

# AKAN STUDIES COUNCIL

## NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 3

Fall 1990

### CO-CHAIRS' STATEMENT

by  
Raymond A. Silverman  
and Judith Timyan

First, we would like to apologize for the delay in distributing the *Newsletter*. We hope that the next issue will appear, as scheduled, in April or May.

The Akan Studies Council is thriving. A number of members have provided the names of colleagues for addition to our mailing list. At the moment we are sending the *Newsletter* to 152 individuals (and institutions) in 14 countries; 59 of these recipients have not yet returned a completed questionnaire—we urge them to do so as soon as possible. We have established a policy that if we do not receive an update at least once every two years the individual's name will be removed from our mailing list.

If you are based at an institution that you feel should be receiving the ASC *Newsletter* please ask your librarian to write to us. There is a modest \$10 annual institutional subscription fee.

Our treasury continues to grow, *slowly*. We currently have a balance of \$175. This year only 16 members remitted dues. We ask that *all* members who have access to US funds please send us a check for \$5.00 for annual dues.

During the summer letters were sent to most of the major academic presses inviting them to submit copies of their Akan-related publications for review/summary in the "Recently Published Books" column.

Gareth Austin took the initiative this Fall to convene a regional meeting of the Akan Studies Council in the UK. A summary of the meeting is presented below. We would like to encourage members in other countries to organize similar meetings. If any of you are planning a regional meeting please prepare a brief announcement for inclusion in the *Newsletter*.

There will be a meeting of the North American chapter of the ASC at the next US African Studies Association Meeting to be held in Baltimore in early November. Specific information about the meeting may be found in the "Announcements" column. The minutes will be reproduced in the Spring issue of the *Newsletter*.

We are pleased to announce that the ASC is sponsoring a panel at the ASA Meeting. "New Research on the Greater Akan Region: Political Economy and Transformation," is being chaired by David Groff (Linfield College) and Ray Dumett (Purdue University). See the "Announcements" column for more details. Thanks to the efforts of David and Ray and to the generosity of the ASA's International Visitors Program, Henriette Diabaté, a historian from the Université d'Abidjan, will be traveling to Baltimore to participate on the panel. We

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#### ASC Newsletter

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Michigan State University  
distribution: Peter Shinnie

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hope that this serves as a model for future meetings. If any of you would like to organize an ASC-sponsored panel at the next ASA Meeting or any professional meeting please let us know--we will be happy to assist.

Our biggest challenge continues to be diffidence. Since the publication of our last issue, over six months ago, only fifteen members (10% of those receiving the *ASC Newsletter*) provided us with information on their current research and publications. Needless to say this is a poor response. We hate to harp on this problem, but if the ASC is to succeed there must be a greater level of participation by its members. We ask all of you, once again, to *please*, send us an annual update. For your convenience a questionnaire is appended at the end of the *Newsletter*. . . why not take a few minutes--right now--and fill it out. Thanks.

Only a few members have taken advantage of our "Announcements" column. If you have any news or information you would like to share with your colleagues please send us a brief statement. The deadline for the next issue is March 15, 1991.

If you have any questions or suggestions concerning the ASC address your correspondence to Ray Silverman, Department of Art, Michigan State University, East Lansing MI 48824 (USA).

Please be aware that members' contributions to this *Newsletter* are reproduced as received, with few, if any, editorial changes. The editor is not responsible for errors in fact or incomplete references submitted by contributors.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### AKAN STUDIES COUNCIL MEETING

The next business meeting will be held in conjunction with the ASA Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. The meeting will take place on Friday, November 2, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, in the Poe Suite (Omni Inner Harbor Hotel). Please try to attend.

The Akan Studies Council is sponsoring a panel at the upcoming ASA Meeting. *New Research on the Greater Akan Region: Political Economy and Transformation* is being chaired by David Groff (Linfield College) and Ray Dumett (Purdue University). The panelist include:

Henriette Diabaté (University of Abidjan), "Le Sannvin, Un Royaume de la Côte d'Ivoire, 1701-1901."

Maxwell Owusu (University of Michigan), "Building Popular Power in Ghana in the 1980's: Tradition and Transformation."

Richard Rathbone (University of London), "Kinship and the Emergence of National Consciousness in Akyem Abuakwa, 1935-1948."

Emmanuel Terray (Centres d'Etudes Africaines, Paris), "Centralized Kingship and Economy in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman."

Ivor Wilks (Northwestern University), "The Asante Concept of Frontier: Space and Time."

Robert Handloff (Library of Congress) and Louis Wilson (Smith College) will serve as discussants.

Thanks to the efforts of David Groff and Ray Dumett, the ASA's International Visitors Program is providing funding for Professor Diabaté's travel from Abidjan to Baltimore to participate in this panel.

The Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, invites papers for a symposium on *The City of Kumasi: Past and Present* to be held in December, 1990. The object of the symposium is to examine the cultural, economic, social and political developments of Kumasi from its foundation in the seventeenth century to the present day. Submit inquiries to Professor Kwame Arhin, Director, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, P.O. Box 73, Legon, Ghana.

## MINUTES

### UK Business Meeting September 1990

Gareth Austin convened a meeting of the Akan Studies Council at the ASUK Meeting recently held in Birmingham. He reports that it was an intimate group--only four people showed up (there were only 110-120 people who attended the ASUK Conference as a whole). Nevertheless the ASC meeting was fruitful. A brief summary of the main point discussed follows:

- 1) The question of what will happen to the funds remaining from the defunct *Ghana Studies Bulletin*. The idea that seemed most

attractive: use them to bring a Ghanaian or Ivoirien colleague for a future ASC Conference in the UK.

2) The possibility of holding an Akan Studies conference in the UK. This was thought to be desirable, at least as an objective for a year or two's time.

3) A member asked whether any libraries were taking the newsletter, which (we agreed) is important if a permanent record is to be kept and to enable students, etc., to find it. [In the UK, SOAS, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London, the Centre of West African Studies in Birmingham, and the Centres of African Studies in Cambridge and Edinburgh certainly ought to take it, and could be asked to pay perhaps \$10 a year from the dollar accounts which they or their university libraries doubtless keep, so avoiding exchange costs.]

4) Austin was asked if he had informed the new Anglo-Ghanaian Association about the ASC. Austin replied that he would speak to its Chair, Revd. Tetteh.

### STATE OF THE FIELD: ARCHAEOLOGY

We continue the tradition of including a state-of-the-field section in the Fall issue of the *ASC Newsletter*. Last year this section was devoted to history. This year we have attempted to address the state of archaeological research in the Akan area. We were only able to obtain statements from Ghana and North America. At the present time there is no one residing in either Côte d'Ivoire or Great Britain who is engaged in archaeological investigations in the Akan region. Regrettably, our French contributor was unable to produce his statement before the *Newsletter* went to press.

### Archaeological Research in Ghana

by

Professor J.R. Anquandah  
Department of Archaeology  
University of Ghana, Legon

The past four decades have witnessed increasing archaeological research at sites and in cultural areas attributed to Akan peoples. During this period, more than 30 different scholars have made various degrees of contribution to Akanland archaeological studies. During the first two decades (1950-70) archaeology in Ghana as a whole, and Akanland in particular, was characterised by widespread reconnaissance surveys and small-scale excavations at selected Akan sites, such as the settlement sites of Mampongtn, Nsuta hill, Kokobin, Beifikrom and terra cotta sites like Ahinsan and Twindorase. Archaeological research during the decades 1970-90 moved away from the ad-hoc nature of previous decades and assumed the character of planned programmes with specific problem-solving research designs. Its approach became increasingly multi-disciplinary as archaeologists began themselves to learn to document ethnohistories, ethnography, etc., while seeking expert advice from natural scientists, linguists etc. in order to provide explanation and meaning for data collected. Archaeological research was conducted along thematic lines: (a) origins of Akan society; (b) urbanization; (c) state formation; (d) technology; (e) long-distance trade; (f) art, etc. A few instances may be cited as illustration:

i) Thanks to studies conducted in the 1970s and 80s, by Flight, Dombrowski, Stahl and Anquandah, at numerous Akanland sites having manifestations of the prehistoric Kintampo Culture thought to have pioneered farming and village life (c. 2000-500 B. C.), it was possible to state in 1988:

From the correlation of linguistic studies on Baule, Agni, Bia and Akan with archaeology there is emerging the possibility (still yet to be tested) that proto-Akan evolved in the forest and savanna environment straddling the middle and southern parts of the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast and that the Kintampo Complex whose sites have now been identified in both countries may well be the archaeological equivalent of an ecologically-adapted proto-Akan populace which knew no territorial boundary such as now exists between Ivory Coast and Ghana (Anquandah and Andah 1988).

ii) The theme that seems to have been most dominant is urbanism -- its *raison d'être*, its character (size, morphology), factors that

determined its process and course (environmental resources, indigenous know-how and ideology, external ideas, products, and migrant population), its demographic character (Sutton 1981a) and its impact on Akan lifestyle as a whole. Archaeological contributions to Akan urbanology include the works of Ozanne and Keteku (Akwamu-Nyanawase), Posnansky, Crossland and Anquandah (Begho), Effah-Gyamfi (Bono Manso), Boachie Ansah (Old Wenchi) Brempong and Sutton (Akuapem) and Shinnie (Asantemanso).

iii) Under the broad thematic studies of urbanism, state formation and organized commerce, a number of special cultural aspects have provided subjects of study, particularly potting, brass casting, iron working, bead production, cloth making, architecture, food production and ethnomedicine. In tropical Africa as most ancient remains are rapidly destroyed in the soil, the archaeologist has to rely heavily on pottery for working out cultural sequences, relative dating schemes, and patterns of trade, migration and cultural context. It is thanks to ethnoarchaeological and Iron Age studies on Akan pottery that there is available now a useful ceramic cultural and chronological framework that can be utilised as a basis for future studies (Anquandah 1967, Bellis 1976, Posnansky and Van Dantzig 1976, Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1976, Davies 1977, Effah-Gyamfi 1985, Boachie Ansah 1986, DeCorse 1988 Ph.D. dissertation, Crossland 1989).

Studies undertaken on iron working and brass casting have shown that metal technology provided an infrastructure for the development of various aspects of Akan culture (Effah-Gyamfi 1985, Posnansky 1980, Garrard 1980). Similar studies have been undertaken on Akan architecture (McIntosh 1975, Posnansky 1987, Effah-Gyamfi 1985) and traditional gold mining (Bellis 1987).

#### Current Developments in Akan Research

At the 1984 New York symposium and exhibition on the theme "Asante and Its Neighbours -- relations with the exterior", it was noted that: "the dearth of archaeological activity in the Asante hinterland has limited historical reconstruction and has led to a possible overemphasis of the role of both northern and coastal elements in Asante culture." Fortunately, Shinnie's current archaeological work at Asantemanso, near Kumasi, is providing

interesting data supported by radiocarbon chronology and is making up for the gap in Asante studies (Shinnie 1987, 1988). A second example of on-going research is that of DeCorse's study of the remains of the 18th and 19th century township of Elmina. The excavation which is producing abundant local pottery, brass works and human burials along with a rich harvest of European imported pottery, pipes, glassbeads and glass vessels has shed useful light on European-African relations at the time (DeCorse 1987a, 1987b). Archaeological work related to Akan art studies has focused chiefly on terra cotta. A recent international conference held at Bellagio (Italy) in 1988 expressed concern about past tendencies of scholars in creating "a tension between those disciplines that take the object as the subject for analysis (archaeology and history) and those that focus upon the object's social context (history and anthropology)," and so prescribed an interdisciplinary approach as an effective solution to the problem of isolationist study. A 63-page paper presented to the conference analyses Akan terra cottas along multi-disciplinary lines (Anquandah 1988).

Research on bead technology and trade is currently underway at the University of Ghana, Legon, stimulated by a short-term visitor, Peter Francis, Director of the Center for Bead Research, Lake Placid, New York. The study is revealing an earlier Akan local tradition of bead making based on stone, shell and bauxite and a later tradition of externally-inspired glass bead production whose legatees still thrive today at bead centres like Dabaa near Kumasi. The studies provide an indication of the far-flung and complex nature of Akanland external trade connections in the period AD 1400-1900 as the corpus of glass beads excavated from Akan sites includes "drawn", "wound" and "moulded" beads imported from Venice, Holland, France, Bohemia, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. Moreover, among the startling discoveries found in the collections from the excavations at Begho township were 15th century glass beads from Fustat Cairo presumably imported via the trans-Saharan trade.

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- (forthcoming) "Urbanization and state formation in Ghana during the Iron Age." In *Food, Metals, and Trade in Africa History*, ed. T. Shaw. World Archaeological Congress.
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**Archaeological Studies of the Akan  
in North America**

by

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Recent archaeological research by North American scholars has addressed a wide range of research objectives. Some results of this work are summarized here and general directions are discussed. It was frustrating preparing a review of this kind concentrating solely on work by scholars in the Americas. The research mentioned here cannot be considered in isolation; to appreciate the range of research represented, work in other areas must also be considered. Significantly, no archaeological studies of the Côte d'Ivoire Akan are represented. This omission will hopefully be rectified by future work. In collecting material I have also not attempted to survey material culture studies, which in many cases are closely inter-related with archaeological data.

Work on Asante origins is being undertaken by Peter Shinnie at Asantemanso, the site which oral traditions indicate was the settlement occupied before the late seventeenth century and the consolidation of the Asante Empire. A program of surface survey and excavation initiated in 1986 has defined pre-European contact occupation areas, as well as seventeenth and eighteenth century deposits (Shinnie 1988). Radiocarbon dates obtained range from  $1070 \pm 80$  BP to  $190 \pm 70$  BP. The reliance on a series rather than isolated dates is extremely important in establishing an accurate chronology for the site and providing a means of inter-site comparison. Additional samples are being run from what promises to be a very important site.

Work by Shinnie integrates oral traditions relating to the settlement with archaeological data. During the 1987 field season, mounds first reported by R.S. Rattray were located with the help and consent of the Queen Mother of Asantemanso. Excavations in this area recovered no European trade materials or trade pipes, but did produce a number of early radiocarbon dates. The pottery recovered also appears distinct from more recent examples in the assemblage. Work on the ceramics and plans for additional field work during

1990 are underway.

Additional archaeological research has been undertaken outside of Asante. Ongoing ethnoarchaeological research by Merrick Posnansky has examined the settlement of Hani, Brong Ahafo. Hani is the modern descendent of the early trading town of Begho, which was excavated by Posnansky in the 1970's. A long term study of the material inventory, housing, and settlement pattern provides insight into change within the modern community.

A recent paper by Posnansky (1990) examined the changes archaeologists have affected in Hani over the past 20 years. Hani is a rural community with a present population of 2000. The presence of expatriate researchers, students and technical staff from the University of Ghana has had both short and long term effects. Immediate impact on the community included increased income from temporary labor, new social contacts, and access to new technology. Long term effects include a greater awareness of the past among the local populace, but also the incorporation of non-traditional elements into the traditional view of the past. Other consequences include changing settlement patterns and technology. A new quarter, "Brunikrom" or European quarter, developed between the town and the archaeologists research station. New building methods also have been copied from buildings constructed by researchers.

In coastal Ghana, my own research has concentrated on the African settlement of Elmina. The town is historically important as the site of the first European trade post in sub-Saharan Africa and headquarters of both the Portuguese and Dutch in West Africa. The African town site is unique from an archaeological standpoint as it was not re-occupied following a British bombardment in 1873. Research undertaken between 1985 and 1987 identified over 30 structures, some with stone walls still standing to a height of over five feet. Documentary sources indicate that there was a tremendous amount of change in Elmina's socio-political organization and customs. However, examination of individual features and quantitative study of artifact distributions within structures indicate that, while there were many additions to the material inventory, there was little culture change in terms of the people's world view or shared

system of beliefs. Diet, ritual, burial practices, and the use of space within structures remained much the same as that seen in other Akan communities.

The Elmina excavations produced a large variety of European trade materials spanning the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries. These were of special importance as many can be closely dated, providing closer chronological control than is often possible on African archaeological sites of the past 500 years. Examples of seventeenth century cast beads, mid-eighteenth century *forowa* fragments, and locally produced glass beads (DeCorse 1989) provide new information on the artistic traditions of the coastal Akan.

Additional work to be undertaken at Elmina during July through September 1990 will be aimed at the further excavation of structures previously identified as well as testing additional areas of the site. Future work will increasingly focus on Fanti sites in the hinterland to obtain comparative data. It is planned that this work will include a reexamination of Efutu in cooperation with Kofi Agorsah, now at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica.

Kofi Agorsah is also continuing his research in the northern Volta Basin. His research compares and contrasts the use of space in modern communities (primarily Guan) with patterns identified archaeologically. Such studies aid in the interpretation of archaeological data and potentially offer insight into the definition of ethnicity in the archaeological record (Agorsah 1985; 1988a). Agorsah (1986; 1988b) concludes that a series of "Local rules" defining social opportunities structure the use of space in the Nchumuru communities he examined.

It is difficult to identify common threads in studies which have been aimed at answering such diverse questions. What seems common to all is an awareness of other disciplines and their relevance to archaeology. While archaeology is traditionally an interdisciplinary study, the concentration of recent archaeological research on the more recent past increases the importance of ethnographic and historical data in interpretation. Increasing research on primary historical sources, oral traditions, linguistics and historical studies of the early historic period have greatly facilitated the integration of documentary, ethnographic, and archaeological resources.

The archaeological research surveyed also represents new avenues of study. While chronology and culture history continue to be important concerns, many research questions posed are aimed at issues that are beyond purely regional interest. Agorsah's work seeks a generalized model for the interpretation of social relationships in archaeological contexts, while Posnansky's comments on the role of the archaeologist in the African community. Both raise issues of which researchers everywhere should be cognizant.

The coming decade promises to be an important period in Akan archaeology. Final reports on some of the larger projects will hopefully be completed and many new studies are in the offing.

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN AKAN STUDIES

This brief list of recent publications in Akan studies was compiled from information submitted by members. We continue to have problems with incomplete and illegible citations--we ask that in the future the citations be as complete as possible and that they be typed. One can ascertain from the length of the list that only a few of our members offered information about their recent publications. We emphasize, once again, that one of the primary functions of the ASC is the dissemination of information--indeed, a number of members have commented on the value of these citations. We ask that you take a few minutes once or twice a year and send us a list of your recent publications.

- Allman, Jean Marie. "Hewers of Wood, Carriers of Water': Islam, Class and Politics on the Eve of Ghana's Independence," *African Studies Review* 33 (3) 1990 (forthcoming).
- "The Youngmen and the Porcupine: Class, Nationalism and Asante's Struggle for Self-Determination, 1954-1957," *Journal of African History* 31 (2) 1990 (forthcoming).
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- "Western Art Historical Methodology and African Art: Panofsky's Paradigm and Ivoirian Mma," *The Art Journal* 47 (2) 1988: 147-53.
- Stahl, Ann. "Ethnic style and ethnic boundaries: a diachronic case study from west central Ghana," *Ethnohistory* (in press).
- "Intensification in the West African Late Stone Age: a view from central Ghana." In *Food, Metals and Towns in African History: Adaptations in Subsistence and Technology*, eds. T. Shaw, J. Alexander and A. Okpoko. London: Unwin-Hyman, (in press).
- "Protohistoric archaeology in the Banda area," *Nyame Akuma* (32) 1989: 12-17.

Terray, Emmanuel. "Pour une politique étrangère non munichoise," *Les Temps modernes* 44 (510): 55-76.

----- "Une nouvelle anthropologie politique?" *L'Homme* 29 (2) 1989 avril-juin: 5-29.

Warren, Dennis Michael. "Linking Biomedical and Indigenous African Health Delivery Systems: An Assessment of Collaborative Efforts During the 1980s." In *Ethnomedical Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa*, eds. D.M. Warren, J. Slikkerveer, P. Nkwi and V. Kimani. Leiden: African Studies Centre, (in press).

----- *Akan Arts and Aesthetics: Elements of Change in a Ghanaian Indigenous Knowledge System*. Ames: TSC Program, Iowa State University, 1990.

Warren, Dennis Michael, Slikkerveer, J., Nkwi, P. and Kimani, V. *Ethnomedical Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Leiden: African Studies Centre, (in press).

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Maier, Donna  
Mato, Daniel  
McCall, Daniel  
Mikell, Gwendolyn  
Owusu-Ansah, David  
Soppelsa, Robert  
Stahl, Ann B.  
Suthers, Ellen  
Visonà, Monica Blackmun  
Warren, D. Michael  
Yarak, Larry

## INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE NEVER RETURNED A QUESTIONNAIRE

Those individuals whose names appear on this list have been sent copies of the *ASC Newsletter* but have never returned a questionnaire. Those of you who have been receiving the *Newsletter* since its inception (\*) please be advised that if we do not hear from you prior to our next mailing your name will be stricken from our mailing list.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

Peter Shinnie continues to fund the duplication and distribution of the *Newsletter*. Akan Studies Council expenses are therefore minimal. Nevertheless we would like to continue building an account that can be used for future projects. We ask that members who have access to US funds please remit a modest \$5.00 for annual dues. Please make your check payable to **Michigan State University** and send it to Ray Silverman, Art Department, Kresge Art Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824 [USA]. Only a handful of our members have been sending in their dues. If your name does not appear on the list that follows *please* send us a check at your earliest convenience. Your support is both necessary and appreciated. Thank you.

### Members Who Have Remitted Dues

Allman, Jean Marie  
Feinberg, Harvey M.  
Gastellu, Jean-Marc  
Gocking, Roger  
Groff, David

Abubakor, M.B.  
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