

ON THE NEGROES' RELIGION IN GENERAL

BY L.F. RØMER

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INTRODUCTION:

This is a translation of chapter III of Tilforladelig Efterretning om Kysten Guinea which translates Reliable Account of the Guinea Coast written by Ludvig Ferdinand Rømer and published in Copenhagen in 1960.

Rømer was an employee of the Danish Guinea Company who served at Christianborg Castle on the Gold Coast in the first half of the eighteenth century. He wrote this recollection of his experiences on the Gold Coast ten years after leaving the coast. His account is therefore subject to the shortcomings of the human memory.

The book was the outcome of the encouragement of friends who thought that the Danish public would be interested in his peculiar and interesting observations and experiences on the Gold Coast. **This book is meant for the Danish public of the eighteenth century. It is written in the archaic (old Danish Gothic) style of that period.** Besides, Rømer displays a lack of literary ability which makes translation into another language an arduous task. The translator is most often torn between faithfulness to Rømer's style and the difficulty of bringing out what Rømer wanted to tell his readers. Since this is essentially a historical piece, I have found myself

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occasionally "helping" Rømer to make himself understood. There are still a few points which I need to clear with eighteenth century Danish language experts before the complete Translation is published.

As a historian, I find this chapter of Rømer's book very interesting. It makes references to actual names of people, places and historical incidents which can be cross-checked with the manuscripts and oral traditions of the period. It shows the historical value of customs and festivals. The Labadi (a section of Accra) festival is easily recognisable with a few modification. Possessed priestesses behave in almost the same way described by Rømer as today.

Rømer is torn between his position as a Christian from a different culture and a man who has been exposed to something which has shaken his world. Very often he looks down with 'contempt' on the belief of the people and at other times he is convinced that there is some power which to him defies logic behind the action of the gods which are worshipped. To quote him ... "I should confess that I believe Satan is mighty among the heathens".

Whatever attitude was adopted by Rømer or the Europeans on the coast did not alter the fact that religion played a crucial role in the relationship between the Europeans and the Africans. A remarkable feature of Rømer's observation was his assertion that the Africans believed in a supreme God with minor gods under Him. This means that before the missionaries started their evangelisation in the nineteenth century the idea of the supreme God existed among the

Africans. It is generally accepted that the Africans have been influenced by the Europeans in their religion. Rømer shows that in the eighteenth century it was the Africans who influenced the Europeans on the coast. This is evidenced by his statement that the Europeans were influenced to the extent of wearing charms procured for them by their black wives, mistresses, and servants. The mortality rate among the Europeans was so high that there was an urgent need to use whatever means was available to preserve life. The Europeans therefore relied heavily on African herbs. Since the Africans had a strong belief in the role played by the supernatural in disease and health, the Europeans found themselves eventually accepting the belief in the efficacy of these gods for the preservation of their health.

Inadequate manpower and meagre resources also compelled the Europeans to use the African method of maintaining law and order. Trial by ordeal was utilised by both Africans and Europeans alike.

One striking feature as observed by Rømer is that African religion is as open to corruption as any other religion. In his view Africans could cheat and renege on their promises to their own gods. The Europeans freely participated in this corruption. Rømer often gave drinks to one priestess at Nungo to tell her people to be obedient to the Danes knowing that such a woman has a lot of influence with her people.

Rømer also gives a lively description of our story-telling tradition which shows the African's love for the theatrical. Speech

and movement were combined to entertain in the open air. No stage, enclosed space or special costume were needed for the African theatre. The tradition of origin of the Ananse stories is given putting the blame of Ananse's roguery and cunning on the ingratitude of human beings.

The writer has chosen the third chapter of Rómer's book for a start of translations, because it is the most informative and entertaining for both Historians and non-Historians alike.

2. Since the nature and customs of a people usually flow from their religion, I will begin with that topic, although it is difficult to write about a religion which does not appear to be systematic. For, most of them never bother to think about such things, and the elderly among them who do, are, in most cases, of such varied opinions as East is from West.

What I write here is based on what I have been told by a High Priest,<sup>1</sup> namely our caboceer,<sup>2</sup> Putti<sup>3</sup> (Okpoti) of Labadi and also Noytee (Nuete), the old Tessing (Teshie) cabuceer and others. Not only is Putti (Okpoti) the most famous and greatest priest (fetish maker) on the Gold Coast but Labadi has the most distinctive but not the strongest, which is in Fante. This will be explained later.

You should have stayed on the coast for a long time before a black would answer your question on his religion. Furthermore, you should not have been seen laughing at their ceremonies or ridiculing

their answers to questions posed by the Europeans. If we say "This is rubbish, etc", they answer "It can well be, think what you will", and they laugh with us. They usually do not answer us when we ask more than one question in a conversation.

I remember Putti (Okpoti) came to me one afternoon with greetings from the Fetish (Oracle) which assured me of his friendship and protection, and asked for a bottle of brandy. Since I had given him some not long before, I made objections that his fetish is not as great as that of the Fante and yet is thirstier. I would bet our old bull to see if he (the Fetish) could take a bull or cow up in the air as the Fante's. Putti answered that the Labadi (fetish) could not. I asked why and was answered that the ancestors of the Fantes were with God whilst those of the (Labadi's) died in war. When I asked whether those who died in war did not go to God, he became quiet and sent an old black who was with him on an errand. When we were alone, he answered my question thus, "Don't you know, that the blacks cut off each other's head in war? Do you really think that God takes in people without heads? Can't he get enough people who die in their houses and are buried with their heads on?" I had to be satisfied with such an answer.

All the blacks know that there is a Supreme Being who created all things, guides, rules and sustains the world; but others say that there are three subordinate gods, namely, the sky, the earth, and

the sea gods. They believe that there is a powerful evil spirit with many evil spirits under him who produces all the evil in the world and causes as much damage as possible, if not prevented by God and the fetish. In Accra, God is called Niumbo (Nyomo) and the devil Sissa.<sup>5</sup>

I have not seen any picture of God but of the devil painted like a pousse of clay and gum with a pair of horns on the head and a tail almost as our painters paint it. They say that the devil is white and paint him with the whitest colour. Their picture of the devil is usually a span high covered with hair and feathers. When I asked them if the fetish had instructed them to paint such a picture, they answered that it was an old woman who produced them and hired them for eight days or more to those whom the devil disturbed at night and gave no rest. The devil is so afraid of his own picture that he never revisited a house in which he had once seen his picture.

The blacks have, in addition, traditions of a certain Nanny<sup>6</sup> (Anaamu), and of his wiles and roguery. One could generally call Nanny (Anaamu) the negroes (ulenspeil) trickster. They have practically nothing to do but sleep during the day and gather at night in groups of fifty, sit outside the door whilst the old tell the young about this Nanny (Anaamu). The young find in his intrigues such excitement that they only wish for an opportunity in the world to imitate this trickster.

I should like to digress a little on this tradition. A big black spider (Anaanu), in the language of the blacks called Nanny (Anaanu), on God's orders, created the first human beings or, more correctly, (according to the blacks) Nanny (Anaanu) spun the material and God used it to create man.

Nanny was so diligent that he spun material for a great number of people till he could do no more. Nanny waited and expected gratitude from men for his efforts but they ran away from him and preferred to receive instructions from the fetish on what to do. Nanny created one more creature of the little stuff that he had left. This was lighter than the previous ones. Nanny nursed, educated and gave him his own name. This story is about this singular creature who could live in the world without working, but mainly by deceiving others and could even cheat the fetish himself. When Nanny was supposed to offer the fetish a chicken, he would consume the flesh and set the feathers and bones together just as a whole chicken as he had been taught by the mother. Should he offer an egg, he was taught how he could punch a hole in it, drink it, fill it with sand or earth, cover the hole again and in the bargain be praised for giving such a big and heavy egg, etc.

When the blacks narrate this story about Nanny, they imitate his actions in everything. If he had walked from one place to the other, they walk a couple of steps. If he had beaten somebody the story teller gets hold of somebody in the audience and beats him. If he

had eaten something delicious, cried, laughed, danced, limped, etc. the story teller does the same. I have seen a black imitate Nanny on the occasion when both his hands were cut off and the story teller did it so well that he had to do it a few times for me and others in Portuguese for us to understand him better. There should be five to six blacks present, for each has a role to play.

The story is this. Once upon a time, there was drought in the whole land and such famine that a bean (Faba) cost an egg. Nanny had many wives and children. His first and principal wife often reminded him to procure some food. Nanny knew that his neighbour had a good supply of beans. He was a hunter, and when he went out in the morning he ordered his children to spread out the beans in the sun and stir it to prevent worms entering into them. They were not to eat any of it till he had returned home to give out rations. Nanny came in the absence of the hunter, greeted the children who responded. Nanny had smeared his whole body with pitch or gum and asked for permission to teach them a new dance. He summersaulted in the beans so that many stuck to his body. When he had finished, he showed the children his hands and said "You can see that I haven't taken anything with me". "No, you definitely haven't, how can we say that you have," replied the children. He left, collected the beans from his body and gave them to his wives. When the hunter came home, the children informed him that Nanny had been there and they showed him the dance which he had taught them. Eventually, the hunter noticed that his beans were decreasing and suspected Nanny. One morning, he went out and hid



himself in some bush very close to his house. He saw Nanny stealing his beans in the described manner. He caught him, cut off his hands and released him. Nanny returned home, hid his hands in a scarf and began to scold his wives for not making any attempt to get some food. He warned that he would no longer feed his wives but only his children. For this reason, he ordered the children to come to his house.

The wives had to be satisfied with this arrangement and each brought her children to Nanny's hut. He then went to them, locked them up in the room and hit each child on the mouth with the stump of his hand. He threatened to cut off their hands just like his, if they did not tell their mothers that they had got their stomachs filled with food. The children promised and kept the secret for two days. On the third day they revealed it to their mothers who peeped in on Nanny and discovered that he had no hands.

They all resolved to leave Nanny and find themselves other husbands. They therefore went away. Nanny ran ahead of them, hid himself in the bush and started cutting down trees. The wives who were then passing by greeted him without knowing who it was. Nanny altered his voice and thanked them asking, "where are you going"? The wives told him their story briefly and continued by asking if he did not need any wives. Nanny answered "my dears, return to your husband if you would follow my advice. I had twenty wives but have sacked nineteen. I have more than enough in these hard times". The wives left and went further. Nanny again ran ahead of them and pretended to have had fifty wives but had sacked forty-nine. It happened

again the third time when Nanny pretended to have had hundred wives but had sacked ninety-nine. Nanny's wives put their heads together and resolved to consult the fetish. Nanny heard this and decided to disguise himself as a fetish in the same bush where he had hidden. In the end, the wives returned to their husband, Nanny's house but he was there before them, and refused to open the door except on terms favourable to himself. Some blacks can act this fable a whole night without getting to the end.

If one were to ask questions like how Nanny could cut down trees when he had no hands (because the story-teller hits with his hands, makes cutting gestures and makes a sound with the mouth just like someone who is cutting wood, puffing and blowing at work and in all things imitates Nanny) that would be to ruin the whole story.

All blacks agree that there are creatures that are between God and men and according to Putti (Okpoti), were created at the time God created the first men. They were created to teach men to lead pious and virtuous lives and also with God's permission, to foretell good and evil.

There are (if I understood the blacks correctly) creatures of different sorts, male and female, who breed and in Putti's opinion, die although they can live over a thousand years. The creature which allows itself to be heard once a year in Labadi is a man, the one<sup>7</sup> in Dutch Accra<sup>8</sup> is the wife and the one<sup>9</sup> in Osu is their son and messenger (Tie-tie).<sup>10</sup>

The Oracle which we will first describe calls itself Giemwong<sup>11</sup> (Dzemawon) "God's messenger". His honorific<sup>12</sup> titles which the blacks give him are Bribi<sup>13</sup> (wonderful and unfathomable), and Adja<sup>14</sup> (fire). A hut or house has been built for him in Labadi town three quarters of a mile<sup>15</sup> from Christiansborg. It is round, as usual, with thatched roof but no ceiling, at a pleasant place surrounded with palm and other tall trees. Nearby, live the priests (fetish-makers) and their wives (fetish priestesses) who keep the inside and outside of the hut clean, put food and drinks inside the hut, and attend when called by the spirit to find out what he desired.

The beginning of August is the New Year<sup>16</sup> of the blacks and Giemwong (Dzemawon) through his messenger informs the blacks on what day<sup>17</sup> he would come, which is usually at full moon. It is immediately made known to everybody. In the evening prior to his arrival, the blacks assemble in large numbers outside the hut, usually they all have offerings with them which consist of sheep, goats, hens and sometimes even a bull, and each one usually has brandy<sup>18</sup> with him for offering. I write here, what I have been told by many old negroes and especially by a man who was born and has worked there in the country. This man is now here in Zealand. [A part of Denmark]

About three in the morning, Giemwong (Dzemawon) allows himself to be heard in the air with a sound almost like our wild geese when they fly above our heads in Autumn. When he arrives in his house, the earth trembles together with the hut.

The blacks who are assembled and sit in a big circle, fall on their faces and greet him by clapping softly. They bid him welcome and ask him to be kind to them calling him by his appellations, Adjah!, Bribi!, etc. Giemwong (Dzemawon) begins by blessing them before his speech. He first punishes those who have done evil, praises those who have lived virtuously that year and recommends their virtues. Strangely enough, he pauses after each subject before he starts another. His whole narration lasts for one and a half hours. He speaks an archaic language<sup>19</sup> and answers the questions of the blacks mostly in parable.

The fetish priest who sits nearest to the door receives from the blacks brandy, one after the other. They hold it out at the door and it is taken in without their seeing who takes it. Giemwong (Dzemawon) drinks from the bottle so that people who are near the door can hear it gurgling. When the bottle is brought out again, each gets with it considerable blessing and exhortation.<sup>20</sup>

This fetish has a great thirst for brandy and can consume more at a time than two hundred blacks.

There are two to three hundred people who have assembled and each usually has a present, mostly brandy, for him.

At about five o'clock in the morning he goes away again with just as much earth trembling and screaming as he had come, leaving behind a possessed fetish priest whom the blacks put in the hut and make offerings to, just as they were for the aforementioned.

The person (i.e. in Zealand B.49) swore that he had heard that spirit, Giemwong, say in his language "You should not emulate the whites for although they have God's word with them, which you blacks don't have, most of them are nevertheless, condemned after their death because of their evil life". It is not only this person who had heard such, but many of the christians born in the country who had travelled up and down the Fort have heard a spirit speak at many places and mostly on the same subject, namely, exhortation of his followers to piety and virtue. For these oracles have different names, and, according to the blacks it is not Giemwong in Labadi which visits the upper and downward coast annually but other spirits.

Putti's brother, Quassi, told me that Giemwong once chased an eminent black out of the gathering and told him, to the hearing of everybody present, that he did not accept offerings from someone who had slept with his own daughter. After that he was not respected among his equals and so he committed suicide.

In a particular year, a mullattress who was a christian, poisoned some people in our fort. When she brought forward her offering (which was a bottle of brandy) Giemwong would not accept it like the others, but (this is hillarious and I ask for permission to narrate it) he farted and cursed her with these words "you shall be wiped out of memory". Many blacks told me this and all our employees in the fort knew it, so that the woman, who was a Sergeant's (Cornelius Petersen) wife, did not dare enter the fort for a whole year, for fear of being turned out by our soldiers.

This day, (the festival) the blacks make merry with the brandy which Giemwong (Dzemawon) has left for them. They receive, every other hour, a clay pot full S.V. Urin\* into which they quite greedily dip their fingers and suck it saying that Giemwong has left it for them. We Europeans such as the Danes, the English, and Dutch, usually go there to watch the black's fantastic ceremonies, which last for three days. One sees nothing but three drums,<sup>23</sup> each with its drummer, who is an old man. One of the drums is considered very sacred and it is not played except on these three days of the year.

The drummer, who has it, i.e. the drum, hanging with a band around his neck, acts as if possessed with eyes widely open without blinking. He acts as if the drum is leading him unconsciously to one person or the other who should dance for him. Something like a beard made of raffia smeared with red earth, is hung round the drum. The one who has the honour of dancing with the drum takes hold of this beard whilst the drum is still being beaten. It is surprising to see an old man who can hardly walk dancing with such dignified and quick steps when it comes to his turn to dance with the drum. He takes hold of the drum's beard with special honour and respect, then wipes his face and whole body whilst he makes his sacred capers. Everybody in the ring dances with the upper part of their body without moving their feet. They sing what the possessed fetish priest in the hut starts. It is in the archaic language<sup>21</sup> and they sing it with such a melancholy tone which comes out through the nose with so many hii! ha8 and it is impossible to describe and imagine

such a thing. So many Europeans of the ships' crew and those living in the country whom I have taken there, had to admit that they had never seen such a thing before. It usually falls on us Danes to entertain in Labadi when so many foreigners ask us to take them there to see something which they have heard but have never seen before. Their black employees remind them not to come to that sacred place with empty hands, but should carry an anker or half an anker of brandy with them as an offering. When we are on our way with many ankers and bottles of brandy being carried after us, the possessed or damned in the hut knows (so the blacks say) that whitemen are coming with offerings for Giemwong (Dzemawon). In their honour the fetish priest sings a special song to which nobody but the high priest, Putti should dance. The words of the song are "Whites! children of Whites! Blessings on you." I don't know any other way of translating the words. "Blafonse biatum boo," etc. Stools are set for us to complete the circle. Putti comes with the drum to dance especially for each European. This drum is regarded as particularly sacred and no other person but the old and distinguished could do their capers before it. For the ordinary and younger blacks, there are two other drums also decorated with a beard. The biggest and most sacred is about 4 feet high, the second 3 feet and the third probably 2 feet. They have two frightful looking sticks with which they beat the drum. They are curved like a horn and are used with such strength in beating the drum that sometimes a thick elephant ear is ripped into pieces causing them to stop their fun until it is repaired.

They slaughter their beasts not with a knife<sup>24</sup> but with a sharp stone, giving the blood to the fetish priest in the hut who sprinkles some of the blood in the hut and smears some on the forehead and chest of the one who brings it. Their beast is left lying in the sun with the skin, hair and all the muck till the following day. It becomes so swollen with the sun's warmth that it is an easy task to skin it without a knife. The third day, it begins to smell which the blacks relish. In this way they usually treat all their meat and fish. They accuse us of eating our beasts and fish almost alive and that too much of such unrotten food kills us.

A prominent black celebrates this festival for one day and leaves the second and third days to younger people of lower status. But if something very good has happened to them the previous year, they usually celebrate it on all the three days with such frightful clamour. One has never heard fighting between them, although one should expect such incidents when they have drunk too much. They lie down quietly and sleep off their drunkenness till they wake up and start afresh. The third or last day, the festival is concluded with a ceremony which I have often seen but could not understand what it meant until Putti gave me an explanation of it.

Four blacks, two at each end, carry a long piece of wood or bar on which rides a black who makes funny gestures. He climbs on it at caboceer Putti's house and is carried over the whole square and through the whole town. All the little boys and girls follow him screaming enough to pierce one's ears. One is therefore obliged



to stand out of the way in order not to be drawn into the crowd. It is a ceremony performed in Putti's honour. Once in the time of his forefathers, his town (Labadi) was suddenly attacked by enemies and all the people big and small were captured with the exception of Putti's forefather. They did not dare lay hands on him because he was the highest priest. He was so rich that he redeemed all his people and had gold weighed for each and everyone. The one who rides on the bar makes gestures as if he has a balance in one hand and is weighing with the other. He acts as if he is taking the one redeemed and is pulling him towards him. The young people running before him and at his sides shout "buy me first! buy me first!" And with this ceremony,<sup>25</sup> this great festival comes to an end.

Whenever a black wants to consult the oracle he goes to the fetish priest or priestess. This he does, when either his relative, friend, child, wife are sick or he intends to undertake something important. Our Ursue (Osu black town under Christiansborg Castle) has only two worn-out old women who serve Tie-Tie and ask if they could get the fetish to speak. To this she replies "yes" or "no". The sick, however, first tries if herbs or other things known to be effective in such sickness could help.<sup>26</sup> The following day when asked, the suppliant brings his offering which consists mainly of a bottle of brandy and one or half of rixdallers<sup>27</sup> in goods or bossies.<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that the fetish hut is always round and in it lie or hang a thousand types of knick-knacks. In one corner stands a

meantime, he dares to accuse the fetish that he has offered so many sacrifices in his honour and yet has been overtaken by illness despite the fetish's promise.

There are kings up in the country who, when asked to offer a chicken or something else as on the coast, have one or more of their slaves beheaded in a barbaric manner. Often one sees of the fetish panyarred (which in the Danish language means devil-possessed women), that they (the possessed) get it with convulsions and make such motions with their bodies which appear very unnatural. Their eyes stay wide open; they foam at the mouth, and gasp for breath. They usually get these attacks suddenly and unconsciously. (The possessed is unaware of the state she is in.) A woman sometimes carries a pot of water or something else, talking to someone walking by her side, then suddenly she becomes possessed. I have seen someone make all these contortions and still keep the pot on her head. She lay on her back, turned the body quickly three or four times and still balanced the pot which was full of water, without spilling a drop, even though the pot was round at the bottom. (Let our European jugglers imitate them.) Sometimes I have seen the pot break, when the patient works for a long time, before the fetish, as the blacks say, is able to get the power to talk through her mouth. When the first excitement is over, the woman usually lies on her back and makes such motions and contortions which modesty forbids me to describe. When this is over, she begins to talk. I have forgotten to mention that the blacks, when they can, usually form a circle

clay pot with red clay in which is put the feather of a cock's tail. In the wall are pegs which are bound with a piece of string of raffia. In between is perhaps a red feather of a parrot's tail and human or animal hair. Indeed, one cannot count the curious objects or creatures' bones and other things they have there. Under the tip of the roof, hangs a bell like the type our farmers hang round the necks of their cows and sheep when they go into the woods. Around the bell is bound a string or raffia which reaches almost to the ground. Let us not forget the most important item in the fetish hut which is the fetish stool on which he can sit and his mat on which he can rest. The mat is not bigger than a man's hand and the stool is proportional, that is, to the mat in size. There is also a little bottle of brandy which always stands ready for him.

When the supplicant comes, he delivers his offering to the fetish priest/priestess who puts it outside the door. She crawls on her hands and feet into the hut so that the string of raffia lies on her neck or back. She orders the supplicant to enter the hut, locks the door, sits on the ground and bows his head between the knees covering his face with his hands. The priestess then makes motions or invokes the fetish. When the fetish arrives, the bell is rung. The priestess is or appears to be possessed. She stretches out her arms and legs and begins to foam at the mouth breathing in short gasps with chest lifted high. The supplicant knows that this is the moment to ask what he wants, for example "will my friend or brother recover from his illness?", "what should I give you to remove this sickness

from him?", "why will you kill my brother?", "what has he done against you?", etc. To these, the possessed fetish priestess replies with a fine piercing voice (just like a piping chicken) in that ancient language. In most cases, the suppliant gets good comfort on condition that he should kill a white cock\* or chicken and lay it at a crossroad, or drive ten to twelve wooden pegs into the ground. By so doing, he is supposed to drive his friend's sickness from his body into the ground. There are over a thousand types of such offerings. In my conversation with the blacks, I have often asked 'why don't you lift up your head a little in the air and open your eyes when you sit in the hut to see who rings the bell? Could it not be the priestess who pulls the string?' Most of them have answered "The first five or six times when we had errands at the fetish house, we were curious to know who or what was up by the bell and have seen something which looks like a bird resembling an owl<sup>29</sup> - or a type of small black monkey with a white beard". Some have told me that, as often as they have been there, they have peeped through the fingers to see which of these two creatures would appear.

A rich black usually consults the oracle on the state of his health even when he is well and healthy. He gets an answer that his health is good and is likely to continue. If he is ordered to offer a chicken or an egg, he goes and slaughters a sheep or goat. The fetish does not get the meat which he eats with his friends but a little of the entrails is taken to him. If he becomes sick, in the

around the woman and do not allow any European to come inside the circle for fear that he might scoff at both the fetish and her. She usually begins at least as often as I have seen with the words "Haminse e ba" (Ha minse aba) and repeats these words a dozen times, to which those standing by answered "e ba" and clap softly. The words mean "Let good come" to which is replied "Let it come". After this she begins to foretell.

At Fredensborg<sup>30</sup> I have often heard that the fetish's errand has been nothing but these words "Be obedient to your whites. Do what the whites tell you". One can well imagine how welcome such an oracle is for us Europeans who have problems from these malicious and stupid blacks all the time especially at this place. Consequently, I myself have often given a bottle of brandy to such a soothsayer and wished that she should be possessed everyday since she has great influence with the blacks.

Some women continue for days with their madness running from one town to another. When we meet such a woman, the blacks usually carry us a little off the road to let her have the road to herself. If a European is walking, he is asked to leave the road to avoid the fetish woman being angry with him. It is better to be bitten by a mad dog in Europe than have such a woman release her madness on us with her curses. The blacks are so convinced of the efficacy of such curses that they consider the one who is cursed by a possessed fetish woman as ill-fated person. Generally, those who get these distortions are held in high esteem.

In all the houses of the blacks we find signs of the fetish in varying degrees. In most houses, one sees one or more poles which stand on a wall two feet above the ground and are painted red and white. Hair or feathers bound with raffia and usually stained with blood are tied to the top.

Once, I entered an old black's curio shop in which were over twenty thousand of such tomfoolery. (I don't know what else to call it). This black was our caboceer Noyte in Tessing (Teshie), two miles from Christiansborg. I was travelling from Fredensborg to Christiansborg when I stopped over at Tessing (Teshie) at four thirty after a terrible night, for we have had two storms in one night. I went there to change my clothes and ask the caboceer to have breakfast made for me. I came down to his house and asked for the caboceer, but his people told me that he was still in bed. I waited for a while and asked again but got the same answer. I could not imagine why, because I had often come in the middle of the night and Noyte had immediately come to bid me welcome. Meanwhile, I became impatient and in order not to freeze I took a walk in his extensive yard which is surrounded by houses of his family. I saw an open door which I had often seen locked. I became curious, looked inside and met to my greatest astonishment, my old friend Noyte of Tessing (Teshie) sitting among many thousands of curios among which was elephant's, bull's, sheep's heads and many more. He did not see me until I had cast my shadow in the room by pushing my head and half my body through the narrow door. He stood up and told me to go back.

I refused but promised not to move nearer if he would tell me the meaning of all that. He swore by his father (which is a great oath with the blacks) that he did not know in the least how beneficial it had been, but that all together (probably with the exception of a few hundred pieces) were collected by his forefathers. Each piece had, with God's and the Fetish's aid helped his forefathers in one thing or the other. Of this discourse I am no wiser than before. I asked what he had done with all these in the last war, since their whole town had been burnt by the Asante the previous year. He replied that he had buried them before he and his people left the town and fled to our fort in Accra. In his lifetime, these sacred objects had been hidden ten times in the earth and, strangely enough, once in fifteen years. I saw near me an ordinary stone which was as big as a hen's egg. I took the stone in my hand and said "Tell me caboceer, what do you do with this? Surely you can easily collect many of these within a short time?" Noyte was noticeably disturbed by my impudence but he replied "Did you not see how hard the Asantes were against me when they defeated the Akims<sup>31</sup> and came to us from my neighbours? If I had not had the friendship of the Danes who protected me and pleaded on my behalf how would I have fared? I anticipated this predicament when I heard that my friend Ursue Owusu<sup>32</sup> (One of the Akim Kings) had been killed and his people had fled. I buried these and more in the night to seek refuge in the fort. The first step I took over my doorstep I stepped on this

stone and it was painful. I thought haha! there you are: I took the stone and kept it till I returned to my town and my house was rebuilt. You yourself saw that I had to speak for three consecutive days before I had my case fairly well settled. Did you not see this stone in my hand? Did you not see how it helped me to get off whenever I lacked words to reply to the charges of my adversaries? Would you not admit that God and the fetish sent me help and should I not be grateful?" I then remembered that at the time that he was defending himself, he had something in his hand which he squeezed hard. His case was of great importance. The Asantes demanded that we should deliver him and his whole family since he was an Akim king's slave. I understood him for the first time, for, after that, I noticed that whenever a black had an important case to be decided, he always had something in his hand which he squeezed first in one hand, then in the other and indeed with both hands. It was a way of having morning prayers when he sat for an hour and rumaged in this junk.

The Fante fetish<sup>33</sup> is, as has been previously stated, the strongest. Two miles from the coast above Anomabo, some mountains of indifferent height grown with thick bushes and tall trees formed a semi-circle. Between these mountains, the ground is quite level. I am writing about a place I have never seen but have heard from the description of many people.

The mountains are considered so sacred that even the priest would not dare go very near them but had to keep some distance. This fetish comes three times a year. He is however consulted when



necessary and he answers through the mouth of one priest and priestess, generally in the same way as other fetishes in other places. This fetish is not as distinctive as the Labadi's but very blood-thirsty. He has to be offered a human being at each moon and a couple of bulls after he had received the human beings. This happens in the following manner. When he himself is coming to the place, one of the three times of the year, he does so with an earth tremor, and all the tall trees bow to greet him. He comes like a whirlwind and all the blacks who have formed a semi-circle joined to the mountains (which then becomes a full circle) fall on their faces just as in Labadi. When the fetish makes a speech, it is to be noticed that he speaks like someone who is shaking, trembling, stuttering, has hiccups and is hoarse. I don't know what the blacks say about his voice. What I write is mainly from the account of Bassi, Corrantin's son, who, as I have said before, has been in France for some years. A few others and I have enjoyed hearing Bassi imitate the fetish's voice and giving us a speech in the same language that fetish uses. He has been to the fetish place only once. This was at the time that he returned from France, and his father forced him to go with him to see what he Corrantin had to offer the fetish in gratitude for Bassi's safe return from France. Bassi who was angry with his father said to me that his thievish father had only made the offering out of the happy anticipation for the beautiful goods which he had already intended to steal from the poor French.

We now come to Bassi's description of how the fetish receives his offering. The person or beast to be sacrificed is brought forward by about fifty priests and priestesses who sing in a melancholy voice just as it is done in Labadi. The blacks who sit ten and sometimes twenty men thick, open their circle on the side between them and the mountain. The offering is dragged three times in the circle and all the blacks sing the same song. Finally, they stand up and the priests and priestesses form a smaller circle round the offering not far from the bush from where comes a whirlwind which throws the offering up in the air and is not seen but is heard screaming and howling. Bassi and others have assured me that, as soon as the offering leaves the ground, it twists and turns just as a sea pump (trompe de mer) pulls water up from the sea. This spinning starts slowly but increases in tempo as the offering goes higher in the air.

The blacks do not feel this wind but keep very quiet. Just as the insignia of the Labadi fetish are old drums so is fire the sign of the Fante fetish. It burns day and night year in year out, and is kept at a special place where the priests sing ancient songs and dance every morning and evening. They have players for drummers since nobody can dance in that country without drums. The drums are, however, not regarded as sacred objects.

The following parable was given by the Fante Fetish in one of his usual orations.

A drummer lived at a place where there were many delicious fruit trees. Whenever the drummer wanted some of the fruits to eat he played sweet music under the tree and a snake which lived in the tree threw down for him, some of the fruits of his choice. He lived happily for many years and grew thick and fat. One day, he became ill and could not, as he usually did, make music for the snake. He could hardly walk from his house to the trees. He asked the snake for a couple of fruits (which look like plums but are quite fleshy and healthy). The snake would not show any kindness to our drummer although the sick man promised to pay for it after he had recovered. The sick drummer had to make do with some unripe fruits which were at the lowest branch of the tree, and recovered. He decided quite rightly to wreak vengeance on the heartless snake. He took his drum and went under the tree. He called the snake to stretch its head so as to hear the music better. The snake was happy that its drummer had recovered and did what it was told, but instead of a drum stick, the drummer had two kap-messere with which he quickly cut off the head of the snake. With this story, the fetish wanted to warn his audience not to be mean with their offerings if they did not want to share the fate of the snake.

According to Bassi, the first words of this same Fante fetish when he comes to the bush are "I greet you all". In Bassi's translation "Je salue vous autres.

He speaks these words clearly and then begins to tremble and shake. At some other time, the Fante fetish said "If you don't love good and do it and if you don't hate evil and avoid it, I myself shall aid your enemies to murder you all, and all your relations around you. It is only for the sake of the virtue of your forefathers that you have been spared up till now." So much for Bassi and others' account of the Fante fetish.

A competent artist and engraver could make his fortune if he could travel to the country and give us engravings of a fetish-possessed woman; the inside of a fetish hut; half a hundred types of fetish; a Labadi gathering when the fetish has been there the night before; some dancing blacks, some blacks going to battle; a battle between two groups of blacks; a portrait of Putti and many more.

Generally, this fetish is awfully blood-thrifty. Not only slaves but the most prominent people among the Fantes are killed by his orders. The Fantes once had five Brafos<sup>34</sup> (Generals who hold the highest command over the whole nation) in three years. These Brafos were chosen from a particular lineage which has kept that honour for many years. This family has become so poor in menfolk that in the past years no brafo could be chosen since there were a few boys left. The fetish often ordered that the assembled blacks should immediately behead this or that prominent black and the lot often fell on the Brafo. The fetish does not take it as an offering but is content with his blood. The body can be buried by his friends.

Generally, the negroes reckon their time in good and evil<sup>35</sup> days. I have never been good at this reckoning and our blacks on the coast did not know it either, before a scholar (ironically speaking) from Akim or Asante 200 - 300 miles up in the country came to correct them.

I shall, to the best of my knowledge, put down here the blacks' time reckoning and leave it to sensible people on the coast to correct it. If the book is reprinted it can be added to it. I never thought when I was on the coast that, once in Europe, I would write a book on this or that material, otherwise I would have made some written notes over there. The negroes have twenty-one big good days (Grande bonos Dies) which begin from a new moon and last for twenty-one days. Thereafter come fifteen bad days (Male Dies). This is followed by thirteen small good days (Pikane bonos Dies) and nine particularly bad days. Then their twenty-one big good days start again which finally begins with a new moon. But this by no means agrees with the course of the moon. I will however leave it to a sensible man on the coast to allow himself to be taught by an Akim learned fetish priest.

Every black has his birthday in the week which is considered sacred. They decorate themselves more than usual, paint their faces and bodies with white earth and put on a more beautiful scarf than usual. When a distinguished black woman in Accra decorates herself, she does not only wear a beautiful scarf together with

small gold plates and many black corals but pays particular attention to her head dress. On some parts on their head they let grow their hair or wool. Usually it is a finger long and stand out in one, two, three or four places like a cylinder or one or more square pyramids. Others let it grow like a cock's comb. Indeed they have uncountable varieties. They use a wooden roller to powder these pyramids till they shine out black from their skin. It is necessary among black women to consult each other seriously on how a distinguished black woman should dress up on her birthday which falls each week. She kills a hen or chicken, puts the heart on a wooden stick on her forehead just like our women do with an Italian flower. A black woman decorated in this manner is considered to be as fashionably dressed as our women who visit a barber and a couple of hairdressers. A fashionably dressed black woman should have eight to ten pieces of two rixdallers hanging on a silver belt at each side of the hips and these should rattle when she walks. In the same manner, she should have silver on her feet and many keys at the sides even though she probably has only one chest which has a lock to it.

When a noble woman is pregnant, she should, according to custom, walk through all the streets in town completely naked without wearing a scarf, corals or fetish, accompanied by a great following. This is done shortly before her confinement.<sup>36</sup>

Each trade has its sacred days; for example the fishermen have Tuesday.<sup>37</sup> Since the negroes see the Europeans decorate themselves

on Sunday than any other day, they think that all children in Europe are born on Sunday and say after their fashion when a European greets them "Thank you, Sunday child (Jo Aussi)".<sup>38</sup>

Each town has an animal or fish which they do not eat. For example, the inhabitants of Osu under our fort Christiansborg do not eat elephant meat. However, necessity breaks all laws. A hunter once killed a young elephant but did not dare bring the meat to the town where there was famine and great hardship. The hunter came and informed the Caboceer and the big men together with the fetish women said that they should first ask permission from the fetish, but the others were unanimous that in these hard times, they should fight or appear to fight with the hunter and his people who carried the meat before they entered the town. This happened and our garrison together with the blacks of the town feasted on it for two days.

In the whole of Accra, all boys are circumcized. Whilst among the Jews, it happens on the eight day after birth, here, the children are sometimes eight years<sup>39</sup> before they are circumcized. Nobody is considered a man before he is circumcized, with the exception of those who become fishermen.<sup>40</sup> When one asks who taught them the custom, they reply that their forefathers had kept it without giving any further answer.

They have a special way of swearing an oath which we Danes call "eating fetish". A black who has cheated or stolen from us can be forced according to the laws of the country, "to eat fetish" to

prove his guilt or innocence. We spend two rixdollars on our megler Adoui's fetish which is accompanied into the fort by a whole swarm of old blacks so that it costs us an additional two rixdollars gifts of brandy. This fetish is carried on a mat covered with an old piece of cloth. It consists of a stuffed snake skin without the head and tail but instead there is the hair of an elephant tail, a cow or wolf's tail mixed with cock's feathers so that it looks horrible. It is however in the nature of a necklace with a string at both ends so that the one who puts it on can tie it at the back of the neck. It is put at the feet of the European who is accusing the black. After the question has been explained to all present, the old cloth is taken from this sausage-like fetish and a dough as big as a pea is put on it. The accused steps forward, kneels down, holding the had behind the back and says this oath: "If I have done this or if I have stolen that let the fetish kill me". He then takes the dough from the snake skin with his mouth, holds it on the tongue and lets it be seen by opening the mouth that it is really there and swallows it. By this act, he frees himself from the indictment.

The negroes have many different methods which they use instead of the oath. For example they put oil in a pot over fire till it boils. They then throw cowries into it and the accused is supposed to take them out with his hand. If he is not innocent it will burn him, but if innocent it will not burn him. Sometimes a big needle



is passed through the tongue, a glowing knife is brushed over the arm and many such disturbances.

It can be observed that in some cases the blacks swear an oath even when they are guilty. I expressed my views to Putti who said that one can buy himself free from small fetishes such as Adom's but if one spent four rexdollars on the Labadi fetish, he will guarantee its effectiveness.

Putti then told me something which he swears that no black knew. This is that the Labadi fetish on which they swear an oath is of gold and made like a human head but a little bigger, and was from time immemorial found in the earth when Gienwong showed where it lay. He said further that when there is danger and the blacks have to leave their town, the fetish possesses two of his priests and two of his priestesses who hide this gold mugget together with the most sacred drum in the night so that they themselves do not know its hiding place. When the danger is over and the negroes return to their town, the fetish possesses four people, sometimes other than those who hid them and these sacred objects are returned to their place.

The Labadi blacks had once been driven out of their country and town and those that had put away these curios were dead. It did not last longer than a month when the fetish possessed a couple of priests who fetched it again. Since the fetish is of gold, nobody in Labadi town should endeavour to carry or possess gold, brass, copper, etc.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly after this conversation, I had the opportunity to visit this fetish and I thought that it could be seen as it was but I was deceived. They have so plastered it with red earth that there was nothing of gold to be seen. It was about the shape of a head. The fetish is laid in a big wooden bowl which contains water in which part of this mugget is submerged.

The part for the one who should eat fetish is not dough but a little red earth. An Osu black told me not to put any Labadi blacks before this fetish because they can buy themselves free. In this manner it is difficult to be assured of the truth of these bad people.

I have to cite an example of this. An Akwamu negro who wanted to buy some goods was brought to me by my black servants. I opened the door and the Akwamu spent over half an hour among my goods without saying what type he wanted or what he had for payment. Finally, he told me (which my blacks translated) i had fine goods but it was a pity that he had nothing for payment. I reprimanded my servants for bringing a fool to me. My servant sent the Akwamu outside. He asked to be brought in again and said that he had a young wife from Crepe (a country) but her father had made him eat a very strong fetish that he would not sell her so he was afraid he would die if he disobeyed. My servant knew at once what he wanted and asked him, "nothing else? I will take a couple of friends with me and we shall beat you in such a way that the fetish will be satisfied". With that, the Akwamu was content but asked only that they should not be angry in case

he had to defend himself as much as he could. This was promised him.

This rogue returned after an hour with his wife to help him choose the goods not knowing that they were in exchange for herself. Our Akwamu friend left the goods and went out. Some people who stood by, seized his wife and put her as is usual in irons. One cannot say what a fuss he made fighting those who took his wife. But there were four others ready. He fought a stiff half hour with them. The four threw him on the ground and hit him with their fists. Finally, he warned them that it was enough and they allowed him to get off. He went away, cleaned the blood and dust on him, put on another scarf and came back to fetch his goods. I heard my servants fighting with him so I wanted to know what the matter was. One could almost translate their conversation thus: "You dissembler, you made too much fuss over this nonsense. Didn't you know that a Crepe fetish is easy to pacify? A couple of slaps in the face would have been enough. Give us a bottle of brandy for our trouble". The head and body of the Akwamu man was swollen so that he could hardly see with his eyes. But mine (servants) plagued him that he should give them a bottle out of his anker of brandy, and the matter was closed. He had since not thought of his wife or her father's fetish.

If I should give my opinion on the fetish, I should confess that I believe satan is mighty among the heathen. I have never seen or heard Giemwong or any of their fetishes. I have only had contempt for those of our nation who buy the fetish priests' curios and carry it on their body under their cloths where they are accidentally

seen by their room mates. Such fools have we had among us. People who go there young have been asked by their black women (mistresses) to put on such things as would be good for this or that.

But I have experienced incidents which I still cannot understand. These make it true that satan can seize control over a black's mouth or tongue. I cannot remember what year this incident occurred. It is now ten years since I left the coast, but I am sure if enquiries are made, there are still some of our nationals living who can confirm this and more to be true.

We had an important case to settle between two of our most prominent blacks in Christiansborg. They had been in the fort with their case but it was so obscure and the witnesses were so bad that we had to recommend to the parties to consult their witnesses on both sides in the town in their own homes. After that, they should inform us so that we could give judgement. Since it is the custom among them that when there is a foreign cabocerr, he should be invited to be one of the judges, Aborre, a caboceer from Acron<sup>42</sup> who was with us, was invited to be one of the judges. At that time, (as sometimes before then) he had with him one of his wives who was sometimes possessed by the fetish. Our soldiers who were not on duty, normally go to such places to hear these cases, because there is always something to drink. From these and many blacks I heard this shortly after it had happened. There was a tumult and I was afraid our blacks had each other by the throat. Aborre's wife, the soothsayer, began to act as if she was crazy, ran around

with her hands on her head and shouted "Aborre, there is one of your people lying shot dead. [she jumped around and made a sound just as if she was imitating a shot flint] There lies the third."

This happened at four o'clock in the afternoon, and it became immediately known not only to me but to all the Danes.

Our blacks adjourned their case and Aborre came into the fort to complain to me that an accident had occurred in his town and that he had sent one of his people to see whether it was over. I consoled him by saying that it was not true but he assured me that his sooth-sayer wife had never lied. I had to give him a bottle of brandy to assuage his fright and he went away. I asked that he should let me know as soon as his messenger returned. It was only four and a half miles from us. Early in the morning, he got to know that all was true. However, it did not happen in his town but in another, a mile above his, where a few of his people went to fetch a bride and in drunkenness, came into a fight with others. Aborre's people were shot dead at the same time that the woman made these gestures in our market.

Yet another example. An Akim king called Pobi and the Akwamu king Oppoccu Chuma (Opoku Kuma) lay in arms against each other about twenty miles up in the country. This resulted in our getting neither blacks nor provisions right from Accra to the river Volta. All the Europeans wanted them to fight so that our way would be open again, for, both armies had stood for three months without attacking each other. One forenoon, Putti sent a message to me that, that morning

a battle had taken place and the Akwamus had lost. I sent for Putti to come to me at once to explain in which manner and with what words his fetish had brought out the news. He said that the fetish had barked in his hut like a dog and one of his priests who lived nearby had let him know. He (Putti) had immediately gone into the hut and had let the priest as usual crawl into the hut. The possessed priest had said these words: "Two Akwamu elephants have swam in the river; they thought they could get away but both their heads have fallen from them." We got to know two days later that the battle took place the same morning as the Labadi fetish had said and that Opoccu Chuma (Opoku Kuma) and Adjang the most distinguished in Akwamu, had taken to flight. In their attempt to swim across the river they had been both shot to death. The Akims got them ashore and cut off their heads. I could cite more incidents but they are not as well known as these to our whole garrison.

It is reasonable to mention some of the Labadi fetish's forecasts which are not as accurate as the above-mentioned. I have also heard some of his replies which are so obscure that Putti himself could not interpret or explain them but like all others had to wait till after the event had occurred. Putti (according to him and as can be approximately reckoned) is over 80 years old and has spent his whole life time on this study (if one could call it such). Our blacks at Accra i.e. Osu, Labadi and Teshing (Teshie) blacks had war with the Dutch blacks in 1739. The Dutch caboceer Dacon (Darko) was the Commander of the enemy forces and Okanie was General of our

army. After a few skirmishes of no great imports in the first half of the year, the situation became serious. The fetish in Labadi had Dacon told that he was in the wrong and that he should end the war by coming to terms and giving his opponents satisfaction, but he refused. Glemwong, through his messenger, informed the blacks assembled that Dacon would die within three months or in these words: "Dacon would not eat any of the new corn which then stood in the fields." One can well imagine what joy this caused among our blacks and fright among the enemy. Furthermore, the fetish in the enemy's own town and in Osu confirmed the Labadi fetish's judgement. Dacon was reckoned as a man already dead and no one would have anything to do with him. Our blacks, with a few people, put a whole section of the enemy to flight. The Dutch had to make peace on our terms because of these and other circumstances. But Dacon, against all conjecture lived three years thereafter and died not even naturally as the forecast had indicated, but rather during his assistance to the Akims against the Asantes. With the defeat of the Akims, he sought refuge with another nation but they chopped off his head and those of all his people. These blacks came later and wanted to sell his head to our negroes but we Europeans would not allow it. However, we got to know that Okanie bought two of Dacon's uppermost front teeth for eight rix-dollars, had a hole bored through them, and carried them on his body and round his neck together with others of the same type on his sacred day.

I had often pointed this out to Putti. His reply on this had always been "Master, how can I know what good God found in Dacon after he had put a curse on him? Maybe Dacon begged him not to allow this to happen and God spared him for sometime. But within three years after the judgement had been given, you know very well that he began new acts of roguery against us. God therefore put in his heart the bad decision to go with fifty men to help the Akims. Could this help the Akims who had two hundred thousand men in the army? And see if he did not get worse death than had been foretold."

I once offended our megler Adjoui. He had not been well for some days and he visited me in the fort, complained to me and asked for a bottle of brandy. Whilst my servant was away to fetch something, I asked him who should be his successor in office after his death. Greatly agitated, he stood up and replied, "God has sent me into the world with many years on my head. Do you think I am just like a white-man who comes and goes? But since you want to know, do you not know my brother Atte?" He did not wait for his brandy but left.

The blacks show the sun some kind of honour when it comes over the horizon in the morning and they make funny motions for the new moon. They talk to it and shake their body just as if they would throw away their arms and feet from their body. Finally, they take a piece of firewood and throw it just as if they would throw it to the moon. With this the ceremony is completed.



They have many different opinions on their conditions after death. Putti says that the virtuous, especially those who die in their beds (mats), and get a decent burial are considered worthy of God to take them to himself. But he also makes a strange remark which is incomprehensible. This is to the effect that the body, when it is separated from the world, is the greatest hindrance to the soul in the other world for (so he says) that is also separated. Putti becomes totally incomprehensible when he comes with his revelation and dreams to explain it. I have heard an old black sigh and wish that, he, after his death, should become a rich European and when he was asked the reason, he replied "I would rather be a poor black than a poor white. For, a poor white should have the same superfluous things i.e. shoes, socks, clothing as the rich and therefore may sometimes have to starve". It should be noted that this black believes in transmigration (of the soul) so he thinks his soul could fly to Europe and be born by a European. There are those who believe that their souls enter into animals, birds and fish.

One of our bricklayers, a black company slave called Quacu, (Kwaku) stood working at 12 o'clock midday although they have a break from 11 o'clock to 2.00. A European passing by asked him "Quacu, why are you still working, it is 12 o'clock." He replied (quite angrily): "Our master is so bad to me today. He says that I haven't worked hard enough so I should have this piece (of work) finished before I stopped but I know what I shall do".

Question: "What will you do?"

Answer: "When I die I shall ask God not to send me into the world as a whiteman's slave and if my prayers don't help, I will fight him.

Question: "What will you then be when you come into the world again?"

Answer: "Frempung's slave (Frempung was a great Akan King).

Question: "Why not ask to be Frempung himself?"

Answer: "No, that is not possible for I know that as often as I come back, I shall be a slave".

When I asked Putti (Kpoti) why his countrymen have such varied opinions, he answered "Sir, (Seignore) I have never been dead and come back to life so I cannot dispute with such certainty about the other life as your holy man did at the time he was here". This holy man whose name I cannot remember in the language of the blacks is the Priest Elias Svane here in Zealand. He was priest at Christiansborg for four or five years and was repatriated in 1726. I have never met him but I can adequately describe what veneration the blacks still have for him. Many years after he had left the coast, our seamen had used his greetings to this or that black or any one to get a couple of hens.

I think it was necessary in this way to describe the religion of the blacks as far as it can be done and is known to me. For it is known that people's ceremonies and customs flow from their morals. The reader should be prepared to see in their history of hundred years ago in their wars and quarrels, such inhumanity which is unbelievable, and from it know their nature, manners, customs and more.

FOOTNOTES

1. A high priests, Wulomo, is the religious official in charge of a shrine. In contrast to an ordinary priest, wonuu, he does not become possessed by the spirit of the god which he serves.
2. Cabuceer or Caboceer is a Portuguese term Cabeceira from cabeça, head, is used loosely on the Gold Coast to describe a person holding a political office. Apart from a king the title was used to describe a village head man as well as the head of a larger political unit.
3. He is known in oral tradition of Labadi as Odoi Kpoti. He is remembered as the last person to combine the priestly authority with political power. This confirms the tradition that priests were the original rulers among the Ga.
4. The Oracle is called Lakpa.
5. Sissa is the Ga name for ghost. The name for devil is abonsam.
6. Anaanu is the Ga name for spider. The tales are known as Adesa. They are not necessarily always about Anaanu.
7. This refers to Naa Korle of the Korle Lagoon in central Accra. According to tradition, Lakpa has two wives. Naa Korle and Kpeeshi of the Kpeeshi Lagoon in Labadi.
8. From the 17th to the 18th century Accra was divided into three by the Europeans.
  - (a) Dutch Accra present day: Ussher Town occupied by Asere, Gbese, Otublohum and Abola.
  - (b) English Accra: Jamestown - occupied by Sempe, Akumaje and Alata.
  - (c) Danish Accra: Osu.
9. This refers to Klote of the Klote Lagoon in Osu.

10. Tie Tie - is the name given by the Europeans to a herald or messenger of the kings and other rulers of the Gold Coast during this period. The name is derived from the Akan word - Tie - listen.
11. Glemawon - Dzemawon is the Ga name for a god. Each Dzemawon has its own name. Römer has either misunderstood the term Dzemawon or has forgotten the name of that particular Dzemawon. He is here referring to Lakpa which is the principal deity of the Labadi people. All other Dzemawodzi in Labadi are under him.
12. Rulers and gods among the Ga have honorific titles appellations or praise names with which they are greeted when they make a public appearance. Personal Ga names also have appellations, eg. Odoi's appellation is Atoklo.
13. Bribi - Akan word which also means something.
14. Ogya is Akan word for fire.
15. Danish mile about five English miles.
16. The Ga year is different from the European year. They mark the end of the year with the celebration of a festival known as Homowo usually in August during a time of plenty. The gods are ritually cleansed and publicly worshipped. It is a time of family reunion. Disputes are settled and the New Year ushered in with love and merry making. This festival is still celebrated among the Ga.
17. The day of the celebration is calculated by a special priest in such a way that each Ga town knows the exact interval between its celebration and those of other towns.
18. People now use schnapps and gin, both local and imported, for rituals associated with the gods. It is not known when the shift from brandy occurred.

19. There are still stages of the celebration during which an archaic or incomprehensible language is used.
20. This part of the celebration is not practised today.
21. Most of the songs sang on Wednesday are in comprehensible Ga and are called Kpa songs. They are songs composed to commemorate historical occasions. Others are proverbial, praise and philosophical songs. The songs have a special rhythm which goes with the Kpa dance especially danced during this period.
22. The language used here is not modern Ga. I cannot translate it.
23. These drums are still used today. They are played on the Wednesday (Kpa sho) of the celebration. The biggest is called Lakpa, the name of the principal god, the rest are Osabu and Klolo which are names of Labadi gods.
24. These days the throat of the animal is marked with a stone before a knife is used.
25. This ceremony is still performed exactly as Rømer described it. It is called Agbugbunte. The song sang by the children and adults who follow the man being carried is:

Agbugbunte Esi boyo  
Esi boyo na boyo  
Agbugbunte Esi boyo.

Nobody could tell me the meaning of the words or the origin of the ceremony.

26. The impression is given here that the blacks believe that disease can have either physical or spiritual causes, hence the use of both herbs and offerings to the gods.
27. Danish currency. 32 Rixdallers = 1oz gold.
28. Boesies - Cowries.
29. In Ga, the owl is called Aye looflo - witchcraft bird which shows its spiritual significance.

30. Danish fort at Nungo.
31. The Asantes defeated Akyem in 1942. The Ga were then under Akyem suzerainty. There was therefore very close ties between the Akyem and some of the rulers of the Ga towns. It appears Noyte was one of such Ga rulers.
32. Owusu was the nephew of Bankwate, chief of Akyem Abuakwa. He was the one who gave permission to the Danes to build a fort at Ningo.
33. This appears to be a description of Nananom mpow, the National Fante grove at the outskirts of Mankessim. It was destroyed by the British in the second half of the century.
34. Among the Akan brafo is used generally to describe the executioner.
35. Important transactions were never made during the evil days.
36. This custom is still practised in Labadi when the wife of the Lakpa Wulomo is expecting her first child. She is carried and paraded through the streets of Labadi.
37. Ga fishermen still maintain Tuesday as their sacred day. No fishing is done on Tuesday.
38. Awushi is the Ga appellation for a Sunday born. This appears to be the origin of the term "Kwesi Broni" used in modern times to describe the whiteman.
39. Circumcission is done by the Ga on the eighth day after birth. No Ga child is left uncircumcised.
40. The only explanation I can give is that most of the fishermen along the Ga coast at that time were of Fante origin. Sea fishing as is done by the Ga of today is supposed to have been introduced from Fante.

41. Labadi people of today carry and own gold. However, the wearing of gold jewellery is not allowed at the Lakpa We (Lakpa's home) and on the annual Kpa Wednesday (Kpa sho).
42. Acron was one of the Fante towns.
43. Darko was from Otublohum quarter and Okanie (Okaija) from Gbese.