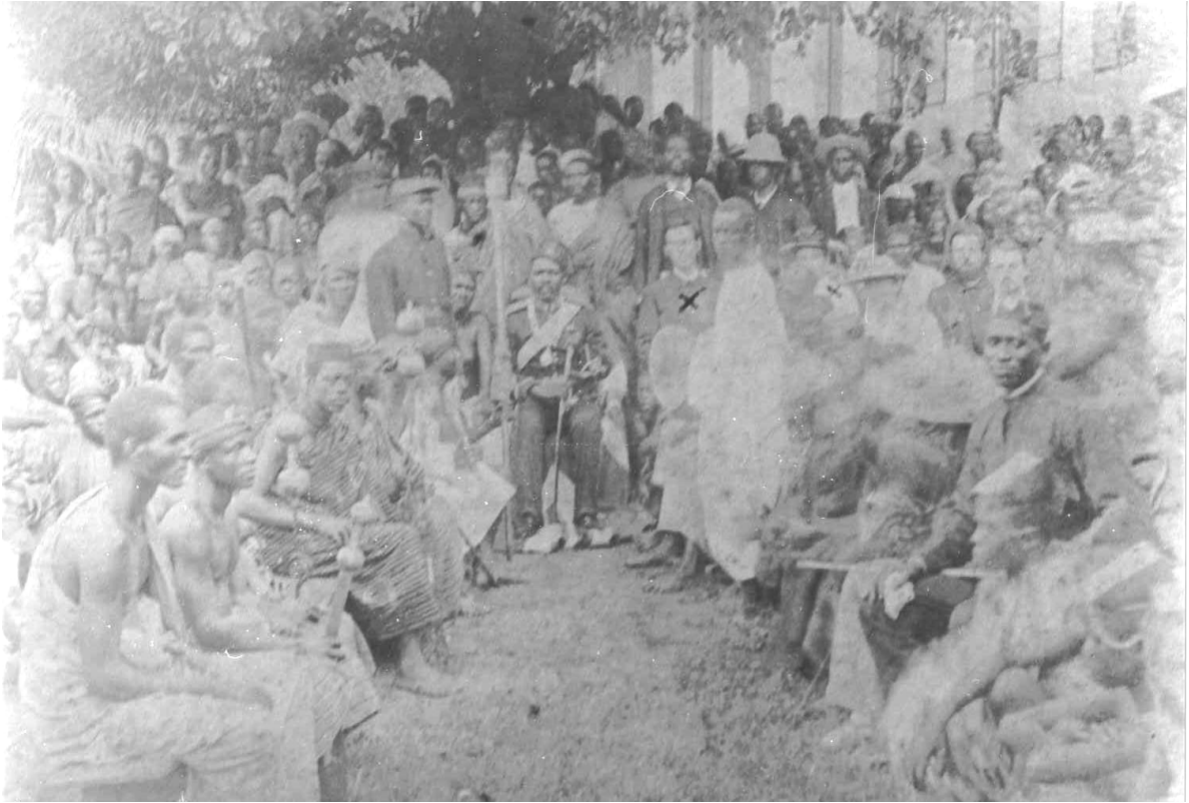


CHRISTIANITY, IMPERIALISM AND CULTURE

The Expansion of the Two Krobo States in Ghana, c. 1830 to 1930



Paramount Chief Emanuel Mate Kole sitting in state, Odumase c. 1896 (details see Fig. 5.2, p. 205).

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Der Dekan Prof. Dr. Emil Angehrn

SUMMARY

This study is concerned with cultural change in south-eastern Ghana during the colonial period. It examines how the two Krobo states negotiated their dramatic economic and territorial expansion in terms of culture from c. 1830-1930; how they remember their erstwhile settlement on Krobo Mountain and the abandonment of these homesteads; how they coped with the abolition of their national centre and recreated it in their principal farm settlements; how they dealt with and circumvented the prohibition of their principal cults and reinvented new festivals; and how today they mobilise their cultural and historical heritage in the context of 'development'. While the abolition of the national centre and the principal rites of the Krobo is remembered as an act of colonial violence motivated amongst others by a 'civilising mission', the thesis argues that the Krobo themselves initiated this intervention in order to achieve the dramatic expansion and negotiate the necessary political transformation. The Krobo did not merely react or respond to external factors such as colonialism and mission. Rather, they actively drew on them (but also on the culture of the neighbouring Akan states) as resources in order to achieve internal transformations and expand their economy and territory. This explains why today mission and church can be considered part of Krobo tradition. The thesis traces these transformations by looking at ritual, ceremony and dress and by making extensive use of missionary sources combined with documents from the colonial administration and oral history.

PREFACE

Nine kake nui ngmo – One finger does not catch a louse (*Dangme* proverb).

On 19 February 1996 a *trotro* (mini bus taxi) coming from Accra stopped on the roadside at Agomanya near Odumase. Those alighting from the vehicle immediately dispersed, the only person left behind was a young *blâfono* (somebody of white colour like corn) with a heavy leather bag. Before he could realise what happened, a mad man bare of any clothing and with filthy dreadlocks, walked straight up to him and started talking to him in a language utterly foreign to the visitor.

Before I could fully appreciate the queer situation a young man came to my help and sent the mad person away. Felix Oseini, shoemaker by profession, was the first out of the many people I got to know during the time I spent in Krobo. His assistance, openness, and friendliness was typical for the way I was received. A visitor to Ghana is constantly supervised and taken good care of. While I have to admit that at times I did feel embarrassed or even harassed by this tutelage, I am grateful to everybody who acted as my “minder”. I found a home at Manyakpongunor with the late Maa Margaret Maku Asime, who became my “sweet mother”.¹ Assisted by her grandchildren she cooked for me, sent me to hospital, washed my clothes, and gave me a proper Krobo education (at least as much of it as I could absorb). Her compound house became my home and through her I found my place in the Asime clan of Manyakpongunor Konorpiem. Papa Narh Asime has been my head of family, Maa Koryo Asime my aunty, Blu *Manyâ* Korkor made sure that when representing the family I was wearing the proper beads and *Asafoatsâ* Nene Pettey Asime V has been my chief and good friend, advising me on many occasions.

Roaming around the hometowns, *up-country*² farms, shrines, chiefs’ palaces, and Diaspora communities of both Yilo and Manya Krobo I enjoyed the help and friendship of so many people that I cannot possibly enumerate them. I will limit myself to the most intimate friends, hoping that the others will understand these my limitations. My teacher Paul Odzawo of Odumase tried his best to teach me the Krobo language and to advise me on the most varied aspects of life. He and his wife Lilly have been very dear old friends. The late Nene Tetteh Kwadjo Gaga of Somanya Plau (“the short man with the

¹ “Sweet Mother” performed in 1976 by the Nigerian Prince Nico Mbarga is probably the greatest West African hit ever. It fused the Congolese guitar style with West African Highlife into an extremely catchy tune with touching lyrics. The song sold more than thirteen million copies and is still very popular especially during funerals.

² Up-country (*yanô* – on the mountain) refers to the Krobo farmlands on and west of the Akuapem-Togo Mountain Range, while *dorm* (in the valley) refers to the hometowns at the eastern foot of the same mountains.

long name”) was like an elder brother to me. Whether witnessing ritual performances, climbing Krobo mountain, hiking to remote up-country farms, travelling by motorbike to Krobo Diaspora farms dispersed all across southern Ghana, or working on his farm – we experienced countless adventures together and shared the ups and downs of life. He informed most of my knowledge on Krobo culture and on the drinks of Ghana. In the shrine of Nene Wanumo Aseni, the high-priest of the war god *kotoklo*, I experienced some of the most peaceful and serene moments in my life. The Sikapa family of Asite, Maa Comfort and her son Evans together with his wife Victoria, welcomed me cordially and supported my research enormously by sharing the memoirs of Maa Comfort’s father Gabriel Sikapa. Mr. Jonathan Padi of Nungua also was very helpful and gave me inspiring comments. Revd Peter Kodjo has been waiting for a long time for this thesis – he has been a source of inspiration and of critique and I remember fondly our meetings, when we discussed my experiences ‘in the field’.

Doing research in Ghana and constantly spending money without ever working manually for it, I enjoyed helping out in the workshop of my friend and bicycle mechanic Kwesi Katey at Somanya Plau. To stop by at his or our friend Peter Shardey’s tailoring workshop, I could switch into a more relaxed mode of participant observation. The workshop of motorbike mechanic Suley at Odumase was another such site. Suley was of great help when during one of my stays he lent me a motorbike for a duration of several weeks. I met with Krobo historians of all sorts, from non-academics like Nene Tete Ashie of Somanya Sawyer Soom to young university graduates such as Peter Obeng-Asamoah, Narh Johnson or Ampomah William Darko. Sharing information from the Basel Mission archives and discussing Krobo history with them was a real pleasure. Among the many linguists who shared their knowledge with me were *Otsiami* Nuertey and *Otsiami* Kofi, *Otsiami* Boaten, *Otsiami* Ngwah Huarpoyu II and Yilo Krobo State Linguist *Otsiami* Amakwata. To all these people and those I could not mention here I want to extend a very cordial “*Nye-tsumi kaa*” (Thank you very much).

Before leaving for Ghana for the first time I received a piece of advice from Peter Haenger, my erstwhile colleague at the Basel Mission Archives. “Anytime you feel really thrilled by your research and your project seems to be more important than anything else, take a step back and drink a cool beer.” This measure has proved very helpful on several occasions. Marijke Steegstra from the University of Nijmegen set out on her PhD research on Krobo initiation rites around the same time as myself. The possibility of sharing the light and the dark moments of our projects has added pleasure and relief. Other fellow travellers on this long road were Malika Kraamer, Sonia Abun-Nasr, Ulrike Sill, Erika Eichholzer, and many others. I do not know how many hundreds of kilos of documents have been moved for this project at various archives in the South and in the North – under the most diverse circumstances ranging from tropical heat to bitter air-conditioned cold. These are the Basel Mission Archives of Mission 21 at Basel, the Ghana National Archives at Accra and Koforidua, the Many Krobo Traditional State Archives, the Presbyterian Church Archives at Accra and Odumase, the Literaturarchiv Marbach, the Public Record Office at Kew Gardens, the Bremen State Archives, the Basler Afrika Bibliographien, and the Musikethnologisches Archiv in Zürich. I am grateful to the staff of these institutions for bearing with us intruders.

The origins of this thesis date back to the time I had just finished my *Lizentiatsarbeit* (MA) at the University of Basel. It was in January 1996 that I travelled to Ghana for the first time. Support from the *Nikolaus und Bertha Burckhardt-Bürgin-Stiftung* enabled me to present my findings at the University of Ghana, Legon and to do further research both at the National Archives of Ghana and in Krobo. A joint grant from the *Schweizerischer Nationalfonds* and the *Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft Basel* allowed me to establish the foundation for my project with two extended stays of ten and five months duration in Ghana and London respectively. The *Reisefonds der Universität Basel* supported travels to Germany, South Africa and Ghana and finally a joint grant of the *Max Geldner Stiftung*, the *Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft* and the *Matthieu-Stiftung* financed the write-up of this thesis. I am grateful to both these bodies and to Agnes Hess Bumbacher and Silvia Buchmüller of the *Ressort Nachwuchsförderung* of the University of Basel for their advice. Paul Jenkins kindly supported the print and despatch of a number of copies of the finished product to Ghana.

At the beginning of the project the subject African History at the University of Basel existed only on the margins. By the time of writing this foreword the Centre of African Studies of the University of Basel has entered its second year of existence, one of its pillars being a chair in African History. I am therefore especially indebted to Meinhard Schuster, Josef Mooser, and Martin Schaffner who provided my project with the necessary institutional support in its initial phase ("until there is a proper person to take care of it"). The former archivist of Mission 21 (formerly Basel Mission) and lecturer in African History at the University of Basel, Paul Jenkins, supervised the project from the beginning. Patrick Harries and Till Förster, who in 2001 were appointed to the new chair for African History and to the chair for Ethnology respectively, were ready to take care of my project. It had led a rather independent life before and I hope they have not been frustrated by a certain stubbornness resulting from the project's previous history. During my stays in Ghana and at London, I was welcomed by and received support and inspiration from Kofi Baku, Akosua Perbi, Mary Esther Kropp-Dakubu, Robert Addo-Fening, John Collins, Kwabena Nketia, Willie Anku, and Abraham Akrong all of the University of Ghana, Legon, from Richard Rathbone and John Parker of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and from Gareth Austin of the London School of Economics. I am once again indebted to the latter for the critical but encouraging comments he made on this thesis as an external assessor. The Department of Social Anthropology of the University of the Witwatersrand hosted me during a teaching exchange in February and April 2005 and provided an inspiring environment when applying the final touches to the thesis. Father Hugo Huber (SVD) of the *Anthropos-Institut* has been a great source of inspiration. The visits to the now discontinued *Institut-Froideville* near Fribourg and his friendly reception are fondly remembered.

I have attempted to write this thesis in English because it is part of Ghana's historiography and it goes without saying that it should be accessible to people in Krobo. Many are those who at various stages have helped to eradicate phrases telling of my German mother tongue. I am especially indebted to my supervisors Patrick Harries and Paul Jenkins for their formidable support and encouragement in this respect. What faults are left are entirely my responsibility, and as it is obvious that there is still much room for improvement, I ask readers of English mother tongue to bear with me. Last but not

least I want to thank my family and friends, foremost Katrin Kusmierz, for supporting me. They have shared some of the joys and all the sorrows of the project. Thank you for bearing with me, especially during the final and never-ending stage of the write-up.

Dedicated to the memory of those who contributed to this project and did not live to see its completion: my grand-father Fritz Arlt, my foster-mother Maa Margaret Maku Asime of Manykpongunor Konorpiem, my dear friend Nene Tetteh Gaga *dipo wôhô* of Somanya Plau, and Albert Wirz to whom I owe to a large extent my interest in the African continent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	III
Preface	I
Table of Contents	V
List of Photographs	VII
List of Maps	IX
Glossary	XI
Abbreviations	XIV
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Ethnicity	5
1.2 Historiography	8
1.3 Methodology	11
1.4 Structure of the Thesis	31
2 Tradition as a Resource	37
2.1 Imagining Krobo Tradition and Identity	38
2.2 The Making of the Two Krobo States	52
2.3 New Leaders – New Forms of Political Legitimacy	59
2.4 The Native Customs Ordinance of 1892	62
2.5 Deeper into the bush	67
2.6 Conclusion	73
3 The Fetish-Mountain of Krobo – Home of Head-Hunters and Prostitutes	77
3.1 Culture Matters	77
3.2 Early Encounters	79
3.3 The Ancestral Home – the Mountain as Burial Ground	98
3.4 Nazirites, Tail Girls, or Prostitutes? Dipo and its Perception	106
3.5 Head-Hunting or Human Sacrifice? The War-Deities and Male Initiation	123
3.6 “Where are the Priests?”	135
3.7 Conclusion: Culture Matters Indeed	137
4 A Bucolic Idyll or the Seat of Satan? The Basel Mission at Odumase	141
4.1 Imaging the Basel Mission at Odumase	142
4.2 Deconstruction	155
4.3 A Continuing Blindness – the Mission and Krobo Expansion	174
4.4 Odumase as a Site of Learning	180
	V

4.5	Odumase as a Site of Christian Culture	191
4.6	Conclusion	197
5	Palavers, Durbars, Executions – the Display of Akan and of Imperial Power and its Appropriation by Krobo Chiefs	201
5.1	Setting the Scene: A Palaver held at Odumase	202
5.2	Innovation in Krobo chieftaincy	210
5.3	Odonkor Azu – “A Taste and Fancy for European Innovations”	214
5.4	Sakite – “He Fell Deep into the Ways of the Akan”	221
5.5	Emanuel Mate Kole – the Educated Chief	241
5.6	Fred Azzu Mate Kole – “According to Time Honoured Custom”	260
5.7	Conclusion	265
6	Conclusion	268
7	Bibliography	275
7.1	Archival Holdings	275
7.2	Interviews	281
7.3	Literature	283

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Fig. 2.1: A delegation of senior Yilo Krobo priests opening the path to Krobo Mountain on the day of the visit to the mountain homes.	40
Fig. 2.2 (left): Performing a sacrifice on the ruins of Yilo <i>Konô</i> Ologo Patu's palace on the occasion of the 1998 <i>kloyosikplemi</i> festival.	41
Fig. 2.3 (right): Young visitors to Krobo Mountain dancing to hip-life music.	41
Fig. 2.4: <i>Kleme</i> - the silent day observance during the <i>ngmayem</i> festival of 1998.	44
Fig. 2.5: Sprinkling the new millet during the 1998 <i>ngmayem</i> festival.	46
Fig. 2.6: Imagining the expulsion from the mountain home.	47
Fig. 2.7: At the 1998 <i>kloyosikplemi</i> durbar on the Somanya lorry park.	50
Fig. 2.8: Elders and attendants of the paramount chief of Manya Krobo pour libation at the <i>klutu</i> .	70
Fig. 3.1: The remains of Chief Ologo Patu's palace on Krobo Mountain.	88
Fig. 3.2: Drawings of <i>Konô</i> Ologo Patu's palace on Krobo Mountain by Johannes Zimmermann.	89
Fig. 3.3 (left): "Two Otufu Girls in Traditional Costume."	118
Fig. 3.4 (right): "An Otufu Girl."	118
Fig. 3.5 (left): <i>Tâgblânô</i> Alfred Kweku Akitiwa Karikari of Plau dancing during a cultural display at Somanya Lorry Park on the occasion of the <i>kotoklo wôdom</i> .	124
Fig. 3.6 (right): Dancing <i>nadu</i> at Agomanor (Agomanya) on the occasion of the <i>enstoolment</i> of an <i>asafoatsâ</i> .	124
Fig. 3.7 and Fig. 3.8: Young boys being introduced to the <i>kotoklo</i> shrine on the occasion of the <i>wôdom</i> .	131
Fig. 4.1: "Odumase with Krobo Mountain."	142
Fig. 4.2: "The Chapel of Odumase" (with Krobo Mountain in the background).	144
Fig. 4.3: "Church service under palm trees. Odumase."	147
Fig. 4.4: "The mission house in Odumase seen from the South-west."	151
Fig. 4.5 (left): "The three oldest Christians in Odumase."	167
Fig. 4.6 (right): "Peter Nyarko."	167
Fig. 4.7 (left): "How one goes to farm."	177
Fig. 4.8 (right): "Missionary leaving his overnight quarters in the farming district and setting off next morning."	177
Fig. 4.9: Principal Dietrich with boys from the Bana School on the occasion of their confirmation.	188
Fig. 4.10: Pastor Quartey with confirmation class at Odumase.	193

Fig. 4.11: "Obscene dance (Sipisapa)."	195
Fig. 5.1: "The Music Band of the King of Odumase."	203
Fig. 5.2: Chief Emanuel Mate Kole and his entourage during a durbar at Odumase.	205
Fig. 5.3: "King Saquite and his court in Odumase."	212
Fig. 5.4: Painted portrait of Chief Sakite I at the Odumase palace.	231
Fig. 5.5: "Gold Coast: African band of the English military."	232
Fig. 5.6 (left): "King Mate Kole from East Krobo."	239
Fig. 5.7 (right): No caption, same date and photographer as Fig. 5.6.	239
Fig. 5.8: "Women with European umbrellas and tooth-sticks."	247
Fig. 5.9: "Girls in bridal gear in Kroboland (Gold Coast)."	249
Fig. 5.10: "Employees of the Odumase station in 1906."	251
Fig. 5.11 (left): Chief Emanuel Mate Kole in uniform.	253
Fig. 5.12 (right): Chief Emanuel Mate Kole in uniform.	253
Fig. 5.13: "King of Odumase."	255
Fig. 5.14 (left): "Chief Em. Mate Kole in Odumase."	256
Fig. 5.15 (right): "Mate Kole, Emanuel, King of Odumase."	256

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: South-eastern Ghana. The two Krobo states in relation with their neighbours.	33
Map 2: The Krobo hometowns (<i>dorm</i>) situated at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range with Krobo Mountain (<i>Kloyo</i>) to the right. Map by Veit Arlt 2003.	34
Map 3: Odumase, its quarters, and the neighbouring towns.	35
Map 4: Sketch map of Odumase.	152
Map 5: The power centre of Odumase.	228

GLOSSARY

A NOTE ON SPELLING

In English texts mostly the ending <-or> is used in place of the open <o> (ô) of the contemporary Dangme spelling. The <i> in the ending <-mi> (inside) remains mostly silent and is therefore often abbreviated: for example <wodom'> or <wodom> instead of <wôdomi>. Names have been rendered according to the contemporary usage where possible, except for quotations and where they could not be fully identified.

afahye (Twi)	Akan court tradition of sitting in state, see <i>durbar</i> .
agbaa	Secret knowledge about the spirit world, the power of herbs, and the symbolic content of archaic objects. The term also refers to the specialists keeping this knowledge.
dipo	The girls' initiation rites among the Krobo and Shai, at other places also known as <i>otufô</i> .
Dom	One of the six divisions of Many Krobo. Not to be confused with <i>dorm</i> .
dorm	Literally: "In the valley" – refers to the hometowns of the Krobo at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Mountain Range. Not to be confused with <i>Dom</i> .
døemeli	The members of the priestly elite, who were in charge of the most ancient and senior cults (<i>døemawô</i>). They sat on the <i>døeme</i> council held at the Anikaka rock on Krobo mountain and steered Krobo affairs in the olden days.
døemawô (døeme- a-wô)/ pl. døe- meawô	The most ancient and senior cults in Krobo.
durbar	Formal gathering to mark a state occasion. The concept of the <i>durbar</i> is based on Akan the court tradition of sitting in state (Twi: <i>afahye</i>). At receptions, during funerals or on other occasions chiefs orchestrate their appearance visually communicating their social position. Colonial officials called these gatherings <i>durbar</i> on the image of the imperial assemblages held in India (Hindi: <i>darbār</i>). The expression in Krobo is <i>matsâô bôgwa</i> ("the chief organizes a crowd").
destoolment	The removal from office of a chief, queenmother, priest or priestess.
enstoolment	The initiation and installation of a chief, queenmother, priest or priestess.

Klo	Krobo (both noun and adjective referring to the region and the nation).
Klogbi	The Krobo language, a dialect of Dangme.
Kloli /pl. Klolii	A member of Krobo society.
Klowem	The ancient mountain home (i.e. Krobo Mountain).
Kloyo	Krobo Mountain (i.e. the physical structure).
klutu	Earthen altar containing some rock or other object with a special meaning to those who erect it. These altars are mostly erected among the Dangme in connection with chieftaincy and priestly rule. See also p. 71.
konô (konor)	Paramount chief (literally: the one who is carried on the shoulders)
kusumi	Custom (i.e. the body of practices, chiefly ritual performances prescribed within <i>agbaa</i>).
Manya Krobo	Formerly also referred to as <i>Eastern Krobo</i> .
manyâ (manye)	See queenmother.
Matsâ (matse)	Divisional chief (literally: "father of the town"). There are six divisions in Manya and Yilo Krobo respectively, each headed by a divisional chief.
outdooring	The naming ceremony for a child (<i>bi kpo-dæemi</i> – "to take the infant out of the compound" for the first time), when it is officially introduced to the wider family and the public, and given a name (<i>biâ-womi</i>), or the re-introduction of a person into society after having been initiated or installed as a chief or queenmother. The term is today used for any form of inauguration, for example of a new political body, or to mark the completion of an apprenticeship.
queenmother	Female political leader [<i>manyâ</i> = literally "mother of the town"]. The <i>queenmother</i> is not the mother of the queen; therefore I have chosen to write it in one word (as it is often done in Ghana). In most cases the queenmother is selected from the royal family. Today the term <i>manyâ</i> is also used for the heads of non-chiefly bodies, for example for the head of the organisation of the market women.
sitting in state	See durbar.
stool (Dangme: sâ)	The symbol of office of a chief, queenmother, priest, or priestess. Among the Dangme these seats can be very small. They are not displayed in public but are kept in a stool room under the care of a <i>stoolfather</i> . Even the one who is being initiated to an office does not see the <i>stool</i> (on which he is seated during his initiation and from which his stool name is derived) with his own eyes. The same term <i>sâ</i> , however, is also used for a profane seat.

stoolfather	Dangme: <i>setsâ</i> . See <i>stool</i> .
tâgblâ / tâgblânô	A hunter's and warrior's cult and dance / somebody who has been initiated into one of these cults.
tsupatsâ	A healer (literally: "father of the medicine"), often referred to in the records as priest.
up-country	The Krobo farmlands on and West of the Akuapem-Togo Mountain Range, called <i>yonô</i> in Krobo (on the mountain) and referred to by missionaries and colonial officials as <i>Kroboplantagen</i> or <i>Krobo plantations</i> .
we ngwam	The court built by Chief Sakite at Odumase (literally: "the big house").
wônô (wonor)	A priest.
wôdom (wô-domi)	Yearly dance in honour of one of the war deities.
Yilô (Yilo) Krobo	Formerly also referred to as <i>Western Krobo</i> .
yonô (yonor)	See up-country.

ABBREVIATIONS

BMA	Basel Mission Archives
CEP	Commissioner Eastern Province
CS	Colonial Secretary
DC	District Commissioner
DLM	Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach
GNA	Ghana National Archives
MKTSA	Manya Krobo Traditional State Archives
MP	Member of Parliament (not to be confused with <M.P.> in references from the Ghana National Archives, which can stand for <Miscellaneous Papers> or <Minute Paper>)
OPC	Odumase Presbyterian Church
PRO	Public Records Office
PCA	Presbyterian Church Archives
SNA	Secretary for Native Affairs

1 INTRODUCTION

It is striking to see what an important role culture and 'tradition' play in contemporary Ghana in negotiating change and initiating development.¹ While the republic has been in existence for near half a century and has recently re-elected its president according to democratic practice, the 'hereditary' office of the chief, queenmother, or ritual performer has survived well into the twenty-first century.² Many an outsider is tempted to see these 'traditional leaders', who are omnipresent with their abundance of colourful regalia, as archaic remnants of a timeless past. The continuity of tradition and custom in a democratic environment appears to be an anachronism and might be expected to hinder radical change. Yet, the chieftaincy institution and the culture displayed during festivals and on other occasions are far from static. As this case study on the Krobo Region of South-eastern Ghana (see Map 1) shows, this culture is at instances itself the product of radical change and modernising strategies. Tradition then serves as a resource for development, together with the very force that is generally believed to have destroyed it, namely missionary Christianity. The latter has thus itself become part of tradition.³

The dissertation is concerned with a polity that experienced a dramatic expansion from the late eighteenth century on, when it embarked on the production of palm oil for the European market. The expansion and the orientation to the world outside represented a break with previous state building policies, which were marked by introversion. The political and cultural system had been geared to defence and to the integration of the heterogeneous groups that made up the community. The area of settlement was restricted to an isolated mountain and the farming too was spatially limited to the immediate surroundings. When leading entrepreneurs embarked on large scale cash-crop production and triggered a general thrust towards oil palm farming, the size of the territory increased within a few decades by a factor of a hundred or more. This growth demanded a new form and new structures of leadership, as well as the transformation of a strong culture that had resulted from the previous integrative policy. It called for a more extroverted and dynamic form of leadership. This radical change was negotiated by those entrepreneurs who were most successful in the economic expansion. They tapped into various resources in order to improve their own position and to transform the politi-

¹ Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD) 2001.

² Berry 2001; Boafo-Arthur 2003; Fayorsey and Amalo 2003; Ray 2001; Ray and LaBranche 2001; Ray and Eizlini 2004; Stoeltje 2003.

³ Jenkins has observed that the assumed deep gulf between Christianity and tradition in contemporary southern Ghana does not stand scrutiny, although it results from an often all too real insistence on "a dichotomous view of Christianity and heathenism" by the erstwhile missionaries (2003: 214-216).

cal and spatial structures. Notably they called on missions, on colonial agents, and on neighbouring states.

On the one hand the study thus deals with culture and its transformation. On the other hand it looks at the spatial change that was both the driving force for the cultural transformation and the condition under which the latter took place. The time span under consideration covers the period when the Evangelical Basel Mission Society was active in Krobo (the 1830s up to 1918). This is also the period during which the most dramatic spatial processes occurred. New settlements emerged that developed into the new centres of society. They were to accommodate the needs of the expanding polity and hosted a new political culture. The mission was part of the latter. Yet, as will be detailed, it only had a temporary assignment and the entrepreneurs shifted their alliances from mission to colonial state and empire. While the mission conceived of itself as of an agent of radical transformation, it struggled to keep pace with the developments taking place in Krobo. The causes are, amongst others, to be found in a reactionary attitude towards modernising processes and an idealization of a rural, self-reliant community.⁴ The emphasis on the agency of the Krobo entrepreneurs makes both mission and colonial state appear, at times, as being at the mercy of an African polity rather than being the dominant players in its history. Both were resources in negotiating the spatial expansion, as well as social and political transformation of the Krobo.

At the centre-stage of my study is the abolition of the historic centre of Krobo society by colonial government in 1892. Elsewhere this event has been taken (at least nominally) as an endpoint for a descriptive history of the Krobo,⁵ and in oral tradition it is considered to have set an end to the 'good old times'. 1892 was indeed a remarkable year in the history of the Krobo. In January 1892 the prominent Manya Krobo paramount chief *Konô* Sakite died. In August of the same year, colonial government interfered for the first time substantially in Krobo affairs. It imposed the election of an educated chief and made its support of the latter conditional on the abolition of the settlements on Krobo Mountain and of the major rituals informing the yearly calendar. Thereby it criminalised the priestly elite that had formerly been in control of Krobo society, and which still retained substantial authority. Yet, the abolition was not a turning point. As will be detailed in chapter two, it accelerated processes that were already going on. In the local historiography, the events following the expulsion are presented as mayhem, as a traumatic experience. At the same time the date is also considered to mark the beginning of the modern era of Krobo history. In contemporary cultural festivals the abolition is remembered as a forced removal imposed by the colonial government with the support of the mission, and is considered to have been the precondition for the advancement of 'civilisation' in Krobo society. This commemoration, however, obscures the agency of the Krobo, who initiated themselves the abandonment of the mountain settlements. Whereas most Christians today tend to construct a rift between their religion

⁴ Miller 1994; Jenkins 1980.

⁵ Wilson 1991.

(or modernity) and Krobo culture thereby replicating missionary ideas,⁶ chiefs stress the role the mission played in the history of the state. Their own chieftaincy culture is largely the result of modernisation and missionary Christianity is part of it. Furthermore, while it is obvious that with the abolition the era when the mountain settlements had a central function for the coherence of the society came to a final end, the latter had been approaching for some time. The study thus starts with the contemporary commemoration of the abolition and then goes back in time explaining how Krobo Mountain and Krobo culture came to be regarded as obnoxious and obsolete. Ample room is given to the encounter of missionaries and colonial agents with the Krobo and their imagination of Krobo culture, leading to its 'paganization' and criminalization. While this perception centred on Krobo Mountain, the Krobo had for some time begun new settlements in the plains. These had emerged as sites of economic production, but they also hosted a new kind of leadership. Here it was that the mission was invited to open its station thereby backing the political ambitions of the new leaders. While the missionaries conceived of these settlements as sites of a new Christian culture, they were also the sites where the chiefs enacted and shaped their new office and where new forms of popular culture were performed. Furthermore, the expansion of the farmlands continued and the greatest part of the population stayed away from the settlements in the plains for most of the year. The missionaries were trapped in their own regulations and tried in vain to force their converts to attend church service at Odumase. Only with a considerable delay did the mission change its policies and start to move with the Krobo farmers to ever more distant places. In order to gather their people at their respective seats of power and assert their hold over them, the chiefs invented new festivals based on the court culture of the Akan states. With time they also reintroduced the banned festivals. The settlements in the plains became the site of encounter with delegates from neighbouring states and with colonial agents. This encounter and the corresponding ritual and procession was an important source of legitimacy for the Krobo chiefs and is reflected in their dress and insignia of office. As will be shown, especially the Manya Krobo state drew heavily on the colonial power in order to secure its political agenda.

As the Comaroffs and others have highlighted, the colonized influenced the manner in which colonizers acted upon them. Their reactions and resistances effectively limited the measure in which their worlds might be invaded. Yet they also experimented "enthusiastic[ally] ... with things foreign". And in the same way as European cultural forms took root on African ground, "African cultural forms insinuated themselves into the everyday routines, the aesthetics, and the material lives of the Europeans".⁷ This cross-fertilization becomes most apparent in dress, rituals and processions. Africans readily seized on foreign clothing and materials as an alternative means to express status and power and circumvent established norms and privileges,⁸ while Europeans invented their own tropi-

⁶ Steegstra 2004: 2-4; Jenkins 2003: 215-216.

⁷ Comaroff and Comaroff (1997: 320-321); Hofmeyer 2004b: 120.

⁸ See the studies by Martin (1994, 1995, 1996) and Hendrickson (1996), as well as the Comaroffs' section on clothing (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 218-273).

cal and ceremonial dress code, asserting their authority, superiority, and/ or identity as coloniser, missionary, adventurer, etc.⁹ The gear of those who “went native” was often inspired by local designs and so were ceremonial uniforms of the highest echelons.¹⁰ Foremost, these uniforms were informed by the experience of the Raj and the same holds true for ritual, procedure, and colonial rule in general.¹¹ As Cannadine has shown, the hierarchical construction of the empire was not merely a replication of the metropole but an exaggeration of it, and in turn reinforced hierarchies at home.¹² Although the British thinking about their colonial subjects was informed by a racial mindset, it was also informed by the idea of rank and status. The empire thus was not only about othering, but also about the construction of affinities and the British had an astonishing readiness to grant African royals the same respect as their own.¹³ As chapter five shows, it was this mechanism that was exploited masterly by Manya Krobo *Konô* Emanuel Mate Kole who ruled at the height of the colonial period.

The studies referred to above all testify to an increased concern with culture and identity in studies on colonialism and empire; as well as to a shift in paradigm away from the dichotomy of centre and periphery. The concern is now with the transnational, and empire is seen “as an intellectually integrated zone in which currents of influence travel in many different directions, not only from metropole and colony”. This trend has also brought about a number of fascinating works on missions (organisations of eminent transnational character) and non-European Christianity. As Hofmeyr has shown, the early post-colonial historiography with its nationalist impetus tended to identify mission too closely with colonialism and paid little attention to it. Religion was assumed to give way to a modern, secular nationalism and historians were more concerned with political economy.¹⁴ Paradoxically within the study of empire too, missions did for a long time not receive much attention, because they were not formally associated with the empire.¹⁵ Beidelman’s piercing study of the Church Missionary Society’s colonial evangelism among the Kaguru, bore the traces of his own uneasiness with mission. Although – or precisely because – Beidelman’s study left many dissatisfied, it was influential in bringing mission into focus.¹⁶ The acknowledgement of the existence of mission archives and of the immense value of the records came late. Today these records are cherished as the richest source for the study of pre-colonial African societies.¹⁷ The recent historiography on missions and African Christianity has recognized that missions were “differentiated enterprises in which different groupings pursued different objectives”. Africans

⁹ Callaway 1992: 230-246.

¹⁰ Comaroff 1997: 241-245; Collingham 2001: 13-44.

¹¹ Callaway 1992: 241; Cannadine 2001: 64-65.

¹² Cannadine 2001: 128-130.

¹³ Cannadine 2001: 123.

¹⁴ Hofmeyr 2004b: 119-120.

¹⁵ Etherington 1999: 303; Porter 2004: 3-5.

¹⁶ Beidelmann 1982, Peel 1983: 408-409; Westerlund 1983: 161-163.

¹⁷ Ranger 2001: 653.

carried the main burden of proselytisation and were the real translators of the bible. Their impact has made for a great similarity between the forms of worship in African Independent Churches and those at the grassroots of the mainstream churches. The study of translation and conversion has gained prominence and has resulted in a number of influential works such as Landau on the Tswana, Meyer on the Ewe and, most recently, Peel's magisterial work on the Yoruba.¹⁸ As I have laid out above, my concern in this study is not with mission, Christianity, conversion and translation in the first place, but with the expansion of the two Krobo states; its effects on and the role of culture; the necessary political transformation; and the mobilisation of culture, tradition, mission and colonial state as resources in these two intertwined processes. If, then, mission is all the same omnipresent in this study, it proves the point that mission studies are often central to an engagement with colonial rule.¹⁹

1.1 ETHNICITY

My interest in Krobo started when I set out to look for a topic in African History for my *Lizentiatsarbeit* (MA). I had decided to make use of the Basel Mission archives and in order not to get lost in the incredible mass of documents I focussed on one clearly demarcated entity – a mission station and its field of action. I also deemed this selection necessary in order to get closer to the individual biographies, families and local institutions such as chieftaincy, or rituals I wanted to detail. This choice has been helpful and has allowed me to trace individuals over a long time span. It has also provided me with some guidance when searching the various archives or when conducting fieldwork. The drawback of this approach, of course, was that all too often I searched for 'the real Krobo'. For example when excerpting the names of converts from missionary reports I often noted only those said to be of Krobo origin. Setting out for my PhD research I therefore endeavoured to overcome this bias by looking at the 'Krobo region' more broadly speaking. I wanted to see it as a bustling area in the South of Ghana, as a centre of economic activity where people from various origins met and interacted, forming a cosmopolitan society. In the course of my research, however, I was captivated again by the power and fascination of the two Krobo states. The concept of these two political units is strong and resilient and plays an important role in the lives of those people who originate from this area. In their perception it makes perfect sense to write about 'the Krobo' and most of those who shared with me their individual history or oral traditions would be utterly disappointed if I were not to write about the 'traditional state' they live in.

Today the Krobo region comprises two such 'traditional states' – Yilo Krobo and Manya Krobo. They are partly congruent with two administrative units of the Eastern Region of Ghana with the same name. Each of these districts has a council situated at Somanya in Yilo Krobo and at Odumase-Mampong in Manya Krobo respectively. The distance from

¹⁸ Hofmeyer 2004b: 121-123; Landau 1995; Meyer 1999; Peel 2004.

¹⁹ Hofmeyer 2004b: 119.

these two central towns to Accra amounts to some 70 kilometres. The reason why they are not congruent with the administrative units lies in the fact that the Krobo have expanded enormously over the last two centuries (see chapter one). They are also farming in the adjoining districts, most prominently in Fantekwa, and have been involved in disputes over their boundaries for more than a century. Each of the two traditional states is ruled by a paramount chief. During the colonial period the two kingdoms formed the operative basis on which indirect rule was built. The needs of this system of administration were, of course, themselves the reason why in Krobo, as at many other places, chieftaincies came into being that had previously not existed in this fixed form. The Krobo case is, in fact, a typical example. Here it was local entrepreneurs who called in the colonial administration and the mission in order to expand and validate their position. As a researcher choosing to write about this specific region I therefore have to ask myself whether these entities are not mere colonial constructs and whether I am reiterating and fixing structures that were invented by the colonial administration or the mission with or without the active participation of their Krobo counterparts? As I have argued above and as will further be demonstrated in the next chapter, the main thrust in the making of 'the Krobo' is based on local rather than external initiative.

For instance the standardisation of vernacular languages by missionaries has reinforced the emergence of ethnicities.²⁰ Literacy, as conveyed by the mission, provided Krobo scholars with the means to publish powerful histories fostering Krobo identity and statehood.²¹ Yet, the language they used was not their own but that of their Ga-neighbours. Ga was used in schools and in church up to the 1970s. The Krobo language (*klogbi*) is a dialect of Dangme and Ga derives from the latter. Basel Mission policy, which ignored the seniority of the Dangme over the Ga, dated from the 1830s when the evangelists began to work on the then Gold Coast. It concentrated at first on Christiansborg (today Accra) and therefore set out to work in Ga. This resulted in translations of the Holy Scriptures, in hymn books and in the Ga Dictionary created with the help of the Ga catechists by Johannes Zimmermann and published in 1858. The latter featured a Dangme appendix based mostly on data gathered in the coastal town of Kpong. Despite the fact that Zimmermann himself soon realised that Dangme was at the root of Ga and that the latter was a foreign language to the local population, the mission kept to its decision and used Ga as a language of instruction for the whole Ga-Dangme area. Few seem to have understood it. Later missionaries realised that the use of Ga was a hindrance when spreading the Gospel and created a barrier between them and the people. Missionary Josenhans, for example, noticed what difference it made to talk to the people in their own language especially when discussing religious matters. In 1894 he therefore proposed to change the language policy, but was immediately silenced by his superiors at Basel.²² The effect was that for more than a century Presbyterian congregations in

²⁰ Vail 1989: 11-12; Harries 1989: 82-117.

²¹ Azu 1929a; Azu 1929b; Odonkor 1973; Sikapa 1937.

²² BMA D-1.60 Goldküste 1894 Ga, Odumase 173, G. Josenhans, Odumase 11.09.1894, pp. 9ff.

the region listened to their ministers preaching in Ga, read the Bible in Ga, had to sing Ga-hymns, and that also in the primary schools pupils were instructed in a foreign idiom. Zimmermann's grammar and dictionary remained for a long time the only major study of the Ga language.²³ Jack Berry, Devine Puplampu, E. L. Rapp and Ida Ward only initiated their linguistic studies in the Dangme language in the 1930s to 50s. This was on the one hand motivated by academic interest but on the other hand Dangme speakers like Puplampu had a genuine longing to see their own language finally raised to a language of instruction. In the early 1970s Dangme was at long last officially adopted for school use and acquired an official orthography.²⁴

Ghanaians often refer to the group they feel they belong to as a tribe and many of the local histories construct genealogies supporting this idea. The scholarly community has been struggling with the concept of the tribe for a long time and has looked at it as a colonial creation. Africans before colonisation belonged simultaneously to a broad variety of social networks and their loyalties and identities were complex and flexible.²⁵ With colonialism and the introduction of schooling, industrialisation and Christianity, further forms of identities were added to those existing before. The concept of ethnicity, which came up in the 1960s was to do justice to the often situational character of group affiliation. While it has created a greater awareness for the fluidity of group concepts, there has been a tendency to simply replace 'tribe' with 'ethnic group'.²⁶ Especially the legacy of tribalism in the apartheid state of South Africa, where it served apologists of the system, supported a constructivist approach to ethnicity.²⁷ Subsequently there was a tendency to present ethnicity solely as the product of administrators, missionaries and ethnographers and deny it a historical basis. The approach thus failed to account for pre-colonial ethnicities. In the meantime historians have come to acknowledge the historical roots of modern tribalism and view it "as a transformation of earlier ethnic forms as much as a colonial creation."²⁸ The British policy of indirect rule asked for a new 'tribal' landscape with fixed entities through which to administer the colonies. While this system did not provide room for much flexibility, the shaping of the consequent ethnic landscape was not a one-sided administrative process. It took place with the active participation of African actors, who creatively made use of, reshaped or invented traditions, so that the result met their own interests.²⁹

In the introduction to their book *Ethnicity in Ghana* Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent have claimed the Ghanaian case to be quite different from the Southern African one in that ethnic identities in Ghana today are not just the result of an invention dating from the

²³ Zimmermann 1858.

²⁴ Kropp Dakubu 1987: 6.

²⁵ Spear 2003: 17.

²⁶ Spear 2003: 16.

²⁷ Vail 1989: 1; Harding 1999: 145-146.

²⁸ Spear 2003: 18.

²⁹ Lentz and Nugent 2000: 5.

colonial period but draw more strongly on older we-group processes.³⁰ The British on the then Gold Coast Colony did not wear 'tribal lenses' but rather used the term 'tribe' in a larger sense for groups of people or polities. They had acquired an understanding of the complexities of the Gold Coast political landscape. In this they were influenced by Gold Coast intellectuals like Reindorf, Sarbah, Casely-Hayford, De Graft-Johnson and Danquah who pleaded for the particularities of the various peoples on the Gold Coast while at the same time emphasizing their commonalities. The different Akan groups, for instance, share the same language and culture. All the same their 'being Akan' does not constitute the basis for an operative community corresponding to the British idea of a tribe. The practical entity the British were looking for they rather found in the 'chiefdom', an entity in which a shared language and culture was not all that essential.³¹ Of course the British recognition of these chiefdoms as traditional states helped to foster a nationalism on that level which was forged by the respective local elites and which was supported by the colonial administration. The legacy of British colonialism in Ghana is thus a colourful map of 'native states' rather than tribes. As has been mentioned above, these entities together with the respective local practices and institutions, foremost chiefs, have maintained a great importance in post-colonial Ghana and play a crucial role in the making of communal identities (rather than ethnicities). This is despite the chiefs' collaboration with colonial government and their subsequent disempowerment in the first republic – a process which was reversed upon Nkrumah's removal, when the autonomy of the chiefs was enshrined in the constitution.³² 'Traditional' states and group-identities function as a basis for development. It is on the occasion of regional or local cultural festivals confirming and renewing the chief's rule that development strategies are transmitted and that politicians deliver important speeches. For the community itself and for its leaders it is an opportunity to address government officials directly and voice its wishes and demands. I deal with these festivals in chapter two and will further detail their history in chapter five.

1.2 HISTORIOGRAPHY

Within the last twenty years historians of Ghana have increasingly discovered the margins of the great hegemonic Akan states that have been at the focus of the vast majority of studies. Greene and Akyeampong have researched the Anlo-Ewe, Parker and Henderson-Quartey have come up with histories of Accra, Gilbert has explored the Guan factor in the Akuapem state, Chouin the Eguafo, and Stahl explored the history of Banda, to mention just a few examples.³³ Yet, the Akan have not only dominated the literature. Their culture too is dominant in all representations of the country and most

³⁰ Lentz and Nugent 2000: 2.

³¹ See Gilbert for the example of the Kingdom of Akuapem (1997).

³² Rathbone 2000: 40, 92-94, 142-143, 163-164 (cited in Spear 2003: 11-12).

³³ Greene 1996, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Akyeampong 2001; Parker 2000; Henderson-Quartey 2002, Gilbert 1997; Chouin 1998; Stahl 1991.

polities have fallen prey to this cultural thrust.³⁴ Traditional states of the South-east, such as the Krobo, Ga, Ewe, and Anlo seem at first sight to have been heavily 'akanized'.³⁵ State protocol, court music and insignia have become almost interchangeable in wide parts of the country. Yet, the appropriation is not the result of a pressure from the hegemonic power to assimilate, but the outcome of the conscious import and appropriation of cultural elements by these states. They match and mix, modify and adopt selectively most of these traits. The outcome of the process may often seem uniform, but a closer look reveals that an "innovative eclecticism"³⁶ has been at work.³⁷ The study by art historian Nii Quarcoopome has examined the material manifestations of the transformation of the Dangme and Ewe states from priestly to chiefly rule, and has given insight into the concept of secret power among these societies.³⁸ Many of these polities have not experienced a long state building process, such as that of the Asante, and do not rely on an overarching kin structure like that of the Akan. Instead, they consist of often highly heterogeneous lineages, which have been amalgamated into distinct polities. Myths of origin play an important role in shaping a common identity, see for instance the Notsie myth of the Anlo-Ewe, which has been the object of a recent study by Greene, or an early critical exploration of the Lolovor myth of the Dangme by Wilks.³⁹

The Krobo Region is a prominent example for this non-Akan fringe. Its rapid rise to one of the prime palm oil producers on the Gold Coast in the nineteenth century, the innovative mechanisms of land purchase it developed in the process and their application when embarking on cocoa production have contributed to its prominence. These issues have been the object of several studies. Margaret Joyce Field wrote a report on the "bloodless conquest" of the Krobo, which was then published in the *Journal of the International African Institute*. Her study, which addresses an issue of immediate concern for the administration of the colony, testifies to the close association of the school of functional anthropology with indirect rule.⁴⁰ In Polly Hill's extensive study on the migrant cocoa farmers of Southern Ghana the Krobo feature prominently as the engineers of the system that served as a model for the companies.⁴¹ Wilson has drawn largely on Field and Huber for his essay (and subsequent chapter) on the Krobo expansion, to the ex-

³⁴ See for example the use of *adinkra* symbols, of carved stools, and of *kente* in the representation of Ghanaian culture (Ross 1998; Kraamer 2002 and 2005).

³⁵ This term has been used by Stahl (1991), Gocking (1994), and Labi (2002).

³⁶ A term coined by McCaskie (1972: 30).

³⁷ See for instance the *Asafo History Programme* of the Universities of Legon and Trondheim, especially the contribution by Akrong (1998).

³⁸ Quarcoopome 1993b (and also 1991, 1993a, [1997]).

³⁹ Greene 2002a, 2002b; Wilks 1956. For a detailed linguistic analysis of the Dangme traditions on their migration see Kropp Dakubu (1972: especially 94-101).

⁴⁰ Field 1943; Cell 1999: 246-247.

⁴¹ Hill 1997: 2. The same holds true for the fascinating study in historical geography by Marion Johnson (1964/5).

tent of uncritically using the title of Field's study.⁴² The most recent and original work on the Krobo expansion is Kojo Sebastian Amanor's study addressing the current ecological and economical challenges in the Krobo region and setting them in historical perspective.⁴³ The expansion of the two Krobo states is a dramatic example of African enterprise and dynamism.⁴⁴ It called for new political structures and Wilson's history of the Krobo, has focussed principally on this political process, more than on the social.⁴⁵ While the author has assembled a remarkable amount of information, his study is marred by lack of precision and an often loose handling of his sources.⁴⁶ The issue of chieftaincy and political change in Krobo has also been the object of two MA-dissertations written at the University of Ghana, Legon. Peter Obeng Asamoah has focussed on the Manya Krobo statesmen from the Mate Kole family, while Narh Johnson has concentrated on the traditional authority structure of the Yilo Krobo state.⁴⁷ The latter's MA-dissertation has led to a PhD thesis on the Krobo warrior cults written within the framework of the *Asafo History Programme* mentioned above.⁴⁸ A number of BA-theses have been written by students from the Krobo area. Kortey has written on the economic history of the Manya Krobo, Azu on the abolition of the mountain settlements, Darko on migration and socio-economic development in Yilo Krobo, Kwao on the Krobo Diaspora and Teye on Krobo and its neighbours.⁴⁹ These were, however, of limited value for this study as they featured but little original research.

All these studies on Krobo and foremost the one by Wilson are based to a large degree on the work of government anthropologist Field dating from the 1940s and on the comprehensive ethnographic study on the "traditional social and religious life of the Krobo" by the Catholic missionary anthropologist Huber (SVD), a member of the Anthropos Institute.⁵⁰ Huber carried out his extensive fieldwork in the years 1951-1956 and published a rich and detailed monograph in the functionalist tradition in 1963. It was reprinted on the request of the Krobo in 1993 when the Yilo Krobo commemorated the centenary of their expulsion from Krobo Mountain. Huber's book has been lauded as a comprehensive and sympathetic study rich in detail and is used as a work of reference and source of information on subjects of all kind.⁵¹ In the Krobo region itself it is cher-

⁴² Wilson 1990; Wilson 1991: 72-99.

⁴³ Amanor 1994.

⁴⁴ Austin in Hill (1997, p. XVIII).

⁴⁵ Wilson 1991.

⁴⁶ At many instances the references proved to be wrong when checked. Equally disturbing is the incoherent spelling of individual names to the extent of complete confusion. See also the reviews by Arhin (1993) and Maier (1993).

⁴⁷ Obeng-Asamoah 1998; Johnson 1997.

⁴⁸ This thesis was written by Narh Johnson at the Institute of African Studies, Legon, and was submitted in June 2004. Unfortunately it was not yet accessible at the time of writing).

⁴⁹ Kortey 1989, Azu 1984, Darko 2000, Kwao 1978, Teye 1985.

⁵⁰ Huber 1993.

⁵¹ See for example Akyeampong's study on alcohol and social change in colonial Ghana (1996).

ished but also criticised where it contradicts individual political claims.⁵² As these putative flaws result in most cases from Huber's scholarly endeavour to write a balanced account lending an ear to differing voices, I am sure that this thesis too will draw similar reactions. Huber, however, also favoured what he perceived as 'traditional' and left out manifestations of what he regarded as recent innovations. This is for example the case with the institution of chieftaincy and especially with the office of the queenmother. While the latter office is not mentioned at all, the former is not given the space it had assumed in Krobo society for more than a century at the time of Huber's research. This neglect of the issue of acculturation, together with Huber's valuation of influences of different origin, was already criticised when the book was issued for the first time.⁵³ The girls' initiation rites, which are clearly at the centre-stage of Huber's monograph, have also been the object of the latest anthropological study on the Krobo by Steegstra. She examines the meanings and politics of *dipo* in historical perspective and discusses the rite with respect to the contemporary discourse on tradition and modernity as well as on development.⁵⁴ Steegstra shows that, quite paradoxically, it was in response to modernisation in the form of Christianity that *dipo* was fixed as tradition and became even more powerful. Marijke Steegstra and I carried out our projects simultaneously and have also spent much time 'in the field' together. This explains why our dissertations have influenced each other, to the extent of being quite closely related.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

When I first set out to work on this thesis I had the idea of writing Krobo history through the life stories of individuals. The idea was to create an emic view of the processes taking place in the region in the late nineteenth century. Thereby I sought to highlight the agency and the humanity of those people, who so often in historiography merely figure as an (all too often victimized) anonymous mass. This approach was inspired by works such as van Onselen's biography of Kas Maine⁵⁵, or the first PhD on African history written at the University of Basel by Peter Haenger. In his study Haenger examined slavery and its abolition on the southern Gold Coast by detailing life histories and illuminating the slaves' and slaveholders' agency.⁵⁶ The thesis stood in a tradition of historiography close to Historical Anthropology, which in Basel has been promoted by Martin Schaffner and others. Similarly my life histories were to be recreated on the basis of written sources available at the Basel Mission Archives, the Ghana National Archives, and the Public Record Office combined with oral tradition. I wanted to show how

⁵² I was repeatedly asked to report to Huber that he had to revise certain passages, especially on the ground of the rivalry between the Yilo and Manya Krobo.

⁵³ Christensen 1965: 551.

⁵⁴ Steegstra 2004. Another recent essay on *dipo* was published by Adjaye (2004). His chapter on *dipo* was previously published as an article in the *Journal of African Cultural Studies* in 1999.

⁵⁵ Van Onselen 1996.

⁵⁶ Haenger 1997, 2000 [English translation].

individual people in the Krobo region have dealt with the spread of the capitalist world economy by displaying an entrepreneurial attitude; and how they made use of mission and colonial government in reshaping their society to fit the demands of economic expansion.

In the process of completing the thesis, I abandoned this approach in favour of a more theme-oriented thrust. Still, the nature of the data basis I had created over the years (i.e. the life history interviews and the biographical data) has informed the outcome of my work. This also holds true with respect to the main archival resource. The basis for this work was laid by systematically working through all records on Krobo to be found at the Basel Mission Archives of today's Mission 21. While I also did extensive research at the Ghana National Archives, Accra, and the Public Record Office at Kew, the outstanding wealth of the documentation available at Basel clearly shows in this thesis. From the outset my intention has been not to write mission or church history. Nonetheless, both mission and church play a pivotal role in the history of the Krobo states. This together with the dominance of the missionary documents blurs somewhat the ideally assumed African perspective on cultural and political change.

1.3.1 SOURCES

For most of this study the focus is on Manya Krobo. This is because of the greater strength of the archival record for Manya Krobo as compared to Yilo Krobo, which results from the far greater reliance on mission and colonial government (from which this body of documents has resulted) in Manya Krobo than in Yilo Krobo. The reason for this is that in the nineteenth century the office of the paramount chief was more firmly established in Yilo Krobo. As will be explained in chapter 2, at both places late-comers of Akan descent played an important role in instituting chieftaincy. While in the Yilo Krobo case the paramountcy still rests with the same group, this is not the case in Manya Krobo. Here the early-comers (drawing legitimacy from their descent from among the early priestly leaders) have managed to re-route the succession to the office of the secular ruler into their lineage. The mission and its literacy played an important part in securing it there. Especially the first educated paramount chief in the region, Manya *Konô* Emanuel Mate Kole was very conscious of the powerful means at his disposal and codified 'customary law' to that effect. In contrast, the Nyewe division of Yilo Krobo hardly had to rely on government in order to secure its paramount position and could treat the mission with contempt. Despite the pressure exerted by the increasing colonial integration, Yilo Krobo *Konô* Ologo Patu (and his immediate successor) could allow himself to draw on decidedly anti-colonial sentiments in building up a strong backing. This explains why the archival record, both missionary and colonial, is so much more comprehensive for Manya Krobo as compared to Yilo Krobo. Notwithstanding these differences and the far less pronounced role of the church in Yilo Krobo, the general trends are the same in both states.

DOCUMENTS BY KROBO AUTHORS

The decision to bundle all non-academic documents relating to Krobo under the category 'sources' was a painful one. It neither does justice to the intellectual work of early

Krobo historians, nor to contemporary writers of popular history and I apologise for listing their works with a variety of pamphlets used for this study. The earliest extensive text on Krobo history was written by the Basel Mission catechist Noa Akunor Agwae Azu in the Ga language. Azu also authored a large collection of Dangme proverbs. Both works were translated and edited by his son Enoch Azu.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Thomas Odonkor wrote a historical text on Krobo that was again translated by the author's son Samuel Saki Odonkor from the Ga original, but was then edited by E. O. Apronti from the Centre of African Studies of the University of Ghana, Legon.⁵⁸ Both texts and authors are discussed in section 4.2.2. The writing of extensive texts in the Ga language must have been a typical ambition of early Krobo converts and as will be shown they played an important role in asserting status and legitimating political claims. Still, only in the cases listed above they have been rendered accessible to a wider audience. Other instances are the texts by Ashie, which are partly his own, and partly consist of the writings of a relative of his.⁵⁹ Interestingly Ashie has recently published informally one of these texts. I was privileged to receive a copy of an extensive text by Gabriel Tetteh Sikapa of Asite, another early Krobo *literator* who lived from 1874 to 1958, together with a typewritten translation by his grandson Evans Sikapa-Madjitey.⁶⁰ Further, I have collected a great number of pamphlets, brochures, programmes and obituaries. The quality of these texts differs greatly, yet they are an important corpus of information and are a valuable complement to both the formal publications and oral tradition. These texts are generally not listed in the bibliography but are referenced fully in the footnotes. At a late stage I got access to the archives of the Manya Krobo Traditional Council. These were closed during the long *interregnum* following the death of *Konô* Fred Azzu Mate Kole in 1990. They are the object of an ongoing project of cataloguing by the Centre of African Studies of the University of Ghana, Legon and will be fully accessible in the near future. As this thesis shows, literacy was an important avenue to power for the Manya Krobo paramount Chief Odonkor Azu and his successors, especially *Konô* Emanuel Mate Kole. This shows in a wonderful stock of records of the "Native Court of Odumase" and a host of other documents. The few documents I managed to access proved to be a fantastic complement to the records of the Basel Mission and of the National Archives of Ghana.

⁵⁷ Azu 1929a and b.

⁵⁸ Odonkor 1971.

⁵⁹ Ashie [n.d.]a and b, Ashie 2000. I have not succeeded in identifying the original author with precision, but suspect him to be Gottfried Ashie Ologo, who had received his training by the Basel Mission was clerk and stoolfather to Yilo *Konô* Akrobetto in 1892 (GNA KD 31/6/490 Krobo Hill 1956, petition by Nene Padi Akrobettoe III, Sra 10.05.1956, §13). Some of the texts were translated by the *asafoatsá* for Bornya -Narkodje Nene Tetteh Dedu II, probably in the 1940s or 50s.

⁶⁰ Sikapa 1937; Arlt 2003.

MISSIONARY DOCUMENTS

The origins of this thesis reach back to a *Lizentiatsarbeit* (MA thesis) written at the Department of History of the University of Basel in 1995, which aimed to highlight the potential of the Basel Mission Archives for the pre-colonial history of the Krobo region.⁶¹ As was the case then, the missionary records form the core of the data used for this doctoral thesis. Basel Missionaries first visited the Krobo region in December 1835 and twenty years later made Odumase an outpost run by two of their catechists, before establishing a fully-fledged mission station in 1857. From then on up to the expulsion of the mission's European staff from the Gold Coast in 1918, it maintained a permanent presence at Odumase. European missionaries lived together with African pastors, evangelists and teachers at the very centre of the settlement, and reported in detail not only on their activities but also on the political and economic situation regularly. Thanks to the meticulous organisation at the mission headquarters in Basel and the strong hierarchies at work in the mission house these records are for the most part perfectly organised. Each document arriving from one of the different mission fields (China, India, Cameroon and the Gold Coast) was filed in an incoming letter book.⁶² If the letter became the object of a discussion of the mission board there is a reference to it on the document and one can in many cases easily consult the large tomes containing the minutes of these meetings. From these we learn what was to be the answer to the missionary in the field. The latter too has been preserved as a copy in the series D-2 (outgoing letters to the Gold Coast). Unfortunately these letters were copied using the blotting-paper technique that was standard at the time. They are in most cases much more difficult to read than the incoming letters. Information on the individual missionary or other member of staff can be found in the personnel files, the so-called *Brüderverzeichnis*. Dates of entry to the mission house and of the various travels to the mission fields, correspondence relating to the time before the admission to the Basel Mission and to the time back home, private letters, references to publications by the respective missionary, are all diligently kept in these folders.⁶³

The original correspondence from the field bears many more traces. The handwriting in the old German script testifies to the often trying conditions on the Gold Coast. The paper of letters dating from the pioneering days is often scribbled in a miniature hand, making use of the rare and precious paper at the disposal of the missionary by covering it up to the margins. The hand itself frequently bears the signs of the writer's affliction by tropical diseases, heat, and fear. The stains of sweat, rain and dust, the postal

⁶¹ Arlt 1995.

⁶² For the Gold Coast these incoming letter books form the series D-1.

⁶³ There are some rare cases where the contents of a letter was deemed so delicate that the letter did not find its way into the proper incoming letter book but was dealt with in a secret meeting. Such letters were afterwards locked up in the so-called *Giftschrank* (poison-cabinet). Considering the lapse of time such documents are today re-filed by and by and made accessible in the series D-10 (miscellaneous documents in European languages) or in the personnel-files. An example of such a classified letter is dealt with in chapter 4.2.1.

stamps – they all add to the special quality of these documents and are themselves texts providing us with precious background information. While the correspondence assumes a more orderly appearance as time goes on and the mission establishes itself more firmly on the coast, marks and subtexts of a different nature are added to the documents. Once a network of a significant number of brethren (and sisters) had been established on the Gold Coast, the mission's policy of maintaining discipline by way of mutual control makes for a very special additional text.⁶⁴ At the end of each letter we can find the signatures and at times comments by the other missionaries then on the coast. This is because each letter was passed on from missionary to missionary and was cross-checked before it left Africa finally passing through the hands of the *Präses*. The latter was the elected senior among the Gold Coast missionaries, an office which despite the seemingly democratic nature of the election was not accessible to everybody.⁶⁵ This procedure was introduced in the 1860s and while missionaries had already earlier on anticipated the mission board's expectations when writing their letters, the introduction of these special regulations concerning the correspondence (*Korrespondenzordnung*) vigorously clamped down on whatever freedom of expression the missionaries had enjoyed.⁶⁶ Now it was no longer possible to contact the mission's director personally in delicate matters or to report confidentially on tensions among the missionaries. This was the privilege of the *Präses*. Then again, the letters in D-1 bear the marks of revision and censorship. Reports were not only to be written in order to provide the mission board with a foundation on which to make its decisions. They were also intended to be published in a fundraising effort. The missionaries were asked to report on their work and on their travels, thereby providing the readership with information on the country and its inhabitants (on *Land und Leute*). At times, and this especially holds true for the pioneering stages, such reports could be veritable ethnographies.⁶⁷ The bandwidth of information apt to be published in one of the mission's various publications was limited. Rare are the reports that were published without major amendments. In my MA thesis I have shown how much more potential the handwritten originals have over the published reports from the popular monthly *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* (The Messenger to the Heathen), the *Missionsmagazin* (which was geared to a more academic audience), or the *Jahresbericht* (Yearly Report). Although at times the editorial alterations are of a minor nature, they can make for a great difference in meaning. Some reports were written to meet the ends of specialised publications such as the *Mitteilungen der Frauenmission* (Newsletter on mission activities geared to women). Others were in-

⁶⁴ Miller 1994: 102-106. These Basel Mission policies concerning discipline and control will be part of my treatment of the mission's educational system in chapter 4.4.2. See also Arlt 2003: 288f.

⁶⁵ See the election of Johannes Zimmermann to this office in 1867 and its consequent reversal in chapter 4.2.1.

⁶⁶ BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase No. 12a, M. Roes, Odumase 20.07.1864.

⁶⁷ See for example the 63-page typewritten transcript of a report written in the 1870s by Missionary Johannes Zimmermann (BMA D-10.1,4 *Land und Leute*).

tended for a special fellowship such as the Christian associations of young men and women (YMCA and YWCA respectively).

Besides this communication with the mission board, individual missionaries created important networks with other missions and with researchers all over the world. Missionary Johannes Zimmermann, who was in charge of the first decades of the Basel Mission's work in Krobo, was a prolific writer and avid linguist (see chapter 4.2.1). The outcome of the nights he spent in his study is reflected in a great number of translations of the scriptures and in a massive correspondence. The latter is not only to be found at the Basel Mission Archives, but also in archives as far apart as Cape Town and London. It is a sign of the relative freedom a missionary might enjoy in the field – a freedom which contrasts with the tightly regulated organisation of the nineteenth century Basel Mission. Within the local society too, many missionaries moved far beyond the role the sending organisation had assigned to them. The same Johannes Zimmermann, for example, acted as a councillor on the chief's court and held a middleman position. The chief rewarded his commitment by presenting him with a richly decorated stool.⁶⁸ Another example for such an involvement in local politics is Missionary August Ramseyer, who played a crucial role in the secession of Kwahu from Greater Asante and its integration in the Gold Coast Colony.⁶⁹ Unfortunately these missionaries could not report on these activities, as they represented a transgression of the mission's policies. At times they are revealed by a different kind of document, namely the photographic record (see the section on historical photographs on page 22ff). The Basel Mission records on Krobo were complemented by the records held at the Odumase Presbytery and at the Presbyterian Church Archives at Accra. Unfortunately with the expulsion of the missionaries in 1918 the records have not been continued with the same ambition. The registers of baptism, communion, marriage, and death have been an especially important instrument.

One major problem presented by the Basel Mission documents as the main source for this study is the missionaries' perception of their employees and partners in Krobo society. When early Krobo catechists (most of whom were members of the royal family of Odumase) did not stick to the evangelist project exclusively but involved themselves in chieftaincy matters or trade, they were first admonished and then expelled. The mission's regulations demanded that they commit themselves fully and the dichotomy the mission defined between Christianity and tradition made any engagement in local matters a transgression. Most of the early catechists were therefore disciplined and at in-

⁶⁸ This stool is on display at the local museum of Zimmermann's hometown in Germany, Gerlingen near Stuttgart. The stool was brought there in 1976 by paramount chief Nene Azzu Mate Kole of Many Krobo in an effort to reinforce the ties between his state and the hometown of Zimmermann (Archiv Gerlingen 324.5, Nene Azzu Mate Kole, Gerlingen 23.05.1976, *Zimmermann's Stool*). The practice of conveying honorary titles and insignia to foreigners in order to promote development is being studied by Steegstra (forthcoming).

⁶⁹ Oral tradition in Abetifi has it that Ramseyer was adopted into the lineage of the Omanhene, the Etena ne Bretuo clan. See Arlt 1997b; Jenkins 2004: 124-125. For a detailed account of the political process see Haenger 1989.

stances expelled from the congregation (see chapter four). Thanks to the training they had received in the mission schools they became influential middlemen negotiating the integration of Krobo in the colonial state. Their skills applied for the secular welfare of the Krobo states and the influence they exerted were an eyesore to the mission, who saw on the one hand its investment lost and on the other hand its monopoly in the field of mediation broken. Moreover, the non-Christian population did not differentiate between a convert living according to the ideals of the mission and a convert having been expelled from the congregation. Whoever had been trained by the mission was perceived as a Christian. Thereby the mission's efforts to create an ideal Christian community were undermined. In Many Krobo tradition people like Peter Nyarko (see section 4.2.2) or his son Emanuel Mate Kole (see section 5.5) are remembered as pioneer Christians, which points to the fact that they were indeed instrumental in "earthing the Gospel"⁷⁰. While contemporary Presbyterian orthodoxy in Ghana will be as critical of the actions of these pioneers as was the Basel Mission in those days, it is clear that they were master-syncretizers in that they tried to combine Christianity and tradition. When at instances my text carries the marks of the negative assessments by missionaries, these might help to balance the uncritical presentation of the pioneers in local tradition.

COLONIAL DOCUMENTS

In contrast to the early permanent presence of the mission, colonial agents seldom made their way to Krobo and even less to the settlements on Krobo Mountain. Before the inception of the Gold Coast Colony, European interests were represented by a merchant community resident in coastal settlements, which did not have the means to interfere in any sustainable form in the hinterland states. In those cases when it ventured to do so, it had to rely on support from allied African states. The latter might lend their support albeit with an agenda of their own. Some early arrangements for permanent residents of the Danish Government on Krobo Mountain in the 1830s seem to have been of no significant duration and no records originating from this presence have been traced so far. (The early Danish records relating to Krobo will be detailed in chapter two). The objective of this operation was not colonial subjugation, but the securing of trade relations. This proto-colonial period came formally to an end with the proclamation of the British Crown Colony of the Gold Coast in 1874. Up to that point British rule on the coast had been direct on the coast and indirect in the hinterland communities, whereby the latter were treated as independent states, over which control could only be exerted on the condition that they had individually agreed to it. What form this setup would take depended largely on the governor in charge at the time. Governor Ussher, who was in office from 1867-1872 with two interruptions and from 1879-1880, distrusted the chiefs' capability to govern and saw them largely as tyrants. He was therefore in favour of a more direct form of rule and was responsible for the appointment of

⁷⁰ An expression that was used as a title for a handbook on enculturation and contextualization (Arbuckle 1990).

the first two district commissioners on the Gold Coast (at Tarkwa and Odumase respectively). His predecessors Freeling and Lees and his successors, however, favoured the indirect form of rule.⁷¹ This was also the opinion of Colonial Secretary Carnarvon, who in the late 1870s called for a more effective government on the Gold Coast.⁷² The Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1878, which was only enacted in amended form in 1883 subjugated and integrated the chiefs in a system of rule, which made use of the 'traditional' political structures for the administration of the colony. It made chiefs dependent on their recognition by the governor, who presented himself as a paramount chief and direct representative of the British monarch, and curtailed their judicial power. This system of rule had emerged in India, where the British reigned through residents supervising local rulers.⁷³ It came later to be known as Indirect Rule, i.e. "the systematic use of the customary institutions of the people as agencies of local rule".⁷⁴ It was born out of the necessity to control large territories with a small number of British administrators. The term was only coined in the interwar years by Lugard and subsumed the forms of "native administration" that had been in existence in many of the British territories in an idealistic way. On the Gold Coast this formalisation was reflected in the proclamation of the Native Administration Ordinance of 1927. After the Second World War the concept was abandoned as it was perceived as being detrimental to the new policy of development.⁷⁵ There have been efforts to define indirect rule as a precise technical term, but they have not always been helpful.⁷⁶ Like many other concepts of imperialism, indirect rule was more of an ideal than reality. As Cell observed:

The main point is not the precise gradation of indirect governance, or even whether control was direct or indirect. It was the adoption across virtually the entire Empire of one or another version of the basic hierarchical structure that has been common to all empires: Mughal, Ottoman, Chinese, or Russian land agglomerations, as well as the French, Dutch, or Spanish seaborne varieties.⁷⁷

In reality native administration was a "prefectoral administration" in which a cadre of officers exercised on behalf of the central government "diffuse and wide-ranging powers within the territorial subdivisions".⁷⁸ Consequently indirect rule presents itself in this study as a rather direct form of rule, albeit with the participation of the chiefs.

⁷¹ Kimble 1963: 460-463.

⁷² Metcalfe 1964: 387.

⁷³ Burroughs 1999: 181.

⁷⁴ W. Halcolm Hailey 1944: *The Future of Colonial Peoples*. London, pp. 45-46, quoted in Cell (1999: 237).

⁷⁵ Rathbone 1993: 54.

⁷⁶ Fisher 1991: 4-5.

⁷⁷ Cell 1999: 242.

⁷⁸ Berman, Bruce 1990: *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*. London, cited in Cell (1999: 242).

What does the establishment of formal colonial rule in the Krobo region mean in terms of the archival record? In the late 1870s a permanent presence was established by a British officer, who sought to enforce colonial rule. For obvious reasons this station was located at Akuse, the commercial centre on the River Volta, rather than on the isolated mountain top or at either Odumase or Sra. Even though this station was quite close to the mountain there were few visits to the settlements on its top. Police officers and other patrols found it difficult to visit the mountain and conduct investigations there. The conditions on the mountain changed between periods when there was hardly anybody present except some 'reactionary elements' (i.e. priests and priestesses) and periods of celebration, when the mountain was heavily overcrowded. Then an atmosphere of commotion reigned, which rendered the outsider's presence problematic. This together with the difficulty of approaching the permanent residents on the mountain (i.e. the priestly elite, which was restricted from encounters with strangers) made for a certain policy of laissez-faire. District Commissioners seldom interfered in Krobo affairs relating to the mountain (although from time to time there were reports on crimes taking place on the mountain or on murderers staying on the mountain). Only in the late 1880s when Government engaged in an effort to enhance trade, to expand its influence up the River Volta, and to administer the region more energetically in view of the German presence East of the River Volta, did it commission an extensive report on the conditions on the mountain. This report, together with a personal visit by the governor in the year 1891, informed to a large extent the decision to abolish the settlements on Krobo Mountain and the 'Krobo customs'.

The first substantial account by an agent of the colonial government referring to the mountain, its significance and the rituals taking place there (albeit in a rather general manner) dates to the year 1882. Then the Civil Commissioner for the newly established Volta River District, Commander R. Murray Rumsey, gave a detailed description of the two Krobo states.⁷⁹ Still, Rumsey's reference to the mountain was rather short and generalized. It was only shortly before the abolition of the mountain settlements that Supervisor of Customs Hesketh Bell personally witnessed some of the customs performed on the mountain and in c. 1890 delivered an extensive report on the Krobo region.⁸⁰ This was followed by a personal visit of acting Governor Hodgson to the moun-

⁷⁹ PRO CO 879/19 Administrator Alfred Moloney to the Earl of Kimberley, Christiansborg Castle Accra 07.06.1882, forwarding the General Report on the River Volta by Commander R. Murray Rumsey, R.N., Aburi House 27.06.1882.

⁸⁰ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo Customs etc., Minute Paper with an abstract of Conf. M.P. 309/91 commenting on the Report of Mr. Bell, D.S.V.R. on the Krobo Customs, dated 19.01.1891. As stated in the section on sources, I have not been able to trace a copy of this report. Instead, I have had to rely on the above mentioned abstract and the comments by the then District Commissioner of the Volta River on the report, as well as on the two historical novels published by Bell (1911a and b). These seem to be quite accurately based on his own experiences from his visit to the mountain (GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute [misplaced from ADM 11/1/1655], Minute Paper 309/91 concerning the *Report from Mr. Supervisor Bell on the Krobo Customs* [in the original *Report on the Resources and Customs of the Krobo Country*], comments by District Commissioner Alexander Williams dated 28.02.1891).

tain in 1891.⁸¹ The increasing interference of the British in the hinterland of the eastern Gold Coast in the last two decades of the nineteenth century was in response to the German involvement in neighbouring Togoland. Before the 1880s they had rather relied on a policy of *laissez faire*, which was amongst others informed by the lesson learned from their disastrous campaign against the Krobo in 1858 and the ensuing palm oil boycott.

The establishment of the British crown colony in 1876 thus is the moment when the British presence in the region becomes more substantial. Up to the late 1870s, and in contrast with the massive records that accrued from the Basel Mission's involvement, colonial records pertaining to Krobo reflected a proto-colonial situation: Those who reported barely moved out of the trading forts on the coast and often had a rather vague idea of the coast's hinterland, its settlements, and its inhabitants.⁸² The British had taken over the Danish possessions in 1850 and in 1857 made an effort to establish tighter control over the 'Eastern Districts' of the Gold Coast and its trade.⁸³ This setup was a far cry from the later colonial administration and was run to some extent on the basis of a 'public-private partnership' involving colonial agents, traders, missionaries, and chiefs. Agricultural Societies were founded which were, for instance, to promote the cultivation of cotton or the building of roads.⁸⁴ In order to fund these projects the British attempted to levy a poll tax. This met with resistance and open defiance. In order to force the population to pay the tax, the settlement of Osu was bombed and a campaign against the Krobo was launched. It is interesting to note that the acting governor, Major H. Bird, right after the expedition against the Krobo presented the British interests as being driven by humanitarian ideals. He wrote to Sir E. Bulwer Lytton of the Colonial Office that whereas the Danish Government on the Gold Coast had been a mission of trade and had been highly dependent on the latter,

[t]he mission of the English government is certainly not one of Trade, but of humanity. British magistrates feel it their bounden and solemn duty to take notice of,

⁸¹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Many Krobo Native Affairs, F. M. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891.

⁸² Danish merchants and botanists staying on the Gold Coast in the early nineteenth century exploring alternative business opportunities in the transition to legitimate trade are a notable exception to this rule. They established farms in Akuapem and in the Ga-plains, which seem to have become important places of interaction with African entrepreneurs. Danish as well as Dutch archives have not been searched for this thesis, as its emphasis is on a later period. For these early Danish records I relied on the work of other authors. Most prominent among these tracts is the one by David Henige who has looked in detail at the early records pertaining to Krobo (Henige 1974). Others are Adams 1957; Nørregård 1968: especially 173-185; Kea 1997.

⁸³ BMA D-1.8 Afrika 1857, Christiansborg No. 31, Memorandum by Colonial Secretary Ed. B. Andrews, Cape Coast Castle 07.10.1857.

⁸⁴ BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Christiansborg No. 33, Quarterly Report, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg 01.11.1858, p. 10.

and punish for, acts which Danish officers would have considered common place, and “the custom of the Country”.⁸⁵

It is not likely that the Colonial Office subscribed to this view except to the inherent nationalism. British interest in the Gold Coast depended on trade and the failure to collect first the poll tax and then the fine imposed on the Krobo, led to the near-withdrawal of the British from the Gold Coast. The fascinating story of the Krobo’s boycott of the payment of the fine has been the object of a study by the economic historian Freda Wolfson, who set it in context with later boycotts on the Gold Coast.⁸⁶ After the government’s intended demonstration of authority had failed, its presence in Krobo stayed rather marginal.⁸⁷ This situation changed to some extent when towards the end of 1880 Lieutenant J. Murray Rumsey was appointed as a Civil Commissioner to the newly formed Volta River District of the Crown Colony of the Gold Coast.⁸⁸ Rumsey’s seat, however, was again on the very margins of the Krobo territory at Akuse close to the inland port of Amedica on the river Volta. At first it was deliberated whether to establish the government station at Odumase and for some months commissioner Rumsey re-

⁸⁵ PRO CO 96/44, Major H. Bird to Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, Christiansborg 10.11.1858, cited in Metcalfe p. 280. As Peel has observed, this Creole term (in the Yoruba case the “fashion of the country” or “country fashion”) blurs the distinction between religious and non-religious, implies a shifting and unbounded body of customary practices rather than a definite and integrated “religion” (2003: 89-90). Among the Dangme the term *kusumi* is used to denote this body of “customs – practices, chiefly ritual performances prescribed within *agbaa*”. The latter refers to “the body of ancestral lore that encodes, inter alia, secrets about the spirit world” and “the powers of herbs” (Quarcoopome 1994: 341).

⁸⁶ Wolfson 1953. The merchants on the coast, who were competing for the Krobo’s palm oil, used to advance any fine imposed on Krobo and then demanded to be paid for it in palm oil. The Krobo Campaign of 1858 was the largest of these deals. Already in 1852 Ologo Patu had to pay a fine of 3000 heads cowries when he failed to show up for an investigation at Accra. This was the equivalent of £370 if calculated at the rate given for 1865, or \$1’666 at a rate given for 1859. In 1858 the Krobos were fined the enormous sum of 65’000 heads of cowries, which sum was advanced by the merchant Hutchinson of the trading firm Swanzy. He thereby gained a virtual monopoly on the Krobo palm oil at a price which was near to half the market value: 1 pot of 8 gallons at 3 heads cowries, which would have resulted in 176’000 gallons of oil (BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 14, C. F. Aldinger, Odumase 07.08.1860). This was almost twice the yearly export number of Krobo palm oil, which in 1862 was said to be 100’000 gallons (BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862, Odumase No. 19, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 03.11.1862). By 1861 £140’000 still had to be paid, whereby Colonial Secretary Ross in an attempt to settle the affair without fully losing his face offered to do away with half of the on the condition that it was paid instantly (BMA D-1.12 Afrika 1861, Odumase No. 10, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 29.07.1861, p. 2). For the exchange rates and the conversion of the cowry in foreign currency see BMA D-1.10 Afrika 1859, Odumase No. 7, C. Aldinger, 07.05.1859, transcription by Ulrike Sill.

⁸⁷ A visit by Governor Simpson in 1871 was noted by the missionaries as an exception providing the official with an opportunity to correct some of the prejudices he had on Krobo. Government’s knowledge on and perception of Krobo was largely shaped by Ga and Akuapem informers, who tended to present Krobo as an ally of the Akwamu (BMA D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase No. 1, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 06.04.1869).

⁸⁸ Public Record Office, Kew Garden [PRO], CO 98/2, Accra 02.09.1880, Minutes of Proceedings of an Executive Council held at Christiansborg Castle; PRO, CO 343/8 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, Despatch No. 292 of 13.11.1880.

sided there.⁸⁹ The choice of Akuse, which had sprung up in the late 1870s as a booming market place where all the major trading companies operated branches, reflected the economic nature of the colonial interests. Here all the major trade roads in the area converged and rapidly Akuse emerged as a new centre.⁹⁰ The region's produce (oil, sugar cane, cotton and later cocoa from the up-country) was brought here to be shipped through the port of Amedica to Ada on the coast. Akuse was a border town situated on the River Volta and customs were excised here. Archival records improve markedly with the implementation of the Volta River District. Nonetheless, the formality of court records and letter books of the district commissioner's office only seldom allow for those descriptions of a direct encounter one often finds in missionary reports. This quality of texts can at instances be found in special investigations of 'native affairs' and in reports on tours made by the Commissioner of the Eastern Province stationed at Kororidua. Yet, the perspective remained very much that of outsiders. Rare were the visits to the Krobo hometowns near Sra and Odumase, or to the up-country farms. The same held true for Krobo Mountain that, up to 1892, remained the ritual centre of Krobo society and was situated close by Akuse.

HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In addition to its comprehensive records, the Basel Mission Archives hold yet another treasure to delight the researcher with. This is a vast collection of ten-thousands of vintage photographs. Most of them are fairly well documented with a caption and a known photographer. But what is more, these pictures have been the object of a pioneering digitisation project. In the course of it they have been linked to an extensive database and are today accessible online.⁹¹ Here we find pictures from the mission's official collection as well as from private collections and albums. The earliest Basel Mission camera came to the Gold Coast with Missionary Wilhelm Locher, who was to test this new technique in the field. The missionary himself was not very happy with this burdensome task, yet the board of the mission, which was aware of the great possibilities pictures offered in propaganda and fundraising, insisted on the assignment.

⁸⁹ From 9 November 1880 on DC Rumsey together with some constables and Hausa soldiers stayed at Odumase with the missionaries and held court at chief Sakite's palace. Preparations were made for erecting government buildings (BMA D-1.32 Afrika 1880, Odumase 69, yearly report by J. Weiss, Odumase ???.1881, p. 9). This presence only lasted for some half year, as Rumsey and his men left Odumase again in May 1881 (BMA D-1.33 Afrika 1881, Odumase 126, Quarterly report by Rudolf Furrer, Aburi 20.07.1881, p. 1; Ghana National Archives ADM 31/1/1 Duplicate Letter Book Akuse, DC Rumsey to the Colonial Secretary, Odumase 19.05.1882).

⁹⁰ Already in 1858 when a first effort was made to bring the 'Eastern Districts' under tighter control, Kpong as a market place on the margins of Krobo on the River Volta was proposed for the allocation of a Government agent (PRO CO 96/48 Gov. Andrews Despatch No. 86: Freeman's case, Enclosure 41, T. B. Freeman, Cape Coast 05.08.1858, p. 869/495).

⁹¹ The URL is <<http://www.bmpix.org>>. The team who has worked on this project consisted of Barbara Frey-Näf, Regula Iselin and Paul Jenkins together with a number of further colleagues, who have coped with the sheer impossible task of bringing together data and pictures from various sources.

Photographs created immediacy with far-away fields and were powerful tools of communication. Locher was not the only photographer working on the Gold Coast in those days, but he for sure was among the earliest to have taken pictures in the hinterland. He took his camera to Akuapem, Akyem, Krobo, Akwamu and Peki. Although he had to experiment a lot and many of the pictures he took did not turn out or faded away, he has left us with an important photographic record of the South-eastern Gold Coast in the 1860s. Unfortunately only few of the pictures he took at Odumase have survived.⁹² The only other picture from those early years is an engraving made on the basis of a drawing by Johannes Zimmermann dating from the 1860s (see Fig. 4.1). Yet, even this absence speaks to us: Many Krobo oral tradition takes it as a proof of the magic powers of the chief at that time.⁹³ Although the Basel Mission clearly understood the value of photography in communicating and raising funds and soon made extensive use of it,⁹⁴ it is only in the late nineteenth century that missionaries captured Krobo social and economic life more extensively. Most prominent were the missionaries Dr Rudolf Fisch and Wilhelm Erhardt who were both avid photographers. For the time period in between there are some few pictures from Krobo, among them portrait photographs most probably done by West Africans. Some of these (and also some of the pictures taken by missionaries) were commissioned by the chiefs, who clearly understood the value of photography as a means of communicating with foreign authorities (see chapter four).⁹⁵ The rich body of photographs in the Basel Mission pictorial collection has been complemented with pictures from other holdings, especially with those portraits displayed in the halls of Ghanaian residences. At instances these are the same pictures to be found in the Basel Mission collection. Some of them have been reproduced several times to the extent of being blurred. As Haney has detailed, these family archives are an important avenue to succession and my own experiences working with photographs in the field underline the potency of these documents in Ghana today.⁹⁶

Reproductions of photographs from the Basel Mission collection were made use of in interviews, when partners were invited to comment on specific pictures, but also to look

⁹² These are a picture showing the first mission house in Odumase (QD-30.011.0105), a portrait of Catechist Reindorf and family taken at Odumase (QD-30.011.0107) and another one of Catechist Thomas Quartey (i.e. Kwatei, see footnote 52, page 90) and wife (QD-30.011.0106). All three pictures date from 1860.

⁹³ In Many Krobo oral tradition this absence of photographs of Odonkor Azu and his court is explained by magic. As the present chief Nene Sakite II told me, the missionaries tried to take a picture of Odonkor Azu but nothing would show on the plate when developed, which was attributed to the spiritual power of the leader. Priestly leaders such as the high-priest for the war deity *kotoklo* may not be pictured and it is asserted that, even if one tried to do so, the picture would just be blurred. A host of other taboos limits the interaction of these priests with ordinary people, especially with strangers, and these taboos seem to have been enforced strictly in the days of Odonkor Azu (Interview with Nene Sakite II, Odumase, November 2000).

⁹⁴ The earliest pictures have been made use of extensively and they re-surface in Basel Mission publications up to the twentieth century (Jenkins 2001: 157).

⁹⁵ Quarcoopome [1997].

⁹⁶ Haney 2004; Arlt 1997.

at the whole range of pictures I carried with me.⁹⁷ In addition neighbours and other visitors to my veranda in Maa Maku Asime's compound at Manyakpongunor wished to see them. Many of the viewers expressed the idea that they could not comment in a meaningful way on the pictures. More often than not this was not an expression of modesty but rather of the person's detachment from anything considered traditional and 'out-moded'. Still, the same people would remark on the side on seemingly unimportant details in the pictures. In the chiefs' residences, however, the pictures assumed an enormous potency, to the extent that right on my first visit to the Odumase royal family in 1996 I got myself into trouble with the latter. I carried with me a couple of portraits of Manya and Yilo Krobo chiefs. One of them (Fig. 5.13) carrying the caption "The King of Odumase" was not known to my interview partners. Six years earlier the paramount chief of Manya Krobo Fred Azzu Mate Kole had died and since then a succession dispute was waging. In this situation, a picture that could not be identified by the royal family and that was not under its control, presented a high risk. As my residence in the town of one of the competitors for the paramountcy further made me suspicious, the elders and the queenmother refused to comment further on the pictures and sent me away with the words: "Come back when the new paramount chief is enstooled, then we will tell you the real story and show you the real pictures".⁹⁸ Ironically I was later able to identify the anonymous chief in the picture as Emanuel Mate Kole, one of the rulers on whom the royal family bases its claim.

The days when photographs were enthusiastically seen as an objective record of reality are long gone.⁹⁹ It is clear that pictures demand the same critical attitude as written records and that they hide even more than they reveal. Physically they can only depict a narrow slice of a 360° reality. In the same way they are temporally selective, as they can only be taken under fair conditions. Far from the snapshots that contemporary photographic equipment allows, the cameras used during the period under consideration demanded long times of exposure. The equipment had to be handled by specialists. It was bulky and heavy. The pictures thus resulted from a tedious process in which the conditions of the photographic portrayal were negotiated. People had to be arranged and advised to keep still. The photographer had great authority even if he worked on the request of those depicted. Nonetheless the concern with the power of the photographer has veiled all too often the agency of those depicted.¹⁰⁰ Many of the pictures reproduced in this thesis demonstrate this agency. Yet, some demonstrate the brutal power

⁹⁷ Similarly, early sound recordings of popular music were at times used in both formal and informal interview situations. This was originally done in connection with an other project dealing with a collection of vintage records recorded by the Swiss Union Trade Company on the then Gold Coast (Arlt 2003). When I noticed that the sound could be even more powerful than pictures in eliciting reactions with the interviewees, I started to use my tapes with old time highlife in life-history and other interviews.

⁹⁸ Arlt 1997: 129.

⁹⁹ Burke 2001: 12.

¹⁰⁰ Theye 1989.

of the “colonising camera”.¹⁰¹ Others, again, tell of the agency the pictures had themselves in shaping desires and social movements or highlight the importance of the materiality of the photographic documents. Numerous works have dealt critically with these issues and space does not permit to dwell on them at length.¹⁰²

The photographs reproduced here come with the original caption (mostly in English translation) where available. The authorship and date have been indicated where known. Otherwise a suggestion has been made, which is subject to discussion. One major problem of the Basel Mission pictorial database is the dates and photographers given for the pictures. Only in few cases the precise year is indicated. The information provided for the photographer has to be treated with even greater caution. It mostly refers to the person through whom the picture entered the collection. This can be the photographer, or the person who reproduced the picture. It can also be the person who bought the picture or who transferred it to Basel. The date of production, then, is often indicated as the time this person spent in the field. The same critical attitude is necessary when it comes to the ‘original caption’. It is evident that only few of these captions, as rendered in the database, were provided by the photographer himself and if so, they might have been subject to editing. Despite of all these cautions I believe that it is important to make extensive use of these pictures, not least because every reproduction invites the audience to engage in an open-ended process of engaging with these pictures, in the course of which we will gain new insights in their content, context, and meanings. Finally, most of the pictures have been edited slightly in brightness and contrast. Colours and tainting have been reduced to grey scale. There has been no partial editing, retouching or other alteration; exceptions to this rule are clearly stated. None of the pictures is reproduced in its original size and in most cases the margins have been cut. For a more original reproduction of the Basel Mission pictures and their measurements please consult the website indicated above.

MAPPING THE FIELD

A further help in visualising nineteenth century Krobo is a large range of maps available at the Basel Mission Archives.¹⁰³ Some of them are sketch maps interspersed in reports and in documents on the mission’s landed property. Others are printed maps kept in the official map collection. When the Basel Missionaries first started their work on the Gold Coast they, like many other contemporary visitors to the coast, relied on an early map of the Danish possessions in Guinea, which provided them with rather sketchy information on the coast’s hinterland.¹⁰⁴ The evangelists literally played an important role in

¹⁰¹ Hartmann et al. 1998.

¹⁰² See the recent contribution by Landau and Kaspin on visibility in colonial and postcolonial Africa (2002). While in this volume missionary photography is remarkably absent, it has been the object of several articles published by Albrecht et al. (2004).

¹⁰³ On mapping and imperialism see Ryan (1995) and Edney (1997).

¹⁰⁴ Mission 21 Library, collection of historical maps, No. 97302, *Die Dänische Goldküste auf Guinea*, date: before 1850.

placing Krobo and its neighbouring states 'on the map' (or 'in the picture'). While the above-mentioned Danish map situates 'Krobbo' (referring to Krobo Mountain) in between the Akuapem-Togo Range and the River Volta, it is positioned too far from the river and too close to the mountains. No reference is made to the extensive palm plantations and farm settlements the missionaries found in between Krobo Mountain and the Akuapem-Togo Range. Little information was given for the territory beyond these mountains and that beyond the River Volta. The missionaries were obviously attracted to these blank spaces waiting to be explored. From early on they set out on exploratory tours and started to draw their own sketch maps. Thereby they took possession of the region as a new mission field, a conquest which occurred in competition with the Methodist Mission. Missionary Steinhauser for instance, gathered the information for a sketch map of the Krobo region with the itineraries used during the missionaries' visits providing more detailed information on settlements, markets and vegetation.¹⁰⁵ The colonial authorities did not dispose of any better map of the region. During the British military campaign against Krobo in 1858 the map at the commander's disposition was far less informative and accurate than what Steinhauser had sketched some years before.¹⁰⁶ And also in the following years colonial officials would rely on information retrieved from Basel missionaries or on the maps produced by them.¹⁰⁷ As early as 1862 the value of and need for decent maps was acknowledged and it was suggested that this situation be changed, but lacking staff and funds the administration could not possibly do anything about it:

[...] we have no officer who would venture into the jungle to do battle against the venomous assaults of all descriptions of vermin and who would expose himself to the more fatal effects of the sun for the sake of gratifying his taste and predilections as a draftsman.

Some officers are indeed most skilful and, for a time, most sedulous in the use of their pencil, but the climate soon transmutes their buoyancy of spirits into melancholy, soon enervates them after the first half-year of their residence on the coast has passed and soon sets at defiance their schemes of public utility as well even as their attempts at private amusement.¹⁰⁸

This statement illustrates perfectly the proto-colonial situation the Basel Mission operated in up to late 1870s and highlights its activities and achievements. It reflects the more direct engagement with the Gold Coast hinterland and its inhabitants during this

¹⁰⁵ BMA D-31.5,4, No. 2, Kärtchen von Krobo nach Steinhauser.

¹⁰⁶ PRO CO 96/44, Acting Governor Bird to Sir Bulwer Lytton, Pram Pram 09.09.1858, Enclosure: map entitled *Gold Coast and Interior of Country*.

¹⁰⁷ BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Christiansborg No. 33, Quarterly Report, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg 01.11.1858, p. 7; PRO CO 96/89, Governor in Chief Sir Arthur Kennedy to the Earl of Kimberley, Sierra Leone 13.10.1871, enclosure: Acting Administrator C.S. Salmon to Arthur Kennedy, Cape Coast 02.10.1871, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ PRO CO 96/58, Acting Governor Ross to the Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast Castle 06.06.1862.

early period, and contrasts the sketchy British authority on the coast, on which the missionaries were nevertheless highly dependent. As was the rule with the Basel Mission, the secular authority in place was to be respected and although missionaries like Johannes Zimmermann at times would long for a change in government,¹⁰⁹ they complied with this rule and even made energetic calls on the British parliament when the British considered a withdrawal from the coast.¹¹⁰ Soon the missionaries produced fairly accurate maps of the region they were operating in (i.e. of today's Eastern Region and Greater Accra Region), which accompanied various publications, or were sold as separate prints. By 1885 the Basel Mission published a state of the art map of the Gold Coast between the River Prah and the River Volta scaled 1:800'000.¹¹¹ It combined the knowledge of generations of missionaries and especially the results of several journeys done by Basel missionaries in 1884 with the explicit aim of drawing up a map and of exploring the interior of the Gold Coast up to Salaga. While this map, of course, still left blank large tracts of country, it was to be probably the most accurate map of the area up to the time the war office drew a map of the colony scaled 1:506'880 in 1889.¹¹² This timing reflects the general developments in the field of colonial cartography, which remained rudimentary and was done on an ad-hoc basis up to the height of economic imperialism in the 1870s.¹¹³ Although the maps become more and more accurate and rich in detail once the crown colony was established, none of the maps I have consulted shows a definite border for the two Krobo states. This is due to the expansion of the Krobo farm lands and the ensuing permanent land disputes with its neighbours. While there have been several commissions charged with a settlement of these disputes, the results have been challenged again and again. Therefore my own maps¹¹⁴ show only approximate borders.

¹⁰⁹ For example Johannes Zimmermann in 1866 suggested that considering the tide of the British interest in the coast that Prussia might make a bid for the British settlements and protectorate on the Gold Coast in view of the Prussian marine's interests and Germany's colonial prospects in Africa. BMA D-1.18b Afrika 1866, Teil 2, Odumase Nr. 10, J. Zimmermann to Th. Weitbrecht, Odumase 05.09.1866.

¹¹⁰ BMA D-10.3,8 Manuscript by Johannes Zimmermann entitled *The Gold Coast Question*, Odumase 03.04.1865; Manuscript by Elias Schrenk entitled *What Is to Become of the Gold Coast?*, 26.01.1865, published in German translation in *Missionsmagazin* 1(1958). Schrenk even campaigned personally before Parliament (Miller 1994: 190n47).

¹¹¹ Mission 21 Library, collection of historical maps, No. 97305, *Die Goldküste ostwärts vom Fluss Pra von Salaga bis zur Mündung*, map 1:800'000 by Basel Mission, Basel 1885.

¹¹² Mission 21 Library, collection of historical maps, No. 97306, *Map of the Gold Coast Colony and Neighbouring Territories*, 1:506'880, compiled in the Intelligence Division of the War Office, 1889.

¹¹³ Ednay 1997: 35.

¹¹⁴ These maps were produced on the basis of a variety of maps (references given with each map). The latter were positioned on top of each other using the Adobe Photoshop software.

ORAL HISTORY AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

I conducted forty-four interviews, of varying length and depth. Ten of them are full-fledged life-history interviews. These were taped and transcribed.¹¹⁵ They were complemented by participant observation. Besides witnessing festivals, functions and rituals I engaged in helping on the farms of friends. These experiences covered early morning marches to the farm – for instance from Somanya one hour up the Akuapem-Togo Range to the Asinesi *huza* on the border with Akuapem. I used to meet my late friend Tetteh Gaga before dusk in Somanya, from where he would set the pace, marching swiftly through town. On its outskirts the mountains rises steeply and the narrow rocky path makes for a strenuous climb. The sounds of the early morning birds was interrupted only by the greeting of other travellers, who were either also going to farm or carrying head-loads of corn and other produce to the market of Somanya. Greetings and news were exchanged without halting. *Dorm-tsemâ? – A ngâ ,a nga-mo! Yonô-tsemâ? – A ngâ, a biô-nyâ!* (How are the inhabitants of the towns in the plains? Reply: They are around (i.e. they are fine) and extend their morning greetings to you. How are those at the up-country farms? Reply: They are around, they greet you). People working at some distance on their farm, who could hardly be seen, shouted their greetings across the valley. My un-experienced eye could at instances barely spot the person. At times we would stop by an *akpeteshi* still, where a palm wine tapper¹¹⁶ was producing his tasty local schnapps on the basis of the oil palm's sap, i.e. the palm wine. A calabash of the freshly tapped sweet and slightly alcoholic juice would renew our energy, the stop-over at the still providing an opportunity to exchange news. These stills are always major hubs where the latest news is exchanged. At the farm house we would take in a light meal of *fufui-sa* (the left-over of the *fufui* and sauce served in the night before). Now it had become day and before the heat was building up we proceeded to do our work. First came the strenuous clearing of the farm, in which we were helped by a party consisting of family members and neighbours. In order to engage their help we entertained them with food and drink. For this a sheep was slaughtered, making for a festive meal once the work was done. Some weeks later the slashed and dried weeds were burned and their ashes were distributed all over the field. The latter was planted with cassava, corn, coco yam, and beans. At other instances we made excursions and visits to Krobo Mountain or to the up-country using the same foot paths. These trips were like the manual labour on the farm important in order to understand the yearly cycle and the logics of the Krobo expansion and economy and their effects on the social

¹¹⁵ For the time being the original material is kept together with the field notes in my documentation.

¹¹⁶ The production of *akpeteshi* is mostly done by specialists either working on their own or employed by an investor, who buys some 100-200 seasoned oil palms from a farmer. The trees are felled and prepared to be tapped. After three weeks the collection of the wine begins and continues for some three to four weeks, depending on the season and the variety of oil palm. Not all trees are felled at the same time in order to extend the duration of the production. This is done in order to reduce the cost of production (displacement of the still consisting of old oil barrels and copper wire/ erection of temporary structures for the still and the *tapper*). On the social history of *akpeteshi* see Akyeampong 1996.

life. At times we were walking on the very same paths in use 150 years ago, whereby the reports by Basel Missionaries and other visitors to the area came to life. The result was often a great respect for their physical performance (or, if they had been carried in a hammock, for that of their carriers). In a few cases, however, my experiences also allowed me to reveal inaccurate information.

Of course I was trapped in gendered spheres. While it was easy to move with men and to interview them, my efforts in entering women's spheres proved far more difficult. At times we worked together on the farm, we travelled together attending funerals or visiting markets and people. Often we engaged in lengthy discussions and conversations be it in informal settings such as during the siesta, during the preparation of the meals (when I tried to learn as much as possible for my own cooking at home), cracking palm-kernels,¹¹⁷ or enjoying the cool evening in the compound after dinner. My late foster-mother Ma Maku Asime enjoyed talking, gossiping, joking, and lamenting and so did most of the other eight to ten female tenants living in her compound. The atmosphere was often very animated and while I learned a lot from living in one compound with these women, it proved near impossible to conduct a deep formal life-history interview with any of them. Mostly women directed me to their husband, partner or male head of family. Often they pretended that they were less informed than the men or used their lack of formal training in the English language as an excuse. Typically the female founder of an African independent church at Adjikpo called in the pastor in residence so as to brief me on her church and herself. While this diverted some of the attention to the male pastor, it also stressed her own holiness and standing. A glance at the list of interviews attached to the bibliography reveals a clear misrepresentation of women. Only two formal interviews were conducted with female partners, a third one was shared by my colleague Marijke Steegstra.¹¹⁸ Despite the difficulties encountered in conducting formal interviews with women, a considerable amount of information by and on women gathered in informal situations can be found in my field notes.

Another trapping consisted in my association with my principal companion and reference person, the late *dipo* priest Tetteh Gaga, who was a very outspoken person. He never hesitated openly to criticise and point out what he perceived as abuse of custom or mismanagement. While he was a very popular person, he also manoeuvred himself in many an uncanny situation. Of course this also had consequences for me who was trailing behind him: His adversaries were prone to become mine, and many people anticipated my position on certain issues to be the same as those of my informant. Gaga himself, in turn, was thought to walk with the white man and was suspected of making

¹¹⁷ Whereas the oil produced from the palm fruits with the help of all family members fit for the job is in most cases marketed by the male farmer, the kernels belong to his wife (or wives). She (or they) will store them and later take up the tedious task of cracking them with a stone. The core is then ground at a mill and the light kernel oil (as against the red oil produced from the outer flesh of the palm nut) is then produced by cooking the ground kernels. It is marketed by the women and the proceeds belong to them (Huber 1993: 48).

¹¹⁸ She interviewed Lilly Odzawo, the wife of one of my informants, and we then exchanged our material.

a living out of it. At times this resulted in greed and open disputes. Our association thus resulted in similar difficulties for both of us. In general I tried to check, as far as I could and with varying success, the inequality inherent in fieldwork situations.¹¹⁹ In Krobo the responsibilities of a guest towards the host society are captured in a saying, which translates as follows: "As a passenger you will help to scud the water out of the boat you are travelling in." Tackling the issue of justice not only pertained to material help or other forms of routine assistance. One of my concerns has been to share the information I gathered in archives.¹²⁰ Already in 1996 I made accessible the transcripts I had produced from Basel Mission reports for my MA thesis to various recipients in Ghana, both public and private. I tried to maintain this policy where possible, sharing my database with young scholars from the region. People shared their knowledge on their family history with me and I tried to give them in return access to whatever material of interest to them, including papers relating to them and based on information supplied by them. Obviously this is a difficult issue. On the one hand there is the problem of feedback, on the other hand it can obstruct the access to further information (see for instance page 24). While I have encountered some problems with this open policy,¹²¹ I still try to maintain it where possible.

Finally, my residence in the compound of Maa Margaret Maku Asime at Manyakpongunor located me not only geographically, but also politically within Krobo. The Asime family belongs to the Konorpiem clan of the Dorm division of Manya Krobo. The chief of this division and his predecessors have been challenging the paramount position of the Djebiam Nam of Odumase. As I have mentioned on page 24, right on my first encounter with representatives of the Manya Krobo Traditional Council in 1996 a historical photograph, used in a discussion and intended as a present, aroused suspicion. In view of the potency of my data the royal family of Odumase tried to bring me under its control by proposing to find accommodation for me at Odumase. It goes without saying that I found it both natural and more tempting to maintain my residence at Manyakpongunor, where I had been welcomed not out of political motives, but as a regular tenant. When I came back to Krobo in 1998 for my PhD research, I returned to the same compound. This time Maa Maku deemed it proper to formalise my association with her family. For her I had replaced her only son Kwame, who had died in a car accident prior to my first visit to Krobo. She was worried by my roaming around the shrines, rituals and processions by day and by night and thought that it was safer for me if I was formally associated with the family. Thus I became Tetteh Kwabena Asime and was told that in case of

¹¹⁹ Bleek [pseudonym for Sjaak van der Geest] 1979.

¹²⁰ The idea of sharing access to documents stored in European archives has been one of the key concerns of the former archivist of the Basel Mission, Paul Jenkins. Before he took this position, he spent a sabbatical leave transcribing and translating large parts of original correspondence by Basel Missionaries into English. These transcripts have been used widely – not only by Ghanaian researchers but also by their European colleagues, as few scholars take up the challenge of tackling the old German handwriting (Basel Mission Archives [BMA] at Mission 21, Signature D-12).

¹²¹ See Arlt 1997.

need I could always call on *Asafoatsâ* Asime's stool for help. On the one hand I do mention this fictive kinship here in order to explain the complications that resulted from it when doing interviews in Many Krobo. On the other hand it fits into the larger theme of this study of how an African polity mobilised external resources in order to achieve internal transformation and negotiate its integration in the colonial state and world system: My association with the family was not the result of my projections but an extension of a local practice, seeking to "make kin out of thin air".¹²² It is also to be seen in the context of local strategies to create networks with the wider world, which can be mobilised in order to address local needs. As the example of Johannes Zimmermann has shown (see page 16), this policy of integrating foreigners can already be observed in the mid-nineteenth century and has led to the contemporary concept of the development chief.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The following chapter introduces readers to the Krobo Region today, to its history and to the ethno genesis of the Krobo. It starts with a description of two contemporary festivals in Krobo and examines how these harness a common heritage in order to mobilise people and resources for development. The festivals are used as a lens in identifying the broad themes the thesis is concerned with. On the one hand chiefs tap into tradition and make use of ancient rituals, which are considered outmoded and pagan by most people in Krobo today, in order to legitimise their authority. On the other hand the festivals create a feeling of togetherness by remembering a past when the ancestors dwelt on Krobo Mountain. From there they were expelled by colonial government in 1892. This abolition of the former centre of society and of the major rituals is identified as a central event in the history of the Krobo. The chapter contextualises it by giving an overview of the history of the two Krobo states, and shows that the interference by colonial government was initiated by the Krobo themselves. This measure was not least motivated by popular perceptions of the Krobo, their mountain settlements and the rituals performed there, and it was legitimised with the policing of this tradition.

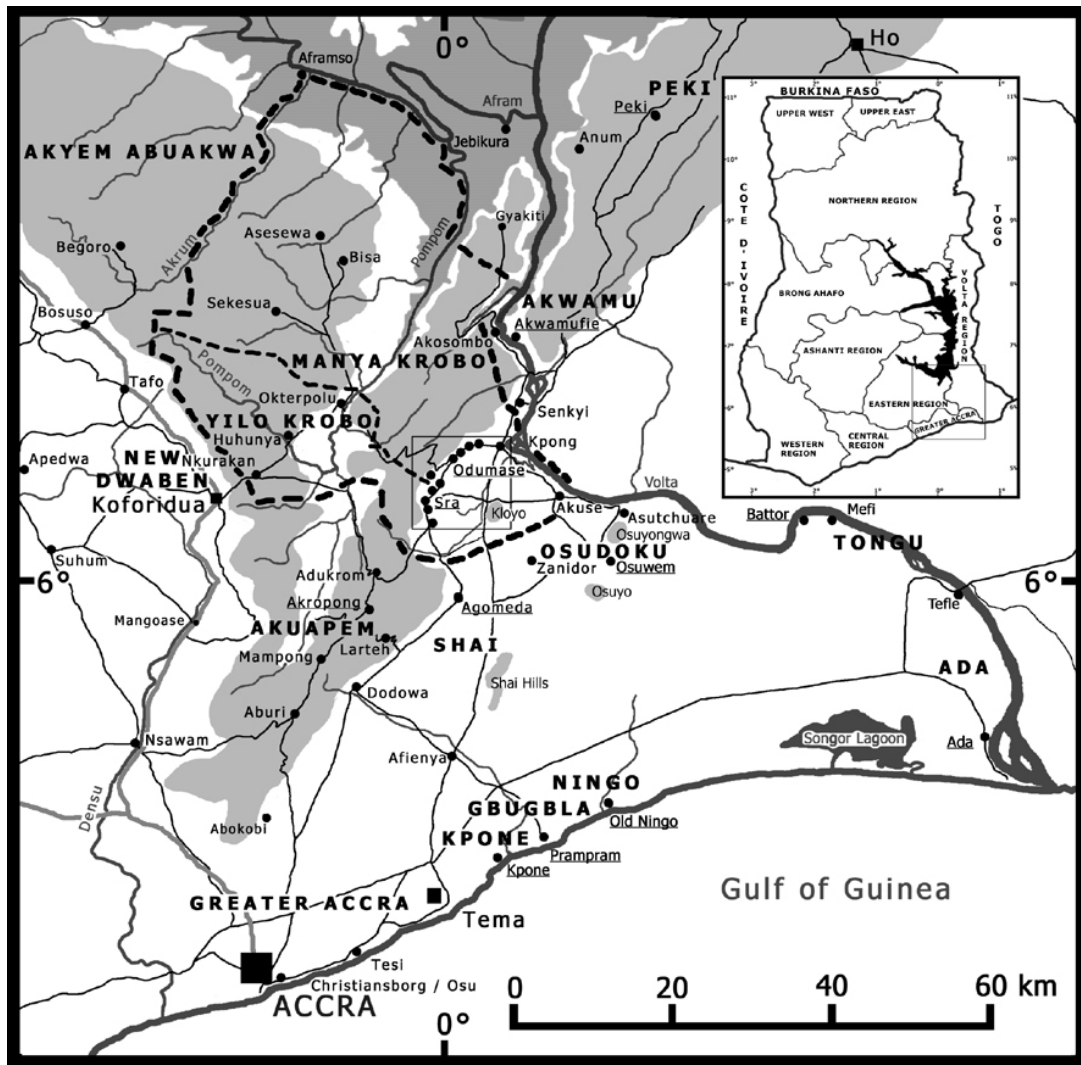
Chapter three therefore looks in more detail at the mountain and Krobo culture. Ever since the earliest encounters the mountain home has exercised an immense fascination on missionaries and other visitors alike. Krobo Mountain was the cradle where Krobo had emerged as a political entity of its own. It offered shelter in uncertain times and became the ritual centre where all important rites and celebrations took place that shaped Krobo identity, especially initiation rites and burials. It was also the seat of the priestly leadership of Krobo, which was hardly visible to outsiders. Missionaries and colonial agents, who were left in the dark respective the secret power structures of the Krobo, aptly referred to these priestly leaders as to the "powers of darkness". The chapter deals with the mountain as a landmark, as a place of settlement, and with the most prominent cults that had their seat there. It examines how they were perceived by

¹²² Kaufmann and Rabodoarimiadana 2003: 182-183.

outsiders as Krobo culture and gave rise to strong stereotypes on the Krobo leading eventually to the abolition of 1892.

Already before the abolition the Krobo had started to settle on their farms in the plains at some distance from the mountain. The major entrepreneurs among the farmers who vied for power developed their hamlets into new centres. They called in the Basel Mission to open a school at their respective hamlets in order to boost its importance. In the mid-nineteenth century the latter eventually opened a station at Odumase and made the hamlet the centre of all its activities in the Krobo region. Chapter four shows how the mission constructed and perceived Odumase as a site of Christianity and economic enterprise in dichotomy to Krobo Mountain as the centre of heathen culture marked by atrocities, sensuality, indulgence and debauchery. Yet, the local entrepreneur and big man had assigned the mission a specific role helping to establish himself as a paramount chief. This can clearly be seen from the situation of the station within the settlement and its lack of a segregated Christian quarter (Salem), which was a typical feature of the Basel Mission stations. On the one hand the chief effectively controlled the mission and tied it to his residence. On the other hand the mission was caught in its own perception and imagination of Odumase. A first section of the chapter dwells on these images, while a second section is devoted to their deconstruction. The chapter continues by showing that the mission failed for a long time to adjust to the economic and spatial dynamics of the Krobo and when it eventually did so, the expansion continued to be a major challenge to the organisational structures and principles of the mission. The two final sections detail the mission's efforts to overcome the limitations of their Odumase station by means of a boarding school set on an isolated hill top and explore the way in which Krobo appropriated Christian culture and negotiated the schism with their traditions.

Chapter five looks at Odumase as a site of chiefly culture and examines how the latter emerged and developed over time. Chieftaincy among the Krobo evolved in connection with the people's expansion and was marked by a departure from earlier priestly leadership traditions. These were based on the concept of secret knowledge and introversion. The new leadership was extroverted and it was those who dealt with foreign relations (war leaders and land leaders, i.e. entrepreneurs), who achieved positions of power. They drew legitimacy and authority from their interaction with neighbouring states and from the colonial encounter. The chapter examines how these sources of authority are manifest in the material culture of the Krobo chieftaincy (in dress, insignia and architecture). It details and analyses some key encounters between the Krobo, their Akan neighbours, and the colonial state. The narrative follows the succession of the Manya Krobo paramount chiefs from Odonkor Azu, who gained power in 1835, to Fred Azzu Mate Kole, who was installed in 1939, and traces how they relied at various times and to varying degrees on mission, colonial government, and tradition in shaping their office. With *Konô* Fred Azzu Mate Kole not only the chapter but also the narrative of the thesis comes to a close: that is to the use of culture, tradition, and Christianity as a resource in contemporary Krobo. I resume my findings and present my conclusion in chapter six.

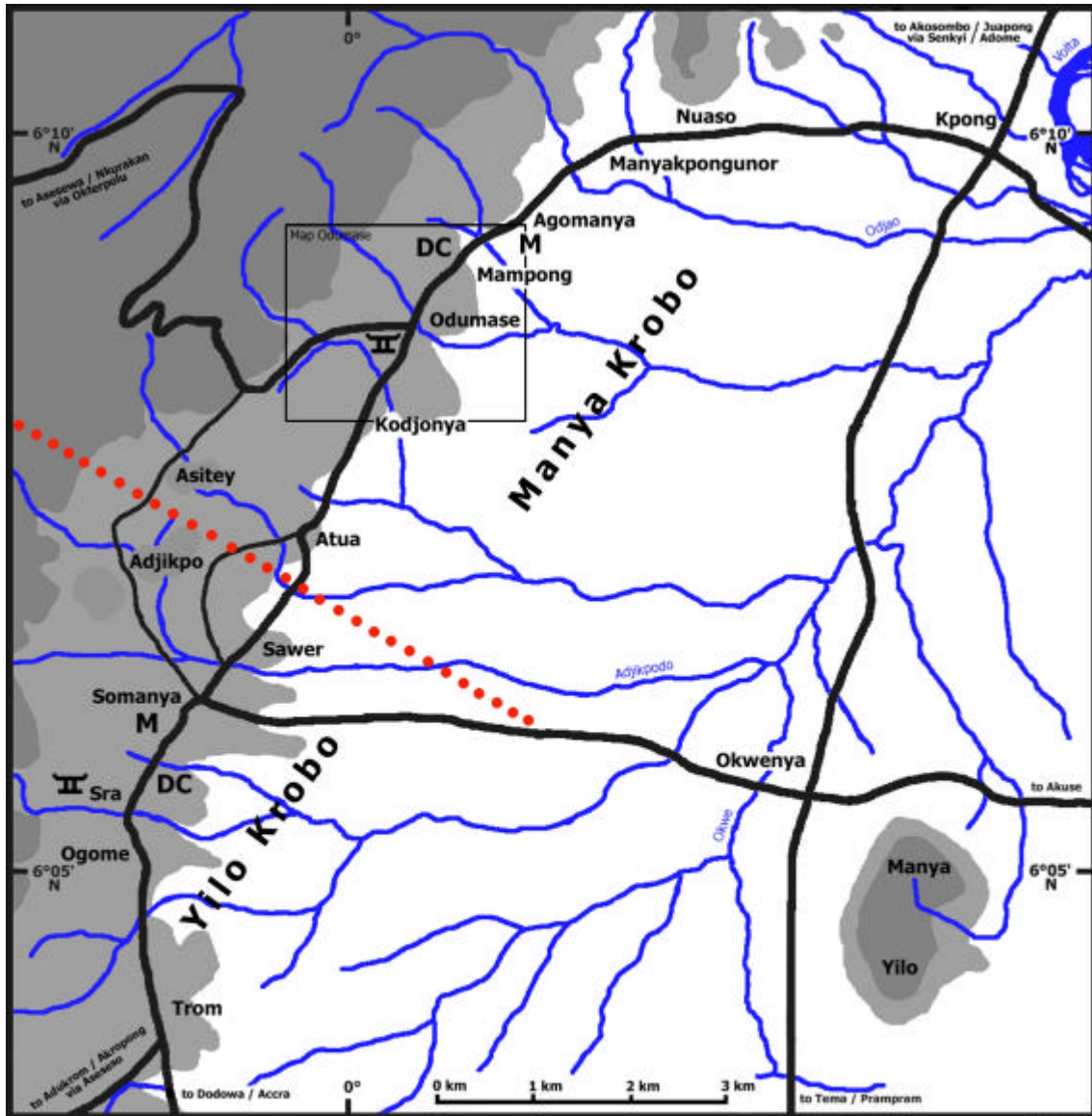


- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| — rivers / sea shore | Ho regional capital |
| ■ Lake Volta | Sra seat of paramount chief |
| ■ elevation higher than 500 ft. | — major roads |
| - - - boundary (approx.) | — railways |

VA/2003

Map 1: South-eastern Ghana. The two Krobo states in relation with their neighbours. Map by Veit Arlt 2003.¹²³

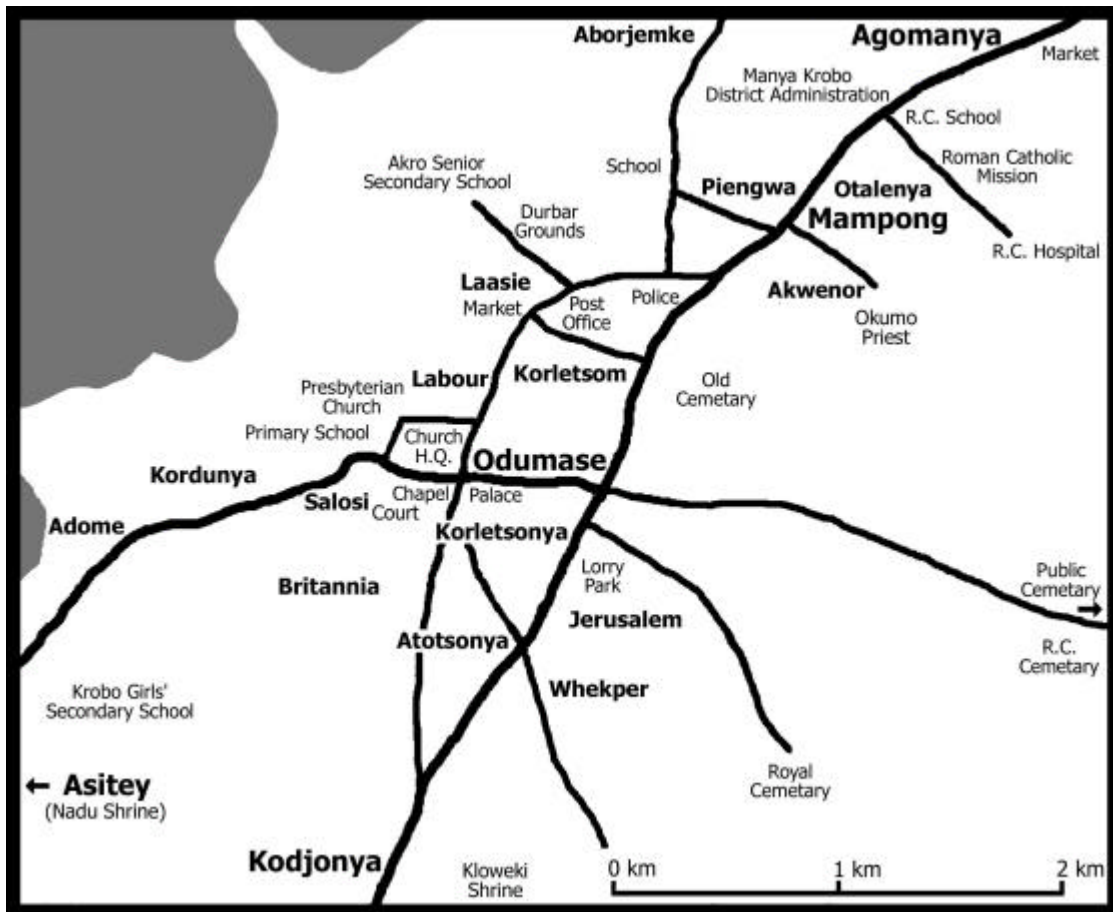
¹²³ On the basis of the following maps: *Ghana 0601B3-4, 0600C1, 0600C3, 0600D1-4, 0500A1-2*, topographical maps 1:50'000, published by Ghana Survey c.1974; *Gold Coast Koforidua L-IV*, topographical map in the Africa 1:125'000 Series, published by Gold Coast Survey 1932; *Die Goldküste ostwärts vom Fluss Pra von Salaga bis zur Mündung*, map 1:800'000 by Basel Mission, Basel 1885; *Map of the Gold Coast Colony and Neighbouring Territories*, 1:506'880, compiled in the Intelligence Division of the War Office, 1889; *Manyakrobo District (Constituencies Map)*, 1:100'000, compiled by Town and Country Planning Department Odumase Krobo; with further reference to sketch maps drawn by Basel Missionaries and colonial agents.



VA/2003

Map 2: The Krobo hometowns (*dorm*) situated at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range with Krobo Mountain (*Kloyo*) to the right. Map by Veit Arlt 2003.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ On the basis of the following maps: *Ghana 0600C3, 0600D4*, topographical maps 1:50'000, published by Ghana Survey c.1974. As the boundary between Manya and Yilo Krobo is fiercely disputed (the Manya Krobo go as far as claiming the whole of Krobo Mountain for themselves, denying the Yilo Krobo any right in Krobo Mountain despite their former residence there) I have refrained from any attempt to draw a more exact line.



Map 3: Odumase, its quarters, and the neighbouring towns.
Map by Veit Arlt 2003.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ On the basis of a map provided by the Many Krobo District Council (without further information).

2 TRADITION AS A RESOURCE

The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint readers with the Krobo region and the broad developments taking place there from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. It also aims to familiarise them with the region's history.¹ I start with a description of two contemporary festivals that are staged every October and November, i.e. at the end of the second ('minor') rains, around the capitals of the two Krobo states.² Both festivals are invented traditions.³ They draw partly on the local ritual calendar and on historical events and compete with each other. (Chapter five will look at precursors of these contemporary events and will detail the context of their establishment). While the rituals serve to ensure continuity, they are also a site of change and prove their malleability when they are harnessed for different projects. Memory, like ritual and culture, is mobilised in order to unite the community in an effort for development and to attract investors to the region.⁴ In my presentation and analysis of the festivals I have drawn foremost on the work of Gilbert and McCaskie on the Akuapem and Asante.⁵ In the course of this account the major themes and key issues of Krobo history and culture will be introduced, which will then be dealt with in a more chronological form in the second part of the chapter. This approach, starting from the present day situation, will help us to appreciate the salience and liveliness of Krobo history and culture and to grasp the importance of history and culture in contemporary Ghana as a political resource.⁶ As we

¹ This chapter is partly based on a paper I presented at the African History Seminar of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London on 9 of February 2000, at the African Studies Centre of the University of Ghana, Legon on 9 November 2000, and finally at the Department of History of the University of Basel on 25 April 2002 (Arlt 2002).

² The region knows two rainy seasons. The so-called 'greater rains' fall between May and July, the 'minor rains' in October.

³ For a recent overview of the discussion on invented traditions in Africa, twenty years after it was launched by Ranger (1983), see Spear (2003). Ranger had been concerned in the first place with British colonial inventions aimed to establish them as patriarchal overlords. The discussion subsequently turned to colonial inventions of African tradition and the creation of tribalism. Thereby the agency of the Africans and their own skilful manipulation of institutions and traditions have often been obscured, and the power of the colonial authorities overstated. It has resulted in an appreciation of tradition as "a discourse in which people continually reinterpreted the lessons of the past in the context of the present" (Spear 2003: 3).

⁴ Lentz 2001: 54-57; Greene 2002: 1028-1031. A prominent recent example is the historical figure Yaa Asantewa, the queenmother of Ejisu who mobilised the Asante against the British in 1900. Her commemoration was made use of for the promotion of tourism and development in the Asante and beyond (Day: 2000, 2004; Donkoh 2001). Other, more ambiguous examples are the Slave Route Project and the tourism focussing on the former slave trade posts along the coastline (Bruner 1996; Hasty 2003).

⁵ McCaskie 1995 (especially pp. 144-242); Gilbert 1992, 1994, 1997.

⁶ For two Southern African examples for the use of tradition for political purposes see Harries (1993) and Gordon (2004).

will see, tradition is also, to this very day, a key resource for political legitimacy at the level of the traditional state and rituals emerge as a site of change and continuity. They prove at the same time durable and malleable and are harnessed for different purposes. I look at these festivals as at a prism which breaks up the seemingly harmonious culture and lets fissures and disputes appear. The festivals further give us clues for analysing political legitimacy and authority in Krobo and reveal key elements in the construction of Krobo identity.

The two festivals are part of a nationwide landscape of such events and whereas the occasions for these various Ghanaian festivals are as diverse as the country's historical landscape, their programmes are in general quite similar, especially in that they always comprise one or two *durbars* – colourful gatherings of the chiefs, the people and their guests. The form of these public assemblies developed in the colonial period on the basis of the Akan concept of a reunion (Twi: *afahye*) where the chief or king 'sits in state' surrounded by his attendants in a horse-shoe pattern, with the chief placed centrally at the bottom of the horse-shoe framed by his courtiers and flanked by subordinate chiefs and commoners, his guests (depending on their status) facing him at the open end of the gathering.⁷ The British colonial agents compared this kind of gathering in which state regalia were displayed, chiefly authority was enacted, and popular allegiance was demonstrated, with the elaborate state rituals they had witnessed, re-shaped, and invented in India. Hence it was referred to as a *darbar* (Hindi: *darbar*), a name which in Ghana is still in use today.⁸ The following description is based on my own observations during my fieldwork in the years 1998 and 2000.

2.1 IMAGINING KROBO TRADITION AND IDENTITY

It was in 1992 that the Yilo Krobo State introduced a new cultural festival.⁹ The idea was to mobilise the local populace for community based development, to attract tourists and to direct investors' as well as government's attention to the rather unspectacular Yilo Krobo traditional area.¹⁰ The term 'unspectacular' especially applies to the Yilo Krobo home towns, which are situated around the market town of Somanya, rather than around the seat of the paramount chief in the neighbouring town of Sra (see Map 2).¹¹

⁷ The Dangme expression is *matsâô bôgwa* ("the chief organizes a crowd").

⁸ Quarcoo 1970: 6; Collingham 2001: 128-136; Lentz 2001: 52; see also chapter five. For "the scholarly study of power and pomp" see Cannadine (1992: 1-19). Cohn, in the same volume) details and analysis the imperial assemblage (*darbar*) of 1877, which was to become the standard by which all subsequent imperial public ceremony was measured (Cohn 1992: 207-208).

⁹ *Centenary Celebrations of Kloyo Sikplemi, 17th-20th December, 1992*. Brochure and programme [author not known], 20 pages.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 3 and 7-10. On the politics of festivals in Ghana see Lentz (2001: 47-72).

¹¹ For the concept of the home town see Middleton (1979: 252-253). A home town, the place where one's ancestors have come from, is important in defining one's individual and group identity all over Ghana. In the past knowledge about one's home town was further important in distinguishing free people from slaves.

This dominance of the market place over the paramountcy reflects the town's glorious past, when the railway and motor-road to Koforidua was not yet built and all produce from the rich Krobo farming area and of part of the Akuapem plantations had to be head-loaded to the plains in the east, where it was traded at important Krobo markets.¹² From about 1874 on it was shipped through Akuse and Amedica down the River Volta to the coast. The town of Somanya at that time was an important palm oil market.¹³ The motto for the 1992 festival as stated in the programme was "Re-discovering our past for development" and a name for it was readily available: It was called *kloyosikplemi* (the descent from Krobo Mountain) commemorating the expulsion from the former ritual and political centre of Krobo society a century ago.¹⁴ This rocky Inselberg is situated at some seven kilometres distance from Somanya in the plain between the River Volta and the Akuapem-Togo Range.¹⁵ Today it is a forest reserve and is deserted except for infrequent visits by illegal charcoal burners, hunters, and a few tourists. Many people admit to have never visited the mountain top. This is on the one hand to be explained by the mountain's association with a 'pagan' past. On the other hand the climbing of the mountain is a strenuous exercise, involving the clearing of the path, and with a modest reward: There are hardly any remains left of the dense settlements which up to the end of the nineteenth century covered the mountain top.¹⁶

The week of the festival, as I witnessed it, opened with a day of "home-coming". This is because the biggest part of the population is not only living up-country on the farms on and behind the Akuapem-Togo Range, in an area stretching from the hometowns as far as Nkurakan near Koforidua, Tafo, and the river Akrum, but is farming in many of the major cocoa growing areas in Ghana.¹⁷ Many have moved to the urban centres or live

¹² On the town of Koforidua, a settlement that was only started after the Sagrenti war of 1874-1878 and with the cocoa boom rapidly grew into a sprawling centre, see Campbell (1994).

¹³ The construction of the railroad through the then Eastern Province began in 1909. It had reached Tafo when the work was stopped because of the First World War

¹⁴ *Centenary Celebrations of Kloyo Sikplemi, 17th-20th December, 1992*, p. 5. Whereas *kloyo* refers to the Krobo Mountain as a physical structure, *klowem* means the ancestral mountain home(-stead).

¹⁵ The geomorphological term Inselberg (from the German *Insel* (island) and *Berg* (mountain) refers to an isolated hill, mostly composed of plutonic rocks such as granite or gneiss and formed under tropical conditions.

¹⁶ Similarly, the town of Notsie and its memory invoked in Anlo festivals is of little significance to the inhabitants of the region today. Yet its remembrance can be mobilised effectively (Greene 2002b: 1029).

¹⁷ See Kwao (1978) on the "Krobo Diaspora". I recall vividly visiting members of my late friend Nene Tetteh Gaga's family. We drove my motorbike over dusty roads all across Upper Yilo stopping at Trawa, where the head of the family is farming. Leaving the Yilo Krobo up-country we emerged at New Tafo and then continuing through Kade we hit the laterite and entered the forest again. We stopped over at another family land in Akyem Kotoku, which Tetteh Gaga had mortgaged to somebody. In Adansi we hit the tarred road again and continued westward through Obuasi and Tarkwa until we entered the dense forest of Sefwi Wiaso in the extreme West of Ghana. Finally we arrived in a small bush village close to the border with Côte d'Ivoire, founded by and inhabited mainly by Krobo people, where despite our disguise by a thick layer of laterite dust, we were immediately recognised and welcomed by Gaga's family members.

abroad. From these areas they only return on special occasions such as funerals or the girls' *dipo* initiation rites. Having attracted the people to their respective family houses in their home towns, the Yilo Krobo Traditional Council invited them to join in communal labour, cleaning up the towns, a task to which the second day was devoted. The opportunity to discuss family matters with the gathered relatives was widely made use of. Generally the festival served as a deadline before which funeral rites were to be performed and vacant chiefly offices – the so called stools – were to be filled.¹⁸ Newly installed queenmothers and chiefs, clad in white, and surrounded by cheering crowds, were a frequent sight during this period. They paraded through the main streets on their way to the paramount chief's palace where they would swear their oath of allegiance.



Fig. 2.1: A delegation of senior Yilo Krobo priests opening the path to Krobo Mountain on the day of the visit to the mountain homes.
Picture by Veit Arlt, date 06.11.1998.

¹⁸ A wooden carved stool is the symbol of office of a southern Ghanaian chief and can be compared to a throne. The installation of a new chief is therefore called 'enstoolment'. Among the Dangme, in contrast to their neighbouring Akan, the real stools remain in the 'stool house' (a shrine) and are not shown to the public (Quarcoopome 1993a: 116).



Fig. 2.2 (left): Performing a sacrifice on the ruins of Yilo *Konô* Ologo Patu's palace on the occasion of the 1998 *kloyosikplemi* festival. Picture by Veit Arlt, date 06.11.1998.

Fig. 2.3 (right): Young visitors to Krobo Mountain dancing to hip -life music. Note the ice-cream seller on the left. Picture by Veit Arlt, date 10.11.2000.

The most important day saw the visit to the ancient mountain home *klowem*. People climbed Krobo Mountain on a steep and narrow path. It had been cleared only the day before and had been ritually opened by a delegation of the priesthood of Yilo Krobo early in the morning (Fig. 2.1). There was even a footrace up to the summit, which served as an attraction for the youth. Having reached the top, a few people tried to detect the places where formerly the family houses of their ancestors had been. This was almost impossible due to the abundant vegetation and the state of decay of the ruins. In 1892, after people had left with whatever they could carry off, the soldiers of the colonial government destroyed and plundered most of the settlements. They left hardly more than the foundations of the buildings.¹⁹ During my visits, chiefs or people delegated by them poured libations where formerly the centres of the respective town quarters had been, and a sheep was slaughtered at the remains of the paramount chief Ologo Patu's palace. This sacrifice was performed by the delegates of the present *konô* (paramount chief) and his stool-priest (Fig. 2.2).²⁰

¹⁹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P. 2704/92 of 01.08.1892, M.P. 2797/92 [n.d.] and M.P. 3448/93 of 01.08.1893.

²⁰ The term *konô* (the one who is carried on the shoulders) goes back to the way, war leaders were honoured in the olden days, being carried through the town. Chief Ologo Patu who built the palace in the mountain town Yilo died on the 15th of March 1870. Basel Mission Archives

For the young people the visit to Krobo Mountain was mostly a fun-event – an opportunity to drink and socialize and, perhaps, have one’s photograph taken with one’s friends. Numerous ambulant photographers were present on the mountain and the expression “Snap me one!” could frequently be heard on this day.²¹ Ice-cream sellers carrying their heavy head-loads were hovering about the wilderness on the mountain-top, while youngsters carrying powerful ghetto blasters danced to the blaring sound of the latest hip-life and gospel highlife (Fig. 2.3).²²

At the south-eastern base of Krobo Mountain a mini-durbar was set where people danced to popular or court music, and where those who had returned from the mountain top relaxed in the shade provided by numerous canopies. Here they could witness the dramatic re-enactment of scenes that took place in August 1892, when the settlements on top of the mountain were abolished and the people were given just two days to abandon their family homes. They had to leave most of their belongings and buried treasures behind and some families even lost track of their members. Back then these homes were mainly inhabited by the old and unfit and the young women undergoing the *dipo* initiation rites, while the working population concentrated on farming lands at one to two days walking distance from the mountain.²³ The following Saturday a grand durbar at the lorry park in Somanya took place (see Fig. 2.7), followed on Sunday by a thanksgiving service. A week later a “meet-me-there” rounded off the festival. It was staged at Boti Falls – one of the Eastern Region’s developed tourist attractions – and was not only supposed to direct the visitor’s attention to the tourist potential of the up-country but was also to strengthen the ties between the people farming in the remote ‘bush’ villages and those living in the more ‘urban’ home towns.

The reactions in Manya Krobo to this festival were in general rather negative. There was a lot of rivalry between the two states. People in Manya Krobo did not applaud the Yilo Krobo efforts to promote integrated rural tourism based on guided tours through the up-country and especially visits to Krobo Mountain. There was hardly any co-operation. Perhaps this reflected envy of the economic enterprise displayed at Somanya. There is a long history of animosity and rivalry between the two states, which may be traced, in part, to the politics of the paramount chief of Manya Krobo. Soon after his *enstoolment* and guided by his father Peter Nyarko, chief Nene Emanuel Mate Kole tried to claim paramountcy over Yilo Krobo.²⁴ There was also a deeper critical discourse raised during

[BMA] D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 3, J. Zimmermann to the mission board, Odumase 30.03.1870.

²¹ Wendel and Behrendt 1998.

²² *Hip-life* is the latest variant of the *highlife*, the popular dance music of Ghana, which gained prominence in the 1950s. As the name indicates, hip-life is inspired by US-American hip-hop culture (Braehler 2004: 1-4).

²³ BMA D-1.29 Afrika 1877, Odumase 136, Johannes Weiss and Rudolf Furrer, Odumase ???.1848, Yearly report, pp. 4-6.

²⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs. Petition signed by Emanuel Mate Kole and others, Odumase 28.08.1899. The whole issue of seniority and the two Krobo states has been ably dealt with by David Henige (1974). Already in 1852 Yilo Krobo would complain that

my visits. – “How can you celebrate an event that should be remembered with eyes red from weeping”? People said, “The Yilo are not real Krobo, they are all strangers, they don't know the proper thing”. Some Manya Krobo claimed one could easily tell from their physiognomy that the Yilo Krobo were late comers and thus strangers. On the one hand it is said, that the lively market of Somanya attracted people from many parts of the country making for a very mixed population. On the other hand, the Yilo Krobo settlements on Krobo Mountain are said to be less ancient than the Manya Krobo ones. From a Manya Krobo perspective they are on the far side of the mountain. It is said that the Yilo, as late-comers, were allocated that place in order to protect the Manya Krobo settlements. The Yilo Krobo, however, retaliate by saying that the location of their historical settlements on the higher side of the mountain was strategically superior over that of the Manya Krobo. Therefore they say, that it is rather the Manya Krobo who are the late-comers. This, some would claim, can be seen from the name Manya which could be translated as “the outskirts of the town”.²⁵ Of course these arguments are not very helpful. It is obvious that even in the most prestigious Manya Krobo families there has been much intermarriage with ‘foreigners’, be it with slaves or with ruling families from neighbouring states (often to foster diplomatic bonds).

Part of ‘the proper thing’ had taken place some two weeks before the *kloyosikplemi*, when Manya Krobo staged its annual *ngmayem* festival. During this event, there was a similar procedure, some elements were different though and associated the festival more closely with the institution of chieftaincy: The celebration started with the paramount chief's stool rituals. On Wednesday the ancestors were remembered when in the early morning the warriors led by the *asafoatsâmei* visited the royal cemetery and poured libations on the graves of the ancestors.²⁶ This was indeed a sensitive and liminal situation which involved a lot of shooting and drinking. Women were not allowed to the cemetery but they played an important part in welcoming the men upon their return to the ‘normal world’. This was a show in itself, much like a victorious return from war: The *asafoatsâmei*, that is the clan chiefs who are in charge of organising the young men in the clan for war and communal labour, were carried on the shoulders of their subjects through the town to the paramount chief's palace,²⁷ while the women cheered them on, singing praise songs, dancing and waving green branches or pieces of cloth (Fig. 2.4).

the chief of the Manya Krobo had once sought to establish supremacy over them by allying himself with the Asante, whom he invited to wage war on the Yilo Krobo (BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 56, J. Chr. Dieterle, Akropong 31.05.1852, p. 5).

²⁵ *Ma* is the town, *nya* means around (Odonkor 1971: 47; Ashie [n.d.]b: 35).

²⁶ The *asafoatsâ* (pl. *asafoatsâmei*) is both clan chief and war captain. The office as well as the name is clearly based on the Akan *asafo* company.

²⁷ The term *konô*, designating the Krobo paramount chiefs, goes back to this mode of carrying a leader: “The one who is carried on the shoulders.”



Fig. 2.4: *Kleme* - the silent day observance during the *ngmayem* festival of 1998. Coming back from their visit to the royal cemetery, the *asafoatsâmei* are carried shoulder-high to the paramount chief's palace. Picture by Veit Arlt, date 28.10.1998.

The third day witnessed the visit to the Manya Krobo mountain towns on the northern side of Krobo Mountain. There were the same libations at the family houses and a sacrifice at the remains of paramount chief Nene Sakite I's palace.²⁸ In the same way as in Yilo Krobo, the mountain was invaded by a huge crowd of people from near and far, including a few tourists. However, the ritual which took place at the site of the former palace was more elaborate and was performed in secrecy. In 1998 I was invited by the paramount chief of Manya Krobo, Nene Sakite II, to witness its performance under the guidance of his state linguist (*otsiami ngwa*), Nene Huarpoyu II. The experience, however, came to an abrupt end, when one *asafoatsâ* from the Djebiam-Agbom division arrived on the scene and expressed his discontent with my presence.²⁹ The situation very quickly turned into a highly uncomfortable one and I had to leave the mountain

²⁸ The name of *Konô* Sakite I is often rendered as Sakitey in order to make clear the pronunciation (Sakité). While this could be confusing with other Krobo names, where the ending -teye or -tei refers to the third-born, it is unproblematic within this specific Odumase family. Here it designates the first-born boy; the second is Nyarko or Nyako, the third Teye or Tei).

²⁹ The Djebiam Agbom-clan of Agomanya is closely connected to the ruling Djebiam-Nam clan of Odumase. During the interregnum following the death of the late paramount chief Nene Fred Azzu Mate Kole in 1990, it was Nene Adipa Tekpanor of Djebiam-Agbom who led the Manya Krobo. Not long after the installation of the present paramount chief Nene Sakite II, Nene Adipa Tekpanor died. He had been one of the last illiterate chiefs in the Krobo region who, nevertheless, enjoyed a lot of respect due to his vast knowledge of tradition.

immediately, as even the state linguist said he could not guarantee my safety. This ejection was partly due to a chieftaincy dispute which was taking place at that time.³⁰ The chief of the Dom division of Manya Krobo, who also lays claims to the paramountcy, had even called for an alternative durbar and *ngmayem* celebration. It was held that very day at Manyakpongunor Memlesi. On this occasion he had a representative of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) address the crowd in support of the Dom people's claim.³¹ Ironically it was due to my expulsion from the mountain by a representative of the paramountcy that I had the chance to attend this function. Because of my residence with a family related to the Konorpiem clan of the Dom division, I was frequently viewed as sympathising with the Dom chief's ambitions – hence the allegation that I was spying for the Dom. My ejection underlined that the ritual performed on Krobo Mountain was of great importance and, indeed, was an integral part of the paramount chief's power. As will be shown, it is exactly the secrecy in which it is performed that makes it mighty.

The next day the grand durbar of the chiefs and people of Manya Krobo took place. In the course of it the priests sprinkled the new millet (Fig. 2.5) – a practice referred to as *ngmayem* (eating the new millet). The priests had already performed this ritual within their respective divisions in more private celebrations. The ceremony during the durbar was of a more symbolic nature. It emphasized the paramount chief's authority over the whole state and demonstrates that his rule was sanctioned by the priesthood. Celebrating the harvest of the new millet crop is highly anachronistic and is a relic from a distant past when the ancestors of the first settlers on Krobo Mountain were still living further to the North-east. Under the ecological conditions of south-eastern Ghana millet is not attractive as a staple food, the diet today being dominated by corn (maize), yam, cassava, plantain and coco yam (taro). When the first Basel missionaries came to Krobo in the mid-nineteenth century, millet had already lost its significance as a staple food. People remembered that it had been of importance one or two generations earlier. Millet continued to be grown by the priests for ritual purposes, its cycle of growth informing the Krobo ritual calendar.³²

³⁰ See Introduction and Arlt (1997a).

³¹ The CHRAJ was introduced in 1993 under the 1992 constitution and integrates previously distinct functions. It possesses a broad mandate to investigate, among other things, complaints of human rights and administrative justice violations and allegations of state corruption. In a country where court cases often drag for years on end, it further functions, to a certain degree, as a bypass to a tedious and expensive legal process.

³² Huber 1993: 46-67, 243-244.



Fig. 2.5: Sprinkling the new millet during the 1998 *ngmayem* festival. From right to left the *labia* (assistant) for Okumo, Adjime and Okumo himself. Picture by Veit Arlt, date 30.10.1998.

The presence of these priests at the festival is quite remarkable. On the one hand the senior priests' interaction with ordinary people and more especially with strangers is highly limited through taboos. At the same time, their participation in the *durbar* exposes them to a great mass of spectators and media. On the other hand, most of those attending the *durbar* belong to a Christian church and the latter fiercely oppose the performance of 'heathen' rituals of any kind. Yet at both the *ngmayem* and *kloyosikplemi* festivals the priests pour libations invoking all the different deities of the Krobo except the Christian God, sing and dance to *klama* songs in which the historical knowledge of the people is transported, and sprinkle the new millet. All of these activities make the onlookers contravene church regulations, by participating in 'heathen' practices. In the performance of the *durbar*, however, the churches too are allocated a part to play. They usually do an opening and a closing prayer and might entertain the crowd by having one of their brass bands, singing bands or choirs perform within the programme. Obviously the *durbar* aims at, and succeeds in, uniting the most diverse actors in society. While each of them has to compromise on major principles, the participation in this state gathering is necessary for asserting authority.



Fig. 2.6: Imagining the expulsion from the mountain home.
Ngmayem festival 2000, Odumase Laasi. Picture by Veit Arlt, date October 2000.

The working of this system of checks and balances is further illustrated by the display of dancing *dipo* girls. *Dipo*, the initiation rites for young girls into Krobo womanhood, has always been the *piece de resistance* in the spreading of the gospel in Krobo. The Basel Mission, trying to make a clear cut between 'tradition' and Christianity, bitterly opposed the ritual. Girls of Christian parents were not allowed to do *dipo*. The rites, however, were the *conditio sine qua non* for becoming an honourable Krobo woman. In former times pregnant women and girls, who had not been initiated, would be driven away and banned from Krobo. The missionaries objected to both the reverence of the deity *kloweki* inherent in the ritual and the general nakedness and luxury associated with the ritual. During the rites the girls would go bare-breasted (wearing only a loin cloth). Once they had passed through the rite successfully, they were richly adorned with masses of beads strung around their hips (and in later times dressed in abundant cloth) and presented to the public. The rite is definitely the most important mechanism for conveying Krobo culture and tradition.³³ The nakedness and concern with the body as well as the display of riches, of course, was (and the former still is) a main point of contention. As early as 1897 the newly enstooled Many Krobo paramount chief Nene Emanuel Mate Kole (himself a former Basel Mission teacher) reformed the ritual, which

³³ Steegstra 2002: 207; idem 2004: 278-282.

had been banned in 1892, by reducing it to the final *outdooring* part,³⁴ when girls go around beautifully adorned, extending thanks to their relatives. *Bobum*, as this rite was called, saw the girls parade in the street adorned in beads, head kerchiefs, purses, and umbrellas, as well as beautiful cloth covering their breasts (Fig. 5.8). This is also the type of outfit worn by the girls performing the dances during the *ngmayem* durbar. It allows for the reconciliation of tradition and modernity within the framework of the durbar.³⁵

To the best of my knowledge the *ngmayem* celebration of 2000 was the first time that the dramatic expulsion from the mountain was enacted in a "cultural display", which by its content, and the historical dresses used, resembled closely that of the *kloyosikplemi* festival.³⁶ The women had dressed in old *kente* cloth, mostly of Anlo-Ewe origin (Fig. 2.6). The thick woven cloth was wrapped around the body in such a way as to greatly exaggerate the shape and size of their hips and bottom. Underneath the cloth, some of them had placed a cushion on their buttocks. This cushion (Dangme: *otufo*) is said to have provided support for the child carried on the mother's back. This form of dress conveys the image of mature womanhood and fertility.³⁷ Some of them handled a *kutsie* as a further symbol of the role of women as providers and as carriers of tradition. This wooden ladle is used in stirring porridge. When displayed in oversize during ceremonial occasions, it corresponds to a linguist's staff. All kind of objects conveying the notion of a distant past were used: replicas of old-time wooden sandals, chests, brass pans, and lamps made of open dishes containing some palm oil with a piece of torn cloth functioning as wick. In addition some performers dressed up as wild beasts alluding to the dangers of the times and others as soldiers driving the people from the hill. This display at the Manya Krobo durbar was much in the way of a somewhat detached theatrical performance, while in Yilo Krobo there was more interaction with the public. There, the performers first climbed Krobo Mountain where they mixed with the other visitors, alerting them to the historical basis of the event. Later they even marched all the way back to Somanya.

The durbar at Odumase featured the usual lengthy programme of 17-19 items: endless speeches, addresses, votes of thanks, prayers etc. mostly marred by bad but powerful

³⁴ In Ghanaian English *outdooring* refers to the naming ceremony for a child (*bi kpo-døeml*), when it is officially introduced to the wider family and the public, or to the re-introduction of a person into society after having been installed as a chief or queenmother.

³⁵ At other times girls performing for a cultural troupe dressed with piece of cloth wrapped around their waist as a short skirt and covered their breasts with a piece of skin-coloured cloth.

³⁶ The importance of an attractive display and innovations therein is highlighted by Greene (2002: 1030).

³⁷ The *kente* cloth of Anlo-Ewe origin used to be and to some extent still is the Ghanaian manufactured cloth of choice in Krobo, as against the fancier and well known *kente* of Asante origin. This choice reflects the historical ties with the Ewe people, with whom the Krobo share a history of migration, and the difficult historical relationship with the hegemonic Akan peoples. On the use of *kente* cloth in Krobo see Kraamer (2002 and 2005).

acoustic amplification through impressive pyramids of loudspeakers. All this was topped by a blazing sun burning down on the canopies sheltering the more fortunate of the guests. Whoever has the stamina to do so will on the next morning visit the inter-denominational thanksgiving service concluding the week of festivities. Of course many Christians attend this part of the celebration only. It evokes the important role Christianity has played in the history of the paramount chieftaincy of Manya Krobo and the cordial relationship between *Konô* Odonkor Azu and the Basel Mission, which is at the root of this history. This big man, who eventually achieved the position of a paramount chief of Manya Krobo, had invited the missionaries to Odumase in the mid-nineteenth century. Odonkor Azu not only allocated land to the mission to build a church and mission station, but more importantly he had assigned the missionaries a specific role to play in his quest for power. The Basel Mission presence at Odumase was an important factor in the development of the small hamlet of Odumase into the capital of Manya Krobo and in the definite establishment of the paramountcy in its present lineage.

So then, was this *ngmayem* festival the 'real thing'? Its historical origins go back to the year 1939, when Nene Fred Azzu Mate Kole became paramount chief of Manya Krobo.³⁸ Despite the fact that its practice predates the Yilo Krobo's *kloyosikplemi* festival, it is equally an invented tradition. The state linguist for Yilo Krobo *Otsiami* Amakwata told me, that he had helped to introduce in his state a festival similar to the *ngmayem* of the Manya Krobo around 1972. His account illustrates nicely the politics of innovation surrounding Ghanaian festivals. Amakwata stated that he was driven by a certain feeling of envy then prevailing in Yilo Krobo towards the well-established and popular Manya Krobo *ngmayem* celebrations. With their peaceful and state-building image these attracted not only large crowds, but more importantly, saw the presence of invited state guests. He said that at first he had wanted to transform the yearly celebration of the war god *kotoklo* as, due to its 'heathen' image, it was attracting fewer and fewer visitors. He received his inspiration from witnessing the hunting festival *aboakyer* at Winneba in the Central Region. This ritual for a war god formerly involved the killing of a human being but today is marked by the hunt of a bush buck. Amakwata thought that the once popular festival for the war god *kotoklo* in his home town might be popularised in a similar vein. His efforts to stage it as a full state-festival in 1966 were, however, stopped by members of the Presbyterian Church. It was foremost the zealous Revd Teyegaga, who accused him of re-introducing a 'heathen' festival.³⁹ Amakwata's plans were further marred when, as a member of parliament of the first republic, he was detained during the coup that toppled Nkrumah.

³⁸ GNA Koforidua KD 31/6/542 Customary Festivals Celebration, No. 108: Letter by the Secretary of the Traditional Council [of Manya Krobo] to all Dadematsemei, Huzanyatsemei, Ewe, Hausa headmen etc., dated 12.08.1964. In this circular the celebration of the 25th *ngmayem* festival was announced.

³⁹ Revd Teyegaga waged a bitter war against everything traditional. Part of his campaign was authoring a booklet on the *dipo* girls' initiation rites (Teyegaga: 1985).



Fig. 2.7: At the 1998 *kloyosikplemi* durbar on the Somanya lorry park. The driving force behind the festival: *Swapoló* Nene Tuumeh I and on the left Yilo Krobo state linguist Amakwata. Picture by Veit Arlt, date 07.11.1998.

Amakwata however did not give up this project. In 1972 a second attempt with a less charged symbol proved successful. This time the festival centred on a visit to Krobo Mountain with a small durbar to be held at the base of the hill. The festival went by the name *klowem-yam*, translated as “going to the Krobo Mountain home”. It was not as big as the Manya Krobo’s *ngmayem* festival and seems to have been discontinued eventually. There had been high hopes to make it a joint occasion for both Yilo and Manya Krobo but this ambition did not materialise. Amakwata was again instrumental in introducing the *kloyosikplemi* festival in 1992.⁴⁰ The driving force behind the now suc-

⁴⁰ Interview with *Otsiami* Tetteh Amakwata, Oklibone School for Higher Education, Somanya 08.12.2000. Tetteh Amakwata was a member of parliament during the first republic and before being appointed he went to Winneba for a Diploma in Political Science at the Kwame Nkrumah Political Institute. Together with one of his co-organisers he was detained after the coup in 1966 for three and a half months and therefore the refurbished *kotoklo* festival scheduled for that year could not come on. Later Amakwata went into education and established his own Oklibone School of Higher Education. He is a historian of Krobo in his own right and – besides having authored many of the pamphlets and brochures of the Yilo Krobo festivals – he has been working on a manuscript on the history of Yilo Krobo. As linguist of the Yilo Krobo traditional state, he has for a long time informed the image of the state in the

successful initiative, however, was a wealthy business man who, for his involvement in developing the Yilo Krobo region, was made a *swapob* (a kind of development chief)⁴¹ (Fig. 2.7). Accordingly, the motto for the festival was “Mobilisation of Resources for Effective Development of Yilo Krobo Communities”, a slogan that testifies to the ever intensifying preoccupation with development. Within the economic environment of the 1990s, when Structural Adjustment programmes and the downsizing of the state took a heavy toll on the Yilo Krobo state, it needed urgently to attract both Government representatives and public attention to the area, making use of culture and history as a base for development.

Later on I will mention some early forms of festivals in the same vein as the *ngmayem* and the *kloyosikplemi* and will provide insights into the context of their introduction. Looking at the two grand present-day festivals I have shown that people are concerned with authenticity but that – considering the fact that both festivals are rather recent inventions – the question which of the two festivals is more authentic is not all that important. What is important, though, is the fact that there is a competition between Manya Krobo and Yilo Krobo, which is fought in terms of historical knowledge, authenticity of feeling (in remembering the trauma of the abolition of the mountain settlements), pureness of culture and tradition, and in terms of first comers vs. late comers. This latter dichotomy was partly also at the root of the chieftaincy struggle in Manya Krobo mentioned above, where the late-comers are credited with having brought the Akan concept of chieftaincy to Krobo but where the first-comers, in whose clans the priestly authority was vested, managed to transfer the warrior stools to their lineage. Ritual performers (i.e. the priests connected to the worship of the deity *kloweki*) play some role in both festivals but they do not seem to be at centre stage. At the 1998 *kloyosikplemi* durbar they even threatened a walk-out as they had not been accorded a central role and had been seated at a corner of the durbar ground. Even at the Manya Krobo festival, which has taken over the name of the important and ancient ritual of celebrating the new millet crop, the performance of the priests tends to be poorly featured and their authority in setting the date for the ritual is hardly acknowledged.

Ghanaian public. A few years ago he began losing his sight and has since retired from his office.

⁴¹ This is Nene Osayem Odorkor Tuumeh I, who besides running an international import-export business and many other activities, is on the board of directors of the Bank of Ghana. The concept of binding resourceful persons into the traditional state, by according them an honorary title, has a long tradition in Ghana. In recent times it has become an important element in rural development policies. Chieftaincies can convey the title of *nkosuohene* (Twi: development chief) to resourceful members of the community, but also to tourists and expatriates, honouring their interest in the locality or inviting them to initiate local projects. The titles conveyed can in most cases be translated as ‘advisor’. The office is transient and non-hereditary (Ghana Centre for Democratic Development [CDD] 2001: *Governance, Democracy and Development in Africa. A Cultural Approach*. Paper presented to the International Conference for Economic Development and Planning IDEP at Dakar, Senegal 10-14 December 2001, pp. 33-34).

The durbars at both Krobo festivals do not differ much from those performed in the neighbouring Akan states. The chiefs and their attendants display similar regalia (such as *obonu* drums, palanquins, golden rings and necklaces and sword carriers) and the same behaviour. As in the neighbouring Akuapem *odwira* festivals they try to rally their subjects from all over Ghana to their home towns and paramount chiefs. Not only the present day Krobo festivals but, as we will see, also their precursors were rather recent innovations. Like Krobo chieftaincy as such, they were coined to a large extent on the example of the neighbouring Akan states. There is a specific Krobo element though: Both festivals establish a link with Krobo Mountain and it is obvious that this landmark plays an important role in the construction of Krobo identity. In the following section I will go back into the Krobo past in order to shed light on the mountain's constitutive role in the development of the two Krobo states. While the expulsion from Krobo Mountain features prominently in the two contemporary festivals, the mountain towns in 1892 were no longer important as places of settlement. The mountain still was the ritual centre of society. In some way the abolition actually freed the people from the onerous burden of having to return there for rituals and allowed them to shift the places of worship closer to their actual residences. The history which I will be narrating starts with the earliest settlements on Krobo Mountain.

2.2 THE MAKING OF THE TWO KROBO STATES

As a language Krobo is a dialect within the Ga-Dangme language group. Those clans that claim to belong to the eldest elements within Krobo society narrate a history of migration going back to Notsie in Togo and to Sameh in eastern Benin, which they share with most other Dangme- and Ga-speaking groups.⁴² I will not add to the speculations on when the first groups settled on the rocky Inselberg which came to be known as Krobo Mountain. For this I refer the reader to the writings of Louis Wilson and the works of various Krobo historians.⁴³ According to Wilson the first settlers on the mountain who were to form the first stock of Krobo society arrived there "from around the fourteenth century" and the name "Crobbo" was first mentioned on a map in 1701.⁴⁴ The early settlers found the top of this rocky mountain to be an ideal shelter in a time of slave-raiding and frequent warfare. Its steep faces facilitated defence and control of access. Several waves of refugees and other migrants were integrated into the society on the condition that they observed certain rules most of which were shared with other Dangme

⁴² Dangme histories narrate a joint history up to a certain point when the stock dispersed from their place of abode at Lolovor into the distinct present units Krobo, Shai, Osudoku, Ada (Kropp Dakubu 1972: 98-100). Wilks (1956) has pointed out that this Lolovor narrative is a myth geared to specific ends.

⁴³ Wilson 1991: 14ff. Among the Krobo historians are Noa Akunor Agwae Azu (1929a and b), Thomas Harrison Odonkor (Samuel Saki Odonkor 1971), Fred Azu Mate Kole (1955), Tetteh Ashie ([n.d.]a, [n.d.]b) and Gabriel Sikapa (1937). Most of these authors are cited below.

⁴⁴ Wilson 1991: 14, 33.

groups and were to become essential features of Krobo (or *Klo*) identity.⁴⁵ Among these were the use of the Dangme language and of a specific naming pattern, not to send messengers outside Krobo without permission, circumcision of the male children, and the *dipo* rites initiating girls to womanhood.⁴⁶ Connected to this institution was the veneration of the deity *kloweki*.⁴⁷ The worship of this deity was and still is organised according to the cycle of growth of millet, which accordingly informs the *ngmayem* celebration described above. All these rules were framed in a set of taboos. Whereas those already mentioned served to amalgamate the heterogeneous population on Krobo Mountain, others helped to differentiate Krobo farmers, who were engaged in expanding their farmlands in the frontier zone,⁴⁸ from the neighbouring Akan. For example, unlike the Akan, Krobo people would not eat snails, the meat of monkeys, or meals prepared on the basis of fermented corn dough such as *kenkey* or *banku*, which today dominate the diet in Krobo as in most of southern Ghana.⁴⁹ Krobo farmers would also distinguish themselves by observing rest days in honour of their deities.⁵⁰

Various other cults existed in the different clans. Some of them cut across their differences, like the cult of *kloweki*, while others remained limited to one specific group. Multiple allegiances to different cults on different levels of importance is a typical element of Krobo religious practice. As Revd Peter Kodjo put it: "You can pay allegiance to one deity and at the same time have your personal object of worship hidden in your

⁴⁵ The term *Krobo* is Twi, i.e. the language of the neighbouring Akan. In the Dangme language people refer to themselves as *Kloli* (sg.: *Klono*) and to their state as *Klo*. Due to the dominance of the Akan Twi as a lingua franca in Ghana, it is *Krobo* and not *Klo* which is generally used on signboards, in the media, and in books. The Basel Mission from the beginning used the term *Krobo* and only in 1871 Missionary Zimmermann who was in charge of the Ga-Dangme translations tried to switch to *Kro*. Editors in Basel ignored this effort to differentiate and chose to continue using *Krobo*. See for example the following report by Zimmermann. BMA D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 6, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 31.03.1871, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Clearly the prohibition of sending messengers outside Krobo without prior authorisation is a sign of the defensive history of Krobo. Slaves were in the same way integrated into the society. They were not just bought for their labour, but also to increase the fecundity of the Krobo. The first generation was not allowed to undergo the full *dipo* ritual and to be buried on the mountain. The offspring of slaves and Krobo, however, belonged to the family and by and by the distinction disappeared. Today slave-ancestry is not spoken about, but it can be brought into play during succession disputes, when it can prevent people from accessing chiefly offices (Steggstra 2004: 84). On slave ancestry as a difficult topic in oral history see Greene (2003: 41-53).

⁴⁷ Interesting enough the worship of the deity *Kloweki* was itself a 'late-comer' addition to the society on Krobo Mountain (Azu 1929a: 14).

⁴⁸ I will elaborate on the frontier later on.

⁴⁹ In most Krobo shrines the visitor wanting to attend ritual performances is asked not to eat any dishes prepared on the basis of fermented corn the day before visiting the shrine. The meal prepared from unfermented corn dough is called *akple* and today is not very popular.

⁵⁰ GNA CSO 21/22/177 Report on Manya Krobo Land Affairs by Dr. M. J. Field, Govt. Anthropologist 1940-41, Saltpond 28.12.1941. With the expansion into Akan territory more and more Krobo people had to acknowledge the cults of the deities they met on the land. These were mainly river spirits. Their cults imposed further days of rest and by and by Krobo farmers in this religious frontier zone stopped observing those days of rest imposed by their own cults. The geographical limits of the Krobo deities' influence are formed by the river Ponpon.

pocket".⁵¹ With time a system of priestly rulers emerged with the priestess for the deity *kloweki* holding the most eminent position.⁵² These priestly rulers were called *døemeli*, sometimes translated as "the eldest people in the world".⁵³ According to Puplampu the *døemeli* consisted of three classes of members: "ruling princes," priests (*ganô*), and war leaders (*konô*). The cults in charge of the priests who were part of the *døemeli* were the most senior ones, the *døemawô*, which enjoyed respect all over Krobo.⁵⁴ The four most prominent of the *ganôhi* (priests) formed the *anikaka* council, a court which exercised both juridical and religious functions. Even though the priestess to the deity *kloweki* herself did not sit on this council she had the last say in any decision. The rule of this priestly elite was based on secrecy; and was enforced through taboos. As the Ghanaian art-historian and specialist on Dangme and Ewe culture Nii Quarcoopome has shown, the discourse on power among the Dangme-speaking people equates power with secrecy (*agbaa*): "*None ile ne olio dzi none ike peo*" – "What I know, that you [ought to know but] do not know, is what makes me powerful".⁵⁵ This knowledge was contained in songs and dances performed during rituals and other gatherings. The meaning of the songs, however, was not accessible to everybody, as their verses are allegories and allusions. Puplampu has compared them to an immense card index system which allows the one conversant with the library to retrieve the information from a collective memory.⁵⁶ Today this knowledge has become even less accessible, as the verses are kept in an old form of the Dangme language.

Priests were the guardians of the knowledge about the spiritual world. They were specialists who mediated between the human and the cosmic. Without them people would be fully exposed to the powers of the spirit world. And it is from this gap in specialized knowledge that they retrieved their power.⁵⁷ The taboos through which the priests regulated social norms and exercised their authority were for example: pregnancy without having undergone the *dipo* initiation rites, rearing of goats (a privilege of the priests), preparation and consumption of fermented corn such as the now very popular *kenkey*,

⁵¹ Interview with Revd Peter Kodjo, Accra 1996.

⁵² According to Wilson the system was in place "by the eighteenth century" (1991: 21).

⁵³ Ashie, Tetteh [n.d.]b: 3. The Dangme historian Noa Akunor Agwae Azu explains the term as "*dsemelii*" meaning "hunters of the worldly affairs" (1929a: 90). Huber thinks it more probable, that it refers to the characteristic bag of the priestly messengers *dŕeme* (1993: 242).

⁵⁴ Unfortunately Puplampu does not make clear, who the "ruling princes" were. All the same his attempt to differentiate the *dŕemeli* is very important. Too often they are simply presented as priestly rulers, which does not help us to understand the ancient system of leadership in Krobo and its transition (1951a: 166; Interview with *Wônô* Tetteh Gaga, Somanya 27.05.1996).

⁵⁵ Quarcoopome 1993a: 114. Brackets added by the author. Puplampu uses the same term *agbaa* used for secret knowledge to refer to the dancers transporting it. The dancers thus are part of the elite (1951b: 237).

⁵⁶ Puplampu 1951b: 237.

⁵⁷ Elias 1987b: 47-48, 78. Ranking among the priests is based largely on the amount of knowledge (Quarcoopome 1993b: 71).

and the building of permanent housing structures outside Krobo Mountain.⁵⁸ While some of these regulations seriously restricted the efficacy of Krobo farming and its expansion, the priests themselves had an even more limited sphere of action: the high-priests especially were not to stay off the mountain overnight and they were not to have direct contact with uncircumcised men, for example of Akan origin, or with people connected with the shedding of human blood.⁵⁹ These taboos emphasized the priests' special status and holiness, but they also limited considerably their ability to cope with the rapidly changing environment.⁶⁰

In the eighteenth century wars in the forest region of what is now Akyem Abuakwa made large numbers of Akan refugees seek refuge on Krobo Mountain. With these refugees, Akan military organisational know-how was introduced in Krobo.⁶¹ There had been military leaders appointed temporarily by the priestly rulers before; but now the principles of Akan military organisation boosted the capabilities of the society in expanding its scarce landed resources. Formerly the agricultural activities had been limited to the lands immediately surrounding the mountain, from where farmers could easily retreat to their mountain fortress. Now Krobo war leaders could successfully negotiate and fight with neighbours and expand their lands towards the Akuapem-Togo Range and beyond. Due to these demands of warfare, and the need to expand agriculture, a general and gradual change towards a new secular system of rule took place. The priests increasingly delegated specific functions to the new secular leaders. These often originated from among the late-comers and, more specifically, from among the immigrants with Akan ancestors. Parallel developments can be observed in other Dangme-speaking so-

⁵⁸ The fact that all these taboos are connected with the cult of the deity *Kloweki* points to the prominence of this deity in Krobo religious organisation. I am grateful to my colleague Marijke Steegstra for pointing this out to me. The sociologist Norbert Elias in one of his last unpublished papers interpreted this priestly rule as an early stage in the development of a sedentary society, the priestly elite distinguishing itself through special dress, being able to raise taxes (i.e. the fines demanded when a taboo was broken and a person or household had to be cleansed) (Elias 1987b: 9).

⁵⁹ Odonkor 1971: 53.

⁶⁰ There is a class of assistants to the priests, at times referred to as messengers or policemen, the so called *labia*, whose insignia is a bag made out of a antelope skin called *døeme* (Huber 1993: 241-242).

⁶¹ The Krobo are fond of their ancestors' prowess in war and their knowledge of guerrilla tactics adapted to fighting in the bush. The Manya Krobo actually claim that Baden-Powell was initiated in some Krobo war cult after he had employed Krobo warriors as scouts during the military campaign to Kumase in 1896 and that this experience inspired his scout movement. While I have not been able to verify this claim, it is a fact that the Krobo were under Baden-Powell during the campaign and that the latter in later years corresponded with Emanuel Mate Kole regularly. Further the Krobo stress that in contrast to the Akan societies there was no need for official executioners in Krobo as every Krobo man had the necessary knowledge and enjoyed spiritual protection from being haunted by the victim's soul. The two most important Krobo war gods are the famous *nadu* and *kotoklo*, which the Krobo adopted from the neighbouring Osudoku and Shai and which attained overarching significance for Manya and Yilo Krobo respectively. Besides these two there are numerous other war deities, whose significance is limited to specific divisions, clans or families.

cieties.⁶² The idea of an evolution from priestly rule to secular rule has informed many writings of historians from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Gold Coast. A typical example is Carl Reindorf's *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* where such a development from prophet-stage to priest-stage to king-stage is postulated.⁶³ These histories continue to inform writings on Krobo history today. It is clear that there has been a shift from priestly to secular rule in Krobo society. But when we speak of Krobo political authority up to the nineteenth century as a theocracy, and of the political class as of a theocratic oligarchy, we have to be aware of these connotations.⁶⁴

The "political-military machinery", which developed in this process, was charged with winning new land.⁶⁵ In the process the war-leaders gained in importance and managed to accumulate land and slaves. Whereas the old priestly authority was oriented towards internal affairs, the new big men who came up among the war leaders were interested in maximising their influence and agricultural production and proved receptive to ideas from outside the society. Probably it was the activity of Danish planters on the Southern Gold Coast that inspired the oil palm boom both in Krobo and in neighbouring Akuapem.⁶⁶ These planters were experimenting with prospective cash-crops in the transitional phase to legitimate trade. At the time the Basel missionaries had their first contacts with Krobo in the 1830s, a belt of oil palm plantations covered the stretch of land at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range. These palms were said to date from about 1815. The missionaries were told the plantations and the farm settlements in the plains had not existed around 1800.⁶⁷ But in the late 1840s the hamlets of Odumase and Sra, situated in a dense palm forest, were rapidly growing in size and importance. New lands on and beyond the Akuapem-Togo Range were being cleared, and Krobo farmers were engaged in producing for both regional and world markets. They had developed a kind of frontier farming which allowed them rapidly to expand their ventures, acquiring new lands by purchase. Not only the profits gained from the palm oil itself, but equally important, those from the crops the farmers planted immediately upon clearing the forest lands, allowed for this rapid expansion. Staple crops such as plantains, coco yam (taro), yam, cassava and vegetables grew extremely well in the freshly cleared forest soil fertilized with ash from the burnt forest vegetation. This surplus production was sold on

⁶² Akrong 1998: 57-69; Quarcoopome 1993b: 202-204.

⁶³ Reindorf 1895: 114 and 117. John Parker urged me to question this model as being informed by missionary teachings, when he commented on the paper that was at the origin of this chapter. Theologian Ulrike Sill, however, observed that there is no evident biblical basis for such a model and that Reindorf would with all likelihood have made reference to such a basis.

⁶⁴ Wilson 1991: 49ff. Wilson's extensive discussion of this process could include a more critical handling of the sources at his disposition.

⁶⁵ Amanor 1994: 55. The terminology used by Amanor is partly influenced by Margaret Field's article on the Krobo's "bloodless conquest" (1943: 54) and Wilson's adoption of this term for both an article (1990: 269-297) and a chapter of his thesis (1991: 72-99).

⁶⁶ Johnson 1964/5; Adams 1957; Nørregård 1968: 174-185; Kea 1995: 121, 122, 135, 139.

⁶⁷ Der Evangelische Heidenbote 3(1867), p. 36.

new markets, which were established at the foot of the mountain range along both old and new trade routes. Once the palm seedlings had grown to a certain size, their shade did not allow for further cultivation of the above-mentioned crops and their production was shifted to the next freshly-cleared plot of forest-land.

With the transition from military conquest of new land, to acquisition by purchase, a new system was developed based both on the military and diplomatic know-how and wealth of the new leaders. This was the purchase of lands by groups of farmers, who sought the leadership of one experienced and influential person. This appointed land-leader (*zuginyadalo*) would contact potential sellers (for example the chief of Begoro in neighbouring Akyem Abuakwa) who would point out a tract of land. Upon inspection of the land and negotiation of the price the *zuginyadalo* would collect the contributions from all members of the purchasing group of farmers (who sometimes belonged to different clans, families and divisions) and completed the transaction including the demarcation of the whole stretch of the land. He might also advance the money or part of it, whereby he would make sure to receive manual labour in return from his debtor, which again allowed him to clear his own farm land in time. According to the up-country topography, such lands were mostly sections of a valley and were thus demarcated by a river running at the base and a crest on the top, the other two sides being demarcated by a line running more or less at a 90° angle to the stream. Later this land would be shared among the farmers according to individual contributions, each of them receiving a strip of land stretching from the river to the crest.⁶⁸ The land leader would in most cases receive an extra piece of land from the group to honour his effort, and/or the seller might 'dash' him an extra piece of land too. By this system the land-leaders could easily widen their lead in accumulating land, wealth and influence. Even the land-leaders' descendants would be respected by the people now on the land.⁶⁹ Along with the system of purchase went an organisation of the *huza*, which was independent from the primary ties of the participants (in this case the kinship ties) but was solely based on the territorial principle. Again the *zuginyadalo* played an important role in appointing a *huzatsâ* ("father of the *huza*" – a chief whose influence is restricted to the *huza* and who arbitrates cases and organises communal labour pertaining to the land) and depending on the size of the *huza* one or several *dadetsâ* ("father of the cutlass", also *dadematsâ* "chief of the cutlass" – an assistant to the *huzatsâ*). It is this *huza* system in which large tracts of land were bought by a group of farmers, which later inspired the company system of the Akuapem migrant cocoa farmers.⁷⁰ What makes the Krobo's *huza* system special though, is its organisation and the fact that the acquisition of land happened in a

⁶⁸ Most *huzas* carry the name of the stream together with a qualifier to differentiate between the several *huzas* on the same stream. This qualifier could refer to the geographical position of the land (for example Aworworso Sisi – Upper Aworworso), to the land leader (for example Dawa Mate Kole), or to the clan to which most of the buyers belonged (for example Osonson Korlenya).

⁶⁹ Interview with Paul Augustus Odzawo, Odumase 05.03.1999.

⁷⁰ Field 1943: 54-59; Hill 1997: 72-74.

fairly systematic fashion following the streams and rivers, whereas the Akuapem companies bought islands of lands within foreign territory. This allowed the Krobo in later years to quite convincingly lay claim to territorial jurisdiction over this area.

For some 150 years Krobo farmers continued to re-invest most of the profits gained from their surplus production in the same venture, thereby expanding their lands and their labour-force. Accumulating lands, purchasing slaves (or later controlling indebted labour), and promoting large families providing labour, turned into a “national ambition” typical for Krobo.⁷¹ The expansion of the region's boundaries, which was achieved in the course of this agricultural venture, is remarkable and has helped to challenge the contention that communal land-tenure in Africa hampered economic enterprise. The government anthropologist Margaret Field in 1943 was the first to describe and analyse the Krobo's system of land purchase through huzas. She went as far as to call this expansion a “bloodless conquest”. In 1963 Polly Hill published her ground-breaking book on the migrant cocoa farmers of southern Ghana, whose company system was inspired by the Krobos' system of land-purchase. Hill's analysis helped to break with the idea that African economics were merely reactive to colonial policies.⁷² Whereas she used the term *capitalist* to characterise the migrant cocoa farmers, Gareth Austin in his preface to the 1997 reprint of her book has preferred the term *entrepreneur*, which befits the economic attitude at stake more accurately.⁷³

In the mid-nineteenth century the Basel missionaries met two such entrepreneurs (or ‘big men’) who both had a background as military leaders, land leaders and successful large-scale farmers. Ologo Patu of Sra and Odonkor Azu of Odumase were ably interacting with neighbouring states, the proto-colonial agents on the coast, and the missionaries. This is illustrated in a report on one of the earliest trips of a Basel missionary to Krobo in 1848. Missionary Widmann visited only Ologo Patu. This caused his rival Odonkor Azu immediately to send his sister as a messenger to the Akropong mission station, where she enquired from Widmann why he had not paid a visit to Odonkor Azu as well.⁷⁴ It probably was the competition between these two men that led to the split of Krobo society into the two separate polities: Manya Krobo and Yilo Krobo. Not only did they introduce themselves as paramount chiefs to missionaries, traders, colonial agents and neighbouring chiefs. They also asserted that they represented two sovereign states, each consisting of six divisions. According to the Basel missionaries this structure corresponded to the settlement pattern on Krobo Mountain, where there were two towns called Manya and Yilo with six quarters each bearing the names of the six respective

⁷¹ Huber 1993: 39; Field 1943: 61.

⁷² See also Berry on the case of Nigerian cocoa farmers (1974: 83-84), Eckert on Cameroon (1999: 109-112) and Green and Hymer on the perception of the local farmer by agricultural experts (1966: 299-319).

⁷³ Austin 1997: xviii.

⁷⁴ BMA, D-1.2 Afrika 1842-48, Akropong 1848, No. 22, J. G. Wiedmann to the mission board, Akropong ??08.1848.

divisions.⁷⁵ It is interesting to note, that during the early encounters the two men are not described as chiefs but rather as the wealthiest and most influential men in their divisions.

At the time of the Europeans' increasing encounters with the Krobo, farming was no longer restricted to the immediate vicinity of Krobo Mountain. The mountain top had become overcrowded and was jammed with houses as the population had not been allowed to establish permanent settlements on their farms in the plains. The first half of the nineteenth century must have seen a dramatic change in the constitution of Krobo society. As we have seen, by the 1830s the main farms already consisted of mature oil palm plantations stretching along the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range. Even north-eastward beyond the ridge well into the Ponpon basin the forest was being cleared. When exactly the priestly policy towards permanent settlement in the plains was relaxed we do not know, but by 1845 the various hamlets situated in the palm plantations were well in existence and were growing fast with Sra and Odumase (the farms of the two entrepreneurs mentioned above) emerging as the major centres. These settlements became a secondary set of home towns while the expansion of the farm land continued at a rapid pace. The frontier with its pioneer settlements of young men and slaves shifted deeper and deeper into the forest areas to the West. By c.1860 the river Ponpon was reached and so were, by c.1890, the places where the important markets of Seke-sua, Bisa and Asesewa were to be established. This process was only halted in the 1920s when Akyem Abuakwa managed to stop the Krobo from buying further Akyem land.⁷⁶ The settlements in the plain and especially the market places like Kpong, Agomanya, Somanya, and the trading town of Akuse with its port Amedica became centres of great social and economic activity. Around 1915 a motor-road connected the Krobo up-country to the new railroad linking Koforidua to Accra. This brought about a re-orientation of many of the trade routes away from Akuse and contributed to the strengthening of the emerging up-country markets. Nevertheless, the market towns in the plains have maintained their cosmopolitan flair.

2.3 NEW LEADERS – NEW FORMS OF POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

As I have mentioned earlier, these economic and spatial developments were paralleled by a political change, which saw the emergence of a new class of secular leaders. In the following section I want to come back to the question of legitimacy. Obviously the economic prosperity of the two entrepreneurs, as perceived by missionaries and colonial agents, was an important feature in shaping and legitimising their leadership. This becomes even clearer when considering that the missionaries also identified “two hereditary rulers” in Krobo who did not rule at that time. At least in the case of one of them this was due to financial problems.⁷⁷ In contrast, when describing the farms of both

⁷⁵ Arlt 1995.

⁷⁶ Addo-Fening 1999.

⁷⁷ Arlt 1995 and 1996.

Ologo Patu in Sra and Odonkor Azu in Odumase in the 1850s, the missionaries were impressed by the labour force at the disposition of these big men whom they called *Oelfürsten*.⁷⁸ When pounding the palm nuts Ologo Patu could rely on 50 men and when sending his produce in palm oil to the coast, caravans of 100 to 200 men and women would carry the pots with oil. Each of them in the 1850s had some 10 to 13 wives and numerous children. The towns of Odumase and Sra having by and large developed out of the farms of these two men, their population mainly consisted of relatives and dependents. The term *Oelfürst* befits the way they assumed their leadership perfectly. Even the present Yilo Krobo paramount chief bears the appellation *kpetenkple* - the richest of the rich – a term used by missionary Zimmermann in 1851 to describe Ologo Patu.⁷⁹ Both of these men in their interaction with the Europeans made use of a set of symbols. For example, they both invested large sums in elaborate and ‘modern’ palaces on top of Krobo Mountain. They employed masons and carpenters from the coast to build them and they fitted them with European furniture.⁸⁰ It was Odonkor Azu who showed an even greater interest in “European ways” and was said to dress in European uniforms when interacting with Europeans.⁸¹ During one of his first visits to Odumase, missionary August Steinhauser had extensive discussions with Azu not only on religion but also on economy, arts and science, especially on the export of palm oil and the role of “treacherous European and mulatto middlemen” in the trade. Azu also showed interest in technology such as the processing of iron, and in achievements such as the construction of the Crystal Palace in London and in urbanisation in general.⁸² The chief had already set up a special building in the mountain town for a teacher to be deployed by the agents of the proto-colonial government.⁸³ Clearly these were men who had been appointed by their society as specialists in the interaction with strangers of all sorts.

Both men held court at their farm settlements. They not only settled disputes among Krobos but also mediated in land disputes with neighbouring states. However, despite their influence and ability, both Odonkor Azu and Ologo Patu seem to have had limited authority. The missionaries rightly assumed that they were bound by ulterior forces which they explained as superstition. The priestly authority being based on secrecy and

⁷⁸ BMA, D-1.8 Afrika 1857, Christiansborg 30, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg ?? .10.1857. *Oelfürsten* might be translated as “palm oil princes” (Arlt 1996).

⁷⁹ BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 13, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg 04.10.1851. See also the brochures for the 1992, 1995 and 1998 *kloyosikplemi* festivals.

⁸⁰ Arlt 1996: 4, quoting BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Akropong No. 39, G. Auer to mission board, Akropong 29.10.1858.

⁸¹ BMA D-1.7 Afrika 1856, Abokobi No. 8/III 89, A. Steinhauser, Abokobi ?? .09.1856, quarterly report to the mission board.

⁸² In his study of early nineteenth century cultural interchange of Asante and European emissaries Tom McCaskie has shown the strategic military motive of the *asantehene* in questioning his visitors on European culture and history. It seems that in comparison Odonkor Azu’s conversations with the missionaries were far more centred on trade than on warfare (McCaskie 1972: 42-44).

⁸³ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1838, No. 6, A. Riis, Akropong 06.07.1838. Published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, 13(1839), pp. 53ff.

taboos, the missionaries never really understood that there was a second fully established system of government at work, of which the secular rulers they were interacting with were mere spokespersons, but of which the latter tried to emancipate themselves. Odonkor Azu quite clearly tried to use the mission as an alternative system of belief and magical power which, with its education, was the perfect religion for trading on the Southern Gold Coast.⁸⁴ He actively invited the mission to establish a station at his farm village Odumase. The fact that he offered the mission a plot right next to his quarters indicates that he might have thought that in the long run he could challenge the priestly authority with the help of this alternative system of belief. Even though this did not come true the foundations were laid for Odumase to become the new seat of authority towards the end of the nineteenth century. The same applies to his competitor Ologo Patu and his farm village Sra. Ologo Patu's interaction with the missionaries was however immediately checked by the priests and he had to follow a decidedly anti-European policy. This had consequences for the development of the church in Yilo Krobo, which for a long time consisted solely of marginalized people, such as girls who had been expelled for not having undergone the *dipo* ritual. It is only in Odumase that a strong historical link between church and chieftaincy has developed.⁸⁵

Formal colonial rule was established in 1874.⁸⁶ Political legitimacy in Krobo was reinforced by the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance Act of 1883 (applied to Akyem Abuakwa in 1899). The Native Customs Ordinance of 1892 dealt specifically with "Krobo customs" transgressing British norms and working as a form of power that withstood colonial authority.⁸⁷ Much later the Native Administration Ordinance Act of 1927 formalised the system of indirect rule. The jurisdiction ordinance fully cemented the distinction into two separate Krobo polities with chief Sakite (son of Odonkor Azu, reigned from 1867-1892)

⁸⁴ Debrunner 1969: 7.

⁸⁵ Arlt 1996: 2. This is also evident from the way the late Many Krobo paramount chief Fred Azzu Mate Kole worked on the relationship with the town of Gerlingen in the 1970s and 1980s. Gerlingen is the hometown of nineteenth century missionary Johannes Zimmermann, who worked in Odumase from 1860 to 1872. Mate Kole was soliciting support for the completion of the new Presbyterian chapel at Odumase. See *Krobo-West German Fraternity Welcomes You. 12th-15th February 1988*. Accra: Jupiter Printing Press, pp. 8, 15-18. With paramount chief Fred Azzu Mate Kole this alliance was extended to include the Catholic Church (see section 5.6).

⁸⁶ I have called the situation before a 'proto-colonial' one in which various European merchant companies competed for trade rather than for territorial influence, and one in which the European influence did not go much beyond the distance covered by a canon shot fired from one of the castles on the coast (PRO CO 96/98 Governor Conran to Edward Cardwell, Cape Coast 07.10.1865).

⁸⁷ See Dirks on the policing of tradition in India, where the British in a similar vein interfered in the hook-swinging ritual. Here individuals volunteered to have iron hooks driven through their muscles beneath their shoulders, be suspended and swung around. This self-castigation was to propitiate the goddess of rain. As the "victims" participated on a voluntary basis, the colonial authorities found it difficult to suppress the ritual, which it deemed inhumane and barbarous. Much like in the Krobo case, government sensed, but did not fully understand, that the ritual as part of tradition "worked as a form of power". Eventually it was forbidden on account of an alleged casualty (Dirks 1979: 185, 201).

in Manya Krobo and Akrobetto for Yilo Krobo (reigned 1874-1908). The colonial government, which applied to these two independent "native states" its experience of the Akan situation, soon noticed that the two rulers did not have the authority it had ascribed to them. For example the two chiefs had immense problems with enforcing two seemingly rather unproblematic regulations: the maintenance of the roads and the establishment of public cemeteries. It was the latter which was among the reasons that led to the abolition of the settlements on Krobo Mountain as the family houses were also the burial places for the dead. In the following section I focus on this expulsion from Krobo Mountain which, as we have seen, plays an important role in the imagination of Krobo identity. At the same time I want to show how Krobo chiefs made use of the colonial government to expand their position. My account is centred on Manya Krobo where the developments that led to the abolition of the mountain settlements began. The aftermath of the abolition looks much the same in Yilo Krobo.

2.4 THE NATIVE CUSTOMS ORDINANCE OF 1892

On the 29th of January 1892 Nene Sakite I died. He had succeeded his father Odonkor Azu as the *konô* of Manya Krobo. Sakite had been enstooled in the late 1860s and thus before the formal establishment of colonial rule on the Gold Coast. Nene Sakite is remembered as a warrior mainly due to the role he played in the Asante war of 1873-4. To the colonial Government he had been a quite co-operative ruler. But due to his illiteracy the policies of indirect rule had to be passed on to him through his brother Peter Nyarko. Nyarko had been among the first Krobo converts of the Basel mission. He had been sent by his father Odonkor Azu to be trained by the missionaries.⁸⁸ Nyarko became a catechist alright but was eventually excluded from the congregation for his royalist and thus traditionalist ambitions. His actions became so focussed on assuming a key role in the governance of Manya Krobo that not only the missionaries kept at distance but also most of the Christians of Odumase. Even though Nyarko facilitated the colonial government's interaction with the Manya Krobo paramount chief, Sakite's illiteracy did not allow for that direct transmission of policies that indirect rule ideally relied on. Like the missionaries, government officials felt uneasy about Nyarko's hidden agenda in initiatives and petitions that were diligently phrased to suit the ideas of colonial government and mission. In the late years of his reign chief Sakite seems to have lost much of his wealth and his popularity, being indebted to several of his sub-chiefs.⁸⁹ His death provided Governor Griffith with an opportunity to assure the ascendance of an educated chief for Manya Krobo. He supervised the *enstoolment* of Peter Nyarko's son, a teacher

⁸⁸ Early converts were often slaves or royals without claim to the stool (Middleton 1983: 4).

⁸⁹ Bell 1911a: 158; GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P. 309/91: Report of Mr. Bell, D.S.V.R., on the Krobo Customs. 19.01.1891 and Letter by F. M. Hodgson, Colonial Secretary and Acting Governor to The Right Honourable, The Lord Knutsford, GCMG, Re: Election of Konor Mate Kole, Aburi 09.11.1891.

of the Basel Mission called Emanuel Mate as Nene Mate Kole I.⁹⁰ During the same durbar at Odumase in which Emanuel Mate Kole was *outdoored*, the governor proclaimed the Native Customs Ordinance and ordered the mountain to be vacated within three days.

Looking at the Native Affairs file at the Ghana National Archives covering the abolition of the mountain settlements it is striking to see that it actually starts with a petition to the governor written in 1884 by paramount chief Sakite of Manya Krobo, some of his headmen and councillors - among whom Peter Nyarko figures prominently.⁹¹ The petitioners complained that some of the Manya Krobo clans or divisions would hardly ever return to their settlements in the plains except for burials. Then they would come down from the up-country but would proceed directly to the mountain towns, where they would bury the corpse and perform the rituals connected to it. As later they would return straight to their farms, their houses in the villages in the plains were in decay. The petitioners also complained that among these people living up-country the cult of *koko nadu* was popular and that it made them come to the plains at night, stealing sheep, goats, palm wine etc. from the townspeople. The petitioners had not been able to track down the culprits. Thirdly the petitioners argued that people up-country were "ignorant of the fact that there was a mission-station with schools at Odumase, where their children could be trained". They called for an order by the colonial government that would compel the people to come down to the plains where they should enlarge the settlements. This would boost the evangelising work of the missionaries and thus the spread of "civilisation". They also demanded that *koko nadu* should be entirely abolished. This wish reflects the social and economic realities in Manya (and Yilo) Krobo at that time. The population was mostly staying up-country, some six hours or more walking distance from the new home towns in the plains and was engaged in intensive oil palm farming. People would hardly come to Odumase, the town of Sakite and the other home towns, except for a "two weeks holiday" as a missionary put it as early 1864. Then they would use their houses for a stop-over before proceeding to the towns on Krobo Mountain.⁹² At that time the towns in the plains had already become the new home towns from where the people would visit Krobo Mountain to assist their daughters undergoing the *dipo* initiation rites or to join in celebrations of other cults. Some twenty years before the up-country had still been a very insecure place where people had always been ready to flee to Krobo Mountain. But with the establishment of the Gold Coast Crown Colony much of this anxiety disappeared.

⁹⁰ Nyarko's diplomacy has resulted in the enduring chieftaincy dispute, which I have mentioned in my description of the *ngmayem* festival of Manya Krobo. The election of Emanuel Mate Kole's son as his successor in 1939 took place with the backing of the colonial government which quenched any opposition. The next succession which took place in 1998 was preceded by an eight year long chieftaincy dispute and the election of the present Manya Krobo paramount chief is still contested (Arlt 1997a).

⁹¹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, petition to the Governor William A.G. Younge, Odumase 28.11.1884 signed by Peter Nyarko and others and marked 2677/A and the according entry on the minute paper under M.P. 2677/A/84.

⁹² BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase 11a, J. Heck, Odumase 06.07.1864.

The grievances of chief Sakite and his counsellors reveal that despite the gain of importance of the former farm settlements, it was not the place where the people actually spent most of their time. Not only did the chiefs have difficulties in enforcing their authority over their people and in creating income through their courts – see *Konô* Sakite's loss of influence in the late part of his reign – but living in those settlements had also become more and more difficult. The decay of the houses that is lamented in the petition is a sign of the shifting of the Krobo frontier. There was only a limited food supply, as almost every bit of land had been planted with oil palms. These mature palm plantations represented a long-term investment of capital, which backed the further expansion, while the surplus from the frontier farming was continuously reinvested in the purchase of further lands. If not in some home-gardens, surplus food crops were only produced on the frontier, where new forest lands were cleared.⁹³ This made for a very expensive living in the home towns, as food had to be brought down from farms and markets as far as six to eight hours walking distance. The first big up-country market that was well established by 1895 was Obenyemi now called Guata.⁹⁴ Then the frontier with its markets shifted westward and Obenyemi lost in importance to the new and even more distant market centres of Bisa and Sekesua. Another problem the mission had to cope with, which was caused by this economy geared to oil-production and later cocoa farming, was the recruitment of labourers. As the missionaries complained, even the chiefs had a hard time getting their people to do communal labour. They could not even get their own "slaves" to work for them outside their farms.⁹⁵ The mission had to rely on artisans and labourers from Accra and had to realise that the Krobo farmers actually paid such workers better than would the mission. It is obvious that evangelisation among a population specialising in the large scale production of an export-crop and in constant migration proved very difficult. This is reflected in the way missionaries depicted Krobo, from the former fascination with the Krobo's industry and zeal, the tone changes to a rather negative one. Increasingly the missionaries and their African evangelists would describe the Krobo as being only concerned with land, children, and money. When the farmers came to Odumase they would be busy settling family matters and court cases "mostly dealing with women and land".⁹⁶

Nene Sakite's petition did not immediately result in the Native Customs Ordinance. In the government's reply he was asked to consult with his colleague *Konô* Akrobetto of Yilo Krobo, as the problem concerned the whole of Krobo. All the same some rules "sup-

⁹³ Amanor 1994: 60-62.

⁹⁴ BMA D-1.62 Goldküste 1895 Ga, Odumase 127, A. Deuber, Odumase 17.06.1895.

⁹⁵ BMA D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 4, G. H. Laissle, Odumase 31.03.1870. Slaves worked under conditions similar to sharecropping and led a rather independent life on the farms.

⁹⁶ This is a sign of the importance of family labour, especially after the abolition of slavery. The wish to have many children and the hunger for land as a feature of 'Kroboness' can be found in the writings of the missionaries as well as in the works of Margaret Field (1943: 54, 61) and Hugo Huber (1993: 39, 84). Both authors stress an attitude conducive to premarital children and to trial marriages.

pressing undesirable cults" such as *koko nadu* were drafted and sent to Odumase on the 19.03.1885. They provided for

(1) suppressing the worship of any Fetish which it is pretended has power to protect offenders, or to injure persons giving information of the commission of offences.

(2) punishing persons dealing in or possessed of any such Fetish or Fetish Charm.⁹⁷

It is worth mentioning that the cult of *koko nadu* had only recently been introduced into Krobo. It attracted especially young men, providing them with the strength and protection needed in a frontier environment that saw frequent disputes over land and in which wild animals like leopards and snakes threatened pioneer farmers. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the missionaries noticed that many new cults like *koko nadu* were introduced and they could be found mostly in the farm-area up-country.⁹⁸ Krobo, however, was rather known for its two great war cults *nadu* and *kotoklo*. Other than this petition on behalf of chief Sakite by Peter Nyarko the same file at the National Archives of Ghana in Accra contains a letter by catechist Emanuel B. Odonkor written a month earlier, in which the author complained about the ongoing worship of *nadu* and *kotoklo*, stating that every year murders were committed in connection with these cults. In reaction to this letter an interview was conducted with Odonkor by the District Commissioner of Akuse. But as Odonkor was unable to further substantiate his claims and as chief Sakite in an interview claimed that such murders had ceased years ago, the case was dismissed as an attempt by Odonkor "to get an official letter from the Government, which he could exhibit and declare to be some authority, under which he might be able, possible, to carry out some fraudulent purpose of his own".⁹⁹ It is rather intriguing that the colonial administration seems to have been unfamiliar with the two renowned war cults that, having been a popular feature in reports on the Krobo mission, were well known to readers of Basel Mission publications in Switzerland and Germany.¹⁰⁰ The Krobo chiefs, whose authority partly was dependent on these cults and who were aware

⁹⁷ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P. 2677/A/84.

⁹⁸ This proliferation of new cults also paralleled the later cocoa boom, which not only brought about increased migration, but also a tendency towards individualisation and accordingly put pressure on the extended family system (Field 1940: 141-143).

⁹⁹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, letter by Emanuel B. Odonkor to His Excellency Governor W. A. G. Younge, Odumase 27.10.1884; entry on minute paper dated 16.12.1884.

¹⁰⁰ See for example "Die Opfer der Neger auf der Goldküste." In: *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, 1(1865), pp. 14-15, here 14; "Ein Volksfest in Krobo." In: *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission für das Jahr 1864*, pp. 96-99 [also published in: *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 11(1864), p. 137]; "Die Krobo Neger [Part I]." In: *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 2(1867), pp. 22-27, here 26; "Die Krobo Neger [Part II]." In: *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 3(1867), pp. 36-43, here 42; C. Buhl: "Die Basler Mission auf der Goldküste." In: *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin*, Basel 1877, pp. 156-177, here 163; "Eine Reise durch das Adangme-Gebiet." In: *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1877*, pp. 70-74, here 72.

of the problems they created under a colonial legal system, carefully avoided mentioning them. We do not know what the precise relationship between the letter of Catechist Emanuel Odonkor and the petition by Sakite and others was. It is likely, that Odonkor's letter, which stirred up a matter chief Sakite must have preferred not to be exposed, caused the chief and his councillors to write their petition in order to divert the colonial administration's attention from the major Krobo cults. This they did by bringing up the issue of the *koko nadu* cult, which was not yet part of the 'pantheon' of Krobo deities and which presented a threat to the chiefs' authority. This move proved successful for some time.

In the late 1880s two complaints to the government and two more initiatives of Krobo scholars made the latter take up the issue again and acknowledge the existence of the war deities. In 1888 one trader from Yom in the Keta District by name Coffie reported at the Akuse District Office, that he had been ambushed near Okwe stream at the bottom of Krobo Mountain, when he was walking from Somanya to Akuse in the evening of 14 January 1889.¹⁰¹ And on 6 August 1890 queen Amba Dewa of Koforidua, too, in a letter to the government alleged that New Juaben traders travelling through the Krobo region "were frequently murdered" in connection with the annual customs of the Krobo deities. The colonial law provided Gold Coast subjects with an opportunity for prosecution of such crimes provided there was a witness. This clause, however, created a lot of problems, as the cults of the Krobo war deities had the form of secret societies and promoted secrecy among their members. There must have been further complaints about the Krobo war cults starting at least with the integration of the region into the crown colony, for which there had been no witnesses, whereby the government could not react to them. As early as 1879 it had been suggested to place an officer with some men in the Krobo region during the time the two cults were performed, a plan which, however, had not been carried out.¹⁰² And again neither Queen Amba Dewa nor trader Coffie had any witness supporting their complaint. This was also the problem with a letter of Krobo scholar and royal of Odumase Christian (Aku-)Tei¹⁰³ Azu, who on 1 September 1890 directed the government's attention not only to *nadu* and *kotoklo* on but also to the *dipo*

¹⁰¹ GNA ADM 31/4/22 Criminal Record Book Akuse, p. 356. The case is, however, entered under the date 03.08.1888 and there seems to have been another problem with it too, as the entry has not been completed and two pages seem to have been spared for a future completion of the report.

¹⁰² GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, minute paper titled Krobo Customs etc., entry Conf. 263/90 reporting on a letter by Christian Akutei Azzu, Odumase 01.09.1890, whereupon the Acting Colonial Secretary P. Hughes on 11.09.1890 commented that "the practice of killing people in the Krobo district for the sake of fetish had long been suspected, but no evidence had been forthcoming as the victims selected were strangers, and there was a shameful complicity on the part of the Krobo to conceal these 'incidents' from the Government." A note on the margin commented: "A proof has been impossible. In 1879 in a report he sent to Gov. Ussher he suggested placing a sur. officer ... of men in Krobo during the period these customs were held."

¹⁰³ Tei is the name for the third born. In the Akute Azu family the prefix Aku (for the family deity *aku*) is added. Instead of Tetteh, Tetter, Tei for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd born, they use Akute, Akunor, Akutei. In the missionary reports Akutei is referred to as Tei.

initiation rites, which he alleged was causing people to commit suicide if they could not afford to have the rite performed for their daughter and in other cases might lead to the sale of the girl into slavery. Like the petition written by Peter Nyarko in 1884 Christian Akutei Azu's letter diligently made use of a missionary and colonial discourse.¹⁰⁴ Again the writer was asked to bring witnesses, which he failed to do. Government did however consult its prime Krobo informant Chief Thomas Odonkor of Kpong who confirmed Christian Akutei Azu's information at the same time offering himself to the government as its instrument in the abolition of the cults. At this time chief Sakite had grown old and the question of who might succeed him must have been on the minds of his family. The letter of Christian Akutei Azu, who had some interest in his brother's stool and who was not on good terms with him, must be seen as an effort to present himself to the government as a potential successor to the chief. Accordingly he can be found among the party contesting the *enstoolment* of Emanuel Mate Kole in 1892.

As we have seen, chief Sakite was indeed to die soon after and his death on the 28th of January 1892 provided the government with the occasion to bring the Krobo states under better control and to make sure that their rulers emancipated themselves from the authority of the priests whose invisible force the government had come to detect. It was Governor Griffith who opted for a clear cut in Krobo and who pushed the issue personally and with energy. The Native Customs Ordinance forbidding amongst others the mountain settlements and the cults of the war deities *nadu* and *kotoklo* as well as the *dipo* initiation rites was published and proclaimed at the same durbar which saw the *enstoolment* of Emanuel Mate as "the first Christian king of Manya Krobo".¹⁰⁵

2.5 DEEPER INTO THE BUSH

What were the outcomes of this colonial policy? Governor Griffith in a letter to Chief Taki Tawia of Christiansborg had expressed the hope:

I think what has taken place will now change Krobo altogether. [...] it will be like opening the doors and windows of a house that has been shut up, so that people will now be able to come in and go out and breathe safely. Trade will recommence and flourish [...].¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, minute paper titled Krobo Customs etc., entry Conf. 263/90, transcript of a letter by Christian Akutei Azzu, Odumase 01.09.1890.

¹⁰⁵ GNA NP13/1 The Gold Coast Chronicle, Vol. 3, No. 87 of 01.08.1892. The Ordinance did not deal with Krobo affairs exclusively but with a host of "undesirable customs" throughout the colony. Among these was the display of flags and emblems by *asafo* companies in the coastal towns, which frequently resulted in fighting (PRO CO 96/225 Gold Coast 1892 Gov. Griffith, Gold Coast No. 203 Governor Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Christiansborg Castle Accra 10.08.1892, Enclosure 1: W.E. Cleaver to Governor Griffith, Victoriaborg Accra 05.08.1892. GNA ADM 11/1/1455 Native Customs Ordinance, Ordinance No. 11 of 1892, dated 15.07.1892).

¹⁰⁶ GNA ADM 11/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 30, Griffith to Tackie, Odumase 24.07.1892.

With his expectations the governor was right to some extent. Trade did prosper and strangers seem to have felt more at ease when travelling through Krobo. But the “opening of the doors and windows” took on a different meaning too. After the dramatic descent from the mountain, which was due to the short notice given to the people for vacating their family houses, a force of some 100 Hausa soldiers took position on the mountain and was ordered to destroy all sacred groves and houses on the mountain. Not only the ordinary people had to leave the mountain, but also the priests were driven down to the plains. Actually it seems that with some exceptions they had already before been frequenting the new home towns. Unbound from the taboos that had formerly tied them to the mountain, they built new shrines in the plains, which although hidden in the bush were much closer to where the people lived.¹⁰⁷ As one missionary put it in 1902, they “were ruling the country secretly”.¹⁰⁸ The river Ponpon beyond the Akuapem-Togo Range became the new border limiting their movements.¹⁰⁹ Those cults that had been explicitly abolished that is the *nadu*, *kotoklo*, *dipo* and *koko nadu* went into hiding and seem to have been reintroduced some ten years later. This is well documented for *dipo*.

In Manya Krobo it was Emanuel Mate Kole himself who proposed to introduce a modified form of the initiation, as he realised that there had to be some rituals which would bring the people together, helping in the amalgamation of the state and checking the centrifugal forces at work. He was also under pressure of the people and more specifically the women, who kept on demanding, that the rites might be performed again. It was merely the *outdooring* part of *dipo*, which was then re-introduced and celebrated publicly under the name *bobum* (Fig. 5.8). The initiation itself was still performed in private in a shortened form lasting some seven days. Nevertheless chief Mate Kole coached by his father Peter Nyarko at first had been very keen on eradicating many cults in the settlements in the plains. This was not just a response to colonial policy and an effort to legitimate his position by acting according to the wishes of government and mission. Many of these cults had allowed people to challenge the authority of the chiefs and by eradicating them the young *konɔ* thought he could improve his grip on the people. He also tried to implement a plan for a clustered settlement of the six divisions of Manya Krobo with Odumase as its centre – the town which had evolved around palace AND mission station.¹¹⁰ In this he failed however. His supposed subjects did not care much about his efforts to assert authority over them. They too made use of the windows and doors opened by Governor Griffith and would not stay in Odumase but rather leaped deeper into the bush. They had lost their ritual centre and awaiting what the outcome of

¹⁰⁷ Huber 1993: 239.

¹⁰⁸ BMA D-1.76, Afrika 1902, Ga-Dangme DA 121, G. Josenhans, Odumase 07.05.1902.

¹⁰⁹ Asked about their sphere of influence or about the limits of the ‘world’ they are overseeing, the priests nowadays refer to the settlements at the foot of the mountain range. Communication by Revd Peter Kodjo (Osu, 03.10.2000) referring to an interview he conducted with the then eldest priest Nene Asa at Odumase-Salosi.

¹¹⁰ PRO CO 96/223 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, Gold Coast No. 144, Gov Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, Aburi Hills Station 12.05.1893, enclosure 3, DC Alexander Williams to the Colonial Secretary, Akuse 06.05.1893.

the abolition would be in the long run, the farmers concentrated on their economic venture which the abolition had facilitated considerably. Only the old and the unfit would stay in the towns in the plains. Not only the chiefs were somewhat left alone, the missionaries too were frustrated by the fact that nothing changed in their somewhat isolated situation in Odumase and blamed the people who they said had lost their orientation and were not yet prepared to make use of their new freedom.¹¹¹ This is rather contrary to the interpretation I have just given: The farmers knew very well how to use their new freedom by expanding their agricultural ventures.

The young paramount chief Emanuel Mate Kole of Manya Krobo like his counterpart in Yilo Krobo Nene Akrobetto thus was at pains to gain control over his people. Very early he recognised that his court, the mission station with its schools and the markets were not enough to attract the farmers from the distant up-country to what was supposed to be the new political centre of the state. What was needed was a ritual component as well and in this Christianity had no encompassing force. The rituals that had worked as an amalgam of the society could not just be dismissed. If they could not be continued they had to be given new forms and their public celebrations might be replaced by new and alternative festivals. Already in 1893 Mate Kole proposed to introduce a yearly festival *yereyeli* (Yams-eating) coined on the *odwira* of the neighbouring Akuapem.¹¹² In December 1897 it was celebrated at Odumase.¹¹³ It seems not to have been fully implemented, as another missionary claimed that it was introduced only in 1917.¹¹⁴ This seems to have been the immediate precursor to the present *ngmayem* festival whose form is reminiscent of the *odwira*, but which has been attached to the ritual connected to the cultivation of millet which informs the Krobo yearly cycle. The early festivals like the Akan original were based on the cycle of growth of yams. Also in Yilo Krobo where chieftaincy is even more directly tied to Akan tradition and thus to the rites connected to the cultivation of yams, there was a public celebration of the stool-rites in 1903 which attracted a huge crowd.¹¹⁵

The same year also saw a public performance of the rituals for the war deity *kotoklo* which had always been very popular with the Yilo Krobo.¹¹⁶ As stated above the celebration of *kotoklo* was up to the introduction of the *kloyosikplemi* festival in 1992 the major annual festival in Yilo Krobo. Despite its bloody connotations it enjoyed an enormous popularity and to this date it continues to attract people from all over Ghana – foremost Krobo people of course. I have already mentioned the *bobum* ritual, which was cele-

¹¹¹ BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 130, Yearly report G. Jaeger Odumase 14.02.1893, p. 2.

¹¹² For an elaborate description of the *Odwira* see Gilbert (1994: 102-108) and McCaskie (1995).

¹¹³ BMA D-1.64 Goldküste 1896 Ga, Odumase 169, W. A. Quartey, ???.1897[?], Odumase.

¹¹⁴ BMA D-3.9 Quartalsberichte 1915-17, *Züge des Heidentums im Krobolande* [the author might be Friedrich Renz and the date must be before 1916].

¹¹⁵ BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 162, W. Erhardt, Odumase 16.07.1903, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

brated for the first time in 1897.¹¹⁷ With time it developed into a new shortened form of the full *dipo* ritual again.¹¹⁸ With the help of these rituals and their public celebrations the chiefs by and by managed to attract their people to their residences. The policy that nobody may be buried up-country, but had to be carried down from *yonô* (the up-country farms) to *dorm* (the settlements in the plains) for burial was maintained. After some initial resistance the new cemeteries in the settlements in the plains were established and respected.¹¹⁹ However, for the burials of those office-holders whose position inevitably demanded intramural sepulchre such as priests and chiefs a solution was found in that they were secretly buried within their houses. By this their new houses in the plains continued the tradition of the ancestral homes on Krobo Mountain.



Fig. 2.8: Elders and attendants of the paramount chief of Manya Krobo pour libation at the *klutu*.
Ngmayem festival at Odumase. Picture by Veit Arlt, date: 25.10.1998.

Chief Sakite had a pioneering role in this development. In 1892 he was buried in the basement of the elaborate palace he had built in Odumase. This met with strong opposition from among the populace. Many thought that the corpse of the late chief had to

¹¹⁷ BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 195, Station (Josenhans), Odumase 24.01.1898.

¹¹⁸ On *bobum* and *dipo* see the recent doctoral dissertation by Steegstra (2004) and the study by Omenyo (2001).

¹¹⁹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute paper, 1967/92, abstract of a letter by the DC of Akuse to the Hon. Colonial Secretary, 26.05.1892.

be buried on Krobo Mountain as had been the case with his predecessor Odonkor Azu.¹²⁰ It is remarkable that the colonial government allowed this burial, despite the cemeteries act forbidding intramural sepulchres. One reason was that following Sakite's death there was an extreme tension in Odumase. This was not only due to the liminality and ambiguity of a situation where on the one hand leadership had been lost, sparking off a contest for succession and on the other hand the form the burial was to take was being contested. But Sakite himself had bolstered his authority by introducing new elements of Akan chieftaincy and there was great uncertainty whether 'somebody would follow the chief', i.e. would be killed in order to become a servant to the chief in the ancestral world as was common in Akan chieftaincy tradition. The district commissioner on one occasion had to flee Odumase because his presence was resented by the bereaved Manya Krobo people. The sight of the mourners clad in warrior-like fashion assembling in the town seems to have been threatening.

But not only the burial grounds were shifted from the mountaintop to the towns. The power of the priests' and chiefs' houses, palaces and shrines in the new locations was boosted through the introduction of a new kind of small altar.¹²¹ Rather unspectacular in appearance the *klutu's* power is based on what is buried underneath it and on the ritual performance of its establishment (Fig. 2.8). Again secrecy is an important element of this power and people will not tell what has been buried. However, it is asserted that mostly a piece of rock or some other object from the ancestral mountain home is among the items. A second important element of the *klutu's* power is thus the link to the ancestral home and the whole body of history connected to it.¹²² The *klutu* also enabled chiefs to exercise their office on their farms in the up-country. For example Dom *Matsâ* Ba on his farm in the up-country placed his seat right over a "fetish" when holding court or receiving visitors.¹²³

The up-country thereby could at times become an alternative sphere of influence. For example the Dom *matsâ* and later the Manya *matsâ* when defying the paramount chief would retreat to the up-country and defy the *konô's* orders, at times seeking alliance with neighbouring states such as Akyem Abuakwa.¹²⁴ In Yilo Krobo a noted example is

¹²⁰ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute paper, Conf.14/92, District commissioner Akuse to Colonial Secretary, Akuse 16.02.1892; ADM 11/1/1452 Begoros-Jakite Land Dispute [obviously the document has been misplaced] Case No. 14/92, Threatened disturbances at Odumasi in consequence of the death of King Sakite.

¹²¹ It is very likely that such altars were already in use at the various shrines on Krobo Mountain, but they seem to have been a novelty in the towns in the plains.

¹²² In other Dangme towns such as Prampram these altars are called *debo* whereas the Ga call them *otutu* (Quarcoopome 1994: 342).

¹²³ BMA D-1.88 Goldküste 1907 Berichte, Odumase 10, Reiseerlebnisse und Reiseindrücke, W. Erhardt, Odumase 29.11.1907, p. 11.

¹²⁴ PRO CO 96/748/1 Annual Administrative Reports Eastern Province, Annual Report on Eastern Province 1937-1938 (Enclosure to Despatch No.585, 27.08.1938), A. Duncan-Johnstone, Koforidua 23.07.1938, p. 55. The up-country could also become a place of forced exile. For example chief Emanuel Mate Kole after destooling Chief Thomas Odonkor of Kpong in 1915

Chief J. O. Adjirackor of Huhunya. He was a member of the royal family of Sra, but like his father in 1917/1918 he failed to assert his claim in the paramount stool of Yilo Krobo in 1931, as it was alleged that his line went back to a slave of the *konô*'s family.¹²⁵ As I have stated above slaves often led fairly independent lives on the up-country farms, rather like sharecroppers and were integrated in the family of the owner through marriage. Adjirackor's family is a typical case in that he through his own effort and partly also through inheritance from his master he achieved major wealth and himself owned many slaves and later controlled a large number of debtors.¹²⁶ Huhunya in the up-country, situated on the margins of the Yilo Krobo territory, became their base of power where they achieved great influence and from where they would try to campaign for more influence in Sra. When they failed Huhunya would be their place of refuge.

As stated earlier on, the expansion of the farmlands in ideally contiguous plots came to an end around 1920 when the river Akrum was reached and when the Akyem took legal action against the Krobo buying further lands. A dispute broke out concerning the jurisdiction over this area the Krobos refer to as *yonô*. While Manya Krobo paramount chief Emanuel Mate Kole claimed that the Krobo had bought all the land contiguously and that the Akyem had given up all rights in these plots, so that the jurisdiction was now with the Krobo, *okyenhene* Ofori Atta said that not all lands had been sold and that the Begoro had always maintained their authority over the area.¹²⁷ Commissioner Harry Scott Newlands who did an enquiry into the matter was in favour of the Manya Krobo claim.¹²⁸ Even though the government's policy was to interfere as little as possible into the affairs of the 'native states' and though several of its agents were not happy about chief Emanuel Mate Kole's troublesome ambition to have his claim approved of, it was favourably inclined towards the Krobo on the ground of their industry, whereas the Akyem were often depicted as decadent. A typical example for this is the report by government anthropologist Margaret Joyce Field.¹²⁹ The Newlands award however was set aside on technical grounds by a motion made by the Akyem. The issue of the jurisdiction over the up-country as well as over the eastern and southern borders of the Manya Krobo state was repeatedly taken up again by its paramount chiefs, foremost Emanuel Mate Kole (ruled 1892-1939) and his successor Fred Azzu Mate Kole (ruled 1939-

advised him to leave Kpong and his family house at Odumase for one of his farms in the up-country (GNA ADM 11/1/604, Case 59/1915 Kpong Native Affairs).

¹²⁵ His opponents insisted that the Adjirackor line descended from a slave called Asare; whereas the family claimed they descended from Padi Keteku, to whom the line of the Yilo Krobo paramount chiefs goes back (GNA ADM CSO 21/22/21 Yilo Krobo Native Affairs (1214/31), Acting Provincial Commissioner to Secretary of Native Affairs, Koforidua 08.08.1931).

¹²⁶ Ibid., DC Austin Cathie to Provincial Commissioner, Akuse 29.04.1931, p. 9. See also BMA D-1.93 Goldküste 1909, Odumase 15, W. Erhardt, Odumase 14.02.1919, pp. 22-23.

¹²⁷ GNA ADM 11/1/1441 Tribes Buying Lands on another Division - Jurisdiction over (Case No. 26/1920); Addo-Fening 1999: 83.

¹²⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/1650 Manya Krobo - Akyem Abuakwa Land Dispute. Award made by Arbitrator Mr. H.S. Newlands Deputy CEP, 31.08.1922.

¹²⁹ GNA CSO 21/22/177 Manya Krobo Land Affairs - Report on by Dr. M. J. Field, Govt. Anthropologist 1940-41, 27 pages, later published in the journal *Africa* (Field 1943).

1990).¹³⁰ Ruling a nation with little historical landed resources these two influential chiefs made the utmost use out of their literacy in having the Manya Krobo territory confirmed as an area stretching from Kpong and Akuse on the Volta to the Afram and Akrum rivers.

The Krobo up-country for several decades was one of the most productive agricultural areas of the Gold Coast and the markets of Bisa and later Sekesua and Asesewa gained national prominence. In respect to the cultivation of cocoa, however, the region belongs to the pioneer area, which suffered most under the cocoa crisis of the thirties and never recovered from that setback.¹³¹ Rather than rehabilitating the old farms in *yonô*, which belongs to the dry semi-deciduous zone close to the forest-savannah boundary, Krobo farmers would attempt to buy new lands in the new cocoa areas in the moist semi-deciduous zone such as Asante, Sefwi and Brong, where the ecological conditions were more suitable to the growing of cocoa. The government programmes to cut out the affected trees in these old areas further reduced the canopy and farmers rather than re-planting cocoa or oil palms changed to corn and cassava farming, which found a good market in the rapidly growing urban areas, but intensified the tendency to desiccation prevailing in this zone. Invasion by savannah grass species and frequent bush-fires more and more brought about savannah conditions.¹³² This development leading to the economic marginalisation of the Krobo up-country was further intensified by the creation of Lake Volta in the 1960s. Although only marginal areas of the Krobo farm area were inundated, the dam had a disastrous effect on the ecology of the Krobo area. On the one hand the pressure on the remaining lands increased immensely, with the fallow periods being reduced drastically. On the other hand the rainfall patterns became irregular and unreliable. Furthermore the overall amount of precipitation decreased. However, the dam brought some new employment opportunities as well, not only during the construction period but also thereafter, when new industries were established on the Volta and eventually electricity and pipe-borne water was brought to the Krobo hometowns in the 1970s.

2.6 CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the roots of Krobo society lay in various groups that settled on the rocky mountain rising from the plains. It was the settlement on Krobo Mountain, which became the unifying element making these distinct groups to be recognized as one people by the neighbouring states. The Krobo case with the heterogeneous population, which assembled on the hill during the constitutive period of the two Krobo states, once

¹³⁰ Stool Land Boundaries Settlement Commission, Accra: Transcript of Notes, Stool Lands Boundaries Settlement (Manya Krobo) Order (L.N.282) (Jackson Commission) 01.09.1953-05.03.1956; Enquiry No.26/75, In the Matter of the Boundary Dispute between Manya Krobo and Begoro (Osiem and Tafo), Manya Krobo Appellant, Begoro, Osiem and Tafo (Commissioners Sampson and Amorin) 16.08.1976-11.07.1983.

¹³¹ Amanor 1994: 35.

¹³² Amanor 1994: 38.

again illustrates the futility of the term 'tribe'. It might be more useful to use Kopytoff's concept of the African frontier and to look at the different elements of Krobo society as remnants of other states which again and again have split off and fused in with other societies.¹³³ Residence on the mountain (or later on the historical ties to it) became key elements of Krobo identity through which the group distinguished itself from fellow Dangme speakers, with whom it still shares many characteristics, as well as from other neighbours. In the case of the latter a set of regulations, taboos and rituals set up by the society's ruling elite enforced this distinction as a 'we-group'. Some of them were based on the 'traditions' of the first comers, others were introduced by 'a little bit later comers' who are today definitely considered as 'early comers' (as is the case with the taboos connected to the deity *klowek*). Others were quite clearly introduced in the frontier situation as a distinction from competitors in the struggle for land. All of them, however, assumed an overarching importance. Still, the society featured a host of religious cults and their ritual specialists formed a ruling elite, whose authority was based on specialist knowledge.

The outstanding feature in Krobo history is the dramatic expansion of the farmlands between roughly 1800 and 1920, whereby the national centre of the Krobo was relegated to the extreme periphery of two separate polities (see Map 1). With its strong centrifugal forces, the expansion challenged the national coherence and exposed the draw-backs of this system of authority. Both economic innovation and enterprise, as well as warfare, led to the emergence of a new leadership whose authority was based on military prowess, economic success and diplomatic skills. It was this situation that the Basel Mission encountered. It was called upon by the upcoming new leaders, who used the mission with its school to bolster their rule and to strengthen the centrality of their residences. Krobo Mountain, which was still the ritual and national centre of society and the seat of the priestly ruling elite, became a limiting factor for both the chiefly authority and the economic venture allowing for the expansion of Krobo territory. In 1892 it was abolished through colonial intervention. The abolition was expected to suit different ends: It was thought to break once and for all the authority of the priests and to strengthen the position of the chiefs as partners under the system of indirect rule. Once the people had settled in new orderly towns in the plains, colonial administration and taxation in the area would be facilitated. The intervention was further to put an end to Krobo ritual practice, which had hitherto limited the success of the missionary project in Krobo.

The effect of the Native Customs Ordinance, however, was rather to the contrary. On the one hand it freed the priestly leaders from their former attachment to the mountain and allowed them to move with the expanding society, adjusting to its needs. On the other hand the abolition did not make people patronise mission school and chiefly court, but rather allowed them to venture deeper into the bush, focussing on their economic ventures and expanding even further than before. Many Krobo *Konô* Emanuel Mate

¹³³ Kopytoff 1987: 3-84.

Kole, who been elected for his (Christian) education, found himself left alone by his people. As Christianity could not exert an attraction strong enough to attach his subjects to his residential town, he had to resort to new rituals, both invented and re-invented, in order to build up his authority and to foster the national unity of the people. In these rituals and the festivals connected to them he creatively fused elements of Krobo and Akan tradition. The legitimization of chiefly authority through the use of new and old tradition, however, goes far beyond of what an outsider can perceive during these festivals. Even though the position and the role of priests and priestesses (not only during the festivals) seems to be rather marginal, their cooperation and support is a crucial element imbuing Krobo chieftaincy with legitimacy and with power (*hewam*) based on the secret knowledge (*agbaa*). As we have seen in the introductory part of the chapter these rituals have been repeatedly re-invented in the course of the twentieth century in order to meet the challenges facing a society whose members have migrated far and wide and whose core-area of settlement and economic production was severely affected by the creation of Lake Volta. The discourse leading to the abolition of the mountain settlements was framed in terms of culture, the mountain being portrayed as the seat of the powers of darkness, where abominable rituals were taking place. The next chapter will explore this discourse showing how topoi concerning Krobo culture were constructed in missionary texts, but also in the writing of Krobo Christians and in reports by colonial agents, and how they persist in the self-representation of Krobo society today, building a resource for both political legitimacy and development and fostering a strong ethnic identity.

3 THE FETISH-MOUNTAIN OF KROBO – HOME OF HEAD-HUNTERS AND PROSTITUTES

Atsa kwâ wa yii – patso he.

Dangme: It is forbidden to climb our mountain - You must go round it.¹

In the previous chapter Krobo Mountain was introduced as the cradle and centre of Krobo society up to 1892. The mountain towns were the seat of the old priestly leadership, which constructed its authority on the basis of rules, taboos and rituals. It was this cultural practice performed on Krobo Mountain that, together with an ancestral link to the mountain settlements, made one a Krobo. The mountain and the rituals performed thereupon were not only important for the self-construction of the Krobo, but also for their perception and construction by others. This chapter looks in more detail at Krobo Mountain as a site of cultural production and at its perception, while chapters four and five will deal with the emergence of the new hometowns as sites of the production of an alternative culture centred on chieftaincy, trade, and Christianity.

3.1 CULTURE MATTERS

His Excellency [the Governor] thought that he could get the customs abolished without disturbance, or very little, and that by so doing the Colony in general, and Krobo in particular, would greatly benefit, for not only would some of the most barbarous practices be abolished, but the trade which at present suffered considerably, owing to the fear which traders from other countries have of passing through the Krobo country, would revive and prosper.²

The abolition of the settlements on Krobo Mountain in 1892 was motivated by several objectives. The colonial government aimed to enforce its control over the Eastern Province thereby building up a solid base for the future indirect rule and assuring its interests vis-à-vis the bordering German Togoland. The abolition was also expected to enhance trade, from which lucrative tolls could be exacted. Control over the region was also a precondition for an expansion of the colony to the North following the River Volta as a trade route.³ A number of ordinances relating to jurisdiction, administration, public

¹ Many Krobo Traditional State Archives [MKTSA] Notes by Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, n.d. [presumably from 1940], p. 47.

² PRO CO 98/7 Minutes of the Executive Council 1889-1893, Minutes of the meeting held at Accra 01.07.1892.

³ Already in 1861 the importance of river transport on the Volta was recognised as the precondition for ensuring competitive exports of cotton and other produce from the region. PRO CO 96/55, Gov. Andrews to the Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast Castle 11.11.1861.

labour, settlements, health and sanitation were proclaimed in connection with this project in the 1880s. Government's concern was with the fostering of strong and cooperative chieftaincies, through which it could administer the colony. While at first sight its partners in Manya and Yilo Krobo seemed to be influential and renowned chiefs, their failure to implement Government policies showed that their authority was not as strong as anticipated. It depended on the consent of Krobo's priestly elite (the *døeme* council), which maintained its authority by enforcing cultural policies. The latter tied the members of society firmly to the mountain and ensured that they kept patronising the mountain towns despite the dramatic spatial expansion the society had experienced. Basically all important rites of passage were staged on the mountain, the most prominent of these being the girls' initiation *dipo*. This policy also meant that Krobo Mountain was to be the sole burial ground for all full members of society.

Therefore it was logical that the interference in Krobo affairs in the early 1890s, which sought to eradicate the power base of the priestly authority in order to strengthen the position of the chiefs, focused on culture. Its instrument, the Native Customs Ordinance, not only criminalized major parts of Krobo culture, but it depicted it as uncivilized and out of date. Furthermore it abolished the settlements on Krobo Mountain as the seat of the priestly authority. The cults, the ordinance was explicitly concerned with, were the two great war deities *nadu* and *kotoklo*, the more recently introduced "marauding fetish" *koko nadu*, and the girls' initiation rites *dipo* (or *otufu* as they were called in Accra). They were subsumed under the term "Krobo Customs".⁴ To this very day the names of these rituals transport powerful images alluding to prostitution and murder. When asked about Krobo, Ghanaians of today are as likely to refer to them as did their forefathers a century ago. The four cults, however, are only a few out of a wide range of ritual practices in Krobo. Some of them are more ancient, others such as the *koko nadu* are of more recent introduction.⁵ In his monograph on the Krobo Huber, referring to the situation of the 1950s, assembled a list of the various cults and the locations of their priests. It comprised fifty-eight entries and was by no means complete.⁶ Why then did the popular perception reduce Krobo culture so drastically? In this chapter I will not elaborate on the diversity of Krobo culture, rather I am interested in the evolution of the stereotypic perception of the Krobo and of their culture as consisting basically of indecent female

⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1455 Native Customs Ordinance No. 11 of 1892, p. 4.

⁵ The cult *koko nadu* came from Osudoku. It was not integrated into the Krobo "pantheon" of national deities and cults but remained an individual and secret affair (GNA CSO 21/22/27 Kotoklo Festival at Yilo Krobo, information by chief Akrobetto 17.10.1892, p.5; Interview with *dipo* priest Nene Tetteh Gaga, Plau 22.11.1998).

⁶ This table was to give an overview over the divisions and clans that make up Manya and Yilo Krobo and indicated the major deities, in some cases including the stool of the chief. In writing his monograph Huber tended to dismiss features of Krobo society that he deemed to be of recent introduction. Chieftaincy for example was barely given the room it deserved in the minds and lives of Krobos in the first half of the twentieth century. This is even truer for the office of the queenmother, which the anthropologist did not mention at all, even though there were queenmothers and though Nkrumah vigorously promoted this office all over Ghana in order to challenge the male chiefs (Huber 1993: 297-299).

initiation rites and murderous war cults of the young men. In this respect the identification of culture with the site of its production is of great importance. While Basel missionaries would refer to Krobo Mountain as the seat of the “lord of darkness”⁷ or as a “den of fetishism”⁸, the Victorian press presented it as a “fetish mountain”.⁹ Culture and the site of its production were amalgamated into one powerful symbol.

As the quotation at the beginning of this chapter indicates, access to Krobo Mountain was restricted and therefore there are few eye-witness reports on what was going on there before 1892. In a first section of this chapter I will detail these encounters and show why there are so few of them. This overview will establish the major points visitors to the mountain were concerned with, ranging from the landscape and the settlements to the various cults, the mountain’s role as a national centre, its importance as a burial ground, and the largely invisible priestly leadership residing there. It will also trace how the perception of the Krobo changed over the first fifty years of missionary encounter. Then I will proceed to detail these points, dealing in section two with the mountain homes and the intramural sepulchre connected to them. The girls’ initiation rites are the object of the next section, followed by a section on the war deities. Concluding the chapter I will briefly dwell on the members of the priestly leadership and their perception by missionaries and colonial agents.

3.2 EARLY ENCOUNTERS

The Basel Mission Archives are of prime importance to anyone exploring Krobo Mountain as a site of culture and settlement up to the year 1892. Starting in the 1830s the missionaries’ reports were for a long time the only eye-witness accounts of the conditions on Krobo Mountain. The first detailed reports by British colonial agents were only written in the early 1880s. At the time when the British extended their influence on the south-eastern Gold Coast, the Krobo chiefs and entrepreneurs had already established their hamlets at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range. Colonial agents could conveniently meet with their Krobo counterparts in the plains and there was no reason to take on the strenuous climbing of Krobo Mountain. Correspondingly there are few British colonial eye-witness accounts on the situation on the mountain. Even before the Basel Missionaries arrived on the Gold Coast, Danish colonial agents had contact with the Krobo in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For some time they even had residents staying on the mountain.¹⁰ Yet, these encounters do not seem to have resulted in any detailed account on Krobo affairs or even in a report on a visit to Krobo Mountain. Most of the early Danish references to Krobo, for example in the trading forts’

⁷ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 19a, C. F. Aldinger, Odumase 02.02.1861.

⁸ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 19a, C. F. Aldinger, Odumase 02.02.1861, p. 160; D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Abokobi No. 124, Daniel Abbloh, Bawaleshi 30.12.1893.

⁹ Bell 1911a; Adams 1908.

¹⁰ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1838, No. 6, Andreas Riis, Akropong 06.07.1838, p. 23.

day books, give only scant information and are written from the perspective of somebody who does not leave the fort often.¹¹ It is likely that Danish planters and botanists active on the Gold Coast at the end of the eighteenth century had a more intimate exchange with the people of the hinterland. They were exploring the opportunities for cash crop production in the transitional period to legitimate trade. When establishing their farms, gathering botanical knowledge, and learning about local agriculture, they must have been engaged in an intensive dialogue with the local population.¹² Still the references in their records are few and remain rather vague. Paul Erdmann Isert, for example, set up a plantation near Akropong and signed a treaty with “the republic of Krobbø” for protection.¹³ In one of his published letters, dated 10 August 1786, he refers to Krobo (under which name he seems to subsume the Shai and perhaps the Osudoku as well, i.e. all three Dangme groups of the interior) as to a small republic with about 500 warriors living on the mountains in the vicinity of his plantation Fredensborg. Krobo Mountain, he said, served its inhabitants as a refuge in time of war, when the mountain dwellers were able to withstand a siege by an army of 500 men. When the Krobo were attacked by an Asante army of about 3000 warriors at the beginning of the eighteenth century, they successfully defended their fortress by rolling boulders down the hill.¹⁴ The Asante thus had to negotiate with the Krobo who managed to establish advantageous conditions for peace.¹⁵

Isert’s book was widely distributed and translated in several languages. It can be assumed that the first Basel missionary to visit Krobo, Andreas Riis, had read it during his training at Basel together with the works of other Danish writers on the Gold Coast such as Rømer.¹⁶ Riis’ first encounter with the Krobo took place between December 1835 and

¹¹ Some of these references have been detailed by Henige (1974: 205) and Kea (1997).

¹² See for example the information on plants and their use gathered by Thonning, which seems to be based both on an intensive dialogue with the local population and on an extensive research (Ascherson 1879: 231-258).

¹³ Nørregård 1968: 174; Kea 1995: 126; Adams 1957: 32-37; Bredwa-Mensah 1996: 446-448. In note 18a Adams points out that concerning the protection by “Krobbø”, Isert must have confused Atiambo’s domain Akuapem with Krobo. It seems to me that this treaty of protection might not have concerned the plantation Frederiksnopel near Akropong, but rather the plantation Frederiksgrave near present day Dodowa. This plantation was situated at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range in what is today Shai. Isert had in an earlier letter applied the name “Krobbø” to include Shai and Osudoku. It may thus be that, against Adams’ contention, Isert did not confuse Krobo with Akuapem. Or, in the case his remark did refer to Frederiksnopel, it could be read as a sign of Krobo then still being suzerain to Akuapem.

¹⁴ In oral tradition these boulders are referred to as “bombs” or “cannons” (Dangme: *oplem*) (Azu 1929a: 39). By using this military-ballistic term a notion of modern technology is conveyed onto this archaic defensive technique. The last reference to the use of this scheme dates from the 1858 military expedition against the Krobo, when the Yilo Krobo kept the aggressors at bay by letting loose boulders (BMA D-10.34,5 Christian Obobi, Diary, Odumase 29.12.1857-???.1858, p. 37).

¹⁵ Isert 1989: 199.

¹⁶ Rømer 1769. Equally available at the Basel Mission library was the account of the Dutch Willem Bosman (1907), first published in 1704. Most probably the 1721 edition of this book held by Mission 21 today was available to Riis.

January 1836, when he joined the military campaign of the Danish Governor Mørck against Krobo. This action had been instigated by the Akuapem, in whose capital Akropong the missionary had established his residence. Riis' perception of the Krobo must have been informed by both Danish knowledge on the region and by his Akuapem hosts. Learning about the imminent arrival of the expeditionary force, the Krobo resorted to the strategy described by Isert. They withdrew to their mountain fortress and defended the same successfully. In a first report written shortly after the expedition, Riis described the Krobo as a strong and industrious people – shy on the one hand but vigorous and revengeful on the other.¹⁷ A second report written some three months later shows that Riis had now gained more insight into Krobo-Akuapem relations. For the report went beyond the Akuapem's view, taking into account the Krobos' perspective.¹⁸

The Akuapem, who considered Krobo to be a tributary state, had induced the Governor to take action against the Krobo on the ground that the latter were unruly and did not show up when summoned. The peace negotiations with the Krobo, however, established that the Akuapem claim for suzerainty could not be substantiated.¹⁹ It dated from a time when the region had been under Asante control and when Akuapem would extol slaves from Krobo in order to pay its annual tribute to the Asantehene. In the aftermath of the battle of Katamanso of 1826 the Krobo had achieved a more independent status and retaliated on Akuapem inroads.²⁰ These skirmishes took place mainly on the frontier farms where farmers and hunters of both states met. Riis' characterization of the Krobo consisted of the same mixture of negative and positive attributes to be found in his previous report, but he now qualified it: It was the economic exploits and increasing strength of the Krobo that had furthered their "independent mind and wickedness".²¹ By the 1830s the Krobo had fully embarked on oil palm cultivation and had established themselves as important producers of palm oil for export. They were engaged in the continuous expansion of their farm lands, which brought about litigation with the neighbouring states – foremost with Akuapem. The farms at the foot and on the slopes of the Akuapem-Togo range were a contested area where farmers or hunters from

¹⁷ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1836, No. 1, Andreas Riis, Akropong 10.02.1836, p. 4.

¹⁸ Arlt 1995: 46.

¹⁹ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1836, No. 1, A. Riis, Akropong 10.02.1836. The Krobo were found guilty of disobedience towards the Danish government and were fined 1500 heads of cowries, for which sum the merchant H. Richter stood security. Richter thereby secured for himself a large share of the Krobo palm oil production. This model of securing a monopoly on the Krobo oil production was made use of again on several occasions, most prominently in the aftermath of the so called Krobo Rebellion of 1858 (see below; Reynolds 1975: 112).

²⁰ While both Akuapem and Krobo had been able to shake off Asante control (a situation which after the battle of Katamanso in 1826 was confirmed by the British-Asante treaty of 1831), Akuapem tried to perpetuate its previous relationship with Krobo, considering itself as suzerain (Boahen 2000: 38; Abun-Nasr 2003: 35-36).

²¹ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1836, No. 3, Andreas Riis, Akropong 28.05.1836, p. 3.

Krobo and Akuapem frequently fought each other.²² Riis, referring to this mutual kidnapping and killing and to the Krobos' expansion, again depicted them as malicious and striving for independence. According to him these characteristics had become more marked with Krobo's increase in economic strength. Their "wicked deeds" went unchecked by their elders and chiefs who, Riis said, had little influence over their people.²³

3.2.1 BASEL MISSIONARIES VISIT KROBO MOUNTAIN

Riis did visit the top of Krobo Mountain at the end of the 1836 campaign, yet it was only in reporting on a second visit to Krobo in 1838 that he described the conditions on the mountain in more detail. In 1836 he had been invited cordially by some of the leaders of the Krobo to visit again. This he did on 21 and 22 April 1838 accompanied by missionary Johannes Mürdter. On their way to Krobo the two had visited the Shai and Osudoku mountains featuring similar situations.²⁴ In what must have been the Krobo mountain town Manya they met very few people.²⁵ The missionaries stayed overnight in a house "of a European type" built in stone where some soldiers from Christiansborg were residing. The next day they continued their homebound journey to Akropong and on their departure passed through the second town on Krobo Mountain (i.e. Yilo). Here the public dance (Dangme: *wodom*) for the war deity *kotoklo* was being performed. The missionaries did not feel at ease and seem to have avoided coming near the activities. On the one hand they felt threatened by the crowd in commotion and feared the encounter with a mass of drunken people.²⁶ On the other hand it was the chief of the place, who did his best to keep them away from the dance ground and who carefully managed his visitors' movements on the mountain.²⁷ The Krobo chiefs were eager to

²² According to the Gold Coast historian Reindorf the Krobo terminated their allegiance to Akuapem when the latter captured 77 Krobo women on Kwayefo market (1895: 314).

²³ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1836, No. 3, Andreas Riis, Akropong 28.05.1936, pp. 2-3. In a document dating from 1861 it was said that it was around 1845 that the Krobos' wealth from producing palm oil increased significantly and that they reinvested their means not only in slaves but also in "fetish charms" (PRO CO 96/55 Gov. Andrews to the Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast Castle 18.09.1861, Enclosure: Certified true copy by Mr Hutchison, signed by Colonial Secretary Ross).

²⁴ Each of the three inland Dangme states, i.e. Krobo, Shai, and Osudoku evolved around a mountain settlement that became the centre of society. By the middle of the nineteenth century all three were engaged in a continuous expansion. The 1892 Ordinance was specifically designed on the Krobo case, but was applied to all Dangme states.

²⁵ The identification of the place is based on Riis statement, that they had been staying overnight in one of the two settlements on the mountain and were on their way to Akropong when they passed through the other settlement. This implies that they were moving from Northeast to Southwest. This is corroborated by the fact that their visit took place in April, which is the month the *kotoklo wodom* takes place in Yilo Krobo, the other big war dance for *nadu* taking place later in May/June.

²⁶ Before coming to Krobo the missionaries had been at Osudoku and there too a festival was about to start. Riis' statement concerning the drunken crowd as their motive to leave early is supported by the fact that the missionaries did visit "the fetish priest" there.

²⁷ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1838, No. 6, Andreas Riis, Akropong 06.07.1838, p. 23.

establish contact with the missionaries. Their intention was well defined, i.e. it was geared towards the establishment of a school. Therefore it is likely that the chief in question wanted to prevent Riis from interfering in cultural practices or to be deterred from a future involvement in Krobo.

After these first encounters between Andreas Riis and the Krobo there was for various reasons almost a ten years' gap before his nephew, missionary Hans N. Riis, visited the Krobo.²⁸ In his report of 5 June 1845 the latter did not reveal details of his visit but spoke of the Krobo and their fellow Dangme states in more general terms, reminding us of his uncle's reports. He mentioned the proven defensive mountain settlements and praised the strength of their inhabitants (especially of the women). With their palm oil producing enterprise the Krobo were said to have taken the lead over the Akuapem. However, while the Krobo excelled in their fierceness and audacity, they equally did so with regard to fetish worship. Their non-Dangme neighbours feared them for their wickedness and only with the Shai they maintained friendly relations. Hans N. Riis was followed in November 1847 by missionary Wolf of the Bremen Mission (Norddeutsche Missions-Gesellschaft), who was then working at Peki,²⁹ and in February and September 1848 by Basel missionary Widmann.³⁰ Both of them visited Krobo Mountain and were fascinated with the settlements on its top. Wolf likened the houses built on terraces to the combs of a beehive and Widmann was amazed by their multiple storeys and many rooms. They mentioned the industry of the inhabitants and their receptiveness to the Gospel. Praising Krobo as a prospective mission field Widmann, however, admitted that he hardly met anybody on the mountain.

To my regret I only met few people at home as many Krobo Negroes, whose industry distinguishes them from the other tribes, stay on their plantations almost all the time.³¹

Those people Widmann met with were at first rather nervous as once again a dispute over land with the Akuapem was pending. At first they mistook the missionary for an agent of the government having come to investigate into the case.³² Motivated by Widmann's positive accounts, the journeys of the early 1850s were to further explore the region providing the basis for a future expansion of the mission field. The Basel Mission

²⁸ On the one hand the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast experienced a political crisis when pioneer missionary Andreas Riis was suspected of anti-Danish activities and on the other hand the tropical climate took a heavy toll on the lives of further young missionaries sent to the coast (Schlatter 1916: 30-31).

²⁹ Mittheilungen von der Norddeutschen Missions-Gesellschaft, November 1848, p. 59.

³⁰ BMA D-1.2 Afrika 1842-48, Akropong 1848, No. 5, J. G. Widmann, Akropong 02.03.1848; BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Akropong 1849, No. 1, J. G. Widmann, Akropong ??.01.1849.

³¹ BMA D-1.2 Afrika 1842-48, Akropong 1848, No. 22, J. G. Widmann, Akropong ??.08.1848, p. 4.

³² BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Akropong 1849, No. 1, J. G. Widmann, Akropong ??.01.1849, pp. 1-2.

felt a certain pressure to move into the area, as its main competitor the Methodist (or Wesleyan) Mission had started to venture into the region.³³ This conflicted seriously with the Basel Mission's strategic planning. It had embarked on a serious linguistic project translating the bible into the Ga-language. This was in tune with its policy of spreading the Word in the local idioms. The Dangme-speaking area stretching between the Akuapem-Togo Range, the Volta and the sea shore was the only area where this work could be applied. The intrusion of the Wesleyans, who were able to expand much faster as they used the English language and bible, was thus a serious threat. However, as an inland station of the prospective Ga-mission district, Krobo offered prospects of a different nature as well: The polity was situated right underneath the gorge of the River Volta, where the Akwamu controlled the rich river trade with the North. This narrow pass through the Akuapem-Togo Range was perceived by the missionaries as a gate to these widely unknown territories. As a route the river would eventually provide access to the near mythical market towns of Salaga and Kete Krakye and to "100'000 souls".³⁴ To the East of the Volta the fellow Bremen Mission was establishing its presence in a region known for its cotton cultivation and woven products. The choice of Krobo as a mission field was indeed a strategic one, driven not solely by religious zeal.³⁵

Already Widmann had paid visits to the farms of the two big entrepreneurs that came to be identified as the chiefs of Manya and Yilo Krobo. The next missionaries in line to visit Krobo first called on these farms and only in a second step ventured to climb the mountain. Now the Krobo's industry occupied an even more prominent place. In their reports dating from 1851, the missionaries Zimmermann, Stanger and Mader all dwelled on the oil production and on the wealth visible in the labour these entrepreneurs controlled. Mader also mentioned the important markets of "KroboLand".³⁶ Zimmermann's and Stanger's visit was badly timed. They happened to arrive at Chief Ologo Patu's farm at a time when the latter was expecting a punitive expedition led by Governor Sam

³³ BMA D-1.2 Afrika 1842-48, Accra: Schiedt's Briefe 1848, No. 2, Fr. Schiedt, Dänisch Accra 16.03.1848, p. 5. The Basel Missionaries carried with them the idea of the *Landeskirche*, i.e. a church associated to a political entity such as their home state of Württemberg in Germany (Sill forthcoming; Miller 2003: xii).

³⁴ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 19, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 30.01.1861, p. 21.

³⁵ Mission Trader Hermann Ludwig Rottmann, suggested in 1862 that Kpong, situated right beneath the river gorge, should be a relay station where the Basel Mission Trading Company [BMTTC] could operate a cotton gin. This would allow it to tap the rich cotton production of the Krepe (i.e. Ewe). Later the BMTTC, which was then still closely linked to the mission, opened its first inland station at Anum. This settlement was situated East of the Volta not far from Akwamufie (Wanner 1959: 111-115; BMA D-1.13a, Afrika 1862 Teil 1, Christiansborg, Nr.25?, Hermann Ludwig Rottmann, Christiansborg ??.04.1862, pp. 1 and 6).

³⁶ BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 11, J. Stanger, Christiansborg 30.09.1851; D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 13, Johannes Zimmermann, Christiansborg 04.10.1851; D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 38, J. A. Mader, Akropong 22.12.1851.

Bannerman.³⁷ The Krobo farmers were about to take refuge on the mountain once more. Despite the threatening military confrontation the missionaries on the next day paid a visit to the mountain. The chief, feeling uneasy about the missionaries' presence and trying to control their movements, had tried in vain to make them leave for Akropong. In the end he sent his educated son to officiate as their guide. While Stanger was rather brief in his description, Zimmermann's fascination shows in an extensive report of 50 pages covering the ethnography, economy, and geography of the Dangme-speaking hinterland. He described its inhabitants as beautiful, strong, straightforward and confiding, and associated them with zeal, drive, honesty and hospitability. In short, the Dangme of the interior, especially the Shai and Krobo, were depicted by Zimmermann as a better race than the inhabitants of the coastal towns, who were considered to be corrupted by centuries of European contact, and whose demanding stance upset the missionaries.

FEELING AT HOME IN A FOREIGN LAND

In this positive perception of the Dangme mountain settlers the landscape played a major role. In their description of the region's physical features the missionaries often expressed a sense of familiarity and of feeling at home.³⁸ Zimmermann, who was used to living on the hot and humid seashore amongst a sprawling, hybrid, and rather urban coastal society, was reminded of his southern German home when visiting Krobo and Shai. He compared these mountains and their position in relation to the Akuapem-Togo Range with the Hohenzollern and Asperg mountains back home in Württemberg. Having climbed one of these hills it was not only the sensation of the fresh mountain climate that had a soothing effect on the European expatriate. Equally important was the ability to overlook the landscape from above and to enjoy a panoramic view. This seems to have been a rare feature in the Basel Mission's field, as even in mountainous Akuapem the then dense vegetation hardly ever allowed for a similar kind of overview. Missionary Mader, who visited Krobo and Shai two months after Zimmermann and Stanger, did the same comparison with the physical features of Württemberg and Basel, likening the appearance of the Akuapem-Togo Range as seen from his view point on Shai to that of the Black Forest back home. From his vantage point even the hot plains beneath, which had made him suffer with thirst during his journey and where he had lost his way, could be seen in a positive light: "Looking at Africa from above" he wrote, "it offers a splendid

³⁷ This was following a charge brought against Ologo Patu by two Yilo Krobo by name Zota Kakpo and Ykokopa. As Ologo Patu did not respond to the summons he was arrested (Reindorf 1895: 331). According to missionary Zimmermann Ologo Patu was fined 2000 "Thaler" equivalent to 3000 heads cowries.

³⁸ See Comaroff and Comaroff on the narratives of missionary journeys to the field. While the passage from the familiar environment of the coastal town to the interior amounted to a *rite de passage*, missionaries clung to well-trodden routes linking the different mission stations (1991: 173). The epic account of the journey through the undomesticated landscape was to present Africa as a "moral wasteland" thereby legitimised a cultural imperialism (eidem 1992: 268). In the case of the Basel Missionaries travelling to Krobo this "missionary road" led mostly through the hill stations of Aburi and Akropong.

sight. And with regard to its great future one can truly say: Africa is a wonderful land." Mader envisaged a future when the slopes and plains would be cultivated and abound with wine and other produce. But as at now "the land is still wild and waste, nature reigning over man and enslaving him".³⁹ In this light the Krobo palm plantations, by then covering almost half of the dry and hot plain stretching between the foothills of the Akuapem-Togo Range and Krobo Mountain, clearly spoke to the missionaries of progress.⁴⁰ All of them referred to, and were overwhelmed by, the farmers' industry and prosperity, which to them distinguished the Krobo from the coastal population and from the inhabitants of the Akuapem hometowns. Travelling from Akuapem to Krobo, many missionaries described the magnificent view from the last outpost of the mountain range over the plains with their palm plantations and the sensual experience of the mild climate reigning in these shady palm forests.

As soon as he has arrived at the base of the mountain range, the tired African traveller [who has been walking] under the blazing sun feasts his eyes on a majestic palm forest, which is a living testimony to the majesty and glory of our great Lord. [...] Having descended the Akwapim Range the traveller is tired to death indeed. Yet, walking in the cool shade of the palm trees his vitality is renewed, he feels happy and starts to sing. From the foot of the mountain all the way to Odumase the flat and fertile land is dotted with small villages and hamlets. The main occupation of these people is to produce palm wine and palm oil.⁴¹

It was not only the pleasant atmosphere of walking along the winding paths in these palm forests passing by various small hamlets, which excited the missionaries. Their positive sensual experience converged with a fascination with the Krobo farmers' evident seriousness and with the determination, with which they had embarked on a business geared far beyond their local economy, and to which the extensive palm plantations testified.⁴² Here the image of the indolent and self-sufficient African, which all too often informed the missionaries' perception, was fundamentally challenged. Referring to "the majesty of the Lord" evidenced by the gorgeous palm forests, missionary Heck in his 1858 report presented the Krobo as destined for the evangelising project. He thereby supported the call for the mission, which had come from the Krobo themselves,

³⁹ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 38, J. A. Mader, Akropong 22.12.1851, pp. 4-5. The comparison with the Black Forest was very popular with the missionaries. See for example D-5.9,4 Chronik der evangelischen Missionsstation Odumase, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Such "minimal signs of physical and social hospitability" played an important role in the placement of mission stations (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 177; eidem 1997: 279-282).

⁴¹ BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Abokobi No. 13, Johannes Heck, Abokobi 25.05.1858, pp. 2-3.

⁴² The representation of Africa as a wasteland and the metaphor of the mission as recreating it as a garden, in which the heathen would be elevated to independent peasants was common among non-conformist missions. The Comaroffs have pointed out a further element in this iconicity, namely that this African garden was part of the imperial marketplace. The industry of the Krobo and their participation in world economy could be seen as self-construction through rational improvement (1991: 80).

most prominently from Odonkor Azu and Ologo Patu. Another important feature of this landscape was the River Volta. There were few perennial rivers near Accra and the sight of this stream had a strong effect on the missionaries. Not only did the visitors repeatedly compare it with the Rhine and with the River Thames, but Missionary Zimmermann, for example, considered the presence of this river to be a sign of God pointing to the strategic importance of a Krobo mission station.⁴³

Krobo Mountain further added to this positive perception. Rising majestically from the plains it naturally attracted the missionaries' curiosity. The strenuous ascent was not only rewarded by a grand panorama. The mountain top also featured what seems to have been the most astonishing and appealing architecture to be met with in the Basel Mission field. The dense settlements, consisting mostly of stone houses built next to each other due to the lack of space and building materials, echoed in the missionaries' imagination.

We climbed [Krobo Mountain] right where it was the steepest, as I had been told there was no other path. [...] Having climbed for about half an hour we arrived on one of the mountain's promontories and soon reached the mountain town Many. Here I saw houses of a kind I had never seen in Africa before, 2-3 storeys high and many with walls of stone, - houses containing 20-30 rooms! But what a curious town this is! Here we stand on the level of one house. We look upward – high above us a second house is resting on a majestic rock! We look downward – vertically underneath our position there is a third house! And it is the same with the whole town – it is a town of rocks!⁴⁴

The architecture distinguished the Krobo from their neighbours and according to the visitors was far superior. They referred to the settlements as to swallows' or eagles' nests,⁴⁵ or to bee cells and presented them as a curiosity.⁴⁶ In his extensive report of 1851 missionary Zimmermann dwelt extensively on the neat and "advanced" architecture on both the Shai and Krobo mountains. Many houses had two storeys, were painted in grey with decorations, and featured a veranda. They were either built from earth-blocks on a stone foundation or even had outright stone walls, whereas in the plains the dwellings were mostly of a temporary nature built from sticks plastered with mud (Dangme: *gba tsu*). While the choice of building material on the mountain reflected the logics of the rocky site, the temporary nature of the structures in the plain was imposed by a taboo. It was to assure that the farmers patronised their family houses on Krobo Mountain and did not evade the sphere of influence of the ruling priestly elite.

⁴³ BMA D-1.6 Afrika 1855, Abokobi No. III 99, J. Zimmermann, Abokobi ??.10.1855, published in *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* 2(1856), pp. 68-89, here 78 and 87.

⁴⁴ BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Abokobi No. 13, Johannes Heck, Abokobi 25.05.1858, p. 5.

⁴⁵ BMA, D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Akropong No. 39, G. Auer, Akropong 29.10.1858, p. 7; D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Odumase No. 18, Johannes Heck, Odumase 01.11.1862, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Report by Missionary Wolf, Peki 12.09.1848. In: *Mittheilungen der Norddeutschen Missions-Gesellschaft*, November 1848, p. 59.

Zimmermann considered these stone buildings to be on equal footing with those seen in the rural areas of Württemberg. In most villages in the area, he said, there were some buildings that could easily accommodate a European with his family. For him they were yet another expression of the superiority of the inland Dangme speakers.⁴⁷



Fig. 3.1: The remains of Chief Ologo Patu's palace on Krobo Mountain.
Picture by Veit Arlt, date 06.11.1998.

One of these structures, and in Zimmermann's perception the most outstanding building, was Ologo Patu's mountain fortress, which was then still under construction but nearing completion (Fig. 3.2 and Fig. 3.1). It was situated right on top of a huge rock and was leaning with its back onto the face of yet another rock. At places the building was three storeys high, at others only two. It had a size of 50' by 40' and was built

⁴⁷ Architecture, like clothing, was a "crucial site of domestication" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 274-322, esp. 274). The stone used in the buildings on Krobo Mountain pointed to permanence and was preferred over the mud and sticks used in buildings on the plains. Rectangular forms were considered a progress over the round shape of the sacred structures at the shrines on Krobo Mountain.

around an inner yard comprising a water reservoir. Its front overlooked the plains and featured a gallery as well as a stairway. For its construction Ologo Patu employed Ga-craftsmen recruited from the coast, salaried at an impressive 15 Swiss Francs per month.⁴⁸ In the town Manyá, situated on the opposite North-eastern end of the mountain, Odonkor Azu built a house of an equal standing and it seems that the two men tried to outperform each other in gadgetry.⁴⁹ On the one hand the buildings together with their accessories were part of an important symbolic communication with the Europeans and traders on the coast and reflected the knowledge of their owners on the architecture both in the coastal towns and in Europe.⁵⁰ On the other hand they also had a meaning within Krobo society. They visualised the two men's ambition to paramount status and were an expression of their sheer wealth.⁵¹

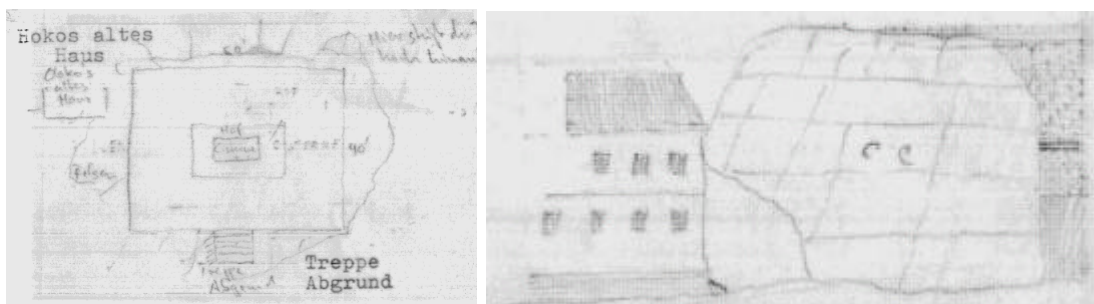


Fig. 3.2: Drawings of *Konô* Ologo Patu's palace on Krobo Mountain by Johannes Zimmermann.

Left-hand image: bird's view of the palace highlighting its situation at the foot of a rock at the back and next to the precipice at the front, with the reservoir in its inner court yard and Ologo Patu's old house situated at the upper left. Right-hand image: Ologo Patu's old house at the left and the wall of the palace to the right. BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 13, J. Zimmermann, Ussu 04.10.1851, pp. 44 (left) and 26 (right).

As has been mentioned above, the chiefs wanted to have a teacher stay on the mountain and had prepared towards it. When in the 1850s the missionaries opted to build their station at Odumase rather than on the mountain, this was not merely a result of their strategic deliberations on where to build a station in Krobo. It is rather the chiefs who had changed their policy. In the meantime they had established themselves firmly on their farms in the plain and they reckoned that the mission would be of help in building up a new alternative centre of power. Locating the mission at Odumase or Sra would help them in transcending the limitations imposed by the structure of priestly

⁴⁸ BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 13, Johannes Zimmermann, Christiansborg 04.10.1851; BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 16, Johannes Zimmermann, Ussu 30.12.1851.

⁴⁹ BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Akropong No. 39, G. Auer, Akropong 29.10.1858, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Odonkor Azu, for example, in 1956 engaged missionary August Steinhauser in extensive discussions on European towns and on the latest feats in architecture – in this case the Crystal Palace constructed at Swydenham and opened in 1854 (BMA D-1.7 Afrika 1856, Abokobi No. 8/ III 89, August Steinhauser, Abokobi ???.09.1856, p. 2).

⁵¹ McCaskie 1972: 41.

authority on Krobo Mountain. Once the decision was taken in favour of Odumase, the excursions to Krobo Mountain lost in importance. The missionaries' preaching schedule still obliged them to pay regular visits to the mountain towns, but also to the smaller hamlets in the plains and to the important markets. It was the African catechists who were charged with these tours. Unfortunately hardly any of their written reports are to be found in the Basel Mission Archives. The documentary evidence relating to the settlements on Krobo Mountain thus becomes marginal.

A LAST RETREAT TO THE MOUNTAIN FORTRESS

Right at the time when mission work had begun at Odumase as a new outstation of the Ga mission district and when the two catechists Christian Obobi and Thomas Quartey had taken up their work there,⁵² Krobo Mountain for one final time was made use of as a fortress. In April 1858 Governor Pine had introduced a poll tax to be levied within the protectorate.⁵³ While Odonkor Azu together with other chiefs of Manya and Yilo Krobo agreed to pay the unpopular tax, his Yilo Krobo counterpart Ologo Patu refused both the payment and the subordination under colonial jurisdiction. With this stand he enjoyed the support from most of the Krobo chiefs, especially from Chief Tenu of the Akwenor division in Manya Krobo. When Ologo Patu did not respond to a summons tension built up at the end of August 1858. A punitive expedition was announced and on 6 September 1858,⁵⁴ the Krobo deserted their farm villages and took refuge on the mountain. A battle was fought on 18 September when the British and their allied Akuapem, Ga and Akwamu forces tried in vain to take in the mountain. In their defence the Krobo used their proven technique of rolling boulders down the hill.⁵⁵ A month later, however, when Major Bird showed up with a much larger force, the Krobo entreated for peace. The troops took possession of the "rebel town" on Krobo Mountain, i.e. the town Yilo.⁵⁶

The headquarters of the British government were then situated at Cape Coast some 100 miles distant from Krobo. Its principal agent for the Eastern Provinces was the former Methodist Missionary Thomas Birch Freeman. He established close contact with the Krobo chiefs and visited the mountain on several occasions. Unfortunately Freeman left

⁵² Christian Obobi and Carl Christian Reindorf were appointed to work at Odumase in early 1857. Carl Reindorf was replaced by Thomas Quartey (in the missionary reports rendered mostly as Kwatei) in September of the same year (BMA D-1.8 Afrika 1857, Christiansborg No. 41, Johannes Zimmermann, Christiansborg ?? .01.1858). At that time it was still open whether Odumase would be the main station for Krobo or not.

⁵³ PRO CO 96/43 Governor Sir B.C.C. Pine to the right honourable Henry Labouchere, Cape Coast Castle 09.04.1858.

⁵⁴ PRO CO 96/44, Acting Governor Bird to Sir Bulwer Lytton, Prampram 09.09.1858.

⁵⁵ PRO CO 96/44, J. Cochrane, Shai 20.09.1858, Report No. 1 of the Officer commanding the Expeditionary Force to "Crobœ".

⁵⁶ Unfortunately the commander's reports contain no information on the conditions on the mountain (PRO CO 96/44, Major H. Bird to Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, Christiansborg 10.11.1858, p. 281 [p. 20 in the original]).

very few records and none on the conditions on Krobo Mountain.⁵⁷ The government's knowledge of the region at that time seems to have been far sketchier than that of the missionaries. Still it criticised the accuracy of the latter's sketch maps. "Amongst many other requirements I had felt very much the want of knowledge in myself, or some other military officer, of the localities, and nature of the country. The German missionary plans are very imperfect."⁵⁸ When the proclamation of acting Governor Major Henry Bird announcing and legitimating the military expedition against Krobo was sent to the Colonial Office, the recipient (presumably Sir Bulwer Lytton) enquired: "Is anything known here of the Crobbos, their strength - character - and relations with the government? By the map they seem to be a mountain tribe." The reply was: "I understand [...] that the Crobbos are a mountain tribe - cowardly - but very rich and that the expedition will pay itself."⁵⁹ The latter point underlines the importance of trade for the British presence. It has been argued that the control of the palm oil trade was the more reason why the British embarked on the expedition:⁶⁰ The Krobo were not only charged with a heavy fine but also with the full cost of the campaign. As in 1836 the fine was "farmed out", that is, some merchants stood security for its collection. The Krobo were to supply them with palm oil in the value of the fine. As they were not allowed to sell their oil to anybody else, these merchants achieved a monopoly over the Krobo oil. In addition the price was fixed at what seems to have been half the market value. Despite the heavy burden imposed on them and the repeated threat of military action the Krobo withstood this scheme successfully. They refused to concede to the sale of oil at a price below its market value and boycotted the traders farming the fine. The fascinating story of the Krobo Palm Oil Boycott has been detailed by the economic historian Freda Wolfson, who saw it as a direct precursor of the Cocoa Hold-up of the 1930s.⁶¹

A MISSIONARY HOLIDAY ON KROBO MOUNTAIN

Soon after the expedition was over, Missionary Johannes Zimmermann was appointed to Odumase in January 1859. Some months later in August 1859 Carl Friedrich Aldinger came to his assistance and by 1860 the mission station had taken shape. It was still a pioneer-situation characterised by provisory housing and continuing construction work. In this situation Missionary Aldinger together with his wife tried to spend a period of four weeks on Krobo Mountain. Aldinger was seriously overworked and suffered from malaria. His wife too had difficulties to adjust to the tropical heat and the situation at

⁵⁷ Freeman principally visited the farm hamlets of Odumase and Sra, as well as the town of Kpong on the Volta when entreating with the Krobo chiefs. See for example PRO CO 96/43, Acting Governor Bird to the right honourable Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, Bt, Cape Coast Castle 05.08.1858.

⁵⁸ PRO CO 96/44, J. Cochrane, Abonse 04.10.1858, Report No. 2 of the Officer commanding the Expeditionary Force to "Croboe", p. 38.

⁵⁹ PRO CO 96/44, Acting Governor Bird to Sir Bulwer Lytton, Prampram 09.09.1858, minutes, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Reynolds 1975: 112.

⁶¹ Wolfson 1953: 68-69.

Odumase. The climate on Krobo Mountain, where there was always a slight breeze, was thought to be particularly healthy as opposed to the hot and dusty conditions at Odumase. Aldinger's intention was, to reside in Odonkor Azu's mountain palace, where he hoped to recover from his fever. He also intended to evangelise among the population residing on Krobo Mountain.⁶² This was the first time a missionary stayed for longer than overnight or just for a couple of hours in one of the mountain towns. The reactions to this intrusion were rather hostile. It hardly comes as a surprise that Aldinger failed with both his endeavours. On the one hand the mountain was very crowded as there were many funerals at the beginning of the year. During the harmattan season many people suffered and died from pneumonia due to the low humidity. On the other hand the missionary and his wife felt that they were not welcome.⁶³ Aldinger tried to hold morning and evening devotions and to preach whenever there was an opportunity for it. Alas, he met with hatred and open hostility. When the missionary tried to teach some *dipo* initiands who were under the tutelage of a priestess living next door, the latter forbade her protégées to have any contact with the evangelist.⁶⁴

It seems that this was the first and last time that the missionaries tried to reside on Krobo Mountain. The sporadic visits especially by catechists were continued, but the main emphasis of the mission work was on the settlements in the plains. Although there are some references to excursions to the mountain, especially in company of visiting missionaries from other stations, the information is very scant. A typical example is the reference to be found in Missionary Roes' report of January 1866.

With him [Missionary Rukaber of the Bremen Mission] I visited Krobo Mountain for several days. We stayed at the king's vacated house, visited and preached in both towns. We had people tell us old and more recent folk tales, and show us the Schädelstätte [presumably the place where the war dances are held]. ... Some weeks later I climbed the mountain again with Brother Dahse [also of the Bremen Mission]. We had the opportunity to praise the heavenly kingdom and to demonstrate the vanity and sinfulness of fetish-worship. Because it is up here that Kodokro and Nadu reside, the highest fetishes of the Krobo. Their high priests and the most bigoted part of the population stay here almost permanently.

This reference shows clearly a certain familiarity with the place and the people residing there. Unfortunately this acquaintance did not result in a more detailed description and Roes seems not to have written down the tales he had heard. One of the reasons becomes transparent in the concluding remarks of his report, where the missionary stated, that he continuously discovered new villages and paths in the neighbourhood of Odu-

⁶² BMA D-1.12 Afrika 1861, Odumase No. 1, C. F. Aldinger, Manya [Krobo Mountain] 04.01.1861.

⁶³ BMA D-1.12 Afrika 1861, Odumase No. 5, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 30.04.1861, p. 2.

⁶⁴ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 19a, C. F. Aldinger, Odumase 02.02.1861.

mase.⁶⁵ The mountain became even the destination of school excursions, for example when in 1867 Weiss visited “the African Olympus” with the boarders of the Christiansborg Boys’ School.⁶⁶ The reports, however, were no longer written with the same ethnographic interest typical of the earlier ones and there were no more eye-witness accounts on what was happening on Krobo Mountain. The missionaries concentrated on their mission field in the new hometowns, where they extended their schools and later embarked on the expansion of their project into the up-country. On the plantations in the valleys of the Akuapem-Togo Range and beyond people were likely to show interest in the Gospel, whereas during their sojourns on Krobo Mountain they engaged in all kind of ritual activity. In missionaries’ reports references to the mountain became scarce. In most cases they were included in order to provide a contrast to mission activity at Odumase or to explain problems therein. For example a description of the girl’s initiation rites on Krobo Mountain was juxtaposed with that of the girls’ school at Odumase, impressing on the readers the urgent need for this project.⁶⁷

There are two major exceptions. In 1864 Missionary Roes deliberately visited Krobo Mountain on the occasion of a *wodom*. He had been on the Gold Coast for just one year and had been recently transferred to Odumase. He seems to have been eager to witness the conditions and culture on Krobo Mountain by himself while Zimmermann, as his senior at the Odumase station, concentrated on literature and language and seems to have left the village of Odumase rather seldom. Roes’ vivid account was published both in the *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* and the *Jahresbericht* (see below). The young missionary did not hesitate to seize the occasion of the war dance and preached to a big crowd before it started. However, once the celebration had started he thought it advisable to leave.⁶⁸ The second detailed report is by Missionary Kölle and dates from 1891, i.e. from shortly before the abolition of the mountain settlements. Kölle had been on the Gold Coast for eighteen months, two of them at Krobo. Like Roes he was eager to witness personally the famous Krobo culture that had fuelled Basel Mission publications again and again. He visited the mountain on the occasion of the yearly *dipo* celebrations. Kölle’s account is the most detailed description of the rite by a Basel Missionary (see below). His portrayal of the grand rally of proud relatives arriving from the up-

⁶⁵ BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase No. 19a, Mattheus Roes, Odumase 17.01.1866, pp. 2-3. Another reference to such an excursion with visiting missionaries is to be found in D-1.19b Afrika 1867 part 2, Odumase 17, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 11.01.1868, p. 4. On their errands in the new hometowns the missionaries seem to have used always the same paths, as even Missionary Zimmermann could report in 1868 that after ten years of work at Odumase he discovered new villages or re-discovered old ones when using an alternative path on his way to Sra (D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, Odumase 9, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 24.06.1868, p. 4).

⁶⁶ BMA D-1.19a Afrika 1867 part 1, Christiansborg 56, Weiss, Christiansborg n.d., yearly report, p. 6.

⁶⁷ BMA D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 13, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 01.07.1871, transcript by Marijke Steegstra.

⁶⁸ BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase 12, Mattheus Roes, Odumase 20.07.1864, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1864*, pp. 6-9.

country to attend the initiation of the girls and young women in their family was in many respects marked by sympathy and fascination. However, it was also geared to present *dipo* as a wild and sensuous ritual, clearly out of sync and to be replaced by the decent Christian girls' education offered by the Basel Mission at Odumase.

3.2.2 THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND KROBO MOUNTAIN

The decrease in information on Krobo Mountain in missionary reports is hardly made up for by the increase in records created by the colonial administration as from November 1880, when R. Murray Rumsey was appointed as a magistrate for the newly created Volta River District.⁶⁹ While the district commissioner's presence in the region resulted in a new and significant body of records of a different quality complementary to the one created by the missionaries, the information on Krobo Mountain remained scarce. This was so despite the fact, that the distance between Rumsey's station at Akuse was much smaller than that between the Krobo hometowns and the mountain. The commissioner actually passed by the base of the mountain when going to Somanya or Odumase. Yet it seems that his visits to the mountain were rare. In an extensive general report on his new field written in 1882 Rumsey allocated some few paragraphs to Krobo Mountain. The DC reckoned that the mountain was "the standard for all the Croboe country, the customs, laws, institutions, divisions of the country, every thing in fact, has its base there". He mentioned the *dipo* rites taking place there as being specific for Krobo and compulsory for the young women and qualified most customs held on Krobo Mountain as "merely drunken orgies". Further he noted that every Krobo was buried on the mountain and that there were twelve villages on its top. Writing about King Sakite of Manya Krobo he noted, that his authority was not sufficient due to his subservience to the fetish priests. He located the latter and their centre of authority on Krobo Mountain, but added that little was known about their regime. The same, he said, held true for King Akrobetto of Yilo Krobo, but to a lesser extent.⁷⁰

The interest of Colonial Government in the 1880s was primarily in trade and in asserting its interests in the region vis-à-vis the growing German presence in neighbouring Togoland. Especially in respect to trade the mountain did not matter and the district commissioner rarely even sent a patrol there. On the one hand his police officers were mostly strangers, whose presence on Krobo Mountain was not encouraged at all. In their ears rumours about human sacrifice taking place there and the connected murder of strangers passing by the mountain, must have resonated very strongly. For example it proved difficult to find jury men to visit Krobo Mountain to investigate a murder case in 1887.⁷¹

⁶⁹ PRO CO 98/2 Minutes of Proceedings of an Executive Council held at Christiansborg Castle, Accra 02.09.1880, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁰ PRO CO 879/19 Administrator Alfred Moloney to the Earl of Kimberley, Christiansborg Castle, Accra 07.06.1882, Enclosure No. 1: General Report on the River Volta District, Commander R. Murray Rumsey, R.N., Aburi House 27.06.1882, pp. 31-32.

⁷¹ GNA ADM 31/1/2 Duplicate Letter Book Akuse, No. 224, DC Rumsey to Chief Akrobetto, Akuse 12.07.1887.

At least on one occasion messengers sent by the district commissioner were even flogged on Krobo Mountain.⁷² The system of Native Administration and Jurisdiction was supposed to allow the district commissioner to rely on the “native police” of the two Krobo paramount chiefs anyway. So the need to visit the places personally, or to send his own men there, was further reduced.

On the other hand the mountain was for most time of the year deserted and only elderly people, girls undergoing the initiation rites, and the priests stayed there permanently. This was not the economically active part of the population, in which the administration was interested. The latter was living and farming in the towns at the base of the Akuapem-Togo Range and beyond at a distance of up to a two days’ journey. Evidence recorded during court cases at Akuse contains some bits of information revealing what place the mountain occupied in the lives of these people. They only came back to the mountain for ritual occasions, or to visit the old persons in the family house. Often people who transported produce from the up-country farms to Akuse stopped over on the mountain on their homebound journey. There they would see and look after some aged relative or a daughter undergoing her *dipo* training, consult some elder, priest, or healer (Dangme: *tsupatsá*) for advice, or participate in the performance of some ritual. This was especially true for women, who often engaged in trade and returned from the river side with fish or with all kinds of goods, which they would sell on the farms or in the hometowns. In some of the records on criminal cases dealt with at the Akuse court it becomes clear, that these movements between the up-country, the trading places, the home towns and Krobo Mountain put considerable strain on the families. This is illustrated by the case of *Abuah Chu vs. Nartey Bortchey*. The former, a trader living at Adjikpo near Somanya, had been pregnant but suffered a miscarriage after a fight with her husband Nartey. She had visited Krobo Mountain and was on her way back to Adjikpo when she met her husband arriving from the up-country. He wanted her to return to the mountain home with him, which request she refused. This brought about the fight. Whether Abua’s refusal was based on an economic interest, on personal differences, or other motives, we do not know.⁷³

In general it may be said, that the lean system of administration and the particular interest of the colonial state brought about a lenient regime at the district level. For example, when the colonial secretary was asked by the governor whether it was true that strangers were often killed when passing through the Krobo Region in connection with human sacrifice, he was ready to believe in the two paramount chiefs’ assertions that this custom had ceased a long time ago. He admitted that such murders might still occasionally occur, but this he deemed to be no sufficient reason to interfere (see be-

⁷² Ibid., No. 343, DC Rumsey to Colonial Secretary, Akuse 10.08.1887.

⁷³ GNA ADM 31/4/22 Criminal Record Book Akuse, *Abuah Chuh vs. Nartey Bortchey*, 03.08.1888, p. 211. The mobility of women traders frequenting Krobo Mountain is also illustrated in the case of *Daday vs. Yerbreebe*, *ibid.* 03.08.1888[?], p. 219.

low).⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the allegations persisted. They resurfaced in an extensive report on the region submitted by the comptroller of customs Hesketh Bell in January 1891, which was the first detailed report on Krobo Mountain. Bell must have visited the mountain towns on at least one occasion in 1890. His observations not only became part of this detailed report on the region,⁷⁵ they also served as the basis for two short novels published in 1893 and 1911.⁷⁶ The rich information, as well as the vivid and detailed descriptions contained in the novels, suggest that Bell spent a substantial amount of time in Krobo and visited the mountain on at least one occasion. In tune with other writers Bell commented on the economic exploits of the Krobo. A large, if not the largest, part of his report seems to have dealt with Krobo Mountain. Bell observed that it was of great importance as a ritual centre, which he deemed obsolete.

Although they had been spread over the surrounding country, the Krobos still regard the Krobo Hill as their sacred and principal spot and centre to which at certain seasons they resort annually for Fetish customs and practices accompanied by many barbarous and inhuman acts, evading detection, but proving how the Krobos are steeped in the grossest superstition and savagery. Exercising more influence than the two Kings are the Fetish priests who incite the youngmen to commit abominable crimes to procure certain objects (human parts) for their fetish ceremonies.⁷⁷

The supervisor related all the information he had gathered on the war cult *kotoklo* and its rituals giving "the story for what it is worth". He stressed that human sacrifice was an inseparable feature of this rite and that similar "barbarous and illegal acts" attended the *nadu* and *koko nadu* cults, which he had not witnessed yet. Bell also mentioned the importance of the *dipo* custom, stressing the high number of girls undergoing the rite every year and the massive expenditure connected with it. District Commissioner Alexander Williams, who was asked to comment on Bell's report corroborated the information given therein in all its principal points.⁷⁸ This together with the problem of the continuing burials on Krobo Mountain, which were contrary to the Cemeteries Ordinance,

⁷⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute Paper No. 2282/84, Colonial Secretary to Governor, 04.11.1884, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁵ *Report on the Resources and Customs of the Krobo Country*. The original report could not be located. An abstract is contained in GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute Paper with an abstract of Conf. M.P. 309/91 commenting on the Report of Mr Bell, D.S.V.R. on the Krobo Customs, dated 19.01.1891. This document (M.P.309/91) is contained in GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute [misplaced from ADM 11/1/1655], Minute Paper 309/91 concerning the *Report from Mr Supervisor Bell on the Krobo Customs*, comments by District Commissioner Alexander Williams dated 28.02.1891.

⁷⁶ Bell 1911a and 1911b.

⁷⁷ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P. 309/91 Report of Mr Bell, D.S.V.R. on the Krobo Customs, dated 19.01.1891, § 11.

⁷⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute [misplaced from ADM 11/1/1655], Minute Paper 309/91 concerning the *Report from Mr Supervisor Bell on the Krobo Customs*, comments by District Commissioner Alexander Williams dated 28.02.1891.

prompted Acting Governor Hodgson to visit the mountain personally on 6 November 1892. His visit must have lasted for some few hours only, as on the same morning he proceeded to see Chief Addo of Ogome near Sra.⁷⁹ While Hodgson's main focus was on the method of burial, his report dealt quite extensively with the regime of the priestly ruling elite on Krobo Mountain. The visit was too short to see any of the burial places, but the governor at least met with some of the priests and saw the site, where the main dancing during the *dipo* ritual used to take place. Hodgson left the mountain again after a short time, without having been able to gather satisfactory evidence, and remarked:

The people on my descent sang in joy that I had not been shown the Fetish. I had however seen and gathered quite enough for my purpose.

Nevertheless Hodgson did not hesitate to corroborate in his account information on Krobo Mountain and the cults being carried out there, which was very likely based on the report by Supervisor Bell submitted at the beginning of the same year. It ended with the strong recommendation, that "these heathen customs should be put to an end and the power of the Fetish Priests summarily broken up", thus supporting the Governor's intention to pass an ordinance in this respect. Hodgson urged, that in order for such an ordinance to be effective, the shrines of *kotoklo* and *nadu* and all houses on the mountain would have to be destroyed, and access to the mountain (not only for burial purposes) would have to be forbidden.⁸⁰ His recommendation indeed led to the abolition of 1892 and the destruction of the mountain towns. The passing of Chief Sakite on 28 January 1892 provided an opportunity for Government to step-in and combine the several issues at stake. One more time the district commissioner at Akuse, now the African Alexander Williams, was asked to confirm whether the settlements on Krobo Mountain as well as the rituals performed there could be safely abolished.⁸¹ The last eye-witness reports from Krobo Mountain stem from its occupation by government troops in August 1892, when the settlements and especially the 133 shrines were destroyed. Even old trees were blown up, as Government suspected them of being part of the cults. Forty-seven drums were destroyed, 18 more seized, and 53 skulls were detected.⁸² The latter number, of course, was far from the alleged 600 skulls that Commissioner Williams claimed to have witnessed on the occasion of such a dance.⁸³

⁷⁹ PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 345 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, § 11.

⁸⁰ The account of Hodgson's visit to Krobo Mountain is contained in a separate report of the same date: PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 346 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, § 17.

⁸¹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.10/92. (attached to 428/92 and Conf.14/92), DC S.A. Williams to the Governor, Akuse 02.03.1892.

⁸² PRO CO 96/225 Gold Coast 1892, No. 229 Gov. Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Christiansborg Castle Accra 25.08.1892.

⁸³ GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute [misplaced from ADM 11/1/1655], Minute Paper 309/91 concerning the *Report from Mr Supervisor Bell on the Krobo Customs*, comments by District Commissioner Alexander Williams dated 28.02.1891.

The abolition of the mountain settlements was geared to establishing tighter control over the Krobo, implementing native jurisdiction and administration (i.e. fortifying the position of the chiefs and breaking the power of the priestly elite) and promoting trade in the region. Yet, the intervention was justified in terms of culture and civilisation in that it called for the discontinuation of unsound ritual practices. There was little evidence as to truth and extent of the alleged trespasses, but the practices in question corresponded to existing powerful stereotypes on Krobo. As Dirks has noted for the case of the hook-swinging ritual in India, which was prohibited at about the same time, the British were concerned primarily with “uncover[ing] the ways in which tradition worked as a form of power”. Thereby they were provoked to commit themselves to a “civilising mission” despite their policy of non-interference.⁸⁴ The following sections detail those features of Krobo culture that outsiders perceived to be the defining elements and that were most strongly objected to.

3.3 THE ANCESTRAL HOME – THE MOUNTAIN AS BURIAL GROUND

[...] the Krobo Mountain in addition [is] a frightful charnel house in the fissures of which all Kroboes let down the bodies of their dead, or else interred them in shallow graves two feet deep or less. [...] It was represented to me [...] that until the Krobo Mountain was closed by the Government so that the people could not convey their dead to it, that they would continue the practice, as well as the celebration of their hateful, demoralising, and wicked customs, and would not recognize the cemeteries which had been provided.⁸⁵

The practice of burial on Krobo Mountain was one of the important points of contention leading to the abolition of the mountain settlements and was an important element in creating the image of the “fetish mountain”. All Krobo (i.e. no slaves, or strangers residing in Krobo)⁸⁶ were buried here with the exception of those who had suffered an “abominable death”⁸⁷. This category referred to those who died during child-birth or pregnancy, or those who suffered a violent death such a suicide. In these cases, the corpse was simply “thrown into the bush”⁸⁸ or buried at the foot of the mountain. This was for example the case with a man who in 1865 hurt his hand when handling his gun and most probably died from an ensuing blood poisoning.⁸⁹ In such a case a priest

⁸⁴ Dirks 1997: 185.

⁸⁵ PRO CO 96/226 Gold Coast 1892 Gov. Griffith, Gold Coast No. 318, Governor Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Accra 23.11.1892.

⁸⁶ Der Evangelische Heidenbote 3(1867), p. 41.

⁸⁷ The expression in Krobo is *e gbo yayam* (literally: he/she died in scum) and *otôfo gbeno* (an evil death).

⁸⁸ This is the expression used in most documents. In the first place it implies that the person did not receive a proper burial. It does not necessarily mean that the body was left exposed. Huber 1993: 136, 202; Steegstra 2004: 187.

⁸⁹ BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 14, Mattheus Roes, Odumase 28.09.1865, pp. 2-3.

would have to cleanse the house of the deceased and the members of the household.⁹⁰ In contrast, the corpses of those who had died a natural death were interred in the mountain towns, mostly inside the family house. Intramural sepulchre was the rule with the Ga and Dangme of the southern Gold Coast. The family house, which was already the nucleus of the lineage, thus became quite literally an ancestral home.⁹¹ Missionary Heck observed in 1862 that the two mountain towns were in fact huge burial grounds. A visitor staying overnight on the mountain might happen to sleep unknowingly on top of such a grave. Heck went on to say, that the same applied to the Ga towns on the coast, as well as to the Shai mountain towns.⁹²

Despite Heck's assertion, intramural sepulchre was not for everybody, but was probably the privilege of the heads of family, the senior women in the house, the chiefs and the priests.⁹³ Their graves were actual burial chambers situated for example in the floor of a bedroom, which were used again and again.⁹⁴ Due to the rocky ground they were mostly just three to four feet deep.⁹⁵ It seems that those, who were not buried in the house, found their final rest in some chasm or rent, of which several were to be found on the mountain top. Their corpses were wrapped in cloth and a woven mat and were then lowered with the help of cords into the crevice. While this information given by Acting Governor Hodgson is corroborated by some oral tradition, Hodgson himself had neither witnessed the practice nor had he personally seen the chasms.⁹⁶ The description given by his superior, Governor Griffith, who in July 1892 inspected the grave of a young boy, sounds far less dramatic. The corpse of this boy had been wrapped in a mat and rested less than two feet under the surface.⁹⁷ Hodgson's assertion, that the conditions were highly unsanitary sound plausible, as the population of Krobo by that time counted some 10'000 to 40'000 people and the space on the mountain top was limited.⁹⁸ The problem was not only the growth of population, which created a shortage of

⁹⁰ BMA D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 159, Johannes Kopp, Odumase 06.09.1887, p.3; Huber 1993: 143. Huber states that such corpses were buried on the mountain, albeit at special places (1993: 36, 219-220). This is not supported by documentary evidence.

⁹¹ Parker 2000: 27.

⁹² D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Odumase No. 18, Johannes Heck, Odumase 01.11.1862, pp. 13-14.

⁹³ This is supported by the fact, that today in the case of a priest's or chief's compound it is only the person in office, who is buried in the house, while the other members of the family are interred at the ordinary cemetery.

⁹⁴ Huber 1993: 202-203; BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 128, A. Mischlisch, Odumase 30.07.1892 and 10.08.1892, p.13f; Sikapa 1937: 75.

⁹⁵ BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 18a, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 10.01.1866, p. 4.

⁹⁶ PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 345 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, §§ 15-16.

⁹⁷ PRO CO 96/226 Gold Coast 1892 Gov. Griffith, Gold Coast No. 318, Governor Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Accra 23.11.1892.

⁹⁸ The census for 1891 for the Volta River District gave a number of 20'000 inhabitants for the whole district. Basel Missionaries, however, already in 1882 estimated the population of Krobo alone to be 20'000 to 25'000 (even 40'000 in the 1870s according to Missionary Zimmermann) and Supervisor Bell in 1890 believed it to count some 35'000 souls. PRO CO

space available for burial, but also the ever increasing distance between the mountain and the places where people actually lived. Already in 1882 the corpses brought from the up-country farms were transported over a distance of up to ten hours. This distance further increased with the continuing expansion of the Krobo farmlands; by 1887 it amounted to up to fifteen hours and by 1892 according to Missionary Mischlisch could take up to four days.⁹⁹

Already in the 1860s Odumase had attained much of the status of a hometown and parts of the funeral could take place there. Yet, the family-houses themselves, where all the important rituals of transition took place, were still located on Krobo Mountain. The emerging status of Odumase can be observed in the Basel Mission documents of the times. Funerals for persons who died at Odumase were half celebrated at Odumase, half on Krobo Mountain. As early as 1866 Missionary Zimmermann would describe the usual funeral practice at Odumase as follows:

A man dies: those who attend to the body surround it closely without taking precautions despite the rapidly advancing mortification. The more distinguished the deceased, the longer his death is kept secret. You can easily imagine the consequences due to the heat and the congested situation in the rooms that are filled with sympathisers. People drink, step out into the fresh air of the night, cry, wail, and dance. At last, and before day breaks, the corpse is lifted [onto the shoulders of the carriers] under lamentation, singing, drumming, and shooting, and is carried to the mountain, which is two hours distant. If the deceased was a noble man, his corpse is turned around at the end of the village and the carriers make believe that the corpse refuses to be carried on. "*ede ke: eb yae, si ewo si kake ne tso si!*" [In the contemporary spelling: *e de ke: e bi yae, si e wo-si kake ngâ tso-si!*] ("He says, he won't leave, he wants to sleep once more under the tree", i.e. in the village). People plead with him to leave of his own free will and not to disturb them later on. May be the carriers demand one more schnapps. Finally the trek continues in storm. At the time it reaches the foot of Krobo Mountain the heat has set in. Rapidly they climb over the steep rocks. Once they have reached the [fam-

96/226 Gold Coast 1892 Gov. Griffith, No. 306, Gov. Griffith to Lord Knutsford, forwarding the Census report for the year 1891 compiled by Mr Farrell Easmon, p. 558; CO 879/19 Administrator Alfred Moloney to the Earl of Kimberley, Christiansborg Castle, Accra 07.06.1882, Enclosure No. 1: General Report on the River Volta District, Commander R. Murray Rumsey, R.N., Aburi House 27.06.1882, p. 33; GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P. 309/91 Report of Mr Bell, D.S.V.R. on the Krobo Customs, dated 19.01.1891, § 7; BMA D-10.1.4, Johannes Zimmermann, c.1877, Land und Leute, p. 28.

⁹⁹ BMA D-1.34 Afrika 1882, Odumase 92, Furrer, Odumase 08.07.1882, p. 1; D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 159, Johannes Kopp, Odumase 06.09.1887, p. 2; D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 128, A. Mischlisch, Odumase 30.07.1892 and 10.08.1892, p. 13f. Teacher Paul Odzawo (born 24.08.1930) recalled that the sight of parties carrying a corpse from the up-country to dorm was still quite common in his youth. The men would sing funeral songs while walking. In the case of a deceased chief popular perception had it that someone met by such a party was at risk of being killed in order to follow the chief and serve him in the world of the ancestors. Interview with Paul Odzawo, Odumase Salosi, House of Joy, 16.05.1999.

ily house] at the mountain top, a grave is dug in any of the rooms, may be in a bed room. Due to the rocky ground it might be as little as 3-4 feet deep.¹⁰⁰

As there was no elaborate technique of preservation the corpse was buried soon after the passing. Probably this was in most cases the next day, which allowed for a night of wake.¹⁰¹ The number of funerals varied through the year and peaked during the Harmattan season, which saw an increase in burials. This was due to the risk of pneumonia caused by the low humidity.¹⁰² At certain times, however, it was not possible to hold a funeral due to a ban on drumming and noise-making. During such periods the death was not made public and the corpse was buried secretly. This was for example the case during the preparatory stages for the yearly *ngmayem* ritual, the *kwôô-dôô-fômi*.¹⁰³ Besides the actual burial and the accompanying funeral¹⁰⁴, there were also rites carried out at certain intervals after the burial. District Commissioner Rumsey observed in 1882 that usually once a year a "very large custom" was held, which lasted four days and was dependent on the fact whether any chief had died during the year. This seems to have been a final funeral rite and it was said to be the only occasion during which the firing of musketry was allowed on Krobo Mountain.¹⁰⁵ These were the periods when a large part of the Krobo population gathered in the mountain towns.

The missionaries, who must rarely have witnessed personally such obsequies performed on Krobo mountain and usually saw only what was performed at Odumase, perceived these funerals in a highly negative way. They were said to be a rather wild and tumultuous affair involving singing, drumming, dancing, shooting, and the consumption of alcohol. The latter was of central importance. It was used for libations with which the ancestors were informed of the transition of a further family member, and in which his entry into the ancestral world was negotiated. The state of drunkenness also helped to

¹⁰⁰ BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 18a, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 10.01.1866, pp. 3-4, my translation.

¹⁰¹ This was still the practice at the time of Hugo Huber's fieldwork in the 1950s (1993: 203-204). Today the burial of a person of high status might be delayed as long as seven months or more, in order to rally a maximum of sympathisers (De Witte 2001 and 2003: 542). The funeral of my late foster mother Ma Margaret Maku Asime who passed away on 4 April 2003 took place three weeks later. This medium period can be considered a compromise fitting both her status as a respected senior lady, which might have called for a longer delay, and her membership in the Presbyterian Women's Fellowship, which advocates moderation. See also Adjaye (2004: 147).

¹⁰² BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 18a, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 10.01.1866, pp. 2-4; D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 1, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 06.04.1869, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Huber 1993: 265. Further, people involved in other ritual obligations, for example in the performance of *dipo*, may not attend funerals in order not to become unclean (Steegstra 2004: 281).

¹⁰⁴ The funeral itself is called *ya-pemi*. It is closed usually a week later with the *ya-sitremiti* ritual.

¹⁰⁵ PRO CO 879/19 Administrator Alfred Moloney to the Earl of Kimberley, Christiansborg Castle, Accra 07.06.1882, Enclosure No. 1: General Report on the River Volta District, Commander R. Murray Rumsey, R.N., Aburi House 27.06.1882, p. 33.

overcome the feeling of grief and was an expression of sympathy.¹⁰⁶ Further, the intoxication was similar to death and thus created a proximity to the deceased and the ancestors in general. Alcohol was also important for the remuneration of those who handled the corpse and prepared the grave.¹⁰⁷ In the late 1880s a funeral could see the consumption of 240 bottles of schnapps and with the wealth created by the Cocoa Boom the amount even increased.¹⁰⁸ The missionaries accordingly framed their critique in terms of health and sanitation: the corpses were buried in the homes, the graves being in immediate proximity of the living spheres, at times even inside the homes, and the rocky nature of the mountain top not allowing for a sufficient covering of the grave, the missionaries believed the odours of the decomposing corpses to impact on the inhabitants' health.¹⁰⁹ This problem was accentuated by the growth in population. Finally, the funeral itself was seen as an unhealthy affair, due to the intoxication and exhaustion of the mourners.

People dance, drink, and wail for some hours. The elderly, still sweating due to the strenuous climbing of the mountain, sit down in the shade, where the breeze cools them down. Others, i.e. the widows and mothers etc., will reside for some time in the room in which the grave is situated. No wonder, some of them will bring the seed of death back to their plantations and on the occasion of their own funeral they will again call others to join them – not to mention those who are hurt by exploding guns and other accidents.¹¹⁰

Missionary Johannes Zimmermann, the author of these lines, was despite his critique of the risks involved in the practice not radically opposed to it. He recognized and accepted the importance of the mountain as the site of the burial. Therefore he accepted that converts joined the burial party, but advised them to return to Odumase right after the interment on Krobo Mountain and to abstain from the funeral custom itself.¹¹¹ Although this advice was remarkably liberal it still created major problems. When Chief Odonkor Azu, for example, tried to stick to it and did not attend the funeral rites held for one of his senior wives in the mountain town, he was criticised for not duly expressing his love for her.¹¹² This criticism did not simply refer to the husband-wife relationship but also to the wider family: It is foremost during funerals, that the relationships between lineages

¹⁰⁶ Akyeampong 1996: 39.

¹⁰⁷ Akyeampong 2000: 39; BMA D-3.9 Quartalsberichte 1915-17, VII, 5, W. Erhardt, Krobo einst und jetzt, Odumase 10.07.1917, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ BMA D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 159, Johannes Kopp, Odumase 06.09.1887, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ The idea of hygiene and health at the end of the nineteenth century was still widely dominated by the idea that miasma (poisonous emanations for example from swamps) had a direct influence on health (Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary 2002).

¹¹⁰ BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 18a, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 10.01.1866, p. 4, my translation.

¹¹¹ BMA D-1.32 Afrika 1880, Anhang 172, Proceedings of the Ga -Adangme District Synod, Odumase 08.12.1880.

¹¹² BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 14, Mattheus Roes, Odumase 28.09.1865, p. 4.

and other agnatic groups are affirmed.¹¹³ Right from the beginning the mission established its own cemetery at Odumase, where mission staff and members of the congregation might find their eternal rest. It seems that hardly any Krobo was buried there in the early years, but only members of the congregation who stemmed from other places and those who had died an abominable death. For the latter the Christian cemetery offered a valid alternative to the burial in the bush. The missionaries themselves or members of the congregation re-interred bodies that were found in the bush in their church yard. The mission land seems to have been perceived as an extraterritorial space.¹¹⁴

The regulations applicable to the Basel Mission congregations in West Africa of 1865 made it not perfectly clear whether Christians actually had to be buried in this cemetery or whether alternative sites were allowed.¹¹⁵ A revised version of 1902 was explicit in that it stated "The corpse [of a member of the congregation] is buried in a simple coffin in the cemetery of the congregation."¹¹⁶ It has already been stated that missionary Zimmermann seems to have taken a liberal stand in interpreting the early regulations. Yet, in the long run the rule that every true Krobo wanted to be buried in his family house on Krobo mountain confronted the mission with a major problem. It made it impossible to establish a Christian funeral practice. When later missionaries wanted to impose stricter rules, demanding that their converts made a complete break with the past, they often had to learn, that the wish to be buried next to one's ancestor on Krobo Mountain kept even the most convinced candidates from baptism.¹¹⁷ These missionaries thus fully supported efforts by the colonial government to enforce burials in the cemeteries in the plains.

SANITATION AND CONTROL

Like the mission the colonial administration highlighted sanitary aspects when arguing against burials on Krobo Mountain, and as was the case with the mission, its true motives were with exerting control over the people. Already in 1864 Governor Pine had commented on the age-old practice of intramural sepulchre prevalent in the coastal towns. Pine did not deem it necessary to abolish it, as he had not witnessed any nega-

¹¹³ Adjaye 2004: 158-159.

¹¹⁴ For example in 1887 one of the presbyters buried his non-Christian sister on mission land, after her corpse had been disposed of in the bush. People would not have allowed him to bury her anywhere else. BMA D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 159, Johannes Kopp, Odumase 06.09.1887, p.3.

¹¹⁵ The regulations stated that "Each congregation seeks to establish as soon as possible a cemetery where the dead are buried and await there resurrection." BMA D-9.1c, 11a *Regulations for the Evangelic Congregations of the Basel Mission in East India and West Africa*, Basel 1865, § 79, my translation.

¹¹⁶ BMA D-9.1c, 13a *Regulations for the Evangelic Congregations of the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast*. Basel 1902, § 77, my translation.

¹¹⁷ BMA D-1.37 Afrika 1883, Odumase 96, yearly report by Jakob Weiss and Johannes Kopp, Odumase ??02.1884, p. 6.

tive effects or vapours.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the establishment of the Volta River District brought about a renewed concern with health and therefore with such burial practices as existed on Krobo Mountain. The Towns Police and Public Health Ordinance of 1878 was followed by a specific Cemeteries Ordinance in 1888, which forbade intra-mural interments. Contraventions were drastically sanctioned and in addition to the resulting fine the further use of the building could be prohibited outright. Already on 6 August 1891 the ordinance was amended and a new penalty was introduced, which fined chiefs who had not set apart land for a cemetery under the ordinance £20.¹¹⁹ This was geared, at least in part, to Krobo where the chiefs were extremely reluctant to establish cemeteries. To be buried on Krobo Mountain was a crucial aspect of Krobo identity and thus of a chief's power and legitimacy. The issue had power to mobilise the population and both in Yilo Krobo and Manya Krobo the cemetery question became an argument among the various competitors for the respective paramountcy.

In Yilo Krobo Chief Addo of Ogome, who contested paramount Chief Akrobetto, continued to bury on Krobo Mountain. Akrobetto in turn obeyed government orders (or pretended to do so) in order to have the latter acknowledge and back his position as a paramount chief.¹²⁰ Similarly in Odumase paramount Chief Sakite shortly before his death on 28 January 1892 established a cemetery and, together with his brother and adviser the ex-catechist Peter Nyarko, reported several people for having buried a corpse in their house. Nonetheless, Chief Sakite was himself buried "under the cellar" of his new palace at Odumase in the night of 29 January. This represented an obvious breach of the law. District Commissioner Williams, however, suspected that the statement was false and suggested that the corpse had been buried on Krobo Mountain. His argument was that Sakite enjoyed not only chiefly but also priestly honours and thus burial on the mountain was mandatory. Rumours had it that the late Chief had been buried in the mountain town. The commissioner's suspicion was further corroborated, when Nyarko refused to unlock the room and to allow the commissioner to exhume the body. When Williams insisted the situation became most threatening. An angry mob armed with guns, clubs, and cutlasses and singing war songs drove the commissioner away, so that he had to seek refuge in the mission house. Alarm was sounded and from all the neighbouring towns armed people came flocking into Odumase. Missionary Josenhans feared for the mission station if Williams stayed overnight. Therefore the commissioner was later escorted to Akuse by the Christian brothers of the late Chief.

¹¹⁸ PRO CO 96/89 Gold Coast 1871, No. 98, The Governor in Chief Sir Arthur Kennedy to the Earl of Kimberley, Sierra Leone 13.10.1871, Enclosure: Extract of a Despatch from Gov. Pine to Mr Cardwell, Cape Coast 13.09.1864.

¹¹⁹ Pro CO 97/3 Gold Coast Ordinances 1884-1898, No. 7/1888, An Ordinance to provide for interments in cemeteries and to prohibit intramural sepulchre; *Ibid.*: An Ordinance to amend the law relating to burials and the regulation of cemeteries, 06.08.1891.

¹²⁰ It was actually this dispute between Addo and Akrobetto and Addo's refusal to make use of the cemetery established by the paramount chief, which brought about the acting governor's visit to Krobo Mountain. PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 345 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, § 12.

Upon investigation Nyarko claimed that the door had been locked precisely in order to prevent the elders of the clan from burying the corpse in the mountain town. The idea of having the corpse of the powerful chief exhumed by the Commissioner's Kru men and this in broad daylight was, of course, simply impossible. In the end, Government seems to have dropped the idea of exhuming the corpse and to have accepted the fact of intramural burial inside the palace at Odumase. On the one hand, the issue had an enormous popular appeal and the situation would have been very difficult to control. On the other hand the presence at the palace of the wailing widows and of an old aunt who was usually staying on the mountain suggested that this was indeed the place where the late chief was buried.¹²¹ Peter Nyarko had been the most important councillor to the late chief and was steering the affairs of the Manya Krobo paramountcy in the background. He was carefully balancing the need for tradition and for modernisation, maintaining an equilibrium between the emerging secular leadership with its base at Odumase and the priestly elite on Krobo Mountain. It seems that he deemed his brother's death to be the right moment to shift the power centre fully from the mountain to Odumase. The burial of the late chief, who himself had combined in an ideal way priestly legitimacy and modernity, at the new palace in Odumase, imbued the site with the symbolic power necessary for making Odumase the new ritual and political centre. In this light the agency of Peter Nyarko as the representative and promoter of the new chieftaincy clearly comes to the fore. It is suggested that the abolition of Krobo Mountain, which was to follow in August 1892 was not so much an assertion of colonial power, but part of Nyarko's efforts to shift the power centre and strengthen the position of the chiefs.

Once the mountain settlements had been abolished and most probably on the ground of the example set by the late Chief Sakite, burial in the new cemeteries by and by was generally accepted. According to District Commissioner Williams it took a great amount of education to have people accept the new system and to get the chiefs to establish cemeteries. It is to be doubted that the people had indeed (as Williams said) "realize[d] the danger" arising from intramural sepulchre and were paying attention to the law in this respect.¹²² Judging from documentary evidence and from evidence gathered during my fieldwork the practice continued in secrecy but was definitely restricted to officiating priests and chiefs.¹²³ For members of the royal family of Odumase, as well as for other

¹²¹ A formal detail allowed government to tolerate the intramural burial: The new public cemetery had not been registered yet under the Ordinance and thus government lacked the legal means necessary for exhuming the corpse (GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute, Case No. 14/92 [misplaced probably from ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs] Threatened disturbances at Odumasi in consequence of the death of King Sakite, note on minute paper: J.R.P. to Gov. 06.02.1892).

¹²² PRO CO 96/230 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, No. 19, Governor Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, Christiansborg Castle, Accra 12.01.1893, forwarding the Report by District Commissioner Williams, Akuse ?? .11.1892.

¹²³ *Asafoatsã* Narteh Okumador Madjitey, for example, was buried during Emanuel Mate Kole's reign (i.e. after 1892) in his family house at Asite (Sikapa 1937: 72).

chiefs' families, a special cemetery was established in 1898.¹²⁴ I suggest that the continuation of intramural burial for important persons occurred with the silent agreement of the government representative at the district level. It will be shown below, that these officers at times showed remarkable laxity in their administration (see also chapter five). The same attitude, which helps to negotiate the continuation of strong traditions in the modern Ghanaian society, is still in place today.

3.4 NAZIRITES, TAIL GIRLS, OR PROSTITUTES? DIPO AND ITS PERCEPTION

The stereotypes in the perception of the Krobo are still of importance today and this holds true especially for women in Krobo. Whenever the issues of prostitution and HIV/AIDS in Ghana are being discussed it is very likely that reference to the Krobo region is made.¹²⁵ A high HIV-rate prevailing in the Krobo hometowns, which is partly due to the re-migration of women from other West African cities such as Abidjan, seems to confirm a stereotype of Krobo women working as prostitutes.¹²⁶ One might argue that the reason why government and non-government organisations alike focus on HIV/AIDS in Krobo today is as much based on an existing infection rate as it is on a historical stereotypic perception of the Krobo, which directs the observers' attention to the region. The traditional councils and especially the queenmothers of both Manya and Yilo Krobo have themselves taken up the issue. There is hardly a durbar in the region, where the issue is not given room. At the Manya Krobo Ngmayem Festival 2004 *Konô* Nene Sakite II announced

the setting up of a committee on culture in the area to look into certain traditional practices that were irrelevant to modern standards of living so as to make recommendations for their modification or change. According to him, the decision to change some cultural practices stemmed from Manya Krobo being described as the haven of HIV/AIDS infection in the country, adding that the traditional council was committed to instituting measures that would effect behavioural changes among the people.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ PRO CO 96/337 Gold Coast 1899, Vol. 1, Gov. W.B. Griffith, Accra 12.01.1899, Enclosure No. 1: DC Volta River Waldron to C.S., Akuse 14.10.1898.

¹²⁵ See for instance Desclaux 1997: 3-5; Akyeampong 1997: 159, 163; Ankomah 2004: 467-478; Ghana Ministry of Health 2001: 46; Bollinger et al. 1999: 10; Awusabo-Asare 1995: 229, 233; Lowe Morna 1989; Mahatir 2000: 7.

¹²⁶ Steegstra 2004: 6, 42; Konotey-Ahulu 1987: 1593-1594; idem 1989: 1-3; Hampton 1991. The Krobo area has become the field of action for major government and non-government initiatives such as Family Health International (FHI), which are dealing with AIDS. The *Manya Krobo Queen Mothers Association* has taken up the issue and is presenting itself as a partner to these external players. This is in accordance with a USAID funded Centre for Development and Population Activities [CEDPA] project (Fayorsey et al. [2003]).

¹²⁷ "GHACEM to Start Mining Limestone for Cement Production." In: *The Daily Graphic*, 01.11.2004. Already in 2003 HIV/AIDS had been the central theme of the Manya Krobo Ngmayem, when an AIDS awareness campaign was launched by the *Manya Krobo Queen*

With “certain traditional practices” Sakite II, of course, referred to *dipo*. It is remarkable that the action of the traditional council is explained by the negative outside perception of Krobo.¹²⁸ In this section I will show that this stereotype is of a very long standing, that its roots can be traced some 200 years back, and that it is closely connected to the girls’ initiation practiced among the Krobo and among other Dangme speaking groups.¹²⁹ The *dipo* initiation and its rituals must have been the most visible and attractive cultural practice of these societies. Important stages of the rites were (and still are) performed in public, when the girls dressed with just a loin cloth visited the great markets near Krobo Mountain and displayed their dancing skills. In the final stage they were adorned with masses of beads and danced in the midst of a cheering crowd celebrating their Krobo womanhood. The rites seem to have been popular with early European traders and other visitors on the coast from early times. To this day they are one of the major tourist attractions in Southern Ghana. It seems that, as is the case today, guests were invited to witness the celebration and join in the party.

The sight of the bare-breasted girls dancing graciously has fascinated both European and African onlookers from an early time on and has added to the fame of Krobo women being particularly beautiful. There is, however, another side to the story, which has contributed to their association with prostitution in the public perception. Women who conceived before having passed the *dipo* rites were formerly not allowed to stay in Krobo and were driven away.¹³⁰ Without the backing of their family network they could not negotiate a proper marriage and must often have been living in informal and changing relationships. This gave rise to this image of permissiveness and prostitution mentioned above.¹³¹ In their hometowns expiation and purification rites had to be per-

Mothers together with the *Klo Drivers Alliance* and the *Krobo Youth Volunteers Groups*. “Ma-nya Krobo embarks on anti-HIV/AIDS campaign.” In: *Ghana News Agency*, 01.11.2003.

¹²⁸ The Yilo Krobo Kloyosikplemi Durbar, which followed a week later, had the theme “Fighting HIV/AIDS and reducing stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS”. Paramount Chief Nene Dautey Ologo VI mentioned in his address that the traditional council “had taken up the responsibility to help stem the spread of HIV/AIDS in the area”. He also made it clear, that the deeper causes of the problem lie with poverty and that the disease cannot be fought without boosting economic development. “GBC to Go Digital.” In: *The Daily Graphic* [reproduced on Radio Joy Online], 08.11.2004.

¹²⁹ These are foremost the neighbouring Shai and Osudoku. *Dipo* is also practiced in Ada and in some parts of Accra the closely related *otufu* is performed. See Steegstra (2004, p. 71 n76, 225).

¹³⁰ Huber 1993: 165. It is interesting to note, that one of the earliest references to *dipo* is to be found in a herbarium and relates to abortion practices among the Dangme speaking peoples of the Gold Coast. It was assembled by the Danish Peter Thonning, who was appointed to the Gold Coast from 1799 to 1802 in order to investigate the conditions for the cultivation of cash crops and dye plants. Writing on the *physalis angulata* (Mullaca) Thonning refers to its usage as an abortive measure by Dangme girls who have conceived prior to having passed through their initiation rite (Ascherson 1879: 247).

¹³¹ Bowdich reported that Asante women who refused to marry according to their family’s wishes could not rely on the latter’s support and had no other resource than prostitution (Bowdich 1966 quoted by Akyeampong 1997: 156). With colonialism women’s options to assert their autonomy and to accumulate wealth as migrants in the urban centers multiplied.

formed, which imposed an important financial burden on the family. In order to cover the expenses families sometimes had to raise a loan by giving some family member as a pawn. According to some sources unchaste girls were sold by their relatives to families from neighbouring states, whereby the image of slavery mentioned above was fostered.¹³²

Today a Christian discourse on Krobo culture generally asserts that *dipo* was formerly a sound puberty rite, during which girls learned about domestic issues, health and sanitation, and which was to prevent teenage pregnancies. This aspect, it is said, has been watered in recent times and the ritual has been corrupted by “the fetish priests”. These are considered to have turned it into a business and to have brought in immoral aspects. As the anthropologist Marijke Steegstra has pointed out, the importance of *dipo* is not in its function as a puberty rite, but in initiating girls into Krobo womanhood. *Dipo* consists of group rituals that cleanse and purify, and thereby assure that the women and their offspring are considered to belong to Krobo. Through *dipo* a girl is fully attached to her family house. Without having passed through the rite she literally cannot eat in the family house and thus is not part of the family. This makes for a cohesion, which effectively counteracts the spatial fragmentation of the Krobo.¹³³ Already in the nineteenth century *dipo* did not have to coincide with the first menstruation and could take place both at an earlier or later stage. Nevertheless, the girls’ cycle was monitored as its absence might point to a pregnancy.¹³⁴

3.4.1 “A MASSIVE, SINFUL FLESHLINESS” – BASEL MISSIONARIES AND DIPO

Given the importance and presence of *dipo* in Krobo society, it is only logical that the Basel missionaries’ attention too was captured by the institution in several ways. As mentioned above the initiands were among the few people present on Krobo Mountain on a permanent basis and thus they are a fixture in most of the reports of Basel Missionaries relating to the mountain. The latter were intrigued by the fact that the mountain towns were seldom crowded, and that hardly anybody was staying there on a permanent basis. Even the chiefs were mostly living on their farms in the plains working together with their slaves.¹³⁵ In stark contrast to this zeal and industry the few inhabitants of the mountain towns, i.e. the old and frail, the ritual specialists and the initiands seemed to lead an idle life. This was especially the case with the girls undergoing the *dipo* rites, who spent a period of between one and three years on the mountain. During this time they were not supposed to do any hard work but to concern themselves with learning old customs and traditions. The *dipo* girls were dressed with a loin cloth only.

Prostitution, however, remained one of the important avenues especially for women with no kinship ties within the community they lived in (Akyeampong 1997: 156-157).

¹³² Steegstra 2004: 89-90, 137.

¹³³ Steegstra 2004: 280-284, 320.

¹³⁴ Steegstra 2004: 205-206.

¹³⁵ BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 10, Johannes Zimmermann, Christiansborg 18.07.1851, p. 21.

Although the girls were strictly prevented from sexual intercourse before they had successfully passed through the rite, this nudity led some of the missionaries to a different conclusion. They expected that the girls had to be involved in something immoral. Johannes Stanger, who was the first Basel Missionary to make reference to *dipo*, set the tone when he reported in 1851:

Like all Negroes in this area they [i.e. the Krobo] worship the fetish. The outstanding feature with Krobo is, however, that they always keep a number of harlots on this mountain, who are not allowed to marry. The fetish, it is said, has initiated them into this sinful life.¹³⁶

An account by Missionary Dieterle, who visited the mountain some months later provided a description which came closer to the actual meaning of *dipo*. He said all girls were to stay on the mountain for a period of two years after their first menstruation. During this time they were not allowed to stay away from the mountain overnight, had to wear a special kind of hat and were not allowed to cut their hair. According to Dieterle this was to celebrate the girls' virginity.¹³⁷ Two reports written in 1858, at a time when Odumase had already been established as a mission outpost, elaborated further on this issue. Missionary Heck's report started out as a rather sympathetic and detailed account reflecting a fascination with a rite described as "the people's pride": All girls (except slaves) of between ten and fourteen years had to stay at the mountain towns for a period of between one and three years. They were supposed to do no work and were looked after by their brothers or prospective husbands. Usually they would get married at the end of the rite. According to the missionary in former times this rite had nothing to do with "the fetish" and it was only recently that the priests interfered in it. They introduced sanctions for girls who got pregnant before having passed through the ritual and now any such girl was driven away and banned from the Krobo area.

This rule being so severe, the sanction does not have to be enforced often. However, all the more sins of a secret nature occur, namely *onanism*. The custom consists in a massive, sinful fleshliness anyway – so much immorality prevails on this mountain among the black youth of both sexes, that my feelings do not permit to describe it in more detail. These *Otufo*-girls are dressed with beads and abundant trinkets only. On their heads they wear a kind of hat without brim [...]. Looking at this exceedingly great misery of the poor black youth, I sighed by myself: Lord, have mercy on this poor race! This custom is a mighty obstacle to the gospel.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 11, J. Stanger, Christiansborg 30.09.1851, pp. 23-24 (my translation).

¹³⁷ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 56, J. Chr. Dieterle, Akropong 31.05.1852, pp. 5-6.

¹³⁸ BMA, D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Abokobi, No. 13, Johannes Heck, Abokobi 25.05.1858 (translation by M. Steegstra, amended by the author).

The second report, written by Missionary Auer in a catchy popular style and published in two slightly differing versions in the mission's publications condensed the knowledge on *dipo* gathered by the missionaries to five short sentences:

A number of girls devote themselves to the fetish for the duration of some years. They live on the mountain and descend from it in order to fetch water and food stuff. They wear a curious, high straw hat, a lot of red coloured trinkets and corals and cover themselves with merely a narrow strip of cloth. Those who break with their vow of chastity will be driven away for ever. They behave quite decently and keep at a respectful distance.¹³⁹

Whereas the reproduction of the text in the mission's Yearly Report was true to the original,¹⁴⁰ its rendering in the more popularly oriented *Evangelische Heidenbote* differed markedly:

[G]irls that lead a kind of convent life. They are betrothed or engaged to the false god for the duration of some years and live on the mountain, go almost naked, adorned with plenty of beads and corals; they also wear a strange [kind of] hat on their heads.¹⁴¹

As Steegstra has pointed out, this shows how the imagination of *dipo*, despite some rather honest and differentiated portrayals of the rite in the missionaries' original reports, was shifted in the direction of the biblical image of temple prostitutes.¹⁴² Missionary Stanger in 1851, of course, had himself referred to harlots in his report, but it is not clear whether he was alluding to *dipo* or to girls serving in some shrine not connected with *dipo*. It might be that two different institutions were confused here into an imagination of *dipo* that became very powerful and was shared widely. In those cases where missionaries acknowledged the good in the institution (i.e. the check on teenage pregnancies), they stressed other negative aspects of *dipo*. These were on the one hand the luxury and idleness connected to this education of the young women, which rhymed rather poorly with protestant ideas of a work ethic and the education leading towards it. On the other hand it was sexual play among the initiands and their future husbands,

¹³⁹ BMA, D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Akropong No. 39, G. Auer, Akropong 29.10.1858, p. 8 (my translation). This report was published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1858*, pp. 94-111. Whereas this version was addressed as a quarterly report to the mission board, the other version, differing mainly in a more colloquial tone of the opening paragraph, was directed to the 'brethren at the mission house', to a Christian assembly at St. Alban in Basel and to Auer's family in Neu Bülach. It was published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 5(1859), pp. 39-42 and 6(1859), pp. 49-53. The original is in BMA, D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Akropong No. 38, G. Auer, Akropong 01.10.1858

¹⁴⁰ *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1858*, p. 101.

¹⁴¹ *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 5(1859), p. 42 (translation by M. Steegstra, amended by the author).

¹⁴² Steegstra 2004: 97-98. For the image of temple prostitutes in the bible see for instance *Deuteronomy* 23,18; *Hosea* 4,13.

which was condoned to a certain degree,¹⁴³ and which allegedly led to what the missionaries referred to as the sin of Onan.¹⁴⁴

Once the missionaries had opened their station at Odumase they acquired a deeper understanding of the rite and at the same time had to learn, that it was “a mighty obstacle to the gospel”¹⁴⁵. When they embarked on girls’ education, their beginnings were soon thwarted when all girls of the age of twelve were taken to the hill to do their *dipo*. Zimmermann acknowledged that *dipo* was an honourable institution, albeit “in heathen terms”. He said, that “in its present form” it could not be allowed to Christians. Firstly it was not free of fetish-worship. Secondly the nakedness connected to it was incompatible with the Christian behaviour envisaged by the mission. To Zimmermann it was clear that *dipo* presented a great challenge to the missionary project in Krobo. Not doing *dipo* meant banishment from Krobo and a ruined reputation. The missionary’s empathy for the Krobo showed when he concluded by stating that a young Krobo woman respected her straw hat (Dangme: *komi pee*) more than her German age-mate her bridal garland.¹⁴⁶ Zimmermann was referring to a headgear made from leaves, which was a remnant of pre-Christian culture in Germany. If the early missionaries in Germany had tolerated such a symbol, why would the Basel Missionary abolish a similar form in Africa?¹⁴⁷ This rather differentiated view of *dipo* contrasted with earlier comments on *dipo* by Missionary Zimmermann dating from 1855. Then he had met *dipo* girls adorned with beads and other finery visiting the big Kokutsonya market and in his report described them as “a kind of female Nazirites, whose nakedness does little to further their vow of chastity”.¹⁴⁸ Zimmermann had obviously chosen the wrong biblical image, as the laws of the Nazirites did not demand chastity.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless his report with the reference to the Nazirites was printed in one of the mission journals and the Nazirites surface again in other missionary texts on Krobo.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Huber 1993: 100.

¹⁴⁴ Onan’s sin, in the understanding of the Basel Missionaries, was that he practiced the coitus interruptus (may be even more broadly self-indulgence), while a more modern reading of the bible will rather see it in Onan’s refusal to obey his father and the laws of the levirate marriage or in his hatred for his late senior brother Er (*Genesis* 38, 7-10).

¹⁴⁵ Steegstra 2004: 71.

¹⁴⁶ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase 8, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 04.05.1860, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴⁷ BMA D-1.18b Afrika 1866 part 2, Odumase 3, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 06.06.1866, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴⁸ BMA D-1.6, Afrika 1855, Abokobi No. III 99, J. Zimmermann, Abokobi ?? .10.1855, published in *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* 16(1856), pp. 68-89, here 74 (my translation).

¹⁴⁹ Nasiräer in the original. The Nazirites (or Nazarites) were sacred persons among the ancient Hebrews, who had vowed not to cut their hair, not to drink alcohol and not to get close to a grave or a corpse (*Numbers* 6, 1ff). The concept of the Nazirite was appropriated by the South African prophet Isaiah Shembe, who in 1910 founded the Church of the Nazirites (*iBandla lamaNazareth*). The wellbeing of this religious community relies on the ritual and moral purity of its women (Muller 1999).

¹⁵⁰ BMA D-5.9,4 *Chronik der Evangelischen Missionsstation Odumase*, n.d. [text written by Paul Steiner].

In 1866 the Odumase mission station had to respond to an inquiry by the mission board at Basel concerning the *dipo* rites. In the report that followed, the Missionaries Roes and Zimmermann gave a detailed and sympathetic portrait of the rite, which was based on information gathered from “competent people”. They put it into the context of the marriage that followed the rites directly in most cases and stressed that its aim was to save the girls from pregnancy during their adolescence. In the eyes of the missionaries their report showed clearly that *dipo*, as opposed to funerals and other “heathen rites”, had a rather positive effect. The major problem was the state of those women who, having passed *dipo*, did not marry straight away. Marriage was no prerequisite for bringing forth children in a socially accepted way; rather it was *dipo*, which was conditional for both pregnancy and marriage.¹⁵¹ Pre-marital offspring was even encouraged. The children would belong to the woman’s father, and while he would have to see to their upbringing, he could also rely on their labour. The actual father of the child could see that the woman was a good match and could later claim the child by performing the *la pomi* ritual.¹⁵² Further, the missionaries were now clearly aware of the fact, that nakedness and clothing were highly significant markers of a girl’s status. Only once she had passed *dipo* was a girl allowed to cover her breasts.¹⁵³ Therefore what the missionaries considered to be a fit dress for a young woman, was read by the local population as a sign of the girl’s defilement. Last but not least, *dipo* like any other ritual entailed the appellation of Krobo deities. Nevertheless Roes and Zimmermann were convinced, that *dipo* would not resist the power of Christianity for long, and that the Odumase Girls’ School was the means to overcome it.¹⁵⁴

FOCUS ON THE ODUMASE GIRLS’ SCHOOL

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter the descriptions of what was happening on Krobo Mountain dwindled once the mission had established itself firmly at Odumase. The focus of the reports shifted towards the mission station and from *dipo* to its Christian counterpart – the Odumase Girls’ School (see chapter 1). Despite a promising start, *dipo* proved stronger than the school’s attraction. All Krobo girls left for the mountain and few returned to school after having gone through their initiation, as in most cases they got married right away. A typical biography of an accomplished Christian Krobo woman was for example the one of Emily Dedewise (born c. 1857). She was the daughter of one of the first Krobo converts, Andrew Mate. Dedewise left the Odumase Girls’ School around 1874 at the age of fifteen. According to her teacher Mrs Missionary Tabitha Schönfeld she left school, because “she felt cramped for space” there. After

¹⁵¹ Steegstra 2004: 109.

¹⁵² The *la pomi* ritual is mostly performed after, or in connection with, marriage (Steegstra 2004: 53-54).

¹⁵³ Steegstra 2004: 205.

¹⁵⁴ BMA D-1.18b Afrika 1866 part 2, Odumase 4, M. Roes and J. Zimmermann, Odumase 13.06.1866, pp. 2-3. See also the covering letter in D-1.18b Afrika 1866 part 2, Odumase 3, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 06.06.1866, pp. 2-3.

having obviously done *dipo* she returned, albeit only to Sunday school in 1875, was baptised, and soon after married Teacher Abel Kodji.¹⁵⁵ The school thus consisted mostly of strangers (i.e. Ga, Ada, Ewe, or Muslims). This was the picture up to the mid-1870s, when one young Krobo woman refused to join her age mates for *dipo* and in August 1872 ran away to Abokobi. Her case resulted in a major uproar. Her mother led an angry mob attacking the mission station and the whole of Krobo turned against the mission. Nonetheless, Mary¹⁵⁶ Koryo was baptised and trained. Unfortunately she died a few years later. Contrary to the missionaries' expectations her example did not herald a new era. Rather the conflict, together with the increasing colonial control in the area, resulted in an increased urge to have daughters undergo *dipo* before it might be forbidden. In addition the priest in charge of *dipo* had died some years ago and several successors died before the rites could come on. Therefore a great number of initiands had built up.¹⁵⁷ The missionaries could notice that now even small girls of the age of six or seven years were sent to the mountain. In fact, *dipo* was back stronger than ever – people even extended the period of seclusion on Krobo Mountain thereby adding prestige.¹⁵⁸ The conversion of Chief Sakite's daughters did not result in the major breakthrough the missionaries had hoped for,¹⁵⁹ and also the presence of a District Commissioner at Akuse did not break the power of *dipo*.

This is manifest in the account of the young Missionary Christian Kölle, who in 1891 shortly after his arrival in Krobo visited the mountain. Kölle could witness a grand celebration of the principal rite of *dipo*, when the girls visit the sacred stone *tāgbâtā*. All initiands have to pass over the rock and it is said that any hidden pregnancy is revealed.¹⁶⁰ It is rather ironic, that this most detailed of all descriptions of *dipo* by Basel Missionaries stems from the very year preceding its abolition. Kölle was fascinated by the crowds of people transporting foodstuff from the up-country to the mountain homes. They all came to attend a relative's *dipo*. The mountain was cramped with people and Kölle noticed that there were many youngsters. The missionary could rely on the explanations and the guidance of a man, who usually worked as a carrier for the mission. Kölle witnessed a senior lady or priestess¹⁶¹ preparing a group of twelve girls

¹⁵⁵ BMA D-1.27 Afrika 1875, Odumase 146, Tabitha Schönfeld, Odumase 31.03.1876, p. 2 (my translation); Odumase Presbyterian Church, The District Register Basel Mission Odumase 1860-1944, entry No. 23; Odjidja 1973: 59.

¹⁵⁶ "Maria" in the original.

¹⁵⁷ The case of Mary Koryo and the beginnings of the Odumase Girls' School have been detailed by Steegstra (2004: 103-107).

¹⁵⁸ BMA D-1.29 Afrika 1877, Odumase 137, K. and J. Weiss and Lydia Müh, Odumase ???.02.1877, pp. 1-3.

¹⁵⁹ BMA D-1.32 Afrika 1880, Odumase 70, J. Weiss, Odumase ???.?.1881, p. 2; D-1.40 Afrika 1884, Odumase 115, K. and J. Weiss, Odumase 20.02.1885, pp. 1-2; D-1.42 Afrika 1885, Odumase 120, K. and J. Weiss, Odumase ???.02.1886, pp. 3-5.

¹⁶⁰ On the *tāgbâtā* and its might see Steegstra 2004: 163 n296, 272. The climbing of the sacred stone is called *tā-kwōmi*, going to it *tāgbâtā-yami* (Huber 1993: 176).

¹⁶¹ These old ladies are the ritual specialists in the house (Dangme: *weku*) and mostly have the status of priestesses, i.e. they have been initiated and are attached to a shrine.

for the rite and noticed that in general *dipo* was the women's domain. The initiands at this stage were wearing a white loin cloth (whereas during the previous stages the loin cloth is red) and the emptied and inflated bowels of a sheep were slung around their upper body or placed on their head. Alternatively a piece of fat was resting like a white veil on the girl's head. Kölle referred to these ingredients as being holy. This was correct in as much as they stemmed from the sheep which were offered for this ritual and thus represented the deity's blessings. The white colour itself stands for blessing and purity. Beforehand the girls had been cleansed with herbal water and were marked with white clay (Dangme: *nguô*). Once the preparations were accomplished the "principal male priest of Krobo, an old burnt-out bloke arrived and performed his mumbo-jumbo" on the girls. Then the girls were led to the sacred stone, whilst the crowd and especially their elder sisters cheered them on. The young men were firing their guns, women were drumming on richly decorated calabashes and even aged women who normally would not even walk upright anymore danced to the songs as if possessed.

Kölle and his companion(s) positioned themselves on an outcrop from where they could overlook the scene and could even catch a glimpse of the sacred enclosure that housed the *tâgbâtâ*. The young missionary alleged that it had not been seen by any true Christian before. His description, however, makes it clear that he had no insight into the enclosure. The girls, about fifty in number, were led by two men who cleared the path and cleansed it with herbal water. Each girl was followed by one or two male relatives who from time to time splashed herbal water on the initiand and made sure she would not stumble or fall. When the ritual at the enclosure was finished, the girls were carried on the back of their attendants. They passed by an open space where a wild crowd was dancing, whirling up clouds of dust that mixed with the smoke of the gunfire. The crowd consisted of "drunken men", "shrieking women carrying babies on their back", and of other *dipo* girls, whose straw hats and walking symbolised that they had already reached a later stage of the rites. They were swinging their sticks when dancing and gave the impression of amazons.

In order not to be witness to the drunkenness and indecency that, according to Kölle, was to follow in the evening, the missionary left this "scene of darkness" with sorrow and in his report continued by presenting the Odumase Girls' School and other missionary activities in Krobo in the "bright and radiating light of evangelic promise". Other than presenting *dipo* as an immoral and indecent affair (although he had apparently not witnessed this alleged indecency), Kölle complained that during the rites girls were supposed not to do any hard work, but to eat and drink lavishly.¹⁶² His opinion echoed the general missionary concern with *dipo*. Kölle's description dates more or less from the time when the attention of the colonial government was directed to the rite. The next section deals with the government's encounter with *dipo*.

¹⁶² BMA D-1.54 Goldküste 1891 Ga, Odumase 167, Christian Kölle, Odumase 25.09.1891, pp. 3-8 (transcript by Marijke Steegstra, my translation).

3.4.2 THE TALE OF A TAIL-GIRL – THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIPO BY COLONIAL AGENTS

Colonial reports on Krobo remained remarkably silent on *dipo*. Government assured the Basel Mission of its support around 1870. In a letter to the Manya Krobo paramount chief, it declared that government would not allow a girl to be forced to do *dipo* and that it would protect the Christians against any sanction.¹⁶³ Yet, no action seems to have ensued. The rite is mentioned briefly in the General Report by Murray Rumsey of June 1882, who referred to a “peculiar custom” prevailing in Krobo, which was conditional for a proper marriage. Every girl had to remain on Krobo Mountain under the custody of the priests and priestesses for a period of six to seven years (sic).¹⁶⁴ While this information seems to have passed unnoticed, government’s attention was called to the rite in September 1890 by Christian Akutei Azu, one of the pioneer Christians and a member of the royal family of Odumase. Akutei had himself ambitions to the succession of the old Chief Sakite, with whom he was not on good terms. Most probably the letter was intended to discredit his brother and to present himself as a possible successor to the chief.¹⁶⁵ Akutei stated that, in case of a pregnancy occurring before the successful passing of the rite, the girl was banned from Krobo and her lover as well as her parents had to pay a heavy fine to the priest in charge. The heavy financial burden made some parents sell their daughter to some stranger outside Krobo, while others in their desperation even committed suicide. The alleged slavery especially roused the interest of the government. It inquired from Chief Thomas Odonkor of Kpong and from the District Commissioner in Akuse, whether the allegation could be substantiated and what *dipo* was all about.

Thomas Odonkor stated that the girls stayed on the mountain for some six to twelve months during which time they were “sitting idle”. He was not of the opinion that *dipo* should be abolished (whereas he offered himself as a partner for the abolition of the war cults). In his reply Alexander Williams confirmed the allegations especially those concerning “slave dealing”. He added some nuance by stating that either the girl was “sold into slavery or given away to some other stranger who paid money to marry her”. Williams mentioned that Chief Sakite’s brother and councillor Peter Nyarko had recently taken under his own protection some girls who were to be banned. The priest in charge of the expulsion and of the expiation rites connected to it was called Asa(r), by Christian

¹⁶³ BMA D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 13, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 01.07.1871, p. 11 (transcript by Marijke Steegstra).

¹⁶⁴ PRO CO 879/19 Administrator Alfred Moloney to the Earl of Kimberley, Christiansborg Castle, Accra 07.06.1882, Enclosure No. 1: General Report on the River Volta District, Commander R. Murray Rumsey, R.N., Aburi House 27.06.1882, p. 32.

¹⁶⁵ Christian (Aku-)Tei Azu was entrusted by his father Chief Odonkor Azu into Missionary Zimmermann’s care in 1855. In 1892 he was among the faction of the royal family opposing Emanuel Mate Kole’s election. GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.263/90, Letter by Christian Akutei Azu, 01.09.1890; BMA D-1.6 Afrika 1855, Christiansborg No. 2/II 39, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg ???.1855, p. 6; Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 48.

name Daniel Chorley. In his response the district commissioner also confirmed that *dipo* was identical with "Otofu" and the "Tail Girls" custom.¹⁶⁶ This expression seems to have been part of Supervisor Bell's report on the region.¹⁶⁷ In his novel *The Tale of a Tail-Girl* (first published 1893), which dealt with the girl Adjua and her lover Bippo, Hesketh Bell gives the following description of a Tail Girl (i.e. a girl undergoing *dipo*). It is preceded by slightly eroticising remarks on her beauty, making clear, that the latter and her hope for a good match are Adjua's main concerns.

Adjua's costume was cool and becoming. Between it and nothing, there were only a tall brimless straw hat, shaped like an inverted flower-pot, a string of coloured beads around her hips, and a narrow strip of bright red cloth which hung down from the beads to the ground. This strip was the "Tail" or badge of the Otofu-girls of Krobo – a sign of maidenhood, and one which all the girls devoutly hoped soon to exchange for the baby-pad which the Krobo matrons carry round their waist. There could be no illusions as to the damsel's figure; she wore so very little that its perfections were absolutely patent to everybody. Adjua was nearly fourteen, and at an age when a negro girl is often thoroughly beautiful.¹⁶⁸

In this passage the interest which the *dipo* girls' nakedness aroused in male European onlookers is overtly apparent. It seems that the expression "Tail Girl" was commonly in use among the European community on the coast. In his *The Fetish-Mountain of Krobo*, which is in the form of a travel account, Bell asserts "This narrow cloth constitutes the 'tail' for which the Krobo girls and women are famous on the West Coast of Africa; the young women of this tribe being generally known as 'Tail-girls' rather than by their native term *Otofu*."¹⁶⁹ In *The Tale of a Tail-Girl* this community is represented by the seasoned palm oil trader John Murphy. This man is described as a sort of ruthless adventurer (a "Palm Oil Ruffian") rather than as a torchlight of Victorian values, as he has 'gone native' and is married to three African women.¹⁷⁰ Bell's plot has Murphy doing good business with Sakite, who is deeply indebted to him. The story revolves around a visit of the trader to Krobo Mountain during the war dance for *kotoklo*, where he is Sa-

¹⁶⁶ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.M.P.286/90, DC Akuse S.A. Williams to Colonial Secretary, Akuse 04.10.1890.

¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately the page relating to *dipo* is missing in the abstract of his report preserved at the National Archives of Ghana. From other references to the report it is clear that Bell did write on *dipo* in paragraphs 15-20. As Bell makes extensive use of the term „tail girl“ in his novels (1911a and b) and as the latter rely heavily on his report, it is to be assumed, that the term came up in the missing paragraphs mentioned above. This would also infer, that it was written before October 1890. GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute Box I+II, Minute Paper Report from Mr Supervisor Bell on the Krobo Customs [obviously misplaced], DC Alexander Williams to the Colonial Secretary 28.02.1891.

¹⁶⁸ Bell 1911b: 10.

¹⁶⁹ Bell 1911a: 69. The term was also used by another contemporary writer, whose novel is set in the same year as the one by Bell, but which is clearly not as close to the historical reality (Adams 1908).

¹⁷⁰ Bell 1911b: 160, 168.

kite's special, albeit self-invited, guest. Bippo (Adjua's lover) is his boy and of course the drunken Murphy sets an eye on Adjua, whereby the drama starts. It is clear, that Bell's story was largely congruent with his report to the government, and the characters of his novel (both African and European) seem to reflect his encounters during his sojourn in the region.

The impression that Krobo girls were known among the trading community on the coast for their beauty and that *dipo* was associated with sexual adventures is further corroborated by an earlier episode: It was in November 1861 and early 1862 that the British trader N. Irvine (an agent of Forster & Smith), the Euro-African trader Robert Hutchison (then Mayor of Cape Coast) and a Ga-trader William Addo intermittently took residence in Odumase for some weeks. During their sojourns they took concubines, some of whom were girls and married women from the royal family. Missionary Aldinger and Catechist Carl Reindorf intervened when Hutchinson and Irvine touched these women in public. Following their report, Missionary Locher wrote a letter of complaint to Governor Andrews and soon after Irvine sued the missionary for libel.¹⁷¹ At court Mrs Juliana Reindorf, who shared the same court-yard with the traders, said that in the afternoon Irvine and Hutchison were sitting under the shade trees next to her kitchen with naked girls sitting on their lap. The traders played with the girls' waist beads. When her husband added, that in the evening the traders used to have naked girls sing and dance for them, Lawyer Charles Bannerman, who represented the traders, made reference to "fetish girls" in order to downplay the gravity of the offence. Otufu (i.e. *dipo*) girls, he said, always went naked. In response Missionary Locher stated that in school these girls would dress properly. It was only in their "heathen dances", which in this case they had performed at the request of the traders, that they were dressed with a loin cloth only.¹⁷² On 18 November 1862 Justice William Hacked ruled against Irvine and others, their behaviour being "not quite in accordance with the Code of morality enjoined by the Christian religion" even if the allegation that they had "played with their fingers at the private parts of young girls in public" could not be substantiated at court.¹⁷³ The case makes not only apparent that *dipo* girls exerted a strong attraction on the trading community on the coast and that *dipo* was associated with entertainment and sexual excitement. *Dipo* was also part of a stereotypic perception, which associated Krobo women with loose morals. It transported powerful images, which a member of the educated Euro-African elite such as Charles Bannerman¹⁷⁴ could mobilise in order to reverse power relations.

¹⁷¹ BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Odumase 10a, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 06.05.1862, p. 2.

¹⁷² BMA D-1.13a Afrika 1862 part 1, Christiansborg 39, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg ??.07.1862, pp. 7-8.

¹⁷³ BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Christiansborg 78, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg 09.12.1862, transcription by Ulrike Sill.

¹⁷⁴ Charles Bannerman (1828-1872) belonged to a trading family of long standing. He was a politician and founded the Gold Coast's first newspaper, the *West African Herald* (Parker 2000: 67).

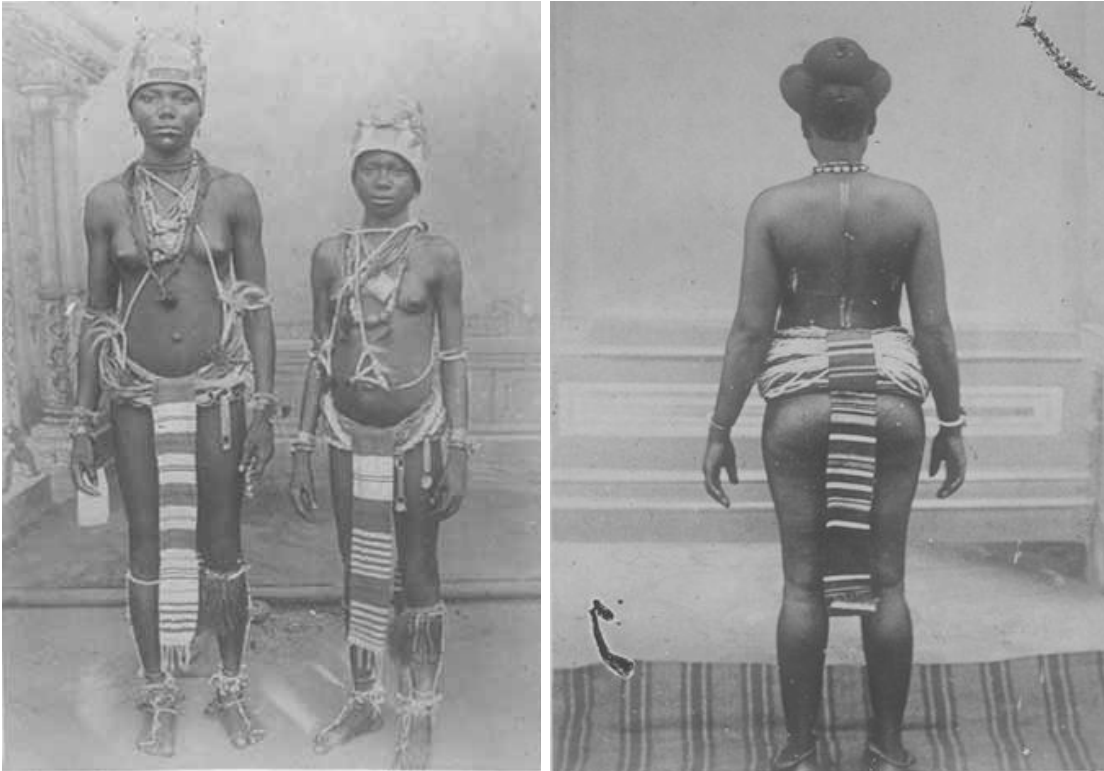


Fig. 3.3 and Fig. 3.4: Studio photographs from the late nineteenth century show *dipo* initiands in their finery. Pictures like the one on the left were commissioned by the families, while the picture to the right is obviously the product of an outside intervention. The situation of the studio portrait has been usurped in order to produce a type photograph. It highlights the loin cloth trailing from the strings of beads, for which *dipo* the initiands were dubbed "tail girls".

Fig. 3.3 (left): "Two Otufo Girls in Traditional Costume."

Unknown studio, date 1899-1908. BMA D-30.08.043.

Fig. 3.4 (right): "An Otufo Girl."

Unknown studio, date 1899-1908. BMA D-30.08.044.

Furthermore *dipo* ranked among the most prominent curiosities the Gold Coast had on offer for those "interested in folk-lore and ethnography". In his *The Fetish-Mountain of Krobo* Bell describes an excursion to Krobo Mountain on the occasion of the *dipo* celebrations. He is part of a group of six Europeans among them "the Commissioner of the district and two other officials who were on a tour of inspection in that part of the Protectorate". As to his own motivation Bell states: "I was particularly anxious to visit the Krobo Mountain, having been told that it was, at certain times of the year, the scene of many curious customs which might be well worth observing. One of the most interesting of all, the *Otufo*, or 'Tail-girl' custom, was about to be celebrated [...]."¹⁷⁵ The group was welcomed by Paramount Chief Sakite and his principal chiefs, and handed over the customary present of whisky and gin. While the priests and priestesses are apparently

¹⁷⁵ Bell 1911a [first published 1893]: 45.

upset by presence of the European visitors, the chief sent "a couple of his people, as guides, to show us what might be of interest".¹⁷⁶

Bell's description resembles very much that of Kölle and it is even more detailed. Unlike the missionary, who had to watch the scene from some distance, Sakite invited the visitors to observe the action from a vantage point.

Every one, save the priests, was now made to retire to a little distance. An exception, however, was made in our favour, and we took our seats on some native stools in the interior of the circle, together with the two Kings of Krobo and their principal chiefs.¹⁷⁷

From this prominent position Bell witnessed the visit of the sacred rock. According to him about 700 girls passed the test. One small girl, however, failed and was taken away by the priests. It may well be that this was one of the embellishments Bell added to his notes of his visit to the mountain. The stark contrast he constructed between the innocent gaiety of the celebration and the vulture-like appearance of the priests added suspense and drama to his write-up. The author even made use of the sun-light and the darkness created by a cloud, as well as of different qualities of music, in order to drive his point home. His story clearly was intended to legitimate the harsh interference by government, which by the time of publication had already taken place.

The girls of Krobo were either unimpeachably virtuous or else possessed a remarkable amount of feminine confidence, for although more than seven hundred of them passed over that slippery rock, the great Fetish gave to each, with one exception, that steadiness of foot which was taken as the certain sign of unimpeachable respectability. The only exception was one unfortunate little girl about twelve or thirteen years old, who, before she had advanced a yard up the side of the rock, managed to entangle her white rod between her feet. Giving a despairing cry, the poor creature threw her hands over her head and fell face downwards on the rock. A terrible shout rent the air; the poor child, who seemed almost unconscious and paralysed with fear, was seized by the howling priests, dragged along the ground, and in a moment the crowd closed over them. With startling suddenness the song had changed, and in the place of the minor chant, which, though rather monotonous, was not unpleasant, an unutterably dismal howl rose from all sides. The tom-toms were immediately silenced, and only the long white ivory horns blew an unearthly wail which re-echoed among the rocks and hollows of the mountain. At the same moment the sun happened to be suddenly obscured by a cloud, and all colour seemed to have faded away into depressing gloom. The effect of the sudden transition was most dramatic, and so unearthly, and at the same time savage, was the song now sung, that a cold shudder ran through my whole

¹⁷⁶ Bell 1911a: 57-58.

¹⁷⁷ Bell 1911a: 62-63.

frame. "What will be done to her?" I excitedly asked the interpreter, thinking of human sacrifices and similar horrors. "She will be sent off the mountain, never to return," answered the man, looking stolidly in front of him. "She is unworthy."¹⁷⁸

One of Hesketh Bell's fellow visitors, "an experienced trader residing in the region", assured the author that no bodily harm was done to the girl. In view of the alleged human sacrifices taking place on Krobo Mountain the author decided to investigate further the issue and he closed by remarking that *dipo* was one of the four great customs taking place every year on Krobo Mountain and that the others (*kotoklo*, *nadu* and *koko nadu*) were far less harmless in character. The original final paragraph, as it was published in 1893 in *Litell's Living Age*, gave a brief account of the present state of the Gold Coast Colony and explained the persistence of archaic customs in the interior with the "ultra-conservative" attitude of the African and with the lean system of colonial government (due *inter alia* to the bad climatic conditions of the interior). While Bell deplored the "abominable practices" he was also of the opinion, that they could not be eradicated "by the mere fact of making them criminal".¹⁷⁹ This was obviously a call for a civilising mission which was to flank colonial control. In the 1911 edition this paragraph was replaced by a brief account of the abolition of 1892. While it mainly speaks of colonial power and its violent intervention on Krobo Mountain, it concludes with the nomination and installation of a Christian chief by the Government.¹⁸⁰

Once the attention of the higher echelons of the administration had been alerted to the existence of the rites, the district commissioner could no longer pass over *dipo* in his reports. In June 1891 he included a passage on the rites. During the celebration in November 1891 there was incessant gun-firing. As *dipo* was said to lead often to disturbances,¹⁸¹ Williams deemed it necessary to proceed to the mountain top twice, warning the chiefs against any riot which might take place. Foremost, his report was impressive for the numbers it featured: For the celebration of *dipo* no less than 2'000 girls were taken up to the mountain towns and the commissioner estimated that around £20'000 were spent on the occasion. A large part of this sum must have found its way into the coffers of the trading firms of Akuse and the expenditure thus pleased both traders and government. However, its connection with *dipo* had a serious impact on the oil-trade and thus on the exports of the colony. While during the months preceding *dipo* the market was flooded with oil, which was mostly traded directly for European goods, the time of the rites itself led to the stoppage of all supplies from the so important Krobo region. In the latter part of November and during the whole of December, the trade was not

¹⁷⁸ Bell 1911a: 66-67.

¹⁷⁹ *Litell's Living Age*, Vol. 83, July-September 1893, pp. 592-601, here 601.

¹⁸⁰ Bell 1911a: 71-72.

¹⁸¹ For example the power play between Akwenor Chief Tenu and Chief Odonkor Azu in 1958 was said to have been sparked off by a disturbance which arose over a dance. PRO CO 96/55 Governor Andrews to the Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast Castle 18.09.1861. Enclosure: Certified true copy by Mr Hutchison, signed by [William A.] Ross.

half of the normal amount, "and the falling off was caused by an entire abandonment of the Croboes to every thing and devoting their energies to the celebrations of the virginal custom *otofu* - I apprehend however, a revival during the ensuing quarter." Forwarding this report to the Colonial Office in London, Governor Griffith assured that the matter was under his consideration.¹⁸² Already in early November 1891 Acting Governor Hodgson inquired into the matter on the occasion of his visit to Krobo. His report confirmed the compulsory nature of *dipo* and the sanctions applied in case a girl failed. While Hodgson did not mention the alleged slavery he stated that a banned woman was allowed to return if she offered "her child to the Fetish - an elaborate ceremony which has to be attended by the King in what I suppose is his capacity as High Priest." The acting governor did not think that child murder took place, but complained that the Fetish practices were veiled in such mystery that reliable information was difficult to come by. He further noted that the place where the banned girls were made to leave Krobo territory was on the border with neighbouring Osudoku. Hodgson was of the opinion that *dipo*, like the other Krobo customs, was "heathenish to the extreme" and that it involved indecency. The latter, according to Hodgson, was the logical result of the sparse clothing of the "tail girls" and of the drunkenness of a large part of the priests and spectators. Most interesting in his report is the observation, that *dipo* was probably more important than the rituals for the war deities.¹⁸³

Matters came to a head very rapidly after Chief Sakite had died in January 1892. At this stage the governor had already come to a decision concerning a wholesale abolition of "the Krobo Customs" and the mountain settlements. District Commissioner Alexander Williams, who supplied Government with some pictures taken on the occasion of the *dipo* rites, fuelled this drive. Interestingly, the commissioner had meanwhile changed his mind and was of the opinion that while the mountain settlements were to be abolished, *dipo* was not to be stopped as it checked on the morals and was harmless except for the banishment of the girls. Williams was of the opinion that it could be celebrated on the plains, where Government could control malpractices more easily.¹⁸⁴ This sug-

¹⁸² PRO CO 96/217 Gold Coast 1891 Gov. W.B. Griffith/ Act. Gov. Hodgson, No. 210, Governor Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Christiansborg Castle 25.06.1891, Enclosure No. 13: Report by DC Riby Williams, Akuse 21.02.1891. A report by the DC Akuse for the later part of the year confirmed the expected revival of the market. After *dipo* had been completed for most of the girls, "the markets of Akuse and Kpong were overflowed with the supply of Palm Oil and Palm Kernels." PRO CO 96/218 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson, No. 304, Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Victoriaborg Accra 12.09.1891, Enclosure No. 10: DC Volta River Williams to the Colonial Secretary, Akuse 28.07.1891.

¹⁸³ PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 346 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, §§ 5-8.

¹⁸⁴ The pictures showed a group of girls before the *tñgbñtñ yami* "the wig-like cover on the head is the fat of goats belly and the chain hanging across the body the entrails of goats", a group of girls after their week of confinement, and the reception by Chief Sakite to celebrate his daughters' completion of *dipo*. The pictures were already fading at the time and I have not been able to trace them. GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.10/92. (attached to 428/92 and Conf.14/92), confidential letter by DC S.A. Williams to the Governor, Akuse 02.03.1892.

gestion, however, came far too late and opinion had already been made to the effect to criminalise *dipo*. When on 19 July 1892 Governor Griffith at a durbar at Odumase declared the abolition of the Krobo Customs he talked at length about “*dipo* and the Krobo women in general”. He deemed it necessary to apologize beforehand to the missionary ladies present and indeed the contents of his speech was strong enough to make Mrs Eckhard and Mischlisch leave the assembly. Unfortunately what he said was not published in the otherwise very detailed article on the “Croboe Question” published in the *Gold Coast Chronicle* on 1 August 1892. Griffith lamented on the expenses connected to the rite and to the fact that at times it created great jealousy leading even to murder (apparently there had been such a case which was known widely).¹⁸⁵ Missionary Mischlisch lauded the Governor for having criticized the “bad and indecent clothing” of the Krobo women and introducing a paragraph in the ordinance that demanded that everybody was to dress decently.¹⁸⁶ That dress, its absence, and the imagination of the nakedness were indeed important issues in the abolition of *dipo* is further evidenced in a letter, with which the Governor informed the other Dangme states on the abolition of *dipo*, *nadu* and *kotoklo*. Funny enough he focussed on the “tail” which played such an important part in the colonial imagination of *dipo*, rather than on the nakedness itself:

The girls who wear tails to their dresses must also be informed that the wearing of such tails will be part and parcel of the fetish practices which have been rendered illegal [sic], and the police will be instructed to inform against the girls wearing such tails to their clothes and they will be summoned before the District Commissioner and fined as often as they do it, and the fine will be increased in every fresh case.¹⁸⁷

Thus *dipo*, as it was performed on Krobo Mountain, came to a formal end. Yet, as mentioned above, *dipo* has survived. In view of government’s concern with the lack of clothing it involved, it does not come as a surprise that when it was re-introduced a few

¹⁸⁵ The Gold Coast Chronicle, Vol. 3, No. 87, 01.08.1892, p. 3. Most likely this jealousy referred to arranged marriages, as in 1893 Chief Emanuel Mate Kole reported to the government, that he had introduced a law prohibiting such marriages. These cross-cousin marriages were very common in Krobo and it is interesting to note, that Mate Kole’s own marriage had been arranged by his father Peter Nyarko. The latter himself had faced problems with such an arrangement. At the time of his conversion he was married to one wife, but had also been engaged to the daughter of the co-founder of Odumase, Nathanael Lawer. In 1868 he was dismissed from the congregation for having renewed the relationship. Peter Nyarko according to the missionaries in later years had eighteen wives. PRO CO 96/233 Gold Coast 1893, No. 144, Governor Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, Aburi Hills Station 12.05.1893, Enclosure No. 1: King Mate Kole to DC Volta River Alexander Williams, the Palace, Odumase 15.04.1893; BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867 Odumase 4, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 03.05.1867, pp. 5-6; D-1.20a Afrika 1868 1, Odumase 3, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 07.04.1868, p. 6.

¹⁸⁶ BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 128, Adam Mischlisch, Odumase 30.07.1892 and 10.08.1892, p. 11 (transcription by Marijke Steegstra).

¹⁸⁷ GNA ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 31-35, Governor Griffiths to Kings of Shai, Osudoku, Prampram, Ningo and Ada, and Odumase respectively, 25.07.1892.

years later, it was re-invented as the “dressing-up custom” *bobum*. This however was merely the closing stage of *dipo*, when girls are allowed to cover their breasts. The other parts of *dipo* were performed in private, albeit in a shortened form. Eventually (latest around 1926) *dipo* was back in public and so were the war dances for the deities *nadu* and *kotoklo* that had been the principal object of the 1892 abolition (see chapter five).¹⁸⁸

3.5 HEAD-HUNTING OR HUMAN SACRIFICE? THE WAR-DEITIES AND MALE INITIATION

[Dipo] is only one of the four great ‘customs’ which take place annually on the Fetish-Mountain; the others, known as the Kotoclo, Nadu, and Kokonadu, are reported to be much less harmless in character. Fetish customs and practices are hedged in with so much secrecy and mystery that many criminal and atrocious acts are probably committed which are never brought to the notice of the Government.¹⁸⁹

Whereas the abolition and criminalisation of *dipo* was based largely on the imagination of the negative aspects of the rite, the war deities *nadu* and *kotoklo* indeed led to criminal acts that called for state intervention. This difference is reflected in the manner in which these rites survive today: Whereas *dipo* is still very much alive, and is an important item on the Ghana Board of Tourism’s overview of festivals, the celebrations of the two war deities *nadu* and *kotoklo* are seldom promoted despite their touristic potential.¹⁹⁰ Other festivals such as the *kloyosikplemi* and the *ngmayem* were established and have replaced the public celebration of these martial cults to some degree. The cults themselves, however, have survived to this day, although they have lost their importance and hardly any initiate (*tāgblānō*) can be traced (see Fig. 3.5 and Fig. 3.6).¹⁹¹ Furthermore in the case of *nadu*, a vacancy in the office of the priest has made for an interruption in the public celebration of the ritual.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/1679 Native Customs and Fetish, No. 46, Acting District Commissioner to Commissioner Eastern Province, [Akuse] 28.05.1936.

¹⁸⁹ Bell 1911a: 71.

¹⁹⁰ In a recent assessment of voting patterns in Yilo Krobo, for example, Emmanuel Debrah refers to the “rich Kloyosikplemi and Dipo cultures” for which Yilo Krobo is popular (Debrah 2001: 325).

¹⁹¹ Interview with *tegbleno* Alfred Kweku Akitiwa Karikari at Somanya Lorry Park on 10.12.2000. Alfred Kweku at the time of the interview was 68 years old and told me that out of the members of the group with which he was initiated into the *kotoklo* cult he is the only survivor. Within Yilo Krobo he said, there were only three *tāgblānō* (member of a secret warrior cult) left, out of whom one converted to Christianity and has nothing to do with ‘tradition’ again. Others who might style themselves as *tāgblānō* will be pretenders. A PhD thesis on the *tāgblānō* secret society written within the framework of the Asafo Project was submitted in 2004 by Narh Johnson, MA, of the Centre of African Studies of the University of Ghana.

¹⁹² The priestly office is not very popular today as it is the antonym of modernity and, especially in the case of a high priest, is fraught with many taboos limiting the person’s movements



Fig. 3.5 (left): *Tāgblānō* Alfred Kweku Akitiwa Karikari of Plau dancing during a cultural display at Somanya Lorry Park on the occasion of the *kotoklo wōdom*.

Picture by Veit Arlt, date May 1999.

Fig. 3.6 (right): Dancing *nadu* at Agomanor (Agomanya) on the occasion of the *enstoolment* of an *asafoatsā*.

Picture by Veit Arlt, date 25.09.1989.

As mentioned in the opening section to this chapter, the Krobo had earned, as early as the eighteenth century, a reputation for being fierce and wicked people able to withstand their Akan neighbours' attempts to dominate them. Their war-cults were of great importance in helping them to fight oppressors and were an important attribute to the emerging institution of chieftaincy.¹⁹³ It was said that the cults originally helped to deal with manslaughter within the society, preventing uncontrolled revenge that might result from such cases. But the cults were equally important in warfare where they fortified the warrior and prevented the spirits of the slain enemies from possessing him. During their yearly celebrations only those initiated into the cults were allowed to dance and drink palm wine using a human skull as their cup, therefore the initiation was an important avenue to status and reputation. The exclusive nature of the *tāgblān*, the prestige

greatly. The high priest for the war god *kotoklo* for example may not wear shoes, drive in a car and shall not meet any unclean person, whereby the social interactions of this fairly young man are greatly limited.

¹⁹³ According to the most senior priest Asa in Manya Krobo (interviewed by Quarcoopome in 1989) the introduction of the war deity *nadu* paralleled the creation of the office and stool of the *konō* in the late eighteenth century. Both innovations were initiated by the priestly rulers. Asa asserted that the Yilo Krobo then introduced the war deity *kotoklo* as part of their efforts to break away from the Manya Krobo (Quarcoopome 1993b: 227 n19).

associated with membership in it, and the importance of the cults as protective medicine is expressed in the following songs.

Waya do o kâ olido mo hisi! – We are going to dance! If you do not know how to dance better stay at home! (*Kotoklo* song).¹⁹⁴

Ogbe ye yeye. Ogbe do ngo! – To kill the animal is hard. But the dance in honour is pleasant. (*Nadu* song).¹⁹⁵

Kakri be dô yi. Dô ngo wô kâ ho! – If there had been no ridge on the banks of the river, its waters would have washed us away. (*Nadu* song).¹⁹⁶

Their importance in this respect (i.e. the war cults as avenues to status) was clearly established by the nineteenth century. In order to be initiated a young man had to have killed somebody and bring his victims' skull or a thighbone to the shrine as proof of his deed. While formerly wars and frequent skirmishes had provided opportunities to procure the necessary trophy, colonial integration and increasing pacification made it difficult to come by these items. As a consequence there was an increase in murders in the region: Youngsters who wanted to be initiated took to waylaying strangers. This practice prevented traders from travelling through the region during festival time and trade decreased significantly. The prosecution of the crimes turned out to be difficult, as the cults ensured secrecy and government was reluctant to disturb the industrious Krobo in their economic ventures.¹⁹⁷ When in 1891 the colonial authorities were for the first time able to convict the culprits of a murder in connection with the war deities, they seized the opportunity to abolish the cults.

Other than the murders that were committed by the initiands, most people believed that the worship of the cults involved human sacrifice. Even today many are ready to believe that this practice persists. The Krobo historian and Basel Mission catechist Noa Agwae Azu was very clear that the *nadu* cult comprised a yearly human sacrifice, which was performed at the shrine. An uncircumcised man or boy (i.e. a stranger) was brought to the shrine, where he was slain and his "blood, brains, heart and intestines are put in the pot where the juju is supposed to live".¹⁹⁸ Azu's history was marked by his own conversion and while on the one hand it was to prove his royal standing and deep knowledge of Krobo history and culture (*agbaa*), it was also to present this history as marked by heathenism. The old priestly regime, for instance, was introduced as "The Fetish Priests and the Doctrine about Hell", followed by the modernist and educated rule of the author's father Odonkor Azu.¹⁹⁹ Catechist Emanuel B. Odonkor, who denounced the cults

¹⁹⁴ Azu 1929b: 67.

¹⁹⁵ Azu 1929b: 115.

¹⁹⁶ The ridge stands for the protective medicine which has guarded the initiate (Azu 1929b: 115).

¹⁹⁷ ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute Paper No. 2282/84, Colonial Secretary to the Governor, 04.11.1884, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁸ Azu 1929a: 83-84.

¹⁹⁹ Azu 1929a: 17-25, 54-56.

to the government in 1884 also stated, that during the *piefim* (i.e. renewing the fence of the enclosure) customs preceding the wodom, which were performed in private, somebody was killed by the priest.²⁰⁰ Another Krobo historian, Gabriel Sikapa, noted that for the establishment of the *nadu* cult in Krobo Chief Muala Okumsro (of Dom/Akwenor, the predecessor of Odonkor Azu) gave a slave girl to be sacrificed.²⁰¹ If formerly a yearly human sacrifice had been part of the cult, its victim had already by 1891 been replaced by a ram.²⁰² This change might have taken place long ago and only the *fama* might have been perpetuated ensuring the power of the cult. Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, who researched into the war cults in 1940, observed:

[T]here is, I think, no one in Krobo who does not believe ~~that bloodshed~~ a modicum of bloodshed to be still secretly associated with the ~~preliminary~~ private rites which precede the public festival.²⁰³

Yet, it is clear that people were killed in connection with the rite, as a young man could only be initiated once he had killed a man. Basel Missionaries were ready to believe and reiterate allegations of human sacrifice. Already during one of the first visits to Krobo in April 1838 Andreas Riis, accompanied by Johannes Mürdter, witnessed the yearly dance (*wodom*) for one of the war gods. He reported that in one of the mountain towns the excited people were engaged in a "general yearly festival":

Holding their deadly weapons, their faces painted with blood and red earth, and clad in a murderous outfit, the Negroes were sneaking about the village pointing their deadly weapons at each other's breast. Meanwhile the women at the main dance ground, where the principal scenes of this misery were performed, accompanied their [i.e. the men's] fetish dance, crying aloud and clapping their hands. According to a Negro from Osu, who is well known to me and who was then accompanying us, each year people are slaughtered on the occasion of this festival. The truth of his statement is backed by the fact, that the chief, who had just arrived on the scene, asked us to use a different path when leaving the village than the ordinary one, which would have passed by this dance ground. It is easily understood that we were not feeling at ease. A miserable sadness came upon us that

²⁰⁰ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, letter by Emanuel B. Odonkor to His Excellency Governor W. A. G. Younge, Odumase 27.10.1884, p. 2.

²⁰¹ Sikapa 1937: 115.

²⁰² PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 346 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, § 4.

²⁰³ Margaret Field was not allowed to witness the secret performances, in which only the priest of the shrine and his elders partake. She was of the opinion that the cults should be legalised again, so that as little of it as possible was performed in clandestine, thereby making it easier to prevent malpractices. The remarkably open and empathic attitude of Field is evidenced in the qualifications she added to her notes. MKTSA Notes by Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, n.d. [presumably from 1940], p. 41.

made us long to take leave from the chief who had entertained us amicably with beer and palm wine at his place.²⁰⁴

Relying on the information provided by his fellow traveller from Accra Riis stated that each year people were sacrificed during the festival. Despite the chief's efforts to direct the missionaries and their attention away from the ritual, Riis' observations found their way into his quarterly report. More than that – the report was published in one of the mission's journals and the allegation of the yearly human sacrifice was widely disseminated. It became a fixture in most statements on the cults to be found in Basel Mission publications. Neither did Riis mention the name of the chief or of the location, nor did he identify the festival. Based on his description it can be assumed that the event took place in the mountain town Yilo and that the two missionaries witnessed the annual dance (*wōdom*) for the war god *kotoklo*.²⁰⁵ On the one hand Riis and Mürdter seemed not to be eager to get too close to the activities, feeling threatened by the crowd in commotion, and fearing the encounter with a mass of drunken people.²⁰⁶ On the other hand it was the chief of the town, who diligently managed the visitors' presence on the mountain. The Krobo chiefs were eager to establish contact with the missionaries. As we have seen, they had invited Riis in 1836 to visit them again. Their intention was well defined, i.e. it was geared towards the establishment of a school. It is likely that the chief in question wanted to prevent Riis from interfering in cultural practices or to be deterred from a future involvement in Krobo. Riis' report was published in the *Evangelische Heidenbote*. Despite the relative paucity of information and the brevity of the missionaries' stay, and despite the fact that this information was based merely on hearsay (in this case on information gathered from insiders, but from the missionaries' fellow traveller from Osu) it was to associate the Krobo with human sacrifice.

None of the visits by Basel Missionaries that were to follow seem to have coincided with the celebration of a *wodom* and consequently the alleged human sacrifices on Krobo Mountain do not appear in their reports. Only missionary Dieterle made a short reference in his letter dated 31 Mai 1852. It was an extensive account of his travel to Krobo and of his encounters with the chiefs and other people. Only a short paragraph, how-

²⁰⁴ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1838, No. 6, Andreas Riis, Akropong 06.07.1838, p. 23 (my translation). This report was published with slight alterations in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 13(1839), pp. 53-56. When it comes to the description of the dance the editorial amendments distort important observations of Riis. Here the women are dancing themselves at the main dance ground.

²⁰⁵ The identification of the place is based on Riis statement, that they had been staying overnight in one of the two settlements on the mountain and were on their way to Akropong when they passed through the other settlement. This implies that they were moving from Northeast to Southwest. This is corroborated by the fact, that their visit took place on 21 and 22 April, which is the month the *kotoklo wodom* takes place, the other big war dance for *nadu* taking place later in May/June.

²⁰⁶ Before coming to Krobo the missionaries had been at Osudoku and there too a festival was about to start. Riis' statement concerning the drunken crowd as their motive to leave early is supported by the fact that the missionaries did visit 'the fetish priest' there.

ever, found its way into an article published in the *Evangelische Heidenbote*, which assembled observations from various places of the Basel Mission field on the Gold Coast. Under the catchy heading "Sacrifices amongst the Negroes of the Gold Coast" the readership was to learn about "the dreadful darkness covering the poor Negroes' world". What subject could have been catchier than human sacrifice?

The Krobo, so I was told, each year sacrifice a human being. The person is not chosen from among their own group, rather some of them are delegated to catch a victim. They will wander about the country side and when they meet someone who cannot reply to their greeting in their own language, they cut off his head and bring the body home [to Krobo Mountain], where part of his flesh will be eaten and where his skull will be made into a drinking cup for one of their elders, as each of the latter has to own such a cup.²⁰⁷

Again, the missionary reported information from hearsay. Dieterle was stationed in the neighbouring Akan state of Akuapem and on his journey he was accompanied by some of his pupils. It is likely that it was his student David Asante, himself an Akuapem royal, who acted as his informant.²⁰⁸ In the missionaries' reports the issue of human sacrifice or even cannibalism did not come up again until some ten years later. In the shared knowledge of the readers of the *Heidenbote*, among missionaries and other Basel Mission staff, the image of the man-eating Krobo will have kept lingering on. The taking of trophies in warlike situations, of course, was a practice existing also among the Akuapem and other neighbouring states. During Governor Mørck's campaign of 1836 some Akuapem warriors attacked the Krobo against the governor's orders and returned with heads they had cut off as trophies.²⁰⁹ The 1858 campaign saw on the side of the Krobo the "foul murder" of Gunner Douglas Ferrol.²¹⁰ Ferrol was killed by one of Chief Odonkor Azu's immediate followers by name Odum, who had joined the party of Akwenor Chief Tenu opposing Odonkor Azu. Odum "mutilated the soldier by cutting off his head, arms, & c & c and then threw the mangled trunk into the river".²¹¹ Salomo Kwadjo, one of the first converts of the Basel Mission at Odumase, was also beheaded on the same occasion.²¹²

²⁰⁷ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 56, J. Chr. Dieterle, Akropong 31.05.1852, p. 7, partly published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 1(1853), p. 14 (my translation).

²⁰⁸ Their names are given as David, John and Salomon. The first of these must have been David Asante, who was a royal of Akropong. The second must have been John Rochester, whose father was one of the West Indian Christian settlers brought by the Basel Mission to Akuapem in 1843. Both of them were then in their last year of training as catechists at the Akropong seminary under Dieterle (Abun-Nasr 2003: 91, 106; Schlatter 1916: 36).

²⁰⁹ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1836, No.1, Andreas Riis, Akropong 10.02.1836, p. 4.

²¹⁰ PRO CO 96/44, J. Cochrane, Abonse 04.10.1858, Report No. 2 of the Officer commanding the Expeditionary Force to "Crobœ", p. 38.

²¹¹ BMA D-10.34,5 Christian Obobi, Diary, Odumase 29.12.1857-???.1858, pp. 50-51.

²¹² Salomo Kwadso [i.e. Kwadjo] had been baptised just two months before. He was a slave of Catechist Thomas Quartey. BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Abokobi No. 22, C. F. Aldinger, Abokobi

On the side of the Akuapem, ritual killings of imprisoned Krobo occurred: The Adonten division of Akuapem returned from the same Krobo campaign of 1858 with eight Krobo prisoners. At least two of them were to be ritually killed. Missionary Dieterle described the situation for Aburi, the town of the Adontenhene. Already on their way at Ashirase the warriors had killed one of the prisoners. Before the next victim was beheaded, boys and girls from noble families had the opportunity to stab the prisoner. In addition to the head, all extremities were cut off and then the warriors paraded through town singing and drumming and displaying the trophies. While the torso was disposed of in the bush, the bones of the extremities were soon to grace one of the big drums. The heart of the victim was dried and later prepared with some herbs as a “delicacy” to be eaten by one of the elders of the town. When Dieterle inquired from the Adontenhene the reason for this carnage, the latter replied that the Krobo had killed one of his men and that he had vowed to take revenge.²¹³ Around the same time Catechist Obobi at Odumase observed, that the Akuapem “seized a Krobo man who was busily engaged at his plantation. They killed the poor man (fellow) cut out his heart and devoured it and drank his blood! Some people may excuse such an act by saying, ‘it was a time of war.’ But instead of excusing such atrocities let us rise and urge them to renounce the works of darkness by repenting and believing the Gospel.”²¹⁴ Obobi’s call was indeed bitterly needed. The frontier situation between Krobo and Akuapem brought about frequent disputes over land and as late as 1867 two Krobo were publicly killed in Akuapem.²¹⁵

These rather unsavoury details show clearly, that the taking of trophies and ritual murder in those days were rather common. In comparison with their neighbours the Krobo even lacked some of the ritual practices involving the killing of human beings. For example it was not usual to kill somebody on the occasion of a chief’s funeral, although there was a tendency to introduce this practice on the image of the neighbouring Akuapem.²¹⁶ What made the Krobo case special were their two great war cults *nadu* and *kotoklo* that were famous all over the southern Gold Coast. They had been introduced as part of the emerging chieftaincy institution and furthered the distinction into the two separate political entities Manya and Yilo Krobo.²¹⁷ They did not count as *døemawô*, as old cults, and thus their priests were not among the *døemeli*. *Wônô* Tetteh Gaga put it like that: the cults belong to the two paramount chiefs, but are controlled by the *døemeli*.²¹⁸ *Nadu* and *kotoklo* were not the only war cults in Krobo, but they were the great-

05.10.1858, p. 7. PCA 5/7 Kirchenbuch der evg. Missionsstation in Odumase 1859, Taufbuch [Baptismal Register] No. 5.

²¹³ BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Aburi No. 8, J. Chr. Dieterle, Aburi 05.11.1858, my translation. I am grateful to Ulrike Sill for directing my attention to this document.

²¹⁴ BMA D-10.34,5 Christian Obobi, Diary, Odumase 29.12.1857-???.1858, pp. 20-21.

²¹⁵ BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867 part 2, Odumase 1, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 16.02.1867, p. 2.

²¹⁶ BMA D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 3a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 30.03.1870, p. 6.

²¹⁷ MKTSA Notes by Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, n.d. [presumably from 1940], pp. 39, 62; Quarcoopome 1993b: 227 n19.

²¹⁸ Interviews with *wônô* Tetteh Gaga, 27.05.1996; 16.09.1998.

est. Their size and overarching influence reflected their connection with the two paramount stools. Others were *kofi dade* (Okper division), *mââte* (Yokwenya clan of Djebiam division), *omââsu* (Piengwa division), *kofi-obônuma* (Plau division), and *ayewa-dade* (Susui division).²¹⁹ Most of these were of Akan origin. According to Johnson this might be seen as the establishment of closer links between the Krobo and their Akan neighbours for mutual benefit.²²⁰ Some of the cults belonged to a family, others to a clan or to a division. The story of how *nadu* was introduced into Krobo, changed its meaning, and achieved overarching influence is typical for many of them. The cult is said to have been introduced into Krobo by a woman who brought it from neighbouring Osudoku. There it was not a war deity but was rather a protective medicine connected to agriculture. The woman's family was afflicted in many ways and she was looking for protective and healing capacities. She was initiated into the cult and set up her own little shrine in Krobo. The dying in her family ceased and not only that: Her family members also demonstrated special prowess in war, which observers attributed to the spiritual protection they had received from *nadu*. It was at this point when it developed into a war cult.²²¹ The human sacrifice offered by Chief Muala Okumsro that has been mentioned above, might have marked this transition and the chief might thereby have gained control over the war medicine, turning it into a national cult for Many Krobo.

As has been mentioned in chapter 2 the Krobo copied and adapted to a large extent the military organisation and court culture of the Akan. One of the realms, where they maintained their own system is the office of the executioner (Twi: *obrafo*). It is often said, that this special office was not needed, as every Krobo was an executioner. This statement refers to the war cults, but it is not to say, that every Krobo was initiated into one of them. Rather a relationship with the cults was established upon circumcision, which might be endorsed, if needed, later on.²²² Boys were circumcised individually at the age of between two and six years.²²³ The child was told to say "Ayoo!" three times and upon the third time the operation was performed. "Ayoo!" was the exclamation with which the *tâgblâ* songs were introduced. These were the songs of the warriors and big game hunters (i.e. those having killed a leopard).²²⁴ The prepuce was buried and with a

²¹⁹ Huber 1993: 271.

²²⁰ Johnson 1997: 63-64.

²²¹ Story as told by members of the house of Kplelii in the Memlesi section of Akwenor to Margaret Field. MKTSA Notes by Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, n.d. [presumably from 1940], pp. 39-40. Krobo Historian Noa Agwae Azu gave a differing account. According to him the cult came from Accra and was already a "wicked juju" and war cult "hat[-ing] all uncircumcised nations", demanding yearly human sacrifices (Azu 1929a: 83).

²²² As Nene Aseni, the *kotoklo wônô* put it: „These shrines were made for war. You have to preserve your life otherwise it will fall just like a plantain if you don't support it with 3-4 sticks. It is the same as with human life. If you do not prevent [sic] yourself from this. There are some people who if you cut them with your cutlass or shoot them with your gun, they will just walk on." Interview with Nene Aseni, Ogame -Kplande 02.12.2000.

²²³ In priestly families the operation might be performed as early as eight days after birth (Steegstra 2004: 205).

²²⁴ Puplampu 1951b: 241.

libation the respective war deity was informed that the boy had become a true Krobo. The deity and was asked to protect him.²²⁵ The major importance of the operation, however, was that the boy had been made a Krobo, which was expressed by the elders by telling him “*Wa p̄a mo Klon̄o*” (We make you a Krobo man). The father of the child would slaughter a fowl. Presents would be given to the child and the elders might sing *t̄agbl̄a* songs for the newly circumcised. At the age of five, the boys would be introduced to the shrine on the occasion of the *w̄odom*.²²⁶ It was believed that this would help them to grow up strong.²²⁷ When I witnessed the *kotoklo w̄odom* in May 1999 about ten boys were brought to the shrine by their fathers, mothers, uncles or aunts in the early hours of the morning. Someone from among the elders led each of them around the sanctum inside the enclosure. In some cases they leaned onto the little hut or touched it with one hand while holding the child in the other, in order to transfer some of its power onto the child.

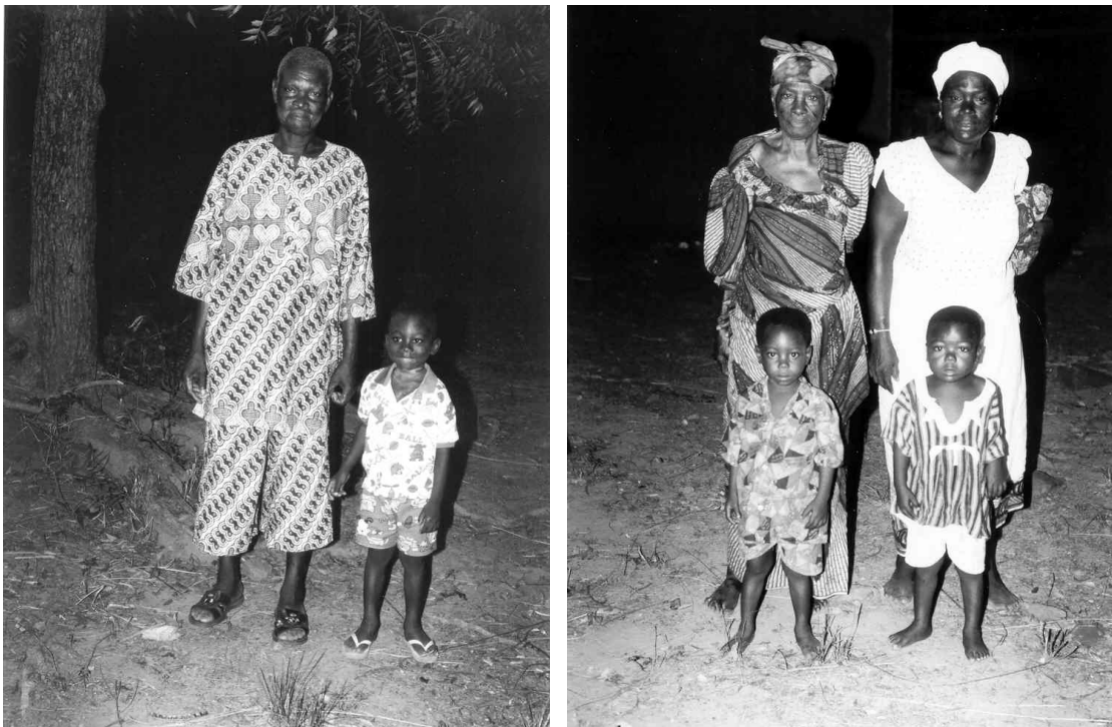


Fig. 3.7 and Fig. 3.8: Young boys being introduced to the *kotoklo* shrine on the occasion of the *w̄odom*.

Left: Elder Wets̄a Saki of Ogome; Right: The white dress of the woman to the right as well as her bracelet identifies her as a priestess.

Pictures by Veit Arlt, place: Ogome -Kplande, date Sunday 02.05.1999, 5 am.

²²⁵ Huber 1993: 154.

²²⁶ Ashie [n.d.]a: 47-48.

²²⁷ MKTSA Notes by Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, n.d. [presumably from 1940], p. 65.

The initiation itself, however, was not compulsory as was the case with *dipo*. A young man might choose not to be initiated. In that case he would not be allowed to join the dancers during the wodom and the young women (among the spectators were the girls undergoing *dipo*) might mock at him. Missionary Zimmermann observed that, especially in the women's perception, nothing distinguished a youngster more and recommended him as a valiant man than having a skull in his possession.²²⁸ Elsewhere he noted that a Krobo man or youngster who did not possess a skull was not considered a real man. No woman and no girl would respect him.²²⁹ Thus there was pressure on the young men to prove themselves by killing strangers. But already by the 1860s this practice was no longer unquestioned within the Krobo population: When two young men from Manya Krobo murdered an Ada and an Akwamu man in order to be initiated into one of the cults (probably *nadu*), a major crisis ensued. In retaliation the Akwamu took some Krobo as captives and the Ada as well demanded satisfaction.²³⁰ It was especially the Ada case which was tricky as the Ada, being a fellow Dangme obeying the same law of circumcision, did not count as stranger and should not have fallen victim to the Krobo war deities. It does not seem that the victim was a slave or other foreigner in Ada. The Ada therefore seized the father of one of the murderers and when Odonkor Azu handed the culprit over, they demanded that the other eleven accomplices also be surrendered. As Odonkor Azu was not willing to deliver any further persons, it was expected that the Ada would execute the two captives.²³¹ This case became widely known and on Pentecost of 1862 delegations from Ada and Krobo met at Kpong, in order to settle the case.²³² Still the relationship between Ada and Krobo remained disturbed.²³³ The next year strangers were murdered again and the trophies displayed during the wodom.²³⁴ On 24 April 1864 Missionary Roes attended a *wodom* and his report was printed both in the *Evangelische Heidenbote* and in the *Jahresbericht* under the title "Ein Volksfest in Krobo". The missionary described the dance of the men and youngsters, the presence of the *dipo* girls and other women watching and cheering on the dancers, but his attention was especially caught by the skulls displayed. The priest would serve the dancers palm wine in these skulls, and those *tâgblânô* who did not have one, would "at least place a piece of human skin into their palm wine". Roes not only gave this vivid description of the dance, but also an explanation for the original meaning of the cult. He said that formerly it was an institution which prevented immediate retaliation in cases of manslaughter within Krobo. In such a case the perpetrator would report his deed and deposit the skull at the shrine, where it was kept for two years. If within this period no-

²²⁸ BMA D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 13, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 01.07.1871, transcript by Marijke Steegstra, p. 6.

²²⁹ BMA D-10.1,4, Johannes Zimmermann, c.1877, *Land und Leute*, p. 29.

²³⁰ BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Odumase 10a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 06.05.1862, p. 2.

²³¹ BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Odumase Nr.18, J. Heck, Odumase 01.11.1862, p. 5.

²³² BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Odumase 12, J. Heck, Odumase 29.07.1862, p. 2.

²³³ BMA D-1.15 Afrika 1863 part 2, Odumase 7, J. Heck, Odumase 20.04.1863, p. 11.

²³⁴ BMA D-1.15 Afrika 1863 part 2, Odumase 16, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 05.08.1863, p. 2.

body called for revenge, the crime could no longer be prosecuted and the deed would be counted as a sign of prowess.²³⁵

Victims only called upon the colonial courts in the 1880s, when the Volta River District was instituted, and even then the nature of *tâgblâ* as a secret society marred efforts to prosecute the crime. In the late 1870s the priests of the war deities had reinforced the law, that whoever wanted to join the *wôdom* had to procure a trophy. Basel Missionaries noticed this revival of the “young men’s initiation” around 1877, referring to it as to a “cannibalistic habit”. Early that year some travellers were attacked and killed and government was unable to uncover the culprits.²³⁶ Nevertheless it staged a public execution at Odumase in September 1877 in order to drive home the point that manslaughter would henceforth be prosecuted. In the case of this execution, however, the crime had not occurred in connection with the war cults: The convict was a jealous husband who had killed his wife.²³⁷ Government action with respect to the war deities remained marginal for reasons mentioned above. As has been detailed in chapter two the initiative to have the war deities abolished came from Krobo itself, when Catechist Emanuel Odonkor called on Government to take action. His letter of 27 October 1884 gave a detailed description of the cults on six pages written in a perfect hand, which together with an enumeration of the Latin terms for the various bones used as trophies testified to the education and sophistication of the writer. Odonkor described *nadu* and *kotoklo* as “War-Fetishes, or fetishes which eat flesh and drink blood every year.” He made it very clear that the two paramount chiefs each patronised their respective cult. His account testifies to the difficulties young men wishing to be initiated faced when it came to procuring the necessary trophy:

Ten men can kill one man, the way to do is: the elder of the party first strikes the man at [the] back [of] his neck once or three times into dead, and cut the head half, give the knife to the second one and so on to the last man. If any of them did not hold the knife to cut some, then he get no sheer [i.e. share] among the skeletons. The head of them has to take the skull, the mate lower jaw bone, the rest have to choose any part of the following parts, such as: hamerus [i.e. humerus], ulna, radius, femur, tibia and fibula &c.

²³⁵ BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase 12, M. Roes, Odumase 20.07.1864, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1864*, p. 96 and in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 11(1864), p. 137 (my translation).

²³⁶ BMA D-1.30 Afrika 1878, Aburi 141, Gottlieb Schmid, Aburi 02.04.1878, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1878*, pp. 70-74, here 72.

²³⁷ BMA D-1.29 Afrika 1877, Odumase 135, Jakob Weiss, Odumase 15.10.1877, published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 4(1878), pp. 29-30; GNA ADM 1/9/2 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 46, Governor to Chief Sakite, 13.09.1877.

According to Odonkor every year three to four strangers would fall victim to such gangs of young men in need of trophies.²³⁸ The number of initiands can thus be computed to roughly thirty to forty. This low number supports the claim, that the initiation into the war cults was not a general thing. Consequent to Odonkor's letter to the government, the latter started an investigation into the cults. Nevertheless, it was ready to believe that the practice of killing strangers had ceased long ago.²³⁹ Peter Nyarko, the powerful councillor and brother to Chief Sakite at Odumase, could not risk *nadu* to be interfered with by government as it was one of the pillars on which the Manya Krobo paramountcy rested. He tried to divert the attention from the war cults by re-directing it to the *koko nadu* cult. This cult was not under the control of the paramount chief and caused him considerable trouble, as it protected thieves and robbers and undermined his authority.²⁴⁰ In response government introduced some rules helping to check on *koko nadu*.²⁴¹

Complaints by outsiders, who feared to travel through the region, did not cease. A further petition by Krobo scholar Christian Akutei Azu of September 1890 renewed the allegations,²⁴² and was confirmed in its major points by the district commissioner. The latter added that before the recent celebration of *kotoklo* on 11 May 1890 could come on three travellers from Juaben had been killed. He also mentioned the minor cult of *koko nadu*. It had not come on that year, due to the arrest of the four men who had killed these Juaben travellers in connection with *kotoklo*. The capture had "caused a panic amongst the youngmen who were watching anxiously how the case would terminate before making further attempts to waylay people for the sacrifice."²⁴³ The report by Hesketh Bell gave ample room to the cult of the deity *kotoklo*. Bell added a taste of cannibalism by stating that the blood of the victim would be preserved as a cure for all kind of afflictions.

The sufferer, after certain mysterious ceremonies, was blindfolded and told to drink out of a cup which was handed to him. The bandage would then be suddenly torn off his eyes, and the shock at finding that he was drinking human blood, was supposed to effectually prevent any recurrence of the fits.

²³⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, letter by Emanuel B. Odonkor to His Excellency Governor W. A. G. Younge, Odumase 27.10.1884, p. 5.

²³⁹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute Paper No. 2282/84, Colonial Secretary to Governor, 04.11.1884.

²⁴⁰ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, petition to the Governor William A.G. Younge, Odumase 28.11.1884 signed by Peter Nyarko and others and marked 2677/A and the according entry on the minute paper under M.P. 2677/A/84.

²⁴¹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P. 2677/A/84.

²⁴² GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.263/90, Letter by Christian Akutei Azu, 01.09.1890.

²⁴³ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.M.P.286/90, Letter from District Commissioner S.A. Williams, Akuse 04.10.1890.

Bell was not too sure about this story and gave it "for what it is worth".²⁴⁴ Such a caveat and the differentiation between *kotoklo* and *koko nadu* mattered little in the colonial policy-making. When Acting Governor Hodgson visited Krobo in November 1891 he witnessed a large armed delegation from Kwahu, which had come to Odumase in connection with a murder. The crime had occurred in the up-country and was said to have been committed in connection with *kotoklo*. Hodgson was convinced that the presence of the Kwahu threatened the peace in the region and promised to see "that justice was done, if the actual murderers could be discovered".²⁴⁵ Finally, in June-July 1892 the murder of an Akwamu slave in connection with *koko nadu* could be proved. Again it threatened the fragile peace between Akwamu and Krobo.²⁴⁶ Nyarko's strategy of diverting government's attention to the *koko nadu cult* had proven only partially successful. While Government had been lenient to interfere in Krobo affairs and had for some time not further investigated into the alleged murders and human sacrifice, the matter had not been forgotten about. By and by an ordinance on "native customs" was drafted; it included both the war deities, as well as the "marauding fetish" *koko nadu* (and *dipo*).²⁴⁷ At long last the moment had come to enforce the Native Customs Ordinance and abolish all "Krobo Customs" including the Krobo mountain home.²⁴⁸

3.6 "WHERE ARE THE PRIESTS?"

Observers, be they missionaries or colonial agents, generally presented *nadu*, *kotoklo*, and later also *koko nadu* as the main cults of Krobo and their priests as the despotic representatives of the Lord of Darkness, who exercised a firm grip on the society. Some observers even thought that the priests of the war deities were in control of *dipo*.²⁴⁹ This was a gross misrepresentation, as all three cults were not represented on the *døeme* council. *Koko nadu* was a minor shrine of recent introduction and attending it was an individual affair. The other two had at least an overarching importance in Manya and Yilo Krobo respectively in that they were linked to and were directly controlled by the two paramount chiefs. Again, initiation into one of them was an individual affair and an avenue to prestige and status. In contrast, *dipo* was compulsory for all women in Krobo. It was connected to the worship of the deity *kloweki* and controlled by the most senior

²⁴⁴ It is likely that this information did not refer to *kotoklo* but rather to *koko nadu*. GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P. 309/91 Report of Mr Bell, D.S.V.R. on the Krobo Customs, dated 19.01.1891, § 11.

²⁴⁵ PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 346 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, § 10-11.

²⁴⁶ PRO CO 96/226 Gold Coast 1892 Gov. Griffith, No. 281, Governor Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Christiansborg Castle Accra 17.10.1892, forwarding the report of District Commissioner Williams, Akuse 10.08.1892.

²⁴⁷ GNA ADM 11/1/1455 Native Customs Ordinance, Ordinance No. 11 of 1892, dated 15.07.1892, p. 4.

²⁴⁸ PRO CO 98/7 Minutes of the Executive Council 1889-1893, Accra 01.07.1892.

²⁴⁹ One of the rare exceptions was Acting Governor Hodgson who sensed that *dipo* was more important than the war cults. PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 346 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, § 5.

priests among the *døemeli*. The other senior cults (*døemawôl*) were not mentioned at all. This had to do with the constituent element in Krobo authority: The concept of secrecy (*agbaa*) demanded that the holders of priestly office kept a low profile. The higher their position, the more taboos kept them from interacting with strangers. Their insignia were inconspicuous to say the least. While this also holds true for the priests in charge of the war cults, the latter comprised large public performances and had (negative) effects that could often be noticed outside Krobo Mountain. The murders that occurred in connection with the war deities had repercussions on the southern Gold Coast and at times led to regional crisis. So well known were the cults that once they had been abolished, they even became a standard by which cults in other parts of the colony were measured.²⁵⁰

References to personal encounters between missionaries or other European visitors and priests thus remained rare. In missionary reports the latter were only alluded to, for instance, with a sentence such as "There were only few clashes with Satan".²⁵¹ In those cases where a direct encounter took place, the priest or priestess will have been a member of the lower echelons of the priestly hierarchy, i.e. an assistant to the *døemeli* (*labia*) or an herbalist (*tsupatsâ*). With rare exceptions the missionaries did not distinguish between these different categories of ritual performers and the echelons of the priestly hierarchy. In September 1891 for instance, Missionary Kopp reported that he visited several important "fetish priests" in and around Odumase. From his description, in which he makes references to the idols (*amaga*) standing in the priests' yards, it becomes clear that their owners did not belong to the priestly ruling elite, but must have been medicine men or diviners.²⁵² There is only one instance, where it seems that Missionary Josenhans indeed visited a *wônô*, i.e. one of the major priests. The missionary must have forced his way into the priest's compound despite the latter's protestations. When the priest refused to shake hands with the intruder in order to avoid pollution, Josenhans insisted and finally held his hand.²⁵³ This led the priest to complain, in an ensuing discussion, that the missionaries were spoiling the town.²⁵⁴

The priests were without exception referred to in negative terms. For example when commenting on the priestly privilege to eat goat meat, the priests were ascribed a "greedy palate".²⁵⁵ In the late nineteenth century the priests were in addition seen as

²⁵⁰ This was the case with the *katawere* and *atchere* cults in Akyem Swedru and Akyem Kotoku. PRO CO 96/243 Gold Coast 1894 Gov. Griffith, No. 55, Gov. Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, Victoriaborg Accra 19.02.1894.

²⁵¹ BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase 26a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 03.01.1865, p. 2.

²⁵² BMA D-1.54 Goldküste 1891 Ga, Odumase 167, Christian Kölle, Odumase 25.09.1891, transcript by Marijke Steegstra, my translation, p. 2.

²⁵³ As a stranger and presumably uncircumcised man, Josenhans was considered unclean.

²⁵⁴ BMA D-1.54 Goldküste 1891 Ga, Odumase 168, Gottlob Josenhans, Odumase 10.03.1892, pp. 6-7.

²⁵⁵ BMA D-1.10 Afrika 1859, Odumase 1, J. Zimmermann and Carl F. Aldinger, Odumase 25.01.1860, p. 5.

furthering alcoholism. The reason was that most of the rituals included an offering of alcoholic drink, which ranged from palm wine to imported schnapps.²⁵⁶ In some few accounts a more subtle understanding of the hierarchy and functions of the priests can be made out. For example Missionary Zimmermann in one of his later reports spoke of the priestesses in charge of the *dipo* girls as of “Vestallinnen”, i.e. Vestal priestesses or virgins. The term implied sexual abstinence, purity, holiness, and prestige: The marriage with a former Vestal virgin was highly prestigious in ancient Rome.²⁵⁷ Chastity was indeed the precept for the high-priestess of the deity *kloweki*.²⁵⁸ She was not only to abstain from sexual relationships but was not to leave the mountain at all. People were not to call her name and she was usually referred to as *yomo-ô* (the old lady). When in 1892 the mountain settlements were abolished, the priestess at first stayed on in her shrine but was removed by the soldiers after a few days. The taboos forbidding her to have contact with foreigners were so strict, that many expected the soldiers to die because of their violation of the rule.²⁵⁹ After her expulsion from the mountain the old lady settled at Korletsom near Odumase.²⁶⁰ Later the shrine for *kloweki* was established at Kodjonya. The other priests too established new shrines on the margins of the towns where the people of their respective division settled. Despite the heavy loss they had incurred, the abolition in the end was to their advantage. They were able to catch up with the population that had to some degree escaped their sphere of influence. Now that they themselves performed the shift to the new hometowns in the plains, they could monitor the society more closely again and assert their continuing influence. The survival of all the cults in the plains testifies to their adaptability and resilience.

3.7 CONCLUSION: CULTURE MATTERS INDEED

Krobo Mountain – the site where the Krobo had emerged as a distinct polity – was the centre of this society up to the abolition of the mountain settlements in 1892 and has retained its symbolic importance to this day. By the mid-nineteenth century the population had outgrown the capacity of the mountain settlements and by the 1870s the erstwhile make-shift farmsteads in the plain had developed into new central places. Yet, the

²⁵⁶ BMA D-1.54 Goldküste 1891 Ga, Odumase 168, Gottlob Josenhans, Odumase 10.03.1892, p. 6.

²⁵⁷ BMA D-1.15 Afrika 1863 part 2, Odumase 16, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 05.08.1863, p. 3. The six virgins at the temple of Vesta near the Forum Romanum had to maintain the fire at the temple. Failure would have resulted in disaster for Rome. The virgins also prepared a special kind of flour to be used in public offerings. The virgins entered their thirty year period of service at the age of six. The breaking of their vow of chastity was sanctioned with execution. During their public appearances they had special seats.

²⁵⁸ Steegstra 2004: 78.

²⁵⁹ In a newspaper article the Methodist missionary Denis Kemp narrated the story of the abolition of the Krobo cults and mountain towns. This was however not based on personal experience. Rather he relied on information received from Governor Griffith. Kemp's article is quoted in Steegstra (2004: 132-133).

²⁶⁰ ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manyà) Native Affairs, Minute Paper entitled Krobo Customs etc., M.P. 3535/92 King Akrobetto to District Commissioner, 17.10.1892.

mountain remained the cultural centre and “the standard” for all Krobo people where all important life-cycle rituals took place. It was the seat of the *døemeli*, the priestly leaders, who by the early nineteenth century had delegated a substantial part of their authority to secular leaders. Still, they were in control of all the rituals that informed the life-cycle and the yearly agricultural calendar, and the secular leaders were dependent on their endorsement. The priests asserted their privileges and authority by a number of taboos. Partly these were geared to control the people and bind them to the spatial centre of society; partly they were a means to levy a tribute. They did not promote contact with strangers, who were therefore discouraged from visiting Krobo Mountain. The culture performed there was equally geared to create insiders; it was to strengthen a joint Krobo identity shared by people of various origins. Of foremost importance in this respect were the girls’ initiation rituals and the burials. Intramural sepulchre turned the mountain homes into sacred sites and the family houses into outright shrines. Here the family gathered to bid farewell to the departed and to negotiate their transition to the ancestral world, and here new members (by birth or marriage) were welcomed into the family. The mountain homes were the sites where the most immediate communication with the ancestors could be maintained and thus all rituals conferring legitimacy had to be performed there. Among the latter was *dipo*.

The girls’ initiation gained a strong reputation all over the South-eastern Gold Coast. The rite was a celebration of womanhood and was associated with the display of wealth and beauty making it into a popular attraction. Yet, the dire consequences of a girls’ failure were equally well known. Banned Krobo women, who had to stay on their own at foreign places, added to the association of the Krobo with prostitution. The European expatriate community, and Euro-African traders or members of the educated elite, associated the nakedness displayed during the rites and the concern with the body with sexuality. The rite developed into an early tourist attraction. Missionaries paganized *dipo* and in their rejection of the local culture turned it into “a mighty obstacle to the Gospel”. The protestant pietists not only had a problem with the sexual connotations they attributed to the rite, but also with the idleness and extravagance it entailed. From their viewpoint *dipo* represented immorality at large. On the one hand the missionaries’ early reports testified to the anticipated expectations of the audience. They replicated popular stereotypes on *dipo* prevailing on the coast and the writers’ own attitude to nakedness, sexuality, and femininity. On the other hand they added spice to the distorted perception of the rite by using mistaken biblical images in their description of *dipo*. The missionaries constructed Christianity and Krobo culture as opposing systems. Therefore *dipo*, as the transmission belt for Krobo values, became the core obstacle to Christianity in Krobo. Colonial agents were not disinclined to the display of beauty and nakedness, although the ritual performances involved some details that were rather unappetising (such as the fat and intestines of the sacrificed goat, which were placed on the initiands’ heads), and although the ritualistic aspect made for a feeling of uneasiness. When they eventually criminalised Krobo culture indiscriminately, they included *dipo* on the ground that girls who failed in its performance were allegedly enslaved.

While especially European visitors identified the two great war deities *nadu* and *kotoklo* as the prime markers of Krobo identity besides *dipo*, these were optional cults. Furthermore, they were only two out of a wide range of similar cults. What made them so

widely known was their patronage by the respective paramount chief. The latter had gained control over them and used them as a means to expand their position as war leaders and to strengthen the cohesion of their respective subjects. The initiation into one of the war cults served as a means of protection for people having killed somebody, and it was an instrument to prevent bloody revenge within the society. Initiation was associated with great prestige and became an avenue to status. Although the 1860s still provided opportunities to gain the necessary trophy in war, young men took to waylaying strangers, as they would not forgo the opportunity to gain status and become a *tâgblânô* – a member of the secret warriors' societies. *Koko nadu*, the cult that in the first place sparked off the abolition of important elements of Krobo culture, was not part of this setup, and it was not an open celebration.²⁶¹ Yet, it gained rapidly in popularity and might have achieved the same importance. All these rites were generally presented as involving human sacrifice and the display of trophies – especially the drinking of palm wine using a skull as vessel – evoked images of cannibalism. Krobo *literati* themselves attributed human sacrifice to the cult, partly to highlight their own detachment from Krobo culture and partly in order to heighten the might of the cult. The question whether the cults involved human sacrifice or not is, of course, of a rather academic nature. People were murdered by young men longing to be initiated, but it is to be assumed that at least in the second half of the nineteenth century the ritual performances themselves did not involve a human sacrifice as such.

The strong images connected to *dipo*, the war deities, and burial sites made the mountain an outright 'fetish mountain' and served as a justification to interfere in Krobo affairs. Yet, the abolition of 1892 was not motivated by a 'civilising mission' driven by Victorian ideals. The primary concerns of the colonial administration were rather control and trade. The latter apparently suffered from the danger, which strangers associated with travelling through the region. The chiefs' inability to stop murders and to enforce the law as well as other colonial policies made apparent the ultimate authority of the largely invisible *døemeli*. While government did not fully apprehend the working of the Krobo political setup, it uprooted by intuition the erstwhile base of the priestly power. As will be shown in chapter five, the abolition did not destroy Krobo culture. On the contrary, it unbound the priestly elite from the taboo limiting their movements and facilitated an adjustment of the system to the needs of the rapidly expanding society.

²⁶¹ Interview with *Wônô* Tetteh Gaga, 22.11.1998.

4 A BUCOLIC IDYLL OR THE SEAT OF SATAN? THE BASEL MISSION AT ODUMASE

In opposition to the dark image the Basel missionaries painted of Krobo Mountain (see section 3.2.1), they portrayed Odumase as a site of Christian culture. It was marked by education, enlightened chieftaincy, soberness and industry, and it was set in a truly bucolic idyll.¹ This image was widely based on the first encounter with the missionaries' strong partner in Manya Krobo, Chief Odonkor Azu, and on the first period of evangelisation during his reign. Yet, it had an effect on the mission's portrayal of Odumase far beyond this period, and was mobilised in most accounts of Basel Mission activity in Odumase well into the twentieth century.² A first section of this chapter deals with the construction of this image, whereas the second section is concerned with its deconstruction: While there is some truth in the portrayal of Odumase, the missionaries soon had to face the limitations resulting from their intimate relationship with the chief. The situation of the station right next to Odonkor Azu's residence at the centre of the village did not allow for the establishment of a full-fledged segregated Christian quarter, called *salem* in Basel Mission jargon. The *salem* was considered crucial for the development of a healthy Christian congregation. The second generation of missionaries, who followed the pioneers, thought that the mission had been trapped in the politics at play at Odumase, and that the resulting situation of the station and the schools in the centre of town did not allow for a successful evangelisation. Few converts succeeded in liberating themselves from the extended family network. Furthermore the royal family of Odumase, from which most of the early converts originated, exerted a strong influence on the Christian community. Besides the royal ambitions of their catechists, the continuing expansion of the Krobo farmlands was a source of constant problems. Section three details how, despite their recognition of this spatial dynamic, the missionaries failed to adjust their policies to the resulting movement of the population. It was only with considerable delay, that the mission 'discovered' the up-country as a mission field.

At various times the missionaries deliberated on moving the mission out of Odumase and onto one of the hills in the surroundings. This wish pertained foremost to the girls' school, as the education and conversion of women proved to be extremely difficult. Lack of funds and staff, as well as fear of a possible conflict with the Manya Krobo paramount

¹ This dichotomy is commonly met in missionary writings, see for example the London Missionaries' portrayal of Dithakong in Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 177-178). On the one hand it was to highlight the progress embodied by the Christian village. On the other hand the settlement as a whole was depicted as a familiar and sympathetic place in a foreign vastness. Thereby an intimacy was created between the supporters of the mission and this far away place, which enticed them to donate towards the mission's activity there.

² For example Buhl (1877: 181); Hartenstein (1932: 38).

chief, did not allow for the shifting of the station. It was only in the early twentieth century, when a middle boys' boarding school was established, that the missionaries opted to accept the invitation from the neighbouring town of Manyakpongunor to establish their new institution on an isolated hill-top. In later years, the missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland followed this example with their girls' boarding school at Asite, and the Roman Catholic Mission also built its Mount Mary College on a hilltop near Somanya. The establishment of the first of these hill-top schools and the resulting conflict with the Manya Krobo *konō* is detailed in section four. This was the site where the Basel Mission produced the so-called 'scholars' – young men, many of them dropouts, with mission education, who developed into the most vocal group challenging the mission in the early twentieth century. The concluding section five then looks at some of the Christian rites and festivals that the Basel Mission staged at Odumase and examines how these were appropriated, or domesticated, by the population.

4.1 IMAGING³ THE BASEL MISSION AT ODUMASE

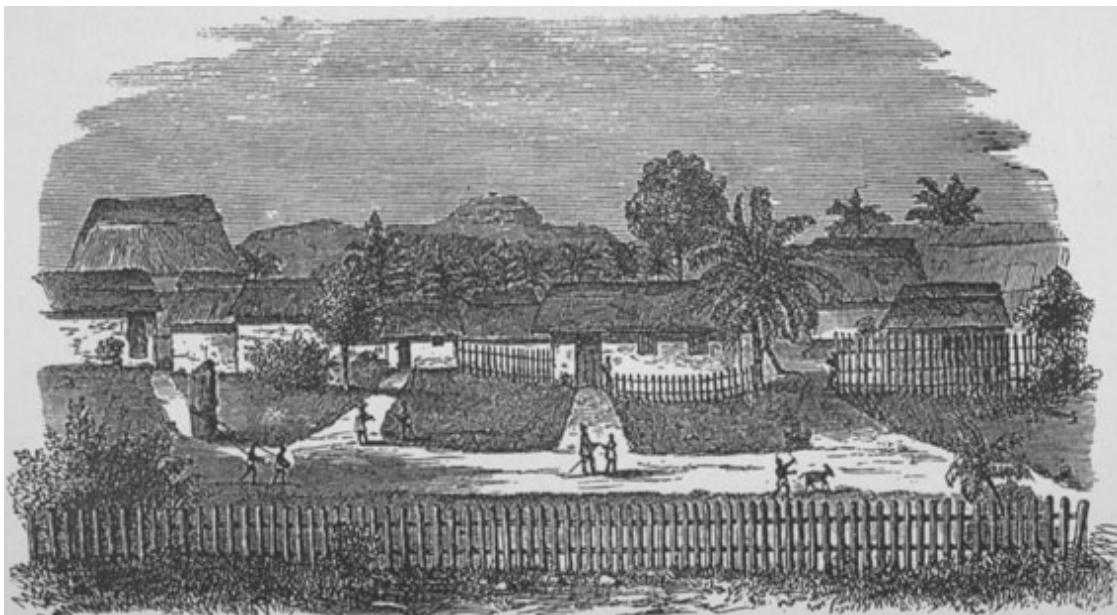


Fig. 4.1: "Odumase with Krobo Mountain."
Engraving based on a painting by Johannes Zimmermann, suggested date 1866. BMA QD-30.001.0112.

After ten years of mission activity at Odumase Chief Odonkor Azu, the great partner and supporter of the Basel Mission, died. In its popular magazine *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* the organisation reported in detail on his death, quoting extensively from a letter

³ The term "Imaging" has arisen with the digital creation of images. A recent contribution on the Basel Mission's early policy towards the production of pictures in and on India shows, that the term can be useful in discussing the production of wood-carvings and engravings (Frey Näf 2004).

by the chief's longstanding friend Missionary Johannes Zimmermann. The article was introduced on the front-page with the picture above (Fig. 4.1) and following text:

This is the view from the [Odumase] mission house in a south-eastern direction. In the foreground we see the road passing in front of the mission house and a number of Krobo houses situated in midst of a marvellous, far-reaching palm forest, which covers the plain up to the base of the Akuapem mountains. [Right of the centre] an Odum tree stands upright with its high stem, straight as a candle and without branches. Its crown spreads out nicely. The hard wood of this tree is very suitable for furniture and construction. The house on the left, which with its thatched roof surmounts all the others, belongs to Odonko Azu, the king of the Krobo [...]. In the background rises Krobo Mountain, the national and religious centre of the Krobo-Negroes. There on the mountain reside the two principal fetishes of the Krobo with their priests; there the gatherings and celebrations of the people take place; there the girls devoted to Otufu stay, as well as the frail men and women who want to end their lives on the holy mountain; there the [Krobo] people takes refuge in times of war. Finally, all the deceased find their eternal rest up there in the houses, which have been built into the rocks [...]⁴

UNDER THE TREE

The engraving (Fig. 4.1) was based on a drawing produced by Zimmermann in 1866, when an employee at the headquarters of the mission asked for a picture of Odumase. It was intended to illustrate a major feature on Krobo in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*. When Zimmermann dispatched his drawing, he complained that he was not an able painter and that the perspective in the picture was faulty. The missionary compared the landscape of Odumase with views published in Barth's *Travels in Africa* and encouraged those working on the picture to refer to this book.⁵ Further, they were to add "some men and women, as the street is hardly ever vacated".⁶ Comparison with early photographs taken in Odumase⁷ and with the present day situation suggests, that even if the artists at Basel followed Zimmermann's advise and consulted Barth's works, the resulting picture might have represented quite accurately the sight of Odumase at the time. Two major mishaps occurred in the process of producing the engraving: on the one hand the size and looks of the people who were added to the scene, and on the other hand the balustrade of the mission house, which has been rendered as the fence of a garden. Thereby the artists added some private space to the mission compound, which

⁴ *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 2(1867), p. 17, my translation.

⁵ Barth (1857-1858).

⁶ BMA D-1.18b Afrika 1866, part 2, Odumase No. 10, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 05.09.1866, pp. 1-2.

⁷ These pictures are a contemporary photograph of the mission house at Odumase (Fig. 4.4, BMA QD-30.011.0105), a later picture showing the old and the new mission house in the setting of the town (QD-30.006.0011), and a drawing of Krobo Mountain apparently made from a position on Menekpo Hill above Odumase (QD-30.003.0004).

the latter lacked due to its situation in the centre of town, but which was the ideal promoted for the design of a mission station.⁸ Further, what did not come out very clearly was the situation of Odumase in-midst of a forest of oil-palms. This is evident in a later picture of the chapel of Odumase, dating from the 1870s (Fig. 4.2).⁹ The palms, the *odum*-tree, the situation of Odumase with Krobo Mountain in the background, and the location of the mission house in proximity of the chief's house are central elements in the missionaries' perception and construction of Odumase.



Fig. 4.2: "The Chapel of Odumase" (with Krobo Mountain in the background). This chapel was built in the years 1869-1870 and inaugurated as Ebenezer Chapel on 14 August 1870. Date 1870-1882. BMA QD-30.006.0010.¹⁰

In the previous chapter it has been demonstrated that the Krobo palm plantations and the farmers' industry played an important role in creating a feeling of familiarity amongst the visiting missionaries. In their reports they cherished the pleasant climate

⁸ Most of the mission stations dating from after the pioneering days had fenced gardens. These were not only maintained for subsistence. With their symmetry, lay out, and choice of plants they were important symbols of order and industry communicating the ideas of the mission (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 208; eidem 1997: 133). For a prominent example see the picture BMA QD-30.042.0052 (also D-30.14.008) by Missionary August Ramseyer. It shows the Abetifi mission house between 1888 and 1895 and reminds us of the typical gardens of Swiss farm houses.

⁹ This picture must have been taken soon after the completion of the chapel in 1870 (*Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 10(1917), pp. 141-145).

¹⁰ Same picture: D-30.06.001.

reigning in these palm groves that illustrated the industry of the Krobo.¹¹ When entering the Krobo area they were travelling on winding paths passing by the many hamlets that dotted these plantations. The hamlets consisted of simple farm houses built in a square form from mud and sticks, each inhabited by a family with its livestock. The space between the houses was cleared except for some shade tree, which in many cases lent its name to the hamlet. This peaceful and bucolic image marked by agricultural activity struck a chord with the missionaries, as they were reminded of the farm villages and forests in their country of origin in rural Wuerttemberg.¹²

During their first visits to Krobo they were called to the hamlet of *Odumase*, a Twi expression translating as “under the *odum* tree” (see the text accompanying Fig. 4.1). The name referred to a big tree, a vestige of the old forest, which had not been cut when clearing the land. Places were often named in the Twi language after such a tree, which had become a landmark even before the Krobo started to farm there. In many instances the Krobo kept these place-names. Generally they referred to the farms with the Dangme expression *tso-si* (under the tree).¹³ This term is reminiscent of the fact that previously it had been a taboo to erect permanent structures outside Krobo Mountain. In those days people sought shelter under a tall tree when on their farms. It is rather astonishing, that the caption to Fig. 4.1 makes reference to the *odum*-tree, as it does not appear very imposing in the picture. In those days the idea of the *Dorfbaum*, i.e. the tree at the centre of the settlement where the villagers would meet, was still of importance in the rural areas of Germany and Switzerland. Often these were lime-, oak-, or chestnut-trees and often restaurants have been named after them. In this light it might be significant that the missionaries referred to the *odum* as to the African oak, highlighting its strength, durability, and the quality of its wood. It can be assumed that the reference to the *odum*-tree in the centre of this African village established a sympathetic linkage between the readers and this small hamlet in Africa.

At the time Basel Missionaries began to work in Krobo, the settlements “under the tree” still had the connotation of not being the real place of abode, but a simple, temporary camp on the farmstead. The actual houses were those on Krobo Mountain. Yet, in the 1850s this situation was changing. The farm villages of Odonkor Azu and of Ologo Patu, the most prominent farmers in Krobo, had become considerable economic centres. Whereas the major Krobo markets were situated about an hour distant in the plains, the farm villages were the locations where the so important palm oil was produced. *Odumase* and *Sra* were each at the centre of a cluster of hamlets, mostly inhabited by the families of the sons and slaves of the two big men. Both sites were marked by economic activity. At *Sra* one could see up to forty-six men engaged in pounding palm nuts,¹⁴ and

¹¹ BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 11, J. Stanger, Christiansborg 30.09.1851, p. 23.

¹² BMA D-5.9,4, Paul Steiner, [15.10.1860], *Chronik der Missionsstation Odumase*, p. 3.

¹³ Der Evangelische Heidenbote 2(1867), p. 27.

¹⁴ BMA D-1.4b Afrika 1851-1853, No. 14, Chr. W. Locher, Osu ???.07.1852, published in *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* 1853, pp. 59-81, here 78.

more than twenty women preparing palm oil.¹⁵ Ologo Patu, who was married to ten or twelve of them, was able to send a caravan of up to two hundred carriers with as many pots of palm oil to the coast.¹⁶

This plantation-village was very busy. More than twenty women carrying their babies on their back were boiling palm oil. Big earthen pots are placed on three stones set firmly in the ground. Between the latter a fire is burning that heats the pot. One part [of the women] is seething the oil, the other part is extracting it. Locco [i.e. Ologo Patu] is the richest man in Krobo, [...], he is the father of more than 50 children, is about 60-70 years old, tall and well-built.¹⁷

At Odumase the situation was similar.¹⁸ Most missionaries were fascinated with the industry and achievement of the Krobo farmers. They had been recruited from a rural part of Southwest Germany, where their families had lived an evangelical pietism based on the living conditions of an economically marginal and remote society. They carried the idea of a rurally integrated pietist Christianity to Africa.¹⁹ Their worldview idealised economic independence on the basis of the 'traditional' farming community, as they had known it in rural Wuerttemberg.²⁰ That the Krobo farmers despite their economic success lived in humble abodes, went well with the pietists' teachings, as the latter promoted modesty and sobriety. The economic activities were based on the extended family that included slaves and pawns. The heads of family controlling this entity were described as friendly patriarchs, governing this micro-cosmos in a manner reminiscent of scenes from the Old Testament.²¹

While Chief Ologo Patu, who had at first welcomed the missionaries, eventually decided on a more anti-European policy and discouraged the evangelists from working in his territory, Chief Odonkor Azu whole-heartedly embraced the mission and did everything to make them feel at home in Odumase. He had the visiting missionaries preach at his hamlet. The first church services took place in the open air in the shade of some fig tree and oil palms near Azu's house. An altar was provided by placing a door upon the chief's

¹⁵ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 38, J. A. Mader, Akropong 22.12.1851, p. 2.

¹⁶ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 56, J. Chr. Dieterle, Akropong 31.05.1852, p. 4; at other places Ologo Patu is said to have had sixteen to eighteen wives (D-1.4b Afrika 1851-1853, No. 14, Chr. W. Locher, Osu ???.07.1852, published in *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* 1853, pp. 59-81, here 78).

¹⁷ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 38, J. A. Mader, Akropong 22.12.1851, p. 2.

¹⁸ BMA D-1.6 Afrika 1855, Christiansborg No. 2/II 39, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg ???.??1855?, p. 6.

¹⁹ Miller 1994: 15.

²⁰ Jenkins 1980.

²¹ The whole hierarchical structure of Krobo society was likened to the twelve tribes of Israel (BMA D-5.9,4 *Chronik der evangelischen Missionsstation Odumase*, Paul Steiner [suggested date: 15.10.1860], p. 2).

two big “war drums” and covering the whole with a white cloth.²² The twenty-four persons attending the lessons and sermons were mostly members of Odonkor Azu’s household, both kinsmen and slaves. Such church services under palm-trees became emblematic of the Krobo mission. They featured in many of the writings on Krobo published by the Basel Mission and there are two slightly differing photographs (and several reproductions thereof) of such a church service under palm-trees that seem to have been used widely in Basel Mission publications and in fund-raising activities such as slide-shows (Fig. 4.3).



Fig. 4.3: “Church service under palm trees. Odumase.” Standing: Missionary Josenhans, to his left: Missionary Erhardt, Mrs. Josenhans, and Catechist Jonas Nikoi.²³ Contrary to the original caption, it is suggested that this service took place in the up-country at either Bamanase, Pleyo or Dawa Mate Kole.²⁴ Picture by Anna Erhardt, date 1901-1912, suggested 1907. BMA D-30.06.024.

The many different copies of the two pictures suggest that the image resonated extremely well with both missionaries and supporters. On the one hand it might have

²² The drums had a height of three to four feet, so they might have been *obonu* drums (BMA D-1.7 Afrika 1856, Abokobi No. 8/III 89, A. Steinhauser, Abokobi ??09.1856, p. 17). The same make-shift altar was still in use a year later, when on 2 August 1857 Missionary Zimmermann administered the wholly communion at Odumase (D-1.8 Afrika 1857, Christiansborg No. 30, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg ??10.1857, p. 4).

²³ Assistant Catechist Jonas Nikoi was a Ga. He joined the Odumase station in 1906 and worked mainly in the Krobo plantations at Obuadaso and Huhunya (BMA D-1.83 Goldküste Ga 1905, Ga-Adangme DA 84, Akropong 09.12.1905, p. 3).

²⁴ D-1.85 Goldküste 1906 Ga, Odumase 137, W. Erhardt, Odumase, 04.02.1907, p. 9.

struck a chord with a readership well versed in the Old and New Testaments where the palm and the *Ölbaum* ("oil tree") are recurrent items.²⁵ The branch of the *Ölbaum* or of the palm tree was a symbol of peace and victory,²⁶ and the *Ölbaum* itself symbolised prosperity and the sublime.²⁷ It is evident, that neither the palm nor the *Ölbaum* of the bible refer to the *elais guineensis* of the West African coast. Rather they denominate the date palm (*phoenix dactylifera*) and the olive tree (*olea europea*). Nevertheless, it seems that the missionaries readily made the link between these plants and made use of this imagery both in preaching on the southern Gold Coast and in communicating with their audience in Europe. For many of the ordinary supporters of the mission in Germany and Switzerland the bible had been the principal text book and, together with the mission journals, informed their geographical and botanical knowledge. For them the Holy Land was as distant a place as West Africa and the imagery of the oil palm (i.e. as both palm and *Ölbaum*) must have resonated very well. Palms and "oil trees" were an important feature of the promised land of the Old Testament. The abundance of oil palms in Krobo created an analogy that presented the area as a mission field of destiny. The oil palm provided a perfect symbol for the evangelisation of the Krobo because the plant and its products dominated every day life in many respects.²⁸ The branches of oil palms provided shade (i.e. they were used to erect canopies)²⁹ and, as in the biblical context, they were used to greet the victorious.³⁰ Their ribs were an important item in construction, their leaves were used in the fabrication of mats and baskets, and the ribs of the leaves made handy brooms. The flower was used for lighting the fire, cleaning pots, and in purification rituals.³¹ Their sap was tapped as palm wine, which was the local alcohol used in rituals and consumed on festive occasions.³² Most importantly there was the oil produced from its fruits that, much like the olive oil in the Near East, was

²⁵ The two trees are characteristic for Palestine and are frequently referred to in the bible. The palm for example is a prominent feature in the description of Elim (*Exodus* 15:27) and Jericho (*Deuteronomy* 34:3; *Judges* 1:16 and 3:13), whereas Canaan abounded in olive trees (*Deuteronomy* 6:11). Olive trees were cultivated by the kings of Israel on a large scale (*1 Chronicles* 27:28).

²⁶ *Revelation* 7:9; *John* 12:13; *Genesis* 8:11; *Leviticus* 23:40; *Matthew* 21:8.

²⁷ *Psalms* 128:3; *Hosea* 14:6. An article in the *Missionsmagazin* of 1891, for example, used Fig. 4.2 for an illustration of the work done in Krobo and concluded: "Thus has the palm of peace, which was planted in the Krobo palm lands through the Gospel, taken its roots" (*Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* 1891, pp. 502-508).

²⁸ Likewise irrigation and gardening played an important role as metaphors for evangelism in the writings of London Missionaries among the Tswana (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 207-208).

²⁹ Palm branches were also used to decorate the church on festive occasions. Examples for this can be seen in the pictures BMA D-30.09.014 (Mission anniversary festival at Aburi) and QD-30.016.0007 (A missionary wedding in church).

³⁰ Azu 1929: 73.

³¹ Huber 1993: 49.

³² Again the missionaries would speak of their own palms as of their vineyard when it came to harvesting, thereby turning the palm plantation into a biblical field of action (BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867, Teil 2, Odumase 7, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 30.06.1867, p. 3).

both an important item in the local diet and the main export product. This is where yet another dimension is added to the reception of the image in Europe: Among the supporters of the mission were also people who had a direct interest in the West African trade. Some of the most prominent merchants of Basel sat on the mission's board of directors and in the mission's trade commission. The latter was founded in 1859 and eventually gave rise to the Basel Mission Trading Company. Other supporters held shares in this company or similar trading ventures.³³ Palm oil dominated its business in West Africa right to the cocoa boom of the 1890s and remained an important product thereafter.³⁴ The image of the "Service under palm trees" and of the Basel Mission presence "in the palm forests of Krobo"³⁵ was indeed an extremely rich and multi-vocal one. It was nurtured and kept alive despite the fact that the mission early on had a structure serving as church at Odumase.

THE ODUMASE STATION – THE TOPOGRAPHY OF A CONGREGATION

On 3 February 1856 Chief Odonkor Azu showed catechist Paul Fleischer a space where he intended to build a house for a teacher.³⁶ A year later, when the mission had decided to take up work in Odumase, these plans were formalised. On 4 May 1857 missionary Zimmermann and Odonkor Azu designated a space for the building, which was to house a teacher and at the same time was to be used as a chapel. The house was built by the chief while the costs were taken over by the mission.³⁷ These structures had hardly been finished when most of Odumase was destroyed by fire during the punitive expedition of the colonial government against the Krobo in October 1858.³⁸ It was only at the end of 1860 that new buildings were completed. The station now consisted of a residence for the missionary and of a school room (used also as chapel), both built by the mission's craftsmen. In addition, less sophisticated structures accommodating the catechists had been acquired from the local population. This first mission house (if the one destroyed in 1858 is not counted) featured a thatched roof, glass windows, shutters and a porch (see Fig. 4.4). It was a fairly long structure consisting of two living quarters

³³ On the history of the Union Trade Company, which developed from the Basel Mission Trading Company, see the official account by Wanner (1959) written on the occasion of its centenary. A critical assessment of the UTC was done by Gannon (1983). On its beginnings see Miescher (1995) and on its recording activities see Arlt (2003b).

³⁴ Wanner 1959: 198-201; Schweizer 2002: 132-135. See also the recent analysis of the cocoa trade of the Basel Mission Trading Company by Franc (2002).

³⁵ In the German original "Unter Krobos Palmen" (*Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1901*, p. 63).

³⁶ BMA D-1.7 Afrika 1856, Christiansborg No. 1/II 19, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg ??04.1856.

³⁷ BMA D-1.8 Afrika 1857, Akropong No. 28, J. Zimmermann, Akropong ??07.1857, p. 3.

³⁸ Most of the Krobo farm settlements at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range, as well as one of the mountain towns were apparently burnt down by the government forces in the course of the so-called Krobo Rebellion of 1858-1859 (BMA D-1.10 Afrika 1859, Odumase No. 4, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg 07.05.1859, pp. 3-4).

divided by a central room serving as school and chapel.³⁹ While some of its features distinguished the building from the rest of the town, the photograph makes it clear, that it was a rather modest structure of a "rural austerity"⁴⁰, very similar in appearance to the other houses. No measures were taken to set it off from the neighbouring houses. The porch of this first mission house was said to be typical for many of the more elaborate buildings at Odumase.⁴¹ Only the glass windows and, as will be detailed, its interior were a major attraction for the local population,⁴² and with its inhabitants the station became a "diorama" for the local population, where it could monitor and study the Christian ways.⁴³

Paul Jenkins has argued that the design and location of the station was a deliberate move by Missionary Zimmermann, who promoted the idea, that the mission should be as close to the local population as possible. This idea also pertained to a basic form of dress, better adapted to the tropical climate than the European coat his fellow missionaries were wearing.⁴⁴ Foremost, Zimmermann's policy was that of an open door and of a readiness to listen to and engage with the people.⁴⁵ It included his sitting on the chief's council, where he influenced a number of decisions and mediated between the colonial and missionary interests and those of Manya Krobo. When during the Krobo palm oil boycott in 1861 matters came to a head on several occasions, Zimmermann not only advised the Krobo, but he also sent letters to the government supporting the Krobo's case.⁴⁶ He legitimised these activities vis-à-vis his superiors by means of his linguistic studies. The degree to which the missionary became entangled in Krobo politics is evidenced by the stool Chief Odonkor Azu gave to the missionary acknowledging his services.⁴⁷ According to Krobo informants its elaborate design featuring brass ornaments

³⁹ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Akropong No. 29, G. Auer, Akropong 08.08.1860, p. 4; D-31.5,4 No. 5 Outline of the Odumase mission station, drawn by Missionary Carl F. Aldinger, Odumase ???.04.1861.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Akropong No. 38, G. Auer, Akropong 01.10.1858, enclosure B, p. 5, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1859*, pp. 94-111, here 98.

⁴² *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission für das Jahr 1860*, p. 152.

⁴³ Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 292.

⁴⁴ This outfit is illustrated in picture BMA QS-30.003.0237.01.

⁴⁵ Jenkins 1976.

⁴⁶ BMA D-1.12 Afrika 1861, Odumase No. 10, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 29.07.1861, p. 2; PRO CO 96/53, Gov. Andrews to the Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast Castle 09.08.1861, Enclosure No. 13: J. Zimmermann to Governor Andrews, Odumase 08.07.1861.

⁴⁷ Nene Azu Mate Kole, the then paramount chief of Manya Krobo presented this stool to Zimmermann's hometown Gerlingen near Stuttgart on 23 May 1976. This gesture was intended to renew the relationship between Odumase and Gerlingen and resulted in various mutual visits. The town of Gerlingen supported the Presbyterian Church in its efforts to complete its new chapel dedicated to Zimmermann. The stool is today housed at the museum of Gerlingen. The conferring of an honorary title to a foreigner for his involvement for the welfare of the local state is a practice that is made use of very frequently in Ghana today. These foreigner or development chiefs (Twi: *nkosuohene*) are the object of an ongoing research project by Dr Marijke Steegstra of the University of Nijmegen (Steegstra forthcoming). For the meaning of stools see note 18 chapter two.

represents ancestral richness. This supports the oral tradition, that Zimmermann had been formally conferred a title at the court of Odonkor Azu.⁴⁸

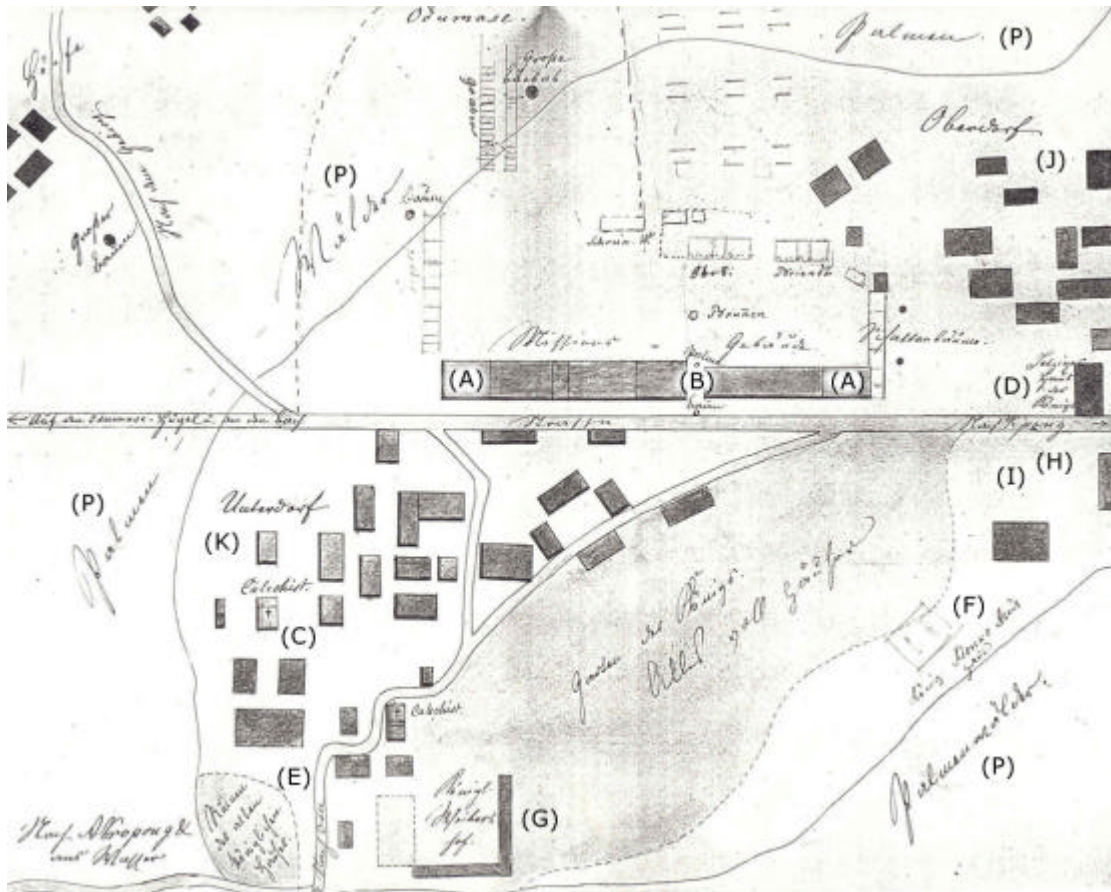


Fig. 4.4: "The mission house in Odumase seen from the South-west."

This house was built by the mason Immanuel Koi for Missionary Laissle. Picture by Wilhelm Locher, date 1860. This is one of the earliest pictures taken by a Basel Mission photographer on the Gold Coast. Missionary Locher complained that most of the pictures he took at Odumase failed, as he was still experimenting with the chemicals. BMA QD-30.011.0105.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Interview with *kotoklo Wônô* Nene Aseni and *dipo Wônô* Nene Tetteh Gaga, Ogome-Kplande 26.02.1999.

⁴⁹ In August 1860 Missionary Zimmermann commented on this picture taken by Locher during his visit to Odumase: The fencing was to prevent the encroachment of the villagers on the lands of the mission, where they would defecate (BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase, No. 12, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg ???.08.1860). Locher's early reports reveal the many difficulties the pioneering photographers had to cope with in West Africa (BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Christiansborg, No.22, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg ???.1860, 1. *Quartalsbericht* 1860, p. 4; D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Christiansborg, No. 31, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg 12.06.1860, p. 2; D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Akropong, No. 24, Akropong 08.07.1860, Chr. W. Locher, p.4).



Map 4: Sketch map of Odumase. Presumably drawn by Johannes Zimmermann around 1866. References A – P added. BMA D-31.5,4 No. 2.

Zimmermann's policy of an open door exposed the evangelists to what was going on in the village. A map drawn by the missionary around 1866 shows the situation of the mission station in the midst of the village next to Odonkor Azu's house (Map 4). The first mission house shown in Fig. 4.4 (A) actually consisted of two separate buildings each housing one of the missionaries. Their roofs connected and covered an open church and school room (B) situated between the two structures. The building to the right seems to have survived to this day as the pastor's manse. The building to the left was rebuilt around 1872 and received a second storey. On that occasion further buildings were erected, which have been added to the map in a different hand. One of the catechists was lodged in the village in a house rented for that purpose (C). It seems that Chief Odonkor Azu was involved in several building projects at the time, as it shows three different buildings attributed to the chief. Next to the mission there is "the present house of the king" (D), on the lower left "the remains of the king's old house" (E), and to the right the position of "King Odonkor Azu's house" (F) has been added. Reference (G) shows the royal women's compound. Reference (H) marks the place, where later the chapel seen in Fig. 4.2 was built and the position of the *klutu* (I). The map also makes it clear, that the village is nestled in a dense palm forest (P), which dominates Odumase. Lastly, the mission was nestled right between the *Oberdorf* (J), and the *Unterdorf* (K), i.e. between the upper village and the lower village. These were dominated by the families of Nathanael Lawer and Odonkor Azu respectively.

In view of the role that Odonkor Azu had assigned to the mission, it is not surprising that the very first converts came from his family and household, most prominently from among his sons. His competitor Chief Ologo Patu of Sra at that time had clearly taken the lead in this respect, as he had already sent three of his sons to Accra where they were trained at the Methodist Mission School.⁵⁰ One of them, who was then twenty years old and had been trained for six years at James Town, served as a middleman to Chief Ologo Patu in 1851.⁵¹ During one of the early visits in August 1855 by Basel Missionaries Chief Odonkor Azu entrusted his thirteen years old son Akutei Azu to Johannes Zimmermann in order that he might be trained by the latter. Akutei, the third born of Odonkor Azu's wife Adjua became Zimmermann's houseboy and was baptized with the name of Christian. He visited the schools at Christiansborg and Abokobi before receiving his training as a catechist at Akropong.⁵² Next in line were the chief's elder sons, by name Noa Akunor Agwae Azu and Peter Nyarko, who were baptised in September 1856. Both of them were later trained as catechists and worked in that profession as from 1863.⁵³

The second main group of converts came from the family of Nathanael Lawer. This influential man was a son of Odonkor Azu's sister Koryo Patautuo and was married to Mary Koko, a daughter of Odonkor Azu.⁵⁴ Nathanael Lawer and Odonkor Azu were not only closely related, but they were basically the founders of Odumase proper. The southern part of the settlement consisted of Odonkor Azu's family, the northern part of Nathanael Lawer's. While during the early period the chief's family produced only male converts, Lawer converted with basically his full family and most importantly with his wife Mary Koko and one of his daughters, Salome Afua. He soon became a presbyter and acted as such until 1868 when he stepped back due to the relationship his (still unconverted) daughter Akoa maintained with Peter Nyarko.⁵⁵ The conversion of Nathanael Lawer was facilitated by the fact, that he lived in monogamy and owned no slaves. Together with his wife, who was the first Krobo woman to be baptised, he became a pillar of the Odumase congregation and, being both an elder on the chief's court and in the church, he was an important mediator between the two spheres.

⁵⁰ BMA D-1.2 Afrika 1842-48, Akropong 1848, No. 5, J. G. Widmann, Akropong, 02.03.1848.

⁵¹ BMA D-1.3 Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 (Berichte) No. 13, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg 04.10.1851, pp. 11-12.

⁵² Odjidja 1973: 46. Christian Tei entered the seminary in 1863

⁵³ BMA D-1.15 Afrika 1863, Teil 2, Odumase No. 25, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 28.01.1864, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Mary is spelled Maria in the original. Nathanael Lawer's father was from Bunase in Yilo Krobo. In 1913 Emanuel Mate Kole mobilised this Yilo Krobo ancestry in order to check the ambitions of Nathanael's son Thomas Odonkor. He alleged that Thomas Odonkor's mother also came from Bunase through her father's side. This is not supported by the entries in the Odumase register and by Basel Mission documents (GNA ADM 11/1/477 (Case No. 49/1913) Chief Odonkor of Kpong, No. 27, Emanuel Mate Kole to CEP, 03.04.1913).

⁵⁵ BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868, Odumase 18, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 02.12.1868.

Thus most of the early converts were in some way or other related to the family of Odonkor Azu and could claim some royal blood. This was in contrast to other Basel Mission stations, where at least in a first phase the converts were recruited from marginalised strata of society. In Sra for example, a large part of the congregation consisted of 'fallen *dipo* girls' and of slaves or pawns. There were no members of the royal family. Among the latter it was said that a royal does not go to church: *odehe solee* [i.e. *sole-we*].⁵⁶ This created a number of problems for the congregation. The Christians were not respected, the Christian men themselves would not want to take a bride from among the (unrespectable) Christian women, and there were no wealthy persons in the congregation. This also brought about a constant financial stress and the congregation could for example not rely on its own funds for the building of a new chapel. As late as 1905 not a single free male citizen of Sra had converted,⁵⁷ and up to the mid-1870s the Yilo Krobo paramount chiefs were not supportive of the mission. Yet, in the very beginning *Konô* Ologo Patu had taken the lead over his competitor Odonkor Azu in approaching the Methodist and Basel Mission. He changed his policy around 1853 and took a decidedly negative stand towards the mission. This change was caused by a fine that was imposed on Chief Ologo Patu for not obeying a summons to the colonial court. In addition one of his sons, who had been trained by the Methodist Mission, had fallen ill with leprosy. The *døemeli* took advantage of this incident to exert greater influence on him, by explaining this misfortune as a sanction for Ologo Patu's contraventions of the laws and taboos of the Krobo deities.⁵⁸ Ologo Patu later did ask for a missionary again, but would have had to make do with a catechist. When the chief refused, the missionaries made their renewed engagement at Sra dependent on the gift of a piece of land complete with a school building.⁵⁹ Ologo Patu was succeeded by Chief Noi. Right after his father's death, Noi and his brothers asked Missionary Zimmermann to support them and build an outstation at Sra. For this they offered a plot and, later, Chief Noi sent some of his children and slave children to the mission school.⁶⁰ Noi's paramountcy was disputed by Chief Larmi of Ogome, who based his claims on his priestly descent and was decidedly against the mission. This seems to have prevented Noi from whole-heartedly embracing the mission. He was qualified as unreliable and as a "stupid brute".⁶¹ It was only

⁵⁶ BMA D-1.40 Afrika 1884, Odumase 114, Jakob Weiss and Karl Bender, Odumase ???.1885, pp. 2-3; D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 161, Johannes Kopp, Odumase 10.02.1888, p. 7; D-1.52 Goldküste 1890 Ga, Odumase 204, Gottlob Josenhans, Odumase 07.04.1891, p. 7; D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 195, Station [Gottlob Josenhans], Odumase 24.01.1898, p. 13.

⁵⁷ BMA D-1.80 Afrika 1904, Odumase 133, Gottlob Josenhans, Odumase 24.01.1905, p. 22; D-1.83 Goldküste Ga 1905, Odumase 124, W. Erhardt, Odumase 22.01.1905, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁸ BMA D-1.6, Afrika 1855, Abokobi No. III 129, Thomas B. Quartey, Abokobi, ???.1855, p. 9.

⁵⁹ BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase No. 22, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 28.09.1864, p. 3.

⁶⁰ BMA D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 22, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 30.01.1871, p. 2; D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 3a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 30.03.1870.

⁶¹ BMA D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 14a, J. Zimmermann, M. Klaiber and J. Weber, Odumase 28.01.1871, p. 14; D-1.25 Afrika 1873, Odumase 11, Christian Buhl, Accra 15.10.1873 (or rather 15.11.1873?), Enclosure 4: Copy of a private letter by Missionary Schönfeld to Captain Glover, Odumase 17.10.1873, p. 2.

after the so-called Sagrenti War, that the attitude of the palace towards the Sra congregation changed somewhat. The newly installed *Konô* Akrobetto realised that *Konô* Sakite of Many Krobo had gained in influence and popularity due to his participation in the Asante Campaign and his being able to rely on a number of educated middlemen, as well as the missionaries.⁶² For the Sra congregation this meant that Akrobetto would from time to time give generous financial support and help to curb opposition to the Christians rising from among his councillors and the priests. By 1880 the Sra congregation had settled on its own land (*salem*) and had a new chapel built with the chief's help, which soon could no longer hold the growing congregation.⁶³

4.2 DECONSTRUCTION

There is nothing special to complain about, except for a general lethargy and sluggishness which is also the cause for the slow growth of the congregation – the adult and in some cases longstanding candidates for baptism keep lingering with the king and new ones often get stuck with them.⁶⁴

The support the mission received at Odumase did not mean that all was well there. Rather the mission was caught in the political scheme of Odonkor Azu. The chief did everything to plant the mission and its schools at Odumase. Yet, his primary motivation was not his concern with the spiritual value of new religion, but rather the strategic importance of having a school and a white man at Odumase. While the documents testify to his genuine interest in Christianity, they also make it clear that Odonkor Azu's solidarity with the missionaries had its limits. The chief attentively participated in the preparatory lessons the mission held at Odumase, but when it came to baptism, he pulled out together with all those who had an interest in the chieftaincy. Among the latter were his eldest sons Akute and Sakite, and also his successor Kofitsã.⁶⁵ The chief argued that a pending court case made it impossible for him to be baptised. The principal reason, however, became evident when the missionaries asked him to have one of his daughters trained at Akropong. This was not possible due to *dipo* and also Odonkor Azu's own political position depended on his obeying the laws imposed by the priestly leadership.⁶⁶ This pattern persisted up to Odonkor Azu's death. The chief would apply his knowledge of the bible in daily life and at court, but he would not convert. Missionary Zimmermann observed that while Azu attended church service regularly together with his elder sons, he secretly prevented the latter from converting. The missionary came to call this

⁶² BMA D-1.26 Afrika 1874, Odumase 228, J. Kopp, Odumase 01.02.1875, pp. 2-3.

⁶³ BMA D-1.31 Afrika 1879, Odumase 57, Jakob Weiss, Odumase ???.1880, pp. 3-8; D-1.32 Afrika 1880, Odumase 71, Cornelius Malm, Sra 07.01.1880, pp. 2-4.

⁶⁴ BMA D-1.12 Afrika 1861, Odumase No. 10, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 29.07.1861, p. 4.

⁶⁵ BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 18a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 10.01.1866, p. 2.

⁶⁶ BMA D-1.7 Afrika 1856, Abokobi No. 8/ III 89, August Steinhauser, Abokobi ???.1856, pp. 2-5, 15-20.

group, which must have consisted of the eligible successors, the royal faction.⁶⁷ *Dipo* remained the main issue in which Odonkor Azu's loyalty was clearly limited and in vain the mission tried to gain the chief's support when going against it. Odonkor Azu underlined the positive aspects of it and denied that it was linked to "fetish worship".⁶⁸ Yet, Azu was a great diplomat and knew how to sustain his good relations with the mission. In Johannes Zimmermann he had an ideal partner who showed a great deal of understanding for his situation. When the missionary once told him openly about his frustration that Azu still had not converted and that this kept many others from doing the decisive step, the chief replied:

Onukpa dsuro! (Dear elder!) What shall I say: it is true. You think I am a heathen and my people think I am a Christian. From both sides I am reprimanded. But you know that I worship Jesus. Just ask the wardens at the castle [Christiansborg]: when we were prisoners there we daily held morning and evening devotions and – I beg your pardon – I myself officiated as priest! Those who were with me now want to serve God. Alas, they are like beasts from the bush: by and by – may be once I am dead – they will come all. As at now I still have to assure them that they may join you and that you will not do anything to them etc.⁶⁹

When the chief died on 26 September 1867 Johannes Zimmermann wrote in his obituary: "None [of the twenty West Africans I have known] has received the missionaries, treated them, cared for them, loved them and treated them as he did." Nonetheless, the dominating theme in this text was Azu's failure to commit himself fully to Christianity through baptism.⁷⁰ Zimmermann had known Odonkor Azu for twelve years. His junior colleague Missionary Roes, who could look back on more than five years of acquaintance with the chief, attested that his understanding of the Gospel surpassed that of "a wealthy, pious and educated farmer in Christendom", and that he had lived according to this understanding. Roes did not agree with the opinion of some other missionaries, who saw the chief as a hypocrite. Like Zimmermann he understood the constraints of Odonkor Azu's position as a chief, whose legitimacy depended on the continuance of ritual practices and the successful mediation with the priestly leadership. Roes feared that the situation in Odumase might change dramatically now that the chief was no longer in control. Would the "power of sheer Heathendom", which had heretofore been checked by the late chief, invade Odumase and threaten the mission?⁷¹ The young missionary's

⁶⁷ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 19, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 30.01.1861, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1860*, pp. 152-158, here 155.

⁶⁸ BMA D-1.15 Afrika 1863 part 2, Odumase No. 16, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 05.08.1863, p. 3.

⁶⁹ BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862 part 2, Odumase No. 25, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 22.01.1863, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁰ BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867 Teil 2, Odumase 15, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.10.1867, pp. 2-6, published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 2(1868), pp. 18-19.

⁷¹ BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867 Teil 2, Odumase 14, M. Roes, Odumase, 01.10.1867, pp. 2-3.

fear was not substantiated. Odonkor Azu's son Sakite proved to be an equally reliable partner to the mission. Like his father he relied on the mission's presence in Odumase in order to strengthen his position, and like him he never converted although he was conversant with the Gospel. What did make a difference was the replacement of Johannes Zimmermann in Odumase in 1872 and the dismissal of Catechist Peter Nyarko in 1868, who then became a councillor to his brother Sakite.

4.2.1 REPERCUSSIONS I - THE END OF THE ZIMMERMANN ERA

While Johannes Zimmermann had been crucial in planting the mission in Odumase, he had done it in his own way. Unlike most of his colleagues he showed a great readiness to listen to his African partners and to negotiate a compromise between the demands of the mission's ideas and the demands of African kinship structures and customs.⁷² This was not conducive to the clear break the Basel Mission expected their converts to make with their past. The one issue where Zimmermann's lenient attitude showed most was *dipo*. In 1866 the missionary, on the special request of the mission board, had to report on the rites. He concluded by saying that *dipo* would eventually be overcome with the help of a girls' boarding school.⁷³ A day school had been started by his wife Mrs Catherine Mulgrave-Zimmermann as early as 1860. Apart from reading and writing the girls were taught needlework and other "female occupations". However, all the elder girls left school when it came to their *dipo* time and the younger ones too no longer came regularly as they had to replace their elder sisters in assisting their mothers.⁷⁴ In general there were hardly any Krobo women in the congregation. This was attributed to *dipo*, which attached women effectively to "heathendom".⁷⁵ By the year 1864 six Krobo girls under the age of puberty and six adult Krobo women had been baptised. Zimmermann's statement thus indicates that they were almost all under church discipline and, indeed, the Odumase Church Register lists only three adult Krobo women among the ten regular female communicants in 1864. By July 1871 the number had risen to just five out of sixteen.⁷⁶ In that month Zimmermann wrote an extensive report on women and girls' education in Krobo. The girls' school was now run as a boarding institution by his wife Catherine Mulgrave-Zimmermann and his daughter Johanna. It had twenty pupils. Twelve of them were from Krobo: four baptised children of Krobo Christians and eight 'heathen' girls. According to Zimmermann the latter longed to be baptised. Their parents did not oppose it and were themselves prepared to convert – once the girls had

⁷² Miller has called Zimmermann a strategic deviant. This deviance originated in the same love for Africa and its cultures that allowed Zimmermann to accomplish his exploits as the mission's specialist for the Ga-language (1994: 130-138).

⁷³ BMA D-1.18b Afrika 1866 part 2, Odumase 4, M. Roes and J. Zimmermann, Odumase 13.06.1866, p. 3.

⁷⁴ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 8, Johannes Zimmermann to mission board, Odumase, 04.05.1860, pp. 1-3.

⁷⁵ BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase 14, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 19.07.1866, p. 3.

⁷⁶ PCA/5/14 Census Book Odumase 1910-1942.

passed through their *dipo*. As Christians they would no longer be allowed to have their child do the rite. *Dipo* thus was an obstacle to conversion for both girls and parents, both male and female. Zimmermann was of the opinion, that *dipo* would eventually be overcome by launching an educational campaign focussed on women. In his view the girls' school should be open to all. Even if the girls would later run away and do their *dipo*, some of their training would persist and some of them would return to the school.⁷⁷

This view was typical for Zimmermann's approach to African culture. He was of the opinion that there was "intrinsic worth in many African institutions, and that the preservation of some of those social arrangements was essential to the spiritual health of the people". Further, he opposed the racism inherent in the Basel Mission's organisational principles. These envisioned a natural hierarchy in which Christ ranked highest, followed by the mission board, the inspector, the missionary, and, at its bottom, the African. In order to maintain this hierarchy any transgression between the different levels had to be checked. Too much familiarity between the missionary and his African counterpart, Christian or not, would have jeopardised this balance. The mission regulations therefore imposed a clear separation and prohibited "being too friendly, adopting African customs or dress, exchanging gifts, or incurring or encouraging debts between Africans and Europeans." While Africans were to take on European norms, treating them as equals was frowned upon. In contrast, Zimmermann openly said that he "would rather become a black in order to win over the blacks", than insist on this racial separation.⁷⁸ And indeed, he did "go native" by marrying the Basel Mission teacher Catherine Mulgrave. This was a two-fold transgression. First, Zimmermann married Mulgrave without waiting for the mission board's approval and second, his bride was an African.⁷⁹

The mission's regulations would have demanded that Zimmermann be dismissed right away. This was not done for strategic reasons: with his linguistic skills the missionary

⁷⁷ BMA D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 13, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 01.07.1871, transcript by Marijke Steegstra, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁸ Miller 1994: 132-133. Of course this was the theory and numerous reports and pictures by Basel Missionaries reveal that the lived missionary practice was often different. Jenkins has argued that mission photographs, as a less controlled medium, can be particularly revelatory of such "unorthodox dialogues" between missionaries and their partners (Jenkins 2001: 145; see also Jenkins 2004: 124-128 and 2002a: 160). Loans from missionaries seem to have been rather common, for example Christian Tei Azu borrowed £20 from Missionary Erhardt (at Odumase between 1901 and 1917) and Solomon Kodjiku in 1906 borrowed £4 from the same missionary (MKTSA Odumase Traditional Court Records 1922-1924, John Odonkor Azu vs. Patrick Mate (resumed), Odumase 12.08.1922, p. 16; PCA/5/17, Diary of Revd W. Quartey for the year 1906, entry for 12.08.1906).

⁷⁹ Catherine Mulgrave-Zimmermann was presumably from Angola, where she was captured by slavers and shipped to the West Indies. There she was freed and grew up under the care of Lady Mulgrave, the governor's wife. She was trained as a teacher by the Moravian Mission. Catherine Mulgrave was among the Christians of African descent recruited by the Basel Mission in 1842 in order to help spread the Gospel on the Gold Coast. She married George Thompson, a Liberian who had been trained by the mission in Basel. When Thompson was excluded from the congregation and dismissed from the Basel Mission the marriage was divorced (Haenger 1995: 12-13; Schlatter 1917: 13, 35, 45, 51; Miller 1994: 133-135).

was indispensable. Instead the board of directors disciplined the rebel by declaring, that through his marriage with an African he had foregone his citizen's rights in Wuerttemberg, and that he need not come home to Europe again.⁸⁰ This leniency paid off, in that Zimmermann was extremely productive as a linguist. Nonetheless, the missionary continued to be a dissenter and to challenge the mission board as well as his fellow missionaries with his views on African culture. In addition he became increasingly eccentric. Zimmermann had not been happy with his appointment to Odumase, in view of the fact that he was working on the Ga-language and that he owned landed property at Abokobi.⁸¹ He felt isolated in Krobo and, perhaps in response, he focussed even more on his scholarship. He had an international network of correspondents, wrote articles for various newspapers, was the author of petitions to various governments, and wrote letters on behalf of Chief Odonkor Azu. His reports to the mission board were mostly over-long and are renowned amongst researchers working at the Basel Mission archives. In the eyes of his fellow missionaries he was "too much of a reader, speaker and writer",⁸² "a pure scholar and only partially of importance to the mission".⁸³ Eventually, in 1862, the mission board changed its policy and tried to check Zimmermann's dissent by calling him home to Basel, where he would be "resocialised".⁸⁴ Again and again the missionary evaded and postponed this journey,⁸⁵ and it was not before 1872 that, together with his family, he left Odumase for Europe. When he returned to the Gold Coast he was appointed to a different station. Unfortunately his health deteriorated rapidly and a few years later he passed away. Zimmermann is revered in Krobo to this very day and has become a symbol for a positive and sympathetic European involvement in Africa. The commemoration of this figure is a resource, which has again and again been mobilised to foster the Krobo States' foreign relations and promote development projects.⁸⁶

The five years before Zimmermann's departure were marked by a probe into the Odumase mission as it had been run and shaped by Zimmermann. It started with the dismissal of Catechist Peter Nyarko. Ever since his baptism in 1856 there had been allegations that he was carrying on his relationship with Akoa, the un-baptised daughter of

⁸⁰ Miller 1994: 134.

⁸¹ This was part of Zimmermann's vision of a self-sustained mission *cum* colonisation (Schlatter 1917: 87).

⁸² In the German original: "Zimmermann ist der alte Vielleser, Vielredner und Vielschreiber." This view was expressed by missionaries Mader and Schrenk at a conference held at Odumase in October 1868 (BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, GKA 36, General Konferenz Ausschuss, Odumase 16.10.1868).

⁸³ BMA D-1.15 Afrika 1863, Teil 2, Odumase 11, Widmann, Odumase 01.06.1863, p. 13.

⁸⁴ Miller 1994: 137-138.

⁸⁵ BMA D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 3, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.05.1868?; D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 4, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 26.01.1871.

⁸⁶ For instance when I led a group of Swiss theologians on a study trip to Ghana in August 2004, we visitors were proudly shown a statue of Zimmermann housed at the former mission house and Zimmermann's name was mentioned countless times on that day (see also Odzawo 2004).

Presbyter Nathanael Lawer. These allegations were never substantiated and were in fact silenced when Odonkor Azu married Akoa to Peter's brother Jacob Lawer. As if this was not enough, Presbyter Nathanael Lawer's Christian son Andreas was also disciplined for adultery. In the same letter, in which he reported this news, Missionary Zimmermann also mentioned that he and Missionary Roes had discussed whether a new girls' school should be built on a hill outside Odumase.⁸⁷ They argued that the Odumase station was too small, as the main building had never received its second storey. According to Zimmermann it was not even suitable for an African colleague. The location of the station at the centre of the settlement made for cramped conditions and much exposure to the trade going on there. Further the proximity to the "heathen activities" made it entirely unsuitable for higher education. Zimmermann proposed that the present mission house should accommodate an African pastor and a teacher, while the missionaries should live on the premises of the new girls' school. This proposal, as well as the news of Peter Nyarko's bigamy, received scathing comments by Elias Schrenk and Johannes Mader. It is evident that for these missionaries, Zimmermann's disclosure provided an opportunity to settle an account with their dissenting colleague.⁸⁸ In March 1867 the Basel missionaries on the Gold coast had elected Zimmermann as president of the Ga mission district and had relegated his colleague Elias Schrenk to the position of vice-president.⁸⁹ This vote was, of course, not accepted by the mission board and a second vote was held in November of the same year. As might be expected Schrenk won it, while Zimmermann was relegated to the last position.⁹⁰ The news from Odumase enticed Schrenk to take advantage of his office, and to ask how it had come that the situation of the Odumase station was so entirely inappropriate, and why Zimmermann thought that two European missionaries were necessary to run it. (Roes had asked for a transfer due to ill health). Schrenk provocatively volunteered to replace Zimmermann and run the station together with two catechists. Even more revealing was Mader's comment, who commented on Peter Nyarko's case: "Regarding Zimmermann it is his great love for the Negro, which has to be considered both the ground and the excuse for [his deeds]".⁹¹

A commission was called to probe into the Odumase affairs. It met in October 1868. In a first step the location of the station was discussed. As an alternative it was proposed

⁸⁷ BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 1, Odumase 3, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 07.04.1868, pp. 2-3 and 6-7.

⁸⁸ In August 1868 Zimmermann again won a vote, this time for the presidency of the Ga mission district and now it was he himself who did not accept the office.

⁸⁹ BMA D-1.19a Afrika 1867, Teil 1, GKA 6, Widmann, Akropong 20.03.1867; D-10.2,2 *Schulwesen auf der Goldküste*, Minutes of the general conference held at Akropong 06.03.1867-07.03.1867, p. 8.

⁹⁰ BMA D-1.19a Afrika 1867, Teil 1, GKA 21, 06.11.1867.

⁹¹ In the German original: "Im Falle Zimmermanns muss seine grosse Liebe zu den Negern als Ent- und Beschuldigung seiner selbst angesehen werden" (BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, Odumase 5, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 08.05.1868, with enclosed commentaries by Elias Schrenk and Johann Mader, Christiansborg 13.05.1868).

to relegate it to the position of an outstation and to erect a new main station on the River Volta at Dauromadam or in the town of the Yilo *konô* at Sra. In view of the problems with Chief Sakite that would have resulted, it was decided to maintain Odumase. The idea of building a new school on the hill top was equally dismissed and instead the extension of the existing station was decided upon. At long last the buildings were to receive their second storey and a separate chapel was to be built, which could also serve as school premises. The land where it was to be built had been bestowed to the mission by the late Odonkor Azu.⁹² The next issue was connected to Peter Nyarko's dismissal. While the latter was undisputed it directed the commission's attention to Presbyter Nathanael Lawer, whose un-baptised daughter Akoa was involved in this affair. Moreover, his son Andrew Mate had had intercourse with the widow of the late catechist Kwatei and his Christian daughter Salome Afua also "had fallen" with George Thompson. The latter was a stepson of Johannes Zimmermann, who was thus at least partially held responsible. While these "sins" were enough to have the presbyter step back, there was more to it than that. On the one hand Schrenk suspected Zimmermann to have covered Peter Nyarko and to have lied to his fellow missionaries. On the other hand Salome Afua's fall from grace was particularly painful to the missionary project at Odumase. Salome had not done *dipo* and would have been the first Krobo woman to enter a Christian marriage. Her example would have been important in challenging *dipo*. Her fall had the contrary effect. She had covered herself with shame both in the eyes of the missionaries and of the Krobo. It was decided to protect and support her. Her father, who was such an influential person at the chief's court and crucial for the mission, had to go. Finally it was deliberated whether Zimmermann should be transferred to another station as proposed by Schrenk. This was declined because Zimmermann had political influence: like Odonkor Azu, Chief Sakite also came for his advice. Second, the experienced missionary was an old hand in Krobo affairs; and third, the problems would have been the same at a different station. It was therefore decided that a missionary with an equally strong personality be stationed at Odumase; someone who could more easily check on Zimmermann.⁹³

Various missionaries were put in charge of this task. The frequent changes are revelatory of the tense atmosphere at Odumase in the last years of Zimmermann's presence there. The first such companion was Missionary Gottlieb Laissle, who was responsible for the construction work carried out in the years 1869 and 1870. Once the buildings had been completed he was replaced by the missionaries Johann Jakob Weber and Mr and Mrs Klaiber in 1870. Never had the Odumase station been equipped with such a massive missionary force. However, instead of the anticipated turn-around, a dead-lock occurred when on 7 May 1871 Mrs Rosine Klaiber died "of a not yet entirely defined illness", as

⁹² BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, Odumase 15, Odumase Untersuchungskommission, Odumase 15.10.1868; Odumase Presbyterian Church Archives, Indenture Book, Odumase 17.05.1869.

⁹³ BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, GKA 36, Odumase, 16.10.1868.

her husband remarked.⁹⁴ Matthias Klaiber suspected that Mrs Mulgrave-Zimmermann had poisoned her colleague and Weber was ready to agree. As far as he was concerned, Weber thought that Johannes Zimmermann had embezzled funds. Luckily this witch-hunt, which had resulted from what must have been an extremely tense situation at Odumase, was stopped by the then senior missionary on the Gold Coast, Adam Mader.⁹⁵ Other than the constellation of these different personalities, the peculiar history and situation of the Odumase station had contributed to this drama. Again it was the location of the station in the midst of the 'heathen' town which challenged those missionaries who, unlike Zimmermann, were used to a more detached mode of living with the host communities. Heathen Africa was perceived as uncanny and threatening and Zimmermann was, *qua* his marriage with an African, considered to be part of this world.⁹⁶ The works for the extension of the station kept dragging on and suffered yet another setback when a thunderstorm destroyed one of the buildings shortly before its completion at the beginning of 1872.⁹⁷ Thus the idea of partially shifting the station and establishing a girls' school on a hilltop near Odumase came up again. Both the Odumase station and the conference of the Gold Coast missionaries supported this proposition, raised by Carl Schönfeld, the new missionary in charge of Odumase. The latter argued that the unfortunate situation of the present station right on the main road and in proximity of the palm wine market, the dance and palaver ground, rendered a meaningful girls' education impossible. The Krobo, he said, grow up "like beasts" and a new breed of Krobo women would only emerge once a fully separated girls' institution had been built on a hilltop.⁹⁸ This negative perception which resulted from the missionaries' frustration over the difficulties they encountered in their work at Odumase was also reflected in their views of Krobo economic enterprise. Ga-evangelist Paul Mohenu commented that the Krobo were rich and satisfied. Their mind was preoccupied with the extension of their farmland, oil, offspring, and money.⁹⁹ In view of the newly built chapel and other expenses incurred in the extension of the Odumase station, the mission board once more did not agree to this proposition.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, after the depar-

⁹⁴ PCA/5/7 Census Book Odumase 1859 [-1874], note by Matthias Klaiber containing the details of the late Rosine Klaiber, date 07.05.1871 or thereabout.

⁹⁵ BMA D-10.78,2 Documents relating to the death of Mrs Rosine Klaiber at Odumase on 7 May 1871, Minutes of meeting held at Odumase 31.05.1871-01.06.1871.

⁹⁶ This supports the point made by Miller (1994: 132), that even Christian Africans were not to be familiarised with and were categorically *othered* by the mission's regulations.

⁹⁷ BMA D-1.24 Afrika 1872, Odumase 174, M. Klaiber, Odumase 06.03.1872, p. 2.

⁹⁸ BMA D-1.24 Afrika 1872, Odumase 177, Carl Schönfeld, Odumase 10.04.1872; D-1.24 Afrika 1872, Odumase 178, Carl Schönfeld, Odumase 10.04.1872, Minutes of the Odumase conference. As late as 1916 Missionary Erhardt brought up the idea for a school on Menekpo Hill again. Due to the deportation of the Basel Missionaries, it was only fulfilled in 1927 by the missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland, when Chief Emanuel Mate Kole brought the idea up again (Odjidja 1977: vii-viii; BMA D-3.9 Quartalsberichte 1915-17, VII, 4, W. Erhardt, Odumase 16.08.1916, pp. 1-2).

⁹⁹ BMA D-1.25 Afrika 1873, Odumase 14, C. Schönfeld, Odumase 31.12.1873, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁰ BMA D-1.25 Afrika 1873, Odumase 1, M. Klaiber, Odumase 09.03.1873.

ture of the Zimmermann-Mulgrave family from Odumase in April 1872, the Schönfelds applied themselves with energy to the running of the station with a special emphasis on girls' education.¹⁰¹

4.2.2 REPERCUSSIONS II – ROYAL CATECHISTS

In addition to the problematic location of the station at the centre of the town, Zimmermann's successors inherited a number of other problems specific to the Krobo mission. One of them resulted from the same intimacy of chieftaincy and mission that had brought about its proximity to the seat of power: It was the royal descent of the first generations of Krobo catechists. Three of the four pioneers were sons of Odonkor Azu and the fourth, Solomon Kodjiku, was the grandchild of Odonkor Azu's senior brother and intended successor Kofitsâ. As stated above Odonkor Azu saw to it, that nobody who had an immediate claim to his succession converted. Yet, the four catechists all had a stake in the chieftaincy and valued this interest as highly, to say the least, as their calling as evangelists. This point is supported by the fact that it took a full fifty years before the first Krobo reverend minister could be ordained. This was Revd Andrew Saki, a grandson of Nathanael Lawer.¹⁰² The following section portrays the four first Krobo catechists and illustrates how they pursued their interests as royals against the expected behaviour and the limited space the mission's regulations imposed on them.

NOA AKUNOR AGWAE AZU – “PRINCE OF HISTORICAL SONGS”

On 28 June 1917 Noa Akunor Agwae Azu, the oldest employee of the Basel Mission in Krobo, died at the age of eighty-four (see Fig. 4.5, centre). He had served the mission as a catechist during thirty-six years at Christiansborg, Tamatoku, Sukpe-Tefle near Ada, and Kpemo in Yilo Krobo. Unlike most of his colleagues he had never been dismissed. Much in the same way his marriage with Dorothea Kwakuele Reinhold of Osu was marked by fidelity. It was blessed with fourteen children, nine of whom were alive at the time of their father's death. According to Missionary Erhardt it was the good example that Noa (and Dorothea) set with this faithful family life, and his longstanding loyalty as a catechist, that had to be valued as his main contribution to the evangelisation of the Krobo. His Christian life was marked by duty and obedience rather than piety and passion. From the missionary's standpoint Noa Azu's weakness was that he valued his royal family and origins more highly than he did his Christian faith. This was reflected in the fact that after his retirement he was neither elected as a presbyter of the local congregation, nor was he invited to preach. His funeral illustrated the important role that his royal descent had played in his life. It was a most elaborate affair organised by his eldest son, the civil servant Paul Azu. Paul was not a member of the Odumase congregation and therefore the missionaries were all the more amazed by his wish

¹⁰¹ This is partially detailed in Steegstra (2004: 104-109).

¹⁰² BMA D-1.95 Goldküste 1910, Odumase 11, G. Josenhans, Odumase 31.08.1910, p. 1.

to have the coffin brought into church during the service. This was not done in Basel Mission congregations at the time – at least not in Odumase Krobo – and therefore the request was denied. The coffin was most expensive and elaborate; and apparently elicited the intended admiration. When carrying it to the graveside the pallbearers walked extremely slowly and stopped repeatedly, as it was done with noblemen. The widow struck up lamentations befitting a royal and when the wailing women seemed to tire she would exhort them by crying “Bemoan the king’s son! Bemoan the king’s son!” When on the next morning guns were fired at the compound of the deceased and the paramount chief’s *obonu* drums were sounded, accompanied with dances in honour of a chief, the funeral was definitely lost for the Christian congregation.¹⁰³ Noa Azu’s royal ambitions are further manifest in his *Adangbe (Adangme) History* and his *Adangbe Historical and Proverbial Songs*. The two manuscripts in the Ga language were translated into English and published by his son Enoch Azu in the late 1920s.¹⁰⁴ As a young man Noa had been trained as a priest of the war god *aku* and was a member of the *agbaa*. He was renowned for his knowledge of klama songs and folk lore and was called Klama Osei – the prince of historical songs.¹⁰⁵ This means, that he also was knowledgeable as an herbalist, and oral tradition asserts that he put these skills to great use during his career as a mission worker.¹⁰⁶ His collection of proverbial songs contains much of this secret knowledge. Together with the history it was to assert the scholar’s status as a royal and to reinscribe him into the history of the Krobo.

In the *Adangbe (Adangme) History* this was done in the context of the 1974 Asante Campaign: In October 1873 the chiefs of the eastern districts were called to Accra, where they were asked to join in the campaign against Asante and Anlo. Due to an intrigue instigated amongst others by Yilo Krobo *konô* Noi, Chief Sakite was accused of siding with the Akwamu. A fight ensued and Sakite was placed under preventive detention at the fort. Noa Agwae Azu happened to visit Odumase when the news arrived. Krobo warriors prepared to march on Accra, but Missionary Schönfeld dissuaded them from rushing things. The catechist went to see Captain Glover in Accra. He successfully mediated and proved his brother’s innocence, pointing out to Captain Glover that there had been a conspiracy against the Manya Krobo chief. While Sakite joined the campaign, Noa Agwae Azu was asked to return to Odumase, rally some five-hundred warriors, and march them to Ada. In his *Adangbe (Adangme) History* Azu elaborates in detail

¹⁰³ The widow and the younger son Catechist Enoch Azu risked to lose their pensions for these trespasses (BMA D-3.9 Quartalsberichte 1915-17, VII, No. 6, W. Erhardt, Odumase 21.07.1917, *Nekrolog für Noa Agwae*).

¹⁰⁴ Azu 1929a. It seems that a substantial part of the Ga and English translations of the proverbs go back to notes taken by Missionary Erhardt. The latter was principle at the Bana Boys’ Boarding School at the time Enoch Azu worked there as a teacher. Together they had been working on the translation of Noa Agwae Azu’s manuscript. Erhardt took two of Noa’s notebooks with about three-hundred further proverbs to Germany and these are not contained in the publication (BMA BV 1380, W. Erhardt to Inspector Huppenbauer, Karlsruhe 04.02.1937).

¹⁰⁵ Azu 1929b: iii.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Jonathan Padi, Accra, 25.05.1999.

on the exploits and bravery of the Krobo force and their cunning.¹⁰⁷ While these details cannot be substantiated by the missionaries' reports, the latter do support the general narrative. During the years 1873 and 1874 Noa absented himself repeatedly from his mission post on the lower Volta and replaced his absent brother at Odumase. Much to the missionaries' regret he neither cared to attend church services during these sojourns, nor did he provide pastoral care to the troops when he called on them in the camp. His superior at Ada, Missionary Simonet, complained that Noa would rather practice his shooting skills than keep to his weekly schedule.¹⁰⁸ This period was indeed a time, when Noa Agwae Azu's ambitions and obligations as a royal lead to repeated conflict with his superiors. Thanks to the diplomatic skills of veteran Missionary Widmann, who urged that a seasoned catechist like Noa had to be treated with leniency,¹⁰⁹ Noa stayed on. In October 1887 he was finally transferred to Kpemo in Yilo Krobo, after having spent most of his career at remote places on the lower Volta.¹¹⁰ Together with his brothers Christian Akutei and Akute Azu he fought in vain for the succession to Chief Sakite in 1892. During his last years at Kpemo he enjoyed much respect, both due to his age and his royal descent. Yet, increasingly the limits of his training and of his health showed and in 1899 he retired against his will.¹¹¹

TEACHER NYARKO – A MACHIAVELLIAN CHARACTER?

The fate of the Manya Krobo paramountcy and of the town of Odumase was up to the turn of the century largely determined by Noa Agwae Azu's brother, the ex-catechist Peter Nyarko (Fig. 4.6). They had been baptized and trained together. At the time the two brothers left the Akropong Training Institute, Peter was rated to be the brighter scholar, albeit of equally rudimentary training.¹¹² Unlike his brother he had the chance of being appointed to Odumase in 1865 after a brief spell at other stations such as Ada.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Azu 1929a: 66-72.

¹⁰⁸ BMA D-1.26 Afrika 1874, Ada 230, Stationsausschuss, Ada 02.01.1874. Shooting skills play an important role in Azu's account of the events on the lower Volta (1929a: 70). When Noa Agwae Azu was transferred to Sukpe, he shot fifty-six crocodiles within eighteen months. These were sacred animals in Sukpe and thus Noa's exploits not only testified to his capability as a hunter, but were also part of an effort to demonstrate the vanity of the worship of these animals (BMA D-1.33 Afrika 1881, Odumase 127, R. Furrer, Odumase 01.10.1881, p. 7).

¹⁰⁹ BMA D-1.26 Afrika 1874, Ada 231, Generalkonferenzsausschuss 20.01.1874.

¹¹⁰ BMA D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 161, J. Kopp, Odumase 10.02.1888, p. 11.

¹¹¹ BMA D-1.70 Afrika 1899, Odumase 202, Christian Kölle, Odumase 12.02.1900, p. 5.

¹¹² BMA D-3.9 Quartalsberichte 1915-17, VII, No. 6, W. Erhardt, Odumase 21.07.1917, *Nekrolog für Noa Agwae*, p. 1; D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 18a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 10.01.1866, p. 7.

¹¹³ Oral tradition as remembered by the Nyarko family and published by Odjidja (1973: 49-50) has Peter Nyarko serving as a loyal catechist up to the year 1892 and portrays him as a torch-bearer of Christianity in Krobo. This is not supported by evidence from the Basel Mission (see above) and Odumase Presbyterian Church Records. The latter only list Peter Nyarko as a communicant from September 1863 to June 1868 (PCA5/7 Kirchenbuch der evangelischen Missionsstation Odumase; BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Akropong 57a, Adam Mader, Akropong 25.09.1865, p. 13).

Nyarko's career as a catechist at Odumase was short. In 1867 he was accused of maintaining a relationship with Akoa, the daughter of Presbyter Nathanael Lawer. Nyarko and Akoa had been promised to each other from childhood on. Their intended cross-cousin marriage was to foster the bonds between the two founding families of Odumase. It replicated the intermarriage between Nathanael Lawer and Mary Koko, a daughter of Odonkor Azu. This arrangement was thwarted when Nyarko converted, as at that point he was already married to another woman by name of Natekwo (later baptised as Catherine, from Odumase Adome). Thus his baptism made it impossible to finalise the marriage arranged with Akoa. As at least part of the customary rites had already been performed, Akoa no longer belonged to her father's household but to Odonkor Azu's family. The latter refused to give up the rights over her and eventually married her to his son Jacob Lawer.¹¹⁴ A first examination of the affair resulted with Peter's acquittal. The allegations, it seemed, had been made up by somebody, who had himself had sexual intercourse with Akoa and wanted to divert the attention from himself.¹¹⁵ Yet, the rumours did not stop and in June 1868 the affair was gone into again. It came out that Peter Nyarko had indeed maintained a relationship with Akoa and consequently he was dismissed soon after his father's death.

At that time Peter Nyarko was already considered to be the most respected and politically influential man at Odumase.¹¹⁶ The designated successor to Odonkor Azu, his half-brother Kofitsã, had died in 1865 and it seems that Nyarko was influential in ensuring the *enstoolment* of his senior brother Sakite as successor to the late chief.¹¹⁷ He became the principal councillor of his brother and as a scholar held a powerful middleman position mediating between the colonial government and the Manya Krobo state. Already during the Krobo Rebellion of 1858 he had acted as a messenger and informer and when during the palm oil boycott his father was imprisoned at Accra, he wrote to the governor in his favour.¹¹⁸ During Sakite's reign he was the writer and, even more important, the author of a number of petitions to the government.¹¹⁹ In most of the treaties

¹¹⁴ BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, Odumase 14, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.10.1868.

¹¹⁵ BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867, Teil 2, Odumase 4, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 03.05.1867, pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁶ BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, Odumase 14, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.10.1868.

¹¹⁷ Unfortunately there is no further information on who this Kofitsã was. Like Odonkor Azu he was an old friend of the mission, who attended church service regularly. Only on one occasion did the mission fight with him bitterly over the conversion of his slave Christian Tete. Kofitsã was in this case supported by Odonkor Azu (BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase 18a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 10.01.1866, p. 2; D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase No. 26a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 03.01.1865, pp. 9-10).

¹¹⁸ BMA D-10.34,5 Obobi Diary, Odumase 29.12.1857-???.1858?, p. 46; D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Abokobi No. 22, C. F. Aldinger, 05.10.1858, p. 7; D-1.13b Afrika 1862, Teil 2, Odumase No. 10a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 06.05.1862, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs 2677A/84, Petition by Peter Nyako and others to his Excellency William A.G. Younge, Odumase 28.11.1884; Ibid. Petition by Emanuel Mate Kole, Peter Nyarko and others, Odumase 28.08.1899.

his brother signed, Nyarko signed as a witness.¹²⁰ This acquaintance with Government and his position at the centre of Odumase affairs eventually allowed him to promote the *enstoolment* of his own son Emanuel Mate Kole as paramount chief in 1892. The family of Noa Agwae Azu and those parts of the family living at Agomanya (probably Djebiam Agbom) opposed this nomination of a grandchild of Odonkor Azu, as at that time several of his sons were still alive.¹²¹ This opposition led Peter Nyarko to call in twelve policemen to ensure the peace during the funeral of Chief Sakite and later the Governor himself assured the *enstoolment* of Mate Kole.¹²² During the young chief's early reign his father kept the reins on the chieftaincy so tight that Government on several occasions felt compelled to remind him, that it was his son who was the chief.¹²³



Fig. 4.5 (left): "The three oldest Christians in Odumase."
From left to right (with their approximate age for 1911): Solomon Kodjiku (65), Noa Akunor Agwae Azu (79) and Christian Akutei Azu (69). Picture by W. Erhardt, date 1910-1912. BMA D-30.06.032.

Fig. 4.6 (right): "Peter Nyarko."
Picture reproduced from Odjidja (1973: 51). Suggested date 1870-1880.

In the perception of the Basel Missionaries, Peter Nyarko became a bitter enemy. In many reports he is presented as a kind of Machiavelli striving for power through intrigues. The mission was not often his partner of choice, as it had been in his father Odonkor Azu's times. In order to boost the chieftaincy of his brother he rather tapped

¹²⁰ See for instance ADM 11/1/1727 Collection of Treaties with Native Chiefs and c. on the West Coast of Africa, African No. 441, Odumase 15.06.1874.

¹²¹ GNA ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 12, Governor Griffith to DC Williams, Aburi 30.03.1892 concerning a letter by Akute Azu, Noah Agwayi [sic] Azu, Christian Tei Azu, Asom Azu and Abraham Nyako Azu, dated 23.03.1892; NP 13/1 The Gold Coast Chronicle, 28.05.1892, p. 3.

¹²² GNA ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 10 and 11, Griffith to DC Williams, Aburi 30.03.1892.

¹²³ BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 130, G. Jaeger, Odumase 14.02.1893, p. 4.

into the traditions of the neighbouring Akan states and relied on collaboration with the colonial power (see chapter sections 5.4 and 5.5). The frustration of the missionaries is easily understood when considering that Nyarko soon took further wives and in the end was said to be married to eighteen women. This of course had something to do with his position as the head of the family. Many of these women were widows, whom he inherited from deceased brothers. Yet he was also said to be a great womaniser. While in the eyes of the missionaries and of the hard core of the congregation he thus lived as a heathen,¹²⁴ the Krobo will have seen him as a Christian, whereby the mission's efforts were undermined. This is reflected in a number of reports by Basel Missionaries. Peter Nyarko asked on several occasions to be readmitted, but as he was living in polygamy this was not possible. Even on his deathbed his wish could not be fulfilled, as Nyarko still refused to dismiss his wives.¹²⁵ When he died on 22 January 1904 he thus could not be buried in the Christian cemetery. In order to avoid the disgrace of having the well known "Teacher Nyarko" interred at the 'heathen' cemetery, his son Chief Emanuel Mate Kole laid him to rest in his own garden, where he intended to build a mausoleum.¹²⁶

CHRISTIAN AKUTEI AZU – THE FIRST KROBO TO BE BAPTISED

While Peter Nyarko and Noa Agwae Azu converted and received their training when they were already adults, Christian Akutei Azu (see Fig. 4.5, right) was a boy of thirteen years when he was entrusted to Missionary Zimmermann by his father Odonkor Azu. The missionary took Akutei to Christiansborg as his houseboy. This was not the first time the small boy went to the coast. He had been at Accra twice and mastered the Ga language. By 1867, at the age of about twenty-five, Akutei had completed his training as a catechist and was appointed to Ada. Barely two years later he apparently wished to be transferred to Odumase, which request was not granted.¹²⁷ Yet, shortly thereafter he was dismissed for having had intercourse with a young Anlo woman called Maleki and returned to Odumase. Missionary Laissle observed that like his equally dismissed brother Peter Nyarko and Andrew Mate he sought to make good for his sins by actively supporting the mission. Together they helped stop a dance that was held right in front of the mission house. Whereas the newly enstooled Chief Sakite and his elders had not managed to check the "bad boys and wild women and girls", the three dismissed Christians succeeded. Laissle was amazed by the authority they enjoyed.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ BMA D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 159, Kopp, Odumase, 06.09.1887, p. 4

¹²⁵ BMA D-1.32 Afrika 1880, Odumase 70, Weiss, Odumase ???.1881, Yearly Report for the Girls' School, p. 2; D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 167, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 10.02.1904, p. 12; D-3.9 Quartalsberichte 1915-17, suggested author: Friedrich Renz, suggested date: after 1916, *Züge des Heidentums im Krobolande*, p. 40.

¹²⁶ BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 167, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 19.02.1904; D-1.80 Afrika 1904, Odumase 133, G. Josenhans, Odumase 24.01.1905, pp. 17-18.

¹²⁷ BMA D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 2, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 12.04.1867.

¹²⁸ BMA D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 7, Gottlieb Laissle, Odumase 04.07.1869, p. 4.

When Christian Akutei Azu came to Odumase in 1869 the young Anlo woman Maleki came with him. She was baptised in the name Theodora and the two were married soon after.¹²⁹ The marriage allowed Christian Azu eventually to find his way back into the congregation, and consequently he is listed together with his wife among the communicants of the year 1870. Yet, when their son John Odonkor (born 9 May 1875) was baptised in June 1875, the father was under church discipline again. The Basel Mission report for that year stated, that the case of Christian Akutei (like those of Peter Nyarko and Andrew Mate) was hopeless. His family was renowned for its prowess in the adherence to customs (vide the worship of the family deity *aku* mentioned above) and Akutei was repeatedly charged of dealing with slaves and treating them badly.¹³⁰ Furthermore, against Maleki's protestations Akutei soon took another wife Merya from Krobo. Akutei and Merya left for Salaga, apparently in order to purchase slaves. Meanwhile Maleki fell ill and returned to her father's family in Ada together with her children. Akutei's new liaison remained childless, and Merya's family provided Akutei with another wife by name Mamle. Incidentally (or was it on purpose?) she was baptised in the same Christian name as Akutei's first wife Maleki, namely Theodora.¹³¹ The question of having children with a true Krobo woman from the Djebiam Nam clan was crucial if Akutei wanted to pursue his royal pretensions. Christian Akutei Azu was briefly reaccepted as a communicant in his late years between 1910 and 1916, but was dismissed again for swearing oaths at the chief's court. Akutei died, still under church discipline, in 1919.

When Missionary Laissle commented in 1869 on the influence of Peter Nyarko and Christian Azu, he did not realise, that it resulted from their political involvement in Krobo at that time. Their brother Chief Sakite was not yet fully in office and on some occasions, for example in entreaties with the Asante, Peter Nyarko and Christian Azu spoke for Manya Krobo.¹³² The family tradition of the Akute Azu family has it, that Christian Akutei Azu had been destined by his late father to succeed him. According to this tradition Chief Sakite was chosen because the missionaries had dissuaded the elders from electing their newly trained catechist. Sakite was enstooled under the proviso that

¹²⁹ PCA/5/7 Kirchenbuch der evangelischen Missionsstation Odumase.

¹³⁰ BMA D-1.27 Afrika 1875, Odumase 148, C. Schönfeld, Odumase ???.1876, p. 6; D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 1, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 24.02.1870, pp. 1-4. Christian Akutei Azu's name appears repeatedly in court cases involving slaves or former slaves (see for instance ADM 31/4/22 Criminal Record Book Akuse, 03.08.1888(?), p. 309, Theodore Azzu vs. Abeho).

¹³¹ MKTSA Odumase Traditional Court Records 1922-1924, Odumase 05.08.1922, John Odonkor Azu vs. Patrick Mate, Statement by John Odonkor Azu pp. 14-18. The family tradition as published by Odjidja (1973: 46-47) remains silent on Akutei's first and second wives and remembers him "as an outstanding scholar and foundation member of the church, but also a gifted Teacher/Catechist, a true friend and father of many". In Azu's *Adangbe (Adangme) History* yet further aspects of Christian Tei's career come to the fore, in that his role as a war leader in the 1874 Asante Campaign is highlighted (Azu 1929: 74-75).

¹³² BMA D-1.21b Afrika II, Odumase 5, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 30.06.1869, p. 2. Christian Akutei Azu also defended his brother Sakite when the latter was questioned by Government regarding his lack of loyalty to the Government. BMA D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 10a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.10.1870, p. 9.

the stool might revert to Christian Akutei Azu for his elder brother Akute later on.¹³³ This tradition, however, is disputed by the Nyarko and Sakite branch of the Odonkor Azu family. And indeed, Nyarko was successful in backing his elder brother Sakite and in maintaining the paramountcy in his family. In the late 1880s the Nyarko family managed to win a court case over a piece of land near Akosombo, which was considered to belong to the stool, and which Christian Akutei Azu claimed to have inherited from Odonkor Azu. The land was a token for the paramountcy and by securing the rights over the land Nyarko further stabilised the succession to the paramountcy in his family.¹³⁴ Nonetheless, the Akute Azu family did claim their right to succession when Chief Sakite died (see above) and it has kept litigating for it to the present day.¹³⁵ Towards the end of Chief Sakite's reign Christian Akutei Azu sought to manoeuvre himself into the game for the succession again, by petitioning the government to abolish the war deities and the girls' initiation.¹³⁶ This letter was not only intended to bring the petitioner's name to the attention of government and to present him as an interesting partner for a civilising mission. It was foremost to discredit those presently in power, i.e. Chief Sakite and his brother Peter Nyarko. This war between Akutei and Nyarko was fought on many front lines. Its dimensions become apparent in a case of March 1891, in which Peter Nyarko sued Christian Akutei Azu for defamation. The latter had accused Peter Nyarko's grandson of having broken certain things in his possession. The discrepancy between the insignificance of the offence and the harshness of the resulting judgment speaks for itself. Plaintiff and defendant had to sign a bond with £25 to keep the peace.¹³⁷ During Chief Sakite's burial on 30 January 1892 Akutei equally proved himself of assistance to the government by helping District Commissioner Williams, when the latter was attacked by an angry mob and felt that the influential Peter Nyarko had done nothing to protect him.¹³⁸ Yet, in the end Peter Nyarko left the battle victorious and had his son Emanuel Mate Kole enstooled. The continuing opposition and efforts by the Akute family to discredit Peter Nyarko and Emanuel Mate Kole were silenced by the government, which bound them to keep the peace and threatened with their deportation.¹³⁹

¹³³ Azu 1929: 61-63.

¹³⁴ BMA D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 142, G. Jaeger, Odumase 27.03.1893, pp. 1-3; Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 87.

¹³⁵ "Absentee chiefs banned at Krobo." In: *GRI Press Review* (source: *The Ghanaian Chronicle*), 04.11.2002.

¹³⁶ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.263/90, Letter by Christian Akutei Azu, 01.09.1890.

¹³⁷ GNA ADM 31/4/23 Criminal Record Book Akuse, 11.03.1891, pp. 392-400.

¹³⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf.263/90, Letter by Christian Akutei Azu, 01.09.1890; ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute, Case No. 14/92 Threatened disturbances at Odumasi in consequence of the death of King Sakite (apparently misplaced), DC Williams to Colonial Secretary, Akuse 31.01.1892.

¹³⁹ BMA D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 142, G. Jaeger, Odumase 27.03.1893, p. 3.

SOLOMON KODJIKU – ROYAL AND PRESBYTER

The failure of the parties involved in the succession to Chief Sakite to come together and find a compromise resulted in a deep rift in the town of Odumase and in the Christian congregation. The mission had had high hopes in the election of a Christian chief. Yet, being critical of Peter Nyarko's actions, it doubted that the election of Emanuel Mate Kole was correct. This view was shared by a large part of the congregation. Peter Nyarko, who was often criticised for his contraventions against the Christian code of conduct, considered the missionaries to support his opponents, the Akute Azu family. The repeated efforts by the missionaries to mediate between the two parties thus failed for their assumed partiality.¹⁴⁰ Besides Noa Agwae Azu of the Akute family, the Odumase station's staff had another vocal member of the royal family amongst its employees, who took the side of Peter Nyarko and Emanuel Mate Kole. Understandably this opposition within the staff was the source of many problems.¹⁴¹ Solomon Kodjiku (Fig. 4.5, left) was not a son of Odonkor Azu, but a grand-child of Odonkor Azu's senior brother. His parents were Nyarko and Korleki. His early years as a catechist saw him working in Odumase and Sra, always in proximity to the palace. During the year 1874 he was very active at the palace and frequently acted for Chief Sakite. The yearly report of the Odumase station for that year remarked that the catechist no longer worked satisfactorily. "He [Kodjiku] has to be pushed to do his work and mixes in other people's quarrels. As a Krobo he should neither be employed in his hometown, nor can he be employed at Sra due to the competition between the two royal houses."¹⁴² The report for the next year in a similar vein complained about his lethargy and disobedience. Schönfeld thought a transfer to Sra, where he could work on its own, would do him good. Instead Kodjiku asked for his dismissal. His elder brother had died and now it was his turn to take on the office of the "Chief of the family". He had to be closer to the family house and being in charge of his late brother's children his salary was no longer sufficient.¹⁴³ When he joined the mission again in 1883, he explained that his dismissal had in part also been due to tensions between Missionary Schönfeld and himself. During these years Kodjiku had stayed at Odumase, had concentrated on farming and had proven himself loyal and cooperative.¹⁴⁴ His new job saw him working mainly as an itinerant preacher visiting the up-country.¹⁴⁵ This was an interesting job, as it allowed close monitoring of the purchase of new *huzas* and perhaps allowed him to join in the deal. In

¹⁴⁰ BMA D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 142, G. Jaeger, Odumase 27.03.1893, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 130, G. Jaeger, Odumase 14.02.1893, p. 5.

¹⁴² BMA D-1.26 Afrika 1874, Odumase 229, Carl Schönfeld, Odumase ???.1875, Report for 1874, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴³ BMA D-1.27 Afrika 1875, Odumase 148, Carl Schönfeld, Odumase ???.1875, Report for 1875, p. 5; D-1.28 Afrika 1876, Odumase 132, Carl Schönfeld and Johannes Kopp, 18.04.1876, pp. 1-5

¹⁴⁴ BMA D-1.37 Afrika 1883, Odumase 77, Salomon Kodsiku, Odumase ???.04.1883, Petition for re-employment; D-1.37 Afrika 1883, Odumase 78, Odumase Station, Odumase 08.05.1883, Assessment re Kodsiku's petition.

¹⁴⁵ BMA D-1.37 Afrika 1883, Odumase 96, J. Weiss and J. Kopp, Odumase ???.02.1884, p. 5.

1892 his 'undue' interference in the succession almost brought about his removal to a Basel Mission station outside the Krobo territory.¹⁴⁶ But these happened to be the years, when the Odumase station 'discovered' the up-country. The next decade saw Kodjiku working at Obuadaso on Yilo territory. At times the missionaries complained that Kodjiku had too many side-jobs and of course he was once more instrumental for the paramount chief when in 1902, the Manya Krobo litigated with the Osudoku before the Supreme Court over a piece of land near Krobo Mountain. This cost him some of the sympathies he enjoyed at his workplace among Yilo Krobo farmers.¹⁴⁷ He retired in 1903 after 25 years of service and was the only one of the pioneering catechists who became a presbyter thereafter.¹⁴⁸ In this function he officiated until his death in 1918 and enjoyed great respect both at the palace and in Odumase in general.¹⁴⁹

A WIND OF CHANGE – LATER GENERATIONS OF CATECHISTS

The sons and nephews of Odonkor Azu dominated the fate of the Basel Mission in Krobo up to the early twentieth century. Yet, the four early catechists described above did not remain the only ones. Others, who have been left out here due to the lack of space, followed in their footsteps. Teacher Abraham Nyarko was a further son of Odonkor Azu who, like his brothers, had to be admonished to concentrate on his job rather than on politics.¹⁵⁰ He too, was opposed to the *enstoolment* of Mate Kole in 1892.¹⁵¹ Some preferred going into trade to joining the mission. This was the case of Emanuel B. Odonkor, who later became a catechist for a short time before returning to his former occupation.¹⁵² In 1884 he interfered in Krobo politics by alerting Government to the war cults and *dipo*.¹⁵³ Another Basel Mission scholar who went into trade was Thomas Harrison Odonkor. He became the first literate chief in Krobo when *konô* Sakite appointed him chief of Kpong. Odonkor received the nickname *officer* (corrupted into *pisa*) for the numerous services he rendered to government. Amongst other services, he worked as a guide and interpreter for District Commissioner Riby Williams and was a member of several government missions to the North (Salaga, Yendi), West (Kumasi, Sefwi, Bon-tuku), and East (the Anglo-German Boundary Commission). Thomas Odonkor was a

¹⁴⁶ BMA D-1.54 Goldküste 1891 Ga, Odumase 168, G. Josenhans, Odumase 10.03.1892, p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ GNA KD 31/6/490 Krobo Hill 1956, Nene Padi Akrobettoe III, Sra 10.05.1956, Petition re Deed of Conveyance dated 09.12.1892 etc. §§ 8-11; BMA D-1.76, Afrika 1902, Odumase 204, W. Erhardt, Odumase 14.02.1903, p. 11.

¹⁴⁸ BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 164, G. Josenhans, Odumase 03.02.1904, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ BMA D-11.1 Berichte Goldküste 1889-1924, No. 12, Wilhelm Erhardt, Beatenberg 10.06.1918, Final report for the Odumase station, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ BMA D-1.54 Goldküste 1891 Ga, Odumase 168, G. Josenhans, Odumase 10.03.1892, p. 10.

¹⁵¹ GNA ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 12, Governor Griffith to DC Williams, Aburi 30.03.1892 concerning a letter by Akute Azu, Noah Agwayi Azu, Christian Tei Azu, Asom Azu and Abraham Nyako Azu, dated 23.03.1892.

¹⁵² BMA D-1.44 Afrika 1886, Odumase 104, J. Kopp, Odumase 31.01.1887, pp. 2 and 7.

¹⁵³ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, letter by Emanuel B. Odonkor to His Excellency Governor W. A. G. Younge, Odumase 27.10.1884; *Ibid.*, entry on minute paper dated 16.12.1884.

grandson of Odonkor Azu on the maternal side, but as a son of Nathanael Lawer he had no direct stake in the Manya Krobo paramountcy. Nevertheless he became bitterly opposed to Emanuel Mate Kole, whose *enstoolment* he had at first supported. As the first educated chief in Krobo he had been an important partner to the colonial government and enjoyed a considerable authority and autonomy. When Mate Kole started to cut these liberties back in order to build up a monopoly of power, Thomas Odonkor chose to support any force opposing the paramount chief. In the end this led to his *destoolment* in 1913.¹⁵⁴ As Odonkor still enjoyed much influence at Kpong he was banned from there in 1915 and sent into exile to the up-country.¹⁵⁵ The paramount chief Emanuel Mate Kole himself, of course, was the most famous exponent of this generation of Basel Mission scholars, of which the missionaries felt, that their investment (training) was lost to the missionary project (on the scholars see section 4.4.3).

As for the catechists, the situation changed when a new generation, not directly related to the paramount chief and without royal ambitions, came to the fore. Andrew Saki was the first Krobo to be ordained as a minister by the Basel Mission. He came from the family of Nathanael Lawer. His ordination on 28 August 1910 heralded a new era: Finally the Krobo Mission had matured and no longer had to rely on 'foreign' ministers. "The time is near when Krobo will be in a position to send catechists to the Ga-country [and can compensate the work done by Ga-ministers in Krobo]."¹⁵⁶ Yet even more instrumental for the growth of the church and its emancipation from the paramountcy was Winfried Odjidja. He came from the Susui division. Already as a catechist he did not hesitate to challenge the senior presbyter and royal Solomon Kodjiku and thereby to make clear that the church had to break free from the shackles of the royal family.¹⁵⁷ Through the conversion of large parts of his family Odjidja contributed to the establishment of a more balanced distribution of Christianity in Manya Krobo. By the time the Basel Mission left he was the pastor in charge of Odumase and successfully assured the

¹⁵⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1726 and ADM 11/1/1774 Records of Chiefs 1888-1925, pp. 18-19 and 399-400.

¹⁵⁵ GNA ADM 11/1/604 Case 59/1915 Kpong Native Affairs, Order by Emanuel Mate Kole to Thomas Odonkor to leave Kpong within a month, dated October 1915. Thomas Odonkor stayed at Okterpolu up to his death in 1940. When ousting Thomas Odonkor, *Konô* Emanuel Mate Kole had stressed that Thomas Odonkor's ancestors on the male side came from Yilo Krobo Bunase. It is a tragic irony, that when Odonkor died, the succeeding *Konô* Fred Azzu Mate Kole II wanted him to be buried at Odumase in order to re-assert Chief Odonkor's historical importance and fame for Manya Krobo. Ironically and in accordance with the Yilo Krobo allegiance the late *konô* had imposed on Chief Odonkor, the Bunase Chief Agbe Tei came to bury Odonkor. The appearance of the messengers from Manya Krobo almost resulted in a fight. Only in the 1950s the Odonkor family reconciled with the *konô* (Interview with Peter P. Odonkor, Adabraka 18.05.1999).

¹⁵⁶ BMA D-1.95 Goldküste 1910, Odumase 11, G. Josenhans, Odumase 31.08.1910, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ BMA D-1.100 Goldküste 1913, GKA 72, G. Josenhans, Basel 26.01.1914; Odjidja 1973: 79-80. An autobiography by Odjidja on the occasion of his ordination is to be found at the Basel Mission archives (BMA D-3.6 Jahresberichte 1915, III Odumase, 6, W. A. Odjidja, 12.05.1914[?]).

transition of the mission church towards its more independent post-war status. This further contributed to his importance for the Presbyterian Church in Krobo.

Not less important was the 'barefooted evangelist' Andrew Padi. He and his colleague from Labadi, Jonas Nikoi, were the principal agents who brought the Gospel to the up-country. Having converted as adults they had received a limited formal training and were merely employed as assistant catechists. Yet they were fervent preachers capable of reaching the hearts of the people. With his skills as herbalist Andrew Padi was capable of catering to many needs. Prior to his conversion Andrew Padi had not only been an herbalist but also a "fetish man" of great repute. When he and his cousin converted, their family at Adjikpo Takper drove them away by shooting a gun after them, as it was done in the case of girls banned for failing in their *dipo*. They came to Odumase, where they were first hosted by Catechist Noa Agwae Azu and later found a new home at the newly founded Odumase *salem*.¹⁵⁸ Jonas Nikoi (see Fig. 4.3) joined the Krobo mission in February 1906. He was in charge of the Obawale and, as from 1917, of the Huhunya outstation in the Yilo Krobo up-country. These two preachers worked mainly off the beaten path in the up-country, where in a frontier situation they engaged in a very direct way with the farmers. They were thus crucial in taking the Gospel to an area that had been all too long neglected by the missionaries and the better trained catechists. For instance, in 1896 Andrew Padi undertook to teach the children of the Okpesi *huza*, where he had been appointed as an evangelist the year before. Little did it matter for him and the local population, that he did not have the adequate training. The parents supplied him with gifts of food and he maintained a patriarchal relationship with both his pupils and their parents. In the same way he took to erecting a chapel without waiting for the consent or funding from his superiors. While these initiatives were commented upon positively, the missionaries felt uneasy with the lack of control. In response they chose to post a junior teacher at the same place, who was charged with checking on Andrew Padi's activities.¹⁵⁹ One might say that it was exactly the modest formal training that made Padi and Nikoi more flexible and prepared to live under pioneer conditions.

4.3 A CONTINUING BLINDNESS – THE MISSION AND KROBO EXPANSION

Krobo Mountain is our home and fortress. There we took refuge from the raids of the Asante and Akuapem. There we have our firm and best residences, whereas on the plantations we only erect simple and temporary structures. When we [i.e. the Krobo people] multiplied, we moved into these mountains and valleys and

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Jonathan Padi (a grandson of Andrew Padi), Accra 25.05.1999 and Nungwa 01.07.1999. The *Salem*, at Odumase called *lebo*, had eventually been instituted in 1877. Contrary to the ideal of the mission it was situated at the centre of the village (BMA D-1.29 Afrika 1877, Odumase 136, J. Weiss and R. Furrer, ???.1878, p. 2).

¹⁵⁹ BMA D-1.64 Goldküste 1896 Ga, Odumase 165, Gottlob Josenhans, Odumase 04.02.1897, pp. 8-9.

bought this land from the Akuapem and Akwamu. That is why each of us has three houses: one in our hometown [on Krobo Mountain], one in the larger plantation settlements [i.e. Odumase, Sra etc.] and the third one on our newly purchased farms. In future, when there is peace, we will build towns and live here.¹⁶⁰

Although the missionaries had been describing the Krobo expansion right from their earliest visits to Krobo, they utterly failed to adjust their structures to the needs of the people. Odumase, where the mission had founded its station, was itself initially not more than a cluster of farms of a handful of families. The hamlets of Odonkor Azu, Nathanael Lawer and others did grow into a small town, yet its inhabitants were mostly on the move. The logic of the acquisition of new lands had it, that especially the young stayed on the most remote farms (*pumi*), as the clearing of the forest was the most strenuous and labour intensive task. Once the palms (or later cocoa) had grown into fruit bearing stage the farm was considered ripe (*nmonya*). Now an elderly person could take care of it. He would sustain himself by gardening on a small plot near the farm house. For the labour intensive harvest of the palm fruits and the processing of the oil he could rely on members of the family, particularly the youth.¹⁶¹ With the growth of Odumase as a centre it had lost much of its function as a site of agricultural production and became a kind of secondary hometown, while the principal family houses were still situated on Krobo Mountain. As the society had outgrown the capacity of the mountain towns, people coming from the more recent farms in the up-country to attend rituals on Krobo Mountain now increasingly stopped over at Odumase or at one of the other villages at the base of the Akuapem-Togo Range between Ogome and Nuaso. Here they would stay for two to four weeks, enjoy the social life and relax, and from here they would visit their mountain home.¹⁶² This means that even during these periods their presence at Odumase fluctuated.¹⁶³ For most of the time, however, people were working on their farms. The further the expansion proceeded, the rarer and shorter their visits to Odumase became. For the Basel Mission this meant that it had not much control over its converts' Christian conduct, and that church attendance was very unstable. While attendance was quite okay during the dry season, Odumase was deserted outright during the main farming season starting as from February.¹⁶⁴ Due to the constant shortage of labour, but also somewhat blindfolded by sheer habit, the missionaries continued to limit their field of action to the range of villages in the plain. Their tours to *yonô* remained ephemeral up to the 1890s. On the one hand the mission thus failed to reach the majority of the population, which was active farming in the up-country for most of the time. On the other hand it tried in vain to immobilise the converts at *dorm*.

¹⁶⁰ BMA D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase No. 19a, M. Roes, Odumase 17.01.1866, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ Field 1943: 57-58.

¹⁶² BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase No. 11a, J. Heck, Odumase 06.07.1864, published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 11(1864), pp. 139-140, here 139.

¹⁶³ BMA D-1.34 Afrika 1882, Odumase 92, Rudolf Furrer, Odumase 08.07.1882, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ BMA D-1.29 Afrika 1877, Odumase 136, J. Weiss and R. Furrer, Odumase ???.1878, p. 8; D-1.30 Afrika 1878, Odumase 108, J. Weiss, Odumase ???.1879, p. 11.

The Basel Mission promoted the close cohabitation of its converts. The idea was that on the one hand this would allow them to encourage each other and help them to refuse the demands of their non-Christian relatives. On the other hand it was to facilitate their surveillance and guidance by the missionary or pastor.¹⁶⁵ This plan was already jeopardised by the location of the Odumase station. After a *salem* had been established in the late 1870s, church attendance and the presence of the converts was still not as regular as the mission's regulations postulated.¹⁶⁶ The "unjustified absence" from church service was a constant complaint.¹⁶⁷ This also pertained to the presbyters. On ten Sundays of the year 1892 not even one presbyter was present at Odumase.¹⁶⁸ It was assumed that absence from the church service held at Odumase equalled disrespect for the holy Sunday. Of course it may well be, that these converts respected Sunday as a day of worship on their farms. Instead of trying to cater to the farmers' needs Missionary Kopp tried to make it a rule that converts had to attend the Odumase church service at least on every second Sunday. For many of them this implied a walk of six to ten hours.¹⁶⁹ In the same way the schools suffered from the fluctuation of their pupils, who moved with their parents to the farms in the up-country.¹⁷⁰ When in 1891 Missionary Josenhans' yearly report was once more marked by repeated complaints about the so called "Buschlaufen" ("going to the bush", i.e. the absenting of converts and pupils from Odumase and their removal to their plantations), Missionary Müller remarked that Josenhans obviously had a blind spot: Was it not due to economic necessity that the people left for their plantations? Where else were they to produce their crops?¹⁷¹

THE HUZA ECONOMY - A ROVING LIFE¹⁷²

At long last the idea sank in that, instead of incriminating the farmers, the mission had to change its policies. This meant, that Odumase had to receive more funding, as the blind spot had at least partially resulted from the chronic shortage of staff. It was not sufficient to accord it the same number of workers as the neighbouring stations in Akuapem, as the Krobo farm lands differed structurally from those of their neighbours. In Akuapem too, a large part of the farmers were living away from the hometowns in

¹⁶⁵ BMA D-1.68 Goldküste 1898 Ga, Odumase 212, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 09.08.1898, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ The converts were expected to attend all church services on offer. Exceptions had to be justified (BMA D-9.1c, 11a Regulations for the Evangelic Congregations of the Basel Mission in East India and West Africa, Basel 1865, § 49).

¹⁶⁷ BMA D-1.34 Afrika 1882, Odumase 94, Odumase Station 14.02.1883, p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 130, G. Jaeger, Odumase 14.02.1893, transcript by M. Steegstra. In later years the mission even created an office for a person who was to rally the members of the congregation for community projects (BMA D-1.80 Afrika 1904, Odumase 137, W. A. Quartey, 10.03.1905, p. 3).

¹⁶⁹ BMA D-1.44 Afrika 1886, Odumase 104, J. Kopp, Odumase 31.01.1887, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷⁰ BMA D-1.46 Goldküste 1887 Ga, Odumase 162, G. Josenhans, Abokobi 09.04.1888, p. 6.

¹⁷¹ BMA D-1.52 Goldküste 1890 Ga, Odumase 204, G. Josenhans, Odumase 07.04.1891, pp. 7, 9, 10.

¹⁷² BMA D-3.7 Jahresberichte 1917, III Odumase, 3, W. A. Odjidja, Odumase 30.06.1916, p. 2.

dispersed farm villages (Twi: *krom*). These were nucleated settlements, where farmers stayed overnight and went out to their farms during the day time. The Krobo *huza* system made for a very different pattern. A *huza* was not a village but a string of plots, every farmer living individually on his own plot. Each house was some 20-100 metres distant from the neighbouring one, their string stretching over the full length of a valley of several kilometres. This pattern demanded a more individualised, itinerant kind of visitation by preachers and thus a rather high input in labour. It also prevented the establishment of a *salem*.¹⁷³ The realisation that an up-country mission was needed urgently came at a time when the Krobo mission had grown in such a way that it could rely on a significant number of teachers and preachers. With the backing of the mission board at home and the missionary body on the Gold Coast, it set out in 1894 to establish two up-country stations (Okpesi and Obuadaso) with pioneer character.¹⁷⁴ This meant that many converts still had to travel over a distance of some two to four hours.¹⁷⁵



Fig. 4.7 (left): "How one goes to farm."

Most Krobo had plots at various places in the up-country and left Odumase for long periods of the year. Picture by W. Erhardt 1899-1912, suggested c. 1903. BMA D-30.08.013.

Fig. 4.8 (right): "Missionary leaving his overnight quarters in the farming district and setting off next morning."

From right to left: Missionary Erhardt, Evangelist Andrew Padi. It was only with considerable delay that the Basel Mission adapted their policies to the realities of the Krobo economy. Picture by W. Erhardt, date 1899-1912, suggested c. 1903. BMA D-30.08.037

This was in many respects a new start for the Krobo mission. With the move into the up-country it was to make sure that it was not trapped in partisan politics again. Mis-

¹⁷³ BMA D-1.76, Afrika 1902, Odumase 203, G. Josenhans, Odumase 05.03.1903, p. 16.

¹⁷⁴ The home board at Basel decided on the matter in 1894 (BMA D-1.60 Goldküste 1894 Ga, Odumase 180, G. Josenhans, Odumase 15.01.1895, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1894*, pp. 38-39, here 38).

¹⁷⁵ BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 162, W. Erhardt, Odumase 16.07.1903, p. 7.

sionary Erhardt at first proposed that an outstation might be established at Chief Mate Kole's Akosombo *huz*. His colleague Gottlieb Jaeger, however, checked him immediately by urging that the new stations should be established without considering the location of the *huz*s of the royal families. This was all the more important because Emanuel Mate Kole's election, as already mentioned, had created a deep rift not only within the congregation but also in Manya Krobo at large.¹⁷⁶

There was not only this political issue. With the planning of the new up-country stations, a second difficulty came to the fore that was related to the specific pattern of Krobo farming: Farmers owned several plots at places often far apart from each other. During the various stages of the agricultural year they moved with their labour force in between these farms. Further, they were engaged in continuously purchasing new plots and these were ever more distant from the hometowns. Here on the frontier the input in labour during the clearing stage was high and so was the output in crops. The early stages brought extremely rich yields and new markets developed nearby. The main concentration of people thus shifted with the frontier to ever new and more distant places, while the areas planted with seasoned oil palms would be almost deserted in between the harvesting periods. This effect was especially pronounced with the *baisse* of the palm oil market in the 1880s and the cocoa boom, which set in soon after. The cultivation of cocoa demanded moist conditions that could be found further away in Akyem Abuakwa. In the race for new lands in this region, the farmers at times even opted not to harvest their palm crop at all. Okpesi and Obuadaso, the two up-country stations founded in 1894 and 1898 in the Manya and Yilo Krobo plantations respectively,¹⁷⁷ were soon to suffer from the drain of people to the cocoa areas. Okpesi started to feel the consequences of the cocoa boom as early as 1908, and was basically depopulated by 1912.¹⁷⁸ Just when a new outstation had been founded some four hours' distant at Bamanase, the wish for a new station even further to the North towards Begoro was voiced.¹⁷⁹ The same was the case with Obuadaso, where the demographic drain was felt by 1910. In 1915 the station was shifted completely to Huhunya, which was situated on the new motor road from Koforidua to Okterpolu and had developed into a market centre.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ BMA D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 132, Adam Mischlich, Odumase 08.05.1893, pp. 4 and 6.

¹⁷⁷ BMA D-1.60 Goldküste 1894 Ga, Odumase 168, G. Josenhans, Odumase 11.09.1894, p. 2; D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 195, G. Josenhans, Odumase 24.01.1898, pp. 4 and 10; D-1.68 Goldküste 1898 Ga, Odumase 218, A. Deuber, Odumase 28.02.1899, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ BMA D-1.101 Goldküste 1913 Berichte, Odumase 12, W. Erhardt, Odumase 16.07.1913, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ BMA D-1.90 Goldküste 1908 Berichte, Odumase 11, W. Erhardt, Odumase 20.02.1909, p. 9; D-1.97 Goldküste 1911, Odumase 12, G. Josenhans 16.02.1911, p. 27.

¹⁸⁰ BMA D-1.95 Goldküste 1910, Odumase 12, G. Josenhans, Odumase 11.03.1911, p. 28; D-1.97 Goldküste 1911, Odumase 12, G. Josenhans, Odumase, 16.02.1912, p. 27; D-3.6 Jahresberichte 1915, III Odumase, No. 1, W. Erhardt, Odumase 26.02.1916, pp. 21-22.

PARADISE LOST – AND REDISCOVERED

Despite renewed deliberations to shift the main station – the idea still came up as late as 1893 – Odumase remained the centre of the Krobo mission.¹⁸¹ Even after the up-country stations had been established, all communicants were expected to attend the Lord's Supper at Odumase on four Sundays in the year. Presbyters, in addition, had to be present on every first Sunday of the month for baptisms and for the meetings of the presbytery.¹⁸² Although Odumase had also in other respects become a centre where Manya Krobos would flock to from time to time, its function as the headquarters of the church was hampered in many respects and church attendance remained a sore point.¹⁸³ By the early twentieth century the erstwhile hamlet had developed into a small town of some importance where the paramount chief instituted new festivals such as the *yereyeli* (see sections 2.5 and 5.5), and where the latest forms of popular music and dance were performed (see chapter five). Outlets for alcohol could be found everywhere – even next to the Basel Mission chapel, which was flanked to the left and right by liquor stores.¹⁸⁴ These were manifestations of the new wealth that had accrued with the cocoa boom. Odumase had definitely lost the pristine bucolic innocence cherished by the early Basel Missionaries. The Krobo hometowns had developed into the sort of evil towns the Basel Missionaries had hoped to prevent on the Gold Coast. Odumase now featured the same hybridity the mission had fled when leaving the coastal towns for the hinterland. In contrast to the Babylonian conditions prevailing at Odumase, the up-country offered the rural innocence the missionaries idealised. This did not lack a certain logic, as Odumase in the 1850s had been at a similar stage of development as most of the *huzas* in the up-country at the turn of the century. Again the missionaries were enthused about journeying in the cool shade of the oil palms. In these forests reigned a serene and holy atmosphere, offering relief from the buzz of the sprawling hometowns.

A well maintained forest of oil palms makes for a wonderful landscape, although it cannot keep up with a deciduous forest in Germany. One has the impression of standing under the vault of a gothic cathedral, with the mighty palm leaves nodding at each other representing the pointed arches. In the shadow of these evergreen palms the farms and hamlets of the Krobo Negroes are hiding. Here the farmer resides for weeks and does his strenuous work. One cannot envision something more idyllic for West Africa than such a Krobo plantation.¹⁸⁵

Basically the whole discourse of the 1850s, which has been described earlier on, was resuscitated. The emphasis was on the peace and quiet, as well as on the soberness and

¹⁸¹ BMA D-1.60 Goldküste 1894 Ga, Odumase 173, G. Josenhans, Odumase 11.09.1894, p. 4.

¹⁸² BMA D-3.7 Jahresberichte 1916, Odumase III, 1, W. Erhardt, Odumase 26.02.1917, p. 12.

¹⁸³ BMA D-1.76, Afrika 1902, Odumase 199, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 31.07.1902, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ BMA D-1.68 Goldküste 1898 Ga, Odumase 218, A. Deuber, Odumase 28.02.1899, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸⁵ Mischlich Adam 1894 " Aus dem Palmenland von Krobo in das Hochland von Okwawu." In: *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1894*, pp. 43-52, here 44.

industry, which contrasted the vibrancy of and indulgence prevailing at Odumase. In their hometowns these farmers would often invest their proceeds in prestigious double storey buildings, court cases, ritual performances, entertainment and (associated with it) alcohol. They would not heed the good message offered by the mission.¹⁸⁶ This mixture of reinvented rituals, consumption, leisure, and concern with worldly affairs was dubbed a “new heathendom”. The materialism, which the missionaries themselves had unwillingly enlivened, was the main challenge they faced at the turn of the century. The tranquillity of the up-country had a soothing effect on the missionaries. Here basically the same people who spurned the mission at Odumase cherished the change that the visit of a missionary or preacher brought to their sober farm life.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, *yonô* provided a setting in which the missionaries could rediscover the Krobo as “children of nature”. Here they could engage freely in a conversation with them that was undisturbed by the manifold side effects of modernisation.¹⁸⁸

4.4 ODUMASE AS A SITE OF LEARNING

Another space where the missionaries felt at ease, was the middle boys’ boarding school they established in 1905 on Bana Hill overlooking the Krobo hometowns. It marked the climax of the mission’s educational effort in the Krobo region, which was begun in the 1850s. In those years Chief Odonkor Azu had called the Basel Mission to Odumase in order to establish a school. Although the motivation of the chief differed from that of the mission, the latter responded readily as education was its key instrument of evangelisation. In fact, education and evangelisation could not be separated: In 1859 a school open to the public was set up at Odumase, where children and adults were taught to read bible stories in the *Ga* language and to write in the same idiom (see section 1.1). There was no separate school building, the chapel had to make do. This school was true to the Basel mission’s concept of education which consisted in a dual system. On the one hand there were the so called *Gemeindeschulen* (congregational schools). Their aim was to create a local Christian congregation whose members could read and study their own bible in the vernacular. Gradually these schools developed into public elementary schools. On the other hand there was the need to raise recruits for the teaching profession. In this respect the *Gemeindeschulen* with their emphasis on instruction and evangelisation could not provide an adequate *Erziehung*, i.e. education in the sense of character training.¹⁸⁹ To this end children were recruited as house boys or girls. They were to live under the constant care and supervision of the missionary and later they would

¹⁸⁶ BMA D-1.60 Goldküste 1894 Ga, Odumase 178, A. Deuber, Odumase 15.09.1894, p. 11; D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 151, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 20.02.1894, pp. 5-7, 10-11.

¹⁸⁷ BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 195, G. Josenhans, Odumase 24.01.1898, pp. 6-7, 9.

¹⁸⁸ BMA D-1.90 Goldküste 1908 Berichte, Odumase 9, G. Josenhans, Odumase 22.02.1909, p. 28.

¹⁸⁹ Miescher 1997: 107.

enter one of the mission's boarding institutions at either Christiansborg or Akropong. At Odumase itself boys' education thus remained for a long time rather limited.

As mentioned above, a girls' boarding school was introduced as early as 1860 due to the challenge *dipo* presented to the mission. It was run by Mrs Catherine Mulgrave-Zimmermann.¹⁹⁰ This gendered education comprised needlework, household chores and gardening. As compared to the boys' education there was less emphasis on the transmission of knowledge as the latter was deemed to alienate the girls too much from the domestic environment. The girls were supposed to play an important role in the evangelisation of the society from within their future position as Christian wives and mothers.¹⁹¹ While in the early years the girls basically stayed with the Zimmermann family, by 1871 the girls' school had developed into a full-fledged boarding institution. One year later special premises were allocated at the ground floor of the refurbished mission house.¹⁹² Whereas due to the limited scope of the mission's policy on female education all training for girls could be provided at Odumase, boys had to move to the Christiansborg or Akropong boarding schools in order to obtain an education allowing them a continuation beyond the primary school level.¹⁹³ The need to send the children to these distant places was a major handicap to the spreading of education in the Krobo region. Few boys enrolled for further education. Therefore the mission was short in local catechists, while 'foreign' teachers were not popular amongst the Krobos. As early as 1866 missionary Zimmermann pleaded for the establishment of a full-fledged boys' boarding school at Odumase to resolve this problem.¹⁹⁴ Yet, it was only in 1884 after the mission's boarding school system had been thoroughly reformed in 1881, and after the colonial government had passed its first education bill in 1883, that the Odumase boys' school was upgraded. For the time being it remained a primary school, but now it allowed for a direct access to the mission's middle schools.¹⁹⁵ Contrary to the difficulties faced with female education, there was no shortage of male students and the school soon reached its limits. In the late 1890s it was proposed to expand the school and to establish a middle school for Krobo. It was hoped that this would attract even more Krobo students and help overcome the shortage of Krobo catechists.

¹⁹⁰ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase 8, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 04.05.1860.

¹⁹¹ See the PhD thesis by Ulrike Sill, Department of Theology, University of Basel, forthcoming.

¹⁹² BMA D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 13, Johannes Zimmermann, Odumase 01.07.1871; B. Steiner: "Fünzig Jahre Missionsarbeit in Krobo." In: *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 12(1909), p. 91. As early as 1872 plans for a boarding institution on an isolated hill out of town were discussed. Yet it was only in 1927 that the Krobo Girls' School at Asite near Odumase was opened (Odjidja 1977: 9).

¹⁹³ Missionary Auer reformed the Basel Mission school system around 1859. By 1863 it included the following levels: six years primary school at the boys' boarding institute, of which the last two years prepared the pupils for the continuation in the middle school and included the introduction to the English language; four years middle school education; and, lastly, four years of teacher-catechist training (Schlatter 1916: 96).

¹⁹⁴ BMA D-1.18b Afrika 1866, Teil 2, Odumase 11, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 29.09.1866.

¹⁹⁵ BMA D-1.40 Afrika 1884, Odumase 114, J. Weiss and K. Bender, Odumase ???.1884.

4.4.1 A CONTESTED ASSET – THE MIDDLE BOYS’ BOARDING SCHOOL

Enlarging the school grounds at Odumase in order to cater for the expansion met with massive but hidden resistance among the councillors of paramount chief Emanuel Mate Kole. His *enstoolment* was connected to and overshadowed by the forced abolition of the settlements on Krobo mountain. Therefore he had to pursue a more conservative course in the early years of his reign, which would win him the necessary support from the elders and divisional chiefs of Manya Krobo. The missionaries repeatedly complained that their supposed Christian chief was the puppet of his councillors, especially of his father Peter Nyarko. When the middle school was finally started within the limited space available in proximity to the mission station, it met with immediate success. It nevertheless soon became evident that within this restricted political and physical space it could not develop to the satisfaction of the missionaries. The school was surrounded by the ‘heathen’ quarters and neighbours repeatedly encroached on the mission land. Already in 1868 the missionaries had acknowledged, that the situation of the Odumase mission station at the centre of the town and in the immediate neighbourhood of the chief’s palace was not conducive to an ambitious educational project. Its situation was not favourable to learning and even less to educating ‘new men’.¹⁹⁶

In this situation Chief Amitei¹⁹⁷ of the Dom division offered the mission a piece of land. It was situated on top of Bana Hill, high above the town of Manyakpongunor at some thirty minutes from Odumase. Amitei was the chief of the largest of the six divisions of Manya Krobo. He was in opposition to the *enstoolment* of Emanuel Mate Kole and claimed the paramountcy for himself.¹⁹⁸ With the establishment of the mission at Odumase the Dom *matsã* had lost a lot of his influence to Odonkor Azu. Now Chief Amitei tried to win it back by replicating Odonkor Azu’s policies: Educational facilities were to reinforce the importance of his town, the missionary staff and later the graduates were to serve as middlemen. Some years earlier he had invited the mission to open an out-station at Manyakpongunor and whole-heartedly supported the mission when it opened a school there in 1898.¹⁹⁹ The latter started on an extremely healthy basis with about forty pupils.²⁰⁰ The numerous *alumni* of the Manyakpongunor school were in fact one of the reasons, why the middle boys’ boarding school at Odumase, which had been started there as a makeshift arrangement, had to expand. When Emanuel Mate Kole continued to frustrate the expansion of the school grounds at Odumase, the mission finally accepted the offer of Chief Amitei. As has been shown above, it had always been the missionaries’ ideal to establish a school and station on a hill top. They were further pushed in that direction when a group of former Basel mission middle school pupils and traders

¹⁹⁶ Obituary for Daniel Abose in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 2(1862), p. 126. Quoted in Miescher 1991: 21.

¹⁹⁷ Often rendered as Ami Tei.

¹⁹⁸ ArIt 1996: 2, 19-20.

¹⁹⁹ BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 186, Minutes of the Odumase station meeting, Odumase 30.10.1897.

²⁰⁰ BMA D-1.68 Goldküste 1898 Ga, Odumase 216, C. Kölle, Odumase 15.02.1899.

of the nearby town of Kpong petitioned that the school be built at Manyakpongunor rather than Odumase. They argued that there was a better supply in food and water in Manyakpongunor, where a big daily market was held. The petitioners added that it was not advisable to build a middle school in the proximity of a girls' boarding school as was the case at Odumase.²⁰¹ The missionaries agreed with this view and pleaded for the establishment of the middle school on Bana Hill. There the school could be built at a healthy distance from the town in a serene environment.²⁰² The secluded situation on the hill top would make for a near perfect control of the pupils' movements and allowed for that character training the middle school was to offer. The site was also recommended by the missionary doctor Rudolf Fisch who praised it as particularly healthy.²⁰³

In 1902 the board of the mission at Basel gave its go-ahead and the site on Bana Hill was prepared for the construction of the school. Yet, the works were soon interrupted, when the decision to build the school in Manyakpongunor sparked off a political firework in Krobo. Already the establishment of a primary school at Manyakpongunor in 1898 had aroused the suspicion of the young *konô* Emanuel Mate Kole. The shifting of a major asset such as the middle school and the allocation of a European missionary to the town of his political opponents was more than he could bear. The mission station and its schools were an integral part of the foundation on which the paramountcy at Odumase was built.²⁰⁴ He therefore tried to stop the construction work by instigating a law suit over the title to the land. Emanuel Mate Kole's fears were well founded: Chief Amitei not only had important claims to the paramountcy of Many Krobo, he was also supported by chief Sasraku of the Many division (equally at Manyakpongunor) and chief Thomas Harrison Odonkor of Kpong. The three chiefs had united in their opposition to Mate Kole's policy of shifting the Manyakpongunor market to Odumase and of largely monopolising taxation and jurisdiction. These measures were to fortify his position as a paramount chief and to provide him with income. They were detrimental to the interests of his subordinate chiefs, who thereby lost important assets. In July 1903 matters came to a head and almost resulted in a civil war. There had been repeated skirmishes on Manyakpongunor market, when Mate Kole's messengers tried to force the traders to move to Odumase. On 9 July the chief sent four messengers to the up-country in order to arrest a subject of Chief Amitei. When they tried to arrest the man at the Sapor *huza*, he shot them.

The bodies of the messengers were brought to Odumase, where they were laid in state in front of the palace, i.e. in the immediate neighbourhood of the mission house. War drums were beaten, and warriors paraded in the streets of Odumase. The missionaries, being themselves suspected of treason by the young paramount chief, hardly dared to

²⁰¹ BMA D-1.74, Afrika 1901, Odumase 169, Petition by J.R. Togbor et. al. to the Basel Mission, Kpong 03.02.1901.

²⁰² BMA D-1.74, Afrika 1901, Odumase 166, Odumase station, Odumase 14.10.1901.

²⁰³ BMA KP Minutes of the board of directors, 1901, § 582.

²⁰⁴ Arlt 1996: 18ff.

leave the mission compound.²⁰⁵ Eventually the case was resolved by the government. It ended with the arrest of the man who had killed the messengers, and the public submission of Chief Amitei and Chief Sasraku to Emanuel Mate Kole (see section 5.1). In the long run it resulted in the *destoolment* of Chief Amitei and Chief Thomas Odonkor of Kpong. After Emanuel Mate Kole, assisted by the colonial government, had asserted his position as paramount chief of Manya Krobo, work on Bana Hill was taken up again in 1904. On the 7th of November 1905 the middle school finally moved from Odumase to its new premises at Bana.²⁰⁶

Another Basel Mission institution Chief Mate Kole tried to secure for Odumase was a medical clinic. In April 1895 Missionary Dr Hey took over the Aburi clinic from Missionary Dr Fisch, who went on home leave. Like his predecessor he paid regular visits to Odumase and held consultations there. In view of Fisch's highly successful medical mission it was deliberated to open a second clinic further inland presumably at Anum. Mate Kole attempted to secure this asset for Odumase by addressing a petition to the mission board.²⁰⁷ When the decision for Anum was taken in April 1897, both Chief Mate Kole of Manya Krobo and Chief Akrobetto of Yilo Krobo vied in a bid for the clinic. Each of them offered a double storey building in his respective town to host the doctor and his clinic.²⁰⁸ When Hey's wife died in January 1899, the doctor gave up his plans and returned to Europe.²⁰⁹ In a final effort the Manya Krobo Chief petitioned to the Stuttgart medical association praising the value of a missionary doctor. Dr Hey, who had previously supported the allocation of a clinic to Odumase, was now critical in his assessment of the petition and spoke against Mate Kole's scheme as being politically motivated and lacking genuine support for the mission as such.²¹⁰

4.4.2 THE SCHOOL ON THE HILL – BUILDING CHRISTIAN CHARACTERS²¹¹

The Bana boys' boarding school was to be the climax of Basel mission education in the Krobo region and epitomized the mission's educational ideals. At the same time it was part of a new direction within the mission's system of education, which had to adjust to

²⁰⁵ BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 159, G. Josenhans, Odumase 14.07.1903; D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 160, G. Josenhans, Odumase 22.07.1903; D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 161, G. Josenhans, Odumase 03.08.1903.

²⁰⁶ Odjidja 1973: 122.

²⁰⁷ BMA D-1.64 Goldküste 1896 Ga, Odumase 161, Emanuel Mate Kole with chiefs and councillors, Odumase 20.11.1896, petition to the mission board at Basel, published in German translation in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 5(1897), pp. 33-34; D-1.64 Goldküste 1896 Ga, Odumase 160, Emanuel Mate Kole, Odumase 12.11.1896.

²⁰⁸ BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 171, Dr Hey, Odumase 20.04.1897 - 01.05.1897; D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 176, Dr Hey, Odumase 12.03.1897, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ Fischer 1991: 180.

²¹⁰ Hey was especially concerned with Mate Kole's father and principal councillor Peter Nyarko, whom he considered to be a highly immoral person exerting a bad influence on the young chief (BMA D-1.72, Afrika 1900, Odumase 119, Dr Hey, Odumase 24.10.1900, pp. 5-6.

²¹¹ For a detailed account of the Bana Middle Boys' Boarding School see Arlt (2003a).

an emerging colonial education policy and to a growing demand for education.²¹² Bana Hill was the site where the missionaries intended to shape a new generation of Christian young men. Even if they chose not to pursue a career within the mission, they were to maintain Christian standards in their respective administrative or commercial positions. Their example would provide the colonial economy and society with a sound moral foundation. The school thus was to shape a "Christian character" that could keep at bay the temptations the alumni would face in their future careers in the colonial economy:²¹³ from that of an intelligent farmer, reliable driver, loyal clerk or honest trader, to that of an esteemed chief, trustworthy lawyer or careful doctor.²¹⁴ Equal importance as to the formation of a steadfast character was accorded to spiritual and intellectual training: Basel Mission middle school pupils were expected to develop will power, reasoning power, perceptiveness, and last but not least a Christian conviction.

In order to achieve this impact, the boys were to be secluded from a worldly-oriented or 'heathen' environment. To this end, Bana Hill offered the perfect physical setting. Once the students had enrolled at the school their movements became highly restricted and controlled. The school's regulations were to be their sole system of orientation for the full duration of their training. Accordingly Old Boys remember the school as akin to a military training camp, where they were subjected to strict discipline.²¹⁵ Students were discouraged from leaving the school early by way of a system of penalty payments.²¹⁶ The school regulations made it clear, that the students' movements outside the premises were highly restricted.²¹⁷ Pupils were only allowed to visit the town at the base of the hill in order to pick up their meals prepared by their personal cateresses.²¹⁸ During their free time on Saturdays, and on Sundays after church service, they might visit their relatives in the towns nearby. Their presence on Bana hill was accurately controlled by daily roll calls and students had to ask the principal for special permission for any un-scheduled leave. If a pupil at the end of a vacation was unable to report back to school in time, he was to inform the school by way of the local Basel mission catechist or teacher. The school's control over its pupils thus extended far beyond Bana Hill all over

²¹² BMA KP Minutes of the board of directors, 1901, § 274.

²¹³ Odjidja 1973: 123.

²¹⁴ Agyemang 1967: 81f.

²¹⁵ Interview with Revd Peter Kodjo, Accra, 11.10.2000; Interview with Jonathan Padi, Nungwa 01.07.1999; Interview with Paul Odzawo, Odumase Salosi, 01.03.1999.

²¹⁶ This was to avoid the proliferation of "half-educated" or "half-learned" men. For the mission such school leavers not only represented a loss in its potential workforce. They were also highly vocal and transported images of modernity that the mission could neither control nor approve of. Such "half and half civilisation" was the most pressing challenge the mission faced in the early twentieth century (BMA D-1.88 Goldküste 1907 Berichte, Odumase 15, annual report on the Odumase congregation by Revd W. A. Quartey, Odumase, 10.02.1908, p. 2). See also the South African case of the "dressed people" (Coplan 1985: 15).

²¹⁷ BMA D-1.101 Goldküste 1913 Berichte, Odumase 14, C. Kölle, Bana 10.02.1914, pp. 7-9.

²¹⁸ This was the standard system adopted in most of the Basel Mission boarding schools. There was no commensality as such. See Ulrike Sill's PhD thesis for a detailed analysis of this policy, changes therein, and inherent problems (Sill forthcoming).

the South-eastern Gold Coast colony. It was not limited to the movements of the pupils but also pertained to their conduct: The sixth paragraph of the regulations stated that "All pupils are to honour the Christian ways and thus their conduct during their vacations shall be a Christian one." Paragraph eight again stressed students were expected to show obedience, sincerity and diligence at any time.

Life on Bana hill – as at the mission seminary at Basel – was highly structured.²¹⁹ Time keeping was an important feature in leading a pietist life, and in preparing students for the exigencies of employment within the colonial economy.²²⁰ The morning call was sounded at 5.30am and the long day only ended when the petrol lights were extinguished at 9.00pm. The strict discipline pertaining to the precise keeping of time, the presence and the conduct of the pupils was maintained by way of a system of punishments. It ranged from caning, or deprivation of one's free time (coupled with labour assignments such as breaking stones), to the outright expulsion from the school. The regime at the Bana boys' boarding school is said to have become even stricter under African direction and the stress on discipline at Bana was further promoted by the introduction of the Boys' Brigade movement with its hierarchic system.²²¹

The school's syllabus was packed. This was due to the mission's ambition both to run the school as a mission school and to comply with the exigencies of the government's board of education. In geography and history for instance the government syllabus focussed on Great Britain whereas the Basel mission, besides the usual biblical history or geography of the holy land and world history or geography, tried to provide its pupils with an adequate knowledge of the history and geography of Africa and the Gold Coast. In addition to teaching English in accordance with government exigencies, it continued to teach the vernacular and to offer bible studies by integrating these subjects. For instance the students were to translate biblical history or extracts from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*²²² from *Ga* into *Twi* and vice versa. Within their four years' course the students studied the whole of the old and new testaments, learned some thirty-six church songs and the principal parts of the Lutheran catechism mostly in the vernacular. Musical training featured knowledge of the notation system, rhythms, polyphonic singing and a basic course on the harmonium. Generally, and especially in mathematics, the syllabus reflected the fact, that most of the boys found employment in clerical jobs. Besides the four basic modes of calculation they learnt about interest and compound interest, shareholder values and foreign exchange rates. Export and import trade was part of the

²¹⁹ Miller 1994: 98f.

²²⁰ For the colonisation of time and its limitations see Cooper (1992: 210).

²²¹ Odjidja 1973: 124. The semi-military brigades and other drill associations were introduced in British education in the late nineteenth century. They were to develop conservative and conformist attitudes. Their universal introduction in the system was not approved by the board of education and legislation on the matter was prevented by the Labour Party (Lawton and Gordon 2002: 126).

²²² Bunyan 1839. See Hofmeyr for a detailed literary analysis of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, its dissemination, translation, and reception (2004a).

geography lessons. Handwriting, dictation, and composition were of course attributed great importance.²²³ Practical training was also part of the curriculum. It was the mission's policy to instil in the students an appreciation of manual, especially agricultural, labour. This was to cope with the alienation of the students from their families and/ or rural background. Next to the school the pupils tilled their own small gardens and were taught to plant and treat cash crops such as Cocoa or Cinnamon. School farms had been part of Basel mission schools almost from the beginning, when they helped in catering for the pupils. As for craftsmanship the missionaries let their pupils participate in the building and maintenance of their schools. The Bana school itself was largely built with the pupils' help as part of their education.²²⁴ Sports also figured on the students' timetable. It featured team games such as football and thus was in accordance with the later recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes commission on Education in Africa of the inter-war years and the according government policies.²²⁵ In addition to the ordinary curriculum, at times visitors to the school gave presentations. For example the mission's medical doctor Rudolf Fisch campaigned for his temperance movement and held lectures on tropical hygiene.²²⁶ As an ambitious photographer and explorer he combined his presentations with slide shows. The *laterna magica* was also made use of by the colonial inspector of schools on the occasion of his visits to the school. In 1907 his presentation introduced the pupils to London.²²⁷

4.4.3 GRADUATION OR INITIATION?

The final examinations marked the end of the training at Bana. Even more important was the day of confirmation and baptism, which took place some months earlier. During the last two years at the school, and in addition to the daily devotions and lessons in biblical history and religious studies, the students received their preparatory training from the hand of the principal himself. It was left to the students to ask for their baptism or to express their wish to continue their training at the mission's Akropong seminary. It seems that the boys without exception asked for full membership in the church before they left school. Besides the spiritual preparation they received during their last term, the pupils also prepared materially for this final rite de passage. Rising expectations led students to spend more money on their clothing – a development that for the costs involved stirred the ire of family members. But to the amazement of the mission-

²²³ BMA D-1.95, Goldküste 1910, Odumase 13, Annual report on the Bana Middle School, C. Kölle, Bana 10.03.1911. In view of the mostly clerical careers of their students, the missionaries by 1916 pleaded for the establishment of a special trade school (*Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1916*, p. 55).

²²⁴ BMA D-1.80 Afrika 1904, Odumase 134, annual report by W. Dietrich, Odumase, 09.02.1904 and D-1.83, Goldküste Ga 1905, Odumase 123, annual report by W. Dietrich, Bana 12.02.1906, p. 2.

²²⁵ Miescher 1997: 293.

²²⁶ BMA D-1.93 Goldküste 1909, Odumase 16, annual report by C. Kölle, Bana, 15.01.1910.

²²⁷ BMA D-1.88 Goldküste 1907 Berichte, Odumase 12, annual report by W. Dietrich, Bana, 27.01.1908.

aries the same relatives would not support their efforts to put an end to this luxury.²²⁸ Rather, the parents accepted the elaborate dress code as an important marker of their son's successful training and of his initiation into the world of the scholar. It became customary for students, on the occasion of their first communion following their confirmation, to receive their first full woollen black suit complete with high collar and patent shoes.²²⁹ This outfit distinguished them easily, especially from those wearing the customary cloth, and they were immediately identified as educated persons.²³⁰



Fig. 4.9: Principal Dietrich with boys from the Bana School on the occasion of their confirmation.
Picture by W. Erhardt, date 1899-1909, suggested 1907. BMA D-30.07.011.

According to Missionary Ruf, one important goal of the Bana school was to teach the boys to be moderate consumers. He was proud when he succeeded in curbing his pupil's material aspirations concerning their clothing for the grand day of confirmation and baptism. The new dress code was far less ostentatious than earlier sartorial habits. The missionaries encouraged that the students express their humility on this special day, by going barefoot and by the choice of simple calico for their clothing (Fig. 4.9). The Bana students are said to have readily accepted these new guidelines. As can be seen in fig-

²²⁸ BMA D-3.7, Jahresberichte 1917, III Odumase 7, annual report by F. Ruf, Bana, 19.02.1917, p.7

²²⁹ Agyemang 1967: 90.

²³⁰ Miescher 1997: 302.

ure Fig. 4.9 this was no uniform and still allowed for all kind of individual design elements. The colour white was dominant. In southern Ghana it stands for purity and is the colour of clothing worn by priests and priestesses among the *Ga* and *Dangme* speaking peoples. White is also worn in church and for *outdooing* ceremonies.²³¹ Agyemang makes it clear, that for the pupils the crucial role of colours did not end there. At least in later years the students had to have (together with the white jacket and trousers) a new white shirt, a white handkerchief, a new hat, a pair of white canvas shoes, a new white bed sheet and pillar case. For their final night before the grand day the candidates were put up in a separate dormitory, reminding us of the seclusion practised during Krobo rites of initiation.²³²

If a candidate failed to master the small examination during the baptismal or confirmation ritual at the church, his white bedding would be soiled with a slur of red palm oil, signifying that his reception into full church membership was not spotless.²³³ The confirmation and baptismal rites for the Bana pupils took place at the Odumase chapel. On the said Sunday morning they descended from their hill dressed in their white suits and marched to the neighbouring town of Odumase. The singing students were led by their principal and teachers in full gown and carried their school's banner. At the chapel they met with the other candidates from town. During the service, however, they were seated separately and as a choir they also contributed to the programme by performing some hymns. After church the students of the Odumase schools would invite the Bana Boys for a modest but decent meal.²³⁴ Parents and relatives gathered in the town for the occasion and in the afternoon thanksgiving parties were held in the respective family houses. The day was closed off with an evening service at the chapel which the boys attended for the first time as full members of the church.

Some weeks later the examinations followed and finally the last day at Bana had come. It was celebrated with some school play, the performance of sketches and songs, and the recitation of poems and speeches. Again, it was attended by the graduates' relatives. During the night however, the students themselves celebrated a farewell in secrecy. It was the new senior students who sent off the graduates. Their ceremony featured speeches, but also the exchange of gifts and the singing of a song.²³⁵ It was part of a strong peer culture, which had developed at the school, and resolved the tensions that had built up during the years of submission of juniors to seniors.²³⁶ Every graduate had been initiated in a harsh way into a hierarchic system based on seniority and had

²³¹ Akyeampong 1996: 9.

²³² Huber 1993: 181.

²³³ Agyemang 1967: 88f.

²³⁴ BMA D-1.98 Goldküste 1912, Odumase 10, Odumase 27.04.1912, pp. 1-2; D-1.88 Goldküste 1907 Berichte, Odumase 12, W. Dietrich, Bana, 27.01.1908, p. 7.

²³⁵ BMA D-1.98 Goldküste 1912, Odumase 15, annual report by C. Kölle, Bana, 08.02.1913

²³⁶ This peer culture and the violence it involved can be linked to the Prussian style of Basel Mission education and to the forms of training existing in Krobo society (Arlt 2003: 292-294, 301-302).

been serving the senior classes. With time he himself had risen up from the position of a “slave” to the more favourable position of a “prince” and now enjoyed the according privileges. At the end of their training at Bana, when the initiation into the status of the scholar rewarded the students for their suffering, this experience had resulted in an understanding of one’s position within society based on achievement and discipline.

The missionaries portrayed the school on Bana Hill (as well as their other schools) as standing in a symbolic communication with the Krobo Mountain, ‘the breeding ground for heathendom’.²³⁷ While the secluded situation of the school on Bana Hill indeed helped in enforcing a set of new norms based on a strict discipline, it was challenged by the very literacy that was made available at the school. The world of letters transcended the confines of the school and enabled a direct communication with the world outside. The latter stretched from the nearby bush schools (in the form of love letters to girl friends) to the Black Atlantic (through the reading of pan-African newspapers and pamphlets).²³⁸ The young men’s horizon included the material world of the metropole in the same way as the political ideas of black America, or the economic spheres of other parts of the colonial world such as the Congo, Cameroon or Southwest Africa.²³⁹ Whereas the mission was successful in educating its pupils and in at least nominally winning their souls, its training empowered the pupils in a way that allowed them to evade the mission’s control. No wonder the Basel Mission found that its school leavers presented it with one of its greatest challenges in the early twentieth century. With the expansion of the Basel Mission school system the number of school leavers who did not pursue a mission career grew and so did the number of drop-outs. The mission labelled them as *scholars*, a term that received an increasingly negative connotation. It referred not only to the graduates of the mission’s middle schools, but also to the drop-outs of any school.²⁴⁰

The mission’s vision was that its students would become agents of change, who either as teachers or pastors, would transform the local society radically and on Christian principles. Yet, most of the school-leavers entered the clerical profession. Suitable jobs pro-

²³⁷ P. Steiner 1909: “Fünfzig Jahre Missionsarbeit in Krobo.” In: *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 12(1909), pp. 90-91, here 91. The same dichotomy was mobilised as late as in the 1950s in a retrospective propaganda film of the Basel Mission on Krobo. It starts and ends with a close-up of two pupils of the Krobo Girls’ School and Teacher Training Institute with Krobo Mountain in the background. Before they set out to introduce the audience to their school, they refer to Krobo Mountain as the former site of girls’ education (Cinémathèque Suisse 77.B.963/Q38-514.8 *Missionsarbeit in Krobo (Evangelisches Lehrerinnenseminar an der Goldküste in Westafrika)*, 1950, 16mm, 240m, silent).

²³⁸ Arlt 2003a: 297-298.

²³⁹ Flothmeier 1916: 304.

²⁴⁰ Boahen describes their position within the educated Ghanaian elite, which emerged during the colonial period, as follows: The elite consisted of the intelligentsia or educated professional elite, the lower elite (teachers, clergymen, catechists, junior civil servants and educated small traders) and the elementary school leavers who often were employed as clerks, messengers, shop assistants &c. This educated elite and especially the lower elite which came to be known as “Verandah boys” became an important factor in Ghanaian politics of the late colonial period (Boahen 2000: 103 and 143ff).

liferated with the integration of the region into the new colonial state. Even drop-outs could find lucrative jobs due to the scarcity of skilled labour at the period. Those who received training up to Standard VII easily found employment as clerks within the colonial administration or at one of the trading firms. Drop-outs were often employed as storekeepers, assistants, or messengers.²⁴¹ Often they acted as middlemen at the chief's court: as registrars, translators, and letter-writers. The Basel Mission, which could not afford to offer competitive salaries, suffered from a substantial brain drain. In the local languages the scholars were called *clacchi* (Dangme) or *krakyie* (Twi). In the literature these terms have often been used to refer to young men who had passed Standard VII in their education.²⁴² It is thus important to note that the label *scholar* does not extend to the educated elite in the professions, but is limited to the broad intermediate classes, to "those with limited formal education who aspired to work as commercial clerks, civil servants, or teachers".²⁴³ I plead for an even broader definition based not only on the degree of training, but on the use of literacy both at the work site and in the private sphere. Being a scholar meant that one knew the white man's ways and that his norms informed one's behaviour. This was most prominent in the scholars' dress code and in their use of the English language. A clerical job, however, was not a condition – a mission trained literate craftsman could be a scholar as well. Some of them did work as teachers within the mission set-up, where they tended to demand more participatory rights, better pay, and to criticise the control exerted by the white missionaries. Often their service at mission schools was of short duration. Scholars proved to be a rather mobile group within and outside the colony, moving to those places where wealth and power coalesced.²⁴⁴ In the late colonial period they emerged as the driving political force on the Gold Coast pushing for independence, while the established nationalist forces favoured a gradual transition.²⁴⁵ The school on Bana Hill thus offered access to status independent of descent and was an interesting alternative to customary avenues to status such as initiation as a warrior or ritual performer. The latter positions had lost much of their attraction with the integration of the region into the colonial state. While these kinds of training tended to bind the initiate spatially, the initiation as a scholar opened up a broad field of action reaching far beyond the confines of the local state or the colony.

4.5 ODUMASE AS A SITE OF CHRISTIAN CULTURE

In order to disseminate the Gospel and propagate their ideas of a Christian lifestyle, the missionaries accorded great value to the performance of life-cycle rituals. These were to demonstrate to onlookers that there was an alternative to their own 'unsavoury' rites.

²⁴¹ Derrick 1983: 61-74.

²⁴² Miescher 1997: 111.

²⁴³ Cole 2001: 69.

²⁴⁴ Cooper 2001: 190.

²⁴⁵ Boahen 2000: 103, 143ff.

The Christian rituals did make an impact. Their appropriation, however, was another issue altogether. One such rite was confirmation. Especially the confirmation of the Bana Boys staged at the Odumase chapel was an important event in the yearly calendar of the Basel Mission (see above). In the missionaries' eyes it was foremost the discipline and training, combined with the modesty visible in the boys' coats without collars and their bare feet, that had an important effect. The boys had been drilled in such a way that the missionaries could expect the event to take on the intended form. This was not the case with the confirmation of the candidates from the girls' boarding school, which caused major headaches. The girls appropriated the rite in their own way and shaped it on very similar lines as *dipo*. In the days before the rite they refused to do any work. Their mothers or other relatives had to serve them. The candidates were showered with gifts, cloth and trinkets, so that they might display the family's riches on the occasion. They insisted that the sheep to be slaughtered on the occasion had to be a white one – a black one might have caused bad luck.²⁴⁶ All this was in utter contrast to the austere form the mission had envisaged for the rite and which is apparent in Fig. 4.10. Moreover the mission could not control what meaning was attributed to the rite. Rather than celebrating the candidate's spiritual ripening, it was perceived as a life-cycle ritual. The missionaries deplored that the girls took confirmation merely as a licence to marry, or worse: as a licence to bring forth children in analogy to the *dipo* rites.²⁴⁷

What is more, it seems that these girls had undergone *dipo* (or *bobum*) without the knowledge of the missionaries. At the end of 1905 it was detected that most of the Christian girls in the boarding school had cicatrices on their chest, belly and the back of the waist.²⁴⁸ These testified that they had passed successfully through the various stages of the initiation rite and were now ready for marriage. In his report Missionary Erhardt suggested, that they had been marked by some of their relatives, insinuating that the girls had not undergone the rite. This is rather unlikely, as the marks were very powerful symbols.²⁴⁹ Whether they had done *dipo* or not – it was obvious that the girls and their mothers crafted the Christian rite on *dipo* and monitored the latest trends in the latter closely. The paramount chief had reintroduced the abolished *dipo* as a seemingly new festival called *bobum* some ten years before (see page 247ff). Had *dipo* been criticised for the nakedness of the initiates, *bobum* celebrated them dressed up in gorgeous clothing (see Fig. 5.8). While *dipo* had thus been 'civilised' as *bobum*, confirmation was 'paganized' to a certain degree by integrating elements of *dipo*.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ BMA D-1.102 Goldküste Berichte 1914, Odumase 10, W. Erhardt, Odumase 10.02.1915, p. 19.

²⁴⁷ BMA D-1.98 Goldküste 1912, Odumase 12, W. Erhardt, Odumase 14.11.1912, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ BMA D-1.83 Goldküste Ga 1905, Odumase 126, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 27.02.1906, pp. 9-10.

²⁴⁹ Steegstra 2004: 208-210; Huber 1993: 183.

²⁵⁰ BMA D-1.83 Goldküste Ga 1905, Odumase 124, Odumase 22.01.1905, pp. 4-5.



Fig. 4.10: Pastor Quartey with confirmation class at Odumase.
Picture by W. Erhardt, date 1899-1912, suggested c. 1906. BMA D-30.06.027.

In 1955 Nketia observed, that the Christian confirmation of girls had at many places in southern Ghana been appropriated on these African lines as a ritual of transition. It was considered as the gateway to sexual intercourse and marriage.²⁵¹ In the case of the Krobo Christians the mission could not prevent the continued secret celebration of customary rites in connection with life-cycle rituals; (Fig. 5.9) and therefore opposed the new *bobum* as a continuation of *dipo*. The case of *dipo* and the Christian confirmation rite is just one example that illustrates how people sought ways to combine and reconcile 'tradition' and Christianity. The mission checked on those cases it detected by applying church discipline. This, however was of limited value. Whether a woman was under church discipline or not – once she had been baptised, or if she had been trained at a mission institution, she was perceived of by outsiders as of a Christian and her actions were considered to be Christian ones.²⁵²

The same mechanism is illustrated by the example of the weddings of scholars. The latter often lived in informal polygamous relationships and were therefore under church discipline. Still they chose to marry Christian women and the latter preferred a scholar

²⁵¹ Nketia 1955: 32.

²⁵² This pertained especially for boys born to Christian couples, who had been baptised early on (BMA D-1.26 Afrika 1874, Odumase 229, C. Schönfeld, Odumase, ???.1875, p. 6).

under church discipline to any "stout Christian farmer".²⁵³ As they could not have a Christian wedding as long as they were under church discipline, they resorted to marrying at the registrar and to presenting themselves in church on the following Sunday. The Christian marriage ritual had at first not been much of a problem, but the cocoa boom of the late nineteenth century and the affluence of the scholars brought up new challenges: While the missionaries preached a pious modesty and sobriety, the performance of the wedding became a site where the display of wealth was celebrated in ever new forms. The newly married scholars staged their visits to church, in which they presented themselves to the Christian community, in the most elaborate way. For instance in 1908 two young men from the royal family hired the drum and fife band of Emanuel Mate Kole for the occasion. Instead of walking the short distance from the family house to church, the bridal couples were driven in carts, led by the band.²⁵⁴ The privilege of marrying in the church was carefully controlled by the missionaries and only accorded to couples who were full members of the church. Emanuel Mate Kole himself wanted to re-marry in church in 1899 when his first wife died. This request was not granted, as he was still under church discipline. In the perception of the missionaries, his case had even got worse since his late wife could no longer exercise her positive influence on him. Still, he would attend church service once a month, thereby laying the basis for a continuing alliance with the mission and ensuring that the population regarded him as a Christian.²⁵⁵ In vain, Mate Kole protested against the severe church discipline maintained at Odumase. In his eyes the Odumase mission church was much stricter than those on the coast (i.e. the Methodist Church).²⁵⁶

Also the high attendance at the mission harvest festival made clear that those under church discipline still conceived of themselves as Christians and considered the event to be their own festival.²⁵⁷ These harvest festivals were important highlights in the yearly calendar and promoted the exchange between the different Basel Mission congregations. Especially with the onset of motor transport they became big events that attracted Christians and Christian associations (mainly youth organisations and choirs) from all over the mission field.²⁵⁸ The mission's boarding schools and its seminary delegated some of their classes to attend these events and contribute by performing hymns. Yet, it was not only these mission-approved associations that graced the occasion: Music bands performing the latest popular tunes also attended the mission festivals. They performed for the mission, albeit against its will, a new kind of popular music that had emerged with the cocoa boom in the late nineteenth century.²⁵⁹

²⁵³ BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 200, W. A. Quartey, Odumase ???.1888, p. 4.

²⁵⁴ BMA D-1.93 Goldküste 1909, Odumase 15, W. Erhardt, Odumase 14.02.1910, pp. 12-15.

²⁵⁵ BMA D-1.68 Goldküste 1898 Ga, Odumase 216, C. Kölle, Odumase 15.02.1899, p. 11.

²⁵⁶ BMA D-1.80 Afrika 1904, Odumase 137, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 10.03.1905, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ BMA D-1.52 Goldküste 1890 Ga, Odumase 203, J. Kopp, Odumase 25.02.1891, p. 5.

²⁵⁸ BMA D-1.102 Goldküste Berichte 1914, Odumase 10, W. Erhardt, Odumase 10.02.1915, p. 15.

²⁵⁹ BMA D-1.88, Goldküste 1907, Begoro 48, A. Schmid, Begoro 28.02.1908, p. 5.



Fig. 4.11: "Obscene dance (Sipisapa)."
Picture by W. Erhardt, date 1899-1912, BMA D-30.23.027.

Ashiko, *osibisaba*, *alòì*, and *sukú* were precursors of the later *highlife*²⁶⁰, the popular dance music of Ghana. As they were mostly performed and promoted by the scholars, the local population called these performances *soleli-ado*, i.e. the Christians' dance. A picture of such a *sibisaba* dance taken in the region (see Fig. 4.11) shows a crowd of dancers, all decently dressed according to the mission's regulations, moving around a banner in a circle. A cross displayed on it hints to a Christian message and together with the clothing supports the point, that the dancers considered their performance to be part of a Christian culture. Yet, dance and drums were key elements of the heathenism that the mission had defined in opposition to its Christianity. The dances were thus considered as a kind of 'new heathenism'. The missionaries also opposed these performances because they were mostly connected to the consumption of alcohol and the display of luxury, and because the songs carried criticism as well as indecent messages. The main problem, however, was that they transported an image of Christianity that the mission could not control. They thus subverted the authority of the mission and they also subverted that of the chiefs. The overt display of luxury and the consumption of schnapps challenged chiefly privileges and some of the songs openly criticised and

²⁶⁰ Collins 1994: xiii, 43. Sackey has called for a more precise usage of the term (1996: 303-308).

mocked the chiefs. Like the mission, the latter tried to check on the dances and took to inflicting harsh punishment for the performance of some songs.²⁶¹

As from 1904 the mission participated somewhat grudgingly²⁶² in the yearly celebration of the Victoria or empire day. The monarch's birthday had been celebrated with receptions throughout the empire already before. Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, celebrated in 1897 in London with immense grandeur, was stimulated and informed by the Indian durbar of 1877 (i.e. the coronation durbar), which harnessed a local ceremonial idiom for the construction of the British empire.²⁶³ The mission celebrated empire day foremost in its schools. Here the history of Britain and its empire was the topic of the day. Games with an educational or disciplinarian character were organised, for which the various trading stores (especially those run by former mission pupils) donated prizes.²⁶⁴ The pupils also attended the special church service held on this day, which attracted not only Christians but also the wider population. The missionaries left it to their African staff to deliver nationalist speeches and the chief too, who presented himself as a loyal imperial subject (see section 5.5, especially page 249ff) did not miss the opportunity to address the gathered crowd.²⁶⁵ Far more to the missionaries' liking were two particularly grand events that took place in 1909 and attracted masses of visitors to Odumase. One was the jubilee of the station, which was celebrated on 26 September and pulled huge crowds.²⁶⁶ The jubilee took the form of an expanded yearly harvest festival. The missionaries tried to portray the latter as having replaced the old rituals on Krobo Mountain that had formerly brought home the people from the up-country.²⁶⁷ Whereas this was only true for part of the population, and whereas even the converts' participation in the activities on offer did not meet the missionaries' expectations,²⁶⁸ the convention of all employees of the Krobo mission at Odumase contributed to the importance of the event. In this respect it was only surpassed by the synod of the Basel Mission churches in the Ga-Dangme speaking area held at Odumase from 26 to 28 January 1909, which was later remembered by the Krobo as "the great gathering".²⁶⁹ Yet, it was the other new festivals held at Odumase and instituted in place of those

²⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of the *scholars' dance* see Arlt (2004: 139-178). On songs of protest in popular music in northern Ghana see Saighoe (1997: 24-24).

²⁶² The Basel Mission's regulations envisioned the organisation as free of national and political interest. Yet, many of the missionaries, especially those recruited in Wurttemberg found it difficult to suppress their feelings for the emerging German nationalism.

²⁶³ Cannadine 2001: 107-109.

²⁶⁴ BMA D-1.80 Afrika 1904, Odumase 136, Emilie Krautter, Odumase 20.02.1905, pp. 5-6. See Apter on empire day, games and British sportsmanship (2002: 582-583).

²⁶⁵ BMA D-1.90 Goldküste 1908 Berichte, Odumase 11, W. Erhardt, Odumase 20.02.1909, p. 5; D-1.80 Afrika 1904, Odumase 137, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 10.03.1905, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ BMA D-1.93 Goldküste 1909, Odumase 14, W. Erhardt, Odumase 04.11.1909, p. 5.

²⁶⁷ BMA D-1.93 Goldküste 1909, Odumase 15, W. Erhardt, Odumase 14.02.1910, p. 11.

²⁶⁸ Attendance at the main church service was okay, but that of the additional afternoon services and workshops was modest as was the offering (BMA D-3.7 Jahresberichte 1916, Odumase III, 1, W. Erhardt, Odumase 26.02.1917, p. 11).

²⁶⁹ BMA D-1.95 Goldküste 1910, Odumase 12, G. Josenhans, Odumase 11.03.1911, p. 7.

abolished in 1892, which took over this political, social, and cultural role. They were promoted by the paramount chief. Just one month after the Basel Mission had celebrated its fiftieth anniversary at Odumase, Chief Emanuel Mate Kole celebrated his Yams-festival *yereyeli*, coined on the *odwira* festival of the neighbouring Akan states. "It seemed as if now that the Christians had celebrated their jubilee, the heathen too were to be satisfied."²⁷⁰ Section 5.5 will detail this innovation as well as the revival of the abolished festivals at Odumase.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has detailed the construction (or rather imagination) of Odumase as a site of Christian culture, contrasting Krobo Mountain as site of tradition, and the mission's entanglement in the politics of Manya Krobo. The evangelists were called to Krobo by two entrepreneurs striving to establish a new base of power and to reform Krobo political structures. One of them, Chief Ologo Patu of Yilo Krobo, pulled out and consequently turned towards tradition and anti-colonial policies as a resource. The other, Odonkor Azu of Manya Krobo, used the mission successfully in order to achieve a political transformation necessary to accommodate the expansion of the state. This is evident in the location of the Odumase station in the heart of the settlement and next to the chief's palace. Its situation was far from the mission's idea of a segregated Christian quarter and right from the beginning it limited the efficacy of the evangelising effort. Yet, this problem was glossed over in the mission's publications, where the Odumase mission was often portrayed as a bucolic idyll contrasting Krobo Mountain as the seat of heathenism. The settlement evoked images of an integrated rural Christian community cherished by the mission. The oil palms, which were the main feature of its surroundings, not only provided a powerful biblical symbol in communicating this picture. They also spoke of the industry of the Krobo. The latter's enterprise and prosperity marked them as a blessed people and the prospects for trade in the region must have appealed to the merchants among the mission's supporters.

On the part of the mission the development of the Odumase station was marked by the figure of Missionary Johannes Zimmermann and his sympathetic attitude towards African cultures and traditions. His openness and close relationship with Chief Odonkor Azu played an important role in making Christianity part of Manya Krobo chieftaincy tradition. Zimmermann's ideas, however, did not correspond to Basel Mission orthodoxy and the organisation struggled to gain control over the situation and implement its policies at Odumase more strictly after the deviant missionary's departure. The congregation was dominated by members of the two founding families of Odumase and this held especially true for the first generation of catechists who were sons of the chief. Their as-

²⁷⁰ It is not clear, when exactly the *yereyeli* was celebrated for the first time. The chief announced its introduction in 1893 and latest by 1896 it took place in grand stile (see section 5.5; BMA D-1.93 Goldküste 1909, Odumase 15, W. Erhardt, Odumase 14.02.1910, p. 4; D-1.64 Goldküste 1896 Ga, Odumase 169, W. A. Quartey, Odumase ???.1897, p. 10).

pirations as royals and their involvement in chieftaincy affairs limited their efficacy as evangelists in Krobo and in the Ga-Dangme speaking mission field in general. Further, conflicts within Manya Krobo chieftaincy directly resulted in rifts within the congregation. The main challenge, however, arose from the spatial dynamics in Krobo: While the mission observed and recognised the expansion of the Krobo farmlands right from the beginning, it utterly failed to adjust its policies to these dynamics. This blind spot resulted in continuous frustration on the side of the evangelists and the converts, who were disciplined if they did not attend church service and meetings regularly. Yet, the idea proved to be stronger than the regulations controlling it and eventually the Gospel spread up-country without the contribution and uncontrolled by the missionaries. This pattern of church members at the grass roots proselytising on their own persisted even when the mission eventually realised the urgent need for mission activity in the up-country. On the one hand the allocation of staff and resources could never match the spatial dimension of Krobo expansion. On the other hand the specific pattern of the *huza* and the constant movement of the people between their various farms and their hometown worked against centralised institutions.

At Odumase the missionaries were faced with a changing climate. From its humble origins as a hamlet the settlement developed into a buzzing township centred on the chief's residence and marked by royal ritual activity. With the continuing expansion of the Krobo farmlands and the farmers' increasing wealth the town also became a site of indulgence. Here, migrant farmers enjoyed the rewards of their hard working life full of privation on the distant up-country farms. New forms of popular music and dance coupled with the consumption of alcohol made for an animated atmosphere in the hometowns. All these trends even increased with the abolition of the settlements on Krobo Mountain in 1892. Now the new towns at the base of the Akuapem-Togo Range became definitely the political and ritual centre of Krobo society, and ritual activity was boosted by the chiefs in order to attract their subjects from the up-country farms. In view of these developments the mission felt increasingly besieged in the centre of Odumase. Its coalition with the Manya Krobo paramountcy limited its actions and the development of its schools. Finally the mission decided to break, at least partially, out of this situation and to realise its ideal by establishing a hilltop school at Manyakpongunor. Again it was caught in a political scheme, this time initiated by a competing party for the Manya Krobo paramountcy. The near civil war which resulted from the allocation of so important an asset as the middle boys' boarding school to the town of the paramount chief's enemy evidences the mission's eminent political role and importance in Manya Krobo.

The Bana Hill Middle Boys' Boarding School, which was established in response to changing government policies on education, embodied all the ideals of the mission. With its secluded situation on a steep hill top, and the tight control and strict discipline enforced there, it amounted to a military training camp. Still the mission could barely control the outcome of the training it subjected its pupils to. The acquired skills enabled pupils to transcend the confines of the school, to appropriate radical and pan-African ideas and later to embark on a lucrative career in trading. Furthermore, they fashioned their sojourn at the boarding school on Bana Hill on similar lines as an initiation rite and their harsh peer culture led to a strong *esprit de corps*. Also in the field of life-cycle rituals such as weddings, which were an important site for the display of Christian values,

the scholars set the tone with ever more sophisticated pomp and procedure. Little did it matter that they were mostly under church discipline or had been excluded from the congregation altogether. At least by the non-Christian population they were perceived as Christians and their actions were identified as Christian behaviour. The mission was thus unable to control the images of Christianity carried by this status group, and this is why the scholars presented the greatest challenge to the mission at the turn of the century. This held especially true for the Odumase royals. The next chapter details how they used Christianity but also imperial and Akan culture in elaborating royal ritual and making Odumase a site of chiefly authority.

5 PALAVERS, DURBARS, EXECUTIONS – THE DISPLAY OF AKAN AND OF IMPERIAL POWER AND ITS APPROPRIATION BY KROBO CHIEFS

The previous chapter dealt with Odumase as the site of Christianity in Krobo. This chapter looks at the town as the site where chiefly authority and the encounter with foreign powers was enacted. It has become clear that the Basel Mission and its schools were an integral part of the new base of power, which the Manya Krobo paramount chief established in order to consolidate and expand his influence. The transformation of power and its shift from Krobo Mountain to the plains, which was to facilitate both agricultural expansion and integration into the administrative and trade networks of the colony, relied fundamentally on this evangelical presence at Odumase. The village developed into a small town and political centre, and replaced the former ritual centre on Krobo Mountain. Thus the erstwhile humble farmstead of Odumase not only became the site of learning and Christianity but also the place where those rituals were performed and encounters with foreign powers were staged, which conveyed legitimacy to the new political leaders. While the chieftaincy institution had grown out of older positions and forms of authority, such as that of the head of family or lineage, it was marked by innovation both in terms of organisation and material culture. In shaping their offices and remodelling the externals of power the chiefs tapped into various resources: mission and literacy, colonial power, the court culture of the sophisticated neighbouring Akan states, or their relations with the coastal trading elite. They appropriated and displayed a range of powerful symbols through which they engaged in a communication with both supporters and opponents.

Chapter two has made clear that the interaction with foreign political bodies was the key function of these chiefs and chapter three has revealed that such exchanges were not encouraged on Krobo Mountain. On the contrary, the old political setup was geared to make the hill the exclusive domain of insiders. Emissaries of colonial government and of neighbouring states seldom found their way to the hill top. Their meetings with the representatives of Krobo authority were mostly staged at the base of the hill, on the sites of the important markets held in its vicinity, and in the emerging centres of Sra and Odumase where the new political leaders resided. In this chapter the focus is on this encounter between the new Krobo leaders and their foreign partners. It is also on the appropriation of foreign symbols and concepts of power displayed on such occasions, which were then used in the shaping of a Krobo court culture and its further sophistication. Clothing, regalia, architecture, and forms of display – they all were to help the small but rapidly expanding Krobo chiefdoms to be acknowledged by the outside world as a political factor, which could not be ignored. The following section details a meeting that marked a critical moment in the history of innovation and of the control of the latter by the Manya Krobo paramount chief. It introduces the main features and topics dealt with in this chapter. A next section will then briefly introduce the theme of

innovation in Krobo chieftaincy and how it has been presented in the literature. The further narrative is informed by the consecutive reigns of those four Manya Krobo chiefs who have moulded the institution as it presents itself today.

5.1 SETTING THE SCENE: A PALAVER HELD AT ODUMASE

On Thursday 10 September 1896 a high-ranking delegation of the colonial government proceeded to Odumase: Acting Governor Hodgson (replacing Sir Brandford Griffith) was accompanied by his Private Secretary Captain Armitage, the Commissioner of Volta River District,¹ the District Medical Officer, the Chief Medical Officer, as well as the Treasurer Riby Williams. Of course there was also an escort of twelve 'Hausa' soldiers with their sergeant. No reference is made to the horde of carriers, servants, interpreters etc. that will have at least doubled the size of the group. The party first stopped at Sra in Yilo Krobo, where the governor called on Paramount Chief Akrobetto, then in his eighties. The chief, riding in his palanquin, met his visitors at Trom from where he led the procession over a distance of approximately five kilometres to his palace. Thereby he could make sure that his opponents did not jeopardise the governor's visit in any way. These were the Ogome people, who also claimed the paramountcy and took a far more conservative position leaning to the old priestly leadership. Akrobetto received his visitors in style with his new drum and fife band. The twenty musicians were clad in uniforms and "played most creditably many of the marches of the Hausa constabulary".² Thanks to the wealth created by the cocoa boom such bands had emerged in many towns in south-eastern Ghana, but the one of Akrobetto was particularly sophisticated. His counterpart in Manya Krobo, Chief Mate Kole, introduced a similar band with some delay in 1897 (Fig. 5.1).³ Such orchestras were not only an expression of wealth and modernity popular among the cocoa farmers of the southern Gold Coast.⁴ For the chiefs they were also an important symbol in the communication with the colonial authorities situating their patrons in the imperial setup. In the case of Governor Hodgson's visit at Sra the display of the band had the desired effect. Although Akrobetto was an illiterate, the governor commented positively on him and said that the introduction of this band marked "an advancement towards enlightenment".⁵ While the aged Yilo Krobo paramount chief had taken the lead with respect to the externals of power, his counterpart in Manya Krobo had one crucial advantage: Emanuel Mate Kole was young (35), had

¹ Most probably this was either J.N. Coy or S. Alexander Williams.

² PRO CO 96/417 Gold Coast 1904, Despatch No. 209 by Gov. J.P. Rodger, Accra 29.04.1904, Report on his visit to the Eastern Province from 15.-27.04.1904, p. 7.

³ BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 195, G. Josenhans, Odumase 24.01.1898, p. 6.

⁴ ArIt 2004: 162-165.

⁵ PRO CO 96/417 Gold Coast 1904, Despatch No. 209 by Gov. J.P. Rodger, Accra 29.04.1904, Report on his visit to the Eastern Province from 15.-27.04.1904, p. 7.

visited the Basel Mission schools, had worked as one of its teachers, and had recently been made the first literate chief in the region.⁶



Fig. 5.1: "The Music Band of the King of Odumase."
Photographer not known, suggested date 1896. BMA QW-30.007.0007.

Like Akrobetto, Chief Mate Kole met Hodgson and his entourage on the border of his state near Somanya. Mate Kole had made sure that, all the way to his residence in Odumase, the road was thronged with a cheering crowd, firing guns. This gave the visitors the impression that the young chief enjoyed the full support of his people. This effect would have been much harder to achieve, had the visitors arrived from the opposite direction, when they would have passed through the towns of Mate Kole's opponents. It was the governor's declared intention to quench this opposition and to strengthen the position of the young paramount chief, who had been *enstooled* four years earlier in connection with the abolition of the Krobo mountain towns and with support from the government. Mate Kole had been facing major problems in the control of his people ever since, and deep rifts were dividing Many Krobo (see chapter four). His election had been far from unanimous and was most strongly opposed by two distinct parties. On the one hand there was opposition from within his own clan, the Dje-

⁶ Chief Akuffo of Akuapem had also been trained by the Basel Mission (PRO CO 96/277 Gold Coast 1896 Acting Gov. Hodgson, Gold Coast No. 386, F. Hodgson to the Right Honourable J. Chamberlain, M.P., Accra 29.09.1896, p. 5).

biam Nam of Odumase.⁷ On the other hand there was opposition from the Dorm division under Chief Amitei, who claimed to be the rightful paramount chief of Manya Krobo.⁸ During the first years of his reign Mate Kole had thus been concerned with fighting this opposition, at the same time securing and expanding his own position. Together with his father the young chief even tried to usurp control over Yilo Krobo by having the government confirm a historical Manya Krobo supremacy.⁹ This, however, the government was unwilling to do. Further, Mate Kole had to cope with a severe drain of people from his town and the neighbouring settlements. As a consequence of the abolition of the mountain homes his subjects had ventured deeper into the forest areas to the North-west, where they concentrated on the expansion of their cash-crop farming (see sections 2.5 and 5.5). The chief's strongest opponents at that time were the Dorm people. They made up the largest of the six divisions and could mobilise widespread support with a policy geared to maintaining the old customs and by opposing Mate Kole in general. Dorm leaders participated in an effort to re-possess Krobo Mountain in June 1895, which was suppressed by the colonial government.¹⁰ They had backing from the priestly leaders and the Susui division, which hosted the cult of the deity Kloweki controlling the *dipo* initiation rites. *Matsâ* Amitei further boycotted the paramount chief's call to mobilise the young men to join the Asante Campaign of the same year.¹¹

⁷ While Mate Kole was a grand child of Chief Odonkor Azu, the founder of the dynasty, some of the surviving sons of that chief claimed their right to the stool. This party was led by Akute Azu and his junior brother the pioneering catechist Noa Agwae Azu (Arlt 1996: 1; Azu 1929a: 77; as well as chapters four and five of this thesis).

⁸ Amitei's great-grandfather Muala Okumsro (or Tsakite Lala) had been a powerful war leader and in some documents he is referred to as to the "king" of Manya Krobo. Amitei supported his claim with a letter written by a presumably Danish governor in 1826 and with the *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* by Carl Reindorf, where reference is made to Muala Okumsro (1895: 317). The text had been published in the Ga-language in the journal *The Christian Reporter* earlier on. The sister of the same Muala Okumsro was the mother of Odonkor Azu. Her descendants claim that the succession to Muala Okumsro was matrilineal (the Dorm are said to have Denkyria, i.e. Akan ancestry) and then the further inheritance followed the paternal lineage, excluding the Dorm from access to the stool (Interview with Lawyer George Djabanor, Asite 24.02.1996; BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 159, G. Josenhans, Odumase 14.07.1903, p. 6).

⁹ Although government deemed it wise not to support Mate Kole's ambitions, the latter kept pursuing this aim (GNA ADM 11/1/1117 Box I Yilo Krobo Native Affairs, Minute Paper dating 16.01.1895-01.04.1895, DC Volta River to Colonial Secretary, 16.01.1896. ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Petition by Emanuel Mate Kole and others, Odumase 28.08.1899).

¹⁰ The meeting in which this return to Krobo Mountain was decided on was convened in the house of Angmortsâ Teku of Susui at Hwekper. Among the participants was also Narteh Okumador of Asite (Sikapa 1937: 43-45). The initiative had originated from among the royal family of Odumase itself, when Elder Mate Ahran, who had no right to the stool, spread a rumour that the Government had allowed the re-occupation of the mountain. He said Emanuel Mate Kole and his father and councillor Peter Nyarko had ignored this decision. It seems that Mate Ahran had ambitions to the stool which he hoped to realise by mobilising the reactionary forces in Krobo (BMA D-1.62 Goldküste 1895 Ga, Odumase 128, G. Josenhans, Odumase 22.06.1895, pp. 3-6).

¹¹ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Emanuel Mate Kole to the District Commissioner Volta District, Akuse, Odumase 26.12.1902, p. 4.

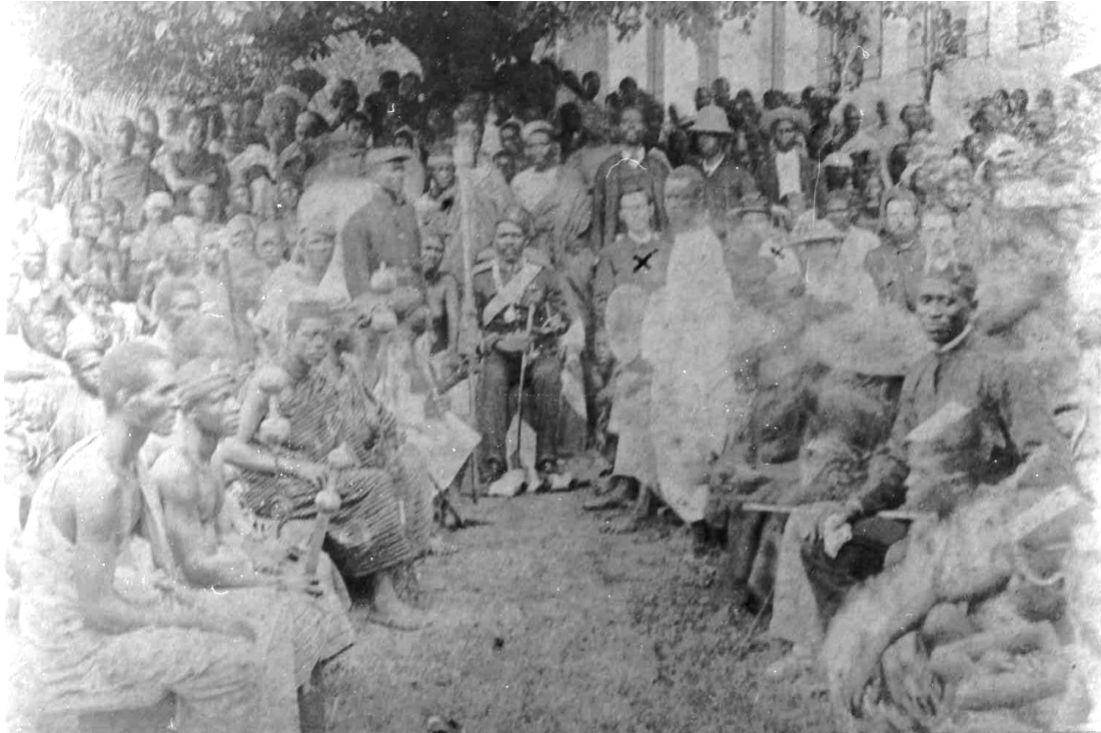


Fig. 5.2: Chief Emanuel Mate Kole and his entourage during a durbar at Odumase. To the right members of the missionary body, in the background to the right the southern face of the chapel, to the left the *we ngwa* (not visible, cf. Fig. 5.3). The photographer must have had the forecourt of the palace in his back. Suggested date: 12.09.1896. PCA (no reference number), reproduction by Dan Walter.

Mate Kole pursued several strategies to try and subdue the Dorm and, at the same time, elevate his position and strengthen Odumase as the capital of Manya Krobo. He tried to shift the important market of Manyakpongunor to Odumase, thereby re-directing the flow of people and goods to his town and achieving control over the market dues.¹² This not only elicited resistance from Chief Amitei, but also from chief Sasraku of the Manya division.¹³ Secondly Mate Kole sought to make his paramount position manifest through the use of regalia. This implied that he also had to check on its usage by his supposed subaltern chiefs, making sure that the latter did not display an equal amount of paraphernalia. Thirdly, he relied heavily on support by the government and asked the latter for instruments¹⁴ and symbols of power such as an elaborate uniform

¹² BMA D-1.60 Goldküste 1894 Ga, Odumase 173, G. Josenhans, Odumase 11.09.1894, pp. 1-2; PRO CO 96/248 Gold Coast 1894 Gov. Griffith, Gold Coast No. 271 Governor Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, K.G. (George Frederick Samuel Robinson, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1892-1895), Cape Coast Castle 20.09.1894, forwarding the report by DC Alexander Williams, Akuse 09.07.1894.

¹³ Both the Manya and the Dom divisions are predominantly located at Manyakpongunor (ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute Paper Case No. 374 cont., entry for 16.01.1904).

¹⁴ One such instrument was the Roads Ordinance of 1894, which allowed for fining refractory chiefs up to £50 or seizing and selling of the stool lands or of the chiefs' property (PRO CO 97/3 Gold Coast Ordinances 1884-1898, 22.10.1894). While it is obvious that these ordinances were imposed upon the chiefs in the colony and were mostly met with reluctance, I

(see below). In exchange he sought to prove himself a willing partner of the government in the implementation of unpopular laws and decrees. As a former teacher he presented himself as an 'enlightened' ruler and did the utmost to make government representatives feel at home when they passed through Odumase.

At the Odumase meeting Acting Governor Hodgson intended to address the following points: Dorm *Matsã* Amitei had repeatedly refused to obey Mate Kole and had not cleared the roads in his district when ordered by the young paramount chief to do so. He was favouring the re-introduction of the abolished customs, was styling himself the King of Krobo, and was displaying more regalia than his superior Emanuel Mate Kole had allotted to him. Hodgson therefore wanted to achieve the public submission and humiliation of the Dorm chief. On Saturday 12 September the acting governor held a grand durbar with the chiefs and people of Manya Krobo. A crowd of two thousand gathered on the free space between *we ngwa*, chapel and palace. Chief Emanuel Mate Kole had taken position under the shade tree next to the chapel surrounded by his elders and followers (see Fig. 5.2).¹⁵ Peter Nyarko, the father of the young chief, was sitting next to him with his left shoulder uncovered, a gesture which underlined his son's position of authority. The latter was wearing the splendid uniform that he had recently acquired at a price of c. £37. It consisted of a blue tunic with a red collar edged with gold lace, the badge of the colony in gold on each side, golden shoulder cords of three inches width with three crowns on each, gilt buttons with the imperial crest, two at the back of the waist and two smaller ones on each cuff. The latter were again kept in red and were edged with gold lace forming an Austrian Knot on the upper edge. The tunic came with trousers ornamented with gold stripes three inches wide, patent leather boots complete with brass spurs, golden belt, slings and cross belt, as well as a pouch all in gold. A red blocked Turkish Fez with a blue silk tassel and a gold badge of the colony in adorned the chief's head.¹⁶ In addition to his uniform the chief displayed a sword and necklace (see also Fig. 5.11). Most probably this was the general officer's sword that had come with the uniform, while the necklace had been presented to Mate Kole for his participation in the Asante Campaign of 1896.¹⁷ To complete his self-representation

want to stress that Mate Kole actually welcomed them, as they allowed him to exert force over his opponents with backing from the government.

¹⁵ Fig. 5.2 comes without information as to place and date. Yet, the place can be identified as Odumase thanks to the characteristic church building visible to the right. Chief Mate Kole wearing the same fez appears in Fig. 5.13 and Missionary Josenhans too is easily made out. The date can be ascertained to be later than 1893 due to the information we have on the ordering of the uniform (see section 5.5). Both Basel Mission and colonial records suggest the meeting of 12 September 1896 as the occasion depicted here. There had been at least one grand durbar upon the return of the Krobo warriors and carriers from the Asante Campaign in 1896, but it seems that the missionaries did not partake in that occasion.

¹⁶ PRO CO 96/235 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, No. 215, Governor Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, K.G., Christiansborg Castle 11.07.1893.

¹⁷ See Fig. 5.13 and Fig. 5.11; PRO CO 96/338 Gold Coast 1899, Despatch No. 85, Gov. W.B. Griffith, Accra 25.02.1899, P. 7. Alternatively sword and necklace might have been those presented to Chief Sakite in 1878 or the one presented to his predecessor Nene Sakite by Queen Victoria in 1878 for his merits in the Asante Campaign of 1874. Both sword and necklace were similar to the one, which Mate Kole was wearing on this Saturday (GNA ADM

as a loyal chief in the imperial setup, Mate Kole was sitting on a chair of a European design apparently covered with a Union Jack.¹⁸

In stark contrast to the chief's appearance his entourage, especially the sword carriers and the linguist with his staff, was mostly clad in cloth. Some, however, were wearing shirts and different kinds of hats. The man standing in front of Peter Nyarko might have been an interpreter. He is dressed in western attire reflecting his education. On the right hand side we can make out several missionaries with their wives and some of the African evangelists. One of them seems to be Andrea Padi. He is standing behind Gottlob Josenhans who, like his wife Theodora, has been marked with a cross. The two white men sitting next to them might be Missionary Kölle and Dr Hey, also of the Basel Mission. No further picture from this occasion is at hand, but it is likely that the acting governor and his entourage were sitting at the opposite end of the durbar ground and that the twelve divisional chiefs of Many Krobo with their followers had taken position on the left and right sides. It is not known what the acting governor's attire was. Hodgson appears on several pictures in a rather sober outfit, while his entourage depicted on the same occasion tends to sport the fantastic ornamentation typical for imperial uniforms.¹⁹ However, it may be assumed that Mate Kole's position and clothing communicated directly to his visitors and to the imperial power they represented. According to Hodgson "the proceedings were watched with the most intense interest, and [...] not a sound was heard for an hour and a half, the period during which the meeting lasted".²⁰ A direct transcript of the acting governor's speech gives us insight into the proceedings. In a first part Hodgson established his acquaintance with Krobo, which was based on earlier visits. He made it clear that it was his report on Krobo from the year 1891, which prompted the abolition of the mountain settlements and the customs performed there. He not only stressed that his report informed Governor Griffith's actions, but also the opinion of the Queen in England. Thereby he established a direct link to and placed himself directly under the great monarch who was at the top of the British imperial hierarchy encompassing chiefdoms all around the world. Hodgson continued by reminding the crowd of the fact that it was Governor Griffith who had effected the abolition and who had *enstooled* Emanuel Mate Kole personally.

Now if anybody is so foolish as to suppose that the English Government is going to allow these customs to be restored in any form at all he is very much mistaken.

1/9/2 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No.17, Governor Sanford Freeling to Chief Sakite, dated 04.03.1878).

¹⁸ With the European design I simply want to stress that it was not a carved stool. This design had for long been appropriated by Ghanaian craftsmen and had entered the paraphernalia of Gold Coast chiefs. Its shape and finish had been reworked, its meaning redefined, and one has to speak of an African design.

¹⁹ On a picture taken in Kumasi in 1900 he even sports a woollen cap (BMA QD-30.020.0044) and at a reception in Accra in the same year he wears a top-hat and coat while his guests are dressed in imperial splendour (BMA QD-30.044.0025).

²⁰ PRO CO 96/277 Gold Coast 1896 Acting Gov. Hodgson, Gold Coast No. 386, F. Hodgson to the Right Honourable J. Chamberlain, M.P., Accra 29.09.1896, p. 7.

There are people who even now think that if they can induce the King to approach the Government in this matter the King would be able to get the customs restored in some form or other, but the King knows how useless it would be for him to act in this manner and he has always sternly resisted all attempts on the part of his Chiefs and people to induce him to take that action and in refusing he has really the best interests of his people at heart. I wish to tell the people that King Mate Kole was placed upon the stool by Governor Sir Brandford Griffith and this is I think the only case so far as my recollection serves me, in which the Governor of the Colony has been present and has taken part in the *enstoolment* of a Native King and I can say this and I say it with confidence that King Mate Kole enjoys the full confidence of the Govt. of this Colony. That leads me to deal with the principal matter which has brought me here. It is absurd to suppose that the Govt. is going to permit the pretensions of any person to be the King of Eastern Krobo other than King Mate Kole. There can be only one King of this country and that King so long as he lives and so long as he goes on in the way in which he has begun will be King Mate Kole.²¹

Hodgson made it clear that the young paramount chief had the full support of the government, but at the same time could never act against the intentions of the government. Interestingly the fact that the installation was interfered with by Governor Griffith was used to support its fixedness, while it was exactly this interference which made it contestable from a Krobo point of view. In contrast to the intimate relationship between the government and Mate Kole that was evoked in this passage, the acting governor did not spare Chief Amitei in any way. Right from the beginning he humiliated him by saying how he had simply ignored the chief's repeated attempts to have his case heard. "I told the Chief that I was not there to listen to what he had to say but that he was there to listen to what I had to tell him." (Underlined in the original). Further he mentioned what sanctions he had in mind in case the chief did not obey his orders: Hodgson would take him on a tour of the neighbouring districts and humiliate him by declaring that Amitei was "a small chief in the eyes of the Government".²² Later he would deal with him under the provisions of the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance and would most likely suspend him from his office. Chief Apra Kwaku of Susui and Chief Amitei of Dorm were then asked to give up one of the four *obonu* drums they each had. The desperate attempt by the two chiefs and their speakers to avert this fate shows how powerful these symbols of power were. Further they were ordered to stop using palanquins (Twi: *apaka*, Dangme: *akpakai* or *tso kpo*) with four bearers and limit themselves to carrying chairs with two bearers. The climax of the meeting was the public submission of Chief Amitei. He was made to kneel down before the young chief holding Mate Kole's knees as a gesture of both supplication and subordination. Finally he was forced to swear an oath

²¹ Apparently this is the transcript by the acting governor's shorthand writer (GNA ADM 11/1/1117 Yilo Krobo Native Affairs, [Acting Governor Hodgson], Palaver held at Odumase, Odumase 12.09.1895, pp. 3-5).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

of allegiance, promising that he would be a loyal subject to the paramount chief. Prior to this humiliating act the Dorm *matsā* had tried for a last time to speak up and address the crowd. It seems that he managed to convey his message in the Krobo language. The acting governor chose to ignore it and even refused to have it translated. Nonetheless, the chief's words must have resonated with the public gathered at the durbar ground: When the act of submission was over and chief Amitei was asked to take his seat again, "there was a great murmuring noise made by the assembly which the King's linguist with the Court crier tried to stop." Again this underlines the gravity as well as atrocity of Hodgson's actions and surely it did not foster sympathy amongst the opponents of Mate Kole.²³ Amitei's oath under coercion did not prove sustainable and in 1902 Mate Kole complained that the chief had forgotten about the oath he had sworn. Thereby the *konō* placed an obligation on the colonial government to address the situation.²⁴ Amitei's opposition indeed continued until his *destoolment* in 1904,²⁵ only to be perpetuated by his successor *Matsā* Bah Ngwa, who in 1924 suffered the same fate.²⁶

The description of this meeting raises various points of interest. On the one hand there is the political dispute between Mate Kole and his supposed subordinate chiefs. This has been dealt with at other places and will not be the primary object of this chapter.²⁷ On the other hand there is the striking assemblage. It features a young chief who has been *enstooled* despite an apparent lack of legitimacy, and who now calls on his strongest ally, the colonial government, to assure his precarious position. This ally is represented by an acting governor who seems to have a liking for the theatrical *mise en scene* of imperial power. The encounter between the chief and his subjects and the colonial power seems to be diligently orchestrated, both from the part of the chief and of the acting governor. The assemblage entails the usage of imperial emblems by the young paramount chief. These paraphernalia are apparently an important symbol of, and avenue to, recognition by the colonial government. The dispute that is carried out, however, is not concerned with imperial ornamentalism but rather with regalia of African origin. As will become clear, these were in most cases of rather recent introduction. The paramount chief seems to be grappling with an anarchic regime of innovation and adaptation of such regalia, which is open to a wide range of actors in Krobo. It will be shown that Mate Kole was trying to impose a hierarchic system assuring his primacy in the display of Akan regalia, which he codified as customary law. Finally there is an important presence of members of the missionary body of Odumase at the durbar, which

²³ It is interesting to note, that this was the same governor who in 1900 triggered the uprising of the Asante and the siege of the Kumasi fort when he demanded to sit on the golden stool, The latter was the unifying symbol of the Asante nation.

²⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Emanuel Mate Kole to the District Commissioner Volta District, Akuse, Odumase 26.12.1902, p. 8.

²⁵ GNA SC 17/20 Mate Kole Papers, District Commissioner D. Waldron to the Colonial Secretary, Akuse 01.01.1903; ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Case No. 374 cont., entry for 28.01.1904.

²⁶ GNA ADM 11/1/847 (case 33/1923) Manya Kpowuno Native Affairs (Dom) (Ba Ngwa); ADM 11/1/253 Manya Kpowuno Native Affairs (Manya Krobo) Case No. 173/1910).

²⁷ Arlt 1996; idem 1997a; Obeng-Asamoah 1998.

is staged right next to the chapel highlighting the close relationship between church and paramount chief. How far was it typical for the enactment of the colonial presence and for the *mise en scene* of the chieftaincy? In the course of this account further incidents of the staging of chieftaincy and of imperial power at Odumase will be detailed. They will be reviewed in the concluding section. In the following sections the main thrust will be on innovation and the integration of new symbols of authority in the Manya Krobo chieftaincy. These ranged from architecture, imperial flags, medals, and uniforms, to photographic pictures. I will proceed chronologically by looking at the four Manya Krobo paramount chiefs who ruled the state during the colonial period.

5.2 INNOVATION IN KROBO CHIEFTAINCY

When the Swiss anthropologist Hugo Huber wrote his monograph on the “traditional social and religious life” of the Krobo in 1963, based on fieldwork conducted in Ghana in the 1950s, he chose to allocate very little space to chieftaincy and only mentioned it *ad passim*. At one instance he described the *enstoolment* of the divisional chief of Ogome as part of his treatment of initiation rites in general and in the 1993 edition of his book he included a picture of Manya Krobo paramount chief Fred Azzu Mate Kole.²⁸ In order to emphasize the religious factor in the social organisation of the Krobo, he had clearly understated the importance of chieftaincy. His argument was that chieftaincy in Krobo, as it existed in the 1950s, represented a relatively recent development – not a ‘tradition’ in the sense Huber used the term.²⁹ While it is true that Krobo chieftaincy only emancipated itself from the control by the priestly ruling elite and took on its modern appearance in the late nineteenth century, it evolved from older structures of secular leadership. On the one hand this chieftaincy had its roots in the office of the family head and clan chief, who himself is not only a secular leader but also has priestly functions.³⁰ On the other hand it emerged from the office of warlords with a temporary appointment. In some cases these were recruited amongst refugee groups of Akan origin. They are said to have introduced the corresponding military know-how and organisation into Krobo society.³¹ When the priestly leaders, the *døemeli*, realised that the institution of chieftaincy had come to stay, they imbued it with ritual power and delegated some of

²⁸ The choice of the Ogome case is in line with this concern with the priestly traditions. The Ogome themselves legitimate their ambitions to paramountcy with the priestly origins of their stool (Huber 1993: 229-232 and Fig. 65). In 1992 Hugo Huber was invited by the Yilo Krobo Traditional Council to witness the first *kloyosikplemi* festival. On this occasion he was honoured with the title of an “Officer of the Civil Division of the Order of Kloyo (Highest Honour of the Yilo Krobo State)”. It was the fervent wish voiced by the people of Yilo Krobo during his visit, which prompted the re-edition of his book in the following year (Hugo Huber, personal communication, Posieux 10.07.2004).

²⁹ Huber’s handling or outright neglect of acculturation led one reviewer to ask, how long a trait must be present before it becomes traditional (Christensen 1965: 551).

³⁰ These roots have been aptly described by the then government anthropologist Margaret Field, who saw the smaller political units of the Ga-plains, in which the head of family officiates as priest of the family deity and as chief for the community, to be the prototype for the social organisation of the south-eastern coastal societies (Field 1940: 138-139).

³¹ Wilson 1991: 51-53.

their authority.³² Margaret Field, the then government anthropologist, researched into the dispute between the Nyewe and Ogome divisions of Yilo Krobo around 1940.³³ Her report showed up this general transformation in Krobo chieftaincy and the inherent tensions between lineages with Akan ancestry and those tracing their origins to the early priestly rulers. This rather short report informed the writings of Huber, Henige and Wilson.³⁴ While Huber mentioned chieftaincy only *ad passim*, Henige and Wilson were primarily interested in the political aspect with the former focussing on the interplay of the written documentation and oral tradition. It was left to the art-historian Nii Quarcoopome to analyse the regime of innovation among the Dangme and Ewe of Southern Ghana in more detail, especially with regard to material culture:³⁵ Formerly the authority structures of the Krobo were marked by introversion and understatement. Their concept of power was based on secrecy and avoidance and this was also reflected in the material forms. The early leaders came from the priestly elite and correspondingly dressed in priestly attire and beads.³⁶ The chieftaincy institution among the Krobo, and connected with it the political organisation, has been transformed fundamentally on the image of the Akan states that demonstrate power through spectacle. Today Krobo chieftaincy is marked by the same extroversion and display of a panoply of paraphernalia, which is typical for the Akan states. The ethos of secrecy, however, has persisted. A sign for this is a relative prevalence of understated and austere forms in the regalia of contemporary Krobo chiefs, which is reminiscent of the early priestly leaders. The acquisition of Akan regalia and art was closely connected to the accumulation of wealth by war chiefs and entrepreneurs. Therefore we can find numerous items among the regalia of Krobo chiefs that once were part of a booty, as well as items ordered from Europe or made from imported materials. Collaboration with the colonial government was another important source of power. Especially the Manya Krobo paramount chiefs made widely use of the colonial power in order to secure their claims to authority, be it with regard to chiefly office or land. The incorporation of imperial emblems into the panoply of chiefly insignia in Manya Krobo testifies to this tradition.³⁷ The following account is largely informed by Quarcoopome's findings, and attempts to add to them by embedding both material culture and ritual in the intricate politics at play in Krobo at the height of the colonial period.

³² Interview with *Wornor* Nene Agbaa Asa, Odumase Salosi 11.06.1996; Interview with Revd Peter Kodjo, Accra 30.05.1996.

³³ GNA CSO 21/22/251 The Krobo Constitution in Relation to the Nyewe-Ogome Dispute and the Significance of Priestly Stools. Report by Margaret Field, Accra 01.05.1942, 12 pp.

³⁴ Huber 1993, Henige 1974, Wilson 1991.

³⁵ Quarcoopome 1993 a, 1993b, 1994.

³⁶ Azu 1929a: 36.

³⁷ Quarcoopome 1993b: 462-472.



Fig. 5.3: "King Saquite and his court in Odumase."
Unknown studio, date early: March 1878, date late: c. February 1882.³⁸ BMA D-30.06.039.

The priestly and the Akan roots of Krobo chieftaincy reverberate in the early photographs Krobo chiefs commissioned.³⁹ In Fig. 5.3 Chief Sakite of Manya Krobo is posing with his entourage in the courtyard of the *we ngwa*, the then palace at Odumase modelled on an Akan court, in front of its main (i.e. north-western) access. On the one hand the picture is replete with elements of Akan chieftaincy. There are six sword bearers (Twi: *afenasofo*) and at least two bearers of breast-plates (Twi: *akrafo*, Dangme: *kla*). These are the child to the left and the young man sitting on the ground to the right holding what seems to be a pipe.⁴⁰ An umbrella (Twi: *katamanso*, Dangme: *akatawia*) is held over the chief's head. While all these elements are evocative of an Akan court, the insider will notice several elements of disorder. The sword carriers would be expected to have all taken a position to the left and right in the front, facing each other. If the small girl is indeed wearing a breast plate (Twi: *akrakonmu*) signifying her status as a *kra* or

³⁸ This photograph is a low quality reproduction (vide the tilted background). A more original version is to be found in the Henrik Muller collections of the KIT, Amsterdam. A picture of Sakite taken on the same occasion (BMA D-30.06.038) was published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 5(1882), p. 37.

³⁹ Quarcoopome [1997].

⁴⁰ The art-historian Quarcoopome has identified this object as an *okoli-awotso*, a mystical stick as it is used by Dangme priests. My interpretation differs in this respect. The *okoli-awotso* I have seen were mostly thicker, somewhat rough and not as long (Quarcoopome 1993b: 150). A similar pipe decorated with rings of silver can be seen in picture BMA D-30.24.027, depicting the attendants of Chief Abankwa of Kwahu. This picture is published and documented in Ramseyer's *Achtzig Ansichten von der Goldküste* (1895: Fig. 42).

soul of the chief, she ought to sit in front of the chief on the ground. Furthermore it is unusual to see girls as *kra*.⁴¹ The same applies to the young man holding the pipe.⁴² On the other hand there are elements that are obviously of European origin. The chief holds a sword and around his neck he wears a chain, to which an additional medal is attached. These items are to this day part of the stool regalia of Manya Krobo. They were presented to the chief on 4 March 1878 as a reward for his participation in the Asante Campaign of 1873-4.⁴³ In this connection we should also note the man in the background to the right wearing a jacket. While the latter might originally not have been part of a uniform, the man wears it much in this style. The object he is holding under his left arm (may be a cane or a gun), the object on his head (either a kind of beret or a cloth wound into a turban or simply folded and draped on the head), the scarf, as well as the man's posture all convey the impression that he is wearing his outfit as a uniform. May be he was a member of Sakite's "native police".⁴⁴

Krobo historiography remembers chief Sakite as the great innovator who introduced a host of Akan regalia into the Manya Krobo paramountcy. He is further remembered as a warrior, whose exploits greatly augmented his standing as a chief.⁴⁵ While all this is evidenced by the regalia displayed in Fig. 5.3, the most important signifier of Sakite's legitimacy in this picture is the least conspicuous. It is the head-tie he is wearing. This form of adornment ranges amongst the oldest elements of ceremonial dress amongst the Dangme and Ewe. It is worn by priests and priestesses during rituals and by chiefs during their *outdooring* and on other ritual occasions.⁴⁶ It is a sign that chief Sakite de-

⁴¹ The *akrafo* are selected from among male children born on the same day as the chief. Their youthfulness and purity cleanses and revitalises the king. They share the king's destiny and would in former days accompany him into the grave (Gilbert 1993: 136).

⁴² Yet another element curiously intruding in the formal setup of the gathering is the small girl wearing a dressing gown, who leans on the chief's side. We know that Sakite was very fond of his daughters, some of whom were educated in the Basel Mission Girls' School. While his first born daughter had converted after passing *dipo*, Eleonora Maku and Juliana Makutu, the first and second born by another wife of his, are said not to have passed through the *dipo* rites at all. BMA D-1.42 Afrika 1885, Odumase 120, Mr. and Mrs. Weiss, Odumase ??:02.1886, p. 5. Juliana Makutu later became the first paramount queenmother of Krobo (Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 54; Steegstra 2004: 217-218).

⁴³ An inscription on the sword reads "Presented to King Sakitey by Command of Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies for his Faithful Services to the Queen during the Ashanti War of 1873". On the badge it reads "Sakitey, Glover's Force 1873-4", and on the chain "For Services 1873-4" (Mate Kole 1929a: 115-117); for the date on which these items were presented see GNA ADM 1/9/2 Governor's letters on native affairs, No. 17, 04.03.1878.

⁴⁴ The Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1883 provided for the control of the chiefs' court and police. These institutions had been in existence at most places already prior to that date. A uniform outfit of the "native police" was only introduced in 1939 (PRO CO 96/757/7 Annual Administrative Reports Eastern, Enclosure to Despatch No. 747 of 13.11.1939, Report on the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast for the year 1938-39 by A. Duncan-Johnstone CEP, Koforidua 03.08.1939, p. 9).

⁴⁵ Odonkor 1971: 27; Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 30-31.

⁴⁶ For example during a funeral a chief may wear a red head-tie. See the picture of *Konō Nene Fred Azzu Mate Kole* during the silent day (*klemē*) observance of the 1960 edition of the Ngmayem festival (*Oklemekuku Azzu Mate Kole (Konor of Manya Krobo)*). *Golden Jubilee 1939-1989*. [Produced by F. T. Mate and C. A. de-Graft Johnson], p. 14).

spite his modernising efforts, his leanings towards Akan court culture, and his increasing collaboration with the colonial government was firmly rooted in Krobo culture and tradition and thus enjoyed high legitimacy. Yet, the more reason why his innovative drive did not diminish his acceptance was that these kinds of innovation were not new in Krobo at all. They neither started with Sakite nor were they only feasible at Odumase as against Krobo Mountain. The earliest written evidence for these innovations dates from the times of Chief Odonkor Azu (reigned 1835-1867). Again it must be stressed that this is in no way the beginning of innovation in Krobo chieftaincy, rather it is the beginning of its documentation. Krobo society was right from the beginning marked by the continued integration of migrant and refugee groups. Other than new ideas and concepts, these brought with them different material cultures that were at least in part appropriated by the host community.

5.3 ODONKOR AZU – “A TASTE AND FANCY FOR EUROPEAN INNOVATIONS”

With respect to innovation in Krobo chieftaincy, the case of Sakite's father and predecessor *Konô* Odonkor Azu might be considered even more radical. Unfortunately no photographic record of his person or court exists.⁴⁷ His avenue to power and the whole of his reign was widely based on his interaction with foreigners and the appropriation of their skills and insignia.⁴⁸ He was appointed as a leader of Manya Krobo, when the mountain was besieged by the forces rallied by the Danish Governor Mørck in 1835-1836.⁴⁹ The young Odonkor Azu volunteered to entreat with the enemy. He accomplished this task with bravura and prevented further military confrontation. Oral tradition has it that for this achievement he was hailed as a leader for the whole of Krobo, being carried shoulder-high.⁵⁰ While this honour might not have meant that he was given paramount authority outright, Azu became the spokesman for the Manya Krobo and gradually usurped the position of a paramount chief.⁵¹ This office had not existed in

⁴⁷ Basel Missionary Chr. Wilhelm Locher did take a range of pictures at Odumase when he first experimented with a camera on the Gold Coast. Only a few of his pictures worked out and survived, due to his lack of experience with the chemicals and the effect of the tropical climate on the materials (BMA D-1.12 Afrika 1861, Christiansborg No. 13, Chr. Wilhelm Locher, Aburi 08.05.1861). Oral tradition attributes the failure of the photographs and consequent lack of pictures of Odonkor Azu to the chief's spiritual powers (Interview with *Konô* Nene Sakite II, Odumase 25.10.1998).

⁴⁸ Henige 1974: 213.

⁴⁹ This episode in Krobo history coincides with the first visit of a Basel missionary (Andreas Riis) to the region (BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1836, No. 1, Andreas Riis, Akropong 10.02.1836, pp. 3-4).

⁵⁰ Azu 1929a: 48-49; Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 27-29.

⁵¹ The Krobo historians Thomas Odonkor and Noa Agwae Azu present the 1835 episode as the unanimous hailing of Odonkor Azu as *konô* for the whole of the Krobo (Azu 1929a: 49). However, these two authors were members of the royal family and obviously had an interest in confirming Odonkor Azu's paramountcy (Noa Akunor Agwae Azu was a direct son of the chief, while Thomas Harrison Odonkor's father Nathanael Lawer was the son of the chief's sister Koryo Patautuo). Elsewhere I have shown that, as late as 1858, Odonkor Azu was still only acting on behalf of Chief Ba of Dorm. Later the Akwenor captain Tenu challenged Odon-

Manya Krobo in that form before. Oral tradition remembers a line of “kings”, but at the same time agrees that Azu was the first paramount chief. This issue has been dealt with in detail by David Henige and Louis Wilson.⁵² At this place it is sufficient to note that this kings’ list consists of priestly rulers and of war chiefs, who at various times gained an overarching influence over Manya Krobo. Whereas the priest-kings came from the elder elements of Krobo society, the war chiefs for a good part emerged from immigrant groups with Akan background. Odonkor Azu had family ties with both lines. On the side of his father Osei Tutu Boafo he descended from the line of priest-kings, while his mother Koryo Patautuo was the sister to Osei’s successor Muala Okumsro, who was a chief of the Akwenor Division and is equally remembered as a paramount chief. Both Osei Tutu Boafo and Muala Okumsro rank among the early war leaders of Manya Krobo.

Other than these genealogical issues, three further elements were important for Odonkor Azu’s ascent to power: his own exploits as a warrior, his wealth as a palm farmer and, thirdly, his skills as a diplomat. These three elements are interrelated: On the one hand the possibility to secure tracts of conquered lands for themselves and to control captives (slaves) afforded war captains an advantage when embarking on cash crop farming. On the other hand diplomacy and conflict resolution was both an important element of leadership in war and of negotiating the purchase of lands from neighbouring states. It were foremost his diplomatic skills and his wealth, which were crucial for Odonkor Azu’s career at least from the 1830s onward. They allowed him to negotiate support by the colonial government and mission and to avert political crisis on several occasions. Early missionary and colonial records acknowledge the leadership of Odonkor Azu over Manya Krobo, but also make it clear that his authority was limited. At several instances it is stressed that he was more of a broker (“*Mäkler*”), rather than a “hereditary chief”.⁵³ Like his Yilo Krobo counterpart, Chief Ologo Patu, he had “no real author-

kor Azu’s quest for power dramatically. Tenu, supported by Ba, rallied most of Manya Krobo and even many of Odonkor Azu’s own Djebiam division against him. While Azu managed to keep his position, not least because of his alliance with the colonial government and the mission, the Akwenor continued to check his leadership. The Akwenor factor has continued to cause troubles with each succession in the Manya Krobo paramountcy. It is at the basis of the claims raised by the Dom division since 1892 (Arlt 1996: 19). See also GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, J. Zimmermann to Mayor C.N. de Ruvignes, Odumase 18.11.1861.

⁵² Henige 1974; Wilson 1991: 49-71.

⁵³ In early reports of Basel missionaries Odonkor Azu is called “*der Mäkler von Krobo*”, which might be translated as “the negotiator or middleman for Krobo”. And in his obituary Missionary Johannes Zimmermann stressed Azu’s diplomatic qualities (Arlt 1996: 17-20; see also chapter three). The term *Makelaar* was also used by the Dutch for chiefs who gained access to positions of power in this way (Parker 2000: 14). Colonial Secretary William A. Ross stated in 1861 that Odonkor Azu had little power over his people, that he was very politic and had gained his position by cunning. The real chief of Eastern Krobo, however, was Ba (PRO CO 96/55 Governor Andrews to the Duke of Newcastle, Cape Coast Castle 18.09.1861, enclosed certified true copy by Mr. Hutchison, signed by William A. Ross).

ity" over his supposed sub-chiefs.⁵⁴ The latter information further points to the middle-men rather than chiefly offices of these two big men.

SYMBOLS OF OFFICE I – THE PALACES ON KROBO MOUNTAIN

Both chiefs built elaborate palaces on Krobo Mountain, which were emblematic of these two components (i.e. diplomacy and wealth). Specialists recruited from the coastal towns, who were paid high salaries, built these houses. The dwellings were an expression of wealth reflecting their owners' status within the society and beyond, and also served as important symbols in the chiefs' interaction with the Europeans and with traders from the coast in general (see section 3.2).⁵⁵ Most of the houses on Krobo Mountain were built in stone, the material of choice on the rocky mountain top, and there were buildings of important size with two storeys and up to twenty-four rooms.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the two mountain palaces of Ologo Patu and Odonkor Azu clearly stood out, not only in size and design, but also with their elaborate details and furnishing. Missionary Auer in 1858 gave a detailed description of Odonkor Azu's mountain palace.

[...] the royal house itself is of an European appearance. At the lower level there is a kitchen, a storeroom and so on. A large stairway of stone leads to the residence. Its entrance is locked with the help of a cactus. We open it and enter the colonnade [that seems to surround an inner yard]. On both sides of it there are two nice rooms. Continuing, we enter the backward part consisting of one bigger and two smaller rooms. The right one of these serves as the royal treasury and bedroom. There are some chests of drawers with china, some boxes and bags with cowries and a huge four-poster bedstead dating from the 16th century. It features two big pillows, some seven fine mats and nine different skins (of leopards, antelopes, wildcats and monkeys). The imperial flag and a purple dress are laying on top of it. [...] The house is whitewashed to the finest using lime extracted from mussel-shells, [...] everything is exactly right-angled and stainless, from the floor up to the ledge the wall is tastefully painted in blue. The windows are closed by twofold shutters: ordinary ones and Venetian blinds. The floor is one firm mass, which is as smooth as marble. It is made of a kind of stone that is ground into powder and then kneaded. This is also used for pottery. There are pots that have a capacity of some buckets.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ PRO CO 96/68 Governor E. Conran to Edward Cardwell MP, Cape Coast 23.10.1865, Enclosure: A. B. McIntyre to Acting Colonial Secretary M. Doorly, Cape Coast 25.10.1865.

⁵⁵ As the early Gold Coast Colony was administered by the merchants, it is difficult to differentiate between colonial agents and traders. Furthermore the latter mostly were Euro-Africans (Boahen 2000: 34-44).

⁵⁶ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 56, J. Chr. Dieterle, Akropong 31.05.1852, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁷ ArIt 1996: 13 quoting BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Akropong No. 39, G. Auer, Akropong 29.10.1858.

Ologo Patu's palace was described in similar terms in 1851, when it was still under construction. It measured 50x40 feet and was at places three storeys' high. In its inner court yard there was a cistern and several huge pots with cowry shells worth several hundreds of dollars.⁵⁸ These descriptions are reminiscent of the *aban*, the *asantehene's* stone palace at Kumase, built in the early nineteenth century and finished in 1822.⁵⁹ Like the latter the palaces on Krobo Mountain stood out of the rest, attracted visitors, and surprised them with the wealth they housed. They indeed made an impression on the European visitors who readily accepted Odonkor Azu's invitation to stay at his palace overnight during their visits to the mountain.⁶⁰ Already in 1836 the Krobo chiefs had invited government and mission to send a teacher for whom they would provide accommodation. And when Missionary Riis and Mürdter visited the mountain in 1838, they were put up in a "nice house of European design", where some soldiers of the Danish government were residing.⁶¹ But the houses did not simply function as residences for foreign guests or as beacons channelling visitors to their owners. Equally important was the message they conveyed to both these visitors and to Krobo society. They presented their owners as extremely wealthy people, well-versed in the latest fashions and connected to the world beyond the coastline. The buildings also identified their owners as members of a trading network spanning the southern Gold Coast and originating from the coastal towns.⁶²

SYMBOLS OF OFFICE II – FLAGS, DRESS, REGALIA

Objects such as the bedstead or the porcelain displayed in Azu's palace proved that their owner was tied in a global flow of goods and fashions. The imperial flag was more than just another curious foreign object. It is said to have been given to the chief by Acting Governor James Bannerman when the chief swore his allegiance in 1850.⁶³ It was not simply a one-way symbol marking the extension of the British empire – an allegiance that proved more than shaky in the years to come. More important was its meaning for the chief and his avenue to power in Krobo. It was a further sign of legitimacy and was thus added to the regalia of his office. Odonkor Azu's "taste and fancy for

⁵⁸ BMA D-1.3, Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 Berichte 13, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg 04.10.1851, p. 44.

⁵⁹ Perrot 1999: 879.

⁶⁰ BMA D-1.13b Afrika 1862, Teil 2, Odumase No. 18, J. Heck, Odumase 01.11.1862, p. 13.

⁶¹ BMA D-1.1 Afrika 1829-39, Akropong 1838, No. 6, A. Riis, Akropong 06.07.1838, p. 22.

⁶² To give an example: on the neighbouring Shai Hills the family of Regina Rottmann-Hesse, wife to the founder of the Basel Mission Trading Company, had a house of a similar design and size. Hers was an old Euro-African trading family and it does not come as a surprise that family ties existed with the one of Odonkor Azu (BMA D-1.8 Afrika 1857, Akropong No. 15a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase ??04.1857, p. 3; D-1.17 Afrika 1865, Odumase No. 13a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 26.09.1865, p. 5). Regina Hesse's mother Charlotte came from Shai, her family name is given as Lamiaakaa (Miescher 1995: 356).

⁶³ This was the year when the British assumed control over the Danish possessions (Azu 1929a: 57).

European innovations”⁶⁴ did not stop there. While his counterpart Ologo Patu in Yilo Krobo seems to have dressed more according to the fashion of Akan chiefs, wearing an abundance of necklaces, bangles, and other kind of silver rings and metallic trinkets,⁶⁵ Odonkor Azu is said to have usually dressed in European attire whenever he met with white men. Missionary Steinhauser, for example, reported on the early evangelising work in Krobo that on 17 August 1856 the chief “made his appearance [at the prayer] in a magnificent uniform (a blue gown with golden braiding; hat, trousers, shoes, and so on, all in white) that suited him quite well.”⁶⁶ As Basel Mission catechists reported, Odonkor Azu’s European clothing not only made an impression on visitors but also on his own people. It seems that the clothing was not just displayed on those occasions when white men were present.⁶⁷ Further, he used to assemble the different insignia of his office into an astonishing ensemble. In 1864 for example Odonkor Azu was dressed like a “European burgher” when he attended the celebrations for the war deity *nadu* on Krobo Mountain. He had been carried to the mountain town in his long palanquin and when he marched from his palace to the dancing ground, he was led by his sword carriers. Both palanquin and swords were Akan elements. During the dance itself this man of a European appearance was seen standing in midst of a wild crowd of dancers, leaping ecstatically to the sound of the drums and drinking palm wine served in human skulls, while one of his sons held his silver sword over his head as a sign of his royalty.⁶⁸

THE MISSION AS A SUPPLIER OF DESIRED OBJECTS

We do not know the source of Azu’s uniform. It might have been presented to him, either for his merits in some military encounter or as a gift enticing him to sustain his allegiance and to assure trade relations in the export of palm oil. It is even more likely, however, that he had ordered the uniform himself from one of his trading partners. Among those from whom the chief acquired additions to his paraphernalia were the missionaries, whose station and other material possessions were closely monitored by the local population.⁶⁹ Missionary Zimmermann, who followed an open door policy, described how visitors would examine attentively the furniture and other objects in his room. At the end of a conversation they would often ask him in passing to order some portrait or chair for them.⁷⁰ Odonkor Azu for example asked Johannes Zimmermann to

⁶⁴ BMA D-10.34,5 Diary by Christian Obobi, [Odumase 29.12.1857 - ???.1858(?)], p. 5.

⁶⁵ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 38, J. A. Mader, Akropong 22.12.1851, p. 2. It is interesting to note the apparent prevalence of silver. The gold, from which Akan regalia were principally made, was taboo for the ritual leaders of the Krobo.

⁶⁶ BMA D-1.7 Afrika 1856, Abokobi No. 8/ III 89, A. Steinhauser, Abokobi ???.09.1856, pp. 2-4.

⁶⁷ BMA D-10.34,5 Diary by Christian Obobi, [Odumase 29.12.1857 - ???.1858(?)], p. 5; D-1.7 Afrika 1856, Christiansborg No. 4/II 39, Chr. W. Locher, Christiansborg ???.07.1856, p. 3.

⁶⁸ BMA D-1.16 Afrika 1864, Odumase 12, Roes, Odumase 20.07.1864, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1864*, pp. 6-9.

⁶⁹ Meyer 1997: 328.

⁷⁰ BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867, Part 2, Odumase No. 2, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 19.03.1867.

have two ceremonial swords of Akan design (Twi: *afena*, Dangme: *afla*) made for him. The design was to be based on his present sword, the blade of which was kept in silver. The handle was to be covered in silver or gold. It is significant that Azu explicitly wanted these items to be manufactured in Europe. The result would have combined the qualities of the two dominant powers with whom he was interacting and that informed his chieftaincy and politics. Other items on Azu's wish list were a silk umbrella and a silk cloth to dress with.⁷¹ Zimmermann suggested that these swords or, alternatively, a state-umbrella might be an adequate gift to be presented to the chief by the mission, rewarding him for negotiations he had conducted with Akwamu on its behalf. When the missionary was apparently questioned by his superiors, whether fulfilling this wish would not amount to a trade in arms and was thus counter to missionary ethics, the latter explained that this kind of sword was not used as a knife or weapon, but merely as a symbol. Zimmermann pointed out the trader Rottmann as a person who might be knowledgeable and helpful in acquiring the item. He also mentioned that two years earlier he had paid fifty dollars for a state-umbrella to be given to the paramount chief of Akwamu. Zimmermann was of the opinion that it would be good to order a range of items, from which the chief might choose before the remainder was sold.⁷²

The missionaries' role in informing the Krobos' taste and desire for European goods is clearly illustrated by the above description of Missionary Zimmermann's office as a shop-front. Birgit Meyer observes that in the case of the Bremen Mission in Peki even the private photo-albums of missionaries were, in a similar way, turned into mail order catalogues. Converts and other visitors loved to look at them and would later place an order with the missionary for this or that item they had spotted in the album.⁷³ The chiefs were engaged especially in this kind of trade with the mission. They were fully aware that the missionaries were likely to pass on their wishes, as the evangelists were eager to secure a good relationship with the leader of the community. This is illustrated by a request of the paramount chief of Akuapem addressed to Missionary Dieterle in 1852. The chief had received a dressing-gown and a night-cap from the Basel Mission, for which present he said he was thankful. Yet, both gown and cap were too small and he could not wear them. The chief wondered whether the missionaries had sent bad report on him to their headquarters, as he was sure that otherwise he would have received as nice a gift as the chief of Peki. The latter had received a full dress from the Bremen missionaries and the chief of Akuapem was full of praise for its shiny buttons.⁷⁴ Clearly the missionaries were dealing with societies that had a long tradition of incorporating artefacts of foreign production into their material culture. In this way, the ex-

⁷¹ BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867, Part 2, Odumase No. 1, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 16.02.1867, pp. 10-11.

⁷² BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867, Teil 2, Odumase No. 12, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 16.09.1867.

⁷³ Meyer 1997: 329.

⁷⁴ BMA D-1.4a Afrika 1851-1853, No. 56, J. Chr. Dieterle, Akropong 31.05.1852, p. 9.

change of these artefacts was an important part of both the political and economic spheres.⁷⁵

ODUMASE AS SEAT OF POWER – THE BEGINNINGS

Coming back to Odonkor Azu's architectural innovations: besides sporting an impressive palace on Krobo Mountain the chief seems to have pursued various other building projects in his farm village. While the early accounts of his encounters with the Basel Mission had described his homestead at Odumase as a simple farm building, Missionary Zimmermann in 1866 sketched the chief's house as rising above all the other building at Odumase. We do not know what it looked like, but judging from its representation in Fig. 4.1 it might have been based on the design of the old Akan architecture with its high and steep roofs. In contrast the roofs of the surrounding buildings seem to have less inclination and resemble the contemporary design of farm-houses in the area.⁷⁶ This house must be the one, which was added to Map 4, and is marked as (F).⁷⁷ The one referenced as "Odonkor Azu's present house" (D) could not be viewed from the perspective chosen by Johannes Zimmermann. Interestingly there is also a compound house for the king's wives (G), to which it seems a further wing is being added. Finally there are the "remains of Odonkor Azu's former house" (E). There is an apparent tendency to shift the centre of authority towards the mission and the upper village. Under Odonkor Azu's successor Chief Sakite this geography was further compacted (see below).

Although Odonkor Azu had obviously embarked on a sophistication of his residence at Odumase, his mountain home remained the ritual centre of the family and amounted to a shrine. When on 26 September 1867 the chief died, his sons secretly carried his body in his palanquin to the palace on Krobo Mountain. He was buried in the basement right next to the graves of his forefathers. When two days later the news were announced and Odumase filled with mourners from all the neighbouring towns, the dead chief was represented by a dummy: Odonkor Azu's palanquin had been draped with his "state dress" and his "feather hat". In the late afternoon it was carried in a procession to Krobo Mountain where the funeral continued for several days.⁷⁸ We do not know what this state dress and feather hat exactly were. While it is likely that the first was a *kente* cloth, the second might have been an officer's hat. This headgear was popular with chiefs on the southern Gold Coast and was also worn by Chief Sakite in 1870 (see below).

⁷⁵ See Thomas on how the origin of the material object constitutes an important part of its meaning, transcending its value as a commodity. The value of a thing becomes entangled with stories about their sources and the donor (1991: 103).

⁷⁶ For a contemporary picture of such a house see BMA D-1.3, Afrika 1849-51, Ussu 1851 Berichte 13, J. Zimmermann, Christiansborg 04.10.1851.

⁷⁷ On a map drawn by Missionary Klaiber in 1873 (BMA D-31.5,4 No. 1) this house is depicted as a big compound house.

⁷⁸ BMA D-1.19b Afrika 1867 Teil 2, Odumase 14, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.10.1867, published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 2(1868), pp. 18-20.

5.4 SAKITE – “HE FELL DEEP INTO THE WAYS OF THE AKAN”

With the death of Odonkor Azu the Basel Mission lost its greatest supporter at Odumase. His son Sakite who succeeded him in 1867 proved to be of equal assistance to the mission. One of his first actions was to finalise the allocation of land for the building of a chapel – something the missionaries had been waiting for anxiously. The plot came as a legate to the mission by the late chief and was situated right opposite the street from where Odonkor Azu’s house had been (see Map 4).⁷⁹ Sakite helped a great deal in the construction of the building, so that by August 1870 the new chapel was completed (Fig. 4.2). Yet, the new chief did not rely on the missionaries as brokers to the same extent as his father. Instead it was his younger brother Peter Nyarko, who had been trained as a catechist by the mission and had been dismissed in 1866, who fully took over this function and had great influence on the politics of Manya Krobo. Sakite is remembered as a great warrior, but even more as the chief who refurbished and developed the Manya Krobo paramountcy along the lines of Akan court culture.⁸⁰ These innovations included both the introduction of paraphernalia such as state umbrellas, swords, and drums; but also the adoption of new ceremonies, dances, and the swearing of oaths. In the words of Krobo historian Thomas Odonkor “Sakite fell deep into the ways of the Akan” and by the end of his reign the Odumase court did not differ much from that of an Akan chief.⁸¹ As has been documented above, this development had already started with his father Chief Odonkor Azu. Yet, with Sakite it reached a new scale.

THE FULL ROYAL GLORY OF BLACK MAJESTIES

On Wednesday 23 November 1881 Chief Sakite followed by a grand crowd of warriors and attendants arrived at Akropong in order to settle a dispute over land.⁸² In order to check this massive intrusion and to receive the visitors, *Okuapemhene* Kwame Fori gathered his subjects in his town, so that Akropong soon overflowed with people. The first days were devoted to the reception of the visitors. “The full royal glory of black majesties was staged: the royal insignia were displayed and any instrument producing some sound was activated.” On Saturday the proceedings were agreed upon, so that finally the case could be investigated. It was held at Mpeniase, the durbar ground in front of the royal palace, and lasted for three days. During the meeting each chief sat under a canopy surrounded by his attendants and people. Missionary Eisenschmid at Akropong was truly astonished by the grand style of the meeting, but considered it to be a waste of time and money, which did not pay off. Indeed, the Krobo did not win the

⁷⁹ Odumase Presbyterian Church [OPC], Indenture Book, title of land dated 17.05.1869, signed by Lakotsá Teiwayo, Sakite, Akute, Peter Nyako, Chr. Akutey, H. Laissle, Z. Zimmermann, J. Walker, registered at Accra on 24.12.1870. Odonkor Azu’s house is marked as (D) and the site of the chapel as (H) in Map 4.

⁸⁰ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 30-31.

⁸¹ Odonkor 1971: 27, 34.

⁸² The dispute concerned farm land north-west of Dawu in Akuapem and broke out when a relative of Chief Sakite (Osom from Agomanya) was killed at that place (Odonkor 1971: 35-36).

case.⁸³ Yet, while the arbitration itself was a disappointment for Chief Sakite, the grand durbar at Akropong was a success all the same. The Manya Krobo had proved that their court culture matched the one on which it had been modelled. The joint visit to Akropong of all chiefs of Manya Krobo was a novelty and as such it had not been unquestioned by Sakite's councillors. To meet a neighbouring chief in his capital was a delicate affair in itself. Equally challenging was the performance of *obonu* drumming and dancing at a place where this culture was deeply rooted. These drums speak in the Twi language, i.e. their sound follows the tonal pattern of the spoken language, which is foreign to the Krobo. The performer thus risks inadvertently offending his audience, or evoking their derision. The same applies to gesture in dance. Such faults in court procedure can be very costly, as an offended chief might demand a fine of several crates of schnapps and a number of sheep to be used in a pacification ritual. According to Thomas Odonkor, who was an eyewitness to the event, the Krobo could only use such a drum if they had captured it in war, or if they had permission from the court from where it originated. This was not the case with the *twenesin* drum beaten by one of the Krobo chiefs during the Akropong meeting and thus there was a sequel to it: The *okuapemhene*, of whose court the *twenesin* was part, sued the Manya Krobo and tried to seize the drum. Nonetheless, on balance the visit to Akropong was a successful test.⁸⁴

The portrait of Chief Sakite and his court at Odumase (Fig. 5.3), which has been discussed above, reflects the same context as the durbar at Akropong. It was to assess and document the chief's progress in the sophistication of his court. Since he had succeeded his father in 1867 he had come a long way. Sakite's election had not been undisputed, and as late as June 1869 he had not yet been formally installed and accepted as the new paramount chief of Manya Krobo.⁸⁵ Both within and outside Manya Krobo he was under pressure to prove himself as a leader. Internally there had been "a mild succession dispute" after Odonkor Azu's death.⁸⁶ The Dom-Akwenor faction is said to have

⁸³ BMA D-1.33 Afrika 1881, Generalpräses 58, D. Eisenschmid, Akropong 17.11.1881, partly published as "Eine heidnische Gerichtsverhandlung in Akropong" in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 5(1882), pp. 36-38; GNA ADM 1/9/2 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 28, 16.09.1881.

⁸⁴ Odonkor 1971: 36. For the royal privilege of running an orchestra see Nketia (1971: 17). Another drum displayed at Akropong was the *plāmpā* (Twi: *prempēh*). Krobo traditions have it that the privilege to play it had been granted to Sakite by the paramount chief of Akwamu Nana Akoto in 1874, in an effort to establish a friendly relationship between the two states (Odonkor 1971: 34). This information is supported by *Omanhene* Emanuel Asare Akoto Ababio IV of Akwamu. Asked whether the Manya Krobo had seized the big war drum of the Akwamu in a battle at Abumutu, he replied that his grandfather Akoto Tenten had especially made the drum for the Krobo (GNA SCT 2/6/11 Divisional Court Judgment Book 1925-1926, Judgment given by Justice Sydney Spencer Saurey-Cookson, Victoriaborg 19.12.1925, p. 239).

⁸⁵ BMA D-1.21b Afrika II, Odumase 5, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 30.06.1869, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Wilson 1991: 116-117. Unfortunately Wilson's treatment of the succession is very sketchy and marred by incorrect references. For example he confuses Nathanael Lawer with the Dom *matsā*, and his reference (No. 4, p. 217) does not support what he writes in the chapter: Azu Mate Kole (1955: 133) does not deal with succession at all. Space does not permit to into this matter in detail.

been ready to accept a Djebiam *konô*, but Akute Azu and his brothers insisted on having their claim acknowledged before they agreed to his installation.⁸⁷ Externally the Krobo's palm oil hold-up of the early 1860s marred their reputation. Their refusal to accept the payment scheme for the war indemnity imposed on Krobo in 1858 put the British in an awkward situation, and the Ga merchants were upset by the complete disruption of the palm oil trade with the Krobo. Furthermore, before they chose to keep back their oil outright, the Krobo had at first eluded the scheme by trading their produce to merchants east of the Volta estuary. This was the territory of the Anlo who, led by the notorious Geraldo da Lima, were at war with the Ga-Dangme in the 1860s.⁸⁸ The Krobo themselves suffered from da Lima's pillaging of the towns on the Volta. Nonetheless, their trade relations with the Anlo coast and their immediate neighbourhood and diplomatic relations with another enemy, the Akwamu, aroused suspicion concerning their loyalty to the colonial government, when in June 1869 an Asante army led by Adu Bofoô invaded the Ewe-speaking Krepe area east of Akwamu-fie.⁸⁹ At Anum (north of Akwamu) the Asante took three members of the Basel Mission captives and later marched them to Kumasi.⁹⁰ The missionaries at Odumase called on the palace to entreat for their colleagues. In vain Peter Nyarko, his brother Jacob Lawer, and Andrew Mate went to Akwamu in order to negotiate the release of the captives.⁹¹ These activities seemed to corroborate the suspicion of the leading merchants of Accra, who alleged that Sakite was trading gun powder to the Akwamu. A niece of the chief had been married to the Omanhene of Akwamu in order to foster peaceful relations between the two states. She was thought to be instrumental to this trade.⁹² Reports by Missionary Zimmermann dating from the late 1860s testify to the delicate situation the Krobo found themselves in. Both Asante and Akwamu (but also Akuapem hunters) could be found in the up-country

⁸⁷ Both Odonkor (1971: 24) and Azu (1929a: 63-64) highlight the interest of the Akute Azu faction and acknowledge that the go-ahead for a Djebiam *konô* was subject to the consent of the Dom *matsâ*. The major difference is that Odonkor underlines the role of his father Nathanael Lawer as a kingmaker.

⁸⁸ Greene 1996: 130; Akyeampong 2001: 60.

⁸⁹ The aim of this campaign was to re-assert the Akwamu supremacy over Krepe and to secure the Asante trade routes to the sea-shore. This was a consequence of the trade-off and consolidation of the Dutch and British possessions on the Gold Coast (Parker 2000: 63). On Adu Bofoô see *Asante Seminar '75*, No. 1, March 1975, pp. 10-14.

⁹⁰ These were Fritz and Rosa Ramseyer, as well as Johannes Kühne. Together with the missionaries a French trader by name of Marie-Joseph Bonnat was taken captive. Like Fritz Ramseyer and Johannes Kühne he left a diary covering the four years of captivity and sojourn at Kumasi, which was edited by Perrot (1994). The Ramseyer and Kühne diaries were edited into one text by Hermann Gundert (1875) and published in several slightly differing versions and translations. For a critical appraisal of the Ramseyer and Kühne diary see Jones (1991).

⁹¹ BMA D-1.21b Afrika 1869, Odumase 10, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 08.08.1869; D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 8, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 22.07.1869; D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 15, Laissle, Odumase 04.10.1869, p. 3.

⁹² PRO CO 96/81 Gold Coast 1869, Governor in Chief Sir Arthur Kennedy to the Earl Granville, Sierra Leone 09.10.1869, enclosed letter by W. A. Lutterodt, G. F. Cleland, J. Bannerman, L. Hesse, W. Addo (members of the Managing Committee of Educated Natives of Accra), Accra 13.09.1869.

where they helped themselves to provisions from the Krobo farms.⁹³ The Krobo home-towns and markets too were frequented by Asante and Akwamu in those days. When Sakite and his brother Akute took a clear stand against Akwamu and Asante this presence ceased.⁹⁴ The border, however, became a lucrative place where an intensive exchange of goods, provisions, and captives took place, and where some individuals made good business.⁹⁵ These activities further fuelled the suspicions concerning the Manya Krobo's position.

Finally the British mounted a campaign against Asante in 1873. This campaign not only allowed Chief Sakite to rid himself of the above-mentioned allegations. It also provided him with an opportunity to build a high profile, when he got involved both in the war on the Volta and in the march on Kumasi.⁹⁶ Things did not go easily: When in October 1873 Captain Glover rallied the Chiefs of the south-eastern colony at Accra in order to secure their cooperation, Chief Sakite unilaterally promised to assist. Thereby he jeopardised the plans of the Ga, who were reluctant to face an Asante army. Together with the Yilo Krobo and Akuapem, the Ga plotted against Sakite by accusing the Manya Krobo of siding with Akwamu. At the durbar Sakite was insulted by the other chiefs and when he retaliated with an offensive gesture a fight ensued. The chief had to take refuge in a Basel Mission store and was eventually detained as a protective measure.⁹⁷ Captain Glover at first believed the allegations and chose to cooperate with Ogome *Matsâ* Lar-mee of Yilo Krobo only.⁹⁸ Eventually Sakite and his brothers were able to point out the intrigue at work (see also chapter four).⁹⁹ The Manya Krobo joined in the actions on the River Volta and seem to have made a difference.¹⁰⁰ From there Glover's forces pro-

⁹³ BMA D-1.20a Afrika 1868 I, Odumase 9, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 24.06.1868, p. 6; D-1.21b Afrika II, Odumase 5, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 30.06.1869; PRO CO 96/81 Gold Coast 1869, Governor in Chief Sir Arthur Kennedy to the Earl Granville, Sierra Leone 09.10.1869, forwarding a despatch from acting Administrator Simpson, Cape Coast 03.10.1869 with an enclosed copy of a letter from Chief Sakitey to the C.C. Commandant, Odumase 24.08.1869.

⁹⁴ BMA D-1.21b Afrika 1869, Odumase 10, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 08.08.1869; D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 11, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 16.08.1869, p. 4.

⁹⁵ One of these entrepreneurs was Timoteo Nate (or Nathanael Narteh), a grandson of Yilo *konô* Ologo Patu, who was involved in smuggling guns and also in kidnapping people (BMA D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 6, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 04.07.1869; D-1.21b Afrika 1869 II, Odumase 11, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 16.08.1869, p. 5; D-1.23 Afrika 1871, Odumase 13, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.07.1871).

⁹⁶ While the overall commander Garnet Wolseley marched directly on Asante from Cape Coast, Captain Glover was to check on the Asante and Anlo east of the Volta (Wilson 1991: 123).

⁹⁷ BMA D-1.25 Afrika 1873, GKA 76, Chr. Buhl, Christiansborg 15.10.1873, pp. 1-5; Azu 1929a: 64-66; Odonkor 1971: 28-29; Parker 2000: 70.

⁹⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/1117 Box 2 Krobo (Yilo) N.A. 1899-1930, Case No. 509/1906, The Ogomey Tribe of Western Krobo, John Glover to Lar-mee, King of Crobo, 21.10.1873.

⁹⁹ Reports by Basel Missionaries at Accra at the time support the somewhat fantastic epic of Sakite's detention and rehabilitation narrated by Azu (1929a: 64-66), Odonkor (1971: 28-29) and Mate-Kole (1929b: 105-108).

¹⁰⁰ Krobo traditions present the other allies as rather lukewarm in their efforts and dumb-founded by the exploits of the Manya Krobo. While they might be overstating the case, it is

ceeded to Kumase via Odumase and Kyebi. In 1874 Sakite and his men returned to Odumase and were received in grand style as victorious warriors.¹⁰¹

COVETED TROPHIES

The expedition, and especially the looting of the Asante capital, provided the Krobo with an opportunity to acquire further regalia and trophies. For example John Akwasi, the senior brother of Thomas Odonkor, carried home a stool decorated with bells from Kumase. The Dom warriors brought back a mighty *atumpani* drum covered with brass and fitted with ivory pegs. After the campaign Sakite sought to secure both items for himself, but the Dom did not part with their drum, so that the chief had an exact copy made.¹⁰² Equally important were trophies of a different kind: The chiefs who had participated in the Asante Campaign received a medal, the Ashanti Star. It seems that Sakite for some reason was not awarded a medal, or that he was not satisfied with it. He obstinately insisted on receiving an adequate recognition of his services and over the years sent several complaints to the government. In 1877 his request finally reached the Colonial Office with the recommendation of Governor Freeling that Sakite be presented with a sword and a collar.¹⁰³ By March 1878 Chief Sakite received these objects (see Fig. 5.3).¹⁰⁴ They immediately became part and parcel of the paraphernalia of the Manya Krobo paramountcy.¹⁰⁵ Their importance is not only evident from the massive correspondence with the metropole that the chief's request solicited. Numerous references to necklace and sword can be found in reports by missionaries, colonial agents, and other visitors to the Gold Coast.¹⁰⁶ The only images of Sakite available show him wearing these insignia; and his successor Emanuel Mate Kole used them to prove the contribution of Chief Sakite to the British forces during the Anglo-Asante war of 1873-1874, correcting a contradictory account in Claridge's *History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti*.¹⁰⁷

true that Glover in his final report underlined the Sakite's contribution (Wilson 1991: 131, n. 46).

¹⁰¹ Azu 1929a: 73.

¹⁰² Odonkor 1971: 32.

¹⁰³ PRO CO 343/7 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, No. 153, Governor Freeling, 09.06.1877; CO 343/7 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, Individuals, King Sackity 09.07.1877; CO 343/7 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, No. 196, Governor Freeling, 08.08.1877; CO 343/7 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, Confidential, Governor Freeling, 28.10.1877; CO 343/7 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, Individuals, King Sackity, 09.11.1877.

¹⁰⁴ GNA ADM 1/9/2 Original Correspondence (Misc. Letters from Governor on Native Affairs, No.17, Freeling to Sakite, 04.03.1878; PRO CO 343/7 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, No. 61, Governor Freeling, 25.03.1878.

¹⁰⁵ Quarcoopome has pointed out that also in other states on the southern Gold Coast the privileges connected to such individual awards became hereditary (1993b: 327).

¹⁰⁶ See for example Bell (1911a: 56); BMA D-1.30 Afrika 1878, Odumase 105, Ernst Preiswerk, Akuse 12.07.1878, p. 7; *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 5(1882), p. 37.

¹⁰⁷ Mate-Kole 1929a: 115-116; Mate-Kole 1929b: 114; Claridge 1915: 84.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF STATE PROTOCOL

One of the sources of inspiration for the meeting at Akropong in 1881 was the visits by the Akwamu chiefs to Odumase in the aftermath of the Asante war. In June 1874 the town became the stage where the treaty assuring free trade relations on the River Volta was signed by the Akwamu.¹⁰⁸ On two occasions the *omanhene* of Akwamu, Nana Akoto, arrived with his subordinate chiefs, attendants, and all the sophisticated pomp and pageantry marking an Akan court. During their sojourns they even attended the mission's church service.¹⁰⁹ Krobo historian Thomas Odonkor expressed the opinion that this meeting was a key to the increased Akanization¹¹⁰, which took place under Sakite.

[...] it was a good thing that [Chief Akoto] came to Odumase, because for the first time the Krobos beheld an Akan Chief in all his glory. It is important to note that the Adangmes had Priest-Rulers, and a monarch as separate from the priests was a complicated foreign order or innovation which they had yet to learn. Odumase was agog with excitement. All came out to witness the jubilant parade of the Akwamu Chief and his entourage. Captains in their multicoloured palanquins under state umbrellas, state-sword bearers, horn-blowers and the glitter of ornaments – all these presented a spectacle that could never be forgotten. Again, it was delightful to see the general comportment of the elders in their sandals to the great durbar, amidst the continual thumping of the "Obonu", the rattling of the "Twene-sin" (short drum), and the droning of the "Nkrawiri". [...] This pompous, jubilant parade and the homage paid to the chiefs was a novelty in the eyes of the Krobos, but they liked it and Sakite decided to do something about it.¹¹¹

While this account seems somewhat exaggerated, with respect to the novelty it ascribes to the event, it is true that earlier meetings of a similar scale did seldom take place at Odumase itself, or did not include such high-ranking rulers. The Krobo Rebellion of 1858 for example saw several of the neighbouring paramount chiefs encamping at the foot of Krobo Mountain, among them Dowuona of Osu, Kodjo of James Town, Kwao Dade of Akuapem and Akoto of Akwamu.¹¹² On that occasion, however, they will not have been clad in ceremonial but rather in warriors' gear. At a meeting held at Odumase in May 1860 representatives of the different chiefs of Akuapem were present, among them one

¹⁰⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/1727 Collection of Treaties with Native Chiefs and c. on the West Coast of Africa, No. 441, Treaty with Akwamu, Odumase 15.06.1874.

¹⁰⁹ BMA D-1.27 Afrika 1875, Odumase 148, C. Schönfeld, Odumase ???.1876, p. 2, published in *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission auf das Jahr 1875*, p. 96.

¹¹⁰ The term here refers to the hegemonic role Akan culture plays in the transformation of Ghanaian chieftaincy traditions. For the case of Akuapem Gilbert uses it more specifically for the process of incorporating the non-Akan elements into the central political Akan structure of Akuapem (Gilbert 1989: n13; Gilbert 1997: 502, 513; Gocking 1994: 424, Labi 2002; Stahl 1991: 262f). At other places it has been used to denominate the dominance of politicians of Akan decent in party politics, cf. the ongoing discussion in Côte d'Ivoire on the PDCI-RDA (Maddox Toungara 1990: 22).

¹¹¹ Odonkor 1971: 33-34.

¹¹² BMA D-1.9 Afrika 1858, Abokobi No. 24, Carl Reindorf, Abokobi ???.1858, p. 3.

asafohene (i.e. divisional chief), but not the *okuapemhene* himself.¹¹³ Finally, in August 1872 the last treaty of a similar scale to the one with Akwamu, which involved all Akuapem chiefs and the chiefs Noi, Lame and Sakite of Krobo, was signed at Sasabi, at a considerable distance from the two capitals.¹¹⁴ Of more importance to the Krobo chiefs themselves must have been the meetings that were staged at Accra by the various colonial governments in order to take the oath of allegiance from the chiefs in the protectorate (or, later, colony). For example the same durbar of October 1873, in which Sakite was attacked, saw the colourful appearance of the young paramount chief of Akyem Abuakwa Nana Amoako Atta together with his queenmother. The latter was referred to as the *okyenhene's* mother by Missionary Buhl. This points to the fact that the office of the queenmother in those days had not yet spread to the coastal states.¹¹⁵ Another grand durbar was held at Christiansborg after the Asante Campaign in 1874, when Governor Strahan demanded that the chiefs "show their gratitude for the British defeat of Asante by being faithful to the new colonial government".¹¹⁶

NEXT TO THE CHAPEL – LOCALIZING THE COURT

The influx of Akan ceremonial into Krobo court culture and the emphasis that Sakite laid on improving protocol right from the beginning of his reign is visible in Basel Mission documents as early as 1870.¹¹⁷ State dances by elders and senior women became part of the Manya Krobo court protocol. When in February 1871 Commander Lees with 150 men and some delegates from Osu visited Odumase in order to settle some cases, a canopy of cloth was mounted in front of the new chapel. The meeting was opened with the firing of guns and drumming. Once the British and the Krobo had taken position facing each other, one of Sakite's elders performed a dance by "performing funny leaps and holding a *klante*" (cutlass). One of the widows of the late Chief Odonkor Azu equally performed such a state dance. It is interesting to note this performance of a senior woman in state ceremony, as the first queenmother of Manya Krobo is said to have been only installed in the 1890s.¹¹⁸ The ridiculing description of the state dance might be explained with the novelty of the practice in Krobo. Of further interest is the setting of the durbar right in front of the chapel. It is likely that this refers to the same place shown in Fig. 5.2. The chapel had been finished only a few months earlier and the choice of the place for the durbar reflects both the chief's pride in the building, as well

¹¹³ BMA D-1.11 Afrika 1860, Odumase No. 14, C. F. Aldinger, Odumase 07.08.1860, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1727 Collection of Treaties with Native Chiefs and c. on the West Coast of Africa, Treaty between Aquapem and the nations of the protectorate made by Civil Commandant Charles Cameron Lees, Sasabi 21.08.1872.

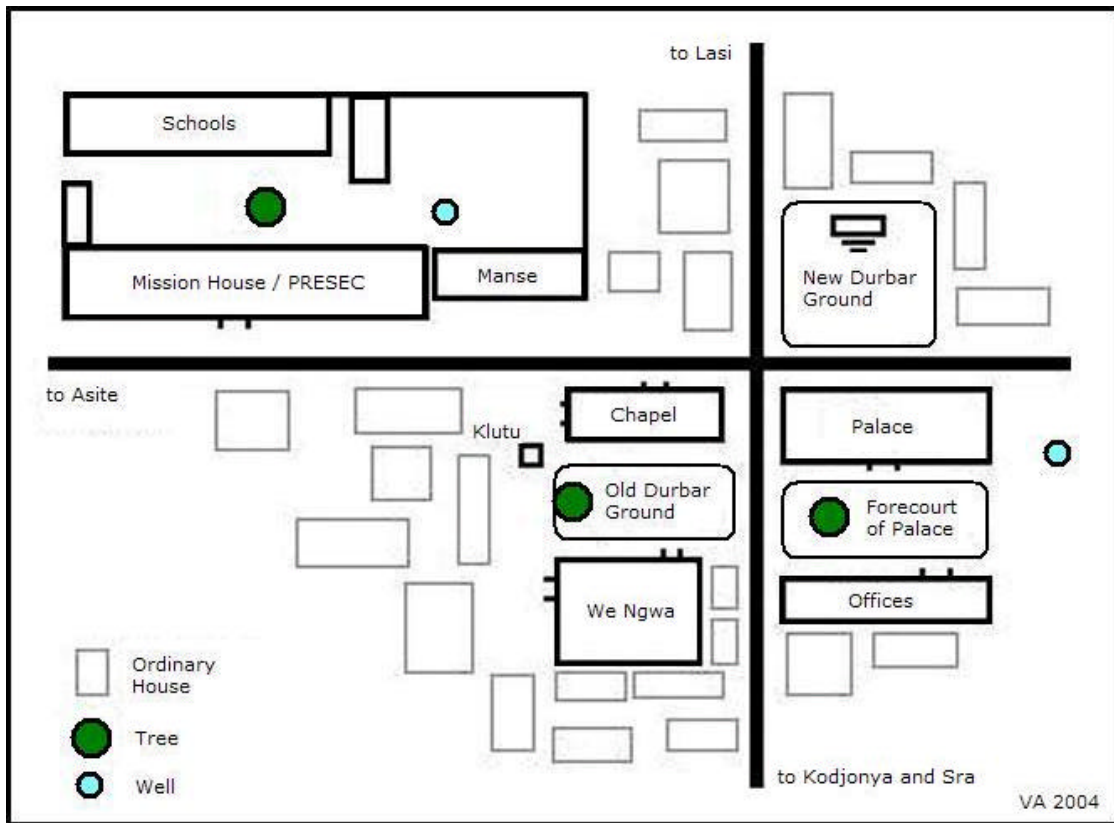
¹¹⁵ BMA D-1.25 Afrika 1873, GKA 76, Chr. Buhl, Christiansborg 15.10.1873, p. 1, published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 12(1873), p. 96.

¹¹⁶ BMA D-1.26 Afrika 1874, GKA 58, Chr. Buhl, Christiansborg 11.11.1874.

¹¹⁷ BMA D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 10a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.10.1870, p. 5.

¹¹⁸ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 54. According to Steegstra (2004: 218) Juliana was only enstooled in the 1930s.

as the important role the church played for the paramount leadership over Manya Krobo of the Djebiam-Nam clan of Odumase.



Map 5: The power centre of Odumase.

The intimate relationship between Presbyterian Church (i.e. mission) and paramountcy is obvious. Chapel, the *klutu*, palace, *we ngwa*, and durbar grounds are all in immediate proximity. Map by the author, not to scale.

After Sakite had returned from the Asante Campaign, presumably in the years 1875-1878, he built a palace on the image of an Akan court in the immediate neighbourhood of the chapel.¹¹⁹ Today this first palace is called the *we ngwa* (i.e. the big house, see Fig. 5.3). It is situated some twenty metres south of the chapel. Oral tradition claims that this project was undertaken with the help and advice of missionary Kopp, acknowledging Sakite's assistance in building the chapel.¹²⁰ Among the craftsmen working on the site were three masons from Prampram. At least two of them (Late and Tei) were related to the mason who maintained Odonkor Azu's mountain palace and they were

¹¹⁹ The *we ngwa* was completed latest by 1878 when the missionary trader Ernst Preiswerk makes reference to Sakite's palace at Odumase, consisting of some rooms surrounding a courtyard where cases are settled. He was of the opinion that chapel and mission house were still far more imposing than the palace (BMA D-1.30 Afrika 1878, Odumase 105, Ernst Preiswerk, Akuse 12.07.1878, pp. 7-8).

¹²⁰ This is supported by one of the early histories written by a Krobo scholar born in 1861 (Odonkor 1971: 32). Basel Missionaries also acknowledged the assistance of Sakite (BMA D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase No. 14a, the Odumase station, Odumase 28.01.1871, p. 4).

also working for the mission in the extension of its buildings at Odumase between 1873 and 1890.¹²¹ Another specialist craftsman involved in the construction was Stephen Djabatey. He was a member of the royal family and was trained as a carpenter in the Basel Mission workshop in Christiansborg.¹²² The buildings of the *we ngwa* are set up around a large court yard. On the southern side lies a hall and the living quarters. In front of it there is an elevated colonnade where the chief and his elders would sit. Tucked away behind this building is situated the stool house, while a prison cell and the hall of the “native tribunal of Odumase”, as well as some store rooms enclose the other sides of the yard. What is absent is the open reception room (Twi: *dampan*) of the typical Akan compound house, as well as ornamentation of columns and walls. Instead the main building features an elevated veranda with big columns opening on the courtyard, where the chief and his elders sit during functions.

Odumase had now definitely become the centre of the Manya Krobo paramountcy, and although the ever more sophisticated state protocol had a negative impact on the work of the missionaries, Chief Sakite knew how to sustain a positive relationship with the latter. When in December 1882 the mission’s director Praetorius visited Odumase, Sakite joined in the great reception staged by the congregation for the prominent visitor. Old and young members of the congregation met the director at some forty-five minutes distance from Odumase, singing hymns and swaying palm leaves. The drums of Chief Sakite’s court orchestra competed with the songs and announced the chief’s coming. Visually a big red umbrella heralded his presence in the midst of a large retinue of attendants carrying shiny swords and staffs. The same competition between the congregation and the state was repeated two days later, when Praetorius proceeded to Sra, where the Yilo *Konō* Akrobetto let one of his state umbrellas shade the director. Both chiefs made rich presents to the prominent visitor. While at Sra they consisted of two sheep, yam, and palm wine, Chief Sakite presented the skins of a leopard and of some monkeys, as well as some earthenware. The reception had the intended effect. Praetorius indeed felt very welcome among the Krobo and praised them as a nice and zealous people.¹²³

¹²¹ Odonkor 1971: 38. One of the masons by name Late Kpakpo had been working in Lagos early in his career (BMA D-3.10 Quartalsberichte 1915-17, XXII, 8, F. Renz, Odumase 30.06.1917, p. 2).

¹²² Interview with ‘Uncle’ Nanor Mate Kole, Odumase *we ngwa* 08.06.1999; Stephen Djabatey was born at Odumase in about 1860. He was baptised 1869, visited the Basel Mission elementary schools before receiving his training at Christiansborg. He worked as a carpenter at Odumase until his brother Emanuel Mate Kole was enstooled as *konō* of Manya Krobo, when Djabatey became a courtier. He married four wives of whom only the first one had not been baptized. Consequently he was excluded from the congregation and was only re-admitted in 1907 after dismissing three of them. Djabatey died in 1910 (BMA D-1.88 Goldküste 1907 Berichte, Odumase 15, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 10.02.1908, p. 7; D-1.95 Goldküste 1910, Odumase 15, W. A. Quartey, Odumase 11.04.1911, p. 4).

¹²³ BMA D-1.34 Afrika 1882, Odumase 94, Odumase station, Odumase 14.02.1883, p. 8; D-1.34 Afrika 1882, Odumase 96, R. Furrer, Odumase ???.1883, p. 2; private letters by Praetorius dated Odumase 21, 22, and 25.10.1882, published in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 3(1883), pp. 17-18 and 4(1883), p. 58.

Towards the end of his reign Chief Sakite built a second palace at Odumase, which made the integration of the chapel into the Manya Krobo paramountcy even more evident (Map 5). Now it was embraced in the West by the *klutu*, to the South by the *we ngwa* and durbar ground, and to the East by the new palace. This new structure might have been one of the reasons, why Sakite faced financial problems at the end of his reign.¹²⁴ It was far more imposing than the *we ngwa*. The latter was situated at a lower level than both chapel and mission house, so that it was somewhat submerged by the surrounding buildings. The largest and most imposing building at Odumase was the mission house. Sakite's new palace is often said to have been designed on the image of the typical Basel Mission building. The core concept of the latter was aeration and the elimination of heat building up in the structure. This was achieved by surrounding the rather compact rooms on all sides with a wide wooden veranda on both levels. These verandas and the wide roof prevented sunlight from touching the earthen walls. This design was applied to most of the houses build by affluent cocoa farmers around the turn of the century. They were far less massive in appearance than the new palace built by Sakite. This building is still in use today and has survived without major modifications. Its base is very wide and the exposed thick outer walls on the ground level give it the massive appearance of a fortress when looked at from the roadside to the North. The ground level features to the South a kind of recessed veranda with massive pillars opening to the forecourt. In the early years this veranda seems to have opened to the North as well, before the gaps between the pillars were closed.¹²⁵ Like the cocoa and mission houses it has a staircase leading to the first floor, where the main reception room of the chief and his private rooms are situated. This upper storey is very similar to that of a mission house. It seems that Sakite did not live to inhabit his new palace.¹²⁶ The chief is nonetheless very present in this building. On the one hand he is said to be buried in its basement,¹²⁷ and on the other hand his portrait hangs prominently in the reception hall right opposite from where the present paramount chief sits (Fig. 5.4).¹²⁸

¹²⁴ A sign for this was that Sakite no longer shared the remuneration for the cleaning of the roads with his chiefs (GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute Paper with an abstract of Conf. M.P. 309/91 commenting on the Report of Mr. Bell, D.S.V.R. on the Krobo Customs, dated 19.01.1891, § 9; PRO CO 96/217 Gold Coast 1891 Gov. W.B. Griffith/Act. Gov. Hodgson, No. 191, Gov. Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Christiansborg 06.06.1891, enclosure 13, report by DC Riby Williams, Akuse 13.11.1890).

¹²⁵ These openings are visible on a picture of the Odumase Girls' School pupils taken on the veranda of the mission house between 1888 and 1893 (BMA D-30.06.045).

¹²⁶ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Minute Paper with an abstract of Conf. M.P. 309/91 commenting on the Report of Mr. Bell, D.S.V.R. on the Krobo Customs, dated 19.01.1891, § 9. By 12 January 1892 the building was still not furnished. At that time it was even deliberated whether the mission should rent it in order to put up missionary doctor Eckhardt (BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 102, C. Kölle, Odumase 12.01.1892).

¹²⁷ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Conf. 14/92, Telegram by District Commissioner Akuse to Colonial Secretary, Akuse 30.01.1892.

¹²⁸ On the display of portraits in southern Ghanaian family houses see Haney (2004).



Fig. 5.4: Painted portrait of Chief Sakite I at the Odumase palace. Reproduced with a digital camera by Thala Linder on 04.08.2004, set straight digitally by Veit Artl 20.01.2005 with reference to picture BMA D-30.06.038.

THE POSTHUMOUS PRESENCE OF A LOYAL SUBJECT

The colourful painted portrait was apparently produced on the basis of the photographic portrait Sakite had made when he received the sword and necklace presented to him by Queen Victoria in 1878. A copy of this photograph is held by the Basel Mission Archives.¹²⁹ According to Wilson this portrait, which was presented to the Krobo by Governor Griffith in 1892 is “representative of the unusual position occupied by Sakite during

¹²⁹ BMA D-30.06.038, published as engraving in *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 5(1882), p. 37.

his long reign and suggestive of his important and consistent service to the colonial government during and after the 1873-1874 Asante War and of his invaluable assistance in the administration of the Volta District". A close study of colonial records reveals that Wilson's assessment is rather exaggerated and reproduces the oratory of Governor Griffith (see below). The relationship between Chief Sakite and the government was far from smooth (see above). Yet, the portrait had a high symbolic value, especially for Sakite's successor Emanuel Mate Kole, in whose *enstoolment* it played an eminent role. The circumstances of Sakite's death in January 1892 that lead to the *enstoolment* of Mate Kole and the abolition of the war cults, the girls' initiation, and the mountain homes, have been detailed in chapters two and three. The durbars held in this connection at Odumase between 19 and 23 July 1892 were exemplary of the governor's leaning towards histrionic productions.



Fig. 5.5: "Gold Coast: African band of the English military."
The bands of the colonial government (here a drum and fife ensemble) were a major attraction on the southern Gold Coast, an effect which was used in recruiting campaigns. Date late: 31.12.1895, photographer and location unknown. BMA QW-30.011.0053.

The governor arrived at Odumase on 19 July with a large retinue consisting of the colonial secretary, the governor's private and military secretaries, and a number of further members of the administration. They were accompanied by 150 Hausa soldiers and the whole train entered the town ceremoniously to the tune of a military brass band. Like the court orchestras of the African chiefs the band heralded the governor's presence.

With its shiny instruments, its uniforms and military drill it was on the one hand an expression of colonial authority and its mighty sound was a terrifying demonstration of power. On the other hand it was a great attraction and was very popular among the people of the southern Gold Coast (Fig. 5.5).¹³⁰ The governor was aware of the latter aspect and had even announced in a letter to District Commissioner Williams that he would bring this band “specially for the gratification of the ladies, so [...] they must get ready to have some nice dances for three or four days whilst I am at Odumasi”.¹³¹

The event was to be documented by the governor’s shorthand writer and by Edmund Bannerman (solicitor of the Supreme Court and agent for Reuter’s). Bannerman listed carefully the various members of Griffith’s entourage.¹³² The governor had with him messengers of the different Ga-chiefs as well as of the *okuapemhene*.¹³³ The governor had requested the moral support of these chiefs in consideration of “the gravity of the matter”. As will be seen, their support was not only in conveying messages of approval to the Krobo, but the large number of linguists and their attendants in full regalia further added to the sophistication of the enactment of the governor’s presence at Odumase.¹³⁴ In the afternoon of Wednesday 20 July the joint durbar with the Manya and Yilo Krobo chiefs and people was held. Most of the divisional chiefs and their respective *asafoatsâmei* arrived in full splendour, riding in a palanquin or sedan chair and accompanied by their spokesmen, sword bearers, umbrella and stool carriers. They were led by their own court orchestra and followed by the commoners who were dancing and singing. The colourful umbrellas, the gorgeous cloths worn by the chiefs, the golden rings adorning their arms and fingers (even their thumbs), their headgear consisting of leopard and other skins, all made for an extremely rich picture and were proof that Akan court culture now informed Krobo chieftaincy on all levels. Remarkably *Konô* Akrobetto was wearing the same turban-like headgear favoured by the late Manya Krobo chief. At the one side of the open space on which the durbar was held, the brass band and the Hausa troops clad in their dress uniform and armed with their guns with bayonet had taken position. Two cannon were placed to their left and right. (According to the governor, these were intended to fire a salute to the newly installed king, but it is obvious that they also were strategically placed should the situation get out of hand).¹³⁵ In front of this display of colonial power the governor and his entourage had taken posi-

¹³⁰ Arlt 2004: 144, 165-166; Boonzajer Flaes 2000: 32-57.

¹³¹ ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 26, Governor Griffith to the Commissioner of the Volta River District Williams, Christiansborg Castle, 06.07.1892.

¹³² This “litany of names” was also a typical feature in descriptions of the imperial assemblage (durbar) in India. The names, titles and functions were in fact an embodiment of the durbar, which lived of the multifaceted hierarchies elaborately assembled and organised in one grand panache (Cohn 1992: 193).

¹³³ GNA NP 13/1 “The Krobo Question.” In: *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, Vol. 3, No. 87, 01.08.1892, p. 3 [in the following quoted as “The Krobo Question”].

¹³⁴ PRO CO 98/7 Minutes of the Executive Council 1889-1893, Meeting of the 06.03.1893.

¹³⁵ GNA ADM 1/9/4, No. 26, Governor Griffith to DC Williams, Christiansborg Castle, 06.07.1892; Apter 2002: 575.

tion, sitting behind a long table, and it is to be assumed that their outfit matched the dress uniforms of the Hausa soldiers and the African chiefs. To their left and right were the speakers and messengers of the neighbouring chiefdoms with their retinue consisting of the same kind of attendants that framed the Krobo chiefs.¹³⁶ The whole spectacle was a carefully staged “processual ordering”¹³⁷ that recognised the African chiefs visually, but at the same time controlled them tightly. Griffith began his speech by announcing that he had come to implement unpopular measures, and expressed his hope that the Krobo would obey the Queen’s will just as he himself did. In order to create further support for his position, he harnessed the figure of the “great warrior Sakitty who was all his life a devoted friend to your and my mistress Her most gracious Majesty the Queen”.

He is no more here, but has passed to the other land, but not without leaving a name; yes he has left a name for valour, for loyalty to the Government of Queen Victoria and the special aptitude to govern people which not many men possess. I hope that as I am between you and Her Majesty's will and pleasure her commands will be accepted and implicitly obeyed. Do you all see that vacant chair occupied by nobody? (Here the Governor pointed to a vacant chair near the table in front of him towards the right). It was intended for your late King. I know if Sakitty was here, he would have sat in it, but still I shall endeavour to put him there. I will, he is under the Union Jack (at this stage the Governor unfolded a framed picture of late Sakitty which was wrapped up with the British flag, and resting on the table near by, raised and held it up to public view saying “Croboes here is Sakitty”). Placing the picture on the vacant chair and then pointing to it he added these words: - “he sits in his place near the Governor.”¹³⁸

The governor thus re-constructed a partnership with the late chief, which tapped into the alliance the chief had forged with the government. This bond was embodied in the necklace and sword presented to him by Queen Victoria and featuring prominently in the painting. The two symbols which had been instrumental in expanding Sakite’s and the Manya Krobo’s influence were thus turned into a means of obliging the Krobo to accept the 1892 Native Customs Ordinance and the interference of the governor in the election of Sakite’s successor. Griffith then addressed the two “fetish priests Aguale and Okumo”,¹³⁹ whose simple white calico cloth and high straw hat distinguished them

¹³⁶ BMA D-1.56 Goldküste 1892 Ga, Odumase 128, A. Mischlich, Odumase 30.07.1892 and 10.08.1892, published as “Wichtige Tage für das Krobo-Land.” In: *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 11(1892), pp. 81-83, [in the following quoted as “Wichtige Tage für das Krobo-Land”].

¹³⁷ Apter 2002: 575-576.

¹³⁸ “The Krobo Question,” p. 3.

¹³⁹ Aguale (or Agware) was probably the priest for *kloweki*, and ranked among the holiest and most important persons in Krobo. He was only surpassed by the priestess for the same deity. Okumo was (and still is) the spokesman and head assistant of *kloweki*. While strict laws assure the purity of the *dæmeli* and prevent them from getting in contact with blood, Okumo was the one in charge of executions. He is thus the most worldly-oriented among the *dæmeli* and in this respect ranked first among them. He was also in charge of enstooling the *konô*

markedly from the colourful crowd. These two members of the *doame* council had written a letter to District Commissioner James Alexander Williams announcing that together with a number of the divisional chiefs they had elected Akute Azu as the new paramount chief. Government had found out that the signatures of the chiefs had been forged.¹⁴⁰ At least the chiefs Apra Kwaku of Susui, Asare of Akwenor and Amitei of Dom denied having signed the letter. Questioned by the governor, Priest Aguale blamed Otutu, the head of the Azu family, for having instigated this deed. The governor then publicly denounced the letter written to the district commissioner as a fraudulent and diabolical scheme typical of the priests. He continued by declaring the “Krobo Customs” abolished, and had the representatives of the chiefs of Christiansborg, Accra, and Akuapem, as well as Edmund Bannerman representing the educated coastal elite, speak in support of the measure. Concluding the meeting the governor called on the crowd to deliberate on who was to be Sakite’s successor. The decision was to be announced in a next durbar to be held in two days’ time.

“AS IT WAS USUALLY DONE IN FORMER DAYS”

The meeting of Friday 22 July saw the same setup, except that this time none of the priests was present. Again an emissary of a neighbouring state, the linguist of the *okyenhene*, held a speech in support of the abolition. Griffith urged that he wanted the election of the new chief to be “as it was usually done in former days”. What followed was obviously a far cry from any assumed customary procedure. The governor called on “Chief Kwayo” who had known Odonkor Azu and knew “all that is usually done”.¹⁴¹ Daniel Kwayo had been a councillor of Chief Sakite and was baptised at the age of seventy in 1879. Missionary Schönfeld claimed in 1880 that Kwayo gave up his office upon baptism, but this seems not to have been the case.¹⁴² He was the chief of the Djebiam-Nam clan, the stool-keeper, and thus one of the kingmakers. According to Kwayo the six divisional chiefs had to agree to the candidate he, as the head of the Djebiam-Nam (i.e. Odonkor Azu’s) clan, proposed. Once they had done so, the *enstoolment* could take

(Huber 1993: 242-243; BMA D-1.62 Goldküste 1895 Ga, Odumase 128, G. Josenhans, Odumase 22.06.1895, p. 4).

¹⁴⁰ That is, they did not meet the regulations concerning the signatures of illiterate persons. These prescribed that the writer of the letter had to be qualified for this job and that he had to interpret the content of the letter in the local language to the signatories, making sure that they had fully understood it.

¹⁴¹ According to Azu (1929a: 78) Kwayo (or Daniel Lawer Kwao) had posed as a son of Odonkor Azu, whereas in reality his father was an Ewe man.

¹⁴² Daniel Lawer Kwayo’s signature is to be found on many later documents, such as the petition of 1884 quoted in chapter one. He is referred to as the “chief of Odumase” or a “chief captain”. His son Tetter Osieku Tutime (also given as Osiakro or Osiokru) officiated as a junior *otsiami* to Chief Sakite and later as senior *otsiami* to Emanuel Mate Kole (BMA D-1.31 Afrika 1879, Odumase 57, J. Weiss, Odumase ???.1880, p. 9; PRO CO 343/10 Register of Correspondence from Gold Coast, Despatch No. 307, Governor Griffith, 06.08.1886, p. 75; GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Many) Native Affairs, Case No. 374 contd., Eastern Krobo Native Affairs, entry on minute paper dated 22.12.1903 being an abstract of notes of evidence of the enstoolment of Emanuel Mate Kole on 24.07.1892; ADM 29/4/56 Inquiry into the Akyem Abuakwa - Krobos Land Dispute, 01.05.1922, evidence by Chief Linguist Mate Kojo, p. 228).

place. Griffith therefore asked the six chiefs publicly to voice their agreement to the proposed candidate Emanuel Mate Kole, and reassured himself that there was no other clan that had to be consulted. He proceeded to examine the candidate himself and took "his oaths of allegiance and fidelity as required by law" (i.e. the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1883). The installation of Mate Kole took place on the next morning (23 July 1892). Again the chiefs and the governor with his suite showed up "in full court dress" and again, the ceremony was carefully arranged and seems to have met with the government's highest expectations. According to the reporter of the Gold Coast Chronicle (presumably this was Reuter's Agent Edmund Bannerman himself) it was "so grand and imposing that there was nothing to equal it (save Prince Boatin of Ashantee's visit to Accra in August 1891) on record in this Colony".

The new king with his badge of office round his neck and a Golden Sceptre full eight feet high in the hand of his grand marshal standing by his side took position in his Palanquin opposite His Excellency and suite; a guard of honour to the new king and His Excellency's body guard formed an inclosure [sic] of three angles [...] Sir Brandford Griffith then proceeded on to say - "Where are the priests? Are they afraid to show themselves today? Chiefs of Eastern Croboe, I am here to receive the king whom you elected yesterday! Will you bring him up and present him (The chiefs did so, - and the king who is almost six feet high descended from his Palanquin and stood before the Governor, as straight as a Piston rod, full of life, amid loud cheers and a countenance bespeaking firmness and an evidence that he was born and destined to rule nations - when His Excellency addressed him as follows: -) "King"! I welcome you! Chiefs, where is the stool? The stool was then delivered by the custodian and brought to the Governor by the two leading chiefs and the Governor told the drum major to be ready, when the gunners also stood by their cannons ready to fire the Imperial salute accorded at the installation and coronation; then the Governor added: - Croboes I present to you the king who has been selected and returned unopposed as king of Eastern Croboe: and as Governor and commander in chief of the Gold Coast Colony with the advice and consent of the Executive Council thereof, in the name and by the authority of Her most gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria of the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India I place him on the stool in the centre of the meeting under a salute of arms by the guards, a flourish of trumpets, a volley of artillery and the strains of music [.]¹⁴³

Indeed, this was a grand performance of imperial spectacle, in which the governor enacted his position as the representative of the supreme power in the colony, who alone could invest a chief with authority. This supreme power was embodied in the person of Queen Victoria. The British monarchy had become the focal point of the empire, although it had back home developed into a constitutional one. The Imperial Titles Act of

¹⁴³ "The Krobo Question," p. 1.

1876 had conferred on Victoria the title of Empress of India. Its proclamation at the “imperial assemblage” (darbar) of 1877 marked to a certain degree the starting point for the re-invention of the British empire as a feudal order and honorific hierarchy. An elaborate culture of ornamentation developed, which appropriated foremost Indian symbolic forms.¹⁴⁴ India was thus to serve to a certain degree as a blueprint for the other colonies, among them the Gold Coast. While the British freely invented their imperial hierarchy and re-invented their representatives as noblemen, their command of the indigenous culture was less masterly. The election and installation of Emanuel Mate Kole as *konô* of Many Krobo as performed during the two darbars at Odumase was merely a hoax – even according to the standards the governor himself had established. Had Griffith not invoked tradition as the legitimating factor in the election process? While he had assured himself of the consent of the divisional chiefs, there was more to the election and installation procedure than what had been publicly staged in the two darbars. First, the decision of the kingmakers of the Djebiam-Nam clan had not been anonymous. Second, Krobo chieftaincy was rooted in the priestly leadership. The *døemeli* had delegated the control of the worldly affairs to the new secular leaders and had invested their stools with their priestly authority. The rule of the paramount chief was thus dependent on the *døemeli* and had to be endorsed by them. They had clearly expressed their disagreement with the choice of the kingmakers and supported a different candidate. Their absence from the meeting made very clear that the election and *enstoolment* was not authorised.

As it were, the governor had usurped their role and replaced priestly with colonial authority. His placing Mate Kole publicly on some stool was an act bare of relevance. Contrary to the travesty staged during the darbar, Krobo *enstoolment* rituals are marked by secrecy. The stool, which embodies the chiefly power, is never shown in public and even the initiand himself does not see the stool on which he is sat three times during his installation.¹⁴⁵ Mate Kole’s election and installation thus lacked the very legitimacy through tradition the governor had called for. While in the eyes of the outside observers the absence of the priests in the ceremony seemed to signal the downfall of their rule and to reinforce the authority of colonial government, it was precisely the factor limiting Mate Kole’s authority. This discrepancy is visible in Fig. 5.6 and Fig. 5.7, two pictures that were made by the Odumase photo studio J.W. Hills on the occasion of the *enstoolment*. Chief Mate Kole sent them to District Commissioner Williams to be forwarded to Governor Griffith. The latter chose to send the one in which the chief is sitting to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and commented on Mate Kole’s appearance: “He is a fine young fellow, about 35 years of age, calm and reserved, but with a look which denotes decision and determination.” The governor continued by adding that the young chief had asked the missionaries for a thanksgiving service to be held on the Sunday

¹⁴⁴ Cannadine 2001: 45-46; Cohn 1992: 201-202.

¹⁴⁵ Quarcoopome 1993a: 116-117.

following his *enstoolment* (24 July 1892).¹⁴⁶ The preference of Fig. 5.6 over Fig. 5.7, in which Emanuel Mate Kole took on a slightly aggressive posture pulling out his sword, reveals a further message the picture was to carry: the young chief was not so much to be presented as a resolute but rather as a docile ruler and loyal subject.¹⁴⁷ The display of sword and necklace further evoked continuity with the reign of Mate Kole's predecessor Chief Sakite.

Revd Peter Kodjo has observed the make-shift nature of the picture, which is revealed by the imperfect backdrop and the absence of the trade beads with which a person is usually adorned on the day of his *outdooring*. The shirt the chief is wearing under his cloth should thus not be interpreted as a sign of the chief's Christian demeanour but rather as the result of the lack of care in the arrangement of the picture.¹⁴⁸ What is then more important is the absence of those marks that convey legitimacy to a newly *enstooled* person among the Dangme. Instead of the necklace and sword establishing a direct link to the credits Mate Kole's predecessor had deserved with the imperial power, one would expect to see far less conspicuous signs validating the initiation. These would be the bracelet (Dangme: *la*) consisting of a white *nyoli* and black *tovi* that is tied to the initiate's wrist and traces of white chalk (*ayilo*).¹⁴⁹ Thus, what had taken place on 23 July 1892 and was heralded by the governor and the missionaries as the dawn of a new era was only relevant in that it forced a candidate on the Krobo, whose acceptance would have to be negotiated in a tedious process. It is obvious that, in view of the colonial might on display during the durbar, the divisional chiefs had no choice but to agree to the governor's selection. While the latter had announced that the cannons were only there to fire salute, it is clear that he also relied on their value as weapons and he even chose to reinforce the 150 Hausa at Odumase as he considered it to be "no harm in a strong man making himself stronger".¹⁵⁰ In Krobo tradition the cannon and the firing of the salute are remembered for their violence and are said to have been the means to coerce the people to leave the mountain settlements.¹⁵¹ While these tradition are exaggerated in that they remember the shots of the cannons to have dispersed the crowd, the physical power ascribed to the cannons was real. The same arms were displayed again some weeks later, when government resorted to another enactment of its power.

¹⁴⁶ PRO CO 96/225 Gold Coast 1892 Gov. Griffith, No. 197 Gov. Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Christiansborg Castle 01.08.1892; GNA ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 37, Griffith to DC Williams, Christiansborg Castle 09.08.1892.

¹⁴⁷ Quarcoopome 1993b: 324.

¹⁴⁸ Revd Peter Kodjo, personal communication, Odumase 04.08.2004.

¹⁴⁹ Quarcoopome 1991: 61-62.

¹⁵⁰ The Hausa carried 250 boxes of ammunition with them – a further hint that they did not serve as mere ornamentation (GNA ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 30, Griffith to Tackie, Odumase 24.07.1892; "Wichtige Tage für das Krobo-Land").

¹⁵¹ Odonkor 1971: 45-46; Azu 1929a: 78, Ashie [n.d.]b: §27, Teyegaga 1985: 53-54.



Fig. 5.6 (left): "King Mate Kole from East Krobo."

Photographer: J.W. Hills, Odumase. Suggested date: c.23.07.1892-30.07.1892. BMA QD-30.016.0013.

Fig. 5.7 (right): No caption, same date and photographer as Fig. 5.6.

PCA (no reference number), reproduction by Dan Walter.

"DIPO IS AS DEAD AS THE FOUR MURDERERS HANGED AT SOMANYA"

When on 20 July the governor announced the abolition of Krobo Customs he impressed upon his audience that any contravention of the law would be prosecuted. In order to underline this point he recalled the execution of four "fetish priests" at Larteh in Akuapem who had been hanged for having committed human sacrifice. "I never speak two ways [...] – I hanged them for it."¹⁵² The determination of government fully to enforce colonial law in the region was further evidenced by the public execution at Somanya of four young Krobo men. It had been their murder of an Akwamu slave that had sparked off the abolition of the Krobo Customs. On 5 September 140 Kru men and 20 Hausa soldiers arrived in the town and started the preparations. They set the gallows at the most advantageous spot of the big Somanya market. Once the preparations had been completed the four convicts were brought from Accra, escorted by 186 Hausa armed with two seven pounder guns. The execution too was carefully staged as a display of colonial might and order and drew a large crowd especially from Krobo and Shai. At the centre stage was set the huge platform with the four gallows. The Hausa took position in a quadrangular formation surrounding the scaffold; they had bayonets fixed

¹⁵² "The Krobo Question," p. 3.

to their guns and were "quite prepared for action in case of any attempt at resistance by the natives. But the decidedly determined aspect presented by both Captains Aplin and Boisragon, and the terrible appearance of the well known savage Houssas, so terrified the people that all such thoughts, if even they had cherished the notion, of attempting to rescue the criminals, immediately flew away from them." The execution itself was witnessed with the utmost interest, but it was only when the veil was taken off the scaffold at the request of the chiefs witnessing the execution that the populace fully realised what had happened. One hour later the four bodies were buried on the same market place under the eyes of the crowd. The officers showed a remarkable sense of symbolism when Colonial Surveyor Matthew Jones ordered to have prickly pears brought from Krobo Mountain, which were then planted upon the grave.¹⁵³ These could, with all likelihood, have been easily found in the immediate neighbourhood of Odumase.

This was not the first execution to be staged in this form in Krobo. Already in September 1877 a convict had been hanged at Odumase. Chief Sakite, who had to collaborate with government as his own position depended on it, gave the government escort a full-fledged state reception. He met it on the road riding in his palanquin covered by his state umbrella and accompanied by the state drums. On the request of the officer in charge he procured the necessary building materials for the scaffold, which was erected on the next morning. Several thousand people watched the execution and not a sound could be heard. In the afternoon, following the interment of the body, the officer thanked the chief publicly for his collaboration and presented him with a crate of gin.¹⁵⁴ As has been detailed above, Sakite's cooperation, which must have been extremely unpopular, paid off in the long run. Rather than fuelling resentments against him, the display of power by his allies added to his own authority. Most executions, however, were performed at Accra and the chiefs in charge were invited to witness. For example, when in January 1883 a Manya Krobo subject was executed at the gaol at James Fort, Sakite was asked to delegate five chiefs selected from the respective quarters (Asite, Yokunor, Adome and Odumase) to witness the execution. They were to report at the castle, where their travelling expenses were refunded.¹⁵⁵ It seems that these executions at Accra did not have the desired deterring effect in Krobo. Many people believed that the convicts had been taken to Sierra Leone or even London, where they were drafted into the colonial forces.¹⁵⁶ In this respect, at least, the public execution staged at Somanya in 1892 was said to have had a "most impressive" effect on the minds of the people.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ GNA NP 13/1 "Execution of Four Criminals at Somanya. Kotokro's Followers Dumbfounded." In: *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, 19.09.1892, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 4(1878), pp. 29-30.

¹⁵⁵ GNA ADM 1/9/2 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 2, Secretary of Native Affairs Chas. Turton to Sakite, Christiansborg 19.01.1883.

¹⁵⁶ *Der Evangelische Heidenbote* 4(1878), p. 30

¹⁵⁷ PRO CO 96/230 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, No. 19, Governor Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, Christiansborg Castle 12.01.1893, enclosure: Report by District Commissioner Williams, Akuse ?? 11.1892.

5.5 EMANUEL MATE KOLE – THE EDUCATED CHIEF

Mate Kole was appointed and “installed” by the Governor. This did not convey any legitimacy upon him from a Krobo point of view. To this end he had to be properly *enstooled* with the collaboration of the *døemeli* and then initiated during a certain period of confinement, whereupon he would be presented to the people (i.e. *outdoored*). As long as he had not gone through this process the caretaker of the stool must have been in charge of Manya Krobo affairs. The governor did not realise (or paid not heed to) these limitations directing all his communications to Mate Kole exclusively, and the latter too (together with his father Peter Nyarko and part of the kingmakers) set aside protocol, relying on government support rather than on recognition by his people. Until his formal *outdooring* and, as will be detailed, for a certain period beyond he was thus no more than a puppet of the governor and his father. It is interesting to note that Peter Nyarko, who had been the driving force behind the *enstoolment* of his son, kept in the background during the durbar. His actions had aroused the suspicion of the government and in April 1892 he had been bound to keep the peace.¹⁵⁸ Nyarko had for example been found to have forged some signatures in a letter informing government of the unanimous support of the kingmakers for the candidature of his son.¹⁵⁹ Only once Mate Kole had been *enstooled* did Nyarko step into the public again, now as the principal councillor of the young chief. In this function he negotiated the agreement of the other chiefs and the *døemeli*. On the other hand he contracted their supply with water and provisions of the detachment of Hausa soldiers who took position on Krobo Mountain in order to destroy the settlements and ensure that nobody returned there.¹⁶⁰

Towards the end of 1892 and in early 1893 it seemed as if the abolition and connected *enstoolment* of Emanuel Mate Kole showed the intended results. Heaps of destroyed “fetishes” could be found outside the settlements in the plains.¹⁶¹ The chief’s action especially focussed on the *koko nadu* cult that had been the object of the 1884 petition leading to the abolition of the mountain homes. This cult had been introduced rather recently into Krobo and undermined the authority of the chiefs (see chapters two and three).¹⁶² Further, Mate Kole prosecuted some cases where people had practiced intramural sepulture instead of burying in the public cemetery. On 28 April that year, the chief was outdoored at a durbar held in Odumase at the same place as the one depicted in Fig. 5.2. The arrangement was the same, with Missionary Mischlich, Revd Quartey, the mission’s teachers, the District Commissioner and his interpreter sitting to the chief’s left. Mate Kole was not yet wearing a uniform but a silk cloth and was sitting on

¹⁵⁸ GNA ADM 1/9/4 Original Correspondence (Misc. letters from Governor on Native Affairs), No. 12: Griffith to DC Williams, Aburi, 30.03.1892.

¹⁵⁹ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 49-50, quoting GNA ADM 31/1/7, District Commissioner to Peter Nyarko, 09.03.1892, pp. 93-94.

¹⁶⁰ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 53.

¹⁶¹ BMA D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 145, A. Mischlich, Odumase 19.06.1893, p. 1.

¹⁶² GNA CSO 21/22/27 Kotoklo Festival at Yilo Krobo, Chief Akrobetto 17.10.1892, p. 2.

a carved stool instead of the later armchair.¹⁶³ The *outdooing* was followed by the firing of guns and dancing until dusk. While the opposition to Mate Kole had not died off, it seems that he had meanwhile been ritually *enstooled*. On the second day the chief announced that, after the abolition of the mountain settlements, the towns in the plains were to become the new centre of society. He envisioned a new town with Odumase at its centre and six quarters laid out regularly around it. He urged people to send their children to school and to make sure that their daughters were not given into marriage before they had reached the right age.¹⁶⁴ In this respect both Missionary Mischlich and District Commissioner Alexander Williams had the opportunity to address the gathering.¹⁶⁵ The most important message, however, was that Mate Kole announced a new festival to be held at the end of August or November. It was to celebrate “the eating of the new crops” and replaced the old festivals “Nadu, Kotokro or Dipo”. The chief was aware that without such a festival he would not see his subjects: “[S]hould I fail in the performances I will not see them when required and they will stop in their plantations for years.”¹⁶⁶

CELEBRATING CHIEFTAINCY – THE YEREYELI

Indeed, the biggest problem Mate Kole was facing in the early years of his reign, was that his subjects in the aftermath of the abolition concentrated even more on their farming and the expansion of their farmlands. Odumase was deserted for most of the year and, as the old ritual centre on Krobo Mountain had fallen away, there was not much attracting them to the settlements in the plains (see sections 2.5 and 4.3). Odumase, like the other towns, was mostly empty except for the school children, old women and “some idlers”. An unearthly silence prevailed in the town for most of the time.¹⁶⁷ Mate Kole’s call to improve the settlements and develop them into urban centres, as well as his announcement of a new festival were measures to make the place of his residence more attractive. While the call for planned urbanisation did not bear fruit, the chief did introduce the new festival. It is not clear whether it already came on in 1893 as announced, but it for sure took place in December 1896 against the protestations of the missionaries. By that time Mate Kole had already been excluded from holy com-

¹⁶³ According to Missionary Mischlich this was a red silk cloth. This colour does not befit an outdooing occasion. It might be that the description only referred to the meeting of the second day, or it has to be assumed that the enstoolment had taken place some time ago.

¹⁶⁴ The same messages were conveyed by *konò* Akrobetto at a durbar held at Sra on 16 June 1893 (PRO 10.07.1893, sub-enclosure in enclosure 1 (Williams to Colonial Secretary 01.07.1893): Object of Meeting of King Akrobetto with his chiefs and people, Copy by DC Williams, Srah 17.06.1893).

¹⁶⁵ BMA D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 145, A. Mischlich, Odumase 19.06.1893.

¹⁶⁶ PRO CO 96/233 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, No. 144, Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, Aburi 12.05.1893, enclosure 1, King Mate Kole to DC Alexander Williams, Odumase 15.04.1893 and enclosure 3, DC Alexander Williams to Colonial Secretary, Akuse 06.05.1893; GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Krobo Customs etc., minute paper, ?789/93 referring to a report by the district commissioner of Akuse, dated 06.05.1893.

¹⁶⁷ BMA D-1.60 Goldküste 1894 Ga, Odumase 173, G. Josenhans, Odumase 11.09.1894, p. 1.

munion for maintaining a polygamous relationship, and the mission had to bury the high hopes it had placed in him.¹⁶⁸ The new festival was coined on the *odwira* of the Akan and lasted at least for four days. It was called *yereyeli*, i.e. the eating of the new yam. When Revd Quartey reprimanded Mate Kole, the latter replied that he was not involved in any ritual. Yet, this was only half the truth, as the festival was built around the purification rituals performed for his stool.¹⁶⁹ The *yereyeli* (or *hiâyemi*) had been in existence on Krobo Mountain already, but now it was turned into a grand public affair and into the principal yearly festival.¹⁷⁰ By 1909 the *yereyeli* had become a fixture in the Manya Krobo yearly calendar. It was celebrated in grand style and attracted huge crowds. Whereas formerly the stool rituals had been performed without much ado in the family houses, and whereas the purification itself was still carried out in secrecy, it was now part of a great public celebration centred on the chieftaincy. Odumase was filled with people rejoicing, dancing, singing, and firing guns. The missionaries, who had celebrated their own mission festival some few weeks before, considered *yereyeli* to represent an unexpected revival of heathenism.¹⁷¹ How much the chief was at the centre of this festival became even more evident, when Mate Kole had a stepped platform (Twi: *sumpi*, pl. *sumpene*)¹⁷² built next to the palace ("New Durbar Ground" in Map 5). These platforms are a fixed feature of Akan chieftaincy. Here Mate Kole would sit in state, visually emerging from the crowd, and receive homage by his divisional chiefs and subjects.¹⁷³ In Sra the stool rituals for the paramount chief were in the same way turned into a grand public festival, which by 1903 attracted most Yilo Krobo to their hometowns. Both paramount chiefs introduced elaborate brass or drum and fife bands (Fig. 5.1). In Sra it was already in existence in 1896 (see above), while in Odumase it was only introduced a year later. One of the sources of inspiration must have been the brass band which performed at the 1892 durbar. It is remembered in oral tradition as having made a deep impact.¹⁷⁴ The cocoa boom, which set in during the 1890s, brought about increasing wealth and many rich cocoa farmers such as Mate Kole financed brass bands as a marker of their status.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁸ BMA D-1.58 Goldküste 1893 Ga, Odumase 146, A. Mischlich, Odumase 19.08.1893.

¹⁶⁹ BMA D-1.64 Goldküste 1896 Ga, Odumase 169, W. A. Quartey, Odumase ???.1897, p. 10.

¹⁷⁰ Yam (and not millet) informs the yearly calendar of the deity *likpotsu* that is located in the Djebiam-Agbom section of Manya Krobo. The fact that it was part of the *døeme* council shows that the forest conditions informed Krobo ritual life from an early stage on (MKTSA Notes by Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, n.d. [presumably from 1940], p. 8; PRO CO 96/217 Gold Coast 1891 Gov. W.B. Griffith/Act. Gov. Hodgson, No. 191, Gov. Griffith to Lord Knutsford, Christiansborg 06.06.1891, enclosure 13, report by DC Riby Williams, Akuse 13.11.1890).

¹⁷¹ BMA D-1.93 Goldküste 1909, Odumase 15, W. Erhardt, Odumase 14.02.1910, p. 4.

¹⁷² McCaskie 1995: 312.

¹⁷³ BMA D-3.7 Jahresberichte 1916, Odumase III, 1, W. Erhardt, Odumase 26.02.1917, p. 13.

¹⁷⁴ Odonkor 1971: 46.

¹⁷⁵ Arlt 2004: 164-165.

“A MOST ENJOYABLE TIME” – THE WAR DANCES

In addition to the new public celebration of the stool rituals performed at Sra in 1903, the *kotoklo* dance too was celebrated again publicly. It had been reintroduced with the omission of the alleged human sacrifice.¹⁷⁶ Suspicion concerning ritual murders committed in connection with *kotoklo* and *nadu* persisted.¹⁷⁷ The abolition had not reduced the might of the two cults. Of course the performance of any rite in connection with the war deities was prohibited. Yet, despite their abolition the cults had not vanished. The shrines had been relocated to the margins of the settlements, such as Ogome Kplande for *kotoklo* and Asite for *nadu*, where they persisted and where they were in proximity of the new family houses of the migrating population. For some years the rituals were performed clandestinely, but with time it was found that it was possible to celebrate them in public again. Emanuel Mate Kole seems to have tacitly tolerated the performance of *nadu*, but when in January 1910 *Matsâ* Ba of Dom allowed for the performance of a *nadu* dance, Mate Kole supported the District Commissioner to check on the chief. Yet, his motivation was not so much the eradication of *nadu*, but rather its monopolisation by the paramount stool.¹⁷⁸ The cult was an important foundation on which the office of the *konô* as a war leader had developed. In order to assert his paramount position Mate Kole could not allow his rival chief perform *nadu*.

Mate Kole was ever ready to check on those cults that presented a threat to his position. Among these were the powerful *kleme* and the numerous cults that were introduced in connection with the cocoa boom.¹⁷⁹ *Kleme* was situated at Kpemo near Somanya and worked as a independent court. It offered people the opportunity to appeal against judgments given at the paramount chief's court. The shrine thus presented both a threat to the chief's system of revenue and to his power.¹⁸⁰ In 1906, for example, *kleme* was called upon by some Manya Krobo to kill Mate Kole, when he ruled to their disadvantage in a land case.¹⁸¹ The colonial government soon abolished *kleme*.¹⁸² In contrast, the old Krobo cults *nadu*, *kotoklo*, and *dipo* were all soon performed publicly again. This was at least the case by 1926. A *modus vivendi* had been found between the

¹⁷⁶ BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 162, W. Erhardt, Odumase 16.07.1903, pp. 1-3.

¹⁷⁷ BMA D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 159, G. Josenhans, Odumase 14.07.1903, p. 23; D-1.78 Afrika 1903, Odumase 160, G. Josenhans, Odumase 22.07.1903, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/253 Manya Kpowuno [Manyakpongunor] Native Affairs (Manya Krobo) Case No. 173/1910, Extract from Quarterly report for the quarter ending 31.03.1910, Akuse District.

¹⁷⁹ Field 1940: 141. For example Mate Kole readily checked on *aigbe dah* (GNA ADM 11/1/1679 Native Customs + Fetish, Emanuel Mate Kole to district commissioner, Odumase 14.12.1910).

¹⁸⁰ BMA D-1.85 Goldküste 1906 Ga, Odumase 137, W. Erhardt, Odumase 04.02.1907, pp. 2-3; D-1.88 Goldküste 1907 Berichte, Odumase 10, W. Erhardt, Odumase 29.11.1907, p. 7.

¹⁸¹ BMA D-1.83 Goldküste Ga 1905, Odumase 126, W. A. Quarte y, Odumase 27.02.1906, p. 7.

¹⁸² GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute Boxes 1 and 2, Case 5/1907 Eastern Krobo Native Affairs, CEP Crowther to SNA, Akropong 24.11.1906; CEP Crowther to SNA, 03.01.1907.

chiefs and the colonial authorities at the district level. This became apparent when in May 1936 the *African Morning Post* reported on the gay celebration of *kotoklo*.

This year's celebration of the Kotokro Festival, the great annual festival of the Yilo Krobos, was one of the grandest ever witnessed for some time. It started on May 1, and lasted for four days. The festival proper actually started on May 2, when the main street from Somanya to Ogome was thronged with happy villagers dressed in their best, singing and dancing about the town. The third day of the festival was by far the grandest and the most memorable. First there was some customary early morning visit of the elders to the man in charge of the festival [i.e. the *kotoklo* high priest] - a grand and ceremonious spectacle in itself. Then came the parade of newly circumcised youths who were taken to view the remains of the ancestors, renowned for their bravery. General dancing took place later at a place called "Klade" [Kplande] - a spacious but dusty square. The clouds of dust raised by the crowds of dancers drove the spectators back a good distance. It is hoped that a better place will be chosen for next year's celebration. The festival came to an end on May 4, after a most enjoyable time had been spent by everybody. A distinctive feature of the festival was the fact that not a single accident occurred during the celebration.¹⁸³

The gaiety and innocence of the description contrasted sharply with the barbarous image of the war cults that had informed the perception of the general public, and especially that of the colonial administration. The commissioner of the Eastern Province had the case investigated. It was found that the *kotoklo* festival, as well as *nadu* and *dipo*, had been celebrated regularly for the previous ten years if not longer than that. Police had been present on the scene and deemed the dances for the war gods to be harmless "except for a certain amount of drunkenness". In place of a human sacrifice a sheep was now slaughtered.¹⁸⁴ In the same way *nadu* was said to have been "shorn of all un-savoury features". The celebrations of both festivals attracted huge crowds to the hometowns and as home-coming festivals they provided the chiefs with much needed opportunities to maintain contact with their respective people and to assert control over it. When the Commissioner for the Eastern Province Duncan-Johnstone commented on the *nadu* celebrations of May 1938 he presented it as mere folklore, as an annual custom having as its object the "gathering at Odumase of Krobos from all parts of the state to do homage to the *konô*, and to hear from him the State's policy in matters relating to their welfare". Duncan-Johnstone further mentioned that the performance had a rain-

¹⁸³ GNA ADM 11/1/1679 Native Customs + Fetish, No. 45, Commissioner Eastern Province to District Commissioner Akuse, 22.05.1936, forwarding an article that had appeared in the *African Morning Post* of 20.05.1936, entitled "Yilo Krobo – Festival Celebrated".

¹⁸⁴ GNA ADM 11/1/1679 Native Customs + Fetish, No. 46, Acting District Commissioner Wooley to Commissioner Eastern Province, Akuse 28.05.1936; CSO 21/22/27 Kotoklo Festival at Yilo Krobo, pp. 1-6.

making effect.¹⁸⁵ This arrangement seems to have been perpetuated, although the Native Customs Ordinance did not allow for the re-introduction of the cults, even in a modified form. Few allegations concerning crimes committed in connection with the cults resulted in action. An investigation into *nadu* in 1930 was abandoned.¹⁸⁶ Only once, when the mutilated body of a boy was found near Somanya in February 1942, was the *kotoklo* shrine raided and most of the objects used in the worship of the deity destroyed by the police. Yet, there was no proof that the boy had been killed in connection with *kotoklo* rather than with another cult.¹⁸⁷ According to the present high priest, Nene Aseni, it was only later found out that the murder had nothing to do with *kotoklo*; and that the cult had only been celebrated after a break of seven years.¹⁸⁸

It seems that both Emanuel Mate Kole and *Konô* Akrobetto pursued a subtle policy with regard to the abolition, survival, and reintroduction of the war cults. *Nadu* and *kotoklo* were under the direct control of the two paramount chiefs. As their position depended on their consent to government policies they had had no choice but to abolish the cults publicly. For Mate Kole the abolition had even been the condition on which he acceded his office. Yet, without the war deities the paramountcy, which was essentially the office of a war leader, was barred of one of its essential pillars. What is more, the cults might even have got out of control if abandoned by the chiefs. Their policy thus was to have the dust settle on the abolition and then to reintroduce the cults gradually in an allegedly new form.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ PRO CO 96/748/1 Annual Administrative Reports Eastern Province, Annual Report on Eastern Province 1937-1938 (Enclosure to Despatch No. 585, 27.08.1938), A. Duncan Johnstone, Koforidua 23.07.1938, p. 57.

¹⁸⁶ GNA CSO 21/22/27 Kotoklo Festival at Yilo Krobo, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ GNA ADM 11/1/1679 Native Customs + Fetish, No. 78, Superintendent Gold Coast Police Eastern Province R. Tottenham, Koforidua 21.02.1942, Situation Report for Week ending 21.02.1942; Ibid., No. 79, District Commissioner Akuse to Commissioner Eastern Province 09.03.1942; Ibid., No. 80, Commissioner Eastern Province to District Commissioner Akuse, 16.03.1942; Ibid., No. 84, Note by Intd W.R.G. on discussion with District Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, 21.03.1942; Ibid., No. 89, District Commissioner Akuse to Commissioner Eastern Province, 22.05.1942; ADM 11/1/1797 Yilo Krobo Native Affairs (File No. 1501), Sub file No. 3, Kotoklo Festival at Yilo Krobo, Superintendent E.P.R. Tottenham to Commissioner Eastern Province, Koforidua 30.05.1942, Kotoklo Fetish at Kplande.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with *kotoklo wonô* Nene Aseni, Ogome Kplande 02.12.2000.

¹⁸⁹ I am tempted to argue that the form was not new, and that human sacrifice had not been part of the cult. Rather, the fama of the yearly human sacrifice had added to the fame and might of the cult. As detailed in chapter two, already in 1891 a ram rather than a human being was slaughtered on the occasion of the ritual. This is not to deny that youngsters wanting to be initiated did occasionally commit murders (PRO CO 96/219 Gold Coast 1891 Act. Gov. Hodgson and Gov. Griffith, No. 346 Acting Gov. Hodgson to Lord Knutsford, Aburi House 09.11.1891, § 4).



Fig. 5.8: "Women with European umbrellas and tooth-sticks."

After the *dipo* initiation rites had been banned in 1892, the ritual was re-introduced in a slightly modified form as *bobum*, which was simply the final *outdooring* part of the custom, when girls paraded in richly adorned clothes through the streets giving thanks for the support of their relatives. The "tooth-sticks" were not a matter of dental hygiene but formed part of the *yi-fōmi* ritual. The boy standing on the right played an important role during this ritual.¹⁹⁰ The picture must date from between 1897 and 1917, most likely around 1905, and was clearly taken in front of the Odumase mission house. BMA QD-30.019.0005.

DRESSING UP – REINVENTING THE GIRLS' INITIATION

The war cults could easily be kept dormant for a while, as initiation into one of them was not compulsory but rather an elite thing. The case of the girls' initiation, however, was different. *Dipo* was an integral element of Krobo identity and conditional for motherhood. There was no way the chiefs could maintain their influence without allowing for its performance. Immediately following the abolition many Krobo sought to evade the ban by having their daughters undergo the ritual in neighbouring Shai. There the cult was equally abolished but the colonial administration seems to have been less vigilant at first. Yet, before long the practice came to light and was immediately checked.¹⁹¹ The priests and the people in general rebuked Mate Kole for not fully reinstating *dipo*, while his political opponents accused him of tolerating the clandestine performance of the

¹⁹⁰ For a detailed analysis of the picture and more information on the *yi-fōmi* ritual see Steegstra 2004: 143-144.

¹⁹¹ GNA NP 13/1 *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, 05.09.1892, p. 3; PRO CO 96/230 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, No. 19, Griffith to the Marquis de Ripon, Christiansborg Castle 12.01.1893, forwarding a report by District Commissioner Williams, Akuse ?? .11.1892.

rite.¹⁹² In response to the latter Mate Kole considered suing Christian Akutei Azu for defamation.¹⁹³ While Akutei's allegation was motivated politically, it was not false in its essence. The *konô* chose to introduce in 1896 a rite that was to replace *dipo*. Whereas *dipo* was criticised for the nakedness of the girls, the new ritual celebrated the dressing-up of the girls (Fig. 5.8).

It was basically the final stage of *dipo*, when girls were allowed to cover their breasts. Mate Kole presented it to government as a rite that was formerly performed for strangers such as slave girls, who were not allowed to do *dipo*. *Bobum*, as it was called, was thus free of 'fetish worship' and nakedness.¹⁹⁴ This was to distinguish it from *dipo* and to make it acceptable to Christians. The concern with dress won it the consent of the colonial government. The missionaries, however, objected to it. The reason was that, as with *dipo*, marriage was not a condition for sexual intercourse and pregnancy. Once the girls had passed through *dipo* nothing could prevent them from engaging in sexual relationships.¹⁹⁵ At first *bobum* met with strong opposition among the population, who wanted to have the full *dipo* reinstated. The fact that District Commissioner Coy spoke in support of the idea, did not help to further its acceptance.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless, by 1900 the new rite was firmly instituted in the whole of Krobo.¹⁹⁷ The reason is that the initiation had simply been split into a public and a clandestine part. While *bobum* was celebrated in the open the full initiation rites, albeit in shortened form, were performed in secret. Photographs taken by missionaries Dr Vortisch and Kölle (Fig. 5.9) show that *dipo* was performed openly again some ten years after its abolition.¹⁹⁸ Formally Chief Mate Kole at several instances lent a hand to the government to check on these performances. While Obeng-Asamoah sees this as a proof of the *konô*'s valiant fight against the practice, it seems that Mate Kole only interfered when he was pressed to do so and never tried to stop the rite completely. His policy towards *dipo* was one of tacit consent, while he had specialists perform the stool rituals or the *nadu* cult for him and there was no need to participate in them directly.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² Steegstra 2004: 136-137.

¹⁹³ GNA Conf. 33/93, entries for the 28.01.1893 and 22.02.1893.

¹⁹⁴ Obeng-Asamoah (1998: 154-155) quoting GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, Mate Kole to Colonial Secretary, 14.10.1895.

¹⁹⁵ BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 195, G. Josenhans, Odumase 24.01.1898, p. 7.

¹⁹⁶ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Manya) Native Affairs, M.P.4997A/96?, District Commissioner J.N. Coy to Colonial Secretary, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ BMA D-1.72, Afrika 1900, Odumase 121, G. Josenhans, Odumase 19.02.1901, p. 16.

¹⁹⁸ Steegstra 2004: 146.

¹⁹⁹ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 153-157.



Fig. 5.9: "Girls in bridal gear in Kroboland (Gold Coast)."
Picture by Missionary Dr Vortisch. Date: 1903-1905. BMA QW-30.011.0040.

SHIFTING ALLIANCES – FROM MISSION TO EMPIRE

The obedience to the government that Chief Mate Kole overtly demonstrated was as important for legitimating his rule as his covert patronage of these rituals that were key to Krobo identity. He was ever ready to appropriate ideas voiced by government officials and colonial initiatives be it in the field of agriculture, legislation, or administration. He actively promoted the tours of inspection and demonstration of agricultural officers and lent a hand to the implementation of their policies. For instance the chief promoted the growing of cotton and rubber and himself established such farms.²⁰⁰ Other highlights in his progressive administration of the Manya Krobo state were the agricultural show he organised at Odumase in 1910; his efforts to make the up-country accessible by having a motor road from Odumase to Bukunor and various feeder roads constructed with the help of his people;²⁰¹ and, finally, the state treasury he instituted shortly before his

²⁰⁰ GNA ADM 11/1/1115, Case No. 374 Contd. Eastern Krobo Native Affairs, 13.05.1903-15.03.1905, entry on minute paper for 13.05.1903; SC17/20 Mate Kole Papers, District Commissioner D. Waldron to the Colonial Secretary, Akuse 01.01.1903; PRO CO 96/417 Gold Coast 1904, Despatch No. 209, Gov. J. P. Rodger, Accra 29.04.1904, p. 8.

²⁰¹ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 121-125.

death.²⁰² When government called for the chiefs' assistance in the Asante Campaigns of 1896 and 1900, Mate Kole was ever ready to supply recruits and carriers. From 1911 to 1916 and again from 1921 to 1930 he served on the Legislative Council.²⁰³ In the First World War he was instrumental in recruiting carriers for the British Army, which could not easily recruit by force on the Southern Gold Coast due to a vocal African press.²⁰⁴ With all these activities Mate Kole nurtured an important stock of benevolence on the side of the government. This resource could be mobilised when it came to securing the claims Manya Krobo laid to the lands into which it had expanded,²⁰⁵ or defending his own position against his political opponents (see above). The chief was quite successful with this policy, except when he tried to have government confirm his alleged paramount position over Yilo Krobo.²⁰⁶

The palace at Odumase played an important role in attracting government officials, investors, and other visitors to the region. Officials were welcomed warmly at the palace and often stayed there overnight.²⁰⁷ Chief Mate Kole made sure he documented their visits with the help of a visitors' book. The latter was more than just a souvenir. On the one hand it was a register of prospective allies. With many of them, for instance with Baden-Powell, Mate Kole corresponded regularly. On the other hand the book documented the chief's place in the colony and in the imperial world. The perplexed Missionary Erhardt was told by the chief that to him the signatures in the visitors' book were like photographs.²⁰⁸ Much like a picture the book had indeed a lasting impact. It fea-

²⁰² In 1928 the chief made first proposals for a state treasury. These were refused because the colonial legislation did not allow for the necessary bye-laws. In 1931 and 1932 the chief made new proposals, but these had to be reworked, whereby the introduction of the state treasury was delayed. Mate Kole was clearly ahead of his time in this respect (GNA CSO 21/22/122 Address of Welcome by Konor of Manya Krobo [EMK] to H.E. the Governor, [1935?]; PRO CO 96/757/7 Annual Administrative Reports Eastern Province, Enclosure to No. 747, 13.11.1939, Report on the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast for the year 1938-39, CEP A. Duncan-Johnstone, Koforidua 03.08.1939, p. 9).

²⁰³ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 178-179.

²⁰⁴ A large number of these recruits deserted once they had arrived at Accra. This was taken as a proof supporting the classification of the Basel Mission as an enemy institution (Killingray 1978: 50-52; BMA D-11.1 Berichte Goldküste 1889-1924, No. 12, Wilhelm Erhardt, Beatenberg 10.06.1918).

²⁰⁵ As from the 1880s, the Manya Krobo paramount chiefs were engaged almost continuously in litigation over the lands into which they had expanded. For a detailed analysis of the dispute with Akyem Abuakwa in the times of Chief Emanuel Mate Kole see Addo-Fening (1999: 80-100). For an example of bye laws designed by Mate Kole in this respect and his intimate co-operation with government in this respect see: GNA ADM 11/1/313 (Case No 41/1911) Bye laws made by Konor Mate Kole of Odumase Re court matters, Mate Kole to DC Poole, 07.02.1911, forwarding bye laws dated 13.02.1910.

²⁰⁶ GNA ADM 11/1/1726 Records of Chiefs 1888-1924, Emmanuel Mate Kole, p. 17; ADM 11/1/1774 Records of Chiefs 1888-1924, Eastern Krobo, Head Chief Mate Kole, p. 388.

²⁰⁷ For example the chief accommodated the colonial inspector of schools in 1898 and, in 1904, Governor Rodger himself (BMA D-1.68 Goldküste 1898 Ga, Odumase 209, Sophie Im Hof, Odumase 05.07.1898, p. 4; PRO CO 96/417 Gold Coast 1904, Despatch No. 209, Gov. J. P. Rodger, Accra 29.04.1904, p. 7).

²⁰⁸ BMA D-1.85 Goldküste 1906 Ga, Odumase 137, W. Erhardt, Odumase 04.02.1907, p. 2.

tured prominently in the obituaries of Mate Kole issued by government in print and radio.²⁰⁹ So proactive was the chief in pursuing this policy that his subordinate chiefs and the Yilo *konô* complained about its drawbacks. They felt that Mate Kole monopolised these visitors, especially District Commissioner Poole, and that he thereby unduly expanded his influence.²¹⁰



Fig. 5.10: "Employees of the Odumase station in 1906."
 Front (l-r): Chief Emanuel Mate Kole, Missionary Dietrich, Teacher Winfred Odjidja, Assistant Evangelist Andrew Padi, Teacher Andrew Saki (head of the Odumase girls' school), Missionary Erhardt, Revd William Quartey. Standing left: Teacher Koi, fourth from left: Teacher Oko. BMA: D-30.06.026.

The missionaries could notice that the many British visitors to the palace reduced their own importance as allies to the chief.²¹¹ They criticised Mate Kole for courting even the lowest ranking colonial agent, or most dubious European visitor, and disapproved of his

²⁰⁹ GNA CSO 21/22/76 Manya Krobo Native Affairs 1939-1940, No. 14, Gold Coast Gazette of 07.02.1939.

²¹⁰ This criticism was voiced pointedly by Chief Odonkor of Kpong. While the Commissioner for the Eastern Province admitted that some of Odonkor's accusations were overstated he confirmed that Mate Kole's near monopoly on District Commissioner Poole was problematic and detrimental (GNA ADM 11/1/477 (Case No. 49/1913) Chief Odonkor of Kpong, No. 125, Thomas Odonkor to CEP Harper, 10.03.1913; Ibid. No. 107, CEP Harper [to the A. DC, Government House?], 13.03.1913).

²¹¹ BMA D-1.85 Goldküste 1906 Ga, Odumase 137, W. Erhardt, Odumase 04.02.1907, p. 2.

policy as an opportunism that dishonoured Christianity in Krobo.²¹² The strained relationship between the mission and the chief is evident in Fig. 5.10, in which the chief quite literally gives Missionary Dietrich a cold shoulder. It seems as if he had forced his way into the picture, as the photograph was to document the staff of the Odumase mission, of which Mate Kole was no longer part.

“BETWEEN A TURKISH GENERAL AND A SUPERIOR KIND OF POSTMAN”

Fig. 5.10 also makes clear that the chief expressed his vigorous affiliation with the colonial government and the imperial power through his dress. The open white jacket and self-assertive posture set him off from the mission staff. Numerous pictures show him wearing this outfit. With the white jacket, the patent leather boots, and the pith helmet it resembled the one of a district commissioner. While upon his *enstoolment* in 1892 and at his first great durbar in 1893 the young chief made his appearance clad in cloth, he seems to have mostly worn the kind of “European clothing” seen in Fig. 5.10. The latter, however, did not convey any notion of royalty and was thus not suitable for public appearances such as meetings with colonial officials or the subordinate chiefs. Therefore Mate Kole already prior to the 1893 durbar applied for permission to wear a special uniform for “occasions of state”. His application was forwarded to London and a design suitable also for other chiefs was decided upon. Governor Hodgson supported the initiative as he thought that the number of educated chiefs, and thus the demand for such a new kind of state dress, would increase. For instance Chief Dowuona of Christiansborg, another “educated chief”, also used to dress in European clothing. The inspector general Sir Francis Scott made a proposition for an appropriate design, which reflected the concern with imperial honours then in vogue in the British empire. The result has been detailed earlier on. It combined ornamental remnants of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy with oriental elements such as the Turkish fez with tassel (see Fig. 5.2 and Fig. 5.11). The colonial secretary supported the idea, stating that:

Anything that tends to increase self respect among the Kings and Chiefs is of course a step in the right direction, and if a uniform of this sort becomes popular, as it probably will, the granting or refusing of it will be a further incentive to good behaviour.²¹³

²¹² BMA D-1.66 Goldküste 1897 Ga, Odumase 195, G. Josenhans, Odumase 24.01.1898, p. 6; D-1.70 Afrika 1899, Odumase 202, Christian Kölle, Odumase 12.02.1900, p. 7; D-1.72, Afrika 1900, Odumase 119, Hey, Accra 24.10.1900, pp. 5-6.

²¹³ PRO CO 96/235 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, No. 215 to the Marquis de Ripon, K.G., Christiansborg Castle 11.07.1893. The remark is to be found in a minute presumably by the Marquis de Ripon.



Fig. 5.11 (left): Chief Emanuel Mate Kole in uniform.
Date: c. 1929-30.²¹⁴ Picture held by the Nathanael "Papa" Lower Mate Kole family of Odumase.

Fig. 5.12 (right): Chief Emanuel Mate Kole in uniform.
Date: c. 1930. Picture on display at the Odumase palace. Reproduced with a digital camera by Thala Linder on 04.08.2004, set straight digitally by Veit Arlt 20.01.2005.

The readiness with which the colonial administration reacted to the chief's request reflects the ornamentalism described above. The remark by the secretary of state for the colonies also makes clear that this ornamentalism went along with a system of ranking, which was to harness individuals to the imperial project. David Cannadine has demonstrated that the expansion and codification of the honours system played an important role in homogenising the heterogeneity of empire and in uniting the most diverse people in rendering service to it. Different orders, especially the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, served to honour those involved irrespective of race and gender.²¹⁵ These imperial honours were expressed in elaborately designed costumes and medals. The crown represented by the governor was "a fountain of honour" distributing decorations and privileges. In return those who accepted these gratifications were bound to cooperate with and further the interests of the empire.²¹⁶ The governor him-

²¹⁴ Mate Kole received the Knight Bachelor's badge of the Order of the British Empire on 14 April 1930. Its absence on this picture suggests that it was taken earlier than Fig. 5.6.

²¹⁵ Cannadine 2001: 85-93.

²¹⁶ Cannadine 2001: 99-100.

self, of course, was part of this competition for honours.²¹⁷ Cannadine has stressed the fact that this system was more concerned with rank and status than with race. It entailed thinking in analogies, which tended to embrace an African chief on the basis of his royal descent in the same way it embraced a European royal.²¹⁸ This is not to say that race did not matter, as is evident in the colonial secretary's comment on the proposed uniform for Chief Emanuel Mate Kole. While it is to be assumed that the colonial secretary himself sported a similarly fantastic attire on occasions of state, he expressed disdain for the African chief by likening his uniform to that of a postman. "[...] if the King is to wear this uniform, which seems to be something between that of a Turkish general officer and a superior kind of postman, he certainly ought to have brass spurs on his patent leather boots."²¹⁹ Two photographic portraits dating probably from the late 1920s (Fig. 5.11 and Fig. 5.12) show Mate Kole wearing the same model of uniform. By this time the fez with tassel had given way to a cocked hat with plumes befitting the honours that had been bestowed on him in the meantime.

Mate Kole was highly aware of the opportunities the system of imperial honours offered. The example of his predecessor had been enough of proof in this respect. Mate Kole's services in the Asante Campaigns of 1896 and 1900 earned him his own Asante medals and like his late uncle Sakite he was awarded a sword by Queen Victoria.²²⁰ But there were other avenues to imperial honours as well. The chief's close relationship with District Commissioner Evered Poole paid off, when the latter suggested to his superiors that Mate Kole might be compensated for his good services with a yearly stipend of £200. While this suggestion was refused, the Commissioner for the Eastern Province, Maxwell, supported the general thrust of the proposition. He testified that Mate Kole was the most loyal and progressive chief in the colony, ever ready to support the government and to further agriculture in his area. Maxwell proposed that the chief be invited to attend the coronation celebrations in London of 1911.²²¹ Such occasions were the platforms on which imperial honours were awarded and on which representatives from the empire's periphery paraded as imperial subjects.

²¹⁷ See for instance Adams (1908: 530). In his novelette about the 1892 abolition, the governor is most concerned with securing a "K.C.M.G. already overdue". The craving for imperial honours is a prominent theme in many imperial memoirs such as those by Willcocks (1925).

²¹⁸ Cannadine 2001: 8.

²¹⁹ PRO CO 96/235 Gold Coast 1893 Gov. Griffith, No. 215 to the Marquis de Ripon, K.G., Christiansborg Castle 11.07.1893. The remark is to be found in a minute presumably by the Marquis de Ripon (George Frederick Samuel Robinson, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1892-1895).

²²⁰ Obeng-Asamoah (1998: 35) referring to Sampson (1969: 175-176).

²²¹ GNA ADM 11/1/1452 Begros-Jakite Land Dispute, Boxes 1 and 2, Case 201/1910 Proposal to recognize the services of Konor Mate Kole of Eastern Krobo, DC G.A. Evered Poole to CEP, Akuse 22.11.1910; Ibid, CEP John Maxwell to Secretary for Native Affairs, Akuse 24.11.1910.



Fig. 5.13: "King of Odumase."

The woman to Chief Emanuel Mate Kole's right seems to be his sister Johanna Adams,²²² while his daughter Kate (by his first wife Helena) is standing to his left next to the chief's second wife.²²³ Picture by Dr Hermann Vortisch, date c. 1903-1905. BMA QW-30.007.0009.

It is not clear whether Mate Kole attended the coronation or not, but it is evident that he was now set on track and before long he was adorned with a plethora of medals, ribbons, and titles: In 1921 he was awarded the King's Medal for African Chiefs (K.M.A.C.), in 1922 he received the Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George (G.C.M.G.),²²⁴ and he is said to have been the only recipient of the Agricultural Medal in West Africa up to 1930.²²⁵ In 1929 the honour of a Knight Bachelor of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) was conferred on him. The invest-

²²² After the death of her husband John Adams in January 1897 Johanna Dedo Adams assumed a more and more traditionalist position and moved away from the congregation. Earlier on she had been a leading member of the Christian community. BMA

²²³ Emanuel Mate Kole's first wife Helena died in 1898, his daughter was then six years old. At the time this picture was taken she was between eleven and thirteen years old. The chief's second wife seems to have had the same name. She was also called Kumase-yo (PCA/5/17 Diary by Revd W. Quartey for the year 1906, entry for 13.12.1906; BMA D-1.68 Goldküste 1898 Ga, Odumase 209, Sophie Im Hof, Odumase 05.07.1898, pp. 6-7; Interview with 'Papa' Ebenezer Lawer, Odumase 08.06.1999).

²²⁴ Quarcoopome (1993b: 326) referring to PRO CO 98/35 Minutes of the Gold Coast Legislative Council, 04.02.1921, p. 10.

²²⁵ Odjidja 1973: 65; Sampson 1969: 177.

ment ceremony took place at Odumase in April 1930, when Governor Slater (himself a Knight Commander of St. Michael and George and a Commander of the British Empire) presented him the warrant of knighthood and the corresponding insignia in the presence of neighbouring paramount chiefs and other prominent visitors.²²⁶ Finally, in 1937-1938 he and Yilo *Konô* Nene Ologo were awarded coronation medals for their long service. These honours made for a number of acronyms embellishing his name. Already after his first period of service on the Legislative Council he retained the title "honourable" and proudly made use of it.²²⁷ The G.C.M.G. and Knight Bachelor entailed the appellation Sir and although Mate Kole received these honours only shortly before his death, he is remembered as Sir Mate Kole to this very day.²²⁸

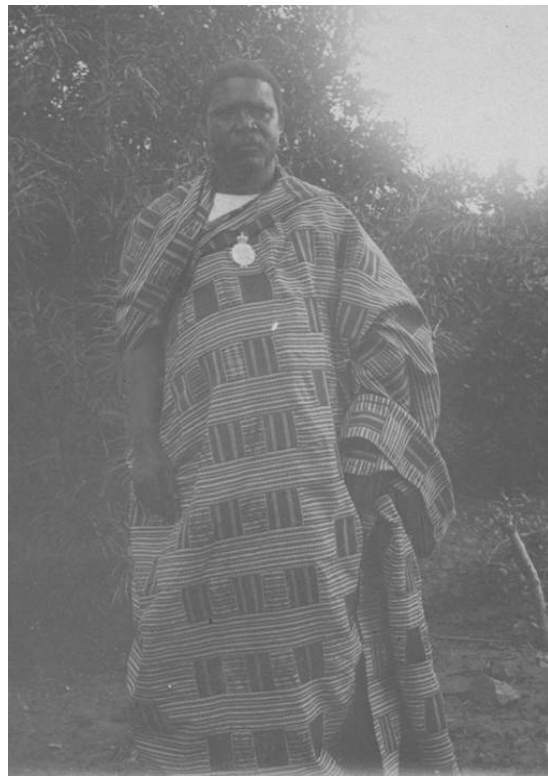


Fig. 5.14 (left): "Chief Em. Mate Kole in Odumase."
Date late 1912. Photographer: W. Erhardt. BMA D-30.06.037.
Fig. 5.15 (right): "Mate Kole, Emanuel, King of Odumase."
Date late 1912. Photographer: W. Erhardt. BMA D-30.06.036.

As has been detailed above, this collaboration with the colonial government by Manyá Krobo paramount chiefs had a long tradition and already Mate Kole's grandfather used to wear uniforms and other European dress. With regard to clothing this policy had been less pronounced under Chief Sakite, but this did not pertain to imperial insignia. In con-

²²⁶ Sampson (1969: 177).

²²⁷ BMA D-3.7 Jahresberichte 1916, Odumase III, 1, W. Erhardt, Odumase 26.02.1917, p. 13.

²²⁸ Interviews with Nathanael 'Papa' Ebenezer Mate Kole, Odumase 08.06.1999 and 19.11.2000.

trast to his predecessor Mate Kole embraced the imperial system whole-heartedly and coordinated all his actions carefully with the government. This is illustrated by the example of the uniform: Right from the beginning Mate Kole sought the approval of government rather than going ahead and creating a uniform of his own. Further, he seems to have been more punctilious in wearing this outfit as intended by its designers than his predecessors.²²⁹ Only in one picture (Fig. 5.11) Mate Kole sports the fez, which had come with the uniform he had ordered in 1893, in combination with a chain and a cloth. The necklace is similar to, but not identical with, the one his predecessor and brother Chief Sakite used to wear. Two further pictures from the Basel Mission collections show the chief wearing cloth and suggest that he was engaged in exploring new ways to wear it. The camera is in exactly the same position for both pictures and apparently the chief has changed his garments on the spot.

In both pictures the chief has flung the cloth not only over his left shoulder, but has carried its end around his back with the end of the cloth covering his right shoulder. In one picture (Fig. 5.14) it is fixed to his chest with the help of the detached Victorian long service medallion. It is not clear, what exactly the chief's motivation was: The fixing of the cloth with the help of the medallion might suggest that the chief was concerned with freeing his left arm from having to hold the surplus cloth. In the other picture (Fig. 5.15), however, the medallion is not made use of in this way and the arm is covered with cloth. Even a person skilled in wearing cloth has to redress the latter rather frequently. Fixing a medallion to it usually makes things rather worse. Therefore it might be exactly this question, how to display the medallion without running into trouble, which sparked off the action. These pictures mostly elicited amusement and frowning with informants in Ghana. Most of them commented that Emanuel Mate Kole had a liking for European dress and uniforms and that at times he went over the top in this respect. The result displayed in the two pictures is indeed odd and will hardly have added to his recognition among his people. For instance the display of a certain amount of 'superfluous' cloth on one's left arm is a sign of wealth and importance – an opportunity foregone by Mate Kole in these pictures.²³⁰ Nevertheless the pictures point to the chief's concern with presenting himself as an enlightened and modernising ruler. Quarcoopome has considered that these portraits expressed the chief's "break with the monarchy's priestly 'pagan' past", and sees them as part of Mate Kole's use of photography as an "apparatus of statecraft, defining the kingships privileged relationship with the European masters while helping to articulate its political philosophy."²³¹

²²⁹ Numerous references show that Sakite mixed and matched different styles. For example he is described to have worn on a military occasion in 1870 a "magnificent red cloth of damask together with his officer's hat and flowing tuft of feathers". There is no indication that Sakite ever wore a full uniform as his father had done (BMA D-1.22a Afrika 1870 I, Odumase 10a, J. Zimmermann, Odumase 01.10.1870, p. 5).

²³⁰ On the use of *kente* see Ross (1998) and Kraamer (2005).

²³¹ Quarcoopome [1997]: 15. Whenever I discussed this picture with Krobo informants, they reacted amused or perplexed. The picture made them generally assert that Emanuel Mate Kole had a fancy for European cloth, and at times tended to overdo things.

CONTROLLING AN ANARCHIC REGIME OF INNOVATION

It seems that none of Mate Kole's divisional chiefs embarked on a similar use of European clothing as a marker of status, and the paramount chief effectively monopolised the relationships with government. An exception was Chief Thomas Odonkor of Kpong, who had been an important partner of the colonial government up to the time when he started his opposition to Mate Kole (see above and section 4.2.2). He was appointed as chief of Kpong by *Konô* Sakite in 1885 precisely for his capacities as a scholar.²³² He had been trained by the Basel Mission but went into trade after graduating from the Akropong Middle Boys' Boarding School. For almost a decade he was the only literate chief in Krobo and therefore his imposing double storey building became the first port of call for government agents visiting the area. Odonkor, who was fluent in Hausa and other languages, was instrumental in many government missions. His services as an interpreter made him travel all over the territory of the Gold Coast Colony and the Northern Territories. His work as an inspector of the trade roads in the Volta Region was especially useful for his trading venture.²³³ All these activities, and his close association with the government, brought about a reputation with the local population, which was expressed in his nickname *Odonkor Pisa* (i.e. officer), and material rewards by the government. Like *Konô* Mate Kole he proudly displayed a general officer's sword as symbol of his recognition by government.²³⁴ With his skills, reputation, and connections Thomas Odonkor presented a serious threat to Chief Mate Kole, when the latter failed to co-opt him into his state council and Odonkor started his opposition. As has been detailed in chapter four, in the end the chief was *destooled* and even banned from Kpong and Odumase.

The other opponents to Chief Mate Kole's paramountcy were less vocal when it came to communicating with the colonial authorities. While Chief Odonkor's opposition was voiced in letters to the editor of various newspapers or directly to government, Chief Amitei of Dom and Chief Apra Kwaku of Susui used powerful symbols to challenge the *konô*. As has been detailed in the opening section of this chapter (5.1) they outperformed Mate Kole in the display of a number of powerful regalia such as the big *obonu* drums and palanquins with four carriers. With the help of the government Mate Kole managed to have these chiefs surrender some of their insignia in 1896. Nonetheless, the Dom chief continued to express his historical ambitions to the paramountcy through the use of emblems. Already in Chief Sakite's times he had allegedly insulted the colonial government by displaying a sword. It was decorated with a hand held up in an abu-

²³² Thomas Odonkor's grand mother Koryo Patautuo and her husband Tete Yumu seem to have been pioneer settlers at Kpong at the time her brother Odonkor Azu and her son Nathanael Lawer founded Odumase. While Odonkor (1971: 12 and 40) stresses this quasi hereditary accent to the position of a chief over Kpong, Azu (1929a: 75-76) places more emphasis on the role of *Konô* Sakite. The family relationship was important for the installation. As a result of Thomas Odonkor's opposition Chief Mate Kole did his best to present Odonkor as a stranger with Yilo Krobo ancestry (GNA ADM 11/1/477 (Case No. 49/1913) Chief Odonkor of Kpong, No. 19, Emanuel Mate Kole to the Commissioner Eastern Province, 30.04.1913).

²³³ GNA ADM 11/1/1726 and ADM 11/1/1774 Records of Chiefs 1888-1925, pp. 18-19 and 399-400.

²³⁴ See his portrait in Odonkor (1971).

sive manner with a snake behind. Its significance was “I defy you or otherwise I shall bite” and it almost brought about Chief Amitei’s *destoolment*.²³⁵ When in 1903 a subject of Amitei killed some of Mate Kole’s messengers at Sapor (see section 4.4.1) the paramount chief brought an action against Amitei resulting in his *destoolment*. In the course of the investigation Mate Kole had to admit that the drums of Chief Amitei actually were a trophy the chief had won in war and that his predecessor Chief Sakite had granted the Dom *matsâ* permission to display them.²³⁶ Yet, Mate Kole was successful with his *destoolment* charges and when Bah Ngwa was elected as a successor to Amitei he was only accepted by Mate Kole under the condition that he limit the paraphernalia belonging to his stool (i.e. office) to a specified number of drums, ceremonial swords, umbrellas etc. While Mate Kole, in view of the privilege granted by his predecessor, could not demand the giving up of the fourth *obonu* drum, Bah Ngwa had to agree that he would not play it in Odumase or in Mate Kole’s presence. Further he had to forego a number of other regalia: swords decorated with gold, a palanquin carried by four persons, and a stool decorated with bells.²³⁷ As might be expected, Mate Kole could not enforce these privileges and suppress the Dom’s claims to the paramountcy for a long time. In 1922 he *destooled Matsâ* Bah Ngwa. Amongst others, the Dom chief was charged with displaying a state umbrella with a horn on top of it and a sword decorated in gold with a hen and a chicken. Both symbolised his assumed paramount position.²³⁸

In 1927 the Native Administration Ordinance, which had first been implemented in Krobo in 1883, was amended.²³⁹ The amendment was to fully implement indirect rule as introduced by Lugard in Nigeria in 1914. In order to lessen the constant disputes over succession a questionnaire was sent out to the “native authorities”. They were to indicate precisely the procedures concerning succession, *enstoolment*, and *destoolment*. Mate Kole made use of this opportunity to establish firmly the paramountcy in the Djebiam-Nam clan, to assert control over disputed border towns,²⁴⁰ and to consolidate the control over his divisional chiefs. He defined a catalogue and hierarchy of titles and sought to establish them as equivalents to the Akan system of chieftaincy. This, however, raised more questions than it resolved and led to further investigation by the colonial administration. The equivalents seemed mistaken and the system stipulated for Many Krobo differed markedly from that given for Yilo Krobo.²⁴¹ Still, the general lines

²³⁵ GNA ADM 11/1/1115 Krobo (Many) Native Affairs, Emanuel Mate Kole to the District Commissioner Volta District, Akuse, Odumase 26.12.1902, p. 3.

²³⁶ GNA ADM 11/1/1115, Case No. 374 Contd., Entry on minute paper dated 07.12.1903, Charges laid against Chief Amitei.

²³⁷ GNA ADM 11/1/1115, Case No. 374 Contd., Entry on minute paper dated 30.01.1905.

²³⁸ GNA ADM 11/1/847 (case 33/1923) Many Kpowuno Native Affairs (Dom)(Ba Ngwa), No. 25, Copy of proceedings and report in Chief Ba Ngwah’s *destoolment* 1922, Emanuel Mate Kole, Odumase 11.08.1022, statement by Senior *Asafoatsâ* Okotei (1st witness).

²³⁹ Hailey 1951: 203.

²⁴⁰ This, he also did when he gave evidence for a report on land tenure in West Africa (Belfield 1912: 58-59).

²⁴¹ The *konô* did not hesitate to qualify the Many Krobo divisions by explaining their names. While the meaning of Djebiam was given as “lion-hearted”, Dom was qualified as “tactless”

were accepted and although the chief was at times caught up in the very system “of timeless customs” he had himself fixed for Many Krobo, it greatly consolidated the leadership of the Djebiam-Nam.²⁴²

5.6 FRED AZZU MATE KOLE – “ACCORDING TO TIME HONOURED CUSTOM”

When Sir Emanuel Mate Kole died in January 1939, he was succeeded by his own son, the police officer and Achimota graduate Fred Lawer [Azzu]²⁴³ Mate Kole. As in 1892 there was a succession dispute and if the *enstoolment* did not see the same display of colonial might as was the case then, the presence of an important number of high guests and of the police band underlined the recognition the chosen candidate enjoyed with the colonial government. As the main government representative, Provincial Commissioner Duncan-Johnstone entered the durbar ground led by sword bearers with a state umbrella being held over him.²⁴⁴ In his talk he evoked the long reign of *Konô* Emanuel Mate Kole and stressed that the succession from father to son was according to time honoured custom – which of course had been defined by the late chief himself in 1927 and published in the *Gold Coast Gazette* in 1931.²⁴⁵ The newspaper *The Daily Spectator* praised the educational background of the new chief and quoted the speech of the Provincial Commissioner: “A son succeeding his father according to the time honoured and traditional Krobo custom, marks the beginning of a new and perhaps more difficult era in which a totally different set of problems will have to be faced.” Yet, while the new chief was able to build up on the foundation and continue along the same lines established by the late Emanuel Mate Kole, the very problems that had been created by the disputed *enstoolment* of Emanuel Mate Kole persisted.²⁴⁶

and the associated Akwenor as “a dangerous serpent” (GNA ADM 11/1/959 Titles of Native Chiefs - some Explanations of (38/1926), DC J. V. Shaw to Commissioner Eastern Province, Akuse 01.07.1927).

²⁴² GNA ADM 11/1/1098 Akuse Native Affairs, No. 52, Acting Commissioner Eastern Province to Secretary of Native Affairs, Koforidua 02.11.1902. On the making of customary law see Spear (2003: 13-16).

²⁴³ The name Azzu (or Azu) was presumably added in order to emphasize his direct descent from Odonkor Azu (Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 69).

²⁴⁴ Also in the 1930s Basel Missionary Hermann Henking took to create his own paraphernalia, consisting of an umbrella, a stool and a linguist staff together with the corresponding attendants, in order to communicate with the chiefs in a way befitting their and his own status. At least this is what his family tradition asserts (Jenkins 2003: 220 n. 58).

²⁴⁵ *The Gold Coast Gazette*, 24.01.1931, pp. 132-133.

²⁴⁶ At the same moment that Fred Lawer Mate Kole's *outdooring* was celebrated at the forecourt of the palace, the Akute Agwae family enstooled their own candidate Gustav Azu at their family house in the immediate neighbourhood (GNA ADM 11/1/1098 Akuse Native Affairs, No. 52, Acting Commissioner Eastern Province to Secretary of Native Affairs, Koforidua 02.11.1902 [misplaced], “High Officials Present as Krobos Instal [sic] Mantse.” In: *The Daily Spectator*, 19.06.1939, pp. 1 and 3).

“WE SHOULD SEE THAT THE NEXT MAN SOAR HIGH”

In the discussions of the kingmakers of Odumase, Pettey Osom²⁴⁷ had voiced the opinion that the next chief was to live up to the standards the late Emanuel Mate Kole had set. The latter had been awarded the medal of a Knight Bachelor and therefore they had to see that “the next man soar high”.²⁴⁸ Fred Lawer Azzu Mate Kole lived indeed up to the great hopes both the kingmakers and the colonial administration placed in him. He consolidated the native administration and especially the treasury of Manya Krobo, proved himself a loyal partner to the government, and soon earned a number of distinctions. In 1942 he was awarded the King’s Medal of Chiefs and in 1948 he was given an O.B.E.²⁴⁹ As a loyal chief he held moderate views concerning independence and aligned himself with the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC).²⁵⁰ Thus it is hardly surprising that, once Ghana had achieved its independence, it was only in the post-CPP era that he was awarded further honours.²⁵¹ Like his father, he reigned for an extremely long period and had a strong formative influence on the Manya Krobo chieftaincy. The times of colonial warfare were over and the influx of trophies ceased. Still new Akan regalia and organisational elements came into Krobo. The regalia could be presents made by other chiefs in order to foster a friendly relationship, in other instances they were outright acquisitions. On the organisational level the office of the queenmother was instituted at all levels of Krobo society from the 1950s onward. On the one hand this development was based on the drive of innovation and adaptation of Akan elements of the Krobo states. On the other hand it was part of a general development that took place all over Ghana: The promotion of the office of the queenmother was also a strategy of Nkrumah geared to lessen and balance the influence of the chiefs.²⁵²

Fred Azzu Mate Kole seems to have been more successful than his father in co-opting church and tradition. In the same year in which he ascended the stool he welcomed the Catholic Church in Manya Krobo. He offered the church a large plot at Mampong-Otalenya (near Agomanya) where the Catholics established a large mission with a health clinic and in 1951 the *konô* allocated a further plot at Adjikpo near Somanya,

²⁴⁷ “Paittey” in the original.

²⁴⁸ Nene Muala Okumsro II et al. vs. Nene Tekpenor Adipa II and Frederick Noah Azu vs. Nene Tekpenor Adipa II et al. Appeal against judgment of the chieftaincy tribunal of the Eastern Region House of Chiefs – Koforidua. Consolidated suit dated 24.05.1994, minutes of the kingmakers’ meeting held at Odumase on 27.05.1939, p. 283.

²⁴⁹ Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 41-42. GNA NP 22/1-6 *The Gold Coast Observer*, 20.06.1947, p. 92.

²⁵⁰ Rathbone 2000: 28.

²⁵¹ In 1968 he was made a member of the Order of the Volta and later he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Ghana, Legon (Obeng-Asamoah 1998: 42-43). According to Obeng-Asamoah the chief was on good terms with Prime Minister Nkrumah despite their differing political views. It was rather on the local level that he fought with the CPP and its Member of Parliament Mate Johnson (ibid.: 106-112).

²⁵² On the growing importance of the political role of women in Ghana in the pre-independence years and the limits of this growth, see Greenstreet (1972: 353-354).

where the Mount Mary Teachers' College was established.²⁵³ The first priest appointed to Agomanya, the West Indian Joseph O. Bowers, became a close friend to the chief. Later Azzu Mate Kole, who had been raised as a Presbyterian, converted to the Catholic faith and became a stout member of the church.²⁵⁴ The more liberal attitude to culture and greater stress on enculturation of the Christian faith of the Catholic Church accommodated the chief greatly, and so did the post-colonial re-valuation of tradition.²⁵⁵ Had his predecessor tried to gloss over his support for "Krobo Customs" and culture, the new chief had a far more liberal attitude in this respect. He was known for his efforts to create a better understanding and valuation of customs and traditions and for his willingness to reconcile Christianity with aspects of local culture.²⁵⁶ This is also evident in one of his first actions he took as the head of the Manya Krobo State Council. On his proposed reformed state council he wanted to see both the *døemeli* and the churches represented, along with other public bodies such as the teachers' union, cooperative societies and youth associations.²⁵⁷ In the same way he institutionalised the interdenominational thanksgiving service which today is a fixed feature of the *ngmayem* and other festivals (see section 2.1).

Azzu Mate Kole also promoted openly the performance of the banned Krobo cults. When Government Anthropologist Margaret Field conducted her fieldwork at Odumase around 1940 she entitled her notes concerning the *nadu* cult "The Nadu Festival for Konor Mate Kole, Odumase Krobo". This was more than merely a geographical or political reference locating *nadu* within Manya Krobo. Field's description makes it very clear that Azzu Mate Kole not only freely supported the *nadu* cult, but that the yearly custom was specifically performed for the paramount chief. On the day after the principal rites had been performed at the *nadu* shrine at Asite "a dance for the Konor" was held at Odumase:

The populace arrived in cheerful parties, up to a hundred in a group, all dancing and assembled in the big gravelled square beneath the balcony of the Konor's house. In the centre of the square were the drums and the priestly officials sat under a big tree. The Nadu priest and Labia were there and the wōyei, all in white, with their brooms. The populace, party by party, came to pay their respects to the Konor by dancing round the drums. Many of them wore fantastic clowning costumes, both old and new, ancient wooden masks and bark cloth tunics. As each party finished its dance it moved off and paraded the streets of the town, leaving

²⁵³ The school is located right on the border between Manya and Yilo Krobo and is almost entirely surrounded by Yilo Krobo settlements. The choice of this location was definitely geared to assert Manya Krobo territorial claims (Stool Lands Boundary Settlement Commission [SLBSC] Transcript of Notes, Stool Lands Boundaries Settlement (Manya Krobo) Order (L.N.282) (Jackson Commission) 01.09.1953- 05.03.1956, especially pp. 309-315).

²⁵⁴ According to Obeng-Asamoah this conversion was due to his disappointment over the transfer of the Presbyterian Secondary School from Odumase to Legon (1998: 157).

²⁵⁵ Greene 1998: 1.

²⁵⁶ Azu Mate Kole 1955: 140.

²⁵⁷ GNA CSO 21/22/179 Manya Krobo State Council, Constitution of Manya Krobo State Council (No. 0381/17).

the crowded dancing place to fresh comers. The captains and other “big men”, many of them in ancient and picturesque war costume, came up on to the balcony and exchanged courteous greetings with the Konor. The Nadu priest himself, in white calico and flower-pot hat, performed a dignified dance round the drums. At one point there was a rain-making ceremony similar to that of the previous day: the labia mounted an attendant’s shoulders and splashed the crowd with water from his broom and the crowd shouted 3 times and jumped and stamped.²⁵⁸

The *konô* thus fully exploited the potential the *nadu* cult offered as a unifying element within Manya Krobo society. As a police officer (during the first years of his reign he had not quit the service yet, but was only on temporary leave), he must have been sure that no criminal acts were connected to the performance of the cult. Little did this matter to the Presbyterian Church, for which a simple libation was already a fundamental transgression against the Christian code of conduct. The Odumase presbytery launched repeated petitions and campaigns against these institutions and called for special evangelising efforts at Asite and Kodjonya, the towns where the two shrines are located.²⁵⁹ This campaign was led with special zeal by Revd Teyegaga, who was the head pastor of the Odumase congregation from 1966 to 1976, yet it did not result in a change of the *konô*’s policies. Instead, the latter sought to disarm and pacify the fervent minister by presenting him with a special award for his relentless work in the Odumase community and Manya Krobo in general.²⁶⁰ It was a silver linguist staff ornamented with a cross identifying its owner as an “authentic speaker in Church and state matters”.²⁶¹

Notwithstanding the criticism voiced by the Presbyterian Church, the chief had a rather free relationship with the institution and its history. He did not tire praising the work of the Basel Mission and its successor and actively built up bonds with the hometown of Johannes Zimmermann near Stuttgart, which resulted in the *Krobo-West German Fraternity*.²⁶² Yet, it was not by accident that Azzu Mate Kole highlighted the contribution of Missionary Zimmermann rather than that of his colleagues. As has been detailed in section 4.2, Zimmermann’s name stands for a reconciliatory attitude towards culture and by praising this pioneer the chief implicitly called on the church to review its strict policy on culture.

²⁵⁸ MKTSA Notes by Government Anthropologist Margaret Field, n.d. [presumably from 1940], pp. 54-55.

²⁵⁹ OPC Minutes of the Presbytery, 20.06.1958; 21.11.1960; 18.08.1967; 20.05.1868; 27.05.1968; 07.10.1968.

²⁶⁰ Teyegaga authored a pamphlet on *dipo*, which was to prove that in its present form the rite was incompatible with Christianity. According to Teyegaga *dipo* had been a sound institution in the beginning but had been corrupted by the *daemeli*. Interestingly the Presbyterian minister sought to Christianise the rite by interpreting certain elements as signs of a Christian prophecy (1985: 32, see also Steegstra 2004: 157-158).

²⁶¹ Brochure and Order of Service for the Burial and Thanksgiving Service for the late Rev. B.D. Teyegaga (Aged 88 years), Odumase 12.03.1994. Accra: Jupiter Printing Press, p. 8.

²⁶² *Krobo-West German Fraternity Welcomes You. 12th-15th February 1988*. Accra: Jupiter Printing Press.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

In June 1988 the art-historian Quarcoopome, on the occasion of an interview with Nene Azzu Mate Kole relating to art and chieftaincy among the Dangme, made a photographic portrait of the chief at the Odumase palace. The chief chose to wear a striped woven *kente* cloth of Kwahu origin and a conical gold-leafed crown commissioned by his father at the end of his reign. The same crown and cloth were worn by his successor, the present paramount chief Nene Sakite II in his first official photographic portrait as fully *en-stooled* chief published in 1998.²⁶³ The shape of this headgear is reminiscent of old Dangme warriors' hats. Golden feathers encircle a core made from leopard and other skins. They represent the totem animal *kole* (Dangme: eagle) of the royal family and, together with the leopard skin, further reinforce the notion of a warrior tradition.²⁶⁴ According to Quarcoopome the striped cloth had already been worn by Chief Sakite a century before and might point to trade relations with the Kwahu. In comparison with an Akan chief the golden chains and rings worn by Sakite II and his predecessor Nene Azzu Mate Kole are not opulent and seem understated. They are closer to European designs than to Akan forms and some of them are interspersed with beads. Their whole outfit tells a tale of appropriation of foreign elements of both African and European origin, yet it is a far cry from the overt display of imperial insignia or of Akan regalia that had marked the portraits of their predecessors and that have repeatedly been the object of this chapter. The golden lure of the trinkets worn by the two chiefs hints to the long way that their office has come from the times of the priestly leaders. For the *døemeli* gold was taboo and their authority was based on secrecy and understatement. Still, even if gold has found its firm place in the regalia of the Manya Krobo paramount chiefs, the relative austerity in their outfit is reminiscent to the priestly tradition and the persistence of the ethos of secrecy. With Chief Fred Azzu Mate Kole the Manya Krobo paramountcy has thus come back to its roots to a certain degree.

While his predecessors greatly depended on an alliance with mission and/or colonial government, and on the appropriation of Akan culture, Azzu Mate Kole explored the roots of the Manya Krobo chieftaincy tradition. He openly confessed his pride in the priestly tradition, exactly because it was this element that distinguished Krobo chieftaincy and imbued it with ancient authority. At the same time the *konô* was conscious of all the many facets that have influenced the paramountcy during the rule of his predecessors. Whereas he himself had earned his honours in the colonial and postcolonial state, and like his predecessor was celebrated as an 'enlightened ruler', he also acknowledged the importance of the warrior tradition and the patronage of the war deities. He refocused the yearly festival that his father, in analogy to Akan *odwira*, had based on the harvesting of the new yam. Instead, the sprinkling of the new millet, an old priestly ritual that marked the climax of the yearly agricultural calendar and was no

²⁶³ Ngmayem Festival '98. 1st Grand Ngmayem Durbar of the Newly Installed Nene Sakite II, Konor of Manya-Krobo. Odumase Krobo, Friday 30th October, 1998. Brochure and programme 24 pp. [Author not known], see portrait on cover.

²⁶⁴ Quarcoopome 1993b: 258-262.

longer performed publicly, was harnessed for the state festival. In the same way, Azzu Mate Kole acknowledged the important role the mission had played in establishing the paramountcy at Odumase. When Nii Quarcoopome portrayed the old chief in the subtle choice of insignia described above, Azzu Mate Kole insisted on the use of an old painted canvas as backdrop.²⁶⁵ It depicted palace and chapel at Odumase and made clear that the church was an integral element of the chieftaincy, which could not be left out of the picture. Mission and church history have thus become part of tradition and are an important resource both for the transformation of the state and for development.²⁶⁶

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at Odumase as a site of chieftaincy and of encounter with representatives from neighbouring states and the colonial state. It was this encounter with foreigners that gave rise to chiefly office in Krobo. The new leaders were recruited from entrepreneurs who had achieved great wealth in careers as warlords and farmers. They expressed and asserted their status in dress, architecture, and insignia and by means of ceremony and photography. On Krobo Mountain they erected ambitious buildings, which were modelled on the coastal merchant architecture and attracted the attention of visitors. This outward orientation contrasted sharply with the appearance of the sites of sacred power on Krobo Mountain: Shrines, abodes of ritual performers, and meeting grounds were of an unassuming appearance. The priestly leaders were restricted from contact with non-Krobo and the latter's presence on Krobo Mountain was not encouraged. When the former delegated part of their authority to the new secular leaders and imbued their stools with an element of sacred power, they also allowed for the hamlets at the foot of the Akuapem-Togo Range to become permanent settlements. Thereby they channelled the movements of strangers in the region and diverted them effectively to the farm settlements. Here the respective paramount chief for Yilo and Manya Krobo by and by developed their residences and their office on the image of Akan court culture. The written record, oral tradition, as well as the architecture, bear witness to this process. The chapter has traced this development from farmstead to full-fledged court for Odumase. It has shown that the mission station was a central element of the town's topography of power. The same holds true for the staging of the encounter with foreign powers. In the times of *Konô* Sakite meetings were held right in front of the chapel, to the construction of which the chief had contributed essentially. The towering building rising behind the chief conveyed a powerful message to visitors. It spoke of education,

²⁶⁵ Nene Azzu Mate Kole was probably Quarcoopome's most vocal informant in Krobo and the chief's outstanding qualities as a mediator between the different traditions informing Krobo chieftaincy reverberate in the art historian's writings.

²⁶⁶ Christianity as tradition in Africa is also an element, which emerges from a paper on the assertion of land claims by Basotho in the southern Free State. Christian rituals performed at various sacred locations are considered a tradition validating ancient claims to land situated in South Africa (Coplan 2003: 185-206).

modernity and 'good governance'²⁶⁷. Not only the mission station but also its staff was drawn into the picture. Missionaries sat on meetings and were allocated a slot in the protocol where they might address the gathered crowd. In the early days they also served as middlemen, but were soon replaced in this function by the first graduates of the mission schools.

Organisation and assemblage of the meetings were modelled on the principles of Akan court culture and centred on the person of the chief. The colonial government usurped the concept of the grand meeting for itself and fused it with its idea of the Indian *darbar*. When the governor staged himself as supreme ruler on the Gold Coast and direct representative of the Queen, he relied on representatives of the subjected states in order to convey the same powerful picture. While he himself and his immediate entourage, dressed in richly ornamented imperial uniforms, were at the focal point of the assemblage, the spokesmen and other representatives of allied states appeared in local attire displaying their insignia of office. In this way the local court culture was harnessed for the aggrandisement of the empire and its agent. The great importance attached to the careful mounting of government presence as imperial spectacle during meetings at Odumase and Sra is to be explained with the choice of Akuse as district headquarters, which rendered government presence in the principal Krobo settlements rather ephemeral. The height of the colonial period saw a crisis in Manya Krobo leadership when a young mission teacher was made chief, who did not directly qualify for the succession. While in Krobo this move was only supported by a small faction, it had the full backing of colonial government. As intended by the candidate's supporters, the colonial government forced the choice of the Christian chief on the people and guaranteed it thereafter. During most of his reign *Konō* Emanuel Mate Kole drew his legitimacy from this support by colonial authority. Visually this is expressed in his choice of imperial uniforms and the display of European insignia rather than African regalia. By and by the chief gained recognition among his people. To this end he had to tap into tradition and re-introduce rites, the abolition of which had been conditional to his installation. In addition he invented new rituals based on Akan court culture and focussing on the chiefly office. Still, the recognition by colonial government remained characteristic for his reign. The imperial system of honours, originally established for British agents in the empire but soon extended and opened to imperial subjects, provided an important resource adding legitimacy to Mate Kole's reign.

As the examples of Chief Odonkor Azu and Chief Sakite show, the usage of European dress and especially uniforms, as well as imperial honours started far earlier. It was a development that took also place in neighbouring states with a similar state tradition. It was less pronounced in the Akan states of the hinterland with their well established statecraft. The latter has not only informed Krobo chieftaincy, but also cultures and traditions all over Ghana. It is obvious that this akanization testifies to the power and

²⁶⁷ This odd term seems to fit perfectly in the colonial situation of indirect rule, thereby reinforcing our uneasiness with it. Does it not testify to a neo-colonial rather than post-colonial condition?

dominance of the Akan. Yet, it is not simply the result of an Akan hegemony. Rather it is the Krobo who consciously tapped into the successful model given by their erstwhile oppressors. This borrowing occurred in varying extent under all Krobo chiefs under review. It probably saw a climax under *Konô Sakite*, who even made it a sport to test the sophistication of his court in encounters with neighbouring Akan states. The import of Akan insignia occurred foremost in the framework of colonial wars. Therefore it was free to everybody and many powerful insignia found their way into the paraphernalia of competing chiefs. Emanuel Mate Kole, the most contested chief in the period under consideration, made use of the codification (or, rather, invention) of customary law and relied on the support by the colonial government to check on his competitors. With his policy of collaboration he eventually gained the upper hand. The cultural borrowing from the Akan and Europeans may not be seen as a mere technological osmosis. Rather it has to be appreciated as a process of conscious and selective appropriation geared to specific ends. This was ably demonstrated by the historian Tom McCaskie in his seminal article on Asante "innovational eclecticism", in which he urged to acknowledge the awareness of African states in the appropriation of foreign ideas and objects and the subtlety of their appreciation of the novelty.²⁶⁸ This holds as true for Asante's conversation with Europe that was the object of McCaskie's study, as it does for Krobo's conversation with the Akan (and Europe). While Krobo chiefs literally lived of innovation and boosted their office with all kinds of foreign elements, they maintained links to an old priestly leadership which imbued it with legitimacy. These links remain largely hidden from the observer, as they are foremost of ritual nature. Still, they reverberate in the clothing and insignia of Krobo chiefs and have experienced a revaluation under *Konô Azzu Mate Kole*. In line with post-colonial policies highlighting African traditions, he replaced the celebration of the yam, which was at the basis of the annual festival introduced by his father and was modelled on the Akan Odwira, with the old priestly celebration of the millet harvest. Rituals embody, and are intended to ensure, continuity. Yet, as this chapter has shown, they are also a site of change and prove their malleability when they are harnessed for different projects.

²⁶⁸ In the case of Asante this stands in stark contrast to the nineteenth century European depiction of this kingdom as savage and despotic (McCaskie 1972: 30-31). When the Asante Campaign entered the capital Kumasi the British were shown what amounted to an outright museum of European material culture at the palace (Wolfson 1958: 161-162; Perrot 1999: 875-884).

6 CONCLUSION

In August 2004 I officiated as a guide for a group of twenty-four Swiss theologians of the protestant-reformed denomination on a study tour through southern Ghana. This was on the occasion of the convention of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) held at Accra in July and August 2004. On the first day we paid a visit to the town of Odumase, the capital of the Manya Krobo traditional state. The trip was to familiarise the participants with Ghana and enable them to meet with Ghanaians of all walks of life outside the protected microcosm of the university campus at Legon, where the convention was held. Local congregations and communities of the Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church had been alerted to the coming of visitors. In most cases such groups attended a church service and were entertained thereafter by the local communities with a cultural display, local dishes and refreshments. Later they would be shown some development project. Our visit, however, was an individual arrangement. The choice of Odumase was informed by the research I had conducted there and my familiarity with the place. I had previously announced our coming to the palace and to the Presbyterian Church of Odumase, and had expressed my wish that the theme of our encounter would be the relationship between the Manya Krobo chieftaincy and the church. The Odumase Presbyters' session had taken charge of everything and had arranged the modalities with the traditional council. Nevertheless, there would not have been much of a difference had our visit not been initiated and the theme suggested by myself.

Upon our arrival at Odumase, we were met on the main road by a brass band of the Presbyterian youth organisation that led us all the way to the palace performing swinging church songs in highlife rhythm. The Presbyterian Women's Fellowship took the lead dancing, singing and waving their handkerchiefs. Long before we arrived at the palace we could hear the droning beats of the big *fontomfron* and *obonu* drums accompanied by the clattering metallic sound of the bell. When our train entered the forecourt of the palace and passed by the court orchestra an incredible cacophony developed from the meeting of the two orchestras. Here a large rectangle consisting of canopies had been set up for a so-called mini-durbar. On the side close to the palace *Matsã Dome Siako III*, acting on behalf of the *konô*,²⁶⁹ had taken position. He was framed by his linguist, elders, the councillors of the paramount chief, the paramount queenmother *Manyã Mamlé Okleyo* and her entourage, as well as several other chiefs. 'As custom demands' we went round the rectangle, led by the ministers and elders of the Odumase Presbyterian Church, and greeted the dignitaries from right to left,. After we had taken our seats

²⁶⁹ *Konô Sakite II* is a professor of Business Management and Economic Administration at Clark University, Massachusetts, and spends most of the year in the USA.

under the canopy facing the chiefly representatives, the music stopped. The women's fellowship sat down on the left hand rows and the brass band as well as other participants and onlookers took position on the right hand rows. A delegation from the chief's side came over to greet us and enquire into our 'mission'. Once these formalities were settled, the proceedings started in full. In a long speech state linguist *Otsiami* Boaten narrated the history of the town of Odumase and of Chief Odonkor Azu, who welcomed the Basel Mission in the nineteenth century. He also referred to Krobo Mountain, the former place of abode embodying tradition and heathendom, contrasting Odumase as a site of modernity. Boaten stressed the importance of the church and its schools in the history of the state and the great merits of Johannes Zimmermann and his fellow missionaries. The head of our group, Revd Strub, sought to reply appropriately. As an interlude between the speeches, the programme saw the gracious performance of five young Krobo women dancing to the sound of *klama* songs. They were dressed in beautiful cloth and adorned with beads and jewellery as during the closing ceremonies of *dipo*. As a second interlude one of the courtiers danced *obonu* in honour of the chief and his guests.

Later we withdrew together with the elders and the chiefs to the hall on the upper level of the palace. A great number of pictures, many of them dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century dotted the walls. Most of them depicted the consecutive Manya Krobo paramount chiefs clad in cloth and especially the more recent photographs showed them in an apparel that differed not much from that of an Akan chief. Most prominent, however, was the painted portrait of *Konō Sakite* (Fig. 5.4) opposite the chief's seat. As has been shown in section 5.4, it played an important role when Governor Griffith appointed the young mission teacher Emanuel Mate Kole as paramount chief of Manya Krobo. In one of the pictures this chief is seen wearing a uniform (Fig. 5.12), another one shows his long time pen pal Lord Baden-Powell. Each of the pictures had its own significance, testifying to the legitimacy of the royal family of Odumase. We had ourselves brought along a number of reproductions of pictures relating to the history of Odumase from the Basel Mission collection and donated them to the Manya Krobo Traditional Council for a future exhibition. As I had expected, they fuelled our discussion with the elders and were received with much enthusiasm. The continuation of the programme was fully in the hands of the church. We were taken on a short tour of the neighbourhood of the palace. It took us past the old chapel and the old *wem ngwam*. On my request we greeted one of the eldest members of the royal family residing there.²⁷⁰ To him we presented the customary gift of two bottles of Dutch schnapps, which he readily accepted. These should have been presented during our meeting at the forecourt, but the church had opted to omit this point from the programme. As I had anticipated, Nanor took us to the *klutu* and poured a libation at this concrete altar situated between chapel and *wem ngwam*, invoking the ancestors and the various deities of importance for the Manya Krobo state. He informed them of our visit and asked them to bless it. In his invocation he set our visit in connection with the first visit of Basel Mis-

²⁷⁰ 'Uncle' Nanor is a son of the first Christian paramount chief of Odumase Emanuel Mate Kole.

sionary Johannes Zimmermann to Odumase, who was welcomed and invited to stay by Nanor's great grandfather Odonkor Azu. Meanwhile the ministers of the Odumase Church looked on uneasily and hastened to show us the old chapel, the old mission house and the small grave yard next to it. Here a number of Basel Missionaries, their wives and children, as well as a few eminent Krobo pioneers of the church are buried. While to us the often incredibly young age of those lying here was probably the most striking sensation, to our hosts the grave yard was a far more powerful place. As we learned from the pastor's speech in the new big chapel where our tour ended, the legacy of 'our' ancestors was to be a commitment for us and we were encouraged to live up to their example. We were admonished not to forget about the historic bond between Switzerland and Odumase. This historical link was perceived by our hosts as providing a trans-national bridge, which was to connect the Odumase congregations with partners overseas in the tradition of the friendship between Chief Odonkor Azu and Missionary Johannes Zimmermann.

Our reception at Odumase embodied the essence of this thesis. The commemoration of the Basel Mission, alongside elements of 'traditional culture', was mobilised on the occasion of our visit for the promotion of development in the area. While for the church it was difficult to embrace the performance of culture on this occasion, the traditional state had no reservations when it came to including the church and Christian culture in the performance of the mini-durbar. Its relationship with the latter is marked by checks and balances, whereby the palace is more open to Christian culture than the church is towards tradition. For the Manya Krobo traditional state, Christianity has become part of tradition. Cultural practices such as the initiation rites for the girls or the dancing of *obonu* in honour of the chief, are as important a resource as is Christianity, despite the dichotomy created by early missionaries between the two. As this thesis has shown, both tradition and Christianity have played an important role in negotiating the radical spatial and political change in the Krobo states in the nineteenth century.

This brings us back to the analysis of the two contemporary festivals in the region that provided the point of entry for this study. In Ghana such cultural festivals play an important role as platforms where the 'traditional states' communicate with the national or regional government and voice their concerns and expectations. In the same way they are made use of by government representatives for communicating national or regional policies and for calling on traditional leaders to transmit and implement these policies. For the chiefs and queenmothers the festivals are the arena in which they reaffirm annually the allegiance of their people and assert their role as leaders of the community. The latter is today dispersed all over Ghana and abroad²⁷¹, yet the cultural identity and

²⁷¹ There are no statistics on the number of Krobo living abroad. Like their fellow Ghanaian citizens they are avid travellers and can be found all around the globe. For example when Nigeria expelled Ghanaian nationals in the early 1980s almost a million persons were repatriated between 1981 and 1983 (Arhinful 2002: 153). As the aftermath of the El Al airplane crash at the Bijlmermeer suburb of Amsterdam in the year 1992 has made clear, any official statistic is immediately toppled by the number of unregistered immigrants (Knipscheer et al. 2000: 461-462). How important this Diaspora community is, can be seen from an estimate by the

historical heritage, as invoked and fostered on the occasion of the festivals, serves as a powerful bond keeping these imagined communities together. This is especially true for the Krobo, who as migrant farmers have since the 1850s coped with their spatial fragmentation. They expanded their farmlands contiguously up to the 1920s when the neighbouring state of Akyem Abuakwa stopped their progress. Consequently Krobo farmers started to buy lands further afield and created island settlements all over the forest areas of southern Ghana. This development has been exacerbated by the creation of Lake Volta, which has flooded parts of the Krobo farmlands and has thereby increased pressure on the land. The migrant farmers' Diaspora communities, who live mostly amongst Akan speakers, maintain their bonds with their hometowns in the Krobo area and return there for all the major life-cycle rituals, for initiations, *outdoorings*, burials and for the yearly cultural festivals (if they can afford the journey). The home-coming, rallying the dispersed people in their hometowns, together with the forging of a shared cultural identity are thus central aspects of the festivals.

It is striking to notice that during the festivals two apparently antagonistic heritages are mobilized to this end. On the one hand there is 'traditional culture', manifest in the form of libations, court culture, the old priestly ritual of the sprinkling of the new millet crop, the dances of the girls' initiation rites, the commemoration of the ancient mountain home and of the traumatic experience of its abolition. On the other hand most of the onlookers and participants are Christians; the clergy and the churches in general contribute to the event with prayers, hymns, and an interdenominational thanksgiving service; and the heritage of the Basel Mission is highlighted as the central agency in the modern history of the state. As such the mission is (at least in part) responsible for the very abolition of the mountain homes and of Krobo culture that is remembered during the festival. How is this working contradiction to be explained? As my analysis has shown, the abolition of 1892 was not simply the effect of external powers. Rather, it was the leading members of the Manya Krobo royal family who themselves initiated the abandoning of the mountain home. This was necessary in order to allow for the further expansion of the state and for the strengthening of the chieftaincy. By supporting the prohibition of Krobo culture the royal family could effect the installation of a young educated member of the family despite an obvious breach with customary procedure. As a teacher this candidate enjoyed the full support of government, which consequently left the Manya Krobo no choice but to accept him.

Once *Konô* Emanuel Mate Kole was in power he reintroduced the banned rituals. They had an important function not only for creating and maintaining an ethnic identity, but also to rally people physically at the centre of society. The abolition had destroyed the latter and in order to assert their own settlements as new centres, the chiefs had to devise an attraction. First they introduced new festivals to replace the old ones. These centred on the person of the chief and/or were controlled by him. Once the dust had settled the chiefs also reinstated or reinvented most of the banned rites. In order to

Bank of Ghana of the private remittances flowing yearly back to Ghana. The number given for 2002 is US\$1.3 billion (Appiah-Adu 2004).

avoid conflict with colonial law, the rituals were split into public and non-public parts. The former was devoid of "immorality" and emphasised clothing, while the latter saw the continuation of tradition as it was previously known. Similarly the festivals for the war deities were split into a secret ritualistic part and a public festive celebration. In the case of the girls' initiation this was first done under the disguise of a modernised form. While the priestly performers were still in charge of the rituals, the chiefs achieved considerable control over them. Other than the old and the reinvented rituals, the chiefs instituted new public performances of the stool rituals, inspired by the court culture of the neighbouring Akan states. This was not a wholesale adoption of a neighbouring hegemonic culture, but an eclectic and highly selective appropriation of certain elements. For example, while the office of the queenmother was instituted in Krobo, it was left bare of the political function it had among the Akan, where the queenmother has the last word in the election of a new chief. In a similar vein the practice of destoolment is said not to exist in Krobo. This, of course, is a situational assertion: Many Krobo *Konô* Emanuel Mate Kole embraced and readily made use of the concept to get rid of his opponents Dorm *Matsâ* Amitei and his successor *Matsâ* Bah.

Akan culture is just one foreign element that reverberates in Krobo chieftaincy. The colonial state, too, was a great source of power and legitimacy on which the chiefs drew. The system of indirect rule ensured the persistence of chiefly authorities. When chiefs showed themselves as enlightened and cooperative rulers they could count on government to back them in most of their endeavours. A chief like Emanuel Mate Kole, who ideally combined education, youth, economic enterprise and submissiveness, and who drew heavily on government recognition in order to make good the irregularities in his ascent to the throne could thrive on his good relationship with government. Indirect rule also provided an access to imperial recognition. In order to bolster its system of indirect rule the British opened their system of imperial honours to "native" rulers. A loyal chief could stock up his paraphernalia with all kind of imperial insignia: uniforms, medals, collars, swords, certificates and pictures. Alongside with elements of the pageantry and material culture of British imperial rule these became part and parcel of the chiefly tradition. Yet, in the same way they entered the chiefly assemblage in the colonial period, they had to make room for symbols of African origin in the post colonial period, when African culture received renewed esteem. The same applies to the yearly festivals that serve to rally the dispersed Krobo community every year. Today ancient Krobo rituals, which have long lost their meaning to the wider population, are harnessed to this end together with the commemoration of the expulsion from the ancient mountain home. While these rituals and traditions embody continuity, they prove malleable and, as this thesis has shown, they are themselves the site of change.

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Otsiami Amakwata, Somanya

Michael Tei (Nene Anumnor), Manyakpongunor-Konorpiem

Nene Agba Asa, Odumase-Salosi

Nene Wanumo Aseni, Ogome Tekporsi (*kotoklo* priest)

Tetteh Ashie, Somanya-Sawer

Nene Pettey Asime, Manyakpongunor-Konorpiem

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Sam Batsa, Odumase

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George Djabanor, Asite

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Nene Tetteh Gaga, Somanya Plau

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Lft. Col. Kodjiku, Agomanya

Revd Peter Kodjo, Osu

Otsiami Kofi, Agomanya-Agbom

Vera Madjitey-Scales, Asite

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Otsiami Nuete, Agomanya

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Kofi Odonkor, Accra

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Nene Omesu, Piengwa
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Evans Sikapa-Madjitey, Asite
Nene Tawiah, Okwenya
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7.3 LITERATURE

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CURRICULUM VITAE VON VEIT ARLT

Ich kam als drittes von fünf Kindern der Hannelore Arlt(-Hardt) und des Wulf Arlt am 17. Oktober 1967 in Köln zur Welt. Schon im Verlaufe meines ersten Lebensjahres zog die Familie in die Schweiz, wo ich in der Umgebung von Basel aufwuchs. Nachdem ich 1974 das erste Schuljahr in Witterswil begonnen hatte, absolvierte ich alle weiteren Schulen in Muttenz und schloss im Herbst 1986 mit der Matura (Typus B) ab. Nach einem Zwischenjahr immatrikulierte ich mich 1987 an der Universität Basel. Mein Studium der Neueren Allgemeinen Geschichte und des Mittelalters, sowie der Physio- und Humangeographie schloss ich im Dezember 1995 mit einer Lizentiatsarbeit zu einem Thema der Geschichte Afrikas ab. Es folgten Aufenthalte in Ghana, auf den Kapverdischen Inseln und in Südafrika, sowie Anstellungen in den Basler Afrika Bibliographien und im Archiv der Basler Mission. 1998 immatrikulierte ich mich als Doktorand an der Universität Basel. Das Dissertationsprojekt wurde durch Paul Jenkins (damals Lehrbeauftragter für die Geschichte Afrikas) und Prof. Patrick Harries betreut. Vor der Schaffung der Stiftungsprofessur für die Geschichte Afrikas nahmen die Professoren Josef Mooser und Meinhard Schuster die institutionelle Verantwortung für das Projekt wahr. Forschungsaufenthalte führten mich wiederholt nach Ghana, aber auch nach Deutschland, England und Südafrika. Im April 2005 fand die Dissertation ihren Abschluss, gefolgt vom Examen in Neuerer Allgemeiner Geschichte am 24. Mai desselben Jahres. Externer Gutachter und Prüfer war Prof. Gareth Austin von der London School of Economics. Im Verlaufe meines Doktorats ging ich einer selbstständigen Erwerbstätigkeit im Bereich des Kulturmanagements nach, war aber auch am Historischen Seminar der Universität Basel angestellt. Zur Zeit arbeite ich in der Koordination des Zentrums für Afrikastudien Basel und nehme einen Lehrauftrag im Bereich der Geschichte Afrikas wahr. In diesem Zusammenhang habe ich im Februar und März 2005 im Rahmen eines Austauschprojektes am Department of Social Anthropology der University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg gelehrt.