Kingship in Elmina before 1869: A Study in 'Feedback' and the Traditional Idealization of the Past.
Monsieur David P. Hennige

Résumé
D. P. Henige — La royauté à Elmina avant 1869 : étude sur le « feedback » et l'idéalisation traditionnelle du passé. Les traditions orales tendent à simplifier et idéaliser le passé et l'évolution des sociétés qu'elles décrivent, notamment en laissant de côté les conflits et tensions politiques. Un des mécanismes de cette idéalisation paraît être un effet de « feedback », ou boucle, des premiers essais d'histoire écrite, effet étudié ici par une comparaison entre les « traditions » d'Elmina, les premières sources imprimées anglaises sur la Gold Coast (Ghana), et les archives coloniales hollandaises, qui montre que l'institution de la royauté s'est développée beaucoup plus tardivement et dans une atmosphère beaucoup plus conflictuelle que ne le montrent les sources « traditionnelles » récentes.

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I

Traditional accounts of the remote past tend to simplify and idealize the evolution of the society they describe. For instance whole epochs are personified by a single archetypal figure and the existence of political strife is minimized or ignored. At the same time many of the details in these accounts are not inherent to the tradition but are products of the age of literacy—barnacles on the ship of tradition. This ‘feedback’ from external printed sources reflects both a dearth of knowledge of the remoter past and a propensity to overvalue the printed word.

The origin, growth, and role of kingship in Elmina, a coastal town in southern Ghana, illustrates these points. The duration, continuity, and detail of the written, contemporaneous documentation for Elmina is unrivalled in sub-Saharan Africa. Records in the Dutch, British, and Ghanaian archives provide details on traditional politics in Elmina from the middle of the seventeenth century to the present. While these often lack the circumstantial detail and sympathetic understanding that the historian would prefer, they can provide in broad outline the development of several traditional political offices in Elmina. These data are supplemented by the voluminous materials for Elmina traditional politics in the twentieth century. In sum, this near embarrassment of riches provides a rare opportunity to study both the nature of kingship in early Elmina and the development of traditions concerning it. The contrast between the pictures painted by these two varieties of sources illuminates both the nature of and stimuli for the growth of much oral tradition.

1. The research for this paper was carried out under the auspices of a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship for which I am grateful. Needless to say, the usual disclaimer applies. I wish to thank Albert van Dantzig and James W. Brown for reading an earlier draft of this work and commenting helpfully on it.


3. Contemporaneous records for the Kongo kingdom certainly rival and perhaps exceed those for Elmina in duration and detail but lack the continuity of the Dutch records for Elmina.

Cahiers d’Études Africaines, 55, XIV-3, pp. 499-520.
This paper will focus on the origins of the office of omanhen or paramount chief in Elmina, and on the role the occupants of this office played in Elmina traditional politics before 1869. It is intended primarily as a study in source analysis and emphasizes only one aspect of these traditional accounts—the fashion in which they treat the concept of omanhen.

II

Elmina (or Edina) stool traditions, as recorded in the twentieth century, trace the origin of the town's paramount stool to the migrations of one Kwa Amankwa, also called Edina in some traditions. Kwa Amankwa is alleged to have migrated from the north and to have founded both the paramount stool of Elmina and the town itself. Earlier traditional accounts cited either Eguaso, a town a few miles northwest of Elmina, or an unspecified area 'north' of Elmina as the original abode of Kwa Amankwa but in the 1930's, with the return of the Asantehene from exile and the restoration of the Asante Confederacy, most Elmina traditions began to identify Kwa Amankwa as 'of royal Asante stock' who had fled southward after a succession dispute.

Elmina accounts are nearly unanimous in crediting Kwa Amankwa with founding the town's paramount stool. The traditional dating of this event ranges from 'during the latter period B.C.' to 'prior to the

4. Throughout this paper the terms omanhen 'king' (pl. amanhin) and paramount ruler are used interchangeably according to the context.

5. In traditional nomenclature Elmina and its environs are designated Edina. However, for the purposes of this paper the more familiar historical term Elmina is used.

6. For a summary of these traditions see J. Sylvanus Wartemberg, São Jorge d'El Mina: Premier West African European Settlement, Its Traditions and Customs (Ilfracombe, [1950]): 13-18, and Eva Meyerowitz, Akan Traditions of Origin (London, 1952): 71-73. Wartemberg was an Elminan and at the time he wrote his book he was head of one of the clans of the town.

7. There seems to have been no mention whatever of this specifically Asante connection in earlier traditional testimony or in written accounts. See, for example, E. J. P. Brown, Gold Coast and Asianti Reader (London, 1929), II: 7-14. After c. 1930 this alleged relationship began to predominate and secured the field with the publication of Wartemberg's book. See also the various testimonies given at the 1934 Stool Dispute Enquiry, National Archives of Ghana (henceforth: NAG), ADM11/1/1692, passim, esp. pp. 202-206. In 1946 the advocates of a change to matrilineal succession attempted to secure the Asantehene's endorsement of their position by asserting this kinship. See affidavit of Elmina chief, 20 November 1946, NAG, ADM11/1/1787, pp. 342-343.

This story of the origin of Kwa Amankwa was facilitated, perhaps even motivated, by the historically friendly relations between Asante and Elmina, both hostile to the Fante. For instance, the Huydecoper mission to Asante in 1816 carried greetings from the Elmina people to their 'brothers', the Asante. Cf. Journal of Huydecoper, Furley Collection, Balme Library, University of Ghana (henceforth: FC). With the eclipse of Asante power after 1874 the utility of this 'connection' diminished but was remembered and embellished after the return of the Asantehene from exile in 1924.
twelfth century' to c. 1300. All such conjecture is based on a single chronological linchpin, the reign of Kwamina Ansa, who, all Elmina traditions now claim, was ruling in 1482 when the Portuguese arrived and built their fort. As can be seen from Table I, Kwamina Ansa is identified in tradition as a successor of Kwa Amankwa—sometimes as his immediate successor, sometimes as late as his fifth successor. Table I includes five traditional lists of the amanhin of Elmina. Wartemberg's list is used as the baseline since, by its appearance in print, it has superseded all previous lists and informants in Elmina today will almost invariably refer to it when asked for information about the early rulers of the town.

The implications of the various Elmina kinglists will be discussed at greater length later. At this point however, it is necessary to determine how Kwamina Ansa came to be included in Elmina traditions. Kwamina Ansa was not included in the list of Elmina rulers collected in 1899, but he appeared in each of the later lists. There is substantial evidence that Kwamina Ansa, and concomitantly the whole fabric of Elmina traditional chronology, was the product of an increasing awareness by Elminans of a body of European historiography dealing with the arrival of the Portuguese on the Gold Coast. Indeed, until the great era of stool disputes in Elmina in the 1920's to the 1940's, there is little evidence that Elminans thought much about their origins and early history or indeed that they cared much about them. In 1853, for instance, the inhabitants of the town, fearful of falling under British rule, memorialized the Dutch king regarding their long-standing loyalty. In this petition the Elminans began their history only with the Dutch capture of the Portuguese fort there in 1637 despite the fact that it would have been an ideal opportunity for stressing the great antiquity of Elmina royal institutions, particularly if these were seen as antedating the arrival of the predecessors of the Dutch.

The omission of Kwamina Ansa from the 1899 kinglist reflected the fact that few printed accounts of the chief who had permitted the Portuguese to build Elmina Castle, had yet reached Elmina.

9. This statement is based on my own efforts to collect kinglists in Elmina in May and June, 1971.
11. A. B. Ellis (A History of the Gold Coast of West Africa (London, 1893): 18) spoke of Caramansa and speculated that the name might be the equivalent of Kwamina Ansa. In 1895 the first edition of C. C. Reindorf's History of the Gold Coast and Asante appeared. Reindorf mentioned 'Karamansa, the native chief of Fetu' and suggested that this name might have been a corruption of 'Okoromansa', ibid.: 14. When the second edition of Reindorf appeared in 1951 this ruler was called Kwamena Ansa, thus reflecting the 'new' history.
### Table I

**Traditional Lists of Elmina Amanhin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Waremberg*</th>
<th>List of 1899b</th>
<th>List of J. J. C. Smith, 1934c</th>
<th>List of Apram Esson, 1934d</th>
<th>Meyerowitze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1300-1355</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa, or Ampon Dziedur</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa</td>
<td>Kobena Amankwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1355-1390</td>
<td>Kwegya Ansa I</td>
<td>Edina</td>
<td>Aseliife Condua</td>
<td>Ampon Dziedur</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1390-1426</td>
<td>Ampon Kuma</td>
<td>Yankum</td>
<td>Kwegya Ansah</td>
<td>Kwegya Ansah</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1426-1450</td>
<td>Ebu I</td>
<td>Dziedur</td>
<td>Interkudzi</td>
<td>Amprah Kuma</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1450-1475</td>
<td>Amankwa II</td>
<td>Ntakudzi</td>
<td>Ahin</td>
<td>Ohinba Edu</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1475-1510</td>
<td>Kwamena Ansa</td>
<td>Kobina Arhin</td>
<td>Ebu</td>
<td>Kwa Amankwa II</td>
<td>Kwaagya I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1510-1545</td>
<td>Kwegya Ansa II</td>
<td>Ebu</td>
<td>Anowí</td>
<td>Kwamena Ansah</td>
<td>Kwaagya II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1545-1572</td>
<td>Kofi Ahen</td>
<td>Anowi</td>
<td>Diawu</td>
<td>Kwegya Ansa II</td>
<td>Kwamena Kwegya Ansa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1572-1605</td>
<td>Eseli Kondua</td>
<td>Condua</td>
<td>Kobina Condua</td>
<td>Kobina Ghan</td>
<td>Kobena Kondua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605-1660</td>
<td>Ntakudzi I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1660-1680</td>
<td>Ampon [Dziedur]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1680-1720</td>
<td>Ohenba Ebu II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720-1760</td>
<td>Anowi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760-1820</td>
<td>Di Ewu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1868</td>
<td>Kobena Kondua</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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b. ADM11/1/111, box 1.
c. Notes of Evidence of 1934 Hearing, 150, ADM11/1/1692.
d. Ibid., 177.
More importantly, English had not yet replaced Dutch as the European language spoken in Elmina. After 1900 references to Caramansa began to proliferate in works on Gold Coast history. The first of these was John Mensah Sarbah's *Fanti National Constitution*, published in 1906. Sarbah discussed the arrival of the Portuguese and spoke of ‘Ansa, the King’ without any further details. Nine years later W. W. Claridge published *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti* and repeated Sarbah’s account at greater length and with a few new twists. Claridge’s work seems to have had a greater impact on the development of Elmina traditions than any other publication and it is necessary to discuss at some length his sources and the way he used them. Claridge’s source for the Caramansa account was, like Sarbah’s, James Clarke’s *The Progress of Maritime Discovery*, which appeared in 1805, and from which Claridge quoted liberally. Clarke nowhere referred to Caramansa as anything but ‘the Negro chief’ or ‘the African chief’. Clarke’s own account was drawn in turn from João de Barros’ *Da Asia*, published in Lisbon in several volumes between 1777 and 1788 and from Manuel de Faria e Sousa’s *Asia Portuguesa*, an English edition of which had been published in 1695. Barros called Caramansa ‘Senhor daquella aldea’ or ‘Lord of that village [proto-Elmina]’. ‘Senhor’ can mean any number of things, but never ‘king’ in the sense of an independent ruler. Faria e Sousa referred to Caramansa as ‘senhor’ of the people who had met the Portuguese and was therefore even more vague than Barros had been. Rui de Pina, writing about thirty-five years before Barros, referred to Caramansa as ‘a que os negros chamavam Rey’—‘he who the blacks

12. In 1903 J. Rhule, a member of a mulatto family of longstanding prominence in Elmina, wrote a long letter to the Society of African Missions in which he discussed, *inter alia*, the early history of Elmina. He stated that ‘according to traditions’ Elmina was originally subject to Eguabo. In the thirteenth century the Portuguese came and ‘soon after’ the Dutch also arrived. Rhule made no mention whatever of Kwamina Ansa when discussing the arrival of the Portuguese. Letter of Rhule, 31 August 1903, entry 19722 of 1903, Società delle Missioni Africane, Rome.

As late as 1918 one of the destoolment charges againstomanhen Condua III was that he insisted on using a ‘foreign [i.e. English] language [. . .] unremittingly during the daily sessions of the [Native] Tribunal’ and that only a few Elminans could understand him. NAG, ADMII/1/1111, box 1.


called king'. But king of what? The evidence of the sources on this point is extremely vague and even contradictory. Eustache de La Fosse, a Flemish mariner who visited the area in 1479, spoke of the 'manse et caramanse qui sont le roy et viceroy' but he too failed to specify the realms over which the caramanse ruled as viceroy and the manse as king.

It has been suggested that Caramansa was a title which reflected Mande influence in the area since mansa is the Mande word for 'ruler'. This is plausible but we need not concern ourselves with the meaning or derivation of the name or whether Caramansa represented a proper name or a title. What is noteworthy is that none of the sources known to or used by Claridge referred to Caramansa as the king of Elmina. Indeed the most common feature of these sources is their ambiguity on this very point. Other evidence about Portuguese activities at Elmina after 1482 suggests, like La Fosse, that the town on the site of Elmina was not an independent polity, but was either part of the State of Eguafa, or of the State of Fetu, or was divided between these two States by the Benya river. Claridge, following Ellis, argued that Caramansa 'was probably a corruption of Kwamina Ansa', but when he further stated that this Caramansa/Kwamina Ansa was 'the Chief of Elmina' he clearly went beyond any of his sources.

Thus, through a long and tortuous process, Caramansa, who, on the basis of the evidence of known contemporaneous accounts, can be described as no more than a prominent personage in the area of Elmina, became Kwamina Ansa, independent ruler of Elmina. In due course Claridge’s Kwamina Ansa was incorporated into Elmina traditions as an important omamhen of the town—so important, in fact, that he had been mentioned in the many works on the early history of the Gold Coast. During the half century since the appearance of Claridge’s History Kwamina Ansa has become entrenched in Elmina traditions; before 1915 he seems never to have appeared at all.

Kwamina Ansa’s historiographical evolution illustrates the propensity

21. Ivor Wilks, ‘A Mediaeval Trade-Route from the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea’, Journal of African History 3 (1962): 339. For further suggestions regarding the derivation of the word Caramansa see P. E. H. Hair, ‘A Note on de La Fosse’s “Mina” Vocabulary of 1479-1480’, Journal of West African Languages 3 (1966): 55. One of Hair’s suggestions, that the term ‘mansa’ was imposed on the area by the Portuguese or their interpreters, familiar with the Mandinka from the Senegambian area, seems the most plausible.
23. Claridge, I: 44.
24. The popularity of Claridge’s work may be seen in the number of times it was extracted in various Gold Coast newspapers. For instance the Gold Coast Times of Cape Coast carried the full account of Caramansa drawn from Claridge in its 9 August 1930 issue.
of oral tradition to subsume printed 'facts' uncritically and exemplifies
the validity of the Chinese proverb that 'a strong memory is weaker than
the palest ink'\textsuperscript{25} The reasons for this propensity in Elmina will be
discussed in the conclusion of this paper. In many cases, of course,
this kind of feedback can have important chronological implications,
as it has for Elmina chronology. With the aid of the Portuguese and
Dutch records and of seventeenth and eighteenth century travelers' accounts,
however, it is possible to trace with some confidence the
development of Elmina political institutions, and the office of omannen.

A Portuguese \textit{regimento} (royal ordinance) granted to S\~{a}o Jorge da
Mina (i.e. Elmina) in 1529 specified the relationship of the Portuguese
authorities there with the indigenous population. This \textit{regimento}
mentioned no office of paramount ruler in the town and strongly implied
that the inhabitants were under the direct control of the Portuguese
capit\~{a}o-mor.\textsuperscript{26} Any other detailed records that may have existed for
the period of Portuguese rule in Elmina were destroyed in the earthquake
of 1755 and no further information is available for the town until the
seventeenth century. The Dutch map of 1629 described Elmina as
being divided into three parts, each under a 'Captain'.\textsuperscript{27} The Dutch
director-general Arent Jacobzen van Amersfoort declared ten years later
that the people of Elmina were 'accustomed to communicate all occur-
rences to the [Director-]General, because they have no king'.\textsuperscript{28} In 1659
the director-general recorded that 'the Caboceers of Elmina' came to
consult with him regarding a campaign against Asebu.\textsuperscript{29} Olfert Dapper,
writing in the 1660's, but relying on earlier sources, repeated that Elmina
was divided into three 'quarters', each ruled by its own 'Braffo', the
equivalent of captain.\textsuperscript{30} Willem Bosman, writing c. 1700, described
what he termed 'the tyrannical Government of some of their [Elminans']
Generals'.\textsuperscript{31} Correspondence from the director-general and entries
in the Elmina Journal (dagregister) for the period from 1700 to 1720
contain many similar references to Elminan 'Captains', 'Caboceers',
'Chiefs', and 'Vaandrigs'.\textsuperscript{32} These accounts probably reflect the develop-

\textsuperscript{26} A typescript of this \textit{regimento} is in the Furley Collection. A summary of
it will be found in P. D. Br\~{a}sio, ed., \textit{Monumenta Missionaria Africana} (Lisbon,
1952-1969), I: 502-504. See also Wiltgen: 15-17, and David B. Birmingham,
1-7.
\textsuperscript{27} 'Map of the Region of the Gold Coast in Guinea', in Albert van Dantzig
\textsuperscript{28} Quoted in H. M. Feinberg, 'Who are the Elminans?', \textit{Ghana Notes and
\textsuperscript{29} Diary of Johan Valckenburg, 15 January 1659, FC [NBKG 81].
\textsuperscript{30} Dapper, translated in John Ogilby, \textit{Africa, Being an Accurate Description
\textsuperscript{31} Willem Bosman, \textit{A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea}
(London, 1705): 42.
\textsuperscript{32} Pieter Nuyts to West India Company, 30 April 1706, FC 1701-1715, 1701-6:
208; Nuyts' Diary, 19 January 1707, FC 1701-1715, 1707-15: 32; Elmina Journal,
2 June 1716, 25 July 1716 and 5 October 1716, FC 1715-1730, 1715-7: 159, 235.
ment of an inchoate *asafo* system in Elmina, where the number of *asafo* eventually reached ten.  

In short, not a single available source for the period before 1732 intimated that the office of king, or indeed any form of centralized government, existed in Elmina. While it is often ill-advised to argue from negative evidence, the volume and consistency of such evidence in this case seems overwhelming. While the Dutch may not have understood or been interested in the subtleties of Elmina traditional politics they could hardly have failed, in their daily intercourse with the inhabitants of the town for nearly a century, to have become aware of any paramount ruler with whom they could have conducted their business conveniently.

In 1732 one Codja Comma signed a ‘Pen and Contract’ with the Dutch authorities as ‘Upper King’. A few months later the *Elmina Journal* recorded that ‘one of the so-called kings of this Crom [African town] was buried’. These are the first references in the Dutch records to the title of ‘king’. The tenor of the entry in the *Journal* suggests that the Dutch authorities had only recently become aware of this office and still regarded it as a novelty.

During the eighteenth century there was usually a First or Upper King, a Second or Under King, and a Third King. The origin of this hierarchy is not at all clear; it may be related to the old tripartite division of the town but any speculation would necessarily be somewhat idle since there is no direct evidence bearing on the subject.

As Table II indicates, Elmina ‘kings’ appeared in the Dutch records with frequency and regularity after 1732. They most often made their appearance as signatories of the ‘Pen and Contracts’. Few of these agreements are available for the period before 1732. This absence may

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The Furley Collection consists primarily of notebooks of transcribed Dutch and Danish archival materials relating to the Gold Coast. All the Dutch records cited in this paper, with the exception of the 1853 Memorial, have been used in these transcriptions. Presently these notebooks are gathered into boxes, each containing several notebooks. Thus the first citation in the footnotes to this paper refers to the box, the second to the notebook and the third to the page number. The Furley Collection is presently being catalogued and calendared by Edmund Collins and Albert van Dantzig and it is possible that the citations used here will become obsolete.

33. FEINBERG: 24-25, and Ansu K. Datta and R. Porter, ‘The *asafo* System in Historical Perspective’, *Journal of African History* 12 (1971): 285-286, 288-294. What the Dutch called *Vaandrigs* (Ensigns) may have been the *supi* or captains of the various *asafo* Companies, each of which had its own distinctive flag.

34. *Elmina Journal*, 8 June 1732, FC 1731-1757, 1734-40: 48. The ‘Pen and Contracts’ were agreements periodically signed between the Dutch government in Elmina and the African officials of the various towns in which Dutch forts were located.


36. For this hierarchical structure see FEINBERG: 20-21, and J. A. de Marrée, *Reizen op de Beschryving van der Goud-Kust van Guinea* (The Hague, 1818), I: 52-53.
simply reflect an accident in their preservation. On the other hand the
invention of the ‘Pen and Contract’ mechanism may have developed,
or at least flowered, with the development of an official with whom the
Dutch felt that they could conveniently make these arrangements. In
any event the sharp contrast between the periods before and after 1732
suggests that the office of amanhin had crystallized into recognizable
form only shortly before that date. Doubtless the appearance of this
paramount office was more in the nature of another step in the evolution
of Elminan political institutions than an instant innovation. This
development is reflected in the growth of the three original quarters
of the town to seven by this time and the more frequent appearance of
titles like Vaandrig in the Dutch records.37 It is not unlikely that the
office of amanhin may have crystallized as a result of the exigencies
accompanying Elminan participation in the expedition against John
Connyn in 1724.38 Certainly this venture was the largest military under-
taking by the Dutch and their allies in the eighteenth century.39

Table II lists the amanhin of Elmina that were recorded in the Dutch
records before 1869.

The vagaries of Dutch orthography make it difficult to distinguish in
every case one amanhin from another, but by conservative estimate there
were at least fourteen amanhin and seventeen reigns between 1732 and
1869.40 This compares rather closely with the number of rulers given
in several of the traditional lists shown in Table I, except that by tra-
ditional chronology the reigns of these rulers spanned over a period three
or four centuries longer. It is not impossible, of course, that this correspon-
dence in number reflects accurate recollections which went aground on the
shoals of a European-based chronology. The difference between the
erlier names in the two Tables would present no difficulties to the
acceptance of such a hypothesis since traditional modes of nomenclature
have often escaped alien observation and understanding.

Nonetheless other evidence militates against the acceptance, based on
an adventitious agreement in number alone, of the reliability, even in
broader outline, of Elmina traditions in this regard. The growth of
Elmina kinglists between 1899 and 1950 paralleled the growth of Elminan
knowledge of printed information on the early history of the town. It
suggests that more went into these lists than undiluted traditional
evidence. The evolution of the Elmina kinglists was more likely a
response to the need to accommodate new information, particularly the

38. This is also suggested by FEINBERG, ‘The Nature of Elmina Political Develop-
ment in the Eighteenth Century’, a paper delivered at the Connecticut Valley
African Colloquium, 6 March 1971: 22.
39. For the expedition against John Connyn see K. Y. DAAKU: 141 and ID.,
40. In this calculation I equate Ahin and Atjin, Quouw Etja and Quetja,
and Quetja Coema/Quetja Ansan/Quetja Quamena. My reasons for inferring
two different rulers between 1795 and 1811 are discussed below, p. 512.


### Table II

**AMANHIN OF ELMINA KNOWN FROM DUTCH RECORDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ruling Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coedja Comma, ?</td>
<td>ruling in May, 1732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Andue, Annuwe, Amnue*</td>
<td>ruling in 1735 and 1743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Aussie*</td>
<td>ruling in 1742, destooled in 1748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Andue (again)</td>
<td>re-enstooled in 1743, died in 1749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aussie (again)</td>
<td>ruling in 1750, died in 1760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ahin, Atjin</td>
<td>enstooled in 1760, still ruling in 1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Quetja*</td>
<td>ruling in 1776, destooled for six months in 1777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ahin* (?)</td>
<td>signed as king in 1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Quetja</td>
<td>ruling in 1787, probably same as 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>unnamed ruler died in 1794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Quamin Ahin* (?)</td>
<td>enstooled in 1794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Quouw Etja, Quetja*</td>
<td>ruling in 1795, 'provisionally destooled' in 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Quetja Coema</td>
<td>enstooled in 1804, died in 1811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Andowee</td>
<td>enstooled in February, 1811; died in November of the same year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Cobbina Ahin</td>
<td>ruling in 1816, died in 1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kwamena Anowi*</td>
<td>enstooled in 1826, destooled in 1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Diawu</td>
<td>enstooled in 1831, died in 1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Kobina Condua*</td>
<td>enstooled in 1863, destooled in 1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Kobina Gyan</td>
<td>enstooled in 1869, deported by the British in 1873</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* destooled *amanhin*; a* (?) denotes that a destoolment is inferred.

appearance of Caramansa. The random sequence of the earlier names in the lists may also reflect their extemporaneous and artificial character. In fact several lists recorded during this period showed Anowi (1826-1831) as the immediate successor of Ampon Dziedur, or at least characterized the period between them as one in which 'nothing noticeable happened'.

In fact the earlier names in many of the lists seem to be a potpourri of repetitions and patronyms, which is more or less what might be expected when a kinglist is expanded at a late date.

On the other hand it is significant that all of the traditional lists agree with the Dutch records regarding the names and sequence of the last three *amanhin* before 1869. If Ebu/Edu, whose inclusion in some of the lists is not surprising in view of the notoriety he achieved in his own time and the fact that he served as Second King for at least ten years (before 1816 to 1825), is omitted, the 1899 list and the Smith list of 1934 are correct back to the reign of Cobbina Ahin, who died in 1824. Any further attempt to identify names in the two Tables would be gratuitous but the recurrence of Kwegya in the traditional lists and Quetja and its...

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41. Testimony of Kwa Dadzibu, Kwamina Ahinakwa, and Herbert Krakue at 1934 Stool Dispute Hearing, NAG, ADM011/1/1692, pp. 31-32, 55, 107.

42. For Adoe or Ebu see below, p. 513.
variants in the Dutch records suggests that the expansion of the traditional lists may perhaps have been based in part on the lingering memory of prominent names from earlier times.

The traditional accounts of Elmina history have also been correct in attributing a long reign to Diawu (1831-1863). Diawu's reign was easily the longest of all the Elmina amankin, although traditional accounts exaggerated its duration by assigning him from 'over forty years' to 'sixty years' in office.\(^{43}\)

It is important to emphasize this aspect of Elmina traditions—their ability to recall with some precision events which occurred as much as a century earlier. This pattern accords with the pattern of stool traditions in several other Fante coastal towns and of the Asante sub-stools.\(^{44}\) It may not be unreasonable to argue that this length of time delimits more accurately the expected parameters for which this kind of abstract detail will be recalled with any degree of accuracy. Where no formal mnemonic technics are employed, the breakdown of tradition beyond this limited period is due both to the limits of human memory and to the function of many traditions. In order to validate the present, traditions are often seen as necessarily encompassing the entire past. When Elminans became aware that a settlement existed there at least as early as the fifteenth century and when they could quantify this span of time, it became necessary for traditional historical accounts to grapple with this new information and to react to it by expanding the Elmina kinglist compensatingly. The mechanisms by which this was done were not dissimilar from those employed throughout historical time and space by other cultures faced with the same type of problem.\(^{45}\)

III

The nature of kingship in early Elmina, despite the almost constant upheaval and factional strife of the twentieth century, is regarded by the traditions as having been very different. Wartemberg claimed that 'the person of the Omanhen is considered sacred by virtue of his office'.\(^{46}\) Wartemberg may have meant to imply here that the sacredness of the office was reflected by the stoolholder but transcended his tenure, since this was a common Akan concept.\(^{47}\) Even so, the conception of the power

\(^{43}\) WARTEMBERG: 88; Testimony of Kweku Ayerenu at 1934 Stool Dispute Hearing, NAG, ADM11/1/1692, p. 122; Petition of Elmina Chiefs, 27 February 1930, NAG, ADM11/1/1074; Testimony at Hearing of 5 April 1949, NAG, ADM11/1/1787, p. 447.


\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) WARTEMBERG: 95. The regnal lengths he assigned to these rulers, from twenty to sixty years, suggests that longevity was a concomitant of this sacredness.

and authority of early Elmina amanhin has been idealized beyond recognition in most traditional accounts. This is most clearly demonstrated in their accounts of the omanhen Ampon Dziedur. Although circumstantial details for most of the early amanhin are very meager in traditional accounts, Ampon Dziedur, along with Kwa Amankwa and Kwamina Ansa, has become one of the cynosures of Elmina traditions.

Succession to the paramount stool in Elmina is patrilineal. This contrasts with the usual Akan custom by which offices and wealth descend in the female line. Today only succession to the paramount stools of Elmina and of Shama, a coastal town west of Elmina, remains patrilineal, although succession in both Oguaa (Cape Coast) and Winneba seems to have been in the male line before the 1850’s. The origins of patrilineal succession in Elmina are not known. It may be a relic of pre-Fante times; this explanation would also account for the practice in the other three stools since all existed prior to the growth of Fante power in the eighteenth century and were not (and except for Cape Coast are not) predominately Fante in character. The peculiar multi-ethnic nature of the Elmina population might also account for this custom. The Dutch often imported Africans from along the coast as far as the Niger delta to serve as laborers and soldiers. Consequently Elmina assumed a more cosmopolitan aspect than its neighboring stools and patrilineal succession to the paramount stool may have been one result of this intermingling.

Whatever the genesis of patrilineal succession in Elmina may have been, however, the Elmina traditions have a simple explanation to account for this anomaly. In accordance with the claim that Kwa Amankwa immigrated from the north, they generally insist that succession had originally been matrilineal. However, the story goes, Ampon Dziedur had a dispute with the oman (people) in which he was supported by his sons but not by those of his sister, who were his natural heirs. As a result, he unilaterally changed the succession to the stool in order to exclude his disloyal nephews. Ampon Dziedur was then succeeded by his sons and they by their sons and descendants in the direct male line.

A sustained and nearly-successful effort was made in the 1940’s to change ‘back’ to matrilineal succession to the Elmina paramount stool. The story of Ampon Dziedur suited the advocates of this change well because it acknowledged the priority of matrilineal succession and at the same time emphasized the extemporaneous and arbitrary aspects of Ampon Dziedur’s actions. The original change itself was explained by pointing out that ‘In those days [of Ampon Dziedur] the Omanhen’s

50. The fullest account of Ampon Dziedur is given in letters from the suqi of Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 Companies to the Colonial Secretary, 5 May 1915 and 1 June 1915, NAG, ADM11/1/1111, box 2. See also Wartemberg: 85-88, and Feinberg: 20.
simple word was law, and no one dared to question it or to venture to oppose it without incurring severe punishment to himself and his whole family. At the same time it was maintained that succession from the time of Ampon Dzedur was exclusively through the sons and grandsons of reigning amanhin. It is to this traditional characterization of the early kingship in Elmina that we now turn our attention.

It is possible from the Dutch records to infer broadly patrilineal succession patterns in eighteenth and nineteenth century Elmina. That succession was confined to sons and grandsons of amanhin, however, seems extremely unlikely. However, attention to this aspect of kingship in Elmina will be deferred to later in the paper.

The Dutch records contain much information on the vicissitudes of Elmina rulers between 1732 and 1869. In sum, their evidence provides a sharp and interesting contrast with the role of the early kingship found in traditional accounts. Annuwe or Andoe, the king in 1735 and 1743, was destooled and replaced by 'Aussie' some time before 1746. In 1748 the chief men of the town asked the Dutch authorities to 'recognize anew as their king Andocie [sic], the old king destooled by them'.

A year later Andoe died and apparently was succeeded once again by Aussie, who was ruling in 1750 and died in 1760. Ahin succeeded and, if a reference to 'Atjin' referred to him, was still ruling in 1772. By 1776 one Quetja was described as king. On New Year's Day of 1777 Quetja solicited the support of the Dutch garrison to quell a disturbance in the town. Eventually grapeshot was used and '8 to 10' of the disputants were killed. The Elminans, unable to retaliate effectively against the Dutch, 'conspired to drive the King out of the Crom and kick him from the stool, which they unexpectedly carried into effect'. Not satisfied with this, they 'dragged him with extreme cruelty out of his dwelling and threw him into a small canoe, stripped him as naked as an Ape and brought him to the beach where [.] they accompanied him as far as the Sweet River [about three miles east of Elmina] which they compelled him to cross'. Quetja then fled to Apam, a coastal town forty miles east of Elmina, where his mother was from and where the

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51. Minutes of the Edina State Council, 1943, NAG, ADM 11/1/1787. As the fortunes of the matrilineal party waxed the supporters of patrilineal succession responded by claiming that succession had always been in the male line because Kwa Amankwa had not been accompanied by any of his sisters on his journey south from Asante.
52. Testimonies of Kwa Dadzibu, Herbert Krakue, and J. J. C. Smith at the 1934 Stool Hearing, NAG, ADM 11/1/1692, pp. 31-32, 97, 150; Petition of various chiefs to the Secretary for Native Affairs, 12 February 1936, NAG, CSO 657/32.
53. E.g., see testimony of amanhin Annowie in 1831, below, pp. 514-515.
55. FC 1757-1762, 1759-60: 50b [NBKG 297].
56. ‘Pen and Contract’, 2 April 1772 [NBKG 305].
Dutch had a small trading post. Eventually, after repeated representations by the Dutch authorities the Elminans agreed to 'invite' Quetja back and agreed that they were 'disposed to accept him again if he promised to treat them well and pacified them with presents'. Quetja complied with these demands and was reinstated. In July, 1781 a certain Ahin signed a 'Pen and Contract' as king but in December of that year and again in July, 1783 Quetja signed as king. This suggests either that one Quetja had been replaced by another with Ahin intervening, or that the Quetja of the 1777 incident had once again had difficulties with his men and been temporarily displaced. Either of these suggestions is reinforced by an enigmatic but suggestive comment by the director-general Pieter Volkmar in 1783 that 'It is very important that the Elmina King be a native of the town since the strangers who have been promoted to that post have not been loved.' Volkmar was almost certainly referring to the recent past and his remark suggests the possibility that succession to the office of paramount ruler in Elmina may not have been clearly defined at that time.

In 1794 Quamin Ahin succeeded but less than six months later 'Quouw Etja' signed as king. References to Elmina kings in the Dutch records during the following fifteen years are confusing. 'Quetja' is mentioned in 1796 and 1801 and was probably the same individual as the 'Quouw Etja' of 1795. In 1801 another 'Quetja' is mentioned as Under King. In 1803 the Elmina ruler, unnamed in the sources, was accused of scheming with a fetish priest to poison his enemies and was 'provisionally removed from his post'. The following year 'Quetja Coema' signed as king and there was no Under King. In 1810 Quetja Coema signed as king and 'Annowie' as Under King. The same year the director-general observed that no death customs had been paid to the Elminans since 1794 because 'no effectively functioning King had died in that quality since that time'. This suggests that the 'provisional' destoolment of 1803 had become effective and that two different Quetjas ruled during the period. In March of 1811 the Under King Andoe or Annowie became king as 'the closest to the stool' but he died eight months later.

59. Ibid.: 144.
60. Furley Photostat Collection [NBKG 314, NBKG 316].
61. Volkmar to WIC, 18 May 1783, FC 1725-1791, 1779-84: 116 [WIC 499, f. 1321].
63. 'Pen and Contract', 15 December 1801, Furley Photostat Collection, [NBKG 223].
64. Elmina Journal, 4 June 1803, FC 1781-1816, 1803-10: 16-17.
65. Furley Photostat Collection [NBKG 223].
Cobbina Ahin evidently succeeded Annowie since he signed a ‘Pen and Contract’ dated 15 October 1816.69

From 1816 to 1818 Herman Willem Daendels served as governor of the Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast. Daendels, who had served as governor-general of the East Indies from 1808 to 1811, had been ‘exiled’ to the Gold Coast for his anti-Orangist tendencies. During his tenure Daendels kept a detailed diary and, as a result, we have a particularly detailed account of activities in Elmina during this period. At the time the most powerful individual in Elmina was not the king but Jan Nieser, a mulatto trader.70 The Elmina king was described as ‘subservient’ to Nieser while the Under King ‘Aboe’ was Nieser’s slave.71 In consequence Daendels refused to recognize the office of Under King and to allow its occupant kostgeld (food stipend). Daendels claimed that the position of Under King was a recent innovation which had not ‘existed of old’ and was ‘only an abuse’.72 A measure of the importance of the king in Elmina before this time, at least in the view of the Dutch, was the fact that the kostgeld granted to him was only one-half that granted to the Great Vaandrig and the Makelaar (broker). Daendels abolished the post of Makelaar, which was a Dutch creation and not a traditional office, and raised the king’s kostgeld to parity with the Great Vaandrig, who was probably the tufohen or head of the combined asafo Companies.73

Cobbina Ahin died in 1824 and an interregnum ensued. Aboe, still Under King despite the efforts of Daendels, assumed the reins of government.74 In due course he probably would have been elected to the paramount stool if previous patterns had been followed but the Dutch authorities, long hostile to him, caused his arrest for murder.75 If later tradition is correct, Aboe (or Edu) was subsequently transported to the East Indies, presumably as a result of the murder charge.76

In 1826 a certain Quamena Annowie was presented to the Dutch authorities as the new king. The townspeople claimed that ‘according to their laws [he] must now be King’.77 The basis of Annowie’s eligibility and the circumstances of his enstoolment become clear from his own testimony five years later when he was defending himself against destoolment charges. These proceedings, which are very reminiscent of similar

74. Elmina Journal, 5 March 1824, FC 1824-1829, V: 28 [NBKG 663].
76. Captains of Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 Companies to Colonial Secretary, 5 May 1915, NAG, ADM 11/1/1111, box 2.
proceedings held in many Fante stools in the twentieth century, were copiously recorded in the Elmina Journal. In August of 1831 the Dutch commandant (a new title replacing that of director-general) heard that ‘the Elmina people were meeting daily and had come to the decision to depose their King’, but were trying to keep news of their activities from the Dutch. On investigating he found that the Elminans were alleging that Annowie ‘had behaved as a tyrant over them’ and that they had presented six specifications supporting this charge. These included misappropriation of powder, keeping a slave, intimating to the people that the Dutch were his own ‘slaves’, and behaving toward the women of the town ‘in a scandalous manner’. The charges were signed by the Great Vaandrig, the Vaandrigs of the seven quarters, and numerous other officials.

Annowie defended himself vigorously against these charges. He claimed that his unpopularity was the result of his efforts at ‘checking some of the most influential elders and getting the Commander’s [sic] orders carried out’. The Elminans remained adamant, however, and insisted that ‘they would not have the King anymore’. On 4 September the king presented his case. He stated that prior to his election he had been ‘a washerman of the American captains’. When he was approached to assume the post of king he ‘refused for a long time on the grounds that he was a slave child and a Creole’ and that consequently ‘free natives and Caboceers [ . . . ] would with difficulty submit themselves to him’. When asked to what he ascribed the hostility toward him he replied that

‘It is the only treatment that the Kings experience [ . . . ] When his father had to succeed he was servant of the Commandant of Shama and preferred his service in that to the kingly office, which he gave to one of his brothers. He [the latter] being a Grenadier in the service of the Chief [Dutch] Establishment

78. Elmina Journal, 1 August 1831 to 30 October 1831. FC 1830-1847. 1831-34: 27-33, 48-55, 110-112 [NBKG 806].
79. Elmina Journal, 1 August 1831.
80. Elmina Journal, 5 August 1831.
81. Ibid. This last argument was probably, at least in part, designed to enlist the support of the Dutch authorities. Likewise the destoolment charge that Annowie had called the Dutch his slaves was almost certainly an effort by the townspeople to preclude this support.
[at Elmina] likewise refused the hazardous post. By both these brothers the right was given as a present to the father of the present *terragen* [Elder] Emizang, named Kwou Kwedja.'

Annowie went on to relate that Kwou Kwedja had been destooled during the administration of director-general Gerhardus Hubertus van Hamel (1796-1798) for seeking the fort’s help in quelling a riot. Some of the rioters were killed and the townspeople held the king liable and chased him away. Eventually, after ‘two or three years’, he was recalled but survived his ordeal ‘only a year’. This relation bears more than a superficial resemblance to the events of 1777 described above. Annowie’s attribution of these events to the time of van Hamel may simply have been the result of faulty temporal perception; there is no evidence that Annowie himself witnessed them. Certainly the Dutch records of van Hamel’s administration fail to record this incident. On the other hand, given the insecure position of Elmina kings during this period, it is not impossible that Annowie was recalling a second destoolment which had been very similar to the earlier one. Perhaps the forms of destoolment had become institutionalized.

Annowie concluded his testimony by reiterating that he had been persuaded against his best judgment to accept the position of king. The Elmina chiefs resented his efforts to ‘perform his duty’ because they preferred a ruler ‘with whom they could do as they liked’.

The Dutch authorities were not pleased with the destoolment of Annowie. The commandant reported that the king, ‘by his strict compliance with orders and his competence for the post [...] certainly was of the highest utility to the [Dutch] Government on the Coast.’ Nevertheless he felt compelled to accept the destoolment in order to ‘maintain the internal and external quiet’ of Elmina and its environs.

Later in 1831 Kojo Diawu was chosen to be *omahn* after two other candidates had been rejected by the Dutch for unspecified reasons. When asked for gunpowder to conduct the enstoolment ceremonies the Dutch commandant refused, saying that he would not incur expenses today for the installation of the King and again tomorrow for his deposition.

Diawu enjoyed (?) an unprecedentedly long tenure of thirty-two

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84. Ibid.
85. Commandant Last to Minister of Marine and Colonies, 31 October 1831, FC 1830-1847, 1831-4: 110-111 [NBKG 388]. A similar sentiment was recorded in the *Elmina Journal* of 9 September 1831.
87. *Elmina Journal*, 14 October 1831 and 31 October 1831, FC 1830-1847, 1831-4: 85-86 [NBKG 360]. Some traditions claim that Diawu had been Annowie’s ‘Linguist’ or Under King and hence his proper successor. Testimony of Kweku Ayerenu, 1934 Stool Dispute Hearing, NAG, ADM 11/1/1692, p. 119. It is just possible that the Dutch may have been acting as ‘legitimists’ in insisting on the succession of Diawu while rejecting two other nominees.
years, a length of tenure which is reflected in traditional accounts of him. When he died in 1863 he was succeeded by Cobina Condua, who had probably been his Under King.99 Condua in turn suffered what seems to have been the occupational disease of Elmina amanhin. In 1869 he was destooled ‘by the people of Elmina for various reasons’ and replaced six months later by Kobina Gyan, who had served as his Under King.90 Kobina Gyan was the last amanhin of Elmina during the period of Dutch occupation. The Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast were sold to the British in 1871 and the actual transfer took place the following year.91 For reasons that escape analysis, but doubtless at least partly because of Elmina hostility to the Fante, the Elminans seemed to have been devoted to the Dutch government. In any event they vehemently protested the imposition of British authority. A series of untoward events, culminating in the appearance of an Asante army in the neighborhood, led to the bombardment and total destruction of the town by British naval forces and the Castle guns. Even before this occurred, however, Kobina Gyan had been arrested and eventually was transported to Sierra Leone.92 He only was allowed to return over twenty years later and died soon after. In a sense his travails encapsulated a century and a half of vicissitudes for successive amanhin of Elmina.

In the twentieth century the amanhin of Elmina have been chosen from No. 7 (Enyampa) asafo Company and it was claimed that this had always been so.93 As a result the members of No. 7 Company have come to be regarded as the descendants of Kwa Amankwa.94 However, the evidence for the succession of amanhin in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggests that the role of No. 7 Company as the providers and electors of amanhin developed from an earlier, quite different, succession system. It was only in 1811 that No. 7 Company was described as ‘the first in rank’ which had ‘to place the newly elected King on the stool’.95 Enyampa Company certainly existed in 1724 and it might

89. Idzinga to Minister of Colonies, 10 October 1866, FC 1859-1871, 1865-6: 38.
90. Annual Report for 1869, 122, Furley Miscellaneous Collection, 1848-1872 [NBKG 415]. Cobina Condua had supported a mission to the Netherlands to urge that Elmina be retained, but the mission was a failure. It may be that Condua was too pro-Dutch for his time.
91. COOMBS: 116-120, 126-130. The fear of Fante control if the Dutch possessions were sold to the British was expressed by Elmina and Shama leaders in a meeting held in Elmina, 19 December 1870. Ussher to Kennedy, 21 December 1870, Correspondence relating to the Cession of the Dutch Settlements on the West Coast of Africa, 14-6, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers [C. 670], 1872 Session, Vol. LXX.
93. WARTEMBERG: 76; Findings of 1934 Stool Dispute Hearing, NAG, ADM 11/1/1692, p. 208; Letters of supi of Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 Companies to Colonial Secretary, 5 May 1915 and 1 June 1915, NAG, ADM 11/1/1111, box 2; Minutes of Edina State Council, 12 September 1949, 21-2, NAG, ADM 23/5/11; Senior Captains of No. 7 Company to Secretary for Native Affairs, 31 August 1944, NAG, ADM 11/1/1787.
94. WARTEMBERG: 16.
have been one of the three original quarters of Elmina. It may also have begun to provide amanhin from that time. Still, the patterns of succession which are discernible from the Dutch records do not support the notion of a single ‘dynastic unit’ from which amanhin were chosen. The mention of ‘strangers’ and the promotional system which was part of the Elmina political structure at that time imply less restricted modes of succession.

Over one-half of the known successions to the Elmina paramount stool between 1732 and 1869 involved the promotion of the Under King. The Under King apparently represented a sort of ‘heir apparent’ during this time and perhaps even into this century. The genetic relationship of the Under King to the omanhen, if any, is not clear, but it seems extremely unlikely that it was very often father/son, as some of the traditions claim. The ‘Chief Captain’ (probably the tufoken, i.e. the old Great Vaandrig) was described as Under King in 1873 and any close biological relationship between this individual and the omanhen seems very unlikely from what we know of asafo organization.

All of the available contemporaneous evidence suggests that succession to the paramount stool in early times was haphazard. Perhaps, during the eighteenth century the No. 7 Company managed to acquire for itself the prerogative of providing the paramount ruler. Such a suggestion would not be unreasonable, although unsupported by the present evidence. It would argue that the terms of succession to the kingship, like the development of the institution itself, evolved from uncertain beginnings and continued to develop and respond to new exigencies. In this sense the kaleidoscopic patterns of twentieth-century traditional politics in Elmina may be seen as an extension of earlier norms rather than a sharp departure from earlier, more halcyon, times.

IV

Several questions can be asked about the development of kingship in Elmina and about the traditional recollection of early amanhin. These concern the representativeness of the Elmina experience and of the later traditions concerning it. Elmina was in close and continuous contact

96. Feinberg: 25; Elmina Journal, 7 January 1758, FC 1757-1762, 1757-59: 20 [NBKG 119].
97. In 1924 the Elminans spoke of the ‘Crown Linguist’ who was ‘a person of royal blood who during the occupancy of the stool is appointed for training as a prospective ruler in case of vacancy’. Questionnaire submitted in 1924 ‘election’, NAG, ADM 11/1/111, box 2. Despite this claim the actual existence of this office during this century is belied by the endemic strife after 1918 over succession to the paramount stool. Nevertheless, the ‘Crown Linguist’ doubtless represented, at least in spirit, the old office of Under King.
98. H. T. O’Reilly, Civil Commandant, Elmina, to Colonial Secretary, 12 February 1873, NAG, ADM 23/1/36, pp. 158-159.
99. Feinberg: 20-26 emphasizes the developmental aspects of Elmina political institutions.
with, actually more or less under the control of, Europeans for nearly 400 years. What effect did this circumstance have on the political life of the town? In its social and ethnic composition Elmina differed from its neighboring stools inland and the course of its political development no doubt differed as well. It is impossible to do more than speculate about what these differences might have been because we have no solid evidence for the inland stools. Certainly the impact of the presence of the Dutch fort and garrison needs some comment.

Generally the Dutch seem to have avoided intervening directly in Elmina stool affairs. But even in passivity they influenced the tenor of traditional politics in the town. In at least one instance, as we have seen, the omanhen served as a surrogate target for the anger of the populace against the Dutch, and this may not have been uncommon, for the amanhin of this period inevitably found themselves in the unenviable position of trying to navigate between the Scylla of the Dutch fort and the Charybdis of their own people. In this difficult task they were handicapped by the loss of some of their judicial authority to the Dutch.

On the other hand the Dutch would seldom, if ever, have provoked the kind of riot that resulted in the destoolment of 1777. Such disturbances were the result of enmities among the various asafo Companies and were a prominent feature of Elmina life. Under these circumstances it is not unlikely that the results in 1777 would have been similar even if the Dutch had chosen to do nothing. Furthermore on several occasions the Dutch authorities successfully supported the position of the omanhen. That the Dutch presence had an impact on Elmina political life is undeniable. But the differing aspects of this impact, at least as far as the position of the omanhen is concerned, may have served to cancel each other out.

Of particular interest, however, is the fact that, however aberrant the Elmina historical experience may have been, the traditional accounts of it are stereotypical in their tendency to distort the past through idealization or to fabricate it with the aid of materials from available printed sources. The traditional history of the Elmina paramount stool is essentially similar in content and character to the traditional histories of the other stools of southern Ghana, even though few of these shared Elmina's unusual historical development. We cannot know how accurate these other stool traditions reflect their past because independent evidence is not available. We have seen, though, that the Elmina traditions distort aspects of their own past to the point of caricature. The fact that traditions are similar where the pasts have been different suggests that common influences on the development of these traditional accounts helped to make them homogeneous.

100. One exception to this policy is described in Feinberg, 'An Incident in Elmina-Dutch Relations, Gold Coast (Ghana), 1739-1749', *African Historical Studies* 3 (1970): 359-372.
Among the Fante-ized States of southern Ghana the paramount influence on the development of stool traditions was the imposition of ‘indirect rule’ and the availability of printed information on the early history of the Gold Coast. The incessant succession and land disputes among these stools may or may not have been a twentieth-century phenomenon. But they unquestionably influenced the course and rapidity with which stool traditions developed and changed.

The problem of ‘feedback’ from printed sources in these traditions is alarming in its proportions and guises. Nevertheless it is more apparent and susceptible to analysis for Elmina and other stools in the area of southern Ghana than for most other parts of Africa. It is possible to suggest some reasons for the development of this problem. The availability of printed sources both suggested to oral societies the dimensions of the problem and at the same time offered a solution. Elminans and the inhabitants of other coastal States came to realize that they had to account for a past whose duration could now be ascertained. At the same time the information in printed sources provided a scaffolding on which to erect accounts of this past. The perceived need to account in a coherent fashion for the entire past was aggravated by the obvious expectation of the British colonial authorities that this could be done. Although the British administrators were careful to observe the forms of ‘native customary law’ in adjudicating stool disputes, their latent biases were clearly manifested in their interpretation of the relative merit of evidence presented during these proceedings. The witness who presented a coherent and full account of a stool’s traditional history and one that seemed to conform in broad outline to printed sources was credited with great ‘traditional learning’. Conversely the witness who admitted that he did not know ‘all’ of his stool’s traditional history was often characterized as unwilling, unresponsive, or simply ignorant. The biases of the British were neither surprising nor indefensible; rather they were the ineluctable result of the literate tradition in which these administrators operated. Significantly, however, the parties in these disputes soon learned that straightforward ignorance was a poor substitute for glib fabrication and created ‘traditions’ accordingly. In this sense they were using the past in the same way as societies everywhere have used it—as an explanation of, and justification for the realities of the present.

The Elmina example provides a rather stark example of the way in which a forgotten past has been created or distorted when it became convenient or necessary to do so. At the same time the general reliability of Elmina traditions for periods of as long as one hundred years—in other words, the ‘unforgotten’ past—should not be ignored. Elmina,
and other Fante traditions as well, support the contention that 'before the use of letters, the names and actions of men could scarce be remembered above eighty or a hundred years after their deaths'.

Most importantly, it must be recognized that traditions often change over time. When this change can be documented it is imperative that the archival sources that are available to illuminate this process of change be consulted—which often enables the historian to perceive the nature of, and reasons for this dynamic. When oral traditions are viewed from this perspective the scholar's work becomes more meaningful.