that an Asante

captain stationed at Paintree was intercepting correspondence carried by traders from Kumase on the orders of the Asantehene (T.70/41).

Following Tedlie's detention, the officers were effectively put under house arrest by the Asantehene as Bowdich noted that 'after this we seldom went out' (Bowdich 1819, 74). The series of abbreviated extracts which appear in the official correspondence bear witness to the fact that this was a particularly unproductive and tense period. Their virtual confinement to the Residency prohibited them from carrying out many of the Mission's objectives and the only respite was their public attendance at the periodic *Adae* Custom and visits from authorized Asante personnel who simply called on them to pay their respects. Interestingly, this enforced inaction did not prevent James from visiting Odumata (Adum Ata (1752-188), one of the four principal Asante captains, on the 2nd of July to conclude the purchase of an undisclosed number of elephant tusks (T.70/41).

Finally, on Saturday 5th July, after a long absence of 38 days, the messengers from Cape Coast Castle returned with written instructions from the Governor. The number of days it took for messengers to travel between Kumase and Cape Coast varied considerably. A number of factors such as the season, the state of the road and the number of designated bad days (*dabone*) on which messengers were prohibited from travelling as part of personal and state ritual observances all affected the length of the journey. When the dispatches were opened it was discovered that James was recalled with immediate effect and Bowdich appointed to conduct the Mission. The obstacle of the notes had also been removed as the Governor had replaced them with two new ones for the full amount. Over the next week preparations for James's imminent departure provoked another squabble with Bowdich regarding whether he should be permitted to take the silk travelling flag or the residency's bunting one with him on the return journey. The argument was eventually resolved by James who, in order to avoid a public dispute, surrendered his claim to both and opted to have a flag made. James finally departed Kumase for Cape Coast on Saturday 12th July, with an escort of five hundred Asante, headed by the Asantehene's favourite maternal nephew, Adu Bradie.

On Wednesday 9th July, Bowdich wrote to the Governor informing him of the events of his first separate audience with the Asantehene. He described how he presented each of the objectives of the Mission in turn and confidently pledged that he could deliver ‘the accomplishment of the Residency, the Education and the Treaty’ (Bowdich 1819, 84). He went on to state that a letter, written in the Asantehene’s presence, had been sent detailing another outstanding dispute with the people of Comenda (Komenda) which threatened to delay the ratification of the treaty. In this letter the Asantehene requested that the Governor settle the dispute and informed him that he was sending his nephew to Cape Coast to help mediate in the negotiations. Bowdich made a point of telling the Governor that he had argued about this issue until the Asantehene eventually retired, actions that were in stark contrast to James’s previously ineffectual attempts.

He went on to inform the Governor that in his second private interview he had obtained permission for two of the three sets of remaining hammock men to leave Kumase. He had decided to dismiss them partly to reduce costs but also because they were becoming increasingly difficult to control. Bowdich is on record as having inflicted a dozen lashes on one of these men in order to keep discipline (T.70/41). On the subject of physical violence Fabian has observed that,

‘[...] the pressures of self-discipline and self-control inevitably left [European explorers] little tolerance for the constant challenges, playful and serious, that Africans put up against their authority [and many] resorted to physical violence – trying to match self-control with the control of others in order to accomplish their Mission’ (Fabian 2000, 277).

In Bowdich’s case, this appears to have been an isolated incident and, despite the fact that over the next two months he was to have his authority repeatedly challenged by the Asantehene, the Assembly and various Asante officials, he refused to have offenders physically punished or executed, preferring instead to set an example of clemency. In effect, for Bowdich self control was firmly rooted in Christian morals and values and outward displays of national character. As will be shown, the twin requirements of performing one’s duty to the Governor, Company, King and Country, and preserving

one's honour as an Officer and a Gentleman were strategically used by Bowdich on a number of occasions to bring about a successful conclusion to the Mission.

On the 3rd of August, the Asantehene's messenger, Okra Nyame, returned to Kumase from Cape Coast complaining of his treatment by the Governor who, he claimed, neglected him during his stay at British headquarters. This accusation caused the Asantehene to be distant with Bowdich, who immediately challenged the messenger's version of events and wrote to the Governor requesting particulars of the man's treatment and the presents he had been issued with. On the 10th August Bowdich conducted a search of his baggage in front of the Asantehene and discovered some gifts hidden away. In a dispatch written to the Governor on the 19th August Bowdich reported that he used this and other incidents to reassert the profile of the Mission and demand an audience with the Asantehene to discuss the treaty. This was necessary because the negotiations concerning the settlement of the Komenda dispute were taking too long and the Asante Assembly were becoming increasingly distracted by developments in the neighbouring state of Gyaaman, (in today's eastern Ivory Coast) which had revolted (see Britwum 1974, 229-239; McCaskie 2007, 1-25).

Collins, in his treatment of the Mission, argued that from this point on, Bowdich's prime concern was to flee Kumase, but he veiled his feelings in the guise of duty and stately principles of humanity and justice (Collins 1962, 128). I disagree with this interpretation on the grounds that Collins misinterpreted Bowdich actions as being motivated principally by fear. Instead, I suggest that Bowdich was well aware that the imminent threat of war promised a protracted delay of months, if not years, for the ratification of the treaty. This possibility made him anxious to avoid all further procrastination on the Asantehene's part and the potential for failure made him impatient to ratify the treaty and depart from Kumase. As a result, he implemented a strategy whereby he re-asserted the limits of his duty and used the threat of departure in the final month of his stay to hasten the ratification process and bring about a successful and timely conclusion to the Mission.

Bowdich got to put this strategy into practice for the first time just a few days later when his repeated requests for an audience were granted. On the 20th and 21st of August he read out the draft treaty article by article to the Asantehene and his Council for their consideration. On the 23rd of August, he was summoned again to appear before the Asantehene and the Assembly of captains to read out every article of the draft treaty, each of which was debated by the gathering. The Asantehene attempted to delay things for a third time by suddenly requesting that another outstanding dispute with the people of Amissa be settled before the treaty could be ratified. Bowdich countered it by stating that he would not recognize this new dispute, that negotiations were at an end and that the Mission would leave Kumase. Bowdich and his colleagues abruptly retired from the negotiations and during the following three hours issued several *ultimata* through various channels requesting an audience with the Asantehene whilst they prepared to depart. Finally, Bowdich was received at the palace by the Asantehene, who apologized, reassured him about the treaty and begged him to wait a little longer until all his captains arrived for the Yam Custom.

Collins argued that this was tantamount to Bowdich throwing a tantrum (Collins 1962, 131). This is not only belittling, as it seeks to reduce his actions to those of an unreasonable child, but it is also unsubstantiated. Bowdich came from a self-consciously 'polite' society in which a man's word, once given, was binding but on this occasion he had been repeatedly ignored and misled by the Asantehene. Unbeknownst to the Asantehene this was exactly the sort of treatment that touched a raw nerve with Bowdich who, as I have previously suggested, was pre-disposed to be sensitive to slights and reacted petulantly when confronted with them.

The following morning Bowdich and his colleagues were informed that the Asantehene had left in the night for Berramang (Bremen), the royal country residence located five miles to the north east on the Sallagha (Salaga) road. Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie were invited to join him there the following day and on arrival enjoyed a European-style banquet. That evening, on their return to Kumase, Bowdich discovered that dispatches and letters from the Governor had been retained by Adu Bradie's messenger. Again,

timing suggests that this banquet had been put on in order to create a diversion that would enable this correspondence to arrive in Kumase without the officers knowledge. This begs the question whether there were people in Kumase who could read the dispatches besides the Bowdich and his companions? Given that the off-spring of Anglo/Fante marriages and some employees were taught to read and write English either in the school at Cape Coast Castle or as part of a private education in England, means that it cannot be ruled out as a possibility (for an in-depth study of Anglo/Fante marriages see Priestley 1969). There followed another diplomatic stand-off between Bowdich, who demanded the dispatches, and the royal courtiers, who had intercepted them. Having issued numerous demands for the dispatches, all of which were ignored, Bowdich proceeded to launch a strong protest but on finding the messenger at Adu Bradie's house he successfully recovered them.

Collins suggested that, by this stage in proceedings, the beginnings of panic were visible in Bowdich's reaction and that 'the elementary obligations of civil and diplomatic conduct in a foreign capital became as nothing in the frenzy which now possessed the leader of the British Mission' (Collins 1962, 134). Again, I believe that Bowdich's reaction was completely understandable given the circumstances. Dispatches often contained confidential and sensitive information and, as such, he was right to defend the integrity of the Company's correspondence which was in danger of being compromised possibly with fatal consequences for himself and his fellow officers. As it happened, the dispatch did contain highly sensitive information in the guise of a letter from the Governor detailing the settlement of the Komenda dispute.

The following day (Thursday 28th August) the officers were summoned to the palace and the affair of the dispatches discussed. The messenger declared that the Governor had ordered that the correspondence be delivered to the Asantehene, something that Bowdich denied. The Asantehene requested that Bowdich swear on his sword that he had not altered any part of the Governor's letter, which he did. In his reply written on the 29th August, Bowdich stated that there followed a debate about the terms of the settlement which were eventually agreed and he enclosed a copy of the preliminaries to the general

Treaty which had been signed on the same day by the Asantehene. He adds that he had the Asantehene's assurance that the treaty would be formally executed in six days time when all the tributaries would be present in Kumase to celebrate the Yam Custom.

On the 30th August, however, Bowdich received another letter from the Governor, (written on 17th) which advised him of an unpleasant incident that potentially posed another threat to the ratification of the treaty. On the 15th August, Aboagye, the brother of the Asantehene's messenger, had been clapped in irons and held in a cell at Cape Coast Castle for not observing the customary mark of respect when passing the Castle gate and of striking the sentinel. Sometime during the night of the 16th/17th August this man had allegedly hanged himself in the cells. Messengers quickly relayed details of this incident to Kumase which resulted in a temporary deterioration in relations as Bowdich stated that '[...] the insolence of the lower orders [...] became insufferable [and] they proceeded even to pelting us with stones' (Bowdich 1819, 119). On the following day Bowdich had an audience with the Asantehene at which the death of this man and the behaviour of the residents of Kumase were discussed. The Asantehene accepted the Governor's version of events and offered to behead any Asante whose conduct had offended Bowdich. On the 4th September the business regarding the false accusations made by the Asantehene's messenger, Okra Nyame, was also settled in the Mission's favour.

On the 5th September, Bowdich witnessed the tributary chiefs arriving in Kumase for the Yam Custom. In a dispatch to the Governor he described how, during the afternoon of Saturday 6th September, he and his fellow officers attended the Asantehene who sat in state in the great market place, and heard the chiefs make their public oaths of allegiance. At some point the treaty was discussed and two palace officials and two senior captains were deputized to swear on behalf of the Asante Assembly. On Sunday 7th September, the Anglo/Asante treaty was formally ratified by the Asantehene (see Appendix 4). Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie processed to the palace where Bowdich declared the objects of the Mission and the treaty and swore on his sword that he declared the truth.

The Asantehene also swore an oath in front of his wives, after which the ceremonies associated with the celebration of the Yam Custom continued.

On Monday [8th September] the treaty was ratified by Kwasi Boaten, the Dwabinhene (Juabenhene d.1839), and formally ratified by the designated representatives of the Council. Bowdich presented Hutchison with written instructions regarding the Residency and issued several messages to the Asantehene reminding him of his promise to let the Mission depart for Cape Coast. Bowdich had previously entered into negotiations with the Asantehene on this point and had reported in a dispatch to the Governor written on the 31st August that '[...] after the settlement of the Komenda dispute, the King requested me to wait ten days, which were afterwards extended to fifteen [...] this time expired on Saturday (13th September) but the King said that we must not go until Monday (15th September)' (Bowdich 1819, 135).

As fate would have it, on Monday 15th September Bowdich received a letter from the Governor advising him that his wife and two-year old daughter were unwell with the seasoning fever (a term that described various illnesses including malaria, yellow fever, dysentery and sleeping sickness). This ominous news undoubtedly played an important role in the events that followed and, I argue, lay at the heart of Bowdich's subsequent actions. In a dispatch written by him to the Governor dated 16th September 1817, he described how the Asantehene did not send for him until six o'clock in the evening (of the 15th) and refused to let the Mission depart before he had time to assemble suitable gifts. He then asked Bowdich to stay until Wednesday (17th September). Bowdich attempted to make the Asantehene swear to this but he refused and then stated that he would let them leave the following Monday (22nd September). Bowdich was once again faced with the choice of either remaining in Kumase for a further six days or forcing the issue. Given the circumstances, I suggest that his sense of personal pride demanded that he save face and anxieties about his family's well-being also contributed to the mounting sense of desperation he felt at the prospect of a further delay.

Another game of brinkmanship ensued with Bowdich threatening to leave, as before, without permission. He even went so far as to offer to send for the treaty and tear it up if

the Asantehene regretted agreeing to it. Having cajoled, implored and threatened by turns to no effect for two hours, Bowdich felt it was necessary to at least try to leave. He related how the Mission had scarcely proceeded fifty yards before they were attacked by a crowd and their baggage and flag seized. A scuffle ensued during which the officers regained some of their articles and retired to the Residency. Fearing for their lives, Bowdich sent a message to the Asantehene requesting help which duly arrived. He made clear to the officials, however, that he knew the Asantehene had had them forcibly detained, and that as a consequence they considered themselves his prisoners.

In the same dispatch Bowdich related how, by dawn the following morning, (Tuesday 16th September) the rest of their property had been returned, but he refused to receive it. They were visited by a series of senior palace officials who presented them with gold dust, alcohol and food on behalf of the Asantehene. Bowdich persisted in refusing everything short of an audience. At this point the Cape Coast messengers declared that the Governor had sent them as a check upon the officers and that Bowdich was not following the Governor's instructions in talking so to the King and not waiting his pleasure. Bowdich responded by depriving them of their canes (a badge of office carried by all messengers when on duty) and threatening to put them in irons. A short time later the officers, dressed in plain clothes, were conducted to the palace. Collins described Bowdich as being in a 'heroic sulk' at this point but I believe he thought they were in genuine danger of being detained in Kumase for an unspecified length of time (Collins 1962, 137). Huydecoper, the Dutch Envoy who had visited Kumase in 1816, had been detained at the Asantehene's pleasure for nearly a year and was only allowed to return to Elmina a few weeks before the British Mission arrived. This suggests that such delays were not only occurring because of Asante beliefs concerning good and bad days for travelling, but constituted a kind of hostage-taking strategy.

Fabian, who published a study of German expeditions to Central and Western Africa during the mid-nineteenth century, suggested that '[...] the constant pressure to compete with the representatives of other nations and to rush through their assignments [...] drove some [Europeans] to the brink of madness or, at any rate, made them behave in ways toward [...] Africans that strike us as somehow demented' (Fabian 2000, 277). This is

an accurate reflection of the circumstances Bowdich was facing and of his reaction to them. However, two other factors not mentioned by Fabian may also have influenced his, and possibly others, behaviour in similar situations. Firstly, Bowdich was very conscious of the fact that, as a representative of the Africa Company, he was also a proxy of the Crown and hence someone who was entitled to the same attention and respect as other principal chiefs and native princes. In trying to maintain this profile, however, he was periodically obliged to reassert his authority with the Asantehene and his court. He was also well aware that if the Asantehene failed to show the members of the Mission due respect and honour then they quickly became objects of derision, and hence fair game for the general populace as had happened on at least one occasion. Secondly, the tension that built up as a result of hiding emotions and stress levels and the requirement to maintain a public display of national character was something Bowdich and his colleagues were constantly negotiating. Keeping up a façade was especially important as they were, to some extent, asking the Asantehene to base his judgment of the British and the Africa Company on their ability to maintain their dignity and keep their word.

In the interests of reconciliation the Asantehene entreated Bowdich to settle their dispute and requested the officers to drink with him, to shake hands and resume wearing their uniforms. Bowdich took the opportunity to renew the subject of their departure and the Asantehene repeated his request that they stay until Monday (22nd September), something Bowdich then acquiesced to. During the interim period he attended the *Adae* ceremony held on Sunday (21st September) during which he formally presented Thomas Hutchison, the first British Resident, to the Asantehene and his court. On the evening of Monday 22nd September the British Mission was given a royal send off but, as it was already dark, they only travelled a few miles to the satellite village of Ogogoo. Bowdich's ten-day march back to Cape Coast was hampered by heavy rains which made the paths difficult to negotiate and the rivers dangerous to cross. On several occasions he became separated from Tedlie and the porters but he pushed on determined to reach headquarters as quickly as possible and eventually arrived back at Cape Coast Castle on Friday 3rd October, 165 days after the Mission had set out.

On his return he was greeted with the news that Florence, his two year old daughter had died at some point whilst he was *en route* from Kumase. Sarah later poignantly related the details of her daughter's funeral in a chapter entitled 'A Fragment' which was published as part of her reminiscences of life on the Gold Coast (Lee 1835, 248-250). Her own illness was to continue for at least another three months and it appears that Bowdich's health too was impaired (*ibid*, 130). Sometime in late February 1818, they set sail for England aboard the Company store ship accompanied by Hope Smith's son (the first of three children that resulted from a relationship with Ama Akwa (c. 1789-1842) a Fante woman also known as Fanny Smith), as well as two black servants and a Gennet cat that had been presented to Hutchison on behalf of the King of England (McCaskie personal communication, 2010). His second sudden and unscheduled departure can be explained by the fact that he wanted to speedily publish his account of the Mission, which he partly wrote whilst becalmed on the voyage home. Having sailed to Gabon first to load a cargo of ebony and red wood at Empoongwa, Thomas and Sarah eventually arrived at Penzance sometime in late June or early July 1818. In the interval, the Governor and Council wrote a dispatch to the Africa Company in which they praised the manner that Bowdich 'by his talents, energy, perseverance and prudence,' surmounted obstacles that seemed invincible and went on to state that 'whatever may be the extent of our future intercourse with the interior, the foundation must certainly be attributed to him' [T.70/41].

Part Three: Bowdich's Account of the Mission

The publication of Bowdich's account in 1819 contributed to a growing literature on West Africa that included publications written by 'old coasters' such as Archibald Dalzel (1793), and Henry Meredith (1812), both of whom had been officers in the African Company and former colleagues of Hope Smith. The most significant impetus, however, had come from explorers such as James Bruce (1790) and Mungo Park (1799/1815). Park, in particular had become a celebrity when his first volume excited the popular imagination and aroused interest in the work of African exploration. It is clear that Bowdich drew personal inspiration from Park as he cited and referenced him frequently in his own publication, possibly in order to create parallels between the two men in the

minds of his readers. In writing and publishing an account of the Mission Bowdich hoped to accomplish several things. Firstly he wanted to establish himself as a scientific explorer in the same vein as Park before him. Secondly, he hoped that it would bring him fame and open the doors of respected savants in both England and Europe. This was very important if he was to establish his reputation and secure new sources of patronage to continue his exploration of Africa. Thirdly, he hoped it would make him wealthy. No doubt these desires motivated him to gather as much information as possible on all aspects of Asante culture as this would provide the raw material and generate the income upon which he planned to live on his return to Europe. He also collected a small assemblage of artefacts whilst in Kumase which literally and figuratively could be made to illustrate his experiences and promote interest in and funding for further exploration.

The recent re-discovery of Bowdich's official report has enabled a direct comparison to be made between its contents and those of his published account (see Table 1). This analysis has revealed that the official report, which itself consists of seven separate reports, constituted the drafts for a number of chapters which appear in Bowdich's published account. The comparative analysis also revealed important clues as to when these drafts were written and how his text was constructed. Bowdich sub-divided his published account into two parts, the first of which describes the events of the Mission. It is primarily based on edited extracts copied from the official correspondence that was generated during the officers Residency in Kumase. It is important to note that Bowdich selectively edited the correspondence that is reproduced in his published account, especially that which concerns James. In his introduction to the third edition Ward used this to undermine Bowdich's veracity as an author on the basis that he presents a skewed version of events and makes the case that,

[...] the point of printing, heading, date, superscription and signature is to guarantee authenticity: it is a way of saying, this is the account we wrote on the very day, when the events and our reflections on them were fresh; this is what we felt at the time. But if we find that the text is not as written on the

Table 1: Comparative analysis of the official report and Bowdich's published account

Official Report			Published Account		
Report Heading	No of Pages	Date	Chapter Heading	No of Pages	Comment
Route to Coomassie	50	21/11/1818	The Objects and Departure of the Mission	11	Copied from the official Mission correspondence
			The Route and Reception of the Mission	28	
			Proceedings and Incidents until the Third Dispatch to Cape Coast Castle	59	Probably written after June 1818, using the official Mission correspondence
			Proceedings and Incidents until the Signing of the Preliminaries to a General Treaty	17	Probably written after June 1818, using the official Mission correspondence
			Proceedings and Incidents until the Ratification of a General Treaty	13	Possibly written after June 1818, using the official Mission correspondence
			Proceedings and Incidents until the completion of the Mission and its return to Cape Coast Castle	30	Possibly written after June 1818, using the official Mission correspondence
Geography Report	90	27/01/1818	Geography	67	
History Report	41		History	24	Footnotes added to published version
Constitutions and Laws of the Kingdom of Ashantee	14		Constitution and Laws	9	
Superstitions Report	24	02/01/1818	Superstitions	13	Long footnote on Aggy beads added to published version
			Customs	30	Probably written between February 1818 and March 1819.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of the official report and Bowdich's published account

Official Report			Published Account		
Report Heading	No of Pages	Date	Chapter Heading	No of Pages	Comment
			Architecture, Arts and Manufactures	11	Probably written between February 1818 and March 1819.
			Climate, Population, Revenue, City, Market	15	Probably written between February 1818 and March 1819.
Trade Report (entitled Commerce)	25	Feb/1818	Trade	14	Some footnotes added to published version
Language	20		Language	17	Probably written between February 1818 and March 1819, translations missing from Report.
Music	14		Music	17	Probably written between February 1818 and January 1819, translations missing from Report. Report draft finishes abruptly.
			Materia Medica		Provided by Dr Tedlie between 3 rd October 1817-September 1818
			Hutchison's Diary		Provided by Mr Hutchison Between 3 rd October 1817-March 1819
			Sketch of Gaboon	41	Probably written between March 1818 and March 1819.
			Suggestions for Future Missions	31	Probably written between February 1818 and March 1819.

very day, but edited and rearranged some weeks later, the guarantee of authenticity vanishes, and so does some of our confidence in the author' (Ward 1966, 16).

Ward's emphasis on the conventional guarantees of epistemological authenticity in this passage highlights the fact he was concerned primarily with establishing the truth surrounding Bowdich's usurpation of James as Mission leader and less interested in the truthfulness of his observations of Asante culture. Ward implicitly negated his own argument, however, when he stated that 'the rearrangement is made only in passages of comment, and does not affect the accuracy of the narrative' (Ward 1966,16). In effect, Bowdich related the events of the Mission accurately but misrepresented the facts of the case concerning James and his recall. In light of this, I argue that Bowdich's anecdotes, descriptions and observations regarding Asante personalities and culture are, for the most part, unaffected (see chapter V for a further discussion).

In his published account Bowdich interwove the edited correspondence with his own anecdotes, descriptions and observations which were originally recorded in his personal journal and his official report. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the recording of events and observations was erratic throughout the residency of the Mission. During the first month Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie co-wrote a series of five lengthy dispatches that went into minute detail concerning James and their suspicions about his behaviour. During the very tense period between the 29th May and the 5th July when the Mission was internally divided and the Asantehene had confined the officers to the Residence pending the Governor's reply concerning the notes, it appears that Bowdich filled his time by writing up his observations in his journal. Once he was promoted, however, the need to keep such detailed records was to some extent removed. In a letter written by him to the Governor on the 12th July 1817, he declared that he would '[...] henceforth discontinue to copy my rude diary before submitted, [as] it is only a dull register of disgusting circumstances, illnesses, human sacrifices, and ceremonious visits' (Bowdich 1819, 89). Instead, he stated 'I will abridge some passages of my diary, merely to give an idea of the nature of our conversations, and the biography of the leading men' (*ibid*). This suggests that he based some of the content of his official report on his dispatches and journal

entries as the same descriptions, observations and reports of court gossip and history appear in this narrative as well as in the final version of his published account.

The frequent intrusion of this anecdotal material is, however, confusing and misleading. For example, the extract taken from Tedlie's journal relating to how he exhibited and explained his surgical instruments, medicines and botanical books to the Asantehene is inserted at a point in the published text (pp. 97-100) which implies that this interview took place sometime between 12th July and the 10th of August, when in reality it actually occurred months earlier on Sunday 25th May 1817. This combination as a composition technique was a characteristic trait of travelogues written in this period but it also shares marked similarities with Sarah Bowdich Lee's method of story-telling. The compositional strategies used to compile the text and the extent to which Sarah may have collaborated in the creation of her husband's published account is explored further in chapter V.

At the beginning of Part II Bowdich outlined and defended in print the methodology he used to collect and corroborate some of the information he gathered during the Mission.

'I shall pass over a mass of memoranda recorded on individual report, and only select such, wherein Moors and natives, unknown to each other, have agreed; describing their travels in their own way, without my questions anticipating or directing them. These routes and observations were further confirmed by the evidence of children, recently arrived as slaves from the various countries, whose artless replies decided my credence' (Bowdich 1819, 161).

By comparing what he was told with the reports of others, Bowdich effectively used a technique that has become standard practice amongst ethnographers today in order to substantiate information. He also compared what he was told with other travellers accounts such as Bosman (1705), Barbot (1688/1732) and Isert (1788) in order to corroborate evidence before publishing it. This demonstrates that he understood the importance of enquiry and verification to strengthen and support the claims he made in his publication. In another passage he acknowledged some of the difficulties he

encountered in trying to gather information which he stated ‘[...] requires much labour and patience, both to make a native comprehend, and to be comprehended by him’ (Bowdich 1819, 230). This is an important admission as it demonstrates that although Bowdich probably knew and used some Fante words and phrases that he had learned during his time on the coast he was by no means proficient in Twi, the language spoken by the Asante. Given this, how did Bowdich communicate with informants?

His account makes clear that during negotiations with the Asantehene and his court, he and his Mission colleagues were forced to use personnel, such as Quarshie, the Fante head linguist from James Fort, Accra, who interpreted and mediated all verbal exchanges. It is probably safe to assume that the same personnel also performed a similar service for Bowdich when he was gathering information for his official reports. Despite occupying trusted positions within the forts, these linguists often had personal and familial loyalties that conflicted with their employer’s interests. Quarshie, for instance was discovered by Bowdich to be privately employed by James as his personal gold-taker which cast considerable doubt over his trustworthiness during negotiations. As a consequence, it is highly likely that a small proportion of the information Bowdich elicited from informants, especially of a controversial or sensitive nature, was selectively inflated, edited or entirely lost in translation. This should not detract however, from the fact that he was the first European to conduct such enquiries and, it should be noted that similar difficulties were also experienced by other visitors to Kumase.

In contrast, when describing technological procedures such as gold-casting and constructing houses from swish (mud tempered with straw) Bowdich took pains to ensure that the reader was aware that he actually observed them first-hand and was therefore describing them from life. Bowdich was also interested in collecting information that would allow him to piece together the social structure of Asante and the grammatical structure of some of the West African languages he encountered. In addition to this he wanted to construct an accurate geographical map and establish the boundaries of Kingdoms and States in the interior and build a comprehensive knowledge of the fauna and flora of the region.

The chapters which make up the second part of Bowdich's published account reflect the scale and scope of his enquiries and the chapter headings are identical to those of the official reports that he was charged, as the scientific officer, with writing by the Africa Committee. He also included extracts from Henry Tedlie's journal and reproduces in full his official medical report which appears as Chapter XI 'Materia Medica and Diseases.' A large extract from Thomas Hutchison's journal is also reproduced as Chapter XII and details events that occurred whilst he was Resident in Kumase from the date of the Mission's departure until his return to Cape Coast Castle on 4th of February 1818. He also republished, as Appendix I, an extract taken from Henry Meredith's book (1812) which described the siege of Anomabu Fort and the first Anglo/Asante conference that took place in the town in 1807.

The inclusion of Hutchison and Tedlie's journal extracts may reflect Bowdich's desire to give these gentlemen, who had shared all the deprivations and dangers of the Mission, some recompense for the support they had given him. The publication of Tedlie's medical report was almost certainly intended by Bowdich as a posthumous memorial to his colleague who died suddenly on 9th September 1818, aged 27, at Cape Coast Castle. Also included as part of the published account were three maps, showing the geographical discoveries resulting from the Mission to Asante, an iconographical sketch of Kumase, four sheets of music, an engraving of the notification partially written in Arabic requesting information about Major Peddie, and ten colour illustrations which depict important Asante buildings, occupations and practices.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that the first edition, which comprised 750 copies, was published by John Murray sometime in early March 1819 (McClay, personal correspondence 2010). The timing of the publication has been based on two letters; one of which was written on 29th March 1819 by William Hamilton, Secretary of the Africa Association, to Bowdich, in which he stated 'I beg leave in the name of the African Association to congratulate you on the publication of your most interesting and instructive book' (Bowdich 1819b, 78). The second letter, which was written by Joseph Dupuis a week earlier on the 22nd March 1819, to the Secretary of the Africa Committee,

included the comment that ‘Mr Bowdich has by this time produced his flaming quarto, [and] the eyes of all England nay even Europe will be open to the proceedings of the Committee’ (T.70/1605/1). Dupuis had been appointed by the Crown as the British Envoy to Kumase on the 26th January 1818 following the news of the successful conclusion of the Mission. Dupuis’ foreknowledge of the content of Bowdich’s publication was gained as a result of being granted permission by the Africa Committee on the 31st October 1818 to peruse the documentation resulting from the 1817 Mission which, it appears included parts of his official report (Hutton 1821, 412).

Dupuis noted in the same letter that, at the time he saw it, Bowdich’s draft ‘was already written, with the reservation, perhaps, of [the] geographical section’ (T.70/1605/1). This assertion can now be discounted, however, as the re-discovery of the official report reveals that Bowdich had already completed this section on the 27th January 1818, a few weeks before leaving the Gold Coast. The same report is also referred to in a letter written to Bowdich on the 13th July 1818 by John Rennell in which he stated ‘I return your valuable MSS [manuscripts] with my best thanks for the permission to read them. Without flattery, I consider them as containing much new and valuable information respecting the geography of a part the least known and which presents objects which were not expected’ (Bowdich 1819b, 76). Timing again suggests that Dupuis must have been responsible for alerting the Committee to the fact that Bowdich’s official report was held by him in England at this time. This appears to have angered the Committee as, after repeated requests failed to secure this document, a written rebuke was issued on the 13th November 1818 to Governor Hope Smith for allowing Bowdich to remove it from Cape Coast Castle (T.70/74).

Bowdich’s published account was initially very well received by his peers and the public. In October 1819, *The Edinburgh Review* contained a long notice of the Mission which described it as a work of ‘considerable importance,’ [containing an] ‘almost incredible story (recalling *The Arabian Nights*) of a land and people of warlike and barbaric splendour [sic] hitherto unknown’ (Anonymous 1819, (64): 389-399). However, this acclaim was short-lived as in March 1820 Sir John Barrow published a 30-page article in

the *Quarterly Review* in which he criticized the author for ‘exaggerating the cultural attainments of the savage’ (Barrow, 1820, (22): 273-302). This review fatally undermined Bowdich’s hopes of fame and fortune as Barrow was not only a revered explorer and author but also a linchpin of London’s patronage networks. Despite this, he publicly defended his account by publishing *A Reply to the Quarterly Review* later the same year.

Bowdich and his account were also heavily criticized by Joseph Dupuis in his publication entitled *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* that first appeared in 1824. He undermined Bowdich’s veracity as an author by throwing doubt on the accuracy of his observations and he repeatedly insinuated that he misrepresented, exaggerated and invented details to make his account appear more extraordinary and sensational (see chapter V for a further discussion). He also implied that Bowdich was misinformed or duped by his informants regarding important particulars and that his ability to distinguish and accurately assess the worth of Asante arts and culture was limited by his lack of refinement and taste. In some parts of his journal Dupuis attributed these faults to Bowdich’s youth and immaturity and in others insinuated that they resulted from his overweening ambition. In dressing up animosity as duty, however, Dupuis belied the fact that he had a vested interest in sabotaging Bowdich’s character and account. This desire, it appears continued even after Bowdich’s sudden and untimely death on the 10th January 1824 from fever at Bathurst (Banjul) in the Gambia became known (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 224/225). Since then many of Bowdich’s observations regarding Asante culture, customs and practices have been corroborated by other missionaries, ethnographers and travellers (see Freeman 1843, Ramseyer and Kuhne 1875, Reindorf 1895 and Rattray 1923, 1927, 1929).

In assessing the historical value of Bowdich’s publication Ward stated in his introduction to the third edition that ‘[...] our first impression is that his book is little more than a jumble of superficial information, much of it of little interest to a modern reader’ (Ward 1966, 15). Despite being dismissive and deliberately provocative he goes on to point out three reasons why Bowdich’s publication is important, firstly, his account of the British Mission to Asante was the first to be recorded in this way; secondly, Bowdich’s eye-

witness descriptions of Kumase at the height of Asante power are unique; and thirdly, the light which his narrative throws on practices and personalities in the last years of Company government on the Gold Coast cannot be matched (ibid, 59). This betrays the fact that Ward only considered the value of Bowdich's account from an historian's point of view. Ten years later Malcolm McLeod reiterated that Bowdich was an excellent observer with a voracious appetite for new facts and discoveries but points out that as an analyst he was hesitant and erratic (McLeod 1977, 96). This resulted, in part, from the fact that Bowdich interpreted Asante customs, social organization and practices by comparing them with those of the classical Mediterranean world, in particular Greece and Rome. This eventually led him to assert that Asante culture ultimately derived from that of ancient Abyssinia and Egypt (see Bowdich 1821; McCaskie 2009). However, this analogous and comparative approach severely constrained Bowdich's capacity to analyse what he experienced effectively. McLeod also agrees with Ward that the historical value of Bowdich's account lies in the vivid and detailed descriptions of the Asante state at the height of its power but, in contrast to Ward, McLeod sees it as an almost inexhaustible source for anthropologists as well as historians (McLeod 1977, 82/83). I fully concur with this and believe that, if interrogated cautiously but sympathetically, this publication with its eye-witness descriptions and representations of people, practices and places still has the potential to reveal much new evidence.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have concentrated on assessing the circumstances surrounding Thomas Bowdich's early life and career in the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa as well as the publication of his account of the Mission to Kumase. In the first part of this chapter I argued that some of his actions, attitudes and values were shaped by early experiences of disempowerment and disappointment that ultimately reflected socio-economic and political changes that were re-shaping British society during the last decade of the eighteenth, and the first decade of the nineteenth century.

In the second part, I posited the idea that the composition of the first British Mission to Kumase was flawed as generational and ideological divides and conflicting personal,

political and professional tensions that existed between individuals, institutions and nation states made it inherently unstable. I also attempted to imply this in my choice of chapter title which, in quoting part of a well known colloquial saying, points out the inevitable advantages known quantities had over the unknown during this period. Furthermore, I argued that those scholars who interpreted Bowdich's actions during negotiations with the Asantehene as being petulant or rash have not considered the possibility that they formed part of a coherent strategy. However, his repeated use of brinkmanship to force the Asantehene's hand indicates that he held too high an opinion of himself, the Africa Company and the British Crown and too little regard for Asante conventions and etiquette. In mitigation, it is worth remembering that he was only 24 or 25 years old, inexperienced, worried about his wife and daughter and under enormous pressure to succeed.

Finally, I examined what Bowdich's motivations were for gathering, recording and publishing his experiences, what methodology he used, how he structured his account and what models he drew on when composing it. As part of this analysis I presented some new evidence that re-configures our understanding of how he went about composing his text and in what order. In the next three chapters I will concentrate on analyzing in more depth instances of Anglo/Asante inter-cultural acts of appropriation, which Bowdich described and/or illustrated as part of his account of his experiences as a member of the 1817 British Mission to Kumase.

II

Processing the Alien: Anglo/Asante Encounters in Kumase

Outline, Aims and Structure of Chapter

In this chapter I will focus on analyzing Thomas Bowdich's description of the British Mission's approach, entry and reception in the Asante capital of Kumase on the 19th May 1817. In order that this experience can be compared and contrasted with similar events, the descriptions of state receptions held for Willem Huydecoper in 1816, and Joseph Dupuis and William Hutton in 1820 will also be considered. In addition Bowdich's description of the Yam Custom, which was celebrated during the month of September 1817 and his illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' will form part of this analysis as they contain important textual and pictorial evidence of underlying structuring principles used in the ordering of Asante ceremonies. I have chosen to focus on the state reception and the Yam Custom (*odwira* lit. purification or cleansing) because they occurred at either end of the first prolonged encounter that took place between the Asante and the British in Kumase in 1817. The state reception, in effect, marked the start of formal diplomatic relations between the two peoples and the Yam Custom coincided with the ratification of the first Anglo/Asante trade treaty and the Mission's departure from Kumase.

I will demonstrate, using the evidence contained in Bowdich's account and those of other envoys, that the sequence of events associated with reception ceremonies was structured according to cultural framing devices that were designed to establish and maintain correct socio-economic, political and religious relations between the Asante and powerful alien entities. Furthermore, I will show that during state receptions, members of successive diplomatic missions were subjected to sensorial and environmental manipulations that were aimed specifically at stunning their senses and incapacitating their ability to act, interact and react. This line of argument draws on the work of Kathryn Geurts (2002) regarding bodily ways of knowing and on Johannes Fabian's (2000) survey of reason and madness in the exploration of Central Africa during the mid-nineteenth century. Finally,

I will show that the creation and location of a variety of liminal sites were predicated on binary oppositions such as culture/nature and purity/dirt. However, as physical and meta-physical boundaries, conduits and containers I will also demonstrate that they were intimately associated with the notion of wrapping which, as a concept and a practice, structured other aspects of Asante culture. Joy Hendry's notion of social wrapping; the wrapping of people by people, spatial wrapping; the designation and use of space and temporal wrapping; the ordering of events and of time, will be used in this chapter to frame my arguments regarding the Asante structuring of status and power, physical and meta-physical space and the integration of alien elements.

This analysis is directed toward answering the following three questions: How did the Asante perceive outsiders, how were they integrated into Asante society and what physical and esoteric procedures did they employ to achieve this? To facilitate this analysis I have sub-divided this chapter into three parts, the first part entitled 'Approaching Kumase' will concentrate on analyzing Bowdich's account of the events leading up to the entry of the first British Mission in Kumase. The second part entitled 'The State Reception' will examine his and others descriptions of the reception ceremony and the third and final part entitled 'The Yam Custom' will compare the structure of state receptions with some of the Yam Custom rites. In the chapter summary I will conclude my analysis and present the main findings.

Part One: Approaching Kumase

The four officers of the 1817 Mission were the first Britons to travel through the uncharted interior of the Gold Coast. Previous to this there had been two separate visits made by Dutchmen. In 1701 the Dutch Governor David van Nyendael had dispatched an ambassador to Asante and sometime during the mid-1700s two renegade Dutchmen had found their way to Kumase and set up a distillery for the Asantehene. In his published account Bowdich frequently described the natural environment they were forced to march through for twenty eight days in order to reach their destination. In some passages he waxes lyrical about the bucolic scenes that they chanced upon but these are tempered by descriptions, such as the one below, that details far less attractive prospects.

'The path was level, but very swampy, and generally covered with water.

The fire-flies spangled the herbage in every direction, and from the strength of their light, [...] excited the apprehension of wild beasts [...]. The greatest fear of the people was of the spirits of the woods, [...] and the discordant yells in which they rivalled each other to keep up their courage, mingled with the howls and screeches from the forest, imposed a degree of horror on this dismal scene, which associated it with the imaginations of Dante' (Bowdich 1819, 22).

This passage is included here as it highlights two important points. Firstly, it conveys something of the constant physical threats posed to life and limb and also expresses some of the psychological stress that attended Bowdich and his companions as they ventured into the unknown. Secondly, it also documents indigenous reactions to this environment and makes clear that the porters' fears were directly associated with the dense and damp forest (*kwaeberentuw*), sometimes referred to as the black forest (*kwaebibiri*). This was widely believed to be the abode of numerous supernatural entities such as gods (*abosum*), small creatures with backward pointing feet (*mmoatia*) and the tree-dwelling monster (*sasabonsam*). These powerful entities existed outside of human society and were thought to pose a threat to the order that characterised human habitations. Both McLeod (1981, 20-40) and McCaskie (1995, 75) separately argued that the most important defining opposition that structured Asante, and other Gold Coast societies, was predicated on the separation of culture from nature. This distinction found physical expression in the division of space into inhabited and uninhabited areas which gave rise to other qualitative distinctions such as purity and cleanliness that became opposed in Asante thought to dirt and pollution. This also formed and informed the spatial layout of settlements that were ideally conceived as having clean populated cores that were surrounded by increasingly unpopulated and polluted peripheries (McLeod 1981, 28; Platvoet 1985, 174-200).

Evidence contained in the accounts of Bowdich and other European envoys indicates that the spatial organization of the majority of the settlements encountered along the path to Kumase conformed to a prescribed layout. In 1817 Bowdich noted that the Fante settlement of Paintree ' [...] was prettily situated on a level, encircled by very fine trees, and consisted of a very broad and well cleaned street of small huts, framed of bamboo

and neatly thatched' (Bowdich 1819, 17). In 1820, Hutton also noted a similar configuration of elements in the Asante settlement of Kikiwhiri which he describes as having '[...] a fine broad street or parade, extending north and south, agreeably shaded by ganian-trees' (Hutton 1821, 183/184). Descriptions of the interiors of some of the houses that European visitors stayed in during the journey suggest that despite small differences they too conformed to a basic model. Bowdich noted that the chief of Paintree occupied a dwelling comprising '[...] a square of four apartments that were entered from an outer one, where a number of drums were kept; the angles were occupied by the slaves, and his own room which had a small inner chamber, was decked with muskets, blunderbusses, cartouch belts fantastically ornamented, and various insignia' (Bowdich 1819, 18). These descriptions indicate that the houses of the elite formed a complex of separate buildings (fig. 2.0) that enclosed an open air court (*gyaase*) located in the centre.

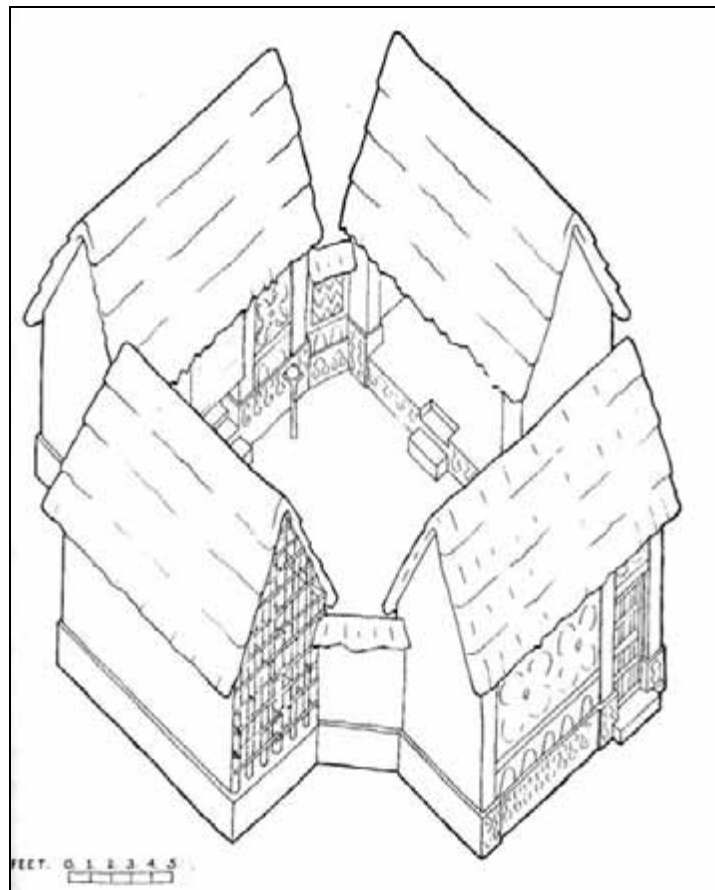


Figure 2.0: A line drawing of a typical Gold Coast house (Swithenbank 1969, 3)

Ethnographers such as Rattray (1923, 1927), McLeod (1981) and Swithenbank (1969) have documented the construction and spatial layout of colonial and post-colonial domestic housing which closely correlates to the remains of similar structures that have been found by archaeologists at several sites (Anquandah 1982; Posnansky 1976, 49-59/1977, 1-25; Stahl 1994, 51-112). Houses were usually grouped into quarters (*abono*) that were situated on both sides of the main street. Sometimes they were located adjacent to each other on the same side and as the population grew the settlement expanded outwards. This division and sub-division within settlements required the erection and maintenance of both physical and spiritual boundaries in order to delineate the social distinctions of its population and to keep the inhabited space of the settlement from the over-powering forces of nature. Nature was kept at bay by the thorough cleansing of all shrubs, weeds and other flora from the living areas, lanes, streets and main roads (Platvoet 1985, 174-200). Typically the only plant-life that was actively cultivated and permitted to thrive in Asante settlements were the shade trees, also known as trees of reception (*gyennua*) that are characterised by their large heads and often dense foliage. Spiritual disruption was forestalled by the erection of symbolic barriers (*pampin*) at the entrances to settlements. Hutton noted that in 1820 when the second British Mission entered a settlement called Moinsey they passed '[...] under some fetish that was suspended to a cross pole, supported by two others at each end' (Hutton 1821, 190).

The partition of inhabited space was also reflected in the ordering of the landscape outside the immediate confines of settlements. Bowdich observed that as they drew nearer to Kumase, the villages were surrounded by extensive plantations of yam, plantains and corn (Bowdich 1819, 26). Beyond the cultivated areas were located the burial grounds (*asiee*), such as the neatly fenced example Bowdich noted at Aquniasee (*ibid*, 30). Although he did not specifically mention it, sacred groves (*asamanpow*), the shrines of some gods (*bosum'dan*, *bosum'fie*), the middens (*sumina*), the latrines (*yanne*), and menstruation huts (*bradan*, *brafie*) were also located in this area (see also McLeod 1981, 35-40). This evidence indicates that the extreme periphery of settlements, known as a *kurotia* (lit. the end, border or fringe of a village), constituted a marginal zone that was primarily associated with ambiguous, intermediary or special conditions. This quintessentially liminal space therefore functioned to prevent physical and spiritual

contamination and bridged the gap between the cultured spaces of human habitation and the supernatural realm of the wilderness. It also served as a site of interface and/or point of transit where interactions and transactions between the living, the ancestors and the spirits could be conducted.

Liminality, therefore, played an instrumental role in the maintenance of all boundaries in Asante culture and was deeply implicated in the designation of certain animals and people such as chiefs (*ohene*), priests (*akomfo*) and witches (*abayifo*) as prime foci and loci of mediation in Asante society. These entities were considered to be liminal because they were credited with having essentially ambiguous natures and were believed to inhabit two or more mutually exclusive spheres (see McLeod 1971, 8-15; 1978, 305-316; 1981, 129-131; McCaskie, 1992). I argue that itinerant artisans, foreign traders and visiting diplomats were also considered to be ambiguous and/or liminal as they were all transient, to some degree and all originated from beyond the confines of Asante culture.

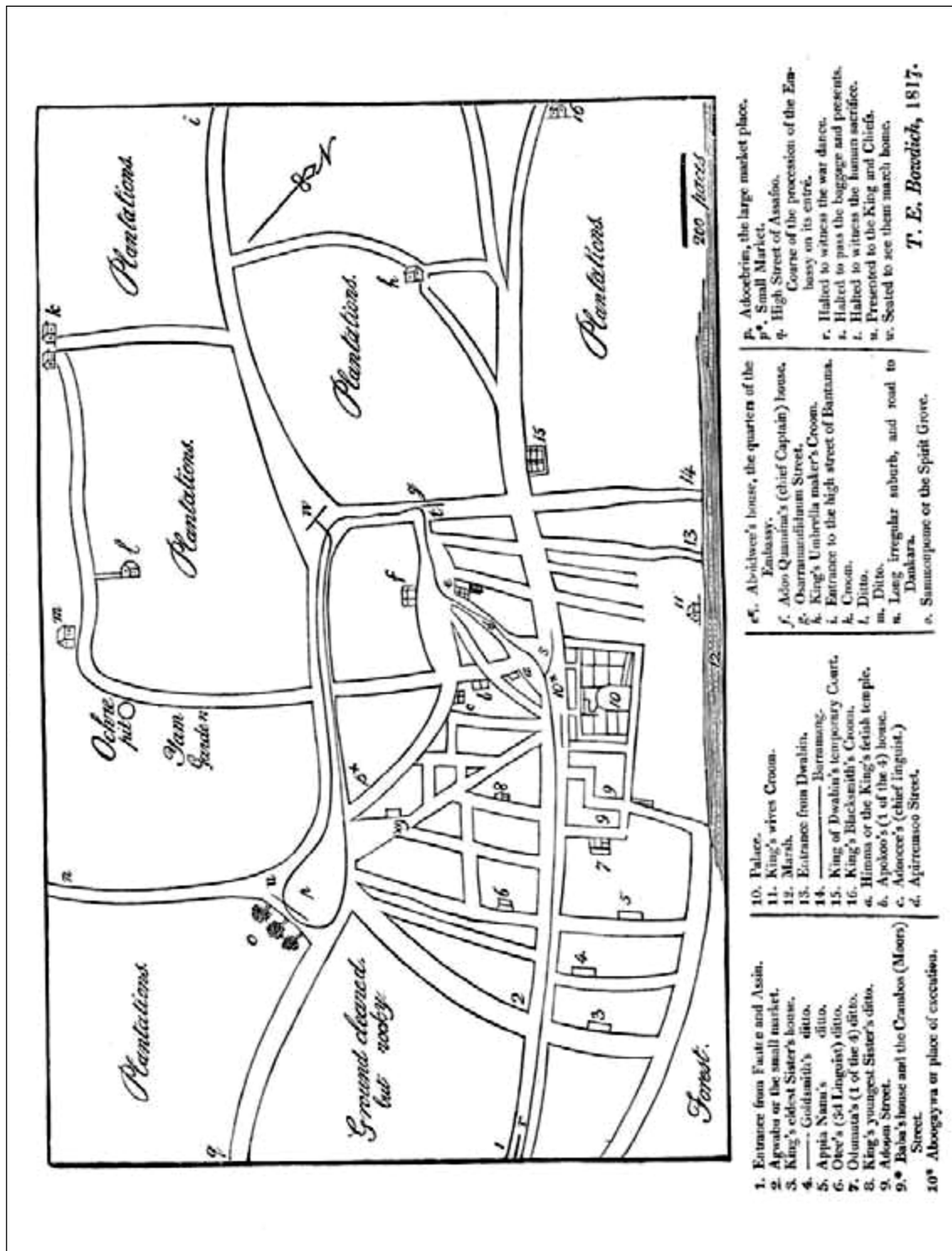
Bowdich noted that as the Mission approached Kumase, '[...] the plantations became more frequent and extensive [...] and the country was thickly inhabited' (Bowdich 1819, 29). Some of these settlements housed specialist craftsmen who had been relocated to Kumase following the Asante wars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Posnansky 1975, 25-38). These specialists manufactured a wide range of articles that were intended primarily for use by the Asante elite. Bowdich recorded that Doompassee, which he describes as, '[...] the most industrious town on the path,' was noted for its manufacture of cloths, beads, and pottery and Datasoo was where '[...] large quantities of pottery were manufactur[ed], exclusively' (Bowdich 1819, 28/29). The same settlements were recorded by Dupuis and Hutton in their respective accounts as producing the same articles in 1820 (Hutton 1821, 196; Dupuis 1824 [1966], 59).

The spatial model outlined in respect of the organization of settlements and their environs is also reflected in the ordering of the conceptual map of Asante. Kwame Arhin has argued that the Asante categorised people and states, not only in terms of how distant they were from its borders, but also in respect of whether they shared cultural traits such as beliefs and language (Arhin 1967, 65-85). He goes on to suggest that the polity of

Asante should be divided into three categories of states: provinces, protectorates and tributaries, on the basis of their cultural and physical distance from Kumase (*ibid*, 85). In this way, the provinces, which were populated by peoples who shared a common language and culture, were considered to form part of the Asante heartland. The protectorates, which were treated as allies or protected peoples and the tributaries, which were populated by peoples who did not speak an Akan language or share cultural traits, formed the inner and outer layers of Greater Asante (*ibid*). In effect, these states surrounded and separated the homelands of the Asante from the unknown and potentially hostile regions that lay beyond its ambit of influence and power. This, I suggest, closely correlates with the functions of *kurotia* which served as the physical and spiritual boundary between the spheres of culture and nature.

Associated with this concentric spatial organization was the notion that the *Asantehene* was surrounded by people of progressively lesser power and status. This fits in with evidence that indicates that during the nineteenth century the degree to which villagers were understood to be civilized depended upon their spatial proximity to Kumase, thus the people of the Kwabre area were held in marginally higher esteem than the more distant residents of the Mponua towns (McCaskie 1995, 84). As a result rural dwellers (*nkuraasefo*), who resided a long distance from the capital, became synonymous with a clumsy and laughable uncouthness (Arhin 1967, 80). In this way, physical distance from Kumase also reflected a relative cultural, political and social distance.

In his account, Bowdich noted that there were nine great paths (*akwankese* or *akwantempon*) leading to Kumase and his ground plan (fig. 2.1) indicates that the polities of Dwabin [Juaben], Akin, Assin, Warsaw [Wassaw], Sauee, Gaman, Soko, Daboia, and Sallagha [Salaga] surrounded it in all directions, although their actual distance and location in relation to the Asante capital were not then known. The road layout clearly indicates that, by 1817, Kumase was already established as the cultural and geographical centre of Greater Asante. In effect, these thoroughfares were some of the most important physical features of Asante at this time as they were the means by which control and influence were extended beyond its immediate borders and wealth and external sources of power were concentrated within the economic, political and spiritual heart of Asante (see



1. Entrance from Fautre and Assin.
 2. Apwaba or the small market.
 3. King's oldest Sister's house.
 4. ——— Goldsmith's ditto.
 5. Appia Nana's ditto.
 6. Oke's (54 Linguist) ditto.
 7. Odumata's (1 of the 4) ditto.
 8. King's youngest Sister's ditto.
 9. Adosem Street.
 9* Baba's house and the Crumbos (Moors) Street.
 10* Aboogywa or place of execution.
10. Palace.
 11. King's wives Croon.
 12. Marsh.
 13. Entrance from Dowlahin, ——— Barramang.
 14. King of Dowlahin's temporary Court.
 15. King's Blacksmith's Croon.
 16. Hinna or the King's fetish temple.
 a. Apoko's (1 of the 4) house.
 b. Adosece's (chief linguist.)
 c. Adiremasoo Street.
 d. ———
17. Entrance to the high street of Bantama.
 18. Croon.
 19. Ditto.
 20. Long irregular suburb, and road to Dankara.
 21. Samucompone or the Spirit Grove.
22. Absobren's house, the quarters of the Embassy.
 23. Ados Quamina's (chief Captain) house.
 24. Osaramundilum Street.
 25. King's Umbrella maker's Croon.
 26. Entrance to the high street of Bantama.
 27. Croon.
 28. Ditto.
 29. Long irregular suburb, and road to Dankara.
 30. Samucompone or the Spirit Grove.
31. Absobren, the large market place.
 32. Small Market.
 33. High Street of Assin.
 34. Course of the procession of the Em-bassy on its entire.
 35. Halted to witness the war dance.
 36. Halted to pass the baggage and presents.
 37. Halted to witness the human sacrifice.
 38. Presented to the King and Chiefs.
 39. Seated to see them march home.
- T. E. Bowdich, 1817.**

Figure 2.1: 'Ichonographical sketch of Coomassie, with the principal streets and the situations of remarkable houses' (Bowdich 1819, 323)

also Wilks 1992). The main arterial routes that fanned or radiated outwards from Kumase were intersected by smaller interlinking tracks that circumnavigated the capital and facilitated the circulation of goods and people within and between Asante states, as well as beyond. The cultural importance of this configuration, I suggest, is also reflected in the significance attributed to other elements such as nets, spiders and webs, which all have continuing esoteric associations and symbolic value in Asante culture.

As a place of special symbolic significance, Kumase also enjoyed a special status in that, with the exception of the Asantehene and other members of the royal *Oyoko Kokoo* lineage, no-one claimed Kumase as his or her village of birth or origin; in other words, everyone came from somewhere else (McCaskie 1995, 34). It was also a world apart and provincial Asante regarded Kumase as a forbidding place, a destination that it was easier to travel to than to return from, in safety (*ibid*, 84). This reputation can be explained, in part, by the fact that Kumase was periodically the site of mass human sacrifices that were connected to events which marked momentous dislocations in time and space.

Evidence suggests that the Asante elite closely controlled the timing and sequence of these events by manipulating some of the external and internal factors associated with them. For example, Bowdich related how, on Thursday 8th May 1817, a messenger from the Asantehene arrived at Doompassee with instructions that the British Mission was to arrive in Kumase on the 19th May (Bowdich 1819, 28). As a result, the officers were effectively forced to halt for six days despite being only three days march from the capital. During the second Mission of 1820, Hutton also recorded how their Asante guide wanted them to halt at a place named Kikiwhiri for six days as he could not proceed any further without first dispatching a messenger to the Asantehene to inform him that they had crossed the Bosumpra, the river which marked the southern border of Asante (Hutton 1821, 182). Prolonged delays were not limited to European visitors as in 1822, a Muslim traveller named Wargee of Astrakhan had to wait for fourteen days in a village outside Kumase, until he received royal permission to enter (Wilks 1967, 170-189).

A comparative analysis of the accounts of Huydecoper (1816-1817), Bowdich (1819), Hutton (1821) and Dupuis (1824) indicates that some of these halting places were

prescribed, as was the practice of dispatching messengers to the Asante court. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the Asantehene escalated his directions and instructions as the envoys got closer to Kumase until, on the actual day of entry, every movement was to all intents and purposes, micro-managed by his armed guard. Bowdich noted that in 1817 when the first Mission got to within four miles of their destination they stopped at the small settlement of Agogoo to dress in full uniform then halted again when they got to within a mile of Kumase so that their imminent approach could be made known to the Asantehene (Bowdich 1819, 31). In reply royal messengers were dispatched by the Asantehene requesting them to wait at the settlement of Patiasoo ‘[...] until he had finished washing,’ when captains would be deputed to conduct them to his presence (*ibid*). This reference to washing probably refers to the practice of sacrificing sheep or people and letting the blood flow on to spiritually-charged artefacts as a way of empowering and strengthening them prior to the visitors’ entry. This interpretation is also borne out by Dupuis, who noted that his entry into Kumase was ‘[...] signaled by the sacrifice of a number of human victims; slaves and malefactors, [...] the number of victims offered up at the palace, [...] were nine, and every chief was compelled to furnish an additional quota to the sanguinary offerings’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 100).

Similar delays and diversions were also experienced by Huydecoper, the Dutch envoy, who in April 1816 had been halted first at a settlement called Koekoe, where he took some refreshment and set his clothes in order and was halted a second time by four sword-bearers at an un-named village because ‘[...] the Generals and caboceers had not yet arrived at the capital and he was to proceed no further until he received orders’ (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 16). As the second British Mission approached the Asante capital in 1820 Dupuis and Hutton separately describe how they were met on the path by court messengers and thirty soldiers of the King’s guard, dressed in Company uniforms, commanded by a white negro captain (an albino) who conducted them to the little village of Ciry, where they exchanged road dress for other apparel (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 68; Hutton 1821, 203-206).

This comparison reveals a distinct pattern of prescribed halts that were ostensibly concerned with giving both the visitors and the Asante court time to assemble, organize

and prepare themselves for the forthcoming encounter. I suggest, however, that these practical considerations masked the Asantehene's increasing appropriation of, and control over, the visitor's physical movement through time and space. Bowdich did not record if the officers and attendants of the first British Mission organized themselves into some kind of ordered formation prior to entering the capital, but Hutton set out in detail the sequence that was adopted by the second British Mission in 1820.

'Mr Dupuis, in a palanquin [draped in rich taffetas was] carried on men's shoulders, with a man carrying a silk union before him, attended by two sword bearers, [he was] preceded by the linguist and bugleman, two soldiers, the Ashantee captain (in uniform), with an inferior captain beside him, both carrying gold handled swords, and one of his attendants following in his war-dress, with two attendants behind. I followed Mr Dupuis in my hammock and was preceded by a man carrying a silk union and attended by two sword bearers; Messieurs Salmon, Collins and Graves followed in succession in their hammocks' (Hutton 1821, 206-207).

Hendry hypothesized that the European use of social wrapping, in this instance dress uniforms and a retinue of subordinate officers, soldiers, servants and porters, played a significant part in impressing indigenous peoples (Hendry 1993, 135). This evidence suggests, however, that by decking out Dupuis' hammock with silk taffetas and forming themselves up in this way the members of the second British Mission were acting on information that had been gleaned from the experiences of the 1817 Mission. This implies that in a pre-colonial context, the British were still refining the impression they wanted to create by appropriating some of the Asante trappings of status and power. Furthermore, I would argue that during the first and second British Missions both the Asante elite and the officers used social wrappings of vastly differing scales in order to make the identification of those of senior rank and status obvious and to establish the relative hierarchy of their retinues without the need for verbal explanation. As such, both cultures were in the process of engineering a fit between two systems of hierarchical self-representation that would facilitate the establishment and maintenance of diplomatic relations. As will be shown in the section to follow, Hendry's assertion about Europeans'

ability to impress indigenous peoples through the trappings of status and power is, in this particular case, overstated and requires qualification.

In his account Bowdich described Kumase as ‘[...] an oblong of nearly four miles in circumference encircled by a beautiful forest,’ but his published ground plan shows that it was surrounded on three sides by marshland, forest and plantations and on the fourth by a river (Bowdich 1819, 321/323). In many respects this arrangement echoes that of the smaller settlements that Bowdich and his companions had encountered on the path. His ground plan also reveals that it was divided into numerous districts or wards by seven streets, ‘[...] four of which were half a mile long and from 50 to 100 yards wide’ (*ibid*, 322). These districts were further subdivided by approximately twenty smaller roads which intersected the main thoroughfares at right angles. The ground plan and its integral legend also indicate that some of these districts were occupied by distinct communities of people. Numeral 4, for example, marks the location of the goldsmiths quarter (*dwinfuor*) and in a letter addressed to the Governor, dated 7th September 1817, Bowdich mentioned that ‘[...] the Moors [...] occupy one street exclusively’ (*ibid*, 129). Other districts housed merchants, soldiers, and officials which indicates that, in 1817 Kumase was organized differently to other settlements which tended to reflect matrilineal affiliations.

Bowdich also noted that ‘[...] the buildings along the main streets belonged to important functionaries and to major chiefs from outside who periodically visited Kumase on political business or to attend the annual Yam Custom’ (Bowdich 1819, 129). During his residency in Kumase he sketched several of these impressive open-fronted buildings (*adampan*) some of which appear in the background of his illustration entitled ‘Part of Adoom Street’ (fig. 2.2). Bowdich stated in the notes that accompany this illustration that ‘[...] each open front denotes the residence of a captain, [and was] used for talking palavers, receiving strangers, observing or superintending customs, and evening recreation’ (*ibid*, 308). These elite residences seem to have been distinguished from others not only by the inclusion of certain architectural features such as open-fronted rooms and their prominent location, but by their overall size and relatively elaborate decoration.

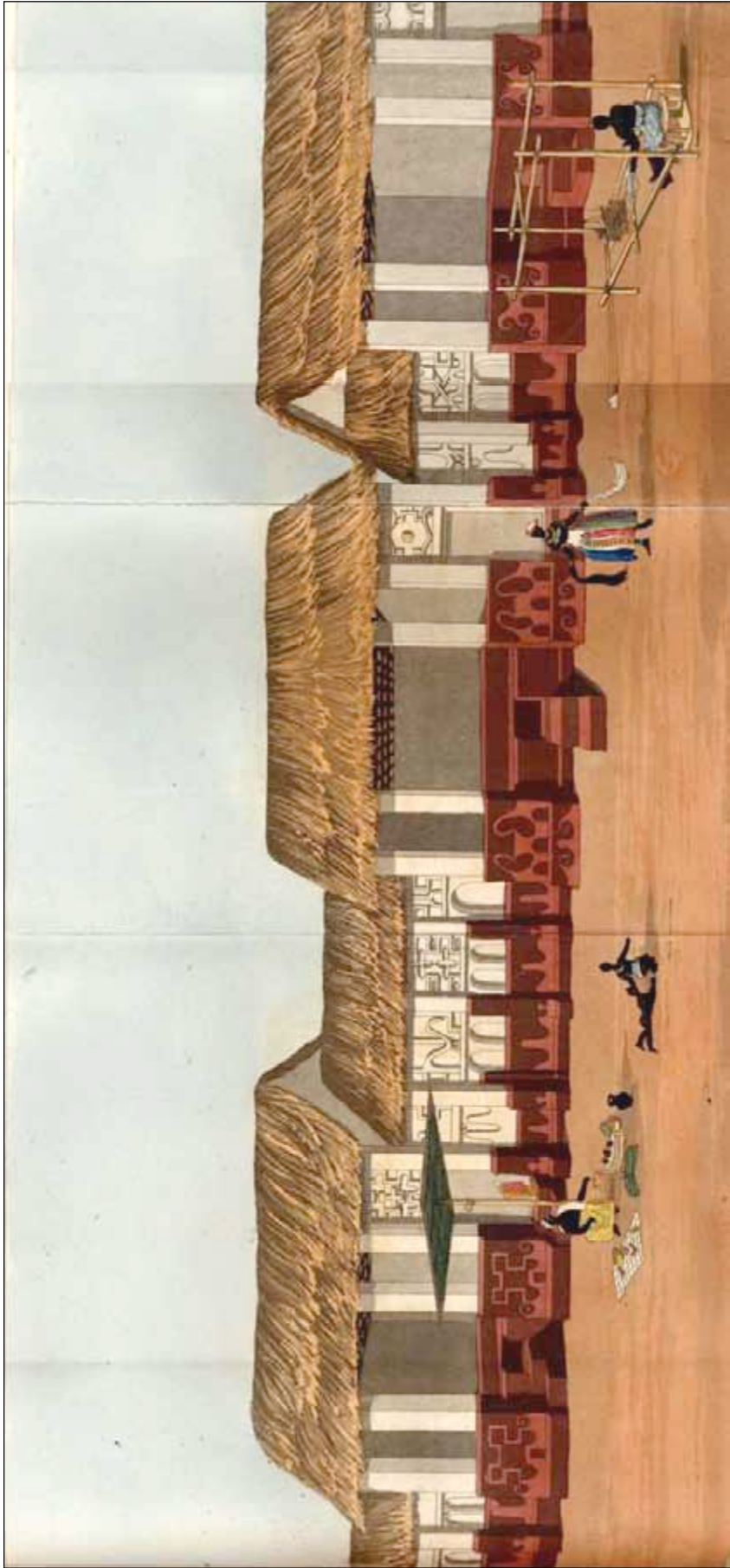


Figure 2.2: The facades of some elite Asante houses located along one of the seven main thoroughfares of Kumase (Bowdich 1819, 'Part of Adoom Street')

Part Two: The State Reception

The First Halt

1

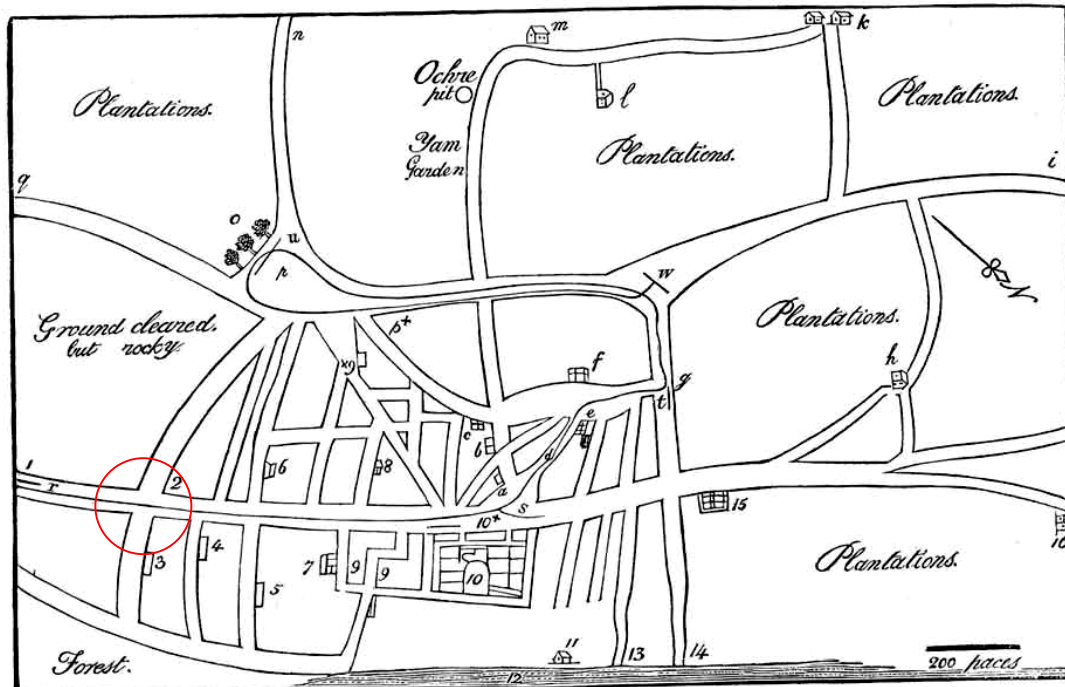


Figure 2.3: The first halt
(Bowdich 1819, 323)

Bowdich described how, on arriving at the threshold of Kumase at 2 o'clock the members of the Mission had to '[...] pass under a fetish, or sacrifice of a dead sheep wrapped in red silk, and suspended between two lofty poles' (Bowdich 1819, 31). The positioning of this wrapped 'fetish' corresponds with similar physical and spiritual barriers (*pampim*) that were located at the thresholds of other settlements. This strongly suggests that the Asante viewed the arrival of the first British Mission with great suspicion and took spiritual precautions to protect themselves.

Having passed beneath this feature, Bowdich described how the members of the Mission were assailed by;

'[...] upwards of 5000 people, the greater part warriors, [who] met us with awful bursts of martial music, discordant only in its mixture; for horns, drums, rattles and gong-gongs were all exerted with a zeal bordering on phrenzy, to subdue us by the first impression' (*ibid*).

Bowdich made clear that he felt this to be an audible assault that was designed to overpower them. Evidence suggests, however, that it formed part of a staged performance, an interpretation that is given added weight by the fact that the same aggressive demonstrations also featured during the receptions of Huydecoper in 1816 and Hutton and Dupuis in 1820. All of these envoys separately reported in their accounts how they were initially greeted by enormous and unruly crowds that formed a human barrier that had to be physically beaten back by the accompanying guard. This indicates that ordinary citizens played an active part in a pageant that played with and inverted the idea of violent entry. This type of spectacle is not confined to the Asante or West Africa but closely resembles, in terms of its function and symbolism, the royal entries of visiting monarchs during the early modern period in Europe (for further discussion see Thøfner 2007). Furthermore, these officers also mention that the throng was stifling and the noise deafening which leads me to suggest that this bombardment in many ways was designed to echo the clash of arms and the crush associated with battle. In this way, it served not only to present an outward show of military strength, but it also physically and psychologically simulated a real military assault that initially stunned visitors.

The interpretation offered here is, I believe, further reinforced by Bowdich's next sentence, which describes how they were;

‘[...] encircled [by the smoke] from incessant discharges of musketry,’ [and] whilst the captains performed their pyrrhic dance, [...] a confusion of flags, English, Dutch, and Danish, were waved and flourished in all directions [...] their warriors [...] followed them, discharging their shining blunderbusses’ (Bowdich 1819, 31-32).

This experience made quite an impression on Bowdich, who included a very similar scene of wild dancing and flag-waving on the extreme left-hand side of his illustration of ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’ (fig. 2.4). Interestingly, it appears that this practice may have been modified for the reception of 1820, as Dupuis stated that on entering Kumase he was greeted with ‘[...] a royal blunderbuss salutation [which] burst full, as it may be expressed, in my face’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 70). This and other quotes also highlight the fact that European visitors were not only physically and psychologically manipulated during these events, but their immediate environments were qualitatively

Figure 2.7. Detail of display of wind dancing and flag waving by Asante captains and their retainers (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')



altered by the Asante through the introduction of gun-smoke and dust into the air and by the raised noise level. Their senses were also affected as a consequence of the manipulation of heat and humidity levels and exposure to the sun. The effects of sensory over-stimulation and deprivation were also accentuated through the with-holding of food and, more importantly fluids in temperatures that probably exceeded 90°C.

These seemingly extreme reactions to the appearance of the British Mission of 1817, and that of the second in 1820, may have resulted from the fact that many of the inhabitants of Kumase had not seen white men before. This is not true of everyone, however, as Asante merchants and traders travelled regularly to the European forts and factories on the coast and so would have been familiar with such a sight. I suspect that the inhabitants reacted in this way partly because the unprecedented appearance of white men within the confines of Kumase signaled a break with the protectionist policies of the past that had helped to maintain an informal and indirect dialogue and exchange with Europeans. I also suspect that despite the fact that these Europeans had been invited by the Asantehene to come to Kumase as his guests in order to negotiate treaties, they were perceived to be neither friends nor foe by the populace and were therefore, regarded with great suspicion.

The Second Halt

1

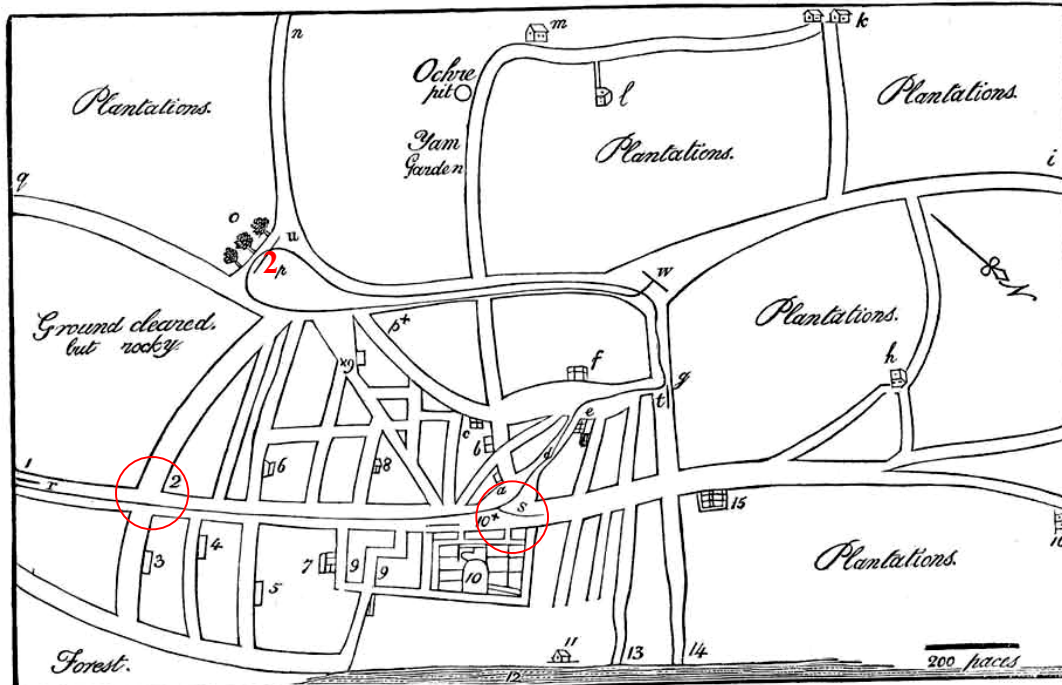


Figure 2.5: The second halt
(Bowdich 1819, 323)

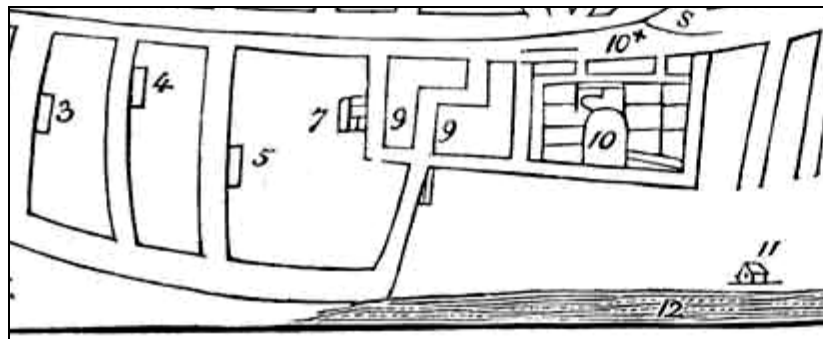
Bowdich continued his narrative of the 1817 state reception by relating how, having waited for about half an hour, they were allowed to proceed encircled by warriors until they were halted for a second time when they reached the palace, about half a mile further on (Bowdich 1819, 32-33). At this point the tenor of the reception changed. Bowdich describes how the bands, ‘[...] principally composed of horns and flutes, trained to play in concert, seemed to soothe our hearing into its natural tone again by their wild melodies’ (*ibid*, 33). Here, in this passage, there is some indication of the effect that the loud martial music was having on the officers. He also noted that ‘[...] the immense umbrellas, [were] made to sink and rise from the jerkings of the bearers, and the large fans waving around, refreshed us with small currents of air, under a burning sun, clouds of dust and a density of atmosphere almost suffocating’ (*ibid*). This suggests that the members of the Mission were allowed something of a respite whilst the bearers were directed to the residence that had been assigned to the Mission in order to unload the luggage and the gifts that were destined for presentation to the Asantehene. It also strengthens my earlier assertion that the Asante manipulated the qualitative effects of the environment immediately surrounding the visitors during the reception ceremony.

Figure 2.6: Detail of the King's House
(Bowdich 1819, 323)

Bowdich did not mention the palace again during his description of the state reception but in another part of his account he describes in detail its location within Kumase and its internal structure.

‘The palace was situated in a long and wide street running through the middle of the town, from which it was shut out by a high wall, terminating at each end at the marsh [it] being a sufficient boundary. It included Odumata’s and the King’s brothers residences, and two or three small streets, (besides the several areas and piazzas)’ (Bowdich 1819, 322).

He also included a schematic layout of the palace, or more correctly the King’s house, in his ground plan of Kumase, distinct elements of which are separately enumerated in his accompanying legend (fig. 2.6).



During his residency in Kumase he became a frequent visitor and described the most important part of this residence as;

‘[...] an immense building of a variety of oblong courts and regular squares, the former with arcades along one side [...]. They have a suit of rooms over them, with small windows of wooden lattice, some [of which] have frames cased with thin gold. The squares have a large apartment on each side, open in front, [...]. They are lofty and regular, and the cornices of a very bold cane work in *alto relieve*. Doors chancing to open as we passed, surprised us with a glimpse of large apartments in corners we could not have thought of, the most secret appeared the most adorned’ (Bowdich 1819, 56-57).

In addition to describing the spatial layout of the royal residence and including an outline of its basic structure in his ground plan, Bowdich also published two sketches, (figs

2.7/2.8) which depict different views of the piazza, or great courtyard (*Pramakeseso*). This was where the Asante executive council met to discuss matters of state and it was also the venue for most of the Anglo/Asante trade negotiations during 1817. In addition to these images he sketched the exterior of the Asantehene's bedchamber, the most secluded and private part of the royal complex (fig. 2.9). Together, these descriptions, illustrations and plans reveal that in its location and internal structuring, the King's house conformed to the same organizing principle of discreet, enclosed and sub-divided spaces that has been outlined in respect of other dwellings and settlements. However, as the residence of the paramount chief of Asante and the political and spiritual centre of Kumase, it differed materially in its decoration, size and internal complexity.

Hendry stated that spatial wrapping can be detected in '[...] architectural style [and] the layout of domestic and religious edifices [which] use layers of 'spatial wrapping' in the way they enclose their inner sanctums' (Hendry 1993, 4). Bowdich's descriptions reveal that this royal complex was wrapped in a number of different layers: firstly, it was situated in the middle of Kumase, so it was partially surrounded by the residences of officials and administrators on one side. But it was also concealed from public view by a high wall that ran the length of the palace. Secondly, it was also bounded on the other side by the river and marsh, both naturally occurring liminal features. This suggests that it straddled the divide between culture and nature, and may have been situated within the *kurotia* of Kumase. Thirdly, some of the facades of the King's house and other principal buildings within the complex were embellished with intricate patterns which included representational and geometric forms.

These patterns were created by bending cane poles into curvilinear or rectilinear patterns which were then plastered over in mud. It has been suggested that these interlocking geometric designs resemble the curving patterns of Islamic script and several scholars have hypothesized that their adoption is somehow connected to writing (Garrard, 1980, McLeod 1981, Mack 2007). John Mack however, has rejected the idea that they had some hieroglyphic meaning and has argued instead that glyph-like designs were accorded more general cabbalistic significance (Mack 2007, 198). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the same designs were also repeated on the exterior coverings of Islamic

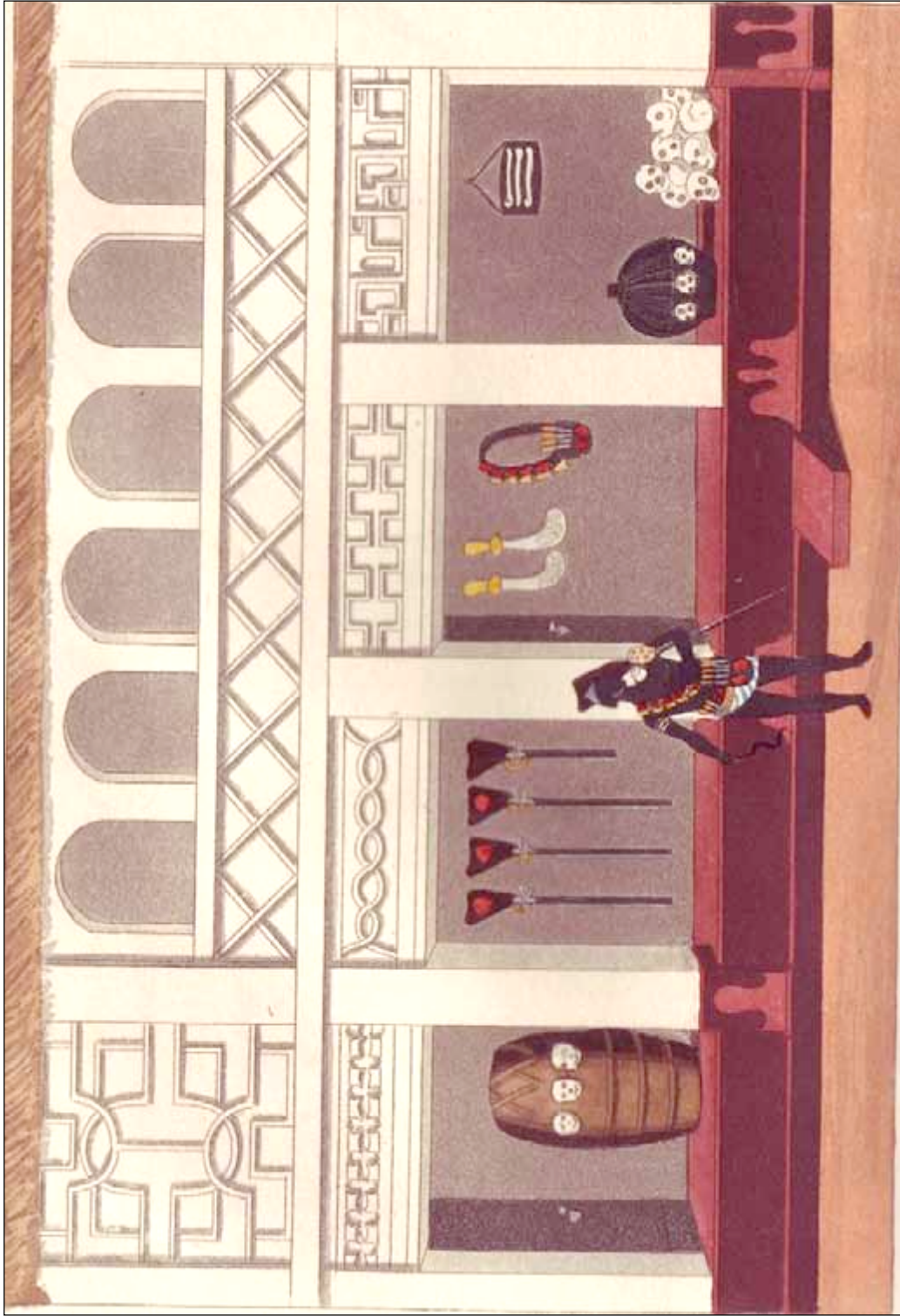


Figure 2.7: A view of the great court, note the intricate wall decoration and items of regalia on display
(Bowdich 1819, 'Part of a Piazza in the Palace')



Figure 2.8: A second view of the great court
(Bowdich 1819, 'The Great Piazza of the Palace')

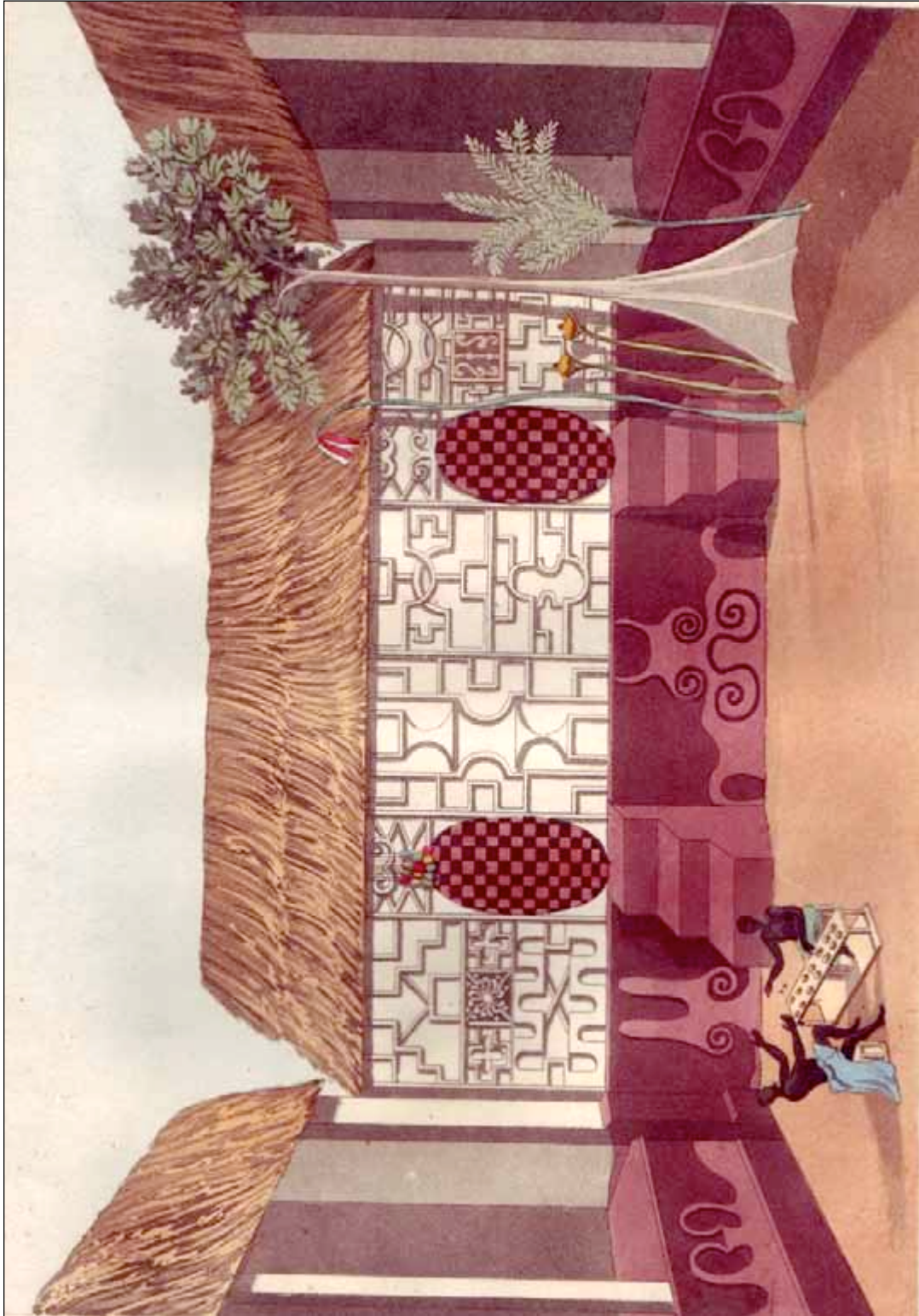


Figure 2.9: The façade of the *Asantehene*'s sleeping room, note the intricate patterning of the walls and the Islamic amulets hanging above the doorway
(Bowdich 1819, 'The King's Sleeping Room')

amulets (*safi's* and *sebe's*) that incorporated Koranic inscriptions, and were believed to protect precisely because they too were derived from the same source of esoteric knowledge and power.

In contrast, Bowdich thought that the designs grew out of the woven patterns of the wall substructure. The suggestion that these patterns were woven is an interesting one as it highlights another interpretative possibility, namely that they derived from imported Islamic textiles. In this way, these designs can be understood to wrap the external facades of important buildings in much the same way as they wrapped the bodies of powerful entities as coverings and garments. These decorative symbols also constituted departure points for the production of metaphorical and proverbial knowledge although few of the meanings of these symbols are now known. Bowdich's descriptions and illustrations therefore contain important evidence for an earlier episode of appropriation which resulted in externally-derived symbolism becoming part of the physical and metaphorical fabric of Asante culture. In this context it came to provide another layer of wrapping that both concealed and revealed distinct aspects of authority and power. Interestingly, all three of Bowdich's illustrations of the interior of the royal residence also contain evidence of the appropriation and display of externally-derived artefacts within its precincts. It is therefore my contention that this labyrinthine structure not only formed the physical epicentre of Kumase, in particular, and of Asante, in general, but was also one of the principal sites for the appropriation of alien sources of power which included the Asantehene himself.

The Asantehene was believed to possess an inherently ambiguous nature which made him capable of both benevolent and malevolent acts. He did not share the same limitations of time as ordinary men, as he straddled the spheres of the living and the dead and he did not occupy ordinary space, in the sense that he was neither of the earth nor of the sky, the domains of people or of deities (Gilbert 1987, 327). Therefore, as a liminal entity that inhabited the animal, human and spiritual domains, he too was treated as an alien outsider. In this way, the Asantehene not only embodied the juncture where many dichotomous elements confronted each other, but he was also the ultimate site for the convergence and diffusion of power and was therefore, both a container and a conduit,

who functioned in much the same way as the liminal spaces of Asante settlements. However, instead of being confined to the periphery, he occupies the inhabited core of Kumase thereby inverting the norm, as unlike other Asante, he is the only one who is truly an insider as everyone else is from somewhere else.

1 The Third Halt 2

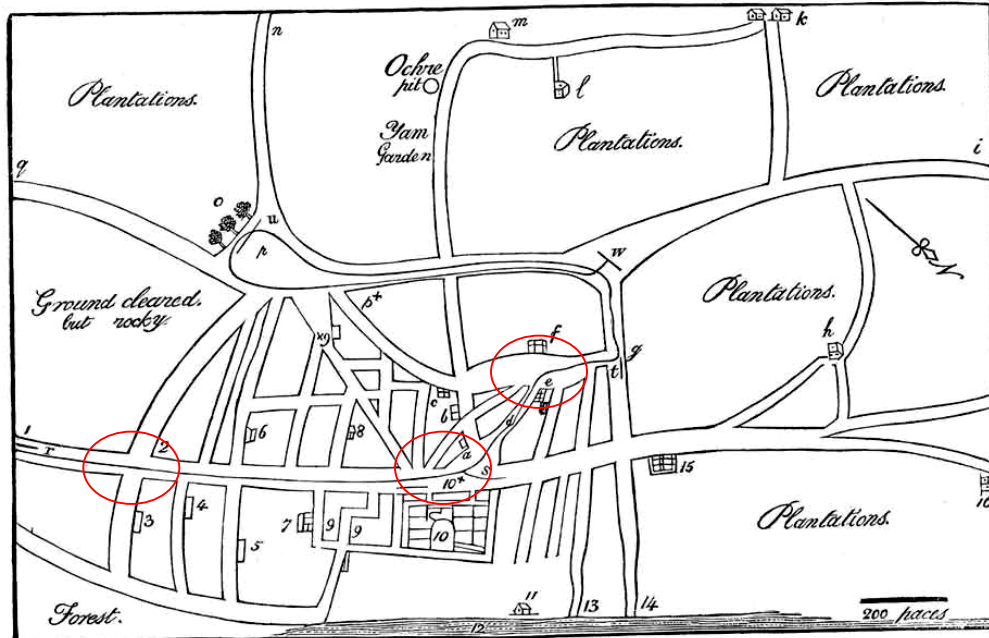


Figure 2.10: The third halt
(Bowdich 1819, 323)

Having stopped for an unspecified length of time outside the royal residence, Bowdich recounted how the members of the Mission ‘[...] were then squeezed, at the same funeral pace, up a long street, to an open-fronted house, where [they] were desired by a royal messenger to wait a further invitation from the king’ (Bowdich 1819, 33). A similar delay was also experienced by Huydecoper in 1816 who stated that at this point in the procession, orders came through that he was to wait until further notice under a nearby tree, since the assembly was not yet in fact ready to receive him (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 16). Whilst halted here, he complained of being stifled by the people [who] pressed closer and closer, streaming in from all sides in the hope of catching a glimpse of me’ (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 16). Dupuis also described how, in 1820 ‘my palanquin was on a sudden arrested in the main avenue by a deputation of Caboceers [...] here, therefore I alighted under the shade of some high trees, reposing for a while from

the scorching blaze of the sun [...] the atmosphere too, was in a manner stifled by the pressure of the multitude' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 70). It is noteworthy that they all report having very similar experiences of being stifled and suffocated by the proximity of the crowd at this location. Their reactions to this occurrence were no doubt informed by the relatively recent events of the French Revolution which engendered a political horror of unruly mobs in the minds of men like Bowdich. Furthermore, the impolite intrusion of personal space by the Asante crowd transgressed newly established middle class European notions regarding embodied selfhood and appropriate private space. As such, these descriptions not only provide evidence of instances where Asante and European cultural perceptions and practices clashed but they also demonstrate that the Asante manipulation of immediate environments followed a systematic and precise sequence.

This observation complements my contention that once visitors were within the precincts of Kumase their progress continued to be controlled in a highly orchestrated manner. They were publicly processed through the settlement, they were halted frequently at prescribed stopping places and the speed of their progress within its environs was also the subject of regulation by the Asantehene. The open-fronted building that Bowdich mentions was located near the intersection with big cannon street (*Apremoso*), the name of which was derived from the Dutch cannon that had been captured by the Asante during the decisive battle of Feyaise in 1701 and which were prominently displayed on top of a mound at one end. Whilst they were halted here his attention was;

'[...] forced from the astonishment of the crowd to a most inhuman spectacle, which was paraded before us for some minutes; it was a man whom they were tormenting previous to sacrifice; his hands were pinioned behind him, a knife was passed through his cheeks, to which his lips were noosed like a figure of 8; one ear was cut off and carried before him, the other hung to his head by a small bit of skin; there were several gashes in his back, and a knife was thrust under each shoulder blade; he was led with a cord passed through his nose, by men disfigured with immense caps of shaggy black skins' (Bowdich 1819, 33).

This shocking sight was almost certainly calculated to induce fear and horror in the

members of the first British Mission. However, their reactions to it, which were not recorded, would have been conditioned to a certain extent by the still horrific nature of public executions held in England at this time. Likewise, the residents of Kumase were also routinely exposed to public executions which took place at designated places that were set aside for this purpose. Interestingly Bowdich included a similar scene in the foreground of his illustration of the ‘First Day of the Yam Custom’ (fig. 2.11). Neither

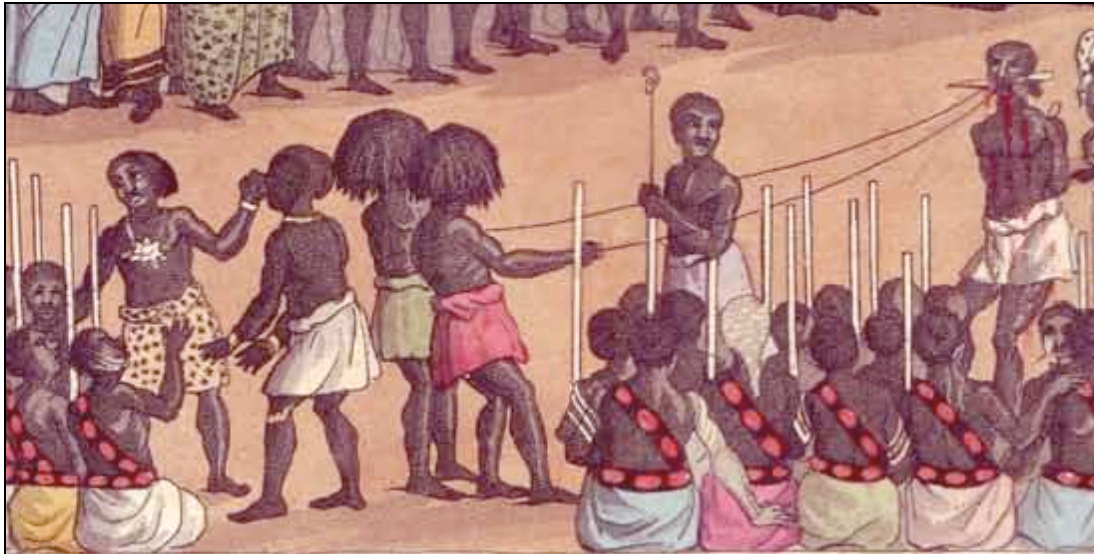


Figure 2.11: Detail of a blood-soaked felon being tortured previous to execution (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

the Dutch envoy in 1816, nor the officers of the second British mission in 1820, report being subjected to the same display as Bowdich and his companions were at this site in 1817. This might reflect the fact that the Asante intended it to be an object lesson to the first European visitors that the penalty for transgressing the law was slow torture followed by death. Unfortunately, Bowdich appears to have missed the point and instead misinterprets it as a sacrifice rather than the execution of a criminal who had been sentenced to death for his crimes.

Figure 2.11: Detail of ground plan showing the location of the split grove in relation to the market place (Bowdich 1819, 323)

The Fourth Halt

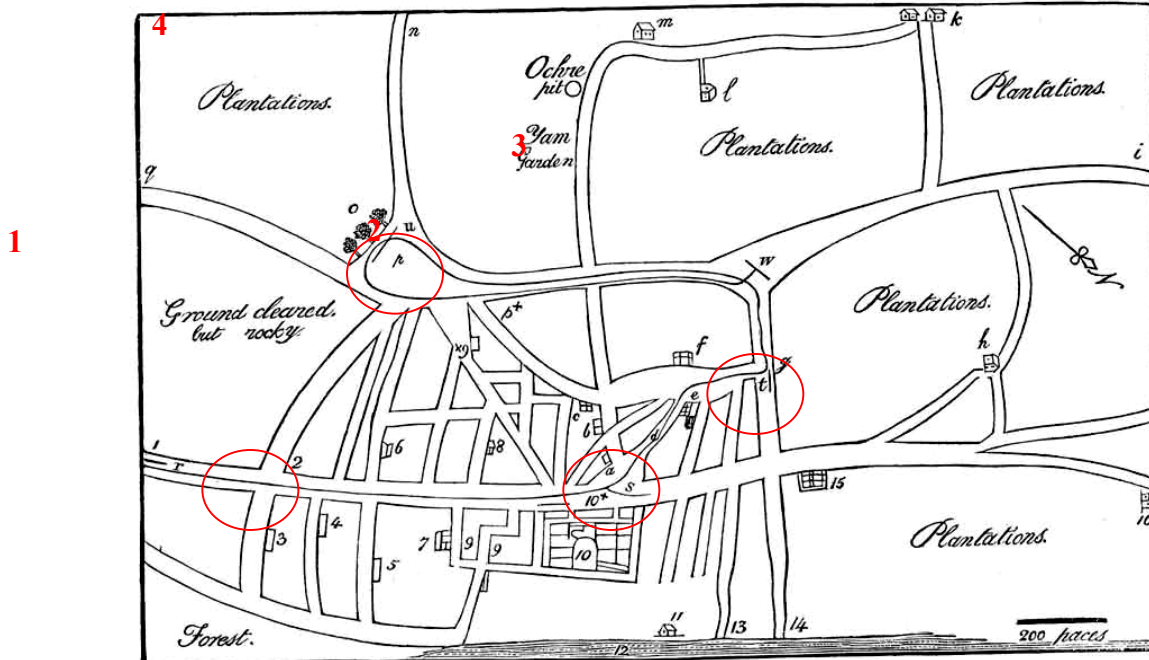
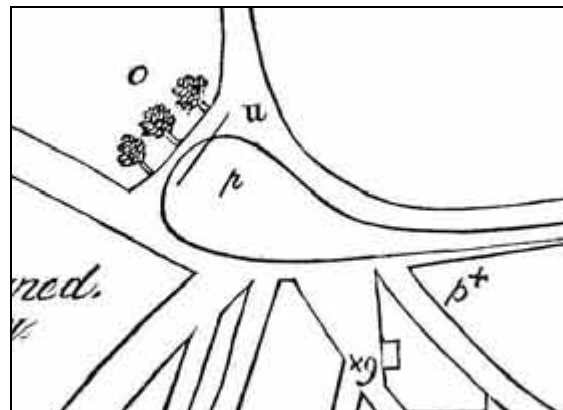


Figure 2.12: The fourth halt (Bowdich 1819, 323)

Bowdich's account goes on to relate how they '[...] were soon released by permission to proceed to the King, and [...] passed through a very broad street, about a quarter of a mile long, to the market place' (Bowdich 1819, 33-34). His ground plan shows the location of a large circular feature which he identifies on the accompanying legend as being the great market place (fig. 2.13). It is clear from his account that this large open space did not function solely as the location of the market but was regularly used to hold public meetings, to receive important visitors, to stage large celebrations and to host the



customs of the Asante elite. The different functions and roles associated with this site suggest that it was not simply a commercial or a domestic space but an inherently liminal one where relationships were acknowledged, maintained and validated via public display. In effect, the market place can be understood to be an open-air extension of the King's house but with one important difference: it was commandeered expressly for those occasions when it was deemed desirable for the general public to be present. This explains why the members of the first and second British Missions were summoned here and not to the royal residence to state the reasons for their visit. The connection between the market place and the King's house was also expressed through architecture as it was one of several locations in Kumase where a circular dais (*sumpene*) made from clay was situated. Bowdich describes these structures as being '[...] small circular elevations of two steps, [which resembled] the bases of old market crosses in England' (Bowdich 1819, 323). During public appearances he records that the King's chair was placed on the top step of a dais which had the effect of raising him above his retinue, thereby creating a direct visual expression of superior status (*ibid*).

I argue that the esoteric and transactional functions of this site may also have been signified by its physical proximity to the spirit grove (*sumanpone*), which is clearly indicated on Bowdich's ground plan by three trees that delineate the upper left margins of the market place. In his account he states that '[...] the small grove at the back of the large market place was [where] the trunks of all the human victims were thrown,' and he also mentions that '[...] the extent of the daily sacrifice was indicated by the number of vultures that settled in these trees' (Bowdich 1819, 323). The location of the market place and the grove at the edge of the inhabited area indicate that they too formed part of the *kurotia* of Kumase which, as was the case with other settlements, made it the ideal location for gatherings where boundaries, distinctions, time and space were conflated in order to allow entities that were normally segregated from one another, to come together to participate in and witness important events.

In the background of Bowdich's illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' he depicts what appear to be the same trees as those which demarcate the spirit grove on his ground plan (fig. 2.14). The figure of Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame is shown seated,



Figure 2.14: Detail of the trees of the spirit grove
(Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

with his back to the grove but with its trees, flanking him on either side, which suggests that they also formed a backdrop for certain state events. If this interpretation is correct, then these particular trees were not just landmarks, but extremely powerful signifiers in and of themselves. If this was the case, then the Asantehene's physical placement at this location during state receptions and at the Yam Custom celebration may have been designed to publicly promote or reinforce his role as principal ritual actor/mediator between the human, ancestral and natural worlds.

Having reached the entrance to the market place during the reception of 1817, Bowdich's attention was quickly claimed by the magnificent and novel sight of '[...] the king, his tributaries, and captains, [...] resplendent in the distance, surrounded by attendants of every description, fronted by a mass of warriors which seemed to make our approach impervious' (Bowdich 1819, 35). The way in which he described the spatial arrangement of the Asante personnel in this passage suggests that he intuitively understood that it was designed to protect the Asantehene. This equates to Hendry's definition of social wrapping whereby high status people are wrapped in layers of subordinates who perform a 'mediating and boundary-maintaining role (Hendry 1993, 126). In effect this

arrangement served to separate them off from the general populace and create an aura of power. Bowdich captures something of this in his illustration of the ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’ which depicts multitudes of people encircling the Asantehene in a similar arrangement (fig. 2.15). A gap in the crowd, located in the middle foreground of the image, indicates the only entryway on to the ground. A similar scene was witnessed by Huydecoper, who describes how, in 1816, he had been overwhelmed by the tumultuous sight of an estimated 50,000 people, splendidly adorned in a profusion of gold (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 16). Dupuis also states how, at this same spot in 1820, he was confronted with ‘[...] the sight of assembled thousands, in full costume displaying all the ostentatious trophies of Negro splendour’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 68).

The long halts were replaced by a series of shorter and more accelerated ones as the officers were obliged to stop and formally greet each of the chiefs who were lined up in order of rank and seniority (Bowdich 1819, 35). This observance of diplomatic protocol also ensured that visiting envoys symbolically followed a trajectory that took them from the tributaries, situated on the periphery of Greater Asante, through the protectorates to the provincial Asante heartland. Bowdich’s description of how the suites of attendants were organized around each of these chiefs suggests that they too were arranged in a strict formation that effectively insulated the chief.

‘Immediately behind their chairs [...] stood their handsomest youths [...].
Their stools [...] were conspicuously placed on the heads of favourites; and
crowds of small boys were seated around, flourishing elephants tails [...]
The warriors sat on the ground close to these, and so thickly as not to admit
of our passing without treading on their feet’ (*ibid*, 36).

Given this, I would like to suggest that the order in which the visitors were introduced to the general assembly and the configuration of each chief’s retinue combined to reproduce in microcosm a physical and spatial representation of Asante society’s basic composition and hierarchical structure.



The First Day of the Yam Custom
(Bowdich 1819, 274-275)

Bowdich continues his account by stating how, '[...] we were suddenly surprised by the sight of the Moors' (Bowdich 1819, 37). During the state reception of 1820 Hutton also noted that '[...] a short distance before we came to the King, we observed the Moorish chief Ali Baba to the left of his Majesty' (Hutton 1821, 215). The inclusion of Muslims from northern states such as Hausa, Dagomba and Gonja at Asante state occasions suggests that their relationship with the Asantehene and his court was, at this time, relatively stable and firmly established (fig. 2.16). It also provides valuable supporting evidence of how other outsiders, who had been in contact with the Asante over a much longer time period, had been integrated into the hierarchy.

From Bowdich and Hutton's descriptions, it is clear that during state receptions the European visitors approached the Asantehene from the left, something that was determined by convention. As part of his description of the 1817 reception Bowdich recorded the sequencing of the Asantehene's household as they appeared in the line-up, starting with the chamberlain, the gold horn blower, the captain of the messengers, the captain for royal executions, the captain of the market, the keeper of the royal burial ground, and the master of the bands (Bowdich 1819, 37). Furthermore, he also noted that each of these officers sat '[...] surrounded by a retinue and splendor which bespoke the dignity and importance of their offices' and went on to describe how the cook 'had a number of small services [...] held behind him, and a large quantity of massy silver plate [...] displayed before him,' and the executioner 'before whom the execution stool was held' (*ibid*, 37-38). Bowdich also mentioned four linguists whose '[...] gold canes, were elevated in all directions, tied in bundles like fascies,' and the keeper of the treasury, whose '[...] magnificence was [signified] by the ostentatious display of blow pan, boxes, scales and weights' (*ibid*, 38). These descriptions demonstrate that the roles of office-holders were displayed via their insignia and equipment which were carried before them as well as, in some cases, behind them.

The series of shorter but more intense personal encounters between the Asante elite and European envoys finally culminated with each officer individually approaching the Asantehene and receiving his hand. Bowdich did not note the exact style of greeting adopted in 1817 but in 1820 Hutton stated that '[...] on appearing in the royal presence,

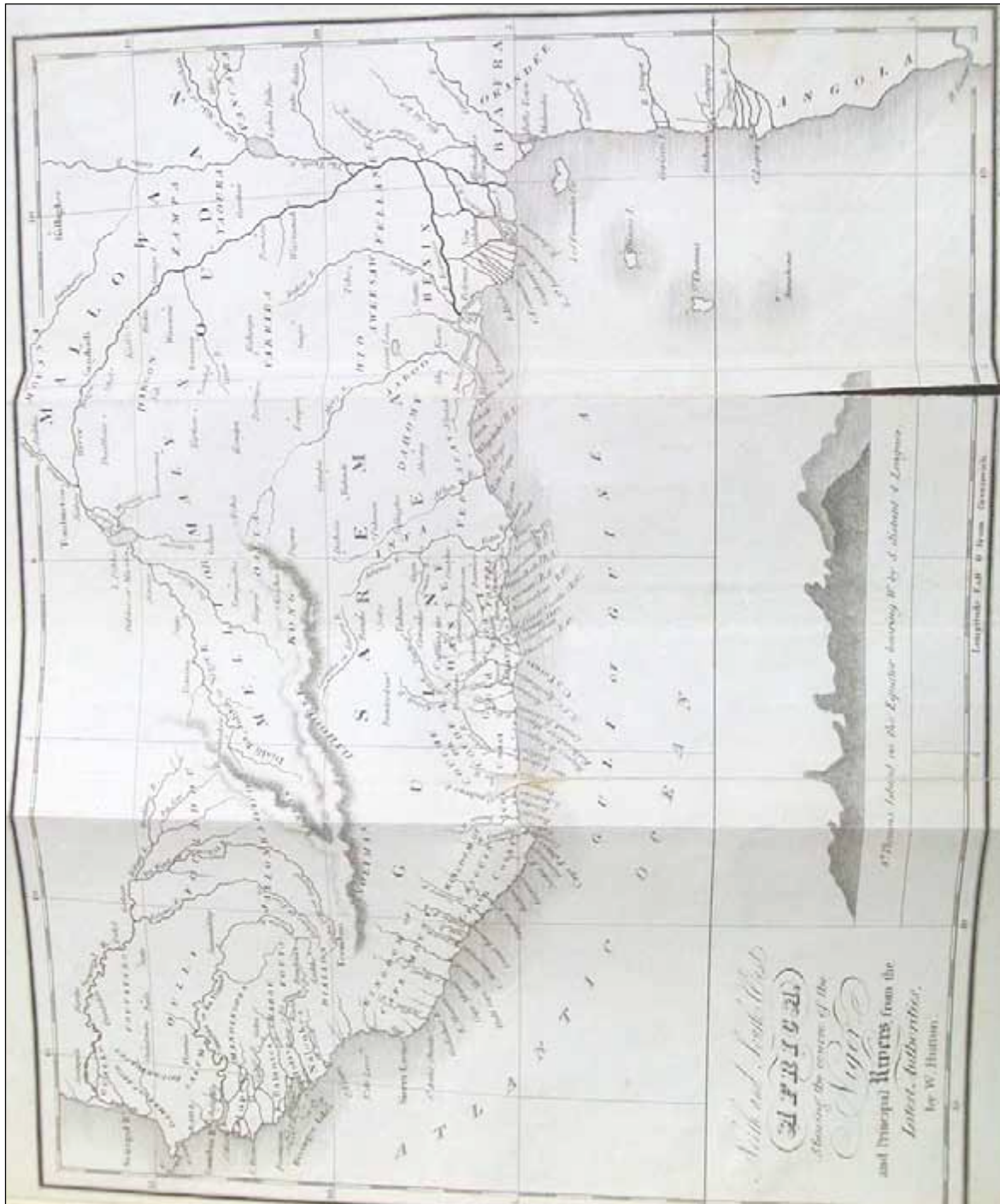


Figure 2.16: Map showing the States surrounding Asante (Hutton 1821, Map II)

we all took off our hats, and each of us, in regular succession advanced and shook hands with his Majesty' (Hutton 1821, 217). Having shaken hands with the Asantehene,⁴ Bowdich continued to note as part of his description of the 1817 reception that stationed immediately behind and to the right⁵ of the monarch were personnel who included guards and the infant sons of the nobility superintended by a eunuch waving elephant tails and large plumes (Bowdich 1819, 39). The eunuch stood next to '[...] ocrachs [personal servants of the Asantehene]² and various attendants and beyond them were stationed more captains and chiefs' (*ibid.*). Evidence from Bowdich's and other envoys' accounts demonstrate that the hierarchical arrangement of personnel also played a major role in the diplomatic choreography that accompanied reciprocal gestures of greeting during official receptions.

The Fifth Halt

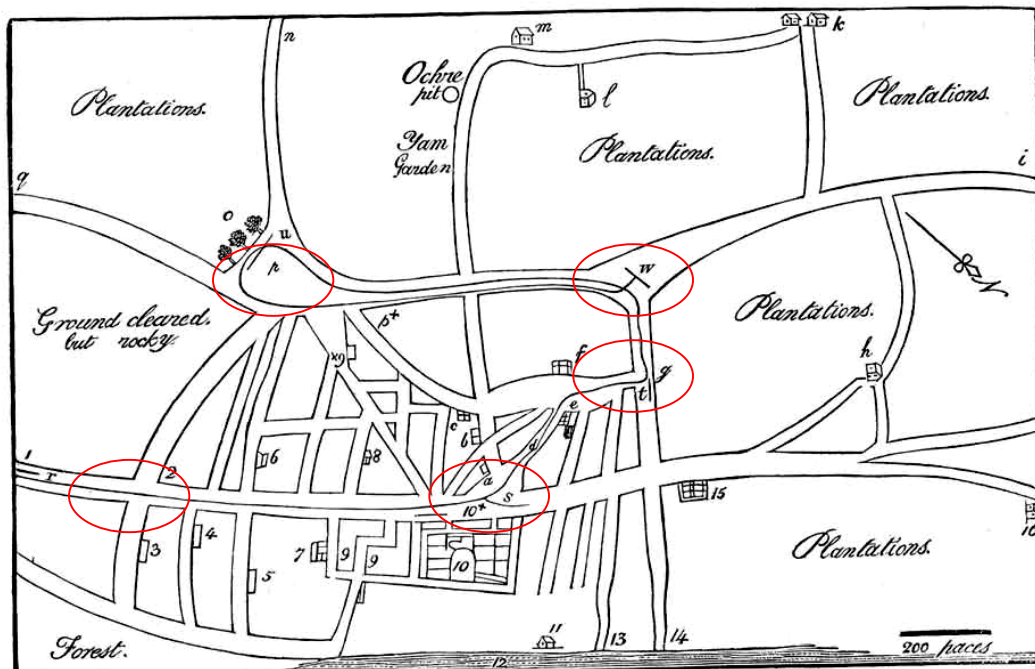


Figure 2.17: The fifth halt
(Bowdich 1819, 323)

Having reached the end of the line of chiefs, Bowdich and his colleagues were requested to withdraw and seat themselves under a distant tree in order to receive the compliments of the Asante assembly (Bowdich 1819, 39). This constituted the fifth and final halt of the reception which took place just as night was falling. At this location they received

the reciprocal greetings of the Asante chiefs, who filed past them in the same strict order of precedence as they had appeared at the market place. After a long period, Bowdich stated the torch-lit procession of the royal entourage appeared and '[...] the Asantehene stopped to enquire our names a second time and to wish us good night; he was followed directly by his aunts, sisters and others of his family' (Bowdich, 1819, 41). Similar scenes also occurred during the receptions of Huydecoper in 1816 and Dupuis in 1820. However, at this point in the ceremony in 1820 Dupuis and Hutton separately reported that the appearance of the Asantehene was accompanied by a sudden rush of his guards which took them by surprise, to such an extent that Dupuis was knocked off his feet and temporarily lost his sword and hat (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 81; Hutton 1821, 221). Hutton reports how he and the other officers '[...] struck [the intruders] with the hilts of [their] swords, which soon made them give way in turn, [after which] his Majesty shook hands with each of us, and wished us good night' (Hutton 1821, 221). This action bears all the hallmarks of a feigned attack and remains the only reported incident of its type. It may be that it was designed to intimidate the members of the second British Mission, or to vent pent-up tensions, alternatively it could have been intended as a warning, in much the same way as the display of the condemned man had been for the members of the first British Mission.

This comparative analysis conducted using the written accounts of European envoys who visited Kumase in the four years between 1816 and 1820 reveals that they all thought the reception experience was deliberately manufactured in order to impress upon them the magnificence of the Asantehene and his court. They all variously complained in their accounts of being assaulted by loud and discordant music, of being stifled by the enormous crowds and the heat, of being dazzled by the glare and stunned by the amount and splendour of the gold during state receptions. Dupuis expressed it best when he stated '[...] it naturally occurred to me that the impression was intended to paralyze the senses, by contributing to magnify the man of royalty' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 81). This is undoubtedly true but I think that the experience was intended to do much more than impress; I believe it was intended, amongst other things, to give form to the formless and place to the placeless.

As a result of this analysis, several significant points have been identified. Firstly, it has been revealed that the entry of European envoys and their reception by the Asante court occurred during the day, whilst the Asantehene's reciprocal greeting took place after nightfall. This indicates that these ceremonies were organized around the observance of a complementary principle. This can also be detected in the 1817 Mission's departure from Kumase which took place on 22nd September 1817 after dark, thereby reversing the circumstances of their arrival in daylight, although this is not borne out by the departures of other envoys. Secondly, it appears that the journey and reception were sub-divided into a series of alternating episodes of movement and stasis which began well before the visitors arrived in Kumase and ended only after the Asantehene had received and formally recognised the envoys and reciprocated their greetings. Furthermore, the halts were characterised by their seemingly arbitrary occurrence and time-length which contrasts starkly with the fact that they constituted parts of a longer cycle of activity that was highly prescribed. However, it has been shown that the arbitrary and prescribed elements of the reception worked in combination so as to effectively wrap European visitors in a series of social, spatial and temporal layers, that successively revealed self-presentations of Asante culture and power as a pre-requisite to their assignment of a temporary social status within the state hierarchy.

Thirdly, I have identified that the five stopping places described as part of this analysis correspond with consecrated boundary markers or sites of execution that were ritually energized with medicinal and polluting substances to protect the environs of Kumase. The first halt occurred at the *nkwantanan*, an important crossroads where the path from Cape Coast intersected the main thoroughfare into Kumase. The Asante believed that this was one of the sites where powerful medicines had been buried in antiquity to prevent unauthorized incursions. The second halt occurred at a site of execution that was situated directly outside the palace wall known as *heman(e) ho* (do not give offence to the King), also referred to as *nkram* (in the midst of blood) (Rattray 1927, 112). The third halt was in the vicinity of *apremoso* (the place of cannons), where trophies of war were prominently displayed. The fourth halt occurred at the *dwaberem* (great market place), a site where public ceremonies were regularly held, and the fifth halt corresponded to

another crossroads known as *bodomase*, where powerful medicine was believed to be buried.

Finally, Asante receptions were designed to expose visitors to a series of events where the senses of sight, hearing and occasionally smell were predominantly assaulted, unlike the neighbouring Anlo-Ewe culture, where Geurts has suggested ‘the dominant senses at the beginning of a ritual oppose and balance out the dominant senses displayed at the end of the event,’ (Geurts 2002, 157/158). Interestingly, the senses of taste and touch were not targeted in the same way. Touch was restricted to the shaking of hands and taste was suppressed entirely, as no refreshments were offered to the envoys during the receptions of 1816, 1817 and 1820, despite the fact that each of these ceremonies averaged five hours in length.

This analysis therefore provides important new evidence that, to some extent, challenges the view expounded by Johannes Fabian in *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (2000). In this publication he argues that explorers were far from rational during their sojourns into the African bush and often met their hosts in extraordinary states induced as a result of opiate and alcohol abuse, sex, fever, fatigue and violence. I suggest that given the evidence cited here, in some cases Europeans also experienced similar states as a direct result of manipulations by their African hosts. Apart from highlighting these points of correlation, this comparative analysis also raises a series of important questions such as, why did state receptions take this form? Did similar processions feature as part of other Asante events and if so, how do they relate to state receptions? In the section to follow I will pursue the answers to these questions by examining Bowdich’s descriptions and illustration of the 1817 Yam Custom.

Part Three: The Yam Custom

Huydecoper and Bowdich noted separately in their respective publications, written in 1816 and 1817, that processions also featured prominently as part of the Yam Custom which was held annually over 42 consecutive days during the months of August, September and occasionally, October. It was proverbially referred to by the Asante as the

time when ‘[...] the edges of the year had come round,’ which suggests that time was conceived of as being cyclical. It also hints at the probability that the period between the immediate end of an old year and the start of a new one was considered to be liminal, a time outside of time and/or a space outside of space. Both Huydecoper’s and Bowdich’s descriptions of this Custom are imprecise and sketchy which can be explained by the fact that their participation was limited to certain events which featured as part of the ritual cycle. This possibility takes on an added significance when it is remembered that some of the *odwira* rites were directed toward enabling Asante and non-Asante, the living and the dead and the sacred and the profane, to transgress the boundaries that normally divided them, for a short period. However, both authors made it clear that, by this point in time, the ritual celebration of the first Yam crop was also conflated with a thanksgiving ceremony for the royal ancestors and a ritual purification of the collective Asante soul, as well as providing a platform for the celebration of the founding of the Asante state.

Since 1817 the events and sequence of the Kumase *odwira* have also been documented by Captain R. S. Rattray, a colonial ethnographer (1927, 122-143) and T. C. McCaskie, a cultural historian (1995, 144-240). Rattray’s version is based on conversations he had with a ‘white-haired Ashanti friend’ which were conducted whilst he was working as the head of the newly-established Anthropological Department of the Gold Coast Administration (Rattray 1927, 131). At the time he was writing, the *odwira* had not been celebrated in Kumase since the deposition of Asantehene Nana Agyeman Prempeh I (1872-1931) following the Asante uprising in 1896. Despite Rattray’s assurances that the information had ‘[...] been checked, in its most important points and is to be trusted,’ his description is rather muddled, which probably reflects the fact that his informant, like Huydecoper and Bowdich before him, was not privy to all aspects of the ceremony (*ibid*, 128).

In contrast, the description of the Asante *odwira* which appears in McCaskie’s publication *State and Society in Pre-colonial Asante* (1995) does not rely on one informant’s version of events. Instead, he draws on several nineteenth century European travellers accounts, including Huydecoper’s and Bowdich’s, to trace the historical evolution of the *odwira* and reconstruct its sequence of rites by analysing the changing

structure and meanings associated with it. In this way, he provides the most comprehensive description of the rite but, as a composite construction, it must be treated with caution as over time some of the events that were described by European observers were dropped in favour of new ones. This indicates that many different versions of the *odwira* were performed in the past and it is therefore unlikely that visitors to Kumase were describing exactly the same event. Despite the acknowledged limitations of these studies, however, I propose to draw on both Rattray's and McCaskie's work in the next section to contextualize some of the events described by Huydecoper and Bowdich.

Tradition has it that, at some point around the end of July, the Asantehene and his senior advisors selected an auspicious Monday on which to visit the royal mausoleum at Bantama, which was located in the back town, approximately 1 mile to the north of Kumase. This visit was made in order to borrow gold dust from the ancestral spirits of previous rulers (*asamanhow*) to pay for the ceremony. On their return a meeting was held in the palace courtyard at which the Asantehene, the Kumase office-holders (*Kumasefoo*) and the palace officials (*nhenkwaa*) formally announced the timing of the *odwira*. Messengers (*afenasafu*) were dispatched to the outlying tributaries and provinces to command the presence of their chiefs in Kumase on the appointed day. The intervening days were spent in repairing and renovating the physical fabric of Kumase, including the palace and other architectural features, as well as overhauling all items of state regalia such as canopies, chairs, drums, palanquins and stools. In 1817 Bowdich either observed or was informed about some of these practices as he noted in his account that '[...] the royal gold ornaments [were] melted down every Yam Custom, and fashioned into new patterns as novel as possible' (Bowdich 1819, 279).

McCaskie and Rattray both documented how, at the beginning of the rites, the Asantehene customarily processed around Kumase in a prescribed route that took him to a succession of ideologically and historically important sites (McCaskie 1995, 163/164; Rattray 1927, 128). During this procession the Asantehene periodically halted at certain residences in order to sacrifice sheep in front of the ancestral stools of important officeholders including the fathers of the Asantehene's predecessors (ibid). The procession also halted at each of the crossroads (*nkwantana*) that marked the boundaries

of Kumase, in order that he could pour libations of alcohol over them. Tradition has it that these physical features known as *nkwantan* had been empowered by potent protective medicines (*nduru*; sing. *aduru*) which had been buried within them to repel any form of hostile supernatural or human intruder. Even today people will talk about how buried medicine which has been strengthened by being added to by successive Asantehenes in the past continues to protect the city. Therefore, such libations were intended to spiritually fortify and strengthen these thresholds in readiness for the forthcoming cycle of rites. Bowdich made no mention of this however, in his account which either indicates that this part of the ceremony was not performed in 1817 or, he was unaware that it had taken place.

The importance of spiritual fortification only becomes apparent when it is considered in relation to other events that constituted the *odwira*. A week or so later the tributary chiefs started to arrive in Kumase, something that Bowdich witnessed. He noted that as part of this event ‘[...] the principal caboceers sacrificed a slave at each quarter of the town, on their entré’ (Bowdich 1819, 274). This was also the day when the spirits of the dead (*asamanfoo*), especially those who had died since the last *odwira*, were ritually summoned to take part in the ceremony. The spirits of executed criminals were also roused by the state executioners (*adumfoo*), who danced at the sacred grove (*asamanpow*) where the severed heads and bodies had been scattered for the wild beasts to devour (McCaskie 1995, 202). Furthermore, the Asantehene ritually defiled himself by sacrificing a prohibited animal such as an ox (*ibid*, 199-200). Together these acts marked the commencement of the temporary suspension of the laws and norms that governed society and as a consequence this was also the day that the Asante state was at its most vulnerable from spiritual attack.

In effect, what Bowdich observed and documented was the annual assembly of the Asante body politic, which included the dead as well as the living. These diverse and disparate members converged from all points of the compass in order to recreate, in microcosm, Greater Asante within the confines of Kumase. This convergence on Kumase, I suggest, also functioned metaphorically to highlight the Asantehene’s ability to unite Greater Asante under his command, in a consummate display of political power

and leadership. The ‘quarters’ that Bowdich referred to were, in all probability, the same boundary markers that the Asantehene had visited the day before. In this way, each chief supplemented the Asantehene’s libations with human blood in order to strengthen and sustain Kumase’s physical and spiritual integrity. The performance of each sacrifice also ensured that the entry of the subordinate chiefs into Kumase echoed the staggered progress of the Asantehene’s procession of the previous day and that of State receptions. Bowdich’s account makes clear that his participation at the 1817 Yam Custom was primarily limited to attending the assembly of chiefs which occurred on the afternoon of Saturday 6th September 1817. This explains why he probably entitled his illustration ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’ because, as far as he was concerned it was, despite the fact that the rite had actually begun many days prior to this. During this magnificent ceremony, vassal chiefs processed through Kumase in order of seniority and precedence and swore a personal oath of allegiance to the Asantehene, who sat in state in the market place. In this way, public acknowledgement and validation of familial and political relationships which existed between the Asantehene, every member of his court, and the retinues of sub-chiefs, were expressed not only verbally but via spatial displays. In effect, such displays formed a vital visual component of all state ceremonies including state receptions for foreign envoys. In effect, the social wrapping described here was designed to reflect degrees of distance and formality and the hierarchical structure of the state (Hendry 1993, 99). A schematic diagram (fig. 2.18) of the distribution of the Asante court at a royal durbar held in the early twentieth century was published with an accompanying legend by Rattray (1927). Despite being one hundred and ten years later in date, this diagram accurately reflects the same deployment of personnel as that described by Bowdich at both the state reception and the Yam Custom held in 1817.

Those officials situated to the left of the Asantehene constituted the *gyassefo* (lit. people of the hearth), trusted advisors and powerful ritual specialists who were the sons and grandsons of former kings. These office-holders were closely identified with the Asantehene and his ancestors and represented the mystical and the patri-line, whereas those situated on his right, which included the heads of the non-royal clans, were identified with the state, political authority and the matri-line. In front of the Asantehene, in two diagonally flanking rows, were arranged those personnel who represented

Table showing the seating at a 'durbar' at which were present the King of Ashanti, the great paramount Chiefs (*Amanhene*), and Officers of State.

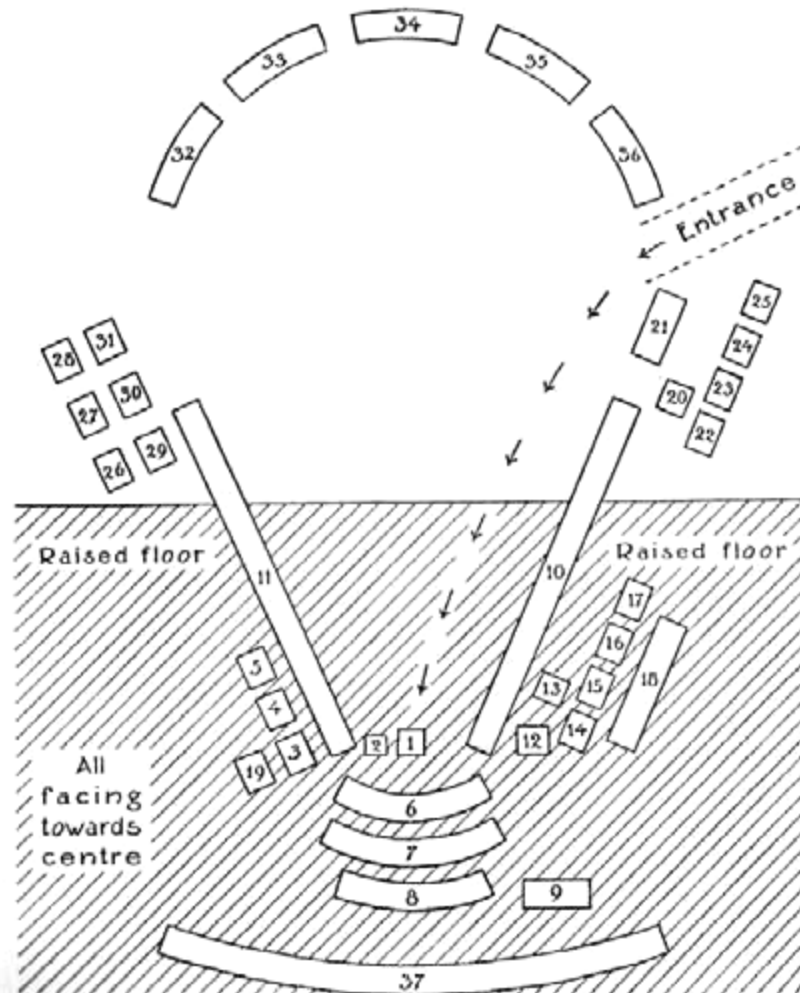


FIG. 55

Key to seating: 1, King of Ashanti; 2, Queen Mother; 3, Akyempim 'hene; 4, Nsuta 'hene; 5, Adam 'hene; 6, Akonnuasosafu and Kwadwumfo; 7, Atumitufo; 8, Ankobea 'hene; 9, Atipim 'hene; 10, 11, Afonasofo and Ahoprafo; 12, Official holding the dwete kudufo, a 'silver vessel' containing £1,000 in gold dust; 13, Gyase 'hene; 14, Oyoko 'hene; 15, Juaben 'hene; 16, Kokofu 'hene; 17, Bekwai 'hene; 18, Lesser Oyoko chiefs; 19, Dominase 'hene; 20, The King's twelve *Akyeame*; 21, Asene; 22, Maippon 'hene; 23, Donten 'hene; 24, Ejeiso 'hene; 25, Ofinsu 'hene; 26, Asumengya 'hene; 27, Kumawu 'hene; 28, Tafo 'hene; 29, Ananta 'hene; 30, Gyasewa 'hene; 31, Dadeasoaba 'hene; 32, Asafohenfo 'hene; 33, Asafo 'hene; 34, Bantama 'hene; 35, Danyease 'hene; 36, Bantama Asafohenfo; 37, Afotuosafu with horn blowers, and fottomfrom, and ntumpane drummers.

extensions of his own inner spiritual nature. Nearest to him were the young soul washers (*akrafo*), who sat holding swords. Beyond them were stationed the linguists (*akyeame*, sing. *okyeame*), who mediated in all verbal exchanges between the Asantehene and the people. Also positioned in front of the ruler were the deformed heralds (*esene*), who kept order in the palace. Their physical imperfections, when interpreted in light of their role, suggest that they may have embodied a symbolic bridge that spanned the ordered space of the human domain and the disorder of the wild. Beyond these officials stood the drummers and horn-blowers who communicated directly, via their instruments, with the ancestors, the monarch and the populace and next to these were stationed the executioners (*abrafo*), who dispatched anti-social elements on the orders of the Asantehene.

I argue that the division of the court into two separate wings may have been predicated on beliefs concerning what constituted an individual. Ethnographic accounts dating from the colonial and post-colonial periods document Asante conceptions that individuals were considered to be composite entities made up of ancestral, biological and spiritual elements (Rattray 1923, 45-85; 1927, 51-68; Akyeampong 1995, 481-508). Blood (*mogya*) was inherited from the mother, the soul or life force (*kra*), was considered to be a particle of *Onyame*, the Supreme Creator God, whilst the ego (*sunsum*), and personality/character (*ntoro*), were inherited from the father. In addition to these elements there was also human breath (*saman*), which on death was believed to transform into a ghost. Evidence shows that each of these elements was implicated in the formation of an individual and were also closely associated with a particular direction or location in space. As a result, ideological and political relationships that existed between the parts and the whole were structured around abstract symbolic configurations which were physically enacted at specific times and places, in order that they could be distinguished at a glance during public displays.

This analysis goes some way towards explaining why the British and the Muslim contingents occupy separate places on the left-hand side of the Asantehene in Bowdich's illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom.' Their placement on the Asantehene's left was predicated on the fact that they fitted in with the overall pattern of

patrilineal/esoteric associations rather than those of the right, which consisted of matrilineal/royal/political ones. Their positioning on the left of the ruler therefore strongly indicates how European officials were nominally perceived and integrated within the existing Asante system of ranking and prestige during the second decade of the nineteenth century (for a fuller discussion see McLeod 1987, 190).

Bowdich's descriptions of the retinues of the sub-chiefs at the Yam Custom indicates that they were also deployed in the same configuration as the court, which probably served to underscore visually their loyalty to and unity with Greater Asante. McCaskie argued in relation to this that 'the enfolding semi-circle or crescent was the preferred geometrical and spatial mode in which the state (re)presented itself in all public displays as this morphology accorded in a fundamental way with the basic distribution of power' (McCaskie 1995, 209). This was clearly the case in 1817 as Bowdich described in his account how each subordinate chief and his entourage approached the Asantehene and his court in order of precedence and formed up into a shallow arc or semicircle in front of the royal court (Bowdich 1819, 274-278). In this way, McCaskie argued, the spatial distribution of power was 'framed within (and overlaid with) one of the most potent visual metaphors in the Asante register: the completed circle (*puruw: puruo*) which as round globe, disc or cylinder connoted an aesthetic and morally integrated unity or perfection' (*ibid*). In effect, the dominant arc of the court, which remained static throughout the ceremony, became conjoined with a succession of arcs formed by the retinues of each sub-chief, starting with the lowest in rank and finishing with the highest. As each subservient arc engaged with that of the Asantehene both were temporarily re-configured into a circle effectively expressing in its completeness and symmetry the unity that existed between them. It also ensured that symbolically each political component that made up the Asante state effectively followed each other in forming along with the Asantehene's retinue the inner-most layer of social wrapping surrounding the monarch. Meanwhile the inhabitants of Kumase who encircled the entire assembly formed the outermost layer, thereby reversing the positions normally occupied by the tributaries and protectorates. Another consequence of this formation was that it ensured that everyone faced inwards towards each other and, more especially, towards the political and ritual centre which was dominated by the figure of the Asantehene. Therefore, the arc/circle

configuration was the most effective and efficient means whereby a simultaneous interface and engagement between ruler and ruled could be effected.

The complementary principle underpinning spatial organization was not confined to static displays but was also expressed via the integral symmetry that can be detected in the sequencing of the assembly of chiefs. In a repetition of the ordering adopted at state receptions the Asantehene processed around the assembly of chiefs in a reciprocal gesture of welcome at the end of the presentations. His office-holders preceded him in the same strict order of precedence and formally greeted the sub-chiefs and their retinues starting with the lowest in rank. Bowdich recorded that, following the assembly, '[...] the broken sounds of distant horns and drums filled up the momentary pauses of the firing which encircled us: the uproar continued until four in the morning' (Bowdich 1819, 275).

Given his limited understanding of events, he was in all probability, unaware that this disturbance formed part of a ritualized mourning for the dead (McCaskie 1995, 212-213). In a dispatch addressed to the Governor dated 8th September 1817 Bowdich reported how at some point during Sunday morning (7th September) the members of the Mission processed to the King's house accompanied by flags, guns and music. On arrival in the great court he formally read out the objects of the Embassy and the Treaty to the gathering and swore on his sword that he declared the truth after which the Asantehene swore a reciprocal oath in front of his wives.

Despite the fact that, following this event, Bowdich was limited to describing what he could observe from the safety of the British Residence in Kumase, it is possible to piece together the ritual activities which occurred at other locations. After the ratification, the Asantehene, the executioners, the Kumase office-holders and a number of sacrificial victims probably processed in state to the royal mausoleum at Bantama. Bowdich recorded that several slaves were sacrificed there over a large brass pan and their blood was directed over the putrefying animal and vegetable matter at the bottom of the vessel in order to [...] produce invincible fetish (Bowdich 1819, 280). Rattray stated in his account of this ceremony that twelve sacrifices, generally captives or criminals already sentenced to death, were lined up before the great brass vessel (*Aya Kese*) located outside the mausoleum (fig. 2.19), and as the Asantehene visited each of his ancestor's coffins, a

drummer signaled the command for a victim to be beheaded (Rattray 1927, 139). He went on to relate how the body was quickly turned over on its stomach, and some of the blood was smeared on certain drums (*ibid*, 139-140). The skulls of the deceased enemies of the Asante state were also taken from their resting places, in front of the coffins of the



Figure 2.19: The *Aya Kese* in front of the royal mausoleum at Bantama (Rattray 1927, frontispiece)

particular Asantehene who had defeated them. They were entrusted to the care of the executioners, who smeared them with alternate bands of red (*inchuma*) and white (*hyire*) clay and put sprigs of fragrant plants such as *emme* (indeterminate), *nunun* (*Ocimum viride*) and *pea* (*Hyptis sp.*), which Bowdich likened to thyme, through the eye sockets and into other orifices, as the smell was believed to drive away evil revengeful spirits (Rattray 1927, 132). On their return the royal entourage made a circuit of Kumase during which the executioners repeatedly halted along the route at specific places in order to identify each skull and insult it in an animated manner in front of the assembled crowds. It is unclear from Bowdich's account whether he took part in this procession, but the fact that he limits his description to that of the King and his dignitaries being carried in their hammocks and passing through a continuous blaze of musketry, suggests that he did not (Bowdich 1819, 279). This may also account for the discrepancies that occur between

the versions provided by Rattray and McCaskie and that of Bowdich.

Bowdich described how, during the assembly of chiefs held on Saturday 6th September 1817, he witnessed these relics ‘[...] paraded by two parties of executioners, [...] who in an impassioned dance [and] with the most irresistible grimace [and] frightful gesture [...] clashed their knives on the skulls’ (Bowdich 1819, 275). He also clearly depicted a similar parade of skulls in his illustration of ‘The First Day of Yam Custom’ (fig. 2.20). McCaskie stated that he believed Bowdich to be mistaken in assigning the display of these relics to the assembly that occurred on the 6th September (McCaskie 1995, 218). I argue, however, that in 1817 a combination of circumstances such as the worsening crisis in Gyaaman and Bowdich’s insistent requests for the Anglo/Asante treaty to be ratified as speedily as possible, may have forced a change in the ritual programme.



Figure 2.20: Detail of the parade of skulls
(Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

McCaskie interpreted the public parading of enemy skulls as an exercise in didactic exposition, a history lesson, which in its essentials and its thrust were nothing less than an unrelenting paean to the ideological rectitude, power and authority of the Asante state

(McCaskie 1995, 218-219). I suggest that, in light of my earlier analysis, McCaskie's interpretation does not adequately explain the systematic halts at specific sites which echo the same episodic processions that have already been discussed in relation to the state receptions held in 1816, 1817 and 1820. I suggest that, given the evidence already presented, these halts corresponded with the same boundary markers that were the focus of libations on Thursday 4th and human sacrifices on Friday 5th September. In this way, the skulls were processed at these sites not only as part of a history lesson but also in order to fortify and reinforce the spiritual defenses of Kumase. I argue that this interpretation is given further credence by the fact that other similarly aggressive shows of strength also appear to have taken place around the same time this was happening.

Huydecoper stated that as part of the festivities he witnessed in 1816, the Asantehene, dressed in an ancient war costume and wielding a sword and a shield, tested the capabilities of his officers by defending the Golden Stool in a mock battle against an invading enemy (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 46). In his treatment of the ritual McCaskie interpreted this as another didactic performance in which the Asantehene's own heroic origins in warfare were re-enacted using archaic weapons and symbolic props (McCaskie 1995, 218-219). I contend that, given the evidence already presented, these events were also designed to complement the spiritual confrontations that were taking place at the boundary markers of Kumase.

This procession was followed by another which interestingly, for the purposes of this analysis, occurred after dark on the same day. During this event the Asantehene processed in his hammock to the boundary marker, known as the *Subenso*. This site was located on the southern edge of Kumase where the road to Cape Coast crossed the marshy ground adjacent to the Nsuben River. This appears to correspond to the crossroads that formed the first halt of the 1816, 1817 and 1820 state receptions and is known by the name 'push back the year let the other one in.' In front of the procession marched the executioners carrying new yams smeared on one side with red and on the other side with black (McCaskie 1995, 221). When they reached the boundary a royal linguist (*okyeame*) addressed an hermaphrodite spirit called *Awo*, who was believed to have been the first sacrificial oblation ever made to the earth goddess (*asase yaa*) (ibid,

222). At the end of this address the yams were cast into the wilderness; at the same time the accompanying bodyguard fired a volley into the air and everyone turned round and ran home in complete silence (McCaskie 1995, 221). The timing of this procession and the casting of new yams into the realm of the supernatural suggests that this constituted a form of reciprocal transaction, in which the products of human cultivation and therefore culture were offered back to nature in order to maintain relations between them and acknowledge their mutual interdependence.

This rite effectively bridged the critical juncture in agricultural, cultural and calendrical time and it was also associated with the mutually exclusive states of birth/death, day/night, male/female and human/divine. The events of this day therefore formed the metaphorical pivot point or hinge of the *odwira* as they signaled the transition from old to new and from past towards future. In light of this, I argue that the formal ratification of the 1817 Anglo/Asante trade treaty took place on this particular day because, on a practical level, it enabled the maximum number of people to witness it and on a spiritual level, the trajectory of its rites reflected something of Asante apprehensions and hopes with regard to the treaty and future relations with the British.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have focused primarily on analyzing Thomas Bowdich's account of two important historical events: the state reception of the first British Mission in Kumase held on the 19th May 1817 and the Yam Custom which occurred during September and October 1817. These descriptions have also been contextualized and explored in relation to the accounts of Huydecoper (1816-1817 [1962]), Hutton (1821) and Dupuis (1824 [1966]) which have revealed a number of striking similarities in their reception experiences. My analysis of these events was structured around answering three key questions: How did the Asante perceive the members of the Mission, how were they integrated into Asante society and what procedures were employed to achieve this? Before I present my summary I will briefly comment on two overarching trends that have emerged as a result of this analysis. Firstly, I have identified many examples where social, spatial and temporal wrapping, as defined by Hendry, have been used to structure a variety of physical and metaphysical cultural elements that required concealment,

protection and separation as well as augmentation and magnification. This indicates that, as a concept and an activity, wrapping in all its various guises, had many practical and spiritual applications within Asante culture. This is also borne out by the fact that the Akan term for wrapping (*nnuraho*) is derived from the verb *dura* which means to cover, coat and/or overlay as well as to finish (properly) by putting that which is to be wrapped (in safety) on the inside (McCaskie, personal communication). As such, wrapping is also inextricably bound up with notions of completeness, appropriate division and protection, which, in its most perfect manifestation forms a circle (*puruo*) that is also the most complete form of wrapping. Secondly, this analysis has demonstrated that there were significant similarities in the way that human and super-natural entities were received and integrated into Asante culture and society at this time. In particular, it has been highlighted that encounters were structured primarily around the concepts of complementarity, liminality and reciprocity which indicate that, like wrapping, they also framed other cultural practices.

In order to answer the first question, I have cited evidence taken from the descriptions of the official receptions attended by Huydecoper in 1816, Bowdich in 1817 and Hutton and Dupuis in 1820 which strongly indicate that Europeans were perceived by the Asante as potentially hostile entities which prompted the same precautions and procedures to be adopted as when interactions with other anti-social and supernatural beings were required. This involved confronting them with ‘fetishes’ and powerful shows of strength, directing their physical movement and controlling the speed of their entry as they negotiated their way through the environs of Kumase and restricting their capacity to act, interact and react by manipulating the environmental and physical conditions immediately surrounding them. Evidence cited from the accounts of Huydecoper (1816-1817 [1962]) and Bowdich (1819) as well as those of Rattray (1927) and McCaskie (1995) suggests that the same restrictions, in varying degrees, also applied in respect of the spirits of the dead and the relics of state enemies during the Yam Custom rites.

In respect of the second question, I have argued that the accounts written by consecutive envoys between 1816 and 1820 provide clear evidence that, during this four year period, processions formed the *modus operandi* for appropriating and integrating alien entities of

all kinds into Asante culture and society. I have also posited that the trajectories of processions and the spatial configurations of the court and other retinues during public displays were formed and informed by abstract framing devices, which functioned to structure the establishment and maintenance of correct socio-economic, political and religious relations between the Asante and powerful alien others. As part of this analysis I have suggested that European envoys were processed around the environs of Kumase in two distinct but inter-related ways during state receptions. Firstly, they were physically processed through the crowded streets of Kumase following a prescribed route that included a number of halts at sites of great historical and spiritual significance. I have argued that this generated a rhythmic pattern of alternating interludes of movement and stasis that were designed to incrementally draw visitors in from the periphery towards the centre of Asante power in a highly controlled manner. I have also suggested that the episodic changes of tempo echoed the staggered progress of ritual processions, such as those that were conducted as part of the Yam Custom. Secondly, Europeans were also processed psychologically and psychically at pre-ordained sites by being confronted with carefully orchestrated performances that punctuated their entry and induced a series of emotional and sensory highs that were designed repeatedly to shock them.

Finally, in answer to the third question, I have argued that the Asante controlled the integration of alien entities by incrementally processing them within a modified environment that temporarily disorientated and induced altered states of consciousness. Evidence for this comes from four separate accounts that document participant-observers experiences of over-crowding and claustrophobia, the effects of dust, heat, noise and smoke, exposure to violence and over-stimulation of the senses which, I have posited, were all calculated to control actions, interactions and reactions. In arguing this, I have extended Fabian's hypothesis that, the effects of drugs, sex, illness and violence altered the state of mind of European travellers and explorers in sub-Saharan Africa. By citing the evidence of four pre-colonial European envoys, I have demonstrated that in this case, indigenous communities deliberately manipulated conditions in order to induce mind-altering effects in visitors.

In conclusion, I contend that Kumase, the boundary markers, the palace and the market

place all formed a series of separate but interconnected layers of liminal wrapping which at different scales functioned to mediate and regulate encounters with super-natural forces. All of these layers of wrapping were situated in transitional contexts where time and space were conflated, boundaries and distinctions collapsed and ritual and social environments modified. In the chapters to follow, I will refer to these altered environments as hyper-environments; a term of my own invention, which describes the manipulation and modification of external and internal conditions that temporarily enabled many different types of potentially volatile interactions and transactions between the Asante and alien entities to take place. In the next two chapters I will develop and extend this thesis by demonstrating that notions regarding form, formality and formation also informed the wrapping of bodies, language, presentations and representations and as such, are deeply implicated in the appropriation of externally-derived artefacts and conventions within Anglo/Asante diplomatic contexts.

III

Tokens, Trappings and Trophies: Anglo/Asante Appropriations, Displays and Presentations of Guns, Swords, Canes, Chairs and Silver Plate

Outline, Aims and Structure of Chapter

In this chapter I will concentrate on analysing appropriated artefacts and objects made of metal and wood, principally guns, swords, canes, chairs, silver plate and brassware that Thomas Bowdich described in his account and depicted in his illustration of ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom.’ The choice of artefacts has been dictated by the source material, which despite being circumscribed, is not intended to be exclusive. As was also the case in the previous chapter Bowdich’s written descriptions and imagery will be supplemented by the published notes and illustrations of his wife, Sarah, and the published and unpublished accounts of Dutch Governor-General H.W. Daendels (1815-1817), William Huydecoper (1816-1817), Thomas Hutchison (1819), William Hutton (1821) and Joseph Dupuis (1824). Occasional references to Archibald Dalziel’s *History of Dahomy* (1793) will also provide evidence of corresponding appropriations within a wider West African context.

During this analysis I will develop three of the main themes that have emerged in the previous two chapters and discuss them in relation to new contexts and examples. Firstly, I will expand on the wrapping model outlined above and demonstrate how associated structuring principles informed the functioning of various appropriated artefacts in new cultural contexts. In particular, Hendry’s notion of ‘wrapping language’ will be used to frame discussions of Asante conventions surrounding correct forms of address, oath-taking and speech-making and Bowdich’s subsequent appropriation of these practices during the first British Mission to Asante. Secondly, I will examine how several externally-derived artefacts, including exuviae taken from the dead enemies of the state, were used by the Asante to project their authority beyond temporal and spatial boundaries. I use the term ‘exuviae’ to describe parts of a human or animal body that

have been generated and then separated either through natural processes such as shedding, or by design, as in harvesting. I will use Alfred Gell's concept of distributed personhood which he outlined in *Art and Agency* (1998, 96-154) to support my hypothesis that, in some cases, appropriated items functioned in Asante contexts as empowered social agents that played an active part in diplomatic and ritual encounters. Finally, I will pursue my proposition concerning second skins by examining the properties and qualities of other materials and substances that were considered to be ambiguous and liminal by the Asante. As part of this, I will expand on Mary Douglas's (1966 [2006]) analysis of form and non-form/un-formed by arguing that, in this case, for material and immaterial transformations and transitions in state/status to occur, cultured and uncultured elements had to be fused together. This implies that, in contrast to the static and mutually-exclusive categories of form/non-form, the liminal juncture that existed between them was infinitely dynamic and mutually inclusive. As a result I will argue that junctures formed the location of the primary generative force that was believed to drive the formation and reformation of all things.

The following three questions will form a framework for this analysis: How and in what ways were imported artefacts made of metal and wood appropriated by the Asante by 1817? What circumstances and perceptions informed the selection and appropriation of these items and what functions did they serve in new cultural contexts? This chapter has been sub-divided into three parts: Part One, which is entitled 'Binding Attachments' will concentrate on the re-processing and functioning of firearms, swords and canes in diplomatic and ritual contexts. Part Two, entitled 'Wrapping Words' will explore Asante linguistic conventions and the appropriation of two particular practices by the members of the first British Mission. Part Three, entitled 'Embracing Supports' will consider how the qualities and properties that were associated with liminal substances framed Asante conceptions and influenced the selection and appropriation of European chairs, silver plate and brass-ware that were incorporated into Asante symbolic repertoires. As before, I will summarise the main points of my analysis at the end of the chapter.

Part One: Binding Attachments

A large number of guns and muskets appear in Bowdich's illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' (fig. 2.15). Most are carried by attendants and guards with the exception of a group of Asante 'captains' who are shown firing what appear to be blunderbusses and flintlock muskets on the far left of the picture frame. The inclusion of this scene by Bowdich was probably intended to illustrate the practical part these weapons played at extra-ordinary events such as state receptions and the Yam Custom, as well as giving some idea of their appearance and an impression of the overall effects of their use. Their ubiquitous presence at important events can also be explained by the fact that access to, and the acquisition of, firearms was intimately associated with the historical origins of the Asante state which can be dated to A.D.1700 or 1701 and to its continued expansion and protection.

Records indicate that the Portuguese first traded firearms on the Gold Coast during the fifteenth century, but by 1650 large quantities of guns were exchanged for gold dust and slaves by British, Danish and Dutch trading companies (Anquandah 1982, 11; Tenkorang 1968, 1-16; Law 1980, 121-132). The royal *Oyoko* oral tradition recounts how, during this period the Kwamen ancestors of the Asante became the vassals of the neighbouring state of Denkyera (Prempeh 2003, 95). Ever-increasing demands for tribute by the *Denkyerehene* Ntim Gyakari (c.1694-1701) eventually provoked a full-scale revolt by the Kwaman and their allies who, under the leadership of Osei Tutu (d.1712/1717?), successfully defeated their overlord at the battle of Feyiase in 1700/1701. Evidence suggests that this victory was secured in part as a direct result of the Kwamen gaining access to muskets and gunpowder at the Danish fort at Akwamu a few years previously (*ibid*, 95). Bowdich, Hutton and Dupuis all observed that Danish flintlock muskets were still used by Asante soldiers alongside spears, swords and bows and arrows during the second decade of the nineteenth century (Bowdich 1819, 36; Hutton 1821, 211, Dupuis 1824 [1966], 75).

Within a relatively short time the Asante alliance was converted into a centralised political confederacy administered by a professional body of civil administrators. New institutions were created including that of the Asantehene, (paramount chief of Asante)

and an exchequer (*Gyasewa fekuo*), as well as official posts such as the Keeper of the Leather Bag containing the Asantehene's goldweights (*Fotosanfohene*) and the *Ahwerewamuhene*, Keeper of the Golden Elephant's Tail (*sika mmera*), the symbol of Asante wealth (Garrard 1980, 193). These offices were endowed with items of state regalia, the most important of which, the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, (the Golden Stool born on a Friday) is believed to contain the collective life-force or soul (*sunsum*) of the Asante people.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Asante waged successive military campaigns against their neighbours in order to consolidate power and expand their territory. In 1807, 1811 and again in 1816, Asante armies attacked the neighbouring Assin and Fante communities which resulted in high-ranking members of the Asante elite being exposed to direct and prolonged contact with the European traders on the coast. The expansion, prosperity, stability and unity of Asante were therefore firmly rooted in the bravery of its warriors and its firepower (Tenkorang 1968). In 1817 Bowdich noted that the Dutch cannons that had been captured from the Denkyera during the battle of Feyiase were displayed on a mound at the top of 'big cannon street' (*Apremoso*), which was located close to the residence of the British Mission (Bowdich 1819, 233). In this place they were displayed as trophies of war and as symbols of the founding of the Asante state.

Bowdich also noted that during the state reception and the Yam Custom of 1817 the *Asantehene* was guarded by a large cohort of warriors who were armed with smooth-bore, flintlock muskets, the barrels of which were richly decorated at intervals with gold bands and the rests, locks and stocks covered with leopard's skin and mounted with red shells (Bowdich 1819, 36). The same combination of elements was also noted on the muskets of the Asantehene's bodyguard by Huydecoper in 1816 and by Dupuis in 1820 (Huydecoper 1962, 24; Dupuis 1824 [1966], 75). Bowdich depicted muskets with some of these attachments and a pipe-stem with the same gold banding in his illustrations (figs. 3.0/1/2). This suggests that the practice of binding the long straight elements of some high status artefacts with gold bands was widespread among the Asante



Figure 3.0: Detail showing gold band decoration on a musket barrel (Bowdich 1819, 'Part of the Mission Quarters')

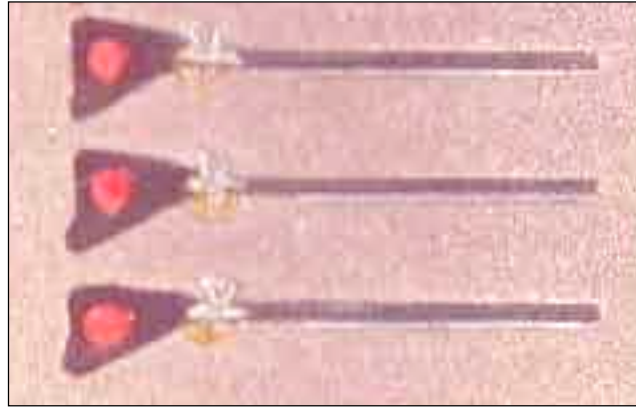


Figure 3.1: Detail of three firearms with red shells decorating the stocks (Bowdich 1819, 'Part of a Piazza in the Palace')



Figure 3.2: Detail showing gold bending applied to a pipe-stem (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

elite at this time. Like many other embellishments, it probably served several symbolic rather than practical purposes, including advertising the owner's status and wealth and adding additional layers of value to an already valuable possession. Could these elements however, also be linked to the same pervasive practice of re-processing that has been discussed in relation to other alien sources of power in the previous chapter?

Some circumstantial evidence can be gleaned from their contexts of use. When relating the events surrounding the first British Mission's reception in Kumase Bowdich described how they were encircled by warriors who incessantly discharged their muskets. This had the effect of creating so much smoke that he could only glimpse things that emerged in the foreground (Bowdich 1819, 31). He also mentioned that the continuous gunfire drowned out the crowd's exclamations and obscured the people's gestures and movements (*ibid*, 33). Dupuis' account of the reception held in 1820 also suggests that gunfire was used to produce dramatic effects or to punctuate certain moments in the ceremony. When he and his companions advanced towards the place of audience he described how '[a] salute was fired [which was succeeded by] a silence [and] as the echoes died away; and as the smoke dispersed, the view was suddenly animated by assembled thousands' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 70). Other evidence suggests that dramatic and choreographed displays of gunfire were not restricted to the state receptions of visiting envoys.

On Saturday, 2nd August 1817, Bowdich related how he attended the funeral custom of a high-ranking woman at Assafoo which commenced with '[...] a burst of musketry near the King, [which] spread and continued incessantly, around the circle [of assembled chiefs], for upwards of an hour' (Bowdich 1819, 286). He also observed that '[...] the greater the chief the heavier the charge of powder he [was] allowed to fire' and how, during the ceremony 'many made a point of collecting near us, just within the circle, and firing as close as possible to startle us' (*ibid*). This indicates that such gun-use was associated with several ceremonies that, on the face of it, appear to be unrelated, but on closer inspection are revealed to achieve similar ends. Firstly, state receptions, the Yam Custom and the funeral rite were all directed toward facilitating transitions from one state or status to another. Secondly, during these events, European visitors were surrounded

by Asante soldiers who discharged their firearms at close range. The explosions had the effect of stunning them. The noise of the gunfire drowned out all verbal communications and the discharged smoke acted as a literal smokescreen that obscured facial expressions, movements and gestures.

The importance and significance of such explosive displays may have been connected to widely held beliefs that they frightened away evil spirits (Garrard 1980, 81). When discharged, flintlock muskets not only produced a loud bang but also a dramatic flash of fire from the muzzle. The fact that these effects could be reproduced in relatively quick succession may explain why such large numbers of firearms were present at important ceremonies. In effect, the discharge of firearms in these situations was predicated on the same requirement to attack and defend as informed their use in combat and/or hunting contexts. As such, their concentrated and repeated use was primarily aimed at disrupting and neutralising potential threats by creating an altered atmosphere/environment that was designed to safeguard the integrity of the rites and the participants and to protect the Asante from spiritual incursions during periods of acute vulnerability.

It is possible that some aspects of this practice may also have their origins in the gun salutes that were routinely fired by the European castles and forts on the coast and which had, in a former era, been an intrinsic part of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In his book entitled *The Grand Slave Emporium: Cape Coast Castle and the British Slave Trade* (2007), William St Clair identified that during this period European gun salutes fell into three broad categories: salutations, time management and warnings. Evidence from the accounts of successive envoys shows that by the second decade of the nineteenth century the Asante had already adopted the practice of honouring visitors of rank with a gun salute on their arrival and departure from Kumase. In a diary entry dated 22nd April 1817, Huydecoper reported that on his departure from Kumase the Asantehene honoured him with a salute of fifteen guns which, he was told, the Dutch General had to return with a similar number of rounds when he reached Elmina, '[...] for this will show he really is a friend to the King of the Ashantis' (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 83). The request for this salute to be returned accords with other Asante practices that required reciprocal acts from those who professed friendship.

Other observations regarding how the Asante handled their weapons also suggests that they were in the process of appropriating other European military practices at this time. Dupuis recorded how, in 1820, he was escorted into Kumase by some ‘apish warriors’ who formed part of the King’s body guard; on arrival, he stated, ‘[...] they fell into open ranks and made some awkward movements with their musquets, accompanying each caricature evolution with a low submissive obeisance’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 69). Dupuis’ use of the words ‘apish’ and ‘caricature’ to describe these soldiers and their actions makes clear that he thought this display a crude attempt by the Asante to copy the soldiers garrisoned in the European castles and forts on the coast. Whilst I do not dispute that many years of sustained contact influenced the appropriation of some European practices I would like to put forward the suggestion that one historic event in particular probably contributed more than any other to the development of a similar display by the Asante during this period.

The presentation of arms by Europeans was something that Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame witnessed for the first time at the Anglo/Asante conference held in 1807 at Anomabu Fort. Governor Torrane had directed that on this occasion ‘[...] the King should be received with arms presented and the grenadiers [were to] march when passing the soldiers’ (Meredith quoted in Bowdich 1819, 475). It appears that this made a lasting impression on the Asantehene and may well have inspired a reciprocal display during the receptions held in 1817 and 1820. Bowdich noted that towards the end of the first British Mission’s reception a ‘[...] distinguished caboceer performed the war dance before us for some minutes, with a large spear, which grazed us at every bound he made; but the greater number passed us with order and dignity’ (Bowdich 1819, 40). Similarly, Dupuis noted that during the latter part of the reception held in 1820, ‘[...] a number of warriors passed by performing a war dance during which they twirled their gold-mounted guns’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 82). If, as I suspect, these performances constituted an Asante version of a march past with arms presented, then it indicates that both Bowdich and Dupuis were accorded similar distinctions as that offered by Torrane to the Asantehene some years previously. This begs the question whether the need to reciprocate acts of politeness and honour were a prime motivator for inter-cultural appropriations of artefacts and practices?

Swords provide another example of a weapon-type that was appropriated by the Asante and then assigned an expanded symbolic role. It is not known when swords were introduced into this region of the Gold Coast but early examples probably derive from Islamic weapons that were passed down the trans-Saharan trade routes (McLeod 1981, 88). The physical forms of these swords are very distinctive as they have a large flat curved blade that is broader towards the tip than the hilt. The hilt is formed by two globes, high status examples of which are foiled in gold and separated by a round grip that is encased in shagreen or ray skin. Bowdich included numerous depictions of similar swords with large curved blades, cross-hatched decorations and gold-leafed barbell hilts in his illustration (fig. 3.3). It is possible that the cross-hatching on the blades is intended



Figure 3.3: Detail showing a variety of incised or perforated sword blades (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

to suggest incised or perforated patterns. In his written account he described a sword that resembles a fish trowel and another '[...] of fine workmanship' that had 'two blades springing from one handle' (Bowdich 1819, 312/313). It is probable that he was describing a type of ceremonial sword known as *afenatene* which combined these elements (see McLeod 1981, 92). He also depicted several groups of people holding swords aloft either by their gold handles or by their blades (fig. 3.4). Those holding their swords by their blades are probably chiefs, as this constituted the customary greeting offered to the Asantehene by inferiors (Bowdich 1819, 281).



Figure 3.4: Detail of Asante chiefs holding their swords aloft in greeting (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

A similar manipulation of swords during state receptions suggests that, in this context they were actively used by the Asante, not only to dramatize proceedings, but to punctuate the actual moment of physical contact with visiting dignitaries. During the reception of 1820, Dupuis recounted how ‘[...] as [he] approached the King [...] the household slaves advanced, flourishing their scimitars over [his] head with menacing violence [and that] this threatening ceremony was directed with renovated vigour as [he] advanced to take the King’s hand’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 75). These swords were in all probability the Asantehene’s swords of state which, as well as being badges of office, were also imbued with great spiritual power (see McLeod 1981, 91/92; Kyerematen 1964). The swords, collectively known as *keteanofena* (lit. edge-of-the-bed-swords), are divided into two groups, the *akrafena* and the *bosomfena*, which are carried respectively on his right and left sides during state functions. Gell asserted that when ascribing ‘social agent’ status ‘[...] it does not matter what a thing (or a person) ‘is’ in itself; what matters is where it stands in a network of social relations’ (Gell 1998, 123). I argue that the position and proximity of these swords to the Asantehene during public events reflected

the fact that they shared a special relationship and spiritual bond with him. The categorical sub-division was predicated on the Asante belief that an individual incorporates both corporeal and spiritual elements (Akyeampong and Obeng 1995). The two groups of swords therefore embody and represent two distinct spiritual elements; those on the Asantehene's right (*akrafena*) represent his soul or life-force (*kra*), those on the left (*bosomfena*), his ego, spirit or personality (*sunsum*) that was inherited from his father. This complementary division of regalia also mirrors that of the Asante court as discussed in chapter II.

As Gell noted, we normally '[...] individuate persons by identifying the boundaries of their person with the spatial boundaries of their bodies' (Gell 1998, 139). In this case, however, Asante beliefs concerning the composite make-up of individuals presents us with a model for the investment/divestment of agency in objects which are symbols of royal office. From the moment of his en-stoolment the Asantehene becomes a physically detached fragment of the Golden Stool of Asante. As permanent static symbols of authority, both the Golden Stool and its living incumbent, the Asantehene, are, in effect confined to the centre of the state where they are surrounded by lesser chiefs and retainers who act as intermediaries. In this way, the Asantehene stands in the same relationship to the Golden Stool as his officials stand in relation to him. The same goes for state regalia such as swords and canes that, as stool property, can be understood to be exuviae of the Golden Stool. Their association with the ultimate source of ancestral and chiefly power is made explicit by the addition of embellishments that are formed from the same substance as the Golden Stool itself. Exuviae, in this context, do not therefore stand metonymically for the authorising body but are physically detached fragments of its 'distributed personhood' – 'that is, personhood distributed in the milieu, beyond the body-boundary' (Gell 1998, 104). As such, court personnel and their associated regalia can be understood to be dynamic agents of the static authorising body. In this way, the constant movement of personnel between Kumase and the provinces, tributaries and neighbouring states, that was reported during the residency of the first British Mission in 1817 and the second in 1820, channelled and projected the Asantehene's authority in the world beyond and facilitated the flow of information and the concentration of wealth in Kumase.

In his illustration Bowdich depicted, on the right of the Asantehene, four seated attendants each of whom holds a large sword (fig. 3.5). It is probable that they represent



Figure 3.5: Detail of the *Asantehene's* state swords
(Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

Osei Tutu Kwame's swords of the soul (*akrafena*), that played an instrumental part in the annual soul-cleansing ceremony (*odwira*). As part of the rites these swords were washed, along with other items of regalia, in order to spiritually cleanse the Asantehene's soul and fortify it against attack. This practice centred on the belief that a person's soul became divested in personal items over time. Furthermore, at least one of these swords was probably used by senior chiefs to swear a public oath of allegiance and fidelity to the Asantehene during the annual celebration. Bowdich attempted to capture the drama of this important act in his illustration (fig. 3.6). On the left of the Asantehene, Bowdich depicted a male figure dressed in a green cloth. His right arm is extended towards the sky whilst in his outstretched left hand he holds a sword. In his written commentary Bowdich stated that the Asantehene is '[...] holding up his two fingers to receive the oath of [this] captain [...] who, pointing to a distant country, vows to conquer it' (Bowdich 1819, 277). Given the timing of the first British Mission, the distant country referred to was, in all probability, Gyaaman.



Figure 3.6: Detail of a captain swearing an oath in front of the Asantehene (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

As part of his written account Bowdich also described from first-hand experience, the form that Asante oath-taking took. On the 24th May 1817, he recounted in a letter to the Governor, the dramatic events that unfolded when negotiations broke down between Frederick James and the Asantehene;

‘[...] the captains, old and young, rushed before the King and [...] presented themselves successively [...] and bowing before [him], received his foot upon their heads; each then directed his sword to the King (who held up the two first fingers of his right hand) and swore by the King’s head, that they would go with the army that night, and bring him the books [written records of the Africa Company] and the heads of the Fantees. Each captain made the oath impressive in his own particular manner; some seriously, some by ridicule, at our expense, and that of the Fantees, pointing at our heads and ears, and endeavouring to intimidate us by the most insolent action and gesture as they held out their swords’ (Bowdich 1819, 59).

This detailed passage makes clear that Asante oath-taking took the form of a dramatic public performance wherein actions and words reinforced each other and made the oath binding. Furthermore, the oral delivery of an oath was punctuated at intervals by

physical gestures executed whilst holding a sword, in much the same way as when physical contact was made between the Asantehene and European envoys during state receptions. In both cases it appears that the flourishing of swords was designed to give explicit direction and emphasis to the oath that was being pledged at the time.

It appears from the evidence contained in other envoys' accounts that oath-taking always combined aggressive delivery with threatening actions even when the oath was friendly in intent. Dupuis, for example, stated that when the Asantehene swore an oath of inviolable friendship he '[...] flourished his weapon at intervals in the air elevating or depressing the point of the blade as low as my forehead' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 90). These actions can be interpreted in light of contemporary practices. In her study of the neighbouring Anlo-Ewe people Geurts noted that '[...] in an abstract way, words were thought by some to be projected and directed or wielded with force and also with the intention of hitting a mark' (Geurts 2002, 59). This indicates that the combination of aggressive words and threatening actions were essential for the accurate targeting of an oath and for impressing upon witnesses the positive or negative intentions that accompanied it. Furthermore, these actions probably also created power in those that performed them and generated emotionally-charged atmospheres that heightened participants' senses. In this way, sword-use and gun-use appear to have shared similar structuring principles and functions. The importance that was attached by the Asante to oaths in general, and the dramatic act of swearing on swords in particular, was not lost on Bowdich, who quickly appropriated these practices as a way of expressing his and the Mission's honesty, integrity and sincerity during negotiations with the Asantehene.

Other swords depicted in 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' were almost certainly messenger swords (*asomfofena* lit. swords of those in service), which formed another distinct category of institutional regalia despite being of the same manufacture, design and origin as swords of the soul (*akrafena and bosumfena*). In his illustration, Bowdich included another scene which demonstrates how these swords were used (fig. 3.7). Just to the left of the arc formed by the Asante court a man is shown having a sword blade inserted into his mouth. Bowdich's written description of this event explains that the Asantehene's chief linguist Adoosey [Kwadwo Adusei (d.1829)] is shown in the act of

‘[...] swearing a royal messenger, (to fetch an absent captain) by putting a gold handled sword between his teeth, whilst Agay [Asante Agyei (d.1823)] delivers the charge, and exhorts him to be resolute’ (Bowdich 1819, 276).



Figure 3.7: Detail of a messenger swearing on his sword (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

Every messenger who was dispatched on official business was required to swear an oath on the sword he was given to carry, that he would deliver the message to the right recipient and accurately repeat its content. As part of the oath the messenger was required to put the sword blade in his mouth possibly in order to consecrate the words he was going to carry. These safety measures were required in an age where literacy on the Gold Coast was restricted to a handful of Europeans and a few Islamic scholars. Swords therefore acted as badges of office that vouched for the integrity of their bearers and the message they carried. They also functioned in the capacity of passports ensuring that messengers were accorded something like diplomatic immunity and enabled them to gain admittance into the halls of power. To deprive a messenger of a sword or cane, as Bowdich did on the 16th September 1817, was to strip him of his office, and a messenger who voluntarily surrendered his insignia in effect resigned his commission.

Evidence from successive envoys’ accounts also make it clear that sword-bearers were used to guide and control the movements of visitors. Huydecoper, Bowdich and Dupuis all described in their accounts how they were met by several messengers carrying gold-

handled swords on the path to Kumase (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 15/16; Bowdich 1819, 31; Dupuis 1824 [1966], 69). The number of sword-bearers in an escort was significant, as it proportionately reflected the status of the visitor. These officials not only escorted visitors to Kumase but also advised and mediated between them and the Asantehene whilst they were still *en route*. Their role was therefore two-fold, in that they acted as openers of the way to the royal presence and ensured compliance with royal instructions regarding the timing of their entry. In the following section, I will continue to examine the layers of social wrapping that were associated with the spoken word by analysing some of the other conventions, personnel and appropriated artefacts that were used to articulate them.

Part Two: Wrapping Words

From the seventeenth century onwards European canes, alongside canopies, flags and clothing were regularly presented by trading companies to West African monarchs and chiefs. These canes were essentially European ceremonial batons, similar to those thrown and twirled by Majordomo's during public parades, but on the Gold Coast they were used to facilitate verbal and non-verbal communications between European traders and local chiefs. During the eighteenth century local bureaucracies expanded and canes, together with other artefacts, were employed as symbolic badges of office for certain court personnel. By the time of the first British Mission's arrival in Kumase, swords appear to have become associated primarily with messengers and canes with linguists and ambassadors.

McLeod stated that by the early nineteenth century, canes '[...] expressed more or less enduring political alliances' between whites and local cane-holders (McLeod 1981, 98). Evidence contained in the published accounts of Huydecoper and Bowdich, however, suggests that the possession of a cane only signified that a formal recognition and communication between Gold Coast communities and Europeans existed at this time. In effect, a cane was presented in the hope that it would be accepted, displayed and used by a chief exclusively. However, it appears that European attempts to monopolise relations and trade were frequently thwarted by the diplomatic manoeuvrings of astute statesmen such as Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame who accepted a present of a silver cane from the

Dutch envoy Huydecoper in May 1816 and another mounted with a crown from the first British Mission almost exactly a year later (Bowdich 1819, 122).

In his illustration Bowdich included a depiction of the four royal linguists, Otee [Oti Panin (d.1824)], Quancum [Kwasi Kankum (d.1826)], Adoosey [Kwadwo Adusei (d.1829)] and Agay [Asante Agyei (d.1823)], two of whom are shown seated and two standing, on the Asantehene's right (fig. 3.8). He also depicted the three linguists who were attached to the Mission (fig. 3.9). These officials are shown seated on the ground in



Figure 3.8: Detail of *Asantehene's* linguists (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')



Figure 3.9: Detail of the linguists attached to the first British Mission (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

front of Bowdich and his companions. Their relative proximity reflects the fact that they functioned as intermediaries who facilitated communication between the Asante and the British officers and also suggests that this relationship was physically expressed at public events via their spatial deployment (see chapter II). The knob of each cane is encased in gold and the tips in silver, which contrasts with their plain black shafts. The physical appearance of these canes and the way they were displayed was in stark contrast to those of the four royal linguists, whose canes were reportedly furnished with gold tips and knobs and had bands of gold wrapped around their shafts at regular intervals, in the same way as guns and pipes. Bowdich did not illustrate these canes, but they were probably a mix of locally produced and imported examples, that were similar in size and shape to those already described. He observed that during the state reception of 1817 these canes were displayed '[...] elevated in all directions, tied in bundles like fasces' (Bowdich

1819, 38). A similar sight was also recorded by Hutton in 1820 (1821, 219). McLeod argued that '[...] locally copied canes were shown in large numbers in a form of visual hyperbole [where] meaning depended mainly on the quantity rather than the form of the canes' (McLeod 1981, 98/99). Whilst agreeing in principle that quantity was a significant factor, in this context, I suspect that canes were also displayed in this way in order to send a clear message that the Asantehene, as the principal arbitrator in ancestral, human and spiritual affairs, was the ultimate source of mediation in disputes and palavers.

Evidence from Huydecoper's and Bowdich's accounts also indicates that within the arena of Anglo/Asante diplomacy the number of canes dispatched, and the use of different types of precious metal furnishings to decorate them, was designed to signify visually the rank and status of the sender and possibly the importance and urgency of the message. In a diary entry dated 22nd June 1816, Huydecoper mentioned that he had hurriedly dispatched a messenger on business with '[...] my golden chain and staff' (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 30). This implies that Huydecoper not only selected the specific combination of a chain and staff decorated with gold in preference to others; but he did so in order to signify that the sender was of high-status and the content of the message was urgent. Other evidence indicates that an alternative way of communicating the same thing existed. On the 29th August 1817, Bowdich recorded how he had '[...] sent two canes to tell the King that mine was a great palaver' (Bowdich 1819, 108/109). On another occasion he noted that he sent three canes with his compliments to the Asantehene on his return to Kumase (*ibid*, 111). The practice of increasing the number of canes presumably also signified that the content of the message was important and urgent.

Other reports suggest that, like flags, canes could also be made to stand in for people in their absence. For example, during the argument that erupted as a result of the Asante messenger's refusal to hand over dispatches written by the Governor, Bowdich recorded how he '[...] left a cane in waiting at the palace [and] had also left an undisclosed number of canes in waiting at Apokoo's residence' (Bowdich 1819, 108/109-111). When considered together, this evidence demonstrates that the significance attending the

dispatch and reception of canes was entirely context-dependant and that the number of canes, their metal furnishings and the way in which they were manipulated was designed to give the receiver some indication of the content and urgency of the message before they heard it.

The appropriation of walking sticks and the subsequent symbolic extension of their function may have been linked to the dual nature of the linguist/messenger role. The acts of listening and speaking were both associated with great responsibility for the Asante and professional messengers and linguists were trained to listen carefully and to repeat accurately the messages they were required to deliver. Learning to hear, listen and obey was of primary importance, and is consonant with the fact that Twi is a tonal language which requires the development of finely tuned auditory abilities (Geurts 2002, 106). Bowdich unwittingly depicted, in the foreground of his illustration, the penalty which befell those who failed to pay sufficient heed (fig. 3.10). He also described in lurid detail how the organs of speech and hearing in particular, were targeted as part of the torture that preceded the execution of transgressors (Bowdich 1819, 33).



Figure 3.10: Detail of a man being paraded prior to execution, note the knives thrust through the cheeks and the ear carried on a stick in front of him (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

A similar pre-occupation with speaking and listening can also be detected in the role of court heralds (*esene*), sometimes referred to as criers, whose high-pitched voices frequently interjected during royal audiences and assemblies with admonitions to ‘[...] be silent, be quiet, pray hear’ (Rattray 1927, 279). As court jesters they were also able to say what they liked to their masters with impunity (*ibid*). I suggest that messengers, linguists and criers formed distinct layers of social wrapping that controlled, mediated and structured verbal exchanges. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the wrappings that surrounded communication also took immaterial as well as material forms. In this way, verbal interruptions correlated to the physical punctuations that have been discussed in relation to oath-taking, sword-handling and gun salutes during ritual events and the periodic halts that successive envoys were subjected to as part of state receptions. In effect, such episodes of interruption or punctuation served the same purpose in these contexts as temporal wrappings did in others, in that they divided the flow of social intercourse into an alternating series of exchanges and enforced silences that together formed part of a larger sequence of interactions.

Linguists (*okyeame* pl. *akyeame*) were also trained to listen and recite from memory but, in contrast to messengers and criers, they acted as literal mouthpieces or spokesmen for the Asantehene and interpreted his words. As Hocart so astutely observed of linguists in general, ‘[...] he is the word, and it is as officer in charge of the word that he has developed into the king’s specialist in words’ (Hocart 1970, 201). By the early nineteenth century these specialists served in a number of different capacities including that of counsellor, judicial advocate, military *attaché*, foreign minister and ambassador. All of these roles had an auditory as well as a verbal and/or narrative dimension to them and were associated with great responsibility. This reflects the fact that the spoken word, in particular, is believed by the Asante to have great power that can be used for good or evil.

As well as verbal expression, all other forms of royal bodily expulsion were also intercepted and mediated as they too were considered to be potentially dangerous and/or efficacious, especially those, such as coughing and sneezing, which were associated with the head, the seat of all power. Douglas argued that the sacred must always be treated as

contagious and that marginal matter such as blood, milk, semen, urine, faeces, saliva, tears, skin, hair, nails and sweat, by simply issuing forth have traversed forbidden boundaries (Douglas 1966, [2006], 150). Interestingly some of these elements were routinely encased, along with other empowering substances, within amulets. The care taken by the Asante to safeguard the boundaries of the royal body/ body politic and their respective productions underpinned a number of practices, such as gesticulating when the Asantehene sneezed and wiping away his spit, that were witnessed and recorded by European visitors to the court. In the case of the Asante, all of these mediatory actions were specifically designed to prevent the unregulated and therefore, unsanctioned dispersal of powerful substances which, it was believed weakened the royal body and by extension the state.

In 1806/1807 war between the Assins, Fantes and Asante had erupted, partly as a result of the torture and murder of Asante messengers. In both cases those parts of the messengers' bodies that were associated with speaking, principally the head and mouth, were mutilated. I argue that the meanings behind these actions can only fully be understood if the messengers are viewed as exuviae of the Golden Stool and its living incumbent the Asantehene. By torturing and killing his officials, the murderers were not only sending a very clear message to the Asantehene, but they may also have attempted to kill him via an act of contact sorcery. For contact sorcery to work, the sorcerer or witch has to gain access to parts (exuviae) of the bodies of their intended victim so that in possessing a part they effectively possess all and can therefore induce illness, sterility or even death at will (Gell 1998, 103/104; Rattray 1927, 30). On this hypothesis the messengers were distributed parts of the Asantehene's personhood, and their defilement and subsequent murder was actually directed at the Asante state itself.

In contrast, the role of ambassador differed significantly from that of linguists and messengers who were required to repeat, more-or-less verbatim, what they had been charged to say. As valued personnel who were considered to be gifted and trustworthy advocates, ambassadors were given a relative degree of autonomy when settling disputes with the head of another community or state. Gell noted in relation to this that '[...] an ambassador is a spatio-temporally detached fragment of his nation, [...] with whom

foreigners can speak ‘as if’ they were speaking to his national government’ (Gell 1998, 98). Bowdich mentioned in his account one such ambassador, Adoo Bradie, who was not only the son of the former Asantehene Osei Quamina but also Osei Tutu Kwame’s maternal nephew. This man was of royal descent and as a child had resided at Cape Coast Castle where, in little less than six months, he had learned amongst other things to speak some English and to dress in the European manner. This residency also contributed to him being considered, by the Asante at least, as the adopted son of Governor Torrane. Interestingly, Bowdich stated in a letter dated 9th July 1817 that the Asantehene considered his nephew to stand in the same relation to Governor Hope Smith and was therefore the proper messenger to send to him to help in negotiating a settlement with the people of Komenda (Bowdich 1819, 87).

It is possible that the relationship between maternal uncle and nephew, which is an extremely important one in Asante society, may have informed the Asantehene’s choice of ambassador as well as influencing the Governor’s selection of personnel for the Mission (Rattray 1927, 317-331). It is not unreasonable to suggest that, having served on the Gold Coast for seventeen years, Hope Smith may have known enough of Akan kinship ties to exploit them in respect of his own so-called nephew. Furthermore, if this family connection was known, which is entirely possible given that personal relationships together with patronage and rank formed the basis of social status in the European forts, it would also explain why, when the Mission’s negotiations broke down under James, the *Asantehene* condescended to listen to Bowdich. In effect, his words were deemed to carry weight as they were uttered by a maternal blood relation of the Governor’s.

It is obvious too from Bowdich’s description of this event that he had been quick to recognise the potential of addressing the Asantehene using local conventions and of adopting the Asante form when delivering speeches. In contrast to James, who consistently failed to make an impression on the court, it appears Bowdich made an instant and dramatic impact when he took over negotiations. He stated that when he rose and addressed the Asantehene directly for the first time, ‘[...] the attention of the King was arrested by the novelty of a white man addressing him in the oratorical manner of his own country’ (Bowdich 1819, 53). Having stood and delivered a lengthy speech in

which he reassured the Asantehene of the Mission's good intentions, he went on to relate how the '[...] King [...] held out his hand to [him] and said, 'he spoke well; [that] he liked his palaver much' (Bowdich 1819, 51). Bowdich afterwards sought clarification of these comments from Quarshie, the Mission's linguist, and was told that '[...] the King likes you, you speak a proper good palaver, you speak like a man' (*ibid*, 62). These comments must be treated with caution, however, as the linguist may have flattered Bowdich about his abilities in order to curry favour and it was in Bowdich's own interests to inflate reports of his personal effectiveness during negotiations with the Asantehene to the Governor-in-Chief and to the public. If, however, what he reports in his account is true, then it seems that he was considered to be, by Asante standards, a good spokesman.

This event took place in the great courtyard of the palace where audiences were regularly held. In one of his illustrations of this venue, Bowdich depicted three muskets, a blunderbuss, two gold-handled swords, an ammunition belt and a bag decorated with three bones displayed on the walls (fig. 3.11). This exhibition of weapons in a royal setting echoes the siting of similar motifs on decorative wall murals which covered the facades of other important buildings such as shrines (fig. 3.12). Some of these items also appear as motifs on cast brass vessels (*kuduo*), which were closely associated with a man's spiritual health, and in the form of cast brass gold-weights (see Garrard 1980). In essence, the Asante primarily associated externally-derived weaponry with physical and spiritual protection. By 1817 they were also displayed or featured as part of artefacts and buildings that housed spiritual forces that presided over acts of interaction and transaction or oversaw transitions and transformations. Given the evidence already presented, I argue that their presence reinforced and strengthened sites that were the loci of hyper-environments.

In the same way that firearm and sword motifs protected the sites of hyper-environments, so too were the hilts, stocks, barrels, blades and sheaths of the weapons themselves adorned with amulets. The most common amulet-type appears to have been imported red sea-shells that decorated the bandoliers and cartridge belts of warriors and their gun stocks, although occasionally cast gold ones were substituted. As early as the fifteenth

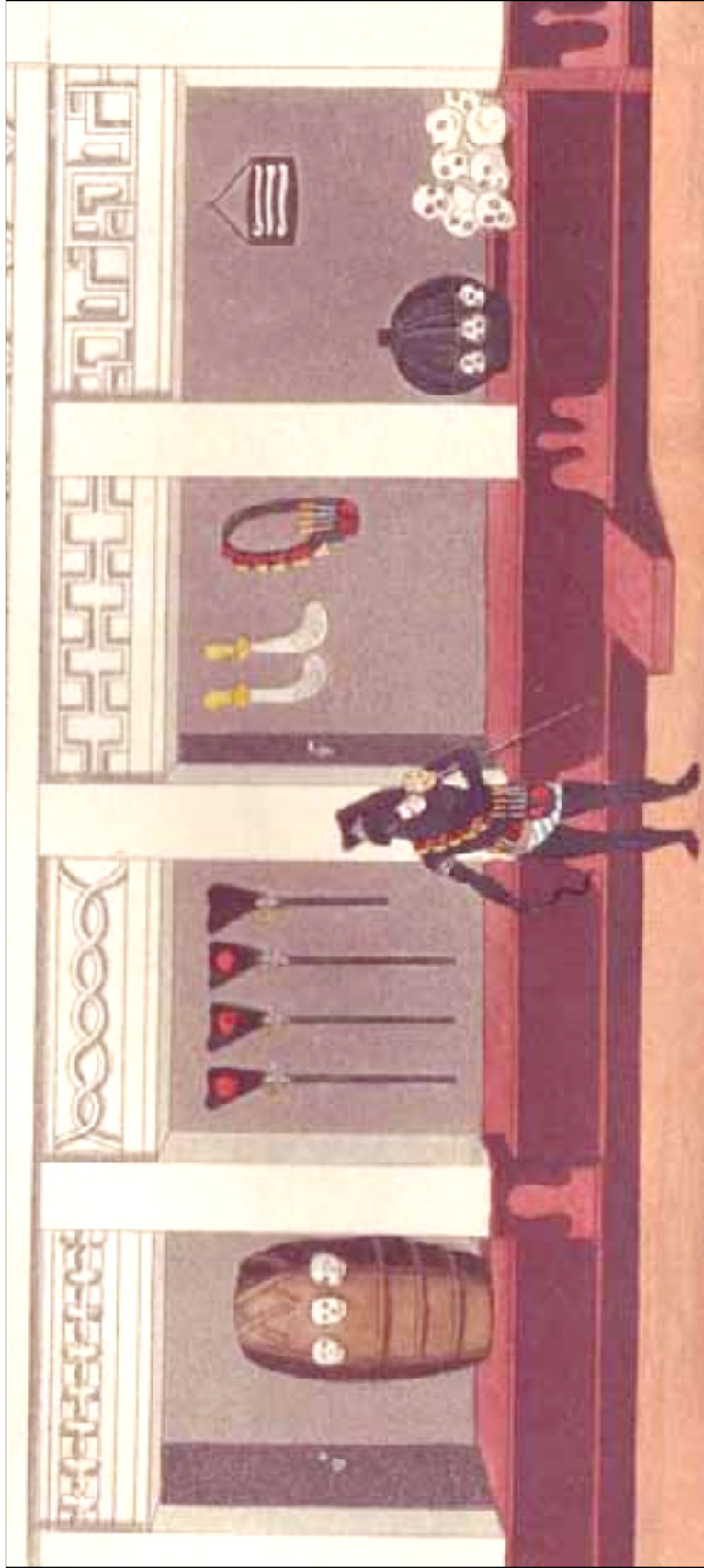


Figure 3.11: Detail of artefacts displayed on the walls of the great courtyard of the King's House in Kumase (Bowdich 1819, 'Part of a Piazza of the Palace')



Figure 3.12: The decorated threshold of the shrine at Adarko Jaeki which features a man holding a gun on the right of the doorway
(Ghana Museums and Monuments Board 2009, 16)

century the Portuguese had imported these shells from the Indian Ocean but Hutton noted that in 1820 they were procured from the coast around Cape Lahoo (Hutton 1821, 215). They were worn in earlier periods as protection against lightning bolts but by 1817 they had become firmly associated with European firearms.

In his description of the state reception Bowdich also observed ‘[...] large circles of gold hung by scarlet cloth from the swords of state’ (Bowdich 1819, 39). These items were probably soul discs that were attached to the Asantehene’s swords of the soul (*afenatene*). He did not depict these artefacts but included, in his illustration of the Yam Custom, representations of figurative gold sword ornaments (*abosodee*) which he first saw at the state reception in 1817 (see fig. 3.5). In his written account of this event Bowdich described ‘[...] wolves and rams heads as large as life, cast in gold, [...] suspended from their gold handled swords’ (Bowdich 1819, 35). McLeod suggested that representational sword ornaments may have had a proverbial dimension and that those cast in the shape of the ‘[...] heads of slain beasts were either hunting trophies or a form of protective medicine (McLeod 1981, 88/89; 1976, 94). I suggest, that given their association with swords of the soul, it is also possible that the ornaments Bowdich saw, which included two gold snakes and the heads of two dogs were symbolic representations of totemic animals that were associated with the Asantehene’s specific *ntoro* affiliation. It is known that Osei Tutu Kwame belonged to the *Bosommuru ntoro* whose day of observance was a Tuesday. The specific *Bosommuru ntoro* totems and taboos included the python, ox, cow, a species of monkey called *kwakuo*, domestic and wild dogs, and a species of bird called *asokwa* (for a full list of *ntoro* affiliations, their day of observance and totems see Rattray 1923, 47-48).

Interestingly, Bowdich did not mention sword ornaments that took the form of either large cast gold containers (*kuduo* or *abusua kuruwa*), commonly derived from imported European teapots and sugar bowls, or severed human heads. It is possible that he was unaware of these particular types of *abosodee*, but a trophy head of Worosa, the King of Banda was known to be in existence in 1817. Bowdich states that Worosa was killed by *Asantehene* Osei Kwadwo (r.1764-1777) in retaliation for murdering Asante traders (Bowdich 1819: 237-238). Just three years later Dupuis reported seeing a trophy head

representing Adinkra, the chief of Gyaaman (d.1818) which the Asantehene claimed had been cast in gold because Adinkra's skull was broken during the battle and he did not want to lose the trophy (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 165).

The appropriation of body parts from dead enemies and executed criminals was part of a long-standing and widespread tradition in West Africa. During the late eighteenth century for instance, Dalzel noted a similar practice in Dahomey, a great slave-trading state located to the east of the Gold Coast, now a part of the Republic of Benin (1793 [1967], 148/9). Evidence strongly supports the view that in Asante contexts, items such as skulls, teeth, jaw bones and thigh bones were commonly attached to drums, horns and occasionally ornaments, during the second decade of the nineteenth century. During the state reception of 1817 for instance, Bowdich observed 'large drums [that] were braced around with the thigh bones of their [the Asante's] enemies and ornamented with their skulls,' a depiction of which (fig. 3.13) he included in the foreground of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' (Bowdich 1819, 36). He did not mention or represent the contemporaneous practice of decorating drums and elephant ivory horns with jaw bones (fig. 3.14) unlike Dupuis who did (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 43).



Figure 3.13: Detail of drum decorated with two human skulls
(Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

This suggests that only certain human body parts, such as long straight leg bones or those with oral associations, were selected to adorn these instruments and as such, their appropriation can only partially be explained by the fact that they were war trophies. This leads me to question whether these 'ornaments' have been misinterpreted in the past and if so, was their appropriation framed by the same structuring principles that have been outlined for the incorporation of other sources of power?



Figure 3.14: Drum decorated with human jaw-bones
(Niangoran-Borah 1986, 143)

Circumstantial evidence gleaned from the accounts of successive envoys suggests that the physical appropriation of enemy skulls and jaw-bones was not aimed primarily at ornamenting but subordinating. Indeed, the binding of skulls and jaw-bones to instruments indicates that this was done so that their empty oral cavities and orifices could be made to resonate with the praises of the Asante elite, in much the same way as elephant horns and drums. I suggest that these actions were aimed at emphasising the cultural importance of auditory/oral training as, unlike drums that have the skin of an elephant's ear stretched over them, the skulls and jaw-bones are devoid of skin or any other covering. Their exposure at public events is in stark contrast to other artefacts, such as ancestral stools that Bowdich noted were covered during the same ceremonies in order to preserve their sanctity. On one level, the concentrated exposure of bound jaw-bones served to amplify the invincibility of the Asante, but on another it served to enslave the souls of Asante enemies in an existential limbo. In this way, their jaw-bones and skulls became the conduits through which the Asantehene proclaimed his achievements and projected and transgressed his physical and temporal boundaries during transitory events. In many ways these disarticulated mouthpieces mirrored the functions and roles of living Asante messengers, linguists and ambassadors who could be considered their counterparts.

Bowdich also depicted other contexts where skulls and bones were displayed. In the same illustration of the great courtyard, he depicted a pile of human skulls, a large round container ornamented with three skulls and a large drum also adorned with three skulls displayed along the walls of the open-fronted rooms (see fig. 3.11). I am very sceptical about the historical accuracy of the pile of skulls, as there is no evidence from any other historical source that corroborates this practice. The binding of long bones and the skulls of state enemies to drums and their display within the confines of the King's house is, however, well documented (see McLeod 1981, 43). Again, this suggests that the practice was designed to facilitate the subjugation and control of destructive anti-social forces that had threatened Asante order, stability and unity.

I believe that the binding of other European-made or inspired artefacts to important Asante symbols of power were directed towards achieving similar ends. Bowdich depicted at least two examples where Asante stools had European-style cast bells attached to them in his illustration of the Yam Custom (figs. 3.15/3.16). The first stool he explained belongs to a '[...] young caboceer [and is] ornamented with a large brass bell' (Bowdich 1819, 275/276). The Golden Stool of Asante which is ornamented with two



Figure 3.15: Detail of a Chief's Stool
(Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')



Figure 3.16: Detail of the Golden Stool of Asante
(Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

bells is shown being carried on the shoulders of a bearer standing a little to the right of the figure of the Asantehene. Hutton also mentioned that the executioner's stool had a large bell attached to it (Hutton 1821, 220). Bells were customarily bound to ancestral stools in order to call the spirits of the departed, and those attached to the Golden Stool were rung to summon the Asante people. Interestingly, hollow cast gold effigy figures (*nkoa*) that represented defeated enemy kings were not mentioned or depicted by Bowdich which indicates that he either did not see these figures, or they did not exist in 1817.

The binding of appropriated artefacts to ones of domestic manufacture was not restricted to royal or elite contexts however. Manacles were commonly added to ancestral stools in order that the deceased's soul could be bound to it, and by extension to the living members of the matrilineage/matriclan. In this way, the stools of elders often had manacles attached to them during their owner's lifetime to ensure this process started before they died. Manacles, in this context, were not used to imprison and enslave souls but were instrumental in enabling strong links to be maintained between the living and the dead. A similar sentiment may also have prompted the Asantehene to declare to Dupuis in 1820, that '[...] the King of England had chained his heart to him' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 89). This suggests that the act of binding had both negative and positive associations that in some cases were motivated by a desire to sustain close relations with someone out of affection and respect rather than out of a desire to dominate and subordinate. Miniature representations of manacles and bells were also cast in the form of gold-weights, strung as composite elements onto ornaments and appeared as part of the decorative schemas of cast brass *kuduo* vessels. The presence of these motifs on such a wide and varied range of articles suggests that binding, in particular, was fundamentally associated with capturing and imprisoning anti-social entities and uniting those elements that comprised Asante individuals, matri-clans, the state and cosmos. Appropriated artefacts were therefore used in these contexts as instruments that gave voice to individual and collective Asante sentiments.

Part Three: Embracing Supports

Most of the bindings that were applied to appropriated artefacts were cast in precious metals, notably gold and to a much lesser extent, silver. Goldsmiths (*sikadwumfo* or *sikananfo*) in Asante culture are highly skilled specialists who learn their trade during a long apprenticeship. During Bowdich's residency in Kumase these craftsmen occupied a separate quarter known as the *dwinfiuor* that, as the ground plan indicates, was located within the bounds of the royal complex (fig. 3.17). Scholars of Asante arts and material culture have distinguished three basic techniques of working gold, some, if not all, of which were probably introduced to the forest region sometime during the fourteenth or fifteenth century A.D. by metal-smiths from the northern savannah (Garrard 1980; McLeod 1981 and Ross 1998).

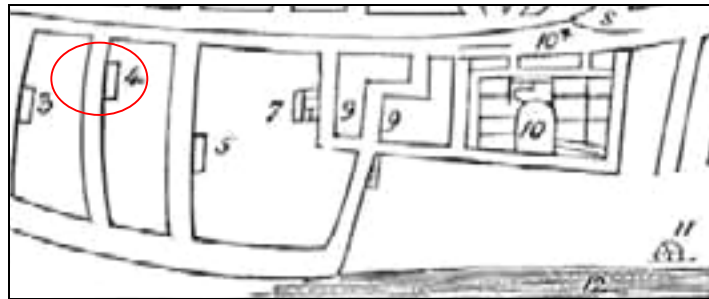


Figure 3.17: Detail of Bowdich's ground plan of Kumase showing the location of the gold-smith's quarter in 1817 (Bowdich 1819, 323)

The first involved beating gold into leaf, foil or sheet which was then decorated with repoussé work and wrapped around a wooden core; alternatively, gold could be cast using either a direct method, where a natural object forms a model for a casting, or by using the lost wax or *cire perdue* method. Lost wax casting is the process more commonly associated with the Asante. Thomas Hutchison recorded in his diary how, on Saturday 4th October 1817, he watched Apokoo (Opoku Frefre) attempt to cast a gold fish in a mould (Bowdich 1819, 389). Bowdich also described in detail the step-by-step procedures involved in the casting process which suggests that he may also have witnessed first-hand the creation of gold ornaments, possibly some of those he later donated to the British Museum (*ibid*, 312).

Artisans such as metal-smiths, potters and weavers were responsible for transforming amorphous raw materials into manufactured forms and products that could be used within the domesticated sphere of human culture. In many ways these processes are analogous to others such as baking or cooking which also turn raw, often wet ingredients into dry, cooked products (Barley 1984, Sterner, Sterner and Gavua 1988; Schmidt and Mapunda 1997). Mary Douglas argued that '[...] the cooking process is the beginning of ingestion,' and I believe that this technique formed one of the main methods that the Asante used to domesticate and internalise liminal products during the early nineteenth century (Douglas 1966 [2006], 157). In order to explore the implications of this further I will concentrate on discussing Asante mould-making and casting procedures which involve the use of substances such as clay, gold and wax that originated in the uncultured sphere. Firstly, these substances were refined using various methods in order to cleanse them of impurities, or were pre-treated by being mixed with the by-products of human cultivation and domestic activities before being shaped or cast. Clay, for example, which is used to make the mould (*foa*), had other substances such as charcoal and plant fibres added to it in order to temper it. Significantly, charcoal has to be manufactured and the plant fibres were commonly left over from human food-production and consumption. In this way, various domestic/human and esoteric/wild elements which are sourced from both the uncultured and cultured spheres are combined in the manufacture of ceramic and metal implements and ornaments.

It is possible that technical processes such as those used in the smelting and casting of gold and the potting of clay may have provided the Asante with analogous and dialogic models that informed social beliefs and values. Technical processes required an in-depth knowledge of the elements and the properties and qualities associated with cold and hot, solid and liquid, of purity and corruption and the creation and dissolution of form, and with it, identity and meaning (Gosselain 2000, 205-230). In essence, I am arguing that Asante culture was partly structured by technology and technology was partly structured by Asante culture.

Gold, for example, has long been considered a dangerous and ambiguous substance by Asante gold-smiths as it is associated with dirt, in view of the fact that it comes out of the

ground, and with purity as it is also found in water and is incorruptible (Garrard 1980, 136-140). Panning, mining and smelting processes probably contributed to these perceptions as, in each case, the gold has to be separated out from the dross that adheres to it by using either water or fire. This leads me to suggest that gold, in its different states, was associated with both purity and corruption. In effect, molten gold was perceived to be pure, cast gold or rock gold could be purified by washing, but gold dust was considered inherently impure as it could be adulterated. This raises the possibility that molten gold, gold dust and cast gold occupied different parts of a qualitative spectrum that sub-divided all substances on the basis of whether they were in a liquid (i.e. formless), semi-solid or solid state. Those ambiguous and liminal substances such as gold, blood, clay, fat, egg yolk and wax which could transmute from liquid to solid, appear to have had particular significance in Asante culture possibly as a consequence of their intrinsic potential for transformation. The esoteric significance of some of these substances is also attested to by the fact that they were regularly dripped, spilled, poured, smeared and sprinkled as offerings to spirits and ancestors, as well as during ceremonies that marked important transitions during life when status was considered fluid. This is in stark contrast to the care that was taken not to accidentally break, spill or lose any of the same substances at all other times.

Douglas argued that a tension exists between form and formlessness that is partly posited on the idea that formlessness is powerful as a result of having no distinctive character (Douglas 1966 [2006], 27). In effect, formlessness denotes ambiguity, androgyny and liminality, all of which are believed to be potentially beneficial and/or hazardous. On the one hand, formless elements and entities are credited with having an unlimited potential for life, whilst on the other, they are associated with decomposition and pollution. In effect, the powers that formlessness possesses, whether good or bad are quintessentially fluid in nature, rootless and unfocussed (*ibid*). Given this, I argue that in early nineteenth century Asante culture, naturally occurring gold nuggets and cast gold occupied the pure end of this spectrum as they were solid and incorruptible as well as being cold, hard and reflective. The other end was occupied by molten gold which was fluid, formless, viscous and hot. I suggest that gold-dust occupied the mid-point as it retained certain amorphous associations in that it could flow much like molten metal despite having a

solid granular form. As was the case with cloth and cowries the divisibility and versatility of gold dust must have contributed to it being adopted as the major exchange medium for commercial transactions on the Gold Coast by the end of the eighteenth century. In this way, the weighing out of gold-dust may also have contributed to the development of Asante ethics and social values. In particular, this practice may have informed ideas concerning balance, control, equipoise, level-headedness and even-handedness which were all associated with negotiation skills and an inner state of calm and coolness when transacting business.

Evidence suggests that the same qualities that were associated with gold in its different states were also attributed to the Asantehene and other powerful entities. I have previously contended, in chapter II, that the Asantehene characteristically possesses an essentially ambiguous nature that makes him capable of both benevolent and malevolent acts. As the prime mediator between the ancestral, physical and spiritual worlds, his body was also considered to have permeable and porous qualities as well as solid and impenetrable ones.

The processes involved in transforming personal stools (*did dwa/adware dwa*) into ancestral 'blackened' stools (*nkonnwa tuntum*) also provides evidence that similar conceptions underpinned the creation of other powerful vehicles of mediation. If an elder died in office having led a successful, untarnished life and leaving behind successors, their personal stool was transformed into a shrine that was temporarily inhabited by their soul (Rattray 1923, 145). Evidence published by Rattray in 1927 records that a child was commonly presented with its first stool shortly after it began to crawl and this was subsequently replaced with others that marked important stages in life such as puberty, marriage and motherhood (Rattray 1927, see chapters on birth 51-68, puberty 69-75 and marriage 76-87). As I have already mentioned, an owner's soul is believed to start inhabiting their stool during the course of their life. Following the owner's death, hair and nail parings (*exuviae*) of the deceased are placed in the hole which runs vertically through the central column. The stool is then customarily blackened, which in the first quarter of the nineteenth century involved the sacrifice of an important member of the same matri-lineage as the deceased (Gilbert 1987, 308). The blood of the victim was

then mixed with gunpowder, or soot from the hearth, raw egg and spider's web which was rubbed into the stool's surfaces.

Soot or ash is the residue of form, in that it has been transformed through burning into formless matter which can be re-used in the formation of something else. Blood was a particularly hazardous fluid/substance that was closely associated with menstruation, childbirth and sacrifice (Rattray 1927, 69-76). Raw egg also has fluid and solid properties when released from its shell, but the combination of the semi-solid mass of the yolk and the gelatinous white in which it floats suggests a fusing of substances which were commonly used to bind other elements together especially when cooking. Spider silk also has sticky properties and when spun into a web temporarily assumes a form, but this is quickly lost once it is damaged or broken. I suggest that these seemingly disparate substances share three things in common: firstly, they are all androgynous, liminal and associated primarily with domestic contexts and with women. Secondly, they all subvert the form/formless categories, as they are neither solid nor liquid and finally, they are also fragile, transitory and embody or entrap life thanks to their viscous properties which attack and challenge the boundaries of the physical self.

The life-giving potential of these substances is activated by their initial combination and then released by being rubbed onto the surfaces of the stool, a process that in pre-colonial times was periodically repeated as a result of the regular observance of *adae* rites and the annual *odwira* celebration. In 1817 Bowdich described the executioners' stool that was displayed at the state reception as being '[...] clotted in blood and partly covered with a cawl of fat' (Bowdich 1819, 38). Dupuis also noted the same stool in 1820, displayed on one side of the King '[...] clotted with the still reeking gore of its victims' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 142). These offerings were made in order to enrich and sustain the soul of the deceased and over time they congealed on the surfaces of the stool, encasing it in a hard carapace or second skin that cannot be separated, unlike the exuviae of living/dead persons. These additions effectively reversed the decomposition process that the deceased's body was undergoing in the grave and was also a direct subversion of the purifying rites that the stools of the living were subjected to. As part of the same *adae* and *odwira* ceremonies, the stools of the living were scrubbed with sand and lime juice

by their owners in order to bring out the light colour of the *esese* wood and to remove dirt and polluting substances from their surfaces.

The gold, silver, plain and blackened stools of the Asante therefore conveyed meaning through their colour, usage and display contexts. The Golden Stool of Asante was paraded at public events such as the Yam Custom in full view of everyone, as were the silver stool of the Queen Mother and those of other chiefs. The blackened ancestral stools, however, were housed in special rooms (*akonnwafieso*) and never exposed to daylight or to public scrutiny (fig. 3.18). Concealment, darkness and separation,



Figure 3.18: Ancestral stools displayed inside a stool-room
(Kyerematen 1964, 88)

therefore emphasised the pure and sacred nature of the ancestral stools which contained the essence of chiefly authority in contrast to the shiny surfaces of the Golden Stool which reflects the unity of the collective Asante soul and state. Therefore the shiny surfaces of the Golden Stool and the scrubbed wood of plain stools formed a dialectical relationship with the dull obscured forms of the ancestral stools. Together, they symbolised the concealed and revealed aspects of spiritual authority and the transient and permanent states associated with the cycle of life. Could it be that other externally-derived items were appropriated by the Asante because they were made from substances

which facilitated their use in ritual and royal contexts? In the final part of this chapter I will explore this proposition in relation to European chairs and the appropriation of silver plate and brassware.

I began this chapter by discussing the Asante practice of adding bands and bindings which were cast from precious metals to gun-barrels, pipe-stems, sword-handles and cane-shafts. Evidence suggests that similar elements were also added to bigger items, such as pieces of furniture that were periodically presented as gifts or traded on the coast by Europeans. In Bowdich's illustration the Asantehene is shown seated on a black European-style chair, the legs of which are encircled by two bands of gold and the crossbar and stretchers decorated with gold discs or tacks (fig. 3.19). It is probable that this was the same richly ornamented chair of ebony and gold that Bowdich saw for the first time at the state reception (Bowdich 1819, 39). In his accompanying description he makes clear that some of the most important Asante chiefs also sat on chairs that were made '[...] of a black wood, almost covered by inlays of ivory and gold embossment' (*ibid.*, 36). In his illustration of the Yam Custom he indicated that distinctions in social status were also expressed by the Asante via the type of chair people used. This may explain why Bowdich depicted himself, Hutchison and Tedlie seated on plain chairs made of a light wood with short arm rests and round backs (fig. 3.20).

Other descriptions of chairs that were used by high-ranking Asante chiefs correspond closely to the decoration that was observed on another royal seat. Whilst in Kumase in 1820, Dupuis was shown the captured chair of Denkyera which he stated '[...] was studded all over with gold and silver ornaments, and silver coin such as dollar and half dollar pieces, that were riveted against the framework' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 76). The physical shape of the coins echoed that of other artefacts such as soul discs, and their attachment to chairs may have been related to the concomitant practice of attaching large cast discs onto stools. The gold and silver discs which dominate the centre of high-status stools (fig. 3.21) are known as *otadee* ('like a pool'). Depending on the social rank of the incumbent, some stools were also decorated with gold or silver strips which radiated outwards in a sunburst pattern, and/or placed around the supporting columns and the base. The gold strips that are described as encircling the legs of some chairs at regular



Figure 3.19: Detail of Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame sitting on a European style chair at the Yam Custom (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')



Figure 3.20: Detail showing the members of the Mission seated on European chairs at the Yam Custom (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')



Figure 3.21: The silver stool of Mampon
(Ross 2002, 48)

intervals may be related to the binding of metal strips on stools and those found on gun-barrels, pipe-stems and cane-shafts. In this context, they may have functioned in a similar manner to indicate rank and status and to add value to already valuable objects.

Some of these chairs were probably presented by competing European trading companies as part of diplomatic gifts. In April 1816, for instance, the Dutch Governor-General had shown an Asante delegation ‘[...] a costly and beautifully gilded chair covered with velvet and gold braid’ which he intended to send to the Asantehene as soon as the heavy rains had passed’ (Daendals 1964, 273). In his journal, Daendels described this chair as a ‘King’s chair’ and stated that it is ‘[...] as magnificent and beautiful as has ever been possessed by a King’ (*ibid*, 100). This suggests that he had high hopes that the Asantehene would use it as his state throne, in much the same way as European monarchs. Subsequent evidence from Bowdich and Dupuis’ accounts indicate, however, that Daendel’s hopes were thwarted, partly because the European concept of a ‘King’s chair’ or throne was, to a large extent, alien to the Asante.

Bowdich's account and imagery provide strong circumstantial evidence that by 1817 the Asante had already successfully appropriated at least three basic types of European chairs (known as *asipim* (I stand firm), *akonkromfi* (praying mantis?) and *hwedom* (facing the field or the enemy) that appear to be derived from seventeenth century Spanish or Portuguese proto-types (see Cole & Ross 1977, 141-142; McLeod 1981, 120). The physical characteristics of one of these chair-types, the *hwedom* closely matches Bowdich's description and image of the chair used by the Asantehene during the state reception and the Yam Custom of 1817. Anthropologists and cultural historians all concur that *hwedom* chairs were large, black in colour and had frames covered with brass or silver nails which were primarily used to seat senior chiefs when in public (*ibid*). Given this evidence, *hwedom* chairs would almost certainly have been used at important state receptions and ceremonies where the Asantehene and his captains literally came face to face with potential and actual enemies of the Asante state.

Corroborating evidence, in the form of a description and illustration, which was published by Sarah Bowdich in 1835, also suggest that a similar chair was used by the Asantehene during negotiations with the first British Mission (fig. 3.22). The illustration



Figure 3.22: Detail of the Asantehene seated on a low stool beside an empty chair (Lee 1835, Plate IV)

depicts a royal assembly in the great courtyard. The Asantehene is shown seated on a low stool which is placed next to a chair which has a large circular shield propped against it, in front of which kneels an advisor, possibly an *ocrah*. It is widely believed in Asante that vacated stools will be inhabited by bad spirits unless they are tipped on to their sides to prevent this from happening. This image contains evidence that suggests that, in the early nineteenth century, similar beliefs may have also extended to European chairs but, instead of being tipped up, the chair is effectively protected by an actual shield and by a servant who acts as a human shield.

In his account Bowdich noted that ‘[...] on his fetish day [Tuesday] the King always sat on a stool placed before his chair as a foot stool would be’ (Bowdich 1819, 266). His refusal to sit on this chair on certain days suggests that he was observing some kind of ritual taboo connected to his *ntoro*. It also echoes the taboo against sitting on the Golden Stool which indicates that, in courtly contexts stools and chairs formed part of a symbolic system that expressed distinct aspects of the Asantehene’s role as the arbitrator between the ancestral, the living and the spiritual realms. If my interpretation is correct, then European-style chairs in general, and *hwedom* chairs in particular, were associated explicitly with the sphere of the living. Furthermore, it appears that this association is substantiated by the fact that in certain contexts chairs not only provided a seat for members of the Asante elite to rest on but also provided support for important Asante stools in both private and public contexts.

This essentially supportive function can also be traced in respect of the Asante appropriation of metal containers, principally brass bowls and items of silver plate. The Portuguese started trading enormous quantities of silver, tin, brass and lead vessels within fifty years of establishing contact with the peoples of the Gold Coast (see Vogt 1973, 93). These valuable commodities enjoyed widespread appeal in West Africa for centuries and circulated as part of a much larger exchange system that included gold dust, beads, cloth and iron bars. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the practice of presenting gifts of entire dinner services and large items of silver plate was also one of the strategies adopted by European trading companies to ingratiate themselves with influential chiefs. However, evidence suggests that as a direct result of the Napoleonic wars in Europe

valuable gifts such as these had stopped arriving on the Gold Coast. In a diary entry dated 24th May 1816, Huydecoper noted that;

‘His Majesty, [...] showing me some silver ware, asked why such beautiful things were not sent to him any more. I replied that the recent lengthy war had prevented the importation of such things, but now the sea route was open again the General would be bringing goods of this kind out again and would send some to His Majesty’ (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 19).

True to form it seems that the Dutch Governor was very keen to be the first of the European powers to present the Asantehene with some new silver and promptly sent a cup that he had received from Holland in December 1816 (Daendels 1815-1817 [1964], 273). The timing of this gift, which occurred just as the British were preparing to dispatch their first mission to Kumase, was no doubt designed to put them at a disadvantage. This strategy back-fired, however, as during the Mission’s residency in Kumase, Bowdich informed the Asantehene that the good silver in his possession was English, and the bad, Dutch (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 157).

During the state reception of 1817, Bowdich noted that behind the chairs of some of the most important chiefs stood ‘[...] finely grown girls [holding] silver basins’ (Bowdich 1819, 36). In his illustration of the Yam Custom he included depictions of these attendants on the right of the Asantehene (fig. 3.23). Furthermore, he also described how



Figure 3.23: Detail of young women carrying silver bowls (Bowdich 1819, Illustration No. 2)

‘[...] the cook had a number of small services [...] held behind him and a large quantity of massy silver plate [...] displayed before him’ (ibid, 37). Some of the same pieces were probably seen and recorded by Dupuis on 23rd March 1820, as a result of the Asantehene’s request for him to assess and identify the origins and quality of his silver. Dupuis identified several items such as a tureen, coffee-pot, cups, a richly-chased urn, kettle, ewer and basin as being the products of Holland, Spain and Portugal; not all of these items, however, had been presented as gifts (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 156). The *Asantehene* explained that ‘[...] some of them came from the Fantee, when [he] conquered the Braffoes [...] and many more [he] took in Gaman when [he] killed Dinkera [Adinkra]’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 156). This evidence is very important as it highlights the fact that some of these items were trophies of war and may have been displayed at public events in much the same way as the captured cannon and body parts. Given this, I suspect that some of the silverware Bowdich observed during the state reception and the Yam Custom of 1817 had been taken from the Fante in 1807 and 1816.

Other, conflicting evidence suggests that some silverware was not displayed as trophies of war but as tokens of esteem and friendship. At the first Anglo/Asante conference held at Anomabu in July/August of 1807, the then British Governor-in-Chief, Colonel Torrane, had presented the Asantehene with a personal gift of silver cutlery. On 25th August 1817, Bowdich and his companions were invited to attend an open-air banquet that was held at the Asantehene’s country residence at Barramang [Breman]. The timing of this banquet, which occurred just two days after Bowdich had threatened for the first time to quit Kumase without obtaining royal permission, suggests that it was intended to lower tensions and provide the British officers with a little diversion. On arrival Bowdich recounted how they were conducted to a secluded garden where the ‘[...] King’s dining table (heightened for the occasion) [was] covered in the most imposing manner [with] silver forks, knives and spoons’ which he identified as being Colonel Torrane’s (Bowdich 1819, 114). It is obvious from this description that the Asantehene was keen to impress his guests with a European-style dinner party, but given the circumstances, was his use of Torrane’s silver cutlery on this occasion more than just coincidental?

I suggest that it probably formed part of a deliberate strategy on the Asantehene's part that was designed to remind Bowdich of his personal friendship with another British Governor who treated him with respect. If my interpretation is correct, then the display and use of this cutlery on this particular occasion was aimed at conveying a subtle message to the officers of the Mission to treat him in like manner. As such, the practice of communicating implicit messages may not have been restricted to messenger canes but possibly included items that, because of their external origins, shared social connections and histories which made them suitable agents of intercession and mediation.

The same associations also appear to have informed the appropriation of receptacles made from brass, known as *yawa*, that were used by the Asante in a variety of ritual and secular contexts. Several historians and anthropologists have argued that European brass vessels replaced analogous imports manufactured in Egypt, Morocco and Muslim Spain (see Cole & Ross 1977, 216; McLeod 1981, 134). During his description of the Yam Custom, Bowdich mentioned three instances where brass containers were used as part of the rites. Firstly, he noted that, on the morning of Sunday 7th September 1817, large quantities of rum were poured into brass pans situated in various parts of Kumase for the populace. This coincided with that part of the rite where the normal rules governing Asante society were temporarily inverted and suspended. The act of drinking alcohol from these containers echoed the drinking of palm wine (fig. 3.24) which, according to



Figure 3.24: Detail showing the method used to drink palm wine (Bowdich 1819, Illustration No. 2)

Bowdich, required two calabashes: one to drink from, the other to catch the drops in (Bowdich 1819, 277). It also referenced the drinking of ‘fetish’ or ‘doom’ which was made from an infusion of bark from the Adum tree that was served in a brass pan by linguists, to those who wished to prove the truthfulness of their claims and assertions (*ibid*, 297). The Asante believed that liars would be exposed by coughing or gagging on the noxious liquid. These examples indicate that brass vessels functioned primarily, but not exclusively, within ritual contexts and, together with calabashes and imported European glasses, formed part of a well-established hierarchy of drinking vessels that were associated with distinct contexts.

This assertion is given added weight when Bowdich’s second observation of brass pan use is considered. As part of the rites conducted on the same day, he stated that several slaves were also sacrificed at the royal mausoleum at Bantama, over a large brass pan so that their ‘[...] blood mingled with various vegetable and animal matter to produce invincible fetish’ (Bowdich 1819, 279). Later in his account he observed that this receptacle (fig. 3.25) was situated near the entrance to the mausoleum and was ‘[...] the largest brass pan I ever saw, being about five feet in diameter, with four small lions on the edge’ (*ibid*, 289).



Figure 3.25: Detail of the *Aya Kese* as it was photographed by Lieutenant General Sir Robert Baden Powell in 1896 just prior to the destruction of the Bantama mausoleum. (Rattray 1927, Plate I)

Asante tradition states that this container, known as *Aya Kese* (great vessel), together with two English ewers made in the time of Richard II, were captured from the Sefwi during the eighteenth century (McLeod 1981, 134). It appears that these items

subsequently formed part of the ritual equipment of the mausoleum. The display of the vessel at the threshold known as, ‘before the doorway of the Kings’ (*Ahen boboano*), probably served to highlight the essentially liminal nature of the place and its ritual function. Furthermore, I argue that as a war trophy it also symbolised a particular Asante military victory, in much the same way as the Denkyera cannon and the skulls of enemy leaders did. However, the combination of its function and location also indicates that it formed one of the Kumase boundary markers that were routinely fortified by the Asantehene with human sacrifices (see chapter II). In this way, it was also intimately associated with the ritual offering of certain liquids such as blood and alcohol, which links it to other vessels such as *kuduo* and the small brass bowls situated on *Nyame dua* altars that were used for similar purposes.

Related associations can also be detected in the third and final instance that Bowdich documented. During the purification rites, which took place on Thursday 11th September 1817 in the marsh outside Kumase, he witnessed ‘[...] several brass pans [...] covered with white cloth, with various fetish under them’ (Bowdich 1819, 280). What is clear from this description is that such pans were used to house and transport powerful spiritual entities and were instrumental components in rituals that were concerned with maintaining boundaries and mediating transformations. The two principal types of entity that have been documented as being housed in ‘brass pan shrines’ represent Tano River deities (*Atano*) and witch-catching deities (*abosommerafu*) (Cole & Ross 1977, 99). It is probable that the brass pans that Bowdich saw housed *Atano*. These powers are believed to be the children of *Onyame*, the omniscient and omnipotent Creator God, and are commonly associated with lakes, streams and other watery places in the landscape. It appears that brass containers were principally used by the Asante to house the earthly manifestation of the *abosum* (large God) which customarily took the form of sacred water, clay, pebbles, sticks and other sedimentary elements. As the temporary abode of the deity, the brass bowls became focal points of worship and over-time were filled with sacrificial offerings (fig. 3.26). These offerings commonly accompanied appeals for advice, fertility, well-being, protection and wealth. When the container was full it was placed inside a larger one and the process continued.



Figure 3.26: Asante brass pan Atano shrine in a village near Kumase (Visona et al. 2000, 212)

As a result many of these brass-pan shrines are composed of a series of stacked containers which are nested within one another. The sacrificial matter, commonly chicken blood and raw eggs, which is rubbed onto the surfaces as part of the ritual washing (*dware*) process, adheres and congeals into an accretion that causes the stacked containers to become permanently stuck together. I suggest that this process inverts the purification that is designed to prevent the build up of impurities on the surfaces of objects such as jewellery and stools that are used by the living. Furthermore, this essentially additive process also echoes that used in the creation of moulds for casting and for creating ancestral stools. Finally, I argue the layering that is implied in the containment of sacred fluids and the accretion and solidification of sacrificial ones, references the layering that occurs during casting processes which imposes form onto formless matter. Having some kind of physical form or locus appears to have been an essential prerequisite for interacting and participating in the cultured environment of Asante society and may also have indexed the extent to which entities were sympathetic towards humanity and interested in their affairs.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I focussed on appropriated artefacts and objects made of metal and wood, principally the guns, swords, canes, chairs, silver plate and brass containers that feature in Thomas Bowdich's illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom.' My analysis was structured around three questions that provided a framework which enabled me to develop some of the themes I had introduced in chapter II and explore them in relation to new contexts and examples. The first question asked how and in what ways were imported artefacts made of metal and wood appropriated by the Asante? My subsequent analysis demonstrated that these artefacts were appropriated in several different ways. Firstly, evidence obtained from Huydecoper's diary (1816-1817), Bowdich's account (1819) and Dupuis' journal (1824) show that, during the early nineteenth century they were predominantly appropriated as personal status symbols and badges of office by the Asante. All three visitors to Kumase noted large quantities of guns, canes and silver plate being publicly displayed during events such as state receptions and ritual celebrations. Secondly, evidence presented as part of my analysis also demonstrated that guns, canes and swords were appropriated for use in diplomatic and ritual contexts, where interactions and transactions were dramatised and punctuated by the manipulation of insignia. Thirdly, Bowdich's account and imagery also documented how some European artefacts such as bells and manacles were physically bound to items of Asante manufacture such as stools. In the case of guns, canes and chairs, modification took the form of gold bands that were bound at regular intervals around the barrel, shaft or legs. I argued that these appropriative actions were akin to other forms of social wrapping that were associated with the containment of power, the conflation and transgression of different spheres and the reinforcing of physical and meta-physical weak points.

I also argued in the course of this chapter that the appropriation of external artefacts was informed by Asante beliefs regarding the aggregate composition of individuals and the state. By the time of Bowdich's visit in 1817, the most important spiritual elements were believed to inhabit powerful items of state regalia, such as the Golden Stool which embodied the collective soul of the Asante state and the swords of the soul which embodied discrete aspects of the Asantehene's life force. The relationship that existed between the Golden Stool, the source of all power, and its living representative, the

Asantehene, was articulated and symbolised through the manipulation and use of inalienable items of regalia, some of which had been alienated from other contexts of use. This relationship provided the model on which all other hierarchical relationships were based. I focussed primarily on messengers and sword-bearers in order to demonstrate that canes and swords (which derive from appropriated European and Islamic prototypes) were not just badges of office, but were empowered social agents that were imbued with ancestral and chiefly authority. In this way, I posited, both artefact and bearer formed indivisible components of the state and were instrumental in enabling knowledge, power and wealth to be accumulated and disseminated. The dynamic tension that is implied in the internalisation of alienated symbols of power and the control of internal powers through inalienable symbolism was also traced in other contexts, notably the appropriation and public exhibition of war trophies.

Bowdich's illustration clearly indicates that the skulls and jaw-bones of state enemies were bound to drums and horns that were used during state receptions and Yam Custom rites to proclaim the strong names of the Asante elite. I argued that these disarticulated mouthpieces served to articulate Asante might and to re-emphasise the cultural importance and value that was attached to speaking and listening. The Asante appropriated the very parts of these anti-social elements that had threatened to un-balance and destroy social order and turned them into subordinate conduits for the propagation of Asante culture. In contrast, however, I argued that the appropriation, display and manipulation of diplomatic and individual tokens of affection and esteem, and the adoption of European-style military practices, were framed by Asante conventions of complementarity and reciprocation that were designed to convey expressions of friendship, mutual admiration and respect.

The second question was aimed at ascertaining what pre-existing perceptions informed the selection, appropriation and reprocessing of these artefacts. In answering this, I advanced the hypothesis that the properties and qualities associated with some materials and substances were implicated in the appropriation of externally-derived artefacts. Using Bowdich's description of the lost wax casting process, I posited that Asante beliefs and conceptions regarding purity, corruption and liminality had been informed by

technical procedures that transformed formless and fluid substances into forms that were suitable for human ingestion, inhabitation and manipulation. I also argued that the same technical processes may have informed the appropriation, domestication and internalisation of alien entities and products. In effect, externally-derived artefacts and liminal entities were effectively reformulated/re-processed by being bound, encased and wrapped using certain materials. As part of an expanding symbolic repertoire, these items were exhibited alongside others as part of transient processions or permanent static displays. In both contexts, the sheer variety of materials, shapes and textures combined to create overpowering spectacles such as those Huydecoper, Bowdich and Dupuis observed and described.

The third and final question was aimed at determining what functions appropriated artefacts served in new cultural contexts. I have argued in this chapter that, in most cases, appropriated objects functioned as symbols of status and wealth in Asante culture during the early nineteenth century. Having completed my survey, I am confident that externally-derived objects functioned in two distinct but inter-related ways. Firstly, they mediated relations and unified the disparate elements that made up individuals, matrilineal clans, the Asante state and cosmos. Secondly, they functioned to demarcate, protect and reinforce physical and meta-physical boundaries and to maintain and support the structural integrity of Asante. In effect, these empowered social agents coalesced and were deployed around specific sites that embodied critical material and immaterial junctures. Their presence and manipulation at these sites was instrumental in the creation of hyper-environments that neutralised potential threats, amplified and magnified Asante power, facilitated the conflation of spheres and allowed the successful transgression of boundaries during transitory events.

In conclusion, my analysis has demonstrated that the Asante selection and appropriation of European artefacts was partly directed and motivated by pre-existing cultural concepts. These concepts appear to have been structured around a number of paired oppositions (internal/external, fluid/solid, raw/cooked and form/formless) which together with those already identified and discussed in chapter II, formed the basis of a mechanism that enabled the Asante to maintain and regulate cosmic balance and harmony. In chapter IV

I will analyse how notions associated with wrapping informed Asante appropriations of European and Islamic textiles which were used in overlapping secular, spiritual and state contexts to conceal and/or reveal commercial and political ambitions and esoteric and spiritual entities.

IV

Stitching the Flesh, Spinning the Skin: Anglo/Asante Appropriations, Displays and Presentations of Flags, Canopies and Clothing

Outline, Aims and Structure of Chapter

Joy Hendry speculated as part of her analysis on social wrapping that some of the impressions that were created by European diplomats, explorers and travellers on non-western peoples involved the trappings of status and power (Hendry 1993, 135).

Evidence contained in the accounts of successive envoys to Kumase written between 1816 and 1820 indicates that during pre-colonial diplomatic encounters, members of the Asante court and British officers appropriated elements of each other's trappings. By concentrating primarily on Thomas Bowdich's account of the 1817 Mission to Kumase (1819) and his illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom,' I will show that in these cases, appropriated artefacts and conventions formed part of extended Asante and British symbolic repertoires. During negotiations these appropriations were manipulated in various ways to signify a mutual willingness to foster relations, to express inexpressible sentiments, to signify respective rank and wealth as well as to impress each other. As part of this analysis I will also expand on my hypothesis that the properties and qualities attributed to certain products were informing what was selected and manipulated. Finally, I will demonstrate that externally-derived artefacts were used by the Asante in both diplomatic and ritual contexts to wrap liminal entities in a series of layers that conflated, deflected, isolated, mediated and protected during potentially hazardous encounters.

In contrast to the previous chapter, I will limit my analysis to textiles and textile-related items such as flags, canopies and clothing. I would like to clarify that these artefacts have not been arbitrarily selected by me, but reflect the bias of the source material. As a result I omit discussion of many artefacts that Bowdich either did not observe or failed to describe but were known to have existed in Kumase in 1817. Despite this, the arguments and interpretations that I offer in respect of the artefacts that are included in this analysis can also be extended to those which I do not consider

but were appropriated before 1816 and after 1820. This begs the question, when does appropriation stop being appropriation? In this particular case, it only appears to have stopped when artefacts lost their association with ‘otherness,’ which in Asante society took many years, as frequent presentations of certain gifts by trading companies on the coast continued to re-affirm their foreign origins. As part of this analysis I will also discuss the Asante appropriation and display of textiles and related items that were manufactured and/or traded by the so-called Sarem states, which included the kingdoms of Gaman, Banda, Takima, Soko, Ghofan, Enkasi, Kong and Dagomba in the east, the state of Gonja in the south and those of the Manding in the north and Ganowa in the north-west (see fig. 2.16).

The same questions as those posed in the preceding chapter will continue to provide a basic framework for the analysis of appropriation in this chapter: How and in what ways were imported textiles appropriated in this period? What circumstances and perceptions informed the selection and appropriation of textiles and what functions did they serve in new cultural contexts? This chapter is divided into three parts: Part One, which is entitled ‘Fabric of Society,’ will consider Anglo/Asante appropriations of textiles and flags that were presented as part of diplomatic exchanges. Part Two, entitled ‘Shades and Shields’ will discuss the Anglo/Asante appropriation of canopies and umbrellas as well as red silk, *nsaa* cloth and animal skins. Part Three, which is entitled ‘Second Skins’ will focus on Anglo/Asante appropriations of European clothing, in particular items of uniform. The major points of my argument will be summarised at the end of the chapter.

Part One: Fabric of Society

Historical evidence suggests that from the earliest years of contact, Portuguese merchants included lengths of cloth and second-hand clothing as part of the cargoes of merchant ships bound for the Gold Coast (Vogt 1975, 635-7; 644-7). In fact, a market for imported textiles from North Africa had been established centuries earlier as a result of the trans-Saharan trade network (Levtzion 1973, 180). By the beginning of the eighteenth century textiles from all over the known world were exported in increasing quantities and frequently formed an important part of European presentations to local chiefs. Evidence indicates that this practice continued into the

early decades of the nineteenth century as Huydecoper is recorded as presenting cloth and other valuable commodities to the Asantehene on behalf of the Dutch Trading Company shortly after his arrival in Kumase in 1816. A year later the members of the first British Mission also presented the Asante ruler with rich fabrics. The comparatively close timing of these presentations is indicative of the rivalry that existed between the British and Dutch companies who were locked in an aggressive competition for trade at this time. Such tournaments were characterised by competitive bouts of excessive gift-giving that, in terms of monetary value and novelty, were aimed at topping a rival's presentation.

Evidence from the accounts of Huydecoper (1816) and Dupuis (1824) suggests that in the period between 1816-1820 gifts of cloth intended for the Asante elite were limited to a relatively small range of luxurious fabrics, something that was also reflected in royal requests. In a journal entry dated 26th May 1816, Huydecoper stated how he was summoned by His Majesty who asked that '[...] at the first opportunity, an order be sent to Europe for some lengths of old Dutch chintz [and] some plain red, black and green velvet' (Huydecoper 1962, 21). Some four years later Dupuis related how, on one occasion during his residency in Kumase, the Asantehene showed him;

'[...] some very rich brocades, of various coloured patterns, [...] together with pieces of crimson damask, and fine cotton cloths, which the King had just received as part of a present from the governor of Elmina. 'Tell the merchants to bring plenty of those goods, I will buy them all; [...] I give many to the Kings who live in Dagomba and other countries, near the great water, [the Niger]'' (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 157).

This passage is also interesting because it highlights the fact that gifts of luxurious fabrics were also exchanged between African chiefs in order to establish and maintain diplomatic relationships throughout the sub-Saharan area of West Africa during this period. It may also have served to advertise that a monarch had access to such goods and to external sources of power and wealth. I suggest that in some contexts the frequency of such gifts, their length, span and their qualities and properties reflected, quite literally the colour, extent, richness and warmth of the relationship that existed between donor and receiver. As such, the exotic origins of some cloth also seem to have played an important part of this 'materialisation' of intangible bonds of alliance and friendship, perhaps suggesting that geographical distance was of no import when

strong ties bound individuals and states together? This evidence also suggests that cloth was ranked hierarchically, according to the types of animal or plant fibres it was woven from and that its colour, size and plain or patterned surfaces indicated the status and wealth of an individual. Dalzel noted in 1793 that the cloth used to dress the men in Dahomy ‘[...] is about the size of a common counterpane, for the middling class; but [...] a piece of silk or velvet, of sixteen or eighteen yards, makes a cloth for a Grandee’ (Dalzel 1793 [1966], xvi).

Although I am focussing primarily on the exchange of textiles during pre-colonial diplomatic encounters, it is worth mentioning that their economic and symbolic value in that arena was derived in part from their exchange value in other contexts.

Circumstantial evidence from the accounts of explorers such as Clapperton, who in 1826 travelled as far inland as modern-day northern Nigeria, suggests that during the first quarter of the nineteenth century cloth constituted a form of currency throughout this part of West Africa (Clapperton 1829 [1966], 57, 95; see also Candotti 2010, 187-189). In this capacity it was also widely used by the employees of European trading companies scattered in factories and forts along this part of the African coastline to procure a vast range of local goods and services.

Evidence from Huydecoper’s account attests to the fact that different types of indigenous and imported cloth were sold in standard lengths on the Gold Coast (fathoms or ells) that could be exchanged for equivalent measures of gold dust, cowries or iron bars (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 4-5). The following entry written on June 28th 1816, by Dutch Governor-General Daendels in his journal, also makes clear that in certain circumstances, such as repatriation, cloth was also bought and sold between rival European trading companies;

‘[...] a British officer being repatriated [I] bought 300 pieces of long cloth goods [...], from Governor Dawson I bought his last long cloth, most of his Tom Coffy roemaals, the remainder of his Armozijnen silk and the last piece of silk damask. [From] Mr Watts Armozijnen silk of which we bought a portion, and another fine piece’ (Daendels 1815-1817 [1964], 141).

The versatility of cloth in several overlapping economic and social contexts may explain in part why trading companies persisted in the importation of clothing and lengths of cloth, rather than dyed and spun yarn to West Africa.

In his account of the first British Mission Bowdich frequently mentioned occasions when he and his companions presented gifts of cloth. It is frequently unclear, however, whether the officers were giving these gifts as individuals or in their official capacity as representatives of the Africa Company, or even the British Crown. A good example of this occurred on the day after the state reception (Tuesday 20th May 1817) when the Mission was summoned to the King's house to present the gifts they had brought with them from Cape Coast Castle. Bowdich noted that:

‘[...] all the curiosity the packages excited could not incline the King to regard them, until he had desired distinctly to understand who had sent them, the King of England, or the Governor. He was told, the Company to whom the forts belonged under the King; the interpreter seemed to render it the King individually; it was more intelligible, and the agreeable impression it made was striking’ (Bowdich 1819, 44).

Documented presentations of cloth during the first British Mission also highlight the differing diplomatic strategies that were adopted by the Asante and the British during key stages of the negotiations. Evidence points conclusively to the fact that in 1817 the British strategically presented gifts of cloth to individuals who might be persuaded to support the Mission. In a letter dated 21st June 1817, the Governor wrote ‘I send you [Bowdich] a piece of muslin and 10 danes [Glasgow dane was a shiny dyed British cotton that came in a variety of colours] for presents to the Moors, whose friendship it will be highly necessary to conciliate’ (Bowdich 1819, 79). On the 9th July Bowdich dutifully reported back that he ‘[...] distributed the muslin's &c as politically as possible, including the Moors of repute, the aristocracy, or four captains controlling the King, his four linguists, his brother and successor, our housemaster, and some other captains of superior influence’ (*ibid*, 85). This policy was also adopted in 1820 by Dupuis, who as head of the second British Mission ‘[...] drew up a list of those in power, whose influence at court was most important to my views, and to these men I distributed presents in proportion to their rank’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 112). In contrast, gifts of cloth, together with other valuable presents, were

normally distributed at the end of negotiations by the Asante. In this circumstance cloth was given to subordinate personnel who had played an instrumental role in the proceedings as well as high-ranking participants. Bowdich recorded that when the first British Mission departed from Kumase, the two soldiers and the linguists who had accompanied them from Cape Coast and Accra were given gifts of cloth and small amounts of gold by the Asantehene (Bowdich 1819, 147).

Other evidence contained in Bowdich's account indicates that Asante presentations of cloth also featured prominently as part of other ceremonies where physical and meta-physical transactions marked either the transition and/or transformation of states/status. For instance, Bowdich described how, as part of the funeral rites of an important individual, it was customary for the deceased to be '[...] handsomely drest in silk and gold, and laid out on the bed, the richest cloths beside it' (Bowdich 1819, 282). He goes on to relate how during the funeral procession itself;

'[...] troops carried the rich cloths and silks of the deceased on their heads, in shiny brass pans, twisted and stuffed into crosses, cones, globes and a fanciful variety of shapes only to be imagined, and imposing at a small distance the appearance of rude deities' (*ibid*, 284).

This description may be associated with an illustration that was not published in Bowdich's account of 1819 but which subsequently appeared in Sarah's publication sixteen years later (fig. 4.0). In an accompanying explanation she stated that it '[...] represents the end of a funeral procession' (Lee 1835, 363). On the extreme left



Figure 4.0: Detail of a Fante funeral procession showing female mourners displaying cloth twisted into various shapes and carried in large basins (Lee 1835, Plate I)

of the picture frame, three mourners are depicted carrying large basins on their heads filled with textiles that have been formed into different shapes just as Bowdich described in 1817. The number and variety of cloths on display probably served to indicate the extent of the deceased's wealth and the range of their familial, social and trading connections. In this way, an individual's fortune and social status could be displayed by his family and assessed by his friends and neighbours via the public exhibition of textiles. It is not known whether the textiles that Bowdich observed were imported or of domestic origin but it is probable that both were represented.

In their surveys of Akan/Asante art and culture Cole and Ross and McLeod discuss the practice of unravelling imported silks and woollen cloth which, historical evidence suggests, started around the early decades of the eighteenth century (1977, 39; 1981, 153). This practice was still prevalent in Asante in 1817 as Bowdich recorded in his account how '[...] red taffeta (11 yards in each piece) are unravelled by the Ashantees, and wove into the cloths of their own manufacture' (Bowdich 1819, 331). In his chapter dealing with commerce, he also noted that a cloth known as *sastracunda*, (a shiny British cotton with bright red stripes separated by a bar of white) was bought '[...] solely for the red stripe (as there is no red dye nearer than Marrowa) which they weave into their own cloths, throwing away the white' (*ibid*, 332). In 1820 Hutton noted that 'the cloth [the King's sons] wore were large and handsome, of Ashantee manufacture, from cotton and foreign silks, which had been unravelled to weave them' (Hutton 1821, 208).

These procedures were probably carried out at Bonwire, a settlement located approximately 12 miles (19 kms) to the south of Kumase. It is not known whether Bowdich visited this place but he described in detail how the Asante used a spindle to make thread and how their looms produced cloth not more than four inches broad (Bowdich 1819, 310). The strips were customarily sewn together along the selvedge in order to make larger cloths. He also included a representation of a weaver and a loom in the right foreground of his illustration of 'A Part of Adoom Street' (fig. 4.1) and collected, and later donated, an Asante loom and several examples of woven cloth to the British Museum on his return to England in 1818 (see Table 2).

Bowdich interpreted the Asante practice of unravelling imported silks in terms of commerce. During his stay in Kumase he became increasingly aware that the demand for silk cloth and brightly coloured yarns far exceeded supplies and the British traders on the coast could potentially exploit this deficit. In a letter to the Governor, dated 29th August 1817, Bowdich complained of having been applied to by several of the

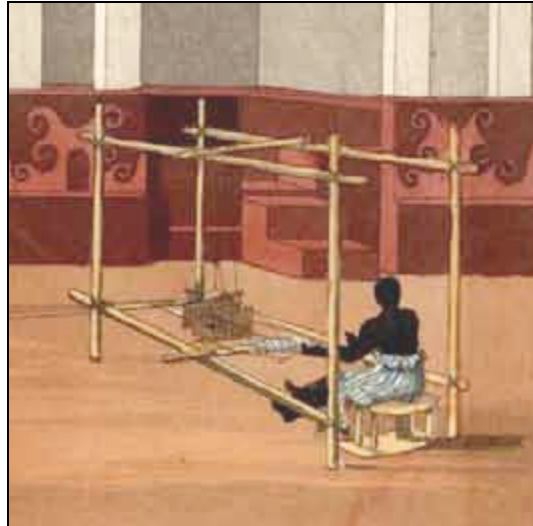


Figure 4.1: Detail of an Asante weaver at his loom (Bowdich 1819 ‘Part of Adoom Street’)

principal men ‘[...] to send to Cape Coast for silks, to be paid for on receipt at Coomassie’ (Bowdich 1819, 104). At first he found these approaches irritating, but later he speculated that ‘[...] as the silks the [Asante] obtain from Fezzan [are] dearer than our own, I should think we could induce a preference’ and opportunistically suggested that ‘our Manchester cloth and cotton manufactures would be novel and useful to them’ (*ibid*, 342).

The Asante practice of unravelling and re-weaving imported textiles, I suggest, provides another significant insight into how other externally-derived elements were appropriated and incorporated into Asante culture. Firstly, the woven matrix of the imported cloth was unravelled in order that the thread could be separated and extracted. Secondly, the weaver incorporated the extracted thread into a new cloth by re-weaving it into configurations or patterns that were essentially Asante constructs. I suggest that the re-processing model I have identified here for yarn metaphorically and physically correlates in certain important respects to the processing that European envoys experienced during state receptions as outlined in chapter II. As part of this

ceremony the strangers were made to weave their way through the streets of Kumase following a prescribed route. As they did so, they were physically manipulated and separated out from their attendants, porters and servants and finally integrated into the social fabric of Asante society by being allocated a place within the socio/spatial schema of the court. If, as this implies, the appropriation and integration of external elements in Akan/Asante culture involved some type of adaptation and/or re-processing during this period, then these aspects should be identifiable in relation to other appropriations.

Alongside lengths of cloth, another gift item that was routinely exchanged between European trading companies and the chiefs of Gold Coast communities was flags. Gifts such as these were designed by the Europeans to encourage relations and to increase trade and exchange which, it was hoped, would lead in due course to the establishment of a more formal diplomatic alliance between themselves and a local chief. The presentation of flags therefore also formed part of the symbolic arsenal that trading companies deployed in their ongoing battle for commercial domination. As a result, it was in each trading company's economic and political interest to present their flag to those influential chiefs who had the power to facilitate trade, in the hope that it would be the only one that was accepted and displayed. In this way, flags not only served to identify and distinguish different European commercial/national entities, but also signalled the existence of a trading affiliation or alliance between a European Company and a Gold Coast community.

No doubt this was precisely what Dutch Governor-General Daendels intended when on the 24th April 1816 he dispatched Huydecoper to Kumase with gifts of flags for the Asante generals and a 3-piece flag for the King (Bowdich 1819, 24). It appears that Huydecoper had been issued with precise instructions regarding the presentation and use of the flag intended for the Asantehene as he noted that 'I presented [the flag last] with the words, My Master said that Your Majesty should place this flag on top of your house, as befits so great a King' (Huydecoper 1816-1817 [1962], 18). It is possible that some of these flags appear in Bowdich's illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom.'

Figure 4.2. Detail of the first cluster of European flags (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

On the extreme left of the image, the flags of Holland, Denmark and Britain form part of a display of wild dancing and gun-salutes (fig. 4.2). In addition there is an



unidentified flag with a red cross on a blue background topped by a white and a red border, which is shown at a little distance from the others. Bowdich stated in his description of the celebration that this is '[...] the fanciful standard of a chief' (Bowdich 1819, 276). It is possible that this was one of the flags that Huydecoper presented to the Asante Generals encamped at Abra in May 1816. This indicates that Asante military commanders were then in the process of acquiring such flags from Europe and that this practice was closely associated with the invasion and defeat of the coastal Fante communities. Furthermore, Bowdich's illustration makes it clear that they were used in conjunction with and alongside, but not instead of, older signifiers of identity and status such as canopies, woven cloth, sandals and stools.

This particular scene also shares marked similarities with the illustration of a Fante funeral procession discussed earlier. At the top of this illustration, a group of three male figures are depicted in the act of waving three flags (fig. 4.3). The figures face



Figure 4.3: Detail of whirling flag-bearers at a Fante funeral procession
(Lee 1835, Plate I)

inwards and their poses suggest that they are whirling around as part of a ritual dance performed in honour of the deceased. Circumstantial evidence suggests that some of the European flags depicted in Bowdich's illustration may also have been trophies of war. An entry from Mr Hutchison's diary, dated Monday 8th December 1817, recorded that Adum Ata (1752-1822), one of the Asante war captains, had told him that '[...] they had Dutch and Danish flags, which they had taken from forts' (Bowdich 1819, 410). The dramatic display of captured European flags at public ceremonies such as state receptions may have served as a subtle reminder to European visitors that lives and trade were dependant upon maintaining good relations with the Asantehene. Conversely, their presence may also have indicated the Asantehene's ambitions to foster greater commercial and political ties with these foreign sources of power.

Bowdich depicted a second cluster of flags (fig. 4.4), comprising those of Great Britain, Holland, and Denmark flanking the Asantehene's canopy. Their placement in this part of the image serves several practical and symbolic ends. Firstly, they provide a colourful backdrop and act as framing devices that effectively draw the eye towards the figure of the Asantehene. Secondly, their relative proximity to the Asantehene was probably intended to indicate the existence of close personal relations between him and the European trading companies concerned. Thirdly, the flags are also shown with their edges extended towards him, a metaphorical device



Figure 4.4: Detail of the second cluster of flags flanking the figure of the *Asantehene* (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

that implies that the trading companies also extended their support in a similar fashion. However, the way in which Bowdich has drawn them reveals the constructed nature of this image as the wind cannot blow in two directions at the same time, so the flags could not face each other as they are shown to do here. Thirdly, this contrived arrangement may also have been designed to indicate that Asante prosperity was dependant upon trade with Europe in general and Britain in particular. This is subtly implied by the presence of two Union Jacks in this part of the image, whereas the other European trading companies are represented by one flag apiece. This interpretation is also corroborated by the fact that one of the Union Jacks is shown flying at full stretch behind the officers of the British Mission who, on the 22nd September 1817, were on the verge of ratifying the first Anglo/Asante trade treaty. Given this, I argue that Bowdich's placement and positioning of flags in this illustration was designed not only to convey propagandist messages in general, but was also intended to promote his own personal success as 'conductor' of the first British Mission (for a further discussion see chapter V). The close relationship that existed between the flag and the officers of the Mission is also hinted at by the fact that the flag pole of the Union Jack is held by the soldier standing behind the seated

officer on the left and nearest the Asantehene. This implicitly suggests that the Mission had the official backing of the Committee and Council of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa and the British Government, a conflation of authority that, as I have already suggested, was actively exploited by Bowdich and his colleagues during diplomatic encounters with the Asantehene.

Evidence also indicates that the Asante elite partly predicated their understanding of flags on their construction, function and contexts of use. Firstly, a comparative analysis of the accounts of Huydecoper (1816-1817), Bowdich (1819) and Dupuis (1824) makes clear that during this period European flags were displayed by the Asante during events such as state receptions or ritual celebrations where they may have stood in for the absent European monarchs or other representatives that were unable to attend. This interpretation draws on the fact that the Asante believed that the souls of their ancestors inhabited important artefacts which were closely associated with them. Indeed, their own regalia formed part of the inalienable property of the ancestors whose souls inhabited the stools associated with chiefly power. Secondly, flags were composed of either a single piece of cloth or, in the case of the Union Jack, several strips of coloured cloth sewn together. This strip construction was similar to the cloth produced by Asante weavers, commonly known as Kente, and of other important items of regalia such as canopy coverings. Thirdly, the principal functioning of a flag revolved around identifying those who displayed it and signifying their physical location. In this way, they served in a similar capacity to state canopies, a correspondence of function, I suggest, that must have been compounded by the fact that flags were also routinely twirled and waved as part of public displays.

The respect and importance that European envoys attached to flags may also have contributed to another incident that took place on the day of the ratification of the treaty. In a letter addressed to the Governor, Bowdich related how the Asantehene had received him and his colleagues in the palace ‘[...] dressed in flags that were all sewn together, and wrapped around him as a cloth’ (Bowdich 1819, 124). He did not record what his reaction was to this extraordinary sight nor did he state if these flags were Union Jacks but, given that the point of the ceremony was to mark the start of formal diplomatic relations with Britain, it is probable that they were. Did the

Asantehene present himself in this way simply in order to mark the occasion, or was it intended to have deeper significance?

When the Asantehene appeared in front of the officers and his assembled court wrapped in flags to ratify the first Anglo/Asante treaty, they must have understood that he did so in order to communicate at a level beyond that of words, to express sentiments that were either too difficult or too uncomfortable to be more explicit about. In light of this analysis, however, I think it is possible to hazard an educated guess at some of the things he was trying to express. Firstly, by physically enfolding himself within important signifiers of European national identity, the Asantehene was demonstrating in a very literal way the closeness of the new relationship that existed between the Asante state and Great Britain. In effect, it amounted to a reversal of the customary practice of cutting or tearing cloth (*ekar*) which represented the breaking off of relations in Asante culture. Secondly, by wearing these flags the Asantehene was not only honouring his guests and dramatizing the event of the ratification, but he was also highlighting his own central role in securing a major new source of external power and wealth for Asante. Thirdly, the Asantehene was also displaying the trajectories along which Asante influence and power were extending. Finally, it enabled him to express particular aspects of his other-worldly nature via a new medium. In hindsight, the figure of the Asantehene wrapped in flags not only expressed something of Asante ambitions and hopes regarding the new relationship with Britain, but also encapsulated nascent British ambitions which ultimately culminated in the colonisation of Asante and the subsequent capture, imprisonment and deportation of its ruling monarch in 1896.

Part Two: Shades and Shields

From the early eighteenth century canopies were also increasingly presented as gifts by representatives of European trading companies. These prestigious items had originally been introduced into the region by merchants trading goods from North and East Africa as part of the trans-Saharan trade. Evidence suggests that by the early nineteenth century they, together with other items, formed part of the same intensely competitive gift-giving tournament that was then in progress between the rival British and Dutch companies. The Dutch Governor-General had included a present of a handsome canopy fringed with gold for the Asantehene, as well as umbrellas for the

Asante generals, among the gifts he dispatched with Huydecoper in April 1816. Just over a year later, on Tuesday 20th May 1817, the first British Mission also presented the Asantehene with, among other gifts;

‘[...] a nine foot umbrella made of superfine scarlet broadcloth lined with various colours, a screw joint top, tips and bottom, the furniture gilt in best manner festooned drapery suspended with two rows of rich fringe between the festoons, gold and silk tassels, the outside seams covered with gold lace, a richly gilt elephant and castle screwed at top, an iron varnished spike at bottom [and] the bones covered with ribbon’ (Bowdich 1819, 24).

On this occasion it appears that the British had presented a folding umbrella to the Asantehene as opposed to a fixed canopy. This is significant as folding umbrellas were only just becoming fashionable in Europe, having been introduced from China in the 1780s. This suggests that folding umbrellas were something of a novelty on the Gold Coast at this time and, as such, were presented only to the highest ranking members of the Asante court.

Despite Bowdich’s inaccurate rendering of the elephant and castle finial, circumstantial evidence points to the possibility that the canopy, which is depicted shading the figure of the Asantehene in ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom,’ is intended to represent the Company’s gift that had been presented by the members of the British Mission on their arrival in Kumase (fig. 4.5). This assertion can be made with some confidence, as the assembly of chiefs, which occurred on Saturday 6th September 1817, also coincided with the ratification of the Anglo/Asante trade treaty. Given the significance and timing of this event, I suggest it is more likely that the British gift was selected for use on this occasion by the Asantehene as opposed to the canopy presented by the Dutch a year earlier. As such, its appearance on this momentous occasion would have provided Bowdich with an excellent opportunity to indulge in yet more propaganda at Dutch expense, something which I suggest, counters the idea that it is just an artist’s fanciful impression.

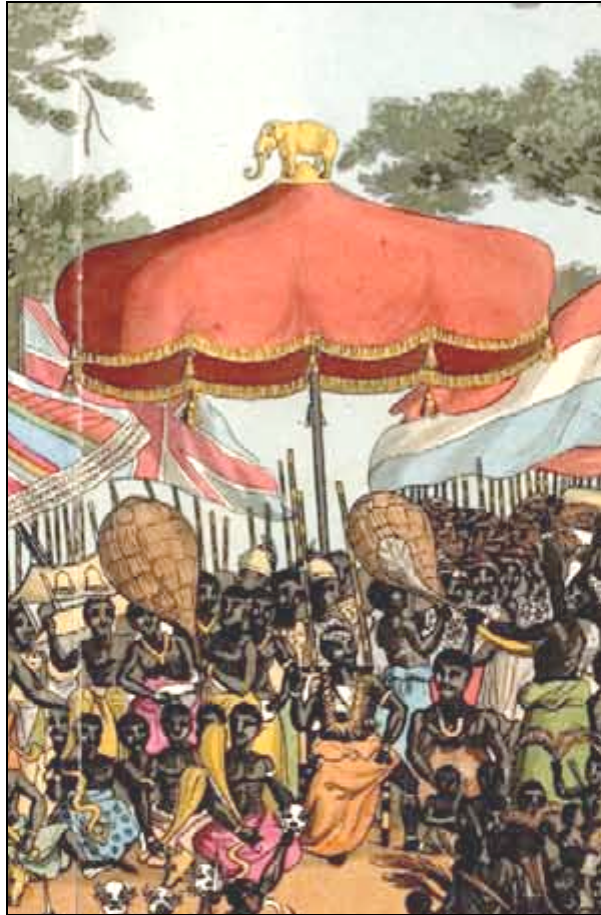


Figure 4.5: Detail of the *Asantehene* seated under the Africa Company's canopy? (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

The use for which these gifts were put is amply illustrated in Bowdich's image of the Yam Custom which depicts thirteen large canopies, made from a variety of plain and patterned textiles, scattered throughout the crowd. At the state reception of 1820, Hutton estimated the number of umbrellas at one hundred, some of which he noted were capable of covering thirty or forty people (Hutton 1821, 216). Some of the shades depicted by Bowdich appear to be rectangular or square fixed canopies as opposed to folding umbrellas. This pictorial evidence supports my earlier assertion that folding umbrellas were probably restricted to the top tier of Asante society at this time. This is also corroborated by Dupuis who noted that in 1820 '[...] the chiefs were distinguished from the commonality by large floating umbrellas or canopies, fabricated from cloth of various hues (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 70/71).

Bowdich's illustration also demonstrates that, by September 1817, the members of the first British Mission had adopted the practice of appearing at Asante ceremonies with umbrellas (fig. 4.6). The officers are shown seated but in the background behind each

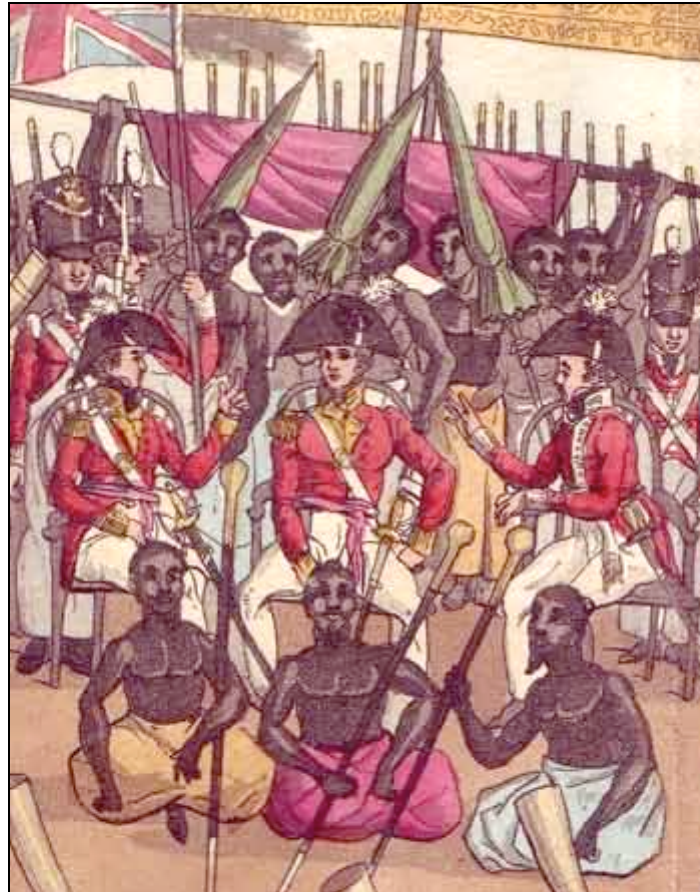


Figure 4.6: Detail of the British officers with attendants holding up folded green umbrellas (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

one, attendants hold aloft three green umbrellas. Interestingly, the umbrellas are depicted closed which demonstrates that they were equipped with a folding mechanism. They were probably issued to the officers by the Africa Company in order to protect them from the tropical sun, as well as to advertise their ability to supply such items, and signify their relative status. At this point in time, the Asante could not manufacture a green dye from the vegetable and mineral sources available to them and so green textiles and leather goods were highly desirable and consequently costly, which ensured they were inaccessible to all but the elite (Last, M. personal communication). It appears that Bowdich quickly realised the potential of this as, on the 28th May, he requested that the Governor send a common green silk umbrella as a present for the Asantehene’s favourite nephew (Bowdich 1819, 67). Given this evidence, I suggest that these umbrellas were strongly associated with the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Further pictorial evidence supports this assertion, as in 1821 William Hutton published an illustration entitled ‘Mode of Travelling in Africa’ (fig. 4.7) as part of

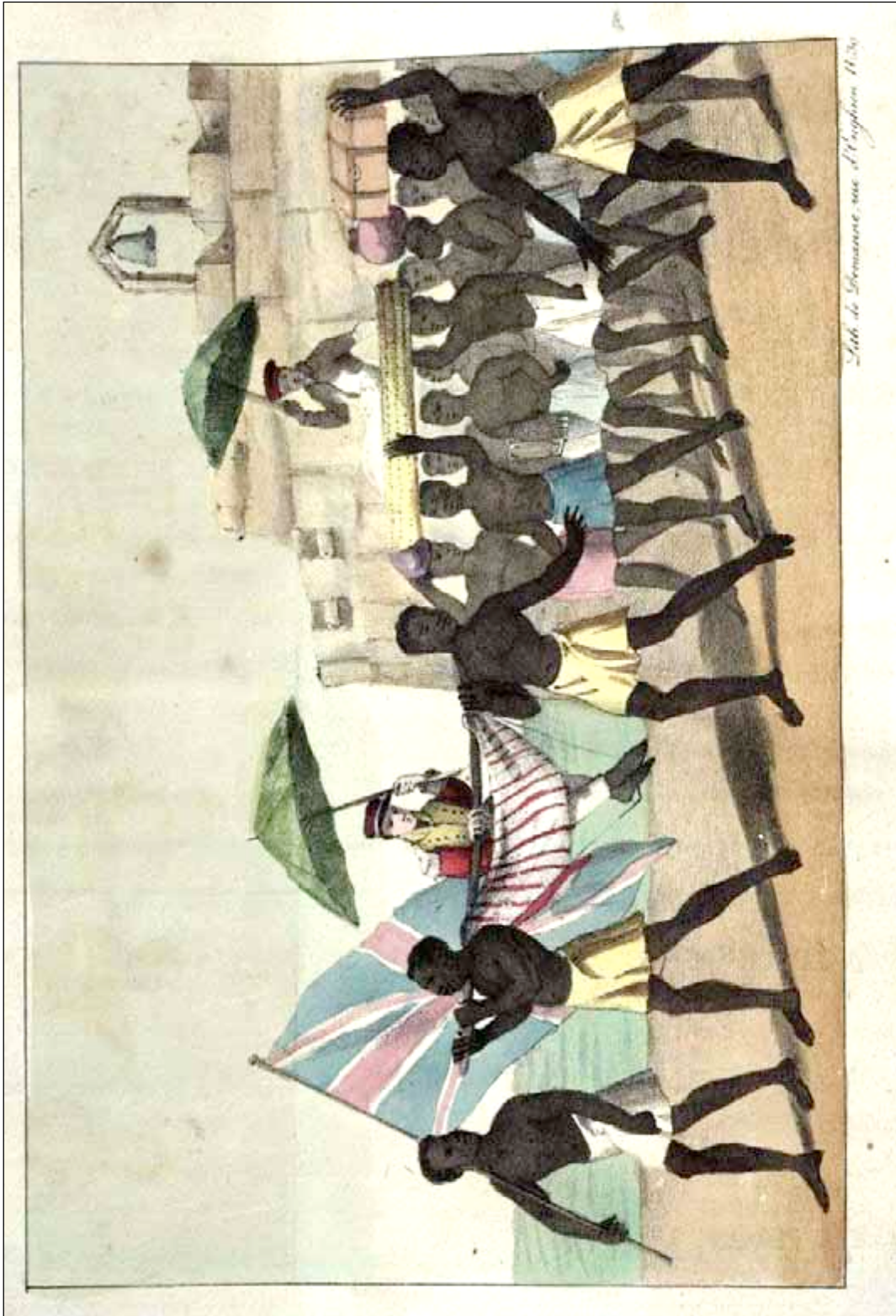


Figure 4.7: 'Mode of Travelling in Africa.'
(Hutton 1821, 138)

his account which includes depictions of Mr Salmon and himself holding aloft similar green umbrellas as they set off from Cape Coast Castle as part of the second British Mission to Asante in 1820.

Bowdich correctly observed that one of the principal functions of a canopy was to create and maintain a qualitatively different environment beneath its coverings. Under a canopy it was cooler and darker but, more importantly, when it was manipulated correctly, it could also promote a constant circulation of air. This was generated as a result of it being thrust up and down and twirled round and round by its bearer (*kyinie kyimini*). Bowdich also recorded how, during the state reception and the Yam Custom of 1817, the constant circulation of air, particularly around the Asantehene, was augmented by certain members of his entourage who fanned, flapped and twirled elephant-tail and horse-tail fly-whisks and ostrich feather and woven grass fans, as part of their duties (Bowdich 1819, 33/ 276). On both occasions he also mentioned that flags and banners were waved around which, together with the twirling umbrellas, helped to promote a cooling breeze.

At both ceremonies the immobile figure of the Asantehene formed the silent and still focal point of proceedings, in stark contrast to the constant twirling motions that were produced by his entourage and subjects who surrounded him on all sides. The immobility of the Asantehene can be explained by the fact that, as the primary container and conduit of power and the locus of mediation in human and supernatural affairs, he was required to become physically inactive from the moment of his enstoolment, as he was believed henceforth to be imbued with immense mystical power, a precious energy that had to be shielded and preserved. If this power was permitted to escape it would not only stain the land and its inhabitants, but would diminish the ruler's own spiritual existence (Bravmann & Silverman 1987, 105). In order to prevent this, great care was taken to safeguard the boundaries of the royal body, and by extension the body politic, by enveloping him within layers of wrapping that helped to control access to, and egress from, him and the environment which surrounded him. Physical precautions included separating the Asantehene from the elements using a number of devices such as footrests, sandals and canopies. His enforced immobility, of necessity, meant that others also had to act, interact and react on his behalf as discussed in chapter III. The underlying implications of this suggest

that all physical movement by the Asantehene resulted in the dispersal of power, whereas stasis enabled power to be conserved. In this way, coolness (*dwo*) was associated with the control and regulation of power in contrast to heat, which agitated it and caused it to dissipate.

Given this, I posit that regulation was primarily associated with circulation, something that is reflected in the Akan term *kyinie* which encapsulates ideas of swirling/whirling air and coolness (McCaskie 1989, 424). This term forms the basis of the name *kyinhyia*, (the place of whirling or turning around) which was the Asante name for the great court in the King's house (Rattray 1927, 128; McCaskie 1995, 160). This term can therefore be understood to have several applications, but always implied notions of circulation, coolness and inner spiritual peace which were all considered essential for balanced judgement and the maintenance of good relations. In this way, the shade of the Asantehene's umbrella, known as *Boaman* (the nation's conqueror) is likened to the shade that the shade tree (*gyedua*) provided for the people. This reinforces the idea that state umbrellas are, in effect, transportable versions of shade trees, with the carrying-pole symbolising the trunk, its framework, the branches and its cloth-covering/s, the leafy canopy.

During the early part of the nineteenth century, these trees provided settlements with natural boundary markers and meeting places where public life could be conducted in comfort out of the heat of the sun. Communal living required co-operation and consensus, which were conceptually defined in terms of spiritual peace and harmony. This was characterised as a condition of coolness (*dwo*) in contrast to the antithetical condition of heat (*ahohuru*). Coolness was conceptualised as white, calm, easing, abating, tractable and protective, whereas heat was red, violent, agitating, confrontational, disruptive and threatening (McCaskie 1989, 423). The shade provided by the *gyedua* tree came to symbolise the cool, harmonious, calm and relaxed relations that should ideally exist between the members of a matri-lineage and by extension between all the matri-lineages that occupied a settlement (Platvoet 1985, 180). This idea of communal harmony was encapsulated in the notion that the roots of the shade tree extended under the houses on both sides of the street, binding them together with invisible bonds. This goes some way towards explaining why trees, which were considered to be ostensibly wild entities, were the only plant-life that

were actively cultivated and permitted to thrive within Asante settlements.

Given their role within this context, I suggest that this practice was predicated on the idea that trees embodied two sets of oppositions, wild/civilised and hot/cool, which promoted them as ideal mediatory vehicles. Further evidence for this comes in the form of large forked tree branches (*Nyame dua*, lit. God's tree), which were commonly propped in the corners of domestic compounds (Rattray 1923, 142; 1927, 271). These forked branches served as altars to the sky god, *Onyame* (variously known as *Nyame*, *Onyakopon* and *Odomankama*) and supported a tin or brass bowl filled with water and leaves, into which offerings were placed at regular intervals. In Bowdich's illustration of 'The King's Sleeping Room,' (fig. 4.8) two such shrines can be seen on the extreme



Figure 4.8: Detail of the altars and 'fetish' trees at the entrance to the King's sleeping room (Bowdich 1819, 'The King's Sleeping Room')

right of the door-way, and he also depicted a stunted silk-cotton and a manchineal tree which he variously describes as ‘fetish or sacred’ (Bowdich 1819, 308).

I argue that on the basis of this evidence, trees were also believed to embody meta-physical junctures, in much the same way as the Asantehene and the peripheries of Asante settlements, which promoted them as ideal mediatory vehicles and symbols of political, social and spiritual unity. This also ensured that they became closely associated with chiefs in general, and with the Asantehene in particular, who was metaphorically and proverbially identified with them (McLeod 1981, 28-30). When the Asantehene dies, the event, which cannot be referred to directly, is often alluded to using metaphors such as ‘the great tree has fallen.’ This metaphorical and symbolic conflation resulted in the Asantehene becoming intimately bound up with the concepts of *kyinie* and *gyadua*.

Given the close proverbial and physical associations that existed between these elements it is possible that they may also have functioned as static and transportable *axes mundi* which served to connect the spiritual and physical realms and enabled interactions to be conducted between them. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that similar associations and beliefs concerning great sheltering trees, high human status and titled leadership, ancestor veneration, and the appropriation of external materials and imagery from European and Muslim sources was shared by other Akan communities such as the Fante and Ewe as well as the Baule and Lagoons peoples of the Ivory Coast (see Cole 2000, 194-224) and the Fon of modern-day Dahomey (see Poyner 2000, 259-265).

Bowdich’s account also provides details about where the Asante manufacture of canopies took place. As part of his ground plan he indicates the location of a settlement of skilled craftsmen who were employed in making canopies for the Asante elite (denoted as ‘h’) (fig. 4.9). It is unlikely that Bowdich visited this settlement as he did not describe it in his account. However, he did donate an example of a child’s umbrella which had a carved bird finial to the British Museum on his return (see Table 2). It is possible that this was one of the gifts that the Asantehene presented to

Bowdich on his departure from Kumase.

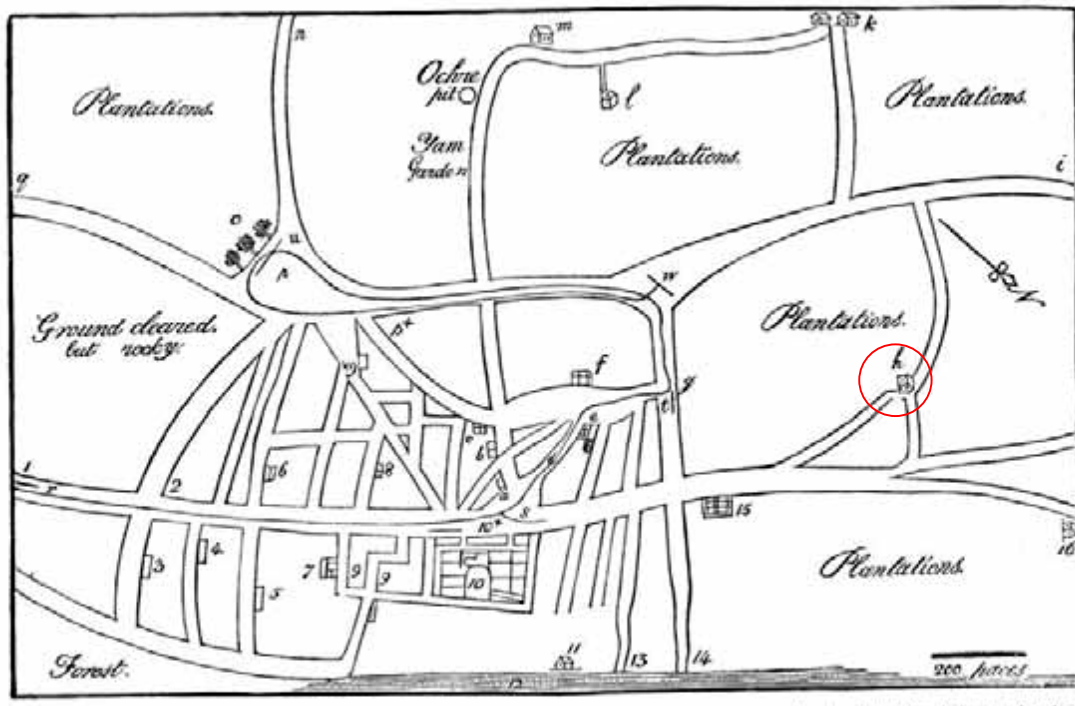


Figure 4.9: The location of the umbrella-makers village (Bowdich 1819, 323)

In his description of the 1817 state reception Bowdich vividly described how the separate components of the umbrellas, the cloth canopies and valances, the carved finials and other attributes, interacted together to produce a brilliant effect (Bowdich 1819, 34). He mentioned that scarlet and yellow cloth, in particular, formed the most common colour combination, something that was also noted by Hutton (*ibid*; Hutton 1821, 216). This is not reflected, however, in Bowdich's illustration, as at least five canopies appear to be made from many different strips of plain and patterned cloth that do not favour any particular colour scheme and, at least two are covered in a blue material, one in yellow and another in purple. The discrepancy between the written account and the accompanying image may have occurred as a result of the fact that Bowdich wanted to depict an assortment of different shapes, sizes and colours so as to give the reader some idea of the variety of canopies in use. Alternatively, it may indicate that he did not colour the original image himself or, that the image was coloured for publication by someone who had no access to, and/or knowledge of, his written description.

Bowdich also mentioned that ‘[...] the most shewy cloths and silks’ were used to create a canopy (Bowdich 1819, 34). His use of the word ‘shewy’ is, I argue, primarily intended to convey to the reader the gaudy effect that the ostentatious and un-coordinated display of numerous rich brocades, satins, silks and velvets produced and it may also have implied that Bowdich considered their use as canopy coverings extravagant. However, Hendry noted in a different context that ‘[...] using brocade material and other sorts is a particularly effective way of adding a layer of value to something’ (Hendry 1993, 48). This was certainly true of the Asante as, during the early decades of the nineteenth century, fabrics such as silk brocade could only be obtained via the trans-Saharan or trans-Atlantic trade network. It is probable that some of the umbrellas that Bowdich saw also incorporated pieces of thick multi-coloured *nsaa* cloth, woven from sheep wool and/or goat hair by the Fulani who lived far to the north, in the savannah region of what is now modern-day Mali. All of these textiles were therefore extremely expensive and their display at public ceremonies was designed to advertise a chief’s, and by extension, his stool’s status and wealth. Bowdich also made it clear that these canopies were used to shield important artefacts as well as people. In his account of the Yam Custom he described how ‘[...] the royal stool, entirely cased in gold, was displayed under a splendid umbrella’ (fig. 4.10), a depiction of which he included as part of his illustration of this ceremony (Bowdich 1819, 275-276).



Figure 4.10: Detail of the Golden Stool of Asante on the shoulders of a bearer and shaded by a canopy (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

I suggest that Bowdich's use of the word 'shewy' also infers something about the way in which the canopies sumptuous mix of colours and their smooth and glossy textures attracted his eye. In his description he noted that some of the valances had small looking glasses inserted into them, which suggests that this cloth may have come from India. These small mirrors, which flashed and glittered in the sunlight, were probably incorporated into the valances in order to deflect evil away from the inhabitants sheltered beneath. It is also clear from Bowdich's illustration that these castellated, fringed and scalloped valances were, more often than not, made from separate and contrasting pieces of coloured and patterned cloth to that used for the main canopy covering.

Bowdich also described how the canopies were crowned on the top with finials carved in the shape of crescents, pelicans, elephants, barrels and arms and swords of gold (Bowdich 1819, 34). This is corroborated by Hutton who mentioned that in 1820 he too saw umbrellas which were '[...] topped by elephants, crescents &c of gold' (Hutton 1821, 216). When we compare these descriptions with Bowdich's illustration, similar finials can be identified. The dome-shaped umbrella, fifth from the left (fig. 4.11), has a finial carved in the shape of a wooden barrel and the British officers are shown seated in front of a canopy that is topped by a hand holding aloft a sword (fig. 4.12), whilst behind them is another dome-shaped canopy crowned with a finial shaped like a crescent (fig. 4.13). Crescent-shaped finials feature prominently in Bowdich's illustration, where its association with Muslim court members is made explicit.

In contrast to the fleeting mention given to most of these finials, however, Bowdich wrote a far more thorough and detailed account of the finial that topped the canopy of an old Asante General named Quatchi Quofie (Kwaakye Kofi, d.1820s). It seems that, in this instance, the artefact's history proved to be sufficiently interesting for him to record the particulars in full:

'In 1785 Sai Quamina succeeded his grandfather Sai Cudjo, [as *Asantehene*]. The Akims revolted soon after his accession under Ofoosoo, [Ofosu (d.1780s)] their most active ruler for many years: he engaged several smaller states in alliance, and defeated the Ashantees repeatedly; at length the treachery of his followers procured Quatchi Quofie, the



Figure 4.11: Detail of a barrel finial (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

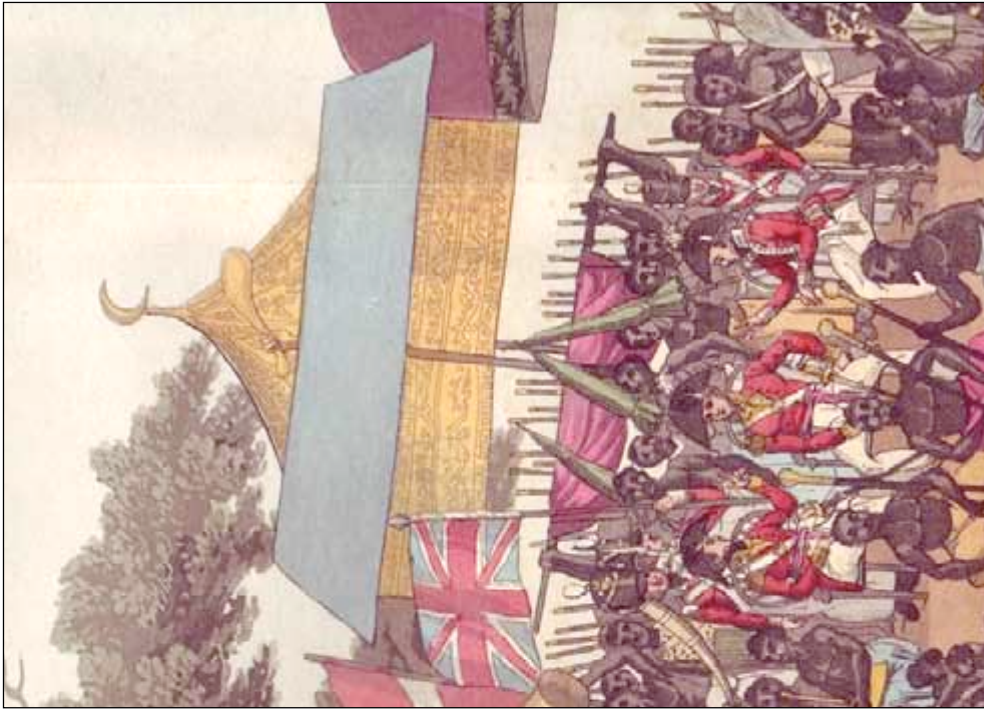


Figure 4.12: Detail of a carved finial of a hand holding a sword (Bowdich 1819, 'First Day of the Yam Custom')



Figure 4.13: Detail of a crescent-shaped finial (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

Figure 4.14: Detail of Quatchie Quofie's canopy
(Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

Ashantee general, his head; with which he returned to Coomassie, the country having again submitted. The fame of Ofoosoo made Quatchie Quofie so vain of this achievement that he had a figure of him made, with which his umbrella is still crowned, and before which he dances with every insulting gesture and vaunt, when he arrives on the ground at the various ceremonies' (Bowdich 1819, 237).

Bowdich also depicted this particular canopy in his illustration (fig. 4.14) and provided a description of the finial itself in his accompanying account. 'At the top of his [Quatchie Quofie's] umbrella is stuck a small black wooden image, with a bunch of rusty hair on the head, intending to represent the famous Akim caboceer who was killed by him' (*ibid*, 277). This finial appears to be unique on three counts, firstly it is the only one that is carved in the form of a human figure; secondly, it is the only one that represents an actual historical individual; and finally, it is also the only one not to be covered in gold foil or leaf.



Frequently scholars of Akan art have discussed carved umbrella finials in terms of their artistic merit, their origins and their metaphorical significance. McLeod, for example writes that;

‘[...] on one level these images are considered pleasing because they are well carved and show things or creatures which are themselves considered beautiful or powerful, and on another they are given a wider significance by having various verbal formulae attached to them. These sayings, aphorisms and proverbs are interpreted as making truistic statements about the chiefs who are sheltered under the umbrellas and their political position’ (McLeod 1981, 111).

Whilst I fully accept the validity of the interpretations offered, a function of canopy finials that has not been adequately explored, but is implied by their physical position, is their possible defensive role in relation to the incumbent’s head, which is believed to be the seat of power in Asante culture. This supposition is predicated on the proposition that finials may also have had amuletic associations in the past, something that is perfectly in keeping with the practice of shielding powerful entities.

Customarily, the Asantehene was not permitted to step out of doors, or to pass from one room of the palace to another unless covered by a canopy and this was observed even when he held audiences at night. The reason was acknowledged in the well-known saying ‘the Sky God must never behold the crown of the King’s head.’

Bowdich also described in this passage how some canopies were decorated with ‘[...] the proboscis and small teeth of elephants [...] and [how] a few were roofed with leopard skins, and crowned with various animals naturally stuffed’ (Bowdich 1819, 34). Again, a comparison with his illustration enables similar examples to be identified as those described in his and others’ accounts. The castellated valance of the first canopy on the left appears to be made from leopard skin (fig. 4.15) and the fourth from the left is surmounted by a small leopard-type creature which has a spotted pelt (fig. 4.16). Furthermore, the second canopy on the extreme right, also has a finial in the shape of what looks to be an antelope from which is suspended an elephant’s trunk and two small ivory tusks (fig. 4.17). When analysed together, Bowdich’s written account and his illustration contain clear evidence that animal skins were used to cover canopies in a similar way as imported textiles. This is extremely important as their concomitant use in this context not only suggests that both animal skins and imported cloth were perceived by the Asante to share similar external origins, but that their foreign provenance was a determining factor in their use as wrappings for liminal and powerful entities.

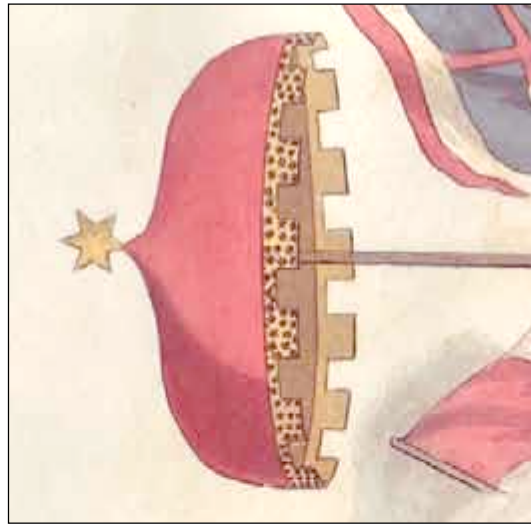


Figure 4.15: Detail of canopy with a castellated valance made of leopard-skin (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

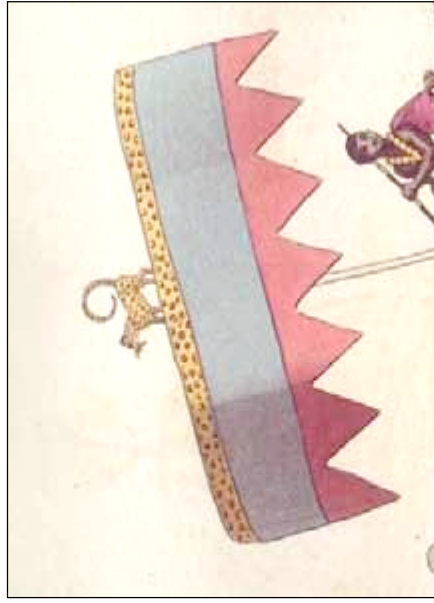


Figure 4.16: Detail of a canopy with a leopard finial and leopard-skin cover (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)



Figure 4.17: Detail of a canopy with an elephant's trunk and tusks suspended from the finial (Bowdich 1819, ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom’)

Part Three: Second Skins

Bowdich also depicted items of clothing that were either made from, or partially covered in, a variety of animal skins such as the monkey skin caps which were worn by deformed heralds (fig. 4.18) and the immense caps made of shaggy black skins worn by the executioners (fig. 4.19). Furthermore, in describing the vanguard of warriors who sat in front of the Asantehene, Bowdich described elements of their

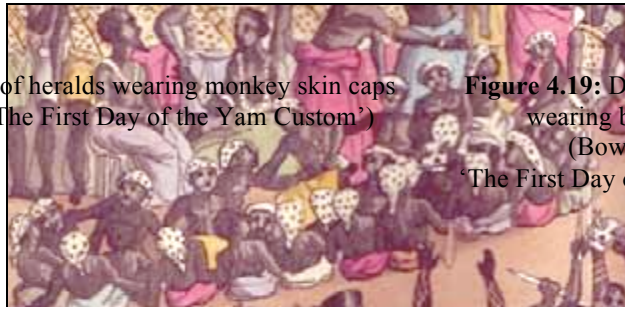


figure 4.18: Detail of heralds wearing monkey skin caps (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')



Figure 4.19: Detail of executioners wearing black skin caps (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

costume including caps made of pangolin and leopard skin, cartouche belts of leopard and pig skins ornamented with red shells and the sheaths of gold-handled swords and the locks of guns covered in leopard skin and shagreen (Bowdich 1819, 36/37). The recurrent referencing of leopard skin indicates that it was widely used by the Asante to provide different types of wrapping for people as well as artefacts. The leopard is closely associated with kingship throughout West Africa and their body parts and imagery were exclusively exploited in the production of visual and verbal metaphors concerning royal power (Blier 1998 125-163). One of the Asantehene's titles for instance, is *kurotwiamansa* which means the leopard. In Asante culture this solitary and secretive hunter is primarily associated with the liminal and supernatural spaces of the dark forest. As animal/human equivalents, the identities of these two powerful entities became conflated and the leopard's skin symbolically came to express ideas concerning ambivalence, mystical powers and second sight.

The same understandings, regarding liminality and extra-sensory perception, also informed Asante appropriations of other natural products such as sea-shells and snail-shells, which they used to adorn important artefacts and objects (see chapter III). These creatures were seen to inhabit two or more spheres and as a result, their hard carapaces were considered to bestow power on the wearer as well as physical and

spiritual protection. By introducing products that were associated with nature into the cultured domain, a conflation of spheres occurred which enabled these elements to be appropriated and used as barriers, containers and/or conduits. As such, imported manufactured items can be understood to function in a similar way as these natural products, in that they provided certain entities with protective second skins and/or outer shells.

Bowdich's observations regarding the Asante use of animal products suggests that they were also sub-divided using the same pairings of binary oppositions that informed the separation of the cultured and domestic from the uncultured and wild. However, this analysis challenges the notion that the physical and metaphysical distinctions that underpin Asante conceptions were all directed towards establishing and maintaining clear boundaries and margins between mutually exclusive entities and spheres, as has previously been argued by McLeod, (1971, 1978, 1981). Instead I suggest that animal parts and skins, and by extension imported textiles, were used by the Asante in very specific ways and contexts to separate and to conflate entities.

De Heusch (1997) and Drucker-Brown (1999) documented the neighbouring Mamprusi and Tallensi practice of using domesticated animal skins to separate chiefs from the earth. In contrast however, the Asante use the pelts of wild forest animals, such as antelopes, leopards and elephants for this purpose. This practice probably represents another, much older, example of appropriation by the Asante that was informed by the same principles as those that directed the integration of foreign artefacts. In this way, the practice of wearing animal parts and pelts by court officials was predicated on the understanding that it would also create a similar conflation of entities. In effect, these personnel literally wore a second skin in order that a part/s of their cultured human form was encased within part/s of an uncultured animal one. This conflation of animal/human identities was essential if these retainers were to successfully mediate between the Asantehene and ordinary citizens and transgress physical and metaphysical boundaries as part of their courtly duties. It also enabled them to take on some of the attributes and power that were associated with the creature whose skin they wore (for a fuller discussion see McCaskie 1992).

Bowdich's account also contains descriptions of imported cloth being used to cover and wrap elements in similar ways as animal skins. *Nsaa* cloth has been documented as lining palanquins and it may also have been wrapped around important artefacts during public ceremonies (Bravmann 1972, 42; Cole and Ross 1977, 145). Bowdich, however, recorded and illustrated its use as an ancestral stool room door-hanging (fig. 4.20). In the accompanying description of his illustration of 'Odumata's Sleeping Room' he states that '[...] the cloth suspended to the left of the door on the top of the steps, hides the bloody stools which are in the recess' (Bowdich 1819, 307). This documented use of *nsaa* cloth to delineate and separate areas and elements points to the fact that, like certain animal skins, it was primarily associated with liminality, which made it eminently suitable for use in certain contexts where concealment, containment and isolation were required.

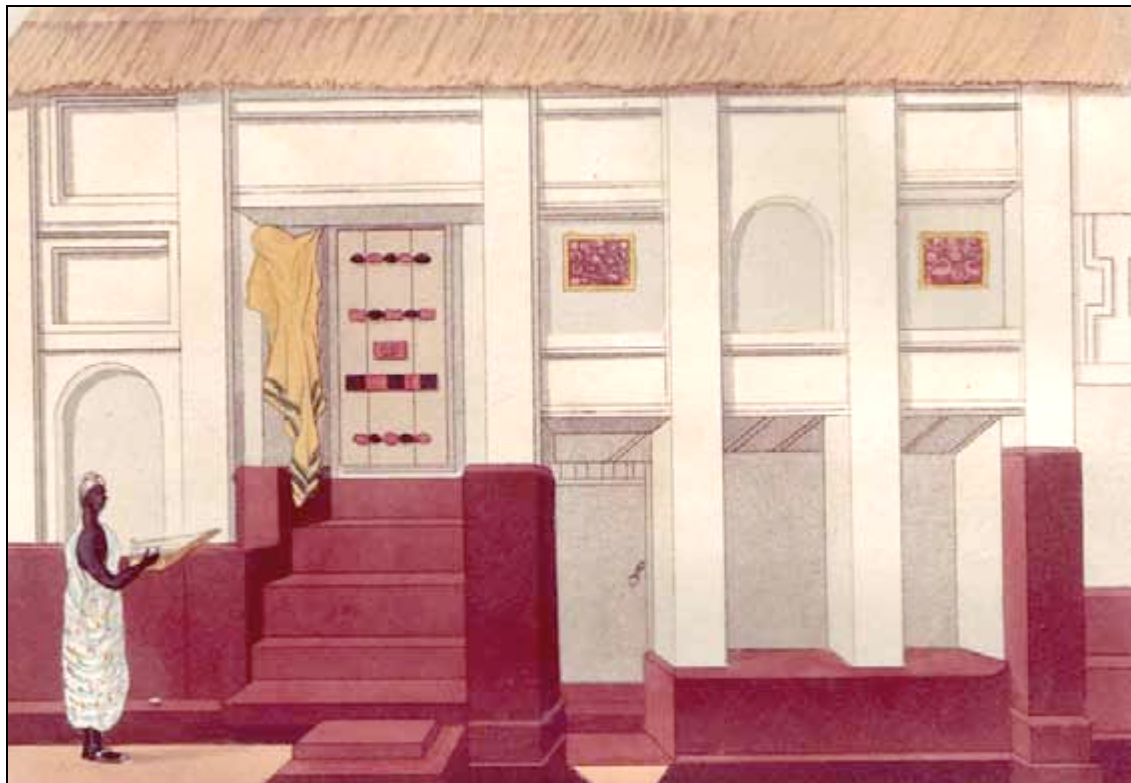
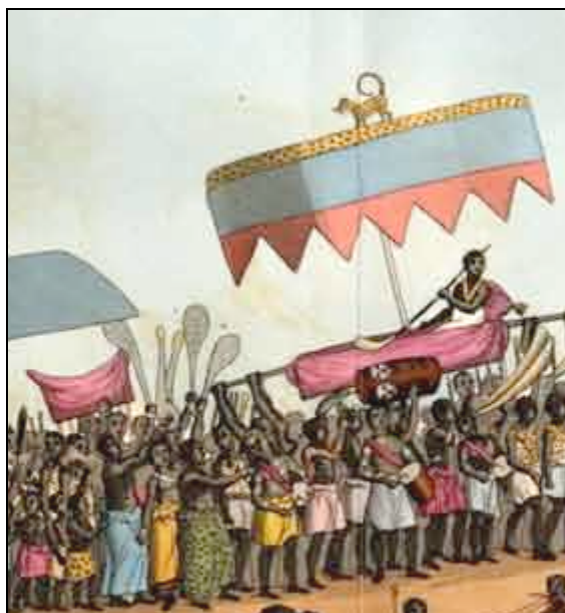


Figure 4.20: *Nsaa* cloth used as a door-hanging at the entrance to a stool-room (Bowdich 1819, 'Odumata's Sleeping Room')

Bowdich also recorded, as part of his descriptions of the state reception and the Yam Custom, that red silk cloth was used to line and wrap significant artefacts. For example, he stated that on first entering Kumase, the Mission passed under a 'fetish' of a dead sheep wrapped in red silk (Bowdich 1819, 31). He also described and depicted (fig. 4.21) crimson taffeta cushions inside state hammocks which were lined

Figure 7.21. Detail of the executioners' stool wrapped in red cloth and a palanquin lined with red cloth and cushions (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')

with red silk as well as the executioners' stool, so stained with blood that it [was] thought decent to cover it with red silk' (Bowdich 1819, 276). This evidence suggests that red cloth was used in the same contexts and in similar ways to *nsaa* cloth and animal skins. But what was significant about the colour red?



Red (*kokoo*) along with white (*fufu*) and black (*tuntum*) forms the triumvirate of primary colours in Africa (McCaskie 1995, 203). Each colour is associated with specific qualities and substances and with different spiritual states and occasions. McCaskie stated in relation to the colour red that it;

‘[...] is symbolic of both the life and death aspects of blood (*mogya*) and also with heat,’ and as such can be understood to be ‘expressive of the potentially volatile mix of feelings that are associated with strongly emotive concepts such as danger, sorrow, impurity, anger and defiance,’ and ‘in anything but a life-giving context – execution, spillage, waste, menstruation – it connotes putative danger’ (*ibid*).

Some of these emotional states were witnessed by Bowdich as part of the events of the Yam Custom. When describing the festivities of Sunday 7th September, which included a ritual mourning for all those who had died since the last *odwira* ceremony, Bowdich mentioned seeing ‘[...] strings of drunken women hand in hand, their faces, arms and breasts profusely daubed with red earth, in horrid emulation of those who

had succeeded in besmearing themselves with the blood of the executed' (Bowdich 1819, 284). In this context the wearing of red clay was intended to signify not only the liminal nature of the day and the anarchic chaos that ensued as a result of the suspension of the normal rules that governed Asante society, but also indicated the emotional, social and spiritual disorder that marked the death of kin, anti-social elements and significant others. Could it be that some of these same associations and connotations were also informing the concomitant Asante appropriation and display of imported red cloth?

Bowdich's descriptions and his illustration are associated with two public events that, in different ways, were about controlling interactions with dangerous alien entities in the heart of the Asante capital. Evidence suggests that the display and use of imported red cloth was therefore, primarily related to events where breaks in continuity were a significant feature. The state reception of the first British Mission in Kumase was a tense and potentially volatile event and the Yam Custom was ostensibly a celebration of life and death, beginnings and endings which took place at the juncture where the edges of the old and new years met. It is probable that the use of red cloth during these specific occasions was designed to indicate the ambivalent nature of the event as well as the status of some of the participants. As such, I suggest that the use of red cloth to line items such as palanquins was designed not only to indicate the occupant's social status and wealth but also signified that it was the temporary container for a powerful and volatile instrument of mediation during periods of social transition. This interpretation, I argue, is further strengthened when it is considered in relation to canopies and shade trees which were discussed earlier.

Many items of stool regalia such as necklaces and bracelets are cast in solid gold but others, such as finger rings, pendants and sword ornaments (*abosodee*) are hollow-cast and subsequently lined with red cloth. McLeod argued that this is done to accentuate and set off the gold, but I suggest the red lining is added in order to give the impression of an internal, even corporeal space or environment which serves as a protective shell or receptacle for the life force (*kra*) of the wearer (McLeod 1981, 93). Bowdich noted that cast gold ornaments were also made to appear more red by having a layer of finely ground red ochre (called *inchuma*) applied to them before being boiled in lightly salted water for half an hour, after which they were thoroughly

cleansed (Bowdich 1819, 812). This suggests that red cloth functioned in a similar way to animal pelts, in that it was used to provide certain artefacts and entities with protective porous/impervious second skins and/or outer layers.

Bowdich's account and imagery also contains evidence that cloth, precious metals and animal skins were used to contain and cover composite items that formed parts of larger assemblages. During the state reception and the Yam Custom he noted that the Asantehene and other chiefs wore various charms and 'fetishes' as part of their jewellery or clothing and included depictions of some of these in his illustration, he also collected and donated an example of a 'fetish' to the British Museum (see Table 2). The charms and fetishes that he described and illustrated can be divided into two categories; indigenous fetishes (*suman/asuman*) and Islamic amulets (*safis/sebes*).

Asuman (sing. *suman*) are fetishes in the proper sense of the word, in that they are man-made objects which can be held in the hand and are composed of disparate ingredients, such as feathers, hair, shell, claws, teeth, bark scrapings, leaves, beads, ash and other substances that derive from both cultured and uncultured contexts. In *The Art of Small Things*, John Mack suggested that the efficacy of these elements derives directly from the significance of the materials of which they are a fragment (Mack 2007, 170). I would like to expand on this idea and suggest that their efficacy is essentially bound up with how their inherent properties and qualities are blended and combined together. In effect, I am proposing that each *asuman* is a microcosm that contains a unique mix of hard, soft, cool, hot, shiny and dull cosmological ingredients that are sourced from the domestic, liminal and supernatural realms. Bringing these elements together causes distinctions to collapse, confluences to occur and initiates a confrontation between opposing forces.

Taussig described the power that such confluences create '[...] as a kind of electricity, an ac/dc pattern of rapid oscillations which allows spirit and matter, history and nature to flow into each other' (Taussig 1993, 191). In a similar vein, Drucker-Brown used the metaphor of heat convection, whereby a heated fluid or gas moves away from and then returns to the source of heat, to describe the flow of power (Drucker-Brown 1992, 74; 1989, 499-500). These descriptions are both predicated on the idea that energy/power circulates by a process of dispersal and convergence from a central

source. I contend that the dynamic power (*tumi*) that is generated by energized artefacts such as *asuman* is more akin to a nuclear explosion, in that the conflation of elements sets in motion a series of never-ending actions and reactions which create pulses of energy that radiate out from, as well as return to, the central point of origin. This reaction is activated and subsequently channelled by the amulet-maker towards a specific purpose by the application of sacrificial blood or raw egg, both of which are believed by the Asante, to be extremely powerful androgynous fertile forces that have yet to assume a solid form.

The second type of amulet that was documented by Bowdich has completely external origins. Scholars have argued that the adoption of Islamic amulets known as *safi*'s and *sebe*'s by the peoples of the Gold Coast dates back to the fourteenth century A.D. and was predicated on their association with the written word, which was in and of itself considered magical (Handloff 1982; McLeod 1981; Saul 2006; Wilks 1993). I would like to suggest however, that the adoption and subsequent popularity of Islamic amulets was also influenced by the significant number of correlations and correspondences that existed between their manufacture and their mediatory functions and those of indigenous *asuman*.

Bowdich, Hutton and Dupuis all noted that a small number of Muslims resided in Kumase, some of whom were probably responsible for overseeing major portions of the long-distance trade between Asante and her northern neighbours whilst others, such as Ali Baba, the senior Muslim cleric, served as political and spiritual advisors to the Asantehene (Wilks 1966, 326-330; 1975, 256-261). Some of these people may have been Arabs, but most would have been Moshi, Fulani, Hausa or other Muslim people from the Niger valley. In one passage of his account Bowdich described how;

‘[...] when a charm was applied for, one of the oldest [disciples] wrote the body of it, and gave it to Baba, who added a sort of cabalistical mark and gave it a mysterious fold; the credulous native snatched it eagerly as it was held out to him, paid the gold, and hurried away to enclose it in the richest case he could afford’ (Bowdich 1819, 90).

Bowdich did not mention how the Koranic inscriptions were organised on the paper, which suggests he did not witness this stage of the procedure. The majority of inscriptions however, take the form of a single phrase or phrases selected from the

Koran which are repeatedly written in symmetrical geometric shapes such as squares or circles that are believed to possess spiritual balance (fig.4.22). Interestingly, the same configurations also inform the design of Asante war shirts (*batakari*) and funeral cloths (*adinkra*), an example of which, in natural white cotton and painted with a mixture of blood and red dye wood, was collected by Bowdich in 1817 and subsequently donated to the British Museum on his return (see Table 2).



Figure 4.22: An example of an Islamic amuletic inscription similar to the one that Bowdich describes in 1817 (Bravmann 1983, 30)

Furthermore, I argue that similar ideas regarding the magic inherent in geometry and symmetry may also have influenced the spatial deployment of personnel during Asante ceremonies (see chapter II). When completed, amuletic inscriptions are commonly folded into geometric shapes, such as a square, triangle or rectangle and encased in dyed leather, tanned animal skin or cloth coverings which are often embellished with embroidered or *repoussé* patterns or alternatively, encased in gold or silver foil.

Secrecy can therefore be understood to form one of the most important components of both indigenous *asuman* and Islamic *safi*'s or *sebe*'s as the tangible and intangible

Figure 4.23. Detail of a Dagomba Chief
(Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam
Custom')

Figure 4.24. Detail of amulets suspended over
the exit of the *Asantehene*'s sleeping room
(Bowdich 1819, 'The King's Sleeping Room')

contents were concealed from view by an external covering. Evidence from Bowdich's account hints at the possibility that, in contrast to the practice of covering Islamic amulets with man-made cloth or leather coverings, *asumen* at this time were primarily encased using natural materials. On Saturday 4th October 1817, Thomas Hutchison observed that in Apokoo's bedroom there hung three strings of fetish made of gold, red earth, horn and bone, in the shape of thigh bones, horns and jaw bones (Bowdich 1819, 388). The practice of encasing or wrapping amulets had a two-fold function, it concealed and protected its secret core and also served to concentrate and contain its power. Hendry also posited that power is associated with a contained state as it fosters the notion of a sacred force gestating and growing (Hendry 1998, 149).

All *asumen* and *safi*'s are created in order to ameliorate a specific problem or particular set of circumstances. As a consequence, a single individual obtained many amulets during a lifetime but, using the evidence contained in Bowdich's and other envoys' accounts, they can be divided into three main categories on the basis of location. Firstly, amulets were attached to valuable possessions such as animals, in order to give them a measure of spiritual protection. During the Yam Custom Bowdich observed and later depicted (fig. 4.23) a Dagomba chief riding a horse whose harness was covered with fetishes and bells (Bowdich 1819, 277). Secondly, he also illustrated amulets that were suspended over thresholds, in his depiction of the 'King's Sleeping Room' (fig. 4.24) several coloured bags are shown suspended over the lintel of the left-hand doorway which, he stated, '[...] contain Moorish charms' (*ibid*, 308). Finally, Bowdich and others observed many instances where amulets



were worn, either in the form of jewellery or as part of clothing by high-ranking Asante chiefs at events such as the Yam Custom, which indicates that they also functioned as special types of *asuman*. I suggest that this probability is also strengthened by the fact that they were frequently cast into the same shapes as other ‘fetishes.’ Some of this ‘fetish gold’ was also combined with glass-beads and Islamic amulets to form composite ornaments such as elbow-bands (*sebe dontwon*), which were believed to give the wearer the power to control crowds and protect them from any threat which might arise (Cole and Ross 1977, 35). Bowdich either acquired or was presented with seven different examples of ‘fetish gold’ which he donated to the British Museum on his return (see Table 2). During his account of the 1817 state reception he described in detail the jewellery that adorned the Asantehene;

‘He wore a fillet of aggrey beads round his temples, a necklace of gold cock spur shells strung by their largest ends, and over his right shoulder a red silk cord, suspending three saphies cased in gold; his bracelets were the richest mixtures of beads and gold, and his fingers covered with rings; [...] his knee-bands were of aggrey beads, and his ancle [sic] strings of gold ornaments of the most delicate workmanship, small drums, sankos, stools, swords, guns, and birds, clustered together; his sandals, [...] were embossed across the instep band with gold and silver cases of saphies’ (Bowdich 1819, 38/39).

This description gives a vivid impression of the Asantehene being literally clad in gold, something that Bowdich’s illustration does not adequately convey. The encasement and partial effacement of the Asantehene can be explained in relation to the containment of other sources of power such as *asuman*, *safi*’s and *sebe*’s. As the supreme mechanism for the mediation and regulation of power, the Asantehene was not only adorned with gold ornaments in order to signify his elevated status, but they also served to delineate and define the external margins of his being and functioned as physical and meta-physical constraints on the power he generated and embodied.

A close reading of Bowdich’s passage reveals that these ornaments were principally clustered around his neck, elbows, wrists, fingers, knees and ankles, where two or more joints met. These inherently weak points of the body can easily be broken, dislocated or penetrated and so the wearing of gold ornaments may have been designed to protect these parts by virtually encasing them in metal. In this way, gold

ornaments reinforced and strengthened joints in much the same way as the gold bands that were applied around the shafts of firearms, linguist canes and pipe-stems (see chapter III). It is noteworthy that the same ornaments also encircled or encompassed those parts of the Asantehene's physical body that were used to manipulate, greet or propel and, as such, may possibly have served to emphasise and/or restrain movement. Bowdich also witnessed chiefs resting their regalia-laden hands on the heads of child attendants (Bowdich 1819, 35). The sheer amount and weight of gold worn by the Asantehene must therefore have made all but the smallest gestures and movements impossible, something which effectively ensured that he could only act, enact, interact and react through the intercession of his officials.

The sheer proliferation of regalia forms and the repetition of motifs and symbols in Bowdich's description also suggest meanings beyond those of pure decoration or ornamentation. This phenomenon has also been noted and discussed by Cole and Ross who state that the excessive abundance of ornament is restricted to chiefs and interpret this 'intentional redundancy' in terms of an attempt to bridge the visual and verbal realms (Cole and Ross 1977, 23). I feel that the term 'intentional redundancy,' which was originally coined by Arnold Rubin in 1975 to describe the reduplication of features often attributed to symbolic systems, is misleading as it implies that sheer repetition in some way causes an element's efficacy and function to become surplus to requirement, which is clearly not the case here. Instead, I will use the term 'saturation' to describe the concentrated display and concomitant effects of such profusions, as it conveys more accurately what is intended by this practice.

A good example of saturation was documented by Bowdich during the state reception. In describing this event he gives details of the appearance and composition of the war-costume of Adoo Quamina, which he subsequently illustrated (fig. 4.25). In his account he states how;

'[...] the vest was of red cloth, covered with fetishes and saphies [...] in gold and silver; and embroidered cases of almost every colour, flapped against [his] body as [he] moved, [these were] intermixed with small brass bells, the horns and tails of animals, shells and knives; [and] long leopards tails [which] hung down [his] back' (Bowdich 1819, 31).



Figure 4.25: The war costume of Aduo Quamina (Bowdich 1819, 'A Captain in his War Dress')

This garment was probably a *batakari kese* (great batakari), which were only possessed by the Asantehene and other prominent chiefs. Costumes such as this were primarily battle dress but they were also worn during ceremonies, such as instalments and funerals, which marked the transition of an individual from one state to another. Bowdich explained the presence of large numbers of amulets on *batakari* as resulting from a firm belief that they;

‘[made] them [Asante chiefs] invulnerable and invincible in war, paralyse[d] the hand of the enemy, shiver[ed] their weapons, divert[ed] the course of balls, render[ed] both sexes prolific, and avert[ed] all evils but sickness [...] and natural death’ (Bowdich 1819, 271-272).

As proof of their efficaciousness Bowdich added that '[...] several of the Ashantee captains offered seriously to let us fire at them' (Bowdich 1819, 272). The sheer profusion of amulets undoubtedly provided the wearer with extra protection, but I believe it was also designed to confront and confuse harmful forces with an overwhelming display of colours, patterns, sizes, shapes and textures. Bowdich hinted at some of the bedazzling effects that such a display had on him when he stated that the 'variety of extraordinary ornament and novel insignia, [on Odumata's vest] courted and reflected the sun in every direction' (*ibid*, 285).

Interestingly, it seems that Odumata [Adum Atta] and the other Asante captains did not purchase their *batakari*, but were given them, as Bowdich recorded that the Asantehene gave to the King of Dagomba for this war coat the value of thirty slaves; for another, twenty; for Adoo Quamina's, thirteen, for Akimpon's, twelve, for Akimpontea's, nine and for those of greater captains in proportion (Bowdich 1819, 271/272). The Asantehene's purchase of these outfits in 1817 coincided with the military preparations that were being undertaken in anticipation of the forthcoming conflict with Kwadwo Adinkra (r.1800-1818), the rebellious ruler of the vassal state of Gyaaman. The same circumstances also appear to have accelerated Asante appropriations of European clothing in general, and uniforms, in particular.

Bowdich's illustration also included several depictions of figures wearing items of European uniforms and other apparel, the most prominent of which occupy the right foreground of the image and represent Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie. As junior officers in the Company of Merchants, they are shown wearing black bi-corn hats and military-style scarlet jackets with one white facing and a single 'gold bullion' epaulette on the right shoulder (fig. 4.26). Flanking the three British officers, are two uniformed soldiers of the Africa Company, who formed the Mission's escort. These outfits are not, however, military uniforms as none of these men were soldiers, but civilian contractors, privately employed by a company established by the British state to provide shore facilities for the ship-borne British trade (St Clair 2007, 109).

Figure 4.27: Detail of the Asante militia wearing items of European clothing and uniform (Bowdich 1819, 'The First Day of the Yam Custom')



All of the envoys and their principal attendants who visited Kumase between 1817 and 1820 wore these quasi-uniforms which served a number of purposes. First of all, it identified the wearer as a member of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and signified what occupation and role they served within that organisation. Secondly, it provided other members of the same institution information regarding the wearer's rank within the internal hierarchy, and finally, it signified to others, such as Gold Coast chiefs, that they were authorized representatives of that institution.

Bowdich also depicted in the same illustration members of the Asante audience wearing a variety of military-style accessories. These figures feature conspicuously in the crowd that occupies the immediate foreground of the image (fig. 4.27). In his accompanying description, Bowdich mentioned that 'the back of the whole assembly is lined with royal soldiers, [...] the commoner ones ranged in front, with here and there a captain and a group of musicians, who, some with an old cocked hat, some with a soldier's jacket, &c, &c afford a ludicrous appearance' (Bowdich 1819, 278).



Dupuis recorded how on the 21st February 1820, the second British Mission were escorted along the path to Kumase by a royal bodyguard which was commanded by a white African ‘[...] dressed *en bourgeois* with the exception of a ponderous hat *en militaire*’ (Dupuis 1824, 69). In his account, Hutton, who was also present at this event, interestingly pondered what it might have signified;

‘He was no doubt sent by the King, or some of his captains; but what could have been the motive for sending such an object to us, dressed in this ridiculous manner, we could not imagine, unless it was to let us see, that there was something like a white man in the country; but we subsequently found such *lusus naturae* were not uncommon, the King having a great number of them at Coomassie’ (Hutton 1821, 195).

Two points of interest stand out in respect of Bowdich’s and Hutton’s statements on this subject. Firstly, they both make it clear that the wearing of these military-style accessories was restricted to Asante captains and musicians and Bowdich depicted several of these figures carrying or beating different types of drums in his illustration of the Yam Custom. I suggest that Bowdich’s evidence supports the view that immediately prior to the Gyaaman conflict, European items of clothing, especially those with military connotations, were increasingly being appropriated by the Asante to signify military rank, in general, and to distinguish drummers, in particular. I also suggest that this specific act of appropriation may have been directly influenced by the Africa Company’s use of marching bands that performed as part of every parade and procession undertaken at a British castle or fort at this time (St Clair 2007, 109-116).

The repeated requests for military uniforms that are detailed in Bowdich’s account attest to the fact that the first British Mission was actively engaged in facilitating this process, especially with regard to fitting out the elite. In a letter dated the 26th September 1817, which was written whilst *en route* to Cape Coast, Bowdich stated that ‘[...] a messenger of the King of Dwabin [Kwasi Boaten, Juabenhene] (the most powerful chief after the Asantehene), accompanies me for a suit of our armour for the King’s wear, which I could not refuse’ (Bowdich 1819, 148). Other dispatches, however, provide evidence that requests to kit out less illustrious Asante court members were ignored. In October 1817, Hutchison recorded that the Asantehene had sent down thirty men to be clothed as soldiers, ‘[...] one of them as [a] captain

and one a serjeant [sic], with a flag' if the Governor could spare clothes (Bowdich 1819, 114). This request, it seems, was one that Hope Smith could not comply with as on Saturday 27th December, a full two months later, Hutchison recorded that the Governor had only fitted out two messengers in English uniforms instead of the thirty the King had originally requested (Bowdich 1819, 417).

Secondly, Bowdich and Hutton's descriptions also make it clear that the Asante, when dressed in European military clothing afforded a 'ludicrous' and 'ridiculous' appearance. The use of these terms suggests that, like Dupuis, they considered this practice to be nothing more than an absurd instance of dressing-up. An interesting incident which was subsequently recounted by Sarah Bowdich suggests that these perceptions were not confined to the officers but were also widely held amongst the European civilian population at this time. She related how an Asante captain, named Quantree, visited her at Cape Coast Castle sometime around mid-July 1817. During this visit she stated, he '[...] made so ridiculous an appearance [by] squeezing himself into an old red coat of Mr Bowdich's, a neckcloth, and a worn-out cocked hat' (Lee 1835, 177/178). As a consequence, these perceptions may have profoundly influenced Bowdich's placement of such figures in the foreground of his illustration as their proximity to the officers of the Mission may have been intended to provide a contrast that bordered on a visual joke.

The description of the Yam Custom celebration was not the only occasion when Bowdich shared his thoughts and feelings about the Asante practice of wearing European clothing. In a diary extract which dates to the end of August 1817 Bowdich recorded how;

'[...] the King walked abroad in great state one day, an irresistible caricature; he had on an old fashioned court suit of General Daendal's of brown velveteen, richly embroidered with silver thistles, with an English epaulette sewn on each shoulder, the coat coming close round the knees, from which the flaps of the waistcoat were not very distant, a cocked hat bound with gold lace, in shape just like that of a coachmen's, white shoes, the long silver headed cane we presented him, mounted with a crown, as a walking staff, and a small dirk round his waist' (Bowdich 1819, 122).

He clearly found the sight of the Asantehene, dressed in an indiscriminate collection of old-fashioned cast-offs, amusing. His use of the word ‘caricature’ to describe the Asantehene’s appearance also belies the fact that he saw the practice as a crude attempt to ape a European gentleman. He insinuated that the comic effect arises not from the fact that the man is black, but that the clothing does not fit and some of the accessories are of an inferior quality for the Asantehene’s status. This critical appraisal reveals something of Bowdich’s own home-grown sense of taste and fashion that had no doubt been cultivated during his employment in his father’s hat shop. This period of his life coincided with the rise of Beau Brummell, who was instrumental in promoting the cultivation of elegance and taste in a gentleman’s dress. Comments subsequently made by Sarah suggest that Bowdich may have been a little foppish, as she attributes the bestowal of his Fante nickname ‘Shantee Mensa’ which alluded to a remarkable dandy captain from Ashantee, to the fact that her husband was ‘[...] extremely neat and careful in his toilet’ (Lee 1835, 69).

Whilst in Kumase, however, Bowdich did not allow his personal views to get in the way of one of the stated objects of the Mission, which was to develop an Asante market for British textiles. In a letter to the Governor dated 9th July 1817 Bowdich stated, ‘I did not discourage the King’s great anxiety for clothes of the more English costume, considering that his example would be more auspicious than anything else, to the introduction of these manufactures’ (Bowdich 1819, 85). This policy evidently paid dividends as in later years Asantehene Oesi Tutu Kwame came to favour the full dress uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet for his public and state appearances (*ibid*, 122).

What is clear from Bowdich’s account is that by 1817 the wearing of European apparel, especially uniforms, was already associated in a small way with the events of the Yam Custom. However, I would like to suggest that the Asantehene’s appearance in European dress during the 1817 *odwira* celebrations may be the origin of a later Asante tradition, that reached its apogee during the reign of Kwaku Dua Panin (r.1834-1867). During this period, the elite members of the court processed through Kumase on specific days dressed in military uniforms and European garments (McCaskie 1995, 236/237).

These documented incidents demonstrate that neither the Company personnel stationed on the coast, nor the officers of successive British Missions had any clear understanding of the indigenous practice of wearing European apparel. In light of this analysis I suggest that these acts of appropriation had both spiritual and political dimensions that indicate the Asante elite were in the process of establishing the touch and the feel of physical contact with the West, by literally putting on its skin. Interestingly, Sarah recorded an incident which appears to support this assertion in a very literal way. In her published notes she recorded how her Asante servant/slave-girl, Adua thought gloves to be '[...] double skins, [which could be] drawn on and off at pleasure, and expected every part of white people's skins to possess this happy contrivance' (Lee 1835, 111). She also noted that the same misconception '[...] constantly assailed Mr Bowdich on his journey to Ashantee' (*ibid*, 129). I suggest this notion was predicated on pre-existing Asante beliefs concerning certain animal skins and these same beliefs informed the concomitant Asante desire for uniforms and European garments. In light of this analysis, I argue that the Asante appropriated and wore European clothing in much the same way as they did animal skins and believed that in doing so, it would enable similar conflations and confrontations of identity and power to take place. Ironically, Bowdich may also have desired something similar when he and Sarah 'dressed up' in an assortment of West African clothing on their landing back in Britain;

'Our appearance was so grotesque as to raise many conjectures in the town whence we came, for the news of our arrival from the sea had caused many a peep from between the window curtains as we passed [...]. Each of us wore caps made of monkey fur, [and] Mr Bowdich carried a bag made from the skin of [a leopard], and I one of a silver grey monkey; the same fur also decorated other parts of my dress, for the sake of warmth; and to increase our extraordinary costume, Mr Bowdich had on a pair of the yellow boots of Madeira, and I a large and thick African cloth' (Lee 1835, 361).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have concentrated on analysing Asante appropriations of European flags, canopies and clothing that feature prominently in Thomas Bowdich's written account (1819) and illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom.' As part of this analysis I supplemented his observations with those of Willem Huydecoper (1962), Thomas Hutchison (1819), Joseph Dupuis (1824) and Sarah Bowdich (1835). These sources contain a variety of evidence for collective and individual, official and personal appropriations, exchanges and presentations of textiles and related articles between the Asante, British and the Dutch during the four year period 1816-1820. These appropriations occurred within the context of an ongoing competition between rival European companies to secure a trading monopoly with Asante and the preparations for the forth-coming Asante/Gyaaman war. During the crucial months of a British Mission's residency in Kumase public displays and private presentations of canopies, flags and uniforms were used by both the Asante elite and the envoys to symbolically express ambitions, identities, rank, relations and status. Bowdich's published account and imagery overtly reflects this but it also contains evidence that suggests Asante acquisitions of these European items were being driven by other practical and symbolic considerations. In order to interrogate this further my analysis was framed around three key questions: How and in what ways were imported textiles appropriated by the Asante in 1817? What circumstances and perceptions informed the selection and appropriation of textiles, and what functions did they serve in new cultural contexts?

I have posited in this chapter that the Asante appropriated externally-derived textiles and related artefacts by physically re-processing them within certain environments such as specialist workshops and as part of public displays. Reprocessing in these contexts principally took the form of fabrics and materials being wrapped around powerful artefacts and/or entities that were instruments and vehicles of mediation in Asante culture. I have posited that actions such as interweaving and/or wrapping were designed to appropriate and conflate the liminal qualities of materials and substances that originated from beyond the confines of Asante culture in order that they could conceal, separate and shield powerful entities during transitions and transformations which threatened the status quo. European, Islamic and natural products therefore provided literal second skins that formed an important part of the

repertoire of mediatory devices and instruments that the Asante used to conduct and control transactions between the ancestral, human and supernatural realms. In this way, Asante culture maintained and protected its core values and external integrity, but also enabled it to be partially re-shaped and transformed by the controlled introduction of new elements and influences. In effect, this process facilitated the integration and internalisation of external symbols of power and the control of internal powers through externally-derived symbolism. As part of this analysis, I introduced the idea that certain colours, characteristics and qualities attributed to substances and the associated properties of materials, played a much greater role in the selection and subsequent appropriation of externally-derived products in Akan/Asante cultural contexts than has hitherto been recognised.

Finally, I contended that the physical re-processing of imported textiles into porous and impervious containers and conduits, also formed part of a much larger mechanism that oversaw the coalescence and dispersal of power and the internalising and externalising of identities and relationships in Asante culture. As such, I posit that externally-derived textiles were essential active/reactive elements in the formation of modified micro-environments that, on an ascending and descending scale, formed the embedded components of hyper-environments. I have argued in chapter II that these segmented and componential arrangements of artefacts and personnel were centred around the Asantehene, who, as the prime regulatory instrument of socio-economic, political and spiritual mediation, presided over the interactions and reactions of both micro-environments and hyper-environments. In the final chapter, I will switch my focus to analysing how, and in what ways, Bowdich appropriated and represented the Asante to European audiences on his return to England in 1818.

V

Aggravated Barbarity and Splendid Novelties: Thomas E. Bowdich's Re-presentations of Asante

Outline, Aims and Structure of Chapter

In chapters III and IV, I concentrated on analysing Anglo/Asante appropriations of social conventions and material culture that occurred during the residency of the first British Mission in Kumase. In this chapter, I will examine how Thomas Bowdich re-presented Asante, its people and its culture, on his return to England, through the use of three different sites of knowledge production: the travel narrative, imagery and artefacts. Appropriation, in this instance is essentially concerned with acts of re-invention, re-presentation and display which are not innocent occupations, as the selection and interpretation processes involved are always consciously and unconsciously filtered through the cultural lens of the author/artist/collector (Benjamin 1970, Hall 1997, Mack 2003). This profoundly influences how the subject is constructed, framed and presented and provides clues as to the politics, the prejudices, the systems of value and morality and the deepest neuroses and desires of the individuals involved and the culture which shaped them.

The following three questions will be used in this chapter to provide an over-arching framework for my analysis: How, and in what ways did Thomas Bowdich re-present the Asante in his published narrative, his imagery and via his collection of material culture? What motivated him to do this, and what contribution did he make to the development of knowledge about non-western peoples in pre-colonial nineteenth century England? As was the case previously, this chapter has also been subdivided into three parts. In Part One entitled 'Describing Asante,' I will examine in detail the literary devices Bowdich used to re-present Asante by comparing the second chapter of his published account entitled 'The Route and Reception of the Mission' with the corresponding part of his unpublished official report (ADM 5/3/1-1817) entitled 'Route to Kumase.' As part of this analysis, I will also consider what published and unpublished literary sources may have influenced Bowdich when writing

his travel narrative and I will examine the circumstantial evidence that supports the view that Sarah Bowdich collaborated in writing and/or editing her husband's account.

In Part Two, entitled 'Illustrating Asante,' I will consider the role that imagery played in Bowdich's re-presentation of Asante. This analysis will commence with an examination of his published illustrations of Asante buildings before going on to compare his image of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' with others that were produced by Archibald Dalziel (1793) and Joseph Dupuis (1824). I will argue, as part of this analysis that, in the same way texts informed the creation and construction of other texts, imagery is implicated in a similar process. A comparison of some illustrations will be undertaken in order to determine how, and in what ways, these authors made use of conventional models to mediate and represent the Asante as well as ascertain whether they adapted or abandoned these framing devices in the face of direct encounters and experiences. I will also examine the placement of illustrations within the body of Bowdich's text and will argue that they were strategically embedded within passages of text that describe dramatic encounters with the Asante. In this way, I will demonstrate that text and imagery were deliberately integrated in his narrative in order to create sites of virtual encounter. I will conclude this part of my analysis by comparing and contrasting Bowdich's illustrations with previously undocumented watercolour sketches that were painted by his wife, which call into question the authorship of the imagery that appears under his name in *Mission to Ashantee* (1819).

In the third and final part, entitled 'Exhibiting Asante,' I will consider how, and in what ways, Bowdich appropriated Asante artefacts and how Asante was subsequently re-presented via displays of material culture to European audiences. This analysis will begin with a discussion of Bowdich's presentation of artefacts and specimens to several prominent institutions on his return to England. In contrast to previous assessments that analyse Bowdich's assemblage in isolation, I will examine his collecting practices in respect of the objectives of the Mission and in relation to his publication. In doing so, I will argue that he created a referential relationship between these two sites of knowledge production that effectively ensured that the Asante were closely associated in the public's mind with his diplomatic and scientific achievements. Subsequent donations of Asante artefacts to the British Museum by his widow in 1855 will also be considered in relation to her 'husbanding'

of Bowdich's memory. Finally, I will conclude this analysis by discussing the evidence for where and how these artefacts were displayed in the British Museum.

Part One: Describing Asante

Thomas E. Bowdich's publication of *Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee* (1819) appears, at first glance, to be an official authorised version of events but it is actually a personal narrative written by a private individual. The reader can be forgiven for being misled on this point, however, as Bowdich boldly introduces himself on the title page as the 'Conductor' of the Mission. This claim to authority is designed to establish from the outset that he is the main protagonist and hero and that his narrative is definitive. His use of this odd title can be explained by the fact that his role had only been gained at the expense of Frederick James, whose leadership he usurped during the Mission's residency in Kumase. Governor Hope Smith had previously initiated the use of the titles 'leader' and 'conductor' in order to distinguish between the two men and their respective status. These titles may also have alluded to differences in the men's moral characters, as Bowdich had conducted himself and the Mission in the proper manner, unlike James who is accused by the author in his publication of 'mis'-leading it.

I discussed in chapter I how Bowdich interwove edited extracts from official correspondence with observations and reported anecdotes that were sourced from his own, and his colleagues, personal diaries and reports. He also referred in his publication to other authors such as Bruce (1768-1773) and Park (1799) and quoted, sometimes at great length, passages taken from the travelogue of the German explorer Isert (1788) and the historical narrative written by Meredith (1812). This literary practice of quoting material taken from a variety of published and unpublished sources enabled authors to connect their reports to existing knowledge, to give their accounts added importance and veracity and demonstrate that they were well-informed on the subject. It also created what Johannes Fabian calls 'a rhetorical constellation' and Stuart Hall terms 'discursive formations' that enable the creation and development of literary constructs and discursive tropes to be traced through time (Fabian 2000, 255; Hall 1997, 328). Bowdich's account is therefore firmly rooted in the patriotic imperialist discourse of pre-colonial travel writing, but in combining eighteenth century literary traditions with emerging elements of nineteenth century scientific

MISSION
FROM CAPE COAST CASTLE
TO
ASHANTEE,
WITH A
STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF THAT KINGDOM,
AND
GEOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF OTHER PARTS
OF THE
INTERIOR OF AFRICA.

BY T. EDWARD BOWDICH, ESQ.
CONDUCTOR.

"Quod si præ metu et formidine pedem referemus, ista omnia nobis adversa
futura sunt."

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.
1819.

Figure 5.0: Title page of the first edition of *Mission to Ashantee*
(Bowdich 1819)

investigation, it can also be considered innovative.

The recording and reporting of empirical data was specifically mentioned in the objectives of the Mission and as the Scientific Officer, Bowdich was responsible for using the thermometers, compasses, sextants and watches to take readings that calibrated, measured, quantified and surveyed the Asante state and its inhabitants. However, empirical calculations and data could not describe and/or explain the sorts of impressions and sensations that Bowdich experienced first-hand. In order to impart this subjective type of information, he uses a well-known rhetorical literary device that has its origins in the practice of diary and letter-writing. This format, which was also strongly associated with autobiography, was perceived to have more authenticity and integrity. In order to analyse this in more detail I will focus on the second chapter of Bowdich's published narrative entitled 'The Route and Reception of the Mission.'

This chapter copies the entry style that characteristically formed the content of personal travel journals. Each entry commences with a statement regarding the day of the week, sometimes the date and the location of the author. Occasionally Bowdich omitted some, or all of these details which results in confusion as to where and when events occurred and on which day/date. In the majority of these entries he also quoted compass readings, which give the direction of travel, described the landscape he was travelling through, noted the name, direction and flow of any stream or river and stated the names and approximate distances of each settlement that was encountered along the route. All entries commonly end with a short report on the recorded latitude and longitude measurements and occasionally include thermometer readings. This overview demonstrates that Bowdich systematically combined the reporting of objective scientific data with subjective descriptions and observations in this part of his narrative.

Several of Bowdich's entries also include long descriptive passages written in a rich poetic language that reflects a romantic aesthetic (see Pratt, 1992; Gray & Law, 1990). These overblown descriptions may have been inserted in order to provide a contrast to the scientific data and make his account commercially more appealing. An early entry written on Thursday 24th April 1817 provides a typical example:

‘Passing through Tachradi, [...] we ascended a gentle rising [...]. It was environed by small groves; and clumps of cotton trees rose so happily in frequent spots, as to afford all the scenery of a romantic little park; the broken rays of the sun stealing through the small trees in the distance, to make the deep shade of the foreground more imposing. The path then became more hilly, and the landscape fuller of wood: our descents and risings frequently through long vistas, so richly gilded with the sun on their summits, that, [...] we naturally yielded to the expectation, in ascending each eminence, that it would afford us delightful prospect of an open country (Bowdich 1819, 15).

Bowdich’s picturesque description not only contains the names of some of the plants he observed and important information concerning the topography of the land, but it also gives the impression that he was travelling through an earthly paradise, an Eden that was devoid of Adam and Eve but filled with the illuminating light of heaven. The encounter that he was waxing lyrical over here is not one between peoples, but between civilised man and primordial nature. When read in relation to other passages, it also articulates the dialectical relationship between the physical journey through the landscape and the internal emotional journey into the self. Fabian posited the idea that ‘[...] if travellers experienced the enterprise’s complexities as anxiety-producing they projected the ‘jungle’ within onto a largely metaphorical wilderness outside’ (Fabian 2000, 39). As will be shown, this is certainly true of Bowdich. Brevity prevents me from considering all the possible examples in depth, so I have chosen one dated two days after the entry quoted above as I hope the disparity between the two will make the point.

On the Saturday 26th April 1817, having left Paintree, (Abura Dunkwa) a clean, well-provisioned and safe stopping place, Bowdich found himself separated from James and confronted by several drunken porters who had halted and were refusing to proceed. He describes how, after much difficulty;

‘[...] we started again [...] about half past three, and almost immediately entered a large forest impervious to the sun; the risings were frequent but gentle; the path, crooked and overgrown, presented such constant obstacles to a hammock [...]; the only inconvenience [to walking] was the troops of large black ants, which were too thick to be avoided, and stung us sadly’ (Bowdich 1819, 19).

This is a clear example of where Bowdich projects his anxieties and frustrations onto both the landscape which was now dark, crooked, overgrown and obstacle-strewn and the troops of large black stinging ants. However, by the 1st May, his good mood was restored as he described how ‘[...] there was a mild beauty in the landscape, uncongenial to barbarism, which imposed the expectation of elegance and refinement’ (Bowdich 1819, 24). Bowdich’s positive projections are in stark contrast to those of a few days previous and in many ways presage the enlightened views he later painted of Kumase and the Asante.

Evidence strongly suggests that the uneven tempo and the paradigm shifts that have been detected within the narrative, not only reflect Bowdich’s changing emotional state, but also correspond with the practical conditions and pace of life of a diplomatic expedition on the move. As such, the physical nature of travel can be understood to structure writing practices and writing structured travel. In this way, periods of movement and/or enforced stasis which occurred during the Mission can be clearly identified in Bowdich’s narrative by the intrusion of anecdotal material or descriptive passages. For example, on the 7th May, the Mission arrived at the settlement of Doompassee where James was struck down with fever. As a consequence, the officers and porters were obliged to halt for six days until it abated. Given that they stayed in this place for a prolonged period, it is perhaps surprising that Bowdich chose not to describe the settlement in preference to recounting the story of a former wife of the late Asantehene who ‘[...] possessing irresistible art in practising upon the numerous admirers of her beauty’ was employed by the King to inveigle distant chiefs ‘[...] whose lives or properties were desirable to him’ (Bowdich 1819, 28).

The appearance of this passage is interesting on two counts: firstly, it disrupts the established narrative pattern by introducing a third mode of dissemination, that of apocryphal anecdote, which is not grounded in objective science or in subjective observation; secondly, by recounting the story of the King’s wife, Bowdich is manipulating the reader’s impression of the Asante and inviting them to make certain moral judgements regarding their character and cultural practices. Far from being unique, this type of interruption was an established literary practice that was consonant with other travel narratives produced during this period. This begs the question whether Bowdich was copying the compositional techniques of his predecessors in order to align himself and his account more closely with these explorers and

their literary productions? What is clear is that his publication contributed to an interlocking set of conventions, ideas and practices that constructed, engendered and presented West Africa as an oppositional other to that of Europe. In effect, by following established conventions, Bowdich was complicit in promoting essentialised and biased representations which characterised the peoples of the Gold Coast as immoral and their rulers as despotic and selfish (for a wider treatment of this subject see Said 1978).

Bowdich used a technique that plays on this dichotomy in order to create tension throughout his narrative of the Mission's journey into the interior. The further away the officers travelled from the open coastline, which was inhabited by civilised Europeans and where it was airy, light and relatively healthy, the more frequently he highlighted the dangers that were associated with the dark rainforest which was inhabited by ferocious wild beasts and swarms of biting insects. Other lurid, macabre and sensational details were also introduced periodically as the Mission got closer to its final destination and together, these elements formed part of a subtle narrative thread that was designed to create drama and inculcate a growing sense of unease in readers.

The first instance of this occurs in Bowdich's entry for Sunday 27th April, in which he described Mansue (Assin Manso). 'Mansue had been the great Fantee market for slaves from the Interior, and its former consequence was evident from the extent of its site, over which a few sheds only were now scattered' (Bowdich 1819, 19). On the face of it, this passage appears to document the demise of a once thriving *entrepôt* that had declined as a result of the British ban on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but Bowdich deliberately did not offer any kind of explanation. The second instance appears three days later in the entry for Wednesday 30th April, in which he described how '[...] the path was sometimes trackless, and appeared to have been little used since the invasion of 1807; several human skulls were scattered through this dark solitude, the relics of the butchery' (*ibid*, 23). In this passage Bowdich hinted at the bloody and violent altercation that had left the land depopulated for ten years; but he remained all but silent on the reason why these human remains had been left to rot in the forest. The idea of a catastrophic event continued to be cultivated by him in fleeting references that appear in an entry for the next day, Thursday 1st May, in which he described marching through the deserted settlements of Dansamsou and Meakirring. He noted as part

of this entry that the area that straddled the border between the Fante and Assin territories presented;

‘[...] all the gloom of depopulation, and the forest fast recovering the sites of large towns destroyed in the Ashantee invasions. The inhabitants of the few wretched hovels, remotely scattered, seemed as if they had fled to them as outcasts from society; they were lost even to curiosity, and manners were brutal and sullen’ (Bowdich 1819, 24/25).

The abandoned state of this region and the unfriendliness of the Assin form a stark contrast to the Asante population of Fohmannee, a very considerable settlement which Bowdich reached on Wednesday 7th May. Readers might expect this to augur well for the Mission but Bowdich quickly extinguished this hope by introducing fresh evidence of a menacing nature at this point in his narrative:

‘We stopped there awhile at the request of a venerable old man, who regaled us with some palm wine and fruit; his manners were very pleasing, and made it more painful to us to hear that his life was forfeited to some superstitious observations, and that he only waited for the result of a petition to the King to [...] allow him to be executed in his own croom [village], and to be spared the fatigue of a journey to the capital; he conversed cheerfully with us, congratulated himself on seeing white men before he died, and spread his cloth over the log with an emotion of dignity rather than shame: his head arrived at Coomassie the day after we had’ (*ibid*, 27/28).

In creating an image of the Asante Bowdich had, up until this point, combined historical fact regarding the repeated invasions of the Asante army into neighbouring coastal states with his own observations of the death and destruction that resulted. In the passage quoted above, however, he changed his tactics by introducing the first example of an Asante ritual practice that required human sacrifice. He also chose to describe this chance meeting with the condemned man in an emotionally-charged way which serves to invoke sympathy for the victims, whilst conversely constructing the Asante as a barbaric, bloodthirsty and superstitious people. This evidence strongly indicates that Bowdich deliberately manipulated this and other descriptions that dealt with historical and contemporaneous acts of atrocity in order to cast the Asante in a bad light and simultaneously himself as a heroic character for enduring such hardship. Some of his embellishments, however, which had, in all probability

been included by him in order to make his account a more interesting read, were later to be publicly criticised by others, who cited them as proof that he had fabricated and sensationalised his account.

The deliberate exaggeration of details and events by an author was a standard practice of travelogue writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, it is highly likely that publishers such as John Murray encouraged it as a way of boosting sales. Several details of Bowdich's account were later publicly exposed by Joseph Dupuis, the second British Consul appointed to Kumase and his assistant William Hutton, as being exaggerations at best and falsehoods at worst. It is obvious, from the comments that subsequently appear in the published accounts of both these men, that the members of the second British Mission had access to, or had read Bowdich's report/draft and/or his published account before they set off for Kumase in 1820. As they followed the same route as the first British Mission into the interior occasional comparisons are made by them with Bowdich's account. Hence, Hutton referred to an entry dated 26th May 1817, in which Bowdich described how, the hilly landscape near the settlement of Cottacoomcasa '[...] forcibly reminded [him] of the celebrated ride by Grongar hill, from Carmarthen to Llandilo' (Bowdich 1819, 18). In his publication Hutton confessed that on arriving at the same spot in 1820, 'I did not see any of those beauties which Mr Bowdich mentions near Cuttacoomakasa, as resembling Grongar Hill' (Hutton 1821, 169). Given the three-year time difference, the tropical climate and the rate of vegetation growth, it is not surprising that the two men were looking at very different scenes.

However, a more serious accusation of fanciful invention was levelled at Bowdich by Dupuis, over his anecdote regarding beliefs and practices that were associated with the river Bohmen. In his published account Bowdich recounted how on Wednesday 7th May 1817, the first British Mission came upon a river, the waters of which were '[...] said to instil eloquence, and numerous Ashantees repair annually to drink of it' (Bowdich 1819, 27). On arriving at the banks of the same river in 1820, Dupuis recounted how, having recalled what Bowdich had said about the efficacy of the so-called 'waters of eloquence' he decided to put it and the author to the test by drinking some. He went on to state that it '[...] failed in working its usual miracle, and notes that;

‘[...] upon making enquiries of the Ashantees, respecting the alleged virtue of the water I had some difficulty in persuading them that it was a serious question. When assured of the fact, they declared they [...] did not know that it was capable of prompting speech, nor did they ever hear that it was visited on that account by parties of their countrymen’ (Dupuis 1824 [1966], 32).

Dupuis had good reasons for trying to prove that Bowdich had been either mis-informed or had falsified this part of his account but, in truth, this discrepancy may have an innocent explanation. The Asante custom of drinking the water may have become obsolete in the intervening years between 1817 and 1820 and even if it had not Dupuis’ Asante guides may not have been aware of the practice. Interestingly, Hutton did not mention in his account that Dupuis questioned the Asante guides about the water’s oratorical powers but instead repeated Bowdich’s assertions without qualification (Hutton 1821, 190). This may simply have occurred as a result of Hutton plagiarising large parts of Bowdich’s account when writing his own, but it also points to the possibility that Dupuis made it up in order to discredit Bowdich’s veracity as an author. Suffice it to say that, by including in his account such uncorroborated details, Bowdich unwittingly exposed himself to the accusations of Dupuis and others who had vested interests in calling into question the truthfulness of his account. However, it would be a mistake to think that he was unique in inventing details in order to spice-up an otherwise dull narrative. This all too brief analysis demonstrates that although literary embellishments were not extensive, they could and did contribute to readers cultivating a distorted perception of other cultures and their concomitant beliefs and practices.

The submission sheets that are attached to some of Bowdich’s unpublished reports (ADM 5/3/1-1817) indicate that the majority were written after his return to Cape Coast Castle on the 3rd October 1817 (see Table I). As a consequence, despite feeling very immediate when initially read, many of his descriptions were in all likelihood written many months after the events actually occurred and were probably subjected to multiple revisions before appearing in their final form in his published narrative. This assertion can confidently be made, as his handwritten report includes very few crossings-out or mistakes which indicates that it was not a first draft but a fair copy. Given this, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that in editing this copy for publication, Bowdich omitted and/or embellished certain details in order

to make it more commercially appealing. Furthermore, I suggest that the majority of the distillation and refinement processes that turned disparate diary entries, letters and notes into a coherent narrative occurred whilst he was on board ship and after he arrived back in England. This is important as I believe that ethical and moral disapproval of some aspects of Asante culture, not only correlated with physical distance from the Gold Coast, but to physical proximity to England and Europe. Therefore Bowdich's literary composition was also shaped in part by his knowledge of audience expectations, values and views. A final point that is worth making is that he did not make the voyage to England alone but was accompanied by his wife, Sarah. Despite the fact that this kind of non-fiction literature was an implicitly male territory in the early nineteenth century, could Sarah have lent a hand in editing and/or writing parts of the account?

I am not the first to suggest this as both Silke Strickrodt (1998) and Mary Orr (2007) have previously raised it as a possibility. Evidence for this is also provided by Sarah herself who stated, in her publication *Stories of Strange Lands and Fragments From the Notes of a Traveller* (1835), that during the four-month sea voyage from Gabon to England '[...] the fair copy of Mr Bowdich's *Travels to Ashantee* was written during this period' (Lee 1835, 341). Strickrodt went so far as to argue that '[...] the passive construction of this sentence might be interpreted as an indication that Sarah had assisted her husband in the work on the book' (Strickrodt 1998, 32). Two further pieces of circumstantial evidence also support this interpretation. Firstly, some of the books that were written during the couple's residence in Paris between 1819 and 1822 were products of their cooperation. This firmly establishes a later precedent for their literary collaboration that, given the evidence already presented, I suggest can be extended to include Bowdich's very first publication. Secondly, the same modus operandi was used in 1825 by the newly-widowed Sarah who drafted *Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo* during her return voyage home from the Gambia.

Bowdich's appropriation of his wife's literary contributions was ironically inverted eleven years after his death, however, when Sarah published what was, in effect, her own account of her experiences on the Gold Coast. Her anecdotes and recollections appear in the prolific and long endnotes that accompany every chapter which make up the content of *Stories of Strange Lands and Fragments from the Notes of a Traveller* (1835). These endnotes are, in

some cases, almost equal in length to the stories themselves and contain an overwhelming abundance of information on anthropological, botanical and zoological subjects. They are clearly drawn from Sarah's and sometimes also from Bowdich's personal diaries and notebooks that were written whilst they were resident on the Gold Coast. It has previously been asserted by McCaskie that 'Bowdich first rooted Asante in the Western imagination' (McCaskie 2009, 141). Given this evidence however, it might be more accurate and appropriate to say that both Mr and Mrs Bowdich were instrumental in creating a particularly enduring and powerful image of a great African state bedecked with gold and steeped in ritual.

Part Two: Illustrating Asante

Between 1780 and 1830 rhetorical imagery was increasingly supplemented by illustrations in published travelogues. Despite being powerful, impressive and, on the face of it, convincing, these images did not add much to the knowledge being generated about African cultures but instead served to reinforce old assumptions and prejudices. In effect, such imagery functioned either as screens upon which European fantasies could be projected or, conversely, they reflected back at the reader the technological achievements and developments of European civilisation. Just as travelogues were far from being objective reportage, imagery also conflated empirical observations with imaginative fictions that were composed using eighteenth-century representational conventions and framing devices.

In several passages in his published account Bowdich referred to sketching and drawing scenes, some possibly *in situ*. For instance, when he described the Mission's journey to Kumase, in chapter II he stated that on arrival on the banks of the Bosumpra river he '[...] attempted a sketch but it was far beyond [his] rude pencil the expression of the scene could only have been traced in the profile of every tree; and it seemed to defy any touches, but those of a Claude or a Wilson to depict the life of its beauty' (Bowdich 1819, 24). This passage highlights the fact that Bowdich was instrumental in creating a pictorial record of some of the sights the Mission encountered, possibly with a view to publishing them later. It also demonstrates that he was not a very skilled draughtsman as, by his own admission, he failed to adequately capture the scene before him and his reference to the landscape painters Claude and Wilson betray the fact that he was conversant with the romantic ideals then

fashionable in European art and culture. In another reference which dates to around mid-September 1817 he also states that;

‘[The King] was rather uneasy at my sketching; the Moors, he hinted, had insinuated that I could place a spell on the buildings I drew. I told him, without drawings, the people in England could not be convinced that I had visited him; he appeared satisfied and begged to be drawn handsome’ (Bowdich 1819, 144).

This particular passage is interesting for four reasons: firstly it demonstrates that the Asantehene’s Muslim advisors were suspicious of Bowdich recording some of the buildings in Kumase and tried to use their influence at court to prevent it. It is noteworthy that their objections were levelled against the depiction of buildings rather than figural imagery which was strictly prohibited by the Koran. This suggests that Bowdich added the figures that appear in his published images at a later date, possibly after he had left Kumase. Secondly, Bowdich unequivocally stated that images helped to establish authorial authority as it provided visual evidence of sights and scenes that had not been witnessed before. Thirdly, it intimates that the Asantehene was also aware of the importance of imagery and the power of publicity. Finally, it indicates that Bowdich was engaged in sketching some of the more important and prominent Asante buildings just prior to leaving Kumase. These sketches probably captured enough colour and detail to enable them to be worked-up at a later date into finished illustrations. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this may also have occurred during the voyage home as in a footnote Bowdich stated that ‘[...] since I have been at sea I have drawn the maritime part of my map again’ (*ibid*, 221).

On Bowdich’s return to England ten sketches and three maps were selected for inclusion in the first edition of his account which was published in March 1819. Lithography (literally: drawing on stone) works on the principle that grease and water repel each other. The printing surface is commonly a heavy block of porous stone, usually limestone, or a metal plate with the surface ground smooth. The image is applied onto the surface using a wax crayon or a brush. Once the design has been drawn, the whole surface is dampened with water and inked using a roller. The ink sticks to the drawn design, whilst it is repelled by the dampened areas. Thick paper is then laid over the surface and the image transferred. To make a colour lithograph, a new stone or plate is required for each area of the design to be printed in a separate colour. The appearance of lithographs can be extremely diverse,

depending on how the wax medium is applied. All ten of Bowdich's chromolithographs demonstrate the use of an etching technique known as sugar aquatint that produces a grainy texture which enables graduated areas of shading to be represented. A dry point has also been applied to these images in order to sharpen the delineation of outlines and other details.

Lithography was a time-consuming process and images created using this technique were relatively expensive both to produce and to buy. An image as detailed, as colourful and as large as 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' is therefore unique. Indeed, no other travel account published before or since has anything comparable to it in terms of size or complexity. As such, it must have presented R. Havell and Son with a considerable technical challenge that had to be successfully surmounted in the five months between late-June/early-July and the end of November 1818. The engraver/lithographer were, therefore, also implicated in the process of image-making as they were responsible for copying original works and re-producing them for mass consumption. Furthermore, the production of such an ambitious illustration required the publisher, John Murray, to pay a substantial amount of money up-front that potentially might not be recouped in sales. Murray must have felt confident that he could make a profit, however, as this and other illustrations attributed to Bowdich were published separately on 2nd December 1818, a full three months ahead of the quarto volume. It no doubt helped that these images contained some level of narrative content as this added to their appeal and their advance circulation may also have helped to publicise the forthcoming publication thereby optimising Murray's sales to two different audiences.

The ten lithographs in the first edition are reproduced on separate pages or plates rather than being integrated within the text. This arrangement resulted directly from the limitations of print technology but it also served indirectly to give them added prominence and importance. Fabian argued that '[...] the placing of illustrations in travelogues was often so varied [that] it strain[s] the notion of an established practice' (Fabian 2000, 261). He went on to suggest that '[...] the discrepancies express an awareness that text and images were different creatures altogether; [and that] they only co-habited a book' (*ibid*). In formulating this argument, however, Fabian consulted a relatively small sample of German travelogues that were published between 1850 and 1900. As a result, his hypothesis does not accurately

reflect the placement of illustrations in British travelogues that pre-date the colonial period in West Africa.

The first image to appear in Bowdich's account is entitled 'Captain in his War Dress' and it is inserted between pages 32/33 (fig. 5.1). The placement of this image in Chapter II entitled, 'The Route and Reception of the Mission' corresponds to the point in his narrative where he described the first halt of the Mission during the state reception. His panoramic image of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' is inserted between pages 274/275 in Chapter V entitled, 'Customs' at the point in the text where he described the assembly of chiefs which occurred on the afternoon of Saturday 6th September (see fig. 2.15). The two sets of paired images entitled 'The Oldest House in Coomassie'/'Part of the Quarters of the Mission' (fig. 5.2) and 'Odumata's Sleeping Room'/'Inner Square of Apookoo's House' (fig. 5.3) are inserted in Chapter VI between pages 306/307. A further set of paired images both entitled 'Part of a Piazza in the Palace,' (fig. 5.4) and another, smaller panorama entitled 'View of Adoom Street' (fig. 5.5) together with a single image of 'The King's Sleeping Room' (fig. 5.6) are inserted between pages 308/309 in that part of the text where Bowdich discussed Asante architecture, arts and manufactures. Some of these buildings also feature prominently in his account of the state reception and may have been intended to compliment his 'Ichonographical sketch of Coomassie, with the principal streets and the situations of remarkable houses' that is inserted in Chapter VII between pages 322/323. This survey demonstrates that in every case the placement of the illustrations in the text correlates closely to the subject matter that Bowdich was in the process of describing.

Bowdich's illustrations of Asante buildings which appear in his published account are characterised by the use of a restricted colour palette and a flattened perspective which was probably intended to convey a dispassionate objective representation of Asante architecture. Comments that appear in the account of Hutton, in particular, imply that these images had initially fostered a sense of great expectation in the members of the second British Mission. However, Hutton stated that;

[...] on entering the capital, and passing through the principal streets, I felt disappointed from the impression Mr Bowdich's drawings had made upon my mind; and the same feeling, I believe, extended to my companions. These



Figure 3.2. The Oldest House in Kaniassé and 'Part of the Quarters of the Mission' (Bowdich 1819, 306/307)

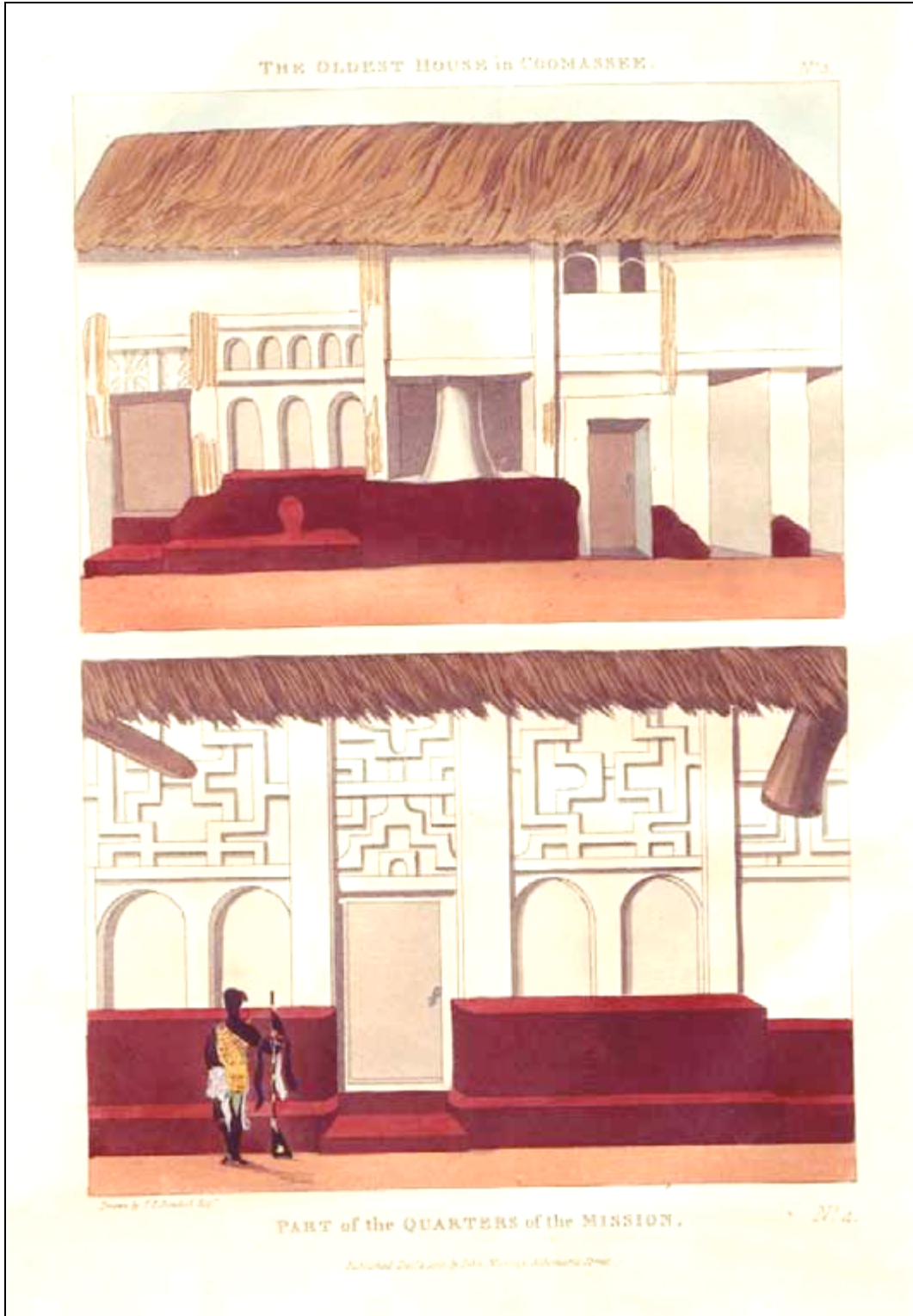


Figure 3.3: Odumata's Sleeping Room and
'Inner Square of Apokoo's House
(Bowdich 1819, 306/307)

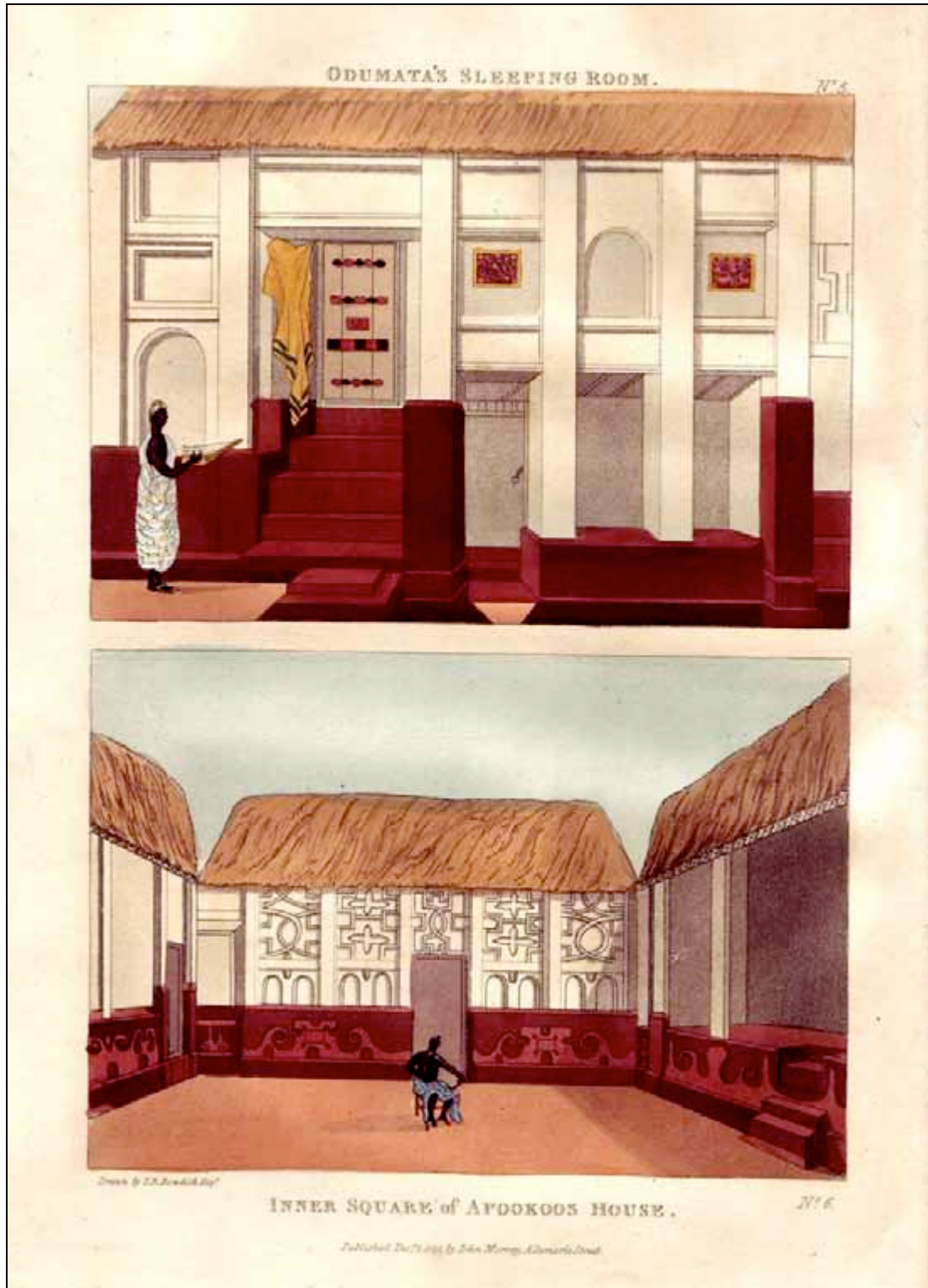
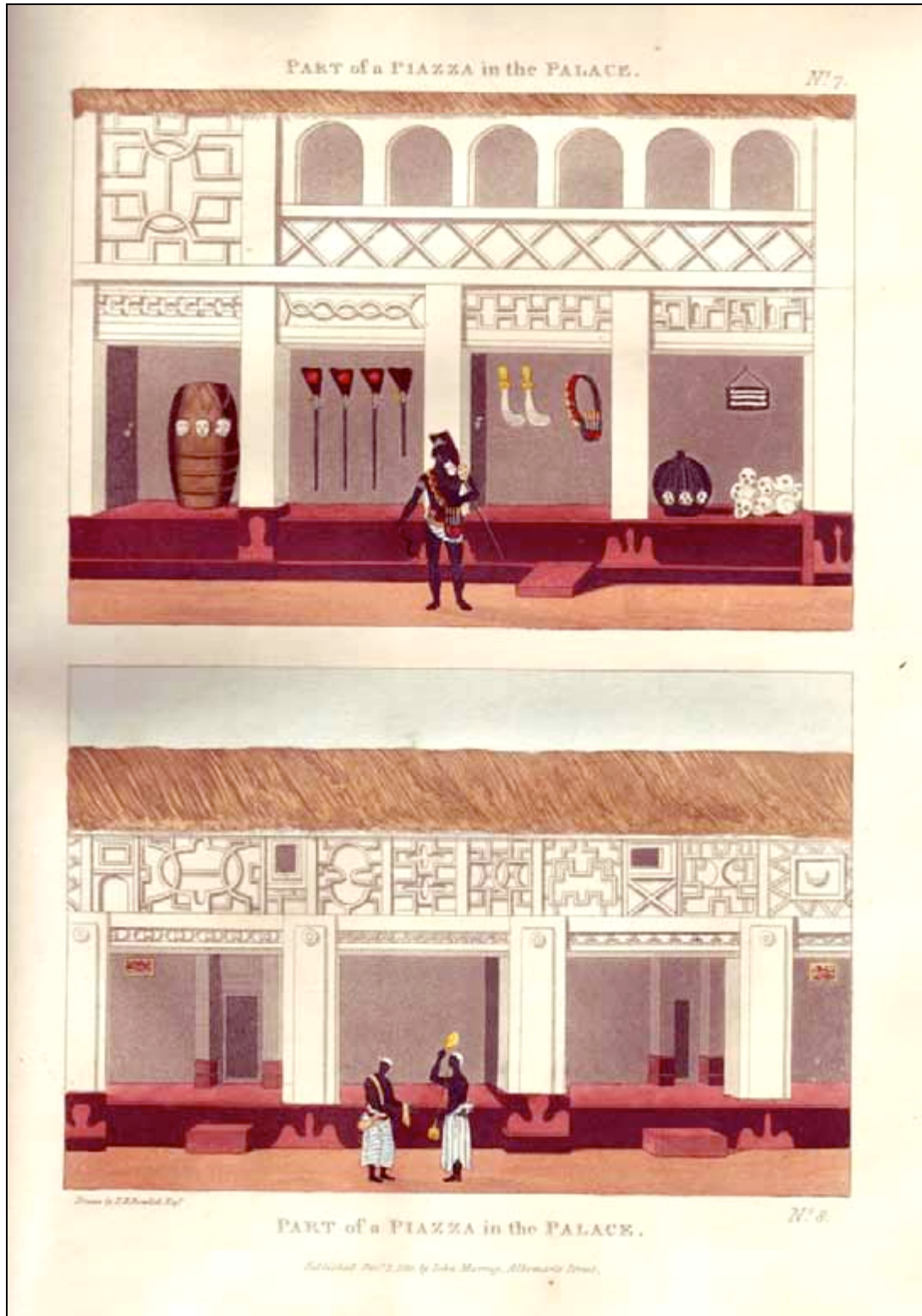


figure 5.4: part of a piazza in the palace
(Bowdich 1819, 308/309)



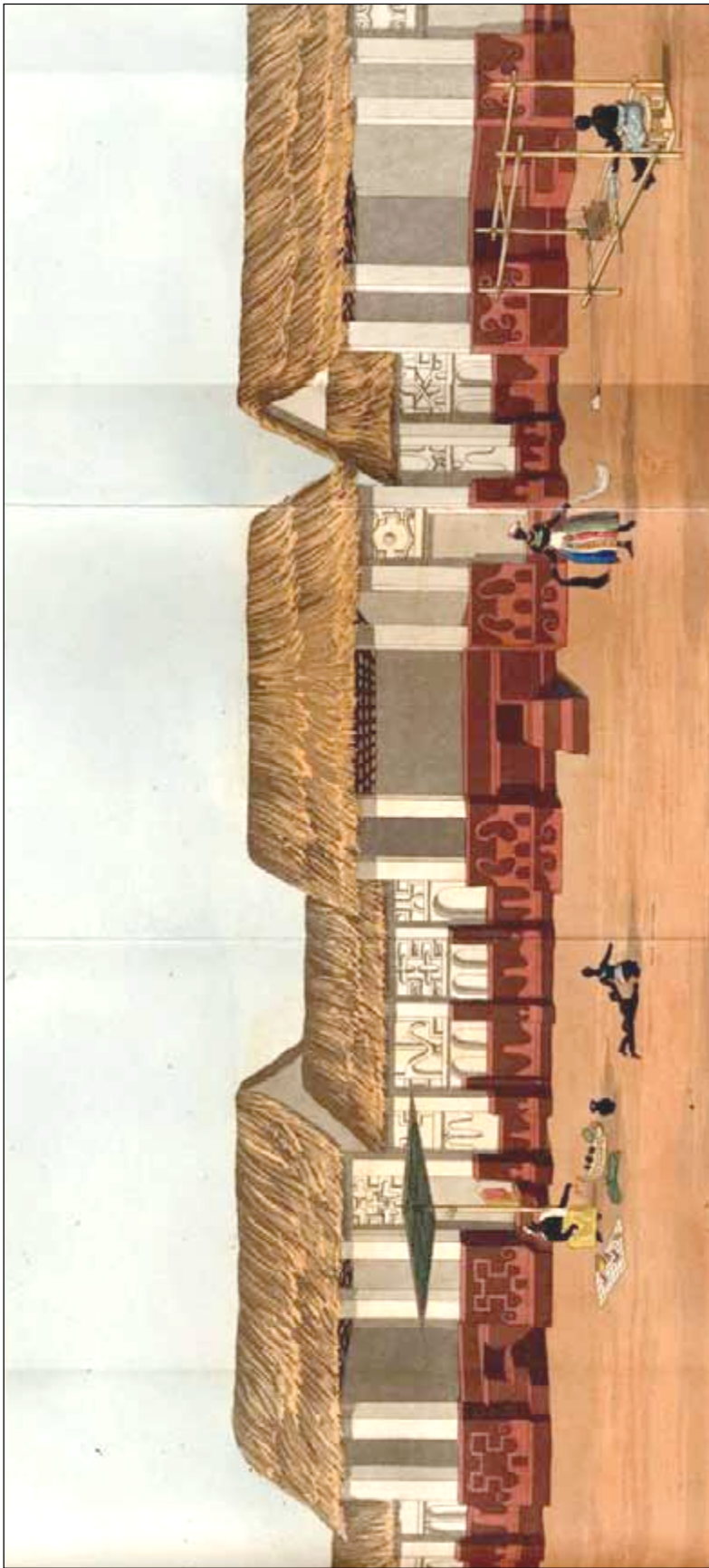


Figure 5.5: 'Part of Adoom Street'
(Bowdich 1819, 308/309)



Figure 5.6: 'The King's Sleeping Room'
(Bowdich 1819, 308/309)

drawings to say the least of them, are too highly coloured. Many of the Ashantees, to whom I showed them, could not perceive a resemblance sufficient to strike them at first sight' (Hutton 1821, 237).

Joseph Dupuis also commented on the disparity between Bowdich's illustrations and reality when he wrote that '[...] the habitations of some were washed on the outsides with a bluish clay, which, from exposure to the sun and atmosphere, had faded to a dirty white, recalling by an effort of the imagination what had been reported by Mr Bowdich of Ashantee 'architecture' (Dupuis 1824, 34). Not satisfied with this, however, Dupuis attempted to correct the impression that Bowdich's images created by inviting readers to compare Bowdich's illustrations with alternative images that he published as part of his own account. In an accompanying description of an illustration entitled 'The Palace of Ooso Adoom the King's Nephew; the Author's Temporary Residence at Coomassie' (fig. 5.7) he stated;

'[...] the annexed engraving is copied from a correct external view of the palace, representing that sort of hieroglyphical sculpture, in relief, which is characteristic of the style of decorating the houses of chieftains, and which, it would seem, Mr Bowdich has so highly improved upon (*ibid*, 83/84).

It is obvious that Hutton and Dupuis were intent on exposing Bowdich's artistic embellishments, in much the same way as they had discredited his literary ones. They openly accused him of exaggerating or mis-representing the appearance of Asante buildings by making them appear too clean, pristine and brightly coloured. Dupuis, in particular, believed that Bowdich's illustrations overstated the level of Asante cultural and technical achievements. In contrast, his depictions deliberately understated, in my view, Asante architectural decorative schemas both in terms of their sophistication and virtuosity. Despite the fact that the majority of Bowdich's depictions of Asante buildings show them as having unfeasibly clean exteriors, ethnographers such as Rattray (1927) and Swithenbank (1969) have subsequently validated the accuracy of his detailing via modern photography.

Another notable characteristic of Bowdich's illustrations of Asante buildings is that they also feature one or two male and/or female figures which occupy the foreground. Bowdich explained that '[...] the figures are introduced to shew the proportion of the buildings, and to

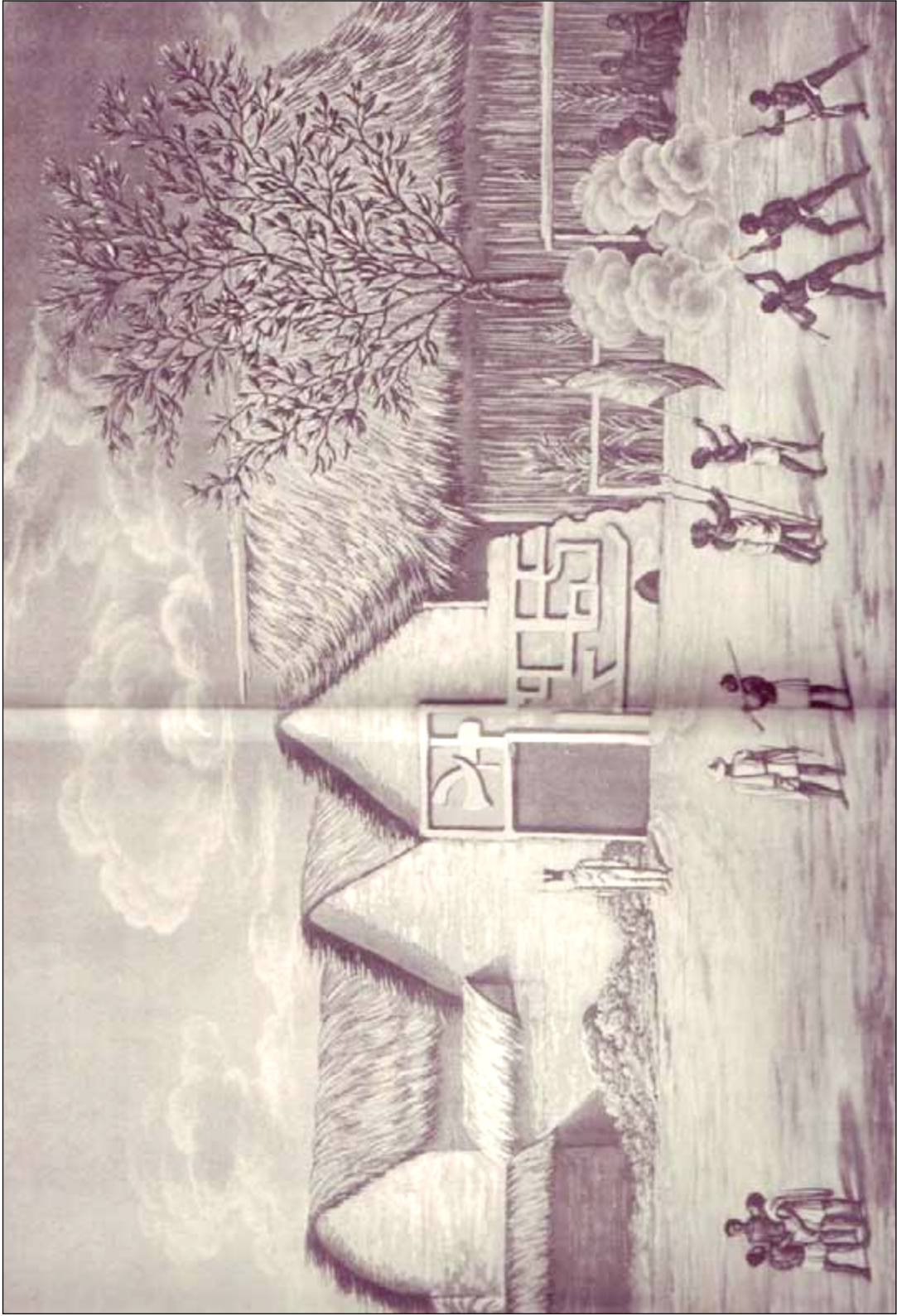


Figure 5.7: ‘The Palace of Ouso Adoom the King’s Nephew; the Author’s Temporary Residence at Coomassie.’ (Dupuis 1824, 82/83)

give some idea of the costume' (Bowdich 1819, 307). They also provide a visual vehicle for the representation of *accoutrements*, occupations and physical appearance. No attributable or signed sketches of similar figures drawn by Bowdich have come to light. Given that, by his own admission his artistic skills were limited, the likelihood is that these figures were drawn by Sarah. Mary Orr also noted that Sarah included as part of her illustrations '[...] a tiny human figure clad in local costume to give scale and a humanizing touch' as part of narratives that were published after Bowdich's untimely death (Orr 2007, 282). Is this another example of where a precedent that has been established for later publications should be extended to include the imagery reproduced as part of Bowdich's published account of 1819?

In the book Sarah published in 1835, she included a monochrome illustration (Plate V) that is populated by a group of six figures; four men and two women dressed in various types of costume (fig. 5.8). The function of this image is made explicit in the accompanying description of the plate in which Sarah stated '[...] this group is intended to represent some of the costumes spoken of in the work' (Lee 1835, 66). She went on to identify a Fante woman, a Governor of a town in Mandingo, an Asante captain, a woman from Goree and a Moor accompanied by his wife and child. At least two of these figures, the Fante woman and the Asante captain, were copied from signed watercolour sketches created by Sarah (figs. 5.9/5/10). It is probable that she painted the Fante woman whilst residing at either Anomabu Fort or Cape Coast Castle during 1816-1818 but the image of an Asante captain is more problematic in terms of attributing a date and a place. Firstly, it is a far more accomplished and nuanced study of the same 'Captain in his War Dress' that was published by Bowdich in 1819 (see fig. 5.1). Secondly, the original watercolour painted by Sarah clearly depicts part of the great courtyard in the background. Another example of this also occurs in respect of Plate III that depicts a stand in the market-place at Kumase (fig. 5.11) which has also been copied from an original watercolour painted and signed by Sarah (fig. 5.12). This image depicts the same Asante buildings as those shown in 'Part of Adoom Street' (see fig. 5.5) which also appears in Bowdich's published narrative.

Sarah did not accompany her husband to Kumase so the presence of these buildings in the backgrounds of two of her watercolour sketches can only be explained as a result of three



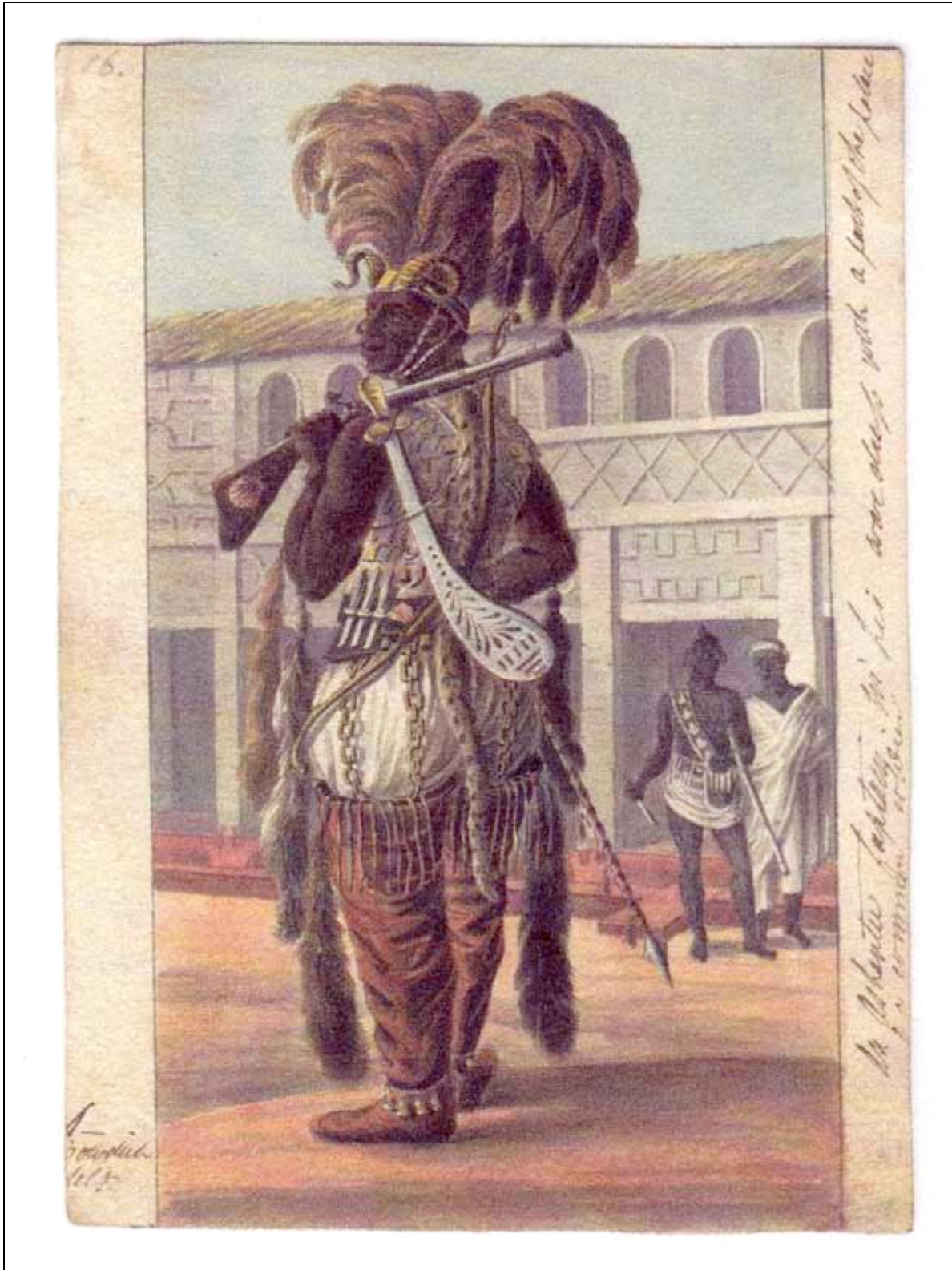
Figure 5.8: Plate V
(Lee 1835, 290/291)

Figure 5.9: 'A Fantee coloured woman'
(Watercolour sketch by Sarah Bowdich)



Figure 3.10. An Ashantee Captain in his war dress with a roof of the palace and a common soldier?

(Watercolour sketch entitled by Sarah Bowdich)



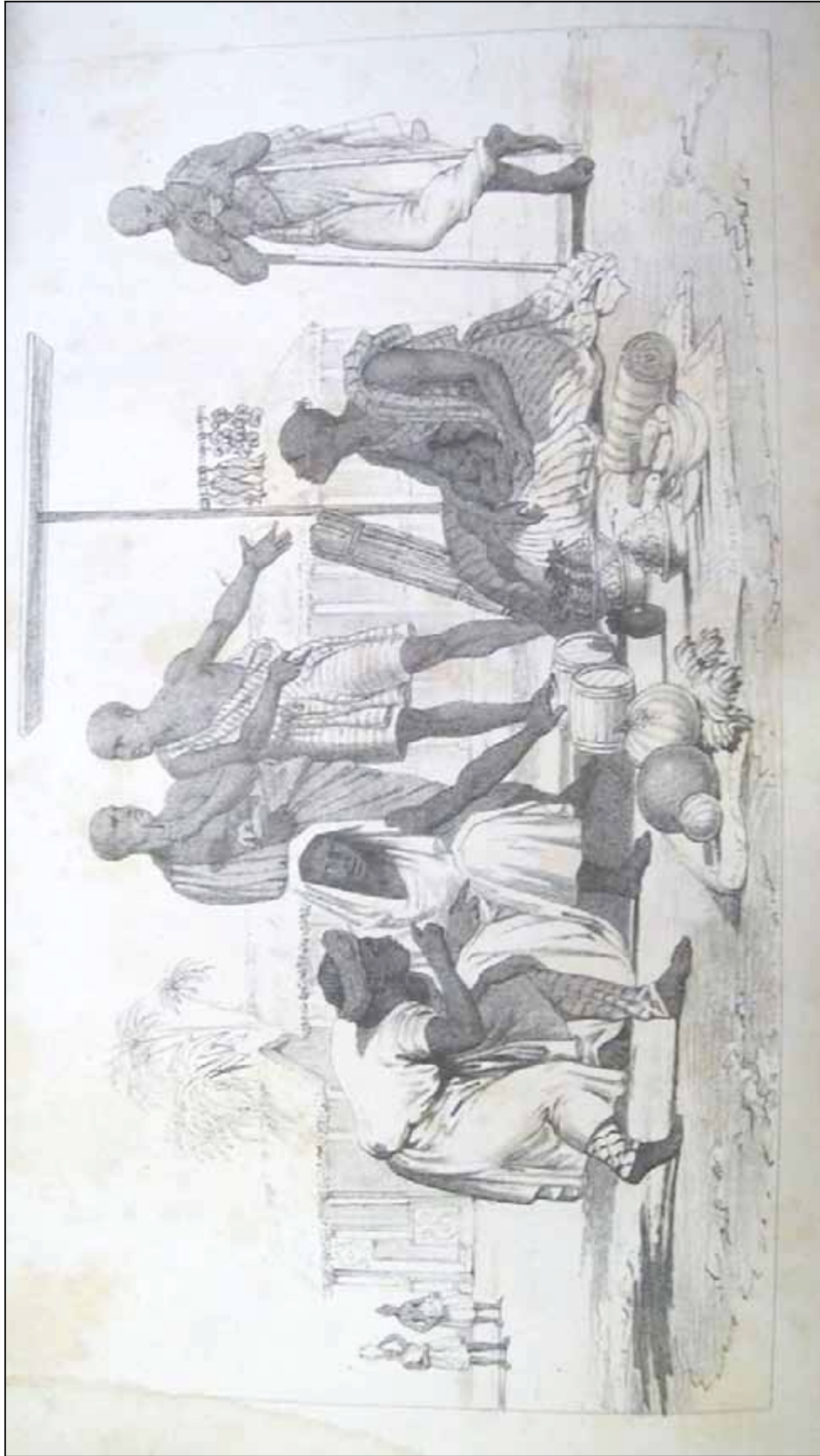


Figure 5.11: Plate III
(Lee 1835, 126/127)

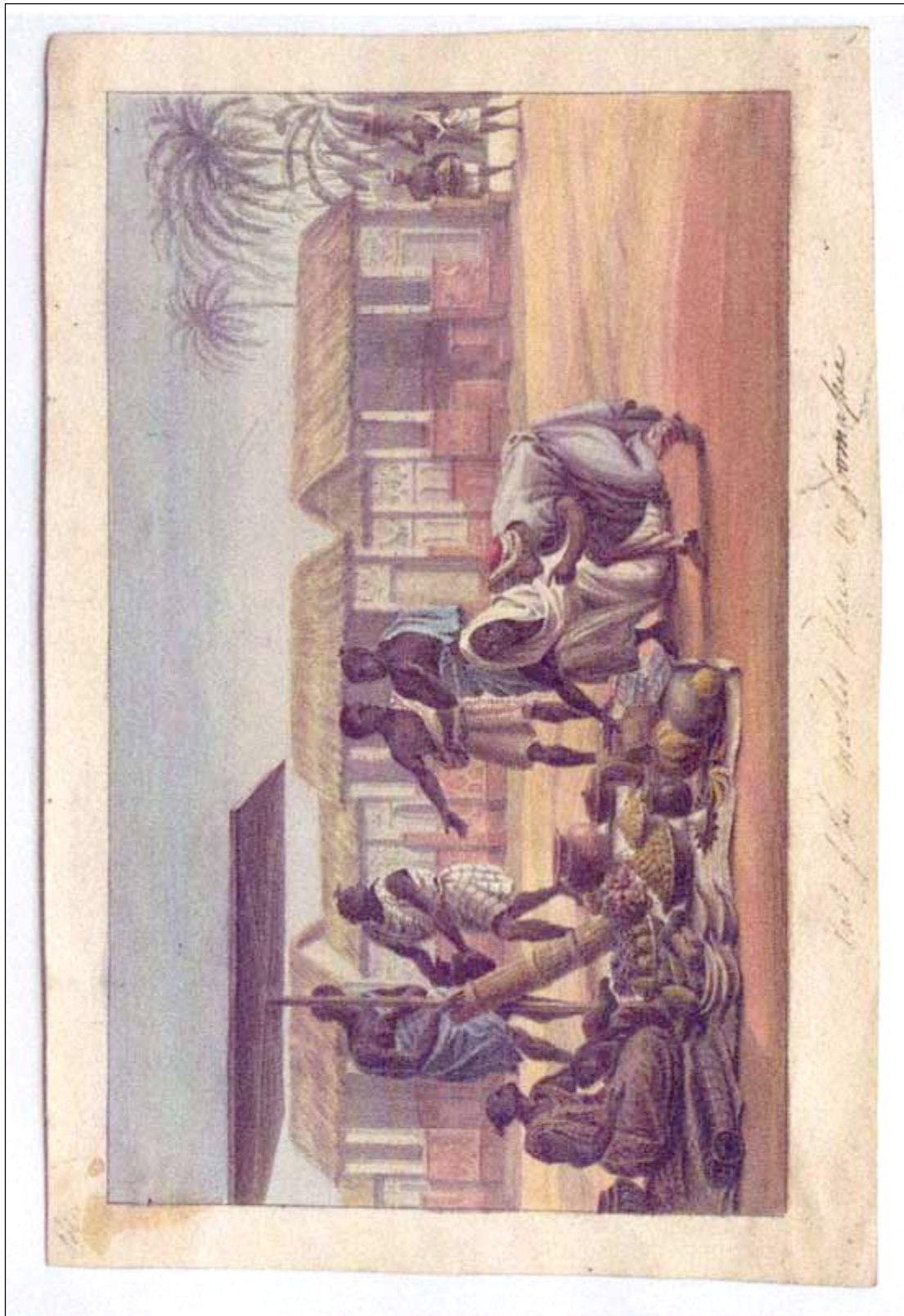


Figure 5.12: 'Part of the market place in Coomassie'
(An unsigned water colour sketch)

possible scenarios. Firstly, she may have worked up some of her husband's sketches after his death in order to illustrate her own work. Secondly, some of these images represent artistic collaborations between Sarah and her husband or finally, Sarah was responsible for creating some of the imagery that was published under Bowdich's name. An analysis of the most complex, impressive and famous of Bowdich's illustrations 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' sheds further light on the question of authorship by yielding more circumstantial evidence. In the section to follow I will analyse how and in what ways this image was structured, what pre-existing illustrations may have influenced its composition and what meanings Bowdich intended to convey to readers regarding the Asante, the British Mission and himself.

No extant sketches of the 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' have been discovered and it is possible that none ever existed. Indeed, evidence suggests that this image was in fact composed from a series of smaller sketches depicting events, scenes and people that were amalgamated into a much larger image using a *collage* or pastiche technique. I have already suggested that this technique was used by Sarah in the production of illustrations that were published after she was widowed in 1824. The Yam Custom image in particular, shares distinct similarities with illustrations that appear in Sarah's 1835 publication. Plate I, for instance depicts a funeral scene (fig. 5.13) which Sarah stated in her accompanying text '[...] is taken from a large original drawing, the sketches of which were made in Fantee' (Lee 1835, 363). I have been unable to track down the drawing or the sketches she alludes to but it appears they may also have formed the basis for some of the crowd scenes that feature prominently in the Yam Custom image. The way the figures are drawn, their lively attitudes and poses, the detailing of the costumes and the division of the action into upper and lower registers are so similar in arrangement that it presupposes that the same artist was responsible for drafting both.

Plate IV, which depicts a session of the Asante Council also includes a number of elements that appear in the Yam Custom image as well as other illustrations that are published in Bowdich's account of the Mission (fig. 5.14). Firstly, the figure of Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame, who is shown resting his left arm on the head of a slave, wears what appears to be the same costume and distinctively pointed necklace as those depicted in the Yam Custom

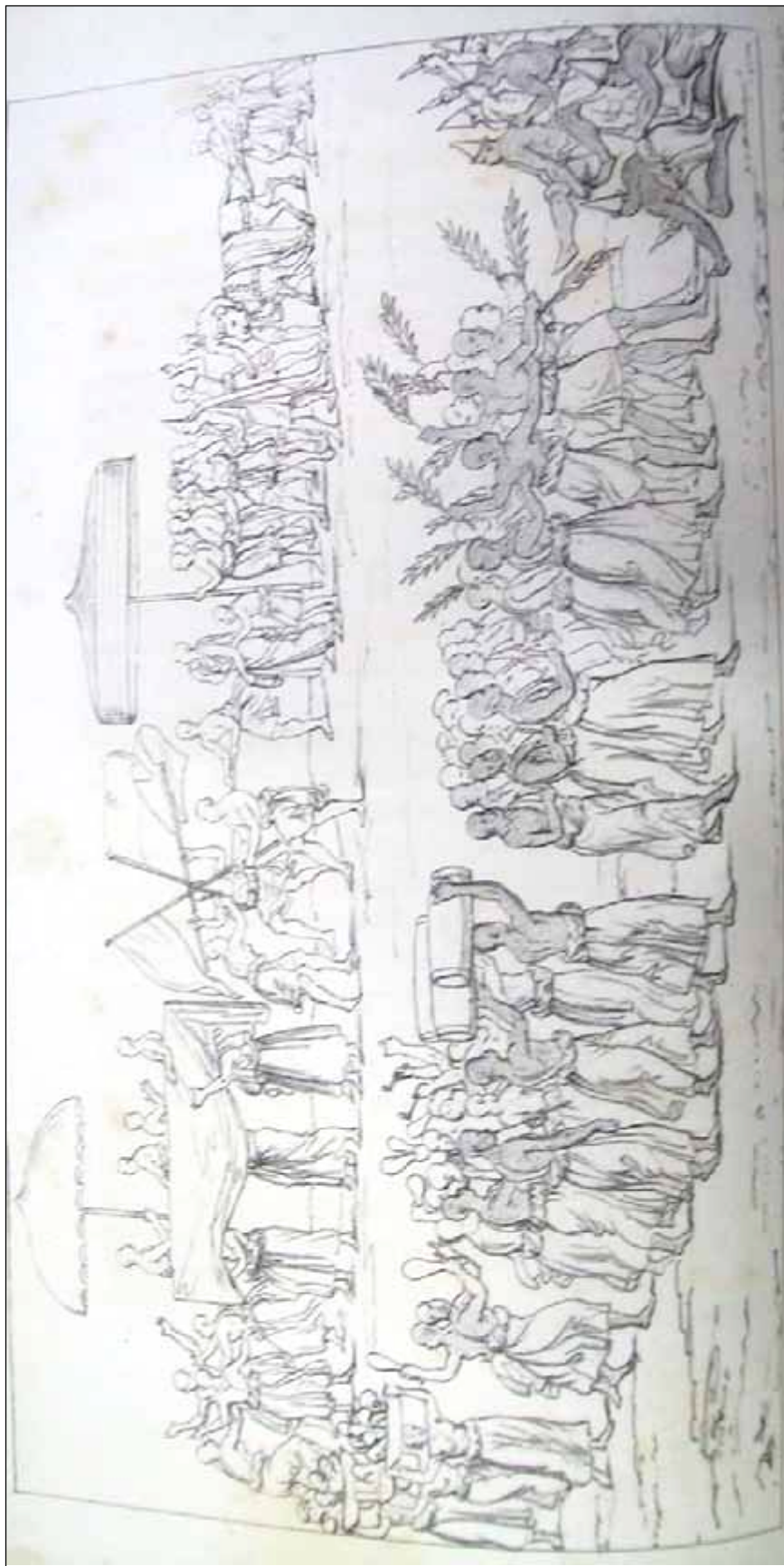


Figure 5.13: Plate I
(Lee 1835, 30/31)

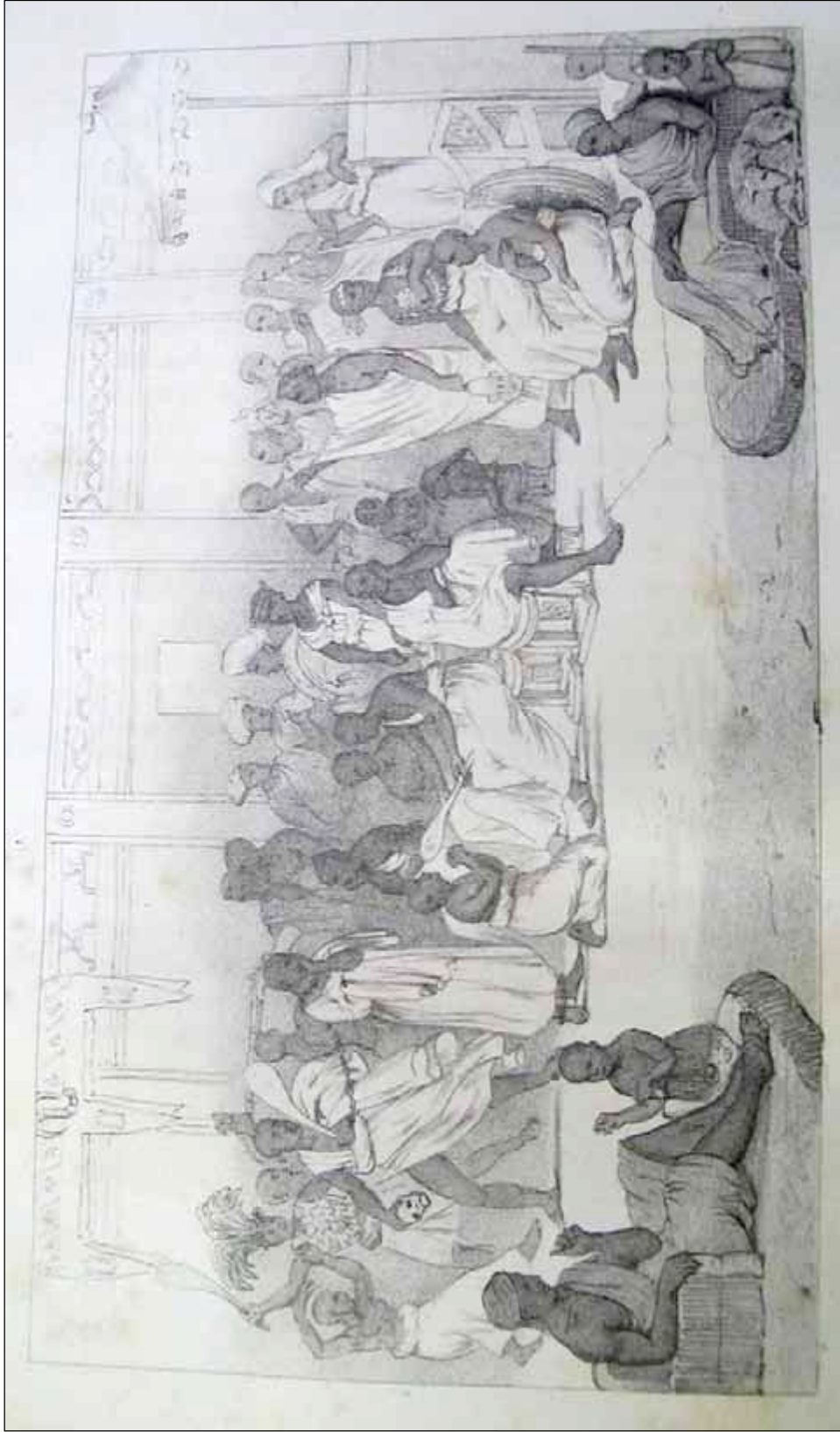


Figure 5.14: Plate IV
(Lee 1835, 164/165)

image. Secondly, the partially drawn canopy on the far left of the scene is identical to that shown on the far right of the Yam Custom image which also has mirrors inserted into the elongated flaps of the valance and an elephant's trunk and tusks suspended from the finial. Thirdly, the architectural detailing of the courtyard shown in the background closely resembles that of the great courtyard as it is depicted in the two illustrations that appear in Bowdich's published account and the watercolour sketches painted by Sarah (see figs. 5.4 and 5.10). How is it possible that these scenes appear in Sarah's book nineteen years after Bowdich returned from Kumase and eleven years after his death? I have already established that she did not go to Kumase herself and could not, therefore, have observed these scenes first hand and Bowdich probably only drew schematic sketches given the restrictions on his time and his level of draftsmanship. The only viable conclusion that can be drawn from this is that Sarah was responsible for drawing some, if not all of the scenes that make up the Yam Custom image under the direction of her husband.

However, the figures that populate the Yam Custom image and other illustrations associated with Bowdich's account lack the delicacy of touch and the refined treatment of similar subjects that appear in the illustrations published by Sarah later in life. Instead of flowing garments and classical poses the figures in the Yam Custom are drawn in a cartoon-like fashion and the figure of the captain in 'A Captain in his War Dress' (fig. 5.1) is, when compared with the same subject in Plate V (fig. 5.10), a caricature. This incongruity of styles could have occurred as a result of several possibilities. Firstly, when drawing the imagery for Bowdich's account Sarah may have deliberately adapted her drawing-style to make it appear more masculine. This pre-supposes that she was complicit in Bowdich's plan to publish this imagery under his own name. Secondly, some of the finer detailing of her original drawings could have been omitted as a result of the lithographer transferring the imagery onto a stone or plate for reproduction. Finally, the publisher John Murray may have requested that the imagery be made literally and figuratively cruder in order to boost sales of the account. Other aspects also indicate that the imagery was being manipulated in particular ways by one or more of the people involved in the publication process.

The use of a pastiche technique to compose an image also pre-supposes a selection process that is predicated on particular criteria. In the case of the Yam Custom image it appears that

Bowdich selected those elements that demonstrated the best and the worst aspects of Asante culture as he had encountered and experienced it. Hence, the inclusion of sensational elements, such as the figures of executioners waving human skulls and a bloodied man being led away to execution, were not only calculated to shock but also offered readers the prospect of a voyeuristic thrill. Representations of the Asante were therefore structured in accordance with several sharply opposed binary extremes – good/bad, civilised/primitive, innocent/bestial, godly/ungodly which are implicitly and explicitly conveyed in the way that some of the figures are arranged and re-presented in the composition.

The majority of the crowd that encircles the Asantehene in the Yam Custom image are shown standing or seated in orderly ranks watching events as they unfold or slowly making their way, as part of chiefly retinues, to their allotted place in the great assembly. Others however, are shown in contorted and grotesque attitudes that emphasise their participation in violent and frenzied activities which contrast sharply with the calm orderliness displayed by those around them. These figures are dressed either in bizarre costumes or are shown almost naked with their bodies painted in intricate patterns. In effect, a dichotomy has been inscribed into this image through the depiction of two stereotypical tropes, ‘the noble savage’ and the ‘primitive brute,’ examples of which are juxtaposed with one another in order to make the contrast between them appear more acute. Furthermore, the pull-out panoramic image of the Yam Custom is folded into the published narrative in such a way that the reader is confronted with the more savage elements of Asante society first (see fig. 2.15). These are preceded by incrementally more civilised depictions until the figures of the Mission officers and the Muslims are finally exposed to view in the very last part of the image.

My previous analysis demonstrates that there are many encoded potential meanings within the Yam Custom image but which of these does Bowdich mean to privilege? The illustration ostensibly depicts a royal gathering but it also represents aspects associated with a barbaric rite. The caption or title in this case, literally spells out the fact that Bowdich intends this image to be a depiction of ‘The First Day of the Yam Custom.’ As such, the meaning of the image does not lie exclusively in the image itself, but in the conjunction of image and title. In effect, the discourse of written language and the discourse of representation are both used by Bowdich to produce and ‘fix’ the meaning and, as has been argued earlier, the position of

the image within the text reinforces this ‘reading.’ However, despite labelling the image and placing it at the point in the narrative where he describes the assembly of chiefs, the identification of the event is problematised by the inclusion of other elements that are not explained in the accompanying description. This suggests that they did not take place as part of the Yam Custom but relate instead to other events such as the state reception. The possible conflation of ‘the barbarous but curious spectacle’ of the reception held on the 19th May and the ‘splendid entertainment’ of the Yam Custom held on Saturday 6th September 1817, is compounded by the fact that when describing the events of the Yam Custom Bowdich directed the reader no less than five times to those passages that give details of the state reception.

Bowdich made it clear in his published narrative that his participation at the Yam Custom was primarily limited to attending the assembly of chiefs. At this magnificent event tributary chiefs processed through Kumase and swore a public oath of allegiance to the Asantehene who sat enthroned in state in the great market place (see chapter II). The spectacle of multitudes of people encircling the Asantehene carrying and wearing all manner of gold ornaments and regalia appears to have shared several striking similarities with that of the state reception. In fact, Bowdich explicitly made this point twice, once at the beginning of his description of the Yam Custom when he stated ‘[...] the scene was marked with all the splendour of our own *entrée*, and many additional novelties’ and again at the end when he commented that ‘[...] this description will be rendered more illustrative of the drawing, by referring to that of our *entrée*’ (Bowdich 1819, 275-278). As a consequence, these two referrals strongly indicate that this image illustrates dramatic moments associated with both events.

During his description of the Yam Custom Bowdich referred three times to scenes in this illustration which appear to have occurred only during the state reception. Firstly, the reader’s attention is drawn to ‘[...] a group of captains dancing and firing,’ on the extreme left of the picture frame which are similar to those ‘[...] described in our *entrée*’ (Bowdich 1819, 275). Secondly, when describing the events depicted in the middle-foreground Bowdich noted that ‘[...] in the area below is an unfortunate victim, tortured in the manner described in the *entrée*’ (*ibid*, 276). Finally, the reader is directed for a third time to consult

his description of the reception when he described the main figure of the King, '[...] seated in a chair of ebony and gold, and surrounded in much the same way as described at the first interview' (*ibid*, 277). The presence of these three referrals points to the possibility that Bowdich originally intended this image to illustrate his description of the state reception rather than the Yam Custom. It is only the presence of the title which indicates the illustration refers to another event. A further circumstance that supports this interpretation concerns Ajay, one of the Asantehene's four royal linguists, who is documented as having departed Kumase for Accra on or around the 29th May 1817 to settle a dispute on the coast. He is reported as having returned on Tuesday 21st October 1817, and could not, therefore, have been present at the Yam Custom rites held in September, but presumably was at the state reception which occurred in May.

Two other aspects of this image however, appear to relate only to the Yam Custom festivities. The first concerns the group of painted figures that appear in the middle foreground who Bowdich stated are depicted in the act of '[...] dancing up to the King in the most extravagant attitudes beating time with their long knives on the skulls of state enemies' (Bowdich 1819, 277). The second concerns the inclusion of the officers of the Mission who at no point during the state reception were permitted to sit with the chiefs in the market place. If, however, Bowdich is to be believed, four months later they were stationed at the centre of proceedings during the assembly of chiefs. I contend that the figures of Bowdich and his companions are included as part of this image not only to provide a literal, metaphorical and moral contrast to the Asante but also to offer a reassuring presence. In this way, Bowdich invites readers to compare and contrast the appearance and bearing of both parties and make value judgements on the behaviour and conduct displayed. Furthermore, their co-location also promotes the close commercial relationships that existed between the British and the Asante as well as other European powers, which are represented in this image by their flags. Commerce is also hinted at by the portrayals of Asante personnel wearing items of European clothing and the display of status symbols, some of which derive from the trade with Europeans. The Mission officers are also shown surrounded by examples of legitimate post-slave trade goods made from a variety of materials including gold, ivory, wood, leather and pottery. Bowdich collected examples of some of these products whilst in Kumase which he subsequently donated to the British Museum.

This image also provides important evidence of the internal social structure of the British Mission itself which is revealed via the deployment of personnel on this occasion. The officers are shown occupying a discrete area which is delineated by their personnel. They are flanked by two Company soldiers, the one on the left acts as a flag-bearer for the Mission's Union Jack and the one on the right stands guard holding a musket in his left hand. The space between the soldiers is populated by servants and retainers, three of whom hold aloft folded green umbrellas. In the foreground sit the linguists who acted as interpreters and mediators for the Mission during the trade negotiations. Bowdich is depicted seated in the centre with Hutchison and Tedlie positioned on either side of him. This arrangement clearly reflects the state of affairs following Mr James' recall on the 5th July 1817, and Bowdich's subsequent promotion. The figure of Bowdich is shown with his left hand resting on his left hip, whilst Tedlie and Hutchison raise their right and left arms respectively as if toasting or saluting him. Bowdich's pose also mirrors to a certain extent the 'strong' pose of the Asantehene.

I suggest that the British officers' physical proximity to the Asantehene also indicates that they enjoyed Osei Tutu Kwame's especial favour on the eve of the ratification of the Anglo-Asante trade treaty. If Bowdich's illustration faithfully represents the events of Saturday 6th September, it would seem that he and his companions had either appropriated, or been accorded, the singular honour of deploying their personnel in an arc adjoining that formed by the Asantehene's court. As such, the relatively close positioning of the officers to the Asantehene may also have been intended by Bowdich to indicate the intimate nature of the friendship that was about to be formalised between the two nations. However, Bowdich used several artistic devices that visually subvert this scene. Firstly, by depicting himself using a larger scale than that of the Asantehene, Bowdich made himself visually more prominent and, as a result he appears as the more assertive and powerful figure. Secondly, the Asantehene is not shown seated on a raised dias as custom demands, but is instead depicted sitting on a chair which is placed directly on the ground without a footrest. This is, without doubt, inaccurate as the Asante believed that if the monarch came into direct contact with the earth he would cause a famine. This error can only be explained by the fact that in order to portray himself literally and metaphorically as being on the same footing as the Asantehene, Bowdich deliberately omitted those items of regalia that maintained the disparity in height

between them and by extension power and status. Finally, the conjoined arc of the British officers effectively acts as a visual counterbalance to that of the Asantehene and his court. In this way, the partial appropriation of the static display of royal power was used by Bowdich, in this illustration, to imply a virtual power share. In effect, Bowdich insinuated himself and his fellow officers into the literal and metaphorical frame in order to emphasise the shared endeavour of the Mission but the enhanced scale and frontal elevation of Bowdich's figure serves to draw attention to him alone, and in this way he visually appropriates the success of the Mission to himself. This image therefore, constitutes a clever piece of personal and political propaganda.

The way in which the Mission members are depicted in this image also hints at the growing importance attached to adopting an air of professional detachment when taking part in such ceremonies where Company representatives were exposed to the scrutiny of native audiences. In the last decade of the eighteenth century Archibald Dalziel published three monochrome illustrations that depict similar scenes of Company representatives participating in rites during a visit to the King of Dahomey (fig. 5.15). These too are self-styled representations but they show officers lolling about in attitudes of indifference or superiority, occasionally they appear to be drunk or are shown coquettishly returning the greetings of native women (figs. 5.16/5.17). In contrast, Bowdich and his companions are depicted as stiff, formal, self-contained observer/participants who remain respectfully alert despite taking a literal back seat during the events which unfold around them.

If we compare Bowdich's image of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' with the much smaller monochrome illustration published by Joseph Dupuis entitled 'Representation of the Court of Select Audience, Costume and the Ceremony of Swearing Fidelity to the British Government' it is clear that he has used Bowdich's image as a model for his own (fig. 5.18). The way in which some of the seated onlookers are arranged with their backs towards the viewer along the front of the picture frame and the poses of some of the standing figures echoes those in Bowdich's Yam Custom illustration. The similarities between these two images also extends to the representations of Dupuis and his colleague, who are shown seated side-by-side on a raised platform surrounded by a retinue which includes two soldiers, who flank them. The soldier on the right of Dupuis bears a Union Jack whilst the one on the

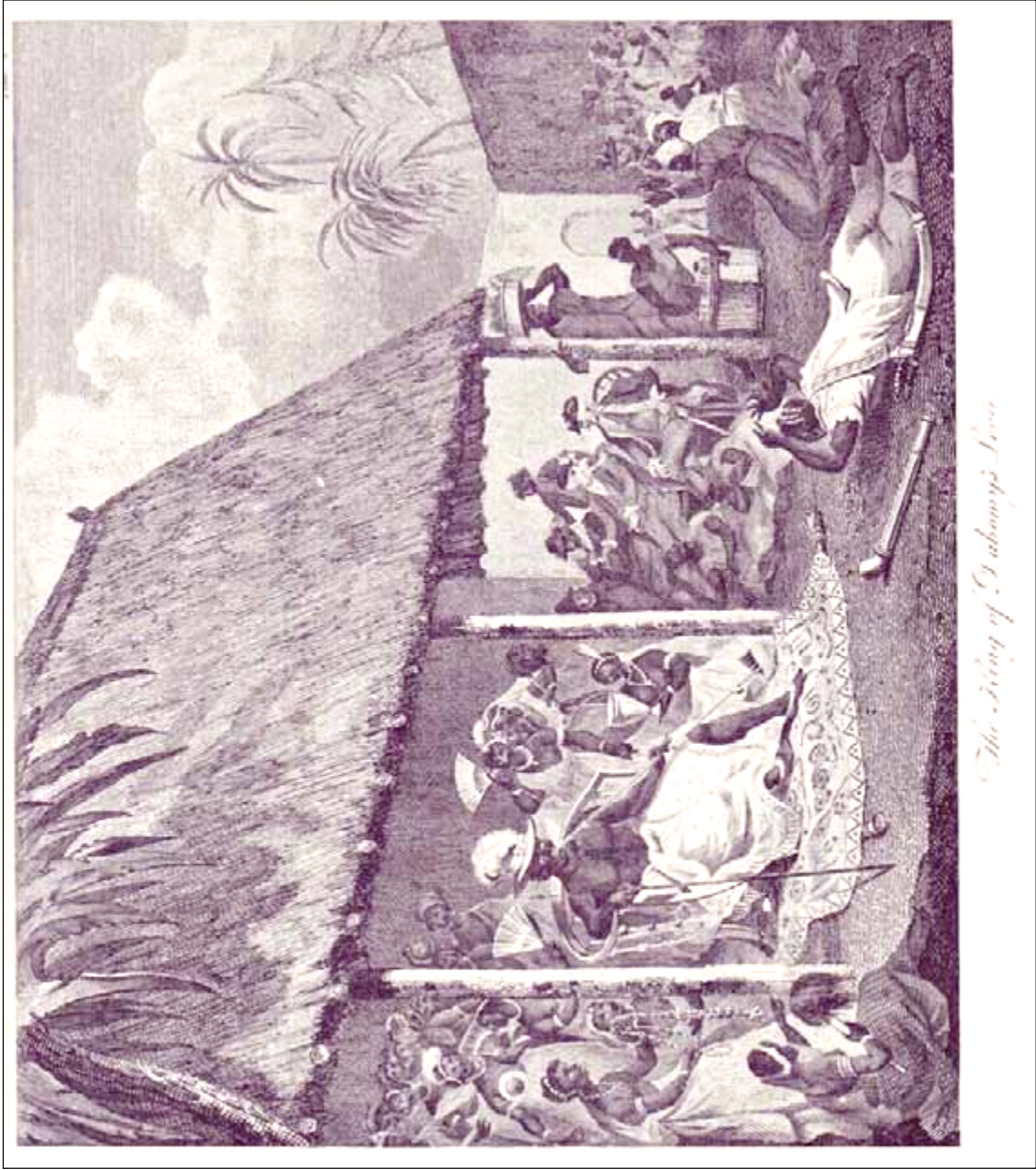


Figure 5.15: Plate I 'The King of Dahomy's Levee'
(Dalzel 1793, viii/ix)



Figure 5.16: Plate IV 'Last day of the annual customs for watering the graves of the King's ancestors' (Dalziel 1793, 136/137)

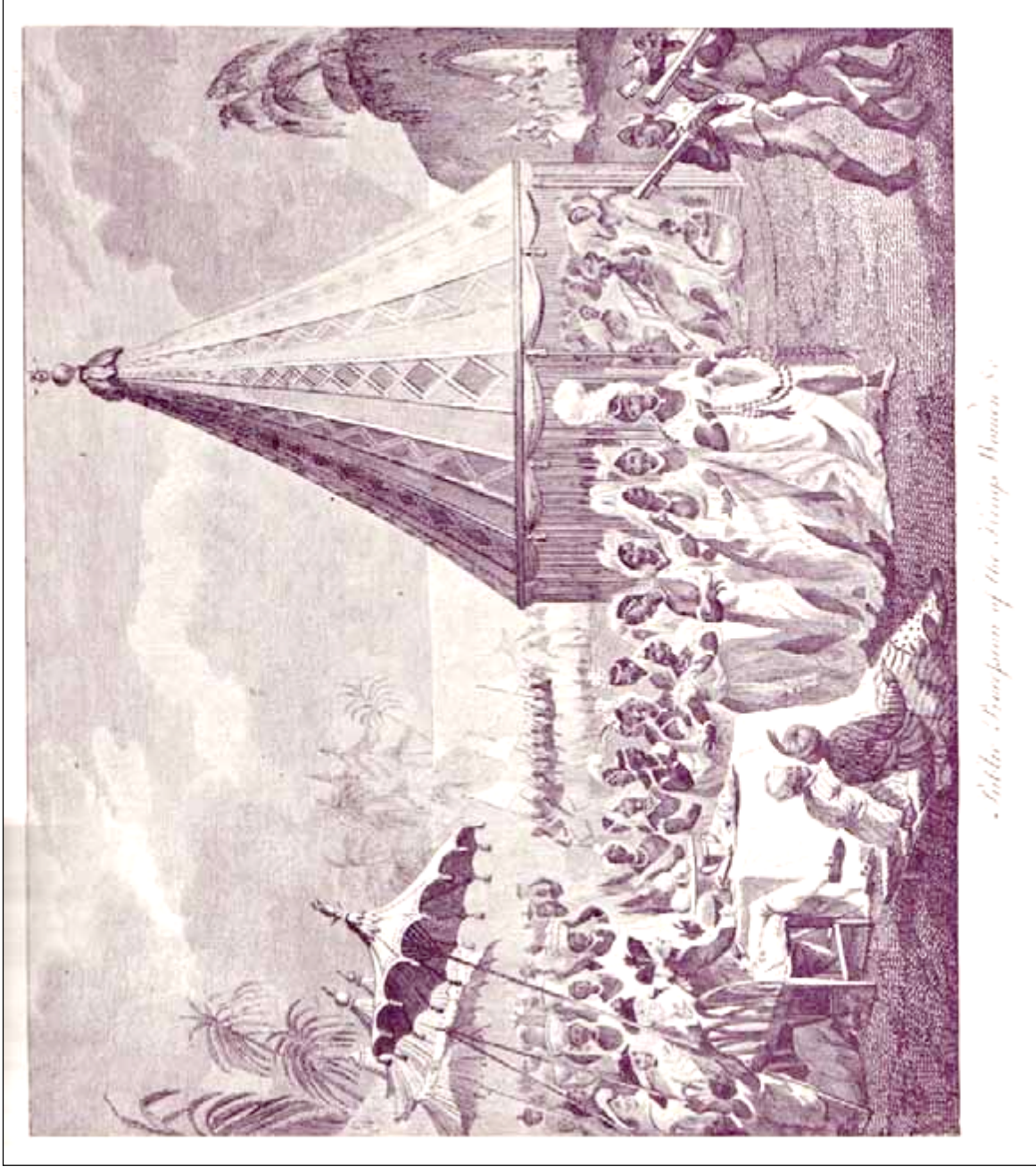


Figure 5.17: 'Public Procession of the King's Women &c'
(Dalzel 1793, 146/147)

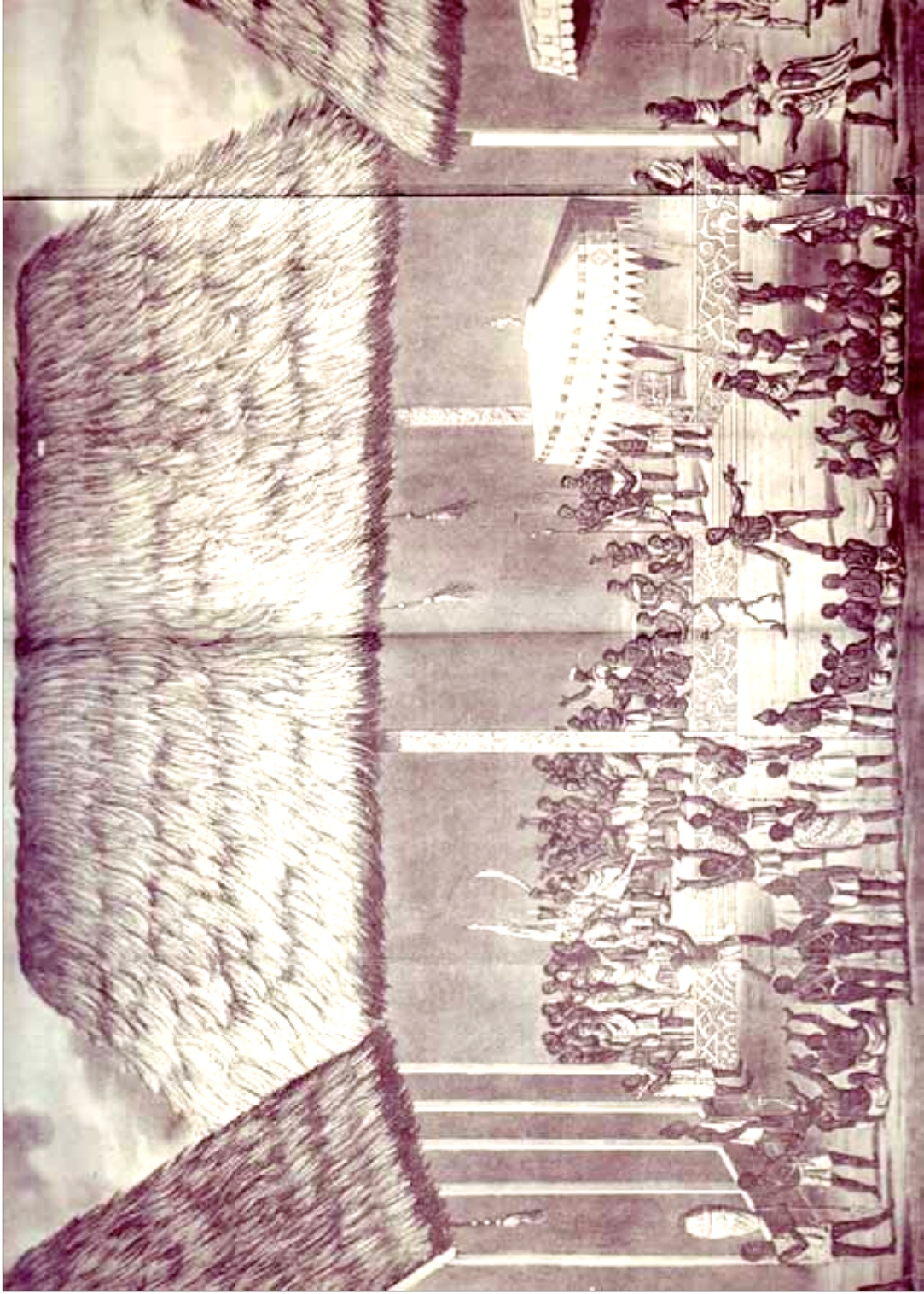


Figure 5.18: Plate I 'Representation of the court of select audience, costume and the ceremony of swearing fidelity to the British Government' (Dupuis 1824, Frontispiece)

left stands to attention. Dupuis' companion is shown side-on with his right arm raised in the act of taking a drink from a bowl. Dupuis depicts himself in full dress uniform minus his cocked hat. He is positioned at a slight angle and is shown in the same pose as that of Bowdich in the Yam Custom image, with his left arm flexed and his right arm lowered by his side. Interestingly, the Asantehene is shown entering the courtyard on foot with his back towards the viewer at the head of his entourage who follow him. I suggest that in depicting the Asantehene in this way Dupuis renders him faceless and undermines his authority and power whereas Bowdich gives him almost equal billing as himself in the Yam Custom image. In effect, both of these illustrations are designed to promote the authors as Company men and establish their ownership of the respective experiences depicted.

Despite the presence of the title 'The First Day of the Yam Custom,' Bowdich was not actually interested in accurately representing the Asante, the British or the Yam Custom as they appeared at a particular historical moment in time but rather, by combining descriptions and imagery, he tried to expose readers to a vicarious experience of encounter. In cross-referencing these two discourses he attempted to impart something of his own sense impressions and convey the indescribable effects of heat, smoke, noise, fatigue, claustrophobia, exposure to violence and sensory over-stimulation that he was subjected to. As a result, his descriptions of the state reception, the Yam Custom and his illustration also function as sites of appropriation in that they allow the reader to encounter and experience the Asante, but only from his perspective and via his mediation.

Given this, I also argue that Bowdich's image is the site of a hyper-environment in that it too is aimed at collapsing boundaries and conflating time and space. The warriors on the far left of the image look out and are posed as if running towards the reader, which gives the impression that the explosive display of firepower and barely suppressed violence is to some extent directed towards them. The illustration is cut off abruptly either side of the picture frame which implies that there is no end to the processions or the crowds of onlookers suggesting that the spectacle is infinite. The scale of the image is such that, in order to appreciate the finer details, the reader has to move closer to it thereby unwittingly adding themselves to the sea of faces amassed in the crowd. The placement of the figures in the foreground on the edge of the picture frame also adds to the impression that the reader is on

the literal and metaphorical verge of joining the *melee*. The eye simply cannot take it all in and as virtual spectators, we place ourselves in the position where we too are overwhelmed by the spectacle.

Part Three: Exhibiting Asante

By 1817 the practice of assembling a collection of artefacts was increasingly cited as being one of the purposes of overseas exploration and travel. In a dispatch dated 15th November 1816, the Africa Committee enshrined the principle of making such a collection in the objectives of the first British Mission to Asante. Included in their written instructions was a direction for the officers ‘[...] to procure and bring away (with the consent of the chiefs) any specimens of vegetable and mineral productions they may be able’ (T.70/74:1). Interestingly however, the Governor-in-Chief did not include the same direction in his own instructions which were issued separately to Frederick James on the 9th April 1817 (see Appendix 2). This ambiguous situation probably contributed to the confusion that was generated in respect of the legal ownership of the items that Bowdich subsequently assembled. It also appears that in addition to collecting specimens of vegetable and mineral productions, Bowdich extended this objective to include all manner of man-made artefacts as well. His inclusion of these items probably reflects his personal concern to capitalise on, and exploit, his Asante experiences when he returned to Britain. A collection of artefacts would enable him to do this effectively as it would provide him with the means to satisfy three closely associated yet divergent ends. Firstly, a collection would provide him with personal mementoes and souvenirs of the extraordinary people and places he had encountered. Secondly, it could also be drawn upon to provide gifts to influential patrons; and thirdly, it could be publicly exhibited thereby establishing the collector’s achievements, credibility and reputation.

Bowdich and his wife arrived off the Cornish coastline sometime in late June or early July 1818, bringing with them a collection of artefacts which included the first Gennet cat (*Genetta Genetta*) to be landed alive on British soil (fig. 5.19). Bowdich did not refer to this animal at all in his published account, which is curious considering he was eager to claim all of the achievements of the Mission to himself. The circumstances surrounding the acquisition and presentation of this cat are somewhat confused and in many ways presage the problems of acquisition and provenance that surround the rest of Bowdich’s assemblage.

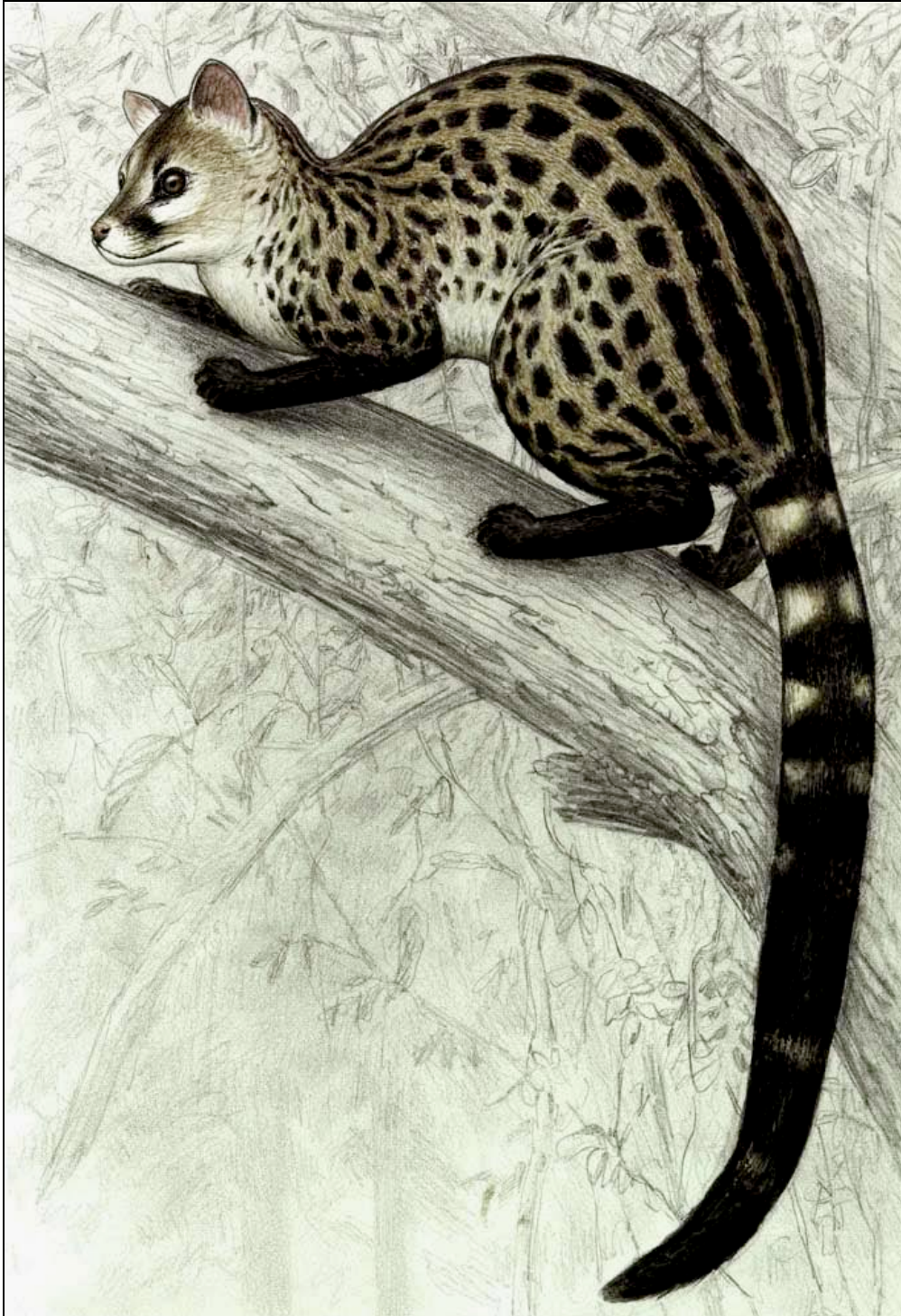
The first mention of this animal occurs in a diary entry dated Saturday 8th November 1817, which was written by Thomas Hutchison, in his capacity as the first British resident in Kumase. He recorded how on this day ‘[...] after nine o’clock at night Boitinne, [Kwasi Boaten (d.1839)] King of Dwabin [Juaben] paid me a private visit, and brought me a present of two curious Gennet cats’ (Bowdich 1819, 394). However, eighteen years later in a footnote in her 1835 publication Sarah offered the following alternative version;

‘This panther was one of two, taken at the same time from their dam in the forest and presented to the king of Ashantee. He kept them in his palace for some months, when the largest and strongest, killed the other in a romping match, and was afterwards sent to us for ourselves, or to bestow on any one whom we pleased’ (Lee 1835, 348).

Sarah’s claim that the cat was a gift from the Asantehene to her and Bowdich is almost certainly untrue. Firstly, such animals were the prerogative of chiefs on the Gold Coast and as a result would not have been presented to anyone but of equal rank such as the Governor-in-Chief. Secondly, despite the fact Sarah stated that ‘[...] his first and royal master the King had named him Sai’ it is probable that this appellation, which is a corruption of the royal title ‘Zey,’ was given to him after he had left Kumase in order to associate him more closely with the Asantehene (*ibid*).

A number of appropriations are therefore implied by these conflicting statements, but it seems reasonable to surmise that Sai was originally presented to Hutchison on behalf of the Governor by the Juabenhene in reciprocation of a gift of military-style clothing and a dress sword which he received from the Governor at Cape Coast Castle on Thursday 6th November 1817. Three months later Hutchison left Kumase taking Sai with him in order to avoid the start of hostilities between the Asante and Gyaaman. Despite Sarah’s assertions that ‘[...] as he would have been very much in our way, we resigned him to higher authorities’ it is probable that the decision was taken by the Governor and Council to present the cat as a gift to the King of England from the King of Asante (Lee 1835, 348). As Bowdich and Sarah were about to embark on their return voyage, it made sense for them to accompany the animal.

Figure 3.19: A Gennet Cat by J. Norwood, Paris
(www.colbustrust.org/otherwildlife.html)



Sarah's attempt to appropriate the gift of this cat can be explained by the fact that in 1835 she was keen to honour her late husband's memory and maximise his status, and by extension, her own. She went on to describe how Sai was nearly drowned in the roads off Cape Coast whilst being loaded aboard the store-ship and how, in sheer desperation they fed him on the carcasses of parrots and other dead birds when they ran low of rations. She went on to relate how, having arrived safely;

‘[...] he was eventually given to the Duchess of York. Her Royal Highness, however, would not send him to Oatlands till she herself returned to that place, and for a time consigned him to the better care of Mr Cross, [Edward Cross] then at Exeter Change. The day previous to her leaving town, she called to see him; he was loose, and played with her most familiarly, but on the following morning, when one of her people went to fetch him, he was dead’ (Lee 1835, 348-349).

Given the fact that Exeter Exchange was located on the Strand, in the heart of central London, Sai was probably the first exhibit associated with the Asante Mission to be publicly displayed in England.

Circumstantial evidence also suggests that within six weeks or so of arrival, Bowdich presented the majority of the Asante artefacts he had collected whilst in Kumase to the British Museum. The timing of this can be ascertained in part by a letter of thanks written to Bowdich by Dr William Elford Leach (1790-1836), the assistant curator of Natural History, on the 6th August 1818. This letter also contains the first clues as to what was presented:

‘As the Trustees of the British Museum will not hold a meeting until November next, I think it my duty to thank you in their name, for the very valuable acquisitions which you have presented to the Museum, consisting of household implements, instruments and works of art and manufacturers, together with several rich and highly valuable specimens of reptiles and insects, several of which are new, and the whole great acquisitions to our national establishment of Natural History’ (Bowdich 1819b, *The African Committee* 79).

Unfortunately no itemised record was made of these artefacts and specimens and it remains unclear as to whether Bowdich permanently donated, or merely lent them to the Museum at this time. Furthermore, evidence indicates that he may not have had the authority to do this, as the Africa Committee took great exception when it became known and argued that the cast

gold items were the property of the Company. An annotated note written by Simon Cock, Secretary of the African Committee, stated that ‘[...] it appears by the despatches of the Governor and Council that these [items] were sent to the Committee, but Mr B. being the bearer, thought fit to present them to the Museum in his own name without their consent’ (Quoted in Ward 1966, Endnote 147). Bowdich countered this accusation by claiming that the gold-work was intended by the Asantehene as a gift for the British Museum, an institution he had told his Majesty about whilst he was resident in Kumase. The confusing situation concerning the legal ownership of these artefacts reflects the fact that ideas surrounding property rights were far more fluid and less transparent at this time and so unresolved issues such as this were not uncommon. What is clear is that the Asantehene must have either given his consent and/or presented Bowdich with examples of gold-work as the creation and distribution of such items was closely controlled by him (fig. 5.20). If the members of the Africa Committee had succeeded in claiming these items it is extremely doubtful they would have survived to the present day as they would have quickly disappeared or been melted down.

Bowdich’s presentation of the Asante assemblage to the British Museum was probably motivated by two concerns: to safeguard the artefacts he had collected and to personally appropriate all the achievements and recognition of the Asante Mission to himself by controlling everything that had been collected and generated as a result of it. Part of this



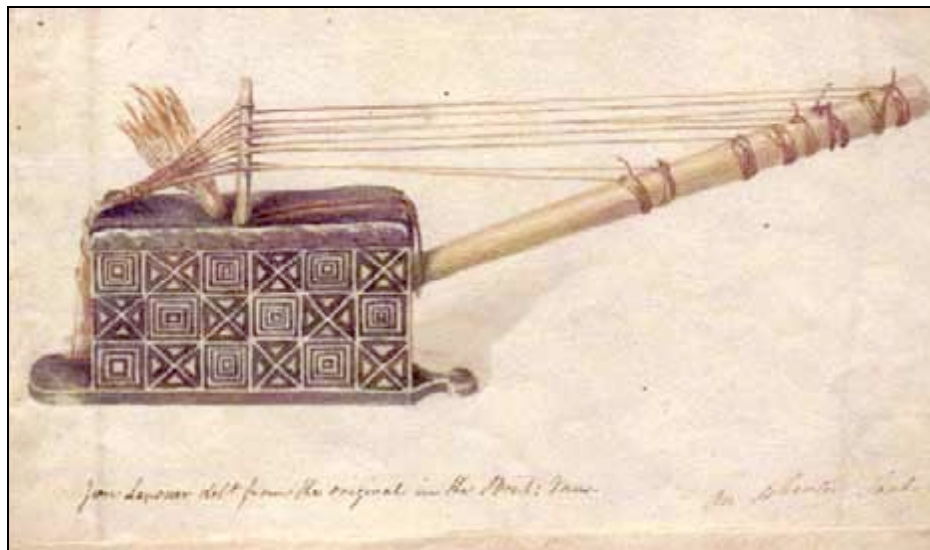
process also involved him extending the referential relationship that he had established between text and image in his publication to include these artefacts too. This appears to be a unique occurrence as no other explorer at this time links all three sites of knowledge production together in this way.

Bowdich's directions and references concerning some of the artefacts he collected were concentrated into two chapters which appear in Part II of his published account. The majority occur in Chapter VI entitled 'Architecture, Arts and Manufactures' but a further reference is also made in Chapter X entitled 'Music.' Once again Bowdich combined descriptions and imagery to create a context for the artefacts he collected and to fix, to some extent, their interpretation when on public display in the British Museum. Suffice it to say that these cross-referrals were also designed by him to direct reader's footsteps to the British Museum in the same way as he directed their eyes to descriptive passages and illustrations in his narrative. This may also explain why detailed illustrations of these artefacts were not provided in the published account, as this would have dissuaded people from going to view them in person. Secondly, the strong association that was created via these artefacts between Bowdich and the British Museum not only served to validate his experiences, but more importantly, enabled him to gain institutional and public recognition as an explorer and a scientist. As such, it is impossible to dismiss the notion that Bowdich appropriated the Asante assemblage and presented it to the British Museum in his own name in order to forge a permanent association in the mind of the public between himself, the Mission and his published account.

Malcolm McLeod was the first scholar to bring Bowdich's activities as a collector to the attention of others in his publication entitled 'T. E. Bowdich: An Early Collector in West Africa' (1977). In this article he pointed out the fact that Bowdich's collection of local art and craft work represents one of the earliest attempts to make a systematic collection of an African society (McLeod 1977, 83). He also highlighted that it illuminated the technology available to Asante at the height of its power and that it indicated the extent of the trading systems which ultimately linked Asante via the Sahara to the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds (*ibid*). Finally, he pointed out that the collection allows us some insight into the ways Bowdich and other Europeans attempted to understand those previously

Figure 3.21. A watercolour sketch of the *sanko* given to Sarah Bowdich and subsequently donated to the British Museum (Landseer, J. 1820)

unimagined and unimaginable societies which they were to encounter' (*ibid*). McLeod raised several other issues in the same article: that Bowdich did not disclose how he went about forming his collection; that the Asante actively helped him; and that some of the items, such as the splendid leather treasure-bag, were in fact gifts. There is no doubt that some artefacts were given to the Company, to the Governor and to Bowdich as presents by members of the Asante elite but there is at least one other gift that has not previously been acknowledged. A stringed musical instrument known as a *sanko* was originally presented to Sarah by Yokokroko, the king's ironer when he visited her at her apartment in Cape Coast Castle sometime during July 1817 (Lee 1835, 178-179).



Footnotes that appear in Sarah's 1835 publication also reveal that she collected and preserved several specimens of reptiles and insects during her stay on the Gold Coast. In one footnote she stated that 'Mr Tedlie, [...] found another [tarantula] in his apartments, I preserved that, and it proved to be a new species, which is now lodged in the British Museum' (Lee 1835, 150-151). Her collecting activities and contributions have, up until now, been disregarded as a result of their appropriation by Bowdich. However, in writing about them after his death Sarah may have belatedly attempted to reclaim one or two of her contributions to natural science.

In his article McLeod also identified two important but contradictory aspects regarding Bowdich's collection: firstly, '[...] that it has a deliberately archaic character due to the exclusion of artefacts that either derived from or were of European origin' and secondly, '[...] that his collection and observations demonstrate clearly that the Asante were linked to many other regions by a vast network of trade and communication' (McLeod 1977, 93). I would add that Bowdich's collecting practices and his subsequent donation to the British Museum can only be fully understood in the context of the objectives of the Mission, his own personal ambition and in relation to his publication. When viewed in respect of these three things it is unsurprising that he systematically collected examples of products that typified Asante manufacturing processes and technological developments. This is completely in keeping with the fact that commerce and trade were the driving force behind the Mission. By writing about, illustrating and collecting such examples he hoped to do several things: to provide British industrialists and manufacturers with information regarding suitable imports; to show-case the types of exploitable raw materials available on the Gold Coast; and to advertise the skills of its people. He may also have hoped to entice new traders to join the Africa Company and speculate in trade to West Africa now that slavery had been abolished. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that he also provides in his chapter entitled 'Architecture, Arts and Manufactures,' precise details concerning the production costs of some items and the prices they would fetch at Cape Coast. This is just the sort of information prospective traders would need before speculating in this type of overseas market. For example, when describing the stool (fig. 5.22) he stated, 'they sell such a stool for about three shillings, [but] in Accra or Fantee it would be twenty' he went on to mention that the '[...] cloth of Ashantee manufacture cost £8 in the country' and notes that 'the price of painting the cloth from Dagomba was one ackie' (Bowdich 1819, 311-313). He also produced a more comprehensive table as part of his chapter on trade which compares and contrasts a whole range of trade items, some of which he collected and brought back to England. As a result, Bowdich was the first European to situate Asante within a larger economic and social context and to document some of the economic mechanisms that were operating at a regional level, in particular the standardised use of cowries, cloth and gold-dust as units of currency and their respective exchange rates in Dagomba, Yandi and Kumase.

Figure 3.22. The Asante stool, painted cloth and woven textile collected by Thomas Bowdich whilst in Kumase and presented in 1818 to the British Museum (Photographs reproduced by kind permission of the British Museum)



Such comparisons served to demonstrate that Asante was linked in complex and sophisticated ways to other states not yet encountered by white explorers. As such, the public display of Asante products in the British Museum was also designed to increase funds for further exploration in Africa. This coincided with Bowdich's personal aspirations and to further his ambitions, he conveniently published his 'Suggestions for Future Missions to the Interior of Africa' as Chapter XIV.

A close inspection of his proposals reveals that Bowdich had appropriated ideas that had originally been developed and submitted some years earlier. In particular, his recommendation to establish a trading lodge or factory on the Ancobra River in order to penetrate inland markets to the west, north and east, had formed the basis of the Anglo/Dutch

plan to send a joint mission into the interior in 1816. Ironically, this was the very same scheme that had motivated the Dutch and the British to send separate missions to Kumase in 1816 and 1817. Furthermore, it appears that in proposing to send trained Consuls to the courts of the Kings of Dagomba and Gonja, Bowdich had been inspired by the Africa Association's idea of establishing a permanent diplomat at the court of the King of Bambuk, which had been earnestly considered in the spring of 1793. By publishing these proposals, Bowdich was hopeful that he could secure further employment as either an employee of the Africa Company, a Government-sponsored explorer or as an envoy, but this was not to be.

As a result of presenting the Asante collection to the British Museum it appears that the Bowdichs struck up a firm friendship with Dr Leach who contributed a report on the reptiles and insect specimens that was subsequently appended to the published account of the Mission to Kumase. During the seven years of his tenure (1814-1820) Leach worked closely with Sir Joseph Banks in re-organising the natural history collections and establishing an exchange network with a number of other individuals such as Baron Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) and Baron Friedrich von Humboldt (1767-1835) as well as other institutions both in Britain and Europe (see Chambers 2007). The friendship of this eminent naturalist was to prove invaluable in the following months as Bowdich had become embroiled in an increasingly acrimonious quarrel with the Africa Company, which eventually culminated in him publishing a pamphlet entitled, *The African Committee* (1819). In it he publicly exposed his employer's shortcomings and accused the Committee of being full of incompetence, corruption and parsimony. Having put himself in an untenable position Bowdich was forced to resign from the service sometime in the winter of 1818. In desperation he wrote to Dr Leach appealing for help, who responded by writing a letter of introduction to Baron Cuvier. As a result of this the Bowdichs moved to Paris some time during the spring of 1819. Another piece of circumstantial evidence suggests that just prior to departing Bowdich presented the Africa Association with the Muslim manuscripts that he had collected whilst in Kumase. A letter of thanks dated the 29th March 1819, written by William Hamilton, the Association's secretary stated 'I beg leave in the name of the African Association, to return you their thanks for your obliging present of the original Moorish charts and routes published in the Appendix to your account of the late Mission to the Ashantee country, together with some sketches on the Gabon River' (Bowdich *The African Committee* 1819, 78). These

manuscripts were probably transferred to the archives of the Royal Geographical Society in 1830 following the merger with the Africa Association. Unfortunately, despite repeated searches of the R.G.S. archives and the Manuscript Department of Cambridge University Library, which now houses the majority of the Society's historical archives, I have been unable to trace any of them.

Once installed in the Norfolk Hotel, Paris Bowdich quickly established himself as a member of Cuvier's circle of collaborators. Sarah recalled in her introduction to Cuvier's biography that her husband was overwhelmed by the research opportunities, for '[...] the vast library of Baron Cuvier, his drawings, his collections were open to our purposes' (Lee 1833, 5). She went on to state that Bowdich was allowed to borrow books to read in his lodgings and if he needed to consult a scarce book that Cuvier did not possess, then it was sent to him from the *Institut de France* on his patron's instructions (*ibid*). Relations were also firmly cemented between the Cuviers and the Bowdichs through Sarah's enduring friendship with their patron's daughter-in-law '[...] with whom, for nearly four years, we were in daily intercourse' (*ibid*). Bowdich also met through Cuvier, Baron von Humboldt to whom he presented an aggrary bead '[...] of the most interesting kind' (Bowdich 1819, 268). This indicates that he had not presented the British Museum with all of the artefacts that he had collected during his time on the Gold Coast.

Their new patron's generosity and support during this period enabled Bowdich and Sarah to pursue their individual and collaborative research, to plan their next expedition to the Gambia and, most importantly to continue publishing. In 1821 Bowdich published in Paris, *An Essay on the Superstitions, Customs and Arts Common to the Ancient Egyptians, Abyssinians and Ashantees*. This extraordinary text was radically original in conception, form and execution and inaugurated a vast and abiding diffusionist project that linked Asante to ancient Egypt and Ethiopia (see McCaskie 2009). Of immediate interest to this analysis are the monochrome plates that illustrate some of the Asante artefacts that he had previously collected and presented to the British Museum. An entry dated 11th November 1820, which appears in the Officer's Reports records that;

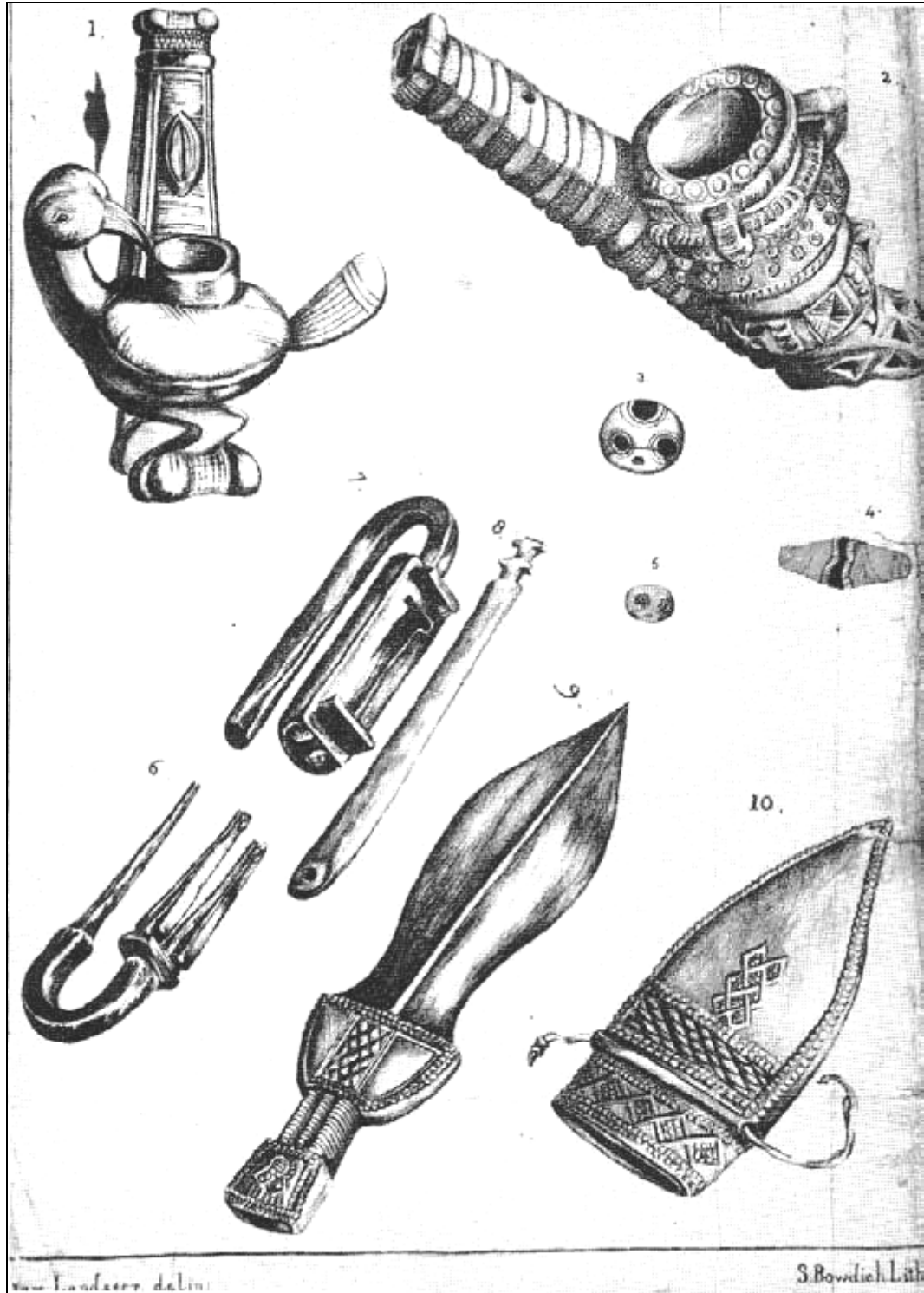
'Mr Konig has been desired by Mr Bowdick [sic], the African traveller, to grant permission for an artist to make drawings of some of those articles from

Ashantee which Mr Bowdick has presented to the Museum such drawings being necessary for the illustration of a work which he is about publishing’
(Officer’s Report 1820-1822, Vol. 6 folio 1364).

Drawings of five aggrey beads, a leather sandal, a wooden stool, a sanko, a leather bag, a leather stool cushion, a length of Adinkra cloth, two ceramic pipe bowls, an iron lock from Hausa and a knife from Kaylee were duly completed by Jane Landseer, the elder sister of the landscape painter Edwin Landseer (see Appendix 4 Nos. 1-9). The original watercolours were sent to Paris where Sarah used them along with some of her own sketches to produce composite monochrome lithographs (figs. 5.23/5.24). These plates not only helped Bowdich to illustrate his argument about diffusionism, but they also served to reassert his connection with the objects in the British Museum and the first Anglo/Asante Mission at a time when the treaty of 1817 had just been superseded (on the 23rd March 1820) by Joseph Dupuis, the second British Consul to Kumase.

The question of legal ownership of the collection was raised again as a direct result of Bowdich’s premature death at 31 or 32 years of age at Bathurst (Banjul) in the Gambia on the 10th January 1824. In the British Museum’s Standing Committee Report dated the 9th April 1824, Charles Konig mentions a chest containing Ashanti objects ‘[...] made over by Mr Bowdich to Dr Leach,’ he is recorded as urging ‘[...] if it should prove not to be formally presented by the late Mr Bowdich [the Trustees should] give a remuneration for the same to his widow, who is quite destitute’ (April/May Standing Committee Report, British Museum 1824). This statement to the Committee appears to have generated the compilation of the most comprehensive list of the artefacts that had been presented by Bowdich to the British Museum in 1818 that has survived to the present day. However, it remains uncertain as to whether the British Museum did make a payment to Sarah Bowdich as no documentation has survived to prove or disprove it. It appears that some of the more valuable items may have been returned at some point by the Museum authorities to Sarah. Evidence for this is contained in a single entry dated the 8th December 1855, in the book of Presents (Donations) which states that ‘five gold ornaments and nine glass beads of the Ashantees collected by Mr Bowdich from Mrs Lee’ were lodged with the Antiquities and Coins Collection (Vol.5: 1854-1862: 166). The timing of this donation is significant as it occurs within three months of Sarah’s death on the 23rd September 1855. It therefore appears that these items were

Figure 5.23: Plate I of Asante objects collected by Thomas Bowdich
Lithograph created by Sarah Bowdich from original drawings by Jane Landseer
(Bowdich 1821 Plate I)



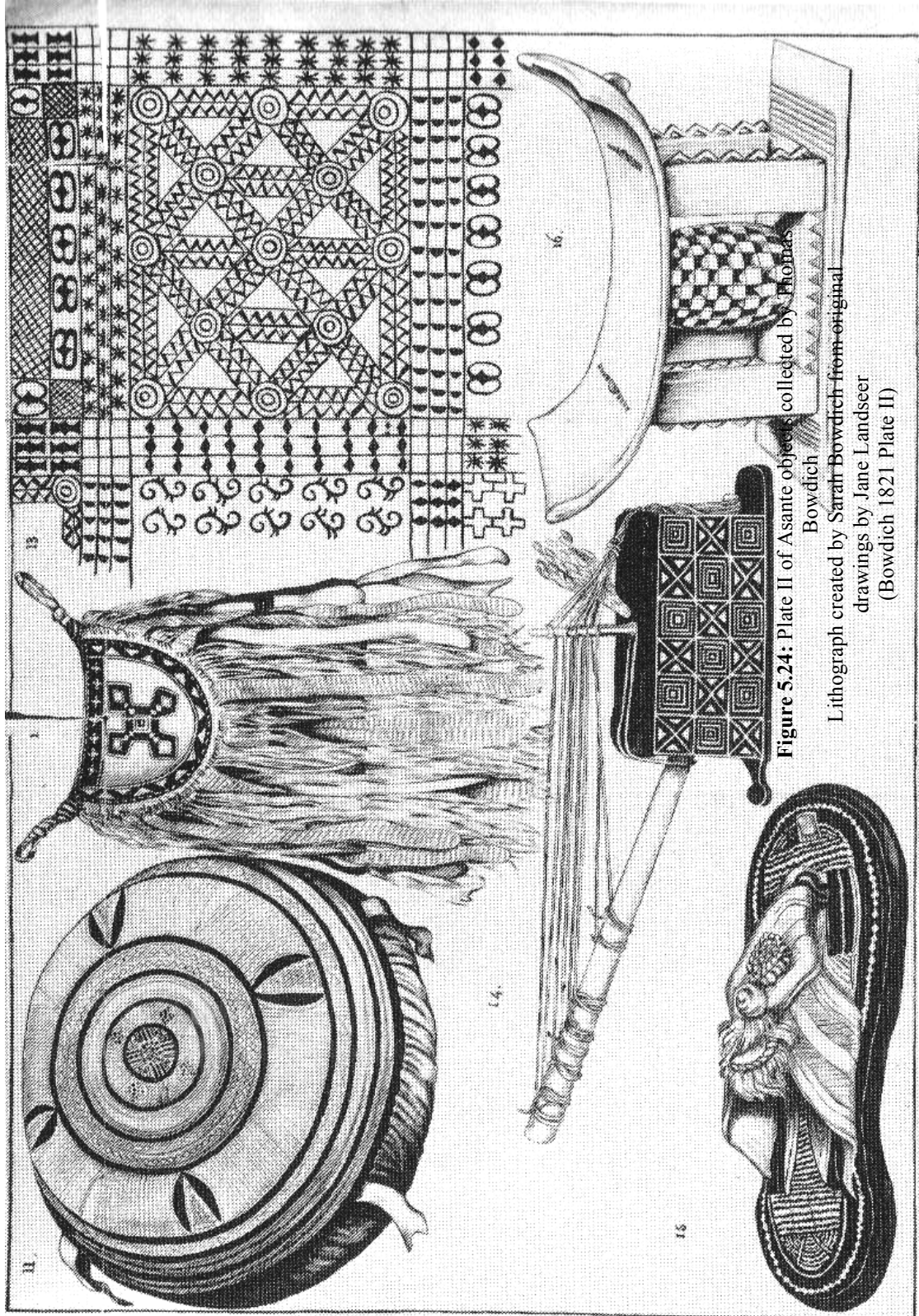


Figure 5.24: Plate II of Asante objects collected by Thomas Bowdich

Lithograph created by Sarah Bowdich from original drawings by Jane Landseer

(Bowdich 1821 Plate II)

S. Bowdich delin.

Jane Landseer delin.

formally donated, probably in accordance with her will, by her two surviving daughters, Mrs Tedlie Hutchison Hale and Miss Eugenia Keir. In an effort to clarify this situation, and to ascertain exactly what artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 British Mission to Kumase were donated to the British Museum and other institutions, I have produced a table (see Table 2, p. 291) which includes information that was gleaned as a result of extensive archival research at these institutions. The table also includes references to artefacts that were mentioned in Bowdich's publications of 1819 and 1821 as well as Sarah's publication of 1835. In addition, I have also incorporated where possible, circumstantial and corroborative evidence regarding acquisition and donation dates that have resulted from the discovery of surviving watercolour sketches of artefacts that were painted by Sarah Bowdich and Jane Landseer in 1820. Unfortunately, during the interim period some of the artefacts and all of the botanical samples and insect and reptile specimens have perished.

We do not know precisely how the Asante assemblage was displayed at Montagu House, the original home of the British Museum, as no visual representations of the interiors of the galleries exist. Jane Landseer's drawings of artefacts and implements that were reproduced as lithographs by Sarah in 1821, may give some idea of their display arrangement but this is pure conjecture. Written records show that the library and natural history collections filled the majority of the rooms, while antiquities, works of art and '[...] instruments, habits, Indian curiosities etc,' which we would now term ethnographic collections, '[...] were mainly confined to two or three rooms, the basement and small rooms off the back stairs' (Sloan 2003, 21). Consequently, the public exhibition of these artefacts in the museum's back rooms implies that Asante culture was perceived to be backward and that it occupied a lower point on the scale of civilisation than that of Europe or of the classical and near Eastern cultures.

George Sharf's views of the entrance hall with its high painted ceiling and grand staircase provide further visual clues as to how the museum's displays were arranged in the early nineteenth century (fig. 5.25). Beyond the staircase a grand room can be glimpsed through an open doorway in which several large display cabinets and book cases are situated. In all likelihood, articles associated with the Mission to Kumase were crammed into similar cases alongside other artefacts that dated from widely divergent time periods and originated from

Figure 3.25: The Staircase of the old British Museum in Montagu House
By Georg Sharf (1845)
(Sloan 2003, Frontispiece).

both ancient and contemporaneous cultures. As such, visitors were confronted with a jumbled array of exhibits which had little or no explanatory or contextual information and no curatorial interpretation or mediation. In effect, such displays served to reinforce European cultural achievements and developments as much as they exhibited the newly discovered exotic cultures of the old and new worlds. In fact the systematic and comprehensive exhibitions of natural history, documenting as they did, the latest thinking by *savants* such as Cuvier and von Humboldt on the origins of life and the age of the earth, were far in advance of those that exhibited the development of ancient and modern human cultures.



Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Image
Glass	Aggy beads pierced flat hexagonal millifiori red and white on yellow ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.6	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	
	Aggy bead long quadrangle, red, yellow and white in dark blue ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.7	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Image
	Aggry bead cylindrical red and white with blue ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.9	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	
	Aggry bead circular blue, white and yellow on red ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.10	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Image
	Aggry bead circular yellow and white on dark blue ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.11	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	
	Aggry bead circular blue and red on yellow ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.12	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Aggry bead cylindrical red, yellow and white spots on black, orange and bright green ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.13	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	
	Aggry bead conical red and blue stripes on yellow ground	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.1/ 1855.12-15.14	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821 Cannot be traced	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
Shell	A bracelet of shells	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.38	Cannot be traced	No Image
Cast gold work	A model bell cast in gold	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.3/ 1855.12-15.4		
	A model sanko cast in gold	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.2/ 1855.12-15.3		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	A Stool	Presented to the British Museum 1818	1818.1114.4/ 1855.12-15.6	Cannot be traced	No Image
	A Jawbone	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.8	Cannot be traced	No Image
	A Soul Disc	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.5/ 1855.12-15.1/ 1856.12-15.1		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	A Soul Disc	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.6/ 1855.12-15.2/ 1856.12-15.2		
	A Drum	Presented to the British Museum 1818 donated by Mrs Lee in 1855	1818.1114.7/ 1855.1215.5		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
Carpentry	A Stool carved from wood	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.9	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	A Sanko with ten strings	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.10	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase


Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	A child's umbrella finial carved in the form of a bird, shaft missing	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.11		
Ironmongery	Needles	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.13	Cannot be traced	No Image
	Castanets	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.12	Cannot be traced	No Image

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase




Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comment	Photograph/Illustration
	Padlock made in Hausa	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.14. a	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	Key to Padlock	British Museum	1818.1114.14. b	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	1 Arrow (poisoned)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.15	Possibly made in Dagomba	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	1 Arrow (poisoned)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.16	Possibly made in Dagomba, cane shaft	
	A Dagger	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.17. a	From Gabon Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	A Sheath	British Museum	1818.1114.17. b	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
Weaving	A heddle with unfinished cotton textile woven in red, white and blue	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.18. a		
	Carved wood heddle pulley	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.18. b		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase




Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Bobbin made of cane with green cotton thread	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.19		
	Bobbin made of cane with white cotton thread	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.20		
	Bobbin made of cane with white cotton thread	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.21		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Boat shuttle made of wood	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.22		
	A rectangular cloth single strip of hand-woven plain weave cotton dyed indigo (1 of 3 girdles?)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.24		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase


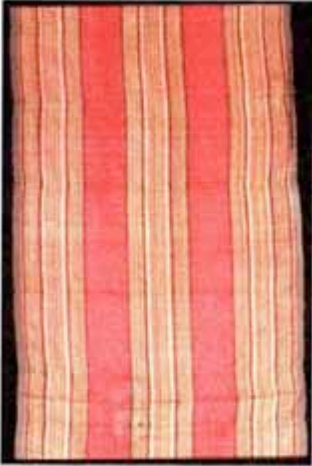
Category of Object	Artefact Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comment	Photograph/Illustration
	Painted cloth from Dagomba	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.23	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	A rectangular textile (scarf?) of hand-woven, plain weave cotton, dyed green, yellow, black, red, blue and natural	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.25		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	A cloth of hand-woven, narrow strip cotton (textile currency?)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.40		
	A hand-woven narrow cotton strip	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.41		
	A spoon of basket work	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.35	Cannot be traced	No Image

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	A cloth made of raffia (grass?)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.36	Cannot be traced	No image
	Specimen of raw cotton	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.39	Cannot be traced	No image
Leatherwork	A leather stool cushion stuffed with kapok	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.28	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	A cow's tail flywhisk (a charm?)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.29		

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase


Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Fringed bag	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.26	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Leather embroidered amulet case (saphire) worked in black, brown, yellow and red thread in Asante	British Museum 1818 may not have been subsequently acquired in 1855	1818.1114.30	Cannot be traced	No Image
Pottery	Ceramic Pipe Bowl	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.42	Cannot be traced	No Image

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase



Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Ceramic Pipe Bowl incised with bands of geometric patterns	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.31	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	Ceramic pipe bowl in the shape of a bird	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.32	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase


Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Ceramic pipe bowl	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.33	Cannot be traced	No Image
	A. saucer/bowl 'Ashantee T.E. Bowdich written in black ink on bottom	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.34		
Miscellaneous	Model of a canoe	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.37	Cannot be traced	No Image

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
Natural Specimens	Preserved snakes (no unknown)	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image
	Preserved Scorpion	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image
	Preserved Lizards (no unknown)	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Preserved Beetles (no unknown)	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image
	Preserved Butterflies (no unknown)	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image
	A tarantula spider	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image



Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	Boosee nuts/Goroo pods	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image
	Sample of African Tobacco	British Museum 1818/ Transferred to the Natural History Collection?	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image
Live Animal	Gennet Cat	Duchess of York,	Named Sai, temporarily housed at Exeter Exchange July/August 1818	Died shortly after arrival	No Image

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
Documents	An illuminated leaf from an Arabic manuscript	Presented to the Africa Association March 1819	Not known	Possibly transferred to the R.G.S in 1830. Cannot be traced	No Image
	An old Arabic manuscript of 13 pages	Presented to the Africa Association March 1819 possibly transferred to the Royal Geographical Society	Not known	Cannot be traced	No Image

Table 2: A comprehensive list all artefacts and specimens associated with the 1817 Mission to Kumase

Category of Object	Artefact/ Specimen	Place Donated/Date	Accession No	Comments	Photograph/Illustration
	A dyed leather sandal (one of a pair)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.27. a	Watercolour sketch by J. Landseer painted in 1820 and published in 1821	
	A dyed leather sandal (one of a pair)	British Museum 1818	1818.1114.27. b		

Chapter Summary

In the introduction to this chapter, I posed three questions which together formed a framework for the analysis presented. The first question asked how, and in what ways did Thomas Bowdich represent Asante in his publication, imagery and via artefacts? In this analysis I have argued that he drew upon well established rhetorical and artistic framing devices that were predicated on binary oppositions in order to represent the best and worst aspects of the Asante and their culture. As part of this I demonstrated that, just as Bowdich was influenced by travelogues that were written during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries so his published account provided a narrative and visual model for others who, in some cases, physically and literally followed in his footsteps a few years later. I have also shown that, in constructing his popular vision of Asante, Bowdich appropriated from his wife Sarah, who it has been argued lent a hand in writing the book, drawing the imagery and collecting some of the artefacts and specimens.

The second question asked, what motivated Bowdich to re-present the Asante? During this analysis I have suggested that he wanted to accrue all of the recognition and success of the Mission to himself. In order to do this successfully he presented himself as the main protagonist/hero in his published narrative, he inserted himself and his Mission colleagues into the illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom' and took it upon himself to present the majority of the Asante artefacts he collected to the British Museum under his own name. He did this because he was keen to gain public recognition for his achievements as an explorer and as a scientist, he wanted to acquire fame and with it wealth and he wanted to be accepted by his fellow professionals. However, his public-spirited act belied the fact that some of the artefacts were not legally owned by him and others had been collected by his wife.

The third question asked, how Bowdich's narrative, illustrations and collection contributed to the development of knowledge about non-western peoples in pre-colonial nineteenth century Europe? I have established during the course of this analysis that he created a unique referential relationship between the artefacts he collected and donated to the British Museum in 1818, and the imagery and narrative that he published in 1819. I have argued that this dialectical relationship between artefactual, empirical, epistemological and representational

discourses augmented, reinforced and supported each other in the appropriation and production of knowledge about Asante. Furthermore, the interweaving of these different discourses echoed the promiscuous pastiche technique that has also been identified in respect of the composition of the published narrative, of the construction of his illustrations and in the public display of artefacts associated with the Mission to Kumase. As a result, all of these sites are revealed to be eclectic compositions that cause time and space to be conflated and physical and meta-physical boundaries to be transgressed, which facilitate vicarious and virtual types of encounters to take place. Visitors to the British Museum can still experience something of this, as in the King's Library a first edition copy of Bowdich's account is displayed open, revealing a page of text and two of his illustrations. Next to his publication is a small selection of the artefacts he collected whilst in Kumase. Hence, by bringing these elements together, this permanent public exhibit testifies to the enduring nature of his legacy - but Sarah's contribution and commitment remain unacknowledged.

Conclusion

Since his untimely death aged 31 or 32 years of age on the 10th January 1824, Thomas Bowdich's life biography has, ironically perhaps, also been appropriated and subsumed, along with those of many other explorers, soldiers, scientists and travellers into what William St Clair described as an, '[...] imagined narrative of empire' (St Clair 2006, 165). The promising, adventurous young man with hopes of a brilliant career and a splendid fortune, the intervention of a well-placed relative who secures the appointment, the enthusiastic letters and dispatches describing exotic experiences, the young wife who joins him and supports his endeavours, and then the sad news of his tragic death in a remote corner of Africa, reads like a poignant colonial narrative that is familiar to us. I hope, however, that I have demonstrated during the course of this thesis that Bowdich's life and legacy amounts to more than just a basis for the creation of a powerful national myth.

Despite his self-interest he was a very keen observer and dedicated recorder of all that he experienced and sensed whilst in Kumase. In fact, I would go as far as to say that his impressions and observations border on what we would recognise today as ethnography/ethnology. In publishing these details, he also succeeded in providing the first recognisable visual and descriptive account of the Asante state, its culture and its peoples as he witnessed them in 1817. In this respect it is worth remembering that his account remains one of the most important sources of information on Asante during this period and was only effectively superseded in the 1920s by the work of the widely acknowledged father of Asante ethnography, R. S. Rattray. In effect, Bowdich's account, collection and imagery has not only provided me with an unending source of inspiration and revelation during the researching and writing of this thesis, but it has also produced large quantities of rich, detailed evidence that has facilitated the production of a fine-grained analysis of inter-cultural encounter and appropriation. By comparing and contrasting Bowdich's observations with a number of other envoy accounts that document similar diplomatic interactions between the same cultural groups during a four-year period from 1816 to 1820, I was able to identify patterns of behaviour and practices that were common to all. In order to structure my study of this historical material I designed three research questions,

which provided a framework within which my analysis was to be conducted. Having come to the end of this exercise I will now attempt to provide answers to those questions and in doing so, draw together the separate strands of my argument by way of a conclusion.

Research Question 1

My first research question asked: How were Asante and European artefacts, social conventions and culture appropriated in 1817? As a result of critically interrogating Bowdich's written account and associated imagery, I was able to identify a number of important descriptive and illustrative examples where appropriations were informed by pre-existing cultural constructs and practices. Binary pairings, the concept of liminality and social, spatial and temporal wrapping, as defined by Joy Hendry, were shown to be pre-dominant in this process, which in many ways vindicates her assertion that, as a concept and an activity, wrapping in all its various guises has universal applications.

In chapter II, I analysed the descriptions contained in the accounts of Huydecoper (1816-1817), Bowdich (1819), Hutton (1821) and Dupuis (1824) regarding their reception experiences on arrival in Kumase. My analysis revealed that all four envoys were confronted with 'fetishes' and powerful shows of strength and had their physical movements directed and the speed of their entry controlled as they advanced towards Kumase. After gaining entry to the capital they then wound their way around its environs as part of processions that formed the basis of reception events. I hypothesized that during these spectacles envoys were being processed in two distinct but inter-related ways. Firstly, they were physically processed through the crowded streets following a prescribed route that included a number of halts at sites of great historical and spiritual significance. This was done in order to generate rhythmic and alternating episodes of movement and stasis that were designed to incrementally draw visitors in from the periphery towards the centre of Asante power in a systematic and highly ritualised manner. Furthermore, I argued that this practice was linked to the staggered progress of other ritual processions, especially those that were conducted as part of the Yam Custom.

Secondly, European envoys were also processed psychologically and psychically at

pre-ordained stopping places, where they were confronted with carefully orchestrated performances that were designed to induce a series of emotional and sensory highs that repeatedly stunned them and significantly reduced their ability to act, interact and react. On the basis of this evidence, I concluded that public processions formed one of the mechanisms that were used to appropriate and integrate alien entities of all kinds into Asante culture during the early nineteenth century. In this way, the circumnavigation of visitors around Kumase on entry and the spatial configuration of the court and other retinues during this, and other ceremonies, were informed by abstract conceptions that functioned to structure the establishment and maintenance of correct socio-economic, political and spiritual relations between the Asante and alien sources of power.

In chapters III and IV, I extended my hypothesis by applying it to the appropriation of externally-derived products that originated in Europe and the Muslim states situated to the north of Asante. I argued that appropriation in this context also took the form of re-processing, whereby ambiguous un-formed or formless elements were encased in layers of materials that were sourced from both the cultured and uncultured spheres. I hypothesised that these actions were predicated on Asante beliefs and conceptions regarding purity, corruption and, more importantly, the ambiguous potential of liminality to facilitate transformations. I cited amulet-making, metal-casting and potting as evidence of where technical procedures effectively transformed liminal elements into manufactured products that were suitable for ingestion, inhabitation and manipulation. I also discussed other examples where imported textiles and animal pelts were wrapped around powerful artefacts and/or ambiguous entities that functioned as important mediatory vehicles that conducted and controlled transactions between the ancestral, human and supernatural realms. I contended that, in these cases imported fabrics, animal hides and cast metal ornaments, in effect provided carapaces or second skins that could augment, conceal, empower separate and shield the extra-ordinary and the supernatural during transitions and transformations which threatened the status quo. In this way, Asante culture effectively maintained and protected its core values and internal integrity, whilst also enabling partial external transformation via the controlled introduction of new elements and influences. In effect, social and spatial wrapping facilitated the

integration and internalisation of external sources and symbols of power as well as the control of internal power through externally-derived symbolism.

In contrast, Bowdich and his Mission colleagues appropriated Asante artefacts in order to amass evidence of the technical achievements and skills of indigenous craftsmen, to demonstrate the extent of the kingdom's trading networks and to exemplify the types of natural resources available on the Gold Coast. Evidence presented as part of this analysis also indicated that Bowdich, in particular, quickly recognised the cultural importance that was attached to correct forms of address, oath-taking and speech-making by the Asante. In appropriating these linguistic wrappings Bowdich was able to differentiate himself from James, the original leader of the Mission, draw the attention of the Asantehene and his advisors to himself and promote his ability to act as an intermediary in negotiations with the Governor. Bowdich also appropriated the Asante people, their practices and products by representing them to European audiences through literary and illustrative constructs that were predicated on well-established tropes. As such, both Asante and British inter-cultural appropriations in 1817 were intimately bound up with mediation, representation and personal and professional exploitation.

Research Question 2

My second research question asked: Where and in what contexts did acts of appropriation take place and what external and internal factors were motivating them? This analysis has revealed that during the residency of the first British Mission in Kumase, the inter-cultural appropriation of Anglo/Asante material and immaterial forms was principally driven by two conflicting factors. Firstly, appropriations of social conventions and explicit displays of power and status were occurring as a direct result of the need to establish new diplomatic relations following the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807. Appropriations of European social conventions by the Asantehene, such as throwing European-style banquets and wearing imported gentleman's clothing, indicates not only a detailed knowledge of European culture, but also demonstrates his willingness to put on such public and private shows in the interest of forging closer relations and to manipulate his visitors ambitions with regard to civilising the Asante. Likewise, the Asante appropriation of public acts that acknowledged and recognised rank, status and relations, such as gun salutes and the

presentation of arms during state receptions, provides evidence of an acceleration in the take up of practices that had at their basis the potential for reciprocity. This was closely tied to the principal of complementarity that was deeply ingrained in Asante culture and formed the nexus of all social and spiritual relationships. The same understandings regarding complementarity and reciprocity also motivated the appropriation of Asante conventions by Bowdich and his Mission colleagues. Practices such as long oratorical speech-making, public oath-swearing and the physical deployment of Mission personnel during important Asante ceremonies have also been shown to be part of a coherent strategy that Bowdich pursued in the hope that it would help the officers of the Mission to establish themselves within the Asante court, aid in the identification of influential office-holders and facilitate the establishment of trust with the Asantehene and his advisors.

Secondly, appropriations of European firearms, ordinance and quasi-military uniforms by members of the Asante elite were, in 1817, also being driven by the potential threat of future conflict with the British and the imminent onset of war between themselves and the rebellious Gyaaman state. Unequivocal evidence contained in Bowdich's account indicates that these circumstances were also responsible for the contemporaneous importation of a number of externally manufactured war costumes (*batakari kese*) from the Muslim state of Dagomba and the creation of amulets that were believed to protect the wearer against bullets and witchcraft.

My analysis of Bowdich's account demonstrated that the Asante selection, appropriation and re-processing of European artefacts was also partly predicated on the perceived properties and qualities of substances. In relation to this I argued that certain substances occupied different parts of a qualitative spectrum depending on whether they were in a liquid (i.e. formless), semi-solid or solid state. Those ambiguous and liminal substances such as gold, blood, clay, fat, egg yolk and wax that could transmute from liquid to solid had particular significance and applications in Asante culture that were intimately associated with the creation and dissolution of spirit and form and with its identity and meaning. I contended that the physical re-processing of some appropriated artefacts was aimed towards creating mediatory devices, instruments and vehicles that could aid in the regulation of cosmic power.

In his account Bowdich described and illustrated some of these artefacts being displayed and manipulated at a variety of sites in Kumase, including the King's House, the great market place and various shrines, all of which were located within the peripheral zone (*kurotia*) that surrounded settlements. In chapter II, I discussed the fact that this was where the cultured and uncultured spheres interfaced with one another. In this way, *kurotia* formed a distinct layer of spatial wrapping wherein time and space were conflated, boundaries and distinctions collapsed and ritual and social interactions and transactions with super-natural forces occurred.

As has already been stated British appropriations of Asante culture in 1817 were limited to literary and illustrative re-presentations and the collection of a small artefactual assemblage. In trying to represent the Asante to European audiences, Bowdich constructed its inhabitants using literary and visual archetypes that had been established by earlier explorers in their travel narratives. His iconic illustration of 'The First Day of the Yam Custom,' provides numerous examples of where empirical diagrams have been conflated with idealised depictions on which the semiology of costume, adornment, physiognomy and gesture were super-imposed. In composing his image Bowdich also inscribed an implicit narrative of civilisation by juxtaposing representations of himself and his fellow British officers with barbaric and sensational depictions of Asante officials that invited readers to make moral comparisons and judgements. Furthermore, he condenses and conflates the activities of at least two events, which were separated from each other by four months, in order to produce one coherent narrative image for the viewer. This serves to sever the action from all of its cultural and religious contexts and, as such, represents precisely the type of incomprehensible encounter that could not be assimilated or equated with European practices.

In order to gain public recognition for his achievements, Bowdich not only mis-represented the Asante and their cultural practices, but also mis-represented himself. In his published narrative he appeared as the main protagonist/hero and he inserted himself and his Mission colleagues into his illustration of the Yam Custom in order to promote his success as Conductor of the first British Mission. Furthermore, he also took it upon himself to present the majority of the artefacts he collected whilst in Kumase to the British Museum under his own name when he may not in fact have

been their legal owner. In chapter V, I presented evidence that, in constructing his popular image of Asante, Bowdich also appropriated from his colleagues Henry Tedlie and Thomas Hutchison as well as his wife Sarah, who I argued lent a hand in writing the account, drawing the imagery and collecting some of the artefacts and specimens. He was motivated to do this because he wanted to appropriate all of the achievements and success of the Mission to himself in a bid to become rich and famous. He was also desperate to impress those whose patronage and favour would enable him to continue the business of exploration.

Research Question 3

My third and final research question asked: To what functions and roles were appropriated objects prescribed in new cultural contexts? Having completed my survey, I conclude that appropriated European artefacts functioned in Asante cultural contexts in two distinct but inter-related ways. Firstly, evidence obtained from Huydecoper's diary (1816), Bowdich's account (1817) and Dupuis' journal (1824) demonstrates that during the early nineteenth century, appropriated artefacts in diplomatic contexts functioned primarily as personal symbols of status and wealth and badges of office. In the illustration of the Yam Custom, several types of European artefacts appear in this capacity and, evidence presented in chapter IV suggests that green silk folding umbrellas were then in the process of being subsumed within the pre-existing repertoire of established regalia types in order to distinguish members of the Asante aristocracy from high-ranking chiefs. All three envoys also describe how, in diplomatic and ritual contexts, insignia such as canes and swords were manipulated by their handlers in order to dramatise and punctuate important moments, such as when the Asantehene came in physical contact with an envoy or when a high-ranking chief swore an oath. I argued in chapter III that, as inalienable stool property, royal insignia embodied the relationship that existed between the Golden Stool, the ultimate source of all power, its living incumbent the Asantehene, the court and the population of the Asante state. In effect, these items of regalia were not passive emblems but active social agents imbued with ancestral power. This relationship was made explicit by the addition of precious metal fittings, amulets and other material signifiers which, when publicly exhibited, created displays that in their sheer profusion of colours, patterns, shapes and textures, contributed to the overpowering sensations that

Huydecoper, Bowdich and Dupuis experienced and described during their residency in the Asante capital.

Indeed, Bowdich attempted to convey something of the effects of this spectacle in his illustration of the Yam Custom. In chapter V, I established that he created a unique referential relationship between the artefacts he collected and donated to the British Museum in 1818, and the imagery and narrative that he published in 1819. I have argued that this dialectical relationship between artefactual, epistemological and representational discourses augmented, reinforced and supported each other in the appropriation and production of knowledge about Asante. Thomas Bowdich can therefore be understood to be not only a recorder of encounter, but an agent of encounter and he exploited this unique position in order to mediate a vicarious and virtual type of encounter between his audience and the Asante.

In contrast, I argued that in Asante contexts a large proportion of appropriated artefacts functioned to mediate relations and to unify the disparate elements that made up individuals, matri-clans, the Asante state and cosmos. Some items helped to protect and repel whilst others attracted and bound together. In this capacity they functioned to demarcate, protect and reinforce the external boundaries of the Asante state as well as to maintain and support the internal structural integrity of Asante culture. Their presence at state events also points to the possibility that they may have played a fundamental part in creating the modified conditions that facilitated the transgression of physical, spiritual and temporal boundaries, the manifestation of the anti-social and super-natural within cultured contexts and the conflation of exclusive spheres. These temporary events, which I called hyper-environments, are characterised by the manipulation and modification of external and internal elements that are concentrated around the figure of the Asantehene, who, as the prime regulatory instrument of socio-economic, political and spiritual mediation, presided over the conflation of micro and macro-environments. In this way, the Asante appropriation of European, Islamic and natural products may also have been predicated on the belief that because of their external origins, they contributed to the creation of hyper-environments wherein change and continuity could be negotiated and cosmic balance and harmony maintained and regulated.

I will conclude by stating that it is my belief that hyper-environments function in all cultural contexts, to transgress and conflate reality as part of transformational and transitional processes that leave society changed forever, or to reproduce the changes necessary for things to remain the same. In defining the particular characteristics of Asante hyper-environments, it was my intention to describe principles that can be applied to any social system and to highlight the potential value of identifying and analysing other historical and contemporaneous manifestations of this phenomenon.

Appendix 1: Key dates and events

- 1750** The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa was established following the charter of the Royal African Company being withdrawn.
- 1753** British Museum opens in Bloomsbury.
- 11.08.1772** The Council of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa passed a resolution that the Fante should be given every assistance consistent with reason if they were attacked, although this did not mean that the British would interfere in a general war. They would protect the Fante's, however, if the latter were driven under the walls of the forts for shelter, an act of humanity, said the resolution, which they had a right to expect.
- 1772** Francis Masson, a young botanist from Kew, was sent to South Africa probably on Bank's initiative, to collect plants.
- 1778** Joseph Banks was elected President of the Royal Society at the young age of thirty-five and as a result, becomes an ex-officio trustee of the British Museum.
- 1780** Joseph Banks was one of a group of wealthy enthusiasts who sent the gardener of the Duke of Northumberland, William Brass, to the Gold Coast on a botanical expedition.
- 1783** One of Banks correspondents in the West Indies suggested a scheme for sending an Arabic-speaking slave to report on the interior of Africa.
- 1785** Paul Isert, a young German doctor serving in the Dutch settlements on the Gold Coast, wrote to Banks telling him of his plans for making a journey into the interior and asking for his support.
- 09.06.1788** The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa was formed out of the Saturday Club that met at St Albans Tavern off Pall Mall. The majority of the members, including Banks, were great landowners.
- 1788-1789** Simon Lucas, the Oriental interpreter at the Court of St James and John Ledyard, an American of Bank's acquaintance and a member of Cook's third voyage, were both engaged by the Africa Association to bi-sect the northern half of the continent. Ledyard was to strike westwards from the Nile, Lucas south-wards from the Fezzan. This enterprise ended in failure. Ledyard died in Cairo, from an accidental overdose of medicine. Lucas excused himself from leaving the North African coast on the grounds that the Bedouin tribes had revolted and cut the road to the Fezzan. Nevertheless; he had arranged to make his journey with a certain Imhammed, a Sherif from the Fezzan and from him he was able to procure an account of the countries of the central Sahara and the central Sudan, including Tibesti, Bornu and 'Cashna' (Katsina – then reckoned the largest of the Hausa states), more detailed than that given by Leo Africanus.
- 1789** Joseph Dawson was commissioned by the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa.
- August 1790** Daniel Houghton sets off from the Gambia at the beginning of the dry season but died nearly a year later on the edge of the desert, beyond the state of Kaarta, exhausted after his maltreatment by the Moors,. His expedition penetrated far further than any other into the interior – revealing among other things that the Niger flowed eastwards and not, as the majority of European geographers believed, in a westerly direction. Particularly encouraging had been the account of his reception by the King of Bambuk, a monarch who was anxious to develop a trade with the English, in order to obtain firearms.

- 1790** Major James Rennell, the foremost geographer, who made a name for himself in India where he had served as Surveyor-General to the East India Company, published the *Construction of the Map of Africa* in the Africa Association's annual report.
- 1790** James Bruce published his five great volumes, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* in Edinburgh and London, 17 years after his return to Europe.
- 1791-92** Archibald Dalzel is appointed Governor in Chief of the British Castles and Forts on the Gold Coast. He serves as Governor continuously until 1802.
- 20.06.1791** Thomas Edward Bowdich was born in Bristol.
- 10.09.1791** Sarah Wallis was born in Colchester.
- 21.08.1792** Thomas Edward Bowdich was christened at St Stephen's Church, Bristol.
- 1792** Major James Rennell was elected an honorary member of the Africa Association. Henceforth, he examined the reports sent or brought back by every African explorer of the age, (including Bowdich's), in order to publish a series of updated maps showing the latest discoveries.
- 1792-1795** William George Browne arrived in Egypt to find that the direct route down the Nile to Ethiopia was closed by war; to by-pass troubled Nubia he followed a circuitous route by way of Darfur. But Darfur proved to be a cul-de-sac and Browne was forced to spend no less than three years in the country before he could return to Egypt. No European had ever visited Darfur before and Browne was therefore able to supply new information on the geography of that country and its neighbours.
- Spring 1793** The Africa Association decided to establish a British Consul at the court of the King of Bambuk.
- 1793** Archibald Dalzel published *A History of Dahomy*.
- 1794** James Willis was formally appointed Consul to the court of Bambuk with authority to raise a force of fifty men to accompany him. In February 1796 the Africa Association's Committee decided to postpone the whole enterprise until the return of peace in Europe.
- May 1795- July 1796** Mungo Park's solitary expedition settled the question of the Niger's direction and enlarged the bounds of Europe's knowledge of the countries of the western Sudan. The Africa Association argued with the Government for an active policy to develop the interior of West Africa for British commerce.
- May 1796- 1798** A young German, Frederick Hornemann, offered his services to the Africa Association. After spending nearly a year in Cairo, in spite of the disturbances that accompanied the French invasion of Egypt in the summer of 1798, he was able to pass himself off as a Muslim and join the caravan to Fezzan. Passing through Siwa, which Browne had also visited, and Augila, he came to Murzuk, where he stayed for several months, struck north to Tripoli in order to send his reports back to the Association, and then returned to the Fezzan. In the last letter ever to be received from him he spoke of his imminent departure with the caravan from Bornu. Nothing was ever heard from him again and for 18 years his fate was a mystery, until in 1819 the Fezzan was again visited by two European explorers, Ritchie and Lyon. There they were told how Hornemann had indeed crossed the desert, reached Bornu, passed on to Katsina and was making his way along the route that led from the Hausa States to the Gold Coast, when he was struck down in Nupe by a sudden, fatal attack of dysentery.

- 1797-1800?** Bowdich attended Bristol Grammar School.
- 1799** W. G. Browne published *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria* and Mungo Park published *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa in the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797*
- 05.06. 1800** John Hope Smith was commissioned by The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa.
- 03.10.1800** Frederick James was commissioned by The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa.
- 1800/01?** Osei Tutu Kwamina was installed as *Asantehene* after his brother; Osei Kwame (1777-1800) was deposed for having Muslim sympathies.
- 1800/1806-7?** Bowdich attended Corsham Free Grammar School in Wiltshire.
- 1802** Sarah's father was bankrupt and the family moved to London.
- 1804** 'Colonel' George Torrane was sent to Cape Coast Castle as Governor-in Chief.
- January 1805** Henry Nicholls arrived on the Gulf of Guinea in order to strike northwards (Bank's idea). In April, three months after his arrival and without ever having left the coast he was dead.
- May 1805** Mungo Park returned to West Africa to resume exploration of the River Niger's course. Park's second expedition was sponsored and financed by the British Government, but had its origin in a resolution passed by the members of the Africa Association at their General Meeting of 1799. At this meeting the Association passed a resolution requiring its Committee to consider once again the plan for appointing a Consul in the interior and for sending a sufficient force to take possession of the banks of the Niger.
- 1805-6** Assin affair started, the Fante were drawn into the conflict after giving sanctuary to two Assin chiefs, Cheboo and Apoutey.
- Spring 1807** The Asante army marched to the coast, the Dutch surrendered Fort Amsterdam and the Asante commander took possession, the first occasion ever in which an African army had possessed a European fort. As proof that he had reached the sea, the commander sent baskets of sea water to the Asantehene in Kumase. The Asante commander sent a message to Edward White, Governor of Anomabu fort, demanding arms and ammunition as an act of submission. White replied offering to discuss any grievances, but declared that if the Asante attacked the people of Anomabu, he would use the guns of the fort to defend them. In doing this he was honouring the guarantee to the local community that was part of the bargain permitting the building of the Castle and forts.
- 01.05.1807** Britain banned the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade by Act of Parliament.
- 14.06.1807** The people of Anomabu attacked a detached force of Asante but misjudged their strength. The Asante army occupied the town of Anomabu and began to kill and capture its inhabitants. Edward White took approximately 2000 women, children and older men into Anomabu fort, the maximum it could accommodate, and barred the gates. Other Anomabu townspeople huddled around the fort's walls.
- 15.06.1807** For the first time ever a British fort was attacked by an African army. The defenders consisted of 5 British officers of the African Service, Governor Edward White, Henry Meredith, Francis Swanzy, John Smith and Baines, 4 'free' mulattoes and 20 men described as soldiers, artificers and servants. Edward White was wounded in the arm and lost 4 teeth and surgeon Meredith took temporary command. To the landward, with no

firearms but muskets, the defenders were unable to prevent many of the townspeople sheltering around the walls from being seized and carried off.

- 16.06.1807** With Anomabu Fort surrounded by thousands of decomposing bodies and flocks of vultures, two British slave ships arrived and three volunteering officers of the African Service together with a corporal and 12 soldiers landed by canoe. Governor Torrane sent a flag of truce and an offer to negotiate with the Asantehene at Cape Coast Castle. The Asante army retreated but the violence continued inland in the coastal regions for months afterwards.
- July/August 1807** The Asantehene declined to go to Cape Coast Castle so Governor Torrane traveled to Anomabu Fort for a conference. The first face-to-face meeting was conducted amid parades, presentations, ceremonies and declarations of mutual esteem and friendship. Governor Torrane acknowledged the Asante victory in letters to London but took care not to concede anything in writing. After negotiations in which it was accepted that neither the Asante nor the British had been defeated, Torrane agreed to split the refugees equally and duly handed over a group which included Cheboo, one of the Assin fugitives, his entourage and regalia to the Asantehene. Apoutay had escaped from Cape Coast. The trade route from Kumase to Cape Coast and Anomabu was accessible to Asante traders for the first time in nearly a century.
- 09.10.1807** In a letter from Governor Torrane to the Committee he reported that the *Asantehene* himself suggested that a British Resident should be stationed in Kumase. Adu Bradie, the Asantehene's nephew was entrusted to Governor Torrane, probably as surety for the British resident. Whilst at Cape Coast Castle he was taught to speak English and dress in the European manner.
- December 1807** Small pox broke out in the Asante army camped outside Anomabu so the conference was cut short. The Asantehene returned to Kumase without negotiating a peace treaty with the Fante. Colonel Torrane died just as an officer from Cape Coast Castle was about to leave for Kumase to take up Residence.
- 1808 - 1815 (1817)** The Africa Association accepted the offer of a young Swiss, J.L. Burekhardt, to follow a route similar to Hornemann's, approaching the central Sudan from the north. He left England in 1809, and spent nearly three years in Syria, with the purpose of learning Arabic so that he could pass himself off as a Muslim. From Syria he made his way to Egypt, visiting on his way Petra, which no modern traveller had ever described. Unable to join a Saharan caravan, he decided to make a journey up the Nile, passed through Nubia to the great market of Shendi, struck across to Suakin on the Red Sea, made the pilgrimage to Mecca and returned to Cairo in 1815. Two years later he was preparing to join the first Saharan caravan to have appeared in Cairo since his return, when he died of dysentery.
- Early 1809** Governor of Cape Coast Castle was informed by the Asantehene that the Asante General then residing at Accra, had orders to make peace with the Fante. The proposal was opposed by the Fante and hostilities resumed until 1816.
- 1811** The Asante invaded Fante territory for a second time. John Hope Smith was promoted to chief of Tantum Query Fort.
- 1812** Henry Meredith, Chief of Winnebah Fort, published *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa; With a Brief History of The African Company*. Having returned to the coast after recovering from the wounds he received at the siege of Anomabu fort, he was seized (*panyarred*) while on his morning walk and a ransom was demanded. Hope Smith, Chief of Tantam Fort arrived and was also seized and carried into the forest, but was released after promising to pay 225 gold ounces (approx £1000) for

both. On arriving back at the fort, he started to pay the ransom, but Meredith, who had been marched barefoot through the forest in the sun and held for days with his head tied to a stake as if he were a recalcitrant slave, died on his way back to the fort. The ransom was paid in full but Hope Smith, with the co-operation of the Council and the Commodore of the African Squadron destroyed both Winnebah fort and the town around it in revenge.

- 1813** Bowdich became a partner in his father's business, Bowdich, Son and Luce. He married Sarah Wallis despite both being minors. After honeymooning in Wales, he possibly attended an un-named Oxford College, although he did not matriculate.
- Sept-Oct 1814** Bowdich solicited his 'uncle,' John Hope Smith, to sponsor his application to become a writer in The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa. Sarah was pregnant with their first child.
- 1815** The Napoleonic War ended and the British Government lavished financial support on African exploration. The most influential advocate of exploration was the Second Secretary of the Admiralty, John Barrow, an intimate friend of Joseph Banks. Barrow's enthusiasm for exploration was shared by Lord Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary and Henry Goulburn, the Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office. Two ambitious expeditions were planned, both of which were designed to solve the riddle of the Niger. One organised by the Admiralty and commanded by a naval officer, Captain Tuckey, attempted to sail up the Congo, the other, arranged by the Colonial Office and led by Major John Peddie was to strike eastwards to the Niger from the region of Senegambia, to follow up the work of Mungo Park.
- Mungo Park's journal of the 2nd Expedition to Africa was published by the Africa Association.
- April – May 1815** Thomas and Sarah's first child, Florence Bowdich was born.
- August 1815** General Daendals was appointed as Dutch Governor-in-Chief and took up residence at Elmina Castle.
- October 1815** Bowdich was commissioned but the Africa Committee refused his request for his wife and baby daughter to sail with him. There is no record of the date/s he departed England or arrived at Cape Coast Castle.
- 08.10.1815** Thomas Hutchison was commissioned by The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa.
- 05.12.1815** In a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, the Africa Committee stated that it was seriously exploring the idea of sending personnel into the interior to make discoveries.
- December 1815** The final campaign of the Asante/Fante war had begun.
- January 1816** Bowdich and Hutchison arrived on the Gold Coast?
- 27.03.1816** The Asante army invaded Fante territory for the third time and encamped at Abura (Abra), near the coast. Three Akim and Akwapim chiefs had escaped Asante justice and were thought to be sheltering under the protection of Cape Coast Castle/Anomabu fort. Asante envoys were dispatched to negotiate with the Governor. Cape Coast Castle was packed with refugees seeking protection from the Asante army.
- 08.04.1816** British and Dutch officers discussed the idea of forming a joint Anglo/Dutch factory on the Ancobra River.
- 20.04.1816** General Daendal sent a dispatch outlining his intention of sending a Dutch envoy to the

Asantehene to negotiate a trade treaty.

- 21.04.1816** Governor-in-Chief, Edward William White departed from Cape Coast Castle on leave pending retirement; Frederick James and William Mollan accompanied him on the same ship. White carried a dispatch proposing that a joint Anglo/Dutch Mission be sent to Asante. Mr Joseph Dawson took over as acting Governor-in-Chief of all the British forts on the Gold Coast. Mr White, who had resided on the Gold Coast for 27 years, died a few hours after landing in England sometime around the end of July or beginning of August 1816.
- 24.04.1816** General Daendal sent Huydecoper as a Dutch envoy to the *Asantehene*.
- May 1816** The Parliamentary Select Committee, headed by Earl Compton sat to hear evidence from the officers of The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa about the running of the establishments on the Gold Coast.
- 06.05.1816** Bowdich applied for leave to return home.
- 08.05.1816** Bowdich was granted a discharge from the service to return to England.
- 09.05.1816** Acting Governor Dawson and Hope Smith wrote to the Africa Committee informing them that they were sending Bowdich home on leave.
- ? .05.1816** Sarah Bowdich and Florence embarked on a trade vessel, 'The Lancaster,' at Liverpool. She was able to negotiate her passage only as far as Sierra Leone. During her two-day stay at Freetown in Sierra Leone she was a guest of Sir Charles MacCarthy. From Sierra Leone to the Gold Coast Sarah travelled on a Royal Navy brig which was patrolling the West African coast to prevent the continuation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
- 22.05.1816** The Dutch Envoy Huydecoper arrived in Kumase, the Asante capital.
- Late July- early August 1816** Bowdich arrived in England, having passed his wife and daughter on the high seas.
- 19.08.1816** Simon Cock, Secretary of the Africa Committee wrote to Bowdich asking for information regarding Dutch ambitions on the Gold Coast and the arms trade.
- 02.09.1816** Bowdich attended the Parliamentary Select Committee and answered questions about the service and his opinion of the candidates for the vacant Governor-in Chief's position.
- 06.09.1816** Sarah Bowdich and Florence arrived at Cape Coast and were welcomed by the acting-Governor of Cape Coast Castle, Mr Joseph Dawson, and stayed for several days as his guest at Cape Coast Castle before transferring to Hope Smith's post at Anomabu Fort.
- 12.09.1816** The Africa Committee appointed William Mollan to be Vice-President of the Council and to the command of Anomabu Fort.
- 18.10.1816** The Committee decided to override Dawson's eleven years of seniority and appointed Hope Smith to be Governor of Cape Coast and Governor-in Chief of its settlements on the Gold Coast.
- Nov 1816** Major John Peddie and Captain Thomas Campbell landed in Sierra Leone intending to travel to Labi and Timbo in Futa Jalon and thence to the Niger to complete the work of Mungo Park. This expedition consisted of over one hundred individuals.

- 15.11.1816** The Africa Committee decided to send a British Mission to Kumase and instructions to Governor Hope Smith were issued.
- Late November - early December 1816** Bowdich sailed back from England to the Gold Coast.
- 16.01.1817** General Daendals reported that the English store ship, 'Lord Mulgrave,' had arrived at Cape Coast Castle bringing news that John Hope Smith was appointed Governor in Chief, and Mr William Mollan, who arrived by the same ship was nominated Vice President. Also on-board were the Company presents intended for the Asantehene as part of the British Mission.
- Sarah was escorted to Cape Coast where she stayed for a short time in a house close to the Castle until apartments in the garrison were prepared for her.
- Late February - early March 1817** Bowdich arrived back at Cape Coast Castle? The Council decided that he was unsuited to lead the Mission.
- March 1817** The Dutch envoy Huydecoper left Kumase and returned to El Mina Castle.
- 09.04.1817** Governor Hope Smith wrote to Frederick James, the Governor of Accra Fort, notifying him of the acceptance of his voluntary offer to conduct the Mission to the King of Asante. He also appointed Henry Tedlie as assistant surgeon, Thomas Hutchison as writer and Thomas Bowdich as scientific officer.
- William Hutton stated in his 1821 publication, that he volunteered to be part of the first mission but for some unaccountable reason the Governor chose not to accept his offer.
- 10.04.1817** Governor General Daendel's sent a secret envoy (an un-named mulatto man possibly Nasser?) to Kumase ahead of the British Mission's departure. He was briefed to plant suspicions about the British and their motives in the minds of the Asantehene and his advisors. He was also an agent for the Company of H. W. Daendel and Sons who were trading illicitly in slaves with the Asante.
- 22.04.1817** At 10am the members of the first British Mission left Cape Coast Castle but were forced to divert to Anomabu as the path from Moree was flooded and overgrown.
- 23.04.1817** The Mission remained at Anomabu as several porters had deserted and more needed to be found in order to carry supplies.
- 24.04.1817** At 4am the Mission left Anomabu and travelled inland to Paintree's settlement [Abura Dunkwa].
- 25.04.1817** The Mission remained at Paintree to allow the procurement of four days subsistence.
- 26.04.1817** The Mission left Paintree but Mr James was left behind on the path. Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie made camp on the path in the forest.
- 27.04.1817** The Mission continued its march, James caught up with Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie and they camped on the path. They were woken at 9pm by a panther prowling around the camp.
- 28.04.1817** Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie continued on but Hutchison waited for James at Amissa.

- The Mission made camp at Fousou.
- 29.04.1817** The Mission marched from Fousou to Accomfodey.
- 30.04.1817** The Mission left Accomfodey and camped in the forest.
- 01.05.1817** The Mission crossed the Boosempira River and halted at the Assin settlement of Kickiwherree.
- 02.05.1817** Mr James ordered the Mission to rest at Kichiwherree until the 3rd May.
- 03.05.1817** The Mission left Kichiwherree and after marching 8 miles made camp on the path.
- 04.05.1817** The Mission marched to Akrofrom and rested there until Tuesday 6th May because of flooding.
- 06.05.1817** The Mission left Akrofrom and encamped at Moisee, the last settlement in Assin Territory.
- 07.05.1817** The Mission left Moisee and crossed the river Bohmen and encamped at Doompassee. Mr James developed a fever and the Mission halted until the 14th May.
- 08.05.1817** A messenger arrived from the Asantehene requesting them to arrive in Kumase on the following Monday (19th).
- 10.05.1817** Bowdich observed an eclipse of Jupiter's first satellite?
- 11.05.1817** James dispatched his gold-taker to Kumase to announce the Mission's arrival in Doompassee. This may be the same message that Bowdich accused James of keeping the contents and reply secret.
- 14.05.1817** The Mission left Doompassee and encamped at Dadasue. James' gold-taker and the Asantehene's messenger returned from Kumase with presents of gold, food and drink for the Mission's subsistence.
- 15.05.1817** The Mission left Dadasue and marched to Assiminia where the Mission rested until the 17th.
- 17.05.1817** The Mission departed from Assiminia and encamped at Ashantee Mansa where it stayed until the 19th.
- 19.05.1817** The Mission arrived at Kumase at 2pm and was given a State Reception.
- 20.05.1817** The Mission was given its first public audience in the market place where they were asked to explain the reasons for their visit to Kumase. The matter of the Cape Coast Castle and Anomabu Fort Notes was raised by the Asantehene but not pressed at this stage. In the afternoon the Mission was summoned to the palace to present the Company's presents to the Asantehene.
- 21.05.1817** No public business was conducted; the Asantehene's mother and sisters visited the Mission at its residence. Mr James was indisposed. During a conversation with Mr Tedlie, he stated that he regretted volunteering to lead the Mission.
- 22.05.1817** In the afternoon the Mission had a stormy interview at the palace, when the Notes were produced. The Asantehene threatened to send an army to defeat the Fante again. Bowdich

intervened to prevent the collapse of the negotiations after James failed to offer to resolve the situation. Bowdich accused James of keeping him and his colleagues in the dark about the Governor's instructions and pledged that he and his fellow officers would stay in Kumase until the issue was settled to the Asantehene's satisfaction. On their return to the Residency Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie wrote separately to the Governor telling him about James' betrayal of the objects of the Mission. In the evening the officers of the Mission were asked by the Asantehene to swear an oath that they intended no harm.

- 23.05.1817** In the morning the Mission had a short interview with the Asantehene, his linguists and his Muslim advisors, during which the officers swore an oath (by tapping the Koran three times with their hands) that they meant no harm and had good intentions. Afterwards the Asantehene sent large quantities of food and provisions as well as gifts of gold dust.
- 24.05.1817** At a morning meeting at which the Notes were again discussed, there was a stormy scene. After a short adjournment Bowdich intervened in negotiations for a second time after an ineffective attempt by James. At this point Bowdich effectively usurped James as leader of the Mission.
In the afternoon they had another private audience with the Asantehene, where the Notes were discussed again. The members of the Mission swore another oath before the Asantehene, this time on their swords that they had good intentions. Both Bowdich and James separately suggested in dispatches that the Governor should re-issue the notes for the full amount.
- 25.05.1817** The Asantehene paid a visit to the British Mission's Residence; later Mr Tedlie went to the palace and explained his medical instruments and medicines. He also treated one of the Asantehene's sisters.
- 26.05.1817** The Mission requested messengers to carry their dispatches to the Governor. The Asantehene dictated a letter to the Governor. The Mission was confined to the Residency unless accompanied by an Asante guard.
- 27.05.1817** The Asantehene finished dictating his letter to the Governor.
- 28.05.1817** Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie asked James to dismiss the hammock-men. Mr James was taken ill with fever.
- 29.05.1817** The Fante porters were allowed to leave accompanied by the messengers.
- 01.06.1817** James was taken ill with a relapse of fever.
- 08.06.1817** James asked the Asantehene for a loan of 12oz of gold.
- 10.06.1817** James sent his linguist to the palace to request the loan of gold.
- 13.06.1817** James was attended by the King's linguist to discuss the loan of gold but the deal fell through. Bowdich was summoned to write a letter to the Governor on behalf of the Asantehene asking for the price of guns and powder. James reveals that he hoped to supply the Asantehene with these articles privately from Accra Fort.
- 15.06.1817** Mr James and Quashie, his gold-taker were witnessed having a private audience with the Asantehene, James stated that this was to solicit the Asantehene for a loan of gold to subsist on.
- 16.06.1817** At 1pm the members of the Mission were summoned to attend the Asantehene where the others sat apart from James. He was accused of being a traitor by Bowdich and Tedlie for visiting the Asantehene clandestinely under pretence of securing a personal loan of gold

dust. They asserted that the purpose of his visit was to try and turn all the Asante trade to Accra instead of Cape Coast.

Thomas Hutchison went out after dark possibly in order to give a message to a trader to pass on to the Governor.

- 19.06.1817** Tedlie was arrested and taken to the palace, a captain asserted that he had found him a good distance on the road to Cape Coast, the Asantehene accused him of an intention to desert but as he does not have a compass on him he was let go.
- 26.06.1817** James obtained a loan of 4oz of gold and gave it to the hammock-men and servants for subsistence as some were close to starving.
- 02.07.1817** James visited Odumata to purchase a number of elephant tusks.
- 05.07.1817** The messengers arrived at Kumase with written instructions from Governor Hope Smith and two new notes made out for the full amount. Bowdich was formally promoted to manage the Mission and James was recalled to Cape Coast.
- 09.07.1817** Bowdich sought permission to dismiss two of the three sets of the Fante hammock-men they had brought with them from the coast, due in part to cost but also because Bowdich was unable to control them.
- 13.07.1817** James departed from Kumase for Cape Coast Castle with an Asante escort headed by Adu Bradie, approaching 500 in number. Bradie carried a letter from Bowdich to Hope Smith informing him that Bowdich had succeeded in displacing Governor General Daendel's envoy from the negotiations.
- 14.07.1817** Bowdich raised the subject of the Treaty and promised the Governor that he could deliver the establishment of a permanent British Residency, the education of some of the Asantehene's sons and the Treaty. The Asantehene dictated a letter in which he requested that the Governor mediate in the Comenda *palaver* and to inform him that he was sending his nephew Adu Bradie to represent him in negotiations.
- 23.07.1817** Governor Hope Smith received an Asante boy and girl at Cape Coast Castle that had been sent by the Asantehene as surety of his good intentions. They probably formed part of Adu Bradie/James entourage as was Okra Nyame, a confidential messenger sent by the Asantehene to negotiate the sale of guns and powder and Yaw Kokrokro. Adu Bradie, Yaw Kokrokro and Okra Nyame all paid separate visits to Sarah Bowdich at this time; Yaw Kokrokro presented her with a sanko as a gift.
- 02.08.1817** Bowdich, Hutchison and Tedlie attended the funeral custom of a senior Asante woman held at Assafoo.
- 03.08.1817** Okra Nyame returned to Kumase and stated to the Asantehene that he had not been well treated at British Headquarters. The accusation caused the Asantehene to be cool towards Bowdich, who openly accused Okra of lying. The Governor and Sarah were requested to write furnishing details of Okra's treatment and the presents he had been issued with for the Asantehene.
- 10.08.1817** Bowdich conducted a search of Okra Nyame's trunk in front of the *Asantehene* and discovered hidden presents. In a dispatch to the Governor Bowdich reported that he used this opportunity to reassert the profile of the British Mission by asking the Asantehene to make the retinues of chiefs give way for the Mission in future. Bowdich also demanded an audience with the Asantehene to discuss the treaty as the Comenda palaver was taking too long to settle.

- 15.08.1817** The brother of the Asantehene's messenger, Aboagye, was clapped in irons and held in a cell in Cape Coast Castle for not lowering his cloth from his left shoulder as a mark of respect when passing the land gate.
- 16.08.1817** On the night of the 16th/17th August the brother of the Asantehene's messenger, Aboagye, allegedly hung himself in the cells at Cape Coast Castle.
- 18.08.1817** Qwamina Bua, the Asante captain who had been in charge of the escort for the Mission to Kumase died despite Tedlie's best efforts. Bowdich refused to contribute anything towards his funeral custom accusing him of dishonesty (he had embezzled provisions intended for the Mission and dealt in slaves on the coast despite prohibition).
- 20.08.1817** The Asantehene and the Asante Council discussed the Treaty.
- 21.08.1817** The Asantehene and the Asante Council discussed the Treaty.
- 23.08.1817** Bowdich was summoned to appear before the Asantehene, the Council, the King's sisters and relics of Asante enemies to read out the contents of the Treaty, every article of which was debated. The Asantehene requested that the Amissa palaver be settled before the Anglo/Asante Treaty was ratified. Bowdich felt that the introduction of this new objective was evasive and was intended to hold up proceedings, he stated that the Mission's negotiations were at an end and that the officers would leave Kumase. Having demanded an audience without effect the Asantehene eventually admitted his mistake and promised to see the Mission the following day.
- 24.08.1817** Bowdich and his colleagues received an invitation from the Asantehene to join him at Bremen, his country residence, the following day.
- 25.08.1817** The Mission attended a European-style banquet thrown by the Asantehene at his country residence at Bremen.
- 26.08.1817** Dispatches and letters were retained by Adu Bradie's messenger. Bowdich demanded the dispatches from the linguists and then directly from the messenger who they found at Adu Bradie's house. Bowdich received the Governor's reply to his letter on the subject of the Comenda palaver.
- 27.08.1817** News of the death/murder of the Asantehene's messenger's brother reaches Kumase.
- 28.08.1817** The Mission was summoned to the palace and the affair of the dispatches was discussed. The messenger declared that the Governor had ordered dispatches to be delivered to the Asantehene, something that Bowdich denied. The Assembly requested that Bowdich swear on his sword that he had not altered any part of the Governor's letter.
- 29.08.1817** Bowdich wrote to the Governor enclosing a copy of the preliminaries of the Treaty.
- 30.08.1817** Dispatch from Governor Hope Smith regarding the death of the Asante man in Cape Coast Castle written on 17/08/1817 arrives in Kumase in the early evening.
- 31.08.1817** The Mission had an audience with the Asantehene regarding the Governor's dispatch. The Asantehene accepted the Governor's version of events and offered to behead any Asante whose conduct had offended Bowdich and his colleagues. Bowdich requested a summary chastisement of two inferior captains as an example.
- 04.09.1817** The incident of Okra Nyame was also settled in the Mission's favour. Bowdich again used the occasion to display mercy by interceding on Okra's behalf with the Asantehene.

- 05.09.1817** The retainers of tributary chiefs started to arrive in Kumase for the Yam Custom.
- 06.09.1817** The chiefs processed through Kumase to the market place where they swore personal oaths of allegiance to the Asantehene who sat in state to receive them. It is around this time that Sarah Bowdich was taken ill with the seasoning sickness.
- 07.09.1817** The first Anglo/Asante Trade Treaty was signed by the Asantehene.
- 08.09.1817** The Asantehene conducted state trials. The Treaty was signed by the Dwabinhene and ratified by the Council after Bowdich reads it out to the assembled gathering. Bowdich tried to leave Kumase but was refused permission by the Asantehene until a week had passed. Bowdich ordered the Mission to pack up and attempted to leave but was set upon by the populace, having been beaten back to the Residency; he was forced to call on the Asantehene to protect them.
- 09.09.1817** All of the Mission's belongings were returned but Bowdich refused to accept them and the Asantehene's gifts. They appeared before the Asantehene in normal clothing and stated they were his prisoners as they had been forcibly detained. The Mission's linguists tried to intervene and stated that the Governor would punish Bowdich if he knew what he was doing. Bowdich denied this and the Asantehene apologized for the attack. Bowdich renewed his request to depart and it was agreed that the Mission would leave on Monday 22nd leaving Hutchison behind as Resident.
- 11.09.1817** The Asantehene washed himself and purified his regalia in the marsh south-east of Kumase.
- 15.09.1817** Bowdich received a letter from the Governor informing him that Sarah and Florence, his 2 year old daughter were unwell with seasoning fever.
- 18.09.1817** The royal household ate new yams for the first time in the market place.
- 22.09.1817** Bowdich and Tedlie were given a royal send off by the Asantehene and his court in the market place after dark. They travelled from Kumase to Odogoo. Hutchison remained behind as the first British Resident to Kumase.
- 23.09.1817** Bowdich and Tedlie travelled from Odogoo to Assiminia.
- 24.09.1817** The Mission travelled from Assiminia to Doompassee.
- 25.09.1817** The Mission travelled from Doompassee to Akrofrom. Bowdich became separated from Tedlie and was overcome by exhaustion after fording swollen rivers and walking across bogs.
- 26.09.1817** Bowdich rested at Akrofrom and waited for Tedlie to catch him up.
- 27.09.1817** The Mission travelled from Akrofrom to Asharamang.
- 28.09.1817** The Mission travelled from Asharamang to Prasoo. At around this time Bowdich's daughter Florence died of the seasoning sickness and was buried in the European cemetery outside the walls of Cape Coast Castle.
- 29.09.1817** The Mission travelled from Prasoo to Ancomassa.
- 30.09.1817** The Mission departed Ancomassa and encamped on the path.

- 01.10.1817** Bowdich was separated from Tedlie and arrived at Paintree.
- 02.10.1817** Bowdich rested at Paintree and waited for Tedlie to arrive.
- 03.10.1817** Bowdich arrived back at Cape Coast Castle.
- 31.12.1817** James was given the junior post of Chief of Comenda Fort and was deposed from his seat on the Council for one year. He resigned from the Service in disgrace. Mr Dawson, (who was senior to Hope Smith but who was passed over for promotion to the post of Governor-in-Chief) resigned his command of Anomabu Fort and was posted to James Fort, Accra to replace James.
- 01.01.1818** Mr Mollan was appointed to the command of Anomabu Fort.
- 26.01.1818** Joseph Dupuis was appointed by the Crown as the British Envoy to Kumase.
- 04.02.1818** Thomas Hutchison left Kumase to return to Cape Coast Castle as a result of the imminent onset of the Asante war with Gyaaman. He was accompanied by a cat called Sai, (a present from the Dwabinhene/Asantehene (?) to the King of England). The Fante gave him the nickname of Gwabin, or Panther possibly as a consequence. On his return he was appointed storekeeper at the Castle.
- February 1818** Adinkra Gyaaman was defeated in the war with Asante.
- Late February 1818** Bowdich and Sarah returned to England aboard the Company store ship, 'Lord Mulgrave,' so he could publish his account of the Mission which he/they partly wrote and illustrated on the voyage home whilst waiting for the south east trade winds. They travelled via Gabon as the boat was to load a cargo of ebony and red wood at Empoongwa, which took 7-9 weeks. They were accompanied by a 'cousin,' Hope Smith's son, his black servant, Hauboo, a boy of about 16 and the Gennet cat which was a present from the Dwabinhene/Asantehene.
- Late June – early July 1818** Thomas and Sarah arrived back in England, the Company granted Bowdich permission to remain on leave to publish the book, to use the public documents (the official correspondence and his own reports which he has taken from Cape Coast Castle) to help in writing it and paid him £500 less expenses for his passage home. The cat is given to the Duchess of York and was temporarily housed in Exeter Exchange, London where he died after a few weeks.
- 06.08.1818** W. E. Leach wrote a letter of thanks to Bowdich for his presentation of some Asante artefacts to the British Museum.
- 09.09.1818** Henry Tedlie died at Cape Coast Castle, aged 27.
- 13.11.1818** Governor Hope Smith was rebuked by the Africa Committee for allowing Bowdich to take his official reports on Asante with him. Presumably this rebuke was issued in response to the imminent publication of Bowdich's account which was based on these reports.
- November 1818** Joseph Dupuis embarked with his pregnant wife, on the Company store-ship 'Sarah' at Gravesend, Kent.
- 02.12.1818** Prints of Bowdich's illustrations were published by John Murray in London ahead of the written account.
- 24.01.1819** Joseph Dupuis and his wife landed at Cape Coast.

- Early March 1819** Thomas Edward Bowdich published *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa*.
- 1819** Bowdich asked that, on the strength of his past service he should be appointed a member of the Council at Cape Coast, commander of troops there, with the brevet rank of Captain, with a salary of £500 a year paid in sterling in England (not in goods on the Coast, as was the usual practice), and with permission to publish accounts of the various scientific and exploring missions he hoped to launch. The Committee refused to promote him and he was forced to resign his commission.
- July – August 1819?** The Bowdichs asked Dr W. E. Leach for help and he wrote a letter of introduction to Baron Cuvier. The Bowdichs moved to Paris and Thomas and his wife join Cuvier's circle of savants.
- August-September 1819?** Bowdich published a pamphlet entitled, *The African Committee*. In it he accused the Company of being full of incompetence and corruption.
- October 1819** The *Edinburgh Review* contained a long notice of the account of the Mission as a work of 'considerable importance.'
- January 1820** Sir John Barrow devoted thirty pages of ridicule in the *Quarterly Review* to Bowdich's account of the Mission, for its exaggeration of the cultural attainments of the 'savage' Asante.
- ?/1820** Bowdich published *A Reply to the Quarterly Review*.
- 23.03.1820** The first trade treaty signed between Britain and the Asante on 7th September 1817, is nullified and replaced by Joseph Dupuis on this day.
- 11.11.1820** Mr Konig gave permission for an artist to make drawings of certain articles in the British Museum that Bowdich collected in Asante.
- 1820** *Travels into the Interior of Africa, to the sources of the Senegal and the Gambia performed by command of the French Government in the year 1818* was edited by Thomas Bowdich, the text was a translation of Gaspard-Theodore Mollien's *Voyage dans l'interieur de l'Afrique aux sources du Senegal et de la Gambia fait en 1818*
- 1820** *Taxidermy: or, the Art of Collecting, Preparing and Mounting Objects of Natural History. For the Use of Museums and Travellers* was published by Sarah Bowdich anonymously.
- 1821** *An Introduction to the Ornithology of Cuvier, for the use of students and travellers*. The text was translated from Baron Georges Cuvier's *Regne Animal* [1817] arranged in tabular form and annotated by T.E. Bowdich.
- 1821** *The British and the French Expeditions to Teembo, with Remarks on Civilization in Africa* was published by Bowdich.
- 1821** *The Contradictions in Park's Last Journal Explained* was published by Bowdich.
- 1821** Bowdich published *An Essay on the Geography of North-Western Africa* (with maps) which was directed at Barrow's criticisms (printed in January 1820 in the *Quarterly Review*) of Bowdich's discussion of the geography of the western Sudan. This piece also set out to rescue Bowdich from accusations following his departure to France.

- 1821** Bowdich published *An Essay on the Superstitions, Customs and Arts Common to the Ancient Egyptians, Abyssinians and Ashantees*, (with plates). Radically original in conception, form and execution, the result was a foundational text that inaugurated a vast and abiding diffusionist project that linked Asante and, in time, West Africa to ancient Egypt and Ethiopia [Abyssinia].
- 1821** William Hutton published *A Voyage to Africa*.
- 07.05.1821** The Act to abolish The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa was passed by Parliament.
- 1822** *Elements of Conchology, including the fossil genera and the animals* was published by Thomas Bowdich (including plates).
- August 1822** Bowdich sailed from Le Havre heading towards Sierra Leone as he hoped, if permitted, to make himself useful to the new Government of the Gold Coast. En route Bowdich stopped at Lisbon before going on to Madeira, where he, Sarah and their two children were detained for some months.
- 1822** John Hope Smith ceased to be Governor-in-Chief of the British Gold Coast forts he was replaced by Sir Charles McCarthy who arrived from Sierra Leone.
- 1823** Bowdich, Sarah and family were the guests of the Keir family on Maderia. Here Sarah gave birth to her last child, Eugenia Keir (named after their hosts).
- 26.10.1823** Having waited in vain for a vessel going direct to Sierra Leone, Bowdich and his family sailed to the Gambia, staying for some time at the Cape de Verde Islands.
- 12.11.1823** After a voyage of sixteen days Thomas, Sarah and family reached Bona Vista, one of the Cape Verde Islands. From Bona Vista they then sailed almost directly to Bathurst on the Gambia making only a brief excursion to St Jago. They arrived at Bathurst at the end of November 1823.
- 10.01.1824** Bowdich died at Bathurst (Banjul) in the Gambia, aged 31/32. His daughter, Mrs Tedlie Hutchison Hale later furnished these details concerning the circumstances surrounding his death:
‘Anxious to multiply his astronomical observations as much as possible, he scarcely allowed himself needful rest, and one night, fearing he had slept too long, he started from his bed in haste, and exposed himself, with too little additional clothing, to the cold land breeze in the open gallery. Fever followed and in ten days he closed his life of activity, energy and zeal’
- July 1824** Sarah Bowdich arrived back in London with her three children Edward Hope-Smith Bowdich, Tedlie Hutchison Bowdich and Eugenie Keir Bowdich. Her friends collected more than £130 for their support after her husband’s obituary appears in the *Gentlemen’s Magazine* and the *Literary Gazette*.
- 1824-1825** Sarah was a frequent visitor to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris where she consulted with Cuvier and Alexander von Humboldt on the preparation of her late husband’s manuscript about their exploration of Madeira.
- 1824** *An Account of the Discoveries of the Portuguese in the Interior of Angola and Mozambique. From original manuscripts to which is added a note by the author on a geographical error of Mungo Park, in his last journal into the interior of Africa* was posthumously published under Bowdich’s name.

- 1824** Dupuis published *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee*.
- March 1825** Sarah Bowdich published *Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo During the Autumn of 1823, while on his third voyage to Africa by T. Edward Bowdich, to which is added by Mrs Bowdich 1. a narrative of the continuance of the voyage...2. a description of the English settlements on the river Gambia...; illustrated by sections, views, costumes and zoological figures*. Sarah had revised, illustrated and expanded the narrative and added an appendix of her own. Illustrated with sections, views, customs and zoological figures.
- 29.07.1826** Sarah Bowdich married Robert Lee, an assize clerk from East Lothian but kept it secret until 1829. They lived in and around St Pancras Marylebone, London.
- 1835** Mrs R. Lee (formerly Mrs T. E. Bowdich) published *Stories of Strange Lands and Fragments of the Notes of a Traveller* (with plates). This was a collection of the stories first published in the annuals of Rudolph Akermann, Thomas Pringle and Caroline Norton.
- 23.09.1856** Mrs R. Lee, formerly Mrs T. Edward Bowdich, nee Sarah Wallis died. From early 1856 she suffered increasingly poor health and moved from London to her daughter Eugenia's house at George's Terrace, Erith, Kent, where she died of heart disease. She was probably buried in the churchyard of Old St Pancras Church, Marylebone, London. In all, she had published 21 books, 22 short stories and 12 articles in her own right.
- 1873** Miss Tedlie Bowdich wrote the introduction to the second edition of *Mission to Ashantee*. She omitted the illustrations and a good many of the appendices, including Hutchinson's diary.
- 1966** Third edition of *Mission From Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* was published by Frank Cass & Co Ltd with notes and an introduction by W. E. F. Ward. The publishers omitted the original maps and four prints as well as reproducing one print in colour and the rest in black and white.

Appendix 2: Instructions to the Governor and Council from the Africa Committee dated 15th November 1816

In order to enable you to redeem the promise to the King of Ashantee (and as we are sanguine in our hopes of the good that may result from it) we send you sundry articles as presents for him to which you may add such others from the public stores as you may deem desirable provided they will not materially increase the expense. The Committee are extremely anxious, (and in this respect the wishes of all classes of people in this country go with them) that no exertions should be spared to become better acquainted with the interior of Africa, and we consider the existing state of things to be most favourable for undertaking an exploratory mission into the dominions of the King of Ashantee.

If, therefore, nothing shall have transpired in the interim of this dispatch being received by you, to make the measure objectionable, we wish you to obtain permission from the King to send an Embassy to his capital: if granted, you will select three gentlemen (one of them from the medical department) for that service; and let them be accompanied with a respectable escort, you giving them the fullest instructions for their government.

In particular it will be necessary for them to observe and report the nature of the country, its soil and products, the names and distances and the latitude and longitude of the principal places and its most remarkable material objects, the appearance and distinguishing characters and manners of the natives, their religion, laws, customs and forms of government, as far as they can be ascertained and by whom each place is governed. When at Ashantee they should endeavour to obtain the fullest information of the countries beyond in each direction particularly whether any high mountains, lakes or large rivers are known, and the width, depth, course and direction of the latter and whether the water of the lakes as the rivers is still as fresh; and how far and under what circumstances white men may travel with safety, especially in a northerly direction. They should collect the most accurate information possible of the extent, population and resources of the Ashantee dominions, and should report fully their opinion of the condition of the inhabitants and of the progress they may have made in the arts of civilised life. They should be directed also to procure and bring away (with the consent of the chiefs) any specimens of vegetable and mineral productions they may be able; and to ascertain where and how the natives collect the gold, and the extent to which the trade in that article and in ivory might be carried. It would, we conceive, be a most important advantage if the King of Ashantee and some of his chiefs could be prevailed upon to send one or more of their children to Cape Coast Castle, to be educated at the expense of the Committee, (to be attended by their own servants if required) under the guarantee of the Governor and Council for their personal safety, and that they should be sent back when required.

Another great object would be to prevail upon the King to form and keep open a path, not less than six feet wide, from his capital, as far as his territories extend towards Cape Coast, you engaging on the part of the Committee, to continue it from that point to Cape Coast; which we presume may be done at a very small expense, by means of monthly allowances to the chiefs of such villages as lie in that line, upon condition that they shall not allow the paths to be overgrown with underwood or otherwise obstructed.

It may perhaps be found that high mountains or a large river may not be many days journey beyond Ashantee in which case if the gentlemen composing the Embassy feel themselves secure in the attempt, they may probably be disposed to proceed so far – in such event we authorise you to pay their drafts for any moderate sums which they may find it necessary to expend as well as for the general objects of the Mission.

Besides the escort of which we have spoken we think it necessary or at least extremely important that the Embassy should be accompanied by natives of character and consequence conversant with the Ashantee language, in whom you have perfect confidence selected one from each of the towns of Cape Coast, Accra and Apollonia to whom you may make reasonable allowances for their time and trouble.

We have said that you should obtain the permission of the King of Ashantee to send the Embassy – we have doubts of the expediency of requiring hostages, and we presume you will concur with us in thinking it will be necessary before it leaves Cape Coast, that a man of consequence should be specially sent down by the King, to serve as a guide and protector – and who on his journey to Cape Coast may arrange with the messengers whom you may send to the King respecting the places at which the Embassy may stop to refresh and give directions to open the paths that may be overgrown.

The gentlemen whom you may select, will, of course, be well advised by you not to interfere with any customs of the natives, however absurd, or in any way to give them offence - and they cannot too strongly

impress upon the minds of the King and people of Ashantee, that the only objects His Britannic Majesty has in view are to extend the trade with that country; to prevent all interruption to their free communication with the waterside; and to instruct their children in reading, writing &c from which, as may be easily pointed out, the greatest advantages arise to the Ashantees.

From what has been said, you Gentlemen will perceive, that in selecting the Embassy, it is important that one of the persons comprising it should be able to determine the latitude and longitude of places and that both shall be seasoned to the climate, of ability physical and mental, of cool tempers and ? habits and possessed of fortitude and perseverance and that in the selection of their excort also regard be had to the qualifications of the artisan in these respects. Among them then should be a bricklayer, carpenter, blacksmith, gunsmith and cooper, with proper tools, if there persons can be spared for the purpose.

We wish also that they should take with them a number of certificates regarding Major Peddie and his companions to be circulated as distantly as possible in the interior for though the period may be past when they might have been useful to those travellers, it is yet possible that they may be of use in making generally known the object of government in sending white men to explore the country.

We have only to add on this subject that having repeatedly conferred upon it with Mr William Mollan (as well as on other points of our service) and put him into possession of our views and sentiments, he will be able to supply any deficiency of instruction which may be found in this dispatch.

Signed: S. Cock (Simon Cock, Secretary to the Africa Committee)

Footnote: We recommend his being well provided with dressings for wounds and bruises so that he may be able to assist any natives whom he may meet with requiring his aid: services of this sort give Negroes an exalted idea of white men and are gratefully remembered. [T.70/74: 1-5]

Appendix 3: Letter from Governor Smith to Frederick James dated Cape Coast Castle 9th April 1817

In accepting your voluntary offer of conducting the Embassy to the King of Ashantee, I have every reason to believe that from your long experience in this country, and your knowledge of the manners and habits of the Natives, it will terminate in a manner highly creditable to yourself, and eventually prove of the greatest importance to the commercial interests of Great Britain, which is the more immediate object of the Mission, however, as many subjects of scientific research may be associated with it, they are particularly recommended to your attention. For this purpose Mr Bowdich accompanies you, and I have no doubt he will be found perfectly qualified to make the necessary observations, in which you will afford him every facility and assistance. He is provided with instruments for determining the latitude and longitude of places.

Mr Hutchison, writer and Mr Tedlie, assistant surgeon, will also be attached to the expedition. The Ashantees who have been appointed your guides, have been selected by the Ashantee captain who is now here. They will I hope aid and assist you in everything that lays in their power.

In addition to the Committee's Instructions, a copy of which you have herewith, you will attend to the following.

On the subject of your journey I have nothing to observe further, than that, I hope you will take every opportunity of travelling when there will be least exposure to the sun, as the officers who accompany you have been but a short time in the Country, and every precaution will be necessary for the preservation of their health.

As soon as may be convenient after your arrival at the Ashantee capital, you will of course see the King, and you will deliver to him the various presents in the name of the African Company, to be received by him as pledges of the harmony and friendship which is ever to subsist between them, and also of his good will towards the natives residing under the protection of the different forts. You will not fail to impress upon his mind the great power, wealth and consequence of the British nation and, how much it is to the interest of himself and his subjects, to promote and perpetuate their present free intercourse with the waterside. In the course of your interview many circumstances will doubtless occur which will suggest various other matters proper to be mentioned to the King, all of which I shall leave entirely to your own discretion.

You will acquaint the King, that in order to secure a correct communication between him and myself, I request permission for an officer to reside constantly at Commassey, who will defray all his own expenses, and for whom you will build a house without loss of time. A carpenter, bricklayer and cooper are sent with you, and you will leave them with Mr Hutchison, who will remain as resident. On your departure you will give him full instructions, in writing for his future government, a copy of which you will deliver me upon your return.

You will keep an exact diary of every circumstance possessing the least interest, a copy of which you will transmit me by every opportunity.

In the course of your stay in the Ashantee country you will embrace every occasion of becoming acquainted with the policies of that nation, of ascertaining its extent and boundaries, the power of the King over the lives and property of his subjects; the probable force he could bring into the field; the number of his allies, the sources and amount of his revenues (whether he is tributary to any other power) what nations in his neighbourhood are tributary to him. The amount of tribute and in what articles paid. The rule of succession to the throne. What are the punishments for crimes of all descriptions. Who are the persons of consequence next to the King? The names of their offices and the extent of their power. By whom, and how paid? What are the most prominent features in the character, manners and habits of the people &c, &c, &c.

Are any human sacrifices made, upon what occasions and to what extent? How are prisoners of war now disposed of?

Of what nation are the Moors, who frequent the Ashantee country and for what purpose do they go there? Ascertain the current medium of exchange, whether gold or cowries – also the usual prices for which the Ashantees sell the goods they purchase from the Europeans on the sea coast, and the extent of their commercial relations with the interior.

You will enquire whether any European travellers have ever been seen or heard of in any of the countries to the northward, and what became of them. Whether anything is known of the river Niger or Joliba as it is called by the natives. This information you will probably obtain from the Moors.

Ascertain the position of the Dunco country and the city of Kong, also the mountains of that name. Refer to Parks travels and acquire as much information as possible of the regions lying between Ashantee and the places he visited. In short leave nothing undone that may add to our present imperfect geographical knowledge of the interior.

You will receive herewith copies of certificates relative to Major Peddie's expedition, which you will distribute amongst any persons you find travelling into the interior from Ashantee.

It would be of the first importance to have a road cut directly down to Cape Coast, and this you will urge to the King in the strongest manner. Your observations will of course enable you to point out the proper direction.

I enclose a sketch of a Treaty and it would be highly desirable if you could procure its ratification by the King, he might perhaps make some objection at first, but may be persuaded at length by your address and reasoning. If he wished any trifling alteration made you might use your discretion in this respect.

You will acquaint the King it is my wish that in future he receives his Company pay at this Castle and not at Accra as formerly. Should he say anything of an increase to his present allowance, you may give him hopes that it will be granted to a reasonable extent, provided the objects of the Mission be fulfilled, and after twelve months experience shall have proved the sincerity of his friendship to the British Government, and to the natives resident under its protection at the various forts on the coast.

From the jealous disposition of the natives of Africa it is highly probable that in the prosecution of your enquiries you will be subject to many unfavourable suspicions. These you will take all possible care to remove by the most candid explanations on every point that may be required.

You will particularly explain to the King the ill treatment the people of Cape Coast have experienced from those of Elmina, which has added very much to the distress they have for some time suffered from the extreme scarcity of provisions and there is reason to believe that this unjust persecution has been induced from their presuming on their connection with the Ashantees. Being perfectly aware that it is has been done without the concurrence of the King I have no doubt, but he will by a proper representation of the affair from you, exert his influence and prevent that which is at present to be apprehended and what the Elminas are endeavouring to provoke, a war between the two peoples.

In all cases not provided for by these instructions you have of course a discretionary power, which I am convinced you will make use of with deliberation and prudence, and with a becoming zeal for the service upon which you are employed. Wishing you a prosperous journey and a safe return.

I am Sir,

Your Most Obedient Servant,

J. H. Smith.

(T.70/41: 1-10)

Draft Treaty Included with Governor's Letter:

'Treaty made and entered into by Frederick James Esq in the name of the Governor and Council at Cape Coast Castle on the Gold Coast of Africa, and on behalf of the British Government, with Zey Tootoo Quamina, King of Ashantee and its dependencies.

1st, There shall be perpetual peace and harmony between all British subjects in Africa and subjects of the King of Ashantee.

2nd, That the same shall exist between the subjects of the King of Ashantee and all natives of Africa residing under the protection of the Company's Forts and settlements on the Gold Coast, and it is hereby agreed that there are no palavers now existing and that neither party has any claim upon the other.

3rd, The King of Ashantee agrees to permit an officer to reside continually at his capital for the purpose of keeping up a communication with the Governor in Chief at Cape Coast Castle.

4th, In order to avert the horrors of war, it is agreed that in case of aggression on the part of the natives under British protection, the King will complain thereof to the Governor in Chief to obtain redress and that he will in no instance resort to hostilities without endeavouring as much as possible to affect an amicable arrangement.

5th, The Governors of the respective forts will at all times offer every protection in their power to the persons and property of the people of Ashantee who may resort to the waterside.

6th, The Governor in Chief reserves to himself the right of punishing any Ashantee guilty of trifling offences but in case any crime of magnitude should be committed, he will send the offender to the King to be dealt with according to the laws of his country.'

(T.70/40: 6-14; T.70/41: 11-13; T.70/42: 8-10)

Appendix 4: The Ratified Anglo/Asante Trade Treaty

N.B: All wording that appears in italics between square brackets represents the alleged discrepancies found by Joseph Dupuis, Second British Consul to Kumase on comparing the copy of the treaty held by The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and that held by *Asantehene* Osei Tutu Kwame Asibey Bonsu in 1820. The copy with the alleged additions has since been lost.

Treaty made and entered into by Thomas Edward Bowdich Esquire, in the name of the Governor and Council at Cape Coast Castle, on the Gold Coast of Africa, and on behalf of the British Government, with Sai Tootoo Quamina, King of Ashantee and its Dependancies, and Boitinnee Quama, King of Dwabin and its Dependancies.

1st There shall be perpetual peace and harmony between the British subjects in this country and the subjects of the King[s] of Ashantee [*and Dwabin*].

2nd The same shall exist between the subjects of the King[s] of Ashantee [*and Dwabin*], and all the nations of Africa residing under the protection of the Company's Forts and Settlements on the Gold Coast, and, it is hereby agreed, that there are no palavers now existing, and that neither party has any claim upon the other.

3rd The King of Ashantee guarantees [*the security of*] the people of Cape Coast from the hostilities threatened by the people of Elmina.

4th In order to avert the horrors of war, it is agreed that in any case of aggression on the part of the natives under British protection, the King shall complain thereof to the Governor-in-Chief to obtain redress, and that they will in no instance resort to hostilities, [*even against the other towns of the Fantee territory*], without endeavouring as much as possible to effect an amicable arrangement, [*affording the Governor the opportunity of propitiating it, as far as he may with discretion*].

5th The King of Ashantee agrees to permit a British officer to reside constantly at his capital, for the purpose of instituting and preserving a regular communication with the Governor-in-Chief at Cape Coast Castle.

6th The King[s] of Ashantee [*and Dwabin*] pledge themselves to countenance, promote and encourage the trade of [*their*] subjects with Cape Coast Castle and its dependencies to the extent of [*their*] power.

7th The Governors of the respective Forts shall at all times afford every protection in their power to the persons and property of the people of Ashantee [*and Dwabin*] who may resort to the waterside.

8th The Governor-in-Chief reserves to himself the right of punishing any subject of Ashantee [*or Dwabin*] guilty of secondary offences, but in case of any crime of magnitude, he will send the offender to the Kings, to be dealt with according to the laws of his country.

9th The King[s] agree to commit [*their*] children to the care of the Governor-in-Chief, for education, at Cape Coast Castle, in full confidence of the good intentions of the British Government and of the benefits to be derived therefrom.

10th The King[s] promise to direct diligent inquiries to be made respecting the officers attached to the Mission of Major John Peddie and Captain Thomas Campbell and to influence and oblige the neighbouring kingdoms and their tributaries, to befriend them as the subjects of the British Government.

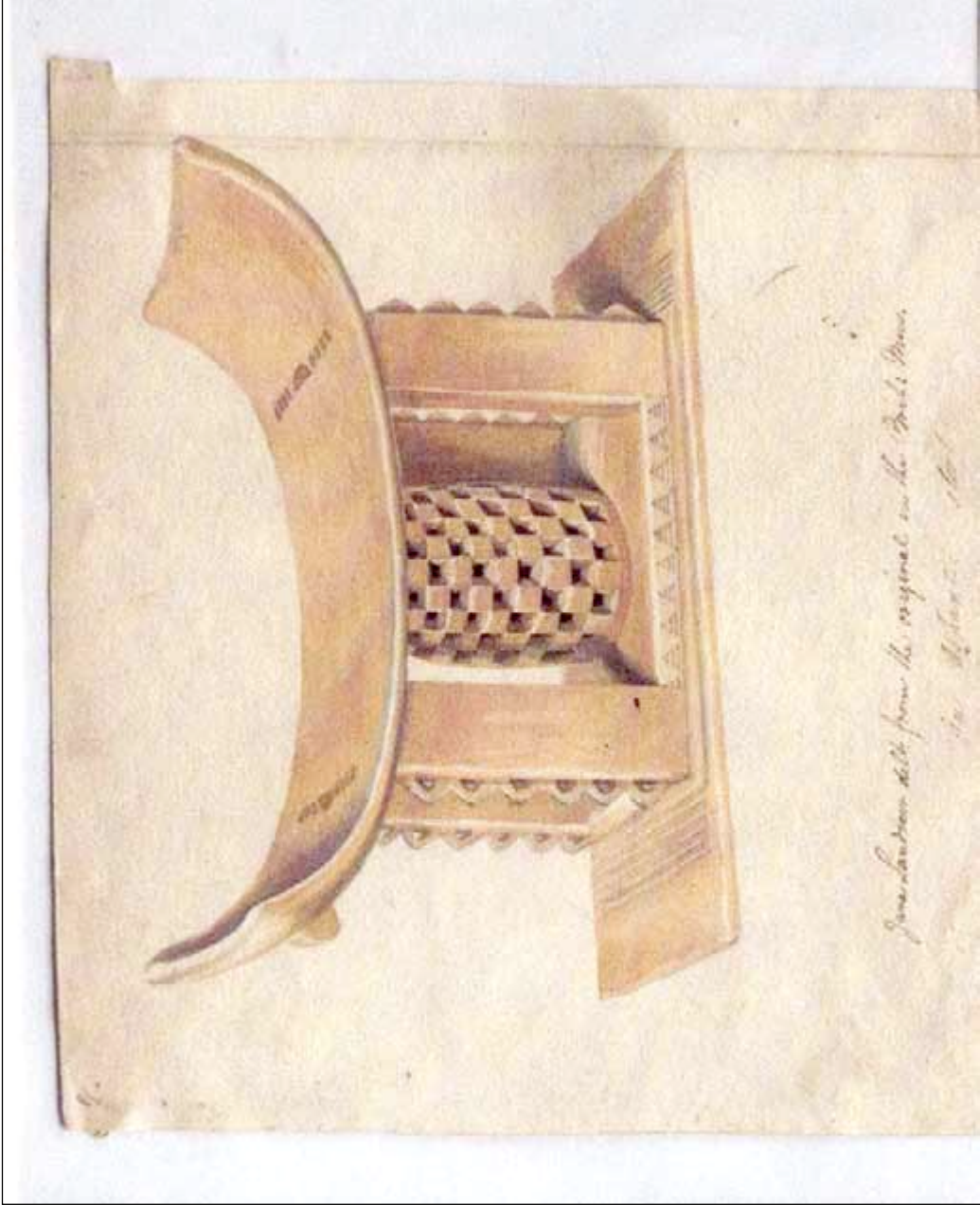
Signed and sealed at Commassie, this seventh day of September, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen. [H.C.412 (1865)]

Appendix 5 contains all the original watercolour sketches drawn by Jane Landseer and Sarah Bowdich Lee that are currently in the possession of a maternal relative:



Appendix 5, no 1: 'An Ashantee Sanko'
13.00 x 24.40 cm

(Inscribed: Jane Landseer delt from the original in the Brit: Mus.)



Appendix 5, no 2: 'An Ashantee Stool'

16.20 x 18.30 cm

(numbered 7 in pencil in top left-hand corner, inscribed in ink: Jane Landseer del from the original in the British Museum (1820))

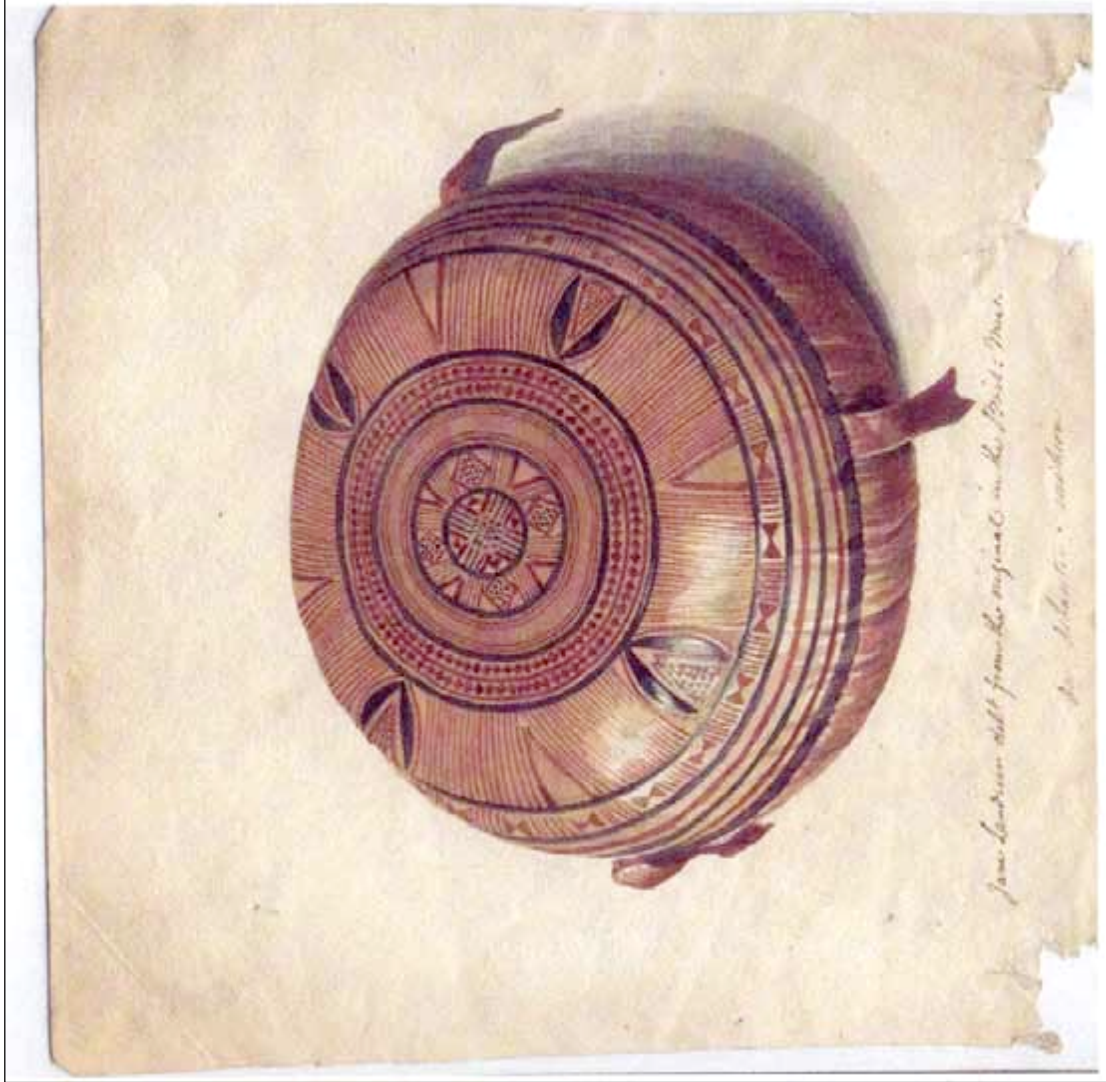


Appendix 5, no 3: 'An Ashantee Minister's State Bag'

22.3 x 15.30 cm

(In pencil at the top left-hand corner: 11

and inscribed in ink: Jane Landseer delt from the original in the British Museum)



Appendix 5, no 4: 'An Ashantee Cushion'

21.60 x 22.20 cm

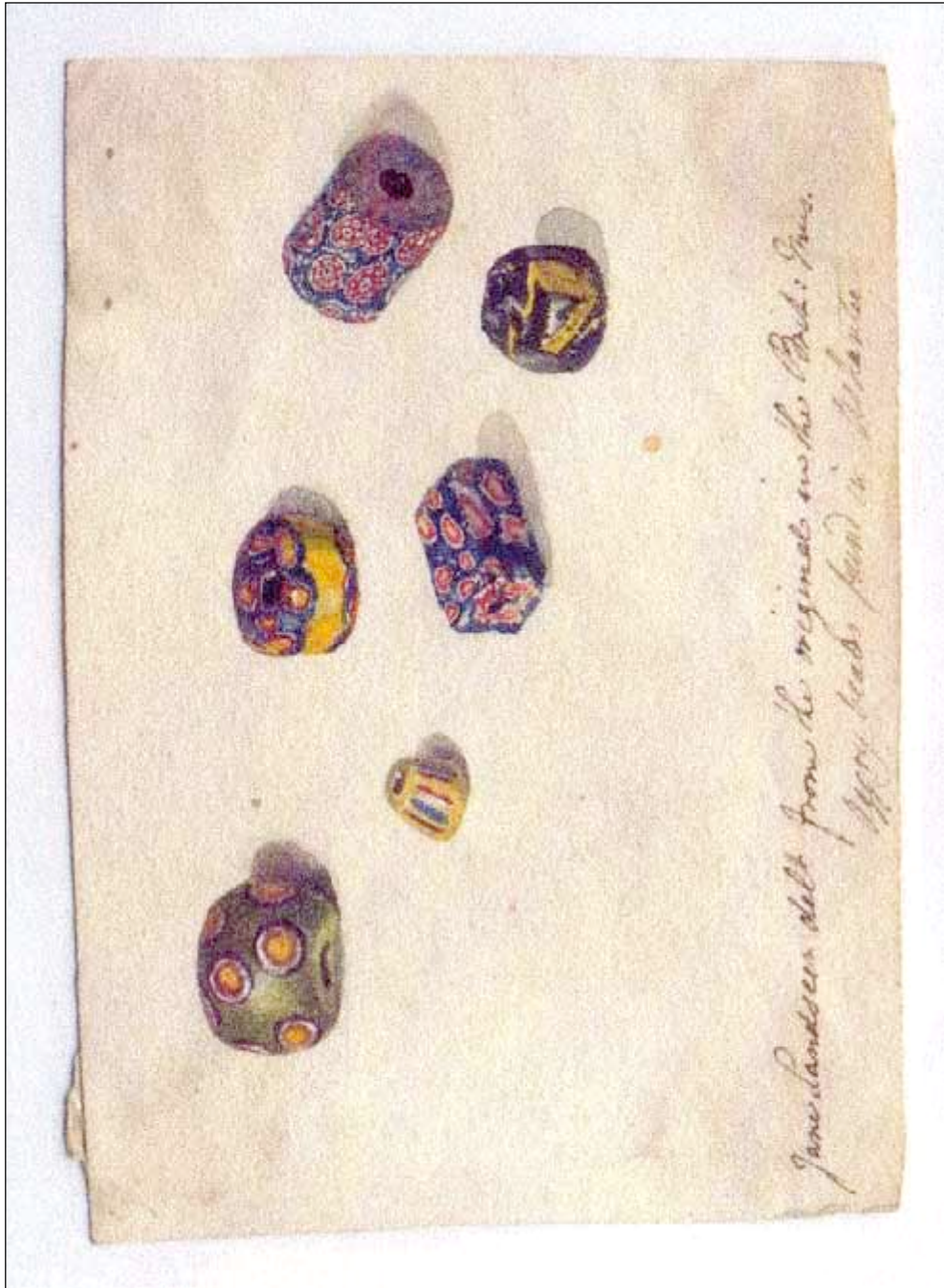
(Inscribed in pencil in top left-hand corner: 1. Jane Landseer
delt from the original in the British Museum)
(1820)



Appendix 5, no 5: 'A Dagwumba Sandal'

9.40 x 19.80 cm

(Inscribed in pencil on top left-hand corner 12. Inscribed in ink: Jane Landseer delt from the original in the British Museum)
(1820)



Appendix 5, no 7: 'Aggry Beads found in Ashantee'

9.50 x 13.50 cm

(Inscribed in ink: Jane Landseer delt from the originals in the British Museum)
(1820)

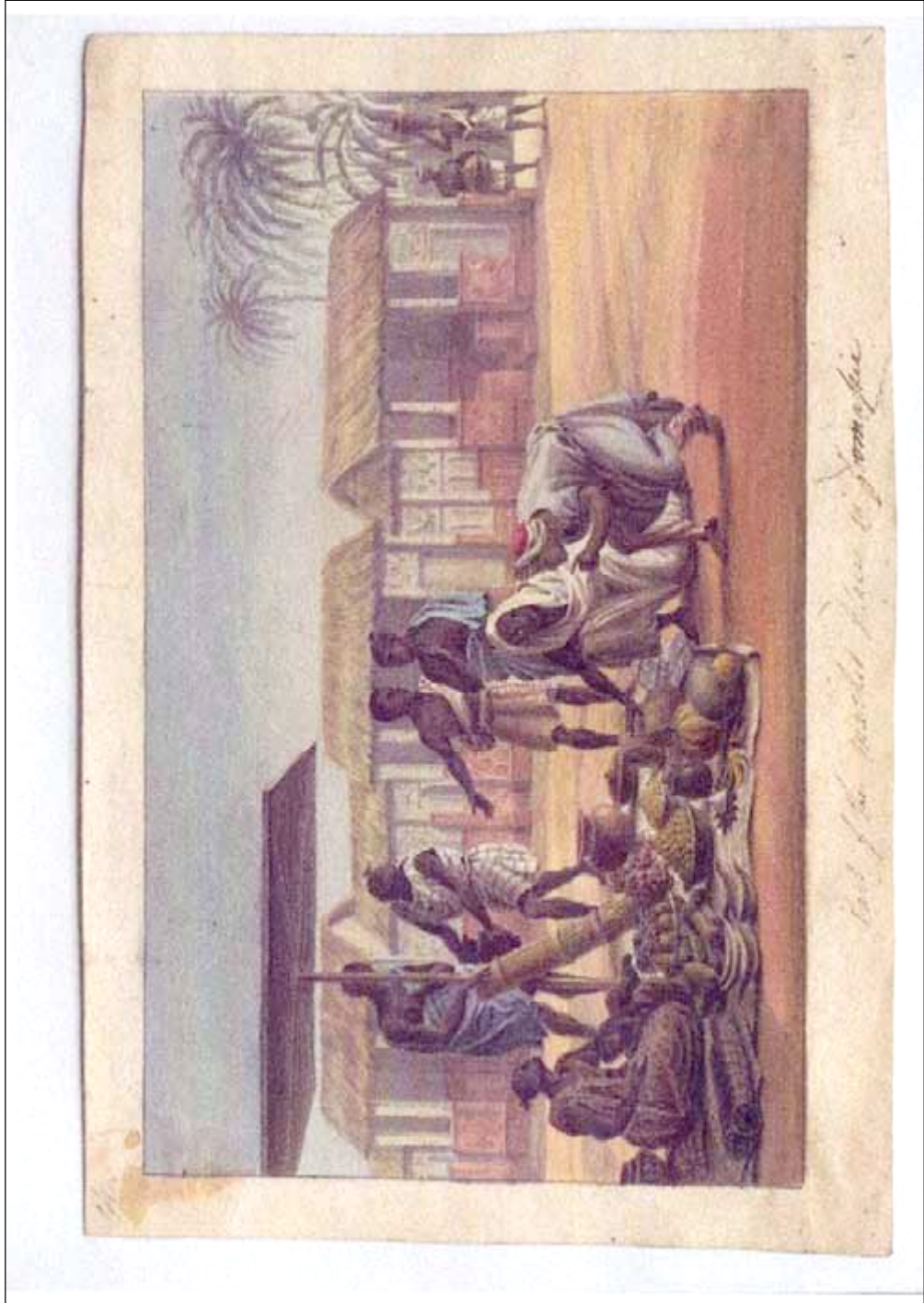


Appendix 5, no 8: 'Goree'

13.50 x 27.00 cm

S. Bowdich del.

(Possibly painted en route during Sarah's first voyage to the Gold Coast in 1816)

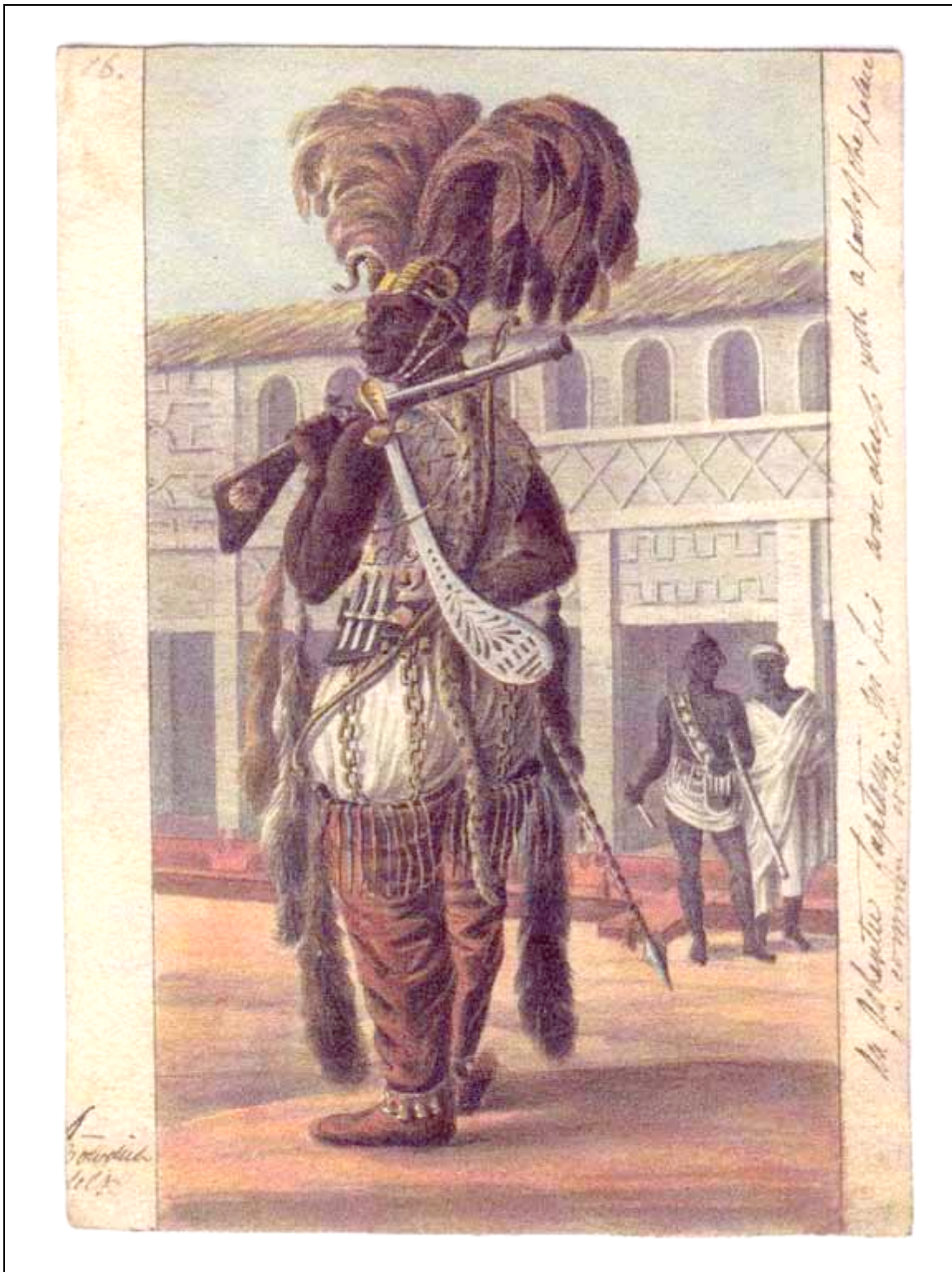


Appendix 5, no 9: 'Part of the market place in Coomassie'
14.00 x 21.20 cm

(Inscribed in pencil on the top left-hand corner: 12)



Appendix 5, no 6: 'Aggy beads found at Thebes and in Ashantee'
8.00 x 12.00 cm
(Inscribed in ink: S. Bowdich del.)
(1820?)



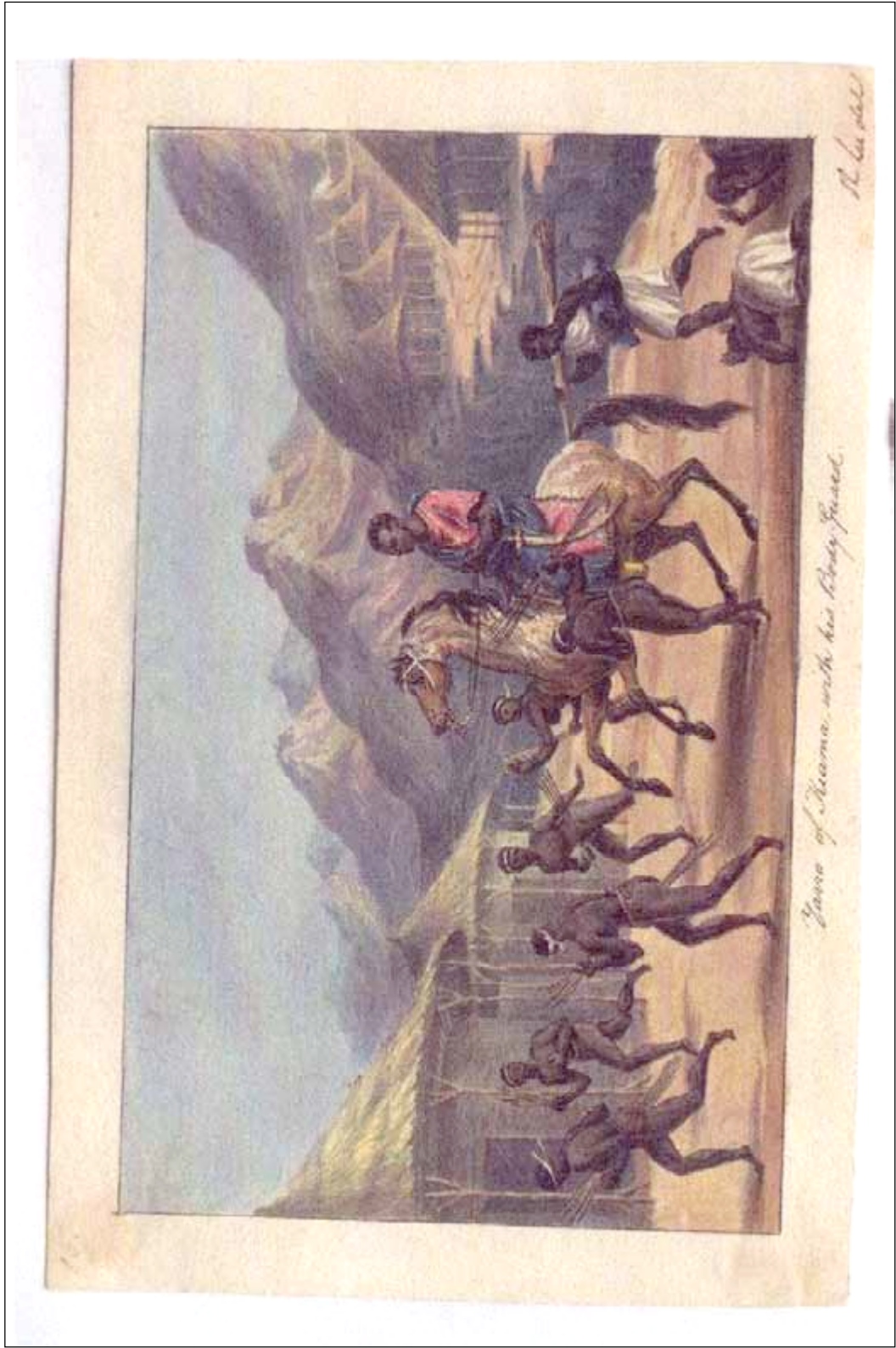
Appendix 5, no 10: 'An Ashantee Captain in his war dress with a fool of the palace and a common soldier'
19.40 x 13.90 cm
(Inscribed on the top left-hand corner in pencil: 16. and inscribed in ink on the bottom left-hand corner:
S.Bowdich del.)



Appendix 5, no 11: 'A Fantee Coloured Woman'

15.40 x 10.10 cm

Inscribed in pencil in the top left-hand corner: 5. Inscribed in ink on the bottom right-hand corner: S.B.
(Possibly painted between 1816-1818 whilst Sarah was resident at Fort Anomabu/Cape Coast Castle)



Appendix 5, no 12: 'Yarro of Kiama with his Bodyguard'
13.80 x 21.20 cm

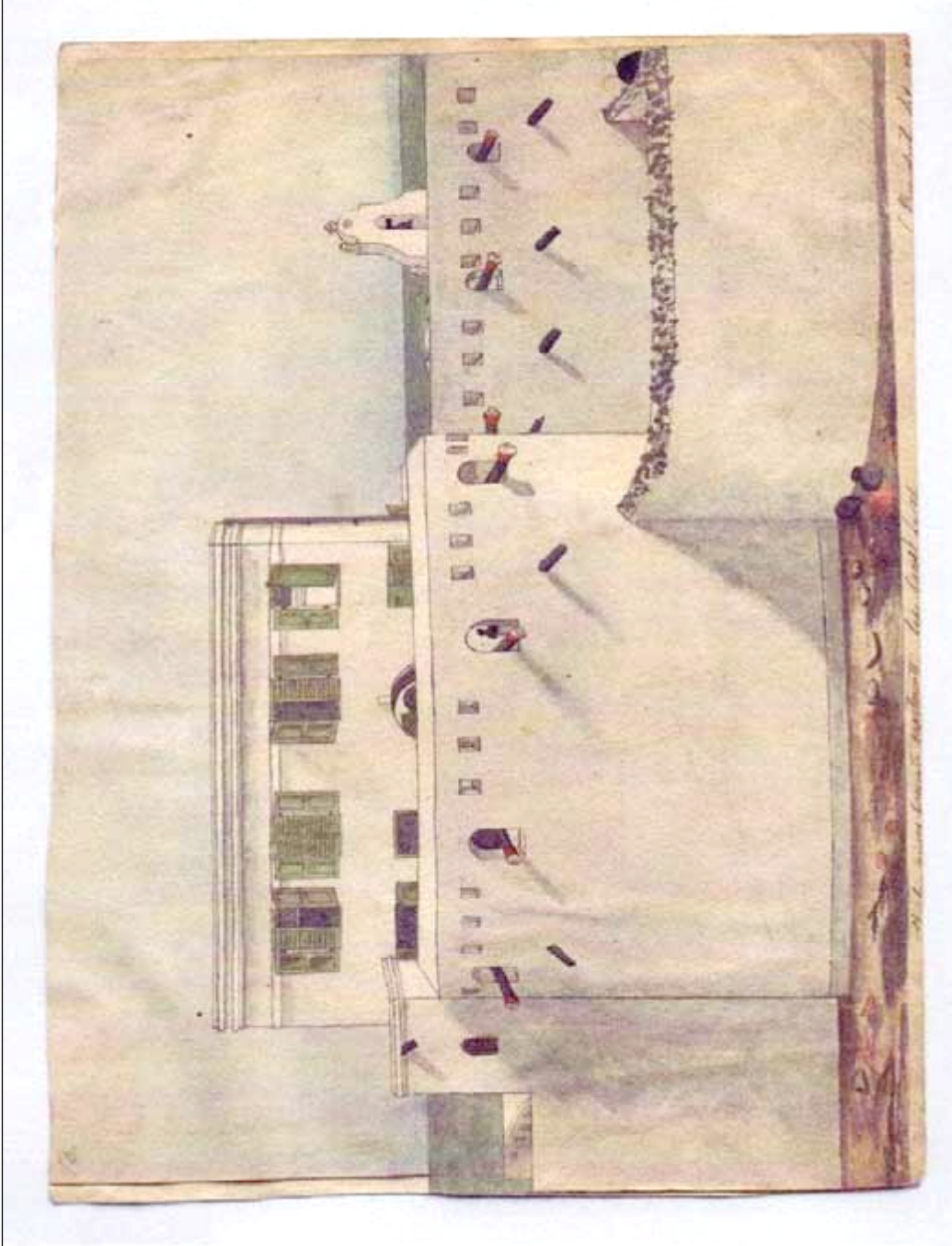
(Inscribed on the top left-hand corner: 15. Inscribed in ink on the bottom right-hand corner: R. Lee del.)



Appendix 5, no 13: A tracing of an agricultural scene, preparatory to transferring on to a stone or plate for reproduction?

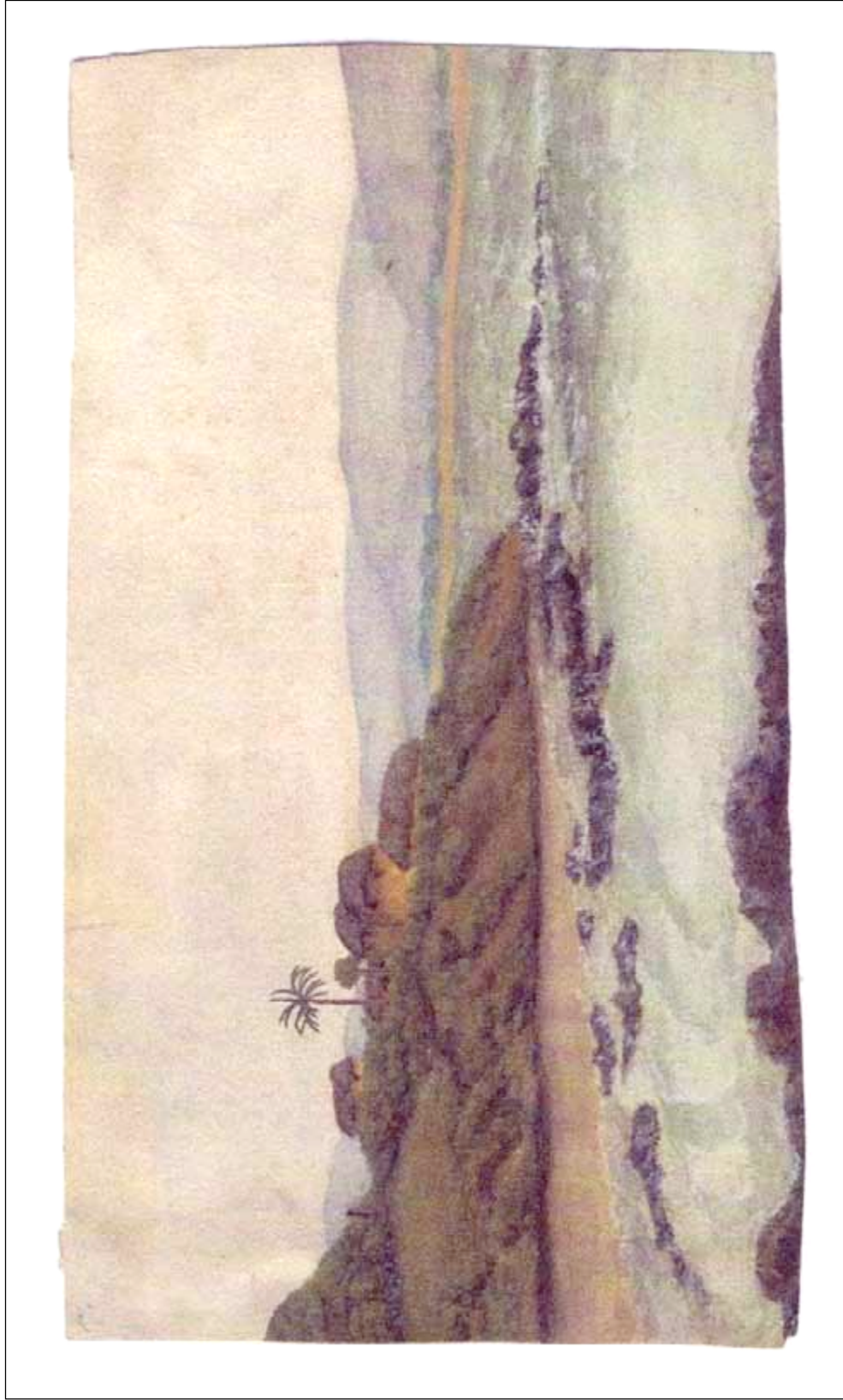
23.40 x 32.30 cm

(Possibly a scene from Sierra Leone or Madeira dating



Appendix 5 no 14: 'The Governor's private apartments, Cape Coast Castle'
19.01 x 25.00 cm

Inscribed in pencil on top left-hand corner: 16. Partial inscription written in ink on the bottom right-hand corner: S. Bowdich delt
(Probably painted by Sarah sometime during her residency at Cape Coast Castle in 1817-1818)



Appendix 5, no 15: 'Near Cape Coast'
14.40 x 25.00 cm
(annotated on reverse in pencil, unsigned and undated)

Glossary of Terms

<i>Abayifo</i>	witches
<i>Abono</i>	a residential district, quarter or ward
<i>Abosodee</i>	a traditional sword ornament
<i>Abosum</i>	small gods
<i>Abosommerrafo</i>	witch-catching deities
<i>Abrafo</i>	executioners
<i>Abusua kuruwa</i>	family pots
<i>Adampan</i>	a traditional open-fronted building
<i>Adae</i>	a ceremony performed at 24 and 42-day intervals, The Big or Sunday Adae (<i>Adae kese</i> or <i>Adae Kwesidae</i>) and the Wednesday Adae (<i>Wukudae</i> also sometimes known as <i>Kupadakuo</i>). During these events the <i>Asantehene</i> sits in public and distributes food, palm wine and gold dust to the assembled crowds.
<i>Adinkra</i>	painted/printed cloth
<i>Adumfoo</i>	state executioners
<i>Aduru</i>	medicine
<i>Adware dwa</i>	bathing stool
<i>Afena/ afoa</i>	a sword/swords
<i>Afenasrafo</i>	messengers
<i>Afenatene</i>	messenger sword
<i>Ahen boboano</i>	the threshold of the Bantama Mausoleum (lit. 'before the doorway of the Kings')
<i>Ahwerewamuhene</i>	Keeper of the Golden Elephant's Tail
<i>Ahohuru</i>	hot/heat
<i>Akomfo</i>	priests
<i>Akonkromfi</i>	a type of chair (lit. 'praying mantis')
<i>Akonnwafieso</i>	a stool house or shrine
<i>Akrafo</i>	soul washers

<i>Akrafena</i>	swords of the soul
<i>Akwankese</i>	a great path or road
<i>Akwantempon</i>	a large thoroughfare
<i>Akyeame</i>	royal linguists
<i>Apremoso</i>	Big Cannon Street
<i>Asamanfoo</i>	the ancestral spirits
<i>Asamanhow</i>	the ancestral spirits of previous rulers
<i>Asamanpow</i>	the grove of the ancestral spirits
<i>Asantehene</i>	paramount chief of Asante
<i>Asase yaa</i>	the name of the earth goddess
<i>Asensie</i>	a place of pots
<i>Asiee</i>	burial grounds
<i>Asipim</i>	a type of chair (lit. 'I stand firm')
<i>Asomfofena</i>	messenger swords
<i>Asumen</i>	amulets
<i>Atano</i>	sons of the creator God
<i>Awo</i>	an hermaphrodite spirit, who was believed to have been the first sacrifice dedicated to the earth goddess (<i>asase yaa</i>)
<i>Aya Kese</i>	the great brass vessel located outside the mausoleum of Bantama
<i>Bradán, brafie</i>	menstruation huts
<i>Batakari (Kese)</i>	war costumes that often have amulet packets attached to them
<i>Bodomase</i>	a crossroads in Kumase
<i>Bosomfena</i>	swords of the God
<i>Bosum'dan, bosum'fie</i>	the shrines of some gods
<i>Caboceer</i>	captain
<i>Croom/s</i>	settlement/s

<i>Did dwa</i>	dining stool
<i>Dwaberem</i>	the great market place in Kumase
<i>Dware</i>	ritual washing
<i>Dwinfuor</i>	Kumase goldsmiths district or quarter
<i>Dwo</i>	cold/coolness
<i>Ekar</i>	to cut or tear
<i>Esen/e</i>	palace herald/s or crier/s
<i>Foa</i>	clay mould
<i>Fotosanfohene</i>	Keeper of the Royal Purse
<i>Fufu</i>	white
<i>Gyedua</i>	a shade tree
<i>Gyaase</i>	a central courtyard in a domestic dwelling
<i>Gyaasefoo</i>	un-free labourers (lit. 'the people of the hearth')
<i>Gyasewa fekuo</i>	the royal exchequer
<i>Gyennua</i>	shade trees/trees of reception
<i>Heman(e) ho</i>	a place of execution (lit. 'do not give offence to the King')
<i>Hwedom</i>	a type of chair (lit. 'facing the field or facing the enemy')
<i>Inchuma</i>	finely ground red ochre
<i>Keteanofena</i>	swords of state
<i>Kokoo</i>	red
<i>Kra</i>	soul or life-force
<i>Kuduo</i>	cast brass offering vessel
<i>Kumasefoo</i>	the Kumase office-holders
<i>Kurotia</i>	the extreme periphery of settlements
<i>Kurotwiamansa</i>	leopard
<i>Kwaeberentuw</i>	dense and damp forest
<i>Kwaebibiri</i>	black forest
<i>Kyinie</i>	whirl/swirl

<i>Kyinhyia</i>	a part of the King's House (lit. the place of whirling or turning around')
<i>Kyinie Kyimini</i>	umbrella bearer
<i>Mmoatia</i>	short or little people with backwards pointing feet
<i>Mogya</i>	blood
<i>Nduru</i>	medicines
<i>Nhenkwaa</i>	the palace officials
<i>Nkoa</i>	hollow cast gold effigy figures that represent dead enemy kings
<i>Nkonnwa tuntum</i>	ancestral 'black' stool
<i>Nkram(u)</i>	a place of execution (lit. 'in the midst of blood')
<i>Nkuraasefo</i>	rural dwellers
<i>Nkwantanana</i>	crossroads/boundary markers
<i>Nnuraho</i>	to wrap
<i>Nsaa</i>	Fulani cloth
<i>Ntoro</i>	that part of a soul which is inherited through the father
<i>Nyame</i>	name of the supreme creator god
<i>Nyame Dua</i>	(lit. 'God's tree') a forked tree branch altar
<i>Ocrahs</i>	personal servants/soul washers of the <i>Asantehene</i>
<i>Odomankama</i>	One of the names of the supreme creator god
<i>Odwira</i>	purification or cleansing
<i>Ohene</i>	chiefs
<i>Okyeame</i>	a royal linguist
<i>Oyoko Kokoo/Oyoko ne Dako</i>	the two royal matri-lineages of Asante
<i>Onyakopon</i>	one of the names of the supreme creator god
<i>Onyame</i>	one of the names of the supreme creator god
<i>Otadee</i>	a metal disc attached to the seat of a stool (lit. 'like a pool')
<i>Palaver/s</i>	dispute/s and/or negotiation

<i>Pampim</i>	a physical and symbolic barrier erected over the threshold of a settlement
<i>Pramakeseso</i>	the great courtyard in the palace at Kumase
<i>Puruw/ Puruo</i>	circle/s
<i>Safii</i>	an Islamic amulet
<i>Saman</i>	human breath
<i>Samandow</i>	the spirit world
<i>Sasabonsam</i>	a supernatural tree-dwelling monster
<i>Sebe</i>	Islamic amulets
<i>Sebe dontwon</i>	an elbow band spiritually reinforced by the addition of amulets
<i>Sika Dwa Kofi</i>	(lit. ‘the Golden Stool born on a Friday’) the name of the state stool of the Asante
<i>Sikadwumfo/Sikananfo</i>	gold-smiths
<i>Sika mmera</i>	Golden Elephant’s Tail, symbol of Asante wealth
<i>Subenso</i>	boundary marker located on the southern edge of Kumase
<i>Suman</i>	a charm or fetish
<i>Sumanpone</i>	the spirit grove of Kumase
<i>Sumina</i>	the middens
<i>Sumpene</i>	a circular dais made from clay
<i>Sunsum</i>	that part of the soul which is the ego, spirit or personality
<i>Tumi</i>	power
<i>Tuntum</i>	black/dark
<i>Yanne</i>	the latrines
<i>Yawa</i>	imported brass containers

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