

## Ashanti

### 1. Description

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

- “Ashanti, Asante, or Asante Twi, is one of three literary dialects of the Akan language of southern Ghana, and the prestige dialect of that language. It is spoken in and around Kumasi, the capital of the former.”(4)

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

- Twi (4)

#### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- Location: N 6° 45' 0" W 1° 30' 0" (5)

#### 1.4 Brief history:

- “The Ashanti created an empire the size of Great Britain, 24,560 square miles, by the time the first Europeans, the Portuguese, tried to fight against the military might of these proud people in 1482. In ancient times the Ashanti unified many tribal units and set up a strong government among the Akan-speaking people in the middle part of what is today the independent nation of Ghana, along the western coast of Africa.”(3)
- “The Ashanti people are one of the largest ethnic groups in modern day Ghana with an estimated population of over ten million. Although they held great power over the region before the British annexed them into their empire, scientific study on the Ashanti has only been seriously undertaken in the last few decades. Prior to their defeat at the hands of the British, the Ashanti (who are a matrilineal society) developed into one of the most powerful African kingdoms. They developed from a tributary state into a kingdom when Osei Tutu, the head of the Oyoko clan) founded the Ashanti Kingdom around 1801. During the reign of Kofi Karikari (1867-74), missionaries journeyed to Ghana in order to ‘civilize’ the African people.”(1)

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

- Throughout all the sources, one realizes that the Ashanti were influenced in some way by the missionaries. As the missionaries began to migrate into the Ashanti land, it was inevitable for them to influence the local citizens. “The missionary too goes to Africa-to seek out the lost, sometimes with Bible, holy sacrament, and testimony foremost, often with hoe and good seeds, with drugs, syringe, and scalpel, or with textbook breaking the way through what he supposed to be the heathen jungle.”(10p4)

#### 1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- “A line of hills, often known as the Mampopng scarp, runs north-west to south-east from Wenchi through Mampong to the Juaso district and divides Ashanti into two-a plateau in the south and the lowlands of the Volta and some of its right-bank tributaries in the north.”(7p65) Furthermore, the Ashanti’s territory can be divided into north and south: “Climatically the differences, according to the statistics, are only slight: Wenchi in the north, for example, has 53 inches of rainfall, while Bekwai in the south has 62 inches, and mean monthly temperatures at most stations vary between 75 and 83 F [...] Much of the south is still covered with closed forest, rain-forest of a mixed deciduous type, notwithstanding the extensive clearing of the forest for farming and settlement. The north is for the most part open, rather degraded, savannah-forest country.”(7p65)

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

- There is no sufficient data pertaining to the population size today. However, some evidence suggests for increase in population within towns and increase in towns as well. (9)
- “In 1911 only Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, had a population of more than 2,000, whereas by 1948 as many as 40 towns exceeded this number. Kumasi itself is estimated to have had a population of about 10,000 in the nineteenth century; this had increased to over 70,000 by 1948.”(9)
- According to a study, the Ashanti are considered to be mostly rural people, and about 80% of the population lives in “small towns, villages, hamlets”.(10p30)
- The average density of the Ashanti is about 35 people per square mile, and in some places, it drops to as little as 16 people per square mile.(10p30)

### 2. Economy

#### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- “Southern Ashanti produces a variety of food crops – plantains, root crops (including cassava, cocoyams and yams) and grains like maize-whereas the north as yet grows little more than yams and guinea corn. Economic crops that flourish in the southern Ashanti, like kola-nut and, above all, cocoa, are impossible to grow in the north.”(7p66)

#### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- The main protein source is fish.(11)

#### 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- There is not much information on weapons within the Ashanti today. However, their history is embodied with wars, but nowadays, the Ashanti are at peace.”Guns were introduced into Ashanti (then known as Amanse and situated in the present Adanse area south of Kumasi) in the seventeenth century but their purposive use as instruments of political expansion was the work of Osei Tutu, who organized the Ashanti army on the basis of the divisions constituting united Ashanti, and introduced into it experts from Akwamu, then the most highly organized Akan kingdom on the Gold Coast.<sup>3</sup> The introduction of guns made warfare an expensive business. Bows and arrows had been within the means of most adults but guns were not, and the king and chiefs of Ashanti had to provide not only powder and shot but also guns for their fighting men.”(14p283)

#### 2.4 Food storage:

- There is no information on whether the Ashanti have a food storage place but, certainly, there is going to be a place designated as food storage.

#### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

- “The amount of work performed by a woman is one of the reasons why few women oppose their husbands’ polygynous marriages. It is also one of the reasons why men favor polygynous marriages. One wife among several finds her own work load reduced, and their husband finds the work output of his immediate family increased.”(10p68)
- Furthermore, there are clear boundaries on what men do and what women do regarding production: “Continuing a long-standing pattern in the division of labor, Mensah slashes and burns the farm out of the forest, but the growing and distributing of foodstuffs are in the capable, calloused hands of his wife, Afua.”(10p139)

#### 2.6 Land tenure:

- “The traditional landownership system provided-and still provides-for the communal owning of land on a community and family basis. Within each family, each man, and often some women, held the right to cultivate and to use the products of his own section as long as he wished. The major restriction on his virtual sole ownership was his lack of authority to sell, mortgage, give away, or otherwise alienate his real estate without express permission of his extended family, of his lineage – if distant members were interested – and, if necessary, of the community chief and his council.”(10p136)
- “The land controlled by each town is distributed to its families, the headman of each family supervising the allotment of its apportioned property to the individual members of his family.”(10p136)
- “As long as an individual uses his land, it is, in effect, his, and he may bequeath it to his legitimate family heirs. If he abandons it, however, it reverts to his extended family, who will give it to another deserving family member.”(10p136)

#### 2.7 Ceramics:

- The Ashanti are known to be involved in ceramic crafting.(9)

#### 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- There is no data on the sharing patterns between the Ashanti. However, as any closely related society, there is most likely a lot of sharing within the tribes/clans.

#### 2.9 Food taboos:

- There does not seem to be any information on food taboos.

#### 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- There is no data of any watercrafts or canoes being used by the Ashanti, given their location. However, most likely, some form of watercraft is indeed being used among the Ashanti.

### **3. Anthropometry**

#### 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- There is no data regarding the height of the adults, but it will be a surprise to be any different than the ordinary height for the neighboring societies.

#### 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

- Although the data for mean adult weight is not present, one would be lead to believe that it will not be any different than the surrounding societies.

### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

#### 4.1 Age at menarche (f):

- There is no data for the general age of menarche. However, “When a girl has her first period, it is cause for celebration. The old women of the village sing special songs commemorating the occasion, and the girl’s mother pours wine and says a special prayer. The next day the girl’s body is shaved and she is dressed in a special dress and adorned with gold necklaces, hair ornaments and leg and ankle beads. Young girls sing songs to her, and friends and relatives give presents. She is given a special bath in the river, followed by dancing and singing. Special traditional foods are prepared and more traditional rites performed. Five days later, she dresses up in her best outfit and goes around the village to thank everyone who had attended the ceremony.”(3)

#### 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

- The data does not specifically point to the age of first birth, but it is considered that a girl generally gets married within one to two years after reaching puberty. Hence, one would assume that shortly after that she will conceive and give birth. (10p56)

#### 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

- There is no specific data to the completed family size. But reading through the different sources, one understands that a family is simply consisted of the wives, husband, and children.

#### 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

- There is no data on the inter-birth-interval within the Ashanti, but it will be of no surprise, to find out that it is not much different than the cultures near-by.

#### 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

- For girls, the age of marriage it is considered to be within a year or two after the point when they reach puberty. (10p55) There is no specific information on what age males get married but it depends on if the boy has matured and reached manhood, which is also less celebrated compared to the ceremonies associated with the girl reaching puberty.(10p56)

#### 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- There is no specific statistical data regarding the proportion of marriages ending in divorce, but a source states the following:

“Both husbands and wives can divorce each other. Reasons for divorce among the Ashanti include: adultery, sterility, drunkenness, physical abuse, and refusal to give support (husband). In case of divorce, a married woman’s property is totally separate from her husband’s; he has no claim on them. The children also, are the mother’s, since they are of the mother’s clan.”(3) Furthermore, after the divorce, the sons usually are placed with the father. (3)

- “Of the accepted grounds for divorce incompatibility is probably one of the most frequent, and couples can separate by mutual consent if relations between them are strained beyond the point of reconciliation.”(10p70)
- Furthermore, according to the source, the Ashanti believe that the number of divorces has increased since the European’s arrival into their land, and has also shifted their social values.(10p71)

#### 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- Although there is no specific statistical information on polygyny, “...among the Ashanti there are fewer men than women, so that polygamy helps to assure that all women will become married, with children, the fulfillment of an Ashanti woman’s goal of success.”(3). Here the source is actually referring to the practice of one man with several wives.
- “...polygamy is traditional among Ashanti, one wife being the senior wife, who would be consulted if any additional wives were contemplated. The Ashanti word for co-wife means, jealous one, although there were apparently families where everyone seemed to live rather peacefully. Whichever wife sleeps with her husband cooks for him, usually for a week at a time. Disputes among wives are not the responsibility of the husband, although he is expected to administer an orderly household.”(3)
- “...one wife being the “senior” wife, who would be consulted if any additional wives were contemplated. The Ashanti word for co-wife means, “Jealous one,” although there were apparently families where everyone seemed to live rather peacefully. Whichever wife sleeps with her husband cooks for him, usually for a week at a time. Disputes among wives are not the responsibility of the husband, although he is expected to administer an orderly household.”(3)
- The idea behind polygyny within the Ashanti is also supported, according to them, due to the fact that the women of the Ashanti are faced with a lot of work that needs to be divided within the different wives. “One wife among several finds her own work load reduced, and their husband finds the work output of his immediate family increased. Because their increased production increases the wealth of the husband’s extended family, that group also approves the acquisition of more than one wife. So everyone is satisfied.”(10p68)

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

- “In order to marry, a young man must get permission from the bride-to-be’s parents, and offer gifts to any members of the clan to whom his bride-to-be directs him. These gifts may be fish, tobacco, salt or gold dust. Once the customary bride price is paid, along with the consent of the girl and her parents, a wedding day is set.”(3)
- Furthermore, there seem to also be a dowry given to the family of the bride by the groom’s family and it is a small sum of money along with some gifts. The more prestigious the family of the bride or groom is, the more gifts/money is given or received.(10p61)

#### 4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- “The inheritance rights of the Ashanti pass through the mother’s side of the family. Land belongs to the woman, not the man. Children belong legally to the mother, since they belong to the mother’s clan, called the matriline. When a man marries a woman he agrees that he will take responsibilities if there by any, but her assets and property should return to the matriline.”(3)

#### 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- “When a baby is born, whether it is male or female, there is great rejoicing among the clan. A few days after the baby is born, the mother carries the baby around the village on her back. The people of the village give gifts and money; they wish the mother congratulations and the baby a long life.”(3)
- “The child has a great deal of freedom at home, with parents seeking to guide rather than discipline the child. Children are reasoned with and parents tend to be very patient, even indulgent with their young ones. The home is where customs and traditions are learned and practiced, stories told, and the past relived. Home is a secure place, where everyone is accepted and respected, where values and attitudes are molded. If a child misbehaves, it is considered the parents’ fault, and a shame and an embarrassment to them. In court, it is Ashanti custom to penalize parents equally for serious crimes committed by their children.”(3)
- “Boys are trained by the fathers to be farmers. From the time they are old enough to walk, they are taken out into the fields to help to weed the garden and learn the names of the plants. Later, they are taught to hunt and fish, and learn the ways of the forest.”(3)

#### 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

- There is no data to support the idea of homosexuality within the Ashanti. However, the society, considering data on family traditions etc..., will most likely be against the notion of homosexuality.

#### 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- There is practice of exogamy or endogamy within the Ashanti. The evidence suggests that the restrictions are only regarding incest. “The cardinal principle to follow is “never caress the ear of a fellow clan member.” Of all the sins against the ancestors, incest, mating with a clansman – foreshadowed by some amorous ear-pulling-is among the most horrifying and dangerous.”(10p55)

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

- “Though the Ashanti believe that it is only through females that *mogya* (blood) is passed from one generation to another in the lineage, and that no male has uterine descendants, they also recognize that a human being is made up of other elements, including a spiritual trait from the male. The term *ba*, which means one’s own classificatory child, is therefore used by both men and women.”(6p329-330)

#### 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

- “The Ashanti believe that within the body of the mother her blood and the blood of her mother’s family are given the form of a new human life when it receives the soul of the father. The soul of the father is the soul he received from his father at conception and this has protected and prospered him through all his years. Thus a child represents the complementary unity of two lines of descent joined together in his person. The blood from which he is formed is matrilineal, and he will always belong to his mother’s family; but the soul which gives life to the blood is patrilineal, received from his father and from his father’s father.”(10p74)

#### 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

- “The Ashanti believe that within the body of the mother her blood and the blood of her mother’s family are given the form of a new human life when it receives the soul of the father.”(10p74)
- Furthermore, “The Ashanti are fully cognizant of the mechanics of conception – if not of the biology of it – but, as may be expected of a religious and philosophical people, they do not confuse mere mechanics with causation.”(10p156)

#### 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

- There is no data to suggest the occurrence of sexual coercion, and rape. However, considering the fact that the society is strictly matrilineal, one would have to conclude that any type of rape or sexual coercion will be prosecuted accordingly. Furthermore, as in any society, there will always be the case of such occurrences, even though prosecuted by the law.

#### 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

- “There are strict rules about marriage partners. A person cannot marry within his or her matrilineal. Parents must approve of the mate a young man or woman chooses, and the girl is expected to be married soon after her coming of age (Puberty) ceremony, in which she is officially displayed as eligible to the rest of the village. A man is allowed to marry several wives, as long as he can adequately provide for them; this demonstrates his wealth and generosity.”(3)

#### 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- “Extramarital activities are less reprehensible for men than for women, until a point is reached at which a wife feels she is suffering a grievous hardship. Then she may ask her husband’s family to restrain him from his philandering or, failing that, she may seek a divorce [...]. She, on the other hand, had better remain a paragon of sexual virtue, keeping herself only unto him, or she will find herself the defendant in a suit for divorce. At the very least she is liable to be dragged into a public disclosure of her faithlessness in a suit brought against her paramour by her husband, whose argument is, in effect, that the lover has trespassed upon “property” to which he had no rights and must, therefore, pay a fee to the outraged husband for having done so.”(10p58)

#### 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:

- Extramarital relationships are not accepted/nor encouraged within the Ashanti and are considered degrading to the family. (10p58)

#### 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

- There is no exact information on that but given the fact that most Ashanti practice polygyny, the other wives will take care of the raising of the children.(10p68)

#### 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

- There is no specific data on this but according to the sources, the marriages are polygynous because there are not enough man.(10p68-70)

#### 4.22 Evidence for couvades

- The Ashanti fathers do not participate in couvades, nor is there any evidence supporting the practice of couvades.

#### 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

- There is no data on distinction of fathers as the marriages are mostly polygynous and there is usually one father, while several women are the wives.(10p68)

#### 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- There is no data on the kin avoidance. With certainty, however, the Ashanti have respect for their families and neighbors.

#### 4.24 Joking relationships?

- There is no data on the joking relationships among the Ashanti, but, certainly, they do exist.

#### 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

- “The Ashanti are a matrilineal people, i.e., an individual’s descent and claim to land is traced through the mother’s lineage. Women have a great deal of freedom and are highly respected. The child, according to the Ashanti, inherits his or her blood from the mother and his spirit from the father.
- “Even though descent is traced through the mother, it is the father’s responsibility to name his children, provide them with an education, and marry off his sons. Among the Ashanti, children may become “ranked” (given status) through their mother’s lineage, but there are certain titles, such as royal titles, which can only be handed down through the paternal line.”(3)
- “The localized matrilineage tracing descent from a known common female ancestor for a period of 10 to 12 generations is the basic unit for political, legal, and ritual purposes. Succession and inheritance rules stress sex, generation, and age, with men having precedence over women, “brothers” over “sisters’ sons,” and senior over junior. Consistent with the emphasis on matrilineal descent is the fact that the system of kinship terminology is of the Crow type.”(9)
- “Contrary to the views of some earlier writers, the Ashanti do not have a true double descent system. While there are groupings in which membership is transmitted patrilineally, these are neither exogamous nor corporate groups, nor are jural or political rights or duties derived from paternal descent. What is involved is the concept of ntoro, the male transmitted ntoro (spirit) which forms a unique spiritual bond between father and son.”(9)

#### 4.26 Incest avoidance rules

- Even though if an Ashanti boy meets an Ashanti girl, they get married, there are some serious rules on whom to marry and more precisely – incest avoidance rules. “The story of their marriage starts back a few years. In fact, it starts back quite a few

generations, for, in the beginning, he and she must have had separate, unrelated ancestresses. The cardinal principle to follow is "never caress the ear of a fellow clan member." Of all the sins against the ancestors, incest, mating with a clansman – foreshadowed by some amorous ear-pulling-is among the most horrifying and dangerous."(10p54-55)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

- The evidence suggests that there is indeed a ceremony: "On the morning of the marriage, the bride dresses up in her best dress adorned with gold ornaments, and is led by her mother to the bridegroom's house, where they thank him for all his gifts. They leave, later to return, when the chief of the village says a few words and performs a short ceremony, including a sip of customary wine."(3)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

- "A baby's life is such a tentative thing, however, that seven days ensue before he receives his name. Then, if he has passed this crucial period and, by staying alive, has signified that he intends to remain alive, he receives his "day-name" from the day of the week on which he was born."(10p75)
- The child also receives other names after some time and some specific rituals. "On that day, or shortly thereafter, the infant receives other names, "strong-names," in honor of great men and great deeds in Ashanti or in the family, or other names of paternal ancestors whose likeness is seen or felt in this child."(10p75)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

- "Marriage restrictions include matrilineal sib exogamy and a prohibition on marriage between the descendants of a man in the male line up to the fourth generation. The ideal marriage is with either cross-cousin, although there is a preference, for men, for marriage with a mother's brother's daughter (wofa ba). Again, marriage with a member of one's own village or chiefdom is preferred to marriage with an "outsider." Polygyny is permitted, but in modern times at least, some 80 percent of all married men have only one wife at a time. Chiefs may have a large number of wives, but commoners rarely have more than three at the same time."(9)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

- The marriages do not seem to be arranged. If a boy meets a girl they get married but only after certain conditions are met such as incest avoidance and so forth (revert back to 4.26-incest avoidance rule). (10p55) However, it is very likely that some marriages will indeed be arranged.
- Also, the ideal bride will be a girl that is not related to the boy and the girl "[...] is the daughter of his mother's brother-in-matrilineal Ashanti, a perfectly marriageable relationship."(10p55)
- Also, according to Robert A. Lystad, the marriage within the Ashanti is nothing resembling our system here in the US or throughout most of the modern world. "In Ashanti, potential in-laws first investigate each other and agree to establish new, important obligations of mutual respect and aid between the families; only then may he and she marry [...] The families of both young people are, therefore, active counselors during the courtship, and their wholehearted endorsement is essential to the success of the marriage."(10p59) Even though the marriages are not arranged, they are somewhat delegated in order for both parties – in laws, and couple, to succeed in the future.
- "Marriages to be sure, are not exactly loveless. Young people are permitted to express their preferences, and these are likely to reflect the warm emotions of "love" rather than the cold calculations of family welfare planning."(10p69)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

- There is not information regarding conflicts of who marries who other than the general accepted principals on whom to marry

**Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

- The Ashanti do not seem to be in warfare these days.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

- There is no data regarding such deaths.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

- There does not seem to be any evidence for in-group or out-group killing.

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

- There is not much information on this topic. However, a source states the following: "If the Ashanti do not exactly despise all foreign Africans, they certainly tend to regard themselves as being a good cut above them. This applies particularly to the Northern Territories people who used, in the not so distant old days, to come to Ashanti only as slaves."(12p162)

4.18 Cannibalism?

- There is no data that the Ashanti practice any form of Cannibalism.

**5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

- There is no data on the average village size, but the Ashanti's population density averages about 16 per square mile to 35 per square mile. Furthermore, about 80% of the Ashanti live in little towns, villages and hamlets with different populations varying from 1000 people as in Goaso to 85,000 people in Kumasi, the capital.(10p28-31)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- The Ashanti do not change their residency due to seasonality. There is not one specific source explicitly speaking of a mobility pattern, but considering all the sources, the Ashanti are presented as a culture that has been at the same place for a long time and plans on staying there for even longer.

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

- “Ashanti lies in a part of the world, West Africa, where several societies had developed forms of government of greater complexity than those of most other areas outside the literate world.”(10p104)
- “The over two million Ashanti and three million other Akans belong respectively to eight exogamous matrilineal clans; namely, Aduana, Agona, Asakyri, Asenie, Asona, Bretuo, Ekoqna, and Qyokoq. Three of these incorporate lesser-known subclans that perhaps were formerly independent entities. In these cases, the Ashanti say, Qyokoq ne [and] Dako, Ekoqna ne Asokore, Bretuo ne Tena.”(8p328)
- The Ashanti used to have a different system than what they have today: “For one thing, the British have succeeded quite well—whether or not this was their expressed intention—in creating some sense of unity between Ashanti and most of its former enemies or competitors in Ghana; for another, the British have build a foundation of political, economic, and other social skills necessary for participation in world affairs.”(10p105)
- Pre-British Ashanti as described by Robert A. Lystad was comprised of “Elaborate state organizations, with decentralized but pyramiding bureaucracies and presided over by a sacred chief [...] Lavish courtly dress, etiquette, and rituals glorified the politicians at successive hierarchical levels of organization; court systems, complete with chief judges, lawyers, and formalized legal codes set[...].”(10p18)

### 5.4 Post marital residence:

- The post-marital situation with the Ashanti is very interesting as they lean toward neo-local postmarital residence, even though some scholars have considered them patrilocal. The evidence suggests that they are both neo-local and also practice different forms of residence depending on the various circumstances. (6p331) Furthermore, “In fact, in most polygynous marriages, neither the husband nor wives change residence; all parties continue residing in their natal or premarital households.”(6p331)
- “The only possible sense in which these polygynous marriages might be said to be patrilocal is that the wives visit the husband in turn for purposes of sexual intercourse or to “sleep behind the husband”.”(6p331)

### 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

- The Ashanti act as a nation and certainly there are rules and boundaries to be kept.

### 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

- While reading through the numerous sources, it doesn't seem that there is a division between the age and sexes. The only noticeable divisions are such that happen while young boys and young girls are growing up before they reach puberty. They are divided between boys and girls and separated to avoid issues:  
“Girls and boys approaching their teens are kept pretty well separated in their play, so as to avoid both the temptation and appearances of wrong, and in the old days a premarital pregnancy was frequently considered so shameful as to be punished by the banishment of the offending couple from the community[...].”(10p57)

### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

- There is no data pertaining to the special friendships/joking relationships between the Ashanti. However, it will be no surprise if such relationships do exist.

### 5.8 Village and house organization:

- “Every long-established Ashanti village or township was until recently divided into wards or sections (brono), in each of which the majority of the residents were members of a single matrilineage. In a large town such as Wenchi (capital of Wenchi Division, population 5,310 in 1931), each section consisted of several lineages. But again, each lineage inhabited a particular area of the section, and the houses of the lineage members were grouped closely together around the house of the lineage head.”(9)

### 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

- There does not seem to be any evidence in support of men's houses. Certainly, there will be specialized village structures.

### 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- There is no data exactly what the houses have as a sleeping ground, but one would assume to most likely be a bed of some type.

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

- “Every long-established Ashanti village or township was until recently divided into wards or sections (brono), in each of which the majority of the residents were members of a single matrilineage. In a large town such as Wenchi (capital of Wenchi Division, population 5,310 in 1931), each section consisted of several lineages. But again, each lineage inhabited a particular area of the section, and the houses of the lineage members were grouped closely together around the house of the lineage head.”(9)

### 5.12 Trade:

- “Amongst the new branches of commerce starting in Ashanti is the indiarubber trade. The forest from Adansi to Coomassie, and so on in a north-east direction to Mampong, is very full of the indiarubber vine. At present all this industry is in the hands of natives from the protectorate.”(13p449)

### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- There does not seem to be any specific information on any social hierarchies. As in societies very well known to us, there are rich people and poor people but it is certain that there are no social hierarchies such as cast systems.

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

### 6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

- There is no data on the exact time allocated to RCR.

### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- “The medico-religious specialist—often called witch doctor or medicine man by the Western skeptic—stands a fair chance, furthermore, of guessing right on his prognosis, regardless of the treatment he prescribes. [...] Since the ultimate question is one of life or death and since the Goaso specialist has a backlog of shrewd, common-sense observations on which to draw, he can make a well-informed prediction.”(10p92)

### 6.2 Stimulants:

- There is no information regarding any stimulants that the Ashanti use.

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

- “But this celebration takes on the flavor of a party, a farewell party, for that, indeed is what it is. The soul of the dead has begun its journey to the land of departed souls, and this is an event which calls for music, for drumming, for drinking, for dancing and visiting. [...] The soul’s journey, for one thing, is not a very long one; the ancestors are always nearby, and he but joins them. Though he will no longer be visible to men, his presence will still be felt, a very real threat to those who ignore him through social misbehavior, a very real help to those who show their respect for him through social conformity.”(10p101)
- “Girls and boys approaching their teens are kept pretty well separated in their play, so as to avoid both the temptation and appearances of wrong, and in the old days a premarital pregnancy was frequently considered so shameful as to be punished by the banishment of the offending couple from the community[...].”(10p57)
- When a girl reaches puberty, there are certain ceremonies followed to display the girl’s reaching a point when she is now marriageable. The celebration continues on for a whole week and “[...] her girlishness was tenderly bathed away, and she emerged a mature woman among women. For seven magnificent days she was required only to bask in the delight of being an Ashanti woman. During those splendid days her relatives and friends besieged her with their lavish gifts; pendants and chains of finely wrought gold were hung about her neck and arms [...]. Each day the elderly women of her family carried her to the river, where all impurities and the vestiges of childhood were washed away [...].”(10p55)
- Regarding death among the Ashanti: “The ritual of the Ashanti funeral is significant for the entire community, rather than just the individual who has died. Of course the rite is most important to the family, though. Mourning the deceased is a way of respecting the place the deceased held in the family lineage. The female members of the family are with the individual while he is about to pass, in order to pour water on his throat for the journey that he is about to embark on. The *kra*, or undying spirit, needs this water to “climb the mountain” into the world of the ancestor. When the death is announced, all adults in the village begin an eight day fast to honor the sacred ritual as a group event. As soon as the head of the lineage is informed of the death, the men of the family gather to plan the funeral and burial. After the chiefs and sub-chiefs are informed, the ceremonial mourning officially begins. Family members cry out in grief, disseminating the news to the rest of the community. Messengers are sent out to inform family living outside of the community so that they may attend. The women of the family lead mourning through the streets, while the men continue making arrangements.”(17)

### 6.4 Other rituals:

- “Public ceremonies for the god are held each nine days, and on these days his presence is acclaimed with a ritual pageantry varying in its elaborateness according to the priest, the prosperity, and the religious interests of the community.”(10p170)

### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

- “The Ashanti believe the world was created by a high God, *Onyonkopon*, the Supreme being. They believe he once lived closer to men, low in the sky, and when an old woman annoyed him by her activities he removed himself far beyond their reach. This God is a person who is remote, uncensorious and all powerful. He no longer practices his power directly for he planned and created the world, endowing it with a general order to run itself. He does not give moral precepts and doesn’t punish or reward humans. He is revered by the Ashanti and looked upon with great awe. Even though the Ashanti look upon this great god with veneration, there are no priests, rites, or rituals of praise. They see him as giving nothing, and demanding nothing from man.”(2)
- “The administration of the universe is governed by great executive deities known as *abosom*. These governing gods are over major departments of nature—the lakes, rivers, the seas, clouds, and the earth itself. Beneath the governing gods are the secondary gods. These gods animate animals, trees, and charms. However, most omnipresent are the immortal ancestors. These ancestors are busybodies who are very concerned that everything be done morally and right. They watch over the Ashanti and censor them, being preceptors, from the lowest of slaves to the King.”(2)

### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- “The Ashanti are noted for their expertise in a variety of specialized crafts. These include weaving, wood carving, ceramics, and metallurgy. Of these crafts, only pottery-making is primarily a female activity; the others are restricted to male specialists. Even in the case of pottery-making, only men are allowed to fashion pots or pipes representing anthropomorphic or zoomorphic figures.”(9)
- According to Robert A. Lystad, charms are also a big part of the art/religious aspect of the Ashanti: “Charms are similar to gods in their functions, except that they represent powers of an inferior order. They are constructed of ordinary or, sometimes, of exotic, mysterious materials which themselves possess no necessary, inherent power, but when mixed or brewed according to a secret ritual recipe by gods or mortals who have acquired the esoteric formula they are transformed into wonder-working objects [...] None of the pass scientific tests of validity, but all of them make their users feel better, at least temporarily.”(10p178-179)
- Furthermore, the Ashanti have used drums as part of their culture for a long time: “A drum-roll is the ancient call of the Ashanti Kingdom. The voice of a proud nation. For centuries, the drums have called warriors to war. Echoing through the forests of West Africa, they have announced the arrival of kings and mourned the death of Queens. Today, the drums are still beating, but some say they are now talking of changing times.”(15)

- “Bark cloth was used for clothing before weaving was introduced. With weaving, there is cotton and silk. Women may pick cotton or spin materials into thread, but only men are allowed to weave. There are different patterns in weaving, each with its own name. Sometimes the pattern represents social status, a clan, a saying, or the sex of the one wearing it. Patterns are not always woven in the cloth. It can also be stamped on in many designs.”(16)
- “Pottery is a skill that is taught to a daughter by the mother. There are many stages to making pots and there are many colors of clay available.”(16)

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- There is no data regarding the sex differences in RCR but as in other cultures, certainly there exist some form of rules that must be obeyed regarding male or female RCR.

#### 6.8 Missionary effect:

- The missionaries have become a big part of the Ashanti culture. “Christian missions founded the first Ghana schools and the Christian denominations have retained most of the supervision of the local school systems. [...] Here and there in Ashanti, Protestant missions have united their educational activities in unified schools, but many towns still support separate Roman Catholic and Protestant denominational schools on the elementary and secondary levels.”(10p84)

#### 6.9 RCR revival:

- There is no data regarding the revival of RCR.

#### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- “But this celebration takes on the flavor of a party, a farewell party, for that, indeed is what it is. The soul of the dead has begun its journey to the land of departed souls, and this is an event which calls for music, for drumming, for drinking, for dancing and visiting.[...]The soul’s journey, for one thing, is not a very long one; the ancestors are always nearby, and he but joins them. Though he will no longer be visible to men, his presence will still be felt, a very real threat to those who ignore him through social misbehavior, a very real help to those who show their respect for him through social conformity.”(10p101)

#### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- There is no such practice within the Ashanti. Neither one of the sources has mentioned that the Ashanti have a taboo of naming dead people.

#### 6.12 Is there teknonymy?

- There does not seem to be any evidence of the Ashanti parents being referred by their children’s names. However, there may be some sort of a different type referencing that the Ashanti follow. Unfortunately, there is no data on that subject.

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

- “The Ashanti have a complex religious system involving elaborate ceremonies, ancestor worship, the ntoro concept and ritual, witchcraft and sorcery, beliefs in many kinds of spirits, divination, shamans, and so forth. According to Service, the greatest and most frequent religious ceremonies are those whose purpose is to recall the spirits of the departed rulers, offer them food and drink, and ask their favor for the good of all the people.”(9)
- “The Ashanti believe that the land belongs to the ancestors, and the living are allowed to use it. These ancestral spirits have control over subsistence, which is given on their behalf by the king, who delegates its disposition to district chiefs, who hand it out to lineage heads, who then assign it to families.”(2)
- “The Ashanti believe the creator gives the life force, which is the piece of animating spirit that returns to the supreme being when a person dies. The *kra* is the soul. The *kra* is the undying part of a person that continues to exist in ancestors. The spirit and the soul are not the same. In the Ashanti, a person gets his status from his mother, his character and ego from his father, and his very life from the supreme god.”(2)
- Furthermore, the Ashanti also believe in a Supreme Creator who is above all gods, Nyame. “Nyame is the fathomless spirit who has made all creation.”(10p163)

### **7. Adornment**

#### 7.1 Body paint:

- No data is present for body paint among the Ashanti

#### 7.2 Piercings:

- There is no data regarding any piercing among the Ashanti but with certainty, there exist some form of piercing rituals.

#### 7.3 Haircut:

- There is no data pertaining to the haircuts among the Ashanti but one would assume that they are similar to the nearby societies.

#### 7.4 Scarification:

- There is no data on scarification among the Ashanti, but some rituals may involve some form of scarification.

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

- There is no information on the adornment, but from pictures of Ashanti people, I can conclude that they do have beads but no information in present on feathers or lip plates. However, there is information on weaving within the Ashanti with cotton etc... which they use for clothes or ceremonial wardrobes.(16)

#### 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- “Kente is an Asante ceremonial cloth hand-woven on a horizontal treadle loom. Strips measuring about 4 inches wide are sewn together into larger pieces of cloths. Cloths come in various colors, sizes and designs and are worn during very important social and religious occasions. In a total cultural context, kente is more important than just a cloth. It is a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature, moral values, social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought and aesthetic principles.”(16)

#### 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- There is no data regarding the difference in adornment between the different sexes but it is certain that some type of diversification in adornment exist.

#### 7.8 Missionary effect:

- There is no specific data on the missionary effect within the Ashanti. However the missionaries have certainly influenced the Ashanti as mentioned in previous pages within this paper.

#### 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

- There is no information regarding the cultural revival in adornment.

### **8. Kinship systems**

#### 8.1 Sibling classification system:

- There is no classification system for the siblings among the Ashanti.

#### 8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- The Ashanti are a sororate society where if a chief's wife dies, the family of the wife are responsible to replace that wife with her sister in marriage.(18)

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

- There is no information on this topic.

### **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

- There seems to be a special figure called *akuaba* that women carry on their back while pregnant as it is considered that the figure will help the baby be born "[...]beautiful, having the same qualities of "beauty" as those expressed in the carving."(3) Furthermore, the figures are also used by sterile women in hope that the figure will help them get pregnant. Often, little girls play with these *akuaba* dolls while learning how to take care of children. Also, to indicate that the figure is owned by a wealthy woman, the figure gets decorated with beads or precious stone. (3)
- There is a myth associated with a Golden stool that is considered to be the unifying source of the Ashanti people. This Golden stool is not to touch the ground, so currently it sits on another chair. The myth was created by Priest Anokye, advisor of King Osei Tutu, as a divine symbol of unity. It is believed that if the chair gets stolen, the nation of the Ashanti people will fail.(3)
- An interesting cultural feature is that the Ashanti believe in a person having more than one soul:"One aspect, the *kra*, is a superpersonal soul, placed in the first men by Nyame, the Supreme Creator, and since that time transmitted through human fathers to their children. The second soul, or soul-aspect, which may be called "spirit", is the *sunsum*; it is similarly received through the father, but it serves primarily as a protector or escort of the soul and of the person. The soul is eternal; the spirit mortal, dying with the body as the shadow of a man disappears when he dies."(10p155)

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