

TIGHT BINDING BOOK

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_162563

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OUP-67-11-1-68-5,000.

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. **572.9667**
M28W Accession No. **2632**
Author **Manoukian, Madeline**
Title **Western Africa. 1950.**

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA

EDITED BY DARYLL FORDE

WESTERN AFRICA

PART I

AKAN AND GA-ADANGME
PEOPLES OF
THE GOLD COAST

BY

MADELINE MANOUKIAN

Published for the
INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN INSTITUTE

by the
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

1950

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London, E.C.4

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON

BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS CAPE TOWN

Geoffrey Cumberlege, Publisher to the University

This study is one section of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa which the International African Institute is preparing with the aid of a grant made by the ~~Secretary~~ Secretary of State under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, on the recommendation of the Colonial Social Science Research Council.

FOREWORD

THE preparation of a comprehensive survey of the tribal societies of Africa was discussed by the Executive Council of the Institute as far back as 1937, but the interruption and restricting of its activities caused by the war resulted in the postponement of the project. Events and developments during the war led to a wider recognition of the need for collating and making more generally available the wealth of existing but uncoordinated material on the ethnic groupings and social conditions of African peoples, particularly in connection with plans for economic and social development. It appeared also that the International African Institute, as an international body which had received support from and performed services for the different Colonial governments, was in a very favourable situation for undertaking such a task.

The Institute, therefore, in 1944, applied to the recently established British Colonial Social Science Research Council for a grant from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to finance the preparation of an Ethnographic Survey of Africa, and a grant was allocated for a period of five years from 1945. A committee, under the Chairmanship of Professor Radcliffe-Brown, was appointed to consider the scope and form of the survey; and collaboration was established with research institutions in South Africa, Rhodesia, East Africa, French West Africa, Belgium and the Belgian Congo.

The aim of the Ethnographic Survey is to present a concise critical and accurate account of our present knowledge of the tribal groupings, distribution, physical environment, social conditions, political and economic structure, religious beliefs and cult practices, technology and art of the African peoples. The material is to be presented as briefly and on as consistent a plan as possible, and the text will be supplemented by maps and comprehensive bibliographies.

The Ethnographic Survey will be published as a series of separate, self-contained studies, each devoted to one particular people or cluster of peoples. It is hoped that publication in this form will make the results more quickly and readily available to those interested in specific areas or groups. The sections of the survey will be published as they are completed, and a list of those in course of publication is given on the cover of this section.

Since the unequal value and the generally unsystematic nature of the available information constituted a chief reason for undertaking this survey, it will be obvious that the material here presented can make no claim to be complete or definitive. Every effort has been made, however, to scrutinize all available literature and to check it by reference to unpublished sources and to workers actually in the field; thus it is intended to present a clear picture of our existing knowledge and to point out the directions in which the need for further studies is most pressing. Any assistance from those who are in a position to remedy deficiencies and correct inaccuracies by providing supplementary material will be greatly appreciated.

The International African Institute expresses its thanks to the Colonial Social Science Research Council, for recommending the grant which has made possible

FOREWORD

the initiation of the work, and also to the many scholars, research workers, administrative officers and missionaries in Europe, South Africa and the various African territories who have so generously responded to our appeals for information and who have spared time to correct and add to the drafts. We are especially grateful for help given in the preparation of this part of the Survey, *The Akan and the Ga-Adangme Peoples of the Gold Coast*, by Mr J. Berry of the School of Oriental and African Studies, by Dr M. Fortes, Reader in Social Anthropology in the University of Oxford, who kindly supervised the first stage of the work and made available unpublished material prepared by himself and his colleagues in connection with the Ashanti Social Survey and by Messrs P. Canham and John Matson of the Gold Coast Administration.

DARYLL FORDE

*Director, International
African Institute.*

CONTENTS

<i>Part I</i>	THE AKAN PEOPLES	PAGE
LOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION	.	9
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	.	11
HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN	.	13
LANGUAGE	.	15
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	.	16
MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY	.	18
KINSHIP, SUCCESSION AND MARRIAGE	.	22
POLITICAL STRUCTURE	.	35
POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF CERTAIN STATES	.	42
LAND TENURE	.	47
LIFE CYCLE	.	51
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS	.	55
BIBLIOGRAPHY	.	63
<i>Part II</i>	THE GA AND ADANGME PEOPLES	
INTRODUCTION	.	65
LOCATION AND GROUPING	.	66
HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN (GA)	.	67
LANGUAGE	.	69
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	.	70
MAIN FEATURES OF GA ECONOMY	.	71
GA KINSHIP, SUCCESSION AND MARRIAGE	.	73
GA POLITICAL STRUCTURE	.	81
GA LAND TENURE AND FISHING RIGHTS	.	86
GA LIFE CYCLE	.	88
GA RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS	.	94
MANYA KROBO STATE (ADANGME)	.	105
BIBLIOGRAPHY	.	109

PART I

THE AKAN PEOPLES OF THE GOLD COAST

LOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION

LOCATION

The *Akan*-speaking peoples occupy the southern half of the Gold Coast, part of Togoland and the south-east corner of the French Ivory Coast. In the Gold Coast the northern limit of this area is the upper course of the Volta; the southern boundary is the sea-coast. In the Ivory Coast the northern limit is the 8th parallel approximately, the western is the Bandama River and in the south the *Akan* peoples are bounded by the coast, except for small areas occupied by the *Kwakwa* people. Outside this main area there is an isolated *Akan*-speaking tribe, the *Chakosi*, numbering about 12,000, in the Dagomba district of the northern Gold Coast and Togoland.

The *Guang* (*Gbanya*) are the northern neighbours of the *Akan* peoples, and small pockets of *Guang*-speakers are found in the *Akan* area, for example in a number of small towns on the Akwapim ridge, at Krachi, and at Efutu in Fanti country. The eastern neighbours of the *Akan* are speakers of the 'Togo remnant languages', and the *Ewe*, and their south-eastern neighbours are the *Ga-Adangme* peoples.

GROUPING

The Gold Coast *Akan* may be grouped on a purely linguistic basis as follows,¹ each group speaking a distinct dialect but not in general having any particular feeling of unity or differing in customs from its neighbours:

<i>Linguistic Groups</i>	<i>Location</i>
1. Asante	All Ashanti except the area occupied by the Brong.
2. Brong ²	Roughly the Wenchi-Sunyani District and the northern Mampong District of Ashanti.
3. Akyem	Central and Eastern parts of Gold Coast Colony.
4. Akwapim	South-eastern area of the Eastern Province.
5. Kwahu	Northern part of Eastern Province.
6. Asen-Twifo	Central part of Gold Coast Colony.
7. Wasa	Western Province.
8. Fante-Agona	Along the coast between the <i>Ga-Adangme</i> peoples and the <i>Ahanta</i> , i.e. approximately between Accra and Sekondi.

¹ Information from J. Berry.

² Though originally *Guang*-speakers, the rapid spread of Twi in this area would seem to justify the inclusion of the Brong.

<i>Linguistic Groups</i>	<i>Location</i>
9. Nzima-Evalue	Along the coast between the rivers Ankobra and Assinie.
10. Ahanta	Between and partly beyond the rivers Ankobra and Pra, in the region of Sekondi, Axim and Dixcove.
11. Afema	Mainly in the lagoon area of the Ivory Coast but some in the extreme south-west corner of the Western Province.
12. Sefwi-Bahuri-Aowin	In the Western Province, between the upper Tano and Bia rivers.
13. Chakosi	In the Dagomba district of North Togo and the Northern Territories.

It must be emphasized that the above is a purely linguistic grouping, without significance to the people themselves, for whom, today at least, the *Oman* or Native State is in general the largest division within which there is a feeling of political and social unity. An important exception to this restricted sense of unity is the Ashanti Confederacy, and possibly the Fanti Confederacy, membership of which is given below. It is not possible satisfactorily to classify the present Native States according to the linguistic divisions given above, as these can only be approximately located, and moreover, a Native State may contain only part of or more than one linguistic group.

Ashanti Confederacy: includes Divisions of Abeasi, Nkoranza, Adansi, Agona, Asumeja, Banda, Bekwai, Berekum, Dormaa, Ejisu, Jaman, Juaben, Kokofu, Kumasi, Kumuwu, Mampong, Mo, Nsuta, Ofinso, Suma, Techiman, Wenchi.

Fanti Confederacy: includes Native States of Mankesim, Nkusukum, Abora, Abeasi, Kwaman and Anomabo.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA¹

POPULATION

1921 Census: approx. 914,000 Akan.

1931 Census: approx. 1,235,000 Akan.

Final figures for the 1948 census are not yet available, but preliminary figures show that the population of Ashanti alone is today over 822,000 as compared with 578,000 in 1931.

There are three main factors involved in the increases in estimated population figures in recent years:

1. Natural rate of increase, about which very little information is available.
2. Immigration, made possible and necessary by the economic revolution due to cocoa and gold production in the present century; this has strongly reinforced the age-old southward movement of the peoples of West Africa. (All heavy work in mines is now done by non-Akan labour and more and more native-owned cocoa farms are worked by hired labour from the Northern Territories.) Today every town, and almost every village, in the cocoa-growing area particularly, and also in most other parts of the Akan-speaking area, has its *Zongo* or immigrant quarter, which, in places like Kumasi and Obuasi, numbers several thousand Northerners. Immigrants far outnumber Akan in northern towns like Kintampo and Wenchi, or Atebubu. There is a constant movement of peoples along the great north-south trunk roads converging on Kumasi.
3. More accurate counting of people.

DENSITY

In the coastal area the density is less than 60 per square mile. There is a concentration of population in the rainforest area (the southern plateau of Ashanti) with its ample rainfall and water supply, favourable natural vegetation and considerable agricultural and mineral possibilities; here the density is about 100-150 per square mile.

In the savanna area further north, which is more isolated, less productive, flooded for 1-2 months and parched during the rest of the year, population is more scattered; the density is about 60 per square mile.

FORMS OF SETTLEMENT

Originally the only determining geographical feature of village siting seems to have been a permanent source of water. Villages were scattered through the forest and linked by paths. There was a constant budding-off of farming hamlets, which were temporary, and of more distant hunting hamlets. The main villages were the

¹ References: Cardinall 1, Steel, 1931 Census.

capitals of the small 'States'. The villages were divided into traditional 'quarters' or 'wards', each one the locality of a matrilineage, and these wards were in turn split up into compounds of extended families.

Today, roads may almost be said to set the pattern of settlement; so greatly are the benefits of a roadside position appreciated that scores of villages are growing up along the roads while villages off the roads are stagnating.

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN¹

The evidence at present available shows that the Akan did not arrive in the far north of what is now the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast before the eleventh century. In the coastal zone, the *Etsi*, who regard themselves as 'brothers' of the *Bono*, a branch of the Akan, claim to have been the first settlers in the region, and their arrival can be dated at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Their tradition has it that they met some *Brossa* people in the central coastal area, ancestors of the modern *Brossa* or *Aowin*. These appear to have been the first *Brossa* to have been driven from their home, north-west of the Gold Coast forest belt, by the invading Akan from the Niger bend in the eleventh century. *Etsi* and *Brossa* were followed from the beginning of the fourteenth century by *Bono* (*Brong*) *Fanti*, *Guang* (mostly under Akan domination), by *Afutu* from the Northern Territories and beyond, and by *Asebu* and *Ga-Adangme* from Nigeria.

The forest zone was not occupied by the Akan proper before the end of the fifteenth century, when the arrival on the coast of the first European settlers, the Portuguese, brought prosperity through trade in gold and slaves.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries powerful states developed: brief accounts of some of these are given separately below.

Bono. The oldest centre of Akan civilization south of the Black Volta was the city of *Bono-Mansu*, capital of Bono, founded about 1295; its ruins are about 100 miles north of Kumasi. According to the tradition of the Bono-Techiman State, the ruling-class founders of the city came originally from the Great White Desert, the Sahara. The discovery of gold in the vicinity of Bono-Mansu caused its development into a great market town. The Bono kingdom prospered until its wealth became legendary. It was at the height of its power between 1712 and 1740, when it was defeated by Ashanti and its capital burned by the inhabitants. Techiman then became the capital of the Bono-Techiman State, later a vassal of Ashanti. After a twenty-year war (1875-95) Bono-Techiman freed itself from Ashanti, but recently it was induced to join the Ashanti Confederacy restored by the Gold Coast Government in 1935.

Fanti. A group of Fanti are said to have left Bono-Mansu at the beginning of the seventeenth century and to have gone south to *Etsi* country on the coast. They subdued the country from Akumfi to Nyanmoranza and conquered *Afutu*, *Eguafo*, *Komenda* and *Shama*. After the collapse of Bono in 1740 more Fanti and others from Techiman went in large numbers to join those already on the coast. They imposed themselves both on the *Etsi* and on the earlier Fanti and eventually ruled the following towns and their surroundings, each of which was and is an autonomous state: Mankesim, Nkusukum, Abora, Abeasi, Kwamank and Anomabo. Today these form the Fanti Confederacy.

Evalue and Nzima. The ruling class of the Evalue, the *Nvanile* (Anona clan), claim to have been among those who founded *Eguafo*. When the Portuguese arrived

¹ Bosman, Bowdich, Claridge, Meyerowitz, Rattray 1, Ward.

on the coast some Evalue went west to found Ahanta State. At the same time Nzima from the northern Ivory Coast founded Axim.

Denkera. This kingdom was founded about 1620. During the eighty years of its existence it was all-powerful in the central forest area and conquered all the surrounding peoples. In 1701 it was defeated at Feyase by the *Kumasihene* Osei Tutu and became a vassal state of the new Ashanti Confederacy. In 1823 the *Denkerahene* fought against Ashanti in one of the Anglo-Ashanti wars. He then obtained land from his father, *Omanhene* of the adjacent state of Wasa Amenfi and there founded Jukwa, capital of the present state of Denkera until about 1943.

Twifo Heman. 'Twifo' or 'Twi people' is the name by which the former *Kumbu* people, from the area round the source of the Kumbu (Comoe) River, are known in the Gold Coast. They founded the states of Amenfi and Twifo Heman. In 1570-80, after a stool dispute, some Twifo founded Kumbu state, called Aquambo on eighteenth century maps and today known as Akwamu.

Akwamu grew in power, but in 1734 was defeated by the three Akim states and their allies.

Akim. The three Akim states, of which two, *Akim Kotoku* and *Akim Busume* were founded by emigrants from Denkera, gained their independence from Akwamu and flourished between 1734 and 1742, when they were defeated by Ashanti and became vassal states.

Ashanti. The latest and the most powerful of the Akan kingdoms was created by a small group calling themselves the *Oyoko*, descendants of the founder of the Bona kingdom in the north Ivory Coast. Osei Tutu created a confederacy of the city-states of the Kumasi region, that is, Mampong, Juaben, Kokofu, Nsuta, Kumawu, Asumegya and Bekwai, and used the military organization learned from the Akwamu to defeat the Denkera in 1701. After this, the Golden Stool was created by Okomfo Anokye as the symbol of unity embodying the soul or spirit of Ashanti, the new state of which Osei Tutu was made *Asantehene*. More conquests followed and under Osei Tutu's successor the Bono kingdom was destroyed and incorporated in Ashanti with all its tributary states from Banda to Kerakye on the Volta. Then the kingdoms of *Nta* (*Gonja*) and *Dagomba* in the north were subjugated, as were the three Akim states in the south-east and *Sefwi* in the west. In less than fifty years Ashanti reigned over most of the Gold Coast and part of the French Ivory Coast. Their conquest of the coast was frustrated by Europeans, especially the British, who helped the coastal peoples to defend themselves. There were seven Anglo-Ashanti wars in the last century, ending in 1900 with the defeat of Ashanti and followed by its annexation in 1901 and its incorporation into the Protectorate. The Ashanti Confederacy was restored by the Gold Coast Government in 1935.

LANGUAGE¹

I. NAME AND TERRITORY

Akan languages are spoken in the southern Gold Coast and in the S.E. Ivory Coast. (The existence of *Akan* languages in the Ivory Coast is probably due to the political expansion of Ashanti to the west; the languages spoken in the west show distinct admixtures of the speech of an older and possibly indigenous population.)

Akan languages may conveniently be grouped as:

- A. *Twɨ*—the generic term for a group of dialects found in the Gold Coast between the rivers Tano and Volta (one tribe, the Akwamu, live on the left bank of the Volta) the chief of which are:

Akwapim in the S.E. (N.W. of Adangme); *Akyem* (W. and N.W. of Akwapim); *Asante* (N.W. of Akyem); *Fante* on the seashore between Adangme and Ahanta.

All these dialects are closely related to each other in vocabulary and structure. They are mutually intelligible. *Akwapim* (under the name *Twɨ*) and *Fante* have each developed an important vernacular literature.

- B. *Anyi-Baule*—a group of dialects definitely related to the *Twɨ* group; found mainly in the Ivory Coast, but extending into the western Gold Coast. Of these dialects the following are spoken in the Gold Coast:

Nzima—on the seashore between the rivers Ankobra and Assinie, bounded on the north by other *Anyi* groups and Wasa, on the east by Ahanta.

Ahanta—east of *Nzima* between and partly beyond the rivers Ankobra and Pra, in the region of Sekondi, Dixcove and Axim.

Sefwi—east of Ndenyo between the upper Tano and Bia rivers.

2. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE LANGUAGE

Twɨ is a Sudanic language and has the usual characteristics of this group. Special features are:

1. *Phonology*: (a) the palatalized variants of k, gh, before front vowels, and the palato-labial series tw, dw, hw.
(b) the absence of the labio-velars kp and gb.
(c) a system of 9 distinct vowel sounds.
(d) an involved system of vowel harmony.
2. *Plural* of nouns is formed by the prefix *a-* or a nasal, or by the suffixes *-fo* and *-nom*.
3. The language has no nominal classes but shows rudiments of them, e.g. *nsu*, water; *osu*, rain; *asu*, waterplace, river, etc.
4. *Word order*. Genitive case precedes governing noun; direct object follows the predicate; adjective follows the noun it qualifies.

¹ Contributed by J. Berry.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT¹

1. NATURE OF COUNTRY

Coastline

i. Between Newtown and Axim : strips of beach sand backed by swampy country, extending in places to about 20 miles from the coast.

ii. Axim eastwards: most of the coast has massive rocky cliffs. Where streams reach the sea there are usually brackish or fresh water swamps or lagoons.

The rest of the country is divisible into three main zones:

- (a) *Coastal zone* : extending up to 60 miles from the sea, and consisting generally of almost level grassy plains with rare, abruptly rising, small ranges of hills or isolated peaks; there are few trees but the soil is quite good.
- (b) *Forest zone*: evergreen and deciduous forest, covering an area of about 18,000 square miles; in shape it approximates to an equilateral triangle, its sides extending from Axim to the Volta River at Kpong, from Kpong to Nkoranza in Ashanti, and its base formed by the western frontier across which the forest stretches towards Sierra Leone. The forest consists of closely grouped lofty trees, 200 feet or more in height, below which is a dense growth of smaller trees and a matted undergrowth. The forest includes hardwoods—including cabinet woods like mahogany—oil-palm and a variety of rubber-bearing plants. The forest country is one of hills and mountains. It is well watered by numerous streams and rivulets forming tributaries of the rivers Tano, Ankobra, Pra and Birim. Lake Bosumtwi, situated some 20 miles S.E. of Kumasi, forms part of this river system: it is the only real lake in the Gold Coast.
- (c) *Savanna zone*: orchard bush and grassland lying immediately north of the forest zone; it also extends in the east right down to the coast and with deforestation is steadily advancing westwards along the coast in a wedge shape; it has now reached Sekondi. This is a gently undulating area with a few isolated peaks; it is drained by the Volta River system and is not well watered except in the rainy season from August to October. Soil may be sand or clay; most land has a sandy soil covering but in many places, because of vegetation destruction, the soil is gone and the bare rock is exposed; where vegetation exists black soil of a few inches depth is found, formed by vegetable decay and ash from annual fires. The rock is mainly sand-stone; where eroded it is granite with quartz; in the S.E. there are detached outcrops of clay ironstone with occasional schists and shales.

2. CLIMATE

The most characteristic feature is humidity; the average relative humidity is 80-90 per cent in the south and 60-70 per cent north of the forest zone. The equable temperature of the Gold Coast in general is due to this humidity. Average shade temperature : max. 75-90 degrees; min. 60-75 degrees.

¹ Cardinall 1, Chamney, Maxwell, Migeod, *Gold Coast Atlas*.

Rainfall: Annual means in the different zones : S.W. corner 86 in. app. ; coastal zone 33 in. app. ; forest zone 61 in. app. ; northern area 43 in. app. ;

Rainy seasons: In north, two rainy seasons without a very marked break ; in south (below line from Sunyani to Kete Kratchi—except for a strip of coastal savanna), marked double rainy season, i.e. March–July and September–November.

Winds: In December–January, a cold, dry wind, the Harmattan, sets in from the N.E. In February–March there are tornadoes during the change from N.E. to S.W. winds.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY¹

ORIGINAL BASIS OF SUBSISTENCE

1. *Simple food-farming*: yams (in north the main food crop), coco-yams, plantain, by rotational fallows, the village remaining as main centre, with constant budding-off of temporary farming hamlets. Farming is carried out by women in forest area; in more open parts yams are grown on a much larger scale by men.
2. *Fishing* in both coastal and forest areas; rivers, streams and Lake Bosumtwi are well stocked.
3. *Hunting*.
4. *Livestock*: some cattle and sheep in coastal zone but in the forest zone, because of tsetse, only poultry and pigs are kept (indigenous in Ashanti and the Colony).
5. *Kola*: large export of nuts to the Northern Territories, where they are a necessity like betel nuts.
6. Some *timber* for local use.
7. *Gold mining and working* in certain areas only; gold fields and mines were state-owned and were worked mainly by slave labour, but every man was allowed to dig for gold and every woman allowed to pan alluvial gold from streams, on condition that they paid one-third of the gold to the state.

TRADE

Kola went north to be exchanged for slaves and cloth woven by the Mossi. Gold and slaves were sent to the coast in exchange for European trade goods. In Ashanti, trade played an important part in maintaining the King's power; he had a monopoly of certain trades, e.g. kola, for a certain period every year. Local industries included wood-carving, pottery (bartered by women for foodstuffs), metal-work (brass, gold), weaving.

CHANGES DUE TO MODERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. *Cocoa* has been the dominant feature of agriculture during the last twenty-five years. It is grown only in the rainforest area; the limit of the cocoa area is roughly represented by the scarp from Techiman through Mampong to Bompata. The zones of maximum production are in the N.W. of Ashanti, in the Sunyani area, around Mampong and Kumasi, and around Kibbi and Koforidua and to the S.W. of these towns. Cocoa is grown almost exclusively by natives, both men and women, in individual holdings of an average production of from half to one ton per annum; there are also some native-owned plantations employing landless labourers, but the proportion of these is not known: in fact very little is yet known regarding the effect of the development of the cocoa industry on land tenure etc. (see 'Land Tenure', p. 47).

¹ References: Beckett, Cardinall 1, Fortes 1, Meek, Meyerowitz, Rattray 1, 2, 3, Steel.

Traditional food-farming by rotational fallow still goes on near villages; cassava is a food-crop now far more widely grown than in former days.

2. *Palm oil* (produced in secondary forest areas), rubber, coconuts (all along the coast), citrus fruits and rice are all produced for trading purposes. Kola is still an important export to the Northern Territories.
3. *Timber* is now a valuable source of revenue as well as being used locally; *khaya*, the African mahogany, is exported.
4. Big towns have grown up around mining areas developed by Europeans; the principal gold-mining areas are Obuasi in Ashanti (one of the richest mines in the world), Prestea and Bibiani in the W. Province, and Kibi in the E. Province; these are all quartz mines. Principal alluvial deposits are found along the rivers Ofin, Ankobra and Pra. Manganese, bauxite and diamonds are also mined.
5. *Local industries* include calabashes, pots, gold ornaments, stool-carving, furniture, canoes, production of snails and poultry, dried fish sent up-country from the coast.

TECHNOLOGY

*Houses*¹

The typical and simple form of house consists of an oblong or square compound, round which are placed various closed-in rooms (*nampon*, sing. *dampon*) and three-walled open verandah rooms (*pato*). The courtyard is known as *gyase* (lit. beneath or below the hearth); here the children play and the wives work and prepare food, which is cooked on the raised floor of one of the *pato*, on the *bukyia* (cooking stone).

House walls are made of wattle and daub or 'block swish', i.e. a layer of mud built about three feet high, left to dry, a second layer built on top, and so on. Roofs are now often made of corrugated iron or wooden shingles, but grass is also still used. Roofs made of leaves were formerly the fashion and are still occasionally seen; they are sewn overlapping on a framework and are pieced together on the ground. Walls may be decorated by paintings or by low reliefs.

*Weaving*²

Almost certainly introduced from the north; the earliest fabric was of cotton thread, grown and spun in the country; later, silk cloths were woven.

Weaving is done only by men, though women who have reached the menopause may spin cotton thread. Little boys who are to become weavers begin to learn at a very early age, by playing on miniature looms. A weaver's sons, but not necessarily his sisters' sons, follow his profession.

The web of fabrics averages about 8-9 cm. in breadth; lengths of web are cut off and sewn together to form a complete cloth. Designs are standardized; each pattern has its name and, in many cases, also indicates the clan, social status or even the sex of the wearer, or it may refer to some proverbial saying. The names of designs appear to be taken from the alignment of the various threads in the weft (there are

¹ Rattray 3, pp. 57-60.

² Rattray 2, pp. 220-68.

a few exceptions). Akan taste in textiles is very conservative; tradition has it that in former days the manufactured silks of European traders were unravelled and rewoven to suit local taste.

Both looms and weavers are subject to certain taboos, e.g. a woman during her period, must not touch a loom, nor may she even address her husband directly. Old looms must not be burnt or broken up.

Stamped cloths—or *Adinkira* cloths (Ashanti); the foundation is plain white cotton or cotton dyed russet brown (Ashanti mourning cloth colour); the designs are stamped on this with dye made from the bark of the *badie* tree; the stamps are cut from old calabashes. Rattray thinks all designs are amulet signs or symbols introduced by Mohammedans from the north.

Barkcloth (*kyenkyen*—from the name of the tree from whose bark it is made) was originally used for clothing; it is still used among the Brong and by some hunters.

*Wood-carving*¹

Subdivided into many separate branches all of which have their specialists; stools, umbrella frames, *suman*-drums, etc. are all made by different people.

A generation ago every stool in use had its own particular significance and special name, denoting the sex, social status or clan of its owner. Afwia village near Kumasi used to be the centre of the stool-carving industry in olden days. Sons or sisters' sons are equally allowed to learn the art. Women may not carve stools; in former days they were not allowed to approach carvers at work, during their menstrual period, under pain of death or a heavy fine.

Asipim chairs owned by chiefs are probably copies of early European designs introduced by European traders; they are decorated with elaborate repoussée silverwork.

Drums, though sometimes classed under the general name of *'twene*, each have their special names, taboos, and in many cases, their special dress.

*Pottery*²

This art is mainly in the hands of women, but there is no law or taboo to prevent men from practising the trade; as a matter of fact men only make pots or pipes if they represent anthropomorphic forms because women are forbidden to make these. Akan say that pottery was left to women because the products were not objects of serious trade, but simply exchanged for foodstuffs, and therefore it was not worth men's while to make them.

It is a hereditary craft handed down from mother to daughter; whole families of girls are potters, having learned the craft when very young.

Pots are moulded entirely by hand, the use of the wheel being unknown. Modern pots are generally severe and plain in design; the commonest ornamentation seems to consist of the lines left on the clay before drying and firing by the corncobs used to model and smooth surfaces during manufacture.

¹ Rattray 2, pp. 269-94.

² Ibid. pp. 295-308.

*Metal-work*¹

In old Akan communities smiths were organized into castes, dealing as they did with life-giving fire, which sets them apart in a special relationship with 'Nyame'. When people moved in search of a site for a new town the smiths 'carried the fire' at the head of the column and were responsible for the camp-fires at night; in war they served in the advance guard, under the *Adontenhene*, made the bullets (hammered from a piece of iron) and were in charge of the wounded.

Nowadays, of all arts and crafts among the Akan, that of casting, by the *cire-perdue* method, in the baser metals is perhaps the most nearly extinct: gold dust is no longer the currency, therefore gold weights are not now the indispensable possession of every male and are only made, if at all, to sell as curios to European collectors.

Mrammuo, or gold weights, fall into 3 groups:

- (a) representing human forms, or animals, birds, fishes etc., either alone or depicting certain ceremonies or illustrating some saying or story;
- (b) representing inanimate objects such as plants, seeds, fruit, weapons, or articles in daily use;
- (c) geometrical designs which were perhaps once symbolical.

Kuduo are brass vessels originally used as ceremonial containers in which to place offerings during certain religious rites. Also, when the owner died, his *kuduo* was buried with him, gold dust and *aggrey* beads being placed in it. They are now very valuable and difficult to obtain and are often supplanted by cheap Birmingham metal ware; Rattray found one or two being revered as shrines.

The art of metal-work is no longer taught in connexion with brass casting and has survived only in the goldsmith's trade, which is still in a fairly flourishing condition. 'Adwumfo' (in present context goldsmiths—*adwini* is any skilled worker in gold, silver or leather) were in olden days an honoured class; they formed a sort of brotherhood and were privileged to wear gold ornaments, otherwise restricted to kings and their wives, and greater chiefs. The art was retained in certain families; if a son did not follow his father's trade then a sister's son was compelled to do so; but if a son did follow the trade he had the right to inherit his father's gold weights and stock-in-trade to the exclusion of any member of his father's *abusua*, unless some such member was also a goldsmith, in which case he had prior claim.

All smiths' tools are sacred; new forges are always consecrated before use.

¹ Meyerowitz; Rattray 1, pp. 300-15; 2, pp. 309-16.

KINSHIP, SUCCESSION AND MARRIAGE¹

Inheritance, succession and political allegiance among the Akan are determined by matrilineal descent. Since authority is vested in the male members of the family, the mother's brother occupies a very special place in the kinship system, and this fact is reflected in the kinship terminology, as well as in other peculiarities in the system.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

This is a classificatory system in which the emphasis on maternal descent dictates special terms for *mother's brother*, *sister's children* and *father's sister*, and the difference between direct and collateral descent is ignored. The system is qualified by the addition of other terms, usually optional, in which preferential cross-cousin marriage is emphasized; there is also provision for the waiving of this mating privilege, in which case children of female cross-cousins are called by the special term for 'sister's child'. There is a fourth possible set of terms in descriptive phrases such as 'father's sister's child'.

The following set of terms is that given by Rattray for the *Ashanti*. Differences of dialect cause slight differences of terminology among the various other Akan peoples, but basically the system is the same. Mead gives a set of terms for the *Twi*² which agrees with the Ashanti terminology.

Agya—father and all his brothers, parents' sisters' husbands; *Ena*—mother and all her sisters, father's brother's wife; *Wofa*—mother's brother; *Sewa*—father's sister; *Nua Ba*—(lit.) brother's child; *Wofase*—sister's child (man speaking: woman speaking, uses term *Ba*—child); *Kunu*—husband; *Yere*—wife (also used for mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter, when cross-cousin marriage is emphasized); *Akonta*—all 'in-laws' of speaker's own generation except man's younger brother's wife, whom he calls *Yere Kuma* (lit. small or secondary wife) because he may inherit her on younger brother's death (but he has no right of access during husband's lifetime); also used for mother's brother's son and father's sister's son (when cross-cousin marriage is emphasized); *Sewa 'Ba*—father's sister's daughter and *Wofa 'Ba*—mother's brother's daughter (when the kinship tie is stressed as against cross-cousin marriage, in which case children of female cross-cousins are called *Wofase*); *Ase*—used of 'in-laws' of first generation of ascendants and descendants; *Nana*—all second generation of ascendants and descendants; *Nana n'ka'so*—all third generation of descendants (means literally 'grandchild, don't touch (my) ear', due to strong taboo on marriage with this generation); *Nana Panyin*—reciprocal of above term (lit. 'old grandfather').

¹ Busia; Danquah 1; Ffoulkes 1, 2; Field; Fortes 2; Johnson; Kyei; Mead; Rattray 1, 2, 3; Sarbah; Ashanti Confederacy Council: Minutes of Fifth and Sixth Sessions.

² Mead's so-called 'Twi' informant came from Kwadjowusu, via Apegusu, Gold Coast. Apegusu is in the Native State of Akwamu.

THE CLAN (*Abusua*)

Every Akan-speaking tribe is grouped into a limited number of exogamous, matrilineal clans, members of which are scattered all over the country. Members of each clan are united by a belief in a common descent from some remote ancestress; among certain of the tribes, e.g. the Ashanti, this ancestress is believed to be descended from some animal, though information on this matter is by no means clear, partly owing to reticence on the part of the people when questioned about this point (see 'Religious Beliefs', p. 55).

List of Clans:

<i>Ashanti</i> (given by Rattray)	<i>Fanti</i> (given by Sarbah)
1. Aduana	1. Twidan (Eburutow)
2. Agona	2. Annona (Yoko, Aguna, Eguana)
3. Asinie	3. Aburadzi (Eduana, Ofurna, Egyira)
4. Asokore	4. Ntwa (Abadzi)
5. Asona	5. Nsonna
6. Beretuo	6. Adwinadzi (Aowin)
7. Ekuana	7. Kwonna
8. Oyoko	

Allowing for differences in dialect, the Fanti list contains several names which are recognizable in the Ashanti.

The same clans are also found among the Akim, Kwahu, Akwamu and Akwapim, and almost certainly exist among the other Akan-speaking peoples, although Rattray says that the pure Brong are apparently quite ignorant of these clan names, and their exogamous divisions seem to be based on an entirely different model; they appear to derive their names from streets or quarters in the towns.¹ Pitt gives similar information about what he calls 'the Bedu people' in Wenchi country: they are presumably Brong.²

Main Characteristics of the Clan System

1. All persons bearing a common clan name are held to be related by blood and descended from a common ancestress. They are therefore considered to stand in a prohibited degree of relationship to one another with regard to marriage and are held together by a sentiment of brotherhood.
2. Clan descent (in the local context of the lineage) alone confers the right: (a) to inherit property; (b) to perform *sacra* for ancestral spirits; (c) to succeed to certain offices; (d) to be buried in a particular cemetery; (e) to unite in the performance of certain funeral rites.
3. The clan tie cannot be lost or broken except by expulsion from the clan.
4. By a legal fiction clan relationship may sometimes be acquired otherwise than by birth.
5. Clans are associated with certain localities and certain important chiefships in the chiefly hierarchy: this is connected with legends of complicated migrations.

¹ Rattray 3, pp. 64-5.

² Pitt, p. 282.

6. Clans are arranged in hierarchic order. In Ashanti, for example, the most important clan is the *Oyoko*, the King's clan.

Each dispersed clan is subdivided into a number of localized matrilineages (described below).

THE NTORO

1. Paternal descent is also recognized by the Akan peoples. They believe that each child inherits his or her mother's 'blood' (*mogya*, *abusua*) and his or her father's spirit (*nton*, *ntoro*). Just as the *mogya* is only transmitted by the female, so is the *ntoro* transmitted only by the man. Everyone belongs to one of eight or nine named *ntoro* groups, membership in which derives from one's father. A *ntoro* group is not a corporate organization of the same type as a lineage. It resembles a patronymic, implying the inheritance from one's father of certain taboos, a belief in a special ritual connexion with one's father and with other bearers of the same *ntoro*, and a special bond of attachment to one's father.

2. Certain observances are associated with *ntoro* membership:

- (a) a special day each week is set apart for ritual lustration (hence the greeting: 'Which *ntoro* do you wash?');
- (b) there are associated taboos;
- (c) a totem (see 'Religious Beliefs', p. 61).

When a woman marries she observes her husband's *ntoro* rites and taboos as well as her own as long as she is of child-bearing age; sometimes these observances do not begin until she is pregnant.

3. There is a limited ban on marriage between members of the same *ntoro*, but it is not nearly as strict as that of the matrilineal divisions. In general, a man and a woman of the same *ntoro* can marry if they cannot trace a common patrilineal ancestor four or five generations back. In any case, it is extremely difficult to trace patrilineal lines of descent, since *ntoro* members are scattered all over the country and are never localized as are members of the matrilineal divisions, who tend to group themselves together wherever they are.¹

THE LINEAGE (*Abusua*)

1. Local groups or villages are divided into traditional 'quarters', each of which is the locality of a matrilineage counting its members back some eight or ten generations to a common ancestress. All the descendants call themselves 'grand-children of such and such ancestress'.

2. Public offices and land ownership are vested in the lineage.

3. Ancestors and the lineage are very closely associated; ancestor shrines take the form of stools, in the custody of the head of the lineage.

4. Every lineage also has its own god or gods (*obosom*, pl. *abosom*); there is a shrine either in a special room in the house of the lineage head or in a separate house nearby.

5. There is a very strong feeling of corporate responsibility among the lineage members; for instance, there is common responsibility for debts and wrongdoings

¹ According to Field, the *ntoro*, as an exogamous group, is now extinct in Akim Kotoku. A great many of the people do not even know to which *ntoro* they belong. Field, p. 104.

of lineage members and members bear the expenses of any funeral within the lineage.

The Lineage Head (Abusua panyin)

Although descent is matrilineal among the Akan, the lineage head is a male, in whom is vested political and legal authority. There is, however, always a female head also, who has high moral authority.

The lineage head is chosen from all male lineage members by a meeting of the whole lineage. Nowadays there is a tendency to choose a youngish man, if possible an educated one. He may be recommended by his predecessor, but this must be confirmed by the majority of the lineage, who are under no obligation to elect him. A head can be removed at any time by a majority of the lineage, if they think he is disregarding their interests or behaving in a way prejudicial to the lineage.¹

The lineage head is custodian of the ancestral stools, dedicated to previous lineage heads. If he dies in office a stool will be dedicated to him also. (Only lineages whose head holds political office have ancestral stools—see 'Religious Beliefs', p. 59.)

Ownership of lineage land is vested in him; he grants portions to lineage members for farming, building etc. He also owns palm-trees on lineage land. He must approve all marriage and divorce within the lineage. He determines questions of inheritance. He is arbitrator in the numerous intra-lineage disputes which are finally referred to him if the heads of the small domestic units have been unable to settle them. This is an important part of his work as the Akan are very quarrelsome people.

DOMESTIC ORGANIZATION

Until very recently, little had been written about Akan domestic organization. Rattray, writing of the Ashanti, describes an *Omanhene's* 'palace' and says that one of its composite blocks, if detached, 'would exactly constitute the less pretentious abode of the modern family, in which conditions—save that slavery and pawning are no longer openly practised—are still almost identical' with those of former days.² Such a family, according to Rattray, might include the male household head, his wives and unmarried children, his married sons and their wives and children, and possibly the head's mother and his younger brothers and unmarried sisters; his married sisters' children might also live there. Rattray speaks only of male household heads and says also that wives generally live with their husbands.³

According to Fortes, writing some twenty years later, the situation today is rather different. Ashanti domestic organization is now very elastic; dwelling groups vary in composition at a given time and membership fluctuates from month to

¹ In Akim Kotoku, the son of the lineage head (here known as an *asafohene*—*asafo* means a group or company in this case) plays a important part in his father's lineage affairs, although he is not a member of the group. He deputizes for his father in matters of stool ritual, and when a new *asafohene* is to be elected the electors are the heads of the lineage households together with the late *asafohene's* sons; the eldest son convenes and presides over the election meeting, and remains as 'father' and adviser of the new *asafohene* until he himself is called away to succeed to some position in his own lineage. Field, p. 18.

² Rattray 3, p. 57.

³ Ibid. p. 22.

month as people move about for trade and farming. The dwelling group is generally a single kin group, i.e. its members are all connected by kinship or marriage, but in places with close urban contacts they may be tenant families or individuals, because of housing shortage. The dwelling group does not as a rule have a common food supply nor do members pool their incomes for common support, but the norm is for it to consist of a single household in the social sense: i.e. food and help are freely asked and given between members.

The Ashanti include other near kin, notably lineage kin, in their concept of the household, and therefore the term *fie* (house) is used not only for the dwelling group but also for segments of a matrilineage.

Fortes found three forms of domestic unit:

- (a) Households grouped round husband and wife. This corresponds to the elementary family in the simplest case but may include other kinsfolk.
- (b) Households grouped round a segment of the matrilineage, e.g. a woman and her sister or her daughters, or a man and his sister or his sister's son.
- (c) A combination of the previous types, e.g. a man, his wife and children and his sister's children.

The norm varies in different localities.

Wives do not always live with their husbands; it would seem that for the first two or three years of marriage they prefer to continue living with their own kin; they cling to their mothers. They cook and clean for their husbands and sleep with them but return to their own compound during the day, when they look after their unmarried male kinsfolk. Later the pull of conjugal ties becomes stronger and by the time a woman has had two or three children, whose advantage it is to be under their father's care, she has usually gone to live with her husband.

The household head (*fie panyin*) may be a man or a woman. Rattray and earlier writers mention male heads only but, according to Fortes, Ashanti say there is complete equality here between the sexes. The head is normally the most senior member by age, generation or status, but seniority alone does not give authority; personal qualities are needed and also the means to maintain one's station; the main factor is possession of the dwelling-house; this may be acquired by inheritance, gift or as a result of personal economic achievement. It is more common for a woman to be household head as a result of her son's building a house for her than by her own economic efforts; she becomes head primarily in virtue of maternal kinship ties and households under female heads are segments of matrilineages.

The household head has no control over the other adult members in economic affairs and has rights over the persons and property of the household members only with the consent of the lineage segment concerned.¹

In the matrilineal Akan society, the male family head has a dual position: as maternal uncle (*wofa*) and as father.

1. *Position of Maternal Uncle (wofa)*

Authority is vested in the maternal uncle in virtue of his position as chosen representative of a group, bound together by the common tie of 'blood'. He is the dominant person in the family and has, or used to have, a great

¹ See Field, pp. 95-103 for information on domestic organization in Akim Kotoku.

deal of power over the family members, by whom he is treated with great respect.

He had the power to pawn his nephew or niece, and although the father was expected to be given 'first refusal' in this case, he had no right to protest or interfere. In the past, an uncle, when his nephew or niece reached marriageable age, would arrange for them to marry his daughter and son respectively and had the power to compel them to do so. An uncle could also compel his niece to divorce her husband so that he might pawn her to raise money for some *abusua* debt. An uncle can remove his nephew from his father's care should the latter be too poor to bring him up properly, but if the father is prosperous and treats his son well, the uncle will not interfere and will generally allow his nephew to follow his father's trade, if any, because he, the son, 'was born already with his father's *kra* (spirit)'.

2. *Position of the Father*

Legally the father's position is a weak one; it is the 'blood' tie that really counts among the matrilineal Akan. But the supposed power of the father's *nton* or *ntoro*, which protects his children, helps to mitigate the importance of the *abusua*, so that in practice the father is a good deal more than the mere figurehead in the family which he might seem to be theoretically.

In any case, according to Akan customary law, a child belongs to his father's household and as long as the child remains with his parents his custody is in the hands of his father. The father is held responsible for his care and welfare until the child reaches puberty, when it is his duty to find him a wife and pay the 'bride-price' for his son even if the boy has money of his own. This personal responsibility is held to be terminated when a son is given a wife and a gun, or when a daughter is married, but even after puberty a father is still recognized by customary law as natural guardian and would have to act publicly as the person responsible for any commitments incurred by his child. The father alone is responsible for charges connected with his son's immoral sexual conduct, but the child's *abusua* are ultimately responsible for all other debts and torts of their kinsman. The father and mother may punish a child—the uncle only with the parents' permission. All profits derived from the work of children go to the father, not to the child's *abusua*. However, the father is expected to put some of this money aside to pay some of the marriage expenses of his son, or any taxes or claims made against him. In other words, the proceeds of a child's labour are more or less considered, morally at least, to belong to him. The father has only a life interest in such profits.

A man can give away property to his children (or to any other person) in the presence of accredited witnesses, provided he has the consent of his lineage: at most he may give them half. (The Ashanti Confederacy Council in 1942 ruled that the approval of the donor's relatives was *not* necessary.)

When the father dies, it is his children's duty to provide his coffin: this is

a very serious obligation and it is a great disgrace to a man's name if his children do not carry it out.

Danquah speaks of the custom of *Tamboba* in Akim Abuakwa (he says it is prevalent among most Akan tribes): this is a payment made by the wife's family if they have to deprive the father of his 'right of use' over any of his children for some reason, e.g. if the child is needed for service as priest of the lineage *obosom*, or to take some inheritance in the maternal family. There is a fixed sum for a daughter or a son which is payable to the father on such an occasion.¹

Naming of children is done by the father (or a member of his *ntoro*) eight days after birth: this is a very important rite as it is the means by which paternity is legally acknowledged (see 'Life Cycle', p. 51).

INHERITANCE AND SUCCESSION

In general, inheritance and succession are determined by matrilineal descent, though there are exceptions to this rule in the case of certain offices (described below p. 29).

1. *Lineage property and rights*, e.g. usufruct of so-called 'family land', trees on such land, fishing rights in streams near the villages and in some of the bigger rivers. Ownership of these is vested in the lineage head and on his death passes to his successor, chosen from among all male lineage members by a meeting of the whole lineage (see 'Land Tenure', p. 49).
2. A. *Men's property*. Rattray gives the following order of inheritance of a man's property among the Ashanti: (a) Maternal uncle, the family head, who has an absolute and undisputed right to succeed but would in practice very probably waive his right in favour of the deceased's (b) Elder brother, next brother in age and so on, (c) Mother's sister's son (*nua*), (d) Own sister's son (*wofase*), (e) Sister's daughter's son, eldest and so on, (f) Mother's sister's daughter's son, (g) Mother's sister's daughter's daughter's son.

This exhausts all possible male heirs. The females who would now come in are the dead man's (h) Eldest sister and next in age, (i) Eldest sister's daughter and so on, (j) Sister's daughter's daughter. All this line being now extinct the property goes to (k) Mother's sisters by seniority, (l) Mother's sister's daughter, (m) Mother's sister's daughter's daughter.

All *abusua* now being extinct, the property would be given to 'a slave child' (*odonko'ba*), descended from a male member of the *abusua*.²

Danquah, following Sarbah, gives a somewhat different order, as follows:

- (a) Brother, (b) Cousin, i.e. eldest *aunt's* (presumably mother's sister's) son, (c) Mother, (d) Nephew, (e) Sister, (f) Nieces, (g) Mother's younger sister, (h) Issue of mother's younger sister.

B. *Women's property*. According to Rattray, the heirs in this case appear to be the following: (a) The deceased's mother, who will often waive her right in

¹ Danquah 1.

² Rattray 1, pp. 41-4.

favour of the dead woman's (b) Sisters by seniority, (c) Own daughters by seniority, (d) Sisters' daughters, (e) Granddaughter, (f) Sister's daughter's daughter, (g) Mother's sister, who will probably give it to (h) Her own daughter, (i) Her own daughter's daughter.

The female heirs now being extinct, the property would go to (j) the male heirs in the order already given.

All *abusua* now being extinct, the property would go to a female 'slave child' (*odonko 'ba oba*).

Nowadays, with the new money economy and individual cocoa-farming, to which they are not strictly applied, the old rules of inheritance no longer have such importance; it is therefore truer today than in the past that the most likely heir is a man's own sister's own son, because of the tendency for the line of inheritance to be limited to the issue of a man's own mother and sisters. This general rule is modified by the fact that a woman is heir to such articles as are essentially feminine belongings; this is what Rattray considers to be the real interpretation of the rule: 'A woman is heir to a woman.'

Succession to Stools. The order in this case is the same as above, with the exception that neither women nor slaves can inherit male Stools, nor can men or slaves occupy women's Stools. Therefore, if all lineage relatives were extinct a member of the same clan would be brought in from elsewhere. In 1943, however, the Ashanti Confederacy Council stated: 'Members of one family (*abusua*) in one Division or State cannot inherit the Stool of the same *abusua* in another Division or State.'

Both in succession to property and to a Stool, an heir may be passed over, with the concurrence of his lineage, for various reasons.

Succession to offices. In general, succession here is also matrilineal, but there are certain exceptions, as follows:

- (a) Succession to offices of *Asafo* (Fanti) and *Mmerante* (Ashanti)—organizations of able-bodied commoners, or 'youngmen'—is normally from father to son, just as membership in these groups is patrilineally determined (see below pp. 39, 46).
- (b) The *Gyasehene* and the *Gyasefo*. The former is in charge of an Ashanti Chief's 'palace' organization, and the *Gyasefo* are the people under him (see below, p. 38). Sons of *Gyase* men would also enter the office to which their father belonged, irrespective of their mother's position (see 'Technology' p. 21, for further examples of how special lines of work or craftsmanship tended to break down the rules of matrilineal succession).
- (c) Certain Captaincies in the *Asantehene's* Court are filled only by the sons of the *Asantehene*; for instance the *Akyempemhene* responsible for the welfare of the sons and grandsons of the *Asantehene*, the *Atipinhene*, superintendent of some of the palace attendants, and the *Anamakohene*, leader of those who discharged volleys of guns at the funerals of Captains and Royals. This method of succession not only made it possible to raise the sons to positions of honour (in a matrilineal society), but also ensured that the *Asantehene* was loyally served by Captains who, besides owing their elevation to him, were bound to him by filial ties.

MARRIAGE

Three factors governing marriage and marriage prohibitions:

1. The clan (*abusua*) is always exogamous (except for clan members of slave descent, who are allowed to marry true members of the same *abusua*).
2. There is a limited ban on marriage between members of the same *ntoro*, confined in effect to a prohibition on marrying anyone of the same *ntoro* with whom one has a common great-great grandfather. Owing to the difficulty of tracing patrilineal kinship (because there is no localization of *ntoro* groups, as there is of matrilineages), it is assumed that a couple have no such common ancestor if the woman comes from a distant part of the country.
3. Prohibition on marriage with one's grandchildren, real or classificatory.

Cross-cousin marriage

Marriage with one's father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter is considered the ideal form of marriage among the Ashanti, but Sarbah says that among the Fanti a man is not encouraged to marry his father's sister's daughter. The Ashanti give as reason for these preferred forms of marriage the fact that by this method a man's property eventually benefits his own children. It reconciles a father's interest in his own children with his obligations to his nephew.

Forms of Marriage

According to Rattray, there are some six forms of marriage among the Ashanti, all of which constitute more or less legal unions. He does not mention any procedural differences among them. They are:

1. *Adehye awadie*—marriage of a free man with a free woman, in the case of commoners; in the case of a Chief, it refers to his marriage with the subject of another Chief, i.e. a woman not under his political authority.
2. *Afona awadie*—marriage of a free man with a woman already under his authority, usually a slave. Also applied to a Chief's marriage with one of his subjects.
3. *Awowa awadie*—marriage with a woman who was a pawn of either the husband or someone else at the time of the marriage.
4. *Ayete* (sororate)—obsolete except among Chiefs. Substitution by the wife's 'family' of another woman (usually a sister) to replace a wife who has died, when *aseda* (see below, 'Formalities of Marriage') is *not* paid again. If the woman selected is already married she must divorce.
5. *Kuna awadie* (levirate)—marriage of widow or widows by the heir of their late husband. This practice has survived among all classes and public opinion would be quick to condemn any man shirking such a responsibility.
6. *Mpena awadie* (lit. the mating of lovers)—open and permanent living together of a man and a woman without payment of *aseda*. In this case the man cannot claim any adultery compensation and the woman can leave the man without her *abusua* incurring any expense. Sarbah says that this is considered a regular form of marriage among the Fanti. Rattray agrees that it probably was in the past.

Female Twins (ntaa) who are not blood relations of the Chief become Stool wives.

Infant betrothal. A girl can be betrothed as an infant or even before birth. *Aseda* is paid so that adultery fees can be claimed from anyone making advances to the infant wife. The union is completed six days after the girl's second menstrual period. If the girl repudiates the arrangement, she and her parents must repay the value of all gifts received from the man.

Formalities of Marriage

Marriage among the Akan is the concern, not only of the man and woman contracting it, but of their kinsfolk also. Its effects on each partner's lineage (*abusua*) are far-reaching and so every marriage should receive the sanction of the lineage-heads (*abusua panyin*) of both the man and the woman. The parents also play an important part in the arrangements. It is held that in the old days children always obeyed their parents in the question of marriage. Now they sometimes ignore their parents' objections and take matters into their own hands.

Kyei gives the following account of marriage procedure in Ashanti:

1. A couple are attracted to each other; the man proposes to the girl and if she accepts him he finds out her parents' attitude to his marrying her. He sends gifts (now mainly cash, formerly meat and salt) to his future mother-in-law, and he helps with friends on the parents' farm.
2. *Ahudee* (introduction fee). The man now introduces himself formally to his prospective 'in-laws'. A bottle of gin (or cash) is sent to the girl's father, and also to her *abusua panyin*. This 'introduction fee' is new in Ashanti and is thought to be of Fanti origin. At this stage the couple may cohabit but the union is not strictly legal: the man is not entitled to adultery fees.
3. *Ayeyode* (gift presentation), formerly meat, now usually cash. The following are the recipients of the formal nuptial gifts: (a) Bride's father (7s., 10s. 6d. or 13s.), (b) Bride's *abusua panyin* (as above), (c) Bride's mother (7s.), (d) Bride's female relatives (4s.), (e) Bride's brothers (2s. or 4s.), (f) The Bride herself (21s. or 42s. or more, according to the man's pocket or her social standing).
4. *Kosre*. The man 'begs' for the girl from her father or her *abusua panyin* through his own father or *abusua panyin*.
5. *Tirinsa* (head wine). This establishes a lawful marriage in Ashanti and other Akan countries. It consists of money and drink paid by the man's father to the girl's father or her *abusua panyin* (in either case the actual recipient sends some to the other). This is *aseda* or 'thanks-money', which is the Akan method of sealing a deal of any kind: in any two-part transaction involving an element of law, the man who benefits produces drink and money to bind the witnesses and to ensure the benevolence of the ancestors. This *aseda* drink is shared by the senior males of the girl's *abusua* and a part is given to the ancestral spirits or *samanfo*. This money must never be given directly to the bride's mother: 'Women do not receive *aseda*.'
6. *Anyame-dwan* (god's sheep). In localities where *tirinsa* is paid to the *abusua panyin*, this is money paid to the girl's father; it represents a sheep for the

father's *kra* or spirit which has guided the girl from childhood and will now bless the marriage.

7. *Aduan-kese* (big dish) cooked by the wife for the relatives and friends of her husband, and for anyone in the village who wishes to eat of it.
8. *Afa-yide* (consolation fee) paid to the bride's mother on the first marriage night for taking the girl from her mother's bedside (this is paid only on the occasion of a girl's first marriage).
9. *Tirisika* (head money). This may be given by the husband to pay debts of the bride's *abusua*. There will be no demand for its return as long as the wife remains with her husband. It may eventually be given to her by him in return for help on his farm, in trade etc.; in this case she and her family will give *aseda* to the husband and his family.

Field's account of marriage formalities in Akim Kotoku differs somewhat from the above. According to Field, the Akim distinguish between *Wofase* or cross-cousin marriage, and *Awari*, the set of formalities associated with the ordinary marriage of non-cousins. In *Wofase* marriage there are no formalities beyond the payment of a bottle of rum or a pot of palm wine by the husband to the wife's parents as a seal on the contract (*odidiso*). In *Awari* marriage the ceremonial gifts vary somewhat with the wealth of the husband; the minimum formalities appear to be the following: (a) sending of door-knocking wine (*abobonsa*) by man's father to the girl's parents; acceptance of this is the sign of their assent to the marriage; (b) payment of *tirinsa* (head wine)—the man's father sends at least four shillings to each of the girl's parents; this amount is compulsory; larger sums may be given, but in case of divorce only four shillings may be claimed from each parent, whatever the amount originally given. The man usually gives some small gifts, such as a mirror, a box, a comb, new cloths etc. to the girl before she actually becomes his wife. *Trika* (cf. Ashanti *tirisika*) may be given by the husband to pay a debt of the bride's *abusua*; this must be refunded in case of divorce. Field also speaks of *Doba* marriage: a man with a marriageable daughter may decide to give her as wife to some youth of excellent character whom he desires as a son-in-law: in such a case the youth's father is merely expected to pay the drink associated with *Wofase* marriage.¹

Rights and liabilities acquired by a husband on payment of Tirinsa

1. *Rights*: (a) He can claim damages, in the event of his wife's infidelity, from the co-respondent, who might be sold by his *abusua* to pay the debt, i.e. he has exclusive rights to the woman's body. (b) He can profit by the fruits of his wife's labour and that of her children. In reality this amounts to the mutual assistance that people sharing a common *ménage* accord each other. (c) *Tirisika* must be repaid by the woman's family if she dies or has to leave her husband for any reason.
2. *Liabilities*: (a) For his wife's debts and torts and for her maintenance and that of her children. (b) When she lives with him he takes into his house someone over whom neither he nor his *abusua* has ultimately any control and one whose acceptance of her position depends largely on the treatment she gets.

¹ See Field, pp. 104-9.

DIVORCE

This is usually obtained by the husband but proceedings may be started by either party. However, Sarbah says of the Fanti that only the husband may obtain a divorce.

*Grounds for divorce*¹

- A. A man may obtain a divorce on grounds of his wife's (1) barrenness, (2) adultery, (3) habitual drunkenness, (4) quarrelsome nature; (5) if it is impossible to maintain ordinary relations with mother-in-law, especially if she is always abusing him; (6) if he discovers after marriage that he has married into his own *abusua* or has infringed the *ntoro* marriage ban; (7) if witchcraft is proved; and (8) in certain peculiar circumstances, without publicly assigning any cause—adultery with his closest friend, for example.
- B. A woman can obtain a divorce on grounds of (1) husband's impotence; (2) her own sterility; (3) husband's adultery; (4) refusal to maintain her properly; (5) assaulting her in some lonely spot; (6) taking another wife without asking her permission, if she is the senior wife; (7) absence for three years without provision for her maintenance; (8) witchcraft.

(N.B. This list is not exhaustive.)

Recovery of Tirisika, Tirinsa, payment of adultery fees etc.

- A. In cases of wife's misconduct, the man is entitled to the refund of *tirisika* and that part of *tirinsa* which has not been given to the ancestral spirits. If she has committed adultery he may also recover customary damages (*ayefare*) from the seducer: the amount of these depends on the social status of the husband.
- B. In cases of husband's misconduct, he may have to refund all the wife's family's expenditure on gifts, etc. for him. He cannot recover *tirinsa*. But when the wife starts divorce proceedings the husband can demand immediate return of *tirisika*: 'If she had not already planned with someone else she would not seek divorce.'

Ceremony of divorce

When *tirinsa* has been returned to the husband, or when he has refunded his wife's family's expenses (if he is the guilty party), the wife gives him white clay (*hyire*) which he smears over her shoulder-blades: this act is called '*hyire guo*' and it nullifies the marriage. Drinks are served to those who witness the ceremony and their cost is borne by the husband and the wife or her mother's senior brother.

Custody of children of a dissolved marriage

A divorced wife leaves her husband but the children remain subject to the custody of their father. Usually the older children live with their father while the younger ones stay with their mother until they are old enough to go to live with the father. A man may remove his children from their mother as soon as they are weaned if he wishes, or he may provide money or meat for the divorced mother to feed the children. He also clothes them and is responsible for curing them when ill and for all other paternal obligations. Some men refuse custody of their children who are

¹ See Rattray 2, pp. 97-8.

then under the care of their mother and her *abusua*. A man who marries a divorced woman may feel it his moral duty to adopt her children.

Parents are afraid that separation from the father may have a bad effect on the child's *sunsum* or spirit, which it inherits from its father and which is under the protection of his *sunsum* (modern version of the *ntoro*) when the child is young and weak.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE¹

The political systems of all the Akan peoples are fundamentally similar in organization, though they vary in complexity and detail, the Ashanti having the most highly organized system. The first part of this account describes those features which are common to all the Akan peoples; this is followed by descriptions of various features peculiar to certain tribes, about which information is available. In all cases, major changes in the native political systems which have occurred in recent years as the result of British rule will be noted.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AKAN POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The country is divided into a number of territorial divisions (*Ashanti*) or States, each one known as an *Oman*, meaning 'nation'; each consists of one capital town or village and many subsidiary villages and hamlets. The capital is the seat of the Chief (*Omanhene*; *ohene* = chief in all dialects) and his Court, which includes the Queen-Mother (*Ohema*) and a number of Elders or *Mpanyinfo*, who form the Chief's Council and assist him in the administration of the state. Some states have several subdivisions, each with its own sub-chief, who has a court which is the replica of that of the *Omanhene* in the capital.

The domestic and personal affairs of the *Omanhene* in his palace in the capital are administered by the *Gyasefo*, a group of Elders and subordinate officials, the most important of which is the *Gyasehene* (Court Chamberlain, see below, p. 38).

The *Omanhene* rules directly over the inhabitants of the capital and indirectly over outlying villages and towns which own as their direct head one of the Elders or *Mpanyinfo* residing in the capital. Together the *Omanhene* and his Council of Elders control the administration of the state.

Territorial sub-chiefs (*Birempon* among the Ashanti) have not as a rule any regular place on the Council of the *Omanhene*; that is, they are not strictly speaking reckoned among the Elders, unless summoned to discuss a matter concerning the whole state, e.g. war, funeral of *Omanhene* or appointment of his successor, etc. They administer their own subdivision independently of the *Omanhene*, with the aid of their own Council of Elders.

POLITICAL UNITS

The political units on which the administration of the state is based are:

1. *The matrilineage*, the basis of communal life in both town and country. There is still a strong feeling of corporate responsibility among the members of a matrilineage, though it is weaker than in the past, when they lived close together in houses grouped round that of the lineage head. He is the ritual and political head of the group and it is his duty to maintain amicable relations within the lineage and to represent it in its relations with the other lineage groups of the village community.

¹ Busia; Danquah 1; Field; Fortes 1; Johnson; Rattray 1, 3.

2. *The village*, traditionally divided into different 'quarters' each one the locality of a particular lineage, consists of a number of lineages forming a political unit under the Headman (*Odekuro*); he is selected from the heads of these lineages to watch over the common interests of the village. He is its official representative and spokesman through whom the Chief or one of his Elders transmits orders. He and the other lineage heads form the village Council.
3. *Subdivisions* exist in certain states. They have an organization similar to that of the greater Division; the head is a sub-chief with his own court and Council of Elders, etc.
4. *Division or State (Oman)*. This is the largest of the political units. The Chief is the focal point in the relations between the separate lineages, villages and subdivisions and holds the whole together.

SELECTION OF POLITICAL OFFICE-HOLDERS

This is based on a combination of hereditary eligibility and popular selection: this double principle runs right through the Akan state organization, from the lineage head to the *Omanhene*.

1. *Election of the Chief*. He is chosen from the royal lineage of the state. Any male member of this lineage is theoretically eligible for election. The Queen-Mother, regarded as the authority on kinship relations in the lineage, nominates a suitable candidate, after consultation with the senior men and women of the lineage. If the Elders approve, they summon a meeting of the whole *Oman* to consider the candidate. The commoners, that is, the citizens who are not councillors or Elders, have the final word in the election of the Chief; if they do not approve of the proposed candidate another must be nominated. 'A Royal does not install the Chief,' Ashanti say; that is the privilege of the commoners who have to serve him.

Only those who elect a Chief can destool him; this is a fundamental principle of the Akan political organization. Thus the common people have ultimately the constitutional right to destool a Chief, with the consent of the Elders, who, however, may initiate destoolment themselves, if for example, the Chief repeatedly disregards their advice. In former days, a Chief might be destooled for such reasons as habitual drunkenness, gluttony, cruelty, or if he became blind, impotent, mad, etc. At the present time the Chief is still elected and installed in accordance with native law and custom, but he must be recognized by the Governor before he can exercise his political functions. The choice of a Chief is thus no longer ultimately dependent on the will of the people.

2. *Election of a Councillor or Elder of the Court*. Most of these are heads of the important lineages located in the capital. Each holds an hereditary office, the symbol of which is its Stool. They are selected by the adult men and women of their lineage and their names are submitted to the Chief, who can ask that someone else be appointed if he does not like the candidate. (For other Councillors, see below. p. 38)
3. *Odekuro or village headman*. He is usually selected by the heads of all the lineages in the village from among themselves, but sometimes the headship

becomes hereditary in one particular lineage, and the head of that lineage is automatically the village *Odekuro*.

4. *Lineage head*. He is selected by all adult members of the lineage. There is a strong tendency nowadays to choose a fairly young and, if possible, an educated man.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHIEF IN THE TRADITIONAL SOCIAL SYSTEM¹

1. He was the focus of unity in the community, counterbalancing the tendency of each of the lineage groups to seek its own advantage without reference to the common interest. Each Elder in the Chief's Council was interested in his own lineage and in the villages under him; it was the Chief's duty to reconcile these sectional interests of the Elders, as he was responsible for the whole state.
2. This unifying role and the subordination of lineages and villages etc. thereto was symbolically expressed in the Chief's ritual acts as the chief intermediary between the community and the royal ancestor spirits, without whose benevolence the community was believed to run the risk of various misfortunes.
3. He was the custodian of customary law and the promulgator of new rules of public conduct.
4. He was the leader of the people in war.

His position can be summed up in the formula: to serve as the central point round which the community was held together as a unit in defending itself from destruction by enemies, in the maintenance of law and order and the rule of custom, in obedience to the ancestors and gods. This was a relatively passive function.

THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE CHIEF²

The existence of British administration implies the reduced status and prestige of the Chief; the people tend to regard the District Commissioner as the chief guardian of their interests. The Chief has become a subordinate authority; his powers are limited and defined by ordinance; both he and his subjects are under the control of the Government, which the people associate with limitless power and wealth, in contrast to the limited power and wealth and lowered prestige of the Chief.

1. The lineage organization has no function in the activities connected with many of the tasks that nowadays fall on the Chief and his Elders.
2. The religious function of the Chief has ceased to be regarded as of supreme significance for the welfare of the community.
3. The maintenance of law and order, even under customary law, is subject to limitations laid down in ordinances and the sanctions are vested in the District Commissioner.
4. The Chief is no longer the military leader; the people do not look to him for defence but to the Government, with consequent loss of prestige and authority by the Chief.

¹ See Fortes 1.

² See Busia.

THE ELDERS OR COUNCILLORS

Most, but not all, of these are heads of the important lineages located in the capital; these Elders used to be distinguished by the names of their lineages, but later these were superseded by titles indicating their position in the military organization of the state. An *Omanhene* has the power to appoint anyone to be his councillor: he will inform the other councillors of his choice, but is not bound to take their advice. Some councillors succeed to their positions through the male line; these are nearly all *Gyase* officials.

The titles and offices of the Elders or councillors fall into two groups:

1. *Gyase* group, headed by the *Gyasehene*. These exercise their authority and influence within the royal household.
 2. *Abontendom* group, the most important of whom is usually either the *Adontenhene* or the *Ko'ntirehene* (Ashanti). Their function was originally that of military leadership. These exercise their authority outside the royal household.
1. *Gyase* group
 - (a) The *Gyasehene*. He is equivalent to a Court Chamberlain. He supervises the numerous officials of the Chief's household who include treasurers, stool-carriers, drummers, minstrels, heralds, cooks, bath attendants, keeper of the royal mausoleum etc. These people may or may not be Elders in their own right. The *Gyasehene* is often of slave origin. Succession to this position is frequently through the male line (this is true of many of the *Gyase* posts), or it may be filled by nomination.
 - (b) *Okyeame*, or Spokesman (sometimes erroneously translated 'Linguist'.) This is an important office on the *Gyase* side. A Chief usually has several spokesmen, who are very busy officials. The office of Head Spokesman (*Kyeamehene* or *Kyeamepanyin*) is hereditary, and the holder, like many of the other Elders, is head of his lineage. The Chief may appoint other spokesmen for personal merit; they hold office at his pleasure.

Access to the Chief is through the spokesmen. They speak at public meetings for the Chief. They also deliver verdicts in court which the Chief may not do, because he must never fall liable to a grudge or make a mistake; any blame thus falls on the spokesman. Spokesmen are the Chief's diplomatic representatives: he communicates with other Chiefs through them.

 - (c) *Abusuahene* ([Royal] Clan Chief). This is his generic title. Locally he is given a more particular designation, being named after the royal clan, over sections of which it is his duty to preside. He looks after the interests of the royal lineage, though not himself a member of this lineage, but of the clan of which it forms part. This position obviates the necessity for the Chief to adjudicate in person on matters where his own kin are concerned except, of course, on appeal; he thus avoids accusations of nepotism.¹

2. *Abontendom* group

The titles here are derived from positions in the military organization of the state. They include the *Adontenhene* (leader of the main body of the army), the *Benkumhene* (leader of the left wing), the *Nifahene* (leader of the right wing), the *Kyidomhene*

¹ Rattray 3, pp. 89-90.

(leader of the rearguard), and the *Ankobeahene* (leader of the Chief's bodyguard. *Ankobe*, 'he does not go anywhere', is so-called because he stays at home to guard the palace when the army goes to war without the Chief). In Ashanti there are also the *Ko'ntirehene* and the *Akwamuhene*; the former is commander of the army if the Chief himself does not go to war, and the latter is his second-in-command; these two take precedence over all the other Elders; rank among the rest depends on the history of the state.

THE QUEEN-MOTHER (*Ohema*)

Though described as the 'mother' of the Chief, she is more often his sister; constitutionally she is regarded as his mother. She is expected to advise the Chief about his conduct and may scold and reprimand him in a way not permitted to his councillors. When a Chief's Stool is vacant the Queen-Mother proposes his successor; she is regarded as the authority on kinship relations in the Royal lineage. However, not her wishes but those of the Elders prevail in the choice of a candidate; she simply advises on his eligibility from the point of view of kinship and character.

When the new Chief is selected he may prefer a different Queen-Mother—for example, his own sister. In this case, provided the Elders approve, the hitherto reigning Queen-Mother retires and her successor is enstooled in her place. If a Queen-Mother dies while on the Stool, her successor is chosen by the Chief's Elders from among the women of the royal lineage; in certain states the Chief may also take part in her selection.

The Queen-Mother is consulted in matrimonial affairs within the royal lineage. She has her own Stool, Elders and Spokesmen and she hears 'household' cases (*efisem*), usually matrimonial cases and disputes between members of the royal household. She used to be a member of the Chief's court and received her share of court fines and fees.

The Queen-Mother does not control all the women of the state; every lineage has its own Senior Woman (*Obaapanyin*), responsible for the women of the lineage and concerned with their marriages and divorces. But in the old days, when the men had gone to war, the Queen-Mother, as head of the royal lineage, superintended the rites and dirges of the women praying for victory and the safe return of the men.

THE COMMONERS (Ashanti term—*Mmerante*; Fanti—*Asafo*)

These are the citizens who are not Chiefs or Elders; they bore the brunt of active combat in war and in peacetime do most of the public services (road, town and farm work for the Chief). In every Akan village and town, the commoners have an association of their own, but its degree of development and of social and political importance varies greatly among the different peoples; the Fanti *Asafo* is the most highly developed of these organizations.

In general, these associations of commoners, with their recognized spokesmen or leaders, occupy an important place in the political system of the Akan state, as it is through them that public opinion and criticism of the government are expressed; the Elders cannot oppose unpopular measures for fear of being accused of disloyalty to the Chief, since they are responsible with him for any decisions made affecting

the people: the commoners, however, can do this. They also play an important part in the election of the Chief; without their approval a candidate could not be elected.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE (BEFORE BRITISH RULE)

The work of administration was done by the heads and councillors of the political units: ward or quarter, with its lineage head, village and subdivision. The Chief dealt with the Elders at the capital and, in matters affecting the whole state, with the full Council of these Elders together with the *Birempon* or sub-chiefs of any subdivisions.

In each administrative unit the head acted with the advice and concurrence of his council. This council consisted of representatives who were expected to consult the group they represented and give effect to its wishes on the council. If a village, lineage etc., was not properly served it could change its representative; in this way all the representatives were subject to popular control.

Underlying all this was the uniform practice of decentralization; each unit was left to manage all affairs which concerned itself alone.

ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS OF OFFICIALS

Their task was to keep law and order in the community. This entailed:

- (a) *Military duties.* Service was based on kinship, which was also the basis of political organization (allegiance to the place and group of one's mother's birth). In time of war, all able-bodied commoners got together in lineage groups within the village units, under company leaders chosen from among themselves; these leaders were responsible through the Elders to the Chief. Territorially adjacent groups fought in different parts of the national army, e.g. one in the left wing, and a neighbouring group in the right wing, being thus prevented from uniting against the *Omanhene* if tempted to do so.
- (b) *Legislation.* Important proposals and laws were passed by a meeting of the full Council of the state. Major proposals of the Chief and his Elders in the capital were submitted for decision to the full Council. The people were informed of decisions by the beating of 'gongong' in the streets in the evening when all had returned from work; it was the duty of the Elders and *Adikrofo* to see that all new decisions, orders etc. were transmitted to the people under their care.
- (c) *Judicial functions.* Law and order must be maintained and custom adhered to. Offences were divided into two main categories:
 - i. Those which did not concern the Chief, i.e. private or household issues (*efisem*—Ashanti). These might involve disputes between members of the same or of different lineages and were settled either by arbitration by a respected member of the group, or by the lineage head, or by discussion between the heads of the lineages involved. Though the judgment of these Elders or lineage heads had no political sanction, a religious sanction was implied since the heads were held in respect as successors of the ancestors.
 - ii. Those which concerned the central authority as public or tribal offences, because they were taboos or 'things hated by the tribe', and came before the Chief and his court of Elders. They were at the same time religious offences and endangered the well-being of the whole community;

they included murder, tabooed sexual acts, misuse of supernatural powers (witchcraft etc.), treason, infringement of commands enjoined with the Chief's oath, and offences against the Chief (because he was socially and ritually identified with the ancestors). Private issues like adultery, theft etc., could be made public issues by the use of the oath.

Oaths among the Akan contain a reference to some misfortune or disaster that, according to tradition, occurred in the past. Every *Odekuro*, Elder, and Chief has his own oath. It is taboo to allude to these misfortunes, both because the ancestors are annoyed or grieved by the memory of such disasters and also because the misfortune might then recur; the Elder etc. whose oath is used has therefore to investigate the occasion of its utterance and punish any misuse. Oaths are set formulae alluding very obscurely to the tragic incident, usually only by the day of the week on which it occurred. Anyone wanting his cause to be inquired into swears the oath in the presence of a third party; if the other also responds by swearing in defence of his claim the witness must arrest them both. After inquiry and decision, the one found 'Not Guilty' pays *aseda* and the guilty person apologizes to the Chief through an Elder for using the oath, and pays the oath fee and any fines decided on by the court, according to the nature of the offence.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNDER BRITISH RULE¹

For purposes of administration, the Colonial Government has divided the Gold Coast into large territorial Districts each enclosing several native states. Each District, in charge of an Administrative Officer, usually consists of several Native Authorities, defined by Ordinance as 'any chief or other native or any native council or group of natives or native councils declared to be a Native Authority under this Ordinance for the area concerned'. The *Omanhene* of each State or Division is appointed President of the Native Authority for that State or Division.

The N.A. is responsible for the maintenance of order and good government within its territory. It has power to make rules and issue orders on certain subjects in the area of its authority. It is expected to establish a treasury to meet the costs of administering its area and providing health and social services. It is protected by Government in the exercise of its powers and is under the control and supervision of Government officials.

There is a general trend towards centralization, necessary for the adequate performance of the N.A.'s main tasks. The result is that the village headmen now have very little share in the administrative work of the state. They may attend the State Council if a constitutional case is to be settled or if a new rule or regulation is important enough to warrant a meeting, but otherwise there is little for them to do. Treasury and court work devolve mainly on the literate staff, administrative instructions from the District Commissioner are dealt with by the Chief and Elders. Many complaints which would formerly have been settled by the Elders and village headmen now go to the court by summons, or to the District Commissioner, so that the traditional role of the headmen and Elders as peace-makers within the community is declining in importance.

The position of the Chief under British rule has already been described (see p. 37)

¹ See Busia.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF CERTAIN STATES

I. THE ASHANTI POLITICAL SYSTEM¹

The Ashanti had the most elaborately developed political system of all the Akan peoples before the British conquest of 1900 disintegrated the Ashanti Union. The organization of each individual state within the Union was more or less as described above under 'General characteristics of Akan political structure'; it is the organization of the Union that is of special interest.

The Mmerante (commoners)

Among the Ashanti the village associations of commoners or *Mmerante* did not hold regular meetings, but discussed all matters of importance which the Elders dealt with. They had a recognized leader or spokesman: the *Nkwankwaahene* (*Nkwankwaa*—young men). This was not a hereditary office: he was chosen for his courage and eloquence. Disputes were submitted for his arbitration and he presented the commoners' views on any important question to the Elders. Although the *Nkwankwaahene* had no official place on the Elders' Council they recognized him as the commoners' representative and gave consideration to his suggestions; thus public opinion and criticism of the government was expressed by the commoners through this spokesman. The commoners also played an important part in the election of the Chief: a candidate for the Stool had to have their backing in order to be successful. The position of *Nkwankwaahene* has been suppressed since the conquest of Ashanti by the British and there is now no established organ for the expression of public opinion and criticism. This function cannot be fulfilled by the Elders: their job is to try to maintain some degree of stability and certainty in the management of the community.

The Ashanti Union

The tradition is that the Ashanti states formed a Union in order to fight for their independence against Denkerā, to which they were tributary. A number of separate, autonomous states, possessing similar social and political institutions, a common language and religion, and bound by ties of clanship, were welded into a Union under the *Asantehene*, whose capital was Kumasi. The Union was a loose confederation in which each state kept its own treasury, held its own religious festivals and managed its own internal affairs. By the end of the nineteenth century, partly owing to migration and partly by absorption and conquest of other tribes, the Union included the states of Kumasi (including Nkwanta and Berekum), Mampong, Juaben, Bekwai, Kokofu, Nsuta, Asumegya, Kumawu, Adansi, Offinsu, Agona, Wam-Pamu, Nkoranza, Techiman and Banda.² The states which were conquered and absorbed were left in possession of their lands and managed their own internal affairs. The bond between them all was common allegiance to the *Asantehene*.

¹ See Busia; Rattray 1, 3.

² See Busia.

No permanent Union army was established: the different states supplied the necessary men when the need arose; all able-bodied men of each state were liable for military service. As the Chiefs provided the fighting men, they were consulted in all matters relating to war: foreign policy was the joint responsibility of all the Chiefs.

Sanctions of the Union. (a) Physical force, used to prevent attempts at secession from the Union; (b) the existence of other potentially hostile states to the north and south of Ashanti gave unity and solidarity to the Union; (c) sentiments of loyalty to the Golden Stool, symbol of the unity of the Ashanti nation, and respect for the ancestors who had originated the Union, were kept up by periodic ritual ceremonies in Kumasi.

The Kumasi Division

In Kumasi the lineage system, on which the military organization of the other states was built up, gave way to groupings based entirely on military considerations. Instead of lineages there were military units or companies (*fekuo*), composed of people of different clans placed under Captains (*Safohene*). There were eight companies said to have been created to commemorate victories: *Konti*, *Akwamu*, *Adonten*, *Benkum*, *Oyoko*, *Kyidom*, *Gyase* and *Ankobe*. The present *Asantehene* has added a ninth company, *Manwere*. Of these, the *Oyoko* and *Adonten* are clans; the former consists of members of the *Oyoko* clan, to which the Kumasi Royals belong, and the latter of members of the *Asenie* clan. The *Oyokohene* and the *Adontenhene* are thus *Abusuatiri* (heads of clans or lineages) as distinct from the others who are Captains (*safohene*) in charge of groups of people of different clans. Nowadays these Kumasi Captains are erroneously known as 'Clan Chiefs', a quite unjustified name.

The Civil Administration of the Kumasi Division was based on the military organization. The company heads became the *Asantehene's* councillors. They were not only military leaders and civil advisers but were also responsible for the administration of the areas and people placed under them. A peculiar feature of this Division is that the Captains were appointed not only over groups and villages near Kumasi, where they lived, but also over distant villages. The Captains stayed in Kumasi and left the distant villages to manage their own affairs under their headmen; in case of war the inhabitants of these villages were available to fight under their Captains. The Captains also had judicial functions; they were members of the *Asantehene's* Court and settled disputes among their own subjects. These Kumasi Chiefs all had and have a varying number of subordinate chiefs whose offices are also of military origin; succession to some of these offices is patrilineal.

The Asantehene

He was the point of common contact for the separate companies and Captains of the Kumasi Division, and was also the centre to which all the Chiefs of the Union were connected; within the Union he held a unique position. He is the most venerated living person in Ashanti, as the successor of Osei Tutu, the first *Asantehene*, and as occupier of the Golden Stool, the symbol of the unity of Ashanti. He is not an autocrat, but is subject to constitutional checks: the same constitutional practice

which governs the election of Chiefs applies to the *Asantehene*; his election is not only the concern of the Queen-Mother and the Kumasi Captains, but also of all the Chiefs of the Union.

In the management of the affairs of Kumasi, the *Asantehene* had to consult the Council of eight Captains and act on their advice. In matters affecting the Union he was subject to similar checks by the Chiefs of the constituent states. As in the case of Chiefs, the *Asantehene* could be deposed by the electors if he did not rule constitutionally.

Administration of the Union

(a) Chiefs must not be approached directly, only through a spokesman, therefore each Divisional Chief had as 'Court Friend' (*Adamfo*) one of the Kumasi Captains, to act as liaison between him and the *Asantehene*. The *Adamfo* kept the Chief (whom he called '*Barima*'—'my man') informed of events in the capital and sent messengers to him if his presence was required there. An *Adamfo* was not appointed by a Chief himself; according to tradition each had been appointed at a different time by an *Asantehene* as the need arose.

(b) The *Asantehene*'s court was the final court of appeal for all cases arising within the Union. Certain cases came before a national tribunal consisting of the Divisional and Kumasi Chiefs and presided over by the *Asantehene*. It was not a regular court, but was summoned if a case was such that it could only be properly tried by the national tribunal, e.g. cases between two Divisional Chiefs, or serious crimes such as treason.

The Ashanti Confederacy Council

As defined by Ordinance, the Confederacy Council is a Native Authority over the Divisions within the Confederacy (restored in 1935) and exercises certain powers concurrently with the Native Authorities for states. Membership includes Chiefs and others from the constituent Divisions. The Council may intervene to prevent the commission of any crime within the area of its authority; it may issue orders and make rules on certain specified subjects; it may declare or modify Native Custom, subject to the approval of the Governor; it may establish a treasury and it may adjudicate in certain constitutional cases. It differs from the old Ashanti Union in certain respects:

- (a) Membership is the same except that seven educated members have been appointed to represent the views of the educated commoners.
- (b) The Confederacy Council is an administrative body with legislative and judicial powers, whereas the Union was primarily a military council, which also met periodically on ritual and ceremonial occasions and was sometimes summoned to meet as a judicial council.
- (c) The Confederacy Council and the Division both operate directly on the people; everyone is subject to several Native Authorities.
- (d) Some matters lie within the sphere of both the general and Divisional Native Authorities. This sets aside the principle which governed the old Union, namely, that each Division was solely responsible for matters which affected itself alone.

- (e) In the case of the Union there were religious sanctions of sentiment, of attachment to the Golden Stool and of reverence for the ancestors, as well as the secular sanction of force. In the case of the Confederacy, the authority of Government is the ultimate sanction for its powers.

2. AKIM ABUAKWA¹

The state of Akim Abuakwa is governed by an *Omanhene* assisted by three distinct Councils, each consisting of elected Chiefs, Sub-Chiefs, Elders and Councillors.

A. *The Kibbi Council*

This is a body of Chiefs, Elders and Councillors who are in constant consultation with the *Omanhene* in the state capital at Kibbi, and to whom is entrusted the direct government of the state. It consists of three main sections or parties usually called:

(a) *Ankobe*, which is subdivided into: (i) *Ankobe* proper, the leader of which is the *Ankobeahene*, is senior to (ii) *Gyase* section, the leader of which is the *Gyasehene*. All *Nhenkwa* (State messengers and emblem bearers) are under him, as is any new sect formed by part of the people, e.g. a new Christian confraternity.

(b) *Apesemaka*. This is the senior part of the Council. The *Apesemakahene* is the *Abontendomhene* of Kibbi; he is first councillor to the *Omanhene*. Succession to this post is not the usual matrilineal one; the holder is nominated directly by the Kibbi Council and the only eligible people are the sons of past and present *Amanhene*. The Queen-Mother belongs to this section.

(c) *Kyidom*. This section possesses two Stools; the senior is that of the *Kyidomhene*, and the second Stool is that of the *Kyidom Panyin*.

For all political purposes, four principal Chiefs are counted as forming the Kibbi Council, viz.: the *Gyasehene*, *Ankobeahene*, *Apesemakahene* and *Kyidomhene*. They, together with the *Omanhene*, manage the political life of the State.

B. *The Amantoo-mmiensa Council or Council of Three Counties*

It is formed of the Chiefs and people of three towns or counties situated within seven miles of the capital: (a) Apapam, the chief town, whose *Odekuro* is president of the Council; (b) Apedwa; (c) Tete.

This council really represents the interests of the common people; the Chiefs of the Council have behind them, as the real operative force, the *Asafomma* or companies of young men. It has a marked influence over both the other councils and may be said to be a sort of connecting link between them. It has the right to criticize all acts of the Executive and is regarded as the official mouthpiece of public opinion.

C. *The Okyeman (State) Council*

This is the national council of the state; it includes all members of the other two councils and all other Chiefs and sub-chiefs of the state; every Stool-owning Chief is on this council. It is the legislative assembly of the

¹ See Danquah 1.

nation and all laws and customs and most of the rules and regulations concerning the state are passed by it. It is also the final Court of Appeal in Akim Abuakwa.

Asafo companies

As in the other Akan states, companies of young men exist in every town and village in Akim Abuakwa. Their leaders or Captains (*Asafoatsefo*), appointed every two or three years, are by the existing laws of the country and as long as they remain Captains of their companies, recognized members of the councils of the Chiefs of the various towns. They form an effective check on the activities of the council, if these appear to be unconstitutional or against the interests of the common people. In general, these *Asafo* companies are acknowledged to possess: (a) a definite voice in the election of the Chief; (b) a right to advise on the price of goods brought to the local market; (c) recognition as the only organized body for local emergencies: road work, town work, farm work, and civil and military services.

3. THE FANTI¹

It is among the Fanti of the coastal towns that the association of young men or commoners is most fully developed and most politically and socially important.

The *Asafo* was primarily a warrior organization. The name was given to all male adults banded together for any purpose, particularly war. 'In its wider sense, it is a socio-politico-military organization, embracing both men and women, including stool-holders or persons holding positions ordinarily recognized as forming part of the political constitution of the *Oman*, . . . as well as all others capable of defending in any way the common honour and integrity of such an *Oman*. In its narrower sense, the *Asafo* connotes the third estate or common people, . . . as distinguished from the *mpanyinfo*, chiefs and elders.'²

There is a strong patrilineal element here, which cuts right across the Akan lineage organization; membership in the *Asafo* companies is patrilineally determined; every child normally belongs to its father's *Asafo* (but by adoption a stranger may join). Also, succession to every office in the *Asafo* is normally from father to son.

The *Tufohin* is the head of all the *Asafo* in each Fanti state; he is the 'Chief of the Gunners'. This is both a military and a political position. The appointment is always subject to the approval of the whole *Asafo*, whether the position is hereditary in a particular family or filled by popular choice. The *Safohin* or Captain is the senior officer in charge of a company or section; there are various other officers, such as drummers and flagbearers.

Women also belong to their father's *Asafo*. They may form themselves into *Adziwa*—dancing and social bands which are the equivalent of *Asafo* attached to certain companies.

From the military point of view, the *Asafo's* function is primarily defensive; they protect the state. Politically, the *Asafo* forms the essential and most articulate part of the *oman*; everyone belongs and only ceases to be actively identified with it on elevation to a public Stool or councillorship. Through its leaders the *Asafo* can express public opinion or criticism of the government; it is represented on the Tribunal and has a voice in the election and destoolment of the Chief.

¹ Johnson.

² Ibid. p. 308.

LAND TENURE¹

The general position regarding land tenure in the Gold Coast at the present time is very confused; it is impossible to assess the full measure of the effect on native customary law of all the changes due, in particular, to the establishment and growth of the cocoa industry, because so little is yet known about the subject. Wage labour, for example, almost unknown in former times, has become a regular feature of the land economy and with it bailiffs, absentee landlords and multiple owners have arisen, but to what extent is not exactly known. There is a tremendous amount of litigation over land and boundary disputes between Stools are very frequent, with the result that many Stools have become impoverished or even bankrupt. It is important to distinguish between the economic use of land and the political definition of its ownership: boundary litigation between Stools is basically a matter of political relationships between Chiefs in the present unstable social system. 'Land litigation is a kind of bloodless civil war following the lines of political cleavage inherent in the political system.'²

From the Akan point of view, land is not to be regarded as a single immovable entity or possession; it may be said to have three distinct aspects:

1. The land itself, in its most literal sense, i.e. the soil, the earth.
2. The usufruct, the use to which the soil may be put.
3. Crops, trees and houses, which are regarded as separable from the soil in which they are rooted or on which they stand.

The religious aspect of land ownership

This is another important factor to be taken into account in considering Akan land tenure.

(a) The earth is believed to have a power or spirit of its own, conceived as a female principle, which is helpful if propitiated and harmful if neglected; in the past, when the earth granted a good harvest, the farmer was expected to return thanks by pouring a libation or making a sacrifice.

(b) A more important belief, in this respect, is that the land itself belongs to the ancestors; from them the living have inherited the right to use the land. They were believed to keep watch over the land and see that it was used properly and fairly. The land is a link between the ancestors and their living descendants. The Stool symbolizes the unity of the ancestors and their descendants and the Chief occupies the Stool; 'the land belongs to the Stool' or 'the land belongs to the Chief' both mean the same thing: 'the land belongs to the ancestors'. This religious aspect is still felt nowadays, though less strongly than in the days before European influence had created among the people the conception of land as a commercial commodity.

(c) The belief that the aboriginal inhabitants of a place are the true landowners and that it is dangerous for immigrants to usurp their land, thus offending local spirits etc., is also found among the Akan. In Akim Kotoku, for example, certain 'towns'

¹ See Beckett; Danquah 1; Field; Fortes 1; Meek; Rattray 1, 3; Redwar; Sarbah.

² Fortes 1, p. 23.

have been formed by an amalgamation of aborigines and immigrants; all the townspeople have the same rights to holdings for farming and all have a share in the proceedings of land sales, but the descendant of the aboriginal occupant of the land is acknowledged as the *asasewura* (literally 'land-master') and has special privileges; he receives an extra share of the proceeds of land sales (and pays a correspondingly larger share of land expenses), for example. In other ways also his equality with the *ohene* (chief) in land rights is recognized. (Cf. position of the *tendana* in the Northern Territories, and the *sitse* among the Ga-speaking people.)¹

OWNERSHIP OF THE SOIL OR EARTH

A Stool, and *ipso facto* the community (*oman*) symbolized by the Stool, owns the soil of its political territory. The Chief, as occupier of the Stool, is the custodian of this land; he is the general guardian of the community's interests, the most important of which is the fair distribution and proper utilization of land. He and the Elders administer the land on behalf of the people.

Formerly, the Chief allotted such areas as were sufficient for each subdivision of the state and held the remainder in reserve against the needs of the future. In cases of extreme need the land could be sold, with the consent of his Council of Elders, but this would have happened very rarely, if at all, in the days before Europeans came to the country: land was a sacred trust and its religious aspect was very strongly felt. However, the demand for gold-mining concessions, beginning about 1880, led to wholesale alienation by Chiefs at the expense of native occupiers, who were deprived of large areas of potential farmland. Land came to be regarded more and more as a commercial commodity and nowadays it may be sold outright by the Stool.

As custodian the Chief is responsible for the defence of the land at law (and in former days, in war). Mineral rights are vested in the Stool and a certain portion of all game caught on Stool land must be paid as tribute to the Chief. The Stool is also entitled to one-third share of any treasure-trove or gold nuggets found on Stool land.²

THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS TO STOOL LAND

Any member of the *oman* has the right to farm anywhere on Stool land, without asking permission from the Chief, except on cemeteries or deserted village sites, or if it is already occupied by someone else. Strangers not belonging to the *oman* can only use land by permission of the Chief and by paying some form of rent for it (the nature of this varies in different areas; it may be a lump sum in cash, a portion of the crops, etc.). In return for farming privileges the user assumes public

¹ Field, pp. 59-62.

² In the three Akim *oman* (Akim-Bosome, Akim-Abuakwa and Akim-Kotoku), because of their peculiar history, the relationship between land and *oman* differs from that described above. Each of these *oman* originated, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, as a military union of hitherto independent 'towns' which joined together to defend themselves against the Ashanti. Each such 'town' owned its own land and retained independent control of it. This independence persists today. Only when a town sells any of its land or timber, or lets it out on hire to be used for any non-agricultural purpose (e.g. mining), that is, when it acquires any extra-ordinary wealth, is the *omanhene*, as representative of the *oman*, entitled to one-third of the proceeds: so long as the land is used in the normal agricultural manner the *oman* gets nothing. See Field, pp. 2-11, 57-63.

responsibility expressed by money tribute, if the Stool is in debt, or public work, such as road-making, and communal work, such as keeping the village clean.

These users of the land own only the usufruct; they can build on the land, plant trees, grow cocoa, sell its produce, but they cannot alienate it, either by sale or mortgage, on such conditions that the purchaser or mortgagee has rights overriding those of the Stool, which owns the soil absolutely.

Usufruct falls into two broad categories of ownership:

1. 'Family land.'
2. Individually owned land.

1. '*Family land*' is land vested in a matrilineage. In villages which have been established for some considerable time and have the traditional social structure, the tendency is for each of the big lineages that make up the community to have one or more patches of clearly delimited land. Every member of the lineage has the right to farm freely and to build on this land, provided that he or she does not trespass on the rights of other members of the lineage; no member can establish exclusive ownership of any portion of lineage land. The Elder or lineage head is custodian of the land and sees that every member has a portion for his farm. In general, a man farms land previously farmed by his maternal ancestors.

Portions of lineage land may be transferred to other lineages though never by alienation; the widow of a lineage member may be allowed to farm a particular portion of her husband's lineage land and when she dies her daughters may be allowed to go on farming there. The grantor lineage, however, always retains the right to resume ownership of the land.

The feeling that the land is a sacred trust committed to the living by the ancestors is very strong in the case of 'family land,' and sale or mortgage is very rare, even nowadays. It would require the consent of the whole lineage and would be resorted to only if a lineage debt had to be repaid. A lineage head is, however, entitled to sell such land, without the consent of his lineage, when members refuse to comply with his request for contributions towards expenses of litigation in defence of lineage property, but only after he has given due notice to the lineage of his intention to do so.¹

'Family land' is used mostly for food gardens, which are often worked by a family in the strict sense of the word, i.e. a man, his wife and children, or a woman and her children. So-called shifting cultivation is the form of tillage practised on this land.

Fishing rights in streams near villages and in some of the bigger rivers also belong to lineages in the same way and can be treated exactly like the usufruct of farm land.

Food and cash crops raised by individuals on 'family land' belong to them; cash crops like kola can be passed on as inheritance within the lineage. Trees growing on the land are owned by the lineage as a whole: ownership is vested in the lineage head, who must be informed by any lineage member who wishes to tap for palm-wine; the fruit may be picked freely by any member without permission. But, if a person plants a palm or other economic tree himself, it belongs to him.

2. *Individually owned land*

The individual ownership of usufruct may be acquired: (a) by a man's own efforts

¹ See Redwar, p. 77.

in clearing and cultivating forest land for the first time; (b) if a man makes his own plantation of economic trees, usually a cocoa farm; (c) by purchase or mortgage; (d) by inheritance.

Until the establishment of the cocoa industry at the beginning of this century, individual ownership of land was rare; most land was 'family land', owned by a lineage and worked on a system of shifting cultivation. But the introduction of tree-borne crops which may occupy the same land for twenty to forty years changed all this, and nowadays, when nearly half the world's cocoa is supplied by the Gold Coast, individual ownership of cocoa farms is the rule.

A cocoa farm is made by an individual with the help of his immediate relatives by birth (brothers, nephews, children) or by marriage. It may be the joint property of two brothers or sisters, but it is never lineage property to start with, though it may become so by the operation of the ordinary laws of inheritance and testamentary disposition. With cocoa farms the emphasis on individual ownership of the farm has the effect of restricting the range of individuals who are recognized as eligible brothers or nephews. The tendency is marked for the line of inheritance to be limited to the issue of the man's own mother and sisters.

Alienation and mortgage of individually-owned usufruct. The individual owner is free to dispose of his cocoa farm as he wishes, without being subject to restraint by the lineage. Titles to farms are transferred either by some sort of document or by native customary procedure (a sheep killed at one corner of land and payment of *trama* or 'cutting of *guaha*'). According to custom, one-third of the proceeds of the sale of such farms should be given to the Stool on whose land they have been made, but it would appear that nowadays this is not always carried out.¹ On the whole, cocoa farms are only sold very reluctantly, partly because they are regarded as a kind of gilt-edged security and partly because of the sense of kinship obligation: people are unwilling to sell a farm which they know will one day be inherited by another member of the family. The usual procedure is to pledge a farm, preserving the fiction that it will one day be redeemed: among the Akan, a pledge is subject to no limit of time and can be redeemed by any successor of the original pledger.

Tenancy by strangers. As already mentioned, tenants who are not subjects of the Stool that owns the land pay what amounts to an annual rent for the farm, the details of assessment and collection varying from area to area.

The Abusa System. This is a system of crop-sharing, under which the owner of the land receives from the tenant one-third of the crop (*abusa* — sharing into three). When the crop to be grown is a permanent one, like cocoa, the use of the land is given on the understanding that it will pass to the tenant's heirs, provided the payments are maintained. Though a tenant has no right of alienation he may transfer his interest to a third party. Nowadays the *abusa* payments are frequently made in cash as an annual rent, which may be fixed or may vary with the price obtained for the crop. A cocoa farmer who employs a labourer may do so on the *abusa* basis of payment, i.e. one-third of the crop or its equivalent in cash. A recent development in some areas is for the grantor of land for cocoa cultivation to be paid outright by a one-third share of the plantation when the trees have begun to bear.²

¹ Beckett, p. 59.

² Danquah 1, p. 220; Meek, p. 176, footnote.

LIFE CYCLE¹

I. PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

(a) Akan believe that the *ntoro* element, transmitted by the father, mingling with the *mogya* (blood) element of the female, gives rise in the first instance and after the sexual act, to conception, and moulds and builds up the embryo. As soon as a woman is married she generally observes her husband's *ntoro* taboos as well as her own; sometimes, however, these observances do not begin until she is pregnant. A pregnant woman is subject to many other restrictions, as during this period she is thought to be particularly susceptible to outside evil influences; for the first three months she should not leave her compound and if she does she must cover her head with a cloth. She also wears special charms to protect her and the unborn child against witchcraft. Infidelity on the husband's part is not thought to be serious, but in the woman's case it may cause a miscarriage or death during childbirth, if not immediately confessed. In the old days, adultery with a married pregnant woman was a capital offence; nowadays a heavy fine is payable, part of which is used to propitiate the ancestral spirits and the *abosom*.

(b) A woman goes to her mother's house for her confinement. No men may be present at the actual birth, at which four elderly women of the mother's *abusua* are generally in attendance. As soon as the child arrives it is named after the day of the week on which it is born. Women dying in childbirth but before delivery must not be buried until the child has been removed from the womb.

For the first eight days after birth, the child is regarded as a 'ghost child' who may return to the land of spirits; it is therefore treated rather negligently; it lies on an old rag or mat, and inferior *baha* fibre is used for the charms round its neck and wrists; it is not really encouraged to feed at its mother's breast. Both mother and child remain indoors during these first eight days and the mother is considered unclean. If the child dies before the end of the eight days it is buried in the village midden-heap and its parents rejoice instead of mourning; various rites are carried out which are on the whole a deliberate antithesis of mourning; the child was only a ghost child sent temporarily to earth by its ghost mother, it was never intended to stay. In former days children dying before puberty were considered to be ghost children and treated in the same way; to accord funeral rites to such children would cause the mother to be barren.

On the eighth day, the *Ntetea* rite (Ashanti name) is held: the father brings gifts to the mother and child. The father or someone else of his *ntoro* then names the child, usually after a male or female relative on the paternal side. After this the child may for the first time be properly dressed and go out by day, carried on its mother's back.

Twins. If they are boys, they become elephant-tail switchers at the Court; if girls, they are the Chief's potential wives. In the old days, among the Ashanti, twins born into the Royal family were killed. In both cases the twins must be presented at court and carried there in a brass basin as soon as possible after birth.

¹ Akesson; Rattray 1, 2, 3.

A woman bearing triplets is greatly honoured. In general parents of large families are held in special esteem, not only during life but after death also.

2. PUBERTY

There are no special rites for boys on reaching adolescence.

Puberty rites for girls are known among the Akan as *Bara* rites (*Wa bo no bara*—‘the *bara* state has stricken her’—is a common euphemism for the passing of the first menses). The girl is dressed in her best clothes and adorned with many gold ornaments; she sits in the village street with her mother and other clanswomen in attendance, to receive gifts and congratulations from her friends. Later in the evening certain rites are performed in the presence of the women of the girl’s *abusua* only; they include ceremonial washing and feeding, with prayers to the ancestors for her fertility. For five days after this the girl is a *barafo*, i.e. a person in the *bara* state, and is unclean. At the end of this time she dresses up in her best clothes and goes round the village, thanking all those who have attended the ceremony. A girl does not change her name upon reaching puberty, but from that date children call her *ena* (mother). If she is not already betrothed she is expected to become so after the *bara* ceremony. In not so very remote times intercourse with a young girl before the performance of her *bara* rite was punishable by death or expulsion from the clan of both parties: it was an offence from which the whole community might suffer. It is still very severely punished, if discovered.

*Restrictions and taboos on menstruating women.*¹ They may not cook their husbands’ or any adult male’s food; they may cook for their own sex or for children, but may not themselves eat food cooked for any man. In olden days an ‘unclean’ woman entering the ancestral stool house would have been killed instantly. She must not cross the threshold of any man’s house and even today every ‘bush’ village has its *bara dan* or *bara fieso* (*bara* hut) where women go and live during their periods. She may not swear an oath nor may oaths be sworn against her. She may not cross certain sacred rivers. The wives of certain craftsmen, e.g. weavers, may not even speak directly to their husbands when in this state, but must do so through a spokesman, usually a young child. For most *suman* (see ‘Religious Beliefs’), contact with them is the deadliest taboo.

3. MARRIAGE

‘It is only when we approach the marriage ceremony from the strictly legal, as opposed to the magico-religious, standpoint, that we really find our justification in treating it as a special rite and under a special heading.’² Courtship and marriage have already been described in the section on the Akan Kinship System (p. 30). The ancestral spirits of the girl’s *abusua* are informed of the marriage and some of the *tirinsa* wine is poured in libation to them. If the girl belongs to a ‘Stool’, i.e. is a member of the Royal lineage, the Chief will use some of his share of the *tirinsa* to buy sheep to kill over the black stools, and wine is also poured over them.

¹ See Rattray 2, pp. 69–75.

² Ibid. p. 76.

4. DEATH

Performance of funeral rites is limited to members of the deceased's *abusua* and participation in these rites is held in the courts to be conclusive proof of such a relationship to the dead person. Attendance at the funeral, however, is open to all friends and *ntoro* relations of the deceased.

The ritual has the specific object of ensuring the spirit of the dead a safe journey to the land of ghosts or *samando*, and maintenance in it; '*kra sika* or 'soul money' in the form of gold dust is attached to the corpse and food is placed before the body and later on the grave.

The body is generally buried on the third day after death; until then there is dancing, drumming, singing and firing of guns; everyone generally gets very drunk, especially as the general public attending the funeral is expected to fast until the burial. Members of the dead person's *abusua* fast from the day of death until that day week, with short intervals for partaking of a little food; palm wine or gin may be drunk, however.

The body is buried in the clan burial ground. 'A head of a family, with special permission from the Chief, and after presenting him with sheep and wine (for the Chief's *samanfo*, to ensure keeping of the promise) may receive permission to be buried under the floor of his sleeping-room.'¹ Kings and *Amanhene* have their skeletons preserved in the royal mausoleum.

The expenses of the burial, for which members of the deceased's *abusua* are primarily responsible, are known among the Ashanti as '*ayi asi 'ka*'—funeral debts which bind or hold. Voluntary contributions made by strangers, as acts of courtesy or friendship, are called *nsa*, and kept separate and distinct. This term is also used of the contributions, more or less obligatory, of the spouse, children and grandchildren of the deceased, who are not members of his *abusua*. In the final adjustment, the *abusua* only are involved: members alone share deficit or profit. The *abusuafo* are responsible for providing gunpowder, palm wine or gin, and sheep. If the deceased is a man, his wife or wives provide gold dust or '*kra sika*' (soul money) for his use in the world of ghosts. They also give money for funeral expenses and provide a shroud, and may prepare food for the corpse. The children provide the coffin, sheep and gold dust. If a woman dies, her husband provides the coffin. Friends in general give what each can afford.

Widows and widowers. The living spouse is separated from the dead by a special rite: there is always the fear that the spirit of the dead person may attempt sexual intercourse with the living partner, causing barrenness or sterility. The bereaved spouse is attended by two widows who have passed child-bearing age (one relative of the dead, and one relative of the living spouse). They are responsible for feeding him or her at appropriate times (he or she must fast for four to five days after the death) and for ritual bathing nine days after the death; contact with a bereaved person is unlucky during the funeral period—one may soon be in the same position oneself—but the two widow attendants are already in that category and as they are not going to remarry they will not pass on the bad luck to anyone else.

¹ Rattray 3, p. 70.

It is considered proper for the heir to take the widow or widows of the deceased: not to do so is to court revenge from the *saman* or ghost of the dead husband; public opinion would quickly condemn anyone who shirked this responsibility. A year must elapse before the heir has sexual intercourse with such a woman. A younger, wifeless brother—not the heir—may sometimes be given the widow in preference to his elder relative. Should a woman refuse to marry her late husband's surviving brother or other heir she is not compelled to do so, but the *tirinsa* and all presents have to be returned to him, unless there are children, in which case 'you may give these things to them'.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS¹

Among the Akan, the cult of the ancestors is the most prominent aspect of religion, though during the last twenty years or so witchcraft and associated witchfinding cults have played an increasingly important part in the life of the people. Belief in the ancestral spirits is at the basis of all laws and customs regulating the lives of individuals within the family and clan, and ancestor worship is very closely bound up with the political organization. However, in spite of the greater sociological importance of ancestor worship in Akan religion, it is more convenient to discuss certain other aspects first.

BELIEF IN A SUPREME BEING

There is a belief in a Supreme Being, 'Nyame ('Nyankopon, Odomankoma are other names, possibly of different aspects of 'Nyame).² 'Nyame is eternal, infinite and the creator of the Universe; he is remote from men and unconcerned with their daily life. Though his cult exists it has no great effect on the religious or moral life of the people. In a number of compounds, particularly those of chiefs, is found an altar to 'Nyame in the form of a three-forked branch or cement pillar bearing a bowl: this is 'Nyame dua or God's tree. It is the place for direct offering to 'Nyame and on *ntoro*-washing days (only now kept by chiefs) eggs are placed in the bowl and 'Nyame is asked to watch over the chief. At other times a priest may tell a chief or anyone else to make a sacrifice to 'Nyame. In remote corners of some of the older palaces, temples to the Supreme Being may still sometimes be found ('Nyame dan—God's house).

'Nyame appears to be one of the sources of fertility and father of the lesser spirits or *abosom*, though this is not absolutely clear. He has small importance in the provision of sanctions for law and custom.

'ABOSOM' (sing. *obosom*—spirits)

There are hundreds of *abosom* or lesser spirits all supposed to be descended from 'Nyame and to derive from him their spiritual power. They are nature deities, water and tree spirits, associated with local territorial and social units such as villages, lineages, etc. to which they stand in the relation of guardianship.

Among the Ashanti, according to parts of a creation myth given by Rattray,³ the four main *abosom* are *Tano*, *Bea*, *Apo* and *Bosomtwe*. *Tano* is the greatest of these. They were all sons of 'Nyame, sent by him to earth to receive and confer blessings on mankind. They became the principal lakes and rivers of Ashanti. All other rivers are regarded as being 'sons of 'Nyame' and as containing some of his essence or spiritual power, which is transmitted through water: in the shrine of an *obosom* power is always derived from an object placed there by the priest and in some way associated with water. All other *abosom* are lineally descended from the

¹ See Brown; Clarke; Danquah 1, 2; Field; Gamble; Harper; Meyerowitz; Rattray 1, 2, 3.

² See Danquah 2.

³ Rattray 1, pp. 145-6.

four main ones, though the association of them with 'Nyame is neither self-evident nor easy to discover.

Shrines, potential abodes of *abosom*, generally consist of brass pans or bowls which contain various ingredients. These pans, on certain specific occasions, become the temporary resting-place of a non-human spirit or spirits.

At any time a new *obosom* may be 'created' by a priest ordering a man or woman possessed by a spirit to make a shrine: the possessed one will dance sometimes for two days to drums and singing, and then suddenly leap up and catch something in his hands or plunge into a river and bring up something; this object will be 'cooled' by sprinkling water on it, placed in the brass pan and quickly covered. Various ingredients will then be added, while special prayers are repeated and sacrifices made. The possessed person will become a priest of this new *obosom*.

Every *obosom* has a temple and various priests, priestesses and other attendants, both men and women.

PRIESTS (*Okomfo*)¹

On some occasion, but most often when attending a religious ceremony, a man or woman may fall down in a fit or go into a trance, or may be cured of an illness by a certain *obosom*. Some priest or priestess, called in to interpret this, would say that it is the spirit of such and such an *obosom* 'who wishes to marry' that person. The subject will then be persuaded to enter and train for the priesthood.

The novitiate lasts three years; the neophyte leaves home and lives with a fully-fledged priest of the *obosom* whose spirit is manifested in him. If he is a married man he must not cohabit with his wife until the end of his training, and if unmarried must remain chaste throughout the three years. Women must leave their husbands altogether: they are 'married' to the *abosom* which are generally thought of as male.

Priests and priestesses have a twofold function: they perform sacrifices to the *abosom* and also act as their mouthpieces: this oracular function of the *abosom* is very important; people consult them about illness, misfortune, barrenness, etc.

In general, wherever there is a definite political, social or kinship division there is an *obosom*. In these cases the *obosom* is of great social value, but when the *obosom* is a nature spirit pure and simple, he is much more on a level with the *suman* or fetish. *Abosom* merge into *suman* and vice versa; merging occurs between all categories and there are no watertight compartments of beliefs.

Today the cults of the *abosom* are in decline, except in remote rural areas.²

THE SUMAN OR FETISH—MAGICAL CHARMS AND MAGICAL MEDICINES

'A *suman* is an object which is the potential dwelling-place of a spirit or spirits of an inferior status, generally belonging to the vegetable kingdom; this object is

¹Rattray translates *akomfo* as 'priest' or 'priestess', but Field considers this term is properly confined to the passive medium or mouthpiece, whom the spirit of the *obosom* may possess from time to time; the true priest is never so possessed, but is in charge of the *obosom* and its worship, and is correctly termed *abosomfo*. Field, p. 172, footnote.

²In the whole of Akim Kotoku Field only met four men who could properly be called priests. There were very few mediums or mouthpieces (*akomfo*), and they were usually very old people; of most *abosom* Field was told that the old *akomfo* died some years ago and the *obosom* had not since possessed a new one. Field, p. 172.

also closely associated with the control of powers of evil or black magic for personal ends, but not necessarily to assist its owner to work evil, since it is used as much for defensive as for offensive purposes.¹

A *suman* contains various symbolic ingredients and its power comes from plants or trees, or sometimes, directly or indirectly, from fairies (*mمواتيا*), forest monsters (*sasabonsam*) or witches (*obayifo*), or from some sort of unholy contact with the dead, i.e. contact in the ordinary way unclean or repellent, unconnected with ancestor worship. It may be bought by anyone from its owner or maker, who may be a priest or a medicine man (*sumankwafo*); the latter say that they have got *suman* from the *mمواتيا* with whom they are supposed to have lived in the forest.

Important *suman* have offerings made to them; among the Ashanti, the greatest *suman*, the *Gyabom* or war fetish, owned by great chiefs, had human sacrifices (small children) made to it in the past.

Although *suman* are often closely associated with *abosom* (priests are taught to make *suman*, and the *abosom*'s temples contain many fetishes), the two are clearly distinguishable; the *suman*'s power resides in itself, not in an *obosom*, and works magically. Some *suman*, by a process whose exact nature is not clear, merge into a higher category and seem to impinge upon the *abosom*.

In recent years numerous *suman* have been imported from other parts of the country, particularly the Northern Territories, and cults have grown up around them. The *suman* has priests and attendants, and members of the cult, by an oath of allegiance, are bound to observe certain moral rules (e.g. no adultery, thieving, scandal-mongering etc.). Breach of these rules is punishable by heavy fines or even death (by the magical power of the *suman*). These *suman* are mainly used for witch-finding; suspects are brought before the *suman* and made to confess; afterwards they are ritually purged and cleansed and payment of money or sheep, fowls etc. is demanded for the *suman*. Promises of money and other gifts are made by people asking the *suman* for favours: prosperity in trade, increased cocoa yield, cures for barrenness and illness, for example. If these promises are not kept the *suman* will punish the client in some way.

LOWER-GRADED SPIRITUAL POWERS²

1. *Animals, plants and trees* are believed to have spirits but many are considered of little account because they have no power for evil. Those animals which have a powerful *sasa* (the bad, revengeful, hurtful element in a spirit; that part which must be 'laid' or rendered innocuous) are designated as *sasa mموا* (beasts with *sasa*): they include the elephant, the bongo, the duyker, the roan, the waterbuck and certain others. When a hunter kills any of these, special funeral rites are held for the animal. Trees which have to be cut down are propitiated by having offerings placed before them.
2. *Fairies and forest monsters*. Fairies or *mمواتيا* live in the forest. They are said to be about one foot high, have feet which point backwards and converse by whistling. They are supposed to be expert in making *suman* and medicine men say they have lived in the forest with the *mمواتيا* and learned their art

¹ Rattray 2, p. 23.

² Ibid. pp. 25-8, pp. 153, 182-6.

from them. *Sasabonsam* is a monster who lives in the dense part of the forest; he is covered in long red fur, has long legs and feet pointing both ways; he is hostile to men, especially to priests. He is supposed to be in league with *mmoatia* and witches.

ANCESTOR-WORSHIP

Akan recognize several spiritual components or principles in each individual, all of which persist after death:

1. *Mogya* or 'blood', which is derived from one's mother and can only be transmitted by a female. It is present in a child from the moment of conception, determines clan membership, and gives clan status and bodily form. After death the *mogya* retains form, personality and clan status and as a *saman* or ghost goes to the spirit world to await reincarnation through a woman of the same *abusua*.
2. *Ntoro*, derived from one's father and transmitted only through males. After death it is separated by a rite from the *mogya* and goes to join the group *ntoro* or *obosom*. It does not go to the spirit world. It may be reincarnated through a male of the same *ntoro* division, but independently of the *abusua* to which it was previously linked.
3. '*Kra*, best rendered by the word 'soul'. '*Kra* are said to be of seven kinds, derived from the day of the week on which a person is born. At death the '*kra* goes with the *mogya* to the spirit world. It may leave the body just before death. It is a divine soul received at birth, which returns to '*Nyame* at death. The deceased gives an account of himself to his late king and Elders and his '*kra* is usually made to return to earth for reincarnation in a child of his *abusua*, because it is not perfect. It is closely bound up with the *honhom* or 'breath of life', which flies away from the body at death in the shape of a bird.
4. *Sunsum*, the spiritual element on which depends a person's individuality. It is frequently used interchangeably with the word '*kra*'; it may be the volatile part of the '*kra*, as it can leave a person during sleep. After death it goes to the *samando* or world of shadows. It seems in some way to be closely connected with its possessor's stool¹ even after death, but exactly how is not clear.

The *saman* or ghost is therefore a clan or *abusua* ghost dependent on the continuity of the *abusua* for honour, propitiation and, possibly, reincarnation. This is borne out in the rituals of birth and death; the mortuary rite, which for commoners is almost entirely concerned with the ancestral spirits, has the specific object of ensuring the ghost a safe journey to the spirit world and maintenance in it; 'as long as the clan exists' the *saman* will get honour and propitiation. Performance of these rites is limited to *abusua* members.

The *saman* experiences in the spirit world or *samando* a life very similar to that lived on earth; death does not sever the ties of kinship, which persist between the living and the dead. The ancestors are believed to be always watching the behaviour of those they have left behind on earth, helping and protecting them, or punishing them if they do not behave. The ancestors are the custodians of the laws and

¹ Miniature fetters are carved on the central support of the stool in order to bind the *sunsum* to it.

customs of the tribe and will punish with sickness and misfortune those who infringe these rules; this is a very powerful sanction of morality among the Akan.

Although the spirit world contains all the ancestors, only some of these are remembered by name: those who were key people in the social system during their lifetime, and whose blackened stools are therefore preserved after death.

Matrilineal ancestors and the stools.

White stools are owned by almost every man, woman and child among the Akan. As has already been mentioned, during life the owner's *sunsum* is in some way attached to his stool. After its owner's death a stool may become a shrine into which the departed spirit may be called to enter on certain special occasions. The stool is blackened or 'smoked' by being smeared all over with soot mixed with egg yolk; it becomes a 'blackened stool' (*apunna*) and is deposited in the lineage stool-house (*akonnua dan*), which is part of the lineage head's dwelling. Not every lineage possesses a collection of ancestral stools: they are only owned by lineages whose heads hold political office, and a blackened stool is only made when its owner dies in office: that is, the only ancestors commemorated by name are those who have held political office: there is thus a direct connection between those who in life had political power and those who are worshipped by name as having ritual power after death.

In general the *samanfo* are limited in operation to their own clan or *abusua*: each lineage keeps in touch with its own ancestors through ritual sacrifices. But it is believed that the tribe as a whole is protected by the spirits of the dead rulers and the Chief is therefore appointed to act as intermediary between the royal ancestors and the tribe. On his enstoolment he is brought into close relationship with the dead by being raised and lowered three times on the blackened ancestral stool of the earliest Chief, and from this moment his person becomes sacred and he is treated with the greatest veneration.

State Rituals.

By virtue of his role as intermediary between his people and the royal ancestors, the Chief is the central figure in various organized ritual ceremonies, the most frequent of which are:

The Aday ceremony. The *Aday* refers to 'those ceremonies at which the departed rulers of the tribe are propitiated, their names and deeds recalled and their favours and mercy solicited'.¹ There are two *Aday*: *Wukuday* (occurring on a Wednesday) and *Kwasiday* (occurring on the third Sunday after *Wukuday*). Each occurs once every 42 days; every 21 days therefore, an Akan chief offers libations to his royal ancestors on behalf of his subjects, praying that the soil may be fruitful and the tribe increase. At the same time the Queen-Mother holds her own *Aday* in her stool-house, and each head of a lineage possessing blackened stools also carries out rites in the stool-house on behalf of the lineage. On these days, also, every family mourns its own dead. In all cases, the Chief or lineage head is accompanied in the performance of the rites by a small number of people only: stool-carriers and certain Elders in the Chief's case and senior members of

¹Rattray 1, p. 87.

the lineage in the case of the ordinary lineage head; no one else is allowed inside the stool-house at any time. Rites on both *Adae* days appear to be the same except that on *Kwasidae* they are more elaborate. The details of the ceremony vary from one town and one state to another, but the fundamental principle is the same throughout the country. In Northern Ashanti, e.g. among the Brong, *abosom* are also worshipped, but in the rest of the country the ceremonies concern only the ancestors.¹

Odwera ceremony. This means 'purification' or 'cleansing' ceremony. It is an annual ceremony but its date of celebration varies among different peoples; in many Akan states it is held some time between July and September, but in Akim, for example, it is held in December or January. It is a feast of the dead, a cleansing of the nation from defilement and a purification of the shrines of the ancestral spirits and national gods. In those Akan states which celebrate the *Odwera* in July and September, it is also very closely connected with first-fruits, since this is the time of the yam-harvest. (As a result, this ceremony has been called 'Yam Custom' by Europeans, but this is a misnomer.)

The *Odwera* is a national festival in the sense that the whole people have to take part in it: all Chiefs, sub-chiefs, and able-bodied men and women attend the ceremony in the state capital. Newly enstooled Chiefs take the oath of allegiance to the *Omanhene* at this ceremony. During the *Odwera*, which lasts more than a week, the *Omanhene* takes no part in the political or administrative affairs of the state; these functions are taken over by the *Ko'ntirehene*, or whichever other Chief is the *Omanhene's* second-in-command.

Sacrifices of wine and meat are offered to the royal ancestors in the stool-house by the Chief and certain Elders, and also at the burial-place of Chiefs. Later the stools 'eat yam', in those places where the *Odwera* is also a harvest ceremony, and the principal blackened stool is carried round the town: the stools have eaten and have taken their annual walk round the town, followed by all the people; this is a symbolic expression of the watch the ancestors keep over the town throughout the year. Other rites of purification also take place in which the Chief plays the main role.

The *Odwera* ceremony has not been held in Kumasi since Prempeh's banishment in 1896, but it still takes place in other Ashanti Divisions and in other Akan states.

WITCHCRAFT (*Bayi*—Twi; *Ayen*—Fante)²

The idea of witchcraft is nowadays very highly developed; it has increased enormously during the last twenty years. Witchcraft works destructively within the clan, but a witch is said to be powerless outside his or her own clan.³ According to Rattray's informant, an old witchfinder or *bonsam 'komfo*, witches suck their victim's blood; each witch has a part of the body of which she is particularly fond. Witches always try to get some object that belonged to the person they wish to kill,

¹ Rattray 1, pp. 116–20.

² See Akesson; Field; Rattray 2, pp. 28–31.

³ But, according to Field: 'It is not now generally believed that witches can kill only members of their own *abusua*, though some of the older people still propound the theory that it is necessary for someone of the victim's *abusua* to connive at the deed.' Field, p. 185, footnote.

e.g. hair, nail-cuttings, waist beads. They can transform themselves into birds, especially crows, vultures, owls, parrots, into horseflies and fireflies, hyenas, elephants, leopards, bongo and all *sasa* animals (see above, p. 57), and into snakes. All witches know each other and are in league with each other and with *sasabonsam* and certain *mmoatia*. Accusations are nearly always within the lineage, and fall most commonly on a man's mother or sister. A non-adult cannot be a witch:¹ until puberty children are not considered to have any power either for good or for evil—they do not properly belong to this world. The great majority of witches are women (*abayifo*), but men may also practise witchcraft (*bonsam*—male witch).

In the old days, a witch was identified by witchfinders (*bonsam'komfo*) or powerful *abosom*, and was often subjected to a public trial by poison: if she vomited the poison, she was considered innocent, and her accuser was ruinously fined. If she was taken ill, she was considered guilty and was put to death by strangling: a witch's blood must never be shed. Nowadays, witchfinding cults employing *suman* or medicine imported from other peoples, especially those of the Northern Territories, have taken over the task of identification; suspected witches are brought before the *suman* by relatives, and, after their confession has been accepted, are ritually purged and cleansed and may then resume normal relations with their kin (see *Suman* above, p. 56).

MEDICINE²

Native doctors are consulted in cases of sickness, barrenness, difficult childbirth, etc. The trouble is usually attributed to an unfulfilled obligation to a *suman*, to a wife's unconfessed adultery or to the influence of witches, but herbal remedies are also used, in which case it is the spiritual property of the ingredients which is held to be responsible for successful treatment. The Ashanti distinguish between '*suman-kwafo*' or dealers in *suman*, '*dunsefo*' or workers in roots, and '*odu'yefo*' or workers in medicines. As already stated, native doctors, who are also often hunters, say they have learned their skill from the *mmoatia* or sometimes the *sasabonsam*, when they were living alone in the forest (p. 57).

TOTEMISTIC BELIEFS³

Certain totemistic beliefs appear to be associated with both the clan and the *ntoro*, but information on this subject is both vague and contradictory.

(a) Among the Ashanti, Rattray met great reluctance to discuss the question of clan origins: 'one does not disclose the origin of another' was the usual reply to his enquiries. However, he was able to discover that the people believed that each clan was descended from some animal, though this was kept a close secret. At a very early age children were told to respect the particular animal from which their clan sprang, but were not told the reason. A man is not supposed to kill his totem animal and might ask someone else of another clan not to kill it if they were hunting together. No one would dare to make a crest representing his real totem animal

¹ But Field gives an example of a child of about two who was held to have been born a witch by the diviner of one of the new cults: 'but she was not yet old enough to kill other people or to eat human flesh'. Field, pp. 193-4.

² Gamble; Rattray 2, pp. 38-9.

³ Brown; Harper; Rattray 1, pp. 47-8; 3, pp. 65-8.

(*tweneboa*); the emblems used by Chiefs on the top of state umbrellas and elsewhere, though generally accepted as being clan totems, do not have this significance.

According to Rattray, one aspect at least of the *ntoro* is totemistic. There is a mythical spirit ancestor who was a python, a crocodile, etc., with whom its descendants claim *ntoro* relationship, and this relationship is expressed in certain funeral customs, e.g. sprinkling of white clay and burial of python or leopard etc. by members of the appropriate *ntoro*. There are other animals, plants etc. associated with the *ntoro*; these are not respected in any particular way, but are simply regarded as food taboos.

(b) For the Fanti, a list of clan totems is given by Brown,¹ who states that none of these clans eat, kill or trap their respective totems. On the death of any of them, any member would bury it with every mark of respect that would be paid to human members. Some earlier writers give almost the same list of Fanti totems and similar information regarding the attitude of clan members to them.

¹ Brown, p. 121.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AKAN

GENERAL

- Akesson, S. K. *Notes on Ashanti courtship, funerals, fetish worship* etc. (Unpublished MS.)
- Beckett, W. H. *Akokoaso. A survey of a Gold Coast Village*. London: Lund Humphries and Co. Ltd. 1944.
- Bosman, W. 'A new and accurate description of the Coast of Guinea divided into the Gold, the Slave and the Ivory Coasts' in *A General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, by J. Pinkerton, vol. XVI. London: 1814. Pp. 337-547.
- Bowdich, T. E. *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*. London: John Murray, 1819.
- Brown, E. J. P. 'Mfantasi Akan Totems.' *Gold Coast Rev.* 2, 2, 1926. Pp. 181-91.
- Busia, K. A. The position of the Chief in the modern political system of Ashanti: A study of the influence of contemporary social changes on Ashanti political institutions. (Unpublished MS. Thesis for D.Phil. Degree, University of Oxford.)
- Cardinall, A. W. 1. *The Gold Coast 1931*. Accra: Govt. Printer, 1932.
2. *A bibliography of the Gold Coast*. Accra: Govt. Printer, 1932.
- Chamney, N. P. *The climatology of the Gold Coast*. Bull. 15. Dept. of Agriculture, Accra: 1928.
- Claridge, W. W. *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti*. 2 vols. London: John Murray, 1915.
- Clarke, E. 'The Sociological Significance of Ancestor Worship in Ashanti.' *Africa*, iii, 4, October 1930. Pp. 431-70.
- Crowther, F. G. 'Affairs in Wassaw.' *Gold Coast Rev.* 2, 2, 1926. Pp. 168-80.
- Danquah, J. B. 1. *Akan Laws and Customs*, London: Routledge and Sons. 1928.
2. *Akan Doctrine of God*. London: Lutterworth Press. 1944.
- Ffoulkes, A. 1. The Fanti Family System. *J. Afr. Soc.* 28. July 1908.
2. Fanti Marriage Customs. *J. Afr. Soc.* 29. October 1908.
- Field, M. J. *Akim Kotoku*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies. 1948.
- Fortes, M. 1. 'Ashanti Social Survey. Preliminary Report.' *Human Problems in British Central Africa*, VI. Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. 1948.
2. 'Time and Social Structure', in *Social Structure: Studies Presented to Professor Radcliffe-Brown*, Oxford, 1949.
- Gamble, D. P. *Notes on medicines and fetish in Nzima*. (Unpublished MS.)
- Harper, C. H., and others 'Notes on the Totemism of the Gold Coast.' *J. roy. anthrop. Inst.* 1906. Pp. 178-88.
- Hayford, Caseley 1. *Gold Coast Native Institutions*. London: Sweet and Maxwell. 1903.
2. *The Truth about the West African Land Question*. London: Phillips. 1913.
- Holtsbaum, F. 'Sefwi and its people.' *Gold Coast Rev.* 1, 1925. Pp. 76-94.
- Johnson, J. W. de G. 'The Fanti Asafu.' *Africa* v, 3, July 1932. Pp. 307-22.
- Joseph, G. *La Côte d'Ivoire*. Paris: Emile Larose. 1917.
- Kyei, T. E. Some Notes on Marriage and Divorce among the Ashantis. Ashanti Social Survey. (Unpublished MS.)
- Mead, M. A Twi Relationship System. *J. Roy. anthrop. Inst.* 67, July-December 1937. Pp. 297-304.
- Meek, C. K. *Land Law and Custom in the Colonies*. Oxford. 1946.
- Meyerowitz, E. L. R. Akan Traditions of origin. (Unpublished MS.)

- Migeod, F. W. H. 'The Gold Coast: its physical features, flora, fauna and ethnology.' *J. Afr. Soc.* 13, 52, July 1914.
- Pitt, W. J. 'The Bedu people: history, customs and language.' *Gold Coast Rev.* 2. 1926. Pp. 277-83.
- Rattray, R. S. 1. *Ashanti*. Oxford. 1923.
2. *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. Oxford. 1927.
3. *Ashanti Law and Constitution*. Oxford. 1929.
- Redwar, H. W. Hayes Comments on Gold Coast Ordinances.
- Sarbah, J. M. *Fanti Customary Laws*. 2nd ed. London. 1904.
- Steel, R. W. 'The population of Ashanti: a geographical analysis.' *Geogr. Journal* 112, 1-3, January 1949. Pp. 64-77.
- Tauxier, L. *Religion, Moeurs et Coutumes des Agnis de la Côte d'Ivoire*. Paris: Geuthner. 1932.
- Ward, W. E. *A History of the Gold Coast*. London: Allen and Unwin. 1949.
- Welman, C. W. *Ahanta. Native States of the Gold Coast No. 2*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies. 1930.
- Ashanti Confederacy Minutes of Fifth and Sixth Sessions.
Council
- Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Expenses incurred by litigants in the Courts of the Gold Coast and indebtedness caused thereby (C. R. Havers, K.C.). Accra: 1945.
- Gold Coast Census Report 1931*. Accra: Govt. Printer, 1932.
- Atlas of the Gold Coast*. Gold Coast Survey Dept. Accra: 1945.

LINGUISTIC

- Balmer, and
Grant, F. C. *A Grammar of the Fante-Akan Language*. London: Atlantis Press, 1929.
- Christaller, J. G. 1. *Grammar of the Asante and Fante Language called Tshi*. Basel. 1875. 2nd Edit. 1933.
2. *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language*. 2nd ed. Basel. 1933.
- Ward, I. C. *Report of an investigation of some Gold Coast language problems*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1945.
- Welmers, W. E. 'A descriptive Grammar of Fanti.' Baltimore, Md.; Linguistic Society of America (supplement to *Language*, July-Sept. 1946).
- Westermann, D. 'A visit to the Gold Coast.' *Africa* 1, 1. Jan. 1928. Pp. 106-11.

PART II

GA AND ADANGME PEOPLES OF THE GOLD COAST

INTRODUCTION

The linguistic evidence, which is supported by their own oral traditions, suggests that these two groups of peoples are of the same stock. They say that, under pressure from a proselytizing Fulani, Dafoleo, they came from Northern Nigeria into the La Adangme plains and that the ancestors of the Ga-speaking section then broke away.

LOCATION AND GROUPING

In the south-east Gold Coast from the mouth of the Volta to beyond Accra. Neighbouring peoples are the *Akan* in the north and west (Akwapim in the north, Fanti in the west) and the *Ewe* in the east.

1. *The Ga-speaking people*

Their territory stretches for about forty miles along the coast, and is bounded on the west by the river Densu and on the east by the Laloi Lagoon and its tributary stream flowing from Aburi in the Akwapim range. The sea is the southern boundary and in the north the sharply rising scarp of the Akwapim hills separates the Ga plain from the forest country of the Akan peoples.

The Ga 'towns' (in Gold Coast usage, places which have a stool) from west to east are: Accra, Osu, Labadi, Teshi, Nungwa, and Temma. Each owns a strip of territory stretching northwards for distances varying between twenty and seventy miles. Each 'town' has associated with it a number of farming hamlets colonized by members of the 'town'. Accra also has a long string of fishing villages stretching for eight miles along the sand to the west.

As will be explained later, each Ga 'town' is an independent political unit: there has never been any confederation of the 'towns' and though today they all form the Ga State under the so-called Ga *Mantse*, this is an artificial grouping due to the Gold Coast Government.

2. *The Adangme-speaking peoples*

These peoples occupy the coastal area from Kpone (where the people are bilingual in Ga and Adangme, but consider themselves Adangme) to Ada, on the Volta, and inland territory within a line drawn approximately along the Volta through Akuse, Senchi, Bisa, Trom and under the Akwapim ridge back to the coast at Kpone. They are today grouped as follows:

1. *Krobo*, in the Native States of Many Krobo and Yilo Krobo.
2. *Ada*, in the Native State of Ada.
3. *Shai*, in the Native State of Shai.
4. Confederation of the people of *Prampran*, *Kpone* and *Ningo*, in the Native State of Prampram.
5. *Osudoku*, in the Native State of Osudoku.

Each of these peoples speaks a different Adangme dialect (see below, Language, p. 69).

It is not clear to what extent, if any, there is a feeling of unity between the Adangme-speaking peoples. The scanty evidence available suggests that such feeling was stronger in the past than it is today.

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN (GA)¹

The Ga-speaking people are not a single group either by tradition or in organization. Each 'town' consists of the descendants of one or more parties of immigrants and of the aborigines among whom these immigrants settled more or less peacefully wherever there was vacant territory.

The aborigines (*sikulebii*) of the Ga countryside were the *Kpesi* people, who spoke the *Kpesi* dialect, which survives today only in the songs of the *Kple* religious festivals; it is akin to Twi, and in the Ga districts is usually called *Obutu*, which it closely resembles. The *Kpesi* people were farmers and their chief gods were spirits of lagoons, hills, groves and other works of nature. When the immigrants arrived they did not drive out the *Kpesi*, but simply settled among them on their own farms. When the Ga 'towns' were formed the *Kpesi* were still recognized as the owners of the land and as the only people able to propitiate the gods of the land: the *wulomo* (priest) of the senior *Kpesi* god of each 'town' is still today the senior priest and the 'town' landlord or *sitse*.

Originally, when the immigrants first arrived, both they and the *Kpesi* lived in scattered farming settlements; there was no centralized government and no military organization. However, threatened with extermination by the increase of slave raiding at the end of the seventeenth century, these farming settlements gathered together into groups for mutual protection and set up military organizations which they copied from the neighbouring Fanti and Akwamu. The Ga word *man*, translated 'town' or sometimes 'nation', is the Twi word *oman* and implies a military confederation. Osu and Accra seem to have been founded at the end of the seventeenth century and Temma, Nungwa, Labadi and Teshi over a century later.

HISTORY OF INDIVIDUAL 'TOWNS'

ACCRA. The so-called *Ga Masi*, Ga-speaking refugees said to have come 'down the Niger' from inland at the end of the sixteenth century, gave rise to the *Asere*, *Abola*, *Gbese* and *Sempi* 'quarters' of Accra, each of which has its own stool and *mantse*, and to the *Akunmadzei* 'quarter' which has no *mantse's* stool. They learned war organization from the Akwamu in the seventeenth century. The *Otublohu* 'quarter' originally consisted entirely of Akwamu people, later joined by some Denkeras who had come to Accra as servants of the Dutch. The *Alata* 'quarter' was first lived in by workers from Lagos brought by the English to build a fort. The *Alata* and *Sempi* 'quarters', later joined by *Akunmadzei*, united for military purposes and put themselves under the protection of the English, becoming known as English Accra or Jamestown. The two main sections of the *Ga Masi*—*Asere* and *Abola*, joined respectively by *Otublohu* and *Gbese*—put themselves under Dutch protection and these four 'quarters' became known as Dutch Accra.

Until about 1840 Accra remained a confederation of seven separate units (*Asere*, *Abola*, *Gbese*, *Sempi*, *Otublohu*, *Alata*, *Akunmadzei*) each one, except *Akunmadzei*, having its own stool and *mantse*. At the time of the Ashanti-Fanti war the Accras were

¹ See Field 2, pp. 72-3, 82-7, 121-5, 142-51, 196-8, 200-202, 207-209.

asked by the Fanti for help. The senior god of Accra (*Sakumo*), when consulted by the people about the leadership of their combined forces, is said to have told them that the *mantse* of the Abola 'quarter' was to be *Ga mantse*, leader of the combined forces of all seven 'quarters', although the senior stool was that of Asere. However, this leadership was to be purely military: in all other matters Asere would remain senior. Misunderstanding has arisen over this because of the ambiguity concerning the meanings of the word *Ga*, which is, primarily, the name of the town Europeans call Accra; the language spoken there became known as the Ga language, and all who spoke it were called Ga. Consequently it was assumed that the '*Ga mantse*', who was really only *mantse* of the 'town' of Accra, was *mantse* of all the Ga people, and he was recognized as such by the Native Administration Ordinance in 1927, being now considered to be Paramount Chief of the Ga people. In actual fact, each Ga 'town' is separate and independent and was only allied with the others in time of war.

OSU. Some people from Osudoku in the Krobo district were given part of the land in this area, overrun by hunters from Nungwa. They formed two 'quarters' which were later increased to four by a group from Labadi and some former servants of the Europeans in Christiansborg fort.

TEMMA. A small number of farming settlements scattered around the present site of this 'town' were menaced by raiders from the forest country and by guerilla warfare between the people of Nungwa and Labadi, so they joined forces and came to live on the present site of Temma. They organized themselves for war under a certain Adzeite Asari, said to be an Akwamu refugee, whose descendants formed that half of the 'town' known as *Asaman* (Asare's town). The other half is composed of Kpesi people, later joined by some people from Late, and is known as *Awudun*.

NUNGWA. It is said that originally the people, of two separate stocks and with two sets of lineage names only, lived in two sets of villages scattered within a four or five mile radius of the present Nungwa; each set married, exogamously, with the other set. One group were Ga-speaking immigrants from 'Nigeria country' who came at the same time as the Accra immigrants, probably in the late sixteenth century. The other group were already on the land when the Ga-speaking people arrived; tradition says they were of Akwamu origin. The two groups joined together when threatened by war with Labadi and the present 'town' consists of two sections or 'quarters', originally exogamous, though today this is only observed by the 'big people'. One of the 'quarters' was later joined by two groups of 'strangers' from Teshi and Accra: each founded a House (*we*) or patrilineage.

LABADI. Founded by the *Ga Boni*, who say they came from Bonni on the Nile delta and arrived in the country with the *Ga Masi*. They founded five 'quarters' and a sixth was created later by a party of Ewe.

TESHI. First organized by a party of colonists from Labadi whose leader had quarrelled with the Labadi *mantse*. They joined with earlier occupiers of the site to form the 'town' of Teshi, which now has five 'quarters', one consisting of Kpesi people, one of the descendants of the Labadi colonists, one formed round a group of Fanti fishermen, joined by people from Accra, one formed by some Gbugbla refugees and other strangers, and the fifth developed round a nucleus of Adangme people from Shai.

LANGUAGE¹

Ga and *Adangme* are spoken in the south-east Gold Coast from the mouth of the Volta to beyond Accra. Neighbouring languages or dialects are *Fante* to the west, *Ewe* to the east and *Akwapim* in the north.²

Although *Ga* and *Adangme* have a considerable vocabulary in common and a marked resemblance in structure, they are not completely mutually intelligible and may at this stage be considered as two languages, each with sub-groups of dialects, as follows:

- A. *Ga*, spoken along the coast from the River Densu just west of Accra to Temma in the east. Dialects are *Teshi-Nungwa*, *Osu* and a debased type of *Ga* spoken in Accra.
- B. *Adangme*, spoken along the coast from Kpone (where the people are bilingual, speaking both *Ga* and *Adangme*, but consider themselves *Adangme*) to Ada (Volta) and inland within a line drawn approximately along the Volta through Akuse, Senchi, Bisa, Trom and under the Akwapim ridge back to the coast at Kpone. Dialects are *Kpone*, *Ningo*, *Prampram*, *Osudoku*, *Shai*, *Krobo* and *Ada*.

Within each language the dialects are mutually intelligible; they are very similar and show only slight differences of usage and pronunciation.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF GA AND ADANGME

Ga and *Adangme* are Sudanic languages and have the usual characteristics of this group; special features shown by both are:

1. *Phonology*. (a) a system of 7 distinct vowel sounds; (b) the labio-velars kp, gb, ŋm; (c) l initiating roots; (d) the palato-labial series tʃw, dzw, ʃw (*Ga* only); the voiced/voiceless series l/hl (*Adangme* only).
2. *Tonal system*. *Ga* has two significant levels of monosyllabic tone, while *Adangme* has three.
3. Both languages possess a definite article.
4. *Plural* of nouns is formed by suffix.
5. *Word order*. Genitive case precedes governing noun; direct object follows the predicate; adjective follows the noun it qualifies.
6. *Vocabulary*. The tendency is for *Ga* to borrow very frequently from Twi. *Adangme*, particularly S.E. dialects such as *Ada*, borrows less frequently from *Ewe*; this is noticeable, for example, in names for foodstuffs.

¹ Information from Mr J. Berry.

² The open o (ɔ) which occurs frequently in *Ga* is not indicated by a special symbol in this text.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT¹

NATURE OF COUNTRY

The country consists of almost level grassy plains with rare abruptly-rising small ranges of hills; there are few trees but the soil is quite good. The area is not well watered except in the rainy season from August to October. Along the coast is a series of lagoons of various sizes, which play an important part in Ga life; they are well stocked with fish.

CLIMATE

The area is one of low rainfall (Accra 27 in. per year; Osu 20 in.) with comparatively high temperature and humidity, and small temperature variation. Fogs, locally called 'smokes', prevail along the coast in June and July. In December-January, a cold, dry wind, the Harmattan, sets in from the N.E., and in February-March there are tornadoes during the change from N.E. to S.W. winds.

¹ Cardinall 1; Chamney; Maxwell; Migeod; *Gold Coast Atlas*.

MAIN FEATURES OF GA ECONOMY¹

Traditionally the Ga lived by farming and hunting, but with increased security sea-fishing, introduced in Labadi and Accra by the Fanti in the latter half of the eighteenth century, has gained greatly in importance and is today a main source of livelihood. Though nearly all Ga men have food farms a majority are fishermen as well.

FISHING, formerly confined to streams and lagoons, has been extended, under Fanti tuition, to the sea with the aid of large hand-nets used from canoes.

The captain of a fishing-boat is usually its owner, though a canoe may be owned by a clerk, a lorry-driver or by some old man no longer able to go out fishing; some boats are owned by women who put a male relative in charge. Relatives are preferred for the crew of four or five.

The catch is divided, with an extra portion for the canoe owner. The owner of the net, which is the most expensive and most easily lost item of gear, also receives some fish from each of those sharing and, if a member of the crew, he gets about one and a half times as much as the others. The crew, but not usually the owner, then hand their fish over to their wives with orders that a specified sum be paid back to one of the crew, known as the *fotrotse* (father-of-the-money-bag). At intervals the money is shared out, the 'net' receiving the largest share, followed by the rest in order of seniority.

Curing and marketing are done by women and it is a wife's duty to trade fish for her husband. Unmarried men entrust their catch to their sister or mother. Fishwives also trade on their own account. Most of the catch is sold wholesale when cured, for the up-country market.

Until the expansion of fishing in the nineties, children who were to be fishermen were apprenticed for two to three years to the *woleiatse* (father-of-the-fishermen), who controls sea-fishing in each 'town', but today children learn from their fathers.

FARMING

All married and many unmarried men have their own food-farms. Neighbours and kinsmen help each other in clearing. A wife has no obligation to help on the farm but she often does assist in clearing, planting and harvesting. It is, however, her duty to market and exchange farm produce for her husband, giving him a stipulated sum for the goods; she is free to keep any excess she can make.

Most women have their own farms and trees, usually inherited from their mothers. They are solely responsible for working these and cannot demand help from any man, though a husband or brother often does clearing and heavier work in exchange for part of the produce.

Plots are worked for about three years, then rested to grow rough grass again. Crops grown are maize, cassava, peppers, okros. Most people grow a surplus for cash sales in urban markets; the large wage-earning population (clerks and other employees) living in Accra, Osu and Labadi absorb large quantities of foodstuffs from the markets.

¹ See Brown; Field 2, pp. 54-70.

OTHER MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD

Many Ga earn wages as clerks in Accra, or as sawyers and lumbermen in the timber forests inland during the slack period in the fishing year. It is held to be easier to work hard and save money when away from home.

TRADING

All trading, except that initiated by foreigners, is carried on by women. Besides trading her husband's goods every woman carries on some sort of trade on her own account; some lay in small stocks of imported and other durable consumers' goods which they retail locally at high margins. Others trade on a larger scale in cloth or head-kerchiefs, and many do illicit trade in spirits. Markets are run entirely by women, and in each 'town' several women run general stores of their own.

TECHNOLOGY

The Ga standard of craftsmanship is today very low. Fishermen look after their nets and tackle with great skill and pride, but this is exceptional. A great many articles of daily use come from outside the country; e.g. canoes, domestic wooden bowls, spoons, dishes, stools, come from forest country, and pottery from the Odumasi district; many chattels come from Manchester, Birmingham and, before the last war, from Japan. Houses are roofed in slovenly fashion with bunches of grass, and the mud walls are left rough, soon crumbling to admit rain.

KINSHIP, SUCCESSION AND MARRIAGE (GA)¹

Inheritance and succession among the Ga-speaking people are in general determined by patrilineal descent, and the basis of social organization is the patrilineage or House (*we*). However, this emphasis on patrilineal descent is modified in that succession to offices held by women and inheritance of women's property go in the female line. This may be due to the influence of the matrilineal institutions of the neighbouring Akan peoples.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

This is strongly classificatory. Kinship terms of address are also often extended to people who are not relatives, e.g. anyone wishing to be respectful may address any old man or woman as 'grandfather' (*ni*) or 'grandmother' (*na*), and an old person wishing to express affection may address a younger as 'my grandchild'. Field gives no systematic list of kinship terms.

THE LINEAGE OR HOUSE (*we*)

1. Each of the Ga 'towns' is a confederation of a varying number of Houses or patrilineages, whose members trace their descent back to the founder of the House and call themselves the *webii* (house-children) or sometimes the *weku* (house-group). The word *we* is used as a suffix on the distinguishing name of the House, e.g. *Sakumowe* means *Sakumo's* House, or the lineage that serves the god *Sakumo*.

2. Membership of a patrilineage may be acquired by adoption as well as by birth (see below, 'Life Cycle', p. 89).

3. Every House has its own set of personal names, divided into two sub-sets used in alternate generations. A number of brothers severally receive the same names as their paternal grandfather and his brothers, sisters receive the same names as their paternal grandfather's sisters. Thus grandparent and grandchild are socially equated.

4. When numbers become too great the Houses break up into sub-Houses but no new sets of names are created.

5. Public offices, both religious and secular, are vested in the lineages; each Ga 'town' is managed and run by its 'big people' who are all representatives of lineages and sub-lineages.

6. Every House has its own god or *dzemawon* whose shrine is in the main lineage-house or *adebosia* (origin-house), where the lineage head, who is also usually the priest (*wulomo*) of the lineage god, lives.

7. There is a very strong feeling of corporate responsibility among lineage members; the lineage is collectively responsible for the behaviour of its members, and there is a tradition of great pride in one's House, which is a powerful sanction of law and order. The lineage head is normally the oldest male member and is also usually the priest of the lineage god. However, if this latter office involves arduous duties, for example, if the lineage god is also one of the main gods of the 'town', then it may be held by a younger member of the lineage.

¹ See Engmann 1; Field 2, pp. 1-70.

Election of a new lineage head is carried out by a meeting of the male members of the lineage. If he is also the priest of one of the 'town' gods the lineage inform the 'town' of their choice and the 'town' signifies its acceptance; presumably the 'town' has the right to object to the lineage's nomination, but this does not appear ever to have happened.

DOMESTIC ORGANIZATION

Men and women live in separate compounds.

1. *Adebosia* (origin-house). This is in two separate sections; it is the main lineage house, the oldest and original dwelling of each lineage and the heart of the secular and religious life of the lineage. In the men's section lives the lineage head, who must always occupy the same room. Other rooms are occupied by the senior male members of the lineage. Very occasionally, senior women who have passed the menopause may live here also if the compound is uncrowded and that of the women very full. The shrine or *gbatsu* of the lineage god is in this compound.

The women's compound usually holds four to five times as many adults to each room as the men's, and also includes the women's children, except the bigger boys of thirteen or so and upward who live with their fathers. Women live here by two kinds of rights: (a) those who are members of the House by patrilineal descent; (b) those who are daughters or granddaughters of women who were born either in this compound or in some other women's compound of the same House.

2. *Other compounds*. Those of men usually contain a group of from three to ten classificatory brothers and their sons who are too old for the women's compound. They are distinguished from women's compounds by the fact that they have no kitchen: the wife brings food to her husband and sons, and comes to her husband's room at night. Every man's compound has its head or 'father' (*tse*), the senior member of the compound.

A rich man may build a separate compound for his wives or sisters, or for his mother. The head of such a compound will be the senior wife or the eldest sister and she decides what other women may live in it; when she dies its new head will be whoever she appoints before her death, but ultimately the compound belongs to the male heirs of the builder.

It is obvious from the above that in general men's compounds contain men who are all of the same lineage whereas women's compounds contain women and children of several different lineages; their composition is determined by the kinship ties between the women and the men under whose jurisdiction the building lies.

The pull of the mother is an important factor in the location of compounds; men like to live near their own mother and tend to build their compound near hers if possible; they also like to have their wives near their mother, but these normally live with their own mothers. A man is, however, often found living with his mother's male relatives, where he has, strictly, no right to be; a woman is rarely found where she has no strict right. A man may demand of his wife that she live with his mother

—though he seldom does so—but a wife cannot demand a home of her husband's people if she has relatives of her own nearby.

The hamlet dwelling

New hamlets (*akrowa*) develop when one or more farmers from one of the 'towns' is short of land or game. Such a man builds a compound for his wife and children, containing a minimum of two rooms and a kitchen. When his sons marry each adds a room of his own and in this situation the wives live together in the women's part of the compound, instead of living with their own relatives. As numbers increase a new separate men's compound is founded, usually by two or three young men who build it themselves; the original compound eventually becomes the women's compound.

The headship of the hamlet lies with the founder and his patrilineal successors: anyone else wishing to settle there must ask his permission. These hamlets are not regarded as their inhabitants' real home; they return as often as possible to their home 'town'.

INHERITANCE AND SUCCESSION

All the lineage members meet to decide the distribution of property of a deceased member. There are no rigid rules of inheritance but there are practices which the elders may modify in any way they think fit.

For purposes of both inheritance and succession the sons of brothers count as one set of brothers and the daughters of sisters as one set of sisters.

- (a) *Men's rights and property.* All goods and rights are inherited by the eldest surviving brother and so on in order of seniority by age. Paternal authority passes in this way and on the death of the last brother, the eldest of the sons of all the brothers becomes the head of the group of 'brothers' and is responsible for the care of the indivisible property and for the distribution of returns from it at the annual lineage or sub-lineage ritual. He allocates portions of the divisible property and takes a larger share of returns than he allows the younger brothers, but not so large as that allocated to the one who is actually utilizing the property, such as a farm plot or fishing-boat.

A man's daughters also receive shares but they are smaller than those of the sons.

- (b) *Women's rights and property.* Land, boats etc. belonging to a woman, and returns from these, are divided between her sisters and *all* her children, sons and daughters being treated equally. When the property is such that it does not deteriorate, or when it is the income from a going concern, the sons' share is for their lifetime only and then reverts to the mother's daughters or their heirs. When the woman's daughters are minors her senior sister becomes their 'mother' and holds the property in trust until her own death. This sister's own children also receive shares when their mother dies.

SUCCESSION TO PUBLIC OFFICE IN THE 'TOWN'

This is always a matter of election by the lineage, which may set aside customary rules.

- (a) *Succession to offices held by men* is patrilineal but it depends on the nature of

the office as to whether a brother or a son succeeds; normally brothers are first, but if the office involves strenuous duties, such as those of the priest of a 'town' god, then a son is more likely to succeed since a younger man is more suitable.

Rotating succession: certain 'town' officials are provided by several Houses in rotation; when the holder of such an office dies, leaving a younger full brother, this brother succeeds and the office does not pass to the next House until all such brothers have succeeded. In matters of inheritance and succession 'the brothers are one': a younger surviving brother is identified with his dead brother. It is only when there would be a change of generation that the succession passes to the next House.

When a brother or son of a previous office-holder is not available his sister's or daughter's son may succeed, if the mother is married to a man of her own House. In former days, when there was little competition for the *mantse's* stool (see 'Political Structure', p. 82), a son of a daughter of the stool House might succeed even if his father was not of the same lineage.

- (b) *Succession to most women's ritual 'town' offices* (e.g. stool-washing) passes in the female line. The eldest of the classificatory daughters succeeds to the post; she has been brought up in the same compound as her predecessor and is therefore familiar with the duties involved. Exceptions are: i. women officials connected with *Kple* rites, who are usually chosen afresh in each generation from any women of the worshipping House; ii. *woyei*, the mouth-pieces of important gods (nearly always women but there are a few male *woyei*—see 'Religious Beliefs', p. 96); these are supposedly chosen by the gods themselves, who may possess anyone, but they are usually members of the House which has the care of the god, or the daughters or grand-daughters of the previous *woyo*.

MARRIAGE¹

The rules of marriage among the Ga-speaking people are a compromise between the customs of the different groups making up the Ga as they are known today. 'One frequently meets not only with inconsistencies in the rules, but often a blatant disregard, in practice, of what they state to be the rules.'²

Prohibited unions

A man may not marry:

- (a) his grandmother, mother, sister, daughter or granddaughter, because this would be *musun bo*—'shaming of the belly'.
- (b) his mother-in-law or her sister, his father's wife or his father's brother's wife, or his mother's sister, because 'she is his mother'.
- (c) his father's sister, because 'she is his female father'.
- (d) his son's or nephew's wife, because 'she is his daughter'.

The above prohibitions appear to apply to the whole of the Ga-speaking people. In earlier days, a man breaking these rules was punished by drowning to avoid polluting the ground with unclean blood and a guilty woman was driven away into

¹ Engmann 1; Field 2, pp. 32-40.

² Ibid. p. 32.

the bush. Also, none of the offenders' relatives were allowed to hold any post of seniority for one generation. Nowadays, offenders are turned out of the 'town' by their relatives, deprived of their lineage names and forbidden by the townspeople to attend any public festivals.

Among certain groups, parallel-cousin marriages are also prohibited, for example, in Nungwa and Accra, homes of the immigrant *Ga Masi* and *Ga Wo*, except in a few wealthy and literate Accra lineages, who often ignore this prohibition in order to keep money in the lineage. In Temma, it is essential to avoid situations arising from such marriages, but not necessarily by prohibiting the marriage; in earlier days, such marriages helped to keep important offices within the Houses holding them.

Cross-cousin marriage.

A man has the right to demand that his daughter shall be taken to wife by his sister's son, but he may send her elsewhere if he wishes. The sister's son, however, whether he marries his cousin or not, always has the right to demand from her certain wifely services, such as cooking.

It is generally held that two brothers ought not to marry two sisters, because they would quarrel, but such unions are not forbidden. On the other hand, twins are encouraged to marry brothers and sisters, because 'they must always do things alike'.

Any suggested marriage is discussed on its own merits, and whether it is considered allowable or not depends on specific circumstances such as housing. Factors taken into account include the following:

- (a) Children brought up in the same women's compound and 'who have sucked the same breast, slept on the same mat and eaten from the same dish are brothers and sisters' in spite of the fact that they may not be blood relations.
- (b) When a man sends for his wife to come to his compound to sleep with him, what other women will also be coming to sleep with his 'father', grandfather or 'brothers'?
- (c) When a man visits his wife at his mother-in-law's, what other men will be there at the same time?
- (d) When a woman 'cries to her husband for money to lend her mother or father' what House will ultimately be impoverished? (Mother and daughter, and father and son, are economically identified.)
- (e) It is a rule of succession that when an official, who should be succeeded by either a brother or a son, has only a sister or a daughter, then the son of this woman may succeed. If she has married a man of her own House, then her son will be of her House also and succession stays in that House.

FORMALITIES OF MARRIAGE

When a young man reaches marriageable age his father usually tries to get him a wife to 'keep him from wanton play'. If the choice is entirely the father's he usually pays all the expenses; but a wise father consults his son, who then shares the costs, otherwise the son may eventually pay off his first wife (see below) or supplant her with a 'small wife' of his own choice.

Ordinary procedure

1. The man first sees the girl alone and gives her a small gift, usually a penny; if she refuses it the matter is closed; if she accepts she shows it to her parents, and the next day takes to her suitor some small titbit of food. The man usually confides in a friend who keeps watch on the girl for a month or two to see that 'she is not playing with some other man'. If he is satisfied he then tells his parents.

2. *Agbosimo* or 'knocking the gate' is the first step towards making the marriage public. According to Engmann, the responsibility for this belongs to the eldest member of the young man's family (presumably his patrilineage) who deals with the eldest member of the girl's lineage, but Field speaks of the couple's parents as being the people responsible. Two messengers—a man and a woman—are sent from the man's relatives to the girl's relatives with bottles of rum or gin, or one guinea (a shilling of which is returned as a receipt); this is the *agbosimo da* or 'gate-knocking wine'.

3. Some time later, if the girl's people approve, they send two representatives (one from her mother's and one from her father's lineage) to tell the man's relatives.

4. Engmann and Field give somewhat different accounts of the next part of the marriage procedure.

(a) According to Field,¹ messengers are sent from the man's parents bearing fifteen pounds, which is the sum of four distinct items:

<i>Kplemo da</i> , 'agreement wine'	£1
<i>Yi nii</i> , 'head-money' or 'bride-price'	£6
<i>Heno to bo</i> , 'buying of the waist'	£4
<i>Bladzu</i> —public announcement by giving of party to which 'all the young girls come and play' and balls of <i>fotolii</i> (dough) are thrown. Should really be called ' <i>Aye fotolii</i> ' as <i>bladzu</i> is the puberty rite of Otublohu girls	
	£4

In addition to the above sum the girl's parents have the right to demand the money they spent on her puberty rites, but they may, and usually do, reduce it, let the sum be paid in instalments or waive it altogether. The £15 is distributed in the following way: both father and mother receive £1 each for a 'wetting cloth', to compensate them for the times when their baby daughter sat on their knees and wetted their cloth; the mother and her women relatives get the rest of the money (including any of the *kplemo* or puberty rite expenses paid by the husband, though the girl's father was originally responsible for these), of which part is used to buy the girl's trousseau.

(b) According to Engmann, a ceremony takes place at the girl's father's house, attended by relatives of both the man and the girl, during which the *sibimonii* (engagement gifts) are presented by women of the man's lineage to the girl's lineage. Formerly this gift was about £2, two bottles of rum and a pot of native beer, but today it consists of from £4 to £8 and a gold ring (in imitation of the European engagement ring) and some drink. The term *henebotoo* is mentioned in connexion with this ceremony (see above). Engmann then mentions two alternative ceremonies, of which the first, *bladzu* (a puberty rite which the man paid for and after which he

¹ Field, 2 pp. 38-9.

could take the girl to wife) has today been superseded by *Boi ekpaahamo* or *Seeni-hamo*: this involves the handing over by the man to the girl's relatives of six cloths and six head-kerchiefs for the bride (or may be simply the sum of £6) as well as thirty shillings for a 'wetting cloth' for the girl's parents.

5. After all payments and announcements have been made, the girl, dressed in her best clothes and decked in her family's finest beads and trinkets, is escorted at sunset to her husband's house, by a crowd of her sisters, cousins and other girls. Two of her mother's sisters hand her over officially to her husband, who provides the party with drinks.

6. If the husband finds that the girl is not a virgin he has the right to demand of her parents a goat to be killed to stain the calico he would otherwise have shown to them as proof of her virginity, but this custom has of recent years almost died out, for, as Field was told, 'not one girl in a thousand is a virgin'.

Minimum procedure

A couple wishing to marry, but unable to get their parents' consent, wait until the girl is pregnant before telling her parents; the youth then has to pay two bottles of rum as an admission of guilt (instead of *agbosimo da*). *Yi nii* is waived but *heno to bo* and *bladzu* must be paid in full; the girl is then the man's lawful wife and any children are his, as long as he does the *kpodziemo* ceremony for them (see 'Life Cycle', p. 89).

Betrothal of unborn girls

This is part of a custom whereby two men cement a friendship by making a pact in which one agrees to bear all expenses connected with the other's child from the moment it is conceived; if it is a boy it becomes as one of his sons, as far as inheritance is concerned; for naming and succession the child belongs to his own father's House; such a boy is known as a *bialo*. If the child is a girl she stays with her mother until she reaches marriageable age. If she then refuses to marry her guardian and insists on marrying some other man, this latter must repay to the guardian all he has ever spent on her. If the girl is seduced before marriage the guilty man is treated as if he had seduced a wife but has to pay more than the usual pacification fee (see below) because the guardian has done so much for the girl all her life.

SEPARATION AND DIVORCE¹

Information on this subject is confused and inadequate; the following account is therefore incomplete.

Divorce proceedings may be started by either party. If the woman wishes to leave the man her relatives must refund all marriage fees; until this is done the husband can claim adultery fees from any man she may sleep with. When a man wishes to rid himself of a wife who has never been unfaithful he must 'put her on the road' with a compensation fee—usually £12.

When a woman commits adultery her husband may claim a fee of £1, known as *dunsa*, from the guilty man: payment of *dunsa* is an admission of guilt without which

¹ Field 2, pp. 40-3.

further proceedings cannot be taken. If the woman is pregnant by the interloper the fee is £2. After this the injured husband may claim customary damages or *ayifali* (cf. Twi *ayefare*) from the guilty man; the amount of these depends on the social status of the husband, a man of ordinary rank being entitled to £6, which is doubled if the woman is pregnant. If the wife of a *mantse* is seduced, he himself claims nothing but every military officer in the 'town' may claim *dunsa* and *ayifali* 'because it is their father the *mantse* who has been disgraced'. If the injured man owns a 'medicine' of any importance, or if his household has charge of a god, he may claim the cost of a sacrifice to purify these things from the pollution brought on them by his wife's adultery. No *ayifali* claim can be made against a brother or near relative: 'You can only claim *ayifali* against your enemy, and it is not good that your brother should be your enemy.' A large pacification fee must be paid, however, and this costs more than the *ayifali*.

If the husband wishes to divorce his wife after he has claimed *ayifali* he must 'put her on the road' with £12. Field does not say whether he is entitled to the refund of marriage fees.

If a man wishes to rid himself of an adulterous wife without paying her 'road money' he may do so by waiving his claim to *ayifali* or the refund of marriage fees; in this case, although the woman is presumably free to marry again, she can be compelled by her former husband's brothers to perform the *kura* funeral ceremony for him when he dies (see 'Life Cycle', p. 92).

In every case of separation and divorce the husband is the possessor of the children, provided he has paid the full marriage fee to his wife's relatives. If he has not, they can claim the children. It is not clear what happens when the marriage fees have been refunded. The child of an adulterous union may also be claimed by the wronged husband, and it has full rights of inheritance and succession in his lineage.

GA POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The Ga-speaking people are not a single group either by tradition or in organization. Each of the six so-called 'towns' (Ga—*man*, from the Twi *oman*—which has no exact English equivalent but implies a military organization) with its strip of territory stretching northwards from the coast, is an independent political unit with a constitution which has grown out of its unique history; there has never been any political confederation of the 'towns'. But, as far as can be seen from the uneven and sometimes inadequate information available, their political systems are, fundamentally similar, though they differ in details.

To describe adequately the present political structure of the Ga 'towns' it is necessary to consider their development during the last 250 years. Until about the end of the seventeenth century, the Ga-speaking people, part aborigines, part immigrants (see 'History and Traditions of Origin', p. 67) formed discrete settlements of extended families, whose priestly heads (*wulomei*), assisted by hunters, were their only leaders. These farming settlements then gathered together in groups for mutual protection and set up military organizations, which they copied from the neighbouring Akwamu and Fanti (see p. 67). The priest-leaders remained the heads of civil affairs, and in each *man* one became head priest, his lineage god, usually a lagoon god of the aborigines, becoming the acknowledged god of the whole 'town'. The hunters became 'captains' (*asafoatsemei*) in the new military organization (*asafo*). When warfare ceased and the population greatly increased the *asafoatsemei* took over the management of secular affairs, and today they really run the 'town', though the priests (*wulomei*) remain ritual heads with considerable prestige.

Each of the six resulting communities, anxious to maintain or increase its numbers, in order to repel inland raiders, allowed bands of friendly outsiders to join the 'town' and receive benefits and protection in return for military aid. Thus each 'town' today consists of several so-called 'quarters' (*akutso*), each representing a separate party of colonists which attached itself to the original group of settlers, preserving many of its own customs and the worship of its own gods, but acknowledging the supremacy of the senior god of the 'town' and its priest, who was head of the 'town'. The 'quarter' was essentially a military unit, the 'town' itself being a military confederation which would never have united except for military ends.

THE PRIESTS (*wulomei*)

The chief *wulomo* or high priest was originally the only ruler of the 'town', but it became necessary, especially with the coming of Europeans, for purposes of negotiation, warfare and alliances, for him to delegate much of his secular authority either to lesser *wulomei* or to the military officials (*asafoatsemei*). Today the chief *wulomo's* formal authority is confined to ritual occasions: he officiates at public worship, offers libations to his god, interprets to the people the wishes of this god, prays for the people and advises them in time of trouble. But his is the final voice in any dispute about right and wrong and anyone may take a case to him if dissatisfied with the decision of other courts. The senior *wulomo* is also often the nominal landlord of the 'town' (see below—'Land Tenure', p. 86).

Two of the lesser *wulomei* of a 'town' may also hold the positions of *mantse* and *mankralo* (see below).

THE MANTSE (literally 'father of the *man*')

This office and the war stool associated with it were part of the military organization copied from the Akwamu and the Fanti. The stool was the central 'medicine' in the war organization; it was carried into battle to encourage the warriors and bring victory. The *mantse* was installed by ritual enstoolment which gave him, and vicariously his followers, supernatural bravery and safety. But he was only magically useful in war; he was not a military leader, and stood apart with his stool during battle, protected by a special bodyguard. In peace time a man had no authority or importance in his capacity as *mantse*, though if he were also a *wulomo*, as was often the case, he had his ordinary priestly duties and position. Negotiations between Europeans and the Ga people were carried out in the early days through the *mantse*. These were largely concerned with warfare or its fruits (gunpowder and slaves) for which he was a suitable intermediary, especially as the senior *wulomo* was never allowed to leave his 'town'; hence the early mistaken idea on the part of Europeans that the *mantse* is the ruler or 'chief' of a Ga 'town', as a result of which he was recognized as such by the Gold Coast Administration, who created a registered *mantse's* tribunal before which offenders could be brought with police assistance. It had power to punish by fines, until 1946—a source of income to the *mantse*. In the old days, if a *mantse* misbehaved in any serious way, he was killed; the process of making him a *mantse* was magical and irreversible; he could not therefore be 'destooled'; if he was not killed, he was simply deserted and ignored. Nowadays, there are continual disputes over the office, due to the different conceptions of his function held by the Government and by the people themselves. (Seep. 68 above).

The *mantse* may be appointed from one House (patrilineage) or from several in rotation; the members of these Houses together form an electoral body known as the *Dzase*, whose head is the *dzasetse*, without whose approval no one can be a *mantse*; the *dzase* elect the *mantse*, who must then be approved of by the military officers of the 'town', collectively known as the *manbii*; they have the right to reject the candidate elected by the *dzase*, who must then choose someone else.

The Mankralo

He is a deputy *mantse* and has a similar stool; he acts for the *mantse* when the latter is absent. The first *mankralo* was created by the 'town' of Osu, when a group of inhabitants disapproved of their *mantse* and set up a second stool; although the Europeans refused to recognize this, the second stool remained and the people divided into two sets, one around the *mantse*, and one around the *mankralo*, forming two distinct 'quarters'. Later, a *mankralo* was created in all the other Ga 'towns', except Accra, when they set up their military organizations and copied the Osu pattern.

THE 'ASAFO' OFFICERS

The *Asafo* was originally the military body of a 'town', which was also called upon to maintain internal law and order: an organization derived mainly from the Fanti, and adopted first by Accra and later by the other 'towns'. Its internal functions

remain important as 'a kind of public works department'¹ and its officers deal with everyday administrative matters. The number of these officers varies in each 'town'; Temma has twelve, and Teshi fourteen, while Accra, being larger, has more than one *asafo* organization, though it is not clear how many. In each 'town' the *akwasontse* was formerly supreme military commander responsible for all the military organization and policy. Under him are the *sipi*; they vary in number from 'town' to 'town'; they were responsible for the distribution of ammunition to their part of the 'town'; now, in Temma, for example, they undertake the actual collection of taxes and distribution of monies in their respective sections. Under the *sipi* are the *asafoatsemei* (sing. *asafoatse*—lit. father of the *asafo*), each of which is in charge of a 'company'. Today all these officials act chiefly as magistrates and hold courts to settle any disputes people care to take to them. Their positions are hereditary and a man appears to be replaced by his grandson, as a rule.

OTHER OFFICIALS

1. *Otsamei* (sing. *otsame*; from the Twi word *okyeame*, one of a set of terms introduced with the military organization) are the mouthpieces or spokesmen of any group and are chosen for their fluency, accuracy and tact. This office is a junior one and a man may be appointed when quite young, but the older *otsamei* may act as magistrates and hold courts. Unlike other elders they are not chosen from any special House. Whenever a body of officials meets which has no permanent spokesman the most junior announces the decisions of the meeting. In Temma the *mantse* has two *otsamei*, the 'town' has two and the *akwasontse* has one.

2. *Woleiatse* (lit. father-of-the-fishermen) controls arrangements for sea-fishing and the discipline of the fishermen. Strangers must have his permission to fish in local waters and pay fees to him. He may forbid the use of any net if he thinks it bad for fishing. He is consulted in times of fish scarcity about the weather, the stars etc., and performs certain fishing ceremonials. In Temma he is chosen from one House only; in Labadi succession goes in turn through four Houses.²

3. *Medical agba*: this is a group of seven (ten in Temma) medicine-men who control the activities of all the medicine-men in the 'town' as the *woleiatse* controls those of the fishermen. They try all disputes involving medicine-men, and other courts call them in if cases involve witchcraft or medicine. The medical *agba* is responsible for the magical protection of the 'town', and for its ritual cleansing after deaths and epidemics.

JUSTICE

In the early days all major cases were tried by the *wulomei*, but these today confine themselves almost entirely to 'oath cases' (see below) in which their own god has been specifically invoked. Many cases are today settled by arbitration; the two parties simply agree to submit their dispute to a committee of impartial elders, who receive a few shillings' worth of rum for their time and trouble; any elder may arbitrate if both parties agree.

The supreme court in every 'town' is, as of 1945, the *mantse's* court, consisting of all the *wulomei*, who have the right to sit although they seldom choose to come, and

¹ Field 2, p. 92.

² See Brown; Field 2, p. 101.

the other 'big men' of the 'town', except the *woleiatse* and the *agba* officials who are co-opted only when necessary. The *mantse* presides. Although his *otsame* actually talks for him, the latter is merely a figurehead, taking no real part in trying the cases and not going 'to Adzina', i.e. discussing the cases in private with the other elders after all the witnesses have been heard. This is the only 'registered' court of which records are kept and which is recognized by the Administration; it can fine heavily and is very expensive, because all its members must be given 'hearing rum' for their time and trouble, and this is costly if the case is lengthy.

In pre-administration days the president of the supreme 'town' court for military and purely secular affairs was the *akwasontse*; this court could put the *mantse* to death if he was unsatisfactory, because the *mantse* as a military official was under the *akwasontse*.

When any case brought before the *mantse's* court involves supernatural affairs it is sent on either to the *agba*, or, if it involves witchcraft, to a special medicine-man (see 'Witchcraft', p. 104).

'Oath cases.' These are cases involving the pronouncement of a conditional curse (Ga—*ka kita*), usually spoken of in Gold Coast English as 'swearing an oath'. The curse is laid upon the judge should he not consent to hear the case, or, in the case of a military oath, on the whole community. If the name of a god is used, the case is taken to the *wulomo* of that god. If a military curse is pronounced the case is taken either to the *akwasontse*, or, nowadays, to the *mantse*. Any third party hearing someone pronounce a general military curse must seize the speaker by the wrist and take him at once to the judge, who must drop all other business and proceed with the hearing not later than the next day, having nullified the curse by the sacrifice of a goat and some rum.¹

Modzawe was a famous public court held in Accra, which judged cases for other 'towns' when asked. It was primarily military but it dealt with any case of bloodshed or attempted murder or incest. Its members were the seven members of the *akwason* of Accra (one from each 'quarter'), the *akwasontse*, every *sipi* and every *asafoatse*. All 'big men' (*wulomei*, elders, *mantse*) could also attend and give their opinion. It was closed in 1910 by the British because it had become bloody and corrupt, but it still functions unofficially.²

Corporate responsibility: wrongdoers are forced by their kinsfolk into submission to 'town' discipline. When a man is asked to appear before an elder's court the head of his household—father or elder brother—is asked to bring him. The household head is responsible for the payment of any costs.

Punishments are rarely inflicted. If one person has injured another he has to pay pacification to the injured party; this is not a punishment but a compensation for injury. Nothing is paid into court and the elders receive only their 'hearing rum' or its equivalent in money to recompense them for their time and trouble. But repeated refusals to obey the 'town' officials would result in expulsion from the 'town' or prohibition of fishing or farming, which in most 'towns' are the only means of livelihood. People caught in the act of theft or adultery are not taken to court but are beaten there and then by the kinsfolk and friends of the injured party.

¹ Field 2, p. 109.

² Ibid. pp. 166-7.

Appeal against kinsfolk. A junior member of a kin-group who is ill treated by any of them may complain to any elder's court. Anyone seeing a young or helpless person being ill treated has a right to report the matter to an elder's court, but must first warn the offender and give him a chance to desist.

GA LAND TENURE AND FISHING RIGHTS¹

Available information is scanty and confused so that it is not possible to give a full account of Ga land tenure. The following generalizations, however, appear to be justified.

The land itself, i.e. the soil, is distinguished from the *usus*, the use to which the soil may be put. In each 'town' the land itself is considered to be owned by the lagoon god or gods of the autochthonous Kpesi, whose *wulomo* is *sitse* or landlord. As these gods also own the lagoons, both farming and fishing are forbidden on the day of the week sacred to each particular god. The situation in Accra, however, appears to be more complicated and will be described separately.

In Temma and Accra the use of the land is divided between the different 'quarters', whereas in Nungwa and Labadi it is shared in common by all the 'quarters'. No information is available regarding the situation in Osu and Teshi. In Temma and Accra, any member of a 'quarter' can farm on any unoccupied land in his own 'quarter' without asking anyone's permission; a man wishing to farm land not belonging to his own 'quarter' asks permission, presumably of the *wulomo* and other 'big men' of the 'quarter'. Where the use of land is common to all the 'quarters' any member of the 'town' may farm anywhere as long as he disturbs no one else. Occupation, including use before the current resting period, gives a continuing right to use and to succession by heirs: as long as a man or his heirs farm the land they may not be disturbed.

Strangers wishing to farm must first get permission to occupy plots from the *wulomo* and other 'town' officials, to whom a gift of rum must also be made.

Trees, which remain the property of the planter and his heirs, may be planted by any townsman anywhere except on other people's farms.

Building in Temma and Labadi requires permission and a gift of rum; in the latter 'town' the *mantse* is the person in authority; in Temma this is not clear. No information is available for any of the other 'towns' except Nungwa, where no special permission is needed for building.

SALE OF LAND

Strangers appear to be able to buy land outright in all the 'towns', though Temma, at least, has never sold any of its land. In 'towns' where land is divided between the different 'quarters' proceeds of sales are divided between the heads of the different Houses of the 'quarter' after permission for the sale has been given by the *wulomo* and officials of the 'quarter'. In those 'towns' where land is shared in common by all the 'quarters', approval of all of these is necessary before any land can be sold; the proceeds are divided equally between them all, though nowadays, in Labadi at least, the *mantse* is given one-seventh of the proceeds (there are six 'quarters') in recognition of the fact that present-day stool expenses are heavy.

¹ Field 2, pp. 101, 113-14, 134-5, 162-5, 202-3.

FARMING HAMLETS

Information regarding the founding of an *akrowa* or farming hamlet is available for Labadi only; in this case the *mantse* must be told; he passes on the information to the *akwasontse* and *wulomei*.

LAND TENURE IN ACCRA

In Accra, the aboriginal lagoon god *Sakumo* seems to be considered owner only of the lagoon and lagoon villages. The religious aspect of ownership of the rest of Accra land is not clear. Apparently every 'quarter' in Accra 'may be said to own the land it occupies',¹ and in addition to such land there are further tracts known as 'hunters' land', originally occupied by small groups fond of hunting, which formerly was dangerous in what was then thick forest country. This continues to be the property of the Houses who originally hunted over it, and anyone wishing to farm or make a hamlet on such land must get permission from the head of the House which owns it; parcels of such land may also be sold outright by the owning House.

In certain 'quarters' of Accra the *mantse* receives a share of the proceeds when land is sold nowadays, in recognition of the fact that he has heavy financial responsibilities; he usually gets one-third and the rest is divided among the various Houses.

The Fa Na fishing villages along the coast in front of the Sakumo lagoon may only be occupied when the lagoon is open to the sea; when the sand barrier is up, 'the old man has closed his mouth and settled to sleep and no one may disturb him' and the occupants of the Fa Na villages must abandon them and return to Accra. In earlier days the houses were burni, but today the payment of a fee to the Sakumo *wulomo* has been substituted for this.²

FISHING RIGHTS

Any townsman is free to fish in the sea near his own 'town', under the supervision of the *woleiatse* (father of the fishermen—see p. 83), without the payment of any fee, but strangers must pay fishing dues, which in Nungwa are divided equally among the eight Houses of the 'town'. Information regarding the distribution of fishing dues in other 'towns' is not available.

Little information is available regarding lagoon-fishing rights; the *woleiatse* does not control these, but apparently he deals with any breach of lagoon etiquette by a fisherman.³

¹ Field 2, p. 162.

² Ibid. pp. 163-5.

³ Ibid. p. 101.

GA LIFE CYCLE¹

I. PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH CUSTOMS

(a) A child's physical characteristics are believed to be affected by various external influences acting on the mother during pregnancy, so she must be very careful during this period; e.g. she must avoid looking at ugly animals or people. Her surroundings are also believed to have a great influence; for example, women living on the grassy plains, periodically burnt smooth and black, have smooth-skinned, very black children.

Witches are believed to be very prone to prey on the *kla* of unborn children, and in order to prevent this the woman washes in a bath containing a magically powerful herb and small pinches of every possible kind of food: the witch will then be told by her own particular food: 'You cannot hurt me without hurting yourself.'

There appears to be no couvade custom, but the ordinary minor ailments of the woman during pregnancy are often visited on her husband instead: she is believed to effect this by stepping over his sleeping body at night.

If the coming child is a second child the first one may come under an influence known as *kwasioko*—jealousy of the newcomer who will share his food, his inheritance and his parents' affection. If he shows signs of this by becoming greedy, bad-tempered and thin he is sent to an aunt or grandmother who will give him extra attention and care.

As the time of birth approaches the father finds out, through a *woyo*, midwife or medicine-man, if the coming child has any tasks it wants him to carry out; usually this means giving eggs and money to the unseen friends believed to be helping the child on its journey into this world.

Repeated miscarriages are dealt with by ritual washing away of the evil believed to be causing them; it is laid on a white scape-chicken (*musunkpamowuo*) which is driven off into the bush.

Barrenness is believed to be caused by a woman's lineage *dzemawon* or by a bad *gbesi*; the god is implored to relent; the *gbesi* is driven away by a medicine-man.

(b) Birth takes place in the woman's mother's house (wives usually live with their mothers), where the woman is attended by her mother and other female relatives; even if she were in her husband's home, it would not be seemly for her mother-in-law to assist at the birth.

During labour, if the woman calls out the father's name, this is believed to give vigour to the child and bring it nearer to actual birth; this is made use of in cases of disputed paternity.

'The belief that the wages of secret sin is death is particularly prominent at the time of childbirth, and an adulterous woman enters her confinement in secret terror.'² If labour is difficult confession may help.

When a pregnant woman dies she is considered the virtual murderess of her child; she has died 'an accursed death'. Special rites are performed and the foetus is

¹ Adjei; Engmann 2; Field 1, pp. 161-205; 2, pp. 23-5, 55-6.

² Field 1, p. 168.

removed from the body after considerable ceremonial. If the child survives it is named *Obiniona* (you have asked and you have received).

The placenta is buried as soon as possible in the bath-house, by a man and a barren woman, who urinates on it to cause her to become fertile. For this benefit she pays a penny to the child's mother, or twopence if twins were born. If no barren woman wishes to make use of the placenta in this way it is buried under a tree which will then be expected to bear an abundance of fruit. •

2. CUSTOMS OF INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

After birth the child is kept indoors for seven days; it is then held to have survived seven dangers and is worthy to be called a person. If it dies before the eighth day it is considered as having never been born and has no name.

The *kpodziemo*¹ or 'going out' ceremony, at which the child is named, takes place on the eighth day after birth. Two women of the father's lineage take the child to its father's house, where are assembled relatives and friends of both parents. The child is blessed by an old person of the father's lineage, chosen for his (or her, if the child is a girl) admirable character, which is supposed to be impressed on the child. Representatives of both parents' lineages also take part in the *kpodziemo* ceremony, at which corn-wine and rum are drunk by the assembled company, after the ancestors have received their share. The child is now a member of its father's lineage and has assumed its own name. Field does not describe the actual naming, which presumably takes place during the *kpodziemo* ceremony. It is done by the 'father' of the child, who need not be its actual progenitor; the child of an unmarried mother is most often 'fathered' by the woman's own father, as it is not usual for the lineage of the defaulting man to be allowed to claim the child unless they can afford to let the man marry the mother at once; a child is always a coveted possession and that of an unmarried mother is usually secured by her own lineage. The man in whose name the *kpodziemo* ceremony is done claims the child as his lawful issue, and it counts as his in all matters of inheritance and succession.

Children are named strictly according to system; each House has its own set of names which recur in alternate generations (see 'Kinship, Succession and Marriage', and 'Religious Beliefs').

A week or so after the *kpodziemo* ceremony the husband gives a feast of thanksgiving for his new child to his wife and friends. At this he thanks his ancestors, and usually also his wife's lineage god, her *kla* and her *susuma*,² for having increased his lineage.

Circumcision.

Boys are circumcised at any time up to the age of twelve, but usually in early infancy. There is nowadays no ceremony connected with this but in former days the operation was accompanied by some ceremonial and was not performed until the boy was old enough to recite the appropriate prayer himself. Today relatives give the boy pennies—'he is now a man, having borne pain'. Uncircumcised boys are derided by their comrades. Circumcision of a foreigner implies naturalization and gives the right to enter the yard of the high god of the 'town'.

¹ Field 1, pp. 171-5.

² See Dogma of Human Personality in 'Religious Beliefs and Cults' below, p. 101.

The tribal mark, consisting of one short slanting cut on each cheek, is made at some time during infancy; it is a means of identifying prisoners and slain during war. At the same time three little cuts are made in the child's heel and 'medicine' is rubbed in to prevent him growing up weak and weedy.

Gbobalo children. When two children in succession die steps are taken to prevent the next from dying also by disfiguring it with long cuts radiating fanwise from eyes and mouth: it will then be ashamed to return to the place of the dead. The parents of such a *gbobalo* child make an elaborate show of neglecting it, often stripping it and laying it on a path in the early morning for anyone to find. By previous arrangement some relative 'finds' the baby, buys him from the parents and names him, sometimes returning him to the parents afterwards. *Gbobalo* children are never given a special lineage name, but some foreign name instead. Field says nothing about the rights of inheritance and succession of such children.

Children of the Gods. A child born in answer to prayer to one of the gods receives that god's name (or a masculinized or feminized version of it) and remains the special property of the god until puberty, when it is 'taken out' or set free by the god's *woyo* or *wulomo*. This is necessary because, although a god's influence is considered beneficial in childhood, adults do not like to be close to a god unless they are priests or *woyei*; such a contact is believed to bring misfortune, quarrels or even madness.

Twins, who are called *Akuete* and *Akwete* if boys, and *Akweli* and *Akwoko* if girls, are believed to have the same spirit as the *wuo*, a savage kind of wild cow. A special ceremonial takes place at their *kpodziemo* ceremony: each is given a little clay pot in which various offerings are put. After a few months, when it is clear that the twins are going to stay on earth, these pots are exchanged for a pair of *wuo* horns, henceforth the twins' most treasured possessions; if one of them beats the horns together in anger, calling on a person's name, that person will die. When a twin dies all the other twins become possessed for several hours by the spirit of the *wuo*. Twins are given an annual *yeleyeli* or yam-feast of thanksgiving, held by anyone who feels himself blessed above others, or who owns an important 'medicine'; at such a time the opportunity is also taken of thanking those common things which do not have a special feast of their own, e.g. a hunter's gun.

Twins of opposite sex are considered a far more powerful combination than those of the same sex. A twin married to another twin is also a powerful combination. If a twin dies the remaining one is believed to have special power because he now has a confederate among the dead.

As twins are considered to have some sort of divine power they never bring misfortune to their family; nevertheless they are not really welcomed as they are said to be capricious and hard to bring up: their wishes must never be crossed, and they cause much anxiety to their parents.

The next child born after twins is named *Tawia* and is regarded as having been sent to serve them.

The third child. If the three eldest children are boys the third is named *Mensa* (if three girls, *Mansa*) and is treated with special consideration, though he is not thought as much of as are twins. He is given an annual yam-feast, is very much favoured and never upbraided. In all stories of three brothers, *Mensa* is the hero;

he is handsome, clever and charming, and in real life also he receives the best of everything and will be chosen for important posts.

The seventh child, called *Ason*, is also specially regarded; he is given an annual yam-feast and is much favoured.

After the seventh child all the odd numbers are venerated. 'The word used is *dza*; exactly the same word is used for the worship of the gods.'¹

Idiots are believed to be incarnations of *dzemawodzi* (gods) and to be born only into chiefs' (*mantse*' ?) lineages and lineages which have a history of intimate association with *dzemawon* worship. They are treated with great gentleness and patience and are never derided.

3. PUBERTY RITES

(a) *Girls*.² There are several different types of rites brought in by the various fragments of tribes which originally formed the Ga 'towns'. Some Houses perform no rites at all whereas others would be disgraced in this world and the next if they neglected their rites. The general term for all girls' puberty rites is *kpemo*, 'which really means to meet or receive socially and implies that the girl has been received into the society of grown-up women or female members of her father's family—in short, has undergone her puberty rites'.³

In general, it is considered blasphemous and dangerous for a girl to conceive a child before her *kpemo* rites have been performed and in earlier days such a woman and her child were driven from the 'town'. Nowadays the offence is condoned but the pregnant girl is rushed through an abbreviated form of the rites to prevent the child being born stupid. Neither a non-*kpemo* woman nor the child of such a woman is entitled to the funeral rites that ensure an honourable reception in the next world, but it is possible to perform the *kpemo* rites before weeping for the corpse begins, as the spirit is believed to be still in the body at this time; the woman is thus saved but her child is not and will be an outcast in this world and the next.

In Nungwa, where the *tun* or camwood rites are performed, the emphasis is on unworthiness to enter the *Gbobukon* (sacred forest of the god *Gbobu*) and the rites are therefore confined almost entirely to women of rank, *woyei*, *dzranoyei* and others likely to have ceremonial business here.

(b) *Boys*.⁴ Puberty rites for boys tend to emphasize entrance into the *Asafo*. They have fallen into much greater neglect than those of girls and are now seldom performed except for boys likely to succeed to some important office such as *wulomo*, *mantse* etc. In some cases the puberty rites are incorporated into the ceremonial of appointment to the post in question.

Chief of the personal benefits conferred by the rites is 'to make the boy cease to be stupid'. The first-born is particularly prone to this stupidity, because 'the one who opens the womb is like one who clears a path. Any bad thing that is in the path will come to him.'

Unlike girls' rites, those of boys seem to have been originally of one kind only

¹ Field 1, p. 184, footnote.

² Ibid. pp. 185-91.

³ Field 2, p. 23.

⁴ Field 1, pp. 191-5.

and are associated with the worship of the *Kple* gods. They are known in some places as *Kromotsu* (firstborn's room) and in others as *Butruwo* (sleeping in the tabernacle). Though they vary in detail they are basically the same rites and involve the flinging of hot corn at the boy, his chasing a crab in a tiny grass tabernacle and the pretence of sleeping in this tabernacle. After the ceremonial sleep or *džranowo* the boy is treated as dead by the old women of his lineage: they wash him and cut his nails as if he were a corpse. Then the new man, dressed magnificently, is taken to the *wulomo's* house, where he sits with the men, apart from the women.

4. DEATH¹

According to Field the keynote of all funeral ceremonies is the severance of the ties between the living and the dead without giving offence to the latter.²

After death the body is washed and shaved and its nails are cut by old women of both the mother's and father's lineages. It is dressed in much finery and when it is ready for the lying-in-state—a man in his own or his father's house, a woman in her father's—wailing begins, led by the old women of the lineage. Relatives and friends visit the body one by one, throwing a cut kola-nut or lime in the air until the two halves fall different ways, a sign that the dead is ready to part company with the survivors. Gifts of money and gold are made to help the dead in his journey to the other world and in being cured of the sickness which killed him.

Commoners are buried the day after death, or even in the evening of the same day, but more eminent people lie in state for several days, after preservatives have been applied to the body. People used to be buried in their own room—a woman in her father's house—but this is now forbidden and they are buried in public cemeteries where ground is assigned according to lineages. Rum, money, gold and soap are buried with the body, but food, when given to the dead, is sprinkled on the grave for the ghost to eat. The sponge used for washing the corpse, its hair and nails are buried in a box under the father's sleeping-room if a man, mother's if a woman; the dead person will regard the burial place of these objects as his own home and will always return there.

Open house is kept with wine and rum for more than a week after the death; dancing and wailing gradually give way to cheerful drinking and merrymaking, ostensibly to cheer the bereaved. After three weeks there is a night of drumming—the real farewell to the dead; the elders meet in the origin-house and offer libations to the spirits of the lineage dead.

Separation Ceremonies

(a) *Widows and widowers.* The surviving partner performs, with the help of an old woman known and respected by the dead, the ceremony called *kura*. The first part is designed to convince the dead of the grief of the survivor, who remains shut up in the dead person's sleeping-room for seven days, wearing or clasping the dead person's garment or blanket; the survivor talks with the dead and mourns him, eating nothing but a little thin gruel during this time. On the eighth day the two are separated: the old woman asks the dead person to go away, the survivor washes in herbs prescribed by her and then bathes in the sea. If this separation is not

¹ See Adjei; Engmann 2; Field 1, pp. 196–205; Field 2, pp. 55–6.

² Field 1, p. 199.

properly performed the dead partner may return to have sexual intercourse with the survivor, thus causing his or her death.

Widows and widowers are expected to preserve six months' chastity after the death of their spouse, otherwise the latter may be resentful and may send misfortune or even death.

(b) Special ceremonies are performed when one of a pair of twins dies, by a woman who is herself a twin; this is to prevent the dead twin getting his survivor to join him.

(c) When a young couple lose a child they are supposed to remain shut up together for seven days, fasting and mourning, to persuade the child to be born again. This *Fia* ceremony is the only funeral ceremony a young child gets. On the eighth day the parents are purified at the beach.

Death of a mantse. There is a good deal of ceremonial borrowed from Akwapim, whence the office of *mantse* also came. A *mantse* is buried under the floor of a special house built for him in the bush.

Death of a wulomo. On this occasion the other *wulomei* of the 'town' go together to inform his god of his death.

Death of a woyo. There is much extra ceremonial on such an occasion as the spirit which used the *woyo* as a mouthpiece must also be bidden farewell. These ceremonies, called *Abofu*, last from three to six weeks and the chief participants are other *woyei* from neighbouring 'towns' and villages.

*Funeral expenses*¹

When a man's wife dies he is responsible for all the actual burial expenses, though he is helped with voluntary contributions. If he cannot afford to bury his wife he is not allowed to claim her children, for they belong to her lineage, who pay the expenses. The wife's lineage are responsible for the entertainment of the funeral guests and for the drumming fees, but a friendly widower is expected to make some contribution also.

The husband of a man's eldest daughter must pay for the coffin when his father-in-law dies, unless the dead man's son is particularly anxious to do so. In this case the son-in-law contributes four guineas, as he does if his wife is either a junior wife or a younger daughter. This amount is compulsory and a dutiful son-in-law should supplement it, if possible, by contributing to the other expenses of the funeral.

If either of a woman's parents-in-law dies she gives two guineas. If her husband's grandparents die she gives a guinea or half a guinea. If either a sister, brother or cousin of her husband's dies she pays half a guinea and four shillings on behalf of each of her children.

¹ Field 2, pp. 55-6.

GA RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS¹

A marked feature of Ga culture is religious tolerance and respect for other people's gods; in each Ga 'town' there are a large number of different cults, some participated in by all the inhabitants, some involving only a small number of worshippers; when the 'towns' were first founded each separate party of aboriginals and colonists had their own gods, which they continued to worship; since then, many cults have intermingled, some gods have disappeared and others, mostly war-gods, have been brought in from outside, but there has never been any conflict between the different groups of worshippers.

The cult of the ancestors is one in which all the Ga-speaking people take part and it appears to play an important role in the preservation of custom, though, from the information available, it is not easy to assess clearly its sociological importance in Ga religion, in spite of statements by Field such as the following: 'I do not think any *wulomo* is half so much afraid of his gods as a man is of his ancestors or an official of his dead predecessors. No system of "functional relationships" ever held together a body of custom half so firmly as this one idea—the idea of the ever-present watchful dead and their power to smite or bless the living', and 'Most people are, in practice, more afraid of offending these (the ancestors) than of offending the gods, though in theory—that is, if they are asked point-blank which is the more terrible, an ancestor or a god—they give the higher place to the gods'.²

THE GODS: *Dzemawodzi* (sing. *dzemawon*)

The Ga term *dzemawon* is translated by Field as 'god'. 'A *won*, by Ga definition, is "anything that can work but not be seen" and includes the smaller beings of specialized and limited activity associated with medicines and magic . . . A *dzemawon* is a powerful type of intelligent *won*, not specialized in his activities but practically omnipotent and omniscient. "He comes and goes like the wind." He is called *dzemawon* "because he walks about the world and the towns" (*dze*—world, *man* town).'³

Dzemawodzi may be associated with certain places, such as hills or lagoons, or with certain animals; there are rain-giving *dzemawodzi*, others associated with fishing, with birth, and with war, though the last are perhaps more accurately described as 'war-medicines' since they often have associated 'medicines' or 'fetishes'. Every lineage or House has its own *dzemawon*, some of which are gods for a whole 'town' also.

In each 'town' there are dozens of gods, some of which are found in more than one 'town' and are worshipped by all the inhabitants, and some which are worshipped only by small groups. Field classifies them as follows:⁴

1. Gods worshipped with singing and dancing of the type called *Kple*. These include the aboriginal pre-Ga gods worshipped before the coming of the

¹ Field 1; Papafio 5.

² Field 1, p. 197.

³ Ibid. p. 4.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 5–6.

immigrant Ga. Chief of these are the gods of lagoons. The cults are agricultural and *Kpledzo*, the main religious feast of the year, is held either at the time of corn-planting, or corn-gathering, or both. A *Kple* god is usually the senior god of each 'town' and is considered to own the soil of that 'town'; his priest or *wulomo* is then *sitse* or landlord and is in charge of the allocation of land.

2. The gods whose worshippers sing and dance to the *Me* type of music. They are of Adangme origin brought by migrants from the Krobo district.
3. The *Kpa* gods, centred in Labadi. They were originally war-gods and have drum fetishes. This cult has absorbed much of an agricultural nature from the older cults. The chief feast is that of *Homowo* (hunger-hooting), which is now universal among the Ga-speaking people, but in those places where the *Kple* worship predominates it is not very heartily observed.
4. The gods whose worshippers use the *Otu* and *Akon* types of dancing and music; they are yam-eating gods of Fanti and Akwapim origin respectively and are all war-gods whose cults were imported by the Ga in comparatively recent times to help them in war; they are all associated with fetishes and are perhaps more accurately described as war-medicines. As these gods must be given their native food, yams, which do not grow in Ga country, have to be fetched from inland to feast them.

The senior god of each 'town', usually an aboriginal lagoon god, is always the rain-giver; in fact he is the giver of all good things; his priest was originally the ruler of the 'town' (see 'Political Structure', p. 81) and still today has the final voice in any moral controversy.

Every important god, except those (apparently goddesses of birth) who have sacred groves called *aklabatsa*, has a house called a *gbatsu* (*gba*—to foretell, prophesy, relate, declare, commune; *tsu*—a room), usually enclosed in a yard whose entrance is forbidden to uncircumcized men and menstruating women. In the *gbatsu* are kept various insignia, such as brooms and pots of holy water used for ceremonial cleansing, and a stool for the god to sit on. There is usually a sacred tree outside, under whose shade the god may sit if he is hot. The priest usually has to sleep in the *gbatsu*, which is said to have under its floor a pregnant woman buried alive.

Besides priests, women known as *agbayei*, *dzranoyei* and *woyei* are attached to the service of the gods; their functions are described below.

PRIESTS (*wulomei*; sing. *wulomo*)

To speak of 'the *wulomo*' today means the priest of the senior god of the 'town'; any other is distinguished by the name of his god. The *wulomo* of any god is elected from one or more Houses (patrilineages) in which the priesthood of that particular god is vested (see 'Kinship, Succession, etc.', p. 73). In former days the priests were the only rulers of the Ga but today they have delegated their secular duties to the military officials (*asafoatsemei*) and now deal chiefly with sacred affairs, though they remain the ceremonial heads of the 'towns'. Priests give their gods daily or weekly libations, and if they are priests of 'town' gods they officiate at public worship and interpret to the people the wishes of the gods. The senior priest of the 'town' has the final voice in any controversy about right and wrong.

Every priest must observe certain taboos; he must not see a dead body, and if he himself is about to die he must be taken from the place of his god. He must not eat salt except in the form of sea-water and no one may speak to him while he is eating. He must not eat fermented food and must abstain from sexual intercourse on certain days of the week and before performing important rites. He is not allowed to have personal property and must therefore be supported by his lineage or the other worshippers of his god, if it is an important one. The senior priest of a 'town' is not allowed to leave that 'town'.

On a priest's accession he is divorced from any former wives and is provided with a young wife 'carefully chosen from certain priestly families'; she has ceremonial duties of her own. Both his and her morals must be beyond reproach; 'if his wife is immoral both he and she are expelled from the "town"'. In earlier days they were both killed'.¹

Priests do not act as mouthpieces of their gods; they are never possessed and would be ineligible for the priesthood if they were. The gods speak through the *woyei* (described below) and the priests receive these messages and interpret them to the people. An exception to the above statement occurs in the case of certain so-called war-gods, whose priest or chief servant is also the *akonfo* (Twi—*okomfo*) or medium and is annually possessed. These priest-mediums, however, never have any secular power, as do the *wulomei* of the older gods.

THE 'WOYEI' (sing. *woyo*, i.e. *won yo*—the *won*'s or *dzemawon*'s woman)

These are the mouthpieces of great and small *dzemawodzi*, and of the dead. They are usually women, but occasionally men (*akonfo*).

Every important *dzemawon* has at least one *woyo*; her appointment is an official one and when the god wishes to communicate with his priest or his people he does so through her. As a human being she speaks with no authority; it is only when possessed that, as a passive instrument of the god, her voice carries weight.

Besides the official *woyo*, who lives at the expense of her god's worshippers, as does the priest, nearly every big *dzemawon* has a number of other *woyei* who have attached themselves because that god chose to enter them.

There are, besides, other unattached, free-lance *woyei* who are able to be possessed by one or more obscure *dzemawodzi* or by dead people; they give advice and help on many subjects, by the use of the wisdom and powers of soothsaying which come to them when possessed, and often make a good living in this way.

The official *woyei* differ in several details from the free-lance *woyei*. They are rarely possessed more than once a year, i.e. on the occasion of their *dzemawon*'s big dance. They may not build up private practices by being possessed to the order of casual clients and their training is different, as will be explained below.

*Making and training of woyei.*²

A *dzemawon* is believed to be able to possess any one it chooses, at any time and place, but usually the *woyei* of the big 'town' gods are members

¹ Field 1, p. 8. It is not clear whether this refers to *all* priests or simply to those of important 'town' gods.

² Ibid. pp. 100-9.

of the House which has the care of the god, or are the daughters or grand-daughters of the previous *woyo*, and the spirit of the *dzemawon* most often descends for the first time on a woman at a dance. Although a *woyo* is usually chosen by a *dzemawon*, sometimes children dedicated to a particular god because he granted their mother's request for a child, may at the age of about twelve be even more completely dedicated (instead of being released with special ceremonial), with the promise that when they reach maturity they will be trained as *woyei* of the god who sent them into the world.

The official *woyo*'s training consists essentially of a week's solitary confinement, ceremonial cleansing, head-shaving and initiation into simple duties, but that of a free-lance *woyo* is much longer and far more arduous. It may extend over several years and during this time the novice is 'apprenticed' to a medicine-man; these men are not themselves possessed, but study the interpretation of the sayings and doings of possessed persons, and take charge of novices. Apprentice-*woyei* are taught to dance while possessed by another *woyo* who is usually one of the wives of the medicine-man. They do not make articulate sounds during their periods of possession until they have undergone most of their training, and until then the medicine-man may not declare definitely what *dzemawon* has chosen them as his mouthpiece, though this may be assumed earlier by certain signs or through information from another *woyo*, who has been told by her own *dzemawon*.

During training the free-lance *woyo* is subjected to rigid discipline—strict chastity, frugal fare, a hard floor to sleep on, etc. If a novice is married she must leave her husband and children, and if she wishes to marry again at the end of her training she may marry only a medicine-man or a male *woyo* (*akonfo*).

There are four types of dancing adopted by *woyei*, which vary according to the language spoken by the possessing *dzemawon*. This language is not necessarily the same as the *woyo*'s everyday language. *Kple* dancing is accompanied by singing or speaking in Ga; the *Me* type by Adangme; the *Otu* type by Fante; and the *Akon* type by Twi. The *woyo* often, when possessed, speaks a language which she cannot ordinarily speak; Field found, however, that such people had invariably spent part of their early childhood away from home among people speaking the foreign language 'and had quite genuinely forgotten, in the ordinary sense, all they ever knew of these tongues'.¹

Every free-lance *woyo* of any standing holds an annual *yeleyeli* or yam-feast for giving thanks to her *dzemawon*. It is attended by other *woyei* from neighbouring towns and villages, and by people beholden to the *dzemawon*, who bring gifts.

Agbayei (sing. *agbayo*) and *dzranoyei* (sing. *dzranoyo*) are women serving the gods, and concerning them little information is available, but it is clear that they are not possessed, as are the *woyei*. They take part in various ceremonies, including puberty rites.

PUBLIC RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES INVOLVING THE MAIN GODS OF THE 'TOWN'

In all Ga 'towns' there are large public ceremonies performed by the chief *wulomei* on behalf of the whole 'town' and attended by most of the townspeople; the most important of these are *Kpledzo* and *Homowo*.

¹ Field 1, p. 107.

Kpiedzo is the main annual religious feast of the *Kple* gods. It takes place, according to the 'town', either at the time of corn-planting, or harvesting, or both, lasts several weeks, and involves ceremonies of thanksgiving to the gods and requests for their blessings on all the townspeople. The gods are believed to visit the town and special songs are sung in their honour; messages from them are transmitted through their *woyei*, who become possessed at this time. A ceremonial sowing of corn in a plot sacred to each god usually forms part of the ceremonial.

Homowo or 'feast of hunger-hooting' occurs in August at the time of the Ga New Year. It is universal but not very heartily observed in those 'towns' where the *Kple* worship predominates. It is connected with the *Kpa* gods, whose cult is centred in Labadi. They were originally war-gods but their cult has absorbed much that is agricultural from the older cults. At the time of *Homowo* villagers who at other times never leave their villages flock to their main 'town'; it is everyone's duty to be united with his father's House at this time; oneness with one's living and dead kin is the keynote of the most important week of the festival. Both the gods and the ancestors are thanked for the good things of the past year and asked to bless the people in the coming year. The ancestors are given *kpekpei* (special ancestors' food), some of which is then eaten by everyone else in their ancestral home. The old year's corn is used: none of this must be left over in the New Year. The newly-dead are mourned. Wronged people receive apologies and forgive those who have injured them. Wives send firewood, a symbol of submission, to their mothers-in-law and dutiful sons-in-law receive advice and blessings from their fathers-in-law. Everyone exchanges New Year greetings with their friends. It is a time of manifestation of social solidarity in which all, both priests and common people, take part.

In general, the *Kple* worship of the Kpesi aborigines has remained the most important ingredient in the collective worship evolved by each 'town'; the rites are primarily what Field terms 'prosperity' rites and are intended to ensure the fertility of the soil, the increase of the family and the avoidance of death. In each 'town' the senior god, giver of all good things, including rain, is almost always a *Kple* 'place'-god, usually of a lagoon. Such a god can never be ousted by newcomers and will always be senior in that place. Although the immigrants introduced the harvest-time festival of *Homowo*, and in Accra and Labadi this grew grander and bigger than the *Kple* planting-time feast of *Kpledzo*, it has not superseded the older festival, but on the contrary has borrowed much from it.

Except for the great annual religious festivals of *Kpledzo* and *Homowo* in which almost all the inhabitants of each 'town' take part even today, the affairs of the high gods have never been the deep concern of the common people; they are remote from everyday life and the *wulomei* are left to deal with them. Nowadays, when the supporting political framework of the old religion has been broken and the priests are no longer the central authorities, both secular and religious, the cult of the greater *dzemawodzi* is declining and there is a great increase in small cults, such as those of the 'yam-eating' gods in Osu and Accra, and in the ownership of private 'medicines'.

THE 'WON'

This, by Ga definition, is 'something that can work but not be seen'. It is a spiritual force, not usually personified (though this seems to vary), which has a more

or less fixed abode in some object and which will act for anyone as long as he observes the proper ceremonies needed for control and keeps the associated taboos. It has specialized, limited and defined activities and works automatically through a palpable apparatus. It thus differs in several respects from the *dzemawon*; the latter, a powerful type of intelligent *won*, is not specialized; it is practically omnipotent and omniscient, and will act only if called on by name (a *won* usually has no name), and then only if it approves of what it is asked to do; it is not approached through any palpable object. There is, however, no absolutely fundamental distinction between *won* and *dzemawon*; one may merge into the other (cf. Akan *suman* and *obosom*).

The Ga do not appear to have any special name for the object which is believed to be the abode of a *won*; sometimes the object itself is loosely spoken of as a *won* and its owner as a *wontse* (father, owner, controller of a *won*); for convenience such an object will here be spoken of as a 'medicine'.

Medicines are usually for the purpose of curing illness, but there are also others, such as fishing, hunting and trading 'medicines', 'medicines' for protection against thieves or enemies and also harmful 'medicines'. The Ga stools are 'war-medicines'; they were carried into battle to make the warriors brave and to bring victory; the *mantse* was magically treated or 'medicined' by being placed three times on the stool so that its magical influence passed into him, making him brave and invincible; this was regarded as the vicarious 'medicining' of all his followers. Though the stool was part of the military organization introduced by the Akwamu and the Fanti, the Akan idea of its being the shrine of an ancestral spirit was not transferred to the Ga.

There are always well-defined conditions attached to the working of 'medicines'; some may be spoilt if an improper price is paid for them either when they are transferred from one owner to another or when the doctor takes a fee from the patient on whom he uses them. The penalty may merely be that the *won* departs and the 'medicine' ceases to work, but quite often it may be the death of the owner. Various forms of uncleanness spoil 'medicines', especially menstruation. But the most important requirement for the working of a good 'medicine' is the moral uprightness of its owner, and of his wives also if he is a medicine-man; any good 'medicine' would spoil at once if its owner attempted to kill or injure anyone; reversible 'medicines', effective for either good or evil, cannot be used by the same person for both purposes.

Sources of 'medicines'. Medicine-men nearly always get their 'medicines' from foreigners, e.g. from Dahomey, from the Northern Territories, or from the Krobo district; foreign 'medicines' are considered to be far more powerful than any obtained in Ga country itself.

Knowledge of how to make any 'medicine' is imparted by one man to another only with the approval of the 'medicine' itself. There may be a fixed price for such a sale and the *won* may desert the 'medicine' if this price is altered. Rum is always poured on the old and the newly-made 'medicine' at the time of transfer and the *won* is told it is to have another owner. Transfer ceremonies always include the

transfer, presumably from 'buyer' to 'seller', of either three, four or seven *wiri* seeds.

Sometimes a new, i.e. original 'medicine' is made by a stray *won* 'talking' to a medicine-man; it suggests to him the use of certain objects and herbs, and promises to come into the new 'medicine'.

Good and bad medicine-nen. A medicine-man whose work is mainly the curing of sickness uses two sorts of materials: the 'medicine' associated with the *won*, and the herbs with which he doses, bathes, etc. his patients. He is therefore called either a *wontse*—father, owner of a *won*—or a *tsofatse*—father, owner of *tsofa*—tree-roots (the meaning of this term has been greatly extended to designate a variety of foreign substances such as petrol, whitewash, boot-polish etc.). Other good medicine-men are the *asamanukpatsemei* who are supposed either to have at some time been lost in the forest or bush and been taught by gnome-like dwarfs or *asamanukpai*, or, although not so lost, to be in continual contact with these creatures; they are believed to have foresight into the future and insight into the present and are valued advisers on medical and other matters. Another small class of medicine-men have fish-like familiars living in the sea, who give them advice on medical and other problems on the beach at night. The *kunyai yelo* is a medicine-man who is neither good nor bad; he is a conjuror and hypnotizer and is usually a foreigner from Dahomey or the Northern Territories, but may sometimes teach some of his craft to a Ga.

Bad medicine-men are the *wontsule* or *won*-sender and the *suolo* or poisoner, whose central procedure also involves a *won*, although he may perhaps reinforce his method with ordinary poisoning. Such medicine-men practise in secret and knowledge of them is gained from their deathbed confessions: at this time they are said to be tormented by their dead victims and cannot die until they have confessed and cried out their victims' names.

'Medicines' and the treatment of sickness. Nearly every 'medicine' is used in conjunction with herbs. When the 'medicine' is first prepared in its calabash, herbs are invariably included among the ingredients, others of which may be clay, feathers, wax and so on. Fresh herbs of the same kind are used to dose patients: these are believed to establish a sympathy between the patient and the *won* in the 'medicine'. These herbs are not believed and do not appear to have any power in themselves of acting physiologically on the patient; they are merely agents through which the *won* acts. However, both medicine-men and ordinary people have some knowledge of the pharmaceutical properties of other herbs and these may be used quite separately from 'medicines', though from the Ga point of view, there is no such thing as their purely physiological action; it is always a question of pleasing some supernatural being, particularly the patient's *kla* (see 'Dogma of Human Personality' below, p. 101).

The idea of washing away sickness is prominent; smoke and incense are also used to drive away disease, which may also be driven out by being shouted at. It is not always necessary to invoke a *won* to expel sickness; substances believed to have obscure affinities with the symptoms are used to draw these symptoms out.

DOGMA OF HUMAN PERSONALITY.¹

Ga believe that a human being is made up of three entities: the *gbomotso* or body, the *susuma* and the *kla*.

The *susuma* is a spiritual element on which depends a person's individuality. It is volatile and able to leave the body during dreams and mind-wandering. A witch's *susuma* leaves her body during sleep and joins those of other witches at their meetings. The *susuma* is not always conscious; a man does not always know what his *susuma* wants and in certain cases a *woyo* is consulted and her *dzemawon* speaks to the *susuma* to find out its wishes. The same word is also used for 'shadow' (cf. Twi *sunsum*).

The *kla* (cf. Twi 'kra) is possessed by all living things; life goes if it leaves the body. The *kla* is supposed to have arms, legs and organs corresponding to those of the body; it is this that is eaten by witches and if it is all eaten the victim dies. The 'day-name' given to everyone according to the day of the week on which he is born is also often known as the 'kla-name'; 'all people born on the same day have the same *kla*'; this name may be used by bad medicine-men in killing, so that the wrong person may be killed, since many people have the same *kla* or 'day-name'; for this reason, according to Field, the Ga rarely use their *kla*-names. The *kla* is that part of the individual passed on in reincarnation; it is given up at death and the dead person becomes an invisible ghost or *sisa*. The *kla* carries the *gbesi*, given to each of his children by every lineage *dzemawon*: it corresponds to the individual's fate, luck, life programme.

The *gbesi* is personified and conceived as external to its owner, i.e. not part of his make-up like the *susuma* or *kla*. It should walk behind a man; if it goes in front it may lead him astray, causing him to do things normally against his principles; if a person committing crimes is believed to be under the influence of his *gbesi*, he is not treated as a wrongdoer but as a sick person, and his *gbesi* may even have to be driven away from him. No requests are ever made to a *gbesi* though a man with an exceptionally lucky one may give it an annual yam-feast of thanksgiving.

Every individual's fate is also influenced by what Field calls his 'sky family'; this includes parents, brothers and sisters and above all a sky wife or a sky husband. Before birth everyone is believed to belong to a family in the sky which remains nearer and dearer to one than any earthly relatives; during life in this world one's *susuma* is always a little homesick for its sky family. Pleasing one's sky family leads to prosperity; if they are displeased they may punish one by sending misfortune. There is no indication that this sky family is in any way connected with the earthly lineage to which one belongs, nor does it appear that one returns to it after death.

Beliefs regarding causes of illness and death are summarized by Field as follows:²

1. Injury to the *kla* by witches, parasitic *gbesi* etc.
2. Resentful *kla*, due to wrong feeding, or to sin on part of patient.
3. Absence of *susuma*, in captivity etc.
4. Resentful *susuma*, as when a witch tries to make an unwilling person into a witch.

¹ See Field 1, pp. 92-9.

² Ibid. p. 120.

5. Breaking of taboos, either religious or magical.
6. Action of a big *dzemawon*, which may be set in motion by malicious curses of an enemy or by the righteous indignation of a person wronged.
7. Anger of the dead.

THE AFTER LIFE¹

The dead are believed to wander about their old haunts, in the form of an invisible ghost or *sisa*, for about forty days after death, that is, until the flesh of the skull has fallen away. They then cross a river, *Nsatsi*, to a place, *Nsa na*, where their noses are broken: the dead are said to speak in nasal tones. There is some belief that people here meet with a reward for their good and evil deeds, but justice can apparently be diverted in either direction by pleasing or displeasing the appropriate powers. In any case, the belief in retribution after death is not nearly as strong as the belief in retribution during life: wickedness may be punished by death itself.

Spirits wandering about after a violent or premature death are known as *otofoi* (sing. *otofo*). They are savage and resentful, and jealous of the pleasures of the living; they try to kill people returning from pleasure by chasing them until their heart gives out.

After three days in *Nsa na* the spirits of the dead are free to return to their former homes, which they may do in the shape of bats; these are therefore never molested. The invisible dead of any household are fed, respected, thanked and looked on as guardians and givers of blessings, but they are also feared and are not encouraged to be familiar with the living. The keynote of all funeral ceremonies is to sever the ties between the living and the dead without giving offence to the latter.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

In everyday life the dead are very present; most people, as a regular habit, never drink, and many never eat, without throwing a small portion on the ground for their forefathers. The living never forget that they are the trustees of the dead; the continuity of custom must be preserved, because customs, rites etc. are a link with the ancestors as well as with the gods. The dead are always watching to see that the living preserve what their forefathers have established; they have the power to send blessings or adversity to their descendants; the welfare of the living is therefore bound up with the faithful performance of ancient custom.

Field says that in practice people are more afraid of offending their ancestors than their gods, though if asked, they would say the gods are more terrible. It is more serious to swear by the dead than by the gods, and there are very heavy penalties for violating oaths sworn by one's ancestors, or by the dead slain in some specific battle.

The dead share in the annual *Homowo* festival held in every 'town'. This is a manifestation of social solidarity; oneness with living and dead kin is the keynote of the main week of the festival, when everyone returns to the home of his patrilineage, and the dead are fed on special food (*kpekpei*) and asked for their blessing for the New Year, which starts at this time.

¹ Field 1, pp. 202-3.

REINCARNATION

This normally occurs only in one's own patrilineage, though apparently not invariably.¹ The first-born son reincarnates his grandfather or classificatory grandfather, and the younger sons their great-uncles. Girls reincarnate their paternal grandfather's sisters. Children are named according to a fixed system: every lineage has its own set of names, which recur in alternate generations, in accordance with this idea of reincarnation. It is the *kla* which is believed to be passed on in reincarnation, and the people see no inconsistency in the fact that a grandfather and grandson may be alive at the same time, or that several grandsons with different fathers may simultaneously reincarnate the same grandfather; they simply say: 'They have the same *kla*.'

WITCHCRAFT

There is no Ga word for a witch. The word commonly used is *aye* (Fante), but medicine-men and others who wish to be exact in describing the entity within the witch use the Twi word *obayi*, which has no exact Ga equivalent. The witch or possessor of this *obayi* is an *obayifo*.

Witchcraft is less rife among the Ga than among the neighbouring Ashanti, Fanti and Akwapim; nevertheless it has increased during the last few years, probably as 'a part of the new sense of insecurity in supernatural affairs which we have already seen favouring the growth of privately-owned "medicines" and fetishes. In Temma where we have the old *Kple* gods in undiminished vigour, witchcraft is practically unknown.'² Field found it a very difficult subject to investigate; the topic is shrouded in shame and attempts to discuss it often put an end to the conversation.

Witches are believed to kill, injure, or cause illness or barrenness in, their victims by eating their *kla*; this is done at night, when the witch's *susuma* leaves her body during sleep and flies off to join the other members of the company (*obayifo feku*), who meet round a special cooking-pot known as a *baisea*: if this is lost or stolen the company breaks up. Witches are also believed to travel on the backs of animals, especially antelopes, leopards and, most commonly, snakes; these latter, however, are more often regarded as familiars and sometimes seem to be identified with the *obayi* itself; witches are often believed to turn themselves into snakes.

Besides such bodily afflictions as blindness and sores, all kinds of misfortunes may be inflicted on victims, such as poverty, debt, spoiling of crops etc. Witchcraft can also be put to useful ends, though this is fraught with great danger; like reversible 'medicines', if once used for evil ends, the power of a witch can never again be used to do good.

A witch's power may be acquired in several different ways: an *obayi* may be left as a legacy by a relative, or it may be given free or sold for a very small sum. One may be born with an *obayi*. The power can be given to people against their will, to spite them. Acquisition of full power may be instantaneous, or it may take years. Men are less often given to witchcraft than women but are held to be more terrible when they do give themselves to it.

According to Field,³ witches are most often unable to give any reason for their

¹ Field 1, p. 175.

² Ibid. p. 135, footnote.

³ Ibid. p. 155.

behaviour; they say they were simply impelled by their evil *obayi*. Sometimes mothers say they killed their children for habitual disobedience or disrespect (most of the confessions quoted by Field mention the killing of the witches' children), and quarrels about property and jealousy among the different wives of one husband are common causes of spite.

Suspected witches, their victims, and people who believe they are being turned into witches, are dealt with by medicine-men who specialize in this work; Ga medicine-men are not regarded as deeply versed in witchcraft affairs and Field says that most Ga cases are sent to a Twi witch-doctor of the forest country. Suspected witches are usually ordered to undergo an ordeal; these vary from one medicine-man to another; a common one consists in drinking a herbal emetic: if snakes are vomited up the accused is guilty (the 'snakes' may be worms, from which many Africans suffer). Anyone shown by the ordeal to be innocent is rubbed with powdered clay to proclaim this fact; a guilty person is spattered with chewed kola-nut. A witch's power is often believed to be destroyed by the very act of exposing her; this is followed by a ceremony of renunciation and cleansing, carried out as soon as the witch has finished the ceremonies pertaining to the curing of her victims; the actual cure consists of the reassembling of the dismembered *kla* of the victims and is believed to occur while witch and victims are asleep.

In former days witches were stoned or burned: this is now forbidden by Government, and the witch is merely fined, and sometimes beaten by her fellow-townsmen; the social humiliation of a discovered witch is very great and is felt far more than the actual punishment.

People afraid that they are being made into witches, or thinking themselves victims of a witch, are kept in the medicine-man's compound and treated with purifying baths and other remedies; their *kla* and *susuma* are also supposed to be strengthened by special treatment: it is everywhere firmly believed that witches can work their will only on those who are afraid.

ADANGME PEOPLES

Scarcely any information is available regarding the social organization of these peoples, and what there is refers only to the inhabitants of the State of *Manya Krobo*.¹

MANYA KROBO STATE

LOCATION

The people are grouped in and around the town of Odumase, near the foot of the Krobo Hill which rises abruptly out of the Shai plain. There are colonies of Manya Krobo people owning land in the states of Kwahu, Akwamu, Akim Abuakwa, Akim Kotoku and elsewhere.

POPULATION

Field estimates this at over 100,000 and thinks it is increasing rapidly.²

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN³

The original home of the Adangme-speaking people is said to have been the Lake Tchad area. After wandering in northern Yoruba country and Dahomey they eventually crossed the Volta and appear to have reached the Krobo Hill some time at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Seeking to obtain fertile land for agriculture, the people were involved in frequent feuds with the Akan owners of the neighbouring forest land concerning the right to cultivate the adjacent slopes of the Akwapim range. About a century ago a Krobo *Konor* (or Chief) ended the strife and bought for his people a large tract of land on the slopes of the range. Many Krobo farmers subsequently bought tracts of forest land from the Akan. About 1890, when Government destroyed the Krobo fetish, the people left the Krobo Hill and settled in and around Odumase.

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY⁴

The people are nearly all very keen farmers, and most of the Krobo literates who are in wage-earning employment in Accra, Odumase and elsewhere, are absentee landlords of at least one farm.

FARMING

Farming is based on the *huza* system of land purchase and land organization. A *huza* is a tract of land bought by a group of people, often, but not necessarily, kinsmen, under the leadership of an elected *huzatse* (lit. father of the *huza*), who carries out all negotiations with the seller. When the purchase is completed, the whole tract of land is subdivided among the subscribers, each receiving what he

¹ Field 4; Meyerowitz, personal communication

² Field 4, p. 60.

³ Meyerowitz.

⁴ Field 4.

pays for,¹ and having thereafter full control over his own parcel, even to the extent of selling it to a newcomer if he wishes. A small *huza* is usually parcelled out between fifty or sixty members, a large one may contain two or three hundred members. Detailed information regarding the size of *huzas* is not available. Field merely mentions two *huzas*, one of about 550 acres, with farms averaging about 10 acres, and another of over 3,000 acres, and says that in size, most *huzas* are somewhere between these two. Land rights appear to be inherited patrilineally but no precise data on inheritance or other subsequent transfers is available.

Huza land is sold by the 'rope' (usually about 14 yards), measured along a backline, usually the line of a stream, and extending at right-angles to this backline to a distance which may or may not be definitely fixed, though today it is usually fixed at the time of purchase. This boundary commonly runs along the watershed between two streams and two *huzas* are thus fitted in between two streams.

When *huza* land is bought a transfer ceremony takes place at the house of the seller: this is the same ceremony which is performed as a marriage rite. Its carrying out before witnesses is the criterion both of a valid marriage contract and a valid land transfer. 'Women and land are the same thing', according to the people. A sheep is then killed on the boundary and the gods, who are believed to be the ultimate owners of the land, are told of the new occupiers and asked for their blessing.

A farmer's land may be of several types, viz. *pum* or uncleared forest; *plocke* or land once cleared and planted with food-crops, then allowed to 'go back to bush' to recover fertility; *whem* or newly cleared land planted with food-crops interspersed with young cocoa-trees and oil-palms not yet in bearing, and finally *nmonya*, or land with mature cocoa and oil-palms. This last is regarded as an old man's farm and the occupier is usually helped in harvesting by younger relatives from other farms. *Whem* farms are regarded as young men's farms.

In former days the staple food was millet, which grew relatively well on the plain. But today, when cultivation is mainly in the more fertile hill-country, it is little grown; it requires a good deal more labour than the usual present-day crops—cassava, yam, maize, plantain, cocoa and especially palm-nuts.

Field's information regarding the division of labour on the *huza* farms is not clear, but it would seem that both women and men own and work their own food-farms, and that marketing of the food-crops is the task of the women. Women also prepare oil and soap from the palm-nuts.

MARKETS

There are three principal markets in the Manya Krobo *huza* country, each of which is very large. It has been claimed that these three markets feed half the non-agricultural population of the whole Gold Coast and Field does not consider this claim extravagant.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

CLAN ORGANIZATION¹

The people appear to be grouped into a limited number of patrilineal clans. The six main clans are as follows:

¹ Meyerowitz.

Diebam, with subclans: Nam, Yokwery, Agbom.

Piangwa, with subclans: Yokweno, Lorm, Yoke and Wekpeti.

Akwenor, with subclans: Asendua, Konya Wekpeti.

These are said to be the original stock.

Suisi, said to be of Denkera origin.

Manyano, said to be of Ewe origin.

Dorm, said to be of Akwamu origin.

A wife is said to be admitted into her husband's clan and carry out its observances. The Stool clan is Diebam.

LOCAL AND KINSHIP GROUPING¹

The clans appear to be divided into patrilineages ('houses'), each one anchored to a particular locality in or adjoining Odumase, which is regarded as 'home' by its members. Lineage members return 'home' from their *huza* farms some three or four times a year, to take part in festivals of their lineage gods.

Field hints at a tendency for kinsfolk to group themselves together on the *huzas*, but this is not very clear.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The head of the state is the *Konor*, a member of the Diebam clan. Apparently chiefs had a predominantly priestly function in former days but today these two offices are separate and distinct. Subordinate officials are 'captains'. No other information is available.²

Local government on the *huzas* is briefly described by Field. The *huzatse*, elected by the group of purchasers to carry out the negotiations, later acts as their leader and representative in all affairs concerning the *huza*. He settles minor disputes arising between members, and knows the names and history of everyone on his *huza*, from whom each man inherited his farm and who is entitled to work it in his absence. On a large *huza*, the *huzatse* may delegate part of his authority to three or four other men, each known as a *dadetse* ('father of a cutlass'). The people under one *dadetse* are often kinsmen, though they may adopt into their group a few complete strangers from among such distant peoples as the Accra.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CULTS³

The national deity was (?) *Akroweri*, the great Mother. Her priestess is the supreme person of the state; no one may approach her except the priests. She is unmarried. A young girl goes into a trance; when she emerges she is told by a certain priest that she is to become priestess of the national goddess. This priest was originally the supreme judge of the people: he had the power to condemn to death by clubbing or stoning.

¹ Field 4.

² Meyerowitz, personal communication

³ Ibid.

FESTIVALS

There are two harvest festivals: 1. *Nmayem*: 'eating the millet', followed in October by 2. the yam harvest festival. The Stool festival is held in June. This stool cult is of Akwamu origin.

LIFE CYCLE¹

Newly-born children must be blessed by the lineage gods, and those born on *huza* farms are taken to the lineage home for this purpose. A *kplangbi* is the child of an unmarried mother and is adopted by the mother's father as his own child. It is named by him at the end of a week and has rights of inheritance equal to those of his own children. Apparently fathers often encourage their daughters not to marry but to have such children, firstly, because by this method the father retains the services of his daughter on his own farm, and secondly, because he thus obtains additional 'sons' without the expense and obligation attached to additional wives.

Boys are circumcized, girls undergo the so-called *Dipo* puberty rites.

MARRIAGE

There is no clear information on this subject. It appears that a man has obligations to his father-in-law in the matter of farm labour. The *yi fa bom* ceremony, performed before witnesses, is the criterion of a valid marriage contract. The institution of *wekugbla* or 'family marriage' is strongly developed among the people; by this the marriage of parallel cousins, regarded as incest by most neighbouring peoples, is condoned. The people say they encourage it for prudential reasons, since the man pays less for his bride and the obligations of farm labour to his father-in-law are not additional to those due to his father's brothers.

A system of 'trial marriage' has developed, whereby a man takes his wife-elect to live on his farm for a year or so before committing himself to any binding marriage contract; he thus tests her abilities as a hard worker and a good market saleswoman.

DEATH

Everyone who dies on *huza* land is taken 'home' for burial and other funeral rites (unless he dies of leprosy, dropsy or insanity).

¹ Field 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GA-ADANGME

- Adjei, Ako 'Mortuary usages of the Ga people of the Gold Coast.' *Am. Anthropol.* 45, 1. Jan.-Mar. 1943. Pp. 84-98.
- Brown, A. A. 'Signs and Omens.' *Gold Coast Rev.* 2, 2. July-Dec. 1926. Pp. 285-9.
- Brown, A. P. 'The Fishing industry of the Labadi district', in *Fishes and fisheries of the Gold Coast*, by F. R. Irvine. Crown Agents for the Colonies. 1947. Pp. 23-44.
- Cardinall, A. W. 1. *The Gold Coast* 1931. Accra: Govt. Printer. 1932.
2. *A Bibliography of the Gold Coast*. Accra: Govt. Printer. 1932.
- Chamney, N. P. *The Climatology of the Gold Coast*. Bull. 15. Dept. of Agriculture. Accra. 1928.
- Engmann, E. A. W. 1. *Social and religious responsibility among the Ga people—Marriage*. (Unpublished MS.)
2. *Illness and death among the Ga people*. (Unpublished MS.)
- Field, M. J. 1. *Religion and medicine of the Ga people*. Oxford: 1937.
2. *Social organization of the Ga people*. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies. 1940.
3. 'The Asamanukpai of the Gold Coast.' *Man*, 34, 211.
4. 'The Agricultural System of the Manya-Krobo of the Gold Coast.' *Africa*, xiv, 2, April 1943, pp. 54-65.
- Maxwell, J. (Editor) *Gold Coast Handbook* 1928. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies. 1928.
- Migeod, F. W. H. *The Gold Coast; its physical features, flora, fauna and ethnology.* *J. Afr. Soc.* 13, 52. July 1914. Pp. 369-84.
- Myers, J. M. Bruce 1. The origin of the Gas. *J. Afr. Soc.* 27. 1927-8. Pp. 69-76; 167-73.
2. Connubial institutions of the Gas. *J. Afr. Soc.* 30. Oct. 1931. Pp. 399-409.
- Papafio, A. B. Q. 1. Native tribunals of the Akras of the Gold Coast. *J. Afr. Soc.* 10, 39. Pp. 320-30. 10, 41. April 1911. Pp. 434-46. 11, 41. Oct. 1911. Pp. 75-94.
2. Law of succession among the Akras or the Ga tribes proper of the Gold Coast. *J. Afr. Soc.* 10, 37. Oct. 1910. Pp. 64-72.
3. Use of names among the Gas or Accra people of the Gold Coast. *J. Afr. Soc.* 13, 49. Oct. 1913. Pp. 167-82.
4. Apprenticeship among the Gas. *J. Afr. Soc.* 13, 52. July 1914. Pp. 415-22.
5. The Ga Homowo festival. *J. Afr. Soc.* 19, 74. Jan. 1926. Pp. 126-34. 19, 75. April 1926. Pp. 227-32.
- Welman, C. W. 1. 'James Fort, Accra, and the Oyeni fetish.' *Gold Coast Rev.* 3, 1. Jan.-June 1927. Pp. 73-88.
- Atlas of the Gold Coast.* Gold Coast Survey Dept. Accra: 1945.

LINGUISTIC

- Christaller, J. G., and Bohnert, H. *Übungen in der Ga oder Accra Sprache*. 1890.
- Rapp, E. 'Die Adangme-Ga-Mundart von Agotime in Togo.' *Afrika*, 2. Berlin: 1943.

Ward, I. C.

Report of an investigation of some Gold Coast Language Problems.
London: Crown Agents for the Colonies. 1945.

Wilkie

Ga Grammar, Notes and Exercises. Oxford Univ. Press. 1930.

Zimmermann, J.

A Grammatical Sketch of the Akra or Ga language and a vocabulary of the same, with an appendix on the Adangme dialect. Stuttgart: 1885.

AKAN, GA-ADANGME AND OTHER GROUPS

Abeadi	31	New Juaben	50	43	Shai
Abeasi & Nkoranza	89	N'usukum	25	44	Awuna (Anlo)
Abura	23	Nkusukum	28	45	Osudoku
Ada	42	Nsein	7	46	Akwamu
Adansi	96	Nsuta	78	47	Manya Krobo
Agona	39	Nzima Eastern	2	48	Yilo Krobo
Agona	80	Nzima Western	1	49	Akwapim
Ahanta	8	Ofinso	86	50	New Juaben
Ajumako	11	Oguaa	21	51	Akim Abuakwa
Akim Abuakwa	34	Osudoku	45	52	Akim Kotoku
Akim Abuakwa	51	Peki	70	53	Akim Busumi
Akim Abuakwa	15	Prampam	41	54	Akim Abuakwa
Akim Abuakwa	56	Prang	99	55	Akim Abuakwa
Akim Busumi	53	Sefwi Anwiaso	66	56	Akim Abuakwa
Akim Busumi	57	Sefwi Bekwai	67	57	Akim Busumi
Akim Kotoku	52	Sefwi Wiawso	65	58	Esikuma
Akpini	60	Sekondi (Dutch)	16	59A	Assin Apimenim
Akwamu	46	Sekondi (English)	17	59B	Assin Apimenim
Akwapim	49	Shai	43	60	Akpini
Anamabu	26	Shama	18	61	Assin Atandaso
Aowin	64	Techiman	87	62	Twifu
Apatem	5	Twifu	62	63	Wasaw Amenfi
Asebu	24	Unamalgamated Administrative Areas	64	64	Aowin
Asogli	73	Volta River Federation	105	65	Sefwi Wiawso
Assin Apimenim	59A	Wasaw Amenfi	74	66	Sefwi Anwiaso
Assin Apimenim	59B	Wasaw Fiase	63	67	Sefwi Bekwai
Assin Atandaso	61	Wenchi	13	68	Denkera
Asumeja	84	Winneba	88	69	Kwahu
Atebubu	75	Yeji	38	70	Peki
Awatime	71	Yilo Krobo	98	71	Awatime
Awuna (Anlo)	44		48	72	Buem
Axim Lower	6			73	Asogli
Axim Upper	4				
Ayan Abasa	33	1 Nzima Western			ASHANTI (DIVISIONS)
Ayan Denkera	32	2 Nzima Eastern			74 Volta River Federation
Ayanmaim	30	3 Gwira			75 Atebubu
Banda	91	4 Axim Upper			76 Kumasi†*
Banka	95	5 Apatem			77 Kumuwu††
Bekwai	85	6 Axim Lower			78 Nsuta††
Berekum	93	7 Nsein			79 Juaben††
Buem	72	8 Ahanta			80 Agona†
Dagomba	104	9 Dixcove Lower			81 Ejisu†
Denkera	15	10 Dixcove Upper			82 Mampong††
Denkera	68	11 Ahanta			83 Kokofu ††
Dixcove Lower	9	12 Impohaw			84 Asumeja†*
Dixcove Upper	10	13 Wasaw Fiase			85 Bekwai††
Dormaa	92	14 Hemang			86 Ohinso†
Edina	22	15 Denkera			87 Techiman†
Eguafo	20	16 Sekondi (Dutch)			88 Wenchi†
Ejisu	81	17 Sekondi (English)			89 Abeasi and Nkoranza†
Ekumfi	35	18 Shama			90 Mo†
Esikuma	58	19 Komenda			91 Banda†
Ga	40	20 Eguaa			92 Dormaa†
Gomoa Ajumako	37	21 Oguaa			93 Berekum†
Gomoa Assin	36	22 Edina			94 Jaman†
Gonja	100	23 Abura			95 Banka
Gwira	3	24 Asebu			96 Adansi†
Hemang	14	25 Nkusukum			
Impohaw	12	26 Anamabu			
Jaman	94	27 Kwaman			NORTHERN TERRITORIES
Juaben	79	28 Nkusukum			(NATIVE AUTHORITY AREAS)
Kokofu	83	29 Mankesim			98 Yeji
Komenda	19	30 Ayanmaim			99 Prang
Krachi	102	31 Abeadi			100 Gonja
Kumasi	76	32 Ayan Denkera†			101 Mo
Kumuwu	77	33 Ayan Abasa			102 Krachi
Kwahu	69	34 Ajumako			103 Nanumba
Kwaman	27	35 Ekumfi			104 Dagomba
Mampong	82	36 Gomoa Assin			105 Unamalgamated Administrative Areas
Mankesim	29	37 Gomoa Ajumako			
Manya Krobo	47	38 Winneba			
Mo	90	39 Agona			
Mo	101	40 Ga			
Nanumba	103	41 Prampam			
		42 Ada			

