The King, His Soul and the Pastor: Three Views of a Conflict in Akropong 1906-7

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Abstract
In 1906-7, in Akwapim, a small kingdom in southern Ghana (then the Gold Coast), a bitter conflict occurred between the king, Nana Kwasi Akuffo, and Kwasi Fianko, a wealthy trader who had been appointed as the king’s ‘soul’ (okra) but who later decided to resign his position and rejoin the Christian community. Two detailed accounts addressed to the Basel Mission were written by an indigenous pastor and his superior, a long-serving missionary. They recount the conflict, the negotiations that ensued, and the complex relations between the king and the Basel Mission community. These reports depict the ambitions and the everyday conduct of a poor king and a wealthy commoner, the one a non-Christian and the other a Christian, in the early years of the twentieth century. They also describe the position of the ‘soul’ in an Akan court, and the central importance of money in a kingdom lacking important natural resources.

Keywords
Akwapim history in the early colonial period, Basel Mission, conflict resolution, religious pluralism, wealth and accumulation, chiefship, the position of the ‘soul’, marriage

Introduction: Two Field Reports to the Basel Mission

Two reports were forwarded from the Akropong congregation in southern Ghana (then the Gold Coast) to the Basel Mission’s home office in Switzerland in the first decade of the twentieth century.1 The first, sent in 1906, was a required annual report. Meticulous and vivid, it was written in English by an elderly indigenous pastor called Theophilus Opoku.2 The second, sent three years later in 1909, was a substantial voluntary report in German by Wilhelm Rottmann, a German-Ghanaian Basel missionary who was one of the longest-serving missionaries in the country, and Opoku’s superior.3 The two reports detail a conflict between the king, Nana Kwasi Akuffo, and one of his
attendants, *Okra* Kwasi Fianko, signaled when the latter decided to become a Christian and sought release from his palace position. In itself, a palace dispute was not particularly unusual, and it might be deemed a politically diplomatic act if a disaffected attendant said he was leaving the palace to join the mission community. It was rare at this time, however, to have two sustained and uninterrupted narratives of the same event that were written by men who were actual participants and whose ears were attuned to both Christianity and the traditional culture. These reports give the reader an ‘insider’s’ view, not only of *Okra* Kwasi Fianko, but also of the king and the pastors.

Excerpts from documents such as these are generally mined for extended historical and ethnographic arguments, but, given the extraordinarily detailed nature of the two reports and the way in which they provide the reader with a rare glimpse of the power dynamics at play in complex lives and how the diverse inhabitants understood their own society, it makes good sense to read them in full. In this way the crafting of the narrative and the structure of the argument can be exposed: Opoku and Rottmann are both addressing Basel, but their ‘language’ and the shape of their reports differ. The authors are shaping what a proper conversation should be; while they are both from the same Mission, they have different statuses, different places in the local culture and different kinds of cultural education. The reports should be read for the content of the conflict as well as for the voices of the participants. They also should be read because they are themselves an integral part of the ‘reality’, and because the way in which the arguments are structured is critical to the elaboration of a meaning (or meanings) that is dynamic and in flux. One needs to look for meaning in the language of the narrative, finally, because it shows how subjective and collective meanings of identity are constructed.

The two reports at their simplest level narrate an episode in the life of an ordinary man who became a wealthy and prominent figure in his home town by manipulating contradictory but fundamental aspects of Akwapim society and culture. They recount a bitter conflict between the Akwapim king, Nana Kwasi Akuffo, and his palace attendant, Kwasi Fianko, over the latter’s decision to relinquish his position as the ‘king’s soul’ (soul: *okra*, pl. *akrafo*) and seek formal readmission to the Akropong congregation of the Basel Mission church. Negotiations concerning the king and his wealthy attendant took place at the Mission House in Akropong, the primary site of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast and the capital of Akwapim, and the detailed accounts include some of the participants’ actual words.

The conflict between the king and his attendant, as described in these two reports, ostensibly concerns tension between church and state and the ways in which meanings are developed and contested. It also points to broader issues
in Ghanaian life during the second half of the nineteenth century: the role of rich men (asikafo) and of ordinary people or commoners (mpapahwekwa), of palace attendants (nhenkwaad), of social hierarchies in the palace, and of attempts by a greedy king (Omanhene) to sustain his power and gain wealth by confiscating directly or indirectly the wealth of his subjects. One learns as well about the position of the ‘king’s soul’, incumbents for which position had virtually disappeared a century later. Both Opoku’s and Rottmann’s reports describe the duties of the ‘[king’s] soul’s companions’. Although often described as a position suited to ‘handsome’ people who are identified with the king, it is a complexly ambiguous role, formerly given to slaves. Issues such as pawning and the emancipation of slaves are also raised in these reports. The Basel Mission introduced skills and knowledge (in education and the economy) that opened new opportunities for wealth; it also introduced a new belief system and complementary practices that conflicted with traditional marriage and succession rules. The description of Fianko moving in and out of the mission community shows how religious pluralism operated in the kingdom. The reports also show how the varied dimensions of rank—wealth, political authority, genealogy, moral stature—were played out in the resolution of this conflict.

In the remainder of this brief introduction we provide necessary contextual information about the Akwapim kingdom and the Basel Mission in Akropong at the end of the nineteenth century. We then sketch the biographies of the wealthy trader, Kwasi Fianko, who became the ‘king’s soul’ and of the king, Nana Kwasi Akuffo; and we describe the traditional social distinctions in the palace and how the nouveaux riches fit into this structure. Finally we turn to biographies of Opoku and Rottmann, the authors of the narratives, who, we suggest, were each in his own way shaping the reality they were trying to explain.

The Context: Interface of Church and State

The Akwapim kingdom, twenty-five miles northeast of Accra, the national capital of Ghana, originally comprised seventeen towns strung along two parallel ridges some 1,500 feet above sea level. Today there are more towns; they vary in size from several hundred to six or seven thousand people. Unusual for an Akan kingdom, Akwapim is ethnically diverse. Akropong and one other town are composed of Akan or Twi-speaking matrilineal people whose ancestors came originally from Akyem Abuakwa; three other towns are composed of matrilineal Twi-speakers from Akwamu. The remaining Akwapim towns are composed of indigenous patrilineal Guan speakers, some of whom have now come to speak only Twi.
Akwapim was a conquest state. The Guan settled in these hills in the early seventeenth century. They were later harshly ruled by the neighboring Akwamu. Asona warriors from Akyem Abuakwa were invited to help overthrow the Akwamu and the Akyem remained to establish a dynasty in 1733 that included the original Guan and Kamena as well as remnants of the Akwamu. There has rarely been peace in Akwapim and from the 1880s on the unrest and factional strife resulted in a large number of British court cases and inquiries. In 1994 a secession, as yet not officially recognized, occurred, largely on ethnic lines, in which the major divisions or ‘wings’ of the kingdom asserted their independence from the capital, Akropong.10

Akwapim lacks important natural resources: there is neither timber nor gold as are found in other Akan kingdoms, such as Asante, and fertile farm land is scarce. The Akwapim kings were always in need of money, and many kings enriched themselves by imposing exorbitant fines on their subjects,11 by exploiting the jealousies and rivalries of their people, or by gifts from wealthy citizens such as Kwasi Fianko. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, the explosive rivalries within the palace in Akropong and between the king and the constituent towns of the kingdom were increasingly mediated by British colonial officials,12 and occasionally by the Basel Mission’s resident pastors.

The Basel Mission, which grew out of the pietistic German Society for Christianity, arrived in Akropong in 1835. Its aim was to expand into the hinterland of the then Gold Coast. It built a complex of churches and schools, introduced cash crops, including cocoa, and helped develop commerce in local commodities and European goods, thus creating new opportunities for Akwapim people. The Basel Mission’s attitude to wealth was complex. It was against conspicuous consumption and for modesty in dress and lifestyle. Nevertheless the Mission’s ethos was one in which individual families were expected to be economically self-supporting through farming or the practice of a profession, such as that of blacksmith or mason. Combined with its emphasis on western-style education and literacy, this made it a focus of modernization.

When the German and Swiss missionaries arrived from Basel, nearly half the Akwapim population was composed of slaves or war captives (nkoa, slaves; Nnonkofo: war refugees, captives bought with money). The mission brought wealth and skills not least to these former slaves, whereas the free elites and royals were less likely to benefit from mission schooling. Royals (adehye) were generally not educated; they had high status and would succeed to property and position anyway.13 They also disliked mixing with Nnonkofo. Within the kingdom there was competition and conflict: king vs. mission; free elite vs. ex-slave; Akan vs. Guan; priests for deities (obosomfoa) vs. Christian pastors.
The missionaries were given parcels of land on which to stay and they established separate communities for Christian converts that were free from the established customs of the town. When there was conflict in the state, the king and his opponents often tried to use the mission community to their own advantage. Akropong people sometimes took refuge with the missionaries when conflicts broke out. Although in principle the Basel Mission directed its personnel not to get involved in local politics, the missionaries and local pastors acted as brokers for peace. The paradox of educated ex-slaves and uneducated free citizens resulted from the local reception of mission education. In any case, by the late nineteenth century there were two centers of economic and political power: the king and the mission, and each of them knew it.14

Kwasi Fianko: Biography of a Nineteenth-Century Entrepreneur Who Became the King’s Soul

Kwasi Fianko is remembered today in Akropong as a man who made his fortune in the 1880s as a trader to Nigeria (in those days called ‘Alata’).15 Elderly men and women in Akropong say he was a rich man (osikani); he had money (ne nsa mu ye duru: ‘his hand was heavy’), and he put up a two-story building (osii aban) on the outskirts of the town on the road leading to Accra. They say that at that time there were no buildings in the area, just open land right up to the Basel Mission church, and that when white people came to visit Nana Kwasi Akuffo they stayed in Kwasi Fianko’s house. His large house was made of yellow stone and stucco; it had a corrugated-iron gabled roof, a wooden verandah around the second story and a row of stone pillars across the ground floor in front of the shops.16 Behind it was a large, walled garden with plantain, yam, coco-yam and a nutmeg tree. With time the house fell into disrepair and in 2005 it was demolished to make room for a student hostel. A large quarter (boron) of the town near the Aboasa market is still called ‘Kwasi Fianko’; the town has grown up around it.

One hundred years after his death Kwasi Fianko was remembered as a close personal friend of Nana Kwasi Akuffo, one of the great kings of Akwapim. Some people said Fianko was a sort of ankobra (advisor) to the king. Others said he was an okra, ‘but not a child okra with a necklace around his neck’, rather one who was appointed once he was fully grown. The meaning and duties of the position of okra (whereby the soul of an important person is externalized and takes up ‘residence’ in another person, whether child or adult) are vividly described in Opoku’s and Rottmann’s reports, including insiders’ views by Kwasi Fianko himself and the king. The reader should be alert to the
problems of translating metaphysical concepts such as soul (kra) and spirit (sunsum) both of which, along with the physical body (ohonam or onipadua), concern the concept of the person. Sunsum and okra are not easy to differentiate, but they are not synonymous.17

No one today can remember much about Fianko’s wives, though a few old men thought he must have married some women ‘because at that time if you wanted to do well, you had to marry many wives to help on your farm lands.’ Kwasi Fianko was paternally of the Dwerebe agyabosom (lit. ‘father’s deity’; group of patrification): no one talked about his abusua (matri-clan). Some said he18 came with others from the Volta region: ‘They stayed with us and changed their names. During the tribal wars, some broke away and lost their culture’: i.e., they were probably Ewe war captives. Okra Kwasi Fianko had no issue, so the lands he bought went to his sisters’ sons. Some people remembered that Kwasi Fianko became a Christian. They said that when he died some people inherited from him and misused what they received: ‘the ingenuity wasn’t there to do hard work and make money, so they spent or squandered what money there was.’

Asking about Kwasi Fianko in present-day Akropong was difficult, in part because a small number of names are repeatedly used there,19 but mostly because inquiries that touch on genealogy are sensitive—slave descent and infertility are not freely discussed. Everyone who was asked was aware that Fianko’s ancestry had a delicate, complicated side. Elders said that these things are tetefo ade (old people’s things) and that the old men would not talk about them before children: ‘Yen ka mpanyinsem, nkyere a mmofra’ (lit. ‘We don’t tell elders’ issues to children’).

The biographical information about Kwasi Fianko provided in the two Basel Mission reports, by contrast, is plentiful and precise. From these we learn that Fianko was born in the 1840s, baptized in 1866 and, as a ‘backslider,’ was ‘excluded’ from the Mission community ten years later. Though Rottmann describes him as being intelligent, intellectually lively and energetic, Fianko did not go to school and was illiterate. Trained as a mason by the Basel Mission, he worked as a young man on the big mission and colonial administration building sites. In this way he assembled his first working capital and concentrated on becoming rich.20

Fianko quickly became a successful farmer and trader. He took salt and brass bowls from the coast inland to Asante and returned with palm oil and parrots to sell on the coast. Soon he was lending money (at extortionate interest rates)21 and accepting pawns to work on his farms. He was one of the first to harvest wild rubber from the inland forests and with the profit he bought land and began to build his impressive two-story house on the outskirts of
Akropong. At the same time he formed a ‘company’ with two other Akwapim men to harvest rubber in the hinterland of Lagos, in Nigeria. This venture was not successful and illness and financial loss forced his return. In Akropong again, Fianko finished his fine house and began a lively trade in schnapps and sheep—commodities always in demand for libations, sacrifices for ancestors and gods, fines, oaths and other similar purposes.

In 1894 Fianko was appointed one of the akrafo (soul people) of Nana Kwasi Akuffo. He served the king as an okra for twelve years. The relationship between Kwasi Fianko’s success as entrepreneur and his identity as okra is at the heart of the quarrel between Fianko and the king, for in 1906 Fianko became ill and, fearing death, decided to return to the Christian congregation. The Basel Mission insisted that he resign his position in the palace and separate himself from all but one wife. Fianko therefore asked the king to be released from his duties as okra so he could be re-accepted as a Christian. This triggered the clash described in the reports Opoku and Rottmann wrote.

According to Rottmann, the king deemed the loss of his ‘soul’ to be a crime against his own life. After all, a king’s okra is totally identified with the king: they share a soul. Fianko claimed that he was obliged to follow God’s call; he must serve his new Lord. The issue was further complicated by the fact that Fianko had three wives—a marital situation that had to be changed before he could re-join the church. The third wife, Susanna Ayebea, was the formally recognized wife, for whom customary marriage rites had taken place. The king himself had advised Fianko to marry her, rather than taking her as a pawn by paying her debt as a customary marriage payment, on the grounds that if he took her as a pawn and then entered a sexual relationship with her, according to custom the money would be lost. The problem was that the other two women had to be compensated, and one of them, Victoria Obuo, was the king’s own sister.

The king responded to Fianko’s request with bitter rage. Both reports disclose the king’s suggestion that if Fianko resigned his office all his property should be transferred to the king. Alternatively, he suggested Fianko could keep Victoria Obuo as his only wife. Since Fianko had no children, she would then, according to Christian customs, succeed to all Fianko’s property upon his death. (The property would thereby come to the king, as her brother.) Fianko objected to having his property confiscated by the king and said the king’s sister was not his customary legal wife. He argued that his estate should move with him into the Christian community and be subject to the rules of inheritance prevailing in the Basel Mission church.

Negotiations were held in the Mission house with the king and his entourage attending. They were not amicably resolved. Nevertheless, an ailing Fianko
and his third wife, Susanna Ayebea, also a lapsed Christian, were re-accepted into the congregation a week later. Two and a half years later, according to Rottmann, the same wife allegedly tried to poison Kwasi Fianko, who ended his days alone in his beautiful house, cared for by his sister and two nephews.

**Nana Kwasi Akuffo: The First Educated Akwapim King and His Need for Money**

Nana Kwasi Akuffo (1863-1927) was an extraordinarily charismatic and ambitious king who reigned from 1895-1907 and 1920-1927. These were times of immense social and economic change all over Ghana. Nana Kwasi Akuffo was the first western-educated Akwapim king and the first to have formerly been a practicing Christian. Trained in the Basel Mission Theological Seminary in Akropong, he was a classical scholar and an impressive orator. He built a European-style multi-storied palace, encouraged cocoa farming, and supported the British in their expedition to Asante in the 1900 Yaa Asantewa war.

Akuffo wanted to make a name for himself in traditional terms, and to show how splendid was the kingship he doubled the state properties acquired by his ancestors. He was said to have been fond of extravagant living and ostentatious display. He married women from all over the kingdom and made nhenkwaa (king’s courtiers/servants) in all the divisions of the state, thereby creating long-lasting alliances with the towns of his kingdom. He also created new regalia: gold covered stools, crowns, breast plates for his ‘souls’, linguist staffs, rings, sandals, European brass bells for his stools. To do this, he pledged stool land and fined his people mercilessly. Many Basel Mission reports and government inquiries indicate how Akuffo abused his jurisdiction to enrich himself and how receptive he was to bribery.

Opoku refers only indirectly to the king’s anger concerning Kwasi Fianko’s decision to give up his position as okra. Rottmann describes the confrontation in the Akropong Mission house, including the king’s attempt to get Susanna Ayebea’s uncle to commit perjury to sabotage Fianko’s plan to enter into a Christian marriage with her. Why was the king so angry? Both Opoku and Rottmann are silent on this issue but it was probably because Nana Kwasi Akuffo was in need of Fianko’s wealth. Money was needed to acquire the objects used to display royal identity. Money was needed to build roads and develop the state. Money was needed to influence people. Although cocoa farming had begun to create new wealth, it had not greatly improved the financial position of the king, who became so unpopular that he was destooled in 1907 for squandering stool property. The conflict with Kwasi Fianko must be read in this context.
Rich Men and Kings

Fianko began with humble origins, gained wealth as an entrepreneur and then used this wealth to help the king and to promote and legitimize his own position within a kingdom where political power and status greatly depended upon birth. He was, at the same time, clearly aware of the idea of 'being civilized' (anibue: lit. 'the opening of the eyes') that was tied to the Basel Mission in Akropong. He was familiar with the British lifestyle that could be seen on the coast, and knew that when needed the British (or missionaries) might protect one against traditional authority. He also knew of the objections by wealthy Asante traders to taxes, death duties and the like. There are a number of extremely insightful and richly documented studies of the accumulation of money (sika) and the role of the wealthy (asikafa, sing. osikani) in Asante history that detail, among other things, the complex negotiations that surrounded power relations in Asante and the interdependence of wealth or high status and spiritual protection. McCaskie's detailed biographical portrait of the British-appointed chief Kwame Boakye (1848-1915) and his narrative of the life of the wealthy commoner Kofi Sraha (1863-1936) and his brothers provide keen portrayals of the 'much conflicted' historical reality of the Asante akonkofoo at this time, of the falling away of personal service to Akan rulers and the combined impacts of Christianity and capitalism in the Asante region. Wilks refers to the asikafa as 'one model of the good citizen... a person who had accumulated enough wealth through his or her own efforts, whether privately or in public service, but from which the state... was ultimately to be the beneficiary.' McCaskie describes asikafa as people of 'acknowledged substance, whether in a local community or on a broader scale.' Arhin notes that wealthy illiterate Asante traders on the coast in the early nineteenth century were known as akonkofoo, from konko: marketing or retailing; they 'later acquired the additional meaning of a rich man osikani; gentleman... or omamma.' He also clarifies different types of traders, who they were and what was accumulated. Certainly when one considers the concept of a 'good citizen', the word omamma is apposite. An omamma, (sing. oman ba: lit. child of the state; or a well known, distinguished man) is someone with outstanding character who is respected by society: he could be either an osikani or an animdefo (pl. animdefo), the latter being someone with great knowledge, wisdom or prowess in some area—academic, intellectual, artistic, athletic—who becomes so important in society that he becomes omamma.

The royal family in Akropong does not have much stool land, and revenue for the Akwapim kingship in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came almost exclusively from the fines levied at tribunals (see above). In the mid-1890s, just as today, benefactors of the king were rewarded with palace...
positions. Kwasi Fianko was appointed okra at the beginning of Nana Kwasi Akuffo’s first reign. There is a customary transfer of money and gifts to the king by newly appointed chiefs, and it is probable that Fianko helped Akuffo financially at his election and in his later ambition to transform the Akwapim kingship visually by means of a lavish display of golden regalia. To acquire this, Akuffo had to sell stool lands and use whatever money he could gain from stool properties. Any additional source of money would have been welcome.

In late nineteenth-century Akropong, access to money, apart from proceeds from trade in palm oil and rubber, was gained largely through holding a palace office or by being a stool occupant. The poor had little influence and had to depend on the rich for support. In recognition of their service, the king’s attendants were given land to farm and wives to marry, and they received money when they represented the king in arbitrations or delivered fees and fines to him. When Kwasi Fianko joined the palace entourage, he was already wealthy from success in trading, and he could help the king. For him, service in the palace would have legitimized his newly earned wealth and provided him with a relatively high status for which his uncertain ancestry did not entitle him.

Akropong people recognize differences between ordinary people (mpapahwékwa), people who have custody of black stools or ancestral shrines (atrankongua: ‘he sits on a stool’, or mpanyinfo: elders), and palace people (ahemfo: an Omanhene or town chief). Sakyi Djan’s exposition of Akan social distinctions and ranks enables us better to understand Fianko’s attraction to the palace and his position in it. It was written in the 1920s and almost certainly pertains to Akwapim. Djan describes the structure as follows:

1. Adehye [sing. odehye]: free man of royal blood who can be called upon to ascend the stool in a family at any time. Lineages with adehye are graded and the Omanhene’s line is superior to the others.
2. Aftakafo: rich men who own large estates and can grant large loans; formerly owned many slaves.
3. Professional class: priests, mediums, asafo officers and drummers.
4. Gentry: less rich, but own a certain amount of land, money and formerly slaves. Includes linguists, akrafo, and other gyaase. Also slaves or war captives of third generation [ofie nipa] who acquired some position.
5. War captives of no great position—servants.
6. Servants [nkoa]: originally purchased, now free. Many become war captains, linguists, etc.; not allowed to occupy stools.

The inclusion by Djan of the akrafo and other gyaase in the category of ‘gentry’ might have been made with men like Kwasi Fianko in mind. Those of slave descent could not inherit clan (abusua) property (unless or until they had been totally absorbed, which generally occurred only when the original family had
died out). Nevertheless, while Fianko was not an odebye, he was certainly wealthy, and through his entrepreneurial skills he had advanced to a status well above his origins. The heart of the kingship was the palace, and Fianko, as one of the king’s akrafo, would have met with his fellow ‘souls’ to bless the king every Sunday, the day on which the king was born. Kwasi is the name for a Sunday-born boy. Sunday (akwasida) is the day on which Kwasi Fianko and Nana Kwasi Akuffo ‘said good-bye to God’, and so they celebrated their soul (kra) on the day on which they were born. Fianko and the other akrafo would also meet with the king and chiefs formally every 42 days to celebrate adae, and annually for odwira. The palace was the heart of politics: arbitrations were heard there and cases were resolved in ways that would affect the lives and welfare of individual Akwapim people and their extended families. The palace gave Fianko social contacts and an uncontested arena for the exercise of power.

Fianko was one of about two dozen akrafo, most of whom were from Akropong, although some came from other Akwapim towns. The position of okra is not an unambiguously positive one. While often described as being suited to a ‘handsome’ person (nea bo ye fe; ohoofefo) who reflected the wealth and beauty of the king, in reality, akrafo were both more and less than this. We learn from Rottmann that an okra was identified with the king and ‘belonged’ to him. In Kwasi Fianko’s own words, akrafo blessed the king, tasted his food for him and sat before him to ward off any approaching danger. They also, formerly, often accompanied him to the grave. Many akrafo had slave ancestry or were ofie nipa (lit. ‘house people’).

One may well ask why Fianko decided in his old age to resign his position in the palace. It is possible that he felt that Akuffo finally demanded too much from him financially. It is likely that Fianko was aware of the political and economic strategies adopted by the wealthy traders in Asante to retain their properties; his response to the king’s attempt to confiscate his acquired property resembles that of the Asante askafo who tried to avoid the ‘death duties’ by which the Asante state obtained much of its wealth. Alternatively it may be that the internal political disturbances in the kingdom, which ultimately led to Akuffo’s destoolment in 1907, were already so obvious that Fianko decided to cut his losses and leave. Those who were in opposition to the king in the early twentieth century had two acceptable options: they could ‘withhold their services’ and return to their farming villages and hamlets in the valley below the Akwapim ridge; by withdrawing from palace affairs, they could avoid disturbances, and ensure by their absence that oaths could not be sworn against them. Or, they could join the Christians. Did Fianko use Christianity diplomatically, as a way to leave the king? Or was it that he was old and
ill and afraid of death? Did he see a Christian funeral as the prestigious alternative to the minimal funerals performed for those without a traditional position and for those of slave ancestry? The reports are silent on these issues.

Wilhelm Rottmann and Theophilus Opoku: Their Reports and Their Readers

Wilhelm Rottmann’s father, Hermann Ludwig Rottmann, was the Basel Mission’s first missionary trader in the Gold Coast, working mainly in Accra from 1854 to 1893. He married Regina Hesse, a member of an Accra mulatto family with Danish ancestors, who were linked to a Shai trading dynasty. Wilhelm Rottmann was their second child, born in Accra in 1859, but educated in Europe. He spent four years in the Mission’s Seminary in Basel (1881-1885) and worked for the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast from 1885 to 1910 with the status of a full missionary.

Wilhelm Rottmann wrote his reports to Basel in German. At some point he gave up the English nationality he held by right of birth in Accra and became a citizen of the German state of Württemberg, which was the center of Pietism and homeland of many Basel missionaries who went to the Gold Coast. In 1892 he married Karoline Muhl from Schleswig, with whom he had six children. When he left the Gold Coast with his wife for the last time in 1910 he returned to Germany and worked as a traveling representative for the Basel Mission in the Tübingen area until his death in 1917.

At the time Rottmann wrote his report on Kwasi Fianko, he was one of the Basel Mission’s longest serving missionaries in the Gold Coast and an important figure in the mission’s local leadership. He was the General Inspector of Schools and a member of the mission’s three-man Executive Committee. Communication within the Basel Mission in the century before the First World War was highly bureaucratized and hierarchical. Rottmann, in an unusually strict adherence to Basel Mission rules, marked his paper on Kwasi Fianko a ‘Voluntary Report’, to distinguish it from the variety of official reports he was required to submit to the Basel headquarters each year. In this voluntary report he provides information free from any organizational imperative, though it is directed to a leadership in Basel which was known to him personally and with which he frequently exchanged letters. The report includes letters and verbatim accounts from the protagonists and gives the reader a vivid source for life in a late nineteenth-century kingdom in the Gold Coast Colony. Wilhelm Rottmann’s interest in this story and the precise information about prices, profits and wages his report contains may well have been inspired
by his own father’s commercial experience with Fianko; we do know that traders in the Basel Mission Trading Company needed to have a sharp sense of the commercial profitability of their goods.

Theophilus Opoku was born in 1842 in Akropong. His father was a son of Omanhene Nana Addo Dankwa I. His mother came from a servant/slave (nkoua) line to Nana Addo Dankwa I. Neither was a Christian. As Opoku was a sickly child, and thus presumably unfit for farming, his father agreed to let the Christians educate him. He grew up in the homes of European missionaries, and was educated in Basel Mission schools and seminaries. Opoku saw himself first and foremost as an evangelist and pastor of the newly converted, whose role was to change the ‘traditional’ social and cultural views and behavior of his fellow-countrymen and convince them to accept Christian interpretations of events. He was a member of the earliest generation of Basel Mission catechists and pastors. He died in 1913.

All the indigenous pastors working under the supervision of the European missionaries were obliged to write annual, sometimes bi-annual, reports in English to the Mission leadership in Basel. The reports follow a general formula and describe the state of affairs of the Christian and ‘heathen’ communities. They tell of successful conversions and of backsliders, of deaths, incurable illnesses, lack of desired children, poverty, debt and the need for refuge. They also tell of the close relationship between literacy and Christianity, and provide a glimpse of the contrast between pietistic Akan Christians and the robust secular lifestyle of drinking, gambling traders. Opoku wrote some thirty-five of these reports between 1872 and 1909. Most of the reports by other pastors are shorter and less detailed than Opoku’s and are distinctly lackluster in character. Opoku belongs to a small group—C.C. Reindorf and Peter Hall belong to the same category—who wrote with subtlety and in meticulous detail about both the Christian and non-Christian communities. Opoku was a skilled and sympathetic observer of his own culture. He describes in detail, for example, funeral customs for pregnant or newly delivered women (annual report 1874, 1896), as well as the practice of devoting unborn children to a ‘fetish’ (or deity) if previous children have died, or if the mother fears she will die in labor (annual report 1886-1897). He is silent on the cultural significance of ancestral shrines (black stools) and human sacrifice; and silent as well on mundane matters such as building, agriculture, schools, salaries and development. Only in his last reports (annual reports 1907, 1908, 1909) does he turn to the troubled internal politics of Akropong that involved Nana Kwasi Akuffo, and the control of the colonial administration and mission. Though no evidence could be found that the Basel Mission hierarchy ever praised Opoku for the thoroughness of his reports, Opoku would have been encouraged to
document local practices by J.G. Christaller who with his indigenous colleagues like Opoku had just completed and published the first Twi dictionary.\textsuperscript{54}

Theophilus Opoku understood well that religious conversion to Christianity had to involve challenging people to a serious dialogue, and that this required a deep understanding of traditional beliefs and practices. He depicts himself, modestly, as a learner in new situations:

\begin{quote}
I am now in the midst of a new and different people, and must consider myself a pupil who has began to enter a new School, to learn and acquire the knowledge and science taught in that School… to imitate the old and experienced Apostle St. Paul, who, when he came to the Jews, conducts himself to gain more Jews to his side, and when he came to the Greeks conducts himself as a Greek, to gain more Greeks to his side.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

He was keenly aware that understanding is enhanced when one tries to describe things as they are understood by the people themselves. He tells us of his method directly: ‘I use the personal pronoun for these fetishes because I describe them in the language of the people as how they take them to be.’\textsuperscript{56}

Opoku was writing for an audience of senior missionaries in Ghana, and for the mission leadership in Basel. He provides the raw data in which he expected the Basel Mission leadership in Switzerland to be interested, but his reporting was not necessarily addressed to fit the expectations of his superiors.\textsuperscript{57} He has a wide knowledge of the Bible, and his deft use of biblical references to make points or subtly imply issues he felt inhibited about expressing directly has a parallel in the careful, indirect speech of the linguist (\textit{okyeame}) in the Akwapim palace.\textsuperscript{58} The frequent use of repetition and synonyms in his writing was also prefigured in the politically astute eloquence of the \textit{okyeame} in traditional Akan culture. It probably also reflects the English with which Opoku was most familiar—the poetry of parallelisms in the Old Testament and the use of near tautology to make prescriptions as comprehensive as possible as is found in archaic legal English. All of Opoku’s reports begin with a brief paragraph declaring his indebtedness to the Lord. These need not be read simply as the usual obligatory missionary pieties. He states with humility and sincerity who he is and what he is about to do (i.e., God’s work); then calls upon God’s blessing before proceeding with his report. This is similar to the conversational tone and organization of a libation that is traditionally poured at the beginning of every important meeting in a family house or in the palace.

In contrast to Wilhelm Rottmann, Opoku was not in frequent contact with the leaders in Basel to whom he was directing his reports. He met only one of them personally—\textit{Inspektor} Praetorius who visited Ghana in 1884-5 and died in Accra before he could start the return journey. Sustained archival searches have found scarcely any indication that Opoku ever received a response from
Basel in reply to his reports. And although his annual reports were supervised (and counter-signed) by his superiors in Ghana, there are no written comments on Opoku’s reports from his superiors in Ghana either.\(^5\) The lack of response in the archival record does not, of course, mean that there were never any responses to Opoku’s reports. His supervisors expected to be in constant interaction with him about events in the arena of his responsibility and about the nature of Opoku’s and the Mission’s proper relations. Opoku was, in the terminology of the time, a ‘black pastor’ and therefore in need of supervision.\(^6\)

Theophilus Opoku was further from the center of power and policy-making in the Basel Mission than was Wilhelm Rottmann.\(^6\) As a native of Akropong, Opoku was also closer than was Rottmann to the everyday practices and beliefs of Christians and non-Christians in Akwapim and to the everyday negotiating of rules governing relationships between the Basel Mission, the king and ordinary people. He thus provides a complementary view to that of the European missionaries like Rottmann and to the pastors from other parts of Ghana who were his colleagues at Akropong. It is in some ways a more acutely observed perspective, but also one that, precisely because he is an ‘insider’, is a little more indirect on culturally or politically sensitive issues. Opoku was engaged in a process of cultural education and a project of language—both the aesthetic aspects and the polemical or pedagogic aspects of language. His sensitivity to language allows for multiple readings of his report and provides greater understanding of a pastor who was very much a part of his own culture.

Viewed together the two reports of Opoku and Rottmann provide a remarkable window onto the ambitions, envies and financial foibles of rich men and kings in the early twentieth-century Gold Coast, a time of flux and experimentation when lines of social affiliations were being redrawn—and they do so in the language of the day. Though these two reports were addressed to cultural outsiders, the struggles of everyday life in the Akropong palace and mission station at a time of great change are brought to life. What matters is the play of voices, the clarity of the complementary and competing voices (Christian and non-Christian, ordinary man and king). It is for this reason that we have presented both the required and voluntary reports of this extraordinary case by both the ‘native’ pastor and his ‘European’ supervisor.

Akropong 8 March 1907.

In giving a review of our pastoral work here, we must feel our great indebtedness to the Lord for our spiritual and temporal mercies, in preserving and sparing us year by year and enabling us to reflect on our own unworthiness, weakness and inadequateness which we are not insensible of and which render us unfit to carry on His holy work, but only for His grace and mercies we are counted worthy still to be stewards in His Vineyard and to recount of His providential mercies and loving kindness, which we poor sinners are unfit to deserve.

In giving a retrospective view of the whole, we are humbled to say that our Report in the whole is not one which gives much encouragement, as in many cases the report which otherwise might have been interesting and encouraging is mixed up with drawbacks and failures. For, in the beginning of the first half-year, our hearts were greatly cheered and exulted when we saw that this time many Backsliders have began to stir or move by seeking after their souls’ salvation which they had for many years cast away or neglected and by applying for reacception into the Congregation, moved as it were by some hidden impulse which made them feel and become anxious about the state and condition of their souls, finding that they live in a dangerous and unsafest situation, began to flee from the wrath to come; which recall to our memory the promise of the Lord, I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely (Hos. 14,4; Jer. 3,22.)64 These retracing their steps, we had the joy and pleasure to extend an open and outstretched right hand of fellowship and to receive so many as eleven souls into the Fold, that they & the Flock rejoiced together and trust with the Shepherd of the Flock with all His Saints (together) (Luk. 15,7 and 1065). Beside these, we see some of these Backsliders attending Church regularly and speak of imitating the example of these 11 by also rejoining it soon. Our joy over this was unbounded. But, it was not long that this (our) joy was turned into one of intense grief, by seeing in the next half year when these eleven reclaimed Backsliders have increased the number of the Flock, we had the painful duty to expel almost the same number from the Church by lewdness, immorality and other habitual sins, committed not only by those we are accustomed to deem as weak and unsteady in character, but also by others on whose mild behaviour or character had made us hitherto placed much confidence on them for godliness. But, by manifestation of vice which they have
exhibited they have shown out their true colours that they walked among us as wolves in sheep skins. Among these latter, we do not with deepest sorrow and mortification exempt our Catechist Christian Oteng the head-teacher of the Boarding School, who putting two maidens at once into pregnancy and leaving us sometime in doubt and in perplexity as to which of the two maidens we had to vote the rightfulness of the marriage with that young man to, as each mother of the two maidens was claiming that right for her daughter. Not without some annoyance at the deed of this Catechist which had caused a great confusion we voted the rightfulness of the marriage to the one he had given his word first about the marriage. This vice and misdemeanour of the Catechist became a wide-spread talk in the Congregation and outside gave much cause and occasion to the enemies of Christian religion and the heathens to ridicule and to mock. These and others inclusively not less than ten souls were turned out from Church fellowship, leaving another wide gap in the Congregation not easily to be filled. We must however not stand in one place to muse and to lament over our loss, but must leave the doubting castle and the giant despair and trust that as long as there is life, there is also hope and must be confident that the Lord in His Wisdom and in His own time and way will work out the salvation of these as He has done with many others and the eleven we have referred to.

A few words about one of the reclaimed eleven showing the time and the mighty Arm of the Lord in reclaiming sinners will not be out of place here. This one Benjamin Fianko an old backslider of many years standing who fell away from grace not less than 32 or more years ago whose character became a hopeless one, but whose reclamation came on in a remarkable way and all of a sudden, manifesting the stronger and powerful arm of the Lord mighty to save. Not many years after his baptism, he fell away and became a backslider for more than 32 years. In all this time he addicted himself to worldliness caring not a bit for anything that concerns his soul’s salvation, but following only his worldly inclinations and propensities, making worldly gain his chiefest ambition and the object of his pursuit. This brought him once to Lagos to work and to trade in rubber and other businesses. He penetrated far inland in the bush, some miles distance from Lagos town. There he was stricken by a severe illness which brought him very low and to the brink of his grave that no spark of hope was cherished for his recovery. In his agony and distress that he was going to die impenitent and in a foreign land, the thought of which made him shudder, he remembered that he was a christian and began once more to pray to the merciful and heavenly Father, a duty he had many long years cast off and neglected. In the depth of his soul, in this prayer, he vowed that if the Lord will forgive his past and manifold sins and will spare him and bring
him back again to his country, he will give himself over to Him anew and will serve Him the rest of his life. The Lord heard his prayer and spared his life again, was recovered and found chance to return to his country (again). But no sooner as his feet touched the soil of his country (and like a bird in the snare who had a shrill mournful and a pitiful crying in the snare, but when released forgetteth very quickly the scrape it was in and assumes the old native song it had in the bush) than he cast away the Lord who had so mercifully and miraculously preserved and spared his life and had permitted him to see the land of his nativity, no more remembering anything about his prayer and his vow. In his ambition, the most characteristic feature in his character, he took one of the King’s sisters to his other wives and thereby became a brother-in-law and a most familiar and favourite friend and companion of the King, and, afterwards accepted a position of being an ‘Okra’ i.e. a soul’s companion or representative to the King’s soul. I give the signification or meaning of this before we proceed on with this our Benjamin.

Any child born in this country is called or named after the day of the week in which it was born until a family or proper name is added to, as for instance. Kwasi, or Akwasiwa (a male or female child born on Sunday) which day is considered its soul’s birth-day or the day on which its soul began to exist; and any person (or persons) having that same day for his or her birth-day is his or her soul’s name-sake. Now, every King, every chief or any notable man chooses from his domestic slaves or from his sons, daughters or friends one who is mostly his peculiar favourite and who bears the same ‘soul-name’ with him and therefore his soul’s name-sake and confers on him (or her) the honour of being his ‘Okra’ or his soul’s companion or representative. These Okras are distinguished from others by wearing golden ornaments in the shape of a plate or a full moon in any occasional time and daub themselves (or at least on their foreheads or on their arms) with white clay and go in white cloth, as Drill, Satin or Calico after having undergone a weekly ablution on that soul-day of the King. (If Sunday or any day in the week being the soul-day, i.e. the birth-day of the King this weekly ablutions go on on that day) which they call ‘washing of the soul’. In times of yearly festival they perform a yearly ablution (or the washing of the soul) in the spring or water-place in which they are attended by a large retinue with all the insignia of the King. In times of public assemblies or annual shows their seats are always nearest to the King on his right and left. They have the privilege to enjoy all dainties and luxuries from the King’s table and are held or treated delicately. Any slightest injury committed on his person, as assaulting him (pushing him on the ground,) or inflicting of any slightest wound on his body is considered high treason, taking it as it were done on the King’s own person and therefore (in olden times) punishable with death or with a heavy fine. Notwithstanding the
lofty and prominent position they hold, they have one *destiny* which makes the position detestable in the eyes of many and is therefore not coveted; and this is that in olden times when human sacrifice was existing and was in its force, this Okra is bound to accompany his royal master or superior, his soul’s partner, companion or namesake at the time of his decease by being strangled or broken by the neck between two clubs or poles (not permitted to be touched with a knife, dagger or scimitar as to make any blood gushed or spilt out) and the naked body dragged into the grave and the coffin bearing the royal corpse lowered to sit upon the body of this unfortunate man, showing that the existence of these as well as their property are in the hands of their royal Superior or Master for life and for death. Of course in this Gospel time and in [the] English Colony this abominable and evil practice or the ‘destiny’ of these unfortunate people is no more in force or at least not carried on openly for fear of a most severe punishment when this crime is discovered.

It is this Okra position as we have remarked that Benjamin Fianko accepted and addicted himself to all worldly pleasures and ambition which human and depraved heart could dictate which connects to this position, forgetting his prayer and his vow made years ago, until lately by the strong Arm of the Lord that brought another serious illness on him by which he thought his end had come, that made this prayer and his vow came once more into his memory. It made him anxious about his soul. This time, a certain man who is known to be a wealthy man possessing lands money and different large farms of cocoa, who is familiarly known to him died in a certain town the intelligence of which was imparted to him. The thought of this sudden death made him miserably anxious and brought many serious thoughts on him. Among others he asked himself: if after all this great wealth of this friend of mine could not save him from death, how much more mine who am once a Christian but have cast away my God and my religion for worldly pleasure? He applied now for reacception in the Fold as a penitent sinner. But this is not to come smoothly and easily without a hard struggle on his part. For, being ‘Okra’ he must on the first hand have to relinquish this state office and on the second hand, he is to part with all his strange wives and keep only to the one who is an acknowledged wife, i.e. the one whose marriage with him had been legalized by country customs and ceremonies. The former is not to be done without the knowledge and consent of his superior master the King. To his proposal or wish to relinquish this state office and become a christian member again, the King did not make an open opposition, but concealed it in the 2 conditions he proposed to him in writing. Viz: That he does not object or oppose to his being or becoming a christian member again, but notwithstanding this 1. he is to understand, acknowledge and keep in mind that his existence as well as all his property, as the laws about Okras are concerned, are in the power
and control of the King and (he the King) is to choose the best or the choicest of his property that will suit his fancy after his decease without any one (of course his relations) having a right to interfere or remonstrate. 2. That he is to keep his sister (who is also a christian member) as a christian and legal wife that one may inherit the other's property according to the manner of christians, when one or the other is not.83

To these two conditions or suggestions Benjamin raised objections, on the ground: 1. That no christian has ever confiscated84 or left his property in this manner to the mercy of a King or any one of authority. If he is a christian or will become a christian, he does so or is to do so with his every belonging or his whole property (Exod. 10,9.85) and questions about it after his decease is only to be dispensed86 with by the Christian community and not by the heathens. 2. With regard to the second point that his sister is to be the rightful wife he said: Although your sister is a christian member, as the manner of native marriage is concerned, she is not the one entitled to our marriage, as hers with me was not legalized by any custom or ceremony as the one which underwent these by your own advice and afterwards by your own sanction by receiving the drinkables sent by me to you on that occasion.87 This answer was put into writing and sent to him as he did with his to him. On receiving it he [the King] was greatly incensed and insisted at once that a separation of his sister and himself (Benjamin) may take place88 which he the latter is to give according to the rank of his sister (a queen-regent89) a handsome sum of money for that separation of their so-called marriage.

Considering that our Rule90 allows £5 in such cases in unlawful marriages [which] are to be dissolved we thought and advised that £6 should be given for the separation; but this he rejected with much disdain, urging that £25 at least ([if] not £50) should be given. But as we have to stick firmly to our Rule we could not yield to this wish or demand. This our consistency or unwillingness to yield [to] his wish or demand on the one hand and our approval to the marriage of the one who is more entitled to it by legal custom and ceremony incensed him highly and brought a very sharp dispute between himself and us. After all, (after this hot dispute) after much deliberation, for peace sake [we] concluded that £10 should be given to the sister and at any cost91 the one who is entitled to the marriage (who was also a backslider) should be reaccepted with the husband, which being done, this man and his wife was reaccepted into the Church to the great joy of themselves and the whole flock. Beside the reclaimed backsliders we have referred above, some heathen now and then express a wish to us for baptism among whom is one chief or bodyguard92 of the King who for this has relinquished his position of (his) chieftainship, but being in the plantation finds some difficulty of coming and remaining home for baptismal instructions. Our difficulty we meet these past
years is that owing to the cocoa-farm-work which has brought almost the whole inhabitants of this town to the plantations, we rarely get regular candidates for baptism. They wish and do express a willingness for becoming Christians, but could not leave their farms and spend some time at home for their instructions wishing rather to have the baptism without due instruction or with only some few days instruction which wish we cannot gratify. Even with our Christians living in the plantations we have that same complaint about their Christian behaviour and can say that among our christians here and abroad we are losing true sabbath-keepers, owing to their attention being so much arrested to this cocoa business. In a visit to the plantations some months ago, the two Sabbaths I spent there, going from one village to the other, my heart was sorely pained to find many Christians not on their duty of keeping the Sabbath devoutly; being met on several ways having their attention on their different transactions than on their devotions. This gives the impression that by and by it will require many good & faithful Local preachers beside catechists or teachers settled on few stations here and there (in the plantations) who are to go from one place to the other to keep the Sabbath with these who let to themselves will not take the trouble to go to a station where a catechist or teacher is, to keep the Sabbath there. The more so that forest lands for cocoa cultivation have been bought by the majority of our Christians in distant places and are penetrating far inland and no prospect that they will stay in a place where we have our stations and let to themselves, will always be careless to their religious duties. But the question arises, where shall we get these good and faithful local preachers, while so many of our agents fall away and go after other worldly concerns, which reduces their number every now and then? And, could these local preachers be steady and firm and stand resolutely against the temptations of this cocoa business by which many are besetted [besotted?] and have led some to cast away their profession and their heavenly calling? We leave this to the Lord of Missions, who knows no impossibilities.

In spite of the complaint we have recorded in the behaviour of some of our Christians, we have however to be thankful that in general our Christians are getting themselves accustomed to their christian duties and are glad to be enabled to record that we had less complaint and trouble with the majority about their Church-attendance and payment of their Church Tax etc.

To say a little about political matters we must remark that for some years past, our country Akwapim had never been in a state of tranquility. It is in a state of very much disquietude owing to political disturbance. There is now and often a rising or taking up of arms against the capital Akropong, being threatened now and then from every side with an attack putting her peace and safety strenuously into a stake; and that her existence hitherto is only to be attributed to divine providence and interposition of which Government interference is
only an instrumental.95 Since the taking up of arms against it by the Kyere-
pongs or the Right-wing army in 1896,96 there had never ceased to occur these
disturbances caused by other towns in the Left wing army such as Larteh,
Mampong, Tutu, etc, all trying to imitate the example of the Right-Wing
army, the Kyerepongs, each town having a secret alliance backs and prompts
each other in their attempt to carry out their design to attack and overthrow
the town. The cause of all this is that there is a great and general dissatisfaction
animosity and indifference cherished by the subjects to the ruler.97 His over-
throw of his kingdom is what many of these subjects are anxious to see and
would hail this with great joy if this would occur. I say it is only by divine
interposition that his town (the capital) is always protected by the interference
of the government, otherwise its fall might have inevitably happened accord-
ing to the wish of her enemies. Out of many instances that Akropong is always
threatened with an attack from all sides I give one as an instance:

Some years ago a dispute about a land in which each opponent party
claimed the right or ownership arose between the King and the Tutus which
case came before the judicial court (in which judgment was given in favour of
the latter) and afterwards passed the Appeal Court and judgment given by the
Appeal Court in favour of the King, the Tutus were not willing to submit to
or admit the judgment.98 The King twice (in the last and the preceding year)
going to take possession of the land in dispute was attacked with arms, wholly
surrounded and shut in by not only the Tutus who had made themselves
obnoxious by many and despicable treatment they had openly given him but
also by other sister towns as Larteh, Mampong etc. etc. who secretly or openly
supported them with ammunition etc. that he (the King) narrowly escaped,
had not the Government Offices arrived with troops in the scene of the distur-
bance in time and dispersed and arrested the rioters. During the time of this
disturbance and all what was going on in the bush, at home
the poor defence-
less women and children with but few men almost without arms were beside
themselves with excitement terror and alarm which was caused by a rumour
that the death of a Larteh captain who has been killed in the skirmish and his
body brought to Larteh has exasperated his force or company so much that
they have determined upon a revenge on the King's capital to destroy and
burn it. Poor inhabitants, old & young, sick and infirm! Where are they to
find refuge and protection, knowing that all the other sister-towns are open &
secret enemies to them! They have no refuge any where to repair to, than to
the Missionaries and their compounds. And although the rumour was
unfounded yet to guard against the inevitable thither they repaired to with
their sick ones, their aged, their children and all their properties; and the Mis-
missionaries with free hearts and bowels of compassion99 opened all their gates, as
the Seminary, the Middle School, the Boarding School etc. and gave free admittance to everyone with her property that accompanied her. This remarkable kindness and philanthropic deed of the Missionaries and their Christians made a deep impression on their minds and imparted a great credit on them that the general utterance of these poor people is: 'Oh, the word of God and the Missionaries! It is nothing else that has kept this our miserable town from destruction and made it to exist till now but to this Word of God and the Missionaries and their Christians. It is only on their account that the town is kept standing'.

The people in their commotion which brought past experiences & recollections of past events of troubles and constant agitation of the town and the many losses they sustain in lives and property in memory did not blame alone their enemies who have risen against them, but did censure the King violently for rashness which set the town often in agitation.

Among many things in the behaviour of the King that cause displeasure and dissatisfaction to his own townsmen there is one in particular of which they are mostly annoyed. It is the abolishing of the old policy which was carried on by the former Kings, his predecessors, which is the creating of a commander-in-chief or field-marshal in the person of the heir apparent or the one next to him in the Kingdom from the royal family. This one is called 'Asonko-hene' i.e. chief-captain of the Asonko company. This one has the second stool or the one next to the King’s and is the head-captain of all the forces in the town. It is this one (Asonko-hene) the town had longed to have but which the King since his coming on the stool had made an open refusal to grant. This is one of the chiefest cause for which they have neglected the town altogether. They take it for granted that it is this present policy of the King (of having abolished the old policy of the old Kings) that has weakened the power and of which weakness their vassals, the Akwapims, have taken an advantage and have made it their habit of taking arms, constantly against them knowing that they (the town) have no head or commander.

Of late, they have unanimously required and insisted upon the policy of the former Kings being enforced which the King with some reluctance did yield to. It is this that made the people longed for and caught Henry Koranteng alias Owusu Ansah by force at Aburi when on his way from Asante passing to his new appointed station Akwamu, and created him with the position of Heir-apparent to the Akwapim stool and Commander of the forces of the town.

Could we hope and believe that among our lot of christians installed with high offices of the state, there will be found some who will show a true example of godliness to their subjects and become divine instruments by which the
salvation of these their many heathen subjects be worked out (by their instrumentality) and tend to the opening of the way to the spreading of the Gospel than to be impediment on its course and all tend to the glorification of the Redeemer the Almighty? Till now we’ve found it the contrary, but we leave the future to Him, praying to be assisted with your kind, and faithful intercession and prayers on this behalf.\textsuperscript{103}

Voluntary Report [i.e. not part of an official annual or quarterly report].

In the mid-sixties a likely lad about 18 years old, used to visit the mission station in Akropong and go to the living quarters of a missionary called Harnisch. His name was Kwasi Fianko. What caused these visits was his friendship with Harnisch’s cook. If something was needed in the kitchen—something from the fields, or to be bought in the market—this friendly boy, who liked to be helpful, was delighted to run an errand and [always] succeeded in fetching what was wanted quickly. Naturally he came into close contact with the missionary and heard from him the Word of Life. He was a bright young man and soon saw that in Christianity a life-force was revealing itself which was superior to the heathenism around him. He asked for baptism and on 21st October 1866 he was baptised by Rev. Widmann. The impressions which he gained of the gospel then have, however, totally disappeared in the many years in which he lived fallen away from God, and cut off from contact with the christian congregation. He tells us that his original reason for entering the christian congregation was the insignificance and transitoriness of everything earthly and the conviction that Christianity was offering something lasting and eternal. He was an intellectually lively young man, and had always behaved well according to the ideas of the heathen—a point on which he lays much emphasis even today. He seems mainly to have been impressed with the outward signs of the superiority of the Christian religion, with its higher moral order, its intelligence, its skills [i.e. in producing material goods: Kunstfertigkeit] and its knowledge. But really the only thing which he seems to remember from this early contact with christianity is the name Benjamin, which he received in baptism.

It is striking that he did not learn to read but turned immediately to a practical occupation and learned to be a mason under the direction of the Oekonomiebruder Pettavel, working on the buildings which were then being erected in Akropong. He also worked on putting up the Government Sanatorium in Aburi under Leimenstoll, and of the Mission House in Kyebi under Buss, and seems to have saved up a nice little packet of capital for himself. More and more he concentrated on getting rich, and with his mind thus orientated to earthly matters it is no surprise that he did not resist the many temptations, and the many foolish and destructive impulses, which the love of money brings with it. He had to be excluded from the christian congregation in 1877.
Now there was nothing to stop this energetic man concentrating on making money. He retired to his farming village Ahabante, 4 hours away from Akropong, made baskets for sale, traded with salt and brass bowls right into Asante, caught parrots and sold them to the coast. At this time he was the beneficiary of a bequest, which he doubled in a short time by lending money at extortionate interest (30-50%) and taking up pawns. The pawns had to work on his farms and prepare palm-oil for him. When the trade in rubber started this clever and enterprising trader must have been one of the first to take advantage of this new opportunity to earn money. He rented large forest tracts in Akim and took as much rubber from them as possible, not by tapping the trees but by recklessly cutting them down to get to his goal in the shortest possible time. He produced wild rubber for 3 (25d) per pound and sold the same amount in Accra for 1/6 (1.5 Marks). With the profit from this trade in rubber he bought more land in his home province [provinz] of Akwapim. Although like all Africans here he did not like to give any indication of his wealth, he was just as unable as all his other wealthy countrymen to deny himself by not building a large house. He began to build a two-storey house on a fine and open site on the outskirts of Akropong.

At this time he heard that in the hinterland of Lagos there were great forests with large amounts of rubber, and that money could be made there. As a skilled and successful trader he could not resist this tempting prospect. He joined forces with another man, called Asante, who was a member of the christian congregation. He recruited 22 young men to whom he offered free transport to Lagos and back. That is to say he had to pay for each man £1.10 (30 Marks) for transport and additionally 1 Mark as daily wage for the period of his stay in a foreign land. In the hinterland of Lagos they rented a piece of forest which stretched several hours and where many rubber trees stood. The rent which he contracted to pay was one-third of the yield of the rubber. As Fianko describes it, the region is very fertile and one travels for 3 days through uninterrupted forest. Plantain, the main nourishment of the Akwapim people, is not much appreciated there. Instead the tasty and nutritious yam is present in such large quantities that—in contrast with Akwapim, where yams are only to be had 5 months in the year—the new crop is available before the stocks from the last harvest have been fully used up. But in spite of the fertility of the land and the low cost of living our friend had no luck with this, his last trading journey. Various circumstances worked together to deprive him of the fruits of his labour and initiative. It turned out that the landowners had rented this forest land to two or even three companies [Gesellschaften] simultaneously. The two men from Akwapim did not know the language or the circumstances, and this hindered them in claiming their rights. And the
different way of life caused a lot of illness in Fianko’s group. He himself fell badly ill of diarrhoea [Breckruhr] and was near to death. In his need he thought again about his God, and the counsels of his friend Asante fell on fruitful soil. He vowed to convert if God brought him back safely to his home, so that when the time came he would ‘know how to die’. He recovered, paid off his people and returned hastily to his home, having suffered substantial loss of money. His friend, who did not have as much capital, had to work for years to pay off the serious debts he incurred in this time. Happy to be home again Fianko hurried to finish his two-storey house. But his return to His Father’s house as penitent sinner was put off to a ‘more convenient moment’. God the Lord made sure that Fianko received many warnings, however. For example, a storm tore off the corrugated metal sheets of the roof of his house and hurled the verandah posts to the ground. It took a lot of money and effort to make the damage good again. He began a lively trade in schnapps to cover his losses and began to raise sheep on a large scale. In the large yard behind his house he would have as many as 60 sheep or even more, so it was impossible to find somewhere to place your foot without treading in sheep-dung.

And then at that time the enemy of souls was able to throw a new net over Kwasi Fianko—a net whose meshes were much stronger than the love of money and from which, humanly speaking, there was no escape. He became an okra, that is a soul-man of the then King Akuffo. This happened in the year 1894.

Okra is the word in the Twi language for soul. According to the African way of seeing things on the Gold Coast the soul of a person is, on the one hand, more or less his spirit, who dwells in him and is one with him. On the other hand they often speak of the soul as if it is a being separate from the individual human, which lives in close contact with the person to whom it has been assigned, who protects this person or neglects him, gives him good or bad advice and who can help or hinder in all the enterprises in which he is involved. Because of this separateness a pious heathen will thank his soul and make offerings to it if matters go well and luck brings him good things. And if someone has escaped danger or a threatened catastrophe has been turned aside, he will cry out ‘this has turned out in this way because I have a soul who favours me’. On the other hand, if someone is pursued by misfortune, people will say he has a ‘black soul’ who does not give him anything good. Even before a baby is born it is a real concern of the heathen mother to learn from a diviner what sort of soul will come with her little child into the world. When someone has been especially successful or receives especial blessings he will go, as dusk falls, to a particular stream or pool to ‘wash his soul’. With kings and other great men this washing of their souls is linked to the great annual festivals of autumn.
The view is taken that the souls of important persons may take their residence partly in one or more other persons. So important people, especially kings, choose those who have been born on the same day of the week and declare that they have become an okra or soul of the king in that a sheep has been sacrificed and blood poured out over the earth in front of them. The more powerful a king the more soul-men or Akrafo he has. Here and there a woman who was born on the same weekday as the king will be made his okra or soul-woman. Usually, however, it is people of any age of the male sex—not only adults, but small children, even those still being carried on their mothers’ backs [who are chosen]. The soul-people of the King of Akropong wear, as a badge of their status, a round plate of gold on their breast, which hangs on a white string around the neck. But they only wear this decoration on the King’s ‘soul-day’, i.e. on the weekday of the king’s birth, and on festival days. The King rarely goes out without having one of his soul-people accompany him. And on his soul-day they gather around him and spend almost the whole day there, like the personification of an invisible spiritual bodyguard. In the old days—and in Asante till recently—the soul-people, with few exceptions, were slaughtered when a king died in order to be at his disposal on the other side.

So let us listen to how Kwasi Fianko himself describes his duties as okra or soul-man of former King Akuffo.

There were about 24 of us ‘Soul-People’, some of us quite small boys, some of whom were still being carried by their mothers. I was the oldest and the head of the whole group. As a sign of my dignity I not only had the round golden plate on my breast, I also carried one of the large king’s swords with a golden handle, the sign of a king’s messenger. Every Sunday morning we had to have our heads shaved smooth, because soul-people are not allowed to grow their hair. Then we went to the stream and washed. We carried a brass bowl full of water back to the king’s house and put it down in front of him. One after the other we went up to the bowl, took a little water in our mouths and blew it out in a fine spray towards the king and called out ‘Kose, Kose’, i.e. ‘may luck and good things [Heil] come to you and everything evil stay far away!’ Then the king bathed in the water we had brought. Sunday was the day on which King Akuffo was born so we all had to put on white cloth, smear white earth with three fingers on our foreheads and upper arms, and carry all the signs of our office. We had to stay with the King all day Sunday. If he went out we all had to go too, for example if he went to church we all had to go with him. You will often remember having seen me in church yourself. On Sunday, his soul-day, the King also usually had a sheep slaughtered to make a special meal for his soul people. We ate in the King’s presence—that is, we ate ‘for him and blessed him. Naturally we were not allowed to do any work of any kind on this soul-day. If something unfortunate happened to us [on the other six days of the week], it was as if it had happened to the King, and if it actually happened on Sunday a very special [act of] atonement had to be carried out. For example, if one of the soul-people injured himself so that he bled, a sheep had to be slaughtered so that its blood flowed in atonement over the King’s sacrificial stone in front of the
palace. If someone swore the King’s oath, that is to say if someone was involved in a quarrel and in order to lend force to his point claimed the King’s life would be forfeit if he was not telling the truth, and by naming a catastrophic day on which an earlier King had died in battle or been murdered in fact cursed the King himself, one or two sheep had to be sacrificed immediately to expunge the curse. Any soul-people who happened to be in the vicinity had to go forward and take up a little blood on their first finger, touch their tongue with it and then spit it out. The meat of such slaughtered sheep belonged to us.

It happened to me once that, when I was coming back from a neighbouring village I tripped at the entrance to the town and ended up lying with my hands on the ground. When the King heard this he made me bring a sheep for atonement, saying ‘Do you really think I am going to walk around my town on all fours?’ Naturally the soul-people had to observe all the prohibitions which applied to the King. For example King Akuffo was not allowed to eat a kind of yam called Afasew, nor was he allowed to eat goat-meat or the meat of the kind of monkey called Kweku. If an okra died the King had to provide a sheep for slaughter to reconcile the guardian spirit. He also sent people out to look for a forked *nsomme* plant with two stems. One stem would be painted white, the other black. The black stem had blood from the sacrificed sheep smeared over it, it was broken off, and laid by the body. But the white branch was brought back to the King. This was a declaration that all the evil caused by the death of the okra which might trouble the King had been sent away with the deceased, and only blessing remained.

An okra belonged to the King. After all, the King’s best thing, namely his soul, was dwelling in him [i.e. the okra]. So according to old custom the whole of an okra’s property—wives, children, money, fields etc—fell to the King on his, the okra’s, death. Admittedly Akuffo could not enforce this over the whole range of property. I remember that once, when an okra died in Larteh he demanded that his two widows be handed over, and one of them was really brought to him. Mostly a King is content to take a fine cloth from the possessions of the deceased and a few sheep as a substitute for the rest of his property.

Being the oldest okra I was also a King’s Messenger, carrying a King’s Sword as sign of office. The King sent me here and there with all sorts of business for him. He had made all sorts of new laws which, if you broke them, you were punished. For example he had forbidden group hunting and if you were caught you were fined £5.0.0 (100 Marks). When the King heard that this kind of hunting had been carried out somewhere—it would come to his ears, for instance, if someone met with an accident while being involved—he sent his messenger out with the sword as a sign of his bonafides to collect the fine. I had to go to Asantema once where a man had been injured in a shooting accident during a hunt of this kind. Each one of those involved had to pay £5, and the unfortunate man who pulled the trigger had to pay double. I returned to my master with £60, and received £1 for my efforts. I often had to collect fines. When I was sent to someone with these evil tidings I lodged with him and he had to support me until he had paid the sum he owed, or had formally applied for an extension to the time before payment by handing over one sheep and two bottles of schnapps. I did not profit from my office as okra. I did manage to complete building my house in that time and furnish it. But serving the King did not really bring blessing to me. I had to give up my profitable trade in schnapps, because when King Akuffo needed schnapps—mostly to give away, because he did not drink schnapps himself—
he would simply send people to me to fetch a case, promising to pay for it soon, which he never did. For the same reason I was forced to give up breeding sheep, because whenever a sheep was needed in the court, Akuffo sent to have one of mine brought to him, and never replaced one. No-one can force a King to pay his debts.

So much for Kwasi Fianko’s stories about his service as an *okra* to King Akuffo. This went on for twelve long years. It is true that he had a pretty 2-storey house on a fine open site with three big well-lit rooms, a veranda around it and at the back a large yard enclosed by a stone wall. The rooms were nicely white-washed and kept very clean. In the middle of the large room containing European furniture there was a long and beautifully made table, with a lamp hanging above it. On the table there were trays with cups, glasses and carafes standing nicely arranged. Along the long walls there were two sofas and a number of impressive chairs of woven willow (so-called Madeira furniture). There were also several chairs made of cane and two comfortable European armchairs. There were several pretty pictures in frames on the walls. On the east wall hung a large photograph of King Akuffo fully robed with the golden crown on his head, holding a golden sword pointing upwards in his right hand and with all sorts of other gold decorations. The picture was behind glass and in a golden frame. On the north wall over the sofa hung a large mirror, and below it a smaller picture framed and behind glass also showing King Akuffo in his regalia, sitting under a state umbrella, and behind him a royal slave with his head shaved on top and with long locks hanging down by each temple. On his left stood a small boy with a massive headdress of feathers, also one of the King’s *okras* and on his right Kwasi Fianko himself with his round gold plate on his breast, holding the King’s Sword before him. Left and right of this room there were two roomy guest rooms, each with two beds.

Many people who passed this fine house must have thought its owner was a happy man. But our friend knew no peace, and so his joy at his property was not unmixed. To this inner unquiet were added problems from without, sent by God to plague him. A severe illness of the lungs cast him down, so that his relatives carried him, as the custom is here, to a farming village two hours away so that he could recover under the care and treatment of a particular indigenous medicine man. On his lonely bed he could not drive away the thoughts of death and the judgement which follows. As he had done twelve years before he vowed that if God would allow him to get better enough to return to Akropong he would ask to be taken into the Christian congregation. An elder of the Akropong congregation, whose farm was nearby, visited him frequently, spoke to him, and prayed with him. One of the Akropong schools came once on a preaching tour through his village and the schoolboys sang him some of the songs of Zion, which really moved his heart and filled him
with longing to be in His Father’s house. His condition did indeed take a turn for the better, and as soon as he was strong enough he returned to Akropong, resolved this time to ‘pay to the Lord what he had sworn to, before all his people’. And with this the most important passage in his life began.

Kwasi Fianko went back to Akropong, told the King he wanted to return to the Christian congregation and asked to be released from his duties as Okra. Akuffo would have none of it and cried out angrily ‘Let none of this come to my ears again. Otherwise I must sacrifice a sheep on the spot.’ (The King saw the conversion of an okra as a serious insult, a crime against the King’s life, which had to be immediately atoned by an offering which Fianko would have to pay.) But Fianko did not give up. He returned the symbols of his position as okra to the King by means of two men from the court who had a good reputation there—the golden plate, the King’s Sword, and the other things he had received from the King. He asked him urgently not to be angry—he (Fianko) could do no other, but had to follow God’s call. What made a settlement with the King difficult, and indeed led to serious complications, was not only his giving up the post of okra, but the resolution of his marriage situation. This was an essential step before he could join the Christian congregation.

Kwasi Fianko had three wives. There were two older relationships with women for whom he had made no customary payments who were, therefore, according to local custom, not really his legal wives, but involved in a marriage-type relationship which could be dissolved at any time. For his third wife, who was still young, Fianko had made the customary payment, and she therefore counted as his legally acknowledged wife. So far so good—if he wanted to join the Christian congregation he could do so only with the third and legal wife. What made regulating this situation much more difficult than usual was the fact that one of the two other women was a sister of the King and also, already, a member of the congregation. She had been baptised about 10 years before and it seems that people did not insist that her rather vague marital status should be, in this connection, clarified by the customary payments. I was in Europe and heard there how proud people were that ‘a queen’—for she had the right to use this title—had become Christian. And indeed she had received, in addition to her indigenous name ‘Obuo’ the European name ‘Victoria’. Her Christianity was not much more than skin deep, however. As is frequently the case with members of the royal family she loved honour in the eyes of people rather than in the eyes of God. And she found it hard to separate herself from all sorts of heathenish customs—indeed at the time about which I write she was excluded from taking communion because she had danced with heathen women in the street. The third wife, for whom customary payments had been made, had had a colourful past. As the daughter...
of a teacher she had had a relatively good education, as indeed a girl can get
over the course of five years in a mission school. Then she worked as house-
maid for a number of years in different mission families. She was dexterous
and lively by nature and had become very experienced with European-style
housekeeping. She grew up to be a young woman, engaged herself to be mar-
rried to a Wesleyan Christian, but fell [into sin] with him, and no proper mar-
rriage was celebrated. When a family debt had to be paid her husband refused
to pay part of it and dissolved the relationship. In this situation Ayebea’s
uncle (this was her name) offered her as a pawn to Kwasi Fianko, if Kwasi
Fianko paid the debt. At that stage the King advised his friend Fianko not
to take the girl as a pawn but to offer the customary payments and marry her,
since ‘if he only takes her as pawn and then enters into a relationship with her
the money will be lost, according to custom.’ So Fianko made the customary
payment and Ayebea became his wife. Now she wanted to rejoin the Christian
congregation, along with her husband. Fianko thus had no other choice than
to send his other wives away and compensate them. Since both women were
elderly this would normally have not been a problem, and indeed one wife
quickly agreed to accept 50 Marks and a piece of land as compensation and
separate herself from him. Since the other wife was both a royal and a mem-
ber of the congregation we thought it advisable that Fianko should offer her a
piece of land and 100 Marks in cash as compensation. But King Akuffo
refused to contemplate this arrangement. He refused the money angrily and
wrote Kwasi Fianko the following letter:

Akropong, 28th February 1906.
Kwasi Fianko!
Recently Timothy Newmann and David Asante brought me your request, that I
allow you to become a Christian. Normally when someone becomes a Christian he
does not need to ask the King’s permission. But I understand what you have done,
since you are my—that is, the King of Akwapim’s—ofri. I do not need to explain
to you what the position of an ofri involves. You know that an ofri belongs to the
King from the top of his head to the sole of his feet. Formerly the King had full rights
over an ofri’s life. In addition you are the property of the King’s deity Kobinko.

Now, I, the King of Akwapim, know something about the Word of God—yea I also
know God’s Word. So hear what I have to say. A person in whose heart God is at work
and who intends to separate himself from earthly things should not find it difficult to
renounce earthly goods. So I declare to you: you are the King’s Okra and if you are
going to give up this office know that your whole property belongs to me. Now that I
have made this clear I can call with a full heart: May he have good luck in his intention
to become a christian. Once you are deceased I will take possession of all your prop-
erty, and then I will know what I intend to do with it. It is true that when an okra dies
the nearest relatives take their part before the King demands what he is entitled to. You
will remember how I sent you to Larteh to demand my part at the death of the okra
Ofri. He had not given up his office, as you intend to do, but died.
I am very happy that God’s Holy Spirit is calling you to turn back, and that you are turning back to God with my sister Victoria Obuo, the Queen of Akwapim. When my sister was converted she declared before us all that she wanted to marry you, because you were a Christian. I am delighted that my sister is still a member of the Christian congregation and draws you with her into the congregation.

The old ones have a proverb: ‘Bosomtwi (a big lake in Asante, which has a lot of fish and is venerated as a deity) gives us fish if you give him white hens and sacrifices dogs to him’. Your wife, my sister Victoria Obuo, would be sitting on this royal throne if she had been a man. She has handed over the kingdom to me, and I am King instead of her. If you intend to serve God with her, you have my fullest blessing for the way you will go. Become a Christian. If you die Obuo will be the inheritor of all your property according to Christian custom—and if Obuo dies, you are her heir. Therefore I call out to you: Good luck! Convert! I take nothing from you, not even an egg. I wish you all the best, but know that if Obuo inherits from you all your property comes to me.

And now allow me to give you one or two words of warning on the basis of God’s Word. It often happens that people who were not even born free think, when they become Christians, that Christianity means something like emancipation and rebelling against their masters. Thus your brother Agyei took up a quarrel with me, tried to be accepted as a false prophet and gave divination against me. When the chairman of the Christian congregation wanted to challenge him about this he ran away. You seem to want to tread in his footsteps. So I want to remind you of different texts in the Holy Scriptures which your Pastor and the Congregational Elders should read out to you and explain, namely Proverbs 24.21-2, Luke 20.24-5, Romans 13.1-6, 1 Peter 2.13-18 and the book of Philemon. If God’s Spirit is really calling you to become a Christian then these words will re-echo in your ears and you will follow them and others will be inspired to follow your good example. For this reason I and my people give you permission, and with our best wishes for your happiness and blessing we call out ‘Go, and become a Christian’.

I am [the one who writes]
Frederick William Kwasi Akuffo
King of Akuapem

Even if you are not familiar with our local situation you will notice, when reading the letter above, that it is full of pin-pricks and flavoured with bitter scorn. If you know King Akuffo well and know what lies hidden behind his outwardly sweet and well-chosen words you have no alternative but to come to the conclusion that it was written in gall by a poisoned pen. The brother of Kwasi Fianko called Agyei, whom the King mentions, was involved in a case against the King over a piece of land. Agyei, who was a member of our congregation, was always a strange character. At that time he was ill, and according to local custom he drank a lot too much medicine, and this medicine seems to have made him mentally confused. One morning when he woke up he told the other people in the house that in the night the Prophet Jeremiah had appeared to him and given him the task of writing a letter to King Akuffo to
tell him to send away all his wives except for the first one. There is no doubt
that he had had this dream, since he knew nothing about a Prophet Jeremiah
and it was only when he asked if there were such a prophet that he learned that
among Israel’s prophets there was one bearing this name. In spite of all
attempts to dissuade him, he did write the letter, which resulted in the King
getting into an enormous rage.

Kwasi Fianko answered Akuffo in writing as follows:

To the King, F.W. Kwasi Akuffo
Akropong 1st March 1906.
My Lord King

The letter you wrote to your servant Kwasi Fianko was handed over to me by Pastor
Opoku, and I answer in all humility and as your subject the following:

1. I received through Messrs T.O. Newmann and D. Asante an answer from my
Lord King to my grave request. He allows me to leave his service in peace. I should lay
my case before the missionaries and ask them if I can continue to perform my two
offices as servant of the King (as okra and as messenger) when I am a Christian;
whether I can serve both God the Lord of the whole world and my Lord King. If this
is not possible I should inform the King. The missionaries replied that I am and
remain the King’s servant but that I cannot hold these two offices and at the same
time be a christian. I informed my Lord King about this answer. The answer my Lord
gave me was that if I want to lay down my office I should add something to it (i.e. give
a sum of money to mark the separation). I myself have no will in this matter, so I asked
to be told what I must do to be made free, for how can I say what I should give with-
out the advice of my Lord King—should it be wine, or should it be water? My Lord
had me told: when all the akrafo come together someone will inform me what I have
to do to separate myself from my office. But no answer came. At last I received the
letter of my Lord King through Pastor Opoku, and it contained the following: My
Lord lets his servant depart in peace—and I wish to thank my Lord with my whole
heart for this. Further he informs me in that letter that when I am no longer there my
whole property falls into his hands. As for this last point I would like humbly as his
subject to reply to my Lord King in the following way: My Lord lets his servant depart in peace—and I wish to thank my Lord with my whole
heart for this. Further he informs me in that letter that when I am no longer there my
whole property falls into his hands. As for this last point I would like humbly as his
subject to reply to my Lord King in the following way: that heathenism with all its customs has nothing to do with me any
more, but that while I live and after my death all my affairs must be regulated accord-
ing to the Christian way and regulations. For in death and in life I am the property of
the Lord Jesus.

2. When my Lord King gave me permission to become a christian, the first ques-
tion the missionaries asked me was: how many wives do I have? I replied: three. Then
they asked me: whether I had made the customary payments for all three? I replied:
that the only wife of the three for whom I had made the customary payment and for
whom the customary wine was brought to my Lord King and the elders of the town is
Susanne Ayebaa. For my two other women [Weiber], Akosua Apmoa and Adwoa
Obuo I made no customary payments, nor were the customary drinks given for them.
So the marriages with these two wives are not legally valid, and the missionaries say
that this kind of marriage is not allowed in the Christian congregation. Therefore I am informing my Lord King that I am joining the Christian congregation with the wife for whom I have made the customary payment and for whom the customary drinks have been celebrated.183

3. I thank my Lord King from the bottom of my heart for the words of warning based on the Word of God, but I would like to take the opportunity to say that what I am doing at this moment, and what I intend, is not based on a lust for emancipation or out of a mentality [Gesinnung] which refuses the role of a subordinate. It is the salvation of my soul that I am struggling for, so that all my sufferings on earth and my illness will end in heavenly rest and holiness. It is true that Agyei is my brother, but just as twins are not quite the same and you can always find a difference between them, so is my mentality different from that of Agyei’s and I have nothing to do with his rebellion.184

4. In conclusion I speak out thanks to my Lord King with all my heart, and in all humility I ask ‘Here is the office I have held, may you take it back’. And as has been the case so far, and will be for all time, the relationship between my Lord King and myself will be one between Lord and slave [this word has been crossed out in pencil, presumably by another hand, and ‘servant’ substitute for it],185 with no thought of freeing myself on my side, until God the Lord will, in his mercy, call your servant Kwasi Fianko to his eternal rest.
I am your servant
Kwasi Fianko.

Now King Akuffo sent to tell Kwasi Fianko that if he is giving up Obuo he must pay her £50 (1000 Marks) compensation. We discussed this in the Presbytery and I wrote on the instructions of the Presbytery to the King to tell him that in our opinion £8 (160 Marks) would be enough. I could have added that this particular woman,186 before she became a Christian, had been married something like six times, without the customary payments ever having been paid—that she had had six men and had abandoned each when she felt like it or when they dissolved the relationship (i.e. when they were tired of her) without any compensation having been paid. In this case, too, she had no basis for asking for compensation, but I did not want to provoke the King unnecessarily. A few days later Akuffo sent to tell me that he wanted to speak with me. The King came at the time we had agreed, not with a small escort, as is usual, but with eight of his town elders187 and the whole following of linguists, courtiers, a clerk and all the other people linked to his court, there must have been about 100 men in all. I cleared out our great room for the discussion, on one of the narrow sides sat we missionaries, the pastor, the two presbyters and perhaps three members of the congregation. Opposite us and filling the whole centre of the room sat the King, his councillors, linguists, and clerk. The rest of the people squatted in the open doors or sat down on the veranda.

The negotiations were conducted by the King with great passion. He got so excited and used such insulting expressions that I pointed out to him that he
was in my house, at which he replied in his annoyance ‘Do you want me to stand up and break off the negotiations?’ One of his friends, a member of the congregation, found it necessary to go and bow deeply before him and whisper to him ‘Lord King, be more moderate! Be more moderate!’

Among the arguments brought against us and Kwasi Fianko (who was ill and not present) their trump card was the assertion that Kwasi Fianko was not legally married to the young woman Susanna Ayebea, she being still the wife of the Wesleyan with whom she fell. It needed a barefacedness such as only Akuffo, whom the people call ‘the liar’, can muster, to deny that he himself had advised Fianko to take that person not as a pawn but as a wife by making payment of the debt a customary marriage payment. It needed the same barefacedness to deny that he had taken receipt of the customary drinks. Our position was made difficult and we were considerably embarrassed in that situation because the uncle of the woman, from whose hands Fianko had received her, and who in turn received the money, had the gall to claim that he had seen the money not as a customary payment for a marriage, but had rather thought his niece had only been pawned. We learned afterwards that King Akuffo had called this man to him on the evening before and had bribed him to make false witness. Akuffo also knew how to subtly bring a somewhat similar case into the discussion so that it supported his position. He pointed to one of his elders and said ‘This man’s wife also became his wife without the customary payment and the drinks and she is nevertheless a member of your congregation.’ At this I could only say ‘It happened 25 years ago that his wife was accepted in the congregation, and in the case of Victoria Obuo a mistake was also made. ‘One doesn’t settle down anew on the site of an old campsite’—nowadays we would handle things differently.’

The King expressed himself very strongly, and got very angry, when he referred to my letter, in which I informed him that the Presbytery had fixed compensation at £8. Time after time he put his golden pince-nez on his nose (he kept them in a tin!) opened my letter and called out: ‘Eight pounds sterling, eight pounds sterling for a Queen! The Presbytery dares to offer me that! Where does it have the authority to do something like that? Eight pounds for a Queen! That is the way they trample around on my sister.’

Then he gave way to angry speeches about Kwasi Fianko. ‘The stupid fellow! He is my slave! His mother is an Ewe woman and was bought by my family with money. Yes! He is a born slave! But here you can see again what these Christians want! Emancipation! They are full of a lust to free themselves! Free, that is all they want, to be free! And what does he want with a young woman? He is impotent! (Fianko has no children). Why does he want a young woman? Lusts of the flesh, nothing but the lusts of the flesh!’ Well, we could have said...
to King Akuffo, who has 60 wives, that people who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones. The King’s anger and the false witness of the uncle frightened the Pastor and the Presbyters, so much so that one of the town elders said ‘It is quite clear that your case rests on shaky foundations—there is nothing left to do but ask for forgiveness’ (in Twi: take off your hats). At which I stood up and explained that enough had been said, and since no satisfactory results had been achieved there was no point in going on negotiating. I asked the King to rise and return to his home, and we would talk among ourselves again and then send him a message. He stood and went off with his whole entourage. As he went my soul was filled with grim anger that the enemy had dared to scorn us in my own house and I thought of the word of the Psalmist—‘the Godless is proud and angry. He takes no-one’s advice. In all his tricks he regards God as nothing. He carries on in his way, Thy judgement is far from him, he is aggressive towards his enemies, he says in his heart I will never be defeated, I will never be in need. His mouth is full of curses, lies and deceit, his tongue causes trouble and effort’ ([a summary of] Psalm 10, 4-15).

After we had been apprised of the false witness we caused Kwasi Fianko to add £2 to the compensation so that the sum was rounded up to £10 (200 Marks). I sent the money to the King and informed him that this was the last time we would concern ourselves with this affair. If he did not accept the money, his sister Obuo would not receive a penny. He must have noticed that his deceit had been spotted, took the money and sent me back my letter with the request that I tear it up. Although I did not understand why he made this request, I did him that favour, and so the whole affair was laid to rest.

The following Sunday Kwasi Fianko and his wife Susanna Ayebea were accepted into the congregation. He was still so weak that a relative had to carry him to church on his back. He sat on a chair before the altar and asked, in a brief speech, for re-acceptance in the congregation. He had been wandering lost for 40 years and now he had come as a tired and sick man to ask to be allowed back into his Father’s house, and his comfort was that the Lord Jesus had said about people like him that whoever comes to him, he will not drive away.

But the cup of suffering was not yet drunk to the end, however. About a year later King Akuffo was able to make his hatred for Kwasi Fianko very evident again. In a land-case before his stool he was able to do injustice to a just case and to do him damage wherever he could. A few months later Akuffo was destooled and lost his throne.

But the cup of suffering had still not been drunk to the very dregs. Two and a half years later—that is to say, very recently, it came out that the woman for whose sake he had fought so hard had been untrue, had committed adultery,
had been giving him a slow-working poison and had thus tried to push her husband aside. That was a severe trial, and the sick old man sighed heavily. . . . We summoned her to appear before the Presbytery and we were shocked to see how unrepentant and how trapped by Satan this woman had become. She refused our advice to be penitent and to change her ways. She just wanted to abandon her husband and join her comrades in sin.  

Our friend is now very lonely in his beautiful house, outside the town. A sister and two nephews take some care of him. But his spirit is quiet. He knows well that he is not alone, but that after much wandering he has come back and is now 'at home in God's heart.' He is waiting in quiet humility till God the Lord will redeem him from all evils of body and soul. When his time comes God will give him a holy end and in grace take him to himself, leaving this valley of tears for that great and beautiful fatherland above.

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Publications


Notes

1. We thank Barbara Bianco for her gracious critical reviews of early drafts and her calm advice; and we thank the anonymous JRA readers for insightful comments that pointed up problems in the essay, not all of which may have been addressed here to their satisfaction. Bossman Murey and Joe Banson shared in the Akropong research with patience and good humor; we are especially grateful to members of the Opoku and Fianko families who very generously provided crucial but sometimes sensitive background information. Early financial support to have Opoku’s reports typed out by Victoria LaGrand was given by the Yale Divinity School. The Overseas Ministry Studies Center for Mission History (Pew Charitable Trust) provided financial help for further research in the Basel Mission archive. Crucial help by Patricia Purtschert in the archive was financed by the Freie Akademische Gesellschaft, Basel. We have not indicated diacritical marks for ‘o’ and ‘e’ in the Twi spelling.

2. Mission 21 Archive, Basel Mission records, document D-1.86.31, Annual Report of Theophilus Opoku for 1906, dated 8 March 1907. Almost half of this report on the Akropong congregation was devoted to the case of Kwasi Fianko. The authors of this paper are planning to publish a full-text edition of all 35 annual reports written by Theophilus Opoku to the Basel Mission. These are held in the Basel Mission Archive and will be gathered together in a single volume. The present article includes only one report by Opoku. Several publications have drawn extensively on other reports by Opoku, e.g., Jenkins 1972, Haenger 2000, Purtschert 2002, Abun-Nasr 2003, Sill 2003 and Dankwa 2005.

3. Mission 21 Archive, Basel Mission records, document D-1.93.29, ‘Voluntary Report’ by Wilhelm Rottmann, dated 18 January 1909. We do not know why Rottmann decided to write his report three years later. Perhaps the timing was inspired by the death of Kwasi Fianko or by continuing factional turmoil related to the 1907 destoolment of Nana Kwasi Akufo; the conflict clearly struck a resonant chord with him.

4. See Scott 1988 on language and the need to situate authors of texts within particular discursive contexts, lest one underutilize the sources and underestimate the complexity. See...
also Davis 1987 on how through full and uninterrupted narratives one can see story-telling skills and view the way different actors structure events.

5. See Scott 1988: 137-138 and introduction. See also McCaskie 2000b: 235-237 on narrative (asem: issues) and writing (kyereu) and the way the Asante structure reality.

6. See McCaskie's fine-grained and vivid study of the Asante in this period of great change (2000b); see also his 2000a analysis of an Asante nouveau riche: both successfully capture the complexity, diversity and voices of the people—and the background tensions—as their worlds were radically changing. See essay by Arhin 1995 on monetization in Asante, also 1975.

7. See Gilbert 1994: 122, n. 42. In 2005 there were no incumbents. The duties of akrafo in Fianko's own words are given in Rottmann's report. See also Opoku n. 11, 14 and Rottmann n. 36, 43, 47.

8. Formerly, a child, beads or cloth could be given or pledged as a pawn (si awowa or owowani), or as surety for a debt. The British abolition of slavery on the Gold Coast (1874) immediately preceded the take-off phase of the cocoa-industry when labor was in great demand. Farmers emigrated from their home towns and resided in their villages; they married many wives to have more hands on their farms; see Opoku annual reports: 1907, 1908, 1909. At this time bridewealth (tiri nsa) became inflated. Akyeampong 2000: 227 describes how this led to the feminization of pawning.

9. The Basel Mission's position on polygamy and inheritance, for example, is an issue in the Kwasi Fianko case. Arhin 1995: 104 addresses the additional concern in Asante that marriage payments by nouveaux riches commoners might exceed those for royals—thus undermining customary status distinctions and authority.

10. Akwapim towns are organized in divisions of the kingdom, as in a war formation: right, left, forward and center. The right and left wings comprise patrilineal Guan peoples. Those in the center and forward wings are matrilineal Akan. See Gilbert 1997 for the acrimonious history of ethnic relations that led to the secession in 1994; and Brokensha 1970 for earlier disputes.

11. Judgement on cases from oaths on deities (abosom) or family or royal oaths could be enormously costly, yet people commonly swore them on their neighbors for revenge; see, for example, Opoku annual reports of 1886 and 1903. A case in the king's court could easily cost 50 francs and interest rates were as high as 50 percent. Rottmann reports that one small case in 1903 in which the Mission was involved incurred a debt of 185 francs for the man deemed guilty. At this time the colonial government prohibited the king from inflicting a fine higher than 600 francs at any one time. (We assume that Rottmann was referring to Swiss francs.) The problem was exacerbated by the fact that revenue diminished as the number of Christians increased because the Christians did not swear oaths. When Akwapim subjects emigrated to grow cocoa, the Akwapim king was forced to contest with kings elsewhere over who had jurisdiction to tax and fine 'his subjects'. See Arhin 1986, 1995 and McCaskie 2000c for the opinions of Asante nouveaux riches and problems of scarce money for cocoa farmers.

12. These negotiations were in the form of interventions and formal inquiries.

13. Education was the responsibility of the father. The children of kings (ahenemma), who in matrilineal Akropong would not inherit, were often sent to the Mission schools. The value of education was gradually recognized by royals (adehye) as well. Opoku notes (annual reports: 1896, 1897, 1901) that literacy provided skills useful in dealing with Europeans, even for chiefs. Though not mentioned by Opoku, by the early twentieth century a few Akwapim royals were being educated in Europe.
15. Biographical information on Kwasi Fianko was collected by Michelle Gilbert, mostly in 2002-3.
16. Rottmann describes the inside furnishings of this house. In the early twentieth century huge two-story houses, for family and followers, were the new symbol of wealth all over southern Ghana. See Akyeampong 2000, McCaskie 2000c: 174 and Arhin 1986: 27 on Asante storied houses built by wealthy traders.
17. See extended discussion by Gyekye 1987: 85-103; 168 on the Akan concept of the person and problems in the translation of the concepts 'soul' and 'spirit'. In general, okra is associated with the principle of life given to each person before birth by God; at death it roams about and then goes to Asaman, the land of the dead; if one is sleeping or very ill, it may go away temporarily. Sunsum or 'spirit' is said to provide protection from spiritual attack or danger. Considerable contradiction exists in the meaning of these terms in Akropong.
18. Probably his mother is meant here.
19. Every Akropong person has a number of names, reflecting how multifaceted the notion of the person is. As Opoku explains in his report, those born on the same day are believed to share an affinity: they have the same soul (kra), and the same name. A Sunday-born male is called 'Kwasi'. There are seven groups of patrilineage (agyabosom: agya: father; obosom: deity) in Akropong: these are groups that formerly ‘washed’ together on ceremonial occasions and went to war together; each has a repertoire of common personal names (din pa) that are associated with praise names, personality characteristics, food taboos, and greeting responses (mnyeso). 'Fianko' is a name commonly associated with the Dwerebe agyabosom.
20. See Rottmann n. 9.
21. See McCaskie 2000b on Asante punitive interest rates and money-lending.
22. See Hill 1963 on Akwapim companies formed to exploit cocoa in Ghana. The term 'company' here suggests that this particular form of economic organization existed in Akwapim before cocoa really became important.
23. Rottmann reports that Kwasi Fianko’s partner in his Nigerian adventure was still paying off the debts he incurred years later—a confirmation that debts in the late nineteenth-century hinterland of Accra were being handled in monetary terms, and that an individual’s credit rating was a serious matter of consequence.
24. Victoria Obuo was probably a classificatory sister; see Opoku n. 9.
25. A further ambiguity here is whether Nana Kwasi Akuffo wanted Fianko’s money for himself or for his abusua.
26. See McCaskie on the akonkofoo and the Asante commoner Kofi Sraha ‘leader of those who claimed the right to dispose of personally accumulated wealth as and how they saw fit’ (2000c: 171); and Arhin 1986 on akonkofoo and the levying of taxes by chiefs on the property of deceased persons.
27. It is likely that Greek was being taught at the Akropong Theological Seminary when Akuffo was a student there.
28. GNA 11/1101
29. Nana Kwasi Akuffo had 62 wives (and 127 children). This is an example of the display of wealth and the accumulative prerogatives of kingship. See McCaskie 2000a: 54 on accumulation and ostentatious consumption and the illuminating case of Kwame Boakye in Asante.
30. Nana Kwasi Akuffo was severely criticized by his opponents for his confiscatory dealings with his subjects and for looting their property. See GNA 11/1101. See Gilbert 1993b and 2005 ms and Brokensha 1972 for more on Nana Kwasi Akuffo.
31. See, for example, Opoku’s 1903 annual report; NAG 11/1665, case No. 67/07.
32. See Arhin 1995: 102-4 on changing perceptions of money in Asante and how expenditure resulted in large debts, taxation by chiefs, and consequent numerous destoolments of stool occupants. See also McCaskie 1986, 2000b.
35. See, for example, Akyeampong and Obeng 1995 and McCaskie 2000a: 45.
39. See Arhin 1986: 25-6. He also notes that early nineteenth-century Asantehene did not encourage trade among commoners for fear that their wealth would lead them either to compete for power with hereditary rulers or to sacrifice the political interests of Asante.
41. Gifts (generally of money) are also given to the palace elders, chiefs (okomani and ankobea), drummers, linguists, etc., who are witnesses. This is called som kabyire (lit. ‘the head-pad for serving’). It is a recognition of the introduction or installation of a new chief, an acknowledgement that this is a transaction recognized in law.
42. When a palace attendant, e.g., a gyaseni, sat on a case or went on errands for the Akwapim king, the percentage of the fines he received was considerably smaller than that given in Asante. When Fianko was sent as a messenger to represent Akuffo on a case, he was given one pound out of a sixty-pound fine (Rottmann report). Palace remittances in Akropong seem always to have been small. Note that in nineteenth-century Asante, by contrast, attendants to the king when sent as messengers were given between 13 and 33⅓ percent according to the rank of the attendant; See Wilks 1975: 441.
43. Arhin 1986: 26 notes that the nouveaux riches in Asante were liable to be forced to make loans to power holders. See too Fianko’s dry remark in Rottmann’s report that ‘No-one can force a king to pay his debts.’
44. Fianko’s mother was most likely an Ewe: Fianko thus had no stool to ascend.
45. Djan 1936: 114. Akropong elders in the 1970s identified Oheneba Sakyi Djan as being from Aburi. They said he was a cousin and brother-in-law to the Akwapim Adontenhene (chief of Aburi and head of the Adonten division) and brother to the Aburi Mankrado.
46. GNA Enquiry, 4 June 1919, No. 168.
47. Ofie nipa were ‘home-born slaves’ (Christaller 1933: 127), products of a union between a slave woman and a slave man who were brought to Akropong from elsewhere, generally as a result of purchase. They took the abusua of their slave mother (reckoned as that of the owner) but had no agyabosom. The child of a union between a free man and a slave woman was an owienade (he does not inherit) and had the agyabosom of his father and the abusua of his mother. See Gilbert 1995: 378, n. 14.
48. Asante had two categories of death duties: ayibiadadee and anwuyadee (the former was levied on the property of a deceased commoner); Arhin 1975: 63-64, 1986; see also McCaskie 2000c, 1995: 315.
49. By and large, traditional funerals stress the deceased person’s ancestry, while Christian funerals stress the deceased’s personal achievements while he was alive. This is one reason why children of those who are not of royal blood will sometimes encourage their parents to convert to Christianity.
50. Rottmann’s ancestry makes his position in the Basel Mission on pre-1914 Gold Coast almost unique. His younger brother Samuel also worked for the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast from 1892 to 1905. He later worked as a Basel Mission representative in different parts of Europe and died in 1951. The Basel Mission was clearly unhappy about mixed marriages, and few happened before 1914; see Miller 2003: 145-147, 150-151. Only one man from the Gold Coast became a full Basel Missionary in the formal sense before 1914—David Asante, who is the subject of a full-length study by Abun-Nasr 2003. In the 1880s Nikolaus Clerk, a descendant of the West Indian settlers the Basel Mission brought to the Gold Coast in 1843, was given missionary training in Basel 1885-8, and rose to high office in the independent Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast during and after the First World War.


53. In Opoku’s annual reports (e.g., 1887, 1892, 1900), we are repeatedly shown his success at evangelizing, and his conversion of persons whose character was deemed hopeless: quarrelsome and litigious mediums and priestesses; men in line to become chiefs; hard-drinkers; pathetic blind old childless women who had spent their lives serving ‘fetishes’ in the hope of having children.

54. Students educated in the Basel Mission schools were encouraged to collect and write their indigenous customs (amanne). It was thought that these traditions that had shaped their identity would soon disappear. In keeping with the Basel Mission emphasis on order and accounting, diaries were also kept to record financial transactions and purchases. Between 1976 and 2004, Michelle Gilbert had the opportunity to read about a half dozen of these personal diaries that were written during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and for this she is very grateful. Beside lists of financial debts, pledging of farm land, fees and bribes to sawyers and carpenters, they often included short essays in English and Twi describing traditional customs, everyday life and family histories. There was no sustained narrative. These notebooks belong to the same intellectual context of literacy in which Opoku wrote, but they are personal and often lack a beginning and an end. While some of them may have been inspired by Christaller’s interest in language and culture, they differ in that Opoku’s reports were written for the Basel Mission hierarchy. They differ as well from the records of arbitration kept by the Presbytery Session.


56. Mission 21 archive, Basel Mission records, Opoku’s annual report for Adukrom, 3 March 1887, D-1.45.46.

57. Purtschert 2002 uses Opoku’s 1908 report to argue that Opoku can be regarded as communicating to the ‘guardians of orthodoxy’ in Basel what they would prefer not to know—in this case the fact that a pastor’s wife in early twentieth-century Akwapim was also the Queen Mother of the kingdom. Purtschert opines that Opoku implicitly contributes to a negotiation about ‘the truth’ between the Mission’s powerful, self-confident European center and the local periphery in Akwapim.

58. His use of biblical allusions to address delicate issues is better documented in his other reports. It was unnecessary to give the full quotation in his reports as these were readily understood by his readers.

59. Currently, annual reports of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana are written by the clerks of the church and the reports are discussed and responded to by the Presbytery or District.

61. See Miller’s 2003 analysis of the hierarchy among European members of the Basel Mission. The hierarchy surely extended downwards into the Ghanaian membership of the mission: Pastors—teachers/catechists/evangelists—church elders etc. The missionaries, especially those like Rottmann in senior positions, will probably have seen themselves in the kind of disciplinary role in relation to their African subordinates that they themselves experienced in their patriarchal subordination to the members of the Mission Committee in Basel. Thus Opoku would have been part of the ‘native’ nexus of pastors, congregational members, lapsed Christians and the surrounding ‘traditional’ society; and Wilhelm Rottmann would have been part of the European nexus of the Mission proper.

62. Opoku’s reports (Mission 21 Archive, Basel Mission records, document D-1.86.31) were handwritten in English on loose sheets of paper which were later bound in the Basel Mission archives. We have left Opoku’s words in their original order. We have sometimes inserted commas where this seemed helpful, but all of the full stops and the paragraph divisions originate with Opoku, as do cases of emphasis that were underlined and rendered here in italic type. Cosmetic corrections have been made to the spelling. We use the English spelling for place-names: ‘Akwapim’ and ‘Akropong’. Any other editorial interventions have been clearly marked in brackets. Footnotes are by Michelle Gilbert and Paul Jenkins. In cases of ambiguity or obscurity in Opoku’s text we have indicated in a footnote what we understand him to be saying.

63. ‘Reacception’, a neologism generated by the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, refers to the process by which someone who had been under church discipline—exclusion from participating in Holy Communion was the most common sanction—was, after appropriate expressions of penitence, the resolution of the situation which contravened mission regulations, and the commitment ‘to do better’, re-accepted as a full member of a congregation.

64. Opoku often uses biblical references in these reports to indicate a point indirectly or with eloquence, much as an okyeame (linguist or spokesman) makes use of proverbs in the king’s palace. In giving the text of these references we use the King James Version, which was presumably the version of the English Bible available to Opoku. Hosea 14.4: ‘I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.’ Jeremiah 3.22: ‘Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto Thee, for Thou art the Lord our God.’

65. Luke 15.7: ‘I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentence.’ Luke 15.10: ‘Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.’

66. ‘Doubting Castle’ and ‘Giant Despair’ feature in John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, written at the end of the seventeenth century. It was a text widely translated, at least in summary form, by nineteenth-century Protestant missions, even by the Germanophone Basel Mission (first Twi version known to us was published in 1885). ‘Where there’s life there’s hope’ is a well-known English proverb.

67. The printed Basel Mission Annual Report (Jahresbericht der Basler Mission) dated 1 July 1907 records that 384 people were entitled to take communion in Akropong. The ‘members of the congregation’ (presumably including those too young to take communion) numbered 660. In the whole of the Akropong mission district (roughly speaking from Mampong north-eastwards—there was a separate mission district based on Aburi) the total Christian community numbered 5,074 people, and in the preceding year 108 people had
been excluded from communion, and 65 received back into the fellowship. In the Aburi mission district (which completed the Mission's coverage of Akwapim, and also included the non-Akwapim town of Nsawam, though the church there was still small) the figures read: 1,741 in the Christian community, 59 excluded from communion, and 21 received back into the fellowship.

68. Those who die away from home are customarily brought back to their home town for burial by their matrilineage or father's family.

69. This expression resembles a Twi proverb but it is more likely that Opoku is using a biblical phrase, such as Paul's admonishment to Timothy on greed, the love of money and the dangers it poses, in order to describe Fianko's state of mind and behavior (1 Timothy 6:9-10 and 2 Timothy 2:26).

70. Obuo, or Janet Victoria, was named after Queen Victoria. She was called ‘Obuo onipa’ to distinguish her from other Obuos. She was an odehye (royal), a daughter of a former Queen Mother, Sakyaabea I, and the mother of Akua Asor who was the Queen Mother (Ohemmea) with Nana Kwasi Akuffo. Present-day descendants of Akuffo say that Obuo was his sister and that they made her like a ‘Queen Mother’ (o ye no te o bekemama): they say that when she grew older she gave the position to her daughter Akua Asor. As Nana Kwasi Akuffo was said to be an only child, Obuo was probably of a slightly different line, perhaps a cousin. While Obuo Victoria was one of the most senior women (obaa panyin) in the Asona royal line from which Nana Kwasi Akuffo descended, she was not a Queen or Queen Mother. See Gilbert 1993b on Akuffo's genealogy and the contested positions of Akua Asor and Akua Oye as Queen Mother.

71. Akwasiwa, or its variant, Akosua, is the kra din (soul name) for a Sunday-born girl. Kwasi is the name for a Sunday-born boy. Stylized responses (nnyeso) are associated with the day names, but are rarely used today. Praises or appellations (nmran or nsabrane) for the day names are used to coax, flatter, cajole or admire. Every child is also given a family name (din pa; lit. ‘good name’) by his or her father; this is associated with the group of patrilineage (agyabosom); see Gilbert 2009 forthcoming.

72. The akrafo were a visually dramatic part of the traditional entourage of a chief. The Akwapim king had a child okra who sat before him on ceremonial occasions and wore a feather headdress and a bead around his neck. A number of adult akrafo also sat before the king and wore large gold ornaments (akrakonmu) around their necks. Both bead and gold ornament (okyere or okenkyere: lit. ‘soul-binder’, Christaller 1933: 294, 264) signify that should the king die, the akrafo would be caught (okyere) in order to accompany the king to the grave, and thus share his ‘destiny’. These ‘soul’ people (kra: ‘soul’) represent the king’s person; the position is not hereditary (see Gilbert 1994) and in the past they were often chosen from domestic slaves. They are distinguished from the hereditary position of Akrahe (chief of the Akrafo), who is an Asona, one of the okoman and a king-maker. See Gilbert 1987 on okoman; see Rottmann n. 36, 40, 43, 47 on akrafo.

73. We think that ‘occasional time’ is intended to refer to Akan holy days like adae, fida fofo, etc.

74. On fida fofo, at the end of the annual Odwira festival (see Gilbert 1994), the akrafo process to a spring in Akropong called Adami, leave offerings of yam, cleanse themselves with water, collect water in a brass pan (ayowa), and then return to the palace to purify and bless the king. Then they eat yam together. Different rivers have different uses and powers; all are considered to be deities (abosom).

75. They stand before the king and if someone approaches intending harm, e.g., with poison on his hand, they deflect it, just as they eat the food offered to the king first, in case it is poisoned. They share their destiny with the king literally and figuratively.
76. The liver is considered the most delicious part of a fowl or sheep. When an animal is sacrificed, the liver is always reserved for the okra.

77. Customarily, blood should not be associated with the soul. When the feather headdress worn by the child okra is cleansed and fed (during Odwira when the king celebrates his kra), sacrificial blood is never used for purification, though it is an integral part of all other purification rites.

78. Fears that such practices continued were real in Ghana and persisted throughout the twentieth century; see Rathbone 1993.

79. ‘Addicted’, ‘depraved’, ‘dictate’: a pastor’s training in a Protestant mission had given Opoku a considerable vocabulary of terms concerning sin, its genesis and its condemnation. One might ask whether in this passage Opoku is suggesting that the ‘depraved heart’ makes its own demands on the individual, over which he has no simple control.

80. Opatu wu is a sudden death that is treated like an ordinary death. In contrast, otofo—a sudden death due to a car accident, suicide, pregnancy, etc.—is deemed a bad death, and the body is disposed of less ceremoniously; see Gilbert 1988. No death is considered to be natural, but the reference here is probably to opatu wu.

81. Protestant missions in Africa generally have had a policy to enforce European-style monogamy. Opoku shows here that the Basel Mission in early twentieth-century Ghana acknowledged the binding nature of customary marriages, and that the king well understood the Christian rules of inheritance.

82. It is likely that the king’s letter was a way to ‘pull rank’—a literate King, on the side of progress, humiliating an illiterate servant by forcing him to get someone to read and explain a letter to him. Akuffo was the first literate king of Akwapim; he had been an accountant in the F. and A. Swanzy trading firm and secretary to Nana Kwame Fori I before himself becoming Omanhene. Akuffo was also notoriously litigious and therefore cautious about documentation. Thus when he accepted the money offered by Kwasi Fianko, he demanded that the letter from the church accompanying it should be destroyed. See also Rottmann n. 68.

83. This sentence ends abruptly in the original. We assume it means: when one or the other is no longer alive.

84. ‘Confiscated’ must mean ‘abandoned’, or more subtly ‘allowed someone to confiscate’.

85. Moses said, ‘We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds we will go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord.’

86. We take this to mean that any question about his property after his death is to be decided only by the Christians, i.e., by the presbyters.

87. We take this to mean, ‘as was the marriage which was legalized by custom on your advice and which was sanctioned by your receiving the drinkables’. The customary marriage rite begins with ‘knocking’ (kokoko) when the young man and his family are introduced to the girl’s family. This is followed by tiri nsa: (lit. ‘head wine’) palm wine or schnapps given to the bride’s family over a period of time as part of the customary marriage rite. Kokoko is not recognized by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana; tiri nsa is recognized. If only kokoko has been performed, but not tiri nsa, the girl (and her family) is not entitled to divorce payment. It is clear that Nana Kwasi Akuffo knew the limitations of the custom. Drink was customarily presented when someone wished to inform the king of a marriage, a funeral, a new chief, or some other important event. The prestation, accompanied by libation to the ancestors, formally acknowledged that the recipient of the drink
knew that the event had occurred. On drink in general, see Akyeampong, 1996; see also Rottmann n. 51.

88. We take this to mean: ‘in which case he (Benjamin Fianko) is to ... give a handsome sum of money’. The customary one-time payment for separation or divorce is called aware gyae. There is no customary fee today in the Presbyterian Church to dissolve a ‘customary’ marriage.

89. She was probably an obaa panyin. See Opoku n. 9.

90. Clearly the Basel Mission is accepting, and indeed manipulating and systematizing traditional marriage regulations.

91. We sense here a reference to the English idiom ‘at all costs’.

92. It is hard to know whom Opoku is calling ‘bodyguard’, possibly an ankobea or member of the gyase.

93. Instruction for new converts and backsliders (wahwe ase; he has fallen) is still a problem for the Presbyterian Church in Akropong. Most backsliders already have learned the fundamental lessons of Christianity: they have been baptized and even confirmed in the church. When they come back into the fold (ye gye no: we have accepted him), they are generally not interested in being re-taught those fundamental concepts. They simply want to be readmitted, but the church believes backsliders must go through some teachings first.

94. For most of the nineteenth century Akwapim people spent much of their lives in farming villages like those at the north-west foot of the Akwapim scarp, producing food crops and palm-oil as a cash crop for export. These villages and hamlets were many hours’ walk from the main centers of political power where the Basel Mission founded its stations and outstations. The geographical spread of cocoa farming was far larger than had been the case with palm oil production, see Johnson 1964/5, Hill 1963; cocoa-farming also involved more intensive care of the trees than the production of palm oil. On ‘plantation’ see Rottmann n. 12.

95. Here Opoku explicitly refers to the peace-keeping role of the British colonial rule as an instrument of God’s will and ties this to Akropong patriotism. The idea is that but for the intervention of God, the town would have gone up in flames. The concept is not unlike that of present-day Presbyterian Church deliverance teams who say it is their mission, and their intervention in the form of prayers, that sustains the town.

96. From the mid-1880s on, there were numerous signs of trouble and unrest in Akwapim. In 1896 the Okere Guan (Kyerepong) towns of Dawu and Awukugua refused to clear the trade roads when Governor Hodgson was visiting Akropong. When Akropong people did it for them, they were accused of looting and attacked. A number of people died in the following riots.

97. The ms. has, inserted in the margin, ‘König Akuff o in Akropong’—i.e., King Akuff o of Akropong—presumably added by a missionary editor to clarify the reference.

98. Opoku here provides the background for the political and factional turbulence of the time. Tutu is a Guan town, but the tensions between Tutu and Akropong were exacerbated by the fact that Asona royals of the Amma Oggya line also live there and it was land that they had purchased that was in dispute. In the 1840s there was a civil war that involved Nana Adum Tokori (r. 1835-1845) and his nephew Owusu Akyem. The latter was Asonko-bene or heir-apparent and accepted as Omanhene by the Akropong people. When the two protagonists were summoned to Christiansborg by the Danish, Owusu Akyem, his two brothers and a number of their followers were ambushed and killed; Adum was exiled to Denmark (see Kwamena Poh 1973: 62-8; Djan 1936: 44). Later, in 1876 Abonnua
(heir-apparent and Adum's nephew) was suspected of killing Nana Asa Kurofa (r. 1866-1875). He took the case to the British courts in Cape Coast and he won huge costs. Akropong people then said he should not sit on the stool again—i.e., he should stay in Tutu in exile with the rest of his people. These people of the Amma Ogyaa line are referred to as the Tutu adehye (see Samson 1908, Chapter VIII). They only returned to Akropong in 1975 with Nana Addo Dankwa III.

99. 'Bowels of compassion'—a quotation from the King James Version of the Bible, in which bowels are referred to as the seat of the emotions—e.g. Colossians 3.12, 'bowels of mercies, humbledmindedness. . . .'

100. The feminine pronoun reinforces the message in the text that the townspeople who sought refuge at the mission at times of violence were women and children. Presumably the men were concentrated wherever the fighting was taking place.

101. Asonko was an asafo company composed of 'young men' who were commoners (townspeople from whom the king derived his power); not royals or king's children. In the past they met near the palace to criticize or support the conduct of the king and ankobea. The king could not refuse to meet with them. They also went to war together. Today they have no great importance. The Asonkohene was chief of the Asonko, and leader of young men. The position was once hereditary: he was the successor to the king. In 1948, the position was changed from heir to that of a non-Asona, thus dissipating fears that an incumbent would undermine rather than support the reigning king. The position was abolished in 1959 (ADM/KD 33/6/224; see Gilbert 1993b: 37 n. 35). Here we see the king, Nana Kwasi Akuff o, refusing to allow the position to be filled—partly, it seems, because he wishes to use the property that went along with the post. Those in opposition to Akuff o were trying at this time to fill the post with someone (Owusu Ansah) who they hoped would control or oust Akuff o (Gilbert 1993b, Samson 1908, Chapter XII).

102. Nana Owusu Ansah was the son of Nana Kwame Fori's sister Akua Oye (Queen Mother in the Nketiaa line and wife of Pastor Simeon Koranteng). Nana Kwasi Akuff o was destooled in 1907 and Owusu Ansah reigned from 1907-1914. A man was customarily 'caught by force' by his supporters. It was expected that he would show reluctance about election to a high office. It is said that once Owusu Ansah was elected, Akuff o opposed him from behind the scenes (ADM/KD 29/6/15). Later Owusu Ansah was himself accused of wasting stool properties and public money (a common criticism of Amanhene over the years). In national politics today people are similarly accused of 'willfully causing financial losses to the state', though it might be said that in the case of chiefs, the idea of 'willfulness' does not apply: one will be a great chief if one survives and ends still on the stool.

103. A point made frequently by Opoku in his later reports is that many of the people holding traditional office in Akwapim in the early years of the twentieth century had once been baptized—but by the strict standards of the Basel Mission had slid back into what Opoku in another place calls explicitly the 'heathen system of Government'.

104. Rottmann's original report (Mission 21 archive ref. D-1.93,29) was hand-written in German on loose sheets of paper and later bound in the Basel Mission archives. This is a full-text translation by Paul Jenkins. Explanatory footnotes were furnished by Michelle Gilbert and Paul Jenkins.

105. Rottmann uses 'Knabe', a term for an immature male, hence the translation 'lad'.

106. Christian Harnisch worked for the Basel Mission as a teacher in Akropong from 1860 to 1866, and was later a teacher in the Mission Seminary in Lund, Sweden. (All data on missionary lives in these footnotes is taken from the Brüderverzeichnis/List of the Brethren in the Mission 21 Archive, Basel Mission holdings. This is also presented in summary
form in the Basel Mission archive photo website, www.bmpix.org under ‘Proper Names/Biography’.)

107. ‘The Akropong Station Chronicle’, a document which originally belonged to the Akropong Station Archive and was brought back to Basel after the First World War, records a number of baptisms taking place on 14 October 1866, but none on 21 October (Mission 21 archive, Basel Mission records, ref. no. D-5.11). This is probably because the ‘Chronicle’ overlooked a few baptisms which had been delayed for a week—whereas Rottmann was referring to the local baptismal register in Akropong when writing this report.

108. Johann Georg Widmann arrived in Ghana for the first time in 1843, spent all his time in Akropong and died there in 1876. For much of the time he was the official head of the Basel Mission in Ghana.


110. This is probably Carl Jakob Leimenstoll, who worked for the Basel Mission in Ghana 1864-1871, but later worked for the Colonial Government. See the ‘Tagebuch von Carl und Friederike Leimenstoll 1864-1881’ in Mission 21 archive, Basel Mission records, ref. no. D-10.34.3.

111. Philipp Buess worked for the Basel Mission in Ghana, primarily as a builder, from 1876 until his death in 1881.

112. This confirms that nineteenth-century Basel Mission building projects injected significant amounts of capital into the local economy. The final accounts of the building of the mission house in Abetifi, for instance, dated 8 May 1878, indicate that this two-year building effort cost £1,259. The itemized expenses show that the greater part of this sum was claimed by wages—Mission 21 archive, Basel Mission records, D-1.30.237. There is a typewritten English abstract of these accounts in D-12.2 pp. 98-9. Haenger 2000: 53 ff. notes that one reason for the interest by traditional authorities in a Basel Mission presence in their town was the increase in the local cash-flow the Mission brought with it.

113. We do not know exactly why Fianko was excluded, and it is not clear whether he was excluded from communion or expelled, i.e., excommunicated from the church. If today a member of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana does something unethical, he will be summoned, cautioned and made aware; then if he is recalcitrant, it will lead to formal expulsion (see Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution, 2000: 88-90). In this case, the reference is probably to exclusion from taking communion.

114. We have no way of confirming this date, but assume that Rottmann checked it against the Akropong Station Archive (for Basel Mission record-keeping in Ghana, see Jenkins 2001).

115. Ahabante is 8-10 miles from Akropong in the valley on the Tinkon-Konko road. It used to be a market center and it still remains as a village, a small market and trading spot, now called Asrenu Nkwanta after a laborer, Asrenu, who lived there. Rottmann calls Ahabante a ‘Plantagendorf’. In the Basel Mission’s nineteenth-century language indigenous farms in the Akwapim area are often called Plantagen. They were not plantations in terms of late nineteenth-century colonial literature. They were special places where indigenous farmers practised agriculture, often with a cash-crop orientation.

116. This list shows an impressive spread from traditional items of daily use (baskets) to staples of local trade from the coast inland (salt), to imported items of key importance for local culture (brass bowls), to luxury exports for the European fashion of the moment (parrots). The brass bowls were made in Birmingham, England with bas relief decorations
specifically chosen to appeal to a Gold Coast market. There is no way to know whether Kwasi Fianko was an exceptionally gifted trader, or whether he was typical of the enterprising asikafu of his generation whose life is only made visible here because he became involved in the tangled relations between church and state in early twentieth-century Akropong.

117. Interest rates at this time were punitive. It was not unusual for a cocoa farmer to spend his whole life juggling debts and small amounts of scarce money, pledging a farm for needed money or pawning a child in the family to pay for a funeral, a fine or a cure. The pawn (owowa) would stay as the creditor’s property until redeemed when the debt was paid off. Because of differing systems of inheritance in Akwapim, pawns seem to have been more common in patrilineal Guan rather than matrilineal Akan towns. See also McCaskie 2000b: 139-142 on money-lending in twentieth-century Asante.

118. There are several other indications in the Basel Mission archive that the nineteenth-century production of palm oil for export in Akwapim was widespread. By the mid-nineteenth century, land around Ahabante was being bought from Akim Abuakwa stools by Akwapim farmers for palm-oil production. See Christaller’s report for the 3rd Quarter of 1865, (Kyebi, 30 Sep. 1865) Mission 21 archive Basel Mission records D-1.17. Akim 25 (with a typewritten abstract in D-12.2, 520 ff.).

119. Rottmann gives most of his values in pounds, shillings and pence, with an equivalent value in German Marks. The exchange rate is evidently 1 British shilling = 1 German Mark, i.e., £1 sterling = 20 German Marks. The rubber prices cited at this point are to be interpreted as 3 pence (i.e. ¼ shilling) = 25 Pfennig (i.e. ¼ Mark) as the producer price, 1 shilling and 6 pence (=18 pence) (1½ Marks) as the selling price in Accra. ‘Per pound’ refers not to monetary value but to the British measurement of weight, the pound avoirdupois.

120. The desire to build a house for prestige and to provide accommodation for relatives and followers is central to Akan culture. Kwasi Fianko was among the first to build a storehouse in Akwapim. To build a house for prestige and to provide accommodation for relatives and followers is valued among the Akan, but it may be associated with witchcraft accusations and with townspeople asking ‘how could such a young man amass money to build such a fine house? He must have had help from abosom, etc.’ For this reason, and to this day, those who build new houses often disguise the source of their money. See also Arhin 1986: 26 on ‘begging’ in the palace and how rich men in Asante concealed their wealth for fear of becoming entangled in ruinous litigation.

121. Later in this report Rottmann indicates that Kwasi Fianko fulfilled his vow to rejoin the Christian congregation in Akropong twelve years after he had first made it, which suggests he must have returned from Lagos only in 1894. From the description of the catastrophes he suffered it is likely that Fianko spent only a short time there. It is not clear why he decided to go to Nigeria, but as the Okyenhene was exiled to Lagos with some of his entourage in 1880-4, there would have been knowledge of Lagos and its hinterland in the early 1890s among leaders of opinion in Akim and Akwapim. See Kimble 1963: 156n for the Okyenhene in Lagos.

122. i.e., 1 shilling per day.

123. The abu sa system—sharecropping in return for one third of the product—is the usual system used by cocoa farmers in Ghana.

124. This phrase indicates how much the Basel Missionaries’ pattern of piety incorporated the expectation and experience of death—no unimportant matter in a region with a high death-rate and where funerals were the main rite de passage.

125. It is not unusual today for the building of a large house to be interrupted or to take decades to complete for financial or personal reasons.
126. ‘His father’s house’ refers to the church, its liturgy and the Christian fellowship. It is a reference to the New Testament text ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions’ (John 14.2). ‘A more convenient time’ was a typical pietist and puritan expression to describe the excuses people had for not responding immediately to the Christian imperative.

127. Practical patterns of piety held to by Basel missionaries in their work on the Gold Coast are documented here. A near-catastrophe caused by a storm was for the missionaries and their congregation a message from God. (Damage to a new house by a storm, similarly, might have encouraged non-Christians to inquire the cause from abosom.)

128. In Akropong, Fianko specialised in commodities useful in palace traditional rites. Sheep and schnapps were always in demand in Akwapim for libations and sacrifices for the ancestors or abosom, for prayers and purification at funerals, fines at tribunals and for family or royal oaths.

129. 1895 is the year of Kwasi Akuffo’s enstoolment. Rottmann dates Kwasi Fianko’s appointment as the king’s soul to 1894; this suggests that Kwasi Akuffo was keen to secure the support of this rich man as backer at the beginning of the selection process for Omanhene.

130. Offerings of eggs are given to the soul.

131. ‘Black soul’ is a direct translation from the Twi (okra-biri, okra-tumtum). Nkraea means destiny and derives from the word kra, i.e., ‘soul’. Okrabire means (1) black soul, not caring well for the person to whom he belongs, or (2) a person of low character, an unfortunate person. See Christaller 1933: 263.

132. In this case, a nearby spring called the Adami.

133. This is part of the Odwira festival; see Gilbert 1994.

134. When a new chief is installed, or when a king marries a wife (and his attendants and okra are ehe yere, i.e., ‘king’s wives’) a sheep is sacrificed and the blood is poured out on the new incumbent’s feet in order to cleanse and separate the person from his or her former status.

135. We understand ‘leaves the palace’.

136. See also Opoku n. 11, 14, 15 and 16.

137. We assume that this is the text of a Rottmann interview with Kwasi Fianko; it is the kind of documentation of traditional culture that went on frequently in the classical Basel Mission years in Ghana. McCaskie (1998: 144) calls the Basel Mission of this period a ‘formidable research enterprise’.

138. The Twi expression mumo nko, na yiye mra (‘evil should go, good should come’) cited here is identical to the blessing of the king, and by implication of the state (oman), by the Oyokohene in the Akropong palace at the end of the Odwira rites on Fida Fofie.

139. Formerly, palace attendants could be recognized by the different patterns in which their heads were shaved and the insignia that they carried. The akrafo wore cloth of white calico, marked their foreheads and upper arms with kaolin and wore a large round gold ornament around their necks (akrakonmu).

140. Here and in the following references to sacrifice Rottmann uses German words—Sühne, Versöhnung—which are usually translated into English as ‘atonement’ or ‘reconciliation’. In Akwapim sacrifices are for pacification (mpata), purification (dwira) or an offering (aboade).

141. This stone is called abonsambo or opemmo (from apem, ‘to knock’ and bo ‘a stone’, or apermo, a heavy conglomerate kind of stone); see Gilbert 1989. All elders with an ancestral stool have one at their compound. They are also used for abosom—it is believed any evil thought or spirit will be stopped by it. There are three places in the palace where sacrifices
occur: the small private ancestral stool house, the large open courtyard, and in front of the palace—symbolically the largest, most public courtyard—where, under the Mpeni tree (a species of *Ficus*), the king sits in state with all the chiefs of the kingdom for the large durbar on *Odwira* Friday. If the town is defiled or the King is cursed, sacrifices are made here. It is this last place that is referred to in the text.

142. There are different kinds of oaths and curses (*ntam kese* and others). Oaths refer to a terrible event, and/or to the day on which it occurred, e.g., the Akwapim state oath *Wukuda ne Sokodee*—‘Wednesday at Sokodee’. To utter an oath is taboo. When such an oath is sworn, the person so swearing is summoned to the palace to be judged and the situation resolved. This generally involves people incurring debts, and making sacrifices of sheep and formerly of people. Oaths can be turned around, ‘reversed’ (*ntam dan*), if done immediately, with sacrifice, and that is equally expensive.

143. The *akrafo* would touch the blood of the sacrificed sheep with their finger and tongue and the meat would belong to them because they are identified with the king, and it is the king who has been threatened by the swearing of the oath.

144. *Okwakuwo* is the mono monkey: *Cercopithecus mona lowei*. Nana Kwasi Akuffo’s group of patrilineage (*agyabosum*: ‘father’s god’) was Bosompra, whose taboos include the things mentioned here. The *akrafo* followed the same food taboos as did the king.

145. *Nsomme* (a species of *Costus*) is a form of ginger that grows near streams. It is used to demarcate sacred areas and is believed to have the power to ward off evil. In this case it is used in a rite of separation that resembles a number of others still performed today by non-Christians.

146. The *akrafo* are regarded as the ‘king’s wives’; they are attendants (*nhenkwaa*) with no political role. Kwasi Fianko may have been the ‘oldest’ *okra*, but he was not the *Akrahene*, chief of the *akrafo*; on the latter see Opoku n. 11.

147. Akuffo made many new laws in order to get money. This was one of the destoolment charges against him.

148. The town of Asantewa is now called Obosomase (lit. ‘under the obosom’).

149. The German word is ‘*Liegestuhl*’.

150. The child *okra* who sits in front of the king, wears a powerful headdress called Oboaman, composed of male eagle feathers, leopard skin, small pieces of human skull bone attached with gold wires, gold covered rams horns. See Gilbert 1993a. The Mission 21 website with historical photographs (www.bmpix.org) has a copy of what is probably the portrait of King Akuffo mentioned here (ref. no. D-30.11.041). It also has a portrait of a boy *okra* evidently taken at the same time in the same studio as the portrait of the King (ref. no. D-30.11.042). It does not have a copy of the photograph of Akuffo with Fianko.

151. A number of healers (*adunsifo*, sing. *odunsini*), who knew herbs and often had *abosom* or *asuman*, lived in hamlets and farming villages below the scarp northwest of Akwapim. Their patients would stay with them for the duration of their treatment.

152. An ‘Elder’ in the old Basel Mission language was what is now called a ‘Presbyter’ in the modern Presbyterian Church of Ghana.


154. There are translation problems here. Rottmann used two terms: *Morgengabe* and *Kopfgeld*. ‘Customary payments’: Rottmann writes first: ‘...für die er keine Morgengabe gegeben hat’. The literal reference is to the gift given from husband to wife after the bridal night re old German law. The simplest translation would be ‘for whom he had given no bride-wealth’. In the second reference, Rottmann writes ‘*Kopfgeld*’, which we take to be a direct translation of the Twi *tiri nsa*, lit. ‘headwine’, i.e., palm wine which is offered along
with other gifts to legalise a marriage. See also Opoku n. 26. For ‘Marriage-type relationship’, Rottmann writes Nebenweiber, lit. ‘side-wives’, clearly expressing their inferior legal status as wife to wife number three. For a much earlier use of ‘Morgengabe’ by a Basel missionary see Haenger 2000: 39 n. and for further clarifications of the actual practice of indigenous marriage in this region Haenger 2000: 36 n.

155. Today if a Christian man and a non-Christian woman decide to marry it will be done customarily, and will not be blessed by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. If two Christians marry, the Church comes as witnesses to bless it. The Church, however, does recognize customary marriages.

156. The use of the word ‘queen’ is ambiguous. It probably refers to aberewatia, a senior woman in the royal lineage. To be called Ohemmea (or Queen Mother) does not necessarily mean the person is a queen. Even children of the Omanhene may be named Nana (as a prefix), and Ohenenana (‘king’s grandchild’) or Oheneba (‘king’s child’) may be given as titles. See Opoku n. 9.

157. In the early twentieth century, there were many women’s singing groups in the villages and in Akropong itself. They entertained in the palace, at funerals, and at abosom celebrations. Women would invent songs about everyday life and sing in praise of the king and abosom. It is likely that Obuo was dancing with one such group. Dance gestures to fontomfrom drums are full of mimed meaning. (In the 1970s the Presbyterian Session was strongly opposed to church members dancing in the palace.)

158. Generally an unmarried woman’s debts would be the responsibility of her father; a married woman’s debts would have to be paid by her husband. In Akropong marriage ceremonies, the young man is frequently told the following Twi proverb: ‘our daughter, when she makes a fortune, she should bring it home; but when she is in debt, it is the husband’s problem’ (‘Onyaa ade a ade ba fi e, obo ka eye de kunu asem’). In this case, as no proper marriage ceremony had been performed, her ‘husband’ had no responsibility for her debts, and, not surprisingly, refused to pay.

159. A pawn (owowa) works off the debt. Most people used a beautiful girl for owowa, so as to tempt the creditor to get involved with her. Once she had been seduced, her family could bring charges against the creditor which might involve him making payments amounting to more than the debt owed.

160. Rottmann has the Ghanaian expression ‘a royal’ (odehye) in mind in this German phrase: Da die Frau eine ‘Königliche’ und Gemeindeglied war . . . .

161. Note that according to the exchange rate used consistently in this report 100 Marks = £5.

162. This letter, like Kwasi Fianko’s reply, has, unfortunately, been translated into German in Rottmann’s report. We think the originals were probably in Twi.

163. We have no information about Timothy Newmann and David Asante, but this is not the Pastor David Asante who studied in the Basel Mission House in the 1850s, who by this time was deceased.

164. According to custom Kwasi Fianko needed formal permission from the King to sever his relationship as his okra. But it was customarily possible for an okra to ‘retire’ from his duties, as was the case with every traditional office.

165. Formerly Akwapim kings had many powerful deities for protection; and there were a number of shrines in the palace. If Kobinko was one of them, little is known of this abosom today. One palace elder in 2002 said that ko a obi nko literally means ‘a going that one does not go’. He said it became an indirect palace expression of caution ‘Be careful Kobinko doesn’t come . . . ’
166. ‘Good luck’ is a direct translation of the German: *Glück auf zu seinem Vorhaben Christ zu werden*. Rottmann may be emphasizing the mixture of ‘registers’—the pious and the secular—with which Kwasi Akuffo expressed himself. ‘Glück auf’ is probably a translation of the Twi expression *yetirinkwan!* (congratulations!) which leads us to conclude that these letters were in Twi. It is clear that Akuffo’s words were deeply sarcastic.

167. See Opoku n. 9 on Obuo Victoria. Nana Kwasi Akuffo is aggrandizing her role here.

168. Bosomtwi is an *obosom* who protects those who venerate and make offerings to him. By citing this proverb, Nana Kwasi Akuffo likens himself to Bosomtwi who gives food (fish) to his people, who in turn serve him (with sacrificial offerings of white hens and dogs). The sacrificial act establishes a contractual relationship between god and man and ensures a harmonious relationship between them. Akuffo thus suggests that Fianko is in a contractual relationship with him: Akuffo gave Fianko the position of *okra* and now expects a major return prestation.

169. The German word is again *Glück*—‘*Glück zu! bekehre dich . . ..*’

170. A real or half-brother must be meant here, since the German has ‘*leiblicher Bruder*’. Michelle Gilbert was told that in the 1880s there was a trader in Equatorial Guinea (Fernando Po) called Yaw James Agyei who came from a Christian family in Abiriz and had a twin brother who was not a Christian convert, but a renowned herbalist. Abiriz and Akroppong congregations were joined at that time. See also Rottmann n. 81.

171. This is another indication that Kwasi Fianko was illiterate.

172. We give here only the first phrases of each biblical quotation, but note that it is not surprising that Kwasi Akuffo knew the key texts in the Bible enjoining obedience to the ‘powers-that-be’: ‘My son, fear thou the Lord and the king….’

173. ‘Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription has it? They answered and said, Caesar’s . . . Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s….’

174. ‘Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but that of God: the powers that be are ordained of God…..’

175. ‘Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well…..’

176. The Letter to Philemon is too long to quote here, but it is the epistle by St Paul written to the Christian master of a runaway slave who is also a Christian, urging the slave to return and the master to receive him charitably. It is one main proof that the New Testament church tolerated slavery in its ranks. Akuffo uses it to show the way Kwasi Fianko should behave to his king, but also to allude indirectly to Fianko’s slave origins. See Rottmann n. 88 for more on Fianko’s origins.

177. ‘*Volk*’.

178. ‘*Ich bins*’

179. Considering Rottmann’s age and experience this is an odd, naive and indeed bureaucratic remark.

180. This part of the negotiation is not covered by Akuffo’s letter to Kwasi Fianko, which indicates that important parts of the negotiations are going on orally.

181. The German word is *Knecht*, which indicates a more comprehensive subordination than the German word *Diener*, which more nearly corresponds to the English ‘Servant’. *Knecht* has, in some contexts, a slightly military touch—a receiver of orders. It is the familiar modern word in southern Germany and German-speaking Switzerland for the unmarried agricultural labourer living in an extended family with the farmer.
182. This is comparative parlance. The expression *m'a sua nsu, m'a sua nsa* alluded to here means ‘I’ve carried water [*nsu*] I’ve carried drink/palm wine [*nsa*]; I know how each feels—which is lighter or heavier, so which one should I give my king?’

183. Again the German is *Morgengabe* and *Kopfwein*. See Rottmann n. 51.

184. The language here is proverbial and simply means that even twins who come from the same womb have their differences. But see Rottmann n. 67.

185. Slave would be *Sklave* in German. But the text uses *Knecht* both times, as we have seen, a German word for ‘servant’. See Rottmann n. 78. The Twi word *osomfo* (‘server’ or ‘servant’) would be fitting; not *akoa* (‘slave’).

186. Rottmann uses the derogatory *Weib* here.

187. We understand this to refer to *palace elders*: *okoman* and *ankobea*.

188. The German is *mässige Dich*. The Twi expression was probably ‘Me wura Ohene nya nto boase’ (‘My Lord King, be patient, be moderate’).

189. We do not know the origin of this proverb.

190. The German is ‘Presbyterium’, which, we take it, refers to the Presbytery, the meeting of Pastor(s) and Congregational Elders.

191. It is bad manners in Akwapim to refer to someone’s slave ancestry; indeed a king is cautioned in his installation rite never to refer to the ancestry of his subjects. Nevertheless, at times of anger, or at funerals when inheritance is involved, such accusations are still sometimes heard. Akuffo insults Fianko and reduces him to the state of a non-person here by asserting that he is infertile (‘impotent’) and thus unable to produce offspring, and that Fianko is really a slave and is only behaving in this way to get his ‘freedom’, thus linking him with the slaves who found sanctuary with the Christian missionaries in Akropong in the early history of the congregation. There was a large influx of slaves of a later generation in Akwapim after the abolition of slavery as a legal status on the colonial Gold Coast in 1874; indeed a large number of Ewe came in the late nineteenth century and Akuffo himself married some of them. In the neighboring town of Abiriw, a sizeable number of such people came from Peki Tsianne in the 1880s. They are now said euphemistically to have been neither war captives nor slaves, but more like refugees. Kwasi Fianko did have Ewe antecedents. Today some relatives say that his mother, Kosi Akua, came from Peki Gyekee in the Volta Region. Others say euphemistically that his mother’s people were not true Ewe, but Akan who lost their way during tribal wars. His father, Offei Amponsah, was from Adanse Subinso in Asante.

192. In traditional negotiations, when, because of difficult circumstances, a resolution cannot be found, the chief ‘puts his foot on it’.

193. We suspect that Susanna Ayebia was still of child-bearing age, and had despaired of having children by her sick and elderly husband. Entering a relationship with a younger man for this reason would attract scarcely any sanction in Akropong society as a whole. It is surprising that Rottmann seems to take the charge of poisoning seriously (though apparently not seriously enough to make a criminal charge out of it). Normally missionaries ignored charges of poisoning and witchcraft.