

The Akan of Ghana

Their Ancient Beliefs

by the same author

*

THE SACRED STATE OF THE AKAN
AKAN TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN

THE AKAN OF GHANA

Their Ancient Beliefs

EVA L. R. MEYEROWITZ



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Preface and Acknowledgments

After completing *The Sacred State of the Akan* and *The Akan Traditions of Origin*, I realized that these studies had only scratched the surface of an extremely interesting and important civilization. It was therefore a great pleasure when I was asked by Mr. D. M. Balme of the University College of the Gold Coast to continue my work; and when the Academic Council of the University Council offered me an award for further research during a period of six months. This is to record here my appreciation, and deep gratitude both to Mr. Balme, and to the Academic Council, who also gave me an allowance for a year to write up my material. Unfortunately a year was not enough: I spent almost six on the two volumes—*The Akan of Ghana: Their Ancient Beliefs* here presented, and *The Akan Divine Kingship and its Proto-type in Ancient Egypt*, now also ready for publication—though perhaps two years of these were taken up by illness, travel and other work.

Egyptologists say that nothing in the ancient Egyptian civilization ever became quite obsolete. The same is true of the Akan culture and civilization in Ghana. Hence the many contradictions, the variations in the beliefs and customs, which are only intelligible if one realizes that these are the result of an uneven development: new ideas did not always supplant old ones, but often continued side by side with them. A marked development had taken place in the course of centuries, owing to the introduction of new ideas from other matrilineally organized countries. Evidence for this are the events in the reigns of two Bono kings: Obunomankoma (1363–1431) and Takyi Akwamo (1431–63). Obunomankoma introduced the cult of the King as the Son of the Sun-god (see Ch. V, 3), which not only revolutionized all the ideas connected with kingship and the state but also those connected with the After Life.

Takyi Akwamo introduced, very much against the wishes of his people, the *Ntoro* cult; and this not only disrupted the whole social system by giving power and authority to the father, now the priest of the family and in charge of all the *rites de passage*, formerly in the hands of the priest of the Clan- or State-god, but tended to shift the power of 'giving life' from the gods to the ancestral spirits, the intermediaries between the deities and the people.

In order to establish an ordered arrangement, in space and time, of my material, I finally fixed four Cult Types and their periods, and visited those regions in Ghana where I expected to find evidence that would clarify the outstanding problems. The region I selected was the Tekyiman-Brong, or Bono-Takyiman State, where I had worked before and whose people I knew. Moreover, the ruler, Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III, has always been exceptionally helpful, and this time went out of his way to assist me in my work. I herewith express my gratitude to him, and to the Queenmother, Nana Afua Abrafi, the chiefs and elders, court officials, priests, and many others, I can only list here my chief informants:

Tuobodomhene Nana Kwaame Frempon and Elders
 Offumanhene Nana Kwaame Ankoma, Nana Kwaame Gyamfi
 and Elders
 Tanosohene Nana Yao Mensa
 Forikuromhene Nana Kwaku Agyepon and Elders
 Adiakahene Nana Kwaame Kra and Elders
 Gyaasehene Nana Yaw Atoa
 Korontihene Nana Kofi Badu
 Nifahene Nana Yao Inwim
 The late Okyeame Pong
 Nana Kofi Adoma of Kyiraa
 Ahenemahene Nana Kwasi Twi
 Abrafohene Nana Kwasi Wusu
 Banmuhene Nana Kwaame Twi
 Sumankwahene Nana Kwaame Boto
 Kwadwomfohene Nana Kofi Asamoa
 Nana Kwaame Nyame, chronicler
 The High-priest of Taa Kese Nana Kofi Mosi
 The priest Kofi Wusu of Krobo
 Akwamu-ba-panyin Nana Yaa Anaa and other Elders of the
 Queenmother.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the neighbouring Nkoranza State I wish to record my gratitude to:

Nkoranzahene Nana Guakro Effah V, the Queenmother and Elders

Ntoahene Nana Kofi Anane

The High-priest of Ntoa at Seseman, Nana Kwabena Ankemako

The priest Kwabena Saben (Edinkra)

The priest Koranten (Dame).

I would express special thanks to my very able and excellent interpreter, the late N.A. Police Inspector Mr. J. K. Ankomah; and to Mr. D. K. Owusu, who also occasionally interpreted for me and was always a friend to be relied upon.

While working as a Fellow at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa (1954), I had the opportunity of discussing my problems with the late Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown; and it was he who first made me realize the importance of the material I had collected about clan-totemism—a system essentially connected with the matriarchal stage of culture. According to Frazer and others, totemism is both a religion and a social system; the religious side consisting in a special attitude of the clansmen towards their totem; the social side, in their special attitude towards one another. Whether the two sides—the religious and the social—have always co-existed or are essentially independent, is a question which has been variously answered. From the material I am able to present here, it seems evident that the two sides do belong inseparably together. Thanks to the rich material provided by the Akan, I am also able to demonstrate the roots of totemism in the matrilineal society. Akan culture and civilization is not Negro-African in origin but can be classed, on the whole, as Libyo-Berber, more precisely perhaps as Libyo-Phoenician or Carthaginian (see Ch. VI), a civilization which owed almost everything to the Near East and Egypt.

The Libyo-Phoenicians, or Carthaginians, were matrilineally organized—like the ancient Egyptians and other ancient peoples of the East and the Mediterranean. The matrilineally organized Akan, then, belong to the same '*Kultur Kreis*'; and their concept of State, their religious beliefs and customs give us clues to the world of the ancients which archaeology alone cannot provide; particularly since the Akan had, until recently, altered little down the ages. But with

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the break-up of the Asante Kingdom, in 1901, much disappeared for ever; and some fifty years of contact with Europe and Christianity have destroyed many ancient institutions and beliefs, and degenerated others. My visit was paid at almost the last moment, when it was still possible to collect material of outstanding interest.

I also wish to thank Professor Daryll Forde, who as on many other occasions, has given me sound advice. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Robert Graves for reading the manuscript and making numerous suggestions for improving its prose style. Mr. Kenneth Gay was so kind as to type my manuscript; this was a special help to me since I was fully occupied with writing the second book. I am much indebted to Miss D. E. Marshall for compiling the index. My brother Ricardo Lewin-Richter and his wife Elfi Osiander de Lewin-Richter I have to thank for seven delightful months in Barcelona where thanks to their care I was able to work in peace and comfort.

For native words and quotations I have used the *Africa Orthography* throughout.¹ ɔ (o) should be pronounced as 'o' in the word 'rock' or 'knot'; ε (e) as 'e' in the word 'left' or 'neck'. For the names of persons I have used the European spelling to make the reading easier.

EVA L. R. MEYEROWITZ

London, 1956

¹ *Practical Orthography of African Languages*, Memorandum I, Published by the International African Institute.

INTRODUCTORY

The Ancestry of the Akan

According to oral tradition, the people who founded the great Akan States in Ghana (the Gold Coast), such as Bono, Asante, Akyerekere, Twifo-Heman, and its daughter states Akwamu and Domaa,¹ formerly lived along the Niger Bend in the region lying roughly between Djenne and Timbuktu. From there they were ousted (at the beginning of the eleventh century) by Moslems—Islamized Saharan Berbers; according to Daboya traditions, by the Assaud or Azawagh.²

The Bono-Takyiman (modern: Techiman-Brong) people, and others among the Akan, further recall that their ancestors, before they settled along the Niger, lived farther north in the 'White Desert' or *Sarem*, 'the country of the sand' which we call the Sahara.³ Koromante and Etsi still preserve the tradition of the place name—'Djadu', 'N'Djadum' or 'Diadom', literally translated: 'Dja or Dia confederation (*dum* or *dɔm*)'.⁴

Djadu, Djadom, or Diadom may be identified with the Oasis of Djado (or Jado), situated west of the Tibesti mountain range in the Eastern Sahara; for Djado (the Arab name) is called 'Agwas' by the Tuaregs of Air; 'Gua' by the Tuaregs of the Fezzan; and 'Braun' by the Tebu.⁵ All three names, the names of peoples—Dja, Agwa(s), Gua and Braun are also found among the Akan, who had a very mixed ancestry (see below).

Other names for the pre-eleventh-century Agwas (or, with prefix: Ilagwas) in the Eastern Sahara, were Agwatin, Ilagwatin, or

¹ See the author's *Akan Traditions of Origin*, 1952.

² *ibid.*, p. 51 and n. 2.

³ *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵ Francis Rennell Rodd, *The People of the Veil*, London, 1926, p. 320. Gua (or French: Géoua) by Labadie, *La Colonie du Niger*, 1927, p. 50.

* Ilaguantan.¹ They were Eastern Libyans, believed to have been of the same stock as the Luata in North Africa.² Braun was the name by which the Tebu, Tibu or Tubu, the earliest people settled in the Tibesti region, called themselves. They are on the whole regarded as Gara,³ said to have been originally of Kushite stock. The Dja, or Za, Zaga (Arabic: Zaghawa), who gave the Oasis its third name, are believed to have originated in Abyssinia, or Southern Arabia.⁴ In the first century of our era the Zaga conquered the Eastern Sudan (where descendants of theirs still live), the Eastern Sahara, and large parts of North Africa.⁵ In the Tibesti region in the Eastern Sahara they founded the Zaga, or Zaghawa Kingdom, which is mentioned by the Arab writer Al Muhallebi (A.D. 903-63) in the heart of the Fezzan-Lake Chad caravan route.⁶

The pre-eleventh-century Zaga Kingdom, it would appear, was a confederation of Za, or Dja, or Dia, who formed the ruling aristocracy and gave the state its name—the Oasis of Djado, not mentioned by Al Muhallebi, may have been the seat of the kings; Agwas, Gwa (without prefix and suffix) or Gua, who were Eastern Libyans, or Libyan Berbers; and Gara, to whom belonged not only the Tibu but also the Kora'an, who were called Garawan in the Fezzan—the mediaeval descendants of the Garamantes of antiquity. Kora'an still form part of the Zaghawa, who now live in the Eastern Sudan; the language of both is Tibu.⁷

It would appear that the founders of Akan states were the descendants of Dia, or Za (Diaga or Zaga); Libyan Berbers; and Gara of the Tibesti region, who emigrated when the Arabs conquered North Africa and pushed the Lemta Tuaregs from the

¹ Ilagwas or Ilaguantan have survived as a major tribe in the Air region, where they now form part of the Tuaregs.

² Rodd, pp. 336, 340. The old name of Luata (Arabic) was Ilagwas. Sir Richmond Palmer, *Bornu Sahara and Sudan*, London, 1936, p. 5, n. 3.

³ E. W. Bovill, *Caravan Routes of the Old Sahara*, Oxford University Press, 1933, p. 23.

⁴ H. A. MacMichael, *The History of the Arabs in the Sudan*, Cambridge University Press, 1922, vol. i, p. 55, quoting Masu' di; p. 235, quoting El Hamdani; and pp. 105-8, who includes the Zaga as among the descendants of Canaan, son of Ham.

⁵ A Zaga Kingdom is mentioned by Abu-l-'ala al Mari (A.D. 937) as having been situated in the Maghreb south of Ifrikiya (Tunis, Algeria). See Palmer, *Bornu Sahara and Sudan*, p. 156. For the westward movement of the Zaga see MacMichael, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 55. Also H. Soelken, 'Innerafrikanische Wege nach Benin', *ANTHROPOS*, 1954, vol. 49, Fascs. 5-6.

⁶ In Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁷ MacMichael, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 54.

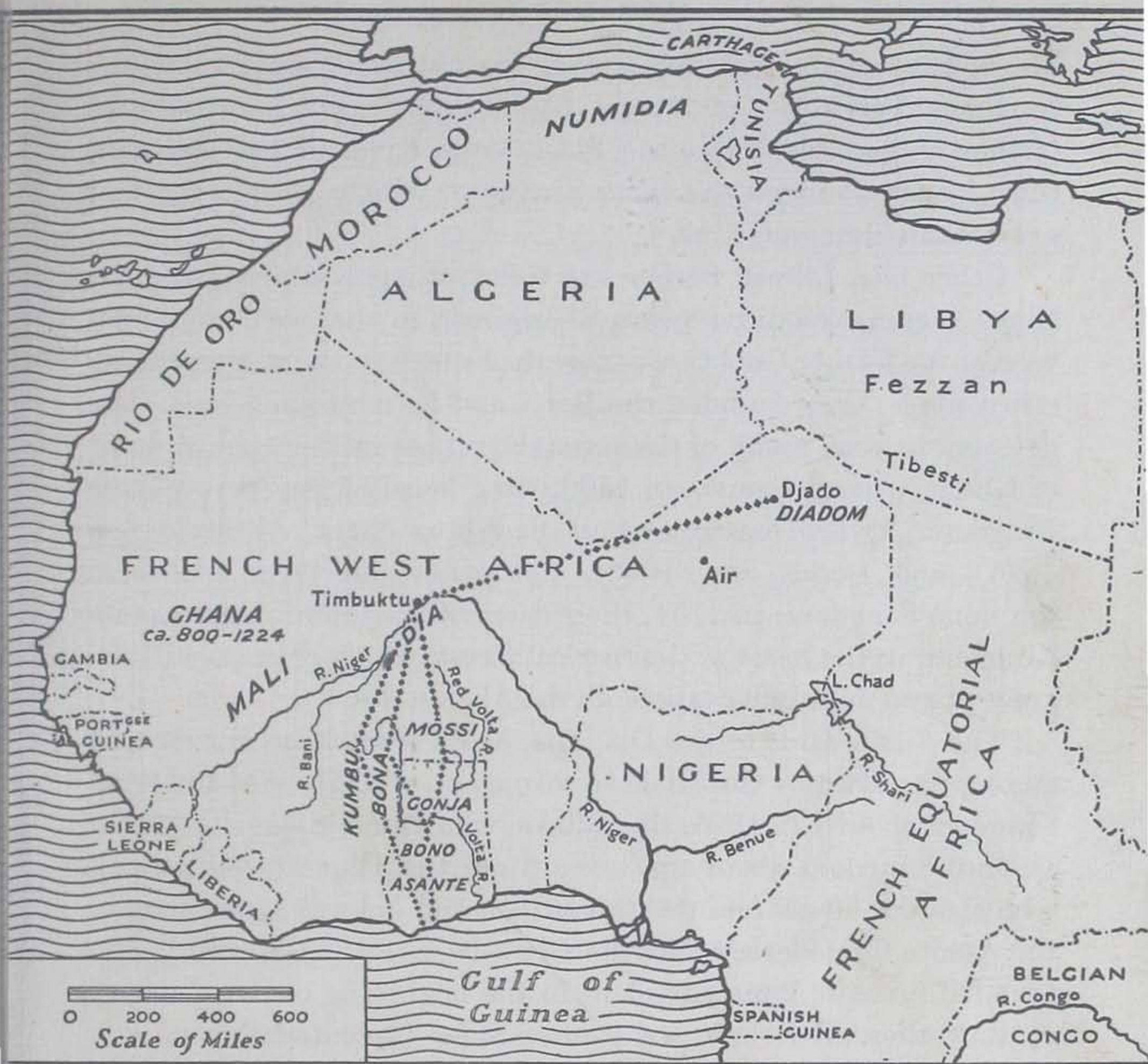


Fig. 1

1. Chief Routes of Migration of the Founders of Akan States
2. .-.- Ghana (Gold Coast).

Fezzan into their territory. Settling along the Niger bend they incorporated many of the inhabitants into their clans, as was the custom among matrilineally organized peoples. These people were originally of much the same ethnic stock as themselves but in the course of time had intermarried with negro aboriginals.

When Islamized Berbers seized their kingdom, called Dia or Dja, thousands of refugees moved south and founded a number of states among the Mo (Grusi-speaking aboriginals). Defeated again, shortly before A.D. 1300, by the ancestors of the present rulers of

Mossi, they again fled southward, mainly into Gonja (now the Northern Territories of Ghana (Gold Coast)); some moved still farther and settled below the Black Volta River. There Asaman, their leader, founded the Bono Kingdom, which became the first great Akan State in Ghana.¹

Other Dia, Libyan Berber and Gara refugees, after leaving the Niger region, colonized negro aboriginals to the north-west and west of the former Gold Coast (now the French Ivory) where, among other states, they founded the Bona and Kumbu Kingdoms. Also defeated in war, many of them sought refuge in the tropical forest of Ghana where, about A.D. 1500, they founded the Akyerekere Kingdom, Twifo-Heman and its daughter states, Akwamu (*ca.* 1575), and Domaa (*ca.* 1600). Refugees from Bona settled in the Bono Kingdom; in 1701, their descendants founded the Asante Kingdom, in the heart of the tropical forest, which remains still the greatest and most important of all the Akan states.²

The descendants of the Dia, Dja, or Za seem to be represented among the Akan by the Diala (Ayoko clan), who founded the Bono Kingdom about A.D. 1295; the Adiaka, who founded the Dia-Mo (or Djomo) Kingdom about the same time; the Diana (Ayoko clan), who about 1680-90 founded the Juaben and Bekwai States, now in the Asante Confederacy; and the Diara-N'Koran (Ayoko clan), who founded first the Bona Kingdom in the beginning of the eleventh century, then the Kokofu and Kumasi States (seventeenth century), and finally the Asante Kingdom. The *akyeneboa*, or totem animal, of the Ayoko of Dia descent was, and still remains, the falcon.

The descendants of the Libyan Berbers—*Agwas* (Gua), *Agwa-tin*, *Laguantan*, or *Iguantan*, without the prefixes and people's or plural suffixes—Gwa, Gua or Guan, constituted the most powerful clan in the Bono Kingdom and styled themselves '*Agwana*' or 'descendants of Gwa' (*A* is the Akan prefix for living things). In other Akan states the name, in the various districts, became: *Aguana* or *Eguana*, *Agona*, *Akwona* or *Aguna*. Their *akyeneboa*, or totem animal, was and remains, the parrot. As the majority of the Bono people were by descent Gwa or Guan, the parrot was chosen as the state emblem.

'Bron' or 'Abron' (nasalized 'Brong') recalls the Saharan 'Braun', one of the names for the Oasis of Djado in the Eastern

¹ *Akan Traditions of Origin*, p. 33.

² *ibid.* p. 111.

INTRODUCTORY

Sahara. 'Brong' is a contraction of 'Bonong', the accent being on the second syllable. The Takyiman-Brong pronounce the name of their former kingdom 'Bono', that is to say, without the *ng*-sound at the end. Bono, as mentioned above, was the first great Akan Kingdom in Ghana. The Bonos proudly sang: *O' Bono be- ank-ama*. ('Bono, who alone gives [civilization].')

The last chapter of this book contains a short summary of the Libyan and Libyo-Phoenician (Carthaginian) concepts of national and religious beliefs; this shows that Akan civilization is essentially pre-Arab North African in character, and that the claim of some of the Akan, that their ancestors had been of a white race and originally came from the Sahara, is unlikely to be fiction.¹

¹ For a more detailed study see the author's 'The Akan and Ghana' in *Man*, June 1957, vol. LVII, pp. 83-8.

CHAPTER I

The Moon Cult of the Akan (Cult Type I)

1. *The Creatrix of the Clan and its Goddess*

(a) *The Supreme Moon Mother-goddess*

It is evident from the position of the queenmother in the state, and the rites and customs which reflect the identification of the divine life-giving queenmother with the moon, that in the beginning a Mother-goddess, visible as the moon, was held to have given birth to the universe. Survivals in Akan language support this view: *srane*, the moon; *sraneɛ*, heavenly bodies; *nsoroma*, stars (literally '[moon] children of the space above'); *okyin-nsoroma*, planets (literally 'the wandering [moon] children of the space above'); *sraman*, lightning; *sraman-bo*, thunderbolt; *sramsram-sram*, emitting sparks—all words derived from *srane*, 'moon.'

Wi or *ewi* is the apparently vacant space encompassing the earth: the vault, or arch, of heaven. *Wia* or *owia* (with prefix *o* used in forming personal names) is the sun; *ewiase*, 'under the vault of heaven', is the visible world. The word *wie* or *owie* means 'completion, termination'; and *owia*, the sun, may be connected with it, because of the Akan belief that the sun was the last heavenly body which the moon brought forth. The firmament certainly must have come into being first, since the twenty-four-hour day of the Akan starts with the night.

There will originally have been many names for the Mother-goddess. Today, 'Nyame' has been accepted by all the Akan as the name of the universal genetrix, the one supreme deity without beginning or end. The word 'Nyame' is believed to have been derived from *nyam*, splendour, or brightness; *Onyame-ani*, 'Nyame's eyes' is the firmament. The substance or body of Nyame,

in her aspect of Moon- and Firmament-goddess, is envisaged as fire; the life-giving spirit or power that animated the fire, and caused the birth of the universe, is called the *kra*.

Nyame in her form of *Atoapoma*, the Ever-ready Shooter, was to shoot a particle of her *kra*, a moon-ray (earliest phase Cult Type I) into the blood-stream of men, beasts and plants, who thus received life and remained alive so long as the *kra* vivified their blood. But Nyame also took life, and was thought of as the 'Killer Mother' (*Ɔdi-a-wuo-no*). People in remoter villages still fear to look at the moon when it is disappearing behind a cloud, for the Moon-mother might take their own *kra* with her and thus kill them.

(b) *The Birth of the Clan and its Goddess (ɔbosom)*

A woman possessed by the *kra* of the Moon Mother-goddess could give birth to an *ɔbosom*. *ɔbosom* (singular; *abosom*, plural), a word which would seem to be derived from *bosom*, the moon,¹ is



Fig. 2

Design from the Adinkra funeral cloth, symbolizing Creation by the Lunar Mother-goddess represented here by the three-fingered hand. The three-fingered hand, frequently depicted on ceramic fragments from Susa and Samarra, is regarded as a lunar symbol. (See John Prince Loewenstein, 'The Swastika its History and Meaning', MAN, 1941, vol. xli, 38.) The Akan today interpret the design as meaning: 'One should not bite one another.'

¹ Twi, the language of the Akan, contains three words for the moon: *srane*, *bosom* and *gya*.

According to J. G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language*, 1933 (sub *bosom*, p. 43), it was explained to him that *ɔbosom*, meaning 'god', is derived from *obo*, 'stone' and *som*, 'to serve'—'because the gods which our forefathers served (by bringing them palm-wine and sheep) were stones.' This chapter shows that though the *ɔbosom* used stones as dwelling places (see pp. 49, 147—Cult Type II), they certainly did not do so in Cult Type I.

the visible manifestation of the *kra*, or vital force of the moon (Cult Type I). *Obosom* (to quote an informant) represents 'a small part of Nyame's power' or 'Nyame's power in manageable size'. Personified as a goddess, the *obosom* was envisaged as a daughter of the Moon Mother-goddess and given a name so that people could address her in prayer. In section (f) of this chapter I am able to give a detailed account of how Ameyaa Ampromfi, the founder of Tanosu (ca. 1750) gave life to various *abosom* and thus became herself divine.

When a woman in the past gave birth to a goddess, she usually established herself as *Oba Panyin*, an elder woman, over a number of people, whom she ruled through her *obosom*. If, for instance, the *obosom* revealed that she wished to be worshipped in another place where water was more plentiful, or the soil more fertile, then the Elder Woman would take her people and go in the direction indicated by the *obosom*. The resultant hardships might be many, but the goddess could be relied upon to help. If the situation became dangerous, she showed herself to her people in animal shape—as an antelope, a falcon, a leopard, or the like—and led them to water, or showed them food, or helped them to escape from an enemy. The *Oba Panyin* then declared that the animal was their *akyene boa*, literally: 'the animal that helped to survive.'¹ Thereupon the whole species was venerated and came to be regarded as an incarnation of the Elder Woman's *obosom*: the people identifying themselves with it and calling it *ahoboa*, 'the beast within oneself.' If the *akyeneboa*, which can be described as a totem animal, had been a leopard, then the people became as aggressive and bloodthirsty as the leopard; if it happened to have been a ram, an animal believed never to fight unless attacked, then the people became as gentle and unwarlike as the ram; if a bat, then the people grew to be as unobtrusive and diplomatic as the bat which hangs upside-down from walls and preserves itself by its wits;² if a falcon, then the people practised patience and endurance, since it is with patience and endurance

¹ *akyeneboa* was translated to me by Mr. Kofi Antubam as the 'animal that helped to survive' (*boa*- animal; *kyene*- survive; *a* noun prefix) by Dr. J. B. Danquah as the 'masked animal' (*kyene* can also mean 'hidden' or 'masked')—'the animal that masks a god.'

² A folk-tale recounted to me by Mr. Kofi Antuban, illustrates the diplomacy of the bat.

'The Sky-god says to the bat: "Go to Earth, and get a gun to fight on my side." The bat replies: "Can't you see that my legs are spread out already, and that I'm on my way?" Then the Earth says: "I'm still waiting for you to come." The bat answers: "My legs are all spread out, don't you see that I'm coming?"'

that the falcon waits for the right moment to attack. The *akyeneboa* was consequently never trapped, killed, or eaten, except once a year at the annual festival. If a specimen was found dead in the bush, its body was painted with white clay to purify it from the defilment of death, and the sponge used for this purpose was placed on its body; the animal, however, was not buried. Should it have been accidentally killed by a member of the *nton*, that is, the clan who worshipped the same *akyeneboa*, then it was buried as if one of themselves, and funeral rites were performed for it.

Just as the Elder Woman gave birth to a clan through her *obosom*, so she could give birth to a state (*dɔm*).¹ This happened when two or three *ntons* formed an alliance. To unite them into a single people, the *Oba Panyin* might have decreed through her goddess—as was still the case in historical times, when states were founded by queenmothers—that the men and women of her *nton* must in future mate only with members of the other *ntons*. All members of a clan, whatever their origin, regarded themselves as kinsmen: brothers and sisters, *nuonom*, ‘children of one mother and descendants of one ancestress’, namely the woman who gave life to their clan. Consequently, sexual intercourse between clan members came to be regarded as incest and was punished with death, or expulsion from the clan and state, of both parties concerned. According to the traditions found in various places this law of exogamy was relaxed only when the people could consider themselves as without a state: that is, when they had cut themselves loose from an existing clan or state, or had lost their state through war or famine. But as soon as a new state was ‘given birth’ by their leading *Oba Panyin*, or *Awura*, ‘Mistress’ [of a state], a title that preceded that of *Ohemmaa*, or Queenmother, the law was again strictly enforced.²

(c) *The Sacred Trees*

When the *Oba Panyin*, or *Awura*, as the case may have been—but for simplicity’s sake I shall now use the term *Ohemmaa* (literally ‘female king’), or ‘Queenmother’ (the European term)—decided that her people should settle down, she planted a life-giving fig-tree, the *gya dua kra*. The *gya dua*, ‘fire-tree’, was so called because of the red flesh of the fig, reminiscent of fire, or of blood

¹ The modern word *oman* describes a confederation of autonomous states.

² See the author’s *The Sacred State of the Akan*, p. 29.

animated by the *kra* spirit or power of the moon—hence *gya dua kra*. Under the *gya dua kra*, planted near the crossroads in front of the site where the *ohemmaa* would build her house, a human sacrifice was buried to ensure the well-being of the village to be. The queenmother had to give her own child for this purpose, preferably a daughter at the age of puberty, or failing this, a son; or one of her sisters or nieces. A woman was regarded as fit to rule only if she made this supreme sacrifice, showing that she placed the welfare of the state and its people above that of her family.¹ But the sacrifice had to be voluntary, for only if the sacrificial victim wholeheartedly agreed to die could the desired blessings be achieved.² It was essential that the victim should be of the queenmother's lineage, because the life-saving lunar *kra* of the ancestress, the founder of a clan or state, was incarnated in her descendants alone. The victim must act as an intermediary between the living queenmother and the supreme Lunar Mother-goddess, whom the *kra* of the victim would now join. The grave under the tree became a place of worship, where in times of need, and during the annual festival, the *Ohemmaa* poured libations and said prayers to her child for transmission to the Great Mother. In wartime, the *gya dua kra* with its grave was defended to the last, as the most precious possession of the state.

Each clan built its village, or quarter, along a main-road, running from east to west, which symbolized the path of the moon.³ Each head-woman of a clan in turn planted a tree before her house. When it is said today that a procession moved 'from one end of the town to the other', it still means only the distance between the two or three trees planted at a time when the state was restricted to two

¹ See p. 104.

² Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III told me that it has also happened in the past that the children of a queenmother refused to be sacrificed. In the reign of Ohene Ati of Bono-Takyiman (1772-83) the gods demanded a human sacrifice but all the princes and princesses declined, whereupon the king was exiled and the royal line cursed; a shot was fired into the sun to show that from now on they were commoners. Kyereme Kofi from another line was elected king after his niece Ameyaa, daughter of Aberofi, had offered herself as a sacrifice. The present Bono-Takyimanhene is a direct descendant of Nana Aberofi. He told me further that in the past the victim was killed in the manner the gods demanded; in general the prince or princess was strangled and the body buried in the middle of a sacred stream; or the body was pounded in a mortar and the bloody remains buried in the fields. Sometimes a pregnant princess was beheaded; or the victim was given to a stranger to be taken away to another country.

³ *Sacred State* p. 185 *et passim*.



or three clans; in later periods, seven or eight became the desired number. The number two symbolizes birth; three, the rule of the Mother-goddess over Sky, Earth and Underworld.¹ In the Bono kingdom (*ca.* 1295–1740), a seven-clan state, each clan identified itself with a planet, and it may be that in the early three-clan state each clan also represented a planet: the queenmother's planet being, as in later times, the moon (sky) ruled by the Mother-goddess; the second clan's being Venus (*fertile earth*) ruled by Asaase Afua; and that of the third clan Jupiter (underworld) ruled by Asaase Yaa, the Earth-goddess (barren soil).

Every compound, apart from the queenmother's, always contained an altar dedicated to the Supreme Being Nyame, and called *Nyame Dua*, literally: 'Nyame's tree' (Pl. 12). It was simply a wooden post planted in the earth, with three (sometimes four) branches lopped short. In the fork of these branches stood, and still stands in many villages, a vessel containing water and a neolithic celt, called *Nyame akuma*, 'Nyame's axe', symbol of strength and power. The people in the compound bless themselves with this water, praising Nyame, and also give her thank-offerings as protectress of their dwelling.

(d) *The Divine Moon Queenmother in her Rôle of Priestess*

The main duties of the queenmother were giving life to the clan, or state, at its foundation, and then maintaining this life, in either case through her divine *kra*. Every man and woman received a *kra*, in the sense of vital force, at birth from the supreme Lunar Mother-goddess, but the queenmother alone was an incarnation of her spirit. She could approach the goddess either through the *kra* of the victim under the *gya dua kra*, or through the *kras* of her deceased predecessors in office which had been reunited with that of the Mother-goddess. Since Nyame, by whatever title she might be known, was much too occupied with her vast realm to pay individual attention to her people on earth, their causes were left to intermediaries—the victim under the *gya dua kra*, and the dead queenmothers. Thus it became the task of the living queenmother to keep these predecessors interested in their people and to maintain unity with the dead by offering them propitiatory libations and offerings; as is still done today. She also paid similar attentions to

¹ *ibid.*, p. 94 *et passim*.

the state *ɔbosom*. In early times, the state *ɔbosom* was usually the goddess of a particular clan; but whereas the dead queenmothers could be approached in prayer only by the living queenmother coming on state business, the *ɔbosom* could be consulted on personal matters by anyone.

To maintain life in the state, the queenmother was above all a rain-maker, and the annual festival centred on her power to produce rain for the crops. In times of drought she would fill a pot with the last remaining rain water and, surrounded by young girls of her own house, would propitiate Nyame through her *ɔbosom* with eggs and libations. This rite is still performed in many areas. In Takyiman, the capital of Bono-Takyiman, the Queenmother would formerly walk in procession with her young girls to a small hill nearby, the abode of Botene—an *ɔbosom* of the earliest settlers, and now the guardian of the town—to pray for rain with offerings of eggs and a libation of the blood of sacrificed female animals. This custom has now lapsed at Takyiman, but is still in force at nearby Tuobodom. There, in time of drought, the women go in procession to the sacred grove of Sirew Anaa to pray for rain. The Ohem maa of Tuobodom, the priestess in charge of the grove, pours out a libation of rum, makes an offering of eggs, and sacrifices a hen. Then the women take the last remaining rain water and sprinkle it all along the way from the grove to the centre of the town. Rain is expected to fall the very day. Anaa, to whom the grove is dedicated was the founder of Tuobodom (*ca.* 1660) after she was seized by the *kra* of Tano Tumpuduo, and is worshipped as the ancestress of the priest-chief and village queenmother of Tuobodom.¹

Fire and epidemics also were dealt with by the queenmother. When the state *ɔbosom* Taa Kɛse of Bono-Takyiman prophesied a fire, or the nearby bush was ablaze, the Queenmother would again walk with her girls to Botene and make an offering, praying for protection. In near-by Nkoranza, the Queenmother still goes with her girls to the Nyame Kɛse, the cone-shaped shrine under the *gya dua kra* of the town (Pl. 39), after she has poured out one pot of water, handed her by young men, at the entrance of the town; another pot in each quarter; and one before her own house; and one before that of the Nkoranzahene (*hene*, king)—the last emptied over the *Nyame Kɛse*. The empty pot is turned upside-down and left on top of the cone, with a large stone placed above to keep it in

¹ *ibid.*, p. 123 *et passim*.

position. This rite is called *sumun*, and the whole ceremony *aman-nyina*, 'in support of the state.'¹

Whenever an epidemic threatened the town of Bono-Takyiman, the queenmother would once walk from door to door with the girls of her house, collecting ashes from the hearths as she went. *Summe-leaves* (*Costus sp.*), for consecration, having been brought in from the forest, a procession in which all the girls and women of the town took part was then marshalled by the queenmother. It moved from house to house down all the streets, while songs of propitiation were sung. The four roads leading to Bono-Takyiman were then strewn with *summe-leaves* and ashes, to bar out death. During major catastrophes, the queenmother was everywhere expected to sacrifice one of her own children, who would go as an ambassador to heaven and there implore the dead queenmothers, or Nyame herself, for help.

(e) *The Queenmother as the Ruler of the State.*

From earliest times the queenmother ruled her state, assisted by a council of head-women from other clans and sub-clans. Every adult in the village could join the *nhyiam*, or meeting; but the



Fig. 3

Lunar Swastika. The Akan call it Nkotimsefo-puaa because the design is cut out of the short-cropped hair of the Nkotimse, certain attendants of the queenmother

decision rested with the women elders, and the queenmother's word was final. She would occasionally tour her state, as did the Queenmother Gyebi Saa Ababio of Wankyi (deposed in 1950), to receive petitions and investigate the people's condition.

On such occasions, girls who had menstruated for the first time and who were unable to attend the capital, were presented to the Queenmother with a plea for the *beragoro* rites to be performed on their behalf.² These rites consisted mainly of a ceremonial bath in

¹ *ibid.*, p. 48; n. 1 gives another version of the same rite.

² *ibid.*, pp. 44, 45.

the nearby river, and the adoption of women's clothes; but in the evening the girls were given sex instruction by the oldest women in the family. The Akan unanimously agree that the *beragoro* is the most ancient of all their rites. Boys were given no sort of initiation rites at puberty, or at any other time; the Akan peculiarly abhor circumcision, because it entails the shedding of blood—blood that had been given life through the *kra*. But when a boy showed his capacity as a hunter by killing some large animal—an antelope, or perhaps even a leopard—his mother's brother (or, at a later phase, his father) would present him with a weapon of his own in the presence of a few invited friends. The boy was then declared to be a man, and joined the *fokuo*, the warrior organization of the clan.

Early laws are remembered because of the following customs. A man who had committed a crime against the state could take sanctuary at the stone, or cone, under the *gya dua kra*, that marked the grave of the queenmother's sacrificed child, in order 'to buy his head'. Crimes of this category were: sexual intercourse between clan members; rape; sexual intercourse in the bush—an insult against the Earth- and Underworld-goddess Asaase Yaa, the Mother of the Dead (an aspect of Nyame); with other similar offences thought to endanger the national well-being. Such offenders were required to obtain an animal for sacrifice—a sheep or sometimes a fowl—and taken away to be judged. Often, today, a dome-shaped cone or stone before the entrance, or in the courtyard, of the king's *ahenfie*, or house, fulfils this function. I once happened to be in Takyiman when a man made a rush for the stone (called *Bronsamo*, after the minor deity said to dwell in it) which he reached in time. The Bono-Takyimanhene thereupon allowed him to go to his house, under the escort of a policeman, and fetch a sheep. This was then sacrificed at the stone, the blood being spilt over it, and later the policeman took the man off to stand his trial in Court (Pl. 37).

Inside the queenmother's house there probably once stood, as now in the king's house at Takyiman, a small statue of a mother and child called *Oyene mma*, 'she who nurses children' (Pl. 43). Girls and women who had committed a minor offence could fly to her and, before they were caught, say: 'Mother, save me!', when they would be pardoned after offering a sacrifice. Barren women also, smarting under their disgrace, could come and kneel before the figure, praying for children.

The queenmother was once the supreme war-leader wherever

kingship had not yet been introduced, or if she was titularly king as well as queenmother, or if the king had died or had been deposed and no successor had been appointed. She is likely to have accompanied her warriors into battle, as did Amoanimaa, *Ohemmaa* of Amakum, a small state in the Kumasi region (ca. 1660), prior to the foundation of the Asante kingdom. It is said that she dressed like a man, with a belt full of knives, and fought the *Ohemmaa* of a neighbouring state for the possession of a golden mortar. The famous Yaa Asantewaa of Ejisu, one of the confederated states of Asante, was the last great queenmother to lead an army. In 1900, she roused the whole Asante nation to rebel against the British, and the war was subsequently named after her. The minstrels still sing:

‘Yaa Asantewaa,
Obaa basia a okura tuo ne ofona beko.’

‘Yaa Asantewaa,
The warrior woman who carries a gun and the sword of state
in battle.’

And even as late as this, women who were past the age of child-bearing fought ferociously in the advanceguard, armed with guns and urging the men to charge against the enemy. When killed, these Amazons were buried with full military honours.¹

(f) *The Foundation of Tanosu by the Divine Ameyaa Ampromfi*

The following is a faithful translation of the narrative by Okyeame Pong, a direct descendant of Ameyaa Ampromfi, who gave birth to several *abosom* before she brought forth Atia Kosie; and who founded Tanosu in about 1750. The Tanosuhene Nana Yao Mensa, the successor of Ameyaa Ampromfi as ruler of Tanosu, has verified this account for me.

I should point out, by way of preface, that Ameyaa Ampromfi did not give birth to a clan *abosom* of Cult Type I, but to a bi-sexual *abosom* of Cult Type II, personified as a god or goddess according to what was wanted from it. I am using here the term ‘god’ throughout. The *abosom* of Cult Type II were, like the old clan *abosom*, givers of rain and promoters of birth and similarly acted as intermediaries between the people and the Supreme Goddess Nyame.

¹ *ibid*, p. 42 n. 2.

Although the story does not mention the fact, Ameyaa Ampromfi gave birth to the god while possessed by the *kra* of the Mother-goddess—in this case Tano, once the supreme deity of the Fante people. Political reforms had made Tano the state god-goddess of the Bono kingdom; and Tano in his-her form of Taa Kese had become the city god-goddess of Takyiman.

Okyeame Pong said:

‘After the fall of the Bono kingdom (*ca.* 1740), when the country was occupied by the Asante, some of the princes and princesses of the royal house of Bono lived hidden in the hills round Takyiman [once the second largest town in Bono]. Presently they consulted the high priest of Taa Kese [Tano the Great], in order to obtain directions for these troublesome times. The high priest thereupon consulted the oracle of the god, and told them that they must send one of the last king’s daughters to Asante to find out the enemy’s intentions with regard to their country.

‘Ameyaa, daughter of Afua Owusuaa, who had been the favourite of her royal father, Ameyaw Kwaakye, and was still deeply devoted to his memory, came forward and declared herself willing to do what the god demanded. The high priest thereupon gave her a small parcel containing some sacred objects to take with her on her wanderings, and allowed her only one woman, Kyereme Akuaa, as her attendant. This woman was given a small stool to carry, called *adwa-pa*, “the good stool”, on which the parcel had to be placed when Ameyaa could not carry it.

‘The two travelled together for many years, and then headed back to Takyiman. When they passed the village of Takyimentia, Ameyaa while in a trance gave birth to an *ɔbosom*, who called himself Banie. She built a house for the god at Takyimentia, and soon people came to worship Banie; so Ameyaa gave up the idea of returning to Takyiman. However, when the god entered his shrine he asked her to carry out this intention, and after about three years she finally left the village. She took the shrine of the *ɔbosom* with her, but had to leave her own child Kwatin Ankoma, born at Takyimentia, behind as a hostage for her return. When Ameyaa and Kyereme Akuaa crossed the river Sibri, they met a farmer, Opon Akyiayesu, who took them to Akumadan, where a hunter of the Takyiman chief lived. The hunter came from Bemeri, two miles from Takyiman, and when Ameyaa looked at him, she fell in love and married him, again abandoning her intention of returning

to Takyiman. But whenever the god Banie entered his shrine, he pressed her to do so, until one day he induced her to follow him, and led her to the Tano river. There Asubonten, a son of Tano, who lived on the surface of the water, entered into her, and she discovered that this was the spirit who had his home in the parcel entrusted to her by the high priest of Taa Kɛse. Ameyaa thereupon returned to Akumadan, and made an offering to Asubonten.

‘When Asubonten one day re-entered his shrine, the small parcel, he told Ameyaa that she would soon give birth to another *ɔbosom*. Later, he asked her to make her home at the spot where he had entered her body. But when Ameyaa wanted her husband to come too, he refused. Asubonten, however, when she consulted him, told her not to be distressed but to remain for the time being at Akumadan until summoned. When he again asked her to go to the Tano river, she found the trees felled and the site well weeded and ready for a village to be built on it. Thereupon her husband, his sons by other wives, and the chief of near-by Aferandwo, agreed to move to the Tano river and there build a village for Ameyaa. When everything was ready she gave birth to the *ɔbosom* Akwatia (or Atia) Kosie Kwaku. His name can best be translated as “Spy born on Wednesday”, and he was so called because Ameyaa’s village, Abofo, lay only eight miles from the Asante border village Mfutudwanemu, so that the *ɔbosom* could easily hear what was going on in Asante.

‘The new god now told her to return to Takyiman, for she had completed her task. Ameyaa thereupon left, with Kyereme Akuaa; and when she reached Takyiman, Atie Kosie Kwaku told her first to visit the high priest of Taa Kɛse. As she entered the temple, the high priest was seized by the spirit of Taa Kɛse and, thus incarnating the god, embraced and welcomed her. She then went to see the Takyimanhene Nana Ameyaw Gyamfi, who had recently been enstooled king of the newly-created Bono-Takyiman state (1748). From him she received the name Ampromfi, meaning “nobility”, or “the noble”, and was given the rank of queenmother to rule the new village and the lands surrounding it. She received a stool, as symbol of her status, which was to be blackened after her death and preserved in the temple of her god, Atia Kosie Kwaku. She also received a large umbrella [the emblem of office of a reigning chief]. Before she returned to the new village, which she renamed Atia Kosiesu [“on the land of Atia Kosie”], she gave birth to a daughter



1. Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III, Omanhene of Bono-Takyiman (Tekyiman-Brong). He is seen sitting here on the *huedom* throne under the double state umbrella. He wears the *sheneasa* cloth which has to be woven between sunrise and sunset; the Bosum-muru gold dagger is in his right hand. The ornaments of his head-dress, the necklaces, arm, finger, leg and toe ornaments are of gold. Next to his right foot on a low stool is the *puduo* (or *sanaa*) with its sacred contents; behind it is a bag filled with ancient treasures. Beside his left foot is a metal container covered with white netting and said to be filled with blessed water, and in front of it, covered with cloth, the so-called *kyem*, an ancient musical instrument or game, played by kings. Next to the Omanhene is the *Adumfohene* (chief executioner) with his whip and sword, the symbols of his office.
(Reproduced by courtesy of Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III.)



2. The Queenmother of Nkoranza Nana Afua Sarpong
and her sister.



3. The Queenmother of Forikukrom village, Nana Amaa Ntansaa
(centre) with two of her Elders.

named Tanaa Tasie. After her mother's death, Tanaa Tasie succeeded her as priestess queenmother of the village which, by this time, through the power of the god, had grown into a town surrounded by outlying villages. The *abosom* being predominantly a promoter of birth, women from all over the Bono-Takyiman State came to worship him and, when they conceived, often settled at Atie Kosiesu. Since the soil was rich, their husbands followed them in many cases. The god became so renowned that woman from many regions of Asante, from Banda, and even from Nzima on the coast, also came and settled there, and with their relatives founded entire quarters in the town. Finally the town was renamed Tanosu ("on the land of Tano"), since it was felt that the name Atie Kosiesu might embarrass the Asante. Tanosu (or Tanoso) is today at least the second-largest town, perhaps the largest, in the Bono-Takyiman State.

'During the annual *Apo* festival, at the season of sowing and planting, Nana Ameyaa Ampromfi's black stool, the shrine of her divine soul, or *kra*, is still carried to Takyiman; and when it reaches the outskirts of the town, a sword-bearer is sent to the Bono-Takyimanhene to inform them of its arrival. The Bono-Takyimanhene then comes in person to welcome the stool, which always has to arrive on Monday, the day of the moon before the *Apo*. It is housed in the sanctuary of Akane Asia and Mframa, the *abosom* which owe their lives to relatives of Ameyaa Ampromfi. On Wednesday, the stool is brought ceremoniously into the temple of Taa Kɛse, where the high priest welcomes and embraces its priestess; a sheep is then sacrificed over the stool. There it remains until the end of the *Apo* festival, and is carried back to Tanosu on Monday morning, New Year's Day, before sunrise, for Ameyaa's divine *kra* to receive offerings there later in the day.

'Ameyaa Ampromfi was succeeded by the following priestess queenmothers: her daughter Tana Tasie, who as *ɔhemaa* took the name Adwoa Ansaa (*Adwoa*, "She of the Moon"); then in turn by Adwoa To; Adwoa Akyempona; Yaa Benewaa; and Ampromfi II Akuaa—after whose death, chieftainship was introduced, and one of her sons by name Koratin Ankoma succeeded as chief of Tanosu. His successors were Akyia Wea, Yaw Brafɛ, Kodjo Dakrubo, Yaw Baafɛ, Kwasi Kwaaten, Kofi Kra, Kwame Brafɛ, Kwaame Kwaten and Yaw Mensa, the present Tanosuhene.'

2. *The Cult of the Clan Obosom*

(a) *The Totem Animal (Akyeneboa)*

To repeat: the *akyeneboa*, or totem animal, was and still is the incarnation of the *obosom*, or deity of the *nton*, or clan. It was revered by the members of the *nton*, and regarded as their friend and protector in times of need. When, for instance, refugees led by a queenmother after the destruction of the Akwamu kingdom (south-eastern Ghana) tried, in 1734, to cross the Volta river and could not find a ford, their *obosom* Ayesu appeared to them, it is said, as a wild pig and led them to safety. Ayesu was the *obosom* of the royal clan, and the bi-sexual state-god of the Akwamu.

The *akyeneboa* were often kept and cared for in the queenmother's house and, when kingship was introduced, also in those of kings or chiefs. In Bono-Takyiman, until a generation ago, the kings kept a tame male falcon, the *akyeneboa* of their clan (Ayoko); and the queenmother kept a female of the same species. When a royal bird died, it was buried with royal honours, in a coffin marked with divine symbols; the male in the cemetery of the kings, the female in that of the queenmothers. Since the art of catching live falcons has been forgotten, only a parrot, totem and emblem of the state, is now kept by the kings. At Daboya (Northern Territories of Ghana), the sacred ibises, the *akyeneboas* of the previous dynasty, are still cared for by members of the present one. These ibises nest in an ancient tree, and fledglings which fall out of their nests are lovingly nursed, and buried with special rites if they die.

The clan people identify themselves with the habits of their *akyeneboa* (see p. 25), and were in the past represented by its image. Even today, I am told, when Fante clan chiefs meet, it figures on their umbrella tops, and on the staffs of the royal spokesmen. In former wars, the Bono-Takyiman fighting men used to call themselves 'parrots'; and referred to their old enemies, the Asante, as *kotoku*, 'porcupines.' During the long war between the Bono-Takyiman and the Asante (1877-96), the Bonos used to provoke the Asante by playing on their war-horns: 'Asante porcupines, where are you?'

The clansmen, however, never use the fur, feather, or any other part of their *akyeneboa* for any ritual or domestic purpose. This is *akyiwade* taboo because to do so would be to remind them of the death of their totem. The animal was killed only once a year

at the New Year Festival—a custom which still survives in some places (described in Section (c) 1, 2).

The people of a *nton* do not regard themselves as descended from their totem, as is evident from the origin of the *akyeneboa*. The descent from the totem, or the *ɔbosom*, here envisaged as a god, not a goddess, would appear to be a later feature (Cult Type IV), and came into being with the introduction of the *Ntoro* cult (see Ch. IV) and patrilineal descent, which among the Akan now runs parallel with matrilineal descent from the ancestress.

(b) *The Sacred Tree of the Deity*

The clan people identified themselves not only with the *akyeneboa* of their *ɔbosom*, but also with the tree, the abode, of the deity's *kra*. Whereas identification with the totem animal gave them their 'self', character, nationality (Cult Type I), the tree became symbolic of their very being. The Akan language still expresses this identification. *Nipa-dua*, the figure, body, or personality of man, means when literally translated 'human tree' (*dua*, tree); *onipa-dua* means 'humanity'. The literal translation of *ne nipadua npo a esi fam nnye fe*, 'his personality, though sound, does not attract' is: 'his human tree, although it stands on the ground, is not beautiful.' The child in the womb is called *ba-dwaa*, 'tree-seed'—the word seed (*dwaa*) being contracted from *dua-ba*, tree-seed. A circumcized man is described as *twa dua*, a lopped tree.

At the death of a king or queenmother, the male and female aspects of whom incarnate the bi-sexual deity of their clan (Cult Type II), it is said *adu pɔn atutu*, 'a great tree has fallen.' *Twa-dua-mpɔn*, 'lean [on] the tree [and] fall not,' is an appellation of Nyame and of Nyankopon, her personified male aspect, as well as of numerous male *abosom*; *Konkom dua kom*, meaning 'tree firmness', is another appellation. Rattray¹ reports a case where a priest, seized by the spirit of his god, bursts out singing: 'I am the *odom*-tree. Let him who loves me come hither.' When pointing to a grave, it is the rule to say: '*Me kura dua mu*', 'I cling to a tree.'

Thank-offerings were hung on the sacred tree of the *ɔbosom*, and the custom persists in some places. The tree chosen is seldom the extremely holy one in the sacred grove, but usually the subsidiary tree planted outside or in the courtyard of the village

¹ R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti*, Oxford, 1923, p. 149.

sanctuary. Such thank-offerings consist of bead necklaces, bracelets, rags, pieces of cloth which have been worn by the donor, or the whole cloth. I have also seen shirts, ties, belts, hats, shoes and other modern personal apparel on the tree before Ntoa's house at Asueyi (Bono-Takyiman state).

Small replicas of fetters are also occasionally hung on these trees, with the object of tying the *kra* of the *ɔbosom* to his or her tree.¹ Strips of white cloth usually represent pledges of attachment. Until she was deposed in 1950, the Queenmother of the Wankyi state, supreme priestess of Ntoa, annually gave two white cloths to the deity; these were first placed on the sanctuary altar and then, after the completion of the rites in the sacred grove, either on Ntoa's tree, or on another tree close by.

A very ancient custom is still performed in the sacred grove of the *ɔbosom* Edinkra at Nkoranza. Edinkra was originally the bi-sexual-goddess of an Asine sub-clan. She has never had shrine or sanctuary—a feature which places her in Cult Type I—and offerings are placed on the roots of a huge and very old *akata*-tree (see Pl. 9). A worshipper will occasionally tie a string around the trunk of the tree, to show that he wishes the goddess 'to bear him upon her back, as a mother bears her child'.²

(c) *The New Year Festival*

The annual festival, a New Year festival, originally concerned the death and resurrection of the *ɔbosom*. It was believed that the *kra*, the vital force of a deity loses strength if not rejuvenated from time to time by the Moon Mother-goddess. To ensure this rejuvenation the *akyene boa*, the mortal embodiment of the *ɔbosom* was sacrificed once a year, so that its *kra*, that of the deity, could join Nyame's and then return to earth, its strength renewed or resurrected. The *akyeneboa* was caught in the bush by warriors of a clan or state, a custom which still prevails in the coastal town of Winneba.

Winneba was founded (ca. A.D. 1530) by Afutu people from Amanforo-Ogua (Cape Coast), descendants of Guan and Mo (Grunsi-speaking people) who came from Bono-Mansu, sometime capital of the Bono kingdom.³ So far as I know, the custom of hunting the

¹ I have seen these in the sacred grove of the *ɔbosom* Bonda, about two miles from Akrokere in Adanse (Asante).

² Information given by the priest of Edinkra, Nana Kwabena Saben.

³ *Akan Traditions*, p. 75.

akyeneboa and catching it alive is obsolete elsewhere, but the capture of large totem animals, which had accidentally strayed into villages, was such a memorable event in Akan history that children born on such a day still bear names commemorating it. For instance, Kwaame Kyeretwie—literally: *Kwaame* ('Boy born on Saturday'); *kyere* ('caught alive'); *twie* ('leopard').

The festival at Winneba is remarkable for the absence of all important rites of later Cult Types—for example, the sacred marriage (Cult Type II)—though the *ɔbosom* is no longer regarded as a mother, but as bi-sexual (Cult Type II); and the deity is served by a priest, not by a priestess; and the sanctification of the animal is performed by the king, and not by the queenmother.

1. *The Death and Resurrection of the Antelope-god at Winneba.*

Two weeks before the annual festival at Winneba, the commanders of the various divisions of No. 1 Company, called the Dentzefo, and of No. 2 Company, called the Tufuafo, meet in the *ahenfie* (or palace) to discuss with the *ɔmanhene*, the ruler of the Winneba state, what colours and materials will be worn by the men of the two competing companies in the inaugural hunt. This is intended to prevent all disputes which may arise later if something has gone wrong and one company blames its colours for having been less lucky than the other's.

On a Friday night in the month of April, the season of sowing and planting, the first rites are performed by the priests of all the gods in town: they attend the headquarters of both companies, situated in different parts of the town, and there invoke the ancestral spirits of Dentzefo and Tufuafo. Libations are poured and prayers said; and guns are fired by the hunters who have gathered outside. At about half past five in the morning, officers and men purify themselves in the sea. Then they return home to eat rice porridge cooked for them by the women of their families. When they have eaten, they dress themselves for hunting. They all use protective charms, because the *wansan*, a large antelope with a striped belly, which has to be caught alive, incarnates the *ɔbosom* Penkye Otu, and is dangerous. Penkye Otu belonged originally to the people of Apa, the owners of the land of Winneba and who were defeated by Osim Pam, the founder of Winneba (*ca.* 1530). The *ɔbosom*'s original name was Sekum Apa.

At about eight o'clock, the two companies leave their headquarters and, accompanied by the priests, march singing and

drumming to the *ahenfie*, where they are greeted by the *Ōmanhene*, with the Queenmother and the Elders, who await them, seated before the entrance. The companies then proceed to their adjacent hunting grounds. The Tufuafo's ground faces the lagoon and Manko Mountain; that of the Dentzefo lies behind. The men roam about until the *Ōmanhene*, Queenmother and Elders arrive and take their seats on a platform. Then, at a given signal, all the men rush to the dividing line between the two grounds, called *Mboni paado*. The priests again invoke the ancestral spirits to assist the undertaking; after which the men begin to drum furiously and sing old songs, invoking the *abosom* of their companies to reveal themselves. In each case the *abosom* is then seen as a *wansan* antelope. That of the Tufuafo carries a bird's-nest between its horns, and is called Sakaja; it is said always to hesitate a moment before turning off towards the sea, as that of the Dentzefo turns off towards the plains. Then the hunt begins with great clamour.

Ancient songs are sung. The Dentzefo men use beagles and bull-roarers; the Tufuafo use bells and whistles to frighten the antelope from its lair. Soon an actual *wansan* is sighted and, to heighten the excitement, is driven down into the plains so that the townsfolk can share in the chase.

Presently the recall signal is sounded. The antelope is then hemmed in and taken alive without the use even of sticks or clubs. The man who finally catches the animal slings it over his shoulders, holding its hind legs with the left hand, its forelegs with the right. Neither rope nor string may be used. As soon as the antelope is caught, the hunters are allowed to capture any other animal that comes their way—rabbits, grass-cutters, and the like. The company that has not yet caught its antelope may continue with the hunt until it succeeds, but the prey has no ritual importance.

The antelope, which incarnates Penkye Otu, is then brought to the *Ōmanhene* and placed on the ground before him. He sets both feet on it three times, then sanctifies it first by touching it with the big toe of his left foot, moving this toe along the antelope's body from left to right, then with the big toe of his right foot, moving it from right to left, and finally with the toe of his left foot, again, from left to right.¹ The antelope is then lifted up and carried

¹ Three is the number symbolizing the Mother-goddess as Ruler of the Sky, Earth and Underworld. Left is female; right is male. The *Ōmanhene* sits facing south; the movement of his toe is therefore from west (west is female, like

through the town, the men of both companies swarming around it singing, dancing, or drumming, until they reach the sacred grove of Penkye Otu. The *ɔsɔɔ*, or high priest, of the *ɔbosom* is already awaiting them, and his assistant priests take the antelope from the hunters. The hunters then return to their headquarters to celebrate their triumph. It would have spelt almost catastrophic ill fortune if no antelope had been caught. The *ɔmanhene*, the Queen-mother, and the Elders have meanwhile returned to the *ahenfie*, where they sit in the audience courtyard and recall old times, especially the brave deeds of their ancestors.

In a place before the grove *ɔbosomba* the antelope is prepared for death. An anaesthetic medicine prepared from the bark of certain trees, the juice of plants and other ingredients—the formula was not revealed to me—is smeared over its legs, so that it does not suffer when these are broken, going peacefully and unsoiled to its death. But the contact of the antelope's feet with the earth, in which the dead are buried, is supposed to have defiled its *kra*, which must be purified for its return to Nyame.

The antelope is sacrificed in the traditional way: its throat slit from ear to ear and the blood caught in a vessel. The hide is then removed and hung for a while on the sacred tree of the *ɔbosom*, but later it will be taken down and preserved in the sanctuary in town. The head is placed at the foot of the tree,¹ and the rest of the carcass jointed and then cut up. Small pieces from each limb and from every muscle and organ are strewn over the floor of the grove as an offering to Osim Pa and the first Queenmother, joint-founders of Winneba. Other pieces of flesh are given to Penkye Otu and placed below his tree. The remainder is sent to the houses of the *ɔsɔɔ*, the high priest, and of all other priests of gods—each of whom receive their traditional portion to be eaten at night with their families.

left) to east (male); east to west; and again west to east. West to east symbolizes the path of the moon; east to west the path of the sun. The reference therefore must be to the Lunar Mother-goddess, Ruler of the Sky, Earth and Underworld, and her son, the *ɔbosom*, incarnate in the *wansan*.

¹ When a fowl, as substitute for the *akyeneboa* of the *ɔbosom* Edinkra at Nkoranza, is sacrificed at the annual festival in the sacred grove, the bleeding neck of the bird is rubbed against the sacred tree. Then palm wine is quickly poured over the blood on the tree to eliminate all traces of the *ɔbosom*'s death. The same rite may also take place in the sacred grove of Penkye Otu; but I had great difficulty in getting information on this point, the rites being secret and witnessed by few people only.

When the rites in the grove are completed, a signal is given and the festival starts in the town with joy at the thought that the *kra* of the antelope has joined Nyame's *kra* and that, in due course, the *ɔbosom* will be resurrected. Singing, dancing, and drumming continue throughout the night. Sunday is quiet; the *ɔso* returns to the sacred grove and there asks the god Penkye Otu to reveal himself and tell his people what will be good and what bad in the year to



Fig. 4

Antelope mask of the ɔbosom Sakrabundu. From a drawing in R. A. Freeman's Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman, 1898.

come. In former times the god is said to have appeared—probably, as in Takyiman with the *ɔbosom* Tano, a man took his place, dressed from head to foot in raffia, and wearing an antelope mask. Nowadays, however, the *ɔso* merely pours a libation and then throws a white, a black and a red ball on to a board. The colour of the ball which hits the board in a certain way enables the *ɔso* to predict what the future will bring. Later in the day, men from the two hunting companies thank the *ɔmanhene*, their own commanders, and the heads of clans, for organizing the festival.¹

¹ Information given by the Ex-*ɔmanhene* Nana Ayiribi Acquah, *ɔheneba* George Acquah and the Elders of Winneba (1946).

2. *The Death and Resurrection of the Mouse-god at Tanoboase.*¹

The *akyeneboa*, which incarnates the *ɔbosom* Amii, is a mouse (*akura*). The rite differs greatly from that performed at Winneba, but can nevertheless be regarded as a variation on the same primitive pattern, since the festival is still exclusively concerned with the *akyeneboa*, and no rites belonging to Cult Type II are in evidence.

Centuries ago, the people of Mansu in the Nkoranza State² formed an alliance with the Tanoboase worshippers of the Antelope-god Taa Kora (Tano). This alliance is still so close that the death and resurrection ritual of the Mouse-god is celebrated in conjunction with that of the Antelope-god. Moreover, the priest of Amii is permitted to carry the shrine of Taa Kora, and *vice versa*, should one or the other priest be prevented from doing so.

On *Fɔ-Dwoɔ* ('Fertile Monday', day of the moon) of the *Apo* festival, the priest of Amii, carrying the shrine of his god and a mummified mouse, walks with his people to meet the high priest of Taa Kora and his people after the completion of their rites in the sacred cave of Tanoboase. After forming a single procession they go to a near-by field and assemble around a hole in the ground in which the priest of Amii had just deposited the mummified mouse. A libation of palm wine is poured over it, while the priest of Amii offers a prayer for the well-being of the people of Mansu and Tanoboase in the year to come. Everyone present takes a sip from the calabash, and the last drop is also poured over the mouse. They sing:

Priest: *Akura, ee, nye wo nko wo bɔn ni.*

*Dampan biako na ntokuro odu, ade sa,
nye wo nko wo bɔn ni.*

*Ye fri Amowi, oo,
ye fri Amowi, Damankama, Amowi, eee,
Asuo kɔkɔ ma, ee.*

*Gyata, ee,
ye ba, oo.*

Dwom a ye de fre no ni.

¹ I was unable to verify this information, given me by the chief priest of Tanoboase; because prevented from visiting the priest of Amii at Mansu.

² The village of Mansu was built on the fringes of Bono-Mansu after the destruction of the Bono kingdom (ca. 1750). Land in the Bono kingdom was given to the people of the *ɔbosom* Amii and Taa Kora in the middle of the sixteenth century. The people of Taa Kora were Fante by origin; as those of Amii may also have been.

THE MOON CULT OF THE AKAN (CULT TYPE I)

Chorus: *Yemfa mfreño kyere yebewie sen.*

Priest: *Takyimanhene, Ameyaw Kwaakye, Akura oni.*

Chorus: *Yemfa mfreño kyere yebewie sen.*

Priest: *Asantehene, Tano oni.*

Chorus: *Yemfa mfreño kyere yebewie sen.*

Priest: *Brong-Kyempem Duoduokwa, Tano oni.*

Chorus: *Yemfa mfreño Kyere yebewie sen.*

Priest: *Asanteman, Tano oni.*

Apuo ne ate, bosom oni.

Takyifiri, Tano oni.

etc.

Translation:

Priest: Mouse, ee, this hole is not yours alone.

There are 30 entrances to the same chamber,

This hole is not yours alone at night.

We come from Amowi, * OO,

We come from Amowi, creator, EEE,

Red (i.e. life-giving) River† yield up,

Lion, † ee,

We are coming.

This is the song by which we invoke him.

* Amowi is the name of the cave where the Bono kingdom was founded.

† Appellation of the Mouse god.

Chorus: But we do not invoke him till we have passed.

Priest: To the King of Takyiman, to Ameyaw Kwaakye, *. To
Mouse, kinsman.

Chorus: But we do not invoke him till we have passed.

Priest: To the King of Asante, † to Tano kinsman.

Chorus: But we do not invoke him till we have passed.

Priest: To the King of the Thousand Brongs, ‡ Tano kinsman.

Chorus: But we do not invoke him till we have passed.

Priest: To the Asante nation, to Tano, kinsman.

Kinsman God, on the throne cushion of the Apo festival.

To Takyifiri, § to Tano, kinsman.

etc.

* The last king of Bono and ancestor king of the present dynasty of Bono-Takyiman.

† Tanoboase is a village serving Asante.

‡ Title of the Kings of Bono.

§ Founder of the town of Takyiman.

THE MOON CULT OF THE AKAN (CULT TYPE I)

Next, a shot is fired at the mouse, and if it misses the mark misfortune can be expected in the coming year. Finally, a grass fire is kindled around the hole and allowed to spread. On the following morning the people return to the field, and find a live mouse in the hole—the resurrected Mouse god. They shoot it, when found, and joyfully take the corpse home to Mansu, where the priests mummify it for the next year's ritual.¹

¹ Compare these two festivals with the Aduana Clan festival (Appendix I) of the latest Cult Type.



CHAPTER II

The Venus Cult (Cult Type II)

1. *The Deities*(a) *The Father-god Odomankoma Bɔrebɔre*

The God Odomankoma presents an anomaly in the Akan cosmological dogma because, unlike the *abosom*, he has no part in the *kra*, or life-giving power, of the Universal Genetrix, the Lunar Mother-goddess Nyame; nor does he personify her manifestations, but counts as an independent god in his own right. He is also a creator (*O-dom-ankɔ-ma*, 'he who alone created the world'),¹ but whereas Nyame created by bringing forth, he worked with his mind and his hands and is therefore envisaged as a divine craftsman or artificer. He created the world by carving or hollowing it out (*bɔre-bɔre*) from an inert substance devoid of *kra*. He represents creative intelligence, and is still venerated as the god of *Natura naturata*, the earth with its mountains, plains, seas, rivers and trees, as opposed to Nyame, *Natura naturans*. Odomankoma has no temple, nor are any offerings made to him, but there must have been a time, before 'Odomankoma passed through death', when he was worshipped as a great god. Odomankoma took his place, theologically, as the co-regent of the Lunar Mother-goddess, becoming her executive and administrator; and as the brother or husband was the 'father-uncle' of the *abosom*.

Odomankoma's title *Nna-mmere-nson* refers to the most important of his cultural introductions, the seven-day week; of which each day was, and still is, ruled by a planet—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. He decreed, it would seem, that the *abosom* no longer received their *kra* exclusively or directly

¹ For further details of Odomankoma, see the author's *Sacred State*, p. 81 *et passim*.



4. Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III carried on the shoulders of his men after a funeral ceremony and followed by the state drums.



5. The High-priest of Tigare wearing the head-dress of an Akan chief. The spear, carved and covered with gold and silver plate symbolises that his *obosom* is a giver of life, as represented by the kola nut on the point of the spear, and a giver of death as represented by the spear itself.



6. The High-priest of Taa Kese (Tano) Nana Kofi Mosi and the 'Mother of the god'. A priest in the background carries the shrine of the deity on his head.

from the Moon, but rather from the planet that ruled their natal day. He appointed special officers, the *akragya* or *Kra*-progenitors, envisaged as bi-sexual, or as male and female deities, to dispense *kra*: the *akragya* Awo (Moon) on Monday; Abena (Mars) on Tuesday; Aku (Mercury) on Wednesday; Abrao (Jupiter) on Thursday; Afi (Venus) on Friday; Amen (Saturn) on Saturday; and Ayisi (Sun) on Sunday.

The *akragya* still give the *abosom* born on the day they rule not only their *kra*, but also their *sunsum* ('character', 'personality' and hence 'destiny').¹ Those born on Monday will have the character of the Moon, which is calm, peaceful, cool and protective; those born on Tuesday will become, like Mars, hot and warlike; those born on Wednesday will be wise and learned, like Mercury; those born on Thursday will become great heroes, like Jupiter; those born on Fridays, wanderers like Venus, but loving and full of generative force; those born on Saturday, experienced and seasoned like Saturn; those born on Sunday will be pure, immaculate and generous like the Sun.²

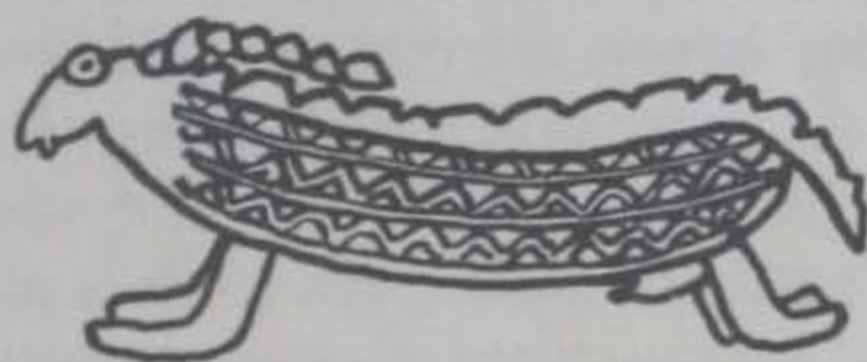


Fig. 5

An antelope that 'masks' a deity. Note the feet pointing east and west (a reference to the rising and setting moon and sun); the eye that is fashioned like the kra sign, and the water sign in three fields (a reference to fertility); the horns have seven twists (seven planets or seven clans).

Kra and *sunsum* came to be regarded as complementary parts of a whole. The *kra* now represented, apart from vital power, the immortal soul, the unconscious psyche, the *Id*, the universal mind without any trace of ego consciousness, and was contrasted with the *sunsum* (literally: 'shadow'), the mortal soul, consciousness of self, personality. The people of a clan then ceased to identify themselves with the *akyeneboa*, the totem animal of their *abosom* who was no

¹ For further details see the author's 'Concept of the Soul Among the Akan of the Gold Coast', *AFRICA*, 1952, p. 24 *et passim*.

² See also J. B. Danquah, *Akan Doctrine of God*, London, 1944, pp. 47, 48.

longer exclusively associated with the moon, and identified themselves instead with the planet of their clan god. The *kras* of the dead, consequently, returned to the planet of their clan *ɔbosom*,¹ except for those of the dead queenmother and her clanspeople, who returned to the moon, as before.

(b) *The bi-sexual Sky-Fertility-gods manifest in Vegetation*

In Cult Type II, then, the *ɔbosom* no longer embodied the manifestation of the moon, but might be the manifestation of any one of the seven planets. For example: Tano (Twumpuduro) of Tuobodom, born on a Monday, is worshipped as a Moon-god or goddess; Tano (Taa Kɛse) of Takyiman, born on a Tuesday, as Mars, a War-god or goddess; Tano (Taa Kofi) of Taakofiano, born on a Friday, as Venus or Lord of Growth; and Tano (Taa Kora) of Tanoboase, born on a Saturday, as Saturn, 'the great spirit that is everywhere.'

The *abosom* were no longer envisaged as goddesses, but as bi-sexual beings; *he* represented the male principle in nature; *she*, as mother and wife, the female principle. The *abosom* of Cult Type II are symbolized by the eight-rayed Venus star, which is a combination of the male and female *mberem* or cross; the male cross points to the four cardinal directions of the compass, *nterew-mu*, the whole expanse of the sky (the cross became a solar symbol only at a much later date); the female combines the symbols of the waxing and waning moon () ().² Though the *abosom* retained their *akyeneboa* which gave a clue to their clan origin and continued to represent their *kra*, they acquired additional animals as emblems of their *sunsum*. Tano's *akyeneboa*, for instance, is the *ewio*, the black duiker-antelope (representing night, moon, firmament); but the main animal that expresses his personality is the bush-goat, an emblem of sexuality. Tano's main characteristic, therefore, is his power to arouse the sexual urge in man and beast, and thus stimulate procreation. Further animals personifying Tano are the crocodiles—fierce, destructive and devouring, but fructifying the waters of the Tano river and the catfish, the goddess' children, symbols of fertility. Crocodiles and catfish are fed by the priests at various places on the river Tano.³

The tree symbolic of Tano's *Kra* is the tall palm (moon, *kra*); the tree symbolic of his *sunsum* is the small *nnuonuo*-tree (at Tuo-

¹ Information given by Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III.

² *Sacred State*, Fig. 7, p. 113.

³ *ibid.*, p. 135 and n. 1.

bodom), which flowers when the *ɔbosom* is reborn. Further he-she expresses his-her personality in rice, and also—from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards—in a certain type of yam (*mpo*). Tano, originally no doubt the *ɔbosom* of a clan, became several centuries ago the chief deity of the Fante, and when the Fante settled in Bono-Mansu, was 'rediscovered' in the Bono kingdom. Soon afterwards Tano became acknowledged as the state god-goddess of Bono, and later as the chief deity of Bono-Takyiman which he-she still remains.¹

The earliest state god-goddess of Bono, worshipped until the destruction of the kingdom in 1740, was Ntoa. Ntoa remains the state deity of Wankyi, and Nkoranza, and is also worshipped in several villages of the Bono-Takyiman state. Ntoa, regarded as having been born on a Friday in all towns and villages (except at Seseman-Nkoranza) where he-she is worshipped, has Venus for his-her planet. The *akyeneboa* of Ntoa is no longer known; his-her *sunsum* is expressed in the goat (sex, life), and the dog (death and resurrection). His-her tree is the *nampranee* (*gardenia ternifolia*), which also grows in certain desert regions of the Sudan; moreover, wild yams and, in some places, the tobacco plant, tiger-nuts and the cola-nut are sacred to Ntoa.

The abode, resting place, or shrine, of the Sky-Fertility-*ɔbosom*, like that of the clan *ɔbosom*, was a sacred tree in a grove, at the foot of which meteorites, or pieces of laterite stone, were placed, symbols of the deity's strength, and power to strike from the sky. But sometimes instead of the sacred grove, the sources of rivers or pools, caves or rocks were chosen—for instance: the sacred cave of Taa Kora at Tanoboase; the grotto with its pool sacred to Bonda, in Adanse; the source of the river Tano, sacred to Tanó Twumpuduo, at Tuobodom. Temple huts containing additional shrines may have first made their appearance in that cultural stage.² The shrines are either in the form of a larger and a smaller cone on a circular base (symbolic of the *kra*), respectively female and male, and sometimes joined together; or in the form of a large truncated cone and a square (symbolic of the daily sun) (*ɔbosom* Dame at Nkoranza, see Pl. 41) joined together. Date (or Dente's) shrine is a truncated

¹ *ibid.*, Ch. VIII, 'The State god Tano.'

² There are still *abosom* who have no sanctuaries; for instance, Edinkra at Nkoranza, who is worshipped solely in the sacred grove. Taa Kora, one of the Tano gods worshipped in the cave at Tanoboase, had no temple until about 1810, according to local tradition.

female cone, on the top of which rests a bowl, or basin, filled with water (fertilizing water-male). Tano's shrines usually consist of two brass basins filled with sacred objects symbolic of the bi-sexual deity. Those of Ntoa are two cone-shaped 'drums' (see Pl. 17). Elsewhere the shrines sometimes take the form of two bowls containing 'medicines'. Temple huts containing such shrines still stand within the village or town; whereas the sacred grove with the sacred tree, usually stands outside it, and is reserved for the rites of the New Year festival.



Fig. 6

A mural painting from a deceased priest's house in Wankyi. showing the Nyame cone and the cones, male and female, of a Sky-fertility-deity. Out of the basin of sacred water on top of the cone grows a tree, which here is shown with partly withered leaves; the spade symbol indicates Death, the death of the priest who cared for the obosom.

The Sky-fertility-deities Ntoa and Tano, originally clan gods, now state gods, are regarded as manifestations of the Supreme being, the Moon- and Firmament-goddess, who now also became envisaged as bi-sexual. I call them Sky-fertility-deities because they received their power from the planets and fertilized the earth from the sky. They were manifest in vegetation. They were also 'givers of children' (*Abaama*) but it was *he*, not *she*, who now promoted fertility among the women. The so-called *tuobo* display, in which the women showed their genitalia to the deity, was now made to

the god, and not the goddess. It must have been first officially admitted at that period (though perhaps previously known) that the union of the sexes, was a prerequisite to procreation; for the central rite of the New Year festival ceased to be the death and resurrection of the totem animal and became the sacred marriage of the god and the goddess, with their death and rebirth..

2. *The Divine King, the Son of the Moon Queenmother and Incarnation of a Moon-Sky-Fertility-god*

(a) *The Divine King*

With the advent of Odomankoma, a further development of the queenmother's functions took place in the early states. The office of *Korontihene*, traditionally regarded by the Akan as the most ancient of all government appointments, is likely to have come into being at that time; for the *Korontihene's* duties, like those of Odomankoma, were to act as the queenmother's, later the king's, executive officer and administrator. In effect, he became the actual governor of the state, and the leader of its men. He commanded the army in wartime, though women who had passed the age of childbearing still led the advance guard as warriors. The office often became hereditary, yet could be given to any man, even a foreigner, whom the queenmother, or the king, wished to honour. Thus, when the defeated Fante chief Amoasanka sought refuge in Bono at the head of an armed column, King Afena Yao I (mid-sixteenth century), took a great liking to him and appointed him *Korontihene*, giving him one of his daughters as a wife. Again, when the Denkyira princess Afera Aso, accompanied by a number of her people, settled in Asantemanso, King Obiri Yeboa I of Domaa (ca. 1620) chose her leading elder Adjei Adiko as his *Korontihene*.

The Akan state, always a confederation—originally of clans, later of autonomous states—mirrored the confederation of heavenly bodies known as the 'Upper Kingdom', *osoro ahemman*. This was ruled, at first, by the Lunar Mother-goddess, and at Odomankoma's advent, jointly by her and a young Lunar god, her son; but as their executive officer, Odomankoma administered the heaven from his seat in the Pole-star. On earth, the Lunar queenmother was now similarly associated with a Lunar king, constitutionally regarded as her son, and the *Korontihene* governed in their names. The Lunar god, whose function was celestial fertility, had to adopt an active rôle; his mother, credited with passivity, left all lunar manifesta-

tions in the hands of her son. On earth, the queenmother was required to behave in the same manner, so that the divine king now became responsible for giving life to the state and maintaining its well-being. The king's title, as the son of the Lunar god, was *Sramakomma*, freely translated to me as 'High-born of the Moon'.¹ This title was still in use in the Bono kingdom,² although since the mid-fourteenth century the kings have proclaimed themselves to be born of the Sun.

(b) *The Okra, the Bearer of the King's Kra*

There was a period, before kingship had been introduced, in which the male aspect of the Lunar queenmother was personified by her handsome young lover: either a prisoner of war, or a slave. He personified the Moon *obosom* at the New Year festival and was sacrificed, just like the *akyeneboa*—his flayed skin being afterwards hung on the sacred tree in the grove. The *Apo* rites at Wankyi, described in section II, 3 (b), seem to recall this period.

When a regular *ohene* (king)³ replaced the youth beloved by the queenmother, he suffered death only symbolically, unless there was a time when, as among other ancient peoples, he died at the close of seven, nine, twelve, or nineteen years; but there is no tradition of such a custom among the Akan. The handsome young lover continued to be sacrificed annually, but now as the king's surrogate, or mock-king. In Twi (or Akan), his name is *okra*. (The prefix *o* indicates a person; he personified the kingly *kra*.)

The *okra* was chosen by the queenmother, and he remained attached to her; but the king also chose a woman *okra* to personify his female *kra*, which was derived from Venus, the Sky- and Earth-Fertility-goddess. The king's *okraa* was usually his favourite wife, with whom he performed the sacred marriage at the New Year festival.

During a later period—probably at the time when the kings regarded themselves as sons not of the Moon, but of the Sun, a change took place. The king not only chose an *okraa* wife, but an *okra* boy, a boy he loved deeply; very often he was one of his own

¹ Literally translated: *sram*, a contraction of *srane*, the moon; *akomma*, or *akom-ba* (*mm* is an assimilation of *mb*) means a child (*ba-*) is the state of being possessed (*akom*) by the spirit of a god, here the Moon.

² The Bono king's bedroom, for instance, was referred to as that of *sramakomma* (see p. 87).

³ *Ohene* was the title of the king as ruler over a clan-confederation. The modern title is *Omanhene*: a king ruling a confederation of autonomous states.

sons. He was not sacrificed at the New Year festival, a slave or criminal took his place, but had to die when the king was buried to follow him into the Other World. He was regarded as the most sacred person in the state because he embodied the king's *kra*, and was entitled to all the privileges the king enjoyed. The queen-mother now chose an *ɔkraa*, generally a beautiful young woman of some family that had been adopted into her clan. (Beautiful prisoners of war of both sexes were always incorporated into the royal clan.)

Finally in the seventeenth century, King Akumfi Ameyaw II of Bono (1649-59), created the post of *Akrafohene*, which meant 'chief of the *akrafo*', or *kra* people. The *akrafo* assisted their relative, the *Akrafohene*, to cook the offering made to the royal *kra*, a task which had, hitherto, been consigned to the king's favourite daughters. Moreover, King Akumfi Ameyaw II officialized the *Kra Dware*, or *kra* cleansing ceremony which had, until then, been performed in private and only when the king felt that his life-giving *kra* was losing strength. Although the *Akrafohene*, a leading courtier, deputed for the king in the rites of the New Year festival, the honour of being sacrificed fell as before to some handsome young slave, or criminal.

The female counterpart of the *Akrafohene* was the *Akrafo-ba-panyin*, literally 'kra elder woman', who similarly served the queenmother.

At what period the deceased kings were each given an *ɔkraa* wife is no longer remembered at Takyiman. These lived secluded in the grounds of the Royal Mausoleum,¹ and were usually the descendants of noblewomen captured in war. The deceased queen-mothers of Bono had their male *ɔkra*, of which nothing is remembered except that they had the same rôle as the deceased king's *ɔkraa*.

The most sacred persons in the state, next to the queenmother and king, were the bearers of their respective *kra*. Unwitting offenders, and even criminals, could run to take sanctuary with them and, once having taken hold of their garments, had to be pardoned. The *ɔkra* and *ɔkraa* (or the *Akrafohene* and the *Akrafo-ba-panyin*), ate the same food as the king and the queenmother; and were once similarly fattened to make them resemble the full

¹ R. S. Rattray, for details in *Religion and Art in Ashanti*, 1927, p. 119, and *Sacred State*, p. 182 and n. 2.

moon.¹ When royal food taboos were introduced with the *ntoro* cult (Cult Type IV), the bearers of the king's and queenmother's *kra*, and their assistant *akrafo*, were also obliged to observe these.

(c) *The Osɔfo Panyin, the High Priest*

As soon as the queenmothers began to share their rule with kings, the elder women of the clans likewise elected their brothers or nephews as clan chiefs to take over many of their duties. These clan

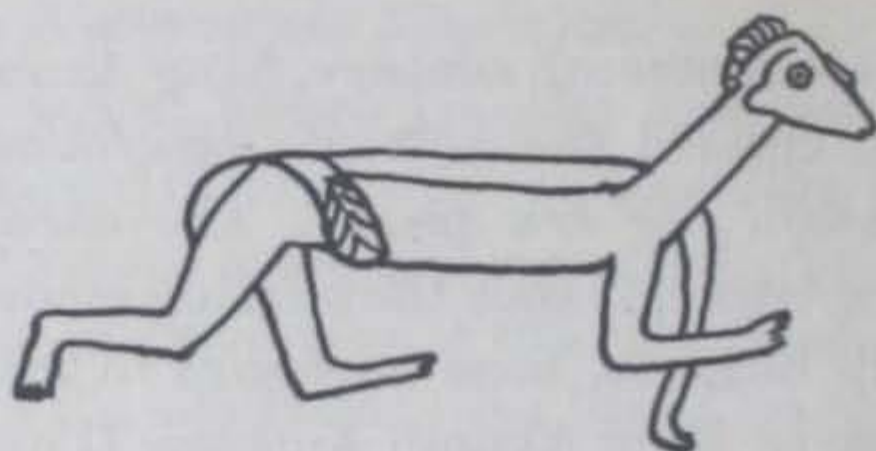


Fig. 7

Gold weight showing a creature with a body and face which is half antelope half man. The antelope represents the ɔbosom; the man, the ɔkra or king who personifies the ɔbosom on New Year's day.

chiefs, like the king, were regarded as the incarnation of their clan *ɔbosom*, and acted as the high priests of the cult.

Originally the *ɔbosom* of the royal clan was also the god of the state. In later times the god of another clan might be elected, either because this clan was numerically stronger, or because its *ɔbosom* had greater repute; in which case, its priest became the high priest of the state. Thus, Buruku-Biakuru, the god of the royal clan of the founders of the Bono kingdom, was not elected state god, but Ntoa, the *ɔbosom* of the numerically strongest clan. Then, about A.D. 1595, the Mande defeated the Bono; Ntoa was made partly responsible for the disaster and fell in disgrace. Tano, the *ɔbosom* of the Fante settled at Bono-Mansu some fifty years previously, usurped Ntoa's royal honours.

The high priests, *ɔsɔ* or *ɔsɔfo panyin*, were, and still are in many cases, descendants of the woman reputed to have given birth

¹ According to the traditions at Takyiman, the queenmothers of Bono were fattened to such an extent that, after three years, they were almost unable to walk by themselves. They were expected to sleep on the roofs of their palaces when the moon was full; but this custom had to be discontinued when they became too fat to climb there.



7. Nana Kwabena Ankemako, High-priest of Ntoa at Seseman-Nkoranza.



8. The Ntoahene of Kokoman Nana Kofi Anane, a matrilineal descendant of the high-priests of Ntoa of Bono-Mansu.



9. Nana Kwabena Saben, priest of Edinkra in the sacred grove of the god at Nkoranza.



10. An *ɔkɔmfo* priest sacrifices an egg by throwing it against the sacred tree of the god. He carries the shrine of the deity on his head.

to an *ɔbosom*, the high-priestly succession being in the female line. The present high priest of Taa Kɛse (Tano the Great) at Takyiman, a successor of Ameyaw who established the worship of this deity, is descended from the Fante Queenmother Takyiwaa, who gave life to Tano in the Bono kingdom. The present Tuobodomhene, a reigning priest and high priest of Tano Twumpuduo, is descended from Anaa (Sirew Nkromaa), to whom this god revealed himself when she was in a seven-day trance. The present Tanosuhene, reigning priest chief and high priest of Ati Kosie at Tanosu, is descended from Ameyaa Ampofi who gave birth to this *ɔbosom*, as described in section I (f). The duties of an *ɔɔfo panyin* were, and still to a large extent remain, those of the reigning princess, his predecessor. Her place was taken, as in Tanosu, by a woman, descended like the high priest from the same ancestress, but she is a priestess without political rights. In Takyiman she enjoys the title of 'Mother of the God', and is the keeper of his ritual; and, in Tuobodom, the Tuobodomhemmaa, the Queenmother, has charge of the rites connected with the divine ancestress and the rain-making ceremonies are performed by her, and not by the Tuobodomhene, the *ɔɔfo panyin*.

(d) *The ɔkɔmfo Priest and the ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*

A stanza given on the *ntumpane*, the talking drums, runs: 'Odomankoma, after he created Death, created the *ɔkɔmfo*'—the prophetic priest or priestess. This records a historical fact, since priests of *abosom* whose rites belong predominantly to Cult Type I—for instance Edinkra at Nkoranza, and Kodu Asare at Offuman—send worshippers who wish to consult an oracle (*nkɔm*), to the *ɔkɔmfo* of an *ɔbosom* whose rites belong to Cult Type II—in these cases either to Ntoa at Nkoranza, or to Offuman, or to one or the other of the Tano gods.¹

The *ɔkɔmfo* is able to prophesy the future by putting himself into an ecstatic trance, which expresses itself in dancing and wild gestures (see Pls. 15, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25). He is then possessed, not by the *kra* of the *ɔbosom*, like a queenmother when she wished to give life, but by the *saman*, the departed spirit of the annually dying god.²

¹ Information given me by the priest of Edinkra, Nana Kwabina Saben and the Offumanhene Nana Gyamfi II.

² Finding it impossible to get any rational explanation on this subject from the *akɔmfo* priests, I have deduced the contents of this paragraph from a number of facts and explanations given me in other contexts.

The *saman* appears in the likeness of the deceased; that is, as a shadow or reflexion of his personality, with all its experience. The *samanfo* (plural of *saman*) spirits live in the *samandow*, the Other-world, originally imagined as situated in the outer region beyond the Heavens, the Milky Way leading to it. That 'Odomankoma created Death' implies his creation of the *samandow* and the concept of *saman*.

If an *ɔɔfo panyin* of Cult Type II is not subject to trances, and therefore unable either to personify the deity in a ritual, or to prophesy the future, he employs an *ɔkɔmfo*. The present high priest of Taa Kɛse at Takyiman and the high priest of Tano Twumpuduo, being, as it happens, both subject to trances, are called *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*. But the *ɔɔfo-panyin* of Taa Kora at Tanoboase, and of Tanosu, for example, use *ɔkɔmfo* as their deputies. The *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, or the *ɔkɔmfo* of an *ɔɔfo*, foretells the future or renders oracles only for the state and its rulers, namely the King, the Queen-mother, and high-ranking elders. Ordinary people have their future foretold by *ɔkɔmfo* priests and priestesses of minor deities, usually by the *nsuoya* method, or by throwing lots.

The *nsuoya* method demands a brass basin filled with water from the river sacred to the *ɔbosom*, crushed leaves, and eggs broken over it. When an *ɔkɔmfo* priestess stirs the brew, the god appears to her and she can predict the future. *ɔkɔmfo* priests usually read the omens from tiny replicas of hoes, axes and stone celts which are fished with a wooden spoon out of the *nsuoya* pot by the consultant.

Odomankoma is credited with having introduced the *abrafo* into the cult of the Sky-fertility-*ɔbosom*. The *abrafo*'s duties are those of a master of ceremonies, as the name shows: *a* is the plural prefix; *bra* means 'conduct' or 'behaviour'; *fo* means 'people'—thus people [who regulate] conduct [at a ceremony].¹ When, on festival days, male and female *akɔmfo* go into trances and identify themselves with the deity as 'Giver of Life or Death',² they frequently

¹ *Abrafo*, or *Brafo Tiri*, meaning 'head of the [a]brafo', as mentioned in the stanza which credits Odomankoma with the creation of the *Brafo tiri*, has been translated by R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti*, 1923, pp. 272 and 282, as 'Chief Executioner'. J. B. Danquah does the same in his *Akan Doctrine of God*, p. 70. Neither writer appears to have known that the *abrafo* originally were the masters of ceremony of the gods and recitation priests, long before they became the masters of ceremony of human sacrifice and thus classed with the *adumfo*, or executioners.

² The knife, dagger, or sword here has become a substitute for the arrow of the Lunar Mother-goddess, who shot the life-giving rays of the *kra* into the universe, or dispensed death with it. Pls. 22 and 24 shows armed priestesses.

behave in a dangerous manner by throwing knives, daggers, or small ceremonial swords among the public; or fall into a stupor and have to be carried away. Female *akomfo* sometimes behave indecorously, and again it is the *abrafo*'s duty to calm them down or lead them off (Pl. 20). The *abrafo* also sing the praises of the *obosom* when a high priest makes the offerings (Pl. 30).

3. *The New Year Festival*

(a) *Summary of Main Points*

Many different rituals in honour of the deities Tano and Ntoa are still performed in the old Bono country during the *Apo* (*Apuo*), the New Year Spring festival. Local variations often reflect changes in the religious dogma of fertility. For instance, the *Apo* celebrated at Wankyi (Ntoa), described in section 3 (b), apparently belongs to the period of Early Cult Type II; the *Apo* at Asueyi (Ntoa), and the *Apo* at Kuntunso (Tano), despite their differences, to the period of Late Cult Type II; that at Takyiman (Tano) to the period of Cult Type III; that at Seseman-Nkoranza (Ntoa), to the period of Cult Type IV. The *Apo* at Wankyi still revolves entirely around the women; that at Seseman-Nkoranza entirely around the men. This demonstrates a remarkable shift in the conception of fertility, which was first ascribed to the woman as mother, later to the man as procreator.

Early Cult Type II. At Wankyi, the *Apo* is concerned exclusively with the Queenmother and the women in the state. The Queenmother's partner was formerly a handsome youth (*okra*), who, impersonating the god Ntoa, was sacrificed in the sacred grove. The 'reborn god' performed a sacred marriage with the goddess Ntoa, impersonated by the Queenmother, in her Venus aspect if she was young enough, or if not, by her deputy—a sister, daughter, or niece—so that the male and female *kra* and *sunsum*, united, might assure the fertility of the earth in the year that followed.

Late Cult Type II. At Asueyi, the central figure in the *Apo* rites is the *akomfo* priest, the spokesman or proxy of the village chief. He suffers death, even if only symbolically, in the sacred grove while impersonating the god Ntoa. As the 'reborn god', the *akomfo* is brought by the people to the village sanctuary with a wreath of flowers around his neck (Pl. 17). There, in sight of the people, the sacred marriage takes place, though again only symbolically, between him and a young girl of the village queen-

mother's lineage. All women who want children go before the god's shrine and display their genitalia (the *tuobo* custom) in order to conceive.

At Kuntunso, all the rites with which we are here concerned take place in the courtyard of the sanctuary of Taa Kuntun ('Tano the Hyena'). The death and rebirth of this bi-sexual deity is enacted by a priestess (*ɔkɔmfo*) in male dress (Pl. 21). Women chant elegies for Tano, and rejoice at his resurrection. The sacred marriage was formerly indicated here by the *tuobo* custom.

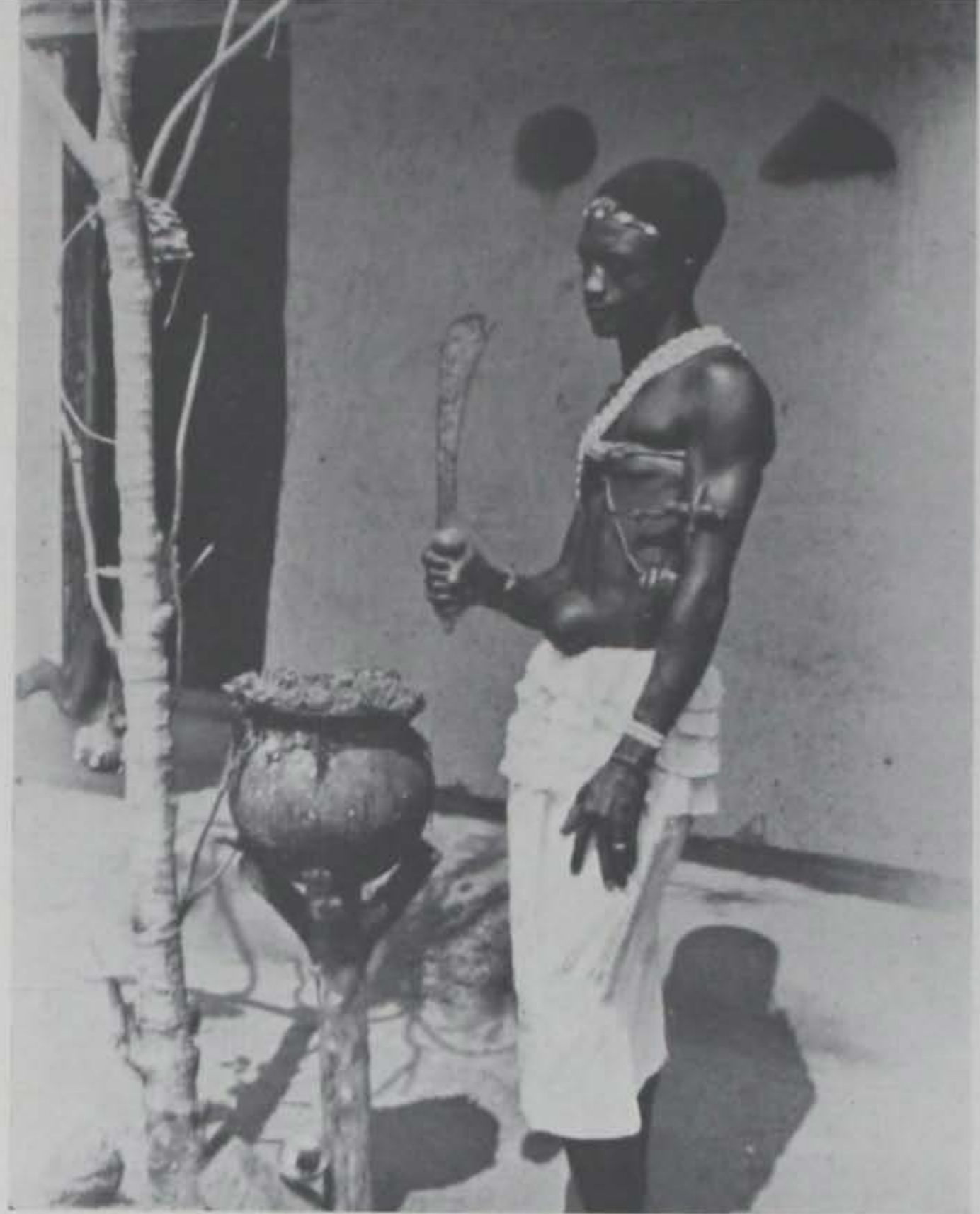
At Offuman, the full rites ceased to be celebrated after the fall of the Bono kingdom, when the yams and the gold dust which had hitherto been offered by the *Bonohene* (King of Bono) could no longer be sent. The shrine of Ntoa is now taken to a sacred place in the bush, called *Asram*, while drums are beaten and guns are fired, as though a funeral were taking place—a reference to Ntoa's death. His rebirth is indicated by the name of the place: *Asram*, 'moon' (*srane*, contracted to *sram*, with prefix *a* used for other meanings). The Offumanhene, Nana Gyamfi II, said of Ntoa the goddess: 'And there she mourns, because she says that she cannot get what she was given in the past'—i.e. the sacred marriage; and the offerings of first fruits (yams) symbolizing her female procreative power; and gold dust (gold is a solar metal), symbolizing her male procreative power.

Cult Type III. At Takyiman, the capital of the Bono-Takyiman state, two New Year days are celebrated: one in Spring, *Apo*, and the other, *Aferihyia Dwaree*, in Autumn, on the day of the autumnal equinox. The *Apo* no longer exclusively celebrates Tano (Taa Kɛse), the state god; the greatest honour is paid to Kwaakye Ameyaw, last King of Bono, and ancestor of the reigning Bono-Takyimanhene. Tano's death is indicated by his confinement in the sanctuary: he had to prepare himself for his purification, and his rebirth. The so-called *bo me tuo* custom performed is on *Fɔ Dwɔɔ*, 'Fertile Monday', when the shrine is taken out of the sanctuary and carried three times from one end of the town to the other: young men are then allowed to approach young girls and ask them to show themselves naked to them. This meant that the young men wished to be revived by the sight; the young girls here personifying the Lunar Mother-goddess.

On the Autumn New Year day (*Aferihyia Dwaree*), described in Ch. III, 3, the King, that is to say the Bono-Takyimanhene,



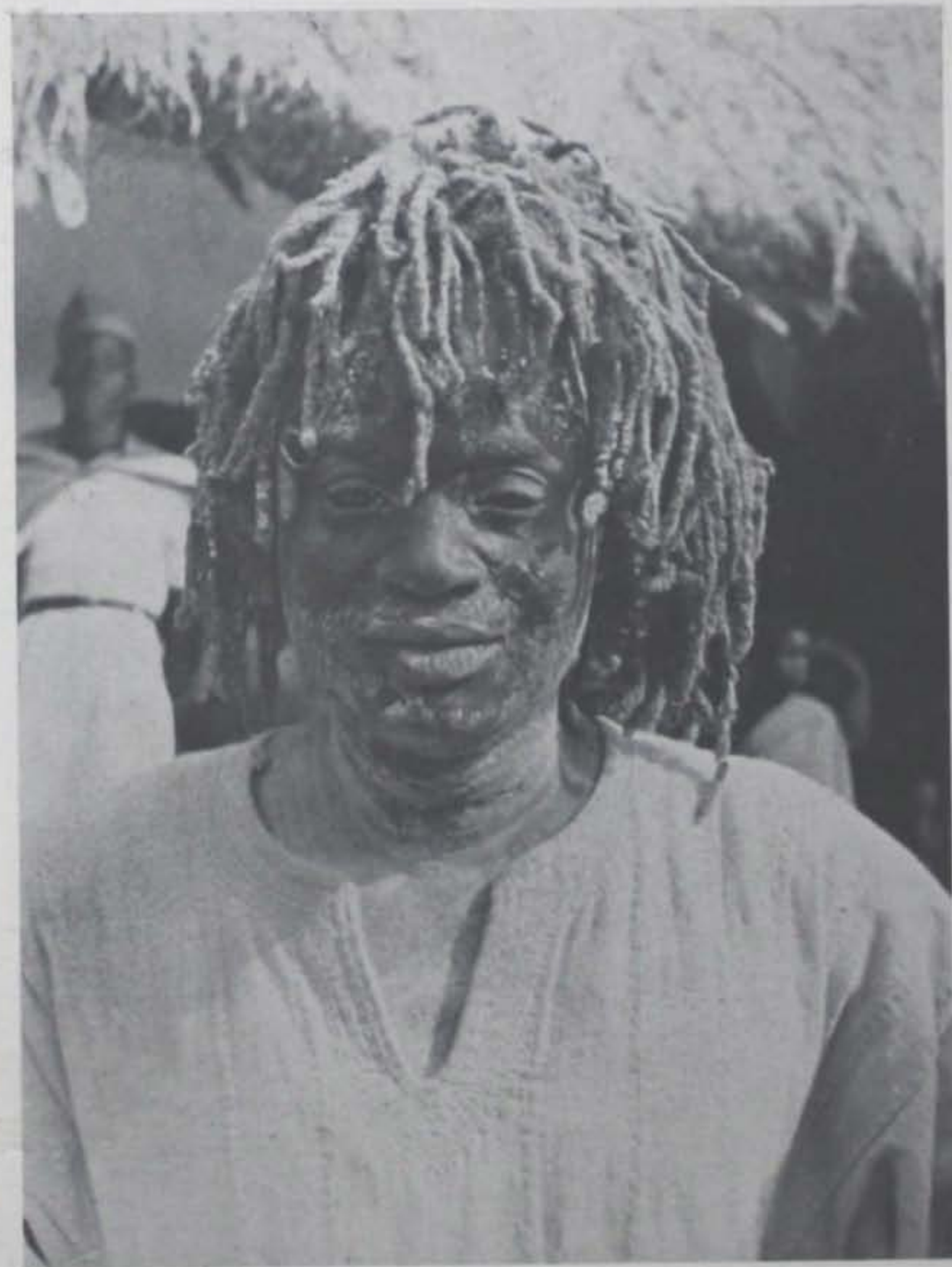
11. The Priest chief of Kuntunso performing a rite before the sanctuary of Taa Kun.



12. The priest Nana Kofi Wusu of Krobo. He stands in front of the shrine of his god Afera Kofi, which is a pot containing sacred water and other ingredients, and resting on a *Nyame Dua* post. On the left is the sacred tree of the god.



13. *Okomfo* priest serving the *abosom* Afua Keranka.



14. *Okomfo* priest serving Taa Kofi at Taa Kofiano.

personifying the Solar god, suffers death symbolically. He is then reborn, and performs the sacred marriage with his senior wife, who here incarnates the Sky- and Earth-Fertility-goddess—the queen-mother's Venus aspect—and not with his most beloved wife, as is still the rule in various parts of Asante.

Cult Type IV. At Seseman-Nkoranza, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, or high priest of Ntoa, impersonating the god, suffers death symbolically (in ancient days, a criminal actually died on his behalf), together with the human sons of the god—namely, boys born on the day of the week sacred to Ntoa, or by his help. All are assisted in the rebirth ritual by the Moon queenmother of the Nkoranza state; and this takes place by night on the bank of the god's sacred stream. The sacred marriage was formerly indicated by the *tuobo* custom and (possibly) by the sacred marriage of the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* with a girl descended from the founders of Seseman village. The ancestors of the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, and those of the chiefs of Seseman, both came from Diuman, a town in the former Bono kingdom destroyed in 1740. ✓

(b) *Death and Resurrection of Ntoa at Wankyi*

The Wankyi state was founded in the middle of the seventeenth century by refugees from Beoo, capital of the Banda kingdom,¹ and situated some 70 or 80 miles from the earlier town of Bono-Mansu. The queenmother who gave life to this state was posthumously awarded the title *Asaase-boa-ode-nsee*, meaning 'scarab'; because, like the winged beetle, she came with her people out of the darkness of the earth into the light to start a new existence. Her *ɔbosom* was the former state god of Banda, Ntoa. To this day, the *Apo* (or *Apuo*) festival is performed annually at Wankyi, the capital, in honour of the Wankyi queenmothers and Ntoa; though the state was not founded there, but in a cave at the source of the river Bonsuaa.

*The Apo Festival.*² On a *Fɔ-Yawoɔ*, or 'Fertile Thursday', of the *Adaduanan* calendar,³ two *abrafo*, masters of ceremony, with

¹ See the author's *Akan Traditions of Origin*, Ch. II.

² Described in slightly greater detail in *The Sacred State*, p. 156 *et passim*; but the references to the former personification of the dying and resurrected god are new. These rites are secret, and I acquired the information about Ntoa and his brides piecemeal and with difficulty, by asking questions not too obviously related to the festival. Thus, when I wrote *The Sacred State*, my ideas on the subject were not fully clarified, and I did not venture to speak in terms of a dying and resurrected god. It has since also been pointed out to me that the name 'Ntoa' should be so spelled, and not 'Ntowa' (as in *The Sacred State*), although that is how it is spoken.

³ For the *Adaduanan* Calendar, see *The Sacred State*, p. 143 *et passim*.

their attendants, thrust palm-branches into the interstices between the wall and thatched roof of Ntoa's sanctuary to prevent all light from entering; and bar the door. At the same time the townsfolk are told that during an entire week no light may be shown in the god's territory, nor any noise made; because Ntoa is expected to enter his shrine during the night and will wish to sleep and prepare himself for purification—that is to say, for his death and rebirth.

One week later, the sanctuary door is ceremonially opened by the *abrafo* in the presence of the Queenmother, the Wankyihene, and the high-ranking state elders. The *abrafo* enter the sanctuary alone, to perform the necessary rites, but report their progress from time to time to those waiting outside. A bullock is then sacrificed before the door, and each person present receives a portion of the flesh; the god's portion is sent into the sanctuary, together with some wild yams, to be offered to him during the night. When the *abrafo* have finished praising Ntoa, they invoke the spirits (*kra*) of the Queenmother's and King's ancestors, and then take up the *nkɔtɔbaa*¹—emblems of the authority wielded by the first Queenmother and by the son who succeeded her. They lift these rods into the air and strike the ground with them three times. The shrine of the god is then brought out, and his sacred drum beaten. This is the signal for general rejoicing, drumming, and dancing, which continue throughout the night.

On the following morning—which is *Nkyi-Fie*, or 'Destructive Friday'—a ram is sacrificed by the Wankyihene, and the Queenmother, and those heads of the royal house of Yefri who are lineally descended from the four children of the first queenmother. The animal's flesh is shared between them for subsequent eating, a libation is poured to the gods of the state and the royal ancestors, and prayers are said for the well-being of the people. At the same time a libation is poured in every household of the town; this being the great annual festival of the *abosom* and of the departed spirits.

In ancient times, the Queenmother's *akra* was then carried to the sacred grove (*kanianko*) and sacrificed; his skin being hung on the sacred tree to be subsequently used as a cover for the drum of Ntoa,

¹ I was unable to get a description of these, but they may have resembled the ones used by young boys and men in the rites of Ntoa at Asueyi (see Pl. 19), namely knotty branches cut from sacred trees—the emblems of authority of the ancestors or village lineage heads.

called 'the voice of the god'. Today, the cloth, the native garment of a suicide is used. The ram, mentioned above, whose flesh is eaten on this 'great annual feast of the god', is a substitute for the *akyeneboa*; so that the meal should be regarded as a totem meal.

From the preceding night until the following *Nkyi-Yawoo*, or 'Destructive Thursday', the two *abrafo* and their attendants remain in the sanctuary and leave it only in the evenings when drumming, dancing and singing have begun in the streets. They then rush out, bearing the ancient *nkotobaa*, of the first queen-mother and first king, raise them high above their heads and, accompanied by young men and boys carrying the rods of their ancestors, run three times from the sanctuary to 'the end of the town', calling upon the people to dance more vigorously—because such dancing is thought to please Ntoa, by stimulating the sexual urge in men. During their week's confinement in the sanctuary, the *abrafo* and their attendants are fed by the Queenmother; and every noble child in town is allowed to visit them and share their meals. Throughout the week the Queenmother sits before her palace, receiving the girls and women from the town and surrounding villages, who sing ancient songs, and dance to the sound of their rattles.

'Destructive Thursday' is the day when everybody is permitted to discharge his pent-up resentment in free abuse. Early in the morning the Queenmother, with her girls, princesses, and others of her clan, walks in procession past Ntoa's sanctuary, without taking any notice of the *abrafo* and their attendants, who are seated in a semicircle before the door. They pass through the town, singing provocative songs and shaking their rattles, and thus license the people to begin the traditional vituperations. Then the Queenmother, who wields such great power, receives a volley of insults from the women who close in and reproach her bitterly for all the bad things she is thought to have done during the year.

Finally, when the Queenmother is able to extricate herself from this ordeal, she returns to her house and dresses two beautiful girls, or young women—a princess and a commoner. In former days the queenmother herself, if she was young, took the place of the princess; and the commoner was chosen each year from the leading family of a different clan. She gives both of them garments of the finest cloth, with a gold necklace, bracelets, and other trinkets, and ties a handkerchief filled with gold dust to their wrists. Then she

takes them to Ntoa's sanctuary, where they are stripped of all their new finery and their naked bodies striped with grease. Powdered gold is then poured on the grease stripes, and adheres to it, so that each girl has a large cross of gold on her stomach, four bands of gold encircling her genitalia, and four more running across her thighs just above the knees. The inside of their thighs is entirely covered with gold dust. Then the Queenmother addresses the god, and offers him the girls as his brides.

Until recently, two strong young men, also selected by the Queenmother, entered the sanctuary at this stage; each slung a girl across his shoulder and walked slowly out, through the main street to the other 'end of the town'. The street was crowded with men, women, and children lined up to watch the procession and touch the girls' genitalia as they were carried past them—one on either side of the street. This was done to secure ample rainfall for the crops, and so promote the fertility of men and beasts in the coming year. Later, the girls are carried back to the Queenmother's house, refreshed with drink, and dressed again.

Between six and seven in the evening the *Akyeamehene*, or chief of the royal spokesmen, posts himself in the middle of the main street and, raising a leopard skin on his ancient staff, blesses the state and its women. Surrounded by the women of Wankyi, he prays for a long life to be granted the queenmother, for ample rainfall and plentiful crops, and for the fertility of women and beasts. At ten o'clock in the evening, Ntoa's drum is beaten and the Queenmother, the Wankyihene, and all the more important persons in the state gather again in front of the god's sanctuary for the blessing of the ancient golden stools, the black stools of the royal ancestral spirits and, above all, the precious bead-stool of the first queenmother—symbol of their national unity. Guns are fired when Ntoa's shrine is carried out by the *abrafo*. The attendants then collect eggs from the Queenmother, the Wankyihene, and the high-ranking elders, each of whom has brought two, and these are given to the god as a thank-offering. The prayers for the well-being of the state, for the queenmother's life, for the fertility of women and beasts, and for a plentiful harvest, are then reiterated. Ntoa is now joined by the War-god Gyansu, whose shrine has been brought from the sanctuary; and by all the other gods of the state. The priests (*akomfo*) of the various gods, falling in trances, utter prophecies; and the *abrafo* predict the rainfall for the coming year.

Between two and three o'clock in the morning—the day being *Kuru-Fie*, or 'Most Sacred or Exalted Friday', and Ntoa's birthday—the god's shrine and the great stools of state are taken to the sacred river for purification; and since this rite must be conducted in secret, people who try to follow are chased away by the *abrafo*'s attendants. In the past, the *abrafo* and stool-carriers were accompanied only by the two girls—brides of Ntoa—and a representative of the Queenmother, who had to see that the rites were properly executed. After the purification of the stools, and the blessing or cleansing of the girls, Ntoa was invoked in the sacred grove 'to come forth'. The sacred marriage was then performed between the man who personified the god and the two girls—who afterwards returned to the Queenmother, while the *abrafo* finished the ceremony by burning *asera* (tobacco) leaves. As the smoke rose into the air, the blowing of the state horns signalled the completion of the *Apo* rites.

(c) *The Death and Resurrection of Ntoa at Asueyi*

Asueyi, a village some miles from Takyiman, was founded by Fa Kosakori, a chief of the Asin-Aboade clan, last *Gyaasehene* (Chief of the royal household) of the Bono kingdom, and his sister, some ten years after the destruction of Bono. Asueyi remained the family residence until 1896, when the then ruling clan chief, Gyaako II, Bono-Takyiman's *Gyaasehene*, and his sister, the *Gyaase-ba-panyin* ('Head of the Queenmother's household') moved to Takyiman. The two Asueyi stools were then given to younger members of the family, who became the village's Asueyihene and Asueyihemmaa. The annual *Apo* festival is celebrated at Asueyi earlier in the year than at Takyiman in order to give the people a chance of attending both festivals.

The rites begin around two o'clock in the afternoon on a *Kwa*, or 'open' Friday, in October, when Ntoa's shrines—a large male and a small female cone (see Pl. 17)—are taken from the sanctuary by the *ɔkɔmfo* priest, the Asueyihene's proxy, and placed on mats under Ntoa's tree close to the entrance door of the building. This is done in the presence of the Asueyihene, the Asueyihemmaa, the elders, and villagers to the beating of Ntoa's drum. The people who have gathered then begin to drum and dance; later in the day, the *ɔkɔmfo* himself dances with the male and female shrine of the god alternately placed on his head. Finally, while carrying the male



shrine, he is possessed by Ntoa's spirit and foretells future events in a trance. The shrines are then carried into the sanctuary by the *asuanifo* ('learners' or 'disciples'), and bathed in the blood of a sacrificed chicken. At nightfall, Ntoa is ceremonially fed with wild yams and boiled chicken, while the *abrafo*, or master of ceremony, sings his praises.

On the *Fɔ*, or 'Fertile' Friday, a fortnight later, the shrines are taken out again and placed before the sanctuary; then drums are beaten the whole day long. In the evening, the shrines are taken inside and, as at Wankyi, the people are warned to keep silent because Ntoa is expected to enter his shrine during the night in order to sleep and prepare himself for purification. No light is allowed to enter the sanctuary; and branches of the *nampranee* tree are stuck into the interstices between the thatched roof and the wall to prevent all light from entering. Branches of the same tree bar the door from the inside.

One week later, on a *Nwona*, 'Protected' or 'Shielded' Friday, the Asueyihene, his elders, and other important men in the village, bring their mats and pillows, and sleep around the sanctuary in order to protect the god, now envisaged as old and powerless. The young men meanwhile roam through the streets to catch all the chickens and steal all the yams that they can lay their hands on; and bring them to the priest. The chickens must be caught without violence, like the *akyeneboa*; and even the yams are said to be 'caught'. At dead of night Ntoa's drum is beaten; everybody gathers around the *ɔkɔmfo*, and the door of the sanctuary opens. The shrines are carried out and placed on mats; after which the *ɔkɔmfo* pours a libation, says a prayer for the well-being of the people, and sacrifices a chicken over the shrines. The chickens are then given to Ntoa's cook for boiling, and are later eaten, with the yams, at a ceremonial meal; a portion being offered to Ntoa. The assembled people chant hymns until sunrise. From time to time, young men and boys from the leading families of Asueyi arm themselves with the *nkɔtɔbaa*, the ceremonial rods of their ancestors (Pl. 19) and, raising them high into the air, run three times along the main road from one end of the village to the other. There is also drumming and dancing. This procedure is repeated every night, until the following *Nkyi*, or 'Destructive' Friday, when proceedings begin in the afternoon with the customary abuse, as at Wankyi. After nightfall, Ntoa's shrines are taken to the sacred grove and left there.



15. *Okomfo* priest in a trance.



16. *Okomfo* priestess of Taa Kɛse.



17. The *ɔkɔmfo* priest carrying the shrine of Ntoa on his head after the rebirth of the god. At the back is the sanctuary with the sacred tree. *Apo* festival at Asueyi.



18. The *ɔkɔmfo* of Ntoa with a woman in a trance, personifying the goddess Ntoa.



19. Men and boys carrying the *nkotobaa* during the *Apo* festival at Asueyi.



20. *Okomfo* priestess in a trance being restrained by an *obrafo* priest. Seized by the spirit of the *obosom* she had thrown a knife into the crowd.



21. *Okomfo* priestess personifying the aged god Taa Kuntun (Tano) at Kuntunso during the *Apo* festival.



22. *Okomfo* priestess with the ceremonial sword.

About two o'clock in the afternoon on the next *Kuru*, or 'Most Sacred Friday', the birthday of the god, the people gather at the entrance to the grove to fetch Ntoa home.¹ The secret of the rites that took place in the grove were not revealed to me; but it is known that the *ayere ye* rite had been performed, that is to say, the shrines were 'mended'. *Ayere ye*, literally translated, means 'to stretch or distend the skin', namely that of the totem animal or its human substitute, a reference to the death and rebirth of the god, the renewal of his power. When the crowd gathers at the entrance of the grove, the *ɔkɔmfo*, his body painted white, a wreath on his head, and fresh, green leaves about his neck, stands with the male shrine placed on his head—thus incarnating the reborn god. Two large tail-feathers from a sacrificed chicken (presumably from the chicken used as a substitute for the *akyeneboa*) are stuck into the shrine. The *ɔkɔmfo* is accompanied by the Asueyihene, the Asueyihemmaa, and the Asueyihene's *ɔkyeame*, or spokesman, who has been placed in charge of the god. After a while, the shrine is taken from the *ɔkɔmfo* and set on a mat under Ntoa's sacred tree in the grove; whereupon the female shrine, also decorated with two feathers, is then placed upon his head.

Finally a libation is poured out; and four strong young men, *asuanifo* take the shrines by the handles, two for each shrine, and run with them as fast as they can, twirling them round all the time, and going wherever the deity inspires them to go. At last the shrines reach the sanctuary, where they are set on a mat, but taken up again several times by the *asuanifo* whenever the deity gives these the order. Then the *ɔkɔmfo* carries the male shrine on his head for as long as he can support its heavy weight. A young woman of the Asueyihemmaa's lineage, who has fallen into a trance, and is now possessed by the goddess Ntoa, keeps close to him, though occasionally she wanders off as though in search of something. After a longer absence than usual, she returns and kneels before the male shrine which has just been taken off the *ɔkɔmfo*'s head. Then both he and she have a line of white clay drawn across their foreheads (symbol of their sacred union—see Pl. 18), to sanctify them. The talking drums, loud in the praise of Ntoa, are beaten almost all the time; women accompany them with their rattles and sing *Apo* songs; some of them dance. Later, in the afternoon, men and boys

¹ The grove formerly was purified, for when a priest was dying, he had himself crucified with staples to one of the trees; his body had to be removed.

arrive with their ancestors' ceremonial *nkɔtɔbaa* lift them three times into the air, beat the ground three times, then run with them three times from one end of the village to the other. At nightfall they make another run, while the *ɔkɔmfo*, with the male shrine of the god set upon his head, slowly walks to the main road of the village and pauses before the houses of the Asueyihene, the Asueyihemmaa, the elders, and other important people, to predict the future, the good with the bad, for the coming year. A woman holding a pot filled with water awaits him in front of each house. This he quickly overturns, so that the water is spilled, and throws an egg into the bottom of the pot. If the breach in the egg-shell fails to face the sky, misfortune will come to the house and, in order to avert evil, the head of the household must sacrifice a sheep to Ntoa on one of the following days. Then the shrine of Ntoa is carried back to the sanctuary.

Next morning, the *Gyaasehene*, the *Gyaase-ba-panyin* from Takyiman, the Asueyihene, the Asueyihemmaa, the elders, and all the people, dressed in their best, gather before Ntoa's sanctuary with an offering of eggs. The *abrafo* open the door, and when the shrines have been carried out again by the *asuanifo* and set on mats, a libation is poured by the *ɔkɔmfo*. Women who are anxious to have children then step forward and approach the god. While two women hold a length of cloth behind them so that they are visible only to the god, they display their genitalia, in the *tuobo* custom. Meanwhile the women standing around shake their rattles and chant sacred hymns. Some men dance to the sound of drums; others grind *asera* leaves (tobacco), which are later offered to Ntoa. The Asueyihene's spokesman then raises his ancient rod and says the prayer for the well-being of the state, the village, and its people. He prays for rain, the fertility of women and beasts, and for a plentiful harvest. When he has finished his prayer, he pours a libation of palm-wine, after which the *ɔkɔmfo* carries back the shrines, the door is closed, and the *Apo* is at an end.

(d) *The Death and Rebirth of Taa Kuntun at Kuntunso*

At Kuntunso, a small village about five miles south of Takyiman, the deity worshipped is Taa Kuntun ('Tano the Hyena'). The festival (*afahyia*), the main day of which I witnessed on 'Great Sacred Monday' (*Fɔ-Dwoɔ-Kɛse*), took place in February.

On the previous Friday some four hundred people from Kun-

tunso and the neighbouring villages, worshippers of the god, had gathered in the courtyard of Taa Kuntun's sanctuary, ready to go to the clay wells (Tano *kyirem*) on the outskirts of the village. The following is the ritual. A mass procession forms; and the people chant as they walk to the wells:

Osee yei, yeeyei Tano Kuntun
Adwoa afe ano ahwyia,
yerepe yeanya o, o, o,
yenya a yebe di o Duduu.

[*Osee yei, yeeyei Tano Kuntun*
*Adwoa, * the yearly festival, has come round again*
We are all happy, O, O, O,
We are expecting the New Year.]

* 'She of the Moon' a reference to the woman, who gave birth to the god.

On their arrival at the wells, the prophetic high priest, *asfo* *akomfo*, pours a libation, and makes a small offering of eggs and mashed yams (*eto*). Then lumps of clay are dug, and the people return with them to Taa Kuntun's sanctuary. His high priest then carries out the god's shrine and sets in on a low dais in the courtyard. Thereupon he sings the first *dapaa* songs, which are taboo at any other time because they refer to the coming death of the god:

Kae me dabi wo
bekae me wo bekae eno.
Gyam bibi hye
wuda dabi wo bekae me.

Ahia ne nee Kuntun Nsonsowoo Kodjo
ahia mena me nye den,
ahia me, ooo
Kuntun, eee.

Asamoa de neho aba eei
otwie a ode ne ho, oo.

Okra Nyamewa Bosompema
akom mye kom na,
na akyire asem.

Akokotan banee na yea ye wo dee sa;
waka wo ma agu wakyi na
wo soso wo mfema akokotan ei
na yea ye wo dee sa.

THE VENUS CULT (CULT TYPE II)

[Remember me some time
As you remember your mother.
Great and forceful, you will
Remember me on the day of your death.

I need you, Kuntun Nsonsowo Kodjo, *
I need you, and what shall I do?
I need you, O, O, O,
Kuntun, eeh!

Cat † now presents himself to you,
Who like the leopard has kept himself apart, O, O!

Small son of Nyame's *kra*, there are thousands of gods.
To be a priest is not difficult but,
A vocation is.

The hen that beats another's chicken
Beats you too; you should treat
Others as you treat your own.]

* Born of the Moon. † A title of Tano.

The song before the closing of the ceremony runs:

Enowa Kodjo bra zhehe Kodjo bri.
Zhene nante brew, dono ee,
Adwoa Boakye ba, Kodjo
merefri Kodjo hene ba Dono ee,
Ɔdɔnkɔ oni bi ose orefare
akom, dono ee,
oni amma no anu kɔm
ose ama no anukrom dono, ee.

[Little Mother, Kodjo King Kodjo be born anew!
A king walks carefully, *dono ee*, *
Son of Adwoa Boakye, † Kodjo,
I am going, King Kodjo, *dono ee*,
A slave who has nobody to care for
Him, says: *dono ee*
That he wishes to become a priest.]

* *Dono*, an hourglass-shaped drum used by the women. In outline the drum shows the two triangles that meet at the apex, the symbol of the bisexual Mother-goddess as ruler of the Sky, Earth and Underworld.

† She was the woman who gave life to the *ɔbosom*.



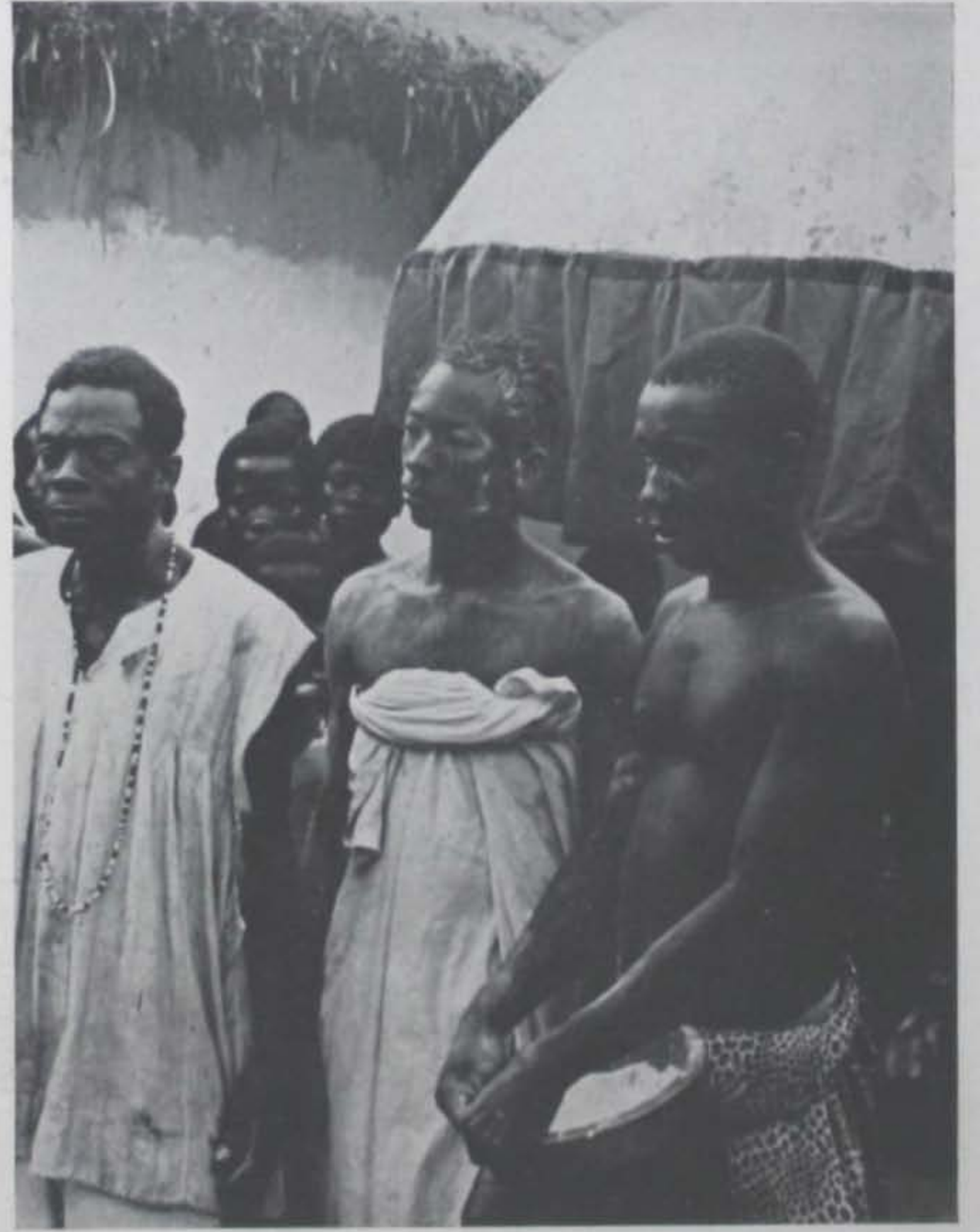
23. Young *Okomfo* priest dancing with the ceremonial sword during the *Apo* festival at Takyiman.



24. *Okomfo* priest dancing. Left, two priestesses in a trance. *Apo* festival at Kuntunso.



25. *Okomfo* priest in a trance dancing.



26. *Okomfo* priest at Taa Kofiano watching a dance.

And the final song:

*Recoda oo,
bribi a yehu a yewu na
rebeko Agyeman Tano.
Na worebeko na waba Agyeman Tano.*

[You are now going to sleep, * O, O!
The fear is seizing those who dance.
You are going, Saviour Tano.
But you shall come again, Saviour Tano.]

* To die.

The shrine is then carried back into the sanctuary.

At dawn on *Fɔ Dwɔɔ Kɛse*—('Great Fertile Monday') the *Korontihene* of Takyiman, owner of the village, comes to the sanctuary with all the priests and priestesses of other villages owned by him. He pours a libation and sacrifices a ram, as well as a number of fowls. The shrine of Taa Kuntun is then carried into the courtyard, and the priests sing the same *dapaa* songs as on the preceding Friday; but this time the songs are accompanied by drums and gongs. Meanwhile, a 'medicine' is brewed with which, when ready, all the priests and priestesses present rub their bodies (possibly to protect themselves against the infection of death). At about eight o'clock the crowd disperses.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon, the rites and ceremonies are resumed. The *Korontihene*, this time accompanied by his elders, takes his seat to watch the proceedings that are about to take place in the courtyard. Priestesses are already dancing, armed with knives, daggers, or small ceremonial swords. Women sing and accompany them with their rattles. After a little time, the *ɔɔfo ɔkɔmfo* makes his appearance with the god's shrine set on his head. He staggers under the weight of the shrine—a large brass bowl covered with a silk cloth, said to be filled with gold dust, meteoric stones, and other symbols of Taa Kuntun's power. Pain tests his faith, and tears well from his closed eyes. *Asuanofɔ*, on either side, keep him steady and make sure that the shrine does not slip off his head. The *ɔɔfo ɔkɔmfo*, once he has accustomed himself to the weight, makes the round of the spectators, and greets the *Korontihene* and his elders, the representative of the Takyimanhene, and

other important people seated on one side of the courtyard. Then, still carrying the shrine, he sings:

*Ayeyi ayeyi, oo, oyee,
nayaa woso,
yayeni yayese, oo,
yeye moa bia yeayi ye no.*

[Praise, praise, O, O, Oyee,
We listen trembling,
If we were beasts, (?)
We should be freed.]

Then the priestesses:

*Ane se ye mera ye—
baa, ee
yaba ye be se:*

[Our ancestors said that we should
Come, ee,
And we have come to say:]

The high priest:

*Ye firi Amowi oo,
ye firi Amowi oo,
Odamankoma, Amowi oo, ee,
Ye firi Amowi, oo, ee
Damankoma.*

[We have come from Amowi. * OO,
We have come from Amowi, OO
Creator, from Amowi, OO, EE,
We have come from Amowi, OO, EE,
Creator.]

* The cave in which it was decided to found the Bono kingdom.

The priestesses:

*Nana mammua ye ye ti ne ye
Nhwɛ ye som wo,
Akoama boniaye mammua yen.*

[Nana, * do not mind our conduct.
We serve you,
Ally, forgive us our conduct.]

* i.e. Tano.

The high priest, personifying the god Taa Kuntun, sings in a trance:

*Amoro bieε mpete bae na yeri
fre agya, ko na ye fre agya,
Ko gue na na ye bae didi matem.*

*Ko bae na agya wom bi
obi nye bi mmo so?
wuo bae na agya wom bi,
obi nye bi mmo so?*

*Kwabena gyae
dee woaye nso a
Kwabena gyae dee woanye nso a!
obi nye bi mmo so?*

*Bede ayeyi ara ne mo de
Koto sumniaso.*

[I am unhappy, during the small-pox epidemic you prayed to me, during the war you prayed to me, and now I am abused.

There was war and I was in the middle of it (unhurt). Who can do this? There was death and I was there (unhurt). Who can do this? Kwabena (i.e. Taa Kεse) be silent!

Let somebody do the same for me to see. Who can do this?

(I am no more than)

A basket made of palm leaves (*bede*) that has been thrown away when it has served.]

Sung by priestesses and people:

*Naa woaye Kwagynamoa
uon ye biako aboa bi.*

[Cat Tano (*Kwagynamoa*) does not serve only one person, but all.]

The songs are interrupted by an *ɔkomfo*, who appears carrying a smaller shrine on his head, also kept in the sanctuary. This too is very heavy, and he has to be supported by *asuanofɔ*. When the songs have ended, the high priest with his shrine, and the *ɔkomfo* with his, take them back to the sanctuary, where they leave them. Then they emerge again without them, but fetch them later in the afternoon.

Akomfo appear now to amuse the people with their tricks, such as pretending to catch from the air various objects connected with the god. For example, I was given an egg (symbol of life and crea-

tion); a piece of iron stone (symbol of strength and striking power); and a small truncated cone (an emblem of the goddess) of the type that priestesses sometimes wear on a cord around their necks. A group of *akomfo* then acrobatically formed a pyramid; the pyramid, or triangle, symbolizing the Lunar Mother-goddess as ruler of the sky, earth and underworld. All this time the women were singing to the accompaniment of rattles, or the *fontomfrom* (talking drums) were beating out proverbs, which most listeners understood. Towards the close, a priestess in male costume gave a dramatic performance: she acted the old, dying god, leaning on a staff; then indicated his rebirth by throwing her staff and some of her garments on the roof top, amid popular rejoicing (see Pl. 21).

New yams had been cooking all the afternoon, and towards the evening were ready for offering to Taa Kuntun by the *ɔɔfo ɔkomfo*. These offerings were repeated nightly, until the Sunday which closed the *Apo*.

(e) *The Naming Ceremony (mranee) of Tano Twumpuduo (or Twumpuro) at Tuobodom*

Tano Twumpuduo, 'He of Monday', was the state god of Bono from about 1600 until 1740. He is still one of the three most important Tano gods in the Bono-Takyiman state; and his power is also recognized by the Asante. The Asantehene annually sends a ram for sacrifice at the *Apo*.

The *afahyia* of Twumpuduo is celebrated, like that of Taa Kuntun, in November on 'Great Fertile Monday' (*Fɔ Dwɔɔ Kese*). Forty days later, the *Gyatutuo* rite is performed. The Tuobodom-hene, the reigning chief of Tuobodom and *ɔɔfo ɔkomfo* of Twumpuduo, carries the god's shrine on his head to a sacred spot near the source of the river Tano. There the shrine is set down, and a ram sacrificed before it, *mpo* yams are offered to the god. The *Korontihene* of Tuobodom then kindles a fire around the shrine, formerly using flint and iron, and walks around it three times (three honours the Lunar Mother-goddess); quenches it with *summe* leaves, commonly used for consecration; and addresses Twumpuduo three times with all his titles. This ceremony is called *mranee*, 'Naming.' Its significance is that the reborn god is reinstated as lord and king. His titles are:

<i>Atanotifihene:</i>	King of the source of the Tano river.
<i>Asubunmuhene:</i>	King of the Pool (at the source).

THE VENUS CULT (CULT TYPE II)

<i>Takyiman Bosom nea:</i>	State god of Takyiman.
<i>Pempongyae Kodjo:</i>	Ancestor of thousands, He of the Moon.
<i>Kum-Adinkra Kodjo:</i>	Killer of [King] Adinkra, 'He of the Moon.'
<i>Kodjo Atuodenfuo:</i>	He of the Moon, Firer of Guns [i.e. rays of the moon].
<i>Ankoma Powafi:</i>	<i>Ankoma</i> , Lord of the Grove. [Ankoma —'He who alone gives.']
<i>Ka-ntam-antono:</i>	He who fulfills his promise.

There is no dancing or singing, but the talking drums recall the deeds of Tano. Afterwards everyone present takes a leaf or one of the sweet-smelling flowers of the sacred *Nnuonuo* tree, its flowering being a symbol of Tano's rebirth. Leaves and flowers are also placed on the *ɔbosom*'s shrine.

Walking back to the village, the people sing:

<i>Nnuonuo, oo, oo,</i>	<i>Nnuonuo, OO, OO,</i>
<i>Nnuonuo, oo, oo,</i>	<i>Nnuonuo, OO, OO,</i>
<i>Nnuonuo, oo, oo.</i>	<i>Nnuonuo, OO, OO.</i>
<i>Nana de ɔye no de, ooo,</i>	Our Lord is pleased, O
<i>Twumpuro de ɔye no de, ooo.¹</i>	Twumpuro is pleased, OOO.

(f) *The Death and Rebirth of Ntoa at Seseman-Nkoranza*

After the collapse of the Bono kingdom, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* of Ntoa, Nana Boa Nyanpano, and the chief of Diuman, Nana Sese brought Ntoa's shrine to Nkoranza—then a newly-created state—where with refugees from other places they founded the village of Seseman (*ca.* 1750), which is now part of Nkoranza town. Ntoa soon became powerful again as Ntoa of Seseman, but since Nkoranza already had a state god, Dame, a Sky-Fertility-deity with *Apo* rites similar to those performed at Asueyi, Ntoa of Seseman was adopted by the Nkoranza state as a war-god and slayer of enemies, though retaining his old character as Sky-Fertility-god. His priesthood then developed on regal lines: that is to say, he was supplied with all the important officers and attendants that a king has in his service. On state occasions, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* wears the regalia of a king (see Pl. 8), and is carried in a regal palanquin during certain ceremonies.

¹ Information given to me by the Tuobodomhene Kwaame Frempon, the Tuobodomhemmaa Afua Fosuaa Aduanwoma, and elders.

The *Apo* festival at Wankyi lasts sixteen days (sixteen is a Venus number 2×8). At Seseman, it covers a period of nearly three months, not counting the first rite which takes place, as in Asueyi, on a *Kwa*, or 'Open' Friday at the end of November. On that day the high priest of Ntoa closes the sanctuary with *summe* leaves thus warning those who have eaten new yams not to approach the god. About one month later, on a *Fɔ*, or 'Fertile' Wednesday, the Nkoranzahemmaa, the queenmother of Nkoranza, leads all the state elders to Ntoa with an offering of eggs and chickens. A libation is poured, prayers are said, and they consult the divine oracle. The high priest, possessed by Ntoa's spirit, foretells the future concerning the state, and then bars the sanctuary with branches from the *nampranee* tree, explaining that Ntoa wishes to sleep and prepare himself for purification. No noise that might disturb the god may be made in the neighbourhood of the sanctuary.

Forty days later, on the evening preceding another Fertile Wednesday, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* of Seseman, and elders in the service of the god, eat a ceremonial meal consisting of the season's first yams. These have been grown by the village chief of Bomini, the Ntoa's farmer; other yams, including wild ones, are presented by the Sesemanhene and his elders. The meat has been supplied by Ntoa's own hunters; and the meal takes place in the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*'s house opposite the sanctuary. While the food is being prepared by Ntoa's cooks, under the supervision of the *gyaasehene*, the chief of the divine household, *abrafo* sing the praises of Ntoa and his great deeds in war. The food, when ready, is shared out by the *gyaasehene*; he sits next to the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, who has the *ɔkyeame*, or 'spokesman of the god', on his other side. The Sesemanhene and his elders and other officers in the service of the god, are seated according to rank. When the ceremonial meal has ended, Ntoa's drum is beaten as a signal for general rejoicing. Everybody in Seseman rushes into the street; women form themselves into groups, shake their rattles and sing *Apo* songs; young boys carrying the ceremonial *nkɔtɔbaa* of their ancestors run three times from 'one end of the main street to the other' (the whole length of Seseman village). When the *Apo* is in full swing, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, accompanied by the Sesemanhene, his elders, and all the people in the service of the god, attend Ntoa's sanctuary. There the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* pours a libation and opens the door. The god is fed ceremonially with new yams and the meat of chickens which have been caught by boys in the streets. Then the

ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo and the Seseman elders bring their mats and sleep in and around the sanctuary to protect the dying god. Some time before dawn, when everyone else has fallen asleep, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* carries out the sacred shrine (there is only one shrine here, not two, as at Asueyi)¹ and, accompanied by Ntoa's retinue, takes it to the sacred grove where it remains.

About eight o'clock next morning, a *Fɔ-Wukuo*, or 'Fertile Wednesday', the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, dressed in full regalia, is carried in his palanquin under a large umbrella, to the sacred grove. At the head of the procession walk the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*'s tail-switch bearers, to protect him from evil spirits. These are followed by stool-carriers in charge of the black stools; the shrines of the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*'s predecessors in office, who once personified the god; after them come two *ɔkrafo*, or 'kra-bearers'. Next come the spokesman of Ntoa, and the *gyaasehene* of the god, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*'s palanquin, flanked by sword-bearers and gun-bearers. The rear is brought up by the drummers, women shaking their rattles, and the townsfolk. When the grove is reached, however, the women and townsfolk are obliged to return, being forbidden (as I was) to witness a small but mysterious rite performed there by the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*. Presently, he is carried back to his house. Since the 'death' of the god takes place that afternoon in the grove, it seems likely that in ancient times the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*'s *ɔkra* rather than the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* himself, was carried there in a palanquin, and that he was not brought back.²

At about four o'clock in the afternoon, the 'sons' of Ntoa appear in the main street; these are boys and men born on a *Mono* or 'New Saturday', like Ntoa, or whose mothers once performed the *tuobo* custom and were thereby helped to conceive. They are completely naked, except for a small loin-cloth (made from the bark of a sacred tree which has been beaten out by men in the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*'s house), but are powdered with charcoal from head to foot—black symbolizing death. They form small groups, and run three times from the sanctuary to the end of the main street and back, passing the *ɔɔfo-*

¹ The shrine resembles that of Ntoa at Asueyi, but it is squarer in shape. It has a patch of skin on top—either originally black, or blackened by the blood of sacrificed animals. The *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, Nana Kwabena Ankemako, who has been otherwise most helpful in giving me information about his god, refused to tell me about the skin, or let me photograph the shrine.

² In the past, the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*'s *ɔkra* was a prisoner of war, or a criminal, and died for him.

ɔkɔmfo's house as they go. Then Ntoa's horn is blown, and the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, himself dusted with charcoal and naked except for his bark loin-cloth, which is fastened by a gold brooch (gold being the symbol of the Sun, and of life), stations himself under the ancient tree in front of his house. A chieftainly umbrella is held over him; next to him stand Ntoa's spokesmen. The sons of Ntoa gather and dance before the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, clicking iron castanets. After watching them for a time, he turns around, and walks to the sacred grove to fetch Ntoa home. The sons of Ntoa follow him, and so do the townsfolk; but no order is kept, and everybody is allowed to enter the grove. There, in the centre of the clearing, underneath a huge umbrella, stands the sacred shrine, but protected from common view by the shields of Ntoa's shield-bearers, who are sons of local chiefs. The *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* enters their circle and, unseen by the crowd, pours a libation. Then he performs a *ayere ye* rite—*ayere ye* meaning 'to stretch, or distend' the skin of an animal, a reference to the skin of the *akyeneboa*, or the human sacrifice, which was also once stretched before being hung up the sacred tree (see pp. 60, 65). A similar piece was also stretched over the shrine of Ntoa, as in Wankyi and Asueyi. Today, however, *ayere ye* means only 'the mending of the god's shrine', i.e. the renewal of his power. While the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* is so engaged, the sons of Ntoa dance around him until they reach a state of frenzy. In corners of the sacred grove dance the *ɔkɔmfo* priestesses (Ntoa's wives?), and go into trances; if they become unmanageable, they are carried out by Ntoa's *abrafo* to recover. After a time, three fowls are thrown into the air, caught by the sons of Ntoa, and again thrown into the air, altogether three times. Then they are sacrificed by the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*.

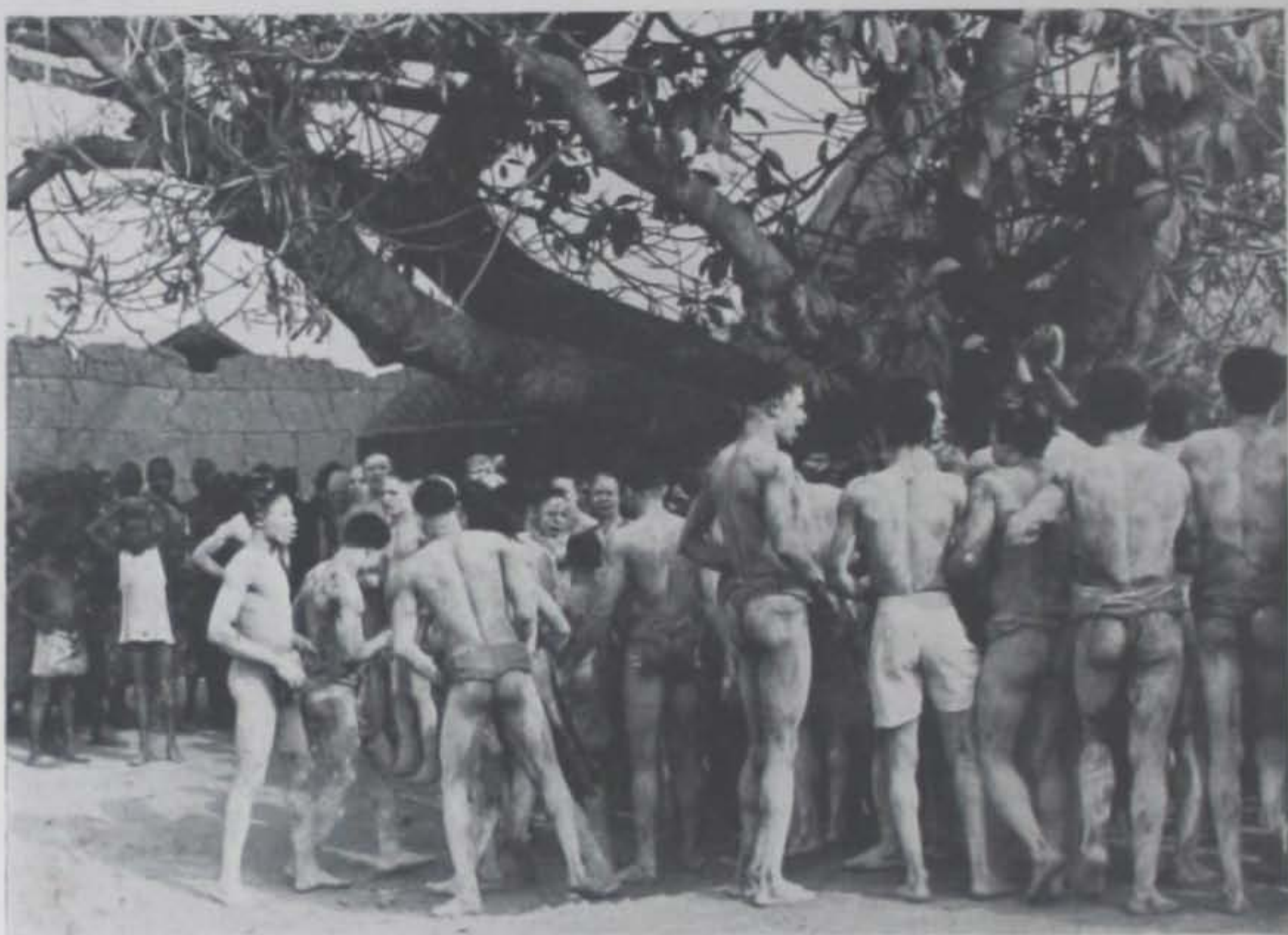
While the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, and the sons of Ntoa, are symbolically suffering death, the Nkoranzahene and the Nkoranzahemmaa, and their retinue, have arrived in Seseman and seated themselves before Ntoa's sanctuary: the Queenmother directly in front of the door, the Nkoranzahene and his elders before her, facing her. They have each brought a pot of palm-wine; as have the priests of Edinkra, the priest of Dame, and the priest of Okumisa, the *ɔbosom* of Domase, a village not far from Nkoranza. Finally the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* arrives, accompanied by Ntoa's sons, and carrying the shrine of Ntoa on his head. He places the shrine on the *simpini*, a dais in the form of a truncated cone, which stands before the sanctuary; and pours a libation. Everybody present takes a sip of palm-wine; then



27. Women shaking rattles, accompanying the dance of an *ɔkɔmfo* priest.



28. Woman shaking a rattle.



29. The 'reborn sons of Ntoa' at Seseman-Nkoranza during the *Apo* festival.



30. The women who prepare and cook the offering to Ntoa in their characteristic dress during the *Apo* festival at Seseman-Nkoranza.

the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* sets the shrine of Ntoa on his head again and goes off, with Ntoa's sons, to the sacred stream to cleanse themselves of charcoal and the defilement of death. The Nkoranzahemmaa and her women also go off because, as the Moon Mother-goddess' daughter, she has to renew the life of the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* and Ntoa's sons.

By the time that the river is reached, night has fallen; but the moon can usually be counted on to give light. Ntoa's shrine is set on a chair, and the men bathe in the sacred water to prepare themselves for the rebirth, which will be celebrated sixteen days later. When they return and assemble before the Queenmother, Ntoa's spokesman three times sprinkles the shrine, the Queenmother, and all present with the sacred lustral water.¹ He then prays for the well-being of the state. The *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* goes into a trance, with the god's shrine on his head, as if possessed by Ntoa's spirit. Finally the procession returns; the shrine is replaced on the *simpini* before the sanctuary; another libation is poured; and the Nkoranza-hene, the Queenmother accompanied by the elders and the visiting priests, returns to Nkoranza.

At Seseman, drumming, dancing and singing of *Apo* songs continue until dawn. Two days later, in the afternoon of *Nkyi Fie*, of 'Destructive Friday', the black stools are taken in procession by the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*—these are shrines containing the souls of his deceased predecessors. He is dressed in full regalia and carried in his palanquin for purification in Ntoa's sacred river. On his return, new yams are cooked which will be offered that night to the ancestral spirits and placed on the stools. Meanwhile, the *abotoɔ* rite takes place in the main street, which runs from north to south. Townsfolk of Seseman line up on both sides to prevent anybody from crossing it. Whoever does so—usually strangers who walk into Seseman to see what is going on—has to pay the penalty of a sheep, which he must supply at once and sacrifice to Ntoa. The prohibition is probably enforced because Ntoa, as a Sky- and Fertility-god, has the cross as his symbol; and to make this sign by walking over the road would be disrespectful, since Ntoa has died and not yet been reborn. *Abotoɔ* ('here is your stone') means that the people realize the culprits' having sinned innocently; their pardon is symbolized by the stone given to him—in ancient days people who violated a

¹ I do not know exactly what the Queenmother does in this rite, which I was unable to witness.

taboo were sometimes stoned to death. Afterwards Ntoa's horn is blown, and his shrine carried out and placed on the dais under a large umbrella. The drumming and dancing then recommence, and continue until late at night.

A fortnight later, on *Kwa*, or 'Open Friday', the *gyaasehene*, chief of Ntoa's household, sends gong-gong beaters through the streets to announce that the *Apo* is to be resumed. Simultaneously, Ntoa's spokesman sets out from his village of Akpim for Seseman, where he sends a sword-bearer to the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* to announce his arrival. The *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* thereupon advances to meet him, and together they walk to Ntoa's sanctuary and open the door. The shrine is again carried out and placed on the *simpini*. By and by, the priests and priestesses of Ntoa from all over the country bring their local shrines on a visit to Ntoa. Libations are poured; they dance and go into trances. During the dances, any young man may go up to any girl and say, '*Bo me tuo*,' literally: 'fire a gun at me.' The girl is then expected to whisk off her dress and reveal herself naked to him, except for a little red cloth between her thighs, the ends of which are tucked into a bead girdle at front and back. The original formula will have been 'shoot an arrow at me'—namely a life-giving moon-ray, like those shot by the Lunar Mother-goddess into the Universe. The girl, in fact, impersonates Nyame, and the young man is asking to be revitalized by her. The *bo me tuo* custom recalls the *tuobo* custom, which was formerly also performed at Seseman, in which the women show the god their genitalia; though the purpose of the *tuobo* custom is for women to be fertilized by the god; not, as goddesses, to revitalize man. When the priests and priestesses have gone away, the people drum and dance until late at night.

The following day is *Mono Memene*, or 'New Saturday', when the rebirth of Ntoa and his sons is celebrated. Early in the morning the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* again carries the shrine out of the sanctuary, placing it on his head, and stations himself before the door. Soon after, four strong young men seize the shrine from him, and run at great speed wherever Ntoa may take them, twirling it between them. Other young men catch hold of one another and, forming compact circles, move forward and backward, thus symbolizing the flow and ebb of life. Then Ntoa's shrine is placed on the *simpini*, on which now lie the ceremonial *nkɔtɔbaa*, carved from the god's sacred tree and hence emblems of life and growth, some shaped like

axes (Pls. 33, 34), emblems of his power of striking fear from the sky.¹ The *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* then walks home.

At about five o'clock in the afternoon, Ntoa's sons appear in the street, naked except for a loin-cloth (see Pl. 29), but smeared all over, on this occasion, with white clay from the sacred clay wells. White is the colour of life, joy, and happiness; and celebrates the ritual renewal of Ntoa's power. They run three times 'from one end of the main street to the other', then fetch the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* from his house and lead him to the *simpini*. He is wearing a simple white cloth, and his long hair hangs down to his shoulders. Surrounded by the elders of Ntoa he then twice pours over the shrine a libation of palm-wine mixed with white clay. The remainder of the wine is now drunk by those who perform the rite. During these proceedings Ntoa's praises are sung by the *abububofo*, 'the flatterers'—four elderly women, who begin their incantations with a long-drawn-out *eee*, each on a different note, a high-pitched *eee* alternating with a low one. They sing:

eeee, He who is the son of Nyame,
eeee, He who like thunder and lightning destroys,
eeee, He who resembles a leopard whom one fears,
eeee, A great king, a master of wisdom,
eeee, A big breast that feeds orphans,
eeee, A builder of towns,
eeee, Strong like leather that cannot be eaten.
eeee, A destroyer of evil plotters,
eeee, Wise like the kotokoamamenakwa bird that knows the
future,

¹ The *nkɔɔbaa* of the *abosom* and those carried by men or boys during the *Apo* festivals are said to have the same meaning; in both cases they represent sceptres, and are either branches of the *nampranee* tree, or carved from the trunk of the tree. *Nampranee* or *Nyaprane* (Brong dialect) is possibly a corruption of *nya-prannaa* (*aa* in Asante dialects is often pronounced *e* or *ɛ* in Brong dialects) and may have been originally, as Dr. M. J. Field (now engaged in research in witchcraft in this area) has suggested to me *Nyame-pranaa* or 'Nyame's Lightning'. Incidentally some of the *nkɔɔbaa* are definitely zigzag-shaped reminiscent of lightning, others are axe-shaped (see Pls. 33, 34). Axes are often associated with lightning. The *nkɔɔbaa* of the *abosom* are usually referred to as weapons with which the deity punishes wrongdoers, especially witches. In the past the blood of human sacrifice was poured over the *nkɔɔbaa* of the *abosom*; they are usually thickly encrusted with blood—after a victory ascribed to the deity or after a successful prophecy. In some cases the *hemakyem* plant, a creeper, is substituted for the *nkɔɔbaa*; it is said to make a noise when cut with a knife.

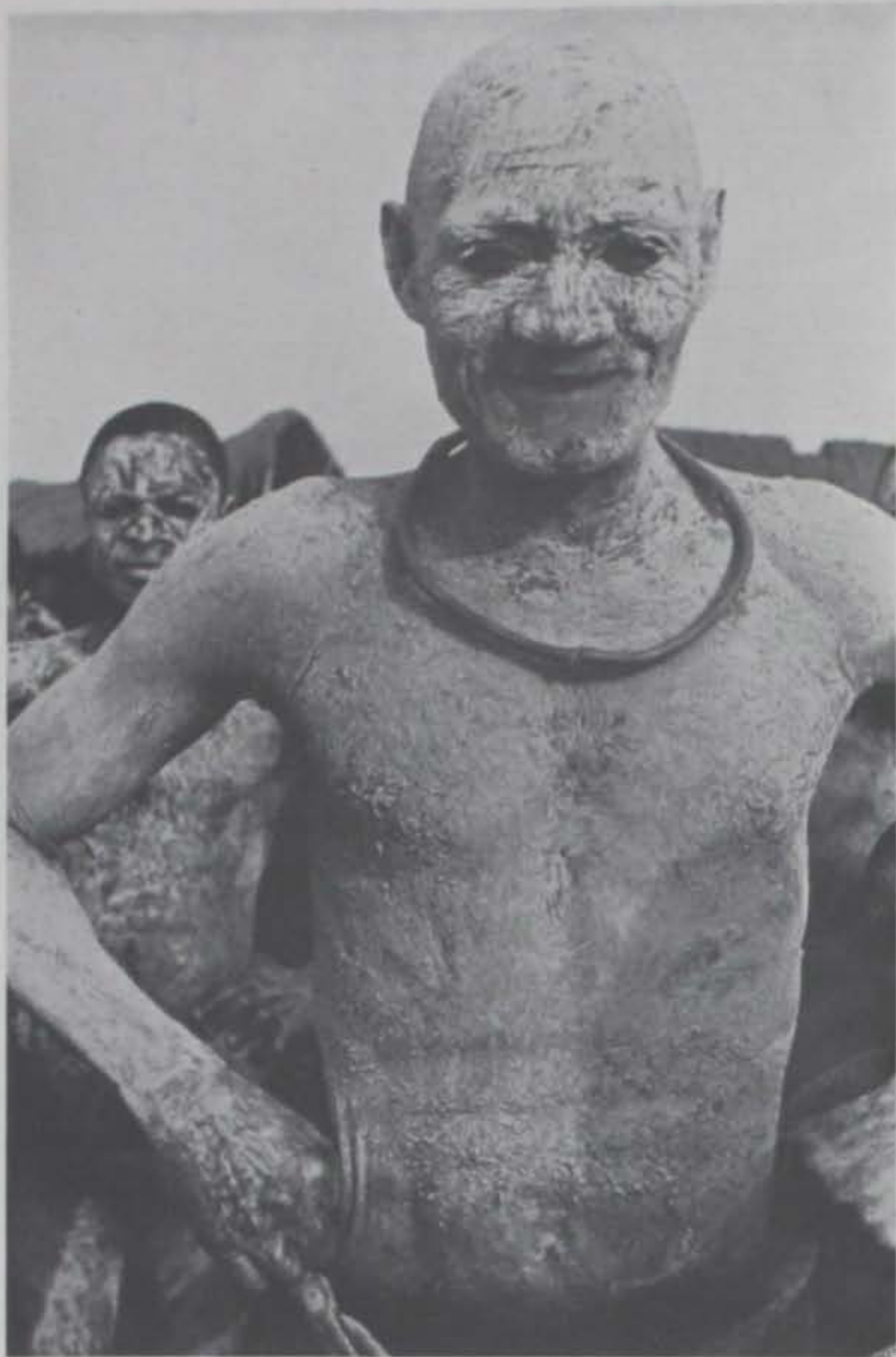
*eeee, Like ashes of a burning bush that fly great distances,
eeee, Who can turn somersaults like a bird.*¹

These incantations are accompanied by a drum, beaten unobtrusively, and a gong-gong; occasionally Ntoa's horn sounds—a short elephant-tusk, the ivory colour of which has darkened to a yellowish-brown. Then the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* returns to his house, accompanied by the god's elders and other old men from the town who, under the leadership of the *sodohene*, the chief of Ntoa's cooks, run three times 'from one end of the town to the other', and then remain outside the house. Next, the young boys form into groups and also run along the street and back three times. Then the women appear, dressed in all their finery: their faces, arms and hands painted with creation symbols and other intricate patterns in white clay. They form three groups and, closely pressed together, walk 'from one end of the town to the other' under the leadership of the Seseman queenmother: three times, with a shuffling gait. Then, singing *Apo* songs and accompanying themselves with their rattles, they end many of the songs with the refrain: 'Remember what Ntoa has done for you in time past.'

Before the women have finished, the four young men have again seized Ntoa's shrine and run with it wherever the god may take them. But now Ntoa wishes to fetch the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* from his house; whereupon the young men, possessed by the divine spirit, halt under the sacred tree. Old men rush into the house to warn the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, who has been expecting the call. He appears in the street, painted white from top to toe, naked except for his bark loin-cloth, which is secured on each hip by a large gold ornament. An umbrella is held above him, while he slowly walks to the *simpini* through dense crowds, Ntoa's shrine preceding him at frightening speed on an unpredictable course; while the people shout, the drums beat, and the sound of Ntoa's horn pierces through the hubbub. The shrine soon returns to the *simpini*, where the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* stands waiting. It is placed on his head, and he carries it into the sanctuary. When he emerges again, the *sodohemmaa*,² the chief of

¹ They sang so quickly that I was unable to transcribe every word; and I was forbidden to hear the incantations repeated privately.

² Ntoa at Seseman has male and female cooks in his service. The male cooks under their chief, the *sodohene*, cook the ceremonial food that is partaken of by the *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, and the ancestral spirits of his deceased predecessors; the female cooks, under the *sodohemmaa*, cook the offerings for Ntoa (Pl. 50). The *ɔɔfo-ɔkɔmfo*, like the Akan kings, employs male cooks only, for fear that a



31. A 'reborn son of Ntoa', the *Sodohene* in charge of the offering to Ntoa and the deceased predecessors of the high-priest.



32. The *Kwadwomfohene* (minstrel) Kofi Asamoa of the *Omanhene* of Bono-Takyiman.



33. An *okomfo* priest about to establish the worship of a new *obosom*. Note the *nkotobaa* in his hand. The spears, daggers and knives symbolize the *obosom*'s life and death-giving power; the python skin is a reference to the god's annual death and rebirth.



34. The same seen from the front.

Ntoa's women cooks, and her assistants, await him with basins full of sacred river water and, in the presence of Ntoa's elders, ceremonially wash the white clay off his body. When the time comes for everybody to go home and wash, the chief of Bomini, acting as Ntoa's *atufohene* ('gun-bearer') fires his gun to all four quarters of the sky. His fellow-villagers, who have gathered around him, continue to follow his example until nightfall, when the *Apo* festival ends.

On the next *Fo*, 'Fertile Wednesday', which is celebrated as New Year's day at Seseman, Ntoa's shrine is once more taken out by the *asɔfo-ɔkɔmfo* and carried most of the day. Visitors from all over the country come to consult the divine oracle, and he foretells the future of all visitants. Late in the afternoon, every man in Seseman is obliged to attend the *Gyahye* rite. The Queenmother of Nkoranza has a broad *apakyie* (calabash) before her, filled to the brim with strained *kenke* (a drink brewed from millet or maize). By using the *kenke* as a mirror, she can see whether there are any absentees; if so, they will later be summoned to court, and she will fine them. *Gyahye* means the burning down of the bush that surrounds a town—the signal for the hunting of any animals it may harbour. Farming is later undertaken on the reclaimed land. The presence of every man is required because of the danger that the flames may spread to the town. The fire is started by the *gyaasehene* of Ntoa in a particular part of the sacred grove; they take three palm-branches tied together, and kindle them at a fire provided by three logs of *esa* wood.

female might be in a menstruous condition. The menstrual flow is held to endanger the *kra* that resides in their blood, and thus diminish their life-giving power. But Ntoa, being bi-sexual, need have no such fears, hence women are permitted to cook his offerings.

CHAPTER III

The Sun Cult (Cult Type III)

1. *The Sun-god Nyankopon*

Originally, the sun was believed to be reborn every morning by the Moon Mother-goddess. When, however, the conviction grew that the sun always remained the same eternal, self-generating power, quite unindebted to the moon, the sun became the most important of the religious planets. This view caused a religious revolution. The Father-god Odomankoma, hitherto worshipped as the creator and administrator of the world, was deposed in favour of Nyankopon, the personified male aspect of the Moon Mother-goddess Nyame, who now became a Sun-god and, as such, ruled the Universe. The event is recorded in three ancient sayings: '*Odomankoma boɔ owuo na owuo kum no*,' ('Odomankoma created Death, and Death killed him,');¹ '*Odomankoma kowui no, oden akyi gyaw agyina*,' ('Odomankoma left his affairs in the hands of councillors [Nyame and Nyankopon], his co-regents in the sky,'); and '*Nyankopon no Domankoma ba*,' ('Nyankopon is Odomankoma's son,')—'son' here meaning his successor or heir. Odomankoma, however, lived on in Nyankopon, because it is also said: '*Nyankopon anye Odomankoma sunsum*,' ('Nyankopon is Odomankoma's *sunsum*, or personality'). Thus Odomankoma's name is sometimes joined, in prayers, to that of Nyankopon, as for instance in the phrase, '*Onyankopon Odomankoma abo ade nyinaa*,' ('Nyankopon-Odomankoma created the world'). For though Nyankopon was credited with a supreme *kra*, only a deity with a strong *sunsum* can be a god above all gods; and this Odomankoma supplied.

Before being associated with the Sun, Nyankopon had been an

¹ For maxims referring to Odomankoma see J. B. Danquah, *Akan Doctrine*, pp. 58–77. Also *Sacred State*, p. 81 *et passim*.

ɔbosom, or clan-god; then he became a Sky-Fertility-god. This is proved by his titles and certain popular sayings. One of his most ancient titles is '*Awurade Tweduampɔn*' ('Lord of the tree, on which you lean and never fall'), which implies an *ɔbosom*'s sacred tree;¹ '*Nyankopon Tweduampɔn*' is still invoked in woman's songs sung at royal enstoolment ceremonies. Then, he shares the laudatory name '*Konkonduakom*' ('tree firmness'), with many Sky-Fertility-*abosom*; and as a Rain-god, he is called '*Teterebonsu*' or '*Totorobonsu*' ('he who causes rain to fall copiously'). To this day, when rain is approaching, people say: '*Nyankopon ba*,' ('Nyankopon is coming'). A word for rain-water is '*Nyankopon-su*'; and, for the rainbow, '*Nyankopon-ton*.' When it thunders, people say: '*Nyankopon bom*'; and, though the thunderbolt is usually called '*Nyame akuma*' (or '*abonnua*'), Nyankopon's name can here be substituted for Nyame's. This refers to a finger-shaped stone which is believed to fall from Heaven with the lightning; then to enter the ground until it strikes water, after which it returns. Neolithic celts, or stone axes,² are identified with these thunderbolts.

Nyankopon's natal day being Saturday, he is addressed in prayers as Nyankopon Kwaame, 'He of Saturday.' Saturday is ruled by the *akragya Amen* (Saturn), and as the Sky-Fertility-god, Nyankopon's *sunsum* was that of Amen. In some places, Nyankopon is still invoked together with Asaase Afua, the Goddess of Procreation, 'She of Friday', whose planet is Venus. Nyankopon's title '*Odaa Amen*', may have come to him when he became a Sun-god. It is translated either as 'He who rests (*odaa*) on Amen's day', or as 'He who is an appendage (*odaa*) of Amen'.³ Both translations however imply that Nyankopon does not rule on Saturday, as Amen does, but rests; consequently he can be regarded as an appendage to Amen.

As a supreme deity, Nyankopon has divine 'sons', to whom he delegates some of his power. But whereas Nyame's children are a particle of her life-giving *kra*, Nyankopon's sons are a particle of his *honhom*, or 'divine breath'. A priest to whom the god reveals himself receives the god's *honhom* in a blinding flash of lightning. He then builds a shrine for the new *ɔbosom* thus created, and mediates between him and his worshippers.⁴ Nyankopon, through his sons,

¹ *Sacred State*, Ch. IV, 4, 'Nyankopon'.

² Christaller, *Dictionary*, p. 39, under *abonnua*.

³ Danquah, *Akan Doctrine*, p. 47.

⁴ Rattray, *Ashanti Proverbs*, 1916, pp. 21-2; *Sacred State*, p. 81.

is worshipped by the people as a Father-god. He is '*Nyaamanekose*', 'He in whom one confides troubles'; and '*Brekyirihunuade*', 'He who sees and knows all.' As a Sun-god, his laudatory names are '*Tetekaframua*', 'He who endures for ever'; '*Oteanankaduro*', 'He who knows the antidote for the serpent', the serpent being death; and '*Atoapoma*', 'The Ever-ready shooter', because he shoots the life-giving rays of the sun into the universe.

2. *The Divine King*

(a) *The Divine King as Son of the Sun-god*

The cult of the King as Son of the Sun-god was introduced into Bono by Obunumankoma (A.D. 1363–1431), at a time when the royal line had been firmly established, and the country had grown from a city state to a kingdom of considerable size.¹ Moreover, prosperity was now assured for several generations because of the discovery of gold and its exploitation on a large scale. In Asante, the cult was introduced by Opoku Ware at some date previous to A.D. 1749. He had conquered Bono and the kingdoms to the north of it—Gonja and Dagomba—after extending his rule over several states to the south and west of Asante. The courts both of Bono and Asante must have felt that a High King, who rules over numerous petty kings, must enjoy a higher status than they, if he is to consolidate his position. The cult of the High King as Son of the Sun, rather than Son of the Moon (as every petty king and clan-chief had to be in matrilineally organized states), fulfilled this purpose.

The task of the Sun-king, like that of the Moon-king, was to give and maintain the life of the state. He achieved this through his solar *kra*, which was the *kra* both of the Sun-god, his divine ancestor, and of his Royal Ancestors (*nananom*), the deceased kings, whose *kras* had become one with Nyankopon after death. The solar *kra* can therefore be regarded as an ancestral and collective *kra*, reincarnated in the reigning king. He won it, in a special rite, at the end of the *Werempe* ceremony, when the stool of the late King (the shrine for his *kra*) was brought to him;² the Enstoolment ceremony earlier performed having given him his secular power to rule the land. He was, however, Son of the Sun-god solely with regard to his office, the kingly *kra* descending to him in the male line from his predecessors; as a man, he remained the son of the Lunar

¹ See Ch. V, 3.

² The rite is fully described in *The Akan Divine Kingship*, Ch. VIII, 4.

Mother-goddess, from whom he was descended in the female line.

At the annual *Asubo* ceremony, the kings of Bono and Bono-Takyiman purified their lunar *kra* by sitting on the silver moon-stool, and not on the golden sun-stool which they occupied five days later during the New Year rite that followed the *Aferihya Dwareε*. Constitutionally also, the King continued to be the son of the Queenmother: he could issue decrees only after consultation with her and his council of elders. Thus, though proclaimed supreme as the incarnation of the Sun-god, he never became an autocrat.

The King was venerated as the fount (*ndee nsee*) of everything; above all of truth, justice and wisdom, and the repository of all authority and power. In reality he had delegated all his power to subordinates, but the fiction remained. Although he never went to war,¹ all victories were ascribed to his personal valour and superior intelligence; songs credited him with personally slaying the enemy king. He was equally held responsible for national disasters and defeats. Because he had failed to preserve his subjects from death and famine during the Mande invasion from Gonja, Berempon Katakryira, the King of Bono, found himself obliged to challenge Death to battle, and had himself locked up in a conical hut without doors or windows. Thirty days later he died of starvation, defeated by Death and deserted by his father, the Sun-god.² When, in 1740, the Asante conquered the Bono kingdom, the then ruling King of Bono, Akumfi Ameyaw Kwaakye, committed suicide, it being impossible for a king to survive the shame of so great a disaster.³

The King devoted himself entirely to the task of giving life, which implied keeping his generative *kra* in perfect working order, preserved from all defilement, particularly corpses and menstruous women. Among the Bonos, he was forced to live in such seclusion that he left his palace only once a year, on the day of the *Asubo* ceremony, and then took a road reserved exclusively for the royal procession. His people were not allowed to see him, lest their evil wishes might injure his *kra*. The work of government was undertaken by his heir-apparent, who bore the title '*Dea ote Abakoma*

¹ In the Bono kingdom, after the introduction of the cult of the king as the Son of the Sun-god, the kings never went to war, nor did their heirs-apparent. In Asante, where this cult was never fully introduced, the kings continued to go to war.

² See p. 115.

³ See p. 126.

Dwa so', literally: 'He who sits on the Highborn's Stool', and ruled publicly like a king. Since, in most cases, the King himself had been an heir-apparent, he was familiar with all governmental matters. He kept himself well informed, and gave final decisions on matters of importance.

The King was entirely surrounded by his sons, or the sons of his predecessors, who held all palace or governmental posts. Of course they served him loyally, because their personal interests were bound up with the throne. In Bono, the King had over a thousand wives (three thousand three hundred and thirty-three was the desired number), who lived in a harem, supervised by eunuchs. Nearly all came from families who owned stools in the country—that is to say, hereditary offices which their sons and daughters, namely the King's sons and daughters, could be chosen to occupy. The King could thus attach closer to him, through marriage ties, the clans, states, vassal states, towns and villages, as well as court officials and palace officers. The King's children who succeeded to the politically important stools, above all of clans and vassal states, remained in their mothers' clans; the others, heirs to less important stools and such of the King's children as did not succeed to an office had to join the state-clan (or child-clan) of the royal line which, in Bono, was the *Anana*. The King himself was obliged to leave his clan after his enstoolment ceremony—he now belonged to the State—and when he (as represented by the heir-apparent) appeared in public, he wore a golden helmet or head-dress, surmounted by a golden parrot, the *akyeneboa* of the Anana clan and emblem of the state.

As the supreme priest of the Sun-god cult, the King venerated his great-ancestor in the Chapel of the Stools. He also propitiated the Royal Ancestors who had joined the god, after their deaths, in *Nyankopon-kurom*, 'the City of Nyankopon', and who mediated between him and the living king. The Sun-god cult was exclusively an ancestor-cult in the royal line, for the people continued to worship Nyankopon as the son of Nyame, her personified male aspect.

(b) *The Divine King as the Incarnation of the Sun*

The King had to model himself as closely as possible on the sun. Since the sun rose, set and travelled across the sky with unfailing regularity, the King's day was similarly regulated, even to the times of his walks, his meals and his children's visiting hours. He

committed a serious offence if he did not go to bed when the sun set; and, if he refused certain foods that were intended to make him as fat and shining as the sun, the *Sodohene*, or chief of the royal kitchen, could refuse to cook the offerings for the Royal Ancestors when the New Year festival came around. The case would then come before the State Council, and should they find the King guilty, he had to pay a fine in the form of a present to the *Sodohene*. Even his sexual life was arranged for him, so that he could neither choose a wife from his harem, nor refuse one sent him by the *Odabeni*, or chief of the royal bed-chamber—he always had to be the grandson of a king by a mother who was of the royal lineage—whose task was to see that each wife had her turn in the royal bed. No wife might argue with the *Odabeni*, who settled all quarrels between the King and his wives, and between the wives themselves. Moreover, the *Odabeni* reported all quarrels to his superior, the *Gyaasehene*, or chief of the royal household and palace—in Bono always the son of a king and chief of the Aborade Assine clan, maternally descended from kings of a former Sudanese state.¹ The *Daberehene*, or chamberlain (always the son of a former king's granddaughter), decided on the cloth, head-dress and jewellery which the King had to wear, and ordered them from the *Manwerehene* (also the son of a former king's granddaughter). The *Daberehene* had to decide, after consultation with the *Gyaasehene*, what presents the King must give to important guests.

In ancient Bono, the King's day began when the sun rose behind the ruler's head. He slept in a bedroom on the top floor of his three-storied palace, the window of which opened east. The bed was built like a seven-step pyramid; each step being covered with material of a different colour of the rainbow. The rainbow was envisaged as a ladder by which the King could reach his father, the Sun-god, and the Royal Ancestors; or the Royal Ancestors could descend by it to visit him in his sleep. The counterpane and sheets were of yellow silk or brocade, embroidered with gold, symbolic of the Sun. His mattress and pillow were stuffed with gold dust that would renew his strength during the night.

The King's reveille was sounded by the *Ahenemahene* (always the eldest son of a former king by a commoner wife), the only household officer permitted to enter the royal bedchamber while the King was in it. On reaching the presence, he slipped off his

¹ See pp. 105-6.



sandals as a sign of respect, and three times rang a bell which hung above the bed. He then turned away to avoid the King's first glance, which might be dangerous if the royal ancestral spirits with whom he had communed at night were still occupying his body. The King then would invite the *Ahenemahene* to sit down—on the chair kept for that purpose—and ask him what was going on in town. After giving the latest news, the *Ahenemahene* would seize the opportunity of apologizing for one or other of the King's sons who had incurred his displeasure, or of asking favours in their name. When the King was ready to rise, the *Ahenemahene* again rang the bell three times, and a number of men entered the room, where they threw themselves on the floor and allowed the King, who might never touch the floor with his bare feet, to walk on their naked backs into the ante-chamber. (This probably symbolized the Sun's victory over the evil powers of darkness.) In the ante-chamber, the King was received by the attendants in charge of his morning toilet, who made him sit, facing east, on a low stool decorated with divine symbols, and setting his feet on two elephant tusks. There they bathed, dried, and perfumed him with lime-juice—limes being yellow like the sun—from a 'sponge' made of plantain-tree bark. (The plantain is a sexual symbol.) When the *Adwarefohene* and his attendants had finished, the *Asrafohene* and his attendants entered to grease or oil the King's skin. He was then dressed by the *Manwerehene* and his attendants. Next, the *Nsafiesohene* and the drink-bearers were called in to offer the King palm-wine or other refreshments. Breakfast was served in another room by the *Sodohene* and the *sodo*, or stewards; there the royal jester had to amuse the King. A group of small boys, the sons of nobles (*ahenkwa*) on the palace staff, were also present; because a king must always have subjects around his feet. The King's second meal was served at about four p.m. While eating, he had to observe a number of taboos which would prevent any evil spirit from entering his mouth and endangering his *kra*. The *Sodohene* (or rather the *Sodohene's* heir-apparent,¹ except on festival days), removed all bones before offering him his food. After each meal the King was given a cold-water massage, and required to rest.²

¹ Not only the King and Queenmother had their heirs-apparent; so also did every chief of importance, including such palace officers as the *Sodohene*. Their younger brothers or nephews did the work for them except on important occasions.

² The above information was given to me by the *Ahenemahene* Kwasi Twi, in the presence of Nana Akumfi Ameyeaw III and selected Elders. When the

Friday was a holiday in Bono, sacred to the state god Ntoa in his female aspect as the Goddess of Fertile Earth and the Lord of Growth. Also the Bono kingdom had been founded on a Friday; it was the day on which the god Buruku-Biakuru had ordered the building of towns. Thus it became the custom for the Sun-king to receive on a Friday his many sons and daughters. The stool-sons and stool-daughters—heirs and heiresses to great hereditary offices—used to ride on horseback into the Palace, which was situated behind that of the heir-apparent, to greet him. Sons and daughters who happened to be good musicians and dancers used to perform for him, their bodies daubed with gold dust, and would receive presents. Poets were also sometimes invited to recite or sing their latest work.

Whereas the King was celebrated as the Son of the Sun-god, and all his ornaments and ceremonial instruments were of gold (the Sun's metal), the Queenmother was venerated as the Daughter of the Moon-goddess, and her ornaments were made of silver (the Moon's metal). However, because she owned the state, and was the King's mother, her state swords, the *nkerante*, and her smoking pipes (tobacco being sacred to Ntoa), were made in pairs, one silver, one gold. Like the King, she had to live in seclusion, devoting herself entirely to her life-giving function. Her *kra*, like that of the King, was a reincarnated ancestral one derived from the Moon Mother-goddess, and the queenmothers who had preceded her. The rites she performed in the Chapel of the Stools were identical with those performed by the King in his Chapel. From the time of the Bonohemmaa Gyasewaa onwards (1656–79),¹ the Queenmother's palace was at Amona, a few miles north of the capital beyond the river Yaya; but her heiress-apparent remained in Bono-Mansu, deputizing for her.

All customs connected with the King's daily routine now also applied to the Queenmother. But whereas the King was always bathed and dressed on the eastern side of his room, the Queen-

Ahenmahene had finished his recital, the high-ranking Elders rose to say that, in the past, for speaking about these matters a slave would have had to be sacrificed—to inform the Royal Ancestors in the Upper Kingdom that the disclosure was necessary. Since human sacrifice had been abolished, however, he proposed to make a libation of six bottles of gin. The *Bono-Takyimanhene* thereupon ordered the gin to be brought, and one bottle was poured out at once on to the floor of the audience courtyard, the others were taken to the Chapel of the Stools to be poured over the black stools of the Royal Ancestors. I felt most embarrassed, a bottle of gin being very expensive at that time, and offered to pay; but my offer was of course rejected.

¹ See p. 122.

mother had to shift daily from one corner of her rectangular room to the other. These corners did not symbolize the four cardinal points of the compass, but points of the revolving year—apparently the equinoxes and the solstices.

The Queenmother's courtiers and palace attendants held the same offices as did the King's, and generally came from the same families. Her *Gyaase-ba-panyin*, in charge of her palace, was usually the sister of the King's *Gyaasehene*, the 'father' of the King's stool-sons, and she was the 'mother' of the princes and princesses of the royal line. At about the age of puberty the princes went off to their own palace in the city, but the princesses remained with the Queenmother; even, for the most part, when they were married. Many never married, but took lovers; and their children were said to come 'from the stool-hole'. Such a stool-hole child without an acknowledged father might succeed to the throne. Ideally, the King, like the Sun, should have no father; and the King's father, even if he were known, had no place in this matrilineal constitution.

3. *The Death and Resurrection of the Divine King on New Year's Day*

The ritual by which the divine King dies and returns to life, as a means of renewing his kingship and being able to give and maintain life throughout the coming year, is still performed in Bono-Takyiman on *Fɔ-Yawoɔ-Kese*, 'Great Fertile Thursday', the nearest Thursday to the autumnal equinox. This day was originally chosen because the equinoctial sun rises due east and looks on both hemispheres equally; so that the year seems to hang in the balance.¹

Early in the morning of *Fɔ-Yawoɔ-Kese*, the *Akrafohene*, or chief bearer of the kingly *kra*, and the *akrafo* that assist him, bathe in cold water from the sacred Adare river, and shave their heads except for a tuft at the top of the skull, which they adorn with a gold bead or some other small ornament. They then walk the two miles to Takyiman from Hansua, their own village, to visit the *ahenfie*, or palace, where the King (*ɔmanhene*) of the Bono-Takyiman state awaits them already. They greet him; the *ɔman-*

¹ The ritual is described in the *Sacred State*, pp. 169, 170, but without the references to the king's death and resurrection. The death of a king is a subject too painful to be mentioned, therefore the information was suppressed. The additional material I was given by Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III.

hene informs them how many rams, fowls, eggs and yams have been sent as a New Year gift by the *Osɔfo-Okomfo* of the state god Taa Kɛse, Tano the Great.

The *Akrafohene*, with his *akrafo*, then takes his leave and withdraws to his town house, where he negotiates with the leaders of the sword-bearers, gun-bearers, umbrella-bearers, palanquin-bearers, stool-bearers, and drummers, and arranges for them to wait at about two or three p.m. just outside the *ahenfie*, and then escort him, with his *akrafo*, to the sacred river.

Shortly before the appointed time, the King, the Queenmother, the Elders, the royal wives (those of the great families), the sons of the King's predecessor, and his own stool-sons, headed by the 'eldest son', the *Gyaasehene*, assemble all dressed in white, in a palace room which serves on that day as *Kra-fieso* ('Chapel of the *Kra*')—there used once to be a separate building for this purpose—and wait for the *Akrafohene* and his *akrafo*. When the *Akrafohene* finally enters, the King rises to greet him and offers him the throne seat. Then the regalia is produced: the precious cloth decorated with waxing and waning moons (see Pl. 15 in *The Sacred State*); the crown, consisting of a broad band covered with sea shells, cast in gold, that symbolize the King as *Apupuo*, or 'Creator of [fertilizing] Water'; the *kanta*, or chains; and the *atwaban* necklate in gold (Pl. 1); sandals, decorated with a gold nugget, golden shells and cowries, and other gold ornaments; the large gold finger-rings which include the *abetia*, a replica of the top of the royal palm (symbolizing the King's descent from the Lunar Mother-goddess); and the *pitire*, the symbol of total ownership, which is worn on both hands; the gold bracelets, anklets, precious beads worn below the knee (Pl. 1); and the *omantimase*, which are gold chains connecting these with the anklets; finally, amulets encased in gold, which are worn on both arms and on the right wrist (Pl. 1). The King then invests the *Akrafohene* with his regalia, because in the rites that are about to follow the *Akrafohene* is to personify the King.

When the *Akrafohene* has been dressed, the King gives him his Silver Stool, to which two bells are attached, and the elephant-skin on which it must be placed. The King then takes one of his golden-hilted state-swords and, standing before the *Akrafohene* in the guise of a sword-bearer, a mere commoner, hands over to him and the *akrafo* the snow-white, long-legged, short-haired rams (imported from the Sudan), with four cocks, seven yams, and eight eggs,

which must be taken to the sacred river for purification. Then he steps aside and announces: '*Nana abo a*,' 'the King is coming' and, walking ahead of the *Akrafohene*, comes to a stop at the entrance of the *ahenfie*. There the palanquin-bearers, the bearers of the large state-umbrella, the bearers of the Royal Ancestors' black stools, the sword-bearers, gun-bearers and drummers are waiting and form a procession.

At the head walk the Queenmother's stool-carriers with the low white stools for the royal wives, and the offerings; they are followed by the royal wives, who are guarded by four *adumfo* (formerly executioners of human sacrifices), holding long, straight swords. After them, beneath one of the state-umbrellas, walks the *Sannaahene*, or chief treasurer, who is the son of a former king, carrying the *puduo* in the *sannaa* bag. The *puduo* consists of gold nuggets separately wrapped, each of which represents the *kra* of one royal ancestor; and above them lies Bosummuru's gold dagger.¹ The whole collection, still in the *sannaa* bag, is placed in a brass basin and covered with a white sheet. Behind this official, under a smaller umbrella, walks the *Akyeamehene*, or chief of the royal spokesmen, followed by the Silver Stool, which the chief of the stool-bearers carries—another stool-carrier is entrusted with the white stool for the *puduo*. Behind these, the *Akrafohene* is borne in the King's palanquin—a long, basket-shaped litter—flanked on either side by the *akrafo*, holding scimitars with hilts decorated in white and gold. Next come the stool-sons, many of them weeping at seeing their father, the King, deprived of his kingship. They are flanked by bearers of guns; and the drummers with the huge state-drums bring up the tail of the procession.

On arrival at the sacred river, *Adare*, the *Akrafohene* seats himself on the Silver Stool; the brass basin containing the *sannaa* bag is placed before him on the white stool, and he is shaded by the state-umbrella. The *akrafo* sit in two rows on the ground in front of the *Akrafohene*; and the stool-sons enclose him and the *akrafo* in a semi-circle. A little apart from this group sit the royal wives. Another basin is now filled with sacred river-water by an *akrafo*, and the *Sannaahene*, uncovering the *sannaa*, uses the leaves of a *summe* plant, uprooted on the river-side, to sprinkle this water on the *puduo* and Bosummuru's dagger. He also sprinkles the *Akrafohene*, thus purifying and blessing him; then the stool-sons, one after the

¹ For Buru- Bosummuru see p. 99 *et passim*.

other; and finally the royal wives. No speech, however, is made, nor is any libation poured. When the rite has ended, the *sannaa* is covered up again with the white sheet, everybody shouts '*Asubo!*', 'Cleansed, cleansed!' and '*Aferihyia pa o!*' 'We wish you a good year!' The state-drums are beaten, and the gun-bearers fire to all four quarters. Three eggs are left on the river bank as an offering to the River-god, whereupon the procession forms up again and returns to Town, where crowds of people are awaiting it.

At the southern end of the town the Queenmother and Elders, sitting in a semicircle, are also waiting for the procession to arrive. The *Akrafohene* dismounts and sits down on the King's throne seat, to the right of the Queenmother. The *Sannaahene* then steps forward and, with sacred river-water which has been brought by them, purifies and blesses all the assembly, including the common people who throng around. The Queenmother then makes a speech and thanks the Elders and the people for all they have done for the State during the past year. Her example is followed by the *Akrafohene*, who speaks as though he were the King. Guns are fired again, drums are beaten, and the procession, which now includes the Queenmother and the Elders, returns to the Palace. The King, still disguised as a common sword-bearer, is waiting at the entrance gate and, standing on his sandals, humbly greets the *Akrafohene* with the formula: '*Nana akwabo,*' 'Welcome, Nana!' The same group of people who have congregated in the *Kra-fieso* earlier that afternoon, assemble there again. Everyone sits down, the *Akrafohene* taking the Silver Stool, slightly in front of the Queenmother, who is next to the *Gyaasehene* (here acting as the eldest stool-son); but the King takes his seat right in the far background, next to the royal wives. The *sannaa* is placed on the table before the *Akrafohene*, and the gold nuggets of the *puduo*, with the Bosummuru gold dagger, are uncovered. The Queenmother now rises and purifies these objects by sprinkling them with sacred water,¹ and then also sprinkles the assembly. She utters the prayer for the well-being of the State in the new year, and implores the Royal Ancestors to assist their people once more and make them prosper.

¹ When the Bono kingdom was at its peak of power, the sacred water came from the source of the Tano river. All sons of the reigning Bonohene and of his deceased predecessors, who were chiefs or sub-chiefs, and all vassal kings whose mothers had been daughters of a king, would form a line stretching from the source to the *Kra-fieso* in the Bono-Mansu palace. They would pass a golden basin containing the sacred water from hand to hand. It was a scene of great splendour and showed the people how immensely powerful their kingdom had become.

Meanwhile, yams and eggs purified at the riverside, have been cooked and brought in. The yams are mashed by the *akrafo*, kneaded into small balls, and placed on a dish; bits of hard-boiled egg are sprinkled over them. The *Akrafohene* takes an *adwera*, which is a leaf floating in the sacred water, puts it into his mouth and spits the water from it three times over the food, saying: '*Kosie, me kra didi me hyire m' ako*,' ('Blessing: let my *kra* take this food from my heart!'); he then eats the traditional three mouthfuls. When the *eto* has been divided into three portions, the first is offered in a small bowl to the *kras* of the Royal Ancestors, and placed before the *puduo*; the second to Bosummuru, and placed next to his gold dagger; and the whole assembly share the third. Whatever *eto* remains on the dish is placed on the *puduo* and the dagger.

Next, a fowl is brought in and held by the *Akrafohene* before one of the offering bowls. He says: 'If no misfortune is destined to befall in the new year, then take this fowl.' If the fowl thereupon pecks three times at the consecrated food, the Royal Ancestors are held to have accepted the offerings. Everybody now shouts: 'We thank you, we thank you!' and the fowl is sacrificed. Should the fowl, however, refuse to eat, this is regarded as a bad sign and a sheep must be sacrificed to avert disaster.

After a while, everybody moves into the audience courtyard, where the *Akrafohene*, still personifying the King, sits on the royal dais. The other courtiers arrange themselves according to rank. Two rams which have been purified at the riverside are brought in and sacrificed by the *Sannaahene*, who pricks their throats; four cocks are also sacrificed. A fire of three logs of *esa* wood is lighted and, while another sacred meal, the *okra suo*, is being prepared, minstrels recite the great deeds of the Royal Ancestors. The talking drums then take over: drummers beating out the rhythms which refer to great historical events, and which all present understand. There is dancing to the beat of drums until the meal is ready. The *okra suo* consists of a thick soup made from the flesh of the rams and cocks, which is poured over seven¹ *fufu* balls prepared from mashed yams, and offered by the *Akrafohene* to the Royal Ancestors and to Bosummuru, the 'Great Ancestor'. On top of each of the offering bowls thus filled are placed pieces of ram's heart, ram's liver and

¹ Seven here symbolizes the state, a confederation of seven clans, each ruled by a planet.

ram's tail; a cock's head, a pair of cock's legs, cock-hearts and cock-liver; as well as a sausage made from the rams' blood. The *Akrafohene* blesses the bowls, over which he pours a libation of gin; and does the same for the *akra suo* soup eaten by the assembly. Women and children who wish to share the consecrated meal may send in small bowls. The rest of the boiled meat is then distributed among the Elders, along with their share from the gifts sent to the King by Taa Kese's High Priest.

When the meal is over, the *Akrafohene* calls for palm-wine, and while the assembly are drinking it, he slips quietly away to a room nearby, takes off his borrowed regalia and walks home, accompanied by the *akrafo*. The *Omanhene* equally quietly withdraws to another room, where he resumes his regalia and re-appears as King. In former times the King of Bono, representing the risen Sun, wore only gold on that occasion. His body would be greased and powdered with gold dust, he would put on a woven gold loin-cloth¹ and, dressed in a profusion of gold ornaments would seat himself on the Golden Stool. When homage was done to him, he used to withdraw with his senior wife, the queen, into the *Nyame Dan*, a sanctuary dedicated to Nyame, and spend the night there with her so that she might be possessed by the Royal Ancestors. Three white rams were sacrificed to Nyame on the threshold of their bedchamber.

Very early next morning the *Akrafohene*, three *akrafo*, and the *Sannaahene* enter the *kra fieso*, collect the *summe* leaves and *adwera* leaves which were used for consecration, carry them into the forest and bury them there in a secret place. On the next Great Fertile Thursday, forty-two days later, the *Akrafohene* and the *akrafo* visit the King and present him with one hundred hard-boiled eggs. They then enter the Chapel of the Stools and, after having poured a libation to the Royal Ancestors, place some of the eggs before, and on, the *puduo* and the Bosommuru gold dagger. Then they return and share out the remaining eggs among the visitors who come to greet the King this morning; namely the Queenmother, the Elders, chiefs from all over the country, and others.

On the *Fɔ-fie*, or 'Fertile Friday', before the Great Fertile Thursday, almost identical rites have been performed for the Queenmother. Her *Akrafo-ba-panyin*, daubed with white clay,

¹ The loin-cloth is said to have been woven with threads of hammered gold; it was about a yard square. The square symbolized the four quarters of the earth on which the sun daily shines. The cloth is said to have been woven in one day, from sunrise to sunset.

dressed in the Queenmother's own white cloth, and accompanied by female *akrafo*, is carried in a *sako* (sedan chair) to the sacred river. All the princesses of the royal line, and all daughters of the King whose mothers have inherited stools, go with her. Instead of the *puduo*, however, and the gold Bosummuru dagger, one of the Queenmother's daughters carried the *aforo* box, filled with precious beads and pieces of silver and gold. The beads symbolize blood, and therefore lineage; silver symbolizes the Moon and the Queenmother's predecessors in office; gold symbolizes the Kings as Sons of the Sun-god, though also sons of a Queenmother. On the return from the river, the *akra suo* soup is prepared from the carcasses of two sheep and a hen, and the offering is placed on the *aforo* box. The sacred meal is eaten in the same way as at the King's death and resurrection; also a hen is sacrificed after it has prophesied, by its pecking at food, whether the new year will be good or bad.

4. *The Concept of Reincarnation*

No tradition survives as to when the concept of *Kra* reincarnation first arose, but as it has no place either in Cult Type II or in Cult Type IV, one must assume it to have been evolved when the King was first conceived to be the Son of the Sun-god. The solar *kra* of the King is the collective *kra* of his Royal Ancestors, and reincarnated in him; the lunar *kra* of the Queenmother is the collective *kra* of her predecessors in office; each receives it in a rite following his or her enstoolment ceremony.

The idea of the ancestral collective, reincarnated *kra* eventually spread to the common people, who no longer believed their *kra* was a gift from the *akragya* of their clan-deity's planet, but attributed it to the *akragya* of the planet which ruled their own natal day of the week. The *kra*-names given to children, according to the day on which they were born, are evidence of this. Boys born on a Monday are still called Kwadwo (Kodjo); the girls are called Adwowa (*akragya* Adwo, Moon); boys born on a Tuesday are called Kwabena (Kobina); and the girls Abenaa (*akragya* Abena, Mars); and so forth.¹ The *kra* received at birth was, and generally still is, that of his maternal clan and family; it is reincarnated in him for completion. That is to say, it is every person's duty to fill the *kra* that had been given to him—actually the *honhom* that dwells in the *kra*

¹ See the author's 'Concept of the Soul Among the Akan', *AFRICA*, 1952, p. 24 *et passim*.



35. The *ɔbrafo* priest of Taa Kɛse at Takyiman demonstrating how he sings the praises of the god while the offerings are being made.

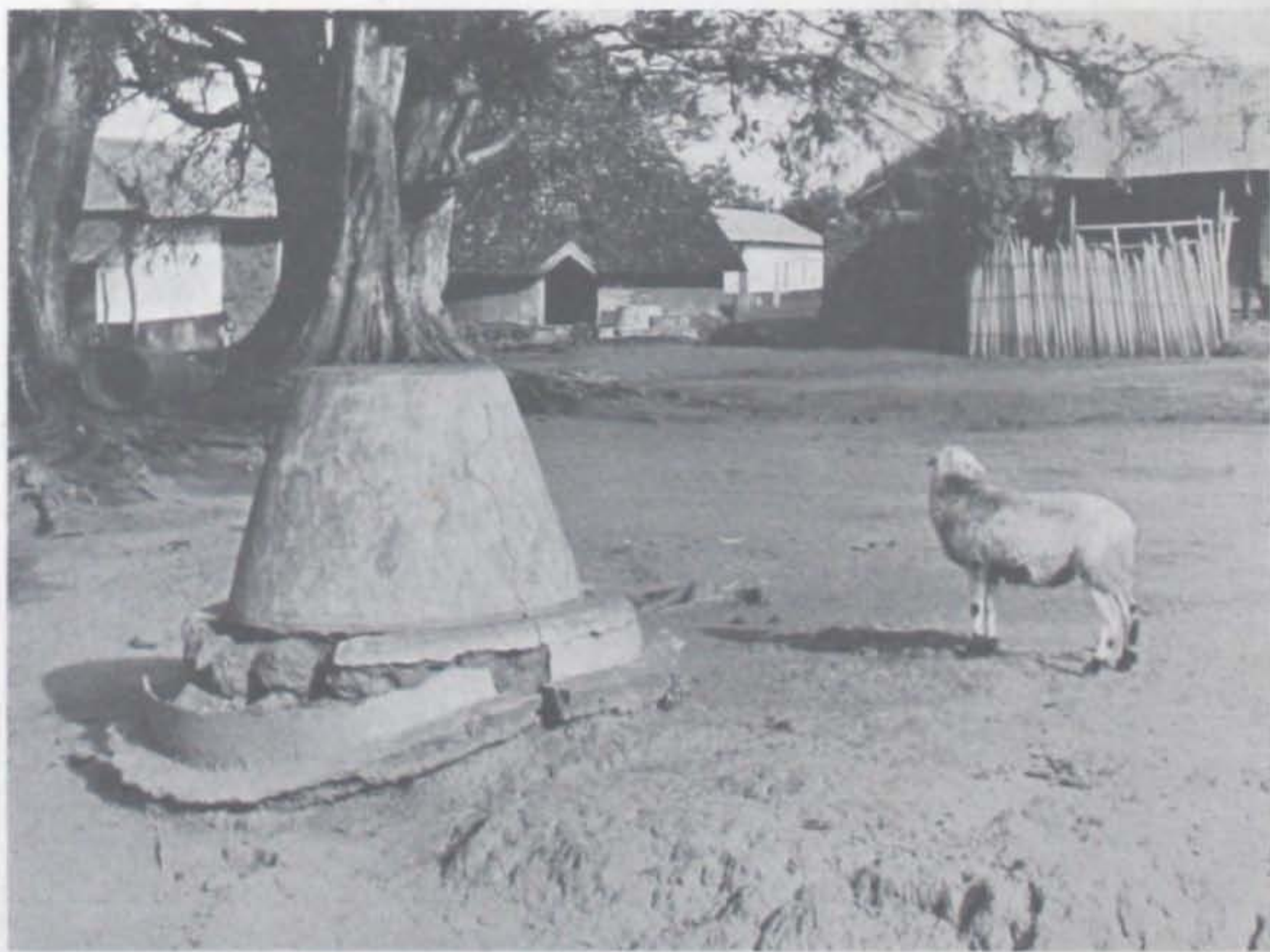


36. The dais in front of the sanctuary of Taa Kɛse upon which the shrine of the deity is placed on *Foo Dwoɔ*.

37. Nyame cone in the palace courtyard of the *Omanhene* of Nkoranza over which libations are poured and wrong-doers 'can buy their head'.



38. The Nyame cone in the palace courtyard of the Queen-mother of Nkoranza.



39. The Nyame Kese under the *gya dua*, the sacred tree of Nkoranza. In the background the sanctuary of the *obosom* Dame.

—to the brim with goodness;¹ since only a pure and wholly good *kra* can become one again with Nyankopon.

The dead person, represented by his *kra*, which has become his true personality, is believed to be judged in the Upper Kingdom (*Osoro Ahemman*) by the most recently deceased king, who rules on the sun in the City of Nyankopon (*Nyankopon-kurom*) as the Sun-god's deputy.² If the *kra* is a perfect one, it remains with Nyankopon; if imperfect it has to be reincarnated and must return to earth. But *okrabiri*, people with a thoroughly bad *kra*, who have omitted to fill it with goodness, are refused permission to stay in the Upper Kingdom and become evil spirits on earth. If they repent, however, they are pardoned; and their *kra* is reincarnated in a child born blind, lame, or otherwise infirm.

The *sunsum* of the person is supposedly that of the planet which rules his own natal day of the week. It changes after death into *saman*, and goes to live in the *samandow*, an otherworld situated below the earth.³ The *honhom* flies back to Nyame, but when it is filled to the brim with goodness it becomes one with the Sun-god.

¹ Danquah, *Akan Doctrine*, pp. 85, 86.

² In the old Akan states the King judged the men and the Queenmother the women in their respective law courts. I omitted to inquire whether the *kra* of women, no doubt judged by the deceased queenmothers in heaven, were for the final judgement handed over to the king, or not.

³ Originally perhaps, as for the ancient Egyptians, in the region through which the sun travelled at night.

CHAPTER IV

The Ntoro Cult (Cult Type IV)

1. *The Concept of Ntoro*

The first step towards patrilinear succession was made when the King styled himself Son of the Sun-god, and ruled that his solar *kra* descended in the male line. The next step came with the *ntoro* cult, introduced from the Sudan, when a new theory of descent affected not only the King but his people. Every person was now held to be descended in the female line from the ancestress of his family, and therefore also from his remote ancestress, the Creatrix of the clan; but in the male line from a supernatural ancestor, the god of his *ntoro* group.

The *ntoro* gods began as selected clan *abosom*—*ntoro* and *nton* are said to be the same word in different dialects¹—of whom many had once been worshipped as Sky-Fertility-gods of the state: Bosommuru (Buru), Bosom-Pra and Bosom-Twe are examples.² The *ntoro* gods' *akyeneboa*, or totem animals, are indicative of their clan origin; the *akyiwade*, or tabooed animals and plants, are indicative of their *sunsum*, or personality, which these gods received from the *akragya* of the planet that ruled their weekly natal day. The ideal number of *ntoro* gods and group in any state was twelve (3×4, 3 female, 4 male), as opposed to the ideal number of clans and their *abosom*,

¹ See also J. G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language*, 1933 (sub *nton*, p. 527).

² Bosommuru, or (o) *bosom* Buru, was the god of the Ayoko clan, but not its true clan god, whose name has been forgotten, but who is known to have had a falcon as his emblem.

Bosom-Pra, originally the state god of a kingdom on the banks of the Niger, was introduced into Bono by the last King of the Aboade-Assine clan. Bosom-Twe or Bosom-Twi is said to have been also state god of a Niger-bank kingdom and, according to Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III, belonged to the *ahenfie*—which I understand to mean the Great-king of the confederation of which these two states and Diala, worshipping Bosommuru, were members.

namely seven (3 + 4).¹ In Bono, the *ntoro* and clan-gods were often identical, and in such cases the clan-chiefs also acted as the heads of the *ntoro* groups.

The introduction of the *ntoro* cult into Bono (mid-fourteenth century), and other Akan states, replaced matrilineal with patrilineal marriage as a means of enhancing paternal authority. Indeed, it practically converted the father of a family into a god, because he was now venerated both as the priest and as the shrine of his *ntoro* god. *Rites de passage*, illustrative of conception, birth, marriage and death, had hitherto been supervised by the mother's family, or the priest of her clan god—but now became the concern of the father and the *ntoro* god.

The man, in identifying himself with his god, imitated the character of the stretch of water sacred to the god. Men of the Bosom Pra *ntoro* tried to be as resolute and tenacious as the Pra river; those of the Bosom Twa *ntoro*, as calm and tolerant and their souls as immaculate, as Bosomtwa lake. The sacred water was regarded as seminal fluid: *wohonsu*, 'the water of yourself'; and in sexual intercourse the men identified themselves with their god who fertilized the land, as they did their wives. Female children belonged to their father's *ntoro* group, but when they married joined their husband's. A *ntoro* god, however, derived his character not from a river or lake, but from the *akragya* of his natal day.

In some Akan societies of this cult type, the child received his *kra* and *sunsum* from the *ntoro* god of his father, but his blood (*bogya*, in the sense of 'lineage') from his mother; in others the *sunsum* from the *ntoro* god, but the *kra* (the reincarnated *kra* of a maternal ancestor) from the *akragya* of his own natal day. The *ntoro* cult meant that men were now venerated as givers of life; hitherto only women had been so venerated. *Ntoro*, in fact, defined the paternal clan or group to which each individual belonged, as the child of his father.

2. Bosummuru, the Ancestral Deity of the Kings and Queenmothers of Bono and Asante

Buru, the *ɔbosom* of the priestly chief Asaman and his sister Ameyaa, joint-founders of the Bono kingdom, won the laudatory name Biakuru, 'He who builds towns', after having commanded the refugees to settle in their new region.² Buru was the personified

¹ *Sacred State*, Ch. 'Ntoro'.

² See p. 104.

male aspect, or 'son' of the Goddess Buruku (the nasalized form being 'Burukung') which means 'Great Buru', a Creatrix and Supreme Being of the Nyame type. When the Bonohene Takyi Akwamo and the Queenmother Kyereme Mansa introduced the *ntoro* cult into Bono, the *ɔbosom* Buru, or 'Bosommuru' (*mm* is an assimilation of *mb*) became the *ntoro* god of the state.¹ This implied that, although everybody in the state belonged to the *ntoro* group of his physical father, the King belonged to that of his titular father who had preceded him in office; usually his brother, nephew, maternal uncle, or cousin. The King therefore received his *kra*, his divine life-giving power, from the Sun-god Nyankopon; but his *sunsum* (here meaning his male procreative power) from Bosummuru—both deities being regarded as the sons of Nyame.²

Bosummuru's natal day was Tuesday, the day of the *akragya* Abena—the planet Mars; hence his *sunsum* was warlike, hot-tempered and fierce. His shrine was a gold dagger (the kings of Asante still use a golden sword) on which, during the enstoolment ceremony, the kings swore allegiance to their people.³ The animal which incarnated Bosummuru was the bull; in early days this bull was sacrificed at the New Year festival.

Other animals which incarnated Bosummuru were the mouse, his *akyeneboa* as clan god; the dog, which was his emblem as the Sky-Fertility-god; and the manatee (*suo-bodom*, literally: 'water-dog'), or sea-cow, which symbolized his *sunsum* or personality as state god of Diala on the Niger—the kingdom from which the ancestors of the Bono Kings and Queenmothers originated.⁴ The red-haired monkey (*kwakuo*) is *akyiwade*, or taboo, in Bono; as it is

¹ See Ch. V, 4.

² I got the impression that the original supreme deity of the Bono, Gonja and Guan was Burukung, and that Nyame and Nyankopon were introduced with the cult of the King as the Son of the Sun-god. Nyame and Nyankopon appear to have been the supreme deities of the Akan, who originated from the Kumbu kingdom. There are grounds for believing that the Kumbu kingdom was once a state in the confederation of the Mali, or Melli, kingdom. It is interesting to note that Nyame is written 'N'ya-me' in Mandingo, the language of Mali, and means 'divine ancestral soul', which describes the *kra* of Cult Type III. The Akan Nyame is, of course, pure *kra*, that *kra* of the moon and firmament. For N'ya-me, see M. Delafosse, *La Langue Mandingue*, Paris, 1929, p. 307.

³ As it is still done to-day. *Sacred State*, Pl. 13 shows the Bono-Takyiman-hene with the Bosummuru dagger.

⁴ The manatee, or sea-cow, would have symbolized the deity's female aspect, because of its triangular mouth, its triangular paddle-shaped tail, its paddle-like flippers, usually with three nails, and its single pair of teats.

to almost all *ntoro* groups: red being the colour of death, that is to say of blood which has lost its *kra* and become 'hateful' to all who desire life and procreation—such as menstrual and lochial blood. The taboo on menstrual women became law by the introduction of the *ntoro* cult.¹

Buru at Diala was incarnate in the *nsana*, a sweet wild berry from which bread was made;² and incarnate, in Bono, in maize, first brought to Bono by his worshippers. No maize in any form may be eaten on a Tuesday. Palm-wine and other alcoholic liquors are also tabooed on Tuesdays, because the ancestral spirits who have transmitted Bosummuru's *sunsum* are cool, and whatever heats the body is offensive to them.

Tuesday was observed as a holy day by Bosummuru's *ntoro* groups; but the Kings of Bono, and later those of Bono Takyiman, disregarded Tuesday and worshipped the god on every sixth Thursday, called *Fɔ-Yawoɔ*, or 'Fertile Thursday', sacred to the *akragya* Abrao—the planet Jupiter—which controlled death and resurrection—an allusion to the immortal Royal Ancestors. The rites for maintaining the King's *kra* were consequently shifted from his natal day of the week to *Fɔ-Yawoɔ*; which allowed the rites for maintaining his *sunsum* to be performed at the same time. This arrangement also involved the shifting of Bosummuru's annual

¹ See Ch. V, 4.

² This sweet wild berry seems to be *Rhamnus lotus*, common in the Sahara and Western Sudan, of which Mungo Park writes in *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, London, 1800, pp. 148–50:

'These are small farinaceous berries, of a yellow colour and delicious taste, which I knew to be the fruit of the *Rhamnus Lotus* of Linnaeus. The negroes shewed us two large baskets full which they had collected in the course of the day. These berries are much esteemed by the natives, who convert them into a sort of bread by exposing them for some days to the sun, and afterwards pound them gently in a wooden mortar, until the farinaceous part of the berry is separated from the stone. This meal is then mixed with a little water, and formed into cakes; which, when dried in the sun, resemble in colour and flavour the sweetest gingerbread. The stones are afterwards put into a vessel of water, and shaken about so as to separate the meal which may still adhere to them: this communicates a sweet and agreeable taste to the water, and with the addition of a little millet pounded, forms a pleasant gruel called *fondi*, which is the common breakfast in many parts of Ludamar, during the months of February and March. . . .

'As this shrub is found in Tunis, and also in the Negro kingdom, and as it furnishes the natives of the latter with a food resembling bread, and also with a sweet liquor, which is much relished by them, there can be little doubt of its being the lotus mentioned by Pliny, as the food of the Libyan Lotophagi. An army may very well have been fed with the bread I have tasted, made of the meal of the fruit, as it is said by Pliny to have been done in Libya; and as the taste of the bread is sweet and agreeable it is not likely that the soldiers would complain of it.'

birthday from a Tuesday near the New Year festival to the *Fɔ-Yawoɔ Kɛse*, or 'Great Fertile Thursday', which became New Year's Day.

In Asante, as opposed to Bono, the King belonged to the *ntoro* group of his physical father and, since Bosummuru was kept as an ancestral deity in the royal line, it became of the utmost importance that the King's mother should marry a man of his *ntoro* group. Hence, in Asante, cross-cousin marriage was obligatory not only for the King, but also for his mother: that is to say, for all the princesses eligible for the Queenmother's stool. Even so, it happened that only eight kings out of twelve belonged to this *ntoro*. In Bono, where the princesses jealously guarded their right to marry whom they pleased—a high percentage, in fact, married foreigners—the *ntoro* was attached to the stool, or the state, and the whole line of kings and queenmothers officially worshipped Bosummuru.

In Asante, again, Tuesday was not discarded by the King in favour of Thursday: he sacrificed the sacred bull on the last Monday of the year and Bosummuru was resurrected through him on the Tuesday. The Bosummuru sword, Bosummuru's divine shrine, was held before the King, while he uttered the following formula: 'O Bosummuru, the edges of the year have met; you were sharp, but I took that thing which you abhor (i.e. death) and touched you [with it]; but today I sprinkle you with water so that your power may revive.'¹

It is no longer remembered at what period the bull ceased to be sacrificed in Bono. It may have been when the rites connected with Bosummuru were shifted from Tuesday to Thursday, or when Bono—that is to say, the Bono-Takyiman Kingdom—became a vassal state of the Asante Kingdom, and the Asantehene, as Great-king, alone had the right to sacrifice a bull.

¹ The Asante New Year festival (*Odwira*) is described in full in *The Sacred State*, p. 171 *et passim*.

Whereas the kings of Bono, and now of Bono-Takyiman and also of Asante, claim descent from Bosummuru and in the sexual act incarnate the god of procreation, the queenmothers claim descent from the goddess Bosummuru and incarnate her as a wife and mother. The King, being the son of the Queenmother, his titular mother, thus can claim descent not only from the god in the male line but also from the goddess in the female line.

Bosummuru the god is incarnate in the White Bull which in the past was sacrificed by the kings on New Year's day so that his power may be restored; Bosummuru the goddess is incarnate in the black cow which was sacrificed in the same way by the queenmothers. The shrine of the god was a sword or dagger, phallic symbols, the shrine of the goddess the red *bota* and *bɔdɔm* beads, symbolic of blood.

CHAPTER V

The Reigns of the Bono Kings and Queenmothers

1. *King Asaman (1295-1325) and Queenmother Ameyaa Kese (1297-1329)*¹

At the beginning of the eleventh century, a horde of Islamized Berbers invaded and destroyed the Dia, or Dja, kingdom situated at the Niger bend, with its centre in the Timbuktu region. Thousands of its people fled south; and a group of Gbon (in other dialects Gban, Gwan or Guan), under the leadership of Dia from Diala, finally settled between the Upper Red and White Volta rivers, then occupied by the primitive Mo (Grusi-speaking aborigines), and built up a confederation headed by a king and queen-mother. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, these Dia-Gbon people were defeated by the ancestors of the present rulers of Mossi.

Again a great stream of refugees flowed south, including Mo tribesmen, and other negro aborigines. They were led by a priestly

¹ A good deal of the material contained in this chapter was collected for me by Mr. Kofi Antubam, who had acted as my interpreter in 1945-6, at a time when I did not expect to be able to return to the Gold Coast. When I did finally return in 1949 I checked up on the information that had been given to him by Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III, the late Nana Kofi Biantwo and Nana Kwaame Nyame. I received some additional material, especially the minstrel songs (*adawu*), which Nana Akumfi Ameyaw was so kind as to explain to me. They are very difficult to translate, being brief allusions to events which are rarely mentioned. I hope that one day the *adawu* will be recorded properly and in the archaic Twi, not in the modern Twi as they were written down for me. Twi, not Brong, is said to have been the court language and *lingua franca* of the Bono kingdom; the so-called Bono people were multilingual; at the time of the destruction of the kingdom eight languages are said to have been in general use, the chief ones being Fante, Guan and Mo (a Grusi dialect). Brong is believed by my informants to be no more than a Twi dialect mixed with words from the other languages spoken at Bono-Mansu, the capital.

prince, who died under circumstances no longer remembered. He was succeeded by his brother, and he by a second brother, also a priest, who is known to tradition as Asaman (meaning 'spirit body', or 'the third Asah'), his real name being too sacred for pronouncement.

After a short stay in Gonja, also founded by Gbon from Dia, Asaman and his sister (but some say that she was his mother), decided to found a kingdom of their own. Leaving their kinsmen, they moved south, crossed the Black Volta river, and paused in the region of Amowi, famous for its caves. When a cave in which many members of the aristocracy were sheltering, collapsed as the result of a landslide, Asaman consulted his god, the *ɔbosom* Buru, a son of Buruku, the former state deity of Dia. He was advised to 'build towns'; that is to say, to found a state. The god thereupon received the laudatory name of 'Biakuru', 'He who builds towns.'¹

The first town to come into being was Tutena (now called Yefri), not far from Amowi and the present town of Nkoranza in the Nkoranza State. When hunters reported that a site some miles farther to the west would be more suitable for a state capital, Asaman and Ameyaa visited it with their followers. Approving of the choice, Ameyaa offered up her daughter, an albino, in sacrifice; on her grave the *gya dua kra* was planted. The town was called Bono-Mansu—'[town] on the land of the Bono', 'Bono' being the modern pronunciation of 'Gbonong', which has its *ng* nasalized. Asaman was proclaimed King; but Ameyaa, despite her sacrifice, was not proclaimed Queenmother. The council of seven women contained other princesses of royal clan lineage, who claimed to have as much right as she to rule.² However, after (it is said) three years, Ameyaa succeeded and became Queenmother of the new state. She received the title of respect 'Adwo', best translated as 'She of the Moon'.

Asaman died after ruling for thirty years, and was given the laudatory name *Asa, ɔsraman a odura akura*, 'Asa, Lightning that destroys Towns'—a reference to his conquest of lands, then occupied by Guan, to the east of Bono-Mansu. The minstrels still sing: *Ahene mu ahene owura daseansa*,—'King of Kings, to you above all, thanks!'—thanks, that is, for having laid the foundation of the

¹ For greater detail see *Akan Traditions*, p. 33 *et passim*.

² It is also possible that some of these women were queenmothers from allied states, who had attached themselves and their followers to Asaman and his people in the exodus.

Bono Kingdom. A leather cushion on which he sat was preserved in the Chapel of the Stools, and is now said to be in the Chapel of the Stools at Takyiman. On it was placed a golden falcon; the falcon (*osansa*), being the *akyeneboa* of his clan (*Ayoko*). During Asaman's reign, gold was discovered in the Twi river, which runs into the Black Volta, and also in the region of Perembomase, which caused great prosperity and rapid social development.

After Asaman's death Ameyaa, since styled 'the Great', hid the regalia to prevent any new king from being elected; she feared that the kingship, and with it the queenmotherhood, might pass into the hands of one or other of the seven dominant clans. She also confiscated the royal band, consisting of seven horns, one of which had always to be played by a nephew of the king's; and another, the smallest, and highest in pitch, by his first wife. For her brother's funeral, Ameyaa had a huge state-drum made, which might be used in future only for a king of her own lineage. On it she had her drummers drum the message: *Ana gyese, Anndo ni bedi ade no ansa na mede same*—'Unless some member of the people who do not farm (i.e. the royal lineage) succeeds, I shall not give up the regalia.' After three years her policy proved successful, and Akumfi Ameyaw, her son, became King at the age of twenty-six; but less than two years later she died.

2. *Akumfi Ameyaw I (1328-63) and Owusuaa Aberefi (1329-65)*

Akumfi Ameyaw is remembered as *Okum afiafe Ameyaw*, 'Ameyaw, Slayer of People' because, when Ameyaa Kese died, he sacrificed a great many people in her honour and every year on the anniversary of her death. Minstrels still sing about his reign: *Asansa ko abu a ode n'akyi gya akroma*, 'When the she-falcon sits on her eggs, she leaves everything to the male falcon,' meaning that the King and a council of male elders, the priest chiefs of the clans, now began to take over the administration of Bono, the Queenmother's council of women remaining to rule the women only; though the Queenmother still reserved for herself the last say in all matters of state.

At the same time, the post of *Gyaasehene*, Chief of the royal household, and Palace officials, was created and awarded to Kosa Kwaretoapie, who bore the royal title *Fa* (or *Fan*, or *Fang*), and had come to Bono-Mansu as a refugee. His ancestors were rulers

of a kingdom said to have lain somewhere to the north, on the Niger banks. With him had come a train of followers, and his sister Fa Mansi, who now became the *Gyaase-ba-panyin*, or head of the Queenmother's household.¹

Shortly afterwards the new Queenmother, Owusuaa Aberefi, began work on her own royal enclosure, the *Twemma*—meaning 'vulva', because this was regarded as the great life-giving vulva of the state. She built the *Twemma* behind the King's palace, and in oval shape to resemble a vulva, placing her own house in the centre, surrounded by hundreds of huts. These huts were occupied by all female members of the royal lineage, also well-born girls given her for training, attendants, and slaves. There are said to have been three hundred cooking hearths in the *Twemma*. When the Queenmother went out, her eyebrows daubed with shea-butter into which gold-dust was mixed, three hundred girls,² chosen for their beauty, walked before her. She was carried by her *mben soɔno* — 'handsome men'—to whom she felt greatly attracted: changing her husbands so frequently that she never became a widow so long as she lived.

Owusuaa Aberefi was called *Obaa, a, na ne tiri mu ye no de*, 'the woman who is merry in her head', because she had such a happy temperament. Her fondness for men became so notorious that Moslem traders from many parts of the Sudan made a point of calling on her with presents—precious beads, gold dust, and woven or embroidered materials. A Moslem quarter was founded in Bono-Mansu, which finally became its twin city.

Ameyaw Akumfi and Owusuaa Aberefi loved music and dancing. Both would appear in public, dancing to the *ntumpane* talking drums, and to the *fontomfrom* drums which had been introduced from the north. They would also take part in performances of the *ntahera* orchestra, of which the seven gold-covered ivory horns are

¹ As the successor of kings the chief was allowed certain royal prerogatives: he could continue to wear the gold ornaments of the regalia of his predecessors and throw his spear into the sores of a beggar who crossed his path when he was riding out in the morning, an act which symbolized the healing power of the divine king. An arrow was shot into the air while he was eating. (At a later date a gun was fired.) Information was given by Nana Yao Atoa, a descendant of the former kings.

² 300 hearths; 300 girls; Ameyaa had to wait 3 years before she became Bono's first queenmother, and ruled 3 years after the death of Asaman. Three is the number which symbolizes the Supreme Mother goddess as the ruler over Sky, Earth and Underworld. The queenmother represents her on earth; since the actual numbers of years, hearths, girls and so forth are no longer remembered, the numbers 3 or 300 are substituted today.

still in existence—or, rather, replicas of the originals which were looted by the Asante in the war of 1740.

When the King died, he was succeeded by Obunumankoma, Owusuaa Aberofi's eldest son; and when Owusuaa Aberofi herself died, two years later, her daughter Sewaa succeeded as Queen-mother.

3. *Obunumankoma (1363–1431) and Sewaa (1365–1419)*

Obunumankoma was only twenty-nine years old when he came to the stool, but with experience far beyond his years. While still very young, he had been sent north by his mother, under escort of certain Moslem traders, and visited the courts of the various Sudanese kings. His commission was to advertise the wealth of Bono, and inform the Sudanese of a desire to trade. Bono could offer two products for which there was an inexhaustible demand: gold, and a type of cola nut (*Sterculia acuminata*), which grew only on the fringes of the forest in Ghana. The red nuts of *Sterculia acuminata* can be preserved for as long as two years, whereas pink and white cola nuts, and some of the other red varieties, will keep only for eight or ten months. The caffein content of these nuts allays fatigue and thirst, and provides a stimulant which traders and others on long marches could not do without. Gold was now also found in the Tomme and Tain rivers of Bono, and later obtained from still others. In Obunumankoma's reign, the first gold mines were dug, to a depth of twenty or thirty feet.

On his accession, Obunumankoma created the *Sanaa*, or Royal Treasury, instituted gold dust as currency, and approved a system of weighing gold dust. He had his own weights cast in gold and decorated with the symbols of kingship—those of the Queen-mother who had her own *Sanaa*, being cast in silver and decorated with the symbols of queenmothership. He is said to have travelled all over the Sudan, and as far as 'the white man's country', probably North Africa, then in the hands of the Seljuk Turks; but it is not known from whom he derived the idea of a metal currency.¹

¹ I believe that the Bono introduced the system of weighing gold dust from the Kumbu kingdom, a great Akan kingdom, once situated in a region which now belongs to the French Ivory Coast. There is good reason to assume that the gold-producing Kumbu people had in turn learnt this system, Indian in origin, from traders from the ancient Ghana kingdom. (See *Sacred State*, p. 202.) It is known that in the Mali kingdom which had succeeded Ghana as the greatest Sudanese power in the west, the Arabic system was in use in the fourteenth century.

Obunumankoma's most important act was to proclaim himself the Son of the Sun-god, and take the title *shene ye owia*, 'the King is the Sun.' Hitherto, the King, as the son of the Queenmother, had incarnated the Moon. To demonstrate his new standing, he used to appear in public, dressed in precious embroidered cloth, and bedizened with gold ornaments—gold being the metal of the Sun—with the Queenmother beside him, similarly adorned with silver—the metal of the Moon. The wearing of gold and silver ornaments was also permitted to the great men and women at court; and these were now worked locally by smiths who had been sent to the Sudan for training.

Sewaa, the Queenmother, was small, and handicapped by being pronouncedly left-handed. The left hand is regarded as unclean, because used by women for handling menstrual rags, and by both sexes for lavatory purposes. Thus nobody offers the left hand in greeting, nor gesticulates with it. Sewaa being naturally impulsive, used sometimes to forget this convention; and presently dignified men refused to appear when she spoke in public, for fear of being insulted by some left-handed gesture. When the princes now protested against her use of an *ate* (leather cushion) decorated with sky symbols like the King's, she had to accept a low seat, carved in wood, with a handle on the left. As a mark of solidarity with her, Obunumankoma thereupon ceased to use his *ate* and ordered a so-called *asipim* for his own use: namely, a chair of European type, with a high back and arm-rests.¹

Sewaa was interested in farming, and especially encouraged the growing of yams, introducing a tool called a *sɔsɔ*, for digging them, as used by the people beyond the Black Volta. When she died, the King happened to be absent from the city; he mourned deeply and sincerely for her. She was succeeded by Kyereme Mansa.

4. *Takyi Akwamo (1431–63) and Kyereme Mansa (1419–1463)*

When Obunumankoma introduced the cult of the king as 'Son of the Sun-god', he ingratiated himself with his people by the display of great splendour, stressing the power of the kingdom which now could hold up its head among the greater Sudanese nations.

¹ This chair may have been introduced from North Africa. Europeans did not discover the Gold Coast till 1471 and trade with the Portuguese only started in the 1480's.

This, for a time, disguised the political implications of the new cult: namely a final victory for the Ayoko falcon clan of all others, and immense additional power for the King. It was left to Obunuman-koma's brother, the forty-eight-year-old Takyi Akwamo, who succeeded him, to translate these invidious changes into law.

One of the first acts of Takyi's reign, therefore, was the introduction of the *ayete* custom, which meant that each of the seven clans in Bono had to send one princess to the King's harem, so that her children, as his sons and daughters, could succeed to the clan's stools. The same rule applied to each family in the country that held a stool, whether as hereditary rulers of a town or village, or hereditary officials at court; so that gradually the whole kingdom became ruled by the King and his kinsmen. Moreover, all the King's children, except those of the leading clan families, had to become members of the Anana clan, the planet of which now was the Sun; and worship *Bosommuru* (*Bosom Buru*), the *ntoro* god of their royal father, from whom they claimed to be descended in the male line. This was the first step towards the introduction of the *ntoro* cult.

The second step was the supersession of matrilineal by patrilineal marriage, intended to break the power of the women. The young bride had to leave her mother's house in the quarter of the town occupied by her clan, and move to her husband's house in the quarter occupied by his. To make this less distressing for all concerned, cross-cousin marriage was favoured by the Queenmother, and became more or less obligatory for the aristocracy. By marrying her cousin, the son of either her mother's or her father's brother, the bride moved into her uncle's house and, although she had to live in a different quarter of the town, remained in her own family. The Queenmother and the royal heiress princesses, however, could marry whom they pleased, including slaves; but they had to regard Bosommuru as their 'father' and 'husband' and had to keep the god's taboos.

Nevertheless, the institution of patrilineal marriage met with great resentment, above all from the women, and people still recall with horror the frequent poisoning of husbands and wives which took place in Takyi Akwamo's reign. The most obnoxious novelty was that the wife was obliged to recognize her husband as head of the household, ruling through the power of his *ntoro* god; and had also to be segregated during menstruation. Many women grew so



vexed that they ran away from their husbands and bigamously married traders in the Moslem quarter of the city, or turned prostitutes. To limit the epidemic of poisoning, the Queenmother Kyereme Mansa, a highly moral woman, and herself married to a priest, instituted the *akunaye* and *kunaguo* laws, which imposed an ordeal on widows and widowers. The surviving spouse of a marriage was ordered to bewail his or her dead spouse for a year, appearing downtrodden, ragged and dirty in public, fasting at stipulated times, and abstaining from all sexual intercourse. At the conclusion of this ordeal a second funeral ceremony was performed, after which the mourner was purified (*kunaguo*) and could marry again. Kyereme Mansa also ordered the payment of a bride price at every marriage as a safeguard for the wife's proper maintenance.

Takyi Akwamo further set up the office of *abusua panyin*, which meant that an elder of each royal clan was maintained at Court to watch the interest of his clan in judicial matters. A sister, or close relative, of his was attached to the Queenmother's Court which dealt principally with offences against the marriage laws. On the other hand, to remind the clans that they were now subordinate to the reigning family of the royal clan, each of them must give the King a boy to serve as *ahenkwa*, or page; and the Queenmother, a girl. The girl was replaced when she reached the age of puberty.

Kyereme Mansa is remembered as an excellent potter and patroness of potters, to whom she gave permission to use the human figure in ceramics. She died of tuberculosis (*bobo*) at the age of seventy-four.

The minstrels sing of Takyi Akwamo: *Hede Takyi abeam; atakyi suo nea emene. 'Sono' na merefre no. Merema no 'abe' sakraka orentumi nto; wofre no 'abe' sakraka.* (Soft earth that can drown an elephant; I offer him a palm-tree to uproot. If he cannot do so, I will call it a mighty palm-tree.)

5. Gyako I (1463-75) and Kuromo Kese (1463-1527)

Gyako was the nephew of Takyi Akwamo and, while still a prince, interested himself in farming millet and certain species of yams. He brought to Bono labourers, mostly Nafana people from the Banda country on the west, who were familiar with the cultivation of this crop. He is said to have been incapable of enjoying an idle life. When he became King his first interest was to regulate the marriage customs. In opposition to the young Queenmother Kur-

omo Kese, he fully supported the *ntoro* cult, and insisted that every child should be surnamed after a *ntoro* ancestor of its father. Women were encouraged to help their husbands on the farms by an exemption from state tax (*amato*). The bride price was reduced to a minimum, so that no women should lack a husband. Gyako introduced new adultery laws (*ayeferagya*) under which the guilty party became liable to a heavy fine.

Finding herself unable to crush the *ntoro* cult, Kuromo Kese ('the Great') did her best to strengthen the cult of the *abosom* in general; in consultation with the oracles of various deities, she fixed obligatory days for their worship. She is recorded to have stammered badly and behaved both noisily when pleased, and uncontrollably when vexed. She ruled for sixty-four years, remaining Queenmother throughout the entire reign of Gyako's successor and during half the reign of the next King.

The minstrels praise Gyako: *Pinpimnipi a zhye nokware nkɔm*. ('Great King who truly foretells things to come.') And: *Adre ba Gyako, kontromfi a osia ne asuo. Kontromfi yensi no nsema. Nipa a obedi wuo fa ntam gye no*. ('Gyako, thou son of River Volta, Chimpanzee that walks along the river. A chimpanzee can never be trapped; but who says that he will never taste death, let him swear it!')

6. *Dwamena Kwaame (1475-95) and Kuromo Kese*

Dwamena Kwaame, Gyako's brother, was forty years old when he came to the stool and well versed in state affairs, having acted for many years as heir-apparent. For fear that a nephew might succeed he never left Gyako's side, and at his death stole the royal regalia and stool paraphernalia. Kuromo Kese and her elders, who did not wish him to be King, made a strong but unavailing protest.

Like his immediate predecessors, Dwamena Kwaame took great pains to reform marriage customs. He instituted the *ayeforo*, a wedding feast to reward girls who had kept their maidenhead until their wedding day; and decreed that whoever offered marriage to a girl must be sponsored by respectable elderly men or women. By one of his laws, a debt owed by a bride's family (*tirinsatuo*) could be liquidated by the bride price. If the wife died, her family had to return the money to the husband—doubtless to prevent the wife or her family from poisoning him.

Towards the end of Dwamena Kwaame's reign Kuromo Kese

placed funeral rites on a new footing. They now corresponded with the causes of death, which she classified as follows:

1. *Abodwewu*—death from natural causes, such as old age or any illness except leprosy. The house was darkened, and the family in town notified. The corpse, washed and drained of its liquid contents, lay in state for two to five days, to let distant relatives arrive in time for the funeral. The family fasted until the body had been buried. Relatives paid funeral donations; and afterwards settled all debts of the deceased—whose property could then be inherited. If the deceased held an hereditary office, his or her successor had to be elected before the relatives left town.

2. *Nsramuwu*—death by violence, during a battle, a riot or a festival. This death was regarded as honourable, because its victims laid down their lives for the community. Warriors who died thus had the right to be buried with arms. Hitherto no weapons had been placed in a grave, lest the ghosts who took them into the Upper Kingdom, or Heaven, might disturb its peace.

3. *Anwobawu*—death of a childless woman or man. Anyone who died without issue had failed to justify his or her life on earth: 'the barren have no face in the Other World (*asaman*).' The corpse was therefore washed outside the house, and a ball of pepper pushed into the corpse's rectum. In the case of a woman, the husband paid the funeral expenses.

4. *Atɔfɔwu*—the death of the transgressor, which included suicide, death by leprosy and accidental deaths by lightning, earthquake, drowning, and so forth, which were regarded as a punishment for sin. The body was not to be brought home; and had to be buried unwashed, and without any rites—unless the deceased held an important official position.

5. *Amumuwu*—a woman's death during pregnancy or childbirth, or in consequence of an abortion or still birth. The corpse was buried unwashed and sitting on a chair (*akentendwa*). Nobody might weep for her, because this sort of death was also regarded as a punishment for sin. The dead child or foetus had to be buried, unwashed, in an old cooking pot.

Dwamena Kwaame composed the following lines with which a minstrel may still warn a king: *Afre kese'ma, duoduokwa wo nya amane a wommua, wonya amane a efi nea obea wo. Mani kyerefo na etum mani.* ('The squirrel says: if you are accused, then it is thanks

to your neighbour [for your sins would hardly be discovered otherwise]. A man is always betrayed and killed by his neighbour.')

7. *Afena Yao I* (1495–1564), *Kuromo Kese* (1463–1527) and *Nyako I* (1527–64)

In 1495 the Guan on the eastern frontier made war on Bono. They discovered where the matrilineal heirs to the royal stool were hiding and killed them all, including the heir-apparent. No matrilineally legitimate successor could be found when Dwamena Kwaame abdicated. Properly he should have committed suicide, since no king was allowed to survive a disaster of such magnitude. But Dwamena Kwaame remained alive, hoping for a return to power, and suggested that Yao, the heir-apparent's son, should be made king. Kuromo Kese violently opposed the choice. Yao was a grandson of Dwamena Kwaame, but his mother came of the Asona clan and Kuromo Kese feared that the royal succession might fall into their hands. Finally she agreed on condition that Yao married her daughter Yaa Aberefi and became regent, not King. This he did and received the title 'Afena', which means 'Protector', and was presented by Dwamena Kwaame with the *afena* sword, a scimitar which emblemized his office. Even so she put such obstacles in his path that the elders rebelled and tried to exile her. In this they failed, but forced her at last to swear *abosomnom*,¹ which meant allegiance to Afena Yao.

Kuromo Kese was succeeded by Nyako I who died, like Afena Yao, in the thirty-eighth year of their joint reign. She spoke many Sudanese languages because, while she was young, her greatest pleasure had been accompanying royal envoys on their visits to foreign courts. On becoming Queenmother she married a wood-carver, of Guan extraction, who is said to have carved for her the *maa dwa*—to this day the ceremonial stool of the Akan Queenmothers. She is remembered as an exceptionally good cook.

The post of *Akyeamehene*, 'chief of the royal spokesmen', was created to assist Afena Yao, when he came to the stool as a young boy. The *Akyeamehene*, an office still in existence in all Akan states, acts as the King's confidential counsellor in matters of state.

¹ To swear *abosomnom* means that the offender has to drink a liquid which had been first poured over the stool of the founder of the state, and is then collected in a calabash. He or she has to say the following words: 'If I ever break this oath the *kra*'s of the Royal Ancestors kill me.'

Afena Yao's reign is summed up in the saying: *Nkotinko Krodonko abɔ me dawuru a abɔ, me san san. Dawuru kese mpare baabiara*, which means: 'When you are sent to convey news of an authority by means of a *gong-gong*, say the words plainly, so that everybody may hear and understand them clearly. For a *gong-gong* message must be heard by everybody everywhere.' This refers to Afena Yao's proclamation as regent, which was so unusual, as not at first to be understood by the people.

8. *Berempon Katakya* (1564-95), *Ameyaa II* (1564-1566), *Yaa Aberefi* (1566-76) and *Adwowa Twimwaa* (1576-93)

At the beginning of this reign Berempon Katakya was greatly concerned about Ameyaa II, the Queenmother, who was enstooled about the same time as himself. She had been obliged to divorce her Moslem husband, a rich Mossi trader, because the people feared that the royal lineage might be converted to Islam, and soon after, her little son, who had been circumcised, died. Being a Moslem no royal funeral rites were performed for him. Ameyaa, though suspected of murdering him, was so broken-hearted that thenceforth she wore only red cloth in token of her grief. She reigned for no more than two years.

Her successor, Yaa Aberefi II, played an unhappy part in Bono history. She was devoted to her father, a Fante by birth, and to all the Fante immigrants who had come into the country with him some twenty years before. They were warriors who dared not return home after a serious defeat. Afena Yao allowed them to settle in Bono-Mansu, and honoured their leader Amoasanka, by making him the *Korontihene*, i.e., the local governor, and giving him a princess to wife. Others of the Fante captains also married princesses or royal daughters and when Yaa Aberefi, who seems to have been Amoasanka's daughter, came to the stool, she intrigued to get the royal succession into Fante hands. In this she was forestalled, and forced to commit suicide with the last of her many husbands. Yaa Aberefi II was succeeded by Adwowa Twimwaa, the daughter of a Wasa trader in gold dust, a weak colourless Queenmother, who is remembered only as introducer of the *eteota* spoon, still the most popular cooking utensil among Akan women, and the *awerewa kanea* brass lamp.

At the beginning of Berempon Katakya's reign a large number

of Mande warriors, some speaking Wangara, others a Guan dialect, had taken refuge both in Bono and in Gonja, the state which bounds Bono on the north. Like the Fante, they were ambitious for supreme power and shortly before 1595 they won it in Gonja. A large new group of Mande (under Diakpa their leader) came there as invaders, armed with guns, joined their compatriots, and conquered western Gonja with Gbuipe (Manwere) the state capital, on the other side of the Black Volta immediately to the north of Bono-Mansu. The Mande in Bono-Mansu now rebelled, supported by Mande troops from Gonja, and a famine caused by the arrival of large numbers of Gonja refugees spread such distress that Berempon felt himself responsible for natural calamities. He announced that he would 'fight death'. He had himself walled into a conical hut (*danmum*), meaning a house without doors or windows, where he fasted for thirty or forty days until he died.

The minstrels sing of him: '*Okyem tete a ma da bremo, bremo tete a ma da kyem. Okyem na adoa ta Kyere bremo senianse, obire fiampon odi akwanton mu Ade ne Nana Katakya obonini nkrawiri bi nnim naboa suban*', meaning: 'An old shield made of twigs rests on the centre-part of its framework; an old centre-part weighs down a shield. The shield's roundness presents itself to view, the centre-part beneath keeps it in balance. That Nana Katakya, one does not know what type of animal he personifies.'

9. *Yeboa Ananta (1595-1609), Kuruwa I (1593-98), Aferanowaa (1598-1604) and Aferakomaa (1604-1610)*

The new King, Yeboa, contrived to re-establish order within a couple of years. He bought guns from Danish merchants on the coast and with these defeated the Mande. He received the posthumous praise-name of 'Ananta', 'Danish gun.' A minstrel song eulogizes him thus: *Nkron ne nkron nua wose din na wonse nko mmrane. Onipa a wɔɔ din, na wɔɔ ne din sa no nko mmrane*. ('Take nine, take nine bothers. Their names are the same but not their deeds. He who is famous for his deeds alone deserves new titles of praise.')

Yeboa Ananta re-established the divine kingship; and though said to have often insisted that gold symbolizes the King, and silver the Queenmother, nevertheless had a spinning basket made for the Queenmother in gold rather than silver.

The Fante immigrants who had given so much trouble under Berempon Katakya, were joined in Bono shortly before the Mande war, by another group of Fante, most of them women. After the war, Yeboa Ananta decided that the Fante should have a town of their own. Takyifiri, a grandson of Yaa Nyamaa, a niece of Amoasanka, therefore left Bono-Mansu for a village some ten miles away, then inhabited by Dja-mo or Djomo (Twi pronunciation: *Dwomo*). He enlarged it into Takyiman, which soon became the second town in the country. His mother Yaa Takyiwaa gave 'life' to Tano, the Fantes' national deity, in a cave near the river Agyentoo.¹ The Queenmother Kuruwa I, the daughter of a Fante priest, accepted the god by presenting Takyiwaa with a golden key, as symbol of her office as high-priestess to Tano. The King gave gold dust to be poured into the source of the river—now called the Tano—when rites were performed.

Yeboa Ananta specialized in cotton-growing, spinning, and weaving, and imported weavers from the Wangara country. Kuruwa I decreed that spinning was an exclusively female pursuit, and introduced the art into her palace, which kept numerous girls busy. It was on this account that Yeboa Ananta gave her the golden spinning basket. He is remembered as a very religious man, who did nothing without consulting the divine oracles. With equal punctilio he also consulted the various Queenmothers who shared his reign.

Kuruwa I had several children by Tano priests whom, however, she did not marry. She died, after a short reign, from an unmentionable disease, perhaps leprosy. Great purificatory ceremonies took place. She was succeeded by Aferanowaa, an ambitious woman of the dark-coloured line of the royal lineage. She managed to secure the stool after many intrigues in which she had been supported by the *Banmuhene* and the *Banmuhemmaa*, respectively the priest of the King's, and the priestess of the Queenmother's, cemetery. She had been three times married before she assumed office, first to a slave and then to two *mallams* (Moslem priests) whom she is said to have married for their wealth; but never embraced the Moslem faith.

Aferanowaa was succeeded by her daughter Aferakomaa, who

¹ The Fante under Amoasanka brought their Tano god with them. However, the *ɔbosom* was 'rediscovered' on a Friday by the priest at Bonse near the former Bono-Mansu, that is to say Taa Kofi (Tano, 'He of Friday') appeared to the priest and told him in which tree and stream he wished to reside.



40. Old mural decoration in the courtyard leading to the Chapel of the Stools at Takyiman. It depicts a sacred tree of which the branches are stylized in such a fashion that they convey life-giving water. Note the lozenges and the eight-pointed star, symbols of fertility.



41. Dais of the *obosom* Dame in the form of a truncated cone and square in front of the sanctuary of the deity upon which the shrine is placed on Dame's birthday.



42. *Oyene Maa* statuette, 'She who nurses children', carved in wood. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Abbey Museum, New Barnet, London. Height 12½ inches.)



43. *Oyene Maa* statuette in brass at the *Ahenfie* at Takyiman.

also reigned only for a short time. She owed her stool to the *Ban-muhene*, and when she became Queenmother made his office an important one. She married several times and also took a number of lovers, mostly foreign envoys. She did much to smother the quarrels which arose in the Palace because so many of the princes and princesses had been converted to Islam, and were therefore disqualified from burial in the royal cemeteries.

10. *Ati Kwaame (1609-18) and Takyiwaa (1611-43)*

Just before Ati Kwaame became King, the Fante, inspired by their god Tano, had made another bid for power. Ati Kwaame prudently recognized Tano as the State god of Bono, on condition that the Fante promised to recognize the royal lineage as owners of the state and never to usurp the King's and Queenmother's stools. After the death of a King or Queenmother the *Gyaasehene*, 'chief of the royal household', now took charge of the regalia and stool paraphernalia, which had to be kept under lock and key until a successor had been lawfully elected; he wore a gold key on public occasions to symbolize this duty.

Ati Kwaame had been a goldsmith before becoming King, and travelled widely in the Sudan to study gold-mining techniques, especially in the Mande Wangara country: he imported these into Bono during his short reign. He also introduced the *maa dwa*, or five-legged stool, now used by all Akan kings as the sacred throne (Pl. 45). The leather cushions (*ate*) on which the King sat when rites were performed, were no longer placed, after his death, in the Chapel of the Stools; the *maa dwa*, covered with a gold sheet and its columns filled with gold dust, took their place. The *asipim* chair still served as throne on public occasions. After a dispute about the succession to the Queenmother's stool had lasted for over a year, Takyiwaa was elected. She was fair-skinned and had long soft tresses, a long nose, and a long slender neck, features which she inherited from her Fulani father, but so hairy a skin that the people affectionately nicknamed her '*Efoɔ*' (monkey). She was a fine dancer and a heavy drinker. Her main interest was to enlarge the kingdom of Bono, and she managed to incorporate into it several small states on the eastern frontier.

The King is praised: *Ohene Ati, otire a eso nnadee, Osraman hene, Nana Ati. Bisa nsuo a mansa Nana. Benkum ne nifa da wo ase.* ('Strong-headed King Ati, like a head that carries iron. Great

lightning Nana Ati. If you ask for water, Nana will give you drink. Left and right wing, thank you for your generosity.'))

11. *Ameyaw Kurompe* (1618-33) and *Takyiwaa* (1611-1643)

As soon as Ameyaw Kurompe became king, he sent six of his predecessor's sons to countries beyond the 'white desert'; namely, to the Fezzan and North Africa; with orders to discover how the kings there ruled. He welcomed new ideas, but it is no longer remembered what reforms he made, except that he introduced the *Afirihiya Dwaree*, an annual *kra*-washing ceremony on the autumnal New Year's day. At its close, the King appeared as the rising sun, covered with gold ornaments and clad in a square loin-cloth woven in gold thread, his body dusted with gold; and took his seat on a golden stool made for the occasion. This new tradition is celebrated in the lines: *Asikadwahene Ameyaw Kurompe a opim-pam ne man* ('Ameyaw Kurompe of the Golden Stool, who peacefully settles matters in the state.')

Ameyaw Kurompe ordered the water for the *Afirihiya Dwaree* to be brought from the source of the Tano river. To get it in its purest condition he had two hollow elephant tusks, pierced and covered with gold sheet, fixed to the place where the spring first breaks from the rocks.

Towards the end of his reign the Banda kingdom on Bono's western frontier was torn by civil war, and then invaded by a small Nafana army. Ameyaw Kurompe thereupon ousted the Nafana from Banda, which was rich in gold mines; but later allowed them to settle behind the Kyem river in the Banda hills. Ameyaw Kurompe was consequently called: *Ameyaw Kurompe, Boɔ Kɛse, asa brane se wo, pamboɔ* ('Ameyaw Kurompe, Great Stone, who deserves martial fame as Thrower of Stones'). This meant that, like the Sky-god, he rained down meteorites.

During this reign, Domaa immigrants from the Akwamu kingdom to the south, and Bona-Nkoran people of the Ayoko-Falcon clan, were awarded lands in Bono's most southerly province, part of the central forest. They founded Asantemanso which soon became a big market town, where goods from Bono were exchanged for European manufactures brought up from the coast. It seems that when the Denkyira conquered the Adanse kingdom, immediately to the south, they also invaded Asantemanso. Ameyaa Kurompe

decided to make war on them but died before he could do so, and Asantemanso passed into the hands of the Denkyira, from whom the Asante took it in 1701.

Osenkuku nea ewen amanfo Akatakyi 'brebo' a wodi ani sem a wogya no bi nne no. ('A valiant, undaunted man who watches the nation; he is the man who is called upon when deeds are to be performed.')

12. *Afena Diamono (1633-9) and Takyiwaa (1611-43)*

Afena Diamono is said to have become King because he was determined to be King. He had been regarded as too young for the office and thus earned the nickname '*Diamono*', meaning 'the immature'. His character was disagreeable and, when King, he revenged himself on all who had opposed his election, executing two leading chiefs, Takyiakwa and Kotokuo. Hence: *Woaye saa akum Gyan Takyiakwa moma kyere soro a ogye bo.* ('You have killed Gyan Takyiakwa, a bold man'—literally, whose forehead when it points to the sky accepts stones.) And: *Obrebro-tim koto babi a na yesre se okoto babi a na ye amuna, Sanaa Kese firi a kom gu. Ate mankorasee mampam see nia pam Kotokuohene—baniniba, Asamoa brofo ase ade kese nsokosuo.* ('When there is hunger we are unhappy but Sanaa Kese, the harvest festival dispells it.')

In Afena Diamono's reign war broke out. About 1634 the Mande chief Diakpa Lanta had conquered the eastern Gonja and Dagomba, and built up a large kingdom for himself. It seems that Diakpa Lanta invaded the Nsawkaw and Kintampo provinces of Bono; at all events, Afena Diamono declared war against him, was defeated and committed suicide.

13. *Owusu Aduam (1639-49) and Akua Gyamfiwaa (1643-56)*

When Owusu Aduam came to the stool at a time of chaos, he eventually managed to expel the Gonja invaders and restore order, though the royal treasury was now empty and great losses in life and goods had occurred. To restore prosperity he settled refugees from eastern Gonja in certain gold-mining districts, mainly along the Tain river; introduced a new trading agreement between Bono-Mansu and Takyiman; and settled traders from foreign parts in both towns. By the end of his reign much wealth had again accumulated; as the King demonstrated by publicly wearing the

abakoma-naase, anklets made of precious beads and gold, which were later copied by all Akan kings (Pl. 1).

Owusu Aduam was supported by the Queenmother Akua Gyamfiwaa. As a princess, she had been a great trader and travelled in many parts of the Sudan with a retinue of thirty slave girls. Every time she returned to Bono-Mansu she introduced new fashions, and also brought bead-makers to teach her women to make glass beads. Her husband, a slave, was both gold-miner and goldsmith. When elected Queenmother she refused to stay in the Palace; so the King obliged her to wear the *aba koma bode*, heavy anklets made of gold and glass beads, so that 'her feet should be too heavy to move'. In theory a Queenmother never stirred from the Palace—but left the heiress-apparent to represent her in public.

When Owusu Aduam's mother suddenly died, he was beside himself with grief. The minstrels refer to this event in the song: *Wo ase nsinnsin a se brebre. Aboabi akita sadom agya ne ba. Onipa a obedi wuo fa ntam gya. Obi nnim faakon a Obewu ada.* (Freely translated: 'Take heart, do not sacrifice too many people. Take your time despite your grief. Nobody knows when he will die.')

14. *Akumfi Ameyaw II (1649-59), Akua Gyamfiwaa (1643-56) and Gyasewaa (1656-79)*

Akumfi Ameyaw II is remembered as a martinet. He ruthlessly deposed or executed whatever chiefs did not immediately obey his commands. His title '*Akumfi Agyeman*', 'Slayer of Men, Conqueror of States', refers perhaps to the vassal states of Bono whose chiefs made a bid for independence at the close of Afena Diamono's reign. The men who came to arrest people used to sing: '*Osum*' *awo neba ato 'Ankama', 'Boade' awo neba ato 'Ankama'; Ankama se orensom osum; orensum hyene anka o'me Adawu begoru, Nsaman agoru, Adidie mu Kwabragyana ne ahenegoru.* ('Osum' (Darkness) got a child and named it 'Ankama'; 'Boade' (Creator of Light) got a child and named it 'Ankama'. Both Ankama refused to serve Darkness and Light, and instead played the game of ghosts with minstrel songs. Greedy monsters who play with chiefs) by way of consoling the men arrested that more important people than they had earned the King's displeasure. To show his power, he had a two-decker state-umbrella (*bidabiakyi*), made for himself, which the people called *bitebiso*, 'someone sits on someone else', and which is still used by the reigning Bono-Takyimanhene (Pl. 1).

In the beginning of his short reign Ameyaw, a Fante prince matrilineally descended from the Queenmother Yaa Takyiwaa and the son of a King of Bono (perhaps Ameyaw Kurompe), 'rediscovered' another Tano god in the ford where the Sunyani road crosses the Tano river. The god revealed that he was to be worshipped at Bono-Mansu; and later, that he also needed a sanctuary at Takyiman. He further demanded that the state capital should be transferred to Takyiman. Akumfi Ameyaw refused, but to avoid any further trouble with this god and his Fante supporters, agreed that the *Korontihene* of Bono-Mansu and the people serving him, mostly of DjoMo (*Dwomo*) descent, many of them Adiaaka, should settle in Takyiman. The newly-discovered god, now named Tano Kɛse, 'Tano the Great', was then awarded a temple in Takyiman. Ameyaw became his first High Priest.

Akumfi Ameyaw II is further remembered for having created the post of *Akrafohene*, 'Chief of the *akrafo*', and bearer of the King's *kra*, or soul. He wore the *akrafokoom*, a gold disc decorated with solar designs, as badge of office on his breast.

When the Queenmother Akua Gyamfiwaa died, she was succeeded by Yaa Gyasewaa. Her first demand was that a queenmother, too, should have her state-umbrella. The King refused, but granted her the *hema-papa*, large fans in the shape of palm-leaves, and symbolizing the moon. The *hema-papa* are still used by Asante queenmothers.

15. *Kofi Asamankwa (1659-64) and Gyasewaa (1656-79)*

The sickly King Kofi Asamankwa died after five years on the stool; he is believed to have suffered from tuberculosis. He had been elected because of his reputed love of order and wisdom, and is remembered as *Asamankwa Abrakwamsi, Ohene ne hwan* ('Asamankwa Abrakwamsi [an untranslatable title] who is the king')¹⁰ but because of his illness the *Korontihene* became the real ruler of the kingdom, or so it is said. When the *Korontihene* brought some chiefs into court, the people begged Kofi Asamankwa for their lives in the following words, still recalled by the minstrels: *Kofi Ababio, ɔdofo neyae neho abredi. Nana Osraman, Aduomere, Owusu ne Kwaw onipa be wu. Nana w'o amanfo da wo ase.* ('Kofi Ababio ["the reborn"], a loving heart interferes and persuades. King Lightning, everybody dies. [We plead for] Aduomere, Owusu and Kwaw. Nana, the people of the state thank you.')'



In his reign the Queenmother Gyasewaa built a new palace outside the capital and named it '*Nkotimso*' ('[Place of] those to whom one cannot speak'), (i.e., too great to be accosted. She designed different hair-styles for palace use, so that various non-royal attendants, including girls sent her for education, should no longer be mistaken for princesses of the royal lineage.

16. *Owusu Akyempo* (1664-9) and *Gyasewaa* (1656-79)

Before Owusu became King he had been superintendent of the gold miners, originally either slaves or refugee immigrants, bound to serve the royal lineage; and loved gold so much that while still a prince, he used to play with gold coins in public, and at festivals would reward dancers with them in token of his appreciation. When as a king, he rewarded his ministers similarly, he earned the nickname '*Owusu Akyempo*', 'Owusu, he who gives presents of gold pieces.'

17. *Gyamfi Kumanini* (1669-84) and *Gyasewaa* (1656-79)

Of Gyamfi Kumanini it is recorded that he used to let people under sentence of death escape, for the pleasure of recapturing them in a night hunt. The minstrels allude to this in the song: *Anofi Nkodie na ebo abum nne kwae Sroboa obo bubu a ye mpam*. ('A night eagle which disperses monkeys in the bush—one cannot mend a stone, once it has broken into pieces'—meaning that a convicted man has no real chance of escape.) To gain favour with the people Gyamfi Kumanini often pardoned commoners guilty of the same charges for which he sentenced chiefs with severity.

Gyamfi Kumanini, who loved the display of wealth and power, instituted the night market at Bono-Mansu and Takyiman, and collected heavy tolls from Sudanese traders in form of gold nuggets and gold dust. The state treasury grew rich, and in self-satisfaction he had a golden stool made for his daily use. It now became fashionable to wear silk cloth imported by 'a tall fair race with silky hair who came from a great river in the far north that spread out like the sky'—presumably the Egyptians.

In his reign the god Tano Kese demanded that the *Werempe* ceremony should be instituted, together with the *Apunya*. The intention of the *Werempe* ceremony, still performed in every Akan state, is that the spirit of the late King shall enter into the stool on which his corpse has been bathed—a new stool made for him while

he was still alive. The *Werempe* officials, among them members of the royal lineage, carry for this purpose the stool to the Royal Cemetery at night, after the completion of the funeral rites for the royal deceased. It is then placed in the Chapel of the Stools, after being blackened (*apunia*) in the Chapel courtyard—which is the *Apunya* ceremony,¹ Hitherto the small golden seat, introduced by Ati Kwaame, housed the solar *kra* of the Kings. The blood of sacrificed animals was henceforth poured over the stools. This signified a theological change from the theory of *Kra*, or disembodied power, to that of *saman*—the ghost or shade of the deceased, to which the blood gave immortal life. Gyamfo Kumanini ordered that the death of kings and queenmothers were no longer announced as such. When Gyasewaa died, he informed the people that she had gone back to her own village, where she would henceforth reside.

18. *Boakye Tenten* (1684–92) and *Ankomaa* (1680–1707)

Boakye Tenten is mainly remembered for military reforms.² He reorganized his army on the Akwamu fashion, when he became involved in war with the Gonja. He also fought the Nsawkaw people of Banda, who had rebelled, a campaign to which the minstrels allude in their chant: *Yerekɔ Nsawkaw Krukru-atabiako; Amo Kyereme. Tadia Kɛsɛ a yaawa wo so.* ('We are going to Nsawkaw Krukru-Atabiako [the name of the people];³ Amo Kyereme (the

¹ The *Werempe* and *Apunya* ceremonies are described in detail in the *Akan Divine Kingship*, Ch. VIII.

² He would appear to have introduced the military titles for the seven clan chiefs in his council and given each special duties to perform in war—*Adontenhene*, *Nifahene*, *Benkumhene*, *Akwamuhene*, *Kyidomhene*, *Twafohene* and *Ankobeahene*. The seven head-women in the Queenmother's council received the same titles—*Adonten-ba-panyin*, *Nifa-ba-panyin*, *Benkum-ba-panyin*, *Akwamu-ba-panyin*, *Kyidom-ba-panyin*, *Twafo-ba-panyin* and *Ankobe-ba-panyin*. As counterpart to the king's *Korontihene* she had the *Koronti-ba-panyin* (*ba panyin* meaning elder woman), her former title, was *Mmaa Naano* 'Head of the women'. She still acts as the queenmother's deputy and should she be absent her place is taken by the *Akwamu-ba-panyin*.

The counterpart to the king's *Gyaasehene*, chief of the royal household, is still in the queenmother's household the *Gyaase-ba panyin*. Information was given by the Queenmother of Bono-Takyiman and her elders.

³ Nsawkaw or Nsoko was founded by Moslem from Bɛɛo-Nsoko after the destruction of the Banda kingdom (ca. 1630) on land that belonged to the Koro, Kuru (or N'Koran). The Atabiako people from Hani conquered Nsoko and buried the skull of the N'koran chief under a tree they planted, and placed beneath the tree the large brass basin engraved with ornamental Arabic characters which they had taken from the Moslem. See *Akan Traditions of Origin*, p. 47 and n. 1.

name of the conquered chief). Great Tree, on it[s roots] a brass basin.'))

Until Boakye Tenten's reign, the King had lived secluded among his women, who had been under the Queenmother's charge. It was perhaps owing to his long wars that Boakye Tenten decided to give the women a separate quarter, and instituted the *maam*, or harem, where they were supervised by eunuchs.

After Gyasewaa's death, a stool-dispute broke out and no queen-mother was elected for several months. The choice fell finally on Ankomaa, daughter of Abena Aberefi, the youngest sister of Gyamfiwaa, who had married a Moslem Mo and thereupon been forced to leave the country. On the death of her husband, Abena Aberefi returned with the eight-year-old Ankomaa, born in Mo country. Ankomaa is mainly remembered for having introduced the European sedan-chair (*sako*) for queenmothers, toe-rings (*suntikaa*), and Mande hair-dress (*takuwaa tire*) for women.

19. *Kyereme Pambuo* (1692–1712), *Ankomaa* (1680–1707) and *Nyako II* (1707–26)

Opataku Sanku a womno no agyegyirenfi. Nsia ne Nsoa ba Bansotire na merefre no. Bonini Nkrawiri a obiara nnim naboasuban. ('A harp called "wolf" one does not play in vain. Nsia and Nsoa's son Bansotire was summoned. A barren woman's music nobody understands, it has the character of a beast.')

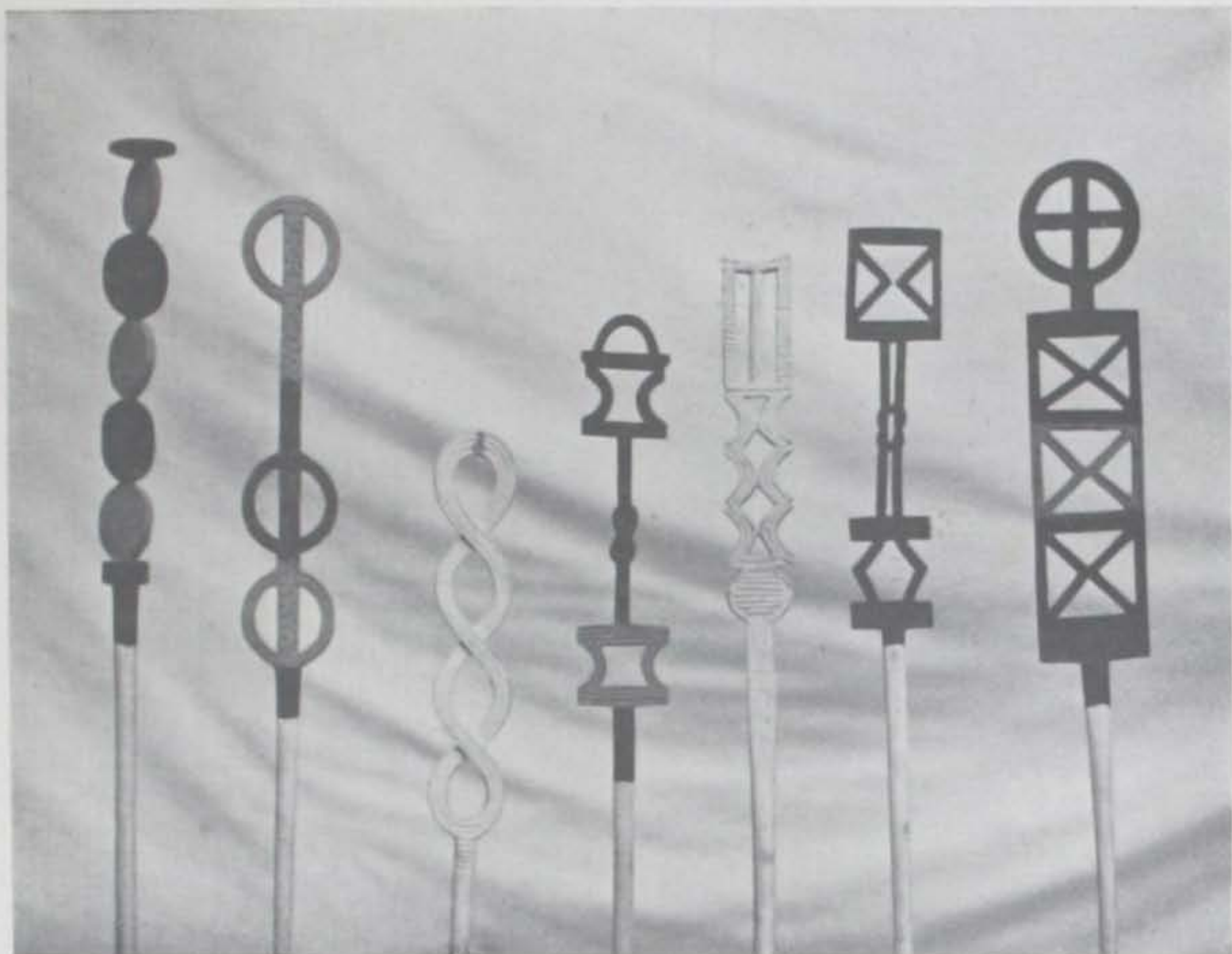
Kyereme Pambuo's Fante father had brought him up among the Fante, which explains his great favour towards them and towards Takyiman, their town. He is said to have made trade agreements with the light-skinned people who imported the silk cloth, and to have arranged for annual caravans to visit his kingdom from North Africa. The market of Takyiman was about a mile long and lined by guest-houses intended for the foreign merchants.¹

Kyereme Pambuo showed such indulgence to the princes and royal sons, whom wealth and power corrupted, that though their sport was to ride madly through the town, shooting arrows at passers-by, he never punished them. He also let them ill-treat their attendants and slaves so vilely that many of these fled to the coast.

In his reign the 'political'² god Sakrabundu of Mande-Wangara

¹ See also *Sacred State*, pp. 206, 207. For descriptions, the lay-out and architecture of Bono-Mansu and Takyiman see p. 186 *et passim*.

² He was called thus by the Wankyihene Nana Kwaame Abrafo V (now destooled) in a conversation with me.



44. Ceremonial chewing sticks decorated with celestial symbols from Bisease, Takyiman district. They are between 12 and 15 inches high. They are sometimes placed with the offerings on the shrines of the gods and the Royal Ancestors.



45. The five-legged 'Silver Stool' of Nana Akumfi Ameyaw III.



46



47

46. This gold mask of a Queenmother is believed to have come from the Baule country in the French Ivory Coast. The Baule Kingdom was founded by an Akan Queenmother (*ca.* 1750). Note the symbolism: the life and death giving arrows of the Mother goddess which decorate her cheeks; the moon-shaped mouth signifying conception, with 2 lines on each side (2 is symbolic of birth and creation) and 3 lines below the centre of the mouth (3 is symbolic of the goddess as ruler of the Sky, Earth and Underworld). Forehead, eyebrows and nose form an axe of the type that represented the power of the lunar ruler in the sky and on earth. Above it, in the centre of the hair, seven lines symbolize the seven planets or the seven clans which represent them on earth and form the state. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire at Dakar.)

47. The gold mask of a lunar King, like the gold mask of the Queenmother is probably from Baule. Note his headdress consisting of 2 horns in the form of crescent moons, the five lines across his forehead (5 is symbolic of the goddess and her son) and the 3 triangles of the goddess which make it clear that he rules in her stead, or the Queenmother who represents her on earth, and which is further emphasized by the 3 lines on each cheek. The mouth is moon-shaped, the moon with points downward symbolizing protection, protection to the people of the seven clans, which is expressed by the seven little squares which form his beard. The 4 lines on the base of the horns convey that the King, like the lunar god, rules the 4 quarters of the sky. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire at Dakar.)

origin started to enjoy royal support. Sakrabundu, an antelope god, was originally a Sky-Fertility-deity of the type of Ntoa and Tano.¹ In the Bono kingdom, however, the *ɔbosom*'s priests, unable to secure an important place for their god, finally concentrated on the smelling out of witches and black magic. 'Witches' were people whom the government believed to be politically unreliable, and wealthy men and women who had become too influential. They had to submit to a poison ordeal, which was fatal unless they had previously bribed the priests with large sums.² In the case of wealthy people the King, or the Queenmother if it was a female victim, confiscated their gold dust and thus enriched themselves or their treasuries.³

Nyako II, who succeeded Ankomaa, had married a goldsmith, said to have been a Songhay from Gao. She shared Kyereme Pambuo's passion for trade.

20. Ameyaw Kwaakye (1712-40), Nyako II (1707-26) and Dwambara Akonten (1726-42)

Kyereme Pambuo was succeeded, over a year after his death, by his nephew Ameyaw Kwaakye, whose chief interest was also the amassing of wealth. He is mainly remembered in this respect as the 'Creator of the Golden Wall'. The minstrels still sing:

'Atintimma ankata suo ankata wia. Atintimma bebu ama dan afere. Dwebera Antwi; Kwabrane.' ('A wall which can not protect one against rain and sun. A wall, that is not a wall, is ashamed to call itself a wall. Tyrant, Mighty Lord.')

? The Golden Wall was erected at Akyinhatae round the large flat rock on which gold dust was dried and bottled like liquor and gold

¹ Sakrabundu is still worshipped as such by the Kulango and others in the French Ivory Coast.

² The sacred water of Sakrabundu, in contrast to that of other deities, was poisonous. It did not come from a special river or stream but was water into which poison was mixed. The poison was sacred, for when it had to be transported, from one sanctuary to the other, the poison was extracted from the water, in clay balls which then were dried and later dissolved again in water. Information was given in Odumase.

³ The cult of Sakrabundu was also introduced into Asante at an unknown date; it became so murderous that when Asante came under British rule the worship of this *ɔbosom* was forbidden and all the sanctuaries and sacred groves with their stone circles, characteristic for the god, were destroyed. The dances connected with the cult, however, survived in certain regions. I saw one at Wankyi one night; it is quite unlike that of other *abosom*. The dancers of whom half were male, half female, were ranged in order of size, starting with the tallest man to the smallest boy, then the tallest woman to the smallest girl, and formed an incomplete circle, moving in huge spirals, snakelike. The spiral is a symbol of birth and creation.

nuggets were cast in the shape of yams. The bottles and the 'yams' were then stored like Yams (hence the name of the Wall *Aputuo*, meaning yam store); they were pushed through loops of ropes fastened to poles, so closely packed that they formed a long wall.

The guardians in charge of the treasure were so numerous that a village sprang up to house them.

Every utensil in the palace was now made of gold, including the lampstands in the courtyards, and Ameyaw Kwaakye had his state umbrellacovered with gold plate. He gave Tano Twumpuduo a golden basin to be placed under the ivory horns at the source of the river and had large elephant tusks covered with gold fixed to the rocks above.

Dwambara Akenten, the Queenmother, was a tall broad-chested woman, Nyako's daughter and Ameyaw Kwaakye's mother. Because she had a strong character, her election did not take place for several months. The love of gold obsessed her too and she refused to use silver, no longer wishing to incarnate the moon; she replaced her silver ornaments, ceremonial pipes and swords, and all the utensils in her palace with solar gold; and had a golden stool made for herself, though forbidden to use it on official occasions.

Owing to the misbehaviour of the princes, and also of the princesses, one of whom is known to have tortured people for her pleasure, more and more people emigrated from the Bono kingdom. On the other hand, more and more foreigners came in search of wealth from all over the Sudan. As a result, when war broke out with the Asante to the south, national morale was low. The chiefs and their people refused to serve a King and Queenmother who were no longer interested in the welfare of their people; and the foreign settlers fled across the frontier. The war was over before it had well begun; the Fante of Takyiman alone resisted, but were defeated in the first battle. Bono-Mansu was burnt to the ground by its own unhappy inhabitants before the Asante occupied it. King Ameyaw Kwaakye committed suicide; the Queenmother, in hiding, ruled the remnants of her people for another two years. The King's heir-apparent and the Queenmother's heiress-apparent were captured and taken to Kumasi, the Asante capital. So long as they were useful to the King Opoku Ware, who wanted to introduce the divine kingship into his country and to have a splendid court,¹ they

¹ The golden *Nyame Dua* was captured together with other golden objects by the Asante in 1740. A Danish envoy from the Coast, who was sent on a mission to the court of the Asante King Opoku Ware in 1749, saw these and described these. See *Sacred State*, p. 58.

THE REIGNS OF THE BONO KINGS AND QUEENMOTHERS

were well treated. All the craftsmen from Bono-Mansu, the royal goldsmiths, weavers, carvers, and embroiderers had been transported with their whole families to Kumasi, together with the King's and Queenmother's palace officers: the chamberlains, cooks, stewards, and so forth. The Bono Kingdom ceased to exist.¹

After years of chaos, Ameyaw Gyamfi, a prince of the Bono royal lineage, and Ameyaa Adiyaa, a princess who had lived in hiding for years (near Forikukrom), were allowed to return and to rule the Bono-Takyiman State, vassals of the Asante Kingdom. They did their utmost to bring back prosperity into the devastated country; but most of the Fante had fled to the coast, and still more left on Gyamfi's arrival. Robbed of its craftsmen, its drummers and singers, Takyiman became a backwater. For though renewed trade with the Sudan brought in a certain amount of wealth, the Asante officials got their hands on it. When the Asante Kings turned deaf ears to prolonged complaints, the people of Takyiman rebelled and fought the Asante from 1877 until 1895, when the British joined in and captured Kumasi. An independent Bono-Takyiman State was then set up and recognized by the British in the following year. Nevertheless, in 1935, when the British Government re-established the Asante Kingdom, or Confederacy, they once more placed Bono-Takyiman under its sovereignty. All appeals against this decision failing, the present King of Bono-Takyiman, Akumfi Ameyaw III, a member of the ancient Bono royal lineage, refused homage to the King of Asante. In 1952, he declared himself independent and joined the Domaahene, who is descended from the Domaa Kings of Asantemanso, in setting up a Bono or Brong confederacy. This has not yet been recognized by the Ghana government.

The Kings and Queenmothers of Bono were succeeded by the following Kings and Queenmothers, rulers of the Bono-Takyiman State:

Kings

Ameyaw Gyamfi	1748-1771
Ati Munsunuhene (destooled)	1771-1782
Kyereme Kofi Tuahyeresie	1782-1830
Owusu Amprofi	1830-1837
Ameyaw Kyereme	1837-1851
Bafuo Twi	1851-1864

¹ The details of the conquest of the Bono kingdom can be found in *Akan Traditions*, p. 36 *et passim*.

THE REIGNS OF THE BONO KINGS AND QUEENMOTHERS

Kings—(cntd.)

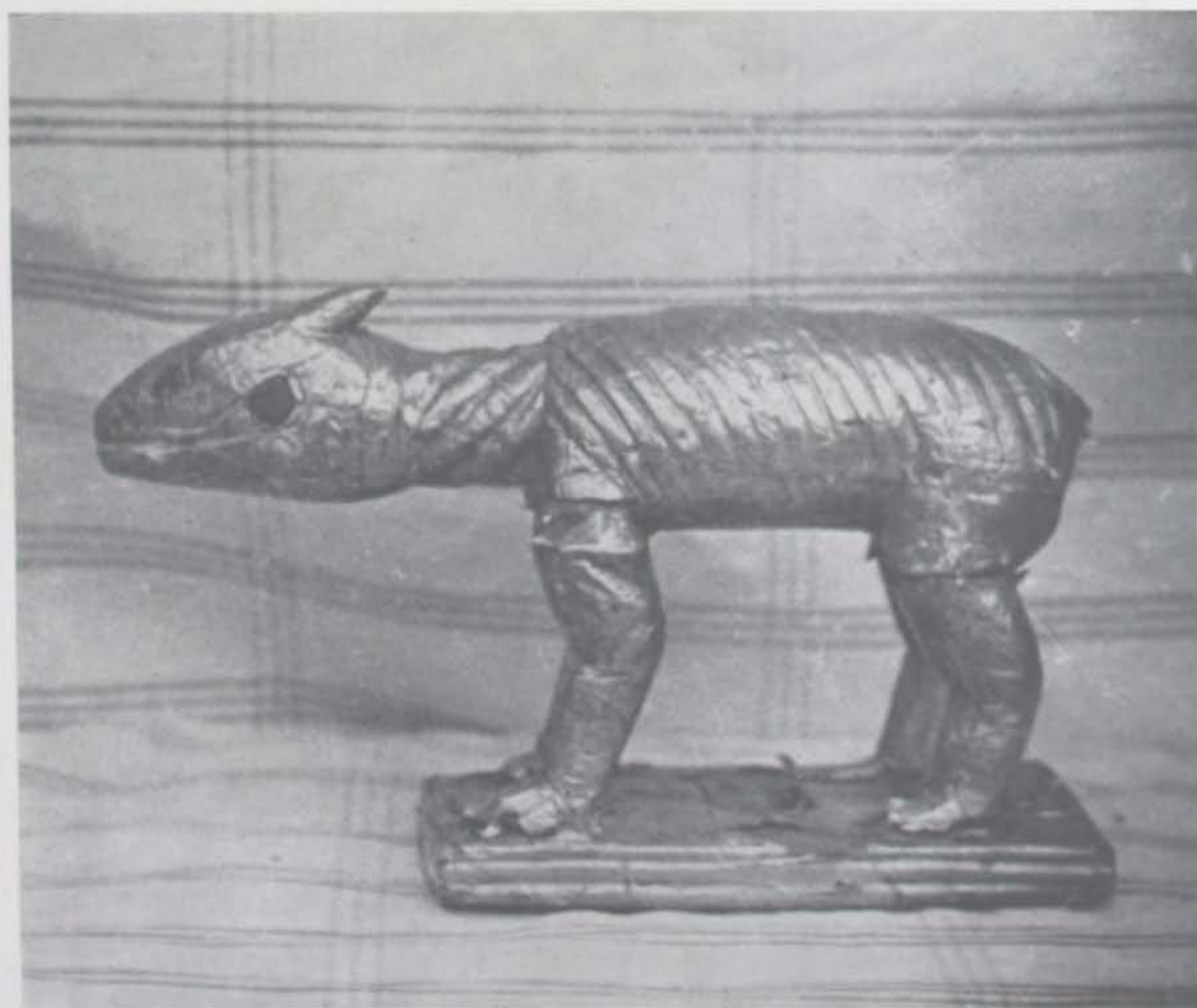
Kwabena Fofie	1864–1886
Gyako II	1886–1899
Konkroma	1899–1907
Kwaame Boakye (destooled)	1907–1908
Yaw Kramo (assassinated)	1908–1927
Yao Ameyaw (destooled)	1928–1934
Kwasi Twi (destooled)	1935–1936
Yaw Ameyaw (destooled for the second time)	1936–1937
Kwaku Kyereme (destooled)	1938–1941
Kwaku Gyako III (destooled)	1941–1944
Akumfi Ameyaw III	1944–

Queenmothers

Ameyaa Adiya	1748–1763
Abrafi Fosaa	1763–1777
Maneti Takyiwaa	1777–1788
Kyeremaa	1788–1800
Owusuaa	1800–1813
Boakyewaa Mansa	1814–1837
Gyamfiwaa Kese	1837–1856
Abrafi Asikadwa Koto	1856–1874
Kuruwaa	1874–1895
Nyaakowaa	1895–1922
Kromo	1922–1935
Akua Dapaa	1935–1946
Afua Abrafi	1946–



48. The gold mask of the Denkyira King Ntim Gyakari which decorates one of the Juaben state swords. Note the three 'sticks' jutting from the corners of the mouth; they represent the *kra* or soul that had left the body of the murdered king.



49. A carved and silver plated antelope from a royal spokesman's staff or umbrella top which the Wasa-Amenfi people say they obtained in a war at about the end of the 18th century.



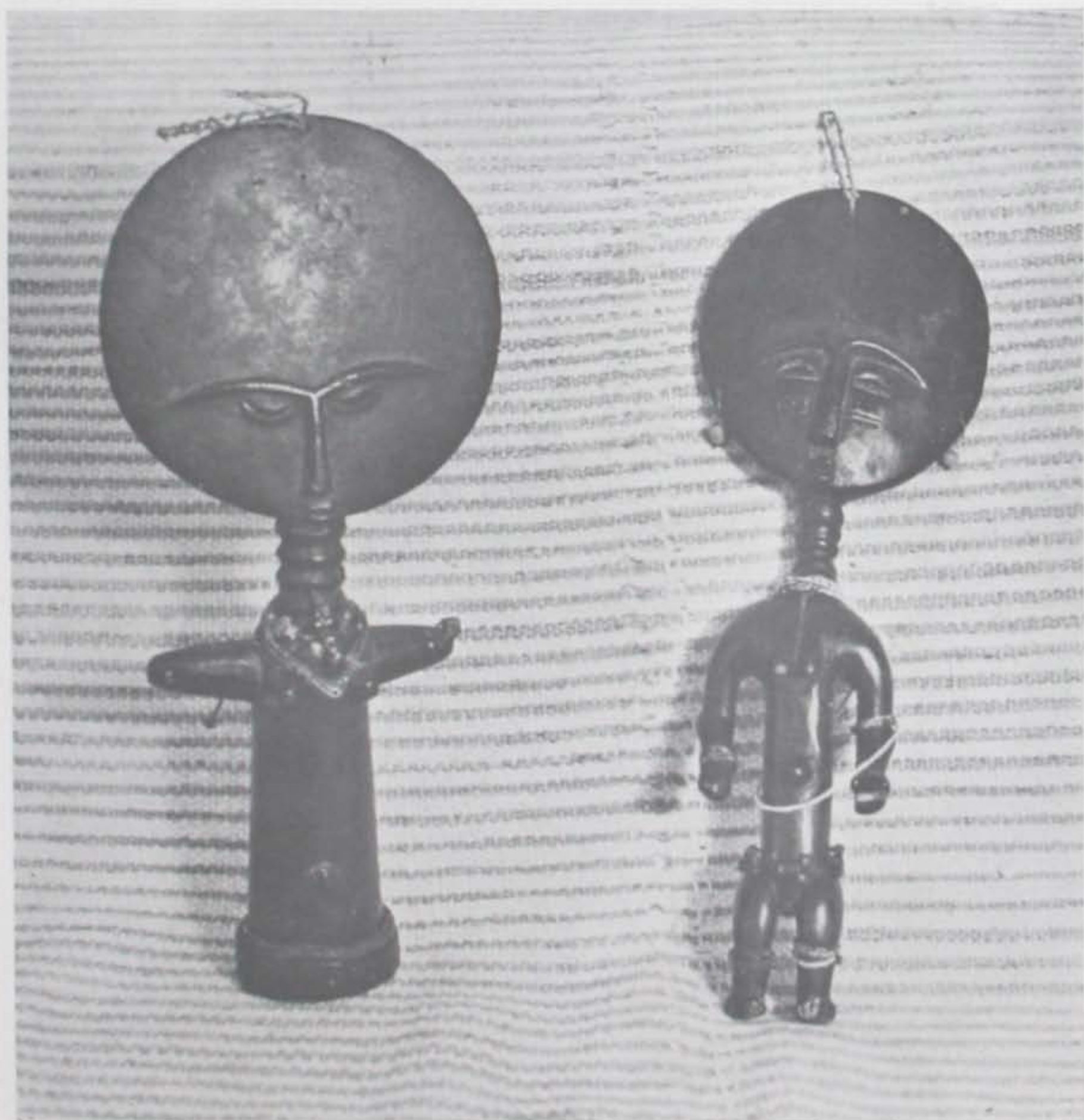
50. *Akuaba* statuette, symbolizing the Moon Mother-goddess, in wood, given by a priest to barren women so that they may bear children. (Reproduced by courtesy of Dr. Carl Kjersmeier.)



51. *Akuaba* statuette. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Abbey Museum, High-Barnet, London.)



52. *Akuaba* statuette with raised arms, the type which used to be placed on the graves of the headwomen of the clans. It symbolized the lunar *kra* of the deceased. Takyiman district.



55. *Akuaba* statuette, same as 50 and 51, and *Akuaba* doll, given to little girls to teach them the care of children. (Reproduced by courtesy of Mr. Anthony Levett-Prinsep.)



54. The house of a priest in the old architectural style in Asante. This photograph was taken in 1901. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Museum der Basler Mission.)

CHAPTER VI

Analogies to Akan Beliefs and Customs in Libyan North Africa

1. *Among the Libyo-Phoenicians (Carthage)*

(a) *The Divine Moon-Queen*

About 850 B.C., Helissa, a daughter of the Tyrian King Metten I, and widow of her uncle Acerbas, a priest of Melkart, the Tyrian Hercules, secretly left Phoenicia with a number of followers, among whom were senators and other officials. She sailed to Numidia, where she bought land from a local chieftain, and there founded the city of Carthage. Under the name of Dido, said to mean 'the beloved', she became queen of a small state which was soon to dominate North Africa. According to the Graeco-Roman legends, she stabbed herself to death on a funeral pyre, or leapt into it from her palace when it was already blazing, either to escape the importunities of King Hiarbas the Numidian, or from chagrin at having been deserted by Aeneas the Trojan. Dido received after her death, divine honours so long as Carthage maintained its independence and even, as some scholars believe, after the Roman conquest of the city. She is likely enough to have sacrificed herself (or her proxy, a daughter) by burning alive on a pyre at a time of national crisis: because the god from whom she claimed descent, Melkart of Tyre, had to die annually thus, in the person of royal victims, before being resurrected.

The idea that only a woman of divine descent, as Dido was, and as the Akan queenmothers were, can give birth to a state, persisted in North Africa until Roman times. Thus after the destruction of Carthage in 46 B.C. Numidia, one of the states in the Carthaginian confederation became, like the rest, a Roman province. Ten years later, a Numidian prince who had been carried off to Rome and

became a protégé of Octavianus (the Emperor Augustus), was enthroned as Juba II, King of Numidia. But Octavianus had already secured Cleopatra Selene (Selene: 'moon'), daughter of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt (and Mark Antony) as Juba's co-regent. Coins from 20 to 19 B.C. have the king on the obverse, as the descendant of Tyrian Melkart, and on the reverse Cleopatra Selene wearing a diadem, the emblem of royal authority. All coins show her as a sovereign queen, often with her portrait, an honour withheld in antiquity from queens who were merely the wives of kings. Cleopatra Selene was obviously chosen for the one purpose of giving life to the new Numidian state, and a new royal lineage;¹ for when she died, Glaphyra, daughter of the King of Cappadocia, received none of Cleopatra Selene's prerogative when Juba II then married her.² Not being divinely descended, she was unable to give and maintain life in the state, unless she somehow became possessed by the lunar spirit and gave life to a deity.

(b) *The bi-sexual Moon Mother-goddess Tanit-Pene-Baal*

The Great Goddess Tanit of Carthage had given birth to the universe without having first conceived. Her title in Roman times was 'Virgo Coelestis', the Heavenly Virgin.³ The title Tanit-Pene-Baal, 'Tanit, the face of Baal', expresses Tanit's bi-sexual aspect. It means that Tanit represented the visible moon and firmament, which is matter, whereas Baal represented the power that vitalized the matter.⁴ Baal Haman was worshipped at Cirta as a god in his own right, a Sky-Fertility-god, the male principle of reproduction, whereas at Carthage before the Punic Wars he was no more than the male aspect of the Goddess, and as such a Moon-god.⁵ Afterwards, he was worshipped at Carthage as Deus Coelestis, a Sky-

¹ One may well ask: why was a Numidian princess not chosen? Either none was available, or else the Romans preferred a foreigner, so as to discourage Numidian nationalism. After Cleopatra Selene's death Juba II was obliged to exchange Numidia for the kingdom of Bogud and Bochus in Mauretania; Numidia then again became a Roman province.

² Stephane Gsell, *Histoire Ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 1913, vol. viii, p. 218 *et passim*.

³ Philippe Berger, 'Tanit-Pene-Baal', extrait du *Journal Asiatique*, 1877, p. 7.

⁴ The interpretation of Tanit-Pene-Baal has puzzled scholars. See Gsell, vol. iv, p. 245. The interpretation here given is my own, based on the Akan concept of heavenly deities.

⁵ Philippe Berger, *La Trinité Carthaginoise*, Paris, 1880, p. 19, says that the Greeks in their inexact translation of 'Pene-Baal' used the same term that designated the moon.

Father and Weather-god, and thus became confused with the Roman Juppiter.

The third most important god of Carthage was Esmun, of whom little is known; in Roman times he was identified with Aesculapius, god of healing, and a number of other gods. His emblem was the open right hand, which is also that of Tanit-Pene-Baal.¹ Esmun formed a trinity with Tanit and Baal Haman, which some scholars regard as an artificial one, since the ex-voto inscriptions are addressed only to the other two.² Similarly, among the Akan, prayers are addressed to Nyame and Nyankopon, but never to Odomankoma who, though the creator of the material world, cannot give life but represents creative intelligence. Only when combined with Nyan-kopon, and thought to represent the latter's *sunsum*, or personality, is he occasionally addressed as 'Onyankopon Odomankoma'. Esmun may have played a similar rôle, seeing that Tanit and Baal-Haman correspond exactly with Nyame and Nyankopon, as the following tables will show:

Tanit

Gave birth to the universe without the help of a male partner.

A Moon- and Firmament-goddess. Symbolized by the moon in her three phases on ex-voto stelae, the crescent being sometimes turned up and sometimes down.

Nyame

Gave birth to the universe without the help of a male partner.

A Moon- and Firmament-goddess. The waxing moon symbolizes her as giver of life and increase; the waning moon as the Killer-mother. Conception is expressed on ritual and ceremonial objects by the crescent with horns turned up, motherhood by the crescent with horns turned down.³

¹ On one ex-voto stele the figure of a man with a large right hand is clearly shown; illustration Fig. 53, p. 61, in G. Perrot-Charles Chipiez, *The History of Art in Phoenicia and its Dependencies*, London, 1885. On the other hand, a hand inscribed with the ideogram of Tanit belongs undoubtedly to Tanit-Pene-Baal, the goddess mentioned by Berger, p. 7. Also six or seven statuettes of Tanit show her with an open lifted right hand. Berger, *Les Ex-voto du Temple de Tanit à Carthage*, Paris, 1877, p. 8.

² Gsell, vol. iv, p. 231.

³ For the meaning of the various symbols, see *Sacred State*, Ch. VI.

Tanit

Worshipped as an armed divinity. The broad arrow-head, and the spear with a triangular blade, symbolize her on the ex-voto stelae. Single or double axes in lunate form were used in her cult. The triangular axe was a votive object.¹

Her ideogram was the triangular cone (sometimes replaced by a rectangle), which formed the body, surmounted by a straight bar, usually ending in crescent moons, representing

Nyame

Worshipped as an armed divinity. Nyame *akuma*, or Nyame's axes (neolithic celts) are regarded as her weapons.

As Nyame *Atoapoma*, the Ever-ready Shooter, she shoots the life-giving rays of the sun and moon into the universe.

The triangular axe, decorated with a waxing moon on its sheath, was an emblem of the Queenmothers of Bono, who personified the Moon-mother, and is still used by the Asantehene on ceremonial occasions.²

Long gold and silver swords (*nkerante*) belonged to the insignia of the Queenmothers of Bono.

The priestesses of the numerous *abosom*, born on Monday, who personify the manifestation of the Great Mother, still carry weapons of all sorts on ritual and ceremonial occasions (see Pls. 22, 24).

Her ideogram is the *akuaba*, which usually consists of a rectangular or triangular body surmounted by a straight bar, and a head in the form of a disc. On the back of the disc are engraved

¹ C. Berthelon et E. Chantre, *Recherches Anthropologiques dans la Berberie Orientale*, Lyon, 1913, p. 614.

² It is said to this day, when a King or Queenmother is destooled or dethroned, that 'he or she has thrown away the axe' (*awatu akuma atwene*). The triangular breastplate originally worn by the Queenmothers of Bono, is still worn among the Akan by the Asantehene and the Gyamanhene. It is regarded as an equivalent of the triangular axe.

Tanit

shoulders, arms and hands, and a stylized head, consisting of a disc or a circle within a larger circle.

Her *akyeneboa* seems to have been the deer, since deer were sacrificed to her²

Sheep are depicted over two hundred times on Carthaginian ex-voto stelae. From the accompanying inscriptions, dedicated to Tanit alone, and not to Tanit and Baal-Haman jointly, it is clear that she was incarnate in the sheep.⁴

She was also symbolized on the stelae by goat, swan, hare and fish.

Nyame

celestial symbols (see Pls. 50, 51, 52, 53).

The triangle symbolizes Nyame as ruler of the Sky, Earth and Underworld.

The disc of the *akuaba* represents the moon. The circle within a larger circle symbolizes the *kra*, the life-giving power of the goddess.¹

The *akyeneboa* of Nyame is the *adowa* (small duiker, or gazelle) which also symbolizes the Moon Queenmother. As the Supreme Being, Nyame is symbolized by seven varieties of antelopes, one for each planet.³

Nyame is incarnate in the sheep, occasionally in the black sheep. In the Wasa-Amenfi state, the black sheep is still tabooed and may not be seen on the streets. The skins of sheep sacrificed to Nyame are preserved in the Queenmother's Chapel of the Stools; the stools, in many places, are placed on them. In some states, the Queenmothers sit publicly on a sheep-skin.

Nyame, as Venus, as Asaase Afua, Goddess of Friday, is incarnate in the goat. Swans are unknown in Ghana. The hare symbolizes Nyankopon in folk-tales. Fish are regarded as

¹ See *Sacred State*, p. 110, ill., p. 111.

² Berger, *Trinité*, p. 14.

³ *Sacred State*, p. 73. Deer are unknown in West Africa.

⁴ W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 1889, p. 477.

Tanit

Also by dog, scorpion and serpent. Dogs are said to have been sacrificed to Tanit.¹ Amulets in the form of scorpions were worn at Carthage.

Doves were sacred to Tanit, and appear frequently on the ex-voto stelae.

Tanit's tree was the palm, a symbol for the moon in North Africa and Asia. Sacred groves are said to have been characteristic of her cult.³

Nyame

the children of Tano, Bonda and other *abosom*. All these animals characterize a deity as Giver of Fertility.

The dog symbolizes death among the Akan. The Fante are known to have sacrificed a dog at funerals to give the deceased a safe passage to heaven.² Scorpion and serpent are the symbols of Nyame in her form of Asaase Aberewa, the Thursday-goddess of the Underworld. Dog, scorpion and serpent symbolize not only death, but rebirth.

Doves, regarded as Nyame's messengers, are sacrificed by priests when sinners, troubled by their *kra*, wish to gain Nyame's attention.

Nyame's tree (like Tano's) seems to have been the tall palm, a symbol for the moon.

The afterbirth (regarded as part of the *kra*) of children of the royal lineage (in Bono and Bono-Takyiman, possibly also elsewhere) is still buried under a palm-tree on land belonging to the royal lineage.⁴

¹ Recent exploration suggests that the sacrifice of dogs may have been an old indigenous Libyan custom, not necessarily connected with Tanit. Oric Bates, *The Eastern Libyans*, London, 1914, p. 177.

² 'The negroes are great lovers of dog's flesh; and prefer dog's flesh for their eating to that of cattle, and accordingly esteem a meal of that the best treat they can take or give.' W. Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, 1705 (1907), p. 239.

³ Byron Khun de Prorok, *Digging for Lost African Gods*, 1926, p. 87.

⁴ How much the palm-tree was venerated along the coast of the Gold Coast can be seen from the following extract from J. Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of Northern and Southern Guinea and of Ethiopia Inferior*, Paris, 1732, p. 308:

Tanit

On the ex-voto stelae a jug, or water-pot, is sometimes depicted under the ideogram of Tanit.¹

Tanit-Pene-Baal

Tanit-Pene-Baal personifies the male and female aspect of the deity. The male aspect was personified as Baal Haman, or Lord Aman (Ammon, Amen).

Baal Haman

Baal Haman was called in Roman times 'the African Saturn',³ meaning that he received

Nyame

The *hemmaa-papa* fans of stylized palm-leaves were held over the Queenmothers of Bono when they sat in public. The Queenmother of Asante still uses them on public occasions.

Most of the Akan *abosom* are worshipped in sacred groves.

The stool of the first Queenmother of Asante had a gourd in its centre. So did the original Golden Stool of the Asante which symbolized the Asante nation. Among the Akan, the gourd, pot or jug is a female symbol for the womb.

The Supreme Being Nyame

Nyame, the Supreme Being, personifies the male and female aspect of the deity. The male aspect is personified as Nyan-kopon, meaning 'the Alone Great Nyame'. His appellation is 'Amen'.²

Nyankopon

Nyankopon Kwaame, 'He of Saturday', received his power from the planet Saturn. As the

'The palm-trees are the most peculiar sort they make choice of to consecrate into deities; especially that sort of them which they call Assianam. I suppose, not only because the most beautiful, but by reason that they are more numerous than any other; and accordingly there are very many consecrated, in all parts, and scarce any black will pass by them without taking off some strings of the bark, which they twist between their fingers, and then tie them to their waists, necklaces, arms, or legs, with a knot at one end, and reckon those baubles a protection against several misfortunes.'

¹ Prorok, illustrations, p. 68.

² J. B. Danquah, *Akan Doctrine of God*, London, 1944, p. 47.

³ Oric Bates, *The Eastern Libyans*, 1913, p. 201.



Baal Haman

his power from the planet Saturn. As the son of Tanit, the Moon, he was a Moon-god; as the husband of Tanit in her Venus aspect he was a solar god. Moon and sun symbolize him on the ex-voto stelae.

Baal Haman was incarnated in the ram, as is evident from statues which show him as a man in the prime of life, with ram's horns; the arms of his throne were also carved in the shape of rams.¹ Rams are depicted on the ex-voto stelae of Carthage.

Baal Haman is believed to be symbolized on Carthaginian coins by the horse. The horse is usually only viewed as a solar symbol; but on the coins, the horse is placed between two palms, which symbolize the moon. The horse's hoofs are moon-shaped.

Tanit was worshipped at Carthage as a Moon and Firmament Mother-goddess, Giver of Life and Death, and as a Fertility-deity (Venus); and though Nyame no longer possesses a temple and

Nyankopon

son of the Moon- and Firmament-goddess Nyame, he must once have been a Moon-god; as the husband of Asaase Afua (Nyame in her Venus aspect), he was a solar god. Also the Ancestor-god of kings he was incarnated in the sun.

Nyankopon (and Nyame as Supreme Being) is incarnated in the snow-white ram. The skins of sacrificed rams are preserved in the King's Chapel of the Stools; in many states the stools of the Royal Ancestors are placed upon them. A sacred herd of white rams is still kept by the king of Asante.

A white horse was attached in Bono, and still is attached in Bono-Takyiman, to the Chapel of the Stools of Kings; on ceremonial occasions the Kings rode on a white horse. A black mare used to be attached to the Chapel of the Stools of the Queen-mothers.

The horse symbolizes the life-giving moon and sun. Horse-tails were used on battlefields to revive the dead. A horse's tail, the *bodua*, is still carried by Akan Kings on ceremonial occasions.

¹ G. Perrot-Charles Chipiez, vol. i, p. 74, fig. 25.

people are little concerned with her, there is evidence that she was once worshipped in much the same way as the other great bi-sexual Mother-goddesses, Tano, Ntoa, Buruku, by Akan living in the seventeenth century, notably by the Asokore Mampon people.¹ When political changes made Nyame the Supreme Being, her rivals were declared her children, and she was regarded as too grand to be bothered with human prayers.

That Tanit and Nyame have the deer, or antelope, in common as clan-totems, and the sheep in common when they are worshipped as Sky-Fertility-state goddesses (also the goat, scorpion and dog as subsidiary animal emblems) suggests a common origin. This assumption is supported by the similarity of their sons and consorts, Baal Haman and Nyankopon. Berthelon² believes, very sensibly, that the Libyo-Phoenician Nit (or Ta-Nit, the Libyan feminine article being *Ta*), the Libyo-Egyptian Neit, Net, or Nit, and the Phrygian A-Nait-is, are one and the same deity, as are also Baal Haman or Hamon (Aman or Ammon), the Egyptian Amen or Ammon, and the Phrygian Men.³

Tanit's great temple at Carthage, destroyed by the Romans in 46 B.C.,⁴ is believed to have contained a colossal statue of the Goddess⁵ before which, according to Roman sources, children were burnt to death as sacrifices. It is, however, unlikely that child sacrifices took place on such a large scale as the thousands of urns containing the relics and bones of the children suggest.⁶ Tanit was venerated as a Great Mother, a giver and sustainer of life, symbolized by the crescent with turned-down horns; the widespread destruction of child life is not in keeping with that concept. The children, whose remains were preserved in urns in her temple may therefore have been children who had died young of natural causes, and whose corpses were brought to the temple to be destroyed by fire as a means of insuring rebirth or reincarnation in a healthy body. The Bono formerly burnt witches, unfaithful king's wives, and others, to prevent the *saman*, or shade, from surviving in the Netherworld; thus only their immortal and untainted *kra*

¹ *Sacred State*, p. 141.

² Berthelon, pp. 612 and 618.

³ To this list I would add the Palestinian Anatha, and the Greek Athene of Libyan origin, whom the Greeks equated with Neith.

⁴ Prorok, p. 87 *et passim*.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 87.

would return to the Mother-goddess for reincarnation in a child of their mother's family. Children, generally those of the Queen-mothers (including queenmothers of clans) were sacrificed when a state, town or village was founded, to ensure prosperity by means of direct contact between the deity and the victim; or in time of national disaster, when renewed direct contact was again needed. In every case the child-victim had to understand what was required of him or her: namely to become a messenger and intermediary between the people and the deity. The burning of a king's son at the foundation of a city was a Canaanite custom several times mentioned in the Old Testament—the Carthaginians called themselves Canaanites, not Phoenicians.

In 409 B.C., Hannibal cut the throats of three thousand prisoners of war at Himera, on the spot where his ancestor Hamilcar had died in 480 B.C.,¹ to appease his ghost. The Akan similarly sacrificed royal prisoners over the black ancestral stools in the Chapel of the Stools (Cult Type IV). The purpose was not to revive the *kras* of the deceased kings, which was unnecessary, the *kra* being immortal, but to rejoice their *saman*, or shades, in the Netherworld.

Diodorus Siculus records that when the Carthaginians defeated Agathocles, they thanked their gods by offering the most beautiful of the prisoners as burnt sacrifices. Among the Akan, the most beautiful prisoners and criminals were reserved for sacrifice at the Queenmother's death. The prisoners taken by the Carthaginians were probably burnt, not as offerings to the gods in general, but as messengers, purified by fire, sent to tell Dido, the founder of Carthage, of Agathocles's defeat, and swell her ghostly retinue.

(c) *Melkart of Tyre, the Ancestor-god of the Carthaginian Royal Lineage*

According to Diodorus, Melkart of Tyre was not only god of Carthage, but god of the Carthaginian dependencies; he calls him 'the Colonial God'.² His position in the Carthaginian state approximates to that of Bosummuru in the Bono Kingdom. The worship of Bosummuru, the god from whom the Kings and Queenmothers claimed descent in the male line, was introduced into the dependencies of Bono, tributary states, vassal states, etc., through marriage of their rulers with royal daughters or collaterals who vener-

¹ Gsell, vol. iv, p. 407.

² A. H. van Heeren, *Historical Researches into the Politics, Intercourse and Trade of the Carthaginians, Ethiopians and Egyptians*, 1832, vol. i, p. 91.

ated Bosummuru as their ancestor. In Carthage, ladies of rank¹ were married to confederate kings and chiefs, probably for the same purpose as in Bono and Asante, namely to link them with the ruling dynasty.

The following table will show more clearly what Bosummuru and Melkart of Tyre have in common:

Melkart of Tyre

The supernatural ancestor of the Carthaginian royal lineage founded by Dido. He had a temple at Carthage.

As the ancestor of the Carthaginian royal lineage, incarnate in the bull. He is depicted as a bull in action on an ex-voto stele, and on a terracotta token a bull's head is shown between the ideogram of Tanit and a figure of eight.²

Also incarnate in the dog at Tyre. In the legend of the invention of the purple dye, preserved by Pollux and Malalas, he appears accompanied by a dog. The sanctity of the dog among the Phoenicians seems also to be confirmed by the existence of a class of sacred ministers called 'dogs'.³

Bosummuru

The supernatural ancestor of the Bono royal lineage. He is still worshipped as such by the royal lineage of Bono-Takyiman in the Chapel of the Stools.

As the ancestor of the Bono royal lineage incarnate in the bull. A bull was sacrificed once a year, symbolizing his divine death and rebirth. The figure of eight can also be found on objects among the Akan. It suggests life, death and rebirth forever repeating itself. (Eight is the Venus number.)

Also incarnate in the dog. The dog in his cult is tabooed.

(d) *The Sky-Fertility-god Ammon of Shiwa*

The sanctuary of Libyan Ammon in the Oasis of Shiwa was founded, according to Herodotus, by a prophetic priestess of Ammon from Egyptian Thebes. Under the rule of her successors, Ammon

¹ *ibid.*, p. 254.

² Berthelon et Chantre, *Recherches*, p. 260.

³ W. Robertson Smith, *Religion*, p. 291.

became the most renowned god in the desert, to whom pilgrimages were made by people from all over North Africa and the Sahara. They came to consult the god's oracle, and never failed to bring gifts. Among the Akan, the great oracle-giving deities were usually served by an immigrant priesthood without state support, at any rate to begin with. For example, Buruku, the original state god of Bono had been, centuries before, the state god of another people of the same race settled in the region east or south-east of the Red and White Volta rivers. When this state ceased to exist, Buruku's priests migrated southward, and settled in the mountains of Siare (now Central British-mandated Togoland) among the Kotokoli people. There Buruku became an oracle giver of almost Delphic renown.¹

Another oracular god was Date, or Dente, formerly worshipped by Guans at Late (South-eastern Ghana), whom he ruined by giving them bad advice. His sacred cave was stormed by the enraged people, and his priests banished. They went northward, and finally contrived to have Date accepted by Buruku as his eldest and most favoured son. Date now took up his abode in a cavernous grotto amid the dank, dark groves outside the town of Kete-Krakyi, close to the junction of the Sabu river, sacred to Buruku at its source, and the Black Volta. The priesthood gained considerable political power by declaring that Date hated the spilling of blood and abhorred war; for this allowed them to settle migrant tribes in this region, without fighting, under the overlordship of Asante.²

Baal Haman (or Baal Ammon), like Amen of Thebes, and Ammon of Shiwa, was incarnate in a ram. Like Amen of Thebes, too, he suffered death and resurrection. But he was buried with unusual ceremony. A richly ornamented boat containing his bejewelled image, laid in the funereal posture adopted by the Nasa-monian Libyans, was carried by eighty priests and followed by women lamenting and mourning through the palm groves that surrounded the temple.³ The god was carried in whatever direction he himself willed his bearers to go—a custom well known among the Akan at the death of a King. His body, wrapped for burial, was carried in a *patakan*, or litter, to the cemetery, and the bearers, dominated by his spirit, invariably fell into a trance and went wherever he directed them to go.

¹ *Sacred State*, pp. 139–40.

² *ibid.*, p. 139.

³ Bates, *Eastern Libyans*, pp. 189–98.

Sky-Fertility-gods usually have a stretch of water sacred to them: a stream, or river, sometimes a pool, or lake. At the Oasis of Shiwa, it was the famous Fountain of the Sun, the name of which emphasized the god Ammon's solar aspect. The meteoric stones, known to have been the sacred objects there, symbolized his power over thunder and lightning. Herodotus equated Ammon of Shiwa with Zeus,¹ which shows clearly that by the sixth century B.C. he had become the supreme god of the Libyan desert tribes, not merely a giver of oracles.

2. *Libya Antiqua*

(a) *The Queens or Queenmothers*

Diodorus Siculus mentions an Amazonian race in the extreme west of Libya.² The women went to war and reserved for themselves all the functions of government; the men lived in subordinate positions and busied themselves with housework—which probably means, to judge from what we know of the primitive Akan (Cult Type I), that they built the huts, which is men's work everywhere in Africa, and maintained the food supply by hunting.

Nicolas of Damascus records that among the Byaei the men are ruled by men, and the women by women.³ This, in a matrilineally organized society like that of the Akan is true not only for Phase I, but also for Phases II, III and IV; because, until recently, the King with his council elders ruled the men, and the Queenmother with her council of women-elders, the women.

On the reliefs in the temple of the Fifth-Dynasty Egyptian King Sahure, captive Libyan women are portrayed wearing the cod-piece, a distinctly masculine appliance. On one of the tiles at Medinet Habu, Libyan women are again shown in male dress, wearing kilts and robes. Oric Bates comments, on this topic, that for the wife of a chieftain, male costume is the badge of dignity.⁴ If, however, in a matrilineal society a woman wears male dress, this always means that she holds a male office. Among the Akan, for instance, several queenmothers of the last century ruled also as kings. When at the head of their councils of male elders, they wore male dress, but female dress at the head of their female councils. The Libyan women in male dress on the Egyptian reliefs must

¹ Herodotus, quoted and discussed in Bates, p. 189.

² Bates, p. 112.

³ *ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 113.

therefore have been queens or chieftainesses who wore male attire as supreme commanders of their armies.¹

(b) *The Ausean Mother-goddess*

Herodotus describes a ceremonial fight between two parties of Amazonian Libyan virgins near Lake Tritonis, to the west of the Gulf of Sirte, at the annual festival of the Ausean Goddess, whom he equates with Athene.² They fought with stones and clubs, and any who died of the wounds they received were declared false virgins. This ceremonial fight recalls one that has survived among the Akan as part of the *adosowa*, performed at the deaths of Queen-mothers, Kings and other prominent members of the royal lineage. Nyame, in her aspect of Ever-ready Shooter, shot the life-giving rays (*kra*) of the sun, moon and stars into the universe; and the fight persuades the deceased, whose *kra*, after death, has joined Nyame's *kra*, to shoot life from the sky, and particularly provide rain for the crops, so that men and beasts can live.³ The sham-fight between girls at Lake Tritonis was, presumably, a rain ceremony. Since the girls in the rite almost certainly personified the Mother-goddess, as the Akan *adosowa* girls did, the casualties were perhaps condemned not as false virgins but as false life-givers. Only true life-givers can magically persuade a disembodied spirit to give life.⁴

(c) *The Sky-Fertility-god Set*

Scholars regard Set, already worshipped at the dawn of Egyptian civilization, as a Libyan god; being essentially the god of the desert regions which border the Nile Valley from east to west and from north to south.⁵ In the second Dynasty (ca. 3000 B.C.) the Egyptians named Set 'the Lord of Libya'.⁶ He was probably equivalent with the Moon-god, Ash, prominent in Libya during the Fifth Dynasty; because Ash was represented as a man with the head of Set's cult animal; and his name was written with the animal's ideogram.⁷

¹ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, London, 1955, discusses women wearing men's clothes and men women's: vol. i, 78 and vol. ii, 136, 4.

² Bates, pp. 203, 204.

³ *Sacred State*, p. 71.

⁴ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, London, 1955, 100 (1) says that Amazons' seems to be an Armenian word meaning 'moon-women'. If the Amazons of Lake Tritonis personified the Mother-goddess like the Akan *adosowa* girls, then they most certainly can be described as 'moon-women'.

⁵ Samuel B. Mercer, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, 1949, pp. 49-50.

⁶ H. Kees, *Horus und Seth als Götterpaar*, Leipzig, 1923, vol. ii, p. 46.

⁷ Mercer, p. 50.

It is not yet agreed whether the Set animal totem of a pre-dynastic Egyptian state was a pig, a wild boar, a warthog, a hound, an ass, an animal of an extinct species, or something else.¹ The latest identification is the *Orycteropus*, or armadillo;² but its erect ears and bushy tail rather suggest the armadillo (*Proteles cristatus*), a hyaena-like animal still existing in the Sudan, East Africa, and South Africa. Its fur is pale yellow with black stripes; it lives in caverns, and roams at night in search of carrion. Though the filthy habits of the armadillo explain the Egyptians' dislike of Set, it may well have been chosen as totem animal by a defeated people whom it led to a cavern where they might escape massacre.

The archaic Set was a Moon-god; and so violent a character that he is said to have been born by bursting through his mother's side.³ As a Sky-Fertility-god, he was also the shadow that darkened the moon;⁴ meteorites⁵ symbolized his destructive power. On an Egyptian relief of about 1580 B.C., he is shown teaching Thothmes III the use of bow and arrow,⁶ beside two crossed arrows, the ideogram of the Libyo-Egyptian Moon-goddess Neith. In the Pyramid Text, Pepi I, 696, Neith's name is coupled with Set's, as though she were his wife.

The constellation which expressed Set's personality was the 'Thigh', or Great Bear,⁷ the stars revolving round the pole which indicate the seasons.

The animals symbolizing his male and female aspect were the motherly hippopotamus⁸ and the fierce, aggressive crocodile. At Nubt, in Upper Egypt, a crocodile incarnating the god and fed by the priests was kept in a pool near his famous temple.⁹ As a god of vegetation, Set appears to have been personified by the goat. One text states that the companions of Set came, changed themselves into goats, and were slaughtered in the rite of the great earth hoe-

¹ Discussed by Mercer, pp. 52-3.

² *ibid.*, p. 52, n. 21.

³ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, Cambridge, 1744, 12.

⁴ Mercer, p. 60. Compare with Ntoa, the Sky-Fertility-god who darkens the moon and is called 'the frightening coverer of the *kra*', *Sacred State*, p. 158.

⁵ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. ii, p. 246.

⁶ Lanzone, *Dizionario*, Pl. 376.

⁷ G. A. Wainwright, *The Sky Religion of Egypt*, 1938, p. 13.

⁸ The hippo was worshipped in the whole of Egypt as the animal of Set. See Theodor Hopfner, *Der Tierkult der Alten Aegypter*, Wien, 1913, pp. 63, 65.

⁹ Mercer, p. 48. Horus as the vanquisher of Set was called 'Horus on the Crocodile'.

ing at Busiris.¹ 'Set, the bull of Nubt'²—Nubt was the capital of the ancient Set kingdom—represents Set as the state god; the Set kings may have annually sacrificed a bull to celebrate their god's death and resurrection. The people, however, according to a statement by Plutarch, used to sacrifice an annual pig to Set (the Moon), and ate its flesh.³ Set is said to have died by fire.⁴ This has to be understood to mean that the Set King's surrogate was burnt to death. According to Plutarch, the ass⁵ was also a sacrificial victim for Set; but this seems to have come about when he was identified with the Hyksos god Typhon.

¹ Wainwright, pp. 29–30.

² Flinders Petrie, *Naqada and Ballas*, 1895, p. 68.

³ Pigs were also sacrificed to the Moon and Osiris, no doubt in his form of Osiris Sah, i.e., the Moon, and their flesh eaten (see Mercer, *Religion*, p. 53). Moreover, Herodotus reports that offerings of pig's flesh were made to the Goddess Selene (moon): that is, to Nekhbet, the Vulture-goddess of El Kab (*ibid.*, p. 49, n. 8). The pig is therefore closely associated with the moon, and a pig may have been sacrificed to Set from the time onwards when the aardwolf, or whatever animal it may have been, had become extinct due to persecution. See also *Akan Divine Kingship*, Ch. II.

⁴ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, pp. 22, 30, 31.

⁵ Wainwright, pp. 51 and 56.

Summary

The Period of Cult Type I

The moon, worshipped as a supreme deity, was personified as a Mother-goddess, and believed to have brought forth the heavenly bodies by parthenogenesis. She gave life to men and all living things on earth by shooting into their inert bodies particles of her *kra*, a vitalizing moon-fire. She also took life: in her aspect as *Odia-a-wuo-no*, the 'Killer-mother', she was the Goddess of the Dead; and the *kras* that had animated their blood returned to her in the moon. She was venerated as the ruler of the Sky, the Earth, and the Underworld where their dead bodies, as opposed to their divine *kras*, lived.

The *abosom*, goddesses of the clans (*nton*), were regarded as embodiments of the divine lunar *kra*, and acted as intermediaries between the clans and the supreme Moon-mother. Each *abosom* was incarnated in an animal, the *akyeneboa*, or totem, with which its clansmen identified themselves. Thus each clan recognized its particular unity in relation to this totem; and the totem became the visible emblem of the social group. The *akyeneboa* was sacrosanct; yet it was caught once a year and sacrificed under the sacred tree regarded as the shrine of the *abosom*, in order to revive the *abosom's* *kra* power, and to renew the bond between the *abosom*, the Moon-mother, and its people.

The clan had been given life by a woman who, overcome by the life-giving lunar power, had brought forth an *abosom* to be its goddess. This founder of the clan was thereafter venerated by her people as the earthly representative of the Moon-mother. As the supreme priestess of the *abosom*, she ruled the clan, or a confederation of two or three clans, with the help of a council of female elders; and was usually succeeded by her daughter or sister. This society depended entirely, or largely, on the hunting of wild

animals and the collection of roots and herbs; animals, and sometimes plants, became objects of worship.

The Period of Cult Type II

The ancestors of the Akan nobility must, at some time in the distant past, have united with a people who worshipped a Father-god—in Twi called Odomankoma Bɔre-Bɔre. In contrast to the Mother-goddess, who had borne the universe, he was said to have made the world with his hands like a craftsman or artificer. His seat was the Pole star (an indication that Odomankoma came from the North, because the Pole star is barely visible in Western Africa). Odomankoma's people seem to have been ruled by a council of men, led not by a king but by an elected elder, and must have had a considerably more advanced culture than those of the Mother-goddess, since Odomankoma is credited with the introduction of such novelties as the (Babylonian) seven-day week, and the recording of history.

The union between the two people produced the following results in religion and politics:

Odomankoma shared the rule of the Sky with the Mother-goddess, in Twi called Nyame; and as her brother or husband, the father-uncle of the *abosom*, he became her executive officer. Whereas the goddess personified *kra*, immortal life-power, Odomankoma personified *sunsum*, personality or individuality, which was envisaged as mortal. With the introduction of the seven-day week, the *akragya* came into being: namely, the deities of the seven planets—Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and Sun, whose task it was to give *kra* and *sunsum* to the *abosom* on their natal day. For instance, *abosom* born on Monday received their *kra* and *sunsum* from Adwo, the *akragya* of the Moon; those born on Tuesday from Abena, the *akragya* of Mars, and so forth. The *akragya* were regarded either as bi-sexual, or as male and female twins; and so now were the *abosom*. As patrons of growth, the *abosom* were symbolized by the Venus star; and agriculture had now become the people's main concern. The male god of each pair became responsible for the fertility of women; who thereupon addressed themselves to him (*tuobo* custom), and no longer to the Moon Mother-goddess, except in conservative regions where the older custom still holds even today.

The *kra* of an *abosom* was still incarnate in the totem animal,

and its *sunsum* in various other animals, regarded as expressing the *ɔbosom*'s peculiar character. The *ɔbosom*'s shrine remained the sacred tree in the grove, at the foot of which meteorites or laterite stones were often placed, to symbolize the god's power of striking from the sky. Temple huts gradually made their appearance, containing additional shrines, in the form of a female cone and a smaller male cone, or of a female, truncated cone on which a bowl with water (fertilizing water—male) was placed, or two cone-shaped drums (*Ntoa*), one male, one female. Sometimes two bowls, a larger female and a smaller male one, containing ritual objects, constituted the shrine. The grove surrounding the sacred tree of the bi-sexual state god now became too holy to be entered, except at the New Year festival, which was made to coincide with the deity's annual birthday.

The main feature of this festival, a sacred marriage—the renewed union of the god with the goddess—also insured fertility for the year to come. The goddess was personified by the Queenmother of the clan state, if she was young; otherwise by her daughter, sister, or niece; the god, by a handsome favourite of the Queenmother's. In some cases this young man was then sacrificed like the *akyeneboa* of an earlier period: the priests flayed him and hung up his skin on the sacred tree. Later, when kingship was introduced, the King himself personified the god. As a rule, a young male favourite of his (*ɔkra*), died vicariously for him, as mock-king. The first fruits of rice, millet, or yam, depending on the *ɔbosom*'s particular *sunsum* (Tano originally was a rice-god; *Ntoa*, a yam-god) were offered in token of his-her power of resurrection and productivity.

Men in that period ceased to identify themselves with the totem animal of their clan, but adopted the *sunsum* of the planet which had given birth to their *ɔbosom* (Moon, peaceful; Mars, warlike; Mercury, wise—and so forth), and to which their *kra* returned at their death. A dead person's *sunsum* changed after death into a *saman* ('shade' or 'ghost') which went to live in an Otherworld, situated in the outer regions, beyond the stars, and reached by the Milky Way.

The state was ruled as before by the *ɔhemmaa*, or Queenmother, but she now had a chief male executive at her orders, in Twi called *Korontihene*, as the goddess Nyame had *Odumankoma*. When kingship came in, the King, divine like the Queenmother, and consti-

tutionally regarded as her son, represented the male aspect of the Moon, a Fertility-god born by the Moon-mother. Yet he ritually married the Queenmother in her aspect of Venus personified by one of his wives. The King's main task, like the Queenmother's, was to give and maintain life in the state. As supreme priest of his clan god as well as of the state god, in cases where the two were not identical owing to political circumstances, he appointed a high priest (*ɔɔfo panyin*) to deputize for him and relieve him of many burdensome duties.

The Period of Cult Type III

With the expansion of the city state, by conquest of other city states, and uncivilized tribes, it was felt that the High King, as ruler over several petty kings, needed a higher political and religious status than they. He was therefore deemed to incarnate the Sun, which had hitherto been viewed as a creature that died nightly and needed daily resurrection by the Moon-goddess, but which now seemed self-regenerative. His claims to incarnate the Moon lapsed, and he called himself Son of the Sun-god, announcing his independence of the Moon-goddess, and of the Queenmother, who continued to represent the Moon. In the enstoolment ceremony he now officially quitted the Queenmother's lunar clan in proof that he stood alone and supreme.

The Sun-king, like the Queenmother's Moon-consort, was charged with giving and maintaining life in the State; and in consequence had to live a secluded life, as regular as the course of the sun. An heir-apparent deputized for him in public; but the King, often a former heir-apparent, understood governmental affairs, and gave final decisions after consulting with the Queenmother and his ministers. The people venerated him as the sole source of truth, justice, wisdom, authority and power. Although he never went to war, all victories were ascribed to his personal valour and superior intelligence; but at the same time he had to assume responsibility for all national disasters.

The Sun-king was matrilineally descended from the Moon-mother. His solar *kra*, however, was a reincarnation of the *kra* animating his *nananom*, or Royal Ancestors, the deceased King's descendants of the Sun-god Nyankopon in the male line. After death, this *kra* returned to the Sun; and his *sunsum*, also a solar one, changed into a *saman* and went to the Netherworld (*Saman-*

dow), now envisaged as situated below the earth, possibly in the region through which the sun was supposed to travel.

The King's *honhom*, a new concept, the breath of divine life, returned to Nyame in her aspect of bi-sexual Creatrix. The shrines for the Royal Ancestors—leather cushions, later stools—became more important than ever, as the point of assembly for the dead King's *kra*, *saman* and *honhom*. Only when these three elements had reunited was the dead King's immortality insured; propitiated by the living King, he could then assist him in giving and maintaining life in the state. The Royal Ancestors thus mediated between the living King and the Sun-god—a concept originating in the period of Cult Type I, where the Queenmother sacrificed her daughter or sister at the foundation of a clan or state, to mediate between the Moon-goddess and herself.

The worship of the King as Son of Nyankopon was an ancestor cult in the royal lineage of which he acted as high priest. Two New Year festivals were now usually celebrated: one in Spring, after the completion of sowing and planting, dedicated to the Sky-Fertility-god; the other, in autumn before the crops were gathered, dedicated to the ritual death and resurrection of the King as a means of renewing his divine life-giving power. On the day of the autumn equinox he was deprived of his kingship and became as if dead; but at nightfall he reappeared in full splendour as the resurrected Sun soon to appear above the horizon. He then performed the sacred marriage: either with his senior wife, the queen (as in Bono); or with his most beloved wife (as in Asante), who similarly represented the Venus aspect of the Moon-mother.

The Queenmother remained an incarnation of the Moon, and was regarded as the Moon-goddess's daughter. She also propitiated her ancestresses in the Chapel of the Stools, intermediaries between the Moon-mother and herself.

At the same time, the theory of reincarnation spread among the people. The *kra* was still envisaged as fire, supplied by one or the other of the seven planets which animated a person's blood, but its spirit the *honhom* that dwelt in the *kra* was now that of a maternal ancestor; the *honhom-kra* was constantly reincarnated in order to become wholly pure at last. The child received a *kra* with its *honhom* at birth, from the *akragya* of the planet that ruled its natal day, together with its *sunsum*, in a good-bye ceremony from Nyame.



The Period of Cult Type IV

In the period of Cult Type I the people moulded their characters on the *akyeneboa*, or totem animal, the incarnation of their *ɔbosom*, or clan goddess.

In the period of Cult Type II they moulded their characters on whichever of the seven planets had supplied their clan *ɔbosom*, now a bi-sexual Sky-Fertility-god, with his *kra* and *sunsum*, character of personality, on his natal day.

In the period of Cult Type III they moulded their character on the planet of their own natal day from which they had received their *kra*—now that of a maternal ancestor—and *sunsum*.

In the period of Cult Type IV the men moulded their characters on the water, river, or lake of their *ntoro ɔbosom*, a former Sky-Fertility-Clan-god, now regarded as their supernatural ancestor in the male line. Water was chosen because it could be equated with seminal fluid; but the character of the divine water was determined by the planet from whom this god had received his *kra* and *sunsum* on his natal day.

The result of the *Ntoro* Cult, based on a paternal group, was to establish patrilocal, instead of matrilocal, marriage. It gave authority to the father in the family; the mother's brother, however, remained the real head of the family. In the sexual act, the father identified himself with the god; and was at the same time the priest of his *ntoro ɔbosom*. So far only women had been venerated as givers of life; now the men claimed equality with them in the same function. The Sky-Fertility-gods continued to be worshipped agriculturally as the givers of life; and the King and Queenmothers remained intermediaries between the ancestral deities, the Moon-mother, the Sun-god, and the *ntoro ɔbosom* of the royal line—through whom life was given to the state.

APPENDIX

The Aduana Clan's New Year Festival at Takyiman

Originally the people of a clan were the descendants of the people who had gathered round the Elder Woman, the creatrix of the clan. Today, owing to a long historical development the important Akan clans are all confederations of clans. To give an example: the Aduana clan represents really twenty-two clans or, if one wishes to express it differently, it is a clan with twenty-one sub-clans. Seven of these were major clans in the past—Aberade, the royal clan; Aduana, the state clan; Atwea, Nyankonpasakyie, Amoakare (Amoakade), Abira, Adaa (or Onyanyo)—for its clan chiefs under a king ruled the Kumbu Confederation, one of the great Akan states of the past, that was situated in a region which now belongs to the French Ivory Coast. It ceased to exist about 1480. Refugees then founded (in Ghana, the Gold Coast) the Twifo-Heman, Akwamu and Domaa kingdoms and at a time, when these states suffered disastrous defeats, many of its people emigrated and settled in other Akan states. An Akan state is basically or ideally, the confederation of seven dominant clans (*abusua nson*), and since many states at that time had already seven clans, the newcomers were usually grouped into one clan, the Aduana, and two clans of the former amalgamated.¹ The Aduana clan of Kumbu approximated the Anana of Bono; after the introduction of the Sun cult, most of the chiefs of the kingdom, royal sons, had to leave their own clan to belong to that of the king, or state (p. 86).

¹ When it was found some years ago that Asante has eight instead of seven clans the Asantehene Nana Sir Osei Agyeman Prempeh II ruled in a meeting of the Asante Confederacy Council, that Asante should have seven clans only: Ayoko (and Dako); Aduana; Asona; Asine; Konna (and Asokore); Beretu (and Agona); and Asakyiri.

The Aduana's clan-totem animal, or *akyeneboa*, is the dog; but the other twenty-one lesser clans retain their own sub-totems. The Aduana people of Takyiman, for instance, have the *awidie*, or parrot. However, their New Year festival is no longer an *akyeneboa* hunt but concerns the Aduana stool, which has become the emblem of the Aduana great-clan.

This festival takes place, as in all Akan States, on a *Munufie*, or 'New Friday', twenty days before *Sanaa Kese*, the first New Year Day. On the Thursday night two *murukua* drums are beaten. These are shaped like the *ntumpane* (talking) drums, and attached to the *Aduana Akondwa-nnonson*, the Aduana stool with its seven bells symbolizing the seven dominant clans of the original Kumbu Kingdom. This is the only time that the *murukua* drums are beaten, and they sound from about six o'clock on Thursday evening until nine o'clock next morning, or later. Before the drummer begins, the Aduanahene, the Clan-chief, pours a libation wishing him success in his undertaking, and long life. He says: *Murukua nsa, mo megye nsa yi nom, nne afe ano ahyia, okyerema yi rebeka mo, mo ma biriara a obeye biara enye yie ma no, mo ma no nkwasanten, me sre mo nkwa ne akwahosan ma Nana Takyimanhene, ohemmaa, mpaninfoo, mmrerantee ne mmabaa, nemofra ne me ara a me gyina mo' nim ha seisei ara yi.* ('*Murukua*, here is a drink, come thou and take it, now that the year has come round again. This drummer is coming to drum upon thee. Give him success in all his undertakings and lengthen his life. I pray thee grant long life and health to Nana, King of Takyiman, the Queenmother, the elders, the young men, the young women, the children, and to myself who now stand before thee.')

When the drumming ends, visitors arrive: the first being the King of Takyiman, the Queenmother and State elders come to wish the Aduana people a happy New Year. The Aduanahene receives them and takes their presents. They sit down for awhile and are offered drinks. When they rise to go, the Aduanahene's *sodoo* people, the cooks, who claim descent from prisoners of war, prepare to cook the mashed yams and *fufu*, as offerings to the ghosts of ancestors. At about 3.30 p.m. these are placed in little dishes upon a table before the *Aduana Akondwa-nnonson* in the Aduanahene's Stool-house. His *okyeame*, or spokesman, then steps forward, and pouring a libation of water, says: *Nananom Aduana mo me gye nsuo nhohro mo nsa na mo me didi, afe ano ahyia, ma asomdwoe mmra*

oman yi mu. ('Aduana ancestors, come for water to wash your hands before eating. The year has come round again, let the kingdom be at peace.') Then he cuts the *fufu* into gobbets and sets some of these on the black stools of the Aduanahene's ancestors, and others in front of them, while seven ten-year-old boys ring the seven bells of the Aduana Stool. The *ɔkyeame* then pours a libation of rum, and says: *Wo afɔrebɔdeɛ ni, wo afɔrebɔdeɛ ni. Yi wo tirum fitace begye di.* ('Here are your offerings, here are your offerings. Accept them heartily.') And then: *Nananom edidie ne anom, nsa a egu akyire ni-oo.* ('Ancestors, here is a drink which you may take during or after the meal.') The rest of the rum is shared by all present, the last drop being poured over the Aduana stool, to a chorus of: *Kose, kose, kose musuonta.* ('Blessing, blessing, blessing, may the offerings prove successful.')

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Aduanahene receives the visit of the Aduana stool-sons and daughters; the heirs and heir-esses to the stools of various offices; his village chiefs, and many commoners, all of whom bring him presents, mostly yams. Singing and dancing in the courtyard of the Aduanahene's house continues until nightfall.

A libation is poured and offerings are made to the ancestors of the Aduana clan, every morning for a week. This ends the festival.¹

¹ Information given by the Aduanahene of Takyiman Nana Yao Inwim.

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