Where the Negroes Are Masters

An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade

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Introduction

The young Prince William stood at the ship's prow, watching anxiously as his hometown came into view. He was elaborately dressed in the latest style befitting his station—his rich scarlet coat was trimmed in gold lace, and its buttons, set with diamonds, flashed in the sun while the white feather in his point d'Espagne hat fluttered in the breeze. He had been away for many years, had seen many adventures, and had even been rumored to have died abroad, so his homecoming was to be an especially joyous one to his father, who waited impatiently on the shore, equally anxious to see his beloved son once more.

The prince set sail in 1750 from London, where he had been the toast of the town. He had been presented at court and attended a session of Parliament when King George II addressed that assembly. He had been invited everywhere, to grand entertainments like the lavish garden party thrown by the Duke of Richmond at Richmond House in May 1749 to celebrate the end of the War of the Austrian Succession. Everyone of fashion attended that event, including the Duke of Cumberland (the son of George II), the Duke of Modena, and Horace Walpole, while the king and Princess Emily watched from their elegant barge docked at the terrace and other fine barges crowded the river. Handel wrote "Music for the Royal Fireworks" for the occasion. A contemporary etching shows the elaborate fireworks launched from barges in the river and fireworks wheels spinning along the terrace. Walpole reported that all the ladies there knew the prince's romantic story, and many knew considerably more since the tale had been richly embroidered in the telling. Society artist Gabriel Mathias, the son of Huguenot refugees who administered the king's subsidies to the Royal Academy, painted the prince's portrait, showing him dressed in his rich silks and satins, and the popular *Gentleman's Magazine* reproduced it in mezzotint for its interested readers.

The emotional high point of the prince's stay in London came when he attended a performance of *Oroonoko,* the stage version of Aphra Behn's celebrated tale of an African prince enslaved in Surinam. Adapted for the stage by Thomas Southerne, the play was among the most popular of the day. It tells the story of an African prince named Oroonoko, who has been kidnapped by the unscrupulous captain of a slave ship and brought to Surinam, then under British control. In the play, one character is incredulous: "What, steal a prince out of his own country! Impossible!" But the captain describes how he lured the prince and his companions on board his ship, plied them with alcohol, clapped them in chains when they were too intoxicated to resist, and sailed away with them. The captain had planned to carry Oroonoko to England to put him on display there, but the prince was too troublesome, so he sold him into slavery instead. Oroonoko found a good master, helped save the colony from an Indian attack, and then found his wife, Imoinda, who had also been captured and sold into slavery. As the play reached its emotional climax, where Oroonoko is forced to take Imoinda's life, the prince was overcome with emotion and fled from the theater. The audience watched the prince as intently as the actors on stage, and when he ran from the theater in tears, there was not a dry eye in the house.

Why was the prince so moved by this implausible tale? Because in many ways, the story mirrored his own. The prince was William Ansah Sessarakoo, whose father, John Corrantee, was the chief caboceer, or magistrate, of Annamaboe, the principal slave-trading depot on the Gold Coast. In 1747 Corrantee decided to send his son to London to be educated. He had previously sent another son to Paris, where he had been proclaimed Prince de Corrantryn, and since the English and French were vying for Corrantee's support, he used his sons as his eyes and ears in London and Paris. Corrantee entrusted his son to the captain of a British slave ship, who was to take William Ansah to London after selling his slave cargo in Barbados. But rather than deliver William Ansah safely to London, he sold him into slavery and reported that he had died on the Middle Passage. The captain himself died a short time later, and William Ansah's fate was unknown to his father until several years later, when an African sailor from Annamaboe saw William Ansah in Barbados and reported that he was alive and well. The British, eager to win Corrantee's favor and restore the damage the loss of his son had done to relations between them, rescued William Ansah and carried him to London, where they treated him royally as the prince of Annamaboe. After that stay in London, he returned to his home and to the warm embrace of his father, who carried his son ashore through the rough surf to the beach. Days of celebration followed in Annamaboe as John Corrantee and the entire town rejoiced at William Ansah's safe return.[1]

In order to fully understand how this African prince found himself on board this English naval vessel, it is necessary to explain the rise of Annamaboe as an important Atlantic port. Annamaboe, as it was known across the early modern British Atlantic World, is located on the Gold Coast of West Africa and known today as Anomabu, Ghana.[2] Even a focus on a relatively small port like Annamaboe reveals a vast and complex world in motion. Almost no aspect of life in the town escaped the influence exerted by the confluence of Africa, Europe, and the Americas—agriculture, settlement, warfare, economic life, family relationships, goods, trade, and culture were all impacted as Annamaboe and the Gold Coast were drawn into the Atlantic World. Best known as a slave-trading port, it was actually much more than that. It funneled a great variety of goods from Europe and the Americas into the Gold Coast and farther into the interior, and it sent out cargoes of goods and men that found their way around the Atlantic World. By the 1750s the African Committee regarded Annamaboe as "the Key to the Whole Trade of the Gold Coast," and it was described in 1773 as "the Mart for Trade" on the entire coast.[3]

The successful, capable, and wily merchants of Annamaboe were as integral to Atlantic commerce as those of Liverpool, London, Cádiz, Nantes, Charleston, New York, or Kingston. The residents of Annamaboe were traders down to their fingertips. People and their cultural possessions traveled the vast Atlantic World, and many of those travelers found their way to Annamaboe—sailors, captains, soldiers, administrators, and missionaries all converged on the town. Their cultural baggage varied enormously, but they all contributed to the town's social, cultural, and economic life, and the town's "history is the keyboard on which these individual notes are sounded."[4] This book listens to those individual notes and seeks to understand the history of Annamaboe by focusing on the people from Africa and from around the Atlantic World who lived, worked, and traded there. The concept of Atlantic history has its detractors, and the Atlantic World has little meaning unless we can see it reflected in the lives of individuals. Whenever possible, this study emphasizes the lives of men and women whose collective experience shaped Annamaboe's position in the Atlantic World.

Since Annamaboe was the most important port on the Gold Coast in the eighteenth century, the Royal African Company (RAC) (known after 1750 as the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa [CMTA]) maintained a fort there for parts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the seventeenth century, Annamaboe traded primarily in gold and grain, but by the turn of the eighteenth century it was moving aggressively into the rapidly expanding slave trade. The Fante first allowed the Dutch to establish a trade factory in their town, and then encouraged the English to build a larger fort there. The fort looked impressive, but the Fante remained in full control of their town and usually won out over the English in the many disputes that arose between the two parties. The growth in trade and the increasingly intimate relationships between the townspeople and the Englishmen in the forts gradually influenced the town's economic and cultural life.

The RAC lost its monopoly on the African trade in 1698, and that loss, combined with the continual troubles with the Fante, encouraged it to abandon its fort in 1730. Annamaboe's capable leaders traded with all comers as they expanded their trade and influence during the early decades of the eighteenth century. The Fante and Asante wars of expansion brought a steady supply of slaves to Annamaboe, and European powers, especially the French, began to negotiate with the town's chief caboceer, John Corrantee, to rebuild the town's fort. Corrantee skillfully played the French and British off each other before allowing the CMTA to reestablish its presence in the town. The fort once again brought British administrators, soldiers, and traders to Annamaboe; they and the

Fante traded together, slept together, fought one another, and together shaped a creolized society deeply embedded in the Atlantic World. One of the British chiefs of the fort, Richard Brew, left the CMTA to establish himself as an independent trader in Annamaboe. He became one of the principal slave traders on the Gold Coast, integrated himself into the local society, and became a well-known figure throughout the Atlantic World. New England traders known as Rum Men were major players in the Annamaboe trade after 1750, and it is possible to follow the export of enslaved Africans from the inland markets, to Annamaboe, onto the ships, and across the Atlantic to ports like Charleston where Gold Coast slaves were in high demand.

Individuals from Annamaboe traveled the Atlantic World. Some of them were the sons of the ruling elite who were sent to Britain or North America to be educated. Others were the sons of African or mixed-race women and British men who were sent by their fathers to Britain to be educated before they returned to the Gold Coast. Still others were Fante linguists or sailors who found employment on the European ships that frequented their hometown. While these individuals left voluntarily, many others were kidnapped by unscrupulous slavers and sold into slavery in the Americas. In such cases, their families and their entire community fought to have them returned, and in a surprising number of cases, they succeeded. The residents of Annamaboe were major players in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World, eager to travel, to learn, and to engage with their counterparts in Europe and America and as much architects of that world as any of its other actors.

In the early nineteenth century, Annamaboe's fortunes fell. In 1807 the Fante's traditional enemy, the Asante, virtually destroyed Annamaboe and, with the connivance of the British, enslaved and sold many of the residents that survived the war. The following year the British abolished the African slave trade on which the town's economy relied. The British forts like Annamaboe's that had long sheltered and nurtured the slave trade were turned against it. These were body blows from which the town never recovered; its economy collapsed, its population shrank, and it was no longer a major Atlantic port.

Despite Africa's centrality to the early modern Atlantic World—far more Africans moved across the Atlantic than Europeans during that era—historians have paid less attention to the African Atlantic than to other parts of the Atlantic World. This work is inspired in part by the pathbreaking scholarship of John Thornton, who has done more than any other historian to give Africans the attention they deserve as actors in the Atlantic World. One frequently aimed criticism of the Atlantic World paradigm is that it has largely been framed as a story of European expansionism, the old wine of imperial history in a new bottle, often focused on the British North Atlantic. But that Euro-Atlantic worldview has been under steady assault since Paul Gilroy first proposed the concept of a "black Atlantic" where the Atlantic basin would be treated as a single unit and where blacks would be "perceived as agents" as much as whites.[5] Much of the study of the black Atlantic has focused understandably on the slave trade and its millions of victims, but less attention has been paid to the African merchant elites who facilitated that trade and were as essential to the Atlantic economy as the merchants of Liverpool, Nantes, or Middelburg. A biographical approach can bring these merchants into sharper focus, and allow us to reimagine how they negotiated their complex role as mediators between Africa's interior slave trade and the European slavers and the crucial role that a town like Annamaboe played in the Atlantic economy.

1

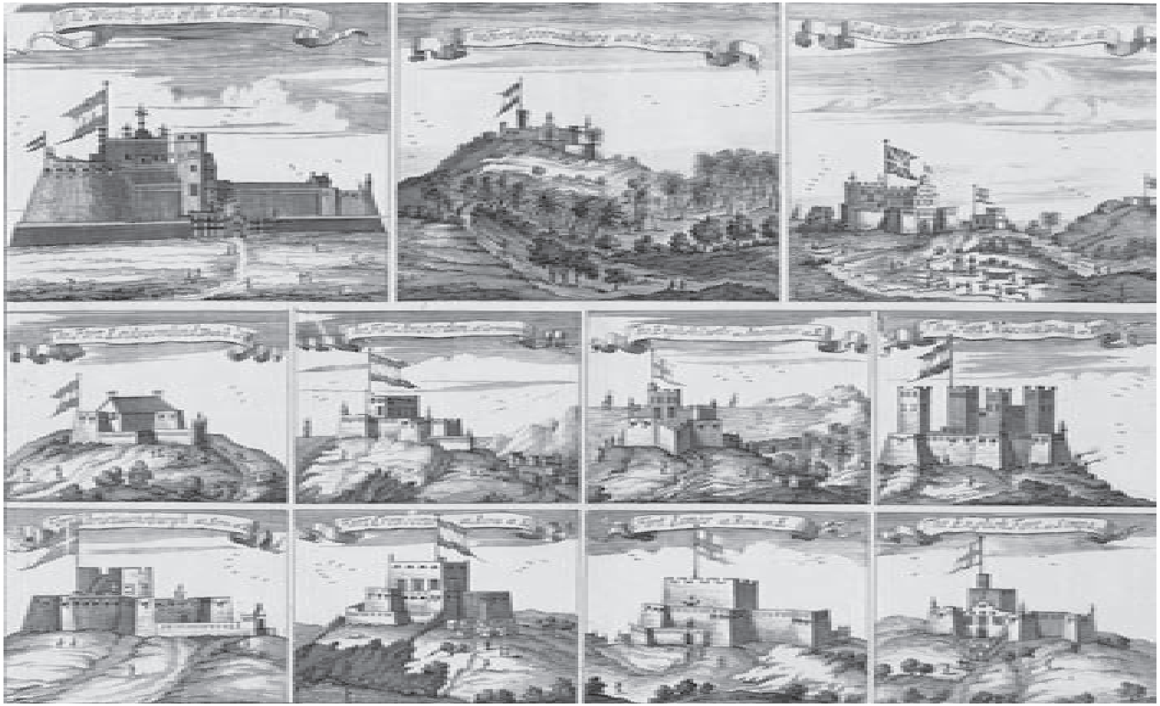
Annamaboe Joins the Atlantic World

Annamaboe was a relatively sleepy fishing village at the opening of the eighteenth century, but within a short time it had become a thriving Atlantic hub. It was the center of shipping and trade for the Gold Coast and one of the largest exporters of enslaved Africans along the West Coast of Africa. That remarkable transformation was driven by Annamaboe's entry into the Atlantic World and by its expansion within the Fante confederacy. The Dutch established a trading lodge there in 1638, but they were displaced by the English, who built a fort in the town in 1679. At that stage, Annamaboe was not an important port for the slave trade but rather a convenient place for slave-trading ships to stock up on provisions before embarking on the Middle Passage. The Asante wars of expansion that began in the 1680s brought a steady flow of slaves to the town and made it a major slave-trading port. Annamaboe's links to the rapidly expanding Atlantic commercial system transformed its culture, economy, and society. The town's capable leaders worked to capitalize on those changes, and they quickly learned to exploit every advantage presented to them. The English expected to monopolize trade there, but they were forced to negotiate the terms of their relationship with the Fante, who operated from a position of strength. The English and Fante sometimes cooperated and compromised, but more often they engaged in conflict and chicanery as each tested the other. While the English chiefs and the caboceers sparred, the townspeople and the soldiers in the fort worked out their own relationships with one another.

Annamaboe was founded before the end of the fifteenth century as the Fante moved from the interior down to the coast, but that date is highly speculative. Its name, meaning "bird rocks," derived from the jagged stones that jutted out of the sea just off the beach and were considered sacred. The countryside was hilly and fertile, especially in the valleys. The coast was rocky and often dangerous to approach by sea due to heavy currents and pounding surf. The history of the town comes into sharper focus with the arrival of the Europeans, though even that early history is somewhat murky. The Gold Coast got its name from the Portuguese, who began inching their way down the African coast in the 1430s, and their rights to the region were recognized in 1455 by Pope Nicholas V, who issued a papal bull declaring the "coast of Guinea . . . the sovereign property" of Portugal. African resistance compelled the Portuguese to rely on diplomacy rather than force. They sent peaceful missions to the states of West Africa and even brought African princes to study in Portugal. In 1482 they loaded a prefabricated castle onto their ships and sailed to the coast of Guinea in search of a location to erect it. They negotiated with a local ruler for a spot on the coast of modern Ghana, where they unloaded their numbered stones and built the imposing medieval-style Castle of S. Jorge da Mina, usually called Elmina, the first of what would become a string of European forts along the Gold Coast. The very name of the castle indicates that the Portuguese were primarily in search of gold, and it was the European lust for that precious metal more than for slaves that drove the fierce competition among the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes, the English, the Brandenburgers, and the French for forts there before the eighteenth century. From the perspective of the Portuguese crown, the most important object at Elmina was the giant *arca com tres chaves* (chest with three keys) which held all the gold acquired by the fort and could be opened only by using three separate keys in the hands of three separate individuals. During the last twenty years of the fifteenth century, gold from Elmina nearly doubled the crown's total revenues and by 1506 made up about one-quarter of the crown's income.[1]

Fortunately for the Portuguese, the other major European nations were focused on the riches of the Americas, in the case of Spain, or preoccupied with internal troubles, in the cases of England and France. The French sometimes preyed on the treasure ships, but from 1480 until 1580 no European power directly challenged Portugal's claims on the Gold Coast. In 1580 Portugal was conquered by Philip II of Spain, and Spain's rebellious Dutch provinces began to prey on Spanish possessions around the Atlantic World. Gold shipments from Elmina steadily declined, and in 1598 the Dutch established posts at Mouree, Cormantine, and Commenda, hemming in the Portuguese at Elmina. The rapidly expanding plantation system in the Americas also meant a rising demand for slaves, and the trade networks that shaped the Atlantic World began to emerge. The rising demand for slaves in England's American colonies led to the creation of the Company of Adventurers Trading to Africa in 1618, but it failed. In 1629 the Dutch West India Company began its operations in West Africa, and the English reorganized their African company in 1631, setting up a rivalry between those states on the African coast. A 1625 Dutch attack on Elmina failed, but in 1637 they succeeded in taking that prize, and by 1642 the Portuguese had given up their settlements on the Gold Coast. The Portuguese left an important legacy, including such cultural changes as the introduction of Christianity and the trade languages that emerged to facilitate commerce. They also introduced citrus fruits, rice, and sugarcane from their possessions in the Far East, and maize, tobacco, pineapple, cassava, and other fruits and plants from the Americas. The Dutch tried to establish their own monopoly over the Gold Coast but failed in that attempt, and soon a race for Africa was under way as the Dutch, the English, the Danes, the Swedes, and the Brandenburgers vied for position. They built, abandoned, attacked, captured, sold, and exchanged forts in thirty-five towns and villages along the Gold Coast in a dizzying game of thrones that continued throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[2]

The emergence of Annamaboe as an Atlantic port played itself out against this background. One of the Portuguese commanders at Elmina, Duarte Pacheco Pereira, left the earliest recorded mention of the Fante in European documents in the sixteenth century when he referred to fishing



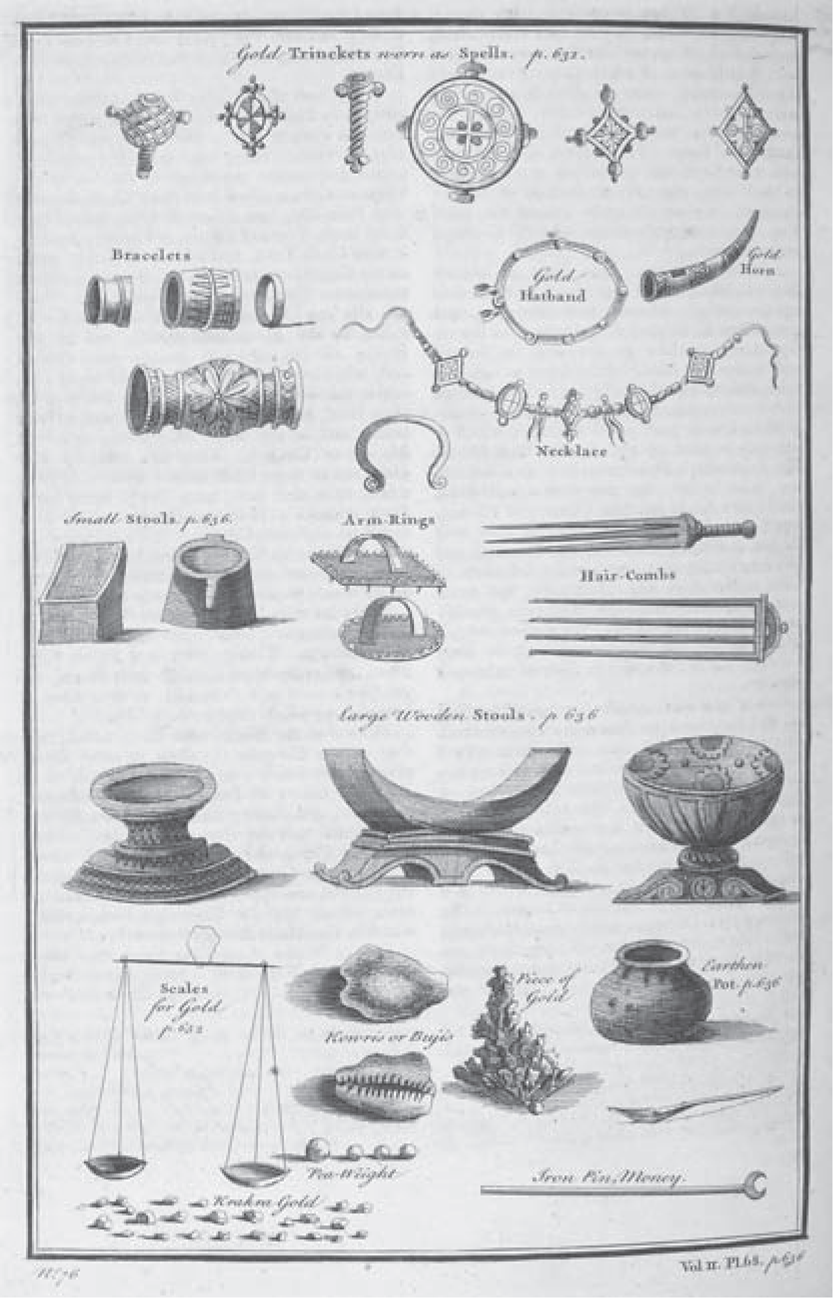
Print depicting eleven of the European forts along the Gold Coast. Annamaboe Fort is third from the left in the second row. This image represents the first fort built there. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

villages called "Fante the Great" and "Fante the Small." It is unclear whether either of these were in Annamaboe, but they were located in that region. In 1624 the Fante signed an exclusive trade agreement with the Dutch, who built a lodge or trading establishment in Annamaboe in 1638. It was occupied at various times by the English and the Swedes, and in 1679 the English took advantage of Dutch preoccupations in Europe to construct Charles Fort at Annamaboe, making them the major players there for the remainder of the slave-trading era and beyond. For most of the seventeenth century the place was known as a supplier of provisions, especially maize, for slave ships and as a market for gold, though its gold was "accounted the worst, and most mix'd with brass, of any in Guinea." The late seventeenth century was a period of transformation in Annamaboe as trade expanded there. Before this period, the inland Fante towns were larger, more prosperous, and more powerful than the coastal towns like Annamaboe, which had an estimated 6,000–7,000 residents by 1680. Its rapid growth can be determined in part from the number of soldiers in its militia; in 1681 the town could muster about 500 soldiers, but by 1700 that number had grown to 2,000. An early Dutch account described the interior towns as "richer in goods and gold" than those on the coast, and described the inland towns as having "more houses" and being "more populous." They were also centers of trade, and according to the Dutch "they also have wealthier merchants who conduct more trade than those in the coastal towns."[3]

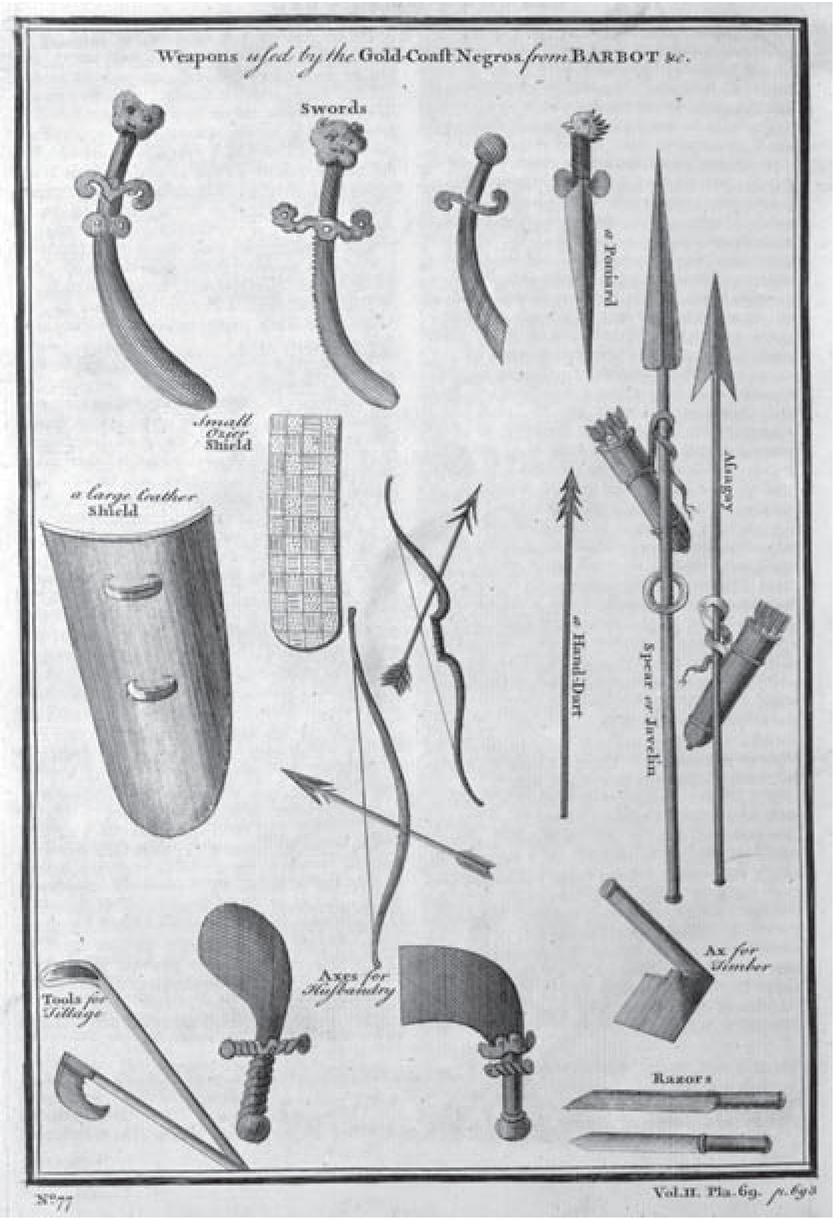
The change in Annamaboe's fortunes was tied directly to the emergence of the slave trade. So long as the economy of the Gold Coast relied on the production and trade of that ore, then the inland towns enjoyed the advantage. Up until the end of the seventeenth century, gold was the region's most valuable export, and the Gold Coast was a net *importer* of slaves, who were needed in the mines and as agricultural laborers. But the Asante wars of expansion, which began in the 1680s and continued into the next century, brought a steady stream of slaves to the coast. Evidence suggests that by the first decade of the eighteenth century, the value of the slave trade was over twice that of the gold trade, at least for the Dutch and probably for other European traders as well. The expansion of overseas trade fueled a different sort of domestic economic growth. The value of the gold trade declined gradually toward the end of the seventeenth century and began to fall more dramatically as the slave trade increased. In part, the decline in the export of gold resulted from the fact that the Fante traders increasingly demanded payment in gold. As the Gold Coast became a net exporter of slaves, it became a net importer of gold. One RAC official on the coast reported in 1773 that gold was essential for the purchase of slaves; "he who has got the Gold is sure to make the quickest dispatch—what the natives do with such immense quantities of that commodity, I know not, nor do I think the most experienced man in the trade can devise or find out." The fast-growing plantation economies in the Americas produced a demand for enslaved labor more profitable even than gold.[4] Annamaboe was poised to capitalize on that shift.

In 1689 Annamaboe was described as "the principal granary" for the Gold Coast. Behind the town's export of maize, a commerce that continued throughout the slave-trade era, lies a major Atlantic agricultural revolution. In his landmark study of the exchange of plants and animals in the wake of Columbus's voyages to America, Alfred W. Crosby Jr. explored the impact of the introduction of Old World plants and animals to the New World. He observed that "the successful exploitation of the New World" by European conquerors and settlers "depended on their ability to 'Europeanize' the flora and fauna of the New World." He focused on the best-known crops—rice, wheat, sugar—but he paid much less attention to the "Africanization" of New World plants that offers an important qualifier to his thesis. Maize came to the Gold Coast with the Portuguese, and mentions of the crop appear in the historical record in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It began to supplement millet and sorghum, the traditional grain crops in the region, and by the eighteenth century it had become the chief grain crop on the coast. On the Gold Coast maize was called *burro* or *aburro,* both derived from *milho zaburro,* the Portuguese name for the grain. The Fante and other Akan speakers along the Gold Coast even described overseas countries as *aburokyire,* countries "where maize comes from." There are five major types of maize (sweet, pop, floury, dent, and flint), and all of them made their way to Africa by different routes. Flint maizes came from the Caribbean and are characterized by a high starch content, early maturation, and brightly colored grains. The Spanish brought this variety back to Seville with their early voyages, and from there it spread to places like Venice and Egypt, and from Egypt along the caravan routes into the African interior. Along the Gold Coast farmers preferred floury maize, which they treated as a grain—drying it and grinding it—rather than as a vegetable to be eaten fresh, as was the case on other parts of the coast, especially the rice coast, where the growing season of the flint variety complemented the rice cycle. Maize could be interplanted with other crops like cowpeas. Combined with New World root crops like yams and cassava, maize provided the carbohydrates necessary to support a growing population and helps explain the rapid population growth among the Fante during the seventeenth century, which would not otherwise have been possible. Henry Meredith, an RAC officer on the coast in the late eighteenth century, commented on the centrality of maize: "Maize, or Indian corn, is the staple commodity of the country, and . . . much attention is paid to the cultivation of it."[5]

Before the introduction of maize, Gold Coast residents faced a shortage of carbohydrates. African grains like sorghum and millet were slow growing and needed ample sunlight and a long dry season. Yams, one available source of carbohydrates, were well adapted to the region's forest soils but were also slow growing and labor intensive. One key to the growth of maize was clearing tropical forests, back-breaking labor that must in part explain why the Gold Coast continued to import slaves in the seventeenth century along with the need for more agricultural workers. The by-product of forest clearing, wood, was also exported from Annamaboe; in 1691, for example, John Gregory sent a canoe "loaden with wood from thence." The scale of that labor may also be reflected in the tons of iron bars that were a staple of the goods sent from Europe to the Gold Coast. In 1680, one English ship carried 32,000 bars to Cape Coast Castle, and between 1673 and 1704 the RAC shipped over 5,000 tons, or more than 400,000 bars, there. African smiths then crafted farm implements like hoes, axes, and saws for clearing forests from the iron bars. Knives were also sent out by the millions, almost 1.5 million from 1673 to 1704, and one important use for them was harvesting maize. Cutlasses were another common trade item; some cutlasses were used as weapons, but others, including machetes, billhooks, and chopping knives, were used to clear farmland. Another important feature of maize was


Gold Trinckets worn as Spells. p. 632.
Bracelets
Gold Hatband
Gold Horn
Neck-lace
Small Stools p. 636.
Arm-Rings
Hair-Combs
Large Wooden Stools. p. 636
Scales for Gold p. 632
Kowris or Bujis
Piece of Gold
Earthen Pot p. 636
Pea-Weight
Krakra Gold
Iron Pin, Money.
N°76
Vol II. Pl.63. p.636

Engraving of items from the Gold Coast. Note particularly the scales used by the gold-takers in the lower left and the cracra (krakra) gold. Thomas Astley, ed., *A new general collection of voyages and travels: consisting of the most esteemed relations, which have been hitherto published in any language; comprehending everything remarkable in its kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (London, 1745–1747), vol. 2 (A 1745 .N49 v.2). Library Company of Philadelphia.


Weapons uſed by the Gold-Coaſt Negros from BARBOT &c.
Swords
a Poniard
Small Ozier Shield
a large Leather Shield
a Hand-Dart
Spear or Javelin
Aſsagay
Axes for Huſbandry
Tools for Tillage
Ax for Timber
Razors
N°77
Vol.II. Pla. 69. p.693

Engraving of Gold Coast weapons and implements, almost all of native manufacture from imported iron. Note the “Tools for Tillage” and the axes along the bottom row, which would have been used in clearing fields and growing and harvesting corn. Thomas Astley, ed., *A new general collection of voyages and travels: consisting of the most esteemed relations, which have been hitherto published in any language; comprehending everything remarkable in its kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (A 1745 .N49 v.2). Library Company of Philadelphia.

that two crops could be grown in a single season, adding enormously to the food supply. Records from Charles Fort demonstrate how the rhythms of the clearing, planting, and harvesting of corn governed the life of the town. Even major Fante holidays were tied to it.[6]

Annamaboe's growth, the introduction of New World crops, the expansion of the Fante state, and the rise in the slave trade were interlocking processes that revolutionized the town during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These factors were not only interconnected; they fueled one another. The rising food production encouraged a larger population, which in turn enabled Annamaboe to mount a larger army. That army was able to conquer more territory, which gave them more land, which led to more food production. That cycle continued so long as Annamaboe and the Fante were victorious over their rivals, as they were from the late seventeenth century through much of the eighteenth century. Maize even provided an ideal food to feed an army on the move—nutritious, easily prepared, easily transported, and nonperishable. The growth in population, territory, and military might have necessitated a more centralized and powerful state. The agricultural expansion also increased the demand for enslaved laborers, and the Fante victories allowed them to enslave their defeated enemies. It was safer and more profitable to sell off their enemies to Europeans and acquire slaves at lower cost from the interior for their own needs. Their growing power enabled them to keep trade paths open and to maintain a steady supply of enslaved laborers from the interior. It is important to note that this process was under way all over the Gold Coast and into the interior, where even larger and more powerful states like the Asante were undergoing a similar transformation. These wars were not exactly fueled by the slave trade or provoked by Europeans, as has sometimes been alleged, though they were not unrelated to the trade. Europeans did arm their African allies and sometimes participate in these conflicts in a very limited way, but they did not play a central role in them. In 1686, for example, the Fante came to Ralph Hassell, chief of Charles Fort, asking for lead and gunpowder to fight the Akyem and Agona, which he supplied. He noted that the conflict had shut down trade, and only the fishermen, women, and children remained in the town, but he added, "We hope it will be a good time shortly for slaves." The Fante were victorious over their enemies and reported that they had taken many slaves, fulfilling Hassell's hopes. The growth in agriculture and the expanding slave trade meant more wealth. The Fante and others could use that wealth to buy more European goods, and they could afford to hoard gold rather than sell it to Europeans.[7]

The Fante in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries were growing in number, wealth, power, and prestige, expanding their territory and building a more efficient government. The Fante needed the Europeans as trading partners—their wealth depended in part on that relationship—but the Fante operated from a position of growing power and confidence that explains much of their attitude toward Europeans on the coast. In the Atlantic World, the presence of a European fort usually indicated military might; in the Americas forts were a base from which European states expanded their colonial enterprises and allowed them to control territory. It would be a mistake to view European forts along the Gold Coast in that context. The forts were primarily trade establishments, housing only a handful of men, and aimed more at their European rivals than the Africans. The forts belonged to the Royal African Company, and the soldiers were hired by the company on five-year contracts. As the mulatto population grew up around the forts, they were employed as soldiers to supplement the small number of Englishmen on the coast. The forts also housed a number of enslaved African men and women who cooked, cleaned, and provided for the needs of the officers and soldiers. Europeans paid ground rent for the forts, and it was clear that they were there at the Africans' pleasure. The forts were conduits through which European goods arrived on the coast and through which enslaved Africans left it. The presence of a fort also encouraged private traders to trade there. In addition, the forts were themselves a source of wealth for the Annamaboe elites—steady financial payments and gifts, known as customs and dashes, flowed into the pockets of the ruling elite and the townspeople in general.

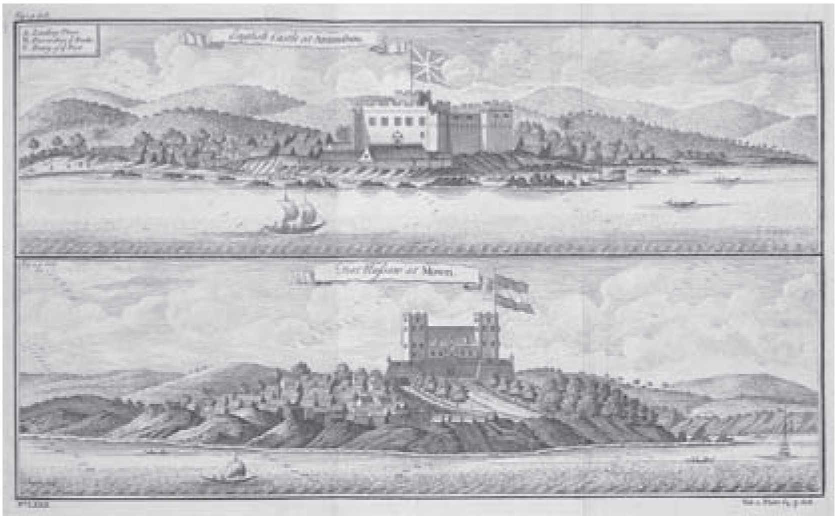
The physical layout of Annamaboe reflected its origins and growth, and its thriving economy fitted its station as the most important Fante town on the coast. It was divided into what was known as the Fishing Town and the Pynin Town, also known as the Upper and Lower Towns. The Fishing Town reflected the old economy of the town, which relied on fishing, although supplying the growing town and the fort with fish continued to be a profitable enterprise. The fishermen used their canoes and their understanding of the sea to carve out an important niche for themselves in the slave trade. They ferried goods to and from European ships and moved goods and people up and down the coast and from fort to fort. Almost everyone in the town engaged in an occupation tied to trade: linguists, gold-takers, farmers, market sellers, slave traders, bomboys, canoemen, craftsmen, artisans, and laborers all found steady employment related to the town's growing commercial activity.

The Annamaboe government was in the hands of the commercial elite, whose influence increased with the rise in trade. Through the seventeenth century, Annamaboe was politically dependent on inland towns and played no important political role. The Dutch signed their treaty of 1624 with someone they identified as the "King of Fante," but in fact the Fante were not a monarchy but a confederation, and their highest government official was known as the Obrafo or Braffo to Europeans. The Europeans paid the ground rent for their forts to the Obrafo, but he exercised little power over the independent Fante states. William Bosman, writing around 1700, described the Fante government as having "no King, the Government being in the Hands of a Chief Commander; whom they call their Braffo, a Word importing Leader. He is a sort of Chief Governour, and has the greatest Power of any in the whole Land, but is somewhat closely restrained by the old Men, who are a sort of National Councellors, not unlike some European Parliament . . . every part of Fantyn hath also its particular Chief, who will sometimes scarce own himself Subject to the Braffo." Independent Fante towns had their own "stool," the seat of authority occupied by the leader of their state. Just when Annamaboe made the transition from a dependent to an independent Fante state is unclear, though it was probably in the 1680s. In 1688, Eggin, who was a leader of Annamaboe, became Obrafo, another important signal of the growing power and political and economic clout of his town. One of the leading men of Annamaboe explained to the Englishmen there that "whenever a man is made Braffo he cannot see the salt water," which may hark back to the Fante nation's traditional focus on the interior. In 1697 both the Dutch and the English paid hefty bribes to the Fante to garner their support; the pro-Dutch Obrafo was overthrown and killed by a pro-English faction, which ended Dutch hopes of winning over the Fante.[8]

Below the Braffo were other officials who governed the independent towns. Records from Annamaboe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries often mention curranteers and cabushiers (later caboceers appear more often). Historian Robin Law defines a curranteer as a ruler of an individual town and cabushiers as chiefs, but the duties of these individuals are unclear, and the confusion is compounded by the fact that both terms are used in the plural in the records from Annamaboe in the early period. In 1686, for example, James Nightingale, chief of Annamaboe Fort, reported to his superiors at Cape Coast Castle that "our Cabusheers of Annamaboe gives your Worship hearty thanks for their yearly customes, also the Braffo and Curranteer." These yearly payments were made to these officials to ensure their support of English interests. But when Nightingale's successor Ralph Hassell reported similar payments in 1686, he referred to "the Capushers of Annamaboe" and "the Braffo and Quareenterrs [Curranteers]." Hassell might have referred to payments to curranteers outside Annamaboe, but that is not clear from the record. The English also referred to captains who were appointed to "look after the white men" in Annamaboe. These men may have gotten their titles from serving as captains of the local militia companies, called *bendefoes.* At the end of the seventeenth century, one of the caboceers of Annamaboe, Bonnishee, seemed to exercise more authority than the others. In 1695, for example, William Ronan, chief of Charles Fort, referred to "Old Bonnyshee, on whom depends the whole management of this country." By the eighteenth century, the records regularly refer to the town's chief caboceer, and the title of curranteer largely disappears from the records, as do references to captains.[9] This change could reflect the growing independence and power of the town and a decline in the authority of the Braffo over its affairs, and / or the growing authority of the caboceers over the town.

The Fante welcomed European traders, and even though they allowed and encouraged the English to build a fort at Annamaboe, they were not subject to them in any way. Europeans often bristled at their inferior status and at the Fante's assertion of their power and authority, and the seventeenth-century records show the English and the Fante working out their relationship day by day. William Bosman described the Fante territory as "so populous, it is very rich in Gold, Slaves, and all sorts of Necessaries of Life; but more especially in Corn, which they sell in large Quantities to the *English* ships: This great Opulency has rendered them so Arrogant and Haughty, that an European who would traffic with 'em is obliged to stand bare to them." He reported that the English at Annamaboe were "horribly plagued by the *Fantynean Negroes.*" That was the European view of the Fante determination to maintain their independence. Disputes often occurred over the payments the Fante expected to receive from the fort, over their right to trade with all comers rather than give the English the monopoly on trade at Annamaboe, and over specific transactions. James Nightingale, chief of the fort in the late 1680s, argued with the Fante caboceers over their annual custom and dashes. In 1686 he informed the RAC that the Annamaboe caboceers would not accept the payments he offered, claiming that the RAC "promised to be larger to them this Christmas, as per your letter in February last; but they plainly tell me, they will not loose their old customs, which have been paid them by the Royall Company." The RAC agreed to the larger payments, and the caboceers promised to serve the RAC "with their lives and their ffortunes," and to "procure slaves and corne." Nightingale assured the RAC that he tried to "keep these people under and not to be ffooled by them." He invited the caboceers to dine with him at the fort as a part of his attempt to maintain good relations with them.[10]

Despite those efforts, Nightingale's relationship with the caboceers steadily deteriorated. In May 1686, they revived an old dispute involving another RAC official at Annamaboe; he had a "long palaver" with them which forced him to give them large quantities of brandy, and he forwarded their demands for payment in cloth and brandy to the RAC. He remarked that he was "much troubled with them." A palaver was a formal means of settling disputes all along the West Coast of Africa, and has been described as "the art of settling matters through talk." Palavers brought together the parties involved in a dispute, such as members of the same household or extended family, members of a community, African nations, and Europeans and Africans at every level. Europeans complained of the long, drawn-out nature of these discussions, and all trade often



Engraving showing the original Fort Charles at Annamaboe before it was abandoned by the British in 1730 and destroyed by the Fante. Note the Bird Rocks in front of the fort and the Fishing and Pynins Towns separated by the fort. Thomas Astley, ed., *A new general collection of voyages and travels: consisting of the most esteemed relations, which have been hitherto published in any language; comprehending everything remarkable in its kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (A 1745 . N49 v.2). Library Company of Philadelphia.

stopped during the palaver, but all disputes on the coast were settled through this means, or violence often resulted. Annamaboe, like most towns on the Gold Coast, had a Palaver House, essentially a court of justice presided over by elders, which as a part of its jurisdiction served to oversee credit, debt, and the protection of pawns. Cases between English and African traders often came before it. On May 13, Nightingale notified the RAC that the caboceers "for some time shut up my gates" and allowed no one in or out of the fort. He did not report the cause of the palaver, but another official reported that it was settled on May 18. Troubled also brewed inside the fort, and on June 3 he sent three soldiers who he claimed were "very turbulent and [re]fractory" from the fort to Cape Coast Castle for punishment or reassignment. He noted that one of them, Jeremiah Mitchell, "has made many of the Capushers his friends, who desires when your Worship has ordered such punishment as your great prudence shall think fit, that he may be returned." Mitchell also begged to be allowed to come back to Annamaboe because he "has a child who he pleads will be ruin'd, if he not return againe."[11]

Mitchell's friendship with the local caboceers and his affection for his mixed-race child illustrate the complex relationships that emerged as the Fante and English lived side by side in Annamaboe. Englishmen and other Europeans who lived on the coast often entered into relationships with African or mulatto women known as "country marriages," and their relationships usually lasted as long as the men remained there. The men supported the women and their children during the time they were together and sometimes afterward. Some Englishmen had their children baptized, some sent them to England to be educated, and the grown children often found employment in the forts as soldiers, writers, or accountants. Ludewig Ferdinand Rømer wrote that European men often took native women as brides, and he noted that "under our fort, as well as the forts of the other nations, we have many children begotten of such a . . . marriage. They are neither white nor black, but yellow, and are called Mulattos." These country marriages were regulated under the Danes but more informal among other nations.[12]

Thomas Phillips, captain of an English slaver that visited the Gold Coast in 1694, witnessed a ceremony celebrating a country marriage between a gunner at Cape Coast Castle and the daughter of a caboceer named Amo, a girl Phillips estimated to be about twelve years old. Henry Meredith noted that the "change from adolescence to puberty, in this country, . . . is very rapid; girls become women at the early age of ten years, and boys men at twelve." Meredith further indicated that "on the first indication of the flow of the menses, a female is obliged to walk abroad, habited in a peculiar manner; thus publishing her attainment of womanhood" and her marriageability. Early marriages were common on the Gold Coast; William Bosman observed, for example, that young people were "frequently married before they become acquainted with the distinction of Sexes." The marriage ceremony followed local African customs, and according to Phillips "the wedding being concluded with only giving a treat to the castle officers, and some of her jetty relations, and a cloth to herself, they were man and wife." Typically, the groom also paid a symbolic bride price to the girl's family, a payment that included gold, brandy, and cloth and depended on the status of the bride's family.[13]

These unions had many advantages for both parties. The wife's family and her children often gained access to employment, education, and financial rewards, and these families often became prominent in trade with Europeans. Men gained not only sexual partners but providers. Their wives maintained a house for the family, nursed their husbands during times of sickness, and had access to cheaper food. Given the unhealthiness of Europeans on the coast, care during illness was a major concern, and among the Fante, women were generally the ones to "perform the office of Surgeon, as well as of the Physician . . . Their manner of selecting different roots and herbs, and their choice of them, discover no mean knowledge in botany; there is scarcely a plant without its peculiar virtue among them." Europeans like the gunner at Cape Coast Castle sometimes married the daughters of prominent African traders and thereby gained advantages in the trade. Their children carried the father's name but were reared in their mother's household. They were African creoles, their identities shaped by their European and African inheritances, and they often moved between both worlds. One European on the coast, Mrs. R. Lee, described the racial classifications that emerged from these relationships: the child of a black person and a white person was known as a mulatto, the child of a mulatto and a white person was called a mustee, and the child of a mustee and a white person was called a mustafee. She reported that "after this the children are supposed to be white."[14]

Mitchell's problems did not end with his punishment. He returned to Annamaboe as he requested, but by February of the following year the new chief of the fort, Ralph Hassell, sent him away again complaining that he was "ill humourd," but more significantly that "there is nothing said nor acted but what he relates to the Blacks." By September he was back, but again in hot water. This time the chief complained that he was a "very drunken ffelow" who could not be trusted, and was spending time on a Dutch interloper "on board which all Cabushiers and traders resort." Once again, his friendship with the caboceers seemed to be the real cause of complaint against him. This time, the RAC moved him to another fort. The problem of soldiers from the fort colluding with people in the town was a recurring one. In 1699 Gerrard Gore, chief of the fort, faced a mutiny from a number of soldiers who he caught buying goods from interlopers, hiding them among their friends in the town, and selling them at prices lower than the fort's.[15]

Isolated in a foreign land, eager to learn, to survive, and, with luck, to prosper, Europeans had little choice but to reach out to the townspeople. Simply staying alive was a struggle for the soldiers. Thomas Phillips was captain of a ship that brought thirty soldiers to Cape Coast Castle in 1694; all were in perfect health when they landed, but by the time Philips left two months later, over half of them were dead, and the survivors were so ill that they were "scarce . . . able to carry their fellows to their graves." These men needed the townspeople for their very survival. Rømer explained how European men on the coast found their footing. He noted that at first, a man was shy and unsure of how to act or how to manage his salary. For a time, the old hands in the fort assisted him, but eventually, he had to learn to manage for himself. The first step was to learn at least a little of the local trade language so that he could communicate with the townspeople. Next, he became "acquainted with a Black in the town, who becomes his friend and gives him advice for his benefit." The European's new friend might even lend him a bit of gold to purchase alcohol or tobacco from one of the ships in the Annamaboe Road; his "Black friend smuggles it in to land for him; and the White hucksters it." With those profits he could buy parrots, parakeets, and monkeys, which were in high demand on the ships. By these means, he could increase his salary by 100 percent. If he earned enough, his Fante friend would arrange to buy a slave for him from the inland markets. If the broker who agreed to make that purchase absconded with the funds or if the slave died, then he had to start all over again. But Rømer observed that once "a European has come that far . . . then he can survive." He became accustomed to the native food, and soon he wanted "to have one of the daughters of the country, or keep a black mistress. . . . When the White's Negress has borne him a couple of Mulatto children he cares as much for her and his children as a man does who had his true wife and children in Europe. Some among the Europeans do not wish to leave their family on the Coast even if they know they could live better in Europe."[16] Clearly, Mitchell and the other men from the fort were deeply engaged in just these clandestine economic pursuits, and Mitchell's concern for his mixed-race son perfectly mirrors Rømer's generalized example. While the Fante caboceers and English chiefs of the fort sparred and argued, the men in the forts and the townspeople were building very different relationships, and in so doing, were reshaping the culture and society of the town.

Nightingale's problems with the caboceers continued to fester. In September 1686 he notified his superiors that he and they "were at variance through their insolences," and he warned that he would "no longer suffer the daily affronts as fformerly." A few days later he wrote, "All differences are ended between self and Capushers," but that pronouncement proved to be premature. Later in that same month he reported "several gross abuses per the natives, not sufferable to be borne." He pleaded for "a sufficient supply to suppress their insolencies, and without that the Royall Company intrest and servants will be dayly abus'd." These disputes ended with Nightingale being stripped naked, beaten, and driven from the fort. He was replaced as chief of the fort at the insistence of the caboceers. James Walker, who replaced him temporarily, reported in October that he was "endeavouring to live peaceably and quietly with the natives, but it is not my will but theirs must be done. Their good success in their rogeries has brought them to such a hight that they esteem and vallue a white man as nought, and as for the Castle, they say can distroy it at pleasure. Likewise say no man shall live their as Chiefe but whome they approve of." When Ralph Hassell arrived as the new chief of the fort, he paid out large sums in customs and dashes to the caboceers and curranteers to meet their demands and to restore good relations.[17]

The Fante continued to challenge the English at every turn, eager to establish their dominance over them. By December, Hassell had problems of his own. The caboceers demanded their Christmas custom, and Hassell asked them to wait until he could find out how much they were to be given; "they answerd they would not be delayd." He tried, to no avail, to have them reduce their demands since the RAC had spent additional funds in replacing Nightingale. They were adamant, and Hassell complained that their "insolence is in reality so great that it is not sufferable." In January 1687 the Fante went to war with several of the neighboring nations, and they needed weapons and supplies from the fort. Hassell initially provided them with what they needed, but a month later denied them additional supplies. The Braffo and caboceers then called on their priests to hang "a fittish on the gate that no man should come to trade to sell any corn or any other thing." Fetish, from the Portuguese *feitiço,* or "agent," embraced a complex set of religious beliefs and practices. To make fetish was to perform worship or cast a spell, to take fetish was to swear an oath, to drink or eat fetish was to drink water or swallow a substance made sacred by a priest that was believed to bring death to anyone who swore a falsehood during the ritual, and anything made in honor of a god was a fetish. Disputes were often resolved by eating or drinking fetish, and the method was used to judge guilt or innocence in trials. Evidence indicates that the English merged these legal practices into their own. In 1780 the Cape Coast Castle Council resolved that "the Oath or Fetish of a Native (unless descended from White Parents) shall not be allowed or accepted by us as evidence . . . relative to . . . a European . . . but the Council will allow the Black or Mulatto People's Oath or Fetish according to the Custom of the Country in all Disputes . . . they have with each other."[18]

Every Fante town had its own gods who resided in sacred spaces; those of Annamaboe inhabited the Bird Rocks and a sacred grove known as Nananom Mpow, located about two miles from the beach in the hills behind the town. As the power of Annamaboe grew, so too did the power of its oracle, which came to be revered across the Gold Coast. The fetish or god spoke through an oracle, and priests or priestesses, known as fetish men and women, were often consulted about major events like wars or more daily concerns like when to travel or make a bargain. In the disagreement between the Fante and Hassell, the priests ritually barred anyone from entering Charles Fort. They did so by hanging a fetish on the door of the fort; Thomas Thompson, an eighteenth-century missionary to the Gold Coast, described a fetish as "Pieces of Gold, single Beads, little Shells, and the Teeth of some Animal" that were tied in a bag. While some Europeans on the coast laughed at the practice, others were "much afraid of them."[19]

Hassell knew that the fort could not survive without supplies from Annamaboe and therefore had to make concessions to have the fetish removed. He wrote the RAC that he "was forced to give the Braffo and Cabushers to take it down againe 2 lead barrs and ½ barrel of powder and a pintadoe [an East Indian batik cloth] that we might not be debard the liberty of people to bring refreshments to sustain us, which is granted, and people have the liberty of free egress and regress." Like Nightingale, he argued when the caboceers demanded their "usuall custom . . . at their putting their corne in the grounde," but because of their "hideous taunts" he gave in to their demands. When the RAC questioned that payment, the Fante instructed them to look in the original contract for the fort where it had been specified. Within a week the Corranteers were demanding similar payments and threatened to expel Hassell if he did not pay them. The following month they again threatened to take their trade elsewhere because he refused to accept their cracra money. Cracra money was small bits of adulterated gold, widely circulated on the coast. The Fante warned Hassell that "no English men should tarry here." On July 27, 1687, the caboceers ordered the Annamaboe bendefoes, the militia, to bar Hassell from entering the fort unless he paid three cases of spirits and half a barrel of powder, and later that month they demanded dashes for cutting their sorghum and millet, known as small corn. Hassell replied that he knew of no precedent for such a payment and refused. They suggested that he contact the RAC to request the gift, and if the RAC refused then they would pay for it. With that agreement he gave them a case of rum and they left the fort. A short time later, they sent messages of thanks and invited him to join them for a celebratory drink "as it was their new year all Chiefs did use to drink with them." He accepted their invitation.[20]

Once he stepped outside the gate, the bendefoes moved in between him and the fort's entrance. He found the caboceers sitting underneath the fort's wall a short distance away—where they knew no gun from the fort could reach them—and they asked him to sit and talk with them. They began what he called their "long storyes," a series of complaints about his conduct as chief of the fort.[21] Their long stories offer insights into the conduct of the trade at Annamaboe and their expectations. First, they complained that he would "take no pawns, nor trust them," a complaint that referred to the widespread credit system that supported the slave trade on the Gold Coast and all along the West African coast.

James Arnold, who practiced as a surgeon on several slave ships, explained how the system worked:

> It was useful in those Parts . . . to trust such of the principal Traders as were People of Character with Goods from the Ship. . . . But though . . . we intrust the Traders with Goods, with which they go to the Fairs, yet we expect that they should leave us something as a Pledge for their Return. To satisfy us in this Particular, they leave their Children and Relations in our Custody, whom we distinguish by the Name of Pawns. As the traders bring us Slaves, or, in other Words, as they pay their Debts, so these are released. But if they are unable to discharge them at an appointed Day (which Day is fixed for the sailing of the Ship), they are taken to the West Indies and sold.[22]

Pawning is another example of how indigenous African systems were adapted to facilitate trade. European traders held the children of Fante merchants either in the forts or on board their ships as collateral for the trade goods they advanced to them, and the individuals held as pawns were typically the sons of the African traders. Fante merchants took the goods that had been secured by the pawns—the cloth, liquors, metal wares, beads, weapons, and other goods—and carried them to the inland slave markets, where they exchanged them for slaves. Their children were essentially held as hostages to insure that the Fante traders would return with the required number of slaves within a specified time. If they failed to live up to the terms of the contract, the pawns were considered slaves and could be sold off the coast. This practice contributed to more personal relationships between the European and Fante traders that endured over time. Pawns might spend weeks or months living with the Europeans on the ships or in the fort, and as a result they learned English and gained insights into European culture and trade that benefited their fathers and contributed to their own educations, which helped them when they entered the trade themselves.[23]

The Fante's complaint suggested that Hassell was not extending sufficient credit to conduct the trade. He admitted as much in his response to them; "I told them . . . that I could not take pawns, knowing that they do not care to redeem them, and that for severall years Mr. Thelwall [chief of Annamaboe factory from 1681–1685] had pawnes from severall of them and that time the Royall Companyes money lay dead, and so they would do again if I took any pawns, and as for trusting of them I had to my losse done to much." It may be that the slave trade and the commercial systems that supported it were not yet fully formed. It might also be that so long as their relatives were not in immediate danger of being sold, the merchants were willing to continue using that credit. But if Hassell refused to either take pawns or trust the merchants with goods, then the trade could not expand. The situation was far different at Annamaboe by 1715, when Captain Peter Holt reported that "there is no factory on ye Coast that Can live without it [pawning] or differ with their best Traders, I have many times since my coming here taken half ye Goods given for a Slave (after they have been Carryed out into ye town & brought back) & given money for them to oblige ye traders for ye Owners of ye Slaves that bring them out of the Country seldom Come into the Castles themselves, the Waterside People not Suffering them, & when ye Goods are Carried into Town, the Owner wanting some other Goods than the Trader has got from him, to Oblige them such things must be done." Clearly, Holt was accepting pawns, trusting the traders with goods, and doing all he could to meet Fante demands and to expand the credit system at Annamaboe to encourage the growth of the slave trade there.[24]

The caboceers also raised another issue related to the commercial side of the trade, complaining that Hassell would not accept their cracra money. Annamaboe was notorious for circulating the worst gold on the Gold Coast, but if the English refused this widely accepted medium of exchange, then trade would suffer. Hassell countered that if he accepted their bad money it would only encourage them to bring more and that he had to make up any deficit. The caboceers also suggested that the Dutch gave them more favorable terms than the English did, and that the English showed greater favoritism to the Fetu, their enemies who resided closer to Cape Coast Castle. These claims are difficult to judge, but the Dutch were certainly eager to woo the Fante away from the English and did all they could to undermine them. Hassell's peevish response was that the Fante were "less treacherous" to the Dutch and the Fetu were more "faithful" to the English. Dissatisfied with his responses, they ordered him to go to Cape Coast immediately without even returning to the fort. Furthermore, they demanded that he immediately send for an anker of rum (which contained ten and a half gallons) or they threatened to "strip me naked and beat me as they had Mr. Nightingale." They agreed to allow him to go into the castle only if he left his fellow RAC employee James Walker behind as a pawn and if several of them accompanied him. He wisely left for Cape Coast Castle.[25] Clearly outmanned and outgunned, he pleaded with his superiors to remove him "from these diabolicall evill people."[26]

Three days later the RAC sent him back, even though he had pledged "never to return to Annamaboe," and they sent James Nightingale with him to try to reach an understanding. The caboceers were out of town on a palaver, but when they returned on August 7, a two-hour meeting ensued in which they reiterated their complaints. They charged him with "having spoiled the country," they refused to accept his oversight of the fort, and they demanded that he and Nightingale depart. They had no choice but to comply, and they requested a canoe from Cape Coast Castle. The caboceers insisted that they would accept anyone else the RAC chose to send. Hassell warned that the fort was in a bad state of repair, which contributed to the problem, and he asserted that the caboceers had "growne to such a height that unless speedily suppression this place will not be long tenable." Despite their orders to stay put, Nightingale left the following morning, and Hassell reported that "since the departure of Mr. Nightingale all the Cabusheers of this place have been with a full cry, why did I not goe with him as I came with him. I told them he went contrary to your orders," but they would not allow him to remain until a canoe arrived, so he was "forced to foot it all the way." Once he was gone, James Walker was left in charge. He reported that the caboceers were "impatient for a new chief . . . they offer no abuse, but continue their visitts every morning." In the end, they once again accepted James Nightingale, and gave him a "civill reception" when he returned on September 9, 1687.[27] Walker understood clearly that "it is not my will but theirs must be done. . . . As for the Castle, they say can distroy [sic] it at pleasure."[28]

These sorts of disputes between the chief of the fort and the caboceers continued to occur periodically, each of them a test of the relative strength of each party and each helping to define the terms of their relationship. In June 1691 John Gregory became chief at Annamaboe and immediately found himself embroiled in a dispute with Bonnishee, the chief caboceer. The month before Gregory's arrival Bonnishee and the previous chief, John Bloome, had differed over the price of maize, and Bonnishee notified Bloome that no maize would be sold unless they met the price he demanded. Gregory held palavers with Bonnishee and the other caboceers in an effort to lower prices and acquire maize, but they were steadfast. The RAC also remained adamant that Gregory pay less. The caboceers also demanded that he pay the Settling custom, a payment made on the arrival of a new chief of the fort. In addition, the Fante were about to go to war again, and they wanted powder and other supplies, which Gregory was reluctant to advance.[29]

On a Tuesday evening, Christmas Eve in 1691, Bonnishee knocked at the castle gate. The sergeant on duty went to ask Gregory if the gates should be opened to the chief caboceer, who apparently felt insulted that the gates were not opened immediately, walked away, and refused to return when the sergeant opened the gates for him. Later that night, he sent a messenger to ask Gregory why the gates had not been opened for him immediately. Gregory responded that Bonnishee could either come when the gates were open or he could wait until they were opened, an arrogant response that further angered the caboceer, who responded by panyarring slaves en route to the castle, beating them, and barring anyone from entering or leaving the castle. Panyarring was a widespread practice on the coast whereby persons seized goods or people and held them until a dispute was resolved or payment was made. It could be used as a means of forcing a palaver, as it was in this case. It differed from pawning in that this was not a mutual agreement, but a seizure of goods by a creditor or by the aggrieved party in a dispute, and it was employed by both Africans and Europeans. Gregory asked his superiors at Cape Coast Castle if they intended to protect him or not, and he expressed his fears that had he gone out of the castle for a walk, as he often did, then they would have seized him "and served me as they did Nightingale." On December 29 a delegation visited Gregory from the town and offered to settle the palaver for a payment in rum and cloth, but the chief was not in a mood to compromise. Instead, he chose to force a showdown with

Bonnishee, expressing his determination to "make the Cabbosheers pay as well as Bonnishee, who I believe [I] shall get from this towne. I shall keep the gates shut. . . . I shall have satisfaction and Bonnishee to goe from this towne." It is unclear how long he kept the gates closed, but by the end of January trade had resumed. The dispute was not yet over, and matters came to a head in April when Gregory decided to take Bonnishee and four other prominent caboceers prisoner (the others were Eggin, Humphrey, Finny, and Peter Quashi). He claimed he did so because they were trading with interlopers, some English captains who violated the RAC's monopoly, and he complained that one of those interlopers, Captain Parish, was "keeping a white man in Bonishees house with goods." But he also reported that he had taken the prisoners because he had received so many "unsufferable abuses from Bonnishee and several others belonging to this town," and to preserve "the intrest and honour of the Company."[30]

The results, predictably, were disastrous. Spoiling for a fight, Gregory wrote to Cape Coast Castle reporting that he had provisions to last a month, requested that about a dozen female slaves and their children belonging to the fort be moved to Cape Coast to relieve him of their support, and asked for more gunpowder and "hand granadoes." What happened next is unclear from the records. Gregory claimed that he ordered the Fante who had surrounded the fort to disperse, but "instead of goeing they turned their backsides to it, a thing we think not to be taken lightly by any [that] has command of a Fort, especially knowing how sufficiently we have been abused." The men of Annamaboe were clearly taunting Gregory, and they refused to allow any white man into the town. Gregory reported that his sentinels had been struck and had "hats stole of[f] their heads." The men of Annamaboe threatened to put Gregory in irons if they could take him, and Bonnishee boasted that "the Fort and all that belonged to it was his and he would sell or do with it as he pleased." There is no indication in the record of who fired the first shot, but violence erupted. Gregory turned the fort's guns on the town, and "the great part of it burnt togither with the peoples goods." In addition to the destruction, Bonnishee informed the English "that 6 men were killed and dead of their wounds and 6 more lay so that they thought they would not recover." The fact that Gregory was immediately removed from this post may indicate who the guilty party was. His replacement, William Cross, found the "place much altered since I was here last." Whites were too afraid to leave the fort, and the thatched roofs of the corn room and other parts of the fort had been burned and would soon wash down if not repaired. Bonnishee and other caboceers called on Cross, who tried to heal the dispute. He "told them that I was come to make peace and recompose all the differences, and for the future no man whatsoever under my command should wrong or abuse any of the Blacks." The caboceers demanded their Settling custom and brought palavers for the damages; Bonnishee helped smooth over the differences so that life could return to normal.[31]

Disputes between the caboceers and chiefs over matters of trade and custom were ongoing. In 1693, Edward Searle, chief of the fort, panyarred one of Bonnishee's slaves because the caboceer traded with an interloper from Barbados, and Bonnishee sent word that "he would doe any such thing in spite of me." The people of Annamaboe refused to recognize the RAC's trade monopoly and were determined to trade with all comers. The RAC interpreted its ground rent for the fort as giving them a monopoly on trade at Annamaboe. In 1696, John Rootsey, chief of the fort, locked horns with Bonnishee over a trade dispute, and after the two men argued, Bonnishee said "he will not come againe into the Castle and if he be good as his word it will be both for the good of the Company and our selves that live here. Our white men and the Company's slaves had been abused and beaten by the blacks severall times." In July 1704, for instance, the Annamaboe people seized Mr. Chaignoan, chief of the fort, as he returned from the English fort at Agah. They carried him back to Agah and refused to allow him to return to Annamaboe because, they said, he had not paid "Setling customs nor their dancing Customs." The dancing custom referred to the Dancing Time, a festival of commemoration for the dead that took place in June or July, and the chief of Annamaboe Fort had traditionally paid a custom for it. Eggin, a longtime leader in Annamaboe, traveled to Cape Coast Castle to explain the dispute to Chaignoan's superiors there. The RAC officials at Cape Coast sent Jo Brown to Annamaboe to negotiate with the caboceers, and he was able to bring Chaignoan into the castle and end the palaver.[32]

Out of these many confrontations, the English and the Fante worked out the terms of their relationship, and on almost every count, the English were forced to bend to Fante demands. Whether the issue was the payment of dashes and customs, the right of the Fante to trade with whoever they chose, their right to set the price for their goods, the necessity of the English accepting cracra money and being more liberal with credit through pawning, the Fante won concessions. The Fante used every means at their disposal to force the English to accede to their demands—they shut down trade, they blocked the fort, and they humiliated the chiefs and forced them out of Annamaboe.

These continual palavers and disputes eventually exhausted the patience of the English, who abandoned Charles Fort in 1730. Ludewig Ferdinand Rømer wrote that the English "were so plagued by the Negroes at that place [Annamaboe] that they thanked God to be able to get away. The Negroes then tore the fort down completely and negotiated directly with the ships." He added that the Fante at Annamaboe "have not cared to have [resident] any Europeans." The English decision to abandon the fort may also have been encouraged by 1698 changes to the RAC that allowed any Englishman to trade in Africa upon payment of a 10 percent duty on imports and exports, which gave these traders the name Ten Percent Men. Without a monopoly to protect, and with the trade at Annamaboe open to all comers, the RAC retrenched, but the English slave trade continued to expand, fueled by the booming plantation economy in America and by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) allowing the English to export slaves into Spain's American colonies. It was only after 1700 that the Gold Coast became a major player in the slave trade; the region saw a "massive increase in slaving" encouraged by strong demand for slaves from the Caribbean and Brazil, though many Gold Coast slaves also went to mainland North America. The best estimates are that 883,100 enslaved Africans left the Gold Coast from 1701 to 1800, and more of those men, women, and children left from Annamaboe than anywhere else.[33] That massive increase in slaving meant a similar increase in Annamaboe's links to the Atlantic World—the routes grew more numerous and well traveled, more goods flowed in and out, more residents of Annamaboe took to the seas, more and more Europeans arrived at Annamaboe, and the wary English and Fante merchants began to consider again the advantages of a closer working relationship.