The Calendrical Factor in Akan History

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Nna nyinaa nsɛ—all days are not the same[1]

—Akan proverb

Introduction

Daniel McCall wrote in the early 1960s, "History without a time dimension is impossible. We must have a chronology … a placement within our sidereal calendrical system."[2] As the academic study of African history and the political independence of African nations emerged at the time of McCall's writing, nationalist leaders and historians engaged in decolonization projects that sought to find a usable African past rooted in the politics and polities of old, thus, the Gold Coast, itself part of a taxonomy representing European interests in West Africa, became Ghana. From the 1960s onward, the scholarly focus on political history was understandable if not evitable, but historians of West Africa relied too much on and often too uncritically of European and Arabic sources while bemoaning the limitations and heretical nature of oral sources, since the latter could not disclose precise dates and submit gracefully to the demands of an imposed calendrical structure. Unlike the polities of the savanna, Islam and the Arabic language have generally exercised little influence on Akan life. The same is true for Christianity and European languages up until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and so the Akan case begs for greater attention to the internal workings and mechanisms of African societies ordered by their own calendrical concepts. Even in the use of oral historical, Arabic, and European archival sources, many historians of Africa have neither pursued nor used timekeeping mechanisms in African societies that challenge—and have therefore yielded to—the hegemony of the Gregorian calendar on African history. This essay examines one such temporal mechanism among the Akan in terms of its structure and embedded meanings. It advances three interrelated views: the calendar ordered social and cultural life through definite patterns of human activity; served as a composite framework rather than discrete and primarily "religious" functions; and provides a unique window into the ways in which Akan culture and society moved through its history.

Almost all calendars are devices used to track the movements of celestial objects or the rhythms of the agricultural cycle. Calendars tend to be governed by arbitrary human rules, and have been modified over centuries. Our purpose here is not to present one historical version of the Akan calendar as definitive but rather to probe its composite nature among Akan societies that have variously used the calendar. Chief among the early

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[1] A.A.G. Ampem, *Akan Mmɛbusɛm bi* (Kumasi: University Press, 1998), 98.

[2] Daniel F. McCall, *Africa in Time-Perspective* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1964), 120.

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writings on the Akan calendar, Asantehene Nana Agyeman Pɛrɛmpɛ (Prempeh) wrote in 1907 that the Asante had a calendrical year of 360 days and that this year was punctuated by the annual *odwira* "new year" celebration.[3] That same year, however, A. Tehle, writing in the *Journal of the Royal African Society* and unaware of Prempeh's writings, seemed convinced, "The natives … [did] not know the calendar day and the year."[4] The British had exiled the Asantehene on the Seychelles Islands and, despite his embrace of Christianity and Western schooling, it is plausible that his thoughts on the Asante (and general Akan) calendar might have been different if allowed to compose in his own language.[5] Nana Agyeman Prempeh had requested to learn to write in Akan (or Twi) while in the Seychelles Islands, but his appeal was denied. R.S. Rattray, writing more than a decade later and also unaware of Prempeh's work, accurately described the calendar as a recurrent cycle of forty-two days (*adaduanan*) in which each day had a distinct name, though he was acutely ignorant of their meaning or origin.[6] The nine *adaduanan* of forty-two days each constituted a "year" (*afe*) of 378 days, and *odwira* or analogous celebrations among Akan societies during the European months of August and October marked the closing and opening of an *afe*.[7] Since Rattray wrote about the Akan calendar as it existed in Takyiman and Asante during the 1920s, a few scholars have examined the calendar for purposes of time and movement, as a matrix for understanding Asante culture and belief, or, in the case of J.B. Danquah, to bolster the (unsustainable) claim that the Akan came from ancient Egypt via the Sahara and Sudan to the semi-deciduous forest. Even fewer scholars, however, have explored the calendrical factor in Akan history in terms of how

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[3] A. Abu Boahen, E. Akyeampong, N. Lawler, T.C. McCaskie, and Ivor Wilks, *"The History of Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself" and Other Writing by Otumfuo Nana Agyeman Prempeh I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 117. For an early twentieth-century account of *odwira*, see R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), 122–43.

[4] A. Tehle, "Soul, Spirit, Fate: According to the Notions of the Tshi and Ehwe Tribes (Gold Coast and Togo, W. Africa)," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 6, 24 (1907), 408, n. 1.

[5] Boahen et al., *Ashanti Kings*, 26–28; K.A. Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 29.

[6] R.S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 114. Inconsistent perspectives on and renderings of the calendar appear in numerous published accounts. See Boahen et al., *Ashanti Kings*, 117; D. Donkor, *Ghanaian Culture in Perspective* (Accra: Author, 1993), 43; O.K. Osei, *A Discourse on Akan Perpetual Calendar* (Accra: Domak Press, 1979), 5–22; D.R. Fink, "Time and Space Measurement of the Bono of Ghana" (Ms. thesis, Iowa State University, 1974), 50; T.C. McCaskie, *Asante Identities* (London: International African Institute, 2000), 10; K. Nkansa-Kyerematen, *Akan Heritage* (Accra: Sebewie Publications, 1999), 140–41; J.K. Adjaye, "Time, Identity, and Historical Consciousness in Akan," in J.K. Adjaye, ed., *Time in the Black Experience* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 63; A.A. Opoku, *Obi Kyerɛ* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1973), 43.

[7] T.C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 44–58; Ivor Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 198; Ivor Wilks, "On Mentally Mapping Greater Asante: A Study of Time and Motion," *Journal of African History* 33 (1992), 180; P. Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti* (Tema: Ghana Publishing, 1977), 20; Rattray, *Ashanti*, 114.

this calendar was formed and the ways it continuously shaped (and shapes) Akan culture from the northern edge of the forest to the Atlantic littoral.

"Akan culture" is used in this essay to mean the composite culture designed by West African forest settlers (whoever they might have ultimately been) between the Komóe and Volta rivers from the southern coast to the northerly edge of the forest, and defined by a distinctiveness in culture and spirituality in terms of a shared (genetic) language, ethos, calendrical system, traditions of origin, sociopolitical order, and a high degree of ideological conformity.[8] The archaeological evidence place the Akan (or proto-Akan) in the forest—between 8 and 4.5 degrees north latitude—for at least the last two millennia, and most foundational Akan societies self-identify themselves as autochthonous throughout the forest and its peripheries.[9] Cartographical evidence from European sources strengthen these claims for most of these societies. This is particularly so for those societies between the Tanɔ and Volta rivers and from the coast to the forest fringe, which exhibited great historical continuity within those spatial parameters between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, notwithstanding migration, displacement, and shifts in polities.[10] Though I use data from specific Akan societies and the Asante-Twi variant of the Akan language, the foregoing is valid for most Akan constituents and underscores the idea that the calendar is largely of Akan origination. The foregoing also suggests the Akan calendar developed in antiquity and has since shaped patterns of human activity in Akan society, and that indigenous calendrical systems can engender their own interpretative perspective and yield key insights into cultural histories and patterned behaviors. The implication is that when and where such systems exist or can be excavated, historians of Africa must unearth and test their imperative powers so as to probe what thinking and behaviors propelled African cultures through their respective histories.

Biribiara wɔ ne mmerɛ ("Everything has its time"): Conceptual Matters of Time

Though a great deal has been written concerning matters that bear on the calendar, there is still a need to disaggregate and clarify—owing to inconsistent perspectives on and renderings of the calendar—its conceptual and constituent parts: the day (*ɛda*) and its intervals, the week (*nnawɔtwe*) and its cultural underpinnings, the forty-two-day cycle (*adaduanan*), and the "year" (*afe*). Time was reckoned by the *adaduanan*; however, the most fundamental unit of time was and is the *ɛda* (pl. *nna*) and its periodicity. *Nkwa-da* and *dafua* were also used to refer to a single day.[11] The two broad categories of day time (*adekyeɛ* or *awia*) and night time (*anadwo*) constitute an *ɛda* (recorded as "ada" in J.W. Müller's and "adda" in Jean Barbot's seventeenth-century vocabularies), and each day is

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[8] See Christopher R. DeCorse, *An Archaeology of Elmina: Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast, 1400–1900* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 18–19, 49.

[9] A. Norman Klein, "Toward a New Understanding of Akan Origins," *Africa* 66, 2 (1996), 264.

[10] See, for instance, Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 30–32, and the maps in the volume.

[11] J.G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi* (Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933), 60.

composed of ten constituents (see Table 1).[12] The distance between towns in earlier times was reckoned by the time (based on the *ɛda*) it took to travel on foot; one would calculate time and distance, for example, in the sense of taking "forty days" to travel from Assin (Asen) in the Pra-Ofin basin to Jenné in the upper inland Niger delta, or "He lived two days away from the Danish fort."[13] Unlike the Islamic day, which begins and ends at sunset, the Akan day begins at daybreak (*anɔpa-hema*) and ends after midnight (*ɔdasuo mmiɛnsa*).[14]

Table 1: Constituents of the *ɛda* (day)

Adekyeɛ ("when things can be seen")

1. Anɔpa-hema (daybreak)
2. Anɔpa (early morning)
3. Bɔme boseawia (mid-morning)
4. Awiagyinaeɛ (noontime)
5. Awiaberɛ (early afternoon)
6. Mferɛtoberɛ (mid-afternoon)
7. Anwummerɛ (early evening)

Anadwo ("the cool of the day")

8. ɔdasuo baako (before midnight)
9. ɔdasuo mmienu (around midnight)
10. ɔdasuo mmiɛnsa (after midnight)

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[12] Johann Wilhelm Müller, *Die Afrikanische auf der Guineischen Gold-Cust Gelegene Landschafft Fetu*, as translated in Adam Jones, *German Sources for West African History, 1599–1669* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983), 277; P.E.H. Hair, *Barbot's West African Vocabularies of c. 1680* (Liverpool: Center of African Studies, University of Liverpool, 1992), 22; G.F.K. Arthur, *Cloth as Metaphor: (Re)reading the Adinkra Cloth Symbols of the Akan of Ghana* (Accra: Centre For Indigenous Knowledge Systems, 2001), 114; D.M. Warren, *Bibliography and Vocabulary of the Akan (Twi-Fante) Language of Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1976), 251; Kofi Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture* (Leipzig: Koehler and Amelang, 1963), 71–74; Wilks, "On Mentally Mapping," 179; Wilks, *Forests of Gold*, 198. The hour (*dɔn nhwere*), minute (*simma*), and second (*simma-sin*) are all recent and exogenous to the Akan.

[13] Christian G.A. Oldendorp, *Historie der caribischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Crux und Sanct Jan, insbesondere der dasigen Neger und der Mission der evangelischen Brüder-Unität Herrnhut, Erster Teil*, eds. Gudrun Meier, Stephan Palmié, Peter Stein, and Horst Ulbricht (Berlin: Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, 2000), 392; Fink, "Time and Space," 27; K.Y. Daaku, *Oral Traditions of Assin-Twifo* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1969). Here, I am referring to the Assin—Nyankumasi interview due to uneven pagination. On the Pra-Ofin basin, see Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities*, 87.

[14] The reader should bear in mind that Ghana is located just above the equator and thus receives an almost equal amount of daylight and moonlight from sunset to dawn. In the seventeenth century, J.W. Müller, among others, also noted some of the finer divisions of the day. See Jones, *German Sources*, 277.

Eighteenth-century European sources, for instance, described the Akan week as a unit of visitation to the fortified bases on the coast: "the Queen of Fetoo [Fetu] came & Stayed 8 or 9 days," "Fetoo Came, ye Queen and Stayed 8 days," or it was "rumoured that *Frempung's* and *Bang's* people, on the next *Bon die* ['good day'], which is in some eight days' time, will come down with our messengers to trade."[15] These observational notes referred, more precisely, to "[w]hat the natives called the week as Naryuchi" (*nnawɔtwe,* "eight days") or the week of seven inclusive days, in which the initial day is counted twice.[16] A week was also referred to as *dapɛn* ("a series of days") and, in some cases, *ayisi*.[17] Each day of the *nnawɔtwe* (and the *adaduanan*) is a combination of a prefix and a stem. The six prefixes are *nwona*, *nkyi*, *kuru*, *kwa*, *mono*, and *fo*. The seven stems, and their parallel in the Gregorian calendar, include *wukuo* (Wednesday), *yaw* (Thursday), *fi(e)* (Friday), *memene* (Saturday), *kwasi* (Sunday), *dwoɔ* (Monday), and *bena* (Tuesday). Writing in the late sixteenth century, Dutch merchant Pieter de Marees recorded the days of the Akan week in similar fashion: "eckura" (*wukuada*), "eggouwada" *(ɛyawoada*), "efira" (*ɛfiada*), "ennemado" (*memeneda*), "quachira" (*kwasiada*), "edouwera" (*ɛdwoada*), and "ebbenada" (*ɛbenada*).[18] Omitting Wednesday and Saturday for reasons unknown, J.W. Müller, the chaplain stationed at Fetu, also documented the passing of "quassi-da" (*kwasiada*), "egwju da" (*ɛdwoada*), "ohenne da" (*ɛbenada*), "ejauda" *(ɛyawoada*), and "efi-da" (*ɛfiada*).[19] Into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Akan week was found in most societies and in the historical record, reflecting a structure that still exists.[20]

Each of the stems derived from and, in some cases, were exact names of the seven *akra* ("souls") associated with the Akan Creator (*Onyankopɔn*)—often conceptualized as seven *abosom* (spiritual "emissaries") or ancients and functioned as the "root" of each personal first name or *kradin* (see Table 2).[21] These *abosom* appear to be the same as those

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[15] Memorandum Book kept at Cape Coast Castle, 20 September 1704, and 24 October 1704, T 70/1463, Public Record Office, National Archives at Kew (hereafter PRO: NA); Ole Justesen, ed., *Danish Sources for the History of Ghana, 1657–1754* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2005), 1: 418, 446; 2: 545, 562–63. "Bon die" was an auspicious day for trade.

[16] Boahen et al., *Ashanti Kings*, 117; R.S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1929), 110.

[17] Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante*, 66; J.B. Danquah, *Adaduanan: A Gold Coast Calendar of "Forty Days*" (n.p., n.d.), 20. A copy of Danquah's unpublished manuscript (ca. 1963) is in Ivor Wilks' papers at the Africana Library, Northwestern University. On related concepts of Akan time, see Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 169–77.

[18] See the Akan vocabulary in the appendix to Pieter de Marees, *Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)*, trans. and eds., Albert van Dantzig and Adam Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[19] Jones, *German Sources*, 278.

[20] See, for instance, Boahen et al., *Ashanti Kings*, 118; A.B. Ellis, *The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887), 218.

[21] The Akan Creator is realized as part and parcel of an unfolding process of creation and this may explain why the Akan acknowledge first but almost never pour libation to their Creator. As manifestations of

recorded by J.G. Christaller in the nineteenth century: "The seven days of the week are named after seven personal beings or Genii called Ayisi [Awusi], Adwo, Bena, Wuku, Yaw, Afi, Amen."[22] Broadly speaking, the predictable conduct and persona of individuals born on a particular day was embedded in his or her *kradin* ("soul name") and in calendrically structured rituals—specific observances on one's day of birth (e.g., dietary restrictions and fasting, no sexual intercourse, wearing white cloth, body smeared with white clay [*hyire*], meditation), salutations, and taboos (*nkyiwadeɛ*). Those born on the same day were thought to share similar qualities and personal challenges. Thus, the Sunday-born is a leader that society looks upon for guidance and leadership and he or she is appropriately known as *obue-akwan*, "clearer of the way"; however, they are very inquisitive and tend to be easily pulled into a thing of interest. The Monday-born is a calm person (*okoto*), peacemaker (*adwo*), protector, and supplicant, but have such a confidence that they tend to be unreceptive to advice external to his or her own. The Tuesday-born, like the Monday-born, has some arrogance and is known as *ɔbarima*, "manly" or "courageous"; but once tempered, they tend to be nurturing and achieve a balance between strength and compassion (*ogyam*). The Wednesday-born is a champion (*ntoni*, *atobi*) of the cause of others and thus a hero, but he or she can be mean-spirited (*obrisii*, "dark hearted") and tenacious. The Thursday-born is courageous and aggressive in a warlike manner (*preko*), and thus tend to be very guarded, judgmental, and appear to be ungrateful (*aye-anya-nya*, "one who suffers from ingratitude"). The Friday-born is an adventurer (*ntefo-a-ɔkyin*, "stubborn one born to be a wanderer") and indecisive and thus take time to settle, but are highly motivated and competent. Lastly, the Saturday-born tends to be talented (*atoapem*), wise, and problem-solvers, but also very sensational (*nya-beasa-wo*, "the sensationalist") and often have a very healthy appetite.[23] Though eighteenth-century clergyman Christian Oldendorp wrote inaccurately, "Many blacks, especially on the Gold Coast, have learned from the whites the division of time into weeks," he observed, "The [Akan] celebrate every week the day on which they are born, for instance Monday. On that day in the morning before washing themselves, they grind up [a plant] … in water and take a mouthful of the water three times and every time they spit out the water they pray to

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the Creator, the *abosom* reside in specific locales and permeate the ocean (*ɛpo kɛseɛ*), rivers (*asu*), lakes (*atare*), streams (*asuwa*), mountains (*mmepɔw*), forests (*akwae*), trees and plants (*nnua*), and microorganisms and animals (*mmoa*) that exist in the temporal domain of Asase Yaa ("earth"). These natural features are part of creation and, by extension, Onyankopɔn—one of several "praise names" for the Akan Creator. See also Danquah, *Adaduanan*, 51.

[22] Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante*, 599. Eva Meyerowitz claimed these "genii" were planets that governed the seven-day week and which were encapsulated in the phrase, "nna-mmere-nson" (seven-day times), a title for *ɔdomankoma* (a name or appellation for the Akan Creator). However, Dennis Warren's research in Takyiman and among the some of the people Meyerowitz claimed to have derived her information does not bear this out. See Eva Meyerowitz, *The Akan of Ghana: Their Ancient Beliefs* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 46; Eva Meyerowitz, *The Divine Kingship in Ghana and Ancient Egypt* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 59; Dennis Warren, "A Re-Appraisal of Mrs. Eva Meyerowitz's Work on the Brong," *Research Review* 7 (1970), 67.

[23] On some of these personal qualities, see Gyekye, *Akan Conceptual Scheme*, 172.

Jankombum [i.e., *Onyankopɔn*]."[24] Through the optic of the calendar, the spiritual-temporal character of the Akan person was thus revealed, ordered, and given meaning within the calendrical unit of *nnawɔtwe*, itself repeated six times within the *adaduanan* (of forty-two days) or fifty-four times within the *afe* (of 378 days).

Table 2. The Seven Abosom, Days, Names, and Appellations of the Week

***Onyame* akra** *(Creator souls)*	**ɛda** *(day)*	**ɔbarima-din** *(male name)*	**ɔbaa-din** *(female name)*	**mmrane** *("praise names"—male [M] and female [F])*
Ayisi, Awusi, Asi	Kwasiada	Kwasi	Akosua, Esi	M: Bodua, obue-akwan F: Adampo, awusi, dapaa
Adwo	Ɛdwoada	Kwadwo	Adwoa	M: Okoto, asere F: Akoto, badwo, adae
Bena	Ɛbenada	Kwabena	Abena(a)	M: Ogyam, ɛbo F: Kosia, atobiaa, gyamaa
Aku, Wuku	Wukuada	Kwaku	Akua	M: Ntoni, odaakuo, atobi F: Dompo, ɛkuseɛ, obisi
Yaw, Awuo	Yawoada	Kwaw, Yaw	Yaa, Aba	M: Preko, barima, kwaw F: Prekowaa, bosuo
Afi	Ɛfiada	Kwafi, Kofi	Afia, Afua	M: Kyin, otuo, okyini, fiifi F: Kyimmaa, nkɔso, beefi
Amen	Memeneda	Kwame	Amma, Amba	M: Atoapem, atoapoma F: Atoapemaa, nyamekyɛ

In practice, the continual association of the six prefixes and the seven stems, such as *nwona* [prefix] + *wukuo* [stem], resulted in the forty-two days of the *adaduanan*

[24] Oldendorp, *Historie der caribischen*, 386. Possessing a similar bias as Oldendorp, Thomas Bowdich, British emissary to the early nineteenth-century Asante capital of Kumase, wrote about the "inability of the natives to compute time." See T.E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (London: J. Murray, 1819), 228.

structure—the Asante *adaduanan* began on *nwonawukuo*, whereas the ones in Takyiman and Kwawu commenced on *fodwoɔ*.[25] Each distinctive day of the *adaduanan* fell within three categories: *dapaa*, *dabɔne*, and *dahunu*. *Dahunu* ("empty" or "ordinary" day) was regarded as an indifferent and common (non-festive) day, *dapaa* ("good day") as an auspicious and festive day, and *dabɔne* ("bad day") as inauspicious or "unlucky" in terms of the kinds of prohibitions that led Basel missionary and lexicographer J.G. Christaller to interpret the day as one where "the heathen natives do not work on the plantation, but may do domestic work."[26] Seventeenth-century observers on the former Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) recognized the significance of these categories, and one wrote, "people will not hardly even undertake anything important during them [i.e., *dabɔne* and *dapaa*]."[27] Invested with so much circumscribing power, these so-called "lucky" and "unlucky" days regulated the public and private aspects of Akan life wherein council meetings could not be held, transactions and government business were placed on hold, and marching troops would stop. An observant British soldier in the late nineteenth-century noted: "this explains the otherwise unaccountable delay which has always marked the progress of Ashanti invading armies."[28] Yet, the categories of *dapaa* and *dabɔne* were not mere inverses, but rather variations on the same theme couched in indigenous imperatives: an ideational and time ordering of society and its members away from the inauspicious toward "goodness" and "righteousness" (determined by the social constructs and constraints of the day). Thus, in *dapaa*, we find *pa* or *paa*, which (through the same intonation) carry the meanings of very well, goodness, genuine, and real. Likewise, *dabɔne* was a sacred, serious, reflective, and a critical day for the immoral and the righteous, those who abhor evil, and the perpetrators thereof.

Both *dapaa* (pl. *nnapaa*) and *dabɔne* (pl. *nnabɔne*) were propitious days in the context of ritual. However, *nnabɔne* targeted the anti-social behavior of *ɑbayifoɔ* (nefarious persons who do *bayie* or acute acts of wickedness) as well as regulated societal norms through adherence to taboos and the performance of specific rituals. To be sure, the most critical days of the *adaduanan* for the Asante and Takyiman—*akwasidae* and *awukudae* for the former and *monowukuo* (*abononnae*) for the latter—were celebrated on *nnabɔne* and preceded by *nnapaa*. *Dabɔne*, as opposed to *dapaa*, served as a time of reflection on culture within the natural order, in terms of organizing key spiritual resources in nature to address forces seen as antithetical to the social order.[29] It also seems that on *nnabɔne* the focus was more on the spiritual agencies reified within that cyclical unity of natural elements, humans (*nnipa*), ancestors (*nananom nsamanfoɔ*), the children yet unborn, and

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[25] Ivor Wilks, "Wangara, Akan and Portuguese in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, I: The Matter of Bitu," *Journal of African History* 23 (1982), 342–44; T.C. McCaskie, "Time and Calendar in Nineteenth-Century Asante: An Exploratory Essay," *History in Africa* 7 (1980), 181.

[26] Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante*, 59, 61, 65.

[27] Müller, *Die Afrikanische*, 180.

[28] Ellis, *Tshi-Speaking Peoples*, 220; McCaskie, "Time and Calendar," 184.

[29] For a useful comment on these matters, see McCaskie, *State and Society*, 153.

those "children" of the Akan Creator (Onyankopɔn), the *abosom*.[30] On *nnabɔne* the foregoing agencies are invoked and manifested themselves on the earth, in the air, in the forests, and on farms, hence, the restriction to farm on those days. The forests and the farms were the homes of these spiritual agencies and thus humans were viewed as tenants that essentially used rather than owned these areas of sustaining life and livelihood. To respect the restrictions and to meditate on the meaning of temporal life within the natural order, by way of pouring libation and providing offerings, one was thought to receive the appropriate blessings (*nhyira*) and be empowered by the presence of those invoked. Though these culturally prescribed and affirming activities were generally intelligible through the above three categories, there were key ideational and spiritual underpinnings of the *adaduanan* that framed human activities on specific days.

Those cultural underpinnings can only be fully disclosed when we treat the *adaduanan* structure as a "living cell" whose "nucleus" or central part contains the meanings associated with each prefix and stem that form its structural base. As suggested in J.B. Danquah's unpublished work on the calendar, the term *adaduanan* meant "forty days" on account of a common penchant for calculating in units of ten, but this colloquial phrase is false if read literally.[31] The "forty day" phrasing connoted a limited period of time without exactness (though culturally intelligible). Thus, in Takyiman, the Foɔdwoɔ Kɛseɛ festival occurred "forty days" after the Afodwowa festival, and only after the former and an additional "forty days" could indigenous rulers (*ahene*) of the festival-hosting settlements travel.[32] The *adaduanan* ordered definite patterns of human activity and deciphering the prefixes and stems that form the forty-two days is critical for an interior understanding of the *adaduanan* and the thinking that guided Akan life. It should be noted in the latter context that Akan thinkers express their thoughts in concrete terms, though they can and do have, for instance, concrete and abstract notions of time (*berɛ*).[33] Admittedly, the sources are limited and often inconsistent on the meanings of the prefixes and stems that form the *adaduanan*.[34] The six prefixes in question are *nwona*, *nkyi*, *kuru*,

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[30] Ònyànkópɔn is one of several gender-neutral terms that the Akan use to describe the attributes of and to refer to the Creator, whom the Akan regard more appropriately as *ɔbɔadeɛ*, The Creator. Other appellations include *Odomankoma* (lit. "the only one who gives grace" in that *wo nko ara na woma yɛn adom*, "it is only you who gives grace or favor"), *Onyame* (*nyam*—to shine; "the shining one" in that *yɛnya wo a na yɛamee*, "When we receive you, we are completely satisfied"), and *Onyankopɔn*. The *abosom* are considered emissaries of *Onyankopɔn*.

[31] J.B. Danquah, *Adaduanan,* 77. Wilks' handwritten note claims Danquah had given him perhaps one of the few copies the latter made.

[32] D.M. Warren and K.O. Brempong, *Techiman Traditional State,* pt. 2 (Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1971), 127.

[33] Gyekye, *Akan Conceptual Scheme*, 170.

[34] J. Gyekye-Aboagye, *Akan Nsemfuasekyere* (Cape Town: Centre for Advanced Study of African Society, 2003); D.M. Warren and O. Brempong, *Ghanaian Oral Histories: The Religious Shrines of the Techiman Traditional State* (Ames: Iowa State University Research Foundation, 1988), 117; P.F.W. Bartle, "Forty Days: The Akan Calendar," *Africa* 48, 1 (1978), 80–84; M.P. Ansah, "The Adae Festival," *Ghana Cultural Review* 2, 2 (1966), 18–19, 24–27; Danquah, *Adaduanan*, 51, 90, 94.

kwa, *mono*, and *fo*, whereas the seven stems consist of *wukuo*, *yaw*, *fi(e)*, *memene*, *kwasi*, *dwoɔ*, and *bena*. R.S. Rattray regarded the prefix *kwa*—as distinct from the title of the same name—as "worthless" and admitted the meaning of the other prefixes, much less the stems, were unknown to him with the exception of "fo," which he translated as festival, holy, and lucky.[35] Rattray provided no basis for this translation nor did he explain the distinction between *kwa* as a noun or title and *kwa* as an adverb or adjective. The quest to uncover the meanings embedded in the prefixes and stems is a challenge not many have pursued, though much has been written on the calendar.

"*Da bi mɛnya wo*," *ɛnyɛ ɛnnɛ asɛm* ("'One day I will get hold of you,' is not a matter of the present"): Questions of Origins and Internal Calendar Matters

Until T.C. McCaskie's 1980 research on time and calendar in precolonial Asante, the study of the Akan calendar had advanced little since the publication of Philip Bartle's 1978 article using the case of Kwawu. Of the two, Bartle's essay is most representative of the misinterpretations (due, in part, to translation errors) that have characterized study of the *adaduanan*, though a modicum of his data is consistent with sources listed in Table 3. Bartle's errors are numerous and only a few will be engaged here. The interpretation of the term *kuru*, one of the most integral prefixes which Bartle says derive from *kurow* ("town"), is untenable for the variants for town in Akan (e.g., *kurom*, *kurow*, *kro*) bear no semantic resemblance to *kuru*, a term that implies circularity, roundness, or completion (e.g., *kúrúkúrúwa*—circular; *kúrúwa*—cup, jug; *kùrú*—sore, ulcer [round or oval in shape]; *kùrú dan so*—to roof in circular form). Bartle's ideas about the birthday of "God" and the "Earth," linked to the stems *ya(w)*, *afi*, and *meme* are unsupported by linguistic or cosmological evidence. In fact, the false notion of a "Sky God" is a minor infraction—committed by Rattray as well—compared to the larger issue of Bartle's use of Rattray to support his claims.[36] Thus, the often quoted but uncorroborated statement made by Rattray, in which a doubtful Asantehene (leader of the Asante people) would refer to the Bono in Takyiman as the "the keepers of the king's [i.e., Asantehene's] calendar," was used by Bartle, and earlier by Jack Goody, to bolster an unconvincing case that has persisted into the present.[37] That case has to do with the tendency to assign Akan cultural assets to Mande or Islamic sources.

For Jack Goody, "the *adaduanan* system represents the conjunction of the Moslem (based on a seven-day week) and indigenous (based on a six-day week)" sources, whereas Bartle, drawing upon Goody, argued the six-day week (or prefixes) was of Guan origin and

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[35] Rattray, *Ashanti*, 115, 283.

[36] Bartle, "Forty Days," 82; Rattray, *Ashanti*, 115.

[37] Bartle, "Forty Days," 82; Rattray, *Ashanti*, 114; J. Goody, "The Akan and the North," *Ghana Notes and Queries* 9 (1966), 20. The use of Rattray as "historian" and his writings as historical source materials has been assessed by McCaskie, who noted, Rattray probably did not spend more than "four to five weeks in Kumase," the Asante capital, and where he could have accessed the Asantehene or other informants, and thus elucidated "the keepers of the king's calendar." See T.C. McCaskie, "R.S. Rattray and the Construction of Asante History: An Appraisal," *History in Africa* 10 (1983), 193.

the seven-day week (or stems) was of "northern" Mande or Islamic derivation.[38] Taken together, both claims amount to an Akan appropriation of the six-day Guan week and the seven-day Islamic week to create its "own" *adaduanan*. If these writers are correct, then Mande or Arab-Islamic societies should bear these claims out. The problem is, however, there are no calendrical structures in the Mande or Arab-Islamic world that bear resemblance to the *adaduanan*, and most Mande societies use Islamicized concepts for their non-prefixed week, revealing an unmistakable confluence between the Mande and Islamic calendars. Further, the indigenous weeks among the Mande are usually four or five days, which are linked to market day cycles and which have existed since at least the fifteenth century.[39] Here, the Mande five-day week corresponds to the Arab-Islamic week, which is actually a five-day week since five days are marked by ordinal numbers and the last two are reserved for gathering (*yaum al-jum'ah*) and rest (*yaum as-sabt*, "Sabbath day"). This Islamic "five-day" week, the supposed source of the Akan seven-day week, is itself in doubt in that the Arabic days, much like the Hebrew and Roman Christian days, are all numbered with the exception of their gathering or Sabbath day and are a function of the lunar cycle and appropriations from pre-Islamic sources or conquered peoples. Indeed, if the Akan employed an Islamic-like calendrical structure, there would have been no need to create, for instance, some kind of concordance between the Akan, Islamic, and European calendars in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Asante.[40] In short, a Mande or Islamic origin for the calendar cannot be supported; the Akan are an anomaly in greater West Africa, particularly the Western Sudan, on matters of language, architecture, social organization, spirituality, and calendar. The Akan language, for instance, is the only one to have maintained an old noun prefixal system in relation to its immediate linguistic family and its non-prefixed week; its architecture is typically rectangular (and not circular); and the Akan are matrilineal, non-Islamic, and follow a non-lunar calendar.[41] In consequence, we must look inward rather than outward. To that end, Table 3 lists the relevant sources used in the reassessment of the *adaduanan* to follow.[42]

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[38] Bartle, "Forty Days," 80–81; Goody, "Akan and the North," 20.

[39] Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante*, 600.

[40] Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 344–53.

[41] E.K. Osam, "The Loss of the Noun Class System in Akan," *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia* 26 (1993), 82; Florence Dolphyne, "Dialect Differences and Historical Processes in Akan," *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 2 (1976), 20; Vincent K. Farrar, "Traditional Akan Architecture and Building Construction: A Technological and Historical Study" (Ph.D. thesis, University of California–Berkeley, 1988), 192, 195. Sources for the matrilineal order and non-Islamic spirituality of the Akan are numerous and easily accessible.

[42] Bartle, "Forty Days," 80–84; Ansah, "Adae Festival," 18–19, 24–27; Danquah, *Adaduanan*, 51, 90, 94; Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage*, 71–74; Warren and Brempong, *Oral Histories*, 23, 143–46. In addition to the work of Warren and Brempong, the data used in the Takyiman column was also compiled from informants in the Takyiman (Techiman) District between 2001 and 2005. All of the following interviews were conducted by the author and most over the course of years through several conversations: Nana Akua Asantewa, December 2001–05, Nyafuman, Takyiman Township; Nana Kwame Bekoe, December 2002–05, Oboyawkrom, Takyiman Township; Yaw Boakye, 22 December 2002, Takofiano, Takyiman Township;

Table 3: Prefixes and Stems that form the *Adaduanan*

Sources	**J.B. Danquah** (ca. 1963)	**K. Antubam** (1963: 154)	**M.P. Ansah** (1966: 19)	**A.A. Opoku** (1973: 25)	**P.F.W. Bartle** (1978: 81–82)	**Takyiman Data** (2001–2005)
Prefixes						
	fɔ—prolific	*fo*—wetness or fertility	*fo*—fertile, generous	*fo*—love for another, rest, satisfied	*fo*—council that passes sentence, judgment day	*foɔ*—rest, generous, calm, love to another
	nwona—shielded	*nwona*—defense of society	*nwona*—shielded	*ngona*—care for someone, wellness	*nwuna*—sleep (death), funeral, covered day	*nwona*—care, wellness, surpass, free of blame
	nkyi—posterior	*nkyi*—survival	*nkyi*—destructive	*nkyɛ*—day is passing	*nkyi*—behind (hate), destroyed	*nkyi*—passing, no restrictions
	kuru—exalted	*kuru*—protection	*kuru*—exalted	*kuru*—holy, sacred	*kuru*—town (i.e., political), royal	*kuru*—sacred, complete
	kwa—leisurely	*kwa*—normal	*kwa*—open or free	*kwa*—empty, nothing	*kwa*—for nothing, free, unrestrained	*kwa*—ordinary, empty, freedom.
	mono—fresh	*mono*—novelty	*mono*—fresh	*mono*—fresh, new	*mono*—fresh (starting) day	*mono*—fresh, new
Stems						
	adwo—peace, calm	----	----	----	*dwo*—quiet (peace), calm day	*dwoɔ*—peaceful, cool, calm
	bena—hot, heated	----	----	----	*bena*—birthday of ocean; heat, boiling, cooking	*bene*—well-cooked (spiritually)
	awuku—death (*owu*), notable (*aku*)	----	----	----	*wukuo*—birthday of spider (mortal version of God)	*wuku*—cleansing, advocate, mean-spirited
	aberaw—strong man, eager for war	----	----	----	*ya*—birthday of Earth (a woman)	*yaw*—pain, suffering, bravery
	afi—to grow,	----	----	----	*afi*—fertility; in	*fi*—depart from,

Nana Kwaku Gyan, 9 December 2002, Mfante New Town, Takyiman District; Nana Kwaku Kenten, 22 December 2002, Oforikrom, Takyiman District; Kofi Sarpong, December 2001–05, Nyafuman, Takyiman Township; Nana Kofi Kyereme, 13 December 2002, Takyiman Township; Nana Yaw Mensah, December 2001–05, Nyafuman, Takyiman Township); Nana Kofi Oboɔ, December 2002–05, Nyafuman, Takyiman Township; Nana Akosua Owusu, 17 December 2002, Tanoso, Takyiman District; Nana Kofi Owusu, 18 December 2002, Pomaakrom, Takyiman Township); Nana Kwasi Owusu, December 2001–02, Seatwi, Takyiman Township; and Nana Akua Sewaa, 18 December 2002, Tanoboase, Takyiman District.

	fertility				some Fante states, birthday of Earth	come forth, travel
	amen—to devour	----	----	----	*mene*—birthday of Sky God (a man); ancient	*memene*—digest, to be really full, creation, ancient
	awisi—under the sun	----	----	----	*kwasi*—under day (i.e., under the sun = universe)	*kwasi* (*kwa*+*si*)—freedom, purify, smoke (*wusi*)

The lack of evidence for a Mande, Islamic, or Guan (of whom comparatively little is known) contribution to what became the *adaduanan* indicate an indigenous formulation among the Akan, though there is always the possibly of some Guan input as evidenced in linguistic similarities between the two languages. Nevertheless, further evidence from Akan culture reveals more about the interior of the *adaduanan* that in other sources or societies. Using Table 3 as a guide and the disclaimer that these interpretations are not final, the initial prefix *fo* or *foɔ* possess the dominant ideas of generosity, contentment, rest, and display of love to one another, whereas *nwona* is conceptually consistent on the ideas of settlement, wellness, free of blame or burden, and care for others. The third prefix *nkyi*, as in *nkyi-dwoɔ* (one of the most auspicious days among the Asante), suggest a non-restrictive day in "passing" that is followed by subsequent days. The fourth prefix *kuru* refers to completion, exaltedness, and a sacred day to perform ceremonies; in fact, two of the most sacred days of the Asante *adaduanan* are *kuru-dapaa-wukuo* (*awukudae*) and *kuru-kwasi* (*akwasidae*). *Kwa*, the fifth prefix, is free, unrestrained, and an ordinary day without burden. Equally, the last prefix *mono* is a fresh or new day. Combined, these prefixes attach themselves to one of seven stems and constitute the *adaduanan*.

Each stem that forms the seven-day inclusive week (*nnawɔtwe*) has a near one-to-one correspondence with the seven "souls" of the Akan Creator (conceptualized as the *abosom* or key ancients memorialized). These "souls" or *abosom* (sg., *ɔbosom*) served as mnemonics for the named seven-day week, and thus the Sunday (*kwasiada*, "Kwasi day") *ɔbosom* called *ayisi* or *awusi* (*wusi*, "smoke") was the convergence of the prefix "kwa" and the root "asi"—if we omitted "yi" or "wu" from *ayisi* or *awusi* we are left with the common denominator and root, "asi." It is important to note all Akan male "day names" shared the prefix *kwa-* ("servant") and each person served the *ɔbosom* of their day of birth as part of a range of ritual observances and as evidenced by the interchangeability of *kwa* and *akoa* ("servant").[43] That all the (original) female names begin not with *kwa-* (e.g.,

[43] Readers familiar with Akan "day names" will immediately question this claim and regard the names "Yaw" and "Kofi" as exceptions to the all male "day name" rule. I would agree, but on different grounds. For the name Yaw/Yao, an older version was "Kwao," a form borne out by a 1781 Dutch record that lists a "caption [and] Dutch chief broker" named "Quow Mysang" in Elmina, and today we find individuals in Bono and Fante communities carrying names like Kwaku Kwao. On the Dutch source, see Elmina—Dutch Contract, Elmina, 20 March 1781, Archief van de Nederlandische Bezittingen ter Kuste van Guinea (NBKG)

Kwadwo) but with the prefix *a-* (e.g., Adwoa) have only led to speculation, though this is a subject that deserves further treatment.[44] Be that as it may, *kwa* was the shortened form of *akoa*, and not only were *ayisi* and *awusi* synonyms for *kwasiada*, but, as Christaller noted in the nineteenth century, *ayisi* or *awusi* was "the genius [*ɔbosom*] of the day called Kwasida (*Sunday*)" and, expressed arithmetically, "Kwasi = akoa+Ayisi" (i.e., a servant to Ayisi).[45] When someone greeted the Sunday-born, he or she would reply to the salutation with "yaa ayisi," and this form of salutation and response applied to all the *ɔbosom*-based names of the week. Sunday-born persons were leaders (*obue-akwan*) and protectors (*bodua*) that served their communities and *ayisi*, but were often unrestricted in their inquisitiveness and thus had the tendency to be easily pulled into a thing of interest. The stem called *kwasi*, therefore, translates into an unrestricting day to purify (perhaps via "smoke" and attendant rituals) and engage in tasks requiring agility and leadership, suggesting Sunday was the start of the week (*nnawɔtwe*) since a synonym for the week was *ayisi*.[46]

The next *ɔbosom* and stem, *adwo*, and the praise name of *okoto* ("calm, unassuming") for the Monday-born peacemaker and supplicant resonates with the notion of *dwoɔ* as a peaceful, cool, or calm day. The *ɔbosom* and stem called *bena* ("the genius of Tuesday") points to a (spiritually) well-cooked or well-done day that is consistent with the praise name of *ogyam* ("good, compassionate") in that the Tuesday-born's arrogance (arising from doing something well) must to be tempered by a nurturing quality in order to achieve a balance between strength and compassion.[47] The *ɔbosom* and stem called *wuku* ("the genius of Wednesday") strongly imply a conjunction of *owu* ("death") and *aku* ("notable," "removal of hair"), and support the combined renderings of death, removal as a form of cleansing, and status as evident in the praise names for the Wednesday-born.[48] The head of a spiritualist (*ɔkɔmfoɔ*) or ruler (*ɔhene*), as "heroic" persons and "advocates" (*ntoni*), were shaven when they died, while *kuru-dapaa-wukuo* remains one of the most sacred days in terms of (ritual) cleansing and the removal negativity, and this day is aptly centered on the ancestors and their blackened stools. The *ɔbosom* and stem of *yaw* ("pain, bravery") and the praise name of *preko* ("assertive, courageous") for the Thursday-born makes it clear that bravery and confidence in the face of pain, suffering, or death were packaged into the stem, as the Thursday-born is also known to be war-like. The *ɔbosom* and stem of *afi* ("the genius of Friday") and the praise name of *okyin* ("itinerant, adventurer") for the Friday-born are consistent with the notion of *fi* as departing or

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314, The Hague. For Kofi, an earlier form was Kwafi and this name still exists as one of the *adaduanan*'s 42 days—Kwafie (kwa+fie).

[44] See, for example, Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante*, 599–600.

[45] Ibid., 276–77, 569, 594, 599. I find it odd—and no reason to explain—the absence of the "genius" for "yaw" (Thursday), though all the other days of the week are accounted for in Christaller's dictionary.

[46] Ibid., 594.

[47] Ibid., 14.

[48] Ibid., 568.

traveling.[49] The meaning of the *ɔbosom* and stem of *amen* ("the genius of Saturday") and the notion of *memene*, as to digest or be really full, is consistent with the healthy appetite for which the Saturday-born is known, though he or she is also known to be valiant, ancient, and heroic (*atoapem*).[50] In decoding the prefixes and stems that form the internal structure of the *adaduanan*, a composite and highly plausible interpretation of each day's meaning(s) emerges—a point to which I return in the next section—in ways that should dissolve all hope that that Islam and the enigmatic Guan produced the cultural thinking and behaviors codified in the *adaduanan*.[51]

Table 4: Days of the *Adaduanan* in Category and Character

ɛda (day)	**Category**	**Character and Interpretation**
Nwonawukuo	dabɔne	A day of settlement and wellness free of blame or burden wherein one can care or become an advocate for others or engage in forms of cleanings
Nkyiyaw	dabɔne	A non-restrictive day in passing, but with a focus on courage, war, pain, and work related to the earth
Kurufie	dabɔne	A day that is complete and sacred and that has a focus on travel, work that requires movement, or business
Kwamemene	dapaa or dabɔne	A ordinary day that is free or unrestricted with a focus on being satisfied or really full and on creation
Monokwasi	--	A fresh, new day of freedom to wash or cleanse (purification), and, in some instances, an end to that freedom in terms of restrictions
Fodwoɔ	dabɔne	A day of generosity, contentment, rest, love to one another in an atmosphere of peace, calm, and coolness
Nwonabena	--	A day of settlement and wellness free of burden; this day is also "well-cooked" (spiritually) and one where strength and compassion co-exist
Nkyiwukuo	dapaa or dahunu	A non-restrictive day in passing wherein one can engage in or advocate forms of cleanings
Kuruyaw	dabɔne	A day that is complete and sacred but with a focus on courage, war, pain, and work related to the earth
Kwafie	dabɔne	A ordinary day that is free or unrestricted but with a focus on travel, work that requires movement, or business
Monomemene	dapaa	A fresh, new day with a focus on being satisfied and on creation
Fokwasi	--	A day of kindness, contentment, rest, freedom to wash or

[49] Ibid., 126.

[50] Ibid., 312.

[51] This *adaduanan* cycle begins on the first day of the Asante *adaduanan*; however, the interpretations offered here apply to other societies who use the *adaduanan* within the Akan constellation. The double-dashes ("--") indicate no data with which to make a determination.

		cleanse (purification), and, in some cases, an end to that freedom in terms of restrictions
Nwonadwoɔ	dabɔne	A day of settlement, wellness, free of blame or burden, and caring for others in an atmosphere of peace, calm, and coolness
Nkyibena	dapaa	A non-restrictive day in passing; this day is also "well-cooked" (spiritually) and one where strength and compassion co-exist
Kuruwukuo	dabɔne	A day that is complete, sacred, and where forms of cleanings and the advocacy thereof can take place
Kwayaw	dabɔne	A ordinary day that is free or unrestricted but with a focus on courage, war, pain, and work related to the earth
Monofie	dabɔne	A fresh, new day related to travel, work involving movement, or business
Fomemene	dabɔne	A day of generosity, contentment, rest, and love to one another with a focus on being satisfied or really full and on creation
Nwonakwasi	dahunu	A day of settlement, wellness, free of burden, caring for others, and freedom to cleanse (purification), and, in some instances, restrictions on that freedom
Nkyidwoɔ	dapaa	A non-restrictive day in passing in an setting of peace, calm, and coolness
Kuruben	dabɔne	A day that is complete, sacred, and that is "well-cooked" (spiritually) and one where strength and compassion co-exist
Kwawukuo	dabɔne	A ordinary day that is free and where one can engage in and advocate for forms of cleanings
Monoyaw	dabɔne	A fresh, new day with a focus on courage, war, pain, and the earth
Fofie	dabɔne	A day of generosity, contentment, rest, love to one another but with a focus on travel, work that requires movement, or business
Nwona-memene	dapaa	A day of settlement, wellness, free of blame or burden, caring for others with a focus on being satisfied or really full and on creation
Nkyikwasi	dapaa	A non-restrictive day in passing and with freedom to cleanse (purification), and, in some instances, an end to that freedom in terms of restrictions
Kurudwoɔ	dapaa or dahunu	A complete and sacred day that is in an atmosphere of peace, calm, and coolness
Kwabena	dapaa	A ordinary day that is free or unrestricted, but that is also "well-cooked" (spiritually) and one where strength and compassion co-exist
Monowukuo	dabɔne	A fresh, new day to engage in and advocate for forms of cleanings
Foyaw	dabɔne	A day of generosity, contentment, rest, love to one another but with a focus on courage, war, pain, and work related to the earth

Nwonafie	dabɔne	A day of settlement, wellness, free of blame or burden, caring for others but with a focus on travel, work that requires movement, or business
Nkyimemene	dapaa	A non-restrictive day in passing with a focus on being satisfied or really full and on creation
Kurukwasi	dabɔne	A day that is complete and sacred with freedom to cleanse (purification), and, in some instances, an end to that freedom in terms of restrictions
Kwadwoɔ	dapaa	A ordinary day that is free or unrestricted in an atmosphere of peace, calm, and coolness
Monobena	dahunu or dabɔne	A fresh, new day that is also "well-cooked" (spiritually) and one where strength and compassion co-exist
Fowukuo	dabɔne	A day of generosity, contentment, rest, love to one another and where one can engage in and advocate for forms of cleanings
Nwonayaw	dabɔne	A day of settlement, wellness, free of blame or burden, care for others but with a focus on courage, war, pain, and work related to the earth
Nkyifie	dabɔne	A non-restrictive day in passing has a focus on travel, work that requires movement, or business
Kurumemene	dapaa	A complete, sacred day with a focus on being satisfied and on creation
Kwakwasi	dabɔne	A ordinary day that is free or unrestricted to wash or cleanse (purification), and, in some instances, an end to that freedom in terms of restrictions
Monodwoɔ	dapaa	A fresh, new day in an atmosphere of peace, calm, and coolness
Fobena	--	A day of generosity, contentment, rest, love to one another; this day is also "well-cooked" (spiritually) and one where strength and compassion co-exist

At the conclusion of the *adaduanan*, the cycle simply began again. The successive cycles constituted one "year" (*afe*)—marked by the saying, *afe nkɔ aporɔ abɛto yɛn so bio*, "the year has made its circular journey and met us again"—after which a new series commenced. Through the centuries, individual merchants, clergymen, military officers, and local leaders have all called the "year" of the Akan "Affi" (*afe*).[52] In the late eighteenth century, Christian Oldendorp, a Danish clergy, interviewed a number of Akan-speakers enslaved in the Danish Caribbean and deduced the following: "On their new year's day and at the time when they are planting corn (maize) and other foods, they meet under a tree and erect many stones. They thank Jankombum [i.e., *Onyankopɔn*] for food

[52] De Marees, *Historical Account* [Akan vocabulary appendix]; Jones, *German Sources*, 279; Ellis, *Tshi-Speaking Peoples*, 215; Boahen et al., *Ashanti Kings*, 117.

throughout the past year and ask him [sic] for blessing in the coming year."[53] The conclusion and beginning of an *afe* did occur in the context of the agricultural cycle described by Oldendorp, but the *odwira* (*dwira*, "to cleanse, purify") or analogous harvest ("new year") festivals that occasioned the *afe* fell historically between the European months of August and October or during *adɔmmerɛ* (the second rainy season) for the Bono and Asante peoples. In this way, the harvesting of new yams (*bayerɛ mono*) and key actors in each polity determined the timing of such festivals.[54] Though the Akan observed "several *Feasts* [i.e., festivals], in terms of Years, Months, and Days," as Dutch revenue agent Willem Godschalck van Focquenbroch noted in the late seventeenth century, the *odwira* and analogous occasions held greater meaning and were not "yam festivals," though associated with the ritual consumption of yam. *Odwira* in Asante or the Bono *fofie* festival involved rituals of cleansing and purification that underscored the trans-dimensional character of the spiritual and temporal community, served as a forum for allegiance to the polity, and an opportunity to examine the state of the nation.[55]

The first Asante *odwira* is thought to have occurred immediately after the Asante defeated Dɛnkyira in 1701, and thus *odwira* is temporally associated with the inception of Asanteman (Asante nation).[56] This association, however, may have to be revised given recent archaeological research that suggest a much earlier period for the emergence of (those who became) Asante or for that matter Akan societies within the limits of the dense forest.[57] For Asanteman, the Asantehene in consultation with political and spiritual advisors determined the precise timing of *odwira*—in ways that are not fully understood—in the nineteenth-century and not without fluctuations, though calendrical matters involving timekeeping and concordance with the calendars of Islamic and European trading partners fell under the purview of Gyaasehene's staff.[58] The Bono *fofie* festival,

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[53] Oldendorp, *Historie der caribischen*, 387.

[54] McCaskie, *State and Society*, 157; McCaskie, "Time and Calendar," 192–93; Busia, *Political System of Ashanti*, 29; Rattray, *Ashanti Law*, 109–10, n. 2; Boahen et al., *Ashanti Kings*, 117.

[55] E.M. Beekman, *The Crippled Heart: An Introduction to the Life, Times and Works of Willem Godschalck van Focquenbroch* (Leiden: Astraea, 1997), 123; McCaskie, *State and Society*, 146; Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities*, 121.

[56] McCaskie, *State and Society*, 145; Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 112.

[57] B.C. Vivian, "Recent Excavations at Adansemanso," *Nyame Akuma* 46 (1996), 41–42; P. Shinnie and A. Shinnie, *Early Asante* (Calgary: Department of Archeology, the University of Calgary, 1995), 6–7, 12; P.L. Shinnie and B.C. Vivian, "1991 Asante Research Project," *Nyame Akuma* 36 (1991), 6; B.C. Vivian, "Origins of the Asante Research Project: 1989–90 Excavations at Asantemanso," *Nyame Akuma* 34 (1990), 19–22; P. Shinnie, "Early Asante: Is Wilks Right?" in J. Hunwick and N. Lawler, eds., *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 198, 201.

[58] Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 345; Rattray, *Ashanti Law*, 109–10, n. 2; Busia, *Political System of Ashanti*, 29; McCaskie, *State and Society*, 151. McCaskie notes, "in Kumase personnel attached to the Gyaasewa and Manwere stools employed cowries to maintain a simple arithmetical record of the passing days of the *adaduanan* cycle and that this mechanism was supplemented by others." See McCaskie, "Time and Calendar," 184. Between 1896 and 1985, the *odwira* languished in abeyance and was resurrected in

unlike the Asante *odwira*, required the consent of the Takyiman state ɔ*bosom* Taa (Tanɔ) Mensa and this could only come after a Takyimanhene had been on the stool (symbol of indigenous authority) for at least three years and the head spiritualist (ɔ*bosomfohene*) for Taa Mensa had completed his training.[59] Once these conditions have been met, consent—in ways more transparent than in Asante—involved divination by the ɔ*bosomfohene* in the presence of the Takyimanhene, key spiritual and political actors, whom were all agriculturalists and thus could empirically confirm the appearance and abundance of new yams on their respective farms. While in Takyiman in the early twentieth century, Rattray observed, "At some Chief's courts was a special official detailed to check off the months, dropping a cowry into a bag each new moon. In Kumasi it was the Gyase Hene [sic] who was responsible."[60] The moon cycle of 29.5 or 30 days was too short in relation to the 42-day *adaduanan* and it seems doubtful the moon was used to monitor the movement from one *adaduanan* to another, though it could have served other timekeeping purposes. In fact, unlike the Borana (Oromo) lunar-stellar calendar of Kenya in which the year starts with the observation of the new moon in conjunction with the star Beta Trianguli, the Akan calendar amongst the Bono or Asante was conditioned by matters of ecology, politics, and spirituality and these three factors in some combination provided the conventions that governed the calendar's regularity.[61] A.B. Ellis, writing in the late nineteenth century, claimed that time was kept by the "priests" (ɔ*bosomfoɔ* or ɔ*kɔmfoɔ*) who announced the commencement of the annual festivals and this may have been so as elders in Takyiman, less than a century later, recalled, "the calendar was reckoned by the festivals celebrated."[62] The factor of spirituality in this context deserve greater consideration for it is Taa Mensa who must be consulted for determining the timing of the *fofie* festival and the "new year," ritually consume the new yam first and thus authenticate the occasion, and

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Kumase in 1985 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the British colonial "restoration" of the Asantehene and the Asante nation.

[59] The *fofie* festival, in the same spirit as *odwira*, was conceived as a period of reaffirmation of shared values, spiritual renewal, social cohesion and settling of disputes, and assessing and planning for the progress of the society. During the festival, rituals are performed for the *abosom* and ancestors (*nananom nsamanfoɔ*), wherein the blackened ancestral stools are purified once every three years at the Atweredaa River. The *fofie* festival is distinct from the annual *fodwoɔ* festival for the Takyiman state ɔ*bosom* Taa Mensa, which commences before the former. Fodwoɔ is also the day on which the "New Yam Festival" occasioning the "new year" in Banda—a non-Akan polity that has adopted Akan institutions—takes place. See Ann B. Stahl, *Making History in Banda: Anthropological Visions of Africa's Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 67.

[60] Rattray, *Ashanti Law*, 110, n. 2. Müller, *Die Afrikanishe*, 154, noted the tying a knot in a cord marked the division of the year; this also calculated "the general festival which is held every year in Fetu and takes place in September."

[61] Laurance R. Doyle, "The Borana Calendar Reinterpreted," *Current Anthropology* 27, 3 (1986), 286; Marco Bassi, "On the Borana Calendrical System: A Preliminary Field Report," *Current Anthropology* 29, 4 (1988), 610, 623.

[62] Ellis, *Tshi-Speaking Peoples*, 216; Danquah, *Adaduanan*, 77; D.M. Warren and K.O. Brempong, *Techiman Traditional State,* pt. 1 (Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1971), 30.

whose annual festival occurs before the *fofie* festival on *fodwoɔ*—the start of the Bono *adaduanan*.[63]

Mmerɛ dane a, yɛdane yɛn ho bi ("If times change, we change ourselves too"): Calendar and Culture History

The Asante and Bono *adaduanan* underscore the regional distinctions that exist between Akan societies as well as the shared cultural views and values from which those differentiations emanate. Insignificant discrepancies and greater continuity between the Bono and Asante *adaduanan*, for instance, were the product of the ways in which spiritual culture and politics shaped the regularity of the calendar, respective ecological sites of occupation, and how each distinct expression of Akan culture shaped nature in the interior of the Asante forest (*kwae*) or the forest-savanna nexus occupied by the Bono. Ivor Wilks theorized the *adaduanan* was used to conceptually map "Greater Asante" in the early nineteenth century and possibly the internal divisions of Asanteman with the capital of Kumase as the point of origin.[64] Though Wilks cautioned this idea was merely a plausible speculation, archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests other instances or conditions in which the *adaduanan* might have emerged and what purposes were served by this cultural mechanism. The major archaeological sites of the forest interior, most of which are positioned in three of the four compass points if we used Kumase as an axis, show overlap in occupation and evidence of settled life and sociocultural development, archaeologically dated from 3500 BC to AD 1840 and the present.[65] The Akan are largely forest bound and the archaeological record of early Akan settlements support the view that the Akan or proto-Akan inhabited the forest and its fringes for at least the past two millennia, if not longer. In the vegeculture and tropical forest zone where root crops and oil palm dominated, oil palm was found near the forest edge; the high forest area that Ghana and its eastern and western neighbors occupy included areas of major yam and oil palm cultivation as well as key sites of early Akan settlement and culture development.

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[63] In 1970, Takyiman elders remarked, "The yam festival is a custom and must be celebrated every year. When yam is ready to be harvested, they first give some to the [*abosom*] because they protect the state. This custom is ancient and anyone who is not a Christian cannot eat new yams before the [*abosom*] have first eaten some." See Warren and Brempong, *Oral Histories*, 117.

[64] Wilks, "On Mentally Mapping," 182–85.

[65] D.W. Phillipson, *African Archaeology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 237; F. Korkor, "An Investigation of the Kintampo 'Neolithic' Complex Site at Nkukua Buoho near Kumasi, Ghana," *Nyame Akuma* 55 (2001), 45; Vivian, "Recent Excavations at Adansemanso," 41–42; P. Shinnie, and A. Shinnie, *Early Asante*, 12; P.L. Shinnie and B.C. Vivian, "1991 Asante Research Project," 5; S.K. McIntosh and R.J. McIntosh, "Current Directions in West African Prehistory," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 12 (1983), 237; S.K. McIntosh and R.J. McIntosh, "Recent Archaeological Research and Dates from West Africa," *Journal of African History* 27 (1986), 441; E. Keteku, "Radiocarbon Dates from Nyanawase," *Nyame Akuma* 24–25 (1984), 4; J.N. Debrah, "Archaeological Survey of the Krobo Mountain Ancient Settlements," *Nyame Akuma* 21 (1982), 17; T. Shaw, "Chronology of Excavation at Dawu, Ghana," *Man* 62 (1962), 136.

Both yam and oil palm are critical indigenous food crops, and oil palm pollen was prominent from 1550 BC onward—a period indicative of an expanded forest, drier climate, human settlement in the forest, and material culture suggestive of sociocultural development.[66] The forest fringe has long been a locus of Bono settlement and the sacred Tanɔ River, which is home of the most historic and revered *abosom* in Akan life. The forest fringe was also home to the indigenous oil palm, especially along rivers, and the dense strands of oil palm in the forest interior indicated early human occupation and forest clearance with stone axes. Clearance of the forest close to Kumase at around 1455 BC must reflect the establishment of a subsistence economy based on the cultivation of yam and oil palm, and possibly animal domestication.[67] In this context, it is conceivable that the ritual consumption of yam and palm oil developed in harvest "new year" periods—yams were and are harvested in July and September (*kitawonsa* and *ɛbɔ*)—where both indigenous crops were prominent and where these food items became staple offerings to ancestors. It is in this context that the calendar might have had its origins: the internal "record" of the *adaduanan* points to early agriculture and hunting; a largely sedentary life sustained by agricultural surplus and trade. The fluidity of the seasons rather than the recently invented "months" contextualized definite patterns of human activity in the forest and on its fringes.

That the "months" of the Akan calendar have been historically unstable and contradictory has little to do with the primary structure of the *adaduanan*. The issue can be found in the "months" themselves in that they are essentially concepts used previously to account for seasonal and climatic variations, but after European contact they were fashioned to fit the twelve months of the Gregorian calendar. In 1602, Pieter de Marees recorded the "months," which began with January, as follows: "kuapera," "sanda," "ebbo," "ebobere," "birafe," "deefou," "a sarcen," "adessensanda," "abessem," "ahanamattan," "ebire," and "mamaure."[68] Several of these (intelligible) concepts referred to the seasonal climate—"ebbo" (*ɛbɔ*, "foggy") and "ebobere" (*ɛbɔberɛ*, "foggy time"). In the later seventeenth century, Müller only named three seasonal activities in terms of "odossin" (ploughing), "eduwoiju" (sowing), and "orowoiju" (harvesting); by the late nineteenth century, Ellis was silent on the "months" and the seasons, and Christaller's uncertainty about these "months" is revealed in his rendering of *ayɛwohomumo* as "about June" or *ɔpɛpɔn* as "about January," but perceptively added that the latter was "the season of the year in which the *harmattan* wind prevails."[69] In 1907, Asantehene Agyeman Prempeh, a man conditioned by European schooling and Christianity, listed the three seasons of

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[66] M.R. Talbot, "Lake Bosumtwi, Ghana," *Nyame Akuma* 23 (1983), 11.

[67] Osam, "Noun Class System in Akan," 81–106; Farrar, "Traditional Akan Architecture"; B.W. Andah, "Identifying Early Farming Traditions of West Africa," in Bassey Andah, Alex Okpoko, Thurstan Shaw, and Paul Sinclair, eds., *The Archaeology of Africa: Food, Metals and Towns* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 250; M.A. Sowunmi, "The Beginnings of Agriculture in West Africa: Botanical Evidence," *Current Anthropology* 26, 1 (1985), 128; O. Davies, "The Origins of Agriculture in West Africa," *Current Anthropology* 9, 5 (1968), 478, 481.

[68] See Akan vocabulary in appendix of De Marees, *Historical Account*.

[69] Müller, *Die Afrikanishe*, 279; Ellis, *Tshi-Speaking Peoples*; Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante*, 387–88, 591.

asuoɔbere ("great rains"), *ɔpɛbere* ("dry season"), and *ofupɛ* ("period between the great rainy and dry seasons"), in addition to twelve "months" that began with January and which shared little in common with de Marees' list: "jojuan," "oflesuo," "ajin kwa," "ohuan kotonima," "ayerhunmumo," "kokosukogua," "bompondia," "sandakesie," "ahinir moor," "bubuo," "openima," "opoponoo," "odiefu."[70] Though a few of these concepts are still used today for the "months," Prempeh's order bears little resemblance to the contemporary sequence that follows the Gregorian calendar, or to the "months" described by Rattray—beginning also with January—two decades later: "opepono," "gyefua," "dwengwan," "fosuo," "fweankokonima," "ayewohomumu," "kwakosu-kwakwawia," "sanakese," "bompore," "ahineme," "obubuo," and "openima."[71] Characterized by fluctuation and invention, these "months" reflect seasonal characteristics over time and across numerous observers; their only consistency is that they all refer to seasonal or climatic phenomena (see Table 5). Had Müller or his informants, for instance, examined the indigenous concepts corresponding to the seasons, he would have concluded the calendrical year consisted of nine *adaduanan*—with adjustments over the years—rather than erroneously arguing, "a whole year [was] divided… into eight months." [72]

Table 5: Outline of the Seasons and their Characteristics

adɔmmerɛ (odwira is part of this period)	A seasonal period punctuated by the second rainy season; the peak of the harvesting season and storage of collected foods in storehouses (*sanaa*), and experiences of dew and foggy weather (*ɛbɔ*) conducive for replanting.
ɔbɛsaa	A harvest time period of rainfall interspersed with sunshine; a period between the rainy season and harmattan (*ɔpɛ*).
obubuo	The concluding period of harvesting; *obubuo* (*bu*, "to break off, to reap"; *bubu*, "to cut") derives from the withering that occurs to occasion the breaking of the yam stem.
Ofupɛ	The seasonal period between the rainy and the dry season; it is *ɔpɛ-bere* (the time of harmattan, "when it blows").
ɔpɛnimaa	The "small" dry season (*ɔpɛ*, "dry season"; *nimaa*, "small, miniature"); mild dry climate wherein one prepares the land for farming.
ɔpɛpɔn	The "big" dry season of harmattan (*pɔn*, "big, great"); severe dry and cold climate, which affects vegetation and the (human) skin.
Mpɛ-noa	A period contiguous with the dry season and marking the end of the harmattan season; one anticipates rainfall and prepares the land for farming.

[70] Boahen et al., *Ashanti Kings*, 117–18. Debora Fink's study of time in Takyiman concluded, "I believe, in fact, that the year is … based on seasons and that these seasons are based on climatic variation. The months … are probably correlated with the seasons." See Fink, "Time and Space," 52.

[71] Rattray, *Ashanti Law*, 110, n. 2 (see Danquah, *Adaduanan*, 94).

[72] Müller, *Die Afrikanische*, 154, 180.

ɔbɛnem— oforisuo	A period where yam mounds are made and crops are planted. Hence, during this period, there is *oforisuo* or "the calling out for rain" (*frɛ*/*fre*, "to call, summon"; *osuo*, "rain"); short rainfall occurs for the planting of yam.
Asusuo	The period of the first or great rainy season occasioned by storms and heavy rainfall, which forces people indoors. For some, small crabs abound. The latter part of this period precedes harvest and since there are instances of food shortage people are advised to "control their hands" (*kitawonsa*). *Kitawonsa* (a-kita-wo-nsa, "to hold-your-hands") also refers to the pain of hands and the arduous task of removing weeds from farms during the heavy rains.

Odwira or analogous events almost always marked the harvest periods, though more so in and around *ɛbɔ* (September) than earlier in the calendar "year."[73] The Akan were aware that the calendar required adjustments to maintain a schedule that adhered to the agricultural cycle, and thus one *adaduanan* was subtracted each three-year period to ensure that *odwira* and the like occurred between early August and late September.[74] Thus, if Akan "year" A fell on August 1, "year" B on September 12, then the third "year" C would fall somewhere in August for the Gregorian calendar observer; for the Akan, the start of the "year" was never on or about a day but rather a flexible time period that followed (and occupied) an *adaduanan* and the seasonal periods. The seasonal periods were fluid in that one melted into the other. These periods, rather than the harvest periods, however, would have certainly affected and reflected settlement patterns. In terms of settlement patterns, it is important to note the term or suffix *manso* may hold additional insights for understanding early Akan society since a number of ancient Akan towns and urban capitals in the forest interior and on its fringes are unambiguously marked by the suffix—Bonomanso, Asantemanso, Adansemanso, Asenmanso, and Abuakwa Atwumamanso. The conceptual and pragmatic links between processes of Akan settlement and culture development on one hand, and the emergence of a calendrical system on the other are evident in the *adaduanan*'s emphasis on ordering labor and freedoms relative to agricultural life, regulating spiritual and temporal life, rituals and the ritual consumption of yam and oil palm (products), and as a matrix for conduct and day-to-day life. If aspects of human history are a response to seasonal, ecological, and celestial cycles, then the Akan *adaduanan* reflected those dimensions of temporal reality ranging from business transactions to farming on auspicious or inauspicious days, to regulating spiritual and material life. The dominant sets of ideas exposed through an analysis of the prefixes and stems that form each day of the *adaduanan* include freedom monitored by responsibility; generosity, love for one another, contentment, and peace; arrogance tempered by nurturing

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[73] Jones, *German Sources*, 30, 84; Willem Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London: J. Knapton, 1705), 296.

[74] Danquah, *Adaduanan*, 77–78; J.B. Danquah, *Gold Coast: Akan Laws and Customs and the Akim Abuakwa Constitution* (London: Routledge, 1928), 135; Eva L.R. Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan* (London: Faber, 1951), 145.

and a balance between strength and compassion; settlement and life protected without danger; travel and commerce; cleansing and the removal negativity; being full and satisfied; courage in the face of suffering or death; and the sacred and seriousness of life. Table 4 suggests how those dominants ideas were realized in a dynamic social and agrarian order that was certainly affected by factors of disease (e.g., malaria), external and internal conflict, and commerce between the coast and the forest fringe and beyond.

If our analysis of the extant evidence has been accurate, we can be confident the *adaduanan* did order patterns of Akan activity and behavior in short cycles and placed greater emphasis on—like the *dabɔne* and *dapaa* days—peace, cleansing, sacredness, contentment, settlement, balancing strength and compassion, and the drive to temper human feelings and actions. The calendrical framework detailed in this essay provides a perspective on key social processes, behaviors, and some of the concepts involved in ordering Akan societies, especially in the last half millennium.

Over the past five centuries, documentary evidence exists for the use of the *adaduanan* in intra-Akan and external relations and in specific historical instances. On 20 January 1482, a historically significant Akan-Portuguese "business" meeting occurred between Diogo d'Azambuja and Caramansa (Kwamena Ansa?).[75] That meeting and the events that followed marked the start of European nationals representing their governments or private companies on the former Gold Coast, and changed the coastal and interior course of Akan history. D'Azambuja was given orders to find a site to build the fort—on the peninsula adjacent to the Benya River (or lagoon)—that would become São Jorge da Mina ("Mina"). D'Azambuja arrived on Wednesday, 19 January 1482 at the village of Edina (Elmina) and negotiated with Caramansa the following day, a Thursday. We do not know at what time d'Azambuja and company arrived, nor why he did not meet on Wednesday. We are told that the meeting was planned in agreement with Caramansa. This kind of meeting, however, was not new for the merchant João Bernades, with whom d'Azambuja spoke before scheduling his meeting with Caramansa, had a ship trading in "gold with Caramansa, lord of that village [i.e., Edina]."[76] Thus, we can infer that Caramansa settled on a Thursday because of prior dealings with the Portuguese and a calendrical awareness that (limited) business was allowed on that day. Moreover, most coastal Akan societies viewed Thursdays as a "(sacred) day of rest," in the words of Pieter de Marees who made this observation in the late sixteenth century. Thursday was the natal day of the earth (Asase Yaa), whereas Tuesday was the "day of rest" for the Fante who were predominantly fisherman along the coast.[77] An anonymous Portuguese report on Mina (dated 29 September 1572) complained that Christian converts also called

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[75] António Brásio, ed., *Monumenta Missionaria Africana—África Ocidental,* 1st series (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1952–1988), I, 21–29; G.R. Crone, trans. and ed., *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1937), 116–19.

[76] Crone, *Cadamosto*, 116. On Caramansa, see P.E.H. Hair, *The Founding of the Castelo de Sao Jorge da Mina: An Analysis of the Sources* (Madison: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin, 1994), 4, 16, 18, 54–66.

[77] Jones, *German Sources*, 30–31, 64, 73; Bosman, *Accurate Description*, 75.

"themselves by heathen names, [for instance,] … the woman Maria [was also known] as Adua" (i.e., Adwoa, "Monday-born female"), showing a key awareness of the "day names" that derived from the calendrical week (*nnawɔtwe*) and the *adaduanan* structure.[78] We can only deduce that the Thursday on which Caramansa and d'Azambuja met was a *dapaa*, for in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries commercial and other activities circumscribed by the *adaduanan* fell under either *dabɔne* or *dapaa* days that determined when Akan leaders and merchants traded with Europeans inland or on the coast.[79]

In nineteenth-century Asante, all Thursdays (i.e., Nkyiyaw to Nwonayaw) stressed a prohibition on all agriculture and warfare, and though limited state business was allowed, this emphasis is consistent with our interpretation that "yaw" days had a particular focus on courage, war, pain, and (a prohibition on) work related to the earth.[80] Specifically, key events occurred throughout nineteenth-century Asante on "yaw" days. The Asante leadership held a council meeting to work out a timetable for Gyaman armed intervention after exhausting diplomatic options on Nwonayaw, 6 November 1817. On Monoyaw, 27 January 1842, H.J. Pel, a European visitor, arrived in Kumase. With a few exceptions, most European visitors on business to the Asante capital did the same. C.C. Lees arrived in Kumase on Nkyiyaw, 23 July 1874; K. Barrow and B. Kirby were both instructed to enter and they arrived in Kumase on Kuruyaw, 26 April 1883; and H.M. Hull was instructed to enter and he arrived in Kumase also on Kuruyaw, 2 April 1891. At the end of the nineteenth century, A.B. Ellis noted, in summary form, "Sometimes, in Coomassie [Kumase] almost always, a message is returned that the visitor cannot be received on the day he has proposed; and visitors are not unfrequently [sic] detained in the villages in the vicinity of the Ashanti capital for some days, if not weeks, before the King announces that he is ready to receive them."[81] These events do not represent an instance of projecting nineteenth-century data into the past, but demonstrates the explanatory powers of the *adaduanan* over time and based on an impressive consistency in indigenous thought patterns.

Consistent with the theme of warfare and diplomacy, the Akan society of Akwamu in the early eighteenth century provides another instance where calendrical thinking was employed. As noted by other writers, Akan warfare was usually planned and military engagement was for most a last resort, even on the battlefield, after diplomatic means had been exhausted. In this context, it is noteworthy that the Akwamu army unfailingly returned from military campaigns in the European month of July or the Akan season of *asusuo* and on several days marked as Nwonadwoɔ and Kurubena in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Akwamuhene Ado and his Akwamu army were at the Volta River on their return from Ouidah (Whydah) on 29 June 1702. They crossed the Volta en route to their capital on July 13, and the army arrived in the capital three days later on July 17

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[78] A. Teixeira da Mota and P.E.H. Hair, *East of Mina: Afro-European Relations on the Gold Coast in the 1550s and 1560s* (Madison: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin, 1988), 78.

[79] Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities*, 212, 272, n. 163–65; Müller, *Die Afrikanische*, 180.

[80] McCaskie, *State and Society*, 152–72; McCaskie, "Time and the Calendar," 182–95.

[81] Ellis, *Tshi-Speaking Peoples*, 244–45.

(Nwonadwoɔ). A year later, an Akwamu-Dutch treaty was concluded between the Dutch and Akwamuhene Akwonno on 3 April 1703 (Kurubena). Five years after this treaty, the Akwamu army arrived in their capital after Kwahu repelled their invasion on 9 July 1708 (Nwonadwoɔ); on 1 July 1710 (Kurubena), however, an Akwamu army returned home triumphant after a series of defeats inflicted upon the same Kwahu. Beyond the apparent calculated nature and yearly intervals of Akwamu engaging in warfare, what might explain the preference for a return home in *asusuo*? *Asusuo* is the first rainy season occasioned by storms and heavy rainfall that forces people indoors and causes instances of food shortage where people are advised to "control their hands" (*kitawonsa*, "hold-your-hands"). One explanation is that up until the mid-nineteenth-century military activity on the coast and in the forest was confined to the dry season of November to March or December to April, and, depending on the duration of the campaign, a returning army might find it appropriate to return to a season of (minor) harvest, since yams were harvested in *kitawonsa* and *ɛbɔ* (July and September). The specific re-occurrence of "kurubena" and "nwomadwoɔ" may be explained by their "dabɔne" categorization: no or limited business was transacted on these "sacred" days, and Nwomadwoɔ was devoted to ritual preparations for *awukudae*.

On 7 January 1818, specific rituals were performed on *kurudapaawukuo* (*awukudae*) to ensure the success of an Asante campaign. On *awukudae*, limited state business occurred, the day carried a range of restrictions (*akyiwadiɛ*) and focused on cleansing and other rituals wherein the Asantehene made offerings to ancestors and publicly distributed gifts to European visitors, if any, on official business. The fulfillment of such obligations and overtures made by the Asantehene consistently took place between 1816 and 1874. Recall that these "wukuo" days were days in which one engaged in forms of cleansing, and had a focus on travel, business or work that required movement. In nineteenth-century Asante, and perhaps earlier, all the "wukuo" (Wednesday) and "fi(e)" (Friday) days allowed for limited state business, though no traveling was allowed on two Fridays (i.e., Kwafie and Fofie) and no state business was allowed on Fofie. For all the "bena" days or Tuesdays, no or limited state business took place and on two Tuesdays (i.e., Kwabena and Monobena) traveling was prohibited. Tuesday was also important especially among coastal Akan settlements. Since at least the seventeenth century, several European observers on the Gold Coast remarked, "Tuesday is their Sabbath and on this day they do not go out to the sea" and sacred fishes were thrown back into the water if caught, while "every year they [held] two dances [i.e., 'festivals']—one where they sow, the other where they reap. They do this for four weeks [i.e., one *adaduanan*]."[82] The first "dance" referred to an "annual [gathering] together in each and every village on a certain day in April" wherein these villagers consulted their *abosom* on matters related to fertility of the land and women, prospects of war and for harvesting, trade, and health.[83] The second "dance" referred to the "great festival," as Müller called it, and this *odwira*-like festival was "held at the beginning of September" among coastal Akan settlements who also prohibited farming on "bena" days or Tuesdays.[84] On one of these "bena" (Tuesday) or "well-

[82] Jones, *German Sources*, 30–31, 33, 36, 86, 118.

[83] Ibid., 36.

[84] Ibid., 167.

cooked" days of goodness and compassion, Asante messengers arrived at the coastal areas of Elmina and fort Christiansborg to announce the death of Asantehene Osei Yaw. They arrived on Nkyibena, 25 March 1834, but did not make the announcement on that day for bad news was prohibited on this auspicious day of Nkyibena.

The most auspicious days in Asante were "dwo" days or Mondays. In this context, Monodwo was perhaps best day for all business, traveling, and for the installation of an Asantehene. As days that carried an atmosphere of peace and calm, it is not surprising that all the "dwo" days were "good days" (*nnapaa*), though Nwonadwoɔ was also reserved for sacrifices and preparations for *awukudae*, whereas state business occurred on Kurudwoɔ and the Asantehene's reception of a Dutch emissary in 1857 serves as one of many instances where business or traveling was prohibited on Foɔdwoɔ.[85] Limited state business also occurred on all the "memene" days or Saturdays, but these days were largely regarded as *nnapaa* (days of goodness and genuineness), though on 12 April 1704 (Kurumenene) the death of the "King of Fettue [Fetu]" was shared with the British at Cape Coast Castle that afternoon owning to the day's sacredness (*kuru*) and goodness (*dapaa*).[86] Lastly, there is a paucity of data available for "kwasi" days or Sundays. This is perhaps because these days were largely unrestricted or filled with freedom to cleanse, though on Kurukwasi (*akwasidae*) such freedoms were restricted due to the sacredness and seriousness of this day in Asante and other Akan societies. Danish sources recorded a "feast" to celebrate the "new year" on 9 August 1722 near a Danish fort—this date was *akwasidae*.[87] "Ye blacks Xmas is here in 10 days from this," wrote a British official stationed at the coastal site of Dixcove on 7 July 1750; July 7 was Nwomafie and July 17 was—to translate the idea of the "blacks Xmas"—an *akwasidae*.[88] On 19 September 1778, a British merchant stationed at the port of Anomabu wrote, "Tomorrow it seems is a grand Fetish day that prevents all traveling."[89] The following day, September 20, was *akwasidae*. Akwasidae and analogous ceremonies occurred from the northern edge of the forest to the coast, and European observers on the coast repeatedly noted "No Divine Service this Day on Account of the Town's Peoples making Custom" on Sunday September 21 (Monokwasi), October 12 (Nkyikwasi), and October 19 (Kurukwasi; *akwasidae*).[90]

The entire rhythm of the *adaduanan* in Asante, as McCaskie has argued, was geared toward the periodicity of *awukudae (kurudapaawukuo)* and *akwasidae* (*kurukwasi*), but each *adae* and analogous celebrations—and their attendant rituals—predated and went

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[85] Larry W. Yarak, "A Dutch Embassy to Asante in 1857: The Journal of David Mill Graves," *History in Africa* 24 (1997), 372.

[86] Memorandum Book kept at Cape Coast Castle, 12 April 1704, T 70/1463, PRO: NA.

[87] Justesen, *Danish Sources*, 1: 317.

[88] [John] Roberts to Mr. Husbands, Dixcove, 7 July 1750, p. 232, T 70/1476, PRO: NA.

[89] T[homas] Westgate to R[ichard] Miles, 19 September 1778, T 70/1480, PRO: NA.

[90] Diary of Transaction in Cape Coast Castle, 12 September, 12 and 19 October 1777, T 70/1468-9, PRO: NA.

beyond the Asante polity.[91] Akwasiadae, often referred to as "the Great Adae" or, in Müller's words, "A Quassi," was a "great festival," but it and *awukudae* ("Little Adae") was held always, respectively, on a specific Sunday and Wednesday of the *adaduanan* rather than "annually at [places like] Fetu."[92] The Asantehene and other leaders made offerings to their ancestors on *akwasiadae* and—of the two *adae*—*akwasiadae* held greater importance for the Asante polity and this was captured by Dutch emissary David Graves who attended one such "big Adai" in 1857: "[on] Sunday the 16th [of August] the Adai was celebrated with an indescribable splendor. The procession which followed it was grand; all the Chiefs, Dignitaries, Princes, etc., were part of it."[93] The two *adae* ("resting place or moment") both fall on a *dabɔne* and a *kuru* day, which only confirm the sacredness and seriousness of these two days in the *adaduanan*. In Takyiman, only one *adae* (i.e., *abononnae*) exists and it was celebrated on Monowukuo.[94] The ritual cleansing and rites that accompanied offerings made to the ancestors on both *adae*, and the Asantehene's public distribution of gifts to European visitors on official business, were part of obligations and overtures made consistently and by way of imperatives rooted in the *adaduanan*.

ɛberɛ, yɛnni nka so ("Time, we do not remain with it"): Conclusions at this Time

Broadly speaking, time may exist independently as a philosophical notion, as Kwame Gyekye has argued in the Akan case, but time was in fact embedded in the cultural matrix and foundational understandings of the Akan, and thus reckoned temporally by the *adaduanan*.[95] The implication here is that the internal workings and mechanisms of African societies ordered by their own calendrical understandings should foreground our African historical thinking and writing, for, in our case, the calendar provided a temporal design that ordered social and cultural life. Indeed, the *adaduanan* structured human activity in the forest and on its fringes in cycles that did and should repeat themselves.[96] The calendrical system revealed some of the foundational thought patterns and cultural practices of the Akan and, perhaps, further investigations into historical linguistics might provide additional insights in ways that would address questions of Akan settlement, agrarian life, and cultural development, and perhaps origins. Though the origins of most (West) African societies remain obscured by gaps in our historical knowledge and techniques that continue to deify documentary sources, the findings in the combined fields of archaeology, biomedical science, linguistic, and oral history translates into an

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[91] McCaskie, "Time and Calendar," 190–193. Ansah ("Adae Festival," 19) claimed, "Originally, the Akan 'Adae' fell on Wednesday. The *Akwasidae* festival which came to be celebrated in addition to the *Awukudae* was of a later origin."

[92] Jones, *German Sources*, 278.

[93] Yarak, "A Dutch Embassy," 372.

[94] For an account of the Bono *adae* in the early twentieth century, see Rattray, *Ashanti*, 113–20, 151–71.

[95] Gyekye, *Akan Philosophical Scheme*, 171.

[96] J.D.Y. Peel, "History, Culture and the Comparative Method: A West African Puzzle," in Ladislav Holy, ed., *Comparative Anthropology* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 111–12.

(proto)Akan presence in the forest and on its fringe between two and three thousand years ago, and the calendar might just be that old.

The internal logic and structure of the calendar, and the type of sociocultural order revealed by an analysis of the prefixes and stems that form the *adaduanan*, point to its antiquity. The *adaduanan* provides a unique window into the ways in which Akan culture and society moved through its history. The *adaduanan* can allow scholars of the Akan (and those societies with calendrical structures) to be more precise in understanding the nuanced and otherwise unexplained ways Akan societies moved through their layered histories and by way of material, ideational, and spiritual forces. The variable of spirituality in Akan historiography deserves greater treatment; this is, of course, not to argue for a new trend that focuses on matters of spirituality, but rather to factor it into our equations of knowledge production. Much of the history of Akan societies has focused on political history, even to the point where we know "what" individuals did on a daily or hourly basis, but we are left without fully grasping "why" extremely powerful leaders yield to demands of a calendar or to demands of spiritual obligations and rituals, even for those who became Christianized but still desired to keep their position, power or privilege? A political narrative impoverishes rather than nourishes our need for historical understanding—an understanding beyond the strictures of the Gregorian calendar for most societies and their histories are not ordered the same ways and for the same purposes.

That the *abosom* were intimately associated with each day of the week and largely water-derived ones with the *ntorɔ* patri-kin groups—observed on specific days of the week—suggest a greater presence of spiritual culture or processes in the life cycle of individuals and communities and, if so, a case for an equally greater presence in historical writings.[97] For the Akan person, perhaps before the last century, such observances were part of "soul-washing" rituals at sacred rivers or streams on days that corresponded to the various *ntorɔ* or *ntɔn* groups. These ceremonials were augmented by restrictions such as no palm wine before sunset, all white dress, parts of the body smeared with *hyire* (white clay) obtained from specific rivers, abstinence from certain foods and sexual intercourse, and observance of the *ɔbosom* associated with one's day of birth.[98] This periodic ritual was used to facilitate the rediscovery or clarification of one's *hyɛbea* ("mission, destiny"), which was realized as *abrabɔ* ("ethical ideal and existence") in the temporal world. The elder who became an ancestor without fulfilling his or her *hyɛbea* was thought to return to

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[97] The *ntorɔ* or *ntɔn* groups, and their days of observances in parenthesis, are Bosommuru (all Tuesdays), Bosommketɛa (all Tuesdays), Bosomafi (all Tuesdays), Bosompra (all Wednesdays), Bosompo (all Wednesdays), Bosomafram (all Saturdays), Bosomakɛm (all Sundays), Bosomtwe (all Sundays), and Bosomdwerɛbɛ (all Sundays). Other *ntorɔ* include Bosomayesu, Bosomakonsi, Bosomsika, and Bosomkrɛte. Note that the former group's observances all occur on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Each has its own observance on the person's day of birth (*krada*), salutation and response, taboos (*nkyiwadeɛ*), and so-called "totem" (*akraboa*).

[98] Indeed, Akan calendrical understandings and the practices that flowed from them made it so that varied types of foods were consumed and prohibited on specific days, there was prohibition on drumming and pounding *fufu* (a staple food), and a range of other cultural behaviors that underscored the qualitative differences between each of the *adaduanan*'s forty-two named days.

the temporal as many times as necessary to fulfill their mission; those who fulfilled their *hyɛbea* would become an ancestor among the "eldered" ancestors called *nananom nsamanfoɔ*. The key to life and living was driven by the principles of balance and fulfillment of one's mission in the temporal linked inextricably to immaterial forces and agencies. The *adaduanan* provided a matrix to achieve that fulfillment.