

# YAA ASANTEWAA, QUEEN MOTHER OF EJISU

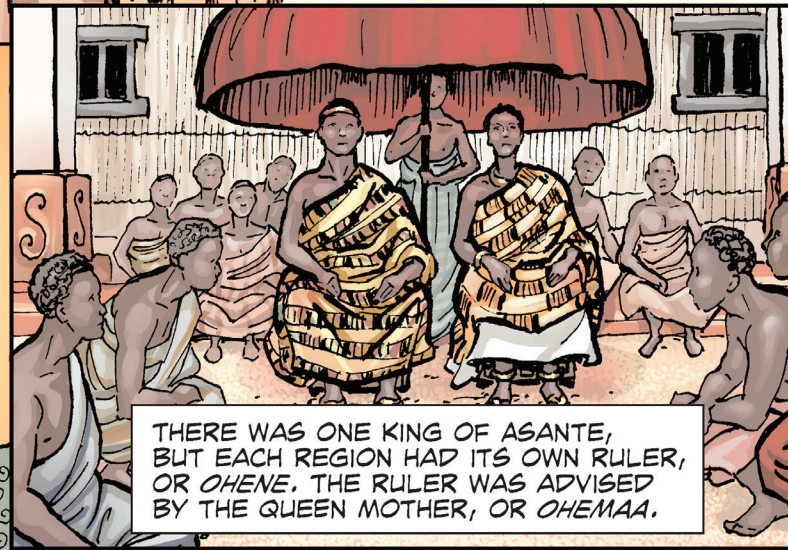
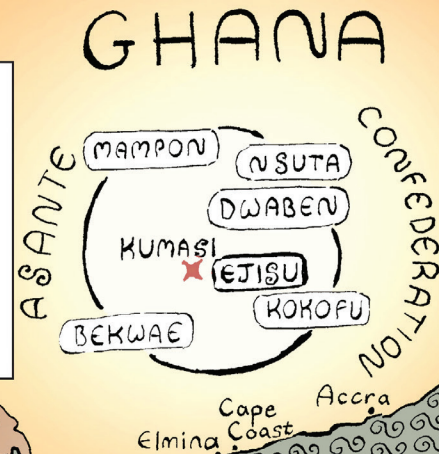
## YAA ASANTEWAA, QUEEN MOTHER OF EJISU

THERE IS A WOMAN, IN GHANA, ABOUT WHOM A SONG IS SUNG:  
"KOOKO HIN KO, YAA ASANTEWAA! THE MERE WOMAN WHO FACES THE CANNON!"  
WHO WAS YAA ASANTEWAA (C.1838-1921), AND WHY DO THEY SING OF HER STILL TODAY?

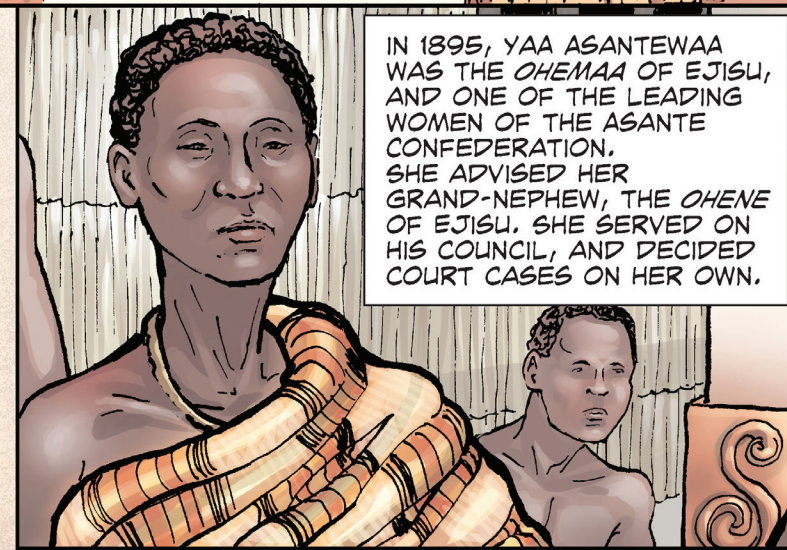
AUTHOR: TREVOR R. GETZ

ARTIST: LIZ CLARKE

IN THE 19TH CENTURY, THE REGION WE KNOW TODAY AS GHANA WAS DOMINATED BY THE ASANTE CONFEDERATION - A UNION OF SEVERAL SMALLER STATES, INCLUDING EJISU, WHERE YAA ASANTEWAA WAS BORN. THESE STATES HAD JOINED TOGETHER TO CONQUER THE WHOLE AREA.



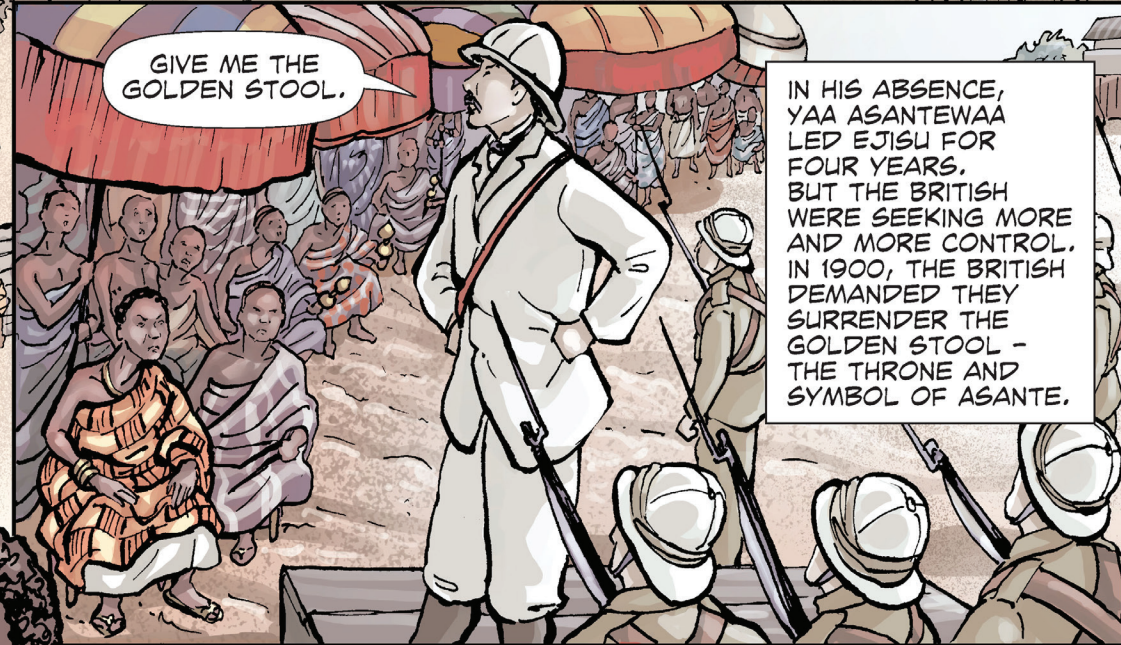
THERE WAS ONE KING OF ASANTE, BUT EACH REGION HAD ITS OWN RULER, OR OHENE. THE RULER WAS ADVISED BY THE QUEEN MOTHER, OR OHEMAA.



IN 1895, YAA ASANTEWAA WAS THE OHEMAA OF EJISU, AND ONE OF THE LEADING WOMEN OF THE ASANTE CONFEDERATION. SHE ADVISED HER GRAND-NEPHEW, THE OHENE OF EJISU. SHE SERVED ON HIS COUNCIL, AND DECIDED COURT CASES ON HER OWN.



BUT IN THAT YEAR, TRAGEDY STRUCK. BRITISH FORCES INVADDED, SEEKING TO CONTROL ASANTE'S WEALTH AND STRATEGIC POSITION. THEY EXILED THE ASANTE KING AND MANY IMPORTANT MEN, INCLUDING THE OHENE OF EJISU.



GIVE ME THE GOLDEN STOOL.

IN HIS ABSENCE, YAA ASANTEWAA LED EJISU FOR FOUR YEARS. BUT THE BRITISH WERE SEEKING MORE AND MORE CONTROL. IN 1900, THE BRITISH DEMANDED THEY SURRENDER THE GOLDEN STOOL - THE THRONE AND SYMBOL OF ASANTE.

WHEN THE MEN OF THE COUNCIL SEEMED LIKELY TO GIVE IN, YAA ASANTEWAA DEMANDED THEY RESIST.

HOW CAN A PROUD AND BRAVE PEOPLE LIKE THE ASANTE SIT BACK AND LOOK WHILE THE BRITISH TAKE AWAY THEIR KING AND CHIEFS, AND HUMILIATE THEM WITH A DEMAND FOR THE GOLDEN STOOL?

THE GOLDEN STOOL.... IF YOU, THE CHIEFS OF ASANTE, ARE GOING TO BEHAVE LIKE COWARDS AND NOT FIGHT, YOU SHOULD EXCHANGE YOUR LOINCLOTHS FOR MY UNDERGARMENTS.

SHE LED A GUERRILLA WAR FOR MONTHS, UNTIL SHE WAS CAUGHT AND SENT INTO EXILE.

YAA ASANTEWAA USED THE 'TRADITIONAL' POWER OF THE OHEMAA, BUT ALSO TOOK THE NOVEL STEP OF LEADING RESISTANCE HERSELF. SHE EXEMPLIFIES THE MIX OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION THAT MANY RESISTERS LEARNED TO USE IN THE COLONIAL ERA.