

'sinful' said the missionaries

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nearest to man in intelligence. The blood of the deer and the leopard is similar to that of man. The deer is also considered as a totem by some Effutus.

As already stated, the two Asafo companies compete among themselves for the catch. Asafo companies exist in most of the coastal areas and historians claim that in the past such companies were also found in Ashanti, but the British government abolished them as they were trouble makers. They acted as soldiers and protected the stool and the chief against enemies. They were responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the state. Taxes were collected by them and they carried out communal labour for building and upkeep of public places such as toilet, market places, the chief's palace and etc. The Asafo companies are associated with the ntoro. The son succeeds his father within the company.

The Company which makes the first catch hurries home with it, amid war songs and shouts of victory. The deer which is caught alive is thrown over the shoulders of one of the members usually the man who caught it, holding its hind-legs with the left hand and the forelegs with the right hand. It is a taboo to tie it with string or rope. The deer should not be carried to the durbar grounds in a vehicle. The first catch is brought before the Omanhene who places his right foot three times on the animal, moving his toes from West to East and from East to West, indicating the paths of the moon and the sun respectively. The chief should remain till the second Company has brought their catch. Custom demands that the chief should remain seated till the last member has returned from the bush. If the second Company makes any catch, it has no ritual importance. After all the members have returned from the bush, the Omanhene joins the pro-

cession behind the winning Company with the deer borne upon the shoulders of the members to the shrine of Penkye Otu.



Members of the Asafo Companies put on their best clothes and with the winning Company in the lead parade through the principal streets of the town amidst singing, dancing, drumming and performance of acrobatic display. The Omanhene, car-

ried in a palanquin with his elders, follow the members of the two Companies. The women of the two Asafo companies take steps in the most popular dances of the Effutus "Akosua Don-toba" and "Owambir".

On the following day, Sunday, the people assemble at the Sacred grove of Penkye Otu to sacrifice the deer to the god. This is done by slitting its throat and the blood collected in a vessel. The hide is removed and certain parts of the meat cut and placed at the foot of the sacred tree in front of the grove. Some of the meat is distributed among the priests, the Omanhene and his elders.

Divination is performed by the priests to know what the future would be. This mystical consultation is known as "Ebisatsir". An earthen pot is placed upside down and parallel lines are drawn on the ground in various directions in white and red clay, another in charcoal and the fourth in salt. The cloth of the priest is rolled into a carrying pad which is

placed at the bottom of the pot. An iron stone shaped in the form of a globe is put upon the pad with spells and incantations to invoke the spirits of the gods. The actual happenings of the year are foretold by whichever line the ball rest upon. The interpretation is given as follows, if it falls on a white clay it means heat and drought, charcoal line indicates heavy rains, salt portends peace, prosperity and abundant food, and the red ochre indicates bloody conflicts.

It is also a belief among the Effutus that if the No. 1 Asafo Company is able to bring in the first deer, there would be peace and prosperity in the ensuing year, but if the No. 2 wins the contest that year there would be war and famine.

After the consultation of the oracles, the festival comes to an end and the members of the two Companies go to the palace to thank Omanhene and his elders. The priests of the State god, Penkye Otu, remain in the shrine till it rains, when they go home.

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