

A Cultural & Historical Tour of Ghana - My Hometown

Dear Friends,

This article begins a new series to help you get to know a little bit more about Ghana. Specifically, topics and subjects that may not be found easily with online research, or known universally. We will begin with the subject of my heritage and cultural circumstances, as I proceed to talk about *My Hometown*.

In Ghana, when any individual's personal profile is being developed, or documented, the subject, or for that matter, detail about one's *hometown* is a necessity. The concept of *hometown* does not refer to my personal hometown, but rather to my maternal origins. You may recall from my personal story; I was born in the Central Region of South Ghana in the coastal town of *Winneba*. But, for the purposes of documentation, *Winneba*, is not my *hometown*.

My hometown, by Ghanaian understanding, is where my mother comes from. It could even be stretched to go beyond my mother and include my grandmother and great grandmother. Culturally, the ethnic group known as *Akans* are regarded as a maternal group. Other ethnic groups are paternal. For documentation, it doesn't matter which part of Ghana I was born, or even if by chance my birthplace had been Lorain, Ohio. The fact that my mother's origin is in Ghana, if the documentation of my personal details is being done in Ghana, then my hometown will be that of my *maternal origins!*

The essence of all this is seen particularly in the detailing of documents such as (1) birth certificate, (2) baptism certificate, (3) travel documents - passports, and (4) national identification (ID) cards. On such documents, apart from the aspect of the *place of birth*, the other important requirement is that of *hometown*. In my situation, my hometown is not *Winneba*, but a town about 23 miles north of *Winneba*, called *Agona Nyakrom*. And unlike *Winneba* which is on the coast, therefore the economic activity is dominated by the fishing industry, the town of *Agona Nyakrom* is in the savanna light forest area, so their community is dominated by farmers and the agriculture industry. It is in the area where *Cocoa* (the source of the chocolate we eat) is grown, besides other farm produce such as plantains, and vegetables.

In the days when money didn't exist, my grandfather described the situation where farmers would bring their produce, especially vegetables, to the shore - travelling on foot - in exchange for the fish that they needed.

The forebears of the people of Agona Nyakrom came from further north in the present area (in the middle part of the country) where the current ethnic group called the *Asantes*, are. It is believed that the group that migrated from the Asante, was led by one *Nyarko*. They originated from the area in Asanteland known as *Agona*, settling at the current location. The people, led by this *Nyarko*, didn't want to be *completely* disassociated from their roots so named the new place *Agona Nyakrom*, the name that came from the expression that this place is *Nyarko's town*. '*Krom*' means '*town*', in the *Akan* language - *Nyarko from Agona's town*.

This *Nyarko*, by rights, became the founder and subsequently the *first ruler* of this people, becoming known as *Nana Nyarko Eku I* (the first of the *Nyarko line*). The current ruler is the tenth (*Nyarko Eku X*) of the dynasty established by the first *Nyarko*. History has it that my mother is a member of the nuclear family of the *Nyarko* that led the journey and consequent settlement at the current location, thus making her a royalist, and by tradition all her children. This makes *me* a legitimate successor to the throne of the *Oman (Kingdom)!!* The title *Nana* simply means *ancestor*, and everywhere in Ghana, this title precedes the name of the *chief* (the ruler). Such a person is known as the *Omanhene*, (from *Oman, kingdom* -- and *Hene, king*), meaning king of the kingdom, and the area would be known as *traditional area*. Before (precolonial) political administrative institutions emerged and assumed authority and rule over peoples, in Ghana, the *Omanhene* was the sole ruler and authority over his identifiable group of people, *the traditional area*, with unique systems: laws, traditions, practices, etc.

The major economic activity of the people is farming - living on the land and producing food and cash crops. This is their natural inclination because of the fact they come from further north (Asanteland), in the forest area, where they worked the land and *eked out* their living from the land. The nature of the land is such that the main tool to work on the land is the cutlasses and machetes, cutting down the trees and planting the cocoa and the plantains and others. It is almost impossible to use any mobile machinery, like tractors, because there is no room to move around and till the land.

It was really hard work to do farming with mostly hand tools. Because of this the farmer required the use of any able-bodied individual in his home to help on the farm. In the past, in precolonial days, many children were denied the right to go to school to receive education because they were needed on the family farm. Even when the opportunity came for the children to go to school, only the boys were fortunate to go to school, with the saying that, *"a girl's place is in the home, in the kitchen, to take care of husband and children."*

The population of the traditional area, made up of several towns and villages, is more than a hundred thousand. Agona Nyakrom as the chief town in the paramountcy, has a little over twenty thousand. *Agona Swedru* is one of the major towns in the traditional area and whose population is close to seventy thousand. This is because it is the hub of all commercial and civil activities. In my next article we will look at some of the interesting things that go on in my hometown, such as the local festival and the general life of the people.

Blessings, Pastor Ben Wilson