

## 1. Description

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

Ghana, Akan, Fante

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

AKA

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): N/A

1.4 Brief history: N/A

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

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): N/A

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: N/A

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): N/A

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: N/A

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: N/A

2.4 Food storage: N/A

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Cultivation of weeding of food crops is undertaken by women (Hill 220). “The men are attached to the land, they own it and clear it; the women are attached to the food, they grow it, process it and cook it and sell it” (Hill 220). The main crops are maize and cassava which are produced both for sale and for local consumption, a farmer should be conceived of as neither an individual male nor female but as a husband and wife who work in symbiotic relationship. The only time this changes is when the male is quite rich, so that he can afford to pay others to do his weeding and harvesting, but he can’t do it effectively unless he has a spouse. This also applies to women (Hill 220). Husbands never have the right to commander the full time labour of their wives. It’s written in the marriage that wives of certain obligations, such as processing and cooking food for the household, carrying firewood and water. When the wife is not doing these things, she can do almost anything she wants. She can devote herself to remunerative occupations such as trading and being under no obligation to hand over any part of the proceeds to her husband. Also, there’s not a part of the marriage contract that have wives not being paid for working on their husband’s farms or when marketing the crops. The husband and the wife are jointly concerned with producing crops for household consumption and sale, and each receiving an appropriate reward. Husbands and wives have their separate farming tasks: men always clear the forest or scrub; women always do the weeding, the carrying of most crops, and the marketing; cassava is always dug by women; and there are some tasks that can be done by both of them. Husbandless

women may occasionally receive assistance from their brothers, spouseless individuals are nearly always obliged to pay someone to do the tasks that are for women for them (Hill 223).

#### 2.6 Land tenure:

There is a land renting system known as the *akasara*, but land can never be sold and land is ill categorized in Fante villages ( Hill 223).

#### 2.7 Ceramics: N/A

#### 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: N/A

#### 2.9 Food taboos: N/A

#### 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? N/A

### 3. Anthropometry

#### 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): N/A

#### 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): N/A

### 4. Life History, mating, marriage

#### 4.1 Age at menarche (f): N/A

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

#### 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): N/A

#### 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): N/A

#### 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): N/A

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

More than half (58%) of the 145 women (that have been married once before) in Taido and Kwaman currently had no resident spouse, rather it's because of being widowed or divorced and had not been remarried (33%) or because their husbands left to go to nearby villages (10%) or had migrated further for work in the cities and hadn't returned yet (14%) (Hill 221). There is a high incidence of spouselessness among men as well as women, there is a positive distaste for remarriage among many middle aged and elderly people. I might be possible that, in matrilineal Akan societies, women feel less obliged to seek the security of marriage than they do in patrilineal societies (Hill 221).

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

Neither, the communities are virtually monogamous, so older men that want to remarry are limited to just one wife. This is quite rare though, marrying more than one wife commonly happen in communities that have no sexual imbalance. However,

polygyny is relevant, it assures women that they'll be able to marry if they so wish. In many polygynous rural communities, divorced and widowed women under the age 50 invariably remarry after a short interval (Hill 221).

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

4.9 Inheritance patterns: If the child is male, active participation and induction in the asafu begins soon after his infancy and continues for the rest of his life, while usual roles and obligations receive little or no practical attention until he becomes an adult and gets married (Chukwukere 62).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: N/A

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: N/A

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): N/A

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? N/A

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") N/A

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

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape N/A

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) N/A

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? N/A

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring N/A

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? N/A

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females N/A

4.22 Evidence for couvades N/A

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

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? N/A

4.24 Joking relationships? N/A

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

4.26 Incest avoidance rules N/A

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? N/A

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

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

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

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: N/A

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

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: N/A

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): N/A

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

Fante: The ruling group consisted of the chief and representatives of the people, who were generally traders (Arhin 14). The men of the second rank, the heads of lineages, like men of the third rank, who represented the asafo military companies, were selected for their wealth. Men of obvious slave origin could become both elders and heads of asafo companies; and there were cases in which men entitled to occupy stools could do so only with the support of wealth inherited from their slaves (Arhin 14). The power of Fante rulers was very limited (14). Asante: The classes were the asikafo, wealthy men; the nkankwaa, young men who were the petite bourgeoisie; and the ahiafo, the proletariat or the underprivileged. The unfree, who were without abusua membership, were the slaves of northern origin whose self-consciousness and mutual recognition as the wretched developed and became intensified because they formed the first body of conscripts and fought. Wealthy men were members of the ruling group, whose accumulation of wealth and its exhibition were all permitted within the framework of the Asante political economy. They did not have independent sources of wealth to give them independent political power, and were equivalent to what is generally known as bourgeoisie (Arhin 3). Persons in the outside group of power and authority holders had limited opportunities for accumulating what Asante culture defined as wealth: hoards of gold dust and slaves, and the more substantial items of foreign trade. It was possible for individuals to acquire more than the average means of life. The bigger cultivators where the concentration of population created a favorable market situation for farmers. Some individuals acquired the means for large scale trading through gold mining and the finding of treasure trove, and they became well known traders. Some commoners made secret sales of war captives along the long stretch of the Gold Coast. Those people became known as abremponna and influenced the political processes of enstoolment and destoolment as well as in recognition of their success, they were integrated into the ruling group through appointment to the position of counselor, okyeame, or the headship of a palace association. If they founded new settlements they were made adekrofo, village head, and assigned positions in the command structure of the divisional fighting force (Arhin 4). Men of enterprise acquired social distinction but did not form a separate rank unit. They were not numerous enough and social ranking was an aspect of political ranking (Arhin 5). The councils represented segments of the population differentiated territorially or as functional palace groups. The territorial councils were those of the village, the division, the oman (state) and the Asante union. The palace councils were those of the palace associations of the omanhene (head of state) and Asantehene's courts. Rank or assigned position in the political order was determined by position in the hierarchy of headships of councils. There was also horizontal rank ordering within the units of adekrofo, ahemfo and amanhene (Arhin 5). The elders, mpanyimfo, together with the odekro, constituted the village council, were ranked in terms of real or presumed order of arrival of their forebears in the settlement of the village: the earliest owned the village stool. An ohene, political head of a division, ranked above all other adekrofo, because the former's ancestors were. Increased in regalia enhanced the rank of the stool. If an ohene was granted

omanhen status he acquired the palatine privileges originally enjoyed by the amantuo or the original constituent states of the Asante union (Arhin 7). They were ranked on the basis of the holders' relationship to the head stools and the nature of the services performed by the units, which also reflected their antiquity (Arhin 7-8).

5.4 Post marital residence: N/A

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): N/A

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

A sanctioned servile behavior to a ruler in public was after matched by familiar behavior in private. A mother of an omanhene (female) called him nana and bowed to him in public but called him by his usual name and could scold him in private. An omanhene's immediate subordinates treated him in a servile manner in public but could enter his bedroom at night and give him a proper dressing down. The nhenkwa, palace servants, who performed the most menial duties in public, could tease and treat the omanhen very familiarly in private. Respect or disrespect was shown in performing or refusing to perform, normally assigned public duties. All occupants of stools, including lineage heads, were addressed as nana, a term also given to ego's grandparents. Nana connotes opanyin, an elder, and all power and authority holders were regarded as elders, owing to their identification with the deceased occupants of their stools. Nana was the general name for all stool occupants. But there were distinctive terms of address which were specific to certain functionaries. The subordinate took off his sandals, bared his shoulders or tied his cloth around his waist before greeting an omanhene with a bow or speaking, on being asked through an okyeame, counselor, who alone could speak directly to rulers in public. There was graded access to an omanhene in public. Directed by sword bearers and executioners who acted as bards, police, and protocol officers, visitors greeted an omanhen from measured distances according to their rank. Unless specifically asked, non holders of power or authority could not go near the raised platform on which the omanhene sat. Non holders of power or authority performed the various menial tasks: carried the state paraphernalia, the rulers in hammocks or palanquins, or the fontomfrom drum beaten during the processions; sang the minstrels' songs; blew the horns or the flutes; and declaimed his praise names. They also provided the victims for ritual executions (Arhin 10-11).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: N/A

5.8 Village and house organization: N/A

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): N/A

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? N/A

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

Fante: Succession to the headships of the towns was hereditary, in the maternal line. But the hereditary rulers had the full right to command even the most distant of blood relations (Arhin 14). Asante: The asefo, descendants/dependants, of successful farmers, traders or master craftsmen, acquired prestige, respect and honor in recognition of the latter's achievements. Their

achievements secured them places in the village or divisional councilor at the court of the Asantehene. In the villages and towns there were lineages, other than royal ones, which were distinguished among others by virtue of the recognition accorded to their heads. The appointment of the abrepomma to the ranks of power and authority holders was one of the principal avenues of political and social mobility (Arhin 5). If a man refused to attend the summons of a lineage head or the head of a palace association would be called before a badwafo and might have to pay a penalty (Arhin 10).

5.12 Trade:

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? N/A

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

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: N/A

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): N/A

6.2 Stimulants: N/A

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

Akan believe that the *sunsum* of the genitor is inalienably passed down to his child. This paralleled by the belief in the prerogative of the child's mother's *bogya* "blood." The immense significance of blood as the sole and absolute determinant of "lineage" membership, rights to immovable property and succession to high offices of the "state" suggests that the "spirit" of the father is subordinate. The first significant social grouping is the institution of *egyabosom*, the foundation of the paternal line, and is better known as *ntoto* in other Akan sub-groups. Traditional Fante "rites of passage" is associated with this. Number one, the rite following conception but prior to birth: on discovering her state the woman takes two fowls to her husband on the day special to his father's god in order to get her womb ritually purified, or for a trouble free pregnancy and delivery. He or his father acts as the priest on this occasion. Libation is poured to the god, they ask the god to aid the wife and to watch the child. The chickens are touched on the woman's body 3 times before they are killed, and together with the main ritual food of the Akan they are eaten. The child, when it is born, immediately becomes a part of the matrilineage and the father partilineage. Rites of birth: the baby is born in its mother's natal or abusua home, where normally her mother and her brother reside. The practice is counterbalanced by the all important naming ceremony which comes off not less than 8 days after the birth. The child's father dominates the stage in this ceremony, usually witnessed by the matrilineal kinsmen of both the man and his wife. He categorically acknowledges his paternity over the baby by publicly announcing its names or names. The father plays an important role in his sons, and the same goes for the mother and her daughters. Before adulthood the son is in a sense completely under his father's supervision and training. This is the son's induction, which consists of potential succession to office and military training. Prior to the decisive symbolic rite of independence, the son is ignorant of his status and role in his matrilineage. But after if his long association with, and full participation in, the duties and activities of the latter begin (Chukwukere 62).

Before they die, men in particular strive to make a material success of life on earth, one socially manifest symbol of which is successful upbringing of one's own children. The abusua is the group of people who must contribute funds for the funeral of their dead member. The kinship tie between father and child is most tangibly expressed at his death. The sons and daughters of the dead man must provide the coffin in which he is interred or else drag his name into public ridicule. The focus of interest is the custom of nkaanasa and esiedze gift exchange, which is the hub of all the elaborate burial ceremonies. There are 2 main gifts with which the head of the abusua of the deceased formally presents the dead man's obituary to his agnates and affines: bottle of local gin or its equivalent in cash, sent to his agnates and fellow asafo members; and a bottle of gin to his wife and their children, through her senior brother. The return gifts are generically designated esiedze. In the patrilineal death rites: the abusuapanyin, head of the former, sends a bottle of local gin or its equivalent in cash to the supi (head) of this company. Through his master-drummer the receiver summons their men, all of whom gather at their company post. Here they ascertain who of their group has died and also to discuss their participation in the burial ceremony. As the financial burden is borne by the bereaved abusua acting more or less in concert the asafo relatives' contribution mainly takes the form of services rendered directly to the corpse. Fante belief regarding death and life after death is that the co-operation of the deceased's matrilineal and patrilineal descent groups is essential for both social and spiritual purposes, and also in the interest of the surviving kinsmen. There must be public acknowledgement that a man's funeral befits his status while he was alive. Without a proper disposal of the corpse the man's ghost would linger on the earth, thus constituting a source of danger and nuisance for the living kinsmen (Chukwukere 64).

In the matrilineal death rites: the nkaansa and esiedze custom performed between the matrilineage of the dead man and his wife's or children's matrilineage that carries the mandatory force and concomitant disgrace characteristic of the more extreme species of prestation which are now well known in the sociology of gift-exchange. The pinyin of the abusua, the chief mourner, formally notifies the widow and children of his departed kinsman. Her brother receives the nkaansa of behalf of his sister and her children. Two bottles or more of imported liquor can be sent (Chukwukere 64).

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

The Akan sacred calendar *Adaduanan* is based on the division of the year into nine 40 day periods of 6 weeks each, each of them is given 1 of 6 sacred or esoteric and movable names. Two special days are held—when *Kuru* (Exalted) falls on a Sunday or on a Wednesday. A *Kuru* Sunday is Sunday Forty day Festival and is called *Kwasidae*, and the Wednesday is the Wednesday Forty day Festival called *Wukudae*. There are also two other calendars called Etsis (stars and constellations are mapped to guide Etsi fishermen in the dry or in the wet season) and the *Aborabora* (a 10 day calendar which appears to be a simplified version of the 40 day calendar. There are others, like civil calendars that consist of 12 months that are named after the seasons or the harvests, and are used for agriculture (Danquah 365).

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

When Nyame (Supreme Being), the great mother, was creating the universe, she separated the male and female forces latent in her, and crystallized the spiritual power. This is visible through the sun, and is personified as Nyankopon (Truly Great Nyame), ruler of the universe. Just as Nyankopon stands to Nyame, the latent male and female, or fire and water, basic foundation of the universe.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): N/A

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

The *crux decussate* (Female Cross), is shown as the symbol for Nyame as the creator of the revolving universe. It is the symbol of the queen-mother that represents the genetrix God of the terrestrial hierarchy and the revolving Moon. The male cross (+) is often combined with a circle with a dot in its center. The dot symbolizes the eternal spirit of the sun, the soul, and the circle emphasizes the feature of Nyankopon (the Supreme Being) as the daily sun. The lion, the scarab, and the serpent are also associated with the male cross. The Swastika symbol is a combination of the female and the male crosses, and it symbolizes negative or deprived power and positive or active power. For the female symbol, it symbolizes the path of the moon and a mark or property of the queen-mothers. The queen-mother's girl attendants, the Nkotimsefo, dress their hair to represent this symbol. The left hand symbol is seen as a mark of masculine contempt (Danquah 361). Nyame is represented on earth by her daughter, the queen-mother. The Truly Great Nyame is represented on earth by the queen-mother's son, the king—The Sun King, or Ohene. The *ntoro* or the male spirit may have affected the dominance of the female. The 12 *ntoro* formed a patriarchal system for disciplining and ruling members of the family (Danquah 364).

6.8 Missionary effect: N/A

6.9 RCR revival: N/A

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

In the Akan doctrine of immortality, there's a conception of the body that corresponds to the vital spirit or the blood. The soul, or the *kra*, and the *honhom* is the spirit. The spirit returns to Nyame after death in the shape of a bird, while the soul has to labour up a steep hill before it reaches heaven (Danquah 363).

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? N/A

6.12 Is there teknonymy? N/A

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

Heaven-> Nyame is the owner of the universe. Nyakopon is the Truly Great Supreme Being, son and soul of Nyame, and is the ruler of the Universe. Odomankoma is the infinite creator and is the spirit of the universe. Sky-> Moon-Sun. Sun-God. Firmament. Earth-> Ohemmaa is the queen-mother and is the owner of the state. Ohen is the king and is the son of the queen-mother and is the ruler of the state (Danquah 361).



## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint: N/A

7.2 Piercings: N/A

7.3 Haircut: N/A

7.4 Scarification: N/A

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: N/A

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: N/A

7.8 Missionary effect: N/A

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: N/A

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system: N/A

8.2 Sororate, levirate: N/A

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

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

1. Ashanti is the central and most powerful of the Akan States (Danquah 360).

2. The number 9 used to be a symbol, but has been replaced by the number 5, representing the other four points in Nyame's crux decussate that symbolizes the equinoxes and the solstices, and the 1 kra (Nyankopon) is added. However, the Etsi still eat nine eggs ceremonially. In Wankyi and Nkornaza, every 9<sup>th</sup> child was considered the cause of calamity and was killed in the past or sacrificed at birth (Danquah 360).

3. The gold weight in the shape of a ceremonial sword, symbolizes the aspect of joint female and male rule. Symbol of conception or fruitfulness, creation by the Supreme Being (Danquah 361).

4. Odomankoma is represented by the least seen but most powerfully felt of the three persons who control the Akan State. The Ancestor is worshipped and is the greatest of all Akan symbols—the sacred Stool. The great ancestor is the mother's brother of the king, the uncle who had in his time ruled the tribe very well that his spirit still operates in his descendants and forms the sacra of their highest religion (Danquah 362).

5. The spirit or the *honhom* idea is fundamental that European Christians translated as the Holy Ghost (Danquah 363).

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