

Indigenous Religion in Ghana

An explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in Kumasi

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Odenkyem da nsuo mu nsuo ohome nsuo ne mframe

The crocodile (*odenkyem*) lives under water, but he breathes air

Adinkra symbol of adaptation

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Declaration

This thesis has been composed by me from results of my own work, except where stated otherwise. It has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree.

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Abstract

This thesis is the result of extensive historical and empirical research in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana (West Africa). Ghana is a modern nation-state with a secular government. Parallel to this post-colonially rooted political institution, the country is ruled by a number of sacred pre-colonially rooted institutions of chieftaincy. Among them, due to its clear hierarchical structure and great sanctity, the Asante institution is most prominent. Since the pre-colonial era, Asante chiefs and queen mothers have derived their authority from a religious source. Traditionally, they perceive themselves as servants of the ancestral spirits, from whom they receive the divine power to rule by occupying a 'stool' (throne). This power enables them to mediate between the spiritual beings and the community and to take care of their wellbeing. Also, since pre-colonial times, traditional Asante authorities have operated as religious peacekeepers as they have managed both religiously and socially to maintain a relationship of balanced tension between Asante indigenous practitioners, Muslims and Christians within the community.

The two main questions that are raised in this thesis are as follows. First, to what extent do the present day Asante traditional authorities still perceive a religious intermediary role? To answer this question the author looks at characteristics of this role in the pre-colonial and colonial era. She also studies four different Asante indigenous religious rituals that have recently been performed in the Kumasi Metropolis: the *Asanteman Adaye Kese* festival, a royal pre-burial ritual, a ritual of pouring of libation and a chief's installation ritual. The author researches whether Asante Indigenous Religion is present in these rituals and whether there is a formal or informal relationship with the Asante persistence of chieftaincy. This provides insight into to what extent the role of the Asante traditional authorities is still that of religious intermediation in the performance of those rituals. The second question is how Asante chiefs and queen mothers have operated as religious peacekeepers and how this role still contributes to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The answer is given by showing the persistent uniqueness of Asante chieftaincy as a religious pluralistic peacekeeping body in today's Kumasi Metropolis.

The author concludes that Asante traditional authorities in the Metropolis still fulfil a significant role as both religious mediators and religious peacekeepers. This phenomenon offers an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in this ancient capital of the Asante Kingdom and its surrounding areas. The role of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers as religious peacekeepers also provides a model for peaceful coexistence in more conflicted areas in West Africa, such as Nigeria and the rest of Africa.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I will address and attempt to defend the following statement: ‘Asante Indigenous Religion’ provides **an** explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana. I have put the indefinite article ‘**an**’ in bold to make clear that I am not making the strong statement that ‘Asante Indigenous Religion’ provides *the* explanation for Asante chieftaincy in this Metropolis. Instead, I am defending the weak argument that among elements of an economic and political nature, Indigenous Religion among the Asante is also an important factor in providing an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. I believe that the weak argument is in a sense stronger, because it takes into account that researchers from different fields can analyse the empirical data in the field in another way and that there are altered co-existing realities, which makes researchers worldwide perceive the same matters with different eyes. My statement raises the following two sub-questions:

- (1) *Who are the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis?*
- (2) *What do the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis believe?*

In this introduction, I will answer the above sub-questions which will pave the way for a further exploration of the relationship between ‘Asante Indigenous Religion’ and ‘Asante chieftaincy’. Chapter One consists of a literature review and a sketch of the context of my research. In Chapter Two, I will explain the research methodology used to collect the necessary historical and empirical data which were needed to defend my thesis statement. This thesis further consists of historical and empirical parts (part one: Chapters Three and Four and part two: Chapters Five and Six).

In Chapter Three, I will focus on the history and indigenous religious authorisation of the Asante state in pre-colonial history. I will also focus on the way in which Asante traditional authorities dealt with European Christian missionary and Islamic religious activities. These topics will illuminate the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities in the pre-colonial period.

In Chapter Four, I will first give a short historical overview of the colonial period. Then, I will focus on the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping role of two Asantehenes who were ruling during this period: the Asantehenes Prempeh I and II. Evidence will be provided for the persistence of these roles, despite the fact that the Asante state ceased to exist in 1896.

Chapter Five will deal with the indigenous religious intermediary function of present-day Asante traditional authorities. To make the point that this role of Asante chiefs and queen mothers has persisted in today’s Kumasi Metropolis, I will test the extent to which indigenous religious elements are present in four different rituals in this Metropole: a royal pre-burial ritual, a pouring of libation ritual, a chief’s installation ritual and the religious *Asanteman Adaye Kese* festival. For each

ritual I will look in great detail at the relationship between ‘Asante Indigenous Religion’ and ‘the persistence of Asante chieftaincy’. The definition of ‘Indigenous Religion’ that I use for this Chapter is that of the scholar of religion J.L.Cox, who has devoted a great part of his academic life so far to the study of Native Alaskan and African Indigenous Religions.

Chapter Six will provide evidence for the persistence of the indigenous religious peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities in the present-day Kumasi Metropolis. In this Chapter, I will make use of one of the characteristics of Indigenous Religion, demonstrated by the scholar of religion and Akan expert J.G. Platvoet, to focus on the social and religious tolerance of Asante traditional authorities towards the religious space of Christians and Muslims within the Metropolis. The overall cordial character of the relationship with these religious movements proves that these authorities operate as indigenous religious peacekeepers. This function that is attributed to the Asante traditional authorities makes Asante chieftaincy a unique institute in the Kumasi Metropolis and provides an explanation for today’s persistence of this institute.

0.1 Who were and are the inhabitants of Kumasi?

The major cultural group¹ in the Kumasi Metropolis is the Asante² (See: Map 1), who belong to the Akan (See: Map 2). This is the umbrella name of culturally and linguistically connected Niger-Congo groups in Ghana, the Côte d’Ivoire and a very small minority in Northern Togo. The Akan cultural groups all speak Kwa languages and dialects and have linguistically been connected to the Ewe, the Fon, and other groups that live to the east. They number over eight million (8,562,748) and make up to 49.1 percent of the Ghanaian population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000 census).

The Asante have been the main historical Akan group in Ghana since the pre-colonial period. Today, making up 14.8 percent (2,578,829), they are the major Akan group and also the major cultural group in the whole of Ghana (Ghana statistical service, 2000, 22: Table 4-ethnic groups of Ghanaians by birth, by region). The majority of the Asante live in the Ashanti Region, which is located in Southern central Ghana. They speak Twi and belong to the Eastern Akan together with the Fante, the Akuapem, the Akyem, Akwamu, Bron, Wassu, Kwahu, Assin, Denkyira, and Gomua. The Akan speak (and 30 percent of them also write) Fante, Twi, Akuapem, Denkyira, Asen, Akyem Bosome, Kwahu, and Ahafo. In the Côte d’Ivoire live the Agni, Baulé, Nzima, Ahanta, Sanwi, Aowin, and Sefwi Western Akan groups (Ogot 1999:204). The Chakosi in northern Togo are also of Akan stock (Braffi 2002:8).

¹ The term ‘cultural group’ is also used in relation to the Asante and the Akan by Stoeltje (2003).

² In the early nineteenth century the Swiss (Basel) missionaries wrote down the Akan language. They tried to duplicate the name ‘Asante’ as they heard it, which resulted in their spelling of the word as ‘Ashantee’ and ‘Shanty’. After Ghana gained independence in 1957, the new Government commissioned the ‘African Studies Centre’ (ASC) at the University of Ghana, Legon, to standardise and rationalise the spellings of all traditional and historical names, which resulted in the word ‘Asante’ (www.scn.org/rdi/index.htm).

Kumasi is the capital of the Asante region. With its 1,170,270 inhabitants, the Kumasi Metropolis (Kumasi including its adjacent villages) is the second largest Metropole in Ghana (Ghana statistical service, 2000, 47: Table 23- population by district, by sex and type of locality of enumeration, Ashanti Region) and it is the administrative and commercial centre of the country. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Kumasi was the capital of the Asante Kingdom, which exceeded the boundaries of present-day Ghana. Until the 1880s (McCaskie 1995:100) the Kumasi ruling elite strictly controlled the flow of foreign religious ideas into the kingdom. 'World' religions, such as Christianity and Islam, could therefore only penetrate the country at the level of an exchange of religious elements. Due to a lack of the 'inner' dimension of conversion, there was no real change of the heart of the Asante, who did, however, continue to perceive Islamic charms, amulets and talismans (*nsuman*) as good or bad spirits and welcomed the Christian God as part and parcel of the wider European modern worldview, technology and economy.

Christian missionaries did not succeed in converting the Asante *en masse* to Christianity until 1914. One of the reasons that the British did not formally succeed in colonising the Asante until 1900 was their reservations regarding outsiders and their (religious) beliefs. The Asante are people with a complex Indigenous Religion and a history of both careful adaptation and resistance to the religions of outsiders, there where they perceived these religions to be a threat to their way of life and the persistence of their chieftaincy institute.

In the nineteenth century, the inhabitants of Kumasi included the Kumasi ruling elite (*the oyoko clan*), which consisted of the founders of the Asante Kingdom and their subjects; other Akan groups who came to Kumasi for trade, such as the Fante; Muslims (Asante *Nkramo*) from as far as Timbuktu who helped the Asante king (Asantehene) at the court; Christian missionaries; and some Asante converts of the Methodist, Catholic, and Presbyterian Church forerunners. Today, the Kumasi Metropolis is therefore the home of Akan indigenous practitioners, Muslims and Christians.

0.2 What do the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis believe?

The inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis are Akan Indigenous practitioners (0.3 percent or 3,511 inhabitants), Muslims³ (16 percent or 187,243 inhabitants) and Christians (78.8 percent or 922,173 inhabitants) (Ghana [Kumasi] statistical service, 2000 census: Table 3: religious affiliation in Kumasi Metro). From these statistics it looks as if the number of inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis adhering to the Akan Indigenous Religion is very small. This is, however, deceptive

³ According to Islam expert D. Skinner, the number of Muslims in the major towns of Ghana is, however, most likely a lot higher than is shown in the official Ghanaian statistics. For the whole country the most recent census places the Muslim population at around 16 percent but other estimates range between 20 percent and 45 percent, the latter surprisingly coming from the Catholic Secretariat in Accra. With substantial conversion to Islam amongst the Ga, Fante, Asante and other southern Ghanaians, the Muslim population in 2008 could possibly be as high as 30 percent (Skinner 2008a:footnote 4).

because in practice, 'many indigenous practitioners who claim to be Christians rarely if ever attend church services and continue to practice the Indigenous Religion. Many who are active in the various Christian groups also often participate in ceremonies of the ancestors and nature deities and visit an indigenous priest. This behaviour is to be expected, since the Akan indigenous religion is polytheistic and pluralistic' (Christensen 1959:269).

The history of the introduction of Islam and Christianity in Ghana also shows that (Christensen 1959:270) 'for the Asante the adaptation of a new deity does not necessarily imply the negation of the old; it is rather to be regarded as an additive factor for protection against the uncertainties of life'.

Of my respondents, eighteen of the fifty six called themselves 'indigenous Christians'. In the official statistics these people are classified as Christians, but when I asked those of my respondents who called themselves 'indigenous Christians' whether they attended church or read the Bible, only some of them answered positively. Other 'indigenous Christians' among my respondents said that they never read the Bible, never went to church and instead visited an indigenous priest. There are thus inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis who call themselves 'indigenous Christians' but who visit the indigenous priest instead of attending church services and reading the Bible. As an outsider, I would call the last-mentioned category of people 'indigenous practitioners' rather than 'indigenous Christians'. In addition to 'indigenous Christians' there are Asante in the Kumasi Metropolis who call themselves 'Christians' and who practice a European or American sense of Christianity. These Christians might also be found observing indigenous Christian rituals, but they participate not as practitioners but out of a feeling of being socially obliged to continue participation in clan affairs.

To give an idea of the numbers of the indigenous priest-healers in the Kumasi Metropolis we mainly have to rely on the statistics of 1989 provided by *Nsumankwahene* Baffour Domfeh Gyeabour I, who is the physician of the Asantehene, the head of Muslims at the royal court in Kumasi and the administrator of all indigenous priest-healers in the Asante Region. According to this source, there were 47 registered and licensed priest-healers in the Kumasi Metropolis, of whom 98 percent worked full-time, which indicates that there was a high demand for their practice. 'Priest-healers are healers who are "called" by the spirits, whose treatments are spiritual, who treat mental and sociopsychological diseases, whose clients are most often residential and receive long-term help rather than on an ad-hoc basis, and who are not incorporated in the formal health system of Ghana' (Tsey 1997). Besides, there were over two hundred and fifty other registered and licenced 'traditional practitioners', herbalists, whose treatments are 'non-spiritually based', faith healers, and cult healers and also a great number of non-licensed traditional practitioners. At the time, the Metropolis had a healer to population ratio of 1:1373 for licensed and registered healers (Anyinam 1989). More recent sources indicated that there are still several licensed and registered indigenous

priest-healers in Kumasi, but that they are most likely rarely consulted by patients in the Kumasi Metropolis in cases of severe mental health problems. What mostly happens is that the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis consult the indigenous priests for minor psychosomatic or mental problems. In more serious cases they go directly to one of the four services⁴ for psychiatric treatment in the Metropolis. Research has shown that of all 322 interviewed patients who ended up in these institutes for mental health treatment, only 5.9 percent had first visited an indigenous priest-healer. On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that in Kumasi, as well as the indigenous priest-healers, the pastors are also providing the same type of spiritual help for their people e.g. 14.2 percent of the patients first visited their pastor (Appiah-Poku and others 2004). On the other hand, an explanation can be found looking at the number of doctors in Kumasi in comparison with the rest of the Asante Region. The Kumasi Metropolis has 346 doctors, which makes up 85 percent of all doctors in the region. The number of traditional healers on which one depends for treatment of mental healthcare problems is therefore much higher in all other places in the Asante Region.

The Kumasi Metropolis thus still has a considerable number of licenced and unlicenced spiritually based traditional healers. However, because of the great number of hospitals and doctors in Kumasi available for medical treatment of health care problems, the inhabitants of the Metropolis (*Kumasifo*) rarely visit the traditional healers in cases of severe medical problems. Nevertheless, they do visit the indigenous priests and/or their pastors for minor mental problems and there are informal links between them and the Council's services for psychiatric treatment. The fact that inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis combine services provides no evidence for a decrease in the populations' Indigenous Religion. Among indigenous Asante, one looks for practical solutions to problems and attempts to find the best solution for each problem. The inhabitants of Kumasi have continued to visit their traditional healers and those healers occasionally receive messages from the spirits to send their patients to a clinic or a hospital.

With regard to Islamic practitioners, the categorisation 'Muslim' is also more complicated than the statistics make it appear, because there is a category of Muslims who are in a sense also Asante indigenous practitioners: the so-called Asante *Nkramo*⁵, who are Muslims who have become Asante through intermarriage and naturalisation, and Asante who have become Muslims by conversion (Asante *Nkramo* headman Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina, 50). Although the Asante *Nkramo* are Muslims, their leader, the king's physician (*nsumankwahene*), who himself is not a Muslim, is also the head of the indigenous priests and herbalists in Asante. The *nsumankwahene* is the leader of

⁴ The four services mentioned are: 'Psychiatric unit of the Komfe Anokye Teaching Hospital' (KATH), 'The Community Psychiatric Nursing Unit' (CPNU), 'The Pankronu Psychiatric Clinic' (PPC) and 'The Santasi Clinic' (SC).

the long-settled Muslims. Many of the non-herbal methods of medical treatment used by him are in actual fact methods derived from Muslim medicine, of which some are mentioned in the Qur'an (Osei Agyeman, 50).

There are thus a lot of similarities between the Islamic Religion of the Asante *Nkramo*, who in a particular way make use of the Qur'an, and today's Asante Indigenous Religion. It is important to take notice of this fact when one categorises the Asante *Nkramo* as Muslims. They are indeed Muslims, but since the eighteenth century their form of Islam has been more interlinked with the Asante Indigenous Religion than that of other Muslims in the Kumasi Metropolis.

In conclusion, the official statistics of the Ghana statistical service do not take into account the complexity of the situation in terms of the religious beliefs of the Kumasi Metropolis' inhabitants. In practice, there is a lot more indigenous religious activity going on than the official statistics show. This is an important point for this thesis because I argue that the indigenous institution of chieftaincy (*Asanteman*) has persisted because of the Asante traditional authorities' indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping roles, while the presumed relationship between the two is not the most obvious conclusion one would draw after studying the official statistics of people and their religions in the Metropolis.

The statistics that I gave at the beginning of this section say that the majority of the population in this town is Christian, whereas the second largest group in the same town consists of Muslims. Official statistics regarding the religions of Ghanaians might be the reason that some chieftaincy studies about Ghana have given the impression that the Indigenous Religions in parts or the whole of Ghana have died out. The historian Richard Rathbone (2000:2), for instance, remarked that 'Ghana is a modern state and its citizens are people whose belief is more informed by the Internet and MTV than by the shadows of the forgotten ancestors'. In this thesis I will show, however, that the Asante Indigenous Religion is very much alive and that it is an underestimated factor in the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis.

⁵ The Asante *Nkramo* were the first Muslims who settled in Kumasi as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. The first Asante *Nkramo* were already converted to Islam before they came to Kumasi. Since the twentieth century indigenous Asante who have been converted to Islam have also been called Asante *Nkramo*.

Chapter One: literature review and research context

Se eba se obi re we Ōsono a, Ōka no baako baako — ‘One should eat an elephant one bite at a time’.

Asante proverb

The purpose of this literature review is manifold. First, it is meant to provide a historical background of chieftaincy studies in Ghana and to place this thesis in a wider context, by showing how it builds upon previous research and its limitations. Second, it gives insight into the topics of contemporary theoretical debates on this matter. Third, it aims to present theories and concepts on chieftaincy matters, which are necessary for understanding the phenomena in a historical and contemporary context. Fourth, it introduces relevant terminology and its meaning in the context of this thesis. Fifth, it pays attention to the significance of the issues being researched.

1.1 Historical background

In this section, I will explain the historical background of ‘Indigenous Religions’ and chieftaincy as separate fields of study, and relate them to my research statement. I will start with a short history of the study of Indigenous Religions, which is the older of the two fields.

The study of ‘Indigenous Religions’, which until recently was known as ‘Primitive Religions’, derives from the European Christian missionary and early anthropological tradition, which did not aim to study the religion of indigenous people objectively. The main reason why in the eighteenth and nineteenth century European Christian churches sent their missionaries overseas was to convert non-Westerners to Christianity. The studies of many of these missionaries on the culture and belief of non-Westerners were therefore written in the tradition of ‘*preparatio evangelica*’, or the idea that God gave all human beings the cognitive capacity to embrace Christianity as a world faith. It was the task of ECMs, however, to enable non-Westerners to become familiar with Christianity by providing the Christian message in an understandable way. The study of non-Western cultures and religions was meant to gain enough insight into these religions to be able to translate the Christian message in the language of non-westerners and to adapt them to the local cultural context. Some examples of studies among the Asante which were conducted in these traditions are as follows: ‘A report of the 1482 mission under the authority of King John II’, which was written in 1483 by Diego D’Azambuja, a Portuguese aristocratic, mission leader and founder of the slave fort Sao Jorge da Mina (St

George's Castle in Elmina). Besides the aim of establishing trade relationships with the people of the Gold Coast, D'Azambuja was sent to this part of West Africa to spread Christianity among these people (Nathan 1904:34). In 1836 'The Religious Tract Society', founded in 1799 and a major British publisher of Christian literature which was intended initially for evangelism, published 'Missionary records: West Africa, London', which also falls under this category, similarly to Rev. T.B. Freeman's 'Journal of various visits to the kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku, and Dahomey in Western Africa', London 1844 and John Beecham's, 'Ashantee and the Gold Coast', London 1841; Beecham in this case being assisted in his work by the Rev. T.B. Freeman who had been to Kumasi in 1839. The Danish reverend Hans Christian Monrad's 'Bidrag til en skildring af Guinea-kysten og dens Indbyggere', Copenhagen 1822, was also meant to convert the indigenous population to Christianity. Monrad served as chaplain in the Danish settlements on the Gold Coast. The Swiss Presbyterians Friederich Ramseyer (1842-1902) and Johannes Kühne (1840-1915) are similarly important sources⁶ in this tradition. These missionaries were captured by an Asante force which had invaded Ewe territory, and from December 1870 until the approach of a British military expedition in January 1874 they were held hostage in Kumasi. Ramseyer believed that his capture and suffering were part of a divine plan for him to bring Christianity to Asante. An important German source is the report of the missionary A. Riis (Yarak 1997:363). Finally, the Swiss-Ga missionary Carl Christian Reindorf (1895) (1834-1917) made a compilation of a large body of oral traditions that he had collected on the Gold Coast (Silverman and David 1989:330). Not only were these sources subjective because they were meant to convert Asante to Christianity, but also because pre-colonial missionary officials in Europe had few scruples about changing the wording of reports sent to them from overseas, which means that many presumed 'primary' sources of this time should actually be treated as secondary sources (Jones 1991:174).

Besides the continuation of the production of documents that were written by Western liberal missionaries who were convinced that God could reveal himself to Africans (such as Geoffry Parrinder (1954) (1910-2005)), in the 1920s anthropologists entered the field of the study of Asante Indigenous Religion. Most well known in the anthropological tradition are the colonial ethnographies of the government anthropologist R.S. Rattray⁷ (1923), (1927) (1881-1938) who was appointed in 1928. Although anthropology in these years developed as an independent academic discipline, the products of this new anthropological school did not meet the standards of what contemporary scholars of religion would regard as objective research. Their main purpose was to serve the need of the colonial administration to justify the colonial enterprise by

⁶ Ramseyer and Kühne left a manuscript, two German editions, an English and a French translation.

⁷ For two extensive critiques on the work of R.S Rattray see: McCaskie (1983), Platvoet (1982:57-68).

connecting it to the Christian ideology of helping the so-called 'savages' in the dark continent of Africa by bringing the light of Western Judea-Christian civilisation.

To sum up, both missionary and anthropological studies of Indigenous Religions in Africa did not meet the requirements of objectivity in the present day academic study of religion. During the years before Ghana gained independence, several 'academic' studies on Indigenous Religions were written, which these days have been recognised as the result of the emergence of Ghanaian nationalism. For the study of Indigenous Religions of Africa, which due to the contributions of Parrinder at the time (1954) became known as 'African Traditional Religion' (ATR) (in the singular), this nationalism had the effect that ATRs became an important part of the Religious Studies programme in the University of Ghana in Legon. The politician Kwame Nkrumah, who played an important role in the preparation of Ghana's independence, and who later became the president of the nation, advertised the study of the ATR programme at Legon as an 'African necessity' (Cox 2007:18). Needless to say, the study of ATR, which had been started by Parrinder at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, fitted in well to Nkrumah's overall ideology of going back to the African roots and showing resistance towards anything connected to the former British colonisation of his country, such as European Christian Missionary education. The study of ATR in Legon was therefore highly politicised. The inclusion of political motives for the study of ATR became even more prominent when Nkrumah's opponents also started to use the study of Indigenous Religions in Ghana and the rest of Africa to gain power and strive for the countries' independence. J.B. Danquah⁸ (1944) (1895-1965) and Kofi A. Busia (1954) (1913-1978) are examples of scholars of religion who portrayed the Asante religion as being monotheistic and therefore comparable with Christianity and Islam, in order to show that Asante were civilised people; surely Asante religion had the same characteristics of the religions of other people in civilised countries. For this reason Danquah, for instance, compared the religion of the Akan with that of the Egyptians, since in those days Egypt was perceived by many scholars as the origin of Western civilisation (Bernal 1996).

The academic study of chieftaincy in Ghana, which became prominent in the one and only university of Ghana in Legon during the years of preparation for Ghana's independence, suffered from the same lack of objectivity due to the results of African nationalism. Both African and Western historians in Legon positioned themselves as anti-colonialists, whose aim was to get rid of the traditional authorities, who were believed to be conservative, anti-modern and collaborating with the colonial regime. From this background, these historians portrayed the institutions of chieftaincy in Ghana as leftovers of an archaic society that would soon disappear once Ghana had gained full independence from the British colonisers who occupied their country.

⁸ For a critique on the works of J.B. Danquah and Kofi A. Busia see Platvoet (1996:105-138).

Ironically enough, due to the colonisation of Ghana most of these historians were trained in the European historical tradition, which made their works highly Eurocentric. In order to free themselves from the political power of Ghana's chiefs and queen mothers, they compared their institutions with those of the ancient regimes in Europe, which had to be dismantled by the organisation of revolutions (such as the French revolution). The aim of the majority of their historical studies was therefore to show that the Asante kingdom and other kingdoms in West Africa displayed parallels with the ancient regimes in Europe, as a justification for the wish to clip the wings of the traditional authorities. Even the well-known contribution of Wilks (1989), who wrote a political overview of Asante in the nineteenth century, suffers from this political rather than academic motive (Rathbone 2006).

This African nationalistic background of the study of both 'Indigenous Religions' and chieftaincy at the University of Legon clarifies why until very recently these two fields of study have not been integrated. In the department of African Studies at this university, researchers focussed on chieftaincy. The religious aspects of chieftaincy were portrayed as superstitious belief and things that belonged to the past, in order to contrast the norms and values of the traditional authorities with the progressive aims and goals of the leaders of the new Ghanaian nation-state. The study of 'African Traditional Religion' (ATR) only fitted into the African nationalistic diary of those leaders as a separate field of study, in which this religion could be portrayed as part of the pride of Africa in the fight against the negative effects of European Christian missionary education on these religions, which threatened their persistence.

My initial Ph.D. research proposal (developed in 2004), which contained the idea of researching the relationship between Asante Indigenous Religion and Asante chieftaincy, derived from the discovered existence of a lack of integration of the two fields of studies. In 2006, Rathbone (2006:48-49), who in earlier works such as 'Nkrumah and the Chiefs' (2000) doubted the importance attributed to ancestral veneration in present-day Ghanaian society, acknowledged the disintegration of the study of chieftaincy and ATRs as a 'gap' in the existing literature. He then remarked that, 'there is virtually no mention of the significance of the otherworldly in what chieftaincy was or what chieftaincy did in that tradition', and that 'by the majority of the politicians and scholars in the period after independence until very recently chieftaincy was consistently regarded as essentially a political category' (2006: 48-49). The multiple meanings and hence multiple roles of chieftaincy tended to be ignored in favour of an over-concentration upon chiefs as temporal rulers, and there was an avoidance of discussion about their wider roles as what Weber would have called "authoritative alligators of values", as trustees of proximate heritage, of their engagements with the other worldly.

Outside Ghana and the rest of Africa, recent studies by social researchers such as the anthropologist Steegstra (2006), who wrote extensively on ‘development chiefs’ (*Nkosuohene/Nkosuohemaa*)⁹, reveal that African Studies departments in many Western Universities concentrate on development studies with a focus on Africa. From this background, researchers in these departments presume that the reason for the continuity of cultural values in relation to chieftaincy, such as respect for chiefs, lies outside Ghana and that the traditional institution would have disappeared without the help of powerful institutions, such as the World Bank, NGOs, and the personal initiative of Westerners to become ‘white development chiefs’ (*Nkosuohene koko*). In my opinion, in these studies the role of Western institutions and persons in the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in Ghana has been overemphasised. In Kumasi, for instance, *Nkosuohemaa* are not taken seriously as traditional authorities but are rather seen as ‘walking wallets’ who are eager to donate money for development projects in exchange for spectacular traditional enstoolments, which are the result of instant ‘inventions of tradition’.¹⁰ If development chiefs are not taken seriously as a traditional authority in a country, how can they be the cause of the persistence of chieftaincy?

With its ‘Promoting Partnership for Traditional Authorities Project’ (PPTAP), no doubt the World Bank has contributed to the transformation of indigenous traditional authorities into development chiefs. But in itself this transformation does not explain why chieftaincy in Ghana has persisted: before the donation from, for instance, the World Bank grant to the Asantehene - the highest male traditional authority among the Asante - in 2004, the Asante chiefs and queen mothers in Ghana were already there, and there were no signs that chieftaincy was about to disappear. The appearance of development chiefs might therefore have been *the result* of the persistence of chieftaincy in Ghana rather than *its cause*, which might lie elsewhere.

In conclusion, the ‘academic’ study of Indigenous Religion and chieftaincy in Ghana has suffered from a lack of objectivity due to their emergence during the heydays of Ghana’s preparations for the country’s independence. This African nationalism has affected the integration of the study of Indigenous Religion and chieftaincy, which as a result did not fit into Nkrumah’s African nationalistic educational diary. Consequently, there is a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between Indigenous Religion and chieftaincy in Ghana. In many African Studies departments in Western countries, resulting from the connections between those departments with

⁹ *Nkosuo* means ‘progress’, or ‘development’ (*-hene* is the designation for a chief, *-hemaa* for a queenmother), and the title was created by the late Asantehene, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II in 1985, at the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his ascension to the Golden Stool (Steegstra 2006).

¹⁰ The colonial power would often invent a ‘tradition’ which they could use to legitimise their own position. For example, a certain succession to a chief’s office might be recognised by a colonial power as being traditional in order to favour their own candidates for the job. Often these inventions were based on some form of tradition, but were grossly exaggerated, distorted, or biased toward a particular interpretation (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992).

development studies, the focus regarding chieftaincy studies lies in the link of the institution of chieftaincy with the outside world. Not only in, but also outside Ghana there is thus a gap in the literature linking Indigenous Religion and chieftaincy. On its own, this gap is not a sufficient reason for undertaking this study. The remaining section of this literature review, and especially section five, is therefore meant to clarify the purpose of this study.

1.2 Contemporary research context

Since this thesis aims to show the connection between ‘Asante Indigenous Religion’ and the ‘persistence of Asante chieftaincy’, there are two academic debates that are relevant. The first debate concentrates on the question of what ‘Indigenous Religions’ are and on the grounds of what characteristics a religion can be categorised as ‘Indigenous’. The second one centres on the question of why chieftaincy in Ghana and other West-African countries has persisted. In this section, I will deal with the above mentioned debates respectively.

With regards to the debate on the definition of ‘Indigenous Religions’, it is important to notice that the inclusion of some religious characteristics and the exclusion of others has affected what is defined as ‘Indigenous’. The present state of religious studies scholarship has not (yet) reached consensus on which characteristics to include or exclude in the category of ‘Indigenous Religions’. Scholars of religion such as J.L Cox, G. Harvey, J. Olupona and G. Cooper all have their individual understandings of what ‘Indigenous Religions’ are and are not. It is therefore of utmost importance to be aware of the consequences of the choice of a particular definition of ‘Indigenous Religions’. In order to comment on the persistence of indigenous religious phenomena in the Kumasi Metropolis, I have made a choice about how to define and consequently about what to include and exclude in using the term ‘indigenous’. This decision has a major effect on the question of the persistence of ‘Asante Indigenous Religions’ as a basis for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. However, while making my choice of definition, and paying attention to some of the characteristics of Indigenous Religions mentioned by other scholars, I realise that each choice of definition has its limitations, since it is only a relative account of what is meant by ‘Indigenous Religions’. The reasons for the choice of the definition of ‘Indigenous Religions’ in this study is to enable me to distinguish indigenous religious phenomena from other ones in an empirical setting, to make the point that Asante indigenous religious rituals have not been primarily performed for social or tourism purposes. A limitation of this research derived from the lack of consensus about the concept of ‘Indigenous Religions’ in the present state of religious studies scholarship is that the conclusions are more subjective than they would have been had a consensus been reached by prominent scholars in this field. I believe that for instance the choice for Olupona’s rather than Cox’s definition of ‘Indigenous Religions’

in this study could have brought me to different conclusions about the persistence of AIRs and consequently also about its relation to Asante chieftaincy, since different religious aspects are included in Olupona's and Cox's definition. Despite the subjectivity of the conclusions, this study is meaningful for the academic study of religion, since by applying Cox's minimum definition of Indigenous Religions to religious phenomena being observed by the author in the present day Kumasi Metropolis, it aims to contribute to the understanding of what 'Indigenous Religions' are. I will now show how this study also contributes to the understanding of chieftaincy in Ghana.

The question of why chieftaincy in Ghana and other African countries has persisted has been asked by many academics, because the continuation of the existence of chiefs and queen mothers in these countries is not self evident. In many countries in Africa that gained independence, the traditional rulers were accused of malpractice without evidence, and consequently deposed by the new ruling government leaders. In the case of Ghana, the chiefs and queen mothers were dismantled, because they were believed to be a threat to the spread of modern norms and values which were connected to the legitimacy of the Independent states. Traditional authorities were affiliated with conservatism and old and yet insignificant norms and values which stood in the way of the majority of politicians who gained power after the struggle of independence in their country, and whose aim was to build a modern African nation-state. The maltreatment of chiefs and queen mothers was an opportunity for the newly chosen politicians, who were often from royal families that were debarred from all their political power during the colonial era, to take revenge on those families who had taken over their positions as a result of collaboration with the British colonial government. Besides revenge, the deposition of those traditional authorities was also a way for Ghana's Independent government leaders during independence to strengthen their political ideology. By downgrading the chiefs and queen mothers to archaic rulers whose knowledge was no longer of any use in the modern state, as performers of backwards superstitious rituals and representatives of superstitious belief, they could highlight the importance of their own progressive nationalistic ideology, which was necessary to build the Ghanaian nation-state after the country gained independence in 1957. In section one of this literature review, I have discussed the problematic aspects of the ideology of these politicians, which also affected and often went together with the mainstream historical paradigm of foreign and Ghanaian scholars who provided major academic contributions to the study of chieftaincy from the 1960s onwards. This study aims to contribute to the academic study of chieftaincy by focusing objectively on the nature of this indigenous institute in a historical and contemporary context.

1.3 Theory and Concept

In this section, I will first give a short historical overview of the history of Asante chieftaincy and the various roles of Asante traditional authorities in today's Ghana. This will help to promote understanding of the politician Rays' and the philosopher Van Binsbergen's theories about the way chieftaincy in today's Africa and in Ghana has been incorporated into many present-day African nation states. The purpose of these theories is to show that the institute of chieftaincy and the state have their roots in different worldviews, meaning Indigenous Religions in relation to chieftaincy and a rather secular worldview in relation to the state, and are therefore legitimised differently. Consequently, according to these theories, chieftaincy can satisfy needs which the state cannot offer to its population. The aim of this thesis is to test whether these theories are applicable to the situation in contemporary Kumasi Metropolis. If so, this can provide a deeper insight into not only how (a) Asante Indigenous Religion and (b) Asante chieftaincy are interlinked, but also why (a) and (b) have continued to exist.

With regards to the history of Asante chieftaincy, it is important to realise that this political institution is born out of a royal kinship institute. In the pre-colonial period, the Asante had a matrilineal social structure and there were seven or eight exogamous matri-clans (*abusuaban-ason*) that functioned as the fundamental social and political units (Platvoet 1979:6), which were ruled by family (*abusua*)¹¹ advisers, such as grandfather (*nana* or *abusua panin*) and grandmother (*obaa panin*). In many Asante communities, it was generally believed that wisdom was linked to age. Within the family, the oldest people were the first ones from whom one sought advice, and they mostly had a lot of influence on their grandchildren and their way of life.¹² Asante elders (*panin*) who were 'Royals' (*adehye*) advised the Asante subjects in their villages together with a board of other elders and were therefore highly respected. In Asante culture, Royals were people who belonged to the local *abusua*, who were believed to have 'owned' and to have founded a village.

Village chiefs (*odikro*) came from the families that ruled over the villages. So, on a micro level the Asante kingdom consisted of families, whereas on a meso level it was made up of villages, which on their turn were part of divisions that consisted of agglomerations of various villages or states (*oman*) ruled by divisional chiefs (*ahene*) and queen mothers (*ahemaa*). Various divisions fell under the leadership of the so-called paramount chiefs and queen mothers

¹¹ The Asante *abusua* consists of all people whose blood relation can be traced to a common female ancestor (Owusu-Frempong 2005), 733.

¹² In his autobiography, the politician and lawyer Appiah (1990:125) notes the important role of his grandparents in his life. He describes how difficult it was for him to leave Ghana to go to Sierra Leone for the 'United African Company' (UAC), as his dominant grandmother did not want him to travel to that country. Had Appiah not listened to her then he would have had to stay in Ghana like other grandchildren who were believed to be more respectable since they listened to their grandparents' advice.

(*amanhemma*). At the highest political level the Asante nation (*Asanteman*) was ruled by the Asantehene and Asantehemma, who had a *primus-inter-pares* position among other paramount chiefs (*amanhene*). In the pre-colonial period, the Asante political institution thus consisted of both men and women, of whom the latter were believed to be politically powerful because of their capacities to found lineages. The *ohemma*, who herself is normally chosen by her senior lineage mates (who can be male or female), is principally responsible for the selection of a prospective Asante chief in case of vacancy of the king's office, the royal stool (Rattray 1969:82). The queen mother may nominate a candidate from among the members of the stool family in consultation with both the Gyasehene, who is the head of the palace administration, and her relatives. The nomination of a candidate remains, however, her sole responsibility (Agyeman-Duah 1964, AS.33: 1.).

In practice a system developed in which the queen mothers (*ahemma*) controlled the female line and the king or chiefs (*ahene*) were in charge of the whole of the community with the support and advice of the *ohemma*. Proverbially, the queen mothers were the 'powers behind the stools'. For women, *ahemma* were more or less the *de facto* rulers, the ones who sanctioned marriages and ensured that sexual mores were observed. The Asante kingdom was ruled by a general council (the *Asantemanhyiamu*) and a government in Kumasi (the Kumasi council). As members of the *Asantemanhyiamu*, the *ahemma* were involved in the maintenance of order, the adherence to legislation and the settling of disputes. They also regulated family, property and inheritance. The *ahemma* ran their own court and could protect people even from malpractices that were exercised by the *ahene*. As chief counsellors to the *ahene*, the *ahemma* could put pressure on the *ahene* to get things done. The relationship between *ahemma* and *ahene* was thus not always cordial, but in most cases they were one another's most reliable allies (Ama Serwah Nyarkoh, 43).

In the colonial period, all chiefs in Ghana became known as 'Native Authorities', whereas queen mothers were no longer recognised as traditional authorities. The British who appointed local authorities to help to rule over Ghana came from a patriarchal society in which women were considered of no account. Consequently, the role of the *ahemma* was relegated to obscurity in most¹³ traditional political systems in Ghana, including that of the Asante. Queen mothers in pre-colonial Asante exercised considerably more power than they did during colonialism and since (Aidoo 1977b), (McCaskie 1995), (Wilks 1989).

However, since Ghana gained independence in 1957, the role of *ahemma* who parallel the *ahene* in the indigenous political system known as chieftaincy has become more significant in

¹³ However, some patrilineal cultural groups in Ghana never had queen mothers as part of their indigenous political institute in the pre-colonial period (Stoeltje 2003).

comparison with the colonial era. Queen mothers complement the chiefs in terms of power and authority. They are the signifiers of the institute of chieftaincy, the affirmers of Asante identity by the performance of their role, and a sign of Asante female authority. Asante queen mothers occupy their own stools, which symbolise power and authority. They thus have their own power and occupy their stools on the basis of their own qualifications and do not derive their power from their relationship to a chief of the same royal family. A queen mother's duties lie in her relationship to the chief and in her responsibility for the welfare of women in her domain. She is also the embodiment of motherhood and considered to be the mother of her clan in her town. She possesses knowledge and wisdom as the (symbolic) mother of the clan and is expected to impart that wisdom to the chief on a regular basis. This knowledge and wisdom, which includes the genealogy of the royal family and politics, legitimates her authority. She exercises her moral authority officially as an advisor to the chief on matters of tradition and religion, but also on secular affairs. She also nominates the chief and is responsible for the resolution of conflicts in the domestic sphere (Stoeltje 2003). Their judicial powers are, however, limited and restricted mainly to cases that are voluntarily brought to them (Chief Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 44¹⁴). The Asantehemma in Kumasi deals with court cases each Tuesday, mainly concerning conflicts between men and women. In most of the villages though, there is no official court, although the queen mother has the authority to hear cases in her domain and to pronounce the outcome, providing guidance and direction for the resolution of conflict in the everyday lives of ordinary people. Besides, Asante queen mothers have ritual duties such as the recognition of a young woman's maturity, the celebration of the ritual calendar days and the participation in funerals of other Royals, family members or prestigious members of the community (Stoeltje 2003).

In Ghana's postcolonial institutions of chieftaincy, however, the queen mothers are barely represented. The main cause for their institutional under-representation has been the transition under colonial rule of the pre-colonial indigenous political institution to a post-colonial dual political system that elevated the male traditional rulers and linked them to their counterparts in the modern nation state. In the dual political system that consists of chieftaincy and the state, the rulers who are linked together are primarily males, whose powers in comparison with queen mothers are less determined by the virtue of their lineage than through the accumulation of wealth and education. Consequently, the dual gender feature of the indigenous system has been gradually diminished. Whereas chiefs are also linked to modernity, queen mothers dealt with indigenous cultural norms and values only.

¹⁴ The numbers in this thesis that are mentioned in relation to the interviewees (such as number 44) correspond with the data in Appendix Three.

For instance, whereas the Asante chiefs meet one another regularly in two different institutions– the ‘Asante Regional House of Chiefs’ (ARHCs) founded in 1961 and the ‘National House of Chiefs’ (NHCs) established in 1971 - the Asante queen mothers do not have a female counter institute, even though they are included in the definition of a ‘chief’ found in the Constitution of Ghana (Stoeltje 2003), and are not allowed to sit in any of the ‘Houses of Chiefs’ (HCs). They do, however, take part in public discussions e.g. those organised by the ‘National Council of Women and Development’ (NDCW)¹⁵ (Müller 2003). The Asantehene has the most important function and is most influential in the ‘HCs’. The chiefs and the president of the NHC deal with traditional customs on a national level and stay on top of the political hierarchy. Right below this institute are the ten ‘Regional Houses of Chiefs’ (RHCs) that correspond with the ten regions in the country. Each RHCs has a Traditional Council (TC) (Assimeng 1996). It is only in some of these TCs that queen mothers and female chiefs are allowed. The HCs provide chiefs with information and contacts that facilitate their links to government leaders, and unlike the queen mothers, many chiefs maintain links with individuals in the government. All together, this has caused a separation between the chiefs and queen mothers, who are no longer equally linked with other institutions within the society, such as courts and the police.

Unlike in Uganda, Ethiopia, Burundi and Tanzania, but equal to the situation in other African countries under former British Indirect rule, such as Nigeria, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (Nugent 2004:106-137), the indigenous political system in postcolonial Ghana has thus **not** been completely dismantled. Instead, Ghana has a dual political system in which there is an alliance between the state leaders and the male traditional authorities. An important function of the chiefs is to mediate between their subjects and the state. They advise the local and central government leaders about the needs of their subjects and translate the desires of the government leaders to the people of Ghana (Miller 1968:183-201). The justification of the traditional leaders’ power has been recognised by the post-colonial state leaders. Chiefs are allowed to claim authorisation by those leaders once listed in the *Government Gazette*, which is a list that includes all chiefs who are officially registered and therefore recognised by the state leaders. These days, Ghanaian state leaders exert a varied amount of control over the traditional rulers, even though since 1992 most issues concerning chiefs are in the hands of those who organise themselves through the RHCs and NHCs. Despite the many chieftaincy disputes about the chiefs’ land (stool-land) that are dealt with by the RHCs, Ghana’s dual political system works relatively well (Berry 1998:39-62), mainly because the traditional and modern rulers do, to a certain extent, respect each other’s political domain. Besides their intermediary function between state leaders and their

¹⁵ The NDCW is the umbrella organisation of all women organisations in Ghana and empowers them financially.

subjects, male and female traditional authorities fulfil a number of tasks concerning traditional matters, such as traditional marriage and indigenous religious festivals and both advise on and help with the revision of customary law (Ray and Reddy 2003:115). Since 2004, the task of traditional authorities has been extended to the involvement in various development projects, such as health care and education. This extra task of chiefs and queen mothers in Ghana was allocated to them after the most influential paramount chief of the Asante¹⁶ (the Asantehene), received a thirty million dollar grant from the World Bank for the provision of good quality education, the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS, the sustaining of Ghana's cultural heritage program and for the purpose of poverty reduction (*Accra Daily Mail*, 11 July 2004). According to Mats Karlson, the World Bank Country Director for Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone, this was the first time that the World Bank gave a grant to a traditional leader in Africa to effect positive change in the lives of African people (www.ghanaweb.com/ID=62556). The transformation of chiefs into development leaders in Ghana by the help of an outside funding body is so far a unique project in Africa. For many queen mothers the search for help of NGOs and their membership of the NCWD is a way to become financially independent of their chief counter rulers (Stoeltje 2003). Asante chiefs are using this foreign money to increase their power in comparison with that of local government leaders in the unit committees and consequently, their possibilities to realise community projects (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

So far, by giving a short history of the development of the Asante institute of chieftaincy and the various tasks of Asante traditional authorities in present-day Ghana, I have shown that today's Asante institution of chieftaincy is male dominated and incorporated in the modern nation-state. Financially, however, Asante chiefs and queen mothers make use of the opportunities offered by various foreign NGOs to empower themselves in relation to other cultural groups or one another or local politicians. On the one hand, chieftaincy is a pre-colonial rooted institution whose main task is to promote traditional cultural norms and values; on the other hand it is rooted in the postcolonial society and makes its rulers use the newest available financial sources to fulfil their roles. And despite the promotion of traditional norms and values, some educated traditional authorities are hypermodern, using mobile phones and Skype to communicate with their subjects, especially those who form part of the African Diaspora (Nana Ama Serwa Nyarko, 43). One of my royal respondents expressed himself as follows: 'In terms of identity our chiefs are traditional, modern and post-modern at the same time. They represent traditional norms and values, are linked to the state and they have multiple and sometimes contradictory identities, such as those of educator, fundraiser, judge, moral indigenous leader, propagandist and village head' (10, Nana Osei Bonsu II). The question that rises after Bonsu's

¹⁶ Since the eighteenth century the Asante has been a very important cultural community in Ghana

description of chiefs is to what extent there is a correspondence between today's Asante Indigenous Religion which legitimates the Asante institution of chieftaincy and that of the pre-colonial period. To what extent should the underlying cosmology of today's Asante chieftaincy institute be regarded as 'Indigenous'? This question brings us to the issue of what 'Indigenous Religions' means and how it differs from cultural customs that are rooted in legality and that are used by government leaders to legitimise the Ghanaian state. Examples of this are for instance the obligation for school children to learn by heart and sing the national anthem of Ghana during the yearly celebration of Ghana's independence.

The conjoined theories of the scholars Ray and Van Binsbergen explain the difference in legitimisation of the institutions of chieftaincy and the state in Ghana which might play a role in the persistence of chieftaincy and of Indigenous Religion. Their idea is that the institution of chieftaincy has continued to exist because their rulers have something to offer to their population, which the state cannot provide; that is, the representation of Indigenous Religion. Whereas the roots of the justification of the post-colonial state lay in its legal authority (the letter of the written word) and an elected national government, that of the chiefs has a cosmological anchorage. Therefore, Ray believes that the institution of chieftaincy is not legitimated at the cost of the postcolonial state. He remarks that because chieftaincy and the state are justified differently, the relationship between the representatives of these institutes should not be seen as a 'zero-sum game'. Van Binsbergen (2003:26-27) also stresses the limitations of understanding the relation of chiefs versus state with the help of a 'zero-sum game' model, which implies that the chiefs and the government fight for a monolithic scarce good, namely 'the overall amount of legitimated power within society'. In a zero-sum game for the interaction between A: the post-colonial state and B: the chiefs, over C: the overall amount of authorised power within society, there are three envisaged outcomes:

1. Virtually all legitimated power within society goes to the post-colonial state.
2. Post-colonial state and chiefs each have an equal share of legitimated power within society.
3. Virtually all legitimated power within society goes to the chiefs.

According to Van Binsbergen, however, the source of power is more diverse, and a more complex model might therefore be more applicable. The chiefs and the state are in competition for various sources of power in society, such as economic, media, religious, domestic, and parental power. Because there is not only one source of power, the competition takes place in various fields, while in each field two fundamentally different structures have to be bridged: that of chieftaincy and that of the state.

In this competition of power between Asante traditional authorities and government leaders in various fields, the Asante chiefs and queen mothers gain by the fact that their indigenous political institute is rooted in Asante Indigenous Religion. The question is, however,

what Indigenous Religions are and whether the meaning of this concept has remained the same since the pre-colonial period. Is there indeed a pre-colonial rooted cosmology that underlies the present-day institution of chieftaincy? Or is today's cosmology merely an invention of traditional norms and values, which in actual fact have their roots in the colonial period when educated city dwellers started to think with nostalgia about their own or ancestors' previous village lives and therefore invented traditions that were believed to be affiliated to their predecessor's life style? If so, then should the cosmology with which Asante chieftaincy is legitimated be regarded as a form of Indigenous Religion? To be able to answer this question with the help of the historical and empirical data in this thesis, it is necessary to provide a better understanding of certain key concepts in understanding life in the Asante Region, such as 'chieftaincy', 'syncretism', 'zongo', 'Akan' and 'Asante Indigenous Religion', 'Indigenous religious intermediation' and 'Indigenous religious peacekeeping', which will be dealt with in the next section.

1.4 Theoretical framework: Asante key concepts explained

The aim of this thesis is to defend the statement that among other political and economical factors the Asante Indigenous Religion provides an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana.

My main argument to support this statement is that there is a continuation of the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions of Asante traditional authorities. This raises the question to what extent there is (1) a continuation of Asante indigenous religious phenomena, such as the pouring of libation for the ancestral spirits and the belief in Asante myths, and (2) a maintenance of the Asante indigenous religious political institution and whether or not this continuation is rooted in the pre-colonial and colonial period.

The question will be asked whether the phenomena discussed have indeed persisted or whether there is in actual fact a situation of discontinuity or change. These questions regarding the degree of persistence can only be answered by letting the thesis' narrative begin at the year of the foundation of the Asante institution of chieftaincy and the creation of Asante indigenous religious rituals that were meant to legitimise that institution in the year 1701. The historical Chapters in this thesis are thus not primarily meant to introduce the present-day situation in Kumasi, but to support the main argument concerning the possible persistence of Asante Indigenous Religion and indigenous politics. Like the history, the main purpose of the conducted fieldwork is to show to what extent Asante Indigenous Religion and chieftaincy have persisted from 1701 until today. The history and the fieldwork report are therefore equally important in this thesis as they complement each other in answering the research question.

In this thesis I focus on three different historical periods: the pre-colonial, the colonial and the postcolonial period. A problematic aspect when it comes to defining new concepts that are then applied in different historical periods, as I do in this thesis, is that it can create anachronism, which is the placement of a person or practice belonging to an earlier time outside its chronological order. An example of anachronism is for instance the use of the term 'Kumasi Metropolis' to describe the city of Kumasi in the pre-colonial period, when the town had not yet reached today's size, which invalidates the use of the term 'Metropolis'. Equally, in a contemporary historical context, the concepts of 'Asante Indigenous Religion', 'indigenous religious peacekeeping' and 'indigenous religious intermediation' do not have the same meaning as they used to have in the pre-colonial period. It is therefore necessary to interpret the meaning of these concepts for each distinctive historical period. The possibility of giving a significant historical interpretation of their meaning might provide evidence of the persistence of the phenomena/characteristics which are described in the definition of these concepts, which is the main aim of this study.

For instance, 'Asante Indigenous Religion' consists of a set of phenomena that are not static, but have undergone changes in the interaction with transitions in the Asante society in other fields, such as that of politics, economics and social and cultural life in general. Consequently, the two functions of Asante traditional authorities that are central in this study - indigenous religious intermediation and peacekeeping - have also undergone changes from the eighteenth century until today. The phenomenological essence of indigenous religious peacekeeping and intermediation, however, might have remained the same throughout the mentioned historical periods.

This thesis aims to describe the interaction between changes in the Asante indigenous religion' and the Asante traditional authorities' intermediary and peacekeeping function in the pre-colonial, the colonial and postcolonial period in order to provide an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. A prior explanation of the application of the terms 'syncretism' and '*zongo*' increases our insight into the definition of the key concepts and their interpretation in relation to the historical period used in this study. It will therefore elaborate on the main purpose of the Asante traditional authorities' indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions with regards to internal and external Asante affairs. The 'indigenous religious intermediary function' of traditional authorities was, by the use of rituals, to create balance between the social and spiritual world within the Asante community, and this formed the main internal Asante policy. 'Indigenous religious peacekeeping' was to create a balance between the Asante community and non-Asante cultural communities, and was meant to deal with the external Asante policy which was exercised by the Asante diplomatic service. In each historical period,

there was also a tension between the Asante traditional authority's indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping function. Intermediation with the spiritual world was meant to ritually control the society and went together with the exercise of coercive force by the use of weapons and violence. Asante traditional authorities could, for instance, exercise the practice of the ritual killing of human beings and the practice of capital punishment of criminals because of the military power that went together with the presence of weapons in the Asantehenes' palace from the centre over the peripheral tribute states. External ideologies, such as those advocated by European Missionary Christians and Orthodox Muslims, threatened the persistence of internal peace of the Asante society established by indigenous religious intermediation. Both European Christian Missionaries and Orthodox Muslims condemned the practice of the ritual killing of human beings and consequently attempted to abolish the annual ritual Asante festival, known as *Odwira*, which was of the uttermost importance for the legitimisation of the Asante state. The abolishment of polygamy from the side of the European Missionary Christians and that of the matrilineal descent system by Orthodox Muslims also endangered the persistence of the Asante state. In the function of indigenous religious peacekeepers, however, the penetration of belief on the syncretistic level of taking elements from Islam and Christianity was a *condition sine qua non* for the maintenance of diplomatic relationships with Europeans (Dutch, Danish, English) and Muslims in the Asante hinterland. Until the eighteenth century the Asante traditional authorities' spokesmen (*akyeame*) used oral diplomatic skills to communicate with Christians and Muslims. In the nineteenth century, the Asante developed a bureaucratic apparatus including three Christian (Dutch, English and Danish) and one Muslim chancery. Christian missionaries and Muslim *ulama* were appointed as permanent or temporary (by being kept hostage!) ambassadors in these chanceries because of the skills these religious leaders had, and were able to teach to Asante diplomats as part of their religious background. From the foundation of the Asante Kingdom in 1701 until today, even though the Asante Kingdom ceased to exist in 1896, Asante traditional authorities have been thoughtful about the effects of foreign religious influences for the Asante society, and have aimed to limit these influences to the extent that their allowance was beneficial for the exercise of Asante foreign affairs. Although since the eighteenth century the meaning of indigenous religious intermediation and peacekeeping has changed, the tension between inner and foreign Asante affairs has remained.

Chieftaincy

'Chieftaincy' is an English term for a phenomenon observed by the first British traders and discoverers in many African countries. The Africans whom the British encountered referred to their political institution as 'kingdom' or as 'state'. The seventeenth century Asante word for

state, for instance, is *oman*, and when the Asante refer to their kingdom, they speak of *Asanteman*. This refers both to the Asante nation (or union) as well as the gathering of all chiefs (*Asantemanhyiamu*, plural *oman-ahemfo*) and queen mothers (*nhemmaa* or *nhemmaanom*) to discuss chieftaincy matters (Valsecchi 1999:46). ‘Chieftaincy’ only refers to the male ruler of the Asante state, while the king (*Asantehene*) and the queen mother (*Asantehemma*) rule *Asanteman* together. A queen mother is legally ‘the mother’ of a chief or king, but in actual fact she is not his real mother but in most cases his sister.

The *Asantehene* had to maintain a balance of power and interests with the *Asantehemma*. The Ghanaian political scientist Aidoo (1977a:11) states that in contradiction to what British anthropologists (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1950:252-285), (Rattray 1923:85) have assumed, in the pre-colonial period the queen mother had not merely an elevated domestic role, arising out of the mother-son relationship. Instead, the *Asantehemma*¹⁷ was a co-ruler with a well-defined constitutional and political role. The *Asantehene* and *Asantehemma* were the joint hereditary leaders at the apex of all the ruling groups in *Asanteman*.

The English term ‘chieftaincy’ does not accurately refer to *Asanteman* in its meaning of a kingdom ruled by a king and a queen mother. In addition, ‘chieftaincy’ does not refer accurately to an indigenous ‘political’ institution, for the term refers to a political institution that is distinct from the other spheres of Asante life. *Asanteman*, however, fulfilled not only a political but also a religious, judicial, legislative, deliberative, and executive function, and the Asante embedded this institution into the whole fabric of their society. Awulae (1999:83), a political scientist and an Asante, claims that *Asanteman* derived its authority from the entire community as made up of lineages and clans, which constituted the fabric of the state. I therefore prefer to use the indigenous term *Asanteman* instead of ‘chieftaincy’.

Syncretism

I will now first give a short introduction to the term ‘syncretism’ and then to its particular meaning in an Asante context. Syncretism has two different etymological backgrounds. As a Greek term, *syncretismos* stems from a combination of the Greek prefix *syn* with *kretoi*, the word for Cretans or *ketismos* ‘the Cretan behaviour’. The Greek historian Plutarch (ca. 50 AD-120 AD) used the term *syncretismos* to describe the behaviour of the Cretans towards foreign influences. Plutarch explained that the Cretans suspended mutual disagreements as a strategy for facing a common enemy. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, a modern version of

¹⁷ According to an oral Asante tradition, the first Asante rulers were all queen mothers. Only when the Asante were preparing for wars with neighbouring groups did men take over the office of ruler, because women were believed to be incapable of leading a war due to their female duties, such as taking care of the children (Nana Ama Serwah Nyarko, 41).

syncretism came into being that stemmed from the neo-etymologism *synkerannumi*, meaning to 'mix' things that are incompatible, and attempted to cancel out the term *syncretizein*, that in a similar sense to Plutarch, meant to combine the confessional differences of the competing Reformed sects, which was perceived as an ecumenical betrayal to the true faith. Humanists such as Erasmus from Rotterdam (1469-1536) and Georg Calixt (1586-1656), on the other hand, tried, like Plutarch, to reconcile competing Christian parties to stand strong towards barbarian influences. The question arises of what 'syncretism' means in the context of this study for the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis. To answer this query I will look at the adaptation and adoption of Islamic and Christian elements in the Asante Indigenous Religion.

From the sixteenth century until today, in the Christian tradition in the non-western world, syncretism has had both the positive and the negative connotations of religious mixture. Various churches (e.g. Protestant and Catholic) have attempted to find their own balance between, on the one hand, allowing non-Christian influences to enter the Christian religion to unify and fight for a common goal: the spread of universal Christianity, and on the other hand, controlling outside influences in order to protect the believers' faithfulness to the Bible and the word of God (Berner 2004). Mande-Dyula Muslim traders in the sixteenth century who already built trade relationships with the Asante in the previous century believed in a mild form of Islam known as 'Suwarianism'. In theory, in order to make it possible for Muslims to survive in land ruled by infidels (*Dar-al-Kufr*), this religion consisted of a very limited amount of indigenous religious syncretistic elements. In practice, however, Africanised forms of Islam came into being that revealed a much closer religious contact between Muslims and 'pagan' rulers.

In contradiction with the religious leaders of the world religions Islam and Christianity, the Asante traditional authorities do not fear a loss of their true 'indigenous' faith due to the incorporation of non-indigenous religious elements in their religion. Instead, one of the aspects of Indigenous Religions, such as the Asante Indigenous Religion, is hospitality towards non-indigenous religions and their practitioners. Nevertheless, Asante history from the eighteenth century onwards shows that Asante traditional authorities consistently and consciously exercised a policy of putting a limitation to the extent to which they allowed non-indigenous religious leaders to enter, practice and spread their religious beliefs in their territory. The unlimited hospitality of royal indigenous religious practitioners stood in sharp contradiction to the political policy of Asante politicians. Religiously, for instance, they aimed to welcome the belief of European Christians and Muslims. On the other hand, they had to protect their area against foreign influences that could undermine the persistence of their indigenous political institution (*Asanteman*), which until 1900 was equivalent to the Asante state. One should also keep in mind that the indigenous religious hospitality of Asante traditional authorities had a pragmatic function.

The Asante traditional authorities' welcoming of European and Muslim missionaries at the royal court did not only have a religious purpose, but was also meant to develop good trade relationships with these foreigners.

To sum up, historically, the religious leaders (and their followers) of the world religions Islam and Christianity and Indigenous Religions have a religious and political history of dealing with 'syncretism', in its modern meaning of *syncretizein*. Syncretism, according to Simpson, Weiner and Murray (1989) is meant to disregard differences, to realise unity between sects or philosophical schools of thought and to stimulate tolerance or 'dialogue', or to prevent conflicts by means of conscious intervention to achieve the coexistence of different opinions.

For this study it is also important to distinguish between various types of syncretism. First, Rudolph (Leopold 2004) differentiates between 'unconscious' and 'conscious' syncretism. Whereas 'unconscious' or spontaneous syncretism is a tendency towards identity-preservation in spite of changes, 'conscious syncretism' is the reflected religiosity of the founder of a religion that may lead to new religious formations. The differentiation between unconscious and conscious syncretism helps to explain the complexity of religious transitions. Apart from a deliberate policy of religious leaders, such as the Asante traditional authorities' policy of stimulating the creation of syncretistic belief forms, those authorities and other indigenous practitioners unconsciously stimulate syncretism in order to preserve their identity in a changing society. Since religious leaders in the Kumasi Metropolis (Christian, Islamic and Indigenous) are also practitioners, syncretism in this Metropolis is both a conscious and unconscious process of religious change. In other words, Kumasi's religious leaders are only partly in control of syncretism; partly they undergo the effects of this religious process like any other religious believers in this Metropolis.

Another differentiation that contributes to the understanding of syncretism is Berner's (Leopold 2004:297) distinction between two different levels of syncretism (elementary and systematic). According to Berner, 'syncretism can be viewed as a process in the historical development of religion, which takes place on the system level where two systems enter into an association, which remains to be defined. It can also be a process on the elemental level, where the association concerns only elements, but not the entire associated systems'. On the element level, the determination of relations designates the proportional relationship of different elements, but does not eliminate the boundary separating them, so that they are preserved as members of a relation and remain recognisable to the adherents of the system concerned. On the system level, syncretism designates those processes where the boundary and thus the competitive relationship between the systems is eliminated. This can happen in very different ways, some with relations on the element level or linked with syncretisms on the element level. Regarding syncretism, the

Asante society has undergone a transition since the pre-colonial period, from a Berner C2 model¹⁸ of elementary syncretism to a Berner A1 model of systematic syncretism. I will come back to this in section 1.5, regarding the Asante traditional authorities' indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions.

Zongo

The term '*zongo*' originally derives from '*zango*', which is a Hausa term for 'a settlement of Hausa and Hausa speaking traders' (Hiskett 1984:329). However, after the colonisation of Asante and the creation of the 'Crown Colony of Asante', the British used the word '*zongo*' to refer to a quarter for strangers. It was their administrative policy to designate specific areas for the 'strangers'. In terms of the *emic* or original meaning of *zongo*, these areas are indeed *zongos*, meaning 'settlements of Hausa and Hausa speaking traders', because even among all non-Hausa inhabitants, Hausa is the lingua franca in all Kumasi *zongos*. In terms of the British or *etic* concept of *zongo*, however, the mentioned areas are not real *zongos*, since there are many Akan of whom the majority in all likelihood are Christians who live inside these *zongos*. The old Kumasi *zongo* (on map 6 referred to as '*zongo*'), for instance, has an estimated population of 12,400 people, of whom 40 percent are Akan and 60 percent consist of Northerners. With regard to the religion of the people, the official statistics reveal that 60 percent of the population consists of Christians, whereas seventy percent are Muslims. The 'New *Zongo*', which has an estimated population of 11,830, consists of thirty percent Akans, 5 percent Ewes and 65 percent of them are Northerners. In terms of the religion of the people, 40 percent of them are Christian, whereas 60 percent are Muslims (Post 2003:13). One could thus say that the present day areas that are referred to as *zongos* are indeed *zangos*, but in the British sense of the word they are not real *zongos*. Instead of '*zongo*', I therefore prefer to use the term 'settler' communities or 'settlements', such as is done by the Asante.

Akan

The problem with creating a link between religious and chieftaincy studies concerning the Asante in Ghana is that the two fields of study have different ways of referring to this cultural group. Whereas all historians refer to 'the Asante' as the unit of study, scholars of religion usually focus on 'the Akan', which is the umbrella name for the Asante and other cultural groups which share cultural customs such as naming ceremonies, rite of passages and festivals and are also linguistically related.

¹⁸ Berner's model runs from A1 to C5 and is designed to cover processes of syncretism and related processes.

Most likely, the reason why historians do not use the term ‘Akan’ is that historically this term has been highly problematic. The term was first used in 1602 by Portuguese map makers, who drew the first map of Guinea¹⁹ (Cortesão and Teixeira da Mota 1962:67-9, plate 362). The drawing of this map was based on details of the Gold Coast collected during a Portuguese mission to the interior in 1573. The Portuguese map makers commented on two interior states known as ‘Acanes grande’ and ‘Acanes pequenos’, which never existed. Portuguese traders on the Gold Coast used ‘Akan’ to refer to Asante traders from the interior. The Portuguese myth of the existence of two ‘Acanes’ states and of the ‘Acanes’ people became widespread and on the maps of Guinea of 1606, 1616 and 1729 cartographers in different countries referred to these imaginary states as ‘Akkany’. Only in 1819 was it removed from maps of Guinea. By then, however, the term ‘Akan’ was widespread. In 1875 the Danish missionary J.G. Christaller contributed to the popularity of the term by including an entry in his dictionary regarding the ‘Ɔkànni’ people. The name Ɔkànni in Christaller’s dictionary refers to inhabitants of Akem, Akwam, Akuapem, Asen, Asante, Denkyira, Twuforo and Wasa, but does not include the Fantefo, the Kamnafo or Bronfo, the Ntafo, and other *pɔɔfo* (Christaller 1875). By excluding the Fante (*Fantefo*), the term ‘Akan’ (*Ɔkànni*) became known as a more limited term than ‘Twi’, which referred to the language of various cultural groups in the Gold Coast, including that of the Fante. Currently, the term ‘Akan’ still exists although the meaning of Akan and Twi has been turned around. These days ‘Akan’ refers to various cultural groups in Ghana including the Fante, whereas Twi refers to various subgroups of Akan dialects, such as the Akuapem and the Asante, but not the Fante.²⁰

Historically, the Ɔkànni people were thus never real, but Portuguese mapmakers and a Danish Missionary spread the myth of their existence. Most historians who work on Ghana, such as Wilks, McCaskie, Allman, Parker, Yarak, Adjaye and Lewin, seem to be aware of this history, and most often they prefer to refer to the real people they are writing about, such as the Asante and the Fante, whose names are created by the people themselves, instead of using a historically inaccurate term. Most scholars of religion, such as Platvoet, Parrinder, Danquah and philosophers from Ghana, such as Gyekye and Wiredu, however, seem to be influenced by Christaller’s dictionary entry on the Ɔkànni people and consequently refer to ‘the Akan’ as a cultural-linguistic term.

In this thesis, similarly to other historians of Ghana but unlike most scholars of religion and philosophers, I have chosen to use the term ‘Asante’ rather than ‘Akan’. Since this is a study

¹⁹ See: kaartencollectie Universiteit van Amsterdam: <http://dpc.uba.uva.nl>

²⁰ http://www.akan.org/akan_cd/ALIAKAN/course/U-References-p01.html

on the Asante in particular, and not on the Akan in general, and more accurate descriptions can be derived from reference to the Asante only than to all Akan in Ghana, Togo and the Ivory Coast , I believe that in this study 'Asante' is the best term to use.

Asante Indigenous Religion

In this thesis, I am using Cox's (2007) definition of 'Indigenous Religions' (IRs) to categorise and describe religious phenomena among the Asante. Similarly to Cox, I refer to IR in capitals. I believe that since all world religions are referred to in capitals it would be a sign of disrespect and unethical behaviour not to use capitals with reference to IRs, which, in my opinion, is also a world religious category. I prefer the term 'Indigenous Religions' in the plural, because although Indigenous Religions worldwide have common characteristics, there is such a wide range of Indigenous Religions that it does not make sense to place them all under one religion (Indigenous Religion). This argument also counts for all other world religions, such as Christianity and Islam, but none of the other world religions include the word 'religion' to subscribe to the type of category. It is a convention in Religious Studies that Christianity and Islam embrace various types of Christian and Islamic beliefs, which makes it unnecessary to refer to these world religions in the plural. Due to the inclusion of the word 'religion' in the definition of 'Indigenous Religions', however, reference to the plural is necessary to emphasise the diversity of the religions included. Reference to 'Indigenous Religion' in the singular would emphasise the similarities and therefore the comparability of Indigenous Religions, which was, for instance, the rationale of Parrinder for referring to various African religions as 'African Traditional Religion' in the singular. However, it would also disqualify Indigenous Religions as a world religious category, which all encompass a plurality of religions. Therefore, I also refer to 'Indigenous Religions' in the plural to make the statement that these religions should be perceived as a world religion. Surely, by leaving out 'Indigenous Religions' as a world category, the consequence is, as Cox (2007) remarks, that the majority of the religions worldwide would not be included in the academic study of religion. The undesirability of this scenario becomes all the more clear once one realises that the 'modern' purpose of 'academia', which became well-known by a contribution of the seventeenth century philosopher Bacon (1905 [original 1609]) (1561-1626), was not only to 'transmit already gained knowledge to successive generations', but also 'to promote the continuous advancement of learning'. Indubitably, it makes clear that excluding the majority of the religions in the world that could further the advancement of knowledge of religions runs against the idea behind 'academia'.

I will now provide further insight into the definition of Indigenous Religions and the IR of the Asante, in order to enhance understanding of the contribution of IRs to the knowledge of religions, and consequently to the relevance of this study (see section five for further

information). In Cox's definition, the primary characteristic of Indigenous Religions refers to its being bound to a location; participants in the region are native to a place, or, in Harvey's (2005), words, they belong to it. The single and overriding belief shared amongst IRs derives from a kinship-based world-view in which attention is directed towards ancestor spirits as the central figures in religious life and practice. As such, IRs are restricted cosmologically because their spirit world is organised around a system of lineage. Ancestors are known by name; they belong to a place just as their descendants do, and they are related to living communities as spirit conveyors of ancestral traditions.

I have chosen to work with Cox's definition because it provides an outsider and value neutral perspective on what 'indigenous' is. I found it important to work with such a definition instead of any of the Asante insiders' definitions that show up in my empirical data, because these definitions were created by the Asante, not only for religious reasons. Peter King Appiah (38), an employee of the 'National Cultural Centre' in Kumasi that I interviewed, for instance, refers to himself as an 'indigenous Asante' and is somebody who is 'deep when it comes to issues of culture'. Appiah:

Indigenous Asante are conservative and proactive, we show a lot of respect for our chiefs and we perform a lot of rituals. At the *Asanteman Adaye Kese* festival there are a lot of prominent people who bring their cloth down to the waist. Linguists of the chiefs, lawyers and high industrialists all bow down for Otumfuo [LM: the *Asantehene*]. One may insult the president and go free, but if one insults the king, the Asante will not take it lightly. The Fante, on the contrary, do not show the same respect for their chiefs. They do not really obey their chiefs and some of their children do not even obey their own father (Peter King Appiah, 38).

'Indigenous' in this quotation is used to refer to 'attachment to local culture' and 'respect for one's local traditional authorities' and this term seems to have been created by my respondent to distinguish himself from another Akan group (the Fante), rather than his use of the word 'indigenous' consisting of generalised characteristics of 'Indigenous Religions'. Asante 'Indigenous' Christians among my respondents defined 'indigenous' in such a way that it enabled them to distinguish themselves from 'Asante indigenous practitioners' and 'orthodox Christians'. Offinsohemma Ama Serwah Nyarkoh (43) said, for example:

I regard myself as an 'indigenous Christian', because in contradiction to indigenous practitioners and Christians from the mainstream churches, I do the same things as the Christians. I and other Christians are for instance venerating the same God. Before the missionaries came, we were already venerating the Almighty God. At home we used to have a tree which was called *Nyame dua*. My father used to put an egg in the middle of the trunk of that tree and then we prayed to God, just like I am now also praying to God who is referred to in the Bible. Then, I also venerate the natural deities, just like the Christians. I know they do the same, because when I was in Rome I saw people throwing money in a fountain [she meant the Trevi fountain] and they hoped it would comply with their wishes. That is also why we venerate the river deities. Last, we venerate the ancestors, but the Christians venerate their saints. So again, it is the same thing all together (Ama Serwah Nyarkoh, 43).

In the above quotation, the term ‘indigenous’ is used by one of my respondents to distinguish herself from other practitioners, rather than referring to a merely religious notion of what ‘indigenous’ might be. The contribution of Cox’s definition, in contradiction to the mentioned insiders’ concepts of ‘indigenous’, is that it provides an academic (that means neutral and value free) concept of ‘indigenous’ that can be applied in order to recognise ‘Indigenous Religions’ worldwide.

In this study, I use the term Asante Indigenous Religion (AIR) to refer to the indigenous beliefs of the Asante. AIR is a type of IRs that is to a greater or lesser extent adhered to by the majority of the Asante. The most important characteristic of IRs is that these religions are based on:

- (a) ancestral belief,
- (b) kinship
- (c) locality

Let me elaborate on each of the above mentioned points in relation to AIR.

(a) The Asante venerate ancestral spirits by pouring libation – which is a type of prayer – and offering animals such as sheep and chickens during ritual calendar days, which are known as the *adae*. Their reasons for ancestral veneration are twofold. First, they attempt to maintain a good relationship with those spirits, since they are believed to be able to help them on both a community and individual basis, for instance by providing rain for the growth of crops or by making barren women pregnant. Asante ancestral belief is thus closely related to the believed capacity of ancestral spirits in providing fertility of human beings and the land on which they live. A second reason for Asante ancestral veneration is their need to identify themselves as a cultural community. The ancestors give them an understanding of where they come from and who they are. Among other factors that are important in terms of their identity are the language they speak (Twi), their cultural customs, and the land on which they are born. Asante call themselves as such because their parents and ancestors are Asante and they belong to a certain lineage which is called upon during the rites of passage in one’s life, such as a naming ceremony after being born, during one’s funeral celebration and, for girls only, also during their puberty rite (Kwabena Anokye, 2; Nana Yaw Dwubeng, 3; Miss Joice Boakye, 6, Beatrice Agyeman Dua Prempeh, 7).

(b) Whereas I do not have any doubts about the belief in ancestral spirits in Asante Indigenous Religion, the characteristic of ‘kinship’ among them seems to be more problematic. I agree with Cox that in those areas where ‘locality’ and ‘kinship’ in terms of descendents of one single lineage seem to have been taken over by regional concerns in a more complex way, ‘kinship’ is also important. However, I do not agree with Platvoet that one should classify the Asante as ‘non-

kinship' based. The term 'multi-kinship' based seems to be more appropriate to characterise the belief of the Asante. To illustrate, the situation among this cultural group is as follows:

First, the Asante comprise seven or eight matrilineans²¹, and thus they do not all belong to the same matrilineage²² (*abusua*), which is the case in kinship relations. Consequently, among the Asante, each member of an *abusua* does not only venerate the ancestors of that *abusua* but also those of the Asante Royals, who are the ones that are ruling their village. In kinship based societies, on the other hand, the *abusua* only venerates ancestors that belong to that same *abusua*. Second, with a particular focus on the area that is now known as the Kumasi Metropolis, since the eighteenth century the majority of the villages have been ruled by various *abusua*. What happened was that subjects or whole villages were often presented by chiefs as gifts to other chiefs during important occasions, such as the installation of a new Asantehene. It was also common for paramount chiefs to sell portions of their territories to defray stool debt (McCaskie 1984). These historical facts make the religion that is native to the Asante multi-kinship based.

(c) According to Wiredu (1996:121-124) the concept of 'locality' is a very important characteristic of Asante Indigenous Religion, because it helps to understand the nature of this religion. For the Asante have a locative conception of existence that has cosmological implications. Unlike in the English language, in Twi, which is the language of the Asante, there is no linguistic difference between 'being' and 'being in a place'. Consequently, to express that 'something is there', the Asante and other Akan say, *Biribi wo ho*, and to express that 'something is', they use the same sentence. For the Asante, then, existence is always connected to a location. The cosmological implication of this is that the Supreme Being must have been part of the world he created rather than a Being that created that world out of nothing. For according to the Twi language, without being in a place, the Supreme Being would not exist, which implies that when he created the world and all material entities in it, such as human beings, plants and stones, he was part of that empirical world. This means that the Supreme Being and all entities of the spiritual world that he created, such as the ancestors and deities, are not fully immaterial, but quasi-material instead. Although these spirits are not visible by ordinary Asante who are not trained to see them and communicate with them, and are only occasionally tangible for these Asante, in terms of imagination they are part of the empirical world, as they share the same material space as beings in that world. The concept of 'locality' in the Asante belief qualifies it as an 'Indigenous Religion'. In doing so, this implies that there is no clear distinction in this belief between the spiritual and the material world, which according to Cox (2007:70) is used as a

²¹ A matrilinean is a clan with membership determined by matrilineal descent from a common ancestor.

²² A matrilineage is a line of descent traced through the maternal side of the family.

characteristic of 'Indigenous Religions' by many other scholars who did not narrow down the definition of 'Indigenous Religions' for an empirical purpose. I emphasise 'locality' as an aspect of Asante Indigenous Religion because it is another characteristic of Indigenous Religions that has made some scholars decide not to classify the Asante as people with such a religion. By focussing on the concept of locality among the Asante in relation to kinship, I will explain why I have a different opinion on this matter.

With regard to 'locality', in case of the Asante, I have found out by conducting fieldwork how it works in practice when a cultural group has a more complex system of kinship. Among the Asante, each member of a matrilineal clan does not only venerate the ancestral spirits of 'Royals' or the rulers in a town or village, but also the ancestral spirits of his or her own matrilineal clan. These ancestral spirits (*nananom nsamanfo*) are local just like the natural deities (*abosom*). However, what happens in Asante religious rituals in towns such as Kumasi is that both the ancestor spirits (of the Royals and those of the *abusua*) and the natural deities (*abosom*) that belong to one's birth village and those in one's new locality (e.g. a town or city) are venerated²³. Since there is believed to be a connection between village and city ancestral and natural spirits, I see no reason why 'locality' should hinder the Asante in classifying them as 'indigenous'. To repeat, according to Cox (2007:69) 'the primary characteristic of Indigenous Religions is that it refers to its being bound to a location; participants in the religion are native to a place, or [...] they belong to it'. This means that Asante in towns and cities can invoke ancestral spirits that *belong to one or more localities* without necessarily living in all of those localities and that this phenomenon does not affect the Asante having an Indigenous Religion. In fact, religiously speaking, Asante in towns relate in the same way to their ancestral spirits and natural deities as many non-Western people in the Diaspora whose religion has also been defined by Cox as 'Indigenous'. Both Asante in towns and non-Western people in the Diaspora belong to a place without necessarily living in the same locality. In other words, I do not think that the concept of 'locality' should disqualify the Asante from having an 'Indigenous Religion' and I do not hesitate to make use of Cox's definition of 'Indigenous Religions' in relation to the Asante as long as it is acknowledged that it is a type of Indigenous Religion that focuses on (a) multi-kinship relations with direct attention to the invocation of ancestral spirits and (b) both what I call 'ancient local' and 'migrated local' ancestral spirits and natural deities, which make the religion local rather than universal.

Now that it has been made clear what IRs are and in what way the characteristics of IR are applicable to AIR, I will give a short overview of the structure of AIR and its relation to Asante

²³ See for instance Nketia (1955:21, 38-39) with regard to the veneration of ancestral spirits during a funeral ritual.

chieftaincy. Walls (1987:254-5) distinguishes between various types of 'primal' or what these days are called 'Indigenous Religions'. He mentions the Supreme Being, divinities, ancestors and objects of powers as the main elements which indigenous religious practitioners use to structure their spiritual world. The relationship between these elements differs between Indigenous Religions. One of his models of possible relationships is that there is an approach of a Supreme Being through intermediation. It is this indirect approach of the veneration of the High God (*Nyame*) through the ancestral spirits (*nsamanfo*) that is characteristic of the Asante. Besides, there does not appear to be much scholarly consensus about the overall structure of the Asante spiritual world. What scholars, such as Parrinder, Gyekye and Wiredu, who have written about the Akan spiritual world – which includes the Asante – have in common is that they propose there is a hierarchy of spiritual beings, with at the apex the Supreme Being (*Nyame*), on a lower level the ancestors (*nsamanfo*) and the lesser gods (*abosom*), on an even lower level charms (*nsuman*), witches (*abayifo*), and individual spiritual powers (*sunsum*) inside animals and humans, and at the lowest level inside natural objects such as trees, plants, rocks, mountains and hills. Parrinder, however, placed the deities or natural gods and ancestors on the same footing, whereas Gyekye (1987:75) and Wiredu (Wiredu 1996:124) believe the deities in Asante Indigenous Religion to be more powerful than the ancestors, who are considered to be nearer man, due to their previous status as human beings. Consequently, Parrinder uses a pyramid to explain the relationship between the spiritual entities, whereas Gyekye and Wiredu make use of a vertical line as a means of explanation. Another example of contention is the relationship between charms or supernatural forces (*nsuman*) and the deities (*abosom*). Whereas Busia and Parrinder believe that *nsuman* belong to a category of being distinct from *abosom*, Gyekye (1987:74) is of opinion that they are categorically linked to the deities in the form of a sub category. A final example of disagreement between Akan scholars concerns the characteristics of the Supreme Being (*Nyame*). Whereas Gyekye (1987:70) argues that in the Akan indigenous belief *Nyame* is not bound to any particular region or space, according to Wiredu (1996: 121) the Highest God must be spatial, since existence or 'being there' (*biribi wo ho*) is meaningless without reference to space. Consequently, Gyekye places *Nyame* outside the physical world, whereas Wiredu imagines God as a spiritual being that must have been part of the physical world once it created it. The difference in perception of *Nyame* between both philosophers has a fundamental effect on the way they think about the relationship between the physical and the spiritual world. Gyekye clearly distinguishes between the worlds, referring to them as being inhabited by spiritual and material entities. Both worlds are real even though the spiritual is non-perceivable, but activities of the inhabitants of the spiritual world extend to and are 'felt' in the physical world. For Wiredu,

the distinction between the spiritual and the physical is less apparent, because in his opinion ancestors and other spiritual beings are quasi-material. That means that they are this-worldly in conceptualisation; ancestors and the ancestral world are believed to be very similar to the world of the living, but immaterial in dynamics, since ancestors are not constrained by the laws of physical interaction. Wiredu regards the creation by various scholars including Gyekye of a clear distinction between the physical and the spiritual in the Akan Indigenous Religion as an effect of European scholarship-studies exercised by missionaries and early anthropologists, and the internalisation of this scholarship including its Cartesian theoretical framework about the relationship between the immaterial mind and the material body by Akan indigenous scholars. The Cartesian distinction in Akan philosophical studies could also be regarded as a side product of African nationalism in Ghanaian education, which during and after the struggle of independence was tempted to use concepts that were derived from the Western philosophical tradition to make the claim that Akan communal oral philosophy was equally important to the individual written philosophy of thinkers in the Western world.

The task of philosophers is to create a theoretical framework consisting of language. Similarly to the way in which artists use colours to make paintings, philosophers use language to make their arguments. A problematic aspect of each philosophical approach towards religion is that the theoretical framework that philosophers create consists of a believed permanent relationship between various religious entities. This makes the philosophical study of religion highly static by nature and therefore, by definition, an imperfect representation of people's various perceptions of religions in the social world. When this imperfect reflection is on top of that placed within a non-indigenous theoretical construction, such as has been the case with Akan studies of religion, it places even more limitations on a philosophical study in terms of its correspondence with the outside world. For the social scientist this raises the question of to what extent these studies are reliable.

Most likely, the empirical accuracy and trustworthiness of any of these philosophical studies is very limited, since the correspondence of philosophical ideas with the empirical reality is not of the philosopher's concern. To get a more empirically grounded picture of Asante religion it is therefore necessary to contribute to the academic study of religion by undertaking a historical (historical facts used to be empirical in the past) and empirical study of this religion. My focus regarding the Asante Indigenous Religion has therefore been on the 'lively' aspects that emerged from the historical and the empirical data. However, the following short overview of philosophical definitions of the entities that the Asante Indigenous Religion comprises also helps to understand it as a historically and empirically founded 'living religion'.

1. The Supreme Being (*Nyame*)

McCaskie's (1995) definition of the Asante Supreme Being is as follows. *Nyame* or *Onnyame* (*onya*, to get, to achieve +*mee*, to complete) is the name for the (withdrawn) sole creator of the world. According to Gyekye (1995:68-76) *Nyame* is uncaused (*odomankoma*), uncreated and transcendent. Wiredu (1996:119-125), however, believes that *Nyame* is caused and not coming 'out of nothing', because when he created the world the Supreme Being was already part of that world. *Nyame* should therefore be perceived as a cosmic architect rather than a creator *ex-nihilo*. Because *Nyame* was part of the world when he created it, the creator is not beyond the category of space, as implied by Gyekye. Consequently, in the Asante Indigenous Religion all spiritual entities are quasi-material and there is no such thing as a non-spatial spiritual world such as the one of Descartes, who clearly distinguished the material physical from the immaterial spiritual world. The two major contemporary Akan philosophers Gyekye's and Wiredu's opinions thus differ regarding the nature of the Asante spiritual world. Gyekye believes entities in this world to be spiritual, whereas Wiredu believes them to be quasi-material. Most likely, the pre-colonial Asante idea of the Supreme Being (*Nyame*) has nothing to do with characteristics that are attributed to God by Christians, such as omnipresence, eternity and omnipotence. None of these characteristics of the Supreme Being are mentioned in any of the Asante indigenous rituals that I have observed in Ghana. For instance, in the *akom* dance of the indigenous priest (*okomfo*), which I describe in Chapter six of this thesis as part of an Asante royal pre-burial ritual, an analogy is drawn between *Nyame* and the wind. Wiredu's (1996:118) observation that early European adventurers, missionaries and anthropologists have affected the present-day understanding of the pre-colonial Asante Indigenous Religion is in my opinion correct. It is much more likely also regarding the agricultural mode of production of the Asante, that the initial Asante Supreme Being was a venerated natural deity, such as the wind but at other times the sun (in relation to *kra* which is believed to be a spark of *Nyame*), the sky and certain trees, than a highly abstract and transcendent entity. Surely, AIR is practical by nature and spiritual beings are venerated so that humans can benefit from them. Whereas the wind and the sun are natural forces which help human beings with their harvest, and certain trees are believed to possess a high amount of spiritual power, a high abstract Supreme Being cannot fulfil these basic needs. It is therefore not very likely for Asante in the pre-colonial period to have believed in a non-empirical entity.

However, the philosophers Gyekye and Wiredu agree that the Asante ontology is hierarchical and ontologically pluralistic, which means that there are categorical distinctions. The entities that make up the Asante Indigenous Religion are therefore not on the same level of being. *Onnyame* stands at the apex of the Asante hierarchy of spiritual beings, followed by the deities, the

ancestors, human beings, the realm of plants and lower animals and at the bottom the inanimate objects, such as stones and stools.

2. The lesser gods (*abosom*)

Abosom are there in two forms. As spirits they can take the form of natural phenomena, such as a tree, river, a mountain, a lake, the ocean, a hill, or they inspire 'things' such as animal bones, balls, calabashes or brass pans (*yawa*). *Abosom* are believed to have protective spiritual power. A thing becomes valuable (*som-bo*), because of the *obosom* that dwells inside it. *Abosom* are very important for the indigenous priests who make use of them to foretell the future and heal people by letting these deities speak through their mouth; a custom which is known in anthropology and religious studies as 'spirit possession'.

2. The ancestors (*nsamanfo*)

The concept of ancestors among the Asante is closely connected to the concept of personhood. Again, the philosophers Gyekye and Wiredu differ in opinion about the meaning of personhood, which affects their perception of the definition of ancestral spirits.

According to Wiredu there is a difference between a human and a person. A human refers to a biological specimen. Anyone possessing *okra* is a human being. A person is somebody who has made use of his full potential in life. It is something to be achieved during a life time. To illustrate, a baby possesses *okra* and is therefore believed to be a human being but it cannot yet be a person, because it has not yet had the chance to prove itself in the social world (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992). An ancestor is a human, who has used his full potential to become a person. It is an individual who, through mature reflection and action, has both flourished economically and succeeded in meeting his or her (often weighty) responsibilities to his or her family and community. His or her memory therefore serves as a moral exemplar to the living that guides the moral journey of the Akan (including the Asante). There is a belief of selective reincarnation for those humans who have died without becoming a person.

According to Gyekye (Wiredu and Gyekye 1992:108, note 22), personhood is not connected to age or social status and even the youngest human can already be a person. One is a person because of what one is and not because of what one acquires. Gyekye perceives reincarnation therefore not as a factual account of personhood but as a moral narrative, which serves to reinforce socially valuable traits and practices such as cooperation and industriousness. The ancestors are perceived as moral leaders of human beings, because of their positive contribution to the Asante society during their lives. Besides personhood, Gyekye and Wiredu

also differ in opinion about the nature of the ancestral spirits, which affects perceptions of the ancestral world. Gyekye believes the ancestral spirits to be immaterial, which makes the world of the ancestors a space which is wholly distinct from the physical world, similarly to Christianity. Wiredu, who believes these spirits to be quasi-material ('this-worldly' in image, but 'other worldly' in terms of physical laws) instead emphasises the similarities between the world of the ancestors and those of the living, and believes the ancestral spirits to be anthropomorphic by nature. In his opinion, in the Asante Indigenous Religion access to the *post mortem* world is believed to be by land travel, during which there is a river-crossing involving the payment of a toll, which was the reason in olden times for the stuffing of coffins with money and other travelling needs. According to Wiredu, the Asante world of the ancestors is so like the world of the living that the political order is supposed to be continued (in perpetuity) in terms not only of structure but also of personnel (*nhenkwaa*). The spiritual and the physical worlds are not distinct in space and are one another's mirror image.

Most likely, in the pre-colonial period, ancestors were believed to be deceased forefathers who continued to influence the living by wandering in their same space. These days the Christian conception of a spiritual world inhabited by ancestors separate from those of the living is also common among Asante Indigenous practitioners. The ancestors are the most important spirits to be venerated by the Asante traditional authorities.

4. Charms and Amulets (*Nsuman*)

Another source of natural or ritual power in the Asante Indigenous Religion is known as *nsuman*. This source of power is comprised of a diverse range of powers that are typically manifested in the form of physical charms or amulets. Charms are filled with passages from the Qur'an, which is itself believed to be a cure for the believer. Amulets are man-made objects that are believed to have special powers dwelling inside them, which can satisfy various specific needs. Both charms and amulets can be regarded as 'take-away' miniature shrines, because they are made up of little packages of wood and leaves, which are easy to carry. They are a lower order of spirits operating through little objects, which can be good or bad. *Nsuman* are being, and have been, produced by the Asante *Nkramo* (Owusu-Ansah 1983).

5. Witches (*abayifo*)

Witches are believed to be members of a family (*abusua*) who either consciously or unconsciously, spiritually and/or physically harm other family members (Olsen 2003). The family aspect of witches made Geschiere (1997:11) remark that 'witchcraft is the darkside of kinship'.

These days, however, it is believed in Ghana that witches can also harm members outside the *abusua*.

6. (Communal) *sunsum*

Sunsum is a spiritual power that dwells inside animals, humans and natural objects, such as trees, plants, rocks, mountains and hills. Communal *sunsum* is a spirit inside royal stools that makes it an object of veneration. Wiredu (1996:124) states that in the Asante Indigenous Religion, entities high in the hierarchy of entities can affect those lower in hierarchy, but lower entities can become an object of veneration once they are believed to contain spirit (*sunsum*). A stone or a stool can thus be venerated, when they are believed to contain *sunsum*. The stone and stool are entities which are lower in hierarchy than human beings and therefore cannot affect them. It is the *sunsum* inside these objects, however, that places them higher in the hierarchy of entities than human beings and which makes them more powerful than humans.

Between two well-known Akan philosophers, Wiredu and Gyekye, there is disagreement about the nature of objects such as stones and stools. According to Wiredu, only some objects, such as royal stools, contain communal *sunsum*, which makes them an object of veneration. Wiredu (1996:124) remarks that the Akan regard some things as lifeless. Gyekye (1995), on the contrary, believes that in Akan Indigenous Religion everything contains spirit (*sunsum*) and that this belief is a form of animism that he prefers to connote as ‘panpsychism’. My fieldwork experience permits me to say that none of these philosophers is right or wrong, which is a piece of evidence for the problematic aspect of approaching Asante Indigenous Religion as a philosophy rather than a multi-stranded living religion. I interviewed Asante who regarded themselves as indigenous practitioners, who believed that everything contains *sunsum* and that sacred objects such as stools or shrines contain more *sunsum* than all other objects. Nana Ama Boakyewaa (9) for instance said: ‘Everything contains *sunsum*. For instance every house, tree, bird and human being is full of power. The *Sika Dwa Kofi*, however, is more powerful than an ordinary kitchen stool (*obaa*) and even though it contains *sunsum* we do not venerate it’. To what extent in line with Wiredu’s argument this woman’s opinion has been affected by Western literature and European Christian missionary teaching I do not know. However, I also interviewed Asante such as Nana Osei Bonsu II (10) who regarded himself as an Indigenous Christian, and who believed that only the *Sika Dwa Kofi* and all other royal stools contain *sunsum*. This paramount chief told me: ‘It is a misconception that Akan Indigenous Religion is animistic. We make a clear distinction between inspirited and non-inspirited objects and most objects such as stones and stools are just empty’. Clearly, these days both ‘panpsychism’ and ‘selective psychism’ are part of the Indigenous Religion of the Asante.

I have chosen to work with Cox's definition of Indigenous Religions, because it enables me to empirically test whether certain phenomena experienced in the field should be regarded as 'IRs' rather than being social or commercial phenomena. Cox's definition has been very useful in relation to certain rituals that I describe in Chapter Five in which I look at the relationship of religious elements in these rituals with the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The problem with Cox's empirically testable minimum definition of IRs for this study is, however, that certain transcendent characteristics of IR which are mentioned by most other scholars of religion, such as Olupona, Platvoet, Harvey and Cooper, had to be left out. An example of these characteristics is these religions' hospitality to foreign religions, which is a characteristic of IRs that is both spiritual and material by nature. Besides the social relationship of Asante traditional authorities with other religious leaders, this characteristic of IRs deals with syncretism between IRs and other religions. In Chapter Six, I make use of this holistic characteristic of IRs mentioned by Platvoet to provide insight into the indigenous religious peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities in the Kumasi Metropolis. Platvoet (1992:11-28) mentions that 'Indigenous Religions' are tolerant of other religions, since they have no interest in converting them to their own faith. Instead, they often adapt to encounters with missionary religions by incorporating elements of the new religion into the original one.

Cox's (2007:71) reasons for not incorporating Platvoets' above-mentioned characteristic of 'Indigenous Religions' in his definition are as follows. First, Cox remarks that Platvoet's characteristic is not unique to 'Indigenous Religions', since it can also be applied 'in cases where the world religions interact with another, often resulting in a mutual exchange of ideas'. Secondly, Indigenous Religions are not always entirely tolerant of outside forces. Thirdly, Cox agrees with Platvoet that Indigenous Religions are non-missionary by nature, but Cox believes that this can be attributed to their 'kinship status rather than to their inherent tolerance'.

I disagree with Cox's interpretation in his second criticism of Platvoet's above-mentioned characteristic of Indigenous Religions. From reading Platvoet's (1979) work on the Akan, I believe that what this scholar means is *not* that Indigenous Religions are entirely tolerant of outside forces, but that these religions are relatively tolerant in comparison with European Missionary Christianity (EMC). A characteristic of the Asante Indigenous Religion, for instance, was that its adherents were selectively adoptive of elements of EMC, whereas European Christian missionaries fully rejected all elements of the Indigenous Religion of the Akan on the grounds of it being pagan due to such elements as polygamy, the pouring of libation and the veneration of ancestral spirits. The focus of the 'European Christian Mainstream Churches' (ECMC) in the pre-

colonial and colonial period was on bringing the Gospel by replacing the Indigenous Religions, rather than attempting to link up with them.

In Chapter Five, I use Cox's definition of Indigenous Religions. He created this definition in order to study and teach students a category type of religions in academia. Consequently, Cox looked for characteristics of Indigenous Religions because this would enable scholars to communicate about these religions and make comparisons with so-called World Religions, rather than leaving them out of the academic curriculum. By using both Cox's (see Chapter Five) and Platvoet's (Chapter Six) approach to Indigenous Religions I attempt to show different dimensions of the 'Asante Indigenous Religion' and its relationship to the persistence of the Asante indigenous political institution. Cox's definition is useful to show on an abstract level the relationship between Asante Indigenous Religion (as a set of specific characteristics with a specific form due to the implementation of these characteristics in one specific culture) and the formal and informal regulations of Asante traditional authorities associated with it. Platvoet mentioned 'tolerance' as a characteristic of Indigenous Religion, which implies it is relational. His focus helps to gain an insight into:

- (1) The relationship of Asante traditional authorities with representatives of the two main world-religions that influenced this religion:
 - (a) the Muslim headmen and chief-imams
 - (b) the Christian church leaders
- (2) The relationship between the Asante Indigenous Religion and Islam and Christianity.

Then finally, as part of the Asante key concepts in this study, I have defined the two main religious functions of Asante traditional authorities from the pre-colonial until the post-colonial era: 'indigenous religious intermediation' and 'indigenous religious peacekeeping'.

Indigenous religious intermediation

is the intermediation with beings of the spiritual world such as the Supreme Being, the lesser gods, the ancestors, charms, witches and *sunsum*, which form part of the Asante Indigenous Religion.

Indigenous religious peacekeeping

is operated by indigenous religious practitioners who act as diplomats, regardless of a people's belief, cultural background and/or political orientation, in order to contribute to the maintenance of peace in society by investing in cordial social relationships with religious leaders and their practitioners in promoting syncretism between their indigenous religion and other religions.

1.5 Significance of issues being researched

My *academic* motivation is to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between religion and Asante chieftaincy in Ghana by studying the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities. I hope that my research will advance knowledge on whether, and if so, why, the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana have continued to religiously identify themselves with their traditional authorities. I expect that this knowledge will give a more in-depth academic understanding of the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis.

The reason for my choice to study the cultural group that is known as ‘the Asante’ is twofold. First, the Asante have been one of the wealthiest and most influential cultural groups in Ghana. Therefore, Asante traditional authorities have played an important role in the process of state formation and in enhancing ‘social and cultural stability’ in the country, which is seen as an important function of chieftaincy (Ray and Reddy 2003:109-112). This makes it likely that there is a link between IR as part of culture and chieftaincy among this cultural group. Second, there is a wide range of historical literature (McCaskie 1995), (Tordoff 1965), (Wilks 1989) available on the Asante, which has made it possible to describe the process of the formation of the Asante state. It also gave a workable set of tools for recognising indigenous, Christian, and Islamic religious groups in today’s Kumasi Metropolis.

My research locale in Ghana was Kumasi and its surrounding area. I have chosen the capital of the Asante Kingdom as my locale because since the foundation of the Asante nation, the government (the *Asantemanhyiamu*) as well as the local government, (the Kumasi Council) have been located in Kumasi. The city of Kumasi is the place where the process of state formation in Ghana began. One can also trace back the roots of Asante Indigenous Religion in this town. This religion played an important role in legitimating Asante chieftaincy from the pre-colonial until the postcolonial era, which makes Kumasi an interesting place for historical and empirical research on IR in relation to Asante chieftaincy. In the colonial period, Kumasi accommodated the nerve system of indigenous religious resistance against colonialism. Today, the town is still at the heart of movements within Ghanaian society that promote the Indigenous Religion of the Asante and reject modernity: the so called ‘traditionalists’ (see Chapter Six for further information).

In addition to the Asante Indigenous Religion, elements of European Missionary Christianity and various forms of Islam have also played a role in the authorisation of the Asante Kingdom. These world religions have a long history in the city of Kumasi, as the town owes its origin to commercial activity that often went together with religious activities. Since the fifteenth century Kumasi has been a junction of important trade routes in West Africa. In 1701 it became



the kingdom's capital, and today it is the second largest city in Ghana after Accra, and the most important commercial and administrative centre in the Asante Region (see map 6,7,8). Because of trade and its huge open air market, Kumasi has always been a place that attracted people from very distant places, and the town therefore has a cosmopolitan outlook. Christians, Muslims, and followers of Indigenous Religion from various cultural groups in Ghana and the rest of the world (especially Asia, Africa, and the Middle East) live side by side. Asante practitioners in spirits (who call themselves 'indigenous Christians') live both in the villages of the Kumasi Metropolis among rural dwellers (*nkuraasefo*) and in Kumasi²⁴ around the city centre, especially in the areas Asawasi (63 percent Akan²⁵, low and middle level of income) and outside the city centre in Ayigya (75 percent Akan, low level of income) (Ghana Statistical Service: 2000 population and Housing Census, special report on 20 largest localities, March 2002, 47). Most of the Asante practitioners in spirits among my respondents²⁶, who called themselves 'traditionalists', however, were located in the areas near the city centre called Amakom (70 percent Akan, middle level of income) and further away from the centre Asokora Mampong (85 percent Akan, low and high level of income) (Ghana Statistical Service: 2000 population and Housing Census, special report on 20 largest localities, March 2002, p. 47). Apart from religious background, education (which was in most cases connected to income [low, middle or high level of income]) appeared to be important for the degree or ability of my respondents to reflect upon their religious beliefs. More highly educated Asante indigenous religious people were better able to explain their religious ideas. Instead of answers such as 'this is how we perform this ritual, because we came to meet it this way' and 'this is what our ancestors told us to do', they compared and contrasted their religious ideas with those of Christians and Muslims. For the more highly educated Asante their (Indigenous) Religion was a choice rather than a given fact of life. Because of this difference in the experience of the Asante Indigenous Religion of diverse educated groups in the Asante society, in this thesis I sometimes refer to different versions of this religion. There is a version that is merely a repetition of what the traditional authorities told their subjects, which is common among lower education and income groups. In another version the indigenous practitioners have chosen their religion often for nostalgic reasons and have become distanced from village life. This version is common among more highly educated and higher income groups. My respondents who were Asante with a mainstream Christian background (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist or Anglican) also happened to be located in both Kumasi and its surrounding villages. The

²⁴ See for the location of the areas Post (2003:13).

²⁵ Notice that 'Akan' is only historically a problematic term. These days there is a general consensus among scholars which cultural groups in Ghana, Togo and the Ivory Coast belong to the Akan. See for details section 0.1.

Muslims (e.g. Asante *Nkramo*, Sisala, Grunshi, Mossi, Bisanga or bisa, Hausa) concentrate themselves in the Muslim settlement (*zongo*) area of the Kumasi Metropolis.

Another reason to focus on Asante Indigenous Religion in relation to Asante Chieftaincy is that, according to the afore-mentioned theories of Ray and Van Binsbergen, indigenous political institutions in Africa fulfil an indigenous religious need which cannot be met by African states. In this thesis, I will provide insight into to what extent Ray's and Van Binsbergen's presumptions are valid in relation to the Asante institution of chieftaincy and the Ghanaian state. The question is whether Asante chieftaincy indeed fulfils a need for Indigenous Religion among the Asante population of the Kumasi Metropolis. In addition, I will study whether the Ghanaian state indeed lacks this capacity, and whether by comparison with other institutions in the Metropole Asante, chieftaincy is unique in providing a platform for Asante Indigenous Religious activity. Besides the mentioned theories written by two Western scholars which need to be tested, a hint in the direction of Indigenous Religion being a possible important factor in explaining the persistence of Asante chieftaincy are the following recent statistics from inside Ghana. Recent quantitative research on Asante chieftaincy that has been conducted by Ghanaian scholars reveals that for 95.8 percent and 90.3 percent of the population in the Asante Region respectively, the 'embodiment of culture' and 'the spokesmen of people' are relevant roles of chiefs (Abotchie 2006:109). These statistics show that Ghanaians themselves find these roles that are related to Asante Indigenous Religion to be highly important, which also makes it worthwhile studying this topic.

However, the relevance of studying Asante Indigenous Religion in relation to Asante chieftaincy is also dependent on the extent to which other factors, such as economic and political ones, can explain the persistence of the Asante chieftaincy institute. Surely, if economic and political factors or both can provide a full explanation for this phenomenon, there is no need to study the effects of Asante Indigenous Religion on the persistence of chieftaincy. In this section I will therefore concentrate on three possible causes²⁷ (an economic, political and religious cause) for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis. I will research if these causes alone provide a sufficient explanation for Asante chieftaincy's persistence or whether they are, which I presume (see introduction), indeed merely complementary in their capacity of providing an explanation for the persistence of *Asanteman*.

²⁶ Not all of my respondents live in Kumasi, but all are, either by work or family, closely connected to the Kumasi Metropolis and often visit this town and its adjacent villages.

²⁷ I realise that Asante traditional authorities have also had juridical power from the pre-colonial until the postcolonial period and that this source of power might also provide an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The study of juridical power in the hands of Asante chiefs and queen mothers is, however, left out from this thesis, due to a lack of specialised knowledge of the author to deal with this material. The following studies provide information about Asante law in Asante history and contemporary times (Rattray 1956), (Sarbah 1904), (Ubink 2007).

In Chapter Six, I will investigate whether this study of the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions of Asante traditional authorities also contribute to knowledge of the relationship between IR and chieftaincy in a wider African context. Insight into the Asante case might be helpful to gain more understanding of the cause of conflicts between Asante traditional authorities and their (indigenous) religious population in countries with many religious conflicts, such as Nigeria.

1.5.1. Chieftaincy and political influence

To know whether the political function of Asante traditional authorities in today's Kumasi Metropolis provides the sole explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy, in this section I will examine this function of these authorities in comparison with its function in the pre-colonial and the colonial periods.

In the eighteenth-century pre-colonial period, Asante traditional authorities had executive, legislative, and judicial influence. They controlled all authority and besides Asante chieftaincy there was no other political institution in the area in which the Asante lived. There is an ongoing debate among scholars about the extent to which the control of authority was democratic. Whereas some scholars, such as Aidoo (1977a), picture the Asante chiefs and queen mothers as totalitarian rulers who ruled over the Asante by fear only, others, such as Bamfo (2000) emphasise the democratic elements in Asante chieftaincy by focussing on the way in which Asante traditional authorities were chosen and supervised, which some argue contains democratic elements (Bamfo 2000). According to Wilks (1989) the extent to which Asante chieftaincy was a democratic institution also depends on the individual ruling style of the various Asantehenes in the pre-colonial period. For instance each Asantehene in this period had the exclusive right to execute Asante subjects as a way of exercising internal control of the Asante state, but whereas some Asantehenes, such as Kofi Kakari, made extensive use of their rights, especially in relation to the ritual killing of human beings, others, such as Osei Kwame, were less keen on making use of their exclusive executioner right. When an Asantehene fully misused his power in the eyes of the board of elders that controlled him, he was usually destooled. This happened for instance in the case of Osei Kwame, who in the eyes of the Asante board of rulers was overly cruel in terms of his style of ruling.

In the colonial period, the British colonial government reduced the authority of chiefs, although they retained their power to levy taxes to fund development in their towns and villages. In 1901, the 'British Chief Commissioner' (BCC) took the position of the Asantehene. Instead of the direct flow of tribute to the treasury of the Asantehene, who in his turn distributed money among his chiefs or 'Native Authorities', the tax money now went directly to the BCC. After

1931, the British changed from Direct Rule to the system of Indirect Rule, which meant that there was a political superstructure imposed on the indigenous Asante political structure as it existed before 1901. Since then, tax money has indirectly been flowing again to the treasury of the Asantehene. The Asante king, however, stood under the supervision of the BCC, who in turn stood under the supervision of the 'British Governor' (BG). The incorporation of chiefs in the system of Indirect Rule which included strong colonial control clearly diminished the authority of chiefs over their subjects. At the local level, District and Assistant District Commissioners were appointed for the day-to-day administration of the District, without taking into account the established traditional authority boundaries. The Asante traditional authorities lost this function and also the power to make rules for the maintenance of law and order, and promote the socio-economic well-being of the people (Arhin 1999).

After Ghana gained independence in 1957, the Ghanaian state was no longer in the hands of the British colonial rulers. Ghanaian rulers such as Nkrumah, who took over state power, attempted to enervate the authority of chiefs, who they perceived as a block in the way of the development of the Ghanaian state in the direction of modernity. Since then, the political power in the hands of chiefs has diminished in comparison with that in the pre-colonial and colonial period. Whereas in the colonial period, despite the British control, the political structure of Indirect Rule permitted chiefs to rule over their subjects on their own, in the postcolonial period they had to share their authority with politicians. In 1952 a dual political system was put in place of District, Urban and Local Councils, which was to be based on the British model, to replace the Native Authorities and to take over all their functions. It permitted both chiefs and politicians to become members of local councils (town councils and unit committees) and until 1992 the chiefs occupied one third of the positions in these councils. However, since the creation of Ghana's newest constitution, which is known as the 'Constitution of the Fourth Republic', chiefs have been barred from active participation in politics. Consequently, since 1994 the government only allows them to be appointed in non-partisan public institutions. Since then, their tasks have been restricted to customary matters and to advising local government rulers about those of their subjects whom they think would be suitable to serve on the local councils.

The Kumasi Metropolis seems to be an exceptional place in terms of the political relationship between politicians and chiefs, because in this Metropolis chiefs do actually sit on a local council, namely the unit committee, which is the lowest political unit of all local councils. Devas and Korboe (2000: 126) remark that the unit committees are the official channel of communication between the 'Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly' (KMA) members, which are part of the City Government (CG), and the local communities. The communication between chiefs and politicians in the unit committees is, however, minimal and not very effective, which affects the

realisation of community projects. The reason for most problems between chiefs and politicians is their difference in interests. Since the authority of chiefs has been diminished, they do everything to remain the custodians of the land from which they derive economic power. Consequently, they deny access to land to their fellow non-royal unit committee members. This makes it very difficult for these members to realise community projects, such as the building of a new school or toilet complex in the adjacent villages of Kumasi. The politicians inside the unit committees, on the other hand, make it difficult for chiefs to realise community projects that are often of a similar kind, because they often refuse to cooperate with chiefs of a different political persuasion. Besides, community projects that are being proposed by chiefs and politicians in the unit committee are often not realised because there is too much overlap between those proposed by chiefs and by politicians, due to the fact that the roles of chiefs and politicians are not well defined.

In terms of political authority, in comparison with politicians, chiefs seem to benefit from their formal political neutrality. The chiefs' neutral position gives them a lot of credibility among their subjects. In comparison with politicians, the majority of my interviewees judged their chiefs as being more reliable. A side effect of the goodwill that chiefs have among their subjects is that it is relatively easy for them to mobilise their people to do community work. This capacity of chiefs makes them indispensable for politicians, who on their own are not capable of mobilising subjects due to the lack of loyalty of those subjects towards them. A chief's capacity to mobilise people is, however, restricted to his own Asante subjects in his area. Consequently, chiefs in areas in the Kumasi Metropolis with a culturally homogenous population (such as Asokore Mampong) have had more success with collective action than those in culturally heterogeneous areas of Kumasi (such as Asawasi). Also, in the adjacent villages of Kumasi, chiefs seem to have more authority over their subjects than in most neighbourhoods in Kumasi. Generally, chiefs in the villages have more control over land, which makes it easier for them to allocate land to development projects (Post 2003).

In conclusion, the question of whether political power invested in today's Asante chiefs in the Kumasi Metropolis alone provides an answer for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy, should be answered in the negative. These days, Asante chieftaincy is incorporated in a dual political system. The nature of this system and the 1992 Ghanaian constitution are such that the political authority of Asante chiefs has clearly been diminished in comparison with their political power in the pre-colonial and colonial period. Consequently, their power has been diminished to such a degree that politics in the Kumasi Metropolis are overall in the hands of politicians rather than chiefs, whose function is to deal with customary matters and mobilising their subjects. These are important tasks which cannot be fulfilled by politicians. However, the relationship with those

politicians has made clear that the chiefs derive their power from their control over land, rather than from their political authority. The political authority of chiefs alone therefore cannot provide a sufficient explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

1.5.2 Chieftaincy and economic influence

In this section, I will investigate to what extent the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis can be explained by looking at the economic power of chiefs complementary to their political authority. Similarly to in the previous section, I will concentrate on the development of economic power invested in chiefs from the pre-colonial up to the post-colonial period. I will concentrate on the two main forms of economic power in the hands of Asante traditional authorities which they derived from their position regarding Asante land and the collection of taxes.

In the pre-colonial period, the king of the Asante's as well as the chiefs' economic function was that of 'custodian' of the land, which was believed to belong to the ancestral spirits. The land custody placed chiefs in a position similar to that of European nobles who owned the land and had personnel working on it for free in exchange for shelter and food. Asante subjects used to work on the land that was held in custody by a chief and in exchange, the chief's household personnel (*nhenkwaa*) provided food for these subjects and gave them shelter in the chief's palace or elsewhere in the village. Additionally, the chief took care of the moral education of his subjects. The income of the land all went to the treasury of the chief, which belonged to the chief's stool and there was no private accumulation of wealth in the Asante society. Chiefs borrowed money from the Asantehene to accumulate wealth for a chief's stool and all money they brought in went to their stool's treasury. When an Asante subject died, all his private belongings were sold and the money that was earned from this was used to fill the chiefs' treasure (Wilks 1979). Besides these so called 'death duties' which were a form of tax to Asante subjects, the Asante traditional authorities owned their wealth from the collection of all kinds of 'tributes' which is also a form of tax for instance to non-Asante traders who wished to travel over Asante land (Devas and Korboe 2000), (Wolf 1982).

Since the 1880s, land was able to be commercially obtained, which means that the Asantehene lost his position of custodian of all land in the Asante Region. This development caused conflicts regarding the control of land and the income accruing from that control. The sale of land gave Asante subjects the opportunity to accumulate private wealth, which diminished the economic power of chiefs (Berry 1998). However, in order to be able to build on a piece of land in the living area of the Asante, foreign investors first had to get the permission of the chief. If a

chief refused to provide land to these investors, there was no other way for them to get access to it. Because of the chief's capacity to mobilise his subjects, contractors who without a chief's permission still continued their plans with a piece of Asante land, ran a serious risk of being killed by one of the chief's subjects (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46). However, in the colonial period, especially under indirect rule, the chiefs had some freedom in the collection of taxes. They could, for instance, ask tax to hunters who wanted to make use of the land that was allocated to them, and to travellers and traders who needed to make use of the roads on their lands.

In the postcolonial period, the economic power of chiefs was further diminished in comparison with the pre-colonial and the colonial period. Although in the Asante Region most land had remained in the hands of the chiefs, some of its land belonged to the local and national government. The dual political system and the increased commercialisation of land give foreign investors the possibility of bypassing the chiefs. These days, these investors can also negotiate with members of the local or national government in order to get permission to build on an Asante piece of land. Additionally, when the government wants land, it can acquire it first and then later, to some extent, compensate the chief for it. This custom is known as 'compulsory state land acquisition'. The chiefs have thus lost authority over land in their area and are often overpowered by the decisions of government leaders concerning Asante land (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

To sum up, in present-day Ghana there are three types of land: (1) customary land in the hands of traditional authorities: (2) public landownership, which consists of land owned by the government: and (3) compulsory state land acquisition. The majority of the land in the Ashanti Region belongs to group (1) and is held in trust for the Asante by the Asantehene, which, along with its economic benefits, gives him a high social status. Anyone wishing to obtain land in this category must have his approval, and the main lever of power that the Asantehene possesses is that of land allocation, even though the local government also plays a considerable role in the allocation of land. The three steps for obtaining the right to use land in the Asante Region are as follows: first, one goes to the chief who keeps the land in custody on behalf of the Asantehene. If the chief gives out a 'use-right' of land (usufructuary rights), then one can go to the land department of the local government (the Lands Commission), who register the land. If one only wants to build a house and live on the land, then this is where the procedure stops. In case one wants to use his or her property on the land (such as a house) to secure a loan and needs to go to the bank, one needs the permission of the Asantehene, who has the final authority over the land. On behalf of the Asantehene, the paramount chiefs can also give permission to get a loan for property on land that is allocated to an individual (Rev Dr. Charles K. Coffie, 4).

The Asantehene allocates land with the help of a network of chiefs, who allocate use-rights to pieces of land. The process of land acquisition involves applications being made through the local chief but requiring the formal approval of, and payment of a supplementary tribute to, the Asantehene; the money concerned is known as 'drink money'. For native Asante, the tribute is, formally at least, in the form of drink and meat (two bottles of schnapps 'J.Henkes-Jonge Bols' the original from Schiedam, The Netherlands' and a fatted sheep); for non-natives, it is paid as the monetary equivalent (Devas and Korboe 2000:133).

The present Asantehene, Osei Tutu II, is officially in charge of two types of customary land. First, he is the custodian of the state land that comes with his occupation of the 'Golden Stool', which is the royal seat of the Asante. Second, the king is officially in charge of most other land in the Asante Region. The official cost of obtaining land from the Asantehene is relatively modest although the amount demanded varies and the process has become increasingly commercialised. The money is supposed to be divided between the local chief, the Asantehene, and the local government and is not a purchase price but rather represents the cost of consulting the ancestors. This means that if an application is refused, the money is not refundable. In practice, the cost of acquiring land by non-natives is considerably higher, effectively approximating the market price. In theory, this means that there would be a considerable amount of money earned by chiefs from the allocation of land to foreigners (Devas and Korboe 2000:133).

In practice, an obstacle for chiefs who attempt to earn money by allocating land to foreigners is that they need the permission of the Asantehene, which they only get when in his opinion the allocation of land to the foreigner contributes to the development of the Asante Region (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46). According to the land allocation regulations, each formal allocation note that is given out by a local chief needs to be endorsed by the Asantehene; otherwise, one's use-right to the land will not be registered by the 'Land Commission' (LC) and so will not be valid. Furthermore, an allocatee is required to start building within one year of allocation; otherwise, the allocation can be rescinded. Such rescindment is unusual, but the potential for allocations to be rescinded is there, and some chiefs issue second leases on plots, sometimes within months of the initial allocation, if they think the plot may not be developed within the required time. Thus, the official system is characterised by uncertainty, which discourages large-scale commercial development. The official system thus does not provide a reason for the increasing commercialisation of the land allocation system in recent years.

There are, however, a considerable number of unscrupulous chiefs in the Asante Region, who demand more for the use-right of land than they are supposed to. They also make more than

one allocation of the same plot without knowing the outcome of the earlier allocations, causing confusion and hardship. In practice, the Asantehene does not always have enough control over what happens with all land in the Asante Region. Although officially the Asantehene is the *primus-inter-pares* of all paramount chiefs in the Asante Kingdom, unofficially the kingdom comprises of sixty-five paramount chiefs who are more or less autonomous rulers over their 'stool land', which comes with their office as a chief. Each chief is obliged to regularly report to the Asantehene on all issues concerning the land that is allocated to them, such as to whom use-rights are given out, and for what price, but in practice this does not always happen. Additionally, although officially no customary land in the Asante Region can be allocated to anyone without the king's permission, in practice there are a lot of cases where paramount chiefs do indeed allocate land without his consent and, as said before, to more than one party.

Another rule that is often not observed by paramount chiefs is that in cases where they give away use-rights to allocate land, they are obliged to spend at least two thirds of their share of the received 'drink money' on the development of their area. There are many recent cases where paramount chiefs have not divided the drink money they received for the allocation of land between themselves, the local chief, the Asantehene, and the local government but have instead kept all the profit to themselves. Sub-chiefs, those chiefs who come under the paramount chiefs, are not authorised to allocate land and are thus breaking the law by doing so. There are, however, also many recent cases of sub-chiefs who have given out false use-rights to the allocation of land (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

The misbehaviour of chiefs in the allocation of land is the cause of many of today's chieftaincy disputes. These are court cases in which various groups are in conflict because they all claim to have the right to use the land. A chief who is guilty of allocating the same land twice or more runs the risk that, on behalf of his subjects, a kingmaker will take him to court, which damages his image as a moral leader of his community. He could also be destooled (dethroned). In terms of their reputation as moral leaders, the reasoning of some chiefs is that they have not so much to lose because since their economic power has diminished, their subjects have already stopped showing respect to them. To sum up, the official land allocation system within the Asante Region is thus not very profitable for the chief, as he has to divide the 'drink money' that comes with the allocation of land between himself, the Asantehene, and the local government (one third each). The unofficial way of allocating land can instead be quite profitable, and in many cases the economic and social sanctions towards chiefs who misuse their position to allocate unofficial use-rights are not sufficient to stop their malpractice (Devas and Korboe 2000:133).

The issue of land in the hands of the Asante traditional authorities brings us to the other possible economic source of power of these authorities. However, whereas in the pre-colonial and

colonial period taxes or tributes were an important source of income, these days the ‘drinking money’ for the ancestral spirits, which is usually not a high tax, is the only formal type of ‘tax’ that flows directly to the treasury of the chiefs. In addition to this tax, the most profitable informal ‘tax’ is paid during a yearly religious festival known as *Asanteman Adae Kese*, as a way of paying homage to the Asante king. All other taxes, such as council tax, which is known in Ghana as ‘window tax’ or taxes that apply to salesmen and women, need to be paid directly to the local government. As a compensation for the diminishment in the income of taxes, chiefs recently have received a state allowance, which is, however, not high enough to make a living. Also, except for during the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival, the more individualised community does not any longer voluntarily pay tribute to chiefs to compensate for the small allowance that is given to them by the national government. Further income of chiefs is, however, provided by court fees, the production of fines, royalties, the profits of marketing activities, and income from the NGOs and the World Bank, but this income is far less than the income which Asante traditional authorities used to obtain from levying taxes during the pre-colonial and colonial period ²⁸ (Jacquemot 2007).

In conclusion, I have looked at two economic sources of power of Asante traditional authorities from the pre-colonial until the postcolonial period: custodianship over land and the task of collecting taxes. In comparison with both sources of economic power in the hands of Asante chiefs and queen mothers in the afore-mentioned historical periods, today their economic power has been diminished. The issue of the custodianship of land that belongs to the ancestors and the resilient custom of paying drinking money to a chief for his allocation of land to honour those spirits indicates that Asante Indigenous Religion is also important in the functioning of Asante traditional authorities. The persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis can therefore not just be explained by political and/or economic factors. Consequently the Asante indigenous religious power in the hands of Asante traditional authorities should also be explored as a possible explanation for Asante chieftaincy’s persistence.

1.5.3. Chieftaincy and religious influence

In this section, I will explore in what sense there might be a relationship between the Indigenous Religion of the Asante and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. Asante chieftaincy is an institute whose existence is dependent on the support of the subjects of its rulers: the Asante traditional authorities. The following Akan proverbs support this view: *Nsuom nam firi nsuom a, Awu, Ihene a Anni akvitaafɔ no Anye Ihene bio*, meaning ‘a fish out of water dies; a king

²⁸ Translated from French by the author.

without followers ceases to exist' and *Nnipa na ema Ahennwa ye kesse*, meaning 'it is people that make a chief's stool great'. Asante chieftaincy exists by virtue of its approval by the Asante population. Besides the queen mother, who herself is chosen by her senior male or female lineage mates and is supported by a board of elders, the Asante subjects have a voice in the selection of a chief. The question arises what the role is of Asante Indigenous Religion (AIR) in the relation of Asante chiefs to their subjects. In this thesis I will explore this relationship in three ways. First, I will look at the possible way in which AIR plays a role in the legitimacy of Asante chieftaincy. Second, I will explore the way in which Asante traditional authorities fulfil a need among the Asante population for an indigenous religious identity. Third, I will explore the role of AIR in the maintenance of harmonious social and religious relationships with Muslims and Christians in the Kumasi Metropolis.

With regards to (1) the possible ways in which AIR legitimates Asante chieftaincy, I will focus on the role of Asante indigenous religious customs and material attributes. An example of an Asante indigenous religious custom that might play a role in the legitimisation of Asante chieftaincy is the celebration of the *Odwira* festival. This festival was held in Kumasi from the foundation of the Asante state in 1701 until its suspension in 1896, and, though transformed, its celebration was resurrected (McCaskie 1995:151) by Asantehene Opoku Ware II (1970-1999) in 1985. The last transformed celebration of *Odwira* took place in 2004 under the name *Asanteman Adae Kese*. In its cultural and religious meaning the *Asanteman Adae Kese 2004* festival is different from the pre-colonial *Odwira* festival, mainly because since the deportation of Asantehene Prempeh I in 1896 the autonomous Asante state no longer exists. The resurrected version of the *Odwira* festival that has been held since 1985 is therefore deprived of the full range of its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century meanings. The question that rises with regards to this festival is to what extent its continued existence is the result of its indigenous religious function in legitimating chieftaincy, and to what extent its continuation should be explained by other factors such as the capacity of rituals to attract tourists, and the social and political function of organising a festival. An example of material indigenous religious attributes that play a role in the legitimisation of Asante chieftaincy are Royal stools or seats, swords for the purpose of swearing oaths and the staff of the chief's spokesman. It is for instance the chief's connection with a royal stool in a stool room from which he derives his political and spiritual power. The stool is a shrine²⁹ which enables him to distinguish himself from other Asante and which provides a means by which to rule over ordinary Asante subjects. It also enables him to communicate with ancestral spirits. The staff of the chief's spokesmen (*akyeame*) enables those spokesmen on behalf of the chief to translate messages to his subjects that he receives from the ancestral spirits, which are

²⁹ A stool is an indigenous religious material attribute and never meant to be sitting upon.

meant to help the living. These messages can be religious, social or political. In the pre-colonial period, the ancestors could for instance instruct a chief to start a war with a neighbouring cultural group. The indirectness of the communication of a chief to his population contributed to his sacredness. It was for this reason that many *okyeames*, instead of only one, were hired to translate the ancestral war message to Asante soldiers (Yankah 1995). These days, a paramount chief can for instance use various *akyeame* to translate the ancestral message that he should prevent too many foreign investors from occupying his ancestral land. However, it is pertinent to query to what extent today's messages of the paramount chief have an indigenous religious content, and to what extent the procedure of making use of *akyeame* at the royal court is merely ceremonial. Other material objects with a possible remaining indigenous religious connotation that help to articulate the paramount chief's sacredness are his ceremonial sword (*Mponponsuo*) that is used in oath swearing rituals³⁰ (McLeod 1981:9), golden rings and necklaces with *Adinkra*³¹ symbols, of which some symbolise Akan proverbs, *Adinkra* and *Kente*³² cloth, a palanquin or U-shaped wooden structure, which looks like a coffin without a cover, in which the Asantehene and these days other chiefs are carried and those attributes carried by a chief's royal servants (*nhenkwaa*), such as great drums (*fɔntɔmfrɔms*), which are beaten with sticks by his drummers (*okyerema*), war shields carried by his war shield bearers (*afonansafo*), fans provided by fan carriers (*kokosesefoo*) and the chief's war deity (*nsuman*) which the chief's physician and religious adviser (*nsumankwahene*) carries for him in a pot on his head. With regards to indigenous religious material objects, a distinction should be made between their importance to Asante chiefs and to queen mothers. It is especially the chiefs who make use of material objects in order to establish themselves as rulers and articulate their sacredness. Although Asante queen mothers also make use of golden necklaces, rings, and state umbrellas, many huge material objects such as a palanquin which is carried on the shoulders of four strong men and goes up and down marching to the rhythm of the great drums (*fɔntɔmfrɔms*) are not part of their royal indigenous religious equipment. Asante queen mothers materially distinguish themselves from ordinary Asante women by wearing *Adinkra* and *Kente* cloth, golden rings and necklaces with *Adinkra* symbols, and by their hairstyle, which is known as *dansinkran* since it was referred to by the British as 'dancing crown'. The *dansinkran* is the hairstyle of female Asante rulers, who are unmarried and have passed child bearing age, which is usually the case. The Asante normally choose older unmarried

³⁰ Chiefs and sub-chiefs make use of the following 'oath swords': *ahwe hwe baa*, *akrafona* and *Gyapatia* (PRAAD ARG 1/2/30/2/12a).

³¹ *Adinkra* (*di nkra*) means to part, to be separated, to leave one another or say goodbye. It usually refers to a symbol in cloth.

³² These are silk and cotton traditional cloths that are locally woven by the Asante and originate from Bonwire—a village in the Asante Region or possible Tekyiman.

royal woman to rule over them, because they believe that a woman who is still menstruating might upset the ancestral spirits. This might pollute the connection of the woman in question with those spirits. Also, a woman who is married should ideally spend her time with her husband and children rather than being a political ruler.

To sum up, Asante traditional authorities make use of customs and material objects to express their sacredness and so legitimatise Asante chieftaincy. The question that arises these days is, however, to what extent these customs and objects are an expression of Asante Indigenous Religion. Also in this perspective it is important to look at the function of the *Odwira* festival. The question in terms of religious significance is to what extent the ancient *Odwira* festival is comparable to today's celebration of *Asanteman Adae Kese*. In 2004, the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival attracted thousands of visitors from inside and outside Ghana, enough to fill the whole of the Kumasi football stadium (Rev Dr. Charles K. Coffie, 4). Is the popularity of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival in today's Kumasi Metropolis a piece of evidence for the resilience of Asante Indigenous Religion, or is it rather an expression of the cultural nationalism³³ that emerged in Ghana after the country gained independence in 1957? A question related to this one is to what extent the present court life and the romantic ideas it is believed to represent of village life in the eighteenth century has its roots in the pre-colonial period. The historical archives and missionary reports show that during this period AIR overall had a much more violent character than in the colonial and postcolonial period. Indigenous Religious practices such as the ritual killing of human beings, the cutting off of limbs of disobedient subjects (Chapman 1844), the killing of twins, the dumping of bodies of subjects who were accused of witchcraft or who died an unnatural death³⁴ (Nana Aboagye Agyei II, 59), and the disgrace of teenagers who had sex before they underwent the *Bragro* or puberty rite ceremony (Nana Ama Serwah Nyarko, 43) were used by various Asantehehenes in pre-colonial times to create fear among the Asante population as a strategy for ruling the nation. The need for ritual killing and other practices related to ruling by fear for the greater part disappeared and such violent rituals were abolished by the British after the Asante Kingdom ceased to exist. In all likelihood, there are also elements in the *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration that date from the late colonial and post-colonial period, at the time when, with the emergence of the modern state, the persistence of village life was threatened and people thought back with nostalgia about the pre-colonial era. In that case new elements might have been added to indigenous religious practices, whereas other elements might have disappeared. Should the earlier mentioned perceived phenomena in the present-day Kumasi Metropolis be regarded as expressions of Asante Indigenous Religion or are they in actual fact part of folklore and cultural

³³ 'Cultural nationalism' can be seen as the aspect of social engineering which is concerned with creating/ strengthening a national consciousness (Forster 1994:480).

³⁴ If you die an 'unnatural death' it means that the ancestors or deities have sent a disease to kill you.

practices in general? In addition, they could also be the result of a need for rituals to be performed for African-American tourists or the need for social and political gathering.

The second aspect that I focus on in this thesis, in terms of the relationship between Indigenous Religion and Chieftaincy, is the role of Asante traditional authorities in the production of an Asante indigenous religious identity. To what extent does Asante chieftaincy sustain a need among Asante subjects for such an identity? A sub-question that arises from this main question is to what extent chieftaincy sustains the indigenous religious belief in ancestral spirits, the Supreme Being and all other beings of the spiritual realm. To what extent have the ideas about this realm been influenced by the world religions Islam and Christianity? Do present-day Asante traditional authorities promote ideas about the sacredness of royal stools or is the meaning of these stools these days completely secularised? Do rites that surround chieftaincy these days have religious substance or are they just a form of entertainment to please the people? Is the Asante custom to extensively greet any Asante traditional authority and show their respect for them derived from their political performance or does this custom refer to the importance of their indigenous religious functions? The questions regarding the extent of the legitimacy of Asante chieftaincy by AIR and to what extent Asante chieftaincy sustains a possible need for Asante indigenous religious identity go together with the function of Asante traditional authorities as indigenous religious intermediaries or the relationship of these authorities with spiritual beings. Besides the indigenous religious function of Asante traditional authorities, the focus in this thesis will also be on their role as indigenous religious peacekeepers.

The third point that I will concentrate on with regards to the relationship between AIR and chieftaincy is the social and religious relationship of Asante traditional authorities with Christians and Muslims. The question that arises in this thesis is to what extent AIR has been important for the maintenance of peaceful relationships with these religious groups and what role these relationships play in the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. In terms of religious content, Asante traditional authorities have a history of adapting and adopting Islamic and Christian elements to their Indigenous Religion. Examples of Islamic religious elements in the Asante Indigenous Religion are for instance the Asantehene's warrior cloth (*bata kari kese* and *suman*) or 'take away spirits' (*suman*). Most likely, an example of a Christian element in AIR is the belief in the Supreme Being as a transcendent God. The question arises in this thesis to what extent these forms of syncretism have been part of a deliberate strategy of Asante traditional authorities to promote cordiality with Muslim and Christian religious groups. In terms of social relationships Asante traditional authorities attend Muslim and Christian festivals to show their goodwill to these religious groups. Besides, they also invite Muslim and Christian religious leaders to attend important Asante indigenous religious festivals, such as *Asanteman Adaye Kese*. During this

festival, after the ceremony of pouring libation for the Asantehene by his indigenous priest (*ƆkƆmfoƆ*) at the Durbar ground and of reading the Qur'an by the imam in the Great mosque in the old Muslim 'settlement' of Kumasi, the Asantehene goes to St Cyprian's Anglican Cathedral, where he receives blessing from the bishops of both the Anglican and Catholic Churches (Rev Dr. Charles Kingsly Coffie, 4). The *Asanteman Adaye Kese* festival is thus an indigenous religious festival that acknowledges Indigenous practitioners, Muslims, and Christians.

On a meta-level, my research focuses on the relationship between AIR and chieftaincy, because it increases understanding of the role of this religion in the maintenance of the internal (by indigenous religious intermediation) and external (by indigenous religious peacekeeping) order in the Asante society. In this thesis, I will show how indigenous religious intermediation has been used to regulate life in the Asante society. Asante indigenous religious rituals, such as *Odwira* and indigenous religious symbols such as Royal stools were not only used to legitimate but also used to create order within the Asante state. The adoption and adaptation of Muslim and Christian elements in AIR and the maintenance of a good social relationship with Islamic and Christian leaders has been a way for Asante traditional authorities to regulate the social and religious relationships of Asante with Muslim and Christian religious groups and so to create order between Asante and the Other.

Now that economic, political and religious factors have been broadly researched, it has become clear that none of them on their own provide a sufficient explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The political and economic role of Asante traditional authorities has respectively been marginalised and diminished. My above descriptions show that to a certain extent there seems to be continuity in the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping role of those authorities. An explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy seems therefore to lie in the sum of the economic, political and religious influence and the function of Asante traditional authorities. In the remaining part of this section, I will elaborate on the meaning of the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions of Asante traditional authorities in the pre-colonial, the colonial and postcolonial Asante society.

1.5.4 The Asante Royals' indigenous religious intermediary function

I will now look at the way in which Asante traditional authorities used to mediate with beings which for Asante indigenous practitioners were thought to be part of the spiritual world, such as the Supreme Being, the lesser gods, the ancestors, charms, witches and *sunsum*. I will focus on the indigenous religious intermediary function of Asante traditional authorities from the pre-colonial until the post-colonial period.

The pre-colonial period

From the pre-colonial period onwards, one of the roles of Asante traditional authorities with the help of indigenous priests has been to maintain peace in the Asante society through indigenous religious intermediation. In the case of violation of ethical descriptions in the community, indigenous priests and chiefs worked together to find a peaceful means of resolving them. An example of the way in which intermediation with spirits contributes to the maintenance of internal peace is also the performances of indigenous priests during a purification ritual that was exercised as part of the annual indigenous religious *Odwira* festival. In order to purify the society, the indigenous priest performed rituals to drive away evil spirits (Ramseyer and others 1875:208-209). The time of the festivities was regarded as a holy season, during which people feared to quarrel or engage in any violent activity that would pollute the earth. The task of the indigenous priest was to cleanse the society by helping Asante families to solve their problems and those between them and other families. Another way in which indigenous priests contributed to the prevention of conflicts was that they made the Asante traditional authorities think twice before going to war, for the indigenous priests first had to ensure that in the eyes of the spirits the Asante fought for a just cause (Uchendu 1965).

The colonial period

In the colonial period, there was a continuation of the Asante traditional authorities and indigenous priests' intermediary function. The deportation of Asantehene Prempeh I did not stop Asante from performing their indigenous religious rituals during sacred days and the annual *Odwira* festival, even though the British residents in cooperation with the colonial government did not allow them to celebrate *Odwira* openly and particularly not in Kumasi, which was known to the British as the location of the nerve system of Asante indigenous religious activity. Many Asante looked back with nostalgia to the days before Prempeh's departure when they were not forced to carry the whites (*obruni*) in a palanquin without payment and fulfil other duties to them for free. Consequently, those Asante of whom many were *nhenkwaa* stayed loyal to the occupant of 'The Golden Stool' (from an Asante point of view Prempeh I was never destooled) and continued to believe in its spiritual and political power. A piece of evidence for this is that when the British captain Armitage came to look for The Golden Stool, none of the Asante subjects told him that their royal seat was hidden away in a remote village of the Asante Kingdom known as Wawase (Lewin 1978).

The increasing influence of European Christian missionaries and Muslim *ulama*, however, caused a diminishment of the importance of indigenous religious intermediation, since it became only one of many ways of connecting to the beings of the spiritual world.

The postcolonial period

With regards to the post-colonial period the following questions arise. To what extent has the Asante traditional authorities' function of indigenous religious intermediation been continued? Are the rituals that are being performed in Kumasi 'indigenous religious' by nature? How important is indigenous religious intermediation by Asante chiefs and queen mothers in the contemporary Kumasi Metropolis in comparison with the colonial period? And what has been the effect on the Asante Indigenous Religion of the world religions Christianity and Islam?

1.5.5 The Asante Royals' indigenous religious peacekeeping function

The transformation of the Asante society caused by contact with the outside world has an effect on the external policy of the Asante, which is dealt with by Asante traditional authorities as part of their indigenous religious peacekeeping function.

Pre-colonial

In the eighteenth century, the Asante trade in firearms with the Danish and the Dutch gave the possibility for Asante to improve their central power. The power of the weapons in the palace was used to exercise coercive force and to exercise an expansionist policy. Although in the fifteenth century the traditional authorities developed oral diplomatic skills to deal with non-Asante in their community, from the end of the eighteenth century there was no diplomatic service as part of a wider written bureaucracy that was used to deal with policies related to non-Asante.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Asante who had an oral diplomatic tradition also developed written diplomatic skills by their interaction with European missionaries and Muslim *ulama* who were invited to the royal palace for this purpose. Although the Asantehenes who ruled in the nineteenth century had different individual policies that were more directed to either peace or war, the development of the written diplomatic service had the effect that overall the emphasis was placed on peace, which was less costly than going to war and better for the trade relationships with both the Europeans and Muslims (Adjaye 1984).

I will now introduce the function of Asante traditional authorities as indigenous religious peacekeepers, which according to my definition means that these authorities are:

- (1) Indigenous practitioners acting as diplomats regardless of people's belief, cultural background and/or political orientation,
- (2) In order to contribute to the maintenance of peace in society,

- (3) By investing in cordial social relationships with religious leaders and their practitioners,
- (4) In promoting syncretism between indigenous religions and other religions.

(1) Asante traditional authorities fall under the category of indigenous practitioners acting as diplomats regardless of people's belief, cultural background and/or political orientation, because they were represented by royal personnel (*nhenkwaa*) with a diplomatic function. The Asante traditional authorities themselves were thus not diplomats or ambassadors but because they were literally represented by *nhenkwaa* – e.g. the Asante traditional authorities regarded an insult that was directed to a *nhenkwaa* as an insult to themselves, one can say that the Asante traditional authorities are indeed diplomats. The *nhenkwaa* were indigenous practitioners who formed part of the chancery, which was part of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Kumasi Council, the central government in Kumasi. They were specialised in dealing with issues in relation to the English, Danish, Dutch or the Islamic hinterland north of Kumasi. According to the Asante rule of inviolation of any diplomats and general hospitality towards strangers, all diplomats, either African or European, and regardless of their religious background, were received with great respect by either *nhenkwaa* who were sent on diplomatic missions or by the Asantehene in person (Adjaye 1984).

(2) The way in which Asante traditional authorities contributed to the maintenance of peace in society is as follows. In the eighteenth century the Asante Kingdom expanded enormously, which was in consonance with the deliberate war policy of the various Asantehenes in this century of the annexation of surrounding areas by military expansion. In the nineteenth century, the Kumasi Council developed a bureaucratic apparatus for both the maintenance of Greater Asante (the greatly expanded Asante state) and the maintenance of diplomatic relationship with European and Muslim traders and missionaries. In this century, the purpose of Asante diplomacy by Asante indigenous religious peacekeepers was indeed to contribute to the maintenance of peace in the Asante society. Adjaye (1984) argues that without the nineteenth century rooted Asante diplomatic service, the amount of Anglo-Asante wars, which were no more than six, and indigenous wars would most likely have been greater. Wilks' (1989) explanation of the strategies of nineteenth century Asantehenes to either promote war for the purpose of expansion or peace for the purpose of trade makes clear that some Asantehenes, such as for instance Mensa Bonsu, were more eager to maintain peaceful relations with their social environment than others, such as Kofi Kakari who due to his dependence on the political support of the war leaders who brought him to power and who had already decided upon war before his installation, remarked: 'My business will be war' (Ramseyer and others 1875:202). Despite the variations in strategy of the nineteenth century Asantehenes, however, one can say that due to the great expertise and

delegacy of the ambassadors and diplomats of the four mentioned chanceries, no matter what the Asantehenes' policies were (peace or war oriented), the Asante diplomatic service prevented many conflicts and wars.

Besides, Indigenous Religion among the Asante has never been the cause of a war (Smith 1989), but instead has contributed to a greater or lesser extent to the prevention of many wars. The effect of the non-prostelysing nature of Asante Indigenous Religion was that the belief of Muslims and Christians was incorporated into it, rather than that it outright opposed these other beliefs. This prevented the breaking out of wars between the Asante and these religious groups. The employment of Muslim body guards for instance was a deliberate strategy of Asante traditional authorities to maintain peace with the Muslim community in the society. The allowance of the Asante princes Owusu Ansa and Nkwantabisa, who were promoters of the Christian faith, to stay at the Asante palace, can also be understood in the light of indigenous religious peacekeeping by the incorporation of other beliefs in order to maintain peaceful relationships with those other practitioners. For this reason, Owusu Ansa Sr. and also his son Owusu Ansa Jr. were chosen as the main ambassadors of the English chancery, who maintained the diplomatic relationships with the English traders and missionaries at the coast (Adjaye 1984).

(3) Besides being in good trade relationships with the Europeans and Muslim traders, Asante diplomacy were indeed also meant to invest in cordial social relationships with religious leaders and their practitioners. The Muslim chancery consisted of *Asante Nkramo*, who were not only employed to correspond in Arabic for political purposes, but also to interpret the Qur'an. On the one hand, various Asantehenes believed that they would benefit from the Qur'an, which was believed to contain spiritual power. On the other hand, the content of the Qur'an helped them to religiously show respect for Muslims and for instance be knowledgeable enough not to force them to bow down to the Asantehene, which Muslims are not permitted to do, due to their belief in the greatness of Allah. The European chanceries (Dutch, English and Danish) of the Asante all consisted of either permanent ambassadors or those who were kept hostage, such as the Basel missionaries Ramseyer and Kühne, of whom most had a Christian educational background. Although the Bible itself was not welcomed by any Asantehene in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, some European Christian missionaries were, because they provided the right education for the European chancery of the Asante to learn how to deal respectfully with Christians and for the purpose of trade.

(4) Indigenous religious peacekeeping in the pre-colonial period was indeed meant to promote syncretism between indigenous religions and other religions. The type of syncretism in this period

fits into Berner's (Leopold 2004:299-310) elementary sociomorphic syncretistic model (C2). According to this model, the relations between and among the gods were formulated in analogy to the hierarchical order of the social system. In the Asante context, sociomorphy comes with regards to the ancestral spirits. According to Asante indigenous practitioners there is continuity between beings in the material and the spiritual world, which consist of a body and a soul. The *okra* or spark of the eternal High God (*Nyame*) does not cease to exist after a person has passed away, but continues to represent a person in the form of an ancestral spirit. The ancestral spirits (*nananom*) in the ancestral world (*asamando*) have a continuing influence on beings in the material (or social) world (Gyekye 1987:59-102). Asante in the social world are believed to be both individuals and social beings, living in a communal society. On the one hand this society strives for the highest goal for the whole of the community, but on the other hand there is acknowledgment of individual differences and consequently of different contributions of individual Asante, whereas the rewards for contributing to the common goal of the society are the same for all Asante. To stimulate individual Asante to contribute according to their natural capacities it is believed that becoming an important ancestor is related to the individual's important contributions to the society. Consequently, important people in the social world most likely end up as important ancestral spirits. This continuation of hierarchical relationships makes the pre-colonial Asante form of syncretism fit into a sociomorphic model.

What was the reason for Asante in this period to allow syncretistic elements in their indigenous belief system? In line with the sociomorphic model, other religious leaders (Muslims and Christians) and their deities gained a high social status if they happened to deliver an important contribution to the Asante society. European Christian missionaries and Asante *Nkramo* were both occasionally welcomed, because they were believed to contribute to the common goal of the Asante community of indigenous religious peacekeeping. Islamic and Christian elements, such as the knowledge of calabastic formulae and quotations from the Qur'an and Bible knowledge, were incorporated into AIR. This knowledge was believed to be helpful for the development of the Asante society. The Bible knowledge came with general schooling, which was believed to be important for the training of diplomats who would be able to maintain cordial relationships with European traders for the purpose of indigenous religious peacekeeping. The mentioned Islamic religious elements were believed to enhance the religious powers of the Asante. Islamic and Christian religious elements, but they were however only incorporated to the extent that it would not threaten the persistence of the Asante Kingdom. The protection of the state against foreign influences was believed to be another common goal of Asante traditional authorities, who attempted to find a balance between their indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions.

Because of the danger of orthodox Islam and Christianity in terms of power relations, a mild form of Islam which was known as 'Suwarianism' was more popular than orthodox Islam and Christianity. The mild or Africanised form of Islam that the Mande-Dyula traders and the Asante *Nkramo* adhered to was already closer to the Asante Indigenous Religion than orthodox Islam. This type of Islam brought the fear of the introduction of a patrilineal system to the Asante society which threatened the power of Asante traditional authorities and jihads organised by the orthodox Hausa Muslim Usman dan Folio in the Sokoto Caliphate (present day Northern Nigeria). Nineteenth century Christianity was associated with colonisation. Besides, both orthodox Muslim leaders and European Christian Missionaries religiously condemned elements of AIR, such as the ritual killing of human beings; a practice that was used to legitimise the Asante state.

The colonial period

(1) In the colonial period, the Asante traditional authorities were also acting as diplomats regardless of people's belief, cultural background and/or political orientation. Asantehene Prempeh I and II were 'ruling' what was left of the Asante nation depending on the colonial sub-period, to a lesser and greater extent under the authority of British colonial rulers. What did this change in the position of the Asante traditional authorities in the society mean in relation to the chiefs' and queen mothers' diplomatic services?

Before Prempeh I was deported by the British his foreign policy was focussed on maintaining an independent Asante nation. Therefore, and for the purpose of trade it was of the utmost importance for Prempeh I to continue the existing diplomatic service. His internal policy was subordinate to his foreign policy and was meant to improve the possibilities of foreign trade. He for instance attempted to strengthen the ties with village chiefs (*odikra*) who operated on the lowest level in the chieftaincy hierarchy to be able to create peaceful relationships within the Asante society which were necessary to open the roads for the purpose of trade (Lewin 1978).

Islamic and Christian religious influences were accepted in order to keep the diplomatic service operating successfully. To please the British colonisers who were raised in various Christian traditions they abolished the custom of ritually killing human beings. However, in this period in history under the rule of Prempeh I, the Asante traditional authorities generally maintained opposition to missionary education, which was perceived as being a threat to the persistence of the Asante state, and they only allowed missionaries to function within the diplomatic service. The attitude to Muslims was ambiguous but focused on remaining in good trade relationships. Asante *Nkramo* continued to be welcomed at the royal court. Generally, their presence did not raise difficulties and the attitude of Prempeh I and those Muslim *ulama*,

including the *nsumankwahene* who was also the spokesman of the Asante shrine priests was harmonious since until 1895 both conjoined in opposing the colonial rulers' spread of missionary literacy. From 1900 onwards, Prempeh I's acceptance of European missionary education brought him into a more tense relationship with the Asante *Nkramo*. By then, the already existing tense relationship with orthodox Muslims became even more problematic, since these Muslims were recruited by the British to fight against Asantehene Prempeh I and contributed to the fall of the Asante Kingdom.

After Asantehene Prempeh I's deportation in 1896, the Asante Region was ruled by a British resident and a triumvirate consisting of three members of the council of Kumasi the Kumasi government 'who were empowered to administer the central government, oversee the operation of the bureaucracy and hold regular court sessions' (Lewin 1978:211). Under this new government the diplomatic service remained active and under the influence of non-office holders (*nkwankwaa*) who were in political opposition to Asante traditional authorities, European missionary education and western cultural lifestyle were more welcomed. The Basel and Wesleyan churches were allowed to establish mission stations in Kumasi and the outlying district capitals. Despite being deported, Prempeh I remained powerful in the Asante region. For the first time in history he accepted royal and other Asante to be educated as Christians, which was part of his strategy to maintain influence in Asante and not lose his adherents. Besides, it was his way to please the colonial rulers by showing his loyalty to them as a true Christian in the hope that they would allow him to come back to Kumasi. To improve the relationship between Asante *Nkramo* and via them the Hausa and other orthodox Muslims in Kumasi's settlements, Prempeh I re-established the college of physicians (*nsumankwafieso*).

In order to maintain adherents, Prempeh II (1931-1970) also promoted syncretism between Christianity and AIR. To show his disregard for the colonial rulers, however, he made Catholicism rather than Anglicanism the Christian religion to be promoted among Asante Royals. Since in this period, conjunction or separation through political parties became more important than binding or division through cultural background, it was relatively easy for Prempeh II to maintain cordial relationships with both mild and orthodox Muslims by founding the United Party, so joining mutual political interests.

(2) As mentioned before, both Prempeh I and Prempeh II overall contributed to the maintenance of peace in society by maintaining cordial relationships with Muslims through the strategy of conscious syncretism.

(3) Under the reign of Prempeh I before his deportation, the Asante Royals in Kumasi strongly opposed Christian influences and missionary education, which clashed with the internal Asante policy of ruling the society by ritual control as part of the Asante Indigenous Religion. European Christian missionaries, such as Ramseyer, Dilger and Perregaux, however, managed to gain access by negotiating with district leaders in the periphery of the Asante Kingdom, who had loose political ties with the centre in Kumasi and were therefore less reluctant to follow the policies set by the Asante traditional authorities in the centre of the Asante Kingdom. In a sense, this behaviour of European Christian Missionaries contributed to the increase of internal tensions in the Asante Kingdom, which made it easier for the British to eventually colonise the Asante Region. After 1896 Asante traditional authorities invested more in maintaining cordial social relationships with religious leaders and their practitioners and Kumasi became more receptive to the introduction of Christian schools, churches and other ecclesiastic influences. Increased colonial influences after Prempeh I's deportation made the Prempehs change their foreign policy of limiting Christian influences to one of conscious syncretism as a survival strategy in a society where European Christian missionaries had succeeded in converting thousands of Asante to Christianity.

In relation to the Muslims, as mentioned before, the relationship of the Prempeh's with the Asante *Nkramo* was cordial overall, due to, among other factors, the role of the *nsumankwahene*, who like the Asante opposed the spread of literacy and European values in the Asante society in an attempt to maintain internal peace through ritual control. The relationship with Hausa Muslims had been less cordial since 1900, when these Muslims were recruited by the British to fight for the 'West African Frontier Force' (WAFF) in the bloody, short-lived Anglo-Asante war of independence.

(4) The colonial period was again meant to promote syncretism between indigenous religions and other religions. In terms of syncretism, this period can best be characterised by a transition between a sociomorphic model (C2) in which non-indigenous religious leaders and elements of their religion were accepted as members of the Asante diplomatic service in order to contribute to the Asante society and (A1) a form of syncretism at a system level characterised by a harmonizing determination of relations (no competition). According to Berner (2004) 'this determination appears where the boundary between the systems is preserved but the competitive relationship is eliminated. The boundaries between the religions are not eliminated, as it is not claimed that they all teach the same. However, the religions are placed on the same level through the claim that they all strive for the same goal. The emphasis on the unity of the goal, the truth of

the religions, and the possibility of testing different routes eliminates the competitive relationship, so that the concept of a “Harmonizing Determination of Relations” appears reasonable’.³⁵

In the colonial period, non-Asante deities, including Akan deities that originated from North of Kumasi, were brought in to recover the balance between the social and spiritual world that was believed to have been disturbed by witches. Islam and Christianity were more influential than in the pre-colonial period, but less significant than in the postcolonial period. More and more Asante converted to Christianity. Most Asante, however, were not fundamentally converted to Christianity and underneath a superficial understanding of his religion they continued to believe in their Indigenous Religion and practice Asante indigenous religious customs. The emphasis on political parties and the link between the Muslim party and the one of the Asante traditional authorities also increased the impact of Islam on Asante indigenous practitioners. The coming back of the *nsumanfieso* under the Asante Confederacy, which was the new form of Asante Chieftaincy under Prempeh II, increased the influence of Suwarianism and improved the relationship of Hausa and other Muslims in the Kumasi settlements.

The level of adaptation of Northern deities and Christian and Muslim influences was beyond that of taking elements and had a clear impact on the Asante society. Its influence was however not so huge that it affected the Asante Indigenous Religion on a system level.

The postcolonial period

(1) In the postcolonial period, Asante traditional authorities continued to act as diplomats regardless of people’s belief, cultural background and/or political orientation. In comparison with the pre-colonial and the colonial period, the role of the *nhenkwaa* as diplomats became less prominent. The diplomatic service did not disappear, but these days Asante traditional authorities receive a lot more freedom in the way they can operate. They rely less on *nhenkwaa* and are more independent in making decisions. This also comes back in the way Asante chiefs and queen mothers operate in relation to their subjects in both villages and cities. Both the traditional authorities themselves and their subjects informed me that the relationship between them has become more direct.

(2) The purpose of indigenous religious peacekeeping in the postcolonial period was again to contribute to the maintenance of peace in the Asante society. After Ghana gained independence in 1957, the relationship between Asante indigenous practitioners and Christians improved, since

³⁵ The A2 model is applicable to the situation in contemporary Ghana, because these days Asante traditional authorities are hospitable towards Christian and Muslim religious leaders and open to receiving their religious beliefs. The emphasis on the similarity between Christianity, Islam and AIR is a deliberate strategy of the Asante traditional authorities in maintaining peace within the Asante society.

Christianity no longer had the negative connotation of being the religion of the colonisers. With regards to the Muslims, on the other hand, the relationship became less close, since after independence Asante *Nkramo* no longer lived at the royal court in large numbers and the overall Asante indigenous Christian community did no longer seek religious advice from Muslim religious leaders.

(3) Asante traditional authorities in this period also invested in cordial social relationships with religious leaders and their practitioners as a religious peacekeeping strategy. It was important for them to maintain good relationships with Muslims and Christians in order to keep enough adherents for their chieftaincy institute, which importance had been marginalised due to its incorporation in the Ghanaian state.

(4) Asante traditional authorities in this period also promoted syncretism between indigenous religions and other religions. In terms of conscious syncretism, in this period the Asante moved from syncretism on an elementary level to syncretism on a system level (A1). The boundaries between the Asante Indigenous Religion, Islam and Christianity were not eliminated. However, the Asante placed the religions on the same level through the claim that they all strive for the same goal. My Asante indigenous Christian respondents often made the remark that the indigenous God (*Nyame*) is the same as the Christian God. Asante Muslims (Asante *Nkramo*) emphasised the similarities between the indigenous God (*Nyame*) and the Muslim God (Allah). Indigenous Christians and Asante *Nkramo* were motivated to call themselves indigenous Christians or Muslims believing that there was no difference between being an Asante indigenous believer, a Christian or a Muslim. The answers show that the Asante have succeeded in promoting equality between the three religions, AIR, Islam and Christianity, as an indigenous religious peacekeeping strategy, despite the clear power inequality between non-Asante, who are for the majority Muslims and Asante indigenous practitioners.

The mainstream churches (MC) in Ghana, especially the Catholic Church, promote syncretism between AIR and Christianity. All MCs these days are members of the 'Asante Christian Chiefs and Queen mother Association' (ACCQA). The relationship between Asante chiefs and queen mothers and 'New African Traditional Religious Movements' (NATRM) is generally also cordial. More problematic is the relationship between Asante traditional authorities and the New Religious Movements (NRMs), which includes all members of the Pentecostal churches. The attitude of Asante traditional authorities towards Muslim religious leaders is one of toleration or non-interference with Muslim affairs rather than tolerance, which would imply a high level of engagement. This religious situation occurs despite the many forms of syncretism

between AIR and Christianity that can be found back in the religion of adherents of the Suwarian tradition and the Ahmadiyya movement. Because of the Islamic custom of male circumcision and the Asante traditional authorities' requirement of the sustenance of the wholeness of the body, Asante chieftaincy and Islam are incompatible. Consequently, Asante chiefs cannot be Muslim. This fact has had a negative impact on the popularisation of Islam among contemporary Asante indigenous practitioners, who for this reason have often preferred to combine their Asante Indigenous Religion with a form of mainstream Christianity.

Chapter Two: Research methodology

Nimde ε te sε onyina dua, wuntimi mbam ne nyinaa - 'Knowledge is like a baobab tree. You cannot embrace it all'.

Asante proverb

Introduction

In this Chapter I will focus on my research methodology. I will first give an overview of the types of data then of the methodology I used. This thesis consists of a historical and an empirical part. My historical method is placed within the 'history of ideas'. The empirical research method that I have used in this thesis is known as 'ethnography'. I will also discuss my ways of getting access and provide insight into the process of data collection.

2.1 Types of data

In this thesis, I made use of four types of data. For the historical Chapters (Three and Four), which form part I of this thesis, the data I use are:

(1) Primary sources, consisting of archives and oral history sources (my respondents). I used archives about 'fetishes and native custom' written by colonial officials (such as those of the Gold Coast police and the Chief Commissioner) and Asante traditional authorities, missionary archives and official documents. These archives (PRAAD) and (NAG) were consulted in Kumasi at the 'National Cultural Centre' (NCC) and 'The Regional House of Chiefs' (RHCs) and Accra, respectively.

(2) Secondary sources, consisting of the historical works of Wilks, McCaskie and Platvoet (among other authors) and the missionaries Ramseyer and Kühne, Freeman and the merchant Thomas Bowdich. These sources were consulted at the 'National Library of Scotland' (UK) and 'The African Studies Centre Library' in Leiden (The Netherlands).

All these sources were used to reconstruct the pre-colonial and colonial history of the Asante with a special focus on the indigenous intermediary and religious peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities in these historical periods. For the empirical Chapters (Five and Six) I collected data through:

(3) Oral interviews, and

(4) Participant observation

Oral interviews were conducted with 56 people, of whom some were interviewed more than once. Oral interviews were used in this study to get an insight into the present-day functioning of Asante traditional authorities as indigenous religious intermediaries and peacekeepers. Participant observations were made of several chiefs' and indigenous priests' pouring of libation rituals, the indigenous religious *adae* celebrations, a royal pre-burial ritual and the Asantehene's court cases at Manhyia palace.

2.2 Ethnography

There are at least three reasons why the use of ethnography as a methodology was suitable for conducting my research. First, ethnographic studies try to grasp the point of view of the ‘indigenous’ ethnic groups (Agar 1986) and to answer my research question I had to focus on the indigenous perspective. Second, when using ‘ethnography’, the researcher needs to look at his or her topic from different perspectives. Because I am dealing with two pillars – chiefs and subjects – a holistic approach of chieftaincy is the preferred choice. Ethnography is holistic by nature (Denscombe 2004) which makes it an appropriate research method. Third, ethnography requires comparing and contrasting understanding and beliefs within a cultural group with another of these groups. In order to understand something of today’s life of Asante in Ghana I needed a research methodology that provides detailed descriptions of real-life situations. Also, from this perspective ethnography had a lot to offer. The main limitation of ethnography itself is that it entails a realistic and relativistic approach at the same time, which causes tensions. The realistic part attempts to offer a natural and objective description of the situation, whereas the relativistic part puts more emphasis on the subjective aspects. I have tried to cope with this tension by making my approach explicit. Where it was necessary to choose, I have favoured a relativistic approach.

In this section, I will discuss my criticism of the historical sources that are available for the pre-colonial and colonial period in the history of the Asante state. I will also make some remarks about the empirical method that I used to collect my data during fieldwork, which is known as ‘ethnography’.

2.3 The historical method: positivism and history of ideas

In the *Tractatus* (1922), the Austrian philosopher Wittgenstein (1889-1951) (1998) states that a meaningful utterance about reality is one in which the logical coherence of objects in a sentence corresponds with the logical coherence in reality. Language is thus nothing more than a representation of reality. Sentences have a logical form, which gives them the ability to describe a fact from reality. To know whether a scientific utterance (a sentence) is a fact, we have to determine whether it is true or false by the method of verification. ‘A fact’ is, therefore, information that is verified by reality, and science is the knowledge of basic facts and of the combinations that follow from these facts, which together should give a complete description of reality. Consequently, utterances that cannot be verified should not be expressed in language. Wittgenstein states: ‘Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen’ meaning, ‘one should not speak about what cannot be said’.

Historical events and experiences of people cannot be objects of empirical study, as they are not there anymore. The study of history is therefore concerned with the history of remains of the past, such as written sources (archives, eye-witness reports, diaries), oral sources, material objects and with the study of the mental archive consisting of memories of the past of living people. If we apply Wittgenstein's positivistic point of view to the study of the past, meaningful utterances about the past are only those utterances that are based on the remembrance of a perceptual experience. Until the 1960s, most positivists believed that only these remembrances could be called 'historical facts'. In their eyes, perceptible realities, such as ideas, beliefs and desires were not cultural variables and historians should therefore remain silent about the existence of such realities. Historians speak in relation to the remembrances of the past about 'historical sources'. Their profession is to study historical sources - the remains of history in the present - to form a picture of reality in the past. Because history is source based, historical knowledge is limited to what sources are available. Positivistic historians therefore only start studying a certain period in the past when they can answer the following question positively.

- *Are there enough remembrances of **perceptual experiences** of this period in the past to make it possible to form a meaningful picture about its reality?*

The main question for positivistic historians is what kinds of sources contain remembrances of perceptual experiences and are thus a source of historical knowledge. In the 1960s, most positivistic historians believed that one could only gain historical knowledge from either written or archaeological sources. In these days, due to the contribution of positivistic historians such as Jan Vansina, most of these historians agree that oral traditions are also valuable sources of historical knowledge. Oral traditions are transmissions of history, literature or laws from one generation to the next in a civilisation without a written culture. What they do not recognise as a source of pre-colonial historical knowledge is 'oral history' or the recording of eye witness accounts of historical events, because it depends on people's memory, which is both selective and discarding³⁶ (Thompson 1978:130).

Now, before a positivistic historian will start writing on the pre-colonial era, (s)he will have to ask him or herself: *Are the available historical sources reliable enough?* Then, in the case of the study of the pre-colonial history of the Asante with a specific focus on religion, the positivist historian will discover that his tools, the historical sources he or she is to work with, are problematic, as written, archaeological and oral sources are of limited reliability. The reasons for the limitations of these sources are as follows:

³⁶ Immediately after an event we can remember most of it, but later on, the brain selects material and to a certain extent reconstructs it. The counterpart of selection is the process of discarding of which the initial part is by far the most drastic and violent. The more people who are involved in an event, the better they can

Firstly, the historian's written sources would not be completely trustworthy, because they are scarce and therefore they do not give a complete picture of the past. The historian would, however, be able to console him or herself with the idea that the descriptions of the Asante are richer than those in many other countries and regions in Africa. Another problem that (s)he would encounter with written sources is that, in many cases, their nature is useless, because they concentrate on the political history of the Asante and their diplomatic relationship with Europeans rather than the Indigenous Religion. Additionally, the written sources that do concentrate on the Indigenous Religion are produced by missionaries, whose motif was to proselytise the Asante rather than giving an objective view of the Indigenous Religion in the pre-colonial period. Just as subjective are the sources of traders and Arabic scholars (*ulama*), who had their own interests in reporting about life in the pre-colonial past.

Second, positivistic historians would find out that one cannot rely on the archaeological sources of the early history of the Asante either, since they are also extremely scanty (McLeod 1981:11). Third, in these days (s)he would acknowledge the value of 'oral tradition' for historical research and would also look at it as a source of history. Unlike Vansina, some historians, such as Doortmont and Falola (1985:238-239), would not let these sources speak for themselves, but analyse both the oral traditions and their social context, including the effect of commercialisation on these sources, with the help of research methods of the social sciences.

In the case of the Asante, historians have analysed oral traditions concerning the origin of the Asante and found out that these are complex, sometimes contradictory³⁷ (McLeod 1981:11) and murky³⁸ (Akyeampong and Obeng 1995:482) and that their content should certainly not be taken literally. According to Henige (1973:235), such contradictions are, among other reasons, caused by the uncritical and almost reflexive incorporation of available printed information into allegedly oral historical materials, which inclination is particularly strong when oral traditions attempt to cope with material more than a century old, such as is the case with the whole of the pre-colonial Asante history.

In conclusion, after reflecting on the available historical sources and their reliability, most positivist historians would conclude in line with the young Wittgenstein that these sources do not deliver 'historical facts'. Pre-colonial Asante history is therefore a phase 'one should not speak about'.

Historians of ideas, however, would conclude otherwise, as they handle a wider definition of historical facts and believe that perceptible entities, such as historical perceptions of the past, are

remember it. The loss of memory during the first nine months is as great as that during the next thirty-four years.

³⁷ See also Boahen (1966), Huydecoper (1962), Ponansky (1974).

cultural variables. Positivistic historians and historians of ideas take diametrically opposite positions on the 1970s-1980s ongoing debate about the nature of cultural variables in the study of history. Positivists believe that only perceptual remembrances of the past are cultural variables. In the opinion of historians of ideas, beliefs, perceptions and desires are also a source of valid and reliable historical knowledge (Murphey 1994:263-307).

Historians of ideas would therefore not immediately put their written sources and material objects aside, when they do not deliver a remembrance of a perceptual reality, but would try to understand what these sources tell them about this in the past. They would ask, for instance: *what did people think and feel in the pre-colonial Asante state? And, what were their perceptions of chieftaincy?* In addition, the historians of ideas use two other sources of historical knowledge of which positivistic historians are more sceptical: oral historical sources and the mental archive of people in the present of the past.

The wider definition of cultural variables by historians and the greater amount of historical sources mean that I will not have to conclude, in line with the young Wittgenstein, that historians should remain silent about the pre-colonial phase of the history of the formation of African states, such as that of the Asante. Instead, in line with the older Wittgenstein, I can create a valid and reliable *Gestalt* of the pre-colonial period by scrutinising the sources on which it is based. I will therefore give a short overview of the historical sources of the pre-colonial period in Asante history (on which secondary sources are based) and its validity and reliability. I will first mention the most important written and oral historical sources and then deal with their limitations from an academic point of view. The historical archives of the Asante pre-colonial history contain written scripts of European (Portuguese, Dutch and English) traders, missionaries and scholars, African-Islamic traders and scholars and an indigenous missionary and a lawyer. In terms of oral sources, I make a distinction between oral historical sources and the historical archive in the mind of present-day inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis.

2.4 Written and oral sources on the Asante pre-colonial history and source criticism

The first pre-colonial historical sources on Ghana are Portuguese and date from the fifteenth century. In 1471, Portuguese missionaries and traders travelled to Ghana, which at the time was referred to as 'The Gold Coast', for commercial and religious purposes. The first written sources date from 1482 and are from the hand of the aristocratic Portuguese Diego D'Azambuja, who was sent to The Gold

³⁸ See the special issue on the Akan of Ghana in the whole edition of: *Ghana Notes and Queries*, 9 (1966); and the papers on the symposium on the city of Kumasi in *Research Review Supplement*, 5 (1993).

Coast by his King, John II, to look for gold and slaves and to spread Catholicism among the Coasts' indigenous population (Nathan 1904:34). This mission was very successful because in a short time 1,300 indigenous people were baptised and in Elmina a slave fort was founded, which became known as 'Sao Jorge da Mina' (currently known as 'St George's Castle'). In 1573 the Portuguese sent six Augustinian friars to the Coast to convert the rest of the indigenous population to Catholicism, and to create maps of the Gold Coast's interior for prospective religious missions (Gocking 2005 :29) The mission of 1573 resulted in the creation of various maps of the interior, including the living area of the Asante, which were however, not very accurate (Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1980).

The Portuguese traders remained at the coast until 1637, when the Dutch,³⁹ who in 1641 had expelled the Portuguese from their last possessions on the Guinea coast, took over Elmina Castle (Anquandah 1999:52,55). The Dutch seventeenth century inheritance of descriptions of the Gold Coast include the works of the traveller Pieter de Marees (1602) , the more well-known work of the physician and writer Olfert Dapper (1668) and the late Chief Merchant Willem Bosman (1702). De Marees' and Dapper's writings had a commercial purpose. However, De Marees' work is the only accurate of the two, since he actually travelled through the Gold Coast whereas Dapper only plagiarised de Marees' descriptions. Bosman's work, which he wrote in mission of the 'West-Indian Company' (WIC) was also based on eye-witness accounts but his writings suffer from a bias against the nature of the indigenous population, whom he accuses of being unreliable, lazy and over-proud, and against the British at the Coast who belonged to the 'English Royal African Company' (ERAC), who were rivals in trade. An important historical source concerning the diplomatic relationship of the Dutch with the Asante are the records of the mission of Akyempon Yaw to Elmina between 1869 and 1892, which are gathered and introduced by René Baèsjou (1979). There are also a number of unpublished written accounts of Dutch-speaking visitors of Kumasi, such those of Willem Huydecoper in 1816-17, Jacob Simons in 1831-32, Jacobus de Bruijn in 1836-37, H.S. Pel in 1842, and David Mill Graves in 1857 (Yarak 1997:363).

The Danish, who have been active in the Gold Coast since 1658, have inherited some interesting reports of some of their chief colonial administrators and that of the earlier mentioned reverend Hans Christian Monrad. In 1850, however, they left the area. In 1872, the Dutch also left the Gold Coast and the British won territory. Important British sources of information on the Asante are the journal of the British Governor William Winniett of his visit to Kumasi in 1848 (Yarak 1997:363), Thomas E. Bowdich's visit to Kumasi in 1817 ((1791-1824); he was the agent of the 'British Company of Merchants' (BCM)), and a report of the Wesleyan missionary Robert A. Freeman (1839-1844) on his residence in Kumasi.

³⁹ See further Dutch, French and German sources in *The History of the Gold Coast*: Jones (1986).

The reports of the Swiss Presbyterians Friederich Ramseyer (1842-1902) and Johannes Kühne (1840-1915) are also important sources⁴⁰ of knowledge about the Asante. These missionaries were captured by an Asante force which had invaded Ewe territory and from December 1870 until the approach of a British military expedition in January 1874 they were held hostage in Kumasi. Ramseyer and Kühne shared a lot of their experiences with the independent French trader Marie-Joseph Bonnat (Bonnat, Perrot, and Dantzig 1994) (1845-1881), who was captured in the same month and left a journal concerning his stay at the royal Asante court (Jones 1991:173). An important nineteenth century German source on the Asante is the report of the Basel missionary A. Riis (Yarak 1997:363), which gives insight into the life of missionaries in the interior and shows the complexity of the missionary discourse.

Arabic sources on the Asante and culture date from the middle of the eighteenth century. Muslims had been part and parcel of life in Kumasi since the beginning of the sixteenth century, when African Islamised Mande people, known as the Dyula or Wangara from the North came south to trade with the Asante and Fante on the Gold Coast. Between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century the Islamic traders did, however, not really settle in Kumasi and did not take their imam's with them. It is for this reason that the first Arabic sources were written around 1750, after educated Asante *Nkramo* were employed by the Asante traditional authorities to write about the Asante court life. The most important Arabic source of this time is the 'Kitabal-Ghanja', which was written by the Asante *Nkramo* Muhammed ibn al-Mustafa Kamaghatay and Umar Kunandi ibn Umar Kamaghatay. This source deals with the history of Gonja and contacts of Muslim traders from this state with the Asante. Another important Arabic source that dates from the end of the eighteenth to the first quarter of the nineteenth century is the 'Arabic manuscript from the Guinea Coast'. Ninety percent of this source consists of magical formulae for the making of amulets and charms. Also important are a number of letters exchanged between the Muslims in Kumasi and those in the northern provinces of Gonja, Mamprugu and Dagbon. A discussion of these Arabic letters in Wilks, Levtzion and Haight (1986) provides an additional insight into the role of Muslims in nineteenth-century Kumasi (Silverman and David 1989). An indigenous nineteenth century Asante author who wrote on Asante culture is the Ga missionary Carl Christian Reindorf (1966) (1834-1917). Reindorf made a compilation of a large body of oral traditions that he had collected on the Gold Coast (Silverman and David 1989:330). The Fante John Mensah Sarbah (1968) (1864-1910), published two books on customary law and the Fante native constitution in the Gold Coast, in which he criticised the British confiscation of land in Africa, which in his opinion was an illegal operation.

Besides written sources, a *Gestalt* of the pre-colonial history of the Gold Coast should also be based on oral-historical sources consisting of the stories of royal Asante in today's Kumasi

⁴⁰ Ramseyer and Kühne left a manuscript, two German editions, an English and a French translation.

Metropolis and the historical archive in the minds of today's Asante. Oral historical sources are different from oral sources because they do NOT form the basis of 'oral tradition' but of 'oral history'. The latter is created by historians who record the oral testimony of 'men of memory', and elderly Africans who represent their communities and have therefore gained a lot of knowledge about its history. In Akan culture, the representatives (*akyeama*) and the queen mothers (*ahemmaa*) of the chief (*ohene*) occupy this function.

2.4.1 Limitations of written and oral sources on Asante pre-colonial history

I have mentioned three types of written sources on Asante pre-colonial history: European (Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Swiss, German and English) sources, Arabic sources and oeuvres that were accomplished by the indigenous population of the Gold Coast. The mentioned Portuguese, Dutch and English sources were written for commercial, political and religious reasons taking into consideration that missionary reports served the European colonial governments. The English merchant Thomas Bowdich, for instance, was sent by his company to explore the market in the interior and to get to know how to convince the Asante to buy their European products. The missionary Freeman was sent by the 'Wesley Missionary Society' to negotiate with Asantehene Kwaku Dua I to found a missionary school in Kumasi in order to convert the Asante to Christianity (Freeman 1844).

The Danish wrote for political and religious reasons, whereas the mentioned reports of the Germans and Swiss had a solely religious purpose. From a scholarly perspective the limitations of the mentioned European sources are threefold: (1) they were not written for an academic purpose and therefore lacked objectivity (2) the missionary reports among them were of limited trustworthiness, because missionary officials in Europe often changed the wordings of the reports which they received from their colleagues overseas. Consequently, there was a difference between the written sources that were accomplished by missionaries from Africa and the messenger reports that appeared in missionary journals. These so called historical 'primary' sources should therefore actually be regarded as 'secondary' sources. (3) The fact that Europeans who entered the interior of the Gold Coast came from outside the Asante Kingdom contributed to the inaccuracy of their accounts. The observations of the merchant T. Bodwich regarding the number of ritual killings of human beings during the *Odwira* festival in Kumasi in 1817, for instance, were overexaggerated to justify the Christian proselytisation and colonisation of Asante that would prevent them from the performance of these kind of, in the eyes of the British, 'barbarian' rituals (Law 1985).

The purposes of the mentioned Arabic sources were religious, political and commercial. The function of the *Kitabal-Ghanja* was partly historical, but there were also politico-religious overtones. The reciting of the names of former office-holders substantiated their continuing claim as well as

legitimising the office itself in the eyes of the populace. Besides, it was also a form of prayer for the wellbeing of the dead as well as the living (Goody 1968). The mentioned Arabic manuscripts and letters were written for a religious purpose. As part of their daily life at the royal Asante court, Muslims operated as accountants and in that function they also wrote reports about the trade in cattle and kola nuts between Asante and Muslims (Schildkrout 1970), (Wilks 1966). Although all nineteenth century Arabic writings on the Asante were completed by Muslim scholars (*ulama*), their works were not (primarily) written for an academic purpose and did not fit with the requirements of today's academic study of religion.

The purpose of the mentioned sources written by indigenous authors was religious or academic. Reindorf was a Danish-Ga half-blood, who was ordained as a 'full minister' in 1872 by the religious leaders of the 'Basel Missionary Society' to convert Ghanaians to Christianity. Mensah was a lawyer, and highly critical of the colonial meaning of the term 'native' for customary law. What both authors had in common was that they were European trained indigenous intellectuals, who used European scholarly frameworks to express themselves, but at the same time were conscious of the limitations of those frameworks from which they attempted to break free. They were known as 'Black Englishmen' and African nationalists, who felt both fascinated and alienated by modernity and whose texts were produced to support their assertions of an African identity (Korang 2004). Their writings were thus meant to be academic, but suffered from subjectivity that was brought in by the effects of European scholarship and African nationalism as I explained in section 1.1 of my literature review.

Oral history is passed on by 'men of memory', a term which in the Asante case refers to the chief's (*ohene*) representatives; his spokesman (*okyeame*) and the queen mother (*ohemma*). Its purpose is to educate Asante subjects about the history of their royal rulers in order to legitimate their privileged position. Via the chief's representatives, Asante commoners are made familiar with his particular stool history that includes narratives about war victories and clan heroes or those who have greatly contributed to the Asante community. Oral historical sources are limited in their reliability for at least three reasons. (1) In passing on Asante history, the representatives of the chief (*ohene*) focus on their own kin-group and will be inclined to construct this history in such a way that it will become one of victory of their group. The objectivity of oral historical sources is therefore limited (2) The chief offer an elitist perspective (Appiah 2003:115) on Asante history, which was not always similar to that of Asante commoners. Ordinary Asante for instance did widely accept the ritualised killing of human beings (especially of slaves and foreigners)⁴¹ In contradiction to their

⁴¹ There are three types of deaths of human beings for religious purposes. The ritualised killing of human beings without trial should be distinguished from the ritualised killing of criminals and for the death of household personel who volunteered to be killed to be buried together with the Asante King and to accompany him in the afterlife (Law 1985:56,60).

chiefs, however, who used it as a way of legitimising their power, this custom was also highly feared by Asante commoners (Anti 1996:15), (Lewin 1978:64-5). (3) Fieldwork experience has taught me that many of the chief's representatives were inaccurate in recalling historical data. Partly, this was done deliberately to emphasise the connection with the ancestral spirits during these sessions of transmission of oral history, which are believed to be among the living and were therefore referred to by Mbiti (1969) as the 'living-death'. The purpose of mental archives of history in the minds of today's Asante as an oral-historical source is to deduct academic historical knowledge from that source by the historian. Some historians, such as Van Binsbergen, believe that historical knowledge is locked up in the layers of consciousness of ordinary people and their present day customs. The limitation of this type of oral-historical source is that also Asante subjects often refer to historical events in the present tense. Many of my respondents, for instance, talked about the notorious founders of the Asante nation - priest Anokye and Asantehene Osei Tutu I - as if they were buried yesterday. This custom makes it very hard for the oral historian to research when an historical event actually took place.

2.5 The historical sources of the colonial period in Asante history

Most studies of the Asante in the colonial period (1902-1957) were done by British colonisers including missionaries, travellers and early anthropologists. Nonetheless, some indigenous Asante and Muslims also wrote works about the Asante in this period. To sum up, the colonial Asante history has been documented by British, indigenous and Arabic authors of that period.

The British historical sources of the colonial period take three forms. (1) they include colonial ethnographies that were written by R.S. Rattray⁴² (1881-1938) (1956;; 1969;; 1923;; 1927;; 1932), who in 1928 was appointed as government anthropologist. Anthropological works were meant to map areas and to gain knowledge of the customs of the people of these areas. According to Max Müller, the motto of the British colonial enterprise was equal to that of the Romans, 'to divide and conquer' (Chidester 2003). (2) They consist of official documents that were created by British administrators of the colonial government in the Gold Coast (Metcalf 1994), that were meant to keep track on the daily government of the colonies (3) They contain documents that were written by Western liberal missionaries, such as G. Parrinder (1954) (1910-2005) who were convinced that God could also reveal himself to Africans and that it was therefore their duty as Christians to convert Africans to Christianity. These works provided an ideological justification for the colonial enterprise.

The indigenous sources in this period were twofold. (1) They consisted of documents that were written by Asante opponents of Nkrumah who also strived for independence and portrayed the Asante religion as a monotheistic religion, comparable with Christianity and Islam to show that the

⁴² For two extensive critiques on the work of R.S Rattray see: McCaskie (1983) and Platvoet (1982:57-86).

Indigenous Religions of Ghana were of equal importance as those world religions. This way of reasoning can be found back in the works⁴³ of J.B. Danquah (1895-1965) (1944) and Kofi A. Busia (1954). (2) They also contain a royal history of the Asante written by Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh I (c. 1888-1931) (Akyeampong 2003) that includes his oral historical memories.⁴⁴ This primary source is interesting mainly because it gives an official royal perspective on Asante history in the pre-colonial period, but as a (coloured) source of primary information on the genealogical history of the Asante kingship it is also important to gain a better understanding of the colonial period (Adjaye 1990:1). King Prempeh I wrote his history of the Asante as part of his project of re-introducing aspects of the pre-colonial way of life in the Asante Region as a strategy first to come back to Kumasi as a ruler and later to legitimise his power in this town and region. Consequently, it provides both insights in life in the pre-colonial period and in the way the history of that period had to be reconstructed and invented to legitimise the power of Royals in the colonial period.

In the 1920s and 1930s, after the introduction of Indirect Rule, Arabic sources, such as the Kitabal-Ghanja, were also re-introduced at the Asante royal court. Under Indirect Rule, history again attributed major importance to the resolution of matters of rights to office, of landownership and of the constitutional relations in general, enabling the chiefs to take initiative in presenting the administration with an agenda for Indirect Rule (Wilks, Levtzion, and Haight 1986:29).

2.5.1 Limitation of the historical sources of the colonial period in Asante history

The limitations of the mentioned British colonial, Asante indigenous and Arabic historical sources from a scholarly perspective is that most of them⁴⁵ were not primarily written for academic purposes and have their restrictions in terms of academic objectivity. The three mentioned British historical sources were meant to realise and legitimise the colonial enterprise. The two mentioned Asante indigenous sources were meant to promote an independent African identity that was of the same value as those of Europeans and to legitimise Asante chieftaincy. The Arabic sources were also meant to legitimise chieftaincy in the Asante area and in the Northern Asante hinterland.

2.6 Getting Access and data collection

In this section, I will discuss the way I got access to the field and my data collection for both my participant observations and interviews.

⁴³ For a critique on the works of J.B. Danquah and Kofi A. Busia see Platvoet (1996:105-138).

⁴⁴ The collection of sources of Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh I consists of two separate parts: an incomplete history of Asante entitled 'The History of Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself' (dated 1907) and copies of some 1,000 pieces of correspondence along with additional sketches of history and the Asantehene's record of everyday activities at the Asante Camp in Seychelles, which were compiled in five legal-sized notebooks between 1901 and 1922 (Adjaye 1990:1).

⁴⁵ An exception should be made for the work of Kofi. A. Busia.

2.6.1 Getting access

In some cases conducting fieldwork can be problematic, as researchers cannot always get access to the data they have planned to collect. However, I did not experience any problems in getting access to the field, mainly because I had already invested in building a relationship with traditional authorities during my first period of fieldwork for my MA thesis in history. Additionally, I gratefully made use of my supervisors' good contacts in Ghana and in Kumasi. I was also very fortunate to meet people who enabled me to build upon pre-existing relationships of trust. What may have worked further to my advantage is that I am a relatively young researcher who is open to all religions. In the field those personal characteristics might have made people believe me to be an 'unthreatening' personality, which according to Lofland and Lofland (1995:41) often grants easy entry to research settings.

To maintain a good relationship with the people in the field, I also helped them attempt to solve some of their social-psychological problems in a temporary function as 'queen mother' and with more easy tasks such as showing how to make effective use of a computer and by daily counting hundreds of old cedis, which used to be the national Ghanaian currency.

2.6.2 Data collection I: participant observations

I participated in the following activities in the field: (1) five pouring of libation rituals (two performed by a paramount chief, two performed by an indigenous priest and one during an *adae* performed at *Manhyia* palace, (2) three funeral rituals, of which one was a royal pre-burial ritual that I analysed extensively, (3) a *bragro* puberty ritual, (4) a court case at *Manhyia* palace and (5) an *Akuapem Odwira* festival. I have included only a few of my participant observations mentioned in category one and two in this thesis. My focus is on the analysis of an Asante chieftaincy pouring of libation ritual and the pre-burial ritual of Nana Saaman Nantwi II, a deceased paramount chief who was the head of the household of the Asantehene. I visually recorded both of these rituals and analysed the images. In addition to this, I interacted intensively with the people involved in these activities. After each event, I wrote down short (semi-structured) conversations and my impressions. I described the events and collected field documents, such as brochures (e.g the *Asanteman Adae Kese brochure*), newspapers (the *GNA*, *The Ghanaian Times*) and monthly magazines (e.g the *Enjoy Accra*). During my stay, the biweekly newspaper the *Traditional Heritage* was launched. This newspaper helped me a lot in finding out what was going on at the royal court in Kumasi.

2.6.3 Data collection II: interviews

To collect my data, I used the method of respondent-driven 'snowball sampling', which is a technique for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from

among their acquaintances. The sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball. This sampling technique is often used in hidden populations which are difficult for researchers to access, such as drug users or commercial prostitutes. For a non-native researcher of the Asante, the Asante population and the people's networks are equally hidden. Snowball sampling therefore seemed to be the best method to use. Snowball sampling has been long believed to result in biased estimates, because people with many friends are more likely to be recruited into the sample. Recently, however, respondent-driven 'snowball sampling' has been shown to allow researchers to make certain unbiased estimates from snowball samples under certain conditions (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004).

For my interviews, I made use of a video camera and a tape recorder. In almost all cases, I got permission from my respondents to use my video camera. In all other cases, they gave me permission to use my tape recorder. In relation to the use of my video camera, I was afraid that there would be problems with the electricity, which would result in what the Ghanaians call a 'light off'. For this reason, I did not only video each interview, but I also used my laptop to type up what my respondents said. Each interview that I conducted became a thematic field in 'File maker Pro', a computer programme that I used to compare the answers of my respondents. The interview questions were semi-structured, which has the advantage that the questions are not too fixed, but at the same time do not suffer from a lack of focus. I used themes to organise my questions. In the field and back home, I watched all my video interviews and listened to the tapes. I transcribed the interview data myself. The advantage of this is that it required me to study each interview again, which helped me to get a grip on the data. My research has an exploratory character. All my interviews were face-to-face, except for those with respondents fifty five and fifty six, with whom I corresponded per email. My respondents can be categorised as follows:

- (1) Asante traditional authorities and their subjects
- (2) Muslim headmen and their subjects
- (3) Christian church leaders and members

In all three categories, I have included the voices from above and below. I have, in other words, interviewed both the representatives of a particular religious or cultural group of people and their members or subjects. The purpose of this dual perspective has been to enhance the accuracy and reliability of this research.

My interviews were conducted in English, Twi, Arabic or Hausa. To be able to interview my respondents in the latter three languages, I made use of three translators, two of whom were indigenous Asante Twi speakers and one who was an indigenous Muslim Hausa and Arabic speaker, who came originally from Lagos in Nigeria. For those interviews that were conducted in Twi, I introduced myself to the respondents in their indigenous language. This was very beneficial as it

created goodwill. I have learnt Asante Twi⁴⁶ and can speak this language at a basic level. The inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis are not all Twi speaking, but I have concentrated on learning this language because the Akan (in particularly the Asante 56.9 percent or 665,884 inhabitants) form the majority (77.7 percent or 909,300 inhabitants) of the city's community (Ghana [Kumasi] statistical service, 2000 census: table 1: ethnic groups in Kumasi Metropolis and table 2: detailed Akan cultural groups under Kumasi Metropolis). Other languages that are spoken in the Kumasi Metropolis include African-English (but in the villages only at a basic level), Hausa and Arabic, which are spoken by most Muslim immigrants in the Metropolis, Ewe and many other non-Akan indigenous languages.

2.6.4 Photographs

Photographs are used in this study for analytical purposes.

2.6.5 Problems and limitations

There are at least four problems and limitations to my research which I will discuss below.

Limited number of interviewees

I recorded, conducted and analysed interviews of fifty six respondents. This entails the limitation that it is *not* possible to perform statistical generalisation with this amount of respondents and to draw 'hard' statistical conclusions. It is possible however to perform qualitative generalisations, whose 'goal is not to produce a standardised set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation...' (Blaikie 2001:254). I further rely on the wisdom of qualitative researchers who believe that it is their common task to build a mosaic in which all pieces together will tell what social reality looks like (Bryman 1988).

The use of perceptions

'Perceiving' is literally the process of using the senses to acquire information about the surrounding environment or situation (Soukhanov 1999). In my study I presume that part of my research question can be answered by gaining understanding about my respondents' perceptions of chieftaincy. The correctness of this presumption is based on the bottom-up leadership theory: that a

⁴⁶ The *Twi* language consists of three dialects: Asante, Fante, and Akuapem, which are spoken by the corresponding cultural groups of the same names.

chief is only a chief if he is perceived as such in the eyes of his subjects. Adherents of top-down theories on leadership in Africa, however, reject this presumption (Othman 2000).

Reflexive approach

One unavoidable aspect of qualitative research is that the researcher is the tool of the conducted research, which brings in subjectivity. I will try to diminish the influence of subjectivity by making my background explicit.

Being a woman meant that my respondents might have more easily revealed their emotions to me. When I addressed gender issues, there was a tendency from female respondents to focus on 'female' affairs. For example, I had conversations with the queen mother of Offinso, Ama Serwah Nyarkoh (43), about puberty rituals in Asante, which she might not have discussed with a male respondent.

I believe that my ethnicity, which is white European, worked to my advantage. In Ghana white foreigners (*obrunies*) are often treated better than the local population, as a result of the Asante custom of showing great hospitality towards foreigners and the presumed positive effects of adding a white researcher to one's personal network.

2.6.6 Objectivity, reliability and validity

It can be problematic to guarantee the objectivity, reliability and validity of my research, as will be explained below.

- By *objectivity* I mean that the researcher should be aware of his/her impact on the research. Hence, a 'memo to self' (in the File Maker Pro program) was therefore added to all stages of my research.
- *Reliability* amongst other things, means being aware of the honesty of one's respondents. One can never know for sure whether one's respondent is lying or not, but non-verbal communication and intuition can help to find out whether one's respondents are telling the truth. With regard to their opinion on the Asantehene and other traditional authorities, I believe that some of my respondents were restrained in showing a critical attitude towards him, since by custom one cannot openly criticise Asante chiefs or queen mothers. The use of video has most likely not had any negative effect on my data collection, as Asante are used to being videoed e.g. during funeral celebrations and other rituals and therefore do not change their behaviour by being recorded in this way. It has in all likelihood contributed positively to the willingness of my respondents to be interviewed, since it enhances one's social status.

- The internal *validity* of this research is guaranteed by paying attention to influences of the self in the research (as explained in section 2.6.1) and by receiving sufficient feedback from informants for which empirical evidence is provided in Chapters Five and Six. The external *validity* is concerned with the extent to which the findings and conclusions fit with existing knowledge on the topic and can be translated to other comparable situations. The conclusion of this research attempts to guarantee its external *validity*.

Part 1: historical evidence

In part one of this thesis (Chapters Three and Four) I will discuss the history of Asante chieftaincy and the indigenous religious and peacekeeping role of Asante chiefs and queen mothers since the pre-colonial period. This phase began in 1701 with the foundation of the Asante Kingdom and ended effectively in 1896. It ended formally on 1 January 1902, when the British constituted it as the 'Crown Colony of Asante' (See: map 3).

Throughout the nineteenth century the Asante were involved in several wars with the British, who therefore were a significant political factor in Asante history. Briefly, Asante lost the southern provinces of Akyem, Akuapem, Accra, Fante, Assin, and Denkyira to the British after the 'Battle of Dodowa' (1826) and the Anglo-Asante treaty of 1831.⁴⁷ British political influence and economic power on the Gold Coast grew persistently after 1831 and became a destabilising factor for Asante (Aidoo 1977a:19). Between 1830 and 1843 Capt. McClean, the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, built a British protectorate, and in 1844 the British and eight coastal chiefs⁴⁸, who among others included those of Cape Coast, Anomabu, Assin, and Denkyera, signed a bond.

The period 1844-1874 was a time of British influence over the coastal parts of the Gold Coast, south of the rivers Prah and Offin.⁴⁹ Although the British already had great political influence in the Asante Kingdom, they had not yet colonised the Asante. The Danish and the Dutch then still possessed 'castles'⁵⁰ on the coast, and in the 1860s and early 1870s the Asante still conducted military campaigns on the coast to come to the assistance of Elmina (*Edena*), an Asante ally based in a Fante town on the coast, to prevent the Dutch from departing.

⁴⁷ In 1830 a committee of merchants in London appointed Capt. George Maclean as Governor of Cape Coast Castle (and Accra). Since the Asante-Anglo federation of 1831 the British no longer had to pay ground rent for their forts, which were also known as tradeposts or 'castles'. Neither the protectorate of Maclean nor the Treaty of 1844 established British territorial power over the Akan states that signed the treaty. British sovereignty became formal in 1874 with the establishment of the Gold Coast south of Asante. There was thus a gradual transition from British influence to a British 'Crown Colony' that could be established only when the other European trade powers on the Gold Coast were gone: the Danish in 1850, the Dutch in 1872. The Asante understood very well that the Dutch retreat would mean that the British would establish territorial power on the coast, and in 1872 they sent armies to the coast to help Elmina in their resistance against a British takeover.

⁴⁸ The chiefs of Cape Coast and Anomabu were Fante; the two chiefs of Assin were Assin, and the two chiefs of Denkyera were Denkyera. The other three chiefs were those of Abora, Domadze and Dominase (Buah 1980:81).

⁴⁹ In the period 1844-1874, the British thus had influence over the early 'provinces', the tributary parts of the Asante Kingdom south of Asante. The Asante Kingdom was located north of the rivers Birim and Offin, which came together in the Prah. South of the Prah lies the former tributary parts of the Asante Kingdom that after 1830 were protected by the British, which is why they accepted more British influence and authority, but also rebelled against this, in the so-called Fante Confederacy (1853-1873). In 1874 they became a formal British 'Crown Colony', after the British had showed their power by undertaking a punitive expedition against Asante in 1873-1874 and to burn Kumasi on 4 February 1874.

⁵⁰ Slave trade was then illegal and was not undertaken by the Danish and the Dutch castles. In 1803 Denmark was the first country that abolished the slave trade, followed by England in 1807. It is unknown whether the Dutch have ever formally forbidden the slave trade. The British abolished the slave trade in 1833, the Dutch only in 1863.

In metropolitan Asante a series of irritations over trade power politics on the coast, the harbouring of Asante refugees by British administrators, and the latter's contempt for Asante laws and culture had led to the inconclusive war of 1863-1865. In 1872, all the simmering antagonisms exploded over the critical issue of the Dutch cession of Elmina to the British. After Asantehene Kofi Kakari had attacked the Fante, who were under British protection, in early 1873, the British government appointed Major General Garnet Wolseley administrator and commander in chief and ordered him to drive the Asante from the coastal region. Approximately one month later, Wolseley sent an advance party across the Prah, warning the Asantehene that he intended to begin hostilities. Wolseley, however, also offered an armistice. When negotiations failed, both sides prepared for war, and the result was the war of 1873-1874 (Wilks 1989:772).

The early machine guns, designed by the Americans for use in the American Civil War (1861-1864), and in possession of the British in the 1860s, enabled the British in February 1874 to capture Kumasi and plunder and burn the town (*kurow*), including the palace (*ahemfie*) of the Asantehene. In July of the same year, the coastal area formally became a British colony, known as the 'Crown Colony of the Gold Coast' (and Lagos) (Boahen 1975:56).

From this consolidated base the British intensified their political and economic competition with Asante until they finally captured the kingdom in 1896 (Aidoo 1977a:19). In this year the British exiled Asantehene Prempeh I and his family (*abusua*) to Sierra Leone and later the Seychelles. The exile of these Royals marked the actual end of independent rule of the Asante Kingdom (Anti 1996:159) and Kumasi became ruled by the British resident Captain Donald W. Stewart, who was responsible to the Governor of the Gold Coast. On 1 January 1902, after the Yaa Asantewaa rebellion (1899-1901), the British government formally annexed Asante as the 'Crown Colony of Ashanti' (Buah 1980: 96). In 1896, the British had also annexed the northern states, which were known by the British as 'Northern Territories'. Also, on 1 January 1902, the 'Northern Territories' were declared a 'British Crown Colony' (Buah 1980:97) (see map 3).

For the Asante the colonial period thus lasted only fifty-five years (from 1 January 1902 until 6 March 1957), or less than three generations, and they were colonised for a relatively short period. The colonial and post-independence period had, however, a profound impact on chieftaincy in the area of Kumasi. In the colonial period chieftaincy disappeared as a sovereign institution. In 1905 *Asanteman* was resurrected but only after reducing its political power to the area belonging to the 'Crown Colony of Asante' and being placed under Direct Rule. In 1935, the British colonial rulers incorporated the traditional authorities into the system of Indirect Rule, and chiefs became the instruments of the local government. The British, however, emphasised the 'secular' function of

chiefs as officers of the colonial administration. Chiefs who offered resistance to colonialism were in many cases deported or deposed ('destooled') by the British.

Ghana gained independence in 1957, and right after the start of the post-colonial period politicians questioned the role of (Asante) chiefs in Ghana. Chiefs required their subjects (*mmerante*)⁵¹ to work on their farms on sacred days, such as *fofie* and *adae*, for free. That practice raised the question among politicians and the community whether they would benefit economically by the abolition of chieftaincy. The subjects or commoners, moreover, were required to pay tribute to their chiefs. In the case of a dispute with a chief, conflicts of interests in the native court made it impossible to get a fair trial. Finally, the chiefs could also confiscate the land of commoners, which made the chiefs very powerful.

In addition to the criticism of the community, Nkrumah's post-colonial government also raised the question of whether chieftaincy should end. As chiefs had been associated intimately with the colonial government, some politicians reasoned that removing them would give the post-colonial government the opportunity to present itself as a *tabula rasa*, purified from colonialism. It would allow the government to monopolise the loyalty of the population. Another reason why these politicians meant to 'clip the wings' of the chiefs was that they were seen as a rival source of power counteracting the introduction of a modern state (R. J. A. R. Rathbone 2000:45).

Other politicians, however, wanted the institution of chieftaincy to stay. They reasoned that the post-colonial government would need the chiefs to achieve 'grassroot governance', which is a way of governing the local-level rural and urban population (Ray and Reddy 2003:92). The main idea was that in this way the colonial system of Indirect Rule could be continued. In most former British colonies in Africa, such as Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Ghana, after the Second World War politicians forced the traditional rulers to forfeit in practice nearly all of their formal power. The government no longer paid taxes and revenues of stool lands to the chiefs but rather to the local and urban councils.

In Ghana, the government decided to pay the local and urban councils instead of the chiefs after the chiefs had criticised the government for its lack of initiative in the fields of health care, infrastructure, and education (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46). Chiefs or other appointees from the traditional councils since 1945 constituted only one third of the traditional councils' membership (Nugent 2004:122). Furthermore, chiefs could no longer extract forced labour arbitrarily; nor did they have the power to regulate the markets. The Asantehene also no longer presided over an apparatus of 'customary' and bureaucratic institutions for the allocation of land rights and the adjudication of conflicting claims to land and landed property (Berry 1998:43).

Today Asante chiefs, except in very limited areas, have no judicial functions or executive powers of any significance. Nevertheless, the Asante institution of chieftaincy has not been reduced to a ceremonial function only. The present constitution of Ghana guarantees the institutions of chieftaincy in the country and chiefs play a role in both their own domain and at the national level. The central government expects the chiefs to provide advice and to participate in the administration of regions and districts, although the government bars them from active party politics. The central government also expects chiefs to be moral leaders. Chiefs should lead their people in organising self-help activities and projects. In addition, chiefs should also take the initiative in establishing institutions and programmes that should improve the welfare of their people in areas such as health, education, trade, and economic or social development. The intention of the government is that chiefs should take charge of the programmes that are provided for by the central and regional government. Finally, chiefs in Ghana have been most active in dispute resolution in cases where the dilatory procedures of the formal courts have disenchanted their subjects.

The present-day tasks of traditional authorities in Ghana are attractive for educated people such as academics, civil servants, business leaders, and teachers, who all compete now to obtain a stool. This in all likelihood shows that Asante subjects perceive chieftaincy as a respected institution. An important question is what the origin of the high respect in Ghana is for the traditional authorities and *Asanteman*. In this thesis I will argue that respect for traditional authorities is embedded in the Asante Indigenous Religion and that this religion has therefore contributed to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. In part one of this thesis (Chapters Three and Four) I will attempt to give a historical explanation for the presumed continuity in the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping role of the traditional authorities in the pre-colonial and colonial era respectively.

⁵¹ *Oberan* of *aberante* means 'young man'; *aberan* of *mmerante* means 'young men' (Christaller 1933:15).

Chapter Three: indigenous religious mediation and peacekeeping in the precolonial period

Wo-to pampin a na wo-a-to kuro. — ‘The fence (chief) protects the city from enemies’.

Asante proverb

Introduction

In this Chapter, I will study the relationship between the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping roles of Asante traditional authorities in the pre-colonial period and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. I will start with providing insight into the relationship between the Asante economy in this period and the Asante Indigenous Religion. A study of the agricultural activities of the Asante gives understanding of the origin of ancestral veneration and indigenous religious intermediation. The annexation and imperialisation of surrounding indigenous cultural groups, the extraction of tribute of those groups and the trade with Muslims and Europeans uncovers the roots of indigenous religious peacekeeping.

To gain understanding of indigenous religious intermediation I will study the legitimisation of the Asante state by ritual control. Regarding the second role I will study the introduction of Islam and Christianity into the Asante society and provide an insight into the impact of these world religions on the Indigenous Religion of the Asante. I will also study how the Asante made use of Europeans and Muslims for their diplomatic service. Finally, I will look at the relationship between the Asante Indigenous Religion and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy during and at the end of the pre-colonial era.

3.1 The Origin of Asante and Asanteman

In this section, I will describe the origin of the Asante and what they did for a living in the dense forest area above the coast where they continue to live today. Then, I will explain how their occupations resulted in the growth of the population and the coming into being of towns such as Kumasi, which became the capital of the Asante Kingdom in 1701.

The Asante - a Niger-Congo linguistic group that belongs to the Akan - lived in the West African tropical forest as early as 930 ±130 CE. They settled in the North and East of the forest and developed quite independently from the areas further up north (Klein 1996:254). From the tenth century CE,⁵² there is archaeological evidence comprised of house floors, faunal remains, slag and

⁵² In my opinion, it is necessary to make some reservations regarding this date. The investigation of the state of *Asantemanso* was part of an archaeological research project by Shinnie on the early Akan. The method that was used to find out until what century the ancestors of the Asantes should be traced back was that of carbon 14 (C-14-dating). Shinnie presents it as if this method is very precise and that by using this method one can know the exact age of material remains of the past, while J. Shott notices that the method of C-14 or radiocarbon dating has a probabilistic character especially when we are dealing with ‘relatively’ early history (Shott 1992:202). Most likely radiocarbon dating is therefore not as precise as Shinnie presumes it to be.

pottery that can be considered linked to the proto-agricultural ‘ancestors of the Asante’ (Shinnie 1995:7-8). ‘Asantemanso’, currently a village twenty miles south of Kumasi in the territorial division of Asumegya, is an interesting archaeological site as the Asante oral history notes seven ancestors (five women and two men) who in Asantemanso had crawled ‘out of a hole in the ground’ (Shinnie 1995:6). McCaskie (1995:43) notes the central significance of Asumegya ‘in Asante myths of origin and early history’, to which the founders of Kumasi (earlier known as *Kwamen*) would trace their origins.⁵⁴

The early Asante were forest dwellers and from 1500 many of them were agriculturalists. Both occupations were important in the process of the Asante state formation. In addition, they also lived from the trade of the natural products of hunting and gathering, such as gold, ivory and kola nuts, and, since the arrival of Europeans at the coastal town *Elmina* — which is Portuguese for ‘the mine’ — from the exploitation of gold mines. I will first focus on the relationship between the trade networks of the Asante with Muslims and Europeans for the development of the Asante state. Then, I will discuss the effects of the exploitation of arable land and gold mines on this development.

Early Asante hunters and gatherers used to collect kola and palm nuts in the forests of Northern Asante, and in all likelihood already before the late fourteenth century they traded these nuts and palm oil with the people from the northern and western Sudan via proto Muslim Dyula traders of the Bonduku area. After this period, due to an increase in the demand for gold in Europe which was used for the minting of new gold coinages at this continent, European gold merchants looked to Africa for increased supplies, and their demands were also found in the gold *entrepôts* of the Western Sudan. The increasing demand for gold occasioned considerable economic activity in the Western Sudan in the later fourteenth century. Consequently, Mande speaking traders (Malinke-Bambara-Dyula and Soninke) from the region of the Upper Niger rationalised the already existing structure of trade with the auriferous lands to the south and made the route from Jenne to further south an arterial highway. Around 1400, Mande-Dyula traders colonised Begho (map 7) a trade centre in today’s Brong-Ahafo region that was located at the edge of the dense forest, which was the living area of the Asante. Begho was a storage area for all trade products such as cloth and brassware which the Mande-Dyula traders took with them on their sojourn from the Western Sudan. Additionally, it was a collecting centre for gold that was brought to Begho from the more southern districts. The Mande-Dyula traders colonised Begho even though it was located far from their Southern trading partners, such as the Asante, because south of this town their caravans could not

⁵³ In 1832 Simons heard that the old town of Kumasi would have been located in Asumegya. In addition, Rattray found ‘evidence of extensive settlement dating from “some remote period”’ in this place. According to McCaskie, however, there is no real historical evidence for these utterances.

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pass. Although a number of lesser paths, such as the one that went through Tafo (later Kumasi), served the Mande-Dyula traders who preferred to take their goods by head-load further south, the majority of these Muslim traders stayed in Begho. Asante and Akan traders who occupied the forest area brought gold and kola nuts to Begho.

Before the Portuguese arrived at Elmina in 1482, Mande-Dyula traders were thus already there. The Portuguese became middlemen between the Mande-Dyula traders and Europeans from various countries who were in search of gold for their coins. Between 1482 and 1557 they obtained gold from the Mande-Dyula in exchange for firearms and for slaves which came from Benin, until the trade of firearms was most likely banned by early Pope Sixtus IV and that of slaves by King John III (1521-57) out of fear for the contribution of this trade to a potential build-up of Muslim power. From the 1550s onwards, the Portuguese lost their trade monopoly on the coast, since the Danish, the Dutch and the English became interested in the gold trade (Jones 1962).

The Asante profited from this coastal trade, for instance, because the firearms that the Dutch took with them enabled them to build up their kingdom. At that time, Begho became a walled city as its Muslim inhabitants attempted to protect themselves against the Asante, who were building their empire south of this town. From then, trade between the Asante and Mande-Dyula traders took place in the bush, until the Asante occupied Begho. In the late eighteenth century, due to a series of violent conflicts between the Asante and the Kong, whose living area was located above the northern border of the Asante Kingdom, the value of the last part of the medieval trade-route from the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea was affected. Consequently, in the early nineteenth century, after the Asante defeated the Kong and had created an empire which was almost the size of what is now Ghana and the Ivory Coast, the Asante rerouted the trade route from the north-west to the north-east through Salaga and Yendi all the way up to the Sokoto Caliphate in what is now Northern Nigeria (see map 8) (Jones 1962).

Asanteman as a centralised institution has its roots in the events of the seventeenth century, in which the trade with the Europeans in gold and slaves in exchange for firearms intensified. These firearms were used to annex more areas, obtain more war-captives who were sold as slaves and buy more firearms, which resulted in the expansion of the Asante Kingdom (Daaku 1972:240). Accordingly, many clans, who developed little states (*berempon-doms*) as a result of their control over slaves and their exploitation of arable land and mines, settled along the Trans-Saharan trade route. The first inhabitants of the area, the *oyoko*, feared that these newcomers would also make claims on the resources of the area. The development of a hierarchical model of chiefs under a paramount ruler clarified who were the Royals or early leaders. In 1660, these new states, such as the Kwaman state of the Asante Royals of the *oyoko* clan, formed the Asante Confederacy, a military union that enabled its members to resist attacks of clans outside the union and diminish the risk that

isolated clans would again be incorporated into another kingdom or Confederacy (Akyeampong and Obeng 1995:493-494). The Asante Confederacy consisted of an alliance of states, which initially were independent and had the same rights. The Confederacy was a loose union, and the villages were economically autonomous. Each state had its own paramount chief (*omanhene*), its own internal politics and celebrated its own religious festivals. The clans within the Confederacy inhabited the states of Mampon, Nsuta, Kokofu, Bekwai, Dwaben, Asumegya and Kwaman. The alliance protected these clans against the Denkyerahene, the ruler of Denkyera.

In the seventeenth century, due to the increase in trade, the number of Asante and other local families (*musua*) in the forest area grew and they developed their areas into states. On a map of the Gold Coast of 1629,⁵⁵ for instance, many states were shown, such as Dahoe and Inta, that surrounded the state of ‘Acanij’⁵⁶ (or on the 1728 map ‘Akanny’), Because of their size, these states demanded another way of ruling than the leaders of the matri-kin groups could provide. The revolutionary demographical changes between 1500 and 1800 thus asked for the foundation of a new political institution. Consequently, in 1701 the Asante established *Asanteman* after capturing the new capital Jukwaa of the *Denkyera* Kingdom after the ‘Battle of Feyiase’. The victory of the Asante in this war marks the beginning of the rise of the Asante Kingdom as a superpower on the Gold Coast. The battle changed the political balance in the alliance in favour of the *oyoko* of Kwaman. After the subjection of the Denkyera and its vassal states, the military leaders of the Confederacy, chose the successful general Osei Tutu I (1701-1718) as their king (Asantehene). Together with his relative and adviser priest (*ƆkomfoƆ*) Anokye⁵⁷ Osei Tutu I laid the foundation of the Asante Kingdom (Boahen 1975:17).

In the period 1701-1718, *Asanteman* was developed into a military machinery through the mobilisation of fighting men for offensive and defensive warfare (Arhin 1999:79). The Asante political system focussed on the annexation and incorporation of surrounding states. In this period

⁵⁵ I refer to the earliest Dutch map of the Akan societies at the Gold Coast, which is entitled: ‘Caert van de Gout Cust in Gunea Waer in verthoont werden de afdeeling van haer Paercken, alsoo die vande Prinsi Palste Swarten hebben onder vracht, en sijn met Stipellen van een gescheyden en by onse volck op deese Mannier bevonden en bekent’. The map was created in 1629 by Hans Propheet, a Dutch WIC factor on the Dutch trade post or castle in Moure (Daaku and Van Dantzig 1966), 14-15. See map: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/Document/CadresPage.jsp?O=IFN7759846&I=1&J=null&M=imageseule>

⁵⁶ On the map it says: ‘hier wonen de Princi: paalfre coopliden die met ons handelen in Gout’.

⁵⁷ In many recent studies by indigenous authors, such as that of Kwamena-Poh, historians describe the Priest Anokye as an eighteenth century historical figure who really existed. However, Anokye did not appear by name in any written historical source before the nineteenth century, although descriptions of the presence of a priest inside the royal Asante court are available. McCaskie (1986b) suggests that the *ƆkomfoƆ* Anokye was a necessary element in the Asante interpretation of their history. In AIR magical explanations of phenomena are common. Anokye has been introduced by the Asante because this priest could explain the otherwise magically unexplainable in historical events, such as why the conquest of the Asante on the Denkyera was successful. There is thus a difference here between an ‘emic’ (Kwamena-Poh) and an ‘etic’ explanation of the role of Anokye in the Asante history. My respondents in Kumasi believed in the emic explanation, while other Akan specialists, such as Platvoet and I find McCaskie’s explanation more plausible.

there was, however, no room for enhancing the structures of the institution of chieftaincy necessary for governing in a more decentralised and democratic manner. Such an institution began to develop under Asantehene Opoku Ware I (1720-1750) who was a successful constructive ruler and whose subjects credited their king with the title 'empire builder' of the Asante Confederacy.⁵⁹ By 1750 the Asante ruled over most Akan-groups. They incorporated, in addition, twenty other kingdoms, including Gonja and Dagomba (Tordoff 1962)⁶⁰ (see: map 4).

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Asante Kingdom had expanded, because, among other reasons, the trans-Atlantic slave trade network of the Europeans residing along the coast (except for that of the Portuguese) increased and became more important than the Mande-Dyula and Hausa trade networks. The Asante were very keen on the export of slaves, which consisted mainly of the war-captives that the vassal states had to pay each year as a form of tribute to the Asantehene and the import of firearms from the Dutch and the British.

In conclusion, the trade with Europeans in firearms enabled the Asante to conquer surrounding states that were not incorporated in the Asante Kingdom, which resulted in its enormous growth. The cultivation of land provided food for the growing population of this kingdom. The increasing size of the Asante kingdom and the Indigenous Religion that derived from the Asante's agricultural occupations caused the Asante rulers to contemplate ways in which they could legitimatise the state. I will elaborate on this in the next section.

3.2 The Indigenous Religious Intermediary Function of the Asante Traditional Authorities

In the pre-colonial period, the Asantehene and Asantehemma and all other Asante chiefs and queen mothers had legislative, judicial, executive, military and religious power. In terms of religion, Asante traditional authorities functioned as indigenous religious intermediaries. Their task was to guarantee the continuity of the Asante society through intercession with the ancestral spirits (*nsamanfo*). The way in which Asante chiefs connected to the inhabitants of the spiritual world differed from that of

⁵⁸ During his rule, King Opoku fought a few battles against Bono and was successful in defeating them in 1723. By 1726, he conquered the Wasa tribe. Thereafter, between 1741 and 1744, Opoku won battles against Akyem, Akwamu or Ga-Adangbe.

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⁶⁰ Kodzo Paku Kludze (2000:5) — a professor of Law in the United States and Ewe chief in Northern Ghana — argues that the Asante borrowed their political institution from the Southern Ewe (the Anlo-Ewe) who live in the south-east of Ghana. The Asante would have come into direct contact with the Anlo-Ewe, because they had a close military alliance with this cultural group. After the Datsutagba war in 1866, this alliance became stronger and, according to Kludze, it was at this time that the Asante fully developed their institution of chieftaincy. Kludze's theory on the development of *Asanteman* is, however, historically unlikely, because the renowned Asante scholar Ivor Wilks (1989) has researched that the full development of *Asanteman* took place for internal political reasons (see section 3.7) and had nothing to do with the Datsutagba war.

the Asante queen mothers. In this section, I will concentrate on the indigenous religious intermediary task of male and female Asante traditional authorities respectively. To understand how and why the power of chiefs and queen mothers is derived from the ancestral spirits, it is, however, first necessary to elaborate on the Asante concept of power (*sunsum*).

The Asante make a distinction between power that is publicly accessible and power that is available to Royals only. The first type of power is known as 'natural power', a concept which dates from before the fifteenth century, when most Asante were hunters and gatherers. The Asante believed that everything (the High God, lesser gods, spirits, ancestors, men, animals, plants, inanimate objects such as rivers and rocks) in the universe contains spirit (*sunsum*) or 'power' and that it is the essence of natural objects to possess power. In African philosophy, according to Gyekye (1995:75-76) this idea is called 'panpsychism'.⁶¹ This element of Asante Indigenous Religion was also observed by Ramseyer and Kühne (1875:80), who, during their stay in Kumasi, remarked that 'the king was not a little surprised, like the South Sea Islanders, that a piece of wood could speak'. The degree of inspiritedness of objects such as trees and stools is, however, a subject of debate among Akan philosophers. In Wiredu's (1996: 124) view the Asante believe that there are also objects that do not contain *sunsum*, because the life-principle has left them. Therefore, for Asante indigenous practitioners, according to Wiredu, 'dead wood is quintessentially *dead*'.

According to Gyekye (1995:75-76) the Asante believe in a hierarchical order between entities in which natural objects, such as trees and rivers, are lower than men, but because deities are dwelling inside these objects they are actually higher than men and are therefore venerated by them. For human beings, it is important to be in a good relationship with higher entities, because they can destroy all lower entities and not *vice versa* (Kwame Gyekye 1995:75-76). What is important here is that the deities that dwell inside natural objects, such as trees and stones, could be consulted by every human being. The only condition to being able to derive power from natural objects is that one had to know the rules of how to make use of it, which was best known by indigenous priests and priestesses (Nana Ama Nyarko, 17).

The second concept of power known to the Asante dates from after the fifteenth century, when many Asante settled down in villages and became agriculturalists. This type of power became only accessible to the traditional authorities. Because of the exclusive rights on ancestral power of one family (the Royals or founding fathers of the village) village dwellers became more dependent on their knowledge of the spiritual world than before when all power was accessible to everybody, although some people, such as Asante traditional authorities and indigenous priests and priestesses, were more specialised in achieving natural power than others. An Akan proverb that illustrates the

⁶¹ *Pan* means 'many', *psychism* means 'soul'.

⁶² *Pan* means 'many', *psychism* means 'soul'.

nature of this second type of power is: *Deé ontumi dance deé ôtumi*, meaning ‘He who has no power depends on he who has it’ (Appiah, Appiah, and Agyeman-Duah 2000:313). In addition, the following Akan proverb is illustrative of the exclusivity of royal ancestral power: *Deε adeε wɔ no na ɔdi εnyε nea ekɔm de no* – ‘It is the one who possesses who eats, not the one who is hungry’. The symbolic meaning of this proverb is that if you do not belong to a royal family, you cannot be selected as a chief or queen mother. Therefore, you cannot inherit a stool and derive royal power from the ancestral spirits.

The purpose of royal ancestral veneration among the Asante was to legitimatise the power of the ruling elite. It was the method for rulers in an illiterate society to keep their families’ history alive, which was the history of the founders of Kumasi and other towns and villages in the Asante Kingdom. The presence of the communal *sunsum* (ancestral spirit) inside their royal stools was believed to link the Asante traditional authorities to their ancestors and their royal history. Also, by pouring libation and saying prayers, the rulers kept their history and the justification of their claim to royal power alive. Whereas ‘natural’ power was thus believed to be in the hands of everyone, royal power was accessible to Asante Royals only. I will now study in depth how Asante male and female rulers were believed to get access to these royal powers and how they used them to legitimate their position.

The legitimation of the Asante male rulers for their position was twofold. First, they propagated that they should be the ones in power because they were the founders of the community or later contributed significantly to the wellbeing of the community. Second, they believed their power was legitimised because they were in better relationship with the ancestral spirits than ordinary people. What Asante traditional authorities have in common with ordinary Asante subjects is that by birth they receive two souls: (*okra*) and (*sunsum*) of which the *sunsum* enables them to sense the ancestral spirits and to communicate with them in dreams. Besides, their own *sunsum* Asante traditional authorities are also linked to the ancestors through a communal *sunsum* that contains the individual *sunsum* of all subjects of the Asante Kingdom. This communal *sunsum* is believed to dwell in side royal stools upon on which Asante traditional authorities sit. The connection with the stool, which links chiefs to a communal *sunsum* is believed to make them more powerful. Anyone who occupies a royal stool is believed to receive extraordinary spiritual powers, which are believed to dwell inside them. It is believed that the higher the rank of a chief, the more extraordinary the spiritual power he receives from the communal *sunsum* inside his stool. The most powerful royal stool among the Asante is the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, which is occupied by the Asantehene, who is therefore believed to be the most important male ruler of the Asante (*Obogumanhene* Nana Owusu Asiamah II [*Konongo*], 54).

It is thus believed to be the chief's stool which makes him spiritually powerful. But because of the connection that a chief's soul (*sunsum*) has to make with the communal *sunsum* inside a royal stool, an extraordinary mind is required for a royal to be appointed as a chief. To understand why, I will explain the ontological distinction which Asante make between 'spirits' and 'inspired beings'. Spirits are entities, such as the Supreme Being, the deities and ancestors that are invisible but tangible by certain human inhabitants of the physical world. Inspired beings are animals and humans who may, it is believed, have two types of minds. There are those humans who are said to have normal minds and who are therefore unable to see or sense spirits. There are also human beings who are reputed to have extraordinary minds that would enable them to sense spirits and to communicate with them, such as witches, sorcerers, indigenous priests, and chiefs. Human beings with extraordinary minds have greater knowledge than ordinary human beings through their link with the spiritual world, which they can use for evil or good. It is those ones among the royal Asante with extraordinary minds who will most likely use their knowledge for a good purpose, and who usually are selected by the queen mother and chosen by their subjects. It is because of the indigenous religious intermediary function that has to be fulfilled by a chief, that he can only be 'enstooled' (enthroned) when the queen mother, the elders, and the commoners (*mmerante*) have judged him by his spirit. In this matter the weightiest testimony is that of the queen mother because of her blood (*mogya*) line with the prospective chief. Because women physically reproduce society, it is said that they 'know' genealogy (Gilbert 1994:102), and therefore they are presumed to be the experts on the prospective chief's character.

The way in which Asante queen mothers are connected to the ancestral spirits and legitimate their position as Royals is as follows. In comparison with Asante chiefs, queen mothers are believed to connect more easily to the inhabitants of the spiritual world. Consequently, they do not have to make use of a royal stool to contact the spiritual beings. Instead, Asante queen mothers communicate with the spiritual beings through 'spirit possession' which is a method by which spirits make use of the body of a human being and speak through their mouths in order to deliver messages to human inhabitants of the physical world. In normal circumstances, an Asante queen mother thus communicates directly with inhabitants of the spiritual world. Similarly to the Asante chiefs, Asante queen mothers occupy a royal stool, the so called 'silver stool' (*ohemma adwa* or *dwete*), which is the senior stool (*akonnua panyin*) in relation to a chief's stool (*ohene adwa*). However, in contradiction to an Asante chief's stool, that of the Asante queen mother only represents 'this worldly power'. An exception is made in those rare cases in which an Asante queen mother occupies the position of a paramount chief (*omanhene*) and symbolically turns into a male ruler.⁶³ This

⁶³ An example is Juabenhemma 'Ama Sewaa', who in the mid-nineteenth century occupied the Juaben Royal Stool in the absence of suitable male heirs (Rattray 1969:173-177).

happens only in cases where there is no male ruler available to fulfil the position of a chief. When a queen mother becomes *omanhene*, she takes over the ‘this worldly’ and normally also the ‘other worldly’ power. An exception is made for queen mothers, who take the position of the chief but who have not yet passed their menopause. When these queen mothers are menstruating, they are not allowed in the stool room because menstrual blood is believed to be polluted and might therefore disturb the ancestral spirits. Most queen mothers⁶⁴ are, however, in their forties or even older so that this problem does not occur (Rev. Dr. Coffie 16/11/2005, 4⁶⁵).

The difference between the indigenous religious intermediary function of Asante chiefs and queen mothers and the way in which they legitimate their position, explains why Asante chiefs were and are more powerful than their female co-rulers. Due to the exclusivity of the link of male Royals with the communal *sunsum*, the chiefs’ stool transferred ‘natural power’ into ‘political power’. The fact that only Royals were allowed to occupy a royal stool that contained spiritual power (*sunsum*) made them politically powerful. Asante queen mothers, on the contrary, had no means of turning ‘natural’ power into ‘political’ power and remained dependent on powers that could be derived from nature by every ordinary Asante. Their training, similarly to that of indigenous priests and priestesses to go into spiritual possession, enabled them to receive more than an ordinary dose of spiritual power, but the lack of a royal stool which contained communal *sunsum* disabled them from turning spiritual into political power. This made it more difficult for them to legitimate their power on the basis of their link with the ancestral spirits. In terms of political power the Asante queen mothers are therefore less powerful than the Asante chiefs.

In conclusion, the concept of power among the Asante provides insight into the indigenous religious intermediary function of Asante chiefs and queen mothers and the differences between them. It explains why Asante traditional authorities legitimate their function differently and why Asante chiefs are politically more powerful than their female co-rulers. It also clarifies, however, that both were ruling together over the Asante state.

In the next section, I will provide insight into how the Asante traditional authorities made use of indigenous religious intermediation in order to legitimise the Asante institution of chieftaincy.

3.3 The legitimisation of Asanteman? The Golden Stool, the swearing of oaths and the Odwira festival

Since its foundation in 1701, the Asante Kingdom suffered from internal political tensions. Not only were there tensions between the different cultural groups that created the Asante Kingdom, but since the rule of Asantehene Opoku Ware I (1720-1750), there were also two royal houses from where the

⁶⁴ An example of an exceptionally young queen mother is that of Tapa (*Tepahene*), who during my fieldwork (6 March 2006) was only twenty-one and still attending senior secondary school.

⁶⁵ The numbers behind the respondents refer to the numbers used in appendix Five.

rulers of the *oyoko* clan descended. All Asantehene were linked with each other because of the matrilineal system of kinship. From an ontological point of view, kinship seemed to be decisive for the structure of the royal clan's (*oyoko*)-dynasty, but from a phenomenological point of view, marriage seemed to be more important. Yet, there was no double descent system. Instead, in structural terms, a highly compact dynasty — defined by matrification — emerged (Wilks 1989:371-373). The Asantehenes Osei Tutu I and Opoku Ware I each came from one of these two Houses, which since Opoku Ware I's enstoolment were involved in stool disputes with each other or with other weaker houses every time an Asantehene died or was destooled. Because of such internal tensions, there was a great need within the Asante Kingdom for symbols of unity whose function was to propagate unity to the outside world and reveal the internal frictions that could endanger the persistence of the Asante state. One of the symbols of unity and peace was the 'Golden Stool' (*Sika Dwa Kofi*). In 1750 (Kyerematen 1969:1-10, 5-6; Wilks 1989:331-332).

The Asante central government council (*Asantemanhyiamu*) decided that the Golden Stool that was believed to originate from the sky and to consist of the divine power that the Asantehenes needed to rule their kingdom should become the symbol of unity of the house of the mentioned Asantehenes, so that it would appear to the subjects as if there were no internal tensions among the *oyoko*.

The Asante elite thus ruled over their subjects by propagating myths within the community and by creating stories to foster belief among their subjects in the legitimacy of their authority. The elite were, although in a privileged position, part and parcel of these collective processes in the creation of meaning. The establishment of power and its authorisation were part of the origination of meaning, but in a subtle and 'concealed' form. The messages of the elite were, so to say, 'hidden' in the rituals that were performed on their behalf. Catharine Bell formulates it as follows:

The strategies of ritualisation are particularly rooted in the body, specifically, the interaction of the social body within a symbolically constituted spatial and temporal environment. Essential to ritualization is the circular production of a ritualised body which in turn produces ritualised practices. Ritualization is embedded within the dynamics of the body defined within a symbolically structured environment. An important corollary to this is the fact that ritualization is a particular 'mute' form of activity. It is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking (Bell 1992:93).

Rituals are a form of communication beyond the grasp of consciousness and articulation. The elite brought the messages of their subjects to the ancestral spirits indirectly, in the form of proverbs, myths or religious rituals. The use of indirect communication was the elite's way of preserving the 'sacredness' of the chief and to show their respect for the ancestral spirits (*nsamanfo*).

In addition to the Golden Stool myth of the creation of the Asante nation, the Kumasi ruling elite legitimated its power by the ritual of the swearing of an oath to the king and by the yearly celebration of *Odwira*, an indigenous religious festival.

In short, the myth of the Golden Stool explains why the Asantehene has sacred powers and therefore has a divine right to rule.⁶⁶ According to the myth, the authority of the first Asantehene, Osei Tutu I, came from heaven in the form of a Golden Stool, which was a symbol of political authority and represented the common soul (*sunsum*) of the Asante. A famous priest called Anokye is said to have assisted Osei Tutu I spiritually in the destruction of the powerful state Denkyera of which Kwaman was a vassal. This was followed by the foundation of the Asante Kingdom by the union of six small states to protect themselves against further attacks from Denkyera. Before, but especially after the victory on Denkyera, the alliance of states that was called *Asanteman* was formed, amongst other things, by destroying all earlier regalia, such as the existing stools of the *ohene* who ruled over their own states, and by replacing them with the *Sika Dwa Kofi*.⁶⁷

Priest Anokye is said also 'to have brought down from heaven' the Golden Stool. He received a message from the spiritual world that Osei Tutu I had a special mission from the God of the Sky (*Onyame*) to turn the Asante into a great and powerful nation (McCaskie 1986b:318). According to the Gold Coast government anthropologist, Capt. R.S. Rattray, the myth goes:

[.....] Osei Tutu I was informed [LM: by Okomfo Anokye or 'Anotchi'] and held a great gathering in Kumasi in the presence of the king and the Queen mother One Manu⁶⁸, and the chief of Kokofu, called Gyami, the Kokofu Queen Mother, Ajua Pinaman, and many others. Anotchi, in the presence of a huge multitude, with the help of his supernatural power, stated to have brought down from the sky, in a black cloud, and amid rumblings, and in air thick with white dust, a wooden stool with three supports and partly covered with gold.⁶⁹ This stool did not fall to earth but alighted slowly upon Osei Tutu's knees.⁷⁰ There were, according to some authorities, two brass bells on the stool when it first came from above. According to others, Anotchi caused Osei Tutu to have four bells made, two of gold and two of brass, and to hang one on each side of the stool. Anotchi told Osei Tutu I and all the people that this stool contained the *sunsum* (soul or spirit) of the Asante nation, and that their power, their health, their bravery, their welfare were in this stool. To emphasise this fact he caused the king and every Asante chief and all the queen mothers to take a few hairs from the head and pubes, and a piece of the nail from the forefinger. These were made into a powder and mixed with 'medicine'. Some was drunk and some poured or smeared on the stool. Anotchi told the Ashante that if this stool was taken or destroyed, then, just as a man sickens and dies whose *sunsum* during life has wandered away or has been injured by some other *sunsum*, so would the Asante nation sicken and lose its vitality and power (Rattray 1923:289-290).

In this version of the myth of the foundation of the Asante nation, Rattray refers to the Golden Stool which symbolised 'the highest level at which political power was exercised' (Wilks 1993:144).

⁶⁶ The myth of the Golden Stool is also known as the myth of foundation, because the major real historical figures in this myth founded the Asante Kingdom (McCaskie 1986b).

⁶⁷ The *Sika Dwa Kofi*, already existed before the victory over Denkyera. The victory was obtained 'owing to the power of the Golden Stool' (Rattray 1923:290).

⁶⁸ Manu shows she was one of the two daughters born in succession. Many of these names I have verified from written histories.

⁶⁹ This rough sketch was made from an old Abrammuo or 'Asante Weight', which, as Rattray had verified, purported to be a model of the Golden Stool.

⁷⁰ The Golden Stool is supposed never to have touched the ground and it was never set in direct contact with it; on the rare occasions on which it was ever used, the skin off the back of an elephant was first placed on the

The myth of the Golden Stool explains why Asante subjects should rely on the Asantehene who controls their presumed individuality. Although the Asantehene allows his subjects to have their own character, he watches their behaviour and bases his judgements on moral values. The Asante subjects perceive the Asantehene as their supreme moral judge. Not only is he regarded as having inherited supernatural powers from his ancestors but he is also viewed as the 'owner' of the individual characters (*sunsum*) of his people that come together in the Golden Stool.

Another symbol of unity that Asante traditional authorities used to legitimatise their power was the swearing of an oath. The 'oath' was a sign of the relationship between the living and the dead. Every *ohene* had to swear an oath before he could be enstooled. As part of his rite of passage of enstoolment, a prospective chief came to Kumasi to swear that he would give military help to the king when he needed him. The religious meaning of the oath was that when its taker — the chief — would turn himself against his king, the gods (*abosom*) would kill him, *Se woye me dɔm da a, abosom nku wo* (Busia 1951:54; Rattray 1956:103-104). Disobedience of the oath was both an offense against the gods, and an open act of political rebellion and defiance. At first, the punishment that was exercised by the king for this type of open rebellion was death; later, in some cases, it was modified by permitting the offender 'to buy his head'.

Oaths apparently had the power to both protect and to kill. An Asante practice was to base oaths on particular heinous circumstances. In the event that someone swore an oath and was lying, something similar would befall him (Priestly and Wilks 1960). The Great Oath of Asante was instituted by Opoku Ware, the nephew of Osei Tutu I, as a national pledge of allegiance, 'not only to assure the Asante that Osei Tutu's spirit continued to guide the nation, but also to reunite and rekindle their fighting spirit and to achieve the purposes for which the Asante Union had been called into being' (Flynn 1971:60).

In addition, the Kumasi ruling elite made their sacredness visual by performing religious ceremonies such as *adae* and the yearly *Odwira*⁷¹ festival. To make sure that the ancestors would dispose themselves favourably towards them and their subjects, the Asantehene and all other chiefs and queen mothers regularly performed rituals to feed the ancestors. In order not to forget these rituals, which were viewed as of utmost importance for the prosperity of *Asanteman*, the Asante created a ritual calendar cycle known as *adaduanan*⁷² by which a year was divided into nine units of

ground; this was then covered with a cloth called *nsa*, woven in the North, and sometimes like what we call 'Kano cloth', and the stool was set upon this. The Golden Stool was not to be sat upon as ordinary stools were.

⁷¹ *Dwira* means 'to cleanse'.

⁷² Literally 'forty days' *da* means 'day', *aduanan* means 'forty'. The forty-two (named) day cycle of the ritual Asante calendar, combined the *nanson* cycle (six days week, originating from the Guan) with the *nawotwe* cycle (seven days week) (six times seven making forty two). In the oral tradition the *adaduanan* was known as 'forty days' (Bartle 1978).

forty-two days. These units (*adae*)⁷³ were occasions for venerating the ancestors by pouring libations of schnapps and the sacrificing of sheep, chickens or goats. The ninth unit marked the end of the year and the beginning of the new harvest. This *adae*, known as the *Odwira*⁷⁴ festival was meant to commemorate the death of all Asantehenes and to perform their mortuary rituals. The performance of the *adae* throughout the year and during *Odwira* linked the Asantehene to the ancestral spirits (Gilbert 1994:103). *Odwira* is as old as the Asante state and was already celebrated by the first King of Asante; Asantehene Osei Tutu I (1701-1750). Since then, the Asante celebrated the festival yearly till 1896⁷⁵ when the British deported Prempeh I; an event which marked the informal end of the autonomous Asante state.

The festival of *Odwira* had at least four functions. (a) it was held to celebrate the change from a primarily hunting and farming community to one of agriculturalists as well as an occasion to celebrate and later to remember the establishment of the first Asante village called 'Kwamen' that later became known as Kumasi (Gilbert 1994:105; Kwamena-Poh 1973:131). (b) It was an occasion to celebrate the New Year according to the Akan ritual calendar; the *adaduanan* cycle. During *Odwira*, the Asante cleaned their environment and quenched all fires to kindle new ones. (c) It was a time to recover relationships and to remember the deceased of the past year. The festival symbolised the homecoming of the ancestors (*nsamanfo*) for being fed with mashed yam (*oto*) which was the only popular staple food of the Asante (Gilbert 1994:103). (d) It was also an occasion to thank the living for their contributions to *Asanteman* in the past year and for the renewal of the allegiance of the household personnel (*nhenkwaa*) and the subordinate rulers to their king. This thanksgiving ceremony was also symbolised by yam. The merchant Thomas Bowdich observed the ritual of the eating of yam by the royal household. Bowdich: 'About ten days after the Yam Custom, the whole of the royal household eat new yam for the first time, in the market place, the king attending' (Bowdich and Ward 1966:279).

At the beginning of the festival, the king's subjects symbolically threw away the yam of the past year and ate the yam of the new harvest but not before the Asantehene had eaten first. The distribution of new yam symbolised the king's rebirth or the renewed allegiance of his subjects (Gilbert 1994:108, 115). The *Odwira* festival was thus also meant to legitimatise *Asanteman* and to re-establish the power of the Asantehene. The political significance of the *Odwira* festival was well summarised by Freeman, who observed,

⁷³ There were two *adae* in every *adaduanan* cycle: (a) *awukudae* (the 'small' or Wednesday *adae*) which took place on day fifteen, also termed *kurudapaawukuo*; and (b) *akwasidae* (the 'big' or Sunday *adae*) which took place on day thirty three, also named *kurukwasie*.

⁷⁴ *Odwira* means 'to purify', or 'to cleanse'.

⁷⁵ In 1896, the openly celebration of *Odwira* on a state's level was suspended. Its celebration did *not* take place again until 1985.

It is a kind of annual parliament wherein, towards the latter end of the festival, all matters of political and judicial administration are discussed by the king and chiefs in Council, and where the latter answer all questions relating to their respective provinces, and are subjected to the consequences of appeals, from their local Judicial Courts, to the Supreme Court of the king in Council (Freeman 1886).

A recurring element in all Asante rites was the chiefs' and the Asantehene's visit to the stool room, in which the stools of the former Asantehenes⁷⁶ were placed to venerate their ancestral spirits. It was believed that the spirit of the departed chief resided in the stool. In 1819 Bowdich observed:

About twenty sheep are dipped (one sheep and one goat only are sacrificed at the time) to be killed in the palace in the afternoon, that their blood may be poured on the stools and the door posts (Bowdich and Ward 1966:289).

During a separate festival, called 'death wake', human beings were ritually killed as part of the king's visit to the stool-room in Bantama. Bowdich referred to this phenomenon when he reported that:

The kings, and kings only, are buried in the cemetery at Bantama, and the sacred gold buried with them; their bones are afterwards deposited in a building there, opposite to which is the largest brass pan I ever saw, (for sacrifices) being about five feet in diameter, with four small lions on the edge. Here human beings are frequent and ordinary, to water the graves of the kings (Bowdich and Ward 1966:289).

Fifty six years later, Ramseyer and Kühne made the following observations:

The most dreadful of the Ashantee festivals, Bantama, or 'death wake', now approached. The king went early in the morning of February the fifth to Bantama, where the remains of his deceased predecessors were preserved in a long building, approached by a gallery, and partitioned into small cells, the entrances of which were hung with silken curtains. In these apartments reposed the skeletons of the kings, fastened together with gold wire, and placed in richly ornamented coffins, each being surrounded by what had given him most pleasure during his life. On this occasion every skeleton was placed on a chair in his cell to receive the royal visitor; who, on entering, offered it food; after which a band played the favourite melodies of the departed. The poor victim selected a sacrifice, with a knife thrust through his cheeks, was then dragged forward and slain, the king washing the skeleton with his blood. Thus was each cell visited in turn, sacrifice after sacrifice being offered, till evening closed ere the dreadful round was completed (Ramseyer and others 1875:117).

After the abolishment of human sacrifices in 1844⁷⁷ the royal stools were officially washed with the blood of sheep. This rite of purification symbolised the unity between the living, the dead and the unborn. Once again, this rite also emphasised the importance of the *Sika Dwa Kofi* for the persistence of the Asante kingdom. The purpose of the above-described rite of purification of the

⁷⁶ Royal paramount chiefs and sub-chiefs had their own stoolrooms and their stools were also blackened after their death as a sign of great honour. The stools of non-royals who became chiefs, however, were usually not blackened because they were not believed to play a role in ancestral veneration and ancestors were believed not to listen to them (Perbi 1991).

⁷⁷ Although the custom of ritually killing human beings was abolished in 1844, it was only in 1876 after debate in the 'Council of Kumasi' and the *Asantemanhyiamu* that the decision was taken to cease carrying out mass executions on public occasions (Wilks 1989:673).

royal stools during *Odwira* was to tell the Asante subjects that their kingdom would persist as long as the Asante would keep safe the *Sika Dwa Kofi* and would continue to perform the stool rituals.

In conclusion, the myth of the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, the swearing of an oath and the *Odwira* festival were three ways to legitimatise *Asanteman*. They enabled the Kumasi elite to rule by coercion and in subtle ways, by indirect ritualised communication, gained ‘consent’ of the population for the use of coercive force.

3.4 The introduction of African Islam and European Missionary Christianity in Kumasi

In this section, I will discuss the introduction of African Islam and European Missionary Christianity into Kumasi in the pre-colonial period in the history of the Asante. I will treat the mentioned world religions in chronological order of their penetration into Asante society, focussing first on African Islam and then on European Missionary Christianity.

Islam was introduced into Kumasi in two different forms: (a) as a mild form of Islam known as ‘the Suwarian tradition’ that consisted of followers of Al-Hajj Salim Suwari, a learned cleric from the core Mali area who lived around 1500. Suwari had created a form of Islam that gave guidance to Muslims among ‘pagans’ (such as the Asante) who, because of their positions as guests in generally non-Muslim areas could not afford to attempt to convert their hosts into Muslims (Robinson 2004:56) (see section 6.3.1 for further details), and (b) as orthodox Islam in the tradition of Uthman dan Fodio that consisted of followers of this eighteenth century Hausa Muslim from Gobir, who in 1804 started an orthodox Muslim reform movement whose main goal was to reinvent the *Dar-al-Islam* (see section 6.3.2) (Robinson 2004:139-152).

Suwarian was introduced in Kumasi in two strands. In the fifteenth century this religion was brought to Kumasi by Mande-Dyula traders and in the nineteenth century it was spread by Asante *Nkramo*. In 1471, Portuguese traders reported that the Fante at the Coast traded with the Islamic Mande-Dyula from the north of present-day Ghana (Silverman and David 1989:326). The African Mande-Dyula came to the Akan zone for trade, not to impose orthodox Islamic religion upon the Fante, the Asante and other Akan cultural groups. Even the jihads, which Islamicised Hausaland in the 1800s and Futa Toro, Segu and Masina in the 1850s and 1860s, did not significantly influence the Akan states. The Mande-Dyula merchants came from Daboya, Buipe, Begho and Bono-Manso (see map 7), a town with a goldmine in the north of Kumasi that in 1722-3 had been defeated by the southern Akan and had become a subject of the Asante Kingdom. The inhabitants of these towns produced and distributed gold, for gold routes ran from Bono to Jenne, on the Niger Bend. The Mande-Dyula traders from Bono carried the gold into Muslim Sudan and carried back salt, cloth, brass bowls and Islamic ideas into the Asante Kingdom (Insoll 2003:334,337). Further, Islam was introduced in the Asante Kingdom when, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Savanna

kingdom of Gonja came directly under Asante control and also Dagomba and Mamprusi came into its sphere of influence. Additionally, the rulers of the Asante kingdom had established diplomatic contacts with those of the Mossi kingdom of Wagadugu and the involvement of the Asante in the profitable trade of kola nuts also developed further contact with the Muslims. In the eighteenth century, Asantehene Osei Kwadwo (1764-1777) invited literate Muslims⁷⁸ to Kumasi who were also followers of Suwari and who became known as 'Asante *Nkramo*', meaning 'those who can read the Qur'an'. The Asante *Nkramo* had received their religious education at the Sankore teaching mosque, a centre of Islamic learning in Timbuktu⁷⁹, to work for him at his palace as advisers in matters of trade and foreign affairs and as keepers of records and accounts in Arabic. Another function of some Muslims was to perform religious services for the protection of the Asantehenes with the help of talisman (*suman*) (Schildkrout 1970:256). In fact, the greatest source of influence from these Muslims in Kumasi was the appeal of Islamic charms and Muslim prayers.

In 1819, the British Consul Dupuis (1824), who came to Kumasi for negotiations and stayed a full year in this town observed that Kwadwo's successor Asantehene Osei Kwame (1777-1803) was also sympathetic towards Islam and used Muslims to maintain a cordial diplomatic relationship with Muslim rulers in the North of the Asante Kingdom, such as Gonja and Mamprusi. Asantehene Osei Bonsu (1800-1824) continued to associate with Muslim advisers and developed a real chancery for the mentioned diplomatic services of the Asante *Nkramo* whose records were kept in Arabic (Adjaye 1984). During his reign the Asante established friendly relations with Ahmad B. Muhammad (Ahmadu Lobbo), a jihadist of Masina. There is, however, not much known about this jihadist as the records about him were destroyed in the fire after the British sacked Kumasi in 1874 (Hiskett 1984:131-133).

The more radical Muslims who settled in Kumasi in the beginning of the nineteenth century came from Hausaland. The best-known of the Hausa Muslims was Sharif Ibrahim, a Borno (e-alim) who was resident in Muhammad (e-Abd al-Salam al-Maruwi). Ibrahim supported himself through the profitable business of manufacturing charms and amulets which is an Africanised form of Islam

⁷⁸ According to Silverman and David (1989:326) the scholars (*ulama*) of Kumasi, interviewed over the years by researchers, have traced their origin to such locations as Buna, Bonduku, and Banda. However, Wilks (1989), (1966) mentions that the first *imam al bilad* of Asante, who worked for Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame (1804-1807) in the palace, was the son of the Gonja divisional town head of Gbuipe and probably came from one of the ancient Wangara Kamaghate groups found throughout Gonja. All subsequent occupants of that imamate have been his descendants, according to Wilks.

⁷⁹ The Islamic learning centre in Timbuktu has sometimes been referred to as a university. The fourteenth century medieval usage of that term, meaning a collection of scholars and students living in a single community for the common purpose of religious teaching and learning, correctly describes Timbuktu at that time. Intellectual influences came first from Morocco, and later (after 1500) especially from Egypt with Azhar in Cairo as a role model (Hiskett 1984:40-41). The Moroccan conquest of Shonghai of 1528 brought a heavy toll to this centre of Muslim religious 'science'. Between 1528 and 1800 it stayed a local centre of Muslim religious scholarship, but it was certainly not the leading centre for the whole of the Sahel (Hiskett 1984:154-155).

and by offering his prayers in return for gifts. Many Hausa leaders, such as Ibrahim were unpopular among other less radical Muslims in Kumasi, who were afraid that too much intimacy with those Muslims would negatively affect their relationship with the Asante Royals (Hiskett 1984:133-135). Most likely, the reason for the unpopularity of these radical Muslims was also related to their perception of the Asante Indigenous Religion as a pagan cult which they believed should be eradicated by converting the Asante to Islam. Orthodox Muslims had great problems with important elements of the Indigenous Religion such as the ritual killing of human beings and libation in honour of the ancestors.

I will now look at the introduction of Christianity into Kumasi. Christians introduced their faith to the Asante through two main strands, European Missionary Christianity and African Christianity, of which the first mentioned was brought in during the pre-colonial period. From the late fifteenth century, Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries undertook the first attempts to convert the inhabitants of the Gold Coast.⁸⁰ The influence of Catholicism on the local Fante community, who lived at the Coast, was small and the locals perceived the few Catholic elements in their religion as a distinctive traditional cult within their Indigenous Religion. The high degree of integration of the Catholic cult in the Indigenous Religion made the vicar in Elmina castle in 1632 remark in his letter to the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide at Rome that the four hundred Christians in Elmina-town (*Edena*) were Christians in name only. By 1872, when the Protestant Dutch, who had a policy of non-interference in the religion of the locals, left and handed Elmina over to the British, the Catholic elements had long been fully integrated into the local indigenous Fante religion (of *Edena*). Therefore, it was not so remarkable when in 1880, two French Catholic priests referred to the Elminian *Santamariafo* (Fante for 'people of Santa Maria') as 'Catholic pagans' (Platvoet 1979:549-553).

The form of Catholic practice these French priests encountered was very different from their own version of Catholicism. It is for this reason that scholars of religion make a distinction between the fifteenth century attempts of missionaries and modern European Missionary Christianity, which started in January 1828 with the 'Basel Missionary Society' (BMS), presently the Presbyterian Church. Later on in the nineteenth century the 'Society of the African Mission' (SAM), which later became known as the Roman Catholic Church in Africa also sent missionaries to the Gold Coast and so did 'The Northern German Missionary Society' (NGMS)⁸¹ less formally

⁸⁰ The best overview, based on Roman and Portuguese archives is Wiltgen (1956).

⁸¹ On 5 May 1847, four missionaries of the 'The Northern German Missionary Society' (NGMS), landed at Cape Coast. Within four years, these missionaries had all died. After thirty four years of labour only since 1881 the activity of the Bremen missionaries showed distinct progress. In 1893 the Gospel was preached in three hundred and thirteen places (Reindorf 1966:238-243). The area in which the missionaries of the small Bremen Mission worked lay in the coastal plain. Franz Michael Zahn, who led the mission, believed that any extension inland was impossible because of the Asante war and the financial problems it would raise. This led to tedious

known as the 'Bremen Evangelic Mission' (BEM) and the 'Wesley Missionary Society' (WMS), the present Methodist Church. The 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel' (SPG) which was a section of the Church of England (Anglican) was dormant⁸² during most of the nineteenth century (Buah 1980:132-138). The Anglican Church itself appeared as a mission organisation (known as 'The Church of England Mission') (CEM) in the 'Gold Coast Colony' towards the close of the nineteenth century. In Kumasi, the missionaries of the CEM were not very successful. Not until 1913 were an Anglican church, a school and a chapel were established by CEM missionary G. W. Morrison (Arhin 1992:55-57). Apart from that, in the pre-colonial period, the Anglican Church in Kumasi also had relatively little influence.⁸³

Most missionaries started their activities on the Gold Coast and came only much later to Kumasi. The Roman Catholics, for instance, came first to Kumasi in 1880 but did not found a church until 1905, when James Anquanda a jailor from Winneba, took the initiative to build one. The first Roman Catholic resident missionary in Kumasi was Fr. Joseph Nuller, a Dutchman, who arrived in 1910 and opened a station in the same year. In 1913 the first Roman Catholic Chapel was built (Arhin 1992:55-57; Kimble 1963:153, footnote 6). The Methodist Church in Kumasi was founded in December 1841 and the Presbyterian Church in 1869 (Ramseyer and others 1875:1-67).

To sum up, African Islam was introduced in the Asante Kingdom in the fifteenth century and eighteenth century in the mild tradition of Suwari and the radical tradition of Uthman dan Fodio. European Missionary Christianity was introduced in the fifteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century. The mainstream Christian churches that were established in the latter two centuries belonged to the 'Wesley Missionary Society', the 'Basel Missionary Society', 'the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel' and 'the Society of the African Mission'.

3.5 The Role of the Asante Traditional Authorities as Indigenous Religious Peacekeepers

In this section, I will look at the role of Asante traditional authorities as indigenous religious peacekeepers. I will first study the social relationship of those authorities with Islamic and Christian religious leaders. Then, I will elaborate on the extent to which those leaders adapted and adopted Islamic and Christian elements in their Indigenous Religion. In both cases, socially and religiously, I

differences of opinion between some of the Bremen missionaries, who wanted to go further into the interior. Zahn, however, kept to his conviction till the large number of baptists in the interior (for instance around 1890) changed their view too (Ustorf 2002:139 and footnote 113).

⁸² One of the few SPG missionaries who were, however, credited with taking the gospel to Kumasi was John Mills. In 1839 Mills held service with the then ruling Asantehene Kwaku Duah I. But when in 1841 the SGP proposed to send a man to Kumasi, the Governor at Cape Coast vetoed the plan on the grounds that too many versions of the Christian faith would confuse the Asante (Williamson 1953:7).

⁸³ In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Anglican diocese was of some influence because it was seen as a typical British elitist church that was linked to the British crown and the colonial government. For this reason, Asantehene Prempeh I became an Anglican, which gave this church standing.

will start with a description of the relationship between Muslims and Asante and end with those between Asante and European Christian missionaries.

3.5.1 The social and religious relationships between Asante and Muslims

From the foundation of the Asante Kingdom in 1701, there were three different groups of Muslims in Kumasi, and I will show the relationship of the religious leaders of these groups with the Asante traditional authorities. Besides the Mande-Dyula and the Asante *Nkramo* at the royal court who were adherents of a mild form of Islam, the town also housed the more orthodox Hausa Muslims. In terms of economic activity, the Mande-Dyula and Hausa Muslims primarily came to Kumasi for the purpose of trade. The Asante *Nkramo* were employed by the Asante to undertake religious and diplomatic services.

The Asante traditional authorities were interested in Mande-Dyula traders who entered their kingdom for reasons of trade in gold and kola nuts. The Mande-Dyula were a powerful trade family of Muslims who were the first link in a vast distributive network that extended northward from the goldfields to the greater entrepôts of the western Sudan and Sahel, thence across the Sahara by caravan trails to the Mediterranean littoral, and so into Europe, the Middle East, and beyond (Wilks 2000:94). The Asante, who were themselves not a trade nation, depended on the trade links of the Mande-Dyula families for obtaining kola nuts which were used in various Asante indigenous rituals, but also, as discussed in section 3.1, because of the trade in firearms that these Muslims obtained from the Dutch at the coast that were then sold to the Asante. Firearms and especially the fear of these weapons in the Asantehene's palace helped the Asante to maintain peaceful relationships between the various state leaders of the Asante Kingdom. They also helped the Asante to expand their nation by attacking surrounding states who were weaker due to the lack of these powerful armaments (Jones 1962). For the purpose of trade, the Asante tolerated Muslims in their capital and to an elementary level allowed syncretism to occur between the Asante Indigenous Religion and Islam (Insoll 2003). In comparison with for instance Dagomba, Islamic elements were, however, hardly incorporated into the Asante Indigenous Religion at all (Levtzion 1968:181-187).

In the eighteenth century, the Asante encouraged Muslims to come and live in Kumasi rather than just come and go for the purpose of trade. Their reasons for doing so were twofold: (a) they attempted to encourage trade with the Mande-Dyula families and (b) they hoped to make use of the diplomatic skills of Juula religious leaders (*ulama*) to negotiate for them with Muslims in the Northern hinterlands and with the Europeans at the Coast. The Mande-Dyula scholars and those of other Dyula families who lived and worked at the royal court became known as 'Asante *Nkramo*'. Being close to the Asante traditional authorities, they soon gained a considerable amount of political and religious power. They gained political power as the recorders of historical and political events, the preparators

of the chronology and dynastic annals of the Asante monarchs and as members of the Arabic chancery which was one of the four Asante chanceries meant for diplomatic services (Adjaye 1984:136-138). Religious power was gained by providing charms and amulets to the Asante traditional authorities and foretelling the future especially in relation to the outcome of wars. I will now elaborate on the religious and political function of Asante *Nkramo*.

In the nineteenth century, an important member of the Arabic chancery and of the king's council in affairs relating to the practitioners of Sarem and Dagomba was the head of the Asante *Nkramo* Muhammad-al-Ghamba. In 1820, for instance, on behalf of the Asante two of his people were attached to Prince Adom's embassy to Cape Coast to take part in the negotiations of the British envoys in the Asante courts. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Asante *Nkramo* played an important role in negotiations with Europeans in Mossi, Mamprusi, and elsewhere. Being more articulate, the Asante *Nkramo* were believed to have easier relations with Europeans than the Asante themselves. The Asante traditional authorities used Muslims who could read and write Arabic to negotiate with Muslims in the Northern districts of the Asante Kingdom to maintain peaceful relationships with them and with all those Muslims North of their kingdom. Under Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame, they were also asked to write peace settlements with regards to Muslims of the north-west with whom he was at war in order to prevent the ancient trade route from Kumasi through Bondoukou (the successor of Begho) and Kong to the Middle Niger from falling into disuse (Levtzion 1968:181-187; Wilks 1961:14-29).⁸⁴ One of the peacekeeping strategies of the Asante traditional authorities was thus to make use of the skills of literate Muslims to maintain diplomatic relationships with other Muslims in and outside the Asante Kingdom. However, this peacekeeping strategy was not only political but also had an 'indigenous religious' component. For Asante *Nkramo* were both at home and during embassies asked to pray for the Asantehene and other chiefs and Asante warriors. The incorporation of Muslim prayers into the Asante Indigenous Religion contributed to the building of harmonious relationships between Asante and Muslims of the embassies and in Kumasi. This occurred to such an extent that in 1819 the British Consul Dupuis, who stayed in Kumasi for a year, commented that the Asante without knowing the content of the Qur'an were persuaded that it was a volume of a divine creator, and consequently that it contains ordinances and prohibitions which are most congenial to the happiness of mankind in general (Dupuis 1824:247). Part of this understanding might, however, have been reached unconsciously rather than as an effect of a deliberate peacekeeping strategy. No doubt a consequence of conscious indigenous religious peacekeeping was the fact that Osei Tutu Kwame sent Asante boys to the school of Muhammad-al-Ghamba for Islamic tuition (Dupuis 1824:97,107, and xiv). At the same time, however, this Asante King held patronage over this school, which soon reached the number of seventy pupils, to make sure that it would not become too

⁸⁴ The Kumasi – Bondoukou trade route was of vital importance for the economy of the Asante Kingdom.

popular (Wilks 1961:20-21). The Asante boys were thus most likely sent more as a sign of respect to the Muslim community than to really promote Islam in the Asante region. Another sign of respect for Muslims, as part of an indigenous religious peacekeeping strategy of Asante traditional authorities, was to show understanding that these inhabitants of the Asante kingdom would not bow down to them.

Overall Asante *Nkramo* Muslims and Asante lived peacefully together. This situation could also develop because these Dyula Muslims were adherents of the Suwarian tradition. Consequently they did not attempt to convert Asante to Islam and they accepted the authority of non-Muslim rulers and supported it insofar as it enabled them to follow their own way of life in accordance with the *sunna*⁸⁵ of the Prophet (Wilks 2000:98). Because of being so far away from 'the land of Islam' (*dar-al-Islam*) referring to the part of the world governed by Muslims and the *shari'a*, they often found themselves at the fringes of what was accepted with regards to the Suwarian tradition, for instance by praying for the well-being of the Asantehene and by attending indigenous rituals such as *Odwira* that included the ritual killing of human beings⁸⁶. Overall, however, they kept a distance regarding the ideas of Asante indigenous practitioners in fear of backsliding (*ihmal*) and even of apostasy and were very much aware of the dangers, in terms of their belief, of staying in 'the land of unbelievers' (*dar-al-harb*).

The third group of Muslims that came to Kumasi in the pre-colonial period was the Hausa. Because of the orthodox form of Islam they adhered to, Hausa Muslims were generally less welcomed by the Asante traditional authorities to live and work in this town and after the 1830s they were restricted to Salaga and markets north of the Volta (Lovejoy 1971). An exception is the case of Sharif Ibrahim, a Hausa Muslim who impressed Osei Tutu Kwame with his 'great sanctity'. Consequently the Asante king asked Sharif Ibrahim both to pray for an Asante victory in the campaign against Gyaman that was then being mounted and also to accompany the armies (Wilks 1961:27-28). Generally though, regarding issues of religion there was less contact between the Asante traditional authorities and Hausa Muslims than between those authorities and the adherents of the Suwarian tradition. Consequently there was also less syncretism on an elementary level between the Asante Indigenous Religion and orthodox Islam than between this religion and Suwarianism.

I will now focus on the religious relationship between the Asante traditional authorities and Islamic religious leaders in the adaptation and adoption of Islamic elements in the Asante Indigenous Religion and vice versa. In other words, I will study forms of syncretism between the AIR and African Islam. I will centre on the following three aspects of syncretism: (a) the process of adoption

⁸⁵ A normative custom of the Prophet or of the early Muslim community, as set forth in the *hadith* (q.v.), which is the prophetic tradition; an account of what the Prophet said or did; second in authority to the Qur'an.

of and adaptation to one another's religion, (b) the Asante traditional authorities' reasons for the allowance of syncretism and (c) the limitations put by those authorities on the occurrence of syncretism.

With regards to the process of syncretism it is important to make a distinction between 'unconscious' and 'conscious' syncretism. According to Rudolph (Leopold 2004) 'unconscious' or spontaneous syncretism is a tendency towards identity-preservation in spite of changes. 'Conscious syncretism' is the reflected religiosity of the founder of a religion that may lead to new religious formations (see section 1.4: syncretism). In the Asante society in Kumasi in the pre-colonial period both of these forms of syncretism occurred. Examples of unconscious syncretism are for instance the Islamic custom of circumcision, which according to the Asante Indigenous Religion prevented a royal to whom this was applied from occupying a stool (McCaskie 2000a), (Pobee 1977:3-4).

Circumcision can be perceived as a clear attempt of Muslims to preserve their Islamic identity in the *dar-al-harb*. An example of unconscious syncretistic Asante indigenous religious elements is the perception of Allah as a being with magical powers. In fact, the whole conception of the supernatural world of Muslims who adhered to the Suwarian tradition is an amalgam of African and Islamic beliefs (Trimingham 1959:47-67, 124-183). An example of conscious syncretism between AIR and Islam is the use of *asuman* or protecting powers by the Asante *Nkramo* for the benefit of the Asante traditional authorities. According to Christaller (1933:483) *asuman* is 'a charm, amulet or talisman, worn as a remedy or preservative against evils or mischief, such as diseases and witchcraft, consisting or composed of various things such as feathers, hair or teeth of various animals, beads, scraps of leather or paper inscribed with mystic characters and tied around some limb or hung about the neck'. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, Asante were familiar with writing in the form of letters, cabalistic formulae and quotations from the Qur'an (McCaskie 1972:32). Written quotations were bought as amulets by the Mande-Dyula and Hausa Muslims as spiritual 'bullet-proof vests' (*bata kari kese*). Muslim amulets contain Qur'anic texts that are believed to serve as charms. Asantehene Osei Bonsu wore these amulets on a warrior cloth during the Dwamen war⁸⁷ of 1874 in order to protect himself against evil spirits (Wilks 1989), (Wilks 1999).

The Muslims of Kumasi in turn had Twi expressions for Muslim religious buildings or activities, such as *Nyame dan* — small mosque — and the expressions *Me kɔfrɛ Nyame* — 'I will pray to God, I will go to the mosque' and *Onyame fre* — 'to pray to god' (Christaller 1933:357), which are

⁸⁶ Juula Muslims did not attempt to convert the Asante, nor were they fully passive towards the pagan religion of their rulers. They for instance tried to abolish the ritual killing of human beings by giving the example of sacrificing a sheep instead (Levtzion 1968:184).

⁸⁷ This is the war that Asantehene Osei Bonsu fought between 1811 and 1818 with the Gyamanhene Adinkra, after this chief illegally (as stated in the 77 laws of Okomfo Anokye that were created at the time of the foundation of the Asante Kingdom in 1701) borrowed the idea of the Asante to make a Golden Stool, which was the symbol of the highest political authority (Wilks 1989:271-273).

also an example of conscious syncretism. Another example of this type of syncretism was the Asante *Nkramo*'s task of synthesising Asante, Christian and Muslim calendars (Adjaye 1984:136-138).

In relation to conscious syncretism I will now focus on the reasons why the Asante traditional authorities allowed these type of syncretistic elements in the Asante Indigenous Religion. The main reason for these authorities to adopt Islamic religious elements was to maintain a peaceful relationship with these authorities. The adoption of Islamic elements confirmed their respectful attitude towards Islam. Other ways to show respect for Muslims were to allow them to live in multi-ethnic communities in areas of the town that were not distinct from other areas (Schildkrout 1970:255), which encouraged their integration. Consequently, the Muslims in Kumasi were incorporated in the Asante society, which becomes clear, for example, from the fact that they spoke Twi (Robinson 2004). Another sign of respect of Muslims was that, unlike other war captives and those avoiding persecution, Muslims were not killed. As a result, Kumasi became the home of several refugees, such as the leader of the Asante *Nkramo* Muhammed-al Gamba who fled for the ruler of Mamprussi who was his relative shortly before 1807 (Wilks 1961). Finally, a sign of trust in Kumasi's Muslims from the side of the Asante traditional authorities was that the Asantehene's bodyguards were Muslims (Wilks 1966). Conscious syncretism was thus part of an overall strategy of Asante traditional authorities of maintaining cordial relationships with Muslims. All limitations in the acceptance of Islamic elements by Asante chiefs and queen mothers were a consequence of their responsibility for the security of the Asante state. In 1803, Asantehene Osei Kwame (1777-1803) was for instance destooled out of protection of the Asante state. Osei Kwame had planned to become a Muslim and to make Islam the only religion of the Asante society by 'his inclination to establish the Koranic law for the civil code of the empire' (Wilks 1961:22). The kingmakers, and especially the queen mother, interpreted the Asantehene's decision to convert to Islam as a threat to the community. They were afraid that it would mean that the *Odwira* festival would be prohibited because it contained, in the eyes of Muslims, pagan elements like the ritual killing of human beings (Wilks 1966:334). In the eyes of the king's chiefs and kingmakers, the prohibition of *Odwira* would weaken the position of the Asantehenes as it was organised yearly to legitimise the Asante state (McCaskie 1995:144-242). In addition, the introduction of Islam and its accompanying patrilineal descent system would be a threat to the continuation of the royal matrilineal lineage. In the words of Dupuis (1824:245) the powerful chiefs in the capital feared,

that the Moslem religion, which they well know levels all ranks and orders of men, and places them at the arbitrary discretion of the sovereign, might be introduced, whereby they would lose the ascendancy they now enjoy. To anticipate the calamity they dreaded, a conspiracy was entered into.

Another limitation that the kingmakers might have put on the activities of Islamic religious leaders as part of a philosophy of accommodation and cooperation between Muslim and local non-Muslim

communities, was on the building of spatially ostentatious mosques in and around Kumasi. Until at least the late 1840s, when Asantehene Kwaku Dua I (1834-1867) formed an official imamate in Kumasi, there is no record of such mosques in this town. This may be attributable to a deliberate Asante policy of preventing their construction in an effort to check the Muslims' development of a physical base and presence. However, an explanation for the absence of these mosques may also lie in the ideology of the mild form of Islam (*Suwarianism*) that was advocated by many of the scholars (*ulama*) in Kumasi, for whom the building of mosques was unnecessary for the expression of their religious belief. In all cases, it was not until 1948 that the Muslim community obtained a plot of land in Kumasi from the Asantehene and began the construction of a large Friday mosque (*jami*) (Maier 1997:323-325; Wilks 2000).

3.5.2 The social and religious relationships between Asante and Christians

In this section, I will study the social and religious relationships between Asante traditional authorities and Christian religious leaders in the pre-colonial period. With regards to the relationship between Asante chiefs and queen mothers and Islamic religious leaders, the attitude of Asante towards these leaders depended on the type of Islam to which they adhered. Followers of the Suwarian tradition were more welcome in Kumasi than the adherents of Uthman dan Fodio's orthodox Islam. The relationship between Asante and Christians did not so much depend on the type of Christianity but instead was dominated by British colonial politics. Since 'European Christian Missionaries' (ECMs) always joined forces with British colonial government servants the Asante often perceived them as one and the same (Bartels 1965). The Asante-Christian bond was thus controlled by the perceived trustworthiness in the eyes of the Asante Royals of the totality of the British colonial delegations that came to Kumasi. I will therefore focus respectively on the Asante-British diplomatic relationships under the reign of the Asantehenes who were in power during the visits of ECMs to the capital of the Asante Kingdom. These Asantehenes were Kwaku Dua I (1834-1867), Kofi Kakari (1867-1874), Mensa Bonsu (1874-1883) and Kwaku Dua II. After these reigns the relationships with the British deteriorated because the Asante traditional rulers focussed on their internal politics as their kingdom became involved in a civil war, among other factors. The situation only became better in 1894 with the enstoolment of Asantehene Prempeh I, whose policy was based on peace with the British for the purpose of trade.

Wilks (1989) distinguishes two main political strategies of the Asantehenes who ruled in the nineteenth century. The policy of most Asantehenes in this century, such as Kwaku Dua I, Mensa Bonsu, Kwaku Dua II and thus also Prempeh I was that of maintaining peaceful political relationships with the British for the purpose of trade with these Europeans. Others, such as Kofi Kakari, put emphasis on the control of the Asante Kingdom by imperialising tribute states and so

creating a buffer defence zone. Their strategy was, in other words, that of fighting wars. According to Wilks, those Asantehenes who put emphasis on peace are 'dovish', whereas those whose strategy was that of war can be referred to as 'hawkish'. Besides the policy of individual Asantehenes *Asanteman* was ruled by war or peace parties whose opinion could be opposed to those of the Asantehenes.

In relation to the reign of the above mentioned 'dovish' and 'hawkish' Asantehenes and their war and peace parties, I will study the Asante relationship with religious leaders of the mainstream European Christian societies, who were predominantly European missionaries who stayed in Kumasi for a long period. The main focus will be on the 'Wesley Missionary Society' (WMS), the 'Basel Missionary Society' (BMS) and 'the Society of the African Mission' (SAM) and the attitude of Asante traditional authorities towards their religious leaders. 'The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel' (SPG) was dormant during most of the nineteenth century; the 'Church of England Mission' was unsuccessful in entering Kumasi until 1913 and members of the 'North German Missionary Society' (NGMS) never dared to come to the interior of the Asante Kingdom until the 1890s.

The six above-mentioned societies all started their missionary activities at the seashores of the Gold Coast. In the fifteenth century, Catholic Portuguese missionaries were the first to arrive at the Coast south of Kumasi which was the living area of the Fante. In 1637, a few Dutch Protestant missionaries came to the Gold Coast to keep out Catholicism and to bring the local coast inhabitants to obedience, thereby giving the Dutch colonisers, who had an exclusive right on possession at the coast until 1673, a kind of flexibility and assistance in achieving their economic (trade) and political (imperialism) goals (Quartey 2007:21). Between 1822 and 1850, the Danish controlled the slave fort Christianborg in the east of the Gold Coast before they sold their settlements to the British. They brought missionaries with them from the Danish Lutheran Church who founded schools and a coffee and cotton plantation; an alternative source of income besides the slave trade at the coast (Nørregård 1966.; Quartey 2007).

Before the nineteenth century, however, none of the ECMs came to Kumasi. In order to reach the town, they would have had to travel through a dense forest, which would be a difficult trip with high costs and health risks. Because death rates among ECMs along the coast were very high, most of them simply did not make it as far as Kumasi. Those missionaries who had a chance of entering the interior in the nineteenth century often feared the Asante, who were believed to have 'cruel customs'. Therefore, even in that century the city of the Asante Kingdom was not the first place that missionaries thought of to bring the Gospel.

Asantehene Kwaku Dua I, however, welcomed Wesleyan and Basel missionaries to come, live and work in Kumasi, since he believed this was in the national interest of the Asante. Consequently, in 1839 he welcomed the Wesleyan missionary T.B. Freeman to the royal court and

gave him permission to hold in his presence, in the palace, a divine service, consisting of the singing of psalms and hymns, reading from the Bible and prayer (*The Guardian* [London], 25 November 1961). In the same year, the Basel missionary A. Riis also came to Kumasi but after his impressions of the town, he did not have much hope of beginning Gospel work in the Asante Kingdom (Reindorf 1966:219) and 'came back with the impression that he had to wait for better hints from the Lord' (Letter of 18 Dec. 1877, from the Rev. F. Ramseyer to Freeling, referring to the journey to Kumasi in 1839 by the Rev. A. Riis; CO/96/122). In 1841 Freeman came back to Kumasi along with the Wesleyan missionary Robert Brookling and two Asante princes, Owusu Ansa and Nkwantabisa. These princes, who were trained in the United Kingdom to become Wesleyan missionaries, were hosted by the British in Kumasi, where they helped to promote Asante-British peace and the Christian faith. Prince Ansa helped Freeman to start a small Wesleyan school and congregation. After that Freeman returned to Kumasi and left Rev Brookling in charge of the mission in Kumasi (Arhin 1992:55-57; Reindorf 1966:230-231). In 1843, Freeman went back to the Asante Kingdom and established a Mission station near Kumasi. In 1845, Freeman returned to Kumasi for the fourth time, this time as General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission on the Gold Coast. Despite all the courteous exchanges between Freeman and the Asantehene from 1839 onwards, the mission station had, however, little success. The Asantehene allowed the missionaries to settle in Kumasi, because of the opportunities the missionary schools brought to educate the Asante as diplomats to preserve peaceful Anglo-Asante relationships. He was, however, also afraid of the introduction of Christianity in the Asante Kingdom, because the adherents of this belief were opposed to the ritual killing of human beings and wanted to abolish this Asante custom. Kwaku Dua I, though, perceived this ritual as 'the most effective means of keeping his people in subjection' (Wilks 1989:594). Then years later, Rev Laing reported that the Asantehene did not encourage the Asante to become Christians. Instead, many Asante were afraid to convert to Christianity, because their King did not support this belief and they were afraid to expose themselves to his ire (Reindorf 1966:quotation, p 235).

In the period 1850-1876, the relationship between the Asante and the missionaries deteriorated and after 1850 all missionaries left Kumasi. From then on, Owusu Ansa was left to carry on single-handedly his missionary work and it was not until 1852 that Rev. Timothy Laing arrived in Kumasi to help the prince with his religious task. In 1853 Prince Ansa left Kumasi to become a Wesleyan minister in the Gold Coast district (Owusu-Mensa 1974). From 1853 until the remainder of Kwaku Dua's reign, missionaries continued to be allowed into the capital, but their activities were carefully supervised: the government utilised their services as intermediaries with the British while at the same time minimising the impact they might have upon metropolitan society (Wilks 1989:595). Between 1862 and 1879 for instance, the Wesleyan missionary J.S.Watts seemingly had an official appointment as councillor in the English chancery and helped the Asante government and the

Asantehene Kwaku Dua I and Kofi Kakari to compose letters to the British for diplomatic purposes. However, because he was in an official and sensitive position most likely he was prevented from engaging in private, unsanctioned correspondence, especially at a time when security decisions and preparations respecting war were being made, as they were in 1867 (Adjaye 1984:152-153).

Asantehene Kofi Kakari had a more positive attitude towards ECMs than his predecessor. Similarly to Kwaku Dua I, he was pleased by the diplomatic skills of those missionaries and the possibility of using them as *ad hoc* chancery officials.⁸⁸ This happened in situations when the permanent members of the English chancery, such as Prince Ansa, who in 1867 was appointed by Kakari as the head of the English chancery, were away. On the other hand, he was reluctant to accept the belief that these missionaries brought with them, since he feared for the negative effects of Christianity on the Asante Indigenous Religion which was used to legitimise his power. What pleased him in relation to the Basel missionaries Ramseyer and Kühne for instance, who were held captive in Kumasi for four years, was that he could make use of Ramseyer's diplomatic skills. For example, he asked Ramseyer to draft letters for him whenever necessary, which was something he could not ask his Asante subjects to do since they did not possess the right ambassadorial skills and fluency in the English language (Adjaye 1984:153-154). Consequently, he treated his prisoners well and gave them a small allowance for living expenses and goods in the form of presents⁸⁹ (Ramseyer and others 1875:73-74). He also made time to hear the gospel from them and they got the king's permission to establish a school with ten pupils near Kumasi, which he believed would be beneficial for the education of the young⁹⁰. It was also not Kakari's decision to keep the Basel missionaries hostage for four years. In 1872, the King actually agreed with Prince Ansa who dedicated himself to the release of the missionaries that it would be better to let them go for free. Adu Bafo, the head of the war party, wanted the British to pay eight hundred Peredwans for them, because he felt that the British had not kept to the Asante-British 'Treaty of Peace' of 1831⁹¹ (Wilks 1989:498). Kakari did,

⁸⁸ The *ad hoc* ambassador represented the official who, without being a career diplomat, was appointed to a special mission. His appointment terminated with the conclusion of the mission. If he was a regular diplomatic office holder, he would revert to his former position at the end of his diplomatic assignment. While all career ambassadors were invariably Asantes, appointment as an *ad hoc* ambassador was not contingent upon Asante citizenship (Adjaye 1984:35).

⁸⁹ On 25 May 1870, for instance, Ramseyer and his wife received from the king a couple of sheep, and an old pair of Dutch military shoes, accompanied by a pair of boots for Mrs. R. of English make, and the finest leather. They had been presented by the Wesleyan missionary Freeman in 1842, to the reigning sovereign, and inscribed on the soles in gilt letters were the following words-'To his Royal Highness, Quakoo Dooah, King of Ashantee, West Africa'.

⁹⁰ Ramseyer also attempted to open a Basel mission station and a school immediately in Kumasi. Unfortunately, this wish was not granted by the Basel Mission Home Committee and he had to wait for some twenty years.

⁹¹ In this Treaty the Asante and the British agreed that refugees from the Asante Kingdom to the Fante coast and vice versa would be sent back for punishment under the law of the area where they came from. As a consequence of their Christian belief, the British, however, repeatedly refused to send back run away slaves whom they believed would be ritually killed once back in the Asante Kingdom (Wilks 1989:498).

however not want to abandon the Asante custom of ritually killing human beings and feared for the effects of Christianity on its persistence.

Asantehene Mensa Bonsu also seems to have appreciated the diplomatic services of the Wesleyan missionaries and equally felt that the introduction of Christianity should be supervised by Asante Royals. On 10 April 1876 under Mensa Bonsu, the request of a Wesleyan missionary named Picot for the re-establishment of a station in Kumasi became part of a debate between the peace and war parties in the Council of Kumasi. He indicated that the Wesleyans were welcome if, like Thomas B. Freeman during the reign of Kwaku Dua Panin, they 'helped the peace of the nation and the prosperity of trade' (MMA, London: Picot to Boyce, dd. Cape Coast, 3 May 1876). However, aware of the sensitivity of the topic among the Asante, he also remarked that missionary schooling was not a good idea, since children had to work and that the customs of Asante were not compatible with Christianity. The Bantamahene, also a member of the peace party, added that polygamy and slavery could not and should not be abolished in Asante. The war party headed by Adu Bofo declared that they would never accept Christianity and would remain true to the ways of their forefathers. Bofo's intervention in council proved decisive and consequently Picot's proposal was rejected, which made him depart the same day (Wilks 1989:518-519). Yet the missionary issue continued to polarise political opinion throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. In March 1881, for example, Mensa Bonsu bowed again to his more liberal councillors and expressed his desire for the reestablishment of schools and a station in Kumase (Lewin 1978:67-68). His response to Ramseyer's presentation of the Bible that year (who visited Kumasi for that purpose) and to other Wesleyan missionaries five years earlier and two years later, clearly indicates that King Bonsu did not welcome these missionaries for religious reasons. For King Bonsu repeated his answer of 1876 that 'the Bible is not a book for us and we would never embrace your religion' (Arhin 1992:quotation, 175; Findlay and Holdsworth 1921). A factor that increased the difficulty for European and Christian Missionaries in bringing the Gospel to Asante under the reign of Mensa Bonsu was that Christianity was increasingly associated with colonisation and European culture and lifestyle. Their presence was consequently perceived to be a threat to the persistence of the Asante state, especially in the remote areas of the Asante Kingdom which were semi-autonomous and fell under less control of the Asante (Lewin 1978), (Wilks 1989).

In 1880, unlike the protestant missionaries of the CEM, King Bonsu also welcomed the Catholic priests August Moreau and Eugene Murat of the 'Society of the African Mission' (SMA), who were the first Catholics in Asante history to travel to Kumasi. The lack of welcome for a Protestant minister came to light in a letter from Asantehene Mensa Bonsu to the Catholic priest Fr. A. Moreau in 1882, in which he wrote: 'I do not refuse you [Moreau], and as for this minister [the Protestant minister], never fear; he won't get in' (Groves 1955:189). Most likely, Mensa Bonsu

welcomed these Catholic missionaries, unlike their Protestant colleagues in the tense years before the civil war of 1883, because they were more sensitive to the Asante Indigenous Religion and therefore less feared for causing a threat to the persistence of that religion. They did their very best to learn Twi, the language of the Asante, even though until the Second Vatican Council, the Church's Latin liturgy of 1963, the Catholics did not encourage much contextualisation of veneration into the culture of the Asante and in general the church had not looked seriously into learning the language of the Akan (Fisher 1998:173-177). Of practical use to the Asante was Moreau's knowledge on healthcare, for which he received praise. Moreau:

[...] Every time I passed the night in a village, I asked if there were any sick. In a short while I would be surrounded by dozens of individuals. A little medicine and ointment for the wounds were all they asked for, and I got the reputation of being a great doctor. On my return journey all who had already seen me did not fail to come and thank me. [...] I love the Ashantis with all my missionary heart, and my greatest desire is to consecrate my life to them. Pray with me that the light may dawn over this great people (*Report*, 16 June 1882, in *AMA* 15/802.02 19.222).

To sum up, initially Mensa Bonsu welcomed Protestant missionaries of the Wesleyan and Basel Missionary Societies, because of their diplomatic skills, of which he could make use. In 1880, when Asante-British relations became even tenser, he only allowed Catholic missionaries to enter Kumasi, because they were more understanding towards adherents of the Asante Indigenous Religion than their Protestant colleagues. By that time, the English chancery, which was part of the Asante diplomatic service, had educated several Asante to be proficient in English and to become familiar with British modes of diplomacy and knowledge of the Gold Coast and Asante affairs. Consequently, it was no longer necessary to ask European Christian missionaries, whose loyalty to the Asantehene was often questionable, to fulfil the task of diplomats on an *ad hoc* basis.

Between 1883 and 1888, the Asante were plagued by a civil war. During that period the Asante government was highly unstable and reigned by an interim government (*kwasafomanhyiamu*) (8 March 1883 to 28 April 1884) and various Asantehenes, such as Kwaku Dua II (28 April 1884 to 11 July 1884), Owusu Kofi (11 June 1884 to Nov 1884) Akyampon Panyin (Nov 1884 to 1887), Owusu Sekyere II (1187 to 26 March 1888) (Kwadwo 2000). On 26 March 1888, Asantehene Prempeh I was elected to become Asantehene but not formally enthroned until six years later. In the eyes of the Asante he remained in this role until 12 May 1931. In practice, in 1897 the British deported King Prempeh I to Sierra Leone and in 1901 to the Seychelles Islands, to return home in 1924 only with the status of private citizen. The British re-enthroned him in 1924 as Kumasihene or paramount chief of Kumasi, and from a British point of view he remained in this position until 1931 (Adjaye 1989). Under John Owusu Ansa Jr, the son of John Owusu Ansa Sr, Prempeh I the English chancery was developed in a diplomatic service with Asante diplomats, who were well skilled and experienced in their negotiations with the British. These diplomats were not permanent working for Owusu Ansa, but came with him on diplomatic missions. The embassy to London of 1894-1895 was,

for instance, composed of Owusu Ansa's brother Albert, Kwame Boaten, Kwaku Fokuo, Kwaku Nkruma, Kwabena Bonna, Akyampon Daban and Kwadwo Tufuo, all of whom had a good reputation in the diplomatic service (Adjaye 1984:125). Consequently, King Prempeh I never had to make use of ECMs for his negotiations with the British. Consequently, in the years before his departure, Prempeh I was very reluctant to let in any ECMs, because he feared an increase in the white men's influence on the religious ideas of his Asante subjects and the eventual fall of the Asante Kingdom. In 1896, it became clear that his fear had been realised, when after arrival in London, the British refused to cooperate with the Asante mission, already having decided to send a military expedition to the Asante Kingdom in order to annexate it and submit the Asante to the British Crown (Adjaye 1984:124-131).

After the exile of Prempeh I, the British welcomed ECMs in Kumasi and opened the kingdom for Christian missionary activity. Consequently, in 1899 the BMS had opened sixteen centres in the Asante Kingdom, with a total of 164 church members and 451 scholars; the WMS then had 1,500 church attendants and 675 scholars (in Sunday and day schools) in eight centres and 7,600 Asante converts. Then in 1900, came the Asante revolt, in the course of which most of the churches were destroyed. However, in 1901, Rev. Frederick A. Lees, a Basel missionary, and John B. Baiden, Assistant African Minister, were given a cheerful welcome in Kumasi. They built a new mission station and at the end of 1902 there were thirty-two Asante converts. Since then the story of the Basel Asante mission was one of steady growth and development in the usual pattern of chapels, Sunday schools and day schools (Kimble 1963:153-154; Wyllie 1980:5-6).

In terms of the religious relationship between Asante traditional authorities and Christians, Asante Royals attempted, and to a certain extent succeeded, to limit the influence of Christianity on the Asante society by only allowing the inclusion of elements of this religion. These limitations that were put on the acceptance of religious ideas in Asante society were part of the Asante traditional authorities' strategies to protect the Asante Kingdom from falling. An example of syncretism between the Asante Indigenous Religion and Christianity on the element level is the coexistence of traditional and Christian marriage rituals. According to the Asante Indigenous Religion a prospective husband should pay a 'knocking fee' (*abowmubodze*), which symbolises the promise to marry a girl. Due to the influence of Christianity on Asante customary marriage rites, they came to include the giving of an engagement ring and a Bible, even in cases where parties were non-Christians. The *abowmubodze*, the Bible and the ring were status symbols. As a result of Christian influences, many marriages also became monogamous, whereas traditionally they were polygamous. However, to secure offspring many Asante who had converted to Christianity married one wife but kept a number of concubines. Christianity also had influence on the death rituals of the Asante. Traditionally, on the

death of a chief some citizens were killed with a view to their serving the deceased chief on the other side. The idea was that the afterlife is a replica of this one. Under Prempeh I, such killings were no longer carried out. Secondly, often in addition to traditional rites, a Church service was also held. (Adjaye 1984), (Pobee 1977:6-8).

Asante Royals attempted to put limitations on the influence of Christianity, because they were afraid it would negatively affect the Asante Indigenous Religion and consequently the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The European Christian Missionaries' introduction of monogamous marriages and the abolition of the custom of the ritual killing of human beings had a great impact on AIR. The effect of these indigenous religious changes was that AIR legitimated the existence of *Asanteman* to a lesser degree. After all, polygamy secured the sustenance of the royal lineage, and the ritual killing of human beings was used by Asante traditional authorities to keep their people in subjection. Besides, Christianity was a threat to Asante Royals, because European Christian missionaries undermined their authority. By introducing Christianity and European clothing they created Asante communities with 'modern' Asante identities, whose members distinguished themselves from the rest of the Asante society and lived in separate parts of town. Instead of listening to the Asante chief and queen mothers, those communities' members now listened to ECMs, whose beliefs undermined kinship solidarity. In particular, the Wesleyan Christian congregations demonstrated a conscious opposition to the ancestral way of life and thought of the rest of the community. The great majority of these missionaries stemmed from Pietistic circles in the Wurttemberg Church in which the primary emphasis was laid on personal devotion to Christ and on experiential religion. The basic principle was to work together with Christ and spread the Kingdom of God on earth, to bring individuals in touch with the saving grace of Christ and to build the converts into new Christian societies (Kimble 1963a). The Basel missionaries showed little respect for the indigenous traditions and its practitioners. Referring to an Asante indigenous believer, BMS member Ringwald for instance wrote:

See this stupid man. He calls and receives no answer; he brings the fetish something and the fowls feed on it (Ringwald 1952:135).

From the perspective of the Asante Royals, the foundation by Basel missionaries of separate Christian communities and their condemnation and attempt to abolish aspects of the Asante Indigenous Religion, made these missionaries rivals for political and religious power in the Asante society. Some Asante converted to Christianity to escape from the authority of the chiefs and queen mothers and the duties that derived from the regulations set during the foundation of the Asante Kingdom, the so called seventy seven laws of Okomfo Anokye.⁹² Conversion to Christianity was

⁹² One of Okomfo Anokye's laws, for instance, says that Thursday is a day of rest on which no one should farm. This caused a clash with the religious ideas of ECMs who instead of Thursday reserved Sunday as a day of rest on which they expected the Asante indigenous believers to go to work. See for more explanation of the laws of Okomfo Anokye, *Ibid.*, 671.

especially attractive for groups within the Asante society who fell outside the jural corpus, such as slaves, princes who could not become Royals, and barren women. The BMS attracted a lot of these Asante since they could offer them a higher social status and in the case of slaves could also prevent them from being ritually killed. Consequently, the Asante Royals were often especially reluctant to allow Basel Missionary Christians to penetrate into the Asante society and spread their ideas (McCaskie 1995), (Middleton 1983:4), (Quartey 2007).

In conclusion, Asante Royals were indigenous religious peacekeepers, because they used the Asante Indigenous Religion to maintain both socially and religiously peaceful relationships with Islamic and Christian religious leaders and their followers. A difference in the acceptance of limited elements of Christianity and Islam is that the former was only received for pragmatic reasons, namely to educate Asante to be able to work for the English chancery of the Asante diplomatic service. The Bible was not believed to bring any good to the Asante society. Islam, on the contrary, was believed to increase the authority of the Asantehene, as the Qur'an was believed to literally contain religious power.

3.6 Inner tensions threatening the persistence of the Asante Kingdom?

From the beginning of the foundation of the Asante Kingdom in 1701 the Asante had been in a tense trade relationship with the British. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the British were involved in the wars of the Asante and the southern coastal states. These states fought for the independence of the Asante Kingdom. However, the Asante royal elite did not want to lose these states, as their incorporation in the Asante Kingdom guaranteed a direct trade route to the coast for the purpose of trade with European nations, such as the Danish, the Dutch and the British. I will come back to the cause of the Anglo-Asante conflicts in the next section. Here it suffices to say that in 1872-3 a series of Anglo-Asante conflicts concerning the sovereignty of the southern states made King Kofi Kakari decide to attack the Fante. An increasing anti-war sentiment caused by the high costs of the war and the great number of victims made the Asante Royals decide to withdraw from the Coast. By then, however, Anglo-Asante relations were so strained that the British decided to attack Kumasi and consequently in 1874 the city was set on fire.

Besides the burning of Kumasi, King Kakari also suffered from the loss of the eastern Bron state (see map 1,2,3), which was part of his Kingdom from the second half of the eighteenth century. To reoccupy the southern provinces in 1872-3 the Asante had made use of troops from the Bron state. Since these troops had suffered enormous losses, once back home the survivors resisted any further demands which the government might make upon them. Consequently, the Dwabenhene Asafo Agyei, who ruled over the semi-autonomous eastern Bron state, rescinded their allegiance to Kofi Kakari and instead decided to obey the British, with whom they had a mutual interest in

changing the Northern trade route with Salaga away from Kumasi (Wilks 1989:279-282). Asantehene Kofi Kakari was accused of the detrimental effects of the war on Asante commoners, who suffered from the economic crisis that had been caused by the economic costs of the battle of 1872-3. As a result, in 1874 King Kakari was deposed and succeeded by King Mensa Bonsu, who remained on his stool until the outbreak of the civil war in 1883. Asantehene Mensa Bonsu had to deal with a series of rebellions against the Kumasi ruling elite. To gain understanding of a series of conflicts with colonial rulers (which will be expanded upon in section 4.2.1), I will briefly introduce two causes of inner tensions in the Asante Kingdom under Mensa Bonsu's reign.

As introduced in section 1.5.2, in the precolonial period of the Asante Kingdom the treasury was in the hands of the Asantehene and there was no opportunity for the accumulation of private wealth. Wealth in the Asante Kingdom was accumulated by the annexing of surrounding states and extracting tribute from those states in the form of cattle, crops and especially slaves. The latter were used by the Asante to work on their land, in the gold mines and to manufacture goods. Since in the eighteenth century, the costs of such wars were proven to be high, in the nineteenth century most Asante Royals chose trade with Europeans and Muslims as a strategy for wealth accumulation. The Asante only allowed one corporation, the 'Company of State Traders', to do business with foreigners. The Asantehene, who headed this company, lent money to chiefs, who could earn money by trade. They had to give back much of their earnings to the Asantehene, but were then paid by him. In 1900 a British colonial described the system of wealth accumulation in Asante as follows:

He [the King] took money from the people, but he gave back money to the people; so that money circulated from the people to the King and from the King to the people. Every forty days the King held what the native call Adai at which it is estimated he spent about £ 1000 making presents to all classes of people in sums ranging from 3 tokos 1/- to 2 and even 3 perequins £ 24 6s. The Chiefs and Captains received each from half Perquin £ 4 1s. to 2 or 3 perequins according to rank; and the lower subjects in proportion. Hence it will be seen that the resources of the Chiefs were never exhausted. Besides the Chiefs of Kumasi acted as Mercantile Agents for the King, each receiving from 500 to 1000 perequines yearly which they in turn distributed to their Subchiefs or Captains and other subjects, who took it to the coast for goods which they took into the interior; and made thereby fabulous profits; they rendered account to the King at the end of the year. With these resources, there is no wonder that they were immensely rich and could afford to meet the exactions of the King who well knew their various wealth (The Gold Coast Aborigines, XVI, no. 115, 30 June 1900, p.3).

Subsequently, the Asantehene praised those chiefs who were able to accumulate a lot of wealth in their lives by personal effort and honoured them with an elephant tail (*Sika Mmra*). The Asantehene possessed the most important *Sika Mmra* in the Asante Kingdom, and thereby possessed the highest symbol of wealth.

Already under the reign of Kwaku Dua I, the impossibility of accumulating private wealth had caused resistance among some Asante traders, who copied a modern lifestyle and European ideology due to their frequent contact with the people of the coast. King Kwaku Dua I, however,

knew how to keep this group of new traders satisfied by allowing some of their illegal methods of escaping from the 'death duties' (*awummyadeɛ*) or taxes that the family of a wealthy person (*sikafo*) had to pay after one's death. Under Asantehene Kofi Kakari the *sikafo* remained quiet. Under the reign of Mensa Bonsu, however, the *sikafo* started to revolt against the Asante state after this Asantehene had increased the amount of tax the *sikafo* had to pay as a result of his government reform program following the destruction of Kumasi in 1874. These intra-Asante tensions did, however, not seriously threaten the persistence of the Asante Kingdom and Asante chieftaincy, as tax dodgers had the chance to escape to the Southern provinces (the 'Gold Coast of Asante') which, since 1874, fell under colonial rule (Wilks 1989:671-705).

The second possible threat to the Asante state was caused in 1879 by the emerging of 'Domankama'; an anti-witchcraft cult. Many Asante attributed the burning of Kumasi and the shrinkage of the Asante Kingdom to the activity of witches. The powers of these enchantresses were believed to come from outside the hierarchy of tutelary deities that defended the realm of human culture. To get rid of these foreign evil spirits, hundreds and perhaps thousands of Asante became members of Domankama. Its leaders promised to hunt for the witches and solve all problems caused by them. Domankama was believed to draw its ritual power from *sasabonsam*, a ferocious, part-human monster of the deep forest who was seen to be in league with witches and whose powers could also heal their effects. At the time, the control and mediation of the Asante state were, however, still strong enough to eradicate the Domankama cult only one year after its emergence (Allman and Parker 2005:126-131).

3.7 Asante Indigenous Religion, the persistence of Asante chieftaincy after the fall of the Asante kingdom

In this section I will show to what extent Asante chieftaincy persisted at the end of the precolonial period. An insight into the degree of persistence of the indigenous political institution of the Asante is a *condition sine qua non* for drawing a conclusion about the relationship between Asante Indigenous Religion, the indigenous religious intermediary and the peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

In the eighteenth century, Asante chieftaincy consisted of two courts of justice and decision-making bodies: the 'inner council' and the assembly of the Asante nation (*Asantemanhyiamu*). In terms of courts of justice, cases of a civil nature were dealt with by the Kumasi court. The *Asantemanhyiamu* dealt with serious offences against chiefs and other insults by Asante subjects that led to the death penalty. Executions could only be proposed by the *Asantemanhyiamu* and took place once a year during the celebration of *Odwira* (Wilks 1989: 76). In terms of decision-making the inner council was a small deliberative body (*agyina*). The mode of decision-making of the *Asantemanhyiamu* was that of 'the great sitting down together' (*asetenakeɛ*).

In terms of membership, the only woman admitted to both councils was the Asantehemma (Wilks 1989: 393). The 'Inner Council' consisted of the Asantehene and the Asantehemma, as an attendant and four *ohene* councillors; the Bantamahene, the Asafohene, the Gyaasewahene and the Adumhene. The *Asantemanhyiamu*'s membership was on a territorial basis. It consisted of the Asantehene and the Asantehemma again as attendant, paramount chiefs (*amanhene*), senior Kumasi chiefs (*ohenes*) and provincial rulers, such as the sovereign of Dagomba (Wilks 1989:76). Travel to the dense tropical forest of the Asante Kingdom was slow and the *amanhene* could not easily be missed by the subjects who were resident in the villages over which they reigned. Consequently, the *Asantemanhyiamu* usually gathered only once a year during the *Odwira* festival to discuss state matters, except for in case of crisis, such as in 1872-3. During crises the *Asantemanhyiamu* came together more often, although it only remained obligatory for *amanhene* to gather once a year. When the *Asantemanhyiamu* was in constant session, many of its members in fact chose not to exercise their right to attend other than the obligatory annual meeting and thus virtually abrogated responsibility to the members from Kumase and those few of the *amanhene* who considered national politics to take precedence over their state (*oman*) affairs. Consequently, the amount of general legislative work that the *Asantemanhyiamu* had expanded far beyond the capacities of that body to handle it.

This situation caused the Inner Council, which in the late eighteenth century had already taken over in an *ad hoc* fashion certain decision-making functions of the *Asantemanhyiamu* and in the 1820s was already in a process of transformation to become the 'Council of Kumasi', to take over more and more tasks of the *Asantemanhyiamu*. In structure the Inner Council of 1820 differed from the one in the eighteenth century. Besides having four councillors, the Council of Kumasi also consisted of two spokesmen (*okyeames*) and five other members, the so-called 'educated commoners'. In 1874, when the Inner Council had fully developed into the Council of Kumasi, membership was extended to incorporate members from the military and administrative elites of the capital. In 1888, in normal times, the size of the Council of Kumasi seemed to be fixed at about eighteen, the Asantehene, the Asantehemma as attendant and some seventeen councillors (excluding the four initial councillors that made up the Inner Council). Besides this, the Council of Kumasi increasingly assumed the functions of central government and as a result became more and more in conflict with the *Asantemanhyiamu*. The conflict of the two councils, *Asantemanhyiamu* and Council of Kumasi, was never fully resolved. However, at the end of the nineteenth century the ideological differences between the aforementioned war and the peace parties, especially in dealing with the British, became more prominent than the conflict in the function of the two mentioned councils (Wilks 1989:413).

To understand what form the Asante institution of chieftaincy took at the end of the nineteenth century it is necessary to consider the ideological differences of the Asante parties in dealing with Anglo-Asante conflicts. These conflicts find their origin in the late eighteenth century, when the Asante war parties were dominant and consequently Asantehene Opoku Ware followed an imperialistic politique by bringing various areas at the Coast under Asante domination. This way, Opoku Ware could guarantee the maintenance of open trade roads from Kumasi to the Coast that were being threatened by loose connections of the Asante with the coastal states. Besides, these states had to pay tribute to the Asantehene, which filled the state treasury and increased the wealth of the Asante Kingdom. The first Anglo-Asante conflict rose in 1807. In that year, the Asante war parties who regarded the state as essentially being organised for the control of territory and the exaction of tribute, again attempted to show their dominance over the coastal states. In contrast, the British, who in 1750 had united in a Company of Merchants and since then rented land from local rulers from whom they received protection of their forts, defended their Fante trading allies. Consequently, the British became involved in a long lasting Asante-Fante conflict and between 1811 and 1826 Fante revolts against their Asante overlords precipitated three separate military engagements between Asante forces and British troops. The Anglo-Asante relationships remained troublesome until in 1831 both parties signed a 'Treaty of Peace'. Among other issues, the treaty stipulated that the Asante government abrogated administrative responsibility over its former southern provinces: Accra, Adangme, Ahanta, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akyem, Aowin, Denkyira, Fante, Sehwi, Twifo and Wassa. The British in turn, guaranteed Asante direct and unrestricted commercial access to the Gold Coast coastal ports. From a British point of view, the former southern provinces fell under British protection and became known as the British Protected Territory. However, from an Asante point of view the treaty did not include a relinquishment of the sovereignty, only a stop of payment of tribute and homage from their side. From the start, the content of the peace treaty was thus not well defined and consequently the Anglo-Asante conflict was not really resolved by signing the treaty. A problem that comes to the heart of the matter is that some southern states (Akuapem, Akyem and Assin) had 'pro-Asante' interests, which also made it difficult for the British to exercise control over these states. Consequently, after Maclean, the brain behind the 1831 peace treaty, whose position ended in 1843, the relationship between the Asante and the English deteriorated. Especially in the 1850s, when his successor Winniet presumed that Asante ritually killed human beings, the British and the Asante became diametrically opposed in their fight of influence over the coastal states. The points of conflicts involved were (1) the closure and maintenance of the southern trade routes, (2) the extradition of Asante citizens from British administrative territory (3) the restitution of fugitives and criminals (4) Asante government policy of maintaining political influence over its southern domains. An example of a conflict that involved

point (1) and (3) between Asantehene Kwaku Dua I and governor Winniet occurred after an Asante fugitive ran away to the British Protected Territory (Lewin 1978:41-53). According to the Peace Treaty of 1831, the British were obliged to send back any Asante subject who looked for shelter in their Territory, to allow them to be convicted according to Asante law. Governor Winniet, however, refused to give up any fugitive Asante and used the argument that back in Asante territory (s)he would become the victim of the ritual killing of human beings, a custom which was not in line with his Christian faith (Wilks 1989:219). Most likely though, it also suited Winniet's convenience to depict the Asante Royals as ritual killers for political reasons, since spreading a negative image of the Asante and consequently not following their commands made it easier for him to keep control over the Southern states. In 1863, however, the Asante did not tolerate Winniet's behaviour any longer. Consequently, they invaded the British Protected Territory and claimed back the Asante fugitives. Anglo-Asante relationships remained tense and the Asante war and peace party were in conflict over how to improve the relationship. Asantehene Kofi Kakari was initially hesitant to start a war, because as a member of the peace party, he believed that the state is essentially organised for the promotion of trade which cannot be realised without peace. The war party, however, was in the majority and consequently in 1873 the Asante invaded the British Protected Territory. However, soon after the invasion, the costs of the war, in terms of lives and materials, was so high that the members of the *Asantemanhyiamu* made the decision to withdraw from the coast. Subsequently, King Kakari hoped to agree another peace treaty with the British. By then General Wolseley had, however, already decided to invade Kumasi and to burn the city in order to diminish the power of the Asante in general and that over the Southern states (Lewin 1978:41-53; Wilks 1989:492-509). On 13 February 1874, the Asante and the British signed the Treaty of Fomena and soon after, the Asante government agreed to pay a war indemnity and relinquished all political claims to the southern provinces, of which most became incorporated in the newly created Gold Coast Colony.

Between 1874 and 1881, the Asante Royals were occupied with rebuilding their nation after the devastating war of 1874, with implementing government reforms and strengthening government control over the remaining provinces and tributaries. Consequently, the seventy-five year old debate between peace and war interests lapsed temporarily. From 1881 onwards, however, the tensions between the two parties increased again in their decision on how to deal with the British, and the war party made plans for another Anglo-Asante war. However, British intervention in Asante affairs increased and in the mid 1880s the British supported centralists in Kumasi and King Prempeh's movement to restore the monarchy. This way, they hoped to improve their connection with the peace party and to curb the battle plans of the war party and so to safeguard the Anglo-Asante trade relationship (Lewin 1978:51-52). From 1874 onwards, out of fear that the French would colonise the Asante, the British policy was focussed on weakening the Asante state in order to be able to colonise

the Asante territory. Then in 1891, governor Hull invited Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh I to place his kingdom under British protection. Prempeh I, though, declined the offer, attempting to resurrect the *Asantemanhyiamu* to full power and to get rid of the British consul office that was introduced by the British after the sack of Kumasi to restrict the power of the Asantehene. However, King Prempeh made clear that he only appreciated maintaining a cordial trade relationship with the British. Nevertheless in 1896, the British government in London made the decision that an independent Asante was not in line with the concept of the British Empire and consequently informally the Asante Kingdom ceased to exist due to an increase of British administration. In January 1897 the British deported King Prempeh I and on 28 March 1900 Governor Hodgson gathered all the chiefs and inhabitants of Kumasi to tell them that their king would not return and that the greatest power in Asante was the Queen of England (Wilks 1989:660-661). Then Hodgson made a great mistake, firstly by demanding Kumasi officials to surrender the Golden Stool (*Sika Dwa Kofi*), which was not only the symbol of Asante political sovereignty but, as I explained in section 3.3, a shrine full of religious power, and secondly sitting upon this royal sacred seat, so insulting the Asante, who would never ever use their kingdom's most holy shrine to sit upon.

After the deportation of Prempeh I, the colonial committee had appointed three experienced Asante⁹³ to form the 'Native Committee of Administration' (NCA). In theory the jurisdiction of this triumvirate was confined to the capital and its villages, but in practice it maintained some of the attributes of a central government (Wilks 1989:659). Opoku Mensa, one of the three members of the triumvirate, however, refused to show the location of the Golden Stool and subsequently Hodgson ordered his military attache, Captain C.H. Armitage, to force the people to tell him. After King Prempeh was taken away, the Asante hid the Golden Stool in the town of Bare to the North of Kumase, and, most likely both because of their belief in the power of the stool and their wish to remain independent, none of the inhabitants of this town gave away the hiding place of the Golden Stool (Lewin 1978:219-220). This incident led to the outburst of the last Anglo-Asante war that was fought under the lead Yaa Asantewaa, the queen mother of Ejisu, who strived for the maintenance of the *Sika Dwa Kofi* among the Asante and the Kingdoms' independence. Eventually, however, as one of the descendents of Yaa Asantewaa revealed, the Asante were betrayed by one of their own people who revealed one of the most important Asante war strategies to the British⁹⁴, in exchange for a royal seat offered to him after the war (Afua Tweneboa Kodua, 21). Amongst other factors, such as the better quality of British than Asante rifles, the Asante lost the last Anglo-Asante war, which made it into the history books as the Battle of Yaa Asantewaa.

⁹³ The names of these experienced men are Opoku Mensa, Gyasewahene from 1884, Kwaku Nantwi Kaakyera, who signed the Treaty of Fomena and Akapkade, who from 1877 sat in the council of elders.

⁹⁴ The secret war strategy of the Asante was that they were hiding in the forest under the ground and attacked the British from there.

By the Ashanti Administration Ordinance of 1 January 1902, the Asante Kingdom became known as the 'Crown Colony of Asante'. The Metropolitan region was divided mainly between the newly created central and southern provinces and the remaining territories of the former Asante Kingdom, between the Western and Northern provinces. The new Provinces were purely administrative units that were directly responsible to a Provincial Commissioner and through him to the Chief Commissioner and the governor of the Gold Coast in Accra.

By mid-1905 the *Asantemanhyiamu* had disappeared and Governor Fuller decided that the 'Crown Colony of Asante' should be ruled by a resurrected 'Council of Kumasi', whose members were, for the majority, adherents of a mercantilistic foreign policy and voted for peace for the purpose of trade and open roads, and a break up of the *Asantemanhyiamu*, of whom many adherents were for an imperialistic foreign policy.

The new Council of Kumasi which consisted of eighteen members, equal to the extended Council of Kumasi of 1888, was structurally but not functionally a continuation of the Kumasi Council in the preceding century. For unlike the members of the nineteenth century Council of Kumasi, who by the end of that century had taken over more and more functions of the *Asantemanhyiamu* and in practice ruled over the Asante Kingdom, the members of the new Kumasi Council were restricted by Fuller to only deal with Greater Kumasi matters only. To prevent this new Kumasi Council from gaining back the full size of responsibilities of the initial *Asantemanhyiamu* and the late nineteenth century Kumasi Council, their task was limited to advising the Chief Commissioner on issues relating to Kumasi and its adjacent villages (Wilks 1989:123, 403).

Even though, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Asante Kingdom had ceased to exist and under British direct rule the power of the Kumasi Council had been greatly diminished, the British remained fearful towards the Asante with their, in their view, cruel religious practices, such as the ritual killing of human beings and their strong loyalty to the Asante King who was deported to Sierra Leone. The British fear of the Asante was for instance reflected in their decision in 1900 to send King Prempeh even further away from Kumasi to the Seychelles Islands to be sure of the diminishment of his political influence on the Asante people. With the fall of the Asante Kingdom, Asante chieftaincy, however, did not cease to exist, and its resurrection first of the *Asantemanhyiamu* by King Prempeh I and then of the Council of Kumasi by the British indicates some of the resilience of this institution in the pre-colonial period of Asante history.

Conclusion

In this section, I will draw conclusions about the relationship between (a) the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities and (b) the persistence of

Asante chieftaincy. I will focus on the relationship between the two factors during and at the end of the pre-colonial period.

Indigenous religious mediation during the precolonial period was realised by the use of material objects, such as the Golden Stool, the invocation of ancestral spirits during the annual *Odwira* festival and the swearing of an oath of allegiance to the Asantehene, who was believed to represent the ancestral spirits in the social world. Mediation with the spiritual world was the Asante traditional authorities' strategy for maintaining peace within the Asante nation by the use of ritual control. Sometimes, however, the ways of maintaining inner control were so harsh that the Asantehene in question had to be destooled. This includes, for instance, for Asantehene Kofi Kakari, who had severe problems with maintaining inner control due to the high costs in terms of loss of wealth and lives of many Asante and consequently ritually killed many Asante as part of his strategy to rule by fear of the King and the ancestral spirits behind him. The destoolment of an Asante King never threatened Asante chieftaincy as an institution. It did however support the argument that there was a continuation in the belief in ancestral spirits, who would not spiritually support a bad leader who would therefore automatically be destooled. The persistence of Asante chieftaincy is thus directly linked with the continuation of the belief in ancestral spirits that legitimated the traditional political institution. At the end of the precolonial period, after the colonisation of Asante, the British did not decide to dismantle the Asante institution of chieftaincy altogether, but to make use of it for the maintenance of unity of the 'Crown Colony of Asante'. The Asante Royals or 'Native Authorities' came under the direct supervision of a British Superintendent, who could not rule without their help. As shown in this Chapter, Asante chieftaincy was deeply embedded in the social structure of the society, and Asante traditional authorities were of great religious importance. Consequently, the British depended on the Asante chiefs and queen mothers to rule over the 'Crown Colony of Asante' and subsequently, after reducing its functions and political power, allowed Asante chieftaincy to persist.

The relationship between the indigenous religious peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities during the precolonial period and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy is as follows. Asante Royals regulated the foreign political and economic affairs with Europeans and Muslims outside the Asante Kingdom by employing those strangers in the Asante diplomatic service. Most likely, without the diplomatic negotiations with foreigners the Asante Kingdom would have fallen apart long before its colonisation. As I have discussed, the jihads of the adherents of Uthman dan Fodio and the ideology of Wesleyan and especially Basel missionary Christians were a concrete threat to the persistence of the Asante Kingdom. The institution's function in the regulation of foreign affairs by the adaptation of Christians and Muslims and their beliefs in the Asante diplomatic

service was thus of great importance for the persistence of the Asante Kingdom and consequently also Asante chieftaincy.

An additional effect of the decree of foreign ideological impact was that those Christians and Muslims who had been allowed to settle in the capital of the Asante Kingdom were not eager to rebel against the Asante state, although in the nineteenth century there were religious and authoritative tensions between Asante indigenous practitioners and Christians. At the end of the precolonial period, the British colonisers of Asante also seemed to have profited from Asante chieftaincy's indigenous religious peacekeeping function. On the one hand, the British reduced the political power of Asante chieftaincy by limiting its influence to the states belonging to the new 'Crown Colony of Asante'. Consequently, the Asante were no longer ruling over all semi-autonomous Muslim states which in the nineteenth century had formed the majority of the Asante Kingdom. On the other hand, it was only because the Muslim states had belonged to the Asante Kingdom that these states now accepted British authority rather than that of the lurking French and German colonisers (Wilks 1989:307). Besides, initially the British also benefited from the Anglo-Asante peace negotiations of the Wesleyan prince Owusu Ansa Sr and his son Owusu Ansa Jr, who were the head of the English chancery of the Asante diplomatic service under the reign of Kwaku Dua I (1853-4) and Asantehene Prempeh I respectively. Initially, the British were in negotiation with the Asante to realise a longterm peace agreement through the diminishment of the gap between European and Asante cultural and political interests. It was only because of the lurking of the French who sought to occupy the inner provinces of the Asante Kingdom ('the Crown colony of Asante') that the decision in London was made to ignore the peacekeeping mission of Owusu Ansa Jr. to Great Britain and colonise what was left of the Asante Kingdom.

To sum up, during and at the end of the precolonial period the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities contributed positively to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. In the next and following Chapters, I will attempt to answer the crucial question of to what extent the Asante chiefs and queen mothers continued to perform an indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping function in the Kumasi Metropolis in the colonial (Chapter Four) and post-colonial (Chapters Five and Six) era.

Chapter Four: Indigenous religious mediation and peacekeeping in the colonial period

Nsuom nam firi nsuom a, Awu, Zhene a Onni akyitaafɔ no Onye. Zhene bio — ‘A fish out of water dies; a king without followers ceases to exist’.

Asante proverb

Introduction

In the first Chapter of this thesis, I indicated that Asante traditional authorities performed an indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping role. In this Chapter, I will provide insight into these two indigenous religious roles of Asante chiefs and queen mothers and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy after the Asante Kingdom ceased to exist in 1896. To gain an insight into this relationship, it is necessary to give a short overview of the form of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis in the colonial period. This phase started in 1902 and ended in 1957, when the country gained independence.

4.1 The form of Asante chieftaincy in the colonial period

In the colonial period, Asante chieftaincy respectively developed into two different forms: a resurrected ‘Kumasi Council of Chiefs’ (KCC) — as I mentioned before in section 3.7 — and the ‘Asante Confederacy’. The new KCC was founded under Asantehene Prempeh I, who was officially ruling between 26 March 1888 and 12 May 1931, but was deported by the British in 1896. The Asante Confederacy was founded under the decree of Asantehene Prempeh II, who ruled between 22 June 1931 and 27 May 1970.

In theory, since 1905 the politics of the British had implied that traditional Asante chiefs would be able to continue to rule over the Kumasi Metropolis in cooperation with a ‘British Chief Commissioner’ (BCC) who controlled the decisions of the Council of Kumasi. In practice, however, after the deportation of Prempeh I, and of other Royals and many of his paramount chiefs, the power vacuum that had occurred in Kumasi was not filled with non-deported traditional Asante chiefs but with chiefs who were newly enstooled by the British as a reward for their collaboration with them (McCaskie 1986a: 5,8,10). After the structural although not functional resurrection of the ‘Council of Kumasi’ in 1905, the status of paramount chiefs depended on their membership of this Council. Consequently, some traditional chiefs, who were recognised as paramount chiefs under the *Asantemanhyiamu* and the original Council of Kumasi that developed out of the Inner Council in the 1820s, no longer bore this status. Other traditional chiefs, who did not have the status of paramount chief before the British colonisation of Asante were however elevated to this status because of the help they offered to the British colonisers. Besides, the positions in the KCC were thus filled by

newly enstooled chiefs, who formed part of a highly self-consciously defined group of notables, capitalists and gentlemen (*akonkofo*). The *akonkofo* were neither necessarily literate nor Christian. They defended the individual right to accommodate and dispose of capital and acquired their own cocoa farms and invested their profits in buildings in Kumasi and the other main towns in the 'Crown Colony of Asante', which they then let to business firms for a handsome rental. They invested in chiefships whose purchase was also a way to maximise the opportunity for profit. Their 'this-worldly' aim of accumulating private wealth was to advance in power and prestige. 'Other-worldly' they hoped to join the ancestors by showing that they had played an important role in the Asante society during their life, one of the prerequisites of becoming an ancestral spirit (see section 1.4). On the one hand, the *akonkofo* looked modern in terms of shaking off the constraints of historical ideology surrounding accumulation, wealth and belief (based on exploitation) equal to the *sikafo* in 1888. On the other hand, they were adherents of the Asante Indigenous Religion and did not oppose the meaning of indigenous religious symbols, such as the *Sika Dwa Kofi* (McCaskie 1986a:7). I will come back to this in section 4.2.1.

Since 1905 the KCC kept itself busy with the administration of Kumasi and with questions of stool-land⁹⁵ and possession, but could not eliminate the governmental chaos in Kumasi after the deportation of Asantehene Prempeh I (Tordoff 1965:152). Soon after its foundation the members of the KCC ruled in such a way that they marked the end of central government in Kumasi, as the political chaos made it no longer possible to rule over the whole of the 'Crown Colony of Asante' from this town. Consequently, the 'Crown Colony of Asante' became divided into four different areas, of which three of the four were ruled over by members of the KCC who had their own 'British Chief Commissioners' (BCCs) to control them. This corresponded with the British *laissez-faire* policy which they had used to rule over the Asante since the foundation of the 'Crown Colony of Asante' in 1902. The BCC were answerable to the Gold Coast Governor and were, except in major matters, subject to little interference from either Accra or London (Tordoff 1968:155). The area that comprised Greater Kumasi, however, fell under the direct leadership of a BCC. Most likely, the British preferred this form of leadership in relation to Kumasi because this area was believed to be most dangerous for a possible uprising of Asante (anti-colonial!) nationalism. To make clear to Asante that the BCC would be the new leader of Kumasi rather than the deported Asantehene Prempeh I, who was never officially destooled, or members of the KCC, the BCC gave himself the title of Kumasihene or paramount chief of Kumasi. This title had not existed before, because from the start of the foundation of the Asante union at the end of the seventeenth century, the paramount chief of Kumasi was known as the Asantehene and not the Kumasihene. Initially, the Asantehene

⁹⁵ 'Stool-land' is land that belongs to a chief's 'stool' or throne.

had the same position as all other paramount chiefs in the Asante union, but from 1701 onwards the position of the Asantehene became *primus-inter-pares*, meaning one-among-many. The position of the Asantehene was thus not equal to those of other *omanhenna*. The title of Kumasihene implies, however, that the paramount chief of Kumasi is as powerful as all other paramount chiefs among the Asante.

The members of the KCC were divided about the desirability of the situation of direct rule of Kumasi by a BCC and the British colonisation of Asante in general. Many traditional chiefs were against British influence and worked on the creation of Anglo-Asante peace treatments to bring back their King, Prempeh I, from the Seychelles Islands to Kumasi to rule not only over Kumasi but also over the rest of the 'Crown Colony of Asante'. The newly enstooled chiefs, on the other hand, who owed their position to the British, supported them in diminishing the political and spiritual influence of Asantehene Prempeh I in the 'Crown Colony', which he maintained after his deportation.

In the meantime in the Seychelles, King Prempeh I did everything to make sure that the British would send him back to his country. In 1904, he therefore became a Christian and opted to be monogamous for mainly strategic reasons.

Prempeh's relocations [LM: his exiles to Sierra Leone and later the Seychelles] impressed upon him the territorial scope of British influence and power. He became aware that only British goodwill could ensure his return to Asante. He decided on a policy of appeasement: he would demonstrate to the British government that he had become a loyal and 'civilised' subject (Akyeampong 1999:290).

Prempeh I became monogamous and divorced two of the three wives who were deported with him as 'he discovered to his chagrin that polygamy ruled out his being confirmed as a Christian and partaking in the Holy Communion', and having more than one wife would militate against his desire to appeal loyal and 'modern' to the British (Akyeampong 1999:269). His conversion to Christianity and his change of lifestyle were partly strategic and not without success. On 12 May 1924 Prempeh I was informed via the officer in charge of political exiles that the 'Colonial Secretary' (CS) had approved his repatriation to Kumasi as long as he would return as a 'private' citizen and would reside within the political district of Kumasi. To some degree, the conditions were the result of an inner transformation of Prempeh I, who due to his missionary education had become 'modernised' and attempted to reconcile his Indigenous Religion with Christianity. On his return to Kumasi, however, Prempeh I became a different type of Christian from the one he was during his stay in the Seychelles. Instead of being monogamous he rather combined the Asante Indigenous Religion with Christianity. He revived the Asantehene's harem and took many wives and concubines (Akyeampong 1999:303). This is important in our understanding of the relationship between the Asante Indigenous Religion and Asante chieftaincy because it shows that the absence of Prempeh I

in Kumasi had not caused the extinction of the Asante indigenous religious customs of marrying more than one wife to sustain the lineage and to satisfy the ancestral spirits.

Asantehene Prempeh I believed that he had been allowed to repatriate to Kumasi because he had shown in the Seychelles that he had modernised himself, that he was loyal to the British and had adopted the British lifestyle. According to British sources, however, King Prempeh I was repatriated at the initiative of the 'British Governor' (BG), Sir Gordon Guggisberg, who was in favor of the application to Asante of the principles of 'Indirect Rule'.⁹⁶ Guggisberg hoped that his type of European colonial policy would improve the relationship between the paramount chiefs (*omanhene*) and chiefs of former Kumasi villages. This was certainly necessary because the foundation of the KCC had led to a deterioration of the relationship between subjects and chiefs. The villagers who were placed under an *akonkofo* chief had often proved most reluctant to serve him, particularly when the chief in question owed his elevation to the administration. In many villages such as Offinso and Ejisu, the chiefs and people were embittered at the removal of Prempeh I and his advisers. They — and many other Asante — resented the loss of their Independence and the undermining of established customs and Asante Indigenous Religion. In 1926, Guggisberg outlined a new policy and pledged the Government 'to conduct the administration of the natives of the country through the proper native authorities'. By 'proper native authorities' he meant, of course, those authorities which the Government recognised; to the Asante, however, this term concerned their traditional rulers. These two views could be reconciled only by restoring the Asante Confederacy and thereby the traditional pattern of allegiance (Tordoff 1968:162).

However, since restoration was not contemplated at this time, Indirect Rule made limited headway in Asante and none at all in the 'Kumasi Division'; that part of the four areas in the 'Crown Colony of Asante' that fell directly under the BCC. Consequently, in November 1926 — after two years of private citizenship, Prempeh I, who most Asante still regarded as their king, was given some official standing, as the British hoped that he would be able to restore order in the KD and so pave the way for the introduction of Indirect Rule.

The need for a restored Asante Confederacy became more urgent during the rule of the Chief Commissioner (CC) of Asante, H.S. Newlands (Fortescue 1990:353), who had been appointed by the Accra government in November 1924. To Newlands it soon became clear that the Asante did not recognise any other stool than that of the Asantehene, whom they believed to be the custodian of the land, which belonged to the Asante and the ancestral spirits. Therefore, the Asante refused to pay direct tax to the British, which was one of the features of Indirect Rule. They also refused to pay

⁹⁶ This was a type of European colonial policy as practiced in large parts of British India (see Princely states) and elsewhere in the British Empire (including Malaya), in which the traditional local power structure, or at least part of it, was incorporated into the colonial administrative structure.

taxes to the *akonkofo* stools. Newland therefore advised his superior, the British Governor Sir Shenton Thomas, that if Indirect Rule was to succeed in Asante, the Confederacy had to be restored. Sir Shenton Thomas then investigated whether there was a basis for the restoration of the Asante Confederacy in the 'Crown Colony of Asante'. The outcome was that the majority of the Asante and Brong divisions (north of Kumasi, today belonging to the Brong-Ahafo region) that originally fell under Asante rule were in favor of the restoration. This shows that the majority of the Asante remained loyal to their traditional authorities, who represented the ancestral spirits, rather than to the new chiefs, who were appointed by the British and therefore had no indigenous links. The guiding principle in this situation was that all chiefs should revert to their former pre-British allegiance. All government-created chiefs would therefore be reduced in status (Tordoff 1968). On 31 January 1935, the foundation of the 'Asante Confederacy Council' (ACC) was realised and Prempeh II was enstooled as Asantehene. The ACC, although created as an instrument of Indirect Rule, was fashioned on the basis of the traditional view of members of the KCC, that nineteenth century Asante had enjoyed a confederate structure and that the *amanhene* had possessed autonomous jurisdiction except so far as they had voluntarily relinquished powers to the central government. These members probably made reference to the fact that the Asante Kingdom grew out of a union of various states, which were equal in power. The British writer Wallace-Johnson (*The Restoration of the Ashanti Confederacy* 1935) remarks that for the following two reasons the term 'Asante Confederacy Council' was wrong: (a) since the foundation of the Asante Kingdom no Stool ever claimed equality with the Golden Stool. Instead the Asantehene, who occupied the Golden Stool, had a *pimus-inter-pares* position, which means that all other paramount chiefs were subservient to him. (b) many chiefs, so far, including the Mamponghene, through family allegiance, willingly submitted themselves to the supreme power of the Asantehene. Others were, however, subdued by conquest. Thus Asante was no less than a monarchy for the Asantehene than the King. Consequently, at the first session of the Confederacy Council in June 1935, the Mamponghene (or paramount chief of Mampong) representatives expressed his rejection to the colonial Government that the Asantehene was only allowed to interfere in the stool affairs of the 'Kumasi Division' (KD) instead of the four divisions comprising the 'Crown Colony of Asante'. They added that the Asantehene was the overlord of all the Stools in Asante and as such it was unconstitutional for him to be told not to have a voice in matters affecting stools (Wallace-Johnson *Minutes of the Ashanti Confederacy Council* 1935). It was not until 1946, however, that members of the ACC attempted to legitimate the authority of that body, and began arguing explicitly for its institutional continuity with the *Asantemanhyiamu* of the nineteenth century. After 1946 the resurrection of the *Asantemanhyiamu* maintained an important point on the agenda of the ACC throughout the colonial period (Wilks 1989:412-413).

Resistance against the restoration of the Asante Confederacy came from two groups: (a) the chiefs (*akonkofo* Ɔ *omanhene* Ɔ) and (b) the so-called *nkwankwaa* ('young men' or 'non-office holders').⁹⁷ The *akonkofo* Ɔ *omanhene* had a realistic fear that they would lose their status as (paramount) chiefs. The *nkwankwaa* who had organised themselves in 'the Friends of Asante Freedom Society' (FAFS) campaigned against restoration, because they did not want any state, except as a tool for individual advancement (McCaskie 1986a:19). Most likely they were afraid that, equivalent to the situation in the 1880s, the restoration of the Asante Confederacy would lead to the return of a strong central state. However, the *nkwankwaa* made few Christian converts and early in January 1935, the Secretary of State turned down a petition against restoration by their society (Tordoff 1968).

In the same year Prempeh II was officially recognised as Asantehene and the Kumasi chiefs resumed their traditional role as Kumasi divisional elders and national advisers. Some villages now fell into the hands of different rulers, a policy which created winners and losers among the various paramount chiefs (*amanhene*). All British 'government-created' *amanhene* lost their paramount status. The *amantoo* (the states of the first Asante Confederacy that was founded in 1666) and the Brong States renewed their oath (*ntam kese*) to the Golden Stool under royal *amanhene* (the original traditional authorities).

4.2 The indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping roles of Asantehene Prempeh I (1888-1931)

In this section, I will look at the effect of the restored Council of Kumasi on the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities, with a special focus on Asantehene Prempeh I. When Prempeh I had been deported, many Asante had not stopped showing allegiance to the person they believed to be their king who was never officially deposed. In 1924, after the repatriation of Prempeh I to Kumasi as a private citizen, some Asante, however, felt that their loyalty should now be with the BCC. The question that arises is whether there was an indigenous religious reason for the continued loyalty of some Asante to the Asante traditional

⁹⁷ The etymology of the term *nkwankwaa* is somewhat murky. Its root is undoubtedly *nkoa* which can be translated as 'subject' or 'commoner'. But as Busia noted, *nkwankwaa* was often used synonymously with *mmerante* (literally, 'young men'). Clearly, *nkwankwaa* has come to have a very specific meaning — much more limited than 'commoner', and transcending, in many cases, the chronological or generational designation of *mmerante* (During the 1950s, the young men active in the NLM ranged in age from twenty to fifty (Tordoff 1965:374); (Busia 1951:10). In reference to the nineteenth century, Wilks defines *nkwankwaa* as 'literally young men' and sometimes translate *nkwankwaa* as 'commoner' (Wilks 1989:728). Boahen mentions that the *nkwankwaa* were not necessarily young in age and that it refers more to the profession of non-office holders, such as lawyer, shopkeeper, petty trader, public letter writer, clerk, school teacher or artisan (Boahen 1975:136).

authorities, including the Asantehene. I have categorised the inhabitants of Kumasi (*Kumasifo*) into five different groups. For each group I will show their attitude towards Asantehene Prempeh I. The groups under study are: (1) the *akonkofo* (2) the Muslims (3) the *nkwankwaa* (4) the *nhenkwaa* and (5) the Christians. I divide the groups of *Kumasifo* into those who turned themselves against Asantehene Prempeh I (groups one, two and three) and those who were in favour of this Asante King (groups four and five). For each group of people, I will also study the political and/or religious reasons that have influenced their attitude.

4.2.1. Prempeh I and the *akonkofo*

The first group, the *akonkofo* – an intermediary group between office holders and non-holders of office – emerged in Kumasi and the capital towns of other Asante chiefdoms during the first phase of colonial rule (1896-1930) (Arhin 1986). This new social status group of rich men came into being due to the economic changes in society, such as the introduction of cash crops, mainly cocoa and marginally kola and coffee production, and the increase in retail and wholesale trading undertaken as agents of the European mercantile firms (Busia 1951) (Tordoff 1965). Politically, the *akonkofo* were rivals to the traditional authorities. Because of their wealth they were able to buy stools and replace legitimate heirs with their own (Busia 1951:211-17). They adopted the attitude of political dissidents towards Prempeh I. In the nineteenth century, the *akonkofo* had taken refuge in the Gold Coast Colony as they refused to pay some of the high taxes and death duties (*awumnyadeɛ*) that the Asantehene demanded them to pay as a contribution to *Asanteman* (McCaskie 1986a:4). The *akonkofo* positioned themselves against the Asante state because they felt that the Kumasi royal elite were exploiting them. The *akonkofo* were not religious dissidents but with regard to the payment of tax to the state and the reimposition of death duties, this group of men had a different opinion, which made them both political and religious dissidents. According to the Asante Indigenous Religion the paying of tax to the Asantehene and voluntarily contributing surplus of the land is a way of showing respect to the Asantehene as the intermediary with the ancestral spirits (*nsamanfo*), who are believed to be the owners of the land. The *akonkofo*, however, invested money in their office and chiefship and they attempted to protect individual enterprise and property against state aggrandisement. They ‘bought’ chiefship for themselves or their clients and they profited by purchasing chiefships. In contradiction to the Kumasi royal elite, they believed that individuals had the right to accumulate and dispose of their wealth. They hoped that in the afterlife this would enable them to become ancestors (McCaskie 1986a:8). In the eyes of the Asante

traditional authorities, the purchasing of land by the *akonkofo* encouraged others who sold the land to them to show disrespect for the land and the soil as a goddess, because Asante deities could not be bought and sold (Rattray 1956:347). With their idea of ‘private capital’ the *akonkofo* were supporters of a more individual lifestyle that, according to some village dwellers, threatened the persistence of the community, as they neglected their common duties (McCaskie 2000a:161) (see also section 3.6).

Throughout the whole of Prempeh I’s life, the *akonkofo* remained an opposing party, which with their modern lifestyle challenged the establishment of the Asante traditional authorities. During Asantehene Prempeh I’s stay in Sierra Leone and later the Seychelles, the *akonkofo* collaborated with the British and took, as I have mentioned in section 4.1, newly non-inheritedly enstooled chiefs. This does not imply, however, that all traditional Asante chiefs occupied their stools through inheritance, but most of them did indeed become heir to a stool.

With their ideas about capital, the *akonkofo* chiefs turned their backs on many of the older inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis. In 1924 after Prempeh I’s return to Kumasi, he was worried by the fact that the installation of *akonkofo omanhene* under the authority of the British disturbed the relationship between these ‘chiefs’ and subjects (Akyeampong 2003:90; Tordoff 1968:160), who were used to a different way of ruling under the traditional Asante chiefs. One of Prempeh I’s first acts as Kumasihene was therefore to abolish the *akonkofo* ‘Kumasi Gentlemen Organisation’ (KGO) (Brown 1972:198) in an attempt to diminish their political power.

The tension in the relationship between Prempeh I and the *akonkofo* increased in the 1930s, when they petitioned against any restoration of the historical fiscal powers of the state. While Prempeh I kept repressing the *akonkofo*, they kept challenging his authority. Nevertheless, there were many *akonkofo* who publicly supported the Asantehene’s repatriation and signed the petition to the British Government to permit Prempeh I to come back. According to McCaskie (1986a:9) they handled out of a sense of the inevitable. In Arhin’s (1986:28) opinion, however, the *akonkofo* signed the protest letter for more than just pragmatic reasons. They attempted to rule over the ‘Crown Colony of Asante’ and knew that because of their social status they would in all likelihood be influential. Despite their positive attitude towards the British lifestyle and education, this shows that their hearts were with the indigenous (religious) Asante way of life. Although they were non-office holders many of them belonged to royal families and later became traditional rulers or they were court functionaries, who fulfilled their duties at the Asantehene’s court after Prempeh I’s return and continued the performance of indigenous religious rituals.

In conclusion, the *akonkofo* turned themselves against Asantehene Prempeh I for political but not for indigenous religious reasons, despite their difference in thoughts about wealth which forms a part of the Asante Indigenous Religion. The *akonkofo* did not disrupt the continuation of the Asantehene's indigenous religious intermediary function. What attracted them to the modern lifestyle within colonial rule was that it gave them the necessary protection against the state and the opportunity to accumulate wealth on a personal level. Therefore, the *akonkofo*'s opposition towards the Asante traditional authorities only focussed on the regulations created by those authorities that prevented them from accumulating wealth.

4.2.2. Prempeh I and the Muslims

Regarding the Asante *Nkramo*, Prempeh I maintained a policy that was comparable to that of his predecessors. Like many of his forerunners, Prempeh I had always been impressed by the religious skills of the Asante *Nkramo*. After his repatriation, they occasionally provided him with talismans and religious maxims as they had done regularly to his predecessors (Eastern Provincial Commissioner's Diary, April 1928, NAG, Accra). In order to keep control over the Muslims, — since the early nineteenth century they lived, like in the pre-colonial period, in a 'spatially circumscribed' neighborhood of Kumasi, known as the old Kumasi settlement, which was not a distinct area in town for Muslims only (see map 6: *zongo*) — they were kept physically close to the Asantehene's place of power (Maier 1997:333). In April 1928, Prempeh I showed his admiration for the Asante *Nkramo* by expressing to the 'District Commissioner' (DC) of Kumasi his desire to revive the then defunct *nsumanfiesu* ('college of physicians'). The institution, headed by the *nsumankwahene* (chief of 'medicines'), was responsible for the physical and spiritual welfare of Asante and the Asantehene (Eastern Provincial Commissioner's Diary, April 1928).

The attitude of Prempeh I toward other Muslims of the Kumasi settlement was less friendly. In 1926, after Prempeh I had become Kumasihene, his policy regarding Muslims and other foreigners was not one of encouragement of their entrepreneurship. Prempeh I was disturbed that many of the nice 'storey buildings' in Kumasi were the property of Muslims from up North and from Syria (Akyeampong 1999:299-300). For foreigners renting a plot of land, building storey buildings or houses on it and being a landlord were one of the few options for investment used to show off wealth as the land was in hands of Kumasi's royal elite (Schildkrout 1975:169-172). Prempeh I, however, preferred these buildings to be in the hands of the Asante. His position towards the Muslims was very much in line with old Asante state concerns: innovation must strengthen the state and maintain the *status quo* (Akyeampong 1999:299-300). In practice this meant that Prempeh I

attempted to keep Kumasi closed to what he believed to be harmful foreign influences and tried to prevent Muslims from entering.

Prempeh I remained ambivalent about Muslims of the Kumasi settlement who during his exile had not shown any loyalty to him and had instead openly supported the BCCs. The Muslims of the Kumasi settlement, especially the Hausa, profited from British colonisation, because in 1927 the British appointed their headman, the Sarkin *Zongo*, as the 'chief' of all Muslims. The British thus made the Muslims more important in relation to the Asante paramount chiefs, because under the rule of the Asantehenes in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the Muslim 'headmen' in the settlement were not recognised by the Asante Kings as 'chiefs'. In the same year, in addition to the status of chief, the British gave the Sarkin *Zongo* his own civil tribunal in which, until Prempeh I managed to reverse this, not only issues that were concerning the inhabitants of the settlement but also issues that were concerning Asante were tried as though Muslim law applied. The British gave the Sarkin *Zongo* much power, because they profited from his ability to keep the settlement area a peaceful place to live in (Schildkrout 1978:88). The Sarkin *Zongo* was respected by the British as a leader of all Muslims because he performed numerous services for all the inhabitants of the Muslim settlements that the administration would otherwise have had to undertake (Schildkrout 1970:260). For the British the recognition of a *primus inter pares* authority in the settlement, like the Sarkin *Zongo*, was necessary because after 1896 — when the Asante power was broken — more northern soldiers recruited by the British to fight against the Asante and northern traders and labourers came to Kumasi as the city could now be entered freely (Schildkrout 1978:69). This meant that several measures had to be taken by a clear overall authority to maintain order. The lives of the people of the Muslim settlements had always been dependent on local authorities — first the Asantehenes, from 1901 the BCC and from 1927 the Sarkin *Zongo* (Schildkrout 1970:258). As true loyalists to the British, who ruled over the 'Crown Colony of Asante' from 1901, Muslims and also other inhabitants of the Muslim settlements were not a group of people from which Prempeh I could expect much sympathy and find supporters. He did not, however, put any restrictions on their religious freedom. They were allowed to build mosques anywhere in the Kumasi Metropolis so that the street picture of Kumasi was that of small mosques and European missionary churches, which could be found next to each other. Generally, the organisation of the religious space in Kumasi has remained like this to this day (Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka, 48).

In summary, the relationship between Asantehene Prempeh I and the Asante *Nkramo* remained one of balanced tension. The relationship between this Asante King and the other Muslims was troublesome. The problems between these Muslims and Prempeh I were caused, however, by a clash of economic interests rather than religious tensions. Asantehene Prempeh I maintained a policy of non-interference towards these Muslims. Under Prempeh I's reign, the Asantehene's role as

indigenous religious peacekeeper was continued as he did not put any restrictions on the religious freedom of Muslims in the Kumasi Metropolis.

4.2.3. Prempeh I and the *nkwankwaa*

Besides the *akonkofo* and the *nhenkwaa*, there was a group of Asante living in Kumasi and its adjacent villages known as the *nkwankwaa* ('young men', 'non-office holders'). Under Asantehene Mensa Bonsu, the *nkwankwaa* and the *akonkofo* had petitioned together against any restoration of historical fiscal powers of the state, which were symbolised by the 'Elephant Tail' (*Sika Mmra*). Between 1896 and 1921, the *nkwankwaa* also showed a sign of disloyalty to the 'Golden Stool' (*Sika Dwa Kofi*), when this sacred object was hidden successively in the villages of Bare Tonto Kokoben, Wawase and Aboabogya, under leadership of the Gyaasewahene Kwabena Asubonten. In 1921, a road gang unearthed the *Sika Dwa Kofi* and it was subsequently stripped of its gold by a group of individuals who were later apprehended, brought to trial and variously punished. The anthropologist Rattray (1923) described this event in his memorandum of the *Sika Dwa Kofi* as an act of desecration. He described the stool as exclusively religious; it was a 'symbol of Ashanti nationality', something that through hallowed custom and belief engendered the objective and consensual virtues of 'obedience', 'respect', and 'great loyalty'. In 1935, Rattray enlarged on this theme by calling the *Sika Dwa Kofi* 'a shrine' embodying 'the soul of the Ashanti people'. According to McCaskie (1983:199), the incident with the Golden Stool was not an act performed by religious dissidents. He believed that the *nkwankwaa* acted out of economic and political reasons to repudiate the controlling authority represented by the *Sika Dwa Kofi*. To the *nkwankwaa* who represented the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, the state was the enemy and stripping the *Sika Dwa Kofi* was a literal stripping of the extractive power of the pre-colonial state. They did not disagree with the perception of the Kumasi royal elite that the *Sika Dwa Kofi* was a sacred object, but they did not wish to accept the Golden Stool as a symbol of the highest political power. In 1930, the *nkwankwaa* were particularly outraged by news that the Kumasihene, Prempeh I, and his chiefs were considering a law which would require that a percentage of a deceased person's property should be given to the Kumasihene and his chiefs. After discussions with the 'Chief Commissioner' (CC), Prempeh I dropped the issue (Allman 1990:269). McCaskie draws the conclusion that the *nkwankwaa* were political dissidents because on 24 September 1921 Kwasi Nsenie Agya, who was one of the persons who were guilty of stripping the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, remarked:

While we were sharing Dwantua [Kwadwo Dwantua] said, he is a stool carrier [*nkomwasoani*] and that *only the wood in it [the Golden Stool] is important but the gold about it is nothing.*

Agya's remark shows that the thieves of the *Sika Dwa Kofi* made a clear distinction between the gold, which referred to the nineteenth-century Asante state, and the *sunsum* inside the Golden Stool, which referred to the spiritual component of a unique 'Asante-ness' (McCaskie 1986a:16). The *nkwankwaa* remained supporters of the Asante Indigenous Religion, despite their flirtations with modernity, individuality and more equal relations (Chazan and others 1999:100-102). Politically, however, the *nkwankwaa* were just like the *akonkofo* rivals of the traditional authorities.

To politically undermine these authorities, the *nkwankwaa* made use of 'Aberewa', an anti-witchcraft cult that had been established in Asante around 1907. Aberewa was the property of *nkwankwaa* and was viewed with hostility by senior officeholders who saw it as an alternative locus of authority, and deeply threatening to their position, since some *nkwankwaa* pledged their loyalty to Aberewa in direct opposition to obedience to office holders. Additionally, Aberewa threatened the legitimacy of their office, because its leaders took advantage of the need of many Asante commoners (*mmerante*) for security by offering protection against threats, such as adultery, envy, theft, cursing, the bearing of false witness, poisoning and barrenness (McCaskie 1981).

In short, the *mmerante*'s urgent need for protection was caused by an increase in the degree of insecurity in the Asante society, due to — among other reasons — the effects of European Christian missionaries' attempts to convert them, which went together with the supporters of a different, modern lifestyle — and Fernando Po's introduction of cacao in 1879. Cocoa affected the Asante society in at least two ways. First, cocoa brought the possibility of the accumulation of private capital. In the pre-colonial Asante Kingdom, almost all capital had been in the hands of the state. The Asantehene was in charge of the one and only treasury and gave office holders the chance to prove themselves as successful chiefs by lending them money for which they had to pay 'rent'. This contributed to the state's enrichment. Equally contributory to the wealth of the state was the fact that after the death of each Asante chief his entire capital went back into the state's treasury (Wilks 1979). The pre-colonial state representative (the Asantehene) had thus a monopoly on the accumulation of wealth, which — as I previously mentioned in Chapter Three, section 3.6 — caused the coming into being of 'Domankama', a witchcraft cult. Its members attempted to accumulate private wealth and therefore made an effort to destool the then ruling Asantehene, Osei Bonsu. This Asante King did not in any sense tolerate the accumulation of private wealth and consequently he killed a lot of Domankama's members, which contributed to his prosperity. However, Osei Bonsu's cruelty and greediness led to the *mmerante*'s increasing dissatisfaction with his regime and eventually caused his destoolment (McCaskie 1981).

The Domankama cult attracted many *mmerante* because they offered the possibility of accumulating private wealth in the Asante society, which was new to them. In their perception that was based on the idea of the existence of one treasury and the state's monopoly on the accumulation

of capital in the hands of private citizens, which was in fact predominantly the result of the production of cocoa; the accumulation of private wealth must have been caused by witches. And it was believed that rich subjects' accumulation of wealth must have caused the impoverishment of others. Pre-colonial witchcraft cults, such as Domankama, and colonial ones such as Aberewa that could catch witches — who were in the majority rich people — were popular because they were believed to be able to get rid of people's poverty. A side effect of the introduction of cocoa as a mono-cash crop in Ghana and the resulting possibility of the accumulation of private wealth was also that it caused trouble in many Asante families. The increase of wealth among some family members and the impoverishment of others resulted in strained relations between them. Again, witches were believed to be the cause of these tensions. On both the macro-level, which caused increased stratification in the society, and micro-level, which caused increased income differences and tensions within the conjugal family, witches were thus believed to be causing trouble. Consequently they needed to be eradicated by anti-witchcraft cults, which flourished in Asante until 1950.⁹⁸ The cynical link between the increase of economic power of the witchcraft movements and tensions in the relationship with the traditional authorities is that by accusing people of witchcraft they had a right to kill them and take their money, which increased their wealth. During a meeting held on 6 August 1908 in Kumasi, F.C. Fuller the 'British Chief Commissioner' (BCC) who ruled over the 'Crown Colony of Asante' between 1905 and 1920 formulated his thoughts on the anti-witchcraft cults as follows: 'When the priest is short of money he falls upon a wealthy person and charges him or her with sorcery or witchcraft' (F.C. Fuller, 6 August 1908, 1/30/1/6 — 'Chief fetish Priest Abirewa' (2/07) 1907-1908).

Although Fuller's opinion was most likely not purely objective, it made clear that the British were keener on cooperation with the Asante chiefs than the leaders of anti-witchcraft cults in Asante. Their main reason was that these cult leaders challenged the power of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers who fell under the authority of the BCC. In terms of religion, the policy of the British was 'not to interfere with the natives' religious affairs' (F.C. Fuller, 6 August 1908, 1/30/1/6 — 'Chief fetish Priest Abirewa' (2/07) 1907-1908). An exception was made for those cases where the practices of anti-witchcraft cults should be regarded as criminal. The British strategy was thus to control the indigenous religious practices of the Asante by the application of laws. During the period of direct rule over the Kumasi Division (1901-1935) and Indirect Rule over the remaining divisions in the 'Crown Colony of Asante' this resulted in a policy to suppress those witchcraft cults which in their eyes were regarded as illegal forms of worship, even though some of these cults' religious practices

⁹⁸ The cults included Tigare (which became the most famous), Kune, Senyakapo, Tongo, Kankamea, Blekete, Kwasi Kukuro, and Kwaku Firi shrines. See Field (1968), Debrunner (1959). After 1950 witchcraft cults became unpopular, whereas prophets, such as Sampson Oppong, increased in popularity and developed mass movements, which became the forerunners of the Independent Churches in Ghana (Miller 1968).

were actually supported by the local Asante traditional authorities who believed in the power of the anti-witchcraft medicines that were provided by these cults. The latter reveals that those colonial Asante chiefs and queen mothers had continued to believe in the power of spiritual beings and consequently maintained their spiritual function. In this period the British, however, regarded the Asante Indigenous Religion in the working of those medicines as ‘superstition’ and as a result they proscribed many witchcraft cults, such as Aberewa, which became forbidden in 1908. The British feared that this anti-witchcraft cult could develop into a mass movement, which — after being an underground movement for some years — nevertheless became a reality in the 1920s (McCaskie 1981), (Olsen 2003:249).

Aberewa and other anti-witchcraft movements were thus politically threatening for both the Asante traditional authorities and the colonial government. Religiously, however, these movements legitimised themselves by making use of symbols and laws that went together with the Asante Indigenous Religion, such as the swearing of an oath and the creation of a list of life rules within the cult, which was also done by Priest Anokye who was occupied with the socio-political organisation of the eighteenth century’s Asante society (the so called ‘seventy seven laws of Anokye’).

To sum up, the *nkwankwaa* were political rivalries of Asantehene Prempeh I and the other Asante traditional authorities, but not rivals in a religious sense. They made a clear distinction between the political and the religious function of the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, which shows that they found it important to let people know that they did not disagree with its religious meaning. It should, however, be noted that during the reign of Prempeh I the indigenous religious intermediary function of the Asante traditional authorities became less central in Asante society. In the pre-colonial state, as previously mentioned in section 3.3, the Asante Indigenous Religion and especially the *Odwira* festival were used ‘to re-enact, re-interpret, and transmit Asante history, renew communication between dead and living Asante, and to emphasise the unity of Greater Asante’ (Arhin 1967). Asante indigenous religious practices, such as *Odwira*, were controlled by the state and meant to strengthen it. Additionally, no shrine spirits (*obosom*) could be introduced in Asante without the consent and approval of Priest Anokye. The collapse of the Asante state resulted in the spiritual realm being less controlled by the representatives of that state (Allman and Parker 2005:125). Consequently, there was room for anti-witchcraft cults to emerge in the uncontrolled, unmediated space of colonial ‘other worldly’ Asante.

4.2.4 Prempeh I and the servants (nhenkwaa) and other Asante commoners (mmerante)

The majority of the inhabitants of Kumasi were in favour of the repatriation of Prempeh I. Those Asante commoners (*mmerante*) who were his most loyal followers were the former servants

(*nhenkwaa*) of the Royals, such as the chief's sword bearer, the palanquin carrier and the wives that cooked for the chief (McCaskie 1986a:10). In the pre-colonial period the *nhenkwaa* used to be a political and economic sub-elite, who participated in the administrative system. They obtained land-grants with settled bondsmen and exercised judicial authority over them. Sources of income for them were benefits from the state in the form of shares in war booty and commission on tribute, tax and levy collection, shares in judicial fees, extortions in the judicial process and trading capital. During the colonial period, they remained loyal to the Asante traditional authorities, from whom they used to derive their social status. Many of the former servants of the traditional authorities had left Kumasi after the deportation of Prempeh I (Adjaye 1984), as under the 'District Commissioner' (DC), the 'Provincial Commissioner' (PC), the 'Chief Commissioner' (CC) and the Governor, who represented the British colonial authorities, they had become jobless. But, loyal as always, when Prempeh I returned back to Kumasi in 1924 some of his perennial supporters also moved back to Kumasi from its surrounding villages (Akyeampong 1999:298). Although the offices of *nhenkwaa* were not officially reinstated under Prempeh I, he offered many of them a job at the palace and, for those who were employed by Prempeh I, life seemed to continue as if their 'king'⁹⁹ had never been exiled from Kumasi. This included the maintenance of practices, such as the pouring of libation and the celebration of the *adae* rituals that went together with the veneration of the ancestors and the honouring of the land, although openly on a state level the celebration of *Odwira* was suspended until 1985, most likely because it was perceived to be a threat to the Colonial Authorities. The British decision to postpone the celebration of *Odwira* after the foundation of the 'Crown Colony of Asante' in 1902, however, demonstrates that it was still perceived as the main way to legitimise the Asante traditional political institution. The presence of this British perception of the meaning of *Odwira* shows that there were clear limitations to the extent to which they managed to control the religious innerlife of the Asante, for whom the Asante Indigenous Religion was very important, even for those who for mainly practical reasons had converted to Islam or Christianity. Because of the continuation of Asante indigenous religious practices during the period of Prempeh I's exile, such as the quiet performance of the *adae* rituals at night, the Asante traditional authorities' indigenous religious intermediary function did not cease to exist.

The cause for the persistence of the celebration of the *adae* is twofold. First, as a result of Indirect Rule, the attitude of many British officials was to not interfere with the religious affairs of the Asante, unless the performed rituals were believed to be criminal, such as those of the witchcraft

⁹⁹ Because Prempeh I was never officially destooled before his deportation, in the eyes of the Asante, he remained their king, even though his residence was the Seychelles Islands rather than Kumasi and even though he returned in 1924 as Kumasihene and even though after his deportation the British did not recognise him any longer as Asantehene, a situation which remained the case until his death in 1931.

cults Mangoro and Aberewa. On 3 August 1908, the Chief Commissioner (CC) of Kumasi, F.C. Fuller, wrote to the British Governor:

The people have their religion and they have their innumerable fetishes, alright, nobody will forbid these, but the Aberewa and Mangoro practices are no religion or cult but simply a devilish way to suck on the people money by taking advantage of their superstition and stupidity (F.C. Fuller to his excellency the Governor, Kumasi, 3 August 1908, 1/30/1/6—'Chief fetish Priest Abirewa' (2/07) 1907-1908).

The quotation shows that F.C. Fuller made a clear distinction between the indigenous religion of the Asante, with its acceptable practices, and cult practices of which some were believed to be criminal.

Secondly, during the period of Prempeh I's exile many Asante refused to live under the colonial order and remained loyal to the Asantehene. In the Seychelles, King Prempeh I continued to celebrate the *adae* as far as possible since the stools of the Asante ancestors were absent. Libations, however, continued to be poured and the Sunday *akwasidae* was even marked by church attendance. The persistence of the *adae* celebration in the Seychelles was very important for Prempeh I, as it is also a celebration of one's geneology, which means that to abrogate it is the equivalent of social death (Akyeampong 1999). With the help of the *adae* celebration Prempeh I maintained his social status as a king for his people exiled in the Seychelles, but also for the Asante back in Kumasi who continued to perceive him as their king. This turned out to be the case from Governor Sir Shenton, who in 1924 wrote that:

In the eyes of the government he [LM: King Prempeh I] returned as a private citizen...in the eyes of Ashanti it was their Asantehene who had come back to them. The Golden Stool had once more an occupant and the people had once more their supreme spiritual head (Governor Sir Shenton, 1924).

Even though officially Prempeh I returned home as a private citizen, his people embraced him as the Asantehene and gave him the Golden Stool and all stool properties. Many chiefs (*amanhene*) took the oath of allegiance to him and celebrated the *adae* festival during his absence.

To summarise, the *nhenkwaa* showed themselves to be in favour of the traditional Asante authorities and the restoration of Asante indigenous religious elements. They had remained loyal to their Asante King and kept perceiving them as the representative of the ancestral spirits, who are the right owners of the land. In imitation of the *nhenkwaa*, many other Asante commoners (*mmerante*) also embraced the indigenous way of life. They continued to perceive the Asantehene and other Asante traditional authorities as intermediaries between the social and the spiritual world.

4.2.5 Prempeh I and the Christians

Initially, until his deportation in 1896, Prempeh I prevented European Christian missionaries from settling in Kumasi (Mendonsa 2000). During his stay in the Seychelles, however, the Asantehene had encouraged his subjects to convert to Christianity and was himself involved in the process of conversion. Consequently, after Prempeh I's repatriation from the Seychelles, he allowed

ECMs to do their work and to build schools in Kumasi, such as the Wesley College (Boahen 1975:86). At the same time, after his installation as Kumasihene, Prempeh I attempted to restore as many pre-colonial rooted Asante indigenous religious symbols and objects as possible, such as the *Aya Kesse*, a huge brass pan that stood in front of the Bantama royal mausoleum. Prempeh I found these religious elements very important for the reestablishment of his Kingdom and until the end of his life he combined the Asante Indigenous Religion with the Anglican faith. During 'Thanksgiving Service' at St Cyprian's Anglican Church in Kumasi, for instance, Prempeh I carried the Golden Stool inside the church and placed it in front of its altar. Together with the queen mother he knelt by the altar and gave thanks for his liberation and restoration to his people (Akyeampong 1999:305). By combining Asante Indigenous Religion with Christianity, Kumasihene Prempeh I introduced an African modernity which enabled him to set an example for both indigenous practitioners and Christian converts. This religious strategy certainly increased his popularity and in all likelihood explains the many supporters of the king despite the attendance of modern Western counter-forces that were promoted by both the British colonial masters and the *akonkofo* Ɔ.

In his function as religious peacekeeper, Prempeh I attempted to find syncretic forms of Asante Indigenous Religion and Christianity, but he experienced resistance from orthodox Christian converts. Many Christians among the Asante had been converted to Christianity in order to attempt to free themselves from the veneration of ancestral spirits and the services to the traditional rulers that they believed to be associated with the veneration of those spirits, such as that which is expressed in the libations during the *adae* and *Odwira* festival. They considered the veneration of ancestral spirits to be 'pagan' and believed drumming and dancing on state occasions to be hateful to the Christian God. They also protested against the ban imposed by the traditional councils on farming in certain areas during days that were dedicated to the veneration of the earth deity (*Asase Yaa*). Their attitude and those of the colonial rulers questioned the authority of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers (Busia 1951:191). Both Christians and colonial rulers discouraged the celebration of *Odwira*, the major festival in Kumasi during the pre-colonial period that was used to legitimise the Asante state, fearing an increase of Asante nationalism.

In conclusion, Prempeh I attempted to maintain a cordial relationship with the Christian community in the Kumasi Metropolis, by emphasising the similarities between the Asante Indigenous Religion and Christianity. This shows a persistence of the religious peacekeeping function of the Asante traditional authorities. Nevertheless, Christian converts and the effects of colonial rule decreased the Asante traditional authorities' function as indigenous religious intermediaries with the ancestral spirits, since they diminished the indigenous role of those rulers. Political resistance against Prempeh I came from the *akonkofo* Ɔ, rather than the Asante *Nkramo* and the *nkwanakwaa*. None of these groups had a religious reason to oppose Prempeh I. There is thus no

evidence of a diminishment of the Asante indigenous religious belief of the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis. In their own way, the *nhenkwaa* were also paving their way to the ancestral world and they did not feel disturbed by the indigenous religious symbolic meaning of the Golden Stool. Cooperation with Asantehene Prempeh I came from the side of both the *nhenkwaa* and Asante who adhered to a milder form of Christianity.

The *nhenkwaa* had refused to show allegiance to the BCC after Prempeh I's deportation. And so it happened that despite the political counter-movements of the *akonkofo* and the *nkwanakwa* during his whole life, Prempeh I could rely on the loyalty of the majority of the Asante, who were both Asante indigenous practitioners and Christians. Agyeman Prempeh I remained Kumasihene from 11 November 1926 until his death on 12 May 1931.

4.3 The indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping roles of Asantehene Prempeh II (1931-1970)

On 24 April 1933 the British restored the Asante Confederacy. Consequently, after Prempeh I's death Kwame Kyeretwie was enstooled on 22 June 1931 and known, until his death on 27 May 1970, as Asantehene Osei Nana Agyeman *Otumfoɔ* Prempeh II. As with Prempeh I, I will also focus on the rivals and adherents of Prempeh II in order to show how the role of the Asantehenes as indigenous religious intermediaries and peacekeepers relates to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

An illustration of the fact that Asante traditional authorities had not ceased to follow the Asante Indigenous Religion is that during the reign of Prempeh II, those authorities generally looked positively towards some anti-witchcraft cults in the Asante Region, such as for instance 'Tigare'. This cult, which was active in the Asante Region between 1946 and 1948, was reported to have originated in French territory (from Ypala near Wa) and had a branch at Adadientem near Ejisum in Asante. In 1946 the 'Commissioner of the Gold Coast Police' (CGCP) recommended that all anti-witchcraft movements, of which Tigare was believed to be the most harmful, should be abolished. Letters belonging to the Asantehene that were included in the report of the ruling DC, however, reveal that the chiefs made a clear distinction between anti-witchcraft movements that in their eyes were harmful for the community and those that were beneficial since they protected their subjects against miscarriages, epilepsy and other evil caused by witches. Tigare was perceived to be one of the anti-witchcraft movements that the Asante traditional authorities did not want to abolish. Consequently, the CGCP suggested that perhaps the time had come when the 'Asante Confederacy Council' (ACC) and the 'Joint Provincial Council' (JPC) would be asked to take steps to bar certain fetishes by licensing some and forbidding all those that were unlicensed (Criminal Investigation Division, The Gold Coast Police Accra, 27 June 1946, 6/1/40—'Fetishes' (0014) 1944-1948). Unlike their earlier attempt to suppress all anti-witchcraft movements, the British colonial officers now

recognised the importance for the Asante community of healing powers of some of those cult leaders who had great knowledge of traditional medicine. In fact they had not much choice, because under the changing regime from direct to indirect rule an increasing number of Asante traditional authorities started to write petitions to the Colonial Officers to beg them to be able to keep the cults in their villages, whose leaders were praised and admired for their healing powers and skills to eradicate witchcraft. The British who could not rule without the Asante chiefs and queen mothers could not afford such tensions in their relationship with those Royals. Consequently, they looked for other solutions rather than the earlier strategy of suppression of those cults. The incapacity of the British to control these indigenous religious activities in the Asante Region shows the resilience of the Asante Indigenous Religion, despite the introduction of, on the one hand Christianity and modernity, and on the other hand new Islamic movements, such as the 'Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah body' and Wahhabi organisations and the Arabic worldview (see section 6.3.3).

4.3.1 Prempeh II and the *nkwankwaa*

Shortly after Asantehene Prempeh II was enstooled, he was confronted with *nkwankwaa*, who, under the leadership of E.C. Bobie Ansa, had organised a conspiracy against him (McCaskie 2000a:219). The *nkwankwaa*, who had also won the support of the big men (*asikafo*) and the 'poor' or 'under-privileged' (*ahiafo*), collaborated with the Dadeasoabahene, Bantamahene, Akyempemhene and Adumhene in a plot to remove Prempeh II from the Golden Stool. The ACC was worried by the fact that the *nkwankwaa* had won the support of such prominent chiefs. Consequently, in 1936 it abolished the position of leader of the young men (*nkwankwahene*) and almost all *nkwankwaa* organisations, so that the *nkwankwaa* were debarred from an acknowledged channel through which they could collectively criticise the government (Allman 1990:270).

As a result, in 1949, Nkrumah founded the 'Convention People's Party' (CPP) (Boahen 1975:162-165; Schwab 2004:102-103), who believed that traditional authorities ought to have only ceremonial functions. Many *nkwankwaa* played key roles in the founding of this political party and participated in Nkrumah's struggle against colonial rule and the power and privilege of chiefly authority. In 1954, however, after the 'Ashanti Youth Association' (AYA) had split between supporters and opponents of the CPP, most *nkwankwaa* broke free from this party and took the side of the paramount chiefs of Asante. They believed that the support of the chiefs was an ideological necessity. The chiefs would bring with them the support of the spirits and ancestors of the entire nation and the struggle against Nkrumah would become the fight of the Asante nation against political slavery, economic slavery and 'black imperialism'. In an effort toward reconciliation with the chiefs, the *nkwankwaa* coupled their demands for a higher cocoa price and Asante autonomy

within a federated Gold Coast, with a call for the preservation of chieftaincy, and posited themselves as the defenders of that 'sacred institution' (Allman 1990:272).

In September 1954 the 'National Liberation Movement' (NLM) was founded, a mass political organisation that united chiefs, 'young men' and many others. Its central aim was to advance Asante claims for self-determination and to oppose the CPP in their advocacy of a constitutional settlement with the British colonial government — a settlement that would bring about a unitary government in an independent Gold Coast. The *nkwankwaa* were the catalyst behind the formation of the NLM and the resurrection of Asante nationalism that it represented. They no longer turned themselves against the Asante state but asked for the support of the chiefs and the old guard of intelligentsia.

To sum up, in 1936 the *nkwankwaa* turned themselves against Asantehene Prempeh II. Then, from 1949 onwards, most *nkwankwaa* took the side of the paramount chiefs of Asante, who they regarded as the authorities of a 'sacred institution'. This is evidence for the presumption that the indigenous religious intermediary role of Asante traditional authorities was maintained.

4.3.2 Prempeh II and the *awuƆsƆnfoƆ*

In 1943, the customary rights over the Kumasi lands were reinvested in the Asantehene by the council in trust for the Golden Stool. The 'Kumasi Town Council' (KTC) (McCaskie 2000a:14), which after 'The Kumasi Council of Chiefs' (KCC) and 'The Kumasi Public Health Board' (KPHB), had been the name for the local government in Kumasi, had the difficult task of looking after housing for all the inhabitants of Kumasi, whose population increased explosively in the colonial period, from 6,280 inhabitants in 1901 to 20,268 in 1921 to 35,829 in 1931 (Boahen 1975:105) (See: map 5). Under the governance of Sir F. Gordon Guggisberg (1919-1927) the infrastructure in the Gold Coast highly improved. In 1925-6 for instance, a road was built from Kumasi to towns in all parts of the Gold Coast such as Bompata, Goaso, Wenkyi and Sunyani. In 1923 a railway was completed that could transport people from Accra to Kumasi in seven hours (Clarke 1960:294). These roads made it easier to reach Kumasi and consequently an increased number of people migrated to this town. Around 1945 the Kumasi Metropolis counted 45,133 inhabitants and did not provide enough housing. In 1948 with 71,313 people the town suffered from a serious lack of dwellings.

In order to create more housing for the inhabitants of Kumasi, the British hired two architects and planned to develop the town in the southern direction. Prempeh II predicted that the expansion of Kumasi to the south would lead to litigious struggles over land rights as people would try to obtain titles to potentially valuable building plots. Prempeh II's predictions were right and in the late 1940s and into the 1950s conflict over land rights around Kumasi escalated, as did applications for

building. As the building of more houses became a very profitable business, both the ‘inherited’ or ‘traditional chiefs’ and ‘invention of tradition’ chiefs claimed the land south of Kumasi. Traditional chiefs claimed that they were the rightful owners of the land, because the first Asantehene, Osei Tutu I, had made them custodians of the land. Meanwhile other chiefs claimed that after the colonisation of the Asante Kingdom the land was given to them by the British. Asantehene Prempeh II himself also attempted to gain financially from the situation by raising the symbolic token people used to pay to the Kumasi metropolitan authority for renting a plot of land by a considerable amount of money. The profit that Asantehene Prempeh II made certainly raised his status, as wealth and distinction went together in the Asante Indigenous Religion.

Consequently, however, history repeated itself during the reign of Prempeh II, in the sense that as an almost inevitable part of the system of creating wealth at the cost of Asante subjects the Asantehene had created opposition from Asante, like the *akonkofo* Ɔ, who positioned themselves as enemies of the state. In Prempeh II’s time these enemies were known as the auctioneers (*awuƆsɔfo* Ɔ) who were active opponents of the Golden Stool as a political body. They declared rights over plots and then auctioned them off to the highest bidder, which was illegal. During the reign of Asantehene Prempeh II there was overlap between the Asante who called themselves *nkwankwaa* and the group of *awuƆsɔfo* Ɔ (the new *akonkofo* Ɔ). In terms of religion, the attitude of the *awuƆsɔfo* Ɔ towards King Prempeh II is comparable to that of the *nkwankwaa*.

The reason why the *awuƆsɔfo* Ɔ turned against Asantehene Prempeh II was religious, not political. The *awuƆsɔfo* Ɔ had no effect on Prempeh II in his function as indigenous religious intermediary.

4.3.3 Prempeh II and the Christians

In terms of the incorporation of Christianity in the Asante Indigenous Religion, Prempeh II continued the project that was started by Prempeh I, although he chose a different church to become the religious house of the Asante Royals. Prempeh II encouraged his subjects to become Roman Catholics and chose to leave the St Cyprian Anglican Church as he did not like to identify himself with the British royal family, who were after all colonising his kingdom. Prempeh II’s belief in Roman Catholicism did not prevent him from remaining an Asante indigenous believer, and believing like other Asante in Jesus as Nana, ‘the Great and Greatest Ancestor’ (Sarpong, 55). He combined Asante Indigenous Religion with Christianity; this was proven by the fact that when he said the Lord’s Prayer he never closed his eyes as no Asante indigenous believer is expected to do. He doubted whether there was an *Onyankopong Kurom* (Heaven) but at the same time uttered a deep

fear for the *Obonsam Kurom* (Hell fire). Also, his Christian religion did not prevent him from following the royal protocol by visiting the stool room at Bantama to honour his ancestors — the departed Asantehenes — during *akwasidae* (Anti 1996:178-180).

King Prempeh II's positive attitude toward Christians and Catholicism is evidence for the continuance of Asante traditional authorities as religious peacekeepers.

4.3.4 Prempeh II and the Muslims

The return of Prempeh I had no doubt been the first step in the restoration of *Asanteman* in 1935. In 1926, Prempeh I became Kumasihene, which in April 1928 gave him enough influence to be able to restore the college of physicians (*nsumanfiesu*) founded in 1844. This brought back the pre-colonial situation of balanced tension between Asante and the Asante *Nkramo*. During the reign of Asantehene Prempeh II the relationship between those two groups remained equal. Under Prempeh II's reign the Asante Confederacy was restored which made him succeed in depolarising the relationship of the Asante with the newer inhabitants of the Kumasi settlement. The Muslims honoured Prempeh II as the king of reconciliation.

Under Prempeh II's reign, political power shifted from kings to political parties. Henceforth, in 1951 the Gold Coast was divided into constituencies that were set up without strict regard to traditional affiliation but using population consideration, which meant that people under a paramount chief could be made to incorporate people of another traditional area and elect someone to represent them in parliament. Political parties were formed and the party which won the majority seats in parliament became the ruling party, and exercised power over and above that of the king.

The creation of political parties during the eve of Ghana's Independence in 1957 certainly helped Prempeh II to achieve what he wanted. For the political parties, whose members voted against Nkrumah's CPP, could only organise themselves by making use of the existing political structure of the traditional authorities. This means that these parties — the 'Muslim Association Party' (MAP) and the 'National Liberation Movement' (NLM), the political party of King Prempeh II — could not function without supporting the traditional authorities and the preservation of chieftaincy. Due to the national character of the NLM, the support of chieftaincy grew in the whole of the Gold Coast in areas that voted against the CPP.

In 1958, the MAP and the NLM, among other political parties, were united in the 'United Party' (UP) in a mutual struggle against Nkrumah's CPP. The UP stood for the promotion of traditional values — Asante or Muslim — and the preservation of the traditional authorities, which ideologically bound the Asante and many inhabitants of the settlement together. Although some settlement Muslim headmen continued to support the CPP, the majority of these headmen and subjects joined the NLM.

Under the reign of Asantehene Prempeh II, the Asante *Nkramo* maintained a relationship of balanced tension with this Asante King and the relationship with the Muslims of the Kumasi settlement improved. The fact that King Prempeh II agreed to a fusion of his party with the one of the Muslims is evidence for the maintainance of the Asante traditional authorities' religious peacekeeping role.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I provided insight into the question of whether Asante chieftaincy has persisted and there has been a continuation in its relation to the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping roles of Asante traditional authorities in the colonial period. I showed that in the colonial period Asante chieftaincy took many forms. Under King Prempeh I the institution became known as the 'Council of Kumasi', which was a transformed form of the precolonial Kumasi Council. Underp Prempeh II, Asante's traditional political institute took the form of a 'resurrected' Asante Confederacy.

Since Asante chieftaincy did not cease to exist, Asantehene Prempeh I and all other Asante traditional authorities indeed maintained their indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping responsibilities. These tasks were to legitimise their institution with the help of the Asante indigenous Religions and to regulate the relationship with Europeans and Muslims, respectively. There was in other words a continuation between AIR and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The *akonkofo* Ɔ, the *nkwankwaa* and the *nhenkwaa* maintained adherence to the Asantehene in his sacred role as representative of the ancestral spirits. As a religious peacekeeper, Prempeh II prolonged cordial relationships with the Muslims and Christians, despite the rebellion of orthodox Christian converts, by providing religious freedom to these two religious movements, e.g. to allow the Muslims to build mosques and Qur'anic schools and the European Missionary Christians to build churches and schools.

During the reign of King Prempeh II the Asantehenes' indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions also persisted. The *nkwankwaa* regarded the Asante institution of chieftaincy as a sacred institution. The *awu* Ɔ *Info* Ɔ did not oppose *Asanteman* for religious purposes. The indigenous religious peacekeeping duty persisted as King Prempeh II maintained a relatively cordial relationship with the Christians and Muslims in the Kumasi Metropolis. The Asante King converted to Catholicism and was a co-founder of the United Party.

It should be remarked on, however, that in comparison with the pre-colonial era, during the colonial phase the indigenous religious intermediary role of Asante traditional authorities had

diminished. As an effect of the influence of Christian converts and colonial authorities, the number of *Kumasifo* who believed in ancestral spirits had also been reduced. Also, whereas in the pre-colonial period most stools were occupied by Asante of royal descent, in the colonial period most stools became occupied by Asante who were either educated and/or wealthy. This change in the occupation of an Asante stool meant a diminishment of the importance of the lineage and its celebration by the performance of indigenous religious rituals (*adae*). Therefore, it negatively affected the indigenous religious intermediary role of Asante traditional authorities. Besides the membership of a royal family, the possession of elitist qualifications became important as a basis for a right to rule. Part of the religious peacekeeping role of Asante chiefs and queen mothers was to lead the Asante community into modernity by linking with the several Christian traditions brought by European Christian Missionaries, while safeguarding the essentials of the indigenous value system.

Introduction Part II: empirical evidence

I am defending the thesis that 'Asante Indigenous Religion' (AIR) is an important and unrecognised explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy (*Asanteman*) in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana. In Chapter One of this thesis, I have shown that there are also economic, political and social explanations for Asante chieftaincy's persistence, but that those explanations alone cannot fully explain why this institution has not ceased to exist. The present state of scholarship shows that there is a necessity to look at the role of indigenous religious aspects in the persistence of Asante chieftaincy and its relation with the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping roles of Asante traditional authorities.

In the first part of this thesis, I have given an overview of the history of chieftaincy in Ghana and have shown that the Asante chieftaincy derives its continuity from its Asante indigenous religious roots. While political changes have often threatened the persistence of *Asanteman* AIR has shown to be a continuing source of legitimisation for its existence. Indigenous religious aspects of chieftaincy are, however, not static and have changed considerably since the foundation of the Asante Kingdom in 1701. Syncretism and 'invention of tradition' in a continuously transforming context are important characteristics of the Asante Indigenous Religion. On a structural level, with concern for most characteristics of Asante identity (*sunsum, kra, mogya, ntro*) and in comparison with the transformations of the institution that have occurred due to its roots in the social world, I have shown that AIR can be seen as a stabilising factor for Asante chieftaincy. This makes Indigenous Religion and the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions of Asante chiefs and queen mothers important in explaining the mentioned indigenous institution's persistence. In the second part of my thesis, I will show that AIR has been important for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy by showing that up to the present day there has been a continuation in the Asante traditional authorities' indigenous religious and peacekeeping functions.

Part II is divided into two Chapters. In Chapter Five, I will use J. L. Cox's (2007:68-71) empirical, radical and deeply focussed definition of 'indigenous' to explain why the Asante chiefs' and queen mothers' indigenous religious intermediary function has continued to be important for the persistence of today's *Asanteman*. In Chapter Six, I will refer to one of the characteristics of IRs that is mentioned by the Dutch scholar Dr. J. G. Platvoet focussing on another aspect of AIR, which gives insight into the Asante traditional authorities' indigenous religious peacekeeping roles.

Chapter Five: indigenous religious mediation in today's Kumasi Metropolis

Onipa wu a na onwu — 'One who passes away is never really gone'.

Asante proverb

Introduction

To understand the effect of (a) the Asante Indigenous Religion on (b) the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the present-day Kumasi Metropolis, it is not enough to focus only on the history of state formation in Ghana in general and of the mentioned Metropolis in particular. To gain insight into the relationship between (a) and (b), one needs to study recent empirical phenomena that either support or reject the statement that 'indigenous religious elements' are present in rituals that are being performed in the Kumasi Metropolis, and that the presence of those elements does — at least to a certain extent — explain the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

In this thesis I have chosen to work with Cox's definition of Indigenous Religions (see section 1.4), which is indispensable for this study because it enables me to empirically test the presence of 'indigenous religious' elements within various present-day religious rituals and relate them to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The possibility of testing today's rituals empirically is exactly what I need, since the first question that arises when one studies the relationship between Asante Indigenous Religion and the persistence of chieftaincy is whether the observed phenomena in various Asante religious rituals can be characterised as 'Indigenous Religion'. This is essential to know, because it is not self evident that the rituals that are being performed in Ghana these days are 'indigenous'. Some rituals, such as those being performed at the Yaa Asantewaa festival that is held yearly in Ejisu in commemoration of the female warrior by that name, do not have any indigenous roots and are only being performed for (the majority of them African American) tourists. If this is the case for the Asante rituals that I am going to describe there is no need to look at the relationship of those rituals with the persistence of chieftaincy. Being 'indigenous' is thus a *conditio sine qua non* of all rituals for defining any relationship of those rituals with Asante chieftaincy's persistence. The focus in this Chapter will therefore be on testing the presence of 'indigenous religious elements' in four Asante rituals (see scheme 1) that I observed in the Kumasi Metropolis during fieldwork in 2006 and to show whether and to what extent there is a relationship between (a) Asante Indigenous Religion and (b) the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

Asante religious rituals
(1) A pre-burial ritual of a deceased paramount chief
(2) Two private chiefs' pouring of libation ceremonies

(3) The rite de passage of enstoolment of a chief
(4) The 'invention of tradition' version of <i>Odwira</i> , an ancient traditional festival known today as <i>Asanteman Adaye Kese</i>

Scheme 1: Asante religious rituals under study

The chosen religious rituals are all related and performed in a chronological order, since they form part of the Akan *adaduanan* ritual calendar. Therefore, one can only fully understand the relationship between (a) and (b) by studying all four rituals.

Another remark that should be made is that there happens to be a clear distinction between the formal relationship of 'Asante Indigenous Religion' and 'Asante chieftaincy's persistence' and their informal connection. For each of the four rituals I will therefore study the formal and the informal link between the two. One final comment before the start of this Chapter: because J.L. Cox's definition is meant to enable researchers to empirically test the degree of 'indigenesness' within religious community practices worldwide, it is inevitable that some of the characteristics of 'Indigenous Religions' that are mentioned by other scholars of religions, such as Platvoet (1992:11-28), Harvey (2000), (2002), (2005), Olupona (2004) and Cooper (1988), are left out. If one mentions all characteristics of 'Indigenous Religions', just like with all other religions, one would have to include those qualities that refer to transcendence and the existence of a spiritual world. Those characteristics are, however, transcendent and can therefore not be incorporated into any empirical study of Indigenous Religions.

Although in this thesis I have primarily chosen to work with Cox's empirical, testable definition of 'Indigenous Religions', in this Chapter¹⁰⁰ I will refer to one other characteristic of 'Indigenous Religions' as mentioned by both Harvey (2000:4-5) and Cooper (1988:873-4), about the sustenance of relationships with beings in the spiritual world. By putting Harvey and Cooper's ideas together it is about harmonious and reciprocal relationships of humans with non-human beings. This characteristic of 'Indigenous Religions' is mentioned because it enhances insight into the link between 'Indigenous Religions' and 'the persistence of chieftaincy'. However, a note should be made that the presence of those indigenous religious elements cannot be proven empirically.

I understand that 'chieftaincy' refers to both chiefs and queen mothers, whereas the chosen rituals are mainly performed either for or by chiefs. The reason for this is that the invocation of ancestral spirits by queen mothers is less visible and therefore less suitable for empirically testing the presence of 'indigenous religious elements'. I will, however, occasionally refer to the role of queen mothers in the performance in some of the four chosen 'indigenous religious rituals'.

¹⁰⁰ And in the next Chapter, I will make use of another left-out characteristic of 'Indigenous Religions' mentioned by Platvoet. IRs are tolerant towards other (world) religions and adapt and adopt elements of those religions.

5.1 Asante indigenous religious elements? The possible presence of locality and the invocation of ancestral spirits in an Asante royal pre-burial ritual

In this section, I will first question to what extent ‘Asante indigenous religious elements’ were present in a royal pre-burial ritual in Kumasi. In section 5.2, I will question whether the possible presence of those religious elements provides an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

My analysis of a pre-burial ritual is based on that of the paramount chief Saamanhene Nantwi II, who was the head of all the servants (*nhenkwaa*) of the Asantehene responsible for the organisation of the palace and the preparation of the king’s food. Apart from the *nhenkwaa*, who are Gyaase people, the Saamanhene had three of the ten other divisions (*fekuo*) in Kumasi under him: the *ankobea*, the *manwere* and the *nkosuo* people (Odotei and Hagan 2002:73). In the eighteenth century, a division was a military or administrative unity that was created to effectively rule over the Asante Kingdom. Those divisions have continued to exist up to today. I have concentrated on Saaman Nantwi II’s pre-burial ritual, which took place on 5 and 6 March 2006, because I observed this ritual during my period of fieldwork in the Kumasi Metropolis, and noticed that there might be indigenous religious elements in it. This pre-burial ritual is therefore interesting for further analysis and I obtained the necessary permission from the family of the deceased chief to attend his pre-burial ritual and to video and use it for academic purposes.

Among the Asante, funeral celebrations consist of at least four phases. (i) the preparation for after-life, (ii) pre-burial mourning, (iii) the burial and (iv) post-burial mourning (Kwabena Nketia 1963:58-59). I have not observed (i) ‘the preparation for after-life’ ritual, which cannot be observed by anyone except the close relatives of the deceased. Those preparations include all rites in connection with the washing of the corpse, the dressing of the body and the pouring of libations. Neither could I observe the actual burial (iii), which took place in Sawua, the chief’s birth village, nor the post-burial mourning ritual (iv). It took three months before the relatives had gathered enough money to make the proper funeral arrangements to bury their deceased chief. Meanwhile, the body was kept in a mortuary (in a freezer).

In this section, I will look for empirical evidence for the presence of (a) ‘invocation of ancestral spirits’ and (b) the importance of ‘locality’ in the mentioned pre-burial rite. For the purpose of in-depth analysis, I have divided the Nana Saaman Nantwi II’s pre-burial ritual into eight events, which are shown in the scheme below.

Events during the pre-burial ritual
(1) The announcement of the pre-burial rite by the firing of musketry.
(2) Public mourning and mimic dancing on the rhythm of a gong – gong (<i>dawuro</i>) and various African drums.
(3) A laying-in-state (<i>ahodae</i>) ceremony.

(4) The last expression of care and respect for the deceased by shaking hands with the <i>abusua</i> .
(5) Performances of the musicians of the 'Manhyia Kete Nnwokorɔ' group and <i>Adowa</i> dancing.
(6) The drinking of palm wine (<i>nsa</i>) and eating of kola nuts.
(7) A gift giving ritual (<i>adosoa</i>).
(8) The <i>akɔm</i> dance of an indigenous priest (<i>Ɔkomfo</i>).

Scheme 2: events during Saamanhene Nantwi II's pre-burial ritual

The Saamanhene's pre-burial ritual started early in the morning with the announcement of the deceased chief by the firing of musketry. Gunpowder (*atuiuro*) that was shot from a local gun (*atuo*) was used to display Asante pride and pomp (*ayisem*) but above all to announce that the chief had died and to remember his spirit. Locally-made incense (*agyi*) was used to drive away evil spirits, such as *sasabonsam*, a ferocious, partly human monster of the deep forest, whose powers were to heal the terrible effects of the powers of witches, which was therefore believed to come from outside the realm of the established deities, such as *abosom*, *Nyame* and *nananom* (Allman and Parker 2005:126-131). 'Locality' plays an important role in pre-burial events because the 'evil' spirit known as *sasabonsam* that is driven away belongs to Kumasi and no other place. All evil spirits have names and are known to the Asante, and belong to a particular locality, such as the Kumasi Metropolis. The announcement of the death of a chief by the use of a local gun (*atuo*) is not only the first but also an event that takes place at intervals throughout an Asante pre-burial ritual, since new groups of people who come to show their last respect for their chief can arrive at any time. All other events during the ritual are unique events and occur in a fixed chronological order.

The second event during a pre-burial ritual is that of public mourning and mimic-dancing (*adowa*). The public mourning event was performed by ten of the 'symbolic wives' (hired mourners) of the deceased chief, who were wearing black cloth (*kuntunkuni*) and weeping bitterly as an expression of sympathy for the deceased. The colour black in Asante context symbolises maturity, as spiritual potency, energy and communion get darker when they mature (Kwaku Amoako-Attah Fosu, 39). Generally, this colour shows recognition of life changes: death, reincarnation, ancestral power, stool power, history, tradition and memories (Bartle 1982). 'Red' is associated with blood and symbolises serious commitment, spiritual power, sacrifice and struggle (Kwaku Amoako-Attah Fosu, 39) and more generally stands for fecundity, passion, danger, defilement, seriousness and dirtiness (Bartle 1982). Black and red are the two colours of the cloth that are worn during all funeral ceremonies and which symbolise the bond between the deceased and the living members of the *abusua*.

'Public mourning' is meant to invoke the spirit of the deceased and goes together with mimic dancing, which is meant to invoke ancestral spirits to guide the deceased to the ancestral world

(*asamando*). Mimic dancing during the public mourning event is only performed by women, because men must show their bereavement in a different way. For among the Asante, it is believed that ‘weeping, does not make you a man’ (Nketia 1955:8). The mimic dance is a stylised, symbolic employment of gestures and movements of the body in tune with the rhythm of African musical instruments. The main function of the dances at the Saamanhene’s pre-burial ritual and most other rituals is to release people from their sorrows by expressing sorrow and loneliness. Asante like ‘to dance their sorrows away’ and ‘to chase away death’. Music, such as that made by drums, is generally not designed to add to the sadness of the occasion but rather to provide an outlet for emotion, or to be a means of expressing sympathy and goodwill to the living (*ateasefo*) or as a means of making a commentary on the event of death (Kwabena Nketia 1963:65). Men who dance at the pre-burial rite of a chief usually hold key positions in the family or in the palace of the chief (Maabahene, in conversation with Maabahene and Nana Prenhyia-Besease, 44). Mimic dancers always perform on the rhythm of a gong-gong (*dawuro*) and various African drums, such as the *fɔntɔnfrɔm*, the *dono* and the *atumpan*, which are known as ‘talking drums’ and are meant to invoke ancestral spirits. During the Saamanhene’s pre-burial ritual, a handful of male mimic dancers were accompanied by two men in red cloth (*koben*) who played a gong-gong (*dawuro*). Another four men who were also dressed in red played the drums in a funeral (*adowa*) band. Family members of the bereaved usually wear black cloth. All other visitors of the pre-burial ritual can wear red cloth.

At funerals, bereaved relations are usually not the makers of music, but it is their duty to initiate music-making by verbally informing all friends of the deceased and fellow music-makers or fellow members of a particular association to which the deceased belonged (Kwabena Nketia 1963:60). Two men used a *fɔntɔnfrɔm*, which is a huge drum that is either beaten when resting on the ground (such as at the Saamanhene’s funeral) or when on the heads of two carriers. The use of *fɔntɔnfrɔm* reveals that the deceased person had a high social status, as those drums can only be used during burial rituals of a royal (Maabahene, in conversation with Maabahene and Nana Prenhyia, 44). Rank or prestige may also be reflected in the details of rites and in the intensity of celebration (Nketia 1963:58). The *fɔntɔnfrɔm* drums are talking drums, but their special function is to drum proverbs or sayings. Rattray (1927:285) remarks regarding the *fɔntɔnfrɔm* that ‘their dress is made of silk; they are commonly decorated with skulls of famous enemies; a newly made pair of *fɔntɔnfrɔm* drums may have a dog sacrificed upon them’. During the ceremony, one man used a *dono*, which is a small drum with a tight membrane at either end in the form of an hourglass. This drum is also called the ‘armpit drum’, because it changes tone when the drummer squeezes it under the left arm. Another man used an *atumpan* (plural. *ntumpane*), which is (like the *fɔntɔnfrɔm*) an

instrument of prayer and mediation with the sacred order of the gods and the ancestors. The *ntumpane* produces two types of sounds — the low or masculine pitch of the tonal language and the high or feminine pitch (Fisher 1998:34). With these two tones the instrument is capable of reproducing proverbs, statements and instructions (Aning 1968:13). By drumming, the drummer (*okyerema*) summarises the myth of creation along with the court crier and the executioner, and he represents the stages of creation and life. ‘Odomankoma’ (the Almighty) created *esen* (crier), then *okyerema*, and in the end *kwamu kwabrafo* (executioner or death) (Opoku 1978:22).

Fisher (1998:34-35) remarks that the drummer uses his drums to invoke the ancestral spirits to ask for their blessings for a successful burial, so that the soul of the deceased can enter the world of *nsamanfo*. Before he can use his drums for this task, the *okyerema* has to ‘warm up’ the drums. He addresses the drum parts and their spirits such as the cedar tree, the source of the wood, and the elephant whose hide forms the membrane over the head and the fibres in the strings and the pegs. He calls upon a dark blue bird (*kokokyanaka*), which is the drummers’ totem or patron animal. Then he calls upon the High God (*Nyame*), the Earth Goddess (*Asase Yaa*) and then to various royal ancestors whose exploits are recalled and celebrated. The drummer receives his ‘texts’ from his fathers, and they receive them from the ancestors. His ‘texts’ are sacred and his drum is also sacred. The ‘book’ of the drummer is his performance that is recorded in oral traditions. And then in the deep rumbling of the drum, the ancestors speak.

Concerning the initiation of the drum and their warming up ceremony, one of the drummers at the funeral that I spoke to told me: ‘These days, we do not sacrifice animals to initiate our drums, neither do we warm them up like they used to do in the pre-colonial and in the colonial times. However, drums are used to invoke ancestral spirits’. In terms of the second event during the pre-burial ritual that I attended, I can thus conclude that the indigenous religious element, ‘invocation of ancestral spirits’, is present and goes together with the purpose of releasing people from their sorrows, which is the most important reason for organising this event as part of a pre-burial ritual.

In search of empirical evidence for the appearance of ‘locality’ in the Asante Indigenous Religion, I will now describe the ‘laying-in-state’ (*ahodae*) ceremony of the deceased chief Saaman Nantwi II. I observed that *Adinkra* symbols were present on the curtains and on the cloth (*ntiamu ntoma*) under the body of the deceased chief (see appendix Five: photo 1). *Adinkra* (‘di nkra’) means to part, to be separated, to leave one another or say good bye and implies a message that a soul (*kra*) takes along when leaving the earth. Only humans or spirits who can bear intelligence possess ‘kra’ (Willis 1998), (Wright 1987:24). *Adinkra* cloth was traditionally only worn by the royal and spiritual leaders for mourning during funeral and burial rites. *Adinkra* symbols often go together with Akan proverbs and can be found again in the form of brass, gold weight figures and other artistic expressions of the Asante, such as brass rings. *Adinkra* symbols have been local to the Asante since

the nineteenth century and are named after the *ohene* of Gyaman¹⁰¹ with whom the Asante fought several wars. Nana Kofi *Adinkra* was believed to wear patterned cloth as a way of expressing his sorrow on being defeated, captured and taken to Kumasi after he created a copy of the Golden Stool (Wilks 1989).

I will mention in more detail three of the ten *Adinkra* symbols that were used by the *abusua* of Nana Saaman Nantwi II to express their feelings towards him, which refer to the presence of either ‘locality’ or ‘the invocation of ancestral spirits’. An *Adinkra* symbol representing palm wine (*nsa*) was on one of the white curtains behind the bed on which the Saamanhene was laying in state



(Rattray 1927:265). 1. *Nsa fufuo* comes from a design of this name found on *nsa fufuo* cloths, and refers to the palm wine that is given to the ancestral spirits during (i) the preparations made for the after-life and (iii) the actual burial ritual, which are both private occasions. *Nsa* is thus associated with the invocation of ancestral spirits.



2. The *Adinkra* symbol, which is known as ‘state ceremonial swords’ (*afona*) goes together with the Akan proverb ‘the retiring great warrior always has a royal sword of rest’, *Akofena kunim koa, wobo afena kye no safohene*. This symbol and proverb refer to the reason why a chief is always laid in state accompanied by a couple of *afona*. These swords not only help the chief to survive in the world of the ancestral spirits (*nsamanfo*), but also provide a way for sub-chiefs to say ‘goodbye’ to their royal leader. With the installation of a paramount chief, all sub-chiefs swear an oath to this chief prior to swearing an oath to the Asantehene. Now that the chief ‘has gone to the village’ (has passed away) the swords are displayed for the sub-chiefs to speak their last words with which they show their allegiance to the deceased chief. During the actual burial ritual, all the swords will go with the chief to be buried together with the body in the coffin. The following *Adinkra* symbol



3. , which is a sign of hope, is known as: ‘O God, everything which is above, permit my hand to touch it’, *O Nyame, biribi biara ewɔsoro ma me nsa nka*. This emblem was stamped on paper and hung above the lintel of a door in the palace. The Asantehene used it to touch this lintel, then his forehead and breast, repeating these words three times (Rattray 1927:266). Having hope is necessary in relation to the journey that a deceased chief shall have to make in order to reach the world of the ancestral spirits (*asamando*). For not all subjects nor all chiefs automatically become an ancestral spirit. Those persons who have behaved wickedly during their life because they have not shown enough benevolence or sympathy for others, a readiness to give advice, to listen to others or share

¹⁰¹ ‘Gyaman’ is a kingdom in eastern Ivory Coast, which crosses the border into an area presently part of Ghana.

with them, might end up as vagrant spirits (*Ɔsaman twen-twen*). Those (*tofo*) who happened to not be fertile and those who were disabled by birth or became disabled during their lives might never reach the ancestral world (*asamando*) (Nketia 1955:44). To sum up, the three mentioned *Adinkra* symbols refer to ‘the invocation of ancestral spirits’, and thus provide evidence for the presence of indigenous religious elements during the Nana Saaman Nantwi II’s preburial ritual. ‘Locality’ also plays a role, because *Adinkra* symbols are both locally created and interpreted religiously.

Apart from *Adinkra* symbols, which often overlap with one of the various Akan symbols, another way in which the Asante express their Indigenous Religion is by making use of *Kente* cloths (*nwentoma*). These are silk and cotton traditional cloths that are locally woven by the Asante and originate from Bonwire — a village in the Asante Region (Ross 1998) or possibly Tekyiman (Warren 1974), which is located in the Brong Ahafo Region in Ghana. The names of the various cloths also refer to Akan proverbs and *Adinkra* symbols. All *Kente* cloths have different symbolic meanings. Each cloth consists of strips that are about three to four inches wide, with different patterns and symbolic meanings. Woven strips sewn together form one *Kente* cloth ranging from ten to twelve feet in length and five to six feet in width (Magee 2005:593). *Kente* weaving is believed to be a gift of *Nyame* and the loom on which *Kente* cloth is woven is perceived as a divine instrument. Before the weavers start weaving a *Kente* cloth, they pour libation to *Nyame*, *nananom* and the *abosom* as in any pouring libation ritual and they ask the spiritual beings to guide them with the loom (Ross 1998). Just like with the preparation for the use of talking drums and royal stools¹⁰² the preparation for the weaving of *Kente* is an indigenous religious activity and one that is in the hands of men only. Since women are often thought to be polluted due to their menstruation, it is believed that such religious preparations to connect to the spiritual beings are better to be in the hands of men.



A weaver befriended by the *abusua* of paramount chief Saaman Nantwi II had designed a particular *Kente* cloth to cover the body of the deceased. The *Kente* cloth that was chosen is called ‘Ideas Finished’ (*Edwina Asa*). The cloth shows that the family of the deceased chief believes him to be ready to depart to the world of the ancestral spirits (*asamando*). In preparation for this journey, the deceased chief also wore traditional leather sandals (*ahenema*) while ‘laying-in-state’. In his right hand the Saamanhene ‘held’ a whisk to protect him against evil spirits during his journey to the world of the ancestors (*nsamanfo*), which confirms that the family believed that he would soon start a journey to the spiritual world. *Kente* cloths do not only have a variety of meanings, but the quality of different cloths varies as well; therefore, these clothes are also often used by various families to compete and show off their wealth. Generally, the more expensive the *Kente* cloth that is

¹⁰² According to the AIR, once a person occupies the stool he receives extraordinary power, because he will receive the help of the natural powers within the stool, which, according to Sarpong (Sarpong 1971:9) is made of certain trees, such as the *odum* tree and *sese* tree. These trees possess spiritual powers that are able to attract ancestral spirits.

used for the laying-in-state ceremony of a deceased person, the wealthier a family is believed to be. The *Kente* cloth used thus does not only say something about the status of the deceased but also of his *abusua*. In terms of symbolic meaning, each type of cloth has its own name that is given to the cloth by its weaver. Just as is the case of the *Adinkra* symbols which were accompanied by Akan proverbs, I will also look at whether there were strips (*ntomaban* or *bankuo*) of *Kente* that were chosen for the design of the *Kente* cloth of Nana Saaman Nantwi II returning to ‘locality’ and ‘the invocation of ancestral spirits’.

In the Nana Saaman Nantwi II’s *Edwina Asa Kente* I have identified seven different types of strips. The only important strips of cloth that I found in relation to ‘the invocation of ancestral spirits were:



1.  and 2.  ‘zigzag’ (*kyimkyim*) cloths (Smith 1975:38). The angle shapes create staccato rhythms that make the cloth suitable for use in ceremonies, and refer to the syncopated rhythm of a talking drum (*fɔntɔnfrɔm* or *atumpan*) that is used for funeral (*adowa*) dances (Thompson 1983:207-222). The chosen colours for the whole *Kente* cloth were yellow, green, gold, black, purple and white. The majority of the colours were dark, which associate the *Kente* cloth used with grief and usually dark colours are used for funeral ceremonies. The symbolic meaning of the colours used is as follows:

Colour	Symbolic meaning
	A reminder of eggs, fruits and gold. Symbolises wealth, fertility, vitality, spirituality and sanctity
Green	Associated with planting, vegetation and harvesting. Symbol of growth, fertility, life, fruitfulness, rejuvenation
Gold	Associated with gold – the precious metal, and symbolises wealth, glory, high status, elegance and spiritual purity.
Black	Things get darker as they mature and the Akan people make things darker to make them spiritually more powerful. Symbol of spiritual potency, maturity, energy and communion. ‘Generally, the colour black shows recognition of life changes: death, reincarnation, ancestral power, stool power, history, tradition, and memories’(Bartle 1982).
Purple	Associated again with female essence. Symbolises life and healing. Almost always worn by women.
	Associated with the white of an egg and white clay used in purification ceremonies. Symbol of spirituality and gods. ‘Symbol of fertility, joy, purity, victory and cleansing (Bartle 1982).

Scheme 3: symbolic meaning of *Kente* cloth colours. Source: interview with Kwaku Amoako-Attah Fosu (39), who is the author of some small books on *Asante* funeral rituals, unless specified otherwise.

Apart from the symbolic meaning of the *Kente* cloth design, its various strips and the natural colours that are used to dye the cloth, the use of a cloth in itself also has a symbolic meaning. In many non-Western societies, cloths are used to sustain relationships with animals, ancestral spirits and

divinities, which is why cloth is also often used in shrines. The Asante use *Kente* cloth to venerate the *Tano* deity ‘Twumpuduo’ in a shrine room in Tuobodom (Ross 1998). ‘Tano’ is a well-known river deity in the Asante Region who has various other deities under him. The more important the deity is, the more important his shrine, and the more expensive the acquired *Kente* cloth. Besides, cloth is also often used as a medium to communicate to both spiritual beings and human beings about the rank and social status of a particular person (Darish 1988:112). As mentioned before, *Kente* cloth also has a religious meaning because of the way it is manufactured. It is actually through the observance of strict taboos, such as the absence of women near the loom during their menstruation period, that *Kente* cloths obtain their religious meaning. Additionally, religious meaning is acquired through the pouring of libation, which is done by Asante weavers to gain from the spirits particular motifs or for importing a sacred protective power to their output (Polakoff 1982). In conclusion, *Kente* cloths, and in general the Saamanhene’s laying-in-state ceremony, are associated with ‘locality’ and ‘the invocation of ancestral spirits’.

The fourth event during the Saamanhene’s pre-burial rite was the shaking of hands of various groups (militaries, servants and sub-chiefs) within the society who were closely related to Nana Saaman Nantwi II. These groups shake hands in order to sever ties with the family of the deceased, to break the relationship with the deceased as a living person and to establish a relationship with him as a spirit. One of the chiefs that I spoke to after the pre-burial ritual told me: ‘When we shake hands with the family of the deceased, we think about the deceased and also about where he is going — that is *Asamando*’ (Nana Prenhyia, in conversation with Maabahene and Nana Prenhyia, 44). Nana Prenhyia’s answer confirms that the invocation of ancestral spirits is an important reason for performing a ‘shaking hands’ event during a royal Asante pre-burial ritual.

During the fifth event, concerning the performances of the musicians of the ‘Manhyia Kete NnwokorƆ’ group and *adowa* dancing, the Asante indigenous religious elements of ‘locality’ and ‘the invocation of ancestral’ were both present. In Asante funeral dirges, such as those of the ‘Manhyia Kete’, much attention is paid to the domicile of both the ancestors and the deceased. In the case of Nana Saaman Nantwi II both his birthplace Sewua, which is a craft village of goldsmiths (Johnson 1979) ‘located eight miles southeast of Kumasi’ (*Population Census of Ghana* 1960) and ‘Ashanti Town’, which is the name of the district in the city centre of Kumasi in which the Saamanhene’s house was located (near Manhyia palace), were mentioned. Among the Asante, the domicile of the deceased is mentioned in the dirges because these places are the bonds between a person and his ancestors. In AIR a village and especially its burial grove containing the members of the lineage are regarded as the common habitat of the ancestral spirits (*nananom nsamanfo*Ɔ) and the living (*asefo*Ɔ). In these days, many people spend most of their lives outside their birth village and

therefore important ancestors of the clan of the deceased who died inside a section of the town (*borɔno*) in which he lives or even in other sections of the town and other towns can also be mentioned in a funeral dirge, depending on the preferences of the singers. A *ɔyokoɔ* person could, for instance, be associated with *ɔyokoɔ* people in Kumasi, Kokofu, Bekwae and Dwaben (Nketia 1955:21,38-39).

The 'locality' of the deceased's origin is mentioned because his domicile shows how (s)he was related to both the living and the ancestral spirits. The relation to the living is emphasised in the dirges by praising the social qualities of the deceased, such as his benevolence and generosity. By praising the deceased, the clan members do not only emphasise the loss of the deceased for the community but also show how (s)he was related. Important praise appellations and by-names were given to the deceased when (s)he was in good relationship with the living. During the observed pre-burial rite, the Saamanhene was praised as 'warrior' (*Barima*), which is a title reserved for Royals only.

Reference to the ancestral spirits is made among the Asante by making use of a standard set of dirges which refer to particular common clan ancestors. The clan of the deceased determines which standard set of dirges is used. In the case of the Saamanhene — being a member of the *ɔyokoɔ* clan — reference was made to the *ɔyokoɔ* clan ancestors, which together with the Dako clan is dominant in Kumasi. However, since each deceased is not only a clan member but also an individual, the 'standard' dirges are also adapted here and there to be able to refer to the particular relationships of the deceased to his *abusua*, other living clan members and to the ancestral spirits. Examples of standard *ɔyokoɔ* clan dirges that were sung during the Saamanhene's funeral were a name song (*Amankwatiaa*) and a praise song announcing the arrival of the Akyɛmpimhene. 'Amankwatiaa' was an Asante war general. Among the many *ɔyokoɔ* clan standard dirges, this name song was mentioned because Nana Saaman Nantwi II had played an important role in the Ghanaian army. This also explains why many soldiers were present during his pre-burial ritual. Particular reference was made to some of Nantwi II's colleagues in the army, which gave the standard dirge a personal note (Maabahene, in conversation with Maabahene and Nana Prenhyia, 44). The standard praise song for Nana Akyɛmpim was not personalised. The Akyɛmpimhene is the title given to the first son of a king, who is symbolically in charge of the sons and daughters of the past and present Asantehene. As during many *ɔyokoɔ* pre-burial rites, this paramount chief represented the Asantehene. The 'Manhyia Kete Nnwokorɔ' group sang a praise song to announce his arrival and informed the

audience that ‘a grandchild was coming’, which refers to the mutual lineage history of the Saamanhene and the Akyempimhene.

A third standard song, known as ‘ancestors’ (*nsamanfo*), was highly personalised, which it should be to make sense for the bereaved. The standard element in this song is that it reminds the spirit of the deceased of his father and grandfather. They tell that the deceased is the child of X and that his ancestor was Y. They also refer to the specific blood (*mogya*) or family (*abusua* or *matrilineage*) relationship of a person through his mother and his or her *ntoro*, which is inherited from the father. The *abusua* is important for a person because it determines one’s specific norms, values and behaviour. They also require certain ritual obligations and the observance of taboos. The *ntoro* determines the way people greet each other and what they cannot eat, which is dependent on the deity (*abosom*), and for some of them also the totem to which the *ntoro* is linked (Clarke 1930:460). In dirges, the *ntoro* and *abusua* are honoured because they determine the membership of the deceased to two social groups and for both of them the deceased is now lost. Although in social life the importance of both family (*abusua*) ties and the membership of a *ntoro* group for individual Asante is declining, in funeral dirges, reference is made to both elements of Asante identity (Nketia 1955:30). This shows that during funeral rites the relationship of the deceased with both the living and the ancestral spirits is emphasised.

The ancestors are mentioned in funeral dirges for at least two reasons. First, the dirges give an opportunity for the family to remember the ancestors and refer to their personality, character, conduct and accomplishments. Secondly, it is believed that during the pre-burial ritual, ‘spiritually’ the deceased is still among the living. Therefore, the ritual is seen as a last opportunity for the living to inform the deceased about his ancestors and his origin. The deceased’s relatives hope that this information will enable his or her spirit to find the world of the ancestors. Although there is acknowledgement of a break with the deceased in relation to the physical body, the spiritual connection between the deceased and the living is believed to persist. Therefore, there must be some guidance from the living to the deceased to enable him to successfully make the journey to *asamando* (Arhin 1994:310; Chukwukere 1981).

The sixth event consisted of the drinking of palm wine (*nsa fufuo*)¹⁰³ and the eating of kola nuts. A big red truck entered the square in front of the house of Nana Saaman Nantwi II and a blue container full of *nsa fufuo* was lifted out of the truck. Male family members of the deceased who were all dressed in black cloth (*kuntunkuni*), which shows their association with the dead, carried the container to the square. Then, one of those men used half of a plastic bottle to take out some *nsa fufuo* from the container and gave the bottle filled with *nsa fufuo* to one of the male family members of the deceased to drink. After this man drank the *nsa fufuo*, he presented the plastic bottle to one of

the other men who wore *kuntunkuni*. This way the men distributed the *nsa fufuo* among themselves. The women who belonged to Nantwi II's *abusua* also drank palm wine, but in a less public venue. They took their share later on that day when they sat together on red plastic chairs at the end of the street that was fenced off for the celebration of the pre-burial ritual. Traditionally, the drinking of *nsa fufuo* at funerals was used to show respect to the ancestral spirits. The *nsa fufuo*, which contains alcohol, is believed 'to bridge the gap between the living and the spiritual worlds' (Akyeampong 1995:262). The main purpose of drinking palm wine is the 'invocation of ancestral spirits', which forms another piece of empirical evidence for the presence of Asante Indigenous Religion. Together with the drinking of *nsa fufuo* there was the distribution of kola nuts, which were to be eaten by both men and women. Kola nuts are used for producing a stronger state of euphoria and well-being and the purpose of their consumption is just like that of funeral dances to forget about one's sorrows. Although the living members of a matrilineage belong to the same group as the ancestral spirits, they are in a different stage of life as those spirits. This thought is expressed by the Akan maxim: 'The one who has kola has life' (Kwaku Amoako-Attah Fosu, 39). 'Locality' also played a role in this event, because palm wine and kola nuts are forest products that are both local to Ghana.

The seventh event during the pre-burial ritual was 'the giving of gifts' (*adosoa*) and the giving of *nsa*. The *adosoa* are carried by women wearing red cloths (*koben*) on their forehead, right shoulder and neck, and are besmeared with red clay (*kotobirigya*). They chew kola, which shows that they are bereaved and that they belong to the same *abusua* as the deceased. They bear a metal tray on their head containing different types of cloth and traditional leather sandals (*ahenema*). In this case, it also contained bottles of the 'original' schnapps from Holland (J. Henkes Jonge Bols from Schiedam) which are referred to as *nsa* (Bersellaar 2007). There is also a less expensive local version of schnapps, but bringing in the more expensive and foreign one contributes to the social prestige of the *abusua*. It was therefore explicitly mentioned that the schnapps came from Holland. The presentation of *nsa* could be seen as the modern and symbolic version of the drinking of *nsa fufuo*. The donors of both *adosoa* and *nsa* are families connected through marriage (Witte 2003:536-540). Both the *adosoa* and the *nsa* symbolise the connection between the families and the deceased in a kind of commodified way. The more *adosoa* and *nsa* are donated to families of the widow and the spouses of the children, the better the bond between the families and the more they can count on reciprocity of gifts during forthcoming funerals. The gifts (*adosoa* and *nsa*) that are meant as a symbolic way of maintaining good relationships within the *abusua* are often accompanied by an amount of money that is given to contribute to the costs of the funeral. In contrast to members outside the family who contribute to the funeral costs by giving money instead of *adosoa* and/or *nsa*, in-laws are not supposed to give money only. In line with their relationship with the *abusua* of the

¹⁰³ *nsa* means 'alcohol', *fita/fufu* means 'white'.

deceased, they are expected to deliver a more intimate contribution in the form of *nsa* or *adosoa*. 'Giving money' is the standard way for people outside the *abusua* to give their condolences and confirm the relationship with the family of the deceased. The amount of money that is given depends on the amount of goods taken by the guests during the pre-burial ritual and on the presumed reciprocity of money gifts by the *abusua* of the deceased during forthcoming funerals. To show the value of the relationship with the *abusua* and disclose the amount of money that is expected to be reciprocated, 'money gifts' are always publicly announced. The amount of money that the *abusua* receives from its guests reflects its social prestige, because all extra contributions from guests — those who do not cover the actual costs of the funeral — should be paid back by the *abusua* at upcoming funerals. What mostly happens, therefore, is that at the end of a funeral the family announces that there is a debt, which prevents the family from paying back huge amounts on future funerals.

The eighth event was the *akɔm* dancing of an indigenous priest. *Akɔm* is different from normal dancing. It is a body movement which has many functions. It is a religious ritual, but is also admired as art, enjoyed as entertainment and it is a tool to make political statements. *Akɔm* dancing is performed at festivals, funerals and other religious rituals (Hanna 1979:25). In Asante Indigenous Religion, two kinds of deities (*abosom*) are believed to take possession of indigenous priests and priestesses. These are the natural deities, such as the river and mountain spirits, who are simply called *abosom* and the *abosom brafo*. Possession by *abosom* is said to bring fertility. It is believed that they make barren women pregnant and bring rain to the land. These natural deities are important for the Asante because they are a life-sustaining source of water and food (Schildkrout 1987: 272). Examples of famous Akan *abosom* are the rivers *Prah*, *Bea* and *Tano*, the lake *Bosomtwe* and the Ocean (*Bosompo*) (Owoahene-Acheampong 1998:91). The function of the executioner deities (*abosom brafo*), such as the famous *Tigare*, *Kune* and *Aprade Tongo*, however, is thought to be to get rid of evil spirits who are said to be threatening the well-being of the inhabitants of the kingdom (or state) and to control witchcraft. They are held to have manifested themselves in the *akɔm* dance of the priests or priestesses (*akɔmfoɔ*) since the 1920s. The new type of deities entered Asante Indigenous Religion at the time of an economic crisis among the cocoa farmers, when these farmers were looking for more powerful deities from northern Ghana to help them to overcome their economic problems (Christensen 1959:277; Allman and Parker 2005).

The *akɔm* dance I observed at the square in front of Manhyia palace (of the Asantehene) as part of the Saamanhene's pre-burial rite, was performed by three indigenous priests who were ritually possessed by 'executioner deities' (*abosom brafo*) and used mimicry as part of their dances. One of them wore a skirt (*odoso*) made of raffia, a talisman made of animal skins (*sebe*) and

traditional beads (*ahwenee*), and wore twinkling bells around her ankles (*adoma*). Next to the musicians who rhythmically supported the dancers sat a man holding a pan that contained two whisks (*bodua*). Their bodies were covered with white clay (*hyire*) symbolising the personification of the *abosom*, the essence of which is to cleanse evil spirits (Bartle 1982). Wreaths of a plant (*asuani*) were passed over his shoulder and crossed, passing under the arms. In the past, these plants were used by widows during their one year period of mourning after the death of their husband (Rattray 1927:171-174). The two other indigenous priests were wearing *bata kari kese*, which is a warrior cloth that has been introduced to the Asante Region by Mande-Dyula alim clerks and traders who since 1400 operated along the north-south trade route connecting the Niger (the Malian Empire) and the Akan hinterlands and Muslim Hausa traders who travelled between Gonja and Hausa land (contemporary Nigeria) who were employed by the Asante court at the end of the eighteenth century (Hiskett 1984:131,135) (see map 7 and 8). To create a rhythm, two men were drumming with hooked sticks on an *atumpan* and two were using their bare hands to beat a *dono*. Two other men were creating rhythm by using a gong-gong (*dawuro*). A few people from the side were watching the priests and dancers. The majority of the audience gathered behind the railing that belongs to Manhyia palace. In *akɔm* dancing, the indigenous priests communicate with the *abosom brafo* by using their body as their medium of expression. They hold their hands in the sky and dance in circles to chase away evil spirits. Their eyes are red, which is believed to be caused by a local sap that encourages dissociation for practitioners by ‘possession’. Another characteristic of indigenous priests in states of possession is that their eyelids twinkle very often. *Atumpan* players use the rhythm of their drum to drive away evil spirits. ‘Locality’ plays an important role in pre-burial *akɔm* dancing in the present-day the *abosom brafo* that are invoked are local spirits. Although imported from northern Ghana in the 1920s, they now belong to the area of the Kumasi Metropolis. Each *Ɔkɔmfoɔ* has his own connections with deities in the spiritual world, which means that during *akɔm* dancing (s)he invokes his or her *abosom*¹⁰⁴. Unlike *akɔm* festival dancing, the ancestral spirits (*nananom nsamanfoɔ*), are not invoked, since the purpose of pre-burial ritual *akɔm* dancing is to drive away evil spirits rather than to reveal the spiritual power of indigenous priests (Muller 2007:11).

To sum up, the underlying scheme below gives insight into the findings regarding the presence of indigenous religious Asante rituals in the nine researched events during the pre-burial ritual of Nana Saaman Nantwi II. In four (1,3,5,8) out of eight events, ‘locality’ happened not only to be present but also to be one of the main reasons for the performance of those events. In another six

¹⁰⁴An important *obosom* that was invoked by the performing *Ɔkɔmfoɔ* Adwoa Bona was Aprade Tongo. *Ɔkɔmfoɔ* Tawiah invoked the *obosom* Akonode Asuo Gyebi, which belongs to the locality ‘Kronom’.

(2,3,4,5,6,7) events, the ‘invocation of ancestral spirits’ was present and important. The scheme below shows that eight events that took place during the Saamanhene’s pre-burial rite had elements of Asante Indigenous Religion.

Events during the pre-burial ritual	Elements of Asante Indigenous Religion
(1) The announcement of the pre-burial musketry of fire	Locality
(2) Public mourning and mimic dancing on the rhythm of a gong and various African drums	Invocation of ancestral spirits
(3) A laying-in-state (<i>ahodae</i>) ceremony	Locality, invocation of ancestral Spirits
(4) The last expression of care and respect for the deceased by shaking hands with the abusua.	Invocation of ancestral spirits
(5) Performances of the musicians of the ‘Manhyia Kete Nnwokor’ group and <i>Adowa</i> dancing	Locality, invocation of ancestral spirits
(6) The drinking of palm wine (<i>nsa</i>) and eating	Invocation of ancestral spirits
(7) A gift giving ritual (<i>adosoa</i>)	Invocation of ancestral spirits
(8) The <i>akɔm</i> dance of a indigenous priest	Locality

Scheme 3: events during the Nana Saaman Nantwi II pre-burial ritual and the ‘elements of Asante Indigenous Religion’ in those events.

In conclusion, I have shown that in the eight analysed events during the Nana Saaman Nantwi II’s pre-burial ritual, the Asante indigenous ritual’s ‘locality’ and ‘invocation of ancestral spirits’ were present, and were an important reason for the performance of those events. The question that now arises is to what extent the existing Asante indigenous religious elements can give an explanation for the persistence of chieftaincy among the Asante, and especially those within the Kumasi Metropolis.

5.2 Nana Saaman Nantwi II’s pre-burial ritual: Asante indigenous religious elements as an unrecognised explanation for the persistence of chieftaincy

To find the relationship between (a) ‘Asante indigenous religious elements’ and (b) ‘the persistence of Asante chieftaincy’, I will show the theoretical (or formal) and the practical (or informal) connection between the two factors.

My findings with regard to the formal necessary and sufficient (a \leftarrow →b) connection between (a) and (b) are derived from fieldwork in the ‘National House of Chiefs’ (NHC) and the ‘Regional House of Chiefs’ (RHC), which are both located in Kumasi. The NHC is the umbrella organisation of all RHCs in Ghana and represents more than 32,000 recognised traditional rulers who exercise considerable influence throughout Ghana, especially in the countryside. In article 272 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana the functions of the NHCs are set out. Of great importance with regard to funeral rites is article 272 (c), which shows that traditional authorities are meant to ‘undertake an

evaluation of traditional customs and usages with a view to eliminating those customs and usages that are outmoded and socially harmful'. Furthermore, article 27 of the Constitution states: 'all customary practices which dehumanise or are injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a person are prohibited'. Additionally, amendments to the Criminal Code have made some of these practices a criminal offence, such as widowhood rites that force a woman to sleep with the body of her dead husband or force her to appear naked in front of an audience (see: section 88 (a), Section 69 (a) and section 314 (a) of the Criminal Code).

As a product of these laws, the NHCs and all RHCs now have regulations on how traditional rituals should be performed. With regard to funeral rituals, there are generally two practices that are believed to be outmoded and socially harmful by the members of the mentioned 'Houses of Chiefs' (HC) (including Asantehene Osei Tutu II) and the national Ghanaian government. These practices are:

- (a) Lavish spending on funeral rituals by poor people
- (b) The performance of widowhood rites after the celebration of funeral rituals, which according to the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution are known to be a criminal offence

(a) Because funeral rituals are not only about the deceased but are also a status symbol of what a family has achieved (which 'showing off' results in conspicuous consumption), it is tempting for poor families to borrow money to celebrate the death of one of their members. Funeral rituals are harmful when the celebration costs are an unrealistic reflection of the social status, and thus, the financial capital of the *abusua* of the deceased.¹⁰⁵

To help poor people in the Kumasi Metropolis avoid running into serious debt due to funeral celebrations, the 'Ashanti Regional House of Chiefs' (ARHC) in Kumasi has compiled a list of regulations which, among other things, determines the maximum price for material necessities such as a coffin, the various objects used for the 'laying-in-state' ceremony and the number of musical bands invited to the funeral (no more than two).

In Kumasi, which is known as 'Ghana's funeral capital', where there are about fifty funerals per weekend (Asare January, 02, 2003), funerals are important for the economy. In a report on, among other topics, the contribution towards funeral costs¹⁰⁶ by Ghanaian migrants — most of whom were Akan — Mazzucato (2005:14) concludes: 'Funeral ceremonies [LM: in Ghana] sustain a diverse range of business and services adding to the economic activities and employment possibilities in Ghana'. For instance, the rent of plastic chairs with *Adinkra* symbols, the creation of coffins by artists, the production of videos, music CDs, photos and T-shirts with a picture of the deceased are all produced locally. From an economic perspective, funeral rituals *per se* are thus not harmful.

¹⁰⁵ This is comparable with the behaviour of poor people in Europe who borrow money to buy expensive material goods such as a house or a car, which are beyond their means and might cause them to run into serious debts.

‘Major (rtd.) Courage Quashigah’, the minister of health, however recently made an effort to raise national consciousness against funerals, since in a country with mortality rates at an average of fifty-seven years for adults and sixty-eight deaths per thousand births for infants, from his perspective it makes more sense to spend money on the improvement of healthcare than on conspicuous consumption during funeral rituals ("Funeral: Most Productive Industry in Ghana ?" 2007, 8 July:Ghana News Archive (GNA) 8 July).

Although there are different points of view on the degree of perniciousness of funeral rituals, what all authors on Ghanaian funeral rituals and the members of the RHCs in Kumasi have in common is that they say in public that they believe it to be detrimental for poor people to borrow huge amounts of money, e.g. as high as £5,658¹⁰⁷ for funerals of members of their *abusua*, while Ghana has an annual capital Gross National Income (GNI) of \$520 [7/12/07: £ 452]¹⁰⁸ (Bank 2008:334). A cynical outsider might say this is all about preventing commoners from competing with the big men in the lavishness of their funerals. Many of the indigenous (Christian) practitioners among my respondents, however, argued that Asante traditional authorities, because of their sacredness due to their connection to royal stools, should be able to distinguish themselves from the commoners, among other ways, by celebrating expensive funerals. Kwaku Amoako Attah Fosu (39) one of my respondents, who also wrote a small book on Asante funerals, told me:

Because chiefs are sacred, there is and should be a difference between the celebration of funerals of ordinary people and chiefs. Chiefs’ burials endure two weeks, whereas the funeral of ordinary people usually is only one day (Kwaku Amoako Attah Fosu, 39).

In the Asante Indigenous Religion, the spending of huge amounts of money on the burial rituals of Royals is thus expected, although there are of course limitations to what is accepted by commoners.

(b) Widowhood rites are performed as part of AIR that when a woman’s husband dies, the soul (*sunsum*) of the woman should be separated from that of her deceased husband. If no widow rites are performed or they are not performed properly it is believed that her husband’s *sunsum* can come back to earth to sleep with her, to make her barren or to kill her (Rattray 1927). Widowhood rites are derived from the already mentioned belief that ancestral spirits and the living are part of the same spiritual community, which made Mbiti (1969) refer to the ancestors as ‘living dead’. They prevent

¹⁰⁶ In Ghana, 6 percent of remittances are spent on funerals.

¹⁰⁷ Mazzucato (2005) mentions the example of a female migrant who she interviewed who spent 6,500 Euros [7/12/07: £ 5,658] on a funeral of a deceased family member, which was four times her income. For further information on the reasons of poor people for borrowing money for funerals see Twum-Barima (A. Twum-Barima 2007).

¹⁰⁸ The ‘Gross National Income’ (GNI), the broadest measure of national income, measures the total value added from domestic and foreign sources claimed by residents. GNI comprises ‘Gross Domestic Product’ (GDP) plus net receipts of primary income from foreign sources. Data are converted from national currency to current U.S. dollars using the ‘World Bank Atlas Method’ (WBAM). This involves using a three-year average of exchange rates to smooth the effects of transitory exchange rate fluctuations. GNI per capita is GNI divided per midyear population.

the soul of a woman's deceased husband from coming back and disturbing his former wife. Among the Asante, widowhood rites are rarely performed for widowers, and if so, the rituals are much shorter and less humiliating than in the case of the rites that are performed for widows. According to the latest (2006) 'Kumasi State Council' (KSC) regulations on funerals 'widowhood rites should be discontinued'.

In conclusion, the formal regulations of the ARHC which are set out in points (a) and (b) do not support the existence of any relationship between AIR and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. On the contrary, points (a) and (b) show that officially the traditional authorities rather discourage the performance of at least some — the presumed to be outmoded ones — of Asante indigenous religious rituals. The 'KSC' regulations of 2006 state that 'chieftaincy in Ghana is a modern institution and that it is the institutions' task to prevent the performance of rituals, which are harmful or outmoded'.

However, by analysing the pre-burial ritual of Nantwi II and comparing the events that took place during this ritual with the 2006 KSC regulations that I looked at during my stay at the ARHC, I found out that with regard to funeral celebrations the traditional authorities do *not* follow their own regulations. For instance, according to the KSC regulations, there should not have been more than two drum bands, whereas at Nantwi II's funeral four drum bands were present. The serving of drinks and the hiring of gifts were also forbidden, whereas as described in section 5.1, those events took place during the Nana Saaman Nantwi II festival. It further says that 'a person may not "lay-in-state" with an expensive cloth and gold items during pre-burial rituals'. The costs of Nantwi II's *Kente* cloth were around 260 pounds [44, Nana Prenyia in conversation with the Maabahene and Nana Prenyia]. Another regulation is that after the funeral only one other funeral ritual should be performed at the fortieth day¹⁰⁹, which forms part of the *adaduanan* Akan ritual calendar. What actually happened, however, was that both one week and forty days after the last stage of the funeral celebration, which is known as a post-burial mourning (iv.), funeral rituals were being performed. At the time I left Kumasi, there were also plans to celebrate a one year anniversary for the deceased Nana Saaman Nantwi II.

Apart from these observances, I also found confirmation of one of my key informants in Kumasi and a report (King 2001) on the relationship between 'urban governance' and 'poverty' in Kumasi, that with regard to the regulations on the performance of traditional rituals, the traditional authorities have a double standard.

While their subjects are advised not to spend too much money on funerals, the funerals that the traditional authorities organise for colleagues and other prominent members within the society

¹⁰⁹ Kwabena Nketia (1963:59) mentions that in addition to the four mentioned phases to one stretch of funeral celebration there are subsequent periods of mourning on the 8th, 15th, 40th and 80th days and on the first anniversary, though these are officially no longer strictly observed.

are lavish. In case of the 'ARHC' it is the House itself which finances the costs for those funerals. In case of the recently deceased Kumawuhene 'Barima Asumandu Sakyi II', who is the chief of Kumawu in the Sekyere East District of Ashanti, for instance, the 'Kumasi Traditional Council' (KTC) appointed a funeral committee of sixty-one members to plan the burial and funeral arrangements for this former paramount chief. With permission of Asantehene *Otumfoɔ* Osei Tutu II, the KTC funeral committee, which falls under the ARHC, lent 60,000 new Ghana cedis (GHC) [£3,070] for the preparation of the chiefs' 'laying-in-state' burial place, his actual burial ground, the ground for the celebration of the funeral, and *schnapps*. According to the authors (King 2001:35) of the report 'urban governance in Kumasi', it is usually the 'Kumasi Metropolis Assembly' (KMA), who 'as protocol demands', donates at the funeral of paramount chiefs, including the Asantehene. Officially, the KMA has a 'free margin' of 6.5 percent of the total yearly KMA budget to spend on social activities, such as funerals. In practice, however, approximately 33.3 percent of the yearly KMA budget is spent on funerals. The autonomy of district assemblies in all likelihood contributes to an easy misappropriation of resources, particularly where the assembly is not accountable to anyone. The poor are the victim of a lack of cheques and balances, because they normally pay revenue but are not involved in any budget decisions and do not benefit from any city expenditures (King 2001:see: 157, 160, 180-184).

With regard to widowhood rites, five of my female respondents confirmed that unofficially those rites are being performed. For instance, when I asked one of my female respondents — who recently lost her husband — her opinion on which Asante indigenous traditions should be changed, she answered: 'What need to be altered are widowhood rights. When your husband dies, such as in my case, you need to take a bath three times a day with cold water and there is an old woman who is guiding you, which means that you do not have any privacy. This puts you in an embarrassing situation. Also, you are not allowed to enter your husband's room for about a year after his death'. Another female respondent, who lost her husband a few years before, told me: 'When I lost my husband, I was not allowed to shake hands with anybody because they were afraid that the spirit of my deceased husband would come and disturb them. I had to undergo certain rituals to separate my soul from that of my husband's. For instance, I had to shave my hair, take several ritual baths per day and was forced to be naked in the presence of others. I needed to stay in a room for days and was not allowed to come out. When I was finally allowed to leave I was being asked to marry my dead husband's brother'. Another of my respondents, who is also a widow, remarked: 'When I lost my husband five years ago, I was asked to sleep with his dead body. My family told me that 'one who dies is not really dead'— *onipa wu a na ɔnwuyɛ* — and that if I refused to sleep with my deceased husband, his soul would come back from *nsamando* to disturb me or other members of my *abusua*.

These and the other answers from my female respondents confirm that, unofficially, widowhood rites continue to be performed, including the ones such as ‘being forced to be naked in the presence of others’ and ‘being forced to sleep with one’s dead husband’, which according to the Ghanaian constitution of 1992 have been recognised as criminal.

In conclusion, there is no official connection between ‘the Asante Indigenous Religion’ and ‘the persistence of Asante chieftaincy’. There is, in other words, no connection between the regulations for traditional customs set by Asante traditional authorities and the continuation of the Asante traditional political institute. Unofficially, however, the traditional authorities have continued to perform indigenous religious rituals, such as pre-burial rites, and have not reduced the high costs¹¹⁰ involved with performing those rituals in an ‘invention of tradition’ type of setting. Those costs include rent for silk *Kente* cloth, the salary for ‘traditional’ ‘Nnwokorɔ’ dancing groups, ‘traditional’ drumming bands, ghetto blasters, and photographers and cameramen¹¹¹ to record the images of the funerals of prominent people. Since AIR is the main authorisation of the Asante institution of chieftaincy, there is a positive relationship between persistence in the performance of Asante indigenous rituals and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

The remaining question is why the traditional authorities are unofficially so keen on the performance of Asante indigenous rituals. According to Van der Geest (2000:107), who conducted six and a half months of fieldwork (in 1994, 1995 and 1996) among an Akan group which is known as the Kwahu, the reason for the performance of those rituals is mainly social. Van der Geest: ‘My view of the Akan funeral is that it is more social than religious, more *diesseitig* (‘this-worldly’, lit. ‘this-sidedness’) than *jenseitig* (‘other-worldly’, lit. ‘other-sidedness’). I will argue that the deceased and his or her dead body, though apparently at the centre of the funeral, are primarily symbols, ritual objects that the family needs to perform a ceremony for itself’. His main conclusion (2000:124) is that ‘the principal gratification does not lie in the glorification of the deceased, contrary to what the words and rituals suggest, but in the self-glorification of the organisers, the *abusua*, and other related groups’. One could of course remark that Van der Geest’s findings are irrelevant for the Asante, since his latest fieldwork was conducted ten years ago and his object of study was not the Asante but another Akan cultural group. However, de Witte (2003:535-536), a current Dutch Ph.D. student in anthropology, who more recently conducted nine months of fieldwork¹¹² in the Asante Region for her Master’s thesis, has studied Van der Geest insights on the Asante and concludes that: ‘It seems to

¹¹⁰ In the pre-colonial and colonial period ‘traditional’ funerals used to be less costly, mainly because the performance of Asante indigenous religious rituals was not yet as commercialised as today.

¹¹¹ The author of this thesis was given permission by the deceased family to use her video camera to record Nana Saaman Nantwi II’s pre-burial ritual for academic purposes. No money has either been received or paid to create the DVD that resulted from the images taken by the author during the pre-burial ritual.

¹¹² De Witte conducted fieldwork in the Asante Region in the district capital of Bekwai from July 1998 to March 1999.

be family status which is at stake rather than the status of the deceased (see Van der Geest, 2000). “‘Respect for the dead’ is the framing narrative families use to celebrate their own excellence’, she wrote.

Although gaining social prestige is certainly a reason for Asante *abusua* to perform indigenous rituals, I do not agree with de Witte’s conclusion that among the Asante the status of the deceased is less at stake than that of the *abusua*. In my opinion, their status is equally important, since spiritually the living and the dead are part of the same family. The status of the deceased is important, because the extent to which the deceased — in the form of ancestral spirits — are able to help the living depends on his status in the spiritual world. The living always gain from their relationship with the ancestral spirits, which is why it is important to maintain a good relationship with those spirits. However, just like in the material world, one can gain more by being related to persons with a high social status in the ancestral world than by those who are less prominent and less important (*asamanfo*). Therefore, funeral rituals focus on the status of the *abusua*, as much as on that of the deceased. Status wise, by separating ‘the living’ from ‘the dead’ one does not acknowledge the unity or the bond between the two.

In a wider context, this means that I do not agree with creating a distinction between ‘social’ and ‘religious’ aspects of funeral rituals and the creation of a difference in importance between them, as is done by de Witte and Van der Geest, for an absolute distinction between the two — the status of the living and the dead — can only be made when one uses a Eurocentric definition of ‘religion’, such as that of Van der Geest, who in describing ‘religion’ creates a binary opposition between ‘this-worldliness’ (*diesseitigkeit*) and ‘other-worldliness’ (*jenseitigkeit*). Van der Geest’s choice of concept of religion shows that he has not been able to overcome the North Atlantic heritage in defining religion that originates from the ideas of the British philosopher John Locke (1689). Locke, who, according to Bertrand Russell (2004:552), is ‘the father of empiricism in theory of knowledge’, clearly distinguished the ‘empirical’ from the ‘metaphysical’. In contradiction to his predecessors who used a more holistic concept of religion, and who lived in a world where politics could not be clearly distinguished from the religious field, Locke (Fitzgerald 2007:211) ‘conveyed a concept of religion as privatised and essentially distinguished from an area of life defined in non-religious terms’. Locke has had great influence on William Penn and the creators of the American Constitution, who opposed the existence of divine kingships in Europe and believed that there would be more tolerance of various religions when ‘religion is a private sphere of life and the state is not involved in people’s private affairs’. Although his aim was religious tolerance, by implementing the idea that ‘the care of each Man’s Salvation belongs only to himself’, he, perhaps unconsciously, also showed certain intolerances towards other more holistic concepts of religion. By separating ‘religion’

from 'politics', as two clearly separated spheres of life, he thus not only opposed the religious concepts of most of his own predecessors, but also that of most people in the non-Western world.

With his intolerant attitude towards Europe's 'divine kingships' — in which there is no separation between 'state' and 'religion' — Locke had much influence on many French philosophers who did not belong to the school of Rousseau (Russel 2004:583) and who prepared the French Revolution, which was clearly a movement that worked against the landowners and their 'divine rule'. His ideas also influenced the German nineteenth century philosophical school, including Karl Marx, who used the terms *diesseitigkeit* (Engels, Marx, and Dutt 1941:e.g appendix: Theses on Feuerbach, 73-75) and *jenseitigkeit* to refer to the separation between spiritual matters, such as 'this worldly' (religion) and 'other worldly' matters (politics). Locke's binary opposition between 'religion' and 'the secular' had so much influence on the wider world that we can say that it has become a paradigm of thought on religion in the North Atlantic world which accurately reflects how the majority of people in this part of the world perceive religion.

As an academic who concentrates on Africa, however, I believe one should not use a concept of religion that does not correspond to the reality of religious experiences of the majority of people in the non-Western world. In Akan religion, one does not clearly distinguish 'the religious' from 'the secular', which means that Locke's concept of religion is not applicable. It is therefore better to use a more holistic concept of religion, such as J. L. Cox's concept of 'Indigenous Religions', which emphasises the importance of the ancestral spirits in this belief and does not clearly attempt to separate 'the physical' from 'the metaphysical'. G. Cooper's (1988:873-4: cited in Fitzgerald on 'encompassing religion', 211) concept of 'traditional religion' shows that there is 'religious significance in animals, birds, natural phenomena, even the land itself' and that all are 'involved in a web of reciprocal relationships, which are sustained through behaviour and ritual in a state of harmony and which makes it difficult to distinguish between 'natural and supernatural'. The application of Cox's and Cooper's concepts of religion to the Akan demonstrates that the key thought of their Indigenous Religions is that there is a continuation in the relationship between 'ancestral spirits (*nananom nsamanfo*) and 'the living' (*asefo*).

Coming back to why the traditional authorities are unofficially so keen on the the performance of the Asante indigenous rituals, why are the traditional authorities (who are the ones who set the official rules on how to perform indigenous rituals), even more than poor people¹¹³, so eager to break their own rules? From a spiritual perspective this makes sense, because chiefs are prominent persons within the society, which means that when they turn into ancestral spirits they

¹¹³ From the current debate in Ghanaian newspapers on funerals in Ghana, I understood that most poor people do not have lavish funerals, just like most poor people do not buy expensive houses or cars. See: *The Statesman*, *The Accra Daily Mail*, *The Ghanaian Times*, *GNA*, especially in the period between November 2005 and April 2006.

will also be prominent. And so it is especially important for the family of deceased chiefs, but also for their subjects, to make sure that the deceased chief will remember them positively, which can be realised by the celebration of a lavish funeral. As Rattray (1927:104) puts it:

In the ceremonial for a dead king the differences [LM: in comparison with ordinary deceased individuals] arose from a desire on the part of his people, not only to accentuate the disparity between the king, the Asantehene, and the common herd, and even the great chiefs, but also to preserve his remains more carefully and reverently in order that these might serve as a medium or shrine for his spirit when it was summoned to return to his people in times of national reunion or national emergencies.

The important function of kings — and other paramount chiefs — as major intermediaries with the spiritual world explains the chieftaincy paradox, or in other words, the seeming opposition between setting and breaking the rules with regard to the performance of Asante indigenous religious rituals. In conclusion, the study of the pre-burial ritual of Nana Saaman Nantwi II shows:

- (1) That Asante indigenous religious elements, ‘locality’ and ‘the invocation of ancestral spirits’, are indeed present in the Saamanhene’s preburial ritual. The presence of those elements is a pre-condition for determining the relationship between (a) ‘Asante Indigenous Religion’ and (b) ‘the persistence of Asante chieftaincy’.
- (2) Officially there is no relationship between the above mentioned factors (a) and (b), whereas unofficially there is indeed a relationship between the two.

Asante Indigenous Religion supports the continuity of chieftaincy because the belief in ancestors, who are believed to be the source of power, and respect for chiefs, has not died out. ‘Ancestral spirits’ are invoked in six out of eight (2,3,4,5,6,7) of the events during the Saamanhene’s pre-burial ritual. Unlike in Europe, where during John Locke’s lifetime (1689) ‘divine kingships’¹¹⁴ were already about to wane power, in the Asante Region in Ghana, the belief has continued to exist that paramount chiefs have a ‘divine’ right to rule. An Akan maxim that supports this statement goes: *Ohene ne hene*, which means ‘God is the king’.

Additionally, the necessary attention is paid to ‘locality’ in the form of veneration of natural deities in four (1,3,5,8) out of the eight mentioned events that make up Nantwi II’s pre-burial ritual.

5.3 Two Asante rituals performed by chiefs where libation is poured and indigenous religious elements are present

In this section, I will again hypothesise whether there is a relationship between the Asante Indigenous Religion and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. As mentioned in Chapter Five, I will also look at the difference between formal and informal relationships connecting the two.

¹¹⁴ Although it should be noted that the term ‘divine kingship’ is technically incorrect, since the Asante kings are not ‘divine’ in the same sense as the European kings used to be. They derive their spiritual powers from a royal attribute (the stool), rather than being directly appointed to rule by God. An Asante ruler is only divine due to his relationship with the stool.

Libation is a form of prayer.¹¹⁵ It is also a form of communication between the living and spirit beings (*Onyame, the abosom* and *nsamanfo*) where unifying the living and spirits is attempted. The pouring of libation, which is an act of pouring a liquid, for example from a sacrifice, reminds the Asante that they are not self-sufficient but dependent on spiritual beings who intercede for them in every aspect of life. The function of pouring libation is to also ask spiritual beings for blessings. It is an opportunity for the performer to show off and display his or her knowledge of the Akan culture, especially Akan proverbs and history and important community events that occurred in past and present times.

Libations are poured by both Asante men and women, who each have different functions in diverse settings, which are an obligatory part of their position, are private or public and have a religious and/or political purpose. During *akɔm* dancing and other religious services conducted by indigenous priests or priestesses (*akɔmfo*), the 'pouring of libation' is a private religious ritual performed by the *akɔmfo*. Another private religious purpose is the invocation of a family's ancestors, usually performed by the grandmother (*obaa panyin*) of the *abusua*.

Traditional authorities perform two types of libation. While they are sitting in state, the pouring of libation is public and is performed by the *ɔkyeame*. The purpose of libations is both religious and political. They are performed to invoke blessings for the community, but also to make reference to political leaders and are a subtle way of communicating veiled communal political discontent. At the chief's palace, the *ɔkyeame* performs a private religious libation ritual in the chief's stool room to invoke his family's ancestors on ritual sacred days (*akusidae*). In most cases, the *ɔkyeame* pours libation for the chief. In some exceptional cases, however, when the chief is not in his village, he himself pours libation. In all cases, the one who performs the pouring of libation ritual, whether the chief or the *ɔkyeame*, should have undergone his puberty ritual. Usually, performers are older, since it takes some time for people to gain enough knowledge about Asante history and culture to demonstrate their knowledge during performances.

Pouring libation is an obligatory part of the religious function of the Asante traditional authorities. Every Asante chief is obliged to celebrate ritual days, known as 'akusidae', every six weeks. There are two types of *akusidae*: the *akwasiadae* and the *awukudae*. The *akwasiadae* are reserved for honouring personal and community ancestors and always fall on a Sunday¹¹⁶. *Awukudae*, or 'little *adae*', fall on a Wednesday and their main focus is the *Nsamanfo* shrines that are guarded by *akɔmfo* and the *Nsamanfo* which feed at those shrines. *Awukudae* is also a day on

¹¹⁵ *Libare* means to pour an offering.

which Asante practitioners can make donations towards any good cause and visit those who are ill. In the Kumasi Metropolis, the *akwasidae* is more popular among traditional authorities than *awukudae* because, in addition to their chieftaincy duties, most chiefs also have to work in town. It is not very convenient for them to leave their places of employment during the week to travel back to the village and fulfil their religious obligations. However, a chief who does not pour libation on any of the *awukudae* will be charged. If there are many charges against a chief, he can easily be destooled. In summary, the pouring of libation is a form of art that is performed in both private and public settings on many religious and political occasions by various (religious) leaders, both male and female, in the Asante society (e.g., *akɔmfoɔ*, *obaa panyin*, *ɔkyeame*).

Now that I have elaborated on the conditions surrounding the pouring of libation, I will emphasise two private libation pouring rituals and I will show to what extent indigenous religious elements (the ‘invocation of ancestral spirits’ and ‘locality’) are present in these rituals. Afterwards, I will focus on the official and unofficial relationships between the pouring of libation and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II (46), chief of Gyamasi¹¹⁷ stated that the libation pouring ritual performed in his stool room — a room that is filled with the stools of former ruling ancestors — is a private, secret and sacred ritual. Nana Brefo first indicated that for this reason, he could not share everything concerning the ritual he performed, but he did reveal many details, which may be a sign of the limited degree of their sacredness in today’s Kumasi Metropolis. Nana Brefo stated the following:

On *akwasidae*, my linguist goes with me inside the stool room, where he first calls upon *Nyame* (the High God). He then fills a whisky glass with schnapps and each time he mentions a spiritual being, he drips some of the liquor on the earth. He starts by ‘pouring libation’ for *Asase Yaa* (the earth spirit). *Nyame* and *Asase Yaa* are the only entities that are always mentioned. Then, he calls the rivers and waters that are associated with me, for instance, Lake Bosomtwi and the river Prah. After each river of water, he says *nsa* (liquor) and spills some alcohol. The type of rivers that are mentioned, however, differ each time my linguist performs a pouring of libation ritual. Finally, he calls my family and my communities’ ancestors, for instance, Yaw Kotoko I, Adudei, Nana Mensa or Adu Nku. Which ancestors are mentioned depends on the situation. He asks for help for my family and my subjects in whatever situations or challenges which are before me and [them] (*nsa*). He also asks the ancestors to help to continue to let my family and my community grow (*nsa*). He says, for instance, ‘Nananom, I know that you will do this for Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II and our community. And, I thank you for your assistance’. Then, he finishes with the words Yooooooooo and pours out all of the drink that is left from his whisky glass. After the pouring of libation, he feeds the ancestors for me with yam (*etɔ*), which is their traditional food. He asks them to support the lineage and to bring blessings to my people. After this ceremony, I walk back together with my linguist and a boy who carries my palanquin to the palace (*ahenfie*). Meanwhile, my stool wives have cooked food for all [of my] subjects and help me feed them. Traditionally, a chief’s subjects always bring food to the palace for the stool wives to cook. These days, there are not

¹¹⁶ *Kwasidae* is Sunday.

¹¹⁷ Gyamasi is located twenty-five miles north of Kumasi, near Mampong.

many people who bring food, but we still cook for everybody who comes to the palace during *awukudae*. Giving food is a way of making a sacrifice on behalf of the people (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

The second chief that I interviewed on the Asante libation pouring ritual is Nana Yaw Dwubeng, chief of Achiase Nwabiagya (3).¹¹⁸ His explanation of the libation ritual he performs during the *akusidae* is as follows:

My linguist pours libation for my ancestors, who are also the communities' ancestors, to contact the spiritual beings. The libation is meant to create a sacred space on earth and to bring the past alive. It is meant to unify the deceased members of our family with the living. My linguist starts the libation by calling upon God, the Dependable One (*Otwedeampɔn*). Then, he calls the earth goddess (*Asase Yaa*) and pours libation (*nsa*). He invokes local deities and asks them to come and receive their drink. He mentions, for instance, *Tankwasi*, who is a priest-professor deity that came from a very small village and is now venerated in the whole of the Kumasi Metropolis. Then, he mentions the names of all the river gods and goddesses and asks them to drink. For example [the] *Ofin* River God (*Ofin, nsa*) [and the] *Densu* river goddess [are both invited to] drink (*Densu Asuo Yaa, nsa*). Then, he invites all *Asante* matriclans to come and drink (e.g., ancestors of the *Oyoko* clan (*Oyokofoɔ, nsa*) and those of the *Bretuo* clan drink (*Etena ne Bretuo, nsa*). He [next] asks all deities and ancestors again to come and receive a drink and asks them to give us good health and a good temperament. He finishes with the words *Yen a yeahyia nyianaa nkwa so* 'to the health of all of us who gathered here'. Besides the pouring of libation, we add two hard-boiled eggs to feed the ancestral spirits, which are a symbol of life and fertility. During the last *akusidae*, we slaughter a sheep. If we had more money, we could do it more often, but sheep are expensive these days — one sheep is between 600,000-1000, 000 million cedis [44-74 pounds]-which is why we slaughter them only once a year (Nana Yaw Dwubeng, 3).

The above descriptions of the royal pouring of libation rituals reveal that they contain 'indigenous religious elements'. In all described rituals, ancestral spirits are invoked. 'Locality' also plays an important role in all rituals, since authorities call upon local deities, such as river and water spirits. The ritual of pouring libation shows many similarities with the hymns which are sung as part of the 'Manhyia Kete Nnwokorɔ' group performance discussed in Section 5.1.1. Both religious events are meant to invoke help from ancestral spirits and natural deities for the living. The mentioned hymns for ancestral spirits, who are part of the *abusua* of the living, are sung to qualify the deceased as a good ancestor (*saman-paa*) so that (s)he can depart to the world of *nsamanfoɔ*. Deities are also called upon to reveal the family background of the deceased. If the living neglects to sing such hymns for the deceased, chances are higher that they will end up losing their way while travelling to the land of the ancestors and be classified as *Ɔsaman twen-twen*, and special rituals will have to be performed to guide the spirit of the deceased to *asamando*. The same applies for deceased individuals who are not qualified as ancestors (*tofo*), due to a violent death which damaged their body so badly that it could not be recovered for the 'laying-in-state' ceremony. The Asante believe that with the help of special rituals, eventually these deceased individuals will be brought to

¹¹⁸ Achiase Nwabiagya is located north of Kumasi and forms part of the Kumasi Metropolis.

asamando. If not, both those deceased — consisting of the living and the dead — who are qualified by the *abusua* as *Saman twen-twen* and those qualified as *tofo* will end up disturbing the living as wandering souls, either as an ancestor who is lost or as a deceased person.

Instead of helping one deceased individual, which occurs in the case of a chief's ritual pouring of libation, ancestors and natural deities are invoked to help the entire traditional authority's community. In both cases, the indigenous religious elements 'invocation of ancestral spirits' and 'locality' are present for the same reason — they are meant to maintain relationships with spiritual beings and invoke their help. This small comparison shows that there is a lot to say for the point of view of scholars of religion, including Harvey (2000:4-5) and Cooper (1988:873-4), who recognise relations as transcendent aspect of Indigenous Religions. Although the actual number of indigenous religious elements recognised during these described rituals — the Saamanhene's pre-burial rite and the two previously mentioned libation pouring rituals — is debatable, it may still be concluded that 'indigenous religious elements' are present.

5.4 The pouring of libation ceremony and the relationship between Indigenous Religion and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy

What does the pouring of libation ritual say about the formal and informal relationship between 'Indigenous Religion' and 'the persistence of Asante chieftaincy'? Formally, there is a positive relationship between the two, since the presence of Indigenous Religion in the form of invoking ancestral spirits during a pouring libation ritual is how the Asante continue their relationships between ancestors and living kin. It is believed that without a continuation of this relationship, chieftaincy would not continue. Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II (46) stated the following:

As a chief, I have to establish a liaison between the living and the deceased spirits of my extended family. If I fail to do so, I will not receive the spiritual powers that are necessary to be a ruler, which means that chieftaincy will not persist. We chiefs need the ancestors in order to receive the necessary spiritual power to rule (Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II, 46).

Later in the same interview, Nana Brefo stated:

We need the blessings of the ancestors for our community. Every family has his [or her] own ancestral spirits, but since I am a royal, it is my ancestors who are venerated by the whole village, in addition to my subjects' personal ancestors. Therefore, I not only ask for blessings for my own family, but also for prosperity for the whole community. The ancestors have acquired some power of the *abosom* that enables them to watch and protect the living. They also work together with *Nyame*. These connections make them powerful protectors of the living, who belong to the same family as ancestral spirits. In return, we — the living — have to venerate *nsamanfo* or they may come and cause havoc in our personal life, our family and our community. The ancestors are the custodians of the laws, customs and traditions of our society and, therefore, we need to abide by their rules. If we listen carefully to our ancestors, our community will continue to live in prosperity (Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II, 46).

Brefo also shows that an informal libation pouring ritual contributes less clearly to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy than those formally prescribed through Asante beliefs.

Nowadays, there are so many churches around that few people in the Kumasi Metropolis really give serious thought [to the idea] that by pouring libation; you [become] their spiritual leader. Christianity, the cosmopolitan character of the area and the enhanced education of subjects, have affected the religious authority of chiefs (Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II, 46).

Brefo exemplifies the informal relationship between the two ideas of formality and informality as follows:

If there is a catastrophe in the village, such as a cholera epidemic, then as a chief, you are responsible for coping with it. It is our religious duty to perform rituals to please the ancestral spirits and failing to do so will be a charge against us. If there are many charges, one can easily be destooled. However, today, there are not many of my subjects who believe that a cholera disaster comes to them because they have angered the gods. If such an epidemic breaks out today, everybody goes to the hospital, because they know its cause. So, formally, I have to pour libation and sacrifice to the spiritual beings to restore relations with them, but in actuality, nobody will rush to me in Kumasi and beg me to perform those rituals in my village Gyamasi. Education has brought the knowledge to my subjects that cholera is caused by bacteria, rather than the spell of spiritual beings (Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II, 46).

Chiefs are obliged to perform formal religious rituals, including libations, which are perceived by the Asante as an affirmation of the chief's connection with the spiritual universe and a dramatisation of wishes. Informally, however, the performance of such rituals is not a high priority. Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II concludes with the following:

Generally, we believe that ancestral spirits will guide us, but in times of disaster, such as a cholera epidemic, my subjects put more trust in modern medical treatments than the advice of ancestral spirits (Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II, 46).

Nana Brefo's remark shows that indigenous practitioners combine the wisdom of their ancestors with other sources of wisdom, depending on the nature of their problems. The acceptance of plural sources of knowledge has been an aspect of Asante Indigenous Religion since the pre-colonial period, when indigenous practitioners combined the wisdom of indigenous priests, chiefs and Islamic healers. These days, the point of focus of Asante indigenous practitioners has changed, since they now combine their belief more with Christianity and Western medical knowledge than with Islamic elements. Nevertheless, Indigenous Religion has remained pragmatic and multi-stranded, which explains how despite the mentioned influences from outside in the eyes of indigenous practitioners, Asante traditional authorities have maintained their sacrality. The characteristics of Indigenous Religion I referred to have contributed to the resilience of this religion, which has had a positive effect on the persistence of the indigenous religious intermediary function of Asante traditional authorities.

5.5 A rite of passage for enstoolment and the presence of indigenous religious elements

In this section, I will again look at the relationship between (a) Asante indigenous religious elements and (b) the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The focus will be on a chief's rite de passage for enstoolment. Queen mothers go through a similar process of enstoolment, but once again, the focus is on the ritual enstoolment of a chief because the rituals the *Ɔkomfo* perform to invoke the ancestral spirits are more visible than those of the queen mothers, who communicate with the ancestral spirits by using their own bodies. Indigenous religious elements studied will again include 'locality' and 'the invocation of ancestral spirits'.

'Locality' plays a role in the rite of passage for enstoolment at the moment when a decision is made about who is going to be enstooled after a destoolment or the death of the former chief. Offinsohemma Ama Serwah Nyarko (43) states that after the burial of a chief, the elders of the chief's family announce to all Royals that the stool is vacant. Every royal may apply for the position of a chief, but there are certain criteria that make it unlikely that some Royals will be chosen. For a candidate to be selected, he needs to have a proven record. He should not chase other men's wives; he should not drink excessively or have a criminal record. He should also not be physically disabled because a chief is supposed to become a good ancestor (*saman-paa*) in order to help the living. Physically disabled people do not qualify as a *saman-paa* and therefore experience difficulties reaching the world of the ancestral spirits (*asamando*). The queen mother chooses a candidate after an announcement is made to the elder of the royal family (*abusua panyin*) that the stool is vacant and that all Royals who are interested can come and apply for it, and after the internal job application for Royals only is closed. The Asante believe the queen mother to be the right person for this task because she is of the same blood as the prospective chief and is believed to know him best. The queen mother makes her decision after scrutinising each applicant against the previously described requirements. If all candidates are eligible for the job, the queen mother chooses the candidate whom she most trusts. Nana Ama Serwah Nyarko (43) states the following:

I choose the chief whom I know I can trust and who will help me. Otherwise, if something goes wrong, the chief won't listen to you and he might keep the stool money, which comes from tapping timber and stool land, instead of distributing it to the elders and to me (Nana Ama Serwah Nyarko, 43).

A queen mother has three chances to select a candidate. After she has made her choice, she presents the candidate to the subjects who gather outside the palace. The subjects can indicate whether they like the queen mother's choice or whether they reject her decision. If her first candidate is rejected, the queen mother has two other chances to choose another candidate. In the rare case that the subjects reject all proposed candidates, then through a consultation with the queen mother, the elders will make the decision of who will become the new chief. If there are a lot of charges against a chief, then after consulting with the elders, the queen mother is also the one who makes the final decision about the necessity of destoolment. The Asante believe that 'the hand which was used to fill the pot

is the same hand that is used to take out from the pot' — *nsa a yedehyee kukuo ma no, saa nsa korɔ no ara na yede yi firi mu*. In conclusion, the locality of indigenous religious elements is indeed present in an Asante rite of passage of enstoolment. 'Locality' plays a role in the selection of a candidate because in a sense, the local community, including the queen mothers, elders and subjects, decide who will become their new chief. To make that decision, they need to know the background of the chief, his personal history and that of his lineage. The community must also have local knowledge about the prospective chief's connections with the spiritual world (e.g., local natural deities, such as those of the rivers and mountains). It is believed that these connections might spiritually affect the community once the prospective chief rules.

The second indigenous religious element whose presence should be verified before looking at its relationship with the persistence of Asante chieftaincy is the invocation of ancestral spirits. Chief Yaw Dwubeng (3) states that the invocation of the ancestors plays a role in three phases of the enstoolment rite. First, the ancestors are called upon inside the stool room, where a chief is chosen by the ancestral spirits. The ritual that is performed inside the stool room by the *Jkyeame* is a secret ritual overseen by the *abusua panyin*. Once the chief is confined inside the stool room, the *abusua panyin* educates him on many aspects of chieftaincy. Finally, after the chief has been installed and has been shown to the public, the *Jkyeame* invokes the ancestral spirits. At this time, the invocation goes together with the slaughtering and offering of a sheep to the ancestral spirits. Once this is done, the *Jkyeame* of the chief is allowed to perform the first libation pouring ritual, which will be repeated during the *akusidae*.

For an accurate analysis of an Asante rite of passage of enstoolment, the theory of the Belgium born anthropologist Van Gennep (1960) will be described. Van Gennep makes a distinction between the preliminal¹¹⁹ phase (separation), the liminal phase (transition) and the postliminal phase (incorporation).

During the preliminal phase, the chief spends time in a stool room, which is a physically separate space where ancestors are believed to be present. The room represents the chief's transition from the outside unknown realm to the inside realm. This phase characterises the symbolic separation of the chief from his social environment as a sign of respect towards the ancestors. The separation is realised by the performance of religious rituals by an *okɔmfoɔ*, who sprinkles the chief with white clay (which transmits the potent spiritual power of the ancestral stool to the chief) and then pours libation to bless and protect him from bad spirits. During this stage, the chief is not allowed to eat the food of a menstruating woman and cannot touch the earth with bare feet, because

menstruation blood and direct contact with the earth are believed to cause spiritual pollution. The invocation of ancestral spirits during this phase takes place inside the stool room, where ancestral spiritual power is transmitted to the chief through white clay.

During the liminal phase, the chief has no position and is neither an insider nor outsider. Dependent on his behaviour during the period of confinement in the stool room, he may become incorporated into chieftaincy and thus be transformed to the position of an insider. In this phase, the chief learns the dos and don'ts of his function. He is instructed in the history of the stool, the history and social and political structure of his community and chieftaincy in general. Important landmarks in the history of the community, such as famines, plagues and wars, are pointed out to him by the elders, while the taboos and customs of the people are explained. The history of his people includes traditional accounts of ancient homes where they came to settle, the reasons behind emigration and the roles and achievement of their former leaders. Normal rules of behaviour may be suspended or exaggerated and the chief's ritual companions, the *Jkyeame* and the *abusua panyin*, are allowed to humiliate him. By humbling the potential head of the most important lineage in a community, similarly to sixteenth century French Charivari (Spierenburg 1988), the social definitions of the group are emphasised. This humiliation can only be practiced when normal rules are suspended. The Ewe chief Kodzo Paaku Kludze (2000) mentions that for this reason, the idea of purification is sometimes exaggerated. Body (*honam*) and soul (*sunsum*) need to be transformed so that they can be united and the relationship with the ancestors can be fortified. The chief has to spend seven days on a sheep's skin, and is offered poor food and has poor bedding during the night. Sometimes, the liminal phase is so physically difficult that if the queen mother does not properly support the prospective chief, he dies. In this case, the ritual companions explain his death as a rejection by the ancestral spirits. According to Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II, however, today, the only foods not allowed during the period of confinement are pepper and salt. With regard to physical endurance, he mentions that the testing of strength is only important for certain stools for chiefs in military services. The general rule with regard to installation rituals is that the more important the chief, the more elaborate and demanding the enstoolment rite is. Today, however, a chief rarely dies or is severely physically harmed as a consequence of this rite.

The function of the post-liminal phase is to reintegrate the chief into his community. The chief, who is nameless and stateless during the liminal phase, now receives the name of one of his forefathers that previously occupied an ancestral stool, which is another way in which ancestral power is symbolically transmitted to the chief. Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II (46) mentions that in the past, chiefs had to enter the stool room blindfolded. They then had to pick the name of a stool of

¹¹⁹ The term *limen* is Latin for 'threshold'. Van Gennep uses this term when referring to the symbol or literal change of physical space in which a person resides during the transition phase. In the case of the chief's rite of

a particular ancestor which they would receive. Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II would be called as such because he pointed to a stool of an ancestor of the same name. Today, however, a chief may choose what name he prefers. The reason for this change in tradition is that during their rite of passage of enstoolment, some chiefs pointed to stools in the stool room of ancestors who did not belong to their lineage. In the past, people did not seem bothered by this, but today, according to Nana Brefo, there is less brotherhood between people of various lineages, which explains why chiefs prefer to choose a name of an ancestor of their own lineage prior to entering the stool room. The name 'Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II' was the result of a free personal choice and Nana Brefo chose this name to sustain his lineage.

To sum up, the chief's rite of passage of enstoolment is a dialectical process that goes from structure (*preliminal*) to anti-structure (*liminal*) back to structure (*post-liminal*) (Turner 1991). During the rite, the social and political structures of the community are first questioned and then re-established (Gennep 1960), after which, the new chief is accepted within the society. In all three phases of the enstoolment rite, locality and the invocation of ancestral spirits is present. This means there is reason enough to investigate the formal and informal relationships between previously-mentioned indigenous religious elements and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

5.6 The rite of passage of enstoolment of a chief and the relationship between indigenous religious elements and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy

In a formal sense, the Asante enstoolment rite reveals that the invocation of ancestral spirits and the connection with local deities continues to be important in the function of an Asante chief. Asante chieftaincy is legitimised by the Asante belief in ancestral spirits, because the chiefs derive their authority from those spirits. A disbelief in ancestral spirits would undermine the chief's authority. Informally, the comparison of Nana Brefo Gydedu Kotowko II's rite of passage of enstoolment to both past and present times shows that it has generally become easier for a chief to undergo this rite. Today, a prospective chief is allowed to eat most foods and the risks associated with undergoing the rite have been heavily reduced.

In conclusion, the formal relationship between the Asante Indigenous Religion and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy with regard to the described enstoolment ritual is more obvious than the informal one. Beliefs in ancestral spirits and the associated rituals still exist, although there has been a diminished interest in ancestral beliefs.

5.7 Asante indigenous religious elements of the Asanteman Adaye Kese festival

passage, the physical space literally and symbolically changes.

In this section¹²⁰, I will focus on the presence of indigenous religious elements ('locality' and 'the invoking of ancestral spirits') in the so called *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival, and the relationship between this festival and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

The *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival, which literally means the Asante nations' (*Asanteman*) big (*kese*) burial ground (*adae*), is the modern version of the *Odwira* festival, whose origins date back to the seventeenth century.¹²¹ *Asanteman Adae Kese* is a combination of those elements that formed a part of the ancient *Odwira* festival and events that have been added as a result of inventing traditions. The last celebration of *Asanteman Adae Kese* in Kumasi took place between 15 March 2004 and 16 May 2004 and went together with the fifth year of Asantehene Osei Tutu II's reign and the celebration of his birthday. The theme of the festival was 'Asanteman Adae Kese: Promoting Traditional Leadership for Accelerated Development'. This theme demonstrates that the festival is about more than legitimatising the institution of chieftaincy by performing religious rituals. Its purpose is also to promote the modern role of the chief as a development worker, to give insight into current development projects and to educate youth on ancient Asante indigenous culture by performing remnant rituals which form part of the ancient *Odwira* festival. The most important *Odwira* element in *Asanteman Adae Kese* is a purification ritual performed at Lake Bosomtwi, which will be discussed later in this section.

The ancient *Odwira* festival was not celebrated from after 1896, when the Asante Kingdom ceased to exist, until 1985. After that year, the celebration of the festival was discouraged by the Ghanaian state. However, in 1991 Asantehene Opoku Ware II reintroduced the celebration of the ninth circle of the Akan ritual calendar. Since then, the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival has been celebrated every four years, with the exception of 1999, when the *Asanteman Adae Kese* Planning Committee was occupied with the organisation of the enstoolment of the present Asantehene, Osei Tutu II. In other districts of the Asante region, the *Odwira* festival is celebrated every year on both paramount and lower levels. The *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration in Kumasi should be seen as the culmination of a series of those yearly celebrated local *Odwira* festivals in the Asante Region. *Asanteman Adae Kese* is an Asante indigenous festival that is celebrated in the Kumasi Metropolis nearly every four years. The question that arises as a result of this research is whether the indigenous religious elements 'locality' and 'invoking ancestral spirits' are present in events forming *Asanteman Adae Kese*.

'Locality' plays an important role in the celebration of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival. Material is distinguished from spiritual aspects of locality. In a material sense, the *Asanteman Adae*

¹²⁰ The information given in this section is based on my analysis of the locally produced video of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival 'The making of the new king: enstoolment and coronation of Otumfuo (Asantehene) Osei Tutu II', the *Asanteman Adae Kese* program brochure and interviews with my respondents.

¹²¹ See section 3.3.

Kese festival has everything to do with the maintenance of good social relationships between the local community, the Asante king and all other traditional authorities. The preservation of harmony between traditional authorities and their subjects is important for two reasons. First, in order to complete business in the Kumasi Metropolis, one needs to have a good relationship with the Asantehene, since every person in the metropolis is the kings' guest, as he embodies the ancestral land. This is why paying homage to the Asantehene is an important event during the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival. Businessmen, market women and other inhabitants of Kumasi give gifts or money to the Asantehene. Kente cloth weavers in Bonwire usually give some free cloth to him, whereas the market women in Kumasi give free tomatoes and cassava. The Asante present gifts to the Asantehene because he allows them to stay and trade on his land. During the festival held on Thursday 15 April 2004, many companies brought gifts to the Asantehene, including the 'Ghana Telecom Company' (GTC), who presented a cheque of sixty million old Ghana cedis [600,000 euro], 'Photo-Riker Pharmaceuticals' (PRP), who presented a cheque of five million old Ghana cedis [50,000 euro] and 'Unipharma Company Ltd'. (UC), who presented two bottles of aromatic schnapps and one carton [200 bundles] of paper napkins. Apart from companies, many clubs paid homage to Otumfuo, such as members of the 'Asante Kotoko Society' (AKS), the 'Nkosuo Fan Club' (NFC) of 'Nkosuo FM Radio Station' (NFRS), both of whom presented two bottles of aromatic schnapps (Kwaku Amoako Attah Fosu, 39). Good relationships must be maintained between Asante family members. Before the start of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* and any other *Odwira* festivals in the Asante region, Asante families must settle all disputes and resolve issues in order to receive blessings from local deities during the forthcoming year. Family disputes might anger the deities, which can bring misfortune. That is why before cleansing *Asanteman* from evil spirits, every Asante should be on good terms with his or her family (Patrick Domfeh, 36). In a material sense, locality has everything to do with gift-giving to maintain harmonious local relationships.

In a spiritual sense, locality also plays an important role in the *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration because the evil spirits from which the Asante nation should be cleaned are believed to be local. According to the Asante, evil spirits that, for example, cause witchcraft (*abayisem*) enter a person through his or her blood (*mogya*), which symbolises the link with their family. Therefore, it is only through contact with one's family members that one can be bewitched, which implies that evil spirits are always local. Spiritually, locality also played a role during the *Asanteman Adae Kese busumuru* rites held on Monday, 17 May 2004. These rites were meant to protect the Asantehene's *busumuru* sword that is used by Asante traditional authorities to swear an oath to the Asantehene against attack from local evil spirits.

Besides the rituals for the cleansing of and the protection against local evil spirits, the festival is an occasion where local natural deities are venerated. The Asante believe that each town

has its own eternal natural deities, since natural gods never die. Important river deities of the Kumasi Metropolis include *Sumankwaa* and *Tano-Adwuman*. Other local deities are *Fofie* and *Asuo Aketego* of *Bomso-Kumasi*, *Apumasu* of *Edwinase Kumasi* and *Odefour Anyanor* of *Ayigya Kumasi*. Besides these ancient local deities, on 23 April 2004, the invocation of executioner deities (*suman brafo*) was performed. During the three and a half hour ritual, indigenous priests and priestesses invoked the *suman brafo* to show their powers to a public audience. One indigenous priest swallowed an egg (See appendix Five: photo 5), whereas another chewed raw charcoal (See Appendix Five: photo 6). After the *asumanbrafo* performance, indigenous priests and priestesses shook hands with the Asantehene and pledged an oath of allegiance to him. In return, the king provided them with schnapps to be used in the future to pour libation and invoke the *suman brafo* spirits.

The next indigenous religious aspect is the role of invoking ancestral spirits during the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival. The first event in which ancestral spirits play an important role is *kuntunkunidae*. On 28 March 2004, at the venue Dwaberen Manhyia palace at 11:00 a.m., all Asante that participated in the festival put on *kuntunkuni* cloth: a brown cloth that comes from the bark of a tree called *kyenkyen*. Symbolically, the cloth represents bereavement. *Kuntukunidae* marks the start of a forty day period in which funerals are banned as well as eating mashed yam (*etɔ*), since this staple food needs to be pounded, making lots of noise. In fact, there is a ban on everything that makes noise, including pounding food, dancing and drumming. On Saturday, 30 March 2004, there was a cleaning exercise at Asawasi and Amakom, two districts in Kumasi. This event consisted of the cleaning of the environment, the ritual cleaning of shrines and temples and the washing of domestic materials, such as cooking pots. This exercise was perceived as preparing for the invocation of ancestral spirits.

Then, on 12 April 2004, around 17.00 p.m., ancestral spirits were invoked during a purification rite at Lake Bosomtwi, which is located thirty kilometres south of Kumasi. In pre-colonial times, Asante warriors who had killed human beings had to purify and release themselves from the dead spirit of their enemies before they were allowed to return to Kumasi by washing themselves in the lake. This purification ritual involved the ritual slaughter of a sheep, cow or fowl. The warriors were obliged to step in the blood (*mogya*) that was poured on the earth before entering Kumasi. During the *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration in 2004, a bird and a cow were ritually sacrificed. After Nana Saaman Nantwi II had poured libation and said a prayer, the throat of a living bird was slit and was then set free to swim on the surface of the water. The bird died on its back with the chest facing the sky (*dayaya*), symbolising the Lake's approval of the celebration of the festival. After the fowl, a cow, believed to be a highly-prized domestic animal, was also ritually killed. During the rite, the Asantehene addressed a prayer to the lake, then cut the cow's throat and quickly

removed its heart and some of the lungs, which were cast into the lake. As soon as this was done, the assembled people fell upon the carcass and cut it up, portioning out the meat to everyone.

Another *Asanteman Adae Kese* event that took place on Wednesday, 14 April 2004, at 9.00 a.m., was a performance by *atano* priests and priestesses who are connected to *atano* deities, which are powers that are derived from rivers, including the river *Tano* in northwest Asante. In the Asante region alone, there are about sixty-five *atano-deities*. Two principal *Tano* deities in the Kumasi Metropolis are *Sumankwaa-deity* and *Tano-Adwuman deity*. According to oral tradition, the *Sumankwaa-deity* is believed to be one of the ancient Asante *abosom*. The *Tano-Adwuman* deity is one of the deities that revealed itself through the body of Priest Anokye and was later used by the Asante as a means of protection during wars. Today, during ceremonies such as *Asanteman Adae Kese*, the priests in which the *Sumankwaa-deity* and the *Tano-Adwuman deity* reside during a trance walk in front of (*sumankwaa*) and at the back (*adwuman*) of the Asantehene, giving him spiritual protection. Each traditional *atano* priest and priestess has a shrine to use for the veneration of the deities. After the performance of *atano* priests and priestesses, royal messengers presented holy water (*atanosuo*) in a brass bowl to the Asantehene's linguist (*Ɔkyeame*). A bryophyllum pinta (*egoro*) plant was put on top to protect the water from spiritual contamination. After removing the plant, the water was used for the ritual washing of the royal black stools and regalia of the *oyoko* clan ruling in the Kumasi Metropolis. The entire performance of the *atano* priests and priestesses can be perceived as preparing for the invocation of ancestral spirits in the 'veneration in the stool house' (*nkonnwafieso som*).

Then, on Thursday, 22 April 2004, a procession began to the Asantehene's *nkonnwafieso som* in Breman, which is a northern district in the city of Kumasi. A stool house is a place where people place the stools of their deceased chiefs. After a chief dies, they put his white stool or throne on his grave for a week before they take it off to blacken it with the blood of a sheep, a chicken or a cow and with soot and egg yolk. The ritual of blackening a chief's stool is performed in order to convert his throne to a shrine, known as 'blackened stool' (*nkonwatuntum*). It is believed that during a chiefs' lifetime, there is a strong connection between the chief's *sunsum* and the *sunsum* inside his stool. Once the chief dies, this connection continues, which is why converting the stool into a resting place for both the chief's *sunsum* and the communal *sunsum* that dwells inside his stool is best. It is believed that *Asanteman* benefits from the invocation of the spirits of the deceased chiefs inside the *nkonwatuntum*.

On 26 April 2004, at 10.00 a.m., the ancestral spirits were actually invoked inside *nkonnwafieso som* during an event which is known as *banmu som*. While a crowd of *adowa* dancers and drummers waited outside and praised the Asantehene by making a V-sign with their hands, the Asantehene, his linguist and a few elders went inside *Nkonnwafieso som* to perform indigenous

religious rituals. My respondents perceived the *Breman Nkonwafieso som* as one of the most important events during the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival.

Two days later, attention was given to the royal ancestors in a more material form. On Thursday 29 April 2004 at 11.00 a.m., a statue of the late Otumfuo Opoku Ware II was unveiled at the Suame Roundabout in Kumasi. The former Asantehene was praised for his contribution to the prosperity of the Asante nation (*Asanteman*). In a libation pouring prayer, offered by the Asantehene's linguist, Opoku Ware II's good deeds for *Asanteman* were summarised; his ancestors were also mentioned.

The last *Asanteman Adae Kese* event during which the ancestors were mentioned took place at 11.00 a.m. on Friday 30 April 2004 and is known as *esom kese*. During *esom kese*, the traditional authorities of Sawua, the elders and other prominent members of the Sawua community march to Manhyia palace accompanied by young women carrying brass pans (*yawa*) on their heads loaded with yams (*etɔ*). The Sawuahene presents the *etɔ* to another chief (*Asemhene*), who then presents this staple food to the Asantehene. The Asantehene's linguist then offers the *etɔ* to the ancestors who dwell inside *nkonwatumtum*. The history of this ritual of presenting *etɔ* to *nananom* began during the Kong War, one of the intertribal Asante wars, at which time a famine broke out. Fortunately, one of the Sawuahene's soldiers developed the idea of attempting to cook *etɔ*. The Sawuahene liked this idea. He asked one of his stool wives to cook the *etɔ* and found out that it was actually edible. Nana Sawua then encouraged his subjects to look for *etɔ*. He also informed the Asantehene of this discovery. Consequently, Otumfuo raised the Sawuahene to his traditional office and gave him the symbolic title of 'test-yam-see' (*so-adee-hwe*). Since then, each year, during the *Odwira* festival, the Sawuahene boils *etɔ* and tastes the food before offering it to *nananom*.

In summary, this section investigated whether the indigenous religious elements 'locality' and 'invocation of ancestral spirits' were present during the 2004 *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration. Because the answer to this question is positive, this paper will now explore the relationship between previously-mentioned indigenous religious elements and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis. Just as in other sections in Chapter Five and in this appendix, my focus will first be on the formal and then on the informal relationship between the two.

5.8 The Asanteman Adae Kese festival and the relationship between indigenous religious elements and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy

Formally, there is a positive relationship between the celebration of *Asanteman Adae Kese* and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. During *Asanteman Adae Kese*, the power of the

Asantehene and other Asante chiefs is renewed by their subjects who show allegiance to their traditional authorities by organising and paying for some of the festival events. The chiefs' subjects also present gifts to their masters in the form of schnapps and/or money.

Besides confirming the legitimisation of the institution of chieftaincy, the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival is also an occasion for Asante to show other cultures who they are. It is an occasion where Asante traditional dancers demonstrate their skills and where indigenous priests show how powerful they are. Indigenous religious rituals are performed where the Asante identify themselves as a people. Traditional games are played, such as *oware*, *dame*, *ate sie*, *tayato* and *ampe*. Traditional authorities derive their powers from spirits that the Asante believe exist. The Asante believe in the Indigenous Religion that is rooted in indigenous rituals and traditions. In addition, their powers are limited to dealing with 'indigenous' problems, such as those that are derived from closing traditional marriages or customary laws. Therefore, one can argue that the demonstration of a partly invented indigenous Asante identity during the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival also contributes to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy.

Informally, however, the existence of any relationship between indigenous religious aspects of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival and the persistence of chieftaincy is questionable because, apart from religious purposes, the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival is celebrated for socio-political and economic purposes. Each of these additional purposes might in their own way threaten the persistence of 'indigenesness' as an important aspect of the celebration of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival. This research will now explore whether this is the case in relation to the socio-political and economic aspects of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival.

From a socio-political perspective, the festival, like many other state festivals in Ghana, is used to promote Asante culture to the outside world. It is an opportunity for the Asante people as a cultural group to place themselves on the diary of politicians who decide to whom they allocate scarce resources, and to compete for prestige and influence among other cultural groups. When advertising one's culture, each cultural group, including the Asante, incorporates 'invented' traditional elements with the original (pre-colonial rooted) festival script. The question that arises is to what extent these invented elements have robbed the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival of its traditional religious meanings. *If it has, to what extent have these invented traditional elements been added at the cost of the celebration of indigenous religious events?*

In chronological order, 'invented' traditional elements which form part of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival celebration are as follows. On Thursday 29 April 2004, there was a debate between pupils of various secondary schools in Kumasi about the role of traditional leadership for accelerated development. On Monday 3 May, 2004, a dramatic performance was shown at the cultural centre, which was titled 'Asante *nkabom*'. On Tuesday, 4 May 2004, a symposium was held

at the 'Kumasi Cultural Centre' (KCC) for secondary school teachers and university lecturers focusing, on the role of traditional rulers in accelerated development. On Wednesday, 5 May 2004 there was a photo exhibition on the Asantehene's reign at the Prempeh Assembly Hall, an inauguration of a CD album of *nnwonkoro* in honour of the Asantehene and the opening of a cultural exposition at the 'National Cultural Centre' (NCC) in Kumasi. On 6 May 2004 attention was paid to the celebration of Otumfuo's birthday in the Inner Gardens of the Manhyia Palace, followed by the launching of an *Asanteman Adae Kese Festival* brochure by Otumfuo's private secretary. On 7 May 2004, nationally sponsored dictionaries (e.g., those distributed by the SSB Bank and Anglo Gold) were distributed to select schools in the Asante Region to show the Asantehene that others were concerned about the improvement of education in his region. On Sunday, 9 May 2004, a Grand Durbar was held at the Kumasi Sports Stadium in which both the Asantehene and President John Agyekum Kufuor delivered a speech to remind the audience that they should forge ahead in unity. The main purpose of this Durbar (a colonial invention) is to renew and reinforce the relationship between the Asantehene, a cultural leader, and the Ghanaian's national leader, president Kufuor. During these occasions, the ruler counts the number of common people. The importance of the dignitaries who are attending the Durbar determines the importance of the cultural group celebrating the religious festival. The high importance of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration can, among other things, be derived from the fact that the dignitaries who were present at this Durbar were President Ahmed Kabba of Sierra Leone, President Gbagbo of La Cote d'Ivoire and a number of local important dignitaries from Ghana. Finally, on 20 August 2004, there was a contest between traditional beauty pageants (*ahoofehemaa*) at the Prempeh Assembly Hall in Kumasi.

An analysis of all *Asanteman Adae Kese* activities shows that one third of the activities consist of 'invented' events; these are defined as events that are not related in any sense to the authentic religious meaning of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival in its original form (*Odwira*). There are also invented elements within the other two-thirds of the events, but modifications are easily recognisable as forms of the original version of these events, although, from an objective point of view, the emphasis of *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival events is still focused on the Asante Indigenous Religion. Some of my respondents fear that the addition of many non-indigenous religious-related events is threatening the existence of *Asanteman Adae Kese* as an indigenous religious festival. Nana Yaw Dwubeng (3) stated the following:

One of the main goals of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival is to educate our subjects. We teach them the religion and the history of our people and our stools. We also like to give them insight in the traditional customs in and around the royal courts. Today, however, the organisers of this festival add so many extra events to it, such as the *ahoofehemaa* contest, the many sellers of food and *nsuo*, the omnipresence of ghetto blasters and cameramen, that one might wonder what is left of the main festival goals and might worry about whether we are still carrying out the right message (Nana Yaw Dwubeng, 3).

Economically, the question arises to what extent *Asanteman Adae Kese* is celebrated for the promotion of the tourist industry. The answer to this question is that generally, the local government in the Kumasi Metropolis and the 'National Ghanaian Government' (NGG) are inventing a new culture and spreading local cultural identities nationally and globally by using festival performances for economic development. The local and national tourist boards anticipate national needs, but especially focus on international tourists when reconstructing a local history, religion and culture. In 2000, for instance, as a side effect of the celebration of the Yaa Asantewaa festival, the female Asante anti-colonial warrior after whom this festival is named was promoted both nationwide and worldwide, since her image could be found on an extensively used Ghanaian stamp. An example of the way in which the local and national Ghanaian government attempts to create links between local cultures and economic and spiritual needs of national or international tourists is the so called 'coming home' industry. Mr. Kwasi Asare Ankomah (19), the registrar of the ARHC in Kumasi, where I resided during the completion of my fieldwork, stated the following:

The *Asanteman Adae Kese* is a classic indigenous religious state festival which is hardly meant for boosting the tourist industry. Other festivals, such as *Yaa Asantewaa* in Ejisu and *Kente* in Bonwire, however, are primarily there to please African-Americans, who form the majority of the tourists who come to the Asante Region. They want to feel at home here in Ghana and are searching for their spiritual roots. We have created festivals that fulfil the needs of these African-Americans in terms of educating [LM: others about the] Asante religion, culture or history. Meanwhile, we hope that these 'coming home' festivals, which are meant for African-Americans on a pilgrimage, contribute to the development of our Region (Mr. Kwasi Asare Ankomah, 19).

The 'invention of Asante traditions' is thus a deliberate part of the policies of local and national politicians. Consequently, in the Asante Region, new festivals pop up like mushrooms, including the Yaa Asantewaa festival in Ejisu, the *Kente* festival in Bonwire, the *Papa* festival in Kumawu, the *Mmoa Ɔnni nkɔ* festival in Offinso and the *Nkyidwo* festival in Essumeja. The question is what the long-term effects will be on the Asante indigenous culture from the creation of these festivals. *Will it rob the Asante culture of its indigenous religious contents, and in that sense will it cause 'damage'?* *Will the attention that is now given to African Asante spirituality by African-American tourists create valuable syncretic forms of the Asante Indigenous Religion?*

These questions are not directly applicable to the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival, since the purpose of this festival has never been to suit the cultural or spiritual needs of national or international tourists. Kwaku Amoako Attah Fosu (39), an employee of the NCC in Kumasi, raises the following point:

Asanteman Adae Kese promotes the tourist industry. Roads are constructed because of the festival and hotels are filled with guests. The festival is there for local people; tourism plays a marginal role in the decision of the Asante to organise an *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival. This type of festival should primarily be understood as a religious experience and an expression of the Asante culture (Kwaku Amoako Attah Fosu, 39).

Economic motives have thus far not had a direct significant effect on the relationship between Asante Indigenous Religion and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival.

In conclusion, the indigenous religious elements ‘locality’ and ‘invocation of ancestral spirits’ were and are present during *Asanteman Adae Kese*. ‘Locality’ plays an important role during the gift-giving ritual, the cleaning ritual ridding an environment of evil spirits, the ritual invoking the protection of the Asantehene’s sacred swords against evil spirits and a ritual that was meant for the veneration of local natural deities. The ancestral spirits are invoked during *kuntunkunidae*, a cleaning ritual, a purification ritual at Lake Bosomtwi, *banmu som*, the unveiling of the statue of the late Opoku Ware II and *esom kese*.

Needless to say, the presence of indigenous religious elements is a *conditio sine qua non* for the relationship between those elements and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. Formally, the discovered relationship between ‘Indigenous Religion’ and ‘the chieftaincy’s persistence’ is positive, since the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival legitimises *Asanteman*, both by strengthening the relationship between chiefs and subjects and by strengthening the cultural foundation on which the Asante traditional political institution is based.

Informally, socio-political and economic reasons might destroy any type of relationship or threaten a positive relationship between indigenous religious elements and the persistence of chieftaincy within the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival. This research, however, reveals that in a social-political sense, the majority of *Asanteman Adae Kese* events are performed for an indigenous religious purpose. Even though many ‘invented’ traditional events have been added to the original *Asanteman Adae Kese* program, from an objective point of view there is no direct threat that these events will rob the festival of its original indigenous meaning, even though some traditional authorities might think otherwise. In an economic sense, while some festivals in the Asante region are used mainly for the promotion of the tourist industry, the ancient rooted *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival is only marginally used for this purpose. Interviews with many Asante respondents reveal that economic considerations do not pose a direct serious threat towards the performance of indigenous religious events during the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival.

A fair question is of course to what extent the *Asanteman Adae Kese* (formerly known as *Odwira*) festival is crucial to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy, considering the fact that between 1896 and 1985 – so for eighty nine years – the festival was not openly celebrated. The reason for this lack of celebration provides an answer to this question (see: section 4.2.4).

Conclusion

In this section, I have empirically tested the presence of Asante indigenous religious elements in an Asante pre-burial ritual and I have investigated whether the relationship between those elements and the continuation of chieftaincy was either formal or informal. Further rituals under study include: (1) A pre-burial ritual of a deceased paramount chief; (2) A chief's libation pouring ceremony; (3) The rite of passage of enstoolment for a chief; and (4) The 'invention of tradition' version of *Odwira*, an ancient traditional festival recently known as *Asanteman Adaye Kese*.

An analysis of the above-mentioned rituals shows that in each ritual, there is a formal or informal relationship between indigenous religious elements and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The main factor behind this relationship is the Asante people's existing belief in ancestral spirits. Nana Saaman Nantwi II's pre-burial ritual actually led to an informal relationship between the two factors (Indigenous Religion and the persistence of chieftaincy). In all other rituals this religion is actually the main basis for a formal relationship between the two. A look at the informal relationship of both factors shows that, apart from the case of the Saamanhene's pre-burial ritual, which formed an exception to the rule, these practices are 'officially' released from formal indigenous rules. The belief in ancestral spirits is weaker than previously believed when one studies formal, that is 'official', indigenous religious protocol. In conclusion, the belief in ancestral spirits is formally the main basis for the authority of chiefs, whereas informal ancestral beliefs are weaker than they appear according to formal regulations for the practice of indigenous religious rituals.

Chapter Six: indigenous religious peacekeeping in today's Kumasi Metropolis

Ɔpanyin n-tena fie m-ma asadua m-fɔ — 'It is the responsibility of the elderly (chief) to see to it that the loom is not left in the rain to become wet'.

Asante proverb

Introduction

A problematic train of thought that might occur from reading this Chapter is whether the Asante traditional authorities should be perceived as 'Asante indigenous practitioners'. The Chapter clarifies that in the Kumasi Metropolis many of those authorities are both Indigenous practitioners and Christians, and in some cases do not necessarily believe in the existence of ancestral spirits. However, in accordance with a survey (Odotei and Awedoba 2006:109), 86.5 percent of all respondents, which includes informants drawn from all ten administrative regions in Ghana, believed that for 95.8 percent 'embodiment of culture' and for 90.3 percent 'spokesmen of the people' were relevant roles of traditional authorities. Due to the importance respondents attributed to the public roles of traditional authorities, I have categorised all those authorities as 'Asante indigenous practitioners' regardless of their personal belief, unless specified otherwise. Following this categorisation, I presume that as adherents of the Asante Indigenous Religion, of which one aspect is that it is adaptive and adoptive of elements of Islam and Christianity, the Asante traditional authorities tolerate the religious practices of Muslims and Christians and their creation of religious space in the Kumasi Metropolis. The research question that follows from Platvoet's characteristic of IRs and my interpretation are as follows:

To what extent does 'religious tolerance' — which is a characteristic of Indigenous Religions — provide an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis?

To answer this key question, I will look at the following two sub-questions:

- (1) How are the presumed Asante traditional authorities' tolerance towards outside religions and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis interlinked?
- (2) How is the Asante traditional authorities' tolerance towards the religious space of Muslims and Christians interlinked with the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis?

In section three and four of this Chapter, I will focus on religious tolerance in relation to 'syncretism', which is an attempt to disregard differences and to realise unity between sects or philosophical schools of thought (Simpson, Weiner, and Murray 1989). Syncretism is a strategy for preventing conflicts and stimulating tolerance or 'dialogue'. It is to a great extent the result of a

conscious intervention to achieve coexistence of different opinions. The term dates from the sixteenth century and derives from the 'Christian' tradition, according to Veer¹²².

A problematic aspect of the term syncretism is that it is normative. A positive explanation of syncretism is that it intends to encourage increased tolerance among religious movements, which is not always realised and sometimes even has the opposite effect. This becomes clear from analysing rituals in Kataragama, the most important place of pilgrimage in Sri Lanka for Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil-Hindus. In this case, the adoption of elements of Hindu devotional practices by Buddhists led to an increase in religious differences (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1990). Negatively explained, syncretism, or the acceptance of deviations, in the eyes of missionaries, is an attempt to degenerate the Holy truth, whereas Asante traditional authorities perceive it as a strategy rather than a threat. I will now focus on the effect of this attitude towards syncretism on the relations of Asante chiefs and queen mothers with Muslim headmen and Christian church leaders respectively.

The structure of this Chapter is as follows. In section 6.1 and 6.2 I will focus on the social aspects of AIR in terms of the consequential tolerance of Asante Indigenous practitioners towards Muslims and Christians, and in section 6.3 and 6.4 on the religious aspects of AIR in terms of its tolerance towards Islam and Christianity. In section 5.5 I will mention my respondents' perceptions of the presumed religious tolerance of Asante traditional authorities and its link to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis. In section 5.6 I will investigate whether the link mentioned by my respondents is unique to the Asante institution of chieftaincy. In section 5.7 I will compare Asante chieftaincy with the local government in Kumasi in terms of legitimisation and adherents.

6.1. The socio-political relationship between Asante traditional authorities and Muslim headmen

To understand how the Asante relate to Muslims in the Kumasi Metropolis and *vice versa*, it is important to know a little more about the Muslims, their living area, their religion and lifestyle. Statistics from the 'Kumasi Statistical Service' (KSS) show that in the year 2000 56.9 percent (665,884 people) of the total population of 1,170,270 people in the Kumasi Metropolis were Asante, 20.8 percent were other Akan groups, 5.8 percent were non-Akan groups (the majority are Ewe) and 16.5 percent were Mole-Dagbani, Ga-Dangme and others¹²³. Muslims of various cultural groups in the Kumasi Metropolis made up no more than 16 percent (187,243 people). In 2005, in terms of religious affiliation, 16 percent of the 1,16 million inhabitants of the Metropolis were Muslim, 8.5

¹²² Text translated from Dutch by the author. The term 'syncretism' was, among others, used by Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1539) and the theologians Calixtus from Helmstedt and Sebastiana Castellio who all fought for religious tolerance between religious groups (Veer 1995:70-71).

¹²³ This specification comes from the report Centre for Research on Inequality (2007).

percent were indigenous practitioners, 69 percent were Christians and 6.5 percent had no religion (Bureau of African Affairs, 2005). The majority of Muslims live either in low income areas in the Metropolis, such as Aboabo¹²⁴ No. 1 and 2 in ‘settlements’ (Post 2003). In this study, I will primarily focus on the Muslim ‘settlements’ in the Metropolis. Muslims outside the ‘settlements’ are for the majority from the so-called first group of ‘Asante *Nkramo*’; the descendents of the scholars (*ulama*) (e.g. Uthman Kamagatay of Guipe and Daboya and Muhammad al Ghama from Gonja) who worked at the royal court in Kumasi in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. These Asante *Nkramo*, who adhere to various forms of Islam, are scattered all over the Kumasi Metropolis with a concentration in the district area Suame (on map 6 referred to as Suame *zongo*, but whether this area should be called a *zongo* is debatable). Another group of Muslims living outside the settlements is that of non-Asante Muslims. These are adherents of a form of Islam that was brought into Ghana in the colonial period, such as that of the Tijaniyya, the Ahmadiyya, the ‘Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah body’ and Wahhabi organisations.

Muslim ‘settlements’ are areas that were originally set up by Mande-Dyula traders in the nineteenth century in various places in Ghana for Muslims to have a place to stay and live. These areas are populated by inhabitants who live there permanently, who stay there with family for a limited period to do seasonal work — mostly low income jobs such as loading and unloading from vehicles and carrying heavy loads on ones’ head — and who come from outside the area and are looking for a place to sleep in one of the houses that is rented or owned by members of the same cultural group. In its literal meaning, Muslim *zongos* (‘settlements’) are ‘motels’.

Today, there are five *areas* in the Kumasi Metropolis that are referred to as ‘settlements’: (see Appendix Four: map 6) (1) the *zongo* near Manhyia palace (the original Kumasi settlement, which is referred to as *zongo*), (2) the North settlement (Sabon or New *Zongo*), (3) the Mossi (Moshie) settlement that dates back to 1958 (Ustaz Ali Adam Al-Ameer, 45), (4) the Suame and (5) the Ayigya settlements (Post 2003:12). On the one hand, these settlements do form separate communities in the city of Kumasi and its adjacent villages, while on the other hand they do not. There are at least five reasons why these settlements form separate communities.

First, the Muslims live on parcels of land that have been allocated to them by the Asantehene. The Asante King and other Asante traditional authorities are the custodians of the ancestral land, whereas the Muslims are sojourners who borrow land from the Asantehene or the Asante paramount chiefs who manage land issues on the king’s behalf. The Muslims are a ‘tolerated’ cultural and religious minority as long as they obey the Asantehene and paramount chiefs who are

¹²⁴ Aboabo No.1 is a sub-community within Aboabo, located within the transitional zone of Kumasi. It is bounded to the north by Dichemso, the south by Aboabo No. 2, the west by Asawasi, and to the east by the Eastern By-Pass. Aboabo No. 2 is another sub-community within Aboabo with characteristics very much like

the custodians of almost all the land in the Metropolis. Small pieces of land in the Metropolis belong to individuals or to the state, or they can be compulsorily acquired by the state. Some of the plots of land in the hands of individuals belong to Muslims who obtained them from the Asantehene. Examples are the parcel of land in the Kumasi ‘settlement’ on which the central Friday Mosque is built (Maier 1997). Another example is the land of the Mossi ‘settlement’ in Kumasi. In 1958, Dawuda Mossi David, who was the first Mossi chief to leave Burkina Faso to settle in Kumasi, received a plot of land from the Asantehene for which he was very grateful. This land gets flooded during the rainy season, which is in all likelihood why the Asantehene gave it away (Mossi headman Al-Hajji Ibrahim Abdul Achman Adam the III, 47). The gratefulness of the Mossi chief for this less valuable piece of land shows that ‘strangers’ in Kumasi are dependent on the goodwill of the Asantehene. This is why they are happy with every little gift they receive. The majority of the land in Kumasi, however, belongs to the Asantehene’s stool and through him to other Asante traditional authorities who all serve the ancestral spirits. Due to the ancestral link, members who belong to the ruling lineages may use stool-land without payment (‘usufruct’). Strangers are instead obliged to lease land that belongs to the stools, which enables the Asante traditional authorities to be rich and powerful rulers.

The land issue creates a clear inequality between the two groups — the Muslim headmen or strangers and the Asante traditional authorities. The inequality in the relationship became evident to me during my interview with Nana Ama Serwah Nyarkoh (43), an Asante paramount queen mother. She explained that she has a Mossi [LM: Muslim] queen mother under her division, who is called Nkosohemma, and revealed that she regards this queen mother as a royal equal to herself, because she is the co-ruler of a paramount chief (the Nkosohene) who is ‘enskinned’ [in Ghana, up north of the Asante Region one uses skins instead of stools to enthrone a chief] in Northern Ghana and therefore equal in rank on the social ladder. Nyarko emphasised that the only difference between her and the Nkosohemma is that the latter has a different religion, but that this does not effect her perception of the Nkosohemma in terms of social status. However, a change in her perception on the position of the Nkosohemma in relation to herself came after mentioning the issue of power over the land. Nana Ama Serwah Nyarkoh:

Some time ago a northerner cursed a neighbour. I called the Nkosohemma to the palace, but she said that she did not have money to go and perform a ceremony to settle the case. I then gave her money from my own pocket, because I wanted peace. But then, after the settlement, instead of saying ‘nana I will go back to give you the money’, the Nkosohemma said that she did not want to give back my money because she did not ask me to pay for her. She is also a royal in the north so I cannot cheat on her. She said a lot of things. I just stand there and looked at her and then asked somebody to bring her to the police and arrest her. I asked for the clan. She was a Mossi and I went to the head of that clan to tell him that this Mossi queen mother was misbehaving. Then, the Mossi headman came with a delegation to my house.

that of Aboabo No. 1. It is bounded to the north by Aboabo No. 1, the south by the Kumasi-Accra railway line, the west by Asawasi, and to the east by the Eastern By-Pass (Post 2003).

They gave me a sheep, plantain and money and begged for mercy. So, whenever I call the Muslims to my palace they will come. If the Muslim headmen are equal in rank, I normally treat them as equal. The fact that they are staying on my land does not mean that I should bully them, but they should do the right thing (Nana Ama Serwah Nyarkoh, 43).

The quotation shows that the Offinsohemma treats strangers on her land as 'equal' if they are equal in rank with her out of respect for their institution of chieftaincy. In case of misbehaviour on the part of Muslims, however, the Asante queen mother uses her power, which she derives from the inequality in land issues, to 'correct' them. The majority of the population in the 'settlements' still consists of Muslims, as it is easier for them to live together in one place, since there are a lot of duties that come with the Islamic religion that are easier to fulfil when it is the social norm, for example the fasting during 'Ramadan'¹²⁵ and the prayers that are performed five times a day. When one is outside the Muslim community it is more difficult to sustain one's Islamic religious duties. Additionally, Muslims within the community might think that those outside are not good Muslims because they do not see them praying. Apart from the religious bond between multiple families, members of the settlements are bonded by 'lineage', mainly through marriage. According to Islamic (Sunni) law, Muslim men can have a maximum of four wives. Although these days schooling and housing are so expensive that most male 'settlement' inhabitants do not reach the maximum, most of them have more than one wife regardless of their cultural background (Hane Harune, 37). Most of the inhabitants are to some extent family members, which creates a bond between them.

Thirdly, the settlement areas can be distinguished from all other areas in Kumasi by the shape of the houses. Muslims live in square family compounds, whereas the Asante compounds are rectangular. Muslim men and women live in separate houses whereas in most Asante extended-family houses each core family occupies one room¹²⁶. Most Asante houses belong to an *abusua* (Tipple 1987). The majority of the Muslim houses are instead owned by Hausa families. This is why they are quite powerful in the 'settlements', even though the position of the Hausa headman who is known as Sarkin *Zongo* is not recognised by all members of the various 'settlements'. Muslim members of other cultural groups and Akan Christians are often lodgers in the houses of the Hausa families.

Fourthly, the settlements are separate areas in town, because they receive their main funding from outside of the local and national Ghanaian government. Unlike the majority of the Asante paramount traditional authorities, the leaders of the various communities in the settlements do not receive a government allowance because by law they are not 'chiefs' but 'headmen'. Therefore, they can never aim for the position of becoming a 'Gazetted chief', or 'chief by law', which is the aim of

¹²⁵ *Ramadan* is a Muslim religious observance that takes place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is believed to be the month in which the Qur'an began to be revealed.

¹²⁶ Of all households in Kumasi, 74 percent occupy only one room despite a mean household size of 4.8 persons and 55 percent of households having 6 or more members.

all other Asante paramount chiefs, since this provides them with a little extra income besides the 'drinking money' that they receive from the lease of their land, for fulfilling their position, and other sources mentioned in section 1.5.1.

Officially, no cultural group in Ghana is represented by a political party, but in practice many political parties consist of a majority of members from one cultural group or another. The Asante, for instance, are the main adherents of the 'National Patriotic Party' (NPP). The Muslims do not form the majority of members of any political party¹²⁷, which makes their leaders less powerful than the Asante in relation to the state. Consequently, the Muslims in Kumasi have to find their main source of income from other bodies than the Ghanaian state. The income of the 'settlement' headmen is provided by their personal and institutional links with (international) Islamic organisations, NGOs, international agencies and foreign governments, such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Iran and more recently Pakistan and all other organisations, agencies and governments who seek allies among Muslims in West Africa in order to 'win souls' for the Islamic religion (Skinner 2008a), (Weiss 2007).

Some headmen have been very successful in receiving an allowance from the above-mentioned funding bodies in the Kumasi settlements, especially for funds meant for settlement Muslims. Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka (48), for instance, receives financial help from the president of Libya to build an Islamic school in the Kumasi settlement. Other Muslim headmen, however, such as the Mamprusi headman Ibrahim Abdullah (51) do not receive any income from anybody but their own people, who pay a small sum of money for their service. The differences in wealth among the various cultural groups in the Muslim 'settlements' in the Kumasi Metropolis are therefore huge, which is a source of tension between those groups.

Finally, the settlements are separate areas in town because their inhabitants are ruled by headmen of the various cultural groups who are appointed by their own community guided by the elders. The 'settlement' headmen also swear allegiance to the Asantehene by reading from the Qur'an in place of swearing an oath as a sign of respect to the political head of the wider community. The only Muslim 'settlement' leader who not only swears allegiance but also swears an oath to the Asantehene, like all Asante paramount chiefs, is the Asante *Nkramo* who is a headman and a paramount chief. I will come back to this in the next section.

At the same time, for at least four reasons, the settlements are also communities that are part of the Kumasi Metropolis. First, the settlements are not limited spaces, because anyone can walk in and out of these areas. Secondly, people of the settlements do not have any separate institutions, such

¹²⁷Al-Hajji Aliu Mahama, the present (at time of writing) vice president of Ghana, however, is a Muslim. Many Muslims in Ghana feel that they are well represented by their current vice president.

as, for instance, a police force¹²⁸ or guardians. The inhabitants of the Muslim settlement are secured by their social network and by the local governmental Kumasi police force. They pay tax to the 'Kumasi Traditional Council' (KTC) like any other inhabitant of the Kumasi Metropolis. There are no separate hospitals for Muslims in the Kumasi settlements, nor in the rest of the Metropolis, and the majority of primary schools that are attended by Muslim children are public schools that are owned by the local government (Al-Hajji Hamidu Usman Madugu, 49)¹²⁹.

In conclusion, Muslim settlements are thus permeable spaces. On the one hand, they are part of the wider community of the Kumasi Metropolis; on the other hand, these settlements are separate from the Asante community, which enables Muslims to create a Muslim sphere of life. The permeable character of Muslim settlements in the Kumasi Metropolis raises two questions:

- (1) Do the Asante acknowledge the Muslim need for a separate sphere of life in the settlements?
- (2) If so, do they show religious tolerance towards the inhabitants of Muslim settlements to enable them to maintain this separate sphere of life?

The answer to question number one is that the Asante do indeed acknowledge the need for settlement Muslims to create a Muslim sphere of life. The Asantehene has allocated land to them to live on that is not yet occupied by other inhabitants of the Metropolis. The answer to question number two is also positive. The policy of the Asantehene with regard to the people of the settlements is that each community should run its own affairs. Generally, Asante do not interfere with the lives of the inhabitants of the settlements and this also counts for their religious practices. *Zongo* inhabitants can go to an imam and there is no censure on what imams are teaching. All Muslim settlements have their own mosques. The great central mosque is located in the original Kumasi settlement (on map 6 referred to as *zongo*). Inhabitants of the settlements are free to choose their own imam and go to an Islamic school. Asante traditional authorities are by law not allowed to put restrictions on the religious freedom of Muslims, who are free to build mosques anywhere in the Kumasi Metropolis. The Asante traditional authorities are obliged to take into account the Islamic religion when setting the requirements of Muslim behaviour towards them. For instance, according to Islam, Muslims are only allowed to bow down to Allah and so the Asante traditional authorities cannot demand that Muslims bow down to them. Instead, the law forces the Asante traditional authorities to show religious tolerance towards these and any other non-Asante indigenous practitioners. Besides this, the Asantehene shows his respect by sending two or three of his delegates to attend important

¹²⁸ The Kumasi *zongo* has its own police station that deals with specific *zongo* problems, but this station is part of the local police force in the Kumasi Metropolis.

¹²⁹ There are, however, at least two Muslim secondary schools in Kumasi: (a) 'T.I. Ahmadiyya Secondary School' and the 'Sakafiyya Islamic Senior High School' (Skinner 2008b:13; Weiss 2007:121). These schools are meant for Muslims in and outside the Kumasi settlements. This means that they are also part of the wider Kumasi community rather than contributing to the separate Muslim sphere of life.

Muslim festivals, such as the two major festivals of the Islamic year that are known as *eid-al-fitr*¹³⁰ and *eid-al-adha*¹³¹ (Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka, 48). Another sign of respect for Muslims is that every Friday at 10.00 am the Asantehene and his personal imam (*imam al-bilad*) Asante *Nkramo* 'Al-Hajji Abdel Momen Haruna II', who is the second in command of the deputy chief-imam of the Asante Region, go together to the central Friday mosque in Kumasi for prayers (Asante *Nkramo* Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina, 54). Besides showing respect for Muslims, the Asantehene also prays together with his imam, because, just as in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, although less prominently present, it is still part of the Asante Indigenous Religion to rely on the advice of Muslim religious specialists. To sum up, Asante traditional authorities are tolerant towards the religious separate space of Muslims and also show respect for their religion by attending their most significant religious festivals.

Where does the policy of non-interference of the Asante traditional authorities end, and where does their interference begin? The Asante policy towards the inhabitants of the Muslim settlements is such that when there are internal problems its people should first report them to the 'Council of the *Zongo* chiefs' (CZC). In most Muslim settlements, all headmen are members of this council, which works together with the local police. Asante chiefs and queen mothers only interfere in the (religious) affairs of Muslims in the case of conflict between Asante and Muslims. In such cases, in the first instance, the Asante traditional authorities turn to the most important headmen of the settlements. In three of the five settlements in the Metropolis, the CZC is headed by a Sarkin *Zongo*, which is the name for a Hausa headman, and the Hausa rule in these settlements. The Sarkin *Zongo* (Malam Kardi) in the original Kumasi settlement was the first Muslim headman to be recognised by the British (Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka, 48). In 1920, they recognised three other headmen (Mossi, Yoruba and Wangara) in this settlement but especially acknowledged the power of the Sarkin *Zongo* (Malam Salaw).

Because of this colonial history, in almost all settlements in the Kumasi Metropolis, the Hausa are still acknowledged as the highest authority. The CZC is headed by the Sarkin *Zongo* who represents all settlement headmen in delegations to the Asantehene's royal palace (*ahemfie*). In case of Asante-Muslim conflicts, it is the Sarkin *Zongo* who usually goes to Manhyia to communicate with the Asantehene for conflict resolution.

The strategy of the Asante traditional authorities in relation to the Muslims in Kumasi is to relate directly to the *primus-inter-pares* among all *zongo* headmen. In three of the five settlements in the Metropolis this position is occupied by a Hausa. With regard to the Kumasi settlement, however, this strategy is more difficult since in this Muslim settlement there is not one ultimate leading

¹³⁰ *Eid-al-fitr* is a feast that starts on the last day of *Ramadan*, once the sun has set.

¹³¹ *Eid-al-adha* is a religious festival of sacrifice celebrated by Muslims worldwide as a commemoration of God's mercy to Ibrahim (Abraham) releasing him from his vow to sacrifice his son, as commanded by Allah.

Muslim headman. The present-day relationship between Asante and the various headmen of the Kumasi settlement can be understood by looking at the specific history of this Muslim settlement, as I did in section 3.4 by providing insight into the reason for Mande-Dyula traders, Asante *Nkramo* and Hausa Muslims to come to Kumasi from the fifteenth until the nineteenth century. By 1900 many more Hausa and also Mossi who were mistakenly taken for Hausa by the Asante were recruited by the British from the north to join the ‘West African Frontier Force’ (WAFF) of the Gold Coast, to fight for them against the Asante in the last Anglo-Asante war, known as ‘Yaa Asantewaa’.

Since 1904, many of these Muslims — the Hausa and Mossi¹³² — have occupied the same area as the old Kumasi settlement that dates back to at least 1817, and a New settlement that was created opposite the old settlement (see map six). Among the first migrants who came to occupy the New settlement, there were also traders — Hausa, Funani, Mossi, Wangara and Dagomba — who came from centralised states long influenced by Islam (Schildkrout 1970:251-269). In the 1950s, the spread and intensification of mining activities and cocoa farming led other groups from northern areas to migrate to the south for work, such as the Kusasi, Frafra and Grunshi labourers. These immigrants were converted to Islam within the New ‘settlement’ (Sabon *Zongo*) area (Allman 1991:1-26), which is located north of the old Kumasi ‘settlement’¹³³.

To sum up, in today’s Kumasi Metropolis, Asante traditional authorities have to maintain relationships with five different Muslim groups:

- (1) The descendants of the Mande-Dyula traders, who from 1400 came from Bighu (Begho), whose medieval trade route brought them to Tafo, and from 1701 to the capital of the new Kumasi state (see map 7) (Jones 1962:339).
- (2) Dyula scholars (*ulama*, sing. *alim*), who, in the eighteenth century, on invitation of Osei Kwadwo (1764-1777) came from Gonja, and who are known as Asante *Nkramo* (meaning ‘those who can read the Qur’an’).
- (3) The descendants of Hausa Muslims, who came to Kumasi in the early nineteenth century when the Asante, after a series of violent conflicts between Asante and Kong in the late eighteenth century, deliberately re-routed its trade away from the north-west and to the north-east, through Salaga, Yendi, Sansanne – Mango to the Bussa crossing of the Niger, and so into the Fulani Emirates of what is now northern Nigeria (Jones 1962:341) (see map 8).
- (4) A group of Muslims, which are also known as Asante *Nkramo*, meaning ‘Muslims of Asante origin’. This refers to Asante who are converted to various forms of Islam and live outside the settlements.
- (5) Muslims who live outside the settlements from Islamic movements which were more recently imported and have their historical roots outside Ghana (e.g. Ahmadiyya, Tijaniyya, Ahlus-Sunnah wal Jama’ah and the Wahhabi movement).

From this historical background, one can say it is remarkable that in three of the five settlements the ultimate leadership of the *zongo* is clear, since Hausa headmen, of whom the first were appointed by

¹³² Both Mossi and Hausa already traded with the Asante in the nineteenth century. Since 1904 the number of immigrants of these two cultural groups who came to Kumasi has increased (Lovejoy 1982).

¹³³ The ‘New Settlement’ is situated in the core of the Kumasi Metropolis, bounded to the north by Manhyia, south by the Kumasi central market, to the west by the old Kumasi settlement, and on the east by Asawasi. The area is dominated by government-built housing estates (Adarkwa and Post 2001). These housing units were built to house veterans of the Ghana army after World War II.

the British, are still ruling in these settlements. The recognition of a supreme leader in the old Kumasi settlement is, however, a little more problematic. In this settlement, three of the five (nr 1, 2 and 3) mentioned Muslim movements are living together, but they do not all recognise the same Muslim headman as their ultimate leader. Initially, the people of the old Kumasi settlement recognised the Sarkin *Zongo*, who was appointed by the British, as their *primus-inter-pares* settlement's headman. In 1924, however, due to the return of Asante Prempeh I to Kumasi, the power of the Sarkin *Zongo* diminished considerably. In 1927, the British therefore recognised another six Muslim headmen. In 1990, there were even thirty-three headmen¹³⁴ who were recognised by the Asantehene and also sat on a council headed by the Sarkin *Zongo*, which is the name for the headman of the Hausa. Only if the Sarkin *Zongo* could not resolve the disputes in the Muslim settlements did they go to the Asantehene via the *nsumankwahene* (the physician of the Asantehene), which is the head of all Asante *Nkramo*; that means the descendents of court Muslims who could read and write and had a training in Arabic, and Asante who converted to Islam (Schildkrout 2006:593). These types of disputes of position occur often in the settlements. The Asantehene has attempted to reinforce the Sarkin *Zongo*'s position, since it is the easiest way for him to rule the settlements and to maintain a peaceful relationship with all their inhabitants. During my fieldwork in 2006 and 2007, despite the attempts of the Asantehene, many Muslims did not recognise the Sarkin *Zongo* as the supreme headman of the old Kumasi settlement. Asante *Nkramo* Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina (54) told me that he is a member of the council of settlement chiefs. He recognises the *primus-inter-pares* position of the Sarkin *Zongo*. However, when he wants to bring or receive news from the palace (*ahemfie*), he tells it to or hears it directly from the *nsumankwahene*. The Asante *Nkramo* thus has his own information channel and bypasses the Sarkin *Zongo* (Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina, 54). But despite the Hausa dominance in the Kumasi settlement, other Muslim headmen also prefer to communicate with the Asantehene via a direct link with the *nsumankwahene*. The Asantehene would prefer to have one supreme headman of the old Kumasi settlement, which would make it easy for him to relate to all settlement headmen at once, but since many people of the Kumasi settlement bypass the Sarkin *Zongo* in order to maintain peace, in the 1990s Asantehene Opoku Ware II introduced the regulation that the deputy chief-imam can never be from the same cultural group as the second in command of the deputy chief-imam. If the deputy chief-imam is, for instance, an Asante *Nkramo*, then the second in command should be chosen from another cultural group. This way, the Asantehene attempts to stay in a cordial relationship with those movements in the settlements which do not recognise the Sarkin *zongo* as their ultimate leader. At the moment,

¹³⁴ In settlements, such as 'the old Kumasi settlement' each cultural group has his own headman. Examples of cultural groups in this settlement are the Yoruba, the Gau from Timbuktu, the Wangara, the Kusasi, the Sisala, the Gurunshi, the Dagomba from Tamale, the Frafra, the Gonja, the Mossi, the Mamprusi, the Hausa, and Asante *Nkramo* (Hane Harune, 37).

however, both the deputy chief-imam and the second in command of this chief-imam are Asante *Nkramo*, which probably means that since the 1990s, the Asante *Nkramo* have gained power inside the old Kumasi settlement and/or that criticism towards the Sarkin *Zongo* has increased.

I have honed in on the authority crises in the old Kumasi settlement, because they provide us with information on how the Asante traditional authorities understand and apply the concept of 'religious tolerance' towards the religious space of Muslim members of the Kumasi Metropolis. Religious tolerance is the condition of accepting or permitting other's religious beliefs and practices which disagree with one's own. Asante traditional authorities show tolerance by the fact that they remain religiously neutral toward the religious background of the settlement leaders. Asantehehes regard the authority issues within the settlement Muslims as an internal conflict and do not interfere with their affairs. In case of problems that concern both Muslim and Asante, the Asante traditional authorities wait for the Muslim settlement leader(s) to come to *ahemfie*. In cases where there happens to be more than one Muslim authority involved, the focus of the Asante traditional rulers is on the creation of regulations that prevent further conflicts between the two movements. Religion is left out from the laws that are created by Asante chiefs and queen mothers, which they believe to be essential for the maintenance of the established order. In the case of religious Asante - Muslim conflicts, laws for the purpose of religious peacekeeping are the only restrictions on the religious freedom of Muslims.

'Tolerance' is a form of behaviour where people mutually recognise everybody's religious freedom. Present-day Asante traditional authorities are tolerant people because they perceive religious freedom as a fundamental right and they show full respect for all religious beliefs, which are treated by them as equal. Therefore, in their recognition of Muslim leadership, Asante traditional authorities do not treat adherents of some forms of Islam that are close to that of the Asante (such as that of the converted Asante *Nkramo*) differently from orthodox Muslims, such as the Hausa.

Also, the rulers of the Asante institution of chieftaincy perceive religion as a private matter. Restrictions on the practice of the various forms of Islamic religion are only imposed on Muslims if these practices do not fall under a range of behaviour that is acceptable for all practitioners of the Kumasi Metropolis. There cannot be inclusion without exclusion when it comes to tolerance. All religious tolerance has its boundaries, since it should enable people with different beliefs to live together. In many cases, it suffices for Asante traditional authorities to use their power to regulate the community. They can, for instance, request people to come to the palace and ask them to behave in such a way that is least disturbing for all inhabitants of that community. With regard to some issues however, Asante chiefs and queen mothers need to be able to use a police force to keep order. The 'Asante Regional House of Chiefs' (ARHC) has the task of collecting information about religious customs that may impinge on others, which therefore need to be restricted in a bye-law. Unlike

chieftaincy customs, bye-laws locally regulate religious behaviour that cannot be tolerated. Each community creates its own bye-laws, which means that those in the Asante Region may differ from town to town. In the Kumasi Metropolis, with regard to religion, the following three bye-laws are significant:

- (1) Between 21.00 p.m. and 04.00 a.m. religious practitioners are not allowed to disturb the public peace with any of their religious practices.
- (2) For a major religious performance, such as a festival, one should seek permission of the 'Town Development Committee' (TDC).
- (3) Out of respect for the deceased, nobody in the Kumasi Metropolis is allowed to organise a funeral before the burial of a deceased Asante paramount chief.

None of these three bye-laws was created to avoid trouble that might be caused by Muslim practitioners. Francis Mark Domenya (5), employee of the ARHC, informed me that in the Kumasi Metropolis religious bye-laws are usually created to warn or penalise Christian members of Pentecostal churches and African Independent Churches, who sing and dance and make a lot of noise for many hours¹³⁵. Muslims, in contrast, do not cause many disturbances by praying. The five-daily calls for prayer are usually very short and prayers are held in silence.

Due to the Asantehene's policy of non-interference, most Asante-Muslim conflicts are non-religious. Conflicts with Muslims are due to disobedience of Muslim youth of the constitutional laws, for instance, by stealing or fighting. Internal Muslim problems that also affect the non-Muslim community of the Metropolis which are therefore reported to the Asantehene are those that involve the use of weapons. Examples of such severe conflicts have led to a succession of disputes between headmen and conflicts over the authority of the central Friday mosque in the Kumasi settlement (Schildkrout 1974) (Schildkrout 2006).

6.2 Socio-political relations between Christians and Asante

In this section, I will look at the relationship between the Asante traditional authorities and the Christian religious leaders of various denominations of the mainstream churches (MC) (Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians and Anglicans), the 'New African Traditional Religious Movements' (NATRM) and the 'New Religious Movements' (NRMs).

6.2.1 New African Traditional Religious Movements (NATRM)

NATRMs arose within the matrix of Traditional Religions. One of these movements, The 'Afrikania Mission Church' (AMC) was founded in 1982 by Osofo Okomfo Damuah; a former indigenous priest (*ƆkƆmfoƆ*) who has since then become a Christian priest (*osofƆ*). The AMC belongs to the so called contemporary NATRMs. Most of them emerged as a result of the encounter of African

¹³⁵ In the Kumasi Metropolis some pastors of Pentecostal churches have been sent to court and some have even been imprisoned after disobedience of bye-law 1.

religion and culture with Christianity and western civilisation. Many of them borrow selected elements from Christianity but remain essentially traditional. Colonial forms of the NATRMs are the anti-witchcraft movements, such as Tigare and Nana Tongo (see section 3.4), who particularly in the 1940s, posed a challenge to Christianity. NATRMs are influenced by race consciousness, nationalism and the desire for ethnic unification, and emphasise the indigenous spiritual foundations as service for the political and economic wellbeing of Africans (Dovlo 1998:53-54). The *Afrikaania* Church has three branches in the Ashanti Region, including one in Kumasi. It challenges Christianity, since it perceives God as the first ancestor and believes the pouring of libation to be the climax of our community veneration (Gyanfosu 2002). AMC church leaders have a syncretistic attitude towards the Asante traditional authorities and the Asante Indigenous Religion.

6.2.2 New Religions Movements (NRMs)

Besides the 'Mainstream Churches' (MC) in Ghana, there is also a fast growing amount of the so called 'New Religious Movements' (NRM). Atiemo (1997) has listed all these movements in six different categories. One of the categories consists of the 'spiritual churches' (*sunsum nsore*). Some examples of spiritual churches in Kumasi are the 'Nube Divine Healing Church' (founded in 1944) and 'The church of Light Mission' (1956).

Generally, the relationship between NRMs church leaders and the Asante traditional authorities is problematic. First, similarly to the Asante traditional leaders who deal with all aspects of traditional religious life (e.g. puberty rites, naming ceremonies, marriages), the NRM church leaders attempt to cater to the total well-being of their members by providing job-services, kindergartens, discussion groups and marriage counselling (Dovlo 1998:63). Second, intellectually, socially, spiritually and in terms of leadership, the NRMs challenge the MC (Dovlo 1998:58-64). Among the NRMs, the leaders of 'Charismatic Ministries' especially draw the youth and the educated middle class elite away from the MC. This attitude of the NRMs church leaders towards the MC leaders is problematic for the Asante traditional authorities, who, for the most part these days are in cordial relationship with the MCs with whom they share membership of the 'Asante Christian Chiefs and Queen mothers' Association' (ACCQA) (see section 6.2 for further details). Third, the NRMs, much more than the MCs, are rivals on the religious market. The content of their religious practice shows several similarities with the Asante Indigenous Religion, even though the NRMs also borrow elements from the MCs, and the leaders of these churches would not admit the existence of those similarities as they attempt to make a complete break with their indigenous religious past (Meyer 1998).

6.2.3 Two case studies: NRM in clash with Asante traditional authorities

In this section, I will attempt to show two examples of tensions between Asante traditional authorities and the non-mainstream Christian churches in the Kumasi Metropolis (the spiritual Churches and the NRMs). The first example is that of Offinsohemma Ama Serwah Nyarko (41), which shows the existing tensions between an Asante traditional authority who is also a member of one of the 'New African Traditional Religious Movements' (NATRM) and the Spiritual Churches in Offinso. Nyarko, who belongs to the *Afrikania* Church, told me that what attracts her to this church is that similarly to the Asante chieftaincy institute, its church leaders do not discriminate against people on e.g. the grounds of their colour, creed, national origin or income. She especially emphasised equality towards the 'income' of her members as a positive point. It was this point which made her utter criticism towards the leaders of some spiritual churches in Offinso, such as the 'Adorn Samaria Healing Church of Grace'. Nana Nyarko said:

The churches are in there for money, money and nothing else. If you get a post in the church it means you have money. The church excludes people without money, while in my place of traditional veneration, my peace palace, people can come without paying anything'. [...] When I was young my mother told me that there was a spiritual Christian church in Offinso, where they asked money for prayers. They had two million cedis prayers, one million cedis prayers, and five hundred thousand prayers. But my mother could not afford to spend this amount of money. She could only afford a 5000 prayer, and she taught that this type of prayer would not be that strong, so she stopped attending the church services. God came for the needy ones, but money in the churches is ruling and if you do not have money, the church does not recognise you. While in my peace palace, my *Afrikania* Church, if you do not have money you will still get sympathy (Offinsohemma Ama Serwah Nyarko, 41).

The Offinsohemma's quotation shows that she felt that as a traditional authority she is there for all practitioners and does not discriminate against those of her subjects who come to her for help who do not have money, which, according to her is bad practice in the Spiritual Churches. After the interview Nana Nyarko showed me her *Afrikania* peace palace, which is located near the road from Offinso to Kumasi. She told me that she was happy that her indigenous Church, in which I saw no altar and an indigenous priest operating, had not been burned down yet by any members of the Spiritual Christian denominations in Kumasi. She said that she was afraid that her church would burn down as often happens with indigenous churches, because the spiritual church denominations were afraid of losing members. A statue of a hunter with bow and arrow in front of her peace palace, which refers to *Kwaman*, one of the ancient hunter deities of the Asante, would give her *Afrikania* church and its members the necessary spiritual protection. My interview with the Offinsohemma made me understand that religious leaders of the Spiritual Churches in the Kumasi Metropolis do not always look positively towards the new African traditional religious initiatives of Asante traditional authorities, such as that of Nyarko who built her own *Afrikania* peace palace.

The second case is that of the Asante chief Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II (46), who spoke critically of the Pentecostal churches in the Kumasi Metropolis. Kotowko II:

The Pentecostals make a lot of noise with their veneration services, which disturbs other people. Their church leaders make long hours, but they do not have much knowledge and are not well trained unlike most church leaders of the mainstream churches, who preach short and to the point. The Pentecostal church leaders hardly tell their members anything useful. Also, they preach that they are born again, which undermines the Asante customs. This is also something that I do not appreciate about the Pentecostals. Luckily, mainstream church leaders are not that arrogant (chief Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

The case of chief Brefo makes clear that what he appreciates in the Mainstream Churches is the attention these churches pay to schooling, the short length of their preaching and their appreciation for the Asante traditional customs. These elements seem to be lacking in the behaviour of the Church leaders of the Pentecostal churches, who, according to Brefo, are therefore less favourable. My interview with Patrick Domfeh (36) confirms that there seems to be a lack of respect among the leaders of Pentecostal churches in Kumasi for the religious practices of the Asante Indigenous Religion. Domfeh:

Before the start of *Asanteman Adaye Kese*, Pentecostal church leaders entered the Kumasi market to preach to the audience that one should not go to this festival. They said that if we go, we would easily be attacked by evil spirits. Therefore, some of my friends did not go at all, whereas others attended some events, but did not go to any of the indigenous religious events during the festival (Patrick Domfeh).

These case studies are exemplary for the insight that I gained from my respondents that the *Afrikania* Church and the MCs are, these days in general, in a cordial relationship with the Asante traditional authorities. Tensions occur between Asante traditional authorities and NRM Churches.

In comparison with the Muslim headmen in the Kumasi Metropolis, the Christian church leaders have more in common with the Asantehene and other Asante indigenous practitioners, because:

- (1) Many Asante traditional authorities are both indigenous practitioners and Christians, and
- (2) Many Asante are also Christians

There are no examples of Muslims in the *Asanteman* who occupy the position of queen mother or chief. The reasons for this are at least twofold. (a) Muslims do not embody the ancestral land in Kumasi, which excludes them from this role. (b) Muslims are circumcised, which according to AIR excludes them from occupying a stool. This has to do with the Asante belief in the wholeness of the body as a prerequisite for becoming an ancestral spirit in *asamando* and the maintenance of the chiefs or queen mothers' beneficial affect on the prosperity of the community in their function as ancestors. This part of the Asante Indigenous Religion implies the exclusion of Muslims from the function of Asante traditional authority. To sum up, there are fewer religious and cultural distinctions between Asante and Christians of various denominations than between Asante and Muslims, whose headmen are non-Asante.

However, even though many Asante traditional authorities are both indigenous practitioners and Christians, not all churches in the Asante Region allow Royals to be members of their

denominations. All mainstream churches (MC) are generally positive toward the Asante institution of chieftaincy. Several charismatic church leaders who belong to the NRMs in the Kumasi Metropolis, however, request that those members who are enstooled as chiefs or queen mothers should refrain from further membership (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46). To understand the religious relations between Asante and Christians of various denominations in the Metropolis, I provide a short overview of the history of these churches since the pre-colonial period in terms of either assimilative or syncretistic relationships of Church leaders towards the Asante traditional authorities (see appendix Two).

6.3 Religious relations between Asante and Muslims

‘Syncretism’, as a strategy to prevent conflicts and to stimulate dialogue, is a reciprocal process. To work, it needs the cooperation of two parties. It is therefore important to investigate the opinion of Muslim headmen in the Kumasi Metropolis on this matter. I presume that their opinion for the greater part overlaps with that of their subjects, since they are the representatives of a communitarian community. I also presume that the view of these Muslim headmen on the desirability of syncretism is related to the form of Islam to which they adhere. In the following three sub-sections I will give an overview of the five main forms of Islam that are present overall or can specifically be found in the five Muslim settlements of the Kumasi Metropolis.

6.3.1 Suwarian tradition

The Suwarian tradition is named by its creator, Al-Hajji Salim Suwari (1523/24-1594). This *ulama* from Soninke esteemed, among other points, that God would bring non-Muslims to convert in His own time. To actively proselytise Muslims who lived as guests in a mainly non-Muslim area to attempt to transform their hosts’ environment from a *Dar-al-Kufr*¹³⁶ into a *Dar al-Islam*¹³⁷ would be interfering with God’s will (Robinson 2004:124-139). Another point of importance for this thesis is that according to the Suwarian tradition, Muslims may accept the authority of non-Muslim rulers, and indeed support it insofar as this enables them to follow their own way of life in accordance with the *sunna*¹³⁸ of the Prophet. The Suwarian tradition, which is a mild form of Islam, is adhered to by the earlier mentioned groups one, two and four (the Mande-Dyula traders and scholars and the Asante *Nkramo* in the meaning of ‘Muslims of Asante origin’) in the Kumasi Metropolis. Important issues of Suwarianism mentioned in relation to syncretism are its ‘non-proselytising character’ and the limitations set on following the authority of the ‘pagan’ ruler in order to follow the *sunna* of the

¹³⁶ The territory of Infidelity.

¹³⁷ The territory of Islam.

¹³⁸ *Sunna* is a normative custom of the Prophet or of the early Muslim community, as set forth in the *hadith* (q.v.)

Prophet. These and none of the other less relevant characteristics of Suwarianism mentioned by Wilks (2000:98) imply that followers of the Suwarian tradition are syncretistic. There is no stimulation of dialogue in this tradition and the characteristic of waiting for Allah to pull the infidels (*kufir*) out of the state of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) promotes more an attitude of indifference of Islamic practitioners towards their hosts than one of religious tolerance.

Asante history shows, however, that there has been a clear difference between the theory of the Suwarian tradition and its practical use by Islamic practitioners. In theory, for instance, Suwarianism believes infidelity to be caused by ignorance rather than wickedness. In the obituary of the *Kitabal-Ghanja*, a mid-eighteenth century Arabic document, however, Opoku Ware was portrayed more as wicked than ignorant. Imam Sidi ‘Umar wrote: ‘[M]ay Allah curse him and put his soul into hell. It was he who harmed the people of Ghanja [Gonja], oppressing and robbing them of their property at his will’. Osei Tutu Kwame and his successors, on the other hand, were regarded as more than just ‘infidels’ with whom some Muslims living in Dar-al-Islam did not even wish to be in physical touch. The Muslim community in Kumasi regarded ‘Osei Tutu Kwame’ as a friend and the *ulama* Kamagate (Karamo Togma) called him a ‘misguided infidel’ who was superior to the King of Dahomey, who was believed to be an infidel of infidels (*Kaffar ben al Koufar*) (Wilks 2000:104-105). During the colonial and the post-colonial period, the attitude of adherents of Suwarianism towards the Asantehene was also often more cordial than this tradition prescribes. Since the colonial period, the intensity of cooperation of Mande-Dyula traders and Asante *Nkramo* with the Asantehene has diminished. By then, the importance of the medieval Mande-Dyula trade-route from the Niger to the gulf of Guinea had decreased, due to the rivalry with European trade, and the production of charms by *ulama* at the royal court had somehow gone out of fashion. Consequently, Asante *Nkramo* switched their attention to the state leaders to whom they showed at times more loyalty than the Asantehene. Despite this development, in a religious sense, one could say that in practice, since the death of Opoku Ware, the Asante *Nkramo* have remained syncretistic in their attitude towards the Asantehenes.

The present-day Asante *Nkramo*, Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina (52) revealed his strategy for both the stimulation of religious dialogue and the justification of his position as being both a Muslim headman and an Asante paramount chief. Just like any other Asante paramount chief, the Asante *Nkramo* has to swear an oath to the Asantehene to swear allegiance to the owner of the land. The Asante *Nkramo* should promise the Asante King that if he calls him he will always come to the palace (*ahemfie*), except for when he falls ill or is fulfilling his religious duties as a Muslim. Unlike all other paramount chiefs, however, there are some religious duties that come with the swearing of an oath that the Asante *Nkramo* cannot fulfill because it is against the Islamic religion. An example is the ‘pouring of libation’ to honour the ancestral spirits, who are the owners of the land that is kept

in custody by the traditional authorities. Asante *Nkramo* Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina (52) shared with me the following syncretistic religious solution that he has found for dealing with this position of being religiously dualistic.

I have sworn an oath to Otumfuo [LM: The Asantehene] like any other paramount chief. Unlike other paramount chiefs, however, I did not pour libation, because my grandparents never did this and it is not part of our religion. After Otumfuo invited me for the oath swearing ceremony, I informed Al-Hajji Abdel Momen Haruna II, the chief-imam of all *Asante Nkramo* and the personal imam of the *Asantehene* that he should pray for Otumfuo. This chief-imam then bought a sheep for the purpose of sacrifice, cut its throat, and gave it to Otumfuo's *Akyeame* Baffour Kwaku Amoaten II who on behalf of Otumfuo received the gift, which is part of our tradition of almsgiving (*sadaqa*).¹³⁹ Then Al-Hajji Abdel Momen told to Baffour that Otumfuo should send our gift [the sacrificed sheep] to a children's home and to prisoners (Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina).

The above quotation shows that the Asante *Nkramo* has found a point of similarity between the Asante Indigenous Religion and Islam, which he uses to justify his position as an Asante paramount chief and a Muslim headman. According to his Islamic religion he cannot give drinks in the form of pouring libation to the ancestral spirits, which is normally part of the oath swearing ceremony. However, what the Asante *Nkramo* has in common with the Asante indigenous believer is that he brings food as a way of sacrifice and presents this as voluntary almsgiving (*sadaqa*). At the time of Osei Tutu Kwame, the Asante King was requested to give *sadaqa* to the Muslim community. The phenomenon of *sadaqa* at the royal court thus has a long history and the present-day Asante *Nkramo* makes creative use of an old tradition.

In a religious sense, the idea behind the indigenous religious ritual and the Islamic ritual of slaughtering an animal is completely different. Whereas Asante indigenous practitioners slaughter animals to feed the ancestral spirits, for the Islamic believer, giving alms such as slaughtered animals is a form of *sadaqa* (Weiss 2007). Despite the differences in terms of religion, the practical ritual of slaughtering the animal is the same in the AIR and Islam. The Asante *Nkramo* therefore uses this ritual to negotiate his position in both religious worlds (Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina, 52) and a side effect of his behaviour is the promotion of religious dialogue.

In conclusion, in theory the Suwarian tradition is not syncretistic, since it includes great reservations towards the religion of the host community out of fear of losing sight of the true Islamic religion and falling into infidelity. There is no proselytising or assimilation, which is the opposite of religious tolerance, but the willingness to coexist is shown by being loyal to the political authority of the host community, not by watering the wine in the field of religion.

¹³⁹ The Muslims in Ghana distinguish two forms of almsgiving: (a) obligatory almsgiving (*zakat*) and (b) voluntary almsgiving (*sadaqa*). *Zakat* is a public contribution that consists of two and a half percent of one's income and wealth and between two and ten percent of one's harvest. It purifies legally acquired wealth in

6.3.2 Uthman dan Fodio's and the Qadiriyya brotherhood reform movements

The form of Islam that in the colonial period was adhered to by the (3) descendents of Hausa Muslims in the Kumasi Metropolis is known as the 'Qadiriyya Brotherhood Reform Movement' (QBRM) of Uthman dan Fodio; a Hausa who was born in the 1750s in the city state Gobir. This Islamic teacher (*ulama*) heavily criticised the rulers from the sultanate of Gobir for being corrupt. In his opinion, the government of Gobir was encouraging an Africanised form of Islam, which did not encourage the development of a good distribution system for the income generated by alms giving (*sadaqa*). It imposed unlawful taxes on the peasantry and pastoralists and it twisted the law of Islam for its own purpose. Consequently, in 1804, Uthman immigrated to the south of present day Nigeria to start a reform movement. In 1808, he and the other members of his movement gained victory over Gobir and established the Sokoto Caliphate on its southern confines. The main task Uthman set himself after his victory was to reinvent the *Dar-al-Islam* in the Sahel as an 'imitation of Muhammed' during the founding days of the religion. Uthman's movement has, until today, been very important for Islamising Hausaland (presently Northern Nigeria) (Robinson 2004:139-152).

What was Uthman's perception on syncretism and what is left of his Islamic ideas among the present-day descendents of the Hausa in the Kumasi Metropolis? Uthman dan Fodio Islamic teaching was radically opposed to syncretism, which tolerates and stimulates the creation of African forms of Islam. His reform movement was based on an assimilation model and encouraged conversion of the infidels (*kuffar*), which even included the Asante *Nkramo*, instead of stimulating the peaceful coexistence of religious beliefs. If the Sarkin *zongos*, of whom the first was appointed by the British in 1900, were loyal followers of Uthman dan Fodio, their main interest in relation to the Asantehene should have been to attempt to convert the Asante King to Islam. Later on, the whole of the Asante Kingdom could then easily be transformed from an area in the stage of *Dar-al-Kufr* to one of *Dar-al-Islam*. The only two steps in saving the Asante from living in a 'Territory of Infidelity' were in imitation of Uthman dan Fodio; first to flee (*al-hijra*) to a neighbouring area and then to start an Islamic holy war (*jihad*). The leading of *alhijra* and *jihad* were perceived to be the obligation of an orthodox Muslim to prevent apostasy among fellow Muslims. *Was the carrying out of Uthman's plans a historical reality?* In 1818, Shaikh Baba, a Hausa from Kassina, did affect a limited and revocable sort of *hija*. In general, however, the Kumasi Muslims seem to have been too deeply involved in Ashanti affairs to be able to regard the pronouncement of the reformers as indicative of any practicable course of action. Due to intertwining of economics and politics, as well as the Asante *Nkramo*, the Hausa Muslim traders were also involved and acted in support of Asante politics, even when this caused an authority and religious conflict among their members, such as in

order to purify the soul of a Muslim from greed and miserliness. The giver is promised a reward in heaven. *Sadaqa* is a private contribution made by a Muslim as a result of individual choice (Weiss 2007).

the case of 1818 when Muslims were obliged to fight against their own people at the launching of the Asante invasion of Gyaman. Despite being deeply involved in Asante affairs, the Hausa did not hold a religious model of syncretism. Although they adhered to a milder form of Islam than was subscribed to by Uthman dan Fodio, they attempted and succeeded to proselytise a small number of Asante, and according to Bowdich they prevented the custom of human sacrifices from becoming more frequent or more extensive (Wilks 1966:152).

In the colonial period, relations between the Hausa and the Asantehene were maintained by several Sarkin *zongos*; an office that was introduced by the British in 1900, abolished by them in 1932 and reintroduced by Nkrumah in 1958 (Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka, 48). After the abolishment, relations between the Asantehene and the Kumasi *zongo* were maintained by the *nsumankwahene*. It is unknown what the effect has been of the history of this Sarkin *zongos*' office on the attitude of the Hausa towards the Asante Indigenous Religion in terms of syncretism or assimilation. The fact is, when their attitude was assimilative, Asantehene Prempeh II did not encourage the Hausa religion to develop in this way. Until the 1940s, he followed a policy of non-interference with *zongo* affairs, which enabled him to maintain a peaceful relationship with all Muslim headmen of the settlement (Schildkrout 1974). Most likely, the attitude of the Hausa towards AIR was thus syncretistic.

After Independence, there was a clear indigenisation of the Hausa religion which has contributed to a more syncretistic attitude of Hausa headmen towards the Indigenous Religion of the Asante. There are at least three reasons for this development. First, since the government of President Busia (1969-72) under 'The Aliens Compliance Order', many Muslims were deported outside Ghana. At the time, the Kumasi *zongo* leadership was divided. The Hausa headman Ahmadu Baba supported the Asantehene and was a member of the same United Party — a fusion of the MAP and NLM — as the Asantehene. His rival, the Hausa Mutawakulu, attempted to become headman by joining forces with the government party CPP. The CPP, who attempted to diminish the power of the Asantehene — a rival in loyalty of the Ghanaian citizens — supported Mutawakulu and in 1958 they appointed him as the new Sarkin *zongo*. Mutawakulu encouraged the deportation of Hausa and other 'alien' Muslims and imams, such as Al-Hajji Amadu Baba and his friend Alfai Othman. These powerful Hausa Muslims were then replaced by Ghanaian Muslims. In the 1970s, Al-Hajji Amadu Baba and Alfai Othman came back from their deportation from Nigeria. Meanwhile, however, their replacement had increased the degree of 'indigenisation' of the Hausa and their religion (Schildkrout 1974) (Weiss 2007: 43).

Secondly, the number of intermarriages between Asante and Hausa Muslims in the Muslim 'settlements' has increased. When Hausa Muslim men marry Asante women, they do not force them to abandon their own (indigenous) religion, but only ask them whether they can raise their children as Muslim. The children of these couples are usually educated in more than one religious tradition,

which has also stimulated the indigenisation of the Islamic Hausa religion (Hane Harune, 37). A third factor in the further ‘indigenisation’ of Islam practiced by all Muslims including Hausa in the Kumasi Metropolis is the change in the type of consumed education. In the pre-colonial and the colonial period, many ‘settlement’ Muslims who had money sent their children to Qur’anic schools (*Marakantas*) where they learned Arabic, or in some cases to state schools¹⁴⁰. An example of the latter is the director of radio station Zuria 88.7 FM, who spent his youth together with the present Asantehene Osei Tutu II at the ‘Assim-Government Boys School’ in Kumasi (Hane Harune, 37). Since the post-colonial period, more children go to Arabic-English schools where they learn English, Arabic and Twi.

6.3.3 Muslim movements outside the settlements

The relationship between the Asante traditional authorities and Muslim movements (Four and Five)¹⁴¹ outside the settlements has not been researched in great detail. The conflicts between those movements are – similarly to those of the people of the Muslim settlements – for the majority intrareligious. Asante-Muslim tensions occur in cases of severe violent intrareligious conflicts. This happened for instance in 2003, when the head of the ‘Tijaniyya’ movement Sheikh Abdulai Maikano and Al-Sunnah leader Alfa Ajua came into conflict. In the violence that followed between their members, a teenage boy was accidentally murdered¹⁴². More of such incidents in the Kumasi Metropolis might take place since there is a series of ongoing violent clashes between the two mentioned Islamic movements in the Ashanti Region¹⁴³. For instance, on 16 April 2007, in Ejura north of the Ashanti Region, ten members of the ‘Al-Sunnah’ sect sustained gunshot wounds in a clash with members of the ‘Tijaniyya’ movement, who accused their opponents of preaching against them. Four of them were hospitalised in critical conditions and sent over from the Ejura hospital to the Okomfo Anokye Hospital in Kumasi.¹⁴⁴ The ‘Tijaniyya’ movement and the ‘Al-Sunnah’ sect are members of the ‘United Front for Islamic Affairs’ (UFIA) whose leading members occasionally meet at Manhyia palace together with the Asantehene and Christian church leaders of various Christian denominations in Kumasi to discuss religious matters (Mohammed Bramah Joseph and Zedan Rashid, 53). One of the aims of UFIA is to incorporate the various post-colonial rooted Muslim organisations in Ghana to make it easier to maintain peaceful relationships between them.

¹⁴⁰ According to Weiss, this was the only type of education for Muslims during the colonial period. Recent research of D. Skinner shows, however, that in this period Muslim children also went to state schools and schools that were sponsored by the Ahmadiyya (Weiss 2007). v.s. (Skinner 2008b).

¹⁴¹ Number four refers to the *Asante Nkramo* or ‘Muslims of Asante origin’ and number five to the members of the Ahmadiyya, Tijaniyya, Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama’ah and Wahhabi movements.

¹⁴² For tensions among Kumasi Muslims, see: *Accra Daily Mail*, 9 December 2003, <http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=8581>.

¹⁴³ http://religion.info/english/articles/article_327.shtml

¹⁴⁴ *The Ghanaian Times*, 16. April 2007.

- *For Ghana, are these relatively new Islamic religious movements syncretistic or assimilative in relation to the Asante traditional authorities?*

Again, similarly to the situation in the settlements, one can distinguish between orthodox and indigenised forms of Islam. The ‘Ahlus-Sunnah’ movement was established in 1997 as an umbrella organisation for all Wahhabi organisations in Ghana, of which most have connections with Saudi Arabia. It is a Sunni orthodox Islamic movement, whose members only believe what the holy prophet Mohammed told them and follow the Qur’an strictly. They preach against Africanised forms of Islam, which means that their attitude towards AIR is assimilative. From their perspective, the adherents of Sufi movements, such as the ‘Tijaniyya’, also practice an Africanised form of Islam, which is why their attitude towards these movements is also assimilative. Members of the ‘Tijaniyya’ movements are indeed adherents of a milder form of Islam, which includes the veneration of saints, but they do not perceive their own Islamic religion to be Africanised. They receive funding from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The ‘Ahmadiyya’ movement was introduced in Ghana in 1921 by a section of coastal (Fanti) Muslim converts. The membership of this movement remains in the hands of Fanti and Asante cultural groups, which is why the ‘Ahmadiyya’ is also known as ‘Fanti or Asante Islam’. The Ahmadiyya is syncretistic towards the Asante Indigenous Religion, but assimilative towards Christians and mainstream Muslims (Mohammed Bramah Joseph and Zedan Rashid, 53 and Dr. John Azumah)¹⁴⁵.

6.4 The relationship between Asante traditional authorities and the Christian religious leaders

In this section, I will look at Christian religious elements within the Asante Indigenous Religion and the level of syncretism of the Asante indigenous beliefs and practices in relation to Christianity. The source of information is derived from the answers of my Asante indigenous Christian respondents¹⁴⁶ who are both indigenous practitioners and members of a mainstream church (the Protestant Church, the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church), the NATRMs or the NRMs in the Kumasi Metropolis. I will focus on syncretism in Asante ancestral veneration in relation to two topics. (1) the Myth of the Golden Stool (*Sika Dwa Kofi*), and (2) the ritual of pouring libation.

(1) With regard to the myth of the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, as I have described in section 3.5, according to AIR the Asante chiefs and queen mothers derived their indigenous religious authority

¹⁴⁵ Dr. John Azumah, Muslim-Christian relations in Ghana: ‘Too much meat does not spoil the soup’, World Council of Churches: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd36-01.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Ideally, I would give examples of the perceptions of all the Christians under separate categories for royal and non-royal respondents. There are, however, limitations to my research since I do not have examples of all of them in all categories.

from the connection with their stools after enthronement (or enstoolment). The Asantehene who has a *primus-inter-pares* position among all paramount chiefs is connected to the *Sika Dwa Kofi* in which the *sunsum* of all stools in the Asante Region come together. All other paramount chiefs, sub-chief and village chiefs also have *sunsum* dwelling inside their stools. To study the level of ‘syncretism’ in ancestral veneration, I have looked at the effect of Christianity on the belief that the Golden Stool is the source of the Asante chiefs’ and queen mothers’ authority.

(2) With regard to the pouring of libation, I would like to start with a general remark made by one of my interviewees on this topic. According to Chief Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II (46), for most of the traditional authorities pouring libation is compatible with their Christian belief and therefore unproblematic. The traditional authorities are aware of the fact that for *akwasiadae*, which is the most important of the two days¹⁴⁷ of the Asante ritual calendar, as part of their function they are obliged to pour libation and therefore they cannot go to the church. They also know, however, that on any other Sunday they can just come to church and their church leader understands that on ritual days the chief would be exempted from attending their church services. However, some of the potential Christian traditional authorities, often those who are members of a Charismatic church, are faced with a dilemma, since their Christian belief does not permit them to pour libation. In this case, a prospective chief or a queen mother might choose not to become a traditional authority or (s)he can also try to find somebody who is willing to pour libation and perform other religious duties on his or her behalf. In most cases, finding a religious representative is the traditional authorities’ preferred option, so that even despite his or her membership of a Charismatic church a traditional authority will be enstooled. In the situation where an Asante chief or a queen mother is already enstooled but for the *adae* rituals refuses to pour libation and has not been able to find anyone who helps him or her with the pouring of libation, (s)he might be destooled. Chief Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II:

It is very rare for a chief or a queen mother to be destooled for a religious reason only. In most cases, the refusal to pour libation will be one of many charges against a traditional authority that led to his or her destoolment (Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

The above remark shows that pouring of libation is an obligatory part of the function of traditional authorities that might cause a religious (inner) conflict for those chiefs and queen mothers who are Asante Indigenous practitioners and Christians. In practice, however, most traditional authorities do not experience an inner conflict and outer conflicts can easily be solved by finding a representative who pours libation on the traditional authorities’ behalf. Although the performance of religious rituals is an important aspect of chieftaincy, neglecting the spirits is on its own not a strong enough reason for destoolment. Generally, there is a tendency among the Asante to combine Christianity

¹⁴⁷ The two days on the Akan ritual calendar that are reserved for the pouring of libation are *akwasiadae* and *awukudae*. On *akwasiadae* a chief is obliged to wear traditional cloth and he should be in his village and

with the religious function of a traditional authority. This is almost inevitable since — like many other citizens of Ghana — most prospective Asante traditional authorities receive a dualistic or even solely Christian upbringing before they become a chief or queen mother. This makes it difficult for them to eliminate the Christian elements in their religion for the sake of chieftaincy. After these two general remarks with regard to (1) the Myth of the Golden Stool and (2) the ritual of pouring libation, it is time to look at the religious syncretism in these two forms of ancestral veneration according to my indigenous Christian respondents.

6.4.1 Sika Dwa Kofi

I will first look at some examples of syncretism among my indigenous Christian respondents, who are also members of one of the mentioned Mainstream Churches (MC). Then, I will look at the opinion of those of my respondents who belong to the NRM or NATRM movements.

Methodism: For Charles Kingsley Coffie (4), Methodism is fully compatible with his belief in the spiritual powers inside the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, since, although more implicitly than in Catholicism, the Methodists also believe in seeking help from the ancestral spirits who, in Methodism, are equated with ‘the saints’. Coffie:

The ancestors are people who have offered their lives for the good of the community and who we can ask for help, because spiritually they are over and above us since they have moved from the social to the spiritual realm. An example is for instance Tweneboa Kodua who offered himself during the war between the Asante and the Denkyera in 1701. The saints, like Peter, have also offered their life for the good of the community. They are also still among us and we can ask them for help. In our Church we say that the ‘church militant’ or those who are still struggling in their faith can seek help from ‘the Church triumphant’, the one who have already been honoured. Both inside the Church and inside the chiefs’ stool, there are ancestors present who help us (Charles Kingsley Coffie, 4).

In Coffie’s case, the Myth of the Golden Stool has not changed since his belief in a communal ancestral spirit who is dwelling inside this stool has remained intact. Religiously, he did not have to change the content of his Indigenous Religion, since he has found a similarity between this religion and Christianity. The syncretistic character of the Methodist Church allows him to draw a parallel between ancestral veneration and the Christian saints. Consequently, there has been no need for a transformation of his Indigenous Religion in order for Coffie to be a dualistic believer.

Presbyterianism: R. Aboagye (33), the Deputy Director of the Metro Education Office in Kumasi, said:

I believe that there is *sunsum* inside the *Sika Dwa Kofi* and other stools and that chiefs and queen mothers receive power from this spirit. The stools are not the only objects that have spirits. Rivers also have spirits, which is why at the end of the year I go to the river with an egg

ideally in his palace to pour libation. On *awukudae* one is also allowed to pour libation elsewhere and the wearing of traditional cloth on this day is not compulsory (Nana Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

and a fowl to thank the river deity for its help. Trees also have spirits, such as for instance the *odi*, which is a very powerful tree because it has blood (*mogya*) inside [LM: a red sap] (R. Aboagye, 33).

According to AIR, a child is the result of the coming together of the blood (*mogya*) of a woman and the semen (*ntro*) of a man. Therefore, both *mogya* and *ntro* are believed to possess spiritual power. In all further conversations with Aboagye this respondent did not show any sign of rejection of any elements of AIR and its panpsychistic belief. For this man, there was no conflict in being a Presbyterian and at the same time having the obligation to show respect to the ancestral spirits as the source of authority of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers, and Presbyterianism did not seem to have affected his Indigenous Religion. Aboagye is an example of an Asante who, according to the official statistics, would be categorised as a Christian, whereas apart from presenting himself as a Presbyterian his practice has actually little to do with Christianity. Besides the category of 'indigenous Christians' who are both 'Asante indigenous practitioners' and 'Christians' there are thus also Asante who call themselves 'Christians', whereas, from an outsider perspective, I would categorise them as 'Asante indigenous practitioners' (in disguise).

Anglicanism Nana Serwaah Amponssaa (29) is a queen mother whose stool belongs to the Anglican Church. With regard to the *sunsum* inside the stool she said:

My belief is rooted in Christianity. I cannot define being a Christian, but I am a liberal person who believes both in the power of the ancestors who dwell inside our stools and in that of the saints. I do not see any problem in receiving powers from the ancestors inside my stool and from venerating the saints when I go to Church. This is my personal opinion. If other queen mothers see this differently, I respect them for that (Nana Serwaah Amponssaa, 29).

Similarly to the Methodist Charles Coffie, Queen mother Amponssaa has also kept the content of her AIR intact, but compares the belief in ancestral spirits with saints in Christianity. Her attitude is therefore relatively syncretistic.

Catholicism Queen Mother Nana Nyarko (18) believes that the one who sits on a stool is in connection with the ancestors. Her idea about the *sunsum*, or communal ancestor that dwells inside stools, becomes clear from the answer she gave to a woman who came to her for consultation on spiritual matters. Nana Nyarko said:

I told this woman, who goes to the same church [LM: the Roman Catholic Church], that there are two ways in which she is spiritually protected. First my family stool, because of the power of the blood (*mogya*) of a fowl or chicken that is used to blacken this stool gives ancestral spiritual protection to all my subjects. Secondly, she is protected by the blood of Jesus, because she goes to Church (Nana Nyarko, 18).

Nana Nyarko has thus not transformed her AIR, but has simply added a second source of spiritual power. She believes that blood (*mogya*) has spiritual powers, which in her Indigenous Religion is used to turn the *Sika Dwa Kofi* and other stools into ancestral shrines. This gives spiritual protection

and in the Christian religion this is given through the blood of Jesus. Similarly to the Methodist Charles Coffie and the Anglican queen mother Amponssaa, the Catholic queen mother Nana Nyarko also seeks similarities between AIR and Christianity, which enable her to keep intact her Asante Indigenous Religion. There is a realisation of unity between both religions, which means that the mentioned respondents' attitude towards AIR is in a sense syncretistic, but not to such an extent that there is an attempt to turn both religions into one unifying whole.

NATRM Offinsohemma Ama Serwah Nyarko (43) believes that there is indeed *sunsum* dwelling inside the stool. She adds that she knows that there are also people in Kumasi who believe that there are evil powers dwelling inside stools, often those who attend Pentecostal Churches, but she thinks that these people are misled by the white men. The Offinsohemma said:

I refuse Christianity, because I believe that God gave the Asante their own way of venerating him, which is the indigenous and not the Christian way. Some of us, however, are misled by the white men. When we grew up they told us that Jerusalem and Rome were in Heaven. But I have recently been to Rome and I know that it is not true. I do not see why we should venerate God in the Christian way, because before Christianity came God was already there. In Rome, they have the Trevi fountain, where people throw coins to make things come true. We do not need this fountain, because in my region we already have many river deities. God was already there and the deities as well before the white men came. Our belief was already complete, so I do not see any reason to stop believing in the power of the ancestors just because of the influences of Christianity in my country. It is better to venerate God the way he has given to us to respect him (Ama Serwah Nyarko, 43).

The Offinsohemma Ama Serwah Nyarko has thus not changed her AIR due to her affiliation to the 'Afrikania Church' and her attitude towards Christianity is assimilative.

NRM Ernestina Ama Brenya (8) is an example of a NRM church member who believes that the Golden Stool is not occupied by *sunsum* but by the devil (*sasa bonsam*). Brenya said:

The spirits inside the stools which the Asante traditional authorities occupy are not derived from God. The spirit inside the Golden Stool, for instance, is a devilish power (*sasa bonsam*). It is better for everybody to stop being in connection with those spirits (Ernestina Ama Brenya, 8).

Brenya is an exemplary of a respondent who has transformed her AIR now that she has become a member of a Pentecostal church and shows an assimilative attitude towards Asante indigenous practitioners.

6.4.2 The pouring of libation

(2) The second topic with regard to the veneration of ancestral spirits is the ritual of pouring libation. I will use the same chronological order to deal with the beliefs of my respondents as mentioned in section 6.4.1.

Methodists Nana Ababeo's (42) explanation with regard to his belief in AIR and Christianity was as follows. Ababeo:

It is not good for a Christian to pour libation, since it is stated in the ten commandments of the Bible that 'thou shall not venerate any other gods but *Nyame* [LM: the Supreme Being]'. When you pour libation the effects of this action for God's decision to send you either to Hell or to Heaven are unknown. It is a matter between you and your creator. You and Him are the only ones who know what you all did in life and how faithful you have been as a Christian. However, if pouring libation is one of the very few things you did wrong, God might consider you and still send you to Heaven, because by being a chief one might also do lots of good to the community (Ababeo, 42).

Ababeo meant that as a Methodist Chief, pouring libation should be perceived as a relatively small sin in a lifetime, which might be compensated for by performing other duties in one's function as chief for the sake of the community. I would regard this as a syncretistic train of thought, and as an attempt to validate the pouring of libation in the eyes of the Christian God.

Not all Methodists, however, seem to agree that pouring libation is relatively harmless in combination with one's belief in Christianity. Patricia Kwakye Manu (22) informed me that she was afraid of the harm that evil spirits might bring her, and said:

I do not like to perform traditional rituals, such as the pouring of libation and the killing of fowls. I am a potential queen mother and in a sense becoming a queen mother attracts me, because one receives respect, people will listen to you and you easily become popular, because of going along with prominent people. However, I do not want to become a queen mother, because then I would be obliged to pour libation. I am afraid that during the pouring of libation bad spirits will attack me, that evil spirits will dwell inside me..I might not go to Heaven (Patricia Kwakye Manu, 22).

The above quotation shows that Manu's attitude is that of an assimilative Christian. The Methodist Daniel Adjei Junior (25) on the other hand, did not seem to have any fear while pouring libation, and told me:

I am a Methodist, but I also believe in the existence of the ancestors. I believe that if I pour libation and give *fufu* to my grandmother, by dripping it on the floor, then she will come to eat it. I do not see any harm in the ritual of pouring libation. Christianity is part and parcel of our culture. I do not believe the traditional belief and Christianity to be in conflict (Daniel Adjei Junior, 25).

The attitude of Daniel towards the pouring of libation can be regarded as syncretistic. The opinions of these three Methodists show that different Methodists do have diverse ideas on the degree of desirability and perniciousness of performing a ritual of pouring libation.

Presbyterians With regard to the opinion on pouring libation, Francis Mark Domenya (5) told me that he does not perform this ritual. He finds it, however, very important to show great respect for chiefs. Mr. Domenya:

If the Asantehene enters the 'Regional House of Chiefs' (RHCs), there should be a standing ovation. It is out of respect for chiefs that if you are wearing a cloth you have to remove it so that

your breast is visible and you have to remove your sandals. The Asantehene is sacred, because of his connection with the spirits. He is the guardian angel of all of his subjects (Francis Mark Domenya, 5).

The example shows that syncretism within the present-day Presbyterian church does not necessarily mean that its members' attitude towards an indigenous religious ritual, such as the pouring of libation, is also syncretistic.

Anglicans Queen mother of Kumawu 'Serwaah Amponssaa' (29) said:

The Anglican Church that I attend was built in 1930 by my grandfather, who was a chief. My family does not live separately from the church and in fact my stool belongs to the same domination as the Anglican Church. I see the two religions, the traditional belief and Christianity, as complementary. I am a Christian and I have a crucifix above my bed, but I also pour libation. I believe that both religions are compatible and that it is also useful to combine the two. For instance, if my representative (*Jkyeame*) pours libation, he will call upon *Asaase Fua* or *Asase Yaa* (the Earth goddess), the *abosom* (divinities, forces of nature) and the honoured ancestral spirits (*nananom nsamanfo*). Of the latter two he will mention their names. First of all, however, he will pour libation to *Nyame* (the High God) and *Nyamewaa* (Goddess), because it is believed that it is through the ancestral spirits that we venerate the Highest God. In both religions, my traditional religion and Christianity, we venerate God'. [...] We combine the two, because they can both be of help (Nana Serwaah Amponssaa, 29).

In the same interview, however, directly following on from this conversation the Queen mother of Kumawu also mentioned that there are limitations to the possibility of combining the two religions. Nana Serwaah Amponssaa (29) said:

There are also certain parts of both religions that are not compatible. For instance, I cannot pour libation in the church, because that is not the norm. Also, I cannot use my Bible when I am invoking the ancestral spirits in front of my stool (Kumawuhemma Serwaah Amponssaa, 29).

The above quotations show that Amponssaa attempts to keep AIR intact. She mentally combines her indigenous belief with Christianity by looking for a similarity between these religions: in both, rituals are being performed to venerate a High God. It seems that Amponssaa has found a way to make the two religions compatible rather than attempting to transform the Asante Indigenous Religion. Her attitude is relatively syncretistic.

Another of my Anglican respondents, Beatrice Agyeman Dua Prempeh (7), said:

It is important for me to pour libation and to invoke the ancestral spirits. I can ask questions and the spirits answer them and help me throughout my life. Sometimes, however, I prefer to go to church to seek help from my pastor and then I do not pour libation. I believe that the spirits understand and tolerate this. It is only in relation to the chiefs and queen mothers that the spirits can become angry when they do not pour libation on the *adae* and would go to church instead. If, for instance, a chief does not listen to the spirits and does not obey them by performing the necessary rituals, the spirits can kill him. It will also be a charge against him (Beatrice Agyeman Dua Prempeh, 7).

Prempeh seems to make a concession to both of her religions. Sometimes she chooses the one religion and other times the other religion and thinks that this decision is in line with her two religions. Her attitude can therefore also be regarded as syncretistic.

Catholics Nana Nyarko (18) believes that the ritual of pouring libation should be continued, and said:

Pouring libation is a custom that has existed for ages. Anybody who comes to sit on a stool must continue with it. It is what our forefathers have done, we came to meet it and therefore we must continue it. The ritual of pouring libation must also be continued for prosperity sake (Nana Nyarko, 18).

Sandra Owusu Ansah (24) a Roman Catholic member, who was a beauty queen (*Asante fo aho Jfehemma*) during the *Asanteman Adaye Kese* celebration in 2004, thought that pouring libation is very important. It is a way to show respect to the ancestors and also to the traditional authorities who represent the ancestral spirits. Sandra found it necessary to show respect to traditional authorities such as queen mothers, because as a beauty queen she lived a life comparable to that of a queen mother. Sandra:

Being a beauty queen is not the same as being a queen mother, because a beauty queen does not occupy a stool. In terms of lifestyle, however, my life as a beauty queen was comparable to that of a queen mother....In our representative function there are certain things you should and other things that you cannot do. We should wear traditional cloth and cannot wear cloth that shows the greater part of our body, because neither the elders nor the ancestors would appreciate it (Sandra Owusu Ansah, 24).

Besides similarities in dress code, the position of being a queen mother or a beauty queen also has a similar effect in terms of restricting their behaviour. Sandra:

As a beauty queen or a queen mother you should avoid being seen at different spots, because that might be interpreted as prostitution. You should also avoid drinking alcohol. You should never swear or curse somebody while pouring libation. You should always be mindful with your words and should know how to communicate in Akan proverbs. You should know how to behave in order to receive respect. Because of our representative position in relation to the spirits, we also deserve respect (Sandra Owusu Ansah, 24).

To sum up, these two Roman Catholic interviewees responded positively towards the ritual of pouring libation out of respect for indigenous customs and the traditional authorities as representatives of the ancestral spirits. Their attitudes are those of Catholics who are indigenous practitioners in disguise.

NATRM A member of the Afrikania Church, 'Eric', whose traditional name is 'Kwame Ofori' (27), said that the pouring of libation and the killing of sheep are customary among the Asante. When one has a problem one pours libation. Ofori said:

It is a matter of reporting to your master. If somebody gives something to you, then you have to thank that person. This is why every forty two days we have to call to our ancestors (Kwame Ofori, 27).

The comparison that Ofori made with Christianity is as follows:

Before the white men came, we had our God already and that is why when we pour libation we first call upon the High God. Then, when Christians are praying they call the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac. Then, when we traditionalists are praying we call the God of Priest Anokye. We believe that when you die, your ghost still exists. The ghost spiritually knows more than what we know physically. That is why we pour libation. The ghosts still look at us when we are managing something good or badly. When we eat something we also have to give the spirits something, because we believe they are there (Kwame Ofori, 27).

When I asked Ofori if, being an Afrikania, he pours libation himself, he answered:

No, I do not pour libation, because I am not the head of my family, who belongs to the Bretuo clan. It is the spiritual head of the family (*abusuapanin*) who pours libation. If the head is not there, it doesn't happen. In town, it is the *okrihene* who pours libation for the town. Every state [LM: region] also has his traditional priest who pours libation. The Asantehene's physician (*nsumankwahene*) pours libation for the whole Asante state (Kwame Ofori, 27).

Then, when I asked Ofori to tell in more detail what he thought about Christian prayers he answered:

Jesus is a white man. He has a white background. Why would we pray for him? He might have a bad spirit. Some people buy calendars with a picture of Jesus on top of it and they hang it in their houses to pray to, but these people have been brainwashed. I would rather hang a photo of Otumfuo [LM: the Asantehene] in my room. Let's not forget that we knew our God already, before the white man came to our land. To many of us, the Bible is now a superior source of knowledge. But some people are using the Bible against us. That is why we should be careful with these people and suspicious about Bible texts (Kwame Ofori, 27).

Ofori's answers make clear that he opposes Christianity, which is common for members of the Afrikania Churches. His attitude is more assimilative than syncretistic.

NRM As mentioned before, there are no Pentecostals who are chiefs or queen mothers, since the leaders of these churches request enstooled members to refrain from further membership (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46).

The non-royal Pentecostal respondent Osei Hyiaman (32) made the following remark about pouring libation.

I do not believe that the chiefs and queen mothers pour libation for the spiritual protection of the whole of *Asanteman*. They only do it for themselves, which is enough because, for instance, for me they do not need to pour libation, because I am a Christian and therefore I can call God directly (Osei Hyiaman, 32).

When I asked Hyiaman what he thought about the Asante traditional authorities' custom of pouring libation, he answered:

My own grandfather, Nanu Adu Kwame II, was chief of Danase, which is an area of the Kumasi Metropolis. He was also Otumfuo's Atehene, which is the person who makes sure the Asantehene never walks in the dark by accompanying him with a streetlamp. When I was young, I also wanted to become a chief, but since I became a Christian I changed my mind,

because the performance of chieftaincy rituals, such as pouring libation, is not in line with my Christian faith. I do not condemn the royal members of my family who do pour libation, because they are part of my family, but I do not involve myself in chieftaincy rituals (Osei Hyiaman, 32).

The example of Hyiaman shows that he remains neutral towards the custom of pouring libation. He does not want to perform this ritual himself, but he also does not condemn those who do perceive it as part of their religion.

To conclude this section, the examples of my respondents with regard to the MCs reveal that members of these churches, for the majority, combine their Asante Indigenous Religion with Christianity by emphasising the similarities between the two religions, and thus have a syncretistic attitude. Or, they regard themselves as Christians without being intrinsically affected by their Christian faith, such as in the case of one from each of my Methodist and Catholic respondents. Only in one case of a Presbyterian respondent was there any sign of assimilation towards the Asante Indigenous Religion.

In the case of members of the NATRM and the NRM churches, the attitude of my respondents is generally assimilative. The reaction of one of them was neutral. Instead of abandoning their belief in Asante chiefs and queen mothers as religious leaders who derive their powers from spirits, all mainstream Christian respondents have created variations of the myth of the Golden Stool and continue to believe in their traditional authorities' religious leadership. The attitude of the NATRM and NRM church respondents towards the leadership of Asante chiefs and queen mothers is more critical. The pouring of libation is a custom that is obligatory for those in the role of chief or queen mother. Generally, the attitude of my mainstream Christian respondents towards this ritual is syncretistic, whereas that of NATRM and NRM members is assimilative.

6.5 Perceptions of the social and religious aspects of the peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities

In this section, I will look at perceptions of the religious and social aspects of the peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities. I will focus on perceptions of two mainstream Church Bishops, various Muslim headmen, Asante traditional authorities and their subjects to gain a deeper insight into the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis' perception of the social and religious functions of the Asante institution of chieftaincy.

6.5.1 Perceptions of social relationships of Asante Royals with the Catholic and Anglican Church

In this section, I will look at the social role of Asante traditional authorities in relation to Catholic and Anglican Church leaders. I have chosen to concentrate on the Catholic and Anglican Church, because of all MC churches it is at most in relation to these ones that the Asante chiefs and queen mothers operate as religious peacekeepers, as they are most affiliated to them.

The Catholic Church: the Asante traditional authorities maintain contact with Rev. Dr. Peter Kwasi Sarpong, the Catholic Archbishop of the Kumasi Diocese. Sarpong was consecrated as Bishop in 1970 in St Peter's Cathedral in Kumasi. From the start, Sarpong has been a promoter of the incorporation of indigenous religious elements into the Catholic religion. An important Christian feast during which Asante Catholics under Bishop Sarpong make use of a lot of Asante indigenous religious symbols is, for instance, that of 'Corpus Christi', described by Obeng (1996). This is a day for the commemoration of the supreme gift of the institution by Jesus Christ. Significant for the relationship of Sarpong with the Asantehene is that during 'Corpus Christi', at the *Manhyia* palace Durbar ground, of all places, the body of Christ is shown in a monstance¹⁴⁸ for venerator to renew their allegiance to Him (King Jesus Christ-*ohene Yesu Kristo*). At the Durbar ground, traditionally each chief and queen mother has his or her own place, which enabled the Asante to organise themselves efficiently during wars. The places that Asante chiefs and queen mothers occupy are significant for their relationship with the Asantehene. The Kyidomhene, for instance, who is the son of the Asantehene — or other paramount chiefs — always sits at the chief's back, since a chiefs' son is believed to be most trustworthy. The Mamponghene, who is traditionally the nephew of the Asantehene, is the Asantehene's most important right wing leader, whereas the Juabenhene sits left of the Asante King (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46). At the Durbar ground, the closer one sits to the Asantehene, the more important is one's position. The most important position is taken by the Asantehene himself. Now, during the 'Corpus Christi' celebration, 'the body of Christ' is placed at the spot that is normally reserved for the Asantehene and is accompanied by Mary, Mother of Christ, who sits on the stool that is normally occupied by the Asantehene's queen mother (*ohemma*). *Adowa* dancers, who, during funerals and other Asante indigenous religious ceremonies point to their chest to refer to the Asantehene, now point to Christ's feet to show that the Asante Nation belongs to Him (*Yesu Kristo*). Singers of a *nwonkoro* group refer to *ohene Yesu Kristo* as their king.

One would imagine that since the celebration of 'Corpus Christi' in *Asanteman*, the Asantehenes, Osei Agyeman Prempeh II and Osei Tutu II, should have been furious about the

¹⁴⁸ A 'monstance' is an open or transparent receptacle in which the consecrated Host is exposed for veneration.

occupation of their palace by Sarpong's indigenous Catholics, since they refer to *Yesu Kristo* as their leader rather than the Asante King. On the contrary, both mentioned Asantehenes were very positive towards Sarpong's mission of selective implementation of indigenous elements in Catholicism and his promotion of the *Asantenization* of the liturgy of the Catholic Church in Kumasi. In fact, in 1967 when Sarpong, who at the time was an assistant priest at St. Peter's Cathedral, asked Prempeh for the king's regalia to be used during 'Corpus Christi', the Asante King answered: *Adea yede hoahoa me Asantehene, no wode ko ako woahoe Nyame. Fa ko fa ko hey Nyame anomonyam.* — 'I am honoured that regalia used in honouring me, as king of Asante, are considered fitting to honour God. I freely allow you to borrow them for this great purpose' (Obeng 1996). The present-day Asantehene Osei Tutu II also allows Sarpong to celebrate Corpus Christi in his palace. He also invited Sarpong to preach during the 2004 *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration (see section 6.6).

Instead of perceiving Catholic Church leaders and *Yesu Kristo* as rivals against the persistence of the Asante institution of chieftaincy, Asante traditional authorities have thus encouraged these leaders to make use of Asante indigenous religious symbols. Some Presbyterian, Methodist and Pentecostal church leaders accused Sarpong of paganising the feast of 'Corpus Christi', because they thought it would confuse Christians and make it tempting for them to fall back into their indigenous belief patterns. The mentioned Asantehenes, however, have always welcomed Sarpong, who has recently retired, as a promoter of the Asante culture. Through the cordial relationship between the Asantehene and Sarpong over the years, the relationship with the other Mainstream Churches and Pentecostal Church leaders has also been improved. Among other things, Sarpong was the one who took the initiative to establish the 'Asante Christian Chiefs and Queen Mothers Association' (ACCQA) of whom all MCs are now members and who have set up regulations to deal with the Asante traditional authorities and the Asante Indigenous Religion (Asante 2006) (see section 6.6). In March 2008, Rev. Thomas Kweku Mensah was appointed as the new Archbishop of Kumasi, and has indicated that he will continue in the mission style of his predecessor (Obeng 1996: Sarpong, 55). Asantehene Osei Tutu II appealed to the new Archbishop in a message delivered on his behalf to be committed to duty just as his predecessor to ensure the total development of the church (GNA 4 May 2008). This shows that so far the Asantehene and the new Catholic Archbishop of Kumasi are in a cordial relationship.

The Anglican Church: Since 1915, the Anglican Church leaders in Kumasi have been in a cordial relationship with the Asante traditional authorities. In this year, Asante members of the royal family started an Anglican school, which received support from (chieftaincy) funds. In 1925 after coming back from the Seychelles Islands Asantehene Prempeh I initially played a role in the emergence of the Anglican Church. These days the attitude of the Asantehene towards this Church is still one of

making selective use of Anglican elements. The relationship between the Anglican Church and the Anglican-Indigenous Religion is cordial. On 19 December 2006, for instance, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II donated 50 Million cedis [249 pounds] towards the establishment of an 'Educational Endowment Fund' (EEF) for junior and senior secondary school students within the 'Accra Diocese' of the Anglican Church. An example of sincerity from the Anglican side is that on 21 March 2007, Bishop Sarfo appeared at the book launch of *Graphic Nsempa*, a regional newspaper for Ashanti and the Brong Ahafo to promote traditional values, and expressed his admiration about the content of this newspaper (*The Ghanaian Times* and email contact with Archbishop Sarfo, 56).

6.5.2 Perceptions of syncretism

I will now focus on the perceptions of syncretism between the Asante Indigenous Religion and Catholicism. As mentioned before, the main promoter of Asante Catholicism in the Kumasi Metropolis has been Archbishop Peter Sarpong, who has been bishop of the Kumasi Diocese since 1970. Sarpong became consecrated in the Catholic Church during 'Vatican II' (1962-1965), a period in the Catholic Church history which in comparison with 'Vatican I' (1869-1960) was much more tolerant towards the incorporation of elements of Indigenous Religions into Catholicism. His mission was therefore much more accommodative towards the Asante Indigenous Religion than that of his predecessor Essuah, who was the first Ghanaian Bishop of the Kumasi Diocese. The mission of Essuah was based on the concept of conversion of the Asante to Christianity and the implementation of a form of Christianity in rejection of AIR. Therefore, the Mass was in Latin and there was a clear distance between pastor and church audience; there was use of vernacular hymns and prayers and the sermons were preached in English with vernacular translation. Sarpong, on the other hand, translated many of the liturgical rites in Asante Twi, using Asante symbols in liturgical celebrations, has composed and employs liturgical songs based on local tunes and idioms, and makes use of local musical instruments such as drums, flutes, shakers and xylophones. The diocese also uses *Adinkra* symbols and their priests are dressed in *Kente* cloth.

In Church, Sarpong sits on an *asimpim* comparable to the one of the Asantehene. He also sits under an umbrella and on official visits he is accompanied by an umbrella carrier. Sarpong has clearly made use of the local existing hierarchical structures to clarify his position within the Catholic Church. The bishop also knows, however, how to distinguish between AIR and Catholicism, because, unlike the Asantehene, he does not want to be carried in a palanquin. With his refusal the bishop makes the statement that he is not the real king but is only a servant of King Jesus Christ (*ohene Yesu Kristo*). Besides being a king, Christ is also referred to in Twi as a healer (*duyefoo*), as warrior (*osagyefoo*) or someone who is able to save the weak and helpless from their misfortune, as a leopard (*kurotwiamansa*), which is also the soul animal (*sasa*) of the Asantehene

and as a deity (*abosom*), who like any other deity in AIR protects people against catastrophes (Obeng 1996).

With regard to the Anglican Church, since the return of Prempeh I from the Seychelles Islands, the attitude of Asante traditional authorities towards Anglican beliefs has been syncretistic. After his return, King Prempeh I appeared like an Anglican wearing fashionable European clothes at the Prince of Wales' Durbar that was held in Kumasi. Internally however, the Asantehene remained essentially Asante in values and despite his attendance and that of his children at the Anglican Church at Le Rocher, Mahé, in the Seychelles he only selectively introduced Anglican elements into AIR. Prempeh I's partial resistance against elements of the Anglican religion is, for instance, shown by his five year continued resistance to the British insistence of marrying only one woman (as opposed to his three wives) and his immediate remarriage of these wives after his return to Kumasi (Adjaye 1989), (Akyeampong 1999), (Sundkler and Steed 2000:219). Asantehene Opoku Ware (Matthew Poku) Asantehene Prempeh II was a Catholic who received his secondary schooling from the Adisdale College in Cape Coast. Despite his Catholicism, he was in a good relationship with the Anglican Church. He went to an Anglican primary school and blessed several of the extensions of the Anglican Church during his period of reign. The present-day Asantehene is an indigenous Anglican, who is very open to the incorporation of Anglican influences into the Asante Indigenous Religion (Francis Mark Domenya, 5).

6.5.3 Perceptions of Muslim headmen of the role of the Asante traditional authorities as religious peacekeepers

In this section, I will study the social and religious relationship between the Asante traditional authorities and the Muslim headmen in the Kumasi Metropolis. The Sarkin *Zongo* Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka (48) praises Asantehenes Opoku Ware II and Osei Tutu II for their ensurance of peaceful coexistence between people of different faiths. Both Asantehenes have put in an effort to avoid further violent clashes between religious movements in Kumasi, such as the one between Muslims and Christians in 1995. Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II acknowledges the importance of Islamic prayers and told him: 'There cannot be unity without prayers'. Therefore, every Friday the Asantehene goes with his chief-imam to the mosque and he asks this imam to pray for him. The Asantehene and other Asante also acknowledge Islam by attending Muslim festivals and the funerals of Muslim headmen. In return, Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka and other Muslim headmen also observe the most important indigenous ritual festival of the Asante (*Asanteman Adaye Kese*). When Asantehene Opoku Ware II passed away, Sheikh Zakuruka's predecessor 'Al-Hajji

Abubakar Ali III' gave his condolences to the Manhyia palace and the Asante traditional authorities (Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka, 48). Also, during important days such as independence Day and Republic Day, and during official occasions (e.g. when the Asante King has Muslim VIP visitors from abroad) the Asantehene always invite the Muslim headmen to the palace (Al-Hajji Ibrahim Abdul Achman Adam III, 47).

Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka did not mention any negative aspects of his relationship with the Asantehene and other Asante. All headmen and also the Director of Zuria 88.7 FM had a photo of themselves with the present Asantehene hanging in their palaces or office. They all emphasised the positive qualities of the Asantehene, such as being a wise and understanding person. They also greatly appreciated that in the distribution of scholarships of the 'Otumfuo Educational Fund' (OEF), which is a fund that was set up by Asante in the Diaspora and in the Asante Region to help brilliant and needy students, the Asantehene did not discriminate against Muslims. In fact, quite a number of scholarships were given to Muslim children in the various settlements in the Kumasi Metropolis (Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II, 46 and Hane Harune, 37). Mossi headman Ustaz Ali Adam Al-Ameer (45) told me that they respect the Asantehene and the Asante a lot, because they have been treating the ancestors of the Mossi very well. When they first came to Kumasi, they received a place to sleep, land on which to build houses and the Asantehene even gave them Asante wives, including some of his own daughters¹⁴⁹. This is why many Mossi these days have Asante blood and *vice versa* and why the Mossi show great respect for the Asante.

These Muslim perceptions should be understood with regard to the fact that in Kumasi it is not permissible to openly criticise the Asantehene, and the Muslims are in a subordinate position as guests on the Asantehene's land. These facts make it unlikely that the Sarkin *Zongo* would share severe critical opinions on the behaviour of the Asantehene towards Muslims with a researcher. Asante *Nkramo* Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina (54) maintains his relationship with the Asantehene by responding to invitations which he receives from the Asante King to go to Manhyia palace to meet:

- (a) With all other paramount chiefs, and
- (b) With all other Muslim headmen of the council of *Zongo* Chiefs

Occasionally, Karim Sina also receives letters from the Asantehene when the latter wants to know what is happening in the settlement. In normal circumstances, this job is preserved for the *nsumankwahene* or physician of the Asante King. Mossi headman Al-Hajji Ibrahim Abdul Achman

Adam III (47) mentioned that when there is a problem between Asante and Mossi, the Asantehene calls him to the palace to discuss the issue. These days, what usually happens is that, in cases where the Mossi are causing trouble, the Asantehene asks the Mossi to pay a fine. Unlike in the colonial period when all Muslims were regarded as strangers, the Asantehene cannot send any Muslims away from his land. If there is a problem among the Mossi themselves, they normally do not involve the Asantehene unless the problem is so serious that they need to seek permission from the Asantehene to send the troublemaker to prison. Achman Adam the III said: ‘Unlike the Asantehene, I do not have my own prison to lock people away. That is also why the Mossi cooperate with the Asante’ (Achman Adam the III, 47).

Another reason that Achman Adam mentioned in relation to the Asantehene cooperating with the Muslim headmen, is when the Asantehene has foreign guests. The Muslim headmen of the home country of the visitor are then asked to meet up with them and the Asantehene at the palace. This is a way for the Asantehene to show the cordiality of the relationship between the Asante and the Muslim headmen to the outside world. Imurana Musah (40), the chief-imam of the whole Asante Region, revealed to me that all cultural groups in the various settlements have their own imam. The Asantehene meets regularly with all chief-imams at *ahemfie*. The Catholic Archbishop Sarpong also attended those meetings. Imurana could also tell that before the headmen are ‘enskinned’ — placed on a skin, which is a way of enthronement that is common among Muslim headmen in Ghana — by their own people in the various palaces in the settlements, they are introduced to the Asantehene. It is only the Asante *Nkramo* who swears an oath to the Asantehene. Then, finally, Ustaz Ali Adam Al-Ameer (45), the chief-imam of the Mossi mosque in the Mossi settlement, remarked that from a religious point of view the relationship between the Mossi and the Asante is fine. Al-Ameer:

Otumfuo [LM: the Asantehene], who is the leader of all Asante shows great respect to the Mossi. He never gets annoyed with us if he invites us to the palace and are not bowing down to him. He knows we cannot do that, because it might look like we are praying to a God, whereas there is only one God which is Allah. Otumfuo understands us and he respect that we follow what Allah says and what the prophet Mohammed says (Ustaz Ali Adam Al-Ameer, 45).

Despite the unequal relationship between the Asante traditional authorities and the Muslim headmen, there were only two Muslim headmen who criticised the policy of the Asantehene towards the Muslims. Mamprusi chief Ibrahim Abdullah (51) mentioned that his community is very poor, that they need help from outside, and that the Asantehene was not doing much to help them. Asante *Nkramo* Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina (52) mentioned that when he asks the Asantehene for help for his people, he calls him to Manhyia palace. When he comes with his delegation to *ahemfie*, the Asantehene tells them to pray and read the Qur’an. Apart from that he does not do much for the Asante *Nkramo*.

¹⁴⁹ The giving away of wives as a way of establishing relationships with neighbouring cultural groups has been part of the Asante diplomacy since the precolonial period (Smith 1989:11).

To sum up, the Asantehene shows his respect for the Muslims and on official occasions he calls them to the palace to advertise the peaceful relationships with Muslims in the Asante Region. Besides this, he does not interfere in the lives of the Muslims and likewise his help to the communities in the Muslim settlements is minimal. In line with the colonial period, his policy towards Muslims is one of non-interference, unless it is in the case of an escalation of intercultural and interreligious violence. There is thus more an Asante traditional leaders' policy of toleration of Muslims in the Kumasi Metropole than one of actual tolerance.

In terms of religious relationships, since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Asante *Nkramo* have produced 'charms' and 'amulets' (see section 1.4). Since the end of the pre-colonial period, however, the charm and amulet production industry, which was there to provide all Asante warriors with spiritual protection, has become far less important. Since then, Muslim religious specialists have been increasingly unpopular in the Kumasi Metropolis. Miss Joice Boakye (6), an inhabitant of Kumasi said, for instance:

If I have a problem, I go to the Methodist Church and to my traditional priest depending on the problem. I know that there are Muslim healers in the Mossi settlement who can heal you with *mugi* [a boiled egg] or *dawa* [pieces of wood] if you have stomach pains, but I never go to them. In case of troubles, I go either to my pastor or to a traditional priest (Joice Boakye, 6).

Muslims are thus no longer popular among the Asante as healers. Also, the Asante traditional authorities do not seem to promote the qualities of Muslim healers as they used to do in the pre-colonial period. Mamprusi chief Ibrahim Abdullah (51) said:

The Asantehene maintains in good relationship with the Nsumankwahene, but Muslims are not being welcomed at the royal court as they used to be. Muslim healers do not live any longer at Manhyia palace and since the pre-colonial period their position has waned (Ibrahim Abdullah, 51).

To sum up, in the perception of inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis, socially, the Asantehene does not concern himself enough with the affairs of Muslims, and their religious qualities are less appreciated by the Asante traditional authorities in comparison with the pre-colonial period. Despite these developments, the present Sarkin *Zongo* Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka praises the present Asantehene Osei Tutu II as a religious peacekeeper.

6.5.4 Asante perceptions on the role of the Asante traditional authorities as religious peacekeepers

In this section, I will look at the religious peacekeeping qualities of Asante traditional authorities in the eyes of Asante indigenous Christian and NATRM inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis. The question is to what extent Asante traditional authorities socially and religiously manage to integrate Christian and Islamic religious movements into the Asante community.

Methodists: Nana Ababeo (42) believes indeed that the Asante chief and queen mother have a central role in the community in the Kumasi Metropolis. This, for instance, turns out to be the case when the traditional authorities organise communal labour. If the Asante chief or queen mother did not have a central function, then when they called the commoners to perform communal labour, nobody would turn up. In fact, however, a few beats of the gong-gong (*dawuro*) are enough to mobilise a lot of people. In a religious sense, the central position of the chief is proven by the fact that the traditional authorities do not discriminate against people with regard to their religion. Chief Ababeo:

Every believer has his own source of trust. The traditional practitioners' belief in Otumfuo [LM: the Asantehene] *nananom* [LM: the ancestors] and *abosom* [LM: the deities] such as *gwmo*, which is *abosom* that was brought to Kumasi by Priest Anokye in 1701. The Christians have Jesus Christ, the Muslim have Mohammed. No matter in whom they put their trust, the *Kumasifo* [LM: the inhabitants of Kumasi] can always come to me for advice (Nana Ababeo, 42).

The non-royal Methodist Margaret Arhin (34) also mentioned the point that Asante traditional authorities are in a good relationship with commoners of various religious movements. Arhin:

The chief does not discriminate anyone on the ground of his or her religion. If I go to my area chief [the Bremanhene] he does not ask me anything about my religion, he just helps me. If I have a problem with my neighbour who has a different religion, such as Islam, I go to my chief to ask for help [...]. My chief opens his doors for everybody (Margaret Arhin, 34).

Then Arhin contrasts this behaviour with that of her pastor to whom she is said to go when she has a problem with somebody in her own church.

My pastor only concentrates on the problems of Methodists in the Breman area. Another limitation of pastors in general is that they can easily be transferred to another area, whereas the chief is always there. Therefore, he got to know his subjects very well (Margaret Arhin, 34).

The quotation shows that whereas the pastor of Arhin's church only concentrates on problems of members of his church, the chief helps everybody.

Presbyterians: R. Aboagye (33) reveals the importance of religious tolerance. The peace between various religious movements — indigenous practitioners, Christians and Muslims — is far from self evident. This becomes clear when one looks at the situation in Kumasi before the start of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival.

Before *Asanteman Adae Kese*, some Pentecostal Christian church leaders were preaching against attending the festival. Therefore, some of these Christians did not go to the Durbar ground [LM: a place of gathering at the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival] because they fear that they will be attacked by evil spirits, because they know that they are not good Christians. They know what they do in the dark [LM: he meant that they are not ritually cleansed like indigenous practitioners who perform an indigenous religious ritual before they enter the

Durbar ground, and that they might therefore be full of sin]. Their Pentecostal church leaders tell them to watch out for evil influences (R. Aboagye, 33).

The quotation shows that some Christian church leaders perceive the celebration of *Asanteman Adaye Kese* as being dangerous. This perception is not only caused by differences in religious ideas, but also because traditional authorities are perceived as potential rivals in the religious market place. To maintain peace, the Asante traditional authorities acknowledge the leaders of the Christian denominations during the festival and incorporate Christian 'Thanksgiving services' as part of the festival. I will come back to this when describing the perceptions of Anglicans of the religious peacekeeping function of the traditional authorities.

Catholics: with regard to the Catholics, Peter King Appiah (38) said:

Yes, our chiefs and queen mothers are indeed peacekeepers in a religious sense, because they are the representatives of the ancestors and embody their traditional religion, which incorporates all other religions, e.g. Islam and Christianity. Many traditional authorities in Ghana are both traditional practitioners and Muslims or Christians. Asante traditional authorities of whom many are Christians can easily relate to all kinds of practitioners. No matter how Christian they are, because of the upbringing in the Asante Region, they also bear the traditional religion in them. No matter how Christian we are, we all have that aspect of *Asanteness* in us (Peter King Appiah, 38).

Appiah also mentioned that many of today's Christian Asante chiefs and queen mothers came in contact with Christianity due to their schooling, but at home they were not brought up in a Christian way of life, due to their descent from royal families and their prospective position as a royal. The same situation of dual religious upbringing counts for traditional authorities in northern Ghana in relation to Islam. Most Asante traditional authorities are trained in both religious traditions, which makes it easy for them to relate to Christians and indigenous practitioners, to discover the similarities between them and to maintain peace among the various religious movements in the Kumasi Metropolis.

Anglicans: Queen mother Serwaah Amponssaa (29) believed herself to be a successful example of a religious peacekeeper because she works together with the pastor of the one and only Anglican Church in Kumawu. However, she attributed that same function to her pastor and said:

As queen mothers we have a counselling group that is separate from that of the Anglican pastor. There are no statistics on which of the two counselling groups my subjects attend more, but I think their numbers are approximately equal. I do not see my pastor's counselling group as a rival for my own group. The pastor and I, we basically work together. There is no difference of the institution of the church and the institution of chieftaincy, because both of us want peace and harmony. My pastor preaches peace in the church and I preach peace in my palace. The Anglican Church that I attend was built in 1930 by my grandfather, who was a chief. My family does not live separately from the church and in fact my stool belongs to the same denomination as the Anglican Church. I see the two religions, the traditional religion and Christianity, as complementary (Nana Serwaah Amponssaa, 29).

The Kumawuhemma, who is an Anglican queen mother, did not see the Asante institute of chieftaincy as having the specific role of religious peacekeeping any more than the Anglican Church. The perception of this queen mother differs from that of most other respondents, who believed 'religious peacekeeping' to be a characteristic of the institution of chieftaincy rather than any of the churches or Islamic religious institutions, chief-imams or headmen. The unique opinion of the Kumawuhemma might be understood in the light of the strong intertwinement of the Kumawu stool with the Anglican Church, which makes it difficult to separate the religious function of the mentioned Asante queen mother from that of the mentioned Anglican pastor.

New African Traditional Religious Movements (NATRMs) Eric Kwame Ofori (27), who is a member of the Afrikania Church, made the following remark about the religious peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities and said:

If I have a problem, I first discuss it with my grandmother. If she cannot help me, then I will go to my grandfather. If they are both not able to help me, I will take the matter up to the head of my family (the *abusuapanin*). Then, if he cannot solve the problem one can go to ones' chief or queen mother, who is the *abusuapanin* of a royal family. In terms of peacekeeping, the *abusua panin* is a family peacekeeper, whereas the Asante traditional authorities are community peacekeepers. These Royals help all commoners and advise the *abusuapanin* of all families, no matter their religious, their political preferences or their cultural background (Eric Kwame Ofori, 27).

Ofori also gave an example of a problem that was dealt with by an Asante chief, which clarifies these Royals' function, and said:

A friend of mine was not satisfied with his job. Therefore, he quit his job and tried to find another one in Nigeria. Unfortunately, he could not find a job in this country, so he went back to Ghana. Then, when he came back, he first went to his grandmother and grandfather, who could not help him. Then, he went to the *abusuapanin* for advice. His *abusuapanin* advised him to go to his chief to take the matter up to the management of his former employee and apologise for his resignation. The *abusuapanin* advised to ask the chief for help, because he is powerful and might make things work (Eric Kwame Ofori, 27).

Ofori's quotations show that Asante chiefs are on top of the hierarchy of a family institution that is set up to solve problems within the Asante community. On the lowest level, it is one's own grandfather and grandmother who can advise in case of troubles; on the highest level this function is exercised by the Asante chiefs and queen mothers. Because these Asante Royals operate on the highest level, they cannot afford to discriminate against a commoner. Their function is to help and advise all in times of need.

New Religious Movements (NRMs) Osei Hyiaman (32) told me that according to him the relationship between the pastors and the chiefs is as follows:

If I have a problem, I would first go to my chief. If he cannot solve my problem, then he can invite my pastor. My chief and my pastor work together, because we all live in the same community. If I have a problem with a Christian of a different denomination in my area, who obeys the same chief, it works as follows: Mister X and I go to our chief. If he cannot solve

the problem, we both go to our own pastor. Then, the chief can invite both our pastors and they can solve the problem together with us. The chief is thus the central figure in the community who brings his subjects together no matter their religion. If I have a problem with a member of my own church, I will only seek advice of my pastor (Osei Hyiaman, 32).

The above quotation shows that when two people in the Kumasi Metropolis with a different religious background are in conflict, the chief is the first person in the community who is there to solve their problem. If two or more people of the same Christian denomination are in conflict, the problem can be solved by their pastor instead. The example shows that in case of interreligious conflicts, the chief is there to bring people together and create a peaceful atmosphere.

To sum up, the characteristics that are mentioned by indigenous-Christian and NATRM inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis about the religious peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities are as follows:

- (1) Asante traditional authorities help all commoners, no matter what their religious preferences. Methodist and Pentecostal pastors, instead, only help members of their own congregation.
- (2) Asante traditional authorities maintain social relationships with the leaders of all religious movements within the Kumasi Metropolis during important indigenous religious festivals, such as *Asanteman Adaye Kese*.
- (3) The Asante Indigenous Religion, which legitimises the institution of chieftaincy, incorporates elements of the religious world beliefs Islam and Christianity.
- (4) The Asante institution of chieftaincy works together with pastors (such as those of the Anglican church)
- (5) The Asante traditional authorities are at the top of the hierarchy of help and advise seeking bodies in the community, which, on the highest level, are meant to help all commoners regardless of their religious and political preferences and cultural background.

6.6 Four integrating bodies in Kumasi in relation to Asante chieftaincy

In this section, I will examine the way in which other institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis contribute to religious peacekeeping and how their method differs from that of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers who are connected to the Asante institution of chieftaincy. This is necessary to find out whether there is something so unique in the Asante traditional authorities' function of religious peacekeepers in the Kumasi Metropolis that it provides an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in this area of the Asante Region. The Asante chieftaincy institution is only indispensable and therefore a source of its persistence when there is no other institution in the Metropolis that can fulfil the same peacekeeping role as the one performed by the Asante chiefs and queen mothers. The question that arises is thus whether there are religious peacekeeping institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis other than the Asante chieftaincy institute, and if so, what is it that these institutions are doing?

Fieldwork experience provides me with the information that besides the Asante institution of Chieftaincy, there are four other institutes in the Kumasi Metropolis whose aim is to integrate the various religious movements. These are:

- (1) 'The 'Asante Christian Chief and Queen mother Association', (ACCQA), a Christian interreligious body.
- (2) 'The Centre for National Culture', (CNC) which receives funding from the national and local government.
- (3) The radio station 'Zuria 88.7 FM', a Muslim-Christian interreligious body and,
- (4) 'The United Front for Islamic Affairs', (UFIA), an Islamic interreligious organisation.

I will discuss in turn how each of these organisations operate and how their peacekeeping methods differ from those of the Asante traditional authorities.

(1) All mentioned mainstream churches in the Kumasi Metropolis are members of the 'National Christian Chief and Queen mother Association' (NCCQA), which since the second half of the 1990s¹⁵⁰ has had a regional branch in Kumasi¹⁵¹. The ACCQA's aim is to promote dialogue between Christianity and the Asante Indigenous Religion. According to the ACCQA, there are at least three reasons for building a more harmonious relationship between Asante indigenous practitioners and Christians since Ghana gained Independence in 1957:

- (a) A movement of liberation in theology since Ghana gained Independence, which struggles against the oppressive and exploitative structures of the colonial masters that undermined the African identity.
- (b) A moving away from the *tabula rasa* in theology, which attempted to despise and destroy all non-Christian elements to create a contextualised theology that emphasises the dialogue with the non-Christian world and acknowledges that Christians cannot 'reduce the biblical Gospel to a few culture-free axioms which are universally intelligible', and
- (c) Acknowledgement of the bones of contention between Christianity and the Asante Indigenous Religion, which are polygamy, the pouring of libation and the dependence on deities for one's well-being, the ancestral veneration and the indigenous religious festivals (*Asanteman Adaye Kese*).

Since the Christian belief of the orthodox churches has become more tolerant towards non-Christian faiths, it has also been easier for the Asante indigenous practitioners to adapt and adopt elements of Christianity in their religion. Consequently, the inhabitants of Kumasi have made a lot of progress, especially in the last twenty years, at making Asante chieftaincy and Christianity compatible (Asante 2006). Since March 2008, the ACCQA does not function any more due to financial problems, but has nevertheless reached some important goals. This is more or less reflected in the answers of my Christian and indigenous Christian respondents, who give their opinion on the relationship between being a Christian on the one hand and chieftaincy on the other hand with regard to 'the pouring of libation' and 'ancestral veneration'. Although the heyday of the ACCQA is over, new initiatives with

¹⁵⁰ In this year, the District Chairman (Ashanti) of the Methodist Church, Ghana Rev. Dr. Asante Antwi, the Synod Secretary, Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Asante, Bishop Dr. Akwasi Sarpong of the Catholic Church, Bishop K. Yeboah of the Anglican Church, Rev. L. A. Quaynor, Charman, Ashanti Presbyterian Church, Dr. Kofi Dzane Selby and Otumfuo's representative met with some chiefs of the Church in Ashanti District and decided on the formation of an Association of Christian Chiefs and Queen mothers to foster the teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and to ensure unity among the Chiefs so that stool practices could be changed to assume progressive methods acceptable to the Christian faith.

¹⁵¹ Kumasi was actually the birth place of this association.

the same aims as this association have recently popped up in the Kumasi Metropolis (Rev. Dr. C.K. Coffie, 4, April 2008). Due to the specific emphasis on the relationship between chieftaincy and Christianity, neither the ACCQA nor these new initiatives are in rival with the religious peacekeeping function of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers of *Asanteman*. These Asante traditional authorities are perceived as religious peacekeepers, because they maintain peace between the Asante and Christians or Islamic practitioners. In comparison with ACCQA, the uniqueness of the Asante institution of chieftaincy thus lies in the chiefs' and queen mothers' neutrality towards the belief of their subjects.

(2) The aims and goals of 'The Centre for National Culture' (CNC) in Kumasi are 'to promote, preserve, project and protect' the heritage of all Ghanaians in general and the Asante in particular. In 1951, Dr. A.A.Y. Kyeremateng founded and became the director of the 'Asante Cultural Centre' (ACCa) in Kumasi. The ACC was built with support from Otumfuo Prempeh II, from whom they received the land on which the centre is located. In 1963 the name of the ACC changed to 'Ghana National Cultural Centre' (GNCC). Its purpose was to bring together the various artistic groups representing the different cultural communities resident in Kumasi to perform and exhibit their works for the enjoyment, delight and enlightenment of the general public once every year. Since 1989, the GNCC has fused with the 'Art Council of Ghana' (ACG) in Accra and is known as 'The Centre for National Culture' (CNC), which organises school singing and dancing competitions and works together with the national and local government. The CNC also organises religious festivals with a special focus on each religious group in Kumasi and one for all religious movements. With a focus on the Asante Region, for the Christians there is *dyewami*, which is celebrated during Christmas and Easter. For the Asante indigenous practitioners, there is a festival during which the indigenous priests are invited to perform and show their powers. This event is comparable to what happened at *Asanteman Adae Kese* (see: section 6.5.5). For the Muslims there is *Ramafest*, which purpose is to celebrate the end of the *Ramadam* and to help the various Muslims to integrate with each other. And then there is the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival, which is meant for all religious movements to integrate with members of various different religions and also to integrate Asante from various other places. Due to the many inter-tribal wars that the Asante fought, there are a lot of Asante who now live in the Eastern Region. During *Asanteman Adae Kese* the Asante from the whole of Ghana come over to celebrate. *Asanteman Adae Kese* is specifically meant to integrate Asante indigenous practitioners with Muslims and Christians. This is why a 'Muslim Thanksgiving Service'¹⁵² and a 'Special Christian Thanksgiving Service'¹⁵³ were part of *Asanteman Adae Kese*.

¹⁵² The 'Muslim Thanksgiving Service' was held on Friday 28 May 2004 at 13.00 p.m at Manhyia (Dwaberem).

The 'Muslim Thanksgiving Service' attracted a lot of important Muslim heads, such as the National Chief Imam Sheikh Usumanu Nuhu Sharabutu, the Regional Chief Imam Sheikh Imurana Musa, Council members of Ulamau and the Imams Ameer and Mauvi A Wahab Adam – the Missionary in charge of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission and the Ghana Ahmadiyya Community. The Regional Chief-Imam opened the service with a prayer, distributed extracts from the Qur'an to all Muslims and then prayed for the Asantehene. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission leader Mauvi A Wahab Adam preached the first sermon, in which he advised his audience to show respect for chiefs and queen mothers, since they are the agents of Allah, who appointed them to lead the nation. He ended by assuring the Asantehene that Muslims would always support him with their prayers. Sheikh Sharabutu, who preached the second sermon, said that the institutions of chieftaincy in Ghana should be used to foster unity, peace and development of the country. On behalf of his Mission, he then presented a Qur'an with commentary in Twi translation and a Big Ram to the Asantehene. The Asantehene's chief-linguist Baffour Kwaku Amoaten II received gifts on his majesty's behalf and the Offinsohene Wiafe Akenten III was delegated to render thanks to the Muslim community. He told them to come to the palace in case of troubles and thanked the Muslims for their ceaseless prayers for the Asante community. Important guests at the 'Special Christian Thanksgiving Service' were the Presiding Elder, Rev. Ben Mills of the Ame Zion Church, who did 'Call to Venerate' and the Regional Head of the Church of Pentecost, Apostle J. Essel, who prayed at the beginning of the programme. Rev. Dr. Mensah Otabil preached the sermon. The Catholic Bishop of Cape Coast Peter K. Appiah Turkson, the Anglican Bishop of Kumasi Rt. Rev. Daniel Yinka Sarfo, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rt. Rev Dr. Sam Prempeh and others prayed for the Asantehene and *Asanteman*, which is the nation as a whole. They all mentioned the need for unity and peace and the importance of the institution of chieftaincy in reaching and maintaining these goals (S. F. Adjei 41, Rev Dr. Charles Kingsley Coffie, 4, Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina, 52, Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka).

To sum up, an important function of CNC is the organisation of general and specific religious cultural festivals in order to promote the integration of inhabitants of various religious movements in the Kumasi Metropolis. The way in which the aims of the CNC differ from the Asante institution of chieftaincy is that it mainly focuses on specific religious groups. The only festival that focuses on more than one religious group is *Asanteman Adae Kese*. Adjei, the Director of CNC, claimed to have organised this festival and he was indeed one of the organisers of the *Asanteman Adae Kese* festival committee. A look at all the members of this committee shows, however, that only one member (the director himself) came from CNC, whereas fourteen of the fifty four members were chiefs. The *Asanteman Adae Kese* celebration was thus far more the work of the Asante

¹⁵³ The 'Special Christian Thanksgiving Service' was held on Sunday, 30 May 2004 at 2.15 p.m at Manhyia (Dwaberem).

chieftaincy institute than of CNC. This comparison emphasises again the remaining apparent uniqueness of the 'religious peacekeeping' role of traditional authorities of the Asante chieftaincy institute, which is generally perceived as positive.

(3) Another organisation that helps to promote integration among the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis is the radio station 'Zuria 88.7 FM'¹⁵⁴, which was founded by the Bisanga or Bisa Muslim Hane Harune (37). Its aim is to let all Muslims in the Kumasi settlement preach in their own language. According to Harune, unlike Schildkrout and Pellows'¹⁵⁵ assertions on this matter, most people in the Muslim settlements do not only speak Hausa, which is the lingua franca in the settlements, but also Arabic or English. They speak at least two other different languages, including the language of their hosts and of their parents' original hometown. Harune himself for instance speaks English, Arabic Hausa, Twi and Bisanga. Seasoned Muslim preachers and scholars of all these regions preach on 'Zuria 88.7 FM'. By preaching in fifteen different languages 'Zuria 88.7 FM' hopes to reach all Muslims and Christians of Northern Descent in the Ashanti Region, in the Eastern, in the Western and in the Central Regions. It also hopes to reach all inhabitants of the Northern Region of Ghana. Harune, the Director of Zuria 88.7 FM said:

The purpose of our radio programmes is to create unity between the people inside the Kumasi settlement and between the settlement Muslims and all other inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis, Ashanti and other Regions. The slogan of *Zuria* FM is 'One nation, one people, one future, one destiny'. For the Christians and Muslims, we have a radio programme that is in Arabic and English. We read from the Qur'an in Arabic and give the English translation afterwards. This programme is meant to create harmony between Muslims and Christians by showing them all the similarities between what is written down in the Bible and in the Qur'an. We do not attempt our listeners to convert to Islam (Hane Harune, 37).

Mossi headman Al-Hajji Ibrahim Abdul Achman Adam the III (47) informed me that most chief-imams in the Kumasi settlement buy airtime on Zuria 88.7 FM because it gives them the opportunity to preach in their own language about the practices of Islam and to teach them on their interpretation of the Qur'an. Achman said that he teaches the Mossi about the Qur'an and begs them not to fight among themselves or people with other religious backgrounds. Clearly, Zuria 88.7 FM is thus also a religious peacekeeping body. It differs from the Asante chieftaincy, however, because its focus is on Muslim and Christians only. The Asante Indigenous practitioners are left out, unlike in the case of the peacekeeping operation of traditional authorities of the Asante chieftaincy. Also, Zuria 88.7 FM concentrates on a wider audience, whereas the Asante chieftaincy Institute specifically focuses on methods of religious peacekeeping in the Asante Region.

¹⁵⁴ In Hausa *zuria* means 'genotype' or 'one big family'.

(4) The 'United Front for Islamic Affairs' (UFIA) is an umbrella organisation of various other Muslim organisations in West Africa. It was founded in 2005 by Mohammed Brahma Joseph and Zedan Rashid. UFIA has approximately two hundred thousand members. Various settlement headmen, such as the one of the Mossi and Asante *Nkramo*, are represented in the board of trustees of this organisation. The main goal of UFIA is to raise the level of education of its members, so that they will be able to increase the political power of Muslims in and outside the settlements on both a local and a national level¹⁵⁶. Additionally, UFIA is an umbrella body of the 'Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah' movement meaning 'the People of the Sunna and the Community' and the 'Tijaniyya movement' (Mohammed Braimah Joseph and Zedan Rashid, 53). The 'Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah' movement is itself an umbrella organisation for all Wahhabi organisations active in Ghana, such as 'The Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs' (SCIA). This is an Islamic movement that was established in 1968 as an offspring of the 'Ghana Muslim Mission' (GMM), which supports the building of schools, public preaching and conferences (Skinner 2008a). Members of the three mentioned organisations are automatically also members of UFIA. They pay monthly dues to their own organisations which includes a small fee for UFIA. The imams of the Friday mosques also contribute weekly to UFIA the amount of 10,000 cedis [1 pound] (Mohammed Braimah Joseph and Zedan Rashid, 53). UFIA is thus a religious peacekeeping body, which integrates various other Muslim organisations. The focus is, however, on Muslims only, and not solely in the Asante Region.

To conclude this section, the Asante institution of chieftaincy is indeed a unique institute for religious peacekeeping in the Kumasi Metropolis. It is the only one of the five mentioned institutions in the Metropolis that focuses on Asante Indigenous practitioners, Muslims and Christians, and which focuses on the Asante Region only. All the others (ACCQA, CNC, Zuria 88.7 FM and UFIA) focus on only one or two of the main religious movements and their subgroups in various Regions in Ghana.

Asante chieftaincy as a religious peacekeeping body can also be perceived as a model for religious peacekeeping in other parts of Africa, such as for instance Northern Nigeria. In the 1980s in this part of West Africa a series of violent confrontations occurred. In the spring and summer of 1980, a group of followers of Maitatsine, although originally perhaps non-Muslim by nature, attempted to purify Islam and subsequently attacked traditional Hausa Muslims, who followed a form of Islam that predated Uthman dan Fodio's jihads in this town. After hundreds of people had been killed by the rioters, in November and December of that year, the so-called 'Maitatsine riots'

¹⁵⁵ Schildkrout and Pellow assert that the majority of 'the people of the *zongo*' in Kumasi do not speak *Twi*, which is the language of the Asante or the language of their parents' original descent, but learn Hausa instead. (Schildkrout 2006), (Pellow 2002).

¹⁵⁶ The organisation has an Islamic educational unit that builds training colleges for Muslims, and also aims to improve the level of accounting skills for Muslim market women, so that they will be economically more independent of their husbands.

had to be stopped by the Nigerian Army. In July 1981 this conflict caused a clash between the *emir* (chief or prince) of Kano and the Kano state government officers, who accused this *emir* of not having prevented the riots of 1980 from happening due to his personal association with the Islamic faith. The conflicts of the 1980s are thus an example of a situation in which an *emir* or chief possibly — depending on whether the accusations against him were right, which is so far unknown — did not stand objectively towards the faith of his subjects. Rather than operating as a religious peacekeeper, he might in fact have contributed to the cause of the conflict (Bienen 1986), (Hiskett 1987). If indigenous religious peacekeepers had been operating in Kano they might have prevented these riots from happening.

6.7 History and the Kumasifo perceptions of the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly vs Asante chieftaincy

Apart from the above-mentioned religious peacekeepers in this Chapter, the Asante institution of chieftaincy also, in some way, cooperates and in another way is in rivalry with the local secular institution for peacekeeping in Ghana: the local government. In most of the colonial and post-colonial era, chieftaincy in Ghana has been in great rivalry with the national government. As we saw in Chapter Four, in the early post-colonial period (1957-1966), President Nkrumah and his political party the ‘Convention People’s Party’ (CPP) attempted to wipe out the chiefs in Ghana. Under the CPP the traditional councils were stripped of their local government and judicial functions while the colonial government’s erstwhile right of recognition of traditional rulers was retained. The CPP members set up ‘Regional Houses of Chiefs’ (RHCs) and gave them the responsibility of re-examining customary law in various parts of the country. Traditional rulers were deprived of their financial base when the new local government bodies were granted land revenues that were formerly reserved for the traditional councils (Brempong 2000). After Nkrumah, with the exception of two brief interludes of twenty-seven months each, Ghana was ruled by the military from 1966 until 1992. Between late 1969 and 1972 there was a democratic elected Busia regime. And, between September 1979 and the end of December 1981 president Limann, who was also democratically chosen, was ruling. The length of the periods that the colonels Busia and Limann were in power was, however, too short for them to become powerful enough to overrule chiefs and queen mothers in Ghana. The leaders of the four following military regimes — ‘The National Liberation Council’ (NLC:1966-69), the ‘National Redemption Council’ (NRC) that later became the ‘Supreme Military Council’ (NRC/SMC: 1972-79), the ‘Armed Forced Revolutionary Council’ (AFRC:June-September 1979) and the ‘Provisional National Defence Council’ (PNDC:1982-1992) were more dominant and their regimes were stronger (Ryan 1996:320).

In short, in the period 1878-1904, the pre-colonial chiefs were replaced by 'Native Authorities' (NA). Since the first constitution of Ghana after the country gained Independence in 1957, chiefs have organised themselves in RHCs. Queen mothers were excluded from these Houses, but founded their own organisations. The RHCs replaced the 'Three Provincial Councils' (TPCs) of The Gold Coast, which, in 1925, were created by the British Governor Guggisberg. In 1969, under the NLC regime which was ruled by four soldiers and four police officers, five paramount chiefs of various RHCs founded the 'National House of Chiefs' (NHCs). This gave chieftaincy in Ghana a powerful hierarchical structure, which was maintained, since the traditional authorities also took care not to involve themselves too much in the political life, which was particularly agitated at the time. In 1980, under the PNDC regime of Jerry Rawlings, again the chiefs suffered the mistrust and the discreditation of the government. Its decentralisation process was an attempt to deal a decisive blow to the existence of the traditional authorities. The traditional institutions were banished, and local assemblies were installed and considered the base of the 'democracy of the people'. The chiefs did not receive a place in the new local assemblies or any other body, because the government of the PNDC judged the chiefs as anti-democratic and counter-revolutionary (Jacquemot 2007:55-58). Since the Fourth Republican Constitution of 1992, times have changed and the institution of Asante chieftaincy in Ghana is guaranteed by the country's constitution. Ghana has become a decentralised, multiparty electoral democracy, with a dual political institution. The chiefs' formal political authority is restricted to customary matters and in addition chiefs serve as advisers to the local government.

In section 1.3 and 1.5.1 of this thesis I have explained how the Asante institution of chieftaincy and the local government, the 'Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly' (KMA), in Ghana are interlinked. I clarified that generally these two political institutions respect one another's political domain, which differ. While the pre-colonial founded institution of chieftaincy deals with traditional matters, the post-colonial founded local government is in charge of all other matters. Therefore, chieftaincy and the local government are theoretically not in rivalry. Practically, however, the leaders of the two institutions do not always work together, and perceive each other as rivals. Each political institution needed to find a way to legitimise itself and find supporters among the population. So far, I have presumed that the legitimisation of the institution of chieftaincy lies in the way Asante chiefs and queen mothers know how to connect to the Asante Indigenous Religion. In this religion, chiefs gain authority because of their representation of the ancestral spirits, which makes them the lords of the soil. Additionally, the Asante chiefs and queen mothers symbolise the unity of the community through their connection with the *Sika Dwa Kofi*.

The question that arises is how the unity of Asante chieftaincy is related to its persistence. To understand this relationship in depth, I will focus on the relationship of this institute to the local

government. A comparison with this secular institution shows an alternative type of institutional authorisation. It also clarifies which movements within the society feel affiliated to chieftaincy, and which ones do not. That leads us back to the reasoning in Chapter One that a chief is primarily a chief because of his adherents. A persistence of the indigenous religious legitimisation of chieftaincy, which goes together with the persistence of groups of supporters, might provide an indigenous religious explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The subquestions that will be discussed in the next two sections are as follows:

- a. how do Asante chiefs legitimise themselves in comparison with politicians according to the people of Kumasi (*Kumasifo*) and,
- b. which characteristics are demonstrated by the inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis who feel themselves attracted to either the leadership of Asante traditional authorities or the politicians?

6.7.1 The legitimisation of and loyalty towards Asante traditional authorities and politicians: the sacred function of Asante traditional authorities

In this section, I will discuss the responses of two Asante subjects, a queen mother who believes that Asante chieftaincy is a sacred institution and whose loyalty is therefore more with the Asante chiefs and queen mothers than the politicians, and a chief, whose name is Owusu Asiamah II.

(a) Ernestina Ama Brenya (8), an older woman, believed that the Asantehene is very sacred. She thought him even more sacred than the other paramount chiefs because he is appointed forever and dies on the stool, whereas all other paramount chiefs can be destooled. Because of his sacredness, she believed that the Asantehene and other chiefs should never walk alone. The Asante King usually has an *ahenkwa* (servant) or *nhenkwa* (servants) who are moving ahead of him. Moreover, he is accompanied by an umbrella carrier. These people accompany the chief to remind him of his sacredness. Since powers are invested in him, a chief should not be easily approachable. Ernestina's father was a praise singer at the royal court in Kumasi, which is how she came to know that in the colonial period the chiefs and the Asantehene had many more servants than they have these days. There was a special servant to brush the Asantehene's teeth and another one to cut his fingernails and there were those who bathed the king at least twice a day. And even further back, in the pre-colonial days, when the king passed away, servants were beheaded to accompany the Asantehene to his journey to the ancestral world (*asamando*). Ernestina believes, however, that the Asante chiefs have not lost their sacredness altogether and have remained as important religious leaders for the Asante people (*Asantefoo*). With regard to her loyalty to the present-day Asantehene Osei Tutu II, Ernestina remarked:

I believe that Otumfuo [LM: the Asantehene] is sent by God, which is why I am very loyal to him. Former Asantehenes have been murderers and were very demanding. Otumfuo is instead modest and he brings peace. I am also loyal to president Kufuor, but I do not regard him as a religious leader, which is why he is less important to me (Ernestina Ama Brenya, 8).

Ernestina is an example of an Asante who shows more loyalty to her king and chiefs than to Kufuor, because of the traditional authorities' religious leadership, which is supported by their use of royal attributes, such as umbrellas and staffs.

(b) Nana Yaa Asantewaa II, the Queen mother of Ejisu (20), believed that the inhabitants of Ejisu respect her primarily because of her connection with the ancestral spirits. Yaa Asantewaa II:

When the famous 'Yaa Asantewaa' who fought in the last war against the British in 1900 died, the then ruling Asantehene Prempeh I decided to take her body to my palace. That is why, recently, when I was not feeling well, I saw Nana Yaa Asantewaa, to whom I am named, in a dream. She stood before me and gave me a skirt. She called the queen mother of Adanse and she invited another queen mother, who is unknown to me. In my dream, these three queen mothers stood in front of me and they must have cured me, because when I woke up my illness was gone. This was after I poured libation and brought some food to my ancestors, who heard my prayers and have provided. What Kufuor lacks as a leader is his connection with the spirits. That is why my subjects in Ejisu are more loyal to me than to Kufuor (Nana Yaa Asantewaa II, 20).

The queen mother is another example of an Asante who believes in the religious leadership of Asante traditional authorities and the power of the ancestral spirit as the source of her leadership and the loyalty of her subjects for her.

(c) Efia Bio (31) mentioned that generally the royal attributes of Asante chiefs and queen mothers are there to distinguish Asante chiefs from their subjects. Some of the attributes, however, do have a religious function. An example of this is the chief's staff (*akyeame poma*), which identifies the *abusua* where people come from. Bio said:

I am a *Koona* and the symbol of my staff is *koo* ('done'). *Koo* is the oldest *abusua* of all the families in Asante. Other families are: Asona ('vulture'), Bretuo (*sebo*), Aduana (*karma*) (Efia Bio, 31)

Bio also told me that in Adanse, where she originally came from, the paramount chief, the Twafohene, the Akwamuhene, the Kronihene, the Adontehene, the Bankomhene and the Nifahene are all from the *Koona* stock. The *koo* staffs of these chiefs show their ancestral connection with this family. Bio teaches us that royal attributes are there both to distinguish Royals from subjects and to clarify the chief's connection with the ancestral spirits. She did not mention anything about Kufuor.

(d) the Obogumanhene Owusu Asiamah II (*Konongo*), 54) told me that he perceives himself as a moral and a religious leader. If one of his subjects is not behaving well, he talks to the person and attempts to help him, or, if necessary, he sends the person to the Presbyterian Church of which he is a member. He believes that if he gives himself to Jesus Christ that people will follow him, which is why he prays to the ancestral spirits and Jesus. The Obogumanhene believes that because of the influence of Christianity and modernity, the sacrality of chieftaincy has changed. These days, chiefs are, for instance, allowed to eat in public and show themselves in a restaurant, whereas in the pre-colonial and colonial period this behaviour was perceived to be an abomination, since it would affect their sacrality and safety. And yet, the religious roots of Asante chieftaincy have not altogether

waned, since it is, for instance, still believed that a woman in her menstruating period cannot cook for a chief as this would cause spiritual pollution. The Obogumanhene himself believes that there are indeed powers invested in the stool, but these forces are not his greatest fear of being destooled. The Obogumanhene:

In my function, I believe it to be very important to remain in good contact with my subjects. If I behave well to them, they will respect and protect me. If, however, I do not serve them well, they might plot against me (Obogumanhene, 54).

The Obogumanhene shows that he fears his people more than the ancestral spirits, which shows the 'this-worldly' character of his reign. With regard to the relationship with politicians, he mentioned that since the presidency of Kufuor, chiefs and queen mothers have generally been in a cordial relationship with the government. They are the advisers of the politicians and need them to realise development projects and especially to improve the education of their subjects, which are chieftaincy tasks that are emphasised these days. Indigenous religious rituals, such as *Asanteman Adae Kese* and funerals, are also used to socialise with politicians. Socialising is indeed a function of these rituals, apart from its religious function. And recruiting people is another task for chiefs and politicians, through making use of either religious or secular symbols and attributes. According to the Obogumanhene, the offices of traditional authorities and politicians are not that different, apart from the fact that there is still a little fear among chiefs and queen mothers that the stool can kill them if they do not behave well, which is why chiefs are more trustworthy.

6.7.2 The legitimisation of and loyalty towards Asante traditional authorities and politicians: the secular function of Asante traditional authorities

In this section, I show four examples of Asante traditional authorities or their subjects who emphasised the secular function of Asante traditional authorities and were equally loyal to them as to Ghanaian politicians.

(a) Nana Nyarko (18) mentioned that the chiefs have to use religious attributes such as stools and umbrellas, palanquins and *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloth to show that they are more important and powerful than their subjects. In relation to her loyalty to the Asante traditional authorities, she mentioned:

We all have to respect them. If you do not respect them, people will disrespect you because our chiefs and queen mothers should not be treated as equal. The same counts for politicians, who also have social status. This is why we need to respect them (Nana Nyarko, 18).

Nyarko's answer shows that apart from religious reasons, royal attributes are also important for Asante traditional authorities in showing their social status, which is also a reason for Asante subjects to show respect for their traditional authorities and politicians.

(b) Kwaku Amoako Attah Fosu (39) revealed to me that being a chief or a queen mother is a very desirable position in *Asanteman*. Sometimes, people are even so eager to become an Asante traditional authority that they kill one another to obtain this position. In Akim, for instance, a successor of the stool got killed and the person who hired the murderer attempted to bribe the stool family to become the murdered chiefs' successor. The case was brought to court and the murderer was imprisoned, according to Fosu. The reason why Asante are so eager to become a traditional authority is because of the respect that comes with the stool. It is an honorary position and it often makes one rich and powerful. For the same reason people also like to become politicians. In that sense, being a traditional authority or a politician is almost the same. The major difference is that chieftaincy is primarily a sacred institution, whereas the nation and local government are secular political institutions.

(c) Josef Agyeman (35) seemed to be very much aware of the strategies used by Asante traditional authorities to remain in power. Agyeman believed that these days fewer people attend public Asante indigenous religious rituals, such as some parts of funerals and certain festivals, unless they are very spectacular, such as the *Asanteman Adaye Kese* celebration. The younger ones do not take enough time to learn how to perform the rituals from the elders, unless they are the heirs of the stool. They rank their priorities differently and prefer to travel and leave the country rather than listen to the elderly. This has a negative effect on the persistence of Asante chieftaincy, and the power of chiefs and queen mothers is waning. They do not have all the power any more to declare wars or to prevent people from breaking certain taboos, such as fetching water from the river on certain days, which might bring misfortune. By bringing Christianity into it they maintain their popularity. In addition, Asante chiefs and queen mothers also have created a new function for themselves, that of development workers.

(d) the Mossi headman Ustaz Ali Adam Al-Ameer (45) remarks that he respects president Kufuor and the Asantehene, because Allah gave both of them the power to rule and he finds it important to respect the elders. Al-Ameer does not respect either of these leaders more than the other, because neither of them does much for the Mossi. He gives the example that when one of his subjects dies, he provides a white cloth and he collects money at the mosque for the funeral. He is convinced that since he is the leader who is most near to the Mossi, they listen more to him than any other leader in the country.

(e) the Kumawuhemma (29) Serwaah Amponssaa believes that her powers are more derived from her position as embodiment of the ancestral land on which her subjects are allowed to work and stay than from her connection with the ancestral spirits. Amponssaa:

The moment that people are in my domain they have to respect me. If they do not do so, I have the right to ask people to leave my township. In practice this has not happened before during my reign. Mostly, people have to slaughter a cow or a sheep and then we cook the

meat to pacify the offender in relation to the ancestors and the deities (Serwaah Amponssaa, 29).

In relation to the Asantehene and Kufuor, she mentioned that her family ruled over Kumawu for three hundred years, whereas Kufuor has only been the president of Ghana for eight years. She thought that because of their long history with their subjects' families, the local and national government also needs the Asante chiefs and queen mothers to rule. Since 2000, the relationship between the Asante traditional authorities and the government has been generally cordial. Both parties have a sometimes conflicting interest in land issues, but she also works together with the local government, for instance, to prevent domestic violence and child abuse. Because she also cooperates with politicians, she does not mind that in their own way they also attempt to seek supporters among the population. The institution of chieftaincy on the one hand and the local and national government on the other are two different political institutions, but its members work together to bring peace to the Asante nation. The interview data show that Nana Serwaah Amponssaa is very conscious about how the traditional political institution and the state operate and does not seem to act primarily out of fear for the spirits in the ancestral stool, but out of involvement with the people in her community, whose lives she would like to improve.

The above and other answers of my respondents confirm the general theory of chieftaincy in Africa by Van Binsbergen mentioned in section 1.3 of this thesis. Asante traditional authorities do indeed make use of symbols and attributes that belong to a cosmological belief to legitimise their power, such as in case of the Asante, the *Sika Dwa Kofi*, but also *Kente* cloth and *Adinkra* symbols. A look at the educational background of my respondents who employ the indigenous religious symbolism used by Asante chiefs and queen mothers, shows that there are at least two groups of people in the Kumasi Metropolis who show great interest in traditional authorisation of the Asante institution of chieftaincy. The first group is that of lower-educated respondents in Kumasi and its adjacent villages and the second one consists of highly educated respondents in the Kumasi Metropolis. The way in which these two groups of respondents show their affiliation to the Asante traditional authorities differs. The second group shows greater consciousness of the strategies of Asante chiefs and queen mothers to gain adherents and does not take their explanation of the meaning of symbols used by these authorities literally. For the lower educated respondents, the *Sika Dwa Kofi* foundation history and other chieftaincy histories with symbolic meanings are not regarded as myths or strategies, but as a daily reality.

Then, who of the *Kumasifo* among my respondents felt themselves more affiliated to politicians rather than the Asante chiefs and queen mothers? The background of the answers of my

respondents reveals that this was mostly the case with the younger and middle educated and the non-Akan members.

One historical explanation for this is that since the colonial period Kumasi has been a traditional town, whose cultural life has been influenced by outsiders from the Islamic and Christian traditions. Therefore, the Asante, who have always formed the majority of the population of this town, have had to coordinate outside influences and protect themselves against culturally — and also politically and economically — being dominated by outsiders. Consequently, traditional intelligentsia among the Asante have always been reluctant towards too much outside influence and have been very aware of the possible negative effect of those influences on the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. The effects of this attitude of the so called ‘traditionalists’ among the Asante intelligentsia in present-day Ghana is twofold. First, they preach against ‘modernity’ and turn themselves, for instance, against the introduction of foreign products in Kumasi, such as CDs, plastic chairs, which are used in funerals, and the ‘MacDonaldisation’¹⁵⁷ of their society. The foundation of many of their traditionalist societies dates back to the colonial period, when Kumasi — and its large number of NLM adherents — were the nerve system of resistance against the CPP Nkrumah regime, which attempted to wipe out traditional influences and transform Ghana into a modern nation-state. Second, a point on which I have elaborated in sections 4.2.2, 4.3.4, 6.1, 6.3 is that Asante traditional authorities maintain a policy of non-interference towards Muslims of non-Asante background. Consequently, in the colonial period, some of the Muslims in Kumasi have therefore stopped being loyal to the Asantehene and have instead become loyal to Nkrumah and other national and local politicians belonging to the Ghanaian nation state. Since none of the loyalty of or for these leaders has been very beneficial, these days many Muslims in the Kumasi Metropolis show, in the first place, loyalty to their own headmen and are ambivalent in terms of loyalty towards the Asante traditional authorities and local and national Ghanaian politicians.

Conclusion

The question to be answered in this Chapter is as follows:

To what extent does ‘religious tolerance’ — which is a characteristic of Asante indigenous religions peacekeeping — provide an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis?

I have distinguished the relationship between 1 (a) the tolerance of Asante traditional authorities of the religious space of non-Asante indigenous practitioners and (b) the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. I have also looked at the perceptions of Indigenous Christian, NATRM and Muslim inhabitants of the Kumasi Metropolis of the religious peacekeeping role of Asante traditional authorities, and 2 (a) indigenous religious tolerance towards Islam and Christianity and (b) the persistence of Asante

¹⁵⁷ MacDonaldisation is the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world (Ritzer 1993:1).

chieftaincy. Finally, to provide insight into to what extent the Asante institution of chieftaincy is unique in its peacekeeping function, I have looked at the characteristics of four other religious peacekeeping bodies within the Metropolis.

Concerning point (1), the relationship between tolerance of the religious space of Asante traditional authorities who operate as peacekeepers and the persistence of Asante chieftaincy is as follows. To maintain peace between Asante indigenous practitioners and Islamic and Christian practitioners, the Asante traditional authorities attempt to stay in a good relationship with Muslim headmen and church leaders. The problem with the Muslim headmen in the most significant Kumasi settlement is that there is no one recognised Muslim authority that represents the whole settlement, which makes it difficult for the Asantehene and other Asante paramount chiefs to relate to the Muslims. With regard to the Christian church leaders, the problem arises in relation to church leaders of Pentecostal churches in Kumasi who are not too willing to cooperate with Asante chiefs and queen mothers in terms of the organisation of the religious space due to the presumed great religious differences between the Pentecostal and the Asante indigenous practitioners. Relationships of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers with the church leaders of MCs are much better due to their shared membership of the ACCQA and more recently similar initiatives. Despite the problematic aspects of the relationship of Asante traditional authorities with Muslims and Christians, the perceptions of my indigenous religious, Muslim and Christian respondents reveal that cooperation with Asante chiefs and queen mothers is generally perceived as positive. The point that is very often mentioned by the respondents is the uniqueness of the Asante institution of chieftaincy as a religiously neutral political body. While all other religious movements and also politicians offer help to members of their own organisation, the chiefs and queen mothers help all of their subjects no matter what their religious or political choice. A study of the aims of four other religious peacekeeping bodies in the Kumasi Metropolis — ACCQA, CNC, Zuria 88.7 FM and UFIA — shows that in comparison with those bodies, the Asante institution of chieftaincy has a unique function in terms of religious peacekeeping. The distinctiveness of their role makes the Asante traditional political institution indispensable, which relates positively to its persistence.

With regard to (2) — tolerance of Asante indigenous religious peacekeepers in relation to the persistence of Asante chieftaincy — I have discussed that, on the one hand, the adaptive and adoptive attitude of Asante Indigenous practitioners, whose representatives are the Asante chiefs and queen mothers, has caused syncretistic forms of the Indigenous Religion and Islam or Christianity to occur. From the ground level, using some examples I gave with regard to the veneration of ancestral spirits, I have shown that members of various mainstream denominations and even of Pentecostal churches do worry about the veneration of ancestral spirits, since they have found a way to incorporate those spirits in their indigenous Christian belief system. A closer look at the way in which indigenous Christians

believe in the myth of the Golden Stool shows that despite the occurrence of syncretistic forms, the belief in the stool as the source of the traditional authorities' spiritual power has not ceased to exist. From the side of Islam, a spontaneous syncretistic form that has come into being is, for instance, the use of charms that include inscriptions of the Qur'an in Twi translation. On the other hand, the attitude of the Asante traditional authorities towards non-Indigenous Religions has also been the result of deliberate policies of those authorities in order to win adherents for their traditional political institutions. An example that I gave of a deliberate policy from the side of the Asante traditional authorities is the ritual of pouring libation. The performance of this ritual is obligatory for indigenous practitioners, but the regulations are such these days that indigenous Christians can ask others to pour libation on their behalf. An example with regard to Muslim's of deliberate syncretism is that of the Asante *Nkramo*, who strategically used his dual religiosity to become a leader among both the Asante and the Asante *Nkramo*. The *Asanteman Adaye Kese* celebration, finally, is an example of deliberate syncretism of Islamic and Christian elements in the Asante Indigenous Religion. The effect of spontaneous and deliberate syncretism for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy is twofold. First, the adoption of non-indigenous elements in AIR increases its resilience against religious influences from outside. This means there is a continuation of the Asante Indigenous Religion, which is the basis for the persistence of the Asante Chieftaincy. Second, the incorporation of the two mentioned 'world religions' in the Indigenous Religion of the Asante is a strategy to increase the number of adherents of the Asante traditional political institution, which would not persist without a great number of followers.

Finally, since the beginning of the Ghanaian president Kufuor's regime in 2000, generally, the Asante traditional authorities have not had much rivalry with local politicians. Since they appeal to different groups of supporters among the *Kumasifo* they legitimise their political institutions differently. The Asante institution of chieftaincy makes use of indigenous religious symbols and cosmology to legitimise itself, such as staffs, *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloth and stools. The state, instead, uses songs, pamphlets and flags for its legitimisation. Also, in terms of supporters and authorisation Asante chieftaincy is unique and it has an irreplaceable function in the society of the Kumasi Metropolis.

Final Conclusion

In this thesis, I have defended the statement that, alongside economic and political factors, Asante Indigenous Religion (AIR) provides an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana.

In part I (Chapters Three and Four), I have focussed on the context of AIR and showed how this religion was used continuously for the authorisation of the Asante Kingdom. In the pre-colonial era, the *Odwira* festival, the custom of swearing an oath to the Asantehene and the myth of the Golden Stool were used to re-enact, re-interpret and transmit Asante history, and to renew communication between the living and the dead. AIR enabled the traditional authorities to ritually control the life and death of their subjects in a ‘this worldly’ setting. They organised ‘naming ceremonies’, puberty (*bragro*) and funeral rituals to provide meaning in the life of the Asante, and, through that, to maintain stability within the Asante Kingdom. These authorities were also the only ones authorised to carry out executions – often taking the form of the ritual killing of human beings – which was a way for them to both control their subjects by controlling their bodies and to create an atmosphere of fear, which helped many Asante rulers to maintain their power. In most cases their style of ruling was a mixture of the use of coercive force with the consent of a group of elders (*abusua panyin*) who were part of the Asante institution of chieftaincy. It goes too far to label the pre-colonial *Asanteman* as a democratic institution, but on the other hand, it would also be too extreme to refer to this establishment as a totalitarian institute, since – depending on the ruling Asantehene – it contained democratic elements.

In the colonial period, a political vacuum came into being after King Prempeh I was exiled to the Seychelles Islands in 1896 and *Asanteman* as an independent political body ceased to exist. In 1901 the British colonised the Asante’s living area, created the ‘Crown Colony of Asante’ and suspended the celebration of *Odwira*, which was the Asante state’s greatest manifestation of its legitimacy. Instead of making use of indigenous religious rituals, such as *Odwira*, the British introduced laws with which they initially attempted to reach the same level of control over the Asante as the pre-colonial Asante traditional authorities had realised by the creation of myths, such as that of the Golden Stool, the veneration of state deities (*abosom*) and ancestral spirits (*nsamanfo*). Between 1901 and 1935, the ‘British Chief Commissioner’ (BCC) ruled directly over Kumasi and the rest of the ‘Crown Colony of Asante’ and managed to get ‘traditional’ chiefs and ‘new’ chiefs on their side. Meanwhile they diminished the authority of Asante queen mothers. Soon after the colonisation of Asante, however, the British realised that they were not the only ones who had attempted to take power in the existing political vacuum of 1896. Between 1900 and 1950, anti-witchcraft cults mushroomed throughout the Asante Region. These cults (such as ‘Aberewa’), many of whom challenged the power of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers, legitimised themselves by making use of Asante indigenous religious symbols, which for the most part were equal to those used by Asante traditional authorities. From 1931 until 1957 the Asante traditional authorities formed part of the reign of Asantehene Prempeh II, who, with others, in 1935 created the ‘Asante Confederacy’, which formed part of the British system of Indirect Rule.

Anti-witchcraft cult members swore oaths to show their loyalty toward their cult leaders, who created laws to organise life within their cults; these laws were quite similar to those used by Asante traditional authorities to organise village and city life. Anti-witchcraft cults derived their popularity from the widespread belief among Asante in the colonial period that witches were causing trouble within their community and therefore had to be eradicated. Amongst other reasons, the previously mentioned power-vacuum and the introduction by the British of a capitalist system, which heavily increased possibilities in the Asante society for accumulating private wealth, led to a greater degree of stratification within Asante families and affected the matrilineal system of inheritance, thereby increasing the degree of social insecurity in Asante society. For many Asante, the existence of witches who caused evil explained the source of trouble in their lives, which they could not understand due to a lack of insight into the processes of transformation within the Asante society and state.

Due to their similarity in terms of legitimisation, which was based on AIR, anti-witchcraft cults were often in rivalry with the Asante traditional authorities. Nonetheless, there were also many cases where these authorities openly showed their appreciation for the attempt of cult leaders to eradicate witchcraft in their towns or villages. This shows that the Asante traditional authorities did not cease to believe in their Indigenous Religion, and maintained their function as intermediaries with the spirits. In agreement with other Asante who believed in the power of anti-witchcraft cult medicines, these authorities thought that only spiritual powers and indigenous medicines that came from outside the realm which had been legitimised by the pre-colonial Asante state could eradicate witchcraft (*bayie*). Witches were believed to be family members and the Asante society was the sum of all Asante family units. Both Asante traditional authorities and their subjects believed that the indigenous religious solution for problems in their society should therefore be located outside the spiritual macro unit (the state). Most anti-witchcraft cult leaders came from the 'Northern Territories' and their cult spread southwards due to the medieval north-east and north-west trade routes (see map 7 and 8). In addition to the threat posed by the anti-witchcraft cults to the authority of the Asante chiefs and queen mothers and the British colonisers, there were groups of Asante who challenged the Asante traditional authorities throughout the colonial period. Under the reign of Asantehene Prempeh I, the *akonkofo* stripped the Golden Stool of all of its elements that had been the symbols of the highest form of political power in the pre-colonial Asante state. King Prempeh II had to deal with the *awu*, who also showed aggression towards the political meaning of the stool that was used to legitimise *Asanteman*. However, among both the *akonkofo* and the *awu*, the indigenous religious meaning of the Golden Stool as well as *Odwira* and the swearing of an oath remained untouched. Although not openly, the Asante kept their loyalty to the

adaduanan ritual calendar, and Asante chiefs and queen mothers maintained their ritual veneration of the ancestral spirits on specific calendar days. Although not openly or on a state level, the *Odwira* festival, which forms the ninth cycle of the *adaduanan* continued to be celebrated. Political dissidents (the *akonkofo*) stripped the Golden Stool of its political meaning, but made a clear distinction between the political and the religious symbolic significance of the stool. For indigenous religious reasons, they did not oppose the royal occupants of the *Sika Dwa Kofi* and believed that its religious meaning should be maintained.

In the pre-colonial and the colonial eras, AIR thus did not cease to exist, but to a limited extent continued to legitimise what was left of the Asante institution of chieftaincy (*Asanteman*). Consequently, in these phases there was a diminishment but nevertheless persistence of the indigenous religious functions of Asante traditional authorities as intermediaries with the ancestral spirits. A lessening of the importance of these traditional authorities' roles was also caused by the increased influences of Christianity and Islam and the introduction of North Atlantic and Arabic worldviews. In the colonial period, churches, such as those introduced by the Wesleyan missionaries (presently known as the Methodist Church), came together with British colonial officers and thereby increased their influence and activities in Kumasi and the rest of the 'Crown Colony of Asante'. In this period, various Islamic movements were also imported into Ghana, such as 'Tijaniyya', 'Ahmadiyya', 'Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah' and 'Wahhabi'. The Asante traditional authorities' religious peacekeeping function, however, remained important throughout the pre-colonial and the colonial period because the need to negotiate with non-Asante groups in the Kumasi Metropolis did not cease to exist. The focus, however, began to lie more on indigenous religious peacekeeping with Asante, within the 'Crown Colony of Asante', than outside this colony. The reason for the switch in focus of the Asante Royals was twofold.

(a) In the colonial period, Asante indigenous religious peacekeepers became less occupied with the prevention of Asante-European and Asante-Muslim wars, and could therefore permit themselves to turn their focus inwards and work on the prevention of frictions between Asante and other religious groups in the society. (b) Because the number of Christians and Muslims inside the Asante colony increased enormously after its foundation in 1902, there was also growing concern for the maintenance of peaceful relationships between these religious groups.

In part II of this thesis (Chapters Five and Six), I focussed on the Asante indigenous religious and peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities in the present-day Kumasi Metropolis. In the post-colonial period, the stability and security of life in the Asante community improved and consequently anti-witchcraft movements ceased to exist. In this period, Asante Chieftaincy transformed from a Marionette Triumvirate to a resurrected 'Council of Kumasi', and then to a resurrected 'Asante Confederacy'. With the help of customary law, Asante traditional authorities

dealt with indigenous issues, whereas all other issues were taken care of by the Ghanaian state, which was legitimised by legality rather than cosmology.

The question that arises in this part of the thesis is what the indigenous religious intermediary and peacekeeping functions of Asante traditional authorities in present day Ghana include. In Chapter Five, I therefore discussed to what extent certain cultural phenomena in the Kumasi Metropolis, such as those observed during a royal pre-burial ritual, can be categorised as 'Asante Indigenous Religion'. Only when these phenomena are acknowledged as 'indigenous' can a link be established confirming the continuation of the indigenous religious intermediary role of Asante traditional authorities, which together with their indigenous religious peacekeeping role provides an explanation for the persistence of Asante chieftaincy. Many scholars who work on contemporary Ghana, such as Rathbone before the year 2006, presume that today this country has a modern state and that the belief in ancestral spirits has died out. What, in their eyes, is left of the practices that go together with this belief should be perceived as a form of folklore rather than religion, which suits (mainly African-American) tourists and thus boosts the tourist industry. It is therefore not self-evident to label the phenomena perceived in the present-day Kumasi Metropolis, such as burial rituals or the *Asanteman Adaye Kese* festival — the modern version of the ancient *Odwira* — as a manifestation of 'Indigenous Religion'. By making use of J.L. Cox's definition of Indigenous Religions, I first tested to see whether the rituals that I observed in Kumasi and its adjacent villages should be perceived as indigenous religious practices. Since the results were positive, I looked at the informal and formal link between (a) Asante Indigenous Religion and (b) the persistence of Asante chieftaincy in relation to the indigenous religious intermediary function of Asante traditional authorities. Unofficially, there was to be a relationship between (a) and (b).

In Chapter Six, I used one of the characteristics of Indigenous Religions mentioned by J.G. Platvoet to focus on the Asante indigenous religious peacekeeping function of Asante traditional authorities in the present-day Kumasi Metropolis. The institution of Asante chieftaincy derives from a kinship system which used to be central in the community. It is because of this institutional history that Asante chiefs and queen mothers have become community workers who help everybody, regardless of their subjects' religious and cultural background and/or political preferences; this makes them 'peacekeepers'. Indigenous Religions are adaptive and adoptive toward foreign religious influences, which is why Asante traditional authorities can additionally be regarded as 'indigenous religious peacekeepers'. The above-mentioned authorities make use of the adaptive and adoptive nature of the religion that legitimises their institution in order to maintain balance within the Asante society. It also helps them to increase their number of followers. In comparison with the situation in other African countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana's chieftaincy institutions and especially *Asanteman* can therefore be regarded as a success story in Africa. Despite the tensions between various

religions, such as between NRM and the Asante traditional authorities, the relationship between Christians and the indigenous population of the Kumasi Metropolis is relatively good. Due to a policy of non-interference with the affairs of Muslims, the relationship between Islamic communities and the Asante chiefs and queen mothers is also cordial. In comparison with other peacekeeping bodies in the Kumasi Metropolis, such as ACCQA, CNC, Zuria 88.7 FM and UFIA, I draw the conclusion that *Asanteman* in this metropolis is a unique peacekeeping body. Also, in comparison with the Ghanaian state, *Asanteman* has a unique function, since it is legitimised differently (indigenous religiously rather than legally) and therefore appeals to different groups in the Asante community (low educated indigenous practitioners and higher educated and reflexive ‘traditionalists’) and meets different needs of the Asante than from the state. Among other historical factors, its uniqueness has caused the persistence of this political institution in the Kumasi Metropolis.

My final conclusion is that, although diminished since the foundation of *Asanteman* in 1701, Asante traditional authorities in present day Ghana continue to function as intermediaries between the social and spiritual worlds. These authorities’ present-day indigenous religious peacekeeping role has changed in focus, but has remained equally important since the pre-colonial and colonial history of the Asante Kingdom. In comparison with the pre-colonial period, the threat of actual wars with foreigners diminished, and so did the need for Asante Royals to focus on the prevention of these wars, which posed a danger to the persistence of the Asante Kingdom that was legitimised by Asante Indigenous Religion. However, in the colonial and postcolonial period, Asante religious peacekeeping remained important to maintain cordial relationships with non-Asante in the Kumasi Metropolis. This became all the more important since the increase of Muslims and Christians in the Metropolis meant that Asante traditional authorities were increasingly dependent on these religious groups as adherents and supporters of *Asanteman*.

In conclusion, the continuation of the Asante Royals’ function of indigenous religious mediation and peacekeeping provides, together with religions and economic factors, an explanation for Asante Chieftaincy, because AIR continued to legitimise Asante Chieftaincy. This phenomenon occurred regardless of the various here-mentioned transformations of this traditional political institution up until the foundations of the ‘Asante Regional House of Chiefs’ in 1961.

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Appendix One: archives, abbreviations and glossary of Asante indigenous religious (Twi) and Muslim (Hausa, Mande and Arabic) terms

1.1 Archives

PRAAD archives at the 'Kumasi National Cultural Centre' (NCC)

1/2/30/2/12a: Asante customs

1.—1/30/1/1-21: 1902-1946.

1/30/1/11—'Fetish custom which necessitates the murder of the ninth child' (11/12) 1912.

1/30/1/10—'Sikaman Fetish' (n 60/12) 1912-1913.

1/30/1/18—'Fetishes and native customs-General' 1931-1939.

1/30/1/7—'Abiniwa fetish' 1907-1912.

1/30/1/6—'Chief fetish Priest Abirewa' (2/07) 1907-1908.

1/30/1/12—'Ejura Fetish Kune' 1914-1916.

1/30/1/14—'Dete Fetish 9N83/1918' 1918.

1/30/1/3—'Native fetish in Offin River requesting 1906'.

1/30/1/1—'Forwarding statement of King of Atebubu. Having reference to certain woman went to Kratchi to serve fetish' (14/08) 1902-1908.

6—1919-1959.

6/1/12—'Fetishes' (28/1929) 1929-41.

6/1/40—'Fetishes' (0014) 1944-1948.

6/1/14—'Lunatics' (25/32) 1932-49.

2:2/2/11—'Nine Fetishes and Native Customs General 1944-1969' J 265/2

2/10/13—'Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association 1962-1969' (134118) vols.

2/30/1—'Organization of the Spiritual cult 1 1967' (6/re/3).

2/1/50—'Legalization of locally distilled spirits' (*akpeteshie*).

2/1/21—'Ashanti history'.

Other Archives

District Minutes 1961, 'Synod Letter'.

'Minute of 8 June' 1876, by A.W.L. Hemming; CO/96/118.

Report, 16 June 1882, in *AMA* 15/802.02 19.222.

'Letter to Fr. Planque', 23 May 1880, in *AMA* 15/802.02 19.180.

'Letter to Fr. Planque', 10 September 1880, in *AMA* 15/802.02 19.184.

'Letter to Fr. Planque', 10 September 1880, in *AMA* 15/802.02 19.184.

'Letter of 18 Dec. 1877', from the Rev. F. Ramseyer to Freeling, referring to the journey to Kumasi in 1839 by the Rev. A. Riis; CO/96/122.

Governor Sir Shenton, letters 1924.

Eastern Provincial Commissioner's Diary, April 1928, NAG, Accra

1.2 Abbreviations

ACCQA: Asante Christian Chief and Queen Mother Association

ACCa: Asante Cultural Centre

ACCb: Asante Confederacy Council

ACG: Art Council of Ghana

AFRC: Armed Forced Revolutionary Council

AIR: Asante Indigenous Religion

AKS: Asante Kotoko Society

ACC: Asante Confederacy Council

ACM: African Company of Merchants
ARHCs: Asante Region House of Chiefs
BCC: British Chief Commissioner
BG: British Governor
BMS: Basel Missionary Society
BEM: Bremen Evangelic Mission
CAS: Centre of African Studies
CEM: the Church of England Mission
CG: City Government
CNC: Centre for National Culture
CPP: Convention People's Party
CPNU: the Community Psychiatric Nursing Unit
CS: Colonial Secretary
CZC: Council of the *Zongo* chiefs
DA: District Assemblies
DAM: District Assembly Members
DCE: District Chief Executive
EEF: Educational Endowment Fund
EMC: European Missionary Christianity
ECMC: European Christian Mainstream Churches
ERAC: English Royal African Company
FAFS: Friends of Asante Freedom Society
CGCP: Community of the Gold Coast Police
GMRC: the Ghana Muslim Representative Council
GNCC: Ghana National Cultural Centre
GMM: Ghana Muslim Mission
HCs: Houses of Chiefs
IR: Indigenous Religion
KCC: the Kumasi Council of Chiefs
KNUST: The Kwame Nkrumah University of Kumasi University of Ghana
KMA: Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly
KPHB: the Kumasi Public Health Board
KSC: Kumasi State Council
KTC: Kumasi Traditional Council
MAP: Muslim Association Party
MC: Mainline Churches
NAG: National Archives Ghana
NATRM: New African Traditional Religious Movement
NCA: Native Committees of Administration
NCWD: National Council of Women and Development
NCCQA: National Christian chief and queen mother association
NDC: the National Democratic Congress
NFC: Nkosuo Fan Club
NFRS: Nkosuo FM Radio Station
NGMS: The North German Missionary Society (less formally known as the Bremen Evangelic Mission)
NHC: National House of Chiefs
NLM: National Liberation Movement
NLC: National Liberation Council
NRC: National Redemption Council
NRM: New Religious Movement
NPP: National Patriotic Party
PNDC: Provisional National Defence Council
PPC: Pankronu Psychiatric Clinic
PPTAP: Promoting Partnership for Traditional Authorities Project
RHC: Regional House of Chiefs
SAM: Society of the African Mission
SC: Santasi Clinic
SCIA: The Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs

SMC: Supreme Military Council
SPG: the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
TC: Traditional Council
TPC: Three Provincial Councils
TDC: Town Development Committee
UFIA: United Front for Islamic Affairs
UC: Unit Committees
UG: University of Ghana
UP: United Party
WAFF: West African Frontier Force
WIC: West-Indian Company
WB: World Bank
WMS: Wesley Missionary Society (the present Methodist church)
WTC: Wesleyan Training College

1.3 Asante (Twi) terms

TWI WORD	Meaning ¹⁵⁸
ABAYIFO	Witches
ABAYISEM	Witchcraft
ABRAFO	The kings' executioners
ABUSUA	Plural. <i>mmusua</i> . Matrilineage, descent and kinship reckoned by matrilineage: maximal matrilineage: family, kin, relatives on the mother's side: the der. of this fundamental word is obscure: the most common traditional explanation is that it means lit. 'imitating Abu', i.e. <i>abu.</i> , a proper name and <i>sua</i> , to imitate, to learn: cf. <i>osua</i> , the act of learning by imitation: i.e. an Adansehene (a ruler of the pre-Asante Akan polity of Adanse) had an <i>ɔkyeame</i> called Abu: asked his children (his heirs) to help to pay his fine, but they refused and went to live with their mothers' relatives: but Abu's sister's children helped him to pay his debt: so, when Abu died he left all of his property to his sister's children: other people began to imitate him, hence <i>abusua</i> . This account is clearly aetiological. But it shows (a) the bedrock antiquity of the institution, (b) the Asante understanding that other peoples trace descent in the paternal line, and (c) awareness of the abiding tensions in Asante social structure between the claims of matriliney and patriliney: cf. <i>obusuani</i> syn. <i>oni</i> , plural. <i>abusuafo</i> , a kinsman, a relative: <i>abusua panyin</i> , pl. <i>abusua mpanifo</i> , the senior member (s) of a matrilineage: <i>obaa pinyin</i> , the senior female in an <i>abusua</i> , the holder of the 'royal' stool.
ABUSUABANASON	Seven exogamous matri-clans
ABUASUAPANINYIN	Headman (comes below the sub-chief), grandfather
ADADUANAN	Forty days (<i>da</i> means 'day', <i>aduanan</i> means 'forty'). The forty-two named day cycle of the ritual Asante calendar combined the nanson cycle six days with the nawotwe cycle seven days: alt. <i>adaduana</i> : der. <i>eda</i> , a day and <i>aduanan/aduanan</i> , forty: cf. the common-but erroneous-rendering 'forty days'. In the oral tradition the <i>adaduanan</i> was known as forty days.
ADAE	Lit. a lying down, resting or burial place: der. <i>da</i> , to lie down, to sleep, to remain, to rest: cf. also <i>eda</i> , a day: <i>oda</i> , a tomb, a grave: <i>adae</i> were festival days upon which offerings were made to the ancestors: there were two <i>adae</i> in every <i>adaduanan</i> cycle: these were <i>awukudae</i> (the 'small' or Wednesday <i>adae</i>) which took place on day fifteen: <i>kurudapaawukuo</i> and <i>akwasidae</i> the 'big' or Sunday <i>adae</i> which took place on day thirty-three: <i>kurukwasie</i> . It is sometimes said that the distinction between <i>awukudae</i> and <i>akwasidae</i> is that it is only on the latter that the ancestral stools are actually taken out of the stool house and carried in procession to the burial ground (<i>baamu</i>): certainly, people 'petitioned' the ancestral stools on the <i>akwasidae</i> , on the grounds that they were temporarily 'occupied': on both of the <i>adae</i> , the reigning Asantehene made offerings to his ancestors, processed to the <i>bantama baamu</i> , and held a public reception in the afternoon.
ADAE KESE	The <i>Odwira</i> festival was also known as the <i>adae kese</i> or 'big <i>adae</i> ' as it refers to the ninth unit of the <i>adaduanan</i> cycle of the Akan ritual calendar.
ADEHYE	Royals
ADINKRA	<i>Di nkra</i> means to part, to be separated, to leave one another or

¹⁵⁸ The sources for these meanings are: (a) the English-Twi translations of Benedict Asante Kyei of the language centre of the University of Ghana, (b) McCaskie (1995), Wilks (1989).

	say good bye. It usually refersto a symbol in cloth
ADOWA	Symbolic dance of the Akan people usually performed at funerals and festivals
ADUMFO	The king's executioners
ADURO	Medicine
ADWUMAN	At the back, work
AFISEM	Household matters
AFONA	State ceremonial swords
AGYI	Locally made incense
AGYINA	Inner council
AHEMFO	A senate of chiefs
AHENEMA	Traditional leather sandals worn on festivals, naming ceremonies and funerals
AHENFIE	(<i>passim</i>) syn. <i>Ahemfi</i> . der <i>Thene</i> and <i>ofie</i> , a house: lit. 'the house of an <i>Thene</i> ': used her of the palace of the Asantehene in Kumasi
AHENKWAA	Plural <i>nhenkwaa</i> . Der. <i>Thene</i> and <i>akoa</i> , in the sense of servant and subject: lit. 'the servant of an <i>Thene</i> ': used here of those who served in the status of <i>nhenkwaa</i> to the Asantehene: <i>Ɔsomfo</i> ; plural <i>asomfo</i> : der. <i>som</i> , to serve a master (human or supernatural): Christaller gives three glosses: (a) the servant of a king; (b) a courtier (which is good, very suggestive reading); (c) (in another context), a type of performance with singing and dancing: recruitment to the status of <i>ahenkwa</i> to the Asantehene was a somewhat haphazard busiensss that might involve a number of factors: residence in Kumasi, the chance to be noticed and/or demonstrate talent, personal liking on the part of the Asantehene and/or a senior office holder, finding oneself delivered up to the Asantehene in settlement of a debt or fine, etc.: number of Asante informants emphasize the <i>personal</i> link in this pattern of recruitment: by contrast, a minority of the royal <i>nhenkwaa</i> were recruited on a hereditary basis (but the son appears only to have succeeded the father as <i>ahenkwa</i> if the mother herself was an <i>akoa</i> in direct service to the 'Golden Stool'): the nature of the relationship between the two categories of <i>nhenkwaa</i> remains uncertain: <i>nhenkwaa</i> formed the base or bottom tier of officialdom, but, crucially, this status bespoke <i>inclusion</i> within the state: a variety of factors, in determining whether or not someone who achieved or inherited the rank of <i>ahenkwa</i> might rise to any higher office: the central idea of <i>personal</i> service is also evidenced in the case of those <i>nhenkwaa</i> who served an <i>Ɔbosom</i> in the status of <i>Ɔbosomkwaa</i> 'a servant of an <i>Ɔbosom</i> ': both the <i>abosom</i> and the Asantehene were legal heirs to the property left by their respective <i>nhenkwaa</i> .
AHOƆFEHEMAA	Beauty peagants
AHWENIE	Traditional beads
AKƆM	This is a bodily movement which has many functions. It is a religious ritual, but is also admired as art, enjoyed as entertainment and a tool to make political statements. <i>AkƆm</i> dancing is performed at festivals, funerals and other religious rituals
AKOA	'Subject', a term of wide connotation. An <i>akoa</i> is the subject of a chief, but a slave is also an <i>akoa</i> of his or her master
AKONKOFOƆ	Syn. <i>akonkofo</i> Ɔ. Der. <i>konko</i> . To retail, to broker: cf. <i>konkosifo</i> Ɔ, a retailer, pl. the same: this term was used to describe the prominent <i>Asante</i> 'businessmen' of the early colonial period; no exact translation is adequate, but the term carried clear implications of wealth (initially rooted in retailing goods between the Gold Coast and Asante), of capital 'individualism', and of 'modernity' in consumption patterns and attitudes: <i>akonkofo</i> Ɔ were themselves often illiterate, but they commonly funded the education of junior relatives and/or dependants: the origin of this group lay in those <i>nhenkwaa</i> and others who rebelled against the fiscal policies of the Asante state in the 1880s/90s, who fled into the Gold Coast Colony and prospered there, and who returned to Kumasi after the deportation of the Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh (1896) and the annexation of Asante by the British Crown (1901): <i>the akonkofo</i> Ɔ were arrivistes, and something of this suggested by the (twentieth-century) meaning of <i>konkƆm</i> (der <i>konko</i> Ɔ), to flaunt oneself, to be haughty, to strut, to 'look big'.
AKONNUA PANYIN	Senior stool
AKONNWA SOAFO	The stool bearers
AKRAFIESO	The abode of the souls

AMAN	An alliance of states
AMANTOO	Vassal states
AMANTOONUM	The original Asante nation
AMPE	A game played mainly by girls by clapping and jumping using legs. Each of the contestants selects the leg that she will draw to get a point.
ANINI	Seven pythons
ASAMANDO	The afterlife
ASANTEHEMMA	Queen mother of the Asantehene
ASANTEHEHE	The Asante King
ASANTEMAN	Asanteman refers both to the Asante nation (or 'union' means <i>amantoonum</i>) as well as the gathering of all paramount chiefs (<i>omanhena</i>) and paramount queen mothers (<i>ohemma</i>) and all other Asante chiefs (<i>ohene</i>) and queen mothers (<i>ohemma</i>) to discuss chieftaincy matters
ASANTEMANHIAMU/ ASANTEMAN KOTOKO	The council or assembly of the Asante nation. The highest legislative council and court.
ASANTEMANSO	The Asante oral history makes notice of seven ancestors (five women and two men) who had crawled out of a hole in the ground in a place known as Asantemanso currently a village twenty miles south of Kumasi in the territorial division of Asumegya.
ASANTENESS	The nature of human culture
ASASAMDO	Court personnel
ASASE YAA	The 'spirit' of the earth: der. (<i>as</i> ∩ <i>ase</i> , that beneath or below, the ground, the soil, the earth and <i>yaa</i> , name day of a female born on 'Thursday' (cf. <i>yawo</i> in the <i>nawotwe</i> cycle): the earth was anthropomorphized and personalized as female, and no 'disturbance' (i.e. agricultural work) of 'her' was permitted on her 'name day', i.e. every recurrent Thursday in the <i>adaduanan</i> cycle.
ASETENAKE	The great sessions
ASIEDEE	Gift giving ritual
ASUANI	Wreaths of a plant
ATANOSUO	Holy water
ATE SIE	A game in which there are two or more sides. A marble is thrown to hit a collection on the opposite side.
ATEASEFOO	The living
ATUDURO	Gun powder
ATUMPAN	Plural. <i>ntumpane</i> . Talking drums: usually appellations or titles of notable people in the community can be skilfully sounded by people who play these drums
AWOAMEFIA	The Bate clan among the Anlo - Ewe, was composed of priests, soothsayers and magicians. Their leader (<i>awoamefia</i>) also performed secular functions but leadership was based on religious and ritual ascendancy
AWUNNYADEE	Death duties levied by the state on an individual's self-acquired movable property: root der <i>wu</i> , to die + <i>nnya</i> , with the sense of leaving, loosening one's grip (imp. of something) and <i>ade</i> , things, possessions, movable property: hence, 'heritage' (<i>ade a obi awu de agyaa wo</i>), the things left behind: cf. <i>owunnyafu</i> , pl. <i>awuunyafu</i> ∩. A survivor, an heir ('someone left behind'): ant, <i>anikame</i> , property given (to a son?) in a father's lifetime.
AYISEM	Asante pride and pomp-making people believe one is strong even though one is not.
BANMU SOM	A veneration of non-muslim, non-christian origin
BAYIE	Witchcraft. <i>oba</i> (child) and <i>yi</i> (to remove, take away): lit. 'to take away a child', encapsulating the belief that witchcraft operated most potently within the <i>abusua</i> .: cf. <i>bayi ye abusaude</i> , 'witchcraft is inborn among or hereditary between [members of] an <i>abusua</i> ': syn. <i>abayisem</i> , <i>abayigoru</i> , <i>abayide</i> : cf. <i>obayifo</i> ∩ (pl. <i>abayifo</i> ∩), a witch or wizard): syn. <i>ayen</i> , <i>kabere</i> , <i>obansoam</i> : the word <i>ayen</i> (cf. <i>yem</i> , a fiery red; <i>yen</i> , to foster, to breed; <i>ye</i> , to have the condition of, to manifest or display) gives some insight into the conceptualization of woman (a hag), and that <i>mberewa</i> (old women) were widely regarded as adepts of witchcraft (being ideally placed in <i>abusua</i> terms, and 'jealous' of those who could still bear children): the Asante distinguished between the practices of <i>bayi boro</i> ('hot' or maleficent witchcraft: cf. <i>aboro</i> , injury, hurt, malevolence) and <i>bayi papaa</i> ('cool' or beneficent witchcraft: cf. <i>papa</i> , moral good, benefit, welfare: impl. prosperity).
BAYIFOO	Plural. <i>Abayifo</i> ∩. Witches

BEREMPON-DOMS	Little states <i>Birɛmpɔn</i> , pl. <i>Abirɛmpɔn</i>) means literally, 'big man' (<i>edom</i> means army, <i>odom</i> means favour). A hereditary title held by the heads of territorial chiefdoms, but also attainable by achievement by the very wealthy.
BODUA	Whisk, usually used by the indigenous priest during the performance of rituals
BORɔNO	A section of a town
BRAFO	Executioner
BRAGRO	Puberty rite ceremony
ɔBIREMPɔN	Plural. <i>abirɛmpɔnfɔ</i> . Lit. 'big man; manhood, state holder) and <i>ɔbarima</i> (a man, a male person; a valiant man; manhood) and <i>pɔn/Pɔn</i> (great, large): impl. Rule, power, wealth: a hereditary title held by the heads of territorial chiefdoms, and also conferred upon the very wealthiest accumulators: the title was symbolized by the possession of the <i>mena/mmra</i> (the elephant tail), the heraldic badge of the <i>ɔbirɛmpɔn</i> : ant (perhaps) <i>ɔberefo</i> (syn. <i>ohiani</i>), a poor, needy, destitute man.
ɔBOSOM	Plural. <i>abosom</i> , <i>som-bo</i> means something valuable or precious, such as gold or diamond) Natural deity or the lesser gods. The ultimate der. of this basic word remains unclear: cf. <i>ɔbo</i> a stone, a rock/ b), generically a verb of action or movement, specifically (in one aspect) imp. originating or creating and <i>som</i> , to serve, to be a servant of (a master, including <i>onyame</i>): but cf. also <i>so</i> , in the sense of attaining to, being able to: <i>eso</i> , over, above, up on high: <i>soa</i> , to thrive, to flourish: <i>som</i> , suggesting a continuance: the <i>abosom</i> have been variously rendered as gods, tutelary spirits and 'fetishes': they were in fact powers of supernatural origin, anthropomorphized as the 'children' or as the 'servants' of <i>onyame</i> . : the essence of an <i>ɔbosom</i> was <i>tumi</i> (power) that emanated from <i>onyame</i> : many classifications of <i>abosom</i> assign them an identity by dedicated use-i.e.state, town, lineage, family or a particular <i>ɔkomfo</i> : but underlying this is the classification, used here, that orders the <i>abosom</i> by the '(super) natural' point of origin of their powers. See <i>atano</i> , <i>wesim</i> , <i>obo</i> .
ɔBOSOM BRAFO	Plural. <i>abosom brafo</i> . The executioner deities
ɔKOMFOɔ	Alt. <i>ɔkomfo</i> . Pl. <i>akɔmfɔɔ</i> : lit. one (who is) possessed' (<i>kom</i> means 'possessed', <i>fo</i> means 'people'), as in <i>akɔm</i> : conventionally but misleadingly rendered as 'priest' or a 'fetish man': in <i>akɔm</i> the <i>ɔkomfo</i> was possessed or 'mounted' by the <i>ɔbosom</i> that he served, and the <i>ɔbosom</i> communicated with the <i>Asante</i> -in words and/or signs-using the <i>ɔkomfo</i> as its mouthpiece: cf. <i>akɔmfɔɔsom</i> , the speech, manner and behaviour of <i>akɔmfɔɔ</i> (often given as 'magic arts', especially by Christians): there were numbers of female <i>akɔmfɔ mma</i> (sing.) <i>kɔmfɔ ba</i> , but the majority of these 'tended' the shrines of the <i>abosom</i> , rather than being directly involved in <i>akɔm</i> : in practising the rites of an <i>ɔbosom</i> , or in carrying out 'service' to it, an <i>ɔkomfo</i> was also <i>ɔsofo</i> , der. <i>sɔre</i> , to perform rites, now Christianized as to 'venerate': an <i>ɔkomfo</i> was also syn. bu wɔ, <i>frɔfo</i> , der. <i>bu</i> , to go beyond, to surpass and <i>frɔ</i> , to call, to summon: this encapsulates an important point-by dint of dedicated application to <i>akɔm</i> , an <i>ɔkomfo</i> might conduce the manifestation of an <i>ɔbosom</i> , but he could not command it.
ɔKYEAME	Plural. <i>akyeame</i> : speaker for the chief, counsellor
ɔSAMANTWENTWEN	Spirit of the dead that lingers on the land of the living either because of premature death or because it was denied a befitting burial.
ɔSONO	Elephant
ɔYOKOD	The clan name of the Asantehene's royal family
DABONE	Plural <i>mabɔne</i> : a 'bad' or 'unlucky' day: i.e. a day that was ritually important and devoted to some ritual observance: der. <i>eda</i> (pl. <i>mma</i>), a day and <i>bɔne</i> , bad, evil, wicked; impl. Powerful, fraught, demanding due attention: sometimes used of those days upon which no farm work might be done, but only domestic or household tasks: in this sens syn. <i>fo fida</i> ; der. <i>afɔ fi</i> , refraining from farm work, staying at home resting or doing domestic chores: cf. <i>obene</i> , a bad man: ant. <i>dapaa</i> .
DAME	Draughts (US) checkers. A game for two people using twenty-four round pieces of wood which is moved on a board with black and white squares.
DANSIKRAN	The <i>dansikran</i> , which looks like a male's haircut, shows that Queen mothers are usually women who have passed their menopause and who can therefore fulfil the role of men
DAWURO	Gong-gong
DAYAYA	Sky. Litteral: supine position, lying flat on the back
DEDA NIPA	Laying-in-state ceremony
DONKESEE	Bell
DONO	An African drum usually with the skin that is played at both ends and has cords that can be modulated to change the sound.

DUA	Tree
DWO	Coolness
EDENA	Elmina-town
EGORO	Bryophyllum pinta
ESEN	Town crier
ESOM KESE	Great veneration
ETƆ	Mashed yam
ETUO	<i>Atuo</i> (pl.) Local gun
FƆNTƆNFRƆM	An African drum usually big and high
FODWO	Bad day
FOFIE ADAE	Bad day
GYASEFOƆ	Palace functionaries
GYE DUA	A tree with great leaves and many branches
HONAM	Body
HWEDOM	Chair
HYIRE	White clay
KENTE	These are silk and cotton traditional cloths that are locally woven by the Asante and originate from Bonwire — a village in the Asante Region or possible Tekyiman
KOBEN	Red cloth
KOKOKYIANAKA	A dark blue bird
KOTOBIRIGYA	Red clay
KRO	Town
KUMASI	The <i>Asante</i> capital. der. (<i>oƆkum</i> , inflected to produce a pair of linked meanings: (a) the name of a type of tree; (b) to kill, to execute, the act of killing + <i>ase</i> , under, underneath: i.e. the place under the (<i>oƆkum</i> tree/ the place where executions to place).
KUNTUNKUNI	Black cloth
KYIMKYIM	Zigzag
KYINIE	A huge umbrella
KYENKYEN	A certain type of tree
MMERANTE	Commoners
MMRA/MENA	Alt. <i>mmara</i> , <i>mmana</i> . The elephant tail: (a) the 'heraldic badge' of the <i>ObirempƆn</i> ; (b) the whisk (Christaller gives 'broom, fan' used by the <i>ahoprafoƆ</i> in a sweeping or fanning motion around the person of the Asantehene: the root der. is <i>pra/para</i> , to sweep, imp. to sweep away, to disperse (enemies, annoyances, etc.): the basic symbolism is of the Asantehene or the <i>ObirempƆn</i> in the manner of the huge, lordly elephant-'sweeping away' all irritants and distractions (these being defined, like flies around elephants, as petty, minor and inconsequential): implicated in this are ideas about volume, mutable substances (gold, excrement) , and of status of loftily 'presiding' over affairs: there is a clearly calculated signal in all of this pertaining to social 'distancing' : i.e. the possession of the <i>mena/mmra</i> is a mark of those (the Asantehene and the <i>abirempƆn</i> who are above and beyond concern with the mundane traffic of life: thus, the <i>mena/mmra</i> is a symbol of 'completion'-by definition in the case of the Asantehene, by accumulation and manifest achievement at the highest national level in the case of the <i>abirempƆn</i> : it should be noted that the word <i>mena/mmra</i> is one that describes action, impl. Function, purpose: i.e. the standard term for any quadruped's tail is <i>dua/edua</i> (der <i>edua</i> , a stick or stalk), hence <i>bodua</i> (<i>aboa</i> , animal and <i>dua</i>), an animal's tail; thus, <i>nantwi dua</i> , a cow's tail; <i>pƆnkƆdua</i> , a horse's tail; <i>Ɔsono dua</i> an elephant's tail: only the elephant's tail has a syn. (<i>mena/mmra</i>) of function, purpose, impl. Symbolic value: that said, other (lesser) animal's tails were used as signs of rank and/or were held to have 'powers': thus, <i>pƆnko dua</i> was the insignia of generals and warriors (and, clearly, ranked below the <i>mena/mmra</i>); it was also regarded as a potent 'war charm', and military casualties were 'fanned' with a horse's tail to affect their recovery.
MPONPONSUO	Ceremonial sword used by the Asantehene in oath swearing rituals
MOGYA	Syn. <i>Bogya</i> . Blood, the blood (both physiologically as substance and philosophically as concept: most importantly, <i>mogya</i> was one of the four essential elements composing a human being: the importance of <i>mogya</i> in descent (in etc.) was reflected in the complex of attitudes towards blood as

	substance: the shedding of blood (<i>mogya gu</i>) by execution, accident, menstruation, etc was in all circumstances hedged about with rituals (of performance, avoidance, management, atonement, etc): the <i>deliberate</i> shedding of blood was at once an <i>attribute</i> of power and an involvement in or <i>dialogue with</i> another, larger autonomous power that was a property in belief: thus, the right to kill (to 'take 'blood' in <i>extremis</i> , 'to hold the knife; as the <i>Asante</i> said) was a prerogative of the Asantehene: the root der. is (ultimately) <i>bo</i> , in the sense of creation.
NANA	Elder
NANANOM NSAMANFO ∩	Ancestral spirits
NIA MMOA ADI NO ∩NI NK ∩	There is no need to cry over spilt milk
NKONNWFIESO SOM	Veneration in the stool house
NKONWATUMTUM	Blackened stool
NKURAASEFO ∩	Rural dwellers
NKWANKAA	Asante educated elite
NNURAHIO	Cover
NNWOMKOR ∩	Singing of dirge and clapping to keep the rhythm. This is mostly performed by women groups.
NSA FUFUO	Palm wine
NSAFOHENE	Titled military commanders
NSUMANKWAHENE	Pl. <i>Nsumankwafo</i> ∩. The king's physician (s) (from <i>suman</i> , 'protective medicine').
NSUMANFIESU	College of physicians
NTOMABAN OR BANKUO	Strips of kente cloth, tent
NTORO	The <i>ntoro</i> determines the way people greet each other and what they cannot eat, which is dependent on the deity (<i>abosom</i>), and for some of them also the totem to which the <i>ntoro</i> is linked
NWENTOMA OR KENTE CLOTH	Silk and cotton traditional cloths that are locally woven by the Asante
NYAME DAN	Small mosque
OBAA PANYIN	Grandmother
ODENNA	Elmina-town
ODIKRO	Village chief
ODOMANKOMA	The Almighty
ODOSO	A raffia skirt used by indigenous priests when they are possessed
ODWIRA	<i>Dwira</i> means 'to cleanse', 'to purify'. The major annual festival, of religious and political significance, at which attendance was obligatory.
OGYE	Wealth appropriation
OGYEFO	A title of some Asantehene's; meaning 'the taking one'.
OHEMMA	Queen mother
OHEMMA ADWA	Silver stool
OHENE	Plural <i>ahene</i> . A term of wide connotation, 'king', 'ruler', 'head' on the level below the paramount chiefs or kings.
OHENE ADWA	The king's stool
OHENE KOMFO	Priest-chief
OKRA	Soul and part of the sun
OKYEAME	linguist, diplomat, a person who translates and presents matters that come to the parties before the chief's court
OKYEREMA	Drummer
OMAN	'Nation', 'state', 'polity'
OMAN-ABOSOM	State gods
OMANHEMMA OR OHEMMA	Queen mother
OMANHENE	A paramount chief or the <i>primus-inter-pares</i> among all Asante chiefs (the Asante King)
OMANTEASE	Peak of Asante power
ONIPA	Human

ONIPAPA	Human-Human (a man of great merits)
ONYAME	The ('withdrawn') sole creator of the world: conventionally render as 'God': der. <i>onya</i> , to get, to achieve + <i>mee</i> , to be full up; or complete, impl. Plenitude, a specific determinations of the omniscience of <i>onyame</i> .
ONYANSAFO	Wise person
OPANYIN	Gender neutral term for an elderly person, male- <i>abusuapanyin</i> or female <i>obaapanyin</i>
OSANTEMAN-NYIAMU	Plural. <i>oman-ahemfo</i> . All chiefs
OTO	Mashed yam
OTUMFOɔ	The powerful one
OTUMI	Power, loyalty. The highest level at which political authority could be exercised, symbolized by the <i>Sika Dwa Kofi</i> , and personified in its custodian the Asantehene: der. <i>tumi</i> , to be able (to do something), imp. Ability, influence, power: cf. <i>atumis:n</i> , 'things of power' i. e. the externalized display of strength, authority: cf. <i>otumfoɔ</i> , 'one who has great power', i.e. the Asantehene.
OWARE	A game for two people using marbles four each in six holes. The marbles are collected and one is put in each hole until the person comes to an empty hole.
OYOKO	The clan name of the Asantehene's royal family
PAPA	The name of a festival in Ghana. It is an ambiguous word. Depending on the tone and context, it refers to father, good quality material or fan.
SANTAMARIAFOɔ	People of 'Santa Maria'
SASA	Individual spiritual powers of animals and humans
SASABONSOM	A hybrid (human/non-human) predatory 'creature' of the deep forest, servant of the <i>abosom</i> , and hostile to human order: it expressed antipathy by preying directly upon individuals and/or by fostering witchcraft: der. <i>sasa</i> , used here of someone 'possessed' and <i>abonsam</i> , wizard, sorcerer, witch.
SEBE	Animal skins, excuse me.
SIKA DWA KOFI	Golden Stool (<i>dwa</i>) means a 'stool', the symbolic throne and the symbol of office and <i>sika</i> means gold and <i>kofi</i> , the day name of a male person born on a 'Friday' (i.e. <i>fie</i> in the <i>nawotwe</i> cycle): it is said that, with the enabling mediation of Komfo Anokye, the <i>sika dwa</i> descended from the skies and settled on the knees of the seated Osei Tutu on a particular <i>fie</i> (Friday): an incumbent Asantehene was the living custodian of the <i>Sika dwa kofi</i> , and was responsible for exercising and discharging that political authority at the highest level that was embodied in it: the <i>sika dwa kofi</i> was held to contain within the collective <i>sunsum</i> of the <i>Asanteman</i> (as ordained and reinforced by prescriptive ritual measures 'dictated' by Priest Anokye).
SIKA MMRA	'The Golden Elephant Tail' that stood for the highest level at which wealth was appropriated. 'The Golden Elephant Tail' der. <i>sika</i> and <i>mena/mmra</i> , an elephant's tail (see <i>mena/mmra</i>): the <i>sika mena</i> was a crucial item of regalia of The Asantehenes: it symbolized the very highest level at which wealth was appropriated, and as such it was conceptualized as being the indispensable 'helper' or 'supporter' of the very highest level of political authority (embodied in the <i>sika dwa kofi</i> (with the sense of 'assisting' it., (b) to 'preside' as the most senior (as a 'parent') over the lesser elephant tails of the <i>abirempon</i> : each Asantehene 'made' his own <i>sika mena</i> , but detailed information concerning this most potent ritual object is difficult to recover: in part this is because the <i>sika mena</i> was a property of the reticent 'mystery' that surrounded power at its highest levels (i.e. its ideological articulation was pervasive, but by corollary its ritual quiddity – its 'being' – was opaque): it is also because the <i>sika mena</i> 'vanished' with the Asantehene from 1896 to 1935, and when the Asantehene Osei Agyeman Prempeh II had one 'made' for himself (to commemorate the British 'restoration' of the 'Asante Confederacy') the pre-colonial systems of accumulation and appropriation of wealth had eroded and effectively vanished: it would appear that the appointed head of the <i>ahoprafɔ</i> was charged with responsibility for the <i>sika mena</i> of the first Asantehene Osei Tutu (and this was kept in the <i>bantama baamu</i>): each successive ruler consigned his <i>sika mena</i> to the care of a trusted and greatly honoured individual (Kwasi Brantuo) in the case of the Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panyin) but the person thereby selected was not always or necessarily the <i>Ahoprafo Chene</i> (that office itself undergoing a formal 'revival' after 1935, when it was (re) assigned to the mid-nineteenth century created <i>Manwere fekuoɔ</i> . current readings of the 'passing' of the <i>sika mena</i> in its original formulation/ meaning are associated, significantly, enough, with the avaricious Mensa Bonsu's <i>sika mena</i> : (a) 'disintegrated' and 'vanished' because it was the product of non-licit accumulation; (b) was appropriated by the people of Saawua; (c) drove its custodians 'mad' and then 'vanished'; (d) was interred with its creator's bones in Kumasi or otherwise 'became lost' during the funeral obsequies.
SO-ADEE-HWE	Test-yam-see (test the greatness of something)
SUMAN BRAFO	Executioner deities

SUMANKWAA	In front, messengers
SUNSUM	<i>Asunsum</i> . An intangible constituent of the person: non-human in origin, the <i>sunsum</i> determined an individual character, but might also be construed as a collective or group 'essence' (e.g. the <i>sunsum</i> of the <i>Asanteman</i> was contained within the <i>Sika Dwa Kofi</i> : the <i>sunsum</i> could be 'cultivated' in a variety of ways, chiefly dedicated to defending its host against hostility and 'illness' (witchcraft, etc.): der. (<i>e</i>) <i>sum</i> (<i>a</i>), shadow, dark, shade, impl. Mysteriousness, hiding: cf. <i>sunsuma</i> , a shade, a shadow (sometimes used as syn. <i>sunsum</i>).
TAYA	A rubber band attached to a Y shaped stick used for shooting loaded with stones intended to kill birds.
WIASE	The world of the living

1.4 Muslim terms (Arabic, Hausa and Mande)

TERM	MEANING
AL HAJJI	Arabic: haj·is or haj·jis also hadj·is <i>Islam</i> 1. One who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca. 2. Often used as a form of address for one who has made such a pilgrimage.
AL-HIJRA	Arabic: flee
BATA KARI KESE	Arabic: Muslim war cloth
DAR-AL-KUFR	Arabic: the territory of Infidelity
DAR AL-ISLAM	Arabic: the territory of Islam
EID-AL-ADHA	Hausa: (in Arabic 'id-ul-adha'). This is a festival of sacrifice. It is a religious festival celebrated by Muslims and Druze worldwide as a commemoration of God's forgiveness of Ibrahim (Abraham) from his vow to sacrifice his son, as commanded by Allah.
EID-AL-FITR	Hausa: (in Arabic 'id-ul-fitr'). This is a feast that starts on the last day of Ramadan, once the sun has set.
IMAM	Arabic: an imam (Arabic: إمام, Persian: امام) is an Islamic leader, often the leader of a mosque and/or community. Similarly to spiritual leaders, the imam is the person who leads the prayer during Islamic gatherings. More often the community turns to the mosque imam, if they have an Islamic question. In smaller communities an imam could be the community leader based on the community setting.
IMAM AL-BILAD	Arabic: personal imam
JAHLIYYA	Arabic: the state of ignorance
JIHAD	Arabic: holy war
KAFFAR BEN AL KOUFAR	Arabic: infidels of infidels
KITABAL-GHANJA	Arabic: a mid-eighteenth century Arabic document written by Muhammed ibn al-Mustafa Kamaghatay and Umar Kunandi ibn Umar Kamaghatay
KUFR	Arabic: infidels
MALAM	Arabic: malam (Maal-amm) means <i>One Who Has Knowledge of Directions</i> . The word first came to use when people from west India's coast went fishing or travelled across oceans to other countries. The captain was called Malam as he knew the right direction and took the vessel in that direction. Now malam is also used as the Surname/Last Name, in west India, in the Veraval city of Gujarat. There are no written records of when this word was first used and where, but it is believed to have started to be used after people from Rajasthan came to Veraval city of Gujarat for fishing around two hundred years ago.
MARAKANTAS	Arabic: Qur'anic schools
NKRAMO	Malinke (Mande): Asante Muslims. The Malinke (Mande) word 'karamoko' originates from the Arabic term 'qurā'a' which means 'great scholar' or 'one who is able to recite the Qur'an'. Because of the Arabic origin of the word karamoko (or 'Nkramo') it is no wonder that the <i>Asante</i> do not know the original meaning of the word <i>Nkramo</i> and gave it the same meaning as to the word muslims (<i>nkrāmofo</i>). In the Asante perception muslims were people who prayed five times a day and practiced divination.

RAMADAN	Arabic: The name 'Ramadan' is taken from the name of this month; the word itself derived from an Arabic word for intense heat, scorched ground, and shortness of rations. It is considered the most venerated and blessed month of the Islamic year. Prayers, <i>sawm</i> (fasting), charity, and self-accountability are especially stressed at this time; religious observances associated with Ramadan are kept throughout the month.
SADAQA	Arabic: voluntary almsgiving
SHEIKH	Arabic: <i>sheikh</i> , also rendered as <i>Sheik</i> , <i>Cheikh</i> , <i>Shaikh</i> , and other variants (Arabic: شيخ <i>shaykh</i> ; pl. شيوخ <i>shuyūkh</i>), is a word or honorific term in the Arabic language that literally means "elder". It is commonly used to designate an elder of a tribe, a lord, a revered wise man, or an Islamic scholar. Although the title generally refers to a male person, there existed in history also a very small number of female sheikhs. It also refers to a man over 40[1] or 50[2] years old generally or a Muslim who is a student of knowledge. Whilst even a new Muslim can be called a Sheikh if he is diligent in seeking the knowledge of Islam based upon the Quran and authentic Sunnah, he can be referred to as such to those he can teach. And usually a person is known as a Sheikh when they have completed their undergraduate university studies in Islamic studies and are trained in giving lectures.[3] The word Sheikh is not to be confused with an Alim, pl. Ulema, (a learned person in Islam, a scholar)[4], Mawlawi, Mawlana, Muhaddith, Faqih, Qadi, Mufti, Hadhrat or Hafiz.
SUMAN	Arabic: pl. <i>nsuman</i> . Charms, amulets, talismans (all dedicated to prescribed, circumscribed functions: all aspects or derivations of a much larger embodiment of power: all – unlike the <i>abosom</i> -man-made): <i>asuman</i> were the most evident/apparent feature of Asante belief practices, and so Europeans erroneously accorder these 'fetishes' / 'saphies' a central (sometimes an exclusive) role as 'Asante religion': der. <i>suma</i> , to hide, to be hidden: <i>osumanni</i> was a maker, owner and/or wearer of <i>asuman</i> (cf. <i>b suman</i> , to make or wear a <i>suman</i> ; <i>tu suman</i> , to make or introduce a <i>suman</i> ; <i>gye suman</i> , to produce or buy a <i>suman</i> : <i>asuman</i> were commonly worn round the neck or limbs, and might be composed of virtually anything that 'held' an efficacious aspect of power (s) (e.g. hair, beads, teeth, feathers, leather, scraps of paper with Qur'anic writing/ Islamic cabalistic formulaed, etc.): <i>asuman</i> were owned by individuals, and might be protective (against malice, witchcraft, disease, etc). or aggressively intended (to been known by generic names; e.g. <i>gyabom</i> , the 'helpers', der. <i>gya</i> , to help, assist, save, <i>dwenfa</i> , worn to assist in acquiring property, lit á thing or person found or seized': <i>ayera</i> , syn. <i>otuo suman</i> , 'the gun <i>suman</i> '
SUNNA	Arabic: <i>sunna</i> is a normative custom of the Prophet or of the early Muslim community, as set forth in the <i>hadith</i> (q.v.)
ULAMA	Arabic: scholar
ZONGO	Hausa: the term <i>zongo</i> originally derives from <i>zango</i> , which is a Hausa term for 'a settlement of Hausa and Hausa speaking traders' (Hiskett 1984:329). After the colonisation of Asante and the creation of the 'Crown Colony of Asante', the British, however, used the word <i>zongo</i> to refer to a quarter for strangers. It was their administrative policy to designate specific areas for the 'strangers'.

Appendix Two: European Christian Churches

2.1 The Methodist Church

First, I will give insight into the attitude of Church leaders of the Methodist Church (formerly the 'Wesley Missionary Society') towards Asante traditional authorities in the Kumasi Metropolis. In the pre-colonial period, the Methodist Missionary James Hayford was in cordial relationship with Asantehene Osei Yaw (1824-38). In 1839, the Asante King allowed Hayford to hold veneration services in his palace. Consequently, when the missionary Thomas Freeman heard about this, he made his journey to Kumasi and succeeded in setting up village schools (see: Chapter Three: section 3.4). The attitude of the Methodists towards the Indigenous Religion in this period was relatively syncretistic. In the colonial period, the Methodist church became the church with the most adherents in Ghana. The Methodist church leaders attributed their growth in adherents and the opening of a Wesleyan Training College in 1924 to their contact with the evangelist Samuel Oppong, who preached in the Ashanti Region between 1920 and 1926 (Kimble 1963:165). Oppong was the disciple of an educated prophet from Liberia, known as Prophet or Professor Harris (1850-1929). Prophet Harris, an African spirit Baptist was very successful in gaining adherents for the Christian belief. To compare, without any Western missionary financial support, Prophet Harris baptized 120,000 West-Africans into Christianity in two years. Philip Quacoe (1741-1816), a fellow Anglican African preacher who was trained in Britain for the Gold Coast and depended on Western missionary finance and control, preached for nine years and only converted fifty two persons. Samson Oppong was a converted indigenous priest who burned the material attributes (fetishes) that he had used in his former function and started preaching the Gospel. Oppong's aim was to convert indigenous practitioners to Christianity. The early attitude of the Methodist church was therefore a little more assimilative than in the pre-colonial period. Prophet Harris and his disciples Samuel Oppong and John Swatson became the predecessors of the Pentecostal church in Ghana, who attempted to make a complete break with the past and preach against the Asante Indigenous Religion (Amanor; Meyer 1998). Later in the colonial period, the attitude again moved more towards syncretism. The Asante traditional authorities helped build churches and schools and they cooperated with the clergy in social reforms and the reduction of evil practices (Parsons 1963:181-195).

2.2 The Presbyterian Church

From the start, the aim of the Presbyterian church of Ghana (known at the time as the 'Basel Missionary Society') was to let European missionaries control all aspects of Church and school life. Due to a lack of money, however, in practice, many ministers were indigenous people, such as Carl Reindorf, who, in 1872 was ordained in the Presbyterian Church. Reindorf was a supporter of polygamy and although for this reason in 1911 he was excluded from communion, this shows the degree of indigenoussness of the Presbyterian church even before its independence of European influences in 1926 (Agyemang 1978;; Williamson 1953). The attitude of the Presbyterian Church towards the Asante traditional authorities was thus more syncretistic than assimilative. Another factor that has kept the Presbyterian Church practising a more syncretistic form of religion is the church's rejection of Oppongs' proposal to connect to his Christian movement.

2.3 The Anglican Church

In the Asante nineteenth century intertribal war years, the Anglican Church (formerly the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel' (SPG) grew by local self-appointed prophets. At the time, the Anglican Church was in the hands of lay organisations, such as, for instance, 'the Guild of the Good Shepherd'. After the colonisation of Asante, the Anglican Church was represented by SPG, which was founded by the Englishman Royal Charter in 1701 to spread the Anglican Gospel in the British colonies. The successes booked by the SPG in the early colonial years in terms of conversion of the Asante were, however, little and activities ceased in 1904. In 1913, the SPG sent the missionary G.E. Morrison to Kumasi, who was assigned to work in this town between 1913 and 1920. Unlike all other SPG centres of veneration in the present day Asante Region, Kumasi had a residential priest. He worked, however, on his own and in his furlough period there was nobody to take over his work. In addition, after his resignation the post remained vacant for three years. This situation shows that missionary leadership of the SPG in Kumasi was relatively strong in comparison with the rest of the Asante area but certainly had its limitations. With one missionary and a considerable gap between the resignation of the one missionary and his successor, the SPG could not exert full control and provide leadership in detail. In this gap period, the SPG in all likelihood received help from indigenous leaders. Due to the small amount of missionaries per centre of veneration, the indigenous influence in the missionary work was considerable (Jenkins 1974). Most likely, the attitude of the SPG church leaders towards the Asante

indigenous belief was therefore more syncretistic than assimilative. In 1924, Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh I worked together with the Anglican Church to provide a night school in Kumasi. The Asante King used stool money to finance the building of this school and appreciated the emphasis the Anglican Church put on education. The Anglican Church allowed many Asante indigenous religious elements in the practice of the Anglican religion, such as dancing and the participation of its members in traditional rituals. The former was not allowed by any of the other large protestant denominations in Ghana. The church also allowed feelings of African nationalism and encouraged peaceful preparations for Ghana's independence. Since the 1920s, in reaction to the rise of Anglo-Catholic expansion in England, the Anglican Church in Kumasi became Anglo-Catholic, which even raised the degree of indigenusness of this church and increased its move towards syncretism. Since 1924, the St. Cyprian Anglican Cathedral in Kumasi has been connected to the royal palace. In the Seychelles Islands, Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh I became an Anglican in name and behaviour (but in all likelihood not by heart) (Akyeampong 1999). Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the present day Asantehene, is also an Anglican.

2.4 The Catholic Church

From the start, the Catholics maintained very cordial relationships with the Asante traditional authorities, which was also their aim. The French Catholic priests Moreau and Morat of the 'Society of the African Mission' (SMA) (presently known as the Catholic Church) invested a lot of time in learning Twi and translating the bible in the Indigenous language. In 1908, the Catholic Church received land in Kumasi from the Asantehene to build clinics, schools and hospitals. In 1967, Asantehene Prempeh II offered a piece of land for the foundation of the St. Hubert's seminary. Both are examples of cordiality in the relationship between the Catholic Church and Asante traditional authorities from pre-colonial times until today.

After the independence of Ghana (Gold Coast), Kwame Nkrumah became the Prime Minister. He encouraged Black Nationalism and therefore pushed for Ghanaian leadership in the church and educational institutions. At the time, scholars like Mbiti, Idowu and Sarpong reemphasized the significance of interreligious dialogue between African Indigenous Religions, Islam and Christianity. A development in the history of the Catholic Church that also stimulated interreligious dialogue is the transitional stage from Vatican I (1869-1960) to Vatican II (1962-1965). In comparison with 'Vatican I', Vatican II was much more tolerant

towards the incorporation of elements of Indigenous Religions in Catholicism. Since 1964, Pope Paul VI established a council for Interreligious Dialogues with the non-western world, including the African continent. Both independence and Post-Vatican II were historical developments that encouraged the Catholic Church to maintain in syncretistic relationship with the Asante chiefs and queen mothers.

Appendix Three: list of respondents

Legend:

Gender:	
01=Male	
02=Female	
Age:	
01= — 16 years old	05=45-54
02=16-24	06=55-59
03= 25-34	07=60 years +
04= 35-44	
Religion:	
01= No religion	
02=African Indigenous Religion	
03= Christian (Mainstream Church)	
04= Indigenous Christian	
05= NATRM	
06= NRM	
07=Muslim	
08=other (please state)	

Nr:	1
Date:	16/11/2005
Name:	Kate Agemensa
Gender:	02
Age:	03: 25
Religion:	06
Town:	Koforidua, Eastern Region, now Kumasi
Starting time:	10:55:59
End time:	12:56:17
Location:	Kumasi: Regional House of Chiefs

Nr:	2
Date:	19/11/2005
Name:	Kwabena Anokye

Gender:	01
Age:	05:49
Religion:	06: Assemblies of God
Town:	Heman BuoƆho
Starting time:	13:07:53
End time:	15:08:07
Location:	Heman BuoƆho: town centre

Nr:	3
Date:	20/11/2005
Name:	Nana Yaw Dwubeng
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 70
Religion:	04: Libito Church God wonderful
Town:	Achiase Nwabiagya
Starting time:	14:07:50
End time:	18:10:05
Location:	Achiase Nwabiagya: inside the respondents' palace

Nr:	4
Date:	16/11/2005
Name:	Rev Dr. Charles Kingsley Coffie
Gender:	01
Age:	05: 50
Religion:	03: Methodist
Town:	Kumasi, formally Sefwa (western region)
Starting time:	13:57:09
End time:	16:58:23
Location:	Kumasi: Regional House of Chiefs

Nr:	5
Date:	08/11/2005
Name:	Francis Mark Domenya
Gender:	01
Age:	04: 43
Religion:	03: Presbyterian
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	10:59:28
End time:	12:59:41
Location:	Kumasi: Regional House of chiefs

Nr:	6
Date:	10/11/2005
Name:	Miss Joice Boakye
Gender:	02
Age:	05
Religion:	03: Methodist
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	13:04:13
End time:	15:12:27
Location:	Kumasi: Regional House of chiefs

Nr:	7
Date:	11/11/2005
Name:	Beatrice Agyeman Dua Prempeh
Gender:	02
Age:	05: 52
Religion:	03: Anglican
Town:	Asante Mampong
Starting time:	10:05:08
End time:	12:07:28

Location:	Kumasi: Regional House of Chiefs
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Nr:	8
Date:	25/11/2005
Name:	Ernestina Ama Brenya /Abrewa Dokono
Gender:	02
Age:	07: 85
Religion:	06: Spiritual Church
Town:	Achiase Nwabiagya
Starting time:	9:16:29
End time:	12:18:42
Location:	Achiase Nwabiagya: inside the respondents' house

Nr:	9
Date:	23/11/2005
Name:	Nana Ama Boakyewaa
Gender:	02
Age:	07: 126 (note, I think she is in her 90s!)
Religion:	02
Town:	Adomako Abuohoo Krobo
Starting time:	9:10:04
End time:	12:10:22
Location:	Adomako Abuohoo Krobo: inside the respondents' house

Nr:	10
Date:	31-1-2001 and additional questions asked in 22-04-2006
Name:	Nana Osei Bonsu II
Gender:	01
Age:	61
Religion:	N.A.
Town:	Mampong
Starting time:	13:16:05
End time:	15:12:10
Location:	The respondent's house in Kumasi

Nr:	11
Date:	23/11/2005
Name:	Akosua Yeboaa
Gender:	02
Age:	05: 48
Religion:	06: Church of Christ
Town:	Heman BuoDho
Starting time:	13:13:05
End time:	15:13:12
Location:	Heman BuoDho: outside the respondents' house

Nr:	12
Date:	24/11/2005
Name:	Ama Framponee
Gender:	02
Age:	07: 65
Religion:	08: Seventh Day Adventist
Town:	Achiase Nwabiagya
Starting time:	9:14:27
End time:	12:14:42
Location:	Achiase Nwabiagya: outside the respondents' house

Nr:	13
Date:	24/11/2005
Name:	Osei Kwaku

Gender:	01
Age:	07:70
Religion:	03: Roman Catholic
Town:	Heman BuoDho
Starting time:	13:15:22
End time:	16:16:34
Location:	Heman BuoDho: outside the respondents' house

Nr:	14
Date:	28/11/2005
Name:	Obiri Asamoah (Adansihene Ankobeahene of Fomena)
Gender:	01
Age:	07
Religion:	03: Roman Catholic
Town:	Fomena
Starting time:	12:28:38
End time:	15:53:09
Location:	Fomena: inside his house

Nr:	15
Date:	28/11/2005
Name:	Efia fia Achiaa
Gender:	02
Age:	07: 70
Religion:	02
Town:	Wheremoase
Starting time:	16:55:00
End time:	19:00:00
Location:	Wheremoase: inside the respondents' house

Nr:	16
Date:	29/11/2005
Name:	Akosua Agyeiwaa
Gender:	02
Age:	07: 60
Religion:	06: Pentecostal
Town:	Fomena
Starting time:	11:36:56
End time:	13:40:14
Location:	Fomena : inside the respondents' house

Nr:	17
Date:	29/11/2005
Name:	Nana Kwabena Agyei
Gender:	01
Age:	05
Religion:	06: Christ of Apostolic Church International (Pentecostal)
Town:	Fomena
Starting time:	14:33:58
End time:	16:52:56
Location:	Fomena: outside the respondents' house

Nr:	19
Date:	05/03/2006
Name:	Kwasi Asare Ankomah
Gender:	01
Age:	N.A.
Religion:	N.A.
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	N.A
End time:	N.A

Location:	Asante Regional House of Chiefs
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Nr:	20
Date:	05/12/2005
Name:	Paramount Queen mother 'Yaa Asantewaa II'
Gender:	02
Age:	04:38
Religion:	03: Roman Catholic
Town:	Ejisu
Starting time:	10:01:45
End time:	12:29:00
Location:	Ejisu: inside the palace

Nr:	21
Date:	05/12/2005
Name:	Afua Tweneboa Kodua: the grand grandchild of the late female warrior nana 'Yaa Asantewaa'
Gender:	02
Age:	07
Religion:	02
Town:	Ejisu
Starting time:	13:17:24
End time:	14:22:33
Location:	Ejisu: inside the Yaa Asantewaa House

Nr:	22
Date:	06/12/2005
Name:	Patricia Kwakye Manu
Gender:	02
Age:	05:54
Religion:	03:Methodist
Town:	Ejisu
Starting time:	10:33:19
End time:	12:01:41
Location:	Ejisu: inside the school of the respondent

Nr:	23
Date:	06/12/2005
Name:	Adu Edward Paulder
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 65
Religion:	03: Methodist
Town:	Ejisu
Starting time:	12:16:28
End time:	13:21:31
Location:	Ejisu: inside the school

Nr:	24
Date:	08/12/2005
Name:	Sandra Owusu Ansah
Gender:	02
Age:	03: 30
Religion:	03: Roman Catholic
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	11:14:58
End time:	13:42:14
Location:	Kumasi: Centre for National Culture

Nr:	25
Date:	08/12/2005

Name:	Daniel Adjei Junior
Gender:	01
Age:	05
Religion:	03: Methodist
Town:	Kumasi (originally from Achease)
Starting time:	14:31:07
End time:	16:52:27
Location:	Kumasi : Centre for National Culture

Nr:	26
Date:	09/12/2005
Name:	Osei Kwadwo
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 69
Religion:	08: Seventh Day Adventist
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	11:04:58
End time:	12:25:49
Location:	Kumasi: Centre for National Culture

Nr:	27
Date:	09/12/2005
Name:	Eric (English slave name) Local name= Nana Kwame Ofori
Gender:	01
Age:	03: 28
Religion:	05: Afrikania
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	13:37:16
End time:	15:37:44
Location:	Kumasi: Okomfo Anokye shrine next to the Okomfo Anokye hospital

Nr:	28
Date:	22/04/2006
Name:	Comfort Serwaa
Gender:	02
Age:	07: 70
Religion:	03: Methodist
Town:	Kumasi: New Tafo of Ahanbronum (comes from Kokotu)
Starting time:	12:17:58
End time:	13:48:14
Location:	Kumasi: New Tafo of Ahanbronum (comes from Kokotu) : inside the respondents' house

Nr:	29
Date:	11/12/2005
Name:	Paramount Queen mother Serwaah Amponssaa
Gender:	02
Age:	04: 40
Religion:	03
Town:	Kumawu
Starting time:	09:57:45
End time:	14:51:38
Location:	Kumawu: inside the respondents' palace

Nr:	30
Date:	10/12/2005
Name:	Kofi Badu
Gender:	01
Age:	04: 40
Religion:	02
Town:	Fomena

Starting time:	13:20:57
End time:	15:26:08
Location:	Fomena: outside the respondents' house

Nr:	31
Date:	23/04/2006
Name:	Efia Bio
Gender:	02
Age:	07: 80
Religion:	08:/
Town:	Fomena
Starting time:	9:18:29
End time:	12:19:05
Location:	Fomena: outside the respondents' house

Nr:	32
Date:	10/02/2006
Name:	Osei Hyiaman
Gender:	01
Age:	04: 44
Religion:	Assemblies of God
Town:	Kumasi, originally Offinso
Starting time:	13:25:54
End time:	14:21:47
Location:	Kumasi: Faith Assemblies of God-Methodist education unit

Nr:	33
Date:	16/02/2006
Name:	R.Aboagye
Gender:	01
Age:	06: 58
Religion:	03: Presbyterian
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	09:29:05
End time:	10:46:41
Location:	Kumasi : inside the respondents office (Metro Education office)

Nr:	34
Date:	16/02/2006
Name:	Margaret Arhin
Gender:	02
Age:	04: 41
Religion:	03: Methodist
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	11:51:13
End time:	15:04:19
Location:	Inside the resource centre

Nr:	35
Date:	14/02/2006
Name:	Josef Agyeman
Gender:	01
Age:	05: 54
Religion:	03: Presbyterian
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	11:51:25
End time:	13:44:22
Location:	Kumasi: inside the resource centre

Nr:	36
Date:	14/02/2006

Name:	Patrick Domfeh
Gender:	01
Age:	04: 42
Religion:	08: Seventh Day Adventist
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	14:51:25
End time:	16:20:20
Location:	Kumasi: inside the resource centre

Nr:	37
Date:	24/02/2006
Name:	Hane Harune
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 63
Religion:	07: Sunni
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	14:53:32
End time:	17:20:39
Location:	Kumasi: Zongo 88.7 FM radio station

Nr:	38
Date:	02/03/2006
Name:	Peter King Appiah
Gender:	01
Age:	04: 38
Religion:	04
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	14:53:48
End time:	16:16:34
Location:	Kumasi: Centre for National Culture

Nr:	39
Date:	08/03/2006
Name:	Kwaku Amoako Attah Fosu (research officer and publisher of small books on the Indigenous Religion of the Asante).
Gender:	01
Age:	04:37
Religion:	03 (Protestant: Seventh Day Adventist)
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	15:29:55
End time:	16:35:33
Location:	Kumasi: Centre for National Culture

Nr:	40
Date:	07/03/2006
Name:	Imurana Musah (chief-imam of the whole Asante region)
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 61
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	16:39:54
End time:	17:46:17
Location:	Kumasi zongo: inside the respondents' house

Nr:	41
Date:	08/03/2006
Name:	S. F. Adjei
Gender:	01
Age:	05: 49
Religion:	03: Presbyterian
Town:	Kumasi

Starting time:	10:07:14
End time:	11:28:30
Location:	Kumasi: Centre for National Culture

Nr:	42
Date:	05/03/2006
Name:	Nana Ababeo (chief of Adiebeba)
Age:	01
Gender:	05: 45
Religion:	03: Methodist
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	13:02:00
End time:	14:34:42
Location:	Kumasi: outside Manhyia palace

Nr:	43
Date:	10/03/2006
Name:	Paramount Queen mother Ama Serwah Nyarko
Gender:	02
Age:	06: 57
Religion:	05: Afrikania
Town:	Kumasi
Status:	02
Employment:	02
Level of education:	03: four year A certificate
Starting time:	11:16:52
End time:	12:45:58
Location:	Offinso: in the respondents' palace

Nr:	44
Date:	06/03/2006
Name:	Maabahene and Nana Prenyia-Besease
Gender:	01
Age:	05: 45 & 04: 42
Religion:	02
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	10:05:27
End time:	11:05:45
Location:	Kumasi: outside Manhyia's palace

Nr:	45
Date:	17/03/2006
Name:	Mossi headman- imam Ustaz Ali Adam Al-Ameer
Gender:	01
Age:	05: 55
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	16:19:26
End time:	18:36:26
Location:	Kumasi: Mossi zongo-Ash town

Nr:	46
Date:	13/03/2006
Name:	Nana Brefo Gyededu Kotowko II
Gender:	01
Age:	05: 52
Religion:	03: Anglican
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	13:06:09
End time:	15:39:48

Location:	Kumasi: the respondent's office in Snitt house
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Nr:	47
Date:	20/03/2006
Name:	Mossi headman; Al-Hajji Ibrahim Abdul Achman Adam the III
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 60
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi: Mossi <i>zongo</i> -ash town
Starting time:	18:11:15
End time:	19:40: 20
Location:	Kumasi: inside the respondents' palace

Nr:	48
Date:	16/04/2006
Name:	Sarkin <i>zongo</i> : Al-Hajji Sheikh Zakuruka
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 72
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	12:07:07
End time:	14:40:48
Location:	Kumasi: old <i>zongo</i> : inside the respondents' palace

Nr:	49
Date:	18-04-2006
Name:	Gurunshi and Sisala headman: Al-Hajji Hamidu Usman Madugu
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 67
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	14:08:16
End time:	16:10:26
Location:	Kumasi: Tummy station

Nr:	50
Date:	19/04/2006
Name:	Osei Agyeman
Gender:	01
Age:	04:35
Religion:	02
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	12:08:37
End time:	17:09:05
Location:	Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Kumasi (KNUST)

Nr:	51
Date:	21-03-2006
Name:	Mamprusi headman: Ibrahim Abdullah
Gender:	01
Age:	07: 62
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	17:11:13
End time:	19:09:38
Location:	Kumasi: old <i>zongo</i> , inside the respondents' palace

Nr:	52
Date:	22-03-2006
Name:	Asante <i>Nkramo</i> headman: Al-Hajji Abdul Karim Sina
Gender:	01

Age:	06: 56
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi: old <i>zongo</i> , inside the respondents' palace
Starting time:	12:09:54
End time:	15:10:28
Location:	Kumasi: inside the respondents' palace

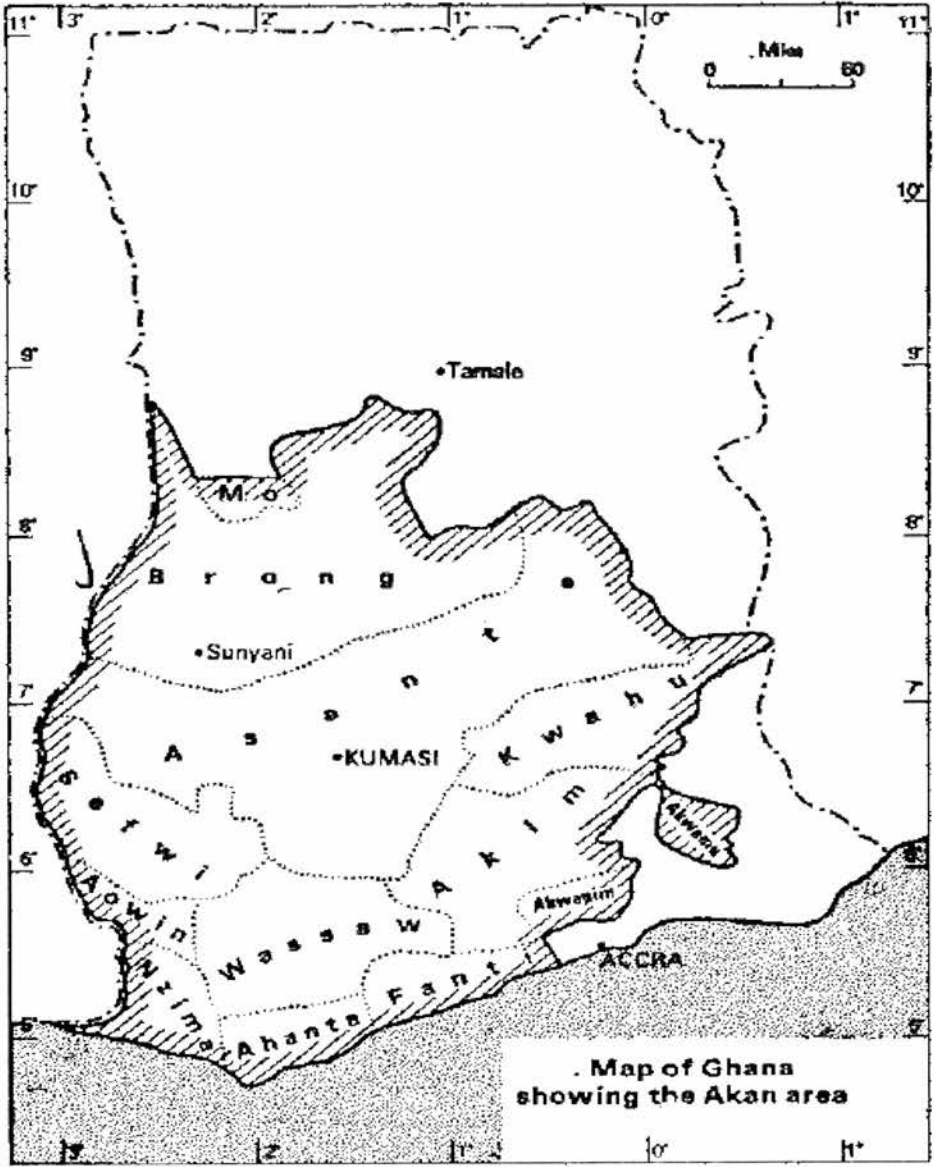
Nr:	53
Date:	20-04-2006
Name:	United Front for Islamic Affairs (UFIA): Mohammed Braimah Joseph & Zedan Rashid
Gender:	01
Age:	05: M:46 & 04: Z:40
Religion:	07
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	14:11:03
End time:	16:18:34
Location:	Kumasi: UFIA office

Nr:	54
Date:	21-04-2006
Name:	Obogumanhene Owusu Asiamah II (Konongo)
Gender:	01
Age:	06:57
Religion:	05
Town:	Kumasi
Starting time:	15:11:53
End time:	17:12:04
Location:	Kumasi: Regional House of Chiefs

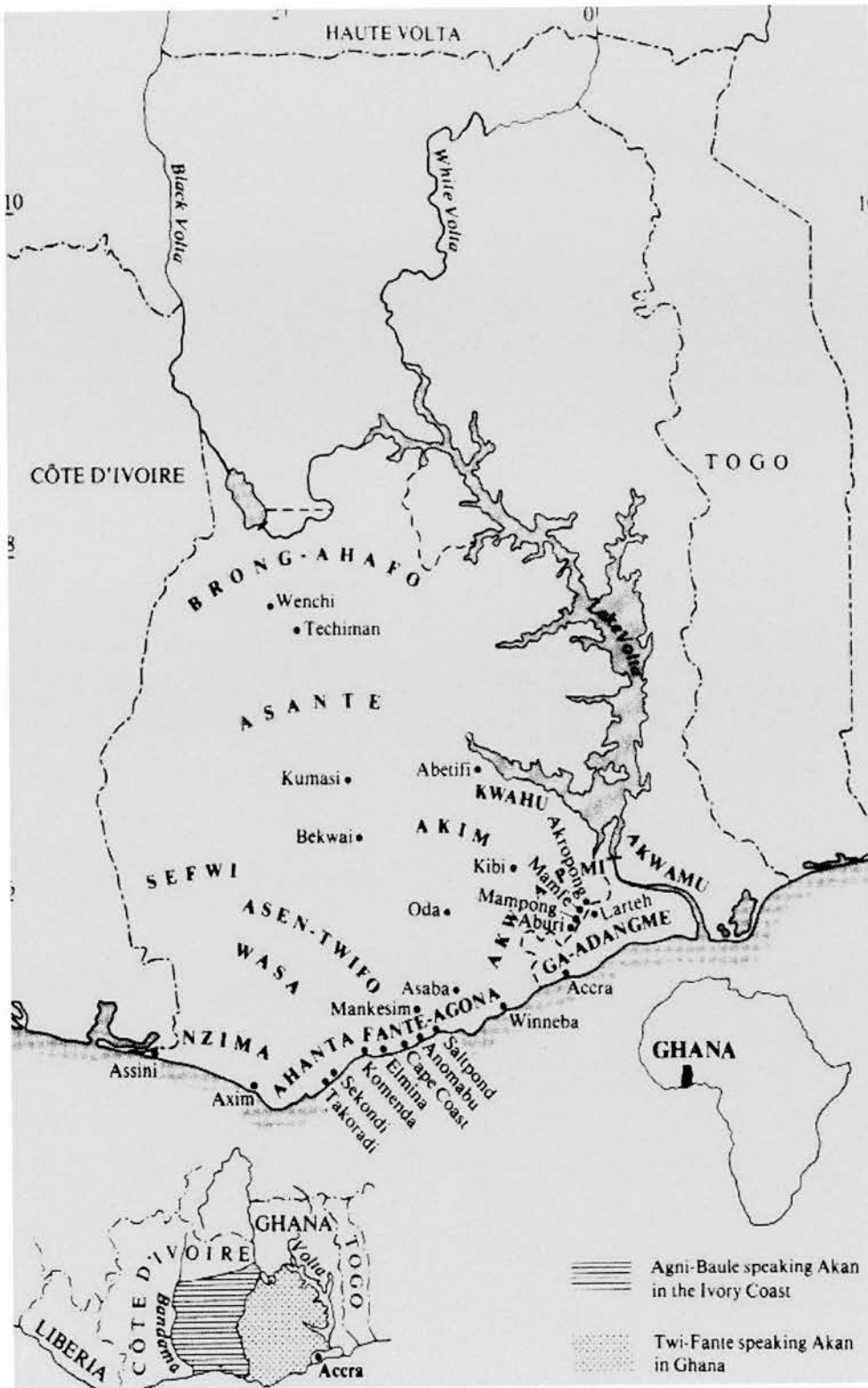
Nr:	55
Picture:	N.A.
Date:	04-04-2008
Name:	Bishop Peter Sarpong and Nana Brempong
Gender:	01
Location:	Email contact

Nr:	56
Date:	07-04-2008
Name:	Bishop Daniel Yinka Sarfo
Gender:	01
Location:	Email contact

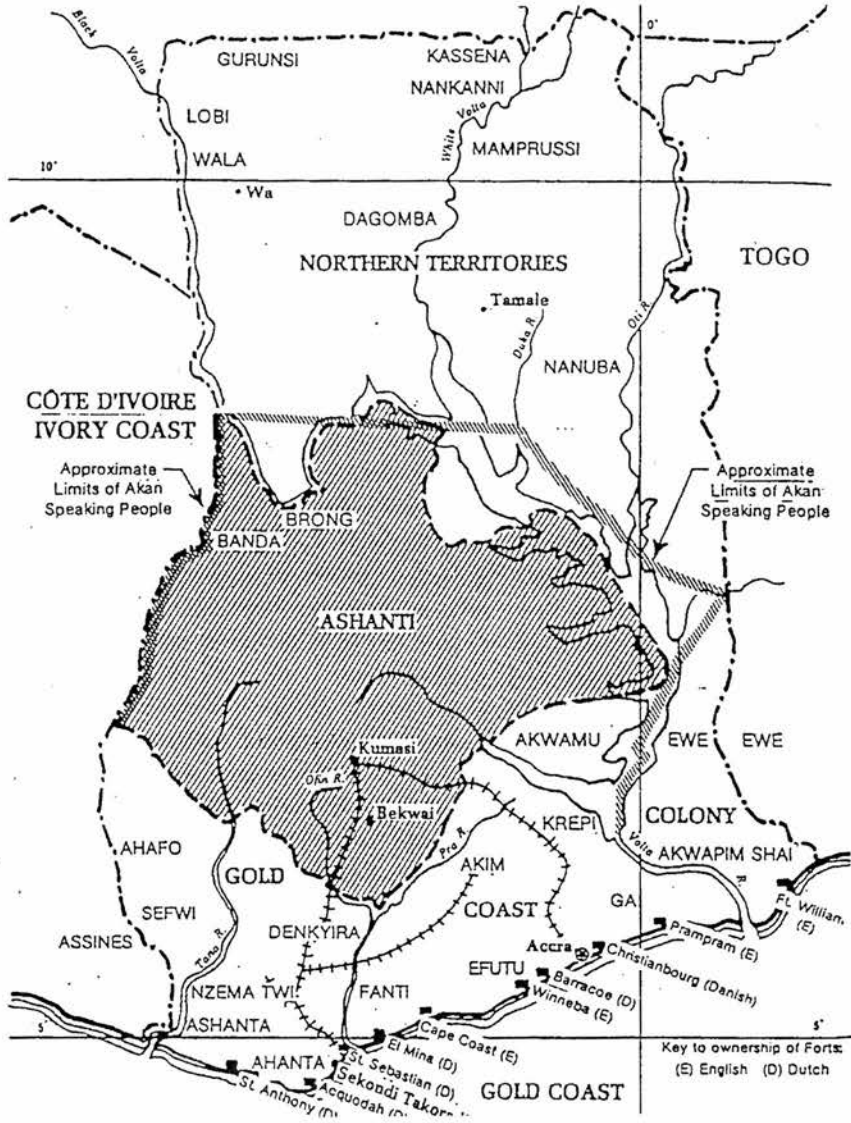
Appendix Four:maps



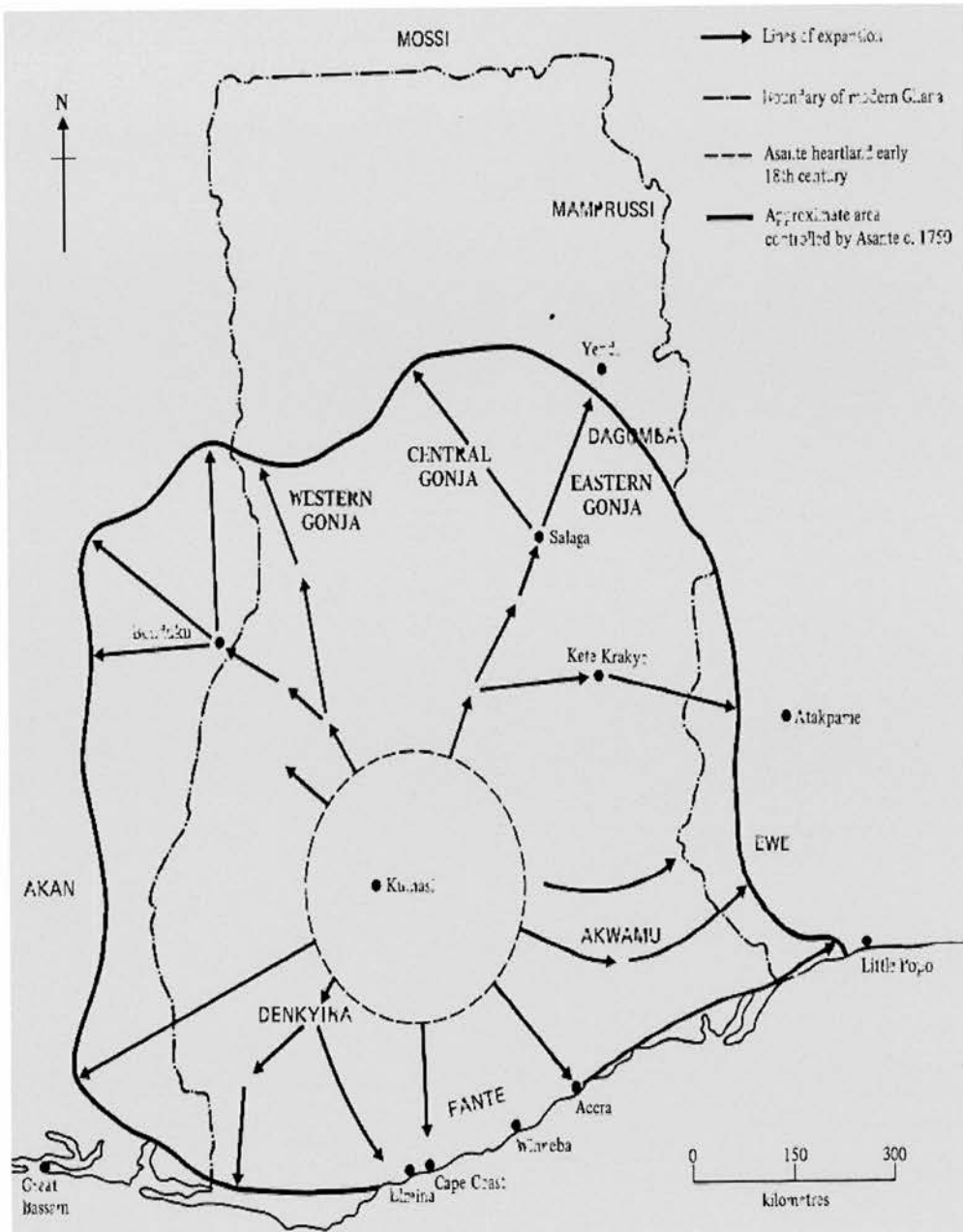
Map 1: the various cultural groups within the Asante Kingdom (Daaku 1970).



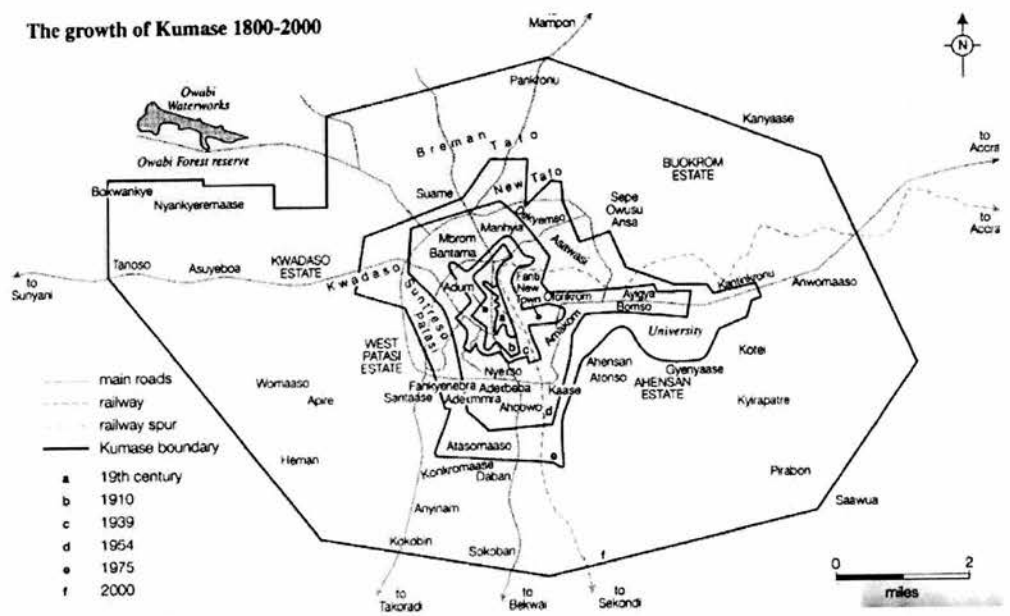
Map 2: the Akan in the Ivory Coast and Ghana (Platvoet 1979:544).



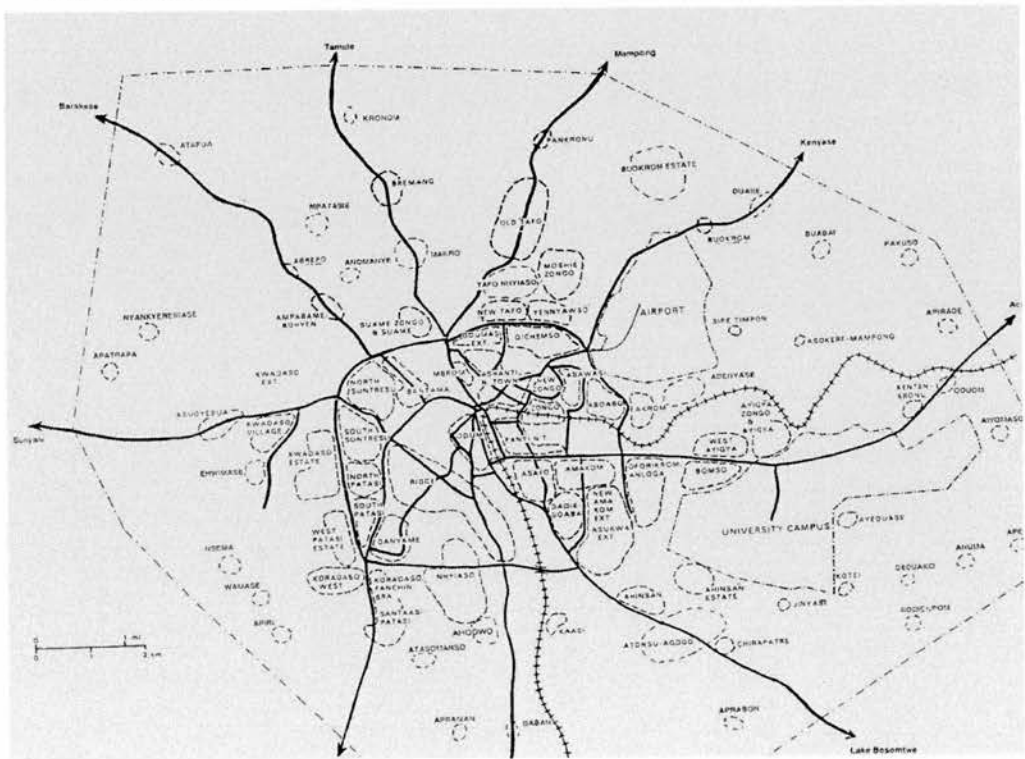
Map 3: the three British colonies in the area of present-day Asante: 'the Northern Territories,' 'the Gold Coast Colony' and the 'Crown colony of Asante'(Gailey Jr. 1967).



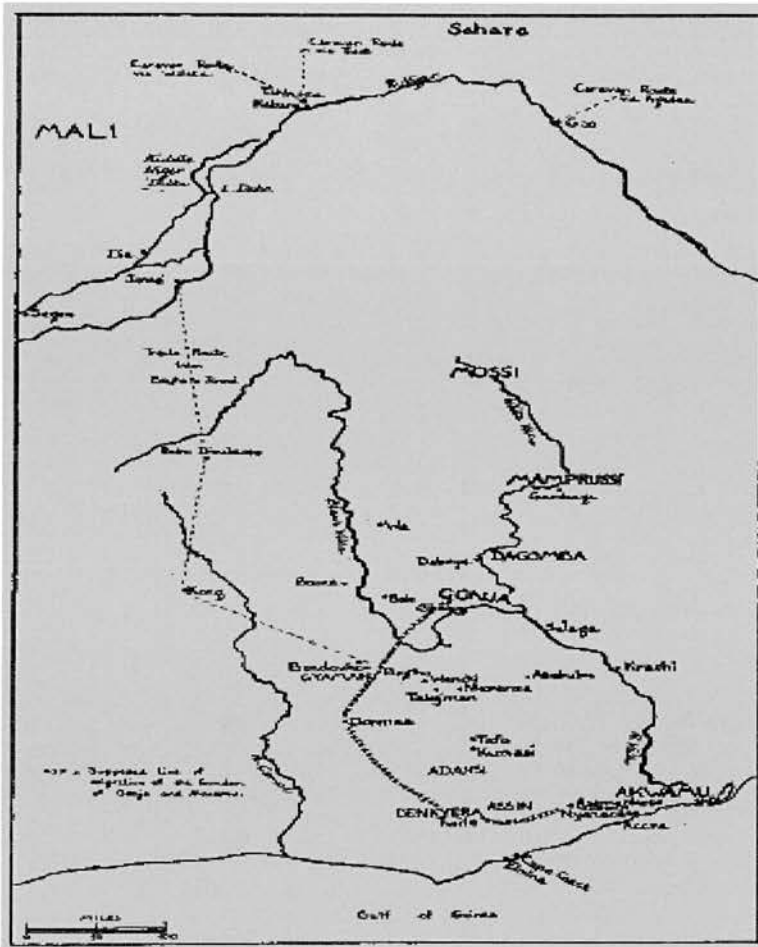
Map 4: the Asante Kingdom around 1750 (Crowder 1977:62).



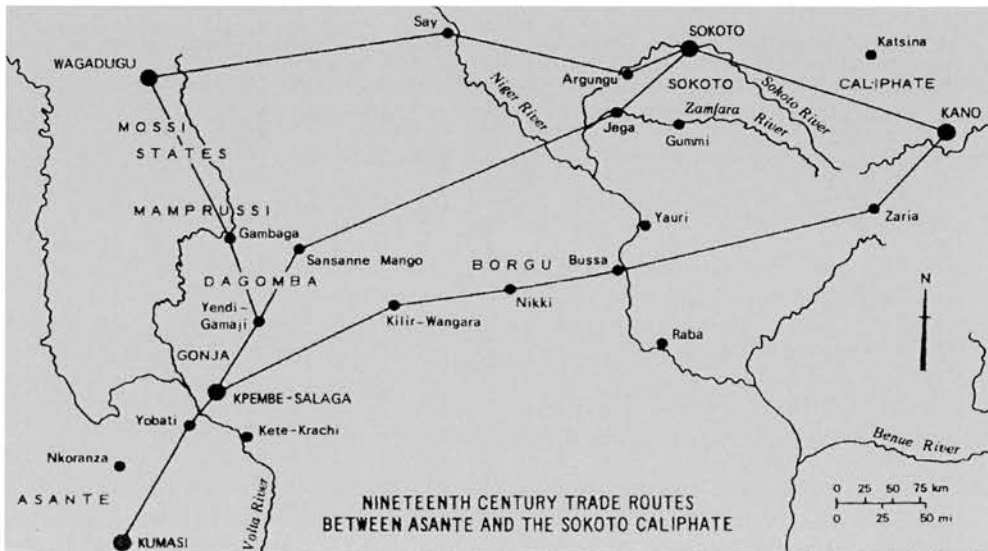
Map 5: the growth of Kumasi 1800-2000 (McCaskie 2000a:208).



Map 6: city of Kumasi, showing residential areas (Korboe 1995).



Map 7: the Southern penetration of the Mandé (Wilks 1961:25).



Map 8: Nineteenth century trade routes between Asante and the Sokoto Caliphate (Lovejoy 1982: 252).

Appendix Five: photographs¹⁵⁹



Photo 1: the 'laying- in-state' ceremony of Nana Saaman Nantwi II



Photo 2: the public mourning of female family members of the deceased and women who have been hired to mourn.

¹⁵⁹ The photographs are taken by the author, unless specified otherwise.



Photo 3: gift giving ceremony



Photo 4: an indigenous priest dancing ceremony

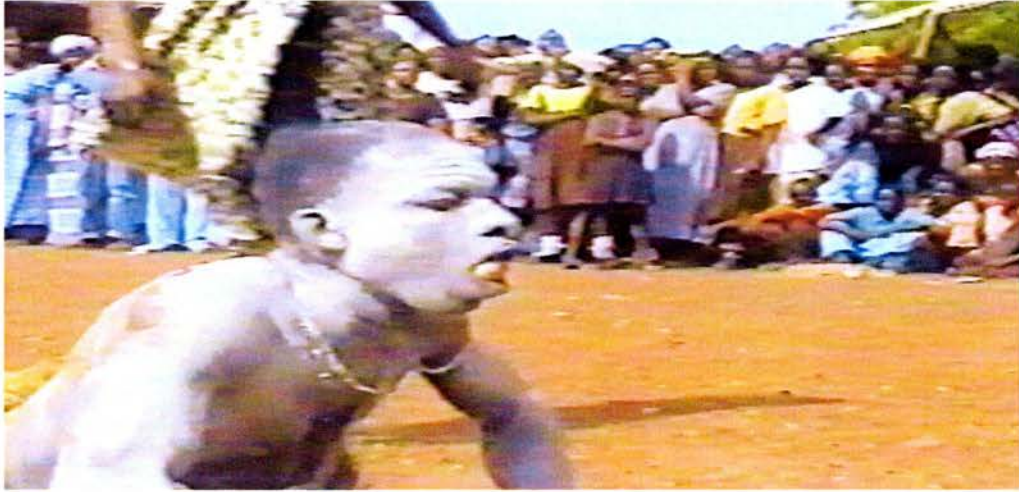


Photo 5: asumanbrafo swallows an egg

Source: Dr. C.K. Coffie



Photo 6: asumanbrafo chews raw charcoal

Source: Dr. C.K. Coffie



Photo 7: (Left) Maulvi Abdul, (in the Middle) Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, (Right) His Eminence Sheikh Wahab Adam Usmanu Sharubutu

Source: Dr. C.K. Coffie

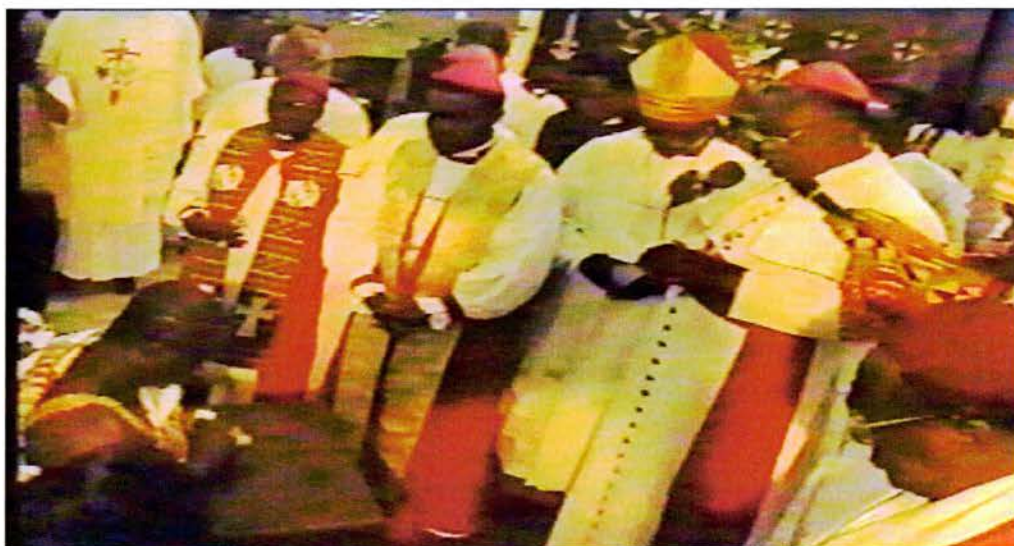


Photo 8: the Asantehene receives blessings

Source: Dr. C.K. Coffie