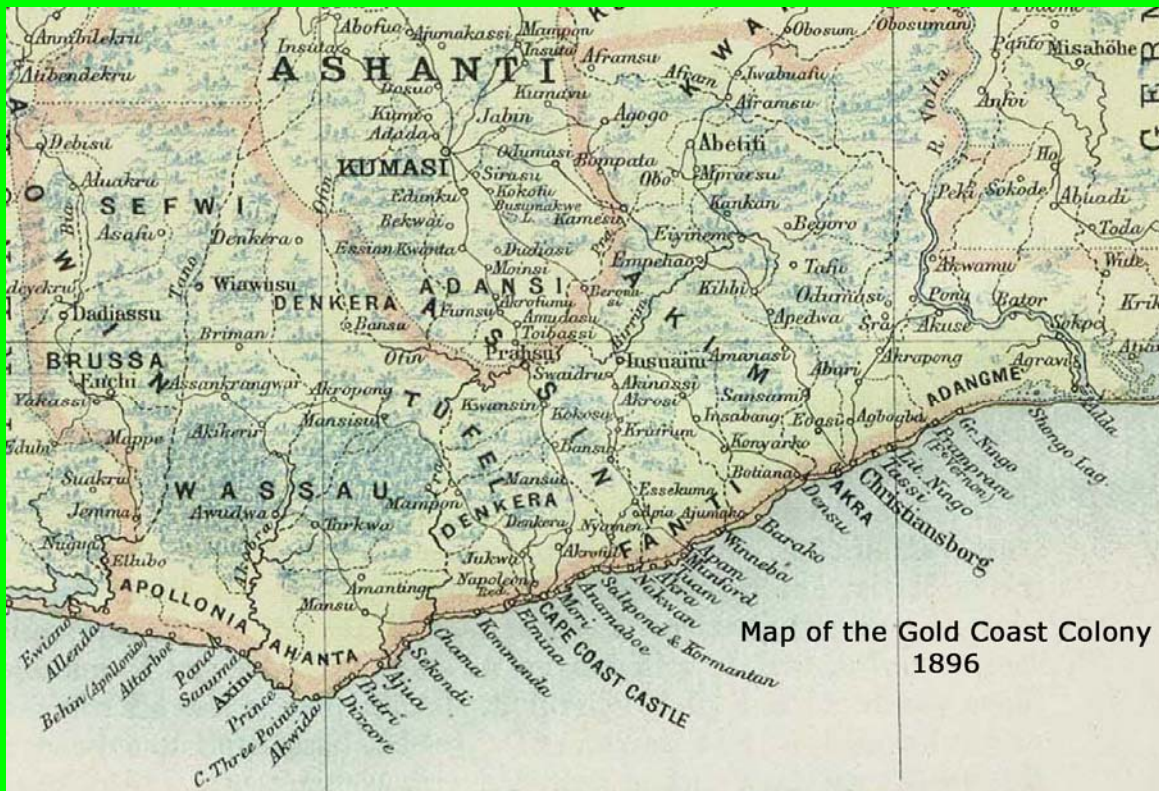


A selection of forts and castles along Ghana's Gold Coast, an introduction

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Photographs by Dirk Teeuwen, Ghana 2009
Sources of the maps, see caption below the maps

This article contains a short description of each of the forts / castles seen by the author during his visit to Ghana, January 2009. In the text the words fort and castle are used interchangeable sometimes. But when necessary, for a good understanding, fort, in this script, is meant as a minor strong point only; a castle is a citadel or, in other words, a major fortress and major trading centre as well as a place to live in at the edge of a native village or a native town.



Map 1 from > Wikimedia Commons

Originally from the Scottish Geographical Magazine. Published by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and edited by Geikie, J. and Taylor, W. A.: volume XII 1896

1. Elmina Castle at Elmina Town

Was built by the Portuguese in 1482, conquered by the Dutch in 1637 and sold to the British in 1872. Pictures 1, 1.a, 1.b show the east, north and west side. From 1637 until 1872 Elmina Castle, originally Sao Jorge da Mina, was headquarter of the Dutch possessions in the Gold Coast area. The castle shows beauty and strength and is in my opinion the most beautiful one of Ghana's coast. The reconstructed the castle between 1770 and 1775. Main trades Dutch were gold and slaves.

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2. Fort St. Jago / Fort Coenraedsburg at Elmina Town

Picture 2. The Portuguese built a church on the hill in 1503. The Dutch conquered the place in 1637. The Dutch built the fort in 1660 and sold it to the British in 1872.

This stone fort is the oldest Dutch / European fort for military purposes only on the coast of Ghana, because there is no commercial architecture present. The Dutch used mostly local building materials.



Map 2 from > Dupuis, Joseph: Journal of a residence in Ashantee, notes to the Gold Coast and the interior of Western Africa (etc. with an account about the Ashanti Wars in those days); London 1824, folding map

3. Cape Coast Castle at Cape Coast Town

Picture 3, 3.a and 3.b. The Portuguese built a trade lodge in 1555. The Swedes built Fort Carolusburg in 1653. The Dutch captured the place in 1660. The British conquered the fort in 1665.

From 1690 until 1700 the British changed the fort into a castle. Slave trade was important until 1807. At the same time and later: precious metals, ivory, corn, pepper, etc. In the eighteenth century more and more the castle began to be the centre of European education in Ghana. In 1807 slave trade has been banned by the British. Their imperialism meant the end of slavery (a custom persisting in native kingdoms) definitely.

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4. Fort Leydtsaamheid (Fort Patience) at Apam

Picture 4. Built by the Dutch in 1697. Reshaped in its present outline in 1702 and in 1721. In 1868 the Dutch hand the fort over to the British, because of a treaty between them in that same year. The forts / castles west of Cape Coast were meant to be Dutch property. East from Cape Coast were meant to be British.

This curious name "Leydtsaamheid" (Patience) was given to the fort because it took five years to finish its raising, caused by disagreement about its architecture between the Dutch and the local rulers. The Dutch were able to build only a small stronghold. Black locals preferred a large one. A large one was, in their opinion, better for safety and the storage of slaves supplied by them.

5. Fort St. Sebastian at Shama

Picture 5. Built by the Portuguese in 1525. In 1638 the Dutch, without any fight, took over a ruin. The form of the castle as it is now, is a result from reconstructions by the Dutch about 1650.

The Dutch Shama lease was very in accordance with the wishes put out by the local chiefs. But trade no success. The Dutch in Shama were busy collecting and manufacturing wood for the maintenance of ships and buildings. (More text on page 12)



P 1 Elmina from the east on a hot humid day in January

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P 1.a Elmina from the west, main entrance with a Dutch drawing bridge



P.1.b Elmina from the north
The ruin and the house, left, are from around 1820

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P.2 Fort St. Jago / Fort Coenraadsburg, right opposite Fort Elmina



P.3 Cape Coast Castle from the north

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P.3.a Main square and governor's residence



P.3.b Cape Coast Castle from the south

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P.4 Fort Leydtsaamheid



P.5 Fort San Sebastian from the south
The main entrance has the shape of a devoured mouth.

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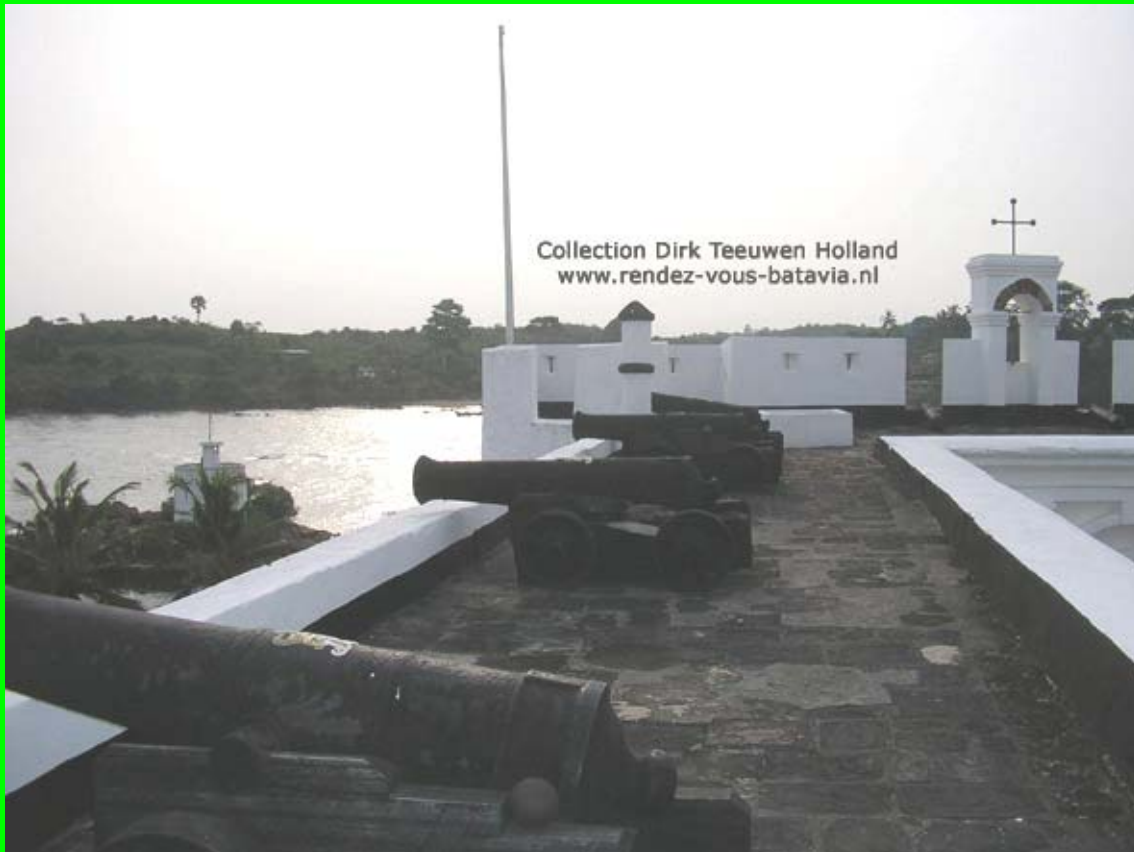


P.6 Fort Metal Cross from the east



P.6.a Fort Metal Cross from the south

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P.6.b Fort Metal Cross to the west, detail



P.7 Fort Apollonia from the east

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P.7.a Fort Apollonia, impression of the village of Beyin



P.7.b Fort Apollonia without words
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8. Fort Orange at Sekondi, now a lighthouse

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6. Fort Metalen Kruis (Metal Cross) at Dixcove

Picture 6, 6.a, 6.b Built by the British in 1692. Became Dutch because of the Dutch / British exchange of Gold Coast properties in 1868.

Ideal harbour for anyone, any type of ship. The Dutch castle Batenstein at Butre just a couple of kilometres away meant a great help to locals chiefs opposing the British and a help to the Dutch themselves of course.

7. Fort Apollonia / Fort Willem III at Beyin

Built by the British in 1768. Handed over to the Dutch in 1868 because of a treaty in the same year. Sold to the British in 1872.

After the abolition of slave trade the British left the fort in 1819. The revenues of gold and timber were too little to stay.

8. Fort Orange at Sekondi

Picture 7, 7.a, 7.b Dutch from 1670. Sold to the British in 1872. From 1872 used as a lighthouse.

The foundation of the fort nowadays was realized by the Dutch, in a couple of years, from about 1670. In 1705 the castle has been called Fort Orange for the first time. In 1872 the Dutch sold it to the British. Slavetrade, cotton- as well as metal industry were important in those Dutch period.

9. Castle Batenstein at Butre

Pictures 8, 8.a, 8.b, 8.c Accessible via a country road and I mean: very country. But you will never regret your drive! Built by the Dutch on a hill in 1656. Meant as a threat to the English in Dixcove: a couple of kilometres far. Sold to those British in 1872.

Trade was not so much because of local wars. The aim of the erection of this fort by the Dutch was mainly a military one: a permanent threat to the British.

10. Fort Amsterdam at Abandze / Cormantin

First a lodge, built by the Dutch in 1631, then a for, Fort Cormantin has been erected by the British in 1638. The Dutch admiral Michiel Adriaensz. De Ruyter conquered Cormantin in 1665 and started to reconstruct the Fort and renamed it Fort Amsterdam.

Mostly "good" trade in gold and slaves, meant for plantations on the Dutch Caribbean Islands.

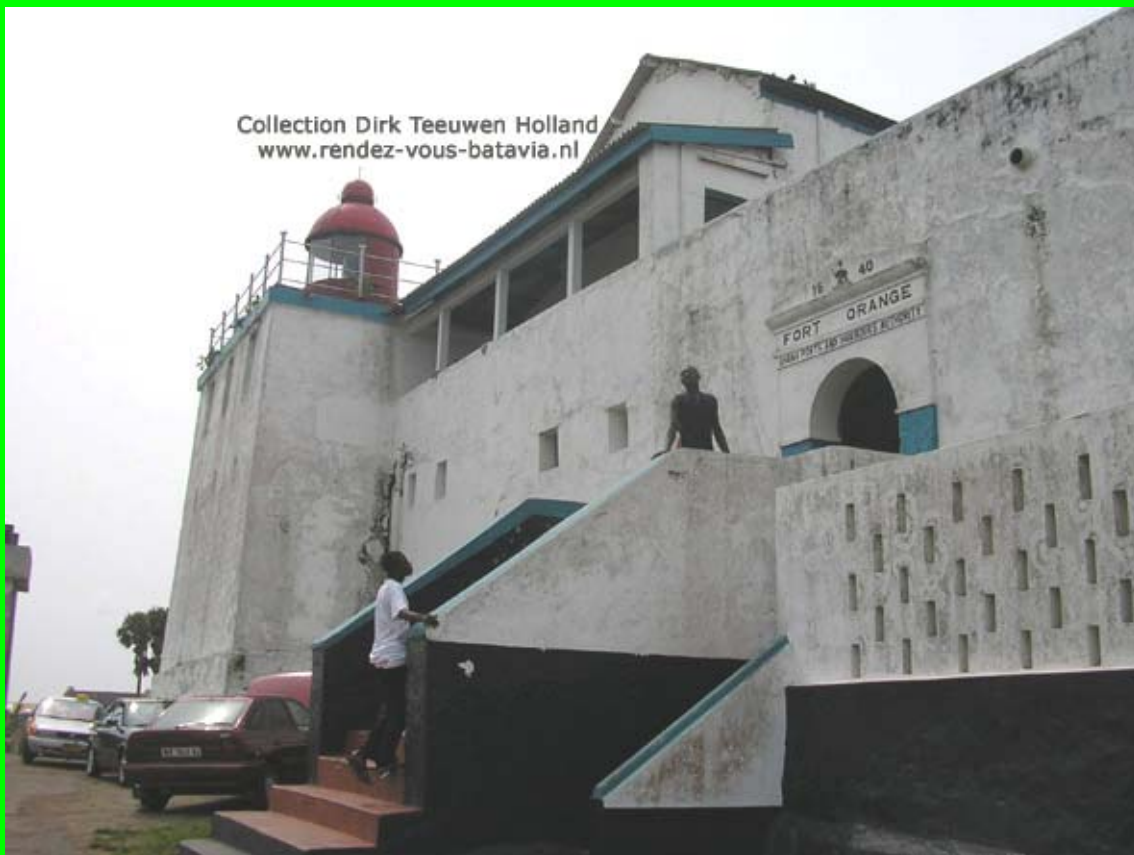
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11. Fort Hollandia / Gross Friedrichsburg at Princetown

In 1683 built by Germans from the German kingdom of Brandenburg. From 1717 until 1724 owned by the Ghanese Ahanta tribe. This tribe lead by chief John Conny, a notorious native slave trader, defeated the Dutch in 1717. Conquered by the Dutch – more successful this time - in 1725. Sold to the British in 1872.

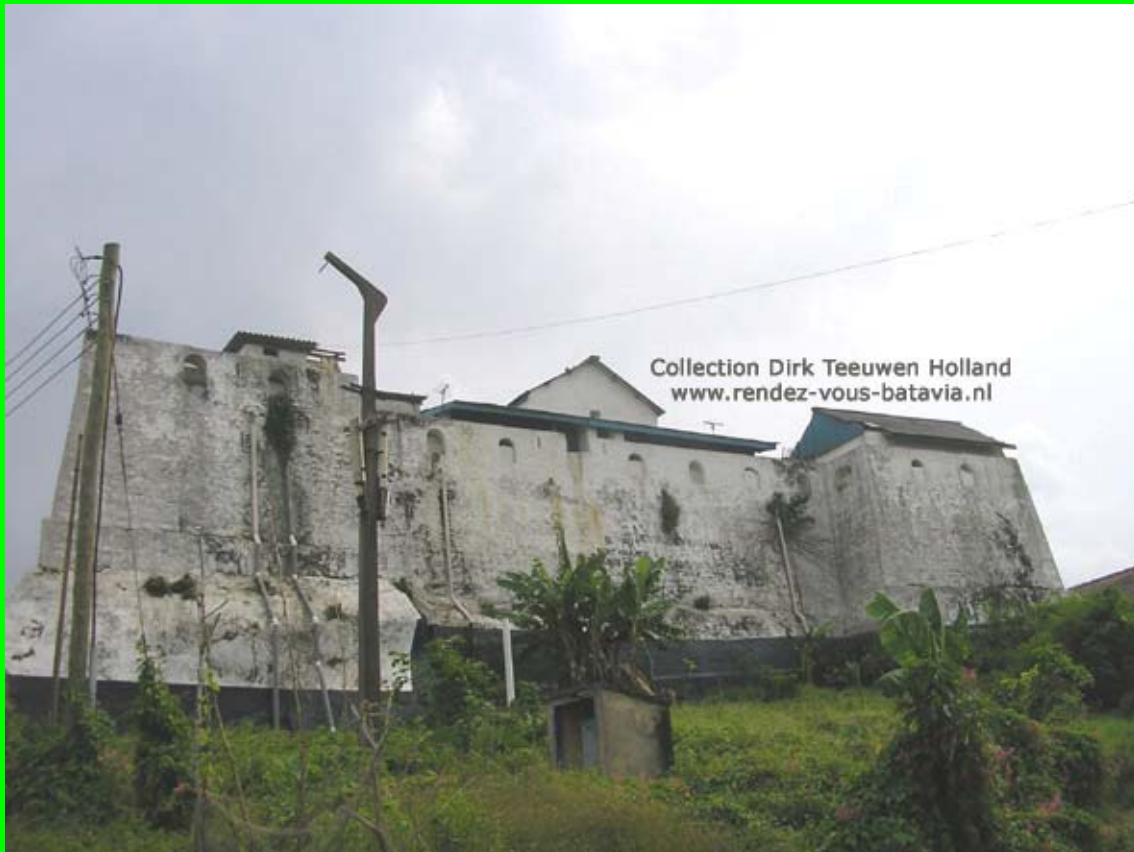
A large fort complete with four bastions. The fort became the headquarters of the Brandenburg possessions.

More text at the end of this article on page 22.



8.a Fort Orange, main entrance

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8.b Fort Orange from the north



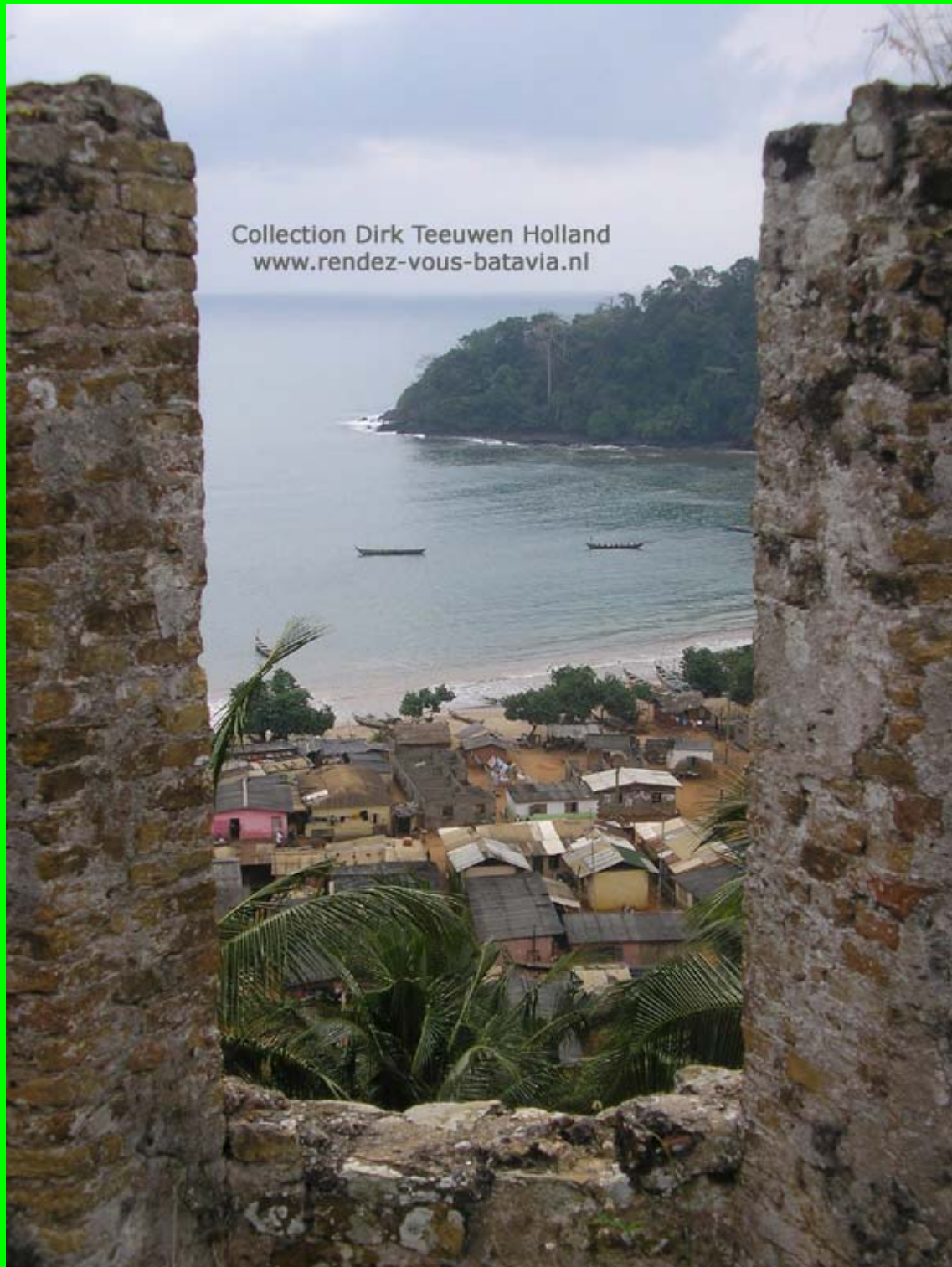
9. Fort Batenstein, detail
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9.a Fort Batenstein, detail
9. b Fort Batenstein, main entrance



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9.c Fort Batenstein, detail

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10. Fort Amsterdam from the north



10.a Fort Amsterdam, view of the beach

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10.b Fort Amsterdam, door of no return

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11. Fort Hollandia /Gross Friedrichsburg



11.a Fort Hollandia /Gross Friedrichsburg, bastion

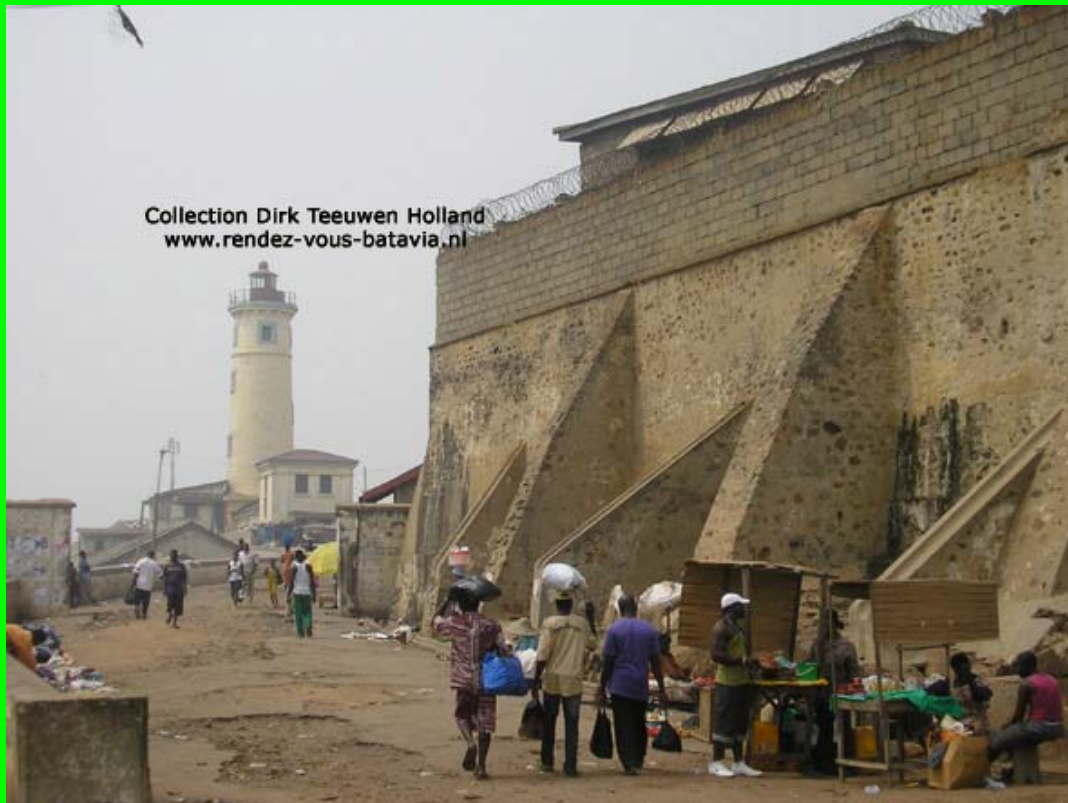
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11.b Fort Hollandia /Gross Friedrichsburg, bastion

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12. Fort St James, Accra



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13. Fort Kumasi

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13.a Fort Kumasi, main building

Remarks

12. Fort St James (British) is from the seventeenth century and is a prison now.
13. Fort Kumasi (British) is from about 1890 and was meant as a place of safety on behalf of the colonials.

End of the article

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