

# AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF FANTI KINSHIP

by George P. Hagan\*

This essay examines Fanti kinship in three significant aspects. First, it examines Fanti kinship terminology as a system of classificatory categories inculcated into the individual for the purpose of defining the groups with which he might participate in specific fields of social activity. Second, living in a social group, and in a kinship group in particular, is regulated by, or reflects, certain stereotyped attitudes which do not depend on individual psychological bent, but constitute a cultural fact in the society. This paper examines this system of attitudes - of avoidance and familiarity corresponding to the terminological system. The paper examines, third, the nature of the changes which occur in the kinship structure as a result of various forms of intermarriage. The problem whether Fanti society is matrilineal or patrilineal, or both, will not be broached here.

Fanti terms for classifying social relationships are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

1. Nana - MM, FM (Nana Basla) FF MF (Nana banyin). SS, DS, SD, DD.
2. Nana Nkansua: - MMM FMM MFF, FFF, SSD, SSS, DSD, DDD.
3. Nana Sum - MMMM, FMMM, MFFF, FFF, SSDS, SSDD, SSSS, SSSD, DSDS, DSDD, DDDS, DDDD.
4. Ena - M (Mother's Sister) full sibs and half sibs on mother's side.

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\* Mr. George P. Hagan is a Research Fellow in Social Anthropology.

5.	Egya	-	F
6.	Egya n'akyereba	-	FZ
7.	Wofa	-	MB
8.	Akantangye	-	WB
9.	Akumaa (Female husband)	-	HZ
10.	Aseo	-	WF, WM
11.	Wofaase	-	ZS, ZD
12.	Ba	-	S, D
13.	Yer	-	W
14.	Kora	-	Co - W

Kinship terms are, as modes of classifying social relationships, categories of thought and action, which every individual has to internalize in the form in which his culture presents them. As the individual grows up within the Fanti culture he becomes aware of the persons he comes into contact with as standing in special relations to himself. He gains this awareness, in part, by observing the application of certain terms to certain individuals and not to others; and, in part, by being required to behave in certain specific ways towards the individuals to whom specific classificatory terms apply. Through a gradual process of education the individual learns to dissociate the terms from persons, and to apply them appropriately as terms for distinguishing types of social relations. In maturity, the individual is able to identify his rights and

obligations in the society by reference to the relations which the kinship terms express.

Using the occasions on which different categories of kin join in some fields of social activity one might draw up several "registers of words"<sup>2</sup> — terms of social categories with reference to which a person defines his rights and obligations in the social circumstances in which he finds himself. It is with these registers of classificatory terms that the society defines the groups responsible for various things — marriage, installation of chiefs, burial, and the payment of the debts incurred from these. In these fields, and in the determination of the defensive units of the state, the appropriate registers of terms help the society to prepare another kind of register. This latter register is that of the proper names of those who fall under the appropriate register of classificatory terms. The former register imposes a definitive group matrix on the individuals who are called up under the register of proper names.

How soon a person acquires knowledge of the registers of social categories is a matter of individual intelligence and education; and it is partly motivational. In a stool house a child will almost certainly be given the relevant genealogies for asserting claims to the stool; and any propertied house would almost certainly do the same to keep their lands and heirloom in the proper hands. Claims to property and office are made and settled by reference to the appropriate register and the entries of proper names under the register. So that knowledge of one's genealogy and "one's people" — as Fantis put it — becomes a social imperative.

The Anthropologist, of course, arrives at this kinship list through a different process — and for a different reason. He begins by observing people at work, at play, and in the serious moods of politics, funerals and fights. His main concern is to see how the people he is studying are organized for these various engagements, with a view

to discovering what the relatively permanent patterns of their social interactions are. Why kinship terminologies and analyses enthrall social anthropologists is that whichever field they choose to begin their work in - say, farming or fishing, marriage or funeral, they come up against the same relational categories, to the extent that, after a time, they realize that without proper understanding of how kinship terms are used, what they connote, and who fall under them, it would be impossible for them to understand the society they are studying.

Among Fantis, two major registers of classificatory terminology are discernible (See pages 5 and 6). The manner of their presentation here is intended not only to indicate which clusters of terms apply in which fields of activity; the vertical sequence in which the terms have been set together is intended to indicate the order of accession to right or office. Thus co-lateral classes belong to the same order of succession. The number of basic descent lines in such a diagram depends merely on how many different kinds of relatives are recognized. It does not correspond to the number of descent groups existing in the society. The rule of exogamy compels us to work with at least three descent lines. Ego's wife and children would come from one Abusua; and he cannot marry any woman from his abusua, so that these two categories have to be recognized in the society. The third category is that from which Ego's father comes: he would not be from Ego's mother's abusua.<sup>3</sup> It is for a similar reason that we have three descent lines in the other scheme.

The first scheme is important for defining the composition of Fanti military units. There are wide differences in the number of Asafo companies in Fanti towns. But whatever the number, one does not find in any Fanti state any military force apart from, or greater than, the whole of which the Asafo military units are parts.<sup>4</sup>

In Capé Coast there are seven Asafo companies, and all but Akrampa and Brofo-nkoa have separate areas of the town to themselves

MILITARY DIVISIONS

WIFE'S ASAFO		EGO'S ASAFO		MOTHER'S ASAFO	
MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
WFFFF ASEO NANA- SUM	WFFFFZ ASEO NANA- SUM	FFFF NANASUM	FFFFZ NANASUM	MFFF NANASUM	MFFFZ NANASUM
WFFF ASEO NANA- NKANSUA	WFFFZ ASEO NANA- NKANSUA	FFF NANA NKANSUA	FFFZ NANA NKANSUA	MFF NANA NKANSUA	MFFZ NANA NKANSUA
WFF ASEO NANA	WFFZ ASEO NANA	FF NANA	FFZ NANA	MF NANA	MFZ NANA
WF ASEO	WFZ ASEO	F EGYA	FZ *MEGYA N'AKYERE- BA	MB WOFA	M ENA
WB AKONTA- NGYE	W YER	EGO KUN	Z AKYERE- BA	MBS NUA	MBD NUA
WBS BA BANYIN	WBD BA BASIA	S BA BANYIN	D BA BASIA	MBSS BA BANYIN	MBSD BA BASIA
WBSS NANA	WBSD NANA	SS NANA	SD NANA	MBSSS NANA	MBSSD NANA
WBSSS NANA NKANSUA	WBSSD NANA NKANSUA	SSS NANA NKANSUA	SSD NANA NKANSUA	MBSSSS NANA NKANSUA	MBSSSD NANA NKANSUA
WBSSSS NANA SUM	WBSSSD NANA SUM	SSSS NANA SUM	SSSD NANA SUM	MBSSSSS NANA SUM	MBSSSSD NANA SUM

## THE ABUSUA

WIFE'S ABUSUA		EGO'S ABUSUA		FATHER'S ABUSUA	
MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
WMMMMB ASEO NANA-SUM	WMMMM ASEO NANA-SUM	MMMMB NANA-SUM	MMMM NANA-SUM	FMMMB NANA-SUM	FMMM NANA-SUM
WMMMB ASEO NANA NKANSUA	WMMM ASEO NANA NKANSUA	MMMB NANA NKANSUA	MMM NANA NKANSUA	FMMB NANA NKANSUA	FMM NANA NKANSUA
WMMB ASEO NANA	WMM ASEO NANA	MMB NANA	MM NANA	FMB NANA	FM NANA
WMB ASEO	WM ASEO BASIA	MB WOFA	M ENA	F EGYA	FZ MEGYA N'AKYERE- BA
WB AKONTAN- GYE	W YER	EGO KUN	Z AKYEREBE	FZS NUA	FZD NUA
S BA BANYIN	D BA BASIA	ZS WOFASE	ZD WOFASE	FZDS BA BANYIN	FZDD BA BASIA
DS NANA	DD NANA	ZDS NANA	ZDD NANA	FZDDS NANA	FZDDD NANA
DDS NANA NKANSUA	DDD NANA NKANSUA	ZDDS NANA NKANSUA	ZDDD NANA NKANSUA	FZDDDS NANA NKANSUA	FZDDDD NANA NKANSUA
DDDS NANA-SUM	DDDD NANA-SUM	ZDDDS NANA-SUM	ZDDDD NANA-SUM	FZDDDDD NANA-SUM	FZDDDDD NANA-SUM

The first Infantry Division, Bantsirfo, is permanently quartered near the Cape Coast Fort, and the whole area used by this division is called Bantsir. The wards which the other territorial forces occupy also bear their names: Ntsin, Nkum, Amanfo and Anafo. So exclusive were the Asafo's rights over the areas they occupied that, in 1909, it became necessary for certain Asafos to sign various agreements.

"No.3 company agreed to give free passage through their company quarter without the imposition of rum-tax, to any Cape Coast Company conveying their dead to cemetery .... "No.2 company agreed to give free passage to the beach to No.3 Company without the imposition of rum-tax, on the occasion of any member of No.3 Company having died, away from Cape Coast; ordinary notification being given".<sup>5</sup>

In all Fanti towns, the Asafos constitute distinct territorial as well as social units, which made the pattern of residence in Fanti towns strongly virilocal. It appears that up till lately it was unlikely for a man to reside permanently in a vicinity or neighbourhood group outside his own Asafo.

In the various Asafo wards men live together in neighbourhood units called Prama. Prama is a large (usually rectangular) compound or area enclosed by a number of houses. Such a compound or opening would be shared by a group of friends who, on account of the fact that they fished together, find it necessary to live, play and stay together. Such a residential and social unit is not necessarily a kinship unit. But because sons tend to live with their fathers, and brothers associate closely with brothers, a Prama assumes the aspect of a cluster of units of kin defined by the first matrix, women excluded.

Each grown-up member of a Prama would have a room to himself. Wives do not stay with their husbands at the Pramado, but make regular visits to bring food to their husbands, and occasionally to sleep overnight. In this social unit the oldest male members act as the source of authority in domestic as well as military matters. In the old days, as soon as a young

man was old enough to carry arms, his father bought a gun for him, and he fought beside his grandfather, father and older brothers. Earlier still, the young man would have joined his father's fishing crew.

Whoever did not belong to a person's Asafo was separated from his residential group and might even oppose him in certain internal conflict situations. Such persons might include ego's mother, mother's brother, mother's father, mother's father's sisters, and so on, who do not, but may, belong to ego's Asafo (as we see in the matrix). Also, a person's wife, wife's brother and father may belong to yet another Asafo. So that for Fantis, the Asafos create the most active fissures in their societies: "they set blood relative against blood relative".

The focus of Asafo group activity is the siwdo, which is a small plot of land over which one finds a totem tree and a hut, housing the Asafo's deity. This plot of land is sacred to the Asafo division. It is the Asafo's military headquarters and the parade ground for their rituals before and after wars. In peace time, the siwdo acts as the focus for social and ritual events, drumming, and dancing.

Every Asafo has its own set of gods, flags, sets of drums, Asafo songs, clothes and insignia. There are ranks, within each Asafo, allocated by inheritance through the father, and by individual personal achievement. There are drummers, fetish priests, flag bearers and arm bearers. Often in the past, women (i.e. groups of sisters, father's sisters, father's father's sisters, for example) participated in wars as carriers, nurses and cooks. Women of outstanding courage and wisdom were permitted to hold office and exercise authority side by side with men.

The symbol of authority in the Asafo division is the WHIP (ASAFO ABAE). The whip has direct application to the maintenance of law and order in the rank and file of the Asafo. A holder of a whip has power to lay it on disorderly individuals and stragglers to secure discipline proper to a fighting force. These whips are usually inherited by sons from their fathers. Because of dangers involved in holding a whip,

many individuals avoid it. Such individuals are usually stealthily captured by the youngsters and made to accept the whip.

It now appears that the martial repute of an Asafo is attested by the number of prominent persons it can capture and honour with whips. In a recent spate of Asafo activity individuals captured have included a police woman, doctors, lecturers and politicians of rank. Asafos are partial to individual achievement.

When fighting together as divisions of a single territorial army, the Asafos are led by an overall general in command, called Tufuhin. Because of the segmental nature of the army under his command the Tufuhin's role is largely advisory. In dealing with the Asafos he relies entirely on his power of persuasion. In certain Fanti states "the Tufuhin sometimes acted as protector or regent of a vacant paramount stool".<sup>7</sup>

Another important office in the Asafo is the Supi. The Supi represents the Asafo in civil disputes. He acts as the public relations officer and negotiates peace with other Asafo companies. In Apam there is an Oman Supi; and he sits as an independent judge on behalf of the Oman (state), in the settlement of disputes between the Bentsir and Dentsin Asafo groups, which are the only Asafo groups in town. The Asafo Supis, I was told, act as civil leaders and judges within their respective fighting forces at the outbreak of hostilities. Supis are chosen for their bravery, wisdom and temperance.

In peace time the Asafos in the past expended their collective energies on civic activities such as the construction of lavatories, wells, roads and public buildings in their respective wards, or for the state. They performed the state duties under the direction of a body of councilors comprising the Asafoheriefo, and the Chief and sub-chiefs of the state. The Asafo also acted as a police force to hunt down highway men, and to do rescue work at the outbreak of fire or destructive floods. These civic and military functions of the Asafo are no longer mandatory and the Asafos survive in many Fanti states as organizations with important

social functions in the annual rites of harvest festivals.

The second scheme gives the classificatory social categories in terms of which a man defines his rights and obligations against other people in respect of birth and death, marriage and divorce, acquisition and transmission of property. Those who fall into these relational categories constitute what Fantis call 'Abusua'. But we must distinguish two senses in which the term 'Abusua' is used.

In one sense - the wider sense - of the term, Fantis have seven principal Abusua units. They are Anona, Nsona, Ntwaafu, Twidan, Aburadze, Kwonna and Adwinadze. The table below gives the clans and their cognate groups together with their symbols. These names refer to the most exclusive and all inclusive groups into which Fantis can be divided. Every Fanti belongs to one or other of these groups, and there is no Fanti who is a member of two. These Abusua are segmented into dispersed lineages, which are further segmented into dispersed sub-lineages and so on. On first enquiry one gets the impression that the rule of exogamy is intended to apply to these wider groups, and to prevail throughout. In practice, the rule can be said to have applied so widely only in the distant historical past. At the present time, the rule that members of the same Abusua (in this wider application of the term) should not marry has no practical significance. The exogamous unit is really the lineage at its lowest level of segmentation.

This smallest lineage is a local descent group associated with a particular town or village, though some members may reside elsewhere. It is this group which effectively bears the weight of Abusua obligations; and the lineage span would not exceed five generations. Little significance is attached to a relationship which is traced through any individual who is beyond Nanasum. If there happen to be two or more such lineage groups in the same town or region, which, from the lineage point

THE SEVEN PRINCIPAL CLANS<sup>8</sup>

	AS DESIGNATED IN FANTI-AKAN	TOTEM	COMPLIMENTARY APPELLATIVE
1.	NSONA	Oso na Akunkuran (The Fox and the Whiteringed Raven)	WIREMPI AKWA ODUDU
2.	ANONA	Ekoo (Parrot)	OWIKU SEKYI AMPOMA ANONA OKUSUBRENTSIR
3.	TWIDAN	Itwi (The Leopard)	EBURETUFU (CORNSTALK) ABOHENFU
4.	ABURADZI	Gyata (Lion)	EDUENA ABURADZI
5.	NTWAA	Bodom (The Dog)	ABANESIA
6.	KWONNA	Iku (The bush cow)	ASUKORI NA KU AHINFU
7.	ADWINADZE	A cluster of odwon trees, i.e. wowo adwin, meaning thinking people	

of view, are segments of the same greater Abusua, it is more than likely that their members will intermarry. A typical example is to be found in Apam. Here Anana, Ofor Ananafo, Agona and others are recognized as segments of the one major clan Anana, and their members intermarry. What shows they are species of one genus is their common use of the Parrot symbol.

But even within a Fanti lineage of this kind there would be distinguished the "scalp" element, "Tsihonam". This group would be composed of the uterine kin of not more than one generation's remove: mother, brothers and sisters, mother's brother and sister's sons and daughters. Exogamy applies most rigorously only within this group, incest being until recently punishable by death.

It would be true to say that the Fanti Abusua even at this lowest point of segmentation is dispersed at the fringe. The only coresident group of members of the Abusua are usually aged, divorced and widowed members of the Abusua, male and female. In their most productive ages, the young men of the Abusua are with their fathers in their father's house, and the young women are with their husbands. This dispersal makes it virtually impossible for an abusua to participate in any economic venture as a social aggregate. But such a group represents a legal unit for the holding and transmission of land and other property; and it holds rights in persons. To examine the jural status of the Abusua, I shall treat here Fanti marriage, as it involves exchange of rights in both men and property.

#### Kinship and Marriage:

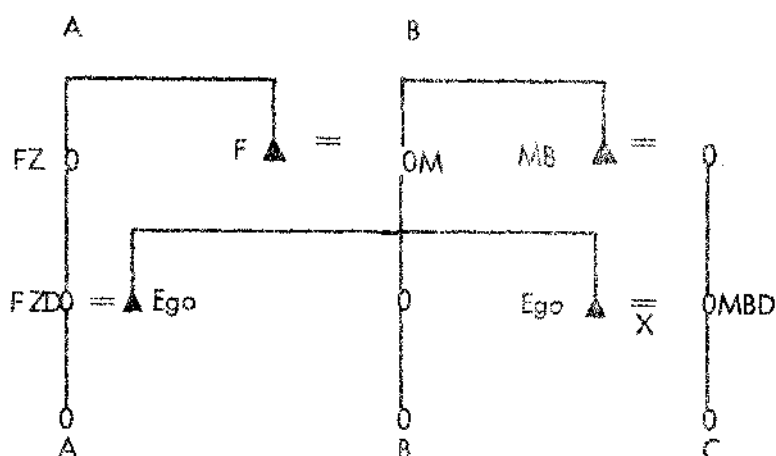
Marriage among Fantis involves the joining not only of the man and woman who enter into marriage but also the minimal Abusua of the man and the minimal Abusua of the woman. The latter become offines as the former become husband and wife. At the basis of the merger there

is a mutual exchange of rights and obligations in respect of persons and things. Husband and wife acquire mutual rights in their sexual faculties and as a result share the responsibility to raise the issues of the marriage. The two abusua groups (in the narrower sense) act to protect the respective rights of their son and daughter.

The husband makes a number of payments to the wife's Abusua before he is given the woman as wife, and these gifts are in fact not intended to be spent. The capital money paid (Tsir Nsa) ought to be ready for payment to the man on the break-down of the marriage. Since marriage involves the transfer of the woman to the house of the man, the money acts as security for the woman who will not be living among her own kinsmen but in a different household and among strangers. The woman changes her social and geographical locus.

At times some families opt to practice cross-cousin marriage to achieve permanent connubial alliances. This form of marriage gives the advantage of greater security to the women and a wider scope for the enjoyment of the property of the families in alliance. The formal rules of such a marriage are themselves not clear. It is often assumed that Fantis consider both patrilateral and matrilateral forms of cross-cousin marriage as acceptable. Though the actual practice of both cannot be denied, there is analytic evidence that a matrilateral cross-cousin is a less acceptable form of marriage.

In the diagram below the two forms of cross-cousin marriage have been put together. The diagram shows the number of descent groups sufficient and necessary to the two forms of cross-cousin marriage. The patrilateral alliance demands two; the matrilateral brings a third family into the alliance which should include only the families of the mother and father. But there are other reasons for considering the patrilateral marriage the more proper kind of cross-cousin marriage.



MBD calls EGO Egya for Ego inherits her father and takes on the paternal responsibilities in respect of MBD. In fact MBW calls Ego Husband. This categorial equation would seem to make the matrilineal cross-cousin marriage an impossibility: a father cannot marry a daughter.

#### Aspects of the Fanti domestic economic arrangements

There are Fanti fishing and farming rural communities, and there are urbanized, 'detrified' Fantis. I have been referring in these pages to only the fishing communities of Apam and Cape Coast. It is necessary to guard against the tendency to apply the little observation I have made to all Fanti communities. Rights and obligations are as different as are the things in respect of which they are exercised. Whereas what might be important for the fisherman is the inheritance of a boat and net, what is important to the farmer is land. The means of exploitation would, I suggest, affect the system of domestic economic arrangements.

In Apam, among the fishing communities, the unit of production and consumption is, strictly speaking, not defined by kinship. The means of production are simple; boat, net and labour. Labour is secured through cooperation between kinsmen. A man might join up with his brothers and their own children or nephews and at times, friends, and set up a fishing unit. The ownership of the boat is vested in the purchaser's Abusua, though while the owner is alive any person he gives the boat to might use it.

A kind of Abusua system works among the Fantis of this coastal town. The fish caught is divided into three parts. One portion of the catch goes to the boat, one goes to the net, and the third goes to the crew, who share it equally among themselves. If the owner of the boat and nets happens to be a member of the crew he gets his share as a member of the crew. The portions of the catch which go to the boat and net are given to the mother of the owner of the boat and net - supposedly to the Abusua.

Each crew member gives his reward at a fixed price to his wife. The wife sells it fresh or smokes it and sells it at the local market or to an intermediary who sells it at other markets. Whatever the returns the wife makes on her husband's portion, the husband receives the "beach price" of the fish. Often when the woman makes a loss on the fish she borrows money to make the gross price for her husband. On the other hand every profit she makes goes to her. It is with these profits that the woman maintains the household. She feeds the whole family, husband, self and children with her profits throughout the year. From the husband the woman expects a certain lump sum and a few pieces of cloth for herself and her children at least once a year. In a household of this kind, there is hardly an article of value which belongs to husband and wife as a unitary couple.

When a man dies whatever personal property he was able to acquire in his life time goes to his mother, his sisters, and brother, his sister's

sons and nephew. The second matrix indicates who may share in the property. Children have no claim to their father's property. They may stay in their father's house, and they are often permitted to do so. When their presence is no longer desired, the members of the father's abusua create a situation for the children to opt to leave the household on their own accord.

It is not correct to say that the Abusua inherits the father's property and nothing else. In so far as the children demand certain fatherly functions, those who inherit the father are bound to continue to fulfil them. A man's heir may offer to marry the widow. It is his privilege to do so. Whether the widow accepts to marry the heir or not, it is expected that she and her children will be looked after by the deceased husband's abusua. When the children become sick, the responsibility for their care falls on the father's relatives. The children could claim these services until they are capable of taking care of their affairs as adults. On the other hand, the children cannot marry without the explicit assent of the father's heir.

When a woman dies, her property goes to her sisters and brothers, children, mother and mother's brothers. The abusua meets to choose the individual to inherit the status of the dead. The children expect from this substitute the performance of all the obligations which their mother or grandmother owed to them. They in turn support her as they supported their deceased mother.

Children are responsible for the burial of their father and mother. In respect of their mother they share the responsibility equally with members of their abusua. In respect of their father, however, they provide, with the support of their abusua, the coffin and clothes for the dead. They hand over to the abusua of their father these articles together with some drinks and an amount of money, now fixed at seven pounds four shillings (N£14.40) in Cape Coast.

This gift is often interpreted as a counter prestation. When the children were born, for each child in turn the father had to purchase various articles of toilet, and clothing - to cover their nakedness. It is similar articles that the children prepare for their father, for his bath and clothing, before his departure to Nananom. The father's abusua looks upon these articles as the children's thanks-offering for the love and care of the father, and their generosity and lavishness is expected to express the depth of gratitude the children owe their father.

When we consider interaction between the two matrices, a number of interesting things emerge. Rights in property -- lands, and tools of production, such as boats and nets, are vested in groups defined by the second matrix. If any person transmits these properties outside the range of persons called under this matrix, in the traditional set-up, he acts ultravires. A person who squanders abusua property in this way calls upon himself the ire of the dead members of the abusua.

A father, therefore, cannot transmit to his son any property or office he might hold by virtue of his membership of his abusua. A son is entitled to the usufruct of his father's property, at least, while the father is alive, and this entitlement is confirmed by the son's co-operation with his father in the exploitation of his property. A father might transmit to his son a whip and a gun; but these things are hardly looked upon as property. They are of use as symbols of Asafo authority. A son cannot claim the father's office in the Asafo as of right. The father's office in the Asafo goes to the son only through the choice of the Asafo. A whip may thus stay in a house for generations before it is given to somebody. This is the difference between succession to office and property through the mother's lineage, and succession to office and military regalia through the father.

The men and women in a Fanti Asafo usually come from several abusua; and there is hardly an abusua which, except by coincidence, has all its members in a single Asafo. Because of this, conflicts between different Asafo tend to break up abusua as it pitches one member of an abusua against another. In Apam, an informant pointed to this as one cause of fragmentation of lineages.

In Cape Coast, to avoid the splitting up of families in this manner, a person might change his Asafo to join that of his mother's brother, for example. One cannot leave his abusua to join another one. There is also a tacit understanding that men should try, as much as possible, to marry women from their own Asafos; and they can do this without breaking any laws of exogamy.

## II.

Two general comments are necessary before the examination of the system of Fanti kinship attitudes. When defining the field of affection as one germane to sociological study, Levi Strauss wrote: "What is generally called a 'kinship system' comprises two quite different orders of reality. First, there are terms through which various kinds of family relationships are expressed. But kinship is not expressed solely through nomenclature. The individuals or classes of individuals who employ these terms feel (or do not feel, as the case may be) bound by prescribed behaviour in their relations with one another, such as respect or familiarity, rights or obligations, and affection or hostility. Thus, along with what we propose to call the system of terminology (which strictly speaking, constitutes the vocabulary system) there is another system, both psychological and social in nature, which we shall call the system of attitudes."<sup>9</sup>

One may interpret this to mean that a study of the affective system should take into account all stylized attitudes expressive of the relationships of "the individual or classes of individuals who employ these terms". This means, I think, all the terms (and not just some of them) must be examined in respect of the attitudes they express. A study which attempts to do this may be difficult, but not logically impossible. Any limitation of the scope of the system can be justified only on heuristic grounds.

Another extension which might be made to the basic techniques for studying affection concerns the symbolic representation of the qualities of affective relationships. In the analysis of Fanti kinship it would be fruitful and, perhaps, even more realistic to think in terms of a three-value system of affection than a two-value one. Under the latter we can only describe affections as loving or hostile, warm or restrained. Yet it is meaningful to talk about mixed feelings in a relationship. So that instead of symbolizing affections as, say, 1, where 1 signifies warmth, and 0, where 0 signifies hostility, we might also add  $(1/2)$ , where  $(1/2)$  signifies a mixture or conflict of warmth and hostility. Levi-Strauss had seen the possibilities of this elaboration but perhaps found little practical application for them.<sup>10</sup> In this paper I shall apply these designations to the explication of the peculiar ritual-embossed role of the father.

In considering the affectual system of Fanti system of kinship and affinity, the jural persons whose relations are most articulate and crucial are father, son, wife, wife's brother and husband's sister. These are the individuals among whom social interaction is most frequent and intense. Apart from these, the attitudes of parents-in-law, grandparents, and grandchildren, receive definite characterization, and they deserve close study. They will be treated in turn.

(i) ASEW: The term "Asew" applies to affines of the first, second, and third ascending generations. The attitude idealized here

is the typical opposite of the taboo of in-law avoidance. Fanti expect married persons to be free and frank with their respective parents-in-law. The thought behind this is that it is in such a spirit that the married partners can consult and obtain advice on the intimate aspects of their marital life. In fact, a Fanti adage considers this joking relationship a condition for the successful consummation of marriage and the prolificity of man and wife: "Efer woasew a nnye wo yere nwo" (Lit. "If you feel shy of your in-law, you cannot beget children with your wife.")

In practice this freedom between in-laws results in unnecessary in-law interference in the marital affairs of the young couple. So that what one might observe in practice is a domineering attitude on the part of the in-laws and a corresponding intransigence on the part of the married couples. The relationship becomes strained.

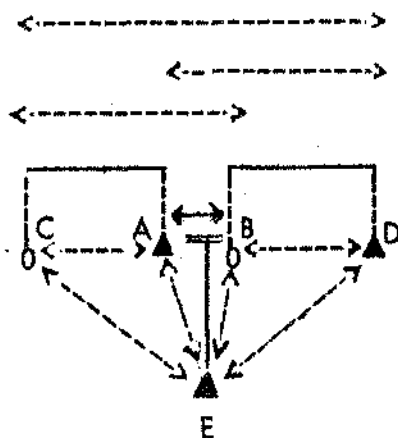
(ii) NANA: In the table of classificatory terminologies there is one term for the Second, Third and Fourth ascending and descending generations: Nana. Nana is a reflexive or reciprocal term: whoever calls another Nana is himself Nana to the person he calls Nana. The suffixes - Nkansua and - Sum are used to specify the degree of generational remove. The lower generations are identified with ascending ones in the terms of classificatory designation. The individuals in the lower generations are given the proper names of those in the higher ones. There is reciprocal affection and exchange of gifts; and extreme warmth and even licence make the relation between a person and his Nana the happiest one.

Seen against the child's relationship with his parents, the relationship of a child to his grandparents appears entirely free of the hectoring and censorious attitude which is an important ingredient in the father-son and mother-daughter relationships. In this contrast, parental attitude is negative while the grandparental attitude is positive. This polarization of affections acts as an important vector force in social mobility. A child might escape from the parental home to seek refuge in the relative warmth of the grandparent's home to which he is always welcome. Within

(iii) In and around the nuclear family, the most frequent interactions are to be found in the following relationships represented in the scheme below:

- And there are two other relationships:

- (i) Father - Father's Sister (Nua) A - C  
(j) Mother - Mother's Brother (Nua) B - D



This system will be analysed in two parts. One part will examine the attitudes in the relations of husband, wife, husband's sister and wife's brother. These constitute the statuses in the affinal complex. The second part will examine filiation and the avunculate.

(a) By kinright a woman identifies herself with the property and the role of her brother viz e.g. wife calls husband's sister, Akumaa.<sup>12</sup> When a man takes a wife he subsumes under his obligations to his sister, new obligations to a new woman. A man's obligation to his wife might reduce his devotion to the services required of him by his sister. These circumstances cast the wife and sister in the role of competitors to win the favour of the man. Fantis identify this competitiveness and the quarrels in this relationship with the rivalry between two women married to a single man. They call the latter KORATWE, and the former YINKUN. In both situations, though a man's affections for the two women might be quite warm, the relationship between the two women is hostile. One may formulate this symbolically as  $A/B. A/C = B/C;$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} 1 & 1 & 0 \end{array}$$

where  $A/B$  is husband and wife relationship,  $A/C$  husband and sister relationship, and  $B/C$  wife and husband's sister relationship.

$A/C$  is identical with  $B/D$ , yet they act in two quite distinct and opposite ways. The obligation which a brother owes to his sister (which is exactly the same factor which causes conflict between a wife and her husband's sister) creates a definite warmth in the relationship between a man and his sister's husband. A man's Akontangye is his closest friend; no man could ask a woman to marry him without first seeking to ingratiate himself with the woman's brother.

On the occasion of taking a woman for wife, a man makes a small cash payment to the bride's brothers. This payment is called

SIKAN (KNIFE). It is customary to dramatize the importance of the bride by pitching the price so high and creating such a din that the groom is reduced to begging and excessive flattery of his in-laws. Usually this drama of conflict ends with the acceptance of a token sum and the giving of the bride's hand to the groom's emissary. The SIKAN (KNIFE) is a symbol of the wife's brothers' power of protection over their sister. By giving the sikan to his brother-in-law the groom shows his indebtedness to them, and accepts responsibility for the welfare of the woman. Marriage is a prestation between two groups of brothers. And its stability depends very much on warmth and mutual respect between husband and wife's brothers.

Among Fantis, there appears to be no articulate stylized form of affection or attitude peculiar to the relationship between husband's sister and wife's brother. But this should not pose any analytical difficulties here. Fantis have no term for distinguishing this relation as a Cultural classificatory category; and we had undertaken to analyse only the attitudes corresponding to the named social categories. This absence of definitive terminology and attitude is nevertheless interesting. The relationship between wife's brother and husband's sister is, in a way of speaking, parallel to that of husband and wife. There is no Akan rule against members of the two affinal categories either intriguing with each other, or, in fact, marrying. The husband's sister and wife's brother remain strangers to each other, though in theoretical terms they are close affines.

(b) The other articulate and stylized forms of attitude are found in the father/son and maternal uncle/nephew relations. Affection towards father's sister is assimilated into that between father and son. A mother's relation to his child is unique in sentiment; it is *sui generis*. The attitude peculiar to it does not depend on any attitude or circumstance outside the bond between mother and child. As Fantis speak of it, maternal sentiments emanate from "something" in the womb which they call ABADEI. When a woman rushes into blazing flames to rescue her burning child, she is believed to be moved, not by any rational calculations of her

chances of saving the child's life. She is not restrained by fear. She is entirely at the mercy of her ABADEI. It is believed, it is only a woman bereft of ABADEI that can hate or treat her child with indifference. The ABADEI makes it difficult for women to punish their children: the pains they suffer exceed what they inflict on their child. And this is why Fantis insist that sons must be raised by their fathers. Men do not have ABADEI.

Egya/Eba; Wofa/Wofase: Fantis look upon paternal and avuncular relations as primarily social facts. Of fatherhood in particular they distinguish between genitor and pater. Though the latter often follows upon the former, the former does not imply the latter. The culture therefore prescribes or recognizes definitive attitudes to these relations; I here rely on two Fanti myths to show the structural interplay of these attitudes.

According to Brown, "A Fanti-Akan tradition of the cognate succession tells us that in the old days, one Sakyi, said to be either a king or a chief, indiscreetly got himself involved in heavy liabilities. In those days spendthrifts and others, who could not meet their debts, were either sold in, or out, of the country, or proscribed, in which latter case the individual either committed suicide or was expelled (from) the country. Sakyi desired to give up his children as hostages to free himself from his liabilities, but his wives objected to their children being sold or going into servitude to relieve him from pecuniary embarrassment. His sister, seeing his plight, gave up her children, and got him out of trouble. Sakyi thereupon swore that at his death his nephews, and not his children, should succeed to his property and political office. Accordingly, at his death, his sister's children succeeded to his estate, and from that time down to the present, succession has been traced through cognates."<sup>13</sup>

This first myth does not explain how the rule of succession

came into existence historically, for, it presupposes or assumes that a woman has absolute right over her offspring, and can do anything with them, including sending them into slavery. But this is exactly the point in question if the narrative should be attempting to account for how matrilineal succession came into being. Rather, what it shows is the nature of the obligations in the system of kinship.

In the myth a man is made to lose or destroy his property and status; viz. his debt and the possibility of slavery, proscription or even suicide. His sister puts her son in the place of her brother as pawn so that his property and status might be secured. In the prestation or substitution of the sister's son for the office and property of the mother's brother the two become identified. A nephew succeeds to the office of his maternal uncle not by a fiat of the latter, but by right. This right derives from the obligation of the nephew to secure the uncle's office.

The myth also contrasts the attitudes of a man's sister and wife. It reveals the deep affection and concern which a sister feels towards her brother, and the opposite sentiment of unconcern and indifference of a wife towards her husband, as far as the security of the man's office and property are concerned. Husband/sister relation is positive (1); and Husband/Wife relation: negative (0).

The second myth contrasts the sentiments in the relations of a man's son and his sister's son in his status as father and maternal uncle. In recounting how matrilineal succession gave way to agnatic succession, the traditions of the people of Elmina say: "Ohin Ampondsiedur of Elmina was suspected by his subjects of having wantonly depleted royal coffers. A conspiracy was formed by his people against him, at the head of which was his sister and nephew, to call upon him, to account for and replace, the moneys so squandered by him and, in default, to assassinate him. His son who happened to learn of the conspiracy, went to him at dead of night and apprised him of what was coming. The old king desired to know whether his sister and nephew were also

among the conspirators, and was informed that they were the ring-leaders. His son besought him to escape with him to a place of safety but the old king allayed the young man's fears by telling him that he was ready to hand the conspirators every ounce of the public money in his possession.

"Early the next morning the conspirators, with the king's sister and nephew, came to him armed and pre-emptorily demanded of him payment of all the money in his possession. He asked them to be cool, for he had not squandered a cent of the public money. He directed them to a certain spot outside the royal residence, where they found the money intact in an earthenware pot. The conspirators were crestfallen and greatly ashamed. The old king rebuked them, and wound up with the request that his son, having proved himself faithful and dutiful to him, should succeed to his stool and other regal property at his decease. The people promised to respect his wishes, and at his death his son succeeded him, which change of succession from nephew to son still obtains at Elmina."<sup>14</sup>

This myth reveals a sharp contrast between the attitudes in the father - son, maternal uncle - nephew relations. Whereas the latter is characterized by suspicion and covetous desires, the latter is filled with goodwill and genuine concern. When we take the two myths together and view them as stories intended to focus on and explicate the complex of attitudes in kinship, one result we obtain is a confirmation of the formula of Levi-Strauss: the relation between maternal uncle and nephew is to the relation between brother and sister, as the relation between father and son is to that between husband and wife.<sup>15</sup>

$$\begin{array}{cccc} \text{MB/ZS} & : & \text{B/Z} & : : & \text{F/S} & & \text{H/W} \\ 0 & & 1 & & 1 & & 0 \end{array}$$

The two myths therefore dramatize the tensions and suspicions inherent in the family structure when the sister's son succeeds to the office and property of a man. But further, they also show, as Lévi-Strauss had maintained, that the scheme of affection could act as a secondary elaboration explaining the observed contradictions in the kinship system; contradictions such as occur between the facts of family life and the normative expectations which should go with a particular system of inheritance. Thus, for example, instead of the sister's brother standing and defending his mother's brother he acts in privy with plotters to take the uncle's office from him. This strain in the relationship of mother's brother and sister's son enables the myth to make meaning of the observed departure of Elminan Fantis from the practice of succession to office by nephews. The nephew's loss of recognition as the proper heir to the maternal uncle is a result of the neglect of his duty to give himself up to his uncle's debtors.

Where matrilineal succession is practised, one will not necessarily observe the exacerbating frictions which in this myth account for the change of succession. The myth relates affections only to the rule of succession. But there are other social factors which we have to refer to in order to understand the system of kinship attitudes.

Strictly speaking every Fanti belongs to, and is under the authority of the mother's brother. It is expected however that the child should live with his father and acquire from him good behaviour and the father's industrial skills. This implies that the father should exert influence, and at times, physical power on the child. There results a clear ambivalence in the attitude of the father on his account. The father's loving care is tinged with restraint.

Another source of ambivalence in the father's role is a man's responsibility towards his sister's son. A man's own son and his sister's son appear to be in a competitive struggle to gain the affection of the man; and the former appears to have the better treatment. Whereas the son lives with his father and tails with him to make the father's

wealth, the sister's son is free of the disciplinary strictures of the mother's brother and appears as the favoured recipient of frequent gifts. When one compares the son's attitude to his father with the attitude a sister's son adopts towards a mother's brother, the latter appears warm and cordial while the former stands out as mixed; that is  $F/S = \frac{1}{2}$ . This makes the quality of the relation between father and son uncertain and fraught with the risk of disruption.

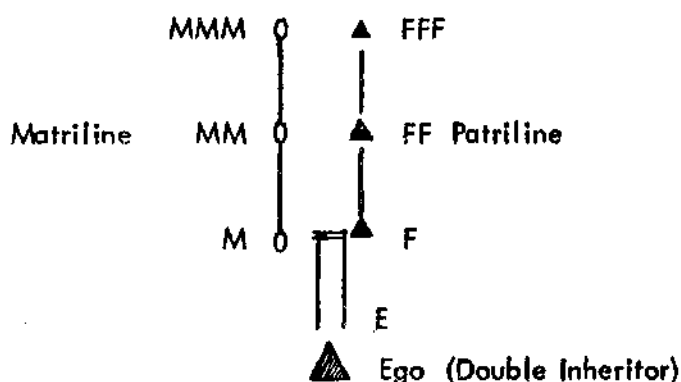
A mother's brother has a secular jural authority over his sister's son. The threat of disinheritance acts as a potent instrument of control over the sister's son. A father's power over his son is legitimate, but it has no secular sanction similar in any way to that of the mother's brother. It rests on the belief that the child is a creation of the father, and that the father is a god. The latter is incapsulated in a Fanti adage that "the 'Father-god' is heavy (or rests heavily) on the child" (*Egya bosom ye dur*). If a child showed any disrespect to his father, the most unguarded rebuke from the father might destroy the fortunes of the child. It is as if a child should cut himself from the body from which he receives spiritual nourishment and protection.

### III.

In this section, I intend to discuss how the Fanti system of inheritance of property interacts with other systems of inheritance of property when a Fanti marries a Ga, Ewe, Dagbani. I intend to show that the forms of interaction I shall be treating would tend, in practice, to produce in Ghana a new social structure coupled with a new distribution of property.

There are two ways in which the Fanti system of inheritance might interact with a patrilineal system. One would be through the marriage of a Fanti woman to a Dagbani, say. Another would be through the marriage of a Fanti man to a Dagbani woman. The two forms of interaction produce two quite different results.<sup>16</sup>

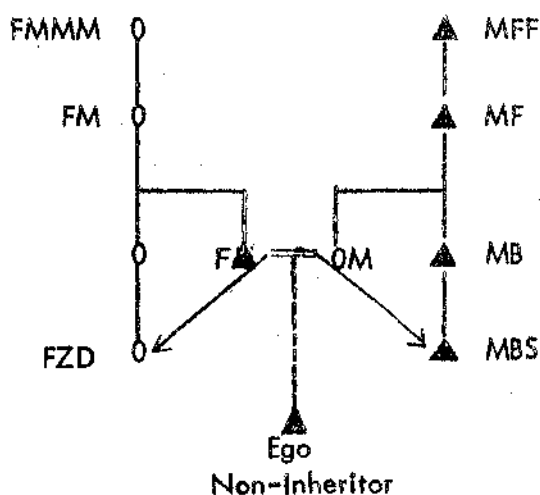
In the one case, as the diagram shows, the offspring has title to the father's property on the principle of Dagbani patrilineal descent, and a right to the mother's brother's property on the Fanti principle of matrilineal inheritance. The offspring would thus enjoy dual descent by right and can accede to office and property in two lineages simultaneously.



When a Fanti man marries a Dagbani woman, the systems of patriliney and matriliney neutralize themselves. The offspring of such a marriage cannot inherit rights from the father, as the father is inherited by his sister's son. Nor can the offspring inherit his mother: in a patrilineal system no important office or property is

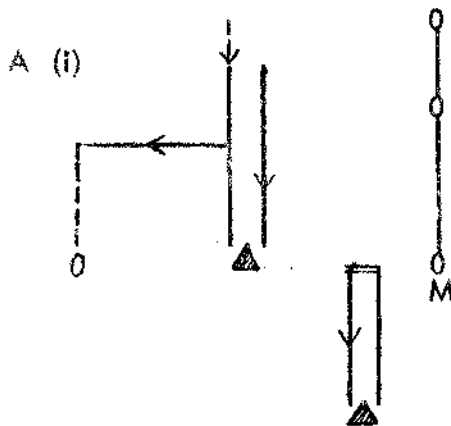
transmitted through a woman. The offspring of a Fanti man and a woman from any patrilineal society would be a person of no status, completely disinherited on purely structural basis.

From a direct exchange of women between the men of matrilineal and patrilineal societies in Ghana, there would result a system of social stratification with two categories of people: one would be men of dual inheritance; and the other, men and women who have no inheritance. The former would have status and property and the latter would have no status and no property. If such an exchange took place, the men of the matrilineal societies would create status-less and disinherited categories of people, while the men of the patrilineal societies would produce a category of people of dual inheritors.



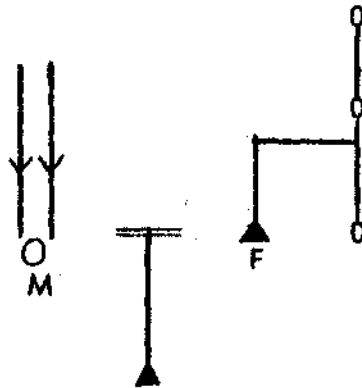
In practical terms, however, the initial stage of such a process would present a system of three-tier social stratification. At the top, and most endowed in status and wealth, would be the dual inheritors.

At the bottom, and most deprived, would be the non-inheritors. Between the two layers would be the unilineal descent groups - the patrilineal and matrilineal societal groups who would be interacting in the way I have already demonstrated, and with the two other resultant categories - the dual descent groups and the no-descent groups. The sketches below are intended to show the abstract forms of the possible interactions within the systems.



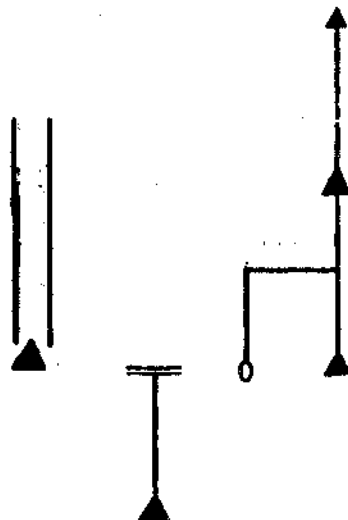
Dual Inheritor married to a woman from a matrilineal society.  
 The product is a dual inheritor: he inherits from his father (a dual inheritor) by father-right; and he inherits from his mother's brother.

A (ii)



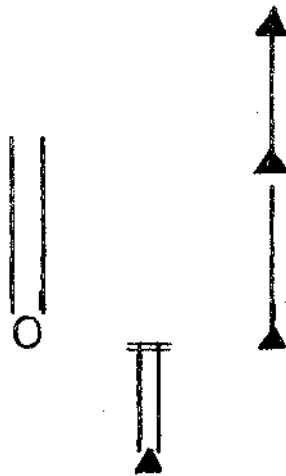
When a woman dual inheritor marries a man from a matrilineal clan, the issue inherits that half of his inheritance which comes to her through her mother. From the father he inherits nothing.

B (i)



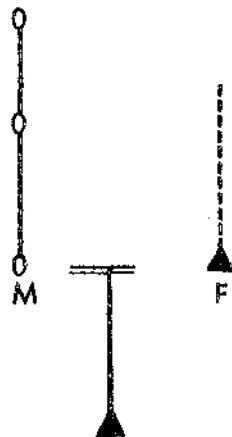
When a man of dual inheritance marries a woman from a patrilineal society, the issue cannot inherit from the mother, he can only inherit from the father by father-right.

B (ii)

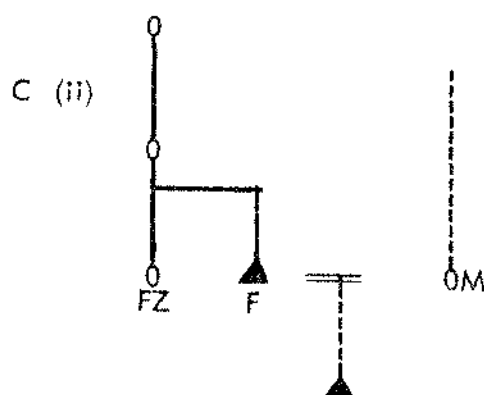


When a woman of dual inheritance marries a man from a patrilineal society, the issue will be a dual inheritor: he inherits from his mother's brother and also from his father.

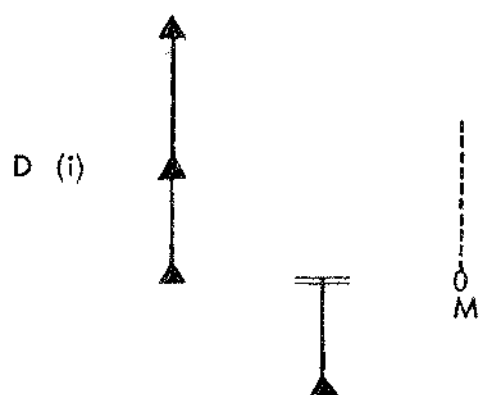
C (i)



When a woman from a matrilineal society marries a man who is a non-inheritor the issue does not inherit from the father; he can only inherit the mother's brother.

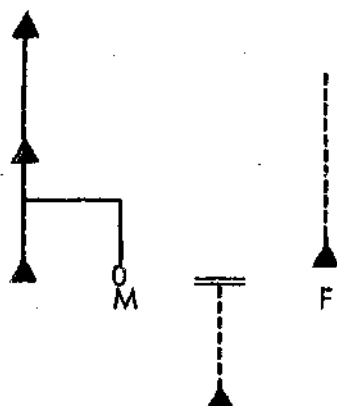


When a man from a matrilineal clan marries a woman non-inheritor, their issue is a non-inheritor. His father is succeeded by his sister's son, and he cannot inherit anything from the mother.



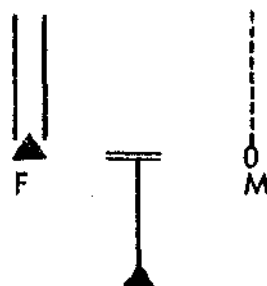
When a man from a patrilineal society marries a woman non-inheritor their issue inherits from his father.

D (ii)



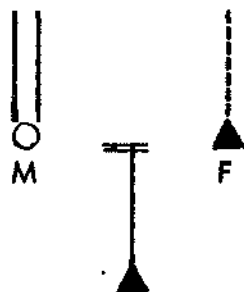
When a woman from a patrilineal society marries a man non-inheritor, their issue is a non-inheritor: he cannot inherit the father, and he cannot inherit the mother.

E (i)



When a man dual inheritor marries a woman non-inheritor their issue inherits from the father as of patriliney. He inherits nothing from the mother.

E (ii)



When a woman dual inheritor marries a man non-inheritor their issue inherits from the mother's brother. He does not inherit anything from the father.

The foregoing marriage models might be classified as follows: (p, m, d and n stand for patrilineal, matrilineal, dual descent and non-inheritance respectively):

Those giving rise to Dual Inheritance:

$$H_p = W_m$$

$$H_d = W_m$$

$$H_p = W_d$$

Those giving rise to Non-Inheritance:

$$H_m = W_p$$

$$H_m = W_n$$

$$H_n = W_p$$

Those giving rise to Unilineal Descent:

$$H_m = W_d$$

$$H_d = W_p$$

$$H_n = W_m$$

$$H_p = W_n$$

$$H_d = W_n$$

$$H_n = W_d$$

From this it might be inferred that, all things being equal,<sup>17</sup> the inter-systemic marriages which might result in dual inheritance and non-lineal descent would tend to occur with equal probability.

Marriages which might result in unilineal inheritance would have higher probability. In other words, with increased inter-tribal contacts, Ghanaian Society would tend to move towards a class structure with dominant middle class of unilineal descent group, and upper and lower classes of equal strength.

Some of the social factors stimulating these forms of interaction are the following:

1. Greater mobility tending to bring together people from different tribes. The marriages we have here studied are predominantly an urban phenomenon.
2. The creation of interests and aims in life which are extra tribal, namely: professional, academic, and social interests.
3. Greater individual financial capabilities. This has two separate implications: first, it means that the individual can satisfy his parents and kinsmen on the one hand, and, on the other hand, support his own children by leaving enough property for each side. This removes the fear that families might reject one's children after death. Second, it does mean that, since the individual is going to bear his own financial burden, he can make his own choices, including the choice of marital partners.
4. It follows from this that children are now generally accepted as the direct responsibility of their parents. This is enforced on the father's side by the now general practice of naming the child and wife after the father.

This is further supported by the notion that since the greater part of the man's life is likely to be spent with his wife and children, and whatever success he achieves must be due to their help, it should be just to give them some inheritance.

### Conclusion

In this essay, I have sought to give some understanding of how Fantis use their kinship terms in the determination of social groups for participation in different fields of social action. I have also shown the system of attitudes corresponding to the system of words. But to understand kinship as on-going process is also to understand the likely changes it could go through. And short of total rejection of the system, no changes would have greater implications for our society than those which might result from "cross-tribal" marriages. The models of these cross-tribal marriages are so general in form that they should be applicable to marriages in any part of Africa.

FOOTNOTES

1. Among Fantis (and probably in all societies organized on kinship basis) knowledge of kinship begins with the learning of kinship terms. This study begins, on this account, by looking at the Fanti kinship terms.
2. In The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching, M.A.K. Halliday, Angus McIntosh, Peter Strevens, Longmans 1968, p.87, the use of 'register' - in the pertinent sense in which it has been employed here - is explained:

"The category of 'register' is needed when we want to account for what people do with their language. When we observe language activity in the various contexts in which it takes place, we find differences in the type of language selected as appropriate to different types of situation".

On pages 5 and 6, I present two different arrangements of the kinship terms I have presented above. The same words acquire different social significance by merely defining the field in which the words are to be used. At least the relations between the different categories (which the kinship terms express) are altered in relation to the field of social activity. Yet it is not the fields which create the shuffling. "It is not the event or state of affairs being talked about that determines the choice, but the convention that a certain kind of language is appropriate to a certain use".

3. In patrilineal cross-cousin marriage, Ego's wife should come from the father's abusua.

4. The police organization now constitutes the effective force for peace. The police gave an effective demonstration of this peace-keeping role when they intervened in a series of bloody strifes between Asafo companies in the twenties and thirties. In Apam, I was told that the colonial government imprisoned the Chief for not maintaining effective order in the town. It was not understood that Chiefs had no force other than the Asafos who were involved in the civil strifes.
5. From A Guide to Cape Coast Company Emblems, 1909, p.12, 13. (Author, anonymous).
6. At Apam an informant indicated that there was a clear dividing line between lands possessed by the two Asafos in town. I was able to observe for myself the two modern buildings which the Asafos use as their respective community centres.
7. E.J.P. Brown, O.B.E., Gold Coast and Asianti Reader, London, 1929, p.199. The notion of regency is not an Akan notion. The protector of an Akan stool is never considered a regent.
8. Adapted from Brown ibid., p.171.
9. Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, London, N.Y. 1963. p.37.
10. According to Levi-Strauss, "the system of basic attitudes comprises, at least, four terms". He gives these as "mutuality (=), reciprocity (+), rights (+), and obligations (-)". (ibid., p.49). In this paper we are viewing mutual attitudes as bundles. The designations I have given here would refer to their dominant content or feature. That which is dominantly free is (1). That which is dominantly hostile is 0; and I have chosen the middle term  $\frac{1}{2}$  to

designate what, in the words of Devothy Emmet, constitutes "the ambivalent attitude of love and at the same time fear and hate lesser people so often feel towards people of exceptional inner powers, such as saints and holy men". Function, Purpose and Powers, London, Macmillan, 1958, pp. 188, 189.

11. Levi-Strauss refers to the function of the system of attitudes in helping to achieve "cohesion and equilibrium" in the kinship group (*ibid.*, p.37). One might interpret this to mean that people would tend to move from hostile relations to loving ones in situations of tension. It is perhaps not surprising to see that Fantis fight on their father's side, in the father's Asafo, against their mother's brothers.
12. In the two matrices on pages 5 and 6, the only categories which are not separated in shuffling categories between Asafo and Abusua are those of brother and sister. The Brother/Ssister nexus is constant, as compared to Mother/Son or Son/Mother's Brother which are severed by Asafo divisions.
13. Brown ibid., p.195.
14. Brown ibid., pp. 195, 196.
15. Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, p.42.
16. Hon. Mr. Nii Amaa Ollenu, The Law of Succession in Ghana, Accra, 1960. The legal implications of these two kinds of cross-tribal marriage are briefly treated by the author (pp. 39-41). The present treatment examines these interactions as an aspect of social change.
17. We do not here take into consideration the number of actual marriages of which the couple are from tribes who reckon with systems of the same kind e.g., Ewe against Dagbani.