

“GOLD MINING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OBUASI IN ADANSE”

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to project the important role played by gold mining in economic development of modern area of Obuasi in Adanse in Ghana. It challenges those scholars who doubt the transformative, developmental and poverty alleviation roles of the mining industry in Ghana. The study is based on archival and oral research, and its arguments are articulated in a historical narrative fashion that link the past and the present while revealing the developmental role of the mining industry in Ghana.

Key words: Obuasi, Gold Mining, Adanse, socio-economic, development, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

Gold mining has had a long history in Africa. (Junner, 1935; Hopkins, 1973; Songsore et. Al., 1994) Africa is the world’s largest producer of gold (Agbesinyale, 2003), and according to estimations by Maponga, the continent hosts 30 percent of world reserve base. (Akabzaa et. al, 2007). Ghana is the second largest producer of gold in Africa after South Africa (Kesse, 1980; Agbesinyale, 2003). Known as the Gold Coast under British colonial rule, the country is fairly richly endowed with the precious metal. The huge European interest in Ghana’s gold and other natural resources culminated finally in the colonisation of the territory by the British imperial powers in the nineteenth century. Developments later led to two marked gold rushes referred to as the “Jungle Booms”.

This led to proliferation of mining companies from Europe into the Gold Coast to prospect for and mine gold in the gold-impregnated areas. One of the auriferous areas that attracted the mining companies was Obuasi in the Adanse traditional area. Historically, the Pra and Ofin basin in Asante and Adanse were well known for their richness in gold. There are repeated references in European records to Adanse territory as a principal source of gold.

Some scholars have raised concerns about the negative environmental impacts on the ecologically fragile ecosystems of mining areas in Ghana. Notable among them are Akabzaa (2000), Agbesinyale (2003) and Akabzaa et al. (2004). According to these scholars, the hyped benefits and opportunities associated with mining largely remain elusive to the majority of local communities who continue to languish in poverty as they pay the heavy price caused by the environmental degradation and other social costs. The main findings of these scholars are that, mining activities have degraded the environment, causing poverty to the local communities directly impacted by the mining activities.

Secondly, they argue that the boom in the auriferous areas in the south-western province of Ghana resulted in dislocation and establishes a gold-poverty paradox scenario and concluded that the gold wealth of Tarkwa and Obuasi catchment areas has become the source rather than a panacea for its under-development. This article however tells a different story. I do argue that gold mining in Obuasi opened up and brought prosperity in the areas. This paper's primary concern is to interrogate related issues and explore the prevailing debates.

CONTEXT

Obuasi is a household name in Ghana and is synonymous with gold not only because of the long history of gold mining associated with the township but also because of the quantity and quality of gold produced there. Until recently, the Obuasi Mine accounted for over sixty percent of the total gold production in Ghana and was undoubtedly the single largest gross

foreign exchange earning industrial establishment in the country. Obuasi's underground mine is presumably the single richest mine in Africa. It has often been said that "Ashanti Goldfields Company Ltd. (AGC) is Obuasi and Obuasi is AGC", because the growth and development of Obuasi is intricately linked to the mine. Obuasi and its environs are part of AGC's extensive Obuasi prospecting concession, which covers an area of about 200 sq. km. Apart from the operations of the AGC; there are no other large-scale mining activities in the area; presumably because the AGC's vast concession leaves no prospecting grounds for competitors. However, artisanal gold mining, which reportedly predates mechanised gold mining by over 500 years, still goes on, even though the AGC has concessionary rights over the entire area (Quarshie et al., 1981; Junner, 1932). (For a detailed description of Obuasi, See Ofosu-Mensah Ababio "Traditional Gold Mining in Adanse" in *Nordic Journal of African Studies* Vol. 19(2) 124–147.)

Obuasi is now the second largest town in the Ashanti Region (after Kumasi), and the ninth largest one in Ghana. The surrounding area is primarily agricultural, with the addition of some logging still being carried on. Connection with Kumasi and the coast by tarred roads and railways line is good. Obuasi is not only a relatively new urban town; it is also an ethnically heterogeneous one. As a large proportion of the labour force at the AGC has always been drawn from the other regions of Ghana and former French West Africa, a relatively large proportion of the population is born outside Obuasi. (Konings, 1980).

A MAP OF GHANA SHOWING ADANSE STATE IN ASHANTI REGION

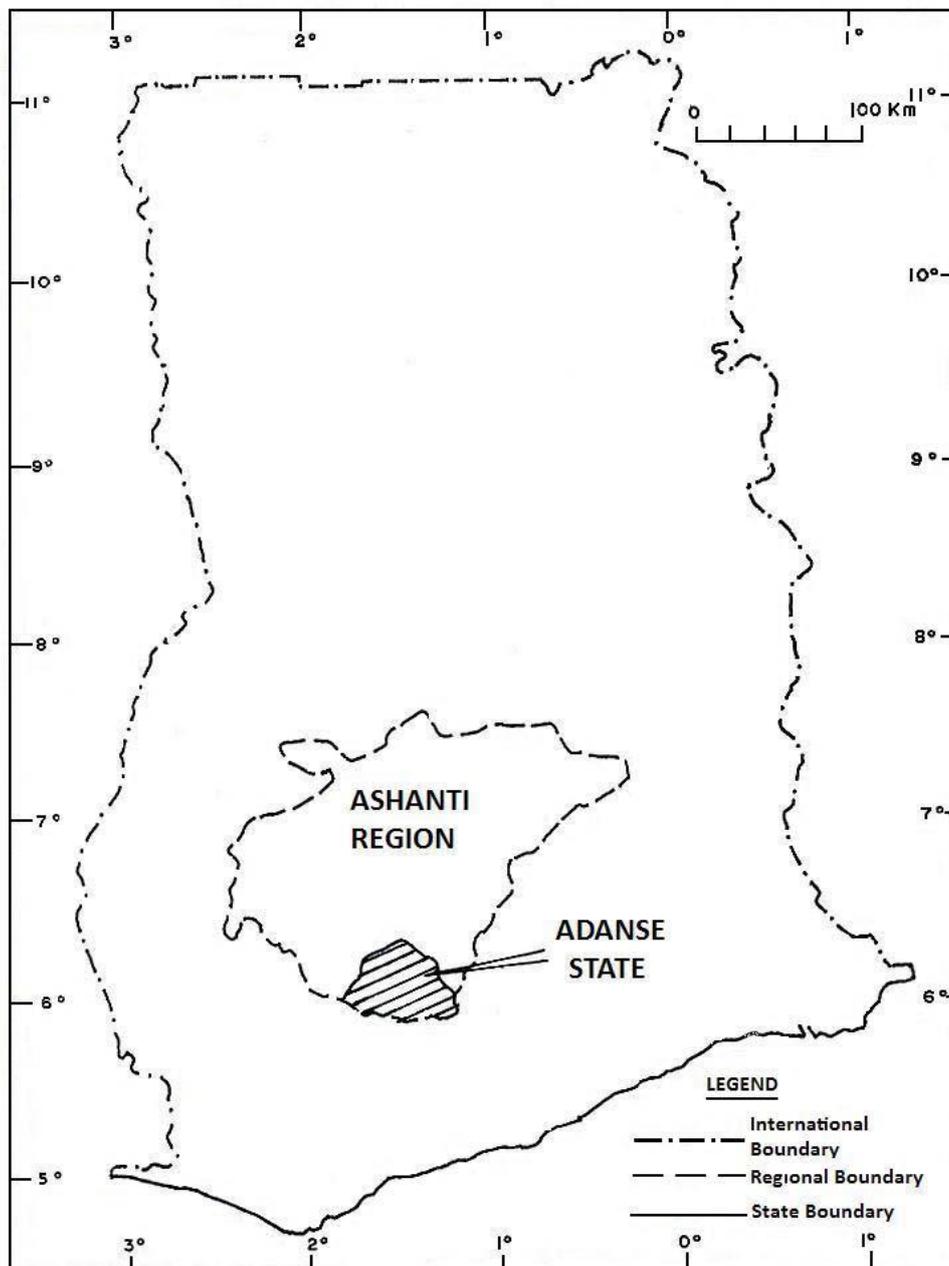


Figure 1: A map of Ghana showing the Adanse State.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a twelve month field work in Obuasi, Akrokyere, Dompoease and Fomena townships in Adanse between 1998 to 1999 (Table 1). The choice of Adanse was informed by the mining activities in the area by the Ashanti Gold Fields Corporation (AGC) now ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI. Key persons such as the aged, ex-employees of the AGC and traditional rulers of Adanse known to have knowledge related to pre-colonial and scientific mining were interviewed using a special interview guide. Archival data was also used in writing this article. Besides, I also reviewed and made use of published and unpublished literature on mining in Ghana to cross-check, evaluate or supplement the archival and the oral data. These were in the form of journal articles and books.

THE BEGINNING OF MODERN MINING IN ADANSE

The pioneer of Ghana's modern mining industry was an educated Ghanaian from Cape Coast named Thomas Hughes. A trader and civic leader, Hughes made a journey to the Ankobra sometime in the late 1850s or early 1860s and secured a mining lease in Wassa Amenfi near one of the richest gold bearing areas. He hired a team of porters from Cape Coast to transport several tons of crushing machinery from abroad to the mining site.

Most historians, including Macphee and Dickson, erroneously believe that the French trader Marie Joseph Bonnat was the founder of modern gold mining in the Gold Coast and Asante. (Macphee 1926; Dickson,1969; Silver, 1981) The truth is the first European miner to take out a concession and dig for gold on the famous Tarkwa Ridge occurred in 1877 by an Englishman, known as J. A. Skertchley. Bonnat's name dominates the literature because he was a prolific writer who boosted his own commercial adventures. Bonnat was more

interested in commerce than mining. In 1874-75 he concentrated on establishing a trading relationship in the market town of Salaga in the Northern Territories, to exchange Birmingham and Manchester goods with Ivory and indigenous salt. (Bevin, 1960; Dumett, 1998).

Modern mining in Obuasi (Adanse) evolved from a small operation owned by local merchants into a multinational company with properties in gold-endowed African countries. (Ayensu, 1998). It has weathered some turbulent storms, from resistance of local people and the Ashanti Kingdom to European domination, to conflicts with local miners whose operations were rendered illegal by the colonial authorities and subsequently by the fact that the entire area became a private property following the official licensing of the areas as an AGC prospect. It has also been buffeted by industrial action by workers, political interference and economic setbacks resulting from economic decisions by its management, notably its choice of hedging options.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, local people were engaged in mining of reefs, in addition to panning gold from streams. Available records indicate that the first concession involving the present mine was obtained on 4th June, 1875, by Monsieur Marie Joseph Bonnat in the area (Junner, 1935; Quashie et. al, 1981; Ayensu, 1998). However, it was not until the end of the 19th century that the idea of an orderly commercial approach to gold mining in the Gold Coast began to gather momentum. Two Fante merchants from Cape Coast, Joseph E. Ellis and Joseph E. Biney, began the modern story of Ashanti Goldfields Company when in March 1890, they laid claim to a concession of land area totalling 265km² (Minerals Commission, 1991; Deeds to Obuasi lands, 1890). A mine named the Ellis Mine was subsequently developed but five years after running this, it became apparent that although this vast

goldfield was very lucrative, it required a lot more capital and expertise. As a result, on 16th August 1895, the concession was transferred to Edwin Arthur Cade in the presence of chiefs of Bekwai and Adansi as the concession lay between both the Bekwai and Adansi kingdoms. The provisional agreement to the new mine, Cote d'Or Mining Company was signed on August 27, 1895, at Cape Coast Castle and the right of the company to the concession ratified by the British Government. Approval for mining, trading and agricultural rights was subsequently given in April 1896. A new company under the name Ashanti Goldfields Company Ltd. (AGC) was registered and on June 11, 1897, all assets and liabilities of Cote d'Or Mining Company were transferred to this new company. The same day marked the listing of the company on the London Stock Exchange. In the 1890s, Ashanti resistance to British rule affected the industry as ratification of the first concession had to wait for annexation of the Ashanti by the British Empire.

CONSEQUENCES OF MODERN MINING IN OBUASI

Modern or scientific mining has been on-going in Obuasi since 1897 but mainly in the form of underground operations. However, surface (Open-pit) mining was introduced in 1989 and carried on up to 2001 (Akabzaa et al., 2007). Critics and other findings emanating from the literature as well as oral evidence indicate that modern mining had some untold negative effects on the people of Adanse in general and Obuasi in particular. Some of these negative developments that were inimical to social life in Obuasi include prostitution which created a serious social problem in Obuasi (Interview with Akuoku, 1999). Many male workers of the corporation and citizens of Adanse contracted venereal diseases because of their relation with the prostitutes. Venereal diseases indeed became prevalent in Adanse in the 1950s (Interview with Donkor and Moshie, 1999). The Social Survey of Obuasi Report of 1953 reported a high

incidence of venereal disease. The disease led to much marital misery and frustration because most men contracted the disease and infected their wives. This often led to incessant quarrels between married couples (Donkor and Moshie, 1999).

Besides, modern mining also brought to Adanse strange diseases such as tuberculosis and waist pains, the results of hazardous underground work and constant use of the shovel to lift the ore. Many of the labourers recruited from the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast were unfit (Gold Coast and Ashanti Medical Report, 1937). The labourers on arrival at Obuasi were heavily infected with hookworm, tropical ulcer and pulmonary disease (Gold Coast Colony Report on the Medical Department, 1935). The tedious underground work they performed worsened their plight. The result of tiredness and the smoke that the labourers inhaled underground was tuberculosis. A lot of labourers from the Northern Territories perished in Adanse in the 1920s because of the disease (Interview with Braimah and Statement of Ormsby, House of Commons Debate, 1926). Due to lack of education labourers who contracted the disease were not isolated and given separate cups and bowls to use; the disease became common among labourers from the North because at Obuasi they lived in unsanitary and congested rooms, which facilitated the spread of infection (Gold Coast Colony Report on the Medical Department, 1935). Besides, the labourers indulged in the disgusting habit of spitting about. They were fond of chewing kola and Betel nuts which induced frequent spitting (Gold Coast Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1922). Some of the indigenous people of Adanse and other migrant labourers who had no resistance whatsoever to tuberculosis easily died from infections.

Another form of illness associated with mining was waist pains. Many labourers developed waist pains due to the constant use of the shovel to lift the ore or the sand and pour it elsewhere (Interviews with Braimah and Donkor, 1999). Victims of such diseases were denied compensation because they were not covered by the workmen's compensation

ordinance of 1940. Under the said Ordinance injuries caused to an employee that deprived him of his capacity to earn a livelihood were deemed to have been caused by the employer. It thus made employers liable to pay compensation to the worker. Nonetheless there was no specific ordinance covering compensation for occupational diseases such as tuberculosis and waist pains (Report on the Mine Labour Committee, Gold Coast, 1953). This omission caused hardship not only to labourers who had to return to the North but also to their dependants. Such returnees spread tuberculosis among their kinsmen some of whom ultimately migrated to Obuasi in search of work in the mines.

Modern mining in Adanse again was accompanied by high incidence of criminal activity. Stealing and robbery became prevalent. The crime rate increased especially at the time workers collected their wages. The victims were AGC workers and other Government workers. Mostly their monies and clothes were stolen (Department of Social Welfare and Community Development Report, 1953).

There have been constant conflicts between the small-scale illegal miners (galamsey) and AGC's security forces, who are often high-handed in their conflicts with the illegal miners. The presence of these two different categories of miners with differing mining and processing methods have resulted in a myriad of environmental, social, economic and health problems.

There is also the constantly recurring power struggle between the Adansehene (King of Adanseland) and his subchief, the Akrokerrihene. According to custom, Obuasi is located in the Akrokerrihene's stool lands, and he should have the right to appoint a local chief (Odikro) in Obuasi, as indeed he does in several other villages bordering Obuasi. However, given the size of Obuasi and the implications regarding payment of the lease for the area, the Adansehene and other Adanse subchiefs refused to permit this. Conversely, when they tried to select and install a local chief in Obuasi over the Akrokerrihene's objections, he protested and took the matter to the courts, where it has intermittently been ever since. Besides the

question of the size of the town, if the other chiefs acknowledge that the Akrokerrihene is the traditional owner of the Obuasi stool lands, then he is entitled to a much larger share of the lease than he currently receives, and would have greater influence in the allocation of the remainder.

The power struggle between the Adansehene and the Akrokerrihene was temporarily resolved, however, by Nkrumah's accession to power; he elevated the Akrokerrihene from subchief to regional chief and placed Obuasi under his rule. At this time, the Akrokerrihene appointed an Ashanti resident of Obuasi as local chief, and also selected a queen mother. The arrangement was terminated shortly after the 1966 coup d'état that removed the Nkrumah regime from power, when all stools were returned to their pre-independence status. But the absence of a traditional Adanse ruler in an ethnically heterogeneous town like Obuasi hardly has any impact on the town. Every ethnic group has its own "elders", of whom one is considered the senior elder or "chief". All residents in Obuasi sharing that ethnicity are considered by the chief and elders as "members" of the group, and subject to relevant discipline as well as eligible for group aid when appropriate. (Konings, 1980).

Concentration and prolonged mining activities by both large and small-scale mining concerns in the area have given rise to various environmental problems. For instance in the Pre-colonial period, the vast stretches of Obuasi land were exploited mainly for hunting and subsistence agricultural production. In the early 1900s the people of Adanse used the forest for cocoa plantation (Boahen, 1975) and other food crops. Modern mining has however affected agricultural activity adversely. First existing cocoa farms were destroyed to make way for mining activity hence Adanse lost much of its luxuriant tropical forest suitable for cocoa production. Secondly, the smoke from the treatment plant where gold was melted into bullions contained poison and this also killed the cocoa trees in Adanse between 1930 and 1960s (COS 19/2/28 No. 2252 PRAAD, Accra). The poison also affected raffia trees and

other food crops. The mining concession which carried the right of felling timber led to deforestation of the dense luxuriant tropical forest of Obuasi and its surrounding villages between 1940 and the 1960. (COS 19/2/28 No. 2252 PRAAD, Accra) This led to loss of farmlands for agricultural activities in Adanse.

Gains from mining brought about affluence which subsequently bred insolence among some Adanse people, mostly the young men who had employment with the AGC. Prior to modern mining there was respect for traditional authority. The aged were held in high esteem because they had money. Their sons worked for them and they used the money to control their families. With the advent of modern mining young men became rich and started disregarding the authorities, especially the chiefs. In 1952 one Kwabena Afrane, a worker of AGC insulted the head of the Asakyiri clan in Akrokyere and was summoned before Krontihene of Akrokyere. A fine of £1 was imposed on him but thanks to his employment he paid it without difficulty (Interview with Amponsem, 1999).

However, despite the above social and environmental ills associated with the scientific mining activities in Obuasi, it is on record that these economic historical events have contributed significantly to the development of the area. A clear case in point is the fact that, in 1898 when scientific mining began, Obuasi was situated in the heart of the forest and comprised “forty crude mud walled and palm thatched huts” (Turner, 1932). These huts easily got damaged or became dilapidated because the materials used for the walls were either wattle and daub or swish. The wattle and daub walls consisted of a framework of sticks and palm branches filled with clay or swish. The building had no firm foundation to support the superstructure and this resulted in the quick decay of the walls especially in the damp places and where erosion was great (Swithenbank, 1963). The walls of the huts consisted of a mixture of clay and water. The huts were rectangular in shape and each of them had a veranda with a short wall. A compound house often consisted of as many as six of these huts

with all the doors of the huts facing a central direction. Apart from the doors, there was no form of ventilation to allow for proper air circulation in these huts. The door frames were made of wood cut with local axe. The doors were covered with mats made from the branches of the raffia trees (Interview with Boasiako, 1998) The huts were built haphazardly without any proper layout or drainage system, and were separated from one another by bush. There were no toilet and bath facilities in the houses and people went to the bush to defecate. In the evening members of the house fetched water from the river and bathed outside the house.

By 1900 the village had been enlarged and also given a new look by the temporary mining wood camps constructed by the corporation and roofed with zinc sheets (Feldtman, 1916) (Figure 2).

Like the native huts, the houses of the mining camps had a tendency to deteriorate because the buildings did not have a firm foundation (Reports on the sanitary conditions of the Mines in the Gold Coast, 1924) In spite of the poor quality of its buildings the Obuasi camp was rated the best in the Gold Coast. The houses were built in rows on building plots that measured 30 ft long by 30 ft wide. The houses had a roadway of 18 to 30 ft wide in front and at the back a roadway of 12 ft wide. Streets were well laid out with drains or gutters cut on both sides (Reports on the sanitary conditions of the Mines in the Gold Coast, 1924).



Figure 2: Native huts in Obuasi. The early mining activities at AGC depended to a large extent on the influx of migrant workers from other parts of West Africa, who became part of the Obuasi community. From E.S. Ayensu (1997) *Ashanti Gold. The African Legacy of the World's Most Precious Metal* (London)

Between 1908 and 1924 many improvements were made to the Obuasi camp. The corporation built bathing and washing platforms attached to the mining camps for the workers' use. The marsh ground close to the village was filled up, drained and converted into a cricket ground for the senior staff. Incinerators for burning refuse were erected. A slaughter house with mosquito and fly protection arrangements was also constructed for the whole town (Gold Coast Medical and Sanitary Report on Obuasi, 1908 and 1914). This was done to ensure that meat was sold in a hygienic condition to prevent cholera and other epidemic

diseases that might attack the corporation's workers which would eventually cut down productivity.

After 1924 the temporary structures built for the corporation's employees started deteriorating because of their poor quality. Besides, the use of more sophisticated prospecting techniques revealed the presence of workable ore under the camp site. Workers were therefore allowed to hire rooms in Obuasi town and its suburbs. Consequently the buildings were demolished to make way for mining.

The construction of permanent houses for the corporation's workers began in 1932. A number of modern quarters for the African employees and bungalows for the European staff were ready by 1934 (Interview with Akuoko, 1999). The quarters were built in between the rolling hills at Anyinam, Bidieso and Wawase while the European bungalows were built on top of some of the small hills. Blocks moulded with sand and cement was used together with iron rods to construct both the workers quarters and the bungalows which were roofed with corrugated iron sheets. The inside and outside of the buildings plastered with cement and were beautifully painted. Unlike the traditional houses and the previous wooden mining camps the modern buildings had a firm foundation to support the superstructures. Each quarter comprised two bedrooms, a kitchen, toilet and bath for a labourer and three bedrooms, a kitchen, toilet and a bath for the headmen (Interview with Akuoko, 1999). The rooms of the quarters were small in size but were provided with windows and doors. The quarters gave an appearance of an army barracks. Like the camps the quarters were built in rows. The European bungalows were separated from the workers quarters and were surrounded by beautiful and well attended gardens (Interview with Akuoko, 1999). Between 1934 and 1969 the existing quarters and bungalows were extended considerably.

The quality of the modern building was an improvement on the traditional huts and the wooden camps. They had more windows and doors which allowed for more ventilation.

Secondly the materials used in building the modern houses were of higher quality than the ordinary sand, mud thatch and woods used to construct the traditional huts. The modern houses provided greater comfort than the traditional huts. For example, beds in the traditional huts were made of bamboo sticks supported at the four corners by wooden stakes. Raffia mats were used as mattresses. In contrast, the beds in the modern building were sophisticated in the sense that they were made with quality wood and provided with mattresses made of cotton.

Unlike the doors of the traditional hut which were screened with mere raffia mats, the doors in the modern building were made of hard wood and provided with locks. This made the houses more secure. Notwithstanding the advantages of modern houses over the traditional huts and the wooden camps the former could not accommodate many people and were not suitable for polygamous households. Workers with large dependents also found them unsuitable. Such workers and their families were congested in their quarter and were exposed to epidemics as well as other infectious and contagious diseases.

The corporation's style of architecture had a great impact on housing construction in Obuasi and its surrounding villages. By 1960 the mud houses in Obuasi, Tutuka, Bogobiri, Boete and other villages had given way to sandcrete block rectangular compound houses in imitation of the European models. Gradually Obuasi developed into a beautiful township.

The authorities of the AGC controlled the development of Obuasi township carefully so as not to let it interfere with future mining plans. Accordingly individuals were not encouraged to put up very expensive two storey buildings. AGC authorities told the people of Obuasi a lie that when they put up two storey buildings it would sink or cave in because of intensive underground mining in the area (Interview with Donkor and Brempong, 1999) The rationale was to eliminate the prospect of payment of compensation to owners if it became necessary in the future to pull down their houses for purposes of mining (Ampene, 1968). In 1960

however, the CPP Government removed the restriction and allowed people to put up two or three storey buildings in Obuasi (Interview with Brempong, 1999). Apart from the construction of improved modern buildings, the corporation provided social amenities like electricity and pipe borne water for the workers. These facilities soon became available to the wider Obuasi public.

From 1907 to 1930 the corporation used boiler power generator to transport the underground miners up and down the mine (Interview with Abu, 1999). From 1930 onwards the corporation started using diesel engine generators. Initially only the corporation's premise was supplied with power but in 1937 power was extended to Obuasi town (Interview with Abu, 1999). The plant produced 150,000 units of electricity a day out of which 16,500 units per day were supplied to Obuasi town (Interview with Abu, 1999). The availability of electric power encouraged the people of Obuasi to own corn milling machines and electric sewing machines. Electricity also encouraged local entrepreneurs to set up small business like sawmills and welding. Before the introduction of corn milling machines women in Obuasi used pestle and a conical-shaped mortar to pound grains of corn for the preparation of family meals. This method of grinding corn was tedious, unhygienic and time consuming. The switch to electricity-driven corn mills enabled women to spend less time grinding their corn. Unlike the traditional method it was hygienic and efficient. Besides, it became an attractive proposition for women to cook large quantities of maize meal for sale to the general public. The money earned by food sellers supplemented household budgets provided by their husbands.

Tailors in Obuasi took advantage of the extension of electricity to Obuasi town to acquire electric sewing machines. The electric sewing machines worked at a faster rate. Tailors could now sew four to six shirts or dresses daily. Before then they could only sew one or two shirts or dresses a day (Interview with Owusu, 1999).

Before the advent of modern mining in Adanse the local people's only contact with Kumasi and Accra was by messengers. In times of emergency messages were delivered personally. The installation of a telephone facility at Obuasi in 1960 guaranteed quick and efficient communication (Interview with Abu, 1999). The chiefs and people of Obuasi availed themselves of the opportunity to communicate with persons in Accra, Kumasi and elsewhere without the necessity of travelling to these places personally.

AGC also provided Obuasi with pipe borne water supply between 1900 and 1908 (Gold Coast Medical and Sanitary Report on Obuasi, 1908, 1924). Before the advent of scientific mining in the area Adanse suffered from the problem of water pollution. The problem was worsened by AGC's operations. First the increase in population and the insufficiency of toilet facilities caused people to defecate at random adding to the problem of river pollution. The local people also washed their clothes in the streams and rivers. As a result of mining activity the streams and rivers became susceptible to pollution because of the discharge of chemicals into the streams and rivers like Kwabrafo, Pompo, Asuosika and Akapori.

In order to safeguard the health of the local community the corporation decided to supply pipe borne water. This was done in phases. Between 1900 and 1933 the corporation supplied pipe borne water to most parts of Obuasi (Gold Coast Medical and Sanitary Report on Obuasi, 1908, 1924). In 1934 the AGC completed construction of a water supply to Nsuta and Zongo section of the town (Ashanti Times, 1962). In 1962 the corporation augmented water supply to Obuasi to the amount of 517,000 L of water daily from the Jimi River about nine kilometres away from Obuasi (Ashanti Times, 1962).

AGC also contributed to the progress of education in Adanse. The Methodist Church established the first primary school in Obuasi in 1900. Between 1900 and 1949 there were about twenty-six primary schools in Adanse. In 1965 AGC built schools at Tutuka and Boate (Republic of Ghana: Ministry of Education Annual Census; Basic Schools 1998/1999

Academic Year). More often than not the white expatriate did not bring their families to Adanse but after the establishment of AGC schools the expatriate brought their children to Adanse to attend these schools. These schools were primarily meant for children of the white expatriates but from 1969 onwards children of the African workers were admitted (Interview with Amponsem and Amponsah, 1999).

Modern mining contributed immensely to the rapid growth of Obuasi's population. Since the first agreement was signed between the first European company (Cote d'Or) and the chief of Bekwai on behalf of the Adanse's; workers from all parts of Ghana and indeed from many parts of West Africa migrated to Obuasi to make a living. As a result, the population of Obuasi increased tremendously (Ampene, 1968). By 1960 Obuasi had become the second largest town in the whole of Asante in terms of population (Tenkorang, 1968; Ghana Population Census, 1960). Available records indicate that modern or scientific mining brought about socio-economic development in Obuasi. Available records do not tell us exactly the population of Obuasi village prior to the start of scientific mining in the area. All that is known is that Obuasi mining consisted of "forty crude mud walled and palm thatched hut". At an estimate of about fifteen people to each house, the population of Obuasi could not have exceeded six hundred (600) persons. By 1931, the population of the area had risen to 7,598. In 1948, it rose to 15,724. The 1960 population census estimated Obuasi's population at 26,578.

The phenomenal rise in Obuasi's population was caused by the attraction offered by the rapid progress of the mines. People from other areas of the Gold Coast and the neighbouring countries migrated to Obuasi in search of wage employment in the mine. The Ellis Mine, the first modern mining operation recruited a labour force of about two hundred (200). There was also a sizeable body of labourers who migrated from south western Gold Coast of Ahanta, Aowin, Gwira and Nzema to Obuasi to search for job in the Ellis Mine.

Ashanti Goldfield corporation which took over the rights and liabilities of Cote d'Or mining Company also attracted labourers from Bono-Ahafo, Asante, Akyem, Akuapem, Kwahu, Accra and the Volta region to Obuasi to work in the mines. The majority of these skilled labourers hailed from Akuapem because of their special training in skilled crafts at the school of the Swiss Basel Mission in the area. Fantes from Cape-Coast, Saltpond, and Elmina also migrated to Obuasi to work at AGC.

Other people also migrated to the area to establish private enterprises like shops and gold smithing business. The presence of migrant labourers in large numbers at Obuasi attracted single women from other areas of the Gold Coast, with the aim of practicing prostitution or looking for marriage partners. Generally migrant mine workers were not accompanied to Obuasi by their wives. Such migrant workers entered into relationships with the prostitutes or the local Adanse women and many children were born outside of marriage. Many of the migrant labourers abandoned their children when they left Obuasi to return home. Opanin Kwasi Seidu and Papa Kofi Alata of Boete and Tutuka were children when their fathers deserted them and left for Niger and Nigeria respectively in the 1940s (Interview with Boateng and Yusuf, 1999). Several of the expatriates from Europe also had children with some of the indigenous Adanse women and the prostitutes. Such mulatto children were also more often than not abandoned by their fathers when they returned home to England (Interview with Boateng and Yusuf, 1999). Lack of parental care led a majority of these children to become delinquent and untrained. In the 1950s Obuasi experienced a high school dropout rate due to lack of parental care (Department of Social Welfare and Community Development Report, 1953). Lack of skills and educational qualification arising from lack of parental care drove some of the male children into illegal mining and crime (Interview with Boateng, 1999).

Modern mining made western medicine readily accessible to the people of Adanse. Before 1930 the people made a journey of about eighteen miles through forest, across rivers and along bush paths to Dunkwa for treatment when they became ill (Interview with Amponsem, 1999). Some of them died on the way because of tiredness which aggravated their situation due to the long distance. Sick people who could not walk were conveyed in hammocks. On arrival in Dunkwa, they faced the problem of accommodation. The construction of a hospital at Obuasi by AGC in 1930 brought relief to the people (Government of the Gold Coast Sanitary Report on Obuasi, 1930). The first medical doctor in charge of the hospital was Dr. Anthony Rice. He served from 1930 to 1940. From 1940 to 1950, Dr. John Lilian became the doctor in charge of the hospital. By 1953 the corporation had a 49 bed hospital with Dr. David Bramble as the medical officer (Interview with Abu, 1999). The miners and their dependants were offered free treatment but the services of the hospital were available to the Adanse people who could afford the cost of treatment. In 1969 the hospital had about 66 beds and two resident doctors (Interview with Abu, 1999). As a result many sick people in Adanse had treatment from the hospital.

The cosmopolitan character of Obuasi promoted religious pluralism. Before the advent of modern mining the majority of the people of Adanse practised African traditional religion. They believed in God the creator and ancestral spirits and the supernatural entities or lesser deities who derived their powers essentially from God, the Supreme Being (Interview with Amponsem, 1999). Some of them were also Christians. The Methodist church opened a branch at Obuasi in 1894 (Interview with Clarke, 1999) and in 1913 the Presbyterian and Catholic churches opened branches in the area (Interview with Wiafe, 1999). Membership of these churches was made up of Adanse citizens as well as workers of AGC and of Government Departments. In the 1960s AGC built churches for the above named missions (Interview with Wiafe, 1999).

The migrant labourers from the Northern Territories and the French West African colonies were largely Moslems and they created a vibrant Moslem culture at Obuasi. In 1950 AGC built a mosque for the Moslems (Interview with Seidu, 1999). In course of time some Moslems married Adanse women while their daughters also married Adanse men. The non-Moslem spouses ultimately became converts to the Islamic faith (Interview with Moshie and Donkor, 1999). Such intermarriages diminished tribal consciousness and fostered a sense of harmony among different ethnic groups. For example, in 1954 at the suggestion of the Adansehene one Adanse citizen and one member of the stranger community were elected to represent the town in the Legislative Assembly (Daily Graphic, 1954).

Modern mining brought wealth to many in Adanse. To begin with, it created employment for a number of indigenous Adanse people. Some opened public eating places. Others established small retail stores along the streets of Obuasi. Some of the workers of the corporation eventually became transport owners owing a fleet of cars. For example, Opanin Kwaku Agyei, an employee of AGC and a native of Tutuka owned two cars and a house in the 1950s (Interview with Gyamfi, 1999). Migrants from other Akan areas and some indigenous Adanse men also took to gold smithing business and became rich. One such rich goldsmith was Opanin Kwaku Fokuo of Fomena. In the 1960s he owned three cars and two houses (Interview with Boasiako, 1999).

The demand for houses by migrants in Obuasi enriched landlords as rent for housing rose high. Between 1960 and 1969 rent was ₵2 per month (Interview with Donkor and Adu, 1999). People also craved land to build shops and this made the cost of land expensive in Obuasi. In 1960 the cost of a building plot was £2 (Interview with Donkor and Adu, 1999).

As business activity increased in Obuasi banks were attracted to the town. Standard Chartered Bank for instance opened a branch at Obuasi on 26 January 1957 (Interview with Vanderpuye, 1999) The Ghana Commercial Bank also opened a branch in the town on 15

May 1964 (Interview with Nuer-Teye, 1999). The establishment of banks at Obuasi obviated the necessity and risk of transporting large sums of money from Accra or Kumasi to Obuasi to pay workers of AGC. Workers were also provided with the opportunity to save their wages at the banks instead of keeping their earnings at home. It was not only mine workers who saved with the banks. Government employees as well as self-employed people also operated accounts with the banks. The banks made credit facilities available to their customers and this helped them to solve their financial problems.

Infrastructural development in Adanse also improved considerably as a result of modern mining. Before the advent of modern mining in the area, the people travelled to other places in Adanse on foot through forest, across rivers and along bush paths. The first significant infrastructural development in Obuasi was the construction of the railway from Sekondi to service the mine. This railway line reached Obuasi in 1902 (Kimble, 1963). Soon after Obuasi had been reached a number of tramways were constructed to various areas on the mining property. Between 1902 and 1930 the corporation constructed roads to Asempaneye, Anyinam and Sanso to aid mining activity (Interview with Akuoku, 1999). These roads and the railway linkages assisted in opening up the area surrounding Obuasi. They stimulated farming and trading activities and gave birth to a number of settlements. Among the settlements which sprang up along the lines were Boete, Nkaso and Kofikrom.

CONCLUSION

Modern mining had a profound impact on the development of Obuasi. Firstly, AGC's buildings provided a model for houses in Obuasi and its environs. Houses built of cement blocks and roofed with zinc replaced swish buildings roofed with thatch. The new houses were better ventilated and more durable. Secondly, the people of Obuasi were privileged to

enjoy social amenities like electricity and pipe borne water provided by AGC primarily for its workers.

Modern mining also contributed to the progress of education. The two schools the Corporation built at Obuasi for the children of expatriates were later opened to children of non-employees. Mining activity also contributed to the rapid growth of Obuasi's population. The AGC mine hospital at Obuasi provided the Adanse people with an easy access to western medicine. The improved infrastructural development provided by the AGC facilitated movement of people and goods as well as communication.

In spite of the developments mentioned above, with regard to infrastructural facilities and development, the mining town of Obuasi is far from affluent, an aberration of what communities endowed with mineral resources should look like. The town is very much unlike other gold mining towns such as Johannesburg in South Africa, Noranda city in Ontario, Canada, Reno in the U.S.A. or Perth in Australia where the scars of mining are sealed by the beauty and riches of these cities, built out of mining.

Despite the social and environmental ills that were associated with the American and Australian gold rushes, it is on record that gold mining has contributed significantly to the development firstly, of the immediate environs and regions of the gold rushes and secondly, the entire nation. The state of California, the richest state in the U.S.A. owes its current development status, partly but substantially to its historical gold rush. The same scenario applies to the eastern states of Australia. Gold wealth developed South Africa where after a few years or decades of work, the Witwatersrand mining operations grew continually from the 1890s and are now the world's largest producer of gold. The discovery of gold in South Africa in the nineteenth century, and other important minerals later on, led to a major transformation of the country politically, economically and socially and indeed in several other respects. In all three cases, individuals as well as mining enterprises facilitated private

capital accumulation needed for investments, which in turn induced a cycle of rapid economic and industrial growth leading to further investments (multiplier effect). In effect, the gold rushes here provided the necessary impulses for economic take-off followed by sustained growth and development. Yet, it is very doubtful if a similar economic scenario could be attained in parts of sub-Saharan Africa including Obuasi in Ghana and Zimbabwe where the rush for gold has been in earnest since the mid-1980s.

The principal factor is that unlike in the case of the North American, Australian and to some extent the South African gold rushes, where large proportions of profit, investible capital and the general wealth that accrued from the gold remained in the country and within the region, in the case of Obuasi and other auriferous regions in sub-Saharan Africa, the bulk of the gold wealth and benefits are siphoned off into the rich countries. This leaves very little or no investible capital to plough back, which could trigger similar growth. This development explains the enclave nature of the mining sector in Obuasi and most African countries. Current trends point to the fact that the gold rush in much of Africa today holds little promise for any significant and sustainable economic growth most especially as more than 80% of the wealth generated thereof is repatriated by the giant multinational companies in control of the continent's rich mineral resources. In any case, the marginal financial benefits from mining, which accrue to poor African countries as in the case of Obuasi in Ghana, are expended largely on external debt servicing.

Further explanation for Obuasi's lack of palpable progress in comparison with the likes of Johannesburg, California and Perth can be found in British colonial policy. Britain basically operated two colonial systems; first was the "colony of settlement" where British nationals were encouraged to settle permanently in the colonies to embark on plantation agriculture, business and commerce etc. Under this type of colonial philosophy, most of the profit that was realised from British commercial ventures in the colony were invested back into the

colony and this brought about huge developments in infrastructure, agriculture etc. to the extent that the colonies became very much like the mother country. A typical example of these colonies includes South Africa where profits from gold mining were used to develop Johannesburg (the Gold City). However, Obuasi happened to fall under the second category of British colonial occupation, these colonies known as colonies of exploitation were basically operated for profit. Here, the

British nationals were not encouraged by the home government to settle and therefore only a few colonial staff were stationed in the colonies. A notable feature of this type of colonial policy was the employment of the Indirect Rule system to administer those colonies. The British therefore siphoned all the gains from these colonies back to the Metropolis (that is, Britain) and virtually did not invest any funds in those colonies. The only infrastructural investments they made in these colonies were those that facilitated trade, for instance in British West Africa, all the railway lines were constructed to link the sea ports to areas where minerals and other trade commodities which the British were interested in were to be found. Examples of these colonies include all the British West African colonies.

Indeed, while mineral booms have their very positive sides, in terms of revenue generation, industrial development, employment creation and others, their ills can have long term adverse consequences for the boom regions or countries especially developing countries, if these are not properly managed well.

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INTERVIEWS (ORAL TRADITIONS)

Interviews with the elders of Adanse and ex-workers of AGC at Obuasi and some bankers in Accra were conducted in 1998 and 1999.

<u>NAMES OF INTERVIEWEES</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>OCCUPATION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Nana Bonsra Sakrakyire II Accra	70	Lawyer	Royal of Fomena
Opanin Antwi Boasiako,	65	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Opanin Kwame Akuoko	70	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Opanin Kwadwo Donkor	80	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Mr. Kojo Bempong	57	Educationist	Education Officer
Mr. Ben Abu	66	Ex-Dep. Eng.	Ex-AGC Staff
Papa Kwame Owusu	74	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Opanin Kwabena Amponsem	55	Farmer/Store Keeper	Ex-AGC Staff
Opanin Kwadwo Amponsah	60	Wood Carver	Ex-AGC Staff
Opanin Kwadwo Boateng	62	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Mallam Yusif Adam	76	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Mallam Mahamadu Braimah	78	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Mr. John Clark	50	Steward of Meth. Ch	Pastor
Mr. J.N. Williams	56	Dist. Lay Movt Chm	Pastor
Rev. Fr. D.O. Wiafe	55	Pastor	Rev. Min. Presby Church, Obuasi
Rev. Fr. John Agyekum	56	Rev. Father	Rev. Father, Catholic Church Obuasi

Alhaji Abubakar Seidu	60	Sheikh	Obuasi Mosque
Nana Kofi Gyamfi	75	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Papa Kwabena Adu	70	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Adam Yusif	72	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Malam Muniru Issahaku	77	Farmer	Ex-AGC Staff
Mr. Willem Vanderpuye	54	Banker	Head of External Affairs, Standard Chartered Bank, Head Office, Accra.
Mr. Joseph Nuer-Teye	52	Banker	H.R. Div. GCB, Head Office, Accra.