

## A Cultural & Historical Tour of Ghana - *'Life of People of Agona Nyakrom'*

Dear Friends,

In April, I explained that *'my hometown'* is not necessarily where I was born, (which is the town of Winneba) but instead the town where my *maternal ancestors* originated. My hometown is *Agona Nyakrom* because that is where my maternal ancestors originated. This article is intended to let you know a little bit more about the life that goes on in the town and its environs, what pertains to economic, social, political, and traditional.

### Economic Life of Agana Nyakrom

The people of Agona Nyakrom are basically farmers who till the land. It's one of the towns in Ghana that supply the major foodstuff such as plantains, cassava, cocoyam, cocoa & other farm produce such as plantains, and vegetables -cash crop, for export. The land is very suitable for these food and cash crops. I like going to the place (though I haven't been for the past two years) because the air feels so natural, free of the smell of polluted air like what one experiences in towns like Accra. The greenery of the town because of the plants and trees such as the plantain and cocoa fills one with a good feeling. No wonder many enjoy the longevity of life in that place. The average life span is into the 80 years age bracket.

About seventy percent of the people are into farming. The farming is really very tedious and basic, because of the nature of the land. The land is not flat so they can't use huge farm machinery. Even where one might see a few tractors with ploughs attached to it, they are only able to move on very small stretches of about 10 to 15 acres, with many obstructions. Besides, the cost of acquiring such machinery is beyond the means of most farmers, so they tend to use very simple tools such as machetes, cutlasses, big hoes, and pickaxes. The land is so suitable for the crops that are cultivated in that area, with the rainfall pattern so favorable that the farmers could predict sowing and harvesting periods with ease, until recently. The situation has however changed drastically. Then to make things worse, because the same land has been used for many years, there appears to be much loss of fertility of the land. The farmers have been depending on fertilizer to enrich that land, even long before the Ukraine and Russian war started, but now it is worse. The stock of fertilizer in the country has reduced so drastically that farmers cannot get it to buy. Before that,

because fertilizer is an imported commodity, the price kept changing as the forex rate changed in favor of the other major currencies like the US dollar.

### Social Life of Agona Nyakrom

The major event that characterizes the life and people of Agona Nyakrom and its neighboring communities is the traditional festival known as '*Akwanbo*'. The term *Akwanbo* refers to the practice whereby paths are cleared, basically to remove any unwanted growth of bushes and twigs that lead to important places in the town. It's a term composed of two words: '*Akwan*' meaning *paths* and '*bo*' meaning *to clear*. Originally it meant clearing the path by which the journey that brought the ancestors to the current place (location). It involves the entire society and its people; hence it is regarded as a social event. It is traditionally led by the '*Omanhene*', ably supported by his sub-chiefs. During the week of the festival, other social activities are engaged in by the people, where music and dance performances, soccer games among groups, parades and some carnival types of gatherings would be organized. It is a yearly event, and it attracts many indigenes of Agona Nyakrom from all over the place including even some who reside out the country, to attend.

### Political Life in Agona Nyakrom

The political life of indigenous Ghanaians used to be under the authority of recognized local chiefs before colonization. The chiefs were the only power that existed. All rule and authority were vested in their hands, passed down from generation to generation by their ancestors. They controlled and administered the subjects that lived in their jurisdiction, and nobody would challenge them, until the advent of the colonial powers. All that is now a thing of the past. The government has appointed civilians to be administrators and they are in control, rendering the chiefs almost without any power, and in many places, they are just mere figure heads. The situation is almost like a *quid pro quo* because the chiefs have become almost powerless since independence, and are merely recognized as *traditional personalities*. Even the traditions that they oversee in their paramountcies are subjected to the scrutiny of *Legislative and Executive Instruments* (L.I. & E.I.) regulated by the government. Notwithstanding the inhibitions, a few local chiefs continue to make their significance felt as they impact the nation with their pronouncements, even over political issues, but more particularly over local traditions, in their particular jurisdictions. One such chief is the *Asantehene* (King of Asantes) who rules over several smaller paramountcies.

There are many traditions that are peculiar to each locality. I will say more about what *those* traditions are, and how and when they are observed, in the third concluding article.

Blessings - Pastor Ben