

1. Description - [ISO 639-3: abr](#)

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

- Abron, Abron, Bantu.

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): abr

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- 7° 56' N / 1° 1' W
- Ghana
- Côte d'Ivoire

1.4 Brief history:

- The kingdom of Gyaman was founded by Gyamanhene Tan Date in west-central Ghana, stretching into the eastern Ivory Coast, in around 1690. The Ashanti took control in 1730, and maintained power for the next 135 years. Revolts were staged in 1750, 1764, and from 1802 to 1804, but all failed. In 1875, the English defeated the Ashanti, and Gyaman achieved its independence again (1p1).
- “Between 1875 and 1886, [the kingdom of Gyaman] underwent a period of serious internal troubles. Invaded by Samori’s sofas in the spring of 1895, it was occupied by the end of 1897 by the French in the west and the British in the east” (1p2).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- Missionaries: Set up hospitals, and converted Abron to Catholicism, Protestantism (mostly Baptist) (3p116-117), and Islam (3p118).
- Schools: Some education takes place at home with children being taught by their mother, or older siblings (3p156-157). Formal schools are still relatively new to the area, but are improving. Some students continue on to universities (3p172-173).
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1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- The introduction of cash crops has caused the reduction of fallow to a point where the land cannot regenerate fast enough (3p219).
- “Their environment contains both savanna and forest land, and they are able to grow a wide variety of cash and subsistence crops” (3p220).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

- Population size: 75,000 (4p276)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- “In addition to subsistence crops – yams, taro, and to a lesser extent maize, dry rice, and millet, as well as a wide assortment of vegetables ranging from tomatoes, cayenne pepper, and eggplants, to onions and lentils – the Abron of today raise three important cash crops and collect a fourth” (3p58-59).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- “The Abron value meat for its taste and would eat it in larger quantities if they could afford it. On the other hand, there is no real shortage of protein, and those families that have little meat make up for this lack with beans and lentils” (3p43).
- Chicken, beef, pork, antelope, and smaller game animals (3p84-85).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- “During a hunt, boys armed with clubs and slingshots accompany their older brothers and fathers” (3p158).
- Some of the men, who can afford them, hunt with guns (3p121-122).

2.4 Food storage:

- Food is stored in pots made of clay and iron, and is cooked outdoors during the dry season. On rainy days, food is cooked on an indoor stove. (3p42)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- “Young men participate in house building, planting, and hunting” (3p157-158).
- “Girls learn to help their mothers clean the houses, fetch wood and water, weed the garden, plant lesser crops, and cook” (3p158).

2.6 Land tenure:

- “Villages as units are said to hold land. Thus Abron villages have their land and Kolongo villages theirs. Title may pass to individual kinship groups (lineages in the old days, families today) if they are resident in the village, but such title is based on use: land, to be retained, must be worked. Strangers who move into a village must obtain permission to use free savanna. Permission is usually granted, for there is no shortage of this type of land used for the production of subsistence crops. Forest, however, is relatively scarce and valuable. This has been true at least since the introduction of cash crops. The Abron recognize that forest land belongs to Kolongo groups and, by their own rules, must ask permission of the Kolongo chiefs to work it” (3p53-54).

2.7 Ceramics:

- Clay pots used for food storage (3p42).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- Not found

2.9 Food taboos:

- “Leftover food is rarely consumed later. Instead, it is either thrown out or given to the animals” (3p45).
- Women may not eat oranges while pregnant (3p45).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- Not found

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- Not found

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

- Not found

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

- Not found

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

- Not found

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

- No average family size found. Men may marry multiple times, and women seem to have an average to large number of children.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

- “Sexual taboos are strictly enforced until the child walks” (3p48).

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

- A man must be able to pay his bride’s family for her. Some men marry young, but there doesn’t seem to be an average age for marriage. (3p103)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- No percentage given, but divorce may be sought by either the husband or wife. After a divorce, the man loses the rights to his children, and, if the divorce was initiated by the woman, she maybe required to pay back the bride price (3p105).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- Polygynous marriage is common, and men are allowed to marry as many women as they can support (3p104-105).

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

- Men are expected to pay their wives’ families an amount agreed upon before the marriage takes place (3p104-105).
- No evidence of dowries found.

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- Abnon ideology does not allow a man to receive an inheritance from his father, but it is common for fathers to give their sons their wealth before death (3p157).
- Titles and goods are passed down matrilineal lines (3p62).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- “A newborn baby is the focus of attention for all the female members of the mother’s household” (3p151).
- “After a child has learned to walk, it begins the painful process of separation from close personal contact with the mother” (3p152).
- “With the exception of infants, young people are disfavored in Abnon society” (3p153).
- “Intolerant of anger in children, parents punish aggressive acts with a fury rarely seen in Abnon society” (3p153).
- “A child who has been fighting, for any reason, is not only beaten by its parents but is also humiliated before its peers and subordinates” (3p153).
- “Parents ignore children once they begin to talk. They are cared for by their elder siblings, and join them in learning the daily round” (3p153).
- “Contact between parents and children for the purpose of training is confined to gardening. Even here, the child is not taught what to do, but learns by watching and helping” (3p155).
- “Early contact between father and son is minimal, because infants are limited to the mother’s house. During infancy, the male parent will spend little more than one hour a day with his child” (3p160).
- “When a younger sibling joins a men’s house, the father’s attention may shift to it” (3p161).
- “While all adults can punish children, the father has the most contact with his sons. Also, he is responsible for their behavior” (3p161).
- “From birth to adulthood, a girl remains in her mother’s household and is a basic part of it” (3p165).
- “A warm relationship exists between a woman and her father throughout life, but she has less contact with him than do his sons” (3p166).

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

- Not found

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- Men may marry within or outside of their community (3p103-104).

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

- No evidence of partible paternity.

- The child is recognized as only having one father (3p160-161).
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")
- Nothing found other than mother of the child.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- No evidence of incremental conception.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- Not found
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- Cross cousin marriage is sometimes preferred (3p103).
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- Women are expected to remain virgins until marriage (3p104-105).
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- Not found
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
- Married couples live in separate houses. Daughters go to live with their mother and female relatives, and sons go to live with their father and male relatives. If a girl's mother dies, the other women in the house will raise the daughter (3p48-50).
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- Not found
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- No evidence of couvades was found, but the father may not be present during the birth (3p45).
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- Not found
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- Older children help raise their younger siblings, and, as the older child, demand the respect of those that are younger (3p161-162).
 - "During infancy, the male parent will spend little more than one hour a day with his child" (3p160).
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- "Sexual joking is allowed between brothers and sisters, providing a non-relative is the object of the joke" (3p75).
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- Patrilineal descent (3p157).
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- Marriage is prohibited between brothers and sisters, and half brothers and sisters (3p163).
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- There are 10 days of traditions involving the bride, groom, their families, and the village (3p105-106).
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- "There are only seven first names for males and seven for women- one for each day of the Abron week" (3p81).
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- No preference
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- "When a marriage has been decided upon between two families, the groom's parents and the other relatives provide the bride price, which is paid to the bride's kinship group" (3p103).
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
- Not found.

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- Not found
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- Ingroup fighting is rare among the Abron (3p153).
 - "The Abron ethic is strongly opposed to aggression. The idea that normal people can display such feelings, is unthinkable" (3p169).
 - Outgroup not found.
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- Not found
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
- "The Bini are related to the Abron and their villages are impossible to distinguish from those of their cousins" (3p137).
 - "Segregated from the main stream of Abron life were the Mossi, laborers whose small village is attached to one corner of Amamvi" (3p31).
 - "An Abron discussing the Mossi will refer to them as dirty and say that they love to sing and dance, feel little pain, and are slow to learn the simple tasks of civilized life" (3p32).
 - There are high rates of intermarriage between the Abron and Kolongo. (4p277)
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

- No evidence of cannibalism.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

- Not found

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- Not found

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

- Local kingdoms have no real power (3p18).
- “The king has one or more *ochamé* (talking chiefs), who speak for him. In former times these were usually slaves. It is their duty to accept responsibility for royal judgements that go astray: “It is the Ochamé who has spoken, not the King.” Other officers include royal drummers, trumpeters, sword and umbrella bearers, court dwarfs, and, until recently, a state executioner, who dispatched those convicted of such crimes as murder, theft, adultery, and gossip” (3p19).
- “Under the king are the chiefs of five cantons, known as Penongo, Achedom, Anefy, Fumasa, and Ciagni. These chiefs are charged with the handling of local matters and succeed to office according to patrilineal rules” (3p57).
- Most political power is held by the national governments of Ghana and the Ivory Coast (3p18).

5.4 Post marital residence:

- Men and women live apart even after marriage, and continue to live with family members of the same gender (3p61).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

- In the past, farm lands were held by a lineage chief, and were distributed according to need (3p58).
- “Strangers who move into a village must obtain permission to use free savanna. Permission is usually granted, for there is no shortage of this type of land used for the production of subsistence crops. Forest, however is relatively scarce and valuable. This has been true at least since the introduction of cast crops. The Abron recognize that forest land belongs to Kolongo groups and, by their own rules, must ask permission of Kolongo chiefs to work it. In addition, mineral rights are, or were, held by Kolongo, and the extraction of gold was undertaken with permission from Kolongo titleholders” (3p54).

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

- Men and women live divided into separate houses by gender, even after marriage, with their families (3p61).
- “When a man wishes to sleep with his wife, he invites her to join him in his room after dark. If she agrees, she will come to his house after the other men have gone to sleep. She will leave before dawn. If a man has more than one wife, and this is true only of the richer, older men, he will sleep with each of them on a rotating basis during the week. (3p61-62)
- The Abron have a Crow kinship system (3p62).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

- “Sexual joking is allowed between brothers and sisters, providing a non-relative is the object of the joke” (3p75).

5.8 Village and house organization:

- Not found

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

- Bath houses, gender specific latrines.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- Not found

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

- “As in most African states, kinship among the Abron is an overlay on a social organization that depends upon lineage segmentations.” (3p54)
- “All members of the ethnic group are related to a founding ancestor, but with each succeeding generation, the number of lines multiplies, each taking off from one son or, in the case of matrilineal systems, nephew (eldest sister's eldest son) of the founder, and in turn the founder's children's children, and so on. Each member of the ethnic group is a member of a minimal lineage (the smallest number of unilineally related kin who form a corporate unit) and more inclusive lineages up at the largest united recognized, which is usually the entire group.” (3p54)

5.12 Trade:

- “Abron of today raise three important cash crops and collect a fourth. These are coffee, cacao, oranges, and kola nuts.” (3p59)
- “The Abron have already become consumer oriented. The government has encouraged the construction of standard cement rectangular houses with corrugated-iron roofs. Motor bikes are becoming more and more common. Even automobiles have made their appearance, although not yet in Diassenpa. I have already mentioned the advent of the transistor radio. In addition to such basic but recently created needs for industrially produced goods (fuel, sugar, and salt), the Abron have become almost exclusively dependent on manufactured cloth.” (3p219-220)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- Slavery – The Abron captured slaves from neighboring peoples to work their lands in the past, but slavery is now outlawed. (3p53,222)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

- “Mourning relatives cover their heads for six days and wear old, dark-colored cloths. The wife of the deceased stays in her husband's house and eats only once a day.” (3p98)

- “When a priest or a member of the royal family dies, the funeral is more elaborate. The ceremony lasts for seven days and nights, and several villages participate. When the king dies, the entire nation mourns and everyone tries to get to the funeral.” (3p68)
- “Funerals are the major events in Abron society. They constitute the single most important social activity in the entire culture.” (3p99)
- “The Abron are pragmatic. Religious observances do not occupy much time in an individual’s daily life. There are few ceremonies, and the gods do not bother those who do not have a specific obligation to them.”

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- “But Abron culture is witch-ridden. Most villagers actively fear the attacks of witches.” (3p89)
- “Deresogo (witches) are supernatural beings. Unlike gods, they live with people but are unknown to them. Deresogo fly in the night and eat the souls of their victims. Like the witches of medieval Europe, they gather to celebrate their own Sabbath. They kill at night through magic and are able to change into animals at will.” (3p89)
- “Ranged against deresogo are kpareso, or priests. Only kpareso know which individuals are deresogo and they can only combat witches. Kpareso never reveal which villagers are deresogo. This would bring them into general combat with the entire community of witches – a great risk.” (3p89)

6.2 Stimulants:

- “Some of the medicines used by Abron contain active agents of one type or another and do have a real effect on symptoms. Others are magical and cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, have other than a psychological therapeutic value.” (3p148)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- “Mourning relatives cover their heads for six days and wear old, dark-colored cloths. The wife of the deceased stays in her husband’s house and eats only once a day.” (3p98)
- “When a priest or a member of the royal family dies, the funeral is more elaborate. The ceremony lasts for seven days and nights, and several villages participate. When the king dies, the entire nation mourns and everyone tries to get to the funeral.” (3p68)
- “Funerals are the major events in Abron society. They constitute the single most important social activity in the entire culture.” (3p99)
- “The Abron have, or at least had, puberty ceremonies for both males and females. I was never able to uncover any details of these ceremonies. Willing to talk about birth, weddings, and even funerals, the subject of puberty was blocked by a wall of silence.” (3p101)
- In addition to life-crisis ceremonies, the Abron celebrate three major fixed religious events. These are the great yam festival (Odiwera), in October, the Adaye, or tribute to the ancestors, and the Fofye, or tribute to local gods and the punungo of dead priests.” (3p106)

6.4 Other rituals:

- “The Abron are pragmatic. Religious observances do not occupy much time in an individual’s daily life. There are few ceremonies, and the gods do not bother those who do not have a specific obligation to them.”

6.5 Myths (Creation):

- Nyame is the creator, but no specifics were given.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- “A woman’s status as a full adult does nothing to change her restricted role in village affairs, and most women are content to run things in the microcosm of their own households, where they may dominate if and when they become senior females.” (3p159)

6.8 Missionary effect:

- Missionaries have introduced the Abron to western medicine. (3p147-148)

6.9 RCR revival:

- Not found

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- “According to those informants who practice Abron religion, when a person dies the soul (ngose), as a distinct from spirit, breaks into two parts. One of these, the punungo, goes to heaven, and the other, the punungo bo bokogo (stool spirit), goes into a stool that was carved for the person during his or her lifetime. Other informants said that there was only one soul, which lived in heaven but visited the soul stool on sacrificial occasions.” (3p100-101)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- Not found

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

- Not found

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

- Abron traditional religion is very magical, with witches similar to European beliefs of the past, and priests which fight witches and heal with the power of their own personal deity, a gbawkaw. (3p148-149)
- “The Abron pantheon is divided into good and evil gods. The high god, Nyame, stands alone as the Creator and Prime Mover. Although he is responsible for epidemics and some other manifestations of disease, he has little to do with the affairs of men. Below Nyame is Tano, the river god. He is often appealed to in time of need. After Tano there is a wide range of gods, or

gbawkaw, who inhabit various natural areas such as mountains, rivers, or even trees and objects such as specially prepared gin bottles and crudely carved statues.” (3p89)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

- Priests may cover themselves with white clay. (3p107)

7.2 Piercings:

- Not found

7.3 Haircut:

- “Abron men keep their hair short and many shave their heads.” (3p38)
- “Women let their hair grow long, but wear it in a tight braid coiled close to the head.” (3p39)

7.4 Scarification:

- No evidence of scarification.

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

- Not found

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- “The mask worn by the chief priest is itself a powerful gbawkaw. Other participants wear black anthropomorphic masks with antelope horns carved at their tops.” (3p108)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- Not found

7.8 Missionary effect:

- Not found

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

- Not found

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- “Children’s dress has been described. Its poorness is a demonstration of the general poverty of children in Abron society. Even though they are loved, they are deprived. This is the result of the heavily age-ranked status system in which people attain certain rights as they mature and come to occupy responsible positions in the social system. Children sit on chairs only when there are enough for all the adults present; they eat food considered inferior for adults; and they are dressed in ragged insufficient clothing. They sleep several to a room or even on the porches of houses, and must give prized possessions to any older sibling who might demand them.” (3p49)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- “A man may have several wives, but since he cannot marry women who are sisters, all his spouses will come from different women’s houses.” (3p61)
- Levirate not found.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

- Crow kinship system (3p62)

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- Men and women live in different houses almost their entire lives. As children, boys move out of their mother’s house at age 8, and will spend the rest of their life in their father’s house, unless they leave the village. Even after marriage, the couples do not live together. (3p61)

Numbered references

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