

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE AMONG THE ASANTE

a study undertaken in the course of the
Ashanti Social Survey (1945)

T. E. Kyei



CAMBRIDGE AFRICAN MONOGRAPHS 14

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Thomas E. Kyei, the author of this monograph, was seconded from his teaching post to participate in the *Ashanti Social Surveys* Principal Research Assistant and Field Officer in charge of the organisation of the section on marriage and divorce. He was responsible for the collection of the relevant information and then wrote the following compilation and analysis. Afterwards he took a degree in anthropology at Oxford. Now in his eighties, he continues to work on the analysis of the materials collected during the project.

The Centre would like to express its thanks to Ludgard De Decker for her editorial and typesetting work.

Keith Hart
Director

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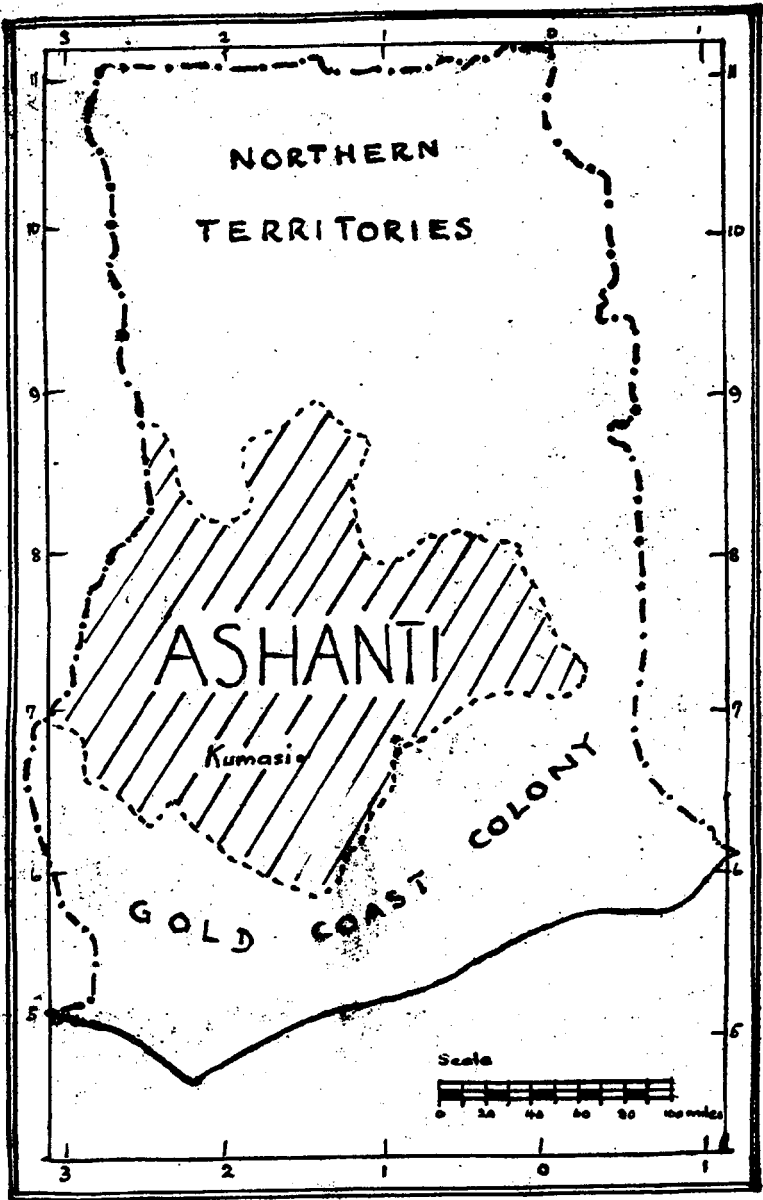
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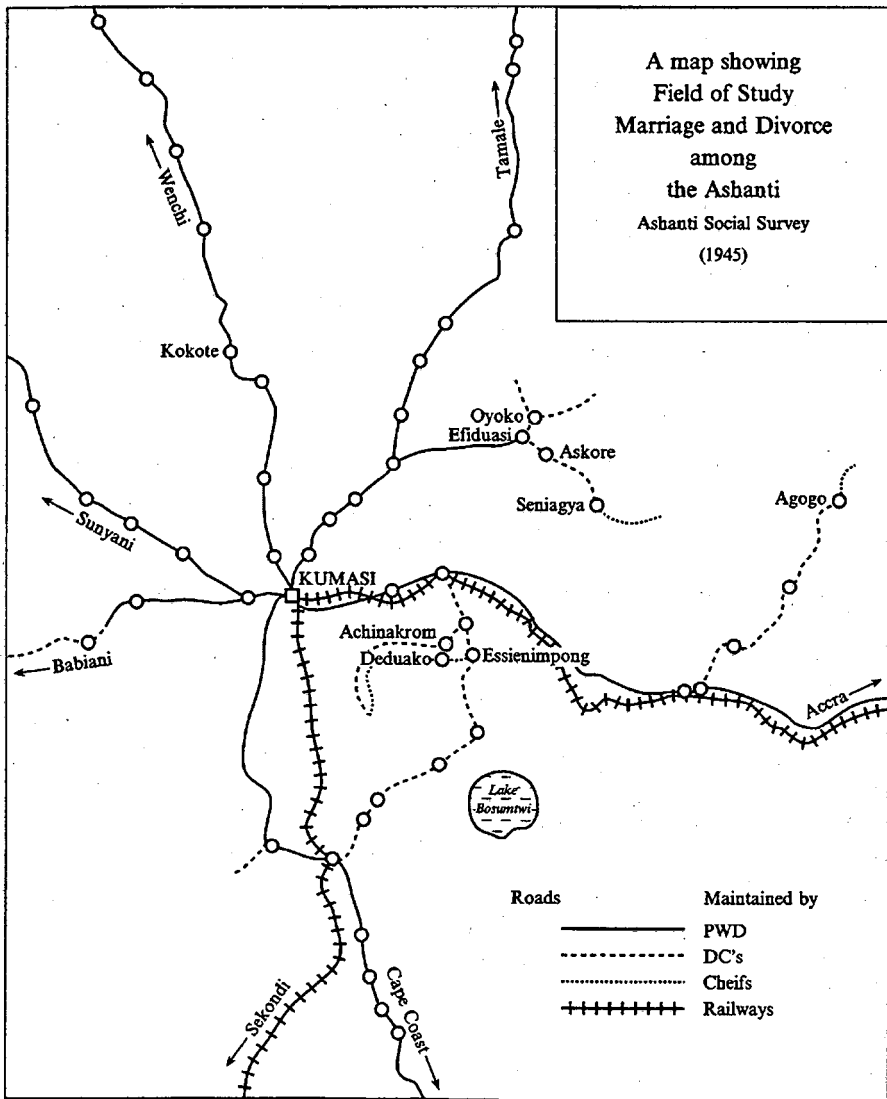
**To
the late
Professor Meyer Fortes**

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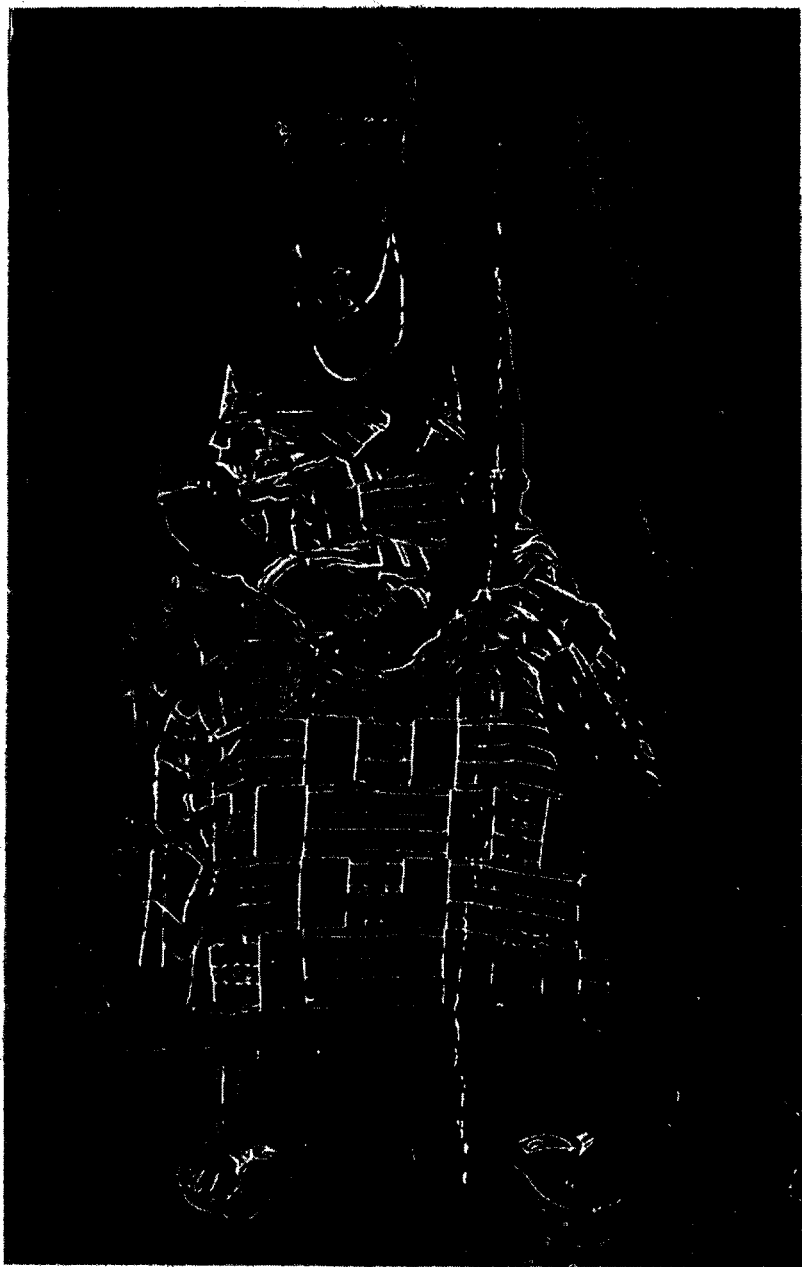
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A map showing
 Field of Study
 Marriage and Divorce
 among
 the Ashanti
 Ashanti Social Survey
 (1945)



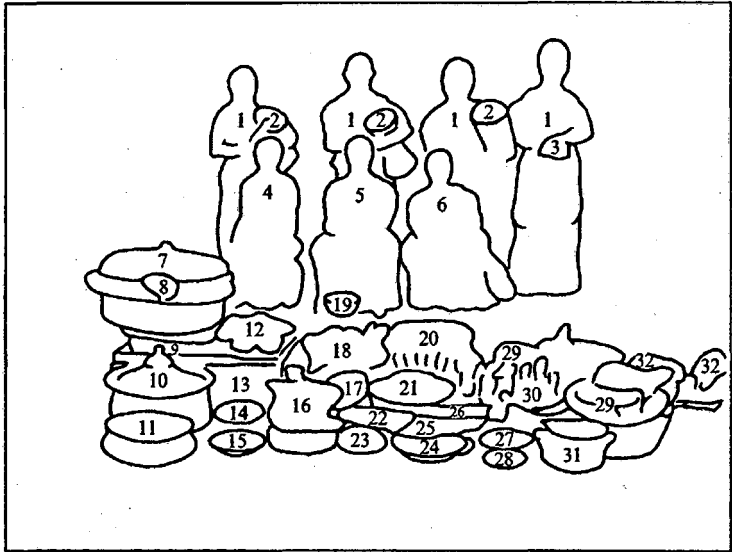
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A girl's nubility-ceremony presents from her parents, relatives and friends, including articles for ANO-KA (mouth-touching rite)

1. 'DONNO' (drum) drummers
- 1a. hoe (accompaniment) striker
2. 'DONNO' drums
3. ASÔ (hoe)
4. the girl's mother's mother
5. the girl celebrating her nubility
6. the girl's mother
7. a brass basin containing cloths
8. 30 sets of cloths, including 3 NWENTAMA (local loom cloths)
9. a second brass basin
10. 30 headkerchiefs
11. a bowl containing 100 eggs
12. a flat basin containing 12 lengths of 'shame' cloth (AMOASEE)
13. 'air-tight' cabin trunk containing outer wear and apparel
14. a calabash containing 6 sponges and TOO-BÉTÊ (traditional towel)
15. a plate containing lime fruits
16. a brass bowl containing one white bath towel, chewing sponge, 4 toilet soap bars, 4 bars pale soap
17. a basin containing 12 talcum powder and 12 bottles of assorted lavender water
18. 1 bunch of APANTUN (large hand) plantain
19. a medium-size brass bowl containing water and ADWERA leaves into which cash gifts were deposited
20. 1 bunch of APEM (small hand) plantain
21. a brass basin containing 12 sets of assorted waist beads (NTÔMA)
22. a plate containing chewing sticks
23. a plate containing APATRE (fish) and 1 ÔTWE-SERÊ (thigh of a duiker)
24. a plate containing pepper
25. a plate containing 24 bulbs of onion
26. a plate containing beans and garden eggs
27. a plate containing table salt
28. a plate containing leaf tobacco cut into pieces
29. 30 tubers of yams
30. 6 bottles of palm oil
31. a plate containing palm nuts
32. 3 fowl



Afua... M... ee
 Wubenya ade ee
 Wubenya ade ee
 Afua... M... ee
 Wukrom mmerantee se
 Wo ho ye fe oo
 Da bi woanwu a
 Wubenya ade ee!

(Afua... M...
 You will gain riches
 You will gain riches
 Afua... M...
 The young men of your town say
 That you are a beauty
 If you do not die
 You will gain riches in future)

Editorial note

In 1989 The African Studies Centre undertook to publish the following monograph written by T.E. Kyei in 1984, a revision of a report written originally in 1946, analysing the data concerning marriage and divorce gathered in the context of the *Ashanti Social Survey*.

Because of its historical value the text has not been submitted to heavy editorial interference.

There is an important point that needs to be made on the orthography of Asante. There are seven vowels in the Asante alphabet: A, E, I, O, U, ϵ , σ . The latter two are like the Greek epsilon and the short o symbol in the phonetic alphabet, respectively. Due to the technical limitations of the desk-top publishing system used, they could not be generated and have therefore been replaced throughout by E and O .

Foreword

Thirty-nine years ago, in 1945, I, then a Secondary Division teacher on the staff of the Kumasi Government Boys' School, was seconded to a social survey that was to be carried out in Asante: the *Ashanti Social Survey* as it came to be known.

In his Introductory Remarks on the survey the leader of the research team, Dr (later Professor) Meyer Fortes stated as follows:

I want first to say something about the origin and organisation of the Ashanti Social Survey. I had long wanted to work in Ashanti. The late Captain R.S. Rattray, whom I knew well and whose profound understanding of Ashanti is more impressive to me now than it was before I went there myself, had something to do with this. The Ashanti themselves, however, were the principal magnet. Having worked with a people in the north of the Gold Coast who are still almost wholly outside the sweep of European social and economic influences, I wanted to study a people who have been caught in the full tide of social and cultural change due to western influences.

What makes Ashanti most interesting from the comparative point of view is that its native culture and social organisation have maintained their vitality, partly in opposition to the new social and economic forces, partly by adaptation to changing conditions, partly by absorbing new values and institutions. Its traditional social system is a complete contrast to that of the northern peoples. In the north I worked amongst a people who have an elaborate patrilineal kinship, gain their livelihood by subsistence farming, and dwell in extensive, dense agglomerations in which the village as a defined social and political unit is unknown. They have no governmental institutions apart from those based on the kinship structure, and no history apart from the personal memories of the old people.

The Ashanti have a matrilineal kinship system. The village is the key unit of social and political structure; their legal institutions and political organisation are amongst the most highly developed in Africa -- with the concepts of rank and chiefship in the forefront; both internal and external trade involving the use of gold currency have played an important part in their economy and their political evolution for over two hundred years; and they have a history of which they are magnificently proud and which can be documented not only by oral tradition but by the writings of early European travellers.

...

Indeed theirs is a culture appropriate to a nation state that once held power over a wide area by force of arms and has had commercial and political contacts with the West through the Coast towns for a couple of centuries. A people who had fought seven wars against the British in a century and had finally revolted against them in a surge of nation-pride to defend not their material possessions but their most sacred symbol of national unity, the Ashanti must have had a highly developed social and political organisation.

Their way of life included fine tradition of arts and crafts and oral literature on the one hand, and, on the other, the apparently inexplicable shedding of human blood on solemn ceremonial occasions. All this posed a mystery that was irresistible to an anthropologist -- the more so in the light of the avidity with which, after their final defeat, they grasped at everything European civilisation had to offer.

An opportunity arose for a field study in Ashanti when I was appointed Head of the Sociological Department of the West African Institute. The Council of the Institute not only sanctioned the project with enthusiasm but also made generous financial provision for carrying it out. This was due in no small measure to the support of the Gold Coast Government for the scheme, and in particular, to the backing of the then Chief Commissioner of Ashanti and the present Governor of British Honduras, Mr E.C. Hawkesworth, C.M.G. In the end the research turned out to be a quadri-partite affair, with the West African Institute, the Colonial Research Council (which financed Miss Ady), the Gold Coast Government, and the people of Ashanti, all contributing. Without the concurrence of the President of the Ashanti Confederacy Council, the Asantehene, and the co-operation of the village chiefs it would have been quite impossible to make any headway. Nor could we have carried out our programme without the loan of African staff and the provision of other facilities by government departments, missionary bodies and the Native Administration. During one short period we had over 40 African field staff at work. And I do want to stress that our African field staff was indispensable for the field techniques we used. Their work, I may add, proved to be of higher quality than we had anticipated, and their enthusiasm never flagged.

Both in the use made of African field personnel and in the attempts to combine the view-points of three specialised social disciplines, the Ashanti Survey represents an experiment in social research methods that has not before been tried in West Africa. I must explain why, when I put forward the scheme to my Council, I asked that an economist and

a geographer should be brought in. Previous contact with Ashanti and other West African areas undergoing similar processes of change made it clear to me that the social life of these peoples had become far too heterogeneous, the conditions too complex and the pattern of forces too fluid to be understood in terms of one social science only. It seemed to me that these societies had moved so far from integrated and balanced structures we find in the simplest subsistence societies that the major groups of factors in the social systems are now operating in relative independence of one another. I considered that this was because each group of factors had acquired a momentum of its own determined by specialised developments which are not susceptible of investigation or perhaps even grasped by the jack-of-all-trades anthropologist.

Three such relatively autonomous sets of factors seemed to me to be of outstanding importance in modern Ashanti. First, the technological factors of soil, climate, vegetation, communications, distribution of population, and so forth. These are the basis of the cocoa, mining, and timber industries which have, in 30 years, transformed the economy and thus profoundly influenced the social structure of the country. Next come the more strictly economic factors summed up in the description of cocoa as an export crop, of the mines as a source of wages for immigrant labour, and reflected in the wants of the people -- for cotton goods, galvanised iron roofs, kerosene, gin and so forth -- and the extent to which they can satisfy these wants. Finally, there is the strictly social and psychological group of factors, that is, the factors arising out of the special forms of domestic, village and political relations current in Ashanti; those that result from the occupations people have, the religions they profess, the aspirations they hold, and so forth. These factors lie behind the organisation of the labour by means of which soil and climate are exploited to produce the cocoa; they direct the use made of income; they are the links which hold the different parts of the social life together.

In Ashanti today this set of factors is an extraordinary amalgam of traditional custom, and imported western norms of behaviour. It was fortunate for the Survey, therefore, that I was able to persuade Mr Steel to take part in it, and the head of his department to release him for the work. Equally fortunate was the appointment of Miss Ady to a Colonial Research Fellowship and her decision to start her field work in Ashanti in association with us.

A word about our method of collaboration. There was no such thing as master plan within which each worker had an allotted task or

problem. Nor was there any direction. Collaboration simply emerged by reason of the fact that each worker know his job, that we were all looking at the same subject from complementary angles and had enough in common to be able to discuss our problems as they arose. In a more practical sense collaboration grew by our working in the same villages and so handling data that overlapped all the time, as you will see from our papers. You will see that we used the questionnaire method a great deal. The success we had with this method owes most to Miss Ady. Though rightly regarded with suspicion by social anthropologists, in the circumstances that now exist in Ashanti this method was fully justified as the quickest and most reliable means of gathering the quantitative data we needed.

The aim of the Survey was strictly limited. It was to get a broad, general picture of the social and political structure of Ashanti today, and to investigate in greater detail those aspects in which ecological and economic factors play a bigger part. Thus family and land tenure received a great deal of attention, whereas very little work was done on modern Ashanti religion and art.

We are not going to try to summarise the results of the Survey today, as we are still busy with the heavy task of analysing the field material. What we want to do is to give you some idea of the methods we used and of the difficulties we met with, and to indicate the kind of problems we studied.[1]

Included in my assignment as Principal Research Assistant of the Survey was a study of some aspects of marriage and divorce within the area of our operation. My task, completed in 1946 under the title *Some notes on marriage and divorce among the Ashanti* was submitted to the leader of the research team. In his book *Kinship and social order* Professor Fortes, referring briefly to the study, stated in a footnote:

... I might add that his analysis bears out a valuable eye-witness description of the ceremony made in 1945 by my field assistant, Mr T.E. Kyei, (unpublished) and kindly placed at my disposal. [2]

My attachment to the *Ashanti Social Survey* developed into a long-lasting friendship with the two men members of the team, Dr (later Professor) Meyer Fortes, the leader, and Mr (later Professor) Robert W. Steel whose

[1] From a copy of type-written notes prepared by Prof. Fortes and kindly made available to me.

[2] Meyer Fortes, *Kinship and social order*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, p.208.

retirement from his lofty post of Principal of University College of Swansea, University of Wales, took place at the end of September 1982.

During these thirty-eight years or more we kept in touch through correspondence or personal visits whenever anyone of the overseas friends happened to be in Ghana on a lecture tour, or I, meeting them in their homes each time that I had the opportunity of visiting Britain.

In two of his last letters to me, the relevant portions of which I quote below, Meyer made some reference to our work on the *Ashanti Social Survey*. In one, dated 30.5.81, which was a reply to mine sent to congratulate him on his 75th birthday, he wrote:

My dear Kyei,

I hardly know how to answer your beautiful and moving letter of May 16th which has just reached me. It is a reward worth surviving for, for 75 years, to have such letters from old friends and I thank you for yours from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for the kind things you say about me.

The real credit belongs not to me but to the teachers and guides my good fortune gave, and among them, I include you yourself. It was a tremendous stroke of luck for me when you were seconded to assist me in our research in Ashanti and my conscience often reproaches me for not bringing out more of the material we collected -- instead of devoting so much of my time and energy to the needs of students. If you and some others gained something, too, from the enterprise, it is a further reason for my gratitude. Of course advancing years have their hazards, as doubtless you yourself have also discovered and, as a matter of fact, I am at the moment still convalescing from a virulent attack of pneumonia. But Providence and the miracle of drugs of modern medicine have been on my side and that is enough for the time being.

When I count my blessings, which is often enough, I think especially of our eight grandchildren -- and remember my old friends from my Tallensi days who always used to say that the crowning glory of life is to 'reach' your grandchildren. ... In the second and the very last letter that I received from him, dated 12 October 1981, Professor Fortes wrote:

... I am delighted to hear of your plans to bring up to date the great Asona genealogy you prepared in 1945. I have placed all the material of our work at that time in the care of the Cambridge Centre for African Studies with instructions that any and all of it should be made available to serious students. I will get hold of the original chart as soon as possible and have a copy made for you.

What is needed for posterity is a history of the Asona tied in to the genealogy and that would be a splendid thing for you to devote yourself to in your retirement. A record of the changes you have seen in your own life-time would make a most valuable and interesting document.

The big question I am constantly asked is whether or not the traditional matrilineal system we found is still flourishing. Most people here seem to expect that it must be giving way to Western and Christian ideas, which would mean in the first place, that distantly related matrilineal cousins could now lawfully get married and there would be no inheritance from a man to his sister's son, but instead always to his own sons. This is the kind of question you will certainly be able to answer. I suspect that Agogo has gone the same way as has this country whose lawful marriage seems to be breaking down. This year the national statistics show that there have been more divorces in the past few years than marriages and that 1 couple in 3 are now just living together in a union without marriage. Children now live in 'one-parent families' to such an extent that one-eight of all families with young children have only one parent!

I shall send you the chart as soon as possible and I hope all goes well with your arrangements for Yaw.

With greetings and good wishes to all the family.

Yours sincerely,

M. Fortes

The expected copy of the genealogy chart never came. What was received in May 1983, after a long wait, was, regretfully, the sad news of the death of Professor Meyer Fortes, an eminent Social Anthropologist and erudite scholar who had been to me a magnetic inspirer.

The passing away of the leader of the *Ashanti Social Survey* has prompted me to undertake the publication of the result of two specific studies carried out by me under his direction and were submitted to him but remained unpublished.

Planned to be published first is this study on *Marriage and divorce among the Asante* which now includes a glossary of Asante words, expressions and proverbs used in the text.

This is to be followed by what the late Professor in his very last letter to me of 12 October 1981 referred to as 'the great Asona genealogy you prepared in 1945'.

T. E. Kyei
Kumasi
June 1984

Part I

Introduction

The penetration of the Whiteman (OBURONII) into Asante has brought in its train some immense and fast changing conditions. Mud and wattle walls and thatched roofs are rapidly giving way to cement blocks and corrugated iron sheets; chapels and school buildings are ousting shrines and sacred groves of ABOSOM (fetishes); motor-roads are chasing out footpaths into remote places; the ubiquitous cocoa -- THEOBROMA CACAO, the vanquisher of forests - - reigns supreme and continues to extend its domain into the densest forests believed some fifty years ago to be the abodes of SASABONSAM (forest monster), MMOATIA (dwarfs), wild beasts and other dreaded monsters; and, not the least, the white-collar has almost completely replaced ÔDANTA (loin cloth worn by Asante men).

These and other changes, too numerous to be fully catalogued here, are affecting directly and indirectly the customs, beliefs and traditional values of the Asante. How far this contact with the foreigner is affecting marriage in particular has been one of the principal objects of a special study begun in April last year (1945) as an assignment undertaken in the course of the *Ashanti Social Survey*.

A random sample of two hundred and sixty-two marriages and divorces was taken on a detailed scale in nine towns and villages, namely: Asokore, Efiduasi, Seniagya, Oyoko, Akyinakrom, Essienimpong, Deduako, Agogo and Kokote.

In Part I-A an attempt is made at a discourse on the various aspects of marriage and divorce among the Asante, some pertinent points which are underscored by facts and figures revealed in Tables I-XV in section B.

A few pertinent topics pertaining to marriage and divorce are treated briefly in Part II of the monograph, followed by a glossary of Asante words, expressions and proverbs used in the text.

A: Various aspects of marriage and divorce in Asante

1. Entering into marriage

"AWAREÊ WARE" (Marriage is a long journey)

A marriage in Asante is not only the concern of the man and the woman contracting it but of their kinfolk also. Its effects on the lineage (ABUSUA) of each partner are far-reaching and so every marriage, to be lawful, should receive the sanction and approval of the lineage-head (ABUSUA PANYIN) of both the man's and the woman's lineages. The part played by parents too is active and decisive. It is they who are ultimately responsible for the guidance of their children in choosing a suitable life partner wisely.

Before the Whiteman came the father's specific duty to his son was to train him from childhood to adolescence, marry a wife for him (ÔWARE MA NO) and buy him a gun before the young man was thrown into the stream of life. ÔBA NYINI ÔSE FIE, NA ÔNKA HÔ (a child grows up in his father's house but does not remain 'living' there all his life). If a son, as a result of his father's failure or neglect to marry a wife for him, committed adultery, the father was held responsible for the payment of the adultery fine (AYEFARE). A mother, in like manner, trained her daughter in housecraft and eagerly looked forward to the day when she would marry her properly to a desirable man. And so it was that the final word on the choice of one's spouse remained with one's parents.

A stranger may argue and say: 'But why should I allow my parents to interfere with my choice of wife or a husband? Why can't I marry any man or woman whom I love?'

Some fifty years ago every Asante child knew and was conscious that ÔPANYIN ANO YÊ ÔBOSOM (the mouth of an elderly person is a god) and so to disobey one's parents, especially one's father, was to incur the displeasure of his KRAA[1] NE N'ABOSOM (his soul and his gods). That was MMUSUO (mystical disaster) and any marriage or undertaking that was without the blessing of parents was expected to have an unhappy ending.

A young woman who had her own way and ignored her parents in her choice of a husband would have no one to appeal to for succour when she was ill-treated or improperly supported by an unapproved husband. A wise girl would therefore always make her acceptance of a proposal subject to her parents' consent: SÊ AGYA NE ÊNA PENE SO DE A, MÊWARE WO (should my father

.....

[1] See Notes on NTÔN/NTORÔ, Part II.

and my mother approve of the proposal I shall agree to marry you) she would always say to her suitor.

But now it is not uncommon to see an ÔDÊEMANII (the young of modern times) especially those in cities and in large towns taking no notice of his or her parents' objection. If the parents remain adamant the ÔDÊEMANII may leave their house and go live with his or her chosen spouse.

In choosing a wife for their son or in approving of one of his own choice, parents always take into consideration the ABUSUA (lineage) of the prospective wife, her parents and her own personal character. Marriage in Asante being exogamous parents must, in the first place, satisfy themselves that ÔYÊ NE WAREFOÔ (he is not prohibited from marrying her), i.e. that she falls outside the ring of prohibited marriages. A man will not be allowed to marry a woman of his own lineage (OBUSUANII) who shares funeral debts and expenses with him. If he is, say, an ASONA man, he will not be allowed to marry an ASONA woman. That is on the mother's side. The patrilineal ring will include the daughters of his father's brothers. [1]

The next point to consider is the parents of the future wife. Marriage is a connecting link joining two lineage groups together. Parents must, therefore, from the onset satisfy themselves that their future relations-in-law are agreeable. If the mother or the father or a near relative of the future wife proves to be quarrelsome (ÔTÔKWA-KOFOÔ), litigious (NANSOTWE-NII), ungrateful (ONNI AYÊ), greedy (ODIFUDEPÊFOÔ) or when there is any trace of YARE-BÔNEE (bad disease) such as leprosy (KWATA), fainting fits (OTWARÊ), or Cushion's syndrome (NKWANTU), the parents of the man will disapprove of the choice of their son and say: 'OFIE HÔ FO HO NTE, ENTI YÉRENTUMI MMA WONKÔ MU AWAREÊ' (the people of that house are not 'clean', we are therefore unable to consent to your marrying from there).

Afua, an old woman of about sixty whose four sons have all been successful in marrying, when interviewed as to the qualities she looked for when choosing or approving of a wife for her sons, said:

She always becomes a good wife, a young woman who is industrious (ÔDEYÔFOÔ), respectful (OBU NIPA), obedient (ÔTE KASA) and sexually faithful (ÔTE NE HO ASE). Beauty (AHOÔFÊ) is taken into consideration but it is not by any means a decisive factor.

On their part, parents of a girl would want to satisfy themselves that, among other things, their future son-in-law is industrious (OSIFOÔ), manly and potent (ÔYÊ ÔBARIMA PAA) and that his character is without blemish (NE HO NNI ASÊM).

.....

[1] See Notes on NTÔN/NTORÔ, Part II.

A girl's brothers are not mere passive on-lookers in the matter of the choice of their future AKONTAGYE (brother-in-law). It is their concern that their WÔFAASE-NOM (maternal nephews and nieces), being their future heirs, should be born of a man of brawn, brain and good character.

WUNNIM DEÊ DABI OBEDI WO ADEÊ A, HWÊ WOAKONTAGYE (should you wish to know the nature of the person who will inherit from you and take over your property in future, look at your brother-in-law)

People of the older generation disfavoured AHÔHO-WAREÊ (marrying a non-native of one's own town or village) especially where the antecedents of the person were not known. Marrying from one's own town was favoured and was very much preferred: 'OBI NWARE NE KURO-MAN-NII NNU NE HO' (No one ever married his or her towns-man/-woman and regretted it) is a proverb often quoted.

Young people are indirectly warned against AHÔHO-WAREÊ through ANASE-SÊM (Asante folktales) from which an appropriate moral can be drawn. One such is that of

a beautiful maiden who, refusing to marry several suitors from her town, one day came home from washing clothes at the riverside, excited and in high spirits with some urgent and interesting news to tell her parents: she had met a handsome young man, a stranger whom she had agreed to marry instantly, that day, that very day. She left her town hurriedly to go with the charming young man of her heart's desire, to his town.

On the way, far, far away from home, in a dense forest by a big river the beau was changed into a python (ENIN-MMRAMA). She was nearly devoured by the monster but for the timely intervention of some young man she had despised and had refused to marry whose SUMAN (talisman) had revealed to him the grave danger she was in and had helped him fly to the spot instantly to rescue her in the nick of time.

Although this parental control in the choice of their son's or daughter's spouse is losing much of its weight it nevertheless exists and any young man or woman who has any respect for his or her parents reckons with it when choosing a spouse, no matter how old he or she may be.

2. Acquisition of a wife

There are among the Asante five ways of acquiring a wife. A man may have married his wife

1. by courting and wooing -- MPENA-TWEE
2. by early childhood betrothal -- ASIWAA
3. by an offer from a paternal or maternal relative, or from a friend -- DÔ-YERÊ
4. in compliance with some customary obligation, e.g.
 - a. to inherit a widow -- KUNA-BAA
 - b. in the case of a Chief,
 - i. to marry a Stool-wife -- AYE-TÊ
 - ii. to marry female twins -- NTAA
5. as a pledge -- AWOWA-WAREÊ

Cases of each way of acquiring a wife are cited below to show how they happened.

1. MPENA-TWEE -- Courting and wooing

Case 1 (a) -- Kwadwo B., a man of about 50, chose his wife by courting:

Her mother's ÔBOSOM was celebrating his Yam-eating festival and so she and all her relatives from her father's village, N. came to A., our town. I saw her then and was charmed by her beauty. I managed to call her to a corner and told her she was beautiful. I loved her and would be happy if she would consent to marry me. She said that she would think over the matter and let me know. Some days later she told me she would agree to marry me if her parents had no objection.

Case 1 (b) -- Kwabena B. (about 65) says:

When we were children we played together and in one game of AHEN-AHEN (marriage play-acting) she was my 'wife'. She outgrew me, married and had three children. One day I had the news that she had divorced her husband. I saw her passing to the market one Wednesday morning and gave her a shilling to buy some pork for herself, adding that I would visit her that evening.

I went to her house in the evening as I had promised and asked her if it was true that she had divorced her husband. She said she had. Then I told her that I would like to marry her. She welcomed the proposal and asked me to see her people.

2. ASIWAA -- Early childhood betrothal

The marriage of girls below the age of puberty is strictly not permitted in Asante, but a girl below age may be betrothed. Her parents may consent to a future union of a man and their daughter. This may happen in two ways:

- A man may have a deep affection for a young girl under age and approach her parents for their consent to betroth her, or
- A father or mother may take the initiative by offering the daughter who is below age to a man as his future wife when she comes of age. This offer may be made as a reward for, or in appreciation of, some deed done to a parent.

Case 2 (a) -- Kwabena M. (over 80):

During the Mampong War (1874), I was at the battle front with my wife's father. I put before him that I wished to marry his daughter when she came of age. He turned round and said: 'But why do you talk of marriage at such a place as this? Do you know whether or not you will go back home to A., our town, alive?'

I told him that my request was on the assumption that I would live through and return home safely.

When the war was over and we had come back home the father sent for me. In his house he told me that I could proceed with the necessary marriage formalities if I still had the desire that the young girl be betrothed to me.

An unborn child may be betrothed even before she was out of the womb:

Case 2 (b) -- O. Yaw, (about 50):

Kwame A. (an OBUSUANII, i.e. a maternal relation, whom the informant called WÔFA, uncle) asked his friends to assist him in his wife's farm. I went with them and worked so hard that everybody there was pleased with my performance.

At the end of the day's work, WÔFA asked: 'O. Yaw, do you have a wife?' I told him that I was unmarried. Then he said 'My wife is pregnant, if she gives birth to a female child you may take her for your future wife.'

I thanked WÔFA for the offer.

Yaa D., his pregnant wife, bore a child but it was male. WÔFA called me and said, 'Yaa has had a male child but my second wife F. is also pregnant. Her child will be your wife, if female'. The second wife, F., bore Ama O. and I bought a mat, some salt, 2 yards of cloth and some shea-butter which were sent to her.

A man's obligation when his ASIWAA reaches the age of puberty is described in the Notes under BRATÔ (mashed yam at nubility ceremony).

3. DÔ-YERE -- Offered wife

A man's wife may have been offered to him by his own maternal uncle or by the parents of his spouse. The offer may be made on the ground of some deep affection for the man or for the purpose of getting some recognised good trait in him transmitted into some of the parents' descendants.

Case 3 -- Kofi N. (about 42):

I travelled to A., about 6 miles away from Kumasi, to visit my father. In the late evening he called me and his niece, Yaa N., into his room and said to me: 'My nephews are all irresponsible sorts of lads, quite incapable of looking after the affairs of my 'house' (FIE, i.e. sublineage) when I am dead and gone. I need a person of my own calibre to succeed me as the head of this 'house', and so you may marry my WÔFAASE (niece), Yaa N., so she may bear children possessing some traits of character which you have inherited from me.'

I thanked him for the offer. My father made all the necessary payments connected with the marriage on my behalf and Yaa became my wife. I have now three children with her, two boys and one girl.

4. Obligatory wife

a. KUNA-YERE -- *Inherited wife*

A widow may be, and in some cases is, inherited by the deceased husband's successor, but a dead wife of an ordinary man is never replaced.

Case 4 (a) Yaw A. (about 52):

My elder brother died about a year and a half ago. I succeeded him and inherited his property consisting of a cocoa farm which he had bought, one compound house and his wife and children. It was not necessary to perform the customary marriage formalities. All I had to do was to give an amount of 7s fee for the 'cutting' (removal) of the woman's AKYEKYERE-BASOÔ (a charm worn on the left wrist of a widow), and to buy a sheep which was slaughtered for the spirit of my dead brother.

b. *In the case of a Chief*

i. AYE-TÊ -- Customary Stool-Wife

A Chief may request the Head of a lineage of a deceased Stool-wife to replace her. When the request is made the ABUSUA PANYIN meets with the senior members of the ABUSUA and selects a young unmarried virgin from among the near relatives of the dead wife and present her to the Chief. The demand may be made at any time, either immediately after the death of a Stool-wife or some time, even some years, later.

There is no specific AYE-TÊ case on my records, but the following may be considered relevant:

Case 4 (b) i.

I was a servant of ÔBOSOM (god) TAA-KOFI of M. All the children that my wife's mother had borne had died in their infancy. Then TAA-KOFI helped her to bear my wife who survived. The Asantehene's linguist, ÔKYEAME Y. B.'s Stool has AYETÊ (Stool-wife) in her 'house'. A time came for her ABUSUAFOÔ to replace a deceased wife of the linguist. A. was then below marriageable age, but she was selected by them to replace her mother. TAA-KOFI objected and ordered that A. should be married to me, his servant. The ABUSUAFOÔ complied with the ÔBOSOM's request and sent to tell me of the god's offer. They selected another virgin who was sent to Kumasi to marry ÔKYEAME Yaw B.

ii. AHEN- NYERÊ NTA -- Female twins, customary Stool-wives

Female twins who are not blood relations of a Chief become Stool-wives.

Case 4 (b) ii. A-hene (about 80):

As soon as the female twins NTA were born their ABUSUA PANYIN (Head of their lineage) sent to inform me. Presents were sent to them and they were treated from that moment as my wives. When they became marriageable and the necessary Nubility Ceremony had been performed, they came to stay at AHEMFIE (Chief's palace).[1]

5. AWOWA-YERE -- A wife married when given as a pledge

Before the practice of pledging human beings was prohibited, a young girl could be given as a security to a money-lender for a loan raised to pay some debt incurred by either her brother, her WÔFA (mother's brother) or some near maternal relative. It often did happen that money-lenders decided to marry some of the girls when they reached marriageable age. All formalities necessary for establishing a lawful marriage had to be observed by the money-lender-husband. When that was done the status of the pledged woman as a servant automatically changed to that of a free wife with all the rights and privileges of a woman properly married under the Asante customary laws.

6. A way of acquiring a wife which no longer exists.

For its historical interest only it is worth mentioning that before the slave trade was abolished in Asante, some men married some of the women slaves they bought or took captive in a war. In some cases some of the women were married to the man's nephews or sons. Children born out of such marriage,

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[1] See Notes on BRA-GORÔ, Part II.

as well as their mother, became adoptive members of the master's lineage. They were treated and regarded as members of the lineage but with certain reservations, the most jealously guarded one of which was that of inheritance. In consequence, none of the children nor any of their descendants was, except under a very special and very rare circumstance, eligible for appointment to the leadership of the ABUSUA, as ABUSUA-PANYIN, head of the lineage who was a Stool elder and a member of the Chief's Council of State.

3. Courtship

If there ever was a most pleasurable time to which the rural Asante young people looked forward with longing, it was the bright moonlit night. The hard day's toil on the farm was over; a hearty evening meal consumed; elderly men and women sat together and chatted; young children romped about or played a game of hide-and-seek (AHUNTA-HUNTA) or sat in a group listening and telling ANASE-SÊM (Asante folktales); a dance-drum was heard sounding at one end of the town or village and young men and women went out, one by one, in twos and in threes, to take part in a dance. It was there at the dance in the open air, away from inquisitive and patronising parents, under the pale silver moon, that lads wooed lasses and courtship took place unrestrained.

Courting might take different forms under different circumstances, but the following two cases are considered typical:

Case 5 (a) -- Kwaku M. (about 30):

I arrived at the dancing place where other playmates had already assembled. Young unmarried women arrived in groups of friends. The dance began. I was leading drummer and drummed heartily. I saw Afua dancing gracefully in a ring among other dancers. 'There she is! What a beauty!', I said to myself.

Enthused with the presence of the comely lass, I beat the drum lustily, harder and louder with unabated zeal and consuming vigour. Afua, I sensed, was reading between the beats: the increased tempo was in admiration of her. That was an opportunity that she too had been waiting for for weeks: I, the lad she had been dreaming about, musing of, and had been adoring secretly, was now appreciating her dance. She danced closer and closer to me and with her handkerchief wiped off the profuse sweat running on my forehead. I breathed deeply ... my heart had not yearned for Afua in vain. She had responded!

Drumming and dancing continued till it was late in the night when we closed. We dispersed, as friends said good night to friends: ADEÊ NKYE O-O-O (good night) DA Y'Ê O-O-O- (have a sound sleep) filled the night air.

I moved about wildly in search for Afua in the crowd of young men and women. She was spotted at last, and I escorted her to the entrance of her house. I admired her and her dance, and before we parted and she entered her house, I embraced her firmly (ME FAM NO). Afua smiled. I felt her heart beat thumping with increased rapidity. But we had to part...

There never was a longer night. I lay awake, haunted by the imagined presence of the nymph.

Afua later told me she also had a sleepless night and lay awake for a long time humming this favourite love song:

WOBÔ ME TIRI PA A,
MEBÔ NE DIN.
WOBÔ M'ANO PA A,
MEBÔ NE DIN.
ÔDÔ-YE-WU,
AGYE SE ÔNO NA ÔMPÊ ... E-E-E.

OSUO MUNA NKARAN ABAN ASE,
ÔTÔ GYAE A,
MEBÔ NE DIN
NTIRI-KWAA-MMAA
MEBÔ NE DIN.
OBI ADEÊ,
M'ANI, O!
M'ANI AGYINA WO'.

(Put my head in chains on a log,
I shall mention his name.
Put my mouth in chains on a log,
I shall mention his name.
My Love, save he disfavours.
Let the rain clouds gather beneath the Accra Fort,
When it clears and ceases to rain,
I shall mention his name.
NTIRI-KWAA-MAA[1]
I shall mention his name.
Someone's Treasure,
I long,
O, I long for you.)

Kwaku continued:

We met again the following night at the dance, and I again saw her off to the entrance of her house and gave her two florins. They were accepted. She thanked me sweetly for them. And oh, what a pleasure her acceptance was to me. We embraced warmly and parted to keep awake!

.....
[1] NTIRI-KWAA-MAA is a substitute name for someone whose real name one does not want to mention.

Courtship was kept secret from our parents during the first few weeks. We met every night in the bright moonlight to pour out the love that filled our yearning hearts. Affection deepened.

I confided to Kofi, my intimate friend and distant relative of Afua, my intention of making an approach to her for her consent to marry me. The suggestion was met with his complete and instant approval. He commended Afua's character which, he said, left nothing to be desired. Afua, he elaborated, was respectful (OBU ADEÊ), hardworking (ÔDE-YÔFOÔ), polite (WAPÔ) and quite chaste (ÔTE NEHO ASE).

I could no longer delay the proposal. I met her at our usual meeting place, and, as we sat on a NKWAN-KWAA-NNUA (communal seat outside the compound on which people, chiefly the young, sat and chatted), I began: 'Afua, there is something I've been trying to know from you all the time, but I ... I ... er ...'

'What is it, Kwaku', she interrupted

'If ... if ..., I mean, if your father has not already offered you to some man to marry', I stammered as I breathed it out with suppressed emotion.

'I am not aware of that. It's most unlikely. You had better approach him on that through Mother, Kwaku', she suggested wisely.

'If he hasn't, Afua, would you agree to marry me? You are the only girl I love in this world', I broached as I put my hand around her perfectly round and smooth shoulders (TOO NO ABASAKON-MUU).

'Let's hear what Father and Mother have to say', she replied.

I asked her to 'sleep' with me, but Afua objected and told me politely to be patient.

I enlisted the services of my friend Kofi to make discreet inquiries to find what would be the reaction of Afua's parents to a proposal from me. The result was favourable and showed that no objection was to be anticipated.

From that time I sent occasional gifts of meat, tobacco and salt to Afua's mother. They were all accepted. We returned visits to one another's house in the evenings as meanwhile arrangements were being made for the performance of formalities as custom demanded.

Courtship is kept secret from parents, but in the course of time they get to know of it. If, for any reason, they have cause to doubt the success of a union they will not hesitate to warn a son or daughter and request that a stop be put to the growing friendship. Such disapproval was formerly binding on a son or daughter and, as has already been remarked, marriage negotiations could not be carried out. One informant said he had to wait for about a year to get his wife's mother's consent before they could marry:

Case 5 (b) -- Kwame S. (about 65):

I began courting her and bought for her mother two thighs of ÔTWEÊ (antelope) at nine pence each, 1 shilling worth of salt and some leaves of tobacco. We did not give cash for presents in those days. Meat was our main item of present in courtship. Her mother refused to accept the gifts because, she complained, my mother's sister's son, who had previously married her elder daughter, was unkind to her (WANNIDI AMMA NO BI ANNI DA -- lit. he never gave her a share of whatever he ate).

I took back the presents and sold the meat. Then I questioned the daughter, my lover: 'Why should you deceive me by saying you love me when you know your mother would not favour my marrying you?'

Afua M.'s only comment was that she knew her mother would give in when she had learned more about me.

I sent a present of meat to her a second time and again it was refused. This continued six times. About six months passed but her mother was unyielding and was still unconvinced that I was a suitable person to be entrusted with her daughter.

I became discouraged and put an end to my courting Afua. No more gifts were sent to the adamant mother.

Another six months passed. Then I heard that Afua's mother's brothers had questioned their sister seriously about the soundness of her attitude to their niece's proposed marriage and had totally disagreed with the reason she gave. She yielded.

As soon as I heard of Afua's mother's change of heart I bought two thighs of ÔTWEÊ and sent them to her. This time they were not returned.

Afua M., my lover, came to thank me in my village that evening, well groomed and enticingly toileted (WATWITWA KROBO). The following day I sent the AVËYÛ-DEË (formal prestations).

There is now a growing tendency for some young people to act on their own and to disregard completely their parents' objection to their choice of spouse:

Case 6 -- Kwadwo Y. (about 35):

About seven years ago my friends who heard that I was about to marry Ama O., warned me and said she was an uncontrollably bad-tempered woman who quarrelled fiercely with her former husband. Their marriage ended, I was told, when she threatened to kill her husband with a cutlass. I threw them off by saying that Ama did not love her former husband, hence the violent brawls.

My mother heard of my intention and swore by a fetish (DI NSE) that she would never consent to the proposed marriage and that if I persisted and married that particular woman, she and all her other children would

never partake of any meal that my wife would prepare and bring to me.[1]

I told my mother to please herself: if she and her children would not eat of my wife's food, I would give what part of it I could not consume myself to any person on the street who would like to have it, I countered.

We got married, Ama and I. My mother, true to her oath, did not take a share of any food my wife prepared and sent to me, nor did she allow any of my brothers and sisters in the house to eat of it. I did not take any notice of their boycott. Later, on the advice of some friends of hers, she gave in, revoked the oath (ÔDANEE NSEÊ NO) and partook of meals prepared by my wife.

But the marriage did not last. It ended suddenly on my initiative when I swore NTANKÊSEÊ (the Great Oath) to divorce the woman on the ground of frequent and violent quarrelling.

In spite of rapidly changing conditions, notably in cities and in large towns, which contribute factors to the erosion of parental authority on the choice of their children's spouse, filial submission to their parents' opinion on a proposed marriage remains, by and large, inviolate in many homes:

Case 7 -- Akua K. (about 37):

Being a christian, I found it difficult to get an unmarried christian man to marry me.

Four years ago I met a young man, a pagan, who made a proposal to me. I agreed to marry him. He brought the required AHU-DEÊ (formal introduction money) to my father. He kept it and started making some inquiries to find out the suitability or otherwise of the young man.

A few days later my father called me into his room and asked me to tell him candidly if I knew enough of the young man and could say he would be able to support me and any children I might have with him financially, if he consented to the marriage. Papa's own opinion on the young man was that he was rather too 'young' in the sense that he was not substantial enough to take a wife. I agreed with my father and suggested that the AHU-DEÊ be returned.

The young man became so ashamed of the non-acceptance of the Introduction Money he left the town for Tarkwa where he has remained

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[1] It is a man's obligation to provide or share with his mother, brothers and sisters living in the same compound, food prepared and sent to him by his wife. The refusal of his kin to partake of such a meal is therefore a solemn breach of family relationships.

ever since.

My second choice was readily approved, and I have every reason to be thankful to my father for the happy marriage I am now enjoying.

Case 8 -- Kwabena A. (about 29):

I should have married three years ago, but my father disapproved of my choice. His reason was that the woman was my distant relative (OBUSUA-Nŋ). I chose a second woman, but again he objected, because he was doubtful of the woman's character. I decided not to make any more choice but to concentrate on my farm work.

I do not regret having taken that decision. I have realised that had I married three years ago, I would not have had enough money to support a wife and engage labourers to help me do my farm work every year. Today I am a proud owner of a big cocoa farm, and hope, with a hard-working wife, I shall not have much to worry about in future.

Mystically induced love.

A few years ago, it was common practice among some young men to use KO-NYA (charm) to influence girls to respond readily to their wooing. These charms were prepared by some other young men in the village or by some herbalists (NNUNSIN-FOÔ) or by some Mallams (NKRAMO-FOÔ). There were different kinds of KO-NYA with different directions for application and use.

An informant told me that after every effort he made to win the heart of a girl had proved unsuccessful, he consulted a KONYA 'specialist' who agreed to help him. The 'specialist' charged him a fee of 7s and asked him to provide him with the following:

- a. some soil on which the particular girl had discharged some urine
- b. some hair from any part of her body
- c. some shred of sponge she uses or a small piece of cloth worn by her
- d. some remnant of her bath water.

The informant said he bribed an inmate of the house in which the girl lived to obtain for him the requisite ingredients. When they were got together and taken to the 'specialist' he burnt the first three items together and ground the lot into some black powder (MMÔTÔ). A few leaves of some herbs were squeezed in his palms and left in a small brass basin. Item d, the few drops of remnant water from the girl's bath, was mixed with a small calabashful of fresh rainwater (NYANKON-SUO) and poured onto the squeezed leaves in the brass basin, and the prepared black powder (MMÔTÔ) sprinkled on the water in the basin. According to the informant:

Case 9 -- (about 25):

The KONYA specialist instructed me to stand a lighted candle in the brass basin containing the concoction and expect my quarry when the flame touched the water in the basin.

I followed his instructions to the letter. I sat by the candle and waited patiently, eagerly.

As soon as the candle-light died out when the flame touched the water in the basin, I sure enough heard a knock behind the window of my room. When it opened, there she was, standing waiting and ready.

A belief was held that after some time KONYA charm lost its potency. The charm, according to some of its users, was ephemeral and became ineffective when its power over a woman on whom it was applied evaporated. The after-effect was said to be an opposing force of blank hatred.

Yaa A., a charming young woman of about 28 who had just divorced her husband -- a queer-looking and unattractive, ugly man -- at the time of this enquiry, believed and suspected quite strongly that the man might have used KONYA to influence her to agree to marry him:

Case 10 -- Yaa A. (about 28):

The man made several attempts to woo me, but I did not love him, not in the least, (MEMPE NO KORA, KORA, KORA). I threw him off quite rudely each time he attempted to make a proposal. I was determined never to yield to such a loathsome creature.

But late one night I felt I had become restless and could not resist 'something' forcing me to go to the house of that ugly man I detested. I asked my friend with whom I was sleeping to accompany me to the man's house at once. From the moment that I slept with him I became inexplicably fond of him.

We were married but after a very short time I became conscious again of the repulsive personality of the man and I divorced him promptly.

Except in some few remote villages in Asante the use of KONYA in courting girls is losing its fascination and popularity. Most young men said they find no need to resort to KONYA charm as women are common and not hard to come by (MMAA ABU). The shoe, it is believed, is on the other foot: it is women, especially some of those married to well-to-do husbands in towns who are said to be using and applying KONYA charms on their husbands in order to influence them to lavish gifts on them (the wives).

4. Formalities: what establishes Asante lawful marriage?

For a marriage to be regarded as lawful and carrying with it the rights, duties and privileges accorded by the society, the contracting parties must comply with certain conditions.[1]

What, in Asante society, are these 'certain conditions' which must be complied with before a marriage can be regarded as lawful?

The performance of seven successive formalities leads to the consummation of a lawful customary marriage in Asante.

These are:

1. The giving of AHU-DEÊ (lit. seeing things), also referred to as ABOBOÛM-BÔ-DEÊ (lit. door-knocking thing) by the bridegroom
2. The presentation of formal marriage gifts, AYÊYÔ-DEÊ (lit. gift presentation thing) by the bridegroom
3. The formal asking for -- KÔ-SRÊ (lit. go beg for) by the bridegroom's senior relative
4. The payment of TIRI-NSA (lit. head 'drink') by the bridegroom through his senior relative
5. The preparation and presentation of ADUAN-KÊSÊÊ (lit. big meal) by the bride to the bridegroom
6. The payment of ANYAME-DWAN (lit. god sheep) by the bridegroom
7. The payment of TIRI-SIKA (lit. head money) by the bridegroom, if so required.

The significance of parental consent to their children's choice of spouse has been touched upon in the preceding subsection, and a typical case of courtship followed up to a point where the parents of the two lovers have given their blessing to the proposed marriage.

All the time, Kwaku kept Afua as his MPENA (concubine). But that was not for long.

According to Kwaku, he made an exploratory move by sending to Afua's mother, as the practice was in those days, one ÔTWE-SRÊ (a thigh of antelope) and some quantity of cooking salt. The gift was not returned. The acceptance gave him the assurance that the 'door' would open for the marriage formalities to proceed.

Meanwhile -- Kwaku narrated -- he organised a small party of his intimate friends who went with him on three occasions to help Afua's mother in some farm work. At the end of each day's work, Afua's mother prepared a dish of

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[1] I. Schapera: *Handbook of Tswana law and custom*, p. 125

FUFU meal which was sent to him and his friends. The stage was then set for the start of the performance of customary marriage formalities.

1. The giving of AHU-DEÊ, also called ABOBOÔM-BÔ-DEÊ.

The bridegroom 'introduces' himself formally to his in-laws by sending one bottle[1] of gin or schnapps to the girl's father, and another bottle of gin or schnapps to her ABUSUA-PANYIN, or the girl's mother's uncle, as the case may be.

It is to be noted that the giving of AHU-DEÊ merely accords recognition to an intent to marry. Kwaku and Afua now live as MPENA (concubines). They are engaged to marry and it is said of them: ÔNE NO WÔ HÔ (lit. he and she are 'there'). Kwaku at that stage would not be entitled to the claim of AYEFARÊ (compensation against an adulterer). Also in the event of the death of one or the other of the couple when they were merely cohabiting, KUNA (widowship rites) would be observed in a modified form and the surviving spouse would not be obliged to perform all the rites in full.

The giving of AHU-DEÊ, according to an elderly informant, is new to the older generation, it being believed to be of Fanti origin and introduced into Asante some time after the exile of Nana Prempeh I (1896).

Once the AHU-DEÊ 'drink' has been given, the couple can live together as husband and wife, depending upon the man's confidence in the fidelity of the woman, for as long as they wished. It depends also upon the complaisant attitude of the woman's parents to the non-completion or the long postponement of the performance of the remaining formalities which make a customary marriage lawful.

A saying that bears this out is: 'WOASE PÊ WOASÊM A, NA ÔMA WO GYE ADWAMAN-YEFARÊ (If your parents-in-law have grown fond of you they may collude in a claim of adultery compensation during concubinage)'.
.....

2. The formal presentation of marriage gifts, AYÊ-YÔ-DEÊ, by the bridegroom
Customary presentation of gifts[2] follows the formal introduction of the bridegroom to his parents-in-law (AHU-DEÊ).

[1] The 'introduction drink' may be given in its cash equivalent, the amount varying in different localities, but ranging from 7s to 13s. Some ardent moderns these days give a bottle of whisky and soda.

[2] An elderly informant (case 5 b), recollected that in his youth meat was the item given. In one area it was observed that the practice of giving meat as AYÊ-YÔ-DEÊ still obtains. A whole ÔTWEE (antelope) and some cooking salt NKYENE were presented and these were distributed to near kinsfolk.

Cash is given as customary nuptial gifts (AYÊ-YÔ-DEË) and the amounts given may vary slightly in localities, but recipients are the same in all areas, as follows:

- a. The bride's father -- 7s, 13s or 10s 6d
- b. The bride's ABUSUA-PANYIN -- 7s, 13s or 10s 6d
- c. The bride's mother -- 7s
- d. The bride's female relatives (ABUSUAFOÔ MMAA) -- 4s
- e. The bride's brothers (NKONTAGYE-SEKAN) -- 2s or 4s
- f. The bride herself -- 21s, 42s, or higher, depending on the bridegroom's pocket or the social standing of the bride.

3. The formal 'begging' for the hand of the bride, KÔ-SRÊ

The stage is moved higher, bringing into the process the ABUSUA-PANYIN of each of the two parties. In some areas the principal person is the father of the woman, in others it is the ABUSUA-PANYIN but in any case, the process, in the main, is about the same.

In Kwaku's case, for instance, it was the head of his fiancée's lineage, OPAYAN Kwadwo B., who was the principal person.

And now we may listen to Kwaku continuing his narration:

Case 5 (a) continued -- Kwaku M. (about 30):

Early one morning my Bretuo[1] ABUSUA-PANYIN, Op. Kwame K., who had already endorsed my choice of partner, sent his messengers, 2 men and two women, all my kinsfolk, to Afua's Ôyoko[1] ABUSUA-PANYIN, Op. Kwadwo B. with this formal request:

'Op. Kwame K., SE: NE DEHYEË, KWAKU M. .. AHU WO DEHYEË BI A, YÊFRÊ NO AFUA B., NA ÔPÊ SÊ ÔWARE NO, ENTI OSRÊ WO, FA AFUA MA NO MA KWAKU NWARE' (Elder Kwame K. has sent us to say to you that his blood relation, Kwaku M. has seen Afua B., your blood relation, whom he desires to take for a wife. Our Elder would therefore be pleased if you would agree to give her to him to be married by Kwaku.)

The messengers were sent back with this reply to my Elder:

'MATE, NA MONSE ÔPANYIN KWAME K. SÊ: MEHU ÔBAA NO, NA NEA ÔBÊKA BIARA, MÊMA NO ATE.' (You may go back and tell Op. Kwame K. that his request is noted. I shall confer with the woman and let him know my reply in due course.) I understand that Op. Kwadwo B. sent for Afua and her mother to his house and informed them of the request he had received from my Elder. Then he asked Afua two point blank questions:

'AFUA, WOPÊ OBARIMA NO?' (Do you love the man?)

.....
[1] See glossary.

‘WOBÊWARE NO?’ (Are you willing to marry him?)

Afua of course gave positive answers to both questions.

That same evening Afua’s Elder Op. Kwadwo B. sent his messengers with the following reply to my Elder’s request:

‘OP. KWADWO B. SE WABISE NE DEHYEÊ AFUA B., NA ÔSE ÔPENE AWAREÊ NO SO. ENTI ÔDE ÔBAA NO KYÊ WO SÊ FA NO MA WO DEHYEÊ KWAKU M. NWARE NO.’ (Op. Kwadwo B. has sent us to tell you that he has conferred with Afua B., his blood relation, on the request you made to him. The woman has affirmed her willingness to be married to the man. He therefore offers her to you to be given to your blood relation, Kwaku M. to marry her.)’

Some relatives and friends accompanied me to Afua’s Elder’s house to render verbal thanks (YÊDE YÊ’ANO KÔDAA ÔPANYIN KWADWO B. ASE).

4. The giving of TIRI-NSA

It is to be emphasised that the giving of TIRI-NSA (lit. head ‘drink’) is the most important of all formalities in the Asante customary marriage system. It is just that formality whose performance establishes a lawful marriage as recognised by society. It may be performed soon after the presentation of AYÊ-YÔ-DEÊ, or, as stated above, may be deferred for some time.

It is on record that there are some marriages in which TIRI-NSA has not been given, and yet the couple have lived together harmoniously and contentedly for many years. In all such cases, as has been observed, the husbands consider it unnecessary because they found their wife’s faithfulness was beyond any doubt, and the women’s parents have not pressed for its performance.

But a cardinal point in the Asante marriage system that remains inviolate is this: the length of concubinage does not confer customary legal status to a union.

Kwaku’s narration continued:

The following day I brought through my Elder’s messengers six pots of palm wine and one OPANTU (i.e. 2 bottles) of gin to ‘thank’ Afua’s Elder for formally consenting to give Afua, his DEHYEÊ, to be married to me.

Kwaku M.’s and Afua B.’s marriage had been consummated.

The Asante refer to the ‘drink’ as TIRI-NSA. When given, a husband was said to ‘have given thanks for the “head” of his wife’: WADA NETIRI ASE, or WASI NETIRI NSA (he has put a drink on her ‘head’).

‘Drink’ given to formalise Asante customary lawful marriage varies in details in different localities. While in the case of Kwaku M. six pots of palm wine and two bottles of gin were required, in another locality a cash

value of £1 3s or £2 7s must accompany the 'drink'. And in yet another locality it was recorded that the prerequisite for TIRI-NSA was 1s 6d (NTAKUO-MMIENSA) cash, with a big pot of palm wine (NSA-FUFUO ASU-HINA). What is worth noting is that the basic principle everywhere in Asante is the same: the responsible person, be he the father or the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the woman, who consents to give her to be married must be 'thanked' with some 'drink'.

A few remarks on ASEDA 'drink' may be useful at this stage.

Before the Whiteman introduced written documents into Asante society, the form of 'stamping' a deal was by producing a 'drink' which was drunk by relatives of both parties present and acting as witnesses. It did not matter how 'big' or small an ASEDA 'drink' was. It could be a pot of palm wine (then worth 2d -- DAMA), a DOMA-FA (3s 6d), a DOMA (7s), NSA-ANO (13s) or a higher amount. The essence was that its giving and receiving made an agreement legally binding on both sides. It must be said in passing that it was not only in marriage that the production of ASEDA-NSA completed a contract. A man, for instance, who gave a part of his farm, a whole house or a part of it, or some substantial movable property to his son, his daughter or his wife, was to be 'thanked' with a 'drink'. The recipient of the gift produced the 'drink' through his or her ABUSUA-PANYIN, to be 'drunk' by friends and relatives of both parties. 'YÉADA ASE, ATU SO NSA' (We have rendered thanks for the gift and have put a 'drink' on it). is an expression meaning a deal has been validated. As long as this ASEDA 'drink' had not been produced a gift could be withdrawn but once it was given and 'drunk' (or the cash NSA shared), a particular gift became the lawful property of the recipient.

It was so in all forms of contract.

It is not nowadays uncommon to hear workmen who are taking some work on contract requesting the employer: 'TU SO NSA' (Put a drink on it). When it is produced the contract becomes binding on both parties.

And so it is in the marriage contract. Neither party is under any legally enforceable obligation toward the other if the TIRI-NSA has not been given. In case of divorce[1] as soon as the NSA is refunded by the woman's ABUSUA-PANYIN to the husband's, the marriage is dissolved absolutely.

TIRI-NSA is sent to the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the bride who drinks one bottle and sends the other bottle to the woman's father. In some areas it is the other way round, i.e. the 'drink' is delivered to the father of the woman who in turn sends a bottle to the bride's ABUSUA-PANYIN. On the occasion of the production of TIRI-NSA the senior members of the bridegroom's lineage meet their opposite numbers at the bride's ABUSUA-PANYIN or her father's house.

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[1] See Note on divorce.

There, in the presence of the gathering, the bridegroom makes the time-honoured Asante marital pledge. The father or the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the bride, as the case may be, puts to him the question:

WODE ÔBAA YE REKÔ YI, SÊ ÔKÔBÔ EKA A, WODEA; SÊ ÊNSO ÔKÔFA ASADEË A, ÔDE KÔ N'ABUSUAM'. WO PENE SO? (lit. As you take away this woman with you, should she incur any debt it would be your liability; but if she comes by a treasure she takes it all to her lineage. Do you agree?)

The husband gives the obvious answer: 'I agree!'

Afua of our cited case was formally handed over to Kwaku's KYIGYINA-NII (lit. backstander) who was a senior relative of his, and who from that moment acted as a sort of surety for the good behaviour of Kwaku toward Afua, and the proper treatment of his wife. It was to the 'surety' that all serious matters relating to the marriage were referred in the first instance.

Kwaku M. and Afua B.'s marriage was now customarily lawful in all respects. Afua might move to live in her husband's house, or she might continue to stay in her family house with her parents, brothers and sisters.

5. Preparation and presentation of the matrimonial meal (ADUAN-KÊSEË) by the bride.

Soon after the payment or giving of TIRI-NSA the new wife prepares her ADUAN-KÊSEË (lit. big meal). Due to the increased costs of meat and other food items these days, young husbands tend to discourage its preparation.

About twenty years ago, according to an elderly informant, it was an essential formality which afforded the young wife the opportunity to demonstrate to the community her proficiency in the preparation of meals. Although the food was presented in her name, it was common knowledge that it was her mother and other female relatives with the help of friends who did the actual preparation and cooking.

A prudent young woman saved cash-presents that she received from her boy-friend from time to time for buying meat for her ADUAN-KÊSEË. Now, as in former days, the meal comprises such sumptuous Asante dishes as NKATE-NKWAN (groundnut soup) and ABÊ-NKWAN (palm nut soup).

A woman of seventy is still proud of her ADUAN-KÊSEË as she recollects with beaming, radiant eyes:

Case 11 -- Nana Akua F. (about 70):

I asked my friends the previous day to assist me in the preparation of my ADUAN-KÊSEË. Two dishes were prepared: ABÊ-NKWAN (palm nut soup) in a big earthenware soup pot (NKWAN-SËN) with 60 balls of plantain FUFU in another big dish. The other dish was NKATE-PESIE (boiled yam and plantains with groundnut stew).

The practice was for the bridegroom to give a present of 4s to the woman and girls who carried the matrimonial meal to his house. After the food had been consumed and the empty dishes were being returned an amount of £2 was placed in one of them. (ÓTOO AYOWAM' PÒN-MMIENU -- lit. he placed £2 in the dish). This latter amount was in most cases given back to the husband who, in turn, gave back a part of it to his wife.

From that time the wife prepared and sent meals regularly to her husband if she lived in her 'family' house.

AFAYI-DEÉ (lit. bedside removal 'thing')

At dusk of the day the ADUAN-KÊSEÉ was prepared and presented, one or two female relatives of the bride accompanied her formally to her husband's house to sleep. In some areas it was the husband who sent his messengers who were his female relatives, sisters or aunts, to the bride's house to escort her to her husband to sleep. It is said of this: 'ÓKÒDA NKUN-KYIRE (lit. she goes to sleep at the husband's back side of his bed). The husband presented AFAYI-DEÉ of 3s 6d, or 7s to the elderly female relatives who accompanied his bride to his house the first night, to be given to his mother-in-law as a sort of 'consolation' gift for removing the daughter from her bedside to his.

AFAYI-DEÉ was given only once in respect of a woman, namely on her first marriage.

6. The payment of ANYAME-DWAN (lit. god sheep) by the bridegroom

It was held that a father's KRAA NE N'ABOSOM (his soul and his gods) guarded a daughter from childhood to maturity and, for that reason, he should be given a sheep (live in the past, but its cash equivalent in these days). The sheep was to be killed by the father for his 'soul and gods', both in appreciation of their care and guardianship of the woman so far, and to solicit their blessing on the marriage just begun.

Where a woman's biological father was, for one reason or another, not revealed or the biological father of the child born out of wedlock neglected the discharge of his duty of looking after the child, ANYAME-DWAN was paid to the person who took charge of her upbringing, a person who nursed and cared for her (NEA ÔTETEE NO). Such a person was almost always a kinsman of the child's mother such as her WÔFA (maternal uncle), ONUA (her brother) or NANA (the child's mother's father or mother). In a few cases the *de facto* 'father' was the man who married the mother properly after the child's birth and took the responsibility of looking after her from her infancy to her maturity until the time of her marriage. To him the child was an ABA-NOMA (step-daughter) who was treated as his own child in every respect.

A middle-aged man recollected:
Case 12 -- Kwadwo A. (about 45):

Her mother maintained strongly that her daughter's father did not care for her (my wife) when she was born and, for that reason, she -- my mother-in-law -- objected to my paying the ANYAME-DWAN of £1 to him. What was to have been given to him as AHU-DEË was also taken by my wife's elder brother who had taken the responsibility of bringing his sister up. I performed all necessary customary formalities in full but everything of what should have gone to the father was taken and given to her elder brother. Nothing was sent to my wife's real father.

ÔBOSOM-NSA (lit. fetish 'drink') or ÔBOSOM-DWAN (lit. fetish sheep)
Akin to ANYAME-DWAN in Asante, is ÔBOSOM-NSA or ÔBOSOM-DWAN. In some pagan homes a bridegroom is under the obligation to present a matrimonial gift, known as ÔBOSOM-NSA or ÔBOSOM-DWAN to the household fetish of the father or the mother, or of both the father's and the mother's ABOSOM. Each ÔBOSOM has its own preferred articles to be presented to it, as typified in the following cases of three husbands in different localities.

Husband A : To ÔDOMANKAMA (fetish), his wife's father's ÔBOSOM

- 1 bottle of gin : 2s 6d
- 2 yards of calico (NWERA) : 2s
- 2 new kitchen knives : 6d
- 1 sheep (cash equivalent paid) : 15s

Husband B : -1- to ASUBÔNTEN, his wife's father's ÔBOSOM

- 1 pot palm wine (NSA-FUFUO) : 3d
- cooking salt : 3d worth
- 1 fowl (AKÔKÔ) : 1s (cash given)
with a pledge to give, on the birth of our first child, SIKA-DWAN (lit. cash in place of sheep) plus 10s and NSA (drink) of 1s.

Husband B : -2- to BAANÊË, his wife's mother's ÔBOSOM

- 1 pot of palm wine (NSA-FUFUO) : 3d
- salt (NKYENE) : 3d
- 1 fowl (AKÔKÔ) : 1s (cash given)
with a pledge of SIKA-DWAN (cash in place of a live sheep) together with an amount of 10s on the birth of our first child.

Husband B : -3- to FOFIE, his wife's mother's second ÔBOSOM
some salt (NKYENE) : 3d worth
1 pot palm wine (NSA-FUFUO) : 3d
1 fowl (AKÔKÔ) : 1s
with a pledge of SIKA-DWAN of 10s together with 1s worth of
palm wine (NSA-FUFUO) on the birth of our first child.

Husband C : -1- to NYAME, his wife's father's ÔBOSOM
1 fowl (AKÔKÔ) : 1s
1 sheep (ODWAN) : 10s (cash given)
1 pot palm wine (NSA-FUFUO) : 6d
some salt (NKYENE) : 6d worth

Husband C : -2- to ÊMEMDO, his wife's mother's ÔBOSOM
1 sheep (ODWAN) : 10s
some salt (NKYENE) : 6d worth
'drink' (gin) : 6d worth

If the bride herself was an ABOSOM-MA (lit. fetish child), i.e. a child obtained with the help of a fetish, the ÔBOSOM who helped the mother to conceive the child was to be presented with a gift of a sheep or a fowl or both when she was married the first time. Failure to meet this obligation, it was believed, could cause a marriage to be unfruitful.

The obligation was applicable to a husband who was ABOSOM-MA too.

A young man ABOSOM-MA who travelled many miles to a particular ÔBOSOM to discharge the obligation had this to say:

Case 13 : Kofi S. (about 25) :

I was told that I was an ABOSOM-MA and so I was under some obligation to perform certain rites as soon as I married. I travelled to Jema, near Kintampo, with my new wife and there I slaughtered a sheep that cost me 18s, to the ÔBOSOM who gave me to my mother. In addition I gave to the ÔBOSOM a bottle of gin and three pots of palm wine. In all it cost me £3 1s, including our lorry fares.

7. The payment of TIRI-SIKA (lit. head money) by the bridegroom

A bridegroom may have to make yet one more marital payment. It is that of TIRI-SIKA, which some misinformed foreigners erroneously refer to as 'bride-price', or money paid to buy a wife. The exposition made under TIRI-NSA should, it is hoped, have made clear one point which, expressed tersely, is that

ASANTE, YÊWARE YERÊ,
YENTÔ YERÊ

(in Asante society a wife is married, a wife is never bought). Any notion held to the effect that the Asante pay a 'price' for a bride must therefore be rightly condemned as fallacious.

TIRI-SIKA, in fact, is an amount of money, as might be needed, which is given in the form of a short- or long-term soft loan by a husband to financially hard-pressed in-laws.

A request for TIRI-SIKA is not made in all marriages, but might be necessitated by certain circumstances:

- a. a debt in a wife's 'house' (FIE) that needed paying urgently;
- b. a near maternal relative fell critically ill and money was needed immediately for a cure;
- c. a wife's mother badly needed a roof over her head;
- d. a wife's brother's school fees together with a bill for materials must be promptly settled;
- e. someone in the 'house' died and money must be had for the initial funeral expenses immediately.

In any of such cases, and others beside, money was urgently needed, but there was no hope of coming by the needed amount immediately from the resources of near relatives to meet the emergencies. To go to a money-lender to raise a loan was a dreaded evil.

It was under one of such hard-pressed circumstances that the maternal uncle of Afua, with her consent and that of her mother's and brother's, would go to their ABUSUA-PANYIN, Opanin Kwadwo B. with a request that Kwaku M., Afua's husband, be approached for help. If the Elder endorsed the request it would be passed on to Kwaku M.'s ABUSUA-PANYIN. Op. Kwame K. would confer with his DEHYEË Kwaku M. and arrange to find the needed amount of money to help his in-laws. The amount given became Afua's TIRI-SIKA (lit. head money on Afua).

According to an informant, TIRI-SIKA does not attract interest these days but about 30 years ago, if a wife in respect of whom TIRI-SIKA had been given initiated a divorce, £2 was added to the amount received from the husband, no matter for how long the amount had remained with the in-laws.

In most marriages in which a wife has diligently helped her husband in his work, repayment of the whole of TIRI-SIKA or a part of it might be waived and treated as a gift to the wife. 'ÔDE NE TIRI-SIKA AKYÊ NO' (lit. he has freely given her her head money) was news one frequently heard in several places. The understanding was that the husband would never claim the amount involved back.

A waived TIRI-SIKA was treated as a gift for which the wife and her ABUSUAFO expressed their gratitude by giving the customary NSA ('drink') to thank the husband. When accepted and 'drunk' by the husband and the senior members of his 'house', the TIRI-SIKA was never claimable on divorce or on the death of a wife.

Says an appreciative husband:

Case 14 -- Kwadwo A. (about 45) :

She helped me a lot in my trading business. I became quite successful.

To show my appreciation, I waived a claim of £13 out of her TIRI-SIKA of £17.

Miscellaneous

1. Registration of marriages

Registration of marriages is a foreign practice introduced into Asante society quite recently. In general it is followed mainly in large towns with a large number of non-Asante residents and has so far not succeeded in superseding or invalidating the native Asante conditions for the establishment of a lawful customary marriage.

Until about ten years ago the notification of a marriage to a Chief did not require any cash payment. In one locality, one of six pots of palm wine given as TIRI-NSA was sent to AHEM-FIE (a Chief's house) and that registered the marriage with the highest authority of the community.

In 1935 when the Native Authority Ordinance came into force in Asante husbands were required to register their marriages by paying a Registration Fee of 2s 6d (5s in some areas) in order to receive the Authority's recognition of the legality of the marriage.

2. The husband of ASIWAA and his obligations at her nubility rites ceremony

In addition to all customary nuptial payments, gifts and presentations outlined here in respect to a normal marriage, a man who acquired a wife by early childhood betrothal (ASIWAA)[1] was, on her reaching the age of puberty, to present her with eggs, salt, palm oil and other articles at her nubility rites ceremony[1], when 'her mouth was being touched' (YÉKA N'ANO[1] with BRATÓ[1] (lit. menstrual mashed yam/plantain).

The principal gift items remain the same now as they were some fifty years ago. Below, for comparison, are some lists of articles presented to NSIWAA by

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[1] See Notes, Part II.

their respective husbands 50 years, 20 years and 1 year ago:

50 years ago

40 eggs @ 6 for 3d
shea-butter 6d
meat 9d
1 fowl 1s
1 bottle of palm oil 3d
1 sponge 1d
soap (cash) 6d
chewing stick 6d
a piece of SONWEREE (smoked elephant skin) 6d
subsistence for 7 days 13s

20 years ago

20 eggs @ 6 for 3d
shea-butter (NKUU) 1s
meat 9d
1 fowl 1s 6d
1 bottle palm oil 6d
salt 1s 6d
sponges 6d
soap 1s 6d
chewing stick 6d
a piece of SONWEREE 6d
subsistence for 7 days 13s
1 pair of sandals 1s 6d

One year ago

60 eggs @ 2 for 3d
shea-butter (NKUU) 1s
2 fowls @ 2s 6d 5s
1 bottle of palm oil (cash) 1s
salt 1s 6d
1 sponge 1d
1 bar of soap 1s
chewing stick 6d
1 towel 2s
1 sponge bowl 2s
1 bottle Balmoral gloss 11d

a piece of SONWEREÉ 6d
 subsistence for 7 days 13s
 1 pot palm wine for dancers 2s
 1 pair of sandals 3s 6d

3. *The modern trend*

Some literate young men in Asante, in addition to customary gifts do present to their brides other items of personal effects on the AYÉ-YÔ-DEÉ DA of a normal marriage, or on Gifts Presentation Day of an ASIWAA's nubility rites ceremony. One such young man of about 40 who married eleven years ago said he gave the following as additional AYÉ-YÔ-DEÉ to his bride:

NTAMA APOFA NSIA, 6 half-piece lengths of cloth @ 12s 6d
 SEREKYE DUKU NSIA, 6 silk handkerchiefs @ 6s
 .AHWEHWÉ ... Baako, 1 looking glass @ 4s 6d
 TÔMA ...Asen Mmiensa, 3 sets of waist beads @8s
 Sika ASOM-ADEÉ ... Mmiensa, 3 pairs of gold ear-rings @ 12s, 13s, 20s
 SEREKYE AMOASEÉ ... Mmiensa, 3 lengths of silk shame-cloth
 DADEÉ ADAKA ... baako, 1 airtight steel trunk @32s
 POWDER ... baako, 1 talc face powder @ 2s 6d
 AFEE ... baako, 1 hair comb @ 1s

Asked for her views on the modern trend of nuptial gifts (AYÉYÔ-DEÉ) to brides, an old Asante woman of over 70 commented:

They are spoiling the girls, spoon-feeding them and pampering them with gifts which, with a little hard work, a woman could save to buy for herself.

In our young days, a wife was expected to begin from scratch, assist her husband diligently in his business and, through joint effort, co-operation and mutual understanding, work together to provide for themselves the wherewithal for a happy living.

* * *

And now to summarise: a man intending to marry an Asante woman lawfully according to custom should bear the following in mind and be prepared:

1. To 'introduce' himself formally with AHUDEÉ, also known as ABOBOÔM-BÔ-DEÉ, 'drink' of schnapps, gin, or their cash equivalent to the woman's father and the senior Elder of her ABUSUA (lineage);
2. To present nuptial gifts, AYÉYÔ-DEÉ, formally to the woman's relatives and to herself;
3. To 'beg' for her hand from her father or her ABUSUA-PANYIN through his own father or his ABUSUA-PANYIN;
4. To 'thank' the woman's ABUSUA-PANYIN and her father (DA NE TI ASE) with

- drinks of palm wine, one PANTU (i.e. 2 bottles) of gin or schnapps, in cash or in kind, according to the practice in the locality in which the woman's parents live;
5. To pay ANYAME-DWAN to her father, or her father's successor if her father is dead;
 6. To pay TIRI-SIKA, if her ABUSUAFOÛ find it necessary to approach him formally through his ABUSUA-PANYIN for it, and, provided that the request has the consent and approval of the woman, his wife;
 7. In the case of a first marriage of a young wife, to 'console' the mother of his bride with AFAYI-DEÊ of 3s 6d or 7s through her female relatives who formally escort his bride to sleep with him on the first night;
 8. To pay her father's or mother's, or both father's and mother's ÔBOSOM-NSA or ÔBOSOM-DWAN, if a pledge to that effect had been made by either the father or the mother or both;
 9. To register the marriage at any local Native Court, if so desired;
 10. To give his bride some money to buy some cooking utensils and other household articles, if needed.

5. Married life

The couple now live together and the machinery of marital union is oiled to run smoothly by the careful observation, by each partner, of certain obligations.

The man's first duty is to feed the wife, ÔBÔ NO AKÔNHAMA (i.e. he maintains her with food). In farming villages the most important item of food for which he is responsible is meat. Where he is unable to supply this by trapping or hunting, he is expected to give her cash to buy it, the woman supplying the remaining items, such as cocoyam, yam, plantain, vegetables, firewood, from her own or her husband's food farm. In towns he must provide enough money to buy all articles of food and also firewood or charcoal. Insufficient AKÔNHAMA-SIKA, commonly referred to as 'chop-money' (ADIDI-SIKA) may lead to domestic rupture which, if not adjusted in time, may result in constant quarrels and even to divorce.

He must clothe her. Husbands in villages give clothes to their wives after harvesting their cocoa, generally around Christmas. Where his source of income is regular, he may give her cloths when and as he finds it possible.

The increase in the number of items of modern women's clothing and the growing desire for other wares such as slippers (full and half), sandals, earrings, necklaces, and other fineries, have cost many an incapable husband many a wife.

Among the women interviewed the percentage of those who initiated divorce on the grounds of inadequate support ÔNHWÊ ME YIYE (lit. he does not look after me well) was very high indeed.

A woman looks to her husband for shelter. She may prepare food in the compound of her mother, father or near relative, but a place for sleeping must be provided for her by her husband.

A husband must play his part in all matters of procreation. Negligence in all matters of procreation not only is a source of trouble and discord between him and his wife, but also with his parents-in-law, and the brother-in-law too. If due to impotence or any other serious cause a husband fails to give the wife sexual satisfaction she will, more often than not, seek divorce.

In the case of a sterile woman, the husband is obliged to do all he can to help her bear a child. He is, for instance, expected to take her to consult medicine-men, famed herbalists, or seek assistance from an ÔBOSOM (fetish). He must buy patent medicines for her to use or send her to a hospital for treatment.

A wife expects companionship from her partner and, for that reason, he must find time to chat freely and converse intimately with her. If she lives

away from him in her parents' house, the husband has to visit her as often as possible, at least not less than once a day.

He is expected to interest himself in any honest work she does which is intended for the good of the union; to act in place of her parents wherever and whenever it is necessary and desirable; and, in short, to assist her in all ways that would make her feel happy and healthy.

Such is an ideal husband.

Says a prominent Akan philosopher:[1]

Two, and perhaps only two things are expected of a young wife by her husband, viz: to bear and care for their children and to do all domestic and some of the farm work, and she must, of course, maintain her fidelity unimpaired.

That, in a nutshell, is a woman's main obligation to her husband. To elaborate on this, it is felt, might not be superfluous.

The preparation of daily meals is one of the cardinal duties of an Asante wife. She is, as it were, the keeper of her husband's stomach and is therefore expected to see that it is never empty. Both the quantity and quality of the food she prepares are important. She becomes a most disgraced wife in Asante if her husband can justifiably say of her: 'ONNIM ADUANE NOA; NE NKWAN NYÊ DÊ (she is bad at cooking; her soup is not delicious)'. Kwabena K., a man of about 40, divorced his wife because, he said, 'ÔYE M'ADUANE BASABASA (she is careless about her preparation of my meals)'. Such a charge is a big stigma on a wife's own reputation, reflecting on her mother's as well as on that of any woman who has had something to do with her training and upbringing.

In villages a wife, as mentioned above, is expected to provide items of food other than meat for the preparation of all daily meals. It is she who fetches water from the source of the village supply which nearly always is a spring, a stream or a river running close by. She must prepare water for his bath, generally in the evening and must carry this to him if they live apart in separate houses. She makes the bed at night, keeps the room neat and tidy in the day and performs such other domestic duties as contribute to make a happy and healthy home. One other important duty of a wife in Asante is to wash her man's clothes and bed linen. He provides soap these days.

On the farm a wife must assist her husband by doing any work that she feels her strength would permit. In particular she is expected to plant food crops, to clear weeds growing in a new farm, and to lend a hand in cocoa harvesting operations.

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[1] Dr J.B. Danquah: *Akan law and custom*, p. 153.

As she is also her husband's partner, he expects companionship from her and so, like him, she should do all she can to make him feel happy and healthy at all times.

Parents-in-law must be given maximum respect. 'ASEÊ FIE YÊNKÔ NO BASABASA (An in-law's house is not to be frequented purposelessly)', is a piece of restraining advice intended for happy-go-lucky newly married young persons. A husband should do all he can to maintain a high reputation with his parents-in-law. He must help his mother-in-law in her farm work as often as he can, send her occasional gifts of tobacco, salt or cash. To his father-in-law he must render any services which he thinks will please him. A daughter-in-law must show a deep sense of respect for her parents-in-law. A disrespectful or unkind daughter-in-law seldom succeeds in marriage in Asante.

From the day that a wife's TIRI-NSA is given, the parents transfer their care and responsibility for her to the husband. He assumes full responsibility for her behaviour, for her actions and in accordance with the condition under which she was given to him, namely: 'ÔBÔ KA A, WO DEA' (If she incurs any debt, you are held responsible for its payment)', he is legally and morally bound to pay any and all debts she may incur when she is with him as a wife. In consequence, he has full authority to disapprove of any action or undertaking from which he has reasonable grounds to anticipate trouble. For that reason, it is the wife's bounden duty to respect his authority unquestioningly. The TIRI-NSA also seals for him the exclusive right of sexual relations.

When a marriage becomes fruitful and is blessed with a child, the father is immediately informed if the wife lives away from him in her maternal house. In his absence his near maternal relation is to be given the news promptly. Most expectant mothers staying with the husband in his house remove to their mother's or grandmother's compound for pre-natal and ante-natal care and treatment. Within the first two or three weeks of the arrival of the child, the husband sends choicest meat generously together with a sufficient amount of money for the feeding of the nursing mother (ÔBAA-TAN).

The naming ceremony[1] generally takes place on the eighth day of a child's life. On that day the father sends his sister or a female relative early in the morning to name his child: 'ÔKOTO NE DIN (lit. she goes to give it a name)'. His messengers carry with them the child's layette together with some cloths and other articles of clothing and toilet things for the mother. The wife's gifts are meant to 'take her out of maternity confinement', hence: 'OKOFIRI NO TAN (lit. he makes her go out of confinement)'.

The following are lists of the outfits of cloths, mats, etc., presented by one informant 40 years ago, and another one, three months ago:

Father A - 40 years ago

- 1 mat (locally made) 2d
- 1 pillow (with velvet AGO, cover) 6d
- 1 SAAWA (locally made silver spoon)
6d
- 1 SANYA (locally made drinking cup)
6d
- 2 yds of cloth FUNAMA-TAM (lit. navel
cloth) 2s

Father B - 3 months ago

- 1 mat (imported) 7s 6d
- 1 pillow (with velvet AGO, cover) 3s 8d
- 1 teaspoon (imported) 1s 6d
- 1 tea cup (imported) 3s
- 2 yds FUNUMA-TAM (lit. navel cloth) 10s
- 1 bucket 3s
- 3 cakes Lux soap 2s 3d
- 1 bottle hair oil 2s 6d
- 1 tin baby powder 1s 6d
- 1 comb 9d
- 1 bath towels 3s
- 1 gold finger ring 7s
- 6 baby dresses 9s
- 2 woollen hoods 4s 6d

A wife, after delivery, remains indoors for seven days (forty days in some localities). She is nursed tenderly and fed fat by her mother out of the money for her subsistence provided by her husband.

Cash gifts as well as presents of other articles including foodstuffs, firewood, salt and shea-butter are sent to her by friends, relatives and well-wishers. After a period of confinement she goes out with her mother and other female relatives to thank her husband, friends and all well-wishers. From then on she resumes her normal domestic duties.

Some wives, with the consent of their husbands, may prolong their 'maternity leave' period to the 80th day (ADA-DUO-WÔTWE), roughly three months after the birth of the child.

In times of sickness, it is the husband's responsibility to bear the full cost of her treatment. He must, if he lives with the wife in his compound, report her indisposition, ill-health or sickness to her relatives promptly. Although they may assist him in paying heavy expenses connected with his wife's illness and its treatment, parents-in-law are not bound to do so. A wife, on the other hand, must report her husband's illness to his ABUSUAFO who take full responsibility for his treatment and cure. What is expected of a wife is to assist her husband's relatives with all needed services.

.....

[1] See Note 4, Part II.

Until a sick wife has been treated and fully cured she cannot be divorced by her husband. She, on the other hand, may ask to be divorced if she is of child-bearing age and the nature of the husband's illness is such that it is impossible for him to have sexual relations with her, particularly when the illness is a protracted one.

When the observance of obligations, the enjoyment of privileges and the discharge of duties are reciprocated understanding is engendered between the couple and the lease of life of the marriage could be long. Man and wife could live together in harmony and in contentment through mutual adjustment of problems in the spirit of toleration and by meeting each other halfway all days 'till death them do part'.

The passing away of a spouse is not merely physical. It bears some religious significance and so certain rites[1] are to be performed. This is done, it is believed, to ward off any harm, misfortune or ill-luck that the spirit of the departed one may otherwise inflict upon the soul, the mind or the body of the partner left behind in the world of mortals.

Until quite recently, a menstruating woman in Asante society was considered both physically and religiously unclean, and should, in consequence, abstain herself from men. Formerly -- and still even now in some remote villages -- a man would have attached to his house a room that opened outside and was called BRA-DAN (menstruating women's room). Attached to others was a small house, BRA-FIE (menstruating women's house). Into this a wife or a sister went to stay during her menstrual period. It was said that a man's soul and god (NE KRAA NE N'ABOSOM[2]) became defiled if a menstruating woman lived together with him in the same house, cooked for him or, worse still, permitted him to have sexual intercourse with her.

This long-held belief is losing its hold in many places due to forces of changing living conditions. Nowadays, except in an AHEMFIE (a Chief's house) and in ABOSOM-FIE (a fetish house), menstruating women living outside a compound house in large towns are a rarity. A Chief in Kumasi who was interviewed on how the problem was resolved in his compound house replied:

Several women live in my house with their husbands as tenants. Naturally they menstruate periodically but this has no effect on my Soul. This is because it is never known to me when a particular woman is in her period. In my own household a menstruating wife or sister stays away from Kumasi in her village for the duration of her period. No menstruating woman should or can enter my Stool Room.

.....

[1] See chapter 10.

[2] See Note 1, Part II.

In the past even the commonest man, from the age of adolescence, would never eat of any food prepared by a woman in her period. If he did eat BRA-DUANE (lit. menstrual food) he would be jeered at by his friends and playmates.

All this is dying out, particularly in towns. Young men have an altogether different attitude to menstrual women. They live together with their wives in one room and under conditions where an additional room elsewhere for a wife in her period is simply impossible to have. It could be said with a high degree of certainty that they almost all of them do eat of food prepared by their menstruating wives all the time.

Polygamy, a marriage of one man to two or more women, is practiced quite freely in Asante. A man has the customary right to marry as many women as his pocket would permit but, should he have any sexual dealings with any other woman, married or unmarried, he must pacify his wife if the affair comes to her knowledge. MPATA, the amount given to pacify an aggrieved wife, differs in different localities and ranges from 13s to two guineas. Some literate husbands these days may give as much as four guineas or even more.

When a married man decides to take a second woman he passes an apology through a friend of his first wife to the wife for her 'consent'. This is purely a matter of formality and in the nature of courtesy since without any tangible reason the wife cannot stop him from taking a second wife. A valid ground for objection on her part could be that the intended wife is a 'blood relation'. In such a case wise counsel will prevail and the husband will give up the idea. Until MPATA (pacification) is given a truculent wife could make hell for the husband and may harrass the intended wife in all sorts of ways. Her acceptance of MPATA signifies her acquiescence in the marriage and this binds her to the observance of all customary regulations governing polygamous marriage in force in the particular locality.

The new wife also pacifies her senior co-wife with an amount of 7s or 13s. Her acceptance signifies her recognition of her husband's first wife, and is an indication that ÔNE NO BÊGORO (lit. she and she will play together, i.e. there will be no ill-feeling). Marriage payments on a second wife are made in full and the procedure is followed as in the case of a first wife.

Impartiality on the part of a husband of more than one wives is a cardinal prerequisite for a successful polygamous marriage. The least indication to any one wife of the husband's inclination toward the other wife leads to broils and strained relations, not only between the wife and the husband but also between that wife and the supposedly favoured wife. Everything worth sharing to the two women -- meat, cloth, farm work, cooking period, as well as periods for the sharing of his bed -- must be shared reasonably equally. An

experienced polygamist informant's advice is: 'For a successful polygamous marriage impartiality must be the watchword of the husband'.

6. Personal relations

Preliminary observations

Fully aware of the fact that procreation is an end result of sexual contact between a man and a woman, the Asante regard sex as a matter for adults who, in obedience to Nature's supreme law, must 'breed and multiply'. Either pre- or extra-marital sex merely for pleasure is against the code of morals. In consequence, a lecherous individual (ODWAMANFOÔ) falls short in the estimation of his or her immediate community.

His deep sense of respect and veneration for sex prevents any well-bred Asante from talking too liberally about sexual relations except between close intimate friends, and even then, it is done in the strictest privacy. For that reason it was not possible, in the course of this study, to collect any data on a statistical basis on facts relating to the sexual relationship between husband and wife. What little information that could be gathered was therefore in the nature of general and veiled opinion from a few obliging informants.

Genitals, e.g., are not spoken about lightly by an Asante. Mentioning in public of the name of these external organs of reproduction, the female organ in particular, sounds repulsive, vulgar and extremely embarrassing. And so whenever a reference is to be made to them, euphemistic words are always employed. A cultured Asante would, for instance, use NE BARIMA (his manhood) for the penis, and talk of a female's private part as N'ANAN-MU (in between her thighs).

Asante parents normally discourage their children from sexual practice and make every effort to keep sex a sacred mystery -- the 'forbidden fruit' -- to the young. But it is not easy in some cases to suppress this instinct successfully. Once in a while a boy and a girl may be seen copulating quite instinctively. Parents then look upon the act with dismay and both children are severely chastised.

Until quite recently KYIRI-BRA, the pregnancy of a girl before her menses had been publicly announced and before the relevant rites had been performed, was a solemn taboo.[1] The general opinion was that in normal women pregnancy only took place after passing menses. A girl who became an exception to this natural rule was considered abnormal and anything not normal, in the way the Asante looked at things, was regarded as being able to cause EMMUSUO (a mystical disaster) if it was not treated in certain ways or if certain rites were not observed. Every mother therefore attempted to keep her adolescent daughter chaste in order to avoid KYIRI-BRA in her 'home'. Her daughter always remained under discreet surveillance and guarded control and in most cases they shared the same bedroom until the daughter was

qualified and married to a desirable man.

Many a 'bush' girl would take the pride in being chaste and unspoiled and would never hastily put her sex to surrender. They were so particular because promiscuity on the part of a young girl was, even as it is in many Asante villages today, a bar to a decent, stable marriage.

In those days there were less opportunities for the young to act on their own, girls were able to preserve their virginity until they were married. In the opinion of almost all old women interviewed a girl with unbroken virginity before marriage is now a rare individual.

The Queen-mother of D. confirmed this by saying:

Case 15 -- Obaapanyin Akwasua S. (about 60):

In our days a young woman experienced her first intercourse with her husband. It was with the greatest caution and under some exceptional circumstance that an unmarried girl would go into the room of a man. No, she felt so bashful and so shy to do so. But now it is the practice of many young women to apply to a man to befriend her. What a shame this! (ËË ANIWU).

Another elderly woman holds this opinion:

Case 16 -- Adwoa P. (about 35):

Girls now reach the age of puberty at a much younger age than our mothers. This is because many of the modern girls begin copulating long before they pass their first menses. It is this premature sex that makes young girls of today reach puberty at an earlier age. They begin young because they want money to buy fineries.

It is the practice of many mothers to instruct their inexperienced daughters in the act of copulating just before they go to their first husband. They are taught what to do before, during and after each intercourse.

Young men on the whole acquire the experience of sex not from their fathers but in most cases from their older and more experienced friends. As in the case of modern girls a sexually 'green' husband is now most uncommon. Old men are also of the opinion that men in their young days never indulged in sexual relations before marriage. One of them gave this as his experience:

Case 17 -- Yaw K. (about 50):

We (my wife and I) grew up together, and I did not know how to 'sleep' with her the first time. She was the first woman I 'knew'. My brothers were very much concerned and feared that I might not be able to 'sleep' properly with her.

.....

[1] See Note 3, Part II.

Husband-and-wife relationship

A man and his wife owe it as a duty to themselves and to their ABUSUA to have children. This, as stated in the preceding paragraph, they know is possible only through sexual contact. Intercourse is therefore freely enjoyed between them and except during the time of the wife's menses there is no taboo period. Should either of them wilfully and frequently deny the other contact for any undue length of time when in sound health the offended partner, more often than not, would lodge a complaint with the spouse's intimate friend or a relative demanding an explanation for such delinquency. Unless one of the partners is physically incapable of copulation persistent refusal to permit sexual intercourse is always an indication of some marital disharmony which must be put right by a third and closely intimate person, should the couple fail to sort things out by themselves.

There is no honeymoon as is understood in a number of Western countries, a period during which the newly married couple spend a few days alone at some place immediately after they have joined as husband and wife. In Asante society the couple live their normal life in the same town or village and there is no break in their routine of work for a holiday. On the first night of the day that an Asante lawful marriage was formally consummated the bride's mother in some areas dispatches her daughter, accompanied by some female relatives, to the bridegroom. After that the wife goes to sleep in her husband's house at night if she lives in her mother's compound.

Masculine potency is at its highest and 'white' nights of serene comradeship are enjoyed during the first few weeks. Later sexual exercises slow down to a normal level when two or at most three acts of coition take place during the night.

Induced abortion is an evil which the introduction of Western civilisation has brought in its train into Asante society.

The desire to have children in any Asante home is so strong that a husband, to be worth his salt, would go to any length in order to have issue in every union. A wife's brothers and some of her near relatives are also much concerned about her whenever her marriage is not blessed with children and will play their part to assist the husband to find a way of making the woman productive. When she happens to be the only woman of the immediate sublineage the urge to do so is very strong indeed, for ABUSUA MU WO MPAEÉ (lit. a lineage has branches). It is the wish, therefore of members of each 'branch' to see to it that it grows and flourishes.

Induced abortion is therefore very much deplored and will never be practiced except in very rare cases where, for instance, an unmarried woman has grounds to believe that the father of the future baby would be violently

disapproved of by her parents. Such a ground could be the nearness of relationship of the woman to her paramour or to some defective trait in the man who has caused her pregnancy. Once a man and a woman decide to marry and do so with the consent of the parents there is, in the view of the Asante of the older generation, no justification for interrupting the course of nature.

For that same reason birth control, until quite recently, was not considered desirable. Consequently contraceptives and the much publicised and advertised methods of their use could rightly be regarded as foreign to Asante society.

A wife who is able to give her husband complete sexual satisfaction by playing her part well during intercourse would be held in high esteem by her spouse. Where, on the other hand, it happens that she is completely ignorant and inexperienced a husband may coach her to suit his pleasure. Kofi B.'s relatives prevailed on him to divorce his wife who was not getting on well with them. He would not yield to their pressures. His reason given in confidence to his friends was that the wife was an excellent bed companion: OTUMI TO NE PA YIYE (she is an adept 'waist shaker' in bed: a mistress of hip and pelvic movements at copulation).

The blending of physical and psychical elements of both husband and wife begets harmony which promotes mutual affection. The mutual affection in turn oils the machinery of the marriage and although the two will remain individuals in the Asante sense -- as opposed to the biblical ideology: 'and the twain shall become one flesh' -- husband and wife become indispensable helpmates one to the other and companions above the ordinary.

Being humans, occasional discord could never be avoidable. Now and then some misunderstanding does arise but as one jovial elderly woman put it to me: 'NTÔKWA MA AWAREÊ SÔ (angry disagreement is a marriage booster)'. In her view a marriage tends to go stale for some time but a little marital quarrel over some petty matters or of a trivial cause could put 'pep' into a union and rejuvenate it after reconciliation. Many couples who have enjoyed long and harmonious marriages could not agree with the old lady more.

7. Parents and children

The strongest natural desire of the average Asante woman -- and man, to some extent -- is to have children. One need not wait for elaborate statistics to prove this. A visit to a traditional healer reputed to specialise in the curing of barrenness or to the shrine of some ABOSOM (fetishes) or to any ADURO-SO (imported Northern Territory religious cult) will confirm this conclusively.

But why, one may ask, should so much importance be attached to the bearing of children in Asante society? In the first place, a couple, by bearing children obey an order of nature. That aside, child-bearing is regarded as a form of 'mutual insurance policy' expressed in the saying: 'WOHWÉ OBI MA NE SE FIFIRI A ÔHWÉ WO MA WO DEÊ TUTU (lit. If you look after someone to grow teeth, he in turn looks after you to lose yours)'. Consequently, to the older generation, there was no limit to the number of children to be desired -- allowance being made for the claims that Death might make. In the interest of proper education coupled with the high cost of living demanded by the harsh modern world, most men are beginning to think in terms of the quality rather than the quantity of children they produce. It is still true in a way -- at least in the rural areas -- that to a woman the more children she can have the higher she is esteemed and the greater the praise she receives. Many elderly women can be heard saying boastfully: 'MAWO 'DU' (lit. I have begotten ten children). The tenth-child ceremony testifies to the honour and respect still accorded to a prolific breeder in some localities.

The unit of Asante society is the ABUSUA (lineage) but to an individual the 'House' or BÊTEMA (lit. the cluster in the bunch of palm nuts), meaning the nearest relatives, the offspring of a common grandmother, is of prime importance. Even though economic conditions are fast breaking the strong ties which used to bind individual members of the whole lineage firmly together, a person's own 'House' or BÊTEMA remains a compact identity and the children of his or her own mother the most important unit. ABUSUA MU WÔ MPAÉ (lit. a lineage has branches) is not without significance when it comes to the evaluation of children and their importance first to the BÊTEMA then to the ABUSUA and up to the village and society. Hence, as has been previously stated, a woman's brothers show some concern when her marriage is fruitless and they may in certain situations be impelled to take certain positive measures that will help her bear children.

Children, it is held, are the gift of Providence: 'ONYAME NA ÔMA MMA' (lit. it is God who gives children) and the number of children granted is predestined but evil persons, AYÊ-FOÔ (malefactors), chiefly witches (ABAYI-FOÔ) interfere with the coming of the given children into the world by taking away the

womb, AWO-DEÊ (lit. birth things) and conceal it on, say, the bed of a stream or under some big tree standing somewhere in the neighbourhood of the village or town. A barren woman therefore almost always attributes her lot to some supernatural force against whom she must seek the help of ABOSOM (fetishes), ADURO (cults) or some divine healer, not excluding Mallams, to obviate the evil influences of their suspected malefactor.

A child is welcome among the Asante. The only exception is that of KIRI-BRA (prenubile pregnancy) which in the past was abhorred and shunned completely. In those far gone days, it is said, KIRI-BRA and her paramour were banished and driven away into a dense forest in which they would disappear, never to be seen again. Until quite recently, according to some elderly informants, a child of KIRI-BRA as well as any physically deformed one, including even the so-called NSA-NSIA (lit. six-finger person), was never suffered to exist. Immediately at birth such a child 'was dispatched whence it come' and the midwife's report 'WASAN AWO-YÊ' (lit. it has gone back at birth) was fully understood by all.

When an unmarried woman is known to be pregnant the senior members of her 'house' (sublineage) will request her to tell them the name of the man responsible for her pregnancy. This is done to establish the biological father who will be held responsible for the care of the child when born and of the woman from the start of her pregnancy to the end of her post-natal confinement. Her reluctance to make known the particular person creates suspicion which has to be cleared. It could mean that she has been impregnated by either a near relative, by some undesirable individual she feels ashamed to be associated with, or she may have been going with more than one man: 'WANHWÊ ASU KORO SO ANSA (lit. she never stuck to collecting drinking water from one source of a stream). If the name of a man responsible for the pregnancy of an unmarried woman is mentioned to her relatives the father or the uncle of the sublineage sends to inform the impregnator of the revelation. More often than not the man owns it readily and takes full responsibility for the care of the woman.

In some rare cases mention of the name of the person responsible for her pregnancy becomes embarrassing to her and she, in such a case, covers up for him by saying that the man was a stranger she met once and could not say where he was. The names of more than one man may be mentioned. In such a case neither of the men would be held responsible for looking after her and neither of them would be accepted as the father of the child..

If the identity of a man who impregnated a woman is revealed by her or is revealed in some other way but the man refuses to accept responsibility or is a man of straw or an undesirable person or a stranger whose whereabouts

are unknown a near relative, generally her father, uncle, brother or grandmother, takes responsibility for the care of the woman and the custody of the child when born. In such a case the custodian presents the layette and names the child after himself or herself.

According to some elderly informants it was an unheard-of thing in Asante in the past for parents to claim 'damages' from a man who made a woman pregnant before she was lawfully married to him. The practice is said to be one more product of western civilisation. In the pure Asante way all that was requested of the man was to look after the woman he had 'injured' (WAPIRA NO) until the child was born. If he wished to marry her lawfully he had to wait till after the birth of the child and the end of the mother's confinement. Marriage formalities were not to be performed among the Asante for a pregnant woman: ÔBAA NYINSÊN A, YÊNYÊ NE HO ADEÊ (marital negotiations are not to be carried out during the period a woman is pregnant). That was a rule that had to be observed.

The Asante man needs children to prove his manhood and also to discharge a very important obligation: that of passing on the names of his forebears from one generation to the other. This is done by naming his children after his parents and ascendant close relatives. The chain would be broken and a name of a forebear fall into oblivion if a man proves unable to continue the line. An old granny was heard saying jokingly to a grandson who was unduly delaying his marriage: 'WARE NTÊM NA WO BA TO ME, NA WOBÊMA ME DIN AYERA (lit. speed up your marriage in order to bear and name a child after me as otherwise you cause my name to die out)'

Children, sons in particular, must help the father in all his work and girls must help their mother. A son is expected to understudy his father: ODI NE NAN ASE (lit. a child follows under his father's foot) and to do other domestic filial duties such as cleaning his dining table every morning, ÔHOHORO NE SE DIDI-PON SO ANÔPA (he washes his father's dining table every morning).

When a father dies it is his children who must provide the coffin. The statement WOSI DAN MA WÔN AKORAA (lit. they put up a house/room for their father) expresses the final filial obligation to a father. It is considered a serious failing on the part of a man if he dies with no child born to him to give him this last respect. It is said of such a childless man: 'N'ADAKA KA AYÊ NO KA' (the cost of his coffin has become his own liability), meaning he was left with no one with the obligation to pay for his coffin. The more children a father has and the higher their social and financial standing the more costly and grander a coffin he can expect to have when he dies. In the words of a prominent Asante Chief: 'YÊDE MMA NA EDI HENE (it is with one's own children that a Chief can perform his chiefly functions effectively)'

In the matter of inheritance the fatherhood of an ordinary child of an Asante woman is of no consequence. What is meant by this statement is that a man's right to inherit the property of a deceased uncle or brother is not affected by who his father is, be he an 'alien' (i.e. non-Asante) or an Asante national. This applies also to a child born of an Asante woman out of wedlock whose father was not revealed or whose identity was revealed but the man did not accept the responsibility for the mother's pregnancy. In the latter case, although not a serious social stigma, a child of an unknown biological father could expect some derision from among his own circle of friends who might say to him jokingly: 'ONNI ÔSEÊ KYIRI BOTIRE[1] (lit. the head of killed game is a fatherless child's avoidance)'. In a serious brawl an opponent may charge him or her with 'fatherlessness'.

On the same subject of inheritance a point worth making is that in the matter of considering the qualifications of a candidate for inheriting an Asante ancestral Stool, particularly one of the principal Stools, the fatherhood of a child could carry very much weight. It is essential therefore -- for the reasons elaborated upon in Part II, under NTÔN -- that the biological father of a child who is an ÔDEHYÊÊ (a member of the ruling lineage of a town) should not only be proper, but well established also.

A point of some religious significance worthy of note is the bond a child is believed to be instrumental in fostering between father and mother from the period of gestation through delivery to infancy and babyhood to early childhood and, in some cases, later.

It is held that a person is an individual of two inherited elements that dwell in the physical body. These two elements are the 'blood' (BOGYA) and the 'soul' (KRAA). The BOGYA, inherited through the mother, is the ABUSUA (lineage) and the KRAA which comes through to him from the father is his NTÔN (NTORÔ). The fusion of the two, it is said, takes place in the mother's womb. It is considered necessary for a husband to be near his wife as much as possible all through the pregnancy in order that the formation of the child can be properly completed through frequent copulation, which also facilitates delivery. It is believed further that if during the period of pregnancy a wife

.....
 [1] BOTIRE, the head of killed game. In the era of hunting as an honourable profession, certain people were entitled to receive specific parts of the killed game. For instance, the thigh of the animal was to go to the Chief of the town; the neck was the hunter's mate's (AYAW-NII) entitlement; the wife of the hunter was entitled to the brisket of the animal, and the head (BOTIRE) was the hunter's child's entitlement. A fatherless child therefore went without the head of killed game, hence the taunting expression.

misconducts herself the soul of the father, passed into the unborn child, would be jealous and take revenge by making labour difficult. For that reason a pregnant woman with difficult labour was confronted to confess her misconduct -- the obvious cause of her distress.

The belief is also held that after birth a man's KRAA inherited by his child could avenge on the father's behalf if the wife wrongs him or if she eats of any of his NTÔN avoidance. In any of such cases the child may become seriously ill. The illness may be blamed on the mother who must confess her misconduct or misdeed or risk the death of the child.

The fear of offending the soul of the father, the KRAA which is the protecting spirit of his child, is felt to be a strong factor which contributes to the stability of many a successful marriage blessed with children.

8. The hazards of Asante marriage

The fusion of two human beings cannot occur without the formation of some slag. There is no perfect conjugal relationship, just as there are no perfect human beings.[1]

‘How on earth can a wife run a home if she must live away from her husband’s house?’ observed a foreigner wonderingly on being first introduced to what appeared to her the ‘queer system’ of the Asante domestic economy.

Standing on a street in any Asante village and in many towns in the evening, an observant person would not fail to see a number of women, young boys and girls carrying prepared food in neatly blackened earthen-ware dishes (AWOWA) from one end or side of the street to the other. These are the evening meals -- the main meals of the day -- for husbands prepared by wives who live in the compounds of their mothers, brothers, uncles or some close relatives. The food is cooked in the wife’s relatives’ house where she lives during the day but she goes to sleep in the husband’s house at night. In the morning she goes back to the ‘family’ house to perform her domestic duties.

The husband lives with his mother, sisters, brothers and other close maternal relatives in his own or his uncle’s house where the female relatives, on their parts, carry out the domestic duties during the day, including cooking, for their husbands in other compounds.

A wife is responsible for keeping her husband’s own room in his ‘family’ compound tidy. She washes his soiled clothes in her ‘family’ compound, provides him with water from there for his bath and sends to him from there prepared food which he shares with the inmates of his house -- his close maternal relatives. Should it happen that a wife lives together with the husband in his house and a violent quarrel broke out between the couple, she might quit the husband’s house and go back to her ‘family’ house where she would remain until they had been reconciled.

The compound in which this paper is being drafted is a ‘family’ house whose residents are:

- a) an elderly woman past menopause who is the ‘head’ of the house
- b) four men
- c) nine married women.

Of the nine married women, two are at present away from the town on some business; two others are with their husbands in farm cottages doing a spell of work, and the fifth woman lives in her husband’s compound. All the

.....

[1] Dr A. Willy, Dr A. Coester, Dr R. Fisher, *The practice of sex*, p.252

remaining women, four of them, spend the night in their husbands' separate compounds. None of the wives of the men live in this compound during the day but they all come in to spend the night with their husbands.

This day and night change of dwelling places by wives is a normal occurrence in Asante and one can safely say with all certainty that there is not a single village of any reasonable size in Asante where all wives live in the same house with their husbands.

It has been necessary to dwell on this point at length in order to bring home the fact that all through their married life husband and wife remain separate partners whether they live together in the same compound or not. Indeed, a clause in the condition under which a man accepts a wife, 'ONYA ASADÉÉ A, ÔDE KÔ N'ABUSUAM' (if she comes by any treasure she takes it whole with her to her ABUSUA) puts a thick wedge between the wife and her husband right from the outset of the 'union'. 'And the twain never shall be one' may be an appropriate injunction perhaps for the Asante entering into a conjugal 'union'.

In the opinion of several men and women interviewed on the subject, but mostly women, it is the ABUSUA with its matrilineal system of inheritance which is held to be the cause of most unhappy marriages among the Asante. The wife is expected to support her husband in his business as best she can, but she must at the same time try to earn her own income. She may buy and sell in towns, or make her own farm in the village, not so much to supplement the household budget, but mainly as a security against a possible hard future. Ask a man for his opinion and surely you expect to hear:

She is expensive, self-centred and much disinclined to assist her husband whole-heartedly and conscientiously.

The woman will retort: 'ÔNHWÊ ME YIYE' (he does not support and maintain me well enough) adding,

We work hard with our husbands in our lifetime, but they die and we are thrown out of his house and driven away from his farm. We become desperate and helpless with our children.

Argued a farmer-husband:

If my wife will help me conscientiously in my work, I shall care for her well when I am alive and before I die give her a share of my farm.

A young wife in her late twenties states quite bluntly:

I should, while young and strong, make provision against the time my husband's relatives will throw me out when he dies.

And the cat is out of the bag!

It is taken for granted that the reader has some knowledge of the system of

inheritance among the Asante which, in a nutshell, is that a deceased man's property is inherited by his brother or by his sister's son. If during his lifetime a father decides to give any part of his immovable property or some substantial movable property to his wife and/or children, he could do so without any restraint. The proviso is that he should do so with the knowledge of his maternal relatives directly concerned. His wife or the child receiving the gift should, as previously observed, thank the husband or father formally through the head of their 'house' with a 'drink' (NSA) which would 'stamp' the deal. The 'drink', when given and partaken of by the senior members of the man's near relatives signifies their acquiescence. Until the NSA is produced and 'drunk' the deal is invalid and the man's successor can legitimately take back the property.

Most women feel sore about this practice and many of them have good grounds to feel thus, but some of them may be heard saying resignedly: 'YĒBĒFA NO SAARA' (lit. we will take it as it is, meaning: what cannot be helped must be endured).

An elderly woman who has been married to one man for about thirty years and has had nine births with him is articulate in her conviction that the modern Asante girl is wiser by not sticking to one husband. In her view, the modern woman has learned her lesson from her mother and grandmother who are now suffering neglect after having devoted the whole of their life to their husbands and have, by so doing, become completely dependent on them. She cites her own marriage experience, which could be taken as typical of what one hears everywhere, to justify her conviction. She says:

Case 18 -- Awo Afua A. (over 50):

I married Yaw ... when I had just passed my first menses. I had not known any man. My father told me to marry him and added that I should help him in all he did. I do not even remember if my TIRI-NSA was taken, but I came to live with him and have helped him in all possible ways. It was I who carried every single plank for the roofing of his house. I had a new baby then, but would go to the bush early in the morning to carry two or three planks home before I went to work on the farm.

I expected he would appreciate my whole-hearted assistance and reward me and my children for it. Now I am old and can do no work, but each time I quarrel with him, no matter how trivial this may be, Yaw will tell me: 'KŌ WO FIE, EFIE YI NYĒ WO DEA' (lit. go to your house, this house does not belong to you)'.

Yaw, my husband, became ill and lay in bed for three years. It was my children and I who attended him all that period. No OBUSUANII came to

help me take care of him. Because I used up all my energy in helping my husband I have nothing of my own on which I can fall back. But if he does not give me part of his farm while he is still alive -- and I have no hope that he will -- I shall be left in this world, in spite of all my hard work to help Yaw, with only Providence to look to. WOSOM ÔBARIMA A, WOBRE GU KWA (serving a man, i.e. a husband, is a wasted labour). A woman must feel secure, but if she depends on an Asante man, she will live to regret it in her old age, in the same way as I am regretting it today.

From my experience, I personally do not blame the modern woman. She is wiser in her trying to acquire her own property and to safeguard her future when she is still young. If she feels that one man cannot help her, why should she not try another?

Case 19 -- ÔPANYIN Yaw K., the Chief Linguist of A., (about 60) holds a contrary view:

In the time of our fathers, women respected and feared their fathers and uncles. Consequently, if they gave their daughters and nieces to a man to marry, these never had any desire to be divorced, especially when any of the parents was dead. It was believed that if she divorced the husband her dead parents' SAMAN (spirit, ghost) would be offended and thereby bring some harm upon her.

Then also, if a woman had children, she regarded it a blessing and valued them more highly than anything in the world. She would stay on with her husband however poor he might be.

Now the modern woman thinks more of fineries. She thinks more of slippers and sandals and costly gold ear-rings, gold necklaces, and a hundred and one extravagant ornaments. If she has children with a husband but does not get all the ornaments she desires, she will always complain and say: 'ÔNHWÊ ME YIYE' (he does not look after me well, i.e. he does not provide me with all my needs adequately). She schemes for a divorce in order to try her luck with another man considered to be richer.

Nephew inheritance is a national custom. Like the double-edged weapon it cuts both ways. If Madam A.'s husband is rich and she is jealous because his nephews will inherit from him, she should remember that her own brother's property will be inherited by her children.

One other fact which these ever-grumbling women fail to appreciate is that a father spends his money and energy on the training and upbringing of his children. This the father does in order that the

children could take over from him the responsibility of caring properly for their mother, his wife, in her old age.

But whatever arguments husbands advance in support of the Asante system of matrilineal inheritance, their women maintain quite strongly that it is their right to have a share of the fruits of their labour with their husbands. They contend that this should not be a reward or a privilege, but a right and that if they cannot have it, they must 'make hay while the sun shines'. The trouble is that in making her hay a woman, more often than not, comes into conflict with her grudging husband. What follows then is obvious and the more she concentrates on her own interests the stronger the conflict develops.

Some informants observed that in unions where the women augment the 'family' budget with part of their earnings or in villages where they assist their husbands by supplementing his subsistence money substantially with proceeds from their food crop farms the partners are known to have sailed clear of this marital cliff.

A second impediment to a successful marriage in Asante tends to be interference of near relatives. For a wife the annoyance will probably come from a jealous sister-in-law or a censorious mother-in-law for ever finding fault. For the husband the trouble will probably centre in the person of an ungrateful, inquisitive mother-in-law. A wife naturally feels that she must be the mistress of her home. But where she lives in the same compound with her relatives-in-law she is warned many a time by actions, deeds and even in words that 'blood is thicker than water'. Whenever she manages to get on well with husband a mother-in-law or a sister-in-law may become jealous and suspect that the wife is draining their son or brother of all his wealth. This is particularly so when they have the least ground to feel that he is not supporting them well enough.

An informant confessed that he was forced to rent a separate room in another house for his wife, not because he could afford to do so, but to prevent his sisters and other close relatives who had access to his room from knowing how well-off his wife was at his expense.

A husband's near kin expects his wife to look after him carefully. If they have cause to suspect any negligence of this duty they make her life very unpleasant. A man who was very much attached to his wife found that he was on the horns of a dilemma. Her sisters and mother did not agree with her and the house was a hell on earth. In Asante a man cannot forsake his ABUSUAFO (matrilineal relatives) in order to follow his wife. The only way to preserve peace and tranquillity was to divorce the wife. And so it happened that the unfortunate man was compelled to separate from his dear wife. And alas! it was an irretrievable separation. On the evening of the divorce the man

shot himself dead.

This is an extreme case but couples who at one time or another find themselves in the same situation as that unfortunate victim are legion. At the time this chapter was being drafted an altercation was overheard between a sister of a husband and his wife in the course of which the wife blew out angrily: 'WONUÀ SERÉ SO À, ÈNNA WO SO' (however big your brother's thigh is it never can lie on you, meaning: you can never marry your brother). The sister retorted: 'WO DEÉ, WOPÉ SERÉ FOFORO À, WUBENYA BI; ME NSO SÈ WOANHWE NO YIYE NA OWU À, NINNI BAABI ÀRA À MEKÔPÉ BI, ENTI MAKÀ' (lit. If you want to have another thigh, i.e. another husband, you can always find one. But for me if you ill-treat him and cause him to die, I shall have nowhere to go to find another brother, so I have to say it, i.e. to protest).

This is the clue to most disagreements between a wife and a husband's near female relatives.

To the husband the mother-in-law has the most nuisance value but this is due mainly to the disparity of their ages and of their outlook. A mother-in-law may want her daughter to behave or act in the way she herself did some 40 or 50 years ago but this may not be compatible with the modern way of life. She may want her daughter treated in the way she decides. If she is a very obstinate old person the husband always has a tough time.

An informant told of his bitter experience with a very conservative mother-in-law as follows:

Case 20 -- Kwadwo N. (about 35):

Three years ago my wife bore a bonny baby boy. Two weeks later it was attacked by a strong fever and I asked my wife to take him to a clinic in Kumasi. She was prepared to go but her mother objected and said: 'DÔKOTA NNI SAA YAREÉ YI ADURO' (hospitals have no remedy for this particular illness).

I became furious and ordered my wife to take the child to Kumasi at once. The old lady followed them to the clinic and when the Medical Officer requested that the baby be admitted, my wife's mother objected and took both my wife and the sick child away. I was informed of this and again I ordered my wife back to the clinic with the poor child. My mother-in-law told me point blank: 'YÈNNWO NNI! AKÔDAA YI, ME NA MEDEÀ. ÔYÉ YIYI À, ÔYÉ MÀ ME, ENTI BAABI ÀRA À MINIM SÈ MEDE NO KÔ À ÔBÈYÈ YIYE NO, ME DE NO BÈKÔ' (lit. Fathers do not beget children and own them. This child belongs to me. If he survives, he survives for me. Therefore I shall take him to wherever I am confident that he will be properly cured).

The poor child was taken to a village near Kumasi and was given

doses of some concoction. The following day it died.

Another source of problems that may beset several marriages and call for several adjustment valves is the presence of a second wife of a polygamous husband. Where a man has only one wife with him there is a fair degree of harmony in the house. One spouse allows a wide margin for the failings and short-comings of the other. Let a second woman appear and the house becomes hot with complaints, both frivolous and founded, discontent and flagrant neglect of household duties. The least fault is magnified several times and capital is made of petty lapses. It is then that senior wives realise that their husbands are ungrateful and their support and maintenance inadequate. The favourite song they sing aloud or hum or recite the words to is:

MMARIMA NYÉ O-O-O!

Men are no damn good

MMARIMA NYÉ

Men, you are ungrateful

MMARIMA, MOYÉ BONIAYÉ

Men you are ungrateful

WAHUNU ÔFOFORÔ ATO DAA ATWENE

He has got a new one and
discarded the old

MMARIMA, MOYÉ BONIAYÉ

Men, you are ungrateful)

Two rival co-wives (AKORA-FOÔ) may endeavour or affect to be accommodating but jealousy, the green-eyed monster, always hides in the corner and could raise its head frighteningly at any moment to create unpleasant situations which only a patient, impartial and tactful husband can handle effectively.

Except that the social status of the Asante woman is not unequal with that of a man, one is tempted to accept as true with the Asante society the following observation made by Schapera on the conception of marriage in an African tribe:

It is evident then, that the Kgatla conception of marriage does not make for loyal companionship and deep personal attachment between husband and wife. The unequal social status of men and women, the lack of daily intimacy in married life, the nature of authority vested in the husband, the polygamous tradition and its modern manifestations in sexual promiscuity, and the growing spirit of revolt on the part of women, all render difficult the attainment of enduring harmony and, on

the other hand, readily facilitate discord. [1]

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[1] Schapera, *Married life in an African tribe*.

9. Divorce

AWARÊ NYÊ AWARÊ NA, NA NE GYAEÊ (getting married is not as difficult as getting out of marriage)

The procedure

A marriage, as is known everywhere, is not all roses without thorns. Misunderstandings and momentary differences of opinion may occur but a devoted and tolerant couple always leave room to accommodate them. But as it happens, differences are not always easily adjusted or resolved and misunderstandings may lead to discord. A provoked husband may beat his obstinate, cheeky, querulous and exacting wife or cease to give her the daily AKÔNHAMA-SIKA (lit. 'chop-money', i.e. subsistence money), and be out of sympathy with whatever she does. The wife may refuse to prepare his meal and deny him sexual intercourse or go away from the husband's house to stay in her 'family' compound. Then there is a break.

A friend of either the husband's or the wife's or a member of the sublineage of either party may bring the disaffected couple together one evening soon to hear the cause of the discord and endeavour to reconcile them. The guilty party may accept the mediator's decision and agree to pacify (PATA) the wronged spouse. A guilty husband may pacify the wife with cash of, say, 2s, 4s or higher according to the nature of the wrong done and as decided by the friend. A guilty wife, on the other hand, is always asked to pacify her wronged husband with some eggs or a fowl or both eggs and a fowl but rarely in cash. The pacification (MPATA) amount or thing may be accepted in actuality or in principle. If in principle, the spouse to whom it is awarded would declare:

MAGYE MPATA NO, NA NSO MEDE KYÊ (The pacification award is accepted, but remitted, meaning: my wife's/husband's apology is accepted unconditionally).

The reconciliator tactfully reprimands the guilty one, consoles the wronged and offers friendly advice to both. Man and wife continue to live together again. They try to forgive and forget. 'The marriage is rejuvenated', as a woman informant observed to me. This is the usual Asante way of adjusting conjugal disharmony and there are only a few unions that can boast of having stayed clear from this 'workshop' of a third party 'damaged'-marriage 'repairer'.

But things do not always go that smoothly. An aggrieved spouse may become uncompromising and bent on divorce. What has to be borne in mind is that in Asante society a spouse is not bound to stay on in a union he/she no

longer wishes to continue. There is, however, a cardinal principle on the effectuation of divorce that must be observed strictly under any circumstance. It is that **AWAREÊ GU NKURO** (A marriage is dissoluble only after arbitration). This is necessary and highly desirable because the reputation of a married person, particularly that of a woman, could be soiled if he/she is sent away without making known publicly the charge against him/her at a gathering of relatives. Such a stain has to be avoided at all costs, hence the need for arbitration.

When it has not been possible for friends to effect a satisfactory reconciliation the partner initiating the divorce takes the matter up by letting the elder before whom the marriage was contracted know that he/she is no longer able to continue the union. Soon after the notification the **ABUSUA-PANYIN** or the father of the spouse initiating the divorce sends for the other spouse and, with the assistance of a few relatives and friends, a body referred to as **BADWA-FOÔ** (a panel of arbitrators or counsellors) attempts are seriously made to reconcile the estranged couple.

Let us assume that the wife is the complainant. She will be asked why she is unable to continue with the marriage. The husband would be called upon to exculpate himself or accept the charge made against him as true. A decision is given in favour of or against the wife but that will not make any difference to her stand. If she is found guilty and is still bent on divorce, she will have it should she maintain persistently: '**DEÊ ÔDA NE GYA NA ONIM SÊDEÊ ÊHYEHE NO FA** (He who wears the shoe knows how it pinches)'. It is at this point that the christian doctrine: 'what God has put together let no man put asunder' crosses with the Asante conception of divorce.

In the traditional Asante view marriage is a union entered into by two persons of their own free will. If the union reaches a stage where it hampers full enjoyment of life and makes it rather unbearable, one or the other or both partners should feel free to decide to end it. Divorce should therefore be sanctioned in order to avoid any unpleasant or possible dangerous consequences which its enforced continuance could bear on a spouse.

A case cited to justify reasonably unrestrained divorce was that of a bitterly disappointed wife who, when her church would not grant her divorce, decided to end it all rather than to continue living with a disagreeable husband. The miserable woman committed suicide by hanging herself in her bedroom! The Asante want to prevent such an unfortunate conjugal disaster. And so, after exploring all possible means of bringing disaffected partners together without success **BADWA-FOÔ** (arbitrators) will give in and agree on the separation requested.

It may all sound easy as, in fact, a European friend of mine observed to me

one day:

Ah, divorce in your Asante society is easy -- one can change one's spouse as easily and quickly as one changes one's clothes.

It is only those Asante who have bathed in the pool of divorce who can appreciate the strong grip that moral sanctions and checks of public opinion can have on lawfully married couples. It must be conceded that divorce in the Asante way is inexpensive, money-wise. It should never cost a man anything above half the cost of 'drinks' provided to BADWA-FOÔ (arbitrators) who witness the dissolution and a marriage never has to be dissolved at a Chief's Court: YENNI AWARE-SÊM MPANYIN ANIM (marriage disharmony cases are not to be resolved by the Chief and his Stool elders sitting in Council). The initiator of divorce is not bound to establish a clear-cut act of commission or omission of an obligation and if the BADWA-FOÔ comprising close relatives and friends of both partners find the initiator of the divorce has no valid grounds on which to press for dissolution, he/she could still persist and press for separation and he/she would get it. In the final analysis the decision to continue or not to continue in a marriage contracted under Asante customary practice, it is to be emphasised, rests solely with an individual partner who entered into the union of his or her free will.

But in a communal society of close and varied connections a person cannot easily have his or her own way all through without creating ill-feeling between himself/herself on the one side and others on whom he/she may depend for some support in times of need, on the other. All such persons have to be reckoned with to influence one's decision especially on such socially important matters as marriage and divorce. Most of these people can be expected to come in one way or another, overtly or covertly, but the weapon they use to save a marriage from breaking down, wherever possible, is not force but persuasion. There are, for instance, a man's own parents, his friends, maternal uncles, the head of his lineage, his father's friends, even a Chief (in his personal capacity), the Queen-mother, benefactors and a host of other people to whom he owes a debt of gratitude, or for whom he has deep respect and whose pleading it would be unwise not to heed. Any such person may be approached -- or might act on his own initiative -- to intervene and intercede to save the marriage from collapse by inducing the couple to agree to live together as husband and wife. All well-wishers of the couple act on the well-known Asante precept:

ÔPANYIN NNI AFOOFI MMA ASEDUA MFÔ (lit. An elderly person, while at home resting, never sits aloof and watches cowpeas spread to dry in the yard, drenched by a falling rain) -- *Noblesse oblige* in other words.

Consequently every elder in a 'house' worth his salt regards it his

responsibility to save a marriage from being hastily dissolved on any ground that cannot be accepted as weighty. He is obliged to make every effort to reduce tension and to do all he can to save a tottering marriage from collapse.

It is when placed in such a trying situation that a person can fully appreciate the import of the saying 'AWAREÊ NYÊ AWARE NA, NA NE GYAEÊ (It is easier to enter into marriage than to get out of it)'.

A conceited individual who turns deaf ears to the intercession and pleading of friends, elders and well-wishers who matter in a village society is branded as 'OMMU NNIPA' (He has no respect for anybody). In a close-knit community where somebody is related to everybody in one way or another a person so branded lives to regret his/her obstinacy sooner or later. When every possible avenue explored to bring the disaffected couple back together has led to a dead end the arbitrators (BADWA-FOÛ) finally give in and allow divorce proceedings to take their course.

The formalities that validate the dissolution of Asante customary lawful marriage are as follows:

1. The return of AWARE-DEÊ

Mention is made of the return of AWARE-DEÊ (lit. marriage things) merely for its historic interest as the practice was abolished ten years ago by a ruling of the Asante Confederacy Council. Before then, AWARE-DEÊ which, as its name implied, was a term covering all goods and chattels given by a husband to a wife during the effective period of their marriage, reckoned from the day the TIRI-NSA was produced, had to be returned to the husband. AWARE-DEÊ included such things as cloths, handkerchiefs, beads, ear-rings and other personal property. If a wife was unable to produce an article given in the course of her marriage, either in whole or a bit of its worn-out part, the cost of the particular article was charged against her. For that reason a prudent wife would securely keep small pieces of old worn-out cloths and other AWARE-DEÊ against such an eventuality.

In the opinion of some people, both men and women, the abrogation of the practice has contributed in a measure to the estrangement of some spouses and the consequent instability of many marriages these days. The men generally maintain that when the return of AWARE-DEÊ was in force a marriage was stable. According to those of them who favour the surrender of AWARE-DEÊ at divorce a woman knew she would lose all that her husband had given her if she initiated a divorce. Now the position, they say, is changed. If a union is unsuccessful a wife increases her personal property by collecting AWARE-DEÊ. Each time she remarries and divorces she adds to her wealth

acquired through marriage. Divorce is thus a material gain to some women who will never let a fine opportunity pass.

A driver and transport owner had this to say on the subject:

Case 21 -- Nkwasi K. (about 40):

Women these days have nothing to deter them from seeking divorce. No AWARE-DEË has to be surrendered.

YEMMU AWARE-DEË (lit. No marriage things are to be accounted for). What they are bent on doing is to accumulate wealth, and so they initiate divorce capriciously. When she is sound, wealth-wise, a woman wants to become completely independent and would not want to toil for a man. A well-to-do woman will build a house for herself and become independent. The other married women become envious and strive to emulate her and in some cases to surpass her.

In a woman's view:

Case 22 -- Akua S. (about 35):

Because a husband cannot now retrieve AWARE-DEË he is cautious and sparing in the provision of the wife's cloths and other personal effects. He entertains the fear that his wife may leave him and take away with her all the things given her in the course of their marriage.

When a wife strives to fend for herself a husband may become apprehensive and suspicious. The least lapse on her part could spark big trouble and offer the man the opportunity to turn the wife back to her ABUSUAFOÛ (maternal relatives) saying: 'ABUSUAFOÛ MFA WÛN NIPA, MERENTUMI NE NO NTENA BIO' (lit. Let the lineage take back their person. I can no longer continue to stay with her).

A Queen-mother of an important subdivision confirmed this. She agreed that the woman of today has her faults but not all the blame should be laid at her door. In her view: MMARIMA NO NHWË MMAA NO YIYE TE SË KANEE NO (lit. men do not look after women properly now as they did in the past). She supported this by citing instances of cases of marriage disharmony that had gone before her for settlement.

2. *The return of TIRI-SIKA*

AWARE-DEË can no longer be claimed back but TIRI-SIKA (lit. head-money) is still refundable. If a husband initiates a divorce the wife's relatives have the option to negotiate with their in-law for a convenient time to pay back the amount. An agreement is generally reached whereby the amount involved could be paid back in, say, a year's time, often at the end of the major cocoa season (KOO-KOO BERË). In such cases the TIRI-SIKA is treated as a debt, validated by document, owed by the woman's senior maternal uncle on whose

authority the amount was collected. It might happen too that the man would agree to wait until the woman was remarried when the divorced husband would send a message through his lineage elder to the ex-wife's elder to demand the referred payment.

If it is the wife who initiates the divorce the husband can press for the immediate refund of the TIRI-SIKA in full justifying any uncompromising stand by saying: 'SÊ ÔNTETÊ NSIEI A, ANKA ÔRENNYAE AWAREÉ' (If she had not conspired with some other man to be married when she is free she would not have precipitated and pressed for a divorce).

3. *The return of TIRI-NSA (lit. Head drink)*

When the question of the return of TIRI-SIKA has been satisfactorily settled the wife's elder or her father, as the case may be, returns to the husband the TIRI-NSA whose payment or production, as stated earlier, established a lawful customary Asante marriage.

The wife at this stage gives the husband some white powdered clay HYIRE which he spatters on her at the back on the lower end of the neck between the shoulders (N'AWAN-MU) as he swears by the Chief's oath and says:

ASIMASI, MEKA ... (PRASO, in Agogo) ... SÊ, SÊ OBI FA WO A, ÔMFAA ME YERE
(Calls out the name of the woman -- I swear by ... Nana's Oath (Praso, in the case of Agogo) ... and declare that, henceforth, if any man copulates with you, he has not done so with you as my wife).

From that moment the marriage is dissolved: the woman is divorced and is free to marry another man any time.

The return of TIRI-NSA absolutely dissolves a marriage contracted under Asante customary law. All those present in the house become witnesses to the dissolution as they are served a 'drink' of, say, a bottle of gin, the cost of which is shared equally by the separating husband and wife. In some areas the 'drink' is to be provided by the initiator of the divorce.

4. *Fetish swearing (NSE-DIE) on marriage dissolution*

Before a marriage is nullified absolutely, or soon after its nullification in some localities, a suspicious husband may request that the wife swears by a fetish (DI NSE) to testify her sexual faithfulness during the period of their lawful union. NSE-DIE, or fetish oath swearing, is done in the shrine or in the compound of a particular fetish (ÔBOSOM) and in the presence of the fetish priest. It is taken early in the morning and on an empty stomach.[1] The woman is accompanied by a representative of her ABUSUA-PANYIN or by her

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[1] See footnote under Table XV

father in some places. The man provides two eggs, one of which is given to the woman.

An informant described his experience as follows:

Case 23 -- Kwabena K. (over 50):

I went with my wife and a representative of her Stool elder to AFRAM-FIE and announced to the fetish AFRAM through the priest that I was about to divorce my wife and had requested that she 'threw an egg' (TO KESUA KYERÉ ME) to testify her fidelity when she was married to me. I went with two eggs. One was kept by me and the other one was given to her. I challenged the wife about to be divorced and said:

'Akua N. (the wife's name),

FRÉ AFRAM DI NSE KA:

- SÊ, EFIRI SÊ MEWAREE WO YI, OBIARA MPÊÊ WO KA ME HO;
- SÊ, OBIARA NKA NKYEREÊ WO SÊ, GYAE AWAREÊ BÊWARE NO;
- SÊ, OBIARA NKA NKYEREÊ WO SÊ, GYE SIKA MA NO MPÊ WO;
- SÊ, OBIAR MFAM WO MMA NE HO NKUM NNUU WO SO;
- SÊ, OBIARA N WASAA WO ANO SO DA.'

(Akua N.

Swear by the Fetish Afram and declare openly

- that no other man has had sexual intercourse with you when you were married to me;
- that no other man has tempted you to divorce me in order to marry him;
- that no man has embraced you to such a degree that his sperm ejaculated and defiled you;
- that no man has ever handled your waist beads).

The woman, holding the egg in her raised right hand, swore and said:

'NANA AFRAM KWAME,

SÊ NSÊM A ÔBARIMA YI DE AMA ME YI, SÊ EBIARA WOM NA ME SE MERENKA:

- SÊ OBIARA APÊ ME DA KA NE HO;
- SÊ OBIARA AKA AKYERÊ ME SÊ, MINNYAE AWAREÊ MMÊWARE NO;
- SÊ OBIARA AKA AKYERÊ ME SÊ, MENNYE SIKA MA NO MPÊ ME;
- SÊ OBI AFAM ME AMA NE HO ABA AGU ME SO;
- SÊ OBI AWASA M'ANO SO DA,

NA ME SE MERENKA A,

NANA AFRAM KWAME, KU ME!

(Nana AFRAM KWAME,

The words that this man has given me (i.e. the challenge that this man has thrown to me) --

if any one of them is true: If it is true

-- that any other man than himself has had sexual intercourse with me when we were married;
 -- that any man has tempted me to get divorced in order to marry him;
 -- that any man has offered me money in order that he might sleep with me;
 -- that any man has embraced me to such a degree that his sperm ejaculated and fell on my person;
 -- that any man has handled my waist beads,
 but I have hidden the deed from him,
 NANA AFRAM, KILL ME!

On the words 'kill me!' the woman dashed the egg to the ground.[1]

I ratified the oath and said: 'NANA AFRAM KWAME, SÊ NSÊM A MEDE AMA ÔBAA YI, SÊ ÊWOM NA ÔSE ÔRENKA A, KU NO' (Nana AFRAM KWAME, If the words that I have given the woman are true, but she denies and refuses to confess, then KILL HER!) -- and dashed the egg I was holding to the ground. Her TIRI-NSA of 1s was refunded to me in the fetish house (AFRAM-FIE).

The woman gave half a handful of white powdered clay which I spattered on her back below the neck.

Our marriage was ended!

AYEFARE (Adultery compensation)

If in the course of their married life a man suspects his wife of sexual infidelity he may request her to swear by a fetish (DI NSE) or he may ask her mother to question her on a specific deal he suspects. In Asante society a husband has no right whatsoever to demand confession of adultery directly from his wife. Such an action is to be taken through the head of the wife's 'house'. If she confesses to them of any illicit dealing with another man her ABUSUA-PANYIN renders an apology to the husband and pacifies him (PATA NO) on behalf of his sister or maternal niece (WÔFAASE). The husband in turn informs his ABUSUA-PANYIN in whose name messengers are sent with a 'drink' called NINKUN-SA (lit. jealousy 'drink') to tell the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the adulterer about the misconduct of his ÔDEHYEË (blood relation). The adulterer's ABUSUA-PANYIN calls his ÔDEHYEË and makes known to him the message that has come to him from the husband's head of lineage and demands a confession from him. If he confesses he pays the appropriate amount of AYEFARE through the adulterer's elder to the elder of the wronged husband.

.....

[1] In some areas the egg is thrown to hit the front wall of the fetish's room.

If the alleged adulterer denies having had any sexual intercourse with the particular woman he has to swear the Chief's oath (ÔKA NTAM) to which the wife will be expected to respond. The issue then has to be argued before the Chief and his Stool elders.

If a wife confesses adultery but refuses to reveal the paramour or says the adulterer was a stranger whose whereabouts were unknown, her ABUSUA-PANYIN will be held responsible for the payment of the husband's appropriate AYEFARE in full.

If the adulterer lives in another town a NINKUN-SA is sent to the Chief of the husband's village. The Chief in turn dispatches a Stool messenger, an AHENKWAA, with another NINKUN-SA to the Chief of the offender's town and through that Chief the adultery is announced to the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the offender, with the NINKUN-SA. Payment of the aggrieved husband's AYEFARE is made through the same channels.

A Stool elder or a Stool servant (AHENKWAA) whose wife confesses adultery informs the Chief with NINKUN-SA and Stool messengers are sent to claim the appropriate compensation through the adulterer's head of lineage. AYEFARE ranges from £2 7s for an ordinary man (ABERANTEË, a commoner) to £9 16s and over, according to the status of the husband.

Causes of divorce

Various reasons were given for divorce in the cases investigated. A summary of these shows that an Asante marriage may be dissolved on any one of the following grounds:

1. Economic causes
 - (a) Incapability of maintaining wife
 - (b) Non-fulfilment of customary payments connected with the marriage
 - (c) Business reasons -- spouse refuses economic help, e.g. in farming, store-keeping or refuses to lend spouse money
2. Friction with spouse's kin
 - (a) Quarrels with kin, or abuse by kin
 - (b) Interference from parents-in-law or from spouse's near kin
 - (c) Disrespect for spouse's kin
3. Friction with husband or wife due to
 - (a) Disrespect, disobedience, quarrels or general disagreement
 - (b) Jealousy over second marriages
 - (c) Laziness
 - (d) Disagreement over children
 - (e) Incapable housewife

4. Childbirth
 - (a) Barrenness
 - (b) Death of children
 - (c) Sterility of husband
5. Sexual deficiencies
 - (a) Infidelity on the part of the husband
 - (b) Adultery of wife or suspected adultery
 - (c) Impotence of husband
 - (d) Sexual dissatisfaction with wife
6. Other reasons
 - (a) Sickness of spouse
 - (b) Neglecting customary duties to spouse's kin
 - (c) Prolonged absence of spouse
 - (d) Miscellaneous causes:
 - i. Practicing witchcraft
 - ii. Becoming a Christian convert
 - iii. Found to be related to spouse
7. No definite reason given.

When no definite reason or a vague one is given it is always to be understood that the man or the woman finds it embarrassing or degrading to reveal the actual cause of divorce, or that a partner may not want to injure the reputation or cause harm to the divorced partner.

It is the common view of many informants that when it is proved against a man that he is inept in the art of marriage, ONNIM AWARE (lit. he does not know how to marry), that is, he

- might ill-treat his wife
- does not maintain and support his wife adequately
- does not concentrate on marrying a wife; ÔSOSÔ MMAA (lit. he pecks at women),

or against a woman that she is

- notoriously quarrelsome
- sexually unfaithful
- incurably lazy, an ineffective housekeeper and a bad cook
- a pilferer of the husband's money

a person can earn a bad reputation of being 'unmarriageable'.

But whatever the cause of divorce may be the consensus of opinion of men and women interviewed everywhere in the area of my enquiry is that divorce is not a pleasant pastime but to many a necessary evil. All were agreed that whoever plans to embark on divorce should be well advised to give the matter

very serious thought and should not plunge himself or herself headlong into it without the greatest circumspection.

Custody of the children of a dissolved marriage

The common saying ÔYERÊ NKÔ MA ÔBA MMRA (let a wife go away but a child come) makes any discussion of the topic unnecessary.

A divorced wife leaves the husband but children of the marriage remain with or are always in the custody of the father. In the majority of cases grown-up children, both sons and daughters, live with their father but the younger ones remain with their mother until they grow old enough to live away from her. A man may remove his children from their mother as soon as they are weaned (YÊATWA NUFUÔ) if he wishes to do so but the age, of course, varies. Occasionally (or regularly in some cases) a father sends money or meat to the divorced mother to feed the younger children living with her. He clothes them, is responsible for them when ill and fulfills all other paternal obligations. A few men, however, refuse the custody of their children who then become the care of the mother and her brothers and uncles. A man who marries this divorced woman may feel it his moral duty to 'adopt' them and do the best he can for them.

The care of the children of a dissolved marriage does not normally present any difficult problem in Asante. It is always ÔYERÊ NKÔ MA ÔBA MMRA. Children live freely in houses of both the father and mother. Parents are aware that divorce may have some detrimental effects on their children (especially in the case of young children below the age of about 5) but these are considered to be supernatural rather than psychological. AKÔDAA NNI SUNSUM (a child does not have a powerful spirit) but as it grows older the SUNSUM it inherits from the father grows. Until this young SUNSUM becomes potential NE SUNSUM ANYIN it is under the protection of its father's SUNSUM. When a marriage is dissolved while the child is still young the child's undeveloped spirit is unable to stand against the possible attacks of evil influence and it may die.

Another theory is that the tender spirit of the child may wish to commune frequently with its father's SUNSUM but if it does not succeed in contacting it, it becomes sad (NE SUNSUM WERÊ AHO) and in that state may die.

Some fathers are believed to have more powerful souls (YÊ KRAA YÊ DEN). When such men divorce their wives, especially when the divorce is initiated by the woman, the husband's SUNSUM may take revenge on the children. A fairly grown-up child (AKÔDAA A WAHU N'ADWE BÔ WE -- a child which is able to crack its own palm nut) has a SUNSUM which is less dependent on the father's SUNSUM to resist the power of evil spirits. This explains why some

mothers hesitate to initiate a divorce when their children are still very young.

Kwadwo D. divorced a wife with whom he had five children. A few months later all three children whom the mother had taken away with her died. It was the wife who had initiated the divorce. Kwadwo D., it was believed, had a strong SUNSUM.

Parents hold the opinion that whether or not they live together as husband and wife, a child is apt to be capricious, naughty, wayward or mischievous, but it is a man who can effectively control its behaviour (ÔBARIMA NA ÔTEË ÔBA). It is to be understood that a wife may live in her relatives' house during the day and go to sleep in her husband's compound at night. Since children spend all or most of their time with their mother the burden of looking after them rests mainly upon her. But the woman and her children belong to the 'ABUSUA' and so her kinsmen share with her the responsibility of bringing them up (see Case 10). Divorce, therefore, is not considered to have any effect on the character and behaviour of children if the father continues the training of his children or if the mother's kinsmen undertake to train them.

10. Death of a spouse

The Asante conceive of death as a transformation of the physical into the spiritual. To them a person dies and the body, unlike any other dead thing which is thrown away and for ever forgotten, is put into the earth and covered with soil 'to hide' -- YEKOSIE EFUNU (lit. we go to hide the body). In a more dignified expression, YÊKÔ KORA AMUU, the Asante mean their body is put in safe custody for preservation. The physical body, according to them, is hidden in the ground all day but hovers and wanders about in the night as a spirit (ÔSAMAN) in human guise. He remains in the 'world of the living (ATEASEFOÔ)' until his funeral is performed after which, on the fortieth day of his death, he travels to the 'world of the dead (ASAMAN-DO)'. He continues to live a similar life there as he lived on earth.

A dead person's connection with the living is never severed by this transition. He continues to take an interest in the fortunes of his living relatives. He is a spirit and, like any other spirit, has the power to control the destiny of the living: to reward those who treat him with respect and do his wishes and, on the other hand, to punish any living relative who contravenes the accepted norms and social behaviour with certain misfortune or sickness.

A full understanding of this conception will help a stranger to understand why the Asante behave in certain ways toward their dead relatives, and to comprehend the meaning and purpose of rites, ceremonies or observances connected with their funerals, a full description of which is outside the scope of this book.

* * *

As stated earlier on, the unit of the Asante society is the ABUSUA, the lineage. All through life -- from birth till death -- and after death, an individual remains a component part of this unit. When a person dies the body is the 'property' of his ABUSUA and it is the ABUSUA which is responsible for giving him/her a decent funeral befitting a member of a proud lineage. It is the lineage that bears all the expenses connected with his/her funeral. Everyone related to a dead person has some part to play at his/her funeral but, from the point of view of this paper, the relevant person to concentrate on is the widow or the widower. For that reason a brief description of rites and ceremonies performed only by a living spouse is given below.

1. On the first day of the death of a spouse

From the moment a spouse dies the living spouse, known in Asante as OKUNAFÔÔ, is subjected to the observance of various taboos and mourning practices and procedures. He must go through a maze of rituals for a period

of 40 days or so after bereavement. If a spouse, say a wife, dies her ABUSUA-PANYIN immediately announces the death formally to her husband with a 'drink' through the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the husband. The bereaved husband (OKUNAFÓ) informs his relatives and selects one of them or a trusted friend of his to be his agent who acts on his behalf in all arrangements connected with the funeral of the departed wife. The relative or friend acting as an agent for the widower buys the following ASIÉ-DEÉ (lit. burial things):

- (a) a coffin (in the case of a dead husband his coffin is provided by his sons and daughters)
- (b) a bottle of gin or schnapps
- (c) a blanket
- (d) a pillow
- (e) a length of cloth (generally 2 yards long)
- (f) a length of 'shame' cloth (AMOASEÉ)
- (g) a set of waist beads

The ASIÉDEÉ are sent to the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the dead wife on behalf of the widower.

During the forty days of the death of the wife, the widower is considered to be in an impure state and until he is purified his actions are to be governed, dictated and regulated by an attendant. He must do nothing that has not been ritually sanctioned by this attendant who also sees to it that the widower exercises moderation in all that he does during the period of his widowerhood.

Accompanied by relatives the widower goes to the house in which the deceased wife lies in state (YÉADEDANO).

The ABUSUAFOÓ of the dead spouse selects a woman who has experienced KUNA, i.e. has once been a widow -- preferably one who has passed child-bearing age -- to act as an attendant to the widower, known as OKUNAFÓ-GYGYE-FOÓ (lit. widower's attendant). This elderly woman holds both hands of the widower and seats him three times on the ground in front of the bed on which the dead wife's body is lying in state. He stays seated on the third seating with his legs stretched forward (ÓSAM NNYIWA). The widower's ABUSUAFOÓ (maternal relatives) furnish him with the following charms and widowhood/widowerhood outfit:

- (a) KUNA-SUMAN, a talisman worn on the left wrist
- (b) GYABUM, a charm made of
 - (i) the fruit of PRÊKÊSÊ tree[1]

.....
[1] PRÊKÊSÊ: *tetrapleura tetraptera*, see: Irvine, *Plants of the Gold Coast*, 1930 edition, p. 410.

- (ii) some leaves of NUNUM shrub[1]
- (iii) some leaves of ÊMEE herb[2]
- (iv) a dry corn cob roasted whole.

All four items were tied together with raffia palm fibre (DOWA).

The charm so prepared was said to have the power of expelling a haunting evil spirit (SASA BÔNEE) of the dead spouse.

- (c) A waist band made of the fibre of BOFUN[3] tree on which was hung a key. The band is worn on the waist with the key suspending over the genitals. The key so worn was said to have locked up the organs so that the evil spirit could not get access to them to cause any harm.
- (d) HWERE-POMA, a long walking stick cut off ÊHWEREÊ stalk[4]
- (e) KUNA-KÊTÊ, (widowhood/widowerhood mat) which was an old mat on which he sat during the day and slept at night throughout the period of observance of the funeral rites
- (f) ABOTIRE, a fillet (headband) made of some seeds of NUNUM and ÊMEE strung together on BOFUN fibre
- (g) ÔDANTA, a loin cloth worn by a widow or widower, made of a strip of cloth cut off a worn-out KUNTUNKUNI (mourning cloth). A wife in widowhood discards waist beads normally worn by Asante women and girls.

Items (a), (b), (c) and (f) were prepared by a 'specialist' who was an old woman in the village. For each ritual item she prepared a charge of 1s was made.

After sitting for some time in the legs-stretched-forward position in front of the body lying in state, the widower is given some drink served in a glass tumbler. The attendant touches his lips three times[5] (MPRÊNSA) with the glass before the drink in it is swallowed.

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[1] NUNUM: *ocimum viride*, ibid. p. 308.

[2] ÊMEE: *ocimum canum*, ibid. p. 307.

[3] BOFUN: *ficus spp.*

[4] ÊHWEREÊ, a tall grass commonly called 'elephant grass' which is a wild sugar-cane-like grass. ÊHWEREÊ is a derivative of HWERE (verb, to lose). A stick cut off the plant symbolises a deep, irreparable loss.

[5] MPRÊNSA, three times. Three is a ritual number considered to be a symbol of good luck. Most ritual actions are therefore performed three times, e.g.:

- (i.) A man's 'soul washing' (KRAA-DWAREÊ) is done by touching his lips three times with ADWERA, herbs;
- (ii.) ABAMON (god of twins) is purified by sprinkling water in a basin

ABÔNTEN-TUO (*Outdoor wailing*)

Followed by his female relatives, the widower goes out of the funeral compound into the street to weep and wail, his actions being directed all the time by his attendant who also accompanies him.

A widower weeps and wails with both hands placed on the top of his head: 'ÔDE NE NSA GU NE TI GYAM' (he bemoans and bewails with his arms on top of his head). A widow wails hands on hips with the elbows swinging backwards and forwards: 'OSI ABATWÊ' (lit. she fixes the elbows). The GYABUM charm is held in the left hand placed on the right shoulder and the HWERE-POMA in the right hand. He jumps through the smoke when a gun is fired.

A widow and her sisters-in-law during the obsequies

Formerly a widow, especially a wife who had not got on well with her husband's sisters (NKUMAA-FOÔ) was subjected to harsh treatment during the funeral of her husband. An old woman recollects her bitter experience:

Case 24 -- Nana Ama A. (about 70):

I was mercilessly beaten by my OKUNAFÔ-GYEGYE-FOÔ (widow attendant). She held my hand and pulled me after her from one end of the street to the other. All my sisters-in-law took part in the ill-treatment. They ordered me to weep a bottle-full of tears, but of course that was an impossible thing to do. They put onions and pepper in my eyes to induce tearful weeping and claimed from me a fine of 1s 6d each time I failed to fill a bottle with my tears.

And from another woman:

Case 25 -- Nana Afua N. (about 65):

My NKUMAA-FOÔ (sisters-in-law) treated me barbarously. The leader performed some incredible acts of strength and commanded me to do as she did. She ran about very fast, skipped and jumped high to pluck leaves from a standing shade tree GYEDUA. I was dragged several times from one end of the street to the other. Each time I showed the least sign of fatigue they rained blows on me.

Back in the funeral compound

On his return from outdoor wailing into the funeral compound the widower's attendant sits him down on the ground three times, on the third of which he

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containing some leaves of ADWERA herbs three times;

(iii.) ANOKA (nubility rite) is performed by touching the lips of the girl three times with salt, fish, mashed yam ÊTÔ, etc.

remains seated with his GYABUM charm and HWERE-POMA placed by his outstretched legs. He eats nothing but cola-nuts and after chewing them and swallowing the bitter juice, he spits the residue on the GYABUM charm.

Burial of a deceased spouse

The body is placed in a coffin. The widower produces his departed wife's ASIE-DEË (lit. burial things) comprising OSIE-NTAMA (a short length of cloth, and OKUNAFÖÖ-NSA (widower's 'drink') of 1s 6d which in the traditional Asante currency was NTAKUO-MMIËNSA, i.e. three six-penny pieces.

The coffin is taken to the burial place (NSAMAN-POM), led by the widower weeping and wailing along. He carries on his head KUNA-KUKUO (widower's pot) which contains lumps of swish (KUNKUM-AMMOË) covered with KOOKO (indigenous cocoyam) tubers. On reaching the outskirts of the town or village he turns to face the town with his back to the burial grove where the grave has been dug.

As soon as the bearers with the coffin pass him he breaks the widower's pot (KUNA-KUKUO) by dropping it on the ground and returns to the funeral compound, never turning his head to look back in the direction of the burial grove. He remains seated in the compound and wails until the burial party returns from the grove, when he is offered a drink of palm wine.

For six nights the widower sleeps on the floor of the room in which his late wife was laid in state, in which also sleeps his attendant and some female relatives. On the seventh night, i.e. the night preceding the eighth day of her death, he 'escapes' to spend the night in a house which the deceased wife seldom visited in her lifetime. In some localities the widower 'runs away' straight away after breaking the widower's pot (KUNA-KUKUO) to the 'safe place'. That is done, it is believed, to avoid meeting the SASA (evil spirit) of the departed partner.

2. On the second day of a spouse's death

Fasting continues. The ABUSUAFOË (maternal relatives) of the deceased give the widower some drink. Whenever palm wine is given he drinks it with a piece of charcoal[1] put in the calabash.

In the forenoon he is given some medicinal soup (ATWEFO-DURO or ABËM-DURO) the ingredients of which are: some leaves of ÊMEE herb, some leaves of AFAMA herb and some lean meat. The soup is prepared by the attendant.

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[1] Charcoal (GYEBIRIE) is believed to have the power of driving away evil spirits.

3. On the fast-breaking day

On the day that the ABUSUAFOÔ of the deceased wife breaks the fast, the widower's attendant shaves his head close with a razor and charges him a fee of 1s 6d (7s in some localities). The attendant takes him to a running stream near the town/village to bathe. She dips a sponge into the water and touches his head with it: once, twice, thrice, before handing it to him to do the bathing. The fee for that operation too is 1s 6d (7s in some towns).

The GYABUM charm, the fillet (ABOTIRE) and the HWERE-POMA (walking stick) are thrown into the stream but the mourning cloth is given to the attendant.

ANOKA (lit. lip-touching) on the fast-breaking day

Back home from bathing in the stream, the attendant touches the widower's lips with the following:

BEFUA (one palm nut), NKATEÊ (peanut), ADWENE (fresh-water fish), ABUROO (maize), BAYERÊ (yam), APATERÊ (Bosonotwe fish), MANKANI (cocoyam), KOOKO (indigenous cocoyam), NWA (snail), NKAMFOÔ (a species of yam), AFASEÊ (water yam), NKYENE (cooking salt), BANKYE (cassava), MPUNAM (smoked game), KESUA (egg), AMAKO (pepper), GYEENE (onion).

As the lip is touched with each item, the attendant mutters: 'WO YERE AWU: ÉNNÉ NA YÊKA WO ANO' (lit. Your wife is dead: it is today that your lips are touched).

A little bit of each food item is put on three pieces of potsherd (KYÊMFERÊ) and the lot taken to a dung hill (SUMINASO) and left there. From that time the widower can eat a meal prepared with any of the food items without bringing any harm unto himself but for forty days he is to take a meal once only in a day, after mid-day.

In the old days, it is said, a widower/widow was not to eat a meal prepared with food dug from the ground (ASAASE-DUANE), i.e. edible tubers, including cocoyam, cassava and yam, during the first forty days of a spouse's death.

4. On the eighth day of a spouse's death

The eighth day is the day of balancing the funeral accounts. Expenses incurred during the week (AYIE-ASE-KA) as well as donations received (NSAWA) are totalled and announced. If total expenses exceed donations the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the deceased wife shares out the debt among the members of the lineage, male members generally paying about twice what female members have to pay. The widower also calculates his expenses which he makes known to the deceased wife's ABUSUAFOÔ for their information only, as he has to bear it all himself.

By another ruling of the Ashanti Confederacy Council reasonable expenses incurred on the death of a spouse are to be pooled and shared by the ABUSUAFOO of the deceased and the ABUSUAFOO of the surviving spouse.

5. NSU-KYERE (lit. water display) on the ninth day of a spouse's death

On the ninth day of the death of a spouse a basin containing some sand collected from a stream and some leaves of ADWERA herb are carried from house to house to thank sympathisers. At the entrance of each house visited some of the sand in the basin and a few leaves of the ADWERA herb are deposited. The widower wears a white calico cloth (NWERA) in his round of thanks-saying.

That performance brings to an end the surviving spouse's observance of the week-long widowhood/widowerhood rites.

6. General remarks

The spirit of a departed spouse

As observed earlier on the Asante believe that the spirit (SASA) of a dead spouse can haunt the soul and the body of a living wife or husband. The KUNA (widowhood/widowerhood rites) are performed in order a) to protect a widow/widower from misfortune, including economic loss; b) to preserve his/her mental balance and c) to keep all bodily organs, genitals in particular, unimpaired.

In KUNA (widowhood/widowerhood) a widow/widower is cautioned to act with moderation. He/she is admonished all the time not to do too much talking, not to be sullen and gloomy, nor laugh too loudly; he/she must not touch money as otherwise he/she would become an incurable spendthrift when out of KUNA. Whatever was done during the period of the funeral -- it was firmly believed -- sticks and becomes a disease that cannot be got rid off after the obsequies.

Informants cited several cases of what became of some widows and widowers who spurned the rites and disregarded their performance with scorn. The following are a few of the instances given:

- 1) The evil spirit SASA of a dead wife touched the penis of a widower who refused to wear the ritual waist band with a key hanging on it. He bled through the penis from that time until he died.
- 2) A widow removed her waist band one night. The SASA of the dead husband came along and 'slept' with her and she became disorderly (OYEÊ BASA BASA). She had some serious defect in her genitals too.
- 3) A widow who was hard hit by the death of her husband ignored the

advice of her attendant and kept nodding all the time. After the obsequies she could not hold her head in its natural position, but kept nodding all the time, day and night.

- 4) A young woman who refused to burn ASASA-DURO (herbs burnt in a room at night to drive away evil spirits) was haunted at night each time she went to bed. She could not sleep in the room until the ASASA-DURO (evil spirit expellant) was burnt in it.
- 5) A very eloquent Pastor of a church refused to observe the KUNA rites and stammered badly after the funeral of his deceased wife.
- 6) A postmaster of a village confessed that he had become completely distraught after the death of his wife. People attributed that to the non-observance of the KUNA rites.
- 7) A semi-literate young man, a cocoa broker, had lost three wives in less than six years because, it was said, he was openly contemptuous of KUNA rites and their observance.

In the opinion of many observers, women were on the whole more scrupulous in the observance of KUNA rites although several men, including literates and some staunch members of churches, were known to have taken the observance seriously.

A male informant who lost a wife three years ago gave his experience as follows:

Case 26 -- J. K. A. (34, a literate, public writer and cocoa buyer):

As a widower I bought a mat, a blanket, a pillow and a pair of ear-rings together with a length of satin cloth for her shroud.

A waist band of BOFUN (*ficus spp*) fibre with a key strung on it was given to me to wear.

I was not allowed to eat in the morning for forty days. All I had in the first three days of her death was palm wine which I drank with a piece of charcoal in the calabash. I could have taken gin but that alcoholic drink makes one feel much too hungry too quickly.

In the evening of her death some medicine was brought to me to eat. It was prepared with the meat of a duiker (ÔTWEE-NAM) and a mixture of some herbs in the form of soup.

During the first forty days I bathed three times a day: in the morning, at noon and in the afternoon.

From the first night of her death some herbs were burnt in my room to drive away the spirit of my departed wife from me when I was asleep. (YEPUN ASASA-DURO).

An elderly woman attended to me. She conversed with me and advised me on what to do. She admonished me not to talk too much, nor be

moody and sullen. She was very particular that I practice moderation in all my actions.

For forty days I was not allowed to sleep with any woman.

Levirate as practised among the Asante

A widow should remain unmarried for forty days after the death of her husband. During that period she is supported and maintained by the maternal relatives (ABUSUA-PANYIN) of the deceased husband or his successor if chosen. On the 40th day the ABUSUAFOÔ assemble and formally introduce to her the man chosen to inherit from her late husband and enquire from her whether she agrees to marry the man who has succeeded her late husband.

Should she decide to marry the successor it is unnecessary to perform again the formalities that establish a lawful customary Asante marriage. All the successor has to do is to give the wife to be inherited her AKYEKYERE-BASOÔ of 7s or 13s which empowers him to take off her waist band. He slaughters a sheep for the spirit of his departed brother or uncle as the case may be.

The widow may decide not to marry her late husband's successor. Her ABUSUAFOÔ would, in that case, give back the TIRI-SIKA if taken, as well as the TIRI-NSA to the ABUSUA-PANYIN of the deceased husband. The marriage is, by so doing, dissolved formally.

If the widow is too old to bear children she may decide to stay unmarried in order 'to marry the memory of her dead husband', saying: 'MÊWARE ME KUNU SAMAN' (lit. I will continue to marry my late husband's spirit). In that case the husband's successor is obliged to regard the widow as his wife in every respect except that he cannot have sexual intercourse with her at any time. As best he can he supports her and performs all marital obligations other than copulation for as long as she is alive.

A man died leaving four wives. His successor described what happened:
Case 27 -- Kwasi A. (about 35):

Two years ago my uncle died leaving behind a big cocoa farm, four wives and several children. On the eighth-day funeral ceremony the ABUSUAFOÔ, including all prominent members, male and female, met and appointed me heir to my uncle's property.

I took over the maintenance of the widows until the fortieth day when the ABUSUAFOÔ and sympathisers met again and called the widows before them. Each one of them was asked whether or not she would marry me, their late husband's successor.

Two of the widows, because of their advanced age, declined to marry me. They would 'marry their husband's SAMAN (spirit)', they explained. The third widow declined because I had married her own sister (same

mother and same father) and divorced her. The fourth agreed to marry me so that she and her children could continue to enjoy the fruits of their labour with my late uncle.

In the night that she was going to sleep with me for the first time I gave her an amount of 8s called AKYEKYERE-BASOÔ before I cut off the BOFUN string with a key which she wore on her waist.

The two old widows are not married to me in actuality but I regard them as my wives in obligation. They do not have sexual intercourse with me. Occasionally I give them some money to buy food. On AWUKU-DÊÊ (sacred Wednesday) I give each one of them money, say 2s or 4s. During the cocoa harvesting season I buy a set of cloth and a headkerchief for each one of them. They are pleased with how I have been treating them and they are very grateful.

The estate of a deceased husband

Under the Asante matrilineal system a brother or a nephew inherits the property of a dead man. After his funeral a day is fixed for a formal visit to his farm(s). His widow accompanies her in-laws to the farm(s) to show them the boundaries of each farm. Back home she must hand over to the ABUSUAFOÔ of her deceased husband any substantial amount she had received from her husband for safe-keeping. The saying is: 'OKUNAFÔ KYERÊ ADEÊ NA ONNI ADEÊ' (lit. a widow enumerates property, she does not inherit property).

If a man dies without giving any of his self-acquired property to his wife and children the ABUSUAFOÔ of the deceased may decide that a part of his farm or house be given to the wife and children. Under certain circumstances they may not decide to do so, in which case the widow and her children go back to their ABUSUA. Any property given to a wife or to a man's children for which no 'drink' had been formally and publicly produced to 'thank' him while alive could be taken back by his successor.

A large number of widows interviewed on the Asante inheritance system felt sore. The experience of widows, especially those who had lived with their husbands all their lives and worked faithfully with them but were thrown away by the successors, had cause for bitter feelings of resentment. One such widow said:

Case 28 -- Yaa A. (about 50):

He left behind five large farms which I helped him to make, together with a good many personal effects. His ABUSUAFOÔ stopped me from going into any of the farms. Now I have no farm of my own. I depend on my sisters. I am like a young girl beginning life all over again -- a poor

helpless woman with nothing to support myself.

It happened that one day I had no food and went into one of the farms which I helped my husband to make to collect some plantain and cocoyams that I had planted myself. His successor saw me and took the food stuffs I had collected from me. The next day I found myself before the Chief to answer a charge of stealing. Judgement was given against me and I was fined.

Another informant whose case is cited above (case 23 -- Nana Ama A., aged about 70) continued:

[...] After the funeral I showed his ABUSUAFOÔ the property of my late husband and the boundaries of his farms. [...] I was driven away from his house and I had to find accommodation with my sister. For nearly one year I depended on her. My uncle gave me one of his farms from the proceeds of which I have managed to build a house for myself. I did resolve never to marry again because nothing comes out of marriage but bitter disappointment.

I always advise young women who are about to marry to be wary and cautious in marriage and never to put their trust in men if they do not want to regret it in their old age.

The views of men interviewed on the subject of the Asante system of matrilineal inheritance fell into three categories, i.e.:

A: Men who were strongly opposed to the system and maintained that a man should bequeath all his property, acquired by him with his wife's help, to his wife and children.

B: Men who held the view that no human institution is perfect, the Asante system of matrilineal inheritance included.

Matrilineal society itself, they held, covers a close-knit system of a wide variety of related and interacting social practices, norms and behaviour -- some very good and worth preserving; others, considered to be not so good -- might well be left to evolution and to gradual change in time.

To condemn *in toto* one aspect of it without taking into consideration the effect that any drastic and premature change is bound to have on the system as a whole needed serious deliberation.

In the view of the men in this category it would be wiser if a man were left to decide freely who should inherit his self-acquired property when he was dead and gone.

C: Men who were very strong supporters of the Asante matrilineal system of inheritance. The system, according to them, was a double-edged

.....
[1] See case 18.

weapon: it cut both ways equally.[1] A widow might lose in a husband, but gain in a brother or an uncle.

In the case of a gain on the maternal side, they contended, a woman kept mum and expressed no bitterness. Let her lose on the husband and there was all the hullabaloo -- and it was the greedy ones amongst the lot who made the loudest noise.

In-laws, they defended, dealt kindly or harshly with a deceased son's or brother's widow depending on the way and manner she treated the husband during his lifetime. No industrious, respectful and chaste wife, no trustworthy helpmate who was not a leech, was ever maltreated by her in-laws when her husband died. On the contrary, they asserted, there were many instances of good wives having become 'adopted' sisters on the death of their husbands.

The patrilineal system of inheritance, the men in category C maintained, was no better by any means and they cited several instances in which the eldest sons, under the system, inherited the property of their fathers and, particularly in polygamous marriages, left the other children and their mothers 'thrown away' to fend for themselves. The plight of such mothers and their children, they inferred, was worse, as such orphans and widows, unlike their counterparts under the matrilineal system, had no uncles and no brothers -- paternal or maternal -- who were under any obligation to take the responsibility for their support and subsistence.

The changing 'old order'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:
The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfills himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world ...
(Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Morte d'Arthur*)

What Alfred, Lord Tennyson made King Arthur say about a hundred years ago is true concerning most of the Asante customs and practices. In particular the rites pertaining to KUNA (widowhood) are undergoing gradual modifications while some aspects of the observance have completely died out.

A widow, for instance, is no longer victimised on any ground and in any way by her sisters-in-law; she can now remarry any day after the fortieth-day ceremony and she need not continue to fast (KYIRI AYIE) for a long time. The elaborate performances on ANOKA (lit. mouth-touching) day have been drastically modified or, in some places, completely discarded.

The preparation of a will is solving many problems connected with inheritance. Besides, some Christian denominations have enacted their own church rules whereby the estate of a deceased member is shared into three: a third goes to his widow, a third to his children and the remaining third to his ABUSUAFOÔ, i.e. to the person appointed by his lineage to inherit from a dead brother or uncle. A majority of members of such churches interviewed considered the rule a sound and satisfactory one that provides an equitable solution to what was, in many cases, a contentious problem.

B: Facts and figures

1. Introductory notes

Selection of samples

The purpose of the enquiry was to collect from a cross-section of people in a few selected towns/villages in Asante as true information as possible on marriage and divorce in the society.

Nine villages were selected, namely: Asokore, Effiduase, Seniagya, Achinakrom, Essienimpong, Deduako, Kokote, Oyoko and Agogo (Asante-Akim).

A fact to be borne in mind is that the Asante have a name for a person who pries into the secret and personal or private affairs of other people or who tells tales about others. It is OSEKUFOÔ, a gossip, a talebearer. For a person who does not give correct information or tells lies the name is ÔTOROFOÔ, liar.

OSEKUFOÔ and ÔTOROFOÔ are not nice names and the point that struck us forcibly in the course of our exercise was that no responsible, self-respecting Asante wanted to be called either of the two names. I was left in no doubt that all persons interviewed who volunteered to give any information did so frankly and as accurately as could be reasonably expected.

People who were found to be somewhat reluctant to give information on their marriage -- and there were not very many of them -- were mainly those whose marriage history, it was suspected, was connected with some painful incident, such as the loss of a dear spouse through death or through some other bitter experience associated with the marriage, the memory of which would be better left untouched. In many such cases a 'drink' was given (many a time at the request of the informant) in order to mitigate some painful recollection.

Old women informants appreciated some petty gifts, such as a few leaves of tobacco, not so much for their worth as for the motive behind the giving which created confidence and trust.

In all the towns and villages in which the enquiry was carried out there was a high degree of co-operation from members of the community -- from the Chief or Odekuro and his Stool elders and from ordinary men and women as well. This was considered possible, perhaps, because:

- a) the field workers were all selected local people and residents of the place, so informants could feel at ease confiding in them, and because
- b) having had the purpose and importance of the exercise explained to them, people fully appreciated them.

Only married people who were pure Asante, i.e. born of Asante mothers, were selected for our interviews.

The enquiry was limited to a few places in the rural area. This, it must be conceded, was a serious defect made unavoidable by time considerations. It would have been very much more desirable had it been possible to include in the field study one or two large urban towns in Asante, such as Kumasi, Obuasi or Bekwai, in order to ascertain:

- a) to what extent occupations influence the number of wives and divorces;
- b) the condition of marriage among
 - i. the literate members of the town community, such as teachers, clerks, storekeepers
 - ii. artisans,
- c) and whether or not there is a tendency among the Asante toward monogamous marriage as the standard of living of the people rises.

Be that as it may, no big town was included in the study. It is hoped that the big hole will be plugged by other enquirers who may have the opportunity to continue the work started and that it will not take a long time for such a study to begin.

The Tables I - XV that follow give the result of our analysis of the sample of 262 men interviewed. The statistics, it is to be noted, have been dealt with from the point of view of men.

2. Tables

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D : Loss of wives by death

Table XV: Number of wives lost by death while married

A: Marriage distribution tables

Table I: Age composition of the sample of men interviewed

Age group	Total number of sample	Total number with wives at present
20-29	50	43
30-39	75	55
40-49	71	51
50+	66	54
Total	262	203

Table II: Total no. of wives married in course of life

Age of husband	Number of wives married											No of men	No of wives married (inc. div +deceased)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+		
20-29	45	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	59
30-39	44	16	7	6	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	75	144
40-49	42	6	11	3	5	1	1	1	-	1	-	71	151
50+	21	9	14	4	4	5	4	1	1	-	3	66	219
No. of husbands	152	34	34	13	10	6	5	2	1	2	3	262	-
No. of wives married	152	68	102	52	50	36	35	16	9	20	33	-	573

Comments on Table II:

The longer an Asante man lives the greater the number of wives he is likely to marry. This conclusion may be reinforced by the big turn-over of wives divorced as seen in Table XII below.

Table III: Present number of wives

Age group	No of wives still married to men											No of men	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		11+
20-29	7	42	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
30-39	20	41	10	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
40-49	20	39	6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71
50+	12	37	10	5	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	66
Total no. husbands	59	159	27	15	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	262 interv. 203 with wives 59 w/out
Total no. wives	-	159	54	45	4	-	-	-	8	-	10	-	280 still marr.
Average number of wives = 1.379 (i.e. no. of wives/no. of husbands = 280/203 = 1.379)													

Comments on Table III:

Asante is a polygamous society. If every man married one woman the average number of present wives would be one. Table III shows an average of more than one, i.e. one man may have more than one wife.

Table IV: No of wives acquired in different ways

No.	Category	Age of husband				Total
		20-29	30-39	40-49	50+	
-	Total wives married	59	144	151	219	573
0	married by voluntary choice	9	27	24	65	125
1	'WOFA BA' (mo's bro's daughter)	1	5	8	20	34
2	'ASIWAA'(betrothed before puberty)	5	13	11	31	60
3	given in marriage by father	23	44	41	24	132
4	given in marriage by mother	12	14	15	18	59
5	given in marriage by mat.uncle	8	35	40	30	113
6	pledged and subsequently married	1	2	5	5	13
7	'KUNA-BAA' (inherited wife)	-	-	3	8	11
8	'AYE-TE' (Stool-wife)	-	-	-	8	8
9	others (given by brothers, aunts, grandparents)	-	4	4	10	18
	TOTAL	59	144	151	219	573

Comments on Table IV:

The figures for the categories dealt with are not conclusive enough. This is because they overlap in most cases but the following facts appear to come out clearly:

- a. The father's influence in marriage is growing while the uncle's is losing.
- b. 'WOFA-BA' marriage is losing its popularity.
Uncles favour this form of marriage because it is meant to give his nephew and his daughter joint ownership of his property after his death but young people do not appear to like it. Whenever the cross-cousins are ill matched embarrassing situations could be created.
- c. There has been no marked change, it appears, in 'ASIWA' marriage in the last 30 years in the villages although the opinion of some informants is that it is declining in urban areas.
- d. 'KUNA-BAA' (inherited wife) exists but its frequency seems to be declining.

The reason given for this is said to be economic. Women marry their dead husband's successor in order that they may remain to enjoy the fruits of their labour with their children (cf. Case 27). In the old days when women depended fully on their husbands for almost all their needs widows remarried these successors. Now women have alternative means of supporting themselves and so, in most cases, they decide to leave men for whom they have no real love and start on their own.

One other strong point made by many informants is the Christian religion whose adherents are strictly forbidden, under any circumstances whatsoever, to marry more than one spouse.

Table V: Distribution of all wives married by present age

Age of husband	age of wife					living wives (marr. or div.)	dec.	total wives	no. of men	average
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+					
20-29	48	9	-	-	-	57	2	59	50	1.18
30-39	68	55	9	-	-	132	12	144	75	1.92
40-49	18	71	43	5	-	137	14	151	71	2.13
50+	13	36	72	38	27	186	33	219	66	3.32
TOTAL	147	171	124	43	27	512	61	573	262	2.19

Comments on Table V:

Broadly speaking

- a) there is not a great tendency for old men to marry young women and
- b) young men do not marry old women in Asante.

A young unmarried woman of about 18, when asked whether she would like to marry an old man (AKWAKORA), replied promptly:

DABI, O! MEMPÔ NKÔ-SAN-BESI-HÔ (lit. O! no, never. I am not in for go-come-back-stay-as-you-were).

Asked to explain NKÔ-SAN-BESI-HÔ she said:

You prepare to go to bed with him in high hopes of a good time in bed, but you lie waiting all night with nothing done. In the morning you return to your house badly unsatiated.

But there was a proviso:

If the old man is able to support me well by giving me all that I would need: cloths, handkerchiefs, sandals, ear-rings and other things for my comfort then, of course, I would be quite prepared to marry that old man.

An unmarried young man (about 24) stated positively that even if he was given an amount of £100 as an inducement to marry a woman more advanced in years than he, he would refuse the offer. His reason? He feared that other young men and women of his age would jeer at him. The other reason he gave was that he might not have any children with an old woman.

Another young man (21) wants to marry a young inexperienced girl so that together the two of them could begin life as novices.

Table VI: Age distribution of present wives

Age of husband	Age of wife					Total	No. of men
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+		
20-29	38	6	-	-	-	44	50
30-39	43	31	1	-	-	75	75
40-49	10	37	21	-	-	68	71
50+	10	16	39	17	11	93	66
TOTAL	101	90	61	17	11	280	262

Comments on Table VI:

Asante wives tend to be about 5 years younger than their husbands. Where there is a sharp disparity in the ages of a couple the husband, in all probability, is a well-to-do man or the wife happened to be inherited.

B: Marriage formality payments

Table VIIa: TIRI-NSA paid -- all wives

Age of husband	drinks only			cash & drink		cash only					total			total wives T-N paid
	palm wine only	PANTU[1] (gin or schnapps)	Whisky & soda	palm wine & cash	Imported drink & cash	1s to 13s	13s to 23s	23s to 33s 6d	33s 6d to 47s	Over 47s	Drinks only	Drink & cash	Cash only	
20-29	-	4	-	3	1	13	7	17	3	1	4	4	41	49
30-39	14	15	-	6	1	8	25	23	8	7	29	7	71	107
40-49	13	21	2	1	7	20	30	20	8	4	36	8	82	126
50+	44	72	1	3	7	14	21	14	2	2	117	10	53	*180
Total wives	71	112	3	13	16	55	83	74	21	14	186	29	247	462

.....
[1] PANTU = 2 bottles of gin or schnapps

[2] a) slaves who were married by their masters and on whom TIRI-NSA was paid excluded. b) two doubtful cases in which meat was said to have been given as TIRI-NSA are also excluded.

Comments on Table VIIa:

The tendency appears to be that cash-only TIRI-NSA is replacing liquid 'drink' only or drink plus cash TIRI-NSA payment.

Table VIIb: TIRI-NSA not paid -- all wives

Age of husband	Age of wife					Total wives TIRI-NSA not paid			No. of wives married	% T-N not paid
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+	M+Div	Dec	All		
20-29	5	3	-	-	-	8	2	10	59	16.95
30-39	15	9	2	2	-	28	9	37	144	25.7
40-49	2	8	3	-	-	13	2	15	151	9.93
50+	2	3	13	9	7	34	5	39	219	17.8
Total	24	23	18	11	7	83	18	101	573	17.63
Total wives (dec incl.)	147	171	124	43	27	512	61	573	573	
% on whom T-N not paid	16.33	13.45	14.51	25.58	29.93	16.21		17.63		
							29.51			

Table VIIc: TIRI-NSA not paid -- present wives

Age of husband	Age of wife					Total	No. of wives still married	% wives T-N not paid
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+			
20-29	2	1	-	-	-	3		
30-39	7	3	-	-	-	10		
40-49	1	2	1	-	-	4		
50+	3	2	5	2	-	12		
Total present wives T-N not paid	13	8	6	2	-	29	280	10.36

Comments on tables VIIb and VIIc:

TIRI-NSA does not appear to be paid often in the younger age group. This may be partly due to a 'trial attitude' being applied to marriage by some young

spouses.

A young man may postpone the payment of TIRI-NSA until he has lived with and studied his spouse closely for some time.

Said a young informant (21, goldsmith):

[...] My father made all the payments but the NSA (drink) because I suggested that I be allowed some time to stay with the girl in order to watch her behaviour. Divorce becomes a more difficult and troublesome business once TIRI-NSA has been paid. I lived with that woman for about 8 months and found that she was worse than my former wife ... and so we eventually separated 'coolly'.

Table VIII: ANYAME-DWAN paid -- all wives

Age of husband	Amount paid									Total wives:
	7s	10s	13s	20s	21s	30s	40s	42s	42s +	A-D paid
20-29	-	1	-	4	18	-	12	1	-	36
30-39	-	1	4	5	43	-	22	1	-	76
40-49	-	-	2	18	23	-	49	1	3	96
50+	7	4	10	51	13	2	29	-	4[1]	120
Total wives	7	6	16	78	97	2	112	3	7	328

Comments on Table VIII:

The payment of ANYAME-DWAN existed fifty years ago but it appears to be more popular with the increase of the fathers' influence on the marriage of their children.

.....
 [1] Includes 3 daughters of Chiefs

Table IX: TIRI-SIKA paid

Age of husband	Age of wife					Total living wives	Dec. wives	Total T-S paid	Total wives marr.	% T-S paid
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+					
20-29	10	-	-	-	-	10	1	11	59	18.64
30-39	5	11	3	-	-	19	6	25	144	17.36
40-49	4	22	23	-	-	49	10	59	151	39.07
50+	1	15	31	19	11	77	22	99	219	45.21
Total	20	48	57	19	11	155	39	194	573	33.86
Total wives married	147	171	124	43	27	512	61	-	573	-
% on whom T-S paid	13.6	28.07	45.97	44.19	40.74	30.27	63.93	33.86	-	-

Comments on Table IX:

TIRI-SIKA is paid more on women in the older age group. Conversely, it is paid on fewer wives of the younger generation.

TIRI-SIKA acts on some unions as an extra bond tying a wife to a husband. But where they cannot get on well together it will not be a bar to divorce. The woman, if she is bent on divorce, will prevail upon the senior uncle or the ABUSUA-PANYIN who took the TIRI-SIKA to refund the money that was taken in a form of 'soft loan'.

An informant who had a hot time with his wife said: 'To have my peace of mind I swore the Chief's oath to say she could go away without paying back her TIRI-SIKA'.

TIRI-SIKA is not paid in many marriages these days. Among some of the reasons are:

(a) Most young women object to its payment except when they find a very sound reason for which it is to be taken.

One other reason for their objection these days is that they find it humiliating and a loss of self-respect to have a TIRI-SIKA hanging on their 'head'. In consequence they refuse to give their consent to a request for payment from their spouse. As it is she who has the final say on the matter such a proposal has to be abandoned forthwith without persuasion or coercion in any way, then and for ever.

(b) Money is very hard to come by these days. The ABUSUA-PANYIN generally finds it not too difficult to have someone to help to meet some exigencies. In several instances the ABUSUA-PANYIN himself feels quite

reluctant to approach an in-law for TIRI-SIKA and seeks help from other sources.

- (c) There is virtually no competition for wives now. When a man finds that such money would be demanded as TIRI-SIKA in respect of one woman he can easily go hunting for another woman on whom little or no TIRI-SIKA would be requested. Many old men observed that in their youth there was fierce, really fierce, competition for wives. An expression one commonly hears from them everywhere is: 'ENNE DEE, MMAA ABU' (women are in abundance these days in Asante).

In the opinion of some of the old men Christianity cannot altogether escape the blame for a very large number of women roaming about without husbands (see Case 29).

Table X: Amount of TIRI-SIKA paid

Age of husband	Amount paid									Total wives T-S paid
	£1 - £5	£6 - £10	£11 - £15	£16 - £20	£21 - £25	£26 - £30	£31 - £40	£41 - £50	£50+	
20-29	9	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
30-39	12	8	1	2	1	1	-	-	-	25
40-49	21	13	11	8	2	3	-	1	-	59
50+	23	38	10	13	2	7	4	-	2	99
Total no. of cases	65	60	23	23	5	11	4	1	2	194

Comments on Table X:

Large amounts fall in the older age group. Among the younger generation the amount of TIRI-SIKA paid is generally not more than £10.

The view shared by many of the young men interviewed on the payment of TIRI-SIKA was that expressed by an informant who said:

I would rather decide on the alternative use of my money, say, in running a 'petty-trading' business with £20 or £30 than to give it as TIRI-SIKA on a young wife.

Table XIa: TIRI-SIKA not paid -- all wives

Age of husband	Age of married or divorced wife					Total living wives	Deceased wives	Total no. of wives
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+			
20-29	5	2	1	-	-	8	1	9
30-39	14	14	1	-	-	29	1	30
40-49	1	11	7	-	-	19	-	19
50+	4	2	12	9	2	29	6	35
Total	24	29	21	9	2	85	8	93

Table XIb: TIRI-SIKA not paid -- present wives

Age of husband	Age of present wife					Total present wives	Divorced	Deceased	Total
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+				
20-29	2	-	1	-	-	3	5	1	9
30-39	7	6	-	-	-	13	16	1	30
40-49	1	3	2	-	-	6	13	-	19
50+	3	2	6	2	-	13	16	6	35
Total	13	11	9	2	-	35	50	8	93

Comments on Tables XIa and XIb:

The conclusion drawn under Table IX appears to be valid in the light of the revelations made in Tables XIa and XIb, i.e. TIRI-SIKA tends to be paid on fewer wives of the younger generation.

C: Wives lost through divorce

Table XII: Number of wives lost through divorce

Age of husband	Number of wives divorced											No of men	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		11+
20-29	40	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
30-39	41	26	5	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	75
40-49	34	24	6	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	71
50+	28	16	6	4	6	3	1	-	-	1	1	-	66
No. of husbands	143	75	18	7	9	5	2	-	1	1	1	-	262
No of wives div.	-	75	36	21	36	25	12	-	8	9	10	-	232

Comments on Table XII:

Divorce appears to be relatively easy among the Asante.

The average number of wives lost by divorce is 0.885, i.e. approximately one:

No of wives lost through divorce/No of men viz. $232/262 = 0.885$

This may lead one to conclude that in Asante society the probability is that every man divorces once before he dies or that a woman marries more than one man in her lifetime. But in a society where a man appears to divorce at least once in his life divorce must be relatively easy.

Has divorce increased in the last twenty years?

This is a question for which there are no conclusive figures. In the absence of such figures one is tempted to accept the opinion and experience of the old people on the deterioration of the morals of the young people of today as a proof of the frequency of divorce within the last twenty years. This may be confirmed by reference to the statements made in the individual cases cited.

One informant, a pagan of about 70, attributes this deterioration of morals to the influence of Christianity:

Case 29 -- Opanyin Kwame O. (about 70):

When we were young there were no christians in A., our town. We served ABOSOM (fetishes). The fear of these ABOSOM made the young men and women of our day behave themselves. If a person disobeyed the ÔBOSOM he was punished. We all knew that and so we tried not to violate their orders. A sick person always consulted an ÔBOSOM to enquire the cause of his sickness. If a man continued to do wrong he was killed. Nobody wanted to die. Christianity has changed this belief. Many young people pay no respect to ABOSOM but at the same time have no fear of the Almighty God they profess to worship. Young people now do what pleases them because there is no fear of ÔBOSOM and they do not have the fear of ÔBÔÔ-ADEE (the mighty creator) in them.

Our fathers could ask their wives to swear by a fetish (DI NSE) whenever they were suspicious of their wives' behaviour. Now no one dare do so. It cannot be done. If a husband asks his wife nowadays to swear by a fetish to prove her fidelity she will do so but she will regard it as degrading to her and as soon as she has sworn she will divorce the husband.

Many of these young people are not christians. They maintain that their church's decrees forbid the swearing of oaths and by fetishes. What can a man or a woman not do when there is no check on his/her morals?

The same informant continued:

Christian churches forbid the marrying of more than one wife. The result is that there are now more women in this town than there are men. A man who is able to look after two or three wives cannot marry them because he is a christian. But many women cannot support themselves independently. This leads to illicit friendship even among those who profess to be christians. A man may be said to be marrying one wife but in reality he has more than one. They have paramours and they keep mistresses. Although our fathers had MPENAFÓÓ (concubines) it was generally a prelude to a lawful marriage.

In the mission quarters of several churches today there is scarcely a house without an unmarried woman in it who cannot get a man to marry her.

Last Sunday, for instance, there was not a single boy among the nine persons confirmed at the local Presbyterian Church. They were all girls, all nine of them. They are all marriageable now and are going to swell up the number of unmarried women. Soon they will become unmarriageable because their morals have deteriorated. If their church laws were not so hard and fast these women could be married soon after they reach the age of puberty.

An old woman, a pagan, confirms the relaxation of parental control as one of the causes of laxity in the morals of the young of today by stating:

Case 30 -- Awo Abena M. (about 75):

In our day we knew that ÔPANYIN ANO YÔ ÔBOSOM (lit. the mouth of an elder is a god). Consequently we never dared to contradict them or disobey them when they disapproved of our actions. If they disapproved a divorce, for instance, we obeyed what they told us. WOANTIE DEÔ WO NI NE WO SE BÔKA A, NE KRAA NE N'ABOSOM BENYA WO (lit. If you do not obey what your mother and your father will say to you his/her soul and god will catch hold of you, i.e. do you some harm).

But now young people do not have any fear for their parents. They disregard what they tell them and do just what they like or what pleases them.

Another old woman, a christian, holds the opinion that a marriage is now easily made and is easily broken. Said she:

Case 31 -- Aberewa Afua N. (about 78):

We waited long after passing the first menses before we married. Young girls of today cannot wait and so they give themselves up to any man who plays love with them. They make their own arrangements to marry and parents can do very little to oppose them. They marry in haste and

no sooner do you hear of the marriage than you hear of its dissolution.

A christian blames the Whiteman's 'civilisation' for most of the ills bedevilling present-day marriage with its divorces and lamented:

Case 32 -- Opanyin Kwadwo P. (about 70):

The young are immoral today but it is not their fault. It is the Whiteman's civilisation that has made them so. Parents can no longer control their children effectively. When we were young, if a child disobeyed his parents, he was chastised. Now a child when beaten will say: 'I will take you to court'. If he follows his threat and goes to a court the Whiteman will listen to him and the Whiteman is our master.

Children are sent to school to learn the Whiteman's ways and behaviour. They come home to say the new ways are better and start to teach us instead of our teaching them the good things our fathers have left behind for us. They call the Whiteman's way 'ANI-BUE' (eye-opening). This ANI-BUE (civilisation) is carried to such an extent that it tends to 'spoil' the nation (ÔREBÔ ÔMAN NO).

If a man wants to follow his forefathers' ways of doing things he is branded an ATETE-KWA (lit. slave of the past), a simpleton they call him.

Tables XIII: Reasons for divorce

Table XIIIa: Initiator of divorce correlated with the number of children of each marriage

No of births	Divorce initiated by				Initiator unknown	Total
	husband	wife	husband's near kin	wife's near kin		
0	26	26	-	8	16	76
1	22	8	1	11	15	57
2	13	9	-	2	15	39
3	10	6	-	-	6	22
4	5	4	-	1	3	15
5	1	-	-	-	6	7
6	4	1	-	-	-	5
7	1	3	-	-	4	8
7+	2	2	-	-	2	6
Total	84	59	1	22	66	232

Comments on Table XIIIa:

(a) In dissolved marriages the number of cases initiated by the husband and his near kin is about the same as those initiated by the wife and her near

kin;

- (b) The husband is prepared to initiate a divorce at any stage, the woman when she has no children, i.e. with the support, probably, of her near kin;
- (c) With more children parents tend to be a little more patient before initiating a divorce.

Table XIIIb: Initiator of divorce due to economic causes

Cause of divorce	Initiated by		Total
	husband	wife[1]	
incapability of maintaining spouse	1	9	10
non-fulfilment of payments	-	3	3
business reasons[2]	6[3]	3	9
Total	7	15	22

Table XIIIc: Divorce due to friction with spouse's kin

Cause of friction	Friction with wife's kin	Friction with husband's kin	Not clearly defined	Total
quarrel with kin or abuse by kin	2	1	2	5
interference from parents-in-law	20[4]	2	-	22
Total	22	3	2	27

.....

[1] Or near kin

[2] These are mostly cases where the wife refuses economic help, e.g. in farm work, store-keeping or other undertakings.

[3] Includes one case where the wife failed to fulfill a promise to lend the spouse an amount of £30.

[4] Includes 5 cases of interference from wife's near kin.

Table XIIIId: Divorce due to friction between husband and wife

Causes (other than economic)	No of cases	Remarks
a. disrespect, disobedience, quarrels[1] and general disagreement	58	6 cases rejected due to scanty information only 2 cases noted as such; laziness may lead to quarrels
b. jealousy over second marriage	11	
c. laziness	2	
d. disagreement about children	4	
e. threats, ill-treatment, insults	5	
f. incapable housewife	1	
Total	81	

Comments on Table XIIIId:

The majority of reasons given as causes for initiating a divorce in Asante society appear to be attributed to 'quarrels', 'disrespect' and 'general disagreement'.

Table XIIIe: Divorce due to childbirth

Causes	Number of cases
barrenness	16[2]
death of children	2
sterility of husband[3]	-
Total	18

-
- [1] Several divorces are attributed to quarrels. This is too broad a cause but some informants were reluctant to give full details. Quarrels may be due to causes or defects which some spouses find embarrassing to reveal, such as laziness, incapable housewife, sterility or impotence and sexual dissatisfaction with wife.
 - [2] Includes 3 first marriages of both husband and wife; 4 first marriages of wives, husbands previously married; 6 wives with one previous marriage; 1 wife with two previous marriages; 1 wife with four previous marriages; 1 wife reluctant to reveal the number of her previous marriages.
 - [3] Sample of men only. All men interviewed preferred not to discuss the matter, much less admit the defect.

Comments on Table XIIIc:

The Asante woman tends to initiate divorce when she finds it difficult to have a child with a man.

Table XIIIf: Divorce due to sexual difficulties

Causes	Number of cases
infidelity of husband	2
adultery of wife[1]	24
impotence of husband	2
sexual dissatisfaction with wife	1
Total	29

Comments on Table XIIIf:

The number of divorces caused by adultery of the wife appears to be comparatively higher than of those caused by infidelity of the husband.

It is to be strongly stressed, however, that in a society where custom permits a man to take and keep more than one woman for lawful wives, adultery is regarded as a more serious marital offence when committed by a wife than by a husband.

Table XIIIf should therefore not be interpreted on its face value, to infer, obliquely or even falsely, that in Asante society the fidelity of a wife is more questionable than that of a husband.

.....

[1] Some of the reasons given for divorce as caused by 'quarrels' under Table XIIId most probably are due to infidelity on the part of the husband or to sexual dissatisfaction with the wife.

Table XIIIg: Divorce due to other causes

Causes	Number of cases
sickness of spouse	1
prolonged absence of spouse	6[1]
neglecting customary duties (to spouse's kin)	2
no definite reason	19[2]
miscellaneous causes	12[3]
scanty information e.g. 'bad character', 'bad habit'	7
Total	47

Table XIV: Divorce correlated with the age of the wives

Wives	Age of wife					Total living	Div. but now dead	Total div.
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55+			
total wives living	142	170	121	42	25	500	-	-
total divorced	43	74	63	23	13	216	16	232
% of wives who have been divorced	30.28	43.52	52.06	54.76	52	43.2	-	-

Comments on Table XIV:

- (a) A marriage is likely to break within the first few years of married life. When a marriage has been unfruitful within the first five years the chances of its continuance become slim.
- (b) On the whole, the longer a marriage lasts the more chances there are for a divorce.

[1] Includes 4 cases of soldiers serving overseas.

[2] Includes 13 cases initiated by wives. These may be due to other defects which informants found it embarrassing to reveal.

[3] Includes

- (i) 1 case where wife's previous marriage had not been completely dissolved
- (ii) 3 husbands who had become christian converts
- (iii) 2 wives who were said to have practised witchcraft
- (iv) wife, discovered later, was related to the husband.

Some men find their responsibilities greatly increased as they grow older by the increasing number of own children as well as their WÔFAASE-NOM (maternal nephews and nieces) and grandchildren. If they can manage it they may wish to relieve themselves of an 'unnecessary wife'.

Some women whose marriages have been blessed with children may find it unnecessary to continue it, especially if they are economically independent.

Age brings sexual difficulties also.

D: Loss of wives through death

Table XV: Number of wives lost through death while married

Age of husband	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+	No. of men
20-29	48	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
30-39	63	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75
40-49	58	12	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71
50+	42	20	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	66
Total	211	46	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	262
Total no of wives lost	-	46	6	3	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	61

Comments on Table XV:

Sixty-one wives were lost through death while married. If there were no divorce at all a higher figure for wives so lost would have been likely.

The assumption is based on the following hypothesis:

Total living wives, married and divorced = 512

No. of wives lost through divorce = 232

No. of wives who continued living married: $512 - 232 = 280$

No. of wives lost through death while married = 61

No. of divorcees some of whom might have died had they remained married = 219

If there were no divorcees and wives who might have died while still married were, say, X, the total number of wives lost through death could have been, hypothetically, $61 + X$

One is tempted to ask: does this mean that some husbands could be inclined to divorce a spouse in order to forestall her loss through death?

The argument is a sham and naive to any person who really understands

what the loss of a wife means to an Asante.

An important Chief who lost his senior wife less than six months ago said bluntly to me in conversation: 'Tikya, I would rather wish my sister were dead than I should lose that wife'. When one realises the importance of a sister in a matrilineal society and the fact that a Chief can and may marry many wives there will be no need to proceed to prove the fallacy of the argument.

Marriage is a human institution, as an informant observed to me, and it cannot, as such, be perfect in all ways. There are likely to be ill-matched couples under any system of marriage anywhere in the world and discord in such cases is always common and not confined to a particular place, people or society.

But, in spite of all or anything that can be said against some aspects of marriage among the Asante, there are, as elsewhere, everywhere and at all places, many happy marital unions in the society -- unions which as are near a high degree of perfection as one could reasonably desire.

And as elsewhere too, whenever an Asante spouse dies the other feels the loss of a true companion, a faithful supporter, a wise counsellor and an irreplaceable helpmate.

The memory cherished by some living spouses is so everlasting that, as was occasionally witnessed in the course of the Survey, tears could be seen gathered in the eyes of many a living spouse -- irrespective of age -- who would not talk about their departed partners except on an empty stomach[1] or over a glass of gin, schnapps or a calabash of palm wine.

An Asante sage, dismissing the argument outright as absurd, said emphatically:

No! Wives are not, never ever, divorced in anticipation of loss by death; otherwise which person will ever get married.

.....

[1] 'On an empty stomach': a bereaved or grievously afflicted Asante goes without food for a day or longer depending on the degree of grief or affliction. The expression is OBUA DA (he/she forgoes his/her meal or meals; he/she fasts).

A man in such a mood generally takes some drink -- palm wine or beer, gin or schnapps if he can afford it. The recollection of any sad or painful memory at any time after its occurrence generates a mood which arrests his appetite for food but prompts the desire for drinking some liquor which, in turn, helps lessen and mitigate the feeling of any such grief.

It is for that reason that the Asante would rather not wish to talk lightly about grievous affliction, say the bereavement of a dear one, 'with stomach full', but would or could do so on a drink or 'on an empty stomach'.

Who can tell in advance whether he or his fond partner will be taken away first by death?

Concluding:

Which man, born of a woman, can foretell the plans of Death -
Death, ÔDOMANKAMA WUO, the final arbiter of life;

Death, from out of whose fast grasp no living creature on earth can be
snatched!

Part II

Note 1: NTÔN (NTORÔ) -- The Asante patri-spirit

The Asante conception of man is that of an individual with a body comprising three complementary elements. These are:

OHONAM -- the flesh (including the bones)

BOGYA -- the blood, and

SUNSUM or KRAA -- the soul or spirit.

According to them the OHONAM is, as it were, the structure in which dwell the other two elements. It is the OHONAM of a person which dies and is taken to NSAMAN-POM (the burial grove) to bury and keep safe.

The BOGYA is inherited through the mother and it is the person's ABUSUA, his lineage. This element, the BOGYA (the blood), the ABUSUA (lineage), never dies.

The third element, the KRAA or SUNSUM (the soul) in the body, is passed through the father to the child and it is the person's NTÔN or NTORÔ (as the word is pronounced in some places), his patri-spirit, which also never dies.

Because of the matrilineal system of inheritance the ABUSUA (the blood), the lineage, plays a more predominant part in the socio-political structure of Asante society. NTÔN, on the other hand is of spiritual or religious significance and it is the old generation and only a very few of the young who have some knowledge or awareness of it.

In the villages where the NTÔN classificatory system was studied it was possible to trace nine NTÔN groups. Each group, it was established, has, as tabulated below, its

- a) distinct designation
- b) NNYE-SOÔ -- salutation response
- c) AKYIWA-DEÉ -- taboo or avoidance
- d) AKRA-BOA -- totem, and
- e) KRA-DA -- weekday of observance.

Marriages among the NTÔN groups are not strictly exogamous in the same marked degree as they are with the ABUSUA (lineage). Informants agree on the point that a man can marry a woman of the same NTÔN provided that:

- a) there was a gap of not less than four generations between them and their common patrilineal ancestor. This means that a man cannot marry his father's brother's daughter. The man's father may not have the same NTÔN as his (father's) brother. In other words, they may be brothers by different fathers but of one mother. But being children of the two fathers, they are classified in Asante as MMAA-MMA, i.e. children of lineage sons who are regarded as brothers and sisters.

It is noteworthy that on the death of any one of the two brothers it is

the customary obligation of the MMAA-MMA to wash and lay the corpse in state, carry the coffined body to the burial place, lower it into the grave dug by them and cover it with earth 'to preserve it' (KO SIE).

- b) a woman is a native of another distant village or town where it is not possible to trace her patrilineal line of descent. In all such cases it is assumed that the man and the woman do not have a common great-great-grandfather.

One informant, Kofi B. (about 40) who 'washes the Soul of BOSOMMURU' (NTÔN) - ODWARE BOSOMMURU KRAA -- mentioned to me that his wife, a native of Kwaben in Akyem Abuakwa, was also of BOSOMMURU NTÔN.

The Asante hold the belief that traits of individual personality are transmitted through the male essence, the NTÔN, which father and son pass to their children.

An old woman informant who persisted that her grand-daughter be married to one particular man, when asked for the reason for her insistence, replied:

I want Ama M. to marry Kwasi A. so that she can beget a child of his calibre for this house.

Asked to elaborate, the old woman said:

Kwasi A. is manly and bold (ÔBARIMA A NE KOKO YÊ DURU); he is industrious (ÔYÊ OSIFOÔ), self-respecting (ODI NE HO NI) and is level-headed (N'ANI DA FAM).

In Asante society a child born out of wedlock has the same right of inheritance as a sister or brother born of a customarily established lawful marriage. Bastardy, therefore, does not carry the same connotation of illegitimacy as it does in some societies elsewhere.

One way in which a child can be regarded as illegitimate is where its natural father did not acknowledge the responsibility for its mother's pregnancy or where its genitor was not revealed.

One significant implication of this is that, although the child's BOGYA, i.e. his ABUSUA is known and therefore accepted as a full member of its mother's lineage, its pari-spirit, its NTÔN, the source of one of the essential elements which contribute to the formation of a completely free born child, is unknown, and that element is therefore missing. Such a child, in the Asante sense, is therefore not a completely whole body -- he has no known NTÔN (spirit or soul).

For an ordinary man this lack is not a very serious blemish. For an ÔDEHYEÊ (a member of a particular town or village ruling 'House') on the other hand, it is of the utmost importance that for the purpose of his 'Soul

washing' (NE KRAA DWAREÉ) his NTÓN, which means a recognised and acknowledged father through whom the patri-spirit was transmitted, be known.

Many cases were cited in the course of the inquiry of some individual ADEHYEÉ who were disqualified for appointment to inherit Stools because they 'did not have a whole body' -- WONNI MU. Their natural fathers were not publicly known and that, in some places, was a valid charge of disqualification for enstoolment.

Purity of the soul

A cardinal point on NTÓN worthy of note is that the Asante man before he was converted to the christian faith was meticulously careful that his KRAA (soul) was kept pure, neat, clean and spruce at all times.

It was for that reason that

- a) retained among the important State functionaries in all the courts of principal Asante Chiefs were AKRA-DWAREFOÔ ('washers' or purifiers of a Chief's Soul) and
- b) the ordinary Asante man did 'wash' or purify his Soul (ODWARE NE KRAA) when he was also said to be 'blessing his mouth' (OHYIRA N'ANO) on some special occasions such as
 - i) after he had had an unexpected spectacular success in some undertaking or a miraculous escape from some danger; or
 - ii) when he had inadvertently indulged himself in some strict avoidance or had been defiled after unknowingly breaking a taboo. Soul 'washing' or purification (KRA-DWAREÉ) or 'mouth-blessing' (ANO-HYIRA) ceremony was performed on a man's NTORÓ's weekday (NE KRAA-DA).[1]

.....
[1] KRAA-DA: see below.

NTÔN(NTORÔ) groups

A : designation

B : salutation response (NNYESOÔ)

C : taboo and avoidance (AKYIWA-DEÊ)

D : totem (AKRA-BOA)

E : weekday of observance (KRA-DA)

A NTÔN	B NNYESOÔ	C AKYIWA-DEÊ	D AKRA-BOA	E KRA-DA
BOSOMADÔM (AKYEREMADE-FOÔ)	ANYAA-DO (Ahenewa)	KOKOKYINAKA(a) ÔDËNKYËM ÔTWENEBOA(bb)	ÔDËNKYËM (Crocodile)	Sunday
BOSOMMURU	EBURU	ÔKWAKUO(*c) ÔKRAMAN (Dog) ODOMPO(d) ÔNANTWIE (Cow) NSA-FUFUO (Palm wine) ABUROO (Corn on Tuesdays)	AKURA (Mouse) ENINI (Python)	Tuesday
BOSOMOTWE	AMU	AKYEKYEDEÊ (Tortoise) ODOMPO(*d) ATAMMIREWA (spp of Snail)	LEOPARD (Ôsebô)	Sunday
ABOADE	AHENEWA	ÔSEBÔ (leopard) AKÔKÔ-FUFUO (White fowl)	LEOPARD (Ôsebô)	Sunday
BOSOMPRA	ANYAADO (Ahenewa)	AFASEÊ (Water yam) AKÔKÔ-FUFUO (White fowl)	WHITE FOWL	Wednesday

BOSOM-NKETE (ASABERE-FOÓ)	ÓPEAO (ÓBERE)	OKRAMAN (Dog) ODOMPO(*d)	ODOMPO	Tuesday
ANKAMADE-FOÓ	ÓPEAO	KWAAGYEDU(*e) AFASEÊ(Water yam) ADOWA(*f)	KWAAGYEDU	Wednesday
DINYINA	ANYAADO	ONYINA(bg) MMIREBIA (Mushroom growing on dead palm tree)		Wednesday
BOSOMMAM	ANYAADO	ÓDÈNKYEM (Crocodile) ÓKWAKUO(*c)	ÓKWAKUO	Saturday

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(a) KOKOKYINAKA: A bluebird

* George Cansdale: *The Gold Coast teachers' journal*

(c) ÓKWAKUO, *cercopithecus mona lowei*, Vol. X/2, p.118.

(d) ODOMPO, *atilax paludinosuo pluto*, Vol.X/2, p.120.

(e) KWAAGYEDU, *pupio anubis chorus*, Vol.X/2, p.119.

(f) ADOWA, *neotragus pygmaeus*, Vol.X/3, p.202.

Þ Irvine: *Plants of the Gold Coast*

(b) ÓTWENEBOA, *cordia Irvingii*, p.130.

(g) ONYINA, *ceiba pentandra*, p.94.

Note 2: BRA-GORÔ -- Asante traditional nubility ceremony for girls[1]

OSEE - E - E - E ... YEE - E !
E - E - E - E ... YEE - E !
ÔTWEADUAMPÔN - E - E - E !
YÊDA W'ASE ... O - O - O ,
YÊDA W'ASE, AMENE, O !
AMA ÔSEIWAA AYÊ 'SAA' ... O - O - O ! [2]
OSEE - E - E
WAYÊ 'SAA' ... O - O ,
OSEE - E - E !
[Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Let's all rejoice!
Almighty Being,
We give thanks to You!
We thank You graciously:
Ama Oseiwaa has done 'so'[2]
Let's all rejoice,
She has done 'so'
Rejoice, Rejoice, Rejoice!

.....

- [1] BRA-GORÔ: lit. menses ceremony, also: YÊGORO NO BRA: the onset of her menses is being celebrated. Other synonymous expressions are: YÊKA N'ANO: her mouth is being touched; YÊBÔ N'ASÔM: her hoe is being struck; YÊWÔ NO BRA-TÔ: her menstrual mashed yam/plantain is being prepared.
- [2] AYÊ SAA: 'she has done so' is a euphemistic expression for 'she has passed her first menses'. Other euphemistic expressions are:
- a) WADIDI AFIKYIRE: she has eaten outside the compound
 - b) WAHU MMOGYA: she has seen blood
 - c) ÔKÔ MPANYIN'M: she has reached adulthood
 - d) WAYI NE HO: she has revealed (exposed) herself
 - e) WADURU MMAA'M: she has reached womanhood
 - f) WABU NSA: she has broken a hand
- In blunt terms the expression is:
WAYÊ BRA -- hence the ceremony, BRA-GORÔ.

Introductory remarks

Until quite recently it was a solemn Asante taboo for a girl to become pregnant before her first menses had been publicly announced and the rite connected with it performed. A girl who broke the solemn taboo was a KYIRI-BRA [1] (a menses taboo breaker), considered as someone who had defiled ASAASE YAA (the Asante earth goddess) and had, by doing so, brought dishonour and calamity onto herself, a disgrace to her parents and a curse to her ABUSUA and to the community as a whole.

Every mother was particularly anxious to avoid a KYIRI-BRA in order to remain free of scandal and to maintain the good name of her home and the reputation of her lineage.

An Asante girl in those days looked forward with eagerness to the time when 'her mouth would be touched' (YĒBĒKA N'ANO) to initiate her into the ranks of womanhood. Not very long ago a girl, on passing her first menses, let her mother know. The mother then examined her daughter and informed her father privately. Both parents called her and warned her sternly to keep away from men: ÔNNORO MMARIMA (she should not 'go' with men). From that time on they prepared for her puberty ceremony which might take place immediately or might be delayed for some time. Some ceremonies were known to have been delayed for as long as a year or even two.

Generally a BRA-GORÔ ceremony was planned to take place during the major cocoa harvesting season -- around Christmas -- when parents were in a position financially to provide the required articles for the occasion. It was also the time when friends and relatives would be able to present gifts generously.

Parents, however, were very cautious and if there was the least suspicion that a delay could bring some disaster, they acted promptly to 'touch the mouth' of their daughter at any time.

Although christianity and other western influences are fast sweeping away many traditional practices and the observance of several customary rites, some conservative Asante parents have stuck fast to what are looked down upon by some 'civilised' members of the community as obsolete customs and heathenish observances among which girls' nubility ceremonies are included.

An eye-witness account

It was fortunate for me to have the opportunity, in the course of my inquiry, to observe BRA-GORÔ in three separate localities, including one in the Kumasi municipality. In all three of them the rites performance followed an almost

.....

[1] See Note 3.

identical pattern, the only difference being in the degree of expenses made and the quantity of some of the articles provided for presentation.

In a humble home the ceremony was a very simple one as compared with the prestigious show of wealth and affluence displayed at the other one that took place in the Kumasi municipality that same year.

The account that follows describes one of the three BRA-GORÔ ceremonies witnessed. Ama Oseiwaa, the girl in respect of whom the particular ceremony was organised, was a member of the town's ASAKYIRI ABUSUA.

Notification

The week-long ceremony started on a Friday. On the previous Thursday the girl's mother went round to notify her relatives and friends and said to them:

WO NANA (WÔFAASE/BA/ADAMFO/NUA), Ama Ôseiwaa, ADURU MMAAM', NA ÔKYENA YÊDE NO BESI AFIKYIRE AGORO NO

Your grand-daughter/niece/daughter/friend/sister, Ama Oseiwaa, has reached womanhood and will be 'seated out of doors' to celebrate the occasion tomorrow.

The Chief of the town, the Queen-mother and the priests of all principal ABOSOM (fetishes) in the village were informed in these words:

NANA .. ÔKYENA YÊBÊGORO WO NANA Ama Ôseiwaa.

Nana, tomorrow the nubility rite of your grand-daughter Ama Oseiwaa will be observed.

Friday, the first day of the nubility ceremony

It was a long day, packed full of rousing as well as sober activities performed in two parts.

The first part, which comprised in the main activities in the nature of conviviality, occupied all morning. The second part which followed in the afternoon was devoted to observances with solemn, religious essence.

ASOM-BÔ (lit. hoe-striking)[1] was the first activity on the first day of the ceremony.

At cock-crow on that Friday, the first day of the celebration, Ama Oseiwaa's

.....
[1] The significance of the hoe in the nubility ceremony deserves a little observation. To the Asante the hoe is the symbol of woman in the same way that the gun symbolises man. Hence a woman appointed to succeed her late mother/sister 'has taken her late mother's/sister's hoe' (WAFAN'ABEREWA/NE NUA ASÔ), just as a man who inherits the property of his late uncle/brother 'has taken his late uncle's/brother's gun' (WAFANE WÔFA/NUA TUO).

mother and the senior female relatives and friends gathered in front of her house 'to strike the hoe' (BŌ ASOM).

The ceremony started with the singing of songs, with a hoe-striking accompaniment, in praise and thanksgiving to:

- a) ÔTWEADUAMPŌN (God, the Mighty Creator)
- b) ASAASE YAA (the Asante goddess of earth)
- c) the principal ABOSOM (fetishes) of the town
- d) Ama Oseiwaa's dead relatives
- e) the living mortals, and
- f) the girl, Ama Oseiwaa herself.

Space permits only the quotation of these examples of the many classified songs sung that morning:

a) To ÔTWEADUAMPŌN (God, the Mighty Creator) were sung songs of thanksgiving, jubilation and triumph. For an example, see the song at the head of this Note.

b) To ASAASE YAA (the Asante goddess of earth) was sung a song similar in phraseology and versification to that sung to ÔTWEADUAMPŌN which ran:

OSEE - E - E - E ... YEE - E !

E - E - E - E ... YEE - E !

ASAASE YAA - E - E - E,

YÊDA W'ASE ... O - O - O,

YÊDA W'ASE, AMENE, O !

AMA ÔSEIWAA AYE 'SAA' O - O !

OSEE - E - E,

WAYÊ 'SAA' ... O - O

OSEE - E - E !

Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

Let's all rejoice!

Yaa, the earth goddess,

We give thanks to you,

We thank you graciously:

Ama Oseiwaa has done 'so'

Let's all rejoice,

She has done 'so',

Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice!

c) To the principal ABOSOM (fetishes) of the town was sung a song in grateful acknowledgement for their gift of a girl and for their care of her from birth to her present state of womanhood. It said:

HINI ME O,
HINI ME.
NA MENKÔKA NKYERÊ ÔBOSOM ... A
SÊ, ABAAYEWA KORO A,
ÔDE NO KYÊÊ ME NO,
ËNNÊ NA WABU NSA

Open me,
O, open me.
That I may go and tell the fetish A :
The only girl he gave to me,
It is today
That she 'has broken a hand'

- d) The fourth was a mourning strain and supplication to Ama Oseiwaa's deceased relatives who were believed to be in the realm of the spirit and were therefore in possession of all the attributes of goodness, virtue and uprightness. It said:

E - E - E ... E

EFA[1]

DABI A, ANKA ...!

ÔBAN-MU-NII ABU NSA,

ÔSAKYIRINII, BÔÔTEADE[2]

YÊSE, WO NANA ABU NSA!

O, yes ... yes,

EFA (i.e. goodness)

Were it in the days of old ... Ah well!

A member of the king's bodyguard 'has broken a hand'

A member of the ASAKYIRE BÔÔTEADE lineage,

Be it known, your grand-daughter has 'broken a hand'.

- e) BÔ AKURA[3] : The song was sung to the mortal, exhorting the living to attain excellence, goodness and uprightness while still living, saying:

AKURA E - E - E !

ONWINI DWO A,

AKURA NNAE E - E - E;

.....

[1] EFA is the classical Asante name for goodness, virtue, uprightness.

[2] BÔÔTEADE is the appellation of the ASAKYIRI lineage.

[3] AKURA is the classical Asante name for the mortal, the living. BÔ AKURA (lit. strike a mouse) means: sing to the mortal.

ADEÊ SA A,
AKURA NNAE E - E - E !
YENIM SÊ, AKURA BÊYÊ EFA
EFA E - E - E !
ÔDE AKA NO.

O, yes, mouse -- the mortal --
At sunset,
Mouse is not asleep;
At nightfall,
Mouse is not asleep.
No doubt there is about it,
Mouse will attain goodness,
He (the mortal) has been touched with it (i.e. with goodness).

f) To the girl, Ama Oseiwaa herself, was sung a song of adulation which said:

AMA ÔSEIWAA ... E - E - E !
WUBENYA ADE ... O - O - O !
WUBENYA ADE !
AMA ÔSEIWAA ... AMA,
WUKUROM MMERANTEÊ SE:
WO HO YÊ FÊ !
DABI, WOANWU A,
WUBENYA ADE ... O - O - O !

O, yes, Ama Oseiwaa,
You will gain wealth.
You will gain real wealth.
Hi, Ama Oseiwaa ... Ama,
Your town's young men acclaim:
You are stunningly beautiful!
In future, should you live long,
You surely will gain wealth!

The second activity in the morning of the first day was ABÔNTEN-TUO (romping through the streets of the town). The women moved fast, boisterously and noisily through the main streets of the town all early forenoon, singing and dancing with the accompaniment of a hoe and DONNO drums.

The presentation and display of gifts was the third round of activities in the morning of the first day of the ceremony.

The girl, Ama Oseiwaa, woke up before dawn and took her usual morning

bath. The elderly women of her ASAKYIRI ABUSUA dressed her gorgeously in costly attire, wristlet beads, gold necklace and sparkling trinkets. At day break she was seated on a white stool in an open space in front of the house: it was time for the presentation of gifts. In front of her was spread a wide mat on which gifts and presents from parents, relatives and friends were displayed. Foodstuffs procured for the ceremony were also arranged in front of her. She sat in the middle of a group, surrounded by the elderly women of her lineage, including the mother and grandmother. By her feet was a brass basin containing some water and leaves of ADWERA herbs[1]. Whenever a cash gift was sent to her an elderly woman relative, sitting close by her, would purify it with a sprinkling of water on ADWERA leaves before it was deposited into the basin. The total amount donated was Ama Oseiwaa's ANYAME-DEË (God-given thing) or AKRA-SIKA (soul money) which was not to be spent frivolously, but was to be kept as her DWETIRE, a fund for some future enterprise.

Meanwhile the women continued their singing and dancing.

Ama Oseiwaa's finger and toe nails were neatly trimmed by a woman whose first-born child (PIESIE) was a living female. (In other towns the trimming was done by one of the girl's closest friends.)

In the afternoon of the first day around four o'clock the women relatives and friends turned up in their best attire and continued BRA-NNWOM-TOÛ (puberty ceremony sing-song) with most of the songs very lascivious and erotic (unprintable). They romped through the streets of the town, exhilarated, mirthful and jestful. It was a real, undisputed 'women's day' and they took the opportunity to act as if they had been licensed that day to challenge the menfolk to prove their manhood -- if they dared!

All day that Friday the tantalised men of the town were completely held at bay by their vocally licentious women.

.....

[1] ADWERA: '*Portulaca oleracea*, a herb used as an emblem of piece and mixed with oil to act as a palliative against evil spirits. When mixed with water it is used in religious ceremonies and also in purifying ceremonies after sickness.' (Irvine, *Plants of the Gold Coast*, p.351.)

Next TIRI-HO-BÔ (close head shaving) was performed by Ama Oseiwaa's father's sister.[1] Her SE-WAA (father's sister) put some gold-dust [2] (SIKA-FUTURO) into the hair of her head and said:

WOSE NA ÔWOO WO O, NA WAHWÊ WO AMA WO, AKODAA YI, WOANYIN.
ÊNNÊ, ÔDE SIKA-FUTURO AMA ME SÊ, MEMFA METU WO PUAA.
WO SEWAA NE ME, NA MEDE SIKA YI REBETU WO PUAA.
YÊ BRA PA; ÊNYÊ BRA BUSUFOÔ AMMA ASÊM BIARA AMMA.
WO SE PÊ SIKA A, MA NO NYA BI MFA NHWÊ WO.

It is your father who begat you.

He has looked after you for you, this child, to grow.

Today he has given to me some gold-dust for the shaving off of your childhood hair.

I am your father's sister. It is I who am going to shave off the hair from your head with the money.

Do not have a cursed puberty to bring ill.

When your father works, let him earn money with which to look after you.

As soon as the shaving was completed one of the women, led by a young girl carrying the white stool, bore Ama Oseiwaa on her back to the nearest running stream. Ama's head was covered with cloth as they proceeded from the house to the stream, and no one could see her face.

Her father's sister (SE-WAA) and several women and girls followed her to the stream but no man was allowed to be anywhere near the place.

Ama Oseiwaa later described to me what took place at the river-side as follows:

The women followed me to the stream. They drummed and danced all the way. When we arrived at the stream my grandmother plucked some leaves of ÊDWEN[3] shrub and placed them on the near bank. She held three eggs in her hand and offered a prayer to the spirit of the stream, saying:

.....

[1] The shaving off of the hair on a girl's head with a razor is done only at puberty by her father's sister, or done when the father dies before the girl reaches puberty. Whoever uses a razor to shave off her hair before puberty had wished her father ill (WABÔ NO DUA) and the father could take action against such a malefactor. After the puberty ceremony a woman can shave off her hair when a close relative dies.

[2] Cash is now used instead of gold-dust.

[3] ÊDWEN shrub: *Baphia nitida*, Irvine, *op. cit.*, p.47.

ASUO A- ..., WOADAWOROMA, AMA ÔSEIWAA AKÔ AFIKYIRE.
NE NSAM KESUA NI, NA WOAGYINA N'AKYI AKYIGYINA PA AMA NO AWO EDU.
MMA BÔNE BIARA NKA ÔNE NE MMA A, ÔBÊWO WÔN.
MA NO AHOÛDEN NE NYANSA A, ÔDE BÊTETE NKWADAA NO.
ASUO A- ..., WOADAWOROMA, WO NKESUA NI.

Stream A- ...,

By your grace Ama Oseiwaaa 'has gone outside the compound'.

These are the eggs from her hands to you, imploring you kindly to take a firm stand behind her in order that she conceives ten children. Let not any ill befall her and the children she will bear. Give her good health and wisdom with which to bring up the children properly.

Stream A- ..., by your grace, these eggs are offered to you.

She placed the eggs on the ÊDWEN leaves and removed my waist beads (TÔMA).

Some raffia fibre (DOWA) was placed on my waist in place of the beads. She pushed me into the stream and repeated the action three times. Then she passed a new sponge round and above my head three times before she bathed me. For a towel I used TOO-BÊTÊ[1]. She squeezed some lime fruit and poured the juice on me and washed that off with water from the running stream. A short length of new calico cloth (NWERÁ) was handed to me to dry myself.

That done I was asked to stoop. I did so. A girl below the age of puberty was stood by me, also stooping. My grandmother patted us at the waist three times. Each time she did that, she muttered:

YÊ BRA (menstruate)

YÊ BRA

YÊ BRA

The raffia fibre put on my waist was removed and thrown into the stream and I was given back my proper waist beads to wear. My wooden stool was washed in the stream.

I was taken back home, carried on the back of an elderly woman, my head covered all the way.

When we reached home, my sisters and other relatives who had stayed behind had prepared and kept ready mashed yam and plantain (ÊTÔ) for my 'mouth touching' (ANO-KA).

.....

[1] TOO-BÊTÊ: a fluff of fibre prepared from the stem of the plantain plant and used as a bath towel in the old days.

ANO-KA:

Back home from the stream Ama Oseiwaa was seated on her neatly washed white stool. By her side on the right sat her grandmother who offered a prayer to the Omnipotent God and to the earth goddess, saying:

ÔTWEADUAMPÔN,
ASAASE YAA,
WO NANA AKWASUA T- ... [1]
NA ÊNNÉ WAWO AMA NE BA AYÉ BRA.
BRA A, AKÔDAA YI AYÉ YI,
ÔNNYÉ NO DWOO.
ÔNNYE MMA MMUSUO MMA OFIE:
ONNYA OBURONII AMANÉÉ;
ONNYA ÔHENE AMANÉÉ;
N'ANI MFIRA;
N'ASO NSI;
ONYIN NWO BADU.
NNIPA A YÊBEOAA ONI YI,
ASÉMMÔNEE BIARA NKA WÔN.

God, the Mighty Creator,
Yaa, the earth goddess,
Your granddaughter Akwasua T- ... [1]
She is it who gave birth to this girl
Who has now reached womanhood.
Let her have a peaceful menses;
Let her not commit any offence against the Whiteman;
Let her not commit any offence against the Chief;
Let her not become blind;
Let her not become deaf.
Let her conceive ten children.
Let not anything ill befall any of the people who came
and assisted her mother in all that was done at this ceremony.

Ama Oseiwaa's grandmother proceeded to take, one by one, each of the following articles with which she touched the lips of her granddaughter, saying as she did so:

1. NKYEN (a grain of salt)

ÔDÊ NKO ARA To wish you every sweetness
YÉ BRA DWOO - O - O Have a peaceful menstruation
She touched the girl's lips with it. Ama tasted it and spat it out.

.....

[1] Akwasua T. was Ama Oseiwaa's grandmother.

2. APATERÊ (a species of fish caught from Lake Bosonotwe)
 YÊ BRA DWOO - O - O!
 WO BORO-BORO SÊ BOSONOTWE MU APATERÊ.
 (Have a peaceful menstruation. Bear many children and be as fecund as APATERÊ, a Lake Bosonotwe fish.)
 She touched the girl's lips with. Ama tasted it and spat it out.
3. ADWENE/ÔKÔTÔ (fresh-water fish or crab)
 ADWENE/ÔKÔTÔ NA OWO MMA,
 WO MMA BEBREE SÊ ADWENE/ÔKÔTÔ.
 YÊ WO BRA DWOO - O - O!
 (It is the fish/crab that has many children,
 Bear children like the fish/crab
 Have a peaceful menstruation)
 Ama's mouth was touched with it. She tasted it and spat it out.
4. SON-WERÊÊ (a piece of elephant skin)
 YÊ BRA DWOO - O - O!
 ÊSONO NA ÔSO,
 YÊ KÊSE SÊ ÊSONO.
 (Have a peaceful menstruation!
 It is the elephant that is the biggest,
 Grow as big as an elephant)
 Ama's mouth was touched with it. She tasted it and spat it out.
5. KOSUA-FA MMIENSA (one boiled egg broken into three pieces)
 ÊNNÊ NA WOAKYIMA,
 NA YÊAFUFU ÊTÔ DE KOSUA ATO SO REKA WO ANO:
 YÊ BRA DWOO - O - O!
 (It is this day that you have reached puberty,
 We have prepared mashed yam/plantain with egg on it to touch
 your mouth:
 Have a peaceful menstruation)
 Ama's mouth was touched with each of the three pieces of one
 broken boiled egg. She tasted each piece and spat it out.
6. APEM-TÔ FUFUO (mashed small-hand plantain without palm oil)
7. APEM-TÔ KÔKÔÔ (mashed small-hand plantain with palm oil)
8. BAYERÊ-TÔ FUFUO (mashed yam without palm oil)
9. BAYERÊ-TÔ KÔKÔÔ (mashed yam with palm oil)
 'YÊ BRA DWOO - O - O!'
 (Have a peaceful menstruation!),
 the grandmother said as she touched her granddaughter's mouth
 with each little bit of each dish.

Ama tasted each of the bits and spat them out.

A morsel of mashed yam unmixed with palm oil was prepared by the grandmother and put into Ama's wide open mouth. She munched it slowly, swallowed it all and was given some water in a calabash to drink.

A whole boiled egg with shell removed was put into her wide open mouth. She munched it slowly and swallowed it.

The remaining mashed yam and plantain (ÊTÓ) with broken pieces of boiled egg was put together in a wooden bowl (KOROÓ) and left in the middle of the yard in the house. A host of children spectators rushed into the yard and scrambled hard for a share of the BRA-TÔ and eggs.

Ama Oseiwaa rose up, took hold of the hands of one of the boys and one of the girls and pulled them away from the crowd of the other children. 'NE MMA NE WÓN' (they are her children), it was said, meaning: they are the symbol of her future sons and daughters.

Ama herself served 'her son and daughter' with some boiled eggs and mashed yam and went into her room to take her proper meal.

The first day of packed activities ended.

The remaining days of the nubility ceremony

During the following four days -- Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday -- Ama, now a young woman, enjoyed a really good and easy time. She was served like a princess of a renowned monarch by her friends who waited on her and did all they could to make her feel happy, joyous, comfortable and, above all, someone who mattered in her community.

For instance: she took a bath three times a day, wore gorgeous and spotlessly neat and gay-coloured cloths, and was fed fat on sumptuous meals prepared by her 'servers' who were all members of her age-group.

On the sixth day, a Wednesday, Ama went round from house to house in company of her mother and other female relatives to thank all friends and relatives who had presented her with gifts or wished her a successful puberty and a happy, fruitful future.

On and from the seventh day Ama Oseiwaa, the initiate, had reached womanhood: she was marriageable and 'licensed' to bear children.

She had been accepted as a full member of the community, qualified to share all the privileges and liable to bear all full responsibilities of an adult woman of the society into which she had been born.

Note 3 : KYIRI-BRA -- Pre-nubile pregnancy

Introductory remarks

In Asante society traditionally a KYIRI-BRA (lit. menses evader), a girl who became pregnant before the onset of her first menses had been made publicly known through the observance of the relevant rites and the performance of the ANO-KA (mouth-touching) ceremony, was a break of a solemn taboo.

A pre-nubile pregnancy was deemed a defilement of ASAASE YAA (the goddess of earth) who, for that reason, was to be purified whenever the taboo was violated in a village. KYIRI-BRA was therefore considered a calamity (MMUSUO), a curse, an abhorrence, and a thing to be shunned absolutely.

A girl who became a KYIRI-BRA was regarded as unclean and until the child conceived through such an act was born, the accursed girl and her paramour were to live away from the village in order not to contaminate its clean people.

KYIRI-BRA and ASAASE purification rite

The following is an account of a KYIRI-BRA and the ASAASE YAA propitiation and purification rite connected with it, kindly given me by an obliging, responsible informant in the course of my enquiry:

Rumours went round the village that Afua K-... , whose menses had not been publicly announced, was pregnant.

The Odekuro and Stool elders of the village sent for the mother of the girl and enquired from her whether or not the rumour circulating about her daughter was founded. She told them that she had herself noticed that her daughter's teats had become somewhat darker but had not made any serious enquiry to ascertain the truth in the rumour.

Three elderly women, including the ÔBAA-PANYIN (the Queen-mother) of the village, were requested to examine the girl closely and report their findings to the ÔDEKURO. The three women met and called the girl before them. She was questioned searchingly and physically examined thoroughly. Having satisfied themselves that the girl was without a doubt pregnant, the committee reported to the ÔDEKURO that 'ABAAYEWA NO HO AYÉ HYE AMPA' (lit. the young girl has become truly warm in her body). A sheep was slaughtered there and then.

The following morning the ÔDEKURO and his elders met and sent for the girl and the man who was responsible for her pregnancy. They were taken out of the AHEMFIE (the Chief's house) and seated on the street, one facing the other.

The ÔKYEAME (linguist) of the village invoked (ÔKANKYEE) and said:

ÔTWEADUAMPÛN,

ASAASE YAA,

ÊNNÊ NA ABUSU-DEÊ A,

NNIPA MMIENU YI AKÔFA ABA NO

ADAA ADIE.

YÊMFA YE'MMUSUO NKÔ WURAM',

NKÔWO ANSA NA AKYIRE ADADUANAN,

YÊASAN ABA KURO YI MU.

(The mighty creator,

Mother Yaa, the earth goddess,

It is this day, today, that the abomination

Brought about by these two people, has come to light.

Let them carry their curse away with them into the bush;

Let them stay there and away from this village for the duration of
the gestation;

Let them not return home till forty days after the birth of their
child.)

The invocation ended, the ÔKYEAME poured a bottle of palm oil on the top of the heads of the girl and the man. A fowl was killed and its blood dropped on the heads of the two accursed people. The KYIFI-BRA and her man were banished and driven away to live in a palm-branch hut built for them at the outskirts of the village.

As they were leaving the village and till they disappeared out of view, amidst boeing, the enraged people of the village hooted vehemently at the two people who had defiled the earth goddess. They chanted all the time this ostracisation song:

OPITIRE[1] E !

FA WO MMUSUO KÔ !

OPITIRE, E !

FA WO MMUSUO KÔ !

(Obdurate defiler,

away with your abomination.

Obdurate defiler,

away with your abomination!)

The two condemned persons lived alone and were confined to the hut until forty days after the birth of their child. Immediately after they had left the village ASAASE YAA was propitiated and purified.

.....
[1] OPITIRE: a species of fresh-water fish, the Asante symbol of stubbornness.

The Queen-mother of the village prepared mashed plantain (ÊÔ) with pieces of mutton cut out of the carcass of a sheep slaughtered for the purpose and, in the company of some other elderly women, scattered the food all about the village.

All the expenses connected with the ASAASE YAA purification were charged to the ABUSUA-PANYIN (lineage head) of the KYIRI-BRA and her man.

Note 4 : EDIN-TOÔ (name giving) -- traditional Asante names and the naming of children

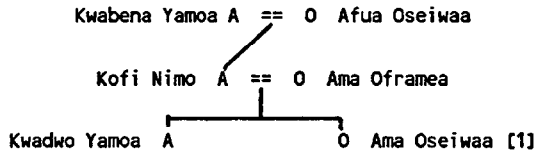
What an Asante father does to name his child formally has been discussed in an earlier section. In this Note an attempt is made to give a brief outline of the pattern which a father may follow in the selection of a name for the child.

It is the practice that a child is given its name by the father on the eighth day (NNAWÔTWE-DA) or a fortnight (DADU-NNA-NUM) after its birth. The naming of a child is done as soon as possible, but it might be delayed and be done at the father's convenience.

In general a father names a child after his parents or near relatives of his parents, i.e. his father, his father's brothers or sisters or his mother, his mother's brothers and sisters. During a prolonged absence of a father from the village or town in a far-away place, his mother, sister or brother could give the child its name on his behalf.

1) A child may be named after its father's maternal or paternal relative.

1(a) a male child may be named after a male relative:



In the above chart, for example, Kofi Nimo and Ama Aframea have a male first child. Nimo decides to name him after his father. The child was born on a Monday and so its name will be Kwadwo Yamo, Kwadwo being the child's week-day name.[2]

.....
[1] A : male

O : female

= = : married to

[2] Week-day names are: Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Akwasi (male)

Kwadwo

Kwabena

Kwaku

Yaw

Kofi

Kwame

Akwasua (female)

Adwoa

Abena

Akua

Yaa

Afua

Ama

1(b) a male child may be named after a female relative

If Nimo decided to name his first child, a boy, after his mother, Oseiwaa, the feminine suffix '-waa' would be dropped and the child named Kwadwo ÔSEI (ÔSEI is the masculine form of ÔSEIWAA).

1(c) a female child may be named after a male relative

Nimo is given a second child, a girl, born on a Tuesday. He may name her after a male relative or a female relative. He decides to name her after his father, Yamoaa. The female suffix '-waa' is added to Yamoaa and the child's name will be Yamowaa, contracted to Yamoaa. Her name will be Abena Yamoaa.

Under normal circumstances male children are named after male relatives and female children after female relatives.

2) A child may be named after a friend or a benefactor, male or female, outside the ring of relatives, but this is entirely the prerogative of the father.

3)* 'Incidental' names:

A child may be named after an incident which took place when it was in its mother's womb or immediately after its birth, as a permanent reminder, e.g.

(a) YAREË-YA (m or f) -- Illness, sickness is a painful affliction -- the name connotes a parent's unfortunate illness at the time the mother was pregnant.

(b) AFRIYIE (m or f) -- You have just arrived at a good time -- a name given to a child born at a happy moment or of some demonstrably good luck.

(c) ADIYEA, AMANEHUNU, ABËBRËSË (m or f) -- You have come at a time of distress or of some painful misfortune or calamity, including the death of the father.

.....
* All persons with names in the class of names marked * have, in addition, their proper names given them on the normal child-naming day.

Because the other 'special' name is the one commonly used in calling a child its proper name becomes, as it were, 'eclipsed' and is rarely heard, except on some special occasions. A few instances are:

special 'common' name -- formal proper name given at birth

3(d) Abena ANTOBRË -- Abena ÔSEIWAA

3(c) Adwoa ABËBRËSË -- Adwoa KWAANE

3(g) Afua ADËM -- Afua GYAA

3(h) Kofi FOFIE -- Kofi OWUSU

8(a) Kwabena MENSA -- Kwabena NKANSA

9 Kofi DÏNKÏ -- Kofi BONSU

10 Afua ATAA -- Afua Ataa-OPUKUAA

Kwaku ATA -- Kwaku Ata-OFOSU

- (d) ANTO (m), ANTOBRÊ(f) -- You never came to meet good times -- a name given to a child born after the father's loss of some fortune, prosperity or power.
- (e) BEDIITÔ (f) -- You have come to eat ÊTÔ (mashed plantain/yam) -- a name given to a child born on a day of some purification or propitiation ceremony when mashed yam/plantain is offered to some god, including ASAASE YAA (the goddess of earth) or to the spirit of a stream.
- (f) BEDIAKO (m) -- The fighting man; you have come to wage war -- a name given to a boy born on the day a war was declared.
- (g) ADÊM (m or f) --

A child may be given the name of a festival if born on that day or during the occasion, e.g.

- BURONYA (m or f) -- born on Christmas day
- AFEFORÔ (m or f) -- born on New Year's day
- DWIRA (m or f) -- born on a day of the ODWIRA festival

A child born on a traditional sacred day takes the name of that day, e.g.

<u>Name of sacred day</u>	<u>Name of child</u>	
AKWASIDÊÊ (Sunday)	Akwasi ADÊÊ (m);	Akwasia ADÊÊ (f)
FÔDWOÔ (Monday)	Kwadwo FÔDWOÔ (m);	Adwoa FÔDWOÔ (f)
KWABENA (Tuesday)	Kwabena BENA (m);	Abena KWABENA (f)
AWUDKU-DÊÊ (Wednesday)	Kwaku KRU (m);	Akua KRU (f)
FOFIE (Friday)	Kofi FOFIE (m);	Afua FOFIE (f)
MEMENEDA-DAPAA (Sat.)	Kwame DAPAA (m);	Ama DAPAA (f)

4) A child may be named after a stream, a river or a lake in appreciation of some beneficence on the part of its spirit, e.g.:

- Afua APAMPRAMASU (f) -- a stream
- Abena SUPUNI (f) -- a stream
- Kwadwo ONYEM (m) -- a river
- Afua SISE (f) -- a lake
- Kwaku PRA (m) -- a river
- Kwame AFRAM (m) -- a river
- Ama AFRAMEA (f) -- a river
- Kwame BOSONOTWE (m) -- a lake

5) A tradesman, a craftsman or an artisan may name a child after his trade, craft or his tool, e.g.:

- Kwaku DWUMFOÔ (m) -- a craftsman
- Kwasi BÔFOÔ (m) -- a hunter
- Kwame ASAYÊ (m) -- A blacksmith's anvil
- Adwoa TAYLOR (f) -- a tailor's sewing machine

Yaw TOMFOÔ (m) -- a blacksmith
Ama ÔKÔMFOÔ (f) -- a fetish priestess
Akua ASÔ (f) -- a hoe

6) A child may be named after an ÔBOSOM (fetish) said to have given it to its parents, or helped them in some way in its conception, e.g.:

Name of ÔBOSOM

ANÔKYE	Kwame ANÔKYE (m); Yaa ANÔKYEWAA (f)
TANÔ	Kwabena TANÔ (m); Afua TANOWA or TANOAA (f)
AFRIM	Kwaku AFRIM Akwasua AFRIM (f)
KOBI	Yaw KOBI (m); Abena KOBI (f)
DÊNTÊ	Kwadwo DÊNTÊ (m); Yaa DÊNTAA (f)
NTÊM	Kwaku NTÊM (m); Ama NTÊM (f)
YENTUMI	Akwasi YENTUMI (m); Akua YENTUMI or YENTUMIWAA (f)
TON-GO	Akwasi TON-GO (m); Abena TON-GO (f)
ÔDOMANKAMA	Yaw ÔDOMANKAM (m)

7) A couple who put their trust in Providence for help in conceiving a child may name it after God, e.g.:

Kwabena NYAME (m); Ama NYAME (f) or NYAMEWAA (f)
Kofi NYAMEKYÊ (f); Akwasua NYAMEAMA (f)

8)* 'Sequential' names:

(a) A child of the same sex as the preceding child or children takes an automatic ordinal name, e.g.

- a mother's second child of the same sex as the first: MANU (m); MAANU (f);
- a mother's third child of the same sex as the previous two: MENSA (m); MANSÁ (f);
- a mother's fourth child of the same sex as the previous three: ANANE (m); ANANE (f);
- a mother's fifth child of the same sex as the previous four: NUM (f); NUM (f);
- a mother's sixth child of the same sex as the previous five: NSIA (m); NSIA (f).

(b) A child has an ordinal name irrespective of sex in the following cases:

- a mother's ninth child is NKROMA;
- a mother's tenth child is BADU (m or f) or BADUAA (f in some places);
- a mother's eleventh child is DUKU;
- a mother's thirteenth child is ADUSA;

(c) A child of the opposite sex to that of the two immediately preceding same-sex siblings is named KONTÔ [1].

9)* BAGYINA-BA (lit. a child 'propped to stand', i.e. to survive).

A child born after the death in infancy of the first or second child preceding it is given some queer or uncomplimentary name, generally with some derisive or derogatory connotation.

The belief is that successive infantile deaths of children of one mother are caused by OBUSU-YENII (the Evil One). An unusual or unsavoury name is therefore given the child whose birth immediately follows the departed one as a sort of camouflage to delude the Evil One into believing that the new child is

- a worthless thing; not worth the trouble of 'taking away';
- one expected to pass away at any time -- a 'stranger' whose departure is not unexpected and will surprise no one;
- one on whom it is a loss to labour, and a waste to spend.

A few such BAGYINA-BA names are:

DÔNKÔ -- a slave; a mean contemptible thing.

SUMINA -- a dunghill; a rubbish dump that is of no value to anyone.

ÔYÔ-GUO -- a lost labour; a thing not expected to live long.

ÔSÊE-NTAMA -- a 'cloth-waster', something on which expenses made to purchase cloth for the mother to carry it on her back will be a waste.

NYÊDESÊ -- 'if it could be done, I would have thrown it away', meaning: the child is not going to survive, its death is a certainty, let it go if it may.

DEÊ-OWUO-AYÔ -- 'Death's handiwork! Couldn't it be repeated?'

BISA-OWUO -- 'It is death who has the answer. Ask him.'

NKA-NSÔ -- 'Take hold of your hoes and keep them ready for grave-digging. This one will not live too long.'

10)* Multiple births.

(a) Twins take the name ATA (m), ATAA (f).

(b) Children born successively after twins are:

TAWIA (m or f) -- the first child born after twins;

NYANKOMAGO (m or f) -- the second child after twins;

.....

[1] KONTÔ is said to be a bad omen. As soon as it is born the midwife attending the mother should say: 'KONTÔ ASIADEÊ' (KONTÔ, fortune or prosperity) and repeat the expression three times.

The belief was that if such an action was taken there would be wealth in the house; misery, including the death of a prominent member of the house, if neglected.

ATU-AKÔSÊN (m or f) -- the third child after twins (rarely heard);

DAM-SAA (m or f) -- the fourth child after twins (rarely heard).

11)* Other 'automatic' names:

(a) PIESIE -- first-born child (m or f);

(b) KAAKYIRE -- last-born child (m or f);

(c) AHEN-KAN -- the first child born to a Chief after his enstoolment;

(d) OFIRI -- the name for an albino (m or f).

Note 5: KRAWA-GORÔ -- the Asante male-sterility-dispelling rite

Until the end of the last century and even some few years after, in some places in Asante a man who in his first marriage with a young woman -- a virgin -- failed to make her pregnant within two or three years, was subjected to the performance of KRAWA-GORÔ, a male-sterility-dispelling rite.

An eye-witness who was a participant in the performance of one such rite gave the following account:

Case 33 -- Kwasi P. (about 70):

Kwadwo T., a fine young man, married Yaa A., a charming young woman (ABABAA-WA FRÔM-M-M). They stayed together for three years without producing a child. Yaa was the only daughter of Eno Afua N. and a sister of five brothers.

The brothers and their mother and uncle became unhappy and worried about Yaa's delayed pregnancy.

At dawn one AWUKU-DÊÊ[1], about 80 days after Yaa Asantewaa War had come to an end, the young men of the village whose marriages had been blessed with children gathered themselves near Kwadwo's house and planned to kidnap him for the performance of KRAWA-GORÔ. I was one of them.

Four of us crept stealthily into his house to lie in wait for him at the entrance of his room. The others waited outside the house. When Kwadwo woke up and opened his door we took hold of him and stripped him naked. He was given a loin cloth (DANTA) to wear and was taken out of the house.

As soon as we emerged from the house our leader, the NKAN-KWAA-MENE (the leader of young men as opposed to the Stool elders) of our village led in singing KRAWA-GORÔ DWOM (sterility-dispelling rite song):

NKWANKWAA-HENE (solo)

KÔTE KRAWA E - E,
WOSÊE MAAME O - O !
YEE-E ... YEE-E!

MMERANTEÊ (young men chorus)

KÔTE KRAWA E,
MA WO YERE NWO BA O!
KÔTE KRAWA E,

.....
[1] AWUKU-DÊÊ: Sacred Wednesday.

MA WO YERE NWO BA O!

(Leader-soloist)

Sterile penis
You spoil Maamy i.e. woman
Yes, yes, yes, you do!

Chorus:

Sterile penis,
Let your wife beget a child!
Sterile penis,
Let your wife beget a child!

The jeering crowd of young men of the village followed Kwadwo friskily as they moved away from the rendez-vous. He was carried on the shoulders of one of us as he held in his right hand a wooden state sword (AFENA) borrowed from the fetish priest of an ÔBOSOM for the purpose. He was whipped all along by any young man who took the fancy to molest him.

Kwadwo, the KRAWA (sterile man) was carried from the house of one Stool elder to the other and from one shrine of one ÔBOSOM to another shrine. Before each Stool elder and to each ÔBOSOM Kwadwo was made to swear the oath of the Chief and by the fetish (ODII NSE, KAA NTAM), and said:

MEKA ... (the Chief's oath)

ÔBOSOM ... (name of the particular fetish) NKU ME SÊ:

SÊ EDURU MFEÊ MMIENU

NA ME YERE YAA A... NWOE A,

MONNYE NO.

(I swear by Nana's oath,

I swear by the fetish

And say: If after two years from now

I fail to make my wife Yaa A. pregnant,

Let her be taken from me.)

The beating, the harrassing, the jeering and the singing ceased in the last house he was taken to swear. There Kwadwo was left alone to walk back to his house. It all ended about mid-day (OWI-GYINA-YÊ).

Some people of the old generation said positively that in most cases KRAWA-GORÔ proved effective. Where a husband was unsuccessful he was compelled to abide by his oath and the wife divorced at the end of the stipulated period.

It is worth observing that the rite was discontinued many years ago. One reason given for its discontinuance was that young men of today resent undergoing the humiliation suffered by a young man who became the subject

of the rite. The other reason, according to my informant, was the fear on the part of participants of being charged with some criminal offence and being convicted.

Glossary

Asante words, expressions and proverbs used in the text

- ABAAYEWA:** a girl below the age of puberty. Hence: ABAAYEWA KORÔ A ÔDE NO KYÊÊ ME NO, ... (the only girl he gave me); ABAAYEWA NO HO AYÊ HYE AMPA
- ABABAAWA:** a maiden, a young woman in her late teens and early twenties. Hence: ABABAAWA FRÔM-M-M (a blooming young woman)
- ABAN:** a castle; government. Hence: NKRAN ABAN (Accra castle)
- ABANOMA:** a stepson or -daughter
- ABASA-KÏNMUU:** arms held around the shoulders of strolling friends. Hence: YÊTOO ABASAKÏN-MUU (we held our arms around each other's shoulders)
- ABAYI-FOÔ:** witches; malefactors
- ABERANTEÊ:** (pl. mmeranteê), a young man. Hence: WOKUROM MMERANTEÊ SE: WO HO YÊ FÊ (the young men of your town acclaim your beauty)
- ABOBOÔM-BÔ-DEÊ:** (lit. door-knocking thing), formal introduction 'drink'
- ABÏNTEN-TUO:** a procession, generally applied to wailing or romping of women moving from one end of their town, back and forward on the main street
- ABOSOM:** (sing. ôbosom) fetishes, lesser gods. Hence: ÔBOSOM-DWAN (fetish sheep)
- ABU:** common thing; not difficult to get; a glut. Hence: MMAA ABU (women are abundant)
- ABOTIRE:** a fillet; a head-band worn by a widow/widower at the funeral of a spouse
- ABUSUA:** lineage; a group of persons who trace their descent through the mother to a common ancestor. Hence: ABUSUAFOÔ-MMAA (the female members of a lineage); ÔDE KÏ N'ABUSUAM (she takes it with her to her lineage); ABUSUA MFA WÏN NIPA (let the lineage take back their person); ABUSUA MU WÏ MPAEÊ (lineage has branches, i.e. segments); MMUSUA-KUO (pl. of ABUSUA) (lineage groups).

The Asante lineage groups are:

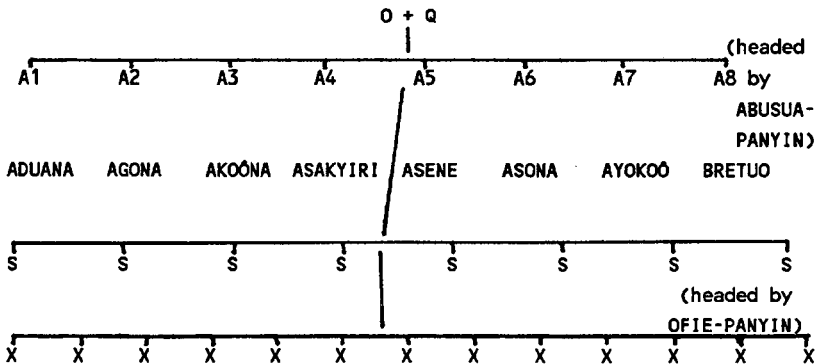
Name of ABUSUA		TOTEM
Principal	Minor	
1. ADUANA	ATWEA ABRADE	ÏKRAMAN (dog)
2. AGONA	TOA	AKO (parrot)
3. AKOÏNA	-	ÏKOÔ (buffalo)

4. ASAKYIRI	-	OPETE
5. ASENEÉ	NSENEWA	ASEE (a bird)
6. ASONA	DWUMUANA	ANENE (pied crow)
		ASONA-WÓ (a snake)
7. AYOKOÓ	DAKO	ASANSA (a bird of prey)
8. BRETUO	ÉTENA	ÓSEBÓ (leopard)

ABUSUA-PANYIN: head of a lineage group in a town/village; a Stool elder who represents the members of his lineage on the traditional council of a particular town/village of which the ÔHENE or the ODEKURO is the head.

The important position that an ABUSUA-PANYIN holds in Asante society as a link between the members of his lineage and the ÔHENE/ODEKURO on the one side and the other lineage heads on the other may be judged from the following schematic diagram:

The place of an ABUSUA-PANYIN in the socio-political set-up of an Asante town or village community



- O = ÔHENE/ODEKURO (chief/village head)
- A = ABUSUA-PANYIN (head of lineage)
- Q = ÔHEMMAA/ÔBAA-PANYIN (Queen-mother)
- S = OFIE-PANYIN (head of segment)
- X = individual members of a particular lineage)

ABUSU-DEÉ: a taboo; an accursed, unclean thing

ADA-DUANAN: forty days interval reckoned between sacred days (see DA-BÔNEE)

- ADA-DUO-WÔTWE: eightieth day of the occurrence of an event
- ADAKA: a box, a coffin. Hence: N'ADAKA KA AYÊ NO KA (the cost of his coffin has become his own liability) -- this is said of a man who dies without leaving behind a child who has the customary responsibility for providing a coffin for the father when he dies
- ADAMFO: a friend
- ADAWOROMA: favour; grace; kindness. Hence: WOADAWOROMA, WO NKESUA NI (with respect, or by your leave, here are some eggs that are being offered to you)
- ADEÊ-NKYE O - O !: good night to you. Response: YO - O - O, DA YIYE O! (thank you, sleep well)
ADEÊ refers to day or night, e.g. ADEÊ AKYE (it is day time); ADEÊ ASA (it is night time). Hence: ADEÊ SA A (when night falls)
- ADE(Ê): wealth
- ADIDI-SIKA: money for subsistence given by a husband to his wife for buying foodstuffs; 'chop-money' in local parlance
- ADUANE: (pl. NNUANE) food; prepared meal or foodstuffs, collectively. Hence: ÔYÊ M'ADUANE BASA-BASA (she is careless in the preparation of my meals); ONNIM ADUANE NOA (she can't cook properly)
- ADUAN-KÊSEÊ: (lit. great meal), matrimonial meal prepared by a newly-married wife and formally presented to her husband and her in-laws
- ADURO: medicine. Hence: DÔKOTA NNI SA YAREÊ YI ADURO (the hospital has no medicine for the cure of this particular disease or illness)
- ADWAMAN: fornication; lechery. Hence: WO ASE PÊ WO ASÊM A, NA ÔMA WO GYE ADWAMAN-YEFARÊ (it is the affectionate son-in-law whose parent-in-law aids him in the claim of adultery compensation in respect of marriage not lawfully consummated)
- ADWENE: fish. The fish as well as the crab, ÔKÔTÔ, is symbol of prolific breeding. Hence: ADWENE/ÔKÔTÔ NA OWO MMA: WO BEBREE SE ADWENE/ÔKÔTÔ (it is the fish/crab that produces several children: be as prolific a breeder as the fish/crab)
- ADWERA: a herb; symbol of purity, used for ritual cleansing
- AFAYI-DEÊ: a compound word: AFA (by the side of) + YI (remove from), i.e. 'place-removal thing': a small amount of money given to compensate the mother of a newly-married wife on the first night the daughter moves away from the mother's bed-side to sleep with the husband in his house. Hence: AFA-YI-DEÊ
- AFE: (pl. MFE) a year. Hence: SÊ EDURU MFEÊ MMIENU NA MEYERE, YAA, NWOE A MONNYE NO (if in two years my wife, Yaa, has not become

pregnant and given birth to a child, you can take her away, i.e. force dissolution of our marriage)

AFEE: comb

AFIKYIRE: outside a compound house. Hence: **WADIDI AFIKYIRE** (lit. she has eaten outside the compound house, a euphemistic expression for 'she has had her first menses'); **ÔKYENA YÊDE NO BESI AFIKYIRE AGORO NO** (she will be seated outside the house for the performance of her nubility ceremony)

AFOOFI DA: a day of light work at home, as opposed to a hard concentrated day of work on a farm in the forest area. **DI AFOOFI:** remaining at home doing some light domestic work or resting and taking it easy. Hence: **ÔPANYIN NNI AFOOFI MMA ASEDUA MFÔ** (an elderly person does not, while remaining at rest at home, sit unconcerned as the rain falls and drenches bean spread in the yard to dry; meaning: a responsible person should take prompt action to arrest the development of a dangerous situation)

AGO: a velvet cloth

AGYA: father. Hence: **SÊ AGYA NE ÊNA PENE SO DE A, MÊWARE WO** (if father and mother give their consent, I shall agree to marry you)

AHEMFIE: a Chief's house i.e. the place of a town or village authority

AHEN-AHEN: children's game of marriage play-acting

AHENKWAA: a Stool servant

AHEN-NYERÊ: female twins who are customary Stool-wives

AHOÔDEN: strength; good health. Hence **MA NO AHOÔDEN** (grant him/her good health)

AHOÔFÊ: personal charm; beauty

AHU-DEÊ: a formal 'introduction' drink presented by a man to the father and **OFIE-PANYIN** (head of 'house') of a woman he intends to marry

AHUNTA-HUNTA: a game of hide-and-seek

AKÔDAA: a child. Hence: **AKÔDAA YI, ME NA ME DEA** (this child, it is to me that it belongs)

AKÔKÔ: a fowl (domestic); chicken

AKÔNHAMA: subsistence. **AKÔNHAMA-SIKA** (lit. subsistence money, 'chop-money'). Hence: **ÔBÔ NO AKÔNHAMA** (he provides her money for food)

AKONTAGYE: brother-in-law (male to male). Hence: **WUNNIM NEA OBEDI WO ADEÊ A, HWÊ WOKONTAGYE** (if you would like to know the character of the person who will inherit your property in future, look at your brother-in-law)

AKORAFÔ: co-wives who are rivals

- AKUMAA: (pl. NKUMAA-FOÓ), sister-in-law (female to female)
- AKURA: a mouse (lit.); mortal (poetic). Hence: BÔ AKURA (sing in proclamation to the mortal)
- AKYEKYERE-BASOÔ: wristlet band. Hence:
- (a) a talisman worn on the left wrist of a widow/widower for the period of a deceased spouse's funeral
 - (b) a specially prepared string of costly beads and nugget put on the left wrist of a baby girl by her father's sister (SE-WAA) on the day that she is formally being given her proper name
- AKWAKORA: old (i.e. aged) man
- ABEREWA, old woman; one's own mother
- AKWANKWAA: (pl. NKWANKWAA) youth; a young man. Hence: NKWANKAA-HENE (a leader of young men of a town/village as opposed to Stool elders)
- AKYIWA-DEË: a taboo, avoidance
- AMOASEË: a woman's underwear of a strip of cloth, usually of silk material which measured about a yard long and six to nine inches wide
- AMANEË: an offence against the state. Hence: ONNYA OBURONII AMANEË; ONNYA OHENE AMANEË (let her not commit any offence against the nation or the town)
- AMUU: a corpse. Hence: YÊKÔKORA AMU (they have gone to inter the dead body)
- ANANSE-SÊM: Asante folk-tales, the hero being the wily, wordly-wise Kwaku Ananse (spider)
- ANI: eye; used in the expression: N'ANI ATE (he is shrewd/cunning); N'ANI AWU (he is ashamed of himself). Hence: N'ANI DA FAM (he is watchful, sober, cautious)
- ANI-BUE: civilisation; abreast with times; cultured
- ANI-FURA: blindness
- ANIGYINA: long for; feeling of home-sickness. Hence: M'ANI AGYINA WO (I long for you)
- ANO: mouth. Hence: ANOKA (lit. mouth-touching); YÊKA N'ANO (her mouth is being touched with food, referring to the ritual touching of the mouth of a girl at her nubility ceremony); WO YERE AWU; ÊNNÊ YÊKA WANO (your wife is dead. It is today that your mouth is touched, i.e. that you are free to take your normal diet)
- ANO SO: a euphemistic expression for the private parts of a woman, or waist beads being worn by a woman. Hence: SE OBI AWASA M'ANO SO DA A, ÔBOSOM AFRAM NKU ME (if any man apart from you has handled me by my waist beads, let the fetish Afram kill me)

ANYAME-DEÊ: god's given thing

ANYAME-DWAN: (lit. god's sheep) money paid by a husband to the father of his newly-married wife for the father's soul (KRAA) and gods (ABOSOM)

ASAASE: earth. Hence: ASAASE-DUANE (edible tubers); ASAASE YAA (the earth goddess of Thursday)

ASADEÊ: treasure. Hence: WODE ÔBAA YI REKÔ YI, WOPENE SO SÊ: ... ONYA ASADEÊ A, ÔDE KÔ N'ABUSUAM? (do you agree that as you take this woman away with you, if she comes by any treasure, she carries it with her to her lineage?)

ASAKYIRI: one of the eight Asante lineage groups

ASAMANDO: abode of the dead

ASE: son- or daughter-in-law; father- or mother-in-law. Hence: ASEÊ FIE, YÊNKÔ NO BASABASA (the house of parents-in-law should not be frequented frivolously)

ASÊMMÔNE: mishap, disaster

ASIMASI: so-and-so

ASIWAA: childhood betrothal. Hence: SI ASIWAA (to betroth a girl under the age of puberty); ASI-YERÊ (a girl betrothed during childhood and married when she came of age)

ASÔ: hoe

ASO: ear. Hence: ASOM-ADEÊ (ear-ring); SIKA-ASOM-ADEÊ (gold ear-rings)

ASU-HINA: water-pot. Hence: NSA-FUFUO ASU-HINA (one pot of palm wine)

ATEASEFOÔ: the living

ATETE-KWAA: simpleton; a slave to the past

AWAREÊ: marriage (see WARE)

AWO-DEÊ: (lit. birth-giving thing) placenta; AWO-YÊ (be in childbirth). Hence: WASAN AWO-YÊ (stillborn)

AYÊ: grateful. Hence: ONNI AYÊ (he is ungrateful)

AWOWA: pawn, pledge. Hence: AWOWA-WAREÊ (a marriage between a woman pledged for a loan and the man who lent the money. This is now a thing of the past)

AYEFARE: a compensation paid by an adulterer to the husband of the woman with whom he has had illicit sexual intercourse. The rate of AYEFARE chargeable is graded according to the status of the husband and ranges (as of 1945) from £2 7s for an ABERANTEÊ (an ordinary man, a commoner) to £9 16s and over for a Chief (ÔHENE) of the town

AYÊ-FOÔ: (sing. ÔYÊ-FOÔ) malefactor, witch

AYE-TÊ: customary Stool-wife replaceable on her death

AYÊYÔ-DEÊ: marital gifts from a bridegroom to his in-laws

AYIE-ASE-KA: funeral expenses

AYOWA: a dish, an earthenware vessel for holding meal. Hence: OTO AWOYAM PÔN-MMIENU (he places an amount of £2 in the dish in which ADUAN-KÊSEÊ, matrimonial meal, was put and presented to the bridegroom)

BA: a child (pl. *mma*), son or daughter. Hence: ME MMA NE WÔN (they are my children, i.e. son and daughter; BADU (a common name of the tenth child, male and female); ABOSOM-MMA (a child believed to have been given by a fetish, ÔBOSOM, male or female); BAGYINA-BA (a child given a derogative name to make it survive)

BADWAFOÔ: arbitrators

BARIMA: (pl. MMARIMA) man, manly. Hence: ÔYÊ ÔBARIMA A NE KOKO YÊ DURU (he is manly and bold). BARIMA is a word used euphemistically for a man's genital organ. Hence: NE BARIMA (his penis)

BASABASA: disorderly, confused, dishevelled. Hence: ÔYÊÊ BASA-BASA (he became a confused person and not quite his former self; he behaved abnormally)

BÊTEMA: a cluster in a bunch of palm nuts. Hence: in Asante society one's BÊTEMA implies a unit of one's closest relatives, the cluster that forms a segment of the lineage as a whole. BÊTEMASO-FOÔ (people of a cluster are strictly members of a branch of a lineage with a common grandmother, constituting the OFIE (house), the most senior member of which is the OFIE-PANYIN (the head of the 'house')

BISA: to ask, confer with, find out, sound. Hence: ÔPANYIN KWÔ B.- SE: WABISA NE DEHYÊÊ AFUA NA, ÔSE ÔPENE AWARE NO SO (Opanyin Kwadwo B.- has sent us to tell you that he has ascertained the views of his blood relation Afua who has expressed her agreement to the marriage)

BÔ: cause the ruin of ... Hence: OREBÔ ÔMAN NO (he is causing the ruin of the nation)

BÔ: to strike. Hence: YÊBÔ N'ASOM (her hoe is being struck, i.e. her nubility rite is being observed)

BÔ NE DIN: mention his name. Hence: WOBÔ ME TIRI PA A, MÊBÔ NE DIN (put my head in chains on a log, I shall mention his name)

BOFUN: *ficus spp.*

BOGYA: blood. To the Asante BOGYA is a complementary element of a living person, inherited through the mother and is the person's ABUSUA (lineage). ME BOGYAA therefore means maternal relation

- BONIAYÊ:** ungrateful, ungratefulness. Hence: MMARIMA NYÊ; MMARIMA YÊ BONIAYÊ (men are not to be trusted; men are ungrateful)
- BORO-BORO:** myriad; countless. Hence: WO BORO-BORO (beget many children)
- BOSOMMURU:** one of the nine Asante patri-spirits. Hence: ODWARE BOSOMMURU KRAA (lit. he washes the soul of Bosommuru, i.e. his soul, patri-spirit, is a member of Bosommuru group)
- BOTIRE:** the head of a killed animal. BOTIRE, the head, is a part of an animal killed by a hunter that goes to his son as his share. BÔ-SRÊ, the thigh, goes to the Chief of the town (ÔHENE) as his customary share. The neck (NEKÔN) goes to the hunter's mate and carrier OYAW-NII. Hence: ONNI SEÊ KYIRI BOTIRE (a child without a known father never gets the head of a killed animal, the share to which he is entitled. It is to him, therefore, something of an avoidance)
- BRA:** menstrual. Hence: BRA-BUSUFOÔ (accursed first menstruation); BRA-DAN (menstruating women's room); BRA-FIE (menstruating women's house for the duration of their period); BRA-DWOM (nubility rite song); BRA-GORÔ (nubility rite ceremony); BRA-TÔ (menstrual mashed yam/plantain); WATWA-BRA (menopause); WAYÊ BRA (she is in her period); YÊ BRA DWO-O-O! (have a peaceful menstruation)
- BU NSA:** menstruating, in her period. Hence: ÊNNÊ, WABU NSA (she has reached womanhood today); YÊSE: WO NANA ABU NSA (be it known: your grand-daughter has broken a hand, i.e. she has reached womanhood)
- DA:** to sleep. Hence: DA YIYE O-O-O! (have a sound sleep); NEA ÔDA NE GYA NA ONIM SÊNEA ÊHYEHYE NO (it is he who sleeps by a fire that can say how badly it scorches, i.e. 'the wearer knows where the shoe wrings him'). Negative: NNA (does not sleep). Hence: AKURA NNAE (the mouse, i.e. the mortal, is not asleep)
- DADA:** old one; a worn-out thing. Hence: WAHU FOFORÔ ATO DADA ATWENE (he has seen or got a new one and has discarded the old)
- DA ASE:** give thanks for a gift, present or kindness received. Hence: WADA NE TIRI ASE (he has given thanks for her head, meaning, he has given as his thanks the required 'drink' that establishes customary lawful marriage); YÊADA ASE, ATU SO NSA (a formal thank you has been said by producing a 'drink' on it, i.e. on the gift, meaning: the deal, contract, agreement has been completed and made virtually binding)
- DA BÔNEE:** Asante sacred day. (pl. NNA BÔNEE, sacred days). Hence the principal sacred days, each of which falls once in forty-two days,

namely: AKWASI-DÊÊ (sacred Sunday); FÔDWOÔ (sacred Monday); KWABENA (sacred Tuesday); AWUKU-DÊÊ (sacred Wednesday); FOFIE (sacred Friday); MEMENEDA-DAPAA (sacred Saturday)

DADU-NNA-NUM: fortnight

DAMA: an amount in the Asante traditional currency whose value was equivalent to twopence. Other values were: DOMA-FA (3s 6d); DOMA (7s); NSA-ANO (13s)

DANE: revoke, withdraw. Hence: ÔDANEE NSEÊ NO (he revoked the oath sworn by fetish)

DANTA: loin cloth worn by men in the days of old

DE: to own. Hence: ÔDE-KURO (the owner, i.e. the founder or the successor of the founder of a particular town or village)

DE DA: to lay a dead body in state. Hence: YÊADEDA NO (he/she, the deceased is lying in state)

DEHYEÊ: a pure member of a lineage is an ÔDEHYEÊ of the group. An elder of a lineage speaks of its younger member as his DEHYEÊ, a royal of his, 'the blood of his blood'. In a broader sense an ÔDEHYEÊ is a member of a segment of a lineage of a particular town from which a person is chosen for enstoolment. Hence: ÔPANYIN KWAME K.- SE: NE DEHYEÊ KWAKU M.- AHU WO DEHYÊ BI A ODE AFUA, NA ÔPÊ SÊ ÔWARE NO (Op. Kwame K.- has sent us to you with this message: his blood relation Kwaku M.- has seen Afua, your blood relation, whom he desires to marry)

DI: to eat (neg. NNI; NNIDI). Hence: DIDI-PON (dining table); WANNIDI AMMA ME BI ANNI DA (he never gave me a share of what he got to eat, meaning: he sadly neglected my sustenance)

DI ADEÊ: to inherit. Hence: OKUNAFÔ KYERÊ ADEÊ, NA ONNI ADEÊ (a widow enumerates property, she does not inherit property i.e. from a deceased spouse)

DI MU: a thing of worth. Hence: ODI MU (a man of substance); ONNI MU (neg. a man of straw)

DI NSE: to swear by a fetish

DIN: name. TO DIN (to give a child its name); DIN-TOÔ (vb. noun -- naming). Hence: ÔKÔTO NE DIN (he performs the naming ceremony of a child); ... WOBÊMA ME DIN AYERA (you will cause my name to fall into oblivion)

DÔ: to love, have fondness for a person. Hence: DÔ-YERE (a wife married as an offer by an in-law in appreciation for some service rendered by the man, or purely for deep affection for the man's person)

DOMA: the value of 7s in traditional Asante coinage

DOWA: fibre from raffia palm leaves

DWAN: sheep. Hence: ÔBOSOM DWAN (a sheep offered to a fetish in fulfilment of a pledge. It might be cash, in kind or a live sheep)

DWARE: take a bath; ritual cleansing of a man's soul. Hence: ODWARE BOSOMMURU KRAA (lit. he washes BOSOMMURU, patri-spirit, i.e. he is a member of the group whose NTÔN is BOSOMMURU and have a common day for the cleansing or purification of their soul)

DWETIRE: capital

DU: reach a place or a stage, arrive at. Hence: WADURU MMAM' (she has reached womanhood)

DWOM: (pl. NNWOM) song, dirge. Hence: BRA-DWOM (nubility ceremony songs)

DWOO-O-O!: in safety, in peace. Hence: YÊ BRA DWOO-O-O! (have a peaceful puberty)

ÊNA mother

EFA: goodness (poetic); virtue, excellence. Hence: YENIM SÊ AKURA BÊYE EFA, EFA EE, ÔDE AKA NO (we have no doubt that the mouse, i.e. the mortal, can become virtuous. She (i.e. the mortal) has had a touch of it, i.e. goodness)

ENIM-MRA-MA: a very big and long python

EDIN-TOÔ: child naming, i.e. giving a child its name and the ceremony connected with it

ÊHWEREÊ: tall 'elephant' grass

ÊMEE: a herb said to have the power of dispelling evil spirits

ÊSONO/ÔSONO: elephant

ÊTÔ: mashed yam or plantain, ritual food. Hence: ÊTÔ-KÔKÔÔ (mashed yam/plantain mixed with palm oil); ÊTÔ FUFUO (mashed yam/plantain without palm oil)

ÊWÔM: it is true, it is a fact, it is confirmed. Hence: SÊ EWOM, NA ÔSE ÔRENKA A, KU NO (if it is true but she denies it, you may kill her)

FAM: to embrace. Hence: NE FAM NO (I embraced her); SÊ OBIARA AFAM ME, NA ME SE MERENKA A, NANA AFFRAM KWAME, KU ME (if ever any other man has embraced me but I deny it, Nana Afram (fetish) you may kill me)

FIE/OFIE/EFIE: a house, home. Hence: ABOSOM-FIE (fetish house); AHM-FIE (a chief's house); BRA-FIE (menstruating women's house)

FUNUMA-TAM: a compound word FUNUMA (navel) + TAM (a piece of cloth). Hence: FUNUMA-TAM (a piece of cloth about 2 yards in length which a father of a newly born child presents to it on its naming day 'for

covering the navel'

FUFU/FUFUO: meal: boiled and pounded plantain/cocoyam/yam/cassava made and kneaded into balls, served with soup: plain, palm nut or groundnut

GORO: play; fraternise (neg. NNORO). Hence: ÔNE NO BÊGORÔ (she will be on friendly terms with her co-wife, i.e. her rival); ÔNNORO MMARIMA (she should stay away from, i.e. not 'play with' men)

GORO: ceremony. Hence: BRA-GORÔ (girl's nubility ceremony); KRAWA-GORÔ (sterility-dispelling rite)

GU: dissolve, undo, bring to an end. Hence: AWAREÊ GU NKURO (a marriage is dissolvable only after relevant complaints have been stated and heard by arbitrators)

GYA/OGYA: fire. Hence: DEÊ ODA NE GYA ... (he who sleeps by his/her fire ...)

GYABUM: a charm held in the left hand of a widow/widower at the funeral of a deceased spouse

GYAM: bewail

GYE: take away from, confiscate, deprive one of the use of (imperative sing. GYE, pl. NNYE). Hence: ... NA ME YERE YAA, NWOE A, MONNYE NO (If my wife Yaa has not become pregnant let her be taken away from me)

GYEGYE: nurse, look after, attend to. Hence: OKUNAFOÔ GYEGYEFOÔ (widow's/widower's attendant)

GYINA: stand. GYINA N'AKYI (lit. stand behind him, meaning: be his support or guardian). Hence: GYINA N'AKYI AKYI-GYINA PA (be for him/her a strong supporter or guardian)

GYEDUA: a shade tree, generally planted from a cutting of some species of ficus tree

HINI: open. Hence: HINI ME O-O! (O, open and let me in)

HO: self; body; 'the things round about or the circumstances of a person'. NE HO (a euphemistic expression for human sperm). Hence: OBI MFAM WO MMA NE HO NKUM NNUU WO SO DA (no one has ever embraced you to such a degree that his sperm defiled you); OFIE HÔ FO HO NTE (the people of the 'house' are not decent); NE HO NNI ASEM (his/her character is beyond reproach); NE HO AYÊ HYE AMPA (her person has become truly warm, i.e. she is truly pregnant)

HOHORO: to wash and make clean. Hence: ÔHOHORO NE SE DIDI-PON SO (he washes and makes his father's eating table clean)

HU: to see, perceive, recognise, find. Hence: AHU-DEÊ (lit. seeing thing) (a

formal 'drink' of introduction produced by a man to his fiancée's father and the head of her 'house' as a hint of his intention to marry their relation); ABOBOÔM-BÔ-DEE is synonymous with AHUDEÊ and is said to be a word of Fanti origin)

HYE: burn. HYE-HYE (duplication of HYE: scorch)

HWÊ: to look; look after, take care of, maintain. Hence: ÔNHWÊ ME YIYE (he does not look after or maintain me well); WOHWÊ OBI MA NE SE FIFIRI A, ÔHWÊ WO MA WO DEÊ TUTU (if you look after some one to grow teeth he looks after you to loose yours; implying acts of reciprocity); MMARIMA NO NHWÊ MMAA NO YIYE (it is a fact that the men do not maintain their women adequately)

HWÊ ... SO: be mindful of, concentrate on. Hence: WANHWÊ ASUKORO SO ANSA (lit. she did not confine her collection of water from one stream or source, meaning: she went with several men, consequently no one man could be held responsible for her pregnancy)

HWEREÊ/ÊHWEREÊ: a species of tall grass, used as a symbol of grievous loss. Hence: HWERE-POMA (a stick cut from HWEREÊ used by a widow/widower during the funeral of a lost spouse)

KA: touch. ANO-KA: ritual 'mouth touching'. Hence:

a) on the occasion of nubility ceremony for girls: YÊKA N'ANO (her mouth is being touched ritually)

b) for a widow/widower on the occasion of the death of a spouse: WO YERE/KUNU AWU: ÊNNÊ NA YÊKA WOANO (your wife/husband is dead; it is today that 'your mouth is touched', i.e. that you can take your normal diet)

KA: to say, utter. KA KYERÊ: tell, allure, entice, persuade. Hence: OBIARA NKA NKYÊRÊ WO SÊ: GYAE AWAREÊ BÊWARE NO (no one has dissuaded you to divorce me in order to marry him); KA NTAM: swear an oath. Hence: MEKA PRASO SÊ, ..., SÊ OBI FA WO A, ÔMFAA ME YERE (I swear the chief oath, PRASO, and say: if any man has had sex with you, he has not done so with a woman who is married to me)

KA: debt. BÔ KA: runs into debt. Hence: ÔBÔ KA A, WODEA (should she incur any debt, you are to be held responsible for its payment)

KÔ: to go. Hence: KÔ WO FIE (go back to your 'house')

KOKO: breast, chest. KOKO refers to the heart. Hence: NE KOKO YÊ DURU (he is courageous)

KONYA: love inducing charm

KOSUA/KESUA: egg; egg, a favourite of the gods, is a popular item in ritual performances. Hence: TO KESUA KYERÊ ME (throw an egg at the

- fetish house to testify your fidelity during the time you were married to me); NE NSAM KESUA NI (here, from her hands, is an offer of these eggs)
- KROBO: a highly sweet-scented and alluring locally prepared cosmetic used by women on their skin. Hence: WATWITWA KROBO (she was enticingly made up)
- KOOKO: a species of cocoyam, an indigenous crop
- KOOKOO: cocoa. Hence: KOOKOO BERE (during the major cocoa season, i.e. around Christmas)
- KORA: to keep safe. Hence: YÊKÔKORA AMUU (we go to bury a dead body to keep it safe)
- KOROÔ: a large wooden bowl
- KÔTE: (vulgar) name for the penis. The cultured name is NE BARIMA, his manhood. Hence: KÔTE KRAWA (sterile penis)
- KRAA: the soul in the body of a person said to be transmittable through father and son and the essence which endows a child with its NTÔN (patri-spirit) and personality. Hence: NE KRAA NE N'ABOSOM (his soul and gods); KRA-DA (a soul's week day); KRA-BOA (a soul's animal, i.e. totem); KRA-SIKA (a soul's money, i.e. money kept safe and tight to meet exigencies)
- KRAWA: sterile man. Hence: KRAWA-GORÔ (male-sterility-dispelling rite)
- KUKUO: an earthenware pot. Hence: KUNA KUKUO (a pot which a widow/widower carries to accompany the coffin of a deceased spouse)
- KUM: kill, put to death; defile, make filthy (neg. NKUM)
- KUNA: widowhood/widowerhood. OKUNAFÔÔ : widow/widower. Hence: KUNA-BAA or KUNA-YERÊ (an inherited wife); KUNA-SUMAN (a talisman worn by a widow/widower at the funeral of a deceased spouse); HUNA-KÊTÊ (a mat on which a widow/widower sits at the funeral of a deceased spouse); KUNA-KUKUO (widow's/widower's pot); OKUNAGYEGYEFÔÔ (a widow's/widower's attendant); OKUNAFÔÔ KYERÊ ADEÊ, NA ONNI ADEÊ (a widow enumerates a deceased husband's property, but she does not inherit it); OKUNAFÔÔ NSA (a drink served to widow/widower during the funeral of a deceased spouse)
- KUNKUM-AMMOÔ: lumps of swish put into a widow's/widower's pot (KUNA KUKUO) which she/he breaks on the way to the burial grove
- KUNU: husband. Hence: MÊWARE ME KUNU SAMAN (I shall marry the spirit/ghost of my late husband, meaning: I shall remain unmarried after the death of my husband); NKUN-KYIRE (lit. husband's back-side); ÔKÔDA NKUN-KYIRE (she goes to sleep with her husband in his house)

KURO: town. Hence: WO KURUMFOÔ (your townfolk); OBI NWARE NE KURO-MAN-NNI NNU NE HO (no one ever married a person of his/her town and regretted it); WOKUROM' MMERANTEÊ (the young men of your town)

KWATA: leprosy

KYÊ: give away, make a present. Hence: ÔDE NE TIRI-SIKA AKYÊ NO (he has renounced the claim back of her 'head-money')

KYÊMFERÊ: potsherd

KYI: hate; forbidden to eat or consume, avoid. AKYIWA-DEÊ: taboo or avoidance. Hence: KYIRI-BRA (lit. a menses evader, i.e. a girl who became pregnant before her first menses had been publicly announced through the observance of the appropriate rite); KYIRI-AYIE (continuous fasting at a funeral)

KYIGYINA-NII: a surety

KYIMA: in monthly period

MAN-NII/ÔMAN-NII: a person of one's own town, country or nationality

MANSOTWE-NII: a litigant

MFÔ: (neg. of FÔ, to become wet) does not become wet, damp or drenched by rainfall

MMA: (sing. ÔBA) children. Hence: YÊDE MMA NA EDI HENE (a chief counts on his children for effective performance of his functions); MMAA-MMA (lineage children: sons and daughters)

MMAA: (sing. ÔBAA) women. Hence: MMAA ABU NNÊ (women are plentiful these days)

MMAAM': womanhood. Hence: ASA ÔSEIWAA ADURU MMAAM' (Ama Oseiwaa has reached womanhood)

MMARIMA: (sing. ÔBARIMA) men. Hence: MMARIMA NYÊ, O-O! (men are no good, i.e. ungrateful, unreliable)

MMOATIA: dwarfs. MMOTIA are said to be some sort of human-like creatures who dwell in caves deep in the forest with their toes pointing backwards and heels forward; kidnapers of children between the ages of 4 and 6 whom they feed with mashed plantain mixed with oil (ÊTÔ-KÔKÔÔ). A child who refuses to eat the meal is returned and placed at a conspicuous spot, hands and legs bound with some creeping plant. A child who eats the meal is returned furnished with charms and amulets which are later found potent in the cure of many illnesses. MMOTIA's means of communication is said to be by whistling. Their favourite food is said to be bananas.

MMÔTÔ: a medicinal black powder, prepared with ashes of burnt roots, bark,

leaves and other ingredients

MMUSUO: a mystical disaster. Hence: YI MMUSUO (to propitiate in order to ward off some impending calamity, misfortune or disaster; YÊMFA YÊMMUSUO NKÔ WURAM (let them carry away their curse with them into the bush)

MPAEÊ: branch, segment. Hence: ABUSUA MU WO MPAEÊ (a lineage has branches, i.e. segments)

MPATA: pacification. Hence: MAGYE MPATA NO, NANSO ME DE KYÊ NO (I accept the pacification in spirit but it is remitted)

MPÊ: (pos. PÊ) has not loved, i.e. has not copulated. Hence: OBIARA MPÊÊ WO DA (no one has ever had sexual intercourse with you)

MPENA: sweetheart, mistress. Hence: MPENA-TWEE (courting)

MPRÊNSA: three times

MU: to be complete, whole. ADUANE-MU: a full, filling meal; ONIPA MU (a substantial person); NIPA MU (a whole body, a total, complete body). Hence: ONNI MU (he is a person of straw, i.e. a worthless person)

NAN: foot. NAN ASE (lit. under his/her foot, i.e. under-studying). Hence: ODI NE SE NAN ASE (he under-studies his father)

NAN: leg. Hence: ANAN-MU (in between the legs, used euphemistically for a woman's private parts)

NANA: grandmother, grandfather, granduncle. NANA, different intonation, means: grandchild, grandson, grand-daughter. Hence: NANA AFRAM KWAME (grandfather Kwame); YÊSE: WO NANA, AMA ÔSEWAA, ABU NSA (it is announced: your grand-daughter Ama Oseiwaa has reached womanhood)

NE HO: about him, an attribute concerning him. Hence: NE HO NNI ASÊM (his/her character is without blemish)

NIM: to know, to be expert in, be proficient in. NNIM (neg.) does not know, incapable of, inefficient in. Hence: ONNIM ADUANE NOA (she is poor at cooking); ONNIM AWARE (he is a failure in marriage)

NINKUN: jealousy. Hence: NINKUN-SA (a drink sent to inform an adulterer formally of his illicit sexual act with the wife of another man)

NKATE-PESIE: groundnut (peanut) stew with boiled yam/plantain

NKO-BE-SI-HÔ: (lit. go-come-back-as-you-were, meaning 'nothing done') a mocking epithet given by young women to old men who, due to feebleness of age, are incapable of giving sexual satisfaction

NKRAMO-FOÔ: Mohammedans, Mallams

NKUMAA-FOÔ: a husband's sisters; a woman's brother's wife

NKUNKYIRE: a wife's place on her husband's bed, generally behind him
 NKURO: complaint; statement of one's case before (an) arbitrator(s). Hence:
 AWAREÉ GU NKURO (a marriage is dissolvable only after relevant
 complaints have been heard and discussed by arbitrators)
 NKWAN: soup. Hence: NKATE-NKWAN (groundnut soup); ABÉ-NKWAN (palm-nut
 soup); NKWAN-SÉN (soup pot); NE NKWAN NYÉ DÉ (her soup is not
 delicious)
 NKWADAA: children
 NKWANKWAA-HENE: the leader of young men of a town/village as opposed to
 Stool elders
 NKWANKWAA-NNUA: a bench type seat erected with sticks under a shade tree
 on which youth of a town/village sit to rest and chat
 NKWANTU: Cushion's syndrome
 NKYENE: table salt, a favourite item of gift to elderly female relatives-in-law.
 NKYENE is the symbol of sweetness
 NNAWÔTWE-DA: the eighth day of an occurrence
 NUNUM: *ocimum viride*
 NNUNSIN-FOÔ: (sing. Odunsinii) medicine men, traditional physicians
 NNYESOÔ: (verbal noun GYE SO) response to greeting
 NSA: 'drink' of palm wine, NSA-FUFUO or imported one, the popular ones
 being schnapps and gin, two 'drinks' which appear to be the
 favourite of the gods and ABOSOM (fetishes)
 NSA: hand. Hence: ÔDE NE NSA AGU NE TI (he has placed his hands on top of
 his head -- a mood of mourning); WABU NSA (lit. she has broken a
 hand, meaning she has had her first menses and has reached
 womanhood)
 NSAMAN-FOÔ: (sing. ÔSAMAN) ghosts; spirits of departed persons said to be
 hovering about on earth in human form or living in ASAMAN-DO the
 abode of the dead. Hence: NSAMAN-POM (a burial grove, a 'thicket
 of ghosts')
 NSA-NSIA: (lit. six-fingered) a tiny growth by the small finger of a person
 regarded by the Asante as something abnormal -- a deformity
 which should not be suffered to exist
 NSAWA: cash donation given to the relatives of a deceased person. Debt
 incurred at a funeral is AYIE-ASE-KA
 NSE, DI NSE: a fetish oath, swearing by a fetish (verbal noun: NSE-DIE, swearing
 by a fetish. Hence: ÔDANEE NSEE NO (she revoked the oath sworn
 by a fetish); DI NSE, KA NTAM SE ... (swear by ... fetish, and the oath
 of the Chief). Please note that when an Asante swears the oath of
 his Chief or, to a more serious extent, the Asantehene's oath, NTAN-

KĒSEĒ, and says: 'ME SRĒ MEKA NANA ... (oath) SĒ ... (I beg to swear Nana's oath ... and say ... : he has solemnly vowed to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth)

NTAA: (pl. of Ata, Ataa) twins

NTAKUO-MMIENSA: three sixpenny pieces, 1s 6d; value in the Asante traditional coinage. It was the amount put into the coffin of a deceased relative to meet his/her 'travelling expenses' from the land of the living to the land of the dead

NTAM: a Chief's oath. NTAM-KĒSEĒ, the Asantehene's oath

NTAMA: cloth worn in three pieces by women or in one piece by men. NWEN-NTAMA is the local loom cloth. The ordinary every-day wear NTAMA introduced into the country was first imported in commercial quantities from Manchester in Britain in units of a piece of 12 yards called ÔPO. A unit piece was either of a short width of 24" (APO-TRAWA) or of a long width (APO-TENTEN) of 36"

NTIRI-KWAAMAA: a substitute name for someone whose real name is suppressed

NTÔKWA: quarrel, squabble, wrangle, broil. Hence: NTÔKWA MA AWAREĒ SÔ (the occasional marriage squabble could put pep into married life)

NTÔN/NTORÔ: Asante patri-spirit of a person transmittable through father and son

NWERA: white calico

NUA: brother or sister. Hence: ONUA PANYIN (elder brother or sister)

NUNUM: a herb

NNYESOÔ: salutation response applicable to members of the same NTÔN group

NYA: be ill affected. Hence: NE KRAA NE N'ABOSOM BENYA WO (his soul and gods will cause you some ill)

NYANKONSUO: rain water collected into a receptacle such as a drinking pot, a basin or a drum

NYIN: grow up. Hence: ÔBA NYIN ÔSE FIE, NA ÔNKA HÔ (a child grows up, i.e. is brought up in its father's house but never becomes a member of his father's lineage)

ÔBA: (pl. mma) a child. See note under NYIN above, elaborated as follows: under the Asante matrilineal system of inheritance a man has as his paternal responsibility the proper training and upbringing of his child. When a person reaches adulthood he/she is regarded as a full member of his/her ABUSUA. He/she needs not necessarily nor literally move away from the father's house on reaching adulthood

to live in the mother's house. Indeed, he/she may remain living physically in the father's house all his/her life but wherever he/she lives, the Asante, in life and in death, is the 'property' of his ABUSUA, the mother's 'blood', the mother's 'house', the mother's lineage -- never the father's

ÔBAA: (pl. mmaa) woman. Hence: WODE ÔBAA YI REKÔ YI ... (as you take this woman away with you ...); WADURU MMAAM' (she has reached womanhood)

ÔBAYIFOÔ: a witch

ÔBARIMA: (pl. mmarima) a man; a brave person. Hence: ÔYÊ ÔBARIMA, PAA (he is manly and potent); MMARIMA NYÊ, O! (men are no good, i.e. ungrateful)

OBI: someone, somebody. Hence: OBI ADEÊ (lit. 'someone's thing', i.e. a worthy, a dear one, a sweetheart)

ÔBÔÔ-ADEÊ: the Creator

ÔBOSOM: (pl. ABOSOM) fetish; gods held to be the vassals of the Omnipotent One, God, the Supreme Being. Every ÔBOSOM has a proper name. Those mentioned in the text are: AFRAM, ASUBÛNTEN, FOFIE, ÔDOMANKAMA, YENTUMI, KOBÌ, NTÊM, TÔN-GO, ANÔKYE, BAANEÊ, NYAME, ÊNEMDO, DÊNTÊ, AFRIM, TANO

OBU: he/she respects, is respectful. Hence: OBU ADEÊ or OBU NNIPA (he/she has respect for a person); OMMU NIPA (he/she is disrespectful)

OBURONII: (pl. aborofo) a generic name given to any alien from any European and 'Western' country with a 'white' skin, Whiteman. Hence: MMA NO NYA OBURONII AMANEÊ (let her not commit any criminal offence against the Whiteman, i.e. the central government; the Whiteman being the ruler ABAN)

OBUSUA-NII: (pl. ABUSUA-FOÔ) a member of one's own lineage

OBUSUFOÔ: the accursed one. Hence: NYÊ BRA-BUSUFOÔ (do not have an accursed first menses)

ÔDÊ: sweetness. Hence: ÔDÊ NKO ARA (let it all, i.e. through your life, be sweetness)

ÔDÊÊMANII: a young person of the present generation

ÔDEHYEÊ: a royal; a member of the ruling lineage of a town/village; a pure member of any lineage is regarded an ÔDEHYEÊ of the particular ABUSUA

ÔDEYÔ-FOÔ: an industrious person

ÔDÔ-YÊ-OWU: (lit. love is death) a substituted expression for a sweetheart, a lover

ODIFUPEÊ-FOÔ: a greedy, avaricious person

ODUNSIN-NII: a medicine man, a traditional healer
ÔDOMANKAMA: God, the Creator. Death qualifies for the title as the Destroyer, ODOMANKAMA OWUO
ODWAN: a sheep. Hence: ANYAME-DWAN (lit. god's sheep); ÔBOSOM DWAN (a sheep for fetish)
ODWAMANFOÔ: lecher, a lecherous man or woman
ÔHONAM: the body comprising the flesh and bones of a living person
ÔHÔHOÔ: a stranger, a non-native of a place. Hence: AHÔHO-WAREÊ (marrying a person who is not a native of one's own town)
ÔKÔTÔ: crab; symbol of fecundity
ÔKÔMFOÔ: fetish priest/priestess
OKUNAFÔ: widow/widower
ÔKYEAME: a Chief's linguist
ÔKYENA: tomorrow. Hence: ÔKYENA YÊBÊGORO WO NANA AMA ÔSEIWAA (tomorrow the nubility rite of your grand-daughter Ama Oseiwaa comes on)
ÔNE NO WÔ HÔ: (lit. he/she is there with her/him), they are lovers
ÔNHWÊ NO YIYE: he does not keep and maintain her adequately
ONWINI: sundown. Hence: ONWINI DWO A, ... (at sundown)
ONYAME: God. Hence: ONYAME NA ÔMA MMA (God is the giver of children)
ÔPANYIN: an elderly person; title of a Stool elder. Hence: ÔPANYIN ANO YÊ ÔBOSOM (lit. the mouth of an elderly person is that of a god; meaning: the admonition or warning from an elderly person has the same power of prediction as that of an ÔBOSOM, a fetish, and so it should be heeded if one is wise. It has the same implication as 'honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that Yahwe your God has given you')
OPITIRE: a species of fresh-water fish; symbol of obstinacy
ÔSAMAN: ghost, spirit. Hence: MÊWARE ME KUNU SAMAN (lit. I shall marry the spirit of my late husband, meaning: I shall remain unmarried after my late husband's death)
ÔSEÊ: father
OSEKU-FOÔ: 'newsmonger', telltale
OSI: stance, posture. Hence: OSI ABATWÊ (she holds the hands at the hip elbows pointing out)
OSI-FOÔ: a diligent, assiduous person
OSIGYA-NII: an unmarried man or woman, a batchelor or spinster
OSUO: rain. Hence: OSUO MUNA (gathered rain cloud)
ÔTÔKWAKO-FOÔ: a quarrelsome person, a scuffler
ÔTOROFOÔ: a tale bearer, a liar

OTWARE: epilepsy

ÔTWEADUAMPON: the Almighty, Providence. His other names are: ONYAME (God); ONYAN-KRO-PÓN KWAME (the only one God whose weekday is Saturday); ÔBOÔ-ADEÊ (the Creator); BÔRE-BÔRE-A-ÔBÔÔ-ADEÊ (the Creator of the aeon)

ÔTWEE: a species of antelope. Hence: ÔTWE-SERÊ (a thigh of the antelope (ÔTWEE)), a favourite article to present to a future mother-in-law)

OWI-GYINAE: around midday

ÔYÊ-FOÔ: malefactor

ÔPANTU: two bottles of gin or schnapps

ÔYOKÔÔ: one of the 8 Asante lineages

PA: keep a person in confinement by putting his hand in chains fixed to a log. Hence: WOBÔ ME TIRI PA A, MÊBÔ NE DIN (if even my head were put in chains fixed to a log I shall continue to mention his (the lover's) name)

PA: waist. Hence: OTUMI TO NE PA YIYE (she is an adept waist shaker in bed)

PATA: to pacify. MPATA (recompense)

PÊ: to love, to be fond of, to have a wish for. Hence: MEMPÊ NO KORA, KORA, KORA (I have not the least love for him); WO PÊ NO? (do you love him?)

PENE ... SO: agree, sanction, approve. Hence: SÊ AGYA NE NA PENE SO DE A, MÊWARE WO (I shall be willing to marry you subject to the approval of my father and my mother)

PIESIE: a first-born child, male or female. KAA-KYIRE, the last

PIRA: to injure, cause bodily harm. Hence: WAPIRA NO (lit. he has injured her. The expression is used euphemistically by parents for 'he has made our young unmarried daughter pregnant')

PÔ: polished, cultured, well-mannered. Hence: WAPÔ (he/she is cultured)

PÓN: one pound sterling. Hence: PÓN MMIENU (two pounds sterling)

PRÊKÊSÊ: *tetrapleura tetraptera*

PUN: to smoke out. Hence: YEPUN ASASA DURO (some special herbs are burnt in a room for the smoke to drive away or expel evil haunting spirits)

SAARA: just so. Hence: YÊBÊFA NO SAARA (we resign and accept the situation just as it is: there is nothing that can be done about it)

SAN: to return, go back. Hence: WASAN AWOYÊ (lit. it has returned at birth, i.e. still-born)

SASA: evil spirit, a haunting ghost. Hence: SASA-DURO (evil-spirit-dispelling)

medicine)

SEKAN: cutlass, matchet. Hence: NKONTAGYE-SEKAN (lit. brothers-in-law's matchet which is the share of marital gifts that goes to the brothers-in-law of a bridegroom)

SERÉ: thigh. Hence: WO NUA SERÉ SO A ÊNNA WO SO (lit. if your brother has a big thigh it does not rest on you, i.e. a sister never marries a brother); WODEÊ, WO PÊ SERÉ FOFORO A, WUBENYA BI ... (lit. if you needed another thigh you can always have one, i.e. you can find another husband but I cannot have another person to replace my brother); ÔTWEE-SERÉ (the thigh of ÔTWEE antelope)

Si: stand; affirm; fix. Hence: WASI NE TIRI NSA (he has put the marriage 'drink' on her head i.e. the marriage has been lawfully established)

Si: to build. SI DAN (to build a house). Hence: WOSI DAN MA WÔN AKORAA (they build a house for their father, meaning: they, i.e. the children, provide a coffin for the burial of their father)

SIE: to bury; hide; keep in safety. Hence: YEKOSIE EFUNU (they bury the dead body); ASIE-DEÊ (lit. burial things, i.e. articles presented for the burial of a dead person)

SIKA: money. Hence: TIRI-SIKA (lit. head money); ADIDI-SIKA (lit. 'chop money', i.e. money to buy foodstuffs); AKRA-SIKA (soul money); SIKA-DWAN (money given in place of live sheep); SIKA-FUTURO (gold dust); WO SE PÊ SIKA A, MA NO NYA BI MFA NHWÊ WO (when your father works let him earn money with which to look after you)

SOM: serve. Hence: WOSOM ÔBARIMA A, WOSOM GU KWA (serving a man is a wasted labour)

SON-WERÊÊ: a piece of smoked elephant skin used ritually as a symbol of largeness or corpulence

SRÊ: beg for, request. Hence: KÔ-SRÊ (make a formal request for the hand of a bride); ÔPÊ SÊ ÔWARE NO, ENTI YÊMMÊSRÊ NO MA NO (he desires to marry her and has therefore sent us to beg you for her to be given to him to marry)

SUMINASO: dunghill; refuse-disposal place

SASABONSAM: a mythical forest monster

SUMAN: talisman

SUNSUM: a soul or the spirit in the body of a person

SAM NNYIWA: to sit on the ground with legs stretched forward

TAA-KOFI: proper name of a fetish

TAN: parent, mother or father (poetic). Hence: ÔBAA-TAN (a mother nursing a baby); OKOFIRI NO TAN (he clears his wife out of confinement, i.e.

when a husband on the eighth day after the birth of a child presents a gift of cloths and other articles to the wife and the child and gives the child its name)

TE: an auxiliary word used with other words to form a phrase such as TE ASE (to be alive); TE SO (to reduce the price, quantity or volume); TE HWE (to fall down from a height). Hence: ÔTE NE HO ASE (he lives a decent life)

TE: to be neat and clean, pure (neg. NTE). Hence: OFIE HÔ FO HO NTE ... (the people of that particular house are 'not clean', in body or in deed, i.e. they are not a decent family from which to choose a wife/husband)

TE: to hear; comprehend, understand. Hence: ÔTE KASA (she is obedient, submissive and manageable)

TETE: to bring up a child, train, nurse. Hence: NEA ÔTETEE NO ... (the person who trained and brought the child up)

TETÊ ... SIE: pre-arranged or secretly planned. Hence: SÊ ÔNTETÊ NSIEI A, ANKA ÔRENNYAE AWAREÊ (if she has not secretly planned with some man to be married, she would not have pressed for a divorce)

TI/TIRI: head. Hence: TIRI-NSA (lit. head 'drink', i.e. a drink produced by a man to his fiancée's father or head of her 'house' to establish a lawful customary marriage); TIRI-SIKA (lit. head money, i.e. money taken in the form of a loan by a woman's close maternal relatives from her husband to meet some exigency, payable on divorce or at any time convenient to the borrowing in-laws. A request for TIRI-SIKA is not made these days without the explicit concern of the wife); ÔDE NE TIRI-SIKA AKYÊ NO (he has renounced the claim of TIRI-SIKA on his wife)

TIE: give ear to, obey. Hence: WOANTIE NEA WO NI NE WO SE BÊKA A ... (if you disobey and pay no heed to a warning or admonition from your father and mother ...)

TIRI HO BÔ: close shaving of the head hair with a razor. Hence: ÔBÔÔ NE TIRI HO (her hair was close-shaved with a razor)

TO: throw. Hence: TO KESUA/KOSUA KYERÊ ME (lit. throw an egg to satisfy me, i.e. a husband requesting a wife to prove her fidelity during the time she was married, by swearing by a fetish in the course of which an egg is thrown to hit the ground or the front wall of the fetish house)

TÔMA: (pl. NTÔMA) waist beads worn by women and girls in sets of generally three or four strings. They are of assorted types and vary in sizes and in worth. Some valued TÔMA are: BOTA, BÔDÔM, ABOÔ,

NENKYENE-MMA. Handling seductively by rattling a married woman's waist beads being worn by her, i.e. PASA-PASA OBI YERE TÔMA HO constitutes an adulterous act liable for a claim of the appropriate compensation (AYEFARÊ) by the husband

TU SO NSA: put a 'drink' on a deal. The Asante traditional way of 'stamping' a deal and make an agreement or contract binding is the production of a 'drink' which is consumed or shared by all present who act as witnesses

TUMI: capable of, has the ability to, is adept at

TWEFO-DURO: a medicinal soup prepared for a widow/widower

WARE: to marry, take as husband or wife. AWAREÊ (marriage); AWARE-GYAEÊ (divorce, dissolution of marriage); AWARE-DEÊ (marriage things, i.e. all property, including apparel given by a husband to the wife in the course of their marriage, previously refundable, but now discontinued); AHÔHO-WAREÊ (marrying a person who is not a native of one's locality, i.e. a stranger. Hence: AWARE NYÊ AWARE NA, NA NE GYAEÊ (it is easier to enter into marriage than to get it dissolved); AWAREÊ GU NKURO (a marriage is dissolvable only after the grounds for divorce have been heard and discussed by arbitrators); YENNI AWARE-SÊM MPANYIN ANIM (cases of marital disharmony do not go before the Chief of a town and his Stool elders for settlement); GYAE AWAREÊ NA BÊWARE NO (get divorced in order to marry him); ÔWARE MA NO (he, i.e. the father, marries a woman for him, i.e. the son); ÔYÊ ME WARE-FOÔ (he/she is someone outside my restricted range of marriage); WOBÊWARE NO? (would you marry him?); MÊWARE ME KUNU SAMAN (lit. I shall marry the spirit of my late husband, i.e. I shall remain unmarried after the death of my husband); AWAREÊ WARE (marriage is a long journey. This is a pun used as homely advice to the young about to enter into a conjugal union. It is meant to impress upon them that, like a long journey, a marriage has its ups and downs, its hills and dales, its straights and its bends. The message plainly is: whoever decides to embark on marriage must be prepared for a long journey of pleasantness as well as irksome encounters before reaching their dreamland of bliss and contentment); ASANTE, YÊWARE YERÊ: YENTÔ YERÊ (the Asante marry a wife, wives are never bought)

WO: give birth; beget. Hence: WAWO DU (she has given birth to ten children); YENNWO NNI (children do not belong to their father but to their

- mother's lineage); WARE NTÊM, NA WO BA TO ME (get cracking with your marriage in order to have a child born and named after me)
- WÔFA: mother's brother. Hence: WÔFA BA AWAREÊ (cross-cousin marriage, i.e. a son marrying his father's sister's daughter, or a daughter marrying her father's sister's son)
- WÔFAASE: a man's sister's son or daughter
- WU: to die, cease to exist (neg. NWU). Hence: DABI WOANWU A WUBENYA ADE (should you live long enough, you will gain wealth in future)
- WURAM: in the bush. Hence: YÊMFA YE'MMUSUO NKÔ WURAM (let them carry their curse away with them into the bush)
- YAREÊ: illness, sickness, disease. Hence: DÔKOTA NNI SAA YAREÊ YI ADURO (the hospital has no medicines for the cure of this disease); YARE BÔNEÊ (lit. bad disease, i.e. dangerous diseases such as leprosy, epilepsy or any transmittable disease, also mental disorders)
- YÊ: perform; complete, carry out. Hence: WAYÊ NE HO ADEÊ (all formalities that establish a customary lawful marriage have been completed)
- YÊ: to be in a state of. Hence: WAYÊ BRA or WAYÊ SAA (she has reached the age of puberty); ÔYÊÊ BASA-BASA (he became disorderly or distraught)
- YERA: be lost; disappear; oblivion. Hence: ... NA WOBÊMA ME DIN AYERA (... you will cause my name to fall into oblivion)
- YERE: wife. Hence: DÔ-YERE (an offered wife, i.e. a woman who became a wife by the offer of her to the husband out of a parent's fondness for the man); AYE-TÊ (replaceable Stool-wife); AHEN-NYERÊ (female twins who are, customarily, Stool-wives); AWOWA-YERÊ (a wife married when given as a pledge, now abolished and discontinued)