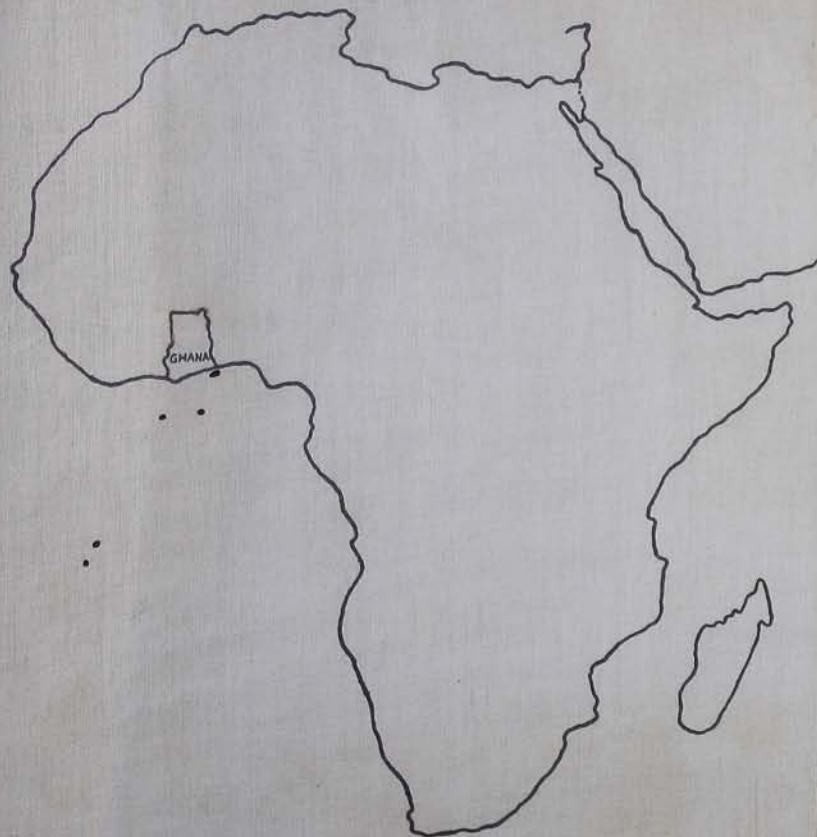


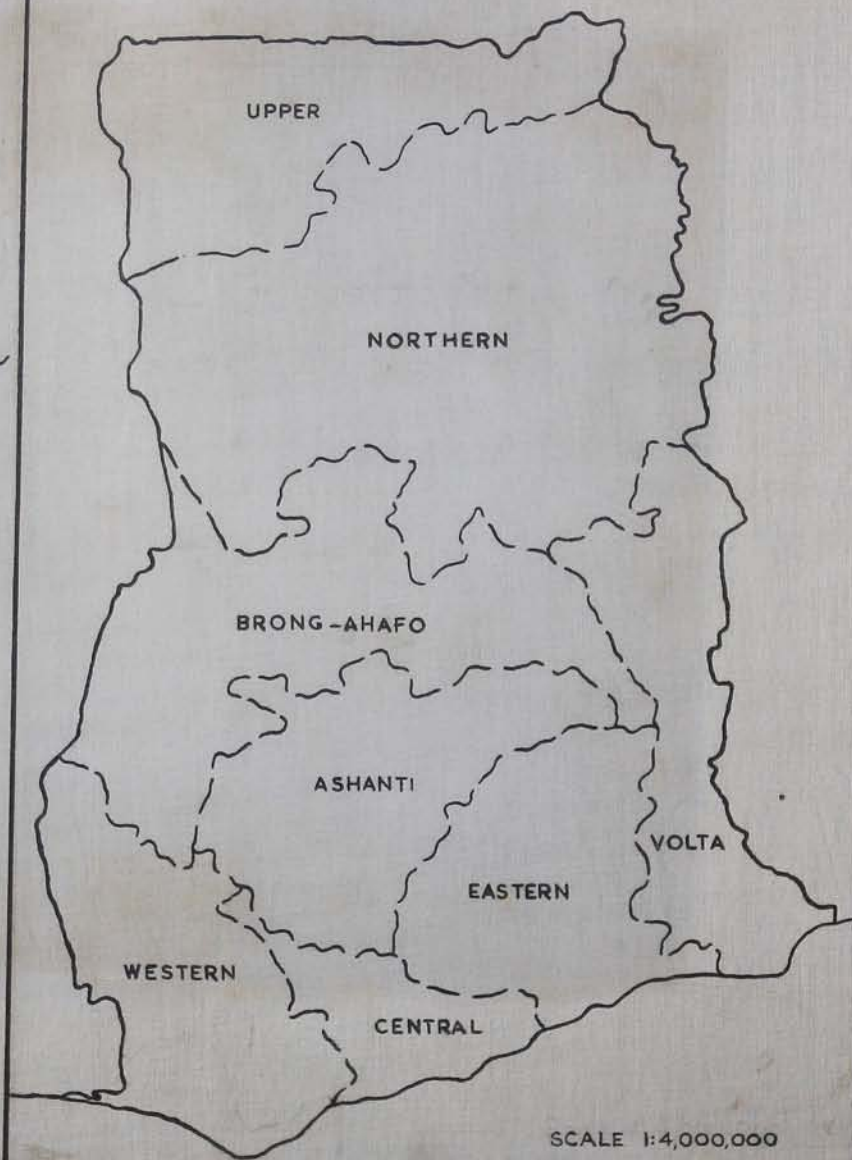
A  
STUDY OF SOME  
ASPECTS OF THE  
LIFE OF THE NZEMA  
PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THEIR  
DIET.

# AFRICA SHOWING GHANA

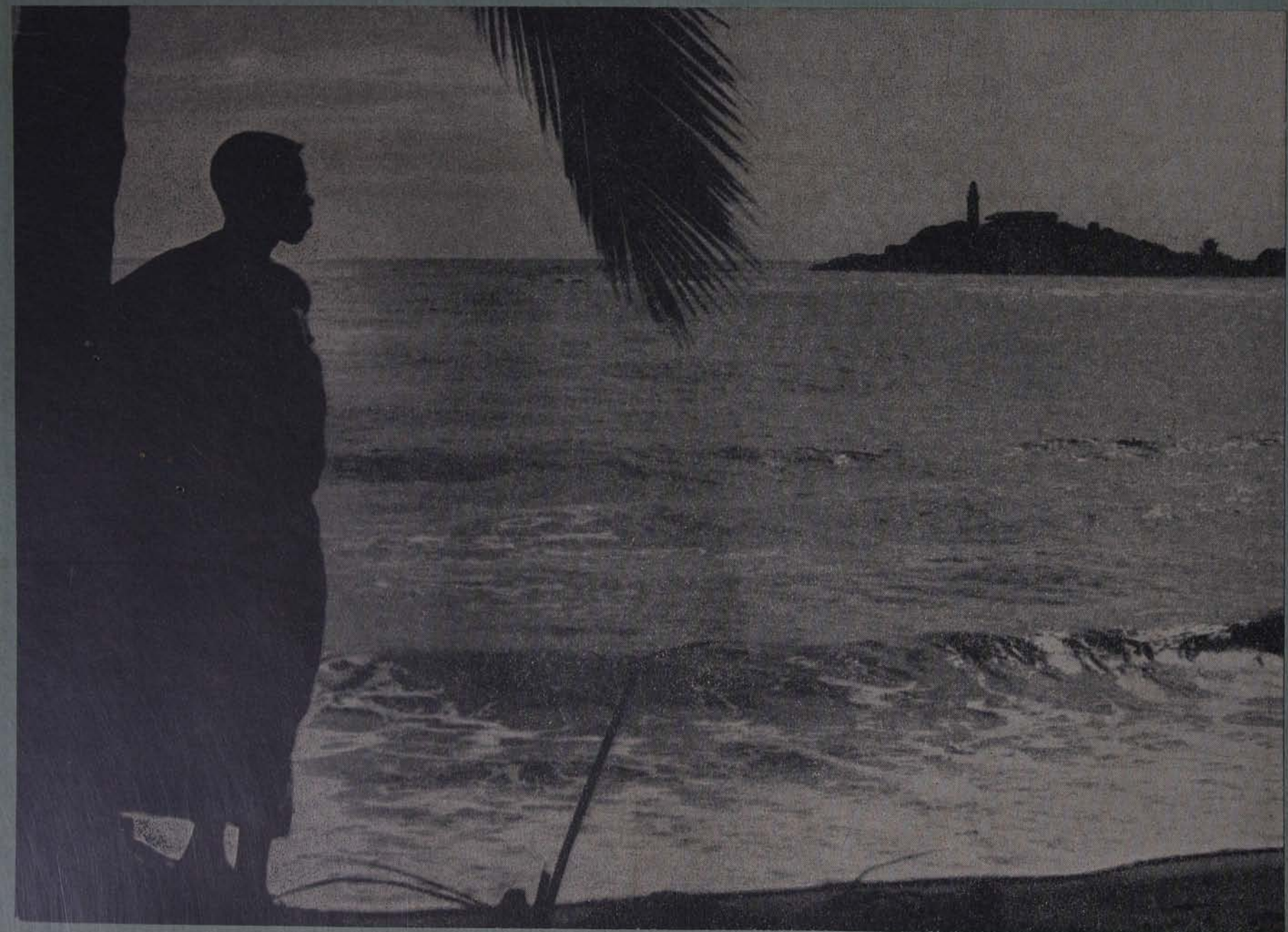


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# GHANA SHOWING THE REGIONS



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View of the Axim lighthouse on a rocky promontory.

# EASTERN & WESTERN NZIMA APPROVED PRIMARY & MIDDLE SCHOOLS



## A B S T R A C T

The main objective in writing this piece of work is to bring to the notice of the girls and women of Nzema in the Middle Schools, Secondary Schools and Training Colleges the present existing conditions in Nzema in relation to the poor housing conditions and wrong feeding among children and adults so as to encourage them to do all they can to improve the feeding of the families in Nzema, to build well ventilated houses and to eradicate all existing practices of malnutrition.

Such improvements will make for the general welfare of the people in the area and help towards the general progress of the nation.

TITLE - A STUDY OF SOME ASPECTS OF THE LIFE OF  
THE NZEMA PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THEIR DIET  
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CHAPTER

1. THE NZEMA REGION
2. HOUSING CONDITIONS
3. OCCUPATIONS
4. STAPLE FOODS
5. HOME LIFE AND CULTURE
6. THE ROLE OF NZEMA WOMEN
7. HOSPITAL AND HEALTH FACILITIES
8. FOOD AND ITS PREPARATION
9. CARE OF CHILDREN
10. DIET AND NUTRITION
11. HOUSECRAFT IN THE NZEMA REGION
12. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS
13. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

## CHAPTER 1

### THE NZEMA REGION

On the South-West coast of Ghana lies the interesting Nzema region. It is bounded on the south by the Gulf of Guinea; on the east by an imaginary line running from mile 32 on the Axim-Takoradi road to a point on the coast called Mutrakni point; on the north by Wassaw Aowin; and on the west by the Ghana-Ivory Coast boundary.

The Nzema region is divided into two distinct districts, namely, the Western Nzema and the Eastern Nzema districts. The Nzemas of the Axim area are known as Evalue; those of the North-~~West~~ East Nzema are Gwira; and those of the Half Assini area on the west coast are Ajomoro; hence the Local Councils being the Evalue, Ajomoro and Gwira Local Councils. The headquarters of the Evalue Local Council are at Axim; Eastern Nzema Local Council has its headquarters at Atuabo and Western Nzema Local Council has its headquarters at Half Assini.

The two District Commissioners in charge of the regional administration are stationed at Axim and Half Assini.

Axim is an ancient seaport which dates from the year 1515 when the Portuguese built a castle there which is still in good condition and is now used as Local Government offices. The lighthouse stands on a rocky promontory.

Half Assini has always been the seat of Government for Western Nzema, for many years and the name has always brought to mind the running ashore of an oil ship called BAKANA

which is recorded in Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's book entitled "GHANA" - The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah.

Along the coastline of the Nzema region is a wide stretch of coconut plantation which gives a pleasant view to visitors apart from the shade it provides to travellers who choose to walk along the beach road. One striking feature of the geographical aspect of the land is the closeness of the forest to the sea.

From the coast the land rises gradually to form a highland on which is the forest area. Rainfall is heavy in this region which is over 85 inches in a year. In the past the Nzema region was famous for its rich forest producing timber for export; even today there is still left standing a large number of huge tall trees in the thick forest. Apart from timber there are rubber plantations and cocoa farms. The land is fertile and there are acres and acres of virgin soil not yet touched for food production.

#### Rivers and Lagoons

This region has many water-ways. The Ankobra river is crossed about 2 miles from Axim by a motor ferry. The same river at Domenase has a modern suspension bridge over it. Other rivers are the Bia, the Tano, Bonuni, Ellonyi loanu, Awia nialuanu, Ama Azule, Suhorni and the Aby lagoon which separates the French Ivory Coast from Ghana.

Besides the rivers and lagoons mentioned there are several streams scattered over the whole area making certain areas swampy, suitable for the cultivation of rice and serving as the source of water supply to the villages.

CHAPTER 2  
HOUSING CONDITIONS

The Nzema people live in four different types of dwelling houses or huts, namely, the Raffia reed hut, reed and swish, wooden, and cement <sup>^</sup>house.blocks.

RAFFIA REED

This type of hut is very popular and is made from raffia palm. It is cheap and easy to build for raffia palm grows in abundance in this area owing to the swamps caused by the many rivers and lagoons. (See picture No.1)

Raffia palm branches are carefully removed from the midribs; when sufficient sticks are collected they are joined together with twigs at even intervals until the required size is completed. Each completed one forms one wall of the hut and each wall is built separately. When all sides of the required rooms are ready they are tied to some sticks which are fixed to the ground. This type of house is detachable and can be transferred from one site to another, when necessary.

The sizes of the rooms vary from 15 feet by 12 feet to about 20 feet by 15 feet according to the number of rooms required, those with single rooms being larger than those with double or more rooms; the windows to these rooms are few and small, each window measuring about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  x  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet. In some cases about five or six houses are built on the same compound with a fence round them; the fence is usually made of raffia sticks and its purpose is to give some sort of privacy to the

occupants of the huts.

The roofing is done separately on the ground by joining raffia branches together according to the length of the roof; the branches of leaves are tied together with twigs overlapping each other until the whole width is covered; when both sides are completed the whole thing is lifted on to the top of the house to form the roof. This kind of roofing endures any amount of heat, but towards the beginning of the rainy season repairs are needed against any possible leakage.

The floor is either cemented or beaten up and daubed with clay according to the financial position of the hut owner.

The building of a hut of this type is generally done by communal labour. The common practice is for the prospective builder to inform his friends in his neighbourhood who readily join to help him in doing the work. No fee is charged except for the occasional provision of palmwine or any light refreshment.

As already mentioned, the Nzema region is famous for its rivers and lagoons. While discussing the housing conditions, reference should be made to a particular tribe of Nzemas who choose to live on a river.

They are the Nzemas of 'NSURO-SO' a village about five miles inland of Beyin. 'NSURO' in the Nzema language means water and 'SO' means above and so the name of this village literally means a village on water. During the writer's study of the Nzema region she was intrigued to come across a large number of huts built on a river. The huts which fascinated her are built similar to the reed hut but are

supported by a number of sticks standing deep in the river in the form of bridges. One might ask how the people manage during the high tide and especially in the rainy season; but they have such a good foresight that the huts are built sufficiently high up on the sticks and the highest tide of the river does not come anywhere near the huts; there are bridges which serve as streets linking one family group to the other and people move about freely as if on land.

It is quite obvious that these people can also move about in canoes; they have their farms along the banks of the river and each family group has a suspending ladder which leads to the family canoe always fastened under the bridge when not in use.

The village of NSURO-SO brings to mind the Chinese of Canton who live in boats on the river Si-Kiang.

#### REED AND SWISH HOUSE

This type of house is a framework of raffia sticks or any kind of sticks available. It is built on the same lines as raffia reed hut, but when the house has taken shape mud or clay is plastered over to conceal the sticks and the gaps between the sticks. (See picture No.2)

The reed and swish house is not detachable and cannot be transferred from one place to another.

It is more durable than the raffia reed hut although the latter is airy and cooler.

The wooden house type is made from packing cases; the framework is made of scantlings and pieces of boards dismantled from packing cases and nailed to the framework of



Pic. 1  
Raffia reed hut.



Pic. 2  
Reed and swish hut.



Pic. 3  
Wooden house.



Pic. 4  
Cement block house.



Fig. 1  
Raffia roof hut.



Fig. 2  
Reed and palm hut.



Fig. 3  
Wooden house.



Fig. 4  
Cement block house.

scantlings to form the house. Gaps are left for windows and doors; the roof is made of corrugated iron sheets. Doors and windows are also made from packing cases.

There are only a few houses of this type as only few can afford to build it owing to the high cost of scantlings and packing cases. (See picture No.3).

#### CEMENT BLOCK HOUSE

This type of house is the modern cement block building which has become very popular in the Municipal towns of Ghana. It requires a special plan designed by an Architect or a Draughtsman and is built by skilled masons and carpenters. The main building rests on a deep concrete foundation made from a mixture of cement, sand and stones; the walls are erected of cement blocks; the rooms are spacious and well ventilated. The roof is either made of asbestos or corrugated ironsheets. This type of house ranges from one storey to two storeys and is, of course, very expensive.

The windows are either made of glass or wooden jalousies and the floor are either cemented or made of wooden boards. This kind of building is strong and can be guaranteed for a number of years. It offers comfortable and healthy accommodation but unfortunately there are only a handful of them in this area except at Esiam<sup>s</sup> where beautiful designs of block buildings have been erected. (See pictures No.4 & 5).

## CHAPTER 3

### OCCUPATIONS

Before the occupation of the Nzema people is discussed it must be made clear that although there are two distinct districts of the Nzemas, namely, Eastern Nzema and Western Nzema, there are the coastal Nzemas and the inland Nzemas. The Nzemas on the coastal fringe deal mostly in copra making and fishing. They also cultivate groundnuts and own small food farms. Those who live inland are farmers and grow their food crops as well as cocoa and rubber in some areas. There is not as much coconut cultivation inland as on the coast.

The coastal Nzemas both male and female are keenly interested in copra making. The wealth of each family is assessed by the number of coconut trees owned by the family and the number of coconut trees per family is nothing less than 100.

Copra is prepared by first breaking into two a dry coconut; the white fruit inside the nut is carefully removed and then dried in the sun for several days until it is very dry. Copra is the main source of income in the Nzema region and every year enormous quantities are exported. During the years 1950-53, 79% of the total copra production of 20,483 tons from Ghana came from this region. Formerly copra was sold to the buying commercial firms like the United Africa Company or C.F.A.O. for export; but recently in the second 5-year development plan the Government has built an edible oil producing factory at Essiama costing about £212,000.

The edible oil produced is of a very good quality and is satisfactorily meeting the great demand of the people in Ghana. The mill has a dual purpose for, apart from edible oil, crude oil which is not good for human consumption is being exported to the United Kingdom for the making of soap etc. The chaff from the copra is being used in the form of cakes for feeding cattle.

Fishing The fishermen use the age-old dug-out canoes manned by two or more men. Recently a special kind of motor boat has been introduced and is being used to sail the canoes smoothly and fast. It is rather expensive but it is worth the price and quite a number of fishermen are going in for it.

In some parts on the coast the surfs are very heavy and sometimes the canoes capsize in their struggle to break through the heavy surfs.

Lagoon and river fishing is a seasonal trade which lasts for a period of about six or eight months; during that season the fishermen with their families leave their homes for the fishing village where they remain till the end of the season.

The sea fishermen fish throughout the year and fish the various kinds of fish according to their season.

#### Fishing Nets

Various types of fishing nets are used and each type of net is named according to the fish it is used for catching. Herring Net. This is used chiefly for herrings. Each mesh is one inch square; three bundles of imported tanned nets, each measuring 100 yards are joined into one long net.

The total cost of an average herring net is about £200, including the cost of lead, cork and ropes.

Mackerel Net. This resembles the herring net but is much smaller. The meshes are wider, each  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches square. It requires one and a half bundles of imported tanned nets to make a complete net. The dimensions are 200 yards long by 16 or 17 yards wide. It costs about £90. It is used for catching mackerel, sea cat fish and shiny nose.

#### Smaller fish Net

It takes a quarter of a bundle of untanned imported net (25 yards) to make this kind of net. It is 80 yards long and 5 yards wide. The mesh is one inch square. It costs about £46. It is used for catching all sorts of smaller fish.

#### Sole Net.

This is used for catching cassava fish, sole etc. The mesh is 2 inches square. The length is 170 yards and the breadth is 4 yards. It costs about £4.

#### Blue Shark net (Opaa)

It is generally used for catching opaa. The mesh is one and a half inches square. The length is 130 yards and the breadth 100 yards. It costs about £10.

Fresh water fish is obtained from lagoons and rivers by means of circular nets and traps made like cone-shape baskets are used for catching river shrimps and prawns.

#### Sale of Fish

Wives and women relatives of fishermen are solely responsible for the sale of fish brought ashore by the fishermen. The wives also have their regular customers who buy the

Pic. 5 ►

Net mending



Pic. 6

Out to sea for fishing.

fish in large quantities for retail after they have been smoked, in the case of herrings, or grilled, and the fishes are either sold at the local market or taken up country to the neighbouring villages and small towns.

Prices of fish vary according to seasons. When herrings are in season, they are sold from 2/- to 6/- per hundred. When they are out of season and scarce they are sold at 6d or 8d each. The months of July, August and September are the good months for fishing. During these months fish is obtained in large quantities and in some areas fishermen are compelled to throw back some surplus fish into the sea where they cannot grill or smoke them and have no other means of preserving them.

The months of February, March, April and May are the bad months for fishing. Fish is really scarce and especially in villages distant from the coastal area. Fish that is available is smoked and re-smoked several times for weeks until it becomes very dry with practically no food value left in it.

Apart from the two main occupations of the Nzema people there are other minor occupations such as being engaged as labourers, who work with the local authorities in the construction and repair of roads. There are the diamond winners in the Bamiankor State who work at Dompin in the diamond fields. There are petty traders, herbalists, drivers, rubber tappers, bakers, store-keepers, teachers, sawyers and seamstresses; but all these workers are in the minority as compared with the two major occupations.

## CHAPTER 4

### STAPLE FOODS

All over the world different kinds of food are eaten by different people and each race or tribe has a particular taste in food. Naturally the staple food of each race is governed by the food product of that particular area hence we have the Nzema people living on Manioc - cassava, rice, maize and plantain as their staple foods. These cereals and root vegetable form the bulk of the Nzema diet. Besides the principle items of staple foods there are other indispensable plant foods which are served with the staple foods to make complete meals. They are palm nuts, groundnuts and garden eggs, tomatoes and pepper.

These food products can only be produced through farming and that is why some Nzema people, especially those living in the forest belt of Nzema land, do farming.

Farming on the coastal fringe of the Nzema region is centred chiefly on the growing of groundnuts owing to the sandy nature of the soil. Cultivation of groundnuts is mostly done by women and girls. Groundnuts come from a leguminous plant which buries its fruits under the ground where they ripen. It is a seasonal crop which is produced once a year. It is interesting to watch the women and girls busily engaged on the work on the farms. Upon investigation the writer was informed that in the past the amount of groundnuts produced from farms in this region was about four times what is produced today. The reason given for this was that since the introduction of the copra industry on a large scale most of the land which

was formerly used for groundnuts has now been taken over for cultivation of coconuts.

Groundnut is a popular food item and is either eaten raw or roasted; it is also ground into a smooth paste for thickening soup (See under Nzema recipes on page      ).

Manioc - Cassava, a root crop is the most commonly cultivated food stuff. It is not a seasonal crop but can be planted at any time of the year and does not require special care. It is the heart and soul of the Nzemas and is cooked in various forms. To the Nzemas cassava takes the place of the potatoes of the English, the kenkey of the Fantis and plantain of the Ashantis.

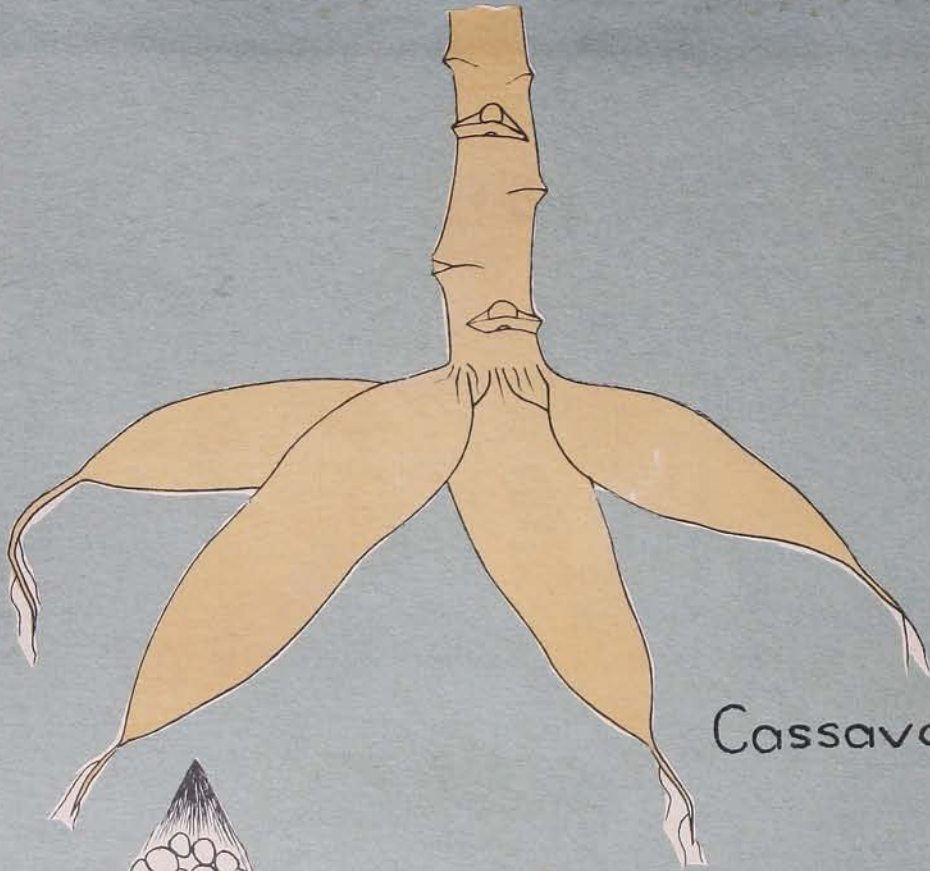
Swamp Rice is the second favourite food of the Nzemas. It is a cultivated cereal grown in the swampy areas of Nzemaland and is also served in different ways.

There is a rice mill at Essiama for removing the husk from the rice. Farmers send their large products of rice to the rice mill; but where the product can be easily pounded by members of the family it is done at home.

Maize is an important cultivated cereal. It is an important food product because of its storage qualities. It is used in preparing various kinds of food, e.g. kenkey and akasa.

Palmnuts are obtained from palm trees which grow wild in the forest belt. The heavy bunches of palmnuts, each of which weighs up to 30 lb., are used in preparing palm soup, a great favourite of the Nzema people, and also in producing palm oil.

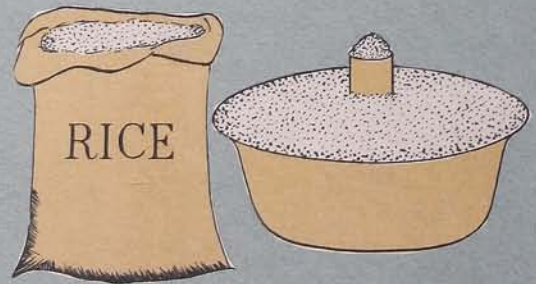
# STAPLE FOODS.



Cassava



Maize



Rice

Plantain. (Musa sapientum var paradisiaca)

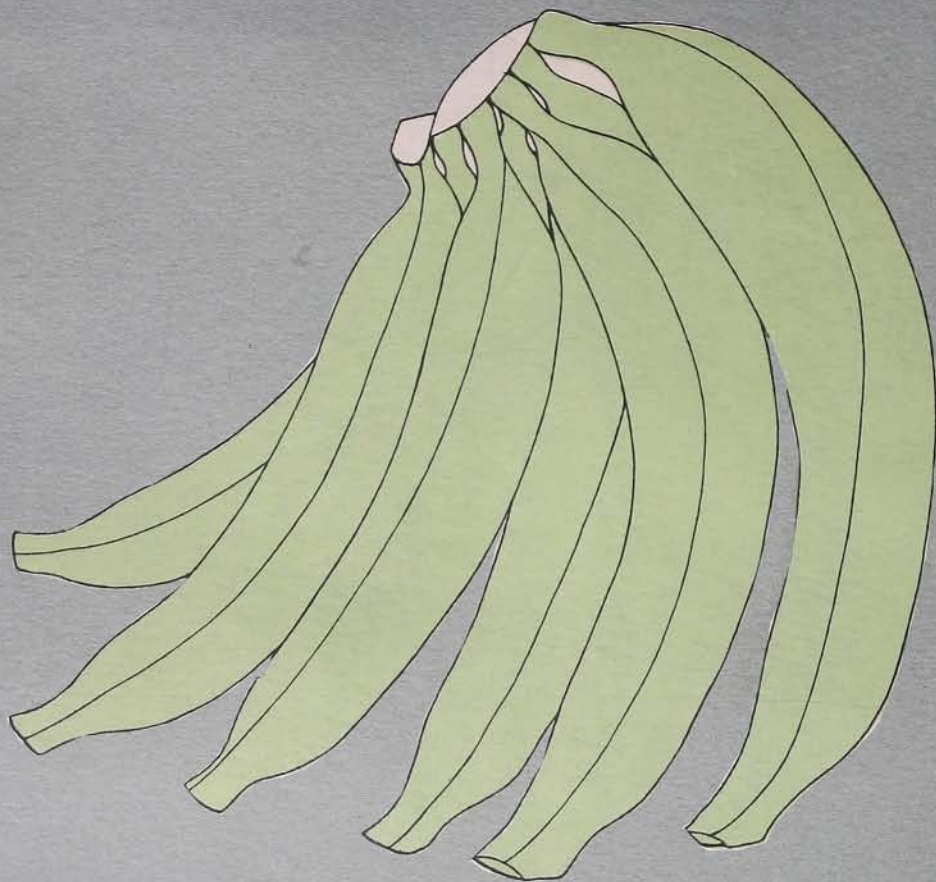
The plantain is a starchy fruit plant which is coarse, and thick skinned. It takes twelve to fifteen months to bear fruit after planting and continues to bear fruit for four or ~~X~~ five years; but the quality of fruits becomes poor from year to year.

The plantain is generally used in the unripe state for fufu. When ripe it is either roasted or fried in oil.

Garden Eggs. Garden eggs are annual plants; they are low bushy plants generally about 2 feet high with large leaves and large fruits with a shiny skin. Some varieties are white; others cream coloured or yellow; others bright orange and others dark purple. The fruits are picked when they are sufficiently grown and are eaten in soups.

Multiplier Onions. These are propagated by bulbs and grow best in a rich, sandy loam soil with a moderate rainfall. They require little care beyond weeding and surface cultivation whenever the soil becomes caked or hard after each rain and during the dry weather. As they mature the leaves turn yellow and fall over, and the bulbs are harvested in dry weather and dried before they are stored. They are usually strung into ropes and sent to the market.

Okro. The okro is grown as a vegetable crop. It is propagated by seed and thrives in most soils provided they are not too water-logged, and good crops of it can be raised on the dry coastal lands, where the soil is even salty and unsuited to the growth of most agricultural crops. It is one of the most useful vegetables eaten in soups.



Plantain



Garden-eggs



Okro



Groundnuts



Palm nuts

# MEAT SUPPLY



Lamb.



Mutton.



Chicken.



Game.

### Meat Supply

This region does not favour much the rearing of cattle as the area has more of swamps than grassland. A few species of small cattle, the West African shorthorns, are reared at Kikam and in a few villages. These are not reared for the provision of meat as such, but as an economic commodity to be sold when the owner needs money. Sheep, goats, pigs and a small variety of chickens are reared but they live only by feeding on whatever food they can get from the village rubbish heap.

The flesh from these domestic animals and birds is lean and tough because the animals and birds are not properly fed.

Game is the main source of meat supply. The hunters hunt at night for the grass cutter also known as bush pig, the antelope and deer and squirrels. The flesh of the animals is smoked before it is sold at the market.

Apart from game, meat generally is not an important item in the Nzema diet and if animals are slaughtered at all they are bought mostly by the Non-Nzemas resident in the region, e.g. Europeans.

Slaughtering of cattle is done at Essiama, Atuabo, Eikwe, Bamiankor and Beyin but no slaughter slabs are provided. Butchers slaughter animals in their individual homes. Axim and Half Assini have slaughter slabs but they are not fly-proof. Meat for sale is inspected and passed before being offered to the public.

Animal slaughtered in 1958/59

Cattle	Sheep	Goats	Pig
71	486	380	45

## CHAPTER 5

### HOME LIFE AND CULTURE

In Ghana society the understanding of the word 'family' is deeper than the English meaning attached to it. People from the same genealogical source are regarded as members of one family and could live together in one family house. Among the Nzemas the same principle is followed, hence a number of relatives, as we may call them, live together on the same compound and share food from the same family pot.

Descendants of one family continue to live in the same compound houses and as the number of the family increases more houses are built on the same compound to make room for the increase.

The family chain, as it were, begins with a man, his wife or wives as the case may be, and his children. When the male children grow up they get married in the course of time and bring their wives to join their parents' family and that is when more houses are required for the second family.

Wives of the male children inevitably share the same compound with their mothers-in-law who assume every right to reprimand their daughters-in-law, when they go wrong.

#### Sleeping Arrangement

A husband shares his room with his wife; where the marriage is polygamous the wives have a room each and share with their children. Male children over fifteen years have a room to themselves or share a room with an unmarried male member of the family.

Young girls above fifteen continue to sleep with their



Pic. 7

A family at Salima.



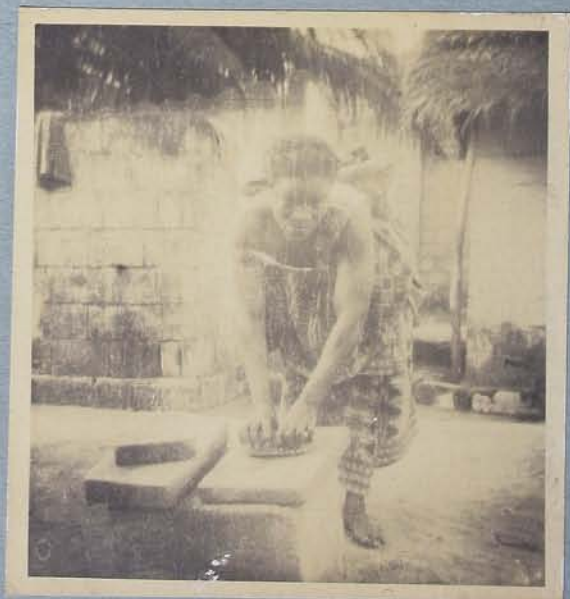
Pic. 8

Preparing maize meal.



Pic. 9

Pounding Cassava



Pic. 10

The way to grind.



Pic. 7

A family at Salinas.



Pic. 8

Preparing maize meal.



Pic. 9

Pounding Cassava



Pic. 10

The way to grind.

mothers or grandmothers.

In all cases people sleep either on wooden beds or on mats on the floor. Children usually sleep on mats on the floor.

#### Bath houses and shelters

In the big towns like Half Assini, Essiama, Bamiankor, Kikam, there are public bath houses as well as private bath rooms in some homes.

In the villages people are keen on having separate bath shelters for men and women.

#### Latrines

These are pit latrines in villages and movable pans in the towns.

People use public latrines in most cases and very few people have latrines in their homes. In the public latrines there is no privacy; about six or eight latrines are made in a row without any partition, and there are no covers to them. Flies are in hundreds and a nuisance to visitors to these latrines.

#### Sanitation and Health.

Sanitation in the Nzema region is generally poor. Most houses have no toilets and public latrines are not always clean and tidy.

Villagers who live near the coastal areas use the beach.

The Rural Water Development Department has sunk bore-holes in some towns and villages such as Half Assini, Essiama, Kikam and Bonyere. In such towns water supply is no problem, but in the interior villages where such amenities are lacking,

the people depend on streams and wells for their water supply. During the rainy season rain-water is collected from house roofs and stored for use in tanks and drums but only for a short season.

### Markets

Shelters used as selling places are found in each town and village. Women take their foodstuffs and other materials for sale to these shelters. Traders in the same kind of foodstuff group themselves at one place, e.g. fish, cassava and plantain.

In some villages where customers are few and trading is slow people feel it is a waste of time to sell at the market. Some women choose to leave their foodstuffs for sale by their doorstep instead of taking them to the market. This is rather inconvenient to strangers to the village who have no food farms and have to go from house to house hunting for foodstuffs.

### Food Bars

These are usually fufu and soup bars and are situated either by the road-side, where travellers can break their journeys and have a meal or by schools for school children to buy something to eat. (See picture No. 12 )



Pic. 11

Children selling food at Kikam.



Pic. 12

A village food bar near the Ankobra ferry.



Pic. 13

Selling mgbokpole at Half Assini.



Pic. 14

Cows feeding on rubbish near a food bar at Kikam.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE ROLE OF NZEMA WOMEN

Women are the mothers of a nation and so the progress of the Nzemas depends largely on the contribution made by the women.

Every Nzema family is maintained by the women. Wives, mothers and daughters hand in hand with the financial support from the husbands, fathers and brothers, run the homes in general.

Daily cleaning in the way of sweeping, washing up of cooking utensils, cooking of meals and washing of clothes are all done by the female members of the family.

#### Early Training

It is part of Nzema culture to give the best possible training to the girls of the family at an early age. When a girl is able to speak fluently and can walk about with ease she is given the opportunity to assist in minor house jobs such as fetching water from the kitchen drum or water pot; fanning the fire when the mother is cooking and peeling of cassava and onions. Children take delight in doing such odd jobs and feel they are recognised as members of the family in this way. Gradually as they grow older, they undertake advanced jobs like the grinding of pepper, fetching water from streams and wells with elder brothers or sisters, pounding of rice or maize and sweeping the compound. In some cases this is overdone, as, in one instance, a child of about seven carried her younger brother of eighteen months to the



Pic. 15

A young girl preparing  
food on the compound at Half Assini.



Pic. 16

Cooking on the compound  
at Essiama.



Pic. 17

Preparing kenkey by the  
wayside at Bamiankoh.

stream to wash him. They are given every opportunity to watch while their mothers do the cooking and that is how they learn to do things. In a case of emergency, that is, when the mother is called away during the cooking of food, the daughter is left in charge to carry on. If the food is nicely cooked on the mother's return the daughter is congratulated on her success; on the other hand if she fails to carry out instructions, she is, of course, reprimanded.

Older girls do the household washing by the stream or well and by this training girls are unconsciously prepared for marriage.

#### Puberty rites

It is a custom among the Nzema people to go through certain ceremonies before a woman is given away in marriage.

When a girl passes her first menses the friends of the girl should watch for the third menses and then report to the girl's parents (mother and aunts). The girl is given oto (mashed yam or plantain with oil and eggs) to eat with her friends.

After about a week or so the mother plans secretly with the girl's friends to catch her unawares and bring her home for puberty rites. This is usually done on a Sunday or Wednesday.

Sheep's skins are spread on the way from the house to the bath shelter. Friends bring water for the bath and one of her mates gives her the bath while she sits on a stool. After the bath she is smeared on the body with shear butter and white clay is used in decorating the body.



Pic. 18

A girl at the entrance of the  
out-dooring



Pic. 19

Entrance of the building



Pic. 20

Group of children

Aggrey beads and gold chains are used in adorning her and she puts on a new cloth. She is richly dressed and she sits on a stool with the feet placed in a brasspan lined with a sheep's skin. (This is done if she is of the Nsona Clan)

All her friends take their bath and use some of her powder and cosmetics provided by her family for eight days.

Oto is prepared again and all well-wishers join in taking the meals prepared for her for eight days.

Friends bring firewood and water daily and there is great merriment for eight days.

After this initiation ceremony the girl can be given away in marriage if she is already engaged.

## CHAPTER 7

### HOSPITAL AND HEALTH FACILITIES

There is a Medical Officer at Axim hospital in charge of the whole Nzema region. All types of medical and surgical cases are tackled by him and those which need further investigation or are beyond the Medical Officer are sent to Sekondi hospital or Accra to see Specialists.

Apart from Thursdays, which have been set down as Ante-natal days, both Medical and surgical cases are seen any day of the week.

There is an Ante-natal clinic in the hospital every Thursday and a clinic at Essiama Dispensary every Friday afternoon. At these clinics antenatals, postnatals and infants and children are seen and given treatment. Advice on child-care, personal Hygiene and diet is given.

There is a Roman Catholic Clinic at Eikwe. The Roman Catholic nurses have been doing good work in the maternal and child welfare field.

The Medical Officer visits Beyin, Half Assini, Bonyere and Nvelenu fortnightly.

A new Health Centre has been opened at Tikobo No.1 and a qualified health Superintendent has been stationed there to cater for the health needs of that area.

The mobile Red Cross Clinic visits Bamiankor on Tuesdays.

#### General Health

The health of the Nzema people is not quite satisfactory. To some extent they are becoming hospital conscious but their



Pic. 21

Health Centre at Essiama



Pic. 22



Pic. 23.

Health Centre and Staff Quarters at Tikobu No.1.



Pic. 21

Health Centre at Essiama



Pic. 22



Pic. 23

Health Centre and Staff Quarters at Tikobu Nat.

belief in, and reliance on, the native doctor are still strong and quite often patients are sent to hospital after the native doctor has declared himself or herself unable to cope with the case.

Among the general population, Anaemia and malnutrition are far too common. Obesity is hardly noticeable in sharp contrast to the plump market women of Accra. Though there may be a hereditary tendency to grow slim, food habits play a big part in this respect.

Worms: are endemic here

1. Most children have roundworms.
2. Most adults have hookworms.

This is responsible for a great deal of Anaemia.

Anaemia is mainly nutritional or secondary to malaria or hookworm. Pregnancy anaemia is also common. There are very few women with haemoglobin of more than 60%. The average is about 50%.

Malaria is as common as in other parts of Ghana.

Diseases of Women.

1. Anemia which is very common in pregnant women.
2. Malaria.
3. Intestinal worms.

Roundworms and hookworms are the commonest.

4. Pulmonary tuberculosis.

Very few complications of pregnancies go to the hospital. Although the antenatal clinics are well attended, very few deliver in hospital.

Breast complications. Very little attention is paid to the breast and so cracked nipples occur. Abscesses are

also common.

Abortions are not as common as in other parts of Ghana.

Children. Most children are not properly clothed at the appropriate time. There are cases of Broncho-Pneumonia where children are taken to the hospital with no clothing at all except the mothers' cloths which support them. Chest ailments, especially pneumonia, are common.

Measles, Chicken-pox and Whooping Cough are the common infectious diseases.

Ulcers are fairly common with school children.

Yaws are usually common with village children.

Diarrhoea is fairly common - usually there is bacillary dysentery. Typhoid is also fairly common.

Tuberculosis is common owing to poor housing conditions and it prevails among both young and adults. One remarkable fact about tuberculosis is that the incidence is mainly with the very young and those about middle age and over.

Health Practices. It is a very common sight to see an Nzema with the native enema gourd filled with some kind of liquid ground herbs mixed with plenty of hot pepper making his way to the beach (this applies to those on the coast) or to the public latrine to take an enema. They have indulged too much in this practice with the result that it has become a habitual vice among children and adults.

CHAPTER 8  
FOOD AND ITS PREPARATION

Cooking Apparatus

In dealing with food preparation it is necessary to know the types of fire places, fuel and utensils used.

Fire places used in the Nzema region are not entirely different from those used in other regions in Ghana. The three legged hearth made of clay (see diagram A) is the commonest fire place used for cooking, and in some cases where cooking is done on the compound three large stones are put together to form the hearth. This kind of fire place requires firewood; the wood is arranged in the gap allowed at the front side and about six or eight pieces are arranged artistically and the fire is kindled in the centre of the hearth so that all ends of the wood burn together. This renders a quick service in cooking, but the disadvantage is that it gives off a lot of smoke and soot as it burns, and therefore blackens utensils, the ceiling and walls of the kitchen. (See diagram A )

The next fire-place is the Dutch stove (see diagram B) or charcoal pot. This is imported and is made of cast iron in the shape of an open pot with a narrow necked base; there is an opening for ventilation at the base, and a grate at the middle of the stove to hold the fuel. Charcoal is the fuel used and a sufficient quantity is put in the open top and either embers of fire are put in the middle of the charcoal heap to kindle or a few drops of kerosene are sprinkled over the charcoal and lighted with a match. As the charcoal burns

# KINDS OF STOVES (NATIVE)



Stones



Swish



Metal Ring Stove



'coal pot' (Dutch stove)



Kiln Oven for smoking  
fish



Oven for bread

# KINDS OF MORTARS AND PESTLES.



For pounding rice and  
cassava.



For pounding fufu.



For pounding  
palm nuts.

The temperature of the water rises as it gets heated and begins to boil when the temperature reaches 100° Centigrade or 212° Fahrenheit - the boiling point. At this stage the water begins to evaporate as it turns into steam and the food gradually gets softer and softer until the food is tender.

Boiling is a simple method of cooking by moist heat and does not require much attention. It is cheap and can be managed by a novice.

One drawback is the long cooking which destroys the vitamins. This makes the food less nourishing and to make up for the lost vitamins the food should be served with fruits in the form of dessert.

Water from boiled vegetables is strained off but this should be reserved and used as stock which is the foundation for soups, bearing in mind to use it the same day otherwise it will go bad.

Frying is done in two ways. Deep frying and shallow frying. By deep frying the food is completely covered with oil and is done in a deep earthenware pot or metal pot. Shallow frying is done in a frying pan with the oil reaching half way the food.

Deep frying is generally used for frying Ngalekele (cassava dough).

Shallow frying is used for fish. Palm oil is used for all purposes.

Baking. This is done in a swish oven. (See diagram D ) The oven is first heated with firewood and when sufficiently hot the firewood is removed and large embers of fire broken

down. The heat is tested with the hand over the top of the oven and if it is of the right temperature the food is placed in and covered with a door and later sealed firmly with wet clay.

Baking in a swish oven requires experience, and skilled Nzema women find no difficulty in testing for the correct temperature.

Bread and "taataa" are the food items generally baked.

#### Steaming

Food is cooked by this method which takes a longer time than boiling. The food is placed in a local earthenware steamer with a perforated base. The steamer containing the food is placed over a pan of boiling water and gradually the steam from the boiling water cooks the food. Important points about steaming are (1) to keep the water boiling steadily and (2) to pour in more boiling water as required so that the pan does not boil dry.

Steamed food is more digestible than boiled food and the food value is retained.

Mgbokpole and Akyeke are cooked by steaming. (See picture. 13.)

#### Grilling.

This process of cooking is used for meat and fish. The food is placed over a charcoal fire on a grid iron. The cooking is done slowly and the food is turned over and over until cooked and dry. It is a method of preserving fish or meat, which can be regilled from time to time.

#### Smoking

This is also another way of preserving fish - mainly

herrings. Fish is arranged on the smoking kiln with a smoky fire usually kindled with sugarcane fibres. As the fish gradually cooks those on the bottom layer are rearranged by moving the top layer to the bottom and vice versa. Herrings preserved in this way keep for weeks.



Breast feeding.

## CHAPTER 9

### CARE OF CHILDREN

#### Care of children

Children, the future generation, are the pride of a nation.

In Nzema society mothers receive with joy the news of a daughter becoming pregnant. It is regarded as a normal course when an unmarried girl or woman becomes pregnant and no attempt is made to discourage her in order to cause abortion as would be done in sophisticated families in other parts of Ghana. A new baby is born to a family and becomes the centre of the family's interest.

It is a happy privilege of the grandmother of the newly born baby or any adult woman in the family to wash the baby regularly and to look after it until the mother is well enough to go about her normal house duties.

#### Feeding.

The baby is breast-fed from birth until it is able to take solid foods. Some mothers who have the opportunity to visit antenatal clinics keep to the feeding hours but the majority feed their babies when they cry and as often as they cry. This is partly due to ignorance of times of feeding and partly due to inability to keep to the instructions given at the Health Centres.

Some children are encouraged to suck the breast until there is practically no breast milk. No serious attempt is made to wean babies; in some cases not until another child is expected.

### Other Foods

Corn porridge is what is mostly given in addition to breast milk when babies are six months old. Quaker Oats and Bird's Custard and also soups hot with pepper are given. At the age of twelve months the babies are given solid foods like "Akyeke", "mbokpole", ~~keakey~~, boiled rice and cassava fufu with any kind of soup. No special food is prepared for the children at this age; they all eat the same food prepared for the family. They eat at odd times.

Eggs are not included in the children's diet, the reason being that children are too young to eat such an expensive food. (The cost of an egg is 3d). Mothers feel they could earn more money by selling their eggs. They are ignorant of its food value. No milk is given after weaning.

The result of children eating solid foods - usually starchy foods - and not keeping to regular meals is constipation, convulsion and stomach upsets.

### Health Practice

Children are given regular enema with mixtures prepared from herbs and red pepper. A woman from Salima reported with pride that she gave her child an enema every other day.

### Observations

At Salima there was a serious case of malnutrition. A child of six months looked like a child of one month. He weighed nine pounds. (See picture No. 24 )

A child of two and a half years was still crawling about. (See picture No. 25 )

A boy of six years had a deformed legs; These are all



Pl. 24

Child sitting



Pl. 25

A boy of the one half years  
is crawling about



Pl. 26

Child with deformed legs

signs of wrong feeding. (See picture No. 26)

Children, like adults, live on starchy foods with little or no protein at all.

### Fruits

Fruits like oranges, pawpaw, mangoes, pine apples, bananas and avocado pears are available but they are not given to children regularly. When they are brought from the farms they are usually sold. When they are not readily bought then children are allowed to eat them. Coconut is the only fruit that is eaten very often and sometimes with boiled cassava.

### General care

Children from the age of three or four months, that is, when they begin to crawl, are allowed to move about freely on the compound. They pick up anything from the ground into their mouth. Mothers are often too busy to see what the children put in their mouths. By this the children eat a lot of dirt and mud; they crawl in the dust and get their clothes very dirty. When they pass urine while crawling about they are inclined to play with the wet earth.

Mothers usually give the children a bath before they retire to bed. Older children of 2 years and over are often taken to the streams or rivers for bathing by their older brothers and sisters. Sometimes these elder brothers and sisters are about seven or eight years and they themselves require to be washed by their parents. They are too young to be given such a responsibility.

### Clothing

In the villages most children under the age of ten years



Fig. 28.

Family of ...

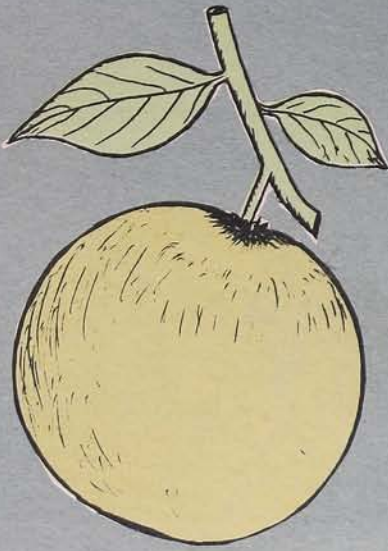
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Fig. 29.

... ..  
... ..

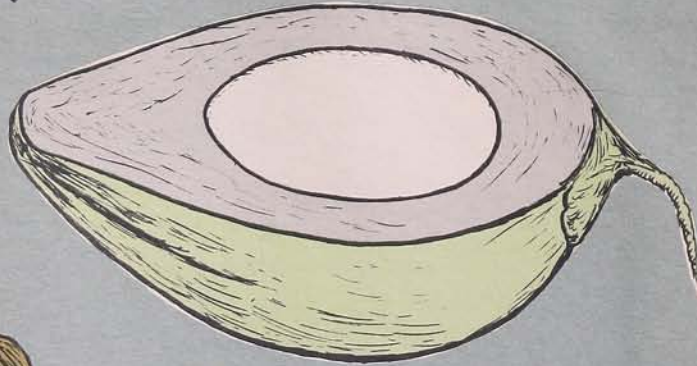
# FRUITS.



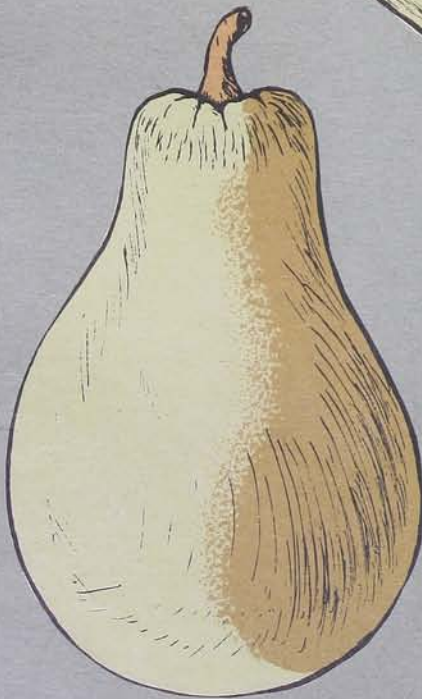
Orange.



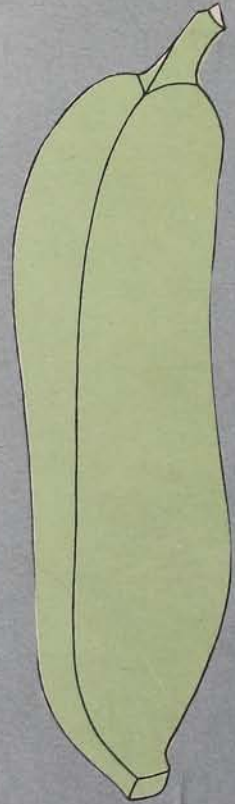
Orange, cut across.



Coconut, cut across.



Avocado Pear.



Banana.

go about naked. When they are given cloths they usually hang them carelessly on one shoulder. This is very common among boys.

One of the great problems facing the world today is over-population; in Ghana it is the very antithesis of this. With an area of 91,690 sq. miles, the number of its inhabitants scarcely exceeds six and a half million. There is a single predominant factor in our low population - infantile mortality - the most relentless enemy to our economic prosperity.

A perusal of the annual medical reports clearly indicates the high rate of infantile mortality of the country. It is not easy to indicate the rate of infantile mortality in the whole of the Nzema region since not all deaths are reported at the hospital at Axim; but the people admit that the death rate among children is high. The superstition is that the children are killed by witchcraft; but the writer's conviction is that many deaths are caused largely through unhygienic conditions, malnutrition and backwardness on the part of parents.

## CHAPTER 10

### DIET AND NUTRITION

In order to find out how Nzema families are fed, a survey was carried out by the writer in different homes, villages, towns and schools.

Conditions of feeding vary from village to village and much depends on the financial position of each family, the amount and variety of foodstuffs available at the local market, and the food production of the food farms.

People living in the towns like Half Assini, Atuabo, Essiama and Axim, depend mostly on the local markets and, to a great extent, there is always some kind of fish or meat either in a fresh state or preserved. Vegetables are always available but these foodstuffs fluctuate in prices according to the quantity available and the demand for them.

Nzemas living inland in places like Bamiankoh, Salima, Nkrɔful and Telekubugazo depend mainly on their food farms.

Sea fish is brought to the villages inland in a dry state except during the months of August and September - the fish season - when herrings are sold fresh. Fresh water fish is available to people living by rivers and lagoons.

#### Meals

The number of meals a day depends on the occupation of the people. Strictly speaking, the average Nzema takes two meals a day; and here too it must be explained that a person's financial position plays an important part.

Like other parts of Ghana, where people are employed in

offices, schools and factories, and where these employees have a midday break, they always have three meals a day, comprising breakfast, dinner and supper. Apart from such educated people, the others who are either farmers, labourers or fisherfolk keep to their two meals a day with an occasional bite at something between the two meals.

### Breakfast

The majority of Nzemas eat cassava cooked in various ways. "Akyeke" and "mbokpole" prepared from cassava (manioc) are their favourite meals. Preparation of these two foods is illustrated under Nzema recipes.

These are either served with fish or eaten plain.

It is a common sight to see labourers on their way to their work in the morning eating raw cassava. Boiled rice or rice water is also another food for breakfast for those who can<sup>af</sup>ford it.

In some villages and towns, rice and pigs feet stew are sold early in the morning at the market and school children often buy them.

Lunch or mid-day meal is usually more of snacks in some homes than a proper meal. People often eat boiled cassava (manioc) with cured cod fish or coconut or boiled green plantain. In point of fact lunch on the whole is a light meal. Farmers, labourers and fisherfolk eat anything that is available during the course of their work and do not attach much importance to it. Few educated people, like teachers and civil servants, take their heaviest meal at midday which

is usually made of fufu and one of the three soups described under Preparation of Food.

The evening meal is taken between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. It is the heaviest meal of the day. Cassava fufu (manioc fufu) is prepared in almost every Nzema home. People living inland and in the coastal areas have fufu for dinner. Fufu is served with soups prepared with fish meat and vegetables, but the nourishment derived from the food depends on the food value of the ingredients used in the preparation of the food.

The basic ingredients for soups are meat or fish, onions, tomatoes, pepper, salt and water; and, of course, the main vegetable for thickening, which is either palmtree, groundnut or garden egg.

During the writer's study she discovered that in many cases people living inland and of the poor income group could not afford to buy good fish or meat and used very dry ones with practically no food value in them. Hunters preferred to sell their game for money than to use it as food.

In some cases, onions and tomatoes were omitted because the people had none on their food farms and these articles were too expensive at the market.

Pepper is a great favourite of the Nzemas and all soups are strongly seasoned with it.

It has been mentioned above that the evening meal is between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. There is a strong superstition among the Nzemas in the villages that diseases travel about in the night and when fufu is beaten late in the evening the travelling diseases might hear the sound of the fufu stick and

visit the village, and so no fufu is beaten after 6 p.m. This somehow is a good superstition because the people finish eating their heavy meal long before they retire to bed which gives enough time for the digestion of the food.

At Bamiankoh and Salima and the inland Nzema villages, where plantain is scarce, people use green banana, as a substitute for plantain, to mix with the cassava (manioc) for fufu. Where fish and meat are not available, some river snails and prawns are used. Beans are grown but are eaten sparingly and occasionally.

Here is a list of the daily meals collected from different homes and schools.

A FAMILY AT SALIMA

	<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Weight of Food</u>	<u>Midday Meal</u>
F. 20 yrs.	Mbokpole 1d worth banana	5 ozs. $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	Boiled Cassava
M. $4\frac{1}{2}$ yrs.	-do- & bacon (locally prepared.)	$\frac{1}{4}$ oz	Boiled Cassava
M. $2\frac{1}{2}$ yrs.	-do- & bacon "	3 oz.	-do-
F. 51 yrs.	-do-		Nothing
F. 31 yrs.	-do- 3d worth	6 oz.	-do-
F. 3 yrs.	-do- 1d worth	2 oz	-do-
F. 42 yrs.	-do- 3d worth	6 oz.	Orange
M. 45 yrs.	-do- 3d worth	6 oz.	Nothing
F. 9 yrs.	-do- 1d worth	2 oz	-do-
M. 9 yrs.	-do- 1d worth	2 oz.	-do-
F. 7 yrs.	-do- 2d worth	4 ozs.	-do-
F. 6 yrs.	-do- 2d worth	4 oz.	-do-
M. 6 yrs.	-do- 1d worth	2 oz.	-do-
M. $2\frac{1}{2}$ yrs.	-do- 1d worth	2 oz.	-do-

F. Female

M. Male

Dinner

-----

Cassava & banana fufu	smoked fish
garden egg soup	
-do-	-do-
-do-	-do-
-do-	smoked river fish
-do-	smoked fish
-do-	river snail
-do-	smoked herrings
-do-	-do-
-do-	-do-
-do-	-do-
-do-	-do-
-do-	-do-
-do-	-do-

BAMIANKOR

<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Lunch or Midday Meal</u>	
1. Boiled yam	1. Garri	1.
2. Boiled yam	2. Bananas (2)	2.
3. Boiled cocoyam	3. Boiled plantain and cod fish	3.
4. Rice and palm soup	4. Rice water. Mango	4.
5. Rice and plain soup	5. Boiled yam	5.
6. Boiled plantain	6. 2 bananas	6.
7. Boiled rice	7. Garri and sugar	7.
8. Boiled plantain	8. Boiled rice	8.
9. Tea and white bread	9. Rice and palm soup (tinned fish)	9.
10. Boiled plantain and palm oil	10. White bread	10.
11. Boiled cassava	11. Cassava and palm soup (fish)	11.

Numbers 1,2,3 etc. stand for the number of people

ESSIAMA

(School children - girls interviewed)

	<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Midday</u>
<u>Female</u>		
9 years	Akyeke and fried fish	Cassava fufu and palm soup (fish)
11 years	Rice and meat stew	<del>Kenkey</del> and fried fish
10 years	Rice and fish stew	Cassava fufu and palm soup
13 years	Rice and palm soup	Cassava and fried fish
11 years	Rice and palm soup (fish)	Yam and Abom (garden egg stew)
11 years	Rice and beans	Ripe plantain and sardine

Dinner

Rice and palm soup	smoked fish
Rice and Palm soup	-do-
Rice and palm soup	-do-
Rice and fish stew	
Cassava fufu and palm soup	fish & pork
Cassava fufu & palm soup	fish

ESSIAMA

(School children - boys - interviewed)

	<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Midday meal</u>
10 years	Boiled rice	Boiled cassava
15 years	Rice and fish stew	Cassava fufu and palm soup (fish)
15 years	Boiled cassava	Boiled rice
11 years	Rice water	Boiled cassava & palm soup (fish)
13 years	Akyeke & fried fish	Boiled cassava & palm soup (fish)
12 years	Rice water	Boiled cassava & palm soup
13 years	Rice	Cassava and fried fish
12 years	Rice and bean stew	Cassava and palm soup
12 years	Cassava and fried fish	Cassava fufu & palm soup
12 years	Rice and fish stew	Rice and mango
11 years	Akyeke and fried fish	Rice kanki and sardine
11 years	Rice and groundnut soup	Garri and fried fish

NZEMA LOCAL FOODS KNOWN TO BE RICH IN THE FOLLOWING

Proteins for Growth - Building and repairing worn parts of Body	Iron for making healthy blood, supply red colouring matter for blood	Calcium for building strong bones and teeth	Vitamin 'C' for protecting body from ill-health	Vitamin 'A' for good eyesight good health
Meat - sheep & goat game of all kinds beef, pork chicken snail crabs Fish - sea fish fresh water fish smoked fish cured fish groundnuts beans pigs trotters Eggs	Liver Yolks of egg Nkontomire Effan (spinach) Shell fish snails kenkey (fermented types)	Nkontomire Cassava leaves Okro Cassava Crabs Bones of fish Shell fish Bones of meat Snails Eggs	Oranges Tomatoes Pawpaw Pineapples Limes Bananas Guava Afam Mangoes Avocado pear Green pepper Red pepper Garden eggs plantain Yam Cocoyam Cassava	Palm oil Palm nuts Liver Yolk of egg Herrings Efan Kontomire Okro fresh Red pepper Mangoes Pawpaw Sweet potato Whole corn (yellow) Plantain

Vitamin B1 & B2 for good nerves healthy skin good health	Fats & Oils for heat and energy supply warmth and comfort	Starches and sugars for energy and heat for hard work and play.
Brown rice	Groundnut	Cassava
Fresh palm wine	Palmnut <sup>oil</sup> oil	Garri
Fermented foods	Coconut "	Plantain
e.g. Kenkey	Kernel "	Rice
Cured fish	Avocado	Wheat flour
Whole grain	pear Coconut	Corn
Corn	flesh	
Beans	(fresh or dry)	Tapioca
Animal foods		Cocoyam
e.g. fish		Sweet potato
snails		Bread
meat		Sugar cane
pork		Granulated sugar
Mushrooms		honey

The study of the Nzema diet reveals that the diet is deficient in protein, iron, calcium and vitamins.

Children especially lack these food substances which are essential for their growth and protection. In the hospital at Axim pregnant women patients' main trouble is rooted in anaemia. This is very serious and something must be done to save the situation. Growing children must have a strong foundation, both in physique and in health. Food deficiencies may cause deficiency diseases which are certain to lead to general ill-health.

There should be a great emphasis on protein foods like meat, fish, eggs, chicken, beans, ground nuts and palnuts.

Iron foods which help to make the blood red and keep it healthy are liver, kidney, meat and eggs.

Calcium foods which help to build strong bones and teeth are green leafy vegetables, milk, animal bones and fish bones which are soft enough to chew.

Vitamins which give vitality and protection are found in fresh fruits and vegetables which grow in the Nzema district and the people must be encouraged to eat them in their daily diet. Good food must be eaten by the people for good health. Fats and oil are of the same importance and these must go with the normal starchy foods, which are eaten in excess in this district, to balance the diet.

It is regrettable to discover that spinach which is a good source of vitamin A and iron does not form a part of the Nzema diet. Nzema women students in my housecraft class have remarked that although spinach grows wild on their

farms their ancestors had nothing to do with it as far as their diet was concerned so their parents have not acquired a taste for it. Since they came to college and have regularly had spinach stew on their college menu, they have acquired a taste for it apart from learning its food value. Evidently, when these Nzema girls return home they will educate their parents on the food value of spinach and other green leafy foods which they at present abhor.

Since the health of a nation depends largely on the women who prepare its food, it is essential to train the women in the right choice of food. It must be made clear to them that the right choice of food does not mean spending a great deal <sup>of money</sup> on the food. It means a knowledge of the body's needs, an understanding of the food nutrients, the cost of different foods and a practical working out of this knowledge in economical, varied and appetising meals.

To illustrate how an Nzema daily diet can be improved here are a few examples of suggested balanced menus:

MENU to suit local conditions

- |    |           |  |
|----|-----------|--|
| 1. | Breakfast | Akyeke and eggs  |
|    | Lunch     | Palnut soup with fish or meat and beans.<br>serve with fufu. Fruit. Orange |
|    | Supper    | Spinach stew with fish or meat<br>serve with mbokpolg                      |
| 2. | Breakfast | Boiled rice with bean stew   |
|    | Lunch     | Groundnut soup with fish or meat<br>serve with fufu. Banana                |

- |    |           |  |
|----|-----------|--|
|    | Supper    | Akye <u>ke</u> with meat                             |
| 3. | Breakfast | Garri with egg and gravy                             |
|    | Lunch     | Garden egg stew and boiled cassava. Orange           |
|    | Supper    | Fried fish and kenkey.                               |
| 4. | Breakfast | Mbokpo <u>le</u> with eggs                           |
|    | Lunch     | Garden egg soup with fish<br>serve with fufu. Pawpaw |
|    | Supper    | Boiled rice and fresh fish stew.                     |
| 5. | Breakfast | Boiled cassava and fried fish with gravy             |
|    | Lunch     | Bean stew and boiled rice. Pineapple.                |
|    | Supper    | Akye <u>ke</u> with meat stew                        |
| 6. | Breakfast | Ngale <u>ke</u> <u>le</u> (suggested recipe)         |
|    | Lunch     | Palm soup with fish and serve with fufu. Banana      |
|    | Supper    | Ken <u>ky</u> and Palmtree stew.                     |
| 7. | Breakfast | Mbokpo <u>le</u> with eggs                           |
|    | Lunch     | Spinach stew with Garri. Orange                      |
|    | Supper    | Boiled rice and fish stew.                           |

farms their ancestors had nothing to do with it as far as their diet was concerned so their parents have not acquired a taste for it. Since they came to college and have regularly had spinach stew on their college menu, they have acquired a taste for it apart from learning its food value. Evidently, when these Nzema girls return home they will educate their parents on the food value of spinach and other green leafy foods which they at present abhor.

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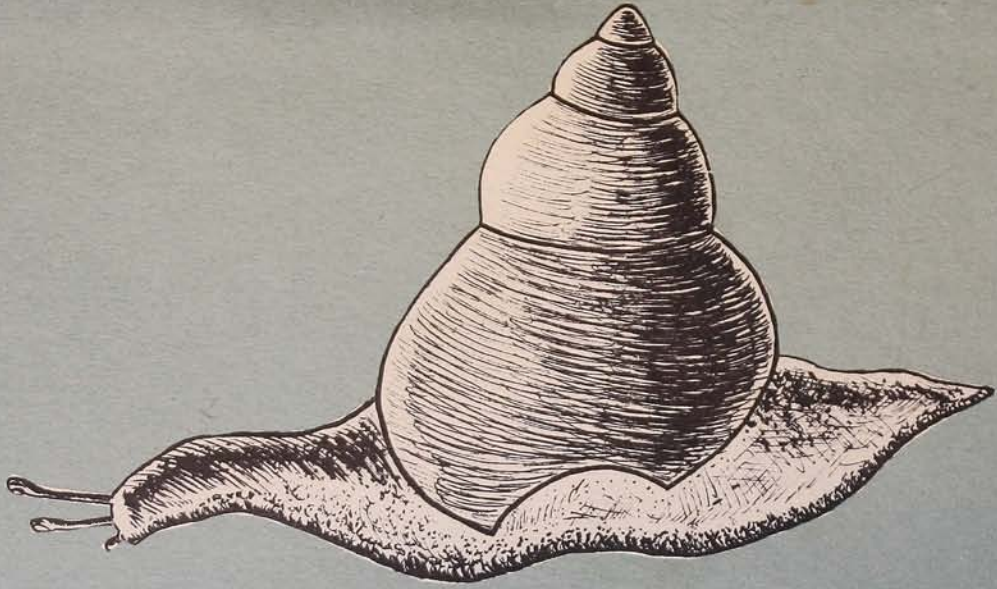
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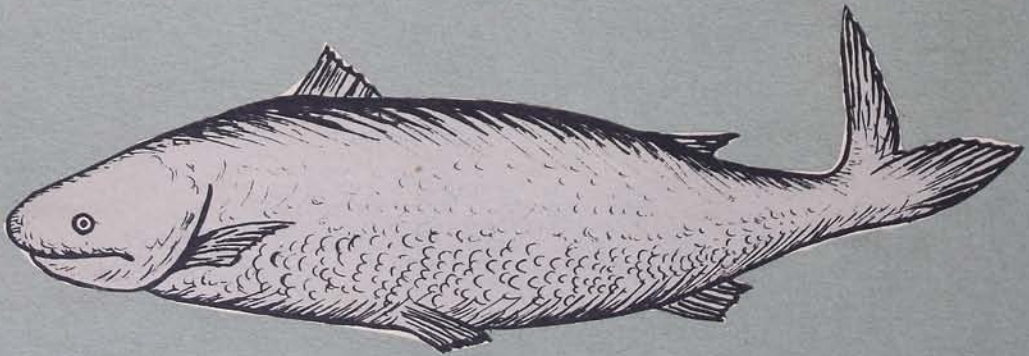
- |    |           |   |
|----|-----------|---|
| 1. | Breakfast | Akyske and eggs   |
|    | Lunch     | Palmnut soup with fish or meat and beans.<br>serve with fufu. Fruit. Orange |
|    | Supper    | Spinach stew with fish or meat<br>serve with mbokpole                       |
| 2. | Breakfast | Boiled rice with bean stew  |
|    | Lunch     | Groundnut soup with fish or meat<br>serve with fufu. Banana                 |

- Supper      Akyeke with meat
3. Breakfast      Garri with egg and gravy  
 Lunch              Garden egg stew and boiled cassava.      Orange  
 Supper              Fried fish and kenkey.
4. Breakfast      Mbokpole with eggs  
 Lunch              Garden egg soup with fish  
                             serve with fufu.      Pawpaw  
 Supper              Boiled rice and fresh fish stew.
5. Breakfast      Boiled cassava and fried fish with gravy  
 Lunch              Bean stew and boiled rice.      Pineapple.  
 Supper              Akyeke with meat stew
6. Breakfast      Ngalekele (suggested recipe)  
 Lunch              Palm soup with fish and serve with fufu.      Banana  
 Supper              Kenkey and Palmtree stew.
7. Breakfast      Mbokpole with eggs  
 Lunch              Spinach stew with Garri.      Orange  
 Supper              Boiled rice and fish stew.

# FOOD ITEMS



Snail.



Fish.

## CHAPTER 11

### HOUSECRAFT IN THE NZEMA REGION

Housecraft is the scientific system of cooking, laundering and caring for the home. It is the essential planning of meals for the household based on the principles of nutrition, the correct treatment of various everyday fabrics used in the home and the importance of providing for the physical well-being of its inmates.

It is therefore considered an essential scheme to establish institutions for the teaching of housecraft to girls in middle schools, secondary schools and training colleges. A central institution serving a number of schools is considered economical both from the aspects of finance and staff.

In the Nzema region only a few schools benefit from this scheme which is widespread in other regions.

At Axim, through the effort of a keen Roman Catholic Priest, a housecraft centre has been established which caters for three local schools; namely, the Roman Catholic, to which the centre is attached, the Methodist and the Anglican.

In the past when there were few girls in the middle schools at Axim three classes could be easily combined without difficulty but, with the present increase of girls in the schools, the housecraft classes are growing larger and larger which brings up a problem of having either two centres at Axim or a housecraft branch in each school. At present the average number on roll in the lower middle schools

is 37, which is against the housecraft regulation of not having more than 20 in a class.

There is another housecraft centre at Essiama Methodist Middle School, which also caters for Kikam Methodist School. The numbers in the combined classes are as follows:

	Essiama	Kikam
Form 1	9	10
" 2	8	1
" 3	11	10
" 4	5	4

There is no problem here as far as the number on roll is concerned.

Apart from these two housecraft centres in the whole of Nzema region, all the other schools have no facilities of affording girls a training in housecraft. Plans are being made to open a centre at Half Assini. As a matter of fact, the building is ready but there are no funds for equipment and that has been the main cause of the delay.

On the whole, the Nzema region has been neglected for quite a long time where the teaching of housecraft is concerned. The Local Councils responsible for the implementation of this scheme have not enough funds to meet the needs of the local schools.

## CHAPTER 12

### SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

This research into the life and food of the Nzema people has been very interesting. It would be wrong to conclude that conditions are either good or bad. There are some good points which are commendable as well as some very poor conditions which require immediate improvement.

#### Housing

Houses and huts in some towns and villages are far from satisfactory. The sizes of these houses and huts in some cases are too small for the number of people using them. Where there are about eight or nine to a room of 15 feet by 12 feet it is obvious that there is congestion. Apart from that, the windows measuring  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet are too small and make ventilation most unsatisfactory.

Houses with thatched roofs are damp and wet during rainy seasons.

It is suggested that in all villages and towns building inspectors should be sent round from the local councils to give help to the people in the planning of the layout of the village or town and in the building of the houses. A special campaign should be undertaken to advise the people on good ventilation and the expansion of the present huts to good sizes of living rooms; there should also be the installation of large windows with shutters.

#### Bath shelters

Some of these bath shelters need to be properly fenced and the floors cemented. One side of these bath shelters

should be roofed so that the covered side could be used during the rainy season.

#### Kitchen

Cooking on the compound is not satisfactory and there should be a campaign by the National Food and Nutrition Board to discourage this practice. As it is, dust and germs are blown into the food prepared on the compound. Domestic animals are always in the way.

#### Latrines.

There should be some privacy in the use of latrines and the suggestion is to provide the pit latrines with partitions so that visitors to these latrines are not seen by their fellow visitors. Covers must be provided for the pit latrines.

#### Diet and Health

In order to improve the diet and health of the Nzema people, it is suggested that housecraft centres should be made available to all girls in Middle Schools. Demonstration of the preparation of food should be organized by the National Food and Nutrition Board for the illiterate women: during the writer's study, a great number of women made this request. These women have no idea of how some kinds of dishes are prepared.

The teaching of housecraft in all its branches should be one of the important parts of the school curriculum for girls. All girls, whether in towns or villages must be taught the elements of hygiene, nutrition and health, and this can

be done through housecraft. It must be remembered that girls are potential housewives and mothers, and through this important training at school, choice of food, the standard of cooking and home management will be greatly improved.

The Agriculture Department has a great part to play if the standard of the peoples' diet is to be improved. Farmers need to be educated in the planting of their foodstuffs and the correct time for planting.

In certain areas in the Nzema region - places like Eamiankoh, Teleku Bukazo, Salima and their neighbouring villages - banana is substituted for plantain for fufu because there is the view that plantain cannot be grown in this area. This is not correct because some Akwapim farmers in this same area have been able to grow plantain quite successfully.

The whole truth is that the Nzemas in this area plant their plantain at the wrong time and before the young plantain plants could stand firmly by the roots they are blown down by heavy tornadoes. These farmers require the guidance of the Agricultural Officers to safeguard their crops and to eradicate the superstition that the natives cannot grow plantain successfully.

The size of food farms is too small and the food crops on these farms are consumed within a very short time. The farms should be increased in size and if possible the Agricultural Department should make tractors available to farmers to prepare the ground for planting. This will help the farmers a great deal since they are not physically strong

owing to their poor diet.

The ~~Workers~~ Brigade in the Nzema area should grow more food to feed themselves and also to assist the neighbouring villages by selling to them their food crops at reasonable prices.

School children should also grow vegetables on their school farms for use in their own homes and also for sale.

#### Water Supply.

Where people depend on streams for their water supply, the streams should be dug deep and cement walls built at the banks so that people might stand behind the walls to draw water instead of standing in the streams to do so. There must be some restriction against the use of unclean buckets for drawing water. The Rural Water Supply Department should give the necessary guidance.

#### Food Bars

Conditions in food bars are not hygienic, especially in the villages. Fufu and soup are prepared by the wayside where plenty of dust is blown into the food by the traffic on the roads. The Local Councils should insist that food is prepared inside the kitchen of the food bars and not outside and that all food must be covered.

Food vendors should also cover their food and special laws should be made to enforce this subject to some penalty if the laws are broken.

#### Hospitals and Health Centres

In the whole Nzema region there is only one hospital

at Axim with one Medical Officer. This appalling paucity of enlightened medical attention in an area so extensive as Nzema makes it impossible for many patients, and discourages many, to seek medical aid. Some of the sufferers expire long before reaching the Medical Officer. It would be very helpful if hospitals could be built at Half Assini, Beyin and Nkroful to serve the immediate needs of the people instead of their having to travel long distances before getting to a health centre and then to be advised sometimes to go to the Medical Officer at Axim.

The Red Cross Mobile Clinic and health centres are doing their best in some villages but there is still more to be done. What the villagers need are resident dispensers to render first-aid in cases of emergency.

Lectures on childwelfare and demonstrations on feeding of babies should be regular, and occasional prizes awarded to healthy babies will give some encouragement to nursing mothers.

#### Care of Children

Parents of young children should be extra careful in the feeding and general care of their children. Regular meals must be given to the growing children, and through the lectures suggested the right type of food to be given will be taught to the ignorant and illiterate mothers.

Cleanliness must be stressed in the lectures at the clinics and washing of children should be done by responsible parents and not by older children who are not competent to do it.

Day nurseries in the villages would be a step forward to improve the dull life among the village communities and would also help to check the rate of infantile mortality.

## CHAPTER 13

### SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

#### Conclusions.

1. One outstanding feature in the study of the Nzema people is the low population of men in the villages as compared with women and children. The writer had the privilege to join a team from the National Food and Nutrition Board taking census of the people in two Nzema villages. Here are the figures of the census.

<u>BAMIANKOH</u>	- Boys from 1 day to 15 years	...	196
	Men - 16 years upwards	...	57
	Girls from 1 day to 15 years	...	90
	Women from 16 years upwards	...	123
<u>SALIMA</u>	- Boys from 1 day to 15 years	...	81
	Men from 16 years upwards	...	29
	Girls from 1 day to 15 years	...	70
	Women from 16 years upwards	...	77

2. Owing to the slow development of the Nzema region, a majority of the men have travelled to other regions to seek employment. A large number of them are working at Tarkwa, Prestea, Bibiani and other mining places as Goldsmiths and miners.

Some of the women live with only their children while their husbands live abroad and visit home occasionally. The unmarried young men come home when they have saved enough money to seek their partners and get married.

This unhappy situation explains why the food farms are

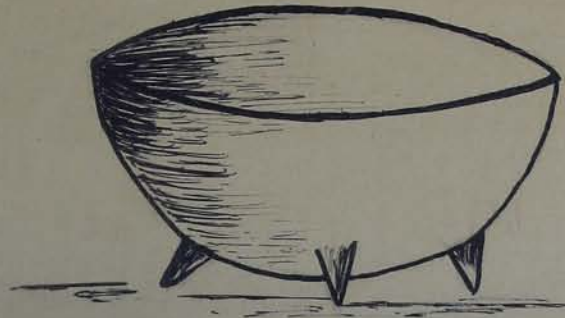
small as the women alone cannot till large tracts of the land. They need the assistance of the men in manual work.

Another outstanding problem is the strong interest in acquiring wealth in the form of gold ornaments and expensive clothing stored for annual festivals. There seems to be some sort of competition amongst the Nzema women in personal wealth, and women prefer to save their money for such material things than to spend it on nourishing food.

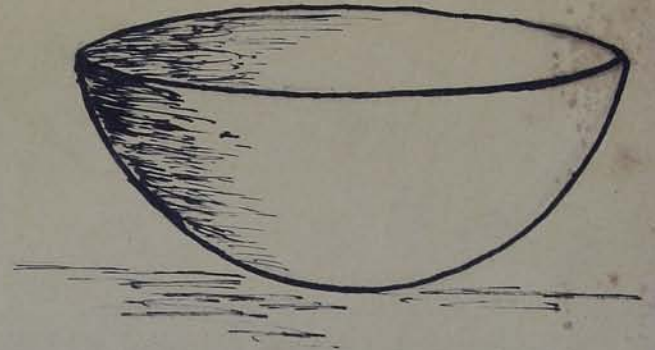
3. In the past Nzema parents insisted on the early marriage of their daughters and it was considered a waste of time for a girl to continue to attend school after the age of puberty. Girls had to leave school to get married and the number of girls in the schools decreased as they reached the upper classes. This practice is gradually dying out and it is hoped that mass education will alter the views of parents on this matter and educate their minds on the need for girls' education in Nzema.

# COOKING APPARATUS.

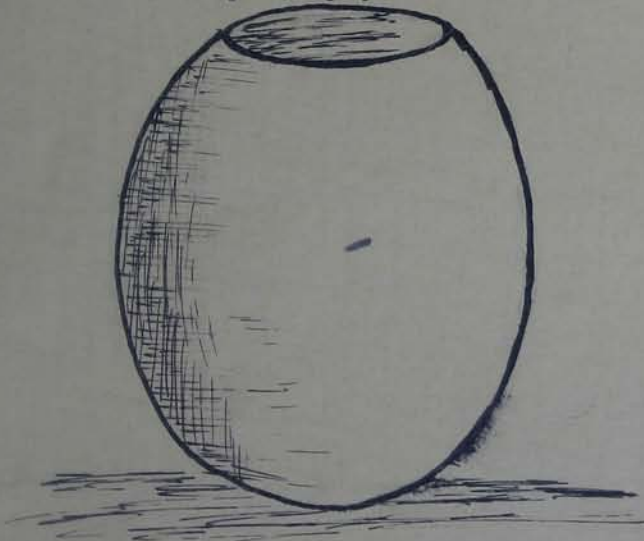
Earthenware Bowl



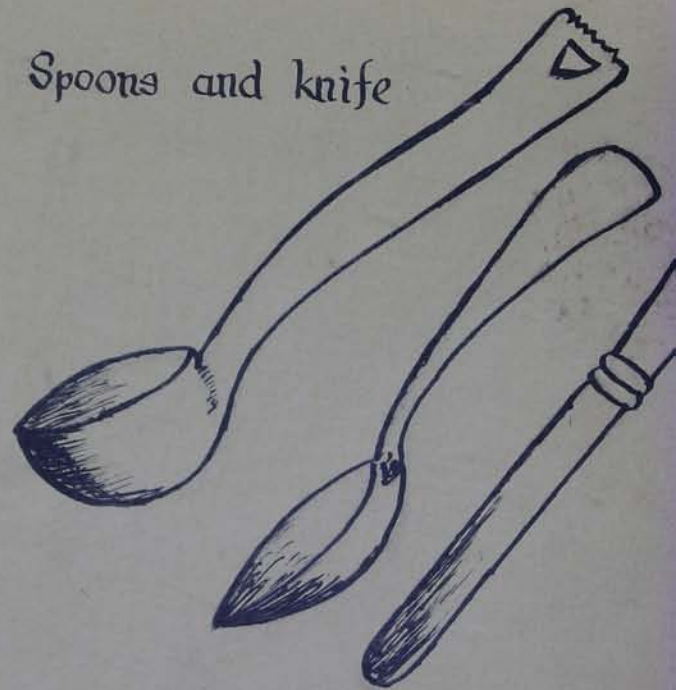
Earthenware Bowl



Pot for water



Spoons and knife



Fan and broom.

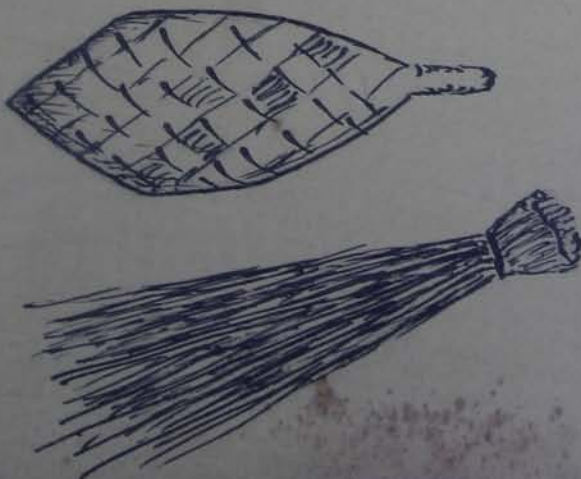
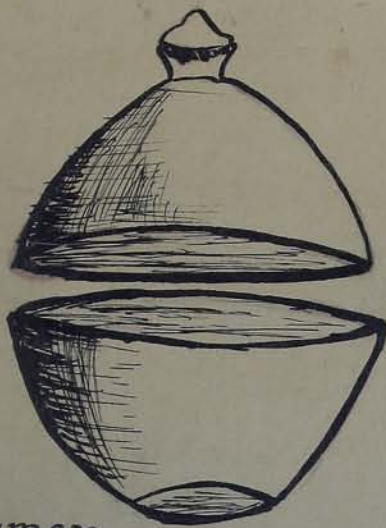


Table for meals.

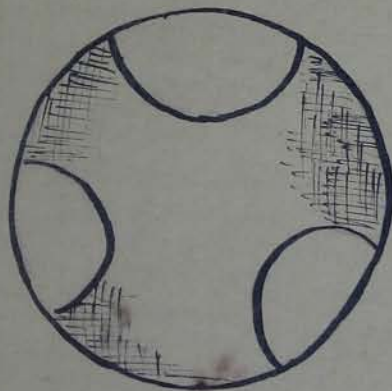




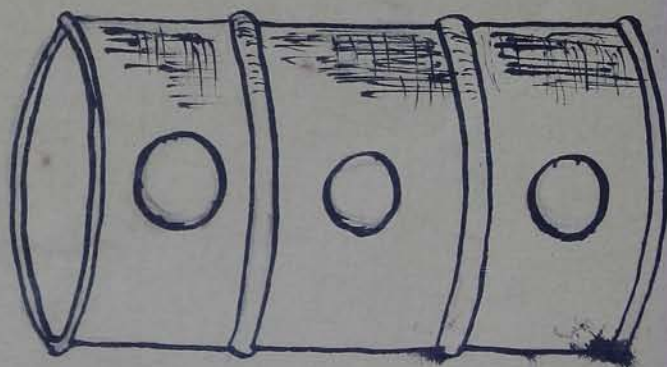
Steamer



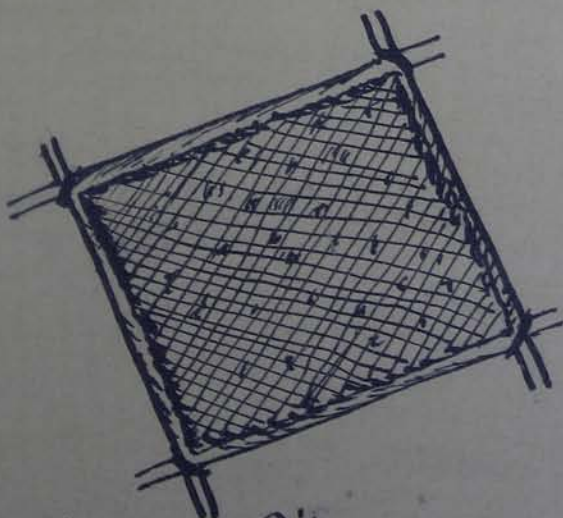
Iron pot



Lid of steamer



Drum for steaming  
(improvised)



Native Sieve



Soup Pot.

# PREPARATION OF AKYEKE.

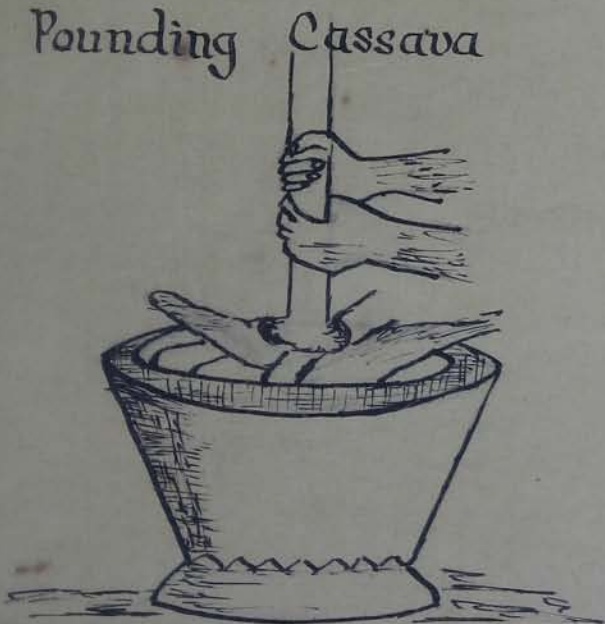
Peeling Cassava



Washing Cassava



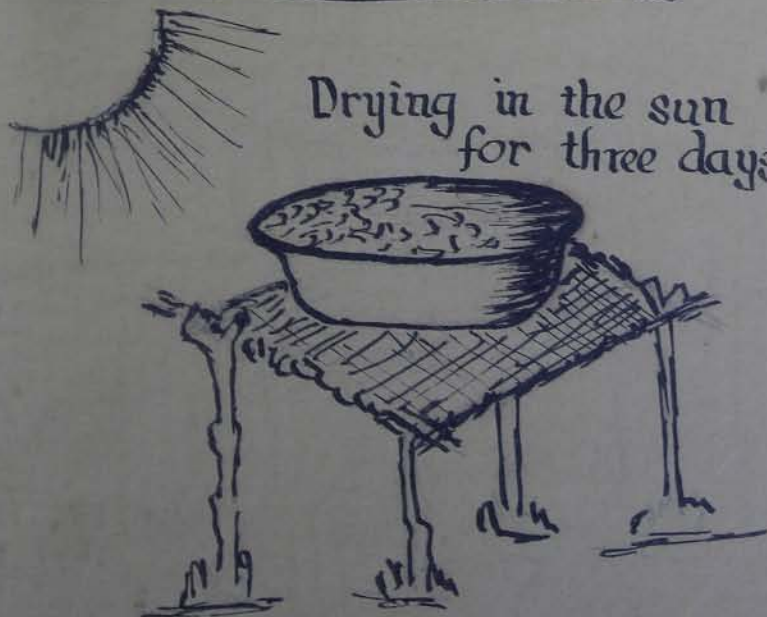
Pounding Cassava



Cassava pulp in a basket.



Drying in the sun  
for three days



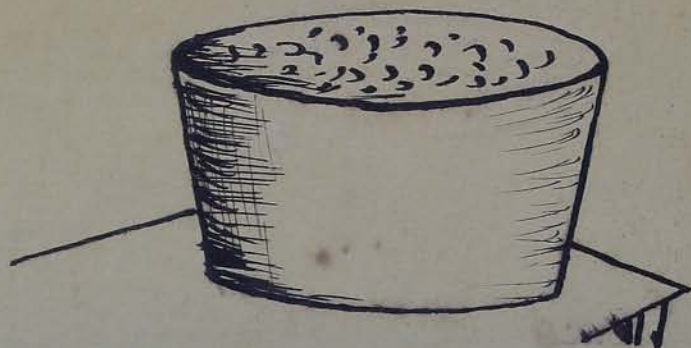
Pounding  
again after  
three days.



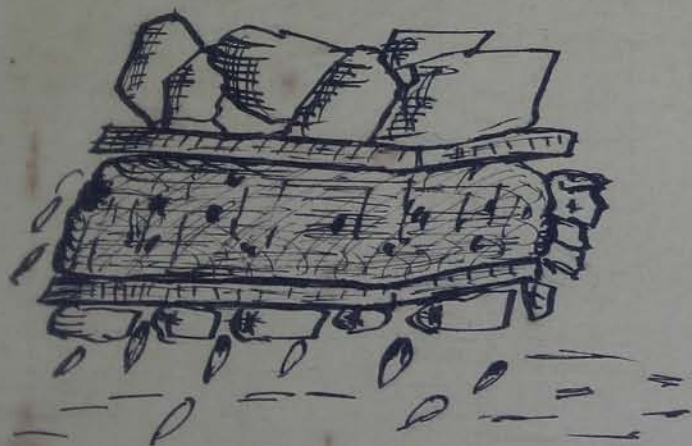
Mixing with water



Leave to stand for eight hours



Put cassava pulp in a sack under weight.



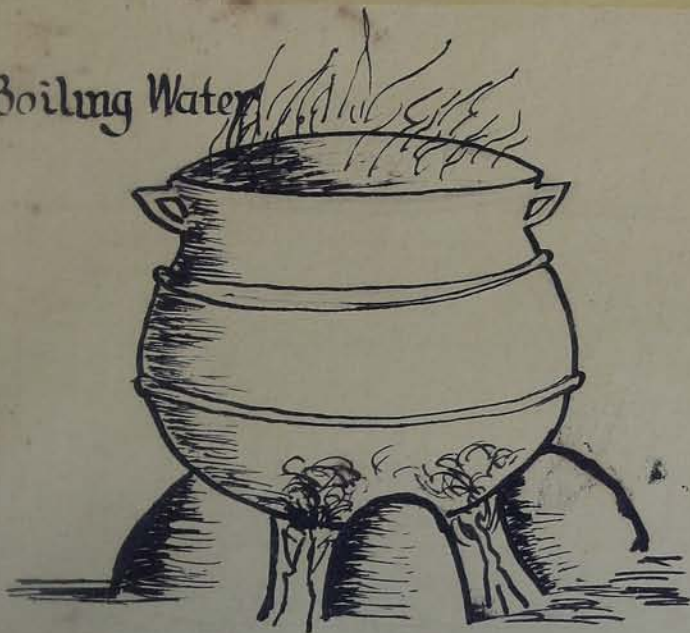
Drying in the sun



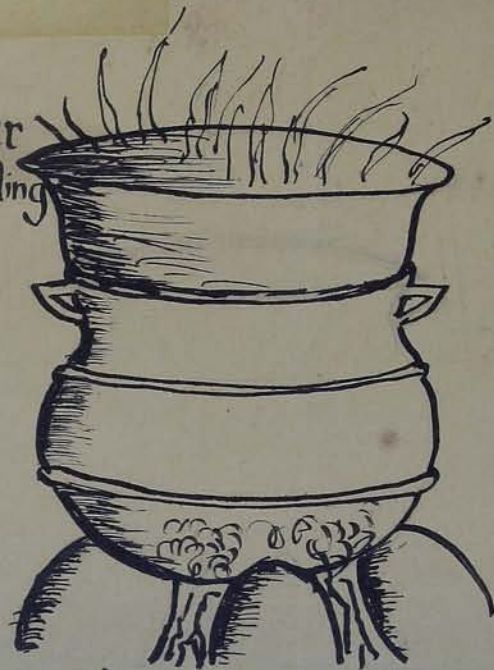
Sieving cassava meal.



Boiling Water



Steamer  
over boiling  
water



Cloth over boiling water.



Steaming  
Akyeke



Akyeke in a bowl.



Adding oil and salt to  
akyeke.

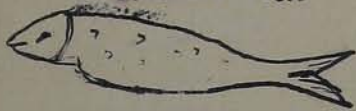


# PALMNUIT SOUP.

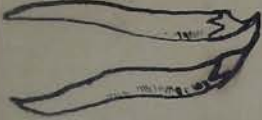
MEAT



SMOKED FISH



PEPPER



SALT



ONIONS



TOMATOES



PALMNUITS



SALTY BEEF



CRABS



Cooking of Palmnuts



Pounding of Palmnuts and mixing with water



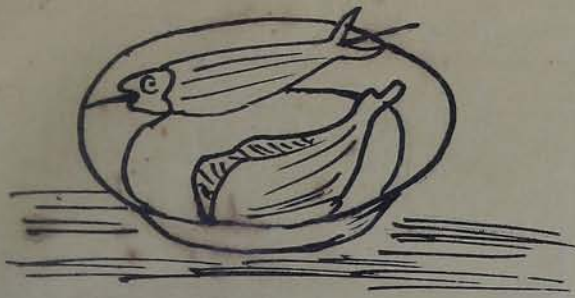


Straining of Palmtree liquid into soup pot



Adding fish meat and tomatoes to soup

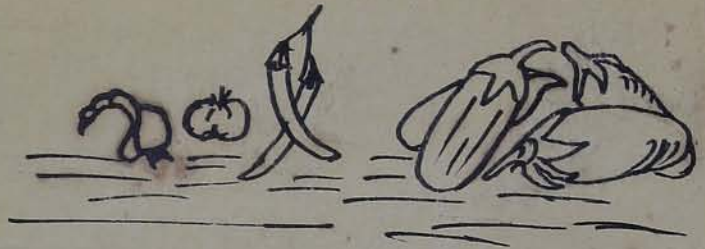
# GARDEN-EGG SOUP.



Fish and Meat



Salty Beef



Onions Tomato Pepper & Garden eggs



A Crab

Wash garden-eggs and pepper



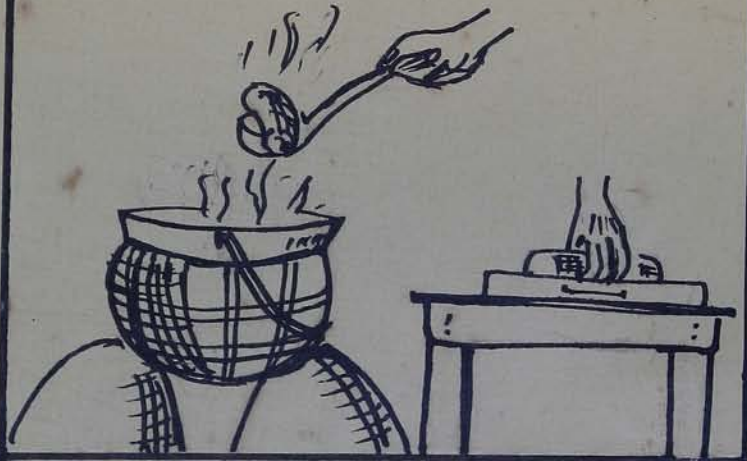
Boil garden-eggs and pepper



Add fish  
and meat



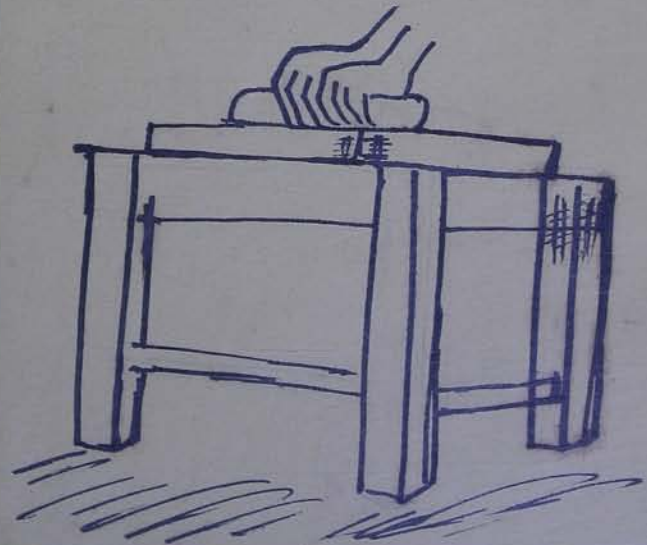
Remove garden eggs and grind



Remove tomato and grind



Grind



Wash crab, salty-beef  
and herrings



Put into soup Pot

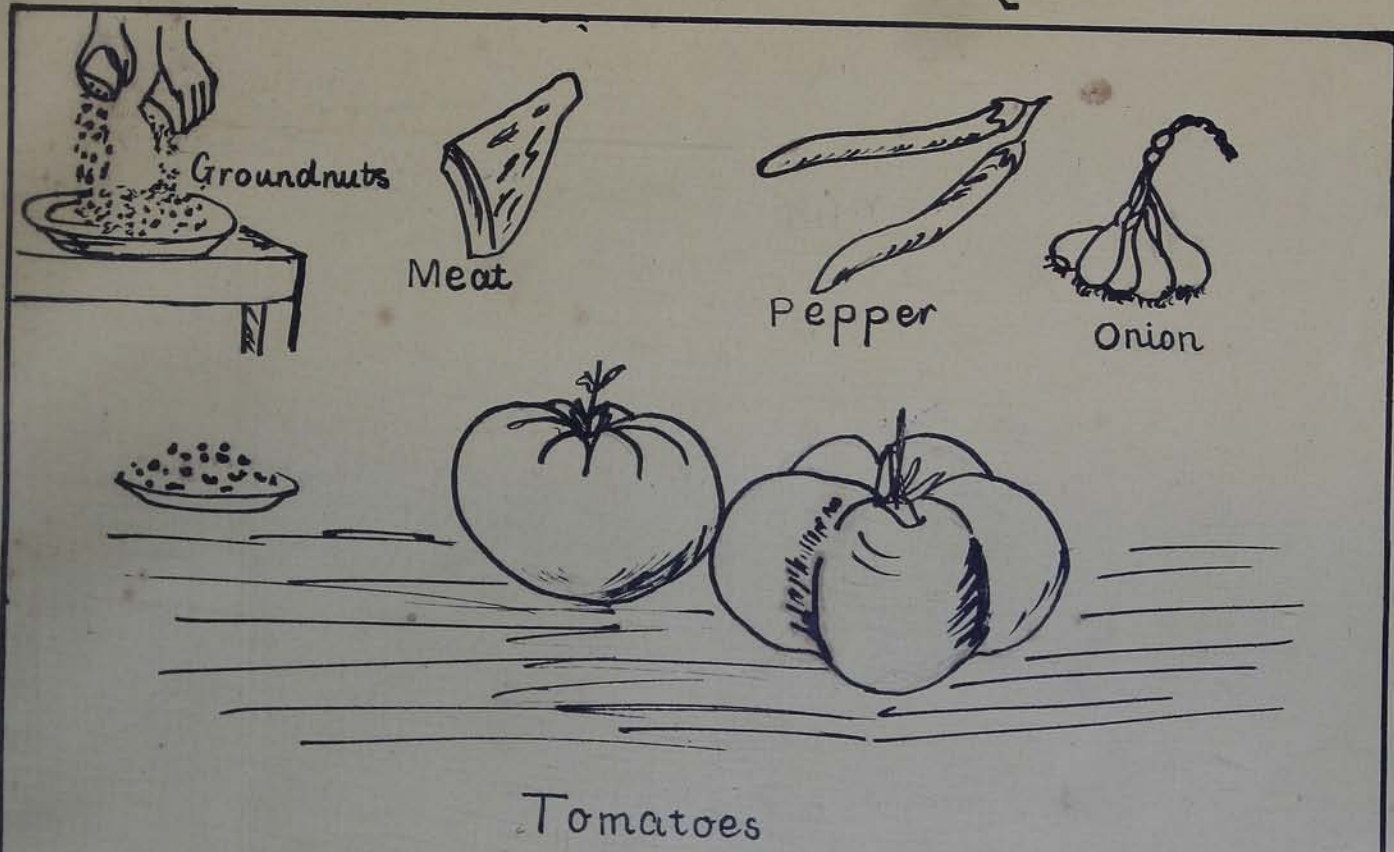


Add sufficient water,  
tomatoes and sliced onions

Put on fire



# GROUNDNUT SOUP



Cut meat into small pieces



wash meat



Put meat and sliced onion and salt into soup pot



Add enough water for Soup



Add ground pepper



Mix groundnut paste with water and add to soup



Add ground tomatoes to taste



## A P P E N D I X

### SOME NZEMA RECIPES WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

#### (A) Akyeke

##### Original recipe and method of preparation

Recipe:        1 lb Cassava  
                   $\frac{1}{2}$  pt. palm oil  
                  salt to taste.

- Method
1. Peel and wash cassava.
  2. Pound cassava and put cassava pulp in a basket lined with banana leaves. Cover with banana leaves and leave in the sun for three days.
  3. On the third day pound cassava pulp again and put in a lined basket for another three days.
  4. On the sixth day pound cassava pulp again and put in a lined basket as before and dry for three days making nine days in all.
  5. On the ninth day mix with 1 pint of water early in the morning and leave to stand till late in the afternoon for about eight hours.
  6. Put cassava pulp and liquid in a clean sack and tie the end very tightly.
  7. Place sack under heavy stones to press out the liquid for a day.
  8. Next day put cassava meal in a large clean bowl and dry in the sun.
  9. Sieve when dry.

##### Steaming

10. Boil some water in a cooking pot
11. Place an enamel bowl with an open bottom over boiling water. Place some sticks over bowl

- and spread a clean sack cloth on the sticks
12. Sprinkle sufficient cassava meal on the sack cloth and fold in the ends of the cloth.
  13. Steam until cassava meal is cooked but stir every few minutes to prevent Akyeke from getting sticky.
  14. When cooked remove from boiling water and add salt and palm oil.

Improvements suggested

(a) Akyeke with eggs

Recipe: 4 oz. Akyeke  
1 or 2 eggs  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground pepper  
salt to taste.

- Method: 1. Prepare akyeke according to illustrated recipe (see back page)
2. When the akyeke is cooked, add beaten eggs seasoned with salt and pepper and stir over fire for a few minutes to cook the egg. (The egg will supply the body building protein).

(b) Akyeke with meat. (Beef, mutton or game)

Recipe: 8 oz. Akyeke  
3 oz. meat  
1 onion  
1 fresh tomato  
1 teaspoonful ground pepper  
salt to taste.

- Method: 1. Wash and cut meat into small pieces, season with salt and fry in coconut oil until tender.
2. Slice onion and tomato and fry them together with pepper and salt. Add fried meat and then stir in the Akyeke after it has been steamed; then serve.

B. Mbokpole

Original recipe and method of preparation.

Recipe: 8 ozs. Cassava

Method: The method for preparation is the same as that of Akyeke from number 1 to number 9.

Steaming

1. Boil some water in mbokpole steamer.
2. Line a cone-shaped steamer with a perforated bottom with a strip of banana leaf.
3. Put enough cassava meal in the steamer and place over boiling water. Cover it.
4. Steam for ten minutes.

Suggested improvements

(a) Mbokpole with fish

Recipe: 4 ozs. cassava meal  
2 ozs. flaked fish (steamed)  
salt and pepper to taste

Method: 1. Mix flaked fish with cassava meal  
2. Add salt and pepper to taste  
3. Half fill mbokpole steamer with the mixture  
4. Steam.  
Serve.

(b) Mbokpole with beans (cassava meal with beans)

Recipe: 4 ozs. cassava meal  
1½ ozs. boiled beans  
Salt and pepper to taste.

Method: 1. Mash beans and season with salt and pepper  
2. Add cassava meal to beans and mix thoroughly.

3. Steam in mbokpole steamer.

Serve with any kind of soup.

C. NGALEKOLE

Original recipe and method of preparation

Recipe: 8 ozs. cassava dough  
salt to taste. 1 pt. palm oil or coconut oil.

- Method:
1. Mix dough with salt to taste
  2. Place the oil on a steady fire in a saucepan.
  3. When there is a blue smoke rising from the oil, drop in small balls of cassava dough (deep frying)
  4. Fry until golden brown
  5. Drain and then serve with fried fish.

Suggested improvement

Recipe: 8 ozs. cassava dough  
3 ozs. steamed fish  
salt to taste  
1 oz. margarine  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoonful pepper  
1 pt. coconut oil.

- Method:
1. Remove bones from steamed fish and flake
  2. Mix cassava dough and flaked fish
  3. Add margarine, pepper and salt to taste.
  4. Make the mixture into small balls
  5. Heat the oil and fry the balls until golden brown.
  6. Drain and serve.

D. BEDEKUMA

Original recipe and method of preparation

Recipe: 1 lb cassava  
salt to taste

Method: Wash and peel cassava.

2. Grind cassava into a dough
3. Mix dough with salt to taste
4. Put large lumps into boiling water to cook
5. Serve with soup or stew.

Suggested improvement

Bedekuma and beans soup.

Recipe: 8 ozs. cassava  
4 beans powder (ground dried beans)  
1½ pts. palm nut liquid  
2 ozs. salt beef  
1 crab  
1 onion, pepper to taste  
1 large tomato  
salt to taste.

- Method:
1. Wash and grind cassava into dough
  2. Mix dough with bean powder and season with salt.
  3. Put palm nut liquid on fire and add sliced onion and ground pepper, and tomato and salt.
  4. Wash crab thoroughly, break fingers and edible parts and add to soup.
  5. When soup is partly cooked, drop in large lumps of cassava and bean mixture.
  6. Let it boil gently until dumplings are done.
  7. Serve.

E. TAATAA

ORIGINAL RECIPE AND METHOD OF PREPARATION.

RECIPE: 1 lb corn dough  
1/4 pt. palm oil.  
1 Teaspoonful salt.

Method: 1. Plantain leaves.

METHOD: 2. 1. Mix dough with salt and palm oil.  
2. Put mixture in plantain leaves and wrap, folding in the two ends.  
3. Bake in a moderately hot oven.  
4. Remove leaves and serve.

Suggested improvement

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT.

RECIPE: 1 lb corn dough.  
2 ozs. white flour.  
1 oz margarine.  
1 oz granulated sugar.

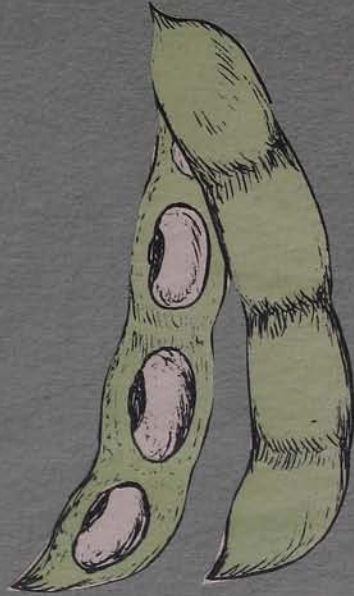
Method: 1. Plantain leaves.

METHOD: 1. Rub flour and margarine with finger-tips until it looks like bread-crumbs.  
2. Add sugar and then the corn-dough.  
3. Put about two table spoonfuls in plantain leaves and wrap.  
4. Bake in a moderately hot oven.  
5. Remove leaves and serve with soup.

# SOURCE OF VITAMINS.



Tomatoes.



Beans.



Green leaves.

F. MGBOTELEBA.

RECIPE: 6 ozs. corn dough.  
1 large crab  
or  
lobster  
2 smoked herrings.  
2 ozs. salt beef  
1 tomato  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  pt. palm oil.  
salt to taste  
peper to taste.

METHOD: 1. Clean crab and break into pieces.  
2. Break herrings into small pieces, cut salt beef into pieces and add to crab.  
3. Cover with sufficient water and boil gently over a steady fire.  
4. Add <sup>p</sup>eper and ground tomato.  
5. Divide dough into two and use half in making small dumplings.

DUMPLING:

Season half dough with salt.  
Make into small balls and press deeply the middle.  
Drop into soup and boil until cooked.  
6. Mix the remaining half of dough with water and strain into soup.  
7. Add palm oil and season with salt.  
8. Stir and leave to simmer until porridge is cooked.  
9. Serve as a complete fish.

# FOOD ITEMS.



Lobster.



Crab.

## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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2. Clinic Nutrition by N. Jolliffe
3. Tropical Nutrition and Dietetics by L. Nicholls.
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5. An African Survey Revised 1956 by Lord Hailey.  
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K.A. Busia, M.A., D.Phil.
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16. Food, Health and Income by J.B. Orr.
17. A Health Nutrition and Parasitological Survey in a  
Rural Village in Gambia by I.A. McGregor & D.S. Smith

## V I S I T S

1. Visits to Axim Hospital and Housecraft Centre.
2. Visit to Kikam Health Centre
3. Visits to Essiama School and Oil Factory
4. Visit to Inkroful
5. Visit to Telekubukazō
6. Visit to Tikobu No.1 Health Centre
7. Visits to Half Assini
8. Visit to Eamiankoh with a team from the National Food  
and Nutrition Board.
9. Visits to Salima with a team from the National Food  
and Nutrition Board.