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# PROFILE OF OTUMFUO OSEI TUTU II ASANTEHENE (KING OF ASHANTI).

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# Introduction to the Asante Kingdom:

## Brief Overview

The Ashanti (or Asante) Empire also known as Asanteman (1701–1896) was a West Africa State of the Ashanti, the people of the Ashanti Region. The Asantes are part of the largest ethnic group in Ghana, the Akan. They historically created an empire that stretched from central Akanland to present day Benin and Ivory Coast, bordered by the Dagomba kingdom to the north and Dahomey to the east. Due to the empire's military prowess, sophisticated hierarchy, social stratification and culture, the Ashanti Empire had one of the largest historiographies of any indigenous Sub-Saharan African political entity.

## Maps

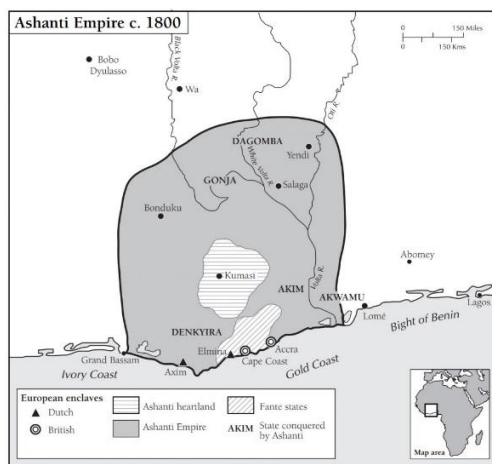


Figure 1: Ashanti Empire – 1800



Figure 2: Ashanti Empire - 1900

## Historical Perspectives

Legend has it that some of the clans of Asante Nation originated from an opening in the ground at Asantemenso near Asumegya. The clans were Oyoko and Aduana. Some of the remaining clans also state that their ancestors descended from the skies.

However, research by Historians like Dr. J.B. Dankwa revealed that the Asante nation was among the group of people called Akans who migrated from Mesopotamia to Africa.

They continue to state that the Akans either shared the same boundaries with the Israelites or were of the same stock as them; they formed part of the Ancient Ghana Empire. They moved southwards in search of arable land to farm. Other factors which necessitated their southward movement were wars and desire for religious freedom.

- Inter-empire issues created instability at their places of abode therefore they moved southwards into the forest belt to avoid constant warfare and to get the peace needed for their farming ventures.
- When the Moslem religion started in Arabia and entered North Africa, people were forced to accept the new religion, but Akans worshipped God through the lesser gods who they claimed to be the linguist to the supreme God. They therefore migrated into the forest belt to have religious freedom.

They first settled in the present Northern Ghana at Gonjaland. This was in the 13th century. The area used to be a forest region; From Gonjaland, they migrated southwards into the thick forest along river valleys. Pioneering work was done by hunters who prepared places under trees with buttresses as their hunting huts.

The hunters were joined by some relatives who followed them to give them help. Others did farm at such places. The Akans were made up of the following people: Akwamu Guan, Fante, Denkyira, Brong, Akyem, Kwahu, Sefwi, Wassa, Asante Akwapim and Assin. They might have migrated in their individual's groups.

In their southward migration, the Asantes settled at the Adanse area. Oral tradition does not state when this took place, neither does it state the ruler who led them to the Adanse area. The probable time might be the 14th century. Since they were always moving from place to place, they did not build houses but lived-in caves and under the buttresses of mighty trees to protect themselves from wild animals. Others lived on trees for protection. As such if some clans claimed that they originated from a hole or they descended from the skies, the truth could not be accepted anthropologically. It might be that they were coming down from the trees on which they lived but were not descending from the sky.

The early ancestors of the Asantes lived in clans. The clans were the following: Oyoko, Bretuo, Aduana, Asona, Asene, Ekuona, Agona and Asakyiri. People belonging to a clan claimed to be the children of one woman, so they were brothers and sisters. Since it was a taboo for brothers and sisters to marry each other, when one needed a partner, one had to go to another clan for the partner. This system of inter-marriage resulted in the creation of alliances among clans, therefore one clan had to go to the aid of another when the latter was attacked because nobody would want to see his children taken into captivity.

### The Golden Stool & Asante Kingdom

The emergence of the Asante Kingdom was a tribute to two men: Opemsuo Osei Tutu I (1695-1731) and his mystic friend and sage, Okomfo Anokye, whose vision, remarkable prowess and geniuses founded a kingdom that rivalled the territorial borders of the old Ghana Empire. Legend

has it that to win independence from Denkyira, then a powerful state, Osei Tutu (then Kumasihene) and his friend, Okomfo Anokye called a meeting of all the clan heads of each of the Asante settlements to Kumasi.

During the meeting, Okomfo Anokye commanded a Golden Stool (Asikadwao Kofi) from the heavens, which landed on the laps of Osei Tutu. Okomfo Anokye declared the stool to be a symbol of the new Asante union (Asanteman) in unity and spirit (sunsum). Each chief then swore allegiance to the Golden Stool and to Osei Tutu as the Asantehene (King of Asante), by holding a golden sword to the Golden Stool. Subsequently the new Asante union proceeded to inflict a terrible defeat on Denkyira, the enemy state. According to etymology, the word 'Asante' is a derivation of "Osa -nti" or "warlike".



### Importance of Asante Culture and Economy

The Asantes are the largest group among the Akan Communities that have always inhabited the southern and forest areas of this part of the Guinea Coast of West Africa which came to be called the Gold Coast and later, Ghana. Together with their kinsmen, the Fantes, Akyems, Akwapems, Denkyiras, Kwauhus, Sefwis, etc they constitute the single largest ethnic community in what is today the modern State of Ghana, and have since the seventeenth Century, exerted considerable influence on the political, cultural, and economic life and development of this area of West Africa.

The King of Asante first came into being in the seventeenth century through the union of previously separate, independent communities of the same cultural identify and ethnic origins, to free themselves from domination by Denkyira, another organized Akan community which interposed itself between them and the coast and denied them direct access to the trade which the Europeans conducted from their forts and castles. The need to control trade to the North and

South for the survival of the new kingdom rather than mere military gain inspired the rapid expansion of Asante in the century following its foundation as a united kingdom. The Asantes were constantly at war with their neighbours to the North and South. This impacted the political structure which their new kingdom evolved from as it was much influenced by and could be understood only in terms of the military organization with which they defended themselves. They pursued and safeguarded their commercial and other economic interests.

The need to control the trade to the North in Kola, Gold and other items of commerce brought Asante into contact with Dagomba and Gonja in the North East and Jaman in the North West; and the trade with the castles and forts on the coast brought Asante into conflict with their kinsmen in the Fante States and ultimately with the British with whom they fought seven wars in nineteenth century.

From its capital, Kumasi, Asante controlled the trade routes to the North through Salaga in the North East and Bontuku in the North West and was in commercial contact with the Moshie and other states in the Savannah and beyond the Sahel region, from where regular caravans carried merchandise in exchange for the gold and kola produced in the forest regions. By the middle of the 18th Century, Asante had become the dominant Kingdom in the forest belt of the 'Gold Coast' of the Guinea Coast and provided a vital link between the coast and the savannah areas to the North and contributed to its own acculturation and the assimilation of the many communities that it came into contact with. Asante was described on a 1764 French map of Africa as "Roy de 'L'Asiante, tres puissant" (enormously powerful).

Today, as in the past Asante remains the largest single community among the traditional communities that constitute modern Ghana and continues to make significant contributions to the country's economy. Richly endowed, it is the economic heartland of the country, responsible for much of its domestic food production and for the foreign exchange it earns from cocoa, gold, and timber.

Asante is the only region in Ghana with a common language, where paramount chiefs in the region and beyond owe allegiance to an overlord king the Asantehene. This arrangement has strengthened the unity of Asante, the most populous region in Ghana towards economic, social, and cultural development.

## Personality Profile: The Asantehene - OTUMFUO OSEI TUTU II



Otumfuo Osei Tutu II is the 16th Asantehene, enstooled on 26 April 1999. His name Otumfuo Osei Tutu II reflects direct succession to the 17th-century founder of the Ashanti Empire, Otumfuo Osei Tutu I. He is also the Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). Otumfuo Osei Tutu II is the Grand Patron of the Grand Lodge of Ghana and the Sword Bearer of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Born on the 6th May 1950 and named Barima Kwaku Dua, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II is the youngest of the five children of the late Nana Afua Kobi Serwaa Ampem II, Asantehemaa (Queen mother of Asante). From early childhood, Barima Kwaku Dua came under the tutelage of his Uncle, Oheneba Mensah Bonsu who had been enstooled as Hiahene in 1952. Oheneba Mensah Bonsu, therefore, ensured that Barima Kwaku Dua benefited from a childhood of careful grooming in Asante traditions and statecraft.

The young Royal had his Secondary Education at Sefwi Wiawso Secondary School in the Western Region of Ghana where his guardian was Nana Kwadwo Aduhene II, Omanhene (Paramount Chief) of Sefwi Wiawso Traditional Area. Barima Kwaku Dua returned to Kumasi in 1969 and enrolled at the Osei Kyeretwie Secondary School. He then moved to Accra in 1971 and was admitted at the Institute of Professional Studies, Legon for a course in Accountancy.

Two years later, he travelled to the United Kingdom and continued his Accountancy Studies at the Kilburn Polytechnic. He later attended the University of North London where he read Human Resource Development and Public Administration.

By the time he returned to Ghana in 1989 to establish his own business, Transpomech International (Ghana) Ltd., he had behind him a wealth of experience which he had gathered working as Senior Consultant with Mutual of Omaha Insurance Company of Toronto; Finance Officer at the British firm Oxon, in London; and as Personnel Administrator at the Manpower Services Commission attached to Brent Council in London.

Barima Kwaku Dua's nomination to succeed his late brother Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, as Asantehene, was received with universal acclaim in the Asante Kingdom and Ghana in general. He ascended the Golden Stool with a natural gift of calm and radiance, which instantly inspires loyalty and motivates people round him. He learnt values of courtesy and tact in dealing with both his peers and subjects; he had grown up with a conviction that traditional leadership rests on a capacity to reconcile, mend, heal wounds and motivate people.

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Asantehene is married to Lady Julia Osei Tutu known among the Asante people as the 'First Lady'.

Since ascending the throne, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, has amplified the profile this Kingdom, focusing on education, economic development, and peace building. So far he has been able to settle over five hundred Land and Chieftaincy disputes which could have sparked agitations and conflicts in his Kingdom and elsewhere. In recognition of his unique leadership, role, the Government of Ghana appointed him Chairman of a Committee of Eminent Chiefs to resolve the Yendi Skin Affairs which had already resulted in the murder of the King of Dagbon.

Because of his passion for education, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II set up the Otumfuo Education Fund to generate resources as an effort to provide opportunities for quality Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Vocational Education in Ghana generally. Since then, over 5,000 Pupils /Students at various Levels of education have benefitted from the scholarship offered by the Education Fund. He has also set up the Serwaa Ampem AIDS Foundation for children under the Leadership of his wife Lady Julia Osei Tutu to help children who have become victims of the HIV / AIDS pandemic.

These two bodies now operate under the umbrella of Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation. It was his keen determination to enhance quality of Education of Ghanaians that the Association of Commonwealth Universities conferred on him the Symons Award in April 2000. Since then, he has received Honorary Doctorate Degrees from nine Universities including the Universities of



Glasgow, the recent one being that of University of East London and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana, where he is the Chancellor.

Through his own initiative, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II secured a World Bank grant for a pilot project entitled "Promoting Partnerships with Traditional Authorities Project (PPTAP). Under the project new School buildings including teacher's quarters have been put up with facilities for portable water and electricity supply.

Since ascending the throne Otumfuo has been the official Guest of many World Leaders including Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain, Queen Beatrix of Holland, the late Mr. James Wolfensohn of the World Bank, President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, President Horst Kohler of Germany, The late Mr. Kofi Annan, U.N. Secretary-General etc. He has also played host to Heads of State including Alhaji Ahmed Tijan Kabbah of Sierra Leone, Muammar Al Qathafi of Libya, Alpha Konrare of Mali, Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa of Zambia etc. The Asantehene has addressed International organisations including the International Cocoa Organization, London, the Plenary Session of the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa and many business fora in Europe, United States and South Africa. He has paid a working visit to the International Tribunal for Rwanda.



Otumfuo Osei Tutu II stands tall as a visionary and Great Leader of his Kingdom preserving cultural heritage as well combining modernism to promote peace and stability, education, health, and economic development of his people.

## 20th Anniversary celebration

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II's 20th anniversary commemoration took place on 21 April 2019, at the Dwabirem of the Manhyia Palace. This was at the grand durbar of the Akwasidaekese. In attendance was the Current President of the Republic of Ghana HE, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, HE, Michael Ashwin Satyandre Adhin the vice president of Suriname and Torgbui Sri, the Awomefia of the Anlo state were in attendance. Other dignitaries included Diplomats and royals from Namibia, Kuwait, Germany, China, Morocco, Latvia, Botswana, and Palestine.

In April 2019, there were sod cutting ceremonies to launch various projects in the Ashante Kingdom including the construction of a hostel at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), GUSS Sports Complex, Beach Soccer Park and Hospitals.

## Destoolment of sub chiefs (Commitment to Compliance)

Osei Tutu II is known to be committed to “doing the right thing” and compliance. In June 2019, he destooled two chiefs for various offenses against the stool. Akyamfou Kwame Akowuah was dethroned for violating the Great Oath of Asanteman. Nana Ahenkro Sei Ababio III was also dethroned for disregarding directives about chieftaincy and land disputes. In April 2018, the Atwimahene, Nana Antwi Agyei Brempong II was destooled by the Asantehene. He was found guilty of misuse of the Great Oath, flouting the monarch's decrees about land administration and several other misdeeds. He was later pardoned and reinstated. In 2009 Nana Kofi Agyei Bi III, the chief of Atwimah was destooled for fraudulent sale of land. In 2015, Nana Mensah Bonsu chief of Pakyi Number One was destooled for inciting the youth to wreak havoc in the area. In 2002 Osei Tutu destooled Ohenenana Kwaku Duah, the chief of Bonwire, for insubordination and a blatant disregard of customs in the installation and deposition of his sub chiefs. In July 2020, the Bantamahene was summoned before the monarch on charges of land encroachment and the diversion of the Subin river without permission. He was pardoned after some of the divisional chiefs pleaded for clemency. He was ordered to reverse all action in the land encroachment and river diversion and fined.

## Commitment to environmental protection and conservation

In July 2019, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II announced his devotion to protect the water bodies of the Asante Kingdom. This entails the planting of 2.5 million trees around Lake Bosomtwe that will cover 400 hectares to aid in improving the ecosystem, cushion climate change and enhance environmental awareness among the communities around the lake. The tree planting initiative is a collaboration between the Oheneba Poku Foundation and Manhyia Palace. The Forestry Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Water Resources Commission, the Ghana Tourism Authority, UNESCO, the District Assemblies of Bosome-Freho and Bosomtwe, and

the Lake Bosomtwe Community Resources Management Areas (CREMA), which is an NGO are the other stakeholders.

## Asantehene's Interests

### Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation

The Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation was officially launched in April 2009. It was established to enable the monarch to serve his people in two of his focus areas: education and health. In line with this, the "Otumfuo Educational Fund" was established in 1999 for the enhancement of education for Ghanaians and the Serwah Ampem AIDS Foundation for children who had HIV/AIDS or were affected by it. The Educational fund had by April 2019, supported 301,980 students with scholarships and other forms of support. This number is made up of 25,756 students who received full scholarships and 276,224 others who received various forms of financial support.

In October 2017, Global Communities partnered with the Foundation to start up the Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE) project. The initiative was for five years and aimed at creating opportunities in the construction industry, to benefit poor youth. Global Communities, a non-profit organization with a global reach, works with communities to create sustainable changes that improve the lives and livelihoods of the less privileged. The implementation of this project was in conjunction with the Mastercard Foundation. The project operates in Ghana's five largest cities: Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Ashaiman, and Tema and will provide opportunities for at least 23,700 youth, between ages 17-24, who earn less than \$2 per day.

In November 2017, 4,946 children from eight districts in the Ashanti, Ahafo, Bono and Bono East Regions (Sekyere North, Bekwai Municipality, Atwima Mponua, Bibaini-Anwhiaso-Bekwai, Bosomtwe, Offinso Municipality, New Edubaise and Goaso district) were given free computer training. This was done by a collaboration between Otumfuo-Agroecom Mobile Library Project (OAMLP), which is a subsidiary of the Otumfuo Charity Foundation, and Agroecom Ghana Ltd, a cocoa buying company. This initiative is in line with its aim to bridge the gap in learning conditions between the urban and less privileged communities and instill reading and the use of ICT in pupils at the basic level.

In January 2019, the office of HRM entered into an agreement with the Young Educators Foundation, organizers of the "Spelling Bee" competition. This aim was to make the literary programs of the Young Educators Foundation available to less privileged communities and public

schools in the Ashanti Region. This gave 100 students the opportunity to benefit from the program every year.

In May 2020, junior high school students in Kumasi received over 2000 books and dictionaries, to keep students academically active while schools were closed to control the spread of COVID-19. Some of the communities that benefited from this gesture were Bohyen, Aduato, Adumanu, Ampabame and South Suntreso.

In June 2020, the Foundation donated books to about 750 Junior High School students from 11 basic schools in the Ahafo Region of Ghana. This was to facilitate the excellent performance of the students, especially in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).

In July 2020, AngloGold Ashanti teamed up with the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation and the Obuasi Municipal and East Educational Directorates to roll out a Live Radio and Distance Learning Programme in Obuasi. This was to ensure continuation in learning, even though schools had been closed to control COVID-19 pandemic. The Foundation was supported by the mine with an amount of 150,000 Ghana Cedis (GH¢) for the purchase and distribution of 10,000 copies of Readers and Workbooks to Junior High School Students in the catchment area.

## Golf - The Asante Open



Otumfuo Osei Tutu II is known to be deeply passionate about Golf and its related activities. He is the pivot of The Asantehene Gold Cup Golf Tournament which usually attracts the crème de la crème of golfers from the country and abroad who compete for top honours. The amateur tournament (Asante open) was first played in 1955 in honour of the Asantehene. It is an annual event and is normally held in the month of May. The tournament is the second biggest golf tournament in the country after the Ghana Open Golf tournament. The Asantehene is an avid golfer.

## Protocol – Meeting the Asantehene

1. Once the Visiting Party enters the seating room where the Asantehene is holding court, the Party will be announced.
2. The Party headed by the leader of the group will be asked to greet the Asantehene. If the Asantehene is already seated, the 'Party' is required to head straight to the Asantehene and greet. Gentlemen bow whilst exchanging a handshake with the Asantehene with both hands, whilst ladies curtsy.
3. From the Asantehene all greetings must continue and proceed towards the right till the last person.
4. The Protocol Officer or the Linguist will indicate where the Party will sit.
5. When the Party is seated, Ghanaian custom demands that the Asantehene asks of the Party's mission or purpose of the visit. This will be done by the Linguist. The Asantehene's Linguist always addresses guests on behalf of the Asantehene unless the Asantehene initially indicates that he will address the guests himself.
6. The Party's mission is to be delivered standing up and is addressed usually by the Head of the delegation; this will be spoken directly to the Linguist and he will in turn pass it on to the Asantehene.
7. After stating the Party's mission, the leader of the delegation should proceed to introduce the rest of the people in the group.
8. After introductions, the leader should present (as Ghanaian Custom demands when visiting a Regent) bottles of Schnapps. In the absence of Schnapps, any type of liquor will be acceptable for presentation. (WE ADVISE YOU PRESENT THE FINEST QUALITY BRANDY OR WHISKY). A member of the Asantehene's Administrative staff will receive it on the Asantehene's behalf and acknowledge receipt. Once the gift is presented, the leader can proceed to his seat.

9. Anybody else who will be addressing the Asantehene will be required to stand to address the Linguist.
10. On departure, if the visiting delegation intends to visit the Asantehene in Ghana in future, it would be ideal time to inform him then as this will make it easier for the group to secure an appointment.

