

Tarikh al-Mazar'i:

Mr. Charles Darkwah, an M.A. student of the Institute, is now preparing an edition of the Tarikh al-Mazar'i, The History of the Mazrui Family, by Sheikh al-Amin al-Mazui, of which a translation has been made for him by Mr. Ritchie of Mombasa as a result of a grant of funds by the Institute. This history covers the history of this family from its origins in Oman and the Governors of Mombasa appointed from it between 1729 and 1827.

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"NSUAE" - THE AKAN OATH OF OFFICE

The "ntam" should be distinguished from "nse". Both are referred to as oath in English. Though it is quite correct to regard the Akan ntam as an oath, perhaps the nearest Akan equivalent of the English oath is the nse. An oath (in English) is "a solemn appeal to a god, or something holy or revered as a witness or sanction of the truth of a statement". Like "nsedie" in Akan society, the English oath is an appeal to the supernatural. In addition, however, to the nsedie - the appeal to the supernatural, Akan society has another type of oath, also an appeal - not to the supernatural, but to a personal, family or national tragedy. This is the ntam.

Among Akan societies, both types of oath are used and resorted to, depending on the occasion and the circumstances. Sanctions for abusing the nse, since it is an appeal to the gods and the supernatural, are imposed or expected to be imposed, by the supernatural. Society itself has no means of enforcing the nse. The ntam is different. It is an appeal to society itself, to its own past - and is therefore enforced by society. The nse is therefore an oath belonging to God, while the ntam is an oath belonging to Caesar.

The ntam is used for several purposes, among which are the following:-

- (a) To assert a claim to a right or property.
- (b) To seek justice by moving the courts.
- (c) To force a person or group of persons to desist from a certain action.
- (d) To complete the installation of a chief. This is the ceremony called nsuae. - the swearing of the oath of office or of allegiance.
- (e) To make an irrevocable promise.

This paper will limit itself to the oath of office and of allegiance. This oath is sworn by all subordinate chiefs. It is an essential, perhaps, the most essential feature in the process of installing a chief. A sub-chief who has not sworn the oath of allegiance to his superior chief remains an Nkwankwahene (unconfirmed, unrecognized chief). All chiefs-elect swear the oath of office before their elders and people. In addition, as mentioned already, all sub-chiefs swear the oath of allegiance to their superior chiefs to complete their installation or enstoolment.

The ceremony is usually performed in the evening - preferably and traditionally, towards night fall. Drumming and singing take place during a greater part of the day, and precede the ceremony. Women sing from one end of the town or village to the other.

When the time arrives for the ceremony itself, the elders and wing chiefs or clan chiefs assemble and take the oath of allegiance to serve the new chief. The new chief then takes his oath of office before his elders. If he is not a paramount, independent chief, but a subordinate chief, he next has to take the oath of allegiance to his superior. A date is fixed for this. When the time comes, (in the evening), the superior chief, together with his councillors and other sub or wing-chiefs sit in state and send for the new chief - the chief-elect. He arrives with his

elders and a few followers. He would have paid a fee - called Abradie which his superior would have distributed among all the chiefs in the state, notifying them of the election of this new chief. He now has to pay certain fees before he swears. These include a fee to the sword bearer for the sword with which he will be swearing; the stool bearers; umbrella carriers; heralds, etc. and the aseda which is in effect a stamp duty or fee.

The chief-elect now approaches his superior, his cloth tied around his waist, his chest bare; bare-footed and supported by his attendants, he pulls the sword from its sheath, points with it towards the sky and then downwards towards the earth. Traditionally, the superior chief places his foot lightly, three times, on the head of the new chief when the latter bends down to point the sword towards the earth. The superior chief places a curse on him - saying - "may the gods kill you if you ever desert me". These days, and in some places, the superior chief places his foot three times on the sword rather than on the head of the subordinate chief. The subordinate or chief-elect now stands erect and proceeds to swear the oath of allegiance, pointing the sword at the superior chief. The chief-elect gives a brief history of his ancestry - mentioning glorious and famous names among his forebears, indicating the standards he wishes to follow and people he hopes to emulate; then he swears the oath "Meka ntam kесеe se semamma wo na mene wo ammuoman yi, na seme metwa wo nkontompo, se meye wo dom, se wofre me anadwo o, awia o, na se mamma a, meto ntam kесеe ". I swear by the great oath to help you to govern this nation. If I ever lie to you, or desert you; if I fail to attend to your summons (whether in the day or night), I break my oath and offend the ntam.

The superior shakes hands with the new chief - whose installation is now complete. He wears his sandals and returns to sit with his people to receive white clay (hyire). The superior chief sends him drinks - which will really come out of the stock (nsuae nsa) presented earlier to the superior chief by the new chief.

This ceremony has the same effect as the coronation ceremony elsewhere. But while in Britain the coronation oath is an appeal to the supernatural - to God, among the Akans, the coronation oath, the oath of office or of allegiance is an appeal to Caesar - an "ntam" rather than an "nse". The ntam is a disaster - a sudden death, an inglorious defeat

or a plague. The event itself is hardly ever referred to directly. Thus we have weeks days - Dwoda, Benada, Wukuda, etc. as ntam. This is only a periphrastic way of referring to the actual incident or event which is the ntam. The name of the week is a word taboo only by association. Ntam is, therefore, to some extent, at least, the counterpart of apae - the heroic song or recitation, which recounts the glories and achievements of a chief's ancestors. The ntam records failure, disaster or defeat. Apae is fuller, as an oral record or history, than ntam, since the ntam refers to a single, particular episode, incident or event. It is the skeleton in the cupboard - as it were.

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NOTES ON THE NAYO FRIKO SHRINE IN AWUNA

There are two places in Awuna where this shrine can still be found. These are Vodja and the capital of Awuna, Awunaga.

According to an Ewe written account:

"Nayo Friko was a shrine of Nortsie to where it was brought from Ketu (which is regarded as the original home of the Awunas and the other Ewe tribes). It is said they are male and female and that they have power and control over many heavenly and earthly things. Formerly the people of Awuna, Accra, Akposo and Kpele made pilgrimage to Nortsie to worship it; they made sacrifices to it with rum, fowl and wine before the shrine in turn gave them their needs. Now the shrine is in a town called Prewu in Adele to which the Awunas still travel to worship it".¹

The shrine, as it is said, comprises twin deities - Nayo the female deity is the shrine of Pereu, and Friko is the male shrine which is at Dipongo. The two villages are a few miles apart in Adele.

It is not certain when and why the ancient shrine - Nayo Friko - was removed from Nortsie to be established in Adele. However, from the following account by Debrunner, it may be conjectured that