THE VALLEY AND THE SCARP

A woman returning from the valley with food to Obomeng

The Local Study of Obomeng

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1953 - 54

PREFACE

In the past, Geography, History, and Civics have been taught in isolation and independent of one another. To-day, the modern view is that these are related subjects whose value in teaching is determined by the extent to which they are related to man and his way of life.

From this viewpoint, the three subjects constitute a homogeneous unit of social science; therefore they appear on the time-table under the title social studies.

The school teacher who has been used to teaching these subjects in the old water-tight compartments and who has not grasped the new concept, is caught in a maelstrom of doubt and indecision as regards what his approach to this seemingly new subject of social studies should be.

The essential point to remember, according to this new theory, is that man is the important factor and that the study of these subjects must bring out their relation to or influence on him, and so lead to an appreciation of the reasons under-lying a community's way of life.

This short local study of Obomeng, therefore is intended to help the teacher to see the relationship of geographical and historical factors to the different aspects of life of the community, and to put him on the road to the handling of this new and puzzling subject of social studies.

I must express my indebtedness to the many friends who gave me the necessary in-

formation, among whom may be mentioned the chief and elders of Obomeng, particularly Linguist Kwabena Akuamoa, Mr A.E. Quist, B.A., of the Forestry Department, Mpraeso, my younger brother E.K. Ansong who designed the illustrations, and my mother.

My warmest thanks are also due to my tutor, Dr M.M. Lusty M.A (N.Z.) Ph.D. (Lond) who read my rough copies, gave valuable suggestions, and guided the whole study.

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May, 1954

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THE LOCAL STUDY OF OBOMENG

1. INTRODUCTION

Obomeng is one of the group of towns forming the Kwahu district, a plateau-land, bounded on the East by the River Volta, on the West by the town of Kwahu Prasu, on the North by River Obosum, and on the South by the town of Tejeti.

The plateau nature of the district becomes very obvious as the traveller by railway reaches Nkawkaw, where the plateau ends abruptly in the Ejuanoma Scarp. This scarp rises to a height of 2478 feet above sea level.[1]

It becomes still more obvious, should the traveller break his journey at Nkawkaw and attempt to ascend it by lorry on the three-mile road which brings him to the summit.

Obomeng is the first of the group of towns the traveller comes across, lying, as it does, behind the scarp, and reached by a very circuitous and precipitous road. Of the latter, it can only be said that it represents a remarkable feat and ingenuity of the Italians in the art of road-making.

2. HISTORY

Origins

In tracing the origins of all akan peoples Ward[2] concludes, after collating the different stories and traditions and evidences in language that all of them, along with the rest of the negroes of West Africa, came from East and south of the Sahara.

The people who inhabit the southern part of the Gold Coast first settled in the N.T.S, but

1. Adam's Geography Page 7. 2. Ward's History of the G.C. Pp 31-34

Fig 2. ? Source and validity

Fig 3

OBOMENG from the West looking down the main street. (Notice how empty the street appears to be — the condition on an ordinary day.)

a fierce and war-like people, the Bantus, invaded them. They inter-married with them, and so influenced their language.

These ancestors, unable to get along with their conquerors, moved southwards, about 1200 A.D., in three waves. The Guans, who were first to move, settled on the Afram Plains, in Akwapim and in the coastal region of the East.

The next to follow were the Fantis, who moved westwards and occupied the place where they now are.

Lastly, the Twi people moved and settled between the two groups in the parts now known as Ashanti and Akim.

From the information gathered from the chief and elders of Okomeng, the Kwahus migrated from parts of Ashanti - Kontanase, Mampong, and Juaben. Upon this, all the informants were agreed, but they could not tell me any more traditions which went farther than that. Anyway, it is clear that if they came from Ashanti, they must have come with the Ashantis from the grasslands of the North, and still more, must have been in the migration from South of the Sahara.

The earliest settlers came from Kontanasi, near Lake Bosumtwi, under their leader Badu. These settled at Bukuruwa, "stone cup", which is so named because of a stone with a depression in it, giving the appearance of a cup, which was found there.

The earliest chief of the Kwahus was called Atara Finam. Other immigrants came along from parts of Ashanti and asked this chief for land on which to settle. He sent one of his servants

Diagram showing Origins

NEGRO (Peoples of West africa)

AKAN (Ashanti, akim, Kwahu, Fanti)

NTORO
Bosommuru, Bosompra
Bosomtwe, Bosommaran
abankwadi, Agyinadie
akankandie, Nkansadie

ABUSUA
Oyoko, Koona
Aduana, Agona
Bretu, Asona
Asenee

KWAHU
Abetifi, Asakraka, Obo,
Mpraeso, Nkawkaw, Atibie,
Aduamoa, Pepease, Abene
Obomeng, Twenduruase,
Bukuruwa, Kwahu Prasu
Nkwatia, Bepong,

OBOMENG

CHIEFS
1. Opinaman 2. Sono I. 3. Sono II.
4. Sono III. 5. Nyarko Kyerefa.
6. Ntoni akuafra 7. Kodee.
8. Adjabeng Nti. 9. Abankwa
10. Obugyei 11. Kwasi Anmakwa.
12. Yao Mensah
13. Sarkodie 13. Kwadwo Boating
14. Owusu Boating

Fig 4.

to lead the way to the place where these immigrants were to settle, but he died on the way; thus the chief in his anguish named the land "akoawu", "slave has died". It was later corrupted, and so it became Kwawu; to-day it is anglicized and called Kwahu.

Obomeng, unlike the rest of the towns of the district, was occupied by settlers, not from Ashanti, but from Nyanawase, sometimes called Asamang, a town near the Nyanoa hill, very near to Nsawam. Nyanawase was part of the Akwamu district which was under Ansa Sasraku, a very powerful chief.

According to Ward[1], in his "Short History of the Gold Coast," Ansa had two wicked sons who mal-treated, with impunity, traders who passed through the district, but Ansa would not listen to the complaints of the neighbouring chiefs against the conduct of his children. To this the chief of Akim had taken great exception, and was on the look-out to take vengeance.

The opportunity was not long coming. For a long time, Ansa Sasraku had threatened an invasion of the Akwapims and Gas, and when these two molested peoples decided to attack, the Akims joined forces.

The Akwamus were routed and forced to escape to different parts of the country, a great bulk of them crossing the Volta into the Nkonya district. This was round about 1733[2]. My informant could not specify anything in regard to date, but it is clear that the migration co-incided with the breaking up of the Akwamu state about whose date Ward is clear.

At this time, a group of these fugitives who once lived at Nyanawase fled northwards

1-2 Ward's History P. 97

and sought refuge on top of a hill behind the Nkawkaw scarp about half a mile from the present site of Obomeng, under the leadership of a woman called Yaa Kwei. To-day the queen-mother of Obomeng is called Yaa Kwei which is a clear indication of the relationship of the present with the past.

It is interesting to note, in regard to the three big migrations of the akans from the Northern Territories, that it seems that the Obomengs must have come with the first batch, the Guans, because the land occupied by these embraced Nyanawase whence the people of Obomeng claim to have come. In this sense, they stand, as already mentioned, in quite a different category in regard to the origins of the people of Kwahu.

Settlement

The Obomengs belong to the adiana clan which is sometimes called Ada.

Tradition has it that after some years of settlement at the old site, famine broke out. A fortunate hunter discovered a ridge not very far away, thickly covered with a grove of bananas from which he had plenty to allay his hunger. On his return in the evening from this place, whenever he was asked by his friends in regard to where he had been, he answered that he had been to "Bɔ-mene", meaning literally, "peel and gulp it in". Eventually the secret became known, and so all the people moved to this place where they could have enough 'to peel and gulp it in'.

It is a moot point as to whether the movement could have been only the advantage of a close proximity to a grove of bananas, a fruit which did not

constitute an important item in their menu. Furthermore, this new site is not very far removed from the old one, and the bananas, if that was the reason for the movement, were within easy reach.

It certainly could not have been the need for water, because both places were equidistant to the River Asubone. To my mind, it was due to the narrowness of the ridge and the lack of land for expansion, because a short distance away, in the direction of Nkawkaw, is a steep and dangerous slope which is part of the scarp formation. In the direction of Obomeng too is a slope which ends in the River Asubone valley.

The first site was definitely unsuitable for the development of a town; however, it is quite reasonable for Obomeng to earn its name to commemorate the experience of the hunter on his expeditions to this place, but the mere proximity to the bananas alone, which tradition tends to establish as the reason for the movement, does not seem cogent enough.

The settlement consisted of a few houses built either of thatch or the bark of trees and roofed with palm leaves. Almost invariably the doors consisted of a broad and thick bark of a tree fastened to the post at the entrance with the help of ropes. This was preferred to mats made out of palm branches, "asrene", as they could give better protection against the attack of enemies or wild creatures.

Later, a fresh batch of immigrants, under one Boateng, arrived from the same town, Nyamawase. As they were kinsmen, they were warmly received and given a place nearby to settle. In size, it now began to take on the look of a town.

Chiefs

Their earliest chief was Opinaman. My informants could not say the relationship between this chief and the leader, Yaa Kwei, but going by the pattern of akan inheritance, it would seem that he was either a son, a sister's son, or a brother.

He was the occupant of the family stool of this group that came here, and was said to have stolen away from their home-town, together with the members of the family, at night, taking with him the family stool. Therefore, to this day, whenever a member of the Ada clan dies, the women sing thus in remembrance of this ancient chief:

"Odum akwasi Pinaman, Nana a ɔnam
anadwo a ɔmfa ogya
Ono na ɔyɛɛ saa ma n'abatafo ɔ
adidi anadwo".

"Handsome Akwasi Pinaman, Grandsire who
travels at night without taking fire,
It was he who caused his companions to
dine late at night".

After him reigned three brothers, all of whom bore the same name, that is Sono I, Sono II, Sono III. Unfortunately their sister, Faah, was barren and had no children, so the stool passed into the hands of an intelligent and crafty Fanti man named Nyarko Kyerefo.

This man secured it by successfully leading an attack against Abene, the capital of Kwahu, whither some citizens of Obomeng had been carried to be executed. He succeeded in effecting a rescue, and in recognition of this exploit, was enstooled chief.

He was succeeded by a chief called Ntoni akafra. He was proud, and took pleasure in abusing

Fig 5

Chronological Order of Chiefs.

1. Opinaman. Brought stool from Nyanawase
2. Sono I.
3. Sono II. } all brothers. Their sister Faah barren.
4. Sono III
5. Nyarko Kyerefo A Fanti
6. Ntoni akuafra
7. KodeE. Fetish priest who became chief. Destooled seven times.
8. Adyabeng Nta. Laid foundation of economic stability of the people
9. abankwa
10. Obugyei. Twi literate, educated at court of Abomosu. made counterfeit coins
11. Kwasi Animakwa. Went to buy stool from akim by paying £40 for it.
12. Yao Mensah. English literate; educated at the Scottish Mission School, Abetifi & Begoro
13.

Sarkordie (Yaa akwei's line)

Kwadaso Boateng (Boateng's line)

Owusu Boateng

and people. He became impopular, and the people looked for the opportunity to destool him.

This was not long in coming. During the Akanta-mansu war' he insisted that he be carried about which the people did with great reluctance. Thus when they were surrounded, the disgruntled carriers let go their onerous burden, and he fell a victim to the enemy.

He was succeeded on the battlefield by his uncle Kodee who, in private life, was a powerful fetish priest. He proved to be a very wicked chief. In consequence, he was destooled six times, but on each occasion succeeded in getting back to the stool. This repeated re-enstoolment was attributed to his super-natural powers he developed before his election into office. However, he was permanently destooled on the seventh occasion, and his nephew put in his place.

This nephew was Chief Adyabeng Nti, who is remembered for the help and encouragement he gave to the unemployed. He advised the young men to make themselves useful by equiping themselves with the hoe, a tool which was a special line of the local blacksmiths, and applying themselves to farming. This received such an enthusiastic response that to-day a place called "Nsokwae", "Hoe forest", reminds the people of the activities of these men who lived at the time. He also promoted the quest for gold dust which was an industry at Bonkese, a town about 12 miles Southwest of Nkawkaw. Thus he effected the financial security of the individual and laid the foundation for the economic stability of the community which was to attract inter-marriage with royal families of other towns. This in turn had its repercussions

' Ward's History Page 132

on inheritance to the stools.

This reign was followed by an uneventful one under chief Abankwa who soon bequeathed it to his nephew Obugyei.

The new chief was a young man educated at the court of Abomosu, one of the leading towns in Akim. He had the special distinction of being the first chief to come to the stool Twi literate. Small wonder the people placed great confidence in him.

But he was a pretentious rascal. On the death of his uncle, he caused counterfeit coins to be made for him out of old broken china plates. These the crafty young man packed into several loads, and, under pretence of being a wealthy man, started for Obomeng to lay claim to the stool.

He created the desired impression. He won popular favour, and was enstooled chief. But the trick was presently discovered, as his true financial status showed up. The people forsook him, and he fled, taking with him the stool, which he gave to the chief of Akim.

The latter, however, sent word to inform the people of Obomeng of the great prize he had in his possession. Forthwith they sent a messenger, Donkwa by name, to go to negotiate for it, but the latter returned unsuccessful. Another man, Aninakwa, set out for Akim, determined to bring it back at all costs; accordingly he offered £40, a very handsome sum of money for those days, and so succeeded in bringing it back.

He was rewarded by being made chief, and reigned for many years, dying at a grand old age.

He, in turn, was succeeded by Chief Yaw

Fig 7

The newly installed chief : Owusu Boateng

7

mensah, an educated man, under whose rule, Obomeng saw many changes and great educational advances.

As a christian himself, he did all he could to promote the Presbyterian church, and gave financial support for the improvement of the existing primary school and its extension to the middle school. He died January 5, 1947, after a slight illness and was deeply mourned.

There has been a long dispute over his succession which has led to great political unrest, not only in the town, but also the whole of the Kwahu district as well. The Omanhene's interference in the case has landed him in a case of his own destoolment.

The town is divided into two camps by two rival candidates, Sarkodie and Boateng, the former hailing from Yaa Kwei's line and the latter the leader of the second batch of settlers, Boateng's group. The latter candidate seemed to be gaining grounds in the contest, but died suddenly in December, 1953. A young man, called Owusu Boateng, has come into his place, and so the struggle over the chieftaincy still continues.

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3. POPULATION

This town which began upwards of two centuries ago has according to the 1948 census a population of only 913. According to that of 1931 the population was 912, which means that over the 17 year period, the increase has been by only 1. But from the records of the local sanitary officer, there are 491 houses, so that allowing on the average 10 people to a house, there could be a population no less than 4000. In fact on occasions when

the people return home to attend funerals or celebrate festivals the houses become so crowded that 4-8 people may sleep in a small room at night.

The causes of this paucity of population and the absence of growth are not far to find, and the evidence clearly illustrates the kind of relationship that exists between the economic or geographical factors and the life of a people.

In the first place, the Kwahus, and for that matter the people of Obomeng, love to trade. There is scarcely any corner of the country where the Kwahu man cannot be found in his small shop, crowded with every conceivable article of merchandise.

It is not easy to explain this natural bent for trading, but it will be quite near the solution to put forth the following hypothesis. Firstly, the vast lands of the afram plains are barren, therefore the people have been forced into the southern part of the district where the land lends itself to agriculture. This, however, is too small an area for all the people. Thus they have been compelled to take to trading.

Their love for rivalry and excellence which is reflected in their buildings and deportment on festival occasions such as Easter has contributed the incentive towards making them successful in this field. Trading has become such a fashionable profession that it is the deciding factor, as far as the girls are concerned, in the selection of a husband.

The Kwahus carry a great bulk of the petty trading in large towns such as Accra, Kumasi, and Koforidua. Here they live the whole year round, returning home only perhaps at Easter or on the


VILLAGES OF OBOMENG
N
W
E
Obomeng
Sebewie
Dadiasi
Awenade
Aponapaso
6° 40'
6° 40'
Kobontwra
Anyinasu
NKAWKAW
Nkawkaw
Ntrado
Janakrom
Drobong
Bereporo.
Amanfrom
Afum
Kaso
Pintinkrom
Duadeso
Kwesi Mireku
Kawso.
Abepantia
Abepawtia No1
Asuboni
Asamdue
Atonso
Esuakaw
Anyenoso
Denchira
Nanchia
Apesika
Domenase
Wawasi
Mpeyo
Kwamasua
Domeabra
Awopawso
Dowa
Adampasu
Krakaw
Abrewankaw
Ampekrom
0° 50'

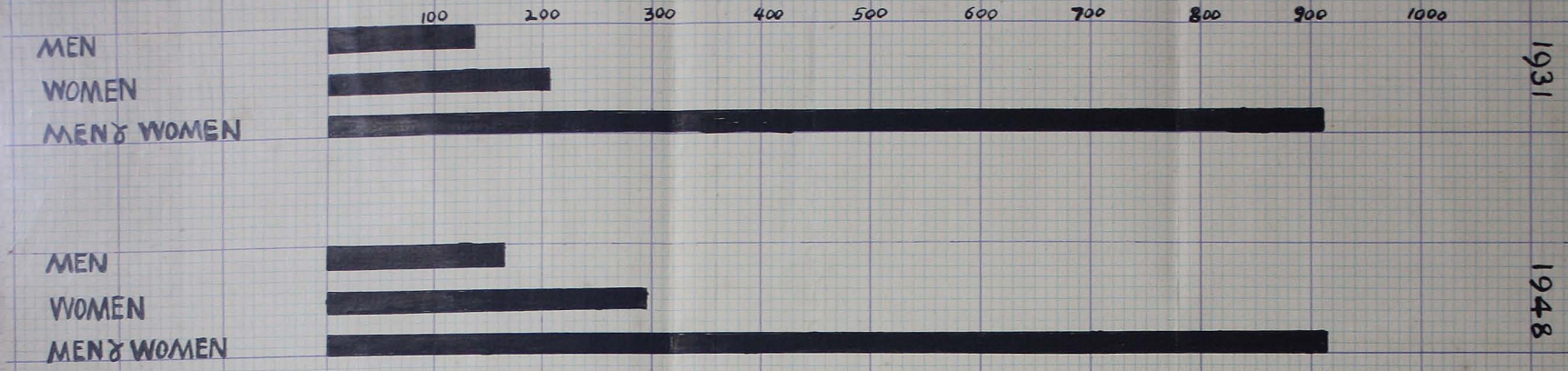
death of a relation. Thus Nkawkaw, a flourishing railway town, 3 miles away, situated at the foot of the hill, where there are opportunities for trading, has taken a great toll of the population of Kwahu.

Obomeng has suffered most in this, because of its close proximity and the fact that Nkawkaw belongs to the Obomeng stool, and so the people have their farms around it.

This last fact is closely tied up with the second and perhaps more important reason which accounts for the stagnation in the population. As will be later discussed, the conditions for farming are unfavourable and this raises food and economic problems. Therefore, since the land stretching for miles around Nkawkaw is fertile, the people have gone to live in this town or in small villages and hamlets, where food is easily obtainable, market is quickly accessible, and their economic problems can be easily adjusted through the production of cocoa.

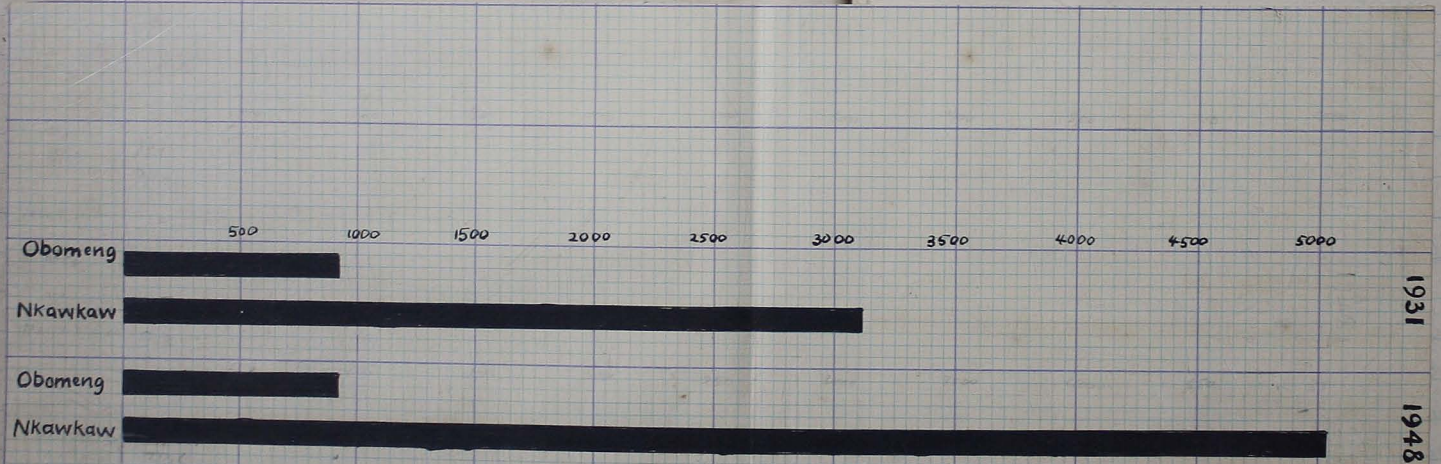
The accompanying map of Obomeng and its villages will give the reader a clear grasp of the situation and help clear up this puzzle about the population. This movement of the population from Obomeng to the villages has increased with the growth of Nkawkaw, and this, as has been already stated, accounts for the absence of improvement in the population within the corresponding period of time.

In 1931, the population of Nkawkaw was 3,106. In 1948 it had risen to 5,043. The chief of Obomeng, alarmed at this state of affairs and to protect the town from complete desertion, has ruled that no citizen of Obomeng shall build at Nkawkaw unless he has built already at Obomeng. But even



Population of Obomeng

(Notice great increase of Women in 1948)



Growth of Populations of Obomeng and Nkawkaw Compared.

so, those already built are uninhabited and in a sad state of neglect. Those in ruins are dismantled at night in order that the iron sheets might be used in roofing new houses at Nkawkaw.

There is another interesting aspect of the population. According to this census of 1948, the number of males and females over 15 years is 166 and 295 respectively. As stated earlier, the girls prefer the traders to the farmers. Consequently, instead of accepting the hand of the farmer and going down to the village to work on the farms, they choose to stay in the town and wait until their chance may come when some of these traders returning home may marry them and take them away into the open towns where life is easier.

This does not happen often, as they expect, and so their numbers continue to mount. In 1931, there were 200 males and 206 females, which was a very good balance. In 1948 there were 166 males and 295 females which shows that the situation has changed for the worse.

To conclude this chapter on population, it may be said that as long as Nkawkaw grows, as it does nearly every day, and the people continue to travel abroad to trade; and as long as geographical conditions create economic hardships which make the movement to the villages imperative, there is hardly anything that can be done to save the situation. Obomeng town is doomed to decadence. The only hope lies in the Volta Project which, according to the chief and elders, proposes the working of the Ejuanoma Bauxite deposits. If the mines begin to operate the prospect will be brighter.

Table of Kinship Groups

Name	Totem	Head
1. Dyoko, Dako, Anona	Dsansa (Kite)	Asantehene
2. Kona, Asokore	Eko (Buffalo)	Adansehene
3. Aduana, Atwea, Abrade, Amoakade Adaa, Abina, Nyamkopasakyire		
4. Agona, Toa, Nyago		
5. Bretu, Tra Twidan, Dnonyo	Etwi	— ?
6. Asona, Dwumana	Anene (Crow)	—
7. Asenee Asakyiri, Pone	Opete (Vulture	—

Fig 10.

Source

4. KINSHIP GROUPS

The people migrated to this place in two waves - one under Yaa Kwei and the other under Boateng - nevertheless both of them belonged to the same kinship group.

The akans have seven of these groups, "Abusua Mmenson". On the opposite page is given a table of the groups showing the totems and the head of each.

These groups or clans designate the origin of the people. The Okomengo belong to the Aduana, otherwise called Ada clan which immediately indicates that they originated from Akwamu.

The groups are constructed matrilineally, that is the child belongs to the family group of the mother, but not the father's. In accordance with the NTORO (Exogamus division) system, the Akan believes that during the conception of the child, it is the blood, "bogya", of the female, and not that of the ~~child~~ male, that makes the child. "Bogya" is synonymous with "abusua", family, and since it is the female who passes this on, the child must belong to the family group of the mother.

This has far-reaching influences on akan kinship construction, relations in family life, for if the mother gives the element that constitutes the family, then inheritance and property must be handed down matrilineally.

However, it is maintained that the blood has to blend with the spirit "okara" of the male. This spirit, "okara", or "NTORO" of the man is responsible for the qualities of the father which show themselves in the child. Thus if the child is brave or cowardly, clever or stupid, noble or niggardly, he owes the attribute to the father.

THE NTORO GROUP

Name	Day for "Washing"	Taboos	Remarks
Bosommuru	Tuesday	Python, ox, cow, monkey called Okwakuo, Dog, Wild dog, Bird called Asokwa Palm wine and Peto not drunk on Tuesday.	A River in akim
Bosompra	Wednesday	Leopard, White fowl, Bush buck, Kwakuo Tamiriwa, Tortoise	A river in Ashanti flowing into the sea near Shama
Bosomtwe	Sunday	Kwakuo, Bush buck Tamiriwa (Species of eadble snails) Tortoise	Lake in Ashanti.
Bosommaran	Saturday	Palm wine, cow,	Derivation doubtful
abankwade	Sunday	ox, cow, tamiriwa	" "
Agyinadie	Wednesday	Crocodile, afasie (water yam)	" "
Akankandie	Tuesday	dove, dog, wild dog	Remember what was told.
Nkansadie	Sunday	bush buck, okankome (serval) tortoise palm wine, tamiriwa	

Fig 11.

Source

Owing to this, after the death of the linguist, "okyeame", it is his son who is called upon to carry on the functions of his father, so that the community might continue to enjoy the good graces and qualities of the deceased father.

There are nine NTORO groups each of which has its totem and taboos and the day on which it may be "washed" or purified. This is illustrated on the opposite page.

The people of Obomeng belong to the Aduana clan whose totem is the dog, and whose head is the akwamuhene. Owing to inter-marriage between one town and the other, several other kinship groups have been brought in. At the time of the settlement, the group under Boateng settled on the western part, the two groups being separated from each other by a clump of bushes consisting, in the main, of tall grasses.

To-day this demarcation is gone, and the two groups as well as the interlopers have all mixed up.

It is interesting to observe that my informant, Linguist Kwabena Akuamoa, claimed that all the seven major kinship groups are much more represented here than in any other town of the district. This, he said, was owing to the fact that because of the wealth in the town, which is traceable to the good administration of Chief Adjabeng Nti, marriage with the young men was very much sought for from outside, and contracts with royal families were particularly frequent.

Thus to-day, many people can stand as candidates to the succession of a number of stools in the district. Conversely, there are as many people outside Obomeng who can lay claim to this stool.

To-day the more hopeful contender to the stool hales from Mpraeso. It is an example of how conditions of the present day may have deep seated roots in the past.

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5. LANGUAGE

The language of the people of Obomeng is that of Kwahu which is called Kwawu. Broadly, Kwawu is a dialect of the Akan, which according to Ward', bears affinities to other Gold Coast languages because of their common origin of the people and the Bantu influence. It has a close resemblance to the Akim and Asante Twi, the major difference lying in the accent and intonation, and the predominance of the rolled 'r' in Kwawu.

In Kwahu itself, there are varying degrees of differences in the pronunciation of words and intonation from town to town. Each has its own characteristic way of speaking, and Obomeng speech is easily recognizable to the Kwahu man from another town in the district.

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6. RELIGION

There are two main religions in the community, paganism and Christianity. There are seven people from the Northern Territories who belong to the Muslim religion. These believe that there is only one God and the prophet mohammed.

Both paganism and Christianity are too well known to need description, but it may be well to look at some broad differences.

As the Christian believes in a life hereafter, so the pagan; the latter, however, does not talk of

'Ward's History P. 32.

Fig 12

Nyame - Dua which is the post on which sacrifices to the Sky God are made.

heaven, but of a spirit world, "asaman", screened from our view. He believes that one who is murdered, a woman who dies in course of delivery, or one who commits suicide or dies any manner of unnatural death goes to live in another place on this earth until his destined time of death.

This they prove by citing some instances of people who have been seen in different places who had been known to have died in other towns.

Like the Christian, they share the belief that the wicked go into an unhappy state in the spirit world.

While Christianity presents an invisible God that must be accepted by faith, paganism presents a God that is visible and almost palpable, and, more than that, one with whom active and direct communication can be held.

It is true to say that they believe in the lesser gods, but they also believe in the great God of the Sky as witness the "Nyamedua", "God's tree", which stands in nearly every house. This is a three-forked post cut from a special tree with the same name Nyamedua, in which a basin is placed to receive the sacrifices to God. To-day, owing to improved building construction these crude Nyamedua posts are giving place to concrete pillars, but it is still indicative that the people are deeply sensible of the existence of the Great God of the Sky.

They call God, Onyame Kwame. A male child born on a Saturday is called Kwame, and this day is looked upon as his "kasa da", "soul's day". If the child some day should wish to purify and summon his soul to himself (this will be explained in a later chapter) this day is the one chosen for

the ritual. Why God is believed to have Saturday as "kara da" no one could explain. On this day, therefore, sacrifices can be made on the Nyamedua to God.

This belief in the Sky God is reflected in several ways. When one is asked in a greeting, "Woho te sen?" "How are you?" the answer invariably comes Onyame adaworoma, meho ye," "By God's grace, I am well".

Their proverbs teem with the idea. The following are a few of them: "Wo a woda ayeya wunhu Nyame, na me a mubutu ho". "You who lie in the supine position, you do not see God, how much I who lie facing the ground."

"Wubu kotɔ kwasea a, Onyame hwe wo to" "If you fool the crab (by stooping to catch it in its hole) God looks into your anus."

To Him they ascribe all power, and so He is "Otumfo" (Almighty) the honour of creation, hence He is "Ɔboade" (Creator) and omniscience, so He is "Hun tahunui" (One who knows the hidden things).

They know He abhors sin and wickedness, hence the expression "Onyame mpɛ bone". The question admits of no doubt, but upon investigation, it will be found that there exists conflicting ideas upon His personality.

Some think He cannot be thought of as possessing a palpable form since He is a Spirit. Others think He is the firmament or cloudy sky above us. Because of the latter view, whenever there is a roar of thunder they say "Onyame abom" "God has roared". If it continues to rain unceasingly for some days, they say "Nnansa yi dɛɛ, Onyame kɔtɔ kyere ha" "These days the penis of God is pointing in this direction".

To Him they attribute all those inexplicable phenomena of life as the above illustrates. The stone axe of neolithic period, they call "Nyame akuma" "God's axe". They believe that it attends lightning and is responsible for the damage done to trees.

And death, the greatest mystery in all nature, they rightly assert, is the creation of God. "Odomankama bɔɔ nnipa na ɔbɔɔ owuo", "When Odomankama (another name for God) created man He created death".

LESSER GODS

Besides this belief in the Sky God, they believe in the lesser gods and worship them more actively. Perhaps the reason for the neglect of the worship of the Sky God is that He is far away.

There is a legend which says that at first "Nyankopon" "God" was right near to the earth, but an old woman who used to pound fufu continued hitting Him in the eye with her pestle, and so He moved farther and farther away.

Although they do not confess to the fact that their worship of Him is weak because He is far away, it is very evident in their attitude.

But their actions and sayings are most contradictory because they have a saying "Onyame bɛn yɛn tɛ sɛ ɔhonam ne ntoma" "God is as close to us as cloth is to the body".

Their idea about these lesser gods is that, "Odomankama", god created them and they must therefore be worshipped. In answer to a question as to why they worship these gods, the retort was: "Na sɛ Onyankopon no ara na ɔbɔɔ won" "But it was God Himself who created them".

The people believe that these lesser gods

Fig 13

A priest standing by his shrine in his regalia

are capable of protecting them from evil, particularly from witches, and this is the primary reason for their worship of them. The other hope for a happier life hereafter does not matter with them, as it does with the christian. "Hwan na ever aka asaman asam aba pen?" "Who has gone to the spirit world and returned?" is their answer, if asked whether they do not care about the future. Their concern is their well-being here and now, and to this end, they worship.

There are several of these, and "obosom" shrine may take the form of a sacred stone or all sorts of odd things like sticks, pieces of roots, and bones placed in a brass pan or earthenware.

Each of these gods, has a priest who is believed to have been selected by the particular deity for this sacred duty. As an evidence of the choice, it is usual for such a man to behave in a strange manner almost bordering on madness. The relatives go to consult a fetish whose "okomfo," priest, indicates that he is possessed of a god. This man so chosen, goes to take up his duties as a priest to an already existing fetish, or may be directed by the older priest to assemble the ingredients for a new shrine.

Some gods have as many as four priests. Generally, these are chosen from families in which there is a god, but some make their choice indiscriminately, women and girls not being exempt. Instances have come to the notice of the writer where doubters in the power of the god have had the "call". On one occasion a small church for which the writer was caring suffered two apostasies in this way. It is not easy to explain the

cause of this, but it is not unlikely that it was due to fear on the part of the apostates.

When under the influence of the spirit or "obosom" the priest, covered all over with white clay and powder and holding a cow's tail which may be equivalent to the wand of the magician, dances hysterically to the rhythm of drums and singing. He quivers, jumps about frantically, and dashes himself to the ground, as the people mute him is with the words: "Woboa, Nana aba, katakyie", "Yes, Grandsire has come, the great one" and the music rises to a crescendo. For a respite, he disappears into the room where the shrine is, crouching on all fours.

Through the priest, sacrifices are made either for the propitiation of the gods or a request for health, childbirth, success in business, or some special favour. The sacrifice may take the form of a hen, eggs, yams, a cloth, a dog, a cow, or money. Oftentimes the solicitors make vows which they are careful to pay when their wishes are fulfilled.

The supplicant goes to the priest with the sacrifice and informs him what is his or her request. He or she comes before the shrine on the knees. If he is a man, he bares his upper part of his body to the chest; in the case of a woman, she takes off the head-gear. The hen is then handed to the priest with some such words: "Nana, mikura me nsam akoko mede rebre skeses na waboa me ma wagyina makyi ama biribi abeto Kotokuom se onipa bonefo bi na ekura mu a, onyi no adi ma nnipa nyinaa nhu no. Se oboa ma eye yie a, afe se nne mikura me nsam oguan biako mede do no ase." "Grandsire, I hold in my hands this hen which is for him so that he

might stand behind me so that something might fall into the "bag" (womb). If it is a wicked one who is causing it, reveal him for everybody to see. If he helps me so that all goes well, a year hence I shall bring a sheep to thank him".

The priest takes the hen, places her on the shrine, and re-iterates the request. Then he says, "Se wopene so a, di akoko yi nma 'yenhwe" "If you are agreeable, accept or "eat" this hen for us to see." He then cuts the throat of the hen, allows the blood to fall on the shrine, and throws the fluttering hen into the parlour where she continues to flutter until she dies. If the final position in which the body lies is the supine, the god has "eaten" the sacrifice and will undertake the contract; if it lies prostrate with the belly to the ground, the contrary is the case. The supplicant may have to promise a costlier thanks-offering before offering another hen. If the sacrifice is accepted, the hen is ripped open and the internal organs such as the heart and kidneys removed and placed upon the shrine. The hen is given to the assistants of the priest called "Nsumankwaa"

As gods, they are not without their codes of laws. These are ethical in nature and quite satisfactorily regulate the conduct of the people. An infraction of these laws almost invariably has a psychological effect on the individual which not infrequently leads to uneasiness of the mind, illness, and finally the confession of a host of sins. It is not uncommon to hear people admit to accusations of being witches, and very young people ridiculously confess to having killed some one who died years before they were born.

To get the men to confess, the priests often use

threats and are wont to say, "Sɛ woanka ne nyinaa a meda wo so" "If you do not confess everything, I will 'sleep' on you" meaning the fetish will kill the man. Instances like this are interpreted to be the direct working and power of the gods and therefore succeeds in maintaining a high moral standard amongst the people. It is all based upon fear.

Unfortunately the Christian who takes an enlightened and scientific view of the cause of illness has lost all of that fear of the gods which keeps the simple folk within the pale of socially desirable moral behaviour; he sins without fear and so predisposes Christianity to the contempt of the heathen.

It must be pointed out that there are two types of gods or 'abosom'. There are those that have been in the community or families from time out of mind and those that come and go from time to time. The latter group is more properly known as 'aduru' medicine, and are believed to be more active in catching people possessed with evil spirits or "bayie".

The greatest of the gods of the community is the Fofie Nkramte. This is a child of Fofie, the god for the whole of the Kwahu district which is at Pitiko, a town on the River Afram. Nearly every town of the district has a child of this god, and by it the people swear to ratify a statement.

Its day of worship is Fofie, the fourth Friday after Akwasidae, so the people do not go to the farm that day.

The priest at Obomeng is an old man called Komfo Kwame Agyei who would not be persuaded to face the camera. He says when he falls ill, he does not go to the hospital for fear that he might

be injected with the needle which is abhorred by his flesh which is dedicated to the "obosom".

The "obosom" or spirit may come to him at any time of the day - even at night - to waken him up. It asks him to produce the "Anantedee" the things by which he travels which is made up of a metal gong - gong "daworo", about 18 small bells strung together, and an "afana" sword.

When he begins to dance, he calls out: "Yinyo o" (a nonsense syllables) and the people sing

"Hyira o, hyira o, amenebua hyira o hyira o
Mekoye maba o maba o."

"Bless o, bless o, crow bless o, bless o,
I went, but have come, bless o, bless o."

The obosom may give him new songs as he dances which the people pick up after the first singing by the priest.

The priest speaks through a linguist to the people when under the influence of the spirit. When I asked him how he eked out existence, he replied that he might occasionally receive eggs, hens and small sums of money brought for consultation, but in the main, he must depend upon his own industry. But the benefits of his services are believed to be shared by the whole community. He is their guardian.

The chief also has his own obosom called "Gyabun", otherwise called "Osiakwan" "Obstructor of the way"; that is it stays any evil which seeks to approach the person of the chief. The elders could not tell me about its composition, because they said it went farther back than any of them could tell, but they were all positive it contained the jaws of human beings. If the chief went into battle, the "gyabun" was carried before him, and this gave him protection from bullets and any manner of evil.

The "aduru" "medicine" of the day is the Tigare, a cult which is already disappearing from Ashanti. The owners ply a good trade out of it, but the enlightened people are against it, because they think it is dangerous to the community, as it prevents the people from treating diseases rationally and so causes unnecessary deaths.

"Asuman" Charms.

The people believe in charms "asuman" which are lesser forms of gods owned by individuals. These may take the form of amulets, belts, or small shrines. They are believed to give protection from enemies and evil spirits, "bayie", and perform all sorts of wonders. They may aid in fighting, make one's skin impenetrable to the cutlass or gun, or give one the ability to disappear in the face of danger. Sacrifices are made to them as in the case of the other gods.

At about the age of twelve I used to be the carrier of my father's shrine. The name of this god was Eru Wangara. It consisted of the horn of a cow, two dry gourds containing black powder which was believed to possess medicinal properties, a bunch of talismans, and rain water.

He always squatted as I carried it, while father offered a sacrifice of a fowl and spoke as follows:

"Bru Wangara, bɛgye O, Mesrɛ nkwa ama me ne me yere ne me nnua. Mesrɛ wo sɛ wobɛma m'aduruma ayɛ yie; onpa bonefoɔ biara a ɔpɛ me bone no, ma n'anim nnyi ase"

"Bru Wangara, receive this. I ask of you life in behalf of myself, wife, and children. I ask you to help me in my work; the evil-doer who wishes me ill, let him be disgraced".

One Sunday morning my brothers and I noticed a green snake approaching our door. We essayed to kill it, but father prevented us from doing so, but said we might watch what it would do. As it climbed our doorway, it turned and then disappeared into the bush. Father said that that was a sign that the spirit in his shrine had departed, for he said that that was just what the one who gave it told him would happen. From that time he ceased to sacrifice to it.

He was a policeman at the time, and he wore the bunch of talismans round his neck, claiming that it could help him overpower anyone he was ordered to arrest. Besides, he could not be fired at. This talisman he also ceased to wear.

A friend who knew about this talisman, asked why he had stopped wearing it, and he explained that he wished to be a Christian. The friend begged him to give it to him, and took it away.

A short time after, he returned to thank father with gifts, saying that he had had a narrow escape from a gun shot, and that if he had not had the talisman he might have been killed.

He explained that he attended a funeral, and found himself standing so very close to one of the men firing guns that had the fire went off as the trigger was pulled, he might have been blown to pieces.

Father nearly split his sides with laughter, after the man had left, saying that he believed that it was only by accident that the trigger did not cause the ignition and that his good fortune was in no way traceable to the talisman. But I doubt whether father had any justification to laugh at his friend. It was all a matter of faith. This

friend believed in the charm whether or not it was powerless in the way (15) father himself placed implicit faith in it when he took it from Bru Wangara, the giver of the charm.

Belief in Nature

Spirits and non-human beings are believed to inhabit the rivers, trees, and other things of nature so that they are looked upon with great sacredness, and are not left out of account in their worship and adoration of the people.

Individuals can go to offer sacrifices and make their supplications to a river. The community also performs its duties to rivers during the afahyɛ or yearly festival. It is often said "sɛ wohaw asuo pii a oyi neho kyerɛ wo" which literally means "if you pester a river by fishing too often in it, the god that inhabits it, reveals itself to you by impersonation.

Because of this reverence for rivers, the people hold some interesting beliefs. One may not mention the name of another river as one stands by or in one river. It is maintained that the river takes a jealous view of this, and will therefore drown the offender.

One may not ease on the banks of a river anybody committing this offence and drinking of its waters will have the stomach swollen and die. The advantage of this from the viewpoint of sanitation is obvious.

Then a person drowned by a river may not be taken to the cemetry for burial, but is buried on the banks of the river. The idea behind this is that if the victim is taken away, the river will claim a fresh one.

Trees and plants are believed to be inhabited by spirits, therefore when the Tweneboa tree which is used for drum-making is to be felled, a sacrifice is made to the spirit inhabiting it, lest its displeasure should be incurred.

Some shrubs and leaves used medicinally will often be taken only after the offering of eggs.

In a town called Asakraka about four miles away from Obomeng, I heard that lightning was worshipped. When I went there upon investigation, I was told that for a long time the town had lost several lives through the frequent occurences of the flashes of lightning. The chief, Kwadwo Agyare, and his elders therefore, went to Ninge, a town on the coast, for a shrine which could ward off the lightning. It cost them £60. The shrine consisted of the image of a man and a woman, and was placed in front of the chief's palace. A priest[1] was chosen who poured on it palm oil as sacrifice from time to time.

It was said that when it began to rain the shrine made a noise as the tinkling of a bell, and this counteracted the action of the lightning.

To-day, the shrine has been broken down, because a road has been put through the place where it stood, but the essential parts were buried in the spot, so that they still continue to enjoy its protection.

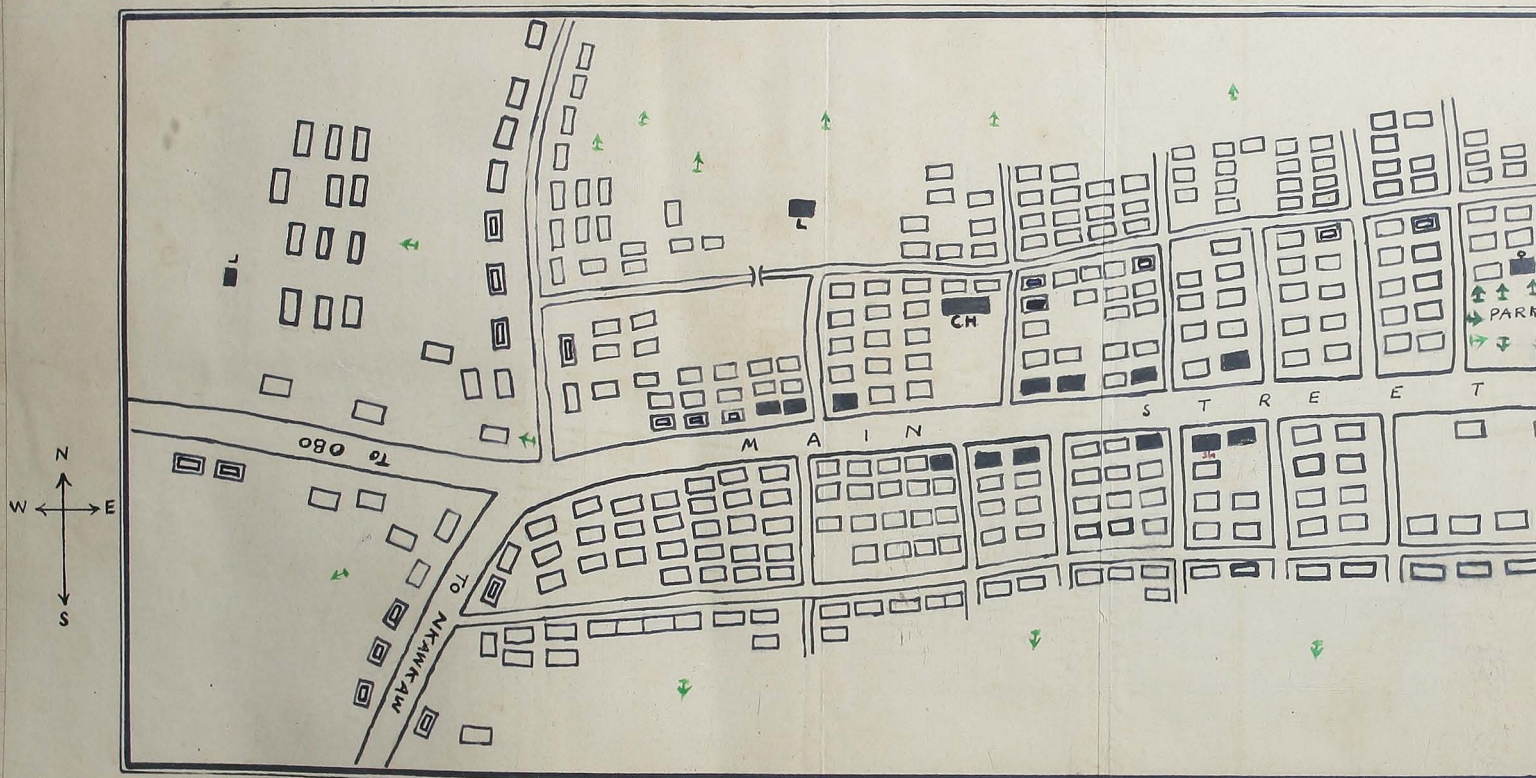
The priest, from whom I was fortunate to collect this first-hand information has himself become a Christian.

* * * * *

The religion of these people, it must be noted, is also bound up with (their) institutions such as the Afahye and Adae festivals described elsewhere. When a person dies, to them he passes

1. The priest is called Nwaku Fofie.

PLAN OF HOUSES OBOMENG



into the spirit world, where he becomes more powerful than he was in life. Hence their rulers are believed to continue to live in their stools, and on these festival occasions are invoked and their help solicited. Care is taken that the souls of the departed are not offended or slighted in any way, but are so respected or revered that they might bestow good gifts and prosperity on them.

A reigning chief who neglects his duty of pouring libation on the stools is therefore destooled at once.

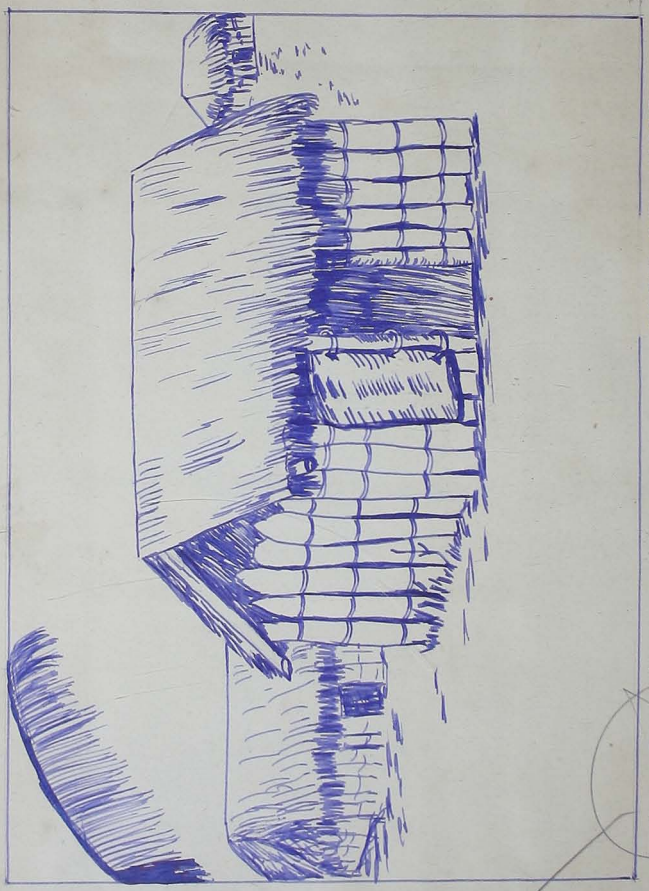
Witness a barren woman as she offers, with tears in the eyes, "eto" mashed yams and eggs to the soul of her departed mother, and prays for the gift of a child; also the chief who enters the stool room, taking off his sandals as a gesture of respect, and with genuflections, greets the souls of his predecessors that inhabit the stools: "Nana nom nsamanfoo, mema mo akye o! Spirits of the grandsires, I greet you!"

In conclusion, it can be said that the people are deeply religious and that their way of life, as will be seen in the following pages, is set against a background deeply coloured by religion.

7. HOUSES

The earliest types of houses at the time of the settlement was of a very simple nature. Most of them had thatch walls and roofs of palm branches. The framework of the walls consisted of strong sticks driven into the ground and palm branches tied across the sticks at intervals of about a foot. Sometimes a kind of cane, called "babadua", took the place of the

Fig 15



EARLIEST HUTS MADE OF BARK OF WOOD

Architectural?

branches, and the tying was done with the help of cane split into ropes about a quarter of an inch thick. The framework finished, swish was built into it.

Others had for walls, either the bark of trees called "abena" or just palm branches placed closely together. The roof could be of bark, palm leaves, or grass. The latter was coolest, but difficult to obtain as it was only obtainable on the afram plains.

Generally, large barks of trees were the only materials used for doors. Holes were made in them through which ropes were passed and fastened to a post in the door-way. These houses, as can be imagined, afford but little shelter from the elements, and and with all these combustible materials, outbreaks of fire often laid waste sections of the town.

Later, that is about a century ago, they learnt to build swish walls, but did not find a better material for roofing, until the German missionaries arrived. These missionaries taught them to roof with shingles which persisted until about the last thirty years, when they began to give way to corrugated iron sheets.

To-day, there are only very few traces of it.

But in those far-off days, the wealthy built two-storey houses. A few of these still stand, but a great many of them are in ruins and fallen into disuse. These have swish walls and the first floors and bulwarks are made with boards. The roofs were of shingles. From the rickety look of those still standing, it would seem that the people were not as mindful of the stability of the houses as they were of the idea of being the proud owners of a two-storey house. There was a feeling of pride and importance attaching to the ability

Fig 16.

A house of to-day with the "Oduruma" wood used as wall for one side - reminiscent of the earliest houses at the time of the settlement

Fig 17.

Some of the houses of the poor people

to say "mato aban", "I have built a two-storey house".

There were however, two very outstanding ones, which to-day compare quite favourably with the new buildings. The owners are long dead, but the buildings are in good repair and appear to be in perfect condition.

The quaint swish buildings of this period afford an interesting study. They had rectangular courtyards. Outside, the walls were coarse and had several cracks, but inside they were plastered and given a smooth surface by polishing with white and red clay. There were rooms with doors "nnampon", a three-walled veranda 'pato', which they could use as living rooms, and the kitchen "gyase".

The "nnampon" were generally few, the majority of the rooms being "mpato". The latter were used at night for sleeping purposes too. To keep out the cold, cloths were hung up on the open side, but they could not give adequate protection from the elements; but the people had to put up with it.

The floors were raised fairly high by dumping with swish to a height between 1 and 3 feet. Beautiful artistic designs were made on the walls to about 5 feet from the ground and these, as well as the floors, were brilliantly polished with red clay. This part they called "Bamma". The upper part of the walls was painted with creamy white clay.

The chief's house consisted of a main entrance 'abankuom' and two large courtyards, the second of which was entered by a door in the first. In the first one was a "pato" in which he could sit on ceremonial occasions and another in which

Fig 18.

A MODERN BUILDING.

Fig 19.

A MODERN BUILDING.
(See how sharply it contrasts with the poorer ones in the background.)

Fig 20.

A neglected house.
But the owners will return into it when they return home to celebrate an occasion.

the state umbrellas were kept. In the second one was the pato for the drums and a room for the stools. Here also were his sleeping apartments. Immediately adjoining this was the harem.

The walls had magnificent mural decorations which shone with the polishing in red clay. To-day parts of the house, particularly the first court, are in ruins, and although attempts are being made to reinstate it, work has proceeded very slowly owing to the struggle over the chieftaincy.

Obomeng is not unaware of the general cry for better housing conditions of the day, and a conscious effort on the part of the people in this direction has resulted in a marked improvement of the sanitation; a great many of the houses have cement walls and are on sound sanitary lines. Some of them are as luxuriant as any to be found in the modern quarters of the large open towns like Kumasi and Accra. They are evenly distributed all over the town, but some of the wealthy who are anxious to display their's to view, have assembled some very imposing ones at the western approach of the town, and these provide an impressive and welcome sight for the visitor.

But in spite of this, many of the buildings in the town are unoccupied, the compounds are unciared for and full of weeds, and the general impression the town carries is that of a deserted cottage. It drives forcibly home to the visitor the fact that houses alone do not make a town.

8. LAND TENURE

The Jews thought that land in the first place belonged to God. The people of Abomeng along with the rest of the Akans hold it that it belongs to the goddess Ya, and so the earth is called "Asase Ya", "Earth Ya".

Then in the second place, all land is owned by the chief. Individuals who work on a patch of ground have a limited ownership, because, although the chief will not lay any claims to it, they only own it, in so far as their crops and other property on it are concerned. And both chief and subjects own land in conjunction with the spirits of the ancestors who have bequeathed it to them. For this reason, land is sacred, and families will do all they can to keep it and not allow this heritage of their fathers to pass into other hands.

The ownership of the land held by the chief was acquired at the time of the settlement. The earliest settlers, by virtue of the fact that they could be called upon to fight for the chief in time of danger, had the right to till the land unmolested. In other words, it may be said that they held land on a basis, for all the world, like the feudal system. They also owed certain duties to the chief. @ In the event of the stool incurring debt, they contributed towards it © they worked on the chief's farm once every year © if one discovered a treasure trove on his land, "ahutuo", a certain portion went to the chief, @ they contributed towards the funeral expenses of the chief © all shared in the cost of the sacrifice by the community to propitiate the gods.

In view of these duties, these early settlers started tilling the land laissez - faire, and all

the land which was "touched by their cutlass" became their property. In time, it passed into the hands of the family; henceforth no individual could claim ownership or enter into any form of arrangement with any one outside the family without the sanction of the family.

Those parts of the land that were not acquired by the individuals in this way became the stool property. These were generally those lands far removed from the town.

As already observed, land was never sold, and although they were given away under various conditions, care was taken to ensure that the terms did not make its subsequent reversion to the owner impossible.

We shall study the various ways in which one may part with his land.

ⓐ A landowner may give a small portion of his land to a friend or relation free of charge with the words "mede asase yi ma wo sɛ didi so" "I give you this land so that you may eat on it! You merely "eat on it"; thus he reserves the right to take it back any moment.

ⓑ "Nhweso", Leasehold. The landowner may give part of the land to anyone with the words "Mede asase yi ma wo sɛ hwɛ so" "I give you this land to look after it". The implication of this is that he will have to take a third of the produce.

ⓒ "Awowa" Mortgage. This is an unpleasant one to the land owner and is only resorted to, when the owner is in financial difficulties.

He gives it to the one from whom he goes to borrow money to defray a pressing debt or under

take an important enterprise. This must be done in the presence of some of the members of the family and witnesses on behalf of both sides. The land is inspected, and boundaries are clearly defined to the lender of the money. If they are not clearly marked out by such natural features as rivers and trees, a quickly growing but hardy plant called "Ntomɛ" "Sale palm tree" are planted along the boundaries.

The debtor "ɔkafoɔ" and the landowner now pours wine on the ground and prays to the spirits of his ancestors, explaining the reasons for his action. He asks their blessing on himself that he might prosper and be able to redeem the land back, and on the lender, "ɔsikani", that no ill might befall him as he tills on the land. The lender hands over the money from which the witnesses take the "nteani" "taking from the top" as the cost of their trouble.

ⓓ "Ntramma" Sale of Land. Repeatedly it has been pointed out that land is never sold, but in recent times this rule has been broken now and again, and people have actually sold portions of their land.

This happens when the family is wealthy in the possession of lands and can afford to part with a certain portion. As usual, it must receive the approval of the members of the family.

Both parties and their witnesses meet on the land, and the buyer is allowed to survey it to satisfy himself that the price demanded is justifiable, and also to find out boundaries.

If these boundaries are not well defined, "ntome" are planted. In case the land has once been cleared wine is used for the pouring of libation and praying in behalf of both parties. But if it is virgin soil, a sheep is slaughtered. A small portion of the meat and "eto", mashed yam, prepared for the purpose, are put on a leaf and left on the ground as the portion of the ancestral spirits.

A rope is then held taut by two people, one representing either party. The owner then says: "Nsamanfoɔ, mo na mode asase yi maa me; nnɛ mereton ama Asumasi. Momma bone bi nto me. Asumasi nsɔ, ɔyɛ aduruma ha a momma nkrante ntwa no, na momma n'aduruma nyɛ yiye". "Spirits, you gave me this land. To-day I am selling it to this man. Let no ill befall me. Do not let the cutlass cut him when he works, and let his work prosper."

A small boy — because he will live longer to bear witness — severs the rope with a cutlass. Henceforth the land becomes the property of those who bought it. But even so, it is not beyond redemption, and the family at some later date, if it feels so inclined and can afford the financial implications, can always recover it.

@ "Samansie" Will. All property, according to custom, is handed down matrilineally. This means that in the inheritance of the father, the child is left out of account. This is not to say, however, that the father is unmindful of his son's sorry plight after his death, and perhaps one of the most pleasurable deeds to the father is the giving away of a portion of his

land or property, before death, to his son who has served him well.

As usual, he calls together some members of his family, and in their presence says "Me ba yi, wasom me yiye, enti asase a ɛda ɛha ana ɛha yi, mede me kyɛ no, sɛ ɔno nso mfa nni di so", "This my son has served me well, and so I give him the land situated here or there so that he too might "eat on it"". The son ratifies this by giving the "aseda" "thanks" which is generally a small amount of money and rum. The relatives having been witnesses to it, respect this will on the decease of the father.

Upon interrogating several people on the subject of the sale of portions of land around Obomeng town itself, I found that it is simply out of the bounds of possibility. "Awowa" Mortgage may be entertained, but that would be for a short duration. This is due to the scarcity of food in the town and the extra value land has therefore acquired.

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9. GOVERNMENT

Like many other things, the government of the town has had its fair share of change. When the earliest people first made the settlement, they were immediately governed by their own chiefs, but these chiefs automatically became sub-chiefs of the Omanhene of Kwahu on whose land they had come to live. Such being the case, they became part of Kwahu and were under the jurisdiction of the Omanhene of Kwahu whose official residence was, and still is, at Abene.

The Kwahu state, in turn, served the Asantehene, and therefore was his subject state. In course of time, however the Kwahus got fed up with the heavy sums of money and gold exacted from them so frequently and the slavish duties they were subjected to by the Asantehene (they uprooted, not felled, whole trees used for polishing the teeth and carried them to him), and succeeded in breaking away, during the disintegration of the Ashanti nation after its conquest by Sir Garnet in 1874.

For purposes of defence and protection from other stronger nations, the Kwahus decided to go to ally themselves to the akims after the break from Ashanti.

The chief of akim was pleased at this this overture, but doubting their sincerity and fearing they might secede any moment, took hostages from the royal families of the Kwahu towns. These were to lose their lives should the Kwahus attempt a breach of their promise.

Thus they became part of the akims, and were governed by the chief of akim, Okyehene.

But eventually, with the coming in of the Central Government of the country and the provision of District Commissioners to protect and control the states, the Kwahus broke away, and became an independent, integral state of its own as it is to-day.

So much for the external relations.

For the preservation of peace and order there were courts. In very early times, these were constituted by the chief and his elders.

If a man felt wronged by his neighbour, he swore by the "Ntamkese", great oath of the

town, "Yawoada Ne Kwasiada", "Thursday and Sunday". (The origin of this oath will be explained at the end of this chapter). If the opponent swore back, the two people were supposed to be "deduafo", prisoners of the chief, and were arrested by anybody present at the spot and taken to the court.

A sheep was immediately slaughtered in respect of the oath, and the prisoners proceeded to justify themselves for taking it. The case was therefore handled initially, not from point of view of the aggrieved person, but the oath sworn.

Only one witness was called. He was generally one on whom both parties agreed would be disinterested, because he bears neither of them a grudge. The messenger despatched to call him swore that he would not acquaint him of the development of the case and just what facts are required of him. Arrived, the witness also swears by the most powerful "obosom" god of the town, Fofie Nkranti, referred to elsewhere, that what he says will be nothing but the truth.

It was believed that the witness who committed perjury was instantly punished by death or afflicted with some malady. One could therefore be sure that the court got the truth and judgement was scarcely miscarried.

For a long time, no records of the proceedings were kept, but by the advice of the Central Government registrars were employed to do this. The first registrar was one Mr Donkor, who took up appointment about 1918[1] during the reign of Chief Yaw Mensah.

1. My informant was one of the earliest literate people of the town, called Kwaku Pong. It was he and another classmate E. I. Ansong, who helped to put Yaw Mensah on the stool.

The chief was closely assisted by the District Commissioner, who interpreted the mind of the Central Government, and dealt with cases other than those involving customs and native law which properly belonged to the chief's court. Mpraeso has been the place of residence of the District Commissioner or the Government Agents as he is now called.

The native police was also instituted at this time to help maintain order and control prisoners upon the advice of the Central Government.

Later this was abolished and the tribunal system instituted. The tribunal was formed by four people made up of the 'Okyeame', linguist, two subchiefs, and the clerk. The chief ceased to be the president as he used to be.

Thus far appeals from the Obomeng court went to the Nifahene's court at Obo, a town 4 miles away to the West, since Obomeng is under the Right Division of the district. From there appeals went to the Omanhene. Fines for nearly every kind of offence were fixed which also took into account the grade of court as to whether it was a subchief, divisional chief, or Omanhene's court.

To-day, the tribunal too has been displaced by the Native Authority introduced in 1943. It is a panel of three councillors, chosen not because they are office bearers but wise, honest, and fair, assisted by the clerk or registrar. These councillors serve for a term of three months. The keeping of prisoners was abolished.

The chief can no longer deal with any case of any description beyond that of arbitration for which no fines are inflicted. Thus he has, by degrees, changed from being the magnate who wielded all power in the community to a mere

figurehead, nevertheless a traditional head and a symbol of unity.

Funds for the running of the town were ~~and~~ obtained from court fines, which were high and not fixed, dues from the market and stool lands, a greater part of which came from the Nkawkaw lands, and taxation. These sums were often mismanaged by the chief and elders, since the former had no fixed salary and there was no efficient system of auditing the accounts.

Besides, as most of the citizens lived in their villages in the Nkawkaw valley doing their farm work, special people were appointed to go round the villages to collect the taxes. This took quite a time to complete, and since there was no satisfactory system of checking up receipts, a greater part of the sum was misappropriated and not accounted for.

To-day the situation has changed. Although the sources of income are the same as before, there can hardly be any misappropriation. The chief has a fixed salary of £144 p.a., and the Local Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of the public services, also takes the responsibility for the collection of the taxes and dues and the regulation of the finances.

Fig shows some of the villages where the people live to carry on their work. Here some arrangement should be made for the preservation of peace and order. In the olden days, each village had an "odekro", "owner of town", who was generally the founder of the settlement. He had sole authority and could deal with cases and inflict fines.

This has, for a long time ago, been abrogated,

and the authority of the "odekro" greatly modified. They are now regarded mere headmen who may entertain only minor arbitration cases for which no fines are made. In the event of any case beyond his authority cropping up, he must report it immediately to the chief of Obomeng, who in turn, commits it to the Native Authority court.

The Asafo.

From time immemorial, the chief was the sole authority in the community, and was the president of the court constituted by his elders or sub-chiefs. Sometimes he could be almost autocratic and his judgements and sentences were severe.

This power or authority was tempered by the existence of the "Asafo" "Company". This is made up of all the young men above eighteen, and is a very powerful body indeed in the political life of the community.

Its functions can be summarized as being threefold. First, the Asafo Company has control over the chieftaincy. It can accept or reject a candidate for the chieftaincy, and when dissatisfied with the conduct of a chief, is the only active body which can bring about his destoolment. In this way, the government of the community becomes democratic.

Secondly, it has right to dictate the prices of the commodities on the market; that is, if prices of the foodstuffs become prohibitive, it immediately demands reductions. It can also complain against and demand improvement in the general state of affairs in the town.

Lastly, it constitutes the militia of the

Fig 21


The Metal gong-gong
(a) The double one
(b) The single ..
(a)
(b)
"Nnawuta"
"Dawuro"

community. It goes to war and turns out to aid or protect individuals in time of danger. Its leader is the asafoakyɛ who is elected, not because he belongs to the royal family, but by his qualities as a leader.

The members have their double metal gong-gong, "Nnawuta," (See Fig 21) which they sound to call members together such as the Twenesin (See Fig) which is used by the chief to call his elders. In the event of some one dying by accident in the forest, being lost, or being in any kind of danger which calls for collective help, the "Nnawuta" sounds:

1. "Ogya framfram,
Ogya hwirenhwirenhwiren,
Ogya abɛtɔ krom
mommra tetrem², mommra brɔbrɔbrɔbrɔ"

"Flaming fire
Glowing fire
Fire has fallen into the town
Come into the open²
Come in uncountable numbers"

Or it may sound:

2. "asafomma, momma yɛnkɔ
Nea ogya redɛre, nea ogya redɛre."

"Members of the asafo
Let us go to the place where fire is
blazing where fire is blazing"

Such calls are responded to post-haste. The existence of the asafo dates back to very early times, and it is still an active body in the government of the community performing the same duties.

Fig 22

Some of the plantains that occupy the outskirts of the town

The Origin of Yawoade Ne Kwasiada

The great oath of the town is "Yawoada Ne Kwasiada", Thursday and Sunday.

It is said that during the reign of Kofi Karikari, the Ashantis attacked the Krepis in 1869 under their leader Adu Bofo. The Kwahus as a subject people of Kofi Karikari were present at this battle. The Krepis under their leader, Dampre, an Akim chief, won a great victory over the Ashantis; but the latter, who had never known what was defeat, began to climb up the great scarp near Amedzofe to which the Krepis had retired.

The latter rolled huge stones down the hill and destroyed many lives. The Kwahu army suffered tremendous losses. Consequently that Amedzofe scarp which the Kwahus called "Asase Aban" "Earth's Castle", because of the immensity of the height and its resemblance to the wall of a castle, became the great oath of the Kwahu people to this day.

The Okomeng contingent of the Kwahu army suffered its losses on Thursday and Sunday engagements, and so the names of these two days were associated with that catastrophe and forthwith became the great oath to this day.

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10. THE USE OF LAND

The land round the town is used mainly for crop farming. The accompanying maps give a clear illustration of this. The area immediately around is occupied by plantains although the soil here is very rich on account of the household refuse deposited here, no crops besides these plantains will survive the foraging of the goats and sheep which are kept in


OBOMNG - NORTH
USE OF LAND
OBO ZONGO
OBOMENG TOWN
OBOMENG Sc
Reference
F.. Food Farm
B.. Bush
W... Wood
E. Class
D ..
Footpath
..Coffee
Motor Road
Hunters' Trail
River
Scale: 2" To 1mile

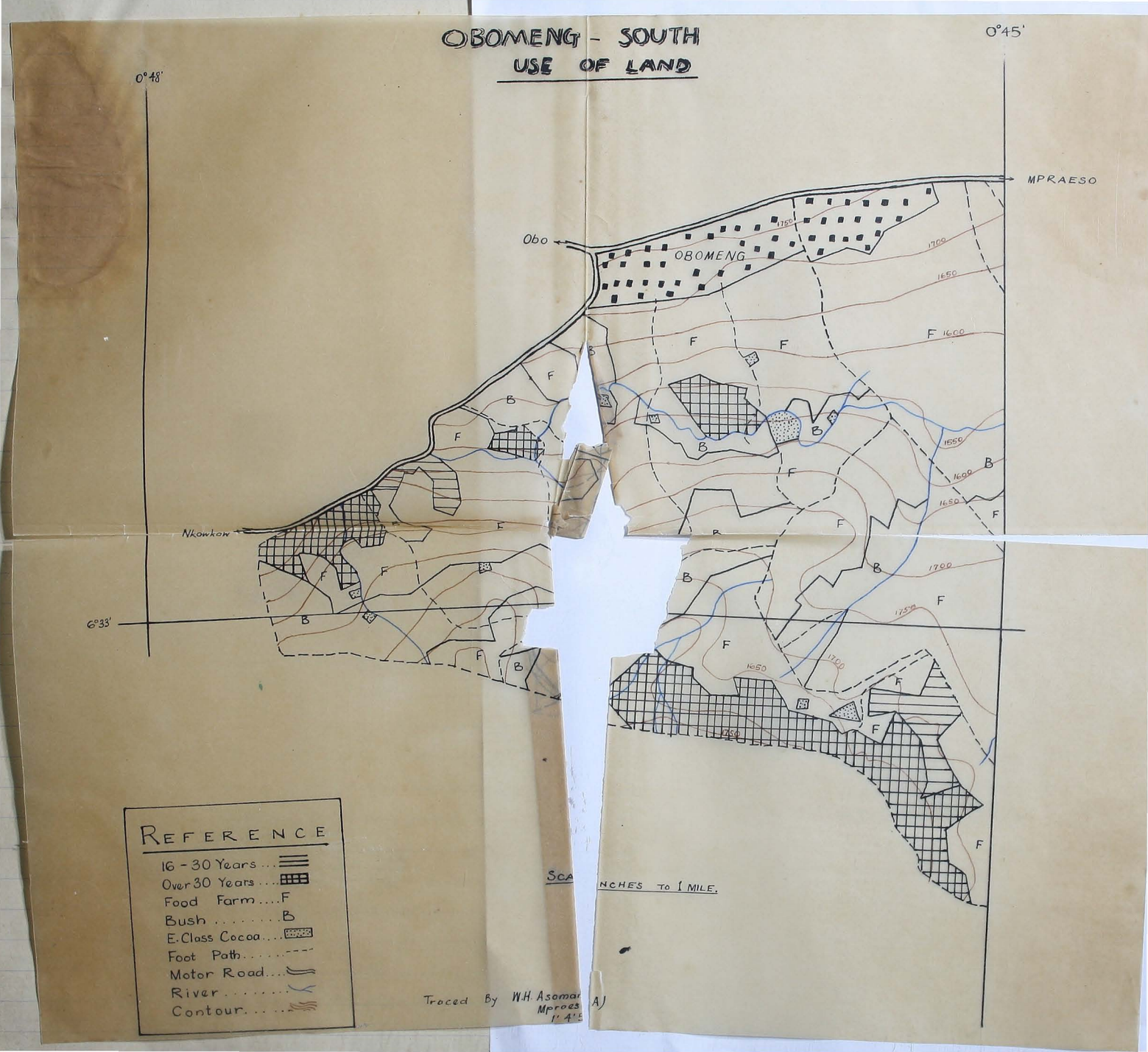
large numbers in the town. Those who decide to make gardens for such crops like cassava — and there are many — must make fences the gardens, which entails much labour.

Farther away from the haunts of the goats and sheep are the crop farms where the groundnuts, yams, cassava, coco-yams, pepper, garden eggs, and tomatoes grow. The vegetation here is savannah.

On the slopes of the mountains which surround the town are deciduous forests. The soil here is richer and more suitable for the growth of coco-yams, the staple food of the community. Plantains which are second in importance, do not do well here as the soil is shallow and the plantains are apt to be blown down by the strong gales that sweep the mountainside.

The people practise what is termed shifting cultivation; that is they move from one patch of ground to another every year. This allows of the land lying fallow, but judging by the amount of land this practice envolves, it can be said that this is feasible in a place like this where the population is small and arable land, compared with thickly populated European countries, easy to obtain. Even so, difficulties sometimes arise when people cannot get fresh plots to till. In many instances, they have been obliged to return to land which has lain fallow for only a year. It can therefore be seen that there is no definite pattern they follow; that is, it cannot be said that the plots are managed on a three- or four-year shifting system. It all depends upon the amount of land available to the individual. Some can afford to allow land to lie fallow for five years, whilst others work on

OBOMENG - SOUTH
USE OF LAND



the same piece of land several years in succession because no land is available to them.

In the Nkawkaw valley, excepting the cocoa farms which are permanent, the rest of the land for food production is used in the way as it is used round Obomeng. In some of the villages all the virgin forest is removed, so that there are just savannah lands like those of Obomeng.

The practice of shifting cultivation precludes strangers from farming at Obomeng, as there is scarcely any land to spare. Those natives who migrated from other places to come to settle here in recent times and have no ancestry dating back to the time of the founding of the town have no lands. This creates hardship for them, for, as has been explained before, these lands were handed by the ancestors after the scramble.

Those who have older ancestors have lands in two or more places. Some of the more recent immigrants who are land-owners bought theirs from these people. But at the present time, it is simply out of the bounds of possibility to buy any patch of land. The patches are so small and yet so valuable to the sustenance of life that no one can part with part of his land, however small. He may let part of it as security for a loan, but the lender cannot under any circumstance consider as a permanent possession.

From the maps, it can be seen that there are only cocoa farms round Obomeng town. One is beyond the River Aoubori on the Nkawkaw road, right at the site of the original settlement. This is a stool property. Adjacent to this is the only Forest Reserve in this area, which stretches from here to cover the Ejuanoma hill. The other

plantations are in the valleys on either side of the town. The rest of the land is given to food farming.

Fig 1 shows that all the cocoa is in the Nkawkaw valley.

In concluding this chapter the attention of the reader is drawn to the relation between geographical factors and the use of land. Food crops are given attention round Obomeng, because the land is suitable for their cultivation. On the other hand, the rich loamy soil which suits cocoa can be found only in the valleys of Nkawkaw and so there the cocoa plantations can be found.

Notice also that there are no cocoa plantations along the scarp. According to the agricultural officer at Nyraeso, the fog on the hills promotes pod diseases.

The historical relation with the use of land is significant. Those with older ancestry have more land and can therefore allow land to lie idle or fallow for a longer time, whilst later immigrants have fewer lands and subject their lands to more intensive cultivation.

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11. FARMING

Methods

The population is essentially agricultural, and farming is the only industry upon which a greater bulk of the population subsist. The soil is unproductive, for in spite of the thin population, food becomes so scarce that people travel to the outlying towns to buy food in addition to what they produce in order to keep body and soul together.

And yet in spite of these grave conditions, nothing has been done to find ways and means of improving methods of farming. The primitive methods are still in vogue. The traditional way of moving from one patch of land to another annually still obtains, and weeds continue to be burned instead of being buried to enrich the soil.

Not all of their practices can, however, be condemned. A few of them, as will be seen later, are in keeping with scientific thought.

The weeds are under the crops are cleared with the hoe which disturbs the surface of the soil, thus breaking capillary attraction and checking excessive loss of water in the dry season; deep holes are made and the rich surface soil dug in to replace the subsoil removed, before yams are planted in them. These things are done with no special reason other than the fact that they have been taught traditionally. The forebears of the people did a thing one way and is accepted as a matter of course, but many of the methods are consistent with scientific farming methods and practice.

In planting food crops, the forest is cut down between December and January. There are two phases to this. In the first is the cutting down of the thick undergrowth. Following this is the second phase in which the trees are felled. Some of them that can serve as supports for climbers such as yams and beans are left standing. By the end of February, the debris is burnt, and the patch neatly cleared in readiness for the planting. This is generally the work of the husband who may enlist the help of the people in the village.

This communal labour provides opportunities for pleasant social life. It is one of the few occasions when the people in the village can come together, sing and make fun, talk of their interests, and share in a common meal. It affords opportunity for those in bad relations to be united once again, so that nearly every one of them return home with a light heart and a joy that emanate from a service rendered to some one and in a spirit of friendliness towards one another. But unfortunately this is passing as people tend more and more these days to hire labourers from the Northern Territories.

The wife's part is to cook large dishes of food and see that every one is well filled.

The clearing of the land over, the woman now begins to make the beds for the groundnuts. In this, she may be assisted by the children or hired labourers.

Next follows ~~follows~~ the making of the mounds for the yams. Whilst this is being done, the husband will be engaged in cutting the sticks to support the stems of the yams, a job which generally bristles with difficulties.

The groundnuts are planted about 4- 6 inches apart on the beds; the latter are covered with palm leaves to protect the seeds, and later the seedlings, from rodents and lizards which relish them.

The yams are cut into "sets". An average-sized yam is cut into three 'sets', but a large one may provide four to six. These 'sets' are kept in a dry shade to dry, and when ready are placed in the mound with the cut surface pointing upwards. The mounds are raised to a height of

about one yard from the ground, the top is capped with leaves, and a prop is provided. I asked the reason for the leaves placed at the top and the answer was: "Na se saa ara na yeyo no" "But that is what is done".

Corn is now planted. Great care is exercised in the choice of seeds, because they realize that lack of discretion in this may result in the seeds failing to germinate; at best it will reflect in the harvest. This means a wastage in time and labour.

Alongside this ~~pro~~ceeds the planting of the pepper, the beans, garden eggs and tomatoes. The seeds are planted in rich, black, loamy soil, and protected from being washed away with a small fence. The keen cultivator will often nurse the garden eggs earlier, ~~in~~ about December, by rivers, as they take quite a time to grow. All of these grow closely together in a cluster and are transplanted later into permanent positions all over the farm.

When the corn has germinated, the woman starts planting the coco-yams and the plantains. The man may help in this, if he has no occupation at the time. The rhizomes, "mankani na", "coco-yam mother" of the cocoyam and the suckers, "brodewa", of the plantains may be conveyed from an old farm or be bought from the neighbours. The rhizomes, like the yams, are also cut into "sets", but do not need drying. They are planted immediately.

By the time all this has been done, the farm may have grown weedy. This is injurious to the crops, so she begins to weed. This she does, in certain places, with the hoe, in others with the cutlass, and where the crops stand in danger

Corn and Groundnuts
planted together.

of being mown down, by hand. [illegible]

In a couple of months [illegible] yams begin to trail on the g[illegible] the st[illegible]ems of the [illegible] farmer and his wife go to heyd [illegible] and the [illegible] round the props by tying them [illegible] to twine strings. Care is taken to see that th[illegible] the latter with the proper direction, because some m[illegible] twin[illegible] round clockwise direction, while others do so [illegible] a[illegible]wise.

In Abou[illegible] June, the farmer digs into th[illegible] to loosen the soil, great care being taken [illegible] mound damage to the roots. This makes for a full dev[illegible]velopment of the tubers. [illegible] a.

About this same time, the groundnuts are leafy and in flower; but the stems are erect, which is not conducive to the production of a large quantity of nuts. The woman therefore treads them down, so that they might send out into the soil more roots at the end of which grow the nuts. Harvesting is in August.

The coco-yams, once cleared of weeds, do not demand much attention. At Oboming, owing to the unsuitability of the soil, the leaves dry up and turn yellow with the cessation of the rain in September, and then they must be harvested, because the development in size of the "corms" "mankani" ceases. In the villages, where the soil is richer, the leaves grow into large blades and may therefore remain another year at the end of which a rich harvest can be hoped for.

Corn is harvested in May or June, if it is to be eaten green, or allowed to remain standing until about July, if it is to be stored or made into "kenkey".

Throughout this description, the relation of crops

to geographical factors is very apparent.

Those who live at or around Nkawkaw grow the same crops and therefore follow the same metho but there they are more interested in cocoa farm ing, and so this we will now turn.

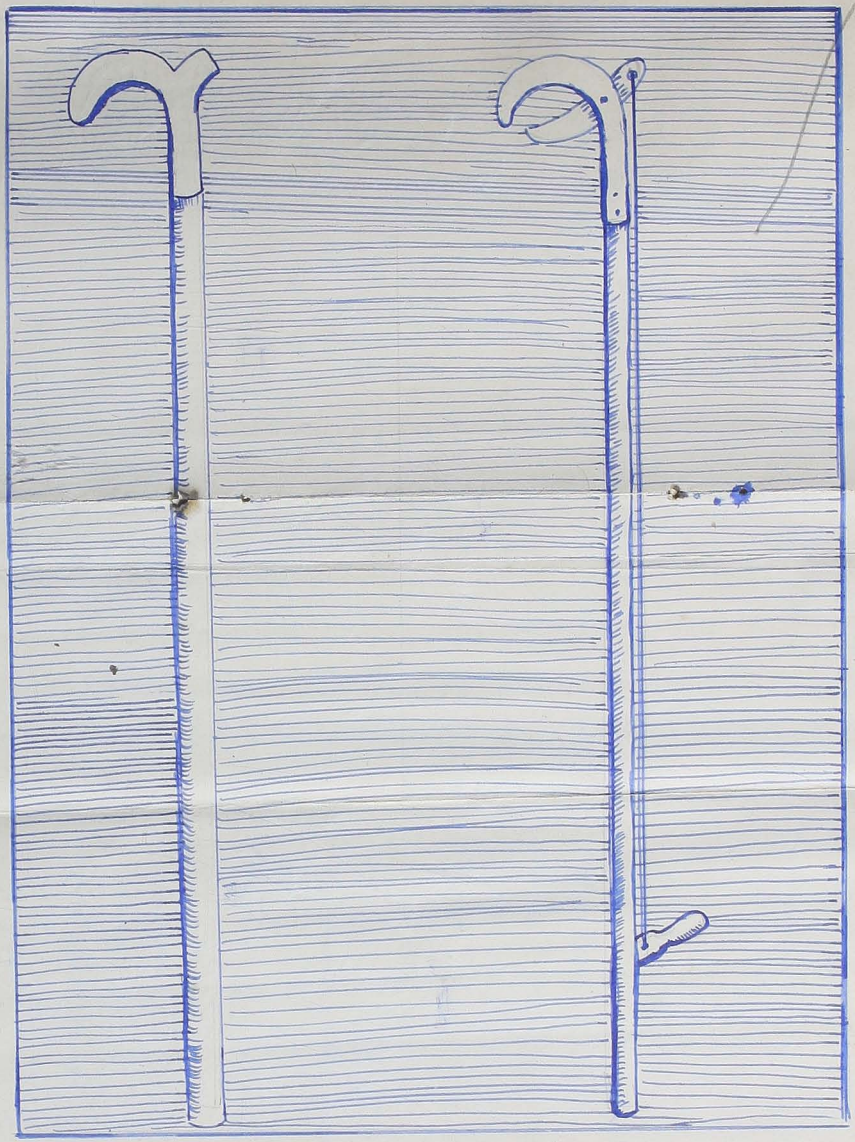
Healthy and selected cocoa beans are nursed by a river. They are ready for transplanting into their permanent places in the farm when the stems are the size of a pencil.

These farms into which they are transplanted unlike those food crops, have large trees stand ing to give the shade and humidity required by the cocoa. To ensure sufficient shade, they are generally transplanted into the farm after the coco yams are sprouting and spreading out their broad leaves which give the needed shade and moisture

They are at first planted very close to each other, but thinned out when their branches inter lace, so that they are twelve to fifteen feet apar after the food crops have all been harvested, the young plants are constantly kept cleared of weeds weeding being done twice yearly.

When the young plants have reached their full height, their branches and leaves now inter lace, forming a canopy which prevents light and the rays of the sun from reaching the ground. The undergrowth therefore, becomes thin consisting mainly of ferns and small coco- yam plants. Weeding now becomes easy.

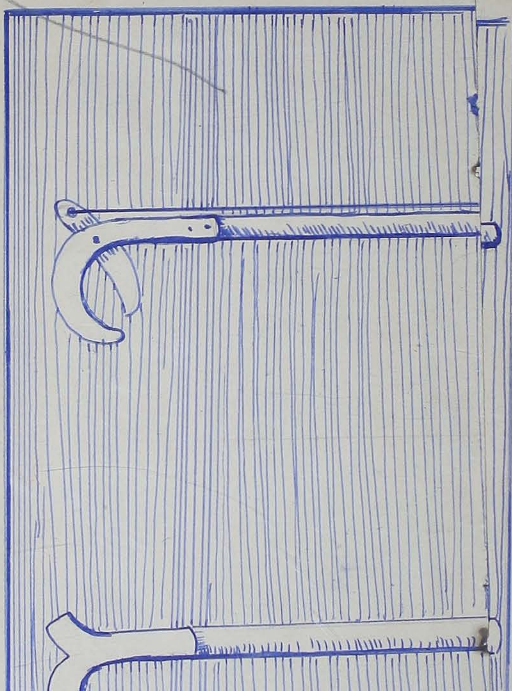
Three to five years after, they begin to yield fruits, and then the nature of the work changes As before, the farm is kept cleared of weeds twice in the year. In about August, the work of harvesting begins. There are two periods of har- vest, the middle crop and the main crop.



Implements for Plucking Cocoa.

Fig 26

Awaits [illegible]



Implements for Plucking Cocoa

The farmer and his children pluck the cocoa and collect them into heaps. Next, they break the pods, a task which calls for every available hand in the village. The men break the pods, whilst the women and children scoop out the beans. The farmer may provede a whole sheep for the repast in the farm. alternatively, he may share it amongst the people or different families who assisted him, when they get back home, so that they can be sure of a good meal that evening.

The beans are wrapped in coco-yam leaves and left to ferment for three days. after the fermentation, they are carried to the village to be dried on special mats spread on sticks. When thoroughly dry, the beans are packed into bags and are ready for the market.

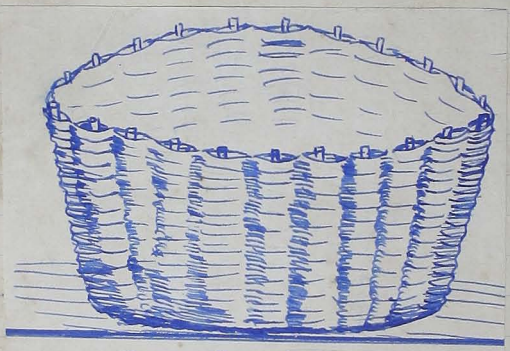
Implements

The implements used are the cutlass, "nkrante", the axe, "akuma", a thin rather straight hoe with a stick about 6 feet long, called "ɔsɔsɔ", and the common hoe, "asɔ".

The cutlass is used for clearing the forest, and cutting down trees. It is an indispensable tool — in fact the most important. although it may be used by the woman, it is more a tool for the man.

The axe is mainly for felling huge trees, which cannot be managed with the cutlass. It is used as the farmer stands on a scaffold, about 6 feet from the ground, made rough and ready from sticks and bush ropes. It is also used in cutting roots and splitting wood.

The hoe on the long stick, "ɔsɔsɔ," is for digging narrow holes, felling palm trees, digging up yams,



The Basket

Fig 27.

plucking cocoa, and a host of other things. In the matter of plucking cocoa, this hoe has been replaced by a better tool of a European make. This is longer and more efficient, and causes less injury to the bark of the cocoa tree.

The hoe, "ass", is more properly, the tool for the woman. It is used for weeding the undergrowth of crops, and making mounds and beds.

All these tools, particularly the cutlass, are sharpened early in the morning, before the farmer goes to his work to ensure satisfactory service. They are all now imported from Europe, but at first were manufactured locally, the hoe being a special line with the black-smiths of Obomeng. The iron ore for the industry was obtainable from stones in the locality. These stones were heated and fell to the ground.

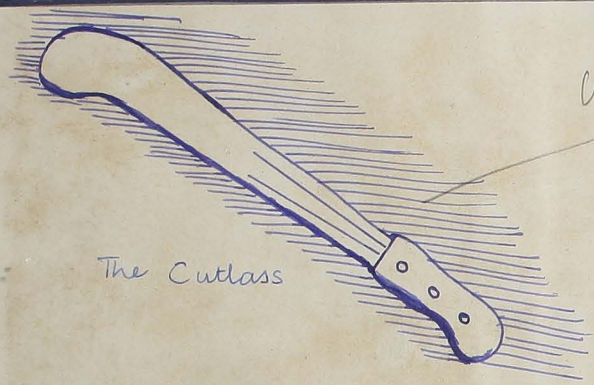
There is yet another thing that completes the implements of the farmer. This is the basket made from the cane or the large wooden plate, "apampa". Either of them is used as a receptacle for conveying home farm produce or firewood.

Farming Education.

There is no formal education in the art of farming, but children serve their apprenticeship with their parents. Children are often reminded of the need to be able farmers, as this will stand them in good stead some day.

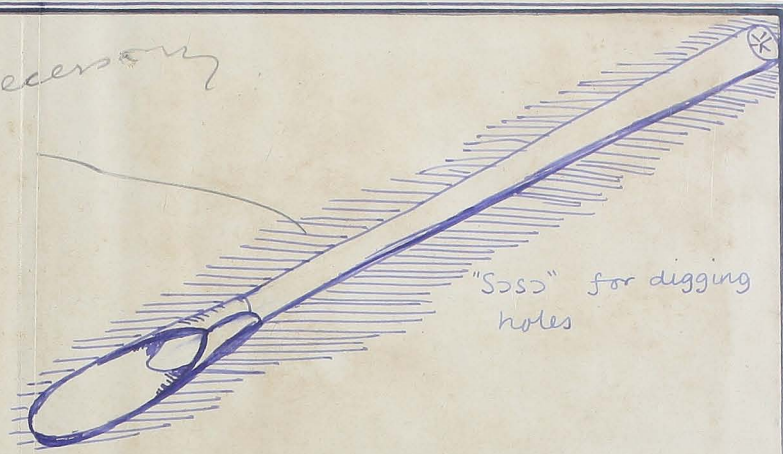
They react to this favourably. It was, and still is the duty of the child to see to the sharpening and conveyance of the cutlasses to the farm.

The candidature of the young man could not be favourably considered by the parents of the young woman, if he was not a skilled farmer.

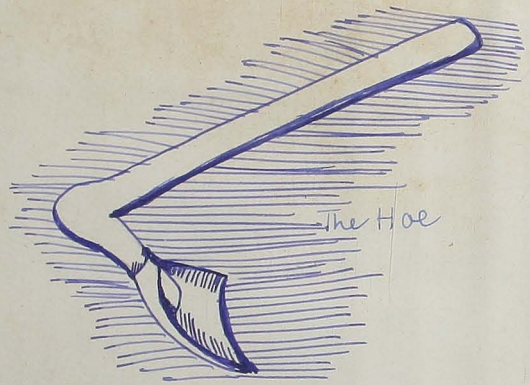


The Cutlass

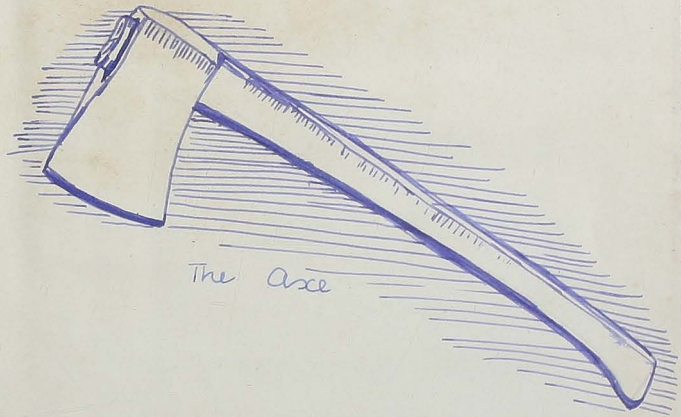
Unnecessary



"Sɔsɔ" for digging holes



The Hoe



The Axe

asked why this was so, a mother answered, "Na me ba beye den adidi, afura ntama?" "How could my daughter eat and have cloth to cover herself?".

New information furnished on farming, except on cocoa, is very scant. When I interviewed the agricultural officer at Mpraeso, he confessed to this and said that it was only on cocoa that they distributed information. The forester said they had advised the people against making farms on the hillsides as this would promote erosion, but the advice fell on deaf ears. In a place like Obomeng, where the only available land is on the hills surrounding the town this measure imposes hardship, but it seems the only alternative.

In the preparation of cocoa, there are many officers who give information on the subject through the Co-operative secretaries at Nkawkaw. The information covers the different aspects of the industry right from the sowing to the drying of the beans for the market. Instruction is given on the selection of beans for sowing, the nursing and transplanting of the seedlings, conditions necessary for a healthy cocoa life, pests and the incidence of diseases, the treatment of the beans from the time they are removed from the pods to the drying stage, and their grading for the market. In short, no pains are spared by the government in ensuring maximum production and rightly so, since the industry is the mainstay of the country.

The people appreciate this help given to them, and try to avail themselves of it. A farmer with whom I discussed the subject of the cutting out of cocoa trees with swollen shoot infection said "Kan no na mese merempene, nanso nnansa yi mehwe sɛnea yade no ɛkɔ so fa no, nidi nnirika na ɛkɔbɔ aworo-

kakyafos no ma wobetwaye", "at first I said I would not agree, but when I saw how the disease was progressing, I had to go on the run to invite the agriculturists to come to cut them out".

In the farm of the local middle school, which the headmaster allowed me to visit, I found some very good instruction was being given to the children. The headmaster showed me two yam farms in which two methods of planting were adopted. In one, the method followed was the familiar one in which the subsoil was removed from the hole and replaced with the surface soil. In the second, he said they had gone further by deliberately fetching humous soil and green manures to fill the hole before planting. although they had not then harvested, the difference between the two yields and the advantage of the latter method would be remarkably apparent. In the former, the stems of the yam were thin and the leaves small and pale green, whilst in the latter, the stems were bigger and healthier looking and the leaves larger and a darker green. Doubtless the impression this will make on the children will be indelible.

I did not see any gardens in the town the children had made themselves, because nearly all of them return to their parents in the villages round Nkawkaw at the end of the week, but I am confident that the good work being done in the school in this field will not fail to bear fruit in these villages from which the children come.

In closing this chapter, the reader's attention is drawn to the influence of the past and traditions, the geographical factors, and the impact of western civi-

lization on the education of the people in regard to farming. The knowledge they impart to the children is traditional and they are opposed to the advice against farming on hillsides, because their forebears did it. Geographical conditions dictate only certain forms of farming — those associated with cocoa and some food crops — and the education associated with these they pass on to the children. Their contact with the western world in recent times is wielding an influence which will revolutionize this type of education a few years to come. The people receive education in the use of the land and the treatment of the most economic crop, cocoa.

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12. OTHER OCCUPATIONS

The chief occupation of the people is farming. apart from this other occupations, arranged according to the number of people engaged in them are petty trading, driving, masonry, teaching, carpentry, palm-wine tapping, transport or lorry owning, and seamstressing.

There are eleven petty traders who have shops and restaurants. Two of the latter are owned by women. In an interview with the restaurant owners, I was informed that generally their shops are empty, their takings for a day falling below 5/-, but when the funerals come — and these are very frequent — they are so inundated with the work of serving customers that they have often found it necessary to engage extra hands. Takings may rise to anything like £60.

Besides these shopkeepers, nearly every woman is engaged in some form of petty trading which involves the retail of fish, foodstuffs, and textiles brought in from the surrounding towns, Kumasi, or Accra.

There are many drivers, but all of them, saving two

who are now resident in the town, live at Nkawkaw. One of those residing at Obomeng told me he had celebrated his thirty-second year in the job and still could stay on at it.

Formerly the building construction was in the hands of people from Atakpame, in the Togo district. These people carry nearly the whole of the swish building work in Ashanti and the Colony, and quite a lot of them had established themselves here. But with the coming in of Land-crete building, the natives have learnt the art, and, with the assistance of labourers from the Northern Territories, have completely captured the occupation from the foreigners. There are just three of these builders who own the machine for laying the blocks; they are assisted by six labourers, so the people engaged in this occupation are only nine and represent about 1% of the population.

In the field of carpentry, the town, I was told, could boast of several skilled men, but the number of those now resident in the town, the most active of whom are foreigners, is just eight and again constitute less than 1% of the population. These carpenters are so interested in the making of coffins that the visitor to the town cannot but wonder whether they would sell in such a thinly populated town; but should he stay here for only a month, he would find, by the number of funerals, that the supply can hardly satisfy the demand.

Palm-wine tappers, I was told, were at first very numerous in the town, but Nkawkaw, with its busy market, has attracted them; to-day one can see only five of them, who, as discussed elsewhere, work jointly. From a talk with them, I detected two were dissatisfied about how things were going and were

contemplating leaving for Nkawkaw too.

Only two people run transport lorries which ply between the town and Kumasi. They convey women who take to Kumasi the products of the district such as sponge, tiger nuts, groundnuts, calabashes, onions, and clay pots and dishes for which Kwahu is famous, and bring back yams, smoked fish, and textiles.

There is only one partially qualified seamstress who caters for the whole town. She is assisted by four apprentices who have had a primary education. It is unlikely that they can establish themselves as professional seamstresses, because the standard of work of their mistress is not satisfactory. Two earlier apprentices, I was told, had moved to Nkawkaw to perfect their knowledge under a more skilled seamstress.

Social and Economic Status of the People

The teacher ranks highest socially. He is respected, if for nothing else, but the fact that he is considered the embodiment of all knowledge! His advice is sought on matters covering all fields, including education, health, letter writing, legal procedures, and the interpretation of government policies. Amongst the christian community, though young and inexperienced, he is the sole arbitrator in family matters.

Next come the transport owners, who, besides the lorries, own large cocoa farms in the villages round Nkawkaw and therefore wield great influence financially.

Following this group are the drivers. The women whom I interviewed and who ranked the drivers third, spoke of them as "wɔn aps" being cultured and modern in their ideas. While this is admittedly

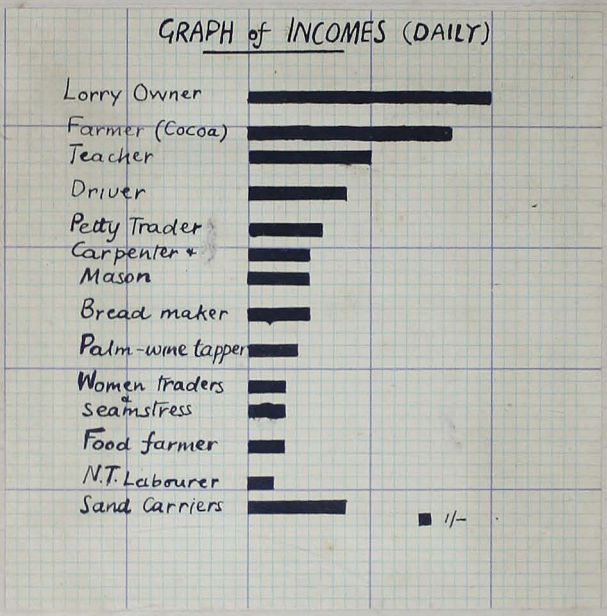

Fig 29.

Daily Incomes of people in different Occupations

true, the general population also hold them in esteem, because of the valuable service they render the community.

The carpenter is next on the list. He is considered a professional man with a regular income, so he commands quite a degree of respect.

Close at the heels of the carpenter is the mason. In point of fact his income is handsome, but because he takes large advances before his work is completed he tends to get out of funds quickly. Two of them with whom I spoke confessed to the fact that they were often driven to seek loans for subsistence. What is worse, usually he has several apprentices who depend upon him.

The bread-maker comes next in importance. Besides her earnings which are quite considerable, for a housewife, she is the wife of the local pastor of the Presbyterian Church, and therefore commands a great deal of respect, especially amongst the womenfolk.

The palm-wine tapper is a good earner, but his occupation is one people tend to disregard. Socially, he is the least respected.

We would expect the seamstress to be placed way up on the list, but that would be so, if she were a really qualified seamstress. I tried to find out about how the community thought about her and I think I could not rank her anywhere beyond the tenth. Several of the women avoid her and go all the way to Mpraeso to get their dresses made. Ranking a little lower is her counterpart who goes about doing petty trading.

The farmer now follows. Here, as in the case of the seamstress, we would expect this person to be ranked higher than this, but I think of the farmer

who lives at Obomeng, doing only food farming which is scarcely able to provide for his bare subsistence. He is not well clad and he only lives from hand to mouth.

On the other hand, the prosperous cocoa farmer, who lives at the village down the valley and visits Obomeng only occasionally, would in terms of wealth top the list, but he himself, realizing that knowledge is power, would quail before the teacher and so step down. But he is very influential in the community and must be placed next after the teacher in the social status but first in the economic aspect.

The Northern Territories labourer brings the rear. He earns very little and has little or no respect in the community. But they do not remain long at this place; they may stay, at the outside, for only a year and return to the North, where according what they told me, they are respected for their experience and their savings from the south which is considered a great deal of wealth there in the North.

Recently the carrying of sand from the river banks for building purposes has come to be a very lucrative occupation for some of the women folk. This has been going on for years in the past, but the new desire for concrete houses has created such a demand for the sand that the price has soared relatively high.
Upon investigation, a woman makes on the average 8/- per day. These women - nine of them - have therefore made it a full time occupation. The large profits accruing from it have been brought to the notice of the local council who have imposed an annual tax of £3 on each

woman thus engaged. The women were seriously contemplating petitioning against this and asking for a reduction at the time I interviewed them.

In this discussion of occupations we find running through it relationship between different aspects of the problem. Socially, the teacher has pride of place in the community, because of his geographical situation; that is, he has assumed more importance in this small and wayside town than he would otherwise be in the open towns where there are more educated people with better social and economic status. He has so to speak, acquired a place value.

The food farmer, in this society, sinks to the bottom in the economic scale, because of the absence of favourable farming conditions. If he goes down the scarp to work in the fertile lands around Nkawkaw, he rises almost to the top of the scale.

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13. CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

A co-operative society is an organization formed by the people of the same industry to tackle and solve their problems collectively.

Since, from the nature of the town, there is scarcely any remunerative occupation, we do not - and rightly - expect to find any society of the kind here.

Farming, the one important industry here, is hardly productive enough to meet the demands of the people for consumption much less to account for any degree of marketing which registers appreciable economic returns. So we do not find co-operative societies as such here.

All the people live in and around Nkawkaw

where some of the farmers have their membership on the register of the society. The society gives them instruction in the preparation of their cocoa and assists them with loans which help them through the lean months of the year until they should sell their cocoa.

A form of association approaching this is the one formed by the palm wine tappers of the town, all of whom sell their wine together in a restaurant at the western end of the town. In this way they regulate prices in their own interest, and work in co-operation. But their number, six, which represents less than 1% of the population is too negligible to make their presence and effort significant. Nevertheless, it illustrates, in a small way, what people can to their mutual benefit.

Another form of co-operative institution is the traditional practice of friends giving assistance to another on the farm when there is work to be done requiring many hands. It is called "nnɔboa" "weeding help" which has been fully described under Farming.

A more recent organization is what the people call "meeting". There are three of these societies, and although they are not associated with work they give assistance to the members. They give relief to the bereaved, and help to the sick and those in any kind of distress.

These organizations all thrive because they are the expression of the people's desire to band themselves together for protective purposes which caused them to ally themselves with the Ashantis and later with the Akims. Thus we see here too, a relation between the past and the present.

Relief Map : Obomeng and Neighbourhood

14. RELIEF

Fig. 30 gives an idea of the physical features of the country within 9 miles radius of Obomeng. There are two main regions or physical units – the plateau of the North, and the lowlands of the south.

Fig. 31 is also a cross section of the country from the Southwest to the North-east, and gives an impressive representation of the Ejuanoma Scarp. Immediately behind this scarp is Obomeng.

The Plateau

The greater part of this region, as illustrated by the map, is more than 1500 feet above sea level. In the North-west, East, and North-east corner, there are lands below 1500 feet, whilst in the North and West, there are areas rising above 1750 feet. At the edge of the plateau there are heights above 2000 feet.

The plateau forms part of the Kofradua – Kintampo range, and it can be observed from the map, that the sharp edge is in a South east – Northwest trend. The towns in this region are Obomeng, Obo, Twendruase, Oduamoa, Asakraka, Bepong, and Mpraeso.

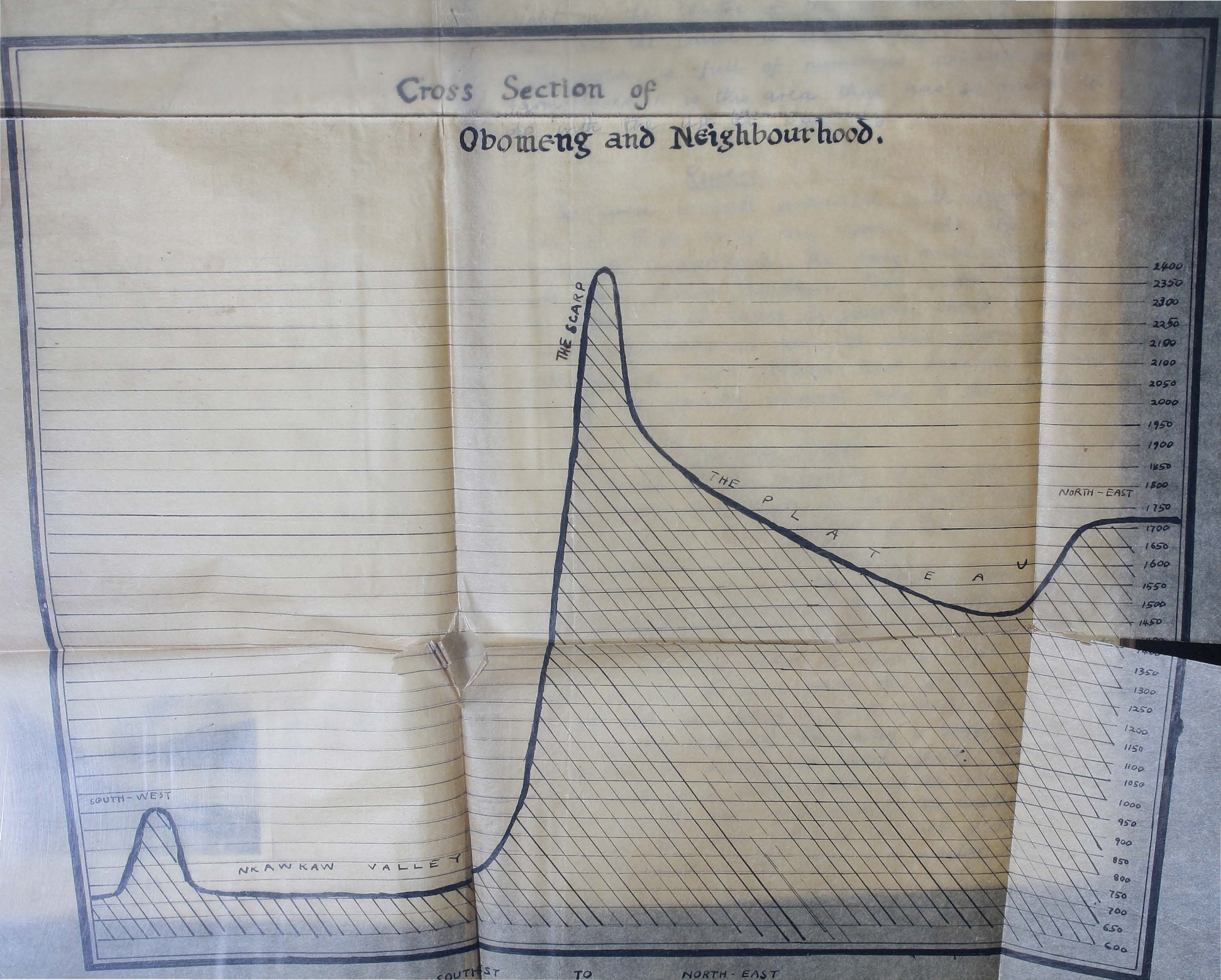
The Lowlands

The lowlands of the south, because of its forest and suitability for cocoa, is the most important area in the region under survey. Here too, nestling near the scarp, is Nkawkaw, the commercial town of the Kwahu district.

This lowland is clearly marked off on the North by the steep wall of the plateau, with its highest point, Ejuanoma, 2478 feet, rising behind Nkawkaw as it does, to form an arch of great beauty.

Cross Section of

Obomeng and Neighbourhood.



SOUTH-EAST TO NORTH-EAST

The rocky strata which checks the erosion in the town.

Fig 32

In the Southwest corner there is a hill rising above 1000 feet; there are three other peaks of comparable height in the centre of the lowlands. Apart from these, all the land is below the 750 feet contour.

The area is full of numerous villages and farmsteads. It is this area that has so much to do with the life at Obomeng.

Rivers

The area is well provided with rivers, but none of them is of any appreciable size and economic importance. The only ones worthy of note are Rivers Asubone, Nwi, Subri, and Pra. The latter which takes its source about 2 miles from Akwaseho, as can be seen from the map although a mere stream here, becomes the migh Pra of the country, second only to the Volta.

Obomeng Proper

A glance at the diagram of the cross section of the town itself and its immediate neighbourhood gives a clear picture of the main feature of the physical structure

The town is on a ridge which slopes gently into a wide valley towards the north. This vall is dissected by a river and its tributaries. The smallest tributary takes its source right from t town as can be seen from the plan of the tow It has cut for itself a gorge which has been de ened by the drainage. This valley is boggy in certain pl

Beyond the valley, the land gently rises into a hill which is a continuation of the hills of Mpraes a town to the east, and runs to Obo, another town the west. The local name of this hill is Okwaa.

To the south of the town is a similar configura

— Relief _ Obomeng —

Fig 33.

tion, with only this difference that the gradient both from the town into and beyond the valley is much steeper. The hill too is higher and rises to a height of 2478 feet above sea level. It is the Tijanoma scarp which can be seen from Nkawkaw.

In the southern valley is River Asuboni which takes its source from the mountains near Twenedurase, a town 5 miles to the west.

Judging from the lie of the land, it would seem that Obomeng suffers seriously from the effects of erosion, but, thanks to the thinness of the layer of soil, a hard rocky strata has been laid bare in some places, so that the water runs off the surface without causing any harm.

This thinness of the surface soil and the presence of the rocky strata militate against farming, and account, in part, for the scarcity of food and the stagnation in the population.

In a few places where erosion has been severe, huge jagged rocks have been exposed.

Towards the East, that is in the direction of Mpraeso, there is a slight dip in the ridge, but apart from this, the land here is comparatively flatter and so provides admirable grounds for the school.

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15. CLIMATE

The climate is the same as that to be found in mountainous regions like Aburi and Akropong. It is very bracing and congenial to health.

The rainfall is very heavy, the maximum which is reached in July being 70-80 inches. The maximum for Axim, the wettest part of the whole country is over 80, so it can be seen that it compares favourably well. The temperature may be described as being mo-

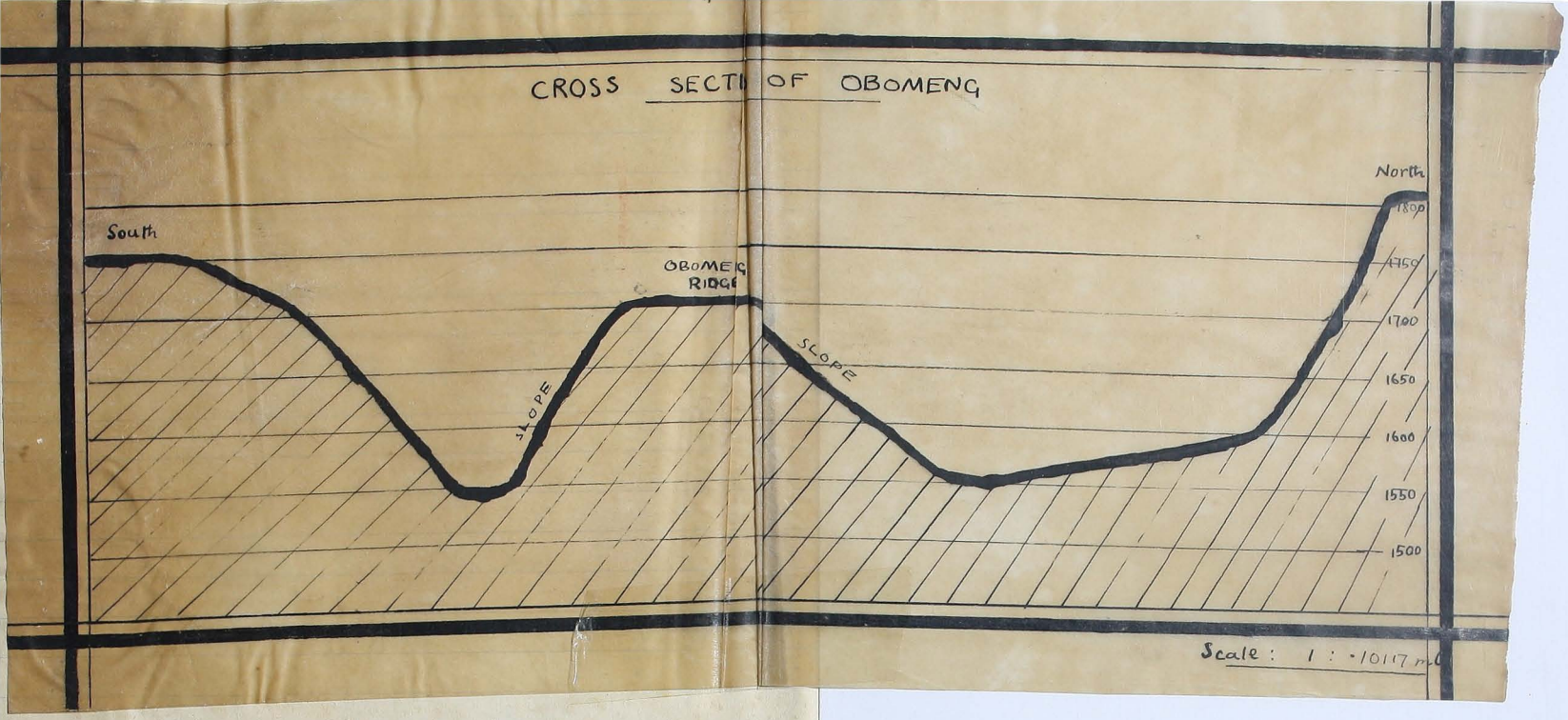

Fig. 34.

Section of the town showing how the rocky strata makes erosion impossibe in spite of the slope.

Fig

Fig 35.

Section of the town showing how the rocky strata makes erosion impossibe in spite of the slope.

derately high, considering the fact that it has a maximum of 84° when the N.T.S, the hottest part of the country has a maximum of 98°.

At Nkawkaw it is sweltering hot, because it is down in the valley. As one leaves this place and begins to ascend the scarp, a remarkable fall in temperature is suddenly felt as one gains the summit.

From May to October, the region is under the rain-bearing south-westerly winds which blow across the Gulf of Guinea. Because the scarp on which the town is situated lies athwart the direction of these winds, it enjoys heavy orographical rains.

In November to April, the whole country comes under the North-East Trades which blows across the Sahara bringing dryness which causes the skin particularly the mouth, to crack. This is the harmattan. In the day, it is very hot and the earth cracks. At night, and especially in the early morning hours, it is bitingly cold, owing to the absence of clouds in the sky and the consequent rapid loss of heat.

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16. VEGETATION

Deciduous forests cover the hills which surround the town of Obomeng, but the lands immediately around the town which have been subjected to frequent cultivation are covered with savannah.

Excepting the few neem and acacia trees to shade the street, no new type of vegetation has been introduced from outside the area which is not indigenous.

During the rainy season, the vegetation grows exuberantly, and the hills are clothed with a ver-

dant green.

In the dry season, the deciduous forest on the hills lose their leaves and the trunks of trees can be seen standing bare and denuded along the hillsides. All around the village is parch dry, and leaves rustle in the characteristic way. This pattern is true for all the area on the plateau seen in Fig 30.

The valley below the scarp is thickly covered with the true tropical vegetation. There are tall trees and woody climbers, and except for a few deciduous trees that shed their leaves, the dry season is not noticeable because of the evergreen vegetation. Here the plantations of cocoa get the shade and humidity which they require.

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17. THE EFFECT of RELIEF on WEATHER and VEGETATION

@ The relief has great influence on weather conditions and vegetation or plant life. We shall first look at its inter-relation with the weather.

The mountains lie in a South-East to North-West direction and across the rain-bearing winds of the country which come from the South-West and blow from the Gulf of Guinea. This causes great precipitation so as to make the region the second wettest in the country. Asam the wettest has over 80 inches of rainfall, whilst this region has between 70 and 80 ins.

When the writer was attending school at this place he had the experience of a downpour which continued without break for a full fortnight. School children and teachers kept dry clothes at school into which they changed when they arrived.

During the rainy season, clouds overhang the sky

which hide the sun for several days. at this time, it is cool. From Nkawkaw, a fleecy white vapour can be seen lying on the scarp in the morning. This causes fogs on the plateau which make it impossible to see a man within a very short distance. Such conditions make the weather very cold, about 70°, and call for heavy clothing.

Before the rains begin, it is very windy and much of the vegetation is torn down from the sides of the hills, and the roofs of buildings are dismantled. The people dread these winds and refer to them as "Yeou amanehuma nframa" "Good Friday winds" because they blow at Easter.

From November to April, when the dry harmattan comes, the rain ceases, and the clouds disappear. The sun beats down fiercely, and we expect the temperature to rise, and so it does in the afternoon Nkawkaw, which is down the scarp and only 4 miles away burns hot as an oven, the temperature being about 88° compared with 87° at Obomeng; clothes are unbearable in the afternoon. This difference in temperature becomes apparent as one gains the summit of the scarp, when travelling from Nkawkaw to Obomeng. There is a remarkably sudden feeling of a change in the temperature.

At night it is very cold on the plateau, whilst it is warm at Nkawkaw.

(b) From the above, it is not difficult to deduce the effects of the relief on the vegetation. The heavy rainfall will give rise to luxuriant vegetation, and all around it is green.

On the other hand, owing to the rocky nature of the region, there is only a thin layer of soil on the plateau which militates against the growth of vegetation, particularly those trees with deep penetrating

roots. Here, therefore, there are few evergreen plants, the vegetation being largely deciduous forests and shrubs.

The slopes of the hills too do not favour the growth of those plants with deep seated roots as they are torn down by the gales that sweep the sides of the hills in the Easter season prior to the breaking of the rains. Plantains fare badly for that matter.

Many plants, like the orange tree, tend to lose their leaves and die far more than they do in the Nkawkaw valley, and it is not unlikely that this is due to the shallowness of the soil and the nearness of the rocky strata to the surface. The rocks are very easily reached when working the soil. This is a great impediment in the digging of latrines and the sinking of wells.

But in the valleys on either side of the ridge of the town, where plenty of soil is brought down from the ridge and the hillsides, vegetation thrives well. Here can be seen the few huge Odum trees in the area.

The rocks too give rise to the growth of many fungous plants like the mosses, lichens, and green algae. On the face of the scarp, these constitute the only form of vegetative life and break the monotony of the dark and light grey colour of the rocks.

In the Nkawkaw valley, there are thick forests, because of the rain and the rich soil. Here can be found the Odum, Owawa, and mahogany which are of such economic importance to the region and the country at large. Here too, the most economic crop, cocoa, thrives.

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18. EFFECT of CLIMATE on VEGETATION and TERRAIN

Effect on Vegetation

The effect of the climate on the vegetation are seen in two ways, which correspond with the two major features of tropical climate – summer rains and winter drought.

In summer, that is from May to October, there are copious rains, and this, coupled with the heat of summer provide the conditions conducive to healthy plant life. Seeds that have lain dry, as if dead, burst into life, and all around there is great activity in vegetation. At this time, weeds grow rapidly in and around the vacant houses of the people who are away at the villages; the sanitary inspectors send word to them now and again to come home to clear the weeds. Food becomes abundant, and cocoa trees begin to bear pods.

In winter, from November to April, the dry harmattan from the North comes to reverse conditions. Vegetative growth comes to an end. Deciduous trees shed their leaves, juicy plants lose their sap and fall to the ground, and the seeds dry up and get buried in the earth to remain inert until the rainy season returns.

But in the Nkawkaw valley, the tall evergreen trees still remain in leaf; however, the shrubs that form the undergrowth die, and the leaves of the cocoa trees fall thick on the ground and rustle loud under one's feet.

Effect on the Terrain

Each of the two seasons which constitute the climate affect the terrain.

First we shall take a look at the effects of the dry season. At this time, the sun beats fiercely upon the earth, because of absence of clouds in the atmosphere. The earth cracks, and a deep layer of dust lies on the ground. On the road, as the lorry passes, it can be seen rising into an abominable brown cloud and settling thick on the vegetation by the roadside. In other places the wind blows it about, so that the nature of the land keeps changing steadily but unnoticeably.

The hills and the rocks get their share of this change. As a result of the intense heat at this time and the sudden change of temperature at night, there is marked contraction which results in the breaking of the rocks on the hills and those that cover certain areas of the town, as it were, like concrete floors. This may be imperceptible, nevertheless the process goes on steadily as the ages pass.

The wind comes along and blows about the small particles of rocks which also helps to change the surface of the terrain gradually.

In summer, the wind blows from the Atlantic Ocean. It is therefore moist and salt and so has a corrosive effect on the rocks.

The rains break in June to September to effect a wonderful change. It carries away from their position the deep layer of dust and the broken particles of rock, and washes away fresh soil, thus completing the work of the sun and wind, and deepening the gullies in certain places, particularly on slopes and hillsides.

It can be observed from the contour map or the cross section of the country that the town lies on a ridge. Now in the southern part where the gradient of the slope is steep, deep gullies

have been cut. But the town is narrow on this side, that is the bush comes near the town, and this checks the devastating effect of the erosion.

On the other side of the ridge, although the gradient of the slope is gentle and not equally steep, there are some pretty deep gullies, but, thanks to the rocky strata, the damage done is slight. In some places, the soil has been washed away and huge jagged rocks have been exposed.

From the look of the rocks, especially the sedimentary rocks, it can be easily observed that weathering has been going on slowly but steadily.

There are several cracks and loose pieces. Through these cracks, the rain seeps, widening them and causing large pieces to give way, and it is not uncommon to see boulders hurtling down the mountain-side or hear them crash at the foot of the hills with a deafening noise. The phenomenon is not uncommon on the Nkawkaw - Obomeng road, where two beautiful falls roll down from the sides of the scarp. Stones break and fall down to the bottom of the mountain; after the rains, two deep river beds are left behind in the valley to mark the course of the falls.

Soil erosion is severe on the hillsides where, against the advice of the Forestry Department, the people have made farms.

The soil and particles of rock that are washed down the slopes of the town and mountainsides find their way into the valleys where they are deposited, so that there is a continuous breaking down and the building up of certain parts of the area, as the effects of climate. In one of those places in the valley to the North of the town, where rich soil has been deposited, wild coco-yams called

"kooko" grow abundantly.

Because of this constant building up of the soil in the valleys, the rivers tend to be blocked up, and therefore change their courses in certain parts nearly after each year's rains.

They may also divide up in certain places into small tributaries which meander along lazily until they leave this valley and join up as River Asuboni at Mpraeso, at town two miles eastward.

In this rainy season too, fungus life is stimulated and the ground becomes covered with the green algae, crustoeae lichens, and mosses.
The algae make the ground green and slippery and therefore dangerous to walk in certain places. The lichens, by dint of some liquid substances they secret, play their part in the weathering of rocks.

The last two chapters therefore show that there exists a relationship between relief and weather and vegetation, and climate and vegetation and terrain.

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19. METHODS ADOPTED TO COUNTERACT THE NATURAL FEATURES AND CLIMATIC CONDITIONS IN THEIR EFFECT ON: ⓐ farming, ⓑ living conditions ⓒ communications

There are several problems presented by the relief and climatic conditions in regard to farming, living conditions, and communications. Some of these are the intense cold, the gales that tear down vegetation on the hill-sides, the rocky nature of the soil which makes the soil unsuitable for farming, the fogs which promote cocoa diseases, the incessant rains which make houses sodden and so unhealthy, and the very serious problem

of erosion. These problems and the methods adopted to counteract their effect in the three different aspects of the life of the people mentioned above are treated fully below under their proper heads.

Farming

The greatest problem presented here is erosion which is aggravated by the slopes and incessant rain. The Forestry Department, according to the local conservator[1] of forests, has advised that clearing on the hillsides should cease. The people, however, taking a short-sighted view of the situation, have not given a favourable response, with the result that rich and virgin soil continues to be washed down every day.

In the farms where food crops are planted, the following methods are employed to counteract the effect of climate and relief. The reader must note that these methods are traditional and dictated by commonsense.

(a) Dams. Sticks are driven into the gullies to hold the soil from washing away. This is also practised in the town itself to control the wash there.

(b) Ridging. In planting the yams and groundnuts, mounds and ridges are made. Thus the water can run off the farms without removing the rich surface soil.

(c) Mulching. On the hillsides especially, the people allow weeds and other debris to lie about to prevent the excessive erosion. Then, although they do not do so intentionally, they clear the weeds with hoes and thus break the surface of the soil. This creates a film of dust which makes it impossible for water to run off. It may be termed dust-mulch, and, as has been stated elsewhere besides check-

1. The conservator is Mr A. Quist, an African graduate of Oxford University.

ing erosion, it conserves water in the soil by breaking capillary attraction

In the cocoa farms in the Nkawkaw valley, besides giving shade and moisture, the tall trees left standing, help greatly to check erosion by reason of their roots which hold the soil.

Most of these methods that the people follow have been handed down traditionally, so they practise them without, in some cases, knowing their significance.

If, however, they were instructed by the Agriculture Department, a conscious effort would be made to improve and supplement these existing and age-long methods. Terracing would be a useful system on the hillsides which would save this washing away of the rich soil.

The cocoa farmers, fortunately, have at their disposal all the modern advice on the farming of this crop. To counteract violent winds, the farmers leave strips of bush around the farms to serve as windbreaks.

On the relief side, equal problems are presented. The first is the one concerned with the rocky nature of the soil. This makes the raising of mounds and ridges very difficult, and as the people work along, they have to remove the stones.

The situation is not comparable to that which exists in parts of the Northern Territories, where the people spend days removing the stones, before they can plant anything at all, but it is one which seriously affects the food situation in the town.

The second is in regard to the slopes. Besides the fact that erosion is greatest here, crops such as the plantain, get blown down easily in gales. The people try to avoid planting the plantains on hillsides;

but whenever this is found unavoidable, they prop the plantains with heavy sticks forked at the top-end.

The third point is in regard to the bogginess of the valley to the north of the town. The solution would be to drain it, but since there are no funds to do this, and the people do not know how this may be done in an inexpensive way, they generally reserve this part for water-loving plants such as sugar cane. This growing of sugar cane could be developed to great advantage, but the interest in it at the present moment, is small.

Frequent fogs, owing to the rains and elevation are injurious to cocoa farms because of rot diseases they promote. To counteract this the people avoid Obomeng — there are only sixteen cocoa plantations according to Figo — and go into the Nkawkaw-valley to make their farms.

Living Conditions

While it is true that the people have not done much to counteract the effects of relief and climate on the living conditions, because they lack the scientific methods and implements to aid them, yet they have not altogether sat back to see things happen.

Because of the slopes on either side of the ridge on which the town stands, erosion is great. This leads to the formation of gullies which render walking about in the town, particularly at night, dangerous. Moreover, it tends to weaken the foundation of the houses.

As has been mentioned elsewhere, the rocky strata has been helpful in certain places in this matter of erosion, but in other places, the wear-

Fig 36

Some people improving their house with landcrete blocks.

ing away of the soil is a menace. The people try to check this erosion round their houses by constructing drains or making dams in the gullies with sticks in order to hold the soil.

In the section of the town called Abeporuwa where erosion is worst, the Sanitary officers, besides allowing the grass to grow, have advised the dumping of household refuse on the parts needing attention. So successful has it been that a once undulating ground, heavily dissected by gullies, has been turned into a level field where boys play football.

By communal labour, the people have raised concrete walls, about a foot in height, by the sides of the street to check the erosion here. The school has lent a hand in this by planting shade trees, both of these measures have arrested the situation as well as improved the aspect. The school ought to persevere in their work by planting new trees in place of those that have died, particularly in the heart of the town.

The incessant rains make the swish walls and floors of houses sodden and insanitary. Many of the walls give way with continued raining and fall down, as the owners are away, either at the village or in distant towns, and cannot give attention to them.

Many of the new houses, however, are of concrete and built on sound sanitary lines. The introduction of land-crete blocks has gone a long way to solve the problem of constructing houses for people of poor incomes; for besides being strong, these land-crete houses are cheap and within the means of the average person.

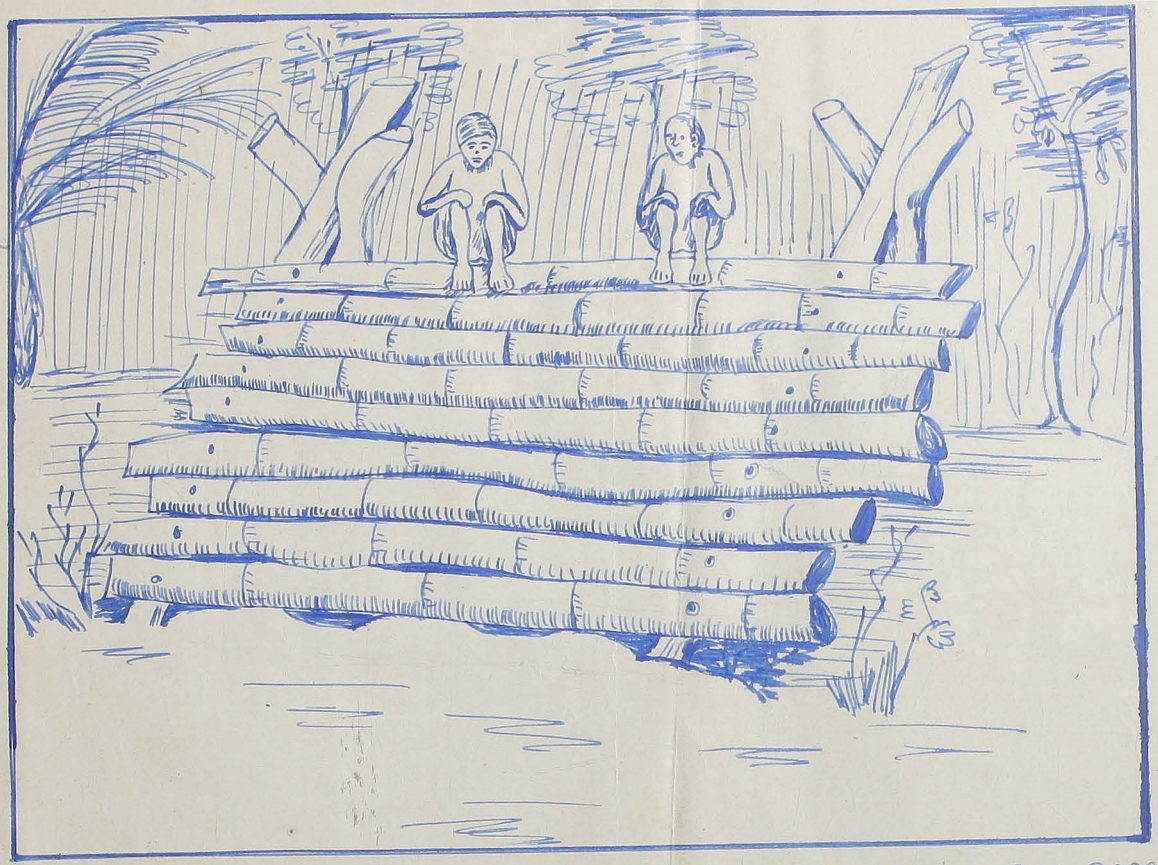
In any case, it is regrettable that most of these

modern houses belong to traders and other people who live in distant places, so that they are unoccupied for the better part of the year. It is unfortunate that houses of those resident in the town the whole year round are the insanitary ones; the floors are damp and the rooms are unceiled so that they cannot give adequate shelter from the elements, with the result that during the peak months of the rainy season and in the harmattan, when it is coldest, there is a high mortality rate amongst the older folk. Of this high mortality rate amongst the aged at this time, there is the country-wide saying: "Okwawu awo a ekum mmerewa", "the cold of Kwahu which kills the old women". It would be interesting to have figures to justify this statement, but the sanitary officers could not help me with this as they do not keep records.

The wearing of sweaters and pull-overs at this time is becoming a practice amongst the people, but not many of them can afford them. The best the old men can do is to sleep by lighted fires and be exposed to the consequent dangers of smoke.

This practice, I was informed, originated from the days when the houses were mere huts, and is therefore an age-long one, but it is dying out now, thanks to the improved housing conditions.

The relief and the climate seriously influence the water for drinking in the town. By reason of the fact that the two main rivers lie in the valleys on either side of the town, they receive drainage from the town. This is very dangerous indeed, when one considers the fact that the



EARLY TYPE OF LATRINE MADE WITH BAMBOOS.

town is poorly supplied with latrines and the surrounding land is highly contaminated. The people, realizing this, are reluctant to drink the water from the rivers.

Fortunately, from places in the rocks treacle pure and refreshingly cool water. The supply, however, is barely ~~enough~~ in the rainy season; in the dry season, it becomes so scarce a kerosine-tin-full of water can be collected only after hours of patient waiting. The women therefore have to go to watch in these rocks all during the small hours of the morning with lamps, but, even so, they may return home with their tins only half full or empty. Attention to this is long overdue, and the community should be persuaded to sink wells.

There is talk of the local council making a move in this direction, though how soon this will be, no one can say.

Some individuals who tried to sink some for their own private use complained of rocks in the subsoil and therefore gave up the attempt. Should the community be defeated in this way when they begin work on the project, then the problem of water will long remain unsolved.

The relief poses a similar problem in the digging of pit latrines. The rocky strata is too soon reached and further digging made impossible. The existing latrines are therefore very few indeed, and these are so shallow that they get filled quickly and give out offensive odour to the neighbourhood.

Until recently, because of the difficulties of digging, many of these latrines were made by placing bamboo sticks on forked sticks standing about 10

feet from the ground; the bamboos were arranged in a slopy fashion so that it touched the ground. The voiding was done from the top. A picture of this appears on the opposite page.

This was most insanitary, as the rivers were directly fouled after the rain. Fortunately this is no longer in use, and, in point of fact, the construction of the first septic latrine is, at the time of writing, under way. It is near that part of Abeponwo where the erosion is being checked by dumping household refuse.

Whilst the heavy rainfall is conducive to farming the rocky nature of the plateau, as has been pointed out time and again, is a disadvantage and has adverse influences. Food is therefore dear. Of thirty people I interviewed, twenty-one of them indicated that they could afford only one heavy meal in the day, and the rest two.

The average therefore is one meal a day, and this because of poor yield of crops which results in high prices. The corms of the co-co-yams are much smaller in size than those obtained on the Nkawkaw valley. For this reason, food has to be imported from other towns like Mpraeso and Begong. Also to supplement their food, the people have learnt to introduce cassava into their menu. A decade ago, it was simply unimaginable to consider this as a food item. They argued that it was only fit for pigs. Now it is relished.

It is easy to grow, and in places where food abound, costs very little. But in this town, the cost soars higher day by day, so that as few as four tubers cost 6d; at Mpraeso, the same quantity may be bought for only 2d.

School children whose parents live at the vi

villages, travel each week-end to these villages to bring home enough food for the week.

Communication

The relief presents great problems in communication too. Since it is situated on a plateau, Obo-meng can be reached only by a steep ascent fro NKawkaw.

For a long time, the only link between the town and the NKawkaw valley was by a foot-path which lay among rocks worn down to considerab depths by years of use. Ascending the plateau b this path, while carrying a load of foodstuffs, wa no easy matter, and it is said that women ligh ened their loads of coco-yams or plantains by casting some away, in the middle of the road, into the valleys.

One of the heavy burdens often brought into th town by using this path was a dead body; fo as a rule, dead bodies were and are still not buried in the villages, but must be brought home for burial. Of the two carriers, the one in front may be on a ground a yard higher than that of the other behind who therefore gets the whole weight.

I mention this, because in my experience of childhood, it was a most horrible sight to see it coming from the valley below, borne by men bathed in sweat, and preceded by a man beating a metal gong-gong "daworo" as a sign of distress. Women retreated from the sight, and I well remember my brothers and I following mo ther, pent up with a desire to cry which we dare not for fear, as we ran back to the town.

In 1922, a road was built. It is a steep road

cut in the sides of the mountain with several sharp bends.

Before this time, the existing lorry road went through Mpraeso to Accra. The making of the Nkawkaw - Obomeng road synchronized with the construction of the railroad from Accra through Nkawkaw to Kumasi, so that the former road through Mpraeso fell into disuse, and the new one became a feeder road to railroad. It became a highway to the people of Kwahu, and Obomeng therefore took on the importance it holds to-day as the gate-way to the district.

It was a swish road, however, and during the rains, it was impassable, and the number of accidents great. By 1925, it had been tarred in certain sections, particularly at the bends, and so rendered safer. To-day the whole of it is tarred.

Recently another steep road has been built to connect Mpraeso with Nkawkaw, so that it is possible to reach Nkawkaw from Obomeng by a second road. This road is nick-named "Gambia", the idea being that travelling on this steep road is as dangerous as going to fight in Gambia. The connection with Gambia suggests that it was built in the war years when several Gold Coast soldiers were sent to that country.

To control the frequent accidents on both roads, particularly during the rainy season, a one-way traffic system has been adopted, so that lorries leave the plateau by the "Gambia" road, and return by the Nkawkaw - Obomeng one. This means that traffic at Obomeng is no longer as heavy as before. It is also not easy to catch a

lorry for Nkawkaw at Obomeng, and one has to travel to Mpraeso, often on foot, before doing so, because lorries passing through the town are usually loaded with passengers for distribution to the other towns of the district.

As another measure to make these steep roads safer, especially at night, poles painted white have been driven into the ground on the side of the road to the valley into which vehicles often slip, to help drivers to see the ditch.

In the Nkawkaw valley, there are rail- and lorry roads which connect Kumasi to Accra, but there are none serving the many villages scattered over the region. There is only one poor one connecting Nkawkaw with Akwasi, which taps the resources of the villages near it. This road becomes very bad in the rains, because of either water collecting in places or serious erosion which creates gullies. As it is not in the hands of the Public Works Department, the villagers try to keep it under repair by communal labour.

The rest of the villages, apart from those near this road, are therefore seriously handicapped as far as communication is concerned. They are connected by only narrow foot-paths which are rendered impassable by rivers, especially in the rainy months. For bridges, crude tree trunks are used which become dangerous when the rivers are in flood. At this time, ropes may be tied to objects on both banks for passers-by to hold on to when crossing.

The problems occasioned by the relief and climate are unavoidable, but we may hope, judging by what has been so far accomplished that better methods will be forthcoming to deal

The Farmer's Calendar

Month	Work	Remarks
January, Opepon	Uprooting "Afase" Water Yam Cultivation	"Opepon" means "great harmattan"
February, Ogyefuo	Felling + Burning trees	Palm nuts plentiful.
March, Obenom.	Planting corn, groundnuts.	"Obenom" is a kind of fly seen at this time.
April, Oforisuo gyenko	Making yam mounds	Rain softens soil for mound-making
May, Kotonima	Corn harvested	
June, Ayewuhumumo.	clearing round cocoa	
July, Kitawonsa	Clearing round Cocoa	Hunger at this time, no food crops
August, Sannaa	First harvest of cocoa	
September, Ebɔ	clearing round cocoa	Foggy
October, Ahinimi	Plucking of cocoa	Plenty of food
November, Obubuo	" " "	
December, Apenimaa	" " " Yam harvest Cutting down forest	Beginning of harmattan

Fig. 38.

more satisfactorily with them.

All through this chapter, we find that in their farm work, living conditions, and existing communications, the people adopt methods and devices in the light of the climate and natural features. They seek to master their environment. There is therefore bound to exist a relationship between geographical factors and the way of life of the people.

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20. EFFECT OF THE SEASONS ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF WORK THROUGHOUT THE YEAR ON: farming and other occupations

Farming

The seasons, in the main, dictate farming activities the whole year round, and the dominating feature of the seasons is the rainfall. The rains suggest when to plant, when to harvest, or when to relax.

They may not influence the work of people in other occupations as much as they do that of the farmer, but whatever the nature of one's pursuit, it behoves one to take notice of the rainfall, if one is to be successful is one's work.

We shall look at the farmer's year in relation to the distribution of his work. It is interesting to observe that the native farmer's months are named according to season or the phenomenon that takes place at that time.

The food crop farmer clears the bush in December, "Openima" "Small harmattan", and January, "Opepon" "Great harmattan", when it is dry, and

the debris is combustible. By the end of February, "Ogyefuo", the debris is burnt, the "apam", clearing of the pieces and stumps of wood left unburnt, is done, and the farm is ready for planting.

When the early rains begin towards the end of March, "Obenom", the corn and the groundnuts are sown. The planting of the pepper, the garden eggs, the coco-yams, the plantains, and the cassava continues through the rains. By April, "Ofosuo", the ground has been softened by the rain, so the mounds are made and the yams planted.

Corn is harvested in May and June, but the other food crops are harvested all through the year, when they are needed for consumption. Cocoyams and plantains are biennial crops and are harvested after the second year. The yams are harvested between November and January.

Those farmers who live in the villages around Nkawkaw, in addition to performing the above duties to provide themselves with food, have to attend other work incidental to cocoa farming.

The clearing of these farms take place in December and January as in the case of the crop farms, and the planting is in April and May, when the rains begin. Brushing takes place between may and September, that is the rainy season, until the trees should begin to bear.

In the bearing farms, weeding takes place between June to September. From august the first harvest begins until November when the big harvest comes and lasts until January.

The harvesting consists of the picking of pods and their collection into heaps, the breaking of the pods to remove the beans, and the carrying of the latter home for drying. All this is done

with the help of the other farmers and their families.

The picking is done with small, sharp, and hooked hoes called "asɔsɔwa" fixed to the end of a long raffia palm branch. The women and the children collect the pods into heaps. The men break the pods, whilst the women and the children scoop out the beans.

The conveyance of the beans to the village is, perhaps, the most tedious, and the farmer may enlist the services of hired labourers from the Northern Territories. The beans are dried on mats made of palm branches earlier in September or October.

In the villages some pieces of work that may be done include the clearing of roads and paths which takes generally in the rainy months, the digging of latrines, the cleaning up of the spring which supplies them with water, and the building and repair of houses. The houses present serious problems in the rainy seasons, and many days are spent in January to April getting the "bamuu", small pieces of mat-like structures in the shape of rectangles made out of raffia palm leaves for roofing.

Sundays are observed as rest days at both Obomeng and the villages, but may be used in attending to game and fish traps which must be inspected every other day.

Funerals make very great demands on the time of the farmer, because they must always come to Obomeng to participate in nearly all the funerals which take place as often as thrice or even more in the month. Thus they drop many of the working days in the year. When this happens, they have to double their efforts to

catch up with their work. They carry a calendar in their heads based upon the seasons; they therefore know whether or not they are behind time. In such cases, non-Christians will disregard the Sunday rest and work on all days of the week.

Employment and Labour on Farms.

The farmer is assisted in his work by the Northern Territories labourer who may be employed on either of the following terms:

(a) Yearly basis. He may be employed on a yearly basis, in which case the farmer takes responsibility for his board and keep, his clothes, and implements for work. Before the new salary scales which came into force in 1952, the maximum yearly payment of the labourer was £12. To-day it may be as much as £30. He draws the cash at the expiration of the year from the date of his employment. Such labourers may be sent by the master to work on the farms of other farmers needing labour at a charge of 3/- per day.

(b) "abusa" System. The second method of employment of the labourer is by the "abusa" system. In this case, the labourer takes responsibility for his own board and keep, clothes, and everything. He takes full charge of the farm, and receives a third of the proceeds of the farm that season. This is by far the more profitable to the labourer, but he must be experienced in the management of a cocoa farm to deserve such trust, otherwise the loss to the farmer would be great. Upon this latter condition, natives who have no farms of their own generally work.

Other Occupations

The work of people in other occupations are fairly evenly distributed throughout the year, except that as a result of the wealth that comes with the sale of cocoa in the Christmas season, there is lively activity in every field, and work is intensified at this time.

Since there is money to pay for it, the carpenter and the mason work harder to complet the building, the petty trader must visit the stores in Accra and Kumasi for more goods, the seamstress works for longer hours to cope up with the demand for the articles of clothin of the womenfolk for the celebration of Christmas and so on and so forth.

However, certain factors tend to influence the work of nearly each of the occupations in a way peculiar to itself.

In July to September, during the fish season, besides the sale of the usual articles of textiles, the women hawkers go to bring from Nkawkaw to sell.

On funeral days, the work of the people running the restaurants is stepped up, and the bread-maker cannot satisfy the demand, becaus bread is one of the few items of food considered proper to eat at this time.

Drivers may stop going to work several days if there are any repairs to be done on their vehicles.

While there are these different factors influencing the distribution of work of the different people, the major control of rainfall is very evident. It controls farm work which is the most important of the occupations of the community,

Naming of Children

DAY	MALE	FEMALE
Sunday, Kwasida	Kwasi	Akosua
Monday, Dwoada	Kwadwo	Adwoa
Tuesday, Benada	Kwabena	Abena
Wednesday, Wukuda	Kwaku	Akua
Thursday, Yawoada	Yaw	Yaa
Friday, Fiada	Kofi	Afua
Saturday, Memeneda	Kwame	Ama

Fig 39.

and this, in turn, exerts control over the other less important pursuits. Thus the distribution of work throughout the year is closely related to the climate.

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21. RITUAL and FESTIVAL

Naming of child

The right to name the child belongs to the father, not the mother. Every person has at least two names. One indicates the day on which he/she is born. This usually stands first. On the opposite page is a table of the days of the week and the corresponding names for the male or female.

It is believed that a child lives in the spirit world before it is born, and so when it is coming into the physical world, it has its own name and therefore determines the day on which it should be born. This day is its "spirit's day" "kra da" and therefore the name "Kwadwo" or "Kwaku" is its "kra din" "spirit's name".

The father gives the surname. He generally names it after a relation on either the paternal or maternal side. He may also, if desired, name it after a friend or anybody to whom he feels he owes some gratitude.

The relations receive first consideration. The first child is named after the father's own father, then his mother, and next his eldest sister or brother; after these have been considered, others may follow.

When the decision upon the one after whom the child is to be named has been taken, word is sent to the person who, under the circumstance

called god-father or god-mother.

This is considered by the person as a great honour and is therefore very welcome news. The reasons for this are many. First, it is an assurance to the one that his or her name will be perpetuated after death. Secondly, he or she may feel a satisfaction that his kind deed rendered some time in the past was appreciated and has been rewarded. Thirdly, it is believed that children inherit the character and qualities of those after whom they are named; parents will therefore avoid naming their children after bad people. So the one after whom a child is named is gratified at the thought that his qualities are considered worthy of perpetuation. But occasionally a father may name his child after an influential person in the family or community, not taking this into account, for reasons best known to himself.

The naming takes place on the eighth day. Until then, the child is not considered a human being, and should it die earlier, it is unmourned. Also, should the mother die before this time, she is considered to have died during delivery, and is therefore buried quietly and unmourned, because she is "ɔtɔfɔ" a person who has no good wishes or intentions.

Friends who are invited and the god-father or god-mother, "nana", assemble. The child is neatly dressed by the mother and brought into the assembly.

The ceremony begins with a display of the baby's gifts from the father, which is performed by the father's sister. She brings them, all arranged in a pan; and ostentatiously shows them to the

assembly, enumerating them as she proceeds. The people express approval with the words "O! waye adee" "O! he has done well".

The god-father or god-mother now takes the child's hand and shakes it affectionately saying: "Me nana, woaba a tra ase O;" "My grandson or -daughter, if you have come, stay;" "na ɛmmɛyɛ kyerɛwani;" "do not come be one-who-merely-comes to-show-the-face". He or she then pours libation praying "Nsamanfoɔ, mommegye nsa nnom O; abofra Asomasi nkwa so O, momma onyin nnyɛ onipa pa; onipa bonefoɔ a ɔmpɛ no yiye, a anka ɛkaa no a, anka onni hɔ dɛɛ, munyi no hɔ". "Spirits, come and receive this rum and drink. It is on behalf of the life of such and such a child; give it long life so it might grow up to find us still in life; make him grow up a good man; the wicked man who wishes it were dead, remove him".

He or she calls the baby by its new name, and says "Kofi Asomasi, gye nsa nnom" "Kofi —, receive this rum and drink." He or she touches the mouth of the child thrice with the forefinger dipped into the rum. He or she finally spits into the mouth of the child.

The people assembled then partake of the wine. any left over is kept for anybody who may visit the child in course of the day.

The god-father or god-mother bestows a gift which may be either money, sheep, hen, or anything. The parents takes great care not to misappropriate it for themselves as that would be starting the child in life badly — he would grow up to be a spendthrift and unsuccessful in life. If it is money, it may be used in buying a sheep, goat, or hen to be reared in behalf of the child.

Sanctification of the Mouth

Sanctification of the mouth, "ano hyira", is a ceremony performed by the individual in his own interest. Just as the "afahyɛ", which will later be described, is held to purify or sanctify the town, so this is done to purify the individual's soul.

The individual decides to do this after some misfortune such as an illness, an accident, or a serious law suit. At times too, after consulting an oracle, one may be told that one's "kra" spirit has been offended, because one has eaten an abomination or something tabooed by one's "Ntoro", Exogamus Division.

The point for this ceremony is not merely to sanctify the spirit, but to call him back to oneself after depression, sadness, and inactivity in these adverse circumstances, and to make him blithe and buoyant once again. This, it is believed will result in the individual's happiness and prosperity in his undertakings.

The ceremony takes place on the spirit's day, "kra da". Eggs and mashed yams, "ɛtɔ", are prepared and placed in a corner of a room. He decides upon anything for which he has a strong appetite; generally it is a hen or a sheep. The creature is killed, and the blood sprinkled round the dish of eggs and mashed yams.

After the cooking, the part of the meat most appetising to the person is put round the "ɛtɔ". He then sits down on a stool by the dish in the corner, takes a bit of salt and bites at it, then prays: "Okra Kwabena Bosompra, mihyira m'ano nnɛ; monnye ɛtɔ ne kosua, ne akoko nni"; "Spirit Kwabena Bosompra, I purify my mouth; receive mashed yams, eggs, and hen and eat. If you have

gone away to some place, return to me, so that I have no more misfortunes, that whatever I do, I might prosper." He may continue to pray, giving expression to his hearts desires and winding off in the usual way: "Onipa bonefoo a ope me bone dee, momma nanim nnu ase" "The evil person who seeks my ill, let him be disgraced". He scatters some of the "ots" round about in all directions, and eats the food. The rest he gives to the children in the house.

Mobome

This a ritual performed by the womenfolk of the community when the men are away on the battle field. It is believed that it brings good luck to their husbands, and is necessary for the winning of victory and the safe return of these husbands.

In the evening and in the early hours of the morning, they come out in complete nudity, taking off the cloths that cover their private parts. In such a state they are very formidable to men whom they meet; and there are usually a few men left behind who may or pretend to be sick. Some elders too may be left behind to pray to the gods in behalf of those in battle. Such men who meet these women may be beaten to the point of death.

The people believe that the sex organs of women have super-natural powers. In fact they say the organ itself is "bayie" a witch which is able to bring misfortunes to or even kill anyone who may be cursed with it by a woman. For proof of this they cite the phenomenon of its ability to give passage to the child at birth.

Thus in this crisis, to invoke its help, they bare it and sing, striking it with their hands:

"Etwɛ e! etwɛ e! Sabirakua
asare puawa, ma woho so!"

Vagina! Vagina! Sabirakua (title)
The hair of Asare, arise!"

This continues without break until the men return. The longest period known in the history of the people during which this continued was in the war of Adu Bofo of Ashanti against the Krepis in 1869'. (It was very remarkable indeed that my informant, who was only Twi literate, could tell me offhand, without reference to any record that it was 75 years ago. I seemed to doubt it at the time, but when later I referred to Ward's History, I found he was right. He is a real student of history.)

The Kwahus were under the Ashantis at the time and therefore took part in the war. It will be recalled that at this time, owing to the severe losses in one of the engagements, the Kwahus had their great oath, "Asase Aban", "the Castle of the Earth". The "mobome" was kept up at this time for three whole years.

In January this year, 1954, I had the privilege of seeing the ritual performed on a small scale when rioting broke out at Abene, the political capital, over the destoolment of the Omanhene, and men hurried there to give help.

As soon as the first lorry carrying a batch of armed men took off, the women began to pour into the meeting-place in front of the chief's house. By the time the second had left, there were assembled no less than sixty women who began to sing.

As they began to sing, the whole atmosphere seemed

' Ward's Short History of the G.C. p.162.

to change; feeling ran high, and those who before had stood listlessly and seemed to be in a state of indecision about going, began to scramble for a place on the lorries which had stood empty for a long time.

In a short time afterwards, the town lay quiet and empty with nothing to break the silence but the singing of the women. This continued until about 2 p.m., when a lorry load of men returned to announce that order had once more been restored without any casualities.

Abamma

People attach such superstitious beliefs to twin children that they treat them differently from other children for fear that they might die and return to the place from where they came. In fact they almost worship them.

The parents make it a point to give both of them the same articles of food or clothing. One must not be held in greater esteem than the other. They are therefore treated equally, and care is taken that no word is uttered in their presence which may be regarded as an abuse to them.

Besides, a shrine, called "Abamma", is made for them. As soon as they are brought forth, their hair is cut, and, together with two beads, placed in a pot. On the eighth day, at the naming ceremony, a sheep is slaughtered, and the blood is put into the pot. It now becomes the shrine, "obosom", for the twins.

"Fiada Dapaa", "Friday the good day", is the day for the celebration of the Abamma. At this time, yams and eggs are offered to the shrine. Occasionally, a hen may be offered too. On this day, the children

are dressed in white. a first-born child is not permitted to partake of the special food prepared at this time for them, and no six-fingered woman is allowed to help in its preparation. She shall not enter the house. (Six-fingered persons are people with a small growth on the little finger, which is considered an additional finger. Such people are considered to carry misfortunes or bad luck. amongst the akans, it is such a defect that an individual who has it will be disqualified for marriage, if it is discovered. The food of such a woman may not be eaten by some people).

Now to come back. Before the annual festival, "afahyɛ", the children, as well as the mother and relations in the house, do not eat yams. at Obomeng, the "afahyɛ" is losing its importance — at least it has not been held since the last decade — so no notice is taken of whether they eat the yams at the proper time or not.

In addition to the shrine, a small farm, about 36 sq. yards in area, is often made for the children, so that the spirits that inhabit the "abamma" may depend upon it for subsistence.

On state occasions, all twins are dressed in white and different parts of their body painted with white clay.

In the community, the mothers of twins, 'awonta' enjoy the privilede of being excempted from taxation and communal labour.

When these mothers die, the children dress in their usual white, and a hen is killed to prepare food for them.

Twins, if they be girls, are the wives of the chief. If they be boys, they are his servants, "nkoa". Therefore as soon as they are born, the chief is informed

of it. He, in turn, sends a sum of money — about one guinea — to them as a welcome gift.

If the twins are both married by the chief, they must both share the same bed with him at the same time. If for some reason, a commoner should marry one of them, the other one should, on the first night her sister goes to sleep with the husband, go to lie on the bed to be used by her sister, and play with the man as if to co-habit with him. She then leaves for the sister to come in. This is done to show that they are one and inseparable.

Baduguian (Badu's sheep)

When a couple is blessed with ten children, it devolves upon the relatives of the woman to make a gift of a sheep to the couple in appreciation of their great contribution to the numerical strength of the "abusua". An umbrella and a white cloth may be included in the gift.

Until this is done, the couple do not eat mutton, as it is believed that this will cause the death of the tenth child, "Badu".

The sheep is killed and all the women in the town who have themselves had a similar experience come to prepare food with the meat.

The food is distributed among friends and relatives. With the exception of few literate people, africans generally do not eat with their wives, but perhaps for the first time in their lives, the couple and the tenth child, "Badu", dine together.

In the evening, they wash themselves, put on the white cloths, and go out to thank these friends and relatives for their good wishes.

Fig 40

A modern house is opened
in a modern fashion
at the Easter time, 1954.

Fig 41.

A wife prepares to send gifts
to her husband to help him
entertain the guests at the opening ceremony
of the above house

In the past a shrine was made for the child for which sacrifices were occasionally were made, but there was fear that it was inhabited by the flesh-eating spirit, "bayie"; this "bayie" is often blamed as being the cause of several human ailments and deaths, so they no longer make the shrine.

The Occupation of a New House

A new house was always occupied for the first time in the evening. The owner called together the elders in the neighbourhood, and provides a pot of palm-wine with which prayer was said by one of them.

This done, he fired a gun, and then went to sleep in one of the rooms. Next day, he killed a sheep or a hen with which the wife prepared food to be distributed amongst the neighbours. "Ets" or mashed yams were scattered in and around the house to propitiate the spirits.

To-day the whole thing has been simplified. The occupation takes place in the evening, and the food is cooked for friends in the neighbourhood, but there is no firing of the gun and the propitiation of the spirits.

Those who are able to build modern concrete houses have a grand opening occasion, which is generally the Easter, on which bands are invited to play and dances held.

Survived Child (Bagyina)

If a woman, on several occasions, has unsuccessful child-births, she and the husband

Some Bagyina Names.

Name	Meaning
Mosi	A Moshi person
Hunu	a worthless man
Asase - asa	No more earth (For the child's burial)
Ntoso	That which is given free after buying.
Kisi	Rat
Ponko	Horse
Brenya	Got with difficulty
Nyamekyɛ	The Gift of God.
Anunna	Not expected
Sumina	Refuse

Fig 42.

go to seek help of a fetish. Should the next delivery be successful, the child is called "Bagyima" "stand child", that is a child has survived.

The child belongs to the shrine that gave the help, and therefore does not eat those things which are taboos to the particular shrine. If it was Tano that gave the help, the child will observe as taboos the flesh of a goat, pumpkin and "akam", a wild yam. These taboos the child will observe, until it is 10 to 12 years old.

The hair is left uncut, so that the strands interlace into dirty looking locks to which several objects may be fastened. These may be cowries, beetles, small metal gong-gongs, stick insects and the hand of the bush lemur, "nkitaden".

The metal gong-gong signifies that death has been warned to stay away from the child. The bush lemur, as the african name implies, is believed not to let go what it takes hold of, and so it means the parents are holding on fast to it.

A small carved stool may be fastened to the foot. This indicates that the child has been given a stool "to sit down" and to go away from the world. Talismans may be put round the waist and a charm round the wrist to keep away the evil spirits.

Believing that the gods prefer the child who is loved by the parents, the latter pretend not to care for it, and call it by the most unsavoury names. It might be called "Donko" "Slave" or "Sumina" "Refuse". It might be called "Mosi" which is the way the southerners call the wild, aggressive Mossi man from the North. As he is

dreaded here, so they think the spirits also will the child, and leave it alone.

The face may be marred by being marked in three places on either side of the mouth

If the child survives until the age of 10 to 12 years, the parents go to give a thank-offering to the shrine. This may consist of a sheep, tobacco, salt, and palm oil. After this, all obligation on the part of the child to parents towards the shrine cease.

Puberty Rites

Among African tribes like the Zulus, the coming of age of young men is observed with great ceremony and ritual. In the olden days at Obomeng, the father married him to a girl out of his own funds, and then presented him with a gun. This signified that he was a man and was expected to fend for himself.

Besides, he was to fight, when war broke out. To-day the practice is no more. The young man chooses the girl, and pays for the marriage with little financial help from the father. He cares very little for the gift of a gun, for he might never need it at all in life.

There used to be much ado about the coming of age of a young girl to mark the time of her first menses and to declare her marriageable.

As a rule, she announced the sight of the first issue of blood to the mother with weeping in which the latter joined. The queen-mother was told about it and a day fixed for the ceremony.

A mother of many children who has never lost a child by death is taken to the place where household refuse is deposited and there given a boiled

egg to swallow whole. Her lips are touched with a yam called "akam" which grows on a thorny climber. This type of mother is selected, so that her good fortune might also be that of this budding woman.

This over, the young woman is stripped naked in the public and washed. She is jeered at, and taunted, if she lacks pubic hair. She is dressed and given several eggs to eat. Her friends stay by her during the week of the celebration to serve her, sing, and play. Friends and relations bring her gifts, and the young man to whom she is betrothed makes the greatest gift of all.

After this ritual, she is accepted into womanhood and must wear a head-gear. She must be careful not to speak to the "okradwarefo", "the one who washes the soul" of the chief, or cross the threshold of any fetish priest during her menstrual period, as that would be desecration punishable by a fine now-a-days, and by death in the olden days.

Here again, partly as a result of the impact of Christianity and partly by the fact that the people all reside in the villages and scarcely come to town where these ceremonies are held, the ceremony has completely disappeared.

In the olden days it was considered that failure to observe this brought misfortune to the whole town and hence criminal, therefore women who were found pregnant without having observed the rite, were put outside the town in a hut together with the man, there to die.

Enstoolment

A stool becomes vacant in their of two ways: (a) by death which is idiomatically expressed "Nana kɔ akura ase" "Grandsire is gone to the village" or (b) by destoolment. The latter will be discussed later.

When this happens, the "asafomma", the company of young men and the elders approach the head of the stool family, who is often a woman, to have a candidate nominated. Any member of the family is eligible for nomination. He might be a brother, a cousin, an uncle, or a nephew. But there are four strong determining factors any of which may disqualify a candidate.

i. He must be in health.

ii. He must not have been touched by a knife

iii. He must have a character beyond reproach. This is a very strong point indeed, and a candidate who is known to be going after other people's wives, or is proud and giving to abusing other people, trying to show that they descend from parents of a low pedigree, is never acceptable.

iv. He must be able to speak well or have rhetoric eloquence.

The elders retire into private to hear the nomination and then come to tell the "Asafomma" who are all assembled before the chief's house. If he is not acceptable, there are unpleasant remarks made: "Wei? yɛmpɛ no; dabi, yɛmpɛ no", "This man? we do not like him; no, we do not like him." There is quite a consternation and the elders call the assembly to order by promising that their feelings will be expressed to the queen-mother or nominating body.

A new nomination is made, and it is acceptable, the news is greeted with ovation. They all shout out the cry of jubilation "Osee yei, osee ayee!"

The elder of the royal family gets the consent of the father of the would-be chief and then hands him over successively through the following office-bearers

i. Akyeamehene, chief of the linguists

ii. Ahenemma, the princes who are to look upon him as their father.

iii. Nkrempehene, chief of all the people in the town

iv. Gyasehene, chief of those in the chief's house.

The would-be chief is seized by the people and beaten (not severely). A sheep is slaughtered forthwith and the blood made to fall upon his feet. Henceforth his feet are never to touch the ground. He is become sacred. White native powder, "hyire", is poured upon him as an act of triumph. He is carried shoulder high and thrice taken from one end of the town to the other amidst the singing of songs of jubilation and the beating of drums.

He serves drinks to the people assembled and pays the "Aseda", thank offering, which at first was £16 but now £50 and 2 cases of gin or schnapps. Next day, all the sub-chiefs under his jurisdiction come forward to swear oath of allegiance.

The elder of the royal family opens it. He buys the "akofana", sword of office from the "afanasoafo panyin", head of the sword bearers at 8/-, by which he swears. (This small sword is believed to contain the spirits of the ancestors, therefore a breach of the promises in the oath is swiftly requited by the spirits. The new chief who has just been installed, although literate and less likely to believe in traditions, told me that if he put it under his pillow, it brought him visions of and instructions from the ancestors). He swears by the great "obosom" shrine of the community, Fofie Nkrante", support the new chief. He then strikes his

head three times with the sword. Then follows in order the akyeamehene, the Gyasehene, and the Wirempehene. The chief in turn swears first to the head of the "abusua", then the akyeamehene, Gyasehene, and Wirempehene. He promises to do as his ancestors did, to be humble, and not to be "akokoakukubama", an obstinate child who does not respect any one.

Next he is taken to the Nifahene, the chief of the Right Wing, who lives 4 miles away. He swears to this chief and his sub-chiefs who also swear back exactly in the same way as at Obomeng. The "Oseda" taken at Obomeng is given to the Nifahene, who divides it as follows:

i. £8 for each of the 4 divisional chiefs of the district
ii. £8 for the elders of Obomeng itself
iii. £10 for the Omanhene of Kwahu

In addition he pays a sum of £9 16/- called "Ntaho" "extra" which goes into the treasury of the Obomeng Stool. One of the cases of gin is given to the elders.

Finally, he is taken to the Omanhene. To him he swears to be faithful and be at his beck and call. He then kneels before his lord who, with his sandals, touches the former's head thrice. The £10 and the remaining case of gin is given to the Omanhene.

Henceforward the Omanhene can take the new chief into his confidence and can so trust him as to allow him to enter his private chamber.

The day for the installation is fixed. Meanwhile he is kept indoors for a week or more and fed well. At this time, he is taught the history of the community. The stool on which he sits during this period is the one that will be blackened and added to the sacred ancestral stools, should he reign until his death. Because of the good feeding when he is next seen, he is transfigured.

The installation ceremony is a very solemn one, and takes place at night. When the day arrives, he is taken into the mystic stool house, where no one can be admitted but the keepers. Here he is initiated into the ancient order of chiefs. He is blindfolded and asked to touch one of the stools of the past chiefs which are all arranged in the room in order of succession of the owners. The name of the one whose stool he touches is the one he will henceforth bear. If he touches Akuamoa's stool, he becomes Akuamoa II.

He is now brought out into the courtyard, where almost the whole population is gathered, singing, drumming, and trumpeting as the climax of the ceremony – the placing of the chief over the sacred black stool – approaches.

First a sheep is slaughtered. The elders then take the chief and proceed to place him over the stool which is done by merely suspending him three times over it. The black stool is believed to be inhabited by the spirits of all the ancestors that have reigned before him, therefore it is dangerous for any part of the chief's body to touch it, as it would result in physical infirmities such as impotence. Therefore he, on his part, makes every effort to avoid touching it.

As this stage is reached, the people's voices, the beating of drums, and the blare of the trumpets rise to a crescendo which can be heard for miles around. Another sheep is slaughtered and the ceremony is over. The new chief now assumes authority to rule.

Destoolment

A chief may become liable to destoolment

upon being found guilty of one or more of several offences. The important of these are:

i. Going after the wives of subjects
ii. Misusing public funds in chief's own interests and failing to account for them.
iii. Abusing elders, and particularly attempting to prove to any of them of his low family pedigree.
iv. Non-co-operation with the "asafo-nmma", company of young men.
v. Desecrating the stool by neglecting the pouring of libation.
vi. Physical infirmities, such as blindness, which render the chief incapable of discharging duties.
vii. Misuse of time and consequently neglecting duties.

It would seem that the head of the royal family or the elders could be the ones in whom power for destoolment is vested, but this lies with the "asafo", the strongest power in the community. Here again is evident the democratic touch or element of the government of the community.

The royal family and the elders have their reasons for staying out of this. As may be expected, the royal family aims at backing and keeping the chief on the stool as long as possible to avoid the disrepute to the family and the unpleasant consequences incidental to this unhappy event.

The elders, on their part, have a hard task showing overtly their dislike for one whom they have been in close touch and association, and from whom they may have, at one time or the other, enjoyed some favours. But they are in secret touch with the Asafo Company, and are

usually the moving spirits behind the uncompromising youth.

When the Asafo Company has got hold of three or more of these serious offences, several others, less serious, perhaps as many as thirty, may be preferred. When this happens, the doomed chief is bound to remain tangled in the mesh, however well he may try to extricate himself.

The young men demand an explanation and court succeeds court. Feeling runs high, and finally one day they rush upon the chief, slip off his sandals and strike his head with them. If he is sitting on a stool, they take it from under him so that his buttocks touch the ground. He is destooled. They now leave the court singing war songs as they go.

Some chiefs, when they realize what the people are up to, decide to hasten the issue. In the midst of such arguments, they themselves slip off their sandals and begin to walk away barefooted. This often comes as a shock to many of those who had been loudest in the argument. There is a hush and many give way to tears.

Marriage and Divorce

The institution of marriage is as old as the hills, and its time of origin and customary laws cannot be traced. One thing is certain and that is its form and laws must have changed with the times.

The following is a list of relations with whom one may not enter into marriage contract or engage in sexual connection. It is said that an in-

fraction of this regulation in ancient times was punishable only by death. To-day one guilty of the offence is made to slaughter sheep, and subjected to a heavy fine.

I. a sister
II. an aunt
III. a niece
IV. a son's daughter
IV. a daughter's daughter
VI. a father's brother's daughter
VII. a father's sister
VII. any one of the Abusua or Ntoro

In the olden days, the parents of the young couple made the contract in behalf of their children, and the latter had to accept it whether or not they were agreeable to it. The worst instance was where young girls were married to men, while the former were very young. This was the "Asiwa" system. The child be married to a man even before her birth, because of some good service rendered to the parents by the man. In such instances, the man made presents to the young girl from childhood until she reached marriageable age.

During the celebration of the girl's puberty rite, the man offered a handsome sum of money as gift to her. Because of these extra expenses which preceded the normal marriage dues, a man found guilty of adultery with such a wife paid half as much again the usual adultery fees to the husband. But this did not make for happiness in the union, because the young girl, more often than not, for she had no love for the husband so forced upon her, and the pair were generally ill-matched, owing to the disparity in age.

To-day "Asiwa" has been abolished, parents no longer decide whom their children shall marry,

and the young men have freedom in the choice of their partners. The young men claim this freedom as a result of their contact with western ideas, and the parents cannot with-hold this freedom.

When the young man gets the consent of a girl to be his wife after the usual proposal to the latter in the words: "Mɛpɛ wo" "I like you", he makes her a present of 10/6 through his sister or a relation. He then goes to consult the girl's father about it, taking with him a pot of palm wine which has been now-a-days substituted with a bottle of a European manufactured wine. This first interview with the father is called "ɔpon bɔ", "door knocking".

The father asks him whether he has talked it over with the daughter, and asks for time to find this out from her. When he has satisfied himself that the girl is agreeable to the proposal, he sends word to the young man to come and see him.

If the father espresses his consent to the contract, the young man produces the following:

1 Bottle schnapp or gin as thanks to the father.
10/6 as the due of the "abusua" family.
£1 1/- as due of the father.
£2 as "Nyame-guan" "God's-sheep". This is for the spirit of the father and belongs to the father.
8/- as "kɛtɛasehyɛdeɛ" "what is put under the mat" This is to point out to the girl that she is married and cannot sit on any man's mat other than the husband's.
4/- for her brothers. This is called "akontagye sekan" "the knife of brother-in-Law".
8/- to cover cost of her father's pipe.
1/- to be paid into State Treasury; this legalizes

the marriage under the native custom.

When all these are paid up, the father now calls a small boy or brother present at the gathering, and asks him to give away the sister to the young man. For this, the boy receives 6d.

The man produces a pot of palm wine as thanks.

The father now gives the young man warnings in regard to how he is to live with his daughter. Amongst other things, he warns him that he is to work hard so as to be able to feed and clothe his daughter. He draws his attention to the paradox of African marriage namely that should the girl gain anything in the course of the marriage, it belongs to the "abusua"; should she incur any debt it is the responsibility of the husband to defray.

Finally the young man offers a packet of matches or a bag of salt which the witnesses present share. The contract is thus concluded, and the man appoints a day when the woman should come to live with him.

Sometimes, if the relatives of the girl are in need of some money repay a debt or undertake an enterprise, "ta ade" "head money" may be charged. This is often a big sum, and the payment of such a sum may be the condition on which a father or "abusua" may give away the girl. When such a sum is paid, the woman finds it difficult to sue for divorce, if she is dissatisfied with the marriage. The woman is, as it were, sold.

Parents and the "abusua" are beginning to see the evils of this and will now not take such money unless very sorely pressed by circumstances.

Divorce

Although the marriage contract is generally entered into with great hopes for a happy future, sometimes there comes the time when the two parties feel they must part.

The causes for divorce in the community are ~~too many~~ too many to enumerate and the divorces are frequent. They come from either party alike. On the part of the woman, the pet cause is absence of child-birth, because from point of view of the African, especially the woman, marriage exists only for procreation.

If there is a desire for divorce, the woman leaves on her own; or the husband sends her in the company of some one to the father, with word that he is suing for divorce because of such and such a reason.

The father sends to the man to come and see him, and with the help of other people, the case is heard. The man may be pacified, if found justified, generally, with a hen and a number of eggs depending upon what the husband may consider sufficient to appease him.

On the other hand, if he is bent on divorce, then the divorce procedure follows.

In the morning, the wife, with some witnesses, goes to the man's house. The man calls in some witnesses. He asks the woman to swear by a fetish to assure him that she has been faithful.

The woman repays double the amount paid to her as "kɛtɛasɛhyɛdɛ" "what is put under the mat" and thus relieves herself of her obligation to him as wife.

This done, the man takes powdered white clay "hyire" or dust and puts it between her feet.

The Chief at a Funeral

The chief seated on a skin laid on the ground as a sign of mourning at a funeral.

Fig. 43.

The marriage is then dissolved.
The woman pays 2/- which is used in buying a packet of matches for distribution amongst the witnesses. She also gets a box which she takes home to show to the father as proof of what has happened.

Funerals

When a man dies, the news is not let out at once until the body is washed and put on bed. Kyeamehene are not allowed to wail until everything is in readiness. A gun is then fired to announce the death of the town, and then a most simultaneous coffin wailing by women begin the wailing.

The chief mourner appoints some one who is sober and dependable, and capable of taking charge of the conduct of the funeral in regard to the finances and supplies. He is called "nea ɔte ayipa so" "the one who sits on the funeral mat". He buys and serves the wine. He sends some to people who are to be formally informed of the death. If he does this well, it brings in funds.

As the body lies in state, the women prepare the dish the dead person liked best when in life, and place it before him. They believe that as he is about to undertake a journey, he must eat and be refreshed.

Towards evening, the body is put into the coffin. Only the closest relations are allowed to come near or see this. It is screened from view with cloth. This screening is an indication of what is happening, and the weeping grows intense.

They believe that he is going to the spirit world, "asaman", where property is needed as

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in the material world, so his best cloth and a good part of his personal effects are put into th coffin. His wife, children, relations, and friends all give him pieces of cloth to take away. Most important of all, they must not forget "stam ano ntakuo mmiensa a yede to nsuo nom" "thr sixpenny pieces tied to the corner of a cloth fo the purchase of water."

If he was a rich man a heavy sum of mone and some gold are put in it too. The body of such a man may be exhumed after burial by thieves (The "akyeamehene" chief linguist informed me that owing to the slump of the Great War I, four bodies were exhumed during the period.)

The coffin which is now heavy with these goods, is carried into the street amidst wailing and the firing of guns. The sons, with both hands on their head cry: "agya, mawie o; agya mawie o" "Father, I have finished; father, I have finished", meaning that they are undone.

The wife follows, carrying in her hand a plan called "sommɛ" and a stone, weeping "O me kun pa wode me gyaaa hwae?" "O dear husband, in whose charge have you left me?" but as she gets near to the outskirt of the town she says: "Ennɛ, asomasi, sɛ me ne wo wɔ biribi yɛ a, efir nnɛ de reks, yeadi kam;" "To-day, such and such a person, if I had anything to do with you, hence forth we have parted company"; she throws what she had in her hands away, and returns to the house, not looking behind. She does this for fear the spirit might haunt her.

All through the funeral her hair is shorn off. Beads are strung together and put round her wris The sap from kola nuts is put on these beads an

together, it becomes a charm called "gyabun" which should keep away the spirit of her husband. It is never taken off until it falls off by itself, which it does in course of time. She carries about in her hand a piece of firewood, which has once been used in cooking and a shrub called "Eme" which has a strong aroma. The latter is always hung round the ear. Wearing only one piece of cloth tied round the body at the chest, she sits down on the ground in front of the dead husband and waits.

The burial over, the chief mourner appoints a day for the formal funeral. It might be within a week, or it might be postponed to about a year after. When the day for the celebration arrives, the weeping, drinking, and booming of the guns begins in earnest as though the one were just dead. The number of the mourners increases, because the traders and other people in distant places will have received notice long enough to enable them to travel home. Previous to this the master of ceremonies, as we would call "nea ste ayipa so" will have arranged for hired sympathisers like bandsmen or vocalists, wine, gunpowder, and all that will be needed.

The wife, followed by the women, weeps through the streets. These women wear a single-piece sack-cloth which reaches up to the breasts. From their arms hang a thick bunch of raffia about one yard long, and enveloping the whole arm. On their foreheads and arms are marks of red clay - indications of sorrow and calamity. To complete the costume, they wear a band of scarlet cloth as head-gear.

If it is a mother - or father-in-law that is

dead, a group of women carry a wooden statue, about a foot tall, in a large brass pan filled with beautiful silk cloths. This is called "adɔbɔ". They wail as they move along from one end of the street to the other. It is not uncommon to see the carriers act as though possessed of the spirit of the dead person. The wife concerned, weeps thus:

"Osɔdoni yɛ yere; ɛnyɛ ɔyɛyere na meyɔ
ahummɔbɔ na meyɛ; owisie akum me koraa."

"Coak, too fond of marriage; it is not because I am too fond of marriage. I am just sympathetic. My eyes are completely blinded by smoke."

The firing of guns continues ceaselessly in the street. A relaxation in this detracts from the success of the celebration, and the master of ceremonies must keep the gunners regularly supplied with powder.

Meantime at home and at the side of the main street, the people are seated, and drinks are served liberally. Sympathisers come to offer donations called "Nsawabɔ". An announcer informs the assembly who the donor is, his relation to the dead person, and the amount of the donation. The money is put into a receptacle provide for the purpose, and a clerk, appointed by the master of ceremonies, records it.

In the kitchen food will be cooking. This is done by the daughters of the paternal group, "ahenemma nma" princesses as the sisters of the deceased are called. The meat for this is provided as follows: the wife brings a sheep with which to bury her husband; the family and his own children each as a separate group, brings one.

No salt is put into this food, because spirits, the people believe, do not eat it.

When it is finished, it is carried to the "nsamanpom" "grove of the dead", and, together with a jug of water, set on a small table on the grave. To this table, the new arrival in the spirit world invites the elders and friends in the new place.

Here we see how the way of life of these people is set against a deep coloured back-ground of a belief in spirits and the supernatural that is religious.

The last stage of the wife's part of the ceremony which concludes her obligation to her husband now comes. First she is charged £4 as fee for the performance of this rite. Her hair is shorn off again. As this is being done, the people come to fan her and either tease or praise her according to whether or not she was kind and ready to let people share in the food she cooked for her husband. If she was cruel, they say "Megye wo ntakuogya" "I claim from you sixpenny worth of firewood". If she was kind they say to her "ɔdɛɛfoɔ, due", "Merciful one, have my sympathy". She takes a brass pan, containing firewood once used for cooking called "gyentia", the aromatic shrub, "ɛme", a pot containing her own hair and a walking stick, and in the company of other women goes to a river. The contents of the brass pan are emptied into the river. The mat is spread on the bank of the river and she is asked to sleep on it for a few minutes. They wash her in the river, and leaving behind everything but the brass pan, they bring her back home.

She has now concluded her part of the funeral so far; but she must have a charm to ward off

the spirit of her husband so that he does not come to have sexual intercourse with her which spoils and render her incapable of procreation or even have intercourse with any man again.

A man who has lost a wife needs such a charm, for it is believed the spirit of a wife sleeping with a husband will render the latter impotent. This charm is made by tying beans and charcoal into a talisman which is worn round the waist. It is called "asasa suman" "spirits charm". When it is removed, it must be hung on a tall palm tree.

The successor in consultation with the rest of the family may decide to marry the woman. She can refuse, if she does not care for it, in which case she repays the "ta ade" "head money" paid by the husband at the time of the marriage, and the ceremony of divorce is performed. Generally she does not remarry until some months have elapsed, as an early marriage is frowned upon by the society.

When the celebration is over, the family assembles to go into the accounts to find out about the expenditure of the funeral and the income obtained through the "nsawabo" donations. After both have been balanced, the successor pays half of the debt left over, whilst the rest of the family takes charge of the remaining half. This brings the whole celebration to a finale.

The people attach great importance to funerals, because it relieves them of their duties and obligations towards the dead; otherwise the family incurs the displeasure of the dead which might lead to untold misfortunes. Furthermore, it is a disgrace, and a stigma on the good name or reputation of a family, if a member is not

mourned fittingly. For this reason, although one might not receive the proper care and attention of the family in time of illness, one's dead body will be accorded full funeral rites demanded by society, cost what it might!

On the other hand, "atɔfo", those who commit suicide or die by accident; women who die during delivery, and any who die by a cause they consider unnatural are not accorded funeral rites. They think the persons concerned had ill intentions for themselves and do not therefore merit being sent off into the spirit world with due ceremony. These are believed to have wandering spirits, "saman twentwen", which hover about the outskirts of the town.

Poor people are given such a funeral as befits their status in life.

Now-a-days funerals are performed for another reason. People tend to have an eye more on the financial profits they yield, and it is not uncommon to find families realize, through the "nsawabɔ" twice as much as they put in the funeral. "Ennɛ dɛɛ yɛtɔn efun" "To-day dead bodies are sold" is the common saying.

In view of this, there are laws to regulate the donations to a minimum of 2/- per head but there is underhand dealing, and people who think this sum too shameful a donation to make continue to donate extravagantly.

Rites Connected With Occupations

There are no important rites or ceremonies connected with farming, seasonal changes, and other occupations as in some countries, but the following

may be of interest.

Mention has already been made of the ceremony connected with the sale and pawning of land, and also the fact that the planting of food crops, and for that matter, yams, could not take place until the "afahyɛ" was over.

It remains to be said that, when food crops are harvested, they cannot be used or sold, until the first-fruits have been brought and laid before the "obosom" of the family. To-day, those who have become Christian express this belief by taking it to the church.

Also a man on first going to clear virgin soil, will pour a libation by praying to the "nsamanfoɔ" spirits thus: "Nsamanfoɔ, mommegye nsa nom o. Ennɛ asase a mode gyaa me yi, mereba abɛyɛ so aduruma. Momma bone bi nto me. Momma sekan ntwa me. Na momma emu aduruma dɛɛ mmra prɔmprɔmprɔm", "Spirits, come and receive wine to drink. To-day, this land that you left to me, I am coming to work on it. Do not let any evil befall me. Do not allow a cutlass to cut me, but let the fruits come abundantly". After this he takes up his cutlass and begins to work.

Carpenters and builders on first starting a contract may pour a libation to the spirits and pray for their help in the work they are about to undertake. Their tools are held to be sacred, and prayers may be said to them in times of crisis. They may swear by these tools. In general, the tools of all professional men are considered sacred, and a literate man may swear by his pen.

When undertaking a contract to convey a dead body to another place, the driver will pour a

libation on the engine of the lorry, and pray for safety on the road.

Some of these ceremonies are recent introductions as for example the ones concerned with the carpenter's tools and the lorry, but are bound up with or related to their ancient superstitious beliefs, which, as mentioned earlier, are at the core of the whole community life.

Festivals

There are two main festivals and several minor ones, all of whom date further back than recorded history. They are true of all akan peoples with slight modifications here and there.

We shall look at them, starting with the afahyɛ festival, the grandest of them all.

Afahyɛ

Afahyɛ, analysed is "afa" festival, "hyɛ" celebrate; so it means "to celebrate festival". The purpose of the "afa", festival, is one of purification or sanctification.

It is believed that during the course of the year, several things happen which tend to desecrate or lessen the sanctity of the stool, ancestral spirits, the rivers, and the gods of the community. For instance, a woman dying in course of delivery is supposed to have some desecrating effects, and as several of these take place during the year, there is a need for this annual purification of the stool and all the supposed powerful elements in the community.

This is one of the rarest occasions when the

town is taxed to its utmost capacity, for then every citizen resident in the town, in the Nkaw kaw valley, or in distant places, makes it a point to be present.

No yams could be eaten before the festival is over; an infringement of this is calculated to bring about a poor harvest. Only children were exempt from this regulation. Also no cultivation of the land and the celebration of funerals are permissible until after the expiration of a fortnight from the day of the festival.

The celebration takes place in "Opepon" December. The drums herald the approach of the occasion, the preceding evening. Early in the morning, the chief takes his bath, and in the company of the elders, enters the stool house. He slips off his sandals, stands on them, then greets the spirits inhabiting the stools thus: "Nananom nnuma mo akye O; ɛnnɛ afahyɛ yi, mɛfa mo ako-asuo mu ako-bɔ mo asu". "Grandsires, I greet you. To-day is the yearly festival. I shall take you to the river and baptise you". They then withdraw.

Meantime the women prepare mashed yam, "ɛtɔ", saturated with palm oil. Accompanied by the elders, the women take the "ɛtɔ" and boiled eggs through and around the town, sprinkling some at every sacred place and in every river.

The climax is reached, when the stool is carried to the river-side for the purification. The chief, resplendent in the richest adornment, appears, riding in his palanquin, and dancing to music and the rhythm of the "fom-fom-from" drums.

Preceded by the stool carried by the stool

carriers, he leads a procession of great pageantry. The procession is in the following order. The stool bearers lead the way; they are followed by the "okyeame", linguist, then the "amankrado", regent, the "shemaa", queen-mother, the chief, and then the people.

Reaching the river, the okyeame dips a "bodua" a cows-tail into the water, sprinkles it on the stool and says: "Yebo mo asuo, yebo mo asuo!" "We baptise you, we baptise you!" Water is sprinkled on the chief and his sons, and the same words repeated. This over, the procession returns to the town in the same orderly manner. All sorts of dances and amusements follow the rest of the day.

The grandeur of the occasion beggars description. It can best be imagined when we consider the fact that the occasion may come on once in the life-time of a chief, and must therefore be celebrated with great ceremony. The chief and all the people therefore, turn out in their richest apparel.

These occasions are generally indicative of peaceful times, so for nearly the last decade, because of the struggle over the inheritance of the stool in which the people are steeped, no thought of this celebration has ever crossed their minds.

The date for the celebration of the Afahye throughout the Kwahu district should be announced by the Omanhene, but he has neglected this because he is a Christian. This is one of the major reasons for his destoolment. The people fear that this negligence of the celebration of the "Afahye" does not make for prosperity

Akwasidae

"Adae" means "rest day". "Akwasidae" therefore means Sunday "rest day". It is held at the end of every forty days or six weeks, and nine of them occur during the year.

Firstly, it is the occasion on which the dead in the battles of the community are remembered. Secondly, it is for the pouring of libation on the stools for the propitiation and solicitation of the spirits of the ancestors and of the gods.

On the evening of the Saturday preceding the Sunday, "Memenida Dapaa" "Good Saturday", the skulls of all the enemies brought home from the battles and which form part of the paraphernalia of the stool are brought out. At the sight of them, the people are reminded of their own friends and relatives who must have suffered a similar fate and whose skulls lie in stool houses of enemy states. Deep feelings of sorrow are expressed in the form of weeping and drinking. They refuse their food that evening.

All night the atumpan drums beat. In the morning, a sheep is slaughtered, and the blood is sprinkled on the stools. Libation is poured, and prayer is thus: Nananom, monmegye nsa nnom. "Nnɛ akwasidae yi, yɛɔrɛ nkwa ama ɔhene, mpanyinfo, amanfoɔ; sɛ momma bone biara mma, akwantufoɔ nsan mmra dwodwo, ɔman nhɔ so, mmarima nwo, na birebiara nhɔ so promprom prom." "Grandsires, come and take this ram. We pray for the chief, the elders, and the people, so that you might stay every evil, help the state to progress, the men might procreate, and everything might prosper."

The elders now leave the chief's house for

TABLE of FESTIVALS

Festival	When Held	Purpose
Afashyɛ	Annually, in Opɛpon. December	Sanctification of stools, gods, and powerful elements
akwasidae	Every fortieth day Nine times in the year	Pouring of libation to the stool. Offering sacrifices to "abosom"
Awukudae	Third Wednesday after akwasidae	Offering sacrifices to the abasom
Forɔdwɔ	Second Monday after akwasidae	" "
Fofie	Fourth Friday after akwasidae	" "
Benada	Fifth Tuesday after akwasidae	
Dapaa		

Fig 44.

their's to take their bath and eat. Following this, the chief may come out richly dressed and riding in his palanquin, whilst his people in their gayest cloths dance to music and engage in all sorts of amusements the rest of the day. The town at this time is generally full of people.

There are other less important festivals like the Fordwoo, the second Monday after Akwasidae, the Awukudae, the third Wednesday, Fofie, the fourth Friday, and Benada Dapaa the fifth Tuesday after Akwasidae. These are all holy days on which sacrifices are made to the stool and the gods.

All these festivals have been seriously modified, and are losing their significance amongst the people. Only the chief and his elders meet for a short time on these occasions to go through the usual ceremonies. Already, it has been pointed out that owing to the political unrest, there has not been any observance of the Afahye during the last decade. The people too no longer care to come from the villages in the Nkawkaw valley to observe the festivals as they used to do, because their attention is taken up by their work on the farms.

Here too we find an example of geographical control upon the life of a people. Better farming conditions attract them to work far away from their hometown, and being absorbed in their work, they forget about festivals and their old way of life.

In concluding this long chapter on rituals and festivals, it is almost needless to draw the attention of the reader to the connection that exist

between these many rites and ceremonies of the people and their beliefs in the spirits and the gods.

They think that the child that is born lived in the spirit world before its birth and so carries its name; the man, after a time of misfortune must, through the ritual of the sanctification of the mouth purify his soul or spirit; funerals must be performed to avert the displeasure of the spirits of the dead, and festivals have the fear of the gods and the spirits at the core. Their rituals and festivals therefore are mainly related to their religion.

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22. ART FORMS

We will now consider the art forms of the people. They include metal work, wood work, weaving, spinning, pottery, drumming, and singing, all of which provide leizure time activities.

Many of them have fallen into the limbo of the past, but in some cases there are traces reminiscent of them.

Metal Work

Metal work included black- and gold-smithing. As stated earlier, the iron used by the black-smith was obtained in the olden days by heating ore-bearing stones that were easily found in the town and on the hills. This iron was then fashioned into such tools as the cutlass, knife, and hoe.

The making of hoes was a special feature of the black-smithing of the community. One of the earlier chiefs, Adyabeng Nti, it is said, often encouraged the unemployed young men to provide

themselves with these hoes and go to work, and so guarded against poverty. This partly accounted for the wealth of the community which, in turn attracted marriages from royal families outside the town.

This practice of using the hoe in farming led to the naming of the North-Eastern slopes, "Nsokwae" "hoe forest".

The gold industry was another speciality of the community — again another and potent reason accounting for the wealth of the town. The same chief, Adyabeng Nti, having the good of his people at heart, encouraged them to go to seek for the gold dust at Pankese, a place 9 miles South-West of Nkawkaw which belongs to the Obomeng Stool.

This was how the gold dust was obtained: The soil in which the gold dust was suspected was removed from holes and river beds, and placed in a receptacle. This was either a large calabash or a wooden plate. After putting water into it, they kept on swirling it backwards and forwards, until they felt the gold dust had settled to the bottom. The water was poured off, and fresh one put it into it. The process was then repeated.

When all the mud had been poured off, the gold dust was left behind in the form of a black powdery stuff. To-day after the fall of rain, some of the gold dust may be left behind in the gullies, and the women and young girls may be seen collecting it; but this is generally in small quantities and in no way comparable to what they got during those days when according to the proper expression "yedi sika" "they

ate gold", that is when they dug for gold.

Cowries, in those days, formed the medium of exchange. Thus a small amount of gold dust was of an inestimable value, and Obomeng was looked upon as the El Dorado of the Kwahu State. People who had been condemned to death by the chief sought financial help or gold dust from the town to save their necks from the executioner's sword. It is said that if Obomeng failed them, there could be no Messaiah for them in the whole of Israel.

The gold-smiths made the gold into rings, necklaces, and other forms of ornaments which found place in the adornment of the people, particularly of the royalty.

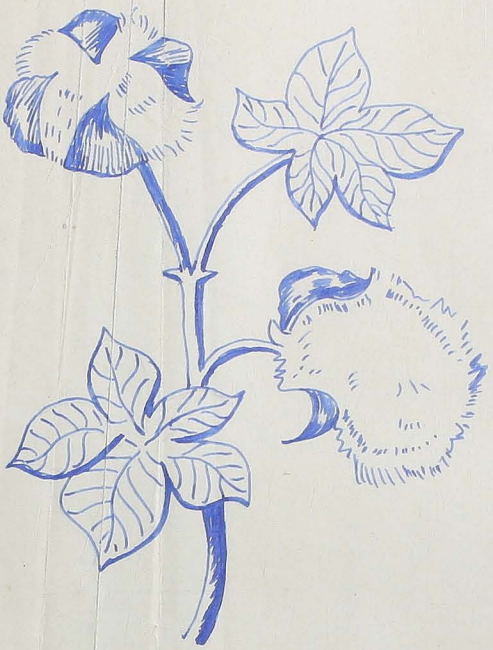
Wood-work

Wood-work included the making of stools, chief's swords of office, combs, and dolls some of which found place as relics in the fetish houses. In this way the art gave and still gives stimulus to religion.

This was mainly in the hands of Ashanto carvers, but as Obomeng has commercial importance, these carvers no longer find it profitable to live here. To-day individuals may make small stools and combs for their own private use, but there are no professional carvers. The wood used was the "osese".

Weaving & Spinning

Weaving has suffered the same fate as wood work. It is mainly an art of the Ashantis and the industry was in their hands. It is said that



COTTON from which the Old Women Spun Thread for Weaving.

as recent as 1938 there were two groups of weavers in the town, but they disappeared with the decadence of the town from the commercial viewpoint.

Cotton spinning is an art of the old women. This provided the thread for the local form of weaving distinct from that of the Ashantis, the product of which was far inferior to that of the latter.

The method followed, however, was the same for both types. The long threads, called "warp" were fixed on a wooden loom. With the help of a shuttle, the weaver passed the thread called the "woof" in and out of the warp.

The thread was also used by the women in stringing their beads. The cotton plant is no longer planted as it used to be, and the art is dying out like the others.

To-day there is not a single weaver in the town, although the older people affirm that there were some here. There is no old woman too who spins. This is due to the absence of weaver and the introduction of better kinds of European thread which is cheaper and stronger.

Pot-Making.

Pot-making used to be leizure time activity of the women, but has shared the fate of the other industries. In this case, however, its death is only a geographical one - it still lives in the villages where the skilled women have gone to live.

The pot is made from clay. The latter is kneaded, great care being taken to see that there are no stones or pebbles in it. The woman makes a clay circle on which she builds the neck and

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Designs on walls of chief's house

Fig 46.

the main body of the pot or dish as the case might be.

She leaves it to dry. Later she scrapes the inside to give it the same thickness. She polishes it and then leaves it to dry again slowly. Finally she fires it, after which it takes on a beautiful shiny black look.

These women, as has been mentioned already, live round Nkawkaw, where they can find ready market for their wares. People come from all over Ashanti and the coastal towns to buy Kwahu pots.

Designs and Paintings

The pot-makers make some beautiful designs on their pots and dishes which form part of the design and painting work of the community.

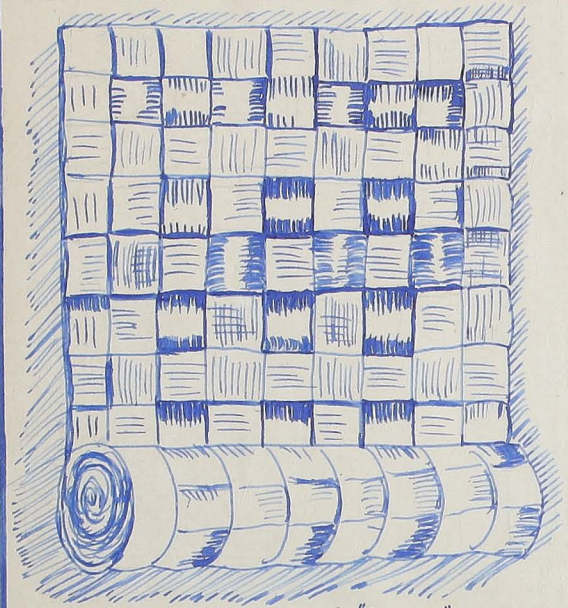
On the walls of the older buildings were wrought beautiful quaint designs in red clay. In the chief's court to-day is a master-piece of this. It was made at the request of Chief Akwasi Aninakwaa who died in 1910[1].

The art was taught by the Ashantis, and this particular design in the chief's court was made by skilled men specially invited from Ashanti. It was made by nailing canes twisted into artistic curves and covered with clay. Later, beautiful red clay was used to polish it.

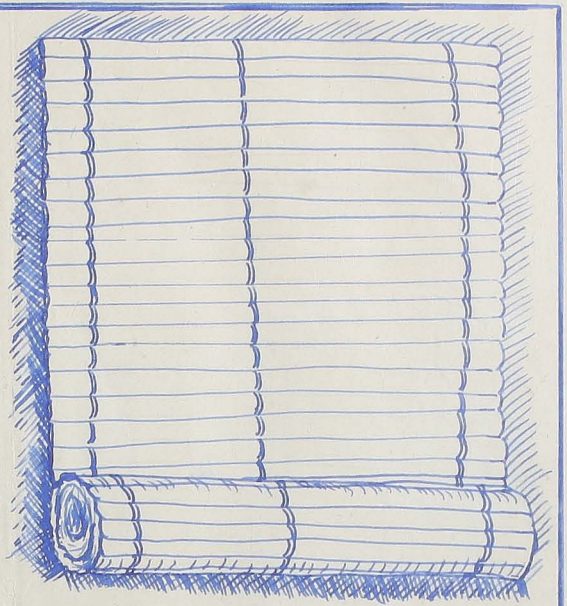
The art is reminiscent of Egyptian art and design and gives indications of a previous contact of the Ashantis, and the people of this country in general, with the Egyptians.

On the olders walls can be seen paintings of animals and birds, but these, as well as the designs are disappearing with the construction of modern concrete

1. This is according to Kwaku Pong, the earliest ultimate person in the community



Mat made from "Sibre" for sleeping purposes.



Mat made from palm branches used as screens for doors. It may be used for drying cocoa.

buildings.

Basket and Mat making

The making of basket is an art which has long survived in the community. Nothing that the European has brought has succeeded in displacing the basket, and so the people continue to make them.

It has the advantage of lightness and cheapness over the pans and other receptacles of European manufacture, and will therefore survive many years yet.

It is made with either cane or palm branches, and although it has no economic value here, nothing so far has been found better for the conveyance of cocoa and other farm produce. Nearly every child knows how to make it.

Closely associated with this, from point of view of technique of production, is the mat. There are two kinds, the one made from "Ntomme" the plant used for the demarcations of boundaries, and the other – the commoner one – made from palm branches. The former, when finished, is soft and used for sleeping on. This has been replaced by the European one which is smoother and more beautiful

During the war years, when the European type was difficult to obtain, the art was revived, and the price of the finished product rose up to as much as 7/6. Now, it is mainly in the school that one sees it.

The other made from palm branches serves many purposes. It may be used for drying cocoa and for sleeping on, or it may be hung in the door-way as doors.

The Talking Drums are well known to West African listeners. These drums are heard at the opening of all transmissions. This picture shows a pair of Talking Drums and the drummer.

Fig 48

Fig 49

Dancing to the drums

Drumming

As amongst all akans, drumming plays an important part in the life of the community. It is closely bound up with their government and religion.

First, a word about how drums are made. Professional makers called "Twenesenfo" "Drum makers" are responsible for their production. The membrane which is beaten is the skin of the elephant which is obtained from hunters on the Afram plains. Special bush ropes called "bofunu" are used in drawing the skin taut over the drum. The stands and drums sticks come from the "ofema" wood.

The main body of the drum is made out of the "Tweneboa" tree. There is an interesting story behind the name Tweneboa. It is the name of a great man in history. It is said that in the war of the Ashantis with the Denkyiras, whose chief was Ntim Gyakari, 1698', Okomfo Anokyi, the mysterious priest of the Ashantis, prophesied that Osei Tutu, the king of the Ashantis at the time, would be killed, if he went to the battle; besides, the Ashantis would be defeated, unless a man who resembled Osei Tutu in appearance was sacrificed. Tweneboa Kodua voluntarily offered himself. Thus he won a great name for himself, and to immortalize his name, this important tree was named after him.

To come back. Before felling the Tweneboa tree a sacrifice of a hen and wine, provided the chief who has ordered the making of the drums is made. Prayer is said to the Tweneboa tree in order that they might be able to do their work without injury and that no misfortune of any

The "atumpan"

Fig 50.

description might befall them in course of their work and after.

In this can be seen the basis of their religion of the Akan people which is the fact that spirits and gods inhabit the things of nature and that these things must be worshipped.

Their work over, the drums are brought home. Here a similar offering is made by the chief to the end that these drums might bring no misfortune to himself and the people. To complete the propitiation, he further offers the drums a white linen cloth "nwera" as a gift. This is divided up into pieces and put round them.

There are several types of drums: the tum, the ayrɔ, the atumpan, and the fontomfrom or abonaa. The atumpan and the fontomfrom of which there are two of each, the male and female, are the most important, and may be used to praise, abuse, or incite the valiant into action.

The fontomfrom, the largest of the drums is often heard to say: "Obrane kasa" "Mighty one, speak", whilst the atumpan also puts in: "Kronkron, kronkron", "Pure, pure", by which it means that the words of the great one are pure.

In praise of the chief, the atumpan is wont to beat "Odehye, nante brɛbrɛ, brɛbrɛ", "The royal one walks majestically".

Both the atumpan and the fontomfrom are played together, the rhythm being supplied by a metal percussion instrument called "daworo". This is the usual one sounded by the town crier if some information is being given to the town.

Another one called "Nnawuta" "Twin gongo" which is a duplication of the "daworo" is used in rallying the people together in time of danger. The

Fig 51

The Fontom from

sound translated into words is "Asafomma mo-mma yenkɔ nea ogya redɛre" "Comrades, let us go to the place, where fire is blazing."

The atumpan and the fontomfrom may be played while they are sitting on the ground or being carried. The latter becomes necessary when the chief, seated in his palanquin, moves in a procession. They are always borne behind the chief, who dances to their music.

There is another interesting drum, the "Twenesia", "Short drum". This is sounded to call the elders of the chief to assemble in his court, whenever there is the need for it.

Different peoples have different language for this drum. At Obomeng, the drum says "afrasɛsɛ" "a year ago this time", and so this drum is usually called afrasɛsɛ. Tradition has it that the Obomengs went to fight against the Omanhene at Abene, and the battle was so fierce that to remind the people of it, this form of call was adopted. It therefore suggests an occasion of grave import.

Early one morning in January this year, 1954, when the writer was at home on holidays, news came that the destooled Omanhene, Nana Akuamoa Akyeampong, had gone to Abene with a band of sympathisers from Abetifi to threaten the custodian of the stool house in an attempt to remove the stool by force. Consequently rioting had resulted and help was needed.

It was 10 a.m. at the time, and nearly every one had left for the farm. The drummer ran with his drum and came to stand in front of the chief's palace, and proceeded to beat the drum :- "afrasɛsɛ, afrasɛsɛ".

ÁFRASESE"

DRUM

Fig 52

The writer ran into the street to see what would happen. About 20 minutes after, the people began to pour into the town from every direction, and run towards the chief's house. It will not be easy to forget that scene! It was an impressive example of the use of the native drum and a concrete demonstration of the spirit of the community. In less than no time, two lorry loads of armed men set off to the rescue.

The drums are in the hands of skilled men called "akyeremadefo". It is their duty to teach the art to would-be drummers, particularly their own sons. The group of drummers is superinted by the chief drummer, the "akyeremadefo panyin".

The trumpet or horn of the chief is closely associated with the drums and must therefore be commented upon here. It is shaped out of a tusk and used to express many ideas in proverbs and sarcasms like the drums. The present idea expressed by the horn in this town, originated with Chief Yao Mensah, who died in 1947. There was a rising against him which lasted several years. At the close of it, many of those who were against him pretended not to have taken part in the rebellion. To make them know that he was aware of their pretences, he caused the trumpeters to say: "Mo nyinaa wom" "you are all among them." Up to the present, this is the connotation of the horn. Future chiefs may change it, if they want to commemorate some experience.

Singing

These people of Obomeng love music, and singing plays no small part in their social and

religious life.

There are different types of music. There are those of jubilation as sung on ceremonial occasions, war songs which are sung in times of war, or moments calling for valour, funeral dirges for which Kwahu women are renowned, and serenades which inspire the breast of lovers.

The following are a few examples:

(a) "Osee, ose, osee yie, (Jubilation:
Nea yɛpɛ na yɛanya no o" (any words to suit occasion).

"Osee, ose, ose yie.
What we want is what we have got."

(b) War Song:

"Onwam Mirekuo Gyamo
Omisaa ne dɔm na ɔrefro Kwawu boɔ".

"Hornbill Mireku Gyamo
He has not asked his army, but he is climbing the mountain of Kwahu".

This song, according to the linguist, is connected with a battle waged against the Kwahus by the akims under their chief Agyeman Nkonto of Oda. He took and burned Obo, the town 4 miles west of Obomeng, and entrenched himself at Atibie, another town 3 miles east.

Upon consulting the priest of Fofie, the greatest deity of the Kwahus, word came that they should attack on a particular day and would be victorious. Thus egged on by this, the Kwahus attacked and routed the enemy; a great many of the latter hurling themselves down the mountainside. The victorious Kwahus then broke into the song.

(c) Dirges. Different clans have their own dirges and the following short piece belongs to the

people of the Agona clan of which the writer is a member.

"Misu wo O, asumasi
Ogyamaduidu nana a ne te firi Oda morontɔ"

"I weep for you, such and such a man
Grandson of Ogyamaduidu whose head comes
from Oda morontɔ."

(d) Religious Songs:

"Hyira O, hyira O, anenebua hyira O, hyira O,
Mekɔɔyɛ a, maba O, maba O,
Hyira O, anenebua, hyira O".

Bless O, bless, crow, bless O, bless;
If I went away, I have returned,
Bless O, bless crow, bless.

(e) Serenade:

"Ɔdɔ-yɛ-owuu akogyina nkwanta retwen me,
Ɔdɔ-yɛ-owuu, medɔ wo na wo nso wodɔ me
Woabɔ huwerɛma na me nso magye wo so,
Ɔdɔ-yɛ-owuu akogyina nkwanta retwen me,
ahomatea".

"Love-is-death has gone to wait for me
at the cross-road.
You have whistled, whistled and I have
answered you.
Love-is-death, I love you and you also love me.
Love-is-death has gone to wait for me
at the cross-road. Slender one".

Serenades have been the songs that have given most amusement and diversion to the people particularly the youth.

For time out of mind, there has never been

a period without some form of musical orchestra to which the people dance. There have been the Akasae, Brofoyedru, atente, Nswamako, Odano, Ahyedo, and many others.

In recent years, European instruments like the flute and the drum were used as complementary to these songs, and the brass band has had its day under the direction of one Panyin Busumuru.

There nearly always used to be present at the same time two or more groups or clubs which vied with each other in their performance. The success of a club was judged by the size of the crowd it drew on occasions like the akwasidae and the number of fashionable girls in its membership. The writer in his own experience remembers the two musical clubs, "Accra" and "Adakam" (In the coffin) which came into being towards the close of the 'twenties and the early part of the 'thirties. The competition became so keen that it led to the making of flags and banners with pictures casting reflections on the other party and the composition of songs with sarcasms.

On occasions they resorted to the use of charms and magic called "Sukusare" which they claimed to be capable of making the important personages of the rival club go mad or cause their drums to break in the midst of performances. It was therefore not uncommon to see one group attack the other with accusations for being responsible for such mishaps and, of course, open pugilistic displays were rife.

The "Accra" and the "Adakam" succumbed to the vocal band, called "Konkomba", begun in

This man died in 1928. after this time the club collapsed.

Kumasi by a group of Fanti semi-literate young men about 1939. It soon spread like wild fire throughout the country just before the last war broke out.

At first the music was general in nature with a strong bias on love as may be expected from young men. One of their popular songs ran thus:

"Meyare O, meyare O, meyare fa wisa bɛyɛ me
Owu to me a, mɛkɔ makɔda; yare bɔ me a, na mafena,
Meyare, fa wisa bɛyɛ me."

"I am sick O, I am sick, come and besmear me over with "wisa" (oluanda, a very hot seed like pepper)
When death comes to me, I shall go to sleep,
If sickness comes, then I get weary,
I am sick, come and besmear me over with "wisa".

When war set in, the music immediately changed. It became, at once, martial in nature, and very soon the army adopted it for marching purposes. The writer who was himself a member of the Home Guard then, was a vocalist in the squad. The young men began to sing:

(1) "Sogya e, yɛrekɔ aba O, yɛrekɔ aba nam nam nam, yɛrekɔ aba O!

"Soldier (Army) we are going to come
We are going to come, walking, walking, walking, We are going to come.

" Gye wo ba e, gye wo ba e,
Aseta gye wo ba e, ma menko o,
Gye wo ba e, gye wo ba e, Sagyen
mogya, gye wo ba e, ma menko o!"

" Take back your child; Take back your child,
Aseta, take back your child, so I may go,
Take back your child, Take back your child,
Sergeant Major, take back your child,
So I may go."

The girls ceased to dance to it; the boys now marched, and many marched into the regimental lines and did not come back. Thus "Konkomba" disappeared, as it were, into the army, and died there.

To-day, there are no organized clubs which promote the singing of these serenades and afford recreational pursuits; nevertheless, the people of the community continue to sing all day long.

Young girls make new songs, generally serenades for their games, and older men and women sing as they work on their farms or ply at their different trades. The songs of the older people cover several fields: serenades, dirges, and philosophy of life.

One of the root causes of this decline may be traceable to Christianity which eliminates and substitutes. It is not wrong to suppose that the singing bands of the churches have displaced these music clubs of the heathen.

To-day, Christian or no Christian, the youth of Obomeng tends to forsake the streets in the evening and assemble in the church to learn gospel melodies.

"DAME" DRAUGHTS BOARD

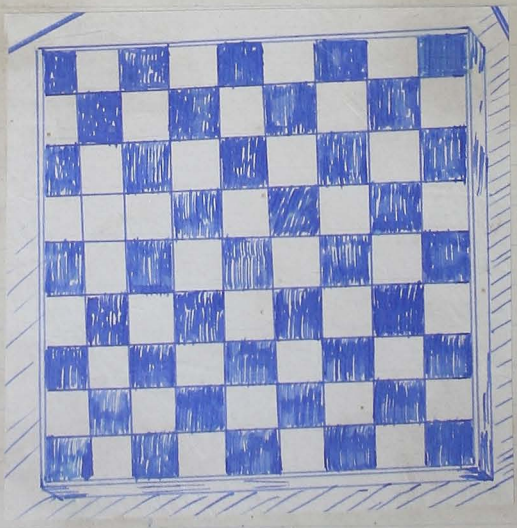


Fig 53.

Games

Under Art Forms, we must discuss the games of the community too. The old people admitted that many of them have been forgotten because they are not played now, and felt that my study and collection of those they remember were very much worthwhile indeed. They are as follows:

"Ntɛ" or the Game of Marbles. This is a very popular game with both the children and the grown ups alike. There is an element of gambling about it which increases with each higher age group.

Amongst smaller children there is satisfaction in the mere success of knocking off an opponents marble from the "apa" the field of play; but as the age increases there is a demand more and more to be rewarded with something for one's performance which is a loss to the other. Some may ask for the surrender of the marble beaten, but higher up the age line, the reward takes the form which have financial implications. It might be cubes of sugar, sticks of matches, cigarettes, or pennies and three-pences. Because of this and also the unpleasant arguments over whether a player is beaten or not, some of which occasionally lead to minor law suits, parents object to their children playing the game.

"Dame" Draughts Perhaps there is no more popular game than this. It is one that is played by members of the different age groups, especially the older ones. It calls for great skill and circumspection, coupled with experience, so it does not appeal to children.

The "aba" or counters are moved about

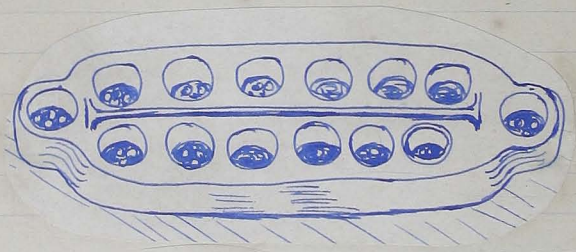


Fig 54

OWARE

Fig 55

Children wrestling after school hours. "AHYIA"

the squares of the board. Each player has twenty of the squares to himself, and his ability is judged by how tactfully he moves the counters into and gets control of his opponents' territory, as it were. It is very much like a warfare, and the one who suffers less casualties wins.

It is a game that makes great demands on one's time, because of the care and thinking required. Here again, the older people say that it is not played as much as it used to be fifteen years ago, though comparatively, it is still more popular than the game of marbles.

"Iware" This is another popular game, not only with the men, but the women as well. Twelve holes, large enough to admit the front of a man's hand, are made in two rows, either on the ground or in a piece of wood specially carved for the purpose.

In each hole are four counters called "Iware aba" "Iware children"; and each player has a row of six of the holes. The player who captures more of the opponents counters is the victor.

"Ahyia." Wrestling. This is a game which provides useful physical exercise for children up to the age of about 12 years. They wrestle with one another by turns, the victor in each contest going round to the next person until he should be beaten.

Very similar to this from point of view of the exercise is "Afuni" in which children put their heads down on the ground and turn over. Another similar one is "Dikyi" somersaulting, which is more for the adolescents and the young men than boys.

"Tonto": This is like the casting of lots, and is played by children. Corn or palm leaves are ripped into strips about a quarter of an inch wide and cut into pieces about six inches in length. A knot is made at the end of one of them. This is mixed up with the rest which may be as many as ten, and held in the hand of one of the players so as to hide the knot.

The rest of the players pull them out one by one in turns, trusting to chance that they do not pull out the knotted one. The one who pulls out this knotted one collects the rest of the strips of leaves for the others to pull out. As soon as the players discover that the lot has fallen upon one of them they sing:

"Tonto aka wo nsam
Yeewa,
Tonto aka wo nsam
Yeewa"

"The lot is left in your hand,
Yeewa (nonsense word)
The lot is left in your hand
Yeewa"

"Srobe" This is played by young adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18. Leaves of the palm tree or plantains are ripped into strips about a quarter of an inch wide. They are put together and bound at one end so that it looks like a broom, except that it is flabby and shorter.

The players divide into two teams and stand in two rows about 6 yards apart, facing

each other. A member at the end of one row throws this bundle of leaves high into the sky, and the members of the other team try to catch with loops made out of cane for the purpose. The team making the greater number of catches is the winner.

"Akotoosie" This is another game for the children. Literally, it means striking the head with fists. A player's head is covered with cloth and the other players strike his head with their fists gently. After each blow, his head is uncovered, and he is asked to guess who did it. This continues until he succeeds in pointing out the right person, who then takes his place.

"Anamoro". It is like "hide and seek", and is played at night. One player kneels down on all fours in an open space, while all the players cover him with their cloths. They then run away to hide. The one covered repeatedly asks, "Memmra?" "Am I to come?" and the rest of the players answer "Dabi O" "No" until they are all sure they are well hidden from view.

Now they answer back "Ai, bra O" "Yes, come" to his question. He goes to look for them; if after a while, he cannot catch any, they all come out running from their hiding places to the spot where he was covered, shouting: "Woan hu me e!" "You did not see me!" This continues until he can catch one to take his place.

To-day, most of these games have ceased to be or are not played as often as before, because of the constant moving away of the people into the villages in the Nkawkaw valley

Fig 55

Children playing football in an open space in the town.

to work on their farms which takes all their attention (b) the fact that most of children now attend and continue to remain at school until adolescence is past more than they did at first, and (c) many European games like the ludo and the football have come to replace these traditional ones.

There are very few people, if any at all, to organize the young men into active clubs of entertainment to play at these games, and the attention of the children of school age is taken up by their books and other school activities in the evenings. Therefore in the day, only few men can be seen playing at few of the games like "dame" and "swore"; at night, there are no voices of children heard in the street.

There is no community centre, and the impression of everybody is that life in the town is dull and uninteresting. By seven in the evening, the town is almost asleep.

The only game which the children play at with any interest, is football. Besides school hours, groups of children can be seen playing at tennis balls for long hours, especially on Saturdays and Sundays in any available open space. Even so, at these week-ends, the mayority of them go to the villages to fetch food, and so have no time for it.

Ball-room dancing provide diversion to a few young ladies and some of the male and female teachers of the Presbyterian School, but the dances are far between and take place at Mpraeso, a town one and a half miles away.

While these games are related to the past, because they have been handed down traditionally,

we can also see them replaced by new ones from the Western world. In the latter sense therefore, the games of the people are related to the present.

Their relationship with the geographical conditions of the place too cannot escape notice. The soil is not favourable to farming cocoa, so the people move away into the villages where their attention is taken up their work, and so their games are neglected and forgotten.

Trapping

Trapping is another form of art in the community. There are different types, each of which betrays great ingenuity on the part of the people.

Bird Traps "Nnomaa Fidie" This is generally for children. There are several kinds, but the commonest one consists of a forked stick about 6 – 8 feet long, and another smaller one from a tough plant, often the "odwene" plant. The latter is bent into a bow.

The string used for the bow is a plaited fibre from the raffia palm. A small thin piece of wood, generally from the bark of the branch of the palm tree, is put across the fork and held there by a device which gives way at the slightest touch. The bow is bent to permit a noose about 6 inches long to be made in the plaited string.

The noose is put across a small thin bar in the fork. To complete it, some fruit, often the "ogyama", eaten by birds, is placed on a branch of the fork. The bird is attracted to the trap

by the fruit, and alights on the small thin bar across the fork, which immediately gives way.

The bow which has been held in the bent position by the help of a small device held in place by the bar, springs out; the noose closes, and the bird is caught. This affords endless amusement to children; they may spend a whole day in the bush trapping birds.

'Nsemma'. This is used in catching four-footed animals like antelopes. The string used is what is called "nsemma" which is obtainable from the base of the raffia palm. It is very hard indeed, and is capable of cutting into the flesh of the animal, if the latter struggles to free itself.

The string is made into a noose, and with the help of two small sticks, pinned on to the track, "kyenenee", of the antelope. Care is taken not to disturb the track, as this can easily be detected and the trap avoided by the animal.

To-day, the "nsemma" is giving place to wire loops, as the latter is stronger and precludes any opportunities of the animal breaking loose and getting away.

Kuntun. This consists of the "nsemma" or wire and a fairly heavy, tough, and springy string about 6-8 feet long. The stick is planted a little distance away from the track of the antelope. The wire which is tied to the upper end of the stick is made into a loop. The stick is bent, and the loop buried in the earth on the track and held there by a small device. As the antelope steps into it, the device which keeps both the loop and the

'ADWAA'. FOR CATCHING ANIMALS.

bent stick in position gives way. The stick then springs into a vertical position, the loop closes round the antelope's legs or neck, and the victim is pulled mid-air where it dangles until it is strangled to death.

"Amfo" This is a trap by which weights — heavy pieces of wood, often-times pieces of "oduruma" wood — are suspended in the air in an enclosure. By a clever device, this weight falls upon the animal if the latter takes the bait. Sometimes the enclosures and the weights are two and so the trap is called "amfota" "twin amfo".

"Adwaa" When a field of corn or rice is made, an enclosure or fence of palm leaves, about one yard high, may be made round it. A few gaps are left at the different sides of the field in which wire or "nseimma" loops are placed. Thus all rodents who attempt to enter the field are caught.

All of these traps are likely to catch huge snakes occasionally, and experienced trappers approach traps very cautiously, as snakes thus caught are known to have killed several people.

People complain that the flesh of animals caught with loops does not taste good, because the animals die by strangling; epicureans avoid such meat.

There are several ways of catching fish too, and the following are the commonest.

Adwokuo This is the commonest fish trap. It is a cylindrical structure made from palm branches, tied at one end, with an opening through which fish and crabs may enter. Inside,

ADWOKUO

there is a device which will not allow the fish to come out. Pieces of food – often cassava and red plantains – are put into it. The trap is held at the bottom of the river by placing stones or heavy objects on it or by tying it to a stick driven into the bed of the river. They are inspected every other day.

"Nsɔtena" This is a longer type of the "adwokuo", but it is simpler and less elaborate. A dam is made across the river by driving pieces of sticks into the river-bed, leaving only a hole wide enough for the mouth of the trap. Generally, it is the large fish that is caught in this way, because there are holes in the dam through which the smaller fishes escape.

"Asau" Nets Small nets about two yards in diameter are used in catching fish. The meshes are much smaller than those for sea fishing. The net may be cast while standing in the water, or from the bank, if the water is deep.

"Dareɛwa" Hook Hooks may be used in catching fish. There are two methods. The popular one is where the hook is fastened to a stick with a long cord. A piece of light wood which buoys up on the surface of the water is put in the middle of the cord, so that if no fish has touched the bait it floats. As soon as the bait is taken, it begins to dive into the water, and that is the signal for the man to pull it. Children very much delight to fish in this way in River Asubonɔ.

The second method is by leaving large hooks fitted with baits in the water overnight. The cord of the hook may be fastened to a strong

post driven into the ground on the banks or any object capable to resist the pull of the fish. Very large fish is caught in this way.

"Nsesebo" Fishing for prawns is an art that belongs to the women. It is done with a sieve-like receptacle made out of the mid-ribs of raffia palm leaves. As they dip it into the water, the prawns — and occasionally the small fish too — are caught. This takes place during the dry season, when the rivers have dwindled into mere streams and ponds.

"Ahwee" This has been described under "Occupations of the farmer". It also belongs to the women, and takes place the same time as the "nsesebo". Dams are made across sections of the river where fish is suspected. The water is then scooped out until the fish are reached. The scooping of the water takes such a long time that the women return home very late in the evening.

"Amuiu" This is the method that yields the greatest amount of fish. It belongs to the men. It consists of poisoning the fishes in a section of the river with the sap of the leaves of a plant called "kwagyan". Because of the great destruction of life in the river this method entails, the people always always fear that they may bring upon themselves the anger of the river-god. Therefore before undertaking the enterprise, they consult a fetish priest who propitiates the god or spirit in their behalf by offering sacrifices at their expense, the cost of which may run into several pounds. They therefore start off with a debit account; consequently they try to offset this and make profits by selling the fish at a high

price, especially where the catch is small.

It is a very wasteful method, as far as life in the river is concerned, because all the fish for miles of the river, including young ones, die many of which are never seen. After such fishing that section of the river remains void of fish life for a long time, and the people who live near it endure great privations. There are therefore laws prohibiting this method, but occasionally people infringe this by stealing away into a section of the river to fish in this way.

Here too, the reader must pause to observe the relationship that exists between this art and other factors. While these traps are mainly traditional and thus related with their historical background of the people, a connection exists between them and the vegetation. The loops would be useless in grass country, because they would be easily detected and avoided by the animals. Even in the Obomeng area, account has to be taken of the type of vegetation in selecting materials for the traps. In the Nkawkaw valley, because of the density of the forest, there are larger animals than at Obomeng proper, so the sticks and wire or "nsɛma" used must be bigger and stronger.

Mention should be made of the relationship existing between the traps and the contact with or coming of Europeans. The wire is preferred to the "nsɛmma" now-a-days, and rats and even large animals like the leopard may be caught with a special European imported trap called "Dade Fidie" "iron trap".

The fishing is related to the seasons. In the rainy months, when the rivers are in flood,

large "adwokuo" fish traps must be used. In the dry season, these large traps are taken out of water and hung up on a tree on the bank of the river until the next season. At this time, small traps must be used.

Women come into the picture too. They fish by the "ahuwee" method in which water in sections of the river is scooped out until the fish are reached. At this time too, they fish for prawns, "nse" with sieve-like structures.

And finally we should note how their beliefs or religion relates itself to this art. For fear of the god of the river, the people go to consult priests before they fish in a certain way. In consequence of the expenses incurred in the course of the consultation, the sale of the fish is affected.

The above, then, affords interesting examples of how the way of life of a people can be related to several factors which may be historical, economic, economic, geographical, or religious.

General

The people accept changes as they come, and adapt themselves to them accordingly, as long as they find justification for them. This is especially so amongst the youth. The older people, like those everywhere, are rather conservative, and slow in this acceptance of and adaptation to changes.

This ready acceptance of change on the part of the youth, however, must not be taken for granted in all fields. They may accept a change readily in some things but slowly in others, as we shall see presently.

On the whole, the people are comparatively quite adaptable to changes. In Ashanti, the celebration of the coming of age of young maidens still persist in all its original form, and can be seen, not infrequently, in open towns like Kumasi and Bekwai where the celebrations are a serious interference to traffic. Here, at Oboneng, the practice has completely died away, and there are no modified forms at all.

Again, in Ashanti, on state occasions, when the native drums are beaten, literate men and women freely join in the tribal dancing. Here, the literate class thinks this idolatory and against Christian principles which they now espouse, and will therefore not dance.

Amongst the pagans of the community, it is believed that new cults which are more powerful should replace older ones. Thus from time to time, new cults are accepted and old ones abandoned. To-day, "Tigare" is in the ascendancy, but one may safely prophesy that in another decade, it will have been succeeded by a new one.

This ready acceptance of new cults leads to a ready change in religious beliefs, and several of the heathens have been won over to the Christian religion. The spread of the latter has therefore been very rapid, and where in 1931 there were only the Presbyterian and Methodist adherents, to-day there are people belonging to the Catholic, English Church, Jehovah Witnesses, Salvation Army, Apostolic, and the Seventh-Day Adventists.

It is only the Presbyterians who have a church and a school in the town, yet all of the

[1] K. A. Busia's Ashanti Page 208

above sects are represented at the cemetery in the town which indicates that the churches exist at Nkawkaw. (Notice here the peculiar relation of Obomeng with Nkawkaw. It proves that the people have only gone to live there for reasons which are economic and geographical, but they are virtually citizens of Obomeng.)

In spite of their acceptance of Christianity, their belief in spirits and, particularly, witchcraft is, perhaps, as strong as ever, and it seems nothing whatever will make them give up the belief. The enlightened teachers and preachers appear to hold on fast to the belief no less than the heathens. Whatever happens to a person is attributed to an evil spirit or a witch. Thus diseases are not given rational medical treatment.

Although the sanitary inspectors try to make them observe the rules of sanitation in and around their houses, they do not fully grasp the point that dirt and filth are the causes of disease. Two mothers whose children I saw very ill told me that if they did not cover the children with dirty and ragged clothes, the evil spirits would take them away. It will be many years yet before the people break away from this belief and adopt a more scientific attitude towards the happenings in life.

Like all other Akans, the people bitterly oppose any change in kinship associations as well as land tenure. The beliefs and ideas concerning these two things are similar. They are those of the "abusua", and it will be appreciated that the African institution and structure of chieftaincy hinge on the traditions around

these things.

Kinship associations are determined matrilineally, and so is land. Both derive their sanctity from the idea of the ancestral connections which is the foundation or core of their culture, religion and worship, chieftaincy and government, and the general life of the community. Introduce a new pattern, and you strike a deadly blow at their very existence as a people. Thus they will contest every inch of ground to maintain the old order of things as far as this matter is concerned.

In methods of farming, the people follow the old traditional ones. But this is not to say that they are simply averse to change. It is only due, in part, to the inactivity of the central government and, for that matter, the Agriculture Department to teach them by demonstration. We have seen how the people have taken advantage of the advice given in regard to the growing of cocoa. They would accept new methods in food farming, if these methods are taught. Though it goes against the grain to have cocoa trees cut down, they have sought the help of government to apply the "cutting out" treatment to their swollen-shoot affected farms. In Fig [redacted] can be seen farms treated in this way. If they can see in a practical way the value of allowing the weeds to rot on the farm, they would quickly abandon the bad practice of destroying soil fertility by burning these weeds.

Their art forms are not merely changing; they are dying out. The people who have not had education seem to be the guardians, but

amongst the educated class, these art forms are completely extinct. The latter class do not take part in the tribal dances, do not play the traditional-games, and fear to sing the native songs which are tabooed by the churches. They seem to appreciate and enjoy European games and tunes better. Unless the schools do more than they are doing at present to preserve these art forms, the latter are doomed, especially when in a few decades from now the number of children attending school increases, as it will certainly do.

Even amongst the older folk, there is a neglect of some of these art forms. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, weaving and spinning are gone, and the death-knell for black-smithing and wood-work is tolled. The people do not seem to be bothered as long as they have better substitutes from Europe.

Their trapping has changed considerably, owing to this European influence. The "nsemma" which was used for loops has been displaced by the wire which the people find better for their purpose. They will always accept change, if only they can find a reason for it.

Strains and Tensions in Regard to Change

From the above, it can be seen that the people generally accept change, but between the older and new generations, owing to the conservatism of the former, there are some strains and tensions.

The younger generation is not bothered about

the non-celebration of the festivals and rituals. The girls are glad that they do not have to go through the puberty rites. Some of them told me that they were glad they did not have to bare themselves in the public as this ritual demanded; but some of the older women expressed their regret that the young girls no longer displayed their beautiful forms and curves and full calfs.

The older folk are very concerned over the non-celebration of the afahye these days. They fear it will bring upon the community the displeasure of the gods and spirits of the ancestors whom they have neglected to propitiate through this festival these many years. It is said that the Omanhene, Nana Akuampong Acheampong II is a christian and therefore not interested, so he does not declare the celebration. This is one of the major charges for his destoolment.

It has been mentioned in the chapter on Government that such vast changes have been effected that executive power has been transferred from the hands of the chief and his elders to a body of elected members called the Native Authority. Naturally the chief and his elders do not look with favour upon this. Complaints have often come from them to the effect that the young men are disrespectful to them because of this transfer of power.

But the general public welcomes these changes, which make the government of the community more democratic than before. There is more freedom of speech, and a greater interest is shown by all in the government. Their relation with the present

Central Government is no less happier, for they have greater participation in the election of members to the Legislative Assembly. Every one seems to be satisfied with these changes and sing, along with the rest of the people of the country, the praise of Kwame Nkrumah.

Another case in point. The older generation always maintains that the cause of the failure of marriages now-a-days is due to the young couple's desire for independence in the choice of their partners and the casting overboard of proved traditional marriage procedures and principles. The new generation, on the other hand, firmly asserts that broken homes are due to the imposition of parents' will in the matter of choice of partners; their frequent intrusion upon married life, and the old-fashioned principles.

The young men intend opening another theatre of war over the touchy question of sonship (patrilineal) inheritance, in preference to nephew, (matrilineal) inheritance. No steps have been taken thus far by the young men to legalize it, but it is clear that when they do, they will have the support of nearly the whole country behind them.

The young men are the active members of the state and their ideas will influence the state of to-morrow. New changes will therefore come in spite of these conservative but powerless old men who are soon to join the great throng of ancestors.

CONCLUSION

The point in this concluding chapter is to attempt, by way of summarising, to help the reader to see the relationships which exist between the geographical and historical or other aspects of the life of the community of Obomeng.

We have seen running through these pages how one geographical factor may influence the historical aspect of the life of the people, how a historical event in the past may have its repercussions on present day affairs, or how an economic problem may restrict the life of the people to go along a certain groove.

In looking at specific cases, we begin with the geographical and historical relationships.

We have found that during the battle between the Akims under their chief, Konto[1] and the Kwahus which took place near Atibie, the Akims were unable to beat the Kwahus, because of the natural features, and they perished, hurling themselves down the scarp. The Kwahus, realizing that their victory was, in the main, traceable to the natural features, broke into the song[2]:

"Onwam Mmirekuo Gyamo,
Omisaa ne dom na oreforo Kwahu bɔɔ".

Hornbill "Mmirekuo Gyamo",
He has not his army, but he is climbing
the rocks of Kwahu."

The course of Kwahu history and of the Obomeng people would have been different but for this geographical factor which was in their favour.

The Kwahus also suffered the same fate at

1. See Page 142. 2. Ward's History Page 162

the hands of the Krepis. In the war of 1869², the Krepis, from the tall mountains of their homeland, rained shot and missiles on the Kwahus, destroying a great part of their enemies and thus driving them back to their country. But for these mountains the issue of the war might have been different, and the histories of these two peoples would not have been as they now are. Nor is that all. For the Kwahus the event has gone down into history and is remembered by the great oath or ntamkese, "Asase Aban", "Castle of the Earth", which has played a great part in the civil life of the community.

According to tradition, the present site was chosen because of the availability of bananas which helped them out of the famine that once broke out. I have tried to argue out this by pointing out that this alone could not have been the cause, since (a) bananas did not form an important item of their menu, and (b) if it did at all, as it would in a time of famine, the original site was within to easy reach of the banana grove to necessitate the entire desertion of their houses and settlement. The reason could only have been the fact that it was hemmed in and too narrow for the expansion of the settlement.

Whichever theory seems to be more acceptable, the cause was geographical, and this modified the history of the settlement and the people.

In the chapter on chiefs, the reader noticed that there were two chiefs at the moment in the town. One of the contestants is Sarkordie, and the other Boateng, each of them a descendant of one of the leaders of the two groups of early

settlers. What a remarkable example of how the present is related to the past! The struggle between the two candidates has raged since the last five years, and it does not seem that either party will give in. The central government has not been able to solve the problem so far.

Finally, in regard to historical relationships, it must be observed that the founding of the settlement was the direct result of a historical event — the defeat of the Akwamus, of whom the Obomeng people formed a part, by the allied forces of the Gas, Akwapims, and Akims.

We have seen that relationships exist between different geographical factors too. The mountains, because of their position across the direction of the rain-bearing winds, cause great precipitation; besides, their altitude moderates the temperature. In other words they are contributory to the climate of the place.

The relief and the climate have their relations to the plant life. The rocky nature of the soil does not promote the growth of vegetation and the making of farms, whilst the rich loamy soil in the valley has an opposite effect.

It has been mentioned that the shortage of water is related to geographical factors. The slopes cause the rivers to be fouled by the drain from the town, and this drain is particularly foul, because of the absence of good latrines, and the fouling of the whole area by the people. Again there are no pit latrines because of the difficulty of digging them, owing to the rocky sub-soil, and there are no wells for the same reason. Septic latrines cannot be built because, as I was informed by the sanitary officer, there

are no funds available, and funds cannot be raised because the population is so thin. The whole thing appears to be a network of related factors all culminating in this one problem. This calls for a solution which cannot be easily found.

The climate, although it promotes exuberant plant life on the plateau, causes fogs there. This brings about rot diseases injurious to cocoa pods and therefore restricts the growing of cocoa to the valley alone.

On man the cold on the plateau is severe, calling for the wearing of heavy clothing and sweaters, whilst the temperature in the valley is unbearable, necessitating the wearing of light clothing.

The unsuitability of the soil on the plateau for farming purposes drives the people to go into the valley to seek other ways of eking out an existence and makes Obomeng almost a deserted village. The population remains static, their art, festivals, and rituals are neglected, and the houses are left in ruins and are uninhabited.

The cause of this stagnation of the population is at once geographical and economic as the above indicates. In the foreseeable future, it is only the proposed Eyuanoma Bauxite mines that can ameliorate the conditions. That failing, the solution of the problem will have to wait for many years to come.

But in these misfortunes of Obomeng, Nkawkaw, so to speak, prospers. It becomes a mart of commerce and its population mounts day to day.

We have also seen that there is a relationship between their religion and other respects of their

life. In point of fact, it was found that their religious beliefs were at the core of most of their practices. Their belief in the spirits is supreme, and whatever they do they make sure it is to the pleasure of these gods or spirits, and bend every effort to be in their favour. They believe that the spirits of their ancestors are present in the stools and take part in the day to day activities of the living. Thus they propitiate them on the Adae, Afahyɛ, and other festival occasions.

Their belief in and fear of witchcraft is another problem which threatens to be insoluble. The teacher and, unfortunately, the Christian preacher himself give credence to it as well as the ăduro "medicine" which promises to give protection from it — in fact some of them are known to have gone "to eat" the medicines at night. The Christian light among the people, which alone can drive away the darkness of fear and superstition, being so dim, the situation is bound to persist for a long time to come.

The land, they believe, belongs to the Sky God and His wife, the god "Asase Yaa" "Earth Yaa", so in doing anything with the land this great Asase Yaa, is never left out of account, but given its sacrifices.

Reference has been made to the Easter which has become a great festival occasion for the people of Obomeng and the Kwahus in general. Although Christian in origin, both heathen and Christian alike have accepted it, and come home in large numbers. This is only a result of the disappearance of the Afahyɛ. They must have a national occasion, and if

Fig 58

The main street of Obo meng on an ordinary day. Notice how deserted it looks.

Fig 59

The same street at Easter, 1954. See how crowded it looks.

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Fig 60

Some boys in fancy dress parading the street of Obo meng on Easter day, 1954.

since the old one has ceased, the new one is accepted and celebrated in almost the same way as the former one. Easter at Obomeng therefore cannot be described as a Christian or a heathen festival. It is a fusion of the heathen festival Afahye and the Christian one of Easter.

At this time nearly every house at Obomeng is opened for occupation and the only street in the town teems with people. All sorts of amusements — dances, inter-provincial football matches, cinema shows, boxing tournaments, dramatic performances, and many other diversions — are arranged.

The occasion lasts from Thursday to Monday. On Tuesday, all the people leave, and the town becomes quiet once more.

Their rites are all founded on religion, and funerals are held to give a send-off to the spirit of the dead into the spirit world. Badu-guan, Bagyima, occupation of a new house, the more recent ceremony the drawer performs before conveying a dead body, and other rituals are all pregnant with religious feelings.

The reader could not have failed to be struck by the relationship that exists between the past and the present in several aspects of the life of the people. In their songs are traces of the past. Of their earliest leader, Chief Akwasi Pinaman, who led them from Akwamu to their present home they sing[1]:

"Odum Akwasi Pinaman, Nana a onam
anadwo a omfa ogya,
Ono na oyee saa ma n'abatafo adidi
anadwo"

[1] Page 10.

"Handsome akwasi Pmaman, Grandsire who travels by night without taking fire-brand. It was he who caused his companions to dine late at night".

Also of the leader of the Agona clan, Ogyamadudu, who later immigrated from Oda, the members of this clan sing, when one of them is dead:

"Misu wo o, asomasi,
Ogyamadudu nana a ne ti fri Oda mmorontoo".

"I weep for you, such and such a man,
Grandson of Ogyamadudu.
Whose head comes from Oda mmorontoo".

The same relationship is found to exist in regard to the past and present farming methods. When asked why they do things in a certain way, the answer has always been, "yebetoe" "We came and found it".

A remarkable example of a present reminder of the past is the part of the land named "Nsokwae" "hoes forest" which goes back to the times when the far-sighted chief, Adjaboeng Nti, advised the young men to make themselves useful by providing themselves with hoes and going to work at this place which now commemorates the activities of these ancestors.

The naming of persons brings out the same idea: Individuals may be named after people long dead, and here a good example is afforded by the names of the chiefs. At the time of the installation, the new chief goes into the stool house, and, blindfolded, touches one of the stools of the ancestors. In this way,

he chooses the name of an ancestor for himself, so that there exists a relationship between the names of the present and the past chiefs.

In regard to this relationship of the present with the past, the festivals and rites teem with examples. The Akwasidae, we have seen, besides being a religious affair, is an occasion to remember those who died in the wars of the community and of the dead ancestors.

They perform many of the rituals not fully knowing their significance, except that they are things handed down to them — a link with the past. Their art — dancing, designs, games, craft, and drumming are all traditional and so related to the past. It will be recalled that the message of the "Twenesin" Short drum "Afrasese" "a year ago this time" is a reminder of the engagement with the army of the Omanhene of Kwahu at Akene.

Pottery could not have been possible but for the incidence of clay in the locality, as weaving would not have been possible without the growing of cotton and the availability of Ashanti weavers. The Ashanti weaver considered his stay worthwhile as long as he could find market for his product, but when the population of Oboneng dwindled and trade declined, these weavers left. Thus a relationship existed between the weaving and the market and population.

Finally we must look at the relationship existing between some aspects of life of the community and European contact.

First, we see that the houses of the people, their clothing, the tools used in farming, roads

and communication have all been so modified as to enable the people to cope better with geographical conditions.

Although in food farming, there have not been great changes, yet their cocoa cultivation is completely managed along Western ideas.

The lack of desire to develop their forms of art such as dancing, drumming, craftwork, designs, and games are due to European substitutes, and the preference, especially the younger generation gives to these substitutes. The children prefer to play at football instead of "Ahyca", wrestling; the young men see more beauty in ball-room dancing more than they do in native dancing; the people, especially the women, find the European thread stronger and better able to satisfy their needs, and so they give up spinning; and the brass-band appeals to the young men better than the traditional talking drums. Here too, we find a relationship existing between the changing way of life of the people and the impact of western civilization.

From the above, it is evident that the different aspects of the life of the community are closely related to several factors which may be geographical or historical, and that a people can be understood only as they are viewed against the background of these factors.

The revelation of this relationship between these many factors and the life of the people of Obomeng has been the burden of this short study, and the success therefore of this attempt can be measured only by the extent to which this can be appreciated by the reader.

THE END

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MAPS

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