

ensure further the fertility of the land the rites of the local god, Sekum Apa, were taken over by the newcomers.<sup>1</sup> As before, they took place in April in the season of sowing and planting, and since this starts a new agricultural cycle the *Aboakyer* is also a New Year festival which is illustrated by the priest's prediction of events for the coming year. Sekum Apa, however, was fused with Penkye Otu, the god of the Effutu,<sup>2</sup> and the hunt of the *wansam*, formerly in the hands of clansmen, was placed in charge of the *Dentsifo* and *Tuafo* of the *Asafo*.

Mr. Wyllie seems to suggest that the translation of *akyeneboa* or totem animal—'the animal that masks a god' is my own. In *The Akan of Ghana* he will find on p. 25, n. 1, that it is Dr. J. B. Danquah's, an authority on Akan religion. The purpose of killing the animal 'that masks a god' is to renew its divine life-giving *kra* so that the crops can grow. It returns to the Moon to be purified and recharged by Nyame (originally by the clan's female deity, whatever her name) and the animal's body is disposed of so that the renewed *kra* can enter a newborn animal of the same species to be killed at the next *aboakyer*. I described this process as death and resurrection by the Moon Mother goddess. Mr. Wyllie's informants, however, had never heard of a 'Moon Mother goddess' and they also insisted that there was nothing special about the *wansam*.<sup>3</sup> They also gave him a rationalized explanation for the charms that the *Asafo* hunters wear—'against accidents'—whereas I was told that the *wansam* ('masking a god') was spiritually dangerous and the charms used were, in the first place, against its supernatural power. Mr. Wyllie also accepted his informants' rationalization for the small rite performed by the *Omanhene* when the animal, bound, is placed beneath his feet. Such explanations did not exist in the past when even the smallest rite had a religious significance.

I am also accused of 'injections of motives', feelings, reactions, expressed by the people in connection with the killing of the *wansam*. Mr. Wyllie is right, I should have made it quite clear that these belong entirely to a minority, still aware of the totem aspect of the festival, and not to the *Asafo* for whom the hunt is no more than a contest between two companies, and to quote Mr. Wyllie, the 'spirit of competition'.

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<sup>1</sup> Information given to me in 1946 by elders at Degho, a village on the coast a few miles from Winneba. Moreover, it was the custom for conquerors to adopt the deity of the land.

<sup>2</sup> I was told by several people in Winneba that Sekum Apa was the old name of Penkye Otu; but the people at Degho made it clear to me that Sekum Apa was an Etsi god, once worshipped at Apa and Degho.

<sup>3</sup> The original totem animal of Sekum Apa was not the *wansam* but the lion, or more likely the

'white tyger', as it is doubtful whether lions lived in the hinterland of the coast. The 'white tyger' is mentioned in the *Atlas Geographicus* of 1714, vol. iv, p. 402, and was a great light-coloured cat which fell upon the cattle and goats of the villagers. I could not get any information about when the *wansam* took its place, presumably when it died out. The only people who would still know something of the origin and original significance of the *Aboakyer* are the Etsi but they seldom give information, for reasons stated in the author's *Akan Traditions of Origin*, 1952, p. 65, n. 3.