The encounter between European missions and African kingdoms is an important topic in the history of colonisation, and reflects central aspects of the problems of modernisation. It also represents a variation on the theme of church v. state, with parallels to similar encounters in other continents, including Christian missions in Middle Age Europe. The following is a case study within this problematic from Ghana.

The Confrontation.
When the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in 1941 met in Akyem Abuakwa, the most prominent "Native State" in the Gold Coast Colony, it was addressed by the Paramount Chief, Ofori Atta I. Here he accused the Church of undermining the political and cultural unity of the Akyem people and argued the need for a compromise with traditional religion and society. The topics of the speech had previously been discussed in the State Council of Akyem, the general assembly of the chiefs of the state, and it was later published as a written Memorandum.1

Ofori Atta was the leading African politician of the time, Paramount Chief from 1912, member of the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast from 1916, knighted in 1928 and one of the two first Africans who took a seat in the Governor's Executive Council from 1943. The Memorandum was taken as a serious challenge by the Presbyterian Church, and a committee with Christian G. Baëta as Secretary was set up to provide a reply. This was ready for approval by the Synod in 1942 and was published in Accra the same year.2

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1 Memorandum to the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast by the State Council of Akyem Abuakwa (Accra 1941), available at the Head Office of the Presbyterian Church in Accra.

2 The Church in the State. The Reply of the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast to a Memorandum presented by the State Council of Akyem Abuakwa (Scottish Mission Book Depot, Accra 1942).
Ofori Atta's Memorandum and Baëta's Reply are exceptionally expressive and representative sources, reviewing developments since the precolonial period and providing detailed illustration and discussion of the relationship of a mission Church to local culture and political organisation. In addition we can draw on material from the missionary station in Kyebbi, the capital of Akyem, for further exemplification. A special feature of the conflict is that the church position in this case was articulated by an African theologian, first educated at the Basel Seminary, later to become professor of Religious Studies at the University of Ghana and president of the International Missionary Council.

Akyem Abuakwa and the Presbyterian Mission

Akyem Abuakwa is an inland area in Southern Ghana, its capital, Kyebbi, situated approximately 60 miles north of Accra. The population in 1948 was about 270,000. Before the British took formal control of the inland districts in 1901, Akyem was an independent kingdom with 12-13 divisional chiefs under the Paramount Chief, Omanhene, in Kyebbi. Akyem, like the other traditional kingdoms of the Gold Coast, retained considerable autonomy under British rule, both in judicial, administrative and financial matters, under the official designation of a "Native State". Under Ofori Atta's leadership Akyem state organisation was consolidated and centralised and became a model of indirect rule.

The Basel Seminary in Switzerland had been established in 1815 as a missionary school for a number of Northern European Protestant, mainly Pietist church societies. Their expansion into the inland areas of the Gold Coast after 1835 was a mixed history of co-operation, compromise and conflict with traditional authorities. The clash was dramatic in Kyebbi, where a large part of the first congregation consisted of former slaves - many of them from the royal court - who had been set free by British decree in 1874. The Paramount Chief of the time, Amoako Atta I, was in constant conflict with the British, and during the 1880s was even deported from Ghana for a five year period. As a result of these religious and political conflicts a persecution of Christians broke out all over Akyem in 1888. British troops intervened to protect the congregations and impose compensation for their material losses. Then followed a period of Christian expansion, and in 1918 the Presbyterians had about 2300 communicants at eight missionary stations and a number of associated village groups. In 1941 the number of full church members had doubled.

A more harmonious relationship between state and church might have been expected when Ofori Atta was elected Paramount Chief in 1912. His father had broken with the Royal House, joined the Presbyterian Church and suffered during the persecutions of the 1880s. Ofori Atta himself was educated at Basel missionary schools, and he continued as a church member even if he had to abstain from the sacraments after he was elected Omanhene. There

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3 The Protocols from the Kyebbi congregation are lodged in the Ghana National Archives, Accra, in the Series EC 1/... The most important are the Presbyterian Session Books, with reports of the meetings of the congregation, and the Note Books, with the Pastor's notes on important events.


5 The figures are taken from Noel Smith, op.cit.. The number of "baptised adherents" might be two to three times higher than the number of "communicants", and the "members of the Christian community" three to four times higher.
was thus an aspect of a personal drama involved in the conflict between church and state during his reign.

Basic to the interpretation of the Memorandum of 1941 is an understanding of the political context. Through the Native Administration Ordinance of 1927 the Native States of the Gold Coast had been given considerable autonomy and Ofori Atta, who played a key role in the preparation of the Ordinance, worked hard to realise its intentions. But during the 1930s the British changed their policy and began introducing reforms which would increase central Government control and undermine the Native States as political units. At the same time Ofori Atta was under permanent attack from the modern educated elite, whose main antagonist he had been during the constitutional struggles of the 1920s. In addition the unity of his state was endangered by the influx of immigrant cocoa farmers who in 1940 made up close to 50% of the population. In this situation of internal and external pressures it was clearly important to try and reduce the divisive effect of the church in the state.

Ofori Atta's Memorandum and Church Practise in Akyem.

Ofori Atta opened his Memorandum with criticism of the missionary pioneers: They did not find time to make proper inquiries into the habits of the people, but condemned every non-European habit as heathen and barbaric. Coupled with the physical segregation of their members in the so-called Christian villages this led to a divorce from the rest of society. The sweeping condemnation of the pioneers "should not be allowed to eat any further into the cohesive elements of national unity which are now threatened from many quarters". The Christians represented a political problem in that they "consider themselves above the true national life, and look down with disgust and contempt on certain features... of the people". After nearly a century it was time for stocktaking. St.Paul's example should be kept in mind: He showed the need to adapt himself to local conditions wherever he preached the gospel in order to obtain popular acceptance.

Ofori Atta was particularly concerned that the Christians demonstrated their separate status by staying away from the public ceremonies at the great "national" Akyem festival, such as the odwira. Ofori Atta claimed that these festivals were celebrated for historical reasons, and not as part of any fetish cult. Admittedly the Christians should not be forced to join in rites they considered heathen, but they ought not to be prevented by their church from taking part in "assemblies where the people of Akyem renew their attachment to the soil and love of country and also loyalty and devotion to the holder of the revered office of the ruler of the oman". Ofori Atta claimed that such pressure was applied more by the Presbyterian church in Akyem than elsewhere.

Of a similar nature was the problem that functionaries at the court of the Paramount Chief were debarred from church membership and vice versa, "all because of the emblems and paraphernalia attached to such office". Ofori Atta maintained that such emblems could not in themselves be in conflict with Christian ideology and he drew parallels with British insignia like the Black Rod and Equerry! Here was a need for definition: "Until anthropologists have clarified such custom, they should not be forced out by the Church". And was the commemoration of the dead through certain ceremonies in Akyem any less proper than the

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reverence for the dead shown at Hampton Court or Napoleon's Cenotaph? In this matter Ofori Atta maintained that other churches were far ahead of the Presbyterians.

The practical effects of church policy on the authority of the chiefs could be felt in administrative matters. When Ofori Atta in 1916 called up communal labour to clear the ground for a new school in Kyebbi the Christians refused on the ground that they had enough with the upkeep of their own school and the house of the pastor. However, they gave in when the case was brought before the Native Court. Earlier the Christians had requested that all administrative orders of this type must come in the form of written notices, but the District Commissioner ruled that traditional announcement by gong-gong must suffice in the Christian village as well as in the rest of Kyebbi.

The conflict between state and church came to a head in the judicial field. Partly it was the procedure of the traditional courts that offended the Christians. They objected to the use of the national oath - which was recognised by the law of the Colony as a means of summons - and would only answer standard written summonses before the chief's court. Ofori Atta considered this a provocation. The oath had nothing to do with fetishism, it only referred to an historical event. He warned that "it is only our sense of tolerance and desire for peace at any reasonable cost ...that has withheld the State from enforcing the law...".

Christians also had other reservations against court procedure, such as invocations, ceremonial drinks and reconciliation ritual connected with ancestor belief. However, the congregation papers in Kyebbi show that many Presbyterians in fact accepted to serve as members of the Native Court. But they demonstrated their conviction by abstaining from their part of the traditional oath fee.

Ofori Atta further criticised church efforts to establish legislative and judicial authority over its own members, separate from the Native Court system. Thus the Synod in 1909 had fixed a fine of £5 for adultery as against 1£ 4 sh. in customary law, and they also demanded specially high betrothal and marriage fees. Ofori Atta reminded the Presbyterian Church that a separate marriage system for the church could not be enforced on the basis of the law of the Colony; there were no ecclesiastical courts in the Gold Coast like it used to be in England. Adultery should be recognised as a secular act to be dealt with by secular remedy: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's". But in the matter of pacification fees to parents for "trespass on spinsters" Ofori Atta defended the practise of grading fees according to "status and circumstances", for instance the education and training of the girl in question.

The protocols of the Kyebbi congregation show that adultery was a serious problem. Up to 3/4 of all cases concerned "the sin of sins", which was normally punished by exclusion from the sacraments or dismissal in the case of priests and catechists. In 1921 one of the candidates for confirmation in Kyebbi was excluded for having been seduced by the Paramount Chief himself. In some districts the number of exclusions were at times higher than the number of new converts.

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7 Note Book EC 1/78, 7 January and 6 October 1916.

8 According to J.B. Danquah, op.cit., a compromise was proposed by the traditional authorities: the Christians need not themselves swear the national oath, but could answer such an oath sworn upon them by swearing "by Heaven" in return.


10 Session Book EC 1/70 13 June 1921 and Noel Smith, op.cit., p.218, on the situation in the Begoro district.
The so-called "mixed marriages" represented another problem. It was a given thing in Akyem that no woman must go unmarried. Because there was always a majority of women in the Presbyterian congregation in Kyebbi, some of them by necessity had to find a non-Christian spouse. Why should they be excluded from the church if they were not disturbed in the practice of their religion? In 1920 Ofori Atta put pressure on the church in this matter by a court declaration that all women above 16 years must be married within three months. With or against their will the church then had to accept mixed marriages. And by 1927 a special ritual had been devised for marriages between Christians under Customary Law. In his Memorandum Ofori Atta also recommended a more tolerant attitude to polygamy: Christian women should be allowed to marry polygamous men in cases where it was clear that they would not be hindered in their religious worship.

At deaths and funerals the conflict between custom and church dogma might be dramatic. For non-Christians it seemed monstrous when Christians refused to take part in traditional burials of their close kin. There were examples that Christians broke down under this pressure. Open strife might develop over the right to arrange the funeral. Ofori Atta himself experienced the uncompromising attitude of the church. As mentioned above, as a chief - although a Christian - he was excluded from the sacraments of the church, and several of his children were denied baptism because none of the parents were full members of the church. When his eldest daughter died in 1922 the church would not let her be buried in the Christian churchyard because she had not been baptised. But on one occasion Ofori Atta disregarded the rules of the church with gusto. When one of his fathers-in-law, who was an elder in the congregation, died in 1924, Ofori Atta came to the funeral in the Christian village with a large following and celebrated the deceased with drums, drinks and dance, to the great consternation of the Christians.

As a modernising chief Ofori Atta was much concerned about educational policy. He established an independent basic school in Kyebbi in 1917 and a secondary school in the late 1930s. He strongly influenced the work of the Gold Coast Educational Commission in the 1920s, where he stressed the importance of studying African culture and inculcating respect for local custom and traditional authority. These initiatives were resented by the church who wanted to preserve school monopoly as an instrument of evangelisation.

In 1927 Akyem Abuakwa had 62 missionary schools - 47 of them Presbyterian - and only two state schools. Through the Education Act of 1927 all missionary schools were placed under public control, but this did not solve the problematic relationship to the chiefs at the local level. Usually the local chief and his council in Akyem contributed to school finance, particularly construction, but also by paying the salaries of one or more teachers. But the chief had no influence over school policy. A locally financed teacher might even be trans-

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12 J.B.Danquah, op. cit.
13 Information by Professor Baëta in interview, 10 May 1971.
14 These examples and episodes are related in Session Book EC 1/69, 2 April 1920, EC 1/70, 1 December 1923 and 11 September 1922, EC 1/71, 13-16 May 1924, and Note Book, EC 1/73, 9 November 1913.
15 Ofori Atta's school policy is discussed in Governor Clifford to the Colonial Office, 11 July 1916, CO Records 96/567.
ferred to another school without any consultation with the chief. In his Memorandum Ofori
Atta was sharply critical of these arrangements. He spoke about "taxation without repre-
sentation" and "utilisation of the school children for purposes of their domination". He
wanted school contributions to become a regular item on the budget of the Native Treasuries,
but demanded influence in return. He hinted that he was working on a grand "educational
plan" for Akyem as an alternative to the missionary schools, which signalled the crucial
political importance he attached to school policy.

It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that the relationship between state
and church in Akyem was exclusively one of conflict. The protocols of the congregation
repeatedly carry notices about the Paramount Chief's generosity: He bought a harmonium for
the church, financed a corrugated iron roof on a new building at the station, and appeared at
school prize giving days with speeches and gifts. "May the Lord who has put in him such a
noble act, let him continue so to the end", wrote the pastor in 1914. For his own Native
Administration Ofori Atta was totally dependent on people with education from the
missionary schools. There were also examples that the Paramount Chief allowed cases
between Christians to be transferred from the Native Court to the Council of the congregation
for arbitration. The State Council of Akyem reformed inheritance law according to Christian
patterns, introducing a new division of property, with one third each to the wife, the children
and the lineage, as opposed to earlier Customary Law, where all in principle went to the
lineage. This was an important concession to the idea of the nuclear family.16

The church on their side accepted to participate in certain national ceremonies. The
Christian brass band played when Ofori Atta left Kyebbi to defend the interests of Akyem be-
fore a British Land Commission in 1914. The pastor blessed the ground for the new school in
Kyebbi in 1917, after having been assured that there would be no fetish ritual on the occasion:
"To mix Christian prayer with heathen incantations is like mixing sugar and salt".17
Presbyters from the congregation did their best to stop a dangerous demonstration of farmers
from the neighbouring villages against the Paramount Chief in 1918, and Ofori Atta mediated
in conflicts at the missionary station.18

Ofori Atta ended his Memorandum on a conciliatory note: He looked forward to the
day when all forms of superstition and fetishism had disappeared from Akyem and been
substituted by Christianity. But he wished that when this happened "the people would not
have lost their legitimate and perfectly proper traditions and other good features of their
national life... to be replaced by a new basis of life entirely foreign or alien to the country". He
pointed to his deep personal attachment to the church: "There is no one more anxious and
keen than I to see that my parent Church, the Church of my parents of revered memory...of
which they were staunch members to their last breath and the Church which has given me the
privilege and honour of schooling and training and progress, should become stronger and
stronger". The purpose of his criticism was to "make peace and harmony prevail among all
classes and pave the way for the day when the entire people and not a section of it only will
adopt Christian religion as the best for the salvation of the people of this country".

16 The above examples are related in Session Book EC 1/70, 14 August 1924 and 10 July 1924. The adaptation
of the inheritance law is described in Noel Smith, op.cit., p.98.

17 Note Book EC 1/73, 13 May 1915 and 16 April 1917. Session Book EC 1/70, 11 April 1925.

18 Note Book EC 1/73, December 1919 and Kyebbi District Book, March 1948, Ghana National Archives,
Adm.32/4/100.
The Presbyterian Reply

The Reply from the Presbyterian Church opened with a defence of the practice of the pioneering missionaries in establishing separate Christian villages: "It succeeded brilliantly in giving each town or village a concrete demonstration of a new way of life". The African past should not be idealised: It was full of cruelty, fear and disease. The allegation that the church based its attitude to traditional society on ignorance was rejected by reference to the pioneering effort of the missionaries in African cultural studies, particularly linguistics, but also history and folklore. Thus the initiative to establish the International Institute for African Languages and Culture came from missionary circles.

With regard to the memorial celebrations Baëta made it clear that a Christian could not "by the very nature of his belief, take part in any ceremony in which worship is offered or superhuman honours are being paid to beings other than God". On this point one must choose to be a good Christian, even if it implied being a bad Akyem citizen. Baëta admitted that libation to the ancestors in itself was not more sinful than the Christians' use of wreathes on the graves, but the formulas recited showed that worship was involved. He challenged the Native Authorities to issue a categorical declaration that stool emblems and ceremonies had a purely secular, political content, and that ancestor veneration did not contain any element of worship. In such case the conflict would be out of the world.

But on certain points the Reply opened for compromise: The Christians should be allowed to participate in the demonstrations during the national festival of odwira, which had positive features of repentance, renewal and prayers for the New Year. Perhaps odwira might one day merge with the Christian Day of Repentance and Thanksgiving about the same time of the year. The adae ceremony was different; this was pure ancestor worship.- The problem of the functionaries at the Paramount Court was more difficult. Certain services were possible for a Christian, such as umbrella carrier, household head, kitchenwork etc. But as a Presbyterian Church report in 1924 had established: "Persons carrying insignia from the chiefs' courts are exposed to grave temptations: these insignia are connected with sacrificing, purifying with blood, swearing, abstentions, calling upon departed men, no true Christian can carry or perform matters connected with such insignia without hurting his Christian conscience".

In judicial matters the Reply revealed that the church was on the defensive. Baëta pointed out that is was long time past that the church demanded that all its members should move to the Christian village. The special fines for Christians in marriage and adultery matters would be given up, as would also the ambition of the church to have its own court in cases between Christians. Mixed marriages must be tolerated, although they were not desirables. But if the man already had a wife the situation was different; the prohibition against polygamy must remain absolute. In this matter Baëta could refer to the International Missionary Council which at their meeting in India in 1938 had declared that monogamy was not only a European cultural feature, but a necessary precondition for a true Christian life. In

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19 The Reply was produced entirely by Christian G. Baëta, according to information he gave in an interview 10 May 1971. Like Ofori Atta's Memorandum the Reply will be analysed chapter by chapter without page references.

20 Quoted in J.B. Danquah, op.cit., p.28.
general the Reply voiced a sharp criticism of the Native Courts, which it claimed were still characterised by heathen oaths, indecent drinking customs and mal-administration of justice. In this respect it was the courts and not the Christians that stood in the way of a closer cooperation. The courts should be cleansed of all fetish elements (suman and abosom).

In the school question the church demonstrated a self-satisfied attitude. Baëta quoted a recent Government report on education which commended the role of the missions, and he pointed out that the progress of Akyem would have been unthinkable without the missionary schools. The problem was to secure a permanent contribution from the Native Authorities. But the church would not concede that such contribution should give control of appointment. The Government did not claim such a right, so why should it be given to the traditional authorities?

In conclusion Baëta provided a succinct analysis of the political problem. He maintained that the greatest obstacle to Christianity becoming the religion of the whole people of Akyem, as Ofori Atta wished, was the belief "that the African state is by its nature a non-Christian state". Ofori Atta's Memorandum was an example of this mode of thought. In this manner the Christians were automatically excluded from political life and Akyem stood to suffer. Baëta maintained that the number of people who took part in the old ceremonies without reservation would dwindle with the spread of education. As a result the traditional authorities would be less and less representative of a more and more modernised society, "until one would have to search somewhere else than among the state officers for the genuine leaders of African life and thought ... If there is to be social and political progress we can not be obliged to choose as our leaders and state officers only those who will adopt polygamy and participate in ancestor worship". Baëta pointed to other African kingdoms, like Uganda and Bechuanaland (Botswana), where the chiefs had converted to Christianity "without sacrificing a whit of their national honour". On the contrary, these states had been strengthened by establishing Christianity as the state religion.

Baëta urged that a new strategy should now be considered by the Native Authorities in Akyem before it was too late. Custom need not be rejected outright, but it must be modified until it became "fully acceptable to the Christian conscience". The church on its side was willing to consider "a new practice which will bring our Christian communities and the stools together ... that eventually we may all become one fold and one shepherd". Ofori Atta was assured that any initiative from him towards this end would be "hailed with joy".

But this was largely rhetoric. In spite of the judicial concessions the main message of the letter was that religious compromise was impossible. The church insisted on maintaining its absolute adherence to a religious and moral practice in accordance with European Protestant dogma. The logical consequence was that the conflict between state and church could only be removed by detaching the traditional state from ancestor belief. The initiative was left with the Paramount Chief. Ofori Atta's reaction to the Reply was, in Baëta's words, that he "withdrew into his own shell".

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21 Information by Baëta in interview, op.cit. - According to Baëta, Ofori Atta had promised not to publish his Memorandum before the Presbyterian reply was ready, still he went ahead. Then, when the answer came out, he sent messengers to withdraw all copies of his own Memorandum. It has not been possible to control Baëta's version on this point.
Compromise Efforts in the 1950s.
The next time the state-church question was raised was 13 years later in a speech by Ofori Atta's successor, Ofori Atta II, to the Presbyterian Synod in Kyebbi in 1954. And this time a Joint Committee was formed to consider a compromise. The Committee in its report four years later gave special attention to the crucial question whether ancestor belief implied religious worship. On this occasion Ofori Atta's brother, J.B. Danquah, a Doctor of Philosophy from London, wrote a separate treatise on the matter. Here he emphasised that ancestor belief must be judged differently from all other forms of spiritual cults in Akyem, such as for example the personal fetishes (suman sebe, i.e. charms, talismans, amulets) which he agreed were evil and should be abolished. To the degree that ancestor ceremonies contained elements of worship, this pertained to the role of the ancestors as intermediaries between man and the Supreme God, a position which he compared to the Christian saints.

Personally Danquah saw no problem in reconciling ancestor belief with Christianity, and he pointed to King Prempeh of Asante who set the first example by openly combining the two. He maintained that individualised Christianity had been developed under the influence of Hellenistic hero worship and modern European culture. Ancestor worship, in contrast, was communalism, it was not so much the person of the ancestor that was worshipped as the "blood or life stream that he transmits." Idolatry was unknown to ancestor worship. - The Joint Committee finally did take one step forward in recommending that the Presbyterian ministers might read prayers at the national festivals and that ancestors might be mentioned in Christian funeral rituals. But any further discussion of compromise was rejected. So again the state-church question was shelved.

At this time (1958) however, the political framework was fundamentally different from 1941. Through the reforms of local administration, started by the British and completed under Nkrumah, the judicial authority of the chiefs had been transferred to professional Magistrate Courts, and their political authority to elected Local Councils. Traditional courts continued mainly as institutions of arbitration and consultation. The Paramount Chief in Kyebbi was reduced to a symbolic head of the Akyem people. But the State Council continued to meet, and the national festivals seemed to grow in importance as manifestations of cultural continuity and social solidarity. However, with regard to political developments Baëta's prediction had proved right: The Native States had been too slow in adapting to modern conditions, and leadership had passed into the hands of an alternative elite.

Conclusion: Some Comparative Perspectives.
In conclusion we may briefly indicate a comparative perspective. Why did the conflict between the missionary church and local political organisation take on such a dramatic form in Akyem? As a general fact colonial protection made it possible for the missionary churches in Africa to follow a more uncompromising strategy than they could otherwise have done. British military intervention in Akyem in the 1880s illustrates this point. With decolonisation the situation changed, and nationalism gave the church an impetus do develop more tolerance

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22 Noel Smith, op.cit., p.230 ff.
23 J.B.Danquah: Ancestors, Heroes and Gods (Kyebbi 1938).
to African culture. It was significant that the theme of professor Baëta's departing lecture in 1971 was the relationship between Christianity and African culture. In this perspective the controversy of 1941 appeared in a new light, and Baëta now expressed regrets that he had been too preoccupied with making an effective defence instead of developing a dialogue with Ofori Atta in "a matter of great significance for the political and cultural future of the country".

The conflict in Akyem was intensified by the special profile of the Presbyterian Church, as a strict and highly individualised form of European Protestantism. The Anglican Church in the Gold Coast had a more tolerant approach to African culture and it was typical that it became specially popular among members of the royal family in Kyebbi. Catholic missions all over Africa followed a strategy based on a more gradual approach towards conversion with several graded categories of proselytes.

Baëta in his Memorandum pointed to the examples of Buganda and Bechuanaland (Botswana) - he might have added Lesotho under King Mosheshwe and the Merina kingdom in Madagascar - where Christianity was adopted as "state religion" on the initiative of the rulers. Why this difference? Part of the answer may lie in the "bureaucratisation" of these kingdoms, which implied a tendency to detach political offices from traditional lineage organisation. A new "King's religion" could legitimise and strengthen such a process. In contrast the Akyem kingdom was a confederation of lineages, districts and divisions, all in the idiom of family organisation, underpinned at all levels by ancestral religion. Can it also be that ancestral religion formed a stronger and more coherent system of belief in West Africa than in other parts of the continent? The whole question of different responses by African kingdoms to Christian missions invites comparative study.

It is clear that Ofori Atta's exceptional personal stature and political ambitions on behalf of his Native State is part of the explanation why the church-state question was opened up in such a pointed manner in Akyem. We have emphasised his need to defend the unity of his state at this particular point of time, when the traditional elite was challenged by modern politicians at the centre of the colony. Even the church people could be seem as part of such an alternative elite, as was clear both from Ofori Atta's and Baëta's arguments. And once taken up, Ofori Atta's intellectual grasp and power of expression meant that the problem was presented with exceptional clarity. Baëta's Reply was of similar quality.

As Ofori Atta indicated in his Memorandum the problems of Christian missions and local culture and political organisation had many parallels in Europe of the Middle Ages. His own ideals of a church policy corresponds well to Pope Gregory's instructions to the missionaries to England in 596 A.D.:

He bade the monks tell their tidings of hope and salvation simply, to insist only on the essentials of faith and baptism, and to avoid anything that might needlessly offend the traditions of the people they had come to save. ... They

25 Baëta interview, *op.cit.*


were to merge the old heathen feasts in the festivals of the Christian year; to destroy the idols but keep the temples. ... Christianity was to be presented as the correction rather than the denial of their beliefs.28

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