

is confirmed by the situation in this West African — elite — setting.

In the final chapter the author gives special attention to a thread running through the entire study, namely the theme of tension and change. She attempts to shed more light on these concepts by fitting them into the sociological models of Stouffer and Merton. The study ends with the thought-provoking statement, "... we do not see such changes to be simply the result of 'Christian influence', 'culture contact' or the 'copying of European models', as a number of previous commentators appear to have believed, but as explicable in terms of adaptations within the system of domestic relationships, serving to adjust it to the economic and demographic changes, which have been taking place and are still continuing" (p. 159).

Another intriguing contention is that, in spite of supposed female emancipation among the urban elite, the married elite woman has lost three crucial resources providing the basis of the relative autonomy of Akan wives in a traditional setting. These resources are: financial independence, the possibility of recourse to the matrilineage and — *in cauda venenum* — freedom to divorce and enter into a new marriage (pp. 116-9). The last point is particularly intriguing. The argument here is that an elite woman who has lost her youthful glamour lacks the traditional facilities to withdraw from marriage, since the conditions for remarriage are not as favourable.

A few critical remarks about the book do not seem out of place. Compression of the original text has not always been conducive to bringing out clearly the main threads of the argumentation, particularly in the last three chapters. It would, moreover, have been better if the various cases had each been printed under a special heading and in a different letter type rather than interweaving them with the main body of the text. Further, the author seems rather over-optimistic about the accuracy and adequacy with which the traditional matrilineal kinship system has been described and analyzed (pp. 21 and 30). There is reason to believe, as has also been noted by Van Velsen, that conjugal and kinship ties in semi-literate societies are less stereotyped than has been suggested by some pioneer anthropologists. Personal investigations among the rural Akan, for example, support the view that there is a wide variety of sexual unions in rural communities and that there is considerable freedom of choice in the election of heirs.

The book has an elaborate index and is published in hard cover only. It is to be hoped that a paperback edition will follow soon, so that this elite study will also be available to non-elite students.

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CHRISTINE OPPONG, *Growing up in Dagbon*. Accra-Tema, Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1973. 79 pp., map. Price \$ 5.00 (£ 2.00).

SJAAK VAN DER GEEST

Most sizeable ethnic groups in Northern Ghana have their "own" ethnographer. The Tallensi have Meier Fortes, the Lowiili and Lodagaa

Jack Goody, the Gonja Esther Goody, and the Konkomba David Tait. The Dagomba, however, cannot make such a claim. This is all the more remarkable since they have played a major role in the history of Northern Ghana and have to a large extent dominated the other groups. In the middle of the 18th century the Dagomba and Asante concluded a treaty whereby the Dagomba gained free access to Asante markets and were supplied with guns. In return the Dagomba provided the Asante with slaves, among other things. These slaves were captured from among neighbouring tribes.

The Dagomba, whose traditional capital is Yendi, have a centralized kingdom and are under strong Moslem influence. The fact that their rich political and social traditions have not up till now been studied in depth may be due partly to the premature death of Tait, who at one time focused his attention on the Dagomba kingdom. *Growing up in Dagbon*, a recent study of Dagomba life by Christine Oppong, a research fellow of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, does not make up for this lack entirely. It is not her aim, however, to present a full picture of Dagbon society; she is concerned rather with describing one particular aspect of the social life, namely education, both in the traditional and the modern sense. Her study, therefore, is a contribution to the scant existing literature on the Dagomba, as well as representing an attempt to further our present knowledge of socialization in the African context.

She gives a concise account of the history and political structure of Dagbon (chapter 1) and of the various aspects of children's lives (chapter 2). In this context she deals with the types of housing, rules of descent, ideas and practices with respect to pregnancy and childbirth, the composition of the average household, stereotyped emotional relationships between relatives, and the customs in connection with child adoption.

In chapter 3 the author examines the way in which boys (little is said about girls) are recruited for traditional professions such as that of butcher, drummer and diviner, and are gradually introduced to these adult occupations. Most traditional professions are of the ascriptive type, but the degree of compulsion varies from one to the next. Training of children by non-parents is common and is made possible though fostering and adoption.

Whereas the above type of training aims at the preservation of traditional values, modern education (chapter 4) rather encourages a departure from tradition. The author describes the Dagomba as "a people with pride in its own ancestry and mode of living", who have therefore reluctantly adapted to the Western school system which was forced on them. The recruitment of pupils for these schools at first met with serious opposition. Chiefs used to send slaves, orphans and subjects' sons in place of their own children. It is only recently that people in Dagbon have become more interested in Western education, though the number of girls attending school is still very low.

Dagomba culture is a blend of indigenous traditions and Moslem

influences. To this the arrival of Western colonialism had added a third dimension, thus making Dagbon society an interesting subject for students of social change. The author has shown the resultant ambivalences in the light of education. One of the merits of the book is the method of description of the social functions of fostering, which is a much more typical phenomenon in Northern than Southern Ghana.

The book is a condensed, and evidently popularized version of the author's M.A. thesis. This probably explains its limited size (79 pages) and the absence of tables, an index and an account of the research methods.

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JAN VANSINA, *The Tio Kingdom of the Middle Congo, 1880-1892*. Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press, London etc. 1973. 586 pp. Appendices, bibliography, index, glossary, maps, diagrams, plates and figures. Price £ 8.00.

H. J. M. CLAESSEN

In this voluminous, heavily documented book the well-known Africanist/historian Jan Vansina describes and analyses the culture and history of the Tio (Eastern Bateke), who in former times economically and politically dominated the Middle Congo.

The book is based on a combination of fieldwork and literature research. Vansina demonstrates most convincingly that, by making use of both kinds of sources, the reconstruction of a pre-colonial period — in this case the period 1880-1892 — can be achieved. However, he does not confine himself to a description or analysis of the Tio only at that specific time. By making use of the literature from 1600 on, and adding the information from traditional accounts and evidence from the field, he succeeds in giving a coherent picture of the political and economic history of the Tio from the very beginning down to the present.

The book contains an immense wealth of data, conveniently arranged through a division into three parts. The first part, *The Little Society* (pp. 29-243), is mainly ethnographic. In it kinship, marriage, types of group, subsistence agriculture, the life-cycle, beliefs and rituals are described in great detail. It is Vansina's contention that these aspects of Tio life underwent the least change in the course of time. Though the small neighbourhood groups create the impression of closed, tightly integrated kinship groupings, they have nevertheless had a number of connections — political as well as economic — with the outside world. These aspects form a kind of bridge to the second part of the book, *The Wider Society* (pp. 244-435). Here Vansina analyses and describes in detail Tio society in its relations with the rest of the Congo. He distinguishes two centres of importance: *Mbe*, the political capital, and the *Pool*, the commercial one. Geographical factors account for the dominance of the people around the *Pool* in the system of trade and commerce, ivory and slaves being the main commodities. The political