FIG. 45. . . . led by his sandal bearers . . .

FIG. 46. A sheep was now carried forward to where the men were mixing the earth and water

XI

RELIGION

A Ceremony witnessed while the Burial Quarters of the Kings and Queens of M—— were undergoing Repairs.

The *Barim dan* or burial rooms of those of the royal blood at the town of M—— having fallen into disrepair, steps were taken to have the building overhauled. In olden times, I was informed, it would have been necessary that the whole work of repairs should be completed between sunrise and sunset of one day, and that with this end in view all the materials required would be collected and in readiness. In this instance this had not been done, but the work of plastering the floors and walls was completed in a single day. The *Barim dan*, outside and inside, looked just like an ordinary Ashanti house. I had passed and repassed it for years without any knowledge as to its significance. Inside, the courtyard was surrounded upon all four sides by small rooms with only three walls, the fourth side being open to the yard. These rooms were perfectly bare of furniture or other utensils, and under the floor of each, I was told, was buried a former ruler of the clan.

The morning the ceremony took place was opened by drumming upon the *ntumpane* or talking drums the history, names, and attributes of the dead kings and queens of this particular clan. Every one was in mourning, that is, wearing the russet brown *kuntonkuni*, dyed cloths, and all had fasted. The chief left his ' palace ' headed by a long cavalcade of court officials, carrying state chairs and led by his sandal-bearers and young treasurer carrying an enormous bunch of iron keys upon his head (see Fig. 45). The *omanhene* was closely followed by the *kwadwumfo* (minstrels), who sang to him the names of his ancestors. The whole townspeople seemed to have collected and to be working like droves of ants, and carrying water and red earth into the courtyard, whilst others inside were mixing the ' swish ' (water and earth). These people

I was told, were ' royals ', i. e. those of the ruling clan and also children of the chief. The old Queen Mother was busy assisting them. A sheep was now carried forward to where the men were mixing the earth and water. The *omanhene* pricked its throat and the blood was allowed to mingle with the clay. The sheep was then carried round into every one of the small rooms, and a little blood allowed to fall upon the floor of each. Gold dust was next sprinkled over the ' swish ' by the chief and Queen Mother, who took it from a little paper packet they carried. The Queen Mother, as may be seen in Fig. 46, carried a *kuduo* (brass vessel) upon her head, and this, I was told, contained water. I did not, however, see her use it. The room and yard were now so densely packed with people that, once having taken up a position, it was almost impossible to move about, and I could only observe what was going on in my immediate vicinity. It was impossible also to hear what was said amid the babel of voices, mingled with the noise made by the drummers and horn-blowers assembled inside the yard.

Dozens of people (men) now set to work to plaster and beat down the red clay (mixed with the blood, water, and gold dust) upon the floor of each room. While this was being done, the *omanhene* was smearing the foreheads of every one with the same mixture with which the floors were being plastered. This he did in the following manner : Smearing the fingers of his left hand with the red earth, and supporting the head and neck of the subject with his right forearm, he held the three fingers of his left hand against that person's forehead, who drew his head along the extended fingers and was marked with three parallel lines thus ≡ (see Fig. 47). A second sheep was now brought in and killed in the same way as the first. I do not know if any of the meat was eaten. I have reason to believe not, at least by adults. I was informed, and believe it to be correct, that in olden times human victims would have been sacrificed on this occasion—always with the clearly defined idea that the ghosts of such would go to attend the ghosts of these dead rulers, and not merely for the sake of wanton cruelty or blood lust.

The chief and Queen Mother now seated themselves in one of the rooms and rum was served out to all (see Fig. 48). Later the *omanhene* and his followers came out into the street and he

FIG. 47. The chief smearing the red clay upon his subjects

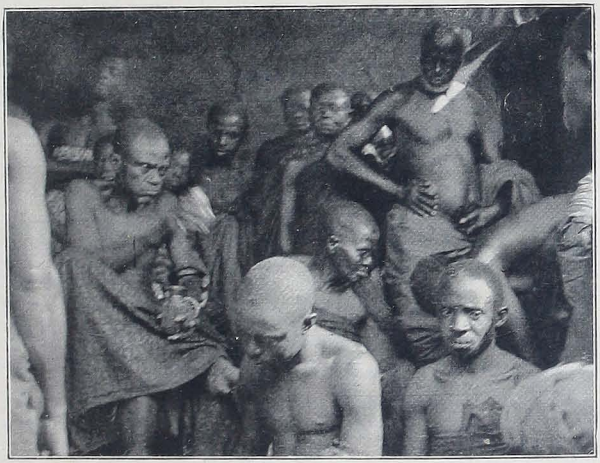


FIG. 48. Rum was served out

FIG. 49. He danced in person, holding a rifle in his hand

danced in person, holding a rifle in his hand, and receiving the encores of his court, which were signified by holding up the hands with the first and second and third fingers extended (see Fig. 49). Every one fasted throughout the whole day, and as a considerable quantity of liquor was consumed the effect of this showed on a number of people. Much of the intoxication noticed by Europeans on such occasions, and still more at funerals, is due to the fact that those participating have been fasting for long periods, so that even a little liquor soon goes to the head. Moreover, indulgence on such occasions only takes place after the solemn rites have been performed and after all the serious business of the day is over. The first part of these ceremonies is never seen by Europeans; these are performed in private and only a select body is admitted. The second and public ceremony any one passing may see. It is in the nature of a relaxation from the seriousness of what preceded it. The public, including Europeans, see only this side and are apt to look upon them as debaucheries. No people in the world is more cognizant of the evils of alcoholic excess than the Ashanti. In olden days, when a chief or king was sitting in council and hearing the suits of his subjects, should any envoy from another court arrive, and the wine cup be passed round to the guests, and partaken of by the councillors and judges, the court would be adjourned lest the wine should have caused the heads of the tribunal to be heated or less clear. Those who were present in Coomassie during the recent trial, before their own chiefs, of the miscreants who desecrated the 'Golden Stool', will never forget the sobriety and the dignity with which that case was conducted (see Figs, 103–5).

XII

RELIGION

The Baya *Ceremony, witnessed at Nsoko in Northern Ashanti on the 29th May* 1922.

I WAS lying very ill in the little rest house at Nsoko in the Brong country of Northern Ashanti when the chief sent his ' linguist ' to me to say that they were about to hold a ceremony of thanksgiving called *Baya*, at which offerings would be made to the *samanfo* (spirits of dead ancestors) for the rice crop of the previous season and a blessing asked for the next season's crop. I was informed later that a similar custom takes place annually at Abora on the littoral near Cape Coast,[1] and at Mampon in Central Ashanti is also held a rite called *Ye re to emo* (we are giving rice); so the custom is very widely observed. As I was feeling so ill at this time, I think it quite possible that I did not see everything that took place on this occasion, and that this account is therefore incomplete. For my present purpose, however, what is here recorded is sufficient to show that ancestral spirits are solicited to use their power in the interests of agriculture.

Inside the yards of both the chief's and the Queen Mother's compounds was one of the usual rooms with three walls only. On the slightly raised floor of each room was a platform (called *ase*) raised a few inches above the floor-level upon which were placed eating and drinking vessels for the *samanfo* (dead ancestors). At the chief's place, these consisted of thirteen little black pots and six broken bottles. I sat down beside the chief in the compartment opposite. An old woman and an old man, *barimfo* (attendants at the burial-places of the dead rulers), I was told, came in through the door leading into the compound carrying plates of rice, ground-nut soup, and water. These were portioned out among the pots and the water poured into the bottles, the old woman saying (see Fig. 50):

[1] It should be noted that Brong tradition has it that long ago some of their ancestors migrated from this region to the coast.

'*Nne Fodwo, nananom samanfo, mo me di mmo, ye hyira o afrehyia pa.*'

'To-day is sacred Monday; spirits of our grandsires come and eat rice, we invoke blessing for a good year.'

The rice remaining over was eaten, I was told, by children. The chief appeared to take no part in the ceremony.

I was carried straight from here to the house of the Queen Mother, where was a somewhat similar row of pots and bottles with the offerings already upon them. She and the other women in her compound had smeared their breasts, shoulders, and arms with white clay (see Fig. 51). I was told that a similar ceremony would be performed in every house in the village, but I did not verify this.

The ceremonies described in this and the preceding pages are only examples of outstanding occasions upon which the aid of ancestral spirits is invoked. One catches glimpses here and there, in everyday life and in almost every action of the social round, which show how near the living are to the dead and how constantly the dead are in the thoughts of the living.

The older Ashanti men and women never partake of food or drink without putting a morsel of the one and a few drops of the other in the ground for the *samanfo.*

When an Ashanti or one of his clansmen recovers from an illness he will say, *Me da samanfo ase,* 'I thank the spirits'.

In the ordinary business transactions they are in his mind. No transfer of land is valid or at least complete without the rum and wine, a demand which many a European has looked upon as a further proof of the insobriety of this people, but which is really to propitiate the spirit owners of the land.[1]

At the installation of a new chief, sacrifices are made to the spirits.

At the marriage of one of the royal blood, wine is poured upon the ancestral stools, with the words:

'*Gye nsa nnom, wo nana Asumasi wa ware, ne 'kunu abetu ne tiri nsa* (or *abagwadie,* as the case may be), *wo die ni, ne'nkwaso, aware a ore ko nye yiye owo mma, yenkye.*'

[1] See Chap. XXI, Land Tenure and Alienation.

'Receive this wine; your grandchild So-and-so has married; her husband had given his head wine (or marriage gifts). This is yours. Long life to them and may the union prosper, and when they bear children may they remain (upon earth).'

A priest will sometimes say to one whom he, the priest, has reason to believe is going to die, *Samanfo ye fwe fwe wo*, 'The spirits of your ancestors are seeking for you.'

When the late *omanhene* (paramount chief) of B—— was ill, a priest consulted by the family as to the cause is reported to have said that the spirits of the sick man's ancestors were annoyed because he, the *omanhene*, had been heard to say that he had done more for 'the stool' than they had ever done. In consequence, said the priest, the spirits were calling upon him to account for his words.

I have a note in my diary under the 5th September 1921 which is as follows:

'. . . to-day, when one of the wives of the chief called E. A—— died, a priest told me that she was always calling upon the name of her late husband, so he had at last sent for her to come to him.'

I was informed that a fire of *issa* logs was always kept alight in the palace of the King of Ashanti in the old days, and that this was for the *samanfo*.

Incest (using the term in the sense in which it is understood in Ashanti) was formerly punished by death, but may now be condoned by the blood of a sacrifice being poured upon the ancestral stools.

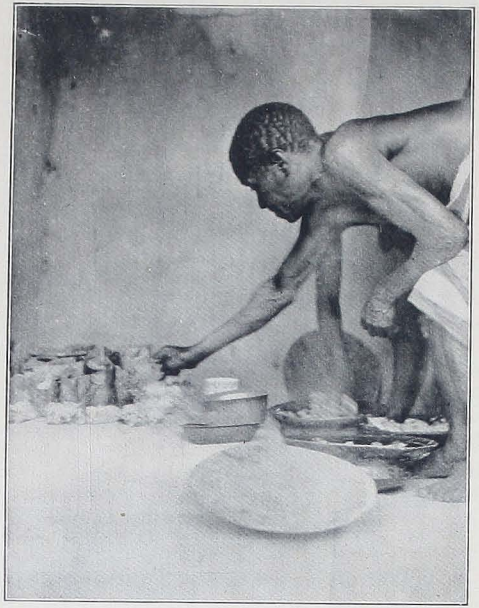


FIG. 50. To-day is *Fodwo* . . . spirits of our ancestors come and eat rice

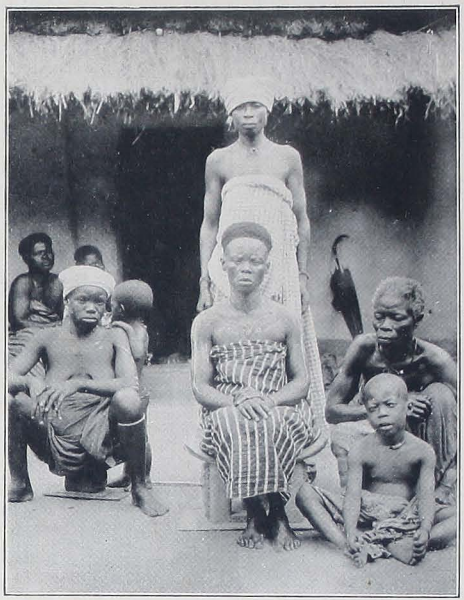


FIG. 51. The Queen Mother of Nsoko

XIII

RELIGION

'Nyame, the Supreme Being.

I HAD some years ago, taken a firm stand against a school of thought—the Ellis school—which denied that the conception of a Supreme Being in the West African mind, and His place in their religion, were due to any cause deeper or more remote than the influence of Christian missionary teachings.

The late Sir A. B. Ellis, our great authority upon this region, in his *Twi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa*, writes as follows:

'Within the last twenty or thirty years the German missionaries, sent out from time to time by the mission societies of Basel and Bremen, have made Nyankopon known to European ethnologists and students of the science of religion, but being unaware of the real origin of this god, have generally written and spoken of him as a conception of the native mind, whereas he is really a god borrowed from Europeans and only thinly disguised. . . . To the negro of the Gold Coast, Nyankopon is a material and tangible being, possessing legs, body, arms, in fact all the limits and the senses and the faculties of man. . . .

'For this reason no sacrifice was offered to him. . . . There were no priests for Nyankopon . . . consequently no form of worship for Nyankopon is established.'

I quoted the above extract in a previous work, and therein stated at some length that I wholly disagreed with the opinion and statements of Ellis upon this particular subject.[1]

Further research, embodying a much fuller investigation into Ashanti religious beliefs than was before possible, has only served to strengthen the opinion which I formerly expressed.

It is surprising to find that Ellis, who, considering his many difficulties in working with an interpreter, made such good use, on the whole, of his opportunities, was so greatly misled with regard to such an important question. He was, moreover,

[1] See *Ashanti Proverbs*, pp. 17–23.

a close student of Bosman, whom he constantly quotes, but he appears to have missed or ignored what the Dutchman wrote upon this subject more than 150 years before those 'German missionaries' ever set foot upon the Coast.

Bosman says:

'It is really the more to be lamented that the negroes idolize such worthless Nothings by reason that several amongst them have no very unjust idea of the Deity, for they ascribe to God the attributes of Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Invisibility, besides which they believe that he governs all things by Providence. By reason God is invisible, they say it would be absurd to make any Corporeal Representation of Him . . . wherefore they have such multitudes of Images of their Idol gods which they take to be subordinate Deities to the Supreme God . . . and only believe these are mediators betwixt God and men, which they take to be their Idols.'

How accurate in some respects Bosman's statement is will be clear from an examination of the religious ceremonies which are here recorded.

I have already stated that I am convinced that the conception, in the Ashanti mind, of a Supreme Being has nothing whatever to do with missionary influence, nor is it to be ascribed to contact with Christians or even, I believe, with ~~Mohammedans~~ Muslims. Surely those who find it incongruous that the West African 'Negro', who seems so backward in most things, should have so far progressed in religious development, forget that the magnificent conception of a one Supreme Deity was not the prerogative of minds which we commonly consider the greatest of old—those of the Greeks and the Romans, but was a conception of primitive people who lived after the Pyramids were built but before the advent of Greece and Rome—the Bedouins of the desert.

I believe that such a thought, so far from postulating an advanced stage in culture and what we term civilization, may well be the product of the mind of a primitive people who live face to face with nature, perhaps unclothed, sleeping under the stars, seeing great rivers dry up and yet again become rushing torrents, seeing the lightning from the heavens rending great trees and killing men and beasts, depending upon the rains for their own lives and those of their herds, observing that the

very trees and herbs and grass can only live if they are watered from the skies.

I can see no reason, therefore, why the idea of a one great God, Who is the Firmament, upon Whom ultimately all life depends, should not have been the conception of a people living under the conditions of the Ashanti of old, and I can see no just cause for attributing what we have come to regard as one of the noblest conceptions of man's mind, to dwellers in, and builders of, cities, and to writers and readers of parchments and books.

In a sense, therefore, it is true that this great Supreme Being, the conception of whom has been innate in the minds of the Ashanti, is the Jehovah of the Israelites. It was He who of old left His own dwelling above the vaulted sky, and entered the tent of dyed skins where was His earthly abode and His shrine, when He came down to protect the Children of Israel in their march to the Promised Land.

Again, there is nothing really incongruous or new in finding a belief in a Supreme Being side by side with 'multitudes of their Idol gods'.[1]

As will be seen presently, every Ashanti temple is a pantheon in which repose the shrines of the gods, but the power or spirit, that on occasions enters into these shrines, is directly or indirectly derived from the one God of the Sky, whose intermediaries they are. Hence we have in Ashanti exactly that 'mixed religion' which we find among the Israelites of old. They worshipped Jehovah, but they worshipped other gods as well. It was only later, after the reign of Solomon, when the Jews became a civilized people and a literary class arose, that Jehovah assumed a purer form and was recognized as the one and only God. The whole subject is one of absorbing interest; as the design of this volume is not, however, to dogmatize or theorize, but merely to state facts, I must pass on to these.

From the very fact that 'Nyame, the Sky God, is considered too remote to be concerned very directly in person with the affairs of man, and has delegated His powers to His lieutenants, the *abosom*, or lesser gods, it would perhaps be natural to expect that His worship, sacrifice, priesthood, and temples

[1] Bosman.

should be lacking, which is the view taken by Ellis in the extract just quoted. But it is hardly an exaggeration to say that every compound in Ashanti contains an altar to the Sky God, in the shape of a forked branch cut from a certain tree (Fig. 52) which the Ashanti call '*Nyame dua*, lit. God's tree.[1] Between the branches, which are cut short, is placed a basin, or perhaps a pot, and in this receptacle is generally to be found (besides the offering) a neolithic celt ('*Nyame akuma*, God's axe).

These altars to the Sky God, together with the figure of the man making the offering, are one of the constantly recurring designs on ancient Ashanti weights (see Fig. 126, no. 10). Beside these rude altars, are to be found, hidden away in remote corners of the older palaces, beautifully designed temples to the Sky God. One such is shown in the frontispiece of this volume, with an altar and one of the priests beside it.

Moreover, Ashanti proverbs abound in references and allusions to the Supreme Being. Here are a few chosen at random :

Asase terew, na Onyame ne panyin.

Of all the wide earth, the Supreme Being is the elder.

Wope aka asem akyere Onyankopon a, ka kyere mframa.

If you wish to tell anything to the Supreme Being, tell it to the winds.

Me a meda anyannya menhu Onyankopon na wo a wubutuw ho.

I who am lying sprawling on my back do not see the Supreme Being, how do you expect to, who are sprawling there on your belly ?

(This proverb is the *motif* of the Ashanti weight shown in Fig. 126, no. 2.)

Onyame ma wo yare a, oma wo aduru.

If God gave you sickness he also gave you medicine.

There are many more which space forbids me to quote, but they may be found in my *Ashanti Proverbs*. The drum language and the set pieces known to every drummer in Ashanti are full of allusions to the Supreme Being.

These constant references, in their proverbs, in this ancient

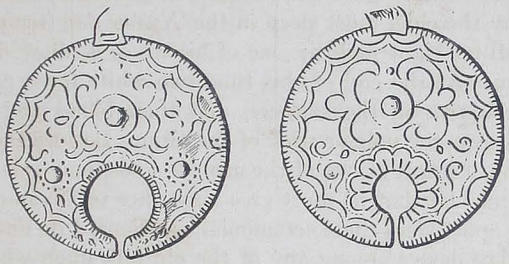
[1] The botanical name of which is *Alstonia Congensis*.

and now almost forgotten art of metal-casting, in the records of their drum language, and in ancient architecture, are proof, if further proof were necessary, that here is no new idea and no new and adopted exotic thought.

It will be seen later, when the shrines of the gods come to be described, that the dominant power in these is nearly always derived from some object taken from water, and that certain waters themselves are looked upon as holy.

The genealogical trees of the most famous gods, which are rivers or lakes, as will be seen later, show them as ' sons of the Supreme Being ', i. e. children of the Sky.

The gold and silver ornaments, in the form of crescent moons,



worn round the young priests' necks, have embossed upon them the sun, the moon, and the stars.

The priest seen in Fig. 52 was one of four, who are known respectively as :

1. *'Nyame boa me.* (God help me.)
2. *Fa ma 'Nyame.* (Take it and give to God.)
3. *'Nyame asem.* (God's word.)
4. *'Nyame adom.* (God's favour.)

Each wears hung round the neck the gold ornament (seen in the photograph, Fig. 52, and in the drawing) called *sika* and *dwete 'srane*, i. e. gold and silver moons. These priests, who are dedicated to 'Nyame for life, cut their hair in a peculiar manner, the head being shaved save for a patch on the sides and down the middle. White clay is then smeared in three lines on the bald patches. White lines are drawn in like manner on the centre of the forehead, down each cheek (reaching up to the crown of the head), on each shoulder, upper arm, and across

the chest. The lines are smeared with the fingers, and the following words spoken: *Nyankopon Kwame wo hyiri eni o*, 'God, Kwame—i. e. whose day of service is a Saturday—this is your white clay, life to our master'. *Eto* (mashed yams) are cooked once a year by the priests, and upon the day appointed (a Saturday) the chief will place a spoonful in the pan upon top of the forked branch, with the words: '*Me Nyankopon me sere wo nkwa, na me sere wo ahooden*' (My God, I pray you for life and I pray you for strength). A sheep is also killed and the blood allowed to fall upon the ground; pieces of meat are threaded upon the skewers seen projecting from the forks of 'God's altar', with the words: 'Here is a sheep I kill for you, take and eat and give me health and strength.' After this ceremony the chief must sleep in the '*Nyame dan* (temple of the Sky God) for eight nights; one of his wives is allowed to sleep with him. At the end of this time two white fowls are killed, their flesh put on the skewers, and their blood and feathers smeared over the pole or stick of the altar. Besides this annual ceremony, a priest of one of the *abosom*, gods, may tell the chief or any one else that he must give a sacrifice to 'Nyame.

Quite apart from these ceremonial occasions, I do not suppose that a day passes among any of the old folk upon which some little offering is not cast upon the roof of the hut or placed on the altar beside the door to 'the great God of the Sky' who is, 'of all the earth, the King and Elder.'

I shall presently proceed to describe rites in connexion with the lesser, but for all practical purposes, really, the far more important, gods. Their power emanates from various sources, the chief of which is from the great spirit of the one God, graciously delegated by Him, that the affairs of mankind may have attention given to them.

FIG. 43. The trees at the sacred grove being dressed in white calico

FIG. 44. At the ceremony

the fig tree was a famous sanctuary, and that any one sentenced to death who escaped there would be safe. I subsequently made fuller inquiries about this matter, and the subject will be referred to again later. All present now returned thanks to Pensan (the Queen Mother's husband), and this completed the ceremony.

A second ceremony immediately followed. The chief again standing over the pots, and holding a glass containing spirits, spoke as follows:

'*Santeman Kobina gye nsa nom: oguan 'so nni, nne Dwo na eye wo da a wo de didi, me fua oguane ne nsa na me de re ma wo, Oboroni nkwa so: Aban nkwa so, nne Aban na ye som no, mma bone biara mma Santeman yi mu, mma obiara mmo ne tirim po mma otuo nto da, mma me kote nwu, mma m'aso nsi, mma m'ani nfura, obawofo nwo ba. Asum'gyaman nkwa so, Santeman nyina nkwa so, Santeman nye yiye ma Aban.*'

'Santeman Kobina, receive wine and drink, here is also a sheep; to-day is Monday, and that is the day on which you eat; I hold this sheep and wine and give to you; life to the white man, life to the "Castle" (Government); to-day it is the "Castle" whom we serve; permit no bad thing whatever to come upon this people of Santeman. Let no one tie a knot in his head (i. e. plot) that the guns should ever go off. Do not let my penis die, do not let my ears become stopped up, do not permit my eyes to become covered over; let the bearers of children bear children. Life to the people of Asum'gye (Asubengya). Life to all the Ashanti nation, and may the Ashanti people work for the good of (lit. do good to) the Castle (the Government).'

He then poured some of the spirit into the hole in the ground, some upon the stone, and changing the glass over from his right to his left hand, he poured some upon the ground, saying:

'*Bohemo etwi a oto abenkum, ye re ma wo 'se biribi adi, na wo na wo bo Asanteman ho ahata, wo die ni.*'

'Bohemo, the leopard, who springs to the left,[1] we are giving your father something to eat, and you who shake the foliage around the Ashanti nation, here is yours.'

The second sheep, which was being supported upon the neck

[1] All Ashanti hunters will tell you that the leopard always springs from the left. The leopard in many parts of Ashanti is, if killed, accorded a funeral.

of one of the men—a stool-carrier I was told—while this was being said, was now brought forward and its throat pricked, blood being allowed to drip upon the stone, into the hole, and into the pots as before. The sheep was killed, cut up, and small pieces again placed inside the *kuduo* (the small brass pot). These fragments, I was afterwards told, consisted of three pieces each of the breast, liver, lungs, kidneys, intestines, stomach, hindleg, foreleg, neck, and root of the tail. The Queen Mother now lifted the pieces out of the *kuduo* with her brass spoon and placed some in each pot, on the stone, and in the small hole she had scraped out. A small piece of the breast of the sacrifice was now dipped into the hole by the Queen Mother, taken out again, and handed to the herald to carry home for the chief. It was put into the hole to get ' the spirit ', I was informed.

The remainder of the sacrifice was divided up as follows :

(*a*) The Queen Mother, foreleg, head, and skin.

(*b*) Chief and elders, hindlegs, the other foreleg.

(*c*) The ' linguist ' (spokesman), the testicles.

The small pieces remaining in the *kuduo* the Queen Mother and her household took home to eat. The offerings in the little pots had, I was informed, disappeared by the following day. The white cloths were left upon the trees. There was a certain spot near the grove for throwing away the contents of the intestines of the sacrifice ; the old woman, who had carried the *kuduo* from the village, showed the men where this was. On her return she demanded a piece of meat, and the photograph (Fig. 44) shows her in the act of passing a knife to some one who is to cut her a slice.

The above completed the ceremonies at the grove.

The *omanhene* and Queen Mother later gave me the following further information about the fig tree and the taboos observed in connexion with this sacred spot. If any person were sentenced to death for a crime or about to be killed at a funeral custom and managed to run away and catch hold of the fig tree, the life of such a person would, as a general rule, be spared, the person becoming a servant of the grove. Should the King of Ashanti, however, insist that such a one should be returned to him for punishment, then ' something would happen to the king before the year was over '. In other cases, before the person

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 (6*s*.), 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).

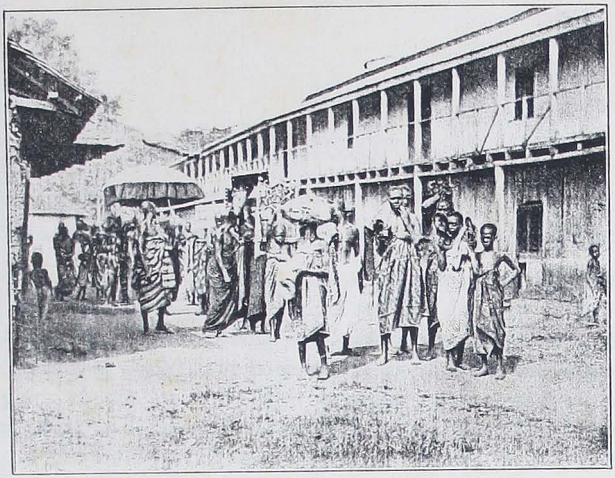


FIG. 45. . . . led by his sandal bearers . . .

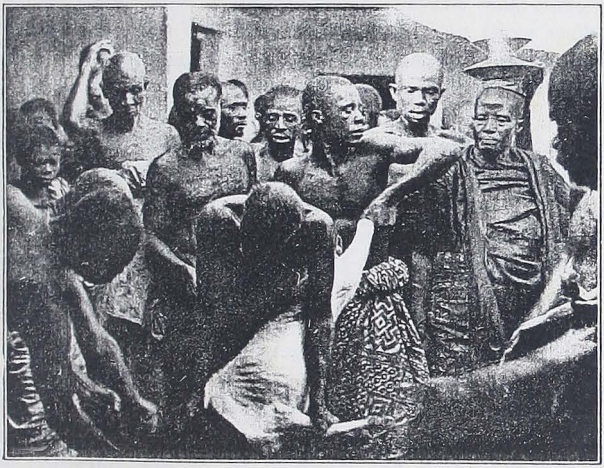


FIG. 46. A sheep was now carried forward to where the men were mixing the earth and water

XI

RELIGION

A Ceremony witnessed while the Burial Quarters of the Kings and Queens of M—— were undergoing Repairs.

The *Barim dan* or burial rooms of those of the royal blood at the town of M—— having fallen into disrepair, steps were taken to have the building overhauled. In olden times, I was informed, it would have been necessary that the whole work of repairs should be completed between sunrise and sunset of one day, and that with this end in view all the materials required would be collected and in readiness. In this instance this had not been done, but the work of plastering the floors and walls was completed in a single day. The *Barim dan*, outside and inside, looked just like an ordinary Ashanti house. I had passed and repassed it for years without any knowledge as to its significance. Inside, the courtyard was surrounded upon all four sides by small rooms with only three walls, the fourth side being open to the yard. These rooms were perfectly bare of furniture or other utensils, and under the floor of each, I was told, was buried a former ruler of the clan.

The morning the ceremony took place was opened by drumming upon the *ntumpane* or talking drums the history, names, and attributes of the dead kings and queens of this particular clan. Every one was in mourning, that is, wearing the russet brown *kuntonkuni*, dyed cloths, and all had fasted. The chief left his 'palace' headed by a long cavalcade of court officials, carrying state chairs and led by his sandal-bearers and young treasurer carrying an enormous bunch of iron keys upon his head (see Fig. 45). The *omanhene* was closely followed by the *kwadwumfo* (minstrels), who sang to him the names of his ancestors. The whole townspeople seemed to have collected and to be working like droves of ants, and carrying water and red earth into the courtyard, whilst others inside were mixing the 'swish' (water and earth). These people

I was told, were 'royals', i. e. those of the ruling clan and also children of the chief. The old Queen Mother was busy assisting them. A sheep was now carried forward to where the men were mixing the earth and water. The *omanhene* pricked its throat and the blood was allowed to mingle with the clay. The sheep was then carried round into every one of the small rooms, and a little blood allowed to fall upon the floor of each. Gold dust was next sprinkled over the 'swish' by the chief and Queen Mother, who took it from a little paper packet they carried. The Queen Mother, as may be seen in Fig. 46, carried a *kuduo* (brass vessel) upon her head, and this, I was told, contained water. I did not, however, see her use it. The room and yard were now so densely packed with people that, once having taken up a position, it was almost impossible to move about, and I could only observe what was going on in my immediate vicinity. It was impossible also to hear what was said amid the babel of voices, mingled with the noise made by the drummers and horn-blowers assembled inside the yard.

Dozens of people (men) now set to work to plaster and beat down the red clay (mixed with the blood, water, and gold dust) upon the floor of each room. While this was being done, the *omanhene* was smearing the foreheads of every one with the same mixture with which the floors were being plastered. This he did in the following manner: Smearing the fingers of his left hand with the red earth, and supporting the head and neck of the subject with his right forearm, he held the three fingers of his left hand against that person's forehead, who drew his head along the extended fingers and was marked with three parallel lines thus ≡ (see Fig. 47). A second sheep was now brought in and killed in the same way as the first. I do not know if any of the meat was eaten. I have reason to believe not, at least by adults. I was informed, and believe it to be correct, that in olden times human victims would have been sacrificed on this occasion—always with the clearly defined idea that the ghosts of such would go to attend the ghosts of these dead rulers, and not merely for the sake of wanton cruelty or blood lust.

The chief and Queen Mother now seated themselves in one of the rooms and rum was served out to all (see Fig. 48). Later the *omanhene* and his followers came out into the street and he

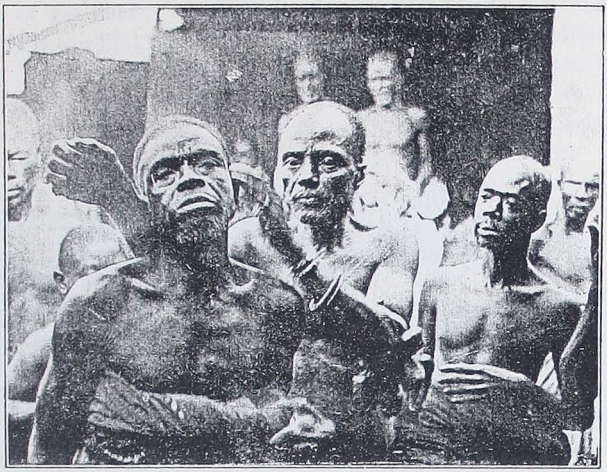


Fig. 47. The chief smearing the red clay upon his subjects

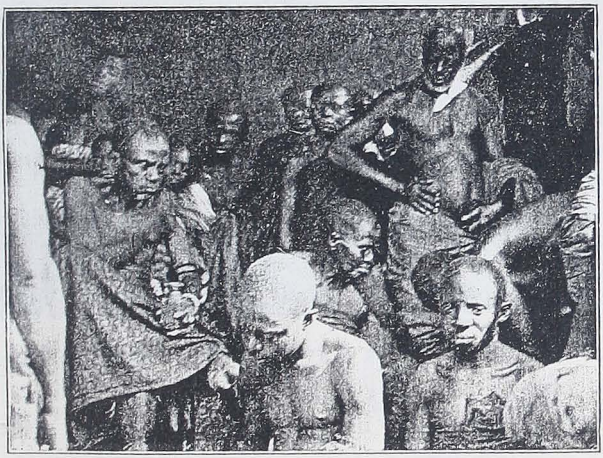


Fig. 48. Rum was served out

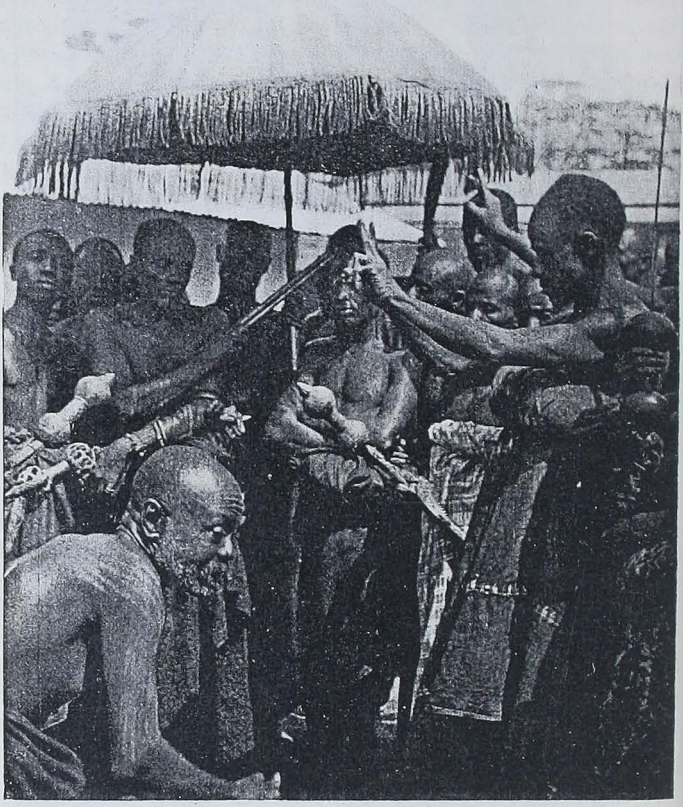


Fig. 49. He danced in person, holding a rifle in his hand

danced in person, holding a rifle in his hand, and receiving the encores of his court, which were signified by holding up the hands with the first and second and third fingers extended (see Fig. 49). Every one fasted throughout the whole day, and as a considerable quantity of liquor was consumed the effect of this showed on a number of people. Much of the intoxication noticed by Europeans on such occasions, and still more at funerals, is due to the fact that those participating have been fasting for long periods, so that even a little liquor soon goes to the head. Moreover, indulgence on such occasions only takes place after the solemn rites have been performed and after all the serious business of the day is over. The first part of these ceremonies is never seen by Europeans; these are performed in private and only a select body is admitted. The second and public ceremony any one passing may see. It is in the nature of a relaxation from the seriousness of what preceded it. The public, including Europeans, see only this side and are apt to look upon them as debaucheries. No people in the world is more cognizant of the evils of alcoholic excess than the Ashanti. In olden days, when a chief or king was sitting in council and hearing the suits of his subjects, should any envoy from another court arrive, and the wine cup be passed round to the guests, and partaken of by the councillors and judges, the court would be adjourned lest the wine should have caused the heads of the tribunal to be heated or less clear. Those who were present in Coomassie during the recent trial, before their own chiefs, of the miscreants who desecrated the 'Golden Stool', will never forget the sobriety and the dignity with which that case was conducted (see Figs, 103–5).

XII

RELIGION

The Baya *Ceremony, witnessed at Nsoko in Northern Ashanti on the 29th May* 1922.

I WAS lying very ill in the little rest house at Nsoko in the Brong country of Northern Ashanti when the chief sent his 'linguist' to me to say that they were about to hold a ceremony of thanksgiving called *Baya*, at which offerings would be made to the *samanfo* (spirits of dead ancestors) for the rice crop of the previous season and a blessing asked for the next season's crop. I was informed later that a similar custom takes place annually at Abora on the littoral near Cape Coast,[1] and at Mampon in Central Ashanti is also held a rite called *Ye re to emo* (we are giving rice); so the custom is very widely observed. As I was feeling so ill at this time, I think it quite possible that I did not see everything that took place on this occasion, and that this account is therefore incomplete. For my present purpose, however, what is here recorded is sufficient to show that ancestral spirits are solicited to use their power in the interests of agriculture.

Inside the yards of both the chief's and the Queen Mother's compounds was one of the usual rooms with three walls only. On the slightly raised floor of each room was a platform (called *ase*) raised a few inches above the floor-level upon which were placed eating and drinking vessels for the *samanfo* (dead ancestors). At the chief's place, these consisted of thirteen little black pots and six broken bottles. I sat down beside the chief in the compartment opposite. An old woman and an old man, *barimfo* (attendants at the burial-places of the dead rulers), I was told, came in through the door leading into the compound carrying plates of rice, ground-nut soup, and water. These were portioned out among the pots and the water poured into the bottles, the old woman saying (see Fig. 50):

[1] It should be noted that Brong tradition has it that long ago some of their ancestors migrated from this region to the coast.

'*Nne Fodwo nananom samanfo mo me di mmo ye hyira o afrehyia pa.*'

'To-day is sacred Monday; spirits of our grandsires come and eat rice, we invoke blessing for a good year.'

The rice remaining over was eaten, I was told, by children. The chief appeared to take no part in the ceremony.

I was carried straight from here to the house of the Queen Mother, where was a somewhat similar row of pots and bottles with the offerings already upon them. She and the other women in her compound had smeared their breasts, shoulders, and arms with white clay (see Fig. 51). I was told that a similar ceremony would be performed in every house in the village, but I did not verify this.

The ceremonies described in this and the preceding pages are only examples of outstanding occasions upon which the aid of ancestral spirits is invoked. One catches glimpses here and there, in everyday life and in almost every action of the social round, which show how near the living are to the dead and how constantly the dead are in the thoughts of the living.

The older Ashanti men and women never partake of food or drink without putting a morsel of the one and a few drops of the other in the ground for the *samanfo.*

When an Ashanti or one of his clansmen recovers from an illness he will say, *Me da samanfo ase,* 'I thank the spirits'.

In the ordinary business transactions they are in his mind. No transfer of land is valid or at least complete without the rum and wine, a demand which many a European has looked upon as a further proof of the insobriety of this people, but which is really to propitiate the spirit owners of the land.[1]

At the installation of a new chief, sacrifices are made to the spirits.

At the marriage of one of the royal blood, wine is poured upon the ancestral stools, with the words:

'*Gye nsa nnom, wo nana Asumasi wa ware, ne 'kunu abetu ne tiri nsa* (or *abagwadie,* as the case may be), *wo die ni, ne'nkwaso, aware a ore ko nye yiye owo mma, yenkye.*'

[1] See Chap. XXI, Land Tenure and Alienation.

'Receive this wine; your grandchild So-and-so has married; her husband had given his head wine (or marriage gifts). This is yours. Long life to them and may the union prosper, and when they bear children may they remain (upon earth).'

A priest will sometimes say to one whom he, the priest, has reason to believe is going to die, *Samanfo ye fwe fwe wo*, 'The spirits of your ancestors are seeking for you.'

When the late *omanhene* (paramount chief) of B—— was ill, a priest consulted by the family as to the cause is reported to have said that the spirits of the sick man's ancestors were annoyed because he, the *omanhene*, had been heard to say that he had done more for 'the stool' than they had ever done. In consequence, said the priest, the spirits were calling upon him to account for his words.

I have a note in my diary under the 5th September 1921 which is as follows:

'. . . to-day, when one of the wives of the chief called E. A—— died, a priest told me that she was always calling upon the name of her late husband, so he had at last sent for her to come to him.'

I was informed that a fire of *issa* logs was always kept alight in the palace of the King of Ashanti in the old days, and that this was for the *samanfo*.

Incest (using the term in the sense in which it is understood in Ashanti) was formerly punished by death, but may now be condoned by the blood of a sacrifice being poured upon the ancestral stools.

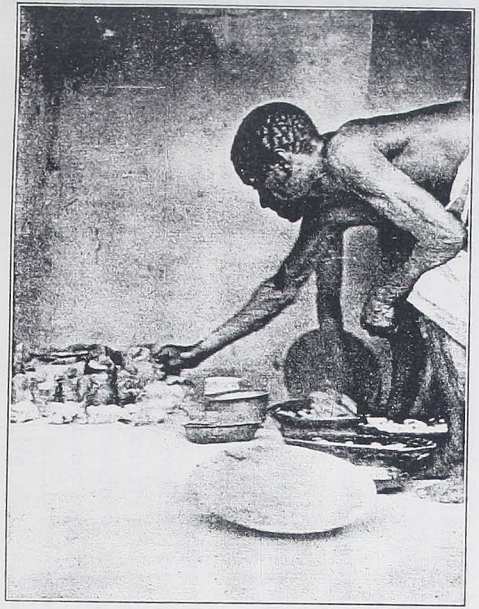


FIG. 50. To-day is *Fodwo* . . . spirits of our ancestors come and eat rice

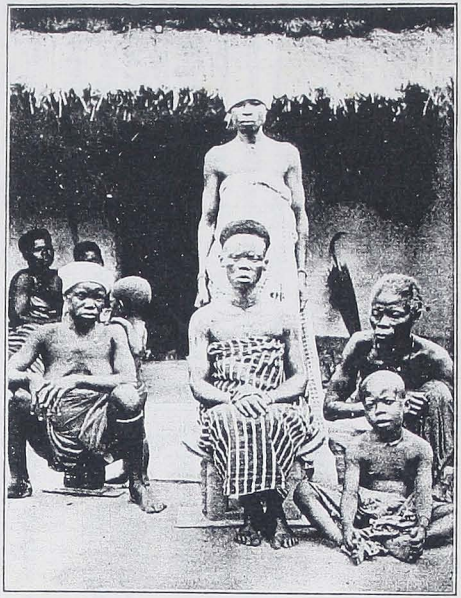


FIG. 51. The Queen Mother of Nsoko

XIII

RELIGION

'Nyame, the Supreme Being.

I HAD some years ago, taken a firm stand against a school of thought—the Ellis school—which denied that the conception of a Supreme Being in the West African mind, and His place in their religion, were due to any cause deeper or more remote than the influence of Christian missionary teachings.

The late Sir A. B. Ellis, our great authority upon this region, in his *Twi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa*, writes as follows:

'Within the last twenty or thirty years the German missionaries, sent out from time to time by the mission societies of Basel and Bremen, have made Nyankopon known to European ethnologists and students of the science of religion, but being unaware of the real origin of this god, have generally written and spoken of him as a conception of the native mind, whereas he is really a god borrowed from Europeans and only thinly disguised. . . . To the negro of the Gold Coast, Nyankopon is a material and tangible being, possessing legs, body, arms, in fact all the limits and the senses and the faculties of man. . . .

'For this reason no sacrifice was offered to him. . . . There were no priests for Nyankopon . . . consequently no form of worship for Nyankopon is established.'

I quoted the above extract in a previous work, and therein stated at some length that I wholly disagreed with the opinion and statements of Ellis upon this particular subject.[1]

Further research, embodying a much fuller investigation into Ashanti religious beliefs than was before possible, has only served to strengthen the opinion which I formerly expressed.

It is surprising to find that Ellis, who, considering his many difficulties in working with an interpreter, made such good use, on the whole, of his opportunities, was so greatly misled with regard to such an important question. He was, moreover,

[1] See *Ashanti Proverbs*, pp. 17–23.

a close student of Bosman, whom he constantly quotes, but he appears to have missed or ignored what the Dutchman wrote upon this subject more than 150 years before those 'German missionaries' ever set foot upon the Coast.

Bosman says:

'It is really the more to be lamented that the negroes idolize such worthless Nothings by reason that several amongst them have no very unjust idea of the Deity, for they ascribe to God the attributes of Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Invisibility, besides which they believe that he governs all things by Providence. By reason God is invisible, they say it would be absurd to make any Corporeal Representation of Him . . . wherefore they have such multitudes of Images of their Idol gods which they take to be subordinate Deities to the Supreme God . . . and only believe these are mediators betwixt God and men, which they take to be their Idols.'

How accurate in some respects Bosman's statement is will be clear from an examination of the religious ceremonies which are here recorded.

I have already stated that I am convinced that the conception, in the Ashanti mind, of a Supreme Being has nothing whatever to do with missionary influence, nor is it to be ascribed to contact with Christians or even, I believe, with Mohammedans. Surely those who find it incongruous that the West African 'Negro', who seems so backward in most things, should have so far progressed in religious development, forget that the magnificent conception of a one Supreme Deity was not the prerogative of minds which we commonly consider the greatest of old—those of the Greeks and the Romans, but was a conception of primitive people who lived after the Pyramids were built but before the advent of Greece and Rome—the Bedouins of the desert.

I believe that such a thought, so far from postulating an advanced stage in culture and what we term civilization, may well be the product of the mind of a primitive people who live face to face with nature, perhaps unclothed, sleeping under the stars, seeing great rivers dry up and yet again become rushing torrents, seeing the lightning from the heavens rending great trees and killing men and beasts, depending upon the rains for their own lives and those of their herds, observing that the

very trees and herbs and grass can only live if they are watered from the skies.

I can see no reason, therefore, why the idea of a one great God, Who is the Firmament, upon Whom ultimately all life depends, should not have been the conception of a people living under the conditions of the Ashanti of old, and I can see no just cause for attributing what we have come to regard as one of the noblest conceptions of man's mind, to dwellers in, and builders of, cities, and to writers and readers of parchments and books.

In a sense, therefore, it is true that this great Supreme Being, the conception of whom has been innate in the minds of the Ashanti, is the Jehovah of the Israelites. It was He who of old left His own dwelling above the vaulted sky, and entered the tent of dyed skins where was His earthly abode and His shrine, when He came down to protect the Children of Israel in their march to the Promised Land.

Again, there is nothing really incongruous or new in finding a belief in a Supreme Being side by side with ' multitudes of their Idol gods '.[1]

As will be seen presently, every Ashanti temple is a pantheon in which repose the shrines of the gods, but the power or spirit, that on occasions enters into these shrines, is directly or indirectly derived from the one God of the Sky, whose intermediaries they are. Hence we have in Ashanti exactly that ' mixed religion ' which we find among the Israelites of old. They worshipped Jehovah, but they worshipped other gods as well. It was only later, after the reign of Solomon, when the Jews became a civilized people and a literary class arose, that Jehovah assumed a purer form and was recognized as the one and only God. The whole subject is one of absorbing interest ; as the design of this volume is not, however, to dogmatize or theorize, but merely to state facts, I must pass on to these.

From the very fact that 'Nyame, the Sky God, is considered too remote to be concerned very directly in person with the affairs of man, and has delegated His powers to His lieutenants, the *abosom*, or lesser gods, it would perhaps be natural to expect that His worship, sacrifice, priesthood, and temples

[1] Bosman.

should be lacking, which is the view taken by Ellis in the extract just quoted. But it is hardly an exaggeration to say that every compound in Ashanti contains an altar to the Sky God, in the shape of a forked branch cut from a certain tree (Fig. 52) which the Ashanti call *'Nyame dua*, lit. God's tree.[1] Between the branches, which are cut short, is placed a basin, or perhaps a pot, and in this receptacle is generally to be found (besides the offering) a neolithic celt (*'Nyame akuma*, God's axe).

These altars to the Sky God, together with the figure of the man making the offering, are one of the constantly recurring designs on ancient Ashanti weights (see Fig. 126, no. 10). Beside these rude altars, are to be found, hidden away in remote corners of the older palaces, beautifully designed temples to the Sky God. One such is shown in the frontispiece of this volume, with an altar and one of the priests beside it.

Moreover, Ashanti proverbs abound in references and allusions to the Supreme Being. Here are a few chosen at random :

Asase terew, na Onyame ne panyin.

Of all the wide earth, the Supreme Being is the elder.

Wope aka asem akyere Onyankopon a, ka kyere mframa.

If you wish to tell anything to the Supreme Being, tell it to the winds.

Me a meda anyannya menhu Onyankopon na wo a wubutuw ho.

I who am lying sprawling on my back do not see the Supreme Being, how do you expect to who are sprawling there on your belly ?

(This proverb is the *motif* of the Ashanti weight shown in Fig. 126, no. 2.)

Onyame ma wo yare a, oma wo aduru.

If God gave you sickness he also gave you medicine.

There are many more which space forbids me to quote, but they may be found in my *Ashanti Proverbs*. The drum language and the set pieces known to every drummer in Ashanti are full of allusions to the Supreme Being.

These constant references, in their proverbs, in this ancient

[1] The botanical name of which is *Alstonia Congensis*.

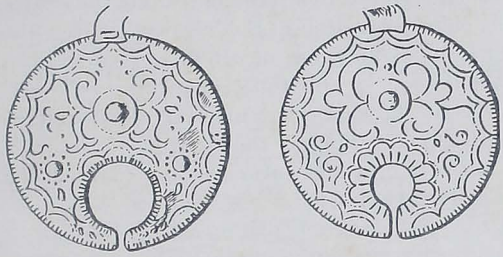
FIG. 52. *'Nyame dua*, altar to the Sky God

and now almost forgotten art of metal-casting, in the records of their drum language, and in ancient architecture, are proof, if further proof were necessary, that here is no new idea and no new and adopted exotic thought.

It will be seen later, when the shrines of the gods come to be described, that the dominant power in these is nearly always derived from some object taken from water, and that certain waters themselves are looked upon as holy.

The genealogical trees of the most famous gods, which are rivers or lakes, as will be seen later, show them as ' sons of the Supreme Being ', i. e. children of the Sky.

The gold and silver ornaments, in the form of crescent moons,



worn round the young priests' necks, have embossed upon them the sun, the moon, and the stars.

The priest seen in Fig. 52 was one of four, who are known respectively as :

1. *'Nyame boa me.* (God help me.)
2. *Fa ma 'Nyame.* (Take it and give to God.)
3. *'Nyame asem.* (God's word.)
4. *'Nyame adom.* (God's favour.)

Each wears hung round the neck the gold ornament (seen in the photograph, Fig. 52, and in the drawing) called *sika* and *dwete 'srane*, i. e. gold and silver moons. These priests, who are dedicated to 'Nyame for life, cut their hair in a peculiar manner, the head being shaved save for a patch on the sides and down the middle. White clay is then smeared in three lines on the bald patches. White lines are drawn in like manner on the centre of the forehead, down each cheek (reaching up to the crown of the head), on each shoulder, upper arm, and across

the chest. The lines are smeared with the fingers, and the following words spoken: *Nyankopon Kwame wo hyiri eni o*, 'God, Kwame—i. e. whose day of service is a Saturday—this is your white clay, life to our master'. *Eto* (mashed yams) are cooked once a year by the priests, and upon the day appointed (a Saturday) the chief will place a spoonful in the pan upon top of the forked branch, with the words: '*Me Nyankopon me sere wo nkwa, na me sere wo ahooden*' (My God, I pray you for life and I pray you for strength). A sheep is also killed and the blood allowed to fall upon the ground; pieces of meat are threaded upon the skewers seen projecting from the forks of 'God's altar', with the words: 'Here is a sheep I kill for you, take and eat and give me health and strength.' After this ceremony the chief must sleep in the '*Nyame dan* (temple of the Sky God) for eight nights; one of his wives is allowed to sleep with him. At the end of this time two white fowls are killed, their flesh put on the skewers, and their blood and feathers smeared over the pole or stick of the altar. Besides this annual ceremony, a priest of one of the *abosom*, gods, may tell the chief or any one else that he must give a sacrifice to 'Nyame.

Quite apart from these ceremonial occasions, I do not suppose that a day passes among any of the old folk upon which some little offering is not cast upon the roof of the hut or placed on the altar beside the door to 'the great God of the Sky' who is, 'of all the earth, the King and Elder.'

I shall presently proceed to describe rites in connexion with the lesser, but for all practical purposes, really, the far more important, gods. Their power emanates from various sources, the chief of which is from the great spirit of the one God, graciously delegated by Him, that the affairs of mankind may have attention given to them.

XIV

RELIGION

The Gods (Abosom). The Making of a Shrine.

BEFORE passing on to a detailed account of the ceremonies I witnessed in connexion with certain of the Ashanti gods, I propose to give a brief description of the origin and nature of these deities and of the composition and consecration of their shrines.

The word shrine is used, in this particular context, to designate the potential abode of a superhuman spirit. It consists (generally) of a brass pan, or bowl, which contains various ingredients. This pan, upon certain definite occasions, becomes the temporary dwelling, or resting-place, of a non-human spirit or spirits.

At the present day it is perhaps hardly necessary to state that such an object or shrine ('fetish' is what every English-speaking West African and most Europeans would wrongly term it) is, spiritually, an empty nothing until the particular spirit for which it has been consecrated, prepared, and made acceptable thinks fit to enter it. It possesses, it is true, a certain sanctity, by virtue of its being the potential abode of such a spiritual being.

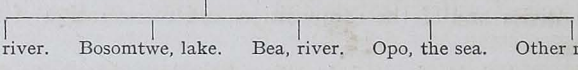
In another context—in dealing with the cult of ancestors—already described, it would be equally correct to call the blackened stools, into which the departed disembodied *human* spirits are called to enter, 'shrines', and again so to designate a rock, or stone, or a tree, which is the potential abode of a spiritual something.

Genealogy of the gods. There is known, from one end of Ashanti to the other, a popular myth, which I shall here only outline very briefly; it gives in simple and childish form the very basis of Ashanti theological beliefs. This myth recounts how 'Nyame—the Sky God—had various sons of whom one in particular was a *bayeyere* (favourite son). 'Nyame decided to send these children of his down to the earth in order that they might

receive benefits from, and confer them upon, mankind. All these sons bore the names of what are now rivers or lakes:

Tano (the great river of that name).
Bosomtwe (the great lake near Coomassie).
Bea (a river).
Opo (the sea).

and every other river or water of any importance. Thus in diagrammatic form we have:



The tributaries of these again are 'their children'.

In Ashanti, any water that dries up in the hot season is known by the title of a '*dan* '*Nyame*' water (a rely-upon-God water).

Returning to our myth, I need not go into the whole story of how, owing to the machinations of the goat (an animal hateful to this god and taboo to his priests), the final resting-place of all the waters was not as really intended by 'Nyame. What has been said is sufficient to show that waters in Ashanti, some in a greater, others in a lesser degree, are all looked upon as containing the power or spirit of the divine Creator, and thus as being a great life-giving force. 'As a woman gives birth to a child, so may water to a god,' once said a priest to me.

When I first had time seriously to study Ashanti religious beliefs, it occurred to me that if we could know just what these miscalled 'fetishes'—the brass pans I have described—contained, and how they were made, and the rites in connexion with the making, we might be approaching the solution of a very difficult and very little understood problem. This idea grew and eventually led to a six-hundred-mile tramp in the quest of a god in the making—an account of which will be given later on in this volume.

I think, however, that now is the time and the place, before the reader is introduced into the presence of the gods, to give him an insight into what these brass pans do contain and the full significance of their contents.

The following is an account, from a reliable source, checked and rechecked from many independent witnesses, of the making

and consecration of a shrine for one of the Tano gods. What follows is from the vernacular. Except in the case of the actual incantation, which is, I think, so valuable that I give it in Ashanti also, I give the translation only.

A spirit may take possession of a man and he may appear to have gone mad, and this state may last sometimes even for a year. Then the priest of some powerful god may be consulted and he may discover, through his god, that it is some spirit which has come upon the man (or woman). The one upon whom the spirit has come is now bidden to prepare a brass pan, and collect water, leaves, and 'medicine' of specific kinds. The possessed one will dance, for sometimes two days, with short intervals for rest, to the accompaniment of drums and singing. Quite suddenly he will leap into the air and catch something in both his hands (or he may plunge into the river and emerge holding something he has brought up). He will in either case fold this thing to his breast, and water will be at once sprinkled upon it to cool it, when it will be thrust into the brass pan and quickly covered up. The following ingredients are now prepared: clay from one of the more sacred rivers, like the Tano, and the following medicinal plants and other objects: *afema* [*Justicia flavia*], *Dama Bo* [*Abras precatorius*]; the bark of the *odom*, a creeper called *hamakyem*, leaves and bark of a tree called *domine*, another creeper called *hamakyerehene*, any root that crosses a path, a projecting stump in a path over which passers-by would be likely to trip, also roots and stumps from under water, the leaves of a tree called *aya*—those are chosen which are seen to be quivering on the tree even though no wind is shaking them—the leaves, bark, and roots of a tree called *Bonsam dua* (lit. the wizard's tree), a nugget of virgin gold (gold that has been in use or circulation must not be used), a *bodom* (so called aggrey bead), and a long white bead called *gyanie*. The whole of these are pounded and placed in the pan, along with the original object already inside, while the following incantation or prayer is repeated:

'*Onyankopon Tweduampon Kwame, Asase Yaa, etwei ne haha ne nnono, nne Fofie o, na Ta Kwesi ye re si wo: ye re si wo ama ye anya nkwa, mma ye nya 'wuo, mma y' aso nsi, mma ye kote nso nwu: 'kuro yi 'dekuro nkwa so, mmerante nkwa so, mmawofoo nkwa so, 'kuro yi nkwada nkwa so.*

' Odum Abena a onyina 'wo no e, mo nyina na ye re fre mo 'ma mo nyina mo aba ama seisei ara ye nyina ye tiri mu asem ye de ahye 'bosom yi mu.

' Ye fre wo anadwo, ye fre wo awia, na se ye ka se ebia ye sei ma yen a, ewo se wo ye. Na mmra a ye re hye ama wo 'bosom yi ene se, ye ne ye mma ne ye nana nom, se Ohene bi na ofiri babi aba na ose ore ko 'sa na obe ka kyere wo na se oko ko ko na onni nim a, ese se wo ka kyere yen : se nso se oko na obe di nim a nso wo ka no nokware. Afei bieku bio, se nnipa na oyare anadwo, ana se awia, ye pagya wo soa na ye bisa se nnipa Asomasi na ore wuo, mmusuo a wo be kyere no mmusu turoro nye nkontompo.

' Nne ye 'kuro yi nyina ye mpanyin ne ye nkwadaa nyina ye nyina y'ako apam ye nyina y'aye ko sipe nni ye yem, ye nyina y'aye ko bafua pe se wo Ta Kwesi nne Fofie, nne na ye re si wo : y'afa 'guane y'afa akoko, y'afa nsa ye de re be ma wo ama w'atena 'kuro yi mu afwe 'kuro yi nkwa so. Efiri nne de kopim nne yi wo nguane ngya yen, efiri nne di kopim nne yi, wo Atanogya, asem biara wo be ka akyere yen wo ntwa yen akofwie, wo nfa nsuo so ngyina w'anum so nka asem nso mfa nkyere yen.

' Nne Ohene 'bosom ene wo (nne) o, nsamanfo 'bosom ene wo nne o. Okyena bi na 'Sante 'hene asem aba se ebia me ba Asomasi se me panyin bi yare na ebia bo mmoden na ko, se osoma 'bofo ma no ba a na wo re ko, nye se wo re guane agya yen.

'Ye nyina y'anum kasa bafua pe.'

' Supreme Being, upon whom men lean and do not fall, (whose day of observance is a Saturday). Earth Goddess, (whose day of worship is a Thursday), Leopard, and all beasts and plants of the forest, to-day is a sacred Friday; and you, Ta Kwesi (the particular god for whom in this case the shrine was being prepared), we are installing you, we are setting you (here), that we may have long life ; do not let us get " Death " ; do not let us become impotent ; life to the head of this village ; life to the young men of this village ; life to those who bear children, and life to the children of this village.

' O tree, we call Odum Abena, (to whom belongs the silk cotton tree), we are all calling upon you that you may come, one and all, just now, that we may place in this shrine the thoughts that are in our heads.

' When we call upon you in the darkness, when we call upon you in the sunlight, and say, " Do such a thing for us ", you will do so.

' And the laws that we are decreeing for you, you, this god

of ours, are these—if in our time, or in our children's, and our grandchildren's time a king should arise from somewhere, and come to us, and say he is going to war, when he tells you, and you well know that should he go to the fight he will not gain the victory, you must tell us so ; and should you know that he will go and conquer, then also state that truth.

' And yet again, if a man be ill in the night, or in the day-time, and we raise you aloft and place you upon the head, and we inquire of you saying, " Is So-and-so about to die ? ", let the cause of the misfortune which you tell him has come upon him be the real cause of the evil and not lies.

' To-day, we all in this town, all our elders, and all our children, have consulted together and agreed without dissent among us, we have all united and with one accord decided to establish your shrine, you, Ta Kwesi, upon this, a sacred Friday.

' We have taken a sheep, and a fowl, we have taken wine, we are about to give them to you that you may reside in this town and preserve its life. From this day, and so on to any future day, you must not fly and leave us. From this day, to any future day, you, O Tano's fire, in anything that you tell us, do not let it be a lie. Do not put water in your mouth and speak to us. To-day you become a god for the chief, to-day you have become a god for our spirit ancestors. Perhaps upon some to-morrow the Ashanti King may come and say, " My child So-and-so (or it may be an elder) is sick ", and ask you to go with him, or may be he will send a messenger here for you ; in such a case you may go and we will not think that you are fleeing from us.

And these words are a voice from the mouth of us all.'

The various sacrifices are then made, and in each case the blood is allowed to fall upon the contents in the brass pan.

I have had many similar accounts of the consecration of a new shrine as the temporary home of a new manifestation of a spirit universal and always present, but not subject to control.

It will be noted that other minor spirits, or powers of nature, are not wholly ignored or neglected, and that all are considered as able in some manner to help the greater spirit that is to be called upon to guide and assist mankind.

The priests tell me that at times, when this greater emanation of God is not present, that the spirits of some of the lesser ones will flash forth for a moment and disclose their presence. For example, a priest will suddenly burst forth, singing, *odoma e, die odo me omera* (' I am the *odoma* tree, let him who loves me come hither '). It seems that the priests and priestesses, when in the

ecstatic condition, are subject to many spirit influences. I have heard a priestess begin to talk in a different dialect from her own. This did not at all surprise the onlookers, who merely said, 'Oh, that is the spirit of So-and-so'—a dead priestess of the same god, who had come from another district, and had used that dialect.

I shall never forget the answer of an old priest with whom I remonstrated, chiefly to draw him out and see what he would say, for not trusting to the one spirit of the great God and leaving out all these lesser powers whose help was thus passively and indirectly involved. He replied as follows: 'We in Ashanti dare not worship the Sky God alone, or the Earth Goddess alone, or any one spirit. We have to protect ourselves against, and use when we can, the spirits of all things in the Sky and upon Earth. You go to the forest, see some wild animal, fire at it, kill it, and find you have killed a man. You dismiss your servant, but later find you miss him. You take your cutlass to hack at what you think is a branch, and find you have cut your own arm. There are people who can transform themselves into leopards; "the grass-land people" are especially good at turning into hyenas. There are witches who can make you wither and die. There are trees which fall upon and kill you. There are rivers which drown you. If I see four or five Europeans, I do not make much of one alone, and ignore the rest, lest they too may have power and hate me.'

I cannot, of course, be certain of the precise elements entering into the shrine of such a god as Ta Kora, the greatest of the Tano gods. His temple, as will be seen later, was quite free from the usual charms or 'fetishes' which are generally associated with the stock-in-trade of the priests.

Once the ingredients described have been put into the shrine, that is apparently an end of them. They are not directly mentioned, and it is only when the spirit of one of the ingredients of the shrine takes charge, as it were, for a moment, that they are even considered.[1]

The foregoing sketch will serve to introduce my readers to the ceremonies I now propose to describe in the next chapter.

[1] A row of shrines may be seen in Figs. 70–1.

XV

RELIGION

The Apo *Ceremony at Tekiman.*

THAT most delightful of raconteurs, Bosman, in one of his letters to 'his very good friend', described a ceremony which he said he had twice seen at Axim, on the Gold Coast.

Two centuries later, it was my privilege to witness this same ceremony in its own natural home, whence it had been transplanted to the coastal belt where Bosman had witnessed it, when performed by some of the ancestors of the very people I was now among. They had, centuries ago, according to their own and Brong traditions, migrated from the Gyaman country in Northern Ashanti and wandered south to the coast to become the present Fanti race. The tradition of this migration thus finds the most interesting confirmation in the two accounts of what are undoubtedly one and the same ceremony.

The Dutch historian of the Coast of Guinea wrote as follows:

'The Devil is annually banished all their towns with abundance of Ceremony, at an appointed time set apart for that end. I have twice seen it at Axim, where they make the greatest stir about it. This Procession is preceded by a Feast of eight days, accompanied with all manner of Singing, Skipping, Dancing, Mirth, and Jollity; in which time a perfect lampooning liberty is allowed, and Scandal so highly exalted, that they may freely sing of all the Faults, Villanies, and Frauds of their Superiours, as well as Inferiours without Punishment, or so much as the least interruption; and the only way to stop their mouths is to ply them lustily with Drink, which alters their tone immediately, and turns their Satyrical Ballads into Commendation Songs on the good Qualities of him who hath so nobly treated them. . . . When they have driven him (the Devil) far enough out of the Town, they all return, and thus conclude their eight Days Divine or rather Diabolical Service . . . and to make sure that he does not return to their Houses, the women wash and scour all their wooden and earthen vessels very neat, to free them from all Uncleaness and the Devil.'[1]

[1] Bosman's *Coast of Guinea*, Letter X.

I propose now to give a detailed account of what I saw during each day the ceremony lasted.

It was by good fortune, rather than design, that I arrived at Tekiman, in Northern Ashanti, on the 11th April 1922. I was on my way north to investigate the rites in connexion with the great Ashanti god, Tano—the Tando of Ellis and of Miss Kingsley. I arrived that day from Nkoranza, where I had been living for some time and making friends with the priests and 'old fetish women', as Mary Kingsley's African friend ungallantly described these very charming, old and young ladies, and my repute had reached Tekiman before me.

I had 'a good press', as we should say, for I was at once called upon by every one of note in their ecclesiastical world. A stroll round the town, which included a return call upon the *omanhene* (chief) and the presentation of letters of introduction from the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, an impromptu exhibition in the court-yard of the 'palace' upon the big talking drums, upon which I drummed out the prelude of one of their set-pieces—the only one I knew—a certain reputation as an elephant hunter that had preceded me here—all these combined to make these people accept me as almost one of themselves.

I was told I had arrived upon the eve of a great annual ceremony, lasting eight days, and they all promised I should be permitted to go everywhere and see everything. A delightful little side-light upon the habitual 'canniness' of the Ashanti character was later revealed by the fact that the chief, to make everything absolutely in order, dispatched a runner that very night to Judd, the acting District Commissioner at Wenki, to inform him that a European *okomfo*—a white Witch Doctor, as the interpreter would possibly quite wrongly interpret it—had arrived on the scene, and was it quite all right?

The chief being informed that it was all right, and that the 'Witch Doctor' was to be considered as his, (Judd's,) guest as long as he was in that district, we all settled down, I taking up my abode in the tumble-down old rest-house on the outskirts of the town. Here I was to spend eight delightful days, and to entertain the priests and priestesses of many of the gods in this part of Ashanti, who had come in from all over the country to attend the ceremony. The *Apo* custom, as the Brong

commonly call it, is sometimes known as *Attenie*, and also *Ahorohorua*. The derivation of *Apo* is probably from the same root *po*, reduplicative *popo*, 'to speak roughly or harshly to' of *atennie*, *atem die*, 'to abuse, to insult'; and of *ahorohorua*, possibly *horo*, 'to wash, to cleanse'. To-day, as it did in Bosman's time, the ceremony lasts eight days. I once asked a semi-educated African what it was all about, and he replied that this was a fetish custom where every one cursed every one else, where morals were relaxed and promiscuity sanctioned, where all the fetishes were brought out to walk about, and where the witch doctors indulged in diabolical rites. That is very like Bosman's point of view. The following is another point of view. It is contained in a literal translation of what was told me by the old high-priest of the god Ta Kese at Tekiman. He said: 'You know that every one has a *sunsum* (soul) that may get hurt or knocked about or become sick, and so make the body ill. Very often, although there may be other causes, e. g. witchcraft, ill health is caused by the evil and the hate that another has in his head against you. Again, you too may have hatred in your head against another, because of something that person has done to you, and that, too, causes your *sunsum* to fret and become sick. Our forbears knew this to be the case, and so they ordained a time, once every year, when every man and woman, free man and slave, should have freedom to speak out just what was in their head, to tell their neighbours just what they thought of them, and of their actions, and not only their neighbours, but also the king or chief. When a man has spoken freely thus, he will feel his *sunsum* cool and quieted, and the *sunsum* of the other person against whom he has now openly spoken will be quieted also. The King of Ashanti may have killed your children, and you hate him. This has made him ill, and you ill, too; when you are allowed to say before his face what you think, you both benefit. That was why the King of Ashanti in ancient times, when he fell sick, would send for the Queen of Nkoranza to insult him, even though the time for the ceremony had not yet come round. It made him live longer and did him good.'

This is, I believe, getting nearer to the reason for this 'Lampooning Liberty' than either Bosman or my semi-educated

African friend ever arrived at, and I wonder if this logic may not have been behind the Saturnalia of the Ancients.

Examining now, before I proceed to an account of the ceremony, the general implication of moral laxity and licence, and of insobriety, all I can vouch for is that, from first to last, I never once saw a drunken man or woman—funeral celebrations are the occasions upon which the Ashanti really get drunk, but there are extenuating circumstances even there, as I have striven to show elsewhere—nor did I hear later of one case of adultery arising out of a celebration in which, theoretically, it seems to have had the sanction of custom.

The rules with regard to this point are very strict and well defined. Theoretically there appears to be a licence in regard to sexual intercourse, but in reality this is not so, and in any case in practice, this is completely nullified for the following reason : Custom enjoins that no redress for seduction or adultery may be claimed, or any complaint lodged, during the eight days the ceremony is in progress. Once this period has expired, all such cases are subject to trial before the customary native courts, and are liable to the ordinary sanctions of native customary law. In other words, if any one thinks it is worth while, he may commit an offence for which he knows punishment will be deferred until the rites are over, but after that period he will have to answer as in the ordinary course and pay the usual penalty for his delinquency.

On the other hand, should the aggrieved party, during the actual celebration of the *Apo* ceremony, bring any action, lodge any complaint, or make any violent scene, he immediately forfeits all right to have his case investigated later or to receive any satisfaction, and is himself heavily fined. These facts, in actual practice, seem more than a sufficient deterrent to any one inclined to take advantage of the respite from prosecution which the ceremony gives. There is a kind of carnival freedom, it is true, which permits of any man to say to any girl (except the king's or priests' wives), '*Bo me tuo*', which means, literally, 'fire a gun at me', and the maiden so addressed is expected to whisk off her clothes, that is to say her cloth. But as every girl wears strings of beads round her waist and a little red cloth tucked into this bead girdle at the front and the back, and, as

FIG. 52. *'Nyame dua*, altar to the Sky God

FIG. 53. The *Apo* ceremony at Tekiman

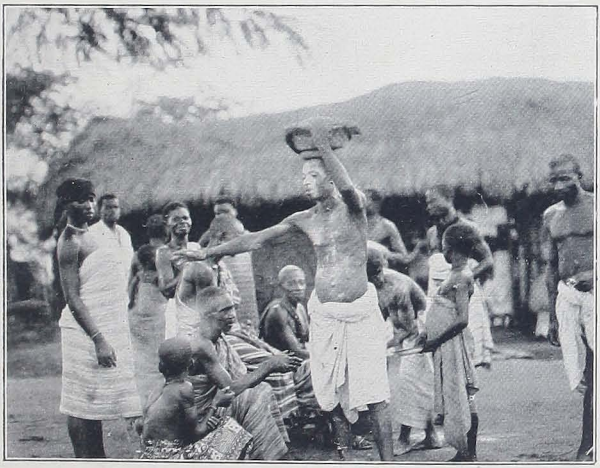


FIG. 54. The *Apo* ceremony at Tekiman

FIG. 55. A shrine under an umbrella

FIG. 56. The gods taking the air

to stand nude in this country—where clothes were not worn in the not very remote past—is in no sense to stand ashamed, the whole effect is to produce results that are no more immoral to the African mind than it is for a European to ask a girl to unmask and to kiss her at a Continental carnival (Fig. 73).

The savage law-makers of old were never fools ; they legislated for law and peace and order in the clan, not for promiscuity, chaos, and bloodshed.

On the Tuesday, priests and priestesses and their followers, with the shrines of their various gods, kept arriving from all over the country, from Tanosu, Tuabodom, Ofori Kuron, Tano Oboase, &c., and towards evening all paraded up and down the broad street running through the town. The shrine of the great local god, Ta Kese or Ta Mensa, as he is variously called, and those of several other gods were carried upon the heads of their respective priests under gorgeous umbrellas of plush and velvet. The blackened stools of former priests and priestesses were also paraded, being supported upon the nape of the neck by their carriers. The various gods ' were taking the air and greeting each other ', I was informed. All their shrines, i. e. the brass pans, were of course covered over with coloured silk handkerchiefs and the contents were invisible. The priests, bearing these shrines, would go up to each other, and bending slightly forward, would allow the shrine of one god to touch that of another, in salutation. Priests and priestesses were sprinkled with white finely powdered clay on face, neck, shoulders, arms, and chest ; others attended them with flat basins or plates containing more of the white powder. They would constantly come up to me and, curtsying or kneeling down, would sprinkle some powder at my feet. There seemed no general plan, every one in the best of good humour strolled about greeting the other gods, i.e. their shrines, priests, priestesses, strangers, and townsfolk mingling in little cheery groups (see Figs. 53–6). The following day, Wednesday, none of the shrines of the gods were paraded, but all the people sat about outside their houses or outside the big temple of the god Ta Kese and conversed. I talked with the chief, who said : ' Wait until Friday when the people really begin to abuse me, and if you will come and do so too it will please me.' That afternoon bands composed entirely of women

ran up and down the long, wide street, with a curious lolloping, skipping step, singing *apo* songs. Later I got them to sing them into my phonograph. Space forbids me printing these songs in the original, so I give an English translation alone.

The god, Ta Kese, says if we have anything to speak, let us speak it,
For by so doing we are removing misfortune from the nation.

Your head is very large,
And we are taking the victory from out your hands.
O King, you are a fool.
We are taking the victory from out your hands
O King, you are impotent.
We are taking the victory from out your hands.

They know nothing about guns,
The Ashanti know nothing about guns.
Had they known about guns
Would they have let the white man seize
King Prempeh and Ya Akyaa [1] without firing a gun?

A e! a e! a e!
Buabasa is a proper fool
Since the Creator created all things
They (i. e. the kings of Ashanti) came from Adum, they who were to succeed (to the throne of Coomassie).
They did not come from Pinanko who were to succeed,
But these days it seems that they come from Pinanko who are to succeed.
Oh, Buabasa is a proper fool.
He causes the nation to be destroyed.[2]

Aframa [3] who bore ten children
Her son was Yaa Dwete,
Father eats his yams, but the people of
Nkoranza eat their cassava.
As for us, we eat our yams while the people of Nkoranza eat their cassava.

Grandfather Ta Kora is like a cat,
He is not the pet of one person alone.

[1] Ya Akyaa, the Queen Mother of Coomassie, died in exile in the Seychelles.

[2] Until the reign and banishment of King Prempeh (1896) all the Kings of Ashanti had lived in that part of Coomassie called Adum. When Prempeh was banished, I am informed, we put one, Buabasa (Opoku Mensa) to look after Coomassie and he lived in that part of the town called Pinanko.

[3] Aframa. The first Queen Mother of Tekiman.

Did I buy and give you to eat
That when they are leading me away
You should laugh at me ?
These times have changed O Kojo Fojo,
O Kojo Fojo, these times have changed.

Ashanti, what do you here ?
Do you taboo your own country ?
Kon ! kon ! kon !
Your father and your mother.[1]

We made scales for the Ashanti porcupines.
They only used them to cheat us.

We are casting stones at Ati Akosua (a god).
The leopard Gya, the King's child,
We are casting stones at him.
How much more shall we cast stones
At the child of the bush cat ?

(From this song it would appear that even the gods come in for some of the general abuse.)

The Ashanti people may be the children of slaves.
The King of Ashanti may have bought them, but he did not buy us.

All is well to-day.
We know that a Brong man eats rats,
But we never knew that one of royal blood eats rats.
But to-day we have seen our master, Ansah,[2] eating rats.
To-day all is well and we may say so, say so, say so.
At other times we may not say so, say so, say so.

Do you people know the child who is head of this town ?
The child who is head of this town is called ' the helpful one '.
When he buys palm wine he helps himself to the pot as well.

To-day he has risen up.
We are the Creator's stars.
When we come out then some one of importance has come out.
(Sung by the young ' royals '.)
We are the useless sponges,
But we shall be called in in the day of necessity.
(Answering song by the villagers.)

[1] Ta Kora, the great god of Ashanti. It must be remembered that the Ashanti conquered the Tekiman people ; most of these songs are directed against the former. To adjure your father and mother would ordinarily be considered a terrible insult. In my entourage were several Ashanti from Mampon and Coomassie, and many of their songs were in their honour.

[2] Mr. Ansah was my typist and clerk.

Upon the same day a crier, beating an *odawuru* (iron gong), went all round the town calling out the following proclamation.[1]

'The Chief says that I am to tell you that upon this *apo* festival which has come round you are (to celebrate it) by abusing him. And (during this time) if any one of you have a cause of quarrel with any one else, or if your friend should seduce your wife, or some one should insult you, and you do not keep your temper, but lodge a complaint, then you are bound by the oath of Wednesday and of Thursday, which make you liable to a penalty of *ntano* (£16 in gold dust). That is the end.'

It will be noted that this proclamation does not say anything about any relaxation in the standard of public morals, and merely insists on the fact that nothing is to be done to mar the happy and genial spirit in which the festival is to be conducted.

Friday, the 14th, was a great day. All the morning various priests and priestesses danced in public, surrounded by a great circle of onlookers. They danced, to the accompaniment of drums and singing, stripped to the waist and holding cow-tails (*bodua*) or swords (*afona*) in their hands, upon which they leaned from time to time (see Figs. 57–8). All were heavily powdered with white clay and most of them were covered with *suman* (fetishes or charms). The male priests wore the kilt made of palm-leaf fibre, called *doso*, with cotton drawers underneath (see Fig. 59). Men and women carrying plates containing powdered white clay followed them about and constantly sprinkled them with it. As I sat on a low stool in the front row of the great circle within which they danced, priests and priestesses would kneel down before me and sprinkle the white powder on the ground at my feet, or even over my bare knees (I was wearing shorts). Some of the male *akomfo* (priests) danced with wonderful agility, leaping into the air and pirouetting like Russian dancers. In the intervals, in which they rested, they walked round the circle greeting every one by placing their right hand between both the extended palms of the person saluted (Fig. 60).

Every now and then I would be presented with an egg. All

[1] '*Ohene se me ma monte se, apo a aba yi be po be yao no na wo ya biara a wo ne bi wo asene ana se wo yonko ape wo 'yere, ana se obi yao wo, se wo ansie abotere na se wo ka asem biara a wo to Wukuara ne Yaoda a wu tua ntanu—pa! fwii!*'

FIG. 57. Priestesses resting upon *afona* (iron swords) after dancing

FIG. 58. Priestesses dancing with cow-tail switches in their hands

FIG. 59. A priest in kilt made of palm-leaf fibre

FIG. 60. A priest walking round shaking hands during an interval

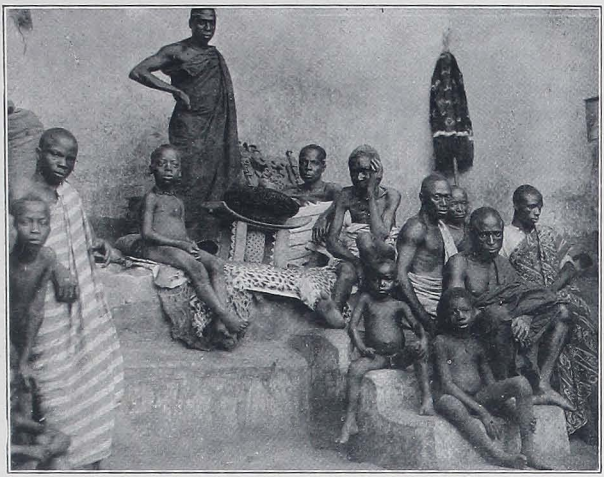


FIG. 61. A shrine on a stool just about to be carried out to join the other gods

FIG. 62. One of the priests carried on a man's shoulders

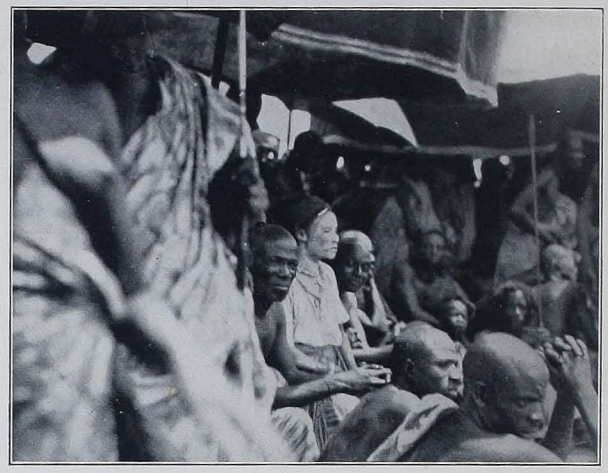


FIG. 63. The head priestess and her companions went and sat down under their great umbrellas

FIG. 64. The priest . . . of Kum Aduasia impersonated a leopard

were very much interested in my reflex camera and anxious to peep into it and see the scene reflected in the ground glass. None of the shrines of the gods were brought out during the dancing (Fig. 61).

That same afternoon a great gathering of five to six hundred persons, assembled in the wide clearing near the chief's ' palace '. Here the chief, his sub-chief, and state officials, seated themselves in a great semi-circle under their huge coloured umbrellas, surrounded by sword-bearers, executioners, heralds, ' linguists ', &c. I was given a chair beside the chief. An Ashanti crowd upon such occasions seems to sort itself out, and order is maintained without an effort. The reason is that every one knows his place, assigned to him by immemorial custom, and falls naturally into it. Opposite the chief, in the great circle, a space was kept clear for the chief priestess of the god Ati Akosua, who was presently to take up her position there, with her retinue. After we were all seated, from the direction of the temple of the god Ta Kese came a long cavalcade, consisting of the priests and priestesses of the gods who were attending the festival. The high-priest of Ta Kese, a dear old man, with a noble and refined face, was carried aloft in a native basket hammock (*apakan*). The chief priestess was borne on the shoulders of one of her attendants, as was also one other priest (see Fig. 62). This line wheeled to the left and, beginning at the left wing of our semi-circle, went round greeting every one, sprinkling clay at the feet of many, and shaking hands in the manner already described. Several, I noticed, embraced the chief in a manner I had never before witnessed; taking his right hand in their own they raised their united hands above the head and each pressed his or her body against the other. After all the salutations were over, the head priestess and her companions went and sat down under their great umbrellas, opposite to our party, making the circle complete (Fig. 63).

The sub-chiefs, from outlying villages, now came and saluted the head chief, just as is done at the *Adae*.[1] Next, many of the *akomfo* danced. A friend of mine, who bore the rather awe-inspiring title of Kum Aduasia (the slayer of sixty), the priest of a god, who I much suspect was an elevated *suman*, impersonated

[1] Chap. V.

a leopard. His spots were very effectively rendered by daubing wet fingers upon his white-powdered body. He is to be seen in Fig. 64, exhausted by his efforts and supported by two men. As he danced, the following song was being sung to him, as a friendly warning, I believe, that his god was a bit out of hand :

Stop all these doings, such goings on and witchcraft walk together,
Grandfather, stop O !

I visited this excellent fellow later at his own village, Tanosu, and his god, from all I could see, was more *suman*, i.e. fetish, than *obosom* (god).

Another song I overheard as the dancing was in progress was :

The door of the ghosts has opened
And father is come.
The door of the ghosts has opened.

Besides the dancing of several other priests and priestesses, the old executioner amused every one by his antics, strutting about pretending to have a *sepow* knife through his tongue [1] (see Fig. 65).

Yet another song sung on this occasion was as follows :

Is to-day not a good day ?
Is to-day not a good day ?
The god who is King has risen up,
He is removing misfortune from the people.

None of the shrines of the gods were brought to this afternoon performance.

The head priestess sat under her umbrella and took no part in the dancing. She appeared to be in a trance. An attendant stood beside her with a plate containing powdered white clay (see Fig. 66). About 4 p.m. every one quietly dispersed, but that evening, about 6 o'clock, all the gods, that is to say, their shrines, were again paraded up and down the street. The greatest god, Ta Kese, was carried upon the head of the old chief priest, and also in turn by other priests. As the shrine

[1] In Ashanti, as soon as a person's death was decided upon, the very first thing to do was to drive a small knife through both cheeks and tongue, to prevent the victim ' cursing the King '.

FIG. 65. The executioner

FIG. 66. The head priestess . . . appeared to be in a trance

of this god was brought out of its temple, a medicine man, carrying a pot of water, ran up to it, waved the pot three times in front of the shrine, and quickly inverted the pot, placing it upon the ground; this ceremony is called *summum*. Priests walked behind the brass pan of Ta Kese with uplifted hands ready to catch it if it should fall from the head of its bearer, when under the influence of the spirit. Ta Kese and many other gods were under their own umbrellas.

The following gods, among others, were pointed out to me:

Ta Kese.	Ta Kwesi.	Ta Kofi.	Asubonten.
Ta Toa.	Ta Yao.	Ani Koko.	Obo Kyerewa.
Ta Kuntum.	Ta Kojo.	Ati Akosua.	Kum Aduasia.

Ta is a contraction of Tano.

Ani Koko means, literally, 'the red eyed one'.

Kum Aduasia, as already explained, means 'the slayer of sixty.

Asubonten is described elsewhere.[1]

Obo Kyerewa is the god of a priest, who only a few days after the events described, came to a terrible end.

Ati Akosua is the god that later spoke to me as the mouthpiece of the great Ta Kora.

There were also to be seen the stools of two dead priestesses, which, wrapped in cloths, were carried upon the heads of two women stool-carriers, under one great umbrella. Another group of men carried, upon the napes of their necks, the blackened stools of dead priests. The bands of women were running backwards and forwards singing the songs already given. As I was watching this wonderful scene, a priest came up to me and said that the high-priest of Ta Kese invited me to come under that god's state umbrella. (I suppose thirty men could shelter under it.) I did so with some slight misgivings, I must confess. As soon as I stood under the umbrella a priest presented me with four eggs. I thanked him for them, and was on the point of asking some one to take them for me, when suddenly he seized me in both his arms and gave me a violent hug, broke away before I could breathe a word of remonstrance, snatched one of the eggs, and swallowed it whole at one gulp. I was so amused at this feat that I forgot to be angry at his onslaught.

[1] Chapter XIX.

The remaining eggs, I was told, were to wash my *ntoro*.[1] Before dark all the gods were put back into the pantheon where is the shrine of Ta Kese.

That evening I strolled down to see the chief to ask him about the next day's ceremony. I found him sitting in the court-yard of his 'palace' listening to a story-teller. Somewhat like the late Miss Kingsley's 'Homer' he was, for he derived his inspirations from his hat, round the entire rim of which were suspended articles that represented or reminded him of some proverb, story, or riddle. You chose your little fancy, and he 'was off'. After listening to a few of his stories, I could not help thinking it was merciful and fortunate that Miss Kingsley could not understand a word of what her story-teller had to say, and so went away hoping and dreaming that it was some new Iliad to which she had listened.

The following day was the fourth of the festival. Nothing new was afoot in the morning; some fresh priests were dancing before the usual admiring circle, but the dancing and songs were very much the same as before.

In the afternoon I noticed a little group of people about twenty yards from the rest-house, several men, women, and boys. They were standing near a chair upon which was set a stool, upon which again was resting the shrine of a god with a pair of sandals placed upon it. There were also a couple of drums, two plates, one containing yellow-coloured powdered clay, and the other a few eggs, also a dress (*doso*) of a priest (*okomfo*). Presently, the priest, a rather striking-looking man, with a beard, came up and began to dress in the palm-fibre skirt and put on his *suman* (charms). I recognized him as a hunter I had met about a week before, with whom I had had a talk about elephants. He was delighted to see me and said he was about to go to the town to take part in a dance, but had come out here (about 400 yards from the town) to work up the spirit of his god upon him.[2]

When he was dressed and had powdered himself with the

[1] See Chap. II.

[2] Some of the lesser *akomfo* also combine other work with that of priest. Many are medicine men, and, following naturally on that pursuit which takes them to the forest, hunters. I know one who was hunter, drummer, priest, and medicine man.

Fig. 67. He then began to dance to the accompaniment of drums and singing

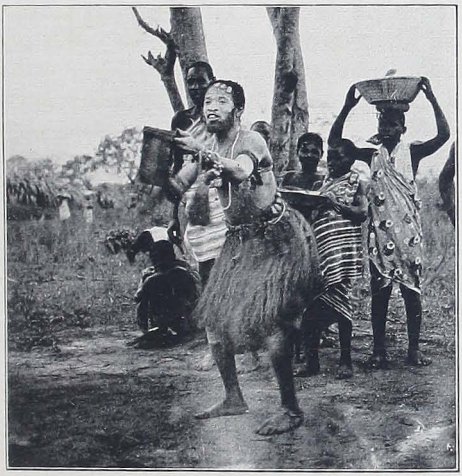


Fig. 68. The priest dancing, gazing into a mirror

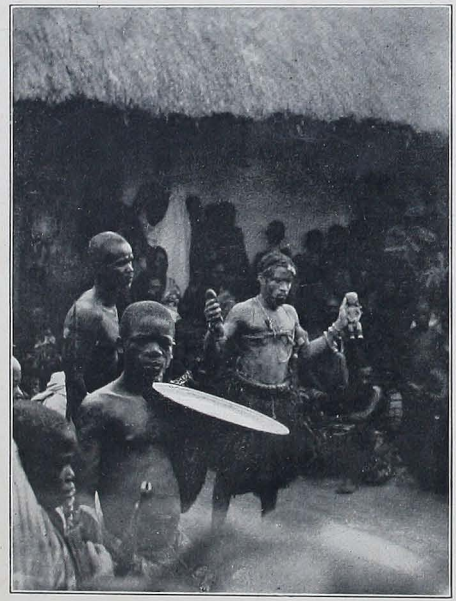


Fig. 69. They danced holding two little wooden dolls

Fig 70. Some priests who attended the *Apo* ceremony

yellow clay,[1] picking up an egg from the dish near by he ran a few paces outside the circle of people and threw the egg upon the ground. This, he told me later, was to avert any ill which some other priest might will against his god. He then began to dance to the accompaniment of the drums and of singing. Sometimes he held the shrine upon his head, sometimes it was supported by an attendant (see Figs. 67 and 68). Suddenly he pounced upon a young girl standing in the group, called forward a spokesman, and bade him ask her why she was not yet married. (It appears the god had ordered her to do so some time ago—she had the reputation of wanting to have a good time before she settled down to matrimony.) The girl seemed very nervous, but promised she would soon marry.

The hunter-priest now set off for the town—the spirit well upon him—accompanied by his followers, and carrying his god upon his head. I accompanied them, and we went to a house or temple where the shrine of another god called Akua Tia was kept. Outside the yard of this temple he and another priest danced for about half an hour, and then we all proceeded to the house of the god Ta Kese. Here, in the court-yard outside the pantheon, was assembled a great concourse of people who crowded the verandah and open rooms round the compound, which was kept clear for the dancers and drummers and women with rattles made from gourds. The two priests greeted the old head priest, entered the temple for a moment, came out, and then began to dance. They would every now and then cast an egg into the air and intercept it with their head as it descended. They danced, holding two little wooden dolls, called Kwaku (a male) and Akua (a female), who are 'the speedy messengers of the gods', and who can 'go and come like the wind' (see Fig. 69). They danced, holding now a looking-glass, now a sword, and yet again a spear. 'In the mirror they can see things, that is why they smile.'[2] The dancing was kept up till late at night, and in the intervals they walked round and round the circle shaking hands with every one.

The following day was Sunday, the 16th. Several *akomfo* who had not danced before gave exhibitions in the street,

[1] Yellow, he told me, only because he could not get white.
[2] Some priestesses practise the art of water gazing.

surrounded by the admiring crowd. I was informed that many of the gods who had been brought in from outlying villages would return home before dawn on Monday, that they might have the water-sprinkling performed at their own particular local water, and this would complete the ceremonies.

Upon inquiring why the shrines were taken back in the night to their respective homes, I was told it was lest the gods might so have enjoyed their outing that they might not wish to return if their departure were delayed till daylight. There is always, in their minds, a dread lest the spirit, that upon occasions thinks fit to settle in the shrine that has been made acceptable to it, should not return to its home. Empty shrines in their temples, awaiting a time when the spirit that has left them and has never returned, will enter them again, testify to this belief.

On Monday, a most impressive rite took place. About 6 p.m. all the local gods, the shrines of which were permanently housed in the Ta Kese or other local temples, were formed up outside the Ta Kese house. Leading the procession were the shrines of fourteen lesser gods, carried upon the heads of young boys, and immediately behind these was Ta Kese and Ta Kwesi, each under its own enormous umbrella. On top of the shrines of these last-named deities were red fez caps—the badge of the Mohammedan in these parts.[1] Priests covered in white powdered clay and in white skirts were in attendance. One man carried a very large branch of the tree the Ashanti call *summe* (*Costus sp.*).[2] The blackened stools of former priests were also carried in the procession, which included:

Three executioners (*abrafo*).
One herald (*osene*).
One soul washer (*'kraguareni*).
Seven priestesses (*akomfo mma*), but one only with white clay upon her.
Three priests (*akomfo*) in white powdered clay.

[1] I was told by some that this was to signify a victory over some Mohammedan chief in one of the wars of the past, and by another that it signified that the Allah of the Mohammedan was just the same as the 'Nyame of the Ashanti.

[2] Much used in religious ceremonies, the smell of the tree is sometimes said to drive away ghosts.

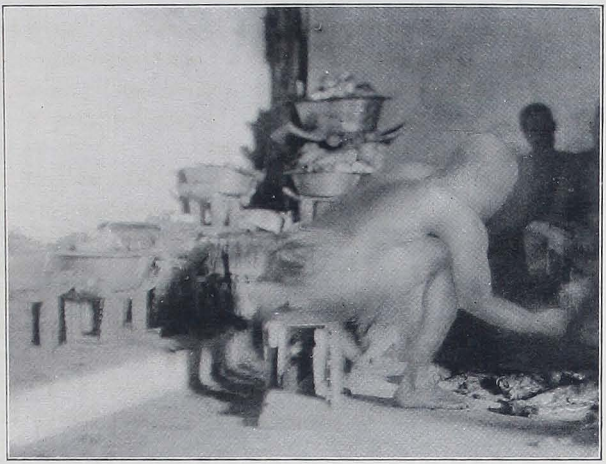


Fig. 71. The highest shrine is that of Ta Kese

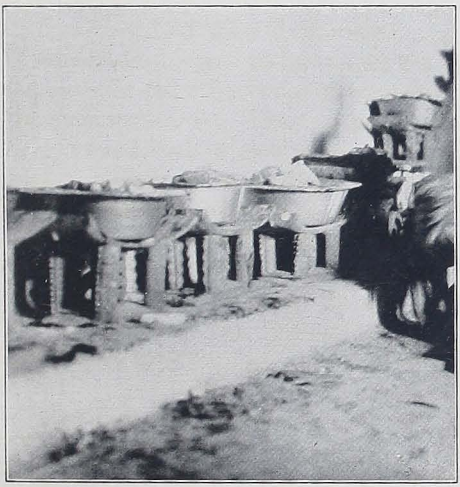


Fig. 72. The shrines of the lesser gods were ranged all round the walls

Several stool-carriers.

Fontomfrom drums carried on men's heads and beaten by drummers walking behind them. There was also one 'female' *tumpane* drum.

Many in the procession carried cow-tail switches and guns. A message was sent to the chief, saying:

'The year has come round, to-day the festival ends and we wish to go to the river.'

The chief replied:

'May no misfortune happen this new year that is now approaching, and may another year once again come round.'

He did not himself accompany the procession to the river, but was represented by his two spokesmen (*akyeame*). The Queen Mother, however, went. The cavalcade now set off to the Tano river, the path being lit up by men carrying bundles of palm-leaf stalks tied together. On arriving at the river, the more important of the shrines were set down, each upon its own stool, the lesser ones were put down resting each upon its circular head-pad (*kahiri*). One of the Tanokwa (attendants on Tano) now proceeded to draw a basin of water from the river, the following words being spoken: [1]

'*Onyankopon Tweaduampon, Asase Ya, Asase Boa ode ne' nsie, Etwie ode ye ha, Tano, mo adaworoma afe ano ahyia na ye de abosom nynia aba ne be bo yen asuo. Mo gyina ye akyiri akyigynia pa, mo mma bone biara nto yen. Ye de ye mma ne ye 'yere nom ne yeho hye mo nsa, mo mma bone biara nto yen.*'

'Sky God, upon whom men lean and do not fall, Goddess of Earth, Creature that rules the underworld, Leopard that possesses the forest, Tano River, by your kindness the edges of the year have met (i. e. the year has completed its circle), and we have brought all the shrines of the gods to sprinkle them with water. May you stand behind us with a good standing. Let no bad thing whatever overtake us. We give our children, we give our wives, we give ourselves into your hands, let no evil come upon us.'

[1] In ancient times, I was informed that this part of the river would have been closed for weeks that there might be no chance of the water being polluted. In fact this was the reason this ceremony was performed at night when the water passing would be more likely to be pure. Contamination, in this sense, would result from any woman bathing in the water who had her menses or after sexual intercourse.

White clay and *adwira* leaves were now mixed with the water. One of the *akyeame* (spokesmen) of one of the gods, not the chief's[1] held a branch of *summe* in each hand and spoke as follows :

'*Nana Ta Kese nne afe ano ahyia, ye de wo aba asuo mu. Ye re be bo wo asu, Etwie, ahaha ne nono, ne Asase Boa de nsie, ne Nyankopon Kwame, ne Asase Ya ne abosom nyina ewo wiase, mo nyina momera, se efi bi aka mo a, ye be bo mo asu.*'

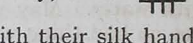
' Grandfather, Ta Kese, to-day the cycle of the year has come round, and we have brought you to the river and we are about to sprinkle you with water. Leopard, Plants, Beasts, Creature that possesses the Underworld, God of the Sky, Thursday Goddess of Earth, and all gods in the world, come hither lest (during the past year) any foul thing has touched you, we are about to sprinkle you with water.'

Then dipping the *summe* leaves in the water he sprinkled each shrine in turn, beginning with Ta Kese, saying as he did so :

'*Ye sere wo nkwa, abofo ko wuram a, yenkum nam, mmawofo nwo mma. Yao Kramo nkwaso, abomofo nyina nkwaso, akomfo nyina nkwaso, ye de afrihyia yi apo a be hye asu yi mu.*'

' We beg you for life ; when hunters go to the forest, permit them to kill meat; may the bearers of children bear children: life to Yao Kramo (the chief), life for all hunters, life to all priests, we have taken the *apo* of this year and put it in the river.'

Water was also sprinkled upon the stools and upon all present. Guns were fired and every one shouted : '*Okose o! okose o!*' ' Farewell ! farewell ! '

The brass pans (the shrines) were being scrubbed with sand and water, and after this was done, the outside of each pan was marked by three fingers moistened with wet clay, thus : 

The shrines were once again covered over with their silk handkerchiefs, and all set out for home.

The head priest and the spokesman now took three long branches of *summe* and, after the last person had passed down the path, placed them across the road, between them and the

[1] Every god of importance has a whole court of functionaries based exactly on the model of a king's court.

river, and put a handful of sand and clay on top. All the evil of the past year was now behind, they said, and this was a precaution against any of it finding its way back.

Every one returned to the village; the shrines were replaced in the temples which were their homes. Here they were uncovered and *eto*, yams, placed upon them. They were still uncovered and these offerings still upon them when I visited the temple the following day (see Fig. 72). No songs were sung during these rites; occasionally the drums beat. Once they said:

'*Obarima ko, obarima n'wane*,' 'The hero fights, the hero does not run away.'

The new year for the Tekiman people began, I was informed, the next day. This was Tuesday, the 18th April 1922. About 9 a.m. on that day, the chief priest, and several priests and elders and I proceeded to the temple of Ta Kese. In front of this house were laid branches of *summe*, to mitigate, I was informed, the evil, should any one thoughtlessly break a taboo of this god. No women were present at the ceremony, though I was informed, the Queen Mother might have attended it. The Ta Kese temple, where the *Adae* already described took place, consists of one large room, with big double doors; there is a very small window, and a certain amount of light also comes through under the eaves. A pole runs from the centre of the floor to the ridge-pole of the roof, upon which were hung bunches of withered plantain leaves that had been used to cover former offerings of palm wine. The room faced east and west. The shrine of the chief god Ta Kese stood in one corner on a stool upon an altar made of mud. Four steps from the floor led up to the altar. The shrines of the lesser gods were ranged all round the east and west walls on a slightly raised portion of the floor, and three blackened stools (of former chief priests) were at the north end of the room. The spirits of the dead priests come into these stools. Amoa (i.e. his shrine), a god who is supposed to be the special messenger of the gods, stood at the foot of the centre pole. This shrine was covered entirely with creepers. This god, I was also told, is guardian and watchman for all the other gods. One priest said he was Ta Kese's son. A god of this name is to be found in many pantheons. He is sometimes

called *bayayere*, i.e. favourite or best beloved son. His habit, they say, is to enter the body of a poor man who will beg for alms ; any one who refuses his request will later on become ill.

The chief, Yao Kramo, standing on a small raised platform, on the left of the altar, now removed his cloth from his shoulder and fluently and in a loud voice spoke as follows, while the old high-priest and two men who held a sheep stood beside him. His speech was punctuated by the loud *Yo! Yo!* of the Tano ' linguist '.

' *Aban mu Ta Kese, afe ano ahyia, ena me ne manfo yi ye fua ye nsam oguan yi de re ma wo, wo agyina yen akyiri akyigyina pa. Wa fre ahaha ne nono ama obawofo awo. Abofo de 'tuo ko wuran a, wa kum nam. Afenso me koo Krakye Dente ho ko gye nwa be gyina 'kuro yi, nne 'so nwa no ayera, wadaworoma wa bo mmoden ama nwa no efiri bio. Afenso animonyan wonsa aka afe yi ano yi, na bo 'dawuru se afe yi obiara nye ase basa basa, na se obi ye basa basa wo ase a, me gye no ntanu susu ampara so obiara anye bone. Wa hunu se oboroni fita na o ne wo apo awie a nne nso ote wo dan mu, nti animonyan a wo nya yi nsua. Wa be gye 'guan yi di Oboroni a owo ha yi nkwaso. Englis abrofo nyina nkwaso, nnipa a o ne yen nam nyina nkwaso afe oman yi nyina nkwaso, me Yao Kramo a me de 'kuro yi nkwaso, mma me kote nwu mma m'ani mfura, mma m'aso nsi, mma me nya Aban amane.*'

' Ta Kese of Aban,[1] the cycle of the year has come round, therefore I and these my people hold this sheep which is from our hands and give it to you. May you stand behind us with a good standing. May you call upon all the spirits of plants and beasts that the bearers of children may be fruitful, and that the hunter who takes his gun to go to the forest may kill meat. And again, I went to Krakye Dente [2] about snails, that they might remain near the town, nevertheless it is as if snails were lost, by your graciousness permit that snails may come forth again. Yet again, by the condescension with which your hand has rested upon this (past) year I beat the *odawuru* (gong), saying that no one was to act wantonly this year during the festival, and saying that if any one did so I should fine him £16—owing to all this, verily no one has done any wrong.

[1] That part of the town of Tekiman where the temple of Ta Kese stands is so called.

[2] A famous oracle that has head-quarters in a cave near the Volta River in what is now a portion of the mandated territory of Togoland.

'You have seen that a white man has been present with you throughout all the Apo ceremony, and that to-day he sits in your room, therefore the distinction you receive is not small.

'May you come and receive this sheep and eat.

'Life to the white man who is present, life to all the English white men, life to all those who walk with him (my companions from Southern Ashanti); life to all this people, life to me, Yao Kramo, who rule this town; do not let me become impotent, do not let my eyes become covered over, do not let my ears become stopped up, grant that I may have no quarrel with the Castle (the Government).'

He then stabbed the sheep in the throat while it was held above the shrine of Ta Kese so that some of its blood dripped into the pan. Next it was held over each shrine in turn that a little blood might fall upon it, and was also held over the blackened stools, and last of all over Amoa. It was then carried outside into the yard and held for a moment against the *fontomfrom* drums that blood might fall upon them. The carcase was cut up in the court-yard, in the usual manner. Some of the meat, lungs, and intestines were carried into the temple, laid upon the ground near the altar, and cut up into small pieces, some were placed in the brass pans, some on the stools, and the rest shared out among those present.

In Figs. 70 and 71, which show the rows of shrines, the man cutting up these offerings may be seen. The room in which the photograph was taken was comparatively dark and a very long exposure of course had to be given, so that the human figure shown is not clearly defined owing to it having moved.

No wine was given as an offering. The chief now stood up and said in a loud voice:

'*Yen nyina nyina nhira e*' ('We invoke blessings').

Every one answered:

'*Okuse o, yen nyina hyira e, okuse o. Ye hyira Yao Kramo o okus o*' ('Farewell, blessings upon all, farewell. We invoke blessings upon Yao Kramo').

The meat and other offerings left upon the shrines, I was informed, would be removed that afternoon; some of the pieces of meat would be threaded upon wooden skewers, roasted, and eaten by the chief priest and the chief.

On p. 161 I have referred to a tragedy in connexion with the priest of Obo Kyerewa.

Not long after the events just described, this young priest, called Kofi Afona, whom I had met during the *Apo* ceremony (his photograph may be seen in Fig. 72), was carried into Tekiman suffering from a terrible wound. I was called to see him and found the poor fellow upon his hands and knees, and only able to walk thus on all fours. From his buttock protruded the socket of an iron spear, the point of which I could feel under the skin a foot up his side. The spear[1] was a *barbed* one and to extract it without a surgical operation was impossible. The nearest doctor was some thirty-six miles distant, so I ordered the chief to get a hammock and carriers ready. I did what I could to plug the wound with dressings and gave the poor man brandy. I have never seen a more plucky fellow. His only idea seemed to be that I should not get my clothes stained from his wound. He told me the accident had happened while he was hunting a *mampam* (iguana). He had followed the great lizard up a tree, jabbed at it with his spear, and missed it, when it had jumped down. He had then thrown down his spear, the iron-shod butt had stuck in the ground, its point thus being upwards; upon this barbed end the priest had fallen as he slid backwards down the tree. Kofi Afona knew he was going to die. He said: 'Tano will soon call me, I know I am dying, thank you for what you have done.'

There seemed an interminable delay in getting the hammock and the hammock men, and an extraordinary apathy on the part of every one. I try never to lose my temper with Africans, but in this case I did so sadly, and I struck one man standing idly by, who made no movement when I bade him go and see what was the reason of the delay. He moved away but did not go upon the errand. My feelings were those of amazement and disgust at such indifference to suffering. Eventually my police orderly and I commandeered a hammock and six men, while the chief only half-heartedly assisted after I had threatened to hold him responsible for the man's death if he did not make it possible to use the only chance to save him. Accompanied

[1] This spear, which was now called *odiawuo* (lit. the murderer), was forfeited and became the property of the chief.

by my orderly they set out about 4 p.m. for Sunyani with written orders to villages *en route* to supply relays of carriers. My orderly returned a couple of days later saying that the priest had died on the way about 4 a.m. next morning. He had sent me a message, saying, 'Bid good-bye to the white *akomfo*, tell him Tano calls me and thank him.'

I went to see the old priest of Ta Kese and we began to talk about the tragedy. He said: 'Yes, of course he died. Did you not know that a *mampam* was a "red taboo" of his god? He should not have tried to kill it.' Then I understood everything—the apparent indifference and utter callousness were neither the one nor the other, it was a natural dislike to interfere with the decrees of a god who had passed a just sentence. Once again, '*tout savoir, tout pardonner*'.

I later, after some inquiry, found the man I had struck, and expressed my regret. He replied that he had not borne me any malice, as he knew I did not understand. I discovered that he was the chief of N——, and we later became great friends. I went to his village to hunt the very elusive *otromo* (bongo), which it is said no European has ever yet shot in these parts, and is, to the Ashanti, the most dangerous animal—not physically but spiritually—in all his forests.

XVI

RELIGION

The God Tano (Ta Kora). A Visit to his Temple.

After nearly nine months' anthropological work in Southern and Central Ashanti, I was advised by many African friends and helpers to visit the northern parts—' the home of the gods ' —and the factory, so to speak, of their shrines.

It is here that Tano or Ta Kora, the greatest of the Ashanti gods upon earth, has his head-quarters, near the source of the great water of that name, the spiritual part of which he really is. The primary object of my visit was, if possible, actually to witness the ceremony I have described elsewhere, i.e. the making and consecration of a shrine for a god. Though I failed in that object, much good resulted from this somewhat ambitious quest, as I was permitted, I believe, to see and to hear things—in mitigation of my possible disappointment—that otherwise might have been hidden from me.

At Tekiman, where the *Apo* ceremony already described took place, I had laid a request before the high-priest of Ta Kese that the priesthood would make for me a shrine into which they would call an emanation of the spirit of their local god, thus creating ' a child of Ta Kese '. As the result of firm friendship laid during the *Apo* ceremonies, they had actually consented to do so, and there only remained certain details to settle, as, for example, whether I was to be permitted to take the shrine to Europe or whether it should remain in their pantheon, and various questions as to its taboos being kept. I promised that I would not be offended or consider myself cheated if the spirit refused to manifest itself to me and for me.

Perhaps being over-confident in my powers of persuasion, I determined to aim still higher and witness the making of a shrine for ' a child ' of the great Tano himself ; so instead of being contented with their offer, I decided to set out for Tano Oboase, a small village near the source of the Tano river.

FIG. 73. Brong girls at the *Apo* ceremony

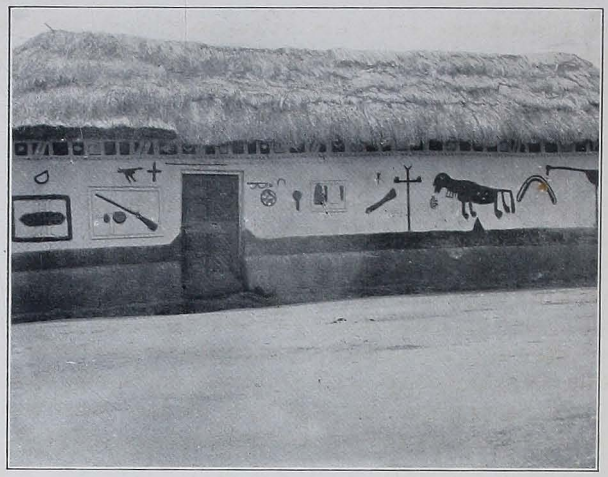


FIG. 74. The outside of Ta Kora's temple at Tano Oboase

FIG. 75. The mural designs on the wall of Ta Kora's temple

Here, I hoped, once the high-priest got to know me, that I should be granted a similar request. Arrived at Tano Oboase (lit. Tano beneath the rock), I put up at the Queen Mother's house. Ama Toa (the Queen Mother) was not in the village, having gone to Mampon, but her daughters made me welcome and gave me two rooms facing on the open court-yard. The temple of the god Ta Kora was almost exactly opposite, across the wide street which runs through the centre of the village. This temple was by far the most elaborate and the best constructed I had seen anywhere in Ashanti. The surface of the walls, outside and inside, were decorated with elaborate mural paintings, some flush with the wall, others standing out in low relief. The colours used were black and red, the black being, I believe, coal tar, the red, clay (see Figs. 74–6).

It might be supposed that such elaborate ornamentation upon a building of this nature must have some special significance in relation with the particular cult. Such, however, did not appear to be the case; when I inquired later from the priest what these paintings represented, he said he did not know all of them, as they had been done according to the fancy of the bricklayer or mason who had built the house, who no doubt had conformed to certain customary standards and designs. Some of these mural paintings were later explained to me, and before I go further I will give the explanation of such as were known.

Beginning with Fig. 75, the dado along the top is chiefly composed of stars and moons and suns, with every now and then a hand. The heavenly bodies are of course here depicted in connexion with the Supreme God, 'Nyame. The hand, which I have seen in many buildings, is simply 'the hand of the craftsman'. 'That is my hand that did the work,' the artist will often tell you. The writing on the wall below the dado runs: 'CHEF KF DURO AMA NTOAH adn BUILD THE CHEF OF TA KORA HOUSE.' This stands, I think, for Chief Kofi Duro (the chief priest and also chief of the town; he combines the two functions), Ama Ntoah (the Queen Mother?), 'adn' is for 'and'. The inscription may be read as meaning, 'And it is they who built the house for the chief god Ta Kora.'

Below the dado and the lettering, from left to right, are fetters, which in the Ashanti mind in this connexion are

associated with a binding, an idea which occurs again in their stools where, as will be seen later (see Fig. 106), fetters are employed ' to bind down the owner's soul to the stool '. A similar device is seen on a *kuduo* (see Fig. 129), with, I am almost certain, the same underlying idea; the design is also found in Ashanti weights. The circular object is, I was told, a *kahiri*, i.e. the head-rest upon which a load or, in this case, a shrine is placed.

The bow is a rainbow (called literally the Sky God's bow).

The next design depicts a rattle (*ntorowa*) used in dancing at religious ceremonies. It may be noted that all dancing in Ashanti has probably a religious significance.

The objects inside the frame are *adawuru* (iron gongs) and the sticks with which they are beaten. These are much used in religious ceremonies for summoning the spirit of a god. The priest in Fig. 62 may be seen to be holding one which he is beating.

In Fig. 74 the design like a draught-board resting upon a stool, and viewed from above, is the game of *wari*. The object beside the Dane gun is a hunter's belt with pouches and knife. Above the *wari* board is a single fetter. The bird is a fowl (a cock?). What the cross depicts I could not find out; it will be noted later that a similar emblem was sewn in cowrie shells upon the altar cloth.

In Fig. 74 the object on the right of the ' gongs ' is an *afona* (a sword); the meaning of the design next it I could not find out, nor the names of the two animals; the bow is a rainbow; the object immediately under the mouth of the animal on the left is a corn cob.

Fig. 76 depicts the inside of the court-yard and shows the entrance to the room in which the shrine of Ta Kora and other shrines are kept.

The paintings upon the outside wall from left to right are:

(*a*) A leopard, with an antelope in its mouth.

(*b*) A cock, fastened by one leg to a stick.

(*c*) A hen.

(*d*) A corn cob.

(*e*) (On the right of doorway) a Dane or flint gun, and below that a long pipe.

The mural paintings inside will be noted later. Through the

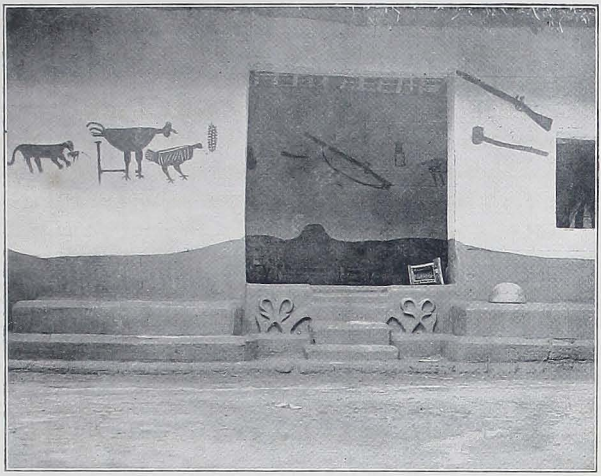


FIG. 76. Inside the court-yard of the temple

FIG. 77. The shrine and altar of Ta Kora

window may be seen the striped cloth covering the altar of the great god Ta Kora.

The design on each side of the steps may be compared with that of the temple to the Sky God (see Frontispiece).

Lying inside the doorway is a ' white stool ', turned over on its side lest any wandering ghost should wish to sit upon it.

At the side of the doorway is a calabash used for the wine offering.

I arrived at Tano Oboase on Thursday, the 4th May 1922, and I propose to give an account of each day's events, but restricting myself to matters having direct bearing upon the cult of the gods.

The evening I arrived, Kofi Duro, who was the chief of the town, and also high-priest of Ta Kora, a perfectly charming old gentleman with a benign and intellectual face, the elders of the town, and various other hangers-on who came out of curiosity, all came to see me after dinner. I well recollect it was a beautiful night with a pale moon in her first quarter. We all sat in the yard in the Queen Mother's compound.

I was introduced by the representative from Tekiman who had accompanied me, and plunged at once into the object of my visit, which I told them was to ask their permission to have a new god made for me, i.e. a new shrine which would be acceptable to the spirit which in itself was as old as the world. I gave them my reasons for making the request, and told them briefly what I had already seen and knew about their country, letting them see that I was already conversant with certain rites and customs that they knew only a privileged few among their own race had ever seen. I talked in Ashanti of course and it was delightful to see, as I had so often seen, the barriers of suspicion and mistrust, that the ' bush ' African always feels for the European, being broken down as I spoke.

My friends Kwaku Abu and Wisirika, men of great standing and repute who had accompanied me from Southern Ashanti, then stood up and spoke with considerable eloquence on my behalf, telling how the work I was doing was for the whole Ashanti nation, and pleading in their own language and in their own way, though they knew it not, the cause of anthropology, which is to lead to the better understanding of the two races.

The old high-priest and the elders and those who came with them, none of whom, it must be recollected, I had ever seen before, rose up and took my hand and thanked me, and I knew that, whether or not my very unusual request would be granted, we would all be real friends. Kofi Duro said that it was impossible to give an answer at once, but that to-morrow was Fofie (a sacred Friday), that Ta Kora would be worshipped in any case upon that day, that I might attend, and that my request would then be placed before him. The interview was then broken off.

That night, about midnight, there was a tornado, and a small tree about fifteen yards from my camp bed was split from top to bottom by lightning. I thought the house I was in had been struck, and so evidently did all its other occupants, for a perfect pandemonium raged among pigs, sheep, and fowls in the compound. Early next morning I went to examine the extent of the damage and found the tree mentioned had been cleft as if with a very blunt wedge or axe from the top to within about a foot of the ground, when the current had left it and entered the ground, making a hole. The tree, strangely enough, was not blackened or charred in the least. As I was standing in my pyjamas examining it, one of the villagers came up and, after looking at it, said that God's axe (*'Nyame akuma*)[1] had, after splitting the tree, passed underground to the river where no doubt it would some day be found.[1] I was told later that the fact that no house was struck and no one killed was taken as a favourable omen. Had I been killed, I am afraid the cause of anthropology in these parts would have received a set-back from which it would hardly have recovered. Untoward events of this kind may easily upset the best intentions and the best-laid plans, and I am not quite sure but for that thunder-storm I might have been able to describe at first, instead of at second hand, the making of a shrine for the gods. However, things certainly might have been worse.

Early next morning, Friday, the 5th May 1922—a sacred Friday—we all met in the court-yard of the Ta Kora temple. As you enter the door, seen in Fig. 74, the room in which are the shrines is on the left. Opposite that room is another with

[1] See article on neolithic implements, Chap. XXVI.

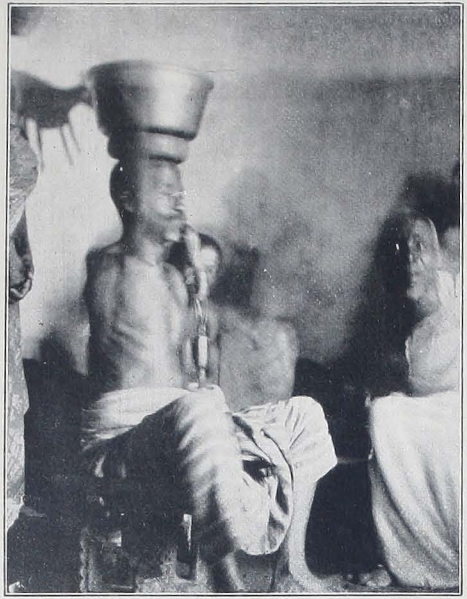


FIG. 78. The old 'red' priest leaning forward towards the god

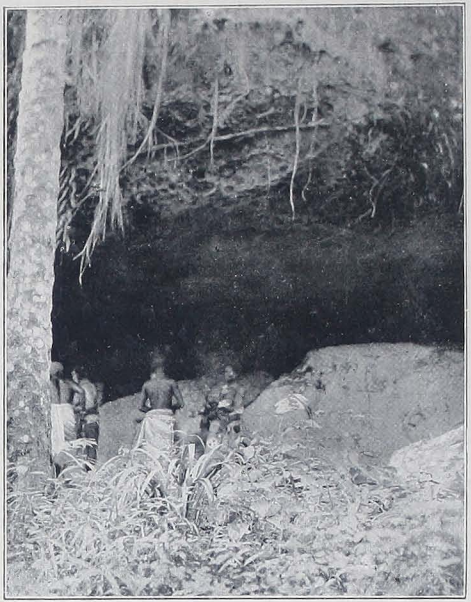


FIG. 79. Ame Yao's cave

only three walls which is used for cooking the offerings of yams, &c. At right angles to these, at each end are the rooms in which Tano's drums are kept. As we entered the yard, a drummer, beating a drum called *mpintoa*, played a dance tune called variously *akyea* or *nantewene*, in which the dancers walk stooping, with slow, affected, strutting steps.[1] Another dance was also played called *Odamani koto koko* from the opening words of the song which accompanies it, which runs :

' The people of to-day go and buy coco yams and ask for salt to put in them.'

The high-priest Kofi Duro, another priest with reddish hair and a red skin (an albino), several other old priests, and I now entered the room where the shrine of Ta Kora was kept. The god's brass pan stood on a raised altar at one corner of the temple. This altar was covered with a native-woven striped cloth (see Fig. 77). In front of Ta Kora, but lower down, was the shrine of another god, Ati Akosua (which, it will be recollected, had attended the *Apo* festival). There was near it one other shrine, that of the god Ta Kwesi, which I had also seen at Tekiman.

The old priest, who had three lines of clay upon his shoulders and arms, and several other of the priests now set down their stools before the altar upon which stood the shrine of Ta Kora. A cloth was spread upon the floor a little to the left of these men, and another priest set his stool upon it and seated himself. The rest of us ranged ourselves facing them.

The shrine of the god Ati Akosua was now uncovered. A *kahiri* (circular head-rest) (see Fig. 78, in which it can be seen beneath the brass pan on the priest's head) was handed to the high-priest. He received it, sprayed some spittle from his mouth upon it, pressed it to his forehead, then to his breast, passed it, as he sat, under his left knee, then taking it in his left hand passed it to the priest who was seated upon his stool on the cloth carpet and was ' to carry the god '.

This priest, settling himself firmly on his stool, arranged his feet upon the cloth so that only his heels rested upon it, put the head-rest upon his head, and upon this was immediately set the brass pan or shrine of Ati Akosua. In his hand he held

[1] *akyea* means to walk thus.

a cow-tail switch (*bodua*), upon the handle end of which were strands of palm fibre called *edoa dokum*. He sat thus perfectly motionless.

It will be noted that the shrine of Ati Akosua not Ta Kora was used. I was later informed that just as upon earth it is not etiquette for a king to speak direct to any one except through his official mouthpiece or spokesman, the *okyeame* (usually but quite wrongly rendered ' linguist ' throughout the Gold Coast), so with the gods, each had his *okyeame*.

The old red priest, who was sitting near, just on the left of the priest carrying the shrine, and may be seen in Fig. 78,[1] now spoke in a low voice as follows :

Odomankoma obosom, ankobi na huni Nkadomako okyere abrane
Ohene Ame Yao obosom
Asante 'hene obosom
Woye sa kum nkora miensa
Obosom a ofiri bomu
Wo na wokum Adinkira
Ohene a yede kosua fufuo guare no
Wo na wo nkwanta aye hu
Ope wo afwe asei wo, asai wo a nsai
Nokware obosom, ose na ewom
Wo na odawuru bo Nyamefrebere
Wo ko babi a, bra
Kwampiri asu o yiri a, na ye fre wo
Abiridi abrade ete 'Nyame so
Wo na wonwene akwan tene mu
Nne Fofie, na ye re pe wo anim afwe
Na waba abetie die ye re ka akyerewo.

Creator's god, who sees even though he be not present.
Nkadomako [a title] who seizes strong men,
God of the King Ame Yao,
God of the King of Ashanti,
You did such and such a thing and slew ' the three old men '.
God who comes from within the rock,
You who slew Adinkira,
King, whom we bathe with white eggs.

[1] This and the other photos were taken in a very badly lighted interior; about one minute exposure was given. It may be judged from this fact with what intense interest every one sat almost motionless.

You, the cross-roads leading to whose dwelling are a fearful place.
He who would see you in order to destroy you, with that destruction be not destroyed.
God who is truthful, when you speak there is truth in what you say.
You whose *odawuru* [gong] sounds even to Mecca.
If you have gone elsewhere, come (hither).
Kwampiri [a title], upon whom, when the waters are in flood, we call,
Shooting stars, that abide with the Supreme Being,
You weave [as it were] a thread [in a loom] across a path stretching afar.
To-day is sacred Friday and we wish to behold your face,
So come and listen to what we have to tell you.[1]

When he had finished, every one sat motionless, the old red priest leaning forward towards the god, with an expression of intense alertness, to await his reply. This expression has been caught in a remarkable manner by the camera (see Fig. 78), the little click of which broke upon a silence that was so intense that the deep breathing of those present could be heard.

This silence lasted about a minute, when the priest supporting the shrine upon his head suddenly began to twitch from head to foot and raise his right hand from his side and slap the side of the brass pan with his flat palm. This, I heard later, was a sign that the spirit of the god had entered the shrine and thence passed into the medium—the priest.

Every one with one breath said :

' *Nana makye o* ' ' Grandsire, good morning '.

The ' linguist ' of the chief (who, it must be remembered, was also high-priest) now called upon the representative of the Tekiman priest, who had accompanied me, to state the object of my visit. This man stood up and said (in the vernacular of course) that I had come to see the great Ta Kora, that I knew and had witnessed many of the most sacred rites of the Ashanti, that I had just come from being present at the *Apo* ceremony,

[1] This beautiful prayer is packed with historical allusions to which I cannot, in this volume, do more than draw attention. Amo Yao was one of the early Kings of Tekiman, whose cave will be described later. Adinkira was the famous King of Gyaman (now the French Ivory Coast), conquered and slain by the famous Ashanti king Bonsu, the elder. Mecca is well known to the Ashanti, who call it ' the place men call upon the Supreme Being '. ' The three old men ' are they after whom Nkoranza is named.

that though I well knew how the shrines of the gods were made, I had never actually witnessed their making and consecration, and that as I knew that he, Ta Kora, was the greatest of the Ashanti gods on earth, I had come to ask his permission for the priests to make a new shrine, which, when made, I would either leave in charge of the priests or take with me to Europe, whichever they desired.

All the time he was saying this the priest carrying the god was slapping the side of its brass pan with his right hand.

He now began to quiver, every muscle of his body seemed to twitch : his heels worked spasmodically upon the carpet ; he removed the fibre end of the cow tail from his mouth—he had been holding it between his teeth—and holding it upright in his right hand called out the names of the two ' linguists ' who were present, and then spoke as follows :

' *Efiri Osai Tutu pen so de be si Agyiman ne pen so asem a ehyia no se obe kyere me a, me ye ma no. Ohene Bonsu ore ko kum Adinkira obe ka kyere me ma me boa no, na wanka kyere me se me nkyere me ba bi ma no. Me nye akora ma adie sei a, na me kora nti na be fre me de Tano Kora na obae yi se ne biribi na asai a na nka ose me nkora no a anka me hu, na se ose me nkyere me ba bi ma no, die me ntumi sa.*'

' From the time of Osai Tutu until the reign of Agyiman,[1] if any one were in need and he came to me and told me, I made it right for him. When King Bonsu was going to slay Adinkira (King of Gyaman) and came and told me, I gave him help, but he did not tell me to seize one of my sons and give him. I am not named " Akora " because I am old (*akora*, an old man), but I am called Ta Kora ; if it be that anything is spoiled I mend it (*kora*, to mend). Now if he had come to me and said that something of his was spoiled and had asked me to mend it, then had I seen the path clear, but he says that I must take one of my sons and give him, but that I am unable to do.'

Here the priest paused for a while, all the time slapping the side of the pan. He continued :

' *Nnipa a odo me na wa ba me nkyen, se oreko a me gyina n'akyi, ma gya no kwan pa ma no ako. Wa ba yi obe ko ma 'bo mu a mo ma no 'kwan ma no nko ; nko fwe bere me te : se obeko asum a mo ma no nko, nko bo ne ho asu. Me mma ne me na' pi*

[1] *Agyiman*, another name for King Kwaku Dua I.

se ye be ko ' school ', nso me nsi ye kwan, se yen ko som 'Nyame meara mu 'Nyame ba ne, me na se oboroni fita se odo me na waben me nkyen a me'nso me gyina n'akyi.'

' The man who loves me comes to me, and when he goes away I shall stand behind him and accompany him on a good path that he may go his way. And this one who has come, grant him permission to go to my rock should he wish to go. Let him go and behold the place where I reside. Should he wish to go to the water (the Tano), allow him to go and sprinkle himself with water. Many of my children say they will go to school, and I do not stand in their path, and say they must not serve the Supreme God. In my own being I am the son of God, and if my grandchildren say that the white man loves me and has drawn nigh to me, I, too, shall stand behind him.'[1]

He ceased speaking, and after a pause I stood up and said I had heard all the words of Ta Kora and thanked him for his permission to visit his cave and his water. I said I was much struck with the god's attitude towards our education and religion, and that we English, too, allowed all men freedom in what they believed. I said all the children should be encouraged to go to school and hear more about 'Nyame—the Supreme Being—who was really the very same God they themselves knew and worshipped, as all their old men told me, long before any Europeans came to this land.

This was repeated by the ' red priest '.

The priest ' carrying the god ' replied :

' *Me da mo ase*,' ' I thank you.'

He then said, ' *Me ko tena 'se*.' ' I am going to sit down.'

Thereupon the brass pan was quickly removed from his head. He shook off the *kahiri* (head-rest), which rolled upon the ground. I noticed the old priest and others peered forward and watched it closely, and I was afterwards told that according as it fell upon one side or the other so they knew if the god wished to speak again or not. In the former case the shrine would be replaced upon the priest's head.

As soon as the shrine was removed from the priest's head he appeared to sit dazed for a few moments, then he put his hand to his face and passed it over his eyes like a man awakening from

[1] The tolerance of this pagan god may seem remarkable. It finds a parallel in the oracle at Delphi which was said to have declared that the proper religion for a man was that of his own country.

sleep or from a trance. He told me later he knew nothing of what he had said until informed by others present.

The head priest now said that only a short time would elapse before the ordinary *Fofie* ceremonies began. I spent this interval in having a look round the temple and conversing with the old priest.

The most remarkable feature about this interior was the total absence of the *suman* or charms that usually adorn the walls of most Ashanti temples. Upon the walls near to the altar were mural paintings depicting a Dane or flint-lock gun with a sling, a small antelope, a folding mirror (such as the priest in Fig. 68 is seen holding), an *odawuru* (gong), and a corn cob. These, like the paintings already described, the old priest told me, had been done by the builder. The priests were also devoid of the usual medicine charms so commonly worn by their class. 'Ta Kora came from 'Nyame, the Sky God, and needs no help from ordinary *suman*,' said the old priest when I remarked on the lack of these, and he added: '*Suman* spoil the gods, but I cannot stop most priests using them.'

Grouped round the walls of the temple and raised a little from the floor upon their stools were several shrines—all but two of these, I was informed, were now mere empty receptacles. The priests who had formerly tended them, when they were active shrines, had died, and since then the spirit that had formerly manifested itself within them has ceased to do so. 'Some day this spirit might descend upon some one who would then become their priest.'

Several priests and priestesses I had spoken to had told me that this was how they had first become priests. They had been seized with a spirit and had either lost all consciousness or seemingly had become mad. A god would be consulted, and he might say it was the effect of an outpouring of such and such a spirit, in which case, if there were a shrine already, such as has been described, its cult would be once again revived. If no shrine existed, then a new abode would be prepared.

The following, I was informed, are the taboos of the god Ta Kora.

(*a*) Rust-coloured mourning cloth (*kuntunkuni*).

(*b*) Black cloth (called *sibiri*).

(*c*) Any ninth child (*nkroma*).

(*d*) The *ambra*, a red monkey (*Cercopithecus ruber*). Should the name of this monkey be even mentioned in the presence of a priest while he is eating, he may not touch any more of that food, which will be thrown away or given to children.

(*e*) Menstruating women. Ta Kora seems especially indifferent or even hostile to women. They are ungrateful creatures (*bonniaye*), he declares. No women are allowed to touch his shrine, and he has no female *akomfo* of his own. Priestesses of other gods are, however, freely allowed in his temple, as I was to note presently.

(*f*) Donkeys.

(*g*) Guinea corn (*atoko*).

The people now began to collect for the celebration of *Fofie*, and the room was quite full when the rites began.

Three eggs were now handed to the chief priest. He cracked one against the altar and, stooping down, allowed the white to fall into a plate; the yolk he poured into the palm of his right hand and immediately began to rub it over the flat, smooth surface which formed the top layer of the contents of the shrine of Ta Kora, saying as he did so:

'Obom' 'hene, nne Fofie, wo ko so, nne na wofiri.
Me fua 'nsam' kesua me de re ma wo.
Tekiman 'hene nkwaso.
Oboase man nkwaso.
Nkoranza 'hene nkwaso.
Nsuta 'hene nkwaso.
Duaben 'hene nkwaso.
Asante 'man nkwaso.
Oboroni nkwaso, ma no nkye se die wo Ta Kora wakyere bomu.
Nkrofo a o ne ye nam nkwaso.
Mma m'aso nsi: mma m'ani mfura: mma me kote nwu.
Wo, na ye fre wo obom' 'hene preko gye kesua yi di: ne Fofie wo agyina yen akyiri akyigyina pa.'

'King of within the rock, to-day is sacred Friday, your days of seclusion are at an end, and to-day you have again come forth.[1]

[1] On *Kwakuo*, i. e. Kwa-Wednesday and upon Thursday, Ta Kora's temple is closed and no one has access to it. These days are bad days for the god. The oath of Ta Kora is *kwakuo*.

I hold an egg in my hand and am giving it to you.
Life to the Chief of Tekiman.
Life to the people of Oboase.
Life to the Chief of Nkoranza.
Life to the Chief of Nsuta.
Life to the Chief of Juaben.
Life to the Ashanti nation.
Life to the white man, may he last as long as you, Ta Kora, have lasted in the rock.
Life to those who walk with him. Do not let my ears become closed, do not let my eyes become covered over; do not let me become impotent.
You, whom alone we call " Lord of the rock ", receive this egg and eat, and upon this sacred Friday may you stand behind us with a good standing.'

During all this speech the herald was continually breaking in with, *Tie! Tie! Kom! fwe! fwe!* (listen! listen! silence! behold! behold!).

Taking a second egg, the priest broke it in like manner and rubbed the yolk over the top of the shrine of Ati Akosua, saying as he did so:

'*Ati Akosua, nne Fofie gye kesua yi di.*
Wo Boase man nkwaso.
Tekiman 'hene nkwaso.
Oboroni nkwaso.
Nkrofo a o ne ye nam nkwaso, ma no nkye se die wo se Ta Kora akyere abomu: me nkwaso (*&c.*, *&c.*).
Die ofua otuo nya nam nkum.'

'Ati Akosua, to-day is sacred Friday, receive this egg and eat.
Life for your people of Oboase.
Life for the Chief of Tekiman.
Life to the white man and to those who walk with him; may he last as long as your father, Ta Kora, has lasted in the cave.
Life to myself (&c., &c., and ending up), May he who holds a gun get meat to kill.'

The third shrine, that of Ta Kwesi (sometimes known as Kramo Kese), was treated in the same manner with the last egg, similar words being used.

A pot of palm wine was now brought forward and poured into a calabash, which was held by the chief priest. Into this he dipped the end of the cow-tail switch, already mentioned, the

edoa dokum, made of palm fibre, and sucking this he sprayed the wine it contained against the wall near by Ta Kora.

Another calabash was brought by the herald and held in front of the Ta Kora shrine, while the priest filled it from the calabash which he held, saying :

'*Obom' 'hene nsa ni o: nne Fofie: wo ko so, nne na wo firi: wa be gye nsa anom: wagyina m'akyin akyigyina pa. Tekiman 'hene nkwaso (&c., &c., and ending), Wo mma ne wo na' ko bata ma yenya sika mmera fie.*'

'Lord of within the rock, here is wine. To-day is sacred Friday, you have gone into seclusion, but to-day you have come forth. May you receive this wine and drink. May you stand behind me with a good standing. Life to the Chief of Tekiman (&c., &c.). When your children and grandchildren go to trade may they bring money home to the house.'

Wine was poured out in the same manner for the other two gods, asking for life for the various Ashanti divisions, and ending with :

'*Wo nno bi, ntan bi, nyina nkwaso.*'

'Life for all, you who do not love some and hate others.' [1]

After this the old priest walked across the room and poured some wine upon four of the blackened stools, saying as he did so

'*Mpanyimfo monge nsa nom.*'

'Elders receive your wine and drink.'

Then upon the fifth stool, saying :

'*Oba panyim gye nsa nom.*'

'Old woman, receive wine and drink.'

This completed the ordinary ceremony which it was the head priest's duty to perform every forty-third day.[2]

Any of the general public who had an offering to bring now came forward with it. One gave eggs, another a pot of wine, another a fowl. Wisirika, one of my party (who is the man on the log, *padua*, see Fig. 19), gave a pot of wine and some salt.

The fowl offered was received by the chief priest in both

[1] The chief priest told me that this god was never asked to hate any one or bring evil upon any one, the most he does is to omit his blessing.

[2] See Chap. IX.

hands from the donor. It was held close to the shrine of Ta Kora, and the following words spoken :

' *Obom' 'hene Ta Kora, wo nana Asumasi na nne Fofie ofua ne nsam okoko ne nsa de re be fwe w'anim mu, osere wo nkwa, osere wo akwahosan, wa be gye adi na wagyina n'akyi akyigyina pa, oye biribiara nye yiye ; ne nkrofo nyina nkwa so.*'

' King of within the rock, Ta Kora, your grandchild, So-and-so, because to-day is sacred Friday, holds this fowl which is from his hands, and brings it that he may behold your face ; he begs you for life, he begs you for long-continuing health ; may you come and receive it and eat and stand behind him with a good standing, and whatever he does may it be well. Life to all his household.'

The priest then set the fowl upon the flat, smooth surface of the shrine. The fowl, which a second before had been struggling and frightened, stood perfectly still upon the shrine, making no attempt to fly or jump down. It began first of all to prune its feathers. I noted it was most intently watched by the priest. It stood still thus for about a minute, when the priest picked it up and again held it against the brass pan, saying :

' *Se wo nana aye wo biribiara oma wo de bem, be gye wa 'koko.*'

' If your grandchild has done anything against you, he begs your pardon. Come and accept his fowl.'

The fluttering, terrified hen was again transferred to the top of Ta Kora's shrine. Here again it stood quite still. Suddenly it sat down as if about to roost and at the same time gave a little peck at the surface upon which it sat. Immediately it was seized by the priest, and in a second its head was wrung off, the bleeding body held above the pan, and a little blood allowed to fall upon it, when the still fluttering body was cast over the heads of the people out into the yard. Here it was cut up and divided, I was told, among the children of the priest.

After this an offering of wine was brought. It was placed in the hands of the priest by the representative who had accompanied me from Tekiman. The priest was just about to address the god when he seemed to be seized with a fit. The calabash of wine fell from his hand to the floor. He staggered and fell against the altar, and was only saved from falling by those who

rushed forward and supported him. Held thus he leaned his head against the brass basin and seemed gradually to recover.

His place was immediately taken by another priest. A fresh calabash of wine was brought and poured out as already described before the gods and upon the stools.

There was so much noise after the old priest's seizure that I could not hear what was said as this libation was made, but was told it was the same as on the former occasion.

Another fowl was sacrificed as before, behaving in the same way. Should a fowl not act thus, it is handed back to the donor, ' the god having refused it '.

Next the wine was passed round, that in the big calabash, which had been offered to the gods, was drunk only by the herald and those who were observers of the god's taboos.

Two staves, with silver tops, belonging to the *akyeame* (' linguists ') were now brought and rested upon the altar and against the shrine of Ta Kora, and a string of beads, called *akomen*, were hung upon it.

After a few minutes these were removed and Ta Kora was covered over with a native-woven cloth, upon one corner of which was sewn a small cross of cowrie shells.

A large striped cloth was now thrown over all and the two staves and the beads replaced on the altar.

While all this had been going on, two women *akomfo*—not priestesses of Ta Kora—were dancing in the court-yard to the accompaniment of drums and songs. Every now and then they would run up the steps into the room where we all were, bend down upon one knee, and emit what sounded just like yelping sounds, but which was really *agya! agya!* father! father! They were heavily powdered with the usual clay. Every one now left the temple and went into the yard to watch the dancing. ' The gods were disporting and enjoying themselves,' I was told.

This completed the ceremony in the pantheon. About an hour later we all set out for ' the King's rock ', an account of which will be given in the next chapter.

XVII

RELIGION

The God Tano (continued).

A Visit to his Rock.

About an hour after the events related in the previous chapter, we all set out from the village to go to the natural shrine of the ' King from within the rock '.

The head priest and I were each escorted under enormous umbrellas. We were closely attended by a very old lady with snow-white hair—the mother of the old chief priest—who carried a cow-tail switch, with which, somewhat to my embarrassment, she would insist on gently stroking my head, face, and shoulders, alternately transferring her attentions to her son, the chief priest. Among others in the cavalcade who came with us were the two priestesses—in powdered white clay—who had been dancing in the yard of the temple. We were accompanied also by the spokesman (*okyeame*), several drummers, and a crowd of about fifty others, all men.

On the outskirts of the town, on the left of the narrow path, stood one of the conical-roofed huts, which is the temple of the god Ntoa, a modern adaptation of which, built with shingles and cement, may be seen at Nkoranza.—An interesting example of the evolution of the modern from the ancient.—(See Figs. 80 and 81.)

The two priestesses darted aside to this temple and curtsied very low before the entrance, at the same time sprinkling before it some white powdered clay. A few minutes later these very active ladies again dashed off, and again bent the knee and sprinkled some clay upon the ground. When I went to the spot I found it was at the cross-roads, one leading to the cave, and the other to the source of the Tano River, and I recalled the words of the priest who had said : ' You, the cross-roads leading to whose dwelling is a fearful place.'

The narrow path we followed ran parallel to another and

FIG. 80. Temple to Ntoa near Tano Oboase

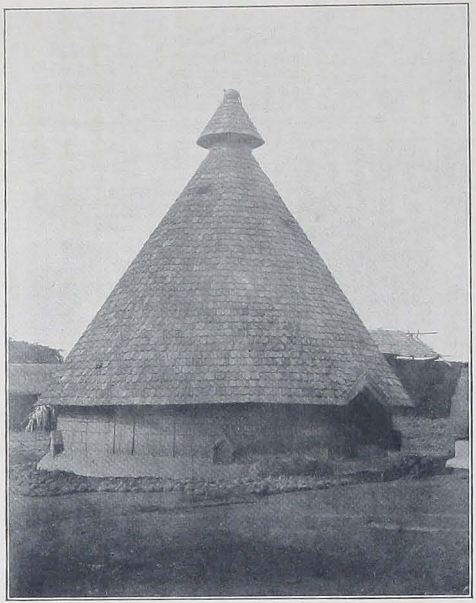


FIG. 81. A modern adaptation of a similar temple at Nkoranza

overgrown path leading, I was told, from the old village of Tano Oboase, the site of which was only a short distance from the present town. It was down this now unused path that the great Ashanti King, Bonsu Panyim (*c.* 1800), had passed when he went to consult the great Tano before his campaign against the Gyaman, the campaign which ended in the defeat and death of the great Adinkira. This event, it will be recollected, had been already alluded to by the god in his speech made to me through the priest.

As we followed the path, there gradually became visible on our right, over the tops of the trees, a long range of sandstone rocks, upon which the path was gradually converging. They rose from 100 to 300 feet in height, in turrets, domes, and castles, and looked at first sight, and from the distance, as if they were the handiwork of man and not of nature. Presently we came to another cross-road leading directly to these cliffs. Here the whole party halted. Our umbrellas were closed, the drums became silent, the old woman, with hair like cotton-wool, became more active than ever with her cow-tail and nearly smothered me with it.

Most of the party halted here, while the old priest, I and a few others went forward to the rocks. The two priestesses ran ahead, and I saw them curtsying among the boulders at the spot that, I was told later, was Ame Yao's cave, where that king used to sit in contemplation (see Fig. 79).

Following the high-priest, we came up to the base of the rocks, high up on the face of which were perched two men (see Fig. 82). These men barred our way, and would not let any one pass until they had been paid a *domma*, i.e. the equivalent of that weight in gold dust.

The sum having been paid, we were permitted to climb the face of the cliff, pulling ourselves up by roots and grass and creepers, a somewhat difficult task for me as I was carrying a valuable camera. On reaching the ledge upon which those men stood, a low archway, which the priest said was called *opono akyi* (lit. the back door), was visible, and one by one we proceeded to crawl on our stomachs through this and along a low tunnel, called *ntwonom* (which simply means an entrance under a doorway). This gradually opened out into a large cave, which

again, on the side opposite to which we had entered, came out into the open. Beyond the mouth of the cave was a large boulder, upon which was piled a small heap of stones, on the top of which were the shells of two eggs (see Fig. 85). This boulder is known as *bokoro* (the one stone), and also as 'the king's stool'. The priest told me these stones were used for placing under and propping up Ta Kora, when his shrine was brought here and set upon the rock. On the right of this boulder (facing the cave) was another but smaller rock, which I was told was a shrine of Amoa, to whom the reader was introduced at Tekiman, during the *Apo* ceremony. Just outside the cave rose a great wall of rock about 60 feet high, upon which the high-priest was presently to throw an egg. This rock 'is the eating place of all the gods in Ashanti when they come to this place'. The cave itself is known as *ahem fie* (lit. the king's home). Inside this cave were to be seen fragments of pottery lying half-buried. 'These have been here since Odomankoma (the Creator) made things,' said the old priest.

The priest pointed out the spot where Bonsu Panyim, the Ashanti King, had stood more than a hundred years ago. No white man had ever been within the cave, said the old priest. One Governor (Sir Hugh Clifford?) had been outside it, and few of the Ashanti themselves had ever been permitted within. He said that when Bonsu Panyim had stood here to consult the god about his campaign against Adinkira, that the god (i.e. the priest carrying the god) had turned his back upon him because he, Bonsu Panyim, was a ninth child, and hence 'hateful' to the god. Standing thus, he had told the king that he would win his campaign and slay his enemy, but that forty days (forty-two?) later he would die. The priest said that up to that date Ta Kora generally resided in these rocks, and that it was only after the war against Gyaman that a shrine was made for him in a brass pan and that a temple had been built. 'Ta Kora even now only comes into the shrine (the pan) when called upon to do so.' 'Tano is as the wind,' said the old priest. Only some half-dozen men had been permitted to enter the cave. The priestesses remained below. The ceremony now began. Every one was stripped to the waist as a token of respect. The chief priest, taking an egg in his

hand, and standing beside the little cairn of stones, now spoke as follows :

' *Obom' 'hene, kantamanto, nne Fofie kese : me nsam kesua ni. Me sre wo nkwa, me sre wo ahooden, me sre wo akwahosan, wo mma ne wo na' nkwaso, Oboroni nkwaso. Tekiman 'hene nkwaso, Asante 'man nkwaso. Ye sre wo animonyan ne ahooden. Wa gyina akyiri akyigyina pa, ye ye biribiara ma nye yiye.*'

' King from within the rock, who, when he swears does not break his oath, to-day is the great sacred Friday ; here is an egg from my hands. I beg you for life, I beg you for strength, I beg you for continuing health ; life for your children and grandchildren, life for the chief of Tekiman, life for the Ashanti nation, life for the white man ; we beg you for favour and strength. May you stand behind us with a good standing. Whatever we do may it be well.'

He then took the egg, allowing white and yolk to fall upon the cairn, and placing the empty shell upon the top of one of the stones.

He then stepped a few paces out of the cave, and facing the wall of rocks—' the feeding place of the gods '—said

' *Sasama Ntoa, abosom nuasa a mo re ba be didi, nne Fofie monye kesua yi ni yanom mo me gye o.*'

' Sasama Ntoa and innumerable gods (lit. thirty gods), who are about to come and partake, to-day is sacred Friday, receive (this) egg and eat, come all of you and accept it.'

Saying so, he cast the egg against the side of the wall of rock.

Next he broke an egg against the small rock, Amoa, saying :

' *Amoa, me de kesua abere wo 'se, wonso wo die ni.*'

' Amoa, I have taken an egg and given it to your father, here is yours also.'

A palm-wine offering was next given, being poured on the cairn, with the words

' *Ta Kora me de kesua abere wo, gye nsa nom.*'

' Ta Kora, I have brought an egg and given to you, here is wine.'

He also threw some wine towards the big wall of rock, saying:

'*Yanom ma ma mo 'se nsa, monso mo die ni.*'

'All of you, I have given your father wine, this also is yours.'

He then poured a little upon Amoa, saying

'*Amoa, wanso wo puo ni.*'

'You also, Amoa, here are the dregs for you.'

A fowl was now handed to the priest, who, standing beside the pile of stones, said:

'*Obom' 'hene, Oboroni se oreba a be ma wo akye, abe fwe bere wo te, ye sere wo nkwa, ye sere wo ahooden ye nsam akoko ni.*'

'King of within the rock, the white man says he comes to give you a morning greeting and to behold where is your dwelling-place. We pray you for life, we pray you for health, here is a fowl from our hand.'

He then cut off the head of the fowl, and held the bleeding bird over the cairn so that the blood fell upon it. The headless body was then cast upon the floor of the cave, and every one leaned forward to watch its convulsive movements. After fluttering about, it lay still upon its back, feet up, a good omen, I was told, showing that the god had accepted it.[1] The fowl was now picked up and laid upon the rock, where it was carefully dissected. The legs, head, wing tips, and intestines were placed upon the Amoa stone, the rest on the Bokoro rock. The kidneys of the sacrifice were very carefully examined; one was found to be white and the other black and white—not a wholly satisfactory omen, the old priest said; both should have been white. He naïvely accounted for this by suggesting as the reason that I had not given any offering in the temple that morning. I took several photographs of this remarkable spot; the light was of course very poor (see Figs. 84 and 85).

We now returned by the way we had come, and climbing down the face of the rock once again reached the ground, where the priestesses and others were awaiting us; we immediately went along to see the cave upon 'the ground floor'. This is shown in Fig. 84. The spot near the two fragments of pottery

[1] Had it lain upon its side or stomach it would have been a bad omen.

FIG. 82. We came to the base of the rocks

FIG. 83. Bosomtwe rocks

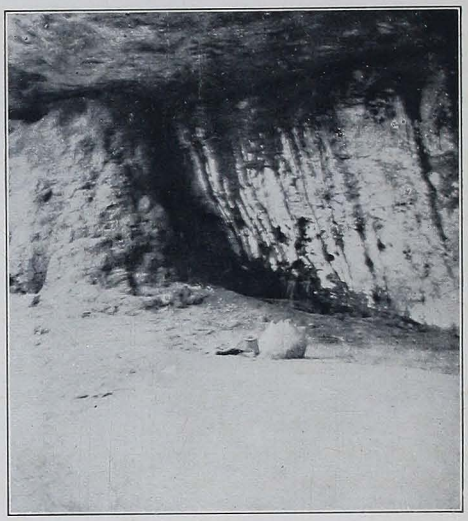


FIG. 84. The interior of Ame Yao's cave

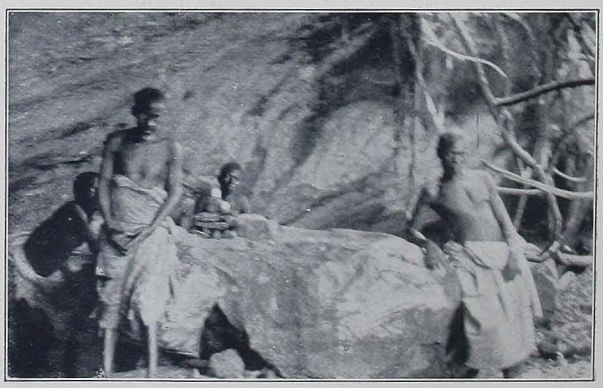


FIG. 85. Bokoro, the king's seat

is known as *Ame Yao anim'* (lit. before the face of Ame Yao), from the tradition that it was here that this half-mythical first King of the Brong used to sit in contemplation when he came here to consult the god. In this cave there is a most interesting rock or boulder, every surface of which bears boat-shaped grooves exactly like those seen on many of the granite outcrops in Ashanti, which I believe to have been caused by the grinding of neolithic celts.[1] Another flat slab of rock, commanding a view to the approach to the cave, was worn as smooth as a marble slab. I think its surface must have been polished, possibly by having been used as a couch, with a skin laid upon it.

These caves are regarded as so sacred that I did not ask permission to dig in them, much as I should have liked to do so. I record their geographical position, and perhaps in some future generation it will be possible to conduct excavations.

We now rejoined the main body of our party, who had halted with the drums and umbrellas at the cross-roads, and all returned to the village.

On the following day I was taken to the source of the Tano and to the Bosomtwe Rock, and an account of these will be given in the next chapter. Before leaving the subject of the caves, however, I may say that a few days later I received permission to explore this neighbourhood. No one would accompany me. The priest said any one who climbed to the top of the rocks would surely die, and that no Ashanti had ever been or would ever go there. I could not persuade a single Ashanti, even my own men, who would generally have gone with me anywhere, to accompany me, and all implored me not to go. Eventually my Police Orderly, Braima Fulani, a stout and most excellent fellow of the type found in that magnificent body of men, the Gold Coast Regiment, W.A.F.F., said he would go with me.[2]

By taking off my boots and socks I was able to climb up the smooth, steep-sloping surface of the great rocks, and by joining our belts and the orderly's cummerbund, he was able to pull me up to the places to which he had mounted with the agility

[1] See Chap. XXVI.

[2] Braima Fulani died very suddenly some weeks later from cerebral embolism. A few days before his death, my own life was only saved by an operation.

of a cat. Progressing thus we worked our way up towards the topmost peak. On our arrival there a wonderful sight presented itself, for on our looking down over the edge of the precipitous rocks we saw a great circular arena, about 150 feet below, which was covered with short green grass, shrubs, and flowers. Beside us, on the surrounding rocks and forming a complete semi-circle, sat great dog-faced baboons with their wives and children, very inquisitive but not frightened by our presence. We descended from the peak with great difficulty, and I was not sorry to find myself back on firm ground, for had we lost our footing on the slippery rocks overlooking the arena and fallen, we should have been shut in by the surrounding rocks too steep to climb; I very much doubt if the local inhabitants would have dared to come and search for us.

On our way back, by a totally different route, which showed that there was no necessity to enter the cave by the arduous and difficult 'back door' entrance, we suddenly came upon the little cairn of stones, the egg-shells, and the sacrifice almost eaten by ants. The whole village was greatly relieved at our return, and the old priest's first inquiry was about the baboons. He anxiously inquired whether I had shot at them. It was impossible to take my camera on this expedition, but I hope some day, when better equipped with a rope, &c., to be able to secure photographs of this extraordinary place.

XVIII

RELIGION

The God Tano (continued).

The Ceremony at the Source of the River.

The Tano River, which flows into the sea at the Tano lagoon near Half Assini, rises about a quarter of a mile from the rocks and caves which have just been described, and south-east of the little village of Tano Oboase. The day following the ceremonies which I have just described, the old priest, in accordance with the expressed wish of his god, took me to this spot. Branching off at the cross-roads, where the priestesses on the preceding day had curtsied and sprinkled white powdered clay, we followed the path till it passed near a great rock, known as Bosomtwe *bo*, i. e. the Bosomtwe Rock, forming part of the sandstone range already mentioned (see Fig. 85). Now Bosomtwe is the name of the lake about eighteen miles south-east of Coomassie, which has been fully described in Chapter II in this volume. We have seen that the water is, like the Tano and other rivers, considered ' a son of the Supreme Being '. There is a curious legend to the effect that Lake Bosomtwe did not always lie in its present locality but was situated near the Bosomtwe Rock in Northern Ashanti. I was taken and shown a large natural depression, now perfectly dry and covered with trees and vegetation, which the local people say was in ancient times the site of this lake, but owing to its not being able to get on with ' his brother ' Tano it departed from here and went and made its home where it is now found.

When we came to the foot of the rocks, the old priest, taking an egg in his hand, spoke as follows:

' *Kwesi Bosomtwe, wadaworoma ; wo 'se ne Ta Kora, sunsum kese a owo babi, ono na ye fre no esono. Na Oboroni abe fwe ne anim mu, na ose ore be sen akofwe asuom*', *na wo Bosomtwe nso*

ontumi nsan woho nko, na me nso me ntumi mfa m'ani hunu me fwe wo. Me fua me nsam kesua de re ma wo. Me sre wo nkyere ; me sre wo nkwa : me sre wo akwahosan ; gye o !'

'Bosomtwe, (whose day of service is a Sunday), by your favour ; your father is Ta Kora, that great spirit which is everywhere, it is he we call elephant. The white man has come and looked upon his face, and he tells you he is passing to go and look upon the water (the Tano), but you, Bosomtwe, he cannot pass by on his way (ungreeted), and I also cannot come and look upon you with my eyes alone, so I hold in my hand an egg to give you. I beg of you long life ; I beg of you health ; I beg of you continuing strength (and throwing the egg against the rock) ; receive !'

Next he presented an egg from my party with the words :

'*Bosomtwe Oboroni se ore be sen ako Tano, na oduru ha yi ontumi nsan woho reko. Okoo asuo ho, omaa Bosomtwe akoko fufuo, na nka ore pe akoko de abre wo, na wanya bi, na ne nsam kesua mienu ne nsa ode bere wo. Yen a o ne ye nam, nkwaso mma ye nim nnu ase ; gye o !*'

'Bosomtwe, the white man is passing, going to Tano, and having reached this spot he cannot pass you by. (Once) he went there to "the lake" and gave Bosomtwe a white fowl, and he was about to seek a fowl for you but did not get one. But here are two eggs and wine from his hands, which he brings you. Life to those who walk with him and do not let their eyes ever drop in shame (and throwing the egg against the rock) ; receive !'

Next the priest filled his mouth with palm wine and spraying it out against the rocks, said :

'*Ye de nkesua mienu ama wo, ye nsam nsa 'so ni, adidi ne anom.*'

'We have given you two eggs, here also is wine from our hands, food and drink, we pray you for health, we pray you for life !'

The priest told me that on this spot used to be sacrificed the cow, sent annually by the King of Ashanti, to ensure good fishing in Lake Bosomtwe, a hundred miles away. He also told me how only three years ago the chief of Kokofu (near Coomassie) had sent four sheep to appease the lake spirit because

Fig. 86. The source of the mighty Tano river

FIG. 87. The white man says he has come to give you a morning greeting

FIG. 88. An altar . . . on the Tano near Kuntunso

of the violation of some of its taboos, namely, the use by certain persons of iron hooks and cast nets (see Chapter II).

We now passed down the path to the source of the river. This spot is variously known as *Obo tirim* (at the head of the rock), *Tano atifi* (at the head of the Tano), and *Tanom'* (in the Tano). As we drew near the spot the priest shouted out :

'*Tano Kwampere me re ba o, mma me fu wo mu.*'

'Tano Kwampere, I am coming, do not let me take you unawares.'

The path now led abruptly down to the stream, a little trickle of clear water rising from a spring beneath a bank (see Fig. 86). The priest stooped down, and taking some water in his hollow palm drew it into his mouth, immediately spraying it out, and saying :

'*Me hyira mano ; me pe nkwa, pe ahooden.*'

'I invoke a blessing upon my mouth, I seek life and strength.'

All who were present did the same, and also bathed their faces and hands. The priest took an egg and, squatting down said :

'*Oboroni se obe ma wo akye, na me nso me ntumi mfa ani hunu me fwe wo me nsam' kesua ni. Me sre wo nkwa,*' &c.

'The white man says he is come to give you a morning greeting, and as for me I cannot behold you with an empty eye, here is an egg from my hand. I beg you for life,' &c. (Fig. 87).

He then placed the egg, without breaking it, in the water, and gave another egg from our party. Next he gave wine, taking some in his mouth and spraying it out, saying :

'*Gye nsa nom, ye de nkesua mienu abere wo, adidi ne anom, ye sre nkwa,*' &c.

'Receive the wine and drink, we have given you two eggs. food and drink. We pray you for life,' &c.

He then poured a little of the wine into the water, and what was left was handed round and all sipped a little. My companions from Southern Ashanti now filled bottles which they

had brought with them and took some of the white clay from the stream. Then all rose up to go. The white-haired old priest asked us all to pass on while he remained behind. He joined us a few minutes later. I asked him why he had remained behind, and he replied that it was that he might be able to protect us who passed on in front. 'My *sunsum* (spirit) is strong,' he said. 'If one of you had followed last, he might have met something to endanger him.'

XIX

RELIGION

The God Tano (continued).

Some of his 'Sons'.

In this chapter it is proposed to examine rites witnessed in connexion with the cult of Tano, as exemplified in the worship of some of his minor emanations, i. e. 'sons of Tano'.

We have been introduced to Ta Kora literally at his fountain head, i. e. the source of the great river, in his rock, and at his man-made and man-consecrated shrine. We have already heard of many of 'his children' and 'his grandchildren'. Their number is indeed legion and there seems no limit set upon them, provided priests be found to interpret and intercept his spirit. We not only find offshoots of Tano in villages remote from that water, but every ford and important crossing of the river seems to possess a local emanation of his spirit.

The traveller who journeys in North-Western Ashanti and has occasion to cross the Tano River will almost certainly see upon one or other bank a rough altar made of sticks,[1] and upon this a shrine, with the usual brass pan or maybe just a stone taken from the bed of the river near by. An example of each may be seen in Figs. 88–9.

Fig. 88 stands near the crossing at Kuntunso. The shrine consists in this case simply of a stone from the bed of the stream. Upon it were the remains of an offering of *eto* (mashed yams). The altar upon which the stone rested is called *apa* (a rack), and the little clearing all round is called *asonyeso* (a place of worship). In this photograph may be seen through the trees my party about to cross the ford, and a flock of sheep being driven down to Coomassie by some Hausa traders. The second *apa*, shown in Fig. 89, is that at the ford near the village of

[1] Nearly always branches of the tree called *Akanye* which take root and sprout and thus do not rot away so readily.

Tanosu. The shrine in this case is the customary brass pan. The second *apa* near to it contains a broken bottle, and this one is for the *samanfo* (spirit ancestors). The shrine is that of Asubonten, lit. the river street, i. e. ford, and the spirit that at times is called to enter this shrine is the part of the spirit of Tano at this ford. This god is, I am informed by Kofi Kra, the chief of Tanosu, he father of the god Ati Akosua, to whose priestess we were introduced at the *Apo* ceremony at Tekiman, and the son of Ta Kora.

On Sunday, the 22nd April 1922, I was present at the following ceremony in connexion with this god. Just beforehand the chief told me that Asubonten was that part of the spirit of Tano whose home was at the ford; the brass pan contained something from the bed of the river, taken from this ford. The first part of the ceremony consisted of the sacrifice of a very small chicken—a few days old. Its head was simply wrung off by one of the *tanokwa*, meaning slaves of Tano, who said, *Gye akoko yi di*, 'Receive this fowl and eat.'

A few drops of blood were allowed to fall on the pan and the chicken was cast into the river, when it was immediately pounced upon by the fish. This chicken was an offering from some one, from whom I do not know. I asked why such a small chicken had been given, and was told that the god which the donor had consulted had possibly said that Asubonten wanted a fowl so many days old. The chief now handed a white cock to one of the *tanokwa* and then addressed the god as follows

'*Nne Fokwesi na Ati Akosua wa hye fa na nnawotwe ne nne, na me re yi ano, na me kura me nsa mu akoko yi de re bere wo. Me nkwaso, Tanosu man nkwaso, Yao Kramo nkwaso. Mma mo nnya Aban amane. Gyina m'akyi akyigyina pa. Kuro yi nkwa so.*'

'To-day is a sacred Sunday and it is eight days since Ati Akosua celebrated his (her ?) festival, and to-day we are making it complete, and I hold this fowl, (a gift) from my hand, to bring you. Life to me, life to the people of Tanosu, life to Yao Kramo (chief of Tekiman). Do not let us get into trouble with the Castle (i. e. the Government). Stand behind me with a good standing. Life to the people of this town.'

The man holding the cock now cut its head off and allowed

the blood to drip into the pan[1] (see Fig. 90). The fowl was cut up, and as soon as this was done the *tanokwa*, holding the pieces in his hand, went to the bank of the river and called out in a loud voice :

' *Asubonten bra, akaafona be gye akoko di.*'

' Come, Asubonten, come sword-bearers, receive a fowl and eat.'

He threw the pieces of fowl into the river, where they were at once seized upon by the fish. The river was in flood and it was not possible to photograph the fish which, I was informed, when the stream was clear and low, put their heads out of the water and were fed by hand.

Next wine was poured upon the shrine, with the words :

' *Asubonten gye nsa nom, odekuru se ne nsa ni. Nne Fokwesi ode akoko abere wo, nsa a ode gu akyiri ni. Mma asem bone biara mma 'kuro yi mu.*'

' Asubonten, receive the wine and drink. The owner of the town says it is wine from his hands. To-day is sacred Sunday, he has brought you a fowl and this is wine which he has poured after. Do not let any bad matter come upon this town.'

The wine that remained was passed round among all present. No offering was made on this occasion to the *samanfo* (spirits of ancestors).

As I was passing the spot a few hours later on my way to another village, I saw an *okomfo* (priest) sitting upon the *apa* beside the shrine. He was covered with white powdered clay and heavily adorned with *suman* (fetishes), and was attended upon by a woman carrying a basin containing powdered clay. He sat upon the logs beating his *odawuru* (gong) and singing the following song (see Fig. 91) :

My words reach far away, O Ame Yao.
My words reach peoples.
I who am the son of the god Ta Kese, King of Aban.
My words reach peoples.

[1] I remember once being told in South Ashanti that a big chief might not kill a fowl. It will be noted too in all sacrifices of sheep that the chief only pricks the throat, which is afterwards cut by some one else.

And again:

> Father, help me for I am miserable.
> Father Ta Kese (a god), help me for I am unhappy.
> Ati Akosua, help me for I am unhappy.

I went up and saluted him. He told me he was a priest from Akumadan. The beating of his gong (*odawuru*) helped him, he said, to hear the voice of the river and served to call up the spirit. The chief of Tanosu and several of the elders told me that the fish in this part of the river are known as *Tano mma* (children of Tano), and that in olden days any one catching or eating them would have been instantly killed. An Ashanti army, going to war, which crossed the Tano at this ford, would make a halt, and the captains would ask for a blessing and give offerings of sheep, fowls, and gold dust to the river. The priest would 'call the fish' and the general would explain to them the reason of the campaign. Some of the very large fish would come half out of the water and lie with their heads on the sand, and a brass pan would be pushed under their mouths, and into this they would vomit up sand and water, and this would then be sprinkled over the captains. When this water dried white it was a good omen. Some of the water would also be carried along with the army. The water from this part of the Tano is not used for cooking and must not be boiled. Should any shrine seem to lose its attraction for the spirit for which it was made, water from the Tano will be sprinkled upon it and its virtue recovered.

Tano water is also used for drinking, as an ordeal. Any one may drink it upon ordinary occasions, but will then say: 'My spirit So-and-so (meaning his or her *ntoro*), I invoke a blessing upon my mouth, stand behind me with a good standing.' No dead body is allowed to cross at the ford, but is taken higher up the river, and even before it is allowed to cross there the sacrifice of a sheep has to be made.

Any woman who has crossed the river to go to her farm or to visit, and begins her 'period', must not re-cross the ford before she is better, and she will spend a week in some other village. Widows, the eighth day after the death of their husbands, are sprinkled with Tano water.

XX

RELIGION

The Afahye *Ceremony.*

THE *Afahye* ceremony, part of which I witnessed at Ejura, may be defined as an annual custom held in connexion with the eating of the first fruits of each crop, in this case yams. The word *afa* is given in Christaller's *Dictionary* as meaning festival, and *hye* is to fix or appoint a day, so that the whole word may be translated by 'an appointed festival'.

The ceremony to be described began, as far as I know, on Thursday, the 27th October 1921, and the new year at Ejura commenced on Monday, the 31st October.[1]

The chief local god is Konkroma ('a child of Tano').

I had administered the Ejura district before the war. The old, now almost blind, chief, Kojo Brenya, was a friend of mine, as was also the chief priestess of Konkroma. The Ejura people occupy the Brong country at its southernmost point.

The first part of the ceremony, which I did not myself witness, and for an account of which I am indebted to the chief and the head priestess, really falls under the heading 'the cult of ancestors', for this ceremony has two distinct aspects, in connexion with

(*a*) The spirits of ancestors.

(*b*) The gods.

The first part of the ceremony, I was informed, was as follows:

On Thursday, the 27th October (1921), the chief's 'white' stools and his chair (*asipim*) were taken out into the court-yard of the 'palace' and thoroughly scrubbed with *cold* water (i. e. water which had not been boiled) and sand, with a sponge made of pine-apple fibre. That same day the walls and floors of the stool-house and of the chief's house were replastered, the

[1] Bowdich in his *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashanti*, p. 230, says, writing from Coomassie, that the year began on the 1st October. I am inclined to think that the date varies in different localities according to the particular god served.

walls with *hyire*, white clay, the floor with *ntwuma*, red clay. The house and stool-house of the Queen Mother were similarly treated. All this was done, I was told, without the accompaniment of songs and music such as were indulged in when 'the house of the gods' was cleaned later. On Friday, the 28th, the chief rose betimes, bathed, and, accompanied by 'linguist', herald, stool-carriers, &c., went to the stool-house (of the blackened stools), where, pouring some wine upon the stools, he said:

'*Nananom e, mo me gye nsa nom, na afe ano ahyia na nne na me de mo ko asuo mu ako bo mo asu.*'

'Grandsires, come and receive wine and drink, for to-day the edges of the years have met (i.e. the new and the old), and to-day I am taking you to the stream to sprinkle you with water.'[1]

Each stool (I do not know how many there were) was then carried upon the nape of the neck of its carrier and taken to the river. That of the first king was carried under an umbrella. When the river was reached, water was drawn in a brass pan and sprinkled upon each stool with a cow-tail switch—while still supported on its bearer's neck—the 'linguist' saying all the time as he did so

'*Ye bo mo asu o, ye bo mo asu o!*'

'We sprinkle you with water, we sprinkle you with water!'[1]

Water was sprinkled in like manner on the chief, his sons, and on those of the chief's clan or blood. After this sprinkling all returned to the village and the blackened stools were replaced in the stool-house. A sheep was now brought and killed with the formalities already described in the *Adae* ceremonies, the words varying slightly and being as follows:

'*Me nkwaso, Mampon 'hene nkwaso, mmawofo nkwaso, abomofo nkwaso, na ma wontumi nkum nam, abatafo nkwaso, akuafo nkwaso, mmarima yenwo mma, mma yare bone mma, ye re ma wo bayere foforo ama wodi.*'

'Life to me; life to the chief of Mampon; life to the bearers

[1] The Queen Mother's stools under her charge were on this occasion taken part of the way to the river when water was carried back to them and sprinkled upon them.

FIG. 89 The platform or altar in the background has set upon it the shrine of Asubonten

FIG. 90. The sacrifice of a white fowl to Asubonten

FIG. 91. The priest . . . singing 'Father, I am miserable'

of children; life to hunters, may they be able to kill meat; may the men beget children; do not let any bad sickness come; we are giving you new yams that you may eat.'

Pieces of the sacrifice were placed on the stools along with new yams sliced and boiled. The remainder of the yams were sent to the chief's house, and he and certain other persons were now permitted to eat them for the first time that season.

The following list was given me of those who were not allowed to taste the new season's crops previous to this ceremony:

(*a*) The *samanfo* (ancestral spirits).
(*b*) The Queen Mother.
(*c*) The chief.
(*d*) Stool-carriers.
(*e*) The adult sons and daughters of the chief.
(*f*) Adults of the chief's clan.
(*g*) The *akraguareni* (chief's soul-washers).
(*h*) The chief's head wife (whose duty it is to cook for the *samanfo*, spirits).

Children and people other than these mentioned were not restricted at any time. Should any in the above list eat yams before the time prescribed, the crops, it is thought, would not be fruitful.[1]

The ceremony so far, it will have been noted, has reference to ancestral spirits, and is not, in its object and practice, unlike the Baya ceremony described in Chapter XII. The next half of the ceremony was more concerned with the gods than with disembodied human spirits. This part of the ceremony I witnessed in person. I arrived at Ejura on Saturday, the 29th October (1921). Nothing, so far as I am aware, took place on that date. On the following day the pantheon where the shrine of Konkroma and those of the other lesser gods were kept, and the rest of the rooms in its compound, were washed down with fresh whitewash and the floors replastered. This work was done entirely by women to the accompaniment of songs and rattles

[1] My old Ashanti friend, the late Kakari, once told me that in the old days every trade and profession held its *afahye*: the hunter for his guns; the farmer for his agricultural implements; the blacksmith for his tools; the trader for his *apakon* (basket which he carried for his goods); drum makers for their tools, &c., &c., in each case it being a kind of annual purification.

(*ntorowa*). The whitewash was mixed by some very old women (see Figs. 92 and 93), and the whole of the work was superintended by the chief priestess, who with some of her children are seen in Figs. 94 and 95. The following is a translation of two of the songs that were sung while the work was in progress. Lack of space prevents me giving these and others, to be noted later, in the original.[1]

Little helpers to call the spirit, let them come ;
Little spirits, if they have gone to eat, let them come.
They who are the grandchildren of the priest Anotchi.[2]

I have water, I have water.
I come from the Tano river.
Little spirits from Lake Bosomtwe, I have water,
Otwedodo, son of Bosomtwe, I have water,
I come from the Tano river.
I am he who was created son of God.

Besides Konkroma, the chief of the gods at Ejura, the following gods were attending the ceremony. All were ' sons ' of the great Tano already described :

Ta Kwame.

Ta Konkroma Kuma.

Ta Asubonten (a son of the Asubonten whose rites have already been described).

Ta Konkroma Kuma II.

Ta Kojo.

Ta Bonia.

Ta Kwesi.

Ta Amoa.

After the plastering of the pantheon, the priestess told me that nothing more would happen till about 11 p.m. the same night.

I returned to the town at the time appointed and sat down at the foot of a great baobab tree just at the entrance of the court-yard of the Konkroma temple. Not a soul was about and the whole of the village seemed asleep. I had the usual West African hurricane lamp beside me, and as I sat a man came

[1] These songs were later sung into a phonograph.

[2] Anotchi was the famous priest who lived in the reign of Osai Tutu and who by his magical powers is said to have brought the Golden Stool down from the skies. See Chap. XXIII.

FIG. 92. The whitewash was mixed by some very old women

FIG. 93. The work was done by women to the accompaniment of songs and rattles

FIG. 94. The work was superintended by the chief priestess

FIG. 95. The chief priestess walking beside another priestess who is carrying a shrine

out of the shadows, peered into my face, and next moment had thrown both his arms round my neck, saying, '*Oboroni obofo*', 'the European hunter'. It was Opoku, an old Ashanti hunter who had tracked elephants for me long before the war, and with whom I had often lain down in the forest when nightfall had overtaken us. We sat and talked about the old days and I made him tell me all about *sasammoa*, i. e. animals which are spiritually, not physically, dangerous, about which I shall have something to say in another volume.

About midnight the drums began to 'talk' in fitful bursts, and the *akomnyumtufo* (singers to call up the spirits) assembled, formed a half-circle in the court-yard of the temple, and began to sing. These are the songs I took down. Again space forbids me giving the Ashanti in every case.

O death, you have done me an evil turn,
To-morrow is the *Adae*, (the Brong Wednesday *Adae*).

Let us sing sweetly that father (the god) may come.
He destroys towns.
When great events are happening, do not be lying down.
Your mischievous enemy is abroad.
When great events are happening, O warrior, O hunter, do not be lying down.

Mother of a people, I have been a porcupine,
Ram that has horns,
I have been a porcupine, Agyiman.

I sleep at the cross-roads.
It is as a leopard that I walk.

The god, Twumpuduo, has come.
Tano Twumpuduo has come.

During an interval I gave the drummers two shillings, whereupon they drummed:

'*Obarima katekyi a neho bon atoduru me da wo ase.*'

'Brave man whose skin smells of gunpowder, I thank you.'

The singers continued:

Banie (a god), we call you.
Come quickly.

The hunter has killed, and tears are very near his eyes, O Suadomo (a name for Tano).

Opoku, the hunter, turned to me and whispered, '*otromo*', meaning that the bongo was referred to. A hunter, when he has shot one of the *sasa boa* (animals with a powerful spirit), will burst into lamentations, as if he had just witnessed the death of some one he loved.

The entangling creepers lie upon you.
They lie upon you; are you going to remove them?

The talking drums now beat out:

Okatakyi ofua otuo ne afona be ko,
Ma wo ho meneso.
Okurotwiamansa wo sesia,
Sesia wo so biribiri,
Kurotwiamansa namtew bere bere,
Ohene namtew bere bere.

The hero holds a gun and a sword to fight.
Make yourself to arise.
The leopard is in the thicket.
The thicket shakes like anything.
Leopard, walk softly, softly.
O King, walk softly, softly.

And again:

Asuo atware kwan,
Okwan atware asuo yi;
Opanyin ne hwane?
Ye bo kwan ko to asuo yi?
Asuo yi firi tete.
Asuo yi firi Odomankoma.
Oboo adie.
Konkon Tano.
Birifia Tano.
Wo ko babi a, bra,
Na ye fwe wo kwan.

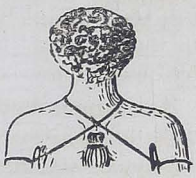
The stream crosses the path,
The path crosses the stream;
Which of them is the elder?
Did we not cut a path to go and meet this stream?
The stream had its origin long, long ago,
The stream had its origin in the Creator.

He created things,
Pure, pure Tano.
Birifia Tano.
If you have gone elsewhere, come,
And we shall seek a path for you.

Another song :

Orphans come.
Little mother, come.
Something I fear is coming upon me.

It was now about 4 a.m., the yard was packed with people sitting all round the circle of singers and in the open verandah rooms. Suddenly the head priestess of Konkroma burst from the temple and rushed down the steps in the centre of the yard. Greeting the assembled with *Me ma mo akye o*, ' I give you good morning,' she passed right through the crowd and out of the yard. The singing continued and in about five minutes she returned, accompanied by two girls. She wore a short white skirt, was naked down to the waist, and white with powdered clay. A band called *bibire*, made of some twisted fibre about the thickness of the little finger, was crossed over her back after passing round the neck, and fastened round the upper part of the arms. Where the strands crossed a *suman* (charm), known as *akyigyina*, lit. stand behind (me), was fastened.[1] When the priestess returned the second time she jumped into the ring, clapped her hands, and shouted, 'Hoo ! Let all evil sickness away and may a good year meet us once more.'



The drums rattle out :

Damirifa ! damirifa ! damirifa !
Ma woho meneso, be goro.

Alas ! alas ! alas ![2]
Make yourself to arise and come and play.

The priestess now began to dance that curious shuffling, stooping, mincing dance alternated with wild gyrations, so

[1] This idea of protection from something attacking one from behind—the invisible—is seen throughout all the ceremonies. Almost every prayer ends with ' stand behind me with a good standing '.

[2] The commiseration was, I was informed, for the spirits of those who had died since this ceremony was last performed, a year ago.

peculiar to West Africa. She was accompanied by rattles, drums, and singing of the songs already given. Her attendants constantly smothered her in white clay. As she danced, the spirit of Ta Amoa came upon her, and she spoke, in the Brong dialect, saying :

I have come from a very far country,
I have been living on cassava,
Now I see yams,
I thank you all.

She kept moving backwards and forwards into the temple, where Konkroma's and other shrines were kept, and in front of which had been placed bundles of yams. Between her wild dances she continued to walk round and round. Shortly before dawn broke she placed the back of her right hand upon the palm of her left and laid her hands against her cheek, whereupon the ' linguist ' said :

' King, we give you the path.'

The priestess then wheeled round and round and threw herself into the arms of four men, who carried her on their shoulders, up the steps and into the temple of the gods, where they laid her down, and every one went home.

It was now Monday morning, the 31st October (1921). Soon after midday the ceremony was continued. All the shrines of the gods were brought out, covered with their silk handkerchiefs. The most important were under umbrellas. Headed by an old woman carrying a pot of water and a man and woman carrying bundles of yams, escorted by six men carrying flintlock guns and by *fontomfrom* drums and a great concourse of people, all set off for the Asasebon River. A man walked beside the shrine of Konkroma and fanned it. The chief priestess was borne on a man's shoulders. Before reaching the waterside the drummers halted under a silk-cotton tree while the procession passed on. On arrival at the water the shrines were set down on the bank, each on its own stool. Water was drawn from the river in a brass basin, and this was mixed with the water brought in the pot (which would almost certainly be Tano water). The ' linguist ' of Konkroma, taking a cow-tail in his hand dipped it into the pan of water, and spoke as follows :

FIG. 96. The *Afahye* ceremony: the shrines of the gods returning from the water

FIG. 97. The escort to a shrine

Fig. 98. Escorted back to the village amid firing of guns

Fig. 99. The shrines, one by one, were taken into the stool house

' Amoa Kotoku die ye yo na ye yo, afe ano ahyia na ye re be bo wo asu, ma wo adi bayere. Adwira man' kwaso ; Adwira 'hene, Kojo Brenya, nkwaso ; Akuo Adai, Kwesi Fo, ohene Kojo Brenya ye de bayere, oguan, nsa, ne nkyene de abre wo se fa di bayere. Kojo Brenya, Akua Adai, Kofi Twinto, Ama Tiwa, Kwesi Fo, nkwaso. Mampon 'hene, Osai Bonsu, nkwaso, ne mpanyimfo nkwaso, asu bo o ! asu bo o ! '

' Amo Kotoku,[1] that which we have done we have done, the edge of the year has come round, and we are sprinkling you with water that you may eat yams. Life to the people of Adwira,[2] life to the chief of Adwira. Kojo Brenya, Akua Adai, Kwesi Fo, and chief Kojo Brenya have brought you yams, a sheep, wine, and salt, saying, partake of yams. Life for Kojo Brenya, Akua Adai, Kofi Twinto, Ama Tiwa, Kwesi Fo. Life to Osai Bonsu and to his elders ; the sprinkling of water ! the sprinkling of water ! '

As he said this he sprinkled each shrine with water. The shrines were then again raised upon the heads of their carriers, and were escorted back to the village amid firing of guns (see Fig. 98). The procession went at a snail's pace through the village, sometimes halting altogether. All the carriers of the shrines seemed under the influence of their particular spirit. They quivered and shook, and their eyes seemed fixed as if unseeing, and they swayed about (see Figs. 96–7). The chief, who had not gone to the water, met the procession in his hammock and fell in at the rear. The shrines, one by one, in turn were taken into the stool-house where the blackened stools were kept (see Fig. 99). Here, upon the floor, had been placed a piece of elephant hide, and upon this the priestess knelt and sprinkled white powdered clay, then rising embraced the Queen Mother. From the stool-house the shrines were taken back to the pantheon.

One priest now danced in the yard, where the previous night's ceremony had taken place. He had the shrine of his god upon his head as he danced, and later on he was joined by other priests and also the chief priestess. All were powdered with clay, and handfuls of this were thrown at them and into the air

[1] Amoa is perhaps the god of that name. Kotoku is sometimes used for the Akan people who were once under a king called Agyeman.

[2] Ejura as we call and spell it should really be Adwira. The town is called after a plant of that name.

as they danced. This dancing went on till about eight o'clock, when gifts from the chief, a sheep, yams, salt, *nsanu* (13*s*.), were handed to the 'linguist' of Konkrôma. These gifts were taken into the temple where the shrines of the gods stood uncovered. The sheep was held by some *Tanokwa* (servants of Tano) and Kwesi Fo, the 'linguist', spoke as follows:

'*Afe ano ehyia na wo man fua oguan de abre wo se fa di bayere ma akyiri nsi dwo. Ma afe nto yen bio ne manfo nyina na yensan mere wo foforo se die ye de re ma wo nne yi ara.*'

'The edge of the year has come round and your people hold a sheep for you, saying: partake of yams, and let what comes after, fall peacefully. Permit the year to come round once more and all people once again to bring you new yams just as we are giving you this very day.'

He then stabbed the sheep in the throat and blood was sprinkled on the top of the shrines in the usual manner and yams placed upon them. This completed the ceremony.

Some of the things 'hateful' to the god Konkroma are curious. They include, among the other usual Tano avoidances:

(*a*) Whistling.
(*b*) Noise of sweeping.
(*c*) Dogs.
(*d*) Horses.
(*e*) Rats.

This completes the present survey of this subject—religion. A large mass of interesting material still remains to be examined, however, before we can arrive at a full understanding of Ashanti religious beliefs, but space forbids their inclusion in this volume.

Much light will be thrown upon their ideas of a future state by the examination of customs relating to birth, puberty, and death.

The whole subject of *suman*, charms, or lower graded spiritual power has yet to be examined; the training of priests and priestesses and their special privileges and obligations have yet to be described. All these and many other questions will, I hope, be examined in a further work.

XXI

LAND TENURE AND ALIENATION

It is proposed in this chapter to examine the ancient Ashanti Customary Laws in relation to Real Property, from an anthropological, historical, and legal standpoint, and to attempt to indicate that in their application we have, I believe, a key to the successful introduction of a workable and satisfactory system of indirect rule, an ideal form of government for these people. This, I believe, cannot be satisfactorily introduced unless based upon such sound principles as would ensure to the stools of the paramount chiefs a steady and adequate revenue for the maintenance of their administration and of their dignity.

Before proceeding to a further examination of the subject, it may be as well to state the present-day legal position in our courts with regard to land in Ashanti. The ownership of the soil in Ashanti remains unaffected by our intervention. The conquest of Ashanti in the wars of 1874 and 1900 (for reasons which need not be here entered upon) did not result in vesting in the Crown any proprietary rights over land, which to-day, as prior to these events, belongs to the native rulers (as stool property), to the clans, or to individual household or family communities.[1]

We have therefore in Ashanti to-day approximately 24,000 square miles owned by the natives themselves, and held or alienated by them according to their ancient Customary Laws.

The broad general principles underlying the Ashanti system of land tenure were summarized in a report drawn up in July 1912 by Mr., later Sir, H. Conway Belfield, K.C.M.G.

If I seem in this chapter not to agree entirely with all the conclusions arrived at in that report, my criticisms are chiefly concerned with sins of omission, for that able document is

[1] The land within a radius of one mile and a half of the Fort in Coomassie, and such lands as have vested in the Government, in companies, or in individuals, by some specific process of law, are excepted from this rule.

on the whole, in its material parts, in accordance with the facts.

A perusal of this report by one interested in the anthropological, as opposed to the strictly legal, side of the question will, however, disclose the fact that in the mass of evidence collected, emanating from persons occupying such varied positions as Colonial Secretary, Chief, Provincial, and District Commissioners, Native Chiefs, West African Barristers, &c., &c., there is hardly an allusion throughout to the religious side of the subject. I use the word 'religious' in the Tylorian sense of the now famous 'minimum definition' of religion, as, *A Belief in Spiritual Beings*; and yet it is this religious aspect of the subject which I believe to lie at the basis of the whole structure of the unwritten land laws of the Ashanti, and I am even inclined to think that an understanding of this hitherto somewhat neglected side of the question may lead to a fuller conception, not only of the matter under review, but of any code of land laws. This religious element among a people such as the Ashanti can never properly be ignored in a critical survey of any of their customs, their laws, or even perhaps of their unpremeditated actions. In Ashanti the divorce of religion from any of these is wellnigh impossible, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that any such estrangement would tend to result in an illegality.[1]

I propose therefore in the first instance to give a few of the facts under this heading which my researches have disclosed up to date.

The Ashanti regard the Sky and the Earth as their two great Deities. The Sky God is 'Nyame, whose rites have been already explained. The cult of the Earth Deity is less well known, perhaps because it is not quite so obvious. No temple or other object is reared to her, but her power is none the less universally acknowledged. The reason for this will be the more easily understood if it be realized that from the Earth, according to one of their best-known myths, sprang some of the aristocracy

[1] A good example of the dangers and misunderstandings arising from the mental attitude which either ignores or is ignorant of this principle, was seen in our treatment of the question of the Golden Stool in 1900, when we dealt with that symbol as if it were a purely temporal object, totally ignoring its deep religious and spiritual significance. See Chapter XXIII on the Golden Stool.

of the Ashanti clans, i. e. the Oyoko, from which the later Ashanti kings from Kwabia Amanfi down to Prempeh belonged, and the Aduana, with its seven sub-clans.[1]

The Ashanti name for the Earth is Asase Ya, Aberewa (Ya, Old Mother Earth), sometimes qualified by the phrase *Asase bo ne nsie*, i. e. Earth, the Creator of the Underworld. Ya is of course a female personal name, which, when applied to women, testifies to their natal day being a Thursday.

Thursday was the day set aside for the observance of 'Old Mother Earth', and even now the Ashanti farmer will not till or break the soil on this day, while only some thirty years ago infringement of this rule was punished by death.[2] It has been noted elsewhere (Chap. II, p. 52) that an offering is sometimes thrown upon the ground to the Earth Spirit.[3]

To this day, when the month comes round in which the farmer commences to till his land, his wife (or perhaps his sister) will cook *eto* (mashed plantain or yam). This, together with a fowl, is taken to the land where cultivation is to be commenced. The farmer stands upon the land and wrings off the neck of his offering, allowing the blood to drip upon the *eto* and upon the earth, and speaks as follows :

'*Nana Asumasi, wo na wo be do ha na wo de gya me. Asase Ya, wo na me re be do wo so, afi ano ahyia na me re be do, se me ye adwuma a, ma afrihyia pa nto me, mma sikan ntwa me, mma dua mmu mmo me, mma owo nka me.*'

'Grandfather So-and-so, you (once) came and hoed here and then you left (it) to me. You also Earth, Ya, on whose soil I am going to hoe, the yearly cycle has come round and I am going to cultivate ; when I work let a fruitful year come upon me, do not let the knife cut me, do not let a tree break and fall upon me, do not let a snake bite me.'

The fowl is cut up and mixed with the *eto*. Portions are then thrown to the four points of the compass, some of the remains being placed in a leaf (preferably *adwin* or *summe*) and left

[1] This spot and the rites in connexion with it are described in Chap. X.

[2] Komfo Anotchi, the famous priest in the days of Osai Tutu, is said to have proclaimed the strict observance of this day of rest to Asase Ya.

[3] In this context it may be as well to note that when the Ashanti, before partaking of wine or spirits, pours a little on the ground from the cup, he does so, not for the Earth Goddess but for the shades of his ancestors.

on the spot where the man had stood when making the offering.

The sacredness of the Earth is also manifested indirectly in other ways, but the reason for the custom, to be mentioned now, is not yet clear to me. We have seen that the 'Golden Stool' was never allowed to come in direct contact with the Earth—it must be placed upon an elephant's skin. The feet of the King of Ashanti were likewise never to touch the ground,[1] 'lest a great famine should come upon the nation'. Hence he always was followed about by a servant bearing a spare pair of sandals, lest the band across the instep of those he was wearing broke; and when he slipped his sandals from his feet at the *Adae* ceremony, when propitiating his ancestral ghosts, he stood upon his sandals so that his feet should not touch the ground.

It is not, however, the Sky and the Earth deities who in Ashanti are held to be the prime factors in shaping and influencing the actions and destinies of mankind. These great unseen powers are generally too remote or perhaps too mighty to be concerned very intimately with the individual clan, much less with the individual member of that clan, and the predominant influences in the Ashanti religion are neither 'Saturday Sky-god' nor 'Thursday Earth-goddess', nor even the hundreds of gods (*abosom*), with which it is true the land is filled, but are the *samanfo*, the spirits of the departed forbears of the clan.

They are the real landowners, who, though long departed, still continue to take a lively interest in the land from which they had their origin or which they once owned. The Ashanti land laws of to-day appear but the logical outcome of a belief which, in the not very remote past, considered the living landowners as but holding as it were tenancies at will from the dead, and as being the trustees of the latter.

I believe it may be this religious aspect which largely accounts for the reluctance in the West African mind to the total alienation by sale of land to a foreigner, or even to one of their own race, a reluctance manifesting itself in the violent opposition offered to such a measure as the Crown Lands Bill of 1894, and

[1] The same avoidance is, I believe, enjoined for the *Dontenhene* (of Coomassie) and the Chief of the Silver Stool—the *Omanhene* of Mampon.

later the Forest Bill of 1911, by educated Africans, some of whom very possibly never knew or had long ago forgotten this 'religious' aspect of their own ancient laws of real property.

This belief in an Earth deity and in the continued interest of the spirit owners in land which they once owned when in the flesh, is not unknown among other African peoples to-day. Mr. Cardinal[1] has shown us how the *tindana* or 'owner of the land' has to be consulted even by the conquering race before they can deal with the land in any way, land which, according to our laws, we would suppose to be theirs by right of conquest;[2] and among the Mang'anja, with whom I lived for four years in British Central Africa, a somewhat similar idea prevails.

This belief in the spirit ownership of land in Ashanti, with its attendant legal consequences, seems, however, considerably modified by the Ashanti belief in the limitation of the field of operation of departed spirits to the people of their own clan.

The replies of an old Ashanti to the following questions will explain my meaning. I asked him if, when the Ashanti conquered new territory in the past, either of strangers or of their own people, they were not afraid of the wrath of the spirit owners of the land they had seized.

The answer came without the slightest hesitation:

'Certainly not (*dabi da*); in the first case, the spirits of people not our own clan cannot affect us as they can only take revenge for any wrong on their own kindred, and secondly, in the case of our own people, if you defeat and make subject to you some of your own clan, you have also rendered subject to you and harmless the ghost ancestors of the people you have subjugated.'

A case of what might be termed 'peaceful usurpation' seems, however, to be another matter, and the following incident, which I witnessed before I had made any inquiries into matters connected with land tenure, and before I knew any of the facts just recorded, seems strictly relevant. By the courtesy of a certain chief, I was permitted to attend an *Adae* ceremony.[3]

[1] *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.*

[2] I believe that Mr. Cardinal's 'Spirits of the land' may be very possibly the ghosts of its former owners.

[3] I have now attended many *adae* so I feel I am not betraying the confidence of a friend whose kindness in allowing me to attend a ceremony put me in possession of information I would otherwise not have obtained.

This particular 'Stool' had come into being under somewhat unusual circumstances, which had resulted in its being rather poor as regards land. Its boundaries had fluctuated owing to civil and other wars in days prior to British occupation and later in the days of our own administration; the result being that, as I discovered later, the boundary of the stool land had in one direction overlapped the land of an adjacent lesser but friendly stool, with whom the more important was intimately connected by marriage. The fact that the boundary was not quite in order was allowed to pass unchallenged by the party concerned. I knew nothing about all this at the time, but at this particular *Adae*, after the ceremony in the stool-house, and after the state reception held on these occasions, the chief and his officers proceeded to a grove in the forest; here were arrayed in two rows eleven little enamel bowls—such as may be bought in any store for a shilling or so—and into each of these was poured out palm wine from a large demijohn (Fig. 100). I noticed, however, that the names spoken over these bowls were not the names spoken in the stool-house. Every attempt to find out who the spirits were that were thus propitiated resulted in complete failure to elicit any information, and as it was quite clear to me that there was something here the people wished to hide, I did not press my questions further. It was only some time after that I was secretly told from another source that these spirits were the real owners of that piece of land, and as the two stools were on a friendly footing, they were duly propitiated to avoid any possibility of unpleasantness for either of the parties concerned.[1]

In a court of law, the larger and more important stool would no doubt be ready to swear to their right to this piece of land, were that right disputed by the other party, and many witnesses would doubtless be forthcoming to testify to the justice of their claim; to the dead, who are more powerful than the living, due acknowledgement was made.

I now propose to examine how the more strictly legal side of this subject shows the influence of the aforementioned beliefs. Before treating of the unwritten permanent law relating to land, however, it will be advisable to review, in so far as reliable

[1] This limitation in the power of ancestral spirits was alluded to in Chap. III of this series, 'Matrilineal Descent in Ashanti.'

tradition has made such a course possible, the probable stages of social evolution of this people leading up to recent historical times, when they were more or less loosely united under one chief, called ' the King of Ashanti '.

The materials available for such an historical review are of a fairly trustworthy character. The tribal memory, which is in the custody of persons whose sole duty is to retain in their heads an accurate record of names and events in the correct chronological order, is, I am inclined to believe, as likely to contain, in many respects, as reliable a record as can be found in many written histories.

The custodians of the tribal lore, each of whom has his or her understudy, have to be absolutely ' word perfect '. Their memory is constantly exercised in the numerous rites they attend at which they have to repeat correctly long lists of names and events in their proper order.

At one ceremony I attended, at which two old women had to recite the titles of the great ancestral spirits as far back as there was any record, I was informed that in the old days two executioners (*abrafo*) would have been detailed to stand behind them, and that if they made a mistake they were ' taken away '. The *kwadwumfo* again—these extraordinary singers or minstrels, who drone like a hive of bees in the chief's ear at every Wednesday and Sunday *Adae*—the names and deeds of the departed kings, must also become perfect at their task.

In written histories, clerical and typographical errors creep in, or even at times deliberate misstatements may be introduced, all of which tend to become perpetuated in subsequent editions.

Ashanti traditional lore carries us back to the time when the various clans, that were later to be loosely united under one king, were living in isolated, independent groups, owning no common head, but each looking upon the senior woman of the clan, the Queen Mother, who delegated some of her power to her male kinsman, as its head.

We may assume that all land in the first instance belonged to a number of isolated and independent family or kindred household groups. That is, we have Family land.[1]

[1] The influx of other blood necessitated by the rule of exogamy did not complicate land matters in any degree, for no one, not of the clan, could under ordinary circumstances, succeed to the land of the clan.

The next stage was where these isolated family groups—owning at first only the head of the family group as having any authority over them—united to form one large composite group, consisting of all the members of one clan, in addition to their wives, and chose one member out of all the scattered, hitherto independent, family groups as chief or head of the now united group.

The land of the individual family groups, now viewed as a whole, became the tribal land.

Just as the head of the little family group had possibly distributed the family land and assumed some sort of indirect control over it, so the new head chosen to command the whole clan assumed some authority over the land of his clansmen who now nominally held it from him in return for certain services.

This brings us at once to the possible origin of stool lands. The Belfield report—already referred to—in § 26, p. 8, states as follows :

'. . . Tribal lands appear to be those which have for reasons not thoroughly elucidated, been disassociated from the control of the occupant of the stool . . .'

A very careful examination of this question has convinced me that the above supposition is not correct, and that to suggest that originally tribal land arose out of stool lands is, I believe, to put the cart before the horse. I am convinced that stool lands had their origin in family lands and not vice versâ.[1]

In the brief sketch outlined above I have suggested how at a certain stage in the social evolution of the Ashanti, a number of independent family groups chose the head of one of these groups to be head of the whole group. This head would already be the owner (in the very limited sense to be described later) of the lands of his own household or kindred group, but when he became head not only of his own group but of all the other groups composed of members of his own blood, and the title

[1] I am not disputing the fact that once the social organization evolved chiefs, and when an exodus of a whole more or less organized community to new lands took place, that in such a case the chief would in all probability allot himself stool lands and then distribute the remainder among his followers in families ; but such a procedure is of course of comparatively recent growth, and very far from being the elemental process that here concerns us.

and powers of a chief came to be bestowed upon him,[1] his piece of family land would come to be looked upon as an appurtenance of his chieftainship, and from merely being the family land of the family supplying the ruler, would become, by this association, the nucleus of all stool land.

This stool land came later to be augmented by one of the following processes :

(*a*) By Conquest (*konim*). When the king or a chief returned from war, he made grants of land to his war chiefs (*asafohene*). This accounts for the fact of certain stools having land far distant from the original stool property.

(*b*) Escheat (*awunyadie*), not common ; this will be described later under the heading of ' Services '.

(*c*) Gift (*akyede*). An incident of conquest.

(*d*) Forfeiture (*adwoyiye*). Extremely rare unless a whole family or tribe be involved in the offence.

(*e*) Purchase. Of comparatively recent growth and formerly, I am convinced, unknown.

I have endeavoured to describe in the abstract what Ashanti tradition will disclose to us only in the concrete. The little family groups, the clans or classes, the gradual welding together into a loose confederation under one king at Coomassie, all are recorded in their unwritten history, which preserves the names of real men and women, who were the ancestral heads of the primitive kindred group, and finally their kings and queens of the Oyoko blood. It is from the advent of the last named, as might be expected, that their historians have been at most pains to prevent the record passing into oblivion. It is their titles and deeds that a central government, anxious to maintain a central authority, have endeavoured to make familiar. This has been done at the expense perhaps of the earlier traditional history which preceded this grouping of independent families, clans, and classes under one authority. This is the reason, I believe, that makes it so difficult, unless we probe under the surface, to trace Ashanti records back later than about the end of the fifteenth century.

[1] When I speak throughout of the chief, I am assigning to him the position fully described in Chap. III, ' Matrilineal Descent in Ashanti '.

I have endeavoured to trace the religious and historical aspects of this subject, both of which help to a better understanding of the more strictly legal side, which it is next proposed to examine. Before entering upon a detailed examination of the various processes of the Ashanti law which regulated the holding and alienation of land there are two statements in the Belfield report which I think require further examination. One is contained on p. 8:

(*a*) '. . . The Crown possesses the inherent right of *ultimus haeres* to any land to which no owner can be found.'

(*b*) And the other, where in § 19, p. 7, it is stated:

'In the days prior to the advent of European enterprise in the inland districts, when the operations of white traders were confined to such business as could be carried on from the fortified stations on the coast, the land was of little or no value in the estimation of the people of the country.'

The first of the two instances above is perhaps of only minor importance, for it is a purely hypothetical event which could, in one sense, never actually happen.

In Ashanti, there can be no such thing as land being without an owner. Every foot of land, indefinite and uncertain as topographical boundaries may be, belongs to some one. This fact being accepted, the only way in which land could come to be ownerless would be by the extinction of a family group. Supposing that in such a case provision had not been made for that event by the procedure of allowing an *odonko ba*,[1] or so-called slave, to succeed, the land would then seem to become without an owner; but Ashanti law made full provision for such an emergency, and such land would be at once absorbed by the stool under whom the now extinct clan or family had held it. It would not, even under a system which came later to acknowledge the Ashanti King as Lord Paramount of all land, revert to that King. It therefore seems illogical, if not impossible, that the Crown should ever in such a case become the *ultimus haeres*.

The second statement, though in itself of no great importance, nevertheless gives such a totally wrong impression of the ideas of this people in the past, that it may be as well here to correct it.

[1] See Chap. I, 'The Ashanti Classificatory System.'

FIG. 100. Here were arranged in two rows eleven little enamel bowls

The proverbial sayings of a people constitute an epitome of their thoughts, and present tersely and briefly something which every one already knows and the national consciousness feels and thinks. Now a universally known Ashanti proverb runs: *tumi nyina wo asase so* ('all power is in land'), and when we come presently to examine the system of land tenure upon which the Ashanti confederacy was based, we shall understand how the national belief in the value and power of land came to give that idea a place among the Ashanti national proverbial sayings.

The recognition thus given to the value of land, coupled with the spiritual associations already described, sufficiently explain, I think, the reluctance of an Ashanti to part with the title to his land, except in case of very great necessity. It is these factors which have caused the process of alienation known as 'sale' to be absent altogether, in the not very remote past, from the Ashanti code of land laws.

The student of the English law of Real Property who comes to examine the Ashanti law relating to that subject, will at first be astonished to find that a system, which he had been taught to believe was peculiar to his own country, had an almost exact replica in West Africa among the Ashanti.

Topham, one of our authorities in the law of Real Property, writes, 'The law relating to land is the most difficult branch of English law, partly because it is peculiar to England and differs widely from any other system, and partly because it is founded in ancient rules and formalities invented to suit a society in which writing was almost unknown, and land was by far the most important form of wealth.'

The student who argues that the similarity in our own ancient feudal land laws to the system evolved in Ashanti was due to any culture contact or to European influences is, I believe, arguing on a faulty premiss. The human mind and human intelligence, even among peoples so widely separated in culture as the Ashanti and the English of the eleventh century, seem often to have reacted in a like manner to a similar stimulus, and the Ashanti, under certain conditions not unlike those existing at the time of the Norman conquest, seem to have evolved an almost exactly similar land code. This is not a matter of

surprise when we know that our own laws, like theirs, were 'invented to suit a state of society in which writing was almost unknown and land was by far the most important form of wealth'.

The King of Ashanti was acknowledged as the Lord Paramount of all land in his loosely united Kingdom. We have already seen how the Oyoko clan, by reason of their special ability, but possibly owing more to the Priest ('*Komfo*) Anotchi—'the Ashanti Cardinal Wolsey', as Sir Francis Fuller aptly terms him—than to any other one man, gradually, by this administrative ability and by warlike enterprises, built up a Central Government at Coomassie at the head of which stood the Ashanti King (*Asante 'hene*). This monarch, however, was always held very much in check by his hereditary councillors, and still more by the clan system, by reason of which no single free man, woman, or child, could ever be considered or treated as a separate entity apart from his or her clan. In this respect his power was much less real than that wielded by William I. The latter had come as a foreign conqueror to a foreign land when the clan system was dead or dying.

The parallel is more exact perhaps when we come to consider the conquests of the Ashanti Kings in the north, east, and west over other peoples who were of different races.

This Central Government simply adopted the procedure with which all had been familiar in the days of their isolated group existence.

The greater chiefs, Mampon, Kokofu, Juaben, &c., became the tenants *in capite* of the Ashanti King, but continued to enjoy more or less undisputed right to their lands, as the clan and family likewise in turn did to theirs. All (some in a greater, others in a lesser degree) were subject now, however, to certain services to the king at Coomassie, and these services were simply based on the same general principles which obtained among the individual members of the family groups which they rendered to the family head, to the clan head, and so on up the social scale. What these services were will now be examined in detail.

Services (*Osom*). By far the most important service demanded of a tenant by his chief or over-lord was *Military Service*, known in Ashanti as *Osako*—the obligation incumbent upon the tenant

and his family to follow and fight for him from whom he held his land. To refuse such an obligation was unthinkable. If you ask an Ashanti to-day what would have happened to any one refusing this service, he will simply say he could not have refused; but if he, and his *abusua* (family), did so, then their land would be forfeited. That this obligation implied a very great and real service, in days which are yet so recent as to be remembered by men now alive, is clear to any student of Ashanti history. I lay some stress on this point for reasons that will be clear later.

We have seen that a clansman's own children could never be of their father's clan, and the natural question here suggests itself as to their attitude in the event of war between their own and their father's clan. There is little doubt in my own mind that originally the tie of blood was the stronger bond and the only one that counted, and that son would be arrayed against father and father against son. The *Omanhene* of Mampon informs me, however, that at a later date matters had been so far adjusted that it was understood that one son must fight for the father's clan, while the other was at liberty to join those of his own blood.[1]

Fealty. The tenant had to swear fealty to his chief, and the chief to his king. This was known as *nsua*. The ceremony of swearing fealty by a sub-chief was as follows. The man advanced before the chief, who was seated on his stool, and removed his sandals; perhaps, if of high rank, he would stand upon them. A sword (*afona*) was handed to him. This he raised to the sky and then dropped the point to earth, bending his head, upon the crown of which the chief placed the sole of his left foot, while his subject took the following oath:

'*Se wo de me asi akonua yi so yi, se m'ansom wo som pa, se m'ammoa wo mmoa pa ma w'ammu man yi, na se me twa wo nkontompo biara a, me ka ntam na 'Nyame ne Asase enya me.*'

'As you have put me on this stool, if I do not render you good service, if I do not give you good help to rule this people,

[1] This is probably a very modern solution of the difficulty.

and if I tell you any falsehood whatever, I swear the oath, then may the Sky God and the Earth (deity) " get " me.'

A stranger on being given land also swore fealty, but in such a case both tenant and owner (the latter, if a chief, by proxy) would drink *abosom*.[1]

Reliefs. Reliefs, in the language of feudal tenure, were sums payable on the death of a tenant. Reliefs have their exact parallel in Ashanti and were variously known as *ayiyo*, *awunyadie* or *ayibuadie*. These formed one of the main sources of revenue of a king or chief.

Bowdich mentions that the King of Ashanti was part heir to all his subjects, and in his capacity as such, according to the rule of Ashanti law, contributed to their funeral expenses. This statement is rather misleading, however, for the casual reader might infer therefrom that the *Asante 'hene* was heir to every Ashanti man in his kingdom. Such was not the case. His right was restricted and well defined; his *amanhene*, *ahenfo*, and *asafohene* each in his grade having those to whom he had the right to become part heir. One point must, however, be very clearly noted. This right to a share in a subject's estate (one-half or sometimes one-third) only applied to the deceased's personal, individual, and privately acquired property; land could not be touched, for individual ownership in land did not exist. This law, which amounted to ' hands off ' family property, applied not only to immovable but to movable wealth. This right of inheritance, as noted already, made it incumbent upon the heir to send a contribution (*nsa*) towards the deceased's funeral expenses.[2]

Reliefs formed one of the great sources of a stool's revenue in the past. The practice has, I am informed, fallen into abeyance since our occupation of the country, and thus one of the main sources of a stool's revenue has been cut off, a point to which I shall revert later.

Next in importance come those services which in the Feudal

[1] This custom is commonly called ' drinking fetish ', it is described in Chap. VIII.

[2] In certain cases—e.g. Mampon and Jamasi—on the death of a chief of the latter division, the *Omanhene* of Mampon would receive not half the latter's estate but half of the *nsa* or total donation contributed towards the funeral.