Review

The historical background to the Takyiman disputes with Asante

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This paper examines the historical background to the Takyiman disputes with Asante. The study reveals that cordial relations originally existed between Takyiman and Asante. Asante defeat of Takyiman in 1723 notwithstanding, Takyiman dutifully served the Asantehene as a vassal state. Under British colonial rule, Takyiman asserted its autonomy but in 1949 failed to have nine of its villages Asante seized in the 19th century restored to them. Together with other Bono states, Takyiman formed the Bono Kyempim Federation (BKF) and seceded from the Asante confederacy. Since 1959, the Asantehene has continually interfered in Takyiman's chieftaincy affairs. This paper seeks to examine the background to Asante's interest in Takyiman affairs. It argues that the Asante and British governments' interference in Takyiman’s chieftaincy affairs was the major contributory factor to the Takyiman-Asante disputes in the twenty-first century. This study relied on archival data than any other source. Archival research differs from the traditional method which is based on the researcher's direct observation. The archival method concerns itself with data previously collected and kept in a repository, not necessarily by the researcher. The archival research enabled me to collect data on what actually occurred during the colonial period on the subject. Secondly, data was used from published works on the subject through library research.

Key words: Takyiman, Asante, Asantehene, chieftaincy

INTRODUCTION

The state of Takyiman located in modern Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana was in the closing years of the seventeenth century among the most powerful Akan states in the forest fringes of modern Ghana lying to the north-west of Asante. Takyiman gradually expanded into what became known as the Bono Manso state. Takyiman’s expansion is attributable to the expansion and flourishing trade from Asante to northern Ghana until her power and influence were destroyed in their war with Asante in 1722/1723. Available evidence suggests that tension and animosity exist between the chiefs and people of Takyiman and the Asanteman Council. The creation of the Bono Ahafo region notwithstanding, the Asantehene blatantly interferes in the affairs of the Takyiman state. For example, in 1988, Otumfo Opoku Ware II, the late Asantehene in a letter to J. J. Rawlings, the then Head of State of Ghana stated that he (Asantehene) was constrained to bring to Rawlings'
attention the concern which certain decisions by Government on Chieftaincy Affairs in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions was causing him and the chiefs and people of Asante. By 1996, the Otumfuo had elevated some stools (chiefs) in the Takyiman area to paramountcies. When fighting broke out between Asante and Bono the citizens at Tuobodom in 1998, many people died, others fled and properties were destroyed. In March 2008, Oseadeeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV, Omanhene of the Takyiman traditional area accused the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II of usurping the traditional powers of Takyimanhene by installing a new paramount chief at Tuobodom describing the Otumfuo’s action as “unacceptable and will not be tolerated since Tuobodom is within the Takyiman traditional area”. He said also that the “Takyiman traditional area is not part of Asanteman”. He is believed to have asked why the Asantehene in the twenty-first century demanded that certain villages and towns in the Takyiman area with which Asante had geographical, economic as well as social interests be part of Asante. (Agyekum, 2008:482). The Takyimanhene demanded to know why the Asantehene should foment trouble in the Takyiman state; an area which he believed was enjoying relative peace. Nana Ameyaw said that the Asantehene should avoid sowing seeds of discord in areas which are not part of his kingdom because the interferences by Otumfuo was tantamount to “indulging in slavery” (Agyekum, 2008:481). A Ghanaian Times newspaper source, (March 19, 2008) asserted that tension had been mounting in the Takyiman state since the installation of an Omanhene in Tuobodom by the Asantehene in December, 2007. Agyekum (2008:481) says that on 3rd Nov 2008, a letter on the Ghanaweb, an internet source indicated that the Asantehene had resorted to “setting the stage for hatred between chiefs in the two regions instead of unifying them”. The aforementioned cases indicate that tension and suspicion exist between the Takyiman traditional state and Asante chiefs, located in two neighbouring administrative regions of Ghana.

Despite hostile relations between Takyiman and Asante, very little documentary information is available about the history of Takyiman’s relation with Asante. These include William Tordoff, Ashanti under the Prempehs 1888 to 1935, Ivor Wilks, The Northern Factor in Ashanti History, and Wilks, Asante in the 19th Century (1975). The few publications on the Takyiman state have their own shortcomings. The main objective of Meyerowitz’s works; The Sacred State of the Akan (1949) and Meyerowitz At the Court of an African King (1962), was, as she stated in Meyerowitz (1962) to commemorate the heroic fight of Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III, King of the Bono Takyiman State and his people for independence from Ashanti and the restoration of the nine villages which they had lost to Ashanti for the second time in 1935 (Meyerowitz, 1962: 5). These books discuss the Takyiman state, its institutions and some social and customary practices of the state than their relations with Asante. Brempong and Warren’s works titled The Takyiman State Histories of Stools and Deities provide vital information but emphasize stories of deities in the Takyiman state. Effa Gyamfi has made valuable contribution to our knowledge of Takyiman in his ‘Oral Tradition and Archaeology, A case study of the Bono State’ (1974) but unfortunately the information is mainly archaeological evidence. Kwame Arhin’s A Profile of Brong Kyempim (1979), a collection of essays on the Archaeology, History, Language and Politics of the Bono people of Ghana, provides little information about Takyiman chiefs’ relations with Asante emphasizing just the origins and achievement of Takyiman as a kingdom.

Busia’s The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti (1951) and George Agyekum’s Asante and Brong Ahafo Regions’ Chieftaincy Affairs (2008) provide useful information about chieftaincy in Asante and the Bono areas. The two books however, respectively discuss effects of British rule on chieftaincy; and proceedings at the Coussey Commission of Enquiry (1972 to 1976) into Bono chiefs’ dispute with Asante. These pieces of information are all useful in helping us to understand the frequent disputes between Asante and Bono chiefs in the Takyiman Traditional area. An important element of Takyiman’s history, namely, the historical relations between Takyiman’s chiefs and their Asante counterparts has not been given much attention by historians. The current study seeks to fill this gap with a survey of Takyiman chiefs’ relations with Asante’s chiefs during the long period of their subordination to Asante in 1723 to 1959. This includes the period of cordial relations, and the era of Takyiman chiefs’ struggle to control these nine Takyiman villages. The study is relevant; it will provide more information to government and civil organizations who seek a lasting solution to the frequent Takyiman state’s disputes with the Asante central government.

The period of sacrifice, co-operation and service

Takyiman’s relations with Asante can be described as a long period of sacrifice and dedicated service from the earliest times to the late 19th century interspersed by periods of mistreatment of Takyiman chiefs and their people. In order to understand this point, it is important to examine some of the major developments that occurred during this period and how these developments in one way or the other affected Takyiman’s relations with Asante. Cordial relations between Takyiman and Asante existed for several reasons; first, Takyiman and Asante royal families belong to the Oyoko clan. Takyiman regards the Asantehene as his brother (Daily Graphic Tuesday May 10, 2005: 40). Secondly, Takyiman, like other ancient states felt safe, and probably proud to be counted as one of the vassal states of Asante. Thirdly, Takyiman
became the successor state to Bono Manso when Asante defeated the latter state in 1723. This also attracted Asante to the Takymian state. Takymian’s richness in gold, and its control of the gold trade passages to Begho’s trading centres were the other factors that encouraged Asante to be interested in the affairs of the Takymian state. Reindorf asserts that King Amoyaw (Ameyaw) taught Opoku Ware how to make gold and silver weights; to claim the estate of deceased chiefs or generals, how to enact laws, and fining offenders in order to add to his power and reduce the power of his subjects. (Reindorf, 1966: 56). Whatever the accuracy of this tradition is, it is said that certain innovations were made in the Asante financial administration when Ameyaw, the Takymian chief was captured and sent to Kumasi in 1723. One of such innovations was the introduction of awuniyadee (death duties), a practice for which it was useful to have the advice of Takymian experts. (Reindorf, 1966: 72).

Another area in which Takymian contributed to Asante’s development was in its effort in Asante wars. To be able to assess the state’s contribution, one needs to consider the number of troops Takymian as a vassal contributed, during Asante’s wars and the casualties on Takymian’s side. This is imperative as it was the duty of every subject to contribute troops to his inability to understand the number of troops Takymian as a vassal contributed, during Asante’s wars and the casualties on Takymian’s side. This is imperative as it was the duty of every subject during the war, sixty years after the defeat of Takymian. Bafour’s contribution in the Takyiman war effort. The social relations between the Takyiman and Asante in pre-colonial times were friendly. Asante’s traders and hunters were not disturbed while going about their hunting and trading activities. Several of the immigrants intermarried with the Bono people. Takymian tradition asserts also that Asante citizens consulted Takymian deities such as Gakro, Taa koraa, Taa Mensa and many others. The traditions assert that the Asante were permitted to dig for gold on Takymian land. They sent the gold they obtained to the Takymian chief who gave them the one-sixth portion given to all Bono miners. (Arhin, 1991: 3-4). As a vassal state of Asante, Takymian dutifully paid an annual tribute of slaves, cows, sheep, cotton cloth and some silk products and from time to time, provided large numbers of able-bodied men to join the Asante army. Takymian
provided between 6,000 and 12,000 men placed within the Adonten division of the Asante army, a position in which they were used as shock troops. (Wilks, 1975: 243) Historical evidence suggests also that Asante benefitted significantly from the peaceful and thriving economic atmosphere that Takyiman’s interest in trade, mining and other economic activities provided. Asante engaged in panning and deep pit mining of gold and trade during Nana Ameyaw Akumfi I’s reign in the 14th Century. Through panning, the miners collected gold dust with cane baskets from the alluvium of rivers Tano, Tain, Bisi and Awora. (Anquandah, 1982: 97). Gold particles were also picked from the ground and along the banks of rivers and streams after they had been exposed by rain. Miners obtained greater quantities of mpokua (nuggets) of gold by digging into the alluvium deposits along river banks. With the use of Asoso (adze) and aso (hoe) the miners sank shafts of between two and three feet in diameter, and about thirty and sixty feet deep into the alluvium. (Effa-Gyamfi, 1978: 55).

Gold became an important commodity of trade in the Bono Manso state with Asante and northern Ghana. People transported it by head-loading quantities weighing between five and a thousand tons to Bono and Kong in present-day La Cote d’Ivoire which were important markets for the Asante gold trade. Takyiman and Asante craftsmen made golden, brass and iron products for the chief’s palace and for sale to traders who patronized the Bono markets (Garrard, 1986: 101). Nana Oburumankoma, chief of Takyiman is said to have introduced cowrie shells and gold dust to facilitate the exchange of goods in the barter trade between Asante and its neighbours in the 14th century. (Asihene, 1980). The nsennnea (scale) and the abramboo (gold weights) became the standard system of weighing gold. It became easier to exchange products, as the abramboo were in different units of kokuo, nsua, asuana and asuansa with kokua being the highest unit, and asuansa was the smallest unit. (Aboagye interview). Asante participated actively in the gold and kola trade across Takyiman and the Salaga to North Africa. Asante’s trade to the north of Africa constituted an important source of revenue to Asante and helped it in its rise as a powerful kingdom and empire. In pre-colonial times, Asante’s traders freely exchanged their products in the Takyiman and other Bono markets at Ahwenekoko, Bonduku and Kintampo without hindrance (Adum-Kyeremeh, 2000: 44). Another important commodity of trade besides gold was kola nuts collected mainly by women and children from Takyiman and other forest areas during May and November. It was sold to the Hausa, Mossi and Berber traders. Kola, to these traders was an indispensable stimulant and a necessity for the travelling trader. The availability and the high demand for kola sustained the Asante-Northern Ghana trade to the nineteenth century when rubber and cocoa trade replaced it in the 1890s. (Arhin, 1967: 6).

Asante and Takyiman traditions assert that Asante obtained the first yam seeds from Nana Ameyaw Kwakye during the reign of Osei Tutu I. Takyiman traders sold their wares of pottery, cloth, kola and the kyem (shield of baboon skin), in the Kumasi market. From Tafo, Kaase, Ofinso and Ohwim in Asante, the Takyiman people obtained European cloths, salt and kola. Kintampo, Atebubu and Donkorok Nkwanta, which were located along the Trade Routes from Asante to the northern markets served as resting places for Asante’s traders. Takyiman oral traditions assert also that the Asante were permitted to dig for gold on Bonoland. They sent the gold they obtained to the Bono chiefs who gave them the one-sixth portion given to all Bono miners. Trade and other economic activities went on smoothly between Asante, Takyiman, Hausa and Berber traders from North Africa throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries. (Arhin, 1965: 13).

**Takyiman as an Asante Vassal state**

Takyiman’s defeat in their war with Asante in 1723 made her a vassal state. Available historical data suggests that the chiefs and people of Takyiman suffered indignities as members of the Asante confederacy. Some of her lands were placed under Bafuor’s rule and Takyiman became part of Nkoranza territory. (Rattray, 1932: 112) says that the Brongs, when conquered became vassals of the confederacy and they were called upon in times of war. Coupled with these was the patchwork of political allegiances introduced in the Takyiman state which formed part of measures to prevent Takyiman from consolidating her power in a single unifying block. Nine of Takyiman’s most influential villages called Tano-Subin villages were put directly under separate Kumasi chiefs as follows: Nkyiraa/Tuobodom-Nsumankwaahene, Ofuman I-Adumhenene; Ofuman II/Branan-Dadeasoabahene; Subinso/Tanoboase-Anantahene; Tanoaso-Ahenkrohene; Buoyem-Asantehema. (Wilks, 1975: 245). These villages became part of their respective assigned Kumasi divisions. They paid part of the head stool’s debt, fought in front of the occupant of the head stool and any revenue derived from the said villages was divided between the supervisor chief and the Asantehene. Additionally, the Takyiman king, the queen mother, and other important Bono citizens were taken as prisoners.

Takyiman’s state treasury was plundered and changes were made in the Asante revenue system after the Asante army defeated Bono-Manso and Takyiman in 1723. Reindorf (1932) states that the whole treasury of the Takyiman kingdom was taken by Asante whose power was greatly increased by this victory and that several improvements were made by Amoyaw’s (Ameyaw) advice, on the government and social conditions of Asante (Reindorf, 1895: 87). Takyiman’s strength was diminished by the Asante policy of
'containment' through which some parts of Takyiman were directly administered by Kumasi clan chiefs. This policy hampered Takyiman's ability to form a formidable force to challenge Asante or any of its satellite states. Any such attempt would have meant that Takyiman wanted to fight Nkoranza and the Asante kingdom as a whole. In Asante, it was unconstitutional of any of the Asante provinces to wage war without the consent of the Atebubuhene. (Atta, 1992: 20-21). Takyiman oral tradition asserts also that the state took part in the Asante-Gyaman war fighting on the side of Asante. After the war, the Asantehene invited the Takyimanhene and his traditional priests to a victory parade in Kumasi. After the parade, Takyimanhene was made to surrender his villages, including, Tanoso, Tanoboase, Tuobodom, Buoyam, Nkyira, Ofuman and Branam to Asante. It is not known whether these villages came under Kumasi's jurisdiction at the time of Opoku Ware I in the early eighteenth century, or later. (Meyerowitz, 1965: 20) asserts that this action took place; and was actually a form of revenge for the act done by Nana Kofi Kyereme, an ex-Takyimanhene for killing Wiafe an Nkoranza royal in the 19th century (Warren and Brempong, 1971: 23).

It would be recalled that Asante developed a policy to prevent Takyiman and other Bono people in its northern territory from trading directly with the coastal towns. These states were expected to purchase their commodities from the Asante middlemen who had in most cases monopolized the interior trade and more significantly, controlled the movement of firearms to the interior. However, after the 1874 war, this monopoly was weakened by the interruption of trade between Kumasi and Salaga by the eastern Bono who had blocked the trade route and refused to allow any Asante traders to go beyond Kintampo. In 1875, Mensa Bonsu, began an intrigue to win back some of the rebellion districts and to strengthen the tottering Asante kingdom. In the same year, Wanky provoked Takyiman by claiming part of Takyiman as its own. Asante deemed the ensuing Takyiman-Wanky conflict as a blessing. Bonsu instructed the Gyanmanhene to arbitrate over the dispute. When Takyimanhene Fofie refused to observe the truce that the Gyanmanhene had called for, the Asante government ordered the forces of Wanky and Nkoranza to assist Gyanmanhene to occupy the Takyiman town. (Wilks, 1975: 271). Knowing very well that his action would infuriate Asante, Nana Fofie sent a message through Gyarko, his nephew and heir apparent, and Nsuapim, a Buoyam royal to Gyanmanhene for support in case Asante forces attacked Takyiman. Fofie urged the rest of his subjects including inhabitants of the Tano-Subin villages to accompany him to Gyaman in case of attack.

With the exception of Buoyam which initially agreed to, the rest of the Tano-Subin villages influenced by Asante, declined Fofie’s request. At Buoyam, the people rebelled against their chief and threatened him with destoolment if he attempted to support Takyiman in any war. Takyiman was swiftly attacked compelling Ohene Kwabena Fofie and his supporters to flee to Gyaman. At Buoyam and Ofuman, Takyiman forces encountered serious exchanges with the Asante soldiers. It is said that about one third of the Takyiman people who fled lost their lives. Takyimanhene tried in vain to regain his state. Takyiman was described as the ‘province’ of Abora a coastal state, far away from Takyiman in 1883. (Goody, 1968: 1). Takyiman was disenchanted with Asante’s rule following the prolonged indiscriminate attacks, exaction of heavy tributes and killing of Takyiman citizens. The people always wanted the fall of Asante and used the opportunity offered them by the Apuo festival to point out Asante’s ungratefulness, and to express their delight at Asante’s troubles. In an apparent claim that it was the Bono who introduced the nsennee (gold weights) to Asante, Takyiman apuo songs for example taunted; “we made scales for the Asante porcupines, they only used them to cheat us. The Asante chiefs may have bought them but he did not buy us.” (Rattray, 1932:104). When the British captured Nana Prempeh I in 1896, Takyiman apuo songs taunted Asante by saying; “They know nothing about guns, had they known about guns, would they have let the White man to seize their king Prempeh and Yaa Akyaa without firing a gun?” (Rattray, 1932:153-156). It is said that the people of northern Asante including the Takyiman and Atebubu peoples who had been paying tribute and supplying men to fight in Asante wars seceded after 1874 and would have offered their allegiance to the British if the British had shown any sign of willingness to accept it. (Takyimanhene’s petition, 1949). The impetus for autonomy was provided by the British government’s land and administrative policies on Asante in the 20th century.

British colonialism and the Takyiman State

Following the British government’s annexation of Asante in 1901, the Asante Native Administrative Ordinance (NAO) (1902) was passed to enforce the annexation order. Under this, Asante was divided into four provinces. These included the Western Province that comprised some Bono states including Berekum, Wam (Dormaa), Takyiman, Ahafia, Gyaman and Wanky. Nkoranza, Atebubu, Krakye and later, Banda and Mo constituted the Eastern Province. Kumasi chiefs were forbidden from their involvement in matters in these territories and other territories that did not concern their own territories. Each division was thus, made to regulate its own internal affairs under the direct supervision of District Commissioners (DCs). Commissioners served as points where chiefs could enquire about their status viz-a-viz that of the Asantehene and his sub-chiefs. For example in 1924, Geoffrey Parker, the District Commissioner of Wanky/Takyiman reported to the Chief Commissioner that the chiefs of the Wanky district had ever since
Prempeh’s return been anxious and nervous as to their exact status. Asante interfered in Takyiman and other Bono states’ affairs. In 1927, Mr. Ballentine, the Provincial Commissioner of Sunyani informed the Akwamuhene of Kumasi that he had no business interfering in the Bono division’s chieftaincy affairs. (PRAAD, BRG 2/1/8).

With respect to land policy issues, the Kumasi division was the most affected. Prempeh’s deportation led to widespread changes in Asante’s political affairs by the British government. One such change was the British government’s policy of land alienation and ownership. In implementing this land policy, the British employed practical considerations. Administratively, it was found both convenient and efficient to place the more distant Kumasi subjects under the immediate control of the Asante Amanhene living nearest to them. When two Amanhene contested for Kumasi villages, the British chose those ones who had not sided openly against the British. It could also give to the chief, who, using tradition, put forward a strong claim to the village or villages in question. It was through this last policy that the government placed the villages in the Tano-Subin valley which had served various Kumasi chiefs since the time of Opoku Ware under Takyiman. (Tordoff, 1965: 141). Direct British interference in Asante affairs persisted from the early 20th century until 1935 when Sir Shanton Thomas, deemed it necessary for Asante’s old system of administration to be restored. In his letter to Sir Philip Cummiffe-Lister on 1st March 1934, Sir Shanton explained the reasons why there should be the restoration of the Asante confederacy. He believed that the restoration of the Asante Confederacy had always appeared inevitable after the release of Prempeh I from exile in the Seychelles. Although, in the eyes of the government, he returned as a private citizen, Asantes always believed that their king had returned. (Metcalfe, 1964: 636-637).

Shanton wondered whether the return of Prempeh had greater significance than would the restoration of the Asante Confederacy with official recognition of Prempeh as Asantehene. On the part of other Asante chiefs, he asserted, although the decision to repatriate Prempeh I was a great thing, it still left Asante incomplete. These chiefs supported the proposal to re-instate Prempeh as Asantehene stating that without an Asantehene, there could be no confederacy. (PRAAD, BRG 2/1/8). For Shanton Thomas, Asante did not delight in merely giving official recognition to an office which Asante, in spite of all past vicissitudes had not ceased to recognize but rather one of restoring nationhood to the people and making them more complete. On the question of why there needed to be restoration, Shanton commented that the great masses of the people earnestly desired it and it was the principle of the then colonial government that people should be governed in accordance with their wishes. Concerning the significance of the inclusion in the Confederacy of Takyiman and other Bono divisions of Wam Pamu (Dormaa), Nkoranza, Atebubu, Gyaman, Abease and Berekum, Shanton asserted that these were of the same stock with Asante and that the political amalgamation of the Asante and the Brong would make for a stronger state and make administration easier. (Metcalfe, 1964). On the other hand, the Takyimanhene and his elders proposed for a comprehensive review of all customs and institutions to fulfill the agenda for total restoration of the Asante confederacy. He categorically rejected any suggestion for Takyiman to join the confederacy. The chief wanted to maintain the status his state has had since 1900. He objected to the return to pre-colonial status. The chief argued “if the government proposes to patch all broken traditions to conform to the order of native customs in a peaceful restoration, then Nkoranza lands must be restored to Takyiman to whom the lands formerly belonged”.

The British colonial administration was bent on implementing Indirect Rule and ignored all protests. At the durbar held in Kumasi on 31 January 1935 to restore the confederacy, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Arnold Hudson, declared Prempeh II formally as the first Asantehene under the British government. In his speech Sir Arnold stated that the ancient royalties of Asante divisions are henceforth, officially to be recognized and sanctioned and that... the domestic affairs and the property rights of properly constituted divisions will not be interfered with unless the native authority concerned invites assistance. Takyiman interpreted these pronouncements to mean that there would be no changes in institutions and internal relationships unless a particular part of the confederated states invited outside involvement. In fact, Sir Shanton proposed that the Bono divisions should be allowed, if they wished to join the confederacy. (Tordoff, 1965: 339). While the colonial government’s principle of non-interference was reflected in the speech to restore the confederate states, Asante’s standpoint of the restoration was different. The restoration was deemed incomplete until the Asantehene’s rights and privileges were restored to its fullness and Asantehene was allowed to return to his pristine status. It is therefore, not surprising that at their first sitting of the Confederacy, the Kokofuhene tabled a motion calling the Councilors to implore the government to “clothe” the Asantehene with the constitutional right to interfere in the councilors’ internal affairs and the restoration of Kumasi lands. This call was reflected in the closing speech of the Asantehene during the second session of the council when he informed the council about the appeal to the Government to restore his lands to him because other towns laughed at him when they hear that Kumasi lands had been taken away. (Confederacy Minutes, 1942: 7).

In the series of editorials entitled “the spiritual significance of land in Asante”, the Pioneer added its voice to the call. It wrote that the restoration of the confederacy without her lands seems a hollow act. In another editorial
comment, the paper argued that when its own lands have been taken away from it, the Golden Stool could not properly adjudicate upon land cases. (The Pioneer March, 1940: 7-9). In 1936, Takyiman, which had previously objected to joining the confederacy changed her position and joined the Asante Confederacy. The ex-Nifahene of Takyiman explained that Takyiman joined the confederacy to avoid the disintegration of the Takyiman state. Asantehene had assured the Tano/Subin villages of his support and that of government to grant them official recognition as a separate Native Authority if they abandoned Takyiman and joined the confederacy. Additionally, Asante migrant settlers in some of the villages intermarried with Bono citizens and so marriage relations increased pro-Asante sentiments in the Takyiman paramountcy. Takyiman decided to join the confederacy to stop the disintegration of Takyiman through the disaffection of its villages comprising Nkyeraa, Ofuman No. 1, Branam, Subinso, Tanobuase, Tuobodom, Ofuman II, Buoyam and Tanoso (Atta 1993: 36). Despite joining the Confederacy, Takyiman lost the Tano-Subin villages again to Kumasi. Takyiman protested vehemently against the decision that the Tano-Subin villages should be made to serve their Kumasi overlords. The Takyiman chief asserted that whilst in exile at Gyaman, Prempeh I agreed to return the villages to them if they reciprocated that gesture and returned to Takyiman. They indeed acted upon that promise but for the unfortunate deportation of Prempeh I, no formalization of that negotiation was made. Takyiman also made reference to the so-called treaty with the British in 1897. These stories were in doubt because Takyiman did not produce any real evidence to back these assertions. (Petition, 1949).

The restoration of the Asante Confederacy also brought in its wake the legitimacy of positions of certain chiefs and their lands. The Committee of Privileges was established to look into the legal and constitutional status of any matter that might arise as a result of the restoration. At the proceedings held by this committee (Committee of Privileges), all the disputed villages were called to testify and give any information which would help ensure the peaceful settlement of the dispute. The testimonies indicated that the villages were divided in their allegiance to Takyiman. For example, the Nkyiraahene emphasized that his ancestors served Asante when Opoku Ware I was king till government placed them under Takyiman in 1900. During the Takyiman-Asante war of 1722/23, the people of Nkyeraa helped Takyiman against Asante. After the war, Nkyeraa was made to serve Asante through the Nsumankwaahene of Kumasi. Though the then Nkyeraahene was the son of Takyimanhene, they are independent of Takyiman. (Proceedings in Agyekum, 2008: 314-315). The Ofuman No-1 chief briefed the committee by first tracing origins of the state. The chief mentioned the earliest encounter between the founder and the queen mother of Takyiman but rejected the fact that they served Takyiman. According to him, when the war broke out in 1723, they refused to help Takyiman. It was Dadiesoabahene who placed the state under the Asantehene. As the Takyiman people fled to Gyaman, he continued, Ofuman I pursued them. There was no communication between Prempeh and the exiled Takyiman people. Although, the founder was not a Takyiman royal by birth, by accepting to hunt for the Takyiman queen mother, he automatically became connected with the Takyiman paramountcy. The Branamhene stated that after the 1723 war, his ancestors allied with Ofuman No. 1 and were serving Dadiesoabahene. Branam sought protection from Takyiman as a bond existed between Branam and Takyiman before the war.

Apart from the afore-mentioned Tano-Subin villages, the rest acknowledged their previous relations with Takyiman before the 1723 war and the subsequent attachment with their various Kumasi clan chiefs. Though these villages had blood affinity with Takyiman, yet most of them, including Buoyam, Tuobodom and Tanobuase were resolved to serve their former overlords since the same authority that placed them back to Takyiman rule was again demanding that they should go back and serve their former Kumasi clan chiefs. (Agyekum, 2008: 314-323). On account of these revelations, the Report of the Committee of Privileges suggested that Takyiman had no case since she could not substantiate her claims; especially the alleged promise by Prempeh to restore to them the Tano/Subin villages. More importantly, the readiness of some of these villages to serve their Asante overlords did not favour Takyiman. When the Takyimanhene threatened to report to higher authority about the decision of the Committee of Privileges, the commissioner’s response was that any individual who desired to do so was of course, perfectly at liberty to petition His excellency, the Governor on the point at issue and if such a person desired to do so, he (commissioner) would forward the petition for His Excellency’s consideration. (Petition, 1949). Takyiman considered the loss of the villages very seriously because of the importance of the villages to the state. The Omanhene laid out strategies to reclaim the lost villages including taking legal action against the Asantehene. To this, the confederacy council responded by informing the Chief Commissioner that it was unconstitutional for any Asante person be he a chief or otherwise to institute an action against the occupant of the Golden Stool. The rule was that anyone who did so was deemed rather to have taken action against Asantehene; not the Asantehene as an individual. (Petition, 1949).

With the support of the British authorities, the Tano-Subin Native Authority was created with its headquarters at Tuobodom by order No. 26. Takyimanhene saw this as the fulfillment of a secret agenda designed by Asante and the British to break and dis-member her. Accordingly, when the Tano-Subin Native Authority was established,
the Takyimanhene was convinced that the Confederacy Council and the Government had conspired to destroy her and the only alternative was to secede from the confederacy. Takyiman left the confederacy under the pretext that the inclusion of the Asantehene as a panel member in the case in which he was equally interested was in itself a case of bias judgment. It lacked fairness as this gave Asante undue advantage. (PRAAD RAO, 2/104). The British, who were bent on ensuring success of the indirect rule policy in a united Asante, however, ignored Takyimanhene’s petitions to secede. Instead, the British sought to compel Takyiman to remain in the Asante confederacy. For example, in 1947, Major C.O. Butler, the Chief Commissioner of Asante visited Takyiman to confer privately with the Takyimanhene and assured the Omanhene that he would be given a reasonable compensation and a six months tour of the United Kingdom (U.K.) if he reconsidered his decision to secede and Ameyaw rejected the offer. The chief is said to have been enraged by what he described as “an annoying letter” he received from the Chief Commissioner (C.C.) of Asante reminding him that by trying to disturb the Asante nation, he was kicking his head against a stone.(PRAAD BRG, 2/2/33).

By early July 1948, all attempts to persuade Ameyaw not to remain in the Asante Confederacy had failed. The British Colonial authorities planned to exile him. This forced Ameyaw to seek asylum in La Cote d’Ivoire. In late July 1948, the District Commissioner of Wankyi was asked to close down the Takyiman Native Authority. All appeals by Takyiman to the British to restore its authority failed. The plight of the people of Takyiman worsened when the British withheld all grants to the schools in the Takyiman district. It became the responsibility of the Takyiman people to administer the schools. Men and women voluntarily donated towards the well-being of teachers in the Takyiman schools. By August 1948 it had become evident that the British would not relinquish their support for Asante. Consequently, on 28 August, 1948 Nana Ameyaw wrote to the Asanteman and the Chief Commissioner, Asante, informing him about Takyiman’s withdrawal from the confederacy. By December 1948, the Takyimanhene had secured the assurance of the three Tano-Subin villages of Tuobodom, Tanoso and Offuman II to support him if he withdrew from the confederacy. (Arthur, 1965: 50). In January 1949, the DC of Sunyani suggested to the British government not to issue gunpowder to the Bono chiefs and to withdraw education and food grants to members of the Bono Kyempim Federation (B. K. F.) formed by the Takyimanhene to pursue its agenda but Ameyaw was unyielding. (PRAAD BRG, 2/2/33). In the same year, Asanteman dispatched the Asante palace police to harass and attack the Takyiman Omanhene and his people. In a cablegram message of 22nd June, 1950, the Takyimanhene reported to the Chief Commissioner attributing the attacks to Takyiman’s interest in the nine villages. The telegram message emphasized “the whole people and chiefs of Takyiman, seriously protest against the molestation of Takyimanhene’s supporters by the Asantehene’s police due to political claims by Takyiman for the nine villages. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

The Takyimanhene’s petition and government’s reaction

In the meantime, Dr. J. B. Danquah, a popular Ghanaian lawyer in the 1940s and 1950s served as Takyimanhene’s counsel. He supported the Takyiman chief to submit for transmission to the British Crown three copies of a sixty-five page Petition with supporting documents. The chief “prayed” to the British crown for the re-consideration of its decision to return the Tano-Subin villages. References were made to Oral Tradition and to Ward, Reindorf, Claridge and other secondary material on Takyiman tradition and history. Other references were to the letters and correspondences between Takyimanhene and British Colonial officials. (Petition, 1949). The Omanhene appealed and prayed that the decision of the 1935 Committee of Privileges by reason of which Takyiman villages were severed from their native allegiances to the Takyiman Stool and made part of the Kumasi Division be set aside as ultra vires and unjust. It mentioned the treaty of 5th June, 1897, in which Queen Victoria pledged to “befriend and to protect the Takyimanhene and his entire country.” It argued: the policy of the government or of the administration of Asante in accepting that decision and acting upon it be reversed on the grounds that the said policy was pursued from a mistaken view of the facts and from ignorance of the Treaty obligations of His Majesty (Petition). The petition described as highly provoking and unjust assaults and detention of the Takyimanhene’s supporters who had been detained and seriously beaten at the hands of Asantehene’s police.

In view of these alleged and real periods of Asante’s mistreatment of the Takyiman chiefs and other Bono chiefs, the Bono Kyempim Movement appealed to the British government for recognition of their Federation. They appealed to government to accede to their petition to withdraw from the Asante confederacy. The British authorities were still against dividing up Asanteman, on the grounds that administration of the confederacy would be rendered more difficult in a divided Asante. Hence, they refused to recognize the Bono Federation (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13, Accra, DC Wankyi’s Report 1952). In Ofuman and Branam, the Asantehene’s police arrested loyalists of the Takyimanhene including Kwasi Ankomah, Kwabena Asuman and Kofi Krah on charges of swearing an oath to sever relations with the Asantehene. These charges, the Senior District Commissioner’s Office refuted. He informed the Chief Commissioner that the Asantehene had already given instructions that no Takyiman subject should be arrested on a charge of
refusing to serve him (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/3). In Ofuman I, an Asante Chief, Kwasi Dua collected £500 from inhabitants as cocoa, cocoyam, corn, cassava, yams and groundnut tributes; an action the Takymanhene described as a recipe for turmoil and trouble. Although, the chief reported this to Goldie-Scot, no action was taken paving the way for the said chief to swear the Great Oath on Ofuman II people. The DC only threatened to send Dua to Kumasi to be beaten and molested but the case at court was left pending. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

Whilst awaiting the submission of the main Petition, the Takymanhene sent a Supplementary Petition with information believed to have been given by Mr. Bryden, described as an authority in Asante history. With respect to this petition, the Chief Commissioner of Asante described it as a partisan document. The Chief Commissioner doubted that the British government will feel disposed to discuss the decision of the Committee of Privileges on the matter of the Takymian villages. Before the Petitions were dispatched from the DC of Sunyani’s office, the Commissioner’s assessment of the two Petitions was that there was nothing new in the arguments put forward by the Takymian chief and his counsel. The Chief Commissioner’s concern was rather to request J. B. Danquah, the Takymanhene’s counsel to confirm in writing to the effect that the Takymianhene and his elders had no intention of leaving the Ashanti Confederacy Council. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). In October, 1949, W. N. L. Goldie-Scot, Asst. District Commissioner Wankyi/Sunyani wrote to Mrs. Meyerowitz, an anthropologist in Takymian, refuting several claims by Takymanhene Ameyaw that his contribution to the increase in revenue collection was very insignificant. He emphasized, “it was not through Ameyaw’s instructions that the Tano/Subin villages contributed so much revenue in the 1948 Financial Year... the chief may only have told his supporters in these villages to pay what was agreed to at the Estimates Meeting, to help develop the nine villages in case they were eventually returned to him”. The Commissioner stressed that the Area Chiefs and their supporters controlled the Tano/Subin Estimates Meetings. In his opinion, these, by far outnumbered those who supported Nana Akumfi Ameyaw, the Takymanhene.

The Tano/Subin villages Area Treasury, the Commissioner observed, had the wholehearted support of the great majority of the people. He believed that this caused the increase in revenue from individual villages and from voluntary contributions unparalleled in the entire Wankyi sub-district in 1949. To him, this would be impossible in the case of a Treasury which did not command the support of the people. At the same time, the DC accused the Takymanhene of allowing two lorry loads of his supporters to go to Tanoso during a riot. The Commissioner condemned this continued interventions of Takymian in Native Affairs of other states including Tanoso stating that the chief had no jurisdiction whatever, outside the Takymian division. In the DC’s view, the presence of the Takymanhene’s supporters and native Constables in Tanoso, and the arrest of the Tanosohene were precipitated by the Takymianhene’s interference and were done with deliberate intentions (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). Goldie-Scot used other occasions to caution the Takymian Native Authority for continuous interferences in Tanoso and in the affairs of other villages. For instance, following repeated complaints from the Tanoso village that the Takymian Police personnel were being sent round the villages with instructions and threats from the Takymian chief, the DC reminded the Takymianhene that he or his police had no jurisdiction whatever, outside the Takymian Division whether in uniform or not. He declared also that he would fully support charges in a native court against the chief if he, the chief, tried to exercise police powers within the jurisdiction of that court. He warned that the Takymian Native Authority Police had never been legally constituted as a Police Force and therefore had no powers whatsoever, even inside the Takymian Division to arrest or detain people. He emphasized; owing to the suspension of your native authority, you do not possess such powers, and your police force is therefore vested with no powers whatever within or without the Takymian division (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

The British Colonial Authority signed an order suspending the Takymian Native Authority for a further six months from mid-July 1950, and as expected, an approval given for further suspension of the Takymian Native Courts for seven months. The Takymianhene’s Petition to the British Crown also remained on the Gold Coast, five months after it had been submitted to Goldie-Scot, the DC of Wankyi/Sunyani. The Chief Commissioner assigned three unconvincing reasons for this delay. First the great length of the Petition necessitated prolonged study. Secondly, there were other works that put pressure on the Chief Commissioner and thirdly, it was the Chief Commissioner’s wish that the Petition should be read before it left his office (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). Regarding the supplementary petition to the British crown, the Commissioner’s response was that to him the version of the martial history given by the petitioners was not correct, and that, the history that had been accepted by the Takymian administration was incorrect. For him, the history in the Second Petition would not significantly affect the recommendations in the Report of the Committee of Privileges. He described as “generally unsound” the large conclusions based on the 1897 Treaty and the Hull report, both in the memorandum and in the supplementary petition. He described the memorandum in particular as a document that tended to obscure certain fundamental facts.

In response to the Takymianhene’s calls for the nine villages to be returned to Takymian, the Commissioner reiterated that the issues about property rights could be determined in the courts and that it was not within the power of the executive to determine claims to the
ownership of land. The Commissioner emphasized, "by the Takyimanhene asking for the "villages" to be restored to him, he meant that the decision on the land owned by the village stools could not be taken by an executive ruling. He reminded the chief that "a decision in any particular case must be arrived at judicially, if there should be a dispute, and not by an executive decision". (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13). Amidst this misunderstanding, the Privy Council decided that Takyiman had a stake in Ofuman I, one of the nine Takyiman villages. It decided that the issue of over lordship of subjects, which formed the second element of the Takyiman claim could be looked into by a committee of enquiry, or on reference, by the Confederacy Council. In 1950, the British government reminded the Takyimanhene that the state joined the Confederacy when the then Takyimanhene took an oath to the Asantehene. This did not differ from the manner in which an oath is taken by sub-chiefs to their Divisional Chiefs. They considered the allegiance owed by the Takyimanhene to be "in full force" which the mere inclusion of the Asantehene in the Committee of Privileges would not invalidate. The Takyimanhene's appeal was in this way "extinguished entirely."

The Commissioner argued; "the fact that Ashanti is a Confederacy did not support the (Takyimanhene's) contention." The Takyimanhene was accused of breaking his oath and committing a criminal offence by refusing to attend Council meetings; and for refusing to rescind that decision until his state's petition had been granted and the villages returned. (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

With reference to Takyiman as a Native Authority, the Commissioner stressed emphatically that it was inadvisable to use the term 'Native Authority' to refer to the chief and elders of Takyiman. He argued that chiefs were persons who acted for the stool in dealing with, or litigating about land; they were people who by custom exercised administrative functions and that as a matter of policy, they were generally but not invariably also the persons who constituted the statutory local government body. For the Commissioner, the three sets of functions were however legally distinct. This situation becomes apparent if a Native Authority is suspended (as the Takyimanan Native Authority) and that the chief and his elders could still fulfill the other two functions in either case (PRAAD ADM, 54/1/13).

The Takyimanhene deemed it unjust that the British government's interferences in its state's affairs, an illegal aggression and an effort at the dismemberment of its state. He saw the Committee of Privileges Report in particular as direct undermining tactics of Major F.W.F. Jackson's, prejudging of the Governor's decision by his principal adviser in Asante affairs, and a conspiracy by government and Asante to destroy her. (PRAAD ADM 54/1/3, Petition, 1949). The chief looked for an opportunity to fulfill his objective spelt out in the aims of the Bono Kyempim ('chiefs') movement. The formation of the National Liberation Movement (NLM), a political movement formed in Kumasi in 1954 appears to have provided the opportunity for that. The NLM sought to achieve a federal independent Ghana with a liberal-democratic constitution.

It declared that Asante was a nation and should remain so. (Austin, 1970). The NLM's objective appealed to Asante's ethnic nationalist sensibilities but ran counter to the BKF's position and objectives. It provided an avenue for the Takyiman-led Bono movement to speed up its call for secession. After 1959, the CPP assured Takyiman and the other Bono chiefs that their wishes would be provided. By 1959, every indication was that the Bono Ahafo Region would be created. Despite the rigorous contests between Asante and Takyiman for ownership of the nine villages, the issue of traditional allegiances in the new region was totally ignored by the CPP government. The Parliamentary Act that set up the Region merely stated that the creation of the Bono Ahafo Region was done for administrative purposes. This blatant disregard of Takyiman's sovereignty by Asante and the British government sowed seeds for the frequent inter-state disputes in Takyiman paramountcy. Takyiman-Asante disputes surfaced few years after the creation of the Bono Ahafo region. Disputes and have persisted into the 21st century. All efforts by individuals and government have been unsuccessful in finding a lasting resolution to Takyiman-Asante chieftaincy and land disputes.

CONCLUSION

It has been pointed out that the Takyiman state at the beginning of the eighteenth century was showing signs of disunity as a result of internal problems. Unfortunately for the state, their king brought trouble upon himself and the whole state. The resultant trouble was the defeat of Takyiman by the Asante army in 1723. Takyiman came out from the war as a vassal state of Asante and until the 1890s, there was a somewhat peaceful accommodation of Takyiman's new status in the Asante Central Administration as mutual and friendly relations persisted. Takyiman chiefs and their elders suffered cases of indignities as vassals of Asante despite rendering sacrifice and service to Asante and also co-operating with its rulers in the post-1723 period. Takyiman provided more men to fight in Asante wars, and because they were placed in the vanguard position, suffered heavy casualties. Besides, the Takyiman people paid heavy tributes in products and money.

In 1895, a punitive expedition from Asante attacked Kwapena Fofie, Takyimanhene compelling a section of the Takyiman chiefs and their families to migrate to Gyaman for twenty years. The British defeat of Asante and the exile of Prempeh enabled Takyiman to reassert its independence which lasted from 1900 to 1935. Takyiman lost theTano-Subin villages again to Asante after a few years of autonomy from Asante. Towards ensuring success of the Indirect Rule policy, the British
government ignored Takyiman’s petitions and all appeals for the return of its villages. The chiefs in most of these villages related closely with Asante central, paid homage and owed traditional allegiance to the Asantehene and other Asante chiefs. Takyiman chiefs supported the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in its struggle with the Asante-based National Liberation Movement (NLM). The failure of the CPP to address the issue of traditional allegiance before the Brong-Ahafo region was created threatened peace and stability in Takyiman chieftaincy after 1959.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

REFERENCES
