

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE GOLD COAST

Basic concepts/ definitions

Economic activities are actions that involve the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services. Production is the manufacturing or processing of goods or merchandise, including their design and treatment at various stages. The production of goods needs land; labour, capital and in modern time's technology. Distribution is the channel taken to disseminate goods from the manufacturer to the retailer, often through wholesalers; down to the final consumer. The exchange of goods (trade) is the activity of buying and selling and mostly involves goods that must be transported from one place to another. Consumption is the use of goods and services created by production to satisfy human needs.

Economic activities are in four categories- primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary occupations. The primary occupation deals with extracting raw materials, for instance agriculture, mining activities and so on. Secondary occupation deals with the manufacturing into finished or semi-finished goods from the raw materials produced by the primary group. Tertiary occupation on the other hand provides services for people, for instance, teachers, doctors and lawyers. The quaternary group relates with high technological service, industry that carries out research and provides information and advice. But for the sake of this essay, discussions will be based on the primary and secondary occupations in the Gold Coast. This is because the topic to be discussed does not include tertiary and quaternary occupations, but rather limits the work to only primary and secondary occupations.

Economic activities in the gold coast

Introduction

Long before the Europeans established trade links with Gold Coast, the people were engaged in local and inter- regional trade. They thus, produced goods and services for the consumption of the family and for sale on the markets. Archaeological findings even show that there have been some forms of economic activities in the Gold Coast dating as far back as the second and third centuries. However the pattern of the economic activities in the gold Coast gradually changed with the coming of the Europeans. This essay shall discuss the economic activities in the Gold Coast from the earliest times to 1700; primary and secondary occupations from 1700-1936— under this, premium will be placed on agriculture (1700-1850), agriculture (legitimate trade,

1850-1936), mining activities (1700-1936), textile (1700-1936), pottery (1700-1936), soap making, (1700-1936), wood craft (1700-1936) and the Ashanti power and expansion of economic activities in the Gold Coast.

Economic activities of the gold coast from the earliest times to 1700

There have been several interpretations about the first inhabitants and human settlement in the Gold Coast. Some scholars postulate that the people of the Gold Coast originally come from the old Ghana Empire that was located in present day Mali and Burkina Faso. Others also think they came from Yoruba land in south-western Nigeria. However, according to archaeological findings, people have lived in Gold Coast as far back as the Stone Age (*that is from approximately 50,000 BCE*). This archaeological findings found at Kintampo was characterized by an advance technology of tool-making, pottery and woodcraft. There is also evidence of domestication of animals.

By the 2nd and 3rd millennium BCE, new developments occurred with the domestication of cattle, sheep, and goat as well as with the first cultivation of food crops such as cowpeas, oil palm and white and yellow yams. Evidence again suggests that, between the 2nd and 4th centuries, there was the development of skills in mining, smelting iron and forging metal tools and weapons. The development of the Iron Age dramatically impacted the life of the pre- colonial people. Not only did iron tools contributed to the development of agriculture but also led to specialization, state formation and territorial expansion. Gold mining for example as a specialization led to a long distance trade that created permanent link between the regions to the north with those in the south.

Before the fifteenth century, the economy of the Gold Coast was largely rural and agricultural. The economy was a subsistence one, so food crops were produced for the consumption of the family and not necessarily for market. In the northern and savannah zones, crops produced include, sorghum, banana and other cereals, as well as the rearing of livestock such as cattle, sheep and goat. In the forest belt, plantain and oil palm were cultivated, whilst hunting was an important supplementary economic activity. Along the coast, fishing and salt production were the principal activities. Besides agriculture and fishing, people engaged themselves in the manufacture in a range of handicrafts: textiles, metal goods, pottery, leather goods and canoes.

With time, contact was established between the coastal dwellers and the interior inhabitants which led to an exchange economy. This contact came as a result of the need for goods and commodities which were not available in the regions. This meant that people exchange what they produced with what they do not; for instance, the coastal dwellers exchanged dried fish and salt for foodstuffs and grains from the interior inhabitants. This wide range of products were exchanged at local markets or carried along well established trade routes for exchange in regional markets. Goods were exchanged by barter or by use of gold dust.

The people of Gold Coast did not only trade among themselves. They also traded with people living beyond the Gold Coast borders, kola nuts were exported from the forest through Gonja to Hausaland. From the *Kano chronicles*, it is evidence that the export of kola from Gonja to Hausaland began sometime between 1421 and 1438. It is also curtailed that much of the gold exported across the Sahara to the Maghreb and Europe (Trans Saharan Trade) in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was carried from Akan forest by the Mande Djula traders based in Begho. Apart from the Trans Saharan trade, Gold Coasters also engaged in economic activities with Ivory Coast, Benin and Whydah. This therefore clearly shows that, before the Europeans established trade links with Gold coast, the people were engaged in local and inter-regional trade. It is important to note that this pre- European trade did not end suddenly with the coming of the Europeans. This is because, in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the Europeans participated in the coastal trade between Gold Coast and her neighbours.

The Gold and Ivory trade between Gold Coasters and the Europeans

The principal reason for the coming of the Europeans was to get to the source of gold which was in great demand in Europe at that time. Thus besides the mercantilist doctrine which defines a powerful nation as one who possesses precious metals in her national treasury, gold was also needed for the minting of coins. So after the Portuguese had gained a foothold in Elmina, by 1500, they were exporting about 567kg of gold through Elmina every year. The annual volume increased between 900 and 1,400kg at the end of the sixteenth century. In the late seventeenth century, Barbot and Bosman, resident agent for the French and Dutch company respectively, estimated that, about one and a half tons of gold worth about €224,000 were being exported annually from Gold Coast to Europe. At the peak period of the gold trade, 1677-89, gold exports from Gold Coast to Britain were 7% of Britain's total import of gold.

Ivory was another important commodity sought by the Europeans. It was needed in Europe for such articles such as knife handles, bracelets, chessmen and keys of expensive piano. Ivory was produced in considerable quantities in the forests of Ahafo and Gyaman which abounded in elephants. In the Eastern part, ivory exports came from Afram plains.

So in the fifteenth, sixteenth and early parts of the seventeenth centuries, gold and ivory were the essential commodities which characterized the economy of the Gold Coast. However, from the middle of the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century saw the rise of slave trade characterizing economic activities in the Gold Coast.

It is worth noting that, the increase demand of gold by the Europeans led to the expansion of the gold trade which in turn led to the growth of import slaves. To realize the production of larger quantities of gold, slaves were exported from the Bight of Benin to Elmina. Some of the slaves were also sent to the interior to the gold mining areas. The slaves were important for carrying the gold from the interior to the coast. This is because there was no pack animal transport, due to the presence of tsetse fly in the forest zones. Therefore, slave labour became very important.

With time, the exportation of slave labour increased after the Europeans had established a foothold in the New World. This is because there were also gold mines and plantations in which demanded more labour, so attention shifted to the New World. As a result of this, the importance of the Gold Coast and other places in Africa became the suppliers of slave labour to the Europeans. This thus marked the beginning of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade.

The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade

In 1650, the trend of the trade in the Gold Coast changed from gold trade to slave trade. The change in the economy from gold trade to slave trading was in response to the changing trend of the European economy. The Europeans needed labour in the New world so changed from gold trade to slave trading. The discovery of the New World changed the pattern of trade in the Gold Coast.

As the trade changed, the economy of the Gold Coast therefore was largely dependent on the slave trade. This is because as the demand for slaves increased, many local people left the local industries such as textile, blacksmith, and others, and engaged in the trade in slaves. This therefore led to the collapse of the local industries. In addition the Europeans introduced firearms

in order to facilitate the pace of the slave trade. This in turn led to insecurities, famine and war fare.

Another major effect of the slave trade on the economic activities of the Gold Coast was the rise of a new class of wealthy indigenous merchants, who played leading roles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These merchant princes include; Edward Barter of Cape Coast, John Cebes of Komenda and John Konny of Pokoso or Princess town. Even some of the slave traders gained power to the extent that they became chiefs and asafohenefo (leader of asafo groups) in their communities. Moreover, there was the emergence of towns such as Abandze, Cape Coast etc., and as a result of the slave trade these towns became populated because most people migrated to the place to engage in the trade.

The slave trade again brutalized the economy of the Gold Coast and changed the character of slavery. This is because slavery existed before the Trans- Atlantic slave trade. These slaves were mostly domestic slaves who were treated humanely. However, as the economy changed and as the demand for slaves increased, the people of the Gold Coast could not resist the temptation to resort to ethnic wars, slave raids to satisfy these demands. Therefore many people had their source of the income from the slavery; an example is the Akwamu people who had become notorious for slave raiding.

Primary occupations (1700-1936)

Agriculture (1700-1850)

Agriculture was one of the earliest economic activities of the Gold Coast. Farming, hunting and gathering, fishing and livestock rearing constituted the subsistence economy. The major primary occupation of the people of Gold Coast was agriculture. About 70% of the people were farmers growing cereals such as sorghum in the Northern and southern savannahs, or banana, plantain, yams and oil palm in the forest regions. There was also the rearing of livestock such as cattle, sheep, goat and fowls. Farmers, especially in the north used shifting cultivation or bush fallowing very much as a method of cultivating the land. With the method of bush fallowing, a piece of land was cultivated continuously for three or four years. When it became clear the soil was losing its fertility, it was left uncultivated to regain its fertility. At the same time, a fresh land would be cultivated.

In many Ghanaian societies, farm work was normally done communally. By this, two or more households would prepare the land for cultivation, planting and harvesting together. In this co-operative system the host farmer provided food and drink during the period of the work on his farm. No one received any form of payment. For the success of this system however, honesty, hard work and punctuality of the members were essential. This system of communal farming was known as 'nnoboa' and 'fidodo' in Akan and Ewe respectively. Farming, from planting and sowing stages to the harvesting stage was also done by physical human labour. Even though both men and women engaged in farming activities, there was a clear division of labour between the sexes and sometimes between the main age groups. The felling of the trees, clearing the bush, and the preparation of the plots for planting or sowing were done by men because of the physical exertion involved while the women were in charge of sowing, harvesting and sales of the produce on the markets. However, in most communities sowing, harvesting and carrying the harvest home were areas in which there was no division of labour according to sex or age. In the forest regions, hunting was an important supplementary economic activity. Fishing was also the principle economic activity along the coastal regions of the Gold coast. Here, the men were in charge of catching the fishing, while the women were tasked with smoking and selling the fish on the markets.

Agriculture-legitimate trade (1850-1936)

After the abolishment of slave trade in the nineteenth century, legitimate trade was introduced. This was characterized by the growth of cash crop by colonies of European countries for export. The same situation prevailed in the Gold Coast immediately after slave trade abolishment; the British encouraged the growth of oil palm for oiling Western industrial machines and timber as well. However by the turn of the twentieth century, cocoa became export leader, fetching even more than gold. The farmers increased their output in agriculture in general and cocoa in particular. Cocoa was being grown in the Eastern and Central Provinces of the colony, in Asante and southern Togoland, Krobo district and Central Province, coconuts in Keta and Ada district and timber in the Western province.

The expansion of agriculture began towards the end of the World War I and continued till about 1928. Military requirements in Europe during the war increased the demand for crops like coconut, oil palm and rubber. In volume and value, cocoa was the most important crop

production rose from 10,000 tons in 1919 to 256,000 tons by 1932. Cocoa became the most important single export commodity. Demand for vegetable oil notably palm oil increased in line with the quickening pace of industrialization. A good number of participated in the export of such commodities like palm oil, groundnut and rubber.

One major effect of the legitimate trade was societies suffered crises of adaptation. This was the situation whereby societies whose economy depended solely on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade suffered to shift from that and adapt the legitimate trade. Therefore it made it difficult for societies to just abolish the slave trade abruptly. However, with the legitimate trade, all class of people could engage in. This is because unlike the slave trade which was restricted for certain class of people, the legitimate trade made people with small tracts of land cultivates these commodities for sale at the markets. Besides, women could also participate in the sale of these commodities which served as their source of income.

Mining industry (1700-1936)

Gold coast was one of the major suppliers of gold to the ancient world. More than 90 percent of all gold ever used has been mined since 1848, but the lure of gold has felt since the beginning of human civilization. In the fifteenth century, Europeans knew the West African coastal area as the source of the gold that reached North Africa via the trans-Saharan trade roots. Before the coming of the Europeans, the people of Gold Coast engaged in mining. Some of the important commodities mined were salt, gold among others.

Gold was produced to feed the trans-Saharan trade that developed before the coming of the Europeans. Although, people of gold coast valued gold as a symbol of status and power, it was seldom used as money. The people of Gold Coast were expert gold miners as well as careful protectors of the deposit source from outsiders. Traditional methods of gold mining had been developed over the centuries and they persisted well after the arrival and encroachment of Europeans into the gold fields. For centuries gold was panned and washed by the gold coasters.

Mining made economic sense to the people as it serves as sources of employment and income to the people of gold coast. Mining occurred within the family group, with husbands, wives and other household members forming the basic work unit, in some instance, slaves were also used in the mining fields. Also, during the dry season, farmers and fishermen in the non-dumper season

employed themselves in the mining for gold. This made the economy running and active before the Europeans came in.

By 1471, Portuguese explorers landed on the African coast near the mouth of the Pra, a river whose bed was filled with deposit of gold before they moved to “la Mina” “The Mine” in present day Elmina. However, before their coming, the Europeans knew that, the gold that has been reaching Europe through the trans-Saharan trade had its source in the interior of West African coast. When the Portuguese reached Elmina they were dazzled by the abundance of gold and called the area “La Mina” a pointed reference to the gold they discovered. The name became corrupted to Elmina. Initially, gold was exchange for Europeans goods. The gold coasters were amazed by the Europeans goods and turn to exchange more gold for less European goods. This caused the movement of gold from up to down centering at the coast. Soon the Europeans explorers were building castles and forts to establish a thriving gold coast trade.

With the Europeans here demand for gold increased, many people now found themselves in the mining sector, heavy machines were brought in by the Europeans to help produced to meet the increasing demand.

However, by the sixteenth century, the Europeans had established a strong hold in the New World, and this saw the increase demand for human labour instead of gold and this caused a reduction in the mining industry especially gold and this usher in slave trade. Finally, industrial revolution in Europe brought in legitimate trade and this finally crippled the mining industry

Secondary occupations (1700-1936)

Pottery (1700-1936)

Pottery is the kind of work that involves making pots, dishes and other articles made of earth ware or baked clay. It can be broadly being divided into earthenware, porcelain, and stoneware. The indigenous people in Gold Coast were mostly into the earthenware in the 1700s but later other techniques for porcelain and stoneware developed.

Pottery is one of the oldest industries in the country and appears to have been practiced from prehistoric times. Good kaolin clay is the raw material for making pottery work and it is available in many parts of the country. Every ethnic group has been engaged in pottery over a long period but pottery is women’s work and men were not allowed to take part in it. Rural women using local equipment and traditional techniques have produced all the pottery.

The earliest ancestors of the people of present day Ghana, who started agriculture and began to live in village settlements are supposed to have already started producing clay pots and artwork in clay depicting various types of domestic animals. Later, with the techniques of iron mining developing, clay furnaces were constructed for smelting the iron to make implements.

Again, the people who weave cloth in the country used clay spindles for spinning the cotton. The pioneers of the gold industry also used decorated clay discs as gold weights in the 17th century. Archaeologists have shown that traditional potting has been practiced in the Accra Plains for the past 4000 to 5000 years. It is known that between 1700 to 1900, Ga- Dangme (particularly Shai) women manufactured elegant pottery on a large scale and were able to sell their produce widely. However, amongst the Ewe, the areas around Adidome, Sagakope, Dzodze, Kpande and the neighboring lands of Kadjebi and Kete Krachi have been known for their pottery industries. In the Akan forest areas of Asante and Brong Ahafo, archaeologists have established that traditional potting was being practiced as early as 1750 by the earliest village builders and farmers. During 1800, (which has been identified as the high watermark of Akan civilization), pottery became more complex in style as Akan society grew more populous and complex.

In northern Ghana also, there is a long tradition of pottery manufacture in which their style was different from that of the south and nearer than that of the pottery style of the ancient Western Sudanese empires.

Textile industry (1700-1936)

Another important industry was the local textile industry in which cloth was made. The raw material for cloth was made from the bark of the tree known as *kyenkyen* in Akan, and *tsobo* in Dangme. Long narrow pieces of the bark were cut and softened in water. They were then laid on tree trunks and beaten with wooden mallets. In the period before the coming of Europeans, bark was used by most ethnic groups.

Later, people began to make cloth from cotton and silk. This was sparked off by the industrial revolution as the demand for cotton increased and people cultivated cotton in large quantities. It has been suggested that people from Mandeland introduced the tradition of strip cloth manufacture to the country. Dagomba and Gonja weavers produce textiles similar to those produced by the Mande peoples of Bondakou and Kong. The Dutch map stated that the Begho area was famous for its very fine 'cloth woven like carpets which are worn'. Archaeological

evidence shows that there was a cloth manufacturing industry in Begho and Bono Manso between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries and at Wenchi in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It appears that from the 17th century onwards, cotton cultivation began in the country. The cotton was ginned, spun, dyed and wove into cloth on hand looms. The weaving was mostly done by men, while the women were largely responsible for the planting, harvesting, ginning, spinning and dyeing of the cloth.

Soap making (1700-1936)

Soap making was one of the indigenous activities of which helped the economy of Gold Coast. The soap-makers used the peeling of crops like plantain and cocoa for making soap. The peelings were dried and burnt to ashes and then soaked in water in a basket underlain with fluffy plantain stuff. The end product, which was collected in a tray, was boiled in palm oil and other ingredients until the mixtures thickened and settle. The chemical ingredients of the soap thus produced were so rich that, the finished product compared very favorably as a detergent with the modern factory-produced soap.

Wood-carving (1700-1936)

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, wood carvers were held in great esteem in the Gold Coast because of their great value which was placed on their products. The Gold Coast wood carvers produced different kinds of goods. Their works included religious works of art, drums, other musical instruments, chief's state umbrellas and stools, household furniture, canoes, building materials like doors. Wood-carving was a hereditary craft passed down from father to son. The craft was regarded as sacred and so the tools used by the wood-carvers were consecrated and regarded as sacred objects.

However, due to the trans-Atlantic slave trade from the early part of the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century, as well as the legitimate trade which characterized the economy of the Gold Coast from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. These local industries declined since most of the population concentrated on both trades.

Ashanti power and expansion of economic activities.

According to Adu Boahen (1975), by the end of the eighteenth century the Asante had established an empire which was easily the most powerful in the whole of West Africa. It had by then conquered all the states and kingdoms in Ghana and had even extended over the south eastern part of present day Ivory Coast as well as much of Togoland.

By the 1660s and 1670s, a number of settlements very close to one another had been founded in the neighbourhood of present day Kumasi. These included Kumawu, Tafo, Kaase, and Amakom. These settlements constituted what was referred to as Asantemanso. All these settlements had arrived before the period in question. The Oyoko clan which arrived in the Asantemanso area in the area in the 1660s and 1670s was the last to do so. This clan soon provided the much needed leadership that was necessary to form the settlements in the area in and around Kumasi into a union of which soon developed into an empire.

The successful creation of the Asante union into an empire by the close of the eighteenth century was made possible by a number of factors both immediate and remote factors.

Factors that led to the rise of the Ashanti to power.

The factors which made it possible for the Asante to rise to power can be grouped under remote and immediate factors.

Remote Factors:

The Geographical location of the Asante states was a key factor. The Kwaaman forest where the Kingdoms developed was commercially viable. Trade groups from Jenne, Timbuktu, Begho and that from the Hausaland met there. Additionally the area was rich in gold deposits as well as kola- nuts, two important items in the Trans – Saharan trade.

The growth of Asante into an imperial power was no less facilitated by the tyrannical rule of the Denkyira. By 1660, the pre- Asante states had become vassals to the Denkyira. The vassals were made slaves and heavy taxes levied on them. This engineered a common hatred among the Pre-Asante states which eventually led to the final overthrow of Denkyira in the Battle of Feyiase in 1701.

The final remote factor to be discussed is the development of the trans- Atlantic trade in the Gold Coast. The lucrative middleman role played by the Fante and Akwamu as well as the

introduction of gun and gun powder as a result of the trade served as the needed impetus for the Asante to conquer the States south of the Pra to enable control of the trade as well as profits.

Immediate Factors:

The very strong ties between the various Oyoko groups who arrived in the Asantemanso area ensured that states that have been formed by them like Juaben, Kumasi, Kokofu, Nsuta and Bekwai were not seen as competitors but rather came together to provide a solid nucleus which later became the Asante Union and subsequently the Asante empire .

The astute political leadership of the first three Oyoko rulers of Asante namely Obiri Yeboah, Osei Tutu and Opoku Ware also contributed to the growth of the Asante Empire. The growth of the Oyoko clan states into the nucleus of the Asante Empire was largely ascribed to the first three rulers starting with Obiri Yeboah. He led the branch of the Oyoko clan states which moved into the Tafo area founded its own town, which is Kumasi and employed means of marriage, diplomacy or war established dominance over the other clan states in the region of Kwaaman. Obiri Yeboah won the former rulers permanently over by admitting them into the Oyoko clan. This move ensured that not only his position was strengthened but notably that of his lineage as the head of the new state. Feeling strengthened and secured, he embarked on wars of expansion starting with states in the neighbourhood who still did not recognise his regime. In 1670 in a war against the Dormaa, ObiriYeboah was killed and was succeeded by Osei Tutu his nephew. This succession marked an important development in the history of the Asante. Osei Tutu with the able assistance of Okomfo his political advisor and chief priest soon turned the nascent union/ state into a formidable empire. To do this he employed five main strategies.

In the first phase, he completed the formation of the 25 mile radius of Kumasi under his lineage of the Oyoko clan. By playing on the common fear and hatred for Denkyira and assisted with the political advice of Okomfo Anokye, he brought all the states together. To make this union a lasting one, a golden stool was conjured from the sky. To the assembly of states, this stool was explained as embodying the soul, strength, vitality, unity and the very survival of the union. Thus it was to be guarded at all cost. The Asantehene was the title agreed to be the official title of all the occupants of the stool and that the occupants of the stool were to be selected from the lineage of Obiri Yeboah and Osei Tutu.

Secondly, Osei Tutu got all the members of the union to agree that Kumasi was to be recognized as the capital and that once every year, all the members of the union were to attend the Odwira

festival there. At the festival, disputes between chiefs were settled and plans were drawn for the New Year. The festival thus rekindled the sentiments of solidarity and nationhood.

Now with the union and its solidarity ensured, Okomfo Anokye drew up a constitution for the union. The constitution recognized the Asantehene who was also the head of the Kumasi state as the head of the union. Below him were the Amanhene of the other states who had to recognize the court of the union as the Supreme court, attend the Odwira annually, contribute a contingent and pay tribute in cases of war and national emergencies in addition to seeking recognition from the Asantehene by swearing the oath of allegiance to him and reserve to him the rights to declare war on any of the members.

Osei Tutu was also able to form an army to offset the yoke of Denkyira overlordship. He did this by borrowing the military formation of the Akwamu. He introduced the military formation consisting of the vanguard (adonten), the (kyidom), the left (benkum) and the right (nifa) wings. Each member of the states was assigned a place in one of the wings and each wing was placed under a commander. The Mamponghene was the Krontihene or commander-in-chief. After the defeat of the Denkyira under Osei Tutu, he reduced them into a tributary state between 1699 and 1701. In 1717 he was killed in a campaign against the Akyem.

He was succeeded by Opoku Ware, his grandnephew. Under Opoku Ware, the Asante conquered and annexed Techiman, Banda, Gyaaman, Gonja and Dagomba all in the North, Sefwi in the West, Twifo in the south and Akyem, Kwahu, Akuapim, Akwamu, Accra all in the South east. Much later the Fante were also conquered. Asante's expansion northward brought into the union a large number of people who had been converted to Islam. The Asante benefited from the literate character of these people and in no time most of them became literate themselves and were employed in the Asantehene's court as secretaries and civil servants. Koranic schools were established in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Islam had an impact on the culture and warfare of the people of Asante.

The successive reigns of Obiri Yeboah, Osei Tutu, and Opoku Ware had thus combined effectively to ensure the creation of a solid empire which to a greater degree maintained its strength and power even under successive leaders until the latter part of the nineteenth century when it was virtually reduced to half of its size and glory.

The effects of the Asante's dominance on trade in the Gold Coast

The Asante were in charge of controlling the trade routes. The Asante were able to control most of the trade routes that linked the Coastal to the Forest and to Northern parts. Jenne, Timbuktu, Begho, and Hausaland all converged at the Kwaman forest where the Asante Kingdom developed.

In addition, the Asante, after gaining control over most of the trade routes, acted as middle-men between the South (i.e. the Coastal States of Fante) and the Northern States. The Asante succeeded with this by preventing the Southerners from passing through their towns to the north for trading purposes and vice-versa.

Moreover, the Asante had access to the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. Following the fall of Denkyira in 1701, the way became open for the Asante to pursue vigorously their policy of pushing down to the coast in order to have direct trade with the European merchants. Therefore, the defeat of Denkyira by the Asante enabled the Asante to trade directly with the Europeans. For instance, the Asante were able to deal directly with the Portuguese at the Coastal fort of Sao Jorge.

The Asante were also in charge of the collection of taxes, tributes. At the height of Asante's dominance, they dominated almost every state and kingdom in the Gold Coast and even beyond. Those vassal states under the Asante paid tributes in the form of slaves and other goods to the Asante Kingdom. An example of such is the slaves that the people of Dagbon paid until 1874, when, the treaty of Fomena, which concluded the Sagrenti War, the Asante agreed to give up slavery.

They were also charged with the duty of collection of rents on European forts. Between 1741 and 1744, the Asante extended their conquest to Akwamu and Ga-Adangbe lands. As a result, the Asante acquired the 'notes' or documents relating to the European possessions in that coastal area and the right to collect rents on the European forts and also established direct trade in the Greater Accra.