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- 1 This is a study of three traditional Akan states in Ghana, namely Akyem Abuakwa, Akyem Kotoku and Akyem Bosome. It is based on Kofi Affrifah's doctoral thesis, "Akyem c. 1700-1874: A study in Inter State Relations in Pre-Colonial Gold Coast", which was supervised by D. H. Jones and accepted by the University of London in 1976. It was the first full-length history of the Akyem polities to be written. Affrifah drew extensively on British, Dutch and Danish archives, and remarked that, "though sometimes partisan in their local relations, the European traders were generally objective in their observations on events in the Gold Coast" (p. 4). This is something overlooked by those who routinely complain about a "reliance on European sources". First, the merchants in the coastal establishments needed to collect as accurate information as possible about events in the interior in order realistically to plan their shipping requirements, and second, virtually the only sources of such information were the local traders who came down to the coast to do business with "the white man". Much of the strength of the first five chapters of Affrifah's book derives from the use he is able to make of such material.
- 2 The raw data recorded by the European merchants for commercial purposes has, of course, to be reinterpreted for purposes of historical reconstruction. A different set of questions has to be asked of it. Affrifah does this with considerable success. *The Akyem Factor* is not, and does not claim to be, the definitive history of the three Akyem polities, and Akyem Bosome in fact receives only cursory treatment. Nevertheless, Affrifah develops a number of theses that future researchers will have to address. To the present reviewer his treatment of the incorporation of the westerly lands of pre-1730 Akwamu into the kingdom of Akyem Abuakwa is highly perspicacious. Paradoxically, the "Old Akwamu" became the "New Akyem" (though the "New Akyem" of Asamankese and elsewhere came to assert their "Old Akwamu" identity once again

in the 1920s and 1930s). Affrifah is also to be especially credited for his recognition that such states as Akyem Abuakwa and Akyem Kotoku were not politically homogeneous, but embraced factions with quite different views about the wellbeing of the state and its people. He points out, for example, that Akyem Abuakwa was “divided on the subject of loyalty to Asante. There was a strong pro-Asante party in Abuakwa” (p. 107). His argument would have been even more convincing at this point had he realised that Tano, one of the leading pro-Asante figures in the 1810s, held office as a divisional head, Nifahene, in Abuakwa.

- 3 Kofi Affrifah's study of the Akyem polities has a significant place in the development of the new, post-colonial Ghana historiography. It is highly unfortunate, therefore, that there is a lapse of a quarter of a century between the acceptance of the dissertation and the appearance of *The Akyem Factor*. For whatever reason, Affrifah has taken little account of relevant writings that have appeared in that period. Thus, for example, his bibliography lists neither R. A. Kea's masterly *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (1982), which treats at length the structure of the “Akani” trading organisations, nor D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa's dissertation, “The Earthworks of the Birim Valley, Southern Ghana” [Johns Hopkins, 1978]. Both works are of major relevance to the vexed question of the origins of Akyem Kotoku and Akyem Abuakwa. Again, Affrifah does not list Kumi Attobrah's *The Kings of Akyem Abuakwa and the Nine Wars against Asante* (1976), though this short popular work draws usefully upon oral traditions and merits consultation. Affrifah's bibliography in fact contains no book, and with one exception no article, published since 1975. Scholars would surely have been in debt to Affrifah had he either revised his dissertation more thoroughly, or at least had prefaced it with an introduction identifying the sort of revisions required.