



The Influence of the Brukung Cult
on the Social Organization of Shiare

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Preface

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My greatest single academic debt is to my supervisor, Dr. Esther Goody, whose unfailing help, advice and pertinent criticisms were invaluable. I would also like to thank Professor Jack Goody, who first suggested to me that I should work in Shiare, who subsequently maintained a keen interest in my work and whose graduate writing-up seminars provided a lively forum for the discussion and clarification of ideas. I would also like to record a special debt to Professor Meyer Fortes, who, during my years of study at Cambridge, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, continually encouraged me in the study of social anthropology.

I am, of course, deeply indebted to the people of Shiare, who welcomed me among them, gave me a home and a name, and allowed me to share their life for a brief period. I would like to thank especially Nana Oberko Agyei II, Shiarewura and Osulewura, Nana Gesu, the chief priest, Nana Kulahome, the head of the Cha clan, Nana Mbowura Ayor, the mankradu, Mr. A. B. Quartey, who placed his house in Shiare at my disposal during the whole period of my field work, Mr. George S. K. Mensah, my invaluable and patient field assistant, Mr. N. A. Abby, from whom I learned much about Shiare customs, and the many others who helped me in my work.

Except where indicated in the text, this thesis is the result of my own original work, and contains nothing done

It does not exceed 80,000 words.

Notes on Pronunciation and orthography

As Gewode is an unwritten language, inconsistencies in spelling are unavoidable.

'Atwode' is pronounced as 'Achode', ch being pronounced as in the English word 'church'. This spelling is the form adopted by educated Shiaremen. ky is pronounced as in 'church', and gy as in 'jam'. Here I have followed the Akan orthography.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to describe and assess the influence of the Brukung cult on the social system of Shiare, the ritual and political capital of the Atwode people. The Atwode are one of a number of numerically small peoples, ethnically and linguistically unrelated to each other, who inhabit the remote hill country and surrounding areas of the central and northern parts of the Volta Region of Ghana. This remote and isolated area formed an ideal refuge for those peoples who fled from the wars fought in the rain forest and savanna on either side of the hills. Living as they did in relative isolation, it could be reasonably presumed that much of the culture they took with them to the hills would have survived intact, and thus of considerable interest to the anthropologist. Rather surprisingly, these peoples have received little attention from anthropologists. With the exception of the Nchumuru (Lumsden 1974) and the Avatime (Brydon 1976), none of these peoples has been studied in detail. What little is known of them is derived largely from the accounts and reports of European missionaries and administrators.

The Atwode would seem to have a particular claim to the attention of the anthropologist, as their chief town, Shiare, is the seat and centre of worship of the ancient and important divinity Brukung, whose fame and cult have extended well beyond the borders of Atwode, due to the shrine's reputation as a pilgrimage centre, and was found over a wide area of central West Africa. Chapter 2, part 1



assembles and discusses the texts relating to the occurrence of the god in this area. It is clear from these texts that though the god was well-known to some of the peoples in this area, and played an important part in their religious systems, very little is known in fact of the god or its cult. No detailed study of the Brukung cult has ever been attempted. There is also some evidence to show that not only is Shiare a major centre of Brukung worship, but it may also possibly be the centre from which the cult spread through central West Africa.

My original plan was to establish myself at the centre of the shrine and the cult, if possible join the cult, acquire a first hand knowledge of the shrine, its cult and its rituals, and work out from the source of the cult, and determine its influence on the life of Shiare.

However, one of the difficulties, and interests, of research is that very often the researcher does not know what he is looking for and cannot assess the relative importance of the materials with which he is working. He may know what kind of answer he wants, but, paradoxically, he may not know what will count as an answer until he has completed his research. The researcher will encounter difficulties, and the anthropologist, alone as he usually is in an alien environment, is particularly vulnerable in this respect. Possibly his greatest difficulty is that he cannot predict, and thus prepare for, the problems he will encounter in his field work, or for the unexpected areas into which his researches will lead him. Often models

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and theoretical schemata have to be modified or discarded, and new ones sought.

Very early in my field work I discovered that the Brukung cult in Shiare was surrounded with great secrecy. Cult membership was rigidly restricted to Atwode-born males, and only cult members were permitted to enter the shrine and participate in its rituals. The secrecy imposed on cult members ensured that these rituals and the cult secrets were never divulged. Thus any possibility of gaining admittance to the shrine and the cult and gaining direct knowledge of its workings had to be abandoned. However, it soon became clear to me that however important the shrine rituals were, and disappointing that I would be unable to observe them, they represented only one aspect of the importance of the shrine and the Brukung cult. What was equally and possibly more important was the social context of the cult. Therefore the main emphasis of my researches in the field was to determine how the cult influenced the social system of Shiare, and establish the relationship between cult and community. Two considerations were involved here, firstly the significance of the cult for the local community, Shiare, and secondly the relationship of the cult, and Shiare, with other more distant communities with whom Shiare is linked through the importance of the shrine as a pilgrimage centre.

Chapter 3 discusses the social organization of Shiare. One of the most distinctive features of the social organization is the existence of the two clans, between whom Shiare is divided territorially. Each clan exercises a considerable degree of autonomy, under the leadership of the clan head, political and religious functions. Each



clan has an altar to Brukung, on which the clan head performs sacrifices to the god. The unity of the shrine worship brings both clans together, and this is expressed in and through the person and office of the chief priest, who is the older in age of the two clan heads, and who is ultimately the source of political and ritual authority in Shiare, which are seen as deriving from the shrine. There is a mutual interdependence between cult and social organization. The cult recruits its members from the clans, and in turn provides the bases of ritual and political authority in the clans and in the subclans, which are the major descent groups. The unity of Shiare in terms of the shrine, and the importance of the role of the chief priest, are expressed in the annual yam festival, which is discussed and analysed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 4 is devoted to a discussion of the political organization of Shiare. The important issue here is the relationship between the chief priest and the Shiarewura (the chief of Shiare). By virtue of his office as chief priest, and custodian of the shrine, the chief priest was, traditionally, the source of political authority in Shiare. Following the imposition of European colonial rule, a new pattern of political authority arose, with the gradual emergence of the Shiarewura as the focal point of political authority, the chief priest playing a more limited political role. The factors leading to the emergence of the importance of the office of Shiarewura, and the various stages of the development of the office are discussed. It will be seen how, though the Shiarewura is important in his own right, political authority still belongs to the chief priest, since all authority in Shiare derives

ultimately from the shrine and is thus exercised by the chief priest, and that the Shiarewura is ultimately responsible to and controlled by the chief priest and thus by the shrine.

Chapter 6 discusses the shrine as a pilgrimage centre. There are two major considerations involved. Firstly, there are the pilgrims themselves, who come in great numbers to the shrine, and how Shiare faces the problem, common to any popular shrine, of accommodating large numbers of pilgrims, and how the consultation process itself is structured and effected. Secondly, there is the political role of the shrine. Traditionally, the shrine was held in high esteem by some of the then powerful, independent kingdoms of West Africa. Embassies were sent to consult the shrine on a wide range of important issues, especially those concerned with war. Thus, almost ironically, having sought the isolation of the hills to escape wars, the Shiare people were again involved in them, but indirectly, due to the shrine's reputation as an oracle. This aspect of the shrine brought Shiare into contact with peoples and policies beyond her borders. How the relationships thus made were defined is discussed in the context of the shrine.

The cult has survived into modern times. Over the past 100 years Shiare and Atwode have been affected by different kinds of social and political change, but the cult has been largely unaffected by these changes. Chapter 3 examines some of the factors now operative in Shiare as the result of these changes, particularly Christianity and education, and how they affect and relate to the cult. Chapter 8 examines

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briefly the cult in the context of social change, and attempts to assess it in terms of the present factors of social change with which it has to contend, and what future effect they may have on the structure of the cult and its traditional functions of serving the needs of the local community, and as a pilgrimage centre, catering for the many people who come to consult the shrine.

My field work, which was carried out from June 1975 to September 1976, was conducted entirely in Shiare. As Shiare is the ritual and political centre of Atwodoland, events in Shiare, and events affecting Shiare, also affect Atwode. Although I sometimes speak of Atwode, my chief concern has been with Shiare, the cult and its implications for Shiare.

CHAPTER 1

THE ATWODE AND ATWODELAND, ITS GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY

1. Origins and Migrations

The Atwode belong to the Guan speaking peoples, who are found widely distributed throughout Ghana and adjacent areas of Togo. With the notable exception of the Gonja, Guan communities are small, numerically and territorially. The Gonja occupy a very large territory, stretching across the centre of Ghana from east to west, in the savannah grasslands, north of the rain forest. The other, smaller, Guan communities are found in two groupings, those in the south, near the Coast, and those in the East, in the Volta region (see Map I).

The coastal communities are situated in the south-eastern part of the country, near Accra. On the coast itself are Efutu and Gomoa; the former includes the town of Winneba, and Bureku; the latter name is a form of Bruku, or Burukung, and this association of a shrine of the divinity Burukung with a Guan-speaking people may be significant in that Brukung is the chief divinity worshipped in Atwode. Further inland, north of Accra and east of Akwapim, are the Larteh and the Kyerepon.

The remaining Guan communities are to be found in the Volta region. They are the Nchumuru, Krachi, Nawuri, Nkunya and Atwode- the Anyanga are in Togo. The Volta Region is the most diversified in Ghana, and contains a great number of ethnic groups. Map I shows how tightly clustered the groups are on a north/south axis along the Ghana Togo border. The area in the south of the region is predominantly Ewe: north of Ho, the regional capital, begin
which run roughly north and south. In the



central reaches of these hills live the peoples classified by Westermann and Bryant as Restvölker; further north, there are the Guan speaking peoples, others of Akan descent, and many others of different ethnic origins. These ranges of hills have long been recognised as refuge areas, which attracted peoples who wished to escape from the wars and struggles being fought in the rain forests and on the savannah on either side. In many cases, the cultures and beliefs they brought with them remained to a great extent intact, as the comparative isolation and remoteness of the hills, and the poor system of communication, did not encourage contact on any significant scale.

The Atwode live in the northern part of the Volta Region, but they are not indigenous to the area, and this is acknowledged in their traditions. It is extremely difficult to establish with any certainty or accuracy the early history of southern and eastern Ghana, but historians now accept that there was a considerable flow of populations, large scale migrations, for various reasons. The Atwode were involved in these migrations, but the precise circumstances cannot be determined.

The Atwode traditions relate that their original homeland was at Nyawase, near the modern Nsawan, north of Accra; today, Guan speaking communities are to be found in this area. The reason for the migration is given as the desire to escape wars and bloodshed, and the evidence of the traditions, though scanty, seems to suggest that that area of the country was involved in one of the numerous wars being waged by the Akan, particularly by the Ashanti. Very significantly, the divinity Brukung hates and abhors bloodshed, and for this reason the people decided to migrate. The Atwode say that they had worshipped the divinity in the south, it with them when they sought refuge in the

Brukung cult are many, complex and problematical, and will be discussed in detail later in the thesis, but it is central for the Atwode, and their own understanding of themselves as a people with their own special identity, that they were guided in their migration by Brukung, and that he wanted them to settle where his worship would be effected in surroundings free from warfare and bloodshed.

The Atwode left the south in two groups, the warriors, led by Nana Attakora Bediadiuro, the war leader, and the non-warriors, led by Nana Sei Mireku. The latter group would include the priests of the Brukung cult; the warriors, because of their contamination with human blood, were not initiated into the cult. The Atwode traditions do not provide any specific details of the journey, but the route led them across the River Volta and up the centre of the present Volta Region to Abrewonkor, in the present Atwode Traditional Area. Here the sister of Sei Máreku died and was buried, from which derived the name of the place, Abrewonkor being the Akan word for 'old woman'. When the funeral ceremonies were completed, the two groups split, and went different ways. The warriors, under Attakora Bediadiuro, decided to continue their journey, and travelled to Gyerekpanga, in the present day Kotokoli country in Togo where they settled, and where their descendants still live. They have lost the Atwode language, and are geographically distant from the Atwode, but they have not forgotten their Guan origins, and their connection with the Atwode is maintained in two important and significant ways. They play an important part in the Brukung cult. The Brukung gegyakpa, or stool of Brukung, which is the most important ritual object pertaining to the cult, is said to have been carved

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in Gyerekpanga. More importantly, when initiations into the brukung cult are held, representatives of the Gyerekpanga people are invited to be present- their participation in the initiation ceremony is regarded as crucial, as it is said that the ceremony could not take place unless this delegation was present (Chapter 2).

Secondly, every year they send a gift of an ayu (guinea-corn) to the chief priest in Shiare for the annual Ayu Festival, which is held in December. This is not regarded as being as important as their participation in the initiation ceremony; in recent years the practice was performed irregularly due, so it was said, to the tension which existed between Ghana and Togo in the latter part of Kwame Nkrumah's presidency.

The participation of the Gyerekpanga people in the Brukung cult, though important, is indirect. They cannot be initiated into the cult, due to the rigid and exclusive conditions of cult membership, which will be treated in detail later.

The other group, under Nana Sei Mireku, remained in the area around Abrewoonkor, and founded some settlements there. After an indeterminate period of time, some of the people, led by the priests, who felt that the area in which they were living was still too exposed to warlike peoples, moved into the rugged hilly country slightly to the east, and they founded the towns of Shiare and Chilinga. The first settlers in Shiare were led by Cha and Asuku said to be brothers, or brother and brother's son; they are the eponymous ancestors of the two clans in Shiare (see page 79).

2. The Atwode Traditional Area

The Atwode Traditional Area is in the northern part of the

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Atwode (Map 2). The area is bounded in the north by the River Oti, beyond which are Northern Region and Dagomba country; on the west the River Oti marks the boundary of the area, and divides Atwode Territory from the Konkomba and the Nanumba. On the south and south-west are the Adele, friends and allies of the Atwode; on the east, the Ghanaian-Togo frontier is the Atwode's eastern border, and divides them from the Anyanga, who are closely related to the Atwode, linguistically and ethnically; the languages are very similar, and mutually intelligible (Map 3).

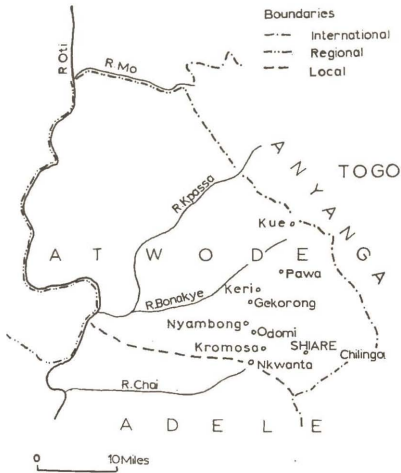
The Atwode Traditional Area is 907 sq.miles in area. The eastern part falls within the Togo ranges in which is situated Mount Djebobo, the second highest mountain in Ghana (2800 feet). The nine towns of the Atwode are Shiare, Chilinga, Kromasi, Odomi, Nyambong, Gekorong, Keri, Pawa and Kue. Shiare and Chilinga are situated in the hills; the others are in the lower foothills of the Togo Ranges or in the lowlands. The western half of the area is part of the Voltaian basin lowlands, and until recently was uninhabited bush, used as hunting grounds by the Atwode and some of the neighbouring tribes (Map 3).

But great changes took place, beginning with the construction of the Great Eastern Trunk Road in the 1950s (Map 4). This road was planned to link the southern part of the Volta Region with the Northern Region. The existing road from Accra to Jasikan was pushed north, through the Atwode Traditional Area, crossing the Volta lake in the northern part of the area by ferry, then on to Bortle and Yendi, which thus linked with the road to Tamale and Bolgatanga. Theoretically, this is the quickest way from Accra

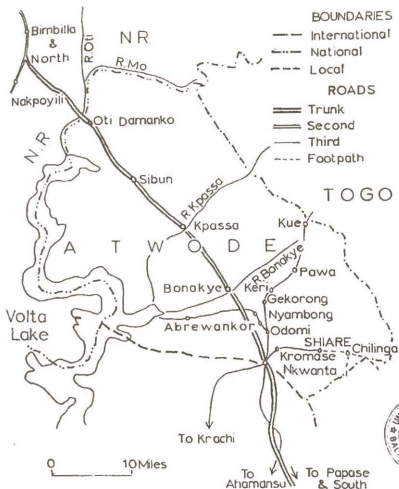
But in fact the road was never maintained or



Map 2 : The Volta Region, showing the main towns
the Atwode Traditional Area.



Map 3 : The Atwode Traditional Area, showing the nine Atwode towns and the new town of Nkwanta.



Map 4 : The Atwode Traditional Area, with the new towns and the new road system following the completion of the trunk road.

repaired, and is impassable at the height of the rainy season.

But the advent of the road had two important effects on the Atwode Traditional Area. The first was the coming of the immigrants. The area is very fertile, and over the years small groups of people had settled in the area and engaged in subsistence farming. Many of these people had been attracted to the country through consulting the Brukung shrine at Shiare, and eventually settled in the area, founding small settlements. But the full potential of the area was not really exploited until the opening of the road. With government encouragement, settlers came from the north, mostly Konkomba and Nanumba, founded villages and cleared the land for cultivation. A variety of crops was grown, but the most important was the yam, for which the area is particularly famous. Settlements were built near the new road; it was thus easy to load the yams on to the lorries, which took them to the ready markets in the south. Thus the economy of the area was affected. The population balance was also radically affected. According to the 1960 census, the total population of the Atwode Traditional Area was 4554. The next decade saw the founding of the new towns, particularly Nkwanta, Kpassa and Damonko, and some smaller ones (Map 4). According to the 1970 census, the population had increased to 22,430, of whom only 3,200 i.e. 14% of the population, were Atwode. The Atwode still occupied the same territory in the south-eastern part of the area, the former uninhabited area supporting the other 86%. The population density rose from 2.2 persons per square mile in 1960 to 24.72 persons per square mile in 1970.

The opening of the new road also brought a new set of problems, as conflicts arose regarding land rights and jurisdiction between

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the Atwode and the new settlers. The paramount chief of the Atwode claimed the land belonged to the Atwode, and that the immigrants could settle on his land and use it provided that his authority was recognised and that the customary offerings of beer and yams were made to him or his representatives to signify this. This was accepted and acknowledged by the Konkomba, but not by the Nanumba, who claimed that the land was free, and that they were entitled to settle there and install their own chiefs without reference to the Atwode Paramount chief. This led to a series of quarrels between the Atwode and the Nanumba, which are still being fought in the courts in Accra.

The second important effect of the road on the Atwode Traditional Area was the founding of the new town of Nkwanta. The town was originally founded in 1935, as an administrative centre for the three tribes of the area, the Atwode, the Adele and the Ntrubu. For some years the town was very small and undeveloped, but its importance increased when the new road linked it with the areas in the north and the south, which made it into an important junction with roads radiating in several directions. From being an insignificant, ill-defined locality, Nkwanta became an important administrative and commercial centre, and an important junction (Map 4). In 1960 the population was 754, in 1970 it had risen to 1654, an increase of 118.2%, and the population is still increasing. The town is the centre of the Nkwanta Administrative Area, with a Grade II Magistrates Court and a police-station. It has two elementary schools, a middle school and a continuation school. The Catholic Mission has a large church, and a clinic and maternity hospital. Several stores serve the community, including as private businesses. The petrol station

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is the only one until Bimbilla, some 60 miles to the north.

From Nkwanta there radiates a network of roads, apart from the major road which runs north and south. To the west runs the road which links up with the ferry at Dumbai, from whence either Salaga or Krachi can be reached. Salaga is on the road to Tamale, and hence the whole of the Northern Region is accessible. The road from Krachi has been improved to Atebubu, which is on the main road to Salaga and Tamale in the north, and Kumasi in the south. These secondary roads had existed for some time, but had been widened and improved to accommodate lorries. It now became possible to travel relatively quickly between Nkwanta and Krachi, which is the centre of the larger administrative area of which Nkwanta is a part.

To the east of Nkwanta are two roads which lead into the traditional Atwode towns. One runs north, through the towns of Odomi, Nyambong, Gekerong, Keri, Pawa and Kue, on the Togo border, all of which are theoretically accessible by lorry from Nkwanta. The other road runs due east to Shiare and Chilinga (Map 4). Originally, the road from Nkwanta through the Atwode towns to Kue was a bush track, quite unsuitable for transport of any kind. Again, it was the opening of the new major road which led to the former bush track being widened for transport. The district between Pawa and Keri is very hilly and forested, abounding in game. To exploit this to the full it was necessary to have direct access to the area; this became possible when the roads were widened to allow lorries to travel to Kue and collect the meat, which could then be taken reasonably swiftly to the south. The improved roads allow, of course, for swifter travel to the major commercial



The road from Nkwanta to Shiare is an important one, and was used by non-Atwode people long before the construction of the new major road and the advent of motor transport, as it was the pilgrim route to Shiare, seat of the divinity Brukung. The new road system benefitted the shrine, and facilitated the pilgrims' journey. Many pilgrims came from Ashanti, which was a long difficult journey, some of which had to be done on foot. The journey was now considerably shortened, and may well have led to an increase in the number of pilgrims visiting the shrine. Only the last 10 miles, from Nkwanta to Shiare, had to be done on foot. It was felt that there was a need for a road from Nkwanta to Shiare. In the early 1950s a lorry road was built from Nkwanta to Kromasi, which is about 3 miles from Nkwanta; from this point to Shiare the terrain is very difficult, rough and uneven, and would require major engineering to make a proper road, which was not considered sufficiently worthwhile financially. However, the Shiare people wanted a road which would fulfil the minimum requirements of a lorry road, so they began to widen and improve the road with their own labour and their own implements. From Kromasi to within 1½ miles of Shiare, the road is just barely suitable for lorries, but travelling is difficult. The construction of this road by voluntary manual labour is interesting, in that the work was undertaken not for commercial or economic reasons, as no passenger lorries ply between Nkwanta and Shiare, but for religious reasons, to facilitate the journey to the shrine. Many lorries from Ashanti and the south have utilised the rough but passable road to Shiare.

The last 1½ miles from the end of the road (known as the
are itself, is up a narrow winding steep

3. Shiare

Setting and Economy

Shiare is situated deep in the Togo Range (which was called the Fetischgebirge, i.e. the 'Fetish Mountains', by the early German geographers). The hills descend so steeply to the river, and the valley itself is so narrow, that it is more properly a ravine than a valley. Through the valley flows the river Sabon. The valley is closed off in the south-east and north-west by two steep hills; the road to Chilinga and Nkwanta respectively winds its way across these hills. The road to Chilinga, which is a steep narrow path, leads on to a high plateau, which continues evenly until the descent to Chilinga, very near the Togo border. The plateau, and this part of the range, is a watershed, to the east of which the rivers flow into the River Mono, in Togo, and to the west of which they flow into the River Volta system in Ghana.

Shiare is built on the lower slope of the high and steep south-western hill (Plates 1 and 2). The spatial structure of the village is determined by the severe constraints imposed by the physical geography of the locality. Below the town, the terrain drops sharply to the river; above it, the terrain rises in a steep gradient, allowing of no possibility for building beyond the present existing limits. Thus, the amount of land available for building is very limited; every piece of land has been carefully exploited and utilised for building, and there is very little land left for expansion. The Shiare people have used the natural features of the hill, where it climbs gently, and have constructed a series of ledges, which run irregularly hill, and on which the dwellings are built.



are, showing houses built on the
pe of the hill.

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and attraction, and simultaneously, its sense of crampedness; the dwellings are of necessity built very close together, with little intervening space; roads and streets do not exist, only narrow alleyways, some a mere few feet wide (Plate 3). Only occasionally is there sufficient space for some huts to be situated around a central open space to form a compound. To go from ledge to ledge involves clambering up and down rocky paths, which become very slippery in the rainy season.

The dwellings are built from the traditional soil (laserite) mixed with sand and water, with stones added to help bind the mixture. Building is done towards the beginning of the dry season, about December/January, the work being done by a communal work force. The traditional dwelling in Shiare is a round hut, with a conical thatched roof. These are found today clustered around two parts of the town, the original nuclei of the twin settlements founded by Cha and Awuku, the eponymous ancestors of the two clans which lie at the heart of the Shiare social organisation. These two nuclei eventually expanded in all directions until the town assumed its present form, but they are still clearly identifiable today, with their clusters of traditional type huts situated around an open space, in which are buried the clan heads and other people of note, and which are regarded as sacred by their respective clans.

Over the years another style of dwelling has appeared, the square or the rectangular buildings, built of the same material, with thatched roofs. In some cases the thatch has given way to a zinc metal roof, which is expensive, and carries a certain prestige, as it indicates the financial standing of the owner.

discussed more fully in the chapter devoted to



Plate 3 : Shiare. Alleyway.

the economic importance of the Brukung shrine to Shiare. Some of the more prosperous men have plastered the outside of their dwellings with a coat of cement; again, this is an expensive commodity, and is indicative of relative wealth. The cement-coated, zinc-roofed dwellings stand in marked contrast to the more traditional round, conically thatched huts.

The economy of Shiare is based on subsistence farming. Unlike building land, farm land is plentiful, but is normally some distance from the town, and to reach the farms involves a long arduous climb out of the valley. Every man has a farm, sometimes more than one; the two main agricultural implements are the hoe and the cutlass. A system of shifting cultivation is practiced. The basic work unit is the family, which consists of a man, his wife or wives, and grown-up sons, who are unmarried or otherwise do not farm for themselves. Occasionally this group may be augmented, for specific purposes, such as clearing new land, in which case a man will call upon his close kin, usually his brothers, or brothers' sons. Farming is the only full-time occupation in Shiare; the town supports a few craftsmen, e.g. a cobbler and two carpenters, but these are part-time occupations, subordinate to the full-time requirements of the farm. There are, however, a few exceptions to this situation of full-time farming, and, as they are related to the cult of the divinity Brukung, they will be discussed later in that context.

Some of the farms are situated at more than a day's journey from Shiare, and at certain seasons considerable periods of time are required to be spent on the farm, so it often happens that a man, and often his family, will live on the farm for several

A temporary dwelling is erected on the
the 'village' as opposed to the 'town'.



Agriculturally, Shiare is favoured by nature; it shares the assured regular rainfall of the forested areas of Southern Ghana, which allows for the cultivation of the crops which thrive in the rain forests, and also, being woodland savannah, can cultivate crops which do not grow favourably in the forest. Thus, a very wide variety of foodstuffs are available. The most important crop, indeed the staple, is the yam, (Dioscorea); two varieties are grown, the yam proper (Dioscorea rotunda), and the water yam (Dioscorea alata). The latter is regarded as being an inferior yam, and is much less favoured than the former, which is referred to simply as the 'yam' (gegyo). The yam is the most prized food, and has a deep symbolic significance for the Atwode, which will be discussed and analysed in the context of the Yam Festival. The planting and harvesting of yams is reserved exclusively to the men.

Cassava (kitiki; Manihot utilissima) and cocoyam (bankani; Xantiosoma mafaffa) are very widely grown. Cassava is especially favoured, as an equivalent yield of cassava can be obtained for far less energy and time than has to be devoted to the cultivation of the yam. In many areas of Ashanti, the cultivation of the yam has given way to that of cassava; this is not the case in Shiare, nor indeed in the whole of the northern part of the Volta Region, which is famed for the excellence of its yam, sometimes referred to as the 'krachi' yam.

Apart from these primary staple crops, a wide variety of crops are cultivated by the Shiare people. The most common and useful are: rice (omologo; Oryza sativa), guinea corn (ayy; ayy), maize (awayy; Zea mays) and groundnuts (aketewa; Arachis). Groundnuts are used in the making of groundnut soup,

as it is a very valuable

protein. The women are responsible for the cultivation of a number of useful foodstuffs, peppers (osin; Papiscum), tomatoes (mantosi; Lycopersicum esculentum), onions (gabū; Alium cepa), garden eggs (getore; Solanum melongena) and okro (gebindi; Lihiscus esculentus). These crops are especially valuable in the making of soup, as are the three kinds of beans which are grown. There is an abundance of fruit: oranges, pawpaw, avocado pear, mangoes, pineapples, banana and plantain. Of these, plantain (horodc, Musa paradisiaca) is the most favoured by the Shiare people as it can be put to a wide variety of uses. Plantain is larger and coarser than the banana, and is richer in starch; it can be roasted in oil, boiled, or pounded into a fufu; or, it may be dried and ground, from which a flour may be obtained, which, unlike many other starchy foods, contains protein.

Of the other fruits, only the orange and the mango are eaten; the others are taken to the market and sold.

The Shiare people are very fortunate in having access to game and other wild animals, which inhabit the high forested hills. The most common are the antelope, a smaller species of deer (duiker), the wild pig, and the grasscutter. This last is highly prized because of its tender tasty meat, not only in the hills, but throughout Ghana. The monkey and the rat are also hunted and eaten. This supply of fresh meat is a very valuable source of protein, and provides the peoples of this region with a very well balanced diet, something which is denied the inhabitants of other regions of Ghana, where there may be little more than the staple root crop or grain.

Many of the Shiare people are hunters; this, again, is not a

specialised occupation, but is combined with farming. Hunting is usually associated with the period spent on the farms; between periods of work, a farmer will set or inspect his traps, or take his gun and go into the bush to hunt. As there is no method of refrigeration, the animals are cut up immediately after killing, and the meat smoked; this will preserve it for a few days, but no time is lost in sending the meat back to the town, where it is eaten or sold. Meat is a highly desirable commodity, and in great demand, so it finds a ready market. Thus the meat will often be sent to the market in Nkwanta, or to the larger market in Kpassa, the predominantly Konkomba town some miles to the north, on the new road.

Increased hunting has brought new problems with regard to the stock of animals. Officially, there is a close season on hunting, to allow some species to breed, but this is ignored by the hill peoples; the government has no means of enforcing its decrees in the isolated hill regions. Thus the animals are being over-hunted, and, due to the lack of a systematic policy regarding the exploitation of the animals, meat is becoming more and more scarce. This situation has been aggravated by the opening of the new north/south trunk road, and the improvement of the feeder roads, linking the Atwode towns to the main road, and hence to the large markets to the south and north. Small quantities of meat had trickled down from the area around Kue (Map 4) which is rich in game animals. The profits from this small trading were not large, as the meat buyers did not negotiate directly with the hunters, but dealt through middlemen, who claimed a large share of the profits. This changed with the improved road system; the meat
ve directly to the point of production,

by the meat directly from the hunters, thereby excluding the middle-men and cutting costs, and making it a matter of a few days. The hunters, too, benefitted from the exclusion of the middle-men, as they no longer had to share their profits. There was thus an increased demand for meat, which in turn led to an over-exploitation of the animals, and in some areas has threatened their survival.

Shiari has essentially a subsistence economy, but two cash crops are grown, namely cocoa and coffee. These do not thrive in the savannah area, but the forest area, especially around Buem, is very favourable to their cultivation. The scale of cultivation is relatively small, but was increased by the opening of the new road. Previously to this, the only road of any importance led to Krachi, the administrative centre of the area, but as Krachi is not situated in or near a cocoa growing area, it did not have a buying centre. So the cocoa had to be head loaded to Ahmansu, some 36 miles to the south, and which is near the cocoa areas of Buem. The new road has facilitated the transportation of cocoa and coffee to the Marketing Board in the south, and has led to a slight, but appreciable, increase in cocoa cultivation. Some Shiari men have migrated to the cocoa growing area around Pampawie, near Dodo Papase, just to the north of the Buem area. A number of Shiari men, some with their families, have gathered in this town, forming a small colony of Atwode; they are engaged in the cultivation of cocoa as a cash crop, and the skills they acquire can be utilised extensively in the production of cocoa in the Atwode traditional area. The question of these migrants will be considered in the context of the membership of the Brukung cult, on residence and migration in Shiari.



Sheep, goats and chickens are reared in Shiare as they are throughout the whole country. Sheep and goats are sometimes slaughtered for food, but they have a special ritual use, being used in sacrifice to the divinity Brukung. They have an important part to play in the economy in connection with the pilgrims who come to consult the shrine, and who are obliged to offer an animal to the divinity; these animals are usually purchased locally, to eliminate the trouble involved in bringing an animal over a great distance, and carrying it on the final stage of the journey to Shiare.

Chickens are much more frequently used for food, and is the most common meat ingredient of the soup; but they are also used ritually, in sacrifice, more so than the sheep or the goat, among other reasons because they are less expensive. They are sacrificed, not only to the divinity Brukung, but also to the lesser spiritual beings which inhabit the Atwode mystical and spiritual world (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 2

THE BRUKUNG CULT IN
CENTRAL WEST AFRICA AND IN SHIARE

This chapter will discuss Brukung⁽¹⁾ shrines in West Africa. Section I will describe the structure of the cult in Shiare. Section II will discuss shrines which have been reported from other areas in central West Africa. The materials for the discussion in Section II are drawn from the published work of missionaries and anthropologists. With few exceptions, these texts are brief, fragmentary and often incidental, providing little or no information as to the social, political and religious context in which the cult flourished. As no major study of a Brukung shrine has been published, a detailed comparison between the Shiare shrine and other Brukung shrines cannot be made; however, in the course of the discussion of the other West African shrines, I shall point to important similarities or differences between them and the cult as I observed it in Shiare.

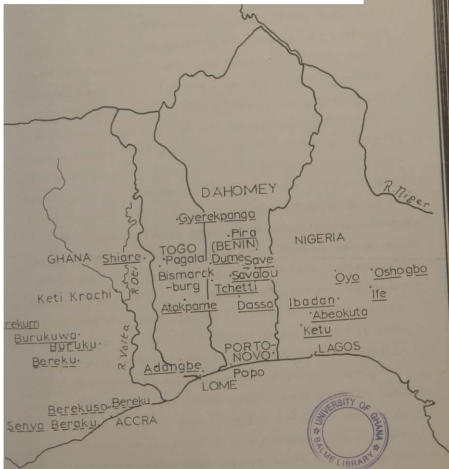
1. The Brukung Cult in Central West Africa

Verges (1957) has shown that the cult is found in Yorubaland, but not further east. Meyerowitz (1961) and Field (1962) have argued that the cult was once distributed over a large area of Ghana, on the evidence of the frequent occurrence of the name 'Brukung', in various forms, in many parts of the country. This allows us to establish the area in which the cult is or was found, and to determine its boundaries. The cult area is Ghana, Togo, Dahomey (now Benin) and western Nigeria, with Ghana as its western boundary, and Yorubaland

as its eastern boundary (Map 5). This is a large area, containing a large number of ethnic and linguistic groups, with differing political, social and religious systems. Thus, it is to be expected that occurrences of the cult will not be uniform, but will reflect the different social, political and religious structures of the peoples among whom it is found.

Among African polytheistic societies gods move very freely from people to people, and from area to area. Unlike monotheistic religions, polytheistic religions are hospitable to new gods, especially to those which have acquired a reputation, and can thus be of use to peoples who need the services which the gods can provide. There are various ways in which the cults and knowledge of gods can travel from people to people, the most common of which are migrations, pilgrimages and wars. Pilgrims who have consulted a well-known shrine and received satisfaction often bring part of the shrine back with them and initiate the worship of the shrine divinity in their own area. Peoples migrate, usually as the result of population pressure and the need to find new land on which to build and to farm, or as the result of wars, in which case the need is to find a place of refuge.

War was evidently the crucial factor in the population movements affecting the whole area where the Brukung cult flourished. The range of hills separating Ghana from Togo is peopled by small groups, unrelated ethnically or linguistically, and it has long been recognised that the mountains were colonised by these peoples to escape the wars being fought on either side of the mountains. Sprigge (1968:89)



Map 5 : Distribution of Brukung Shrines in West Africa.

- known Brukung shrines.
- places which may formerly have been Brukung shrines.

point out that the area between the rivers Volta and Mono, during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, was the constant recipient of refugees in flight from the trans-riverain expansionist powers on either side of it. Bertho (1949) argues that the area between Yorubaland and the Volta, today inhabited largely by Ewe speaking peoples, was subject to a series of migrations from Yorubaland. The original centre of the dispersion was Ife, the sacred city of the Yoruba (Bertho op.cit:125, map). Over a long period of time the migration moved westward, until it reached the mountains separating Ghana and Togo. Thus the Yoruba settled in and influenced the area, and their influence on the religious beliefs and practices of the peoples inhabiting the area is of considerable importance, and will be discussed in the following account.

The intermingling or fusion of religious systems involves either new gods being accepted by the indigenous peoples whose land is colonised, or the indigenous gods being adopted by the newcomers, or both of these. Over a long period, the fusion may be complete, and it may be difficult to distinguish the new gods from the old. Or assimilation may be only partial, in which case it is possible to distinguish the different gods. Sometimes the fusion is effected easily, sometimes with difficulty; in the latter case, tension may arise between the devotees of two or more different cults, and resistance may be offered to the adoption of a new god. This is sometimes reflected in myths, or stories, which seek to show the superiority of one god, and to discredit another. Such myths are found in West Africa in association with the Brukung cult and other gods, which will be discussed later.

Spread of the Brukung Cult Westward(1) Yorubaland

The Yoruba religious system is characterized by a highly complex pantheon. Although the constituent gods of a pantheon may be constant, the importance given to them may vary from area to area. A god which occupies an important position in one pantheon may be demoted to a lower place in another pantheon, and vice versa. A new god may be introduced into a pantheon relatively easily, and in the process may lose the qualities or characteristics which it occupied among the peoples from whom it was adopted.

Among the peoples of West Africa is found the cult of the High God, or creator God; thus among the Yoruba is found Olorun, among the Akan peoples Onyame, and Mawu among the Ewe. These gods are thought of as creating the other, lower gods, but there is a considerable range of variation regarding the actual status of these gods. Sometimes they are clearly thought of as being superior to the other gods, sometimes they are thought of as being first among equals. Sometimes, where a lower god has a very strong cult, it may be equated with the supreme god, and equal powers will be ascribed to both the lower god and the supreme god. Such inconsistencies are common in African religious thought, but they would appear as inconsistencies only to Western minds; the African would not regard these as being in any way inconsistent. Western and African religious thinking are governed by different logical principles.

Ellis, in his examination of the Yoruba pantheon, describes a minor god, Buku, who is found in association

with the more powerful smallpox god Shakpana (1894:73). Buku is described as being an assistant to Shakpana, and kills off those attacked by the smallpox god by wringing their necks. Ellis offers a Yoruba derivation of the name, deriving it from the Yoruba bu, to cut, and iku, death. Müller, writing some years later of the cult of the powerful god Buku of the Ana people in Atakpame, in Togo, notes the occurrence of Buku in the Yoruba pantheon, and rejects the idea that there could be any connection between the relatively obscure god Buku, assistant of Shakpana, and the Buku who is central in the religious system of the Ana (1906:509). There are obvious dissimilarities in the relative polarities of Brukung occurrences in West Africa, in the one case a high god, in the other a minor executive. Müller shows no knowledge of any other form of Brukung worship in West Africa, other than an awareness of the shrine in Shiaré (op.cit:510), thus he cannot equate two disparate forms of the god, but, in the light of what is now known of the movement of gods among different peoples, it may be accepted that both gods, though different in form, are the same god. Ellis offers no further information on Buku in the Yoruba pantheon, apart from its executive function in relation to the smallpox god, thus nothing more than be determined regarding cult worship.

Verger (1957:272) refers to a shrine of Brukung at Abeokuta, where Brukung is worshipped as the high god. Little information is given on this shrine, but the god is said to have come from Sabe, and every year a pilgrimage, lasting three months, is undertaken to Sabe. This pilgrimage took



place from October to December, a period which coincides with the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the dry. Sabe is Save, in Dahomey (Map 5); thus the devotees of the cult look to the west for the origin of their cult, and regard the western shrine as the parent one. As will be noticed later, pilgrimages form a very important part of Brukung worship, and in each case the pilgrimage travels westwards to a parent shrine.

Frobenius also noted this westward orientation in his account of a Brukung shrine in Ibadan (in Verger 1957:278). This shrine is presided over by a priestess, who stated that the God Buruku came from the land of the Egun people. The Egun people live in Popo, on the coast of Togo, some miles to the east of Lome, (Bertho 1949:123). Their name is derived from Gun, the god of iron in the Yoruba pantheon, whose cult was widespread throughout Yorubaland and Dahomey, and which came into conflict with the Brukung cult. Frobenius points out the similarity of Buruku to two gods whom he has encountered while in Togo. One of these he identifies with the god worshipped at Dume, on the Togo-Dahomey border, known as Dadume. Dume is also the site of an important Brukung shrine (see page 39). The other god he explicitly refers to as Brukung, and locates the shrine in Shiare:-

L'autre (puissance), domicilié sur le chemin allant de Bassari à Krachi et, plus exactement, sur la montagne Babamboure, s'appellerait Bouroukou. Or, il n'y a, paraît-il, aucune puissance supérieure qui puisse mieux que ce Bouroukou faire avoir des enfants à ceux qui en veulent. C'est vers lui que vont en pèlerinage tous les ans, beaucoup de femmes, lui menant des chèvres et aussi le prince des Arabes lui menant une vache. Mais
 ... s uns comme les autres, vont lui
 le la puissance ...

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In Frobenius' account, the Brukung cult is presided over by a priestess. Priestesses are also found in Dahomey, associated over Brukung worship, but in Togo and Ghana they give way to priests. Buruku is stated to be a goddess; in other parts of the area, Brukung is male, and in parts of Dahomey where the cult is strong, it would seem to be androgynous (cf Herskovits 1938:101). One of the major functions of the shrine at Ibadan is to remove infertility in women, and many of the sacrifices offered to the divinity are directed to this end.

Frobenius comments on the fact that the knife used to sacrifice a goat, the most common sacrificial animal, is not an ordinary knife, but one made from the wood of a special tree. This evidently reflects an ancient quarrel between the devotees of Buruku and those of Ogun, the god of iron and ironsmiths, each side claiming that their god is the older and the more powerful. Verger (1957:144) recounts a story telling of a dispute between the two gods. Buruku claimed to be the greatest hunter in the world, and refused to worship Ogun, who then took away from Buruku his bow, arrows and a knife, which Ogun had given him. Later, Buruku caught a wild goat, but having no weapons, he was unable to cut it up. Buruku dragged the animal to the house of Ogun and asked for his weapons, especially the knife, to cut up the animal. Ogun gave him the weapons, and from that day Buruku swore that the head of any animal he caught would be for Ogun, who told Buruku that in future he would live in the bush, isolated from other men, and in this way Ogun was shown to be superior to Buruku.

such myths are common when two cults come into conflict, each side trying to discredit the god of the other. It is possible that the myth points to such a conflict, and that the worshippers of Buruku refrained from using an iron knife to show the independence of their worship from that of Ogun. It would also seem to show that the technologically more advanced Yoruba emigrated into an area, bringing their gods and their technology with them, and found an indigenous cult of Buruku, which resisted possible attempts to establish a rival form of worship. Another such conflict, also reflected in story, will be discussed in the account of the important Brukung cult in Atakpame, in Togo (page 45).

(J) Dahomey

The southern part of Dahomey, inhabited by the Ewe-speaking Fon, is an area where several different religious traditions have met, and, to a great extent, fused. Occupying a high and important place in the Dahomean pantheon are the three gods, Mawu, Lisa and Nana Buluku (the form by which Brukung is known and worshipped in Dahomey). Labouret and Rivet (1929:31-32) believe that Lisa was the original deity of the area, that Mawu was brought from further east by the Yoruba, and quickly became established as an important god, and became associated with Mawu to form the cult of Mawu/Lisa. Sometimes they are thought of as being two gods, Mawu as female, and Lisa as male, or sometimes as two aspects of the one god, with Mawu being the female aspect, and Lisa the male. At some stage, which cannot be determined, the cult of Brukung, or Nana Buluku, was introduced, gained an increasingly important position, and became sufficiently important to have Nana Buluku

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introduced into the pantheon with the status of high god. In Dahomey, Nana Buluku is sometimes thought of as female, sometimes as androgynous.

The relative positions of these three gods in the pantheon, and their relationships to one another, are not stable, but fluid. Herskovits (1938:101) who worked in the area around Abomey, where the cult of Nana Buluku is strong, describes the inconsistencies in the religious thinking of the people on this matter. According to some of his informants, Mawu/Lisa are important gods, but were created by another, single god, sometimes thought of as being female, sometimes as androgynous, and this god they claim is Nana Buluku. Nana Buluku in this theory is thought of as being a creator god, bringing forth twins, one female, Mawu, who became identified with moon and the night, the other male, Lisa, who became identified with the sun and with the day. Thus these two gods were allocated spheres of activity, and were responsible for the events which took place within them, including dealings with men. This is a familiar theme in African cosmologies, and can be paralleled in the religious systems of other peoples. The creator god is thought of as being isolated and remote from human affairs; his function was conceived of as being the creator of the world and of lesser gods, who would relate to the world and control its affairs. Elsewhere, however, in Dahomey, Nana Buluku is thought not to be superior to Mawu/Lisa, but subordinate to them. On other occasions, Mawu and Nana Buluku will be used interchangeably. Herskovits describes how a Dahomean will speak of creator, and then proceed to recount how

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Mawu made the earth (1938:291).

Mawu and Nana Buluku are regarded differently by priests and people. Herskovits notes that whatever the status accorded to Nana Buluku by the priests, in the thinking of the ordinary Dahomean, the deity - thought of as too old to have retained much power - figures but little, and her name is given bare mention by the layman (1938:103). As well as being an important member of the pantheon, sometimes the chief member, Mawu is also the generic name for divinity among the Ewe-speaking peoples. Further west, among the Ewe in Togo, Mawu is the high god, and Lisa disappears from the pantheon.

Nana Buluku is worshipped as the high god at Dume, north-west of Abomey, in southern Dahomey (Herskovits 1938:102) (Map 5). Unlike the creator god of the peoples of Togo and Ghana, Nana Buluku has a shrine and a priesthood. The shrine was built, by order of Nana Buluku, on the spot where she resided on earth, and anyone who would worship the god had to make a pilgrimage to this shrine. Mawu and Lisa are believed to be the children of Nana Buluku and in every place where there are cults of Mawu/Lisa, one half of certain offerings made at their shrines must be sent yearly to the shrine of Nana Buluku, as offerings from the worshippers of the divine children to the parent. Also, every year, those who have been initiated into the Mawu/Lisa cult are required to make a pilgrimage to the parental shrine. Herskovits does not provide any details of the functioning of the shrine, or the rituals associated with it, but evidently there is a strong esoteric side to the shrine, as may be gathered from his remark that not every pilgrim is allowed to enter it, but



is the most powerful of the priests of Nana Buluku. It is claimed that anyone who puts his foot within its confines 'learns how to speak a hundred tongues at once' (Herskovits 1938:103). In this respect, the shrine is similar to that of Brukung in Shiare, entrance to which is strictly confined to priests of the cult. It is not clear if the priests of Nana Buluku are also priests of the Mawu/Lisa cult, or constitute a different priesthood; nor does Herskovits describe how these priests are chosen, trained and initiated.

Herskovits (1938:102) thought that this shrine at Dume was unique, being the only shrine in Dahomey of Nana Buluku. However, Parrinder (1961:28) has identified two other important shrines of Nana Buluku, at Dassa and Bante (Map 5). Within a few miles of Dassa there are three shrines of major gods, that is of Mawu, Arigbo and Nana Buluku, or Nana Buku (the form adopted by Parrinder). This part of Dahomey is heavily influenced by Yoruba immigration. Dume is situated in the territory of the Sha people, who are of Yoruba origin; the Yoruba occupy a broad stretch of territory stretching across the country, north of Abomey, and it is in this area that are situated some of the more important temples and shrines of the major gods worshipped (Parrinder 1949:25).

Parrinder believes that the shrine of Nana Buku in Dassa is one of the most important in Dahomey. He visited the shrine, and has described its workings.

The shrine is situated half way up a hill outside the town. There are a large number of huts, which are used to house servants of the shrine, especially those preparing for initiation. The cult is presided over by a priestess; priestesses are frequently found associated with Brukung cults in Dahomey. One of the huts
ums, each decorated with stripes of

cowrie shells one of which, as well as the cowries, has a small model of a human figure attached to it. The shrine is situated near this hut. According to Parrinder, all the shrines of Nana buku are situated in the open air, and can be recognised by the typical thatch covering a clay mound, in which are embedded two or three inverted clay pots, which represent the kernel of the shrine. Near the shrine is a large baobab tree, whose trunk is stained with blood and oil, and which served as an altar. Near the altar are a collection of diviners' rods, and several iron staffs. Parrinder does not describe these staffs, but they may well be similar to those which are used in Shiare during Brukung rituals, and which are also found in Togo associated with Brukung worship. In Togo, where the cult is regarded as a derivative of the Brukung cult in Shiare, these staffs become central in the worship of Brukung, and are frequently the object of worship, being as they are representations of the god who resides elsewhere. In Shiare, these staffs play an important part in ritual, especially during sacrifice, but are secondary in importance to the shrine itself, where the god is believed to reside, and to the stool (Brukung gegyakpa), which is believed to contain the essence of the god.

The cult priestess prays in front of the straw covered shrine. Every morning, the neophytes offer prayers to Nana Buku, on a large granite slab which marks the entrance to the compound in which are situated the shrine and the huts, and on which they must pray the whole night preceding their initiation.

The picture presented by Parrinder is more complete than that given by Herskovits; although it does not present a full and

relationships with the other cults in the area. Parrinder also shows that there is a greater popular awareness of the shrine, and of Nana Buku, than does Herskovits; her name is used by the people of the district in proverbs, blessings and curses, but these people do not offer worship to Nana Buku.

There is no doubt that the shrine is very powerful, and very influential, and, although this is not explicitly stated by Parrinder, feared in the district. It is renowned, and consulted by many people. Parrinder adds that the shrine imposes ordeals, but does not specify which ordeals. The ordeal is a familiar feature in west African and other religions (Post 1887:110). They may be imposed for a variety of reasons, the most common being for the detection of witches, and those suspected of other crimes. Ordeals are often associated with pilgrimages, being integrated into the structure of the pilgrimage itself, and pilgrims are in fact undergoing an ordeal. This will be seen in the Brukung pilgrimages which are part of the worship of the Brukung shrine in Togo. The form of the ordeal imposed by the Dassa shrine has changed; Parrinder remarks that originally the ordeal was undergone personally, but at the time of which Parrinder was writing, i.e. just before 1949, it was done through the intermediary of *tokis*, which symbolise the supplicants.

The shrine is also very influential in the affairs of the district. It evidently intervenes in various matters, and this intervention is usually obeyed. Important shrines often have a considerable influence on the social, political and economic affairs of the area where they are worshipped. A very important feature of the shrine in Shiare was its powerful influence in the politics of the *Shiari* area, and *Mahanti*, and neighbouring areas, in the

last quarter of the 19th century, during the period of European colonisation of Central West Africa. In the case of the Dassa shrine, Parrinder cites the instance of the intervention of the shrine in the local market economy, where the prices were too high and the poor were suffering. The shrine demanded that the prices should be reduced, threatened misfortune; the prices dropped immediately. (1961:297).

(5) Togo

Two centres of Brukung worship have been described in Togo, one in Atakpame, and the other in Adangbeland, near Lome. Atakpame, in south central Togo, lies to the north of the predominantly Ewe-speaking area, and is inhabited by Yoruba speaking people. Verger (1957:273), following Johnson (1911) and Kertho (1949) states that the Ana, the inhabitants of Atakpame, originally came from Ile Ife, in Yorubaland. They represent the most westerly of the Yoruba migrants (Cornevin 1969:57). hestermann (1952:84) states that in Togo the Yoruba are known as the Ana. There are two accounts of Brukung worship in Atakpame, that by Müller, a Catholic missionary who worked in the Atakpame area (1906), and a later one, by an anonymous informant of Verger (1957:273). These accounts are complementary, but differ in points of detail. The Brukung cult in Atakpame is one of the most interesting; it is the one which has been described in the greatest detail, and the one most closely connected with Shiare.

Atakpame is the meeting point of three religious traditions. Two gods are worshipped, Buku and Ifa, the Yoruba god of prophecy, the centre of whose cult is in the sacred city of Ile Ife. Mawu, the high god of the Ewe-speaking peoples, has influenced the Ana concept of Buku. In Togo, and in the southern part of the



Volta Region in Ghana, which is inhabited by Ewe-speaking peoples, Mawu alone is found as the high god; the companion god, Lisa, found associated with Mawu in Dahomey, has disappeared in Togo and Ghana. Müller (1906:509) states that the Ana claim that their highest being, or god, is Buku. He claims that Buku is an abbreviation of the word Brukung, the state god of the Adele and Atwode peoples. He is mistaken in asserting that Brukung is worshipped in Adele; the Adele people have their own god, Friko, whose shrine is situated in Dadiassi, which lies at the foot of the hills in which Shiare is situated. Müller identifies Shiare as the centre of Brukung worship, which radiated from Shiare into the surrounding areas. Buku is worshipped in Atakpame, but resides in Shiare, which thus has a special significance for the Ana, which will be discussed below.

Buku had become identified with Mawu, and many of the attributes of Mawu have been given to Buku. Müller (1906:510) claims that this identification is false; although Mawu and Buku have common attributes, they have very fundamental differences, which invalidate an identification. The major difference is that Mawu is the high god, the creator, residing in the sky, quite removed from human affairs, with no cult, temple or priesthood. This is the common conception in West Africa of the remote 'otiose' god. Buku, on the contrary, lives in Shiare, has a cult and a priesthood, is intimately involved in human affairs, and accessible through sacrifices and offerings at his shrine. Thus Buku belongs to the class of gods known to the Akan speaking peoples as abosum, powerful deities, but created by the high god, and thus inferior to him. Müller does not offer an account of the origin of Buku; this is not a matter of immediate concern to the Ana, who, in

where he is believed to be a son of god (Wuruboare) (cf. Chapter 5).

However, Buku has become identified in some way with Mawu, perhaps inevitably, given the tolerance of African religious systems to the gods and religious ideas of other peoples. One of his titles among the Ana is od'aye (creator of the world). By the time the Catholic missionaries arrived in the area, the influence of Mawu on the Buku cult was sufficiently strong and established to lead the missionaries to use the word 'Buku' to translate the Judaeo-Christian concept of 'God' (Müller 1906:510). In the Ewe translation of the Scriptures and liturgical texts the word 'Mawu' is used to translate 'God'.

The third religious influence is that of Ifa. Neither Müller nor Verger's informant describes this cult, nor its place in the religious life of Atakpame, other than describing the part played by the priest of Ifa in the selection of candidates to make the pilgrimage to Shiare. It would seem that the Yoruba brought with them the cult of Ifa, and other Yoruba gods as they spread westwards from Yorubaland, and these cults settled down with the immigrants, sometimes existing side by side with indigenous cults, sometimes achieving a fusion. The Buku cult was probably indigenous, and adopted to a great extent by the Ana. Conflict and tension frequently arise when an incoming cult meets an established indigenous one. This seemed to have been the case with the cults of Buku and Ifa, and is reflected in some of the stories of Buku collected by Müller, in which tests of skill and wits are described, to establish which god is the greater. In Müller's story, Buku is outwitted and discomfited by Ifa, indicating that the devotees of Ifa were trying to discredit the Buku cult and

----- r 1906:518-520).

----- Atakpame is known as sise Buku (the worship

of Buku), and the devotees known as asebukuna (worshippers of Buku). Buku worship is presided over by a priest, the olibuku; the Yoruba influence on the cult is shown by the Yoruba prefix oli-, meaning 'priest'. Throughout his discussion of the cult, Müller refers to the olibuku in the singular, suggesting that there was only one priest. Verger's informant, however, refers to the olibuku, in the plural, who have at their head a chief, known as the Iba, (Yoruba, 'father'), belonging to the family Bake. No further information is offered, but it would seem that the office was hereditary within one specific family or kin group. There is no basic discrepancy between the two accounts, but Verger's informant complements the account of the cult as presented by Müller.

There is no temple or shrine of Buku in Atakpame; the Ana recognise the Shiare shrine as being the residence of the god. Since the god cannot be worshipped directly, a representation of the god is employed as the focal point of worship. This is an iron staff, about two feet long, with a pear shaped knob at the upper end, made of clay, ashes, blood and feathers, known as okpa buku (the staff of Buku). This staff corresponds exactly to the Brukung okpere (staff of Brukung) which is used in Shiare (Plate 4). The Brukung okpere is an important feature of Brukung worship in Shiare, and is always used in certain sacrifices, but it is not the most important object associated with the cult; the shrine itself is the most sacred place in Shiare, and then the Brukung gegyakpa (the stool of Brukung), which is believed to contain in a very special way the power of the god, and bears a somewhat similar place in Atwode thinking as the Golden Stool does for the Ashanti (Chapter 6). Derivative cults usually bring object associated with the cult, and

which becomes the centre of worship. The okpere is associated exclusively with Brukung worship, and was probably brought to Atakpame from Shiare.

Buku ceremonies are held either in the hut of the olibuku, or in the open space in front of it. The okpa buku is placed on the ground, before which sacrifices and offerings are made. When not in use, the staff is kept in the hut of the olibuku.

Sacrifices and prayers are offered for three ends, 1. as petitions, 2. as expiations, to avoid punishments for transgression of the cult commandments, and 3. as thanksgiving for favours granted. Petitioners are concerned to obtain what they need to live, and to avoid evils and misfortunes; thus the most frequent petitions are for children for women who are barren, rain, good harvests, success in hunting and the curing of illness. Müller adds that since the coming of the Europeans a common petition has been for the removal of the influence of Europeans and their culture. The question of European colonisation in central West Africa is one which is particularly associated with the Brukung shrine in Shiare, and will be discussed in the following section.

A major feature of Buku worship in Atakpame was the pilgrimage to Shiare, to the shrine of Brukung. The pilgrimage took place every three years, and was very highly organised and institutionalised. Anyone who made three successive pilgrimages was granted the title tata, which undoubtedly brought honour, prestige and stature on those who bore it. Similar prestige is accorded to Moslems in West Africa who make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and then gain the title alhaji. To gain the title of tata three successive pilgrimages had to be made; anyone who
rd pilgrimage had to wait nine years before



Plate 4 : Okpere staff.



Candidates for the pilgrimage were not consulted as to their wishes in the matter; anyone around whose neck the olibuku placed a string of cowrie shells was obliged to make the pilgrimage, and anyone who, once chosen, refused to go was believed to die sooner or later as a punishment from Buku. More usually, however, the pilgrims were chosen by a divination process (Ifa bibe), which involved the oli Ifa, the priest of Ifa, who consulted Ifa, who indicated who should make the pilgrimage. The oli Ifa then informed the olibuku, who placed the strings of cowrie shells around the necks of those who had been chosen (Müller 1906:513; Verger 1957:273).

According to Verger's informant, only certain families had the right to make the pilgrimage, and these families were found, not only in Atakpame, but in the neighbouring towns of Tchetti and Savalou, both of which were influenced by Yoruba migrations.

One month before the pilgrimage left, the pilgrims were brought together in Atakpame, to prepare for the pilgrimage. Verger's informant does not provide any details of the preparations, which would probably have been directed by the olibuku, apart from referring to a taboo on sexual intercourse. Large spiders were roasted and eaten; this was obligatory, and anyone who refused to eat was barred from making the pilgrimage. Anyone who had killed a person was believed to die after eating the spiders. This was the first suggestion of the element of the ordeal aspect of the pilgrimage, an element which emerged more strongly later.

The olibuku himself led the pilgrimage; on the first day's journey, the pilgrims were entitled to appropriate as food for the journey any animals which they encountered, emphasising that the

ide the normal workings of society, and

the norms which govern it. (This idea is developed by Victor Turner, who sees pilgrimages as liminal phenomena; the pilgrimage situation itself is liminal, 'an interval between two distinct periods of intensive involvement in structured social existence' (1974:175)). A short distance outside Atakpame, those relatives who had accompanied the pilgrims took their leave of, and said goodbye to their kinsfolk, for it was believed that some pilgrims would never return. The relatives assembled at this same spot to meet the returning pilgrims; if the olibuku handed them the pilgrim's staff, it meant that the pilgrim had died on the journey. No funeral ceremonies were allowed to be performed, as the death was regarded as a punishment, emphasising once again the ordeal aspect of the pilgrimage.

No information is provided concerning the activities of the pilgrims while they were in Shiare other than the brief statement that in Shiare they do not see Buku immediately, but gradually, and that they take oaths not to reveal what they saw (Verger 1957:273).² This remark is puzzling, as it suggests that the pilgrims 'see' Brukung, that is, enter the shrine. As will be shown in the next section, no one, other than the cult members, who must be Atwede men, are allowed to enter the shrine. This is the practice today, and, according to the Shiare elders, has always been the practice. The numerous pilgrims who come to Shiare to consult the shrine are never admitted there; the purpose of their visit is explained to the head of the clan in which they are lodging, and he presents the petitions to the god, and later informs the pilgrim of the god's advice or decision. The cult members take solemn oaths never to reveal what happens in the shrine, and this is very strictly observed. Cult members

with whom I became friendly refused to discuss the shrine, even in the broadest terms, nor answer even the most simple question. It is thus difficult to understand what precisely is meant by Verger's informant. It is possible that the pilgrims from Atakpame, as Buku worshippers and members of the cult, were regarded as full cult members of the Brukung cult in Shiare, and allowed to enter the shrine. But this would raise further difficulties, as membership of the Buku cult in Atakpame is open to men and women (Verger 1957:273), which would thus mean that women were allowed to enter the shrine.

The statement seems to suggest that the Atakpame pilgrims were received differently from the way pilgrims are received today; many of the rituals involving today's pilgrims are conducted publically, and some pilgrims will tell why they came and what advice they were given. The only aspect which is secret, even to the pilgrims themselves, is what takes place in the shrine.

It is possible that there was a ritual especially associated with the Atakpame pilgrims, which is now no longer practised since this pilgrimage no longer takes place, and may have been connected with initiation.

Neither Müller's nor Verger's informant describes any ceremony of initiation into the cult. Membership is open to all, and it is most probable, in the light of the practices of other Brukung and related cults, that candidates would be formally initiated into the cult. Müller links the pilgrimage with cult membership; anyone who makes the pilgrimage henceforward belongs to the asebukuna, the Buku worshippers, but by the same token so do his future children, and likewise the children, family and servants of the olibuku (1906:513).³ Among the commandments of the cult

is the obligation to make the pilgrimage to Buku (Müller 1906:514). But in a slightly earlier passage he seems to say that candidates for the pilgrimage are chosen from those who are already cult members (1906:513). Possibly the cult contains several levels or grades of membership, and that those who make the pilgrimage are admitted to the higher grade. The pilgrims could not be initiated into the Shiare Brukung cult, as these initiations were held very infrequently, twice or three times a century, whereas the pilgrimage took place every three years. Of all the centres of Brukung worship of which there is evidence, Atakpame is the one which has the closest links with Shiare, and which undertook the regular pilgrimage to the shrine at Shiare, which they recognised as the dwelling place of Brukung. This argues for a very close relationship between parent shrine and daughter cult, which may well have led to some kind of initiation, or formal admission into the cult, being held at Shiare for the Atakpame pilgrims, which ceased when the pilgrimage was discontinued. This would be the special ritual suggested tentatively on page 51, and would explain the remark made by Verger's informant.

Another possibility is that in fact the Buku worshippers from Atakpame were admitted to the shrine in Shiare, that the rules then were different from what they are now. There is no evidence showing what the rules were last century; the presumption is that they were as now. If there was a change, whereby devotees of daughter shrines were excluded from worship in the Shiare shrine, and membership restricted to Atwode men, it may be associated with the events of 1890, when the German authorities invaded Shiare. The question of a possible change of practice will be resumed in the following section when the effects of the German intervention

Shiare are discussed.

However, as firm evidence is lacking, these suggestions must remain conjectural.

On their return to Atakpame, the pilgrims did not return immediately to normal social life; this was effected gradually. For the first three months, they did not work nor cook. A number of young girls were appointed by the olibuku to minister to the pilgrims, each pilgrim having an attendant girl (adjaro) to cook and work for him or her. Young pilgrims, having made their first pilgrimage, were obliged to refrain from sexual intercourse for the next three years.

Buku worshippers are subject to a series of commandments, some of which are positive, some negative. The positive commandments direct them to worship Buku, sacrifice to him, praise him and swear by him, make the pilgrimage and obey the olibuku. Among the negative commandments are those imposing sexual abstinence on young pilgrims for a three year period, commanding them to observe three months' period during which they may not work, but observe the time as holy, a time for dance and song. A significant commandment is that relating to Europeans. Buku worshippers are commanded to have nothing to do with Europeans, to offer them no help, nor serve them (Müller 1906:514-5).⁴ The Brukung shrine at Shiare played a crucial part in the resistance to European colonisation in the last quarter of the 19th century; so influential did the shrine become as a focal point of resistance to the Europeans that the Germans had to intervene to destroy the power of the shrine; (the significance of this for Shiare will be discussed in the next section). As there is communication between shrines, and in the case of Brukung, daughter shrines,



this will ensure centres of resistance to the European colonisation process over a large area. Shrines represent to a great extent the traditional values of a society. Shrine priests, having access to the supernatural powers, and control of the religious values which underlie a society, can determine to a great extent the attitudes of large numbers of people to the new factors with which they had to cope in the form of European intervention in their lives.

Sprigge (1969:120) reports the existence of a small group of Brukung worshippers living among the Adangbe people, a small group living in the midst of predominantly Ewe-speaking territory, situated near Lome, between the rivers Mono and Volta. Sprigge does not discuss in any detail the form which their Brukung worship takes, but establishes that these were immigrants, part of the large population movements which were a feature of this whole area in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. He thinks that the Brukung worshippers, when they first arrived in the area, spoke a language which was a dialect of neither Ewe nor Adangbane. He locates their original homeland as lying within the area settled by the Yoruba on their way westwards (1969:120) and where the Brukung cult is known to have flourished. Sprigge's findings, when published, may show that the Brukung worshippers in Adangbe were of Yoruba stock, and part of the pattern of Yoruba migrations which became associated with Brukung worship which has been shown to have been strongly represented in the area between Yorubaland and the Volta Region.

Apart from the relatively well documented pilgrimage from Atakpame to Shiare, other pilgrimages were important in the area. Cornevin (1969:101) refers to a pilgrimage which takes place every year to Shiare. Dume has been shown (page 39)

to be an important Brukung shrine; Herskovits does not give any details of a pilgrimage, and no other information is available on this point.

Outside the context of Brukung worship, Bertho describes a pilgrimage to the Togo hills, which takes place every seven years. Bertho has argued strongly for Yoruba migration, largely from Ife, as far as the Togo hills. Every seven years, groups from some of these Yoruba settlements travel to Adele to a famous cave, south west of Bismarckburg, to worship their god Mawu-Dudua. The ordeal element which was seen to be a feature of the Atakpame pilgrimage, is clearly stated; anyone accused of witchcraft since the last pilgrimage must make the pilgrimage, and many die on the journey. These pilgrimages no longer take place, the last being in 1939 and 1946 (Bertho 1949:128).

(1) Ghana

Field (1962) and Meyerowitz (1961) have drawn attention to the large number of place names in Ghana derived from the name 'Brukung', indicating that these places are, or were, centres of Brukung worship. To the best of my knowledge, no account has ever been published of these shrines, so it cannot be determined whether or not they are still active centres of Brukung worship.

Mensah-Keh (1966:26) shows that the Shiare shrine is still well known outside the borders of Atwode. 'The religion of Brukung is spreading rapidly among the Ashanti and the Fante, who at the end of each year make pilgrimages to the sacred shrine at Shiare' (1966:26). The largest group of pilgrims I saw arriving at Shiare (20 in number) came by chartered lorry from Cape Coast, in Fante country. They said that they had come to consult and

thank Brukung, but I was unable to discover any details of formal Brukung worship in Cape Coast. The significance of 'thanking' Brukung will be discussed in Chapter 6.

What is possibly the earliest reference to the Shiare shrine is contained in Hutchison's diary. He was living in Kumasi, and states that it is fourteen days' journey to Alfai (modern Kpandai), whose chief is subject to Sai Tootoo (Osei Tutu) and then 'one day to Brookum, where the head fetish of that country dwells, and one more day to Crummassia and Sodie, a range of high hills' (in Bowdich 1819:178). The geographical details are inaccurate, as Hutchison was obviously unfamiliar with the area; it is certainly more than one day's journey from Kpandai, which is in eastern Gonja, and on the western side of the Volta River, to Shiare. If Crummassia is the modern Atwode town of Kromasi, then coming from the west one would pass through it on the way to Shiare (Map 3). However, it seems clear that he is locating the Shiare shrine, which was obviously known in Kumasi as early as the beginning of the 19th century.

II. The Brukung Cult in Shiare

1. The Shrine

The shrine is situated in a thick grove on the south-western edge of the town, where the very high hill dominating Shiare begins its steep ascent. The path to the shrine branches off from the path to the river, and is visible for some 50 yards before disappearing into the dense clump of trees which marks the entrance to the shrine area (Plate 5). At the junction of the two paths is a calabash, in which is placed hair shaven from the heads of children born as the result of a petition made to the shrine. Half way along the path to the shrine is a small altar, at which



Plate 5 : Shiare. The shrine is situated in the trees in the centre of right background. The path to the shrine (not visible) begins behind the house of the Shiarewura, the large white zinc-roofed house just below the trees. The path to the left of the Shiarewura's house leads to the river and then across the hills to Chilinga.

the heads of children so born are shaved, and on which certain sacrifices are offered, such as those to the spirits of witches (Chapter 5).

Although nothing is known of the interior of the shrine, or the rituals which take place within it, Cardinall provides a brief general description of what exists behind the trees screening the entrance to the shrine. He is quoting an informant who was said to have accompanied a party of Germans who actually entered the shrine. This may have been on the occasion when von Zech captured the chief priest (page 74); the Shiare elders say that on that occasion the Germans actually forced their way into the shrine. Cardinall writes that, on taking the path to the shrine, 'in a short while one comes to a small clearing where a small pyramid of mud marks the usual preliminary altar. The path continues further until a cave is reached. Here is the very abode of Bruku; only the chief priest and his assistant are allowed within these holy precincts' (1931:51).

Possibly the most important detail in this general description is the reference to the cave, which is entered only by the chief priest and his assistant; the implications of this statement, in relation to the political significance of the shrine will be discussed in the following section.

Apart from this description, nothing is known of the interior of the shrine; the secrecy surrounding shrine worship is one of the most prominent features of the Brukung cult.

2. The Initiation Ceremony (Ayule)

Initiations into the Brukung cult in Shiare are held very infrequently, twice or three times a century. When the numerical strength of the cult has been reduced to a few members, a new chief priest will summon the remaining

the date. The date is affected by three factors. The ceremony is held during the rainy season, which begins about April-May, when the rivers are full; during the ceremony, the initiates are required to wash in one of the rivers near Shiare, sacred to the god (okpere ohung, 'the river of the god'). Then the ceremony must be held before the Yam Festival, which is usually held about the beginning of September. Finally, there is an interval of three months between the first and second part of the ceremony. All these conditions are met by holding the ceremony around the beginning of June. It begins on gikpaga, the first and most important day of the Atwode six day week, on which all important ceremonies are performed.

Initiation is restricted to males of agnatic Atwode descent, who have never been to school and who have never been members of another religious denomination, which, in effect, means Christianity. The condition of illiteracy is strictly enforced; exceptions to the rule of agnatic descent will be discussed in Chapter 3. Sons may not be initiated at the same time as their fathers; thus some young men will have to await the next initiation to be admitted to the cult. It is difficult to determine the minimum age for initiation; very young boys are initiated, provided that their fathers are not being initiated, but they will not be admitted to the second and final ceremony until they are older.

In the long period between initiations, remote preparations are already being made for the next initiation. Very few male children are enrolled at the school; by thus controlling admission to the school, the elders are providing future cult members and ensuring the continuation of the cult. The theme of the initiation is implicit in the annual Yam Festival. Children play a prominent

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in this ceremony, and are reminded by the chief priest that ceremonies which they are witnessing will one day be performed hem, as they will provide the future generation not only of Shiare people, but also of cult members.

The news that a new initiation was to be held was not rely unexpected, but was received with great joy and excitement oughout Atwode and adjoining districts;⁵ mixed with this joy excitement was a sense of tension and fear, as the time of the iation is one of danger and ordeal, during which some of the iates may die.

The secrecy which surrounds the shrine extends also to the iation; all of the ceremonies associated with it took place he huts in which the initiates lived, and in the shrine, and cannot be known. The account which follows was given to me he Shiarewura, Nana Oberko Agyei II who, as a literate Christian, xcluded from cult membership; thus his account describes only e aspects of the ceremonies which were public.

The initiation was held in June, 1962, under the direction of chief priest, Nana Ntela (who died the following year). esentatives of the Kotokoli from Gyerekpanga were present.⁶

On the evening of gekuli, the day before gikpaga, all the idates arrived in Shiare from the various Atwode towns, with exception of Odomi, most of whose inhabitants are Chella, and not eligible for initiation.⁷ Special huts had been set e for the initiates; as many as 50 men were said to occupy ut. They lived in these huts throughout the first part of ceremony, under the care of the chief priest and the other members. During this period, it may be assumed that they

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received preliminary instruction on the rules and customs of the cult. They removed their clothing, and remained naked during the seclusion period, until they were presented to the shrine. They were not allowed to talk, smoke, or receive visitors. Food was sent to them; this is basically millet, but other food may also be eaten. The food is sent in calabashes (awe, sg. gewe). Today the calabash is used for drinking and never for eating, except on this and on one other occasion, that is, during the Yam Festival.

The first period of seclusion lasted seven days. Every morning the initiates were brought out from their huts, and if they had incurred the displeasure of the chief priest, they were whipped. This was a time of great tension in Shiare; during this time the god was believed to punish with death any initiate who had been guilty of undetected witchcraft or sorcery. The normal social life of the town continued, but in an atmosphere of tension and suspense; people avoided the part of the town where the initiates were confined, for fear that they would be punished if they approached too closely.

On the morning of the seventh day (gikpaga) the initiates, led by the chief priest, processed naked, in single file, from their rooms to the shrine, in full view of the townspeople. They walked bent, almost double, examining the ground carefully, for it is said that if they stumbled over a stone they would be sent back and refused initiation. They spent a long time in the shrine, during which they would be initiated. This is the time when tension and fear were at their highest in Shiare, as it was the time of greatest ordeal, when some of the initiates could die. The shrine was said to make loud and terrifying noises, and



people locked themselves in their homes.

When the shrine ceremonies were completed, the chief priest led the newly initiated to the river (okpere obung), where they bathed; they then returned to the town and their rooms, where they would don a white cloth, and white headpiece and beads. While at the shrine their heads were shaved.

The return from the shrine was greeted by the townspeople with great joy and relief, and celebrations began immediately. A special dance (segvere) was performed, during which special musical instruments, used only on this occasion, were played. These small iron bars were known as agpo. Food, including large quantities of meat, was prepared, and taken to the newly initiated by their mothers and sisters. The celebrations continued until early evening, when they ceased. The newly initiated remained in their rooms for another seven days, at the end of which they returned to their own homes, and in the case of those who came from outside Shiare, to their own towns. This marked the end of the first period of the initiation ceremonies.

A period of three months elapsed before the initiated returned to Shiare to be presented to the shrine for the second time. During this period they continued to wear their white garments and beads; they could farm, but returned to their homes before dark. This period was also a time of ordeal, during which the god could punish by death anyone of the initiated guilty of some crime, usually witchcraft. Anyone who died during this period was buried in the bush, without funeral ceremonies, the usual fate of a witch (Chapter 5). Also, during this period, none of the initiated were permitted at a funeral.

At the end of this three months' period, the initiates were they spent three days confined in their

rooms. On the fourth day they were taken to the shrine and presented for the second time. Again, their heads were shaven, and when they emerged, they were full cult members, agyor.

Although the ceremonies fall into two clearly distinct parts, the whole ceremony is referred to as the ayule. The word is sometimes used to designate the second part. Those deemed too young to function as full cult members are not presented to the shrine during the second part of the ceremony; this would be done later when they were older, when they are said to make their ayule. Two different sets of customs would seem to be performed. Initiation took place during the first visit to the shrine, during which the initiated were sworn to secrecy. No one would talk of what happened during the ceremony, not even the young. The second ceremony was evidently the seal set on the first, during which the final customs of the cult were revealed.

The whole ceremony shows features which are common to initiations found in other societies, and in other rites de passage. The basic pattern is one of withdrawal/death, and reappearance/birth, i.e. separation and aggregation. During the liminal period, the initiates are desocialised, withdrawing from normal social life, leaving their homes, wives and families, leaving aside their clothing and living naked, eating special food, and cut off from the normal life of the town around them. This lasts until they emerge from the shrine, newly born as agyor, cult members. Their reabsorption into social life is gradual. Although I was not told of this, it is likely that they would refrain from sexual intercourse during the three months' period between the two parts of the ceremony; this is usually imposed on pilgrims consulting the shrine, and is imposed on the pilgrims

... return from Shiare (page 53).

real social activities and obligations are not resumed fully till the second ceremony has been completed.

The use of the calabash as an eating dish, rather than the formal bowl (lapc), may reflect the antiquity of the initiation ceremony, and the Yam Festival. These ceremonies are conducted as they were in the days of the ancestors, say the Shiare people, when the calabash was probably the only eating dish, until superseded by the eating bowl. Wood, as has already been noted (page 103), was associated with the Brukung cult, in opposition to iron with the Ogun cult in Dahomey. It is interesting that the use of metal is forbidden in ceremonies basically associated with Brukung in Shiare. The stool of Brukung is also made of wood, but metal is also found used in the Brukung cult in Shiare, in the ceremonies following the first visit to the shrine, when the small iron bars, agpo, are used as musical instruments, the only occasion when these are used in Shiare. The stems of the kperc staffs are of metal, but these staffs are not used either in the initiation ceremonies, or during the Yam Festival.

It is said that in the past some people died during the period of seclusion prior to the first visit to the shrine, and during the initiation in the shrine. How this came about cannot be known, but it could be suggested, tentatively, that this was done on the orders of the chief priest, as a punishment for witchcraft, which may have been detected by some divination ceremony held in the shrine. The chief priest traditionally administered the odom poison ordeal to establish guilt or innocence (Chapter 10) and may have wielded considerable powers in the matter of life and death. No one died during the last initiation.

The great oath (ntam ble) of the Atwode derives from the
walked naked to the shrine; (the

wode use the Akan word ntam; there is no Atwode word for 'ath'). Oaths are found among many peoples in Ghana and neighbouring countries, especially among the Akan, and have their origin in dishonourable or disastrous episodes such as defeat in battle, of which it is shameful to mention, and of which people do not wish to be reminded (Rattray 1929:128). The oath is a form of legal procedure. When invoked by someone, it ensures that the dispute in which he is involved is removed from the private sphere of dispute and settlement, and referred, publicly, to a higher, in some cases the highest, authority. It is dangerous to invoke the great oath; a heavy fine is imposed, and even death for whoever invokes it.

The Atwode oath is:-

Nekre fo awurofo fe ne bunu medine fei fe
wurado mo ne fe meta wura elede se me mo
ganadi fuwurado.

(I saw your hardships which you encountered when you were initiated and shown to your god. If you cannot do what I ask you, you should not go and serve your god).

'Hardships' refers to the nakedness of the initiates on the day of their initiation; to be seen naked is shameful.

Variants of the oath are used in Shiare. If someone wishes to gain the help and support of a man whom he respects or whose opinion he values, he will invoke one of that person's respected ancestors. The person thus invoked will become involved in the dispute, and will be rewarded with a pot of palm wine, or a fowl. To invoke the great oath is much more serious, and is not done lightly; a heavy fine is usually imposed. The oath may be invoked by one cult member to another, or by a non-cult member to a cult member. The appeal is not directed primarily to the individual cult

collectivity, and to the chief priest.

by use of the great oath must be reported to him, and he will hear the case; the oath is usually invoked by someone who feels that he has a strong case, and that he will not receive justice

at the level on which his case is being tried. Two sheep may be imposed as a fine for using the oath. When it is used by someone outside Shiare, the chief priest will order the parties to come to Shiare; until they arrive, and the case heard, the chief priest will abandon what he is doing, sit outside his ritual hut, and neither eat nor wash until the parties have come before him.

Two effects are achieved by the initiation. 1. the cult membership is brought up to full strength, and 2. the headships of lineages and subclans are occupied by cult members. Both of these points are connected.

When initiations are held at regular intervals, a fixed level of membership can be maintained. This is not so in Shiare. Cult membership is at its greatest at the initiation; thereafter, numbers decline gradually over a period of some 40 years, when a new initiation will be held. As numbers decline, the duties and functions of the cult become the responsibility of a smaller number of members. This is reflected in the social organisation (Chapter 3). When cult membership is high, as it is now, lineage and subclan heads will be cult members. Subclan heads play an important part in the social and political organisation of Shiare; from their number is chosen the clan head, and the elder of the two clan heads is the chief priest. The clan heads and subclan heads form the nucleus of the council of elders which effectively governs Shiare; when membership is high, the elders will all be cult members; thus cult members will govern Shiare, and shape its politics. When the cult membership declines, non-cult members will

elect a new lineage and subclan head. As elders, they

will be involved in the affairs of the town, but as non-cult members will be excluded from the small group which will ultimately make certain decisions.

Lineage and subclan heads perform certain ritual functions within their respective groups, such as sacrifices to their respective ancestors. Only cult members may slaughter and sacrifice animals; thus a lineage head who is not a cult member cannot perform this function, and will appeal to the subclan head to perform the ceremony. Where the subclan head is not a cult member, he will appeal to the clan head. A high cult membership ensures that political and ritual responsibilities are distributed evenly throughout the entire social organisation, and that ritual functions within any group are performed by the head of that group.

The shrine has two main aspects. It acts as the focal point for the religious life of the local community, offering protection against a wide range of evils and misfortunes which afflict individuals and communities. It is also an important pilgrimage centre; large numbers of pilgrims from over a large area come to consult the shrine to seek help and advice on a large number of issues. The function of the shrine as a centre of pilgrimage will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

The primary functions of the cult are to worship Brukung, and to present to the shrine the petitions of those who need the help of the shrine. The cult acts as an intermediary between shrine and people, through the medium of sacrifice.

Sacrifices take place daily in Shiare, usually in the early morning. Each clan has an altar in its clan territory, and the sacrifices are performed there by the clan head, or, if he cannot preside at the sacrifice, by the next oldest cult member in the

clan. Anyone wishing to consult the shrine will inform a cult member of his lineage, usually the lineage head, who will inform the clan head. Next morning, all those wishing to consult the shrine will gather outside the ritual hut of the priest, and one by one will approach him, with the animal they wish to offer. A fowl is the most common offering, though on certain important occasions, e.g. the mpaba ceremony (Chapter 5) a sheep will be demanded. On other occasions a goat will be sacrificed. The supplicant does not personally inform the priest of the reason for the consultation; this is always done by another, his spokesman, usually a lineage or subclan member.

The priest sits behind the altar (Plate 6); on his right is a large calabash of water, on his left there are usually several bags, roughly made from goat skin, and carried by the cult members. On the altar there may be a bundle of long sticks (ikpere oyi), which are used in settling disputes (Chapter 4). On the altar there may also be medicines (aling). All of these objects will be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificial animal. The okpere (staff of Brukung) of the clan will be placed on the altar; for important sacrifices, when a sheep is offered, two ikpere (i.e. those of both clans) are used.

When the priest has been informed of the purpose of the sacrifice, he will take the head of the fowl, the body being held by the supplicant, rub the neck with water, praying to Brukung to listen to the petition and to accept the sacrifice; he will then swiftly slit the animal's throat, hold it over the objects which may be on the altar or by his side, and allow some of the blood to drop on them. He will pluck a few feathers and stick them on the blood. The animal will be thrown to the side. The petitioner



Plate 6 : Sacrifice performed by Nana Kulahome, head of the
Cha clan.

will offer a small coin to the priest, who will then touch the head and shoulders of the supplicant, praying all the time. The supplicant will retire, and another come forward, the ceremony being repeated in the same way. When everyone's petition has been heard, and the sacrifice offered, the priest will retire to his hut, and the animals will be roasted. Later in the morning they will be taken to the shrine by the cult members, who go to the shrine every day at this time, to perform ceremonies associated with the cult, and to obtain the shrine's decision or advice relating to the petitions made during the sacrifice. Later in the day, the supplicants will be summoned to the priest's hut to learn what the shrine has advised, and be given treatment, depending on the nature of the problem which led to the consultation.

Sacrifices may be offered for different ends. Some are petitionary, some are thanksgiving, for the successful outcome of a consultation, some are expiatory, for breaches of norms. Some sacrifices are associated with rites de passage, such as the mpaha ceremony, for one's okala (soul) (Chapter 5), or the outdooring of a child; this latter ceremony is performed outside the hut of the father, but an offering is sometimes made to the shrine as well. Ancestor sacrifices are performed either in lineage, subclan or clan territory, depending on the ancestor or ancestors to whom the sacrifice is being made, and not on the brukung altar. Sacrifices to twins are held at the twin shrine, which is usually built outside the hut of the father of the twins (Chapter 5). All sacrifices offered at the clan altars are performed in the manner described above; the others may have slight variations.

3. The Chief Priest

The chief priest (okperegyoro ble, literally, oldest or greatest of the cult priests, or members) plays a crucial role in the affairs of the cult, of Shiare and of Atwode (Chapter 4 discusses his political and judicial roles in Shiare), but two difficulties arise in connection with the office. The first is related to determining exactly the full extent of his ritual (and political) role. This arises from the secrecy surrounding the rituals performed in the shrine itself; the precise part played by the chief priest during these rituals cannot be known, as the structure of the shrine worship is known only to the cult members. For example, does the chief priest himself communicate with the god, entering a kind of holy of holies, with the rest of the priests remaining apart, and the chief priest informing them of the god's decisions? Or does he consult the god along with the head of the Cha clan, or with the rest of the priests?⁸ Does the chief priest himself present to the god the petitions made at the sacrifices, or does each clan head do so? The question of whether the chief priest alone communicates with the god, or together with the totality of the cult, could be an important one in relation to the important part played by the shrine in the political affairs of central West Africa prior to and during the early days of European colonisation. During this period, the Shiare shrine had an enormous reputation as an oracle, and was consulted by some of the then powerful independent West African states, including the Ashanti, Gonja and Dagomba (von Zech 1888:107). No major decision, especially any relating to war, was taken by the rulers of these peoples without consulting the shrine. To which these emissaries, bearing gifts, were sent

(von Zech 1888:107). If the chief priest alone communicated with the god, and informed these embassies of its decision, then he was clearly in a position to influence in a significant way the course of West African politics. Whether in fact he was in a position to do so cannot be known. But, even if he himself did not make a personal decision on these matters, the shrine certainly did, through the mediation of the cult. The reaction of the Europeans to this aspect of the shrine will be discussed below.

The second difficulty is connected with succession to the office of high priest. According to the principle of seniority which operates in Shiare, the oldest cult member is the chief priest; as the two clan heads are the oldest men in their respective clans, the older of the clan heads will become chief priest. The office is not hereditary, but open to any cult member, any of whom could succeed to the office. Prestige and privilege are associated with cult membership; more so with the office of chief priest, to which most cult members would presumably wish to succeed. Some educated Shiare men, who have emigrated from Shiare to the larger towns in the south to seek employment commensurate with their education and qualifications, have sent at least one of their sons back to Shiare to be cared for by kinsmen, in the hope that they will eventually be initiated into the cult, and thus provide a link between the educated emigrant family and the cult, and not only have a cult member in the family, but also possibly a chief priest, even though this may be a remote possibility. For example Tetteh (Fig2), himself educated, and living and working as a dispenser in Kedjebi, in the central part of the Volta Region, has sent all his children to school, with the exception of Kwasi whom he has fostered with his brother



Yaw Mensah in Shiare, to learn the traditional occupation of farming, and eventually to be initiated into the cult.

The second difficulty associated with the office of chief priest lies in the fact that, though it is agreed that the older of the two clan heads will succeed to the office, in fact the office has always been held by the Awuku clan head. It is a matter of chance which of the two clan heads is the older. In a non-literate society, lacking written records, absolute seniority cannot be easily determined, but relative seniority can be known; people living in the same community know relative ages. Theoretically, it is possible that the head of the Awuku clan would always be the older, but it is a most curious and surprising coincidence that no Cha clan head has ever held the office of chief priest.

I was informed that the Cha clan resented the Awuku monopoly of the office, claiming that some of their clan heads were older than the Awuku clan head, and should thus have succeeded to the office. I was told that when Nana Kwao, predecessor of Nana Jesu, the present chief priest, succeeded to the office in 1963, it was known that Nana Gepochase, the Cha clan head, was the older, but that he was persuaded not to press this. Tension exists between the two clans over this question.

Closely related to the question of succession to the office of chief priest is the presence of the two altars on which sacrifice is offered to Brukung. This is possibly the most conspicuous feature of the dichotomy which exists in Shiare, whereby each clan acts independently, with offices and rituals being duplicated (Chapter 3). When I was discussing this point with the Shiarewura, he told me that an older generation of

prior to the coming of the Germans,

on which the chief priest (the head of the Awuku clan), offered all the sacrifices. The altar in the Cha clan territory was said to be one of the consequences of the German intervention in Shiare.

The situation in central West Africa was confused and critical in the last quarter of the 19th century, with the British, French and Germans consolidating and expanding their colonial possessions and influence, resulting in the breakdown of traditional structures. The major shrines were consulted to ask for help and advice in dealing with the European invaders. The Shiare shrine played a prominent part in these consultations, and advised resistance to the Europeans, and when annexation has been accomplished, advised passive resistance. By the mid-1890s the Germans had come to understand something of the power of the shrines, especially Shiare, and the threat they represented to European colonisation. In October 1896, Count Julius von Zech (1868-1914), then commandant of the German post at Bismarckburg, later governor of the colony of Togoland, invaded Shiare with a party of soldiers. The occasion of the attack was to arrest the chief priest, Nana Kwantine, for allegedly administering the poison ordeal, a practice which had been forbidden by the German authorities (von Zech 1898:107). But the deeper reason may have been to destroy the power of the shrine, and remove the chief priest, who had been a constant source of annoyance to the Germans:-

The fetish priest was also king of the country; exploiting the esteem in which his fetish was traditionally held, he offered passive resistance to the German administration in every possible way. He ignored orders which were sent to him, refused to accept the flag, and stirred up the neighbouring Adele country against the Europeans, saying, 'you are the pigs of the
can his paths for him. I

don't want the white man and his flag. I am not afraid of the white man, and if he comes into my country, I will make war against him.' (von Zech 1898:107)

Von Zech captured the chief priest, took him first to Bismarckburg, then to Krachi, where he was later shot; this episode should be seen in the general context of German policy towards major shrines and their priests.⁹ While in Shiare, the Germans, according to the Shiare elders, forced their way into the shrine, thereby, in the eyes of the Shiare elders, desecrating it. Von Zech also removed from the ritual hut of the chief priest several objects associated with the cult; (von Zech's inventory of these objects is given in Appendix 1).



Around this time, the stool of Brukung (Brukung gegyakpa) disappeared from Shiare; this is the most sacred object which the Atwode have, representing the power and authority of the shrine, and the focal point of the Yam Festival ceremonies (Chapter 6). According to the elders, who gave me a list of things they claimed were taken from the chief priest's hut by the Germans (described and compared with von Zech's list in Appendix 1), this was taken by von Zech, but it does not appear on von Zech's list. Another account, related to me by the Shiarewura, says that the stool was removed and lost, according to some thrown into a river. It is possible that such a valuable object was removed for safe keeping, and lost in the process, as happened to the Golden Stool of the Ashanti when British troops took Kumasi in 1874. However, the elders say that the original stool was removed from Shiare and never returned. Another was made, the one now in use, by the Kotokoli of Gyerepkanga, who were originally Atwode, and whose ritual centre of the Brukung cult is still maintained

(page 9).

Undoubtedly great confusion reigned in Shiare. The chief priest was under arrest in Krachi, the stool of Brukung was lost, and the shrine had been desecrated. Nana Kwantine had been succeeded as chief priest by Nana Mbowune, but he died shortly afterwards. It was at this point that Nana Akane, head of the Cha clan, became chief priest.

The exact circumstances in which he succeeded to the office are not known. As head of the Cha clan, he would be the oldest man in the clan, and possibly the oldest cult member in Shiare, and thus eligible for the office. Another interpretation, which the Shiarewura thinks feasible, is that Akane took advantage of the prevailing confusion to assume the office and transfer it and its power to the Cha clan, and since the office was now held by the Cha clan, an altar was built on the Cha clan territory, near the ritual hut of the Cha clan head; this then became the altar on which Brukung sacrifices were offered. After the death of Akane, the office evidently reverted to the Awuku clan, but the result of Akane's intervention was that the Cha clan achieved a considerable measure of autonomy regarding its own affairs, including the retention of the altar, and the duplication of the ritual paraphernalia associated with sacrifice. Thus today, even though there is only one chief priest of the Brukung cult, each clan head acts as chief priest within his clan. This explanation must be regarded as tentative, but it offers an explanation of the ambiguities surrounding succession to the office of chief priest, and the existence of two altars used for Brukung sacrifices.

Shortly after assuming the office, Akane held an initiation. He had a long reign, as he was still chief priest when a British

delegation visited Shiare in 1914 to hear the views of the Atwode regarding their future if the Germans were defeated in the First World War (page 171). Before his death he held another initiation, somewhere around 1920, which was the last initiation until 1962.

Two initiations were held within 20 years, a relatively short period. This may have been because Akane thought that the cult was still being threatened by the Europeans. During Akane's term of office, at least two British delegations visited Shiare (pp. 170-171); thus the Atwode were being drawn more and more into the colonial system of administration, and their isolation from the wider political arena coming to an end. Akane may have assumed, reasonably, that the British would be hostile to the shrine, and that one way of protecting it would be to ensure a strong cult membership, hence the second initiation.

Footnotes to Chapter 2

1. The name 'Brukung' occurs in various forms in the cult area. I shall use the form 'Brukung', as used in Shiare, except when discussing a specific Brukung shrine, when I shall use the form as employed in the source quoted.
2. 'Là-bas les pèlerins ne voient pas Buku de suite, ce n'est que progressivement, avec serments de ne rien révéler de ce qu'il a vu.' The grammar is inconsistent; pèlerins is plural, il a vu is singular.
3. 'Alle derart zur Wallfahrt Veranlassten gehören fortan zu den asebukuna den Bukuverehren; ausserdem auch alle ihre späteren Kinder, sowie Kinder, Familie und Gesinde des Priesters des Buku.'
4. 'Du sollst mit dem Europäer und seine Kultur nichts zu tun haben und ihm keinen Vorschub noch Dienst leisten.'
5. Dr. Susan Drucker Brown, who was in Krachi in 1962, told me personally of the interest and excitement in the district when news of the initiation was announced.
6. The exact part played by the Kotokoli of Gyerekpanga in the initiation cannot be determined, due to the secrecy surrounding the ceremonies. Nor can their connection with the Brukung cult. According to the Atwode tradition, as warriors, they were excluded from cult membership, and left the main body of the Atwode in what is their present homeland, and went to Gyerekpanga, in Togo, where they were eventually absorbed into the general Kpotokoli culture, losing the Atwode language in the process. Mensah-Keh (1966:26) states that the Atwode of Gyerekpanga have a branch of the Brukung 'fetish', and that every half century they meet with their brothers in Shiare to initiate the new priests into the cult, and that the initiation is always performed by the Gyerekpanga people.
7. The Chella are a people of unknown origin who live mostly in Odomi, though some have moved into Nkwanta. The Atwode say that they arrived in Atwodoland some time after the Atwode had settled there, and were given land by the chief priest of Shiare, to whom they swore allegiance. They have their own chief, their own language and their own god. Recently, the Chella challenged the Atwode account, claiming that they were the original inhabitants, who allowed the Atwode to settle in their land, and were gradually absorbed by them. This had led to a serious quarrel between the two peoples, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4, where the role of the Shiarewura is examined.
8. Cardinali (1931:51), quoting an informant who was said to have accompanied the Germans who forced their way into the shrine, states that only the chief priest and his 'assistant' enter the cave where Brukung is believed to reside. This statement is unsupported by any other evidence and is therefore doubtful, but it does allow for the possibility that one other consulting the shrine, the

- 194 The arrest and killing of the chief priest of the Shiare shrine was not an isolated episode, but would seem to have been part of a wider pattern to destroy the power of the shrines, by removing or killing the shrine priests. A memorandum of a British official reports the killing of shrine priests by the Germans 'I am strongly inclined to believe that the Bosomfo (priest) was the real ruler of the country, until the Germans killed three of them' (G.N.A. 39/I/32, p.57a). The Dente shrine at Krachi suffered more severely than the Shiare shrine, in that the Germans blew up the cave which was sacred to the god, but did not destroy the Dente worship (Lumsden 1973:136).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SHIARE

Section I of this chapter will discuss the elements of social organization in Shiare, and lineage fission. Section II will discuss the relationship between the Brukung cult and other religious elements in Shiare, and their relationship with the social organization.

I. ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

1. The Principles of Social Organization

The social organization of Shiare is based on the dual principles of unilineal descent and seniority. The society consists of a series of patrilineal descent groups, which I designate as follows. The clan is the largest autonomous agnatic descent group; the links between the clan members and the founding ancestor can no longer be traced. The subclan is the largest division of the clan, descended from a common ancestor, but the exact line of descent can no longer be traced. The lineage is a division of the subclan, and traces descent from an ancestor who is known. The lineage is composed of families, which consist of a man, his wife or wives and their children. Each group has a head (oblense, pl. ablense, elder or wura, pl. awura, chief).

There are two clans in Shiare, between whom Shiare is divided territorially, each clan occupying approximately half of the town. They are Chagewi (that is, the house of Cha), and Awukugewi (that is, the house of Awuku). Awukugewi contains three subclans: 1. Gekado (from geka, a species of tree), 2. Gepubudo (from gepubu, a species of tree), and 3. Wasawasado (from wasawasa, a species of tree). Chagewi contains four subclans: 1. Ogbanaso

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(from gbana, a hill), 2. Denteso (from Dente, the divinity worshipped in Krachi, and so called because the subclan occupies territory around and above the shrine of this divinity, who is said in Shiare to be the oldest son of Brukung), 3. Kankamado, (from kankama, an orange grove, which once flourished on the site now occupied by the subclan, and 4. Abombado (from abomba, a species of tree. Lineage fission took place recently within the Kankamado subclan, resulting in the emergence of three distinct lineages, of which Abombado is one, and which are now establishing themselves as subclans. The process of fission, and the difficulties within the Kankamado subclan, will be discussed in part 2 of this section. The clans and subclans are shown schematically in Fig.1.

The smallest and most basic group within the clan is the family. This may be a simple group, consisting of husband, wife and children, or a more composite group, consisting of husband, wives and children. The family is a productive and reproductive group. A man will farm with his wife or wives and children. In certain circumstances, for example, in the clearing of new farm land, he will call in others to help him, ususally brothers, or brothers' sons, sometimes sisters' sons. The family is not a commensal group; men will eat with their lineage members, their brothers, real or classificatory, and their sons; sometimes sisters' sons are admitted to this group. The family is ideally a residential unit, but this is subject to variation, due to the shortage of building land in Shiare.

Within the family group the father is responsible for providing for his wife or wives and children from his farm.

... .. involved in the negotiations concerning



<u>AWUKU</u>	<u>CHA</u>
GEKADO	OGBANASO
GEPUBUDO	DENTESO
WASAWASADO	(Opea)
	(KANKAMADO) Gblese
	Abumbado

Fig.1 : Schematic representation of the clans and subclans in Shiare.

the marriage of his children, in negotiations concerned with the termination of a marriage, and in the outdooing of his children. However, at this point, the family does not operate as an independent entity, but becomes part of the lineage.

When a Shiareman speaks of his family he usually means his lineage (getang), which is a descent group of shallow depth usually not more than three generations. Fig.2 shows a typical lineage, the descendants of Akpe, of the subclan Wasawasado, of the Awuku clan. The oldest man of the lineage is Anefo, only surviving son of Akpe, who is thus head of the lineage. The lineage has the form of an extended family, a group of male siblings and half siblings, with their wives and children. The lineage may also be responsible for widowed or divorced women of the lineage, sometimes also for their children. The lineage head (getanghlense) has certain responsibilities within the lineage, largely relating to ritual matters, such as marriage and the outdooing of children. In the case of the marriage of a daughter, the girl's father will deal personally and directly with the family of the prospective husband during the early stages of the negotiations, receiving the initial gift of palm wine, but very soon the negotiations will become a matter for the lineage. The girl's father will inform the lineage of the proposal, and discuss with them the suitability of the prospective husband. At a later stage in the negotiations, the boy's father will present a large pot of palm wine to the girl's father, who at this point must summon the male members of the lineage and inform them that the young man in question wishes to take the girl. The lineage head will pour libation, the palm wine is drunk by the lineage members, and the lineage head and the girl's



Fig.2 : Lineage; descendants of Akpe.

father, after consultation with the other male lineage members, will agree to or refuse the proposal. Then the other lineage heads are called and informed that the marriage has been agreed upon. The negotiations will then move towards their final stages.

Similarly, when a marriage is terminated, the lineage is involved. If a man wishes to divorce his wife, he informs his father and his lineage head, who will summon the male members of the lineage, and discuss and assess with them the causes which led the man to seek to terminate his marriage. The husband's lineage will then inform the girl's father that they wish to terminate the marriage, and give their reasons. The girl's father will inform his lineage head, who will summon the male members of the lineage, who will discuss the matter. The affair is essentially one which is resolved within the lineage, but the lineage may call in others from the subclan in a consultative capacity. Where there is disagreement between the lineages, they may call in a mediator, belonging to neither lineage, but acceptable to both, who will listen to both sides, assess the arguments, and offer his decision.

The lineage head performs the ceremony of the outdoorings of a child. Until this ceremony is performed, the mother and the child are confined to the house, the mother's normal social relationships being suspended. The outdoorings will be held on gikpaga, the first and most important day in the Atwode six day week. The day will be determined by the father in consultation with the lineage head; on the appointed day, members of the lineage will meet outside the father's dwelling, where libation will be poured by the lineage head. The child will be brought out, and named. The ceremony as performed today is a shortened version of the former longer ceremony, in which the mother would

bring the child out from the house, three times for a male child, four times for a female child, during which the father walked round the house. Today, the mother brings out the child only once, after the libation has been poured.

When a lineage member wishes to offer sacrifice to the immediate ancestor from which the lineage is descended (e.g. to Akpe, Fig.2), or to his father (e.g. Manase to his father Kwao, Fig.2) he will inform the lineage head. Although this is a matter for the lineage, the arrangements are not finalised until the lineage head has informed the subclan head, who will attend the ceremony, pour libation, provide and slaughter a fowl before the slaughtering of the sacrificial animal, which will be a sheep or a goat; this animal will be slaughtered by the subclan head.

In some respects, the lineage is a land holding group. Farming land is not scarce in the area surrounding Shiare, but the quality of the land varies, as does the distance of the farms from the town. Each lineage has farm land which has come into the lineage through inheritance. There are several ways in which land can be gained by a lineage member. Elder sons will usually begin to farm when they marry; they may either farm on lineage land which is not in use, or clear virgin land and make their own farm. As a father grows older, the work of the farm gradually becomes the responsibility of his sons; if the older sons are working their own farms, this responsibility will devolve upon the younger sons, who may then inherit the farm. But it often happens that the sons will allocate a share of their time to working on the father's farm, and they may claim a share of the farm on the father's death, in which case the farm will be divided. It may also happen that there is no immediate need for farm land;



in this case the land will be allowed to lie fallow until required by a lineage member, or it may be loaned to someone else, not of the lineage, until required by a lineage member. In this latter case, some of the produce of the land will be offered to the lineage member whose land it is. Inevitably, quarrels and disputes arise within the lineage regarding farm land. Where the quarrel is purely a matter within the lineage, it can be resolved within the lineage; the lineage head will call the lineage members and they will debate the matter, and allocate the land to those whom they think the better claim. However, as was seen in the case of marriage and divorce, the other lineage heads of the subclan will usually be involved in a consultative capacity.

Where the question of farm land is usually a relatively simple one, the question of building land and dwellings is much more complex and important, and may lead to deep quarrels and disputes. The geographical constraints of Shiare, the fact that the limits to building have almost been reached, and the fact that the population is increasing are factors conducive to tension and quarrelling in this very important area.

Ideally, lineage members will occupy dwellings adjacent to each other, or near each other looking on to a common clearing, and thus forming a compound (gelande, pl. alande), but the constraints on land restricts the number of such compounds, and thus the number of lineage members who can occupy dwellings adjoining each other. The type of compound which is frequently found in Akan areas in Ghana, namely the square building with a central open courtyard, and rooms opening on to a kind of veranda, is not found in Shiare. In the more densely populated areas of the town, it is quite difficult to distinguish the boundary

between compounds, as there is no obvious break.

The compound will be occupied by the nucleus or core of the lineage; the dwellings will usually be those which have been in the lineage possession for some time. However, as the lineage expands, some lineage members must build elsewhere, but within the territory owned by the subclan; new dwellings will be built at the periphery of the existing subclan dwellings, thus pushing the subclan to the point beyond which no further building will be possible.

Two types of dispute may arise with regard to lineage land. Lineage members may disagree regarding possession of lineage land, or a lineage dwelling. Or the quarrel may be between two or more lineages regarding a plot on communal subclan land, i.e. the dispute may be intra-lineage or inter-lineage.

An intra-lineage dispute exists among the sons of Akpe, (Fig.2), regarding the dwelling house of Kwao, father of Manase and Ampedu. Since the death of Kwao four years ago, the house has been unoccupied. Both Manase and Ampedu, as sons of Kwao, claim the house; however, both men have substantial dwellings, and this has led other members of the lineage to advance contrary claims. The sons of Atosan and Atunkung argued that they had an equal claim to the house, as it had belonged to Akpe, had been inherited by Kwao, but in fact did not belong exclusively to Kwao's sons, but belonged to the lineage. The case was still being argued when I left the field; the dwelling is still unoccupied, and the commensal group consisting of Akpe's descendants eats there.

The second, or inter-lineage type of quarrel is a matter for the subclan, as more than one lineage is involved.

Both groups already discussed, the family and the lineage, though identifiable and recognisable, are very limited in action, and not viable as independent entities, except to a limited degree. The authority of the household head and the lineage head is limited, and weak; both groups show their dependence on larger, more inclusive groups; thus the family is drawn towards the lineage, and the lineage is drawn towards the subclan. In both groups, where authority, political and ritual circumscribed, reference is made to the wider group.

The subclan (getang, pl. atang) is the first major descent group which is relatively independent and viable. It has some characteristics which give it this identity. It is a named group, it has a head (getangwura), who is a person of importance, and it is a land owning body, and within relatively wide limits, it has autonomy.

Each subclan has its own land within the clan territory, belonging exclusively to the subclan; with very few exceptions, no one who is not a member of the subclan can build on subclan land, or live in the territory of a subclan of which he is not a member. The subclan is composed of the lineages within it. The subclan head has authority and jurisdiction to a degree more marked than the family or lineage head. His functions are primarily ritual, and secondarily political. The subclan head is a member of the central group, or council which, together with the chief priest, discusses and determines the affairs of the town. He is also responsible for the welfare of those within the subclan, in both the ritual and the political spheres. Ritually, he offers sacrifice, when this is deemed necessary, to the ancestors of the subclan; he does this in his own right, as an head. Only important ancestors are



remembered and invoked by name; normally, these have been chief priests. Otherwise, they are worshipped collectively. Lineage heads, as has already been seen, may offer sacrifice to their immediate ancestors, but this is always done in consultation with the subclan head, who attends in person, or is represented by a delegate, and who pours libation and makes a preliminary offering of a fowl.

The identity of the subclan is most clearly marked in the context of building land and residence. Each member of the subclan lives on subclan land within the subclan; the pattern, as we have seen, is for a lineage to occupy a group of dwellings, which, if possible, will form a compound. As the lineage expands, building is done towards the periphery of the subclan land. Thus, members of different lineages will live side by side. Allocation of land is a matter for the subclan itself; where differing claims arise, they are discussed and settled within and by the subclan.

Land suitable for building adjoining dwellings of the subclan is regarded as belonging to the subclan, to be used when required. This is agreed, but disputes may arise regarding land where two subclans meet. In the past, one subclan allowed another to build on land which they could have claimed, but as they did not wish to build at that moment, they did not press their claim. This happened between the subclans Denteso and Obanaso, in the Cha clan, with Denteso building two houses beyond Obanaso. According to the agreed convention, land adjoining a subclan's dwelling belongs to that subclan. A dispute arose when Denteso tried to build further dwellings beyond the two they already had, in accordance with the rule. This was challenged by Obanaso, who saw themselves losing land which eventually they would require for

building. The matter was now outside the purely subclan context, and involved the clan. After much discussion, the clan head, Nana Kulahome and the elders upheld the claim of Obanaso. This was accepted, but there is still some tension between the two subclans. Denteso is the most densely inhabited subclan, with no further land for building; Obanaso can still expand up the hill, but only to a limited degree, as the hill becomes too steep for building. Today, no subclan is allowed to build on the land of another.

Originally, the subclan could trace descent from a common ancestor; eventually the exact line of descent was forgotten as the lineages expanded and traced their descent from a more recent ancestor. The subclan is the most important group to which a person belongs in that it gives him his social identity and his right of residence. When asked where he comes from, a Shiare man will always give his subclan, and then the specific lineage to which he belongs. The subclan supplies his immediate ritual needs, such as the outdoorings of children and sacrifices to the ancestors, which are matters pertaining to the lineage and subclan. For other ritual services, he will have to look to the clan head, who will perform sacrifices related to the mpaba (destiny) and okala (soul) (Chapter 5), and also perform sacrifices to Brukung for protection against witchcraft and other evils and misfortunes.

The clan is the largest descent group, and is composed of the subclans within it. There are two clans, Cha and Awuku, named after the eponymous ancestors who first settled in Shiare. The clan head (gewiwura) is the oldest man in the clan, and will thus be one of the subclan heads. The clan head has several overlapping roles; not only is he clan head, but he is also

and family head. When cult membership

as high, these positions are occupied by cult members; as cult membership decreases they will be occupied by non-cult members, but potential cult members; this point will be discussed in the next section. The elder of the two clan heads is the chief priest of the Brukung cult (okperegyoro ble, oldest priest or member of the god).

Each clan is autonomous in ritual matters and with respect to its own internal political affairs. It has its own territory, but the clan itself is not a land-holding body. Land is held by the subclan, but on the occasions when land has been given to non-subclan members, it was given to fellow-clan members, and not to members of the other clan. Clan duality is the most marked feature of the social system. Rituals, ritual objects and offices are duplicated. Each clan has its own altar. The clan head acts as chief priest for his clan, offering sacrifices to Brukung for clan members, and for pilgrims who lodge within the clan territory (Chapter 6). Each clan head has a ritual hut (okpere obu, house of the god), where the clan head spends the greater part of the day, attending to those who have consulted the shrine. In the ritual hut are kept objects pertaining to the cult. Each clan has its own okpere (staff), symbolising the power and presence of the god, and which is placed on the altar during sacrifices, and its own okpere ayi (sticks of the god), a bundle of long thin sticks, which are sometimes placed on the altar during sacrifices, to receive some of the blood of the sacrificial animal, and are thus believed to be charged with some of the power and authority of the god; these okpere ayi play an important part in the settling of disputes and quarrels. In the ritual hut of the chief priest is kept the Brukung gegyakoa, the stool of Brukung, the most sacred



ual object the cult possesses; it is brought out only once a year, and is the centre of some of the rituals of the Yam Festival.

Each clan has two akyeame (linguists or spokesmen), to send to the chief; each clan deposes two elderly women to assist to the stool of Brukung during the Yam Festival. Each clan also has its own asafoatye, who is responsible for organising communal labour, such as housebuilding, and an official who is responsible for ensuring that the clan area is kept tidy; repeated idleness can lead to a fine.

Both clans have their own ayido (sg. oyido, literally place under the trees) which are large open spaces, with trees, and provided with rough benches, in which male clan members meet to discuss or converse. Dances, both ritual and recreational, are held in the ayida. Both clans possess their own sets of drums, dancers, singers, and in some cases, their own dances and songs.

The clan head with the clan elders, will deal with quarrels and disputes arising within the clan. He will also, as chief of the clan, perform sacrifices to Brukung for clan members who offend the shrine, either for the removal of the effects of misdeeds such as witchcraft, and for rituals which cannot be performed within the subclan, such as determining which ancestor has been incarnated in a child, the mpaba ceremony and the okala sacrifices.

The autonomy of each clan would seem to be complete, but this is not entirely so; both clans form a single community, united in their devotion through the cult of Brukung, which will be discussed in the next chapter of the Yam Festival (Chapter 7), but outside this context

own affairs. The political and

udicial functions of the clan heads, and of the chief priest, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3. The Formation of Lineages

When I first made enquiries as to the number of subclans, I was given the information given on pages 79 and 80, namely, that there are three subclans in Awukugewi, and four in Chagewi. This was the case in Awukugewi, but I soon discovered that there were difficulties and discrepancies in the model when applied to Chagewi. This first became manifest during the census in Awuku; where a man had married a wife from Chagewi, I asked her subclan. Enteso, Ogbanaso and Kankamado were referred to by name, but some hesitancy was shown when the wife came from Abumbado, or from the subclan to which Nana Kulahome belonged. In the former case, informants would sometimes say that the wife came from Donkor's people', referring to Agyemine Donkor, a prominent member of the subclan, but not its head (Fig. 6); there was evidently some uncertainty as to the name of the subclan. In the case of Nana Kulahome, they would say that the wife came from Kulahome's' people, but they could not give a name to the subclan, unlike the case of Abumado, where, after a little hesitation, they could agree that the subclan's name was Abumbado. Enquiries revealed that Kulahome did not seem to have a subclan, which was surprising, since, as clan head, he was the oldest man in the clan, and should have been one of the subclan heads.

I raised this matter with the Shiarewura, who told me that the Cha people had their difficulties, but offered no further comment.

Another difficulty, closely connected with those mentioned

above, arose when I began the census in the Kankamado subclan, in whose territory I was living. When I approached the subclan head, Nana Mbowura Ayor, and explained what I wished to do, namely interview each household head and record the details of his family, farms, etc. he replied that this would not be necessary, as he would provide all this information himself. Only after cautiously persistent requests did he finally agree to my interviewing the household heads. He told me that the subclan was not called Kankamado, but Gblese. This surprised me as I had not heard of this name as designating a subclan. He then gave me his genealogy, showing his descent, and that of the subclan, from the furthest ancestor he could remember, Opea, through Gblese, his father's father, after whom the subclan was named (Fig.3).

I later raised this matter of the subclan name with the Shiarewura, who again told me that the Cha people had their troubles, and frequently quarrelled among themselves. He consulted with some of the elders of his own subclan (Gekado) about the names 'Gblese' and 'Kankamado'; they said that they knew of these names, but that this was a matter which should be dealt with by the Cha people. The Shiarewura suggested that I should raise the matter with Nick Awuku Abby, a member of the subclan in question, and who was a graduate of the University of Ghana, and interested in matters of genealogy. Abby told me that Mbowura could not claim genuine Shiare descent, as his father, Bekulai, was not in fact a son of Gblese, but a slave who had been bought, and later married Gpoasekyi, a daughter of Gblese. Thus, according to the principle of agnatic descent, the children of Bekulai were non-Atwode, and as such would be excluded from membership of the Brukung cult. Mbowura's 'illegitimacy' would

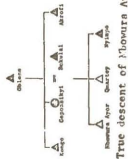
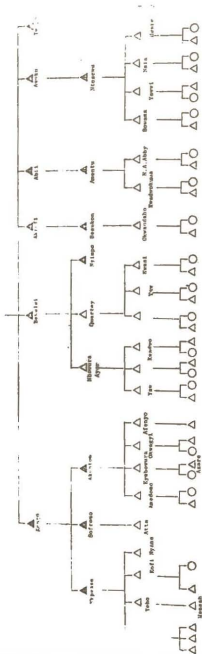


Fig. 3 : Ewe descent.

True descent of Ewe group

explain his reluctance to allow me to make enquiries within the subclan, as I may well have discovered that his father had been a slave. This was common knowledge in Shiare, theoretically I could have discovered it elsewhere, though in fact no one else ever mentioned it to me. Nick Awuku Abby, although a Shiare man, was living and working in Hohoe, many miles to the south, and was only occasionally in Shiare. It was felt by the Shiarewura that Abby could tell me of this since he was removed from the immediate affairs of Shiare. The matter was one of some delicacy, about which the Shiare people did not wish to speak to a stranger.

I also learned that Tekpo Asasewura (Fig.3), who was at that time head of the subclan, was concerned about the children of Bekulai, knowing that their status in Shiare would be ambiguous and difficult. He sent Quartey to a school in Jasikan, a large town in the centre of the Volta Region; enrolment in a school would further disqualify him from membership of the Brukung cult, but educational qualifications would enable him to find employment in one of the larger towns, and offer him a new life outside the traditional structures of Shiare. Only two of Bekulai's children were affected, Mbowura Ayor and Quartey, the third child Nyimpo having died young (Fig.3). Mbowura Ayor worked for some years near Jasikan, as a cocoa farmer, eventually acquiring his own farms, which he still possesses. Quartey was the first person in Shiare to have attended school. He worked for some years in local government, mostly in the field of education. He then entered politics, eventually representing the Nwanta constituency for the C.P.P. from 1965-66. On the downfall of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, he was imprisoned; on his release he again entered the field of education, holding the post of Inspector of Schools for the

hern part of the Volta Region. He retired in December 1976, now lives in Nkwanta.

After some years, Mhowura Ayor returned to Shiare, and actually he and his children were accepted into the lineage Gblese (Fig.3) as agnates. The Atwode distinguish between ung (agnatic kinship, or an agnatic kin group) and minyana gesung (kinship through the mother, or the mother's kin group). Agnatic initiation was not possible, so Mbowura Ayor and his children were initiated to the lineage through matrification. If Gepoasikyi's children could not claim agnatic descent among a people they did know, and if they were also excluded from her kin group, they would belong nowhere; this was admitted by the Atwode in recognising Gepoasekyi's children as being of agnatic descent.

Later in my fieldwork I discovered two further instances of agnatic status being recognised through matrification. The first concerned Okra, of the Gepubudo subclan, Awuku clan, who was bought as a slave, and married Okplanka (daughter of Kwantine, the chief priest arrested by Julius von Zech in 1896), and Isumasa, widow of Akrufi (Fig.4). Okra's surviving sons of these marriages were initiated into the Brukung cult, and their sons will be eligible for initiation when the ceremony is next held. The second concerned Akui, who was also a slave, and married a woman in the Ogbanaso subclan. Akui's son, Lengwa (Fig.5) became a cult member and head of the Cha clan; those of Lengwa's male descendants who were eligible for initiation were initiated in 1962 and their sons will be eligible for the next initiation.

These cases of matrification are transgressions of the agnatic principle, but the principle itself is not invalidated. The principles of reckoning descent are used differently by different

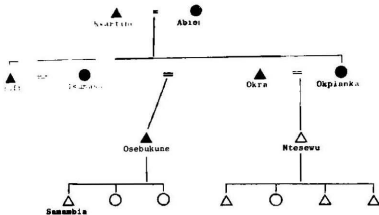


Fig.4 : Okra and his descendants

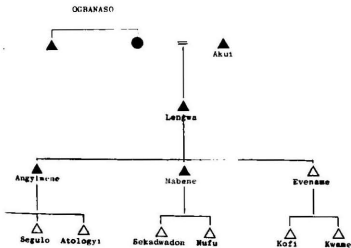


Fig. 5 : Akui and his descendants



societies, and must be understood in the context of the workings of that society.

In other Ghanaian lineage based societies, it is not uncommon for lines of illegitimate or uterine descent to be grafted on to the main agnatic line and be accepted as legitimate. This legitimisation may be absolute, or valid only in specific circumstances. For example, among the patrilineal Tallensi, Fortes notes that two lines of descent, which were grafted on to the true line of agnatic descent, became, over some generations, to be regarded as genuine. In the case of the accessory lineage, the descendants of a sister's son were incorporated into the clan. In the other case, the descendants of a male fathered by a man of another lineage will be accepted as clan members, but this son and his descendants may not inherit from the pater, and this prohibition applies particularly to the inheritance of custody of the ancestor shrines. To all intents and purposes, descendants of these two lines have full clan membership and rights, but, most importantly, they are not allowed to worship at the shrines of clan or lineage ancestors. This is in keeping with the important position occupied by the ancestors in Tallensi thinking; one cannot worship at or inherit custody of the shrine of an ancestor from whom one is not legitimately descended. The fiction of agnatic kinship is not valid in the ritual field. 'The tie of true agnatic descent, which alone confers these rights, cannot be fabricated.' (Fortes 1949:24).

The Atwode view of the ancestors is different from that of the Tallensi; they are less important, and do not lie at the centre of ritual worship, as they do for the Tallensi. Thus the important cult of ancestors and ancestor shrines are not found

among the Atwode, whose worship is directed rather to what is in effect a State god. This explains the fact that after a few generations the exact genealogical order of the ancestors is forgotten, and they are remembered collectively, only the more prominent being remembered by name. Genealogies are not discussed, thus younger people will have heard of their ancestors, but will be unable to trace their descent accurately from these ancestors. The elders themselves could not give their ancestors in the correct order of generations. When I was compiling genealogies, the elders had often to confer for some time before reaching agreement as to the correct genealogical order, and the order of birth within generations. Important political and ritual offices are not inherited in any particular descent group, therefore it is not necessary to trace descent over several generations from particular ancestors. Offices are held by virtue of seniority, therefore it is the existing lineage and subclan which are important.

Agnatic descent determines one's place in the social system; lines assimilated into an agnatic group are given the rights of full lineage members. In Shiare this means two things. Firstly, this means the right to farm on lineage land, and, more importantly, the right to build on subclan land. Thus Mbowura Ayor and Quartey built their own houses (dwellings 17 and 31 respectively, Fig.7). Secondly, members of assimilated lineages suffer no disadvantage in the ritual field, that is, with respect to the Brukung cult, membership of which is not proper to any one descent group, but to any Atwode born male. Thus, once the line was assimilated, and the principle of agnatic descent recognised, then the way was open for admission into the cult, provided the

other conditions for cult membership could be met. Thus Lengwa (Fig.5) was initiated and by virtue of his seniority became head of the Cha clan, and thus its chief priest. Similarly, Mbowura Ayor, was initiated into the cult in 1962, as he was illiterate, but Quartey was not initiated, as he was educated. By virtue of his seniority in the Gblese subclan, Mbowura became subclan head.

The importance of the principle of agnatic descent as the norm is shown by the fact that the descendants of Bekulai, Okra and Akui will refer to them as Shiare born, true agnates, suppressing their own descent through the female line. Sometimes, during quarrels, such descendants will be reminded of their non-Shiare ancestry, but the de facto situation is now accepted in Shiare.

There remained the question of Nana Kulahome and his subclan. It seemed clear at this point that Nana Kulahome's subclan was connected in some way with the subclan Gblese, but the exact relationship had to be determined. A discussion with Kulahome established that his father's father was Opea, but he did not know Opea's father, showing how quickly ancestors are forgotten. When I enquired after the sons of Opea, and their order of birth, he conferred with some of the elders of his subclan. After much discussion and cross-checking, it emerged that Opea had four sons, Ando, Gblese, Awolo and Ogah, in order of birth. From Gblese and Ogah are descended the subclans Gblese and Abumbado, while the descendants of Ando and Awolo remained together to form a third subclan, that of Kulahome, which I shall refer to as Opea for purposes of reference (Fig.6). The discussion with Nana Kulahome also established that Ando was the eldest son of Opea, contradicting the claim by Mbowura Ayor that his ancestor Gblese was the eldest son. When I asked Kulahome what kinship term was

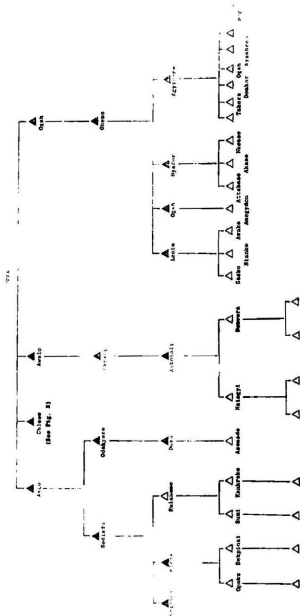


Fig. 6 : Descendants of Opea: original Kankamado subclan before fission.

used by Gblese in referring to Ando, he replied meda i.e. elder brother; the reciprocal term metede i.e. younger brother would have been used by Gblese had Ando been the younger.

Originally, and until fairly recently, there had been one subclan, descended from Opea. I shall refer to this original subclan as 'Kankamado'. It is probable that this is the name by which the original subclan was known, and that when the lineages split and began to establish themselves as new subclans, and the new names began to gain ground, the name 'Kankamado' gradually fell away. It is still remembered, and seems to mean the original descendants of Opea. Mbowura Ayor states firmly that his subclan is called 'Gblese', though some of the subclan members also call themselves 'Kankamado'.

Subclan fission will result eventually if the number of descendants increases with successive generations, although Kankamado is the only subclan in which it can be observed. Denteso, numerically the largest subclan, has not fissioned. There may have been factors at work in Kankamado which I was unable to discover. It may be connected with the fact of Bekulai's children being given the status and rights of agnates. Significant in this respect is the fact that Evename, descended from the slave Akui (Fig.5), is trying to establish Akui's descendants as a lineage, or subclan, independently of the parent subclan, Ogbanaso. He has given it the name 'Gelarado', but in this case lineage fission is in its very early stages, and has not received any general recognition in Shiare, and Evename himself was not helpful when I was questioning him about his genealogy.

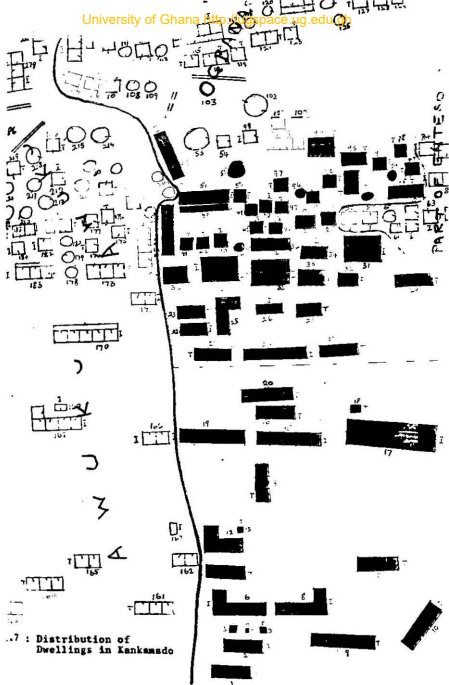
It should be noted that the three new descent groups which have now emerged from Kankamado are lineages according to the

terminology used in discussing the social organization of Shitire, as the ancestor from whom they are descended is known. The same is true of Kankamado, the original subclan, as descent can be traced from Opea. The name subclan has been used in referring to Kankamado to indicate a major descent group within the [redacted]. I have also referred to the three new descent groups as subclans, to indicate that they are different from the lineage which is the extended family group.

In one important respect, however, the three new subclans still act as one subclan, namely in the allocation of building land. One of the diagnostic features of a subclan, as has been shown, is its territorial unity, and the exclusive use of building land for its own members. Fig.7 shows the distribution of the dwellings of the three new subclans within the territory of the former Kankamado subclan.

The line marked by dwellings 21, 24 and 27 forms a boundary. Above it are the dwellings of the original Kankamado subclan. The Opea dwellings on the bottom left are those of the descendants of Awolo, while those on the top right are the dwellings of the descendants of Ando. The dwellings below the boundary were built within the last few years, and all three new subclans have built on this land. None of them has claimed, or managed to claim, exclusive right to this land. The spatial distribution of these dwellings is similar to that found in the other subclans; when building is no longer possible on the original subclan land, new dwellings are built on the land adjoining, which belongs to the subclan, and not to any lineage within it, and members of different lineages live side by side. Had the three new subclans formed from the original Kankamado been long established subclans,





..7 : Distribution of Dwellings in Kankwado

they would have established the right to exclusive use of land adjoining their subclan. The ground below the boundary marked by dwellings 21, 24 and 27 descends very steeply to the river, and required much work to level it and build. The land between dwellings 17 and 11, and between 14 and 8, is too steep and rough to be utilised for building. There is, however, some land still available for building, and may be the occasion of friction between the new subclans. As their subclan identity becomes more established they may try to establish exclusive rights over land which they regard as their own.

II. RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS IN SHIARE

The previous section examined groups based on the norms of descent. The present section will examine three religious groups, namely, the Brukung cult, the women's cult, and Christianity, to determine their place in and their influence on the social organization. Two important factors will be examined in connection with Christianity, namely, the school and education. The school and education are so closely connected with Christianity that they are virtually synonymous; however, Christianity, the school and education will be treated as three separate entities for the purpose of analysis, although, *vis à vis* the two cults, they merge into one.

Categories may be arranged according to different criteria, e.g. on the basis of sex, men as against women, or on the basis of age, adults as against children, or in terms of occupation, e.g. farmers as against artisans or traders. Such groups, however, are unhelpful as analytical tools, as they do not point immediately to any significant areas in Shiare social organization. The

three groups chosen are religious or cultic, and, as such, relate immediately to the Brukung cult, which is basic to the Shiare social system.

Each of these groups is exclusive, their boundaries being determined by the conditions imposed for membership. Initiation into the Brukung cult is allowed only to those Atwode born males who have never been to school, and who are not Christians. The prohibition would seem to apply primarily to those who have been to school; this would thus include Christians, as baptism is usually a condition for schooling. This point will be discussed later. The prohibition would also apply to Moslems, but as Islam is not a relevant factor in Shiare, it will not be considered. Thus, women, those of non-Atwode descent, Christians, and those who have been to school, are excluded from cult membership.

The women's cult excludes all males, and all females who are Christian or who have been to school; however, this last condition is not enforced as strictly as it is in the Brukung cult. The women's cult also accepts non-Atwode born women, provided they are not Christian, and have not been to school.

Christianity accepts both men and women (and children), but not those who are actual members of one of the cults; as the cult rituals and Christianity are incompatible, simultaneous cult membership and Christian adherence is impossible. Cult membership, however, is not a barrier to admittance to Christianity; conversion is possible, provided that cult membership and practice are renounced, and baptism accepted. The converse is not valid. Christianity or schooling are permanent barriers to cult membership.

The school in Shiare was built in the late 1940s. Since the

European colonization of Togo, the Gold Coast and neighbouring territories in the late 19th century, education was associated with the missionaries, who founded schools on a denominational basis. As the Volta Region was originally part of the German Colony of Togo, the denominations represented in the territory were Roman Catholic and the German Evangelical or Lutheran Churches, who established their missions in the more accessible parts of the country. What is now the hill country of the northern part of the Volta Region was remote, isolated and difficult of access, the very qualities which originally attracted the peoples who now live there, and was thus peripheral to the main missionary activities. A series of outstations, dependent upon a main central station, were established, and these were visited infrequently by the missionaries from the main station. Small Christian communities were established in these marginal areas, and were left in the care of a catechist, who had been trained in the rudiments of Christian doctrine, and whose duty it was to conduct services for the community, prepare neophytes for conversion, adults for marriage, etc; these would be performed by the missionary during his visits.

In the 1930s, the area around Shiare, that is, the lands of the Atwode, Adle and Ntrubu began to be visited by Catholic missionaries from Krachi, the main station, and the colonial administrative centre of the area. This led to the beginnings of a small Catholic community, though little is known of its early history. At this time schools had already been founded in the larger towns in the centre of the Volta Region, in Hohoe, Jasikan and Ho, as well as in Krachi. Anyone who wished to receive education had to attend one of the schools in this area; thus

Quartey, who is said to be the first Shiare man to receive education (see page 97), went to Jakikan for his education. In the late 1940s, when Nkwanta was beginning to emerge as an administrative centre, the need was felt for an elementary school and Nkwanta was considered to be the most appropriate place for the situation of the school. The Shiare elders intervened, and requested that the school be sited in Shiare. As no public money was forthcoming, the elders asked the Catholic Church to help. Father Anton Konings, then priest at the Krachi mission, later Bishop of Keta, and the last European Bishop in Ghana, discussed the matter with the elders. The Church would sponsor the school, and the people themselves would provide the labour and the materials. The school was built on a piece of level ground below Shiare, and was the first school built in the area. Some years later, when the question was again raised regarding the building of a middle school in Nkwanta, the Shiare people were the first to come forward with money and labour.

Thus, somewhat surprisingly, a great deal of the initiative for the building of schools was taken by the cult elders. Bishop Konings, who provided the details of the founding of the school in Shiare, told me that he dealt with the chief priest, and not with the chief, during the negotiations which preceded the founding of the school. The elders were sanctioning the introduction into their midst two factors which, by their natures, were hostile to the cult, namely Christianity and the school. The relationship of both these factors will be discussed below.

It is necessary to distinguish between 'schooling' and 'education', as the term 'school' has a wide application. I shall thus distinguish between those who are 'schooled', i.e.

he school, but abandoned their studies



at an early stage, and are thus basically illiterate, and the 'educated', i.e. those who have obtained an education up to at least Form IV, and can be considered literate. The significance of this distinction will become apparent.

1. The Brukung Cult

During the period of field work, there were 116 men initiated into the cult; cult members refer to themselves as okpere agyoro (literally, priests of the divinity, or of the shrine); non-cult members they refer to as Atembu (also the name by which the Atwode people refer to the Kotokoli people, who live in Togo).¹ This figure represents a high membership, due to the comparatively recent initiation in 1962; some of these initiated have since died, but the cult is represented in Shiare in considerable strength. This strength will decrease as the years pass, until a mere handful of cult members are left, when another initiation ceremony will be held.

The following tables show the distribution of cult and non-cult members, which is the major dichotomy among the males. For non-cult members 21 was taken as the boundary between a young man and an adult. During the last initiation, in 1962, children were also initiated; though they would have to wait until they were much older before being allowed to exercise the full functions of the cult. If the youngest initiates were 12 years old in 1962, then during the period of field work the youngest initiated would now be 27 years old, and no one under this age would be a cult member.

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Table 1

<u>ADULT MALE CULT MEMBERS</u>		<u>1</u>
Living in Shiare	106	91
Living outside Shiare	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>
Total	116	100
	—	—

Of the total of 116 members, 106, i.e. 91% actually reside in Shiare; of the remaining 10, i.e. 9%, two are in Togo receiving treatment for illness, and one is farming in Bonakye, a town in the Atwode Traditional Area, but largely inhabited by non-Atwode; little is known of this man, and he seems to have little or no connection with Shiare, and may be considered an emigrant, i.e., one who has left the community permanently. The remaining 7 cult members living outside Shiare are working in Pampawie, in the rich cocoa area of Buem, some 50 miles south of the Atwode Traditional Area, where a small colony of Atwode people has been living for some years. I was able to speak to only one of these men while he was on a visit to Shiare; he told me that he would be working in Pampawie for a period, then he would return to Shiare to live. The families of the others told me that eventually they too would return and live in Shiare. Thus these 7 men should be regarded as migrants, i.e. those who are temporarily living outside Shiare, but still retain rights of residence. The two who are receiving treatment in Togo will also return to Shiare when the treatment is completed. Thus, with the exception of the one man farming in Bonakye, every cult member is residing in Shiare, or

tends to return. This is a very high figure, but it may be accounted for, or explained, by several factors.

The first, and most important, is the cult of Brukung itself. Then, in conjunction with the cult, is the question of the farming economy of the Atwode. The priests worship daily at the shrine, and minister to the large number of pilgrims who come to Shiare to consult the shrine; the priests share in the money which is offered to the shrine for its services. But, except in the case of the chief priest, the clan head of the Cha clan and some very old cult members, the worship and service of the shrine is not a full time occupation. Thus cult membership can be combined with subsistence farming, almost inevitably so. There are few, if any, other possibilities which could be exploited by the priests in Shiare, and the lack of schooling as a condition of cult membership excludes them from a large number of areas of employment elsewhere in Ghana.

Illiteracy in itself is a constricting factor; the unschooled cannot exploit the areas of employment which demand literacy. Thus there is little alternative to farming and remaining in one's natal village or area. However, in Shiare, illiteracy is voluntary, and is chosen, not for its own sake, but as part of the religious worship of the community, which is best performed in Shiare; therefore residence in Shiare is the norm, and is combined with traditional subsistence farming. This, I believe, is the significance of the figures shown in Table 1.

We shall now see if the converse is true, i.e. whether literacy is related to residence. Table 2 gives the school experience and residence for adult male non-cult members.

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Table 2Adult Male Non-Cult Members

	<u>Residence</u>				No.	%
	In Shiare		Outside Shiare			
Attended School	26	37%	44	63%	70	100
Unschoolled	94	82%	20	18%	114	100

There are 184 men who have not been initiated into the cult, for one of several reasons. Seventy men were excluded on the grounds of schooling, three were not initiated because they were not Atwode, and one did not wish to join the cult. The remaining 110 unschooled non-cult members were either too young to be initiated, or were not initiated under the rule which forbids sons to be initiated at the same time as their fathers. These men are potential cult members, and will be eligible for initiation when the ceremony is next held. Their situation resembles that of the cult members, in that, being unschooled, they are constrained with regard to opportunities for employment; although not initiated, their future lies with the cult. One would therefore expect the greater majority to be living in Shiare. Table 2 shows that this in fact is the case, with 94 unschooled men, forming 82% of the total, living in Shiare. Table 2 also shows that 20 unschooled men, 18%, live outside Shiare. This is exactly double the proportion of cult members living outside Shiare, although the numbers are small. The higher figure may be accounted for by the age factor; the men in this group are younger than the cult members, and possibly less traditional in outlook. The new town of Nkwanta has provided opportunities which were denied the older occupation, and several young men,

including the unschooled, went to Shiare and learned the trade from men already established there. Others work in palm wine bars, or in some branch of trading. In the course of their employment, they acquire a smattering of English. The theoretical point arises whether this knowledge of English will be an impediment to initiation, i.e. whether they will be classified as literate, although it most unlikely that they will ever learn to read.

The residence pattern as found among cult members is thus reflected among the unschooled non-cult members (Table 3).

Table 3

Comparison of Residence of
Cult Members and Non-cult Members

	<u>Residence</u>				No.	%
	In Shiare		Outside Shiare			
Cult Members	106	91%	10	9%	116	100
Non-Cult Members	94	82%	20	18%	114	100

We shall now examine the effect schooling has on residence. Table 4 shows the residence pattern of men over 21 in relation to cult membership and schooling.

Table 4

Residence of Men over 21 in Relation to
Cult Membership and Schooling

	<u>Residence</u>				No.	%
	In Shiare		Outside Shiare			
<u>Unschool</u>						
Cult	106	91%	10	9%	116	100
Non-cult	94	82%	20	18%	114	100
<u>Attended School</u>						
Educated	12	21%	44	79%	56	100

Of the seventy men who have been to school, 26 (37%) reside in Shiare; this is a high figure, and would not seem to support the theory that schooling or education are related to residence. However, if the distinction between schooling and education is applied to this figure, of the 26 who have been to school, 12 are educated, i.e. have an education up to at least Form 4, and 14 are schooled, i.e. have been enrolled in the school, but acquired very little or no education, and who should thus be included with the illiterate. Table 4 then shows that only 12 (21%) of the educated men reside in Shiare, which is close to the 18% of the unschooled non-cult members who reside outside Shiare.

The schooled, i.e. those who left school at an early age, are an anomalous group. Like the unschooled non-cult members, they are excluded from the direct worship of the shrine, but, unlike this group, they can never become members of the cult. Their lack of education will prohibit their engaging in other

forms of employment outside Shiare which demand educational qualifications; unless they wish to farm in another part of the country, their lives will be spent in Shiare, devotees of the shrine, but excluded from membership.

The schooled consist of two subgroups, 1. those who have been baptized, and 2. those who have not. As the school is a Roman Catholic denominational school, children who are enrolled are baptized at some point in their schooling. This is often done very uncritically, with inadequate preparation. Some of these baptized children leave school at an early stage; because they have been baptized, and are therefore at least nominally Christians, they are excluded from the cult; due to their lack of education, they have little contact with the educated, and with the world of the educated. The other sub-group consists of those who have left the school before baptism, and are, therefore, not Christians. Superficially, there is little to distinguish them from the unschooled. The question arises, are they excluded from the cult? At this point the prohibition on membership of the cult is not entirely clear. When questioned, the elders say that literates are excluded from the cult, because it is feared that they will write down and thus betray the secrets of the cult. The prohibition is also applicable to Christians; this may be due to the religious nature of Christianity, or to the association of Christianity with learning, or to the fact that both literacy and Christianity are associated with Europeans, whose ways the Atwode have learned to distrust. However, literates are excluded from membership, as are Christians.

In Shiare, Christianity represents a spectrum; at one end

are those who are practising, at the other those who are so in name only, due to their being baptized at an early stage in their schooling. My enquiries did not reveal that anyone who is a Christian has been initiated. The case of the schooled non-Christians is, however, different. Their illiteracy would satisfy the condition, and they have not formally become Christians. There remains the fact of their having been to school, which, technically, is a barrier to admission to the cult. In their case, I think it highly probable that at least some of this group would be allowed initiation. However, I was unable to discover any actual instances of this; this could be due simply to telling me, during the census, that certain people had not, at any stage, attended school. This fiction would be difficult to detect, if indeed it were necessary to invent a fiction. The schooled non-Christians do not represent a threat to the cult.

Like the cult members and the unschooled non-cult members, the group of schooled but unbaptized lives mostly in Shiare; this fact, plus their illiteracy, suggests that the elders can control them, which would not be the case with the literates, who, by virtue of their education, have much greater social mobility.

As the school in Shiare is a Roman Catholic denominational school, with baptism as a condition of enrollment, a group of Christians emerged in Shiare, which will now be examined to determine the part it plays in the social organization of Shiare.

2. Christians

There are 157 Shiare born Christians, of whom 94 are adults and 63 are children. Table 5 shows the distribution of residence of the Christian adults.



Table 5

<u>Residence of Christian Adults</u>					
<u>Residence</u>					
	In Shiare	Outside Shiare	No.	%	
Males	24 (36%)	42 (64%)	66	100	
Females	16 (57%)	12 (43%)	<u>28</u>	100	
			94		
			—		

In the case of the males, the majority live outside Shiare, but the majority of the Christian women live in Shiare. However, if the distinction between schooled and educated is applied to the Christians living in Shiare, the following figures are obtained (Table 6).

Table 6

<u>Education of Christian Adults in Shiare</u>					
	Educated	Uneducated	No.	%	
Males	14 (58%)	10 (42%)	24	100	
Females	3 (19%)	13 (81%)	16	100	

Table 6 shows that of the 16 adult female Christians living in Shiare, only three are educated, in keeping with the pattern whereby the illiterate and schooled live in Shiare, and the educated outside Shiare. The males do not correspond to the pattern.

14 (58%) of the adult males living in Shiare are educated. The Shiarewura lives in Shiare ex officio, the catechist to instruct the Christians. The remainder chose to come and live in Shiare, and farm.

Very few children are attending school (Table 7).

Table 7

Shiare Christian Children at School

	<u>School</u>		<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
	<u>In Shiare</u>	<u>Outside Shiare</u>		
Male	24 (57%)	18 (43%)	42	100
Female	13 (62%)	8 (38%)	21	100
	37		63	
	—		—	

The 63 children at school form a very small proportion of the children in Shiare. There has never been a large number of children at school. Children form an important part of the family work group, and are required for the greater part of the year to work on the farm. Girls, as well as working on the farm, are also required to share in essential household duties, such as cleaning, cooking, carrying water and helping to look after their younger siblings. In the case of the males, non-enrollment at the school ensures that they are eligible for future cult membership. This is also true of the girls, as the women's cult demands illiteracy as a condition of membership, but this is less strictly enforced than in the male cult. In spite of the desire of the elders to have a school in Shiare, it has never been used to any great extent, and plays little part in the life of the town.

The 37 children at school in Shiare are receiving primary schooling only. Of the 26 children receiving education outside Shiare, 9 are receiving higher education at schools in other parts of the country. The remainder are attending one of the schools in Nkwanta, which, apart from the primary school, has a middle school and a continuation school. Some Shiare children, however, are attending the primary school in Nkwanta. Considerable dissatisfaction has been expressed by the Shiare people regarding the standard of education offered by the school in Shiare; this has always been a problem. The school buildings themselves are surprisingly good, and compare very favourably with the school buildings provided by the Government in Nkwanta and other places. The difficulty has always been with the staffing. Shiare is remote, 'bush', in the pejorative sense which the word has for sophisticated Ghanaians. It has few social amenities to offer, apart from the traditional features of Atwode culture. The journey from Nkwanta to Shiare has to be done on foot. It is thus very difficult to get teachers to live there. Many of those who did come were student teachers, whose main interest was in studying for further educational qualifications, and for whom teaching was of secondary interest. Such teachers rarely stayed for more than a year, and there was, therefore, little continuity as regards teaching.

During the first part of the period I was in the field, and for a few years previously, the teachers were Ewe. They could not be expected to understand Getwode, but they were unable to speak Twi, the lingua franca of the northern part of the Volta Region, and understood to some extent by the children. They taught, therefore, through the medium of English, to the pupils'

advantage, as English is hardly spoken in Shiare, unlike in the larger towns, including Nkwanta. There was a noticeable improvement, during the latter part of my field work, when the teachers were Twi speaking, and one of whom was an Atwode, but these teachers did not stay long enough to maintain the standard. What is surprising is the number of well educated Shiare people who did their primary schooling in Shiare, three of whom attended university and obtained degrees.

The main strength of Christianity, and of the educated, lies outside Shiare; the number of adults, residing in Shiare, 40, is small, but this in itself would not prevent it from maintaining corporate existence, or group identity. However, the group is further weakened by the high proportion of illiterates. While Christianity is not in theory a literate religion, in practice it is so, and anyone who lacks the ability to read is at a disadvantage. This in itself is not entirely an insurmountable obstacle, as the obvious substitute for literacy is oral instruction, but again, in this area Shiare Christians are very weak. One of the reasons for this is the lack of leadership. There is no mission station, with a resident priest, in Nkwanta, some 12 miles away. This priest is responsible for a large area, and Shiare, with its very small Christian population, does not rank very highly in the list of priorities; it is visited twice or three times a year, and this is not sufficient for the needs of the Christians. In such circumstances, the leadership of these small communities is vested in the person of the catechist, who is a key figure in most Christian denominations in Africa, and the viability of the remote Christian communities depends to a great extent upon his abilities. In Shiare, the catechist is

and enthusiastic, but limited in his knowledge of Christianity. It is extremely difficult to get people, especially illiterates, to attend instructions; thus the people receive little or no instruction. The youth of the catechist may well be at a disadvantage in a society where authority and respect are accorded in the elderly.

What Christianity is depends, of course, on how it is defined. On the functional level, it may be considered as a belief system, and, as such, a possible alternative to the Brukung cult. In Shiare, Christianity does not emerge as an alternative to the shrine, which argues to the strength of the cult. On a functional level, the weakness of Christianity is shown. If church attendance is taken as a criterion of corporateness, and this is a crucial criterion for Christianity, then Christianity is again shown to be weak. A survey of Christian adults attended the weekly service I held in Shiare during the period of my fieldwork; the children formed the greater part of the congregation. Most Christians consult the shrine; some do in terms of what may be called its social and cultural aspect, such as in the performance of the mpaba ritual, obligatory during adolescence, the Atwode equivalent of the puberty rite of passage (Chapter 6). Most Shiare people offer periodic sacrifices to their okala (soul), and again the shrine is consulted to determine the ancestor who is believed to have been reincarnated in a newly born child (Chapter 6). These rituals are part of the social and cultural heritage of Shiare, and Christians evidently do not find them irreconcilable with the profession of Christianity.

Many baptized Christians have abandoned Christianity. It is very difficult to determine what is meant by 'lapsed' in

religious contexts, what particular requirements or features are necessary before a person is deemed to have renounced a particular religious belief, or religious affiliation. The situation is clear when a person makes a formal statement of renunciation, or embraces another form of belief, which implies the rejection of his previous belief or affiliation. In Shiare, some Christians have abandoned Christianity by becoming devotees of the cult. They cannot, of course, because of their former allegiance to Christianity, become cult members, but their participation in the practices of the shrine, and the frequency of their practice of traditional beliefs, leads them to be classified as having abandoned Christianity. This is the case with four men living in Shiare.

Christianity either has no corporate existence in Shiare, or, if it has, then in a very weak form. It contributes little to the life of Shiare; group solidarity is weak. Christians do not recognise their separate identity by marrying Christians. When this does occur, it is usually not because of the Christian factor, which may well be incidental.

Christianity did not take root in Shiare for various reasons, the chief of which is, I believe, the overwhelming presence of the shrine, and its importance in the social organization. Christianity is not related to the needs of the people, the shrine being much better adapted for this. However, the concomitants of Christianity, namely the school and education, may be seen as having influenced events in Shiare. Both are relatively recent elements in the life of Shiare, and are still seen as alien to the cult, and hence to Shiare. The relationship of the school and education to the cult will be discussed later, in Chapter 8, when the question of the future of the cult and the question of

The Women's Cult

Women play no part in the government of Shiaré. Since the introduction of the chieftaincy, on the model of the Ashanti, the office of Queen Mother was introduced, but this office is purely nominal, the Queen Mother possessing none of the importance and the power associated with the office among the Akan peoples. Women are excluded from cult membership, but they play an indispensable role in the Yam Festival. Four elderly women, two from each clan, must be present to cook the ritual food for the Festival, and to purify the Brukung gegyakpa, the stool of Brukung, as no man is allowed to touch the stool. There is, however, a specifically women's cult, quite distinct and independent from that of the men, and it is this cult with which this section will be concerned.

The cult is based on python worship, as the god is believed to manifest himself in this form. It is called the Advolisa cult, but is known popularly as the Okuoku cult, from the words oku oku which form the greeting in the special language used by cult members.² The cult is not peculiar to Shiaré or to Atwode, but is widespread throughout the northern part of the Volta Region in Ghana and in the adjoining areas of Togo. It is found in every town, and is presided over by a woman head. The cult would seem to have no major shrine, or a place which could be regarded as its ritual centre. Some places have a relative importance in that they are centres of initiation, and most of these are in Togo.

The cult is strongly represented in Shiaré. The shrine is situated in a grove near the river; this is visited by the women

tain ritual occasions, usually in connection with initiations and ceremonies connected with them. Its importance is not comparable to that of the Brukung shrine; it is sacred to the deity but he is not believed to dwell in it. Although the cult is strongly represented in the northern part of the Volta Region, in the adjoining areas of Togo, the cult is of Yoruba origin. Atakpame, whose importance as a Yoruba religious centre, and as a centre of Brukung worship, has already been discussed (page 43), the westernmost point reached by the Yoruba in their migrations, became an important centre of the women's cult. It was probably the centre from which the cult spread into the Volta Region and the neighbouring parts of Togo. In the Volta Region it is found among the Ntrubu, Adele, Atwode, Nawuri, Nanumba and the Sissala of eastern Gonja, and in Togo among the Togo Adele, the Gbete, the Gbete and in the area around Atakpame (Map 5).

One of the most striking features of the cult is the special dialectic language used by the cult members. This language is called Aligyi, a Yoruba dialect, and is the language of the Ana people of Atakpame. The women acquire considerable fluency in the language, but, outside Atakpame, it is not understood by anyone outside the cult. The men know some words and phrases, but are unable to follow a sustained conversation. There are two group divisions within the cult, Alogu (known as the 'Reds') and Aligyi (known as the 'Blues'), both words being Yoruba. The Alogu (Reds) wear red beads, the Aligyi (Blues) wear blue, to indicate the division to which they belong. A woman chooses which group she will join; if the Aligyi (Blues), she will go to be initiated at Pagala or Dofuli, in Anyanga, in Togo, or Nyambong



Abrewonkor, in Atwode. The Alogu (Reds) are initiated in Ani, in Togo.

According to the cult women, the god chooses those whom he wishes to be cult members. This can be done in two ways. The god may possess the girl, who will then place herself under the tutelage of some of the elder women of the cult until the next initiation. Or, girls may offer themselves for initiation, and following the pre-initiation instructions, the god will indicate whether or not he wishes them to be initiated. There is no fixed time for the initiation, but of the three initiations held while I was in the field, two were held during the dry season, being completed before the onset of the rains. This coincides with the slack period of the agricultural cycle, when girls could be more readily spared from farm work. The candidates go off in groups, one of which consisted of 21 girls, to their respective centres of initiation. The period of training varies considerably, from two to six months, certainly long enough for the candidates to learn the cult language and customs. During this period the candidates live together, with other candidates from other areas, under the direction of a woman, the olami who will instruct them on matters relating to the cult.³

Young children are initiated, but, as in the case of the Brukung cult, they do not take part in cult rituals until they are older. Most women in Shiare are cult members. Unlike the Brukung cult, membership is not restricted to any specific ethnic group. Non-Shiare and non-Atwode born women share in the cult activities in Shiare, or in any other town where they may be. Like the Brukung cult, it demands illiteracy as a condition of

f membership, but this is not as strictly observed as in the rukung cult. Table 8 compares cult and non cult members among women over 21 living in Shiare who are actually married or have been married, with reference to their place of birth.

There are 249 women actually married, widowed or divorced, living in Shiare; of these 181 (73%) are cult members, and 68 (27%) non cult members.

After their initiation, the new members return to their own towns, where they are entrusted to the care of the elder women of the cult, who continue their instruction in the customs of the cult, and prepare them for two sets of ceremonies which must be performed by all new initiates.

The first of these ceremonies is related to the Yam Festival. The newly initiated do not share in this ceremony with the rest of the town, but have their own celebration a few days later. This celebration is preceded by a test or ordeal (ikyase getan) to determine whether the initiate may share in the Yam Festival. They gather in the oyido of the Cha clan (the larger of the two yido) and then lie face downward on the ground, with their hands clasped behind their backs, during which the older members of the cult sing softly (Plate 7). At a signal from the older women, they arise and form into two groups, (the Alogu and the Aligyi), one of which dances round the oyido in the form of a spiral, accompanied by drumming; the other group trots to the river in single file with their hands still clasped behind their backs, and at the river enter the shrine, where they are 'introduced' to the divinity. They then return to the oyido (Plate 8), where they dance in the spiral form, while the other group goes to the shrine by the river. When they return, they join in the dance with groups go to the river. When

Town of Birth

<u>Shiars</u>	<u>Town of Birth</u>			
	<u>Other</u>	<u>Akwode</u>	<u>Adele</u>	<u>Anyanga</u>
	<u>Towns</u>			
127	22	3	8	2
Actually Married				1
Divorced, or Widowed, living in Shiars				18
				19

Married Non-cult Members Over 21

53	6	1	2	1	1	6
Actually Married						
Divorced or Widowed, living in Shiars					4	4
					68	68
					249	249





Plate 7 : New members of the women's cult during ceremony prior to being introduced to their shrine.

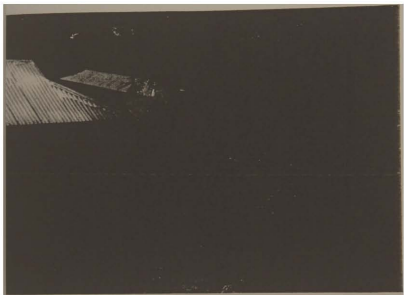


Plate 8 : New cult members returning from the shrine.

Finally return to the oyido, they line up on the edge of the , each one holding a chicken. One by one they approach an elderly cult woman who will preside at the next ceremony.

Each candidate offers her chicken to the woman who presides; she places the head of the chicken between her toes and decapitates and throws it to the ground. While the bird is writhing in death agony, the elder women point at it with their staffs, singing a deep song, and the drummer beats swift quick drum rolls. When the chicken dies on its back the candidate may proceed to the festival; if it dies on its breast, she may not, as she has been found wanting. This is a common method of divination practised in West Africa, and is used on other occasions in Shikre. If the chicken dies on its breast, the candidate is suspected of some lack of social manners. On this occasion, three women were thus suspected; they were taken aside, privately, by some of the elder women and questioned as to what they may have done wrong. The matter was soon rectified; two of the women confessed to having been ill of others, and caused ill-feeling. I did not discover what the third woman did.

The second ceremony associated with the Yam Festival is a form of dancing. There are various kinds of dancing performed in Shikre, some of which are reserved for specific occasions. Dance is always associated with the Yam Festival. On this occasion, the dance which forms part of the initiates' Yam Festival ceremony was combined with the general celebration of the ceremony. These dances are in the form of set pieces, which every candidate must perform. They have been instructed in this by the elder women, and have seen them often in past ceremonies. The candidates are paired, each pair beginning in front of the drummer, then moving rapidly

... then, to each of the four corners of the pyile,
... to the drummer (Plate 9). Their performance was watched
... by the older women, who frequently shouted instructions
... .

The initiates are later called to perform another kind of
... , which takes the form of a mime, which is a solo performance,
is enacted by every candidate. The dance consists of the
... of episodes from the lives of prominent people of Shiare.
... iderable preparation is required for this, and the dancers
very carefully coached by the older women. Those whose lives
so mimed are dead, and some have been dead for many years,
therefore unknown except by name to the performers. The people
the events enacted are well known to the older people, who
h very critically and express approval or disapproval. One
he people thus portrayed was Kwantine, chief priest during
German invasion of Shiare in 1884, and who was subsequently
ed; he has since become a kind of folk hero to the Atwode.
events so portrayed tend to become very formalised and stereo-
d and performers tend to rely heavily on the performance of
ious actors, and a very high standard of presentation is
nded. The person whose life is reenacted is usually of the
lan of the performer, who is thus learning something of the
of her ancestor, and the qualities admired in that ancestor;
iso presents some of the major events of Shiare history to
spectators. This device is obviously of great value to a
ety which lacks literacy and thus the means of recording its
ary. In conjunction with oral traditions, this is the only
the past can be preserved for future generations.

The second form of the dance is quite different from that





Plate 9 : Two girls beginning their dance.

described, lacking its didactic content, and closer to
ainment. Like the former variety, it is mimed, and demands
skill. It involves several performers, who enact a variety
of scenes, usually domestic, some of which clearly involve
conflict and tension, and in which men are often satirized. The
audience usually grasp very quickly who is being satirized, and
react to him. The man's reactions vary from sheepishness to
anger, which sometimes seems very genuine, but which, on the whole,
is staged. On some occasions the men entered the arena and
participated in the action, to the cheers of the crowd. They may
simply be joining in the entertainment, or they may be attempting
to justify themselves, but sometimes the treatment they receive
of the women is so merciless that they are glad to withdraw, to
the cheers and jeers of the onlookers.

There is considerable audience participation in these events;
performers are cheered and encouraged, and a particularly good
performance is rewarded by money being thrown into the dancing
area. Sometimes men are pushed into the action, but they are
kicked out again. Apart from the entertainment value offered,
an opportunity is afforded for a skilled performer to show her
dancing and histrionic skills, and the whole operation allows
her to make a kind of comment on, or protest against, the heavily
sexist bias of the society. The context is jocular, but the themes
being treated are serious. Many of the performances are set in
the context of the household, portraying scenes such as cleaning,
cooking, washing, fetching wood and water, stressing the
fundamental part which women play in the society. There is
possibly here a suggestion that without these services the whole
society would collapse, and this is indisputable. Several of the



... ..

women were concerned with elaborate dressing rituals, involving frequent changing of clothing, the application of cream, powder and pomades, and the use of mirrors, in which the women admired themselves. When I enquired as to the significance of these ceremonies, I was told that this was the wont of women, who liked doing these things. I was also told that it was a reminder that the women expected their husbands to provide them with clothes and creams, in order that the women should be presentable. The obligations and responsibilities of husbands to their wives is an area of potential, and actual, friction, and is one of the most frequent grounds of divorce. Certain prestations are prescribed during the marriage negotiations; these are obligatory, and include a set of household utensils, presented after the marriage has been formalised; until she receives them, a woman will continue to live at her father's house, though she will cook and bring water for her husband. Apart from these obligatory prestations, there are others which are voluntary, such as the cloth which the bridegroom may offer his wife towards the end of the marriage negotiations. As married life progresses, the husband is less likely to present cloths and other gifts to the wife, particularly if he is negotiating for another wife. But circumstances are changing, and new factors are operating in Shiare life. The founding of the new town of Nkwanta, with its market, and easier transport facilities to the other market towns of the area, due to the new road, have brought new ideas and fashions which have influenced Shiare women; hitherto the outside world has been on the periphery of their lives. This is noticable in several ways. Shiare women who have gone to live in Nkwanta and engaged in trading or other profitable employment, are better

than most of the women in Shiare, who lack the opportunities, hence the income, of their Nkwanta counterparts. Itinerant traders frequently come to Shiare with a wide selection of clothing. More affluent buy these for their wives and families, who immediately display them, which leads other women to attempt to acquire them, which brings pressure on the husbands. The older, traditionally minded women ignore this, or are unaffected by it, but many other women seek ways of making money to acquire goods which are becoming less and less regarded as luxuries. Opportunities for making money are few, apart from living in Nkwanta, where a woman can go to earn the necessary money, either by trading or by growing more produce from the farm. The actual number doing this in Shiare is small, but growing.

The differences between the Shiare women and outsiders was illustrated when a group of Adele people arrived in Shiare to attend as part of the funeral rites of a Shiare woman who had been married to an Adele man; the Adele, a neighbouring people, live in the lowlands, and almost all their settlements lie on the north-south and east-west roads; they are farmers and traders, growing yams and cassava locally, as well as for the markets in Kumasi. Their relative prosperity is reflected in their dress, which is superior to that of the Atwode. Their music and dancing are equally divided between the traditional and the modern 'highlife'. The visit was the subject of discussion for some time afterwards; the younger people asked to hear the tapes I had made of 'highlife', and showed less interest in the traditional drumming and drumming; the women were interested in the dresses worn by the Adele women. I was told that the women, especially

subject ones, wanted to imitate the clothing of the Adele men, and that they were trying to obtain money to buy similar clothes. The common complaint was that there was not enough money in Shiare, or opportunities to earn it. In fact, there is a considerable amount of money in Shiare, but it is in the hands of the cult members, especially the elders of the cult. Although the complaints of the women were in some ways slight, and general, they do indicate attitudes which are felt, and they may be indicative of change, or at least of discontent, and the dancing and miming which are associated with the initiations into the women's cults may well be a socially acceptable and recognised way for the women to express their discontent.

The women's cult plays an important part in the social organization of Shiare, though its influence is not comparable with that of the Brukung cult. The shrine at the riverside is not consulted in time of trouble, nor, so far as I was able to ascertain, is its advice sought on matters affecting the general welfare of the community; it is not regularly visited, nor are sacrifices made to the divinity worshipped by the cult. The head of the cult is a person of importance in her own right, her office being regarded as analogous to that of the opkeregboro ble, or chief priest of the Brukung cult. A few days after I arrived in Shiare, the cult head died. Her funeral rites were very elaborate, and her burial was that accorded to the most important people in the town, that is, the two clan heads. No other person is accorded this special type of burial, not even, so far as I was able to discover, the Shiarewura. There are three special features of this type of burial which distinguish it from ordinary burial. The first is that the corpse is buried, not laid, but in the ritual centre

the clan to which the deceased belonged; this ritual centre is the nucleus of the clan, the spot where the founding ancestor built his dwellings. Akungaba, the late cult head, as a member of the Cha clan, was buried in the ritual centre of that clan. Secondly, the grave is dug in a different manner from the graves of others. Instead of being dug in a rectangular shape, it was fashioned in the form of a large circle, and the corpse was placed in the grave in a crouched sitting position, rather than in the more usual horizontal position, but facing west, the usual direction for a woman. It is said that women are always buried facing to the east so that they know from the setting sun that it is time to prepare the fufu for the husband returning from the farm. Usually, the grave is not dug by the Shiare people, but by a group from the neighbouring Atwode town of Chilinga, with whom Shiare has reciprocal burial customs. This group prepares the graves for the clan heads and the head of the women's cult and a group from Shiare does likewise for the chief priest of the Gagon cult in Chilinga (Chapter 5), and for the head of the women's cult in Chilinga.

When I left the field, the women's cult did not have a new head. This seemed surprising. I was told, by some of the men, that she was the oldest woman in the cult, by analogy with the chief priest of the Brukung cult, who is always the oldest man in the cult; therefore it would seem that the next oldest woman could assume the office of cult head, but this was not the case. It became evident that there was some kind of tension, or difference of opinion within the cult, and it did not seem clear that the office was filled in terms of strict seniority. The actual matters which were in dispute I never discovered, but I was told that there was bad feeling between some of the women, the office, and that the women



themselves, the cult members, were divided on the issue, forming groups in support of different candidates. It is possible that the notion of seniority is confused because some cult members have gone into Shiare on marriage. Whatever may have been the reason, the cult was without a head for more than a year, but the cult activities seemed unaffected by this.

It is during the period of initiation, and during the funeral ceremonies for deceased cult members that one becomes very aware of the cult; otherwise it is not very much in evidence. Apart from the dances described above, connected with the initiations, the cult functions as a group in the burial ceremony and funeral rites of a member; the body is washed and dressed by the cult men, who lead the body to the grave with special cult songs, and sing dances during the period of mourning. The cult possesses its own funeral songs, its own dances and drums, though they themselves do not play the drums. They also possess some proper ritual objects, staffs, cloths and calabashes which are used during the funeral dances.

The women's cult differs from the men's in a number of ways. Whereas the Brukung cult initiates very infrequently, the women's cult may initiate twice or three times a year. Like the Brukung cult, only uneducated girls are considered for initiation, but in fact this rule would seem to be less strictly enforced among the women than among the men. During my stay in Shiare, a dispute arose between the Catholic mission in Nkwanta and the women's cult regarding some girls in the Atwode town of Nyambong. These girls were baptized Christians, and members of the church choir which should theoretically, have made them ineligible for membership of the cult. The girls were enticed away by some of the cult women to be trained. Some returned home, others remained

way and were subsequently initiated. The action of initiating Christian girls is contrary to the rules, but such variations in the rules are possible; consistency in a cult spread over such a large area would be difficult to maintain. The women's cult is relatively loosely structured, with no clearly defined centre, no clearly defined leadership and no focal point of authority.

This situation is sharply differentiated from that in the Brukung cult, which operates in a smaller area, is geared to different ends, and is much more tightly structured. Unlike the women's cult, the leadership of the Brukung cult has important consequences for the social and political organization of Shiare; hence, on the death of the chief priest, the office is immediately filled. Being geographically circumscribed, the Brukung cult is able to enforce its rules and control its members and their behaviour. Important as it is in its own terms, the women's cult plays no direct part in the political affairs of Shiare; it can exist side by side with the Brukung cult, in a symbiotic relationship, because it is not in any way in competition with the Brukung cult. They are not competing in any area of importance, in terms of personnel, or in the spheres of power or authority. Nor does the women's cult compete with the shrine. The ideologies of both cults are entirely compatible, and do not threaten each other.

Each cult has its own sphere of operations, and its own values and advantages. The divinity worshipped by the women does not have the standing or the prestige of the divinity Brukung, limited in that it has no political role, and serves different needs. The shrine, or shrines, associated with the women's cult, operate differently from the Brukung shrine; they do not offer the

the range of services, nor do they function as pilgrim centres. Since the women's shrine is of little economic importance, if at all. A shrine becomes a major economic asset if it can attract large numbers of pilgrims. The women's shrine in Shiare does not do this, and in any case it is not a major seat of the divinity. The women obviously hold their shrine in great respect, but do not regard it as a major source of help or advice in time of misfortune; these are provided by the Brukung shrine, through the mediation of the Brukung priests. The major cults of the northern part of the Volta Region and Togo, where the women's cult is strong, are male orientated and male controlled. Membership is either confined to males, as in the Brukung cult, or is presided over by a male priest, as in the cult of Dente in Krachi. Female priesthood is unknown in this area. Cults, including Brukung cults, presided over by female priests, are found in Yorubaland and Ithomey (page 40), but the female priesthood gives way to the male biased cults in Togo and the northern part of the Volta Region. It could thus be argued that the women's cult allows access to a world from which males are excluded and in which they have no power, a world which belongs to the women alone. It offers a form of ritual and worship in which they can participate directly, as compensation for the men's world from which they are excluded, and which, to some extent and in some ways they can manipulate for their own purposes, as shown by the dances and mimes described above.

The special cult language may be interpreted in this light; it would seem to have at least two functions. The first is that as lingua franca, it provides a means of communication between the many linguistic groups in the large area where the cult is found.

Without this, it would be difficult to maintain any degree of unity or cohesiveness. Its second function is to demarcate the area which is proper to the women. Both the men's cult and the women's cult have their mysterious, esoteric side; this is found in the Brukung cult in the prohibition on anyone other than cult members from entering the shrine itself; what takes place in the shrine is known only to the cult members, and this aura of mystery may enhance the standing and popularity of the cult, and contribute to its enduring reputation. Access to the women's shrine in Shiare is equally forbidden to non members of the cult, but the women's shrine seems to be less central in their cult than the Brukung shrine for the men. Thus the mystery aspect of the cult could be expressed in the language. As men play no part in the women's cult, they need not learn the language, and, so far as I am aware, none of the men in Shiare knows more than a few words or phrases of the language. Hence there is an area from which the men are excluded, whose activities are the sole concern of the women.

The Brukung cult and the women's cult differ in their relations with the world outside Shiare.

In some ways the women's cult operates in a wider world than that of the Brukung cult, whose members remain around the shrine, and pilgrims come from outside to consult the shrine. In the women's cult, the women go out to be initiated, and are brought into contact with peoples and customs different from their own. The unifying cohesive factor among these different peoples is the cult, and the cult language is the bridge.

The analysis offered earlier of the social components of Shiare, that is the groups based on descent, lineage, subclan and clan, and the religious associations, the Brukung cult, the

the cult and the Christians, showed that each of these was based according to certain principles, that each had its own regarding recruitment, and that each has a centre of authority, and limited though this may be. Within the descent groups, authority is limited, and commensurate with the size of the group; it is at its most limited in the elementary family, and at its strongest in the clan. The religious ^{groups} recruit their members from the generality of the population, and cut across the boundaries established by kinship and descent. Of the three groups examined, Brukung cult is the most important in relation to the government of Shiare and the area of political authority, and the Christians the least so, as its main strength is outside Shiare, and yet its ideology is still alien to the traditional Shiare view.

Due to the comparatively recent initiation in 1962, the Brukung cult is numerically strong. The relationship between the cult and the distribution of authority in Shiare becomes apparent. With the exception of the Shiarewura, every office in the area is occupied by a member of the cult. This is so because of the recent high membership. Inevitably this membership will decrease over the years, until the point is reached when not every office could be held by cult members, with the exception of the office of chief priest. Prior to the last initiation in 1962, offices were held by potential cult members, who were subsequently initiated. The presumption is that this pattern will be repeated.

It should be noted that, in principle, there is nothing to prevent a non-cult member who is ineligible for cult membership from occupying certain offices or positions, such as lineage head, or even subclan head, as the condition is that the holder of the

as the position of the oldest man. There are enough Christians and unschooled men in Shiare for it to happen that one of them may be oldest. This has in fact never happened, because of the ponderance of cult or potential cult members in Shiare. Therefore the proposition was never tested. The formulation of the rule condition in terms of seniority was sufficiently general to apply to the cult or potential cult members, as there was no other category of claimant. It cannot be stated with any certainty if lineages of lineage and subclan are confined to cult members. The informants with whom I discussed this question said that the oldest man of a lineage, subclan or clan, whether or not a cult member, will be head of that group. These informants, as it happened, were educated Christians, who may have been biased. When the clan leadership fell vacant, and the oldest man happened to be a non-cult member, presumably he would be overlooked, and the office would be assumed by the oldest cult member.

The main difficulty would arise in the ritual field. Subclans offer sacrifices to subclan ancestors, and only cult members do this. Thus a non-cult member would be unable to perform the duties associated with the office.

The problem is theoretical, possibly unimportant and even perhaps non-existent. It is posed simply because of the relationship between the cult and the authority structure of Shiare. The religion and related factors of Christianity and schooling are very recent intrusions in the traditional structure in Shiare, and their visible influence has yet to be tested and decided.

e of the okpere ayi, which is obtained from the clan head of the accused, places it against the wall of his house for a few days, then returns with it to his own clan. The okpere oyi (stick of the god) is one of the long thin sticks which are sometimes placed on the altar during sacrifices to receive some of the blood of the sacrificial animal, and is thus believed to contain some of the power and authority of the god. This ceremony is known as gesere (apology); although the charge may not as yet be substantiated, the accusation is sufficiently serious for the apology to be made immediately. When the man admits the charge, the messenger will again take the okpere oyi, inform the elders of the woman's subclan of the confession, and he will be told to bring the man to the hut of the chief priest together with the statutory fine of two large pots of palm wine and two fowls. A man guilty of adultery is prohibited from entering the territory of the woman's subclan. If he did so, he would be physically assaulted. He is also the bearer of a mystical danger, though this is implied rather than stated by the Atwode. The prohibition on entering the woman's subclan may also be extended to include the whole of the woman's clan.

At the appointed time, the man, accompanied by the gesereodibo and elders from his own clan and subclan, will come to the chief priest's ritual hut, where he will squat, clad only in a pair of shorts. He will be admonished by the elders of the woman's subclan, who will tell him that his behaviour is not that expected of a Shiareman, that to take another man's wife is wrong, causes trouble and spoils the town. The elders of his own clan will also censure him. When they have finished, the chief priest summons a small boy from the subclan of the woman, who squats

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side the man. The chief priest takes a calabash of water, raises it aloft, invokes Brukung, asking him to witness the ceremony and remove the trouble which has been brought on the man. He pours libation, praying to Brukung, then offers both the man and the young boy the calabash, from which they drink. He then pours water over their hands, takes their hands and joins them (Plate 12). This marks the end of the ceremony.

This case differs from the preceding in that the emphasis is on the judicial aspect than on the ritual. Adultery, though uncommon, is potentially very divisive, and cannot be condoned. In the case, people abandon their work, and the normal life of the town may be disrupted. Thus the intention of the process would seem to be to end the tension between the two parties and effect reconciliation, rather than to punish. The fine, while more nominal, is hardly punitive.

The role of the okpere oyi is very important, representing as he does the power and authority of the shrine; to flout it is to challenge the authority of the shrine. When first taken to the head of the woman's subclan, it is an apology (gesere) on the part of the man's subclan, and this must be accepted by the woman's subclan, who will also determine the time for the ceremony of reconciliation. It thus brings the parties together, and initiates the process of reconciliation. When taken the second time, it secures a safe conduct for the man.

The final ceremony is symbolic. The young boy, as well as representing the woman's group, may also be seen as a symbol of innocence, as his very youth will preclude his having committed a serious wrong. When the ceremony has been completed, the trouble is at an end, publicly, no matter what people may feel

ivately. It must never be the cause or occasion of tensions
quarrels between the subclans, or disrupt the life of the town.

The final ceremony is known as mmuso, whose basic meaning
a ceremony involving cleansing or purification, with the
mplication that mystical danger, or aspects of the mystical
rld, are involved. In the case of adultery, mmuso is the
remony by which harmony is restored to the community, and the
ngerous consequences of the act removed. The question of mmuso
this context, and the meanings of the term as used among the
nja and the Ashanti, is discussed more fully in Appendix 3, at
he conclusion of the full account of the adultery case

The okpere oyi is not used when the man and the woman belong
to the same subclan. If the case is confined to one clan only,
the mmuso ceremony is conducted by the clan head. When both clans
re involved, then the ceremony is performed by the chief priest.

Political and Ritual Relations Between Shiare and Other Atwode Towns

Today the other towns in Atwodeland manage their own affairs
to a great extent, and probably did so traditionally. The earliest
ravellers to the Atwode area commented briefly on the role of the
chief priest. David Asante, a Christian missionary of Ashanti
irth, referred to the chief priest as King of the country
(Christaller 1888:255). A little later, von Zech (1898:107), and
lose (1899:439) made the same observation. All three came from
societies with highly centralised political organization, and would
possibly have assumed that the most powerful person in the land
ould exercise a political role. It is significant that the
chief priest was the only person to whom this role could have
een attributed. The other Atwode towns are subject to Shiare

COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

So long as the traditional system of authority was allowed operate, there was no need to differentiate the offices of chief priest, (okperegyoro ble), with ritual authority, and the chief jiarewura, or osulewura, i.e. chief of the land), with political authority. Not only was it unnecessary, it was impossible. The advent of the Europeans introduced a new element into the traditional polity, which, self-sufficient though it was in its terms and within the limits in which it operated, was inadequate to meet the demands of the new structure and patterns of thought within which the Europeans worked. Hence a new office was created, involving a figure who, in the eyes of the Europeans, was a chief (ira), a person with whom they could negotiate in matters relating to politics and administration, but who, in terms of the traditional mode of religious and political structures, could be no more than a messenger or appointee of the chief priest, who alone is vested with ritual and political authority, as he is custodian of the shrine, and of the Brukung gegyakpa, the stool of Brukung, the most sacred object which the Atwode have, and which represents Brukung among them. This point will be discussed in Chapter 7 in the context of the yam festival, where it will be seen how the chief is excluded from the ceremonies connected with the stool, whereas the chief priest performs all the ceremonies related to the stool, demonstrating the source of his authority.

The process of European imposition on the Atwode traditional structure was gradual. Two periods may be readily distinguished, that of the German administration and that of the British, and they will be considered in that order.

power. In this kind of society, the sacred is one dimension of the political. Religion may be an instrument of power or coercion, and an assurance of legitimacy.

Section I will discuss political activity in Shiare itself, how social control is maintained, and the part played in this by the shrine and the chief priest, how Shiare relates to the rest of Atwode, and how, traditionally, Shiare may have been engaged politically with other states. Section II will examine the creation of the gradual development of the role of the Shiarewura, and the gradual involvement of Shiare and Atwode in wider political fields.

POLITICAL ROLE OF THE SHRINE AND THE CHIEF PRIEST

Structure of Political Organization in Shiare

The traditional pre-colonial political organization of Shiare is not known, but it is reasonable to presume that in its essentials it resembles that as found in Shiare today.

Within Shiare, the political organization is embedded in the village/subclan/clan structures, with the head of each group exercising at least embryonic political authority, as well as performing certain ritual functions. Breaches of custom, quarrels and disputes are discussed and settled at the level on which they occur. The lower the level, the fewer the people involved. The absence of absolute political authority, exercised by one individual, is unknown in Shiare; authority is seen as something inhering in the group, more specifically in the group elders, who will meet, deliberate and decide under the leadership of the head of the group. The head of the group will command respect, he will be looked to as the leader of the group, but he does not act alone, absolutely, in resolving quarrels and disputes, but in consultation

the other elders of his group. Sometimes elders from other groups will be called in to help in the deliberations. Thus a village head may invoke his subclan head and other elders from the clan, and a subclan head may ask the other subclan heads and elders to join in the discussions. The matter in question is regarded as being the affair of the group concerned, and will ultimately be resolved by the elders of that group, the outsiders playing a consultative role. When the matter is one which concerns the whole clan, then the clan head will deliberate and discuss with the subclan heads, and other elders from the clan. They rarely invite members of the other clan to their discussions.

At these levels, the cult and political leadership coincide, group heads are cult members. This, of course, will depend on the point in time from the last initiation. As this increases, and cult membership decreases, the group headships will be occupied by potential cult members. As group heads, they will be associated with the clan heads in political and judicial matters relating to Shiare. As non-cult members they are excluded from certain deliberations which are conducted by the senior cult members only. These matters are those relating to external political issues affecting Shiare. They are discussed by the senior elders, but the final judgement on them is given by the elder cult members, under the leadership of the chief priest, retire to the shrine to consult the god, and then they will give the decision on the matter. So far as can be ascertained, this small group has the final say in matters of this kind, their authority for doing so resting on the authority of the shrine, which is ultimately responsible for all matters relating to the well-being of Shiare. Non-cult members cannot



part of this group, and as the time nears for the next generation it will consist of only a few elders, one of whom will always be the chief priest, maintaining the essential link between god and the community. Until recently, this small group of elders could determine and control to some extent Shiare's relations with the outside world. Section II will examine how modern political structures in Ghana has affected this traditional role of the cult elders, and how they are more and more dependent on the person of the Shiarewura.

At the apex of the system of political leadership is the chief priest; when the matter in question is one which affects the whole town, the chief priest will be appealed to. The role and authority of the chief priest are primarily ritual, as his designation indicates okperegyoro ble, i.e. chief priest of the divinity, or shrine. The chief priest is the mediator between divinity and the people; it is he who presents to the divinity petitions of the people, and who conveys the decisions of the divinity to the people. The divinity is the mainstay of the existence of Shiare. It was he who brought the people to their present abode, and who gave the ancestors the rules or laws which he used to guide their lives. The Shiare people speak often of the customs of the ancestors, and reference is made during the important Yam Festival to these customs which were first given by the ancestors and continued until the present generation. The force of tradition is strong in Shiare thinking, and the kind of authority found in Shiare would be the traditional type in Weber's sociology (Weber 1947:341). The other types of authority posited by Weber, rational-legal and charismatic, are not applicable to the Shiare system. The incumbency of the office of chief priest

...to the individual qualities possessed by its incumbent, succeeds to the office by virtue of his seniority; personal lineage is not a relevant factor. The office, and its corresponding authority, are legitimised by the shrine.

Deviances or breaches of the rules or norms governing the society are breaches of the tradition which was first established by the divinity through the ancestors. Not only is the political and social order challenged or threatened, but the authority of the shrine itself. Punishment for transgressions are imputed to the shrine, and not, for example, to the ancestors, as is found in other societies. The Shiare people rarely fear the wrath of the ancestors, and rarely speak of them in such terms. The place occupied by the ancestors in ancestor-orientated societies is taken, in Shiare, by Brukung. Thus the chief priest, as custodian or spokesman of the shrine, has the authority, sanctioned by the shrine, to ensure that the ancient traditional customs are observed, and transgressions punished.

The chief priest has two important roles. His seniority in his clan makes him clan head, and as such he is responsible for dealing with matters within the clan, as well as performing ritual functions at clan level. His seniority within the cult makes him chief priest, and this office transcends purely clan considerations. As the person with the greatest authority in Shiare, he has the responsibility, with the clan elders, for dealing with matters affecting the whole town. His political authority derives from his ritual authority.

The chief priest, like the group heads, does not act alone in determining matters relating to the whole town, but with a group of elders. The composition of this group will vary,



late 10 : Nana Mbowura Ayor, mankradu and head of the
Gblese subclan.

depending on the nature and gravity of the matter under discussion, at its core consists of the two clan heads, the subclan heads, and some other elders whose opinion and counsel are respected. Other elders may take part in the discussions, but decisions are usually taken by the small group consisting of the clan heads, subclan heads, and a few other elders. One other official is always a member of this group, the mankradu (from the Akan, oman, 'state' and kradu, 'key'). The office of mankradu is a political one, and seems to have been introduced into Shiare when the office of Shiarewura was created, and is closely associated with the office of Shiarewura.¹ The relationship between the two offices will be discussed in the following section. The office is held by a senior elder; the present holder is Mbowura Ayor, head of the blessed subclan. The previous holder was Nana Kwao, who was chief priest before Nana Gesu, the present holder. Nana Kwao was mankradu before becoming chief priest, but continued to hold the office of mankradu as well as that of chief priest.

When disputes arise within the town, people may refer to the chief priest himself, or to the mankradu, or to one of the linguists. The mankradu will acquaint himself with the issues involved in the case, and inform the chief priest, who will appoint time for the elders to assemble and discuss the matter. If the chief priest is approached directly, he will inform the mankradu, who is always present at the meeting. The mankradu himself cannot call an assembly and preside himself, but there are cases which seem to concern the mankradu rather than the chief priest.

While I was in the field, a case was referred to Shiare from the town of Kromasi. Shiare, as the seat of Brukung, and of the Shiarewura, who is also paramount chief, is regarded as the court



Plate 11 : Nana Gesu, chief priest and head of the Awuku clan.

highest appeal. The case involved a man who challenged the pointment of linguists to the chief of Kromasi, and insulted a *mankradu*. The man was sent to Shiare, and the case was heard by the *mankradu*, with some of the senior elders. The role of the *mankradu* in this case was probably associated with his connection with the Shiarewura, who is responsible for political matters inside Shiare. As the case concerned a matter outside Shiare, the *mankradu* dealt with it. In this respect he was acting as a deputy of the Shiarewura.

The Atwode political organization does not correspond to either of the polarities proposed by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard in their seminal study of African political systems (1940). The Atwode do not have a centralised political system, and do not approximate to states such as the Zulu or the Banyoro. Nor do they approximate to the segmentary societies, typified by the Illensi and the Nuer, though their political organisation has more in common with the latter than with the centralised states. The chief priest's role is more clearly defined than the ritual figure of the leopard skin priest of the Nuer, although his primary role is ritual, and the Atwode possess at least the beginnings of government.

Nevertheless, it may be questioned in what sense the Atwode may be said to have a political organization. What is seen in Shiare would seem to be a highly developed cult and religious organization, which simultaneously serve the religious needs of the people and guarantees the continuance and stability of the social system. Events or actions which threaten the internal harmony of the society are met with by procedures which are built into the structure of the society, and administered by the elders





Plate 11a : Nana Kulashome, head of the Cha clan.

are themselves cult elders, and who have behind them the hierarchy of the shrine itself.

The political system is not separate from the religious, it depends upon it; the political function of the chief priest is a concomitant of his ritual office. When matters of a political nature arise, the chief priest becomes the focal point of authority, and, together with the elders, provides an authority structure which, within the traditional framework, was sufficient to meet the demands made upon it. The demands of modern politics, which came from without Shiare, demanded new responses, which will be discussed in Section II.

Two cases will be discussed to illustrate ways in which quarrels or disputes are settled in Shiare. The cases are dissimilar, involving quite different issues and quite different types of people, and involve different kinds of settlement procedures.

The first case concerned three elderly Shiare women who resided, in Shiare, by selling akpetishe, a locally produced spirit made by distilling palm wine. The spirit was distilled by some man, in the bush, and sold to the women who, in turn, sold it by retail to the townspeople for an agreed price of one cedi (£1.00) per pint, or 50 pesewas per half pint. Recently, the women had begun selling at a price above that agreed, at two cedis (£2.00) per pint. This caused some annoyance in the town; when it was brought to the notice of the distillers, they were angry, and demanded that the women be punished. The case was reported to the chief priest, who summoned the three women to appear in front of the court.

The chief priest, Nana Gesu, himself presided over the case, assisted by Nana Kulahome, head of the Cha clan, Mbowura Ayorinde, and several other heads. Several other elders

present, as were many onlookers. One of the elders told the chief priest the nature of the charge, stating that this behaviour was 'spoiling the town'. The old women, when questioned by Nana Ayor, admitted that they had charged more than the standard price, and that they wanted more profit. Several of the elders spoke during the hearing, disapproving of the women's attitude, claiming it was against the best interests of the town. One of the women, acting as spokeswoman for the three, admitted that they were aware that what they were doing was not sanctioned by general agreement, that they had not discussed the matter with the men who produced the spirit, but had acted entirely on their own initiative, and had ignored a decision arrived at during a previous meeting, when the prices were agreed upon.

The elders, i.e. the chief priest, Nana Kulahome (the head of the Cha clan), the mankradu and the subclan heads, retired to discuss the verdict. The women were found guilty of breaking an agreement, of 'spoiling the town', and of causing bad feeling. A fine was imposed, but they were warned that if this occurred again it would be treated as a serious matter, and that a fine would be imposed.

This case was a simple one. In one respect it affected the whole town, but did not challenge anything fundamental in the social structure. It does, however, indicate the form which the settlement of disputes takes in Shikole. Charges are brought, and the case is heard publicly. Each side is allowed to bring witnesses to support their version of the events; in the case just described, the defendants did not bring forward any witnesses. In other cases, they would do so. As it was a matter affecting the whole community, both clan heads were present, and also the small shrine. The shrine was not



licitly invoked, except at the beginning, when Prukung and
 of the more prominent ancestors were invoked during the
 liminary libation. But, by virtue of his office, the chief
 priest was regarded as having the authority to determine the case.
 The second case, ^{which concerned adultery} was more complex, involving as it did several
 clans, from both clans; it began as a localised affair between
 subclans, both in the Awuku clan, and rapidly expanded to
 olve the Cha clan, and thus became a matter for the intervention
 the chief priest. The course of the case brought out the
 mechanisms whereby the various groups involved were brought
 ether to discuss the matter and effect a reconciliation. It
 o demonstrated how the authority of the shrine is used in
 ious disputes. The case itself is given in full in Appendix 2.
 main features of the procedures used in adultery cases are
 cribed here.

If a man suspects his wife of having committed adultery, he
 will take her to his lineage or subclan head and she will be
 ed to name the man. If she denies the charge, the ceremony
ikyase getan (the slaughtering of a chicken) is performed, to
 termine whether she is telling the truth; if the chicken dies
 its breast she is guilty. When the charge has been proved,
 if the name of the man obtained, a messenger will be sent to
 form the lineage and the subclan heads of the accused of the
 arge. If the man is in Shiare he will be summoned before the
 ders of his subclan to answer the charge. If he is not
 mediately available, a messenger will be sent to the head of
 e woman's subclan with a provisional acknowledgement of the
 arge, and an apology. The messenger, gesereodibo ('bearer of
 e apology') carries to the hut of the head of the woman's subclan

chi, one Kwadyo, chief of Pawa, an Atwode town, was installed as his successor; he died shortly afterwards, and was succeeded by his son, Kwaku, and this, according to von Zech, was popular with the people (Von Zech 1898:110). Von Zech's account is not quite clear. Up to this point, political and ritual authority were combined in the office of chief priest. Either the Germans installed Kwaku as chief priest to succeed the deposed chief, Kwantine, or they imposed Kwaku as a chief, in the political sense. The latter is the more likely interpretation. If the Germans intended to destroy the shrine, they would hardly install another chief priest. As it so happened, they were evidently unaware of the principle which governed succession to the office, and Akane was urged as the new chief priest to succeed Kwantine. Von Zech uses the word 'König' (king), which would support the interpretation that it was the political office, and not the ritual one, which was in question. Under the rules governing the succession to the office of chief priest, it is clear that the chief priest is always chosen from Shiare, even though men from the other Atwode towns may also be initiated. Kwaku may well have been a cult member, but there would have been opposition to a chief priest being imposed in a way contrary to the long-established custom.

It was at this point in time that the Atwode were compelled to acknowledge German authority, and lost their independence. In March 1918, just prior to the assumption of the mandate at the end of the First World War, a British official submitted a report of his visit to chiefs in the former German colony. He describes his visit to Shiare as follows:-

'The Adjuti tribe live partly in the plains but the chief village, Shiare, is up in the hills north of Adele and is the seat of the fetish Buruku which formerly enjoyed considerable reputation, being consulted by the Ashantis and other surrounding tribes before going to war. The chiefs whom I met at Shiare were unanimous in their desire to remain under the English Government. For a long time after the first inland station had been established at Bismarckburg (sic) in Adele by Dr Wolf in 1888 the Adjutis maintained an attitude of passive resistance to the Germans, and it was not, according to von Zech's account, until 1896 that they were compelled to acknowledge German authority in consequence of the chief of Shiare practicing the Odum poison custom. The chief was taken prisoner and according to their own account he was executed at Krachi, after which the Divisions were placed under the authority of the head chief of Adele. Three years ago, at a meeting with the Adele and Adjuti chiefs at Bismarckburg the latter repeated their request to be allowed to return to their former position of independence, and as the Adele chiefs raised no objection and appeared to have little authority over them the request was granted' (Ghana National Archives (hereafter referred to as G.N.A.) Admin 11/1621, p.19).

The Adele had accepted the German flag some years earlier; they had little choice in this, as their country was the first land area to be brought under direct German control with the establishing of the station at Bismarckburg. The Adele were, and still are, the traditional friends of the Atwode, and it was only with great reluctance, and through fear of the Germans, that they accepted authority over the Atwode.

The above account does not throw any light on the question of the chief as opposed to the chief priest, but it seems that the Germans did demand someone whom they regarded as a chief, rather than the chief priest. Chiefs, as opposed to the chief priest, now begin to appear in the Atwode accounts of the period. A list of the chief priests and of the chiefs compiled for me at the present Shiarewura, the first chief given is Nana Awuku II.

Atwode tradition recognises that Kwaku of Pawa was installed chief of the Atwode, his name occurs in Atwode accounts of the events of this period, but he is evidently not regarded as a chief, because he was not from Shiare.⁴

In November 1918, shortly after the defeat of the Germans in 1918, a British Political Officer visited some of the chiefs in the Kete-Krachi district. He reports his findings in Shiare as follows:-

'At Schiari I found Akandi who stated that he was really the head chief of the Adjutis, but that the district had been compelled by the Government to recognise Adele as their paramount chief. He told me that about 10 years ago the Germans arrested the chief and informed him that he would no longer be recognised as head chief, and would be under Adele in future. On his refusal they executed him. The present chief was then taken to Kete and asked whether he agreed to be under Adele. In view of the fate of his predecessor, perforce he consented. The position appears to be that the Germans arbitrarily fixed the sphere of influence of a paramount chief without regard to difference of people or the old native divisions. The Adjutis and the Adele people are quite different and the former should have their own recognised Head Chief. As a matter of fact, I believe the Natives themselves kept much to their old divisions and the influence of the Adele Chief in Adjuti was more nominal than real' (G.N.A. Admin. 11/1/572, p.13).

This text is not entirely clear, but the general meaning seems to be that the Atwode were still nominally under the Adele, that Kwaku (appointed by the Germans to be chief) or his successor was the (political) chief, and that Akane was the chief priest. Now that the German threat had been removed, Akane may have been working for a return to the traditional system, whereby the ritual and political offices would be combined in the same person, i.e. the chief priest. The figure of 10 years given by Akane is wrong; it was in fact 18 years.

The British Administration

Between 1914, when Togo was captured, and 1918, when the territory was mandated, the British authorities sent officers to the chiefs to ascertain their views on their future. The Atwode were adamant that they did not wish to return to German rule. (G.N.A. Admin. 11/1621, p.19, quoted above). In March 1918, the British secretary for Native Affairs held a meeting at Shiare, which was attended by the chiefs of all the Atwode towns, among whom was Akvesi Djabone, Headchief of Shiare. It would seem that the British continued the policy of having a chief with whom they could negotiate. In 1925, the Gold Coast Chiefs' list contained a list of Atwode chiefs, with one Asasewura as Head Chief, with the title of Osurowura (Osulewura, chief of the land), with a note that he was enstooled in 1920. Thus the differentiation and separation of the offices of chief priest and chief was now formalized. The Atwode state was organized on the model of the Ashanti, with the various towns and their chiefs forming the divisions of the military order of the old Ashanti confederation.⁵ The chief had a stool father and a Queen Mother and linguists. But this was superficial. The Shiarewura did not have any power, nor was the Queen Mother the person of power and influence as in Ashanti and in the Ashanti political structure. The Shiarewura was a representative of the chief priest, and had a very weakly defined role. This was recognised by the British authorities:-

It seems there is a little friction between the chiefs of Kpandae and Siari over the hunting tribute of game shot in the area between the Oti and the mountains. But the people are in no way concerned. Tribute of this sort is not a native custom, but was established in 1920 in order to give some authority to the chiefs, who had lost what little they ever had under the German regime. It must be remembered too that the chief of Kpandae

is an alien a chief superimposed on the Nawuri; and the chief of Siari is in reality little other than the chief linguist, a political representative to the European of the chief priest of the God Bruku. Thus it is that in reality a quarrel between such chiefs is not to be taken as a sign of any real trouble brewing or even existing between the people. (G.N.A. Adm. 56/1/507. Annual Report of the Krachi District for the year ending 31st March 1927. Section II, Native Affairs, p.1).

The British had been as concerned as the Germans had been over the question of the power of the shrines, and the shrine priests. Speaking of the shrine of the divinity Dente at Krachi, a British official wrote:-

I am strongly inclined to believe that the Bosomfo was the real ruler of the country until the Germans killed three of them; however, I am not sure that it would be a wise policy to give a fetish priest so much authority again as he naturally gets his power from superstitious fear (G.N.A. Adm. 39/1/32. Notes on Krachi history, p.3.).

The British plan, which they worked on for some years, was to form a Native Authority, comprising the peoples of the northern Volta Region, based on Krachi and under the authority of the rachiwura. This involved investigation of the peoples who would form the Authority. These investigations showed how little understood these peoples had been, and how different their own indigenous traditions were. They also brought out the importance of shrines and shrine worship in this area.

The two most important shrines in the area were those of Dente at Krachi, and of Brukung at Shiare. The former was the one best known to the British Administration, as it was situated in Krachi itself, the seat of the local Administration. As the preparations for the formation of the Native Authority progressed the political importance of the shrines emerged, or at least the importance the shrines had in the past, and how political

...round the shrines. It became



ident that the communities around Krachi which traditionally
 j been subject to the Krachiwura, or more properly the chief
 test, were basically religious communities, settled there to
 rship the shrine. It became equally evident that Krachi and
 wode had a different tradition of shrine worship, that the
 wode did not look to Krachi for religious leadership, but
 rmed an independent ethnic group centred on the worship of their
 n shrine at Shiare, which also was the focal point of pilgrim-
 es for peoples well beyond the immediate area around Shiare.
 idently it took the British authorities a long time to recognise
 ic fact that Adele and Atwode were outside the sphere of
 ifluence of the Krachiwura or of the Dente shrine. Some reports
 iscussed the relationship between the Krachi shrine and the
 viare shrine, showing that, in the opinion of informants, the
 rukung shrine was considered to be superior to that of Dente,
 n that Dente was thought to be the son of Brukung.⁶ The
 ritish authorities, of course, realised that these accounts did
 ot necessarily constitute objective historical evidence, but that
 hey reflected the relative emphases which were placed on the
 hrines by those for whom they were important. Even as late as
 932, knowledge of the political and religious structures of the
 twode had not advanced very far. A report in that year states:-

Investigation has brought to light the fact that
 the .Adjati who live in the hills to the
 north of Adele talk a language very similar
 to the Guan speech of Krachi...Their ruler
 combines both the functions of priest and
 chief and his territory is the home of the
 fetish Brukung which is today very much more
 powerful than Dente, and is consulted by
 pilgrims from all over the Gold Coast and
 Togoland (G.N.A. Adm. 39/1/32).

By 1934, the question of the Native Authority for the Krachi gion was still not settled, but one point was becoming clearer. It had now been recognised that Adele and Atwode did not readily belong to the political area of Krachi, that they were too far removed geographically to belong to such a unit, and that they had for many years lived as independent entities (G.N.A. Adm. 11/1532, Annual Report - Togoland under British Mandate, 1934). Adele and Atwode were recognised as independent entities, but administered from Krachi.

During these years, and while these negotiations were taking place, little or nothing is known of the activities of the chief priest and of the Shiarewura. According to the Atwode accounts, the worship of the shrine had returned to normal, with chief priests succeeding to the office according to the traditional pattern. In the Gold Coast Lists published by the British Administration, the office of the Shiarewura is recorded, along with the chiefs of the other Atwode towns. But nothing is known of the functions of the Shiarewura during this period, and this is so, I believe, for several reasons. The chief's office was weakly defined, as power in Atwode was still in the hands of the chief priest. In spite of the differentiation of the offices, the traditional pattern of authority continued to function. Atwode was remote from Krachi, and even though negotiations were being conducted to determine the future of Atwode, these did not, at that period, affect the traditional pattern of life. As had been pointed out by a British official, the Shiarewura was merely a spokesman for the chief priest, and as such could have little power or authority in his own right, in spite of the trappings of chieftainship with which he had been invested by the British

authorities. When meetings were held by the British Administration in Krachi in connection with the proposed Native Authority, Shiarewura would travel there to represent the Atwode, but would merely report back to the chief priest and his elders, who would consider the matter. When the British authorities sent officials to the various chieftaincies of the area, the discussions would be between the officials and the Shiarewura, but this would be purely nominal, as the Shiarewura would be merely a spokesman of the chief priest. This arrangement would have been acceptable to the chief priest and the elders, as, by tradition, the chief priest did not travel from Shiare, as by virtue of his office his presence was required to lead the worship of the shrine, and to deal with the needs of the local community and the pilgrims who came to consult the shrine. Moreover, the chief priest was already elderly when he succeeded to the office, and could not undertake the long tiring journey to Krachi.

It may be reasonably assumed that the Shiarewura would be a member of the cult, as most men in Atwode were cult members. As such he would be illiterate, but, like most Atwode men, knew Twi, which was, and is, the lingua franca of that part of the Volta region. Discussions between the British and the various chiefs could be conducted through an interpreter. As yet, there was no need for the Shiarewura to know English.

Thus the impact of the British Administration was still relatively minimal. But important changes, significant for the future, were taking place. Atwode affairs were being determined in Krachi, a new system of government was evolving, new authority patterns were emerging, into which the Atwode would be drawn, and which would challenge the traditional authority structure. It



would seem that the traditional Atwode authority pattern would have to accommodate itself to these changes. The crucial figure in the transition from the traditional to the modern system of government was the Shiarewura.

Under the British system of Administration, the transition from autonomy to absorption in a wider, more centralised system of government was gradual. The Shiarewura became more and more associated with events which were taking place outside Atwode, but so long as these events did not radically affect Atwode, it was not necessary for the role of the Shiarewura to develop or expand.

Ghanaian Administration

However, with the coming of independence to the Gold Coast, and the emergence of the state of Ghana, a new set of factors had appeared, which affected the Atwode. There were four such factors: 1. the involvement of the Atwode in a wider political field, on three levels, local, provincial and national; 2. the fact that unlike their predecessors in the British Administration, the officials of the new state did not visit the areas under their jurisdiction, but expected chiefs to appear at the relevant administrative centre; 3. the use of English as the official language of government and administration; and 4. the two cases and one enquiry in which the Atwode were involved.

The first case was a land dispute between the Atwode and the Nanumba, who live in the area around Bimbilla in the Northern Region. Over a number of years, the uninhabited tracts of country in the west and north of Atwodeland had been colonised by groups from the north, mostly Konkomba and Nanumba, largely as a result of the building of the new Eastern Trunk Road (p.11 ff. & Map 4). The Konkomba observed the customs by sending gifts to the

Shiawura, thus recognising his overlordship, though in practice this was largely nominal. The Nanumba, themselves a centralised state, refused to do this, but claimed the land as their own. Legal discussions took place, eventually the matter was taken to the High Court in Accra, where the decision was given against the Atwode. However, the Atwode appealed, and while this was pending, the matter was transferred to the Commission for Lands and Boundaries.

The enquiry involving the Atwode arose from a Proclamation of the Government in 1972, to enquire into certain matters concerning the Volta Region. This was an issue which affected the whole of the Region. Committees were appointed to enquire into stools which, according to customary law, are the paramount stools in the Volta Region, and which of these paramount stools should be given representation in the Volta Region House of Chiefs. The issues involved in this enquiry are very important, as they relate to the whole question of the recognition of the Atwode as an independent people, with their own stool and traditional paramount chiefdom. The Atwode case was heard at Ho, the provincial capital, on the 4th of August 1975. The Atwode were represented by the present Shiawura, Nana Oberko Agyei II, and a panel of elders, who acted as advisors, some of whom were not elders in the accepted sense of the word, but were educated Shiawemen. The burden of the evidence submitted by the Shiawura was based on the oral traditions of the Atwode, and documentary evidence, drawn largely from the British Administration Archives, complete with maps, to show the continuity of Atwode independence, and the historical claims of the stool at Shiawura.⁷ The findings of the hearing have not as yet been published.

The second case in which the Atwode were involved arose in connection with the Committee of Enquiry, and was, and is still being fought between the Atwode and the Chella people (page 74, footnote 7). According to the Chella version of the affair, they are themselves the indigenous inhabitants of the area, and offered a home to the Atwode, when they were fleeing from the hanti, and over the course of time became submerged by the numerical superiority of the Atwode. They claim that they were recognised by the Germans, who gave to their paramount chief various insignia to show his position as a chief in his own right; they claim that they were also recognised by the British, who reduced their role from the status of a paramountcy to a divisional one. During the hearing before the Committee, they were unable to produce any documentary evidence to support these claims, and stated that owing to the illiteracy of the people and 'for other unknown reasons', the Chella area had always been considered part of the Atwode Traditional Area, but that in fact the Chella people did not recognise the present Shiarewura as their paramount chief.

There is in fact no documentary evidence to support this claim of the Chella people; they are not referred to in any German or British document. The British Commissions which toured the former German territories from 1914-18 visited every chiefdom, but there is no mention in the British records of the Chella as an independent area, with its own chief. The records do show that the chief of Odomi was present as the chief of a town in the Atwode Traditional Area, and he appears as such in the Gold Coast List of Chiefs for the British Mandated Territories. The Chella claims were first made in 1972, when the Commission of Enquiry into the Stools of the Volta Region was instituted.

This quarrel was, and is, a very bitter one, and has led to a deep division in the eastern part of Atwodeland, where the majority of the Atwode people live. The conflict is both institutional, i.e. political, and personal. The Chella claimed Nkwanta is in their area, and nominated a candidate for the chieftaincy; the Atwode did likewise, and the government upheld the enthronement of the Chella candidate. This was attacked by the Atwode, who made representations to the government, who ordered an enquiry into the matter, and accepted the evidence that the enthronement of the Chella candidate was irregular, and that enquiries should be conducted to determine the validity of the Chella claim, and the matter is now linked with the question of the investigations being conducted by the Commission of Enquiry into the traditional stools of the Volta Region.

On a personal level, the quarrel has led to the termination of marriages between Atwode and Chella; fights have broken out frequently between members of the two groups, and the Shiarewura chief is being sued by the chief of the Chella for defamation, the lineage of Nana Mbowura Ayor, of the Cha clan, is bringing an action against the chief of the Chella on a charge of defamation, a child being fostered by Mbowura Ayor died of a fever. The Chella claimed that the child had been shot in mysterious circumstances, reported this to the police, who obtained a court order to have the body exhumed. This was a very serious matter, and was resisted by the family of the Mbowura Ayor, and the people of Shiare. Sacrifices were made to Brukung, attempts were made to challenge the court order, but the exhumation was carried out, a post mortem was conducted, which showed that the child had not been shot, but had died of fever. The event is spoken of with horror in Shiare, and

suit for defamation was filed.

Within a few years, the Atwode, and particularly the Shiarewura, found themselves drawn into the political and legal machinery of a modern state, the workings of which were quite alien to them. The chief priest, and the whole traditional Atwode system, were inadequate to meet the demands of this new system; the isolation of Shiare, the illiteracy of the cult members, and the narrow limits of the Shiare world, could not meet the new world of modern politics and bureaucracy, and understand and cope with it. The office of Shiarewura had been created and introduced into the traditional system; the early Shiarewura had few cult members, rooted in the traditional life of Shiare, subject to the chief priest. Their political functions were minimal, acting as they did as messengers of the chief priest, with no clearly defined authority, and no clearly defined area in which a political role could be exercised. So long as an external system of government could be kept at a distance, and the traditional political structure allowed to function in Shiare, there was no need for the Atwode to meet the demands of this new system; nor was there any need to allow the role of the Shiarewura to develop.

However, by the early 1960s, it was clear that the Atwode had to meet the new political system. This was done, and the office of the Shiarewura became the link which connected the traditional with the modern.

To become Shiarewura, a candidate has to be free from physical and moral flaws, conditions which are usually associated with the office of chief in Ashanti. The Atwode demand that the

1. Does not suffer from leprosy.
2. Does not have any physical deformity.
3. Is not a thief.
4. Is not an adulterer.
5. Is uncircumcised.

Like the office of chief priest, the office of Shiarewura is hereditary, but is open to a candidate who fulfils the conditions. But unlike the office of chief priest, it does not demand that the candidate be unschooled, or that he must be a cult member. If these were conditions in the past, as they may well have been, given the central place of the cult in Shiare, and the close association of the Shiarewura and the chief priest, whose delegate the Shiarewura was, they have now been forgotten. Seniority is a factor in the selection of a candidate. How the chief was chosen in the earlier period is not known, but it is possible that it was done as it is today. The chief is now chosen by the mankradu, whose office was introduced into Shiare when the offices of chief priest and Shiarewura were differentiated. The mankradu, is a supporter, and watchdog, of the stool.

There are several meanings of the word 'stool'. Among the Ashanti, the stool is the symbol of political office. Thus a chief will refer to his stool, meaning his office, and he is said to be instooled when he assumes the office, and to be destooled if he is removed from the office. When a chief dies, his stool is placed in the stool house, along with the stools of previous chiefs, and becomes an ancestor shrine, an object of worship, to which sacrifices are offered, and which is purified at certain times. There is also the Golden Stool, which belongs to the whole nation, and is said to contain the soul of the Ashanti people, and is the



bol of the unity of the Ashanti confederation.

The Atwode have only one stool, the Brukung gegyakpa, which resembles the Golden Stool of the Ashanti in that it belongs to the whole people, and is a symbol of their unity, and represents the power and authority of the shrine. It is in the custody of the chief priest, and is the source of his power and authority. When the ritual and political offices began to be differentiated, and the Ashanti model of political organisation introduced into the Atwode, the Shiarewura referred to the Brukung gegyakpa as the symbol of his authority (there was no other) and would refer to his stool, meaning his office. He does not have a personal stool the way Ashanti chiefs do, nor does he have access to the Brukung gegyakpa, which is controlled by the chief priest. The Shiarewura will refer to his assumption of office as chief as being 'enstooled' though he is not literally enstooled, in the Ashanti fashion. As authority in Shiare is derived from and legitimised by the divinity Brukung, and the stool is the visible symbol of this power, the chief will appeal to the stool of Brukung as the source of his authority and legitimisation of his office.

The stool becomes ritualised among the Akan peoples, i.e. the political has a ritual content. In Shiare, the stool becomes a symbol of political authority, i.e. the ritual has a political content.

The office of mankradu complements that of the chief, and, theoretically, acts as a curb on the power of the chief. In general, he ensures that the chief's actions and behaviour are consonant with the dignity of the office. Theoretically, he is a person of importance, but given the embryonic nature of the mankradu since its introduction into Shiare, this office, like

at of the stool father and the Queen mother, may have been regely nominal. Little is known of the earlier mankradus. However, like the office of the Shiarewura itself, the office of the mankradu has a political significance, and becomes important commensurately with the importance of the office of Shiarewura. When the chief is absent, he acts as the chief's deputy in Shiare; as was noted above how he presided at the case of the man from Komasi who had been sent to Shiare; as this was a matter outside Shiare, and the chief was away, the Mankradu acted as his deputy.

The chief is chosen alternately from the two clans, by the mankradu, who presents his choice to the elders, who meet under the presidency of the chief priest and the head of the Cha clan. They discuss the candidate, and give their approval, or disapproval. When a candidate is chosen, he is 'enstooled' according to the customs prevailing among the Akan. Only the Shiare elders take part in the discussions which lead to the appointment of the Shiarewura, but he will be not only the Shiarewura, but also the paramount chief of Atwode, Osulewura (literally, chief of the state, or land). sule basically means 'town', but its meaning has been expanded to mean the whole area or state of the Atwode). All the chiefs of Atwodeland are invited to attend the enstooling. The chief-elect will spend a period of seclusion in his house, during which he will abstain from sexual intercourse. Significant is the fact that there is no prescription regarding the use of calabashes for the eating of food, as there is during the initiation of members into the Brukung cult. The office of chief is new to the Atwode, and evidently is not governed by the ancient rules and traditions which govern the older traditions and customs.

The Atwode say that the chief 'sits on the thigh' of the

mankradu; the relationship between the chief and the mankradu expressed, aptly, in the idiom of kinship, and in the father/son relationship, as the chief depends, to some extent, on the mankradu. The Atwode say that as a child sits on the knee or in the lap of its father, and receives instruction, and if necessary, correction, so does the chief stand in relation to the mankradu, who will support the chief, but correct him if he deviates from the norms governing behaviour expected from a chief. The chief is thus constrained, in two ways, firstly by the fact that his powers and role are weak, in view of the traditional bias of the Atwode authority patterns, and secondly by the mankradu, who, in the name of the people, in effect of the cult elders, can control the chief.

In 1962, the year in which the last initiation into the cult was held, Stephen Kwaku, of the subclan Gekado, of the Awuku clan, was appointed Shiarewura and Osulewura, a significant event, as he was educated. His education was moderate, but as a Christian and a literate he was excluded from the cult. Significantly, the office holder was now separated from the cult; it may be reasonably assumed that a literate Christian was chosen to meet the new demands which were being imposed on the Atwode. Nana Stephen died after only 8 months in office. According to the rule under which the chieftaincy should alternate between the two clans, the new chief should have been chosen from the Cha clan. However, it was agreed that 8 months was too short a period to be considered as a reign, so the new chief, Nana Oberko A. [redacted] II was also chosen from the Gekado clan.

Nana Oberko was enstooled in July 1963. He is well educated, and prior to his appointment as chief, worked for some years in





Plate 13 : Nana Oberko Agyei II, Shiarewura and Osulewura.

1 government in Krachi, which gave him experience of the
ings of bureaucracy and government, if only on a limited
-1. Again, it may be assumed that the Atwode now realised that
-racy was an essential qualification for the chief; they were
, admitting, if only by implication, that the office of
iawura had changed, that a new pattern of authority and power
emerged. The appointment of a Christian literate would seem,
first sight, to have weakened an already weakly defined role,
further removing the office from the centre of authority, namely
divinity and his stool. I believe, however, that the contrary
the case. The Shiawura now operates in a political field which
ld be called his own, and one far removed from the more localised
cerns of Shiare, particularly the religious and ritual ones,
ch properly belong to the chief priest and the cult elders.
is possible to see here a dichotomy; on the one hand there is
: traditional order, associated with the shrine worship and
literacy, represented by the chief priest, and on the other the
r order, associated with modern political practice and bureaucracy,
sed on literacy and the written word, represented by the
iawura. Each has its own proper sphere of activity, and
ch is opposed to the other, in some respects hostile to each
her. The cult distrusts literacy, which is seen as a threat
the cult, in that the cult traditions may be written down and
trayed. Illiteracy is the enemy of modern bureaucracy, which
pends for much of its functioning on its officials having access
the recorded written word. Two fundamentally different theories
knowledge are being invoked here. The cult has no use for
literacy, but fears it. Literacy and Christianity are the result
f European intervention, but, more importantly, I believe,

eracy is rejected because it contradicts a fundamental assumption which is made regarding the shrine, namely, that the shrine is the repository of all knowledge, that Brukung is all knowing, that no event is outside his control. Modern politics makes different assumptions, and operates on a different level of thought. The connection, or the mediator, between these two different thought systems is the Shiarewura. The role of Shiarewura is always potentially significant, and capable of development. A necessary catalyst was provided by the novel factors in which the Atwode found themselves involved, and which provided a framework in which the role of the Shiarewura could be sharply defined.

When I entered the field in June 1975, the Shiarewura, Nana Nerko Agyei II, was actively engaged in the political and legal matters affecting the Atwode. This inevitably required his presence in Ho and Accra, the regional and national capitals. Earlier the centre of gravity had shifted from Shiare to the centres of government. These political and legal matters also demanded that the Shiarewura spend large periods of time away from Shiare. In each of the matters with which he was dealing, he was able to intervene directly, on the various levels required. He dealt personally with the legal documents and the concomitant correspondence resulting from the cases.

In the matter of the presentation of the Atwode evidence for their claim to be recognised as an historical, independent paramount chieftaincy, the Shiarewura himself researched the relevant material in the National Archives. In this, of course, he and the cult elders could not and did not play any part. The Shiarewura relied heavily on a group of helpers and advisors, all of whom were educated Shiaremen, and as such excluded from cult

ship, but involved in and committed to the interests of the people. This latter point is important in its own right, will be discussed in the final chapter, in the context of political and social change.

This ability to participate directly in, and to some extent control and direct the factors affecting Shiaré and Atwode brings strength and meaning to the role of the Shiarewura. Like predecessors, he reports back to the chief priest and the elders, who discuss the issues involved, but the Shiarewura is not simply an emissary of the chief priest and of the elders. In the past the issues being negotiated between Krachi and Shiaré have been comprehensible to the Shiaré elders, as they were still, to a great extent, within the traditional framework of authority and jurisdiction which were familiar to the elders. This is no longer the case. The issues under discussion in Ho and Accra are beyond the competence of the elders, as are the principles which underlie them. The Shiarewura and his advisors make decisions by themselves, often in Ho or Accra. Thus, on occasions, what is presented to the elders are not matters which they can discuss and assess, and thus approve or disapprove, but matters which have already been decided and agreed upon by the Shiarewura and his advisors. On other occasions, the Shiarewura may present matters which are as yet not decided, and which may thus be discussed; but they are of such a nature that the elders will be guided by the Shiarewura as to their meaning, and whether they should be accepted or rejected. Often, these matters, particularly those which require a specialist knowledge of the law, will be beyond the competence of the Shiarewura, who will thus depend on the advice of lawyers, but it is reasonable to assume

the Shiarewura would grasp the point at issue.

The power to make decisions still resides in the council of elders, who must give formal approval, and who will place the tablet before the shrine, to seek advice and guidance, thereby obtaining approval from the source from which all legitimate authority in Shiare derives.

Shiare people say that the chief is responsible for matters which belong to the government, that the chief priest is responsible for matters pertaining to the shrine, and for matters which relate to the Shiare. They say that the chief priest is the most important person in Shiare, and indeed it is to the chief priest that they look for turn for guidance and decisions in matters which are of local concern, as seen in the two cases brought before the chief priest (pages 155-160). The fundamental ambiguities and contradictions of the role of the Shiarewura still remain, and are obvious in terms of the patterns of government and the day to day life of the town, which still reflect the traditional patterns. The Shiarewura is an ambiguous figure when he is resident in Shiare. Although treated with respect, he is clearly subordinate to the chief priest, and is not prominent in the important events of the life of the town, the rituals, which are a prominent feature of daily life, especially the daily sacrifices, and the consultations which take place at the shrine. This, of course, is inevitable, and does not constitute an accurate or true criterion to assess the role of the Shiarewura within the totality of Shiare and Atwode affairs.

The most interesting and significant difference between the Shiarewura and the cult is the relationship of the Shiarewura to the shrine. The chief priest owes his



tion of eminence, and his authority and jurisdiction, to his
as custodian of the stool, and to his role as intermediary
een the shrine and the people. The Shiarewura claims, rightly,
his office is derived from the stool, even though he is
ed access to the shrine, and plays no part in the various
als associated with the shrine, and with the stool. However,
se two claims are not contradictory, but complementary. The
cess of the differentiation of one single office into its
ponent parts has reached a point in its development when it is
possible to discern each office as an independent, clearly
ntifiable entity, with its own proper function and its own
per sphere of activity, with ritual authority residing in the
of priest and political authority in the Shiarewura. However,
s should not be regarded as an absolute dichotomy. There is
area of overlap, in favour of the chief priest, who is still
arded as the incumbent of an office which is responsible for
l the affairs of Shiare and Atwode; part of the functions of
is office have been delegated to the Shiarewura to meet new
ands and situations which cannot easily be accommodated within
e traditional structures, and which are beyond the competence of
e chief priest. Both are ministers or servants of the shrine,
d each in his own way responsible to the shrine for the well
ing of those who are under the jurisdiction of the shrine; broadly
eaking, the area of responsibility of the chief priest lies
thin Shiare and Atwode, that of the Shiarewura outside. Thus
e Shiarewura's political role in Shiare is less important and
ss marked than his role outside it; matters which can be handled
ad resolved within the traditional structures are still so handled,
t the level on which they occur. Within Atwode there is one area

ere the chief, rather than the chief priest will adjudicate, d that is in the question of disputes concerning land boundaries tween Atwode towns, but this concerns matters outside Shiare. e Shiare people say that in the past this would have been ard and decided by the chief priest and the elders. No such se arose during my period of field work, but I was told that would be heard before the Shiarewura, and the mankradu. This uld seem to be related to the function of the Shiarewura as diating between the Atwode and the Government, as unresolved sputes would then be referred to the Lands and Boundaries mmission, which would bring the Shiarewura into direct contact th Government Administration.

The chief priest and the Shiarewura, then, are not competing; ey complement each other. The Atwode made the transition from e traditional pattern of government to involvement in a modern ate with comparative ease, due to the existence of an office ich was originally imposed, and remained during the colonial riod largely nominal because outside events and forces did not pinge with any great degree of immediacy or cogency upon the twode. When they did, the potential within the office was tualised. The chief priest does not seem to have suffered any iminution in his powers or exercise of his powers, which, raditionally, were not concerned with events outside Atwode, cept in his dealings with those who came from outside to nsult the shrine, on matters pertaining to the affairs of a arge state, as in the case of the Ashanti, or on matters of ocal or personal concern. This is still the function of the hief priest, and the cult members, in which the Shiarewura plays e part. These new external political factors could be dealt with

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the Shiarewura, who is still seen, I believe, as the representative of the chief priest and the elders. The present situation, is one which works to the advantage of Atwode, and which can be controlled and exploited by the elders. They, I believe, control the Shiarewura, through their control of shrine, and through their denying the Shiarewura access to shrine. The necessity, and I think it was a necessity, of giving a literate Shiarewura, again worked to their advantage. The condition of literacy which qualifies a candidate for the office of Shiarewura automatically disqualifies him from cult membership; so long as the Shiarewura is a literate, and there is every likelihood that this will continue to be so, then the Shiarewura cannot succeed to the office of chief priest. Therefore, the Shiarewura's role is confined to the area discussed above, and is not as important as the chief priest's much as it has always been.

There are, however, certain assumptions underlying the assertions just made. The continued importance and significance of the role now played by the Shiarewura in contemporary Atwode depends on the continued existence of the conditions which brought his role into prominence. Again, there is every likelihood that this will be the case. The Committee of Enquiry into the Volta Region is trying to determine which stools in the Region have claims to being paramountcies. If the Shiare stool is judged to be so, then it will be drawn closer into the political affairs of the region. The Committee thinks that there are too many possible stools in the region for all of them to obtain representation in the Region House of Chiefs, which would become unwieldy. Grouping is thus necessary. At the hearing, the Shiarewura agreed that if his stool is recognised as a paramount

ol, Atwode would combine with its neighbours and traditional ends the Adele and the Ntrobu, whose chiefs would sit in ation in the House of Chiefs in Ho. This would enhance his hority, more clearly define his role, and allow him to play a t in the affairs of the province, and allow him to represent ode interests in the regional capital.

Another assumption is that the Brukung cult will remain a sed system, with its insistence on the condition of illiteracy. : evidence of the past and the present would seem to suggest that is, too, will be the case, but this point will be resumed in the ial chapter, which will examine some significant factors which : working in contemporary Atwode society, and which may have a ssible bearing on the future orientation of the cult.

The role of the Shiarewura depends for its legitimacy on e shrine, which is controlled by the chief priest, and the ssibility of conflict seems unlikely. The Shiarewura, if deemed ^{acted} have/in a manner unbecoming to his office, may be destooled; e elders have the right to appoint a new Shiarewura, suggested the mankradu. So far as I am aware, a destooled Shiarewura, d there is no record of any such, has no right of appeal, nor es there seem to be any mechanism for forming a faction to pport the Shiarewura. Ultimately, the Shiarewura is under the ntrol of the cult elders, and this would seem to be the most ffective curb on the power of the Shiarewura.

Footnotes to Chapter 4

1. The mankradu is appointed by the clan heads and the elders. The present Shiarewura told me that he thought the office came in with the Europeans; otherwise nothing is known of the origins of the office. However, it may be suggested, tentatively, that it may have had its origins in the person of the priest of an earth cult which may have flourished in the Shiare area before the coming of the Atwode. When the Brukung cult took root it displaced the earth cult, but indigenous earth cults are important, and cannot be ignored, so the office of earth priest would survive in some form, to emerge eventually as that of the mankradu. Earth cults in northern Ghana survived after the Moslem conquests, with their shrines remaining in the hands of the autochthonous earth priests, with the newcomers exercising political authority. This point is discussed briefly later in the context of shrines and their functions (page 262).
2. Traditionally the Ashanti army consisted of a series of sections, each having its allotted place in the army, and under the command of a chief or elder. Busia (1968:13) describes these in detail. The following are found in Atwode:- adonten (the main body of fighting men), Chilinga; gyase (the King's or chief's personal body-guard), Kromasi; kyidom (the rearguard or reinforcements), Kiri; nifa (the right wing), Abrewonkor; and benkum (the left wing), Nyambong. The chief of the town bears the name of the section he commands, e.g. the chief of Chilinga is the Adontenhene. Ohene means chief in Akan.
3. The Shiare shrine evidently had an important role in resisting German colonisation, and this role is also found in the daughter shrine of Atakpame. One of the commandments imposed upon Buku worshippers in Atakpame was to avoid the Europeans and their culture, and to offer them no help. Cf. page 55 and page 58, footnote 4.
4. Guiness (1934:163) states that the Germans arrived in Shiare when one Lewa was chief priest, and, as he was unwilling to hold two offices, the office of chief was given to one Tinkpo. The Shiare elders reject this entirely. They say that Kwantine was the chief priest when the Germans came, and that Tinkpo is unknown to them. They remember a Kwaku who was chief, and he may have been Kwaku of Pawu, but they have no clear knowledge of the chiefs in the early period, which is not surprising, as the office was weakly defined and had no authority, and in the eyes of the cult elders was probably regarded as unimportant by them. The first chief known with any certainty is Nana Tiakpor Asasewura, who, the present

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Shiarewura told me, assumed office about 1920, about the time of the British mandate, and who died in 1938.

Footnote 2, page 195.

Among the Atwode and neighbouring peoples Dente is said to be the son of Brukung. This point is discussed in more detail in Appendix 2 (page 354).

The Badu commission, under the chairmanship of Nana Agyeman-Badu, was appointed by the Government to enquire into the matter of stools and paramount chieftaincies in the Volta Region. During 1974 and 1975 the commission sat at three centres, Ho, the regional capital, Kpandu and Keta. Every tribal group was invited to present evidence to show that they had always possessed an independent stool, and were entitled to sit in the Volta Region House of Chiefs. The Atwode case was heard on the 5th and 6th of August, 1975. The official accounts of the hearings were published shortly afterwards. The Atwode case is contained in the Proceedings of the Ninety-fifth and Ninety-sixth Sitzings.



CHAPTER 5THE SPIRITUAL AND MYSTICAL WORLD OF THE ATWODE

In this section I shall describe the spiritual world of the Atwode. For purposes of discussion and analytical description it is convenient to treat the spiritual world as somewhat apart and distinct from the material and social world of everyday living, in isolation, as it were. But it must be stressed that this is a distinction which is not consciously made by the Atwode themselves; they do not see themselves as living in two worlds, or as living in two dimensions. Their life is a unity. It may be regarded as composite, but the constituent parts are not polarised. At various times and places, one merges into the other. The world is ordered. The order of the social world is determined by the system of patrilineal clans and lineages, by the kinship system, by the principle of seniority and by the worship of the god Brukung, which reinforces the traditional social structure.

The Atwode recognise that harmony is essential for the well-being of society; harmonious relations should exist, not only between people and groups in the social domain, but throughout their whole world, i.e. these relations should exist between the visible and the invisible world. If the rules governing society are not observed, and transgressions are committed, people know from experience that trouble, or varieties of misfortune, will befall them. The harmony can be broken or disturbed in many ways, and on different levels. Disharmony can occur within the social order; the society has mechanisms for dealing with this, frequently employing supernatural means. Disharmony can also occur between the social and

more serious, and is usually

accompanied by one or more misfortunes. Spiritual beings can offend in ways that are not immediately obvious; determining the exact cause of the misfortune may involve consulting several ritual experts, and the offering of sometimes expensive sacrifices. The Atwode are constantly aware of the delicate state of equilibrium which exists between them and the spirits and forces which inhabit the spiritual world. Sacrifice is the means of communication between men and gods, of intercession and propitiation, of restoring breaches of the social order, and they are careful to observe the rules and precepts governing sacrifices.

I shall now describe the various gods and spirits which the Atwode recognise, and assess their place and importance in the Atwode world view.

Gods

Like many African peoples, the Atwode recognise the existence of a High God, known to them as Wuruboare; this name is also found among other Guan speaking peoples in the same or a closely related form e.g. among the Nchumuru, Gonja and Krachi.¹ As in the case of these other societies, the Atwode have no developed or articulated theories of god, or no theology. He is believed to have created man, his environment and his principal foodstuffs, and is responsible for setting out to each individual his allocated span of life. He has no cult, no priesthood, no shrine. Indeed it is doubtful if one can speak of the worship of Wuruboare at all. It is believed that he partakes of all sacrifices. Every sacrifice and every libation begins with the invocation of Wuruboare, then Brukung, but the sacrifice is offered to Brukung, and not

A High God of this type is found frequently in Africa, and is referred to as the remote God, or the otiose God. There is some justification for these titles; the god is remote from the everyday affairs and concerns of the people. His name is frequently on their lips, but they are much more immediately concerned and in contact with other gods. Some peoples, e.g. the Ashanti, assert that God was formerly much closer to human affairs than he is now, and recount myths to account for his withdrawal from the world. Having rationalised his remoteness, they can now concern themselves directly and almost entirely with the worship of the gods who are easier of access. The Atwode have no myth comparable to that of the Ashanti, but their ideas of the high God are close to those of the Ashanti and other Akan peoples.

It is a feature of West African religious systems that these high Gods do not have pictorial or artistic representations; this is consistent with their roles in the hierarchies of gods and spirits, and their not being the object of formal worship.

The worship of the god Brukung is the main religious activity of the Atwode. Brukung belongs to a class of gods and spirits which is found throughout West Africa. Among some peoples, e.g. the Ewe and the Yoruba, pantheons of such gods are found, ranked in a relatively ordered hierarchy. One of the features of these pantheons is their flexibility and readiness to accommodate gods from other pantheons, or from other areas; in some cases gods are being added to the pantheon, in other cases they are being dropped from it. This fact may be due to the remoteness of the high God, in that its

noteness increases as more personal gods are added to the hierarchy. Brukung himself seems to have found his way into the pantheons of the Ewe and the Yoruba, in some cases as a god of considerable stature, in others as a minor deity (Chapter 2).

Among the Akan speaking peoples, the class of gods to which Brukung belongs is known as abosum (sg. obosum). Among the Atwode such gods are known as ikpere (sg. okpere). Some of these gods have acquired only a very local significance, others have become tribal or state gods; others have acquired fame which extends well beyond tribal or state boundaries. Brukung is the state god of the Atwode, and has a reputation which reaches well beyond the boundaries of Atwode, even beyond the boundaries of Ghana, and has made Shiare a very important pilgrimage centre.

There is no pantheon in Atwode. Three gods are worshipped. Brukung is the chief god, whose worship is confined to Shiare. After Brukung, the most important god is Gagon, whose principal centre of worship is in Chilinga, in the eastern part of Atwodeland, very near to the border with Togo. Gagon is believed to be the son of Brukung, and Chilinga has acquired minor fame as a pilgrimage centre, the pilgrims coming almost entirely from the part of Togo adjoining Atwode. Gagon is worshipped in every other Atwode town, with the exception of Abrewonkor, where a god proper to the town, Gegyoga, is worshipped. These cults are dependent upon the Brukung cult in Shiare. The jurisdiction of the chief priest in Shiare is acknowledged, and the cult members in all the Atwode towns are initiated into the Brukung cult in Shiare.



Gods of the abosum type are common in Ghana and in neighbouring countries. The most important ones in the Volta region are Dente, the god of Krachi, and Friko, who is worshipped by the Adele people, who are neighbours of the Wode. There seems to be a strong relationship between Brukung and Dente. It is often maintained in Atwode, and in the neighbouring regions, that Brukung is senior to Dente; some accounts claim that he is the son of Brukung.² Such claims should not be taken as statements of actual relationships; they reflect the importance and eminence which people attribute to their own god.

These gods have several things in common. None of them is thought of as being a high God, but were created by Wuruboare; sometimes they are said to have been appointed to act as mediators between God and men. They also have highly institutionalised cults, and a priesthood, with sacred places and objects associated with the god. The priesthood is not organised hierarchically. This is consistent with the egalitarian nature of the social organisation of Shiare. Seniority determines respect, and the office of chief priest is determined by the principle of seniority. Thus, in Shiare, the oldest member of each of the two clans is the head of that clan, and the senior of these by age is the chief priest (okperegyoroble) of the cult.

What is important about Brukung, and the class of gods of which he is a member, is that they are accessible, and necessary; unlike the high remote god, Wuruboare, Brukung was, and is, said to be very close. On him depend the well being and continuance of the society the resolution of its problems,

the ordering of social relationships, and the maintenance of right relationship between the social and the spirit world. Central to all these ideas is sacrifice, which is the most common and widespread ritual observance of the Atwode. The occasions of sacrifice are many; they are offered to gods and to beings other than to Brukung, but those offered to Brukung are the most important, and are the basic medium of communication between the people and the god.

All important events in Atwode life are marked by sacrifices, some of which are governed by the day of the week. The Atwode week has six days, divided into 'good' and 'bad' days.³ The first, and most important day of the week is gikpaga; this is a 'good' day on which the major festivals are held, e.g. yogyi the Yam Festival, the ayu or grain festival, as well as the sacrifice to one's mpaba (destiny) and the outdoorings of babies. The most inauspicious day is sogyi, the day of rest from farming, and on which twin shrines are erected, and sacrifices offered to twins. Other sacrifices may be offered on other days; in fact they are held almost daily.

There is another god (okpere) worshipped in Atwode, Gagon, whose chief seat is in Chilinga, but who is also worshipped in all the other Atwode towns, except Abrewonkor, in which Gegyoga is worshipped. This god is regarded as having less power than Brukung, though it is consulted by people outside the Atwode area, but not to the extent that Brukung is. Though it belongs to the same class of gods as Brukung, it is regarded as inferior to him; there is some ambiguity regarding its status, which is expressed when enquiries are made regarding it. Some say that like Brukung and Dente, it is a son

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God; others will say that it is the son of Brukung. Precise definition is irrelevant here; pre-eminence is given to Brukung, but the standing of Gagon is not diminished in the process.

There is no special initiation for the worshippers of these other gods. The conditions for membership of the cults of the gods are the same as for the Brukung cult in Shiare, and the cult members are initiated in Shiare at the same time as the candidates for the Brukung cult. They are members of the Brukung cult, but worship their own god in their own town. Each town has its own chief priest, but the chief priest of the Brukung cult in Shiare is recognised as being the chief priest of all the cults in Atwode. The form of worship in the other Atwode towns is the same as that for Brukung in Shiare.

Brukung is a god of the town, associated with cultural values, social relationships, order and harmony and kinship. The Atwode recognise another class of gods or spirits. Unlike Brukung, these are not associated with domesticity and town living, but with the bush and the farm. They are known by the generic name of ikpere, but this name is qualified by the name of the area with which they are associated; thus they are subdivided into farm gods (ndo ikpere) and earth gods (gesinkpan ikpere). Both groups share common characteristics. They are believed to be the offspring of Brukung, and inferior to him; they have less power than Brukung. Their power or influence is limited and local, and they are domiciled in natural objects, stones, rivers and trees. They have no shrines, other than the objects they inhabit. But their power, local

. Power, in this context,

relative, relative to place and circumstances. If the power of a god or spirit is known to be operative in a certain area, then care will be taken to ensure that this power is not used in a way detrimental to people who may have occasion to expose themselves to this power.

In this context, the farm gods are probably more important than the earth gods. This arises from the relationship which exists between the people and the bush. This relationship is ambivalent. The Atwode, in common with many other peoples of the forest and woodland savannah areas of West Africa, make a clear distinction between the town and the bush, between the ordered structured relationships and harmony which prevail in the town, and the unstructured life of the bush. Essentially, the forest is dangerous, peopled by spirits and beings whose relationships to humans are at the best ambiguous, at the worst hostile. In the forest, mysterious forces are at work, which humans can never really understand or master, but with which they have to come to terms, and against which they need protection. This is necessary, in that man's relationship with the forest is itself ambiguous. Hostile though it is, the forest provides man with his farmlands, his food, and sustains his life. Man has thus to enter into some sort of relationship with the beings and forces of the forest. He must know which gods or spirits inhabit the area which he farms, ascertain their needs and wishes, and thus propitiate them, to guard against loss of crops or other misfortunes. This is done by sacrifice.

The attitude to farm gods is largely negative; sacrifices are intended to neutralise their potentially dangerous powers,



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keep them at bay. But like most gods and spirits, their powers are not necessarily bad. It is possible to use or to divert these powers for one's own advantage. The gods can reward as well as punish. Thus, it is possible to enter into a deeper relationship with the farm gods, a relationship which goes beyond the merely negative. Thus the Atwode say that a farmer can 'adopt' a farm god, and establish a relationship which is based on rights and duties. The farmer will undertake to do something for the god, feed it by sacrifice, in return for favours. These favours will include not merely the assurance that one's farming will be successful, though this in itself is a major boon, but positive help in farming. The god may indicate the best areas for farming, tell the farmer when to plant and guard the crops from any malevolent forces which may be operative in the area. The farmer obviously stands to benefit from this relationship; but there are dangers and difficulties. These gods are capricious, and the farmer can never be entirely sure of the god's intentions. When some misfortune strikes, a mishap occurs, there may be a variety of reasons, but the farmer will suspect his farm god, and this is often confirmed by a diviner, who will advise a sacrifice. Apart from this expiatory sacrifice, there is no definite time for sacrifices, and on the whole they seem to be irregular, sometimes every two or three years. Their frequency is determined by the farmer.

The farmer must also determine which day his god regards as sacred for the land he cultivates; this varies from place to place, but most localities have a day on which no farming is allowed, for fear the god will punish. This day may be

ferent from sogyi, the day which the whole of Shiare regards the day on which no farming may be done. Thus a farmer may find that there are two days on which he may not farm, but there are many other things which can be done. The temporary huts in which the farmers live during the farming season can be built or repaired. Many of these farms are at a considerable distance from Shiare, and cannot be reached easily in a day. People often spend several weeks on the farm, in many cases with their families. Most men in Shiare are hunters; while roaming in the bush they will take the opportunity to hunt the numerous species of wild animals which live in the bush. Apart from hunting with the gun, they also set traps, and the days in which they cannot farm will be spent hunting, or visiting the traps to see if they have a catch, or setting fresh traps.

The earth gods are essentially the same as the farm gods, except that they are not thought to reside on farmland. They are very numerous, and have made themselves known to the people. The relationship between human and earth gods is not so well defined as in the case of farm gods. But it is recognised that their powers can be harmful, so they must be propitiated. Piles of stones mark their shrines, (Plate 14) and lying round can be seen empty spirit bottles and broken eggs shells which mark the remains of libations and sacrifices; occasionally a fowl or a goat may be offered. Sacrifices offered to earth gods and farm gods are not regarded as sacred, in that the offerings are eaten by those who offer them, unlike the offerings made to Brukung, which are taken to the shrine. Relationships with earth and farm gods are private, between the gods and the people concerned; they do not concern the community at



late 14 : Shrine of an earth god.

2. In this sense they are peripheral to Shiare religious . But over a period of time, certain people have established a relationship with an earth god, analogous to between farmer and farm god, have adopted it, and have to be regarded as caring for it. In some cases the odianship of the god and shrine has passed into his family, the god has become associated with a family, and then a age. The god is considered to be 'owned' by the family ineage, who will be responsible for feeding it. Occasionally custodian of the shrine may be asked to intercede with god for help, though this is rare. The same dangers are -rent in this relationship as those noted in the case of farm gods, but to a lesser degree; important activities, as farming, are not involved, so there is less scope for god to inflict harm.

All ritual in Shiare has Brukung as its centre, and the ire people maintain that the worship of earth and farm gods, the sacrifices offered to them, are connected with the ship of Brukung. This is subsumed in the assertion that se gods are the offspring of Brukung, vague though this ertion is. Sometimes the people say that they live on ferance, others that Brukung has given them powers, and set its to these powers. The point is relatively unimportant, that the people themselves are clear as to the spheres of luence which each god has, the resources which each commands. ■ this point of view, it is difficult to see the gods ognised by the Atwode as arranged hierarchically, in the use of being ranked in order of importance or power, these ne the two criteria accordine to which such rankings could

made. From one point of view, Wuruboare would seem to occupy the highest rank, as he is the high God and creator, the earth and farm gods the lowest rank, as they would seem to be of comparative unimportance. However, to see the situation thus would be to impose a structure which the Atwode themselves do not recognise, and thus possibly distort their thinking. Theoretically, Wuruboare is more important than the farm gods; in practical terms, the Atwode are much more aware of the farm gods, and pay more attention to them. Wuruboare has his place firmly fixed in Atwode thinking, and is unassailable and immutable; but his very transcendence excludes him from matters of everyday concern; there is nothing to fear from him. The more accessible gods present a different series of problems, and thus demand fresh set of responses, which have been discussed above.

Ancestors

Like most African peoples, the Atwode have a special relationship with the ancestors. When a man dies a 'good death', i.e. is not a witch, his spirit is believed to go to the ancestor world (ibunido) where, along with all the ancestors, he will live and continue to interest himself in the affairs of the living. The ancestors are remembered as being the originators of the nation, who claimed Atwode for the present inhabitants, cleared the land, and laid down the way of life which is followed today. They are concerned that the ancient customs should be observed, and they will help society to prosper; but they will be quick to punish any deviation from the norms which they have set. They are still aware of clan and lineage and expect the respect which is

; to seniority in Atwode; if this is neglected, they will
ish.

Recent ancestors and those who attained eminence while
ive, will be remembered by name; otherwise they are thought
collectively. An old man will not speak with any confidence
an ancestor beyond the generation of his grandfather; where
is knows the name of his great grandfather, he will be
certain of his greatgrandfather's brothers.

Of the ancestors remembered by name, primacy of place was
ways given to the eponymous ancestors of the two clans, the
o major descent groups, Cha and Awuku. In their respective
ans, these were always invoked immediately after Wuruboare,
ukung and Gagon, during libations. Each clan would remember,
d invoke, the ancestors who had been clan heads, particularly
the Awuku clan, who always, with one exception, (Akane,
76) provided the chief priest of the Brukung cult. Each
an has, in the centre of its territory, a special place
ere clan heads are buried. This spot is sacred, and marks
e original nucleus where the clan settled when Shiare was
ionised. The graves were, and the most recent ones are,
rked by a mound, formerly of clay, latterly of cement,
decorated with cowrie shells. It is on this spot that
sacrifices are offered to these particular ancestors, and is
regarded as a sacrifice for the whole clan. The sacrifice may
ake place every two years, but there is no stated time. Each
ineage will take turns to provide a sheep, and the ceremony
s attended by all the clan elders; the sacrifice is performed
y the clan head, assisted by the subclan heads.

During my period of field work, I was invited to attend

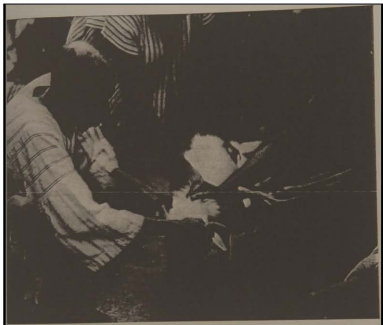


e sacrifice to Akane, of the Cha clan, in whose territory was living, and to which I was regarded as belonging. Akane s the clan head during the time of the trouble with the rmans, in 1896; when the chief priest, Kwantine, was rested and later shot, Akane became chief priest, the only mber of the Cha clan to do so. He is remembered as having stored order and safeguarded the cult and, after Cha himself, regarded as the greatest of the ancestors of the Cha clan. ter the sacrifice offered to him, the meat was divided in der among the elders of the clan, and others; I was offered piece, since this was the only time I would be expected to tend the ceremony, and during the ceremony I was introduced Akane as a stranger living in the clan to which he himself ad belonged.

Ancestors may be remembered, and offered sacrifices, depending on whether they were clan, subclan or lineage heads; s one descends the scale, they have a more local relevance, nd are remembered only in the smaller group to which they elonged. Family and lineage heads would soon be forgotten s individuals, and merged into the generality of the ancestors s a group.

For some years after the death of a lineage head, his ons are expected to offer sacrifice to him, or, as the Atwode ay, 'feed' him. One such sacrifice was offered by Stephen lameme, son of Mamene, of the subclan Denteso. After having pent 18 years in the Army, Stephen retired and came to live again in Shiare. During his period of army service, his visits home were infrequent, and he had never offered a sacrifice to his father, who had been dead for some years.

is he proposed to do, as a mark of filial piety, and to mark his return to the ancestral home and the subclan and lineage. The elders agreed to this. A sheep is always demanded for this sacrifice; this was provided by Stephen and slaughtered by Amese, the head of the subclan to which Stephen belonged, (Plate 15). During the subsequent festivities, there was some discussion of the ancestors, during which I attempted to ascertain the influence which they had on lineage and clan affairs, with special reference to their power to punish. It was agreed that they could and would punish lapses from the norms of the society; when some misfortune occurs, the diviner will diagnose the cause, and prescribe the remedy, which is a sacrifice of a fowl, usually, unless it is a serious matter, when a sheep will be required. But, in practice, such afflictions from the ancestors seem to be rare, and the Shiare people are more afraid of retribution from Brukung for breaches of social norms, than from the ancestors. It would seem that Brukung has usurped the position as guardian of tradition which in many other Ghanaian societies belongs to the ancestors; this was never stated explicitly by the Shiare people, but it was implied, and this opinion was strengthened as my field work progressed. The people insisted that the ancestors punish, though they will also say that they do so infrequently, and that the punishments were minor. The reason is that serious breaches of observance are dealt with by the priest-elders, who consult and offer sacrifice to Brukung; the ancestors are also included in this, but they are given a low profile; their position and authority have become merged with that of Brukung, and if Brukung punishes and accepts reparation, then the



te 15 : Sacrifice of sheep by Stephen Mamene (right) to his late father Mamene. The sacrifice was performed by Nana Amese (left), head of the Denteso subclan.

stors are satisfied.

The major event when the ancestors are remembered and fed during the annual yom festival (gyogyi), which is described in chapter 7.

The principle of harmony which governs Atwode life, and equilibrium which exists between the component parts of it, particularly between the spiritual and the social domains, can be disrupted, with possibly harmful consequences for society itself. Things can go wrong, and a variety of misfortunes can afflict either individuals of the community as a whole. Breaches or transgressions of established custom, neglect on the part of the people of the gods or ancestors revealed post factum; a cause-effect relationship is working. When something happens which threatens the established order, a cause must be found, and steps taken to restore harmony. The foregoing exposition has shown that the effects felt in society emanated from forces belonging to the world of the gods and the spirits. We must now examine two phenomena which involve potentially dangerous powers or forces, the agents of which are members of the society itself. The threat here posed to society is of a different order from that posed by the gods and spirits, thus a different set of responses are required to deal with it. The two phenomena in question are witchcraft and twins; both share some common characteristics. The powers which they possess are dangerous to society; the behaviour of these agents is clearly anti-social, and a threat to the order and harmony of society. The methods of detecting and disposing of the threats and dangers are generically related. The same cause-effect relationship which was noted in the

use of the gods and the spirits is also operative. The end which is sought is the restoration of harmony; the means adopted to detect and remove the threats are directed to this end.

. Witchcraft

Like all African peoples, and many others, the Atwode recognise the existence of witchcraft (gekpe), and the harm which it can cause. The many and detailed studies of witchcraft now available allow the phenomenon to be studied in its social context, and not in isolation, divorced from the social matrix. This distortion is avoided, and valid and clear insights are offered, not only of witchcraft itself, but of the thought processes which underlie the social structure. These studies also show that though witchcraft beliefs are held by all African societies, its interpretation and function vary from society to society. The beliefs themselves are constant but related to these beliefs are a whole range of variables; these variables are found within the social system itself, among the principles which govern the structure of society, e.g. the principles on which descent is organised, on which marriages are arranged, on which authority is inherited and exercised, on which property is inherited. Thus some anthropologists have analysed witchcraft in functional terms, as an index of strain and tension. Witchcraft accusations can be shown to occur in certain well defined areas and groups, for example among co-wives in a polygynous society, against women in societies which practise clan or lineage exogamy; brides brought into a household from another clan, and often from the clan of the husband, and



are often suspected of witchcraft.

Witchcraft is associated with misfortune, illness and death. As in the case of misfortunes which are attributed to the gods and spirits, the activities of witches are known post factum; when the power is realised in a specific concrete instance, then steps can be taken to connect the effect with the cause, and discover the witch.

The Atwode describe witchcraft as something bad and evil, and the witch (okpe, pl. ikpe) is a person who poses the greatest threat to society. Witchcraft may be the cause of a whole range of illnesses and misfortunes, but it is most particularly associated with death. Witchcraft is not confined to any particular group; anyone may be a witch, a man, woman or child; children may be suspected of possessing witchcraft tendencies, but in a weak form. It is when they attain adulthood that the full potential is realised. Witchcraft is not inherited, nor is it believed to be a substance; there is no equivalent among the Atwode of the Tiv tsav (Bohannon 1969:84), nor of the Zande belief that witchcraft substance can be established as an organic growth by a post-mortem examination (Evans-Pritchard 1937:21-22). Witchcraft is believed to be malevolent power, possessed by people, who are thus themselves malevolent, and whose interests run contrary to those of society. Though witchcraft is not the prerogative of any one group, certain people may be regarded as being predisposed to witchcraft; these people belong to the category which the Atwode call ibusafo (sg. obusafo),⁴ best translated into English as 'abnormal'. People in this category display features or characteristics which deviate from the normal;

These features or characteristics are physical, but signify mystical abnormality, hence a danger. The most common effects are found in children who are born feet first, and those who cut upper teeth before the lower, but any physical effect would place a person in the category of the abnormal; warves, hunchbacks, those with a club foot, those with more or less than ten fingers, etc. The danger here is twofold, active and passive; they can be dangerous to other people, and they can be dangerous to themselves, prone to illness and misfortune. They can expect that life will not be easy, that it will be beset by mishaps and misfortunes. Ibusafo are not witches, but it is thought that they have a disposition towards witchcraft, which is not in itself a sufficient reason to remove them from the community. But the latent danger of the powers attributed to them cannot be ignored. When an attempt is made to control or neutralise this power when they are still very young; they are taken to the chief priest, and a sacrifice is offered to Brukung, asking that this power be taken away, or that it should remain within the child and never be allowed to harm people. Nonetheless, suspicion always remains, though ibusafo are never accused of witchcraft unless formally and definitively shown to be so, as will be shown.

Witchcraft possesses people and makes them its own; in this respect, the agent is unconscious of being a witch, and acts involuntarily, but witchcraft can be used voluntarily. It would seem that witchcraft can be acquired in two ways. Firstly, witchcraft itself can attempt to possess and gain possession of this is illness. As

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Illness can arise from a variety of causes, the afflicted person will consult a diviner to ascertain the cause of the illness. If, in spite of treatment, the illness continues, the person will suspect that witchcraft possession is at work. He may well ask a diviner to confirm this, and prescribe medicine (gelin). But, because of the gravity of the situation, he will probably, after consultation, offer a sacrifice to his okala, or soul; (the significance of the okala will be described later); or he may offer sacrifice to Brukung. However, at some point during the illness symptoms the person may become fully possessed by witchcraft, and become a witch. There are three ways in which this could happen. Firstly, by the time the person realises that witchcraft may be at work, and takes the necessary steps to counter it, it may be too late. Secondly, his okra may be weak, and submit at an early stage, and the person may be a witch without realising it. Or thirdly, the person, realising that witchcraft is attempting to possess him, will welcome it, and become a witch.

The second way of acquiring witchcraft power is to seek out a witch and ask to become a witch, to join the band of witches. There is no clear consensus of opinion among the Atwode as to how witchcraft is acquired; some maintain that the okala cannot submit to witchcraft without the person knowing about it; others maintain that sacrifice to the okala or to Brukung will remove the threat. However, the actual analysis of these points is not one on which the Atwode expect to find answers; it is enough for them that witchcraft exists, that they use them; whether it is

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luntary or involuntary, it is used to attack society, and less punished or checked, will cause great harm.

Witchcraft is closely connected with death, which is the greatest disaster which witchcraft can inflict. Thus it is around death that the most intensive investigations into the possibility of witchcraft are found.

When a death takes place, its cause must be determined. As soon as a person dies, a ceremony, the agbagesola (literally, 'the carrying of the agba') is performed. The agba can take one of two forms; either it is a long bamboo pole, about six feet long, or it is a stretcher, made from bamboo, also six feet long, wide enough to take a body, and with a neck support; the latter form is used today only for the agbagesola held for a person of importance, the two clan heads and the head of the women's cult, but it is possible that in former times it was used for every agbagesola, and that the dead body was placed on the agba. Today, only the finger and toe nails of the deceased are used. These are removed immediately after death, and wrapped in a piece of white cloth, which is tied to the agba. Two elders are elected to act as bearers (agba asolabo). They balance the agba on their heads, one at either end. Two objects are elected, usually a stone or a tree or bush, one signifying an affirmative answer, the other a negative answer. Two questioners (agba adabo, literally, agba strikers, from the verb da, to strike), each holding a small bundle of thin small sticks, stand, one on either side of the agba. This is regarded as an important function, and is usually entrusted to elders; of the women's cult, which I



late 16 : Agbagesola, with bamboo pole, for Gegyila, with Nana Gesu (centre) and Nana Kulahome (left) as the questioners. The cloth containing the finger and toe nails is to the left of centre of the agba.

nessed, the questioners were the two clan heads, a sign of the importance of the deceased. On two other occasions the questioners were the subclan head and the clan head; the clan head is usually one of the questioners.

The ceremony begins with an invocation to Brukung, and the spirit of the deceased, inviting it to enter the agba to help determine the cause of death. One of the questioners says 'N. come in', tapping the agba with his bundle of sticks; the second questioner will repeat the invocation and tap. When the spirit enters the agba, the bearers will tremble, and sway from side to side; this is a sign that they have become possessed by the spirit of the deceased, who will henceforth speak through them. The deceased will greet Bruboarc, Brukung and the ancestors. Then the questions begin.

The two major objectives of the agbagesola are to establish the mode of death and the cause of death. The mode of death is simply to determine whether or not the deceased was a witch. This is expressed by the Atwode by saying that the person died 'good death' (len danse) i.e. the person was not a witch, or that the person died a 'bad death' (len nyanyan) i.e. that the person was a witch. The answer to the question relating to the mode of death will determine the course of the agbagesola. The following examples, one involving a 'good' death, the other a 'bad' death, will illustrate the main features of the ceremony.

The first account is of the agbagesola for Akungaba, who as head of the women's cult, and as such she was regarded as one of the most important people in the town, occupying a position analogous to that of the two clan heads. During this ceremony, the presence of Nana Gesu and Nana Kulahome,



late 17 : Agbagesola, with stretcher, as used in agbagesola
for Akungaba, but not taken during Akungaba's funeral.

two clan heads; Gesu is the chief priest of the Brukung
t, and Kulahome is the head of the clan Cha, to which
ngaba belonged.

After the initial invocations, the questioners tapped the
a and asked:-

'Did you die in a bad way?'

The bearers swayed, then pointed the agba to the tree,
ch signified 'No'.

Having satisfied themselves as to the mode of death, the
stioners then set about determining the cause of death.

'You are the senior woman of the cult; perhaps your
ath was caused by your god (okpere) because you did not
'form your functions well'. 'No'.

'Perhaps you promised to give something to the god, and
l not do so?' 'No'.

'Perhaps you stole someone else's possessions?' 'No'.

'Has God (Wuruboare) sent this sickness to you?' 'No'.

'As you have died, have you gone the correct way?' 'Yes'.

'Perhaps the days which God has given you are accomplished?'
es'.

This part of the ceremony ended here; the questioners were
tisfied as to the mode and cause of death. The death was
atural; the span of life allocated by God had run its course.

One other issue is settled during the agbagesola, the
estion of the funeral arrangements. The family and lineage
the deceased will be responsible for this, but the actual
irection and management of the arrangements will be in the
ands of someone who is not necessarily a member of the family,
r even of the lineage. This person is the geli wura

literally chief or head of the funeral), and he is chosen the deceased. After the completion of the questions arising on the mode and cause of death, the questioners will enquire who will be the head of the funeral. The bearers, always acting as mediums for the deceased, will sway, then leave the place where the ceremony is being held, and move through the town, eventually stopping outside the house of a person chosen by the deceased. If there is any doubt as to the person, the agba will be questioned. The person chosen will always accept, and is always a person friendly to the deceased. Sometimes, a person will, while alive, ask someone to be the head of the funeral after his or her death, and indicate what he or she would like done regarding important matters such as inheritance of property, and children. This person will be confirmed by the agbagesola ceremony. Where no prior arrangement has been made, the agba will lead the bearers to someone who was known to have been a close friend and confidant of the deceased.

The second account is of the agbagesola for Geyila, of the Gepubudo subclan in the Awuku clan. She had been a member of the women's cult, and had been married twice. When her first husband, a Shiareman, died she married a man from Pagala, in Anyanga, Togo, where she went to live. When he died she returned to Shiare to live with her brothers. A son and daughter of her first marriage were present at the agbagesola. The questioners were Nana Gesu and Nana Kulahome, the clan heads, and the bearers were Gyato, from Gepubudo, and Ndabiwa, from Wasawasado, both of the Awuku clan.

After the initial invocations, the questioners asked:-

'Did you die the correct way, a good death?' 'No'.

'Did you die a bad death?'

The bearers swayed, then stepped backwards; this is the sign that the spirit of the deceased is admitting that she had been a witch. In this case, questions are not asked regarding the cause of death; it is not clear if death could be due to natural causes, or if death was a punishment from the living for being a witch. This evidently is a matter which does not interest the Atwode; the main issue is the acknowledgment that the deceased had been a witch. More questions were asked; these followed from the admission of witchcraft, and tried to ascertain what evils had been caused by the witch. It was established that Geyila had been responsible for some deaths, but as these were of people in Pagala, they were not of direct relevance to Shiare, so the questions ceased.

The agbagesola ceremony is a serious affair, but a certain informality was noticeable. There were conversations, sometimes loud, among the observers, and laughter, which was shared by the questioners; frequently, the observers shouted comments to the questioners, and two men on several occasions left their places and approached the questioners, and conversed with them. These two men were the son and brother of Geyila, and objected to the finding of the agbagesola that she had been a witch. It frequently happens that the admission will not go unchallenged; it is in the family's interest to deny this, and demand that the question be repeated. This was done, several times, and was eventually accepted. It rarely, if ever, happens that the decision is reversed, but the family will try to minimise the deeds attributed to the deceased. It sometimes



appens that the relatives and others are reluctant to admit that the deceased had been a witch; it may happen that the deceased had been held in great esteem, and had been considered a good person, and the relatives and friends were reluctant to accept the admission of witchcraft. The only course open to them is to obtain from the agba a denial of the admission; thus they will conduct another agbagesola ceremony, in the hope of doing this. This in fact happened in the case of Geyila. A small group of relatives and others took the toe and finger nails and repeated the ceremony, but the result was still the same. It was now accepted that Geyila had been a witch. As it has never been known for an agbagesola decision to be reversed, why should it be challenged and repeated? When I made enquiries on this point, I was told it was the custom. Most likely, it was an attempt to salvage something from the ceremony to the credit of the deceased, though it is equally unlikely that this would be successful. The community as a whole would accept the decision of the agba.

When the ceremony was completed, preparations were made for the burial of the witch forthwith. None of the ceremonial high marks a burial is found when a witch is interred. A grave was dug in the bush outside the town; the body of the witch was carried by some men. There was no funeral procession, and no singing or drumming. The body was wrapped in a cloth and carried in a sleeping mat. Everything was deposited in the grave; one of the men entered the grave, removed the mat and the cloth, leaving the body naked. The corpse was then turned face downwards. A stone was placed beside the head, on the left hand side; the arms were folded behind, and a

A flat stone was placed on the small of the back. The position of the hands suggested an attitude of supplication. The explanation given was that the witch would be left thus all time, asking God to forgive her for the evil she has perpetrated when alive; the stone was a punishment, to remind her of the burden of her guilt. The grave was then filled in, and everyone left. Again, there was no dancing or drumming. The very silence was itself significant. There was no funeral celebrations at the home of the deceased. A small group gathered to drink palm wine. To all intents and purposes, the deceased had ceased to be remembered. A witch is never remembered as an ancestor, and will never be reincarnated. It can happen that witches may still cause harm or misfortune, as the ancestors do. This is diagnosed by a diviner; in this case a small sacrifice is offered to the spirit; this is not offered on one of the altars where sacrifices normally take place, but on a special altar on the path leading to the grove where the shrine of Brukung is situated. This altar is not in the public view, but the ceremony is performed by a handful of elders, with none of the people participating. I was unable to gather any information as to the kind of misfortune which a dead witch could cause; evidently such interventions by witches in human affairs was uncommon. But the people were aware that the witch was not in the world of the ancestors, but elsewhere, in a place known to God.

There is another and important issue which is raised concerning the agbagesola; this relates to the cause of death. If the agba signifies that the deceased has died the correct way, a good death, the cause of death will be sought. This



he natural, as was seen in the case of Akungaba, but the
; may state that the death was caused by a witch. I did
witness such a ceremony, but it frequently happens, and
course of events was described to me.

If death is caused by a witch, then the remainder of the
emony will be devoted to discovering the identity of the
ch. Before this is broached, some questions will be asked
discover why the witch should have killed the person; often
se are framed in a general way. They may ask if the
eased had injured, slighted or otherwise given offence to
neone who, unknown to the deceased, has been a witch. The
wer is usually given in the affirmative. Some people may
e been known to have been enemies of the deceased; this
itself is not sufficient to lay a charge of witchcraft
ainst them. One of several people could have been responsible
r the death, so some more specific indication is needed.

the old traditional form of the agbagesola, which is no
nger practised, this indication would have been given by
e agba. The corpse would have been laid on the agba itself,
d when the time came to ascertain the identity of the witch,
e agba would guide the bearers through the town and stop at
e house of the witch. More questions would be asked to
ngle out the person named by the agba. That person now
tands guilty of witchcraft. Inevitably, the charge would be
sailed. In order to settle the matter beyond doubt, and to
ive the accused an opportunity to prove his or her innocence,
he matter was put to the test, by means of the poison ordeal.
his ceremony is presided over by the chief priest. The bark
f the tree Erythrophlaeum guineense (geping in Gitwode,

in Akan, whence the name usually given to the ordeal) which contains poisonous properties, is crushed and mixed with water; this drink is offered by the chief priest to the accused, who drinks it. If he dies, then there is no doubt to his guilt; if, however, he vomits the poison, and lives, this definitively proves his innocence, and the matter ends there, so far as that person is concerned. A person who thus has proved his innocence will purify himself by taking a ritual bath in the river sacred to Brukung, don a white garment, as a sign of innocence, joy and jubilation, and offer a white ewe to Brukung, as a thanksgiving for his deliverance from the ordeal, and that he has been cleared from the accusation of witchcraft. Some people say that the agba ceremony may be repeated, but others think that the witch has been too powerful, and has used his power to deceive the agba, and divert suspicion from himself. There is also a suggestion that the survivor of the ordeal may in fact have been the witch, and defeated the poison by his power; if this is the case, it is never stated. The poison ordeal is regarded as deciding, unambiguously, the guilt or innocence of the accused. It is still believed that a witch was responsible for the death, but is managed to escape detection, and thus still poses a threat to the community, but for the time being he or she must go unpunished.

The drinking of a poisonous substance is one of the most commonly used forms of the ordeal, and is found throughout a large part of Africa (Post 1887:110 ff). In Shiaré, the administering of the poison ordeal was the responsibility of the chief priest, and von Zech (1898:107) and Klose (1899:437)

ributed at least part of his power to the fact that he had control of the poison ordeal, and was thus feared.

The poison ordeal was prohibited by the German Colonial Administration, and later by the British. It still continued to be practised, and was the occasion of the German invasion of Shikare, and the arrest and subsequent death of the chief of the West, Kwantine in 1896. But its abolition raised serious problems; it removed the certainty of identifying a witch, and thus subsequent punishment. Around this time the custom of placing the corpse on the agba seems to have lapsed. There are numerous instances in anthropological studies of witchcraft of the effect of European prohibitions of traditional methods of witchcraft trials. The main effect is one of confusion and uncertainty, and the belief that witchcraft increased, now that witches can go unpunished. The effect was also felt by the accused; however unpleasant, and fatal, the traditional methods may have been, they established clearly guilt or innocence. An accused person who survived an ordeal would take his place in society without any suspicion of his being a witch, free from fear of victimisation, recrimination or being shunned. The new methods adopted were, in many cases, inadequate substitutes for the older traditional methods: an accused person could be cleared of a charge, but not of the suspicion and uncertainty which would henceforth surround him.⁵

The Atwode had to adapt themselves to the new circumstances which had been forced on them, and these adaptations are found today in the modified version of the agbagesola which is now practised. When the agba indicated that death has been due to witchcraft, the problem is to identify and punish the witch.

The onus is now on the family of the deceased to discover the witch. Today the agbagesola establishes the general cause of death, but not the specific individual. Thus, when the ceremony is completed, members of the family will take the ba and retire to the bush, near the town, and continue with the ceremony. Using the two objects which signify affirmative and negative, questions will be put to the agba. Beginning with the clan to which the deceased belonged, each lineage will be named, and the agba asked to say if the witch belonged to that lineage; if the answer is given in the affirmative, families will then be given, until a household, and even a person is named. If the witch is not named as being in the clan, then it must be in the other, as there are only two clans. I was told that bad feeling could be generated among the members of the other clan at the suggestion that one of their number could be a witch. The procedure is the same, the clan lineage and families being presented to the agba until a name is agreed upon. No one in fact knows who is being discussed, or which clan, as this is being conducted in secret, though it is known that a witch is being sought. The number of people involved is small, and all related to the deceased. The privacy of the ceremony is significant, and possibly shows the limitations imposed on the ceremony. From being a public affair, it has now become a private one. So far as I understand the situation, it no longer has the participation, and possibly the public sanction, of the chief priest or the clan head. This may mark a significant change in the attitude of the society to the witch; this suggestion may be strengthened by further considerations, which will be discussed in due course.

Having discovered the name of the witch, the next step is to verify it; this cannot be done by the poison ordeal, so the family turn to divination. There are some diviners in the area, but these are rarely, if ever, consulted on this matter. Instead, a small party is formed and goes across the border into Togo, whose diviners are highly esteemed in this matter. The number of people is small, usually three or four, headed by an elder, and a son or brother of the deceased. If the deceased was a woman, a member of her lineage is invited to accompany the party; this is usually a brother. The diviner's task is to verify the name given to the questioners by the gaba; to test the diviner's powers, the visitors sometimes present names of people whom they know to be innocent. If he eliminates these names, he is regarded as being a good diviner. Diviners in this part of West Africa usually divine with cowrie shells; the visitors will have with them the stick, stone or other object which are taken to represent the affirmative and negative answers. They will offer a coin to the diviner, having first whispered into it their message, and this coin will be thrown into the cowrie shells in front of the diviner. He will be asked to point to one of the objects, which have previously been agreed upon by the visitors, though which ones represent affirmative and negative are unknown to the diviner. Each time the coin is thrown with the cowrie shells it contains a name, and each time the diviner will indicate yes or no, pointing to one of the objects. He may or may not verify that the name given is the witch. Even when he does, the visitors may pursue their enquiries a little longer, to see if other diviners may be consulted,

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s a check. When they are completely satisfied, they will return to Shiare, and report to the lineage head.

The name of the witch is never made public; having satisfied themselves as to the identity of the witch, all the family can do is to avoid him. The Atwode believe that witchcraft usually works within the lineage of the clan; witches from one clan do not work their witchcraft on members of another clan; the same with lineages. But the network of affinal relationships is so widespread that most lineages are related affinally to others, and in the second generation these affinal relations become kinship relations. A witch will always be sought first among one's own family or lineage; if he or she is not revealed here, then the search will be carried out in the other clan. Avoidance will soon reveal who is being suspected; this is especially so with regard to eating. In Shiare, men eat in groups based on kinship; a group of siblings, half-siblings and classificatory brothers will meet outside the hut of one of the group, and eat from dishes which have been prepared by the wives; each wife prepares a dish, which is shared by the whole eating group. They have no fear of witchcraft-poisoning by a wife from another lineage, or another area. When a member of such a group is suspected of witchcraft, he will be asked to leave the group. If the group meets at his house to eat, it will immediately move, and meet elsewhere. The person who has been thus excluded from commensality will know that he is suspected of witchcraft. If he is not a member of the commensal group, he will be avoided; no one will accept food or drink from him, and will avoid him on every social occasion.



If the suspect is a woman, the group will not eat of her food, if she supplies the commensal group; her co-wives will not eat with her. As people realise that someone is suspected of witchcraft, he or she will be avoided by them.

Thus there is no doubt who is suspected; apart from avoidance, no other action is taken against the witch, but social ostracisation is serious and damaging in itself. Thus the initiative is passed to the witch. The positions are now reversed; formerly, society would challenge the accused, and put the matter to the test; today, the witch must challenge society and discredit the accusation.

A person is surprised and startled to discover that he or she is suspected of witchcraft; the charge is so serious that it cannot be ignored. There are several courses of action open to the suspect. He may accept the accusation, confess, and remain within the community. This is an accepted procedure, and, depending on the feelings of the community, it will be accepted. The confession is made to the subclan elders, the suspect must surrender anything which he possesses in the nature of medicines associated with witchcraft, and place himself in the hands of the priests of Brukung to undergo a purification ceremony. This ceremony is held just outside the grove of the god, where sacrifices are offered to witch spirits; he is washed with water from the river sacred to the god (okpere obun), and treated with medicine. The god will demand the sacrifice of a dog. Alternatively, the person could voluntarily leave Shiare, and live elsewhere; some have gone to live in the little community of Shiare emigres at Benue to engage in cocoa farming. In both these cases,

the existence of witchcraft has been established, and society has exacted some kind of revenge, but the suspicion of witchcraft has not been removed, and will always linger. The element of certainty and that of punishment, so clearly present in the traditional poison ordeal, are lacking.

Another alternative is possible for the person who feels himself innocent of the charge; he will publicly declare his innocence, and undergo a kind of ordeal. He will offer a sacrifice to Brukung, and make an oath, declaring his innocence, and ask Brukung to decide if he is innocent or guilty. If he is not innocent, he will ask Brukung to kill him. Such an undertaking is regarded as very serious, and to a great extent provides the certainty of the poison ordeal, and proves the guilt or innocence of the accused. Many people feel that only an innocent person would undertake this course of action, though it is believed that many people who have appealed to Brukung have died as a result. Those who do not die must be regarded as innocent.

With the removal of the poison ordeal, and with the subsequent alternatives now open to combat witchcraft, it seems clear that the attitude to witches and to witchcraft has undergone some modification. It is difficult to obtain precise information on the full spectrum of the traditional methods of dealing with witches; it would seem that the poison ordeal was central and final. In which case it would follow that witchcraft and social living were incompatible, the witch had to go, usually by death. The modern approach is less definite; it is sufficiently elastic to allow the witch to remain a member of community, after admission of guilt and the ceremony of

ification; this situation is at the best ambiguous, as the guilty are still regarded with great suspicion, and play little part in the town's activities. They are avoided, but this is not damaging, as they have little contact with people outside their family group. Some of the people in this category are women, and thus do not suffer from the disadvantages of exclusion from commensality, though they are not called upon to share in the communal cooking. Exclusion and avoidance is much more serious for a man, so men tend to leave the town, and settle elsewhere. This is regarded as satisfactory by the Shiare people, and is consistent with the view that witches are too dangerous to be allowed to remain in the community. Thus, it would seem that Shiare has in some way come to terms with witchcraft; known witches are allowed to live in the town, and the community has adjusted itself to this situation. When I offered this interpretation to some of the Shiare people, they agreed that this was indeed the case, but insisted that it was not an entirely satisfactory solution. They are still uneasy about the presence of witches in the town, but have to accept the modus vivendi which has now been established.

The attitude to sorcery is not quite so definite, and there is no clearly demarcated boundary between witchcraft and sorcery. Sorcery is the misuse of herbs (afe) with intent to harm. There are many herbalists (afewura, sg. fewura, literally, 'master of the herbs') in Shiare; they have an intimate knowledge of plants and roots, which they use as protection against illness and to ward off evils. Most people have some knowledge of herbs, which they use for their own purposes. Some herbalists have acquired a great reputation

healers, and they will be consulted in cases of minor illnesses. This practice is regarded as good and beneficial. The herbs and roots they work with are known generically as medicines (aling), which have a wide range of application in the area. There is another range of medicines which is popularly known as juju in West Africa. This type of medicine is stronger than herbs, and is used to counteract mystical forces, and the ill effects which may arise from them. Most men are equipped with such medicines, which they use to protect themselves from forces over which they have no control. A very common type is the kind used to counteract the ill effects which are believed to be latent in a menstruating woman; men are believed to be vulnerable to these effects, particularly when he eats food prepared by women, who, unknown to him, may be in this condition. Menstruating women are not allowed to cook, but to safeguard themselves, men usually introduce some medicine into their food as a precaution. Such medicines are personal, widely used, and rarely shared. Each man is confident that his own medicine is potent enough to ward off any danger. But some men have achieved a reputation in this field which is considered to be specialised to the extent that they have emerged as a class of consultants who can provide a range of specialised services in this field, but not so specialised as to become a full time occupation. It is combined with membership of the cult of Brukung and farming. A special kind of medicine known as polla is highly sought after by young men who are seeking to win the exclusive attention of young women. The preparation of this medicine, For a fee, a herbalist will

prepare his medicine, and instruct his client to combine it with a gift to the young woman; it is frequently mixed with soap or pomade, and offered to the woman. When used by a man, it is believed that she will become enamoured of the young man, and eventually become his lover, possibly his wife. To prevent a wife from being attracted in this way, a man will usually have a counter medicine, to ensure that his wife's attention is not directed elsewhere. Medicines of this type are very common, and a man will be constantly on the alert to ensure that his medicines are numerous and potent enough to protect his personal interests.

Such medicines and their use are regarded as good and beneficial, and, in many cases, necessary for the wellbeing of society. But it is also believed that a herbalist can use his special knowledge of herbs to act against the good of society. Such people are known as bad herbalists (fewura yanyan), or sorcerers. They can use their expertise to damage, or to gain advantages for themselves, and do so secretly. They are thus a danger to society, and when a diviner diagnoses the activities of a sorcerer, steps will be taken to discover and punish him. The procedures for doing this are neither as elaborate or institutionalised as those for detecting a witch. The diviner himself may indicate who is guilty, or the afflicted person may decide for himself who is responsible and approach the person and ask him to stop, or he may indicate his suspicions by avoiding the suspected sorcerer. It is also likely that he will approach a good herbalist and obtain medicine to protect himself, or consult the god Brukung, and obtain the protective medicine

ich is part of the consultative process. The effects which
 be produced by sorcery are limited, and serious though it
 thought to be, it rarely happens that a sorcerer is
 pelled from the community. Death is a special case; when
 is occurs, it is witchcraft which caused it, and at this
 int witchcraft merges into sorcery. The witch is feared
 re than the sorcerer, and any sorcerer who causes death is
 finitively classified as a witch. It is assumed that a
 tch has at his disposal control over medicines, but it is
 e witchcraft which makes the medicines powerful enough to
 ll. A witch does not necessarily depend upon medicines
 kill; witchcraft power is sufficiently powerful to operate
 independently of medicines or other substances, but witches
 re thought to employ these as well. In the case, described
 ove, of a witch confessing and promising to renounce witch-
 raft, one of the conditions was that such medicines should
 e surrendered, and destroyed. Thus, though belief in sorcery
 s strong, in the last analysis witchcraft and sorcery coincide,
 nd it is witchcraft, and not sorcery, which is the greater
 vil. During the agbagesola ceremony, attention is directed
 o the discovery of a witch, not a sorcerer.

In the foregoing analyses, the role of the diviner has
 een mentioned. The diviner (palebo, pl. apalebo) is an
 mportant and necessary figure in Atwode, though the actual
 umber of diviners is small, about twelve in all. Divination
 is not a full time occupation. All the diviners are members
 of the Brukung cult, and many of them are renowned as herbalists
 and healers. The smallness of their number is not a true index
 a range of services, but their

le must be seen against the wider background of the Atwode belief system; it is only when measured in this context that their influence and value can be seen, and related to the *brukung* cult, which is at the centre of Atwode religious thinking.

When some misfortune occurs, or anything which is of concern to individuals or groups of people, the diviner is consulted to determine the cause; the diviner's role may stop at this point, being the first step in a consultative process which will demand remedies beyond the diviner's powers. But the initial diagnosis is important, for it provides the client with the information he needs to follow the correct course of action. Thus, if the ancestors, or an earth or farm god, is discovered to be the cause of the misfortune, the client can take the necessary steps to correct the situation. If sorcery is suspected, then the client will approach a herbalist to acquire medicine to counteract the sorcerer's medicine; if the diviner is also a herbalist, and possesses the necessary knowledge or expertise, he will prescribe the appropriate medicines, but he is now functioning, not as a diviner, but as a herbalist. In cases of suspected attacks by witches, the diviner's function ceases when he has made his diagnosis; the matter is then taken to the god *Brukung*, whose power is then brought to bear on the situation. Diviners, as has been described earlier, can point to the identity of a witch when the aghagesola ceremony has indicated that a witch has been responsible for the death; local diviners may be consulted, but *Shiare* people prefer to consult a diviner outside *Shiare*, where the diviners are held in high esteem;



ing outside Shiare, they are thought to be beyond the powers of the witches, who would try to interfere with the divinatory process to escape detection. Anyanga, in Togo, also has the advantage that the language is closely related to Getwode, thus communication with the diviner can be effected directly, eliminating the need for an interpreter.

. Twins

The Atwode attitude to twins (attana, sg. atta) can be understood only in the context of their beliefs regarding the nature of man, and the elements which combine to form the human person. For the Atwode, man is a composite being, having soul (okala) which is the reincarnation (gelie) of an ancestor. He also has a personality (subun). Interwoven with these features is the idea of destiny (mpaba), which has been decided by god (Wuruboare) and which is beyond the control of man, but which will influence every aspect of his life.

The concept of reincarnation is crucial to the Atwode; a person (subun) cannot exist without a soul (okala), and this is given by god, and is always the soul of an ancestor. Ancestors are continually reborn into the society, which is a cycle of death and rebirth. At the moment of birth, and for some years afterwards, the actual ancestor who has been reincarnated is not known. The outdoor ceremony is a statement of the fact that a new person has been born into the society, that an ancestor has been reborn. When the child is a few years old, the identity of the ancestor will be determined. This is done by consulting Brukung. An ancestor is believed to be reincarnated only within his own subclan

lineage; the only exception to this occurred in 1963, when the chief priest of the Brukung cult, Ntela, died. He belonged to the Awuku clan, and the subclan Gekado; within weeks of his death, one of the wives of Ntanke, of the Chaman, and the subclan Abumbado, gave birth to a son; a consultation was held immediately, and it was revealed that Ntela was reincarnated in the child, who was given the name Ntela. Ntela presided at the initiation ceremony in 1962, when the present priests were initiated, the previous initiation having been held in the 1920s. A chief priest who holds an initiation ceremony is held in the highest esteem; the birth so soon after the death was interpreted as an act of uruboare and Brukung to bring the soul of Ntela into the society, and have the fact known as such. However, such occurrences are rare, and it is generally assumed that the soul of the child will be that of a subclan or lineage ancestor.

When the time is deemed to have arrived to determine whose soul has been reincarnated, the elders of the family will approach the subclan head and discuss the matter; the subclan head will then consult the clan head to arrange for the ceremony to take place. This must be held on gikpaga, the most important day of the Atwode week. The father of the child will offer a white fowl to the god, asking him to reveal the ancestor. The priests will visit the shrine after the ceremony, and present the matter to the god. Later in the day, the father and the elders will be summoned to the clan head's hut, and informed of the god's decision. The clan head will then place on the child, and on the parents, necklaces made of cowrie shells. These are reserved only for

ceremony, and are kept in the shrine. The parents and the child will be admonished to treat the soul of the ancestor with respect, never to neglect it. Throughout his life, the child will be conscious of his soul, and will sacrifice to it at regular intervals.

The equally important concept of mpaba (destiny) is more elusive, more difficult to formulate. A person's mpaba is not of him in the way his soul is, but it is so intimately connected with his life that it is spoken of as if it were part of him. A person's mpaba is determined for him before he is born, and once determined, is regarded as immutable. mpaba is connected with reincarnation. A person lives out a life determined for him; when he dies, and the time comes for him to be reincarnated, it is believed that the soul can ask to have another destiny, have a way of life different from the one previously led. This petition may or may not be granted, but it would seem that tensions can arise during the experience of a new life; though one's mpaba is fixed and determined, this may not be fully understood in its details by the bearer of the mpaba. A person who experiences failures in the course of his life may do so because this is mpaba, or it may be due to other factors. A person who wishes to achieve certain things and does not do so will not know if his mpaba is involved, or if other factors are preventing him from achieving his aims. Thus, though it is believed that a certain course has been mapped out for a person, he will try and change his circumstances to his own betterment and advantage. It is believed that he has little to lose by doing so; if his mpaba has been determined to a certain course of events, there is

he can do to change this, but if he feels that if the
e of his destiny is being hampered, he should do so and
ps discover that it offers more than has hitherto been
lot. It would seem that in one sense destiny is not
:hing static, but something with which one has to work in
:ourse of life, and seek to understand at all stages of
. Though determined, it does not lead to a situation of
eterminism, where man is purely passive; there are
s where the person has freedom of action, and the ambiguity
ension is in the area where personal freedom encounters
fixed actions of mpaba.

Once in a life time a sacrifice must be made to the
sa. The choice of the particular time is left to the
nts of the young man or woman but in practice the ceremony
usually held at puberty or in early adulthood, and
umes the character and function of a puberty rite. There
no explicit rite among the Atwode marking the entry into
lthood. It is accepted that at a certain point in their
sical development children pass from one stage into
ther; in former times, a girl was judged to be ready for
riage when she was able to carry a load of a certain weight
l proportion. This is no longer done. Formerly, pre-
rital sex was not condoned; today, it is common and accepted,
ough still regarded as a breach of custom. But marriage
not be entered into, nor intercourse take place, until
e mpaba ceremony has been performed. For a girl, this
emony is usually held after the marriage negotiations
ve been initiated and agreed upon. In this case the
ligatory white sheep must be provided by the husband-to-be.

is possible that by delaying the ceremony until this point, a father can prevent his daughter from contracting relations with other men, and possibly becoming pregnant, and thus, possibly, preventing her from being accepted by the partner chosen for her by her father, as well as freeing him from the expense of buying the sheep. Virginity is still valued, and ideally a girl should be a virgin when she marries. In other cases, a father may hold the ceremony outside the context of marriage negotiations; this is usually the case when a girl has not been betrothed when she was still a child. In both cases, it marks an important stage in the life of the girl. It is the recognition that a critical point has been reached, not only in the physical development of the person, but in the developmental cycle, that the girl has reached a point when she is ready to leave the parental family and establish a new unit in the society. Marriages are arranged by the families, or the lineage group, but it is becoming more common today for young people to attempt to choose their own partners, but this still must be done within the accepted customary usage of the arranged marriage; a girl may indicate her preference of partner, and this may be accepted by the family, who will open negotiations with the family of the young man. If a girl has already been betrothed, there is no question of her having any other preference. Over the years the husband-to-be has done bride service for his father-in-law, and given small presents to his future bride. If, for any reason, the betrothal is broken, the future husband must be recompensed, which could be costly, and ill feeling could arise between the two families. In the case of a girl who has not

en betrothed, if a father sees that she is more and more frequenting the company of young men, he may deem it wise to hold the ceremony. To have intercourse before the ceremony has been held is not only an act of disobedience, but one which will be punished by mystical sanctions; a child conceived in such circumstances is thought to die, as a punishment, and future children may be affected. Today, when young women have more mobility, and may live outside Shiare, away from the traditional controls and restraints, it is thought wiser to have the ceremony, rather than expose the girl to dangers.

The ceremony for young men is held in the same way, and for the same reason, though two of the ceremonies I witnessed were held for young men of twenty or so; some people say that the penalties for a young man having intercourse before the ceremony are less severe than those for a girl, but there is no general agreement on this point. A man is a potential household head, and eventually lineage and possible clan head; hence the ceremony marks a more important stage for him than it does for the girl. It indicated the beginning of his independence, the beginning of a new role, and the first step towards seniority and possibly ancestorhood. In these circumstances it is possible to grasp the significance of the ceremony, and see it as a rite of passage.

For the Atwode, twins are an anomaly. Formerly, both twins were killed immediately after birth. This is consistent with the Atwode interpretation of birth, and reincarnation. When a baby is born, it is not thought to be full person, and for a short period after birth the soul of the reincarnated ancestor decides whether or not to stay in the world; if the

y dies, it is believed that the soul of the ancestor has decided to return to the spirit world; if the baby lives, it is believed that the ancestor has decided to stay, and the dooring ceremony is held. This view is very similar to that of the Akan. Twins are regarded as abnormal and unnatural; it is not natural for a woman to bear more than one child at a time; animals do this, but not humans. They are abnormal in that they do not fit into the category of human beings. They are believed to belong to a different world from that of humans, having a different composition, possessing spirits unlike those of humans, and possessing powers which are incompatible with human life, and are thus very dangerous. For reasons which the Atwode cannot explain, they have found their way into the human world; the human response is to remove them from the world and return them from whence they came. So they were killed. Anthropological literature contains many instances of the ambiguity and abnormality which surrounds twins; they are usually placed in a special category, and treated differently from normal people (Evans-Pritchard 1956:3;80). Many peoples, like the Atwode, resolve the problem by killing; among some of the peoples living in the vicinity of the Volta River, the twins are cast into the river and drowned. The Atwode used to smear the twins with ground pepper and place them, alive, in an ant hill and left them to die. This was also the custom of the Krachi people (Klose 1902:190).

As in the case of the poison ordeal, this practice was forbidden by the European administrations, thus presenting problems and forcing the society to reinterpret its attitude toward twins. The ordeal allowed to live, but the

iguity surrounding them remained, and, more importantly, did the dangers which they posed to the society, arising from their non-human powers. They belong, simultaneously, to two different worlds. They are accepted in human society, but are excluded from part of it. It is believed that they do not have a soul (okala), in the sense that the soul is that of a reincarnated ancestor; twins are not the reincarnation of ancestors, their origin being from elsewhere. Then, they are believed not to have an mpaba, this being for normal people only; thus they do not have the mpaba ceremony. They enter into adulthood, they marry, but this goes unmarked by the customary ritual, showing that they are outside the conventions and rules which govern the normal running of society. In practical terms, steps have to be taken to contain, neutralise or remove the power for harm which they have. There are several ways of dealing with this problem.

As has been discussed above, misfortunes and ills may arise from a number of causes, which fall into two categories; either from the world of gods, spirits or ancestors, or from society itself in the form of witches or sorcerers; to this latter category twins must be added. Like witches, twins may act involuntarily, but unlike witches, they do not kill or deliberately seek to harm. The diviner will indicate the cause of the misfortune; if twins are found to be responsible, there is a set procedure to be followed. However, when the twins are still very young, parents may seek to minimise the harm of which twins can be the cause, by taking them to the chief priest of the Brukung cult, offering a fowl, and asking the god to prevent the twins' powers from causing any great



a. This procedure is not obligatory, and some do not do because they realise that, belonging to a different order being, twins are governed by different forces.

The normal procedure to remove some misfortune of which ns are the cause is to offer a sacrifice, and this must be formed at a special shrine which is erected for the twins, side the house of their parents. About a year or so after : birth of the twins, the shrine is erected; if there is ready a shrine, the twins are added to it; each twin is presented by a small clay mound. The shrine is erected ether or not the twins are alive. Both twins may die shortly ter birth, one may die, or both may live. Identical twins, d those of the same sex, are believed to be less powerful an non-identical twins of mixed sex. There is a high incidence of twins in West Africa, and few houses are without twin shrine. The following is a description of a twin hrine being erected, and a sacrifice offered, which I witnessed.

Samambia belongs to the Awuku clan, and the subclan epubudo. Malebo is the head of the lineage of which Samambia s a member. Samambia's second wife gave birth to twins, but hey died a few days after birth, without being named. Some onths later, Samambia had a dream, in which he was eating; uring the dream, the twins appeared, and reproached him, asking why he was eating and not sharing his food with them. Dreams are important for the Atwode; Samambia consulted a diviner to discover the significance of the dream, although he was sure that it meant that the twins wanted a shrine erected, and sacrifice offered. This was confirmed by the diviner. Samambia then consulted the elders of the lineage



Plate 18 : Bekapo slaughtering chicken during the building
of shrine to Samambia's twins.

subclan, and they agreed that a shrine should be erected. A sacrifice was offered, and a diviner consulted, to ascertain the twins' wishes. Parents never offer sacrifices to their twins; this is always done by another member of the family, who acts as an intermediary, or, as the Atwode say, the one who 'cares' for the twins. The diviner indicated that the twins wished to have Bekapo as their intermediary; from then on he would always perform this function. Two fowls were required for the initial sacrifice marking the erection of the shrine, one white and one black. It took Samambia some three months to find these fowls. The ceremony was held on the 16th of May 1976, on sogyi, the day of rest in Shiare, a 'bad' day, on which sacrifices to twins and the spirits of the dead always take place.

Most of the lineage were present, and also some elders from the subclan of which the lineage was a part. Malebo, the lineage head poured libation to Wuruboare, Brukung, and the ancestors, asking for their help. Two small mounds of clay had previously been put on the shrine, which, according to the custom, was against the wall of Samambia's house. After the initial libation, Bekapo offered a fowl, which, again according to the custom, he had to present, asking the twins to accept it. He then cut its throat, allowing the blood to drip on to the clay mounds, then rubbed the fowl up and down the wall above the mounds, leaving streaks of blood on the wall; feathers were pulled from the fowl, and stuck on the blood which was now thickly adhering to the wall and the clay mounds; this was repeated with the second fowl. When the sacrifice was completed, libation was poured for the twins,

ering them drink. Twins are never offered spirits, palm e or pito, which is a beer brewed from guinea corn (ayū; ghum vulgare); instead they are offered a 'soft' drink, ch is pito taken from the brew at an early stage in the paration, and lacks the alcoholic strength of the drink ich results from the complete fermentation of the grain. e remains of the fowls were roasted, and distributed among e observers; some parts, including the beak and legs, were aced on the shrine. A small calabash was placed on the rine near the mounds; this was kept filled with water, for e twins to drink, and frequently small coins would be :posited in it, as an offering to the twins. When the remony was completed, palm wine was distributed to the ssembly.

There are some points of interest in this ceremony. First of all, there is the question of the intermediary, who will always be responsible for offering sacrifice to the twins. The role of the intermediary is an important one in Shiare, and is found in a number of contexts. The chief priest is an intermediary between the people and Brukung, who is himself thought of as being in some way an intermediary between god and the people. When pilgrims come to Shiare, they never approach the chief priest personally, but only through the mediation of another priest, who will usually be their landlord. During the daily sacrifices to Brukung, the petitioners never state their petition to the priest who is presiding at the sacrifice; they are presented by another, who informs the priest of the reason why the petitioner wishes to sacrifice. During the agbagesola, the spirit of the



Plate 19 : Twin Shrine.



ceased selects someone who will act, in a sense, as its intermediary with the family and, during the funeral feast, with those of the community who share in it. I am not sure what the exact significance of this mediation is, but in the case of twins, it strengthens and emphasises the semi-divine nature which they are thought to possess. It is significant that sacrifice is offered to twins. Sacrifice is associated with gods, and ancestor spirits, who belong to another world; twins belong to another world, but they live in the world of humans, and share in their activities.

When misfortune is found to be caused by twins, the sufferer will approach the twins' mediator and offer a sacrifice, which is usually a fowl. If it is caused by a twin who is still alive, the sufferer can approach the twin personally, and explain that he or she is the cause of their present misfortune. The twin will agree to remove the misfortune, but demand the customary sacrifice, which will be offered by the mediator. The twin will then provide medicine, which is herbs collected in the bush. There is no standard set of medicines, but each twin is believed to have his own medicines, known only to him, and which only he can prescribe.

Sacrifices may be offered to twins apart from the occasions when they are necessary to remove misfortune; it is considered an act of piety to remember twins, and also as a safeguard against the twins' feeling neglected. As in the case of the earth and farm gods discussed earlier, twins may be asked to use their powers to effect something good or beneficial; this is usually done within the family to which the twins belong.

Associated with twins is the twin doll (atta); this is a wooden effigy about 7 inches high, unpainted except for the head, which is black. They are often found in houses, sometimes on the twin shrine, sometimes lying just inside the door. They represent twins who are dead, and are used in situations relating to where a twin would be, were it alive. Thus some families place the effigy with the other children round the communal dish from which they eat, allowing it to share in the meal. A small portion of food is placed in front of the effigy. Young girls may be seen carrying the effigy either on the back, the way in which a baby is usually carried, or pushed down the front of the dress or cloth. This is explained as helping the mother to carry the child. A woman rarely carries both twins together; normally one will be carried by a daughter of the family, or a girl related to the family. The necessity of having a helper in carrying twins will be readily grasped when it is realised that women carry babies everywhere, even on long journeys. Carrying twins would be difficult; when they begin to grow, it would become almost impossible. The effigies are not made locally, but in Togo.

In an ordered world, boundaries are necessary. People and things belong to certain categories, according to rules which the society has evolved. Classification, the ordering of a society's experience of the world, is necessary if harmony is to exist among the different elements or components of experience. When the different facets which go to make up the totality of experience are thus separated and distinguished, and assigned to categories, with clearly recognisable

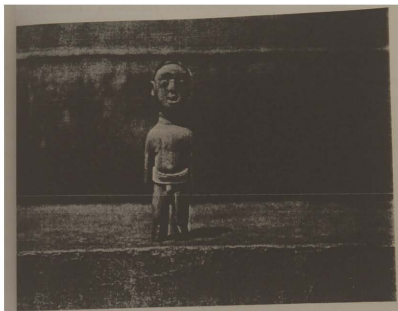


Plate 20 : Twin doll.

boundaries, a set of expectations and attitudes can be determined to govern the relationships which exist between the different categories. What is good or beneficial in one category may be bad or dangerous in another. Therefore what belongs to a certain category must be kept there.

The Atwode have an ordered classified view of the cosmos; powers or forces which are proper to the spiritual world must be kept there. It could be argued that a great part of religious ritual is concerned with maintaining and continually defining boundaries. Divine power is dangerous, and much of ritual is directed to ensure that it remains within its appointed boundaries; it is also necessary, and when it is needed, and it is channelled into society through certain recognised and carefully controlled ways. When divine power, or some other spiritual power, impinges on society, it leads to affliction, either individual or communal. The physical effects are the sign of a deeper cause; when reparation is made, the power is withdrawn, into its own category, and harmony is restored. This pattern is clear with regard to the world of gods and spirits, but not so clear in the case of witches and twins.

In one sense, witches and twins seem to defy classification, or at least any clearly defined category. Witches represent the intersection of two categories, producing a hybrid. The acquisition of witchcraft power nullifies the witch's position in the order of things, hence he is removed from the society. This was done unambiguously by the traditional method of the poison ordeal. Today, as has been shown the situation is not so clearly defined, and to that

extent the categories are less clearly bounded, in that witches are allowed to remain in the society. A somewhat analogous situation has arisen with regard to twins. Twins clearly belong to the domain of the gods; when they find their way into the human world, another confused category results. Again, this was resolved by directing the twins back to their own category, by using the traditional rules. Today, another ill defined category is found in the society. Neither is accepted absolutely. This is particularly so in the case of twins. On the surface, there is nothing to distinguish them from other people. But at a deeper level their ambiguity is clearly seen. Lacking an okala and an mpaba, they are non-human, but otherwise not excluded from human activities. In some ways, the feeling is that they do not belong to the society. A safe, socially approved method of easing them out of the society is to send them to school. This will make them ineligible for membership of the Brukung cult. If they acquire a sufficiently high standard of education, they will leave the town to seek employment elsewhere, and probably settle there. It has been shown earlier that there is correlation between illiteracy and cult membership on the one hand, and education and emigration from Shiare on the other. The principle of compensation is at work here, if only implicitly. What is denied in one area is offered in another. Education is recognised as one of the forces making for change in traditional societies; in Shiare, the influence of education has so far been slight, but it is incompatible with cult membership. The number of children who attended school was, and is, small; why children are sent to school is

not an easy question to answer, but among those enrolled were twins, and those who were not of pure agnatic Atwode descent, and who were thus, technically, excluded from cult membership. In the case of the latter group, the rule of descent, excluding them from cult membership, was not applied consistently; some who should have been excluded on this ground have been admitted. It was stated explicitly that in the case of some, the lineage head sent them to school to allow them to gain skills and techniques to help compensate for the non-Atwode descent. This was not stated explicitly in the case of twins, but it is at least a possibility that the existence of the school is being exploited to help solve the problem created by twins.

As has been shown, the problems which arise today with regard to twins and witches arose directly from European intervention in the area of traditional beliefs. Schooling itself was a result of the imposition of European values; it is thus interesting that the Atwode can exploit one aspect of European influence to cancel out another.

Footnotes to Chapter 5

1. Among the Krachi the high god is Wuruboale (Steemers 1964:1). Among the Nchumuru it is Wuruboare (Lumsden 1973:1). Dr. Lumsden kindly made available to me a copy of his unpublished paper.
2. The relationship of Dente to Brukung, as told by the Atwode, is discussed in Appendix 2, page 354.
3. The days of the Atwode week are:- gikpaga, kpankyeli, sogyi, gimalaga, gigyebi and gikuli. Gikpaga is the most important day, and a 'good' day, on which are held all important rituals and ceremonies. Sogyi is a 'bad' day, and, to a lesser extent, is gigyebi. Twin shrines are erected on sogyi, and sacrifices to the spirits of witches are also performed on sogyi. It is also the day of rest, when no farming may be done.
4. Cf the Akan obusufo (pl. abusufo), meaning a wicked or mischievous man (Christaller 1933:55). Christaller links the meaning of this word with musu, one of whose meanings he lists as 'mischief' (ibid:323). The Getwode forms musu and ibusufo are similar to the Akan forms, and may be derived from them. The significance of musu is discussed in Appendix 2, pp. 370-373.
5. Mary Douglas (1963) in her discussion of the techniques of sorcery control, has shown the problems which can arise when traditional proven methods of dealing with witches and sorcerers, such as the poison ordeal, are denied to a people. She shows how a situation rapidly gets out of control when there are no means of controlling and proving witchcraft accusations. She cites the instance of an old man accused of sorcery, and shows how one accusation led to another, until the man's situation became intolerable. 'One can see how he would be pushed towards welcoming the poison ordeal as a deliverance from his troubles.' (p.133). The symposium in which her paper appears Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa, edited by Middleton and Winter, contains a number of papers which analyse witchcraft in a number of societies, and shows the varying forms it takes, and the different ways it is seen by different societies.

CHAPTER 6

SHIARE AS A PILGRIMAGE CENTRE

The preceding chapters have shown how Shiare functioned on a local level, that is, how it affected the social system of Shiare, and served the religious and spiritual needs of the local community. This chapter will explore the wider or international relevance of the shrine, that is, the shrine as a centre of pilgrimage, and its influence on events and peoples far removed from Shiare. The related phenomena of shrines and pilgrimages will be discussed first.

1. Shrines

A shrine may be defined as 'a receptacle containing an object of religious veneration, or a place where worship is offered to a saint or a deity' (Oxford English Dictionary, Vol.IX, p.779). 'Shrine' has a wide span of referants, and assumes a wide variety of forms, ranging from the elaborate and sophisticated shrines of the major world religions, such as Christianity and Islam, to the simple tree or rock locations which house the divinities or spirits of many traditional religions. Though differing in form and degree of sophistication, shrines have in common the fact that they house, or are associated with, the various mystical and spiritual beings and forces which a society recognises as forming its religious universe. They are associated with what is holy or sacred, and what any society holds as holy or sacred will be defined by and within the society itself. Because of this, shrines may be said to be, in Durkheim's terminology, 'sacred', as opposed to 'profane' (Durkheim 1915:37). This distinction is

seful in that it separates these two important categories, but it must not be taken in too exclusive a sense, as though the categories were necessarily rigidly polarised. What is important in analysing them in a social context is how they are conceptualised and used by the people who live with them, and this will vary from society to society. Far from being rigidly polarised, there may be considerable overlap, and what theoretically belongs to one category may be found in the other. The crucial variable is how they are conceptualised and experienced by the society itself.

As shrines differ in form, so do they differ in function. The formal side of a shrine, as the repository of the sacred or holy, is only one aspect of a shrine. Many shrines are not merely the focal point of religious worship or veneration, but extend their influence into the wider socio-political sphere; this is frequently found in many traditional religions. The precise function of a shrine is determined by examining it in its social context and understanding it as it is seen by the society in which it is found.

Some types of shrine found in Ghana will be discussed briefly, for purposes of comparison with the Brukung shrine. A wide range of shrines is found in Ghana, including ancestor shrines, earth shrines, medicine shrines, twin shrines, and shrines of very local earth and farm gods, such as those found in Atwode, and shrines associated with gods or non-human spirits. These shrines are not mutually exclusive; several may be found together, differing in the use to which they are put, and in the degree of importance or emphasis

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attached to them in any given society.

Ancestor shrines are central in the religious systems of lineage-based societies whose worship is ancestor-orientated. Fortes (1945), has shown the importance of the numerous ancestor shrines found among the Tallensi, and the part they play, not only in religion, but in the socio-political structure of the society. The society is built around the lineage (Fortes 1945:30), and each lineage has a shrine (bɔ̃ɔ̃r) of its founding ancestor, and a shrine (baɔ̃ɔ̃r) to its other ancestors. This is true of the smallest lineage, the minimal, and the largest, or maximal, which consists of all its constituent lineages. A lineage defines itself in terms of descent from its founding ancestor and worships and offers sacrifice at his shrine. The maximal lineage worships at the external Bɔ̃ɔ̃r, the communal shrine of all the ancestors of the clan. The worship of the external Bɔ̃ɔ̃r Fortes calls the apex of the ancestor cult (Fortes 1945:100). Unity of clan and lineage is expressed in terms of the ancestor shrine.

Leadership with lineage and clan is associated with custody of the ancestor shrines. The custodian of any shrine is the most senior man, by generation, in the descent group. In every maximal lineage there is a hierarchy of lineage heads corresponding to the hierarchy of lineage segments and the hierarchy of bɔ̃ɔ̃r shrines. The headship of a maximal lineage carries with it a politico-religious office, symbolised by the lineage head having custody of the focal ancestor shrine of the maximal lineage of which he is head. The Tallensi are



n egalitarian society, and the head of a maximal lineage s primus inter pares, as are all lineage heads, but he as the added moral and religious authority of his office, me to his being identified with the founding ancestors Fortes 1945:225).

The cult of the earth is found throughout West Africa, and is strongly represented among the Tallensi, existing side by side with the cult of the ancestors. The cult of the earth (tɛɣ) is presided over by an earth priest, or custodian of the earth (tandaana). Earth shrines (tɔŋgbana) are found in natural objects, trees, pools, streams, boulders. The earth cult complements the ancestor cult, and like it, is a focal point and expression of clan unity. Earth shrines and ancestor shrines are the two religious foci of clan unity among the Tallensi. 'Together, they constitute the axis, as it were around which the religious ideas and values of the Talis are constructed' (Fortes 1945:80).

Fortes notes an opposition, or fundamental cleavage, between the autochthonous Talis and the invading Namoos, a people of Mampurugu origin, an opposition which expresses itself in the division of ritual and political offices, between priest and chief, with the Talis retaining control of the earth shrines and the Namoos exercising political authority. The opposition between the two groups is expressed in the manner of their dress. The chiefs of Mampurugu origin wear a cloth tunic, a red fez and ride a horse; the earth priests wear skins; cloth, the symbol of status, is forbidden to them. The association of the horse with chieftainship

and political authority is significant, as the horse is the symbol of the conquering might of the invading Moslems. Shrines which remained in the hands of autochthones or commoners expressed their opposition to the non-indigenous holders of political office by imposing a taboo on the horse. This taboo is found at many shrines, including the Tallensi shrine in the Tong Hills, the Gonja shrine of Senyon Kupo and the well known shrine of Dente at Krachi (J.R.Goody 1971:63). 'The autochthones, weaker in military might, were stronger in supernatural power, which served as some counterweight to their political inferiority' (J.R.Goody 1971:65).

Ashanti religious worship is centred on the ancestors, and is closely connected with their highly centralised political system. The stool and the chief are the links between the lineage and the ancestors. Each chief has a stool, the symbol of his political authority. When he dies, sacrifice is offered to his spirit on his stool, which is then said to be 'blackened', and becomes the repository of his soul. The chief becomes an ancestor, and the stool is placed in the stool house, with the stools of his predecessors. Each stool is a shrine, and the stool house itself is a shrine.

The office of chief is both political and religious. At his enstoolment, he is led into the stool house, where, more than any other place, the spirits of the ancestors are believed to dwell. He is raised and lowered three times on the stool of the most renowned of his ancestors, and henceforth he is regarded as being the living embodiment of the ancestors, a sacred person, and the intermediary between the lineage and

the ancestors, without whose aid and support misfortunes could afflict the lineage. The chief himself is responsible for pouring libation and offering sacrifice to the ancestors, and is the central figure during the periodic Aduku ceremonies. Busia calls him Ohene Komfo, chief priest (Busia 1951:28).

Alongside the cult of the ancestors another type of worship is found among the Ashanti, and elsewhere in Ghana, unconnected with ancestor worship, involving a different type of shrine, and associated with the worship of the abosum. These are gods or non-human spirits, believed to be created by and deriving their powers from the high god (Onyame). These gods are numerous, and are worshipped by the Akan and other peoples in Ghana. Some have only a local relevance, but others are well known, and found over a large area, having the status of tribal gods, such as Tano and Fofie. They may inhabit a large range of shrines, but when the god becomes the god of a town or village, and every Ashanti town and village worships one of these gods, its shrine is usually a metal bowl (kuduo). This is temporary abode, which the god enters when summoned by his priest.

Among the Tallensi, responsibility for shrines and their worship was in the hands of lineage heads. In the ancestor worship of the Ashanti, the intermediaries between lineage and ancestors are the chiefs, by virtue of their political office, and the elders, who minister to the stool representing the lineage ancestors. The priesthood associated with the worship of the abosum is organised on a different basis; it is not associated with a specific descent or kin group,



but the priest is believed to be chosen by the god himself, who will show, by certain patterns of behaviour in the person, that he has been chosen (Rattray 1927:40; Busia 1954: 193). Older priests will confirm these signs, and supervise the training of the new priest, who will be subject to strict taboos, learn how to diagnose and treat illnesses, and to intercede with the god on behalf of the people, which is his proper function, and marks him off from other ritual specialists, such as diviners. When his training is complete, he will function as a priest, holding frequent consultations. The form of the consultation varies very little. The priest sits in the hut in which is contained the bowl which will house the spirit of the god. This is placed on his head, drummers will announce the beginning of the ceremony, and the priest will invoke the god, asking him to enter the bowl. If the priest succeeds in entering into a trance, this is the sign that the god has come and taken possession of the priest, and will speak through him; the priest's utterances will be interpreted by a spokesman (okyeame). Each petitioner will enter the hut one by one, state their petition and make an offering, eggs, money or a fowl, and will be given advice and treatment.

Such shrines offer a wide range of services to the whole community, protection from evil and misfortune, such as infertility, failure of crops, and are very frequently consulted. The priest is not directly associated with political affairs, as is the case with the chief, and with the custodians of the ancestor shrines among the Tallensi.

The Brukung shrine at Shiare is generically related to this type of shrine, but differs in some important respects. Many of the abosum shrines may be classed as 'open' or exoteric, in that the petitioners enter the room where the shrine is housed, and establish a face to face relationship with the priest. The Shiare shrine, as has been shown, is closed, and its ritual esoteric, in that the shrine may be entered only by the cult members, the actual form of the shrine ritual being unknown due to the secrecy surrounding the cult. The Shiare shrine is served by a cult, rather than one priest. The most important cult member, the chief priest, is chosen on the grounds of seniority, thereby resembling the custodians of the ancestor shrines of the Tallensi. Brukung resides permanently in the shrine unlike the Akan abosum, which enter their shrines only when summoned by the priest.

Some shrines have only a very local significance, being unknown and having no influence outside their immediate locality. This is the case with, for example, the ancestor shrines of the Tallensi, and the lineage shrines of the Ashanti, which are of immediate interest and concern to those who live in that locality. Some shrines, on the other hand, are well known, and have an influence well outside the locality in which they are situated. Such shrines have a wide occurrence, and are found not only in the major world religions, but in other more traditional religions, such as those found in Africa, e.g. the Tong Hills shrine of the Tallensi, the Senyon Kupo^{shrine}, which had a considerable reputation in Southern Ghana (cf. J.R.Goody 1971:63), and

the brukung shrine at Shiare. The wider influence of such shrines is closely connected with the phenomenon of the pilgrimage.

11. Pilgrimage

There are several elements which combine to form a pilgrimage, which may be summarised as:-

1. Belief in a divinity, or in a person or thing which is associated with divinity, or in an object which is regarded as sacred.
2. The existence of a location, or shrine, where the divinity or sacred dwells, or manifests itself, and where it may be visited or consulted.
3. Motivation to approach the divinity or sacred for a specific purpose, such as petition, expiation, thanksgiving or worship.
4. A journey to reach the shrine.
5. The economic aspect of the pilgrimage. This may be regarded as the material side of the pilgrimage, but is so important as to form an integral part of it. Pilgrims have to be fed and housed, both at the shrine and at various points on the journey. If these facilities were not available the pilgrimage would be difficult or impossible. These facilities, as well as helping the pilgrim, are very lucrative to those who manage them. The shrine itself is also a source of financial gain from the offerings made by pilgrims, and can have a great effect on the economy of the area where the shrine is located.

Pilgrimages are found in a number of forms. Some are highly organized and institutionalized, others loosely so. Some involve large numbers of people, some only a few, some involve only a single person. Motivation may vary, but only within narrow limits, which may be determined by the pilgrim himself, or by the religious system to which he owes allegiance.

Shrines and pilgrimages are built into the structure of the major world religions. Before examining the Shiare shrine, a brief consideration of the pilgrimage as found in Christianity and Islam will be given. These pilgrimages are better known and better documented than those of Africa, and will form a comparative background to the discussion of the Shiare shrine.

1. The Pilgrimage in Christianity

The development of the idea of the pilgrimage, and of the motivation behind it, may be seen clearly when the pilgrimage is traced historically in one religious tradition, the Christian. Here we have an identifiable constant, the pilgrimage, and two variables, the motivation and the shrine, both of which reflect the development and changing emphasis of Christian theology over the centuries.

In the early Church, the idea of the pilgrimage was relatively simple and direct, and arose from the memory of Christ himself, the centre and focal point of Christianity. This found obvious expression in journeys to the Holy Land, to the places directly associated with Christ himself. Thus Jerusalem, Bethlechem and Nazareth are the earliest, and the

greatest, shrines in Christianity. The motivation to visit these sacred shrines was very simple, viz. devotion. It was considered good to offer one's prayers in the places where Christ had been born, had lived and died, but by doing so it was not believed that these prayers were any more efficacious than prayers offered elsewhere. In this early stage, elements such as petitions, especially those for help, which later became central in the pilgrimage, were absent.¹

Very early in the Church's history, another important factor emerged, that of martyrdom. During the first three centuries of the Church's existence, Christians were persecuted, and many died for their faith. This was seen as the supreme act of witnessing, and those who did so were known as martyrs, (the Greek *μάρτυς* = 'witness'). Martyrdom assumed great significance in Christian theology. Two important points are relevant. Firstly, by shedding their blood, the martyrs identified themselves in a very special and literal way with the death of Christ, which involved the shedding of blood, symbolising redemption and salvation. Thus the martyrs are linked directly with the sacrifice of Christ. Secondly, and following from this, it was believed that this act of witnessing i.e. of literally identifying themselves with Christ, led to the martyrs going directly to heaven and being very near to Christ. They thus formed a direct link between Christians living on earth and Christ and the saints in heaven; having lived on earth, and experienced the human condition, it was believed that they could now intercede directly with Christ for the living, and mediate divine

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elp and grace for them. Thus, cults of the martyrs sprang up immediately; the places where the martyrs died became allowed. Churches were built on these sites, if possible over the places where the martyrs were buried. They became shrines, and were cared for by groups of priests and monks, and people flocked to them. These shrines proliferated throughout the early Christian world. People came to establish contact with those who had witnessed with their blood to the Christian faith, and were now with Christ in heaven. Closely associated with this desire for spiritual communication with Christ in the kingdom of heaven was the desire for physical contact with the martyrs, which found expression in the acquisition of objects which had been used by the martyrs, or had in some way been associated with them, clothing, fragments of bones, or objects which the martyrs may have touched. Thus began the cult of relics, which came to play an increasingly important part in the Christian idea of the pilgrimage, at one stage dominating it, and was one of the factors which led to the Protestant Reformation.

The martyrs were the local heroes of local communities, and the cult of many martyrs remained on this very local level, even to this day. But some, whose lives and deaths were of great significance for the whole church, occupied a special position. First among these were the apostles, the first followers of Christ, and the first bishops, among whom Saints Peter and Paul were pre-eminent. They were martyred in Rome, and around their deaths arose a cult which became very

important in Christianity. On the spot where their bodies were buried shrines arose, and then churches. Rome became the centre of Western Christianity, the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, became the spiritual leader of Western Christianity, and also became, as it were, the custodian of the shrine containing the bones of St. Peter, and, as successor to St. Peter, the voice of God on earth.

Gradually, great significance became attached to the miraculous powers attributed to the bodies of the saints and martyrs, and many pilgrimages were undertaken specifically to seek help and ask for favours, and also to obtain relics; the acquiring of relics became a major commercial undertaking. Associated with this was an important doctrinal development in the early Middle Ages, the doctrine of indulgences. Indulgences are remissions for the temporal punishment due to sins, even when they have been forgiven. These indulgences could shorten the time a soul could spend in purgatory; so means of obtaining indulgences became important. Relics became a primary means of obtaining indulgences. Shrines were established, many of them spurious, on the basis of relics alleged to have great powers. Pilgrims flocked to these shrines to gain indulgences, and voluntarily accepted the penances imposed by the custodians of the shrines. Such shrines spread all over Europe, got out of control, and became an abuse and a scandal, because the relics themselves were spurious, and the shrines exploited both the sacred and the pilgrims' piety, for commercial gain. They were attacked and criticised, not only by the reformers, but by the Church itself.

but they still continued to flourish and to attract pilgrims.²

This tendency was in turn connected with the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, a strongly marked feature of the mediaeval Church. Pilgrimages to certain shrines were imposed as necessary conditions for the forgiveness of sins, which thus became the prime motivation for the pilgrims. The Holy Land, Rome, Compostella and Canterbury were among the major shrines to attract these pilgrims.

History played a part in the development of the Christian pilgrimage. Access to the shrines in the Holy Land became difficult, if not impossible, when Palestine was captured by Islam, which was hostile to Christianity. Therefore the shrines had to be rescued, and this gave rise to the Crusades, which were in effect armed pilgrimages, with very strong political overtones. An indulgence was granted to those who took part, and four Crusades marched across Europe into the Near East, motivated by the desire to free the Holy Places and to gain the indulgence, but incidentally plundering and looting as they went.

The pilgrim was a familiar sight on the roads of Europe, with his grey cowl, broad hat and belt, staff, sack and gourd. Travelling was difficult and dangerous, and pilgrims travelled in bands for protection, and they were often armed. The needs of the pilgrims had to be provided for, which led to the emergence of inns and hospices, often run by fraternities in the service of the Church. The Knights of St. John is the oldest Order of Knighthood founded for this purpose; the

Hospices on the Alpine passes became famous. Thus the economic and logistic aspects of the pilgrimage became very important. Pilgrimages are spiritual in intention, but they are also extremely lucrative, and many shrines became very rich because of their popularity. Hence the great reluctance of the shrine custodians to have the authenticity of their relics questioned, or the doctrine of indulgences questioned or challenged. Civic authorities were aware of the great financial advantages of the fairs which had grown up around a saint associated with the town, and they were equally reluctant to have the spiritual basis of their economic prosperity challenged, and possibly discredited. The economic became inseparable from the spiritual; the one complemented the other. An intricate machinery of administration became part of the structure of the pilgrimage.

Thus, by the end of the Middle Ages, the Christian pilgrimage had moved away quite considerably from the pilgrimage as conceived in the early Church. The newer, more complex and highly organized, Church sanctioned pilgrimage, with its emphasis on indulgences and expiation for sin was something which the early Church would probably have regarded as alien. By the dawn of the modern era, the whole idea of the pilgrimage was called into question, as well as the theology underlying it. The reformers attacked the practice of the pilgrimage, and the motivations underlying it. 'They aided no man's salvation', said Calvin. For the Calvinist and the Puritan, pilgrimages were a waste of time and energy that might be better used to demonstrate, in the place where God had

called one, that one has been personally saved, by a thrifty, industrious and pure style of life, with its very strong suggestion of the Protestant Ethic.

But the pilgrimage continued to flourish, but confined largely to Catholicism.

2. The Pilgrimage in Islam

Islam, like Christianity, places great importance on the pilgrimage. As in Christianity, there are many shrines, many with only local significance. But for Islam the greatest pilgrimage, and in some ways the only one, is that to Mecca, the holiest shrine in the Islamic world. In stressing the uniqueness of the Mecca pilgrimage, and because of the very formal and unvarying structure of the pilgrimage, the Islamic conception of the pilgrimage is markedly different from the Christian. It is built into the pattern of Islamic belief in a way not found in Christianity. For the Muslim, the pilgrimage (Hadjdj) is the last of the five pillars of Islam, and is a holy duty incumbent upon every Muslim male of sound mind and body, who has the means to travel and afford the cost of living in Mecca. It is possibly the most formal and institutionalized of all pilgrimages. It must take place during one special month, Dhu 'l' Hadjdj. Special taboos are imposed on the pilgrim; special dress must be worn, indicating that he is a special person, in the holy state of ihram, which lasts until the pilgrimage is completed. Turner (1974), in one of the few studies devoted to the pilgrimage as a social process, draws attention to this important aspect of the pilgrimage, and in his analysis the pilgrim becomes a

'liminal' person, and this state can also be observed in the mediaeval Christian pilgrim, who, like the Muslim, is in a holy state, and marks his withdrawal from the normal world by donning special dress.³

The religious duties which must be performed by the pilgrim are carefully and strictly laid down, and all of them must be observed. The sacred places of Arafat and Mina must be visited; the pilgrims must run seven times between two spots, then walk seven times around the Ka'aba, the sacred black stone in the centre of Mecca.

Before the advent of modern means of travel, the journey was done by camel caravan, took a long time and was very costly. As in the case of the Christian pilgrimage, the economic aspect became an essential part of what was originally spiritual, and an immense network of facilities arose to cater for the pilgrims, which, as well as being necessary, enriched those who managed them.⁴

The elements which were mentioned earlier as forming the general pattern of the pilgrimage, i.e. the shrine with its associated holiness, the pilgrims, their motivation and the economic factors, are clearly seen in the pilgrimage as found in Christianity and Islam. Both religions have much in common; they have a common origin in Judaism, and both are monotheistic, with an emphasis on the after-life. Earthly life itself is seen as a kind of pilgrimage, as a period of trial, the events of which will help to determine the individual's final destiny. This belief colours the idea of the pilgrimage. Both the Christian and the Moslem are

committed to maintaining a grace relationship with God. The motivation of the pilgrimage is two-tiered. The pilgrim is seeking grace, to better the earthly life, and secure the future life. Concern with material things, the concerns of everyday life are theoretically secondary, but are nonetheless important, and cannot be ignored. Both the Christian and the Moslem will ask for favours, cures from illness, help in various ventures, increase in prosperity. But the context of these petitions is that of the otherworld. The will of God and divine providence are ultimate in the Christian and the Moslem experience of life. The fact that a petition is not answered in terms of the pilgrim's expectation is not regarded as a failure, or that the shrine is inefficacious. Ultimately, it is the will of God which determines what is beneficial for the petitioner, and this is recognised and accepted by the Moslem and the Christian, (Islam = submission).

African religious systems are essentially different from those of Christianity and Islam in a number of important respects. They do not teach personal salvation, and are thus not orientated towards life in another world. The believer or practitioner of an African traditional religion has a different set of expectations and attitudes to his divinities, which are very firmly earthly orientated, and often expressed in terms of social values. This factor must be considered as crucial, and must influence views on the nature of god or gods, of the relationship between gods and men, of men in the world, and of men in society. To say that the values of such religious systems are earthly orientated



is not to deny that the adherents do not have a sense of the spiritual, or that they lack a religious life; anthropological research has shown that some peoples do possess such.⁵ What is important is the emphasis, or the use to which religion is put, and for African religious systems the emphasis is on man's immediate environment, which is the world in which he lives, the society and its manifold relationships, in which his destiny has to be acted out. This set of attitudes and expectations influences the shrine, and the pilgrimage as found in Africa.

III Shiare as a Pilgrimage Centre

The discussion of Shiare as a pilgrimage centre will be dealt with in two stages. Firstly, Shiare as a pilgrimage centre, and secondly, an examination of some of the factors which may have helped to make Shiare an enduring and popular shrine.

1. The Consultation Process

I refer to those who come to Shiare to consult the shrine as pilgrims, by analogy with the pilgrim in the Christian and Moslem religious systems. Shiare satisfies the conditions necessary for a pilgrimage centre, and the pilgrims themselves the conditions necessary to allow them to be placed in the category of 'pilgrim'; they are motivated to come to this holy place, and in order to do so have to make an arduous and often expensive journey.

The Atwode language does not have a special word for 'pilgrim'; linguistically, they do not distinguish between a pilgrim and any other non-Atwode person who may be in

iare; all are referred to as asafo (sg. isafo) 'strangers'.⁶ There is, however, little possibility of confusion, as almost every stranger in Shiare is there for the purpose of consulting the shrine.

During the period of my field work between 3000 and 4000 pilgrims consulted the shrine.⁷ These pilgrims represented all walks of Ghanaian life; rich and poor farmer, fishermen, businessmen, a bank manager, shopkeepers, policemen, including senior officers, soldiers, taxi-drivers, teachers, clerks in government service, university students, schoolchildren. Many of the ethnic groups in Ghana were represented, as well as some outside Ghana, though the majority came from the Akan speaking south. Many of these people were well educated, and Christians. The common strand which united them was that they had problems or difficulties, which they wished to present to the shrine.

These pilgrims could be divided into two classes, those who had come to Shiare for the first time to consult the shrine, and those who had already consulted it, and had returned to offer the customary thanksgiving. Both required lodgings, and the question of lodgings may be regarded as the first step in the consultation process, which may be divided into three stages, the pre-consultation stage, the consultation, and the post-consultation stage. In each of these stages the landlord plays an important part.

If the pilgrim has been to Shiare before, he would probably lodge with the landlord with whom he stayed on his previous visit, though he is free to choose any landlord he

wishes. If he is on his first visit, he may arrive in Shiare and enquire after a landlord who has been recommended to him by another pilgrim, or he may simply arrive and state that he has come to consult the shrine, in which case he will be directed to a landlord. Any householder may offer lodgings to a pilgrim, but the landlord is preferably a cult member, for reasons which will become clear. During the period I was in the field, almost every householder was a cult member; due to the recent initiation (1962), cult membership was very high (162 cult members). It was thus easy to find a landlord who was a cult member. Problems would arise when the cult membership declined over the years. I was told that when this happens, as it did in the years preceding the initiation in 1962, non-cult members would act as landlords, but the cult members would conduct the ceremonies in the pre-consultation and post-consultation stages. On one occasion while I was in the field, the brother of the Shiarewura had more pilgrims than his house could accommodate. Two were lodged with the Shiarewura, who, as a non-cult member, took no part in the consultation process, being responsible only for the material wants of the pilgrims lodging with him. Matters concerning the consultation were dealt with by the brother of the Shiarewura.

Although any cult member may act as landlord, and most of them do, there are some men, about 6, whose functions as landlords are such that they have become almost professional landlords, this assuming the proportions of a full-time occupation. They have large houses, which can accommodate several pilgrims. Every day they have pilgrim lodgers,

metimes more than one. Although, like all the men in Shiare, they have farms, they rarely visit them, leaving the bulk of their work to their sons. The question of this all-time concern with pilgrims will be discussed later in the context of the effect of the pilgrims on the economy of Shiare.

The importance of the landlord being a cult member is that not only does he provide the lodgings and food necessary for the pilgrim, the material side of his stay in Shiare, but he also initiates the whole consultation process. On his arrival at his lodgings, the pilgrim will be offered water to drink, will be shown his sleeping place, and asked about his food preferences. This latter point is more than a matter of mere courtesy, but a necessary one, where people from another area may observe certain food taboos. He will be given water for his bath; this may be from the river associated with the god (okpere obung), in which the pilgrim will have to wash once during his stay. If it is not brought at this stage, it will be brought later.

When the landlord has satisfied the immediate needs of the pilgrim, he will raise the question of the purpose of the visit to Shiare. The pilgrim explains the reasons which have led him to come and consult the shrine. The landlord will pour libation, which is provided by the pilgrim, invoking Muruboare and Brukung, asking them to help the pilgrim. He will then inform the clan head, and arrange for him to see the pilgrim. Pilgrims lodging in Awuku clan territory will consult Nana Gesu, the clan head and chief priest; if he

lodges in Cha clan territory he will consult Nana Kulahome. In this respect each clan has equal powers. There is no particular merit attached to a consultation with the chief priest. Early next morning the landlord will escort the pilgrim to the ritual hut (obubele) of the clan head, present him, and the second stage of the consultation will begin.

Each pilgrim will be dealt with individually in the ritual hut. The clan head will be assisted by several elders, and the landlord will also be present. Libation will again be poured, and the clan head will question the pilgrim as to the nature of his problem. He will cover ground already dealt with by the landlord, but will probe deeper, asking questions until he has grasped the problem. Any one of a number of problems may have brought the pilgrim to Shiare, but most of them are illnesses or misfortunes, such as lack of success in business, failures in farming, infertility in women, death of children; in many of these cases witchcraft is suspected.

I was able to discover from some pilgrims why they had come to consult the Shiare shrine. The assistant manager of a branch of the Ghanaian National Trading Coy felt that promotion to a larger branch in one of the larger towns was overdue, and had come to ask the shrine why this was so, and to ask for help in obtaining promotion. A man had brought his sister's small daughter to ask for the cure of a troublesome leg injury. The shrine had been recommended by her husband's sister, who had given birth after consulting the shrine. Janet, a VIth Form schoolgirl, whose father was a prosperous timber merchant from the southern part of the

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Volta Region, was sent, alone to Shiare to seek treatment for a back complaint. Pierre, a medical student from Dakar, Senegal, arrived in Shiare somewhat bewildered. He came to see me, and told me that he had been sent by his parents to report to the priest and offer thanks for his birth, for which the shrine had been responsible. His parents had friends in Accra, with whom he lived for a few weeks, and then came to Shiare, alone. He told me that he did not know what he was expected to do, but that his landlord had arranged for him to see the priest later in the morning. He promised to return and see me before he left Shiare, but he did not do so.⁸

One pilgrim gave me a description of part of the consultation process. John Mensah, from near Mampong, in Ashanti, was the owner of a small contracting business. Over the preceding three years his business had gone badly, and he was losing money. He consulted several local shrines in Ashanti, and was offered advice, but his business did not improve. He told me that he became disillusioned, and suspicious of the motives of the shrine priests. He told me that he felt they had no real interest in helping people, but were concerned only with making money, and he paid out considerable sums for his consultations. He then met someone who had been to the Shiare shrine, which he claimed had solved his difficulties, and advised John Mensah to consult it. So John came to Shiare. He told me that he was most impressed with the reception he received. His landlord, Yaw Mensah of the Wasawasado subclan, was most solicitous for his welfare,

showing him his sleeping place, asking him regarding his food preferences, having water brought for his bath. The landlord enquired as to his problem, sympathised with his difficulties, and assured him that Brukung would certainly help him, that the clan head would present his petitions to the shrine, which would give him advice as how to overcome his difficulties. Even before he consulted the clan head, in this case Nana Gesu, John Mensah told me that he felt confident that the shrine would help him. He felt that Shiare was the seat of a god who was not only powerful, but interested in people and their problems. At this point and during the consultation with the chief priest, there was no mention of money. The landlord and the chief priest concentrated on the problem which had brought the pilgrim to Shiare.

When John Mensah entered the ritual hut, he was told to sit on a goat skin, and the chief priest poured libation, calling upon Wuruboare and Brukung to help the person who had come looking for help. The chief priest then asked questions relating to John Mensah's business, his business dealings, asking whether he had been dishonest, whether he had been negligent in his responsibilities to his family, whether he had been an adulterer, whether he had offended anyone. John Mensah told me of these things before receiving the decision of the shrine, and I did not have the opportunity to see him again, as he left Shiare shortly afterwards, so I did not discover what advice was given to him.

Other pilgrims confirmed the general pattern of questioning. The priest would probe to discover possible causes of



the misfortune which may be latent and undetected, and possibly forcing the pilgrim to assess his relationships and obligations, and recognise possible faults or negligences on his part which may have brought mystical forces into play.⁹

Just before midday the cult members, with the clan heads, all go to the shrine, where the pilgrims' petitions, and any other by Shiaro people that morning, will be presented to the shrine. In the early afternoon, the pilgrims will be recalled, individually, to the ritual hut, where they will be informed of the shrine's advice. Libation will be poured, prayers will be said and medicines will be given to the pilgrims. There is a wide range of medicines (aling) which are used as part of the treatment which is part of the consultation. These range from herbs (afe) which are taken internally, to objects which have the power to protect from harm. These medicines are made by the cult members themselves, and during sacrifices they are placed on the altar and receive blood from the sacrificial animal, imbuing them with some of the power of the god. These medicines are given to the pilgrims with instructions as to their use. Special bodily markings are associated with the cult. Roots are burned and powdered, and marks are traced on the forehead and face. When the cult members return from their daily consultation of the shrine, they always have these markings, a vertical one on the forehead, and two horizontal ones, one on each of the lower temples, running from the ear to the eye. These are placed on the pilgrim while in the ritual hut, and a length of string-like fibre is placed round the neck, which the pilgrim

will wear until he returns home.¹⁰

The priest also issues moral admonitions, which vary with the problem which led to the consultation. If the pilgrim confessed to any kind of deceit or cheating he will be commanded to refrain from this; if adultery to cease this, if he confessed to quarrels or violence, he will be commanded to refrain from this, and be gentle and peace-loving. Pilgrims are usually told to abstain from sexual intercourse for a specified period, which can be as long as three months. It is impressed upon them that these injunctions must be obeyed, otherwise no cure would be effected, and harmful consequences might even result. The pilgrim will then be instructed to return in a year's time to thank the god with a specified offering, if the outcome of the consultation has been successful.¹¹ This marks the end of the second stage of the consultation. If the pilgrim has not already washed in water from the river associated with the shrine, he will do so now.

The pilgrim returns with his landlord to his house, where the final ceremonies will be performed. This involves a ritual washing, again using water from the river associated with the god. Medicines will be applied and supplied, and the pilgrim will be reminded to return in a year's time with his thanksgiving offering. The pilgrim may now leave Shiare, and begin his long walk to Nkwanta, where he can obtain transport. If it is too late in the day, he may spend another night in Shiare, and leave early next morning.

The second class of pilgrims, those returning to thank

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the shrine for the successful outcome of their problems, follow essentially the same procedure, except that their purpose is to thank, not to petition, and a thanksgiving offering will be presented to the shrine. The offering may be a fowl, or one of the more expensive animals, such as a sheep or a goat. Sometimes a cow is demanded as a thanksgiving offering, but the money rather than the animal is brought to the priest. The difficulties involved in bringing a cow to Shiare are many, apart from the fact that they are not bred in the area, due to trypanosomiasis. The animal required will be specified by the clan head. I was unable to discover what criteria they used to relate the animal demanded as a thanksgiving to the problem which led to the pilgrim coming to Shiare.

A frequent cause of consultation is infertility in women. If a woman has a child through consulting the shrine, she is expected, if possible, to bring the child after the statutory year and present it to the shrine as an act of thanksgiving; the child's head will be shaven and the hair placed in a calabash on the path leading to the shrine. If she cannot bring the child, she is expected to bring the hair, which is placed in the calabash. If circumstances prevent her from coming after a year, she is expected to come when she can. I was told that many women return to the shrine to offer thanks for conceiving through the mediation of the shrine. Some were pointed out to me, and I spoke to only one, who lodged with Ntanke, of the Abumbado subclan. She and her husband had returned with the child, which was about

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two years old. The calabash is placed at the junction of the road to the river and the path leading to the shrine, in public view, and I have frequently seen hair in it. I have no reason to doubt that many women did receive help in this matter as a result of consulting the shrine. Frequently the god's name is given to a male child born with his help. A male Shiare child would eventually be initiated into the cult.

Those who return to offer thanks represent the success side of the shrine, i.e. those whose petitions had been granted. To obtain a full and accurate picture it would be necessary to ascertain the number of pilgrims arriving in Shiare, whether they had come to consult the shrine or to offer thanks, and then see if they come back the following year, or even later. The difficulties involved in this are immense. The fact that a pilgrim did not come back the following year does not necessarily indicate that his petition was not granted. He may have been prevented from coming, and some people may delay their thanksgiving offering until they were afflicted by some other misfortune. Two or more years would be required if this were to be done accurately. Many of the pilgrims in Shiare were present at the sacrifices held early in the morning, offering the animals they had brought, and this, added to the many pilgrims who come to Shiare suggest that the shrine has a high success rate. Some of the pilgrims with whom I spoke told me that they had heard of the shrine from other pilgrims, who had been helped by the shrine.

Shiare is splendidly geared to handling pilgrims and

works smoothly and efficiently. There are never so many pilgrims that they cannot all be accommodated. The number of pilgrims varies, and it is impossible to predict how many pilgrims will arrive at any given time, but the flow is affected by the season. There are far more during the dry season, roughly November until April, when the many poor quality roads are firm and dry, and travelling is easier. During this season, when work on the farm is less demanding, more cult members will be residing in Shiare, and able to cater for the pilgrims. But the pilgrims are not evenly distributed throughout the town. Many cult members will have no pilgrims, whereas those few men who have acquired a reputation as landlords will have several simultaneously. These men have large houses, with several rooms, and several pilgrims sleep in the same room. Food is prepared by the wife or wives of the landlord, and his daughters bring water for them from the river. The two clan heads are always in Shiare to deal with the pilgrims. They interview the pilgrims early in the morning, before the sacrifice, but if there is a large number of pilgrims, they will interview them at other times during the day. The pilgrim spends at least one night in Shiare, sometimes two, depending on the time of his arrival and the number of pilgrims to be dealt with by the two clan heads. The pilgrim will rarely spend more than two nights in Shiare, unless his problems demand prolonged treatment. Often, as one set of pilgrims leaves, another arrives. There are many landlords, but only two clan heads, therefore difficulties could arise if there



were more pilgrims than could be dealt with by the two priests. This, so I was told, has never happened to any great extent. The largest number of pilgrims in Shiare during the period of my field work was about 35, including the large group of 29 who came from Cape Coast. They arrived at midmorning one day, and left early in the morning two days later.

The consultation process is smooth and patterned. The pilgrim is dealt with twice by the landlord and the priest, once before and once after the priest has been to the shrine. The movement could be viewed as circular in that the pilgrim enters the system, passes from landlord to priest, who consults the shrine, informs the pilgrim of the shrine's decision, passes him back to the landlord, who completes the consultation process and the pilgrim then leaves the system (Fig. 8). Or it could be seen as pyramidal, with the shrine at the apex (Fig. 9), with the pilgrim moving up from landlord to priest, who enters the shrine with the problem, returns with advice, which he gives to the pilgrims, who then goes down from priest to landlord, who rounds off the ceremonies. In either case it is the shrine which lies at the centre of the process, and the object is to acquaint the shrine with the problem and receive an answer. The part played by the cult member-landlord is important, and an integral part of the process, and he is yet another example of the intermediary which has already been seen as a significant feature in various aspects of Shiare life (p.250).

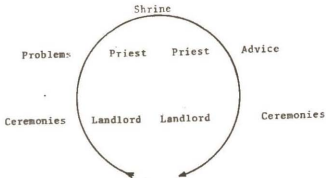


Fig. 8: Schematic representation of the 'circular' view of the consultation process.

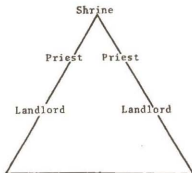


Fig. 9: Schematic representation of the 'pyramidal' view of the shrine.

2. The Economic Aspect of the Shrine

Successful shrines are an economic asset, increasing the prosperity of those associated with the shrine. The Brukung shrine has a considerable influence on the economy of Shiare, but it is difficult to obtain precise information on this point, as this, as is the case with most aspects of the shrine, is a delicate area of enquiry, about which the elders will not speak freely. But it is possible to gain some general facts about the financial benefits deriving from the shrine, supplied by the Shiarewura and some other non-cult members.

There are two classes of people who would seem to profit financially from the shrine, the landlords, for providing board and lodgings for the pilgrims, and the two clan heads, for services provided by the shrine. Regarding the first class, the landlords, the Shiare people say very firmly that Brukung does not allow pilgrims to be charged for their stay in Shiare; the shrine is there to help people. However, this could be interpreted to mean that the landlords do not charge in the sense of asking for a fixed sum, or for asking anything at all, and money is offered to the landlord. It would seem that the amount is left to the pilgrim himself. On some occasions I have seen money being given by pilgrims to landlords; on two occasions £10 (ten cedis, about £5.00), which would be regarded as handsome. Since payment would seem to be left to the pilgrim, the amount offered will vary, but it must be seen as profit to the landlord, as the only expense which he incurs is food, which is usually yam from

his own farm. Pilgrims who wish to show appreciation of their reception by the landlord may express this by making a generous offering. A landlord who caters for many pilgrims, as some landlords do, will thus derive a substantial income.

The method of payment for the services offered by the shrine is more difficult to establish, as are also the amounts involved. I was told that money is offered to the two clan heads. This money is distributed among the cult members of the respective clans, with the clan head retaining a higher proportion than that offered to the cult members. In this way the cult as a whole benefits from the shrine. The amount of money each member receives will vary, depending on the number of cult members. At the present moment, when the cult has a high membership (162 members), the money is being distributed among a large number of people, each member receiving a comparatively small amount. As membership decreases over the years, the money will be circulating among a smaller membership, with more money coming to each member. From a financial point of view, there is an advantage in having a small membership, though this could be offset by a very small group having to cope with fairly large numbers of pilgrims. However, a steady flow of pilgrims ensures a regular amount of money coming into Shiare.

The financial gains deriving from the shrine are reflected in the lifestyles of some cult members. Apart from farming, there is no full time occupation in Shiare; cult membership is combined with farming. The only exception to this is the case of the two clan heads, who, ex officio, are

always in Shiare in attendance on the shrine. In any case they usually become clan heads when they are elderly, when they would be unable to do much work on their farms. However, as mentioned earlier, some cult members were engaged in the activities of landlords to the extent that they could be regarded as having a full time occupation centred around the shrine. There are six of these; Mbowura Ayor, the mankradu, is the oldest, and head of the Gblese subclan, the others being younger, and with the exception of Malebo, who is head of a lineage in the Gepubudo subclan, have no particular status in their subclans. These men spend little time on their farms, apart from short periods in the planting and harvest seasons, devoting most of their time to catering for pilgrims. That this is financially rewarding can be seen from their wives and homes. They all have large houses, two of them, Donkor and Malebo, having three, with concrete plastering and zinc roofs, both of which carry great prestige and are expensive. Each of them has at least three wives. Their access to the money derived from the shrine has enabled them to build houses for their wives and younger children in other parts of the subclan territory, with the main large house being used by the husband himself and his older unmarried sons. Because of their size, these houses are able to accommodate several pilgrims simultaneously, and their several wives are able to cook and cater for the pilgrims. The system is, in a sense, circular. The financial gain from the shrine allows for expansion in terms of building, which can accommodate large numbers of pilgrims, who in turn use these facilities, thus bringing in more money. If this analysis

is correct the system depends on the pilgrims themselves, who are at the centre of the whole operation.

But the financial implications arising from the shrine are not confined to Shiare. Two of these landlords who are engaged in full time activity with pilgrims have ventured into cash cropping outside Shiare. (Mbowura Ayor is not included here, as his cocoa farms in the Buem region, near Jasikan, were acquired before his return to Shiare and his acceptance into the Kankamado lineage (pp 97-98)). These two men have acquired tracts of land, still within the Atwode Traditional Area, bordering the new road which links the south with the northern region, and have undertaken large scale yam farming. Because of their activities as landlords, they are unable to supervise the farm work personally, but employ migrants from the north, mostly Konkomba, who work under the supervision of the landlords' kinsmen, who live in Nkwanta. As these farms are very near the road, it is easy to have the yams transported to the markets in the south, where the yams of this area are prized.

Such ventures are rare in Shiare, and I believe they were made possible by the economic aspects of the shrine. These men were initiated into the cult in 1962; from that date they would begin to act as cult-member-landlords and receive money from the shrine. Their houses were built or extended around 1970, and their cash cropping began in 1973 or shortly afterwards, when they would have been able to accumulate enough money from their association with the shrine for these purposes. It is significant, I believe, and not coincidental,

that the men who have branched out into cash cropping are those who work as full time landlords.

The shrine also affects Shiare, financially, in other ways. Pilgrims who have returned to make thanksgiving offerings require the appropriate animals. Many bring their own fowls, but goats and sheep are bought locally, either in Shiare, or sometimes in Nkwanta, to the obvious advantage of the local people, who are in a position to charge their own prices.

IV. Shrines: Success and Failure

A point of interest connected with a discussion of shrines is the question of why some shrines endure and retain their popularity, while others decline; why are some shrines successful and others not, or simply, what makes shrines work? The issues involved are complex, and depend on many factors. Possibly no definitive answer can be given to these questions, but any attempted answer must be sought within the religious system itself, in terms of its beliefs and practices.

'Shrines are evaluated among other things for what they can and what they cannot do, in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, the degree of power or efficacy' (J.R.Goody 1975:92). Shrines are a means of communicating with the supernatural, and a shrine will be successful if a good communication is achieved. Shrines are expected to be effective, that is, to produce results. What constitutes a 'result' will depend on the nature of the religious system itself and the expectations of the supplicant. African religious systems are essentially dissimilar to those of

Christianity or Islam, in a number of important respects, as has been shown, particularly in the important area of the nature of the relationship of god to man. The Christian or Moslem sees himself ultimately as subject to the will of god, which is inscrutable. The Christian will seek a certain end, or benefit, and will employ the means taught by his religious system to gain that end, which he will be able to define with some precision, and which will be readily recognised by him if it is granted in the terms which he has defined for himself. The result may be otherwise; in non-religious terms, the petition may not have been granted, but within the religious system itself, another explanation is possible. This would be to view the matter in terms of the will of god, rather than in terms of the more limited view of the needs of man.

This point of view would not be acceptable in African religious systems. Gods, as conceived within these systems, function differently, are not inscrutable, and do not refuse human requests merely because they choose to. When a petitioner consults a shrine, he has a problem which he wants answered, and he is clear as to the terms in which he wants it answered; his attitude is purely empirical. He knows what the shrine claims to offer, and the procedures necessary to ensure that the god is approached in the right way. When what the shrine offers coincides with the needs of the petitioner, and his problem is solved, then the shrine is successful. If the problem is not resolved in terms of the petitioner's expectations, then the shrine may be said



to have failed.

Explanations for this will be sought, but not in terms of the Christian teaching on the will of god, but in terms of ideas built into the traditional religious system. There are several possibilities in this situation. If the possibility that the gods do not accede to a request is excluded, and if the necessary conditions are fulfilled, such as prayers in the correct terms and offerings are made, then explanations cannot be sought in terms of the inscrutable freedom of choice, but elsewhere. Such explanations are readily found. It could be due to the interference of another, more powerful god, or the ritual expert may have wrongly diagnosed the god or other force responsible. Or depending on the ideas prevalent in the society, the failure may be due to deficiencies in the officiant, or in the conditions imposed by the shrine, or in the ritual surrounding certain aspects of the shrine or oracle, or whatever means are employed by the society to mediate and communicate with the gods. Failure is not a reflection on the religious system itself, but on other factors related to the system.¹²

Because of their position in the social structure, gods and shrines cannot fail; the implications of this would be very profound. Gods serve many purposes; they 'introduce unity into diversity, simplicity into complexity, order into disorder, regularity into anomaly' (Horton 1970:134). They help man to understand and interpret the world in which he lives. To challenge the gods is to challenge the natural and the supernatural order. The implications would also be

elt in the political sphere, depending on the nature of the political system. Where a shrine is unrelated to the political structure of a society, to challenge it would not be to challenge or threaten the political order directly. However, where religious and political authority are coterminous, as is found for example in Atwode, a challenge to the god would be a challenge to the whole social and political order. Gods are concerned with the collective good of society, but also with individual private interests, provided that these are not contrary to the common good of the society. Thus a shrine may fail an individual, or individuals, without suffering any loss of prestige, or without damaging the social order. If it were to fail collectively, then the consequences could be very damaging. A shrine which is a pilgrimage centre, such as that at Shiare, is viewed differently by the Atwode and by the pilgrim. For the Atwode, the shrine represents the centre of his life, and the principle which gives it order and meaning his view of the shrine is wide. For the pilgrim, the shrine offers help and protection in matters which are of interest to him personally; his view of the shrine is limited. He is concerned with only one aspect of the shrine. If his petition is granted, for him the shrine is successful; if it is not granted, then for him the shrine has failed. Not being a member of the local community, he may not necessarily be aware of or concerned with the wider significance of the shrine in the life of the Atwode. If the shrine were to lose credibility as a pilgrimage centre, its effects would be felt in Shiare, in view of the economic importance it has



or the Shiare people, but it could still retain its significance for the Atwode. Equally, if the shrine ceased to mean anything for the Atwode, it would probably cease to attract pilgrims.

Connected with the consultation of shrines is the question of the alternatives offered by a religious system. Although the Christian may ask for material benefits or favours, the overriding consideration is the will of God, which may not coincide with the immediate needs of the petitioner. In traditional African religions, visible tangible results are demanded. If these cannot be obtained at one shrine, they may be sought at another; this is one of the features built into the polytheistic world view. When a Christian fails to receive the answer he expects, he can account for this by his beliefs concerning god. Lack of success at the shrines of traditional gods can be investigated, analysed and corrected. What is beyond the competence of one god may well be within the competence of another more powerful god. Underlying this is the theory that the gods can be coerced or manipulated. Horton (1960:212 ff), in his discussion of this question, has suggested that there are two polarities in the relationship between men and gods, that of communion and that of manipulation. His model is based upon observed interpersonal relationships among people. Broadly speaking, Christianity and other major world religions will be found operative at the pole of communion, and traditional religions at the pole of manipulation. These relationships should not be regarded as being completely polarised. Horton adds that

between them there is a continuum of relative importance of the communion and manipulative aspects of the relationships, and on this continuum can be plotted the relative emphases which any religious system will give to the aspects of the man to god relationship. World religions are not free from the suggestion of coercion, and some traditional religions contain strong elements of the communion aspect. If it is granted that the traditional religions are nearer the manipulative pole, it would seem to follow, paradoxically, that gods and other forces, which in some ways are superior to men, are in some way under the control of men, though this would not necessarily be seen as a paradox.

The question of failure with regard to some shrines must be seen as relative; the level of failure must be seen in its context, and assessed as such. But some shrines do fail, or lose credibility, but the reason for this may be outside the immediate context of simple failure to answer specific problems. It is possible that few shrines fail for this reason alone; failure on one level, or in one set of circumstances, e.g. as a pilgrimage centre, does not necessarily imply failure on a local level, e.g. as a factor underpinning cohesion and solidarity in a local community, or of segments within it. A shrine may fail because it has ceased to be relevant to changing needs within a community, or because it has been superseded by other means of achieving the goals or aims of any given society.¹³

However, the question of producing results is still an important factor in assessing the reputation and popularity

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of a shrine. Anthropologists have commented on the possibility of manipulation within traditional religious systems, and so indeed have those who use them. Where this is so, blame is not necessarily placed on the god or the shrine, but on those who control and minister to the shrine. This can be shown in the case of the type of god worshipped in Ashanti. As has been discussed earlier, the relationship of the priest to the petitioner is that of the face to face type. The priest is a member of the local community, and has an intimate knowledge of local affairs. He will have ties of kinship and affinity with many people in the community. This is a decided advantage, which can be used and exploited when the priest is called upon to deal with problems which are presented to him. Being familiar with the areas of tension and conflict within the community, he can point to these in his diagnosis, and in his treatment of the case. On the other hand, his close association with the local community can have its disadvantages. His own personal faults and defects will be known to the community, and may well lead to a loss of confidence in him as mediator between the people and the god, and his replacement by another priest.

This intimate knowledge of local affairs is not available to shrines such as that in Shiare, which draws pilgrims from great distances. Studies of such shrines have revealed that some of them may employ some technique of manipulation to ensure that they can provide results, and thus ensure the credibility of the shrine. Whittaker (1965:38 66) has suggested the possibility of this in his discussion of the

shrine of Mwari, in the Matopo Hills, in Zambia. The Mwari shrine resembles the Shiare shrine in certain respects, in others it differs. It resembles Shiare in that it is highly structured, and has attracted many pilgrims due to its reputation as an oracle; like Shiare, it played an important part in the political events of neighbouring states, and also it has given identity to the people of the Matopo Hills, who define themselves in relationship to the shrine. It is unlike Shiare in that it is differently organised in terms of the cult associated with the shrine. One of the features found associated with the Mwari shrine is a group of devotees known as the 'children of Mwari', who are scattered throughout the land, and represent the major shrine in local cult centres, a feature which is absent from the Shiare shrine. According to Whittaker, they also provide what he calls an 'information service', which is fed back to the main shrine, providing an 'intelligence service'. They act as intermediaries for local communities, are often at the main shrine, where they intercept pilgrims, inspect their offerings and engage them in conversation, sometimes for several days, before passing them on to the oracle, thus preparing them for the consultation, but also acquiring information which would be useful in treating the problems or difficulties which led to the consultation.

This feature is not found associated with the Shiare shrine, though it is found with the Brukung cult in Dahomey (Herskovits 1938:103). The Shiare shrine does not depend upon an information service. As has been described earlier,

part of the consultation process in Shiare is the questioning of the pilgrim, which would seem to be a legitimate, and even necessary part, of the consultation, and one which the pilgrim would expect. Priest and god must be in possession of all the relevant facts in order to make an accurate diagnosis and indicate the precise treatment necessary to remove the problem. It could be argued that the shrine priest does not need a detailed knowledge of local conditions; experience would have told him that the difficulties and problems which led the pilgrim to Shiare could be reduced to a few well defined areas; witchcraft could be predicted fairly easily, kinship tension and rivalries, personal feuds. This, plus what is learned from the pilgrim prior to the presentation of the case to the shrine, would be sufficient for the priest to make an accurate diagnosis in the majority of cases. This may fall under the heading of manipulation, but it is an accepted procedure, and one which is practised in situations well outside the context of African shrines.

Shiare has never lost its reputation as a pilgrimage centre, and, given the context of the belief system in which it operates, it may be possible to indicate some factors which contribute to the success and popularity of the shrine. First of all, there is the actual geographical location of Shiare, which is isolated in the hills. To reach Shiare, one has to undertake a long and tiresome journey, even though much of it is now done by lorry rather than on foot, and involves some financial outlay. The journey may take some days, especially in the wet season, when travelling on bad

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roads aggravated by the rains can be slow. The final stage of the journey must be done on foot, up the mountain. Such conditions may well help to make the pilgrimage meaningful. Shiare has adapted itself extremely well to cope with pilgrims; the function of the cult member/landlord, with the strong emphasis on personal attention, has been discussed, and commends itself to the pilgrim. Some pilgrims told me that this feature of Shiare meant much to them; they had taken their problems to local shrines, with no success, but which had cost them much money. They told me they felt that the Shiare shrine, and the priests, were interested primarily in helping people rather than in making money. The fact that the shrine was served by a priestly cult, and that the pilgrim was not allowed to enter the shrine, may contribute to the reputation of the shrine; since the ritual within the shrine is esoteric, the person of the chief priest becomes very important, as he is the mediator between the divinity and the pilgrims. But the actual consultation with the chief priest, or Cha clan head, is brief, and is restricted to two occasions. For the remainder of his stay in Shiare, the pilgrim is attended to by the cult member/landlord, who initiates and completes the consultation process. The pilgrim is, as it were, drawn into a sacred circle, but he is not allowed to enter into the centre of the circle. He is brought into the circle by his cult member/landlord, which leads to the consultation with the appropriate clan head; the climax of the consultation is the consultation in the shrine itself, after which the circular movement moves back to its starting point, with the

second consultation with the clan head, then back to the cult member/landlord, then the departure from Shiare. This whole process would confirm that the pilgrims' problems are being treated with great care and attention. Pilgrims returning to Shiare to thank the shrine for benefits received help to prove its efficacy. Those whose requests have not been granted will not return to thank the shrine, so pilgrims arriving for the first time meet only previous petitioners who can testify to the efficacy of the shrine. Many of the pilgrims who come for the first time do so on the recommendation of others, who testified to the shrine's ability to help, and this is confirmed in Shiare itself when the pilgrim meets those who have returned to offer thanks.

Shiare is an ancient shrine, with a reputation which is well established, and this must always act in its favour in the mind of the pilgrim. Shiare formerly was consulted by the Ashanti and the Dagomba, factors which would have enhanced its reputation.

Footnotes to Chapter 6

1. 'Early Christianity had no temples or sanctuaries. God was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth anywhere. It was the memory of Jesus that made shrines of the places which marked stages of his life'. (Hall 1965:2). Sumption (1975:22-23), quoting from a letter of A.D.156, shows how the Christians of Smyrna gathered the bones of their martyred bishop Polycarp and laid them in a suitable place, where they could gather together to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom. There was as yet no question of petition or miracle working, only veneration. The cures and other miracles later associated with the relics of saints did not begin until the late 4th Century, after Christianity was declared to be a tolerated religion by Constantine (A.D.313). St.Jerome (342-420), who lived in Bethlehem from 386 until his death, maintained that prayers said in the holy places were no more meritorious than prayers said elsewhere. He reacted against the cult of relics and the seeking of miracles, and was reflecting an earlier attitude to the holy places when he wrote "the sites of the crucifixion and resurrection are of value only to those who carry their cross daily and rise again with Christ, and show themselves worthy to live in these holy places. Those who repeat 'temple of the Lord, temple of the Lord' should listen to the words of St.Paul 'you are the temple of God, and the Holy Spirit lives in you'. The heavenly courts are open from Jerusalem to Britain". (Jerome 1951, vol.3, p.76). He tells a certain Desiderius, who is planning a journey to the Holy Land, that it is good, and part of the faith, to worship at the places where the feet of our Lord stood, and to venerate the places of the nativity and passion of Christ. (Jerome 1951, vol.2, p.115).
2. The place and importance of relics in the Middle Ages is discussed in great detail by Sumption (1975). Chapters 2 and 3 of his book trace the origins of the cult of relics, and the miracles claimed for them. Finucane (1977) also discusses the question of relics and shrines in the Middle Ages. He selects seven English shrines, and using the records kept by the shrines, examines the type of pilgrims who consulted them. He shows that the miracles and cures claimed for the shrines tend to be related to the sex and social class of the pilgrim, and that different shrines attracted their own social types. He examines all the aspects of the shrines he analyses, and shows how they are related to the social, political and economic needs of the pilgrims, as well as the religious.
3. The liminal aspect of the pilgrimage, as analysed by Turner (1974) is more marked in the Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca than in contemporary Christian pilgrimages. The form of the Moslem pilgrimage has remained unchanged, and

the special mode of dress is still retained, thereby immediately identifying the pilgrim as belonging to a special class, having left for a period his normal social life and obligations and having become a member of new social group with a new series of relationships and obligations, which will last until the pilgrimage is completed, when the pilgrim will resume his normal social activities.

4. Birks (1978) has analysed the pilgrimage to Mecca from one area, West Africa. He describes this pilgrimage as 'a complete society on the move, with its particular institutions and infra-structure shaped in order to facilitate travel and the hajj (pilgrimage)' (p.ix). In Chapter 9 he discusses the financial aspects of the pilgrimage.
5. Cf, for example, Evans-Pritchard's remarks on Nuer religion, which he describes as a religion of hope and comfort (1956:312). He finds in Nuer religion 'a distinctive kind of piety which is dominated by a strong sense of dependance on God and confidence in him rather than in any human powers and endeavours... it is an intimate personal relationship between man and god. This is apparent in Nuer ideas of sin, in their expressions of guilt, in their confessions and in the dominant piacular theme of their sacrifices' (*ibid*:317).
6. The Atwode use different words to refer to different classes of people. People in general are asa (sg. isa). The Atwode are Atwodenyeng (sg. Otwodenyeng). Shiare people refer to those Atwode living in the towns situated in the lowland as Asetang (sg. Osetang). All other people are asafo, strangers.
7. This is an approximate figure, and a conservative one. There may well have been more pilgrims in Shiare over the period. The figure was arrived at by counting the number of pilgrims in Shiare on certain days during the period of my field work, and on the basis of these samples estimating the number for the whole period.
8. The question of Pierre, who spoke French and some English raises the question of how the cult dealt with the language problem. Shiare people simply say that all languages are spoken in Shiare. Most of the cult members speak Twi, which allows them to communicate with the large numbers of Akan speakers who consult the shrine. Some elders also speak Ewe, Gbanyito (Gonja), Dagomba and Konkomba. I was told that if a landlord could not speak the language of the pilgrim, he would call in a cult member who could, and who would thus act as interpreter, and would accompany the pilgrim and the landlord to the clan head before and after the shrine consultation. The pilgrims' confidences are respected, and the interpreter is also bound to honour these confidences. But some of the preconsultation



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questionings took place openly in the landlords' houses, and could be overheard by people in the house, or by passers-by. I was informed that pilgrims, especially those who shared the same lodgings, would discuss their problems among themselves. This was a matter for the pilgrims themselves. It is possible that there would be no objection to a non-cult member, who is a devotee of the shrine, could be called in as an interpreter, if the pilgrim has no objection. I did not discover what language was used in the case of Pierre, who did not speak any Ghanaian languages. There are some non-cult members who frequently consult the shrine and speak English, who could have been used as interpreters.

9. Questioning the pilgrims was a delicate task, and presented problems. I was always conscious of my position in the town, and of the sensitivity of the cult elders regarding the shrine and anything associated with it, so I could not ask the pilgrims directly why they had come and what their problems were. I could not expect them to tell me their problems, and among other things, good manners demanded that I should not raise the matter myself. However it was possible to gain information. Some pilgrims, who were obviously surprised to see me in Shiare, came to greet me and ask why I was in the town. When I had satisfied their curiosity I could then ask why they had come, and thus gained some information. On other occasions, when visiting the elders, I would find pilgrims lodging there, and, after the greetings, if an opportunity presented itself, I raised the question of their presence in Shiare. If they were reluctant to answer, I would cease my questioning. Sometimes the Shiarewura or Nick Awuku Abby would tell me why certain pilgrims had come to the shrine. This information was known to them from the general conversation of the pilgrims, outside the context of the consultations, and was not seen as a breach of confidence.
10. An example of how secretive the cult members are regarding the cult was provided when I asked Manase, a cult member with whom I became very friendly, how the black powder used to make the cult marks was made, and if a special person was appointed to apply it. Manase smiled, shook his head and told me that he was not allowed to say. He remarked that the cult marks belonged to the Brukung cult, and that the plant used to obtain it was given by God (Wuruboare).
11. The young girl Janet told me that sexual abstinence was enjoined on her. The Shiarewura told me that other pilgrims had said that they had been told to refrain from sex for three months. The fact that pilgrims had to return with a thanksgiving offering after a year was common knowledge in Shiare.
12. E.g., the Zande will attribute failures of the oracle to a variety of factors, the wrong variety of poison having

been gathered, breach of taboo, witchcraft, anger of the owners of the forest where the creeper grows, the age of the poison, anger of the ghosts, sorcery or use (Evans-Pritchard 1937:330). Goody points out that there are a number of ways in which potential disillusionment in some types of medicine shrines may be circumvented. 'A common procedure is to attribute the false prophecy to the actor's failure to comply with the prescriptions of the shrine in question. He has failed to observe the ritual prohibitions and by his sin has forfeited the support of the supernatural agency' (1957:160).

13. This point is discussed by J.R.Goody (1957), in the context of medicine shrines. Barbara Ward (1956) argues that an increase of witchcraft accusations in Ashanti had led to an increase of new anti-witchcraft shrines, which themselves were an index of anxiety as a result of rapid social change. Goody challenges the assumptions made by Ward, and her conclusions. He points to the important fact of the circulation of shrines, which had been a feature of Ghanaian religious systems before European influence became an important factor in the Gold Coast. He also suggests that witchcraft itself had not necessarily increased, but that the increase of witch-finding cults could be the result of the disappearance of the more traditional methods of witchcraft detection. These shrines, he suggests, are not new; the class of medicine shrines had always been present, particular shrines arising and disappearing. 'These shrines were waxing and waning in importance. That they do so is an indication of how loosely they are tied up with the system of social groups' (Goody op.cit.:359). 'One shrine becomes successful, another fades out. The inhabitants are very pragmatic about such things. If one shrine appears to be effective they take it up. If it fails them, they drop it. The next man's shrines, whatever 'faith' he may profess, are as good as one's own; better, if they are more successful' (Goody op.cit.:359).

CHAPTER 7

THE YAM FESTIVAL (GYOGYI)

This chapter will discuss the yam festival, the most important ritual associated with the shrine. Part I will describe the ceremonies themselves, and Part II will comment on their salient features.

I. The Yam Festival

The yam festival is a complex of ceremonies; each of the component ceremonies is recognisable in itself, but depends on its place in the structure of the yam festival to give it meaning. The festival is held towards the end of the wet season, usually about the beginning of September, when the old yams are finished, and the new yams are ready to be dug and eaten. New yams may not be eaten, or brought into the town, until the ceremony has been performed. To do so would be to expose the town to mystical danger, and breaches of this rule are punished by the fine of a sheep. The period between the end of the old yams and the eating of the new ones is one of privation for the people, when they talk of hunger, even though they have cassava, cocoyam, maize and rice. It is the yam which is regarded as the staple food. Two kinds of yam are grown, the white yam (Dioscorea rotunda), and the water yam (Dioscorea alata); it is the former which is referred simply as the 'yam' (gegyo), which gives its name to the yam festival, gyogyi (literally, 'eating yams'). The water yam, though widely grown, is regarded as inferior.

There are two ways of eating yam; the first is to cut it

into thick chunks, or into slices, boil it and eat it with a meat or fish soup (ipo); this is called busa, or in Akan, ampesi. The second is, after boiling, to pound the yam until it becomes a thick almost gluey mass, which is put into the soup, and is known throughout Ghana as fufu, and in Getwode as gepale. The latter way is the preferred and more usual way of eating yam.

The yam festival is held in every Atwode town, with Shiare, the chief town and seat of Brukung, holding it last. The date of the Shiare celebration is determined by the chief priest, and the other towns arrange theirs accordingly. Every town holds the festival on gikpaga, the first and most important day of the Atwode six day week. The festival lasts four days, but only the first and last are significant, as ceremonies are held only on these two days.

The ceremony takes place outside the ritual hut (obubele 'big house', or okpere obu 'house of the god') of the chief priest. In this hut are kept ritual objects pertaining to the cult, the most important of which is the Brukung gegyakpa, the stool of Brukung, which is the centre of the first day's ceremonies.

1. The First Day : Nde busa (the day of the Busa)

Early in the morning, new yam was cooked by four elderly women, known as nnsibide, two from each clan, who are chosen by the clan heads. Other women assisted but these four were the principals in the matter of ministering to the stool. While they were preparing the yam, a crowd had gathered in the space in front of the hut, and in the



narrow alleyways adjoining it. The ceremony began about eight o'clock, when Nana Gesu, the chief priest, emerged from his hut, accompanied by Nana Nkimile, head of the Gekado subclan, and the next senior man in the Awuku clan. Nana Gesu sat on a stool in front of the hut, with Nana Nkimile on his right. They were joined soon afterwards by Nana Kulahome, head of the Cha clan, who was accompanied by Nana Amese, head of the Denteso subclan, and most senior man in the clan after Nana Kulahome. Nana Kulahome sat on the left of Nana Gesu, with Nana Amese on his left. Each priest had a fowl, which would be sacrificed later. When the priests had settled themselves, the four elderly women who had prepared the yam entered the hut and brought out the stool of Brukung, and a stone base, on which the stool would be put later. The stool may never be handled by men. The stool was placed between the two priests, and the women removed the two white cloths which covered it, exposing the stool and the remains of the previous year's sacrifice. The stool is made from a very heavy wood, is between 18 inches and 2 feet high, and is shaped like an hour glass; it is decorated on its narrow waist with strings of cowries shells (Plate 21). The remains of the previous year's sacrifice were cleared away, the the first ceremony, the washing of the stool, began.

One of the women was deputed to wash the stool; the office is held by this woman until she dies. She brought from the ritual hut a calabash (Brukung gewe), which is specially reserved for this ceremony, containing water from the okpere obung, the river associated with the god. She washed the

ool with a locally produced sponge (Brukung kuka). While he was washing the stool, the other women knelt down. I saw the yam festival twice. On the first occasion, Mbowura, the mankradu, left his place on the bench on which he is sitting with some of the elders and approached the women, washing and shouting at them. I learned afterwards that some of the women around the stool were not kneeling properly, and some of the elders objected to this. When this had been corrected, the ceremony continued. The woman washed the stool very slowly, the others chanting in low voices.

When the stool had been washed, the chief priest entered the hut and brought out a calabash of palm oil, which he handed to one of the women. The fowls brought by the clan heads were now slaughtered, by the chief priest, over the stool, the blood being allowed to fall on the surface. The fowls were then handed to the women, who collected the remainder of the blood in small calabashes. While the fowls were being slaughtered, the chief priest prayed, invoking Wuruboare (god), Nana Brukung, Gagon (the god worshipped in Chilinga, and believed to be the son of Brukung), and some of the ancestors of Shiare. Wuruboare was thanked for bringing things into being, and Brukung for having given the ancestors knowledge of the ceremonies in the beginning, and which were now being performed today. Because of Brukung, the people had prospered, and received what they needed to live; the present ceremonies were being performed as they had been performed in the past, as a thanksgiving, with the hope that what had been granted to the people in the past



Plate 21 Nana Gesu and Nana Kulahome with the stool of Brukung on the first day of the Yam Festival.

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would continue to be granted.

After this prayer, the woman responsible for washing the stool poured some of the palm oil on to the surface of the stool with the blood, added the powdered bark of a tree (ge-on), mixed them, and slowly spread the mixture across the surface of the stool with her hand, chanting softly. When she had finished, the women who had collected the blood of the fowls in the calabashes went among the cult members, placing a spot of blood on their foreheads. When they had finished, they washed their hands, from a calabash of water. Meanwhile, the fowls had been taken aside and roasted by some of the young men. While this was taking place, the two priests remained seated, with the stool between them (Plate 21).

When the fowls had been cooked, they were broken in pieces and placed in a calabash and presented to the chief priest, who placed it between himself and Nana Kulahome. The stool was now placed on its stone base, and the ceremony continued with the feeding of the stool.

The two priests broke the meat into small pieces, which they handed to the women, who placed them on the stool. The women then placed their fingertips on the edge of the stool, keeping them there for a few moments, in silence (Plate 22). The remainder of the meat was then distributed among the men, who ate it quickly.

The final ceremony of the first part of the yam festival involved children, many of whom were present at the ceremony, some for the first time. Some of these were brought before

the chief priest, who prayed over them, asking that they should learn and observe the customs of the ancestors, that they should remember them and continue to perform them when they reached adulthood. A calabash of water was given to the chief priest, who poured some of it over the children. Some of the elders went home and performed the same ceremony with their own children. When the ceremony with the children outside the ritual hut had been completed, one of the white cloths was placed over the stool which, however, remained outside the hut. The cult members went to their homes to collect their goat skin bags, which they always carry with them when they go to the shrine. They then processed up the hill to the shrine, where they remained for over an hour. This marked the end of the first ceremony of the first day.

The second and shorter of the first day's ceremonies began around midday, when the elders had returned from the shrine, wearing the cult marks of their foreheads and faces. The women had mashed the yams which they had prepared earlier; they placed this in two calabashes and added some palm oil which they mixed with the yam. The calabashes were offered to the chief priest, who placed them beside the stool (Plate 23). The chief priest scattered a little of the yam around the base of the stool, then both priests handed portions of the yam to the women, who placed it on the stool beside the meat (Plate 24). The women then covered the stool with its white cloths and carried it back into the ritual hut, where it remained until the next year's ceremony.

The elders, carrying calabashes, approached the chief



Plate 22 The women feeding the stool with roast fowl.

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priest and received from him small portions of yam, which they took to their compounds and scattered it around the front of their houses where the ancestors are buried, calling upon them to come and eat, and join in the yam festival (Plate 25). Meanwhile, outside the ritual hut, attention was again focused on the children, who gathered around the chief priest to receive from him portions of the mashed yam. This degenerated into a mad scramble as the children jostled and pushed each other to obtain some of the yam. When the distribution of the new yam was completed, the empty bowl was placed in front of the ritual hut, and everyone departed, the women to prepare the first of the new yams. However, until the final ceremony of the yam festival has been completed on the fourth day of the festival, yams may not be eaten in the form of fufu, but only in the form of slices (busa). This ended the ceremonies of the first day of the yam festival.

No ceremonies took place on the second and third days, but they were regarded as part of the festival, and were partly devoted to enjoyment, though this was somewhat muted, as the major feasting and dancing were reserved for the fourth day. On the third day men went to their farms to bring in new yams, and some of the younger men travelled to Nkwanta to bring pigs to Shiare. Pigs are regarded as a special delicacy for the yam festival; they are not bred in the immediate Nkwanta area, but some miles to the north, by the Konkomba, who breed pigs on a large scale. The pigs were carried, alive, by head portage all the way up to Shiare. The third day was very quiet in Shiare, as most



Plate 23 The calabashes of new yam mixed with palm oil beside the stool of Brukung.



Plate 24 The women feeding the stool with new yam. The cult marks are visible on the foreheads of the two clan heads.

people had gone to bring new yams, and towards the end of the day men could be seen streaming into the town with large quantities of the new yam.

2. The Fourth Day : Nde gepale (the day of the fufu)

There was only one ceremony held on this day, a brief one, concerned exclusively with the children. It began very early in the morning, about 5 a.m. Earlier the chief priest had gone alone to the shrine to pray. Meanwhile some male children had been assembled outside the ritual hut, the age group ranging from 5 to 10 years. None of these was a school-child or a Christian. The same women who had cooked the new yam on the first day of the festival now prepared pounded yam, fufu, and a meat soup and presented it to the chief priest, who took a small portion and placed it in front of the stool of Brukung in the ritual hut. He was joined by Nana Kulahome in the hut, and both priests ate a little of the fufu. The chief priest gave the calabash to the women, who offered it to the children. The food had to be eaten from the calabash, and all of it had to be eaten. The children sat in a semi-circle, and the calabash passed anti-clock-wise. The first child 'cut' (kebi) the first of the food and ate it, passed the calabash to the next child who took his portion and so on until the food was finished. The empty calabash was placed outside the ritual hut.

This was the final ceremony of the yam festival, and shortly after it was completed the women began to pound the first fufu of the new year. This began about 6.30 a.m., an exceptionally early hour, and on no other day is food cooked



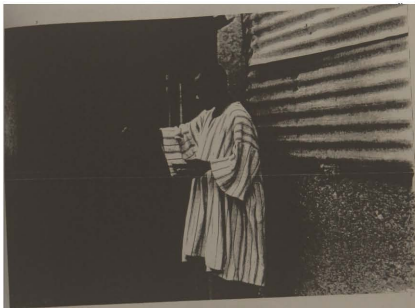


Plate 25 An elder feeding his ancestors during the Yam Festival.

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so early. Meanwhile the men prepared the meat; the pigs were slaughtered, and those who did not have a pig slaughtered a goat or a sheep. The whole town was alive with movement, noise and excitement. Everything was ready after 8.00 a.m., when everyone settled down to eat, in comparative quiet.

The rest of the day was spent in feasting, drinking and dancing. Large stocks of European beer and spirits had been laid in over the preceding few weeks, as well as the traditional palm wine and pito, a beer brewed from guinea corn. The most favoured drinks were brandy, easily obtainable from nearby Togo, and gin. Later in the morning groups of men gathered to converse in the two ayido, the meeting places in the clan territories, and groups of people wandered around the town greeting relatives and affines; women visited their natal compounds for a few hours. Everywhere there was an atmosphere of hospitality and relaxation.

In the early afternoon dancing took place in the oyido of the Cha clan. The special dance, known as kake was performed. This dance is very formalised, and is performed on only a few occasions in the course of the year, and always on the last day of the yam festival. A special drum, known as kake is used during this dance. Several different kinds of drum are used in Shiare, in different combinations. Each clan has its own set of drums, but the kake drum is special in that it belongs to the Cha clan, there being no corresponding drum among the Awuku clan. It is a large drum, and can be played at either end, with sticks. It is used in combination with a small versatile drum, known as ... y drum which may be played with

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or slung from the neck and played with the hands.

The dancing began with a procession, which formed outside the village. At the head of the procession was the kake drum, carried on the head of a bearer, then the drummer, followed by two ofribintin drums, then the men and women, everyone carrying a leafy branch, which they waved as they processed. Many of the men had smeared their bodies with a kind of white chalk. As the procession came towards the oyido, a large audience of children and others gathered on the steps of the oyido and on the ledges above it, also bearing leafy branches. The procession made its way into the oyido and began a series of patterned dances, beginning with the men only, and then the women; the final formation took the form of a large spiral. The dancing continued for several hours, the people breaking up into groups, with one group succeeding another in the dance; when one group dropped out, another took its place, and so it continued until nightfall, when the main celebrations ended, but many people continued to celebrate privately, outside their houses, until well into the night.

II Analysis of the Yam Festival

As mentioned earlier, the yam festival is a complex of ceremonies, all related in some way to Brukung. At the outset, the relationship between Wuruboare and Brukung was established. Wuruboare was invoked at the beginning of the ceremony, and at one or two other points. Material and spiritual creation were ascribed to him, but the rest of the ceremonies were more immediately concerned with Brukung. This is consistent

with the Atwode ideas of god, which were discussed earlier (pp.198-199). There is a suggestion that Wuruboare is involved in the ceremonies, through Brukung's role as an intermediary between the people and Wuruboare with the chief priest acting as the intermediary between the people and Brukung. This once again highlights the importance of the role of the intermediary in Shiare life, instances of which have been discussed earlier (p.250). The role of the chief priest as an intermediary between the people and Brukung may well be the primary model on which all other intermediary roles in the society are based. Thus the basic structure on which the yam festival is built, and also the social structure of Shiare, is:-



The chief priest was the most important actor in the ceremonies, being directly involved in every one. He was shown as not only the holder of ritual office, but also of the political office. In this connection it is important to note the total exclusion of the Shiarewura from the ceremonies. As a Christian and a literate he is excluded from cult membership, and his exclusion from the ceremonies emphasised the weakness or ambiguity of his role as chief. The chief priest, as custodian of the stool, is the representative of Brukung, and in him are vested authority in ritual and

political matters. However, as has already been discussed (pp. 175-77), the office of Shiarewura is emerging in a more clearly defined manner, though it is still seen as being dependent on the stool, which is under the control of the chief priest.

The stool is the most important ritual object which the Atwode possess, representing as it does the ritual and political authority, deriving from Brukung. As has already been discussed (pp.182-3) it is, simultaneously, like and unlike the Ashanti stool. It is like it in that it is the symbol of authority, and legitimises the office of chief priest, and also that of the Shiarewura, who is seen as being a delegate of the chief priest. It is unlike the Ashanti stool in that it is not sat upon, nor is it associated with any particular chief, who has now become an ancestor. It rather resembles the Golden Stool of the Ashanti in that it belongs to the whole people, and contains the soul or being of the people, and is the permanent sign of Brukung among them. Hence the confusion and the sense of loss when the original stool was lost when the Germans invaded Shiare and arrested the chief priest (pp.75-76).

Earlier (pp.91-92) reference was made to the duality which is a marked feature of the Shiare social system, each clan being autonomous, with ritual paraphernalia being duplicated, including two altars of sacrifice to Brukung. A possible interpretation of this was offered in Chapter 2 (p: 76). Whatever its origins, it is now an accepted feature of the social system. There is a tension between the two
 ... which have been discriminated in a struggle to obtain

possession of the office of chief priest. The situation has now resolved itself, in that the office of chief priest, although theoretically occupied by the older in age of the two clan heads, is always held by the head of the Awuku clan. A system which is theoretically open, but is in practice closed, is a good ground for tension when the prize is access to and control of a powerful divinity. However, what is important is that there are not two cults in Shiare, in rivalry with one another. Whatever tensions may exist between the two clans, they are not in open competition. Though the cult finds expression in duality, in essence it is unitary. Brukung is seen as contributing to the collective welfare of the whole community, and not to the welfare or interests of one clan at the expense of the other. Shiare defines itself as a single community in relation to Brukung, and this finds its highest expression in the yam festival, when the unity of Shiare is stressed; both clans, which otherwise express their autonomy and duality in relation to the shrine become one in the yam festival. This is the only occasion when the two clan heads come together in a ritual context. But the chief priest, Nana Gesu, is the principal figure, the Cha clan head, Nana Kulahome, playing a minor role. It would seem that clan duality is being simultaneously asserted and denied, asserted in that both priests or clan heads are present, two fowls are sacrificed, one for each clan, two women from each clan are chosen to minister to the stool and prepare the food; denied in that the chief priest is in control of the entire ritual, he slaughters both fowls himself,

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and the ritual is held outside the ritual hut of the chief priest, who presides over the ritual, not as head of the Awuku clan, but as chief priest of Shiare. This sense of unity is strong enough to help check and control the tensions and conflicts which are potentially present in clan autonomy. The yam festival would seem to be a statement of the ritual and political unity of Shiare, of the whole community, and not of any one part of it.

The yam festival is also a first fruits ceremony, emphasising the importance of the yam for the Atwode, and their dependence upon Brukung. The first offerings of the new yam are made to Brukung, both as a thanksgiving for the harvest, which will provide food and life for the coming year, and a pledge that the earth will continue to provide for the people.

Children played an important part in the yam festival, and ceremonies relating to the children occurred at three points during the festival, at the end of the first series of ceremonies grouped around the washing of the stool, when the children were washed with the same water which was used to wash the stool, to protect and strengthen them to continue the worship of Brukung, then at the end of the second series of ceremonies grouped around the new yam, which was used to feed the stool, the ancestors and the children, and finally on the last day, when the ceremony was devoted entirely to the children. Each of these points marked the end of one ceremony or series of ceremonies within the whole festival, and pointed

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to the beginning of the next ceremony, with the children serving as a link between what had passed and what would come. A connection was established between the children and the ancestors. The ancestors have a place in Atwode thinking, but it is not so strongly emphasised as in other societies. I have suggested earlier (p.212) that this is probably due to many of the qualities attributed to the ancestors in other societies having been integrated into the worship of Brukung, leading to a lessening of the importance of the ancestors in the lives of the people. This part of the ritual may be seen as a symbolic statement of events on a wider, more universalistic time scale, involving the whole society and its relationship to Brukung over a long period of time, which has its roots in the past, in the time of the ancestors, and continues into the present, with the children, who are the descendants of the ancestors. The children then formed a link between the present and the future, when they will attain adulthood and eventually become ancestors, with their children continuing the process, continually linking past generations with future ones. The interdependence of the ancestors, the children and Brukung was expressed very concisely in the ritual of the eating of the new mashed yam (busa). The stool was fed first, indicating the centrality of Brukung in the life of Shiare. It is to Brukung that the people look for their continuance as a people, and for the continuance of the yam, the food without which life would be impossible. Mystical dangers and misfortunes, which experience has shown continually beset

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human living, and which are beyond the competence of society to control, are controlled or removed by Brukung. Then the ancestors and the children were fed, more or less simultaneously. The ancestors were brought to Shiare by Brukung, worshipped at the shrine and cleared the land for the production of food. The children are the present product of this original relationship between Brukung and the ancestors. The children played a more prominent part in the ceremony than the ancestors, which would seem to suggest that the Atwode are more immediately concerned with the present and the future than with the past.

There was an explicit emphasis on growth, development and cyclical movement in the yam festival. This was expressed in terms of the agricultural cycle of the society itself, and of the children. The transition from the eating of the old yams to the eating of the new was done gradually, over a period of days, and was marked by various stages. Firstly there was the period when the old yams were finished, and the new yams, although ready, were not allowed to be eaten until the society had been prepared ritually by the food being offered first to Brukung. This was a period of want and hunger. The second stage was the eating of new yams in the form of busa, slices. The third and final stage was when the yam was eaten as gepale, or fufu. Each stage in the society's introduction to the eating of their staple food was preceded by the children being introduced to this stage, after which the town did likewise. The model would seem to be that of the gradual physical and moral growth of the child. As

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children develop physically and are socialised gradually under the direction of parents and elders, passing from childhood through adolescence into adulthood, so does the society grow in its relationship with Brukung. Society is like children in relation to Brukung, in a continual state of development; each yam festival marks a new phase in the society's relationship with the divinity. The annual agricultural cycle is regarded as having finished with the harvesting of the first of the new yams, and as having begun when they are eaten in the form of fufu, which the Atwode regard as the beginning of the new year, which is also the beginning of a new phase in their relationship with Brukung, when the annual cycle will begin again, with its affirmation of the belief that life, the original gift of Wuruboare, and maintained by Brukung, will continue. This was stressed in the ritual held on the fourth day, when the society was led into the new year by the children, who, after Brukung, ate the first of new yams as fufu, and thus provided the link between the old year, the past, and the new year, the future, in the same way as they form the link between the ancestors, the past, and their descendants, the future.

This theme of birth, growth and decline, may be observed in the initiation into the Brukung cult (pp.58-66) and may also be seen as analogous to the development of the child. When the initiates entered the period of seclusion, they were desocialised. They lived naked, like young children; their food was brought to them by their womenfolk, often by their mothers and sisters. During this period they were gradually

socialised, being educated in the rules and customs of the cult, the society of which they would henceforth be members. Like children, they were under the authority of their elders, in this case of the chief priest, and possibly also of the remaining cult members; like children, they were punished for their faults. Their transition from childhood to adulthood was completed when they returned from the shrine fully clothed and full members of the cult. The joy and relief with which the new cult members were greeted by the rest of Shiare, as well as expressing happiness and relief for the safe return of the men, may also have expressed joy that the cult had been reborn, that the cycle would continue, and that there would always be a chief priest to mediate between Brukung and the people. The cycle will follow its appointed course, with the cult members gradually dying, to be replaced in time by the male children, both those actually living and those not yet born. This latter point was explicitly stated during the yam festival.

Women played an important part in the yam festival, and were involved in every stage. They are excluded from cult membership, but without them the ceremony could not be performed. The stool may never be touched by men, not even by the chief priest, hence the importance of the women's part in the ceremony. It is a great privilege to perform this function, and to be eligible a woman must be elderly and must not have had her ears pierced for earrings. According to the Shiare people to whom I questioned on this point, this latter condition is crucial. Many of the women in Shiare, especially

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the younger ones, have their ears pierced, for purely decorative purposes. It is possible that this is recent, a European custom, and as such, was not part of the original customs of the ancestors in relation to the festival, and therefore excluded from the ritual. I was unable to obtain confirmation of this theory, but it may be analogous to the frequent use of calabashes during the ceremonies of the yam festival, which will be discussed later. Every family ensures that at least one female has unpierced ears, making her potentially eligible for the office, and also to ensure that the yam festival will be continued. When I enquired if the women had to be members of the women's Okuoku cult, or if a Christian woman would be eligible, provided she had unpierced ears, there was some hesitation among the elders. Eventually they said no, but this is not a point in which they have any immediate interest, or with which they have to deal, as it does not arise as a problem, as none of the women in the generation which serves the stool is a Christian; they are all members of the women's cult. But it is interesting to note that even some Christian girls are among those who do not have their ears pierced. According to the rules of the cult, Christian girls may not be initiated, but as been pointed out, the rules governing admission to the women's cult are not so strictly applied as those of the men's cult (p.140).

The women were elderly, and have passed the age of childbearing, which is consistent with the pattern found in some societies that women who have passed the menopause are



eligible for functions from which their sex would otherwise exclude them. Two other factors may be involved. The women cooked food and handled the stool. In Shiare, menstruating women are not allowed to cook (p.236), and Brukung is said to abhor the shedding of human blood (p.8). Women who have passed the menopause would thus not break either of these taboos. These points were not made by the Shiare people themselves, but they are consistent with Atwode beliefs.

The function of the women in the ritual was threefold; they washed, cooked and gave food, which was a reflection of their role in society, and the importance of this role was emphasised in a ritual which is concerned with life fertility and continuity. Women are the bearers of life, and children, during crucial stages of their development, receive much of their training and socialisation from women. During the yam festival, the stool and the children are fed by the women themselves. Significantly, although the women also feed the stool with the meat from the roasted fowls, they do not cook the fowls, nor do they feed the children with it. They cook the yam, and feed the children with the yam, thus stressing the significance of the yam as the staple food, the source of life.

Calabashes are frequently used during the yam festival as containers for food. As pointed out during the discussion of the initiation into the Brukung cult, calabashes are used today for drinking and not for eating. This may be a reflection of the antiquity of both the yam festival and the initiation, when the calabash would be the normal eating vessel,

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the more usual eating dish (ilape) being of recent origin. Both rituals are done as they were in the time of the ancestors. The use of calabashes may also be associated with the fact that cups, glasses and metal eating dishes are not only of recent origin, but also of European manufacture, thus reflecting the hostility of the cult to things European. Although European customs, manners and artefacts have found their way into the relatively isolated Atwode society, ideally they are not part of it, and the major ritual thus reflects the traditional origins of the people.

CHAPTER 8SHIARE AND THE FUTURE

This chapter will examine certain factors which could have bearing on the future development of Shiare or the cult or both. Internal and external factors may be readily distinguished, and they will be discussed in that order, though the overlap is such that some must be discussed simultaneously.

1. Internal factors affecting Shiare

The cult, which is central in Shiare life, depends for its continuation upon a supply of new members, who must be Atwode males and unschooled. Two factors are involved here, the school and literacy, which will be discussed briefly to determine if they could affect the future of the cult.

The school is a comparatively recent factor in Shiare, having been built in 1945, and is potentially a threat to the cult, as the schooled or the literates cannot be cult members. Therefore admission to the school must be controlled by the cult elders, to ensure that there is a reservoir of future cult members. This is what is being done, and has been done since the inception of the school. Very few male children have been enrolled at the school, thus ensuring that the majority of the male population of Shiare are eligible for initiation into the cult. The problem would arise in a very acute form if education, even primary education, were to become compulsory and the government had the means to enforce it. This is not the case at the present moment, and given the present state of the Ghanaian situation, is unlikely to be a possibility for some time to come. However, the possibility, no matter how

remote, exists, and may become a factor with which the cult may have to contend in the future.

The relationship of the cult to literacy was raised shortly before the beginning of my field work in June 1975, when a small group of educated Shiaremen, living in Nkwanta, approached the chief priest and asked if it would be possible for them to be considered eventually as candidates for initiation into the cult. This was surprising, as hitherto the opposition between the cult and the literates had always been accepted unquestioningly. As has been shown (p.112), most of the cult members live in Shiare, and most of the literates outside Shiare, taking little or no part in Shiare affairs. The role of the literates, however, changed as a result of the involvement of the literates in the hearings of the Badu Commission (p.178), whose findings would have important consequences for Shiare. They worked closely with the Shiarewura in preparing the evidence to be submitted to support the Atwode case that they had always been an independent entity and wished to be recognised as such. This required research in the archives and the preparation of documents, which involved the use of literacy, which was beyond the competence of the cult elders. Thus this aspect of Shiare's affairs passed from the hands of the elders to the Shiarewura and his assistants, who, for the first time, found themselves playing a direct and important part in the wider political issues affecting Shiare, and demonstrating the necessity and importance of literacy in modern systems of government. Their awareness

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of their new role, and its importance for Shiare, may have prompted them to make their request to the chief priest. It was refused, inevitably. When I questioned them as to why they had made their request, they replied that the Brukung cult was part of the way of life of Shiare, and as Shiaremen they wished to share in it. They wished to share in what they seemed to regard as their birthright. In one way their argument seemed plausible, but it is difficult to see how they could have expected the cult elders to change the cult radically by accommodating itself to literacy.

The attitude of the cult to literacy had always been uncompromising; it formed no part of the cult or of the traditional life of Shiare. Literacy came into Shiare directly through the founding of the school, but it is possible that the Atwode were aware of literacy and its use in other societies. J.R.Goody (1968) has shown the place and use of literacy in what is now northern Ghana, which was heavily influenced by Islam. The written word, apart from its other uses, became an important part of religious systems. 'The value of writing as a means of communicating with the supernatural powers appears to have been recognised throughout north Ghana in acephalous communities as well as states, among the literate as well as among the partially literate' (J.R.Goody 1968:202). This was true of the Gonja and the Dagomba, with whom the Atwode were in contact, as these states used the services of the shrine in Shiare. Thus Shiare lived on the fringes of the literate or semi-literate world, and were in contact with peoples who used

... noted that one of the valuables he

found in the chief priest's hut, a gift to the shrine, was a northern smock, decorated with leather talismans inscribed with Koranic texts, the saphy or safi which had a wide vogue throughout northern Ghana and contained within them the word of God (J.R.Goody 1968:201) and were believed to have magical properties.

If the Atwode were aware of the existence and uses of literacy among these northern peoples, they ignored it for their own religious system. Literacy involves a different means of communicating with the supernatural. There are two kinds of knowledge involved here, knowledge encapsulated in the written word, and the body of secret knowledge preserved in oral tradition. J.R.Goody has pointed out how knowledge becomes important when people have an interest in maintaining a monopoly of their sources of power (1968:12). This, I believe, is the situation in Shiare, where the cult ritual and secret knowledge are confined to a comparatively small body of men who are localised in a small area, and who, through their exclusive access to the shrine, can control the affairs of Shiare and Atwode.

By asking to be admitted to the cult, the educated Shiaremen were possibly expressing a genuine desire to share in something which is fundamental to Shiare life, but at the same time they were asking that the cult change its character and structure. 'The introduction of literacy, even in a restricted form, immediately expands the intellectual horizons of a community, bringing at least some of its members into active contact with the ideas of individuals

of different cultures and of different centuries' (J.R.Goody 1968:215). The Shiare elders have no interest in and little knowledge of the world of the educated, and show no desire to open their religious system to other ideas. Their contact with the outside world is based on people coming to them, to benefit from their expertise in communicating with the supernatural. The cult is not geared to literacy. The cult elders say that literates, if admitted to the cult, would betray the cult secrets. This is not necessarily so, but it is indicative of the attitude of the elders to the traditions of the cult which have come down to them. The cult and its secrets belong to Shiare, and are shared by those who live in Shiare. Illiteracy is restricting, and may help the elders to control cult members. The elders may feel that the literates, with their greater mobility, could not be controlled so easily.

However, a significant point about the request of the educated Shiaremen is that it was asked at all, as it indicates the importance of literacy even for a traditionally orientated society such as Shiare, and the part which literates can now play in determining the future relations of Shiare with centralised government.

II. External Factors affecting Shiare

Shiare depends for its survival as a pilgrimage centre on its power to attract pilgrims. Some factors have already been adduced to show how Shiare retains its popularity and reputation as an oracle and as a medicine shrine (pp.302-4). The attitude of those who consult the shrine is also an

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important factor. The pilgrims subscribe, even in a general way, to the belief system which operates at the shrine. If their beliefs were to change then their attitude to the shrine would be affected. The emergence of Islam and Christianity, with their inbuilt opposition to the practices and beliefs of the indigenous religious systems, would seem to pose a threat to the traditional shrines. Both Christianity and Islam have won large numbers of converts in Ghana, but they have not weakened the appeal or the practice of traditional religion. Many of the pilgrims who consulted the Shiare shrine were educated Christians, which is significant. Such people can evidently accommodate themselves to both religious systems, and seek from the traditional shrines help for problems which they feel the world religions cannot give. There are large areas of experience where Christianity and Islam cannot provide answers to fundamental questions, such as witchcraft and misfortunes, whose causes lie with spiritual beings and forces of which Christianity certainly takes no account, or does not understand. So long as these attitudes prevail, recourse will always be made to shrines such as that in Shiare.

The future of medicine shrines would seem to be threatened by the introduction and spread of modern scientific medicine and technology. However, the advent of modern scientific medicine has not displaced traditional medicine any more than Christianity has displaced traditional forms of religion. Traditional medicine, in its various forms has proved, like traditional religion, to be very tenacious, and still exists

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very strongly. Twumasi (1975) has examined both the modern (i.e. European) and the traditional medical systems in Ghana, and finds that traditional medicine is still a very important factor in contemporary Ghana. He offers some reasons for this, and shows how traditional medicine has adapted itself to meet changing social conditions (1975: 118-124). 'Traditional medicine has persisted in the area of chronic or psychosomatic ills where scientific medicine has either failed to produce equally good results or has simply ignored the need for systematic attention and research. The functional scope of each medical system has been largely determined by its ability to get results in specific cases of illness' (1975:119). The place and importance of traditional medicine in modern Nigeria is discussed by Maclean (1971).

However, in spite of the survival of traditional religions, and the reliance on traditional medicine, the world religions and modern scientific medicine and technology are factors which affect the traditional functions of shrines. Their ultimate effect on the traditional role of shrines will depend on their complete integration in the social system, and their acceptance by society as a whole.

Significantly, the Shiare shrine has continued to be consulted in matters concerning the political affairs affecting Ghana as a whole, a role it played before European colonisation. In December 1975, while I was in the field, there was a plot to overthrow the military government of I.K.Acheampong. Two soldiers were sent to Shiare to consult



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the shrine as to whether the planned coup would be successful. The Shiarewura discovered, by chance, the purpose of their visit, and went immediately to Nkwanta to confer with some of the educated Shiare men, especially Mr.A.B.Quartey (p.97) who advised him to go in person to Accra and report the matter to the Government. He did so, and was granted an interview with General Acheampong, the then Head of State, who was grateful for this information. The Government had been aware that some senior Army officers had been planning a coup, and they were arrested. Some Special Branch Officers came to Shiare to make enquiries, and the Shiarewura was asked to go to Accra during the trial to identify the soldiers who had been to Shiare. The Shiarewura told me that he was recognised by General Acheampong, who, as leader of the coup which overthrew the government of Kofi Busia in 1971, had come to Shiare to consult the shrine and enlist its help for the success of the coup. I was also told that Kwame Nkrumah had also consulted the shrine while he was Prime Minister and later President of Ghana. The Shiarewura's subsequent friendship with General Acheampong was useful in the quarrel between the Atwode and the Chella regarding the chieftaincy of Nkwanta (p.179). An official had been appointed to examine the claim of the Atwode and the Chella as to whom had the right to appoint a chief. The Shiarewura suspected that the government official had had private consultations with the Chella, and had accepted money from them. He refused to attend the meeting called by the official, and went to Accra and lodged a complaint with the

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Head of State, who immediately recalled the official and appointed a candidate of his own personal choice. This case has not as yet been settled.

The findings of the Badu Commission may have an important effect on Shiare regarding the role of the chief. The Shiarewura told me that he hoped to have Atwode recognised as an independent traditional area. He would receive a stipend from the Government as Paramount Chief, and also hoped to have a house and offices with staff provided by the Government. In his opinion, this would necessitate moving from Shiare to Nkwanta. Shiare's comparative remoteness, which helped to maintain the traditional culture, and was an asset to Shiare as a pilgrim centre, is a disadvantage as a centre of administration for the Atwode Traditional Area. The journey from Nkwanta to Shiare is long and tiring, and the Shiarewura has to travel frequently to Ho and Accra on Atwode business. Any personnel whom the Shiarewura hoped to recruit would resist living in Shiare, where, in any case, there is little or no room to build the proposed offices. However, it is unlikely that the Shiarewura will be given an individual seat in the Volta Region House of Chiefs. He agreed to sit in rotation with the chiefs of the Adele and the Ntrubu. But he feels that it would be more convenient for him to live in Nkwanta. Brenniwase, the seat of the chief of the Ntrubu, is linked to Nkwanta by the new road, and it is reasonably easy to reach Nkwanta from Tutukpene, the seat of the chief of the Adele. Journeys to Ho and Accra would be facilitated, as the long journey from Shiare to Nkwanta

before beginning the journey south would be eliminated.

The move to Nkwanta would be a further advantage to the Shiarewura in that it would further strengthen his political role. In Shiare he is an ambiguous figure, being excluded from cult activities and the machinery of the traditional Shiare political structures, which are still performed by the various group heads. The Shiarewura's field of activity is in matters related to the administration at local, regional and national levels, which can be dealt with much better and more efficiently from Nkwanta than from Shiare. With the exception of Chilinga, all the Atwode towns are more accessible from Nkwanta than from Shiare (Map 4).

The move would also mark the final stage in the separation of the ritual and political offices which began with the introduction of the office of the Shiarewura. Shiare would continue to be the ritual centre of Atwode, under the direction of the chief priest and the elders, who would also be responsible for the maintenance of social order, as they have always done. From his new seat in Nkwanta the Shiarewura, who may relinquish this title and adopt that of Osulewura (chief of the state), would manage the affairs of the Atwode vis-a-vis the administration of modern Ghana.

This is a logical move, and has much to commend it. Whether it will take place will depend on the consent of the chief priest and the elders who may wish the Shiarewura to remain in Shiare in any case. The Shiarewura would still be, at least nominally, under the control of the elders, and would still report back to them on any decisions being made

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affecting Shiare. The office of Shiarewura derives from the stool of Brukung, and would thus still be under the control of the elders, who would continue to regard the Shiarewura as being their spokesman. The possibilities contained in this situation will be determined over the next few years.

CONCLUSION

The most significant facts to emerge from an analysis of the Shiare social system are the importance of the Brukung cult for Shiare, the nature of Shiare's relationship with the political and administrative structures of modern Ghana, and the remarkable degree to which the traditional structures of Shiare have been unaffected by the forces of change. These three points are connected.

Traditionally, Shiare was isolated and independent, in control of its own affairs. The society was geared to the worship of Brukung, which provided the basis and framework of the social system. The shrine was served by a cult, the leader of which was the chief priest, the mediator between the shrine and the community. His office was primarily ritual, and from this office derived his political and judicial functions. His power and authority derived from, and were sanctioned and legitimized by, the shrine.

Shiare's relations with the outside world were also defined in ritual terms. Outsiders who came to Shiare did so for religious reasons, to consult the shrine and utilize the ritual expertise of the cult in communicating with the supernatural.

When Shiare was brought into contact with the administrative procedures of the German and British Colonial administrations, and that of Ghana, and many of its decisions were being made outside Shiare, it was confronted with forces and procedures which were

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external and alien to its traditional patterns of authority, and with which they were inadequate to deal. Shiare had now to define its relations with the outside world in political terms.

It is possible to see here a kind of opposition between the traditional internal patterns of authority and the new external alien structures with which Shiare was now involved, an opposition between the ritual and the political bases of authority. On one level, much of recent Shiare history has been the process of Shiare's adaptation to the new demands made upon it and the resolution of the opposition.

The role of the Shiarewura was crucial in this. The office of Shiarewura was imposed on Shiare, and originally the Shiarewura had a weakly defined role and little authority. The importance of the office increased in proportion as Shiare became more and more involved in the bureaucratic processes of modern government. As these matters were external to Shiare, the role of Shiarewura itself is seen as something external to Shiare. The Shiarewura is an important person outside Shiare, when dealing with the government at local, regional and national levels, but in Shiare he has no role, and is an ambiguous figure. In Shiare people look to the chief priest for ritual and political guidance. This is expressed succinctly in the yam festival, which, among other things, is a celebration and statement of the traditional values of Shiare, which derive from Brukung. Anything

or anyone alien to these ancient traditions are excluded from direct participation in the festival. Food is served in calabashes, rather than in modern, non-traditional eating dishes. The school and Christianity are external to the traditions of Shiare, therefore literates and Christians are excluded from cult membership and so from participation in the cult rituals. The Shiarewura plays no part in the yam festival, as he is a Christian and a literate, but his political role as Shiarewura is not acknowledged during the festival. The chief actor is the chief priest, who exercises his traditional functions as mediator between Brukung and the people, and as the source of authority in Shiare.

The proposed move of the Shiarewura to Nkwanta is interesting and significant. While it is certainly a logical move in that it will facilitate the Shiarewura's journey to the centres of administration and government, it could also be seen as a symbolic move, in that the Shiarewura, and the external political authority he represents, will now be removed from Shiare to the periphery of Atwodeland. This would further emphasize that external political authority is alien to the traditions of Shiare. The Shiarewura claims that his office is derived from and legitimized by the stool of Brukung, but as a Christian and a literate, and thus ineligible for cult membership, he is denied access to the stool. This still remains under the control of the chief priest. The chief priest could

be seen as being the holder of political office, with the Shiarewura as his delegate. Thus an important principle of Shiare ideology, that all power and authority derive from the shrine and are exercised by the chief priest, remains intact.

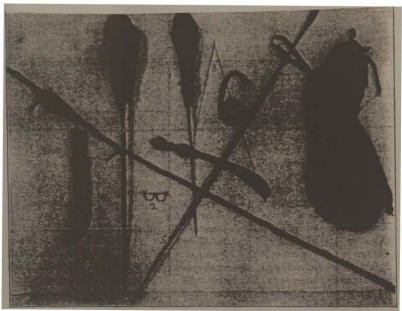
The school and Christianity, which are external and alien to the traditional life of Shiare, still remain within Shiare, but their influence is weak. The school is controlled by the cult elders, and Christianity is weakly represented in Shiare; given the trend that the educated tend to live outside Shiare, it will presumably remain weak.

Shiare adapted itself gradually and easily to the demands made upon it. The traditional structures of authority were essentially unaffected by Shiare's incorporation into a modern governmental system, nor had the traditional office of the chief priest been weakened, or challenged, by the creation of the office of the Shiarewura. The place and importance of Brukung within the social system is unaltered, and Shiare is as it has always been, the centre of the worship of Brukung by the local community, whose needs are served by the shrine, and as a centre of pilgrimage for the many pilgrims who bring to it their problems.

APPENDIX 1

1. The following objects were described by von Zech (1889: 108) as being in the ritual hut of the chief priest Kwantine when he was arrested on the 4th of October 1896. They were removed by von Zech and deposited in a Museum of Ethnology in a German city which he does not specify. The numbers after each object refer to the objects on the photograph (Plate 26).
1. Two fetish objects,¹ each consisting of an upper part and a lower part; the lower part is a thin iron rod, which tapers to a point; the upper part is a large pear shaped knob, made of some unknown material. During sacrifices, solemn occasions etc. they are stuck into the ground. (The objects described are the okpere staffs. They are not stuck into the ground during sacrifices, but after, to allow the blood to dry).
2. Miniature slave irons,² which were also worn as a means of preventing slaves from escaping.
3. Thin, finely spun strings,³ made from a vegetable fibre, and worn around the necks of those who had consulted the fetish on some matter, until their petition was granted.
4. A small fetish sword,⁴ 50 centimetres long, the handle of which was overlaid with gold leaf.
5. A small set of scales for weighing gold, complete with gold weights, of the kind used in Asante.
6. A spear,⁵ which was probably carried by messengers to show their royal mission.

7. An odum staff⁶ and an odum bag,⁷ the former is an ordinary straight wooden staff, at the upper end of which small stubs of branches have been left, and to which is affixed a pear-shaped knob, made from the same material as on the fetish objects described above; adhering to it, clearly the remains of a sacrifice. (Apart from the pear-shaped object at the top end, this staff is the okpere oyi). The odum bag is made of roughly worked goat skin. It too is daubed with blood and chicken feathers; the odum poison necessary for the poison ordeal is kept in the odum bag.
 8. A large knife,⁸ of the kind used in Asante for executions. This was bloodstained, and wrapped in a blood-stained cloth.
 9. A smock, covered with amulets and pieces of leather inscribed with Koranic texts, like those worn in Gonja and Dagomba.
2. The cult elders gave me the following list of objects said to have been taken by the Germans.
- i. Two golden chains, to be worn around the neck, with the box in which they were contained.
 - ii. The stool of Brukung.
 - iii. An Ashanti stool, overlaid with gold, which the elders said was a gift to the shrine from the Ashanti.
 - iv. A woven smock, as worn by the inhabitants of Northern Ghana, decorated with talismans, charms and amulets.
 - v. A hat, matching the smock.
- The fetish sword as described by von Zech, no.4.



6. Zwei Fetischfiguren, Sklaveneisenmodell (Amulett), Halschnüre, Fetischschwert, ein Speer, Odomstock und Odomtasche, Hinrichtungsmesser

Plate 26 : Objects found by von Zech in the ritual hut of the chief priest. (Reproduced from von Zech 1898:151).

The most significant thing about these two lists is their almost total dissimilarity. With the exception of the stool, the elders made no mention of the ritual objects associated with the shrine. The loss of these objects necessitated their being made again, by a human agency. Being so closely associated with the cult, they have acquired much of the secrecy which surrounds the cult, suggesting, almost, that their origin has a mystical aspect. The elders refused to answer my questions as to where the new objects were made, or where they came from. Other informants told me that they were made, along with the originals, by the Gyerekpanga Kotokoli, who are closely associated with some aspects of the cult (pp.9 and 60). The fact that the stool was mentioned, and that the elders asked me to try and find it, indicates that it had a special significance more than the other objects.

Von Zech makes no reference to the stool. If it was similar to the one used today, and if it had been in the chief priest's hut, it would have been almost impossible for von Zech to have overlooked it. It would have been very difficult to carry, being made of very heavy wood, and von Zech may have made no reference to it as he did not take it with him. It has been shown earlier (p.75) that the exact circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the stool are unknown.

The only objects common to both lists are the fetish sword and the northern smock, which, together with the golden chains and the Ashanti stool, were said by the elders to have been gifts offered to the shrine. Great

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Importance is attached to these objects by the cult elders. It is unlikely that they were symbolic of Shiare's political subjection to the Ashanti, as suggested by M. Johnson (1965:35). More probably, they were symbolic of Ashanti and Gonja's ritual dependence on the shrine. The relationship between the politically centralized Ashanti and the non-centralized Atwode was ritual, not political. Hence the importance of these objects in the eyes of the cult elders, showing the importance of the shrine to these states, an importance which would have enhanced the prestige of the shrine, and possibly also the authority of the chief priest.

It may be significant that two of the objects not mentioned by von Zech were made of gold, namely the chain, and the gold with which the stool was overlaid, and, being valuable, could easily have been stolen.

The elders were very anxious to have these objects returned to Shiare, and asked me to try and trace them. Unfortunately, von Zech did not specify the museum in which they were deposited. I made unsuccessful enquiries at the museums in some German cities (Berlin, Stuttgart, Hannover, Düsseldorf and Cologne). Possibly they may have been deposited in the museum at Leipzig. The Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon (1920) has plates of artefacts from the area around Atwode, including Adele, which are housed in the Leipzig Museum of Ethnology.



APPENDIX 2

Guinness's Account of the Atwode

A.C.Guinness, a British District Commissioner, wrote, in 1934, an account of the Adele and Adjate (Atwode) peoples. This was the fullest account to date of the Atwode, and is potentially of great interest. However, as a contribution to the question of the origins of the Atwode, and their subsequent history, it is suspect, and of doubtful value.

Guinness (p.111) recounts the difficulties he encountered in trying to obtain information on the shrine and Atwode history, opposition which stemmed from the head chief of Shiare, whom Guinness describes as 'a toothless old ancient, who suffered from megalomania as to the power and extent of his kingdom, and the power of the shrine.' Guinness may have been uncritical here, and insensitive to the situation he was trying to investigate. As a European, and a representative of the British Administration, he would inevitably be regarded with suspicion by the cult elders and the people of Shiare, especially by the chief priest and the head chief, (the Shiarewura), who, at that time, would probably have been a cult member. In 1934, the political future of Shiare was still being negotiated by the British Administration, and the unfortunate experiences they had with the Germans would still be fresh in their minds. Today they still speak with horror of the arrest and death of the chief priest. They would have been more sensitive then, and suspicious of Europeans and European administrations. They are very sensitive and suspicious regarding the shrine, and view with great suspicion any enquiries regarding the shrine. I discovered this

suspicion early in my field work. Guinness was evidently unaware of these factors, and they may explain the hostility shown by the chief priest, and why he prevented promising informants from talking to Guinness (p.111).

Due to the hostility and lack of cooperation on the part of the Shiare chief, Guinness had to gather his information from 'semi-strangers' outside Shiare. These sources must be considered highly dubious.

In his account of the origins of the Atwode, and the founding of Shiare, Guinness has fused elements of Atwode history and Chella history. According to Guinness, Chuti, the ancestor of the Atwode, and Chella, the ancestor of the Chella, were siblings, Chella being the older son of one Kondo. The office of chief priest of the Brukung cult was held alternately.

I discussed Guinness's document with the Shiarewura, who indicated parts which were wrong, especially that relating to the common descent of the Chella and the Atwode, and also the names of some of the chief priests mentioned by Guinness, which were unknown to the Shiare people. Independently of this discussion, I raised the matter with Michael Addo, a well-educated Chella. Without mentioning either my conversation with the Shiarewura or my source, I enquired about the origin of the Chella people, the shrine and its priests. His account did not correspond to that of Guinness. I then mentioned the account Guinness gave of the Atwode/Chella descent, and the alternate holding of the office of chief priest. He rejected this as quite false.

Guinness (p.110) dismisses the head chief's claim that at one time the Krachis were under the shrine priest of Shiare.

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Claims made for shrines by their priests and devotees are always relative and reflect the importance attached to a shrine by its ministers or worshippers. Guinness, with his experience of the British centre of administration at Krachi, and the knowledge which the British consequently had of the Dente shrine and its importance, would be looking at the Shiare shrine from a quite different point of view, and one which would not give him any insight into or understanding of its importance to the Atwode and neighbouring peoples. The head chief of Shiare was stating a truth firmly held in Atwode and the surrounding country when he claimed a position of pre-eminence for the Shiare shrine.

The priests of the Krachi shrine have always held the Shiare shrine in special veneration, frequently consulting it. Dente is said to be the oldest son of Brukung, and therefore inferior to him, and his shrine is said to be a derivative of the Shiare shrine. Mensah-Keh (1966:26) states that Dente is the senior son of Brukung. In Shiare, the people point to the place, a gloomy dank hollow beneath a small waterfall, where Brukung was said to have brought Dente forth, and the gap in the hills where Dente broke through to go to Krachi. This is described by Cardinall (1931:56).

On many occasions, the priests of Dente travelled to Shiare to consult the shrine. The most important event in the recent history of Krachi was the moving of the town, necessitated by the flooding of the Volta River to create the Volta Lake. This was a serious matter, as it also involved moving the shrine. The priests of Dente did not give their approval
 ... sent to Shiare to consult the shrine.

A British official offered some comments on the relationship between the two shrines. He states that the name 'Dente' is derived from the Akan words nde n'te, I hold, I sit, which coalesce to form 'Dente'. A small boy is said to have brought the god to Dente, and his worship superceded that of Jinator, the original god of the Krachi people. His report continues:-

When the Germans took over this part of Togoland, they set to work to destroy the power of the fetish priests and executed several of them, but the two chief ones, the Ossuriwira and the Dente fetish priest escaped to British territory, the western side of the Volta. Under the British the Ossuriwiya ruled as chief priest from Nsunna to Akrosu, but the Dente fetish priest returned and was duly hanged by the Germans.

During the war, when the British began to administer the Krachi district the head of the Chobwies was the only man of any importance in Krachi - the Ossuriwiya being on the other side of the river and Dente having vanished.

Dente, however, was prevailed upon to return, but not before Brukum, the Siari fetish, was consulted to ascertain how and in what manner the priests could try to get Dente back. This has given rise to the saying that Brukum is Dente's father, and that Dente came from Siari. (R.G.Cooper, Assistant D.C. Some Notes on the Krachi People. p.54. G.N.A. 39/1/32).

Guiness (p.163) states that the Germans arrived in Shiare when a certain Lewa was chief priest. He refused to occupy the office of 'chief' as demanded by the Germans, and act as a liaison between Shiare and the German station at Bismarckburg, and the major German administrative centre at Krachi. He said that one man cannot hold two offices, so a certain Tinkpo was appointed to act as chief, Lewa does not appear on the list of chief priests given to me by the Shiarewura, and the cult of the god is not known to them. The name of

Tinkpo is also unknown; the only name which bears any resemblance to 'Tinkpo' is 'Nana Tiakpor', who was chief (Shiarewura) and not chief priest, and his dates, according to the present Shiarewura, were 1925-1938, well outside the time when the Germans arrived in Shiare.

Guinness dismisses as nonsense the head chief's claim that the Adele 'fetish' (Urubori) is subsidiary to the one at Shiare. He may be correct in this, as the Shiare people do not speak of any connection between the shrines of Dadiase (home of the Adele god) and Shiare. But, in fact the name of the Adele 'fetish' is Friko, and is well known in the area, but its fame is less than that of Brukung. Urubore is not the name of a 'fetish' (obosum in Akan, okpere in Getwode), but the word used in Guan languages for the high God, thus Wuruboare in Getwode, Wurboale in Krachi, Wurubori among the Gonja.

Guinness pieced ^{together} his account from 'unfinished beginnings' (p.111), and from informants outside Shiare. The original premisses on which his arguments are based are rejected by both the Atwode and the Chella, which makes his document, interesting though it may be, valueless as a contribution to Atwode origins, and as a source of information on the shrine.



APPENDIX 3Settlement of an Adultery Case

The case concerned the adultery of two young recently married girls, Kosia and Mansah. Kosia is the daughter of Yaw Mensah of the subclan Wasawasado, of the clan Awuku. She was married recently to Kofi Nsian, son of Amekpo, of the same subclan (Fig.10).

Amekpo and Yaw Mensah are half brothers; Kofi Nsian and Kosia are classificatory siblings. The Atwode have an open system of marriage, with a wide choice of partners. Exogamy is not practised even at lineage level. But they say that the children of two brothers may not marry; this, they say, includes half brothers. But the type of marriage exemplified above is now found in Shiare. I was informed that this is fairly recent in Shiare. It would now seem to be the rule that the prohibition does not apply to the children of half brothers, though the rule still exists prohibiting marriage between the children of full brothers.

Mansah is the daughter of Amatoge, who is a full brother of Amekpo. Mansah and Kosia are thus classificatory sisters, (Fig. 10). The two girls are constant companions, they travel together to the market in Nkwanta and other Atwode towns, selling groundnuts and other foodstuffs grown by their mothers. The dispute began on the evening of Monday, 23 of August 1976, when Kofi Nsian saw his wife Kosia standing with some young men outside the house of Gesu, the chief priest. He dragged her home, slapped her, and accused her of having had sexual intercourse with young men; she denied this.

Next morning, he told his father Amekpo of his suspicions;

Amekro reported the matter to Adomwole, the subclan head who summoned some of the other elders to meet at his house. These elders were Nkimile, head of the Gekado subclan, Malebo from the Gepubudo subclan, and Manase, from Wasawasado, all from the Awuku clan. Kosia was summoned to appear before them; as the marriage was still very recent, she was still living in the house of her father Yaw Mensah, until she received from her husband Kofi Nsian the ₵30.00 (thirty cedis) to buy her own cooking utensils.

At Adomwole's house Kosia was again accused of having had intercourse with men, and denied the charge. The elders then put her answer to the test by slaughtering a chicken (ikyase getan), a common method of divination. The chicken was thrown to the ground, and died on its breast, which indicated that Kosia was lying. She still denied the charge, so she was taken to the house of Gyato, where she was beaten by Kwame Sylvester, half brother of her father. She eventually confessed, and admitted having had sexual intercourse with Atare, the son of Kyebowura and with Mensah, the son of Yeho, both belonging to Gblese subclan, of the Cha clan (Fig.37).

Intercourse with Atare took place in Nkwanta, where he was working as a tailor, and with Mensah in Shiare. Gyato and Kwame Sylvester reported her confessions to the elders, who immediately sent to Yeho and Kyebowura to inform them of the charges against their sons. At this point, the Cha clan was now involved in the affair, which was reported to Nana Gesu, the clan head.

Yeho and Kyebowura reported the matter to the subclan head, Mbowura Ayor. At this stage these were only accusations,

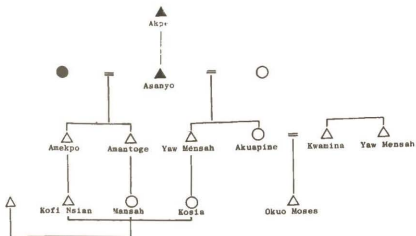


Fig.10 : Kinship between Amekno, Yaw Mensah, Kosia, Mansah and Okuo Moses

and had still to be proved, but they are treated seriously. 'howura Ayor informed the clan head, Nana Kulahome, of the charges, and obtained from him one of the staffs, oknere oyi (literally, sticks of the divinity), which are frequently seen on the altar when sacrifice is made to Brukung, and which receive some of the blood from the sacrificial animal, and which are believed to have a close association with the god. These staffs played an important part in the events which followed.

The first result of the accusations against the two young men of the Cha clan was a state of tension between the two clans, and tension and hostility between the two subclans Wasawasado and Chlese. The two young men concerned were forbidden to enter into the territory of the Wasawasado subclan, and of the entire

Awuku clan, until the whole affair had been settled. Had they done so, they would have been physically attacked and fined, apart from any fine which may be imposed for the charge of adultery. They were also believed to be unclean, in a state of mystical danger, though this is implied rather than stated. A respected elder, Sunwura, was sent to Adomwole, head of the Wasawasado with the okpere oyi; the two young men were ordered to appear before the Cha elders.

The okpere oyi has two functions. 1. It always signifies an apology, and marks the beginning of reconciliation between groups two/who are in dispute over some matter. In this case it signified an apology from the subclan of the two young men to the girl's subclan head, Adomwole. 2. When it is again carried, later in the negotiations, it will on this occasion act as a safe-conduct for the young man, who will be required to enter the territory of the other clan for the reconciliation ceremony. At this stage in the proceedings, it is merely the apology, and a provisional apology, as the Cha elders have yet to make their own enquiries regarding the guilt of the two accused young men. The okpere oyi has the authority of the divinity, which must be respected and obeyed. Its appearance in the other subclan marks the beginning of the reconciliation, for it brings the two sides together, cools tempers, and eliminates long and time-consuming discussions, and possible acrimony. The whole process of reconciliation is speeded up. Time is often an important factor. During such cases, much normal activity is suspended, as people gather to follow the events in the dispute. Men return from the farms, and do not return until the matter is usually resolved. Important work during critical periods of

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the agricultural cycle, such as planting or harvesting, could be affected by long drawn-out negotiations. The apology must be accepted; a refusal would flout the authority of the shrine. Sunwura was told that the two young men were to be brought to Nana Gesu's ritual hut (okpere obu). The case had now been referred to Nana Gesu, the chief priest as the affair now involved both clans. Sunwura reported back to the Cha elders, who dispatched messengers to Nkwanta to bring the young men to Shiare. They could not come until the following morning. Kosia was sent to spend the night with her mother's people; her mother, Molege, was the daughter of Nana Gesu, who sent her to the house of Gyato, of the Gepubudo subclan, of which Nana Gesu is the head.

Early next morning, Asare and Mensah arrived in Shiare, and were summoned before the Cha elders outside Kulahome's hut. They were questioned as to the truth of the accusations. Asare admitted the charge. Mensah at first denied it, but then admitted it when the ikyase getan, the slaughtering of the chicken indicated his guilt. He was ordered to be beaten by the subclan head, Mbowura Ayor. The punishment was carried out by Afinyo, half brother to Kyebowura, and classificatory brother to Yeho, father of Mensah. During the whipping, he managed to escape, even though his hands were tied behind his back, and managed to reach the house of Sako, head of the Abumbado subclan, where he claimed 'sanctuary', which was given. He would eat and sleep at Sako's house until the case was settled. The accused can always try and escape and seek sanctuary. It is possible that this escape is sanctioned and institutionalised. Otherwise it would be very difficult, if not impossible for the accused to escape. The fact that his

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ends are bound behind his back, that there is a large number of people present, who could prevent his escape, and the rough rocky slippery nature of the terrain in Shiare, would make a genuine escape impossible. It also ensures that the accused is outside his natal lineage, and in many cases outside his subclan, until the reconciliation has been completed, and the accused has been ritually returned to the society. The suggestion would seem to be that during the course of the case, the accused has lost his affiliation in the lineage, and in the subclan, on whom he has brought shame and disgrace. Bearing as he does a mystical danger, he is shunned by the subclan whom he has offended by his adultery, and by the subclan who in some way shares in his crime and guilt. He therefore seeks sanctuary with a group who are not involved, and in that sense neutral.

Meanwhile the Awuku elders had been informed that the two men had confessed to the charge; the Cha elders were told to bring them to Nana Gesu's hut, with two large pots of palm wine and two fowls, which is the standard fine. The Awuku elders waived this in the case of Mensah, on the grounds that he called Yaw Mensah, the father of Kosia, 'mother's brother' (nyedabo). In fact, Mensah's mother, Mbowane, was born in Kromasi, the Atwode town between Shiare and Nkwanta, but had classificatory kinship with Yaw Mensah's lineage. Asare could not produce the palm wine and the fowls immediately, so his appearance before the Awuku elders was postponed until the following morning.

Mensah was escorted by the Cha elders to Gesu's hut, with libo, carrying the okpere oyi.

On this occasion, as well as still signifying apology, the okpere oyi was simultaneously acting as a safe conduct for Mensah, indicating that he was under the protection of the divinity, whose sign the okpere oyi was. The staff was placed against the wall of Nana Gesu's hut for a few moments, then taken back to Nana Kulahome. Mensah, wearing only a pair of shorts, squatted in front of Nana Gesu. The Awuku elders sat on his right and left, the Cha elders some distance behind him.

There followed a series of admonitions, delivered by the Awuku elders, particularly by Amekpo, father-in-law of Kosia. They spoke of the shame which he, Mensah, had brought upon his own house through his crime, which was not that expected of a Shiareman. He was reminded of the customs of the ancestors, which he had violated, and how wrong it was to take another man's wife. Such an act 'spoils' the town, and leads to fighting and quarrelling. Frequently, the Cha elders joined in, attacking Mensah's behaviour. The admonitions lasted some time, each of the elders making the same points. When they had finished speaking, the ceremony of reconciliation began.

Mensah approached and knelt before Gesu; they were joined by a young boy from the Wasawasado subclan, who represented the girl's subclan. Gesu was offered a calabash of water, from which he poured libation to Wuruboare (God), Brukung and the ancestors, calling on them to witness the ceremony taking place, to remove the guilt incurred by Mensah, and to heal the damage done. Mensah and the young boy were offered the calabash, from which they drank. They then placed their hands, palms downwards on the ground; Gesu poured water over their hands, then took their hands and joined them, stating, and invoking Brukung, that



the differences between the two groups was now at an end. The joining of the hands of the guilty man and the young boy representing the girl's subclan marked the reconciliation between the two subclans, and the purification of the man from his crime, resulting in the removal of the mystical danger incurred by the adultery. The meeting broke up, the Cha elders returning to their own part of the town.

The reconciliation ceremony, (amuso), is simple, but important and very effective. The whole affair, which began on a Tuesday morning, was over by late morning the next day. A dispute which could be harmfully divisive and lead to protracted quarrelling was swiftly controlled, managed and resolved by very effective mechanisms. Structurally, the process of the case is very simple, consisting of the accusation and admission of guilt, which leads a breakdown of social relations between the two groups, as a result of which the guilty man is unable to function socially, as a person, and is considered to be dangerous, then there is the reconciliation, which restores harmony between the two groups, and the man resumes his normal social life. Crucial in the dispute, and acting as a link between the polarities of disharmony and reconciliation, is the okpere oyi. It is multifunctional. Initially it is an admission of guilt, and an apology; ultimately, as a symbol of the divinity, it is the symbol of unity itself, which derives from Brukung. The okpere oyi is thus a catalyst in the process of reconciliation, and brings the parties together; to refuse to acknowledge it is to challenge the shrine, and the unity of the town. The reconciliation ceremony is final, and cannot be challenged. Whatever private

, especially those most intimately

the stability of the social order would be continually threatened.

Meanwhile, while the processes involving Mensah and Asare were in motion, other aspects of the case were emerging, with such rapidity that several aspects of the affair were being conducted simultaneously. Shortly after the beginning of the investigations of the suspicions against Kosia, Mansah, Kosia's friend, was under suspicion. As the two girls were always together, Kwasi Nyako suspected that his wife Mansah may also have been guilty of adultery. When Mansah heard that Kosia had been accused of adultery by her husband and was being questioned by the elders, she tried to run away, but was soon caught and brought before the elders. At first she denied having had intercourse, but very soon confessed to having had intercourse with a Shiareman living in Pampawie, in the cocoa growing area some 80 miles south of Atwode where a number of Atwode men were engaged in cocoa farming. She denied any further involvement, but the ikyase getan (slaughtering the chicken) indicated that she was lying. She then admitted intercourse with three young men, Yaw Peter, son of Malebo, of the Gepubudo subclan, Okuo Moses, son of Kwamina, of the Wasawasado subclan, to which she also belonged, and Kofi Augustine, son of Nkimile, head of the Gekado lineage; thus all three subclans of the Awuku clan were involved in this aspect of the case.

The procedures described in the case of Kosia were carried out. Both the Gepubudo and Gekado subclans had to perform the gesere, the carrying of the okpere oyi to the house of Adonwole, head of the Wasawasado subclan. As Okuo Moses was of the Gepubudo subclan, the gesere was not performed.

Yaw Peter, the son of Malebo, was whipped by order of his father as he was being led to the house of Gesu to be questioned. He escaped to a house in the Cha clan until the reconciliation ceremony was performed. Kofi Augustine, the son of Nkimile, admitted his guilt, and was not whipped. Okuo Moses was whipped, and during the whipping managed to escape and reached the house of Nana Kulahome, where he was given sanctuary.

Meanwhile, Asare, from the Cha clan, had come to the Awuku elders with the fine of palm wine and the two fowls. The mmuso ceremony followed the pattern of that described for Mensah, except that during the admonitions, Yaw Mensah, father of Kosia, stressed that the case of Asare was more serious than that of Mensah, in that Asare called him, Yaw Mensah, inyedabo (mother's brother), which made the affair more shameful.

At this stage matters took a new turn. Okuo Moses, son of Kwamina, disappeared before the mmuso ceremony could be performed for him. This was because, as well as having had intercourse with Mensah, which he had admitted, he had also had intercourse with Kosia, and this had not as yet been revealed. He suspected, however, that Kosia would eventually mention his name (which she did), and rather than wait and be brought before the elders to be questioned on this more serious charge, he left Shiare and went to Krachi, to his father's brother, Yaw Mensah, who worked on the ferry there.

There were several factors which made Okuo Moses' involvement in the case very serious. Firstly, he called Amantoge, father of Kosia, inyedabo, and Yaw Mensah and Okuo Moses' mother Akuapine were full siblings, unlike Amantoge and Akuapine, who

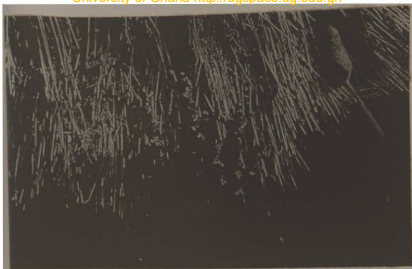


Plate 27: Okpere ayi (upper part)

were classificatory siblings. Then the crime was compounded in that he had committed adultery with two girls. Finally, because he was odamebi (sister's son), he was a member of the commensal group which consisted of the sons of Asanyo. Being aware of the seriousness of the situation due to this complex of factors, Okuo Moses decided to flee. When I left the field shortly afterwards he had not yet returned to Shiare to perform the mmuso ceremony.

Meanwhile, the elders had not yet finished with Kosia. It was still suspected that more men were involved, and this was confirmed by the ikyase getan. She mentioned Okuo Moses, who by this time had left Shiare, Yaw, son of Bekpinai, of the Cha clan, and men in Nyambong and Abrewonkor, both Atwode towns.

The Cha clan was once again involved, and the same process was repeated for Yaw, who was in the bush working at the time who confessed immediately. When I left

the field the case was still continuing. Messengers had been sent to the other two Atwode towns to have the men in question sent to Shiare to be questioned and have the mmuso ceremony performed. The customs of gesere and mmuso as performed in Shiare were also observed in the other Atwode towns.

Adultery is not uncommon in Shiare, and in some ways is regarded as inevitable. Although a possible ground for divorce, husbands do not usually divorce their wives when adultery had been proven, unless the wife does so habitually. Other factors, such as insulting behaviour to the husband, or negligence regarding household duties, are considered as more serious matters, and are much more likely to lead to divorce. What makes the case of Kosia and Mansah so exceptional is the large number of people implicated. Both girls had been very recently married; in fact the marriage had not as yet been finalised, in that both girls were still living in their parental home, visiting and cooking for their husbands until they received their own cooking utensils, when they would then live with their husbands and establish an independent household. Their actions may be an implied criticism of the arranged marriage system which prevails in Shiare. In both cases, the girls had little choice in their marriage partners. Both were illiterate, and part of the traditional structure of Shiare life. But both frequently visited Nkwanta and other towns, and may have been influenced by factors at work there which were making inroads on the traditional values of Atwode society. Opportunities existed in Nkwanta and elsewhere which allowed women some degree of independence outside the traditional structures. Women from Shiare had settled in Nkwanta and had

become to some degree independent by engaging in trading and working as seamstresses. The secondary school and the continuation school in Nkwantahave girls of Kosia and Manṣah's age whose outlook is different, more sophisticated than that represented by Shiare. Some of the educated Shiare men with whom I discussed the case suggested that some of the younger girls found the traditional marriage arrangements irksome, and may have involved themselves with lovers as a gesture of protest.

The mechanisms for dealing with adultery are effective, and their effectiveness is directed more to ending the tension between the parties involved than inflicting punishment. The fines themselves are more of a token nature than punitive, and in some cases no fine was imposed. The beatings inflicted on some of those involved were not statutory, but arbitrary. Kosia was severely beaten, but less for the deed itself than for the fact that she denied the accusations. Mansah confessed almost immediately, and was not beaten. Her readiness to confess may have been influenced by the beating administered to Kosia. Some of the young men were ordered to be beaten by their elders, others were not. The main emphasis was to move events towards the reconciliation ceremony. The attitude of the elders was pragmatic. On the one hand, the fact that adultery was common, common enough to be a fact of experience, was accepted. On the other hand, social norms could not be flouted, otherwise the stability of the society would be threatened; the effects of adultery could be very divisive. The mmuso ceremony restored harmony, but could not guarantee that the parties involved would not again commit adultery.

note on Mbuso

The word mbuso is found among some Guan peoples, in variant forms, but with the same general referant of mystical danger or misfortune.

The word is found among the Akan and Christaller (1933: 323) lists its meanings as 'mischief', 'misfortune', 'disaster', 'misery', 'calamity', 'a thing that causes mischief'. Among the Gonja, mbusu refers specifically to mystical danger. 'The widest definition of mbusu sees it as a state of mystical danger brought about by some sin of omission or commission which throws the relationship between man and the supernatural out of balance' (E.N.Goody 1973:239). It is found in a variety of contexts (E.N.Goody op.cit. 203). The most dangerous states of mbusu occur when the ancestors are angered. 'Mystical danger not otherwise specified is usually taken as being from dead kin, and indeed people sometimes simply equate the two: 'Mbusu is when the ancestors are angry'" (E.N.Goody op.cit. 241).

Among the Kratchi people and the Atwode mmusuo and mmuso are used to designate special ceremonies performed to remove mystical dangers which have occurred. Steemers, writing of the Kenekra (destiny) traditions of the Kratchi, describes the mmusuo (or musi) or pacification ceremony, which is performed when a man encounters great misfortune in his work or in his family life and which can be traced to his Kenekra (Steemers 1964:3).

Steemers (1965) also describes two other traditions found among the Kratchi and some other Guan peoples of the

the Region, based on the belief that every man has a
outside this world, the Sunsum Boasekye, and that every
man has a husband outside this world, the Sunsum Boasekuri.
These spirits can bring trouble and misfortune to married
people, and also before marriage. If troubles or misfortunes
are diagnosed as deriving from these spirits, then the
mmusuo or pacification ceremony must be held, and is almost
identical to that performed for the Kenekra (Steemers 1965:
1-3). The Nkonya also perform a mmusuo ceremony to pacify
the Boasekyi and the Boasekuri Sunsum, but it takes a
different form from that of the Kratchis (Steemers op.cit.

In the prayers recited during some of these ceremonies,
it is interesting to note that Na Bruku (Brukung) is invoked
along with Dente, the god of the Kratchi (Steemers 1964:5
and 1965:7). In the latter instance Na Bruku is referred
to as 'our senior god here'.

Mmusuo for the Atwode is the ceremony of reconciliation and
purification necessitated by a breach of social norms which
has incurred 'a mystical danger. As in the case of the
Kratchi ceremonies cited above, the emphasis is on the
ceremony, the aspect of mystical danger being implied rather
than stated. The object of the ceremony is to reconcile the
two groups which have been estranged because of the adultery,
and to purify the participants, and thus remove the mystical
danger. The Shiare people with whom I discussed the matter
agreed that mystical danger was connected with mmusuo, but
that the word referred primarily to the ceremony. There are



other causes of estrangement between groups, such as eloping with a girl, or disputes regarding building land. In these cases the groups will be reconciled, but the ceremonies connected with the reconciliation are not called mmuso, as there would seem to be no element of mystical danger involved. There may be other occasions when mmuso ceremonies are performed, but I was unable to obtain precise information on this point. But mmuso is certainly connected with adultery, which is fairly common, and brings with it mystical danger. This is also true of sexual relations in certain contexts. Two men who have had relations with the same woman will avoid each other socially, as they believe that one can endanger the other. A divorced woman may not remarry a man of the same subclan. A man who has married the divorced wife of another man will avoid the first husband socially, for a time at least, and will not eat or drink with him, to avoid mystical danger.

The husband of an adulterous woman is believed to be in danger from the man with whom intercourse took place; his lineage, and even his subclan, are believed to be in similar danger. Hence the man guilty of adultery is forbidden to enter the territory of the woman's subclan until the mmuso ceremony has been performed. There is only one occasion when the guilty man may enter the woman's subclan; that is when he enters accompanied by the bearer of the okpere oyi, and is thus under the protection of the shrine, which protects him from physical assault, and which protects the people from the mystical danger.

The case of Okuo Moses was considered to be especially serious. Apart from having committed adultery with both girls, who were classificatory siblings, he called Kosia's father, Yaw Mensah, inyedabo (mother's brother) (Fig.10), and by virtue of this kinship through his mother, he was a member of the commensal group which included the fathers of the two girls, and therefore posed a special threat to the group. Shiare people are careful with whom they eat, as food is regarded as being vulnerable to the attack of witches. E.N.Goody notes a similar attitude among the Gonja. The main means used by women witches to attack their victims is to place mystical poison in their food; therefore they are extremely careful about what food they eat, particularly if they do not know the woman who cooked it (1973:127). The Atwode will not eat food prepared by a suspected witch, and will expel from the commensal group anyone suspected of being a witch (p. 233). Okuo Moses, though not suspected of witchcraft, was the bearer of mystical danger, and a threat to the kin group with whom he ate. I was told that when he returned to Shiare and underwent the mmuso ceremony, he would be allowed to rejoin the commensal group.

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