



ASHANTI



Area in which the Anthropological Researches described in this volume were conducted: towns and physical features are indicated only if they are mentioned in the text.

ASHANTI

English Miles
 0 10 20 30 40 50 60



A temple and priest of 'Nyame, the god of the sky

A S H A N T I

BY

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PREFACE

THIS volume contains the results of the first year's work of the new Anthropological Department in Ashanti, West Africa. It opens up what, I believe, is largely new ground, or perhaps rather, old ground treated in a new way.

As the setting up of this Department was somewhat in the nature of an experiment, it will not, I believe, be out of place to hazard some remarks about it, as the matter affects not merely our own local or even national interests, but those of every great colonizing power.

It must be remembered that the creation of Departments of Anthropology in Colonies and Protectorates where governments are dealing with peoples who are classed as 'backward' or 'primitive' has been advocated long and earnestly by scientists. They have not ceased to press for the application of Anthropology to the work of practical administration among the 'native' races. It may be mentioned that in Lieut.-Col. Sir Richard Temple, Bt., C.B., C.I.E., this cause has had one of its staunchest and strongest advocates.

The objects and reasons for the formation of such Departments are concisely summed up in the findings of a Royal Commission on University education which sat in 1913, and in a report drawn up by the British Association, of which the following are extracts :

' It is as important that officials and others intending to spend their lives in the East, or in parts of the Empire inhabited by non-European races, should have a knowledge of their racial characteristics, as that they should be acquainted with their speech, and we believe that the Colonial office shares this view ' (Royal Commission Report). And again : ' An accurate acquaintance with the nature, habits, and customs of alien populations is necessary to all who have to live and work amongst them in any official capacity, whether administrators, executive officers, missionaries, or merchants, because in order to deal effectively with any group of mankind it is essential to have that cultured sympathy with them which comes of sure knowledge.'

The formation of this particular Department in Ashanti was directly due to the initiative of the present Chief Commissioner, Mr. C. H. Harper, C.M.G., O.B.E. He advocated its creation on the ground that it was necessary to collect and preserve before it was too late a record of Ashanti customs and beliefs. This recommendation was very opportune, for so fast are conditions changing in Ashanti that had the work been postponed for long it is doubtful whether much information would have been obtained. It must be confessed, however, that from a financial point of view the moment was not particularly favourable.

The Gold Coast Government, like others, was struggling with serious difficulties resulting from the Great War and might be laying itself open to criticism for sanctioning a new venture, the success of which was problematical.

To the Colonial Office and to the Governor, Brig.-Gen. Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., as guardians of the funds of the Colony, not only anthropologists but the Ashanti people owe a debt of gratitude for sanctioning the setting up of this new Department in such difficult times, the more especially as many might argue that this country and people had carried on well without it in the past.

I had the honour to be chosen as the first Head of the new Department, being seconded for that purpose from the Political side of the Gold Coast Administration. At the outset I had to decide which of two possible methods of working to follow. The first was to treat the new Department as a Central Office or Clearing House, which meant that it would communicate with all persons likely to be interested in its work, ask for descriptions of customs and beliefs that had come under their observation, and request that they would forward the results of their investigations to the Head of the Department, who, while conducting independent researches, would give advice and assistance with regard to methods to be followed.

If this procedure had been followed the Department in a very short time would have had a great mass of material at its disposal, very difficult to classify, examine, and verify, and requiring probably the undivided attention of its Head.

The second method was for the Head of the Department to

begin work by himself, making a detailed investigation into the beliefs and customs of this people.

I chose the second method, and after a year of work on these lines, I feel convinced that I came to a right decision. It must be remembered that in Ashanti really valuable anthropological information is possessed by comparatively few of its inhabitants. Those who have accurate knowledge are the older men and women who have few dealings with the foreigner, live secluded lives in remote villages, and are ignorant of or indifferent to the social and religious changes brought about by the European. If these 'ancients' are asked to converse through the medium of an interpreter, who often does not know English at all well and is generally quite incapable of rendering into English many of the words used in the vernacular, they usually become reticent and suspicious, or at any rate uninterested, and likely to withhold their stores of knowledge. If, however, they are able to talk freely and without the aid of an interpreter to one who has their confidence, who they know can sympathize with them and understand not only their language, but their modes of thought and pride of race, then and then only are they likely to pour out their store of ancient lore and to lay bare their thoughts. Knowing this, and as I fortunately possessed the trust and confidence of many of these old people and was able to converse directly with them, I thought I could not do better than attempt at once to secure and preserve as groundwork for future investigation the valuable material which could only be gained by direct and personal touch with those who possessed it. I felt that if once this all-important knowledge could be gained, it would form the background for future research. I hope that the short delay that may ensue before my colleagues are asked to step in, and assist the new Department, will not be misunderstood by them, as I trust that the present activities of the Department will aid investigators in the future and increase the value of their work.

I have mentioned in the opening paragraph of this preface that the contents of this volume represent one year's labours. This is in one sense an accurate statement, for I think that there is not a single subject in this book the full facts of which I was cognizant before I undertook this work. In another

sense, however, this statement is incorrect because the foundations upon which this twelve months' work is built have been gradually laid during many years' residence in Ashanti.

It is clear, I think, that a State Department, financed by public money and not by private institutions or individuals, should be 'a paying proposition', as our friends in the United States would say, especially at the present time. It cannot be expected that when rigid economy is imperative, a local Government should set up and maintain a new Department, where work, however valuable it may be from a purely scientific point of view, results in information of interest only to men of science. Such a Department should prove itself to be also of practical value to the Administration, and it is of importance to recognize this point. It has not so much, in my opinion, been the inability of governments in the past to realize the value to them of what may well be called the Intelligence Department of an Administration, as the failure to make more use of the experience of men combining some experience of anthropology with the knowledge of Colonial Administration and its practical needs. It seems to me therefore that the best results are likely to be obtained by training as anthropologists, men already possessing some experience of the people, the language, and the country generally, and also of the problems of administration.

With reference now to the contents of this volume, most of the chapters deal with what is known as social anthropology, because in my opinion the most urgent need of this science to-day is not so much the physical¹ or technological side of the subject, or of broad general surveys of districts or areas, as minute and exact studies with accurate detailed accounts of social and religious beliefs, rites, and customs.

The material from which data can be obtained for this branch of anthropological study is disappearing so rapidly in Ashanti that it will be lost entirely within the next few years.

As I have stated above that an Anthropological Department should, in my opinion, be looked upon as in the nature of an 'Intelligence Department' to the Administration, and I have

¹ In an appendix to this volume will be found the results of some physical measurements taken. These have been treated statistically by Mr. L. H. Dudley Buxton, M.A., Lecturer in Physical Anthropology at Oxford, and for this and his note on the results I am much indebted.

suggested that it should show practical, tangible results and not merely supply information to be pigeon-holed in the archives of an anthropological library, perhaps I may be permitted to illustrate this point from the present volume.

A much wider public than anthropological readers will have heard of the romance of the 'Golden Stool' of Ashanti. I suppose it is no exaggeration to state that this symbol has directly involved the British Government and the British tax-payer in two costly 'little' wars; and lately it might well have been the cause of a third.

The official reports of this event read like a passage from the *Arabian Nights*. This stool had been hidden for over twenty years—since the Ashanti rising of 1896. During 1921 some labourers, working on a new government road, were all unknown to themselves on the point of unearthing it from where it had been buried (enclosed between two great brass pans), on the spot over which the new road was to pass.

The custodians of the stool, who reached the spot just in time to prevent it being dug up, scared off all the labourers by telling them that there was buried the spirit of small-pox which would seize upon any one who further disturbed the soil. They returned in the dead of night. The Golden Stool was dug up and conveyed by seven old men to the hut of one Yao Kyira, alias Wereko the chief of Aboabogya. The new hiding place gradually became known to several persons whose cupidity overcame all other scruples, and gradually, piece by piece, they stripped the Stool of the massive gold ornaments or insignia with which it was adorned. One day an old woman recognized one of these gold ornaments that was offered for sale, and then the whole matter came to light.

The robbers were only saved from instant death by being rushed into prison under our escort; a few hours later the whole of Ashanti was in a state of national mourning and tribulation, far greater than at the loss of any king.

'When war comes, rumours come,' runs an Ashanti proverb, and wild rumours were about to the effect that we, i.e. the Government, had seized the Stool or were about again to demand it. Local feeling ran very high, and we were prepared for all eventualities.

The masterly handling of this delicate situation by the present Chief Commissioner of Ashanti is now past history. The point I wish to bring forward is that he has officially given to this new Department some of the credit for warding off what might have been very serious complications.

The article on 'the Golden Stool', which was originally a confidential memorandum, written a few days after events assumed a critical aspect, is now published in this volume. In the words of the 1921 Annual Report for Ashanti, 'Captain Rattray's researches have already proved of practical value, for it is due to his investigations that much that is new in the history of the "Golden Stool" has come to light, and with such knowledge Government has seen its way to deal in a sympathetic spirit with the disturbing event of its desecration'.

This statement I venture to think proves that even after this Department had been in existence for only a few months it had in some measure, justified its formation.

Our appreciation of what the Golden Stool meant to the Ashanti nation found an echo a year later during the ceremony of the presentation to Her Royal Highness, the Princess Mary, Viscountess Lascelles, of an Ashanti Silver Stool from the Queen Mothers of Ashanti. Sewa Akoto, the Senior Queen Mother, in her speech on presenting the Stool to Lady Guggisberg, C.B.E., for transmission to Her Royal Highness, said: 'This Stool does not contain our soul as the Golden Stool does, but it contains all the love of the Queen Mothers.'

I have devoted a large part of this book to the description of customs having a particular bearing upon religion. It is, of course, impossible in Ashanti to dissociate religion from the examination of almost any aspect of social life, but I have referred especially to customs relating to the cult of gods and ancestors.

I sincerely hope that some of this material will be of value to African missionaries. I have always maintained that necessary and valuable as anthropological training is to the administrator or merchant it should be an indispensable adjunct to the training of the missionary.

I feel that I do not need to make any excuses for having taken part in what old Bosman undoubtedly would have called

'Heathen and Idolatrous rites' in order to elucidate more fully a fascinating problem—the origin of religious beliefs; but lest I should offend any whose esteem and regard I value highly, I would here like to reiterate what I have written elsewhere:

'I approached these old people and this difficult subject (their religious beliefs) in the spirit of one who came to them as a seeker after truths, the key to which I told them they alone possessed, which not all the learning nor all the books of the white man could ever give to me.

'I made it clear to them that I asked access to their religious rites such as are herein described for this reason. I attended their ceremonies with all the reverence and respect I could well accord to something which I felt to have been already very old, before the religion of my country had yet been born as a new thought, yet not so entirely new, but that even its roots stretched back and were fed from that same stream which still flows in Ashanti to-day.'

The stream crosses the path,
 The path crosses the stream;
 Which of them is the elder?
 Did we not cut a path to go and meet this stream?
 The stream had its origin long long ago.
 The stream had its origin in the Creator.
 He created things,
 Pure pure Tano.¹

Another point to which I would wish to draw attention is the interesting Exogamous Patrilineal Divisions, called *ntoro*, and the Ashanti ideas concerning the transmission of blood. These are illustrated in the large Genealogical Chart which will be found in the first chapter of this volume, and are explained in the article to which I give the place of honour in this book, 'The Ashanti Classificatory System'. The chapter on the Drum Language will, I hope, be of some interest and value, and also my suggestion as to the original form of the well-known African celt.

I have taken every opportunity, while gathering material for this volume from my Ashanti friends, to impress upon them

¹ Extract and translation from the Drum language.

strongly that our culture, our ideas, arts, customs, dress, should not be embraced by them blindly to the entire exclusion and extinction of what is good, just, and praiseworthy in their ancient national institutions.

I have told them that their ideal should be, not to become pseudo-European, but to aim at progress for their race based upon what is best in their own institutions, religion, their manners and customs.

I have told them that they will become better and finer men and women by remaining true Ashanti and retaining a certain pride in their past, and that their greatest hope lies in the future, if they will follow and build upon lines with which the national *sunsum* or soul has been familiar since first they were a people.

I have told them that the work of the new Department is to study their institutions, which the rising generation is tempted to despise, and that it is anxious and ready to help and advise the nation as to what will be of assistance to it—conserving, and not destroying, all those customs that are best and not detrimental to progress.

I have tried to make the people understand that we are here among them to help them by grafting on to their institutions such of our own as will enable them to take their place in the commonwealth of civilized nations, not as denationalized Ashanti, but as an African People who will become the greater force and power in the Empire because they have not bartered the wealth of their past, metaphorically and not infrequently in reality, for a coat, a collar, or a tie.

The response to this appeal, which was my *apologia* for prying into their secrets, the genuine understanding, the gratitude and the wish for a helping hand to assist them over this critical stage of their evolution, has been a very remarkable feature of the work of the new department.

The Ashanti seem to be at the parting of the ways. One path leads, I believe, to the unrest and ferment we see on every hand among peoples whose institutions we have either deliberately broken down or as deliberately permitted to decay. The other path, which in no way postulates mental stagnation, leads at least to some surer ground, because it will leave landmarks

which the particular genius of that people will always recognize, and will help them along the road of progress however difficult it may be.

As a result of somewhat informal talks on these lines, I have had from Chiefs, from the Queen Mothers, and from elders, both old men and old women, more assistance than I ever hoped to obtain, and every possible opportunity to conduct these investigations, and guidance and help when the path was obscure and full of difficulty. It is impossible to speak too highly of their aid, for without it I could not have achieved anything of value.

I have again to acknowledge the interest and assistance of Dr. R. R. Marett and of the Oxford School of Anthropology, whose pupil I have the honour to have been. I am most grateful also to Professor and Mrs. Seligman. Professor Seligman, F.R.S., most kindly has gone over with me the whole of my manuscript and helped and advised me. Mrs. Seligman first inspired me with enthusiasm for the Classificatory System and its vital importance in the elucidation of the problems of social anthropology.

I have already stated the debt I owe to my African friends, men and women, and it is not easy to single out any one in particular, but there are one or two special tributes I would like to pay. Two of these are to the dead. The first is to Kakari, an old Ashanti aristocrat, who left his own village to follow me, contributing each day from his treasures of African lore. Without his help and influence at the beginning of my work I could not have achieved one-half of what is here recorded, and I gratefully pay this tribute to his memory. The second is to my friend Sewa Akoto, the late Queen Mother of Mampon. She was a fitting representative of a class for whom I cannot speak without unbounded enthusiasm, the Queen Mothers and old women of Ashanti.

Among the living to whom I am indebted I have a host of friends too numerous to mention, chiefs and hunters, priests and priestesses, medicine men and witch doctors. However, I must especially record the name of Osai Bonsu, Paramount Chief of Mampon.

I am most grateful to my colleagues in whose Provinces and

Districts it has been my good fortune to work, for their unfailing courtesy and interest.

I am indebted to my brother-in-law Sir Henry F. New for having kindly undertaken the reading and correction of all proofs.

Lastly, I have to acknowledge on the behalf of the Colonial Government and of the Department the generosity of the Oxford University Press, in undertaking, with the assistance of the Colonial Government, the publication of this volume, and in giving it such an attractive form. To the Secretary and Delegates I have the honour to tender my sincere thanks.

R. S. RATTRAY.

OXFORD, *March* 1923.

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I

THE ASHANTI CLASSIFICATORY SYSTEM¹

It is an axiom in anthropology that without a clear knowledge of the family organization of a tribe it is impossible fully to understand their social organizations. Therefore at the outset of my investigations into the Anthropology of Ashanti, I decided to give full consideration to this important question.

Before commencing the analysis of the data contained in Tables I and II, a few brief explanatory notes will be given touching the methods adopted by anthropologists for the elucidation of this problem. It will be seen that the chart is called 'Ashanti Classificatory System'. The term 'Classificatory' is used in contradistinction to the term 'Family'² (sometimes called 'Descriptive'). The latter is the term we would apply to our own system of naming relatives. The essential basis of the Classificatory System is that it is founded on the clan or other social group larger than the family upon which our own 'descriptive' system is based.³

The next point to be touched upon is the method employed in collecting the essential data,—data without which the results of their system, so constantly present before our eyes but so little understood, can never be fully grasped. This method is known as the genealogical method.

This procedure, which was first successfully worked out by the late Dr. Rivers, and has been elaborated by Mrs. Seligman, is absolutely indispensable if any successful results are to be obtained. Briefly the method consists in securing the services of an elderly intelligent informant who is asked to give his

¹ With pedigree chart.

² See *Kinship and Social Organization* (Rivers).

³ It can of course be readily argued that our own Descriptive system is in some degree classificatory, e. g. 'uncle' is applied to all brothers of father or mother, while 'cousin' is used to denote an even wider circle. The word Classificatory is used in these tables in a far wider sense. (We are all in Ashanti familiar with the apparent confusion resulting from the indiscriminate and unscientific use of the word 'brother', which word need not necessarily denote only a male child by the same father or mother as the speaker.)

genealogy.¹ More than one genealogy should of course be taken to avoid the possible chance of some double relationship : thus, in table No. I, Kakari gave the relationship name for his father's sister's husband as *wofa*, which stands for 'maternal uncle', but it was soon discovered that this was only because his uncle had married the woman in question ; in the ordinary way the man would be *agya* (father) ; this point is mentioned to show one of many possible pitfalls.

Having secured the actual names of the individuals in the family tree, it is not difficult to find out what relationship term, with, in each case, its reciprocal, is used by them when speaking of each other.

So much for a brief note of method ; for a fuller account those interested should consult *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, especially pp. 149-56, published by the Royal Anthropological Institute.

To come now to an analysis and examination of the tables themselves. They contain a mass of details which have bearing on :

1. Relationship Terms.
2. Clans, kinship or blood. ✓
3. Descent. ✓
4. Succession to Stools. ✓
5. Inheritance of Property. ✓
6. Marriages (Enjoined, Privileged, and Prohibited).
7. *Ntoro*, patrilineal exogamous divisions.

At the present stage of these investigations, which have so far extended only over a comparatively short period, it is obviously impossible to write exhaustively on any of these subjects. In anthropology there is no single subject which the student can take up and say, 'I am going to study this to the exclusion of all else', for among primitive peoples there is hardly an art, a rite, a custom, or belief that is not bound up or connected in some way with some separate art, rite, custom, or belief.

This chapter is therefore necessarily incomplete, and other

¹ Pedigree Tables are illustrated in *Man*, April 1921, with an excellent article on the methods, by Mrs. Seligman.

facts may appear later, which may alter or modify the conclusions arrived at. I nevertheless venture to present it in its present form as I think it will show that, by the use of scientific methods, the anthropologist is capable of throwing new light in a comparatively short time on problems which have remained obscure in these parts for over two centuries, and because I hope that my account may stimulate further investigations by my colleagues.

It may be as well here to recapitulate very briefly such knowledge as we already possess on this subject.

I believe I am correct in stating that no even approximately complete list of relationship terms has ever been drawn up for the Ashanti. This perhaps is not surprising when such an authority as Dr. Seligman, F.R.S., wrote a few years ago, speaking of this subject: 'I doubt if a dozen have been recorded in all Africa, and these are certainly not complete.' In my *Ashanti Proverbs*, I attempted to give a few terms, but that list is not by any means a full one. Christaller's monumental work, *A Dictionary of the Ashanti and Fanti Languages*, contains (in alphabetical order) the words for many of these terms, but without reference to each other, and not in a complete form. I shall therefore come to the present tables and the accompanying chart, I and II, in which the system will be examined. 'A', Kakari, is the central figure, and each term is given in relation to himself, with its reciprocal. The tables will be examined generation by generation, commencing with Kakari's own, then taking his ascendants, generation by generation, then descendants in like manner. The pedigree of Kakari has been enlarged and amplified from other pedigrees to fill up gaps (caused by death, omissions or other causes). The persons' actual names are given in round brackets thus, (Kakari), the relationship term is then given in English, with, immediately under that, the Ashanti. The *abusua*, or blood, is shown, where known, by various patterns, where not known, the circles are left blank. The *ntoro* exogamous divisions are purely fictitious, and various other signs over the *abusua* symbols have been used to illustrate these. The sign = signifies 'marries'. The circles with the arrow upwards thus, ♂, signify males, and downwards thus, ♀, females.

TABLE I

A. 'A's', KAKARI'S, GENERATION

Term.	ENGLISH.	Reciprocal.	Term.	ASHANTI.	Reciprocal.
Husband	Wife		'Kunu ; ku'	'Yere ; ye'	
Elder brother	Younger brother		'Nua panyin ¹	'Nua kuma	
Elder sister	Younger brother		'Nua panyin	'Nua kuma	
Elder brother's wife	Husband's younger brother		Akonta	Akonta	
Younger brother's wife	Husband's elder brother		'Yere kuma (or akonta)	'Kunu panyin (or akonta)	
Elder sister's husband	Wife's younger brother		Akonta	Akonta	
Younger sister's husband	Wife's elder brother		Akonta	Akonta	
<p>This completes 'A's' own brothers and sisters, and their spouses, and we come next to 'A's' father's brother's and father's sister's children, and 'A's' mother's brother's and his mother's sister's children.</p>					
Father's brother's son	Father's brother's son		'Nua kuma, or agya 'ba	'Nua panyin, or agya 'ba	
Father's brother's son's wife	Husband's father's brother's son		'Yere kuma	'Kunu panyin	
Father's brother's daughter	Father's brother's son		Agya 'ba, or 'nua kuma	Agya 'ba, or 'nua kuma	
Father's brother's daughter's husband	Wife's father's brother's son		Akonta	Akonta	
Father's sister's son	Mother's brother's son		Agya wofase, sewa 'ba, akonta, or 'nua kuma	Wofa 'ba, or akonta, or 'nua panyin	
Father's sister's son's wife	Husband's mother's brother's son		'Yere kuma, or akonta	'Kunu panyin, or akonta	
Father's sister's daughter	Mother's brother's son		Sewa 'ba, or 'yere	'Kunu	
Father's sister's daughter's husband	Wife's mother's brother's son		Akonta	Akonta	

¹ The sex descriptive terms *oba*, *obarima* are in these tables generally omitted.

	ENGLISH.		ASHANTI.
<i>Term.</i>		<i>Reciprocal.</i>	
Mother's brother's son		Father's sister's son	<i>Wofa 'ba, akonta, or 'nua</i>
Mother's brother's son's wife		Husband's father's sister's son	<i>Akonta, or 'yere kuma</i>
Mother's brother's daughter		Father's sister's son	<i>Wofa 'ba, or 'yere, or ase</i>
Mother's brother's daughter's husband		Wife's father's sister's son	<i>Akonta</i>
Mother's sister's son		Mother's sister's son	<i>'Nua (kuma)</i>
Mother's sister's son's wife		Husband's mother's sister's son	<i>'Yere</i>
Mother's sister's daughter		Mother's sister's son	<i>'Nua</i>
Mother's sister's daughter's husband		Wife's mother's sister's son	<i>Akonta</i>

This completes 'A's' generation,

B. GENERATION (I) OF ASCENDANTS

	ENGLISH.		ASHANTI.
<i>Term.</i>		<i>Reciprocal.</i>	
Father		Son	<i>Agya, osie</i>
Father's brother		Brother's son	<i>Agya</i>
Father's brother's wife		Husband's brother's son	<i>Ena</i>
Father's sister		Brother's son	<i>Sewa, or ase</i>
Father's sister's husband		Wife's brother's son	<i>Agya</i>
Mother		Son	<i>Ena, 'eno</i>
Mother's brother		Sister's son (m.s.) ¹	<i>Wofa</i>
Mother's brother's wife		Husband's sister's son	<i>Ase</i>
Mother's sister		Sister's son (w.s.)	<i>Ena</i>
Mother's sister's husband		Wife's sister's son	<i>Agya (kuma)</i>

This completes first generation of ascendants.

¹ m.s. = man speaking ; w.s. = woman speaking.

C. GENERATION (II) OF ASCENDANTS

<i>Term.</i>	ENGLISH.	<i>Reciprocal.</i>	<i>Term.</i>	ASHANTI.	<i>Reciprocal.</i>
Father's father	Son's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Father's father's brother	Brother's son's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Father's mother	Son's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Father's father's brother's wife	Husband's brother's son's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Father's father's sister	Brother's son's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Father's father's sister's husband	Wife's brother's son's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Mother's mother	Daughter's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Mother's father	Daughter's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Mother's mother's brother	Sister's daughter's son		Nana	Nana	Nana
Mother's mother's brother's wife	Husband's sister's daughter's child		Nana	Nana	Nana
Mother's mother's sister	Sister's daughter's child		Nana	Nana	Nana
Mother's mother's sister's husband	Wife's sister's daughter's son		Nana	Nana	Nana

This completes generation of ascendants.

FIRST GENERATION OF DESCENDANTS

D. DESCENDANTS (I)

<i>Term.</i>	ENGLISH.	<i>Reciprocal.</i>	<i>Term.</i>	ASHANTI.	<i>Reciprocal.</i>
Son	Father		'Ba	Agya	
Daughter	Father		'Ba (oba)	Agya	
Son's wife	Husband's father		Ase	Ase	
Daughter's husband	Wife's father		Ase	Ase	
Elder brother's son	Father's younger brother		'Nua panyin 'ba	Agya ('nua kuma)	
Elder brother's son's wife	Husband's father's younger brother		Ase	Ase	

Elder brother's daughter	Father's younger brother	'Nua panyin 'ba (oba)	Agya ('nua kuma)
Elder brother's daughter's husband	Wife's father's younger brother	Ase	Ase
Younger brother's son	Father's elder brother	'Nua kuma 'ba	Agya ('nua panyin)
Younger brother's son's wife	Husband's father's elder brother	Ase	Ase
Younger brother's daughter	Father's elder brother	'Nua kuma 'ba	(Agya 'nua panyin)
Younger brother's daughter's husband	Wife's father's elder brother	Ase	Ase
Younger sister's son	Mother's elder brother	Wofase	Wofa (m.s.)
Younger sister's daughter	Mother's elder brother	Wofase (oba)	Wofa (m.s.)
Sister's son's wife	Husband's mother's brother	Ase	Ase
Sister's daughter's husband	Wife's mother's brother	Ase	Ase
Mother's sister's daughter's son	Mother's mother's sister's son	Wofase	Wofa
Mother's sister's daughter's daughter	Mother's mother's sister's son	Wofase	Wofa
Mother's sister's daughter's son's wife	Husband's mother's mother's sister's son	Ase	Ase
Mother's sister's daughter's daughter's husband	Wife's mother's mother's sister's son	Ase	Ase
Mother's brother's son's son	Father's father's sister's son	'Ba	Agya
Mother's brother's son's daughter	Father's father's sister's son	'Ba	Agya
Mother's brother's daughter's son	Mother's father's sister's son	'Ba, wofase	Agya, wofa
Mother's brother's daughter's daughter	Mother's father's sister's son	'Yere 'ba, wofase	'Kunu, agya, wofa
Mother's brother's son's son's wife	Husband's father's father's sister's son	Ase	Ase
Mother's brother's son's daughter's husband	Wife's father's father's sister's son	Ase	Ase
Mother's brother's daughter's son's wife	Husband's mother's father's sister's son	Ase	Ase
Mother's brother's daughter's daughter's husband	Wife's mother's father's sister's son	Ase	Ase

(For E: Second Generation of Descendants, see p. 33 and Chart.)

F. THIRD GENERATION OF DESCENDANTS FROM 'A'

ENGLISH.		ASHANTI.	
<i>Term.</i>	<i>Reciprocal.</i>	<i>Term.</i>	<i>Reciprocal.</i>
Son's son's son	Father's father's father	<i>Nana n'ka'so</i>	<i>Nana (panyin)</i>
Son's son's daughter	Father's father's father	<i>Nana n'ka'so</i>	<i>Nana (panyin)</i>
Daughter's daughter's son	Mother's mother's father	<i>Nana n'ka'so</i>	<i>Nana (panyin)</i>
Daughter's daughter's daughter	Mother's mother's father	<i>Nana n'ka'so</i>	<i>Nana (panyin)</i>
&c., &c., &c., all of this generation being	<i>Nana n'ka'so</i>	<i>Nana (panyin)</i>

TABLE II

GENEALOGY OF YA GYANSUA ('A's' WIFE)

ENGLISH		ASHANTI.	
<i>Term.</i>	<i>Reciprocal.</i>	<i>Term.</i>	<i>Reciprocal.</i>
<i>A. Wife's Generation :</i>			
Wife's brother	Sister's husband	<i>Akonta</i>	<i>Akonta</i>
Wife's brother's wife	Husband's sister's husband	<i>Ase</i>	<i>Ase</i>
Wife's sister	Sister's husband	<i>'Yere (kuma), or akonta</i>	<i>'Kunu or akonta</i>
<i>B. First Generation of Ascendants :</i>			
Wife's father	Daughter's husband	<i>Ase</i>	<i>Ase</i>
Wife's mother	Daughter's husband	<i>Ase</i>	<i>Ase</i>
<i>C. First Generation of Descendants :</i>			
Wife's brother's son	Father's sister's husband	<i>Akonta 'ba</i>	<i>Agya</i>
Wife's brother's daughter	Father's sister's husband	<i>Akonta 'ba, or 'ase</i>	<i>Agya or ase</i>
Wife's sister's son	Mother's sister's husband	<i>'Yere 'ba</i>	<i>Agya</i>
Wife's sister's son's wife	Husband's mother's sister's husband	<i>Ase</i>	<i>Ase</i>
Wife's sister's daughter	Mother's sister's husband	<i>'Yere 'ba</i>	<i>Agya</i>
Wife's sister's daughter's husband	Wife's mother's sister's husband	<i>Ase</i>	<i>Ase</i>

Each of these generations will now be examined in detail and the points of especial importance noted. A mere list of relationship terms without an explanation of their meaning can only be of minor value.

(A) It will be noted that 'in-laws' in this generation are classed as *akonta* (sometimes heard *akontagye*), with one noticeable exception, i.e. the wife of a younger brother, who is called by Kakari 'yere kuma (lit. small or secondary wife), with reciprocal 'kunu panyin, i.e. 'big or elder husband', and the reason for this curious nomenclature will be clear later when, in the law of inheritance, it comes to be noted that an elder brother, when succeeding to a younger brother's property on the latter's death, inherits his wife as forming part of the heritable property. This potential marriage right gives him, even during his younger brother's life-time, the privilege of addressing his younger brother's wife as his 'younger wife'. This, however, gives the elder brother no right of access whatever during the husband's life-time.

Next it is to be noted that all the father's brother's sons and daughters are called 'nua kuma,¹ i.e. 'small or secondary brothers', or *agya 'ba*, i.e. 'father's child'; 'father' here referring, not to the speaker's own father, but to his father's brothers, whom 'A' also calls 'father'.

To an Ashanti the words *agya 'ba*² (i.e. father's child) implies that a child of his father's brother is meant; and at once stamps that child, if a female, as being in a prohibited degree of marriage with the speaker for the reason to be given later when discussing the *ntoro* relationship.

Dealing now with the spouses of these persons we have the father's brother's son's wife called 'yere kuma, i.e. 'small wife', because her husband is called by 'A' his, 'A's', 'small brother' (there is no right of access or marriage, however), or sometimes *akonta* (i. e. sister-in-law). The father's brother's daughter's

¹ 'Nua kuma (i. e. younger or secondary brother or sister) is also used for any of the following persons: (a) Own younger brother; (b) own younger sister; (c) father's sister's son; (d) mother's sister's son; (e) mother's sister's daughter; (f) mother's brother's son. The females among all these, as will be noted later, may not marry 'A'.

² *Agya 'ba* is used in an even wider sense implying the child of any man of the speaker's *ntoro*.

husband is also *akonta*. The mother's sister's son's wife is called by 'A' *'yere* (*kuma*), i. e. 'small wife'; because 'A' in certain circumstances can claim her as his property on the death of her husband. He has no right of access to her, however, during her husband's life-time. The mother's sister's daughter's husband is *akonta*.

The sons and daughters (and their spouses) of 'A's' father's sisters and 'A's' mother's brothers have terms (among others) derived through their parents, i. e. the father's sisters and mother's brothers. These paternal aunts and maternal uncles have special terms due to the very especial position they hold, while the father's brothers and the mother's sisters are all indiscriminately classed as *agya* (father) and *ena* (mother) respectively. The father's sister's son is called *sewa 'ba*, i. e. paternal aunt's son, and the mother's brother's son is called *wofa 'ba*, i. e. maternal uncle's son. The father's sister's son is also called *agya wofase* and *'nua kuma* (small brother), with reciprocal *wofa 'ba* (maternal uncle's child), and also sometimes *akonta*, i. e. brother-in-law.¹

In referring to this alternative term *akonta* (brother-in-law) given by 'A' to his father's sister's son, an interesting fact is disclosed. We find that 'A' calls this man's sister, i. e. his father's sister's daughter, *'yere*, i. e. 'wife'. Now it will be found on investigation that 'A' has an absolute and undisputed right of access to or marriage with this woman. So strong is this feeling that 'A' naturally calls her brother his *akonta*, i. e. brother-in-law, though he may be only potentially so. An exactly similar position exists on the mother's side, where 'A' is the potential husband and has right of access to (provided she is not, with 'A's' permission, another man's wife) the daughter of his mother's brother, whom 'A' in consequence may call *'yere* (wife),

¹ It will be well here to draw attention to the almost universal misconception (due to that constant source of misinformation in West Africa, i. e. the faulty rendering by interpreters whose knowledge of English is imperfect), that 'uncle' or 'aunt' may equally refer to the maternal or paternal side; whereas in Ashanti the equivalents of our 'paternal uncle' and our 'maternal aunt' do not exist; and 'maternal aunts' and 'paternal uncles' are all classed as 'mothers' and 'fathers'. In contradistinction, certain relationships are singled out for distinct and separate names because of their importance in the family organization, this being a normal feature of the classificatory system.

with reciprocal 'kunu (husband), at the same time calling her brother *akonta*, i.e. brother-in-law.¹ Both these marriages are called Cross-Cousin Marriages.

Next we come to the wives of the father's sister's son and the mother's brother's son; both are called by 'A' *yere kuma* (small or secondary wife), or sometimes *akonta*. The reason 'A' calls these women his 'small wives' is that the husband in each case stands to 'A' in the relationship of *'nua*, i. e. brother, hence, as in the case of 'A's' younger brothers, he calls their wives his wives; the name in these cases, however, being only a sort of courtesy title and implying (at the present date at any rate) no rights over them.

(B) *First generation of 'A's' ascendants.* It has already been noted that all 'A's' father's brothers are called by 'A' *agya* (father), and all his mother's sisters are called *ena* (mother), while his father's sisters are called by the special name *sewa*, and the mother's brothers by the special name *wofa*; reciprocals respectively *'ba* (child) and *wofase* (sister's child).

'A's' mother's brother's wife is called *ase*; now *ase* is used of 'in-laws' (fathers, mothers, &c.), and its use here would appear extraordinary, had it not already been pointed out that 'A' has the right of access to and marriage with his mother's brother's daughter; hence his mother's brother's wife is his potential mother-in-law and the terminology at once becomes logical and the meaning clear. The mother's sister's husband and the father's sister's husband are *agya*, reciprocal *'ba*. The father's brother's wife is *ena*, reciprocal *'ba*.

(C) *Generation (ii) of ascendants.* All are classed, without exception, as *nana*.

(D) *First generation of 'A's' descendants.* All the sons- and daughters-in-law are *ase*, with reciprocal *ase*. The brother's sons and brother's daughters are all classed as *'nua mma*, i.e. simply brother's children. The brother's son's wives and the brother's daughter's husbands are all *ase*, as are the sister's son's wives. When we come to the sister's sons, however, we again have the

¹ If 'A' does not marry these women but permits them to marry some one else, he then has the right to marry their daughters whom he will call from birth *me yere* (my wife), and the mother who was first of all his potential wife becomes his potential mother-in-law and is actually so called, i. e. *ase*.

important and distinct terms, i. e. *wofase*, with reciprocal *wofa*—when the man is speaking; when a woman is speaking the sister's son is simply *'ba* (child).

Coming to the mother's sister's children's children, and the mother's brother's children's children (not shown on the chart), we find that the mother's sister's daughter's sons and daughters are called by 'A' *wofase*, with reciprocal *wofa*, and their spouses are called *ase*. The mother's sister's son's children and the mother's brother's son's children are to 'A' simply *mma* (sing. *'ba*), i. e. his children, and they call 'A' *agya*, father (adding name, e. g. Kakari).

When we come to the children of the mother's brother's daughter we have apparently a most baffling and complicated terminology, for we are told by one that of these, the daughter is called by 'A' *'yere* (wife), with reciprocal *'kunu* (husband); by another that 'A' would call this woman *me 'ba* (my child); and by a third that she would stand to 'A' in the relationship of *wofase* (sister's daughter).

What complicates the matter still more is that the inquirer will find that in actual practice one and all of these relationships will be found to exist in different families, and he will be informed in each case it is the normal and proper relationship according to the native customary law.

The son of 'A's' mother's brother's daughter we also will find stated may stand to 'A' either in the relationship of actual 'son', or that of *wofase* (sister's son). This is the kind of problem that causes the casual inquirer to despair, or go away believing that no order or settled design underlies native institutions, which he will suppose are subject to mere caprice, instead of, as is really the case, being ordained by rigid and well-defined laws, which fit one into another in the social organization and seldom seem to clash.

The following explanation will, I trust, make the matter clearer. The mother's brother's daughter's children may, we found, stand in any of the following relations to 'A', i. e. they may be :

- (a) His own children.
- (b) (In case of a daughter) his wife.
- (c) His *wofase* (i. e. his sister's sons).

(a) 'A's' own children: we have seen that 'A' has an undisputed right of access to and marriage with his mother's brother's daughter. If, then, he marries this woman her children will be his children, hence those who state that this relationship exists between 'A' and the potential children of a mother's brother's daughter are stating a fact which is based on native custom.

(b) Again, we have seen that should 'A' not exercise his privilege to marry his mother's brother's daughter, he will then still have the right to marry her daughter; if he does so, she then becomes his wife.

(c) Supposing again that 'A', by agreement, gives up his prior right to this daughter of his mother's brother's daughter, as he did already to her mother, she, i. e. the mother's brother's daughter's daughter becomes known by 'A' as his *wofase*, i. e. 'sister's child', because her mother is now called by 'A' his 'nua', 'sister'.

A universally-known Ashanti saying, which runs, '*Se w'anya wo wofa 'ba ana wose wofase anware a, wo 'nua ne no*' ('If you did not get your mother's brother's child or your father's sister's child to marry, she is your own sister'), shows the whole aspect of the case as viewed by an Ashanti.

The above also explain the double terminology given for the mother's brother's daughter's son, who may be 'A's' own child or his *wofase*, i. e. sister's child.

It must be clearly understood that the courtesy title of *wofase* in this case implies no 'blood' tie with 'A', and is really a fictitious relationship carrying with it none of the privileges of the blood-related *wofase* as to succession to property and stool.¹

Everything that has been written above concerning the mother's brother's daughter's daughter applies with equal force to the father's sister's daughter's daughter, who may be 'A's' 'own child', 'own wife', or 'sister's child', i. e. *wofase*.

The children of 'A's' father's brother's children's children are all *mma* (children), reciprocal *agya* (father).

(E) *Second generation of 'A's' descendants.* All the persons in this generation are classed as *nana* and their spouses *ase* (in-laws).

¹ This point might be of great importance in stool or succession cases and should be carefully noted.

(F) *Third generation of 'A's' descendants.* Here we have again an instructive term. All the persons in this generation are classed as *nana n'ka'so*, i. e. 'grandchild (&c.), don't touch (my) ear', with reciprocal *nana panyin* (old grandfather). The significance of this term will be dealt with later under the heading of *Prohibited Marriages*.

Table II (Wife's pedigree). In this table, which is incomplete, several points of interest should be noted.

The wife's sister is called by 'A' *'yere* (wife). This, as far as I can discover, does not (*now*) imply any right of access or marriage. In this connexion, however, it is of importance to note that in the case of chiefs, when a wife dies, the wife's family are expected to replace the deceased woman by giving her sister in marriage to the chief. Some potential right to a wife's sister in the past is further postulated by the name given to a wife's sister's husband; he is called by 'A' *kora* (reciprocal *kora*). Now *kora* is the word used also for a co-wife, and means literally 'the jealous one'.¹ Again we find that this woman's children (i. e. the wife's sister's children) are called by 'A' 'my wife's children'.

These facts are, I think, particularly suggestive.

The wife's brother's daughter is called *akonta 'ba*, i. e. brother-in-law's child, but there is an alternative title, *ase*, which here means 'daughter-in-law', and the reason given for this name is that one of 'A's' sons 'will probably marry this woman'. The whole question of 'arranged' marriages appears to me to be worthy of very close investigation.

This completes the 'relationships system' proper. Its classificatory character can be seen very clearly. In itself such a list is of considerable value and interest, but passing on to its application, its importance in getting anything like a full grasp of Ashanti social organizations, will come even more fully to be realized.

2. *Clans (Abusua).* It was already known that the Ashanti were divided into exogamous clans. Bowdich noted this fact more than a hundred years ago, while Christaller writes: 'The principle of the division into families is descentance from the

¹ Mrs. Seligman tells me that among some of the Nilotic tribes the word for co-wife is also derived from a root meaning jealous.

same mother, or relation from the mother's side, which relation also determines the right of inheritance among the genuine Tshi Tribes.'¹ Bosman, writing in 1700, also notes the same system.

It is not intended, in this chapter, to enter into a full account of these clans, their number, names, origin, &c. They are only dealt with here in relation to their bearing on the subject under discussion.

In Table I of the chart, seven clans are dealt with, all of which are actually the clans of the persons named in that genealogy.

The first important rule to note is that these clans (*abusua*) are *exogamous*, that is, a person of one clan can under no possible circumstances marry or have sexual intercourse with any one who belongs to his or her clan. Infringement of this law was punished by death, or expulsion from the clan, for both parties concerned.²

The second is that descent is matrilineal, i. e. a man or woman belongs to the clan not of the father but of the mother. These clans are, in the chart, shown by distinctive patterns, which indicate at a glance how the clan persists as long as the direct *female* descendants last, but is immediately lost in the children of any *male*. This fact is the very basis of the Ashanti social organization, and once fully grasped and understood, explains most of their laws of inheritance, succession, and marriage, and accounts for the strangeness of these rules and of their relationship terminologies.

The Ashanti word for clan is *abusua*, and this word is synonymous with *mogya* (blood). There is a well-known proverb which runs *Abusua bako mogya bako*, 'one clan one blood'.

Bowdich wrote: 'This extraordinary rule of succession excluding all children but those of a sister is founded on the argument that *if the wives of the sons* are faithless the blood of the family is entirely lost in the offspring, but should the daughters deceive their husbands it is still preserved.'

A glance at the chart will show the complete fallacy of any such argument and prove how totally this subject has been misunderstood. Take a couple, say Kakari and his wife, Ya

¹ Vide also Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws*, pp. 3-5.

² Expulsion from the clan amounted to outlawry and was a very solemn proceeding.

Gyansua; the former is of the Ekuona clan, the latter (the woman) of the Beretuo clan. They have a child, i. e. son Kojo Nti, who is, according to Ashanti idea, of the mother's clan (Beretuo), i. e. he has his mother's blood. This we will suppose, for the sake of the argument, is the blood it is wished to preserve. This son now marries, but he is, by customary law, compelled to marry some one of a clan other than Beretuo. He marries a woman of the Asokore clan. Now, however virtuous his wife may be or if she be a hundred times unfaithful, matters not at all so far as keeping the Beretuo blood pure is concerned, for the woman's offspring can never be of the Beretuo clan; but if she married twenty men of every possible clan and bore twenty children, all would be her own blood, i. e. Asokore; because the men cannot transmit one drop of their blood to their children; on the other hand, a Beretuo woman would transmit her blood to her children, to be lost entirely in her son's offspring, to continue however in the female side, i. e. her daughter's granddaughters, &c., as long as the female line lasted.

I wish now, before passing on to the other headings (Inheritance, &c.), to refer to a most interesting point which I had not heard of before these investigations were entered upon. It is indeed briefly referred to in *Ashanti Proverbs*, but time and opportunity did not then allow of the matter being fully investigated. I refer to the *ntoro* divisions.¹ Christaller gives as a definition of this word, 'A person of the same ancient family worshipping the same fetish.'

It is the *ntoro* of the man mingling with the *mogya* of the woman that, the Ashanti believes, forms the child, and just as the woman transmits her *mogya* or blood, so the man transmits his *ntoro*. Thus each man and woman have in them two distinct elements—*mogya* (or blood) and *ntoro* (spirit); the former inherited from the mother and transmitted by her alone, and the latter received from the father and transmitted by him to his offspring. This, then, is the physiological aspect of conception as understood by the Ashanti.

The physical condition of women observed at child-birth and

¹ A fuller account of the *ntoro* is to be found in Chap. II, *Ntoro Exogamous Divisions*.

during their periods seem, logically enough, to have given rise to the supposition that 'blood' alone is transmitted by the woman, while conception following the man's efforts in the act of coition (the semen is actually sometimes called *ntoro*) have apparently given rise to the belief that the *ntoro* alone is transmitted by the male.

Just as the *abusua* is passed down the female line as long as there are female descendants to transmit it, so the *ntoro* is passed on through the male line as long as there are *males*, but is immediately lost as soon as it comes into the female line, for a female, while having the *ntoro* she derived from her male parent, is not able to transmit it to her children who will inherit a different *ntoro* from their father.

Sociologically the *ntoro* plays a less important part than the *abusua*, which decides the whole succession of property and stools, but it is none the less important. When we come to consider prohibited marriages we shall find that the *ntoro* accounts for otherwise inexplicable avoidances, and the rules of marriage group themselves into a clear and easily understood system governed by a few simple laws.

Prohibited Marriages.

An Ashanti may not marry :

1. His grandmother, grand-aunt (maternal),
2. His mother,
3. His sister,
4. His mother's sister, mother's sister's daughter, mother's sister's daughter's daughter,
5. His sister's daughter,
6. His daughter's daughter,
7. His daughter's daughter's daughter ; and he may not marry
8. His grandmother, grand-aunt (paternal),
9. His father's sister,
10. His father's brother's daughter, father's brother's son's daughter,
11. His granddaughter (son's daughter), and :
12. Any one of same *abusua*, whether really kindred or not.

Marriages Allowed.

1. Father's sister's daughter (not only allowed but privileged or enjoined).¹
2. Mother's brother's daughter (not only allowed but enjoined).

Let us examine these in turn and find the laws governing them.

Prohibited marriages. Nos. 1-5, it will be noted, are easily explained. The rule governing them being this :

An *abusua* cannot marry the same *abusua*, or, in other words, clans are exogamous. This is simple enough and was of course already known.

But let us examine prohibitions 6-11 and we shall at once find that the above law cannot govern these, for in no case does the prohibited marriage infringe our rule, as in each example the clans or *abusua* are different.

Finally we come to the law that, while prohibiting a man's marriage with his father's brother's daughter (entailing no breaking of the rule as to the blood or clans), it actually enjoins a man's marriage with his father's sister's daughter.

The explanation lies in the facts that (1) the *ntoro* descends through the males, and (2) (like the *abusua*) is exogamous.

Applying this we find on examining our chart that the marriages prohibited in 9 and 10, though they do not infringe the law of the *abusua*, do infringe that of the *ntoro*, while the marriages permitted, i. e. that of sons and daughters of parents who are brother and sister, infringe neither.

Now it will be noted that there still remains one class of prohibited unions which neither the *ntoro* laws nor the *abusua* laws explain, e. g. the prohibition to marry, for example, one's daughter's daughter (No. 6) and one's paternal grandmother (No. 8). These women will belong to neither *abusua* nor *ntoro*.

On inquiring into the reason for this I was informed that no one would ever think of marrying any *nana*, grandchild, grand-niece, &c., *ntoro* or no *ntoro*, *abusua* or no *abusua*, and on inquiring further 'what about a great-great-granddaughter?'

¹ Without going fully into the question of these 'cross-cousin' marriages, I would draw attention to the fact that where there is matrilineal descent coupled with exogamous divisions on a patrilineal basis (like the *ntoro*) such unions become the only possible ones in that generation, and are, I believe, entered upon in connexion with considerations of property and inheritance.

(No. 7), I was met with an exclamation of horror and the answer that, ' *ye kyi no koko* ', i. e. ' that is red taboo for us ' ; and this is further proved by the name for a great-grandchild, and all others in this generation which is *nana n'ka 'so*, i. e. ' grandchild don't touch my ear '—a touch of a great-grandchild, grand-niece, &c., on the ear of the great-grandparent being said to cause the latter's speedy death.

In other words, we have apparently a taboo prohibiting any union of 'A' with either his second generation of ascendants or descendants.

I have elsewhere gone into the details of very great interest, in connexion with the *ntoro*, their classification, the taboos entailed by each, the days set aside for ' washing ' (the question as to what *ntoro* a man or woman belongs is *Wo guare ntoro ben?* ' What *ntoro* do you wash? '), the giving of an *ntoro* to some one who has none, its bearing on the question of illegitimacy (an illegitimate child to an Ashanti is one who does not know the father's *ntoro*—an illegitimate child (by a free woman) will of course always have its mother's *abusua*, and hence may inherit almost equally with a legitimate child).

Before proceeding to the next heading—The rules of inheritance—I shall here recapitulate the three factors which govern unions and marriage prohibitions.

1. The clan (*abusua*) is always exogamous.
2. The *ntoro* (possibly) is always exogamous.
3. The prohibition ruling out all grandchildren in the classificatory sense.

SUCCESSION TO PROPERTY AND STOOLS

Much that has been said with reference to the laws of descent applies equally to the law of succession to property.

When these are properly understood it will be no longer necessary to learn the ' extraordinary ' ¹ fact that a son cannot ever succeed to his father's property, but that a mother might possibly do so, or again that half-truth that one hears every day—' that the nephew, i. e. the sister's son, succeeds '.

There are several proverbs, that have almost the force of legal axioms, which I shall quote here.

¹ *Vide* Bosman.

1. The first is *Oba di oba adie na obarima di obarima adie*, i. e. 'A woman inherits from a woman and a man from a man.' This axiom seems so well known among the Ashanti that it seems astonishing that such an important point is scarcely alluded to in any previous work. In Sarbah's *Customary Laws*,¹ where he gives the law of inheritance for the Fanti and Akan peoples, the only allusion that might have possible reference to this rule might be where he mentions, talking of inheritance, 'Provided always a man is invariably preferred to a woman', but Bosman I find briefly notes it in the extract I give later.

2. *Nuanom nsai a, wofase nni adi*, 'When one's brothers are not exhausted the sister's child does not inherit'.

This saying again proves that the general idea that it is the sister's son who always succeeds is totally erroneous.

3. *Adehye nsai a akoa nni adie*, 'When the freemen (i. e. of the blood) are not finished the slave does not succeed', is yet another. I shall have more to say presently on the subject of the succession of so-called 'slaves' which one sees so often mentioned and all accounts of which appear to give such a wrong impression of what is the real custom.

The Ashanti laws of inheritance, from the days of Bosman and Bowdich—those astute observers into Ashanti customs and beliefs—have caused wonder but never seem to have been fully explained.²

'The property of the wife is distinct and independent of the husband,' writes Bowdich, and again, 'In the Fanti country the principal slave succeeds to the exclusion of the son, who only inherits his mother's property'; and again the paragraphs already quoted, 'the extraordinary rule of succession excluding all children but those of a sister', &c.

Again Bosman writes, 'The children they have by their wives are indeed legitimate, but all along the Gold Coast they never inherit their parents' effects (except at Accra only); the right of inheritance is very oddly adjusted, and as far as I could

¹ *Fanti Customary Laws*, by J. M. Sarbah. For some of the statements in this valuable work I have not always been able to find confirmation in Ashanti customary law, which in these cases may possibly differ from the Fanti.

² 'Their account of this subject is so perplexed and obscure that hitherto no European has been able to obtain a clear description of it, and I am certain they never will, notwithstanding that the negroes are as accurately perfect in it that they never commit any error on this head' (Bosman, p. 174).

observe the brothers' and sisters' children are the right and lawful heirs in the manner following. They do not jointly inherit, but the eldest son of his mother is heir to his mother's brother or her son as the eldest daughter is heiress of her mother's sister or her daughter.'

Bosman has, it will be seen, noted the law I mentioned above that lays down that 'a woman is heir to a woman and a man to a man'.

What he means by the brother's children succeeding, however, I cannot understand, for a brother's child is absolutely barred, as will be seen later.

Now all these statements as to the curious or 'extraordinary rules of succession', to quote old Bosman again, are really simple if we grasp the following rule which is the same as already seen governs the law of descent, i. e. That only a person (man or woman) of the *abusua* or blood can possibly be the heir to and inherit from some one of that *abusua* (as long as any of the blood remain).

A cursory glance at our chart will show that, taking again our central figure 'A', Kakari :

1. His children—sons and daughters—cannot possibly be his heirs.
2. Nor his brother's children.
3. Nor his father's brothers or sisters, nor his own father.
4. Neither his grandfather nor his grandfather's brothers and sisters.
5. Nor his maternal uncles' children.

The reason in all cases being that *none of these persons can ever be his Kakari's, abusua, or blood*. This simplifies matters greatly, for we are left with only a few possible successors, these being (so far as my investigations have led) :

1. His mother's brother, i. e. his maternal uncle—the head of his family. He has an absolute and undisputed right to succeed¹ but would in practice very possibly, for reasons that will not be gone into here, waive his right in favour of :

2. Kakari's elder brother.

¹ I am not going into minute details as to all the various forms of property, i. e. family, ancestral, private, movable, and immovable, but am only dealing with such property as would in the ordinary course be subject to these laws of inheritance.

2a. Next brother in age and so on.

3. Kakari's mother's sister's son ('*nua*).

4. Kakari's own sister's son, i. e. the so often quoted 'sister's child', who only now comes in, the *nuanom*, i. e. brothers, being finished.

Again, No. 4's descendants can never inherit as, being a man, his *abusua* ends with him, so the property again goes off to another line, i. e. :

5. The sister's daughter's son. Eldest and so on.

6. Mother's sister's daughter's son.

7. Mother's sister's daughter's daughter's son.

This, it will be seen, exhausts the whole of the possible male heirs, and it is now necessary to look round for female heirs.

The first is :

8a. The eldest sister.

8b. The next eldest sister ; failing these :

9. The eldest sister's daughter, and so on.

10. Sister's daughter's daughter. All this line being now extinct the property goes to :

11. The mother's sisters, by seniority.

12. Mother's sister's daughter.

13. Mother's sister's daughter's daughter.

All relatives, i. e. *abusua*, being dead the property may be given to 'a slave' ; the particular status of this slave will be explained later, but it is to be noted that this slave will inherit to the absolute exclusion of all those persons who according to our law would have had a legal claim to the property, i. e. Kakari's own children, brother's children, &c.

If a stool be inherited the heirs are the same to 7 ; these issue being extinct, a male of the same clan (not necessarily kindred) must be brought in from elsewhere, as neither a slave nor a woman may occupy a male stool.

Coming now to the inheritance of property from a deceased female, the heirs in order appear to be the following :

1. Deceased's mother (who will often waive her right in favour of) :

2. Deceased's sisters (by seniority).

3. Deceased's own daughters (by seniority).

4. Deceased's sisters' daughters.

5. Deceased's granddaughter.
6. Deceased's sister's daughter's daughter.
7. Deceased's mother's sister, who will probably give it to
8. Her own daughter.
9. Her own daughter's daughter. The female line being now extinct, the property would go to :
10. The male heirs in the order already given.
11. All heirs, male and female, being extinct the property will go to a female slave (*odonko 'ba oba*, i. e. the female child of a slave).

The heirs to a female stool are the same up to 9, then, as neither a slave nor a male can ever sit on a woman's stool, a successor will be sought from among the females bearing the deceased's clan name.

(In both the case of succession by males and females the order of the heirs is that which would hold good in the event of the property or stool descending in an even course. In practice an heir may be passed over, with the concurrence of the family, for various reasons.)

Coming now to the succession by slaves, the first point to note is that a slave, or rather, to use the correct name, 'a slave child' (*odonko 'ba*), may never inherit a stool though he or she may inherit property.

Now it will be well here very briefly to examine exactly the status of an *odonko 'ba*.

It was the custom in Ashanti for male members of a clan to purchase female slaves by whom they had children. These children had of course no *abusua*¹ but had the father's *ntoro* just as a legitimate son or daughter.

The child of such a purchase and all her descendants were known as *odonko 'ba*. These persons lived and grew up with the family and were treated by them very much as members of that family, and of course looked upon the master's home as their domicile.

In the event therefore of the family becoming extinct, such a slave, who might possibly be the great-great-grandchild of the originally bought slave, was preferred as an heir to any member of the *ntoro* of the deceased who might possibly have been

¹ That is assuming they were slaves from the north.

allowed to succeed, but who, if he did, would go off to his own possibly distant home with the movable property, leaving the old ancestral family home and its spirits to be forgotten and neglected.

The *odonko 'ba* having no *abusua*, or in other words no other home, when he or she came into an inheritance, carried on the old master's home at the same spot, and the rites in honour of the departed spirits.

This I believe to be the true explanation of this curious custom.

The Ashanti man in the old times had always a horror of his family becoming extinct, and the purchase and rearing of *nnonko mma* was his insurance against this possible calamity. The *nnonko mma* would even in time come to regard their old master's family as their own, and when the real facts were obscured by time or forgotten, did actually claim clanship (*abusua*) with the family (now extinct) which had purchased his ancestors.

II

NTORO EXOGAMOUS DIVISIONS

I BELIEVE it to be correct to state that the full meaning of the word *ntoro*, as understood in Ashanti, has hitherto been little known to European ethnologists. Christaller briefly and somewhat ambiguously defines the term as 'a person of the same ancient family worshipping the same fetish'.

In the present chapter it is proposed to present the results of some investigations into this interesting subject. In the course of these researches a special visit was made to the fountain head or home of one of the *ntoro* divisions, Lake Bosomtwe, in order to examine on the spot anything which might throw further light upon the question. A fortnight's stay at the lake produced some interesting and important results, and I propose here to give also a full account of that very beautiful expanse of water, even though some aspects of these investigations may not seem to have a strict bearing upon a subject which is primarily anthropological. For our present purpose this chapter will therefore be divided into, and treated under, the following headings :

1. *Ntoro* divisions in general, their classification, taboos, totems, supposed origins, days of observance, ritual, &c.

2. Bosomtwe *ntoro*, *per se*, with its traditional history, myths, supposed etymology, rites in connexion with lake spirit, lake villages, present and submerged, reported phenomenon, report on soundings taken, the lake fisher-folk, with account of appliances used for fishing and boating, &c.

The word *ntoro* is a generic term covering all those exogamous divisions to one or another of which every Ashanti belongs. The term (so far as my present knowledge goes) is best translated by 'spirit'. It might almost be called familiar spirit.

The *ntoro*, the Ashanti thinks, is one of the two great elements in every man and woman. The other element is *Ɔgya*, or blood, for which the general term is *abusua*. As has been noted

elsewhere,¹ the *abusua* or blood is passed on by and through the female and cannot be transmitted by the male. In an exactly similar manner, the *ntoro* is transmitted by and through the male and cannot be transmitted by the female.

The Ashanti believes that it is the male—transmitted *ntoro*, mingling with the blood in the female, which accounts for the physiological mysteries of conception. I have stated that *ntoro* may perhaps be translated by 'spirit'. Indeed, it appears to be used at times synonymously with *sunsum*, that spiritual element in a man or woman upon which depends—not life, i. e. breath, for that is the *okra* or '*kra*—but that force, personal magnetism, character, personality, power, soul, call it what you will, upon which depend health, wealth, worldly power, success in any venture, in fact everything that makes life at all worth living.²

Yet again it has been seen that *ntoro* is sometimes used for semen.

It has been seen in the previous chapter that certain unions which did not infringe the law which rules that 'like *abusua* may not marry into like *abusua*' were nevertheless strictly prohibited because of the law which decrees that 'like *ntoro* may not mate with like *ntoro*'.

I propose now to give the different names for each *ntoro* division.

It will be noted that there are several well-defined characteristics of the *ntoro*.

- (a) The special day set aside for 'the washing' of the *ntoro*.
- (b) A taboo or series of taboos in connexion with each *ntoro*.
- (c) A totem and what may be 'associated totems' or perhaps sub-totems, though this is by no means clear.

To discover to what *ntoro* a person belongs, he is asked, *Wo guare ntoro ben?* literally, 'What *ntoro* do you wash, or bathe?' the answer being, 'I wash such and such and such an *ntoro*.' The meaning attached to this expression will be fully described later on.

¹ The Ashanti Classificatory System, Chap. I; Matrilineal Descent in Ashanti, Chap. III.

² In the Chapter on 'The Golden Stool' it will be seen that this emblem of national unity is also supposed by the Ashanti to contain the national *sunsum*.

NTORO EXOGAMOUS DIVISIONS ON A PATRILINEAL BASIS

Ashanti name.	Day set aside for observance.	Totems or Taboos(?).	Remarks.
1. Bosommuru (sometimes known by the sobriquet Asafodie or Adufodie)	Tuesday	1. Python 2. Ox, cow 3. Species of monkey called <i>kwakuo</i> 4. Dog 5. Wild dog 6. Species of bird called <i>asokwa</i> All these would not be killed or eaten. Besides these palm wine and Indian corn would not be drunk or eaten on a Tuesday	The Bosommuru is a river in Akyem. This is held to be the most important of all the <i>ntoro</i> divisions, partly no doubt owing to its having been the <i>ntoro</i> of no less than eight Ashanti Kings (Osai Tutu, Opoku Ware, Bonsu Panyin, Osai Kwame, Opoku Fofie, Osai Yao, Bonsu Kuma, Kakari (Kofi); and partly because the Ashanti think it was the first <i>ntoro</i> ever given to man. The nicknames given to this <i>ntoro</i> refer to the supposed looting propensities of its holders, due no doubt to their connexion with the royal house.
2. Bosompra	Wednesday	1. Leopard 2. White fowl 3. Species of yam called <i>afasie</i> 4. Bush buck 5. <i>Kwakuo</i> (species of monkey) 6. <i>Tamiriwa</i> (large edible snail) 7. Tortoise 8. <i>Aboka</i> , i.e. any animal found dead	A river rising in Ashanti and flowing into the sea near Shama.
3. Bosomtwe	Sunday	1. A species of monkey called <i>kwakuo</i> 2. The Bush buck (<i>nwansane</i>) 3. <i>Tamiriwa</i> (a species of edible snail) 4. Tortoise	A large lake in central Ashanti.
4. Bosommaram	Saturday	1. Palm wine (but may drink European spirits) 2. Cow	
5. Abankwadie	Sunday	1. Ox or cow 2. <i>Tamiriwa</i> (snail) 3. Tortoise	Derivation (doubtful) given by Ashanti as <i>abrane-koa-die</i> , i.e. that which pertains to a strong slave.

NTORO EXOGAMOUS DIVISIONS ON A PATRILINEAL BASIS—*contd.*

<i>Ashanti name.</i>	<i>Day set aside for observance.</i>	<i>Totems or Taboos (?)</i> .	<i>Remarks.</i>
6. Agyinadie	Wednesday	1. Crocodile 2. <i>Afasie</i> (a species of yam)	Derivation (doubtful) given by Ashanti, <i>gyina-gye-adie</i> , stand and receive something.
7. Akankadie	Tuesday	1. <i>Abuburo</i> (dove) 2. Dog 3. Wild dog	Derivation given by Ashanti, <i>ka-kae-die</i> , i. e. remember what was told.
8. Agyimadie	Sunday	1. Bush buck 2. <i>Okankane</i> (serval) 3. <i>Tamiriwa</i> (snail) 4. Tortoise 5. Palm wine (on Sunday only)	
9. Nkansadie	?	?	

The above list comprises all the *ntoro* that have so far come under my notice, but very possibly does not exhaust the total number of these divisions, nor must my information be regarded as final.

It has been seen that the *ntoro* is considered as being instrumental in the conception of the embryo in the womb. A further proof that this is the belief is given in the following myth—a translation of an account in the vernacular—giving the origin of the first *ntoro* ever bestowed upon man, the Bosommuru *ntoro*.

Very long ago one man and one woman came down from the sky and one man and one woman came up from the earth.¹

From the Sky God (Onyame), also came a python (*onini*), and it made its home in the river now called Bosommuru.

At first these men and women did not bear children, they had no desire, and conception and birth were not known at that time.

One day the python asked them if they had no offspring, and on being told they had not, he said he would cause the women to conceive. He bade the couples stand face to face, then he plunged into the river, and rising up, sprayed water upon their bellies with the words *kus kus*,² and then ordered them to return home and lie together.

¹ This dual origin of man is constantly alluded to in tradition and myths.

² These words are used in most ceremonies in connexion with *ntoro* and Onyame.

The women conceived and brought forth the first children in the world, who took Bosommuru as their *ntoro*, each male passing on this *ntoro* to his children.

If a Bosommuru *ntoro* man or woman sees a dead python (they would never kill one) they sprinkle white clay upon it and bury it.¹

Agyinadie ntoro. This *ntoro* is supposed to have been given to man in a somewhat similar manner, by the crocodile.

Bosomtwe ntoro. This *ntoro* is supposed to have been given to man by Twe, the anthropomorphic spirit god of the lake.

Akankadie ntoro. 'Nyame (the Sky God) very long ago sent down a dove to the earth to a certain man and woman there with his blessing and a promise of children. The Ashanti say that persons of this *ntoro* are to be distinguished by their peaceful natures even to this day.

Myths and traditions in connexion with the remaining *ntoro* have not yet been traced.

Ntoro totems and taboos. An examination of the above myths and of the tables of the *ntoro* divisions show that one aspect at least of the *ntoro* is totemistic. We have a mythical spirit ancestor who was a python, a crocodile, an anthropomorphic water god, &c., with whom its descendants claim *ntoro* relationship, and this relationship is expressed in certain funeral customs.

Now evidence of participation in a funeral custom is held by the courts to be evidence of joint responsibility for a clansman's debt as proving kinship. The sprinkling of white clay and the burying of the python or leopard therefore obviously have a considerable significance.

With regard to the other animals, plants, &c., which might be regarded as associated totems or sub-totems, their position is less clear. The Ashanti say they do not respect them in any particular way. They do not eat them it is true, because they say if they did they would be ill. These taboos, they state, were established long, long ago because these particular things were found to disagree with their ancestors; new taboos are not now created in this sense.

These avoidances or taboos are called in Ashanti, Akyiwadie. Every *obosom* (god) has its list, long or short, of Akyiwadie,²

¹ A *Bosompri* man treats a leopard in the same manner.

² The root is *kyi*, back, behind; hence, to hate; and the whole word literally means 'something you turn your back upon', i.e. a taboo.

or taboos or avoidances, but it would scarcely be correct to label these animals or things as totems of the *obosom* and thus of the persons serving that *obosom*.

There appears to be some distinction in the bond, say between the python, accorded funeral rites, and the Bosommuru man, as compared with his relationship with the monkey, dog, or palm wine, which he merely will not eat or drink because it may give him 'a pain in his belly'.¹ This, however, is a matter for future investigation.

When a woman marries, she will treat all her husband's *ntoro* taboos as her own (still observing those enjoined by her own *ntoro*), while the converse is not the case. Moreover, this recognition of the husband's *ntoro* taboos by the wife lasts only as long as the woman is of an age to bear children, or as long as she is living with him as his wife.

This is a further proof of the belief that it is the husband's *ntoro* that is instrumental in making and building up any offspring that may result from the union.

Yet again, in cases of adultery, the offence, to the Ashanti mind, is greatly aggravated if committed with a woman who is already enceinte, as the meeting of the two *ntoro* is supposed to cause the death of the child in the womb; but should the adulterer by chance be of the same *ntoro* as the husband,² the offence is much less serious, as the two *ntoro* are really one and the same spirit and not so likely to cause fatal results to the expected child. The ceremony subsequent to conception but prior to birth offers additional proof of the importance of the husband's *ntoro*.

The following is an account of this rite, translated from the vernacular, as told me by a Queen Mother :

From the day on which a woman marries she makes her husband's *ntoro* taboos her own, lest if she did not she might offend his *ntoro* and thus seriously interfere with the conception

¹ There is, for example, clearly a magico-religious connexion between a person of the Bosommuru *ntoro* and the python from which he or she may be said to trace its origin, but there is no such apparent bond between that person and the monkey, dog, wild dog, bird, palm wine, and corn which are Akyiwadie or taboo to every one of that *ntoro*.

² On the other hand should the adulterer be the same *ntoro* as the woman, he is also breaking the law which decrees that 'like *ntoro* must not have sexual intercourse with like *ntoro*', and in olden times both parties would be punished by death or expelled from the clan.

and even the birth of the children she will bear her husband. About the sixth to seventh month the husband will give a present to his wife of a white cloth and some gold ornaments. The woman will then present her husband with a fowl (if his *ntoro* is Bosomptra it must not be a white fowl) and eggs, saying :

' You of such and such an *ntoro*, take these and give to your *ntoro* that my child may come forth well and sound.'

The husband takes the fowl into the corner of his sleeping-room and addresses his *ntoro* thus :

' Bosommuru (or whatever his *ntoro* may be), come and receive this fowl that your child in the woman's womb may come forth without harm.' As he says this he severs the head of the fowl with a knife and allows some of the blood to fall upon the floor.

He then puts some *eto* (smashed yams or plantain), that his wife has made, in his *kuduo*¹ (brass vessel), and also puts some blood upon it.

He then sits down beside the *kuduo* and waits until the fowl has been plucked. This is done outside at the foot of the *onyame dua* (the forked post found outside almost every Ashanti house, on which is placed a pot or bowl with offerings to the Sky God (see Fig. 52). The fowl, after being plucked and singed over a fire, is brought back to the husband, who cuts it up. A piece is taken away, roasted, and brought back. The man then takes a leaf of the plant called *adwira*² and some salt, and putting both between his lips, says, *Kus ! kus ! kus ! Twe- aduampon Onyame Bosomptra, me kra, me 'bosom, mo ma akoda yi omera dwo* (' O supreme God, upon whom men lean and do not fall, O Bosomptra *ntoro* (or whatever *ntoro* it may be), O my breath, oh my *obosom* (god), allow this infant to come forth peacefully ').

He says this three times, blowing out the *adwira* leaf and salt, which he renews between his lips each time. He and his wife and any of their children then each eat a little of the roasted fowl.

The wife wears the white cloth, given to her by the husband, and the gold ornaments, and the child in her womb is said to be wearing these.

Fufu (pounded yam or plantain) is brought and soup (*nkwan*)

¹ The *kuduo* (see Chap. XXV) is a brass bowl varying in design, sometimes it is like a chalice cup, and often of beautiful workmanship. They are *agyapadie* or heirlooms.

² Ejura, north of Coomassie, is really *Adwira*, and is named after the plant,

made from the remainder of the fowl. The soup must not be poured over the *fufu* as would ordinarily be the case. The *fufu* is brought in by any one of the woman's own 'blood' (*abusua*), the wife carries the soup.

They all sit down beside the *kuduo* and eat, and some of the food is also placed in the *kuduo*.

After eating, the husband rubs some *hyire* (white clay) on the back of his wrists, while his wife paints, with her fingers, a line of clay from between her breasts to the navel and another strip half-encircling her waist but not quite meeting at the back. The husband also dresses in white. The man and woman now have connexion beside the *kuduo*.

In the evening the *eto* (mashed yams) and meat are removed from the *kuduo* and are given to their children to eat; some is also cast out on the ground and on the roof of the hut for the spirits of the Earth and for the Sky God.

This ceremony, which is called *afodie* (i. e. a ceremonial day), takes place on the proper day assigned to the particular *ntoro* to which the man belongs.

The following is an account of yet another rite in connexion with the *ntoro*.

It has been observed that a person 'washes his *ntoro*'. This lustration takes place on the day of the week proper to the particular *ntoro*. In the case of an ordinary man or woman the rite is conducted, without any intermediary priest or other person, in his or her own house.

In the old days, however, a regular weekly rite used to be performed in Coomassie for the Bosommuru *ntoro*, to which, as has been noted, so many famous Ashanti kings have belonged; and in this case, though each individual did his own ceremonial washing, the King of Ashanti, in the final ceremony, seemed to officiate for all, but there were still no priests (*akomfo*) in the proper sense.

Every Tuesday the King of Ashanti 'washed' in his own palace while all the chiefs and populace went to the Suben river. Here the people of lesser importance entered the water and bathed, while for those of more importance water was drawn in brass pans and taken up on the banks. Some water was also drawn from the special spot called *kwasu* and put in a gold *kuduo* (called *akra yawa*, souls' basin), and this was brought back to



FIG. 1. Lake Bosomtwe, looking south



FIG. 2. About to sacrifice a white fowl upon the Abrodwum stone



FIG. 3. The Abrodwum stone near Lake Bosomtwe



FIG. 4. On the lake shore just before the white fowl was cast into the water

the palace and placed in a room known as *Bosommuru dan* (*Bosommuru* room), sometimes called *Akrafieso* (Souls' House).

All the 'bathers' now met in the long audience court at the palace (called *pramma tentenso*) where the King of Ashanti was seated. A drummer, standing on the king's right hand, beat a drum called '*kukua*, when the king rose up and all followed him to the *Bosommuru* chamber.¹ Here the king, taking a little of the water in his mouth and spraying it out, said, *Kus, kus, me nkwaso, oman yi nye yiye*, 'Life to me, and may this nation prosper'.

He next took some *eto* (mashed yams) and eggs, and with a spoon placed some in a large *kuduo*, and then some leaves of the plant called *Bosommuru adwira* and placed these with some eggshells with the *eto* in the *kuduo*. He ate a little of the *eto* and eggs, the remainder being shared among the assembled people who lined up, in turn filing past an official called the *Bosommuru hene*, who gave a small portion to each.

All dispersed and smeared three lines of white clay (applied by smearing the three fingers with it) down each cheek, down the centre of the head (the hair has been cut short for the purpose), across the chest, on the shoulders, on the upper arms, and on the back of the wrists. The king puts it on the wrists only.

The ordinary person does not wash every week when his *ntoro* day comes round, but when his *obosom* (god) tells him that he should, and when, as my informant said, 'it is thought necessary'.

When a person dies, his or her *ntoro* does not accompany the ghost (*saman*) to the *samando*, spirit world. It is thought to remain behind and look after those persons of a similar *ntoro* who remain alive, and, I believe, eventually to be reincarnated.

This disembodied *ntoro* will, in the case of a man, concern itself, for example, with the children of the deceased. This does not hold for a woman, for her children would not be of her *ntoro* but her husband's; the *ntoro* would not in this case look after her children but (among many possible others) her brothers and sisters by the same father.

Before passing on to the *Bosomtwe ntoro* and the account of the lake of that name, there is just one point to which I wish to draw attention. It is that the *ntoro* element in man seems

¹ This, I am informed, is one of the rare instances of any *ntoro* having a special place set aside for the observance of its rites. Every man's sleeping-room is his *ntoro's* temple.

to be often connected with water or liquid, such as saliva, in some form, and from it to have derived its origin.

As will be noted in other chapters, water has a divine origin—'it comes from Onyame, the greatest of Gods—the Sky God'—and examples illustrating this belief may readily be found.

To take certain ceremonies at birth and at death: in the former, the new-born infant must not be washed with water that has been boiled; in the latter, the corpse generally is so bathed. *To boil water is to kill it*, and the new arrival from the 'cold' spirit world requires the first anxious eight days—when the tie binding it to this earth is so delicate—all the help it can get from terrestrial spirits and *abosom* (gods).¹

I mention saliva, but will only here very briefly state that at the naming of a child, e. g. after his grandfather, the infant is taken to him on the eighth day, and he spits in his grandchild's mouth to strengthen the spirit already there, which is of course his own *ntoro* passed on through his son (not daughter, be it noted, for a grandchild by a daughter would not be of the grandfather's *ntoro*). The law is irrevocable which insists that only one of like *ntoro* can perform this ceremony.

Finally, it will be seen later that the great *obosom* (god) of all Ashanti is the Tano River, from which are derived countless of 'his children' as lesser *abosom*, and that he, i. e. Tano, is considered as the 'son of the Supreme God'.

LAKE BOSOMTWE

I shall now proceed to a more or less detailed account of this lake, giving the results of investigations made on the spot between the 1st and 14th of October 1921.

Bosomtwe is a lake in Central Ashanti lying approximately in Lat. 6° 30' N., and Long. 1° 25' E. It is just over five miles long and just under five miles broad. It lies in a perfect bowl

¹ The infant for the first eight days after birth is scarcely considered as a human being, being looked upon as possibly merely 'a ghost child' that has come from the spirit world, intending immediately to return.

If it die before the 8th day, 'it certainly was such'. The little body is then sometimes whipped, it is put in a pot with sharp-cutting elephant grass (*Pennisetum* sp.) and buried near the women's latrine.

The parents dress in holiday attire, partake of ground-nut soup (to show it is a joyful feast) and retire to their chamber and make pretence of lying together. All this is to shame the little stranger ghost that had dared to wander down into this world, and to discourage it returning in that form to endanger the life of a human mother.

or cup, the sides of which are thickly wooded hills rising about 500-700 feet above the lake, which I have been informed is itself some 200 feet above sea-level (*vide* Fig. 1). It has no outlet, but there are many small streams flowing into it from the mountain sides, and these, with the storm water from the hill-slopes, form apparently its source of supply. Its general appearance at once gives the layman the idea that its bed was formerly the crater of a volcano. The lake shore is closely dotted with villages, of which there are now twenty-six. There were formerly thirty, but four have been submerged and not rebuilt. A fuller account of these submerged villages will be given later.

The previous sum total of our knowledge concerning this lake is, I believe I am correct in stating, contained in an article by Mr. Kitson, C.M.G., C.B.E., Government Geologist, a copy of which is given in an appendix. His short geological report is most valuable and negatives the phenomenon I shall describe presently being due to volcanic causes.

The name and 'strong names' (*mmerane* is the Ashanti word for the latter) of this so-called 'Sacred Lake' are as follows, and practically constitute a title: Akwasi Bosomtwe Akowuakra.

Akwasi. This word, in the case of a person, signifies that the bearer of it is a male who was born on a Sunday. In the case of a god, or *obosom*, it means that this day is sacred to that deity. Sunday, it has been seen, is the day set aside for this particular *obosom* or *ntoro*.

Bosomtwe. This word is derived from *obosom* (god) and *Twe*; the latter is here a name for the supposed anthropomorphic lake spirit. (It has nothing to do with *otwe*, a *duyker*, as is sometimes stated.)

Akowuakra. This is a compound word the translation of which may be given as 'when you die, you bid farewell'. The explanation of this name is to be found in the Ashanti belief that just before death, the *sunsum* or *ntoro* or spirit, about to quit the body for ever, flits from wherever the dying man or woman may be, to this lake and says 'good-bye'.¹

I suggest, therefore, as a name which is both etymologically

¹ What I believe to be a most interesting reference to this, written 200 years ago, is to be found in Bosman. He writes: 'Some of them take it for granted that the deceased are immediately conveyed to a famous river, situate in the inland country called *Bosmanque* (supposing this to be taken in a spiritual sense because it visibly appears that the body is left with them).'

accurate and sufficiently poetical, the title of 'The Lake of the Last Farewell'.

Referring now to the name (proper) of the lake, Bosomtwe, I propose to give both a myth and a tradition, the first touching upon the origin of the name, and the second concerning the lake's rediscovery in comparatively recent and historical times. The first is clearly the older but has become obscured by the more recent story which is really traditional history.

Very, very long ago, long before Akorobompi found the lake, there lived near the site of the present village of Hantase a very old woman. Her name is not even known, but she is spoken of as Aberewa, i. e. the old woman. She was a leper, had no mate and no children, and lived alone. One day out of the lake stepped an *obosom* (god) in the form of a man. He was called Twe (or Otwe, with the prenominal prefix). He made love to the old woman, but she remonstrated with him, saying should she become a mother, she would, living alone as she did, be unable, when the time came for her delivery, to get her own food, firewood, or water. Twe overcame her scruples by saying that any time she wanted anything she had only to crawl down to the lake shore and knock upon the water, when fish would come to her as food. The old woman eventually bore a son called Twe Adodo, the son of the lake spirit, and the first human being to have the Bosomtwe *ntoro*. Every Sunday Twe would come forth out of the lake and sit amid his followers who came with him, while once a year Twe Adodo, the son, would descend into the lake to ask his father about the fishing and if the lake would that year 'explode its gunpowder'.¹

Coming now to the tradition which tells of the discovery, really the rediscovery of the lake, the following account is again a translation from the vernacular.

In the time of Oti Akenten,² a certain man, by name Akorobompi, lived at the village of Asaman. He had a wife called Senianepo. This man was a hunter, and one day he was following an antelope when he suddenly came out on the hills to the north overlooking the lake which was then unknown to the Asaman villagers. He descended to the lake shore, accom-

¹ This expression will be explained presently.

² Probably about the middle of the seventeenth century.

panied by his dog. The path he followed is still known, and where it reaches the water's edge offerings are still made to the lake spirit. Akorobompi returned home, telling his wife what he had seen. She is reported to have told him to return to the lake and 'splash it dry', in order to get any fish that were in it. Akorobompi made several visits to the lake, returning with three, four, and finally ten fish. The first two catches were given to his dog, and as it seemed none the worse he and his wife began to eat the fish themselves. The chiefs of Asaman, Kontanase, and Asansu all got to hear of the good fishing, and settlements of their slaves were founded along the lake shore for fishing purposes.

It was now that the chief of Akyem, by name Ampao, claimed the lake as being his before its discovery by the Asaman man, and he ordered the interlopers to clear off and captured and killed Akorobompi and his wife. This led to a war in which Asaman, Asansu, and Ahuren took part against the Akyems. At this time Komfo Anotchi—who was later, in Osai Tutu's reign, to become the most famous of all Ashanti priests—was at Coomassie. He must even then have had some reputation, for he was consulted by the above-named Ashanti chiefs as to the conduct of the war about to be fought.

Anotchi is reported as having advised that the Asaman chief and the Asansu chief should each take one of their sons, clothe them in a woven textile called *nkrawo*, arm each with a short gun or pistol (called by the Ashanti *akodiawua*), and set them in the path of the advancing army of Akyem. These instructions were carried out, and the two boys were set on the hill near the present village of Abrodwum (on the north shore of the lake), and were promptly slain.

The two armies are said to have met near a great *odum* tree on the side of the mountain near Anamrako. The fight lasted three days, chief Ampao being eventually routed and he himself, with many of his captains, being killed, including one Ntorikoko and the *Gyase-hene*. The skulls of Ampao and of Ntorikoko were said to have been at Asaman as late as 1895, and the skulls of two other *safohene* (captains), called Odi Kofi and Onipantwi, were, and I believe still are, at Asansu.

The lake was divided up among the Asaman, Asansu, and

Ahuren chiefs. Asaman took that part where Anamrako and Abanso now stand; Asansu took the present village of Ahan-tase; Ahuren took Domba.

The Ashanti say that Akorobompi was following a *duyker* (*otwe*) at the time he saw the lake, and this comparatively modern historical tradition has hitherto been too readily accepted as the origin of a name which was no doubt that of the lake long before the seventeenth century.¹

Leaving myth and tradition, I propose to describe the present-day rites as conducted in connexion with the lake cult. The first part of the ceremony about to be described was witnessed by me, the remainder is from a reliable eyewitness.

Having received permission from the chiefs and persons directly concerned with the rites in connexion with the lake *obosom*, I proceeded on the day appointed (a Sunday) to the village of A—, the headman of which, K. E., was also the *Okyeame* (official spokesman) to the chief of A—, who was also present.

At the foot of a tree, of the species known as *gyedua*, lies a large, flat-topped boulder, the sides of which are streaked with the blood of many former sacrifices. This stone is known as *Abrodwum 'bo*, 'the stone of Abrodwum', and has been removed from each successive village as the latter was submerged by the advancing waters of the lake. It will be remembered that it was near Abrodwum that Akorobompi first passed down to the lake shore, and it was on the path he is supposed to have followed, where it now enters the lake, that part of the ceremony about to be described was to take place. The ground round the stone having been swept clean, the headman of A—, with bared shoulders and without his sandals, advanced to the stone holding a white fowl (see Figs. 2 and 3), and spoke as follows:

'*Asida tintirinti obuo a osi dan mu, wadaworoma ye fua akoko yi de re ma wo, wa be gye akoko yi adi, ama asuoyi aye yiye na yanya emu nam pi. Asante 'man nye yiye, Kokofu hene nkwaso, Asaman hene nkwaso, Abuoso hene nkwaso, oburoni ne Aban nkwaso, yen a ye atwa ahyia ha nyina nkwaso, be gye akoko yi di.*'

¹ In Chap. XVIII it will be seen that this same name is born by a rock and a depression in the ground near Tano Oboase in northern Ashanti, which tradition says was the original home of Bosomtwe.

'Immovable one that stands so firm, rock which stands in a temple, by your favour we hold this fowl to give you, come and receive this fowl to eat, let this water be fruitful (lit. good) and permit us to get many fish in it. Let the Ashanti nation prosper, life to the Kokofu chief, life to the Asaman chief, life to the Abuoso chief, life to the white man and the Government, life to all who stand round you, come and receive this fowl to eat.'

With one sharp twist he wrung the head of the fowl from the body, allowing some blood to fall upon the stone and rubbing the bleeding headless neck over it. He next quickly laid the fowl down at the foot of the stone, holding it with his toes, and with one cut laid open the breast and stomach, folded the two sides right back, and took out the heart which he cast upon the stone, where it continued to pulsate for about fifteen seconds.

The fowl was then dissected, legs, wings, breast, and the lungs, intestines, and liver removed, parts of each of these being laid upon the stone. The remainder of the fowl was shared out among all present. The chief of A— next took a half-full bottle of whisky and poured a little into a glass, pouring this over the stone and repeating the same words as were previously spoken, only substituting the words 'wine' and 'drink' for 'fowl' and 'eat'. The remaining whisky was shared out among those present. While this sacrifice was going on some men had been dispatched to clear a track from the main road to the edge of the lake which was supposed to follow the exact route taken by Akorobompi when he first discovered the lake. A curious incident now occurred. I had been previously informed that there was invariably an accident, resulting in the shedding of blood, when this track was being cleared. Sure enough back came a man with a gash on his left hand received, he said, by his cutlass slipping when he was clearing 'the bush'. I was informed that sometimes as many as five or six men were thus accidentally wounded. The reason given was that the cutting of the path disturbed the *sasa* (spirits) of the dead who had been killed in the war already described, and they suddenly woke up in a state of alarm, brandishing their invisible weapons.

The ceremony at Abrodwum being over, we all proceeded along the road which here runs parallel with the lake till we came to a broad clearing cut through the reeds leading off at

right angles to the road. This was the newly cleared track, proceeding down which we came out on the edge of the lake. Here the chief of A—, holding another white fowl in his hand, spoke as follows (see Fig. 4) :

'*Bosomtwe Akwesi, ye fua akoko yi de re ma wo, be gye akoko yi adi, ama asuoyi aye yiye na yenya emu nam pi. Aban nkwaso Asaman hene nkwaso, Abuoso hene nkwaso, Asanteman nyina nkwaso, yen a ye atwa ahyia nkwaso, Kokofu hene nkwaso.*'

'Bosomtwe Akwesi, we hold this fowl to give you, come and receive it to eat. Let this water be fruitful and let us receive plenty fish from it. Life to the Castle (i. e. Government); life to the Asaman chief; life to the Abuoso chief; life to all the Ashanti nation; life to all who stand round; life to the Kokofu chief.'

Having spoken thus he wrung the fowl's neck off and cast the fluttering bird as far as he could into the lake, where it floated, convulsed and flapping, till it at last lay still and slowly drifted away (see Fig. 5). The spirit of the lake had accepted the offering. Had it not, the fowl would have come back to the shore.

What now follows is an account of the full ceremony as practised in the old days when there was a King of Ashanti; it is taken down from the account of an eyewitness.

In olden times, when it was expected that 'the lake was about to conceive',¹ the chief of Asaman informed the Ashanti King who sent sufficient gold dust to purchase two white fowls, a cow, a sheep, and a dog. He also sent a representative. The sheep was offered to the stools of Asaman (i. e. to the departed spirits of dead chiefs), special mention being made of Akuro Gyima Panyin, who fought for the lake in the time of Oti Akenten. The Ashanti King's representative (called *Akwamofuo hene*), the chief of Abuoso, and the Asaman chief all proceeded to the lake and, on a Sunday morning previously agreed, a new path was cut down to the lake shore following the supposed track Akorobompi had taken in olden times.

As already stated, the cutting of this path awakens the *sasa* of Akorobompi and others who had died, and it is these who cause the men clearing the path to cut themselves.

¹ The full significance of this term will be explained later.

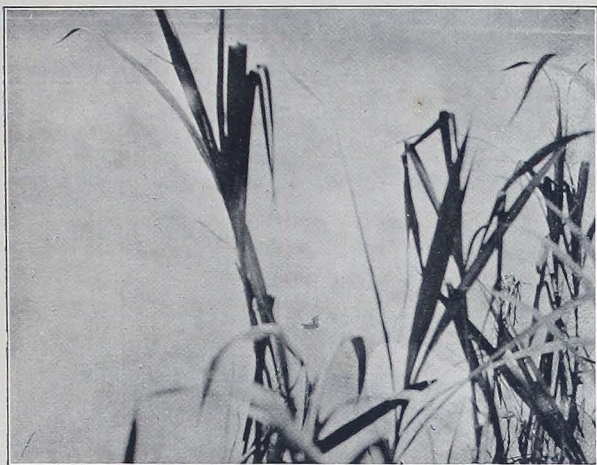


FIG. 5. The white fowl floating in the lake



FIG. 6. The making of the raft



FIG. 7. The raft at the landing-place at Abrodwum



FIG. 8. Showing various positions on *mpadua*

One white fowl is then first sacrificed at the Abrodwum stone, and the other to the lake (as already described).

The fowl having been 'received' by the lake, the cow is led to the same spot. It is thrown over by having its legs bound. The Asaman chief then comes forward, with a knife, and addresses the lake as follows :

'Bosomtwe Akwesi nne afrinhyia ahyia, Asante hene ofua nantwie na ode re be bo wo asu, na wa gye nantwie yi adi, Asante hene nkwaso, Asaman hene nkwaso, Asanteman nkwaso, na afrinhyia yi ma apatere mmera na Asanteman nye bi nni.'

'Kwesi Bosomtwe, to-day the year has come round. The King of Ashanti holds this cow as an offering to the water, receive it and partake. Life to the Ashanti King, life to the Asaman chief, life to the Ashanti nation and this year may the fish come forth and the whole Ashanti nation eat.'

He then cuts the cow's throat. The heart and some of the lungs are very quickly removed and cast into the lake, then the assembled people fall upon the carcass and cut it up, the meat being portioned out to all.

While this ceremony is going on the dog is being sacrificed to 'the mother of Twe' across the lake, i. e. on the south-east side, near the mouth of the Aberewa river. This takes place near the village of Apeu and is performed by the *safohene* (captain) of the Asaman chief. The dog is killed by having its throat cut; the heart and lungs are cast into the river; the remainder of the dog is then portioned out and eaten. The river Aberewa is addressed as '*Aberewa Awukuwa*', and she is stated to be the mother of the lake spirit, but has no connexion with the old leper woman, the human wife of Twe, the lake spirit.

This concludes all I could discover concerning the myths, traditions, and magico-religious aspect of the cult of this lake, which has—so myth and tradition say—forbidden, and up to the present forbidden with success, the use of any of the following methods of catching fish, all equally 'hateful' to Twe, the anthropomorphic lake god.

1. Iron hooks of any description, or any kind of lure or line fishing.
2. *Asawu* (cast nets).

3. Seine nets.
4. The use of canoes, boats, sails, paddles, poles, or any hollowing out, even of a log.
5. Brass or metal pans (only wooden ones must be used). While the following rules must also be observed :
6. No fishing on Sunday.¹
7. No menstruating woman must go upon the lake.

Instead of canoes, the lake-side dwellers go about on what each calls his *padua*. These are logs with sides roughly hewn, as indicated in Figs. 6-9. They are made out of a very light wood almost as soft as cork called *odwuma fufuo*,² and are anything from 6 ft. to 10 ft. long, about a foot wide, and 6 in. to 8 in. deep.

The ends of some *padua* are cut away at both extremities so as to offer less resistance than a blunt prow, and a few were seen in which these ends stood out of the water higher than the centre.

The numerous photographs illustrating this chapter show more or less clearly the different types.

Two or more *mpadua* are lashed together to form an *mpata*, or raft, and these are used to carry out the larger and heavier nets to set up at the chosen fishing grounds. Such a raft, in process of construction and completed, is seen in Figs. 6 and 7.

No cross-struts are placed underneath, those on top are fastened by creepers, for rope may not be used, and such a raft must only be propelled in the manner to be described later.

It was upon such a craft that my various expeditions upon the lake were taken.

The etymology of the word *padua* I have not been able to trace with certainty. *Dua* is of course a log or a tree, and *pa* may be *pa* = good; but if this be so we would expect the adjective to follow the noun, and so have *dua-pa*. Christaller gives in his dictionary *padua*, a log or block of wood in which the iron *pa* for securing the hand of a prisoner is fixed, and also *mpadua*, a bedstead. The latter is possibly the same word, with the root *mpa*, something to lie upon.

¹ Even should 'the Lake explode its powder', on a Sunday no one might touch the fish till Monday.

² Corkwood or *Musanga Smithii*. For this and other botanical names I am indebted to Major T. F. Chipp, M.C., B.Sc., F.L.S., late Deputy Conservator of Forests, Gold Coast, now Asst. Director at Kew.

In spite of the taboos forbidding the use of sail, paddle, oar, or pole, the *padua* is propelled along the surface of the water much faster than an ordinary canoe is paddled or poled by one man. The man on the *padua* uses his hands as paddles, lying face down on the log, when perfect steering control is obtained by a flick of the foot upon the surface of the water. The idiom for 'to paddle' is *yi abasa*, lit. 'to arm it'—'to throw out the arms'.

The various positions adopted on the *padua* will be understood from the photographs (Figs. 8-12).

The men are very fine swimmers and some show magnificent muscular development. They swim either the ordinary breast stroke or a double overarm with a scissor-like kick of the legs.

My raft was pushed and drawn, and the endurance of the men was wonderful, for to swim while pushing a raft with two persons upon it for eight consecutive hours in a broiling sun is no small feat.

The 'pushers', each on his own *padua*, kept the noses of their respective *mpadua* (or sometimes a foot) pressed against the stern of the raft; the 'tractors' were in front lying flat on their *mpadua* with a piece of creeper tied round an ankle or sometimes simply held in the folds of the belly muscles, the other end being attached to the raft (see Figs. 13-14).

In Fig. 13 the small white object at the bow is a model *padua* given me just before starting off, the rope is that used in the sounding operation, to be described later. This photograph was taken about three miles from the north shore on the return journey. I did not see any women on *mpadua* but was informed they were as expert as the men, and this I quite believe, as I used to see whole family parties alternately wading and swimming along the lake shore instead of following the road running between the villages.

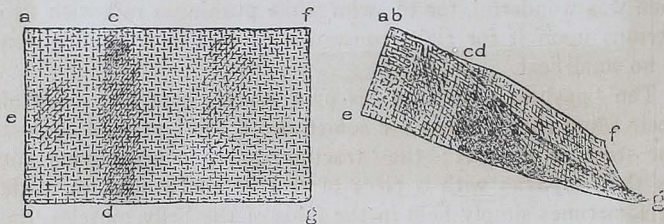
Coming now to the appliances used for fishing, these seem to be of four kinds. All are made out of the same material, i. e. strips of the reed the natives call *sibire*.¹ All these are really only slight variations of one simple design, consisting of an oblong-shaped mat woven of simple criss-cross pattern. See illustration on p. 64.

¹ A species of *Clinogyne Scitamineae*.

This is the basis of every kind of net or fish-trap used. The following are the Ashanti names of these :

- (i) *Ntakwa*.
- (ii) *Mpapare kotokuo*.
- (iii) *Kotokuo kese*.
- (iv) *Bagye*.

(i) *Ntakwa*. A small fish basket or trap made by folding over to meet the points *a*, *b*, *c*, *d* of the oblong, and lacing up the end *ab* to *e*, and *ab* to *cd*. The triangle from the points where *c* and *d* meet with base *fg* form the mouth of the trap, the pocket being at the opposite end ; *f* and *g* are pegged down with sticks, and from these is built a simple kind of fence of palm leaves spreading outwards and converging inwards to these points.



Ntakwa.

Between the sides of this fence walks the fisherman, splashing and making as much noise as possible till he comes to the mouth of the trap. Here he simply stoops down and whisks up the whole trap bodily out of the water, holding it so that the fish do not fall out.

(ii) *Mpapare*¹ *kotokuo*.² Again we have the simple oblong mat as the basis. The points *a* and *b* are folded together as before and sewn down the join, giving this result ; but instead of joining *c* and *d* as in the previous model, a cross-piece of wood is laid from *c* to *d* and the triangle formed by *acd* is woven over, forming a pocket.

The whole trap is now strengthened by building on sticks from *e* to *a*, *a* to *f*, *a* to *g*, and from *f* to *g*.

This trap is then held by one of the corners, *f* or *g*. The

¹ *Papare* is the name for one of the lake fish.

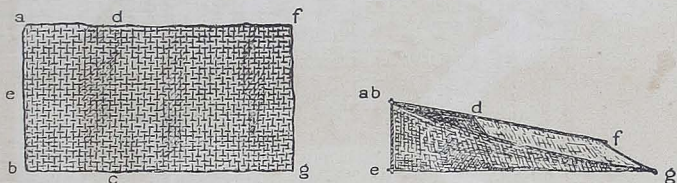
² See illustration on p. 65.

fisherman dives into the water, drags it along the bottom or among a shoal of fish, and by keeping a water pressure against the pocket-end keeps in the fish that enter till he comes to the surface.

(iii) *Kotokuo kese*. Again the basis of this net, which is a much larger affair, is the simple mat, but in this case a whole number of these are sewn together to form one very large complete oblong-shaped net.

I saw some spread out in the villages as much as 30 ft. in length, made up by joining smaller mats which are stitched together with strips of the same reeds of which the net itself is made.

This large composite net is now sewn up at the end to form a pocket exactly as is done with the *ntakwa*. The whole net is then taken out on a raft to where the water is the required



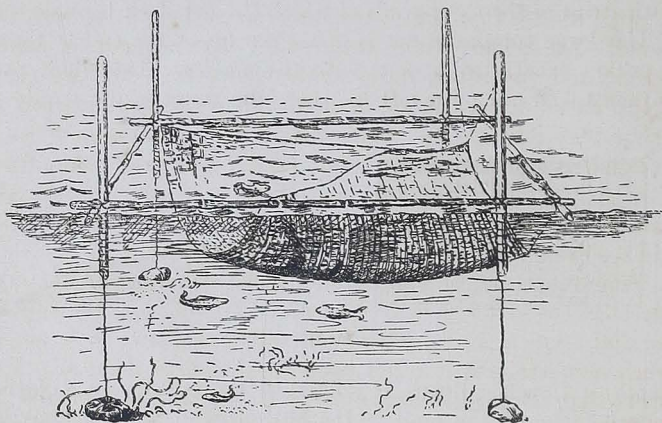
Mpapare kotokuo.

depth, i. e. such a depth as admits of the bottom edge of the mouth to lie on the mud at the bottom while the pocket-end is just on the surface.

The net is suspended on poles sunk in the mud. This net is fished in the following manner. Some five or six or more fishermen, each on his *padua*, line up about twenty yards from the net and then simultaneously start off at top speed, yelling '*padua! padua!*' and splashing and beating the water; as soon as they reach the mouth of the net they slip off their *mpadua*, dive under the water, and pick up the under part of the net, bringing it to the surface (Fig. 15). They then work their way along, under the net all the time (Fig. 16), till eventually the pocket is reached (Fig. 17). This is unlaced (Fig. 18) and the fish in it are poured either into a wooden bowl or into a cloth (Fig. 19).

(iv) *Bagye*. This is the net used in deep water. It is rather

a clever adaptation of the *kotokuo kese* (lit. large pocket or bag) just described. Instead of the under edge of the net lying on the bottom, it is suspended under water from four floating bamboos; these are anchored to the bottom of the lake by lengths of creepers tied together and weighted with large stones. Fastened on to these anchor lines are the upright supports which give this net the exact appearance of the *kotokuo kese*, though these uprights of course are not fixed in the bottom, which may be sixty feet below, but only go far enough down the taut creeper to give them a support.



Bagye.

None of these traps or nets, it will be noted, are self-acting, i. e. apart from the fisherman there is nothing to prevent the fish swimming into the net and swimming out again. There is, however, another way of catching fish which is even more primitive. It is called *abontuo*. The fisherman dives under the water, remains under from thirty to forty seconds, and comes up holding a fish between his teeth—to leave the hands free for swimming. I think they catch these fish possibly lying on the mud at the bottom, and 'tickle' them just as boys do in Scotland in the burns.

All fishing methods give, the fishers say, but poor and small results in comparison with the tremendous hauls of fish sent by the lake spirit when 'Bosomtwe explodes his gunpowder'.

The expression *Bosomtwe oto atuduru* (Bosomtwe has fired or exploded gunpowder) is widely known, and is often heard in Ashanti even far away from the vicinity of the lake. At the lake itself it is accepted as a matter of course and seems to call for no special comment, so used to it are the lake-side inhabitants, who attribute it to the workings of the great lake spirit.

It is stated that periodically, i. e. yearly, every two years, or at even longer periods,¹ 'the lake conceives' (*Bosomtwe fra ahom*). A clear description of what first happens I cannot get; some say it becomes rough, others that it bubbles up, but one and all declare that this disturbance has nothing to do with the wind. The colour of the water in the lake changes to almost black, and apparently quite suddenly, for they say this often happens at night, the air becomes full of a choking smell of what they describe as 'gunpowder'. One witness said 'as if a hundred kegs had been fired'. All say this smell comes from the black slime which rises on the water which, it is alleged, can be perceived some miles away. So far as I could ascertain, no report or rumblings accompany or precede this.

Simultaneously, or soon after, the whole surface of the lake becomes covered with fish, either dead or flapping on the surface so that they can be readily caught. It is said that these are in such numbers that it is not possible to remove them all. The news that 'Bosomtwe has exploded his gunpowder' spreads far and wide, and people come to collect the fish even from inland villages, and one reliable witness said he had waded through thousands of fish floating dead or gasping on the surface of the water.

All the old lake dwellers state that this phenomenon used to be of fairly regular annual occurrence. They ascribe it not having happened for some three years to the fact that certain people are getting lax about the taboos, and they never cease to upbraid the young taboo-breaking generation who are, by their actions, offending the lake spirit and causing it to withhold its gifts.

It is the business of the anthropologist as of the lawyer to consider and to weigh evidence. I think the statements of so

¹ It is everywhere stated that the phenomenon last happened some time during 1918.

many independent witnesses testifying to the same facts are in this case 'good evidence', and that all the facts point to the existence of some natural phenomenon the exact nature of which must be left for the specialist to investigate. The most probable explanation is given in Appendix D to this chapter.

It may be argued that all this has remained unknown and unheard of all the years of European occupation in Ashanti, and that it is improbable that it could have happened and yet have passed unrecorded. Such a presumption is not, however, from my own experience, a fair one so far as events and information concerning this country are concerned.

➤ The phenomenon which only lasts a day or so, is well-known to every lake-dweller. The people do not refer to it except in a phrase unintelligible to the majority of Europeans, who, even if they did understand it, would think (unless they investigated the matter carefully), that it referred to some 'fetish custom'.

A certain amount of romance has hung round 'the Sacred Lake' ever since the reported attempt on the part of Mr. A. J. Philbrick to take soundings. The only knowledge I have concerning this attempt is contained in Mr. Kitson's article to which reference has already been made. He therein writes: 'Its (i. e. the lake's) depth is unknown. An attempt was made to sound it by Mr. A. J. Philbrick, acting Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, but unfortunately when 500 feet of line had been let down it broke, and the attempt was abandoned.'

A few days spent with the fisher-folk who live in villages scattered all round the lake shore soon elicited the information that every existing village about which inquiries were made was the third or fourth of that name. The former villages, which had once been inhabited by the oldest living people, being now a considerable distance out in the lake and under water.

As the sites of many of these villages had apparently been marked by anchoring a log or raft—presumably with the idea of claiming that area of water—I conceived the idea of taking accurate soundings over these sites and thus securing some reliable data as to the rise of the lake level within recent times.

It would be hardly possible for the most casual observer not

to note that the lake level had risen, for the tops of great forest trees may be seen here and there sticking out of the water (Fig. 12).

By the courtesy of the P.W.D. I obtained some 400 feet of 'hammock rope'. Armed with this rope weighted down with a pickaxe head, I set out on a raft, accompanied by Major and Mrs. W. of the Survey Department—who happened to be spending a week-end at the lake—and with guides, who knew the sites of the former villages of Abono.

*The present village of Abono is situated on the north shore of the lake about 150 yards from the lake shore. It is, I was informed, the fourth Abono within comparatively recent times. The present chief, who is a very old man, has lived in all four villages, and from the names of the Ashanti kings who were on the stool at the time, it is possible to get approximately correct dates when these different villages were inhabited and abandoned, and hence, once soundings had been taken, to get an approximately correct record of the number of feet the lake has risen in a given time.

Leaving the waterside of the present village of Abono, our guides, on their *mpadua*, took our raft a course along the lake shore, going west for about half a mile; here, close to the reeds and about 20–30 yards from the land, was pointed out as Abono No. 3. The depth of water was only about 4 feet. No trace of the village remained visible, but the stump of a tree was projecting above the water. This village I later discovered was inhabited in the reign of King Mensa Bonsu, 1874–83, and had been evacuated in that of King Prempeh, 1888–95.

The raft was next taken on a bearing approximately 125° true E., and about 250 yards out we came to Abono No. 2. The sounding here gave exactly 29 feet. This village had been abandoned in the reign of Mensa Bonsu, 1874–83. An anchored raft marked this site.

Continuing on the same course to about 500–600 yards from the shore we came to a log, anchored. Here was Abono No. 1. The sounding gave 61 ft. 9 in. This village had been abandoned in the reign of King Kwaku Dua I, 1836–68. The present chief of Abono was born in this village. He is a man, I should say, of between sixty and seventy years of age. We thus have

definite data that the level of the lake has risen 61 ft. 9 in. in the last sixty to seventy years.

After taking these soundings we continued on the same course and the following soundings were taken.

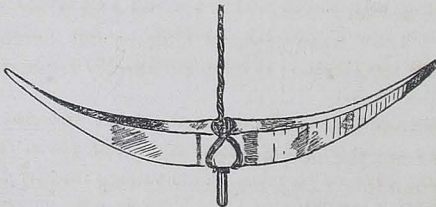
Approx. 1,000 yards from shore,	85 ft. 2 in.
„ 1 mile „ „	105 „
„ $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles „ „	123 „
„ $1\frac{1}{2}$ „ „	147 „ 6 „
„ $1\frac{3}{4}$ „ „	174 „

After this last sounding we turned back, as Major W. had to return to Coomassie that same afternoon.

These soundings came as a surprise, as I had expected a much greater depth in view of previous reports. I decided therefore to try and cross the lake at the centre from north to south and take soundings right across.

On the 13th October, having arranged for six of the best swimmers to be ready with a light raft, I left Abono water-side at 8 a.m. In connexion with what had previously been told me about the 'firing of the gunpowder', the smell of powder, and the alleged killing of the fish, I was very anxious, if possible, to secure samples of the mud from the lake bottom at the greater depths, an analysis of which might shed some light on this question.

For this purpose the following rude appliance proved adequate. The hollow socket of the pickaxe, through which the rope passed, was filled with wooden wedges, and into the centre of these was pushed the tin sheath of an ordinary clinical thermometer with the open end downwards. This tube projected thus :



The course taken from Abono No. 4 was on a compass bearing of approximately 150° E.

Without a stop we proceeded till 9.15 a.m., when I reckoned we had passed the point at which the last sounding had been taken on the previous occasion. The sounding now taken gave 188 ft. No deposit of any kind came up in the tube.

At 9.40 the next sounding was taken. This gave 218 ft. The tube came up full of a thick black slime with a smell I could not place; it seemed to catch one's eyes and throat. The contents were shaken out, placed in a glass tube, and corked up.

The next sounding was taken at 10.15, when I calculated we were about the centre of the lake. This sounding gave 228 ft. The tube again came up full of mud, and mud was also sticking between the wooden wedges in the pick-head socket. This mud was again put in a second glass tube.

The next sounding at 11 a.m. gave 233 ft. 2 in. No deposit came up, but it was possible that it was washed out on the way to the surface. This turned out to be the maximum depth obtained.

The next sounding, taken at 11.15, gave practically the same depth, 233 ft. I wrote in my note-book at the time: 'I think we are now more than half-way across the lake, and I should not be surprised if next sounding gives lesser depth. Course taken since last sounding almost south or slightly west of south if anything.'

I began here to have some difficulty in getting my men to go any farther. They said no human being had ever crossed the lake, and that if I persisted we should die, and I was regaled with stories of the *adare*—a great mythical lake monster—and how one of my men had only escaped from it by casting away his *padua*, which he had left the *adare* crunching up. These stories were received with great amusement by some of the men, but the fact remains that cross the lake in a direct line they would not. They were quite willing to cut across anywhere but the centre, and so would have eventually crossed by a zigzag course.

The sixth sounding was taken at 11.30; I calculated about $2\frac{1}{2}$ – $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the north shore, and gave 233 ft. (no mud).

Seventh sounding 11.45, 233 ft. (plenty of mud).

The last four soundings had covered a distance of perhaps $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, and showed the lake bottom to be here as flat as a table.

Eighth sounding 12.15, 227 ft.

Ninth sounding 12.30, 218 ft. (deposit brought up).

I calculated we had now gone more than three-quarters of the way across. The huts in the villages on the south shore were standing out clearly. My men absolutely refused to continue the journey directly across. They were willing to branch off from the direct course and then come up along the shore, but they refused to take the straight line to the shore. As the last few soundings seemed to show we were gradually getting into shallower water I decided to allow the men to return, and we eventually reached our point of departure at 3.55 p.m., just about eight hours after setting out—a truly remarkable feat for these swimmers propelling the raft. These soundings, while being of some value as giving the first clear data we have to go upon, I need hardly state do not necessarily prove that there is no spot in the lake which is 500 ft. deep or more. They only give the depths across the centre on a bearing approximately north to south. A chemical analysis of the mud brought up is given as an appendix to this report (Appendix B).¹

I suggest the lake level may have risen owing to the inflow of water being in excess of evaporation or possibly to a filling up or rise of the lake bottom. All the old inhabitants round the lake tell of its marked change in appearance within their own time. They say forty or fifty years ago it was a much smaller body of water, and the position of the submerged villages bears this out. With regard to the possibility of the lake level rising owing to excess of inflow over evaporation, it is interesting to note that when I visited the lake in the height of the rains, and after an exceptionally wet season, an hour after the rain stopped the rivers or streams down the mountain side were stony beds with very little water. Moreover, the name for all these streams, with one exception, is simply *obo* (stone), without the usual suffix *su* (water).

Earthquakes (*asase pusuo*) are familiar to all the adult inhabitants of the lake villages. The last is reported as about eight to ten years ago, which destroyed the chief of Abono's hut. Earthquakes are of course not unknown elsewhere on the Gold Coast.

¹ By Mr. R. Drew, of the A.G.C. Assay Office, to whom, for this and other scientific reports, I am much indebted.

Some of the older inhabitants state there used to be a whirlpool (*kyinkyia*) in the lake. They so exactly describe this that it seems almost impossible they can be speaking of something they have never seen. On the other hand, there are many others who state they have never seen it. There is, moreover, a saying current all along the lake shore which runs, *Wo amma Takyi anko, wo amma Takyi ansan, wo ama Takyi aka nsenmu*, 'You did not let Takyi go, you did not let Takyi return, you have made Takyi remain half-way.' This refers to a man 'Takyi' who insisted on crossing the lake; he was caught in a whirlpool, went round and round in ever-narrowing circles, till he suddenly disappeared in a hole in the surface of the lake. When on the lake I scanned its whole surface with glasses but could see no indication whatever of any surface disturbance. I made inquiries concerning the 'flashing lights' mentioned in Mr. Kitson's report. The old chief of Abono was quite matter-of-fact about these; he said they were, he thought, caused by rascals who went round robbing other people's nets at night, and took fire in a bowl to scare away easily frightened people.¹

I conclude this chapter by giving what I am afraid is a somewhat sketchy account of the animals, birds, and fish that frequent the lake.

Of animals, the following do not occur: the crocodile, hippopotamus, and crabs. None of these have ever, it is stated, been known in the lake; on the other hand, there is a species of fish-eating crocodile the natives call *akyekye*. I did not, however, see any of these. It is stated that when the 'lake fires its gunpowder' these reptiles leave the water and go up the streams till the water clears. Pythons are reported as common; one of our *padua* men sang the python's song to us one day we were on the raft:

Kru, kru, kru, nne wukuo kru, nne wukuo kru, nne wukuo.'

(' *Kru, kru, kru*, to-day is Wednesday *kru*, to-day is Wednesday *kru*, to-day is Wednesday.')

I did not see any fish much over a quarter of a pound in weight all the time I was at the lake. The fisher-folk recognize

¹ But see Appendix D which gives probably the true explanation of these lights.

nine different kinds; some of these have been identified by Mr. Norman of the Natural History Museum, to whom I am much indebted (see Appendix C). There are said to be frogs, but I did not see any, and, as I did not sleep on the lake shore, I did not hear them.

APPENDIX A

'There is only one real lake in the country, and that is the sacred Lake Bosumtwi in central Ashanti, about 18 miles south-east of Coomassie. This freshwater lake is roughly circular in shape, with a diameter of about 4 miles and an area of some 13 square miles. It lies in a deep depression, with steep sides rising to 600 and 700 feet above its surface. Its depth is unknown. An attempt was made to sound it by Mr. A. J. Philbrick, acting Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, but unfortunately when 500 feet of line had been let down it broke, and the attempt was abandoned. Though a lake with no outlet, and only a few small annual streams flowing into it, the water is fresh. Its general appearance suggests a volcanic origin, viz. that it is a caldera, but since no evidence whatever has been found on its north-eastern and northern rim and shore of young volcanic rocks, that view is hardly tenable. The available evidence suggests its formation as due to subsidence. Numbers of villages stand on the shores of the lake. There are several interesting native beliefs about the lake. It is sacred to the Ashantis, who regard it as a great fetish. They believe that it is the seat of a powerful and energetic spirit which manifests itself intermittently on its open surface by flashing lights, making noises like the discharge of artillery, and in various other ways. No canoes, paddles, fish-hooks, or brass pans are allowed on or near it. Fish abound in the lake, and are caught in an ingenious manner by the natives. Plaited reed mats with gaping mouths are taken out from the shore by men lying face downwards on cigar-shaped logs of wood. They propel themselves by paddling with their hands, and having set and anchored the nets, mouths open, the lower platform just submerged, they retire for some time. The fish enter the trap and bask in the subdued sunlight, resting on the lower portion. The fishermen return almost noiselessly, pull together the two parts of the trap, capture the fish and tow them and the trap ashore.'—Extract from a paper read by Mr. A. E. Kitson, C.B.E. before the R.G.S., June 1916.

APPENDIX B

A.G.C. Assay Office,
24th November 1921.

CAPTAIN RATTRAY,

I have received two samples of mud from Lake Bosomtwe, which I have examined.

The mud is mainly composed of decomposed organic matter, i. e. leaves, plants, &c., in a moderately fine state of division, together with a small quantity of finely divided inorganic matter, resulting from the weathering of rocks.

I have been unable to detect any free Sulphur; the presence of which would indicate volcanic action, although the reverse does not necessarily prove the contrary.

Sample No. C from 8th sounding contains what appears to be a small fish scale.

Chips of rocks are absent, also any minerals which would be of great assistance in determining the probable cause of the periodic disturbances.

In summing up, I believe the mud to be suspended matter from the supernatant water which gradually accumulates on the bottom of the lake, and I think has very little bearing on the origin of the periodic disturbances as it is only the upper layer.

A sample of mud which I took from a stream in Obuasi was very similar in composition to that from the Lake.

(Sgd.) R. DREW.

APPENDIX C

British Museum (Natural History),
Cromwell Road, London, S.W.7.

22nd September 1922.

DEAR SIR,

I have examined the fishes from Ashanti, which all belong to the family *Cichlidae*. None of them are new forms, but several are most useful for the Museum Collection. I find that we received a collection of fishes in 1888 from Lake Busumchi, and imagine that this is another way of spelling the same lake, especially as the forms obtained by Capt. Rattray agree with them. A list of the species represented is as follows:

<i>Hemichromis fasciatus</i> ,	3	specimens
<i>Tilapia multifasciata</i> ,	1	"
<i>Tilapia zillii</i> ,	1	"
<i>Tilapia melanopleura</i> ,	3	"

I remain, Yours faithfully,
J. R. NORMAN.

APPENDIX D

Geological Survey Office,
28 Jermyn Street, London, S.W.1.
14th December 1921.

MY DEAR RATTRAY,

There are certain lakes (or meres) in Shropshire which behave in a very remarkable way. They are freshwater lakes with no outlet. Every two years or so there is a phenomenon known to the local people as the 'breaking of the meres'. What happens is that the organic matter which has been growing and collecting and putrefying on the bottom of the lake finally gets so buoyant with gases produced by decomposition that it all rises to the surface and forms a black scum which has a terrific stench. If there were an outlet, so that the water circulated, this would not take place. The chief of these lakes is Ellesmere. Mr. P., one of our men who has been surveying in the district, tells me about this. It seems to me that the circumstances are very similar in the case of your lake. Of course in the warmer climate it would probably occur oftener (about once a year is it?). Your lake is also fresh and has no outlet. The smell of rotten eggs is not necessarily nor usually volcanic but can come from the decomposition of many organic bodies. Much of the gas given off would probably be marsh gas, and this is usually accompanied by a little phosphoretted hydrogen which causes it to ignite instantaneously as it comes into contact with the atmosphere. This is the cause of the will-o'-the-wisp. It is not usual to have a loud report, but that would all depend on the mixture of gases given off.

(Sgd.) T. ROBERTSON.

III

MATRILINEAL DESCENT IN ASHANTI

IN a previous chapter the nomenclature relative to the Ashanti relationship terms and the laws of succession and inheritance were described. I now propose to examine the position of women in this country, with special reference to the *ahema* or 'queen mothers'. As has been seen, the Ashanti system of tracing descent is matrilineal and matripotestal, that is, clan descent is traced through the female, and authority in the family lies mainly in the hands of the mother's brother, the maternal uncle (*wofa*). We have seen that:

(i) *Abusua* (clan) is synonymous with *mogya* or *bogya* (blood).

(ii) A woman alone can transmit blood to descendants, male or female.

(iii) Under no conceivable circumstances whatever can a male transmit his blood, which he derived from his mother, and in consequence no Ashanti can, according to orthodox belief, have a drop of the male parent's blood in his or her veins.

(iv) The male parent transmits to his children his *ntoro*—which I have translated by 'spirit'—and the male alone can transmit this *ntoro*, which is present in every person, male and female.

(v) Both the *abusua* and *ntoro* are exogamous.

(vi) The *abusua* and *ntoro* together account for all the marriage prohibitions.¹

(vii) The *raison d'être* given by the Ashanti for tracing *bogya* (blood) through the female line alone is to be found in certain physiological conditions which they have observed, i.e. the presence of blood at child-birth and during menstruation.

(viii) The presence of blood on these occasions has given rise to the supposition that 'blood alone can be transmitted by and through a female'.

While discussing this matter with three old women, one of whom was the 'Queen Mother' of B——, I asked why, if a male had blood in his body, as they acknowledged he had, he could not then transmit it to his offspring. I have indeed repeatedly

¹ With the 'age class' taboos.

asked this question and always been told such a thing was impossible and had never been heard of. On this occasion the answer was that 'if a male transmitted his blood through the penis he could not beget a child'.

I can conceive no possible answer that would show more clearly the underlying belief in the minds of these people, but if further evidence be needed, then the fact that the word for the male-transmitted *ntoro* (spirit) seems sometimes used in the sense of semen supplies that proof.

To the Ashanti mind therefore the word *bogya* (blood) in the wider sense we now use it, as being something that may be transmitted by either or both parents, is incomprehensible.¹

As a result of this belief as seen in daily practice, *abusua*, i. e. clan or blood, in all cases decides the succession to stools and the inheritance of property. The *ntoro*, while regulating, by exclusion, certain unions of the sexes, is of lesser practical importance; its action in certain other respects being spiritual rather than material.

The most obvious results of a social organization framed on such lines is to raise immediately the status of women in the community, and when matrilineal descent is found in a society which is frankly communistic, we seem to have in these two factors in many parts of Africa the key to the importance of women, which has been noted by numerous observers.

A proverb, that may be heard as often as the question is put to an Ashanti man or woman why a woman should be of such account, runs as follows: *Oba na owo obarima*, 'A woman gave birth to a man.' The full significance of this saying will be explained later.

The second factor—the communistic state of the family—has as important if less obvious results.

In the chapter on 'the Ashanti Classificatory System' it was

¹ Yet a further proof that what I now state is correct appears to me to be found in the well-known custom (noted by Bowdich 100 years ago) which 'countenanced the King's sisters not only in intrigue with any handsome subject . . . but allowed them to choose any eminently so (however inferior otherwise), as a husband . . . thus they consider they provide for a personal superiority in their monarchs.' (Bowdich, *Mission to Ashanti*.) [The italics are mine; not only were such unions permitted, but the son of such a marriage, or illicit intercourse, even if the father had been a slave, could become a king, because he only inherited his mother's royal blood.]

recorded that wives were inherited in exactly the same way as any other property; even in the case of a chief who is not dead but who has been deposed, or de-stooled as it is called in West Africa, his successor has a perfect right to have his predecessor's wives transferred to him equally with any other stool property. Again, on examination of the marriage laws, it will be found that, under certain circumstances, the native idiom for 'to marry' is *to 'yere*, lit. 'buy a wife'.

These two isolated instances, removed from their proper context, might well lead the casual observer to suppose that an Ashanti wife was little better than a man's chattel and to point to the servile condition of women.

But in Ashanti no woman stands alone, for behind the woman stand a united family, bound by the tie of blood, which has here a power and a meaning we can hardly grasp. 'If you see one parrot do not throw a stone at it, for there are many others,' runs one of their sayings.

The whole conception of 'mother-right' affords the woman a protection and a status that is more than an adequate safeguard against the ill-treatment by any male or group of males.

Her children belong to her and her clan, not to that of her husband.

All her individually acquired and inherited property is hers and her clan's, and her husband cannot touch it. Not only is this so, but when she dies, no male even of her own clan may be her heir until all her female blood (clan) relations are extinct.¹

From these facts it is clear that the position of women in Ashanti is one of great importance.

'I am the mother of the man,' she says, and her meaning we cannot understand until a fuller knowledge of Ashanti social and religious organization shows us what is meant.

'I alone can transmit the blood to a king.'

'If my sex die in the clan then that very clan becomes extinct, for be there one, or one thousand male members left, not one can transmit the blood, and the life of the clan becomes measured on this earth by the span of a man's life.'

Yet again, unless we understand the full significance under-

¹ This I believe never to have been fully recorded before though Bosman hints at it in two lines in his work.

lying that aspect of the Ashanti religion which enjoins that the spirits and memories of famous ancestors be venerated and propitiated, we cannot fully grasp what a calamity in the Ashanti mind, the extinction of his clan entails.

For not only are human beings divided into exogamous clans and *ntoro*, but in the spirit world (*samando*) the ghosts continue to be concerned with and able not only to confer good upon, but to receive benefits from, those members of the human community alone who were their clansmen on earth. I believe also it may yet be shown that the only hope the inhabitants of the cold shadowless spirit world¹ have of reincarnation upon 'the warm sun-bathed earth' lies in being born again into that *abusua* (and just possibly also *ntoro*) of which they were members on earth. The extinction of the clan would therefore mean the extinction of all hope of return to this world.

I believe in all this we shall find the secret of that irrevocable law among the Ashanti which decrees that none but a clansman (or clanswoman) may ever sit on the clan stool, a belief which, when all the relations are exhausted, causes them to seek a successor from among a group whom they may never have seen, living in a remote part of the country but bearing the clan's name and thus 'all one blood'.

When these researches had led to the disclosure of the above-mentioned laws, I felt convinced that such indirect proofs pointing to the importance of the female sex in the community must, over and above the acknowledgement of that fact as seen in these abstract principles, have had also certain concrete results, and I was prepared also to find proof of them in what anthropologists call 'Survivals', i. e. some custom or practice that survives after its original significance has been lost. I was not prepared, however, to find that the signs sought for, so far from having become extinct, or remaining only to be traced in survivals, were before our eyes and patently obvious once previous study had focussed our attention upon them.

They were not even secrets or half-mysteries such as the *abusua* and *ntoro* are. These, I believe, could never have been explained clearly by investigations conducted through an interpreter or by the medium of semi-educated or ignorant natives.

¹ The Ashanti picture of the world of ghosts.

There is indeed one fact that I believe to have militated against their being known as widely as the circumstances would appear to warrant, the very small number of Europeans who have ever known or made friends with the old Ashanti mothers. 'The old woman you may see crouching behind him (the chief), or whom you may not see at all, but who is with him all the same, and says, "Do not listen to the white man, it is bad for you".' That great Englishwoman, Mary Kingsley, wrote these words, with an intuition that seems almost inspired.

Now it has been my privilege to have broken down in some measure the barriers of the suspicion and distrust that divide us from these old African mothers, and the reward has been a revelation which is still so fresh upon me as to make it perhaps difficult to grasp its full significance.

In a later volume a description will be given of the position of the senior female in the ruling clan, i. e. the *Ohema* or so-called Queen Mother, and of the part she took (and to an ever-lessening extent still takes) in local government and in the selection and enstoolment of a chief. A few details only are now given.

The old Ashanti women tell me—and this information is almost without exception confirmed by the older men—that the senior stool (*okonua panyin*) is the stool of the *Ohema* or Queen Mother, for there are two stools, that of the Queen Mother and that of her kinsman, the chief's stool. The latter has been the only one so far accorded political recognition.

The recognized seniority of the woman's stool is no empty courtesy title. In fact, but for two causes, the stool occupied by the male would possibly not be in existence at all: 1. The natural inferiority of women from a physical standpoint.¹ 2. Menstruation (with its resultant avoidances). In other words, a woman, besides suffering from periodical disability, cannot go to war; but for these two facts the Ashanti woman,

¹ I believe that the second reason will be found to be merely a case of cause and effect. Researches in the avoidances connected with menstruation have led me to believe that a Queen Mother does not go to war, not because of any physical inferiority, but because a woman up to a certain age has her monthly periods and is 'unclean' with all the possible disastrous effects resulting from contact with her. Four 'Queens' of Ashanti are recorded as having accompanied an army to war, i. e. 1. Juaben Sewa, Q.M. of Juaben. 2. Ata Birago, Q.M. of Kokofu. 3. Akyia, Q.M. of Asansu. 4. Ya Santewa, Q.M. of Ejeisu (who was exiled with Prempeh. But all these women only went to war 'because they were old and had passed the menopause').

under a matrilineal system, would, I believe, eclipse any male in importance. A king's son can never be the king, but the poorest woman of the royal blood is the potential mother of a king. I purposely reiterate this fact because I think its import has never been fully grasped. Moreover, in olden times when a chief had to be chosen it was the Queen Mother who had most to say in the choice to be made. She would summon her clan mates, male and female, and they would discuss the matter apart from the sub-chiefs and elders belonging to other clans.

Having chosen the chief the Queen Mother sends a message to the sub-chiefs and elders who now discuss the nominee, and when they have agreed, as I am told they generally do—no one can be put upon the stool against whom the Queen Mother gives her veto—the Queen Mother is informed.

The new chief-to-be is admonished in the presence of all the clan and given much excellent advice by 'his mother'¹ as to his future mode of life, and then conducted into the presence of the assembled chiefs.

After the usual ceremonies he is taken to where his stool stands apart. He is set upon it the customary three times,² and after his sandals have been placed upon his feet and a robe thrown over his shoulder, all the attendant officials with the stool move up to where the Queen Mother sits. Then the new chief takes the customary oath and sits down on the right of the Queen Mother to receive the homage and oaths of allegiance of the assembled chiefs. Ever after, as long as he is king, the Queen Mother's place is on his left hand. She is the 'old woman' of Miss Kingsley's picture.

Whenever the chief travels abroad, except to war, she must accompany him, and when the chief sits in court her place is beside him. She alone has the privilege of rebuking him, his spokesman (*okyeame*), or his councillors in open court, and of addressing the court and questioning litigants.³ To her, too, petitions are addressed praying for pardon or mitigation of a sentence.

Every Queen Mother has the right to choose one wife for the

¹ Not necessarily the chief's mother, often his sister.

² The lowering and raising of the body about to be buried.

³ When she has her menses, she of course may not attend court.

chief, who becomes his 'senior wife', and to replace her if she dies. The senior wife or, if she has grown very old her daughter, is the potential regent when the king goes to war.¹ She takes the chief's name and the Queen Mother calls her *me 'ba* (my child), and she calls the Queen Mother *ena* (mother). The regent, originally only a woman of the royal harem, has, however, from her want of training, no knowledge of customary law and of court procedure, and the whole of these duties devolve upon the Queen Mother, who holds court and decides cases with the full powers of the chief. But more than this, for in the ordinary way, when the chief is in residence, the Queen Mother seems to have jurisdiction in her own court over women connected with her own attendants and also in all cases of disputes between the chief and his wives. Moreover, the Queen Mother has her own 'spokeswomen'. She appears to have jurisdiction also in certain cases where males are the litigants; it was and is, I believe, still the practice, on application being made by both parties, to have cases transferred from the chief's to the Queen Mother's court where litigation is cheaper. The Queen Mother was entitled, I am informed, to a share of the court fees (oath fees) derived from cases heard in the chief's court.

The Queen Mother's share of oath fees at Bekwai was formerly as follows. The fee was divided into three parts; one-third was allocated to the male stool, and of the remaining two-thirds, one-third was handed over to the woman's stool. The Queen Mother, as most of us know, has her own stool, but she is also custodian (with her stool officials) of the blackened stools of departed Queen Mothers, and she performs the rites in connexion with these at the *Wuku* and *Kwesi Adae* ceremonies.²

Every Queen Mother has to be in daily attendance at the chief's 'palace', and should she not put in an appearance, the chief sends to inquire after her health every day that she is unable to attend.

At the ceremonies at which the departed ancestral ghosts are propitiated (the *Adae*), when the chief has completed the

¹ Every big chief for such an occasion, has a special stool made in readiness which is tended by the male stool carriers and kept in the male stool house, and this is, I believe, the only exception to the rule that no woman may sit upon the male stool.

² See Chapter V.

ceremony in the stool house and received his subjects, he may not return to his room until the Queen Mother has come to salute him, and if this old lady cares to do so she will keep him waiting for a considerable time before she puts in an appearance.

The Queen Mother had and still has in an ever-lessening degree, a great influence over all the women. She attends ceremonies connected with birth and puberty, and is (or was) personally concerned with the morals of the young generation. To-day the Queen Mothers are unrecognized by us and their position and influence are rapidly passing away. Many of us have only been made conscious of her presence by her 'troublesome' activities in stool palavers; some of us may have been in the habit of going out of our way to speak to the old lady, feeling rather than knowing she was a power to be reckoned with. Official recognition she has none.

I have myself been surprised at the results of my investigations. I found it difficult to believe what is here described is still in some measure alive to-day. I have asked the old men and women why I did not know all this—I had spent very many years in Ashanti. The answer is always the same: 'The white man never asked us this; you have dealings with and recognize only the men; we supposed the European considered women of no account, and we know you do not recognize them as we have always done.'

In other words, the Ashanti have simply accepted the fact that our system seemed to take no official cognizance of women as a power in the family and in the State, and therefore did not question our methods. Now I feel certain we have here a tremendous potential power for good in these old mothers of Africa; but I have no hesitation in saying that they have been a power working against us in the past. 'Do not listen to the white man, it is bad for you.'¹

How could their influence have been used otherwise but against us when these shrewd old women saw the whole weight of our power apparently used against them, breaking up their former pride of place in society and the state?

I feel convinced that, without the expenditure of public funds, we could by some official recognition of the Queen Mothers do

¹ *West African Studies.*

more for the moral welfare of the Ashanti race than by the expenditure of many thousands of pounds on a campaign conducted through the medium of the comparatively small number of educated African women. They are, I believe, more out of touch with their uncivilized brothers and sisters and less able to understand them than a sympathetic and scientifically trained European with a knowledge of the vernacular. I believe if we were to recognize the Queen Mothers we could do much to combat infant mortality and the slow collapse of the former rigid moral standards. In the course of my investigations I have entered into details concerning child-bearing with these shrewd and lovable old women, and from what they tell me I am convinced we could, with their help and influence, introduce some of the more elementary methods of hygiene and thus inaugurate a campaign against dirt and tetanus, two factors which take a heavy annual toll of infant life. But this opportunity is passing away. The inquirer is told on every side of the indifference of the young to discipline and to self-control. Surely if we—that is, the Government—do not in some small measure give the respect and honour that has always been the Queen Mothers' right—and the Queen Mother is to an Ashanti the personification of motherhood—we cannot be surprised if her children follow our example.

Some recognition of this kind would, I believe, mark an epoch in African administration, and the results for good would be very great.

If, however, we really wish to break up the clan system, then we are doing the right thing by ignoring the position of these women, for they are the keystone of the whole structure.

I can only say that the clan system, as seen in Ashanti, is for the present the main check on immorality and the best stimulus to filial piety, and the respect due to elders and superiors.

The clan system may, nay, must, die out in course of time. That this time has not yet come, seems clear to all who have studied this people.

IV

RELIGION (*Introductory*)

It is proposed in the following chapters, and under the above heading, to examine certain rites that I have witnessed, first, in connexion with the cult of ancestors, and secondly, in connexion with Ashanti beliefs in non-human spiritual powers. In the latter category are included all deities, from the Supreme Being, 'Nyame or Nyankopon, who dwells somewhat aloof in His firmament, down to those to whom He delegates some of His powers, as His vice-regents upon Earth. There are the lesser gods, who in their turn are graded in a regular descending scale, until they reach, or at times almost merge into, that class which the Ashanti themselves name *suman*, who are among the lowest grades of superhuman powers.

I have given elsewhere¹ some accounts of ceremonies, which afford us examples of animism in its simpler forms. Space forbids the inclusion of extracts from accounts of other customs—which will be described perhaps in a later volume—dealing with birth, puberty, and death, and will serve to throw still further light upon religious beliefs. The object aimed at throughout is to present accurate records of what is actually done and actually said at such of the Ashanti religious ceremonies as I have thus far examined.

Later, when more material of this nature has been collected, I, or perhaps others more skilled in critical analysis, may be enabled to draw up a formula which will present to our minds the true nature of the religious beliefs of this wonderful people. These beliefs have for centuries been described as 'fetishism' or 'fetish worship', but the religious conceptions of the Twi-speaking peoples of the Gold Coast and of Ashanti have, in my opinion, been grievously misrepresented.

The reasons which have led to this misunderstanding are not difficult to trace.

¹ See the account of how a drum is made, Chap. XXII, and a stool, Chap. XXIV.

I have suggested, in the preface of this volume, that our information concerning the anthropology of this part of Africa has hitherto been almost wholly derived from two main sources :

(a) Information from educated Africans, who have generously placed at the disposal of the European inquirer facts they themselves knew, or had acquired from their own countrymen, and

(b) Information obtained by Europeans themselves from uneducated Africans (i.e. uneducated according to European standards)—this information being solicited from these 'bush' or 'raw' natives through the medium of an interpreter.

The educated African, however, has been cut off from, and is out of sympathy with, the life of his own people. He has learned in nine cases out of ten, if he has not actually been taught, to despise his own illiterate brethren and the unlettered past of his race. Concerning that past he really knows little or nothing, and generally cares less. Bosman, writing two hundred years ago, mentions 'the negro who ridiculed his own country's gods'. If, as is probable, he has been educated in one of the mission schools, then his whole training, until quite recently, has been one in which it has not appeared orthodox or even conceivable to his teachers that there might be something in the African's own culture and religious beliefs worthy of retention side by side (for a time at least) with the greater, because higher, ethical teachings of Christian theology.¹

Such being the case, can one wonder that African pupils and converts alike have been quick to see and very ready to follow

¹ One of the most remarkable facts that must have struck many laymen in Africa, is that the missionary, to whom anthropologists owe such a vast debt, should not in the past have made more *practical use* of their knowledge in their own everyday work. This fact is well exemplified in the case of the late (German) Basel Mission in the Gold Coast, which claimed among its missionaries a man with such a store of ethnological learning as the late J. G. Christaller. Yet among their converts I have met only one who gave a thought to or was interested in his own old religious beliefs. I have never heard in the past of use being made in the Basel Mission schools of any of the great truths which will be found common to the West African and Christian religion. All this is being rectified now, and with men like Mr. Wilkie and Mr. Beveridge at its head, the Scottish Mission will do work which is being built upon surer foundations than under the former German régime, because it does not neglect or ignore the peculiar genius of the race among whom it labours.

a trend of thought which denied, or ignored, the possibility of anything useful or good or ethical existing in the African's own religion.

The result has been that the cultured and the semi-educated Africans alike (with a few exceptions), when asked about the beliefs of their own people, unconsciously paint them in all the unreal and exotic colours with which their new training and their new environment have taught them to regard them.

They feel, and they have been trained to believe, that they are brands plucked from the burning. It is almost impossible that such persons can be sympathetic with their own past, a past which after all few of them have ever really known, seen, or clearly understood.

With regard to the second source of our European misinformation—the uneducated African—who is examined by the white man through the medium of an interpreter, such methods of dealing with a delicate and difficult subject like religion are, in my own opinion, and from my own experience, equally unsatisfactory.

Inquiries conducted on such lines will either lead to almost wholly negative results or, what is as bad, the information so gained will again be tinged by just the same half-truths as the material obtained from the former source which it thus seems to corroborate. The wrong atmosphere is once again imparted by the educated or semi-educated interpreter, who will unconsciously give answers, couched in the only phraseology which he knows, with which he has been familiar since he first began to learn to read and write.

The old expert, the custodian of the past lore of his race, whose head is full of wisdom undreamed of in the seventh standard board-school philosophy of the interpreter, is never going to open that storehouse at the bidding of a stranger and foreigner, with whom he has to converse through such a medium.

The interpreter very often has not even heard many of the words that these old folk employ in the recounting of ceremonies and rites. These gaps he fills up by words which he will borrow from his own very limited and often misapplied English vocabulary. Any success that the European may hope to obtain in

gaining really valuable information from these old men and old women is attained by other methods.

He must first gain their fullest confidence, and inspire their trust and affection. He must make them believe that his interest in them is not one of idle curiosity or kindly superiority, nor yet again merely inspired by love of knowledge. I approached these old people and this difficult subject (their religious beliefs) in the spirit of one who came to them as a seeker after truths, the key to which I told them they alone possessed, which not all the learning nor all the books of the white man could ever give to me.

I made it clear to them that I asked access to their religious rites such as are here described for this reason. I attended these ceremonies with all the reverence and respect I could accord to something which I felt to have been already very old, before the religion of my country had yet been born as a new thought; yet not so entirely new, but that even its roots stretched back and were fed from that same stream which still flows in Ashanti to-day.

The stream crosses the path,
 The path crosses the stream;
 Which of them is the elder?
 Did we not cut a path to go and meet this stream?
 The stream had its origin long, long ago,
 It had its origin in the Creator.
 He created things,
 Pure, pure Tano.¹

Before I leave this subject, and pass on to a description of the rites witnessed, I should like to point out yet a third factor which has been a further source of error in the proper understanding of West African religion. This factor arises directly from the causes already noted.

In a land where, even now only a few Europeans are able to speak the language of its people, it was inevitable that inappropriate European words should have been employed to describe objects and actions, the real significance of which was never fully examined or understood.

Such words in time became adopted and adapted by those

¹ Extract from the language of the talking drums. See Chap. XXII.

Africans themselves, who learned English or Dutch or Portuguese from the European, and in turn were used again by them when interpreting. Many such words, originally employed in a wholly wrong sense, have become, by long use, almost classical. One example is 'linguist', meaning 'spokesman', and few perhaps of such mistakes really matter. But there is one term the indiscriminate use of which, I believe, has done infinite harm, the word 'fetish'. The story of its origin and introduction into West Africa is so well known that I need not here repeat it.

This term will confront and befog the inquirer who is ignorant of the vernacular, at every turn. It will appear as exactly to fit some aspects of Ashanti religious beliefs, as to be totally inapplicable to others, to which, however, it will be as commonly applied.

I laboured in this terminological maze until I came very carefully to examine the distinction and nomenclature that the African himself observes in classifying two distinct aspects of his religious beliefs.

Broadly speaking, all these objects which we ourselves would loosely call charms, amulets, talismans, mascots, or fetishes, he calls *suman*,¹ and I think that the word 'fetish' should be rigidly confined to designate such only.

His other category of non-human spirits, which he himself calls *abosom*, which he clearly distinguishes from the *suman*, we should never call 'fetishes', for it is a totally inappropriate and misleading term.

The only correct word to use for the Ashanti word *obosom*² is 'god' or, when speaking of the brass pan itself, which is the potential resting place of this non-human spirit, 'a shrine'. I spell this word (god) throughout with a small letter, and only use the capital when the Ashanti is speaking of 'Nyame, the

¹ The African with his charm or fetish is infinitely more logical and sensible in his ideas and application of such than is the European with his or her mascot. The African knows why his *suman* should have power and whence that power is derived. We do not, I am afraid, show the same intelligent interest when we buy a gollywog to fasten on our fuselage, and attribute our luck in not having 'crashed' to its magical power.

² No connexion whatever, as Ellis states, with the word for moon, which is a totally distinct word and has a different dictionary meaning because it has different tones. See article on the Drum Language, Chap. XXII.

God of the Sky, who is to him the Supreme Being of the Universe.

The native pastor and the European missionary alike found a word already in universal use, i. e. 'fetish'. They were possibly quite ready to welcome a designation which obviated any necessity for using a term which, even when written with a small initial letter, they considered much too good to apply to these 'false gods'¹ about whom we really still know so little.

Thus West Africa became 'the Land of Fetish'² and its religion 'Fetishism'.

It would be as logical to speak in these terms of the religion of ancient Greece and Rome, pulling down from their high places the Olympian Deities and *δαίμονες*—Daemons—(those which were the souls of men who lived in the Golden Age, and those which were never incarnate in human form, but were gods created by the Supreme God), and branding all indiscriminately as 'fetishes', and the great thinkers of old, e. g. Plato and Socrates, as fetish worshippers. 'I owe a cock to Aesculapius,' said the latter almost with his last breath, and this pious injunction to his friend would be understood by every old Ashanti to-day.

¹ Bosman used it two hundred years ago, for he constantly holds forth against their 'false gods'.

² Ellis actually published a book with this title, but later must have seen his mistake, for he writes in another of his works 'so far from fetishism being peculiarly characteristic of the religion of the negro of the Gold Coast, I am of opinion that that religion is remarkably free from it'.

RELIGION

A Wednesday Adae Ceremony

THE first in order of importance of those customs dealing with the propitiation, solicitation, or worship of ancestral spirits is the *Adae*. This word is possibly just a special application of the same word *adae*, meaning a place of rest, or lying down—no one is permitted to work or go to farm on an *Adae*.

In the special sense in which it is here employed, it refers to those ceremonies at which the spirits of the departed rulers of the clan are propitiated, their names and deeds recalled, and favours and mercy solicited.

After the death of a wise ruler, if it be desired to perpetuate his or her name and memory, the late owner's 'white' stool is 'smoked' or blackened by being smeared all over with soot, mixed with yolk of egg. It then becomes a black stool (*apunnua*), and is deposited in the stool house (*akonnuu dan*), and becomes a treasured heirloom (*agyapadie*) of that clan. The stool, which during the life-time of its possessor was so intimately bound (literally and metaphorically speaking) with its owner's *sunsum* or soul,¹ thus becomes after death a shrine into which the departed spirit may again be called upon to enter on certain special occasions, such as those about to be described, that it may receive that adulation and those gifts that were dear to it in life, and so be induced to continue to use its new and greater spiritual influence in the interest of those over whom it formerly ruled when upon earth.

The *Adae* ceremony, universally held throughout Ashanti, is a rite which is observed twice in every successive period of forty-three days. The two ceremonies are known as the Big or Sunday *Adae* (*Adae kese* or *Kwesidae*), and the Wednesday *Adae*, *Wukudae* (also sometimes known as the *Kupadakuo*, and among the Brong as *Muruwukuo*). The interval between one Sunday *Adae* and the next Sunday *Adae* is 43 days, and a like

¹ Fetters are put on a stool with the idea of binding to it the owner's soul. (See Chap. XXIV, The Silver Stool.)

time also elapses between each Wednesday *Adae*. The period between one Sunday *Adae* and the following Wednesday *Adae* is 22 days, exclusive, or 24 inclusive, and between the Wednesday *Adae* and the next Sunday *Adae* 17 or 19 days, exclusive and inclusive, respectively.

To give a concrete example : a Sunday *Adae* fell at the town of B— on the 24th July 1921 ; the next Sunday *Adae* would be on the 4th September. The Wednesday *Adae*, following the *Adae* of the 24th July, fell upon the 17th August.

The reason for these curious recurrent 43-day periods, so marked in many ceremonials, and known among the Ashanti as *adaduanan*, lit. 40-day periods, will, I think, be explained when later their calendar comes to be discussed.

The day immediately preceding any *Adae* is known as *Adapa*, lit. a good or lucky day. A child born upon such a day has this word suffixed to his or her own natal-day name ; e. g. a male child born upon a Tuesday immediately preceding a Wednesday *Adae* would be named Kobina Dapa.

The *Adapa* is spent in preparation for the following day's ceremony ; food, firewood, water, wine, &c., are collected, because, as already noted, on an *Adae* no work other than that connected with the ceremony, may be performed. No *Adae* ceremony has, I believe, ever before been witnessed, in its entirety, by a European. A very brief description is given by Bowdich, recording an *Adae* held in Coomassie about the beginning of the eighteenth century,¹ and an even briefer account is sketched by Ellis.² I am here, as elsewhere, greatly indebted to the native rulers in Ashanti for their courtesy and trust in according to me the privilege of unrestricted access to these sacred and deeply significant rites. I propose now to describe, in some detail, four separate *Adae* customs, even at the risk of repeating in an account of one what may have already been recorded in describing another. The ceremonies here specified were performed in localities separated from each other by many days' journey ; they were rites of totally different clans, and finally a considerable interval of time elapsed between their performance.

¹ Bowdich, *Mission to Ashanti*, pp. 230-1.

² *The Twi-Speaking Peoples of Gold Coast*, pp. 228-9.

Wukudae, witnessed on the 17th August 1921.

On the morning of the 16th, the 'white' stool of the paramount chief (*omanhene*), and his chair (*asipim*), were scrubbed by the stool-carriers in the court-yard of the 'palace', and the cooks (*sodofo*) likewise thoroughly cleansed the calabashes to be used at the next day's ceremony. A sheep was chosen; the townsfolk laid in a store of food, firewood, water, &c. The chief personally arranged about the proper supplies of palm wine, rum, and whisky, and his treasurer (the *sanahene*) counted out the money and weighed out the gold dust required for the occasion. All this is called *akonta*¹ *buo*, or reckoning up accounts. I have many a time noticed how thoroughly the chiefs and Queen Mothers go into these details, which possibly explains the smooth running of every ceremony I have attended.

On the evening of the *Adapa* the drummers and horn-blowers assembled, and almost every variety of these instruments was to be seen. There were *ntumpane*, or talking drums, *boma*, *nkawiri*, *mpebi*, *akukuadwi*, *kete*, *mpintin*, *aprede* (also known as *nimsa*, lit. 'Had I known'), *asenkuo*, *agyankotoankama-amane*, and *nyaranie*, drums (*vide* Figs. 20-22).

Of the elephant horns there were *nkufe*, *ntahera*, *asokoben*. Then, as Bowdich wrote a hundred years ago, 'music and firing beguile the night'. The significance of the notes of some of these drums will be explained later. About nine o'clock the following morning every one concerned assembled in the small court-yard inside the chief's palace. This yard was flanked on the right by the very beautiful old 'Nyame dan or temple to the great God of the sky (*vide* Frontispiece). At the other end of the yard was the open side of the usual three-walled Ashanti house, and opening off this, on the right, was a low door leading into the stool house. This door may just be seen (in Fig. 26) over the heads of the people. The head stool-carrier (*akonuasofo hene*), a most important person in an Ashanti court, and like other stool-carriers generally recognizable by the manner in which the hair of his head was cut (*vide* Fig. 32), unlocked this door and we all entered a very small room, so dark, how-

¹ Portuguese, *conta*.



FIG. 20. Drummers at an *Adae* ceremony



FIG. 21. Drummers at an *Adae* ceremony



FIG. 22. Elephant horn blowers at an *Adae* ceremony

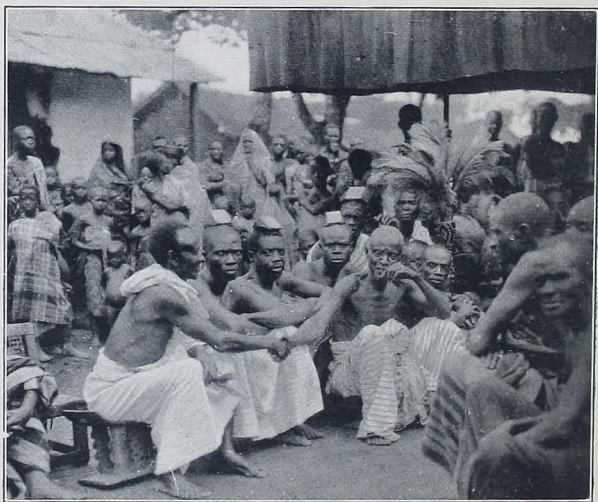


FIG. 23. Scene at an *Adae* ceremony

ever, that I could not at first distinguish anything. The following were the persons admitted besides myself :

- (a) The chief (*omanhene*).
- (b) A spokesman (*okyeame*).
- (c) A gun-bearer (*tumitufo*).
- (d) A sword-bearer (*okafonafu*).
- (e) A herald (*osene*) (see Fig. 23).
- (f) Several members of the chief's household (*dabrefu*).

The chief and all present were dressed in their oldest cloths. On entering the room the chief bared his shoulder and slipped his sandals from off his feet, standing upon them (marks of respect accorded by an inferior to a superior). He greeted the spirits, saying: *Nananom samanfo makeye o* ('Spirit grandfathers, good morning'). He then seated himself upon his stool.

As soon as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, I saw at the end of the room, opposite to the door, a long low platform, raised about three feet off the ground, made of upright poles with cross sticks laid upon them. Upon this table or rack were set the ancestral stools, as yet invisible, for all were covered with one large coarsely woven native cloth called *nsa*. The head stool-carrier came forward and removed the covering. There were thirteen blackened stools, many crumbling to pieces with age. Each stool lay upon its side, the seat facing towards us. They were caked with clotted blood,¹ and pieces of fat could be seen round the centre supports of many of them. (For photographs of smoked stools, see Figs. 34 and 35, which were those at another *Adae*)

The thirteen stools were in three rows. Two brass bells were the only other contents of the room.

A small pot of water was now brought into the room and poured out into a jar. I was told later that this water had been drawn very early that morning from the stream by an old

¹ It may be as well to place upon record the fact that the blood with which these ancestral stools are clotted was never that of a human sacrifice as is so often erroneously supposed. An Ashanti whom I once questioned on this point asked me how I could ask such a foolish question when I knew well that the flesh of the sacrifice was afterwards partaken of. There is one apparent but not real exception, the stool (*not an ancestral stool*) brought from Gyaman by Yim Aware which was really a *suman* or fetish. Upon this formerly a mulatto's blood was sprinkled. Nowadays a *brown* sheep is sacrificed upon it and the flesh is *not* eaten by those taking part in the ceremony.

woman who had passed the menopause. In olden times, if any menstruous woman entered the room where the ancestral stools were kept she would have been killed immediately.

The head stool-carrier then picked up this jar and, going to the door, poured water upon the ground with the words: *Nana Eguayeboafu mongye nsu nhoho mo nsa* ('Grandfather Eguayeboafu (all) receive this water and wash your hands').

A dish of *eto* (in this case mashed plantains) was now brought in by one of the *sodofu* (cooks). The chief stool-carrier, taking a spoonful of this, handed it to the chief, who, rising up, again slipped his sandals from his feet and stripped his cloth from his shoulder, tucking it round his waist. He then placed the contents of the spoon upon the oldest stool, speaking the following words:

'*Me nananom nsamanfo, nne ye Awukudae, mo me gye eto nni, na mo ma kuro yi nye yiye, na mo ma mma nwo mma, na nnipa a ye wo kuro yi mu nhina nya sika.*'

'My spirit grandfathers, to-day is the Wednesday *Adae*, come and receive this mashed plantain and eat; let this town prosper; and permit the bearers of children to bear children; and may all the people who are in this town get riches.'

This speech was punctuated throughout by the deep exclamation of *yo!*¹ from the *okyeame* ('linguist' or spokesman) and shrill cries of *Tie! Tie! Tie! Tie-e-e-e!*² from the *osene* (the herald). Only in the case of the oldest stool was the actual name of the ancestor mentioned; when the *eto* was placed upon the other stools no names were called. What remained of the plantain in the dish was next sent outside the room and scattered over the ground for the attendant spirits of the stool-carriers of these dead kings.

The sheep was now brought into the room amid loud cries of *Tie! Tie! Tie!* It was carried slung across the shoulders and neck of one of the cooks.

The chief again rose up and, holding a small knife (*kuroto*), addressed the spirits in the same words he had previously used when he laid the *eto* on the stools, but substituting the word *ogwane* (sheep) for *eto* (plantain).

¹ *Yo*, really should be spelled *vo*, this *v* having a peculiar *uy* sound and being really a labial semi-vowel.

² *Tie* (listen).

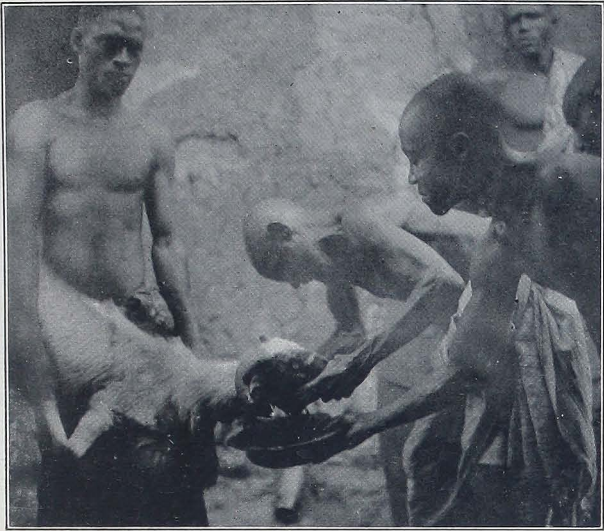


FIG. 24. The blood being collected in a wooden bowl



FIG. 25. Threading the meat on wooden skewers



FIG. 26. The meat on the skewers being carried into the stool house



FIG. 27. Twins who were present at the *Adae*

Two cooks now held a cloth, to serve as an apron or screen, between the chief and the sheep. The sheep was tightly held by several men, while the chief stabbed its throat. A little blood was allowed to fall upon the floor, after which a wooden bowl (*kurowa*) was held under its neck, and the sheep carried outside at once, where its throat was cut, the blood being received in the wooden bowl (see Fig. 24).

The carcass was then laid upon a plank of wood that had been cut, not sawn, out of a log, and was quickly and skilfully cut up. The basin of blood was meanwhile carried back into the stool house and the blood smeared, with the hand, upon the seat and edge of each stool in turn. This was done by the stool-carriers, and no words were spoken.

The omentum or covering of fat on the lower intestines was next placed on the centre support of each stool. The men cutting up the sheep were meanwhile threading (*sina*) choice pieces of the meat upon small skewers (*mfoho*), three pieces upon each skewer¹ (see Fig. 25). These were sent outside to be roasted by being placed upon the hot embers of a fire at the house of the head stool-carrier's wife. They were then brought back, laid upon a wooden dish, and taken into the stool house (see Fig. 26).

The head of the sacrifice and pieces of the intestines were also taken into the room and laid on the ground in front of the stools.

A bell was now rung 'to show that the spirits were eating or about to eat'. The skewers of roasted meat were now placed upon each stool by the chief, who again stripped naked down to the waist; the *sodofo* (cooks) followed close behind him placing upon each a little pile of fragments of lung. As the *omanhene* passed from stool to stool he kept saying, 'Here is meat, receive and eat', the herald, after each sentence, shouting *Tie! Tie!*

After the offering of the cooked and uncooked meat had been arranged upon all the stools, a bottle of whisky was produced. Some of this was poured out by one of the sword-carriers into a very old brass cup, shaped like a wine-glass. This was first handed to the *osene* (herald) to drink—it is the time-immemorial privilege of all *asene* to be the first to touch the wine cup.

The herald having drunk, and the cup having been replenished,

¹ These skewers are made from a wood called *tweapea*, from which tooth-brushes or chewing-sticks are cut.

the chief stool-carrier commenced from the first stool to pour a few drops of the spirit upon each in turn, speaking the following words. [Every few words were followed by *Yo! Yo!* from the *okyeame* (spokesman) and the piercing *Tie! Tie!* of the herald, which rendered it impossible to hear correctly the individual name of each departed ancestor; I have therefore substituted '*Asumasi*' (So-and-so)—after the first name—for the actual name of the departed king.]

'*Nana Eguayeboafu nsa o, B—— fo nkwaso, nne Oboroni som na aba, mma yenfom Aban; na die obeye kuro yi so, mmusuo no ebo ne konkon so.*

'*Nana Asumasi nsa o, nana Asumasi nsa o, nana Asumasi nsa o, w'adaworoma kuro yi nkwaso; nana Asumasi nsa o, mma asem bone mma kuro yi mu, nana Asumasi nsa o; ma B—— 'hene nkyere akonnua yi so, nana Asumasi nsa o, mma asem bone mma kuro yi mu, B—— fo nkwaso; nana Asumasi nsa o——'*

And so on to the last of the thirteen stools.¹

'Grandfather Eguayeboafu, your wine, life to the people of B——; these days, service to the white man has come; do not let us offend the Castle (i.e. the Government); for one who would wish evil on this town, let misfortune fall upon his own neck. Grandfather So-and-so, your wine; Grandfather So-and-so, your wine; Grandfather So-and-so, your wine; by your kindness let this town have life; Grandfather So-and-so, your wine; let no bad matter come upon this town; Grandfather So-and-so, your wine; permit the chief of B—— to remain long upon his stool; Grandfather So-and-so, do not permit any bad matter to come upon this town; life to the people of B——; Grandfather So-and-so, your wine'—and so on.

The remainder of the whisky was now passed round and partaken of by all present; and last of all the *omanhene* (chief) told the spirits that a white man had come to give greetings and pay his respects to them. This completed the ceremony in the stool house.

The offerings, I was informed, remained upon the stools till evening, when they would be removed by the stool-carriers—the apron of fat alone being left.

¹ An actual phonograph record of this address to the ghosts was later made by the actors in this drama (after an offering of two sheep to the spirits for permission to call upon them). Even in the record, however, owing to the cries of the herald and the shouts of the spokesman, it is impossible to distinguish actual names.

The sheep's head became the perquisite of the head stool-carrier, and might be removed by him to his house. Of the meat on the skewers, one skewer is given to the chief who must eat the meat upon it. The meat upon the remaining twelve skewers was, I was informed, eaten by (a) the stool-carriers or (b) by their children.

The chief now retired to dress. It has been noted he was in his old cloths. He later told me it would not be fitting for an inferior to go into the presence of his superiors—the spirits—in fine attire.

Before I give details of the public reception which now took place in the main street, some points of interest may be noted in connexion with the ceremony just described.

The twins (seen in Fig. 27) were present in the court-yard, outside the stool-house. Twins in Ashanti, if both of the same sex, belong, as of right, to the chief, and become, if girls, his potential wives, if boys, elephant-tail switchers at the court. They must be shown to him as soon as possible after birth, being carried to the 'palace' in a brass basin. Twins, on state occasions, are dressed in white, each alike.

It will have been noted that throughout the whole of the ceremony described there is no apparent invocation or mention of any power or spirit other than those of human ancestors—no gods or fetishes are called upon. This, as will be seen later, seems in marked contrast to the *Adae* described in Northern Ashanti. Behind the twins and upon the ground may be noticed something looking like a bundle of quills. This is the Gyabom *suman* (Gyabom fetish). It is a powerful charm for driving away evilly disposed disembodied human spirits. At a festival like the *Adae*, all spirits, good and bad, are expected to be present, but the bad spirits, the revengeful spirits (*sasa*), will flee from the presence of this *suman* (fetish), which consists of a bundle of porcupine quills, a bunch of feathers of the fish-eagle (whose cry, the hunter will tell you, is 'gye 'tuo, 'gye 'wo (only a gun and a snake I fear)), the skull of a porcupine, several human maxillae, an *odawuru* (gong), and leaves of a shrub called *emme*. All these ingredients, as will be seen from a careful examination of the photograph, Fig. 27, are placed in an old brass bowl, in workmanship and ornamentation very like the

kuduo (bowls), which will be briefly described later.¹ All these objects had been dyed a deep red colour by pouring over them a concoction made of the powdered bark of a tree, (called by the natives *adwino*,) mixed with eggs. This dye is known all over Ashanti as *esono*, and is a substitute for human blood, for in olden times this fetish was washed with blood. In those days, when a man was to be executed the Gyabom was set upon his knees, while his head was cut off by cutting through the spinal column at the nape of the neck. This was to prevent the *sasa* (revengeful spirit) of his victim from returning to wreak vengeance on his executioner or upon the king who had ordered the execution.

A human sacrifice, (one of the very few exceptions to the rule that human sacrifices were only made with the idea that the spirit so released might be set free to serve another human spirit), was occasionally made upon the Gyabom fetish. My informant told me how he had, only twenty years ago, seen a child sacrificed upon this very fetish. His body was cut open from the throat down to the abdomen, the intestines pulled out, the sides of the body folded back, and the corpse laid face down upon the *suman*, which thus became saturated with its blood. The jaw-bones of a person executed, later to become the perquisite of the executioner, were always left a few days upon this *suman* to drive away any possible *sasa* hovering about them.

The chief took about forty-five minutes to dress and change into his robes of state, and this interval was filled by the old drummer, Osai Kojo, talking on his two *ntumpane* drums, and telling all who could understand their language the history of that particular division.

I have given elsewhere in this volume an account of the talking drums and of the drum language, and I shall here quote only a few verses of what the drums were saying on this occasion at B—. It must, of course, be understood that I did not follow at the time one-tenth of what they were recounting. I later spent many weeks with the old drummer, working out syllable by syllable, and tone by tone, what is here given in an English translation only.

¹ Chap. XXV.

The Drums.

Oh, Divine Drummer, I am scarcely awake and have risen up,
 I, the Ashanti porcupine chief's drummer,
 I am scarcely awake,
 I have made myself to rise up,
 I am about to sound the drum.
 If you have gone elsewhere and I call you,
 Come;
 The fowl has crowed in the morning,
 The fowl has awakened and crowed,
 Very early,
 They are addressing me and I shall understand.

He then called upon the spirit of the cedar-tree and of the elephant, parts of which had gone towards the making of the composite drum. The following verse is a variation of that used at Mampon.

There are swamps, swamps, swamps,
 Which can swallow up the elephant.
 A river may lie small in the valley
 Between great hills.
 But it flows on for ever and ever.
 If you (spirit of the elephant) have gone elsewhere and I call
 upon you,
 Come.
 The fowl has crowed in the morning, &c.

He then called upon the spirit of the tree from which the fibre is made that holds down the tympanum of elephant hide.

I lay down, but I did not feel sleepy,
 I lay down but my eyes did not close,
 For three watches of the night.
 I think about my friends who have left me and are asleep,
 Amofo—Awuku—the cock—the old bird whose bones have
 grown strong.
 Fowl, good morning, good morning,
 The fowl has crowed, &c., &c.

The sky is wide, wide, wide,
 The earth is wide, wide, wide,
 The one was lifted up,
 The other was set down,
 In ancient times, long, long ago.

Supreme Sky God, upon whom men lean and fall not,
 We serve you.
 When the Sky God shows you anything
 May you profit by it.
 If we wish 'white' we get it,
 If we wish 'red' we get it.
 Him upon whom we lean and do not fall,
 God, good morning.
 You whom we serve upon a Saturday,
 Good morning.
 The fowl crowed, &c., &c.

He then discoursed about the herald 'with his black monkey-skin cap' who 'carries his own stool'. He continued in praise of the great god, Tano, to be described later.

The stream crosses the path,
 The path crosses the stream ;
 Which of them is the elder ?
 Did we not cut a path to go and meet this stream ?
 The stream had its origin long, long ago,
 The stream had its origin in the Creator.
 He created things,
 Pure, pure Tano [the great god of the Ashanti].
 Come here, Tano ;
 He devours rams,
 Ta, the great one, the powerful one
 Whom we serve upon a Monday.

And again :

He is coming, he is coming,
 Little by little, slowly, slowly.
 Be careful not to stumble,
 Little by little, slowly, slowly.
 You will come and sit down,
 Chief, you will come and sit down.
Kon ! Kon ! Kon !
 The great man, Osai's son, has sat down,
 The King has sat down,
 He who destroys towns has sat down,
 He who never forgives,
 He has taken a stool and sat down.

And so on, ending with :

The King is going to rise,
 The destroyer of towns is about to rise.

Rise !
Rise !
Rise !
Little by little !
Carefully ! Carefully !
Take care you do not stumble.¹
King, let us forward.

While the old drummer was drumming out the piece from which the above extract is taken, messengers were coming in from without bidding the chief to hasten as every one was waiting for him. To keep other people (of lesser importance than yourself) waiting is essentially the correct court etiquette in Ashanti.

At length the *omanhene* came out, dressed in one of the magnificent cloths woven on the primitive looms of the country, and heavily adorned with gold ornaments, his hands and fingers so bedecked with massive rings and bracelets that he could hardly lift his arms.

He stepped from his room closely followed by the two *kwa-dwumfo*, those wonderful minstrels who, on state occasions, drone like a hive of bees, into the king's ears, the names and deeds of dead kings and queens, as far back as their traditional history has any record.

He listened as they sang, with his heart full of sadness for the dead. The chief's head was bound with a fillet of velvet inlaid with gold. As he stepped out of the court-yard he was met at the 'palace' gate by young 'royals', bearing ostrich-feather plumes, state swords, the handles bound with leopard hide and gold leaf, children with tails of elephants, his linguists with gold and silver staves, his treasurers holding enormous bunches of iron keys, sandal-bearers carrying spare sandals, *mpintine* drummers and the *kyeniefafo* (umbrella-carriers) carrying the immense silk and velvet umbrellas under which, as these revolve and dance, he is escorted to his place and 'very slowly', 'very carefully', lest he 'stumble', he seated himself at the apex of a double lane, composed of these young 'royals' (young

¹ In olden times it was considered extremely unlucky for the King of Ashanti to stumble, should he do so, a slave was immediately killed on that spot. On great occasions an attendant lifted and set down his feet for the King, lest he should stumble and fall down.

princes of the blood) and other high court officials (see Figs. 21-3). Behind him stood the *kwadwumfo* (minstrels), his linguists, gun-bearers, executioners, &c., and a place was reserved on his left for the 'Queen Mother'.

The big talking drums were immediately behind him and beat out :

The King has sat down,
The destroyer of towns has sat himself down,
The powerful one, &c., &c.

Every one, from the youngest child present, knew exactly his place and fell into it without fuss and without an order. No women were among the select throng.

Down the dense lane of drummers, fan-bearers, and elephant-tail switchers marched one by one the sub-chiefs who had come to do homage to the stool; ¹ slipping their sandals from their feet and baring the left shoulder, they bowed from the waist, saying: 'Grandfather, good morning', and retired, making way for another. The chief acknowledged their salutations by the slightest possible inclination of his head, and with an expression absolutely impassive and unmoved.

After the local sub-chiefs, and his chiefs from outlying villages, who had come in for the ceremony, had all greeted their paramount chief, every one seated himself upon his stool in the place appointed to him, in virtue of his rank or position in the army.

The state officials called *fotosafo* or *petufo*, carrying bottles of rum and whisky, now marched up to the chief, who ordered the distribution among those assembled.

When all had partaken, the *twafo 'hene* (leader of the advance guard) came forward, and bowing, said: 'Grandfather, I thank you, you who bathe Bosommuru.'² Then all gave thanks.

The chief might not, however, retire to his room or eat any food until the Queen Mother came to greet him. This very important lady, fully conscious of her own proud position in the state, might in her turn possibly keep him waiting. She meanwhile had been performing her *Adae*, which will be described in the next chapter.

¹ I am informed that in olden times if the King were ill or absent obeisance would be paid to the empty stool itself.

² His *ntoro*; vide *Ntoro Exogamous Divisions*, Chap. II.

VI

RELIGION

A Queen Mother's Adae Ceremony.

THE Queen Mother of B—— is a personality and a celebrity in her own country. In one of the wars between B—— and J—— she had voluntarily sold herself as a slave to the mother of King Prempeh in exchange for some kegs of gunpowder which were used by the army. She is still the proud possessor of a cloth given her by her late mistress.

The following is a literal translation of what she told me concerning her *Adae*, which I did not myself witness.

My stool-carriers (who are women) prepare *eto* (mashed yams or plantains) and fish from the lake (Bosomtwe) and perhaps *otwe* (antelope) meat.

My head stool-carriers pour a little water upon the ground that the spirits may wash their hands.

I then take a spoon and place the *eto* upon each stool.

There are seven Queen Mothers' blackened stools in my stool house. Not every Queen Mother who dies has a stool blackened for her, for should a Queen Mother have a great number of such stools in her charge, and should war come and she should have to fly, they would be a great encumbrance and she might not be able to save them all.

As I place the *eto* upon the stools I address my ancestors, saying :

'Give me health and strength, and give health also to the King of B——, and to the people of B——, and to the women of B——, and to strangers in the town. May the women bear children and the men gain riches. Any one who wishes evil to the town may that evil fall upon him.'

Of the *eto* that remains, my stool-carriers will place some upon any rock near the A—— river. When asked the reason for this, she said : 'Any stone or rock may after dark become the abode of a spirit.'

The meat is then placed upon the stools and wine is poured over them.

I then sit down and wait for the King to finish his *Adae*. The King may not go home until I have visited him, even should I delay for a long time. He will send for me, begging me to come quickly. When I go to him he gives me wine, and I first pour a little upon the ground, saying to the spirits :

'Health to the King,
Health to the Queen,
Health to the nation,
Let no bad thing come upon the town.'

No woman who has her menses may enter my stool house. If I were 'ill', my head stool-carrier would officiate for me. I do not eat any of the offerings placed upon the stools myself ; the children of the stool-carriers may do so. If any man or woman be impotent or barren, the remains of the offerings will enable them to beget or bear children.

VII

RELIGION

A Sunday Adae (Kwesidae) witnessed on the 4th September 1921.

THE following was the order of events which followed very closely those already described in connexion with the Wednesday *Adae* at the same place.

(a) Preparations made on the previous day (*adapa*).

(b) On the morning of the ceremony an old woman brought a pot of water, and standing outside the 'palace' waved it over her head, quickly inverted it, put it on the ground bottom upwards, and placed a stone upon it. This, I was informed, was to prevent any quarrelling or disagreement arising among those who attended the ceremony.

It will be seen elsewhere that this idea of a 'wave' offering is universally known throughout Ashanti.

(c) A plate of yams, cut up, not mashed, and known as *pusa*, is placed on the ground beside the blackened stools.

(d) Water is poured upon the ground outside the stool house by the head stool-carrier, with the words: 'Ghost Grandfathers, to-day is the Sunday *Adae*; receive this water and wash your hands.'

(e) The yams are placed upon the stools by the chief, the head stool-carrier pointing out and naming stools for him in turn.

(f) The remainder of the yams are taken outside and scattered on the ground with the words: 'Slaves of the stool-carriers of old, this is yours.'

(g) A sheep is carried in, the throat is cut as already described, with the words: 'Ghost Grandsires, to-day is the Sunday *Adae*, and I give you a sheep from my hands; do not let any bad thing at all come upon the town, and to him who wishes evil let it fall upon himself.'

(h) The blood is allowed to drip upon the floor.

(i) The sheep is carried outside and cut up, as previously described.

(j) The blood is brought inside, in a basin, and smeared upon the stools; the meat upon the skewers and the lungs are placed upon each stool.

(k) Rum is poured upon the stools.

(l) A bell is rung.

(m) The chief retires to dress, and the remainder of the ceremony proceeds as before, but is attended by many more chiefs from all outlying villages.

(n) About 4 p.m. the chief is called by the drums, which say: 'Grandfather, come quickly.'

(o) He again seats himself in the public place (*sadwa*), and palm wine is passed round.

(p) About 5 p.m. he entered his hammock (*apakan*) and was carried to a glade in the forest, where the ceremony described in Chapter XXI, 'Land Tenure and Alienation', took place.

This completed the ceremony. I was told that no bad news must ever be broken to a chief on an *Adae*, and that formerly any one doing so would be killed.

VIII

RELIGION

A Wednesday Adae Ceremony, witnessed on the 21st December 1921.

THIS *Adae*, while varying in certain interesting details from those already described, was conducted with practically the same rites. Owing to the fact that the proper stool house was at the time under repairs, the ceremony was held in a room in a court-yard of the *omanhene's* (chief's) palace, and this circumstance enabled me to obtain the photographs which accompany this account. These, I venture to think, are of special interest and value, as they depict scenes never before witnessed by a European, and by only a select few among the Ashanti themselves. I am greatly indebted to the *omanhene* for his permission to take them.

I was in attendance at the 'palace' before the *omanhene* made his appearance. The drums called *nkawiri*, *ampebi*, and *fasafokoko* were being sounded in the court-yard, and presently the chief made his appearance, coming from the *dabere* (rest chamber) accompanied by two very young *kwadwumfo* (minstrels), who were singing their mournful duet in his ears.

He sat down in the court-yard, while the stool-carriers went up the big flight of stone steps to the upper story of the palace to fetch down the blackened stools, which were temporarily lodged there. While we were waiting, a ceremony, having no connexion with the *Adae* itself, took place, and this I shall describe here.

It consisted of the chief 'administering fetish' (to use the phraseology of the native interpreter) to a priest who had had a lawsuit with his nephew and had lost his case. By reason of the former's special position—as a priest—it was feared he might be tempted to retaliate on the nephew by soliciting the power of his god against him. The *omanhene* and his elders had therefore decided that he should go through the ceremony of *abosom*

nom, lit. 'drinking the gods'. A small bottle called *abosom toa* (the gods' phial), containing the liquid to be drunk, was produced. This water is generally made potent by having been poured either over a god or gods or possibly over a stool or some other article having special properties as being the shrine of some spirit, human or divine; in the former case to invoke the power of the god, in the latter the assistance of the spirit of the dead. A little rum was added to the contents of the bottle. The mixture was then poured into a cup made by twisting cleverly together leaves of a tree called *adwin*.¹ The priest, who was to drink, now advanced his right foot and upon top of it the Mkwankwa chief placed his left foot. The priest then spoke as follows:

'*Se Fagyase a ware me yi, se nye die obeka akyere me na me ka, na se me de odo, me de otan, me de ka nkontomposem biara a, abosom yi a me re nom yi n'kum me.*'

'As Fagyase (his god) is wedded to me,² and if what he (i. e. the god) says is not what I shall tell, and if I make love or if I make hate the excuse for any falsehood, may the gods I am drinking slay me.'

The Mkwankwa chief then raised the cup of leaves three times to the priest's lips, until he had drained all the contents. A bell was rung over the man's head while he was drinking. The priest was then given a glass of rum. The chief who had administered the draught, said: *Se wanka nokware a, abosom yi nkum wo!* ('If you do not speak the truth may these gods slay you!'). The priest replied: 'I swear the great oath that I shall speak the truth.' He was quivering from head to foot during the whole of this ordeal, which now ended.

Eight blackened stools were then carried past us, some upon the nape of the neck, others held in front, of the stool-carriers. Most of them had bells attached to 'the ears', as the little knobs under the wings of the seat are called. They were carried into the *patom* or room with three walls, and arranged leaning

¹ Later, some seven days' journey from M—— I found this same leaf used for a similar purpose and also employed as one of the ingredients used in the making of shrines for the gods.

² Priests and priestesses talk of being 'wedded to', and consider themselves 'the spouses' of their gods.



FIG. 28. Greeting the spirits of ancestors at an *Adae*



FIG. 29. The sacrifice—held on the shoulder of an attendant

upon their bells, and beneath the oldest stool—that of a woman, the first ruler of the clan—was spread a piece of elephant hide.

The *ntumpane* (talking drums) now beat out.

<i>Osai bra,</i>	Osai ¹ come,
<i>Osai Bonsu bra,</i>	Osai Bonsu come,
<i>Osai ma woho meneso.</i>	Osai make yourself to arise.

The chief now rose up and, followed by the blowers upon elephant horns, and the drums called *prempéh*, *nkawiri*, and *fasafokoko*, proceeded to the compound where the ceremony was to take place. He mounted the two steps leading to the open room where the stools were arranged, slipped his sandals from his feet, bared his left shoulder, and stooping over the stools spoke some words I could not catch, but which would almost certainly be a morning salutation to the spirits (see Fig. 28). He then sat down. The dear old Queen Mother, whose noble and kindly spirit has since joined those ancestors she that day came to honour, came in, greeted the spirits in like manner, and sat down beside her brother.

The court officials now began to assemble, heralds with colobus monkey-skin hats with gold disks in front, sword-bearers with gold-hilted state swords, 'linguists' with rods covered with gold and silver leaf, executioners with bandoliers of leopard skin filled with little knives, the stool-carriers with their curiously-cut hair, and the *sodofo* (cooks). The chief, the Queen Mother, and other officials all now stood up and bent over the stools, the chief holding a glass containing rum from which he poured a few drops upon each stool, speaking the following words (see Fig. 29):

'*Nana Asiama Nyankopon nsa ni, wo ne mpanyimfo ngye nsa yi nom, ma me 'nkye, mo ma me ne mpanyimfo mmu 'man yi yiye, mo ma asomdwiye mm'ra 'man yi ne abrofo ntem.*'

'Grandmother Asiama² (who came) from the Sky God, here is wine, do you and the ancient ones receive this wine and drink; permit me to have a long reign, make it that I and my councillors rule this people well, let there be peace between the white men and this nation.'

He and the Queen Mother then each sipped a little of the spirit.

¹ The name of the paramount chief.

² The first ruler of the Beretuo clan whom tradition says came from the sky, her name appears again in the drum history of Mampon.

The sheep was now carried up the steps to where the chief stood ; he stabbed its throat with a pen-knife, and it was held above each stool so that a little blood flowed upon them. It was then carried below, held head downwards, its throat cut, and the blood collected in a bowl, being stirred all the time by the hand of one of the stool-carriers (see Fig. 30): The blood was next smeared over the stools by the stool-carriers (see Fig. 32), and while this was being done the sheep was cut up, having been laid upon a wooden door (see Fig. 31). The different parts of this sacrifice were put into separate bowls. The sheep's head was placed in front of the centre stool. Some pieces of meat were now passed up to the chief, who, holding them in his right hand, waved them three times over the heads of the assembled people, and then placed a piece upon each stool, saying the following words :

' *Mpanyimfo, Asiama Nyankopon mungye 'guan yi nni, ma me'nkye, mo ma man yi nye yiye, mo no nye basa basa.*'

' Ancient ones (and you) Asiama (who came from) the Sky God, receive this sheep and eat, permit me to have a long reign, let this nation prosper, do not let it act foolishly.'

He then poured some rum upon the ground in front of the centre stool (see Fig. 33) and then upon all the stools.

All the while the *kwadwumfo* (minstrels) were droning the names and attributes of each dead ruler.

This completed the ceremony ; then we all rose and went outside, leaving the blackened stools with the head of the sacrifice in front, upon which rested two rods, gold and silver (see Figs. 34 and 35). One of the stool-carriers remained alone in attendance. The pile of crumbling stools with the offerings upon them, the head of the sacrifice, the curious angular fan belonging to the Queen Mother, seen in the corner, and the solitary attendant sitting as if carved out of black ivory, formed one of the most impressive sights I have ever been privileged to witness.

The usual reception was now held in public outside the ' palace ', the chief, the late Queen Mother, and myself occupying the raised platform where all came to do homage to their King. The minstrels were again standing behind us, singing the sad story of the dead in whose honour we were assembled.



FIG. 30. The scene in the court-yard

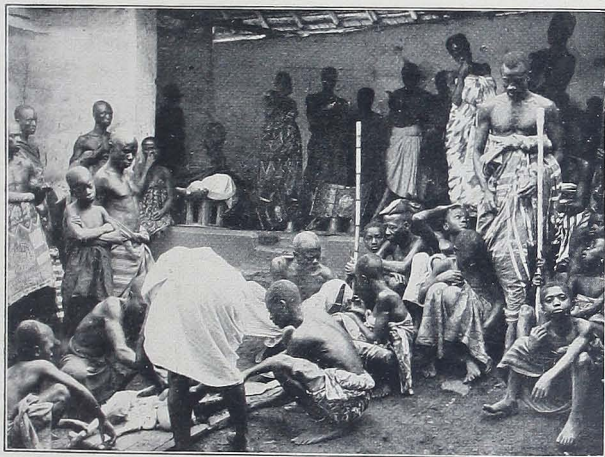


FIG. 31. The sacrifice being cut up



FIG. 32. The stool-carriers smearing the blood of the sacrifice upon the stools

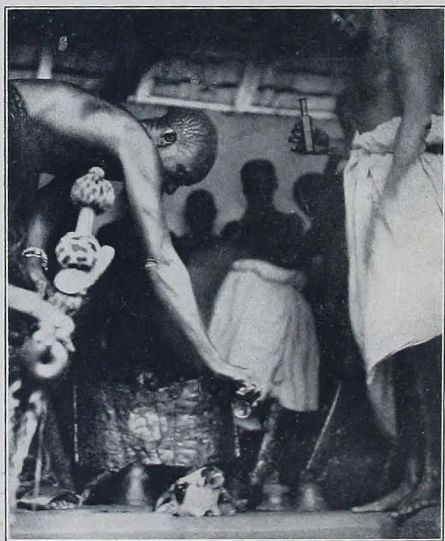


FIG. 33. The chief pouring out a libation in front of the central stool

IX RELIGION

A Brong Adae Ceremony.

THE *Adae* now to be described differs very considerably from those I attended at B—— and at M——, accounts of which have just been given.

This ceremony was witnessed at Tekiman, a town some seven days' journey, on foot, north-west of Coomassie and situated in the Brong country of Northern Ashanti.

The Brong are, in my opinion, undoubtedly a branch of the Akan stock, to which the Ashanti and the Fanti belong. They will be proved, I believe, upon further investigation, to be either the residue of a single migration from the north-west (the remainder of whom passed on southward, becoming the Ashanti proper) or just possibly a later migration of the same people, coming from the same direction as the first, all being driven—by causes at which we can now only guess—from the open lands of the north into the dense forest region that now lies between the fringe of the Sahara and the sea.

The Fanti again, I consider, are either a much later migration of these Brong—who passed round or through the earlier migration which had remained in Ashanti proper—and settled near the coast and became Fanti; or—more likely still—they are a branch of the first migration which peopled Ashanti, passed on to the coast, and severed connexion with their kinsmen. Much later, and almost within historical times, they were joined by a second wave of their people; of this we have an authentic record both in Fanti traditions and in those of the northern Brong.

The Brong were later conquered by the Ashanti and became vassals of the great Ashanti Confederacy. I have prefaced the account of the custom, now to be described, by this very brief note, because I wish to make it clear that I consider the similarity in Brong customs and language to those of Ashanti,

is not due to their conquest by the latter, but rather to the fact that these peoples sprang from a common stock.

If this view is correct, then Northern Ashanti, hitherto untouched by the anthropologist and hardly opened up to the European, should be the ideal ground upon which to study Akan customs and beliefs.

As it is not intended, however, in the present volume, to deal with the historical records of Ashanti, I must pass on to describe the ceremony under consideration.

*Account of a Wednesday Adae, witnessed at Tekiman
in the Brong Country on the 10th May 1921.*

The Wednesday *Adae*, called, as we have seen, *Wukudae* or *Kupadakuo* in Ashanti proper, is, though also known by these names among the Brong, generally called by them *Muruwukuo*.

The Brong do not appear to celebrate any Sunday *Adae*. The day before their Wednesday *Adae* they call *Adapa*, as in Southern Ashanti.

The *Muruwukuo* falls upon the same Wednesday as a *Wukudae* falls in Ashanti proper—a particularly suggestive fact—and it falls once every forty-two days. I had often noticed this commonly recurrent cycle, or forty-two-day divisions of time. The Ashanti call this period *adaduanan*, lit. forty days.

One day I overheard one of my men saying that in olden times, when the King of Ashanti was in doubt as to any date for a festival, he always referred to the Brong, who were the keepers of the king's calendar, so to speak. This led me to ask about it, when I discovered that time was reckoned in periods of forty-two-day cycles, every day of which had a particular name, each day in this period coming round again forty-two days later.

The following are the names of each of these forty-two days. It will be noticed that they consist of the commonly used Ashanti names for each of the seven days of the week, with a prefix. This in each case drops back one day each week, becoming prefixed to the name of the day immediately before that day to which it applied the previous week.

I have not yet been able to discover just what these prefixes

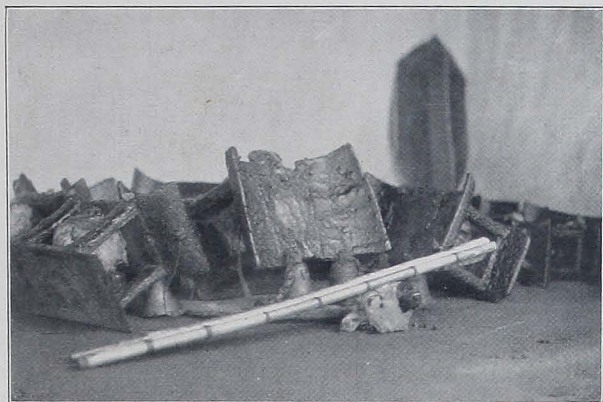


FIG. 34. The spirits are left to eat and drink



FIG. 35. The guardian of the blackened stools

mean, except in one case, the prefix *fo*, which may be translated 'festival' or 'holy' or 'lucky'.

Commencing our cycle with a *foda* (a holy day), say with a *fo*-Monday, and running through the whole cycle, we have (in each case the first syllable is the prefix, and the second the ordinary Ashanti name for that day of the week):

1. *Fo-dwo* = *Fo*-Monday.
2. *Nwuna-bena* = *Nwuna*-Tuesday.
3. *Nkyi-wukuo* = *Nkyi*-Wednesday.
4. *Kuru-yao* = *Kuru*-Thursday.
5. *Kwa-fie* = *Kwa*-Friday.
6. *Mono-mene* = *Mono*-Saturday.
7. *Fo-kwesi* = *Fo*-Sunday.

(Each of the prefixes, it will be noted, now falls back one day.)

8. *Nwuna-dwo* = *Nwuna*-Monday.
9. *Nkyi-bena* = *Nkyi*-Tuesday.
10. *Kuru-wukuo*¹ = *Kuru*-Wednesday.
11. *Kwa-yao* = *Kwa*-Thursday.
12. *Mono-fie* = *Mono*-Friday.

(And again each prefix falls back one day, and the previous week's *mono*-Saturday now becomes,)

13. *Fo-mene* = *Fo*-Saturday.

The following Friday, the nineteenth day, will be *Fo-fie*; the Thursday following that, the twenty-fifth day, *Fo-yao*; the Wednesday following, the thirty-first day, *Fo-wukuo*; the thirty-seventh day, *Fo-bena*; and finally on the forty-third day, *Fo-dwo*, from which we started, will again have come round, and the whole cycle begin once more.

This supplies the explanation—in part at least—why the *Adae* and many other ceremonies, in connexion with birth, death, &c., are repeated in forty-day (really forty-two-day) cycles.

The ceremony witnessed on this occasion was, I was informed, an unusually quiet and inconspicuous affair, owing to the fact that almost all the able-bodied members of the community had gone to collect snails (*ko nwa*).²

¹ Sometimes also known as *Kurudapakuo*.

² These snails, of which there are several edible kinds, are spitted upon

On the *Adae* morning, the old head priest of the god Tano Kese and the elders left in the town went along to the *omanhene's* 'palace' and saluted the chief, after which we all paid a visit to the Pantheon where the shrines¹ of Ta Kese and other gods—to be enumerated later—were kept. We were preceded by the chief's 'white' stool, with bells hanging from the 'ears' (see Fig. 36).

The uncovered shrines of the gods were all ranged along the low ledge running round the sides of the room, with the shrine of Ta Kese—the head god—high above the others, on the altar. I shall describe in more detail the inside of this temple when describing the Ashanti gods in another chapter.

We all sat down inside this room. Including the *omanhene* and the chief priest, there were only some half-dozen persons present. No palm wine or any other offering was made. The chief said that if the people had not been away, wine would have been given, and the gods asked for life, health, children, food, good hunting for the hunters, and good profits for the traders. The remainder of the wine would have been drunk by those present, after which he, the *omanhene*, would have held a reception at which he would have danced.

On this occasion, after sitting before the uncovered shrines for a few minutes and conversing on general topics, we all left the temple.

About 5 p.m. the small drums called *borobi* (hung over the shoulder and beaten with two sticks) called us again to the chief's 'palace'. Again only a few persons were present, the *Gyase* chief, the two old 'linguists', the *omanhene*, myself, and several of my companions, who had accompanied me from Southern Ashanti.

A small low door on the right-hand side of the chief's compound was opened, and disclosed a very small room upon the

wooden skewers, about three feet in length, and tied up in bundles of twenty skewers called *nwakyem* when they are worth from 20s. to 30s. a bundle. They are smoked on racks over a fire.

¹ I shall use the word 'shrine' throughout this volume to designate those receptacles, generally a brass pan with its contents of herbs, &c., which may become the habitat or is at any rate looked upon as the potential abode, of a divine (not a human) spirit. In all such cases the word hitherto used by the native interpreter and the European is 'fetish', a word which I shall use in one sense alone. See Chap. IV.



FIG. 36. Preceded by the chief's 'white' stool

floor of which, but resting upon a long board, were seven blackened stools. In front of each stool had already been set a little pile of boiled yams, plantains, and ground nuts, and upon a very small low table was an old metal teapot, containing water, and two dishes covered over with plates, which I was told contained 'food'.

The *Gyase* chief now held a calabash of palm wine, and one of the 'linguists' held an empty calabash at the foot of each stool, while wine was poured into it by the *Gyase* chief, who said the following words :

'*Tekyia Kwame nne Muruwukuo wo nana Yao Kramo nsa mu nsa ni, wagyee anom, ma wagyina n'akyiri akyigyina pa, osere wo kyere, osere wo akwahosan, kuro yi nkwaso, mma ne marima nkwaso.*'

'*Tekyia Kwame* (one of the dead Kings of Tekiman), to-day is *Muruwukuo* (Wednesday *Adae*), here is wine from the hand of Yao Kramo (the chief of Tekiman), may you accept it and drink, and may you stand behind him with a good standing. He begs you for a long reign, he begs you for long-continued health, life for this town, life for the women and men.'

Upon reaching the seventh and last stool the calabash was replenished and the wine again poured into the second calabash, with the words :

Ta Kora wo die ni o.

Ta Mensa wo die ni o.

Obo Kyerewa wo die ni o.

Ati Akosua wo die ni o.

'*Ta Kora* (the great god of the Ashanti),¹ this is yours. *Ta Mensa* (another name for the god *Ta Kese*), this is yours. *Obo Kyerewa*, this is yours. *Ati Akosua*, this is yours.

We now all went out again into the court-yard and joined the chief. It will have been noted that he took no part in the ceremony in the stool-house, and did not even come inside. We all sat down, and the wine, that had been poured into the large calabash and offered to the ancestral spirits and to the gods, was passed round, the two linguists drinking first (see Fig. 37).

After sitting for a little, and after some general conversation,

¹ An account of this god is given in Chaps. XV—XVIII.

we all set out for the Ta Kесе temple, preceded by the chief's stool-carrier carrying his 'white' stool.

Here the old head priest awaited us and led us into the room where the shrines of the gods reposed.

Since morning the raised altar upon which the chief god's (Ta Kесе's) shrine rested, had been draped over with a white cloth which completely covered the two shrines of the gods next in order, Ta Kobina and Ati Akosua.

The brass basin, or shrine, of Ta Kесе was uncovered but tied round with a coloured silk handkerchief. Upon the smooth top of the ingredients which formed the contents of the pan were reposing five eggs. Against the raised altar itself were resting three elephant tails, one *afona* (state sword), and the two rods of the 'linguists', which they placed there as soon as they entered the Pantheon (see Fig. 38).

The walls of the room, like the altar, were draped with white *kente* cloth and Manchester brocades. All the shrines of the lesser and lower-graded gods stood uncovered on the low ledge running round the room. Several blackened stools—of departed priests—were at the end of the room opposite the altar. As each person entered he said to the priest :

'*Obosomfo maha 'o.*' 'Man of god, greetings.'

The *omanhene* now handed a pot of wine to his linguist, who in turn handed it to the priest with the words :

'*Nne Muruwukuo, nana Yao Kramo se ne nsam nsa a ore be fwe Tano anim ni.*'

'To-day is *Muruwukuo*, Grandfather Yao Kramo (the chief) says that here is wine from his hand which (he gives) that he may look upon the face of Tano.'

The wine was then poured from the pot into a calabash, and the priest filling his mouth with it sprayed it against the wall, saying :

'*Abanmu Ta Kесе Birimpon, nne Muruwukuo, wo nana Yao Kramo se ne'nsa mu nsa ni, osere wo nkwa, osere wo ahooden, osere wo amanno, osere wo akwahosan ; kuro yi nye yiye, mmawofo nwo mma, mmarima nwo mma ; ye pe sika, yanya bi ; wo mma a beko hahane mu be ko fa nwa benya bi benfa mera, ma ye nya bi nni yanya bi nton nto ntama nfura.*'

'Ta Kесе Birimpon (whose temple stands in the quarter of

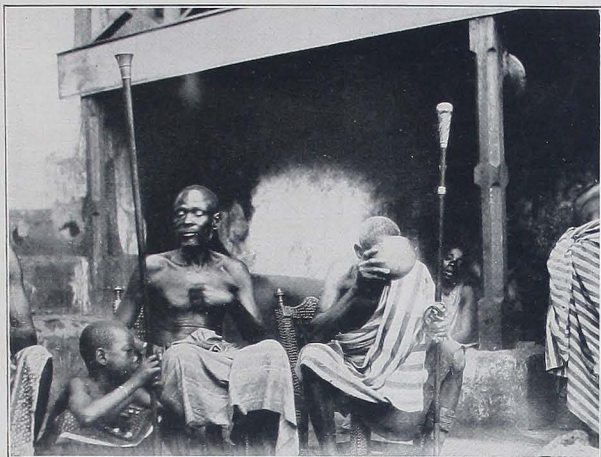


FIG. 37. The two 'linguists' drinking wine after the ceremony in the stool house



FIG. 38. The altar and shrine of Ta Kese

the town known as) Aban, to-day is *Muruwukuo*, your grandchild Yao Kramo says here is wine from his hand; he begs you for life, he begs you for strength, he begs you for love of his people, he begs you for continuing health; may this town prosper, may the bearers of children bear children, and the males beget children; when we seek for wealth let us get some; as for your children who have gone to the forest in order to get snails, grant that they get some to bring, grant that we get some to eat and some to sell that we may buy cloths to cover ourselves.'

In Fig. 38 may be seen a small hole at the foot of the altar, and into this the priest poured the wine.

Following this offering was one of wine, given by the 'linguist' as his own offering. This the priest again sprayed from his mouth, saying:

'*Ta Kese Birimpon, wo nana ne Kwesi Ntwi* (the 'linguist') *ode nne Muruwukuo na ne' nsam nsa ni, osere wo nkwa . . . ope sika a, onya bi; ne nkurofo nkwaso; mma no nya' Boroni amane; mma no mfom Yao Kramo; Oboroni yiko wuran a, onya 'sono nkum, ma ye nya bi nni.'*

'*Ta Kese Birimpon* (the god), your grandchild is Kwesi Ntwi; he says that to-day is *Muruwukuo* and that this is an offering of wine from his hands; he begs you for life, &c., &c.; when he seeks for money let him get some; life to the people of his village; do not let him get into trouble with the white man; do not permit him to offend (his chief) Yao Kramo; when this white man goes to the forest, permit that he kill an elephant that we may have something to eat.'

The wine was poured out at the foot of the altar, as before. What was left was handed round and all sipped a little. We remained seated for a few minutes and the conversation was general, but conducted in subdued voices. The death of the poor fellow, who had fallen upon his spear, which I shall mention later, was discussed. I was asked about my hunting and also why I was interested in their gods, and why I did not, like other white men, say they were bad and foolish things to be burned and cast away.

Shortly after we all dispersed. The food at the foot of the blackened stools would later, so I was informed, be given to the stool-carriers' children.

Thus ended what I was told was a particularly quiet *Adae*. It is of course just possible that, owing to the absence of certain persons, some of the formalities and rites may have been omitted or altered.

The interesting point to notice is the mingling of the propitiation of ancestral human spirits with the worship of non-human spirits—the gods.

This concludes the account of these *Adae* ceremonies, and I propose, in my next chapter, to deal with other aspects of ancestor propitiation, not connected with *Adae* rites.

X

RELIGION

The Sacred Grove at Santemanso.

SOME miles from the town of B——, and a little to the left of the main motor road to Coomassie, stand a few square yards of clearing in the forest marking the site which the Ashanti perhaps hold to be the most hallowed spot in all their territory.

'Since you have been permitted to behold the place, you have seen all we have to show you,' I have had said to me time and again by old Ashanti men and women, meaning that nothing remained of such significance and sacredness.

At this spot, Ashanti myth declares, the first human beings, belonging to certain of their ruling clans, came forth from the ground,¹ and settling near by, increased and multiplied, learned to use fire and other arts, till eventually, compelled by increasing numbers, they scattered and became the clan or 'blood' from which the rulers of the united nation later chose their kings and queens.

Myths and traditions are strangely substantiated in some respects by visible proofs. In the vicinity of this spot is an area of dense primaeval forest. The keen observer will note there are no clearings and no cocoa-trees, and if the mounds through which every now and then the motor road cuts, are minutely examined, they will be found not to be ant-hills but 'kitchen middens' from which project fragments of ancient pottery in which I found many neolithic instruments. The

¹ In many parts of Ashanti is to be found a tradition that the forebears of certain clans came forth out of a hole in the ground. There is a spot near Nkoranza and another near Wenki in North Ashanti, where large funnel-shaped holes are pointed out as being the spot where a particular clan's ancestors came forth in the early dawn of the world. Holding, as I do, that the Ashanti are a people from the North and not the indigenous inhabitants of the country they now occupy, I believe that they have adopted these myths from an indigenous people whom they met in the forests of their adopted country. Bosman, writing more than two hundred years ago, says, 'Having asked who were their ancestors . . . others on the Gold coast would persuade us that the first men came out of holes and pits.'

forest around for miles is dotted with these mounds, and the whole of this area along the banks of the Asuben River must, at some remote period, have been the site of a great settlement, larger by far than any Ashanti towns or villages of the present day. No one is permitted to cultivate the soil or clear the forest at this place.

On the first occasion upon which I was privileged to visit the sacred grove I was guided to the spot by the *okyeame* (spokesman), the *osene* (herald),¹ a little hunchback, and Abena Firi, the dear old Queen Mother—the custodian and priestess of the sacred grove—and several other elders from the little village of Asubengya.

The first thing that struck me was the reverence and the awe exhibited by my companions. Sandals were removed and left behind on the path, shoulders were bared, my Ashanti clerk was asked to remove his boots, and I was politely asked to take off my helmet, which, as the forest afforded a dense shade, I was glad to be able to do.

We followed a path which crossed the European-made road and eventually came upon a little clearing, planted with *summe* (*Costus sp.*) shrubs and containing an ancient wild-fig tree, at the base of which were eight pots buried up to their rims in the soft leaf mould. The Queen Mother would tell me nothing on this occasion, as she said she must first consult the chief and elders at Asubengya.

I recollect thinking, as I retraced my steps from the spot, that possibly the sites of some of our own minsters and cathedrals were chosen in unconscious obedience to dim and ancient traditions connecting them with the long-forgotten worship of prehistoric times.

A week elapsed before I was again taken to the grove. The interval I spent living in a little mud hut, near the Queen Mother's village, talking to her and the old man Kobina Wusu in the evenings, and making friends with the old folks in the

¹ This little man and I had become great friends since one day, when on meeting him for the first time, I had greeted him in Ashanti with 'Good morning, O herald, who drinks first of the wine cup'. (I had hazarded a guess at his profession, as in olden times hunchbacks were usually heralds.) His amazement was delightful to behold and he became my staunch friend and advocate among his villagers. It is such trifling incidents that make things easy for the anthropologist.

village. During this time I was told the tradition of the grove and the reason of its sanctity.

Here in Oxford as I write, the tale may seem like some children's fairy story, but it was otherwise in the environment where I first heard it, and as it was told me by the old Queen Mother in the presence of the chief (the leader of the left wing of the Ashanti army), old Kobina Wusu, the little hunchback herald, and other grey-beards.

The names given here of the dead forbears of the clan were not given me with the rest of the story because the day that it was recounted was not a Monday or Tuesday, the only days upon which it was permissible to mention them. When later, on the day permitted for their recitation, I was told these sacred names, all present stood up and the men bared their shoulders and slipped their sandals from off their feet. (And yet, I have read somewhere that reverence is unknown among this people.)

Here, then, is the story of the grove in the Queen Mother's own words :

' Very long ago upon a certain Monday night ¹ a worm bored its way up through the ground and was followed by seven men, several women, a leopard, and a dog.² The names of these men and women I cannot repeat save only on a Monday or a Tuesday.'

(These were later given me, and were as follows :

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Adu Ogyinae. | 5. Kusi Aduoku. |
| 2. Opoku Tenten. | 6. Ankora Dame. |
| 3. Adu Kwao. | 7. Odehye (royal) Adjewa Sabene. |
| 4. Agyapon Tenten. | |

And of the women there were :

1. Takyuwa Brobe.
2. Aberewa (lit. old woman) Noko.
3. Aberewa Samante.
4. Aberewa Musu.
5. Abrade Kwa.)

¹ *Nkyidwo* was the word she used, which I took down at the time without knowing to what it referred. It will be seen that it is a particular day in the forty-two day cycle still kept up among the Ashanti (Brong) of the far north of Ashanti. See Chap. IX.

² Dogs, until quite recently, were not allowed to be kept at Asubengya.

' All these people, with one exception (Adu Ogyinae), were distracted by the new and strange sights that they saw around them, and their eyes roved wildly about in fear.

' Adu Ogyinae laid his hands upon them one by one and soothed them.

' By Wednesday they had begun to build huts, but while so engaged a tree fell upon Adu Ogyinae and killed him. That is the real origin for the great oath of Ashanti, the *wukuda* oath.¹

' The dog went away and brought back fire in his mouth, food was laid upon the fire, and the dog was fed with this (as an experiment), and as it grew fat, men came to eat cooked food.

' The first of our ancestors settled at Nampansa, where the soil is very red (now the site of the kitchen middens mentioned above).

' The men and women who came from the ground were of the Aduana blood clan, with its six sub-divisions Atwae, Abrade, Ada, Amoakwade, Amanwere, and Nyampasakyi. The Owoko (Oyoko), the clan that was later to sit upon the stool of Coomassie, also came up from the ground at Santemanso.'

The Queen Mother then went on to tell how Odomankoma (the Creator) on his journey about the earth 'making things' met these people already settled here, a feature which recurs in the myths of other clans, so that apparently certain mortals are supposed to have been already upon earth when the Creator of things was walking about at his work.

She continued: 'The Creator (Odomankoma) took one of our ancestors with him as his "linguist", and we had his staff up to the reign of Kakari, when it was lost. The eight pots you saw in the forest are for the men and women of our clan who came up from the ground at that spot. The King of Ashanti always sent a cow, once every year, to be sacrificed at that spot, but he was never allowed to go there in person. Even when King Prempeh was being taken away by the English (1896), once he had crossed the Asuben river, he was bade to cover his head.'

¹ For a note on oaths see *Ashanti Proverbs*, pp. 129-31, where I have briefly sketched the idea underlying the swearing of an oath, as a means of removing a dispute from the sphere of possible private settlement, and securing a trial *in judicio*. I hope to go much more deeply into this subject in some future work.

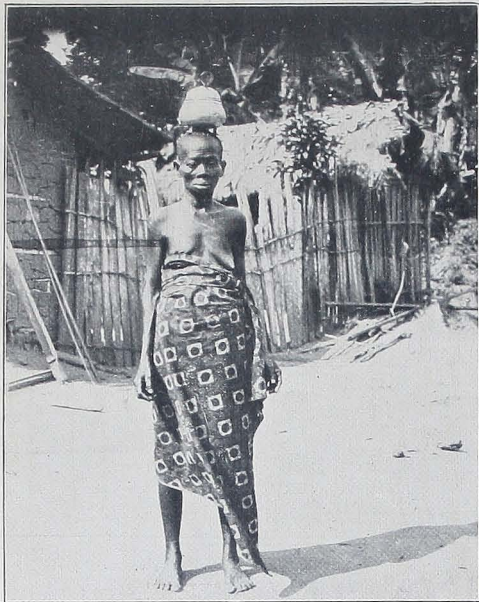


FIG. 39. Setting out for the sacred grove



FIG. 40. The approach to the sacred grove

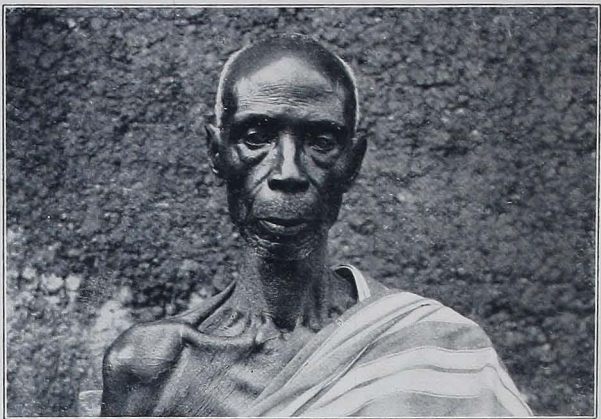


FIG. 41. Kobina Wusu



FIG. 42. The chief pouring out the wine into the pots

Hereupon the old man, Kobina Wusu, who had been following every word of this story, quoted an Ashanti proverb which ran: '*obi nfwe n'akyi kwan*' ('no one looks backwards down the path on which he has come').

That is briefly the myth connected with the grove.

How the Aduana and Owoko clans split up, the latter spreading north and founding Kokofu and Coomassie, eventually becoming the ruling clan, does not concern us here. I will pass on now to describe the rites witnessed at the grove on Monday the 12th December 1921. We all assembled at the few huts which formed the settlement (Asantemanso), where the Queen Mother lived. Here we met several other very old women, one of whom was carrying the brass vessel (*kuduo*) upon her head into which the pieces of the sacrifice were later to be placed (see Fig. 39). Some of these old women, I was told afterwards, were priestesses of a local god, Ta Kofi. We set off, following the narrow path leading from Santemanso to where it met the main motor road; crossing this we again picked up the path on the other side of the road.

Here our way was barred by a device which in olden times was as impassable as any physical barrier. Above the path, about six feet up, had been stretched a creeper, and upon this split sticks had been fixed, like a washerwoman's pegs, only longer (see Fig. 40). This is called in Ashanti *mma* (lit. do not pass), and was used as a warning that no person without authority must pass that way, the penalty formerly being death.¹

When we reached this spot, the Queen Mother sent back about twenty of the people who had followed us from the village (mostly youths and boys). The remainder of us proceeded under the *mma*, and down the path, till we came to the clearing beneath the fig tree, where the eight little pots stood. The Queen Mother and the women wheeled to the left of the tree, the *omanhene* (chief), Kobina Wusu (see Fig. 41), and the rest of us turned to the right, and sat down opposite to each other and a few yards apart, with the little cluster of pots between. Two sheep that had been brought with us were tied to the trees behind—one of these may be seen in the

¹ This sign was also used, I was informed, to shut off the quarters of the women in the King of Ashanti's 'palace'.

photograph (Fig. 43). The glade was so dark that it was not possible to secure any good instantaneous photographs, but those I took are reproduced here because of their particular interest.

Lying beside the pots was a small moss-covered stone which the chief, upon my inquiring about it, told me was called *nokwabo*, lit. the truthful stone. It had, he said, been brought from Coomassie and presented by King Osai Bonsu, the elder, just before he went on his expedition against Gyaman (c. 1800), together with a slave.

One of the very old women with the Queen Mother now came forward and took up a position just beside the pots, whereupon we all stood up. The Queen Mother scooped out a small hole in the ground, close to the eight pots. Amma Amoako then repeated the names of the ancestors, males and females (whose names have been already given), suffixing to each the word *kwa*.¹ As each name was said the Queen Mother repeated it. I was later informed that in the old days it was considered a capital offence to make a mistake in the order in which these names were repeated, or to repeat them at all upon any day other than a Monday or a Tuesday, or to recite them wantonly, i. e. except upon a 'ceremonial occasion' or with the 'permission of the chief and elders'.

After the joint recitation of the names, the ceremony commenced. I had had no information as to what was going to be done, and the rites now to be performed came as a complete surprise. The Queen Mother of Asantemanso had very lately been married—for the third time—I was told. It was the custom that any one who should marry her should make a sacrifice to the spirit ancestors (and just possibly some other non-human spirit, though this point is not yet clear to me) in the grove. The offering, as will be noted in the speech made to the spirits, is called *ayedie*. Now this is the word used for the presents that a bridegroom brings to the parents or other person who has the right of giving a girl in marriage, and its use in this context is very significant.

The chief now rose up. He bared his shoulder, and standing

¹ Cf. the *Drum History of Mampon*, p. 416, foot-note, where this word is used in connexion with the names of kings, in the nature it would appear of a title.

with his feet out of, but upon, his sandals, took a glass of rum, and first allowing the little hunchback herald to sip a little, leaned over the pots and spoke as follows while one of the two sheep was held across the shoulders of a man who stood beside him as he spoke (see Fig. 42) :

' *Santeman Kobina nsa ni o, w'adworaoma nne Dwo: wo 'yere ne Ofiri, na Pensan afa no aware, na wanfa w'ayedie amere wo nti, na wo ma ye mienu so na fom tim'. Nne Pensan de oguan, ode nsa ne ntama de abere wo, ye mienu nkwaso, me Agyeman nkwa so, mma m'aso nsi, mma m'ani nfura, mma me kote nwu, Asanteman nkwaso, Aban nkwaso, Oboroni nkwaso. Ma Pensan ne ne 'yere nwo mma. Yen a ye wo ha nyina nkwa so. Mo be gye 'guane yi adi ne nsa yi anom.'*

' Santeman Kobina, here is wine, by your kindness to-day is Monday ; your wife is Ofiri, and Pensan (the bridegroom) has taken her in marriage, but because he did not bring the marriage gifts to you, you caused them both to fall sick. To-day Pensan has brought a sheep, and wine and cloth for you : let them both have life ; life for me, Agyeman, do not let my ears become closed, do not let my eyes become covered over, do not let my penis die. Life to the Ashanti nation, life to the Castle (the Government), life to the white man ; permit Pensan and his wife to bear children ; life to all of us here present. Receive this sheep and eat, and this wine and drink ' (see Fig. 42).

The drums which had accompanied us, here spoke, but what they said I could not make out (possibly to tell people that the spirits were drinking). The chief poured some of the wine from the glass, first into the little hole that the Queen Mother had dug, next upon 'the truthful stone', and last of all upon the ground, this last for Bohyemo, the leopard, 'the son of Santeman', as I was later informed.

The first sheep was now brought forward, held very firmly by several men by the legs and the muzzle—to prevent it crying out—when the chief pressed a small pointed knife into its throat, saying as he did so the following words :

' *Santeman Kobina, gye 'guan di. Ohema ne ne 'kunu nkwa so, ye ye biribiara a enye yiye. Mma Pensan nka se " Me be ye den ? " Mma Ohema nka se, " Me ko ye den ? " "*

' Santeman Kobina, receive (this) sheep and eat ; life to the

Queen Mother and her husband; whatever they do may it be well. May Pensan (never) have to say "what *shall* I do?" May the Queen Mother (never) have to say "what *must* I do?"

The blood was allowed to drip into each of the little pots in turn, then over the 'truthful' stone, and finally into the hole. One of the men present, Dansu by name, cut the sheep's throat, the blood being collected in a brass basin. The carcass was placed on some leaves that had been collected, and laid upon the ground near the stools where the chief and I had been sitting. The sheep was cut up amid a perfect pandemonium, every one trying to make conversation all the time and to talk at the top of his voice, no one paying the least attention to what any one else said. I asked the chief why such a noise was permitted, and his reply was that they were not making enough, and that I should just hear the noise when a cow is being cut up. From this answer and their conduct, I am inclined to believe that the noise was an intentional part of the rite. It certainly seemed to throw in sharp contrast the hushed voices and absolute stillness of all while other parts of the ceremony were in progress.

Many of the young 'royals', i.e. sons of the royal blood, kept snatching away little pieces of the meat as it was cut up, and were playfully switched with twigs by the elders; but they became such a nuisance that eventually the whole carcass was moved right up beside the pots, where none of the youngsters dared go, and here the cutting up of the meat was continued in peace, if not in quietness. Small pieces of the meat were given to the Queen Mother who placed them in the *kuduo* (little brass vessel). Using a brass spoon, she then transferred the pieces, a spoonful at a time, from the *kuduo* to each of the eight pots in turn, and she also placed a spoonful in the hole and upon the stone. One spoonful was handed over for the chief, and this he would take home, have cooked, and eat. The head of the sheep was laid beside the pots, the remainder of the meat being divided. A piece of calico (twelve yards) was now produced. Pieces were torn off this and fastened round the fig tree and several other trees and creepers growing near this spot (see Fig. 43), the remainder of the cloth being shared between the Queen Mother and the men who had fastened the strips upon the trees. The chief here—in answer to my question—said that

who had reached the sanctuary was handed over to his master, the latter had to swear the great oath that his life would be spared.

There were, however, certain capital offences the penalty for which could not be avoided by fleeing to the grove. These were :

(a) Committing adultery with any wife of the King of Coomassie, Kokofu, Juaben, or with any woman of the Blood (the Owoko blood).

(b) Murder.

(c) Cursing the king or, worse, his ancestors; this terrible offence is euphemistically known as *hyira ohene*, lit. blessing the king, to avoid even using the expression for to curse.

(d) Invoking the power of a god or superhuman spirit to kill the king, known as *bo 'hene dua*, lit. 'to club the king with a stick'. In all such cases, however, before this culprit could be handed back for punishment, the King of Ashanti would send a cow, a *soa* weight of gold dust (6s.), a white cloth, rum, fowls, eggs, and rice to the chief of Asubengya. These gifts were taken to the sacred grove and the chief would address the seven forbears of the seven clans, saying :

'The offence that so and so has committed is one forbidden by your law. The Ashanti king has brought you these gifts that the culprit may be returned to him for punishment. The Ashanti King has done you no wrong, only this culprit, therefore let no harm come upon the Ashanti King, as you know the laws that you yourself made demand death as the penalty of the crime.' The rum is then poured upon the fig tree which is draped with white cloth. The cow is killed and portions put into the little pots.

This sanctuary is still in use to-day, in a minor sort of way, and is sought by people seeking redress for the mitigation of the sentences of a chief's tribunal.

Taboos of the Grove

To spill human blood is absolutely taboo at Santemanso. Moreover, every woman in the little village where the Queen Mother and custodian of the grove reside, as soon as the menstrual period is about to begin, must leave the village and

go and live for a week at Asubengya or some other neighbouring village. Neither is any one allowed to die here; when any one becomes very ill, he or she is removed from the village.

I cannot be quite certain about the Santeman Kobina, who is invoked during the ceremonies I have described. He is not a human spirit, i. e. not one of the ancestral spirits. All were emphatic upon that point. My clerk, who was an educated Ashanti, informed me it was 'the spirit of nature', and perhaps he was near the mark, for the old Queen Mother said it was the soul of the leaves and the trees and of the earth at that spot. At Santemanso no cultivation, i. e. breaking of the soil, is permitted on a Tuesday (Kobina means that the day of observance of this spirit is Tuesday).