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TERRACOTTA TRADITIONS OF THE AKAN
OF SOUTHEASTERN IVORY COAST

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Robert T. Soppelsa, B.A., M.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1982

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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for this project's completion.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This is an art historical survey of the three major terracotta traditions of the Akan of southeastern Ivory Coast: the Agni, Akyé, Abouré, Abbé, Eotile, and Nzima. Since early in this century, Western scholars have known that the Agni of Sanwi, whose capital is at Krinjabo (see maps, pp. 2-3), produced terracotta figurines of high artistic quality, ones similar to the terracottas of their Ghanaian cousins. Terracottas from Krinjabo, as they are most often called, have been in European collections since before the turn of this century.1 Terracottas of the Akyé are less well-known, perhaps because they have been less actively collected by Europeans and Americans. The Abouré, western neighbors of the Agni, also made terracotta figures, but this tradition is virtually unknown in the West. In the 1950's, European scholars first turned their attention to Ghanaian assongu. This tradition of small terracottas originated in the lagoon region of southeastern Ivory Coast. However, only Ghanaian examples have been studied, and the tradition is a recent arrival in Ghana. Moreover, these studies have been anthropological, rather than art historical.

---

1 The earliest museum pieces known to me are in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. Acquisition numbers indicate that they were collected some time before 1900.
IVORY COAST, WITH AKAN TERRACOTTA-PRODUCING AREAS AND VEGETATION ZONES

1. Sanwi (Krinjabo)  } Agni
2. Ndénié (Abengourou)
3. Akyé
4. Abbé
5. Eotilé
6. Nzima
7. Abouré
SITES VISITED

A. Abbé
1. Azaguie-Blida

B. Abouré
2. Aidaho
3. Bonoua
4. Moosou

C. Agni
5. Abengourou
6. Aby
7. Assouba
8. Ayamé
9. Bafia
10. Krinjabo

D. Akyé
11. Adzopé
12. Alépé
13. Anyama
14. Ebimpé
15. Memni
16. Nkoupé

E. Eotile
17. Grand Bassam
18. Ngaloa

F. Nzima
19. Azuretti
20. Port Bouet

LEGEND

- terracotta site
@ traditional capital
Ivory Coast/Ghana Border
--- ethnographic boundary
—— rivers
□ lagoons
★ Abidjan

CZ1 lagoons
Publications on Ivoirian terracottas have been few, sparse, and fragmentary. My intention at the outset of this project was to complete a survey of all the terracotta traditions in the southeastern quarter of Ivory Coast (basically the area occupied by the Akan) in order to increase our understanding of Akan terracottas and their history, and thus filling out our knowledge of the western edge of the Akan "cultural puzzle". Soon after beginning fieldwork in 1979, I realized that the proposed project covered much too large an area, one in which roads were very difficult to travel and transportation even when possible was exceedingly slow. After doing preliminary research in Paris and southeastern Ivory Coast, I decided that there was ample material to be studied within the area, roughly triangular, bounded by Abidjan in the west, Abengourou in the north, and the border with Ghana on the east. Within this area, there are three major Akan terracotta traditions: mma, ba, and assongu. Evidence of terracotta production outside this area was minimal. In addition, the Musée Nationale de la Côte d'Ivoire in Abidjan had large collections of mma, ba, and assongu, most of which had remained untouched in the museum's reserves since they were collected. Based upon this, I decided to survey these three traditions. I would compare the formal data gained from typological and stylistic analyses of the pieces in the M.N.C.I. with that previously published on the traditions, and with information I gathered during interviews with elders and sculptors in southeastern Ivory Coast.

1 Hereinafter referred to as the M.N.C.I.
My study was conducted as follows:

1. I photographed, measured, and described each terracotta in the M.N.C.I., and compared these data with information already gathered on pieces in European and American collections. Based upon this information, I selected a representative sample of sculptures from each tradition for further analysis.

2. I conducted open-ended interviews with elders, sculptors, and specialists in the three traditions. These interviews took place between January and September, 1979, in the following villages in southeastern Ivory Coast:

   ABBE: Azaguié-Blida
   ABOURE: Aidaho, Bonoua, and Moosou
   AGNI: Abengourou, Aby, Assouba, Ayamé, Bafia, and Krinjabo
   AKYE: Adzopé, Alépé, Anyama, Ebimpé, Memni, and Nkoupé
   EOTILE: Grand Bassam and Ngaloa
   NZIMA: Azuretti and Port Bouet

3. For each tradition, I did a typological, stylistic, functional and iconographic analysis, comparing published data with my examination of the samples and information gathered during interviews.

4. I then compared the three traditions so as to identify correspondences and contrasts among them.

5. Finally, I compared my findings on the three Ivoirian traditions with the data published on Ghanaian terracottas, to see how the Ivoirian traditions related to them.
Because each of the Ivoirian traditions is morphologically distinct, the criteria for typological analysis had to be different for each. Also, there is a separate bibliography for each tradition. As a result, I have discussed each tradition separately: mma in Chapter III, ba in Chapter IV, and assongu in Chapter V. Preceding these discussions, in Chapter II, there is a brief ethnographic and historical background of the Akan in Ivory Coast. Chapter VI contains a comparison of the three Ivoirian traditions, while in Chapter VII, I compare my findings on Ivoirian terracottas with the available data on the terracotta traditions of the Akan in Ghana. In Chapter VIII, I will present my conclusions.
CHAPTER II: ETHNOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE IVOIRIAN AKAN

Ivoirian Akan terracottas were (and in one case, still are) produced by seven different groups in southeastern Ivory Coast: the Agni of Sanwi, the Agni of Ménié, the Akyé, the Abbé, the Eotilé, the Nzima, and the Abouré (see map, p. 2). All these groups speak variants of Twi, the Akan language; all call themselves Akan (Boahen, 1974: 66).

What follows is a survey of cultural information currently available on these groups, which establishes the ethnographic background of the producers of the terracottas that are the subject of this study.

Murdock (1959: 252-254) divides the Twi-speakers of West Africa into four dialect clusters: the Ewe, central Togo, Akan, and Lagoon. In his system, the Agni (Anyi)\(^2\) and Akyé (Attié) are Akan; the Abbé, Abouré (Aburé), Nzima and Eotilé (Ewoutiré) are Lagoon peoples. He further identifies a basic cultural difference between the Lagoon

\(^1\) In Greenberg's "African Languages" (1973: 76), Twi is classified as one of the Kwa languages of the Niger-Congo family, which is a subdivision of the Congo-Kordofanian languages of Africa.

\(^2\) Words in parentheses give Murdock's orthography of the terms. There is no universally accepted system for transcribing Akan terms into the Latin alphabet. My spellings are based on the most common current usage.
cluster and the Akan cluster, stating that "most societies of the Akan cluster have evolved complex states with kings, hierarchical administrative organizations, and courts with titled ministers and specialized palace officials" (p. 257), whereas "some of the societies of the Lagoon cluster ... possess age-grade systems of considerable complexity" (p. 256). While these two bases for societal organization are not mutually exclusive (the Abouré, for example, have both royal and age-grade systems as discussed by Ablé, 1980), they establish two basic "types" among the groups in Ivory Coast who call themselves Akan. The non-centralized groups are clustered around the lagoons, and the centralized ("royal") groups occupy the forest area north of the lagoons.

Boahen (1974) listed seven cultural characteristics shared by all the Akan and which, to a certain extent, define Akan culture: (1) language (Twi); (2) matrilineal descent; (3) the naming of children for the day of the week on which they were born; (4) a forty-day ritual calendar (really forty-two-day); (5) a common system of symbols and goldweights; (6) exogamous matrilineal and patrilineal clan groups; and (7) for political organization, centralized states at the head of which is an omanhene or king and queen (pp. 66–71). According to Boahen,

a number of criteria, linguistic, cultural and institutional, distinguish the Akan from any other group, and for a group to

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1 Age-grades, also called age groups and generations, are groups that include all the members of a society, classed by age and sex. They are often the chief agents of political, economic, and religious control in non-centralized African cultures (cf. Balandier and Maquet, 1974: 4–5).
According to this system of classification, a number of the Lagoon groups, which were distinguished in Murdock's system by non-centralized governments, would not be "true" Akan. Boahen surmounts this obstacle by subdividing the Akan into three groups: the eastern, or "pure" Akan, including the Ashanti, Bono, Akwapim, et. al. (p. 72), the "central Akan" (including the Agni and Nzima), who speak an older version of Twi (p. 74), and the "Lagoon peoples" (including the Akyé, Abouré, Abbé, and Eotilé), who speak an even older language, probably "the oldest form of Akan language" (p. 75). He notes that the Lagoon groups generally do not share four of the seven cultural characteristics which help to define what is Akan. They have no centralized political organization (excepting the Abouré); they use a six-day week rather than a seven-day week, though their ritual month is the same length, having an extra week; their system of naming children is different; and, they do not have the clan groups that the other Akan have. Thus, while they are Akan according to language, symbols, and descent patterns, the Lagoon groups lack a majority of the cultural characteristics which mark groups as Akan according to Boahen's criteria. He posits that these patterns were developed in Ghana, and that the Lagoon groups are remnants of the original Akan culture, concluding his discussion with a question:

From the linguistic and the cultural and sociological evidence then, do not the Lagoon peoples represent the parent stock from which the present Akan groups broke away and moved eastwards into modern Ghana before some of them returned centuries later to form the Anyi-Baule-Nzema group? (p. 75)
In light of this, it appears that the traditional notion that the Akan spread westward into Ivory Coast around the year 1700 must be altered. It is believed the Agni, both of Sanwi and Ndenié, and the Nzima (Boahen's "central Akan") moved into the Eburnean forests early in the 18th century, and probably found the Akyé, Abbé, Abouré, and Eotilé (the Lagoon peoples) already living there. These latter groups had been living in the region, speaking a form of Twi, for some time, perhaps for thousands of years (Stewart, 1966: 57). Eotilé legends of origin (fully discussed in Chapter V) support this hypothesis. However, the Abbé, Abouré, and Akyé present a problem in this respect, because oral traditions of all three groups associate them with migration westward in the early 18th century. Polet (1974: 38) affirms this for the Abbé, yet his findings at La Séguié indicate that Akan materials from the site could predate the migrations. The Akyé claim to have come into their present territory from the east, along with the Baulé, in about 1700 (Boni, 1970: 53-60). The Abouré claim to have similar origins (Ablé, 1980: 17-29). Neither Akyé nor Abbé society has a strong, centralized political organization, whereas Abouré society does have this "Akan" trait. All three groups have strong age-grade organizations.

The resulting cultural picture of the Akan in southeastern Ivory Coast is complex. Linguistic evidence indicates that the Lagoon area was probably the earliest home of the Akan, and that groups moved eastward into south-central Ghana sometime after 1,000 A.D. There, they developed many of the institutions which we associate with Akan culture today (centralized "royal" states, the seven-day ritual week,
the naming of children for days of the week, and exogamous clan groups). Around the year 1700, some of these groups moved back westward into the Lagoon area, finding Akan still living there.

Comparing Boahen's and Murdock's systems with information gathered during my fieldwork, I have concluded that the Ivoirian Akan of today can be divided into three types, reflecting two cultural bases in varying combinations. They are classifiable as "old Lagoon" (Eotilé), "new" (Agni and Nzima), and "hybrid" (Abbé, Abouré, and Akyé).

The Eotilé are "old lagoon", both in language and culture. They claim to have come from the waters of the lagoon itself, rather than from Ghana. They are fishermen, whose life is dependent on the lagoon and its resources. They have neither centralized political authority, nor exogamous clan groups, their children are not named for the days of the week, and their ritual week is six days long.

The Agni and Nzima are both "new" (i.e., Ghanaian Akan) cultures. Their language is closest to Ghanaian Twi. Both societies are centralized and hierarchical, and both have exogamous clan groups. The ritual week is seven days long, and children are named for the day of the week on which they are born. The Agni are forest-dwellers and yam farmers; the Nzima live on the lagoons and are primarily fishermen. Cultural ties between these two groups and their Ghanaian brothers are very strong. The Nzima of both countries are a single

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1 The Nzima of Ivory Coast are the westernmost extension of Ghana's Nzima, who are also lagoon dwellers and fishermen. They were artificially separated by colonial borders at the turn of the 20th century.
people, and the Agni of Sanwi say they are really "the same people" as the Aowin, who live on the other side of the Ghanaian border from them.

The Abbé, Abouré, and Akyé are "hybrid" cultures, combining elements of both "old" and "new". All three speak Lagoon dialects of Twi, and all three have age-grade organizations. All three are yam farmers, though the Abouré live on the lagoons and fish, as well as farm. All three groups claim to have come to the Eburnean forests during the westward migration, but none of them has any strong connections with Ghanaian groups today. Neither the Abbé nor the Akyé have centralized political authority, nor are the clan groups of the Ghanaian Akan present. The ritual week of the two groups is six days, the children are not named for the days of the week. The Abbé and Akyé are hybrids which are closer to "old" (Lagoon) culture. The Abouré, on the other hand, have a centralized, hierarchical social and political organization, exogamous clan groups, a seven-day ritual week, and children are named for the days of the week. They are also a hybrid culture, but closer to the "new" (Ghanaian/forest) than to the "old". The information on terracottas, to be presented in Chapters III-VII, will be correlated with these data on culture in Chapter VIII.
CHAPTER III: *MMA*

III.1 Introduction

*MMA* are terracotta sculptures produced by the Agni of Sanwi and the Abouré. They are portraits, sculpted to preserve the memory of a dead person. The term refers to both an individual sculpture, and to all *mma* collectively (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 67). These sculptures were traditionally kept in an area of virgin forest outside the village, called the *mmaso*, or "village of the *mma*". The location is considered sacred and very dangerous for the living, as it is the home of the ancestral spirits represented by the *mma* (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 67).

In discussing the tradition, I will review the literature and research devoted to *mma* (section III.2). Following this, I will point out the misconceptions concerning *mma* which have arisen from this literature (section III.3). Next, I will set forth a typological analysis of known examples of Agni *mma* and a discussion of their style.

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1 According to Amon d'Aby (1960: 67), the Agni of Moronou, the westernmost Agni, apparently once produced *mma*. However, he could find no information on this tradition. My research produced the same result. An informant from Moronou claimed that the tradition had long been forgotten there.

2 In Abouré, the term for the "village of *mma*" is *mmawo*. For purposes of clarity, I use the term *mmaso* in this thesis for both *mmaso* and *mmawo*, except when referring to the *mmawo* specifically.
III.2 Bibliographic Review

The earliest references to mma among the Ivoirian Akan are in descriptions of Agni and Abouré culture published early in the twentieth century by French colonial officers and missionaries. Neveux (1923: 15-16) wrote of seeing polished terracotta statues on the road leading into Moosou, an Abouré village just above Grand Bassam, in 1914. These were under little shelters in a wooded area just outside the town. Neveux illustrated two of these shelters in his article (plate III-63 a, b) and stated that the sculptures were called ma, "family fetishes" which portrayed "the village's dead". Tauxier (1932: 225-226) describes mma as "...the dead, ancestors, and at the same time small clay statues which represent them". According to him, they were made by Agni women who specialized in this art. When finished, they were placed directly on the tombs of those whom they represented, where they were offered human sacrifices. When the French colonial administration forbade human sacrifice, the Agni lost interest in their mma. The fabrication and veneration of the statues had died out by 1925-26, when Tauxier served in Sanwi territory. Corroborative information was published by Bauman and Westermann (1948: 358).
Marcel Lheureux wrote a brief report in 1932, exclusively devoted to mma. He had collected a large number of the sculptures while touring as a physician in Sanwi during the 1920's. His report states that mma were to be found in old cemeteries, several hundred meters outside the villages. The best-preserved and, to him, the loveliest examples were at Krinjabo. Most of the statues were broken, however, and the "cemeteries" had been invaded by the forest. Some figures appeared to have been purposefully destroyed, as the bodies were in one place, and the heads had been thrown on a nearby midden. According to Lheureux, the Agni had abandoned the making and veneration of mma long before he visited their territory. Village elders offered him several versions of what the mma represented and how they had been used. He concluded that the tradition probably came to Agni country from Egypt, because some of the figures had beards dressed "in the Egyptian manner", with thin-bridged noses and thin lips (p. 3). He felt that the statues portraying more negroid-looking noses were of more recent date.  

1 Many of the Agni mma in European and American collections were originally in the Lheureux collection. He took more than 200 mma to France when he left the colonial service, and exhibited a selection of them for sale in the Galerie Braun in Paris in 1933. The entire Helena Rubinstein collection of mma, numbering 54 pieces in all, was originally bought from him, then sold at auction in 1966 by Sotheby-Park Bernet (sale cat.'s no. 2429 and 2460: 1966).  

2 Lheureux may have been introduced to this "Egypt theory" by Akan elders. I was told in villages that the Agni came from Ghana about 1700, while the Akan had earlier come from Egypt. One elder from Krinjabo, who had been educated in colonial schools, specified that the Agni left Egypt during the reign of Sety II. Meyerowitz's theory of Carthagian origins of the Akan is also well-known (1958: 21).
Henri Mouëzy, a missionary in Sanwi during the first half of this century, wrote a history of the kingdom (1953). In it, he discusses mma only briefly, stating that they were once placed beside the road leading into the sacred forest. They were made by women, and "thought to be effigies of dead kings and princes." They were offered food from time to time, and required human sacrifices, or the potter who made them would die (p. 269). He says nothing of the origins or the abandonment of the tradition.

Probably the most extensive discussion of mma and their use is in F.J. Amond'Aby's ethnography of Sanwi (1960: 67-73). According to him, anyone could have a mma, except children who died at birth, and most slaves (p. 68). However, since the ceremonies accompanying the "implantation" (placement in the mmaso) were costly, the mma of children and less important adults were planted during the same ceremony with the mma of more important persons. A great person's mma was then supposed to "watch over" the lesser ones (p. 68). These practices were abandoned after the Prophet Harris forbade them in 1914 (p. 72),¹ and nowadays commemorative sculptures placed in cemeteries have replaced mma (pp. 72-73).

¹ William Wade Harris was a Liberian (c. 1850-1928-29) who was trained by Methodist missionaries, and developed a syncretic Christian cult which permitted polygyny, while denouncing other animistic practices, especially "fetishism". He traveled across southern Ivory Coast to Ghana in 1913-15, baptising, destroying "fetishes" (traditional art), and preaching his doctrine with great success. Harrism survives in several areas of southeastern Ivory Coast today; it is particularly strong in the Ebrié Lagoon region (Holas, 1965: 259-78).
Three scholarly articles have been published on Agni mma. The first, by G.J. Duchemin (1946: 13-14), discusses a single piece in the IFAN museum in Dakar. He concludes that mma, along with their related ceremonies, are similar to the Ashanti abusua kuruwa, or "family pot" (p. 13), and its associated ceremonies, discussed by Rattray (1927: 164). The second article, by B. Holas (1951: 1-18), discusses six pieces in the Centre des Sciences Humaines in Abidjan (now the M.N.C.I.). Holas reviews the scant bibliography on mma, and discusses their distribution and use in Sanwi territory. According to his informants, all Sanwi once knew the practice of mma, but he feels that "classic" mma were all produced in the region immediately surrounding Krinjabo (p. 4). Anyone from the royal family or from the "seventeen free families" had the right to a mma (p. 5). The practice, according to Holas, was abandoned around the turn of the century when human sacrifices were stopped, and the mmaso were subsequently neglected and overgrown by the rainforest. Nowadays, only occasional fragments can be found in Sanwi; the best surviving mma are therefore to be found in private and public European collections (pp. 10-11).

Finally, F.H. Lem published a brief article on mma in the Encyclopédie Mensuelle d'Outre-Mer (1952: 110-114). Lem opted against the theory that the sculptures have an Egyptian origin, preferring to

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1 Holas does not specify whether this "immediate" region included the other royal cities in Sanwi, which are all quite close to Krinjabo.

2 This could have included practically anyone in Sanwi, even freed slaves, since they acquired the rights of the families to which they had belonged (Histoire et Coutumes: 45-46).
believe that they were brought by the Agni during the exodus from Ghana, then placed in sacred forests, to be worshipped in an ancestor cult (pp. 112-13). From this assumption, he also concluded that mma were not grave markers, but physical reminders of past leaders.

Holas reviewed Lem's article the following year (1953). Besides taking Lem to task for an incomplete bibliography (he failed to cite Holas's article of 1951), Holas was less willing to reject Egyptian sources for mma (p. 476).

In addition to the discussion of Aboure mma in Neveux's article, two brief notices appeared in IFAN's Notes Africaines in 1952. The first was a query by Holas, entitled "Qui connaît l'origine de ces statuettes de poterie?" It described and illustrated nine pieces which had been donated to the IFAN museum in Abidjan in 1944. No provenance for the pieces was given, but Holas assumed that they had come from an archaeological discovery near Mt. Nimba (near the western border of Ivory Coast) because they showed "visible evidence of having been buried for some time" and because the man who donated them had just come from Mt. Nimba (1952: 19). In the next issue, Holas's query was answered by Father Jean-Baptiste Veit, a missionary who was serving in Bonoua.\(^1\) The figures, according to Veit, were from the "ma" (mmawo) of Bonoua, and had been discovered in 1942 by a group of men who were clearing a patch of forest near it for cultivation. The

\(^1\)Veit was a parish priest in Bonoua from 1921 to 1954, and was well-known among the Abouré as a student of traditional culture. He is called J-B Vest in Ablé's book on the Abouré (1980: 156-7).
sculptures were portraits in terracotta, made by women to represent important personages at their ceremonial funerals; some were very good likenesses. Veit knew little about the ceremonies associated with the statues, except that they were offered a meal at each yam festival. He further stated that the practice had been abandoned after the appearance of the Prophet Harris in Abouré country in 1914 (1952: 94).

Other sources of published information on mma are textbooks on African art and catalogs of exhibitions and sales. Most textbook references are brief, and rely on previously published data. Thus, they provide little useful information for a detailed study. Catalog references generally present cryptic information gleaned from secondary sources. New York's Parke Bernet Galleries sold Helena Rubinstein's collection of mma at auction in 1966. The sales catalogs provide a brief description of each piece, thereby providing some information on what was "probably the largest collection of Agni terracottas outside Africa" (1966a: 119-131 and 1966b: 50-71). In a recent catalog of African Art (Vogel, 1981: 78-79), Amon d'Aby publishes some notes on Agni mma (my pl. III-28), but they contain nothing new, as they are based on his previous research. They repeat the same information he published in 1960.

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1 Kjersmeir (1937: I, p. 35), Laude (1971: 64), Leuzinger (1960: 110), and Fagg (1965: pl. 18) all state that mma are placed on graves. Bascom (1973: 71) describes the place where mma are kept, but does not call it the mmaso.

Finally, a recent dissertation on the history of Sanwi (Horovitz, 1977: 253, 281, 288) contains transcripts of recorded interviews with Agni elders in which mma are occasionally mentioned. Horovitz's informants called the women who modeled mma, mma bla ("mma women").

In conclusion, the published sources on mma agree on four points. First, they are terracotta portraits, made for ceremonial funerals to commemorate the deceased. Second, they were made by women, exclusively. Third, they were kept outside the village, either at special ceremonial spots, or in cemeteries. Fourth, this form of sculpture died out some time ago; it is no longer practiced by the Agni or the Abouré.¹

III.3 Misconceptions about Mma

Three major misconceptions about mma are fairly common: (1) that they were grave markers; (2) that they were made only for kings; and (3) that they come only from Krinjabo. These misconceptions have two sources: incorrect reporting in the literature on mma and problems arising from the differences between the Akan culture which produced them and the Western culture of those who collected and interpreted them.

The first misconception, that mma were grave markers, has its origins in both Lheureux (1932) and Tauxier (1932). Later sources often quote them, and this repeated publication of their ideas has lent credence to the notion. Moreover, the fact that they are funerary

¹ Delange (1974: 74) is the only author who claims the tradition persists today. According to my sources, it does not.
portraits most likely led to the assumption that they were sepulchral, as is often the case with Western commemorative portraits.

The second misconception, that mma were made only for kings, results from their often being called "royal" portraits. This term appears in Tauxier (1932: 226) and Mouézy (1953: 269); then, it reappears in Leuzinger (1960: 110) and Laude (1971: 64). Amon d'Aby, an Agni from Sanwi, flatly denies that mma were made only for royalty.\(^1\) Thus, in part, the misconception derives from published misinformation. However, it is my perception that the problem arises out of differences between what Akan and Western conceptions are concerning the term "royal", also. I have often heard Akan men referred to as "kings" in conversation. When I ask, "Was he really a king?", the answer is often, "Not really, but he was very rich".\(^2\) This was in interviews conducted in French, where the term used was "roi". In Agni, the problem becomes infinitely more complex. The term dehewa ("royal") can be used to denote any person descended from a free woman (a woman whose ancestry can be traced back through the uterine line to the founders of a village). The term hene ("king") is reserved for the kings of Sanwi. However, these men are most commonly addressed as nana ("grandfather"), a title of respect accorded to everyone considered an important person (both men and women), or afilié kpangi ("chief"), the term also used for heads of compounds and village

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\(^1\) Personal communication: 2 June, 1979.

\(^2\) Horovitz discussed the same issue with a Krinjabo elder (1977: 353-354) and got the same response. Both nobles and very rich individuals are often referred to as "kings".
chiefs. Sikafué ("rich man") is very seldom used in conversation, perhaps because it is considered indelicate. Membership in a royal family in Sanwi is apparently much more a matter of custom than of title, and mma were for any titled person, which included most members of society.

The third misconception is that all mma were made and kept only in the town of Krinjabo, or belong to the "Kingdom of Krinjabo". Museum and catalogue references regularly label the provenance of Agni mma as Krinjabo. This is true of the Metropolitan Museum (New York), the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée des Arts Africains et Oceaniens (Paris), the British Museum (London), and even the M.N.C.I. In these instances, Krinjabo refers not to the town of Krinjabo, but to the whole kingdom of Sanwi. Thus, an Agni mma would come from any of a number of sites in Sanwi, with all being labeled "Krinjabo" because they supposedly came from the "Kingdom of Krinjabo". Ironically, this would be like labeling all English art as being from London, or the "Kingdom of London". Therefore, if no specific provenance can be designated, Agni mma should properly be labeled "Sanwi".

III.4 A Typology for Agni Mma

Making a typological analysis of mma presented a number of problems. First, they were discovered early in this century by European collectors and were exported in great quantities, leaving few examples in Ivory Coast. Many examples of mma are now scattered throughout

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1 There were at least six sites in Sanwi which produced mma and had mmaso (see section III.7).
European and American collections, and are unpublished and/or unavailable for study. Second, most mma probably had both head and body, yet the number of complete sculptures available is quite small. Agni mma are solid and quite large. The clay is often unevenly fired as a result, so that pieces break easily. Heads of mma are large, usually more detailed than the bodies, and therefore, more aesthetically interesting to collectors than the bodies. This has created the false impression that the head itself was the complete piece.\footnote{This is reflected in the copies of mma, called either "mma moderne" or "Abla Pokou" by art dealers in Abidjan. They are sometimes sculpted as full figures, and other times as heads only.} Third, on examination, Agni and Abouré mma appear to form two distinct traditions typologically and stylistically, and thus will be treated separately.

My typology of Agni mma is based on all the complete sculptures I was able to examine. In some cases, this "examination" consisted of close study of a photograph only, because the present whereabouts of the piece is unknown, or I was unable to travel to see the piece. Heads and figure fragments which included formal or iconographic elements not present among the complete pieces are discussed separately. The analysis is presented in four subsections: III.4.1, containing a listing of the complete sculptures in the sample; III.4.2, an outline of typological criteria used in the analysis; III.4.3, a discussion of the typological data derived from the analysis; and III.4.4, a listing of the heads which expand the sample and contribute to the typology.
III.4.1 Complete sculptures included in the sample of Agni mma number thirty-seven. They are in the following locations:

**Ivory Coast**
- 5 M.N.C.I.
- 2 Krinjabo
- 1 Aby

**France**
- 3 Musée de l'Homme
- 1 Private collection, Paris
- 4 Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens

**Belgium**
- 2 Private collection, Oppem

**Switzerland**
- 1 Private collection, Riehen/Basel

**United Kingdom**
- 1 British Museum

**United States**
- 1 Metropolitan Museum, New York
- 1 Lowie Museum, Berkeley
- 3 Private collections

**Present location unknown**
- 1 Private collection, France
- 6 Parke Bernet, Catalogs of the Gourielli auctions (1966)

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1 Hereinafter referred to as the M.A.A.O.

2 Illustrations were taken from the catalogs. Sotheby-Parke Bernet could provide neither photographs of the objects, nor information on their present locations.
III.4.2 The typological criteria considered in the analysis included the following:

I. General
   A. Height (III.4.3.1)
   B. Sex (III.4.3.2)
   C. Posture (III.4.3.3)
   D. Presentation of figure (III.4.3.4)
   E. Holes in the figure (III.4.3.5)
   F. Treatment of surface (III.4.3.6)

II. Lower extremeties (III.4.3.7)
   A. Feet
   B. Legs
   C. Buttocks

III. Torso (III.4.3.8)
   A. Genitals
   B. Navel/belly
   C. Breasts
   D. Back
   E. Front, back marks
   F. Shoulders/shoulder marks

IV. Upper extremeties (III.4.3.9)
   A. Posture
   B. Objects held

V. Neck (III.4.3.10)
VI. Head (III.4.3.11)
   A. Angle on neck
   B. Chin/beard
   C. Mouth/moustache
   D. Nose
   E. Eyes
   F. Brows
   G. Forehead
   H. Ears
   I. Markings on the face

VII. Headdress (III.4.3.12)

VIII. Decorations around the neck (III.4.3.13)
   A. Modeled
   B. Actual

IX. Special elements (III.4.3.14)
   A. Furniture
   B. Objects held in the hands

III.4.3 The general results of the analysis of Agni mma by typological criteria are:¹

III.4.3.1 Height: The largest sculpture in the sample is 50 cm. high (19 3/4"; pl. III-10); the smallest is 20 cm. high (7 7/8"; pl. III-15). The average height is just under 33 cm., or about 13".

¹ Numbers in parentheses refer to pieces which exemplify certain characteristics. Plates follow the text of the chapter.
III.4.3.2 Sex: Sixteen of the pieces are male; eighteen are female; three were impossible to identify by sex. This almost equal ratio of male to female figures provides for a well-balanced typology. However, it probably does not reflect the traditional male/female ratio among mma. Holas (1951: 11) indicated that more females were probably sculpted than males. Among the 186 mma and fragments that I studied, 100 were female, 74 were male, and 12 were unidentifiable by sex. It thus seems probable that more mma were sculpted to represent women than men. (To be discussed in Chapter VI.1.)

III.4.3.3 Posture: Eight mma in the sample are portrayed sitting. Of these, seven sit on stools of various types, but all generally resembling the typical concave-topped Akan stool. These pieces are evenly divided by sex: four are female, and four are male. No headdress type dominates among them. One piece (III-30) has neither legs nor stool, but probably once had both. Twenty-eight pieces are portrayed standing. Twenty-seven of these are legless (the exception is III-13), but the vertical axis of their bodies is uninterrupted, implying a standing posture.

III.4.3.4 Presentation of figure: Twenty-three mma in the sample have cylindrical bodies, with no indication of lower extremities. Two pieces are supported by pot-shaped structures, which are not open, and could therefore never function as containers (III-8,29).

III.4.3.5 Holes in the figure: Thirty-one pieces have no hole at all apparent in the figure; five pieces have a hole near the base, between the legs. One piece (III-7) has a deep, narrow hole in its
base, which probably resulted from a stick or palm branch used as an armature. Among the Agni pieces I studied, all but five (to be discussed in section III.4.4) were solid.

III.4.3.6 Treatment of surface: Thirty-one of the pieces in the sample have a polished surface, which varies in color from middle-gray to black. On pieces whose polish is partially missing, it is apparent that the polish was applied as a slip, which was burnished to a luster, probably with a smooth pebble.¹ Six pieces show no traces of surface polish, but this is most likely due to erosion of the surface, since these pieces all have a granular surface. It is probable that all mma were once finished with a burnished slip. A few pieces have traces of painted designs on the forehead, in various shades of beige and brown (plates III-38, 39). This apparently represents forehead painting in both men and women, but I found no one in Agni country who could remember the practice.

III.4.3.7 Lower extremities: Twenty-two pieces in the sample have neither feet nor legs. This corresponds to the number of figures with cylindrical and pot-shaped bodies, with four exceptions. These are in plates III-5 and 7, which have cylindrical bodies and huge feet but no legs,² and plates III-25 and 28, which are raised on plinth-like

1 This technique for polishing the surface of pots is still commonly used by Akan potters today.

2 The mma in plate III-5 has been restored since its acquisition by the Abidjan Museum (cf. Holas, 1967: 110-111). The feet, which were originally very large, were almost doubled in size during the restoration, though their basic shape was not altered. The mma in plate III-7, which I saw in Krinjabo, has not been restored.
bases which are split at the center of the figure and have crude indications of toes engraved at the front. The bases of these pieces may indicate legs.

Eight of the pieces in the sample have legs. Of these, seven are portrayed seated, with legs bent at the knees. Only one piece with legs is standing (plate III-13). This piece has been crudely restored, and the relationship between the legs and feet of the figure is not at all convincing.

Twelve pieces in the sample have buttocks, which are typically horizontal projections behind the legs, both at 90° to the torso (plate III-6). All the pieces with legs have buttocks but one (III-15), in which the lower torso blends into the top of the stool.

III.4.3.8 Torso: Twenty-six of the pieces have no genitals at all. Five pieces have a penis, which is always very tiny, and sometimes no more than a button in the genital region. Three pieces have a hole where female genitals would normally be, and one female figure wears a cache-sexe, implying the presence of genitals. Generally, the portrayal of genitals in *mma* seems unimportant, particularly since all the figures but one are portrayed nude. Fifteen pieces are without navels, and twenty-one have "button" navels.

All the pieces in the sample but three have cylindrical bodies, with no projecting belly. Two pieces have pot-like bases, in which the pot may represent a rounded belly. One female piece (III-2) has a significantly rounded belly.
Seven pieces in the sample have no indication of breasts at all. Eighteen have nipples, or button-like breasts. Twelve pieces (logically, all female) have breasts which protrude or hang from the torso at various angles. None of the figures has very large breasts.

Raised patterns on the torso, which probably represent scarification, appear on mma in great variety. Nineteen pieces in the sample have unmarked torsos. Of these, thirteen are male, five are female, and one is of uncertain sex. One male figure has marks on the torso, which consist of a single, raised motif at the center of the chest. Two male figures have a similar mark at the top center of their backs, but are otherwise unmarked. Five female and two unidentifiable pieces have elaborate patterns on the front of the torso, and eight female pieces are patterned both front and back. Decorations on the torso, particularly in elaborate patterns, thus seem to be associated with female figures, and unmarked torsos with male figures.

Shoulders of mma are of two distinct types: the most common, present in twenty-three pieces, is a projecting horizontal ridge at the top of the torso, which makes the torso very cylindrical. The arms usually project horizontally from this ridge, in the same plane. Fourteen pieces have rounded, naturalistic shoulders. Two pieces have raised marks on the shoulders.

III.4.3.9 Upper extremities: All the pieces in the sample have, or once had, arms (these are missing from three pieces). The arms, like the legs, are rudimentary, usually non-articulated, often with fingers simply engraved into the clay at the end of rounded stumps. In
thirty-five pieces, the arms are outstretched. In two, they turn upward towards the mouth (III-24, 26), holding a cylindrical object. Two pieces hold something in the right hand, two hold something in the left, and four (including the two mentioned above) hold something in both hands.

III.4.3.10 Neck: None of the mma studied has a short neck. Necks are either medium in length (eleven pieces), or very long (twenty-six pieces); very long necks occur much more frequently. All necks but one in the sample (III-7) are ringed, and nine are also decorated with keloids, in diagonal patterns on the right and/or left side.

III.4.3.11 Head: On all the mma studied, the head leans back atop the neck, so that the face turns upward. Among the pieces in the sample, the angle was slight in ten cases, and pronounced in twenty-six (one piece, pl. III-8, is headless).

Ten of the pieces are bearded (III-3 was also probably bearded, but the chin is now damaged). Among these, the beards of seven are plaited, or arranged very carefully. Eight pieces have moustaches, which always appear as points at the corners of the mouth.\footnote{Agni men still wear their moustaches in this manner today. The hair is rolled into points at the corners of the mouth.} Five pieces have moustaches only; three have both beard and moustache.

The mouth of most mma is a narrow, horizontal groove, which is surrounded by a thin ridge. I have not seen any examples in which lips are modeled. Five of the pieces in the sample are portrayed smiling; twenty-nine do not smile. Noses vary greatly in form. Basically, the
nose is either rudimentary (nine pieces); a triangular, flat-bottomed lump of clay with holes punched in the bottom for nostrils; or naturalistic (twenty-six pieces), with carefully modeled bridge and nostrils. In all pieces but two (III-6,7), the eyes appear closed. On three pieces, the eyes slant sharply downward towards the edge of the face. In most pieces, the eyes follow the same curve as the brows. In every piece I examined, the brows are a thin ridge above the eyes.

In most mma, the forehead is very high (twenty-one pieces). In its most extreme form, the high forehead extends all the way back to the crown of the head (pl. III-22). Ears tend to be small (thirty pieces) rather than large (three pieces), and are generally placed high and far back on the head. The ear canal is represented by a shallow, pierced hole. Only one piece in the sample has holes which are apparently for earrings (III-12).

All pieces in the sample but two (III-6,7) have raised marks on the face, which probably represent keloids. The most common form these marks take is from two to five short, parallel striations on the cheeks, at the temples, and between the brows. Much less common are long, engraved striations on the cheeks (not present on any pieces in the sample, but visible on two hollow heads, cf. III-40, 41). Painted curvilinear designs on the forehead also appear infrequently (III-38, 39), and cruciform or horizontal marks etched into one or both cheeks (also present on the hollow heads). ¹

¹ I have seen this last type of facial decoration on old people in Agni country. The other designs are apparently no longer used.
Headdresses on mma occur in a great variety of types. No two pieces in the sample have exactly the same headdress, but eleven basic types of headdress are identifiable among the pieces in the sample. These are the following:

1. Two concentric tiers encircle the crown of the head, behind a very high forehead; a tuft at the crown completes the design. This is probably a hair arrangement; it is present in five pieces, of which four are female, and one is male. A similar headdress is illustrated in Holas (1951: 11), on a drawing of an "Agni woman of the old days".

2. A row of beads separates the forehead from an arrangement of long, post-like forms that stand out from the head. These probably represent plaited hair. They are often broken off, as they were applied to the head after the figure was modeled. Five female pieces have this type of headdress; a variant of the type is present in two other pieces (pl. III-9, 10), in which the row of beads is replaced by a ridge across the forehead. One of these pieces is female; the other is male. Both are large (48 and 50 cm., respectively), and seated.

3. The head is covered with short ringlets or tufts, which probably represent hair. There is a long, conical projection, either a hat or a tuft of hair, on the left rear side of the head. This type is present in one piece, which is male.¹

¹ Edmond Perregaux, who worked among the Ashanti around the turn of this century, described a very similar hairdo which was then popular among Ashanti women, marked by a conelike tress at the left, rear side of the head (1917: 124).
4. Behind a row of beads, the head is covered with small tufts. This is essentially the same as type 3, but with no conical projection. In plate III-6, there is no row of beads framing the forehead. Two pieces have this type of headdress; both are female. Agni women frequently dress their hair like this today.

5. The head is topped by a conical, hat-like structure, which can be anywhere from ornately decorated to plain. This type probably represents the "iron hat", or bulalè-kèlé, a traditional nobleman's headgear described by Amon d'Aby (1960: 69). It is present in three pieces, all male. It is also present in two male fragments in the Abidjan museum (D183, 191), in its undecorated form. Type 3 may be a variant form of this same headdress, which is reduced in size.

6. The head is ringed by a narrow, projecting rim; above this, there is a truncated cone. The type is present in six pieces; two female, and four male. Like type 5, it apparently represents a hat.

7. Behind a rim or row of beads, a complicated series of plait-like and comb-like forms are arranged concentrically about the crown of the head. This type is present in three pieces; two are female, and one is unidentifiable by sex.

8. The headdress is dominated by a high crest, which leans toward the front of the head. This crest can be simple (present in one piece, probably male), or surrounded by smaller crests.
(two female pieces). This type of headdress is also represented in Agni wood sculptures (Sieber and Rubin 1968: 66-67).

9. The headdress is arranged into a crown, which looks much like the crowns worn by Western royalty. It is present in one male piece (III-30), which is large and seated.

10. The head is surmounted by a rim, which is topped by a rectangular form. This may represent a fabric hat; it is present in one male figure, which represents a drummer. Similar hats are worn by several musicians in an old engraving of an Agni king (Amon Ndoufou II) and his court in Fleuriot de Langle's "Croisières à la Côte d'Afrique" (1873: 389) (cf. III-62).

11. The figure appears to have straightened hair, cut straight across the back of the head. This type is present in one male figure.

In addition to these eleven types, several heads in Abidjan have most of the hair shaved, and the rest allowed to grow short, in geometric and curvilinear shapes. Delafosse (1893: 407, 408) discussed this manner of dressing hair among the Agni, and his article contains a photograph of a man with his hair dressed in this manner.

Another type of headdress not present among the pieces in the sample is present on two male heads (pl. III-43, 44): the head is greatly elongated, and ringed with three ridges. This represents a man's hair arrangement of concentric plaits which is illustrated in Fleuriot de Langle (1873; cf. my pl. III-62) on several court musicians.

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1 Both of these heads also have a hole at the crown.
III.4.3.13 Decorations around the neck: Nineteen pieces in the sample have no decoration around the neck.\(^1\) Eleven pieces wear necklaces that have rectangular, triangular, or trapezoidal pendants. These pendants undoubtedly represent Islamic amulets, which have been used by the Akan as protective devices for centuries. Two pieces wear necklaces with cruciform pendants. Though it is less widely used than Islamic amulets, Christian religious jewelry undoubtedly appeared in the Agni region along with the first missionaries, and could have been used by the Agni for the same purposes. The necklaces in plates III-7 and III-9 are apparently decorated with cylindrical beads, modeled in clay.\(^2\) Like Islamic amulets, this type of jewelry is still commonly worn in Agni country.

Three pieces in the sample wear bandolier-style decorations, across one shoulder and under the opposite arm. In two female pieces (pls. III-19, 33), two strands are crossed over the chest. In one male piece (pl. III-30), a single strap is worn, over the right shoulder and under the left arm. Body decorations worn in this manner are traditionally associated with the Akan priesthood.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) The "choker" mentioned for most pieces in the catalogs of the Gourielli collection is in fact not jewelry, but neck rings.

\(^2\) I have seen only one piece that is decorated with actual jewelry, which is applied over modeled jewelry (Portier and Poncetton: Plate L).

\(^3\) For illustrations of jewelry worn in this manner, see Fleuriot de Langle (1873: 372), Perregaux (1917: 269), and Cole and Ross (1977: 21, 201).
III.4.3.14 Special elements: Seven of the pieces in the sample (four female, three male) are seated on some sort of stool. The stool in plate III-6 looks like a spool-shaped stool. These are common in Agni villages, and lend no particular status to the person seated thereon. The stools of III-9, 10, and 11 are low and bowl shaped, but too badly damaged for their exact original shape to be determined. The stools of plates III-15, 19, and 27 are traditional Akan rectangular, concave stools, which are reserved for persons of high social status. The figure in plate III-30 probably once had a stool also, but it is now missing. With two exceptions,¹ the seated pieces are considerably larger than the average piece in the sample. Despite their posture, they would dominate a group of mma if placed among standing figures.

Seven pieces in the sample hold objects in their hands; an eighth piece may be holding an object. Two pieces probably hold whistles, flutes, or horns (III-24, 26). One piece holds a small drum (III-36), one holds drumsticks against two large drums (III-31), and a fifth piece probably holds a small hand gong in the left hand (III-28). The figure in plate III-21 holds a flared cylinder in the left hand; in plate III-33 there may be something in the right hand², and in plate III-35 the right hand holds a bottle-shaped object. All of these figures but two are definitely male; one is female; the last is not determinable.

¹ The styles of III-6 and III-15 put them into a special category, outside of the "mainstream" style of Agni mma.

² I did not examine this piece directly, and the photograph of the piece leaves this point unclear. It wears crossed bandoliers and has a forward-leaning hairdo.
by sex. The objects held in III-21 and III-25 are probably sword or staff handles. Both are in typical handle shapes, and the long parts of the objects, which would necessarily have been either fragile, ephemeral, or removable, were probably broken off.

None of these pieces is seated. Five of them wear decorations about the neck, of which four are Islamic talismen (worn often by men, and seldom by women in Agni country). Six have headdress types associated with high-ranking men in Agni society.

III.4.4 Heads which expand the typology: Among the Agni mma that I studied, five pieces are significantly different in form and style from the rest. All five pieces are heads; they can be divided morphologically and stylistically into two groups: goblet-shaped, hollow heads (plates III-40-42), and elongated heads which were once part of full figures (plates III-43, 44). These pieces are in the following collections:

plate III-40 M.N.C.I.
plate III-41 M.N.C.I.
plate III-42 formerly M.N.C.I.  
(present whereabouts unknown)
plate III-43 M.A.A.O., Paris
plate III-44 Private collection, Oppem

These heads are discussed separately, in subsections III.4.4.1 (hollow heads), and III.4.4.2 (elongated heads).
III.4.4.1 Hollow heads: Two heads in the Abidjan Museum, and one formerly in the same museum, are unlike most other mma in several ways. They are hollow, whereas other Agni mma are solid. The tops of all three heads are open, and the interior of the head is finished, as if the piece had been intended for use as a receptacle. They sit vertically atop their necks, whereas the heads of most mma lean back. The headdress of all three pieces is limited to small bosses which conform to the shape of the head, rather than standing out from the head, as is the case with most mma. On two of the heads, the headdress is a simple ring of bosses around the hole at the top of the head.

Only one of the pieces is complete (III-42). It has no body, but raised marks below the face resemble scarification patterns which are common on the bellies of female mma. Figures in plates III-40 and 41 have neck rings; in III-42 these are not present. Chins and jawlines are minimally represented on all three pieces. All three pieces conform to a goblet-like shape, with as few projecting parts as possible.

The complete piece is 31 cm. high, almost as large as the average full-figure mma; the heads are about twice the size of the average mma's head. If the figures in plates III-40 and 41 once had bodies, they were very large figures. There morphological similarities to that in III-42 lead me to conclude that they probably never had bodies, but were sculpted as heads only. Finally, the facial scarifications on all three pieces include "+" and "-" marks on the cheeks, in addition to

1 The present whereabouts of this piece is unknown to me. It was in Abidjan as recently as 1966 (Holas, 1966: pl. 119).
the marks at the temples and between the brows. None of the pieces shows any evidence of moustache or beard, and that in III-42 has "body marks" which are associated with female rather than male mma. All three probably represent women.

III.4.4.2 Elongated heads: Like the three pieces discussed in section III.4.4.1, pl. III-43 and 44 show only heads. Both represent males, and both are quite large, compared to the average mma's head. Both of these heads are executed in an elongated, mannered style; they may be by the same hand. Like the goblet-shaped heads, access to the interior is through a hole in the crown. However, the holes in these two heads are very small in diameter (see III-44) and access to the interior is much more difficult.¹

These two heads also differ from the others in that they are tilted sharply back atop ringed necks, much like the heads of full figures. Without a heavy base, neither could stand by itself. In my opinion, both were probably once part of full figures. They are much closer in style to heads of the figures than to the goblet-shaped heads.

III.5 Style of Agni mma

Probably the most notable stylistic trait of Agni mma is their remarkable uniformity of style. A great number of pieces have come out of Agni country since the beginning of this century, presumably taken from several sites in Sanwi. Yet the provenance of mma is invariably

¹ The holes in both heads are quite deep, but I was unable to find out whether the interior of the heads was hollow or not.
given as "Krinjabo". This is probably correct in many cases. Krinjabo was the largest of several towns in Sanwi which had mmaso, and as the capital of the kingdom, it would have produced more mma than the other sites. Pieces are almost never attributed to Aby, Adjouan, Assouba, Ayamé, or Kouaoukro.¹

Even if the pieces were attributable to a specific mmaso, a stylistic analysis would not necessarily produce any conclusive results about region and style. I saw and photographed seventeen pieces in Aby, all of which had been found in the mmaso there, and the stylistic variation among those pieces was almost as great as the variation among all the Agni pieces I studied. This leads me to the conclusion that canons of representation in Agni mma were quite strict, and persisted over a long period of time.

With few exceptions, no specified style of mma can be associated with a given site or date. Archaeological research may someday change this, but no mmaso in Sanwi has yet been excavated under controlled circumstances. None is likely to be excavated in the near future, because mmaso are still greatly respected by the traditional leadership in Sanwi, and the power of the spirits which reside in them is feared. The figures have been taken clandestinely by thieves or traders, or openly by colonial officers, with no concern for the information available at the sites which their intrusions destroyed. The amount of information

¹ Plate III-29 is an exception. It was purchased in Abidjan during the 1960's, and the seller specified that it had come from the mmaso "near the new dam" i.e., at Ayamé. Susan Vogel, personal communication; January, 1981.
still available in mmaso is thus questionable. I was permitted to pass by several mmaso in Sanwi, but never to enter or take photographs.

This stylistic analysis is based on the objects I saw in museums and private collections, and on a few pieces which are still in villages, but removed from mmaso. The analysis was approached according to Morellian principles: first, the basic stylistic characteristics common to most mma were identified. Next, pieces were grouped by style according to variations in minor elements, where an artist might feel free to express herself creatively, without violating the canons of representation. This section of the chapter is divided into two parts, under the following subheadings:

III.5.1 Stylistic canons of representation
III.5.2 Departures from these canons

III.5.1 Stylistic canons of representation: Based on my study of full-figure mma, I have concluded that certain elements of style are common to all figures, and it is logical to assume that these universally present traits were the basic canons of representation in Agni terracotta figure sculpture. They are the following:

1. Frontality: Mma are rigidly frontal, with no indication whatever of movement. Much more attention is devoted to the front of the figure than the back or sides; as a result, the figures are iconic, in that they are most interesting to view from one vantage point.

2. Symmetricality: Figures are bilaterally symmetrical. Even when an object is held in one hand and not the other (pl. III-35), the arms are in the same position and of the same length.
3. Head/body proportions: Heads of mma are very large. The head/figure ratio is between 1:1 and 1:2; in one case (pl. III-15), the head is larger than the body.

4. Rudimentary anatomy: Apart from the head, which is sculpted in great detail, the anatomy of mma is very rudimentary. Bodies are often mere cylinders; arms and legs are reduced to nubbins with fingers and toes engraved in the ends. Fingernails and toenails are absent. Breasts and genitals, when present, are mere lumps. The only attempt to sculpt musculature or bone structure is on the backs of certain figures, which are grooved down the center, indicating backbone and dorsal muscles. Much more attention is devoted to the detailing of scarification on the body.

5. Neck length: Necks of most figures are either long or very long, and conspicuously ringed (again, pl. III-15 is an exception).

6. Posture of head: The head leans back atop the neck (here again, pl. III-15 is an exception).

7. Detailing of head: Heads are very carefully detailed, with the following elements:
   a. mouth: lips are a fine ridge, and slightly parted.
   b. nose: modeling of the nose varies greatly, from rudimentary to naturalistic, but nostrils are always pierced in the bottom of the nose.

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1 The figure in plate III-31, which has fingernails, is an exception.
c. eyes: always closed, sculpted very much like the mouth (pls. III-6 and 7 are exceptions).

d. ears: canals are always indicated by a pierced hole. The ears are generally small and rudimentary.

e. brows: almost always a fine, bow-shaped ridge above the eyes and following their outline.

f. forehead: generally quite high, so that the headdress is pushed to the back of the head.

g. scarification: almost always takes the form of raised keloids on the cheeks, temples, and between the brows. Some figures have more elaborate markings or painted designs on the forehead.

h. headdress: This is the most individualistic element of mma; all are greatly detailed, and no two are exactly the same.

i. solemnity of expression: All these qualities combine to give mma a solemn aspect, even though figures are occasionally portrayed smiling. The long neck, upturned head, and carefully-done headdress also lend a certain elegance to most mma.

III.5.2 Departures from these canons: Some sculptures in the sample vary from the stylistic norms of mma in minor ways, such as the geometricization of heads in plates III-23 and III-29, or the attenuation of form, in plates III-43 and III-44, where the result is very
Another individualistic modeling technique is the lifting of the bottom of the nose from the surface of the face (pls. III-9, 13, 22), which has rather unfortunate porcine results. These variations in form do not occur in enough sculptures, or in striking enough form, to permit the attribution of hands to mma in most cases.

Other variations from the stylistic norms result in figures which were criticized by Agni elders in interviews for the "rough look". I was told on several occasions that the figures in plates III-16 and III-20 could not be mma because they were "too ugly". The critics said that these must be assongu, rather than mma. While neither sculpture is an assongu, each violates at least one major stylistic canon for mma: that in plate III-16 is not symmetrical, and its mouth is irregular. The head in III-20 is too small in proportion to the body, and the surfaces of both are much rougher than most mma.

The figure in plate III-15 departs from the norm in many ways: its head is much too large, and leans forward atop a thick, stubby neck. The whole aspect of the piece is gnomelike and dwarfish. Unlike those in plates III-16 and III-20, however, this piece was not criticized by interviewees.

Plates III-6 and III-7 show the only two mma that I saw in Krinjabo. During several interviews in which I showed elders photographs

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1 The modeling of these heads is remarkably similar, and strikingly individual. Both may be by the same hand.

2 Part of the objection to III-16 may have been because its chin is damaged. However, plate III-10, which is also damaged but is otherwise very elegantly finished, was not so criticized.
of mma from the Musée de l'Homme and the M.A.A.O. in Paris (plates III-9 to III-20), they repeatedly assured me that these could not be Agni pieces, because they were not at all naturalistic enough. A good mma, I was told, is as precise as a photograph in reproducing the features of the deceased. Finally, I asked to be shown some mma which would demonstrate this naturalism, and was shown those in plates III-6 and III-7.

Though both pieces conform to most of the basic canons of representation in mma, they also depart from these in a number of ways. Neither piece is polished; the surface in III-7 appears to have been roughened with a comb. The figure in plate III-6 wears a cache-sexe, whereas all other mma are nude. The eyes of that in III-7 are open, again a unique trait. He appears to have long, straightened hair, and he has no neck rings. Most significantly, both heads were modeled with an attempt to portray the cranial structure underlying the face. These characteristics make both sculptures much more naturalistic than most mma.

Several things lead me to believe that these two figures were sculpted much more recently than the mma in Western collections. First, they are still in Krinjabo, and they are not kept in the mmaso. I was told that this is because most of the mma had been stolen from the mmaso there. Second, they incorporate a realism that is not present in any other mma I have seen. Unique formal elements, like the loincloth, non-traditional hairdo, and lack of neck rings, further separate them from most mma. Finally, the figure in III-7 bears a striking resemblance to the man in whose house I was shown these figures. It could easily represent his father, uncle, or grandfather, all of whom were men of very high status in Krinjabo early in the 1900's. In my opinion,
these figures were probably sculpted by the same artist early in this century. As such, they represent the last vestige of the tradition, which is said to have died out around the turn of the century.¹

III.6 Abouré Mma

Agni Mma and Abouré Mma are two manifestations of a single funerary terracotta tradition. Iconographically and functionally, the two are practically identical. Very little has been published on Abouré Mma, and this information was treated in the bibliographic section along with the works on Agni Mma. However, the form and styles of Abouré Mma are treated separately from Agni Mma in this chapter, because there are major formal and stylistic differences between the two. This section of the chapter will be presented in two parts: III.6.1, a listing of the formal characteristics of Abouré Mma; and, III.6.2, a discussion of styles of Abouré Mma.

III.6.1 Formal characteristics of Abouré Mma: Three relatively complete pieces, four heads, and eight figure fragments were used for this formal discussion. All of these but two are currently in the reserves of the M.N.C.I.;² none of them is currently labeled "Abouré". They are illustrated in plates III-45 to III-61. I identified the

¹ Copies of Agni terracottas are still produced in great quantities somewhere in Agni territory. However, they are all remarkably similar in appearance, as if done on an assembly line, and they lack the refinement and subtlety of traditional Mma.

² One of the pieces (III-58) is now missing its head; another head (ill. in Holas, 1952) and the largest torso (III-59, center) are no longer in the M.N.C.I.'s reserves.
pieces as Abouré through Holas's and Veit's articles (both 1952), through interviews in Adiaho, Bonoua, and Moosou in 1979, and by means of field photographs from the IFAN photographic archives in Dakar, where there are three photos of objects taken in Abidjan in 1951, labeled Aboure. One additional piece, similar in form to those in III-8, III-29, and all the Akyé ba, is also included in these photographs. It may be Aboure, though it was probably collected nine years before the other Abouré pieces. Stylistically, this piece is most similar to the missing head of plate III-58, and quite unlike the Agni and Akyé pieces in the M.N.C.I. It is morphologically dissimilar from the Akyé pieces, and similar to the Agni pieces of the same type, in that there is no access to the interior through the head. It is basically like a goglet in form, but could not function as one. Several more figures are visible in Neveux's two photographs of the mmawo in Moosou (pl. III-63a, b), but the photographs do not show sufficient detail for the pieces to be included in an analysis.

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1 These three photos, taken by G. Duchemin, are not the same photos published by Holas in 1952. They show the female torso (pl. III-58) with its head attached, the separated head of the same figure, the missing torso, and the "problem piece".

2 Pieces in Abidjan often have two acquisition numbers: the original, and one from an inventory which was done in 1974. The original number of the problem piece is CI 42.3.296; thus, the 296th piece of the third collection of 1942. The other Abouré pieces were not acquired before 1951, when Duchemin photographed them. I have been unable to determine why this piece was included in Duchemin's photographs. In another photo from the IFAN archives, taken by A. Cocheteux in 1951, the same object is listed as an Agni piece, and it is currently stored (and numbered) with the Akyé pieces in the M.N.C.I.; its origin appears undeterminable, at present. The piece is analyzed with ba, in Chapter IV.
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This discussion is not a complete typology.

The small number of

Aboure mma presently available for study (three pieces and twelve frag­
ments) is not sufficiently large to permit definite typological conclu­
sions.

However, the pieces are sufficiently varied in type that cer­

tain statements can be made about the variety of forms among Aboure
mma, for purposes of comparison with the other Akan terracotta tradi­
tions discussed in this dissertation.

The discussion is in fourteen

numbered segments (III.6.6.1-14), following the same outline as the
discussion of Agni mma.
111.6.1.1

Size of figure:

The smallest of the three full figures

is 22 cm. high (8 2/3"); the largest is 27 cm. (10 2/3").

These fig­

ures give a false impression of average size, however; the largest tor­
so is 33 cm. tall without legs or head, and the missing figure
(pi. 111-59, center) was very large.

The average Aboure mma was appar­

ently somewhat larger than the pieces in the M.N.C.I. indicate.
111.6.1.2

Sex:

Eight of the figures are probably male; three are

probably female; four are unidentifiable by sex.
111.6.1.3

Posture:

Eleven of the figures are sufficiently com­

plete that a discussion of posture is possible.
standing, and eight are seated.

Of these, three are

One of these is seated on an Akan-style

stool.
111.6.1.4

Presentation of figure:

All the figures but two have

cylindrical bodies that vary from medium-long to very long, with both
upper and lower extremities.

The two exceptions are pi. 111-52, where

the body is short and stocky, and 111-49, which has a short,


cylindrical torso with no lower extremities.

III.6.1.5 Holes in the figure: Twelve of the pieces are solid clay. All the solid torsos have a narrow hole in the base, where a palm-branch or stick was probably used as an armature. Two of the full figures have hollow torsos (III-56, 58). The torso in plate III-58 is eggshell-thin and very finely executed; that in III-56 is less fine. The third full figure (III-52) is solid.

III.6.1.6 Treatment of surface: None of the Abouré figures is covered with a dark surface polish, but six show traces of polish; all pieces but those in III-56 and III-58 are modeled around a core of coarse clay, with a very fine-grained surface layer.

III.6.1.7 Lower extremities: Ten of eleven torsos have legs, which are naturalistically modeled in two cases, and tiny, vestigial appendages to the torso in eight. The eleventh torso never had any legs. One piece (III-46) still has a foot, which has toes. All the pieces with legs also have buttocks.

III.6.1.8 Torso: All the Abouré mma in the M.N.C.I. are nude; four have male genitals, two have female genitals, five have no genitals at all. When genitals are present, they are tiny. That in III-56 has a cylindrical hole between the thighs, but this probably different from the holes in Agni mma. The Agni mma with holes are all female, and the hole is precisely where the vulva should be. This figure is

1 At least one Abouré sculptor modeled her figures' legs very short and heavy in the calves. This is a well-known aesthetic point in Baulé sculpture, as discussed in Vogel (1980:11), and may be the same in Abouré sculpture.
probably male (the genital region is damaged), and the hole is below the groin. There is a much greater variety of shape in torsos of Abouré mma than those of Agni mma. The eleven torsos in the M.N.C.I. vary from long and slender with protruding belly (III-45), to very stocky (III-52). The degree of naturalism varies from cylindrical schematism with no indication of musculature or bone structure (III-49), to a refined naturalism (III-58), in which there was successful attempt to portray the structure underlying the surface of the figure. Abouré artists created figures which lean forward, slightly to the left or right, figures which lean back, and figures which stand and sit in naturalistic postures. Anatomical details of the torso are also more consistently present than in Agni figures. All eleven Abouré torsos have navels; among the twelve torsos and fragments, three female figures have breasts, five male figures have nipples, and four female figures have no indication of nipples at all. When they are present, the breasts are placed quite high on the torso. Plate III-52 shows very large breasts and belly;\(^1\) the other figures have small breasts.

Two of the twelve torsos and fragments have marks on them; the others are unmarked except for navels and breasts. The female in III-58 has three raised marks in a row across the belly, just above the navel. A small part of the torso remains for the male seen in III-54; the

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\(^1\) This figure, with its very obvious fertility symbolism, is rare among mma. It is also unusual in that it has no headdress at all. The head appears shaved, as do the heads of III-51, 55, and 57. The shaved head is a sign of mourning in Akan culture (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 93).
figure probably had raised marks on his chest. In both cases, the marks undoubtedly represent keloids. The association of body keloids with female figures, which is quite clear among Agni mma, is not apparent among the Abouré figures.

The shoulders of Abouré mma are more naturalistically modeled than in the Agni figures; the least naturalistic figure (plate III-49), which has a cylindrical torso, has a more naturalistic shoulder girdle than the shoulder ridge of most Agni figures. None of the Abouré figures in Abidjan has keloids on its shoulders.

III.6.1.9 Upper extremities: Five of the figures still have fragments of arms (all apparently once had arms). In plate III-52, the arms are thick and crudely modeled, with hands indicated by flattened ends; no fingers are modeled. The central figure in plate III-59 had short, thick arms which hung down at the figure's sides and were bent in toward the body below the elbow. The hands were crudely modeled, but fingers are apparent on the left hand. Figures in III-56, 58 also apparently had short, thick arms. In plates III-45 and III-46, fragments of tiny arms remain; they were apparently outstretched.

III.6.1.10 Neck: None of the Abouré mma in the M.N.C.I. has a particularly long neck. The necks in III-54 and III-56 (both male) are the longest. Generally, Abouré figures seem to have had necks of naturalistic length and thickness. The neck in plate III-52, which is very short, is an exception. None of the necks has the pronounced neck rings which are common on Agni mma, though these are apparent on some of the figures photographed by Neveux in the mmawo at Moosou (pl. III-63).
Two figures have fine striations etched around the neck (these are dotted lines in pl. III-57), and three figures have keloids on the neck, in the diagonal configurations which are common on Agni mma. None of the Abouré mma has both neck rings and neck keloids.

III.6.1.11 Head: In seven of the Abouré figures in the M.N.C.I., the placement of head on neck is still apparent. Five of the heads lean back atop the neck, looking upward; two heads are vertical. None of the figures has a clearly apparent beard, but two (plates III-53 and III-56), both male, have very sharp chin lines, which may indicate beards.¹ None of the pieces has a moustache. Two pieces (plates III-52, 55) have large, prognathous jaws. Mouths of Abouré mma are grooved, sometimes with an indication of thin lips (III-54, 56); none of the figures in Abidjan is portrayed smiling. Noses vary from very small (III-56) to large (III-52). Eyes appear closed, as a raised lump with a horizontal slit. Eyebrows are either absent or a very fine ridge above the eyes. Foreheads of Abouré mma are less high than those of Agni mma. The head in pl. III-61 is an exception to this; having the high, domed forehead which is typical of Agni mma. The ears are generally small, far back on the head, and rudimentary. None of the pieces has pierced ears.

Six of the Abouré pieces in the M.N.C.I. still have faces. Three of these have neither keloids nor headdress (III-52, 55, 57). That in

¹ This sharp chin is also present in plate IV-6, which may be Abouré, and probably represents a female. Thus, it does not necessarily indicate a beard, but may rather be characteristic of a particular sculptor's style.
III-54, which is gone above the nose, has a small cowrie-shaped keloid on each cheek. The missing head in III-58 (pl. III-60, 61) had keloids on the cheeks, between the brows, and at the temples, as do most Agni mma. That in III-56 has marks at the temples and between the brows but not on the cheeks. This piece also has a hole pierced through the surface at the left corner of the mouth, which was evidently put there by the sculptor.

III.6.1.12 Headdress: I have already mentioned that three of the Abouré heads in Abidjan lack headdresses. A fourth head fragment (III-51) was apparently also without a headdress. The absence of a headdress in these four pieces may indicate that the individuals were in mourning, at which time the Akan traditionally shave their heads. Piece III-54 has many fine, horizontal lines etched across the back of the head, beginning above a ridge at the neck. These same horizontal lines are on the head in III-56; they rise to a low ridge across the forehead, and apparently represent a close-cropped hairdo. The missing head in III-58 (III-61) had several thick bosses, apparently representing tressed hair. In Neveux’s photographs of the mmauo at Moosou, tufted hairdos and conical headdresses are apparent. Both of these headdresses also appear on Agni mma.

III.6.1.13 Jewelry: Two of the Abouré figures are portrayed wearing jewelry. The one in III-59, center, is wearing a large, Western-

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1 The head of this piece was undamaged when it first arrived at the M.N.C.I. It is illustrated in Holas (1952: pl. II, center). There were also keloids between the brows and at the temples.

2 As discussed in note 1, p. 51.
style key on a chain around its neck (modeled in clay), and a small fragment of a modeled pendant remains on the torso in plate III-50. This was probably an Islamic talisman.

III.6.1.14 Furniture, accoutrements: None of the figures holds anything, but only one of them still has hands. The only other accoutrement is the Akan-style stool on which the central figure seen in III-59 sat.

III.6.2 Style in Abouré mma: Like the previous section, this discussion cannot claim to be complete, because too few examples of Abouré mma were available for study. However, two "hands" are apparent among the pieces in Abidjan. Hand A (plates III-54, 56, 58, 59) sculpted large, highly naturalistic pieces, richly detailed and expertly modeled. Hand B (plates III-52, 55-57) sculpted much smaller, more abstract figures, all of which have very large noses and little sculpted detail. None of the figures by this hand has a headdress. The one in III-51 may also be by this hand (it is of smaller size and is also without headdress), but the fragment is too small for definite attribution.

One comment about Abouré style in general is possible. Because of the wide variety of style evident among the few pieces from two sites, it is apparent that stylistic canons were considerably less rigid for Abouré sculptors of mma than for their Agni cousins.
III.7 Manufacture and Function

The information for this section of the chapter was gathered during field interviews in 1979. These interviews were conducted with village elders in the following towns:

Agni: Abengourou, Aby, Assouba, Ayamé, and Krinjabo

Abouré: Adiaho, Bonoua, and Moosou

This section of the chapter is divided into three subsections, under the following headings: III.7.1, description of manufacture; III.7.2, discussion of function; and III.7.3, comparison of Agni and Abouré traditions.

III.7.1 Manufacture: During most interviews, I was told that mma were sculpted exclusively by women. Some informants specified that only old women made mma. One informant in Moosou told me that men could make mma, and the elders of Ayamé said that they were modeled principally by women, but that men could make them, too. In any case, the sculptors were primarily women, and must have known the deceased.

Descriptions of the modeling process were consistent: the sculptor isolated herself in the bush, filled a bowl with palm oil, and asked the spirit of the deceased to appear in the oil and inspire her to make an accurate image. The elders in Assouba specified that an offering of drink was made at the invocation of the spirit, and that the sculptor must refrain from sexual contacts while the work was in progress. With the spirit's guidance, the sculptor modeled an image which was the exact duplicate of its subject: the term photo was often used to stress the faithfulness of the image. The king or queenmother
was always portrayed seated, and other figures standing.

Only one source specified that a special clay was used for mma: according to Amon d'Aby, they should be made of a fine, white clay (kaolin). Other sources said that the same clay was used for domestic pottery and for mma. Agni figures are modeled around a core of coarse clay;\(^1\) Abouré figures are hollow in some cases, and others are modeled the same way Agni figures are done. Several days before the funeral, the mma was painted with several coats of an indelible, black stain. This stain was obtained from the stems of a climbing plant, called atapée in Agni.\(^2\) Once stained, the mma was ready for planting (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 70).

This information on the manufacture of mma is very general and rather vague. There are two reasons for this. First, I never spoke with any sculptors who had made mma. The tradition apparently died out so long ago that all sculptors are now dead. Second, even if I had been able to interview a sculptor, she would probably have told me little more than I was able to learn from the elders. The modeling of mma was necessarily a secret process, because the sculptor came into direct contact with the spirits of dead people in the process. These contacts were fraught with danger for the living. Any violation of this secrecy by a sculptor would therefore have been very dangerous for her.

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\(^1\) Exceptions to this were discussed in section III.4.4.

\(^2\) I am not aware of any special symbolism in the choice of atapée for staining mma. It was apparently chosen because it produced a very dark, permanent black.
III.7.2 Function: The primary function of mma was to serve as substitutes for the dead at ceremonial funerals. Elders in Krinjabo explained to me that in the old days, there were no cameras or mirrors, and an image of the dead was required for the funeral. Once "planted" in the mmaso, the mma served another function. It represented both the individual as an ancestor, and the permanent watchfulness of his spirit, along with other ancestors of the family and the town.

According to most interviewees, mma were modeled only for adults who were members of the royal family of the king's or queenmother's court. The Krinjabo elders added "famous people" to the list, and further added that each of the seven major families in Krinjabo placed some mma in the mmaso. Apparently, if a person's family could afford the expense of a ceremonial funeral, they had a mma sculpted to take the place of the deceased during the funeral.

Mma were not planted individually in the mmaso, for two reasons. First, the planting of a mma was a very costly undertaking, requiring a great deal of ceremony. Second, the king's mma had to be accompanied

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1 At Agni funerals today, a large photo of the deceased is placed in his/her room, either on the bed or on the wall above it. I assume this photo serves the same purpose that mma once served.

2 This was invariably the term used to refer to the placement of mma in the mmaso.

3 Amon d'Aby disagrees with this, holding that a mma could be modeled for any free person, including children (see p. 16).

4 Holas discusses these seven families as Agni nobility, but holds that any adult member of the "seventeen free families" of Sanwi could have a mma.
by others at its implantation, so that he would have a court in the
group, just as he had had in the world of the living. Therefore, mma were kept in the village after funerals until a king's fune
ral, when they were paraded in groups three times around the town, accompanied by dancers and musicians. For the procession to the mmaso, the statuette had to be embellished or dressed as richly as possible.

It was placed in a basin and carried by a young woman who had been richly dressed and daubed with kaolin for the occasion. This woman was most often recently married, and her association with the mma was presumably to enhance her fertility. The king's mma was carried in the royal palanquin by his bearers, just as he had been in life.

Before the procession, the queenmother addressed the spirit, thus:

Today we say our final good-byes to you. Come, come and be incarnate in your mma, so we can accompany you. Let no harm come to those who are here to sing your praises and carry you to your final resting place. Let no harm come to the one who has sculpted your mma. Please accept the drink I offer you. (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 70-71; translation mine).

After this, the mma were taken to the mmaso and planted as an effigy court, with the mma of the king seated at the center, surrounded by his standing courtiers. A meal and drink were offered to the spirits of

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1 "The king does not like to travel alone" is a common saying in Sanwi. It was used in the past as a justification for human sacrifices at his burial and funeral. I attended the burial and funeral of Amon Ndoufou III, King of Sanwi, in 1979, and heard this adage quoted repeatedly after the news came that a policeman had been killed in an automobile accident, enroute to Aboisso from Kpinjabo on the night of the king's burial. The police had allegedly been sent to guard against human sacrifices for the burial.

2 Amon d'Aby uses the words "La statuette doit etre parée au maximum", so the statue's adornment may or may not have included dress, as is customary in Ghana (see Cole and Ross, 1977: 265).
the dead, and a human sacrifice was also offered. ¹ Food from the ceremonial meal was actively sought out by women who had difficulty getting pregnant, as it was thought to increase their fertility.² Taro from these meals was fed to deaf children to render them auditory.

The mmaso was visited once per year, during the new yam festival. During the visit, a meal and drink were offered to the mma³ as representatives of the ancestors' spirits. The ancestors were asked to provide prosperity and increase during the coming year, and were thanked for the harvest. According to Amon d'Aby, this meal was offered on the second day of the celebration, the day consecrated to the ancestors.⁴ The Abouré also offer a meal to the ancestors (though no longer through the agency of the mma) during the new yam celebration. They call the day on which the meal is offered amioho mmawo, or the "statue celebration", and it falls on the last Saturday of a 42-day month in the ritual calendar, on the day coinciding approximately with the yam harvest.⁵ When the yam festival has been celebrated in recent years, the

¹ Amon d'Aby specifies that the victim was buried up to his neck, facing the sculptures (interview in Aby: 6/2/79). Other informants neither confirmed or denied this, but agreed that a human sacrifice was made.

² According to Amon d'Aby, these women who sought fertility from mma also kept the mmaso clean during the year, and made offerings of foutou to the mma from time to time (1960: 72).

³ The elders in Ayamé insisted that drink only was offered to the mma during the annual visit (interview: 8/30/79).

⁴ Interview in Aby: loc. sit.

⁵ Interview with Abbé Alvert Ablé, Abidjan: 9/24/79.
same rituals are still observed in the mmaso, even though few mma
remain. 1

The food from these offerings disappeared quickly, usually taken
by women with fertility problems. However, the dishes and bottles
remained, and great numbers of them collected in the mmaso. These are
visible in plate III-63, a photograph of the Moosou mmawo taken by
Dr. Neveux in about 1911, and in plate III-64, a photo of an Agni
mmaso taken around the turn of the century. Marcel Lheureux, who col­
lected a large number of mma in Sanwi during the 1920's, found many
mma fragments surrounded by broken pottery, old bottles, and "kitchen
detritus" (1932:1). These were undoubtedly the collected remains of
many annual offerings to the ancestors. Having no notion of the cul­
tural significance of these things, Lheureux interpreted the piles of
pottery and bottles as trash heaps. He left everything in place but
the best statue fragments, mostly heads, which he took away, thinking
they had been thrown out by the Agni. 2

1 The yam festival was not celebrated anywhere in Sanwi in 1979,
because so many of the kings of Sanwi had died during the year (four of
five died in 1979; the fifth died in 1980). Without the king, proper
celebration of the new yam festivities is impossible. However, the fes­
tival had not been held for several years before 1979 in Krinjabo,
because of a disagreement between the king and the town elders over the
construction of a new palace.

2 It should be added in Lheureux's defense that he asked the Agni
about what he found in the mmaso and was told that nobody knew anything
about these things, but that they were dangerous, and he should keep
away from them (1932: 3). Thus, he had no way of knowing about their
cultural importance.
In the old days, mmaso were guarded, and heavy fines were levied against the families of persons caught trespassing. By the same token, the mmaso was once considered a safe place to keep money, because it was doubly guarded by human and spirit forces. The mmaso in Sanwi are still considered dangerous places today, because they are still the dwelling places of ancestors' spirits, despite the fact that they have been pillaged. Contact with spirits must be very carefully controlled, because they are much more powerful than the living. I was told by the Krinjabo elders that one must avoid looking at mma for long periods of time, lest they "seize" you. Therefore, the mmaso are still avoided in Sanwi, except for ceremonial visits.

When I asked which towns in Sanwi had mmaso, the only two mentioned by all my Agni sources were Krinjabo and Ayamé. Elders in Krinjabo added Kouaoudro, Assouba, and Adjouan. Elders in Assouba added their own, Adjouan, and Ehia. No one mentioned Siman, which was the capital before the Sanwi leadership settled in Krinjabo. However, when I asked about Siman, everyone agreed that there had been a mmaso there, also. Amon d'Aby went into the mmaso in Aby when he was a child, and I photographed mma which had been taken from the place, but everyone else

1 Interview with an elder in Bafia, who had been raised in Krinjabo: 9/1/79. I was told the same thing by the Ayamé elders on 8/30/79.

2 Interview in Krinjabo: 6/21/79.

3 Henriette Diabaté, an Ivoirian and Agni historian, has been to Siman and claims that she saw the mmaso there, but that she was unable to photograph the site, because her cameras mysteriously malfunctioned while she was there (interview: 6/79).
I asked about it and denied that Aby had a mmaso. The Ayamé elders said, however, that some villages which had no right to mmaso had "built" them.

I was shown the mmaso in Krinjabo and Assouba, but not permitted to enter either one. I was shown the site of the former mmaso in Aby (now a schoolground north of town). The mmaso in Ayamé has been under water since a dam was built on the Bia at Ayamé in 1959.

Apparently, two of the five Aboure towns once had mmaso: Bonoua and Moosou. Neither town now has one, though the "sacred forest" of Moosou is near the site of the old mmaso.

In Krinjabo, the mmaso is east of town; in Assouba, it is south-east; in Aby, it was north; in Moosou, it was south and east.¹ Despite this apparent dominance of placements on the eastern edge of towns, the location of a mmaso in Sanwi and Aboure territory was determined by symbolic factors, rather than by the compass. The mmaso had to be in a location which satisfied the following requirements: it had to be in virgin forest, well-separated from the settlement. It apparently also had to be alongside the major path leading into town,² which is where graveyards are located today. Finally, the mmaso was always on the opposite side of town from the mosonu, a place in the forest which was considered the dwelling place of the protective deities of the

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¹ I was unable to determine the place of mmaso vis-a-vis the towns in other locations.

² The two oldest references to mmaso, in Lheureux and Neveux, both specify that the mmaso in Krinjabo and Moosou were "beside the caravan route", which was the major road leading into town.
village and which was dedicated to their cult. This separation of ancestral spirits and minor deities was necessary because the two served different purposes, and there was a potential conflict between them. Moreover, the deities were taboo to women during their menstrual cycles, whereas mma were not (Amon d'Abys, 1960: 71-72). Niangoran-Bouah says that the mmawo and the sacred forest in Moosou were similarly opposed.

Everyone I spoke with agreed that mma are no longer made, either in Sanwi or in Abouré territory. The authors on the subject posit that the combined forces of Christianity, Harrism, and the colonial administration brought an end to the tradition; thus, it died out in the early years of this century. Responses by interviewees to the question, "When was this tradition abandoned?", varied. In Ayamé, I was told that the tradition died out after Christianity was introduced. In Assouba, the same answer was given. In Krinjabo, "the forces of modernization" was given as the biggest reason for the tradition's demise. In addition, the Krinjabo elders complained that young people, who were no longer interested in mma, took the statues from the mmaso and sold them long ago. Similar reasons were given in the Abouré towns (Moosou and Bonoua), but much less was remembered about the tradition in Abouré country, so the practice may have died out earlier there than in

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1 Personal communication: 3/1/79.

2 Holas (1951: 16); Amon d'Abys (1960: 72).
Sanwi. In no case was a specific time mentioned, though all events mentioned took place early in the colonial era (beginning in 1893).

Krinjabo was the only town where anyone claimed to have seen a mma planted. The elders there whom I interviewed were all older than 65, and some claimed to have witnessed an implantation. They specified that this even took place a long time ago, and that it was a king's funeral. This was probably the funeral of Amon Azeyma, which was celebrated in 1908. Those who had seen the ceremony said that it happened so long ago, they couldn't remember details, but that it was basically the same as other ceremonies for planting mma.

Though the elders in Sanwi were willing to discuss generalities about mma, the mmaso, and ceremonies relating to them, they were either unable or unwilling to discuss specific points about the tradition in detail. This is doubtless due partly to the fact that the tradition died out some time ago. It is also partly due to a general suspiciousness among Sanwi elders about the motives of whites who claim they are

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1 The Abouré towns, both located on the Comoé just above Grand Bassam, were accessible by boat, and therefore much easier for whites to visit than the Sanwi towns, which (with the exceptions of Aby and Adjouan) were all several kilometers back in the forest. This is probably the main reason for the earlier demise of the tradition in Abouré country.

2 Interview in Krinjabo: 6/21/79.

3 After the death of Amon Azeyma, who died in the French jail in Aboisso, the leadership of Sanwi came increasingly under French domination, and traditional authority has never been reasserted since (cf. Horovitz, 1977: 225-236). Thus, it seems likely that his was the last traditional state funeral.
interested in Agni traditions. However, my questions received more straightforward answers than Lheureux's, which were posed in the 1920's, when the tradition was much more recent, and the leadership feared that the colonizers were trying to extinguish their authority and traditions altogether. Because the ceremonies surrounding mma were "pagan" and involved human sacrifices, the Agni were loath to discuss them with colonial administrators and missionaries. Because the ceremonies are now part of history, the leadership is willing to discuss them today with researchers, albeit with caution. Though there are no records of any suppression of the tradition, there is no doubt that the suppression took place, and was successful, both in Sanwi and in Abouré territory.

All the elders I interviewed said they hoped that mma could someday be replaced by a new tradition, which would honor the dead in a similar way. Amon d'Aby points out that elaborate concrete tombs serve a similar purpose today (1960: 73). These tombs often include a portrait of the deceased, and they require a great deal of expenditure by the family, so they could satisfy the need for mma. Yet, they are not common in Sanwi. Much more common are photographs processed on porcelain and laid into ceramic tile tombs in modern cemeteries. These

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1 This suspiciousness is perfectly understandable, considering what has happened to traditional culture since the turn of the century.

2 The prophet Harris sent envoys to Krinjabo in 1914, and there is no doubt that they encouraged the destruction of "idols", since this was always a part of Harrist activity. However, no record of their activity in Krinjabo has been published.

3 These tombs are much more common in Ndénié, which is much richer than Sanwi.
photos were never mentioned as replacements for mma, however.

The elders in Assouba mentioned elaborate concrete tombs as possible replacements for mma. In Ayamé, where the mmaso was flooded in 1959, and therefore no longer exists, the elders stated that they would like to build a new mmaso, with statues in Carrara marble. The Krinjabo elders were the least certain of how the tradition could be replaced. Though they would like to see some sort of "modern mma", they said that nothing is envisioned at present. The Abouré leadership seem to have abandoned their tradition completely and replaced mma with wooden statues of their deceased royalty which are kept in the palace in Bonoua and displayed on festival occasions.

III.8 Iconography

This section will be divided into two parts: a discussion of symbolic elements in mma and their possible meanings (III.8.1) and a discussion of the cultural implications of the information that is available on the form and function of mma (III.8.2).

III.8.1 Symbolic elements: The following elements of mma probably have symbolic meaning: (1) size of figures; (2) posture and gesture of figures; (3) objects held; (4) nudity; (5) marks on the body and face;

1 Interview: 8/31/79.
2 Interview in Bonoua: 5/19/79.
3 These correspond to Panofsky's second and third levels of iconographic analysis (Panofsky, 1955: 1-21). His first, or descriptive level, has already been presented in section III.4.
(6) headdress; (7) objects worn; (8) placement in the mmaso. Definite symbolic meanings were impossible to establish, for two reasons. First, cultural studies of the Agni and Abouré have been few, and when extant their orientation has been largely historical and economic. Second, answers to questions which I asked about symbolism in mma were invariably vague or very general in nature, probably because the tradition died out so long ago. Thus, my conclusions about symbolism in mma are tentative, subject to refinement, expansion, and correction in further studies.

The size and posture of a person's mma apparently indicated that person's position with the hierarchy of Agni and Abouré society. Among the Agni mma in the sample, the average height of eight seated figures is 36.75 cm., as opposed to an average height of 30.51 cm. for the twenty-eight standing figures.¹ The seated figures presumably represent kings and queenmothers. A photograph of Amon Ndoufou (pl. III-62) shows the king and his closest associates seated on chairs or stools, with everyone else either standing or seated on the ground. This correspondence between large, seated figures and high prestige was impossible to establish for Abouré mma, because so few figures were available for study. However, of the three figures in plate III-59, the seated one was by far the largest before he lost his head. Similarities in modeling and figure conception indicate that these three mma were

¹ The pot-based figures were not included in these calculations, since they are neither seated nor standing.
probably from the same mmawo; thus, they may have been displayed together, and provide an example of the same size relativity among Abouré mma. This notion is supported by a photograph published in Ablé (1980: 87), which shows the Abouré "chief" (king) of Grand Bassam and his court. The king is seated, as are the queenmother and another male figure (dressed in white; he is probably a priest). Everyone else in the group is either standing or kneeling.

Further, the presence of Akan concave-seated stools in certain mma has symbolic value. For the Agni and Abouré, as for the Ghanaian Akan, the state stool incarnates the spirit of the nation. It is therefore a sacred object, which has its own cult (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 24-27; Ablé, 1980: 241-247). The king and queenmother appeared seated on the stool only for ceremonial occasions. A mma seated on the state stool has the same symbolic value as an Akan king or queenmother on the stool. In both cases, the seated personage represents the authority that governs the traditional state, which is manifested in the stool.

Gesture and the holding of objects are also apparently symbolic elements in mma. The most common gesture is outstretched arms, slightly spread and perpendicular to the body. The arms are very short, and the form is rudimentary, so it is impossible to specify whether the palms are turned up or down. I was unable to identify a symbolic meaning for this gesture. Akua'ba figures, made by the Akan in Ghana, often have similarly outstretched, rudimentary arms. The

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1 Veit claimed that they were all from the mmaso at Bonoua (see p. 18).
gesture may be partly due to the shortness of the arms. When asked why the arms of mma are outstretched, some informants answered, "That's the way it was", (i.e., the way they were modeled); others said they didn't know.

None of the Abouré mma I studied holds any object. However, the seated figure in plate III-59 has much longer arms than the others, and the remaining arm is turned downward, in front of the torso. The same posture is apparent in several Abouré figures photographed by Neveux in Moosou early in this century (pl. III-63). I have seen this positioning of the arms in only one Agni mma; it is the largest piece among a group which were photographed in situ in an Agni mmaso (pl. III-64), probably early in this century. This association of downturned arms with large mma probably indicates high status. This notion is reinforced by terracotta images of a Ghanaian king and queenmother in similar postures (Cole and Ross, 1977: 123), by the posture of Amon Ndoufou in Fleuriot de Langle's illustration of the king and his court (pl. III-62), and by the posture of Abouré kings in state portraits, published by Ablé (1980: 87, 99).

The figures in plates III-6 and III-36 both have longer arms than most mma, with clearly modeled hands which are turned toward each other. In III-6, the female holds nothing; in III-36, the male holds

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1 This photo, the only old photo of an Agni mmaso I have seen, presents some problems. It was part of a display of postcards from the colonial era, held in Abidjan in 1980. The cards had been collected in France, and were presented without documentation. On the card, the site is marked "Mafia", which is a Nzima village at the mouth of the Aby Lagoon, next to Assine. I am indebted to Philip L. Ravenhill for sending me the photograph.
a small cylindrical object, perhaps a drum.¹

Four pieces in the sample hold an object in one hand. In III-33, the female holds an unidentifiable, cigar-shaped object in her right hand; in III-35, the male holds a small, bottle-shaped object in his right hand. This is probably part of a state sword's handle. The state sword is carried by officers of Akan kings on state occasions. These are visible in plate III-62 as staffs with dumbbell-shaped handles; see also Cole and Ross (1977: 25, 150) for illustrations of state swords. I assume the rest of the sword in plate III-35 projected above the hand and was broken off. The headdress of this figure is probably a bulalèkèlé, which is associated with men of very high rank in Agni tradition. Thus, he is probably a royal sword-bearer. In III-21, the male holds a concave cylinder in his left hand; it may be a sword handle or a small hand-gong or bell. Similarly-shaped Akan bells were illustrated in Barbot's Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea (1732: V, pl. 22). A similar object is held horizontally in the hand in plate III-28 (male). This is probably also a hand-gong; the right hand, now missing, may have held a clapper. The headdress in III-28 is the "iron hat" of high status; that in III-21 is not.

The male in III-31 stands behind a pair of large drums and holds a beater over each drum. This type of large double drum is used as a

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¹ This figure is said to be "beating a small drum" in the Sotheby catalog (1966 #2429: 130). I was unable to locate similar drums among the Agni, who usually carry small drums at the side of the body (cf. plate III-62).
"talking drum" at Akan state occasions and almost always accompanies the king at public appearances. Such double drums are visible to the king's left in plate III-62. Musicians in this group are also wearing hats similar to the hat worn in plate III-31.

Two pieces in the sample, both male (plates III-24, 26), have elongated arms which are held up to the mouth. In both cases, the hands hold a cylindrical object. The cylinder is apparently undamaged in plate III-24, but the right side, which probably projected beyond the piece is broken off in plate III-26. The figures are obviously playing flutes or horns. The Akan make both long horns (of ivory) and short flutes which are played on state occasions, and considered the property of the king's office. Both are visible in plate III-62. The headdress in plate III-26 is a bulalé-kélé, indicating the figure's high prestige; that in III-24 does not.

In summary, eight of the Agni mma in the sample hold objects; of these, five hold musical instruments, and two probably held state swords. Six of these figures are male; a seventh is probably male;

1 These drums "spoke" for the Krinjabo nobles at Amon Ndoufou's burial and funeral, which I attended in 1979.

2 Personal communication from the owner of the piece: 7/81.

3 Personal communication, Susan Vogel: 7/81.

4 The long horns (also ill. in Barbot, 1732: V, 22; and Cole and Ross, 1977: 168) are shown incorrectly in Fleuriot de Langle's illustration. The horn is held laterally and blown through a hole in the side, rather than through the end.

5 Amon d'Aby (1960: 69) mentions a wooden staff tipped with metal which is carried by some mma, but he does not mention musical instruments or swords. I never saw any evidence of these staffs in the mma I studied.
the eighth is female. The headdresses of five associate them with high social status. The objects held by these figures are associated with ceremonial appearances of the king and his court in Agni tradition. Their presence in certain mma, like the state stool, indicates that some (if not all) mma were portraits of Agni and Abouré notables in their ceremonial roles.

All the Abouré mma I have seen are naked. All the Agni mma in the sample are naked, with two exceptions. The figure in III-6 is wearing a loincloth, and the one in III-7 may be wearing a long robe. Because these two pieces are also very different in style from other mma I have seen,¹ they may be considered separately from the iconographic point-of-view, also. To all intents and purposes, all mma were traditionally naked.²

The nudity of mma presents a problem, because the Akan have never gone about naked, unlike some of their northern neighbors. The earliest accounts of the Ivoirian Akan by Westerners mention traditional male and female garments which are still worn today (Loyer, 1714: 209-212; Delafosse, 1893; 410-12). Cole and Ross (1977: 16) indicate that rich, highly colored cloths were probably worn by the Ghanaian Akan as prestige garments as early as the sixteenth century. If this is so, and if mma represent persons of high prestige, then why are the figures naked? My questions on this point, asked during field interviews, went

¹ As discussed on pp. 45-47. These figures bear no stylistic resemblance to modern copies of mma; I am convinced of their authenticity. I am equally convinced that they represent the tradition in decadence.

² Most wooden sculptures of the Akan are also naked, though they occasionally wear loincloths of real beads and fabric.
unanswered. Several possibilities present themselves. First, nudity in figural sculpture is a long-established convention among the Akan, as well as in Africa generally.\(^1\) Mma may have been sculpted nude because "that was the way things were done." Second, the sculptures may be nude because they represent the spiritual essence of the person, rather than his/her earthly role. If this were so, the sculptures would not logically be portrayed with swords, musical instruments, jewelry, and other trappings of earthly existence. However, traditional Akan logic bears little relation to Western logic, so the possibility should be considered. Third, the term mma is used in reference to both children and terracotta sculptures. Since Akan children go about naked, it may be logical that the sculptures, too, are naked.\(^2\) Finally, (and most probable), it is possible that we do not see mma today as they were intended to be seen. Several published accounts of Akan terracottas and their display mention that the figures were richly dressed for ceremonial implantation (Frimpong, 1945: 83-84; Field, 1948: 44-45; Amon d'Aby, 1960: 70). I have already mentioned Amon d'Aby's discussion of this (p. 16). Cole and Ross (1977: 123) have published a photograph of Ghanaian terracottas on public display, dressed in rich kente cloth and seated on royal asipim chairs. It is doubtful that the dress was maintained once the figures were officially

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1 The convention is not universal. To my knowledge, only one study has been devoted to the implications of dress in Akan sculpture (Ravenhill, 1980).

2 I present this argument not as a possibility according to Western logic, but rather as one of several possible solutions to the apparent oxymoron of a naked Akan nobleman.
planted in the mmaso, but the mmaso was not a public place, and contact with the figures there was avoided on most occasions. When mma were displayed outside the mmaso, they were probably "dressed" in real cloth.

Reproductive aspects of the anatomy seem relatively unimportant in both Agni mma and Abouré mma. Among the Agni pieces, a majority have no genitals at all, though most are identifiable by breasts, body markings, beards and moustaches, or headdresses. Just over half the Abouré pieces I have seen (6 of 11) have genitals. These are tiny in both Agni and Abouré pieces. Breasts, when present on female mma, are quite small in all cases but two (III-6, 52). Amon d'Aby's statement that "young girls are portrayed with rounded breasts" (1960: 69) is not confirmed in the sculptures, though it is possible that no mma portraying young women have survived. One Agni female (III-2) is portrayed with a rounded belly; the belly in III-52 is also rounded. However, the vast majority of figures are flat-bellied.

Despite the absence of direct fertility symbolism in most mma, the sculptures were credited with influencing human fertility. As mentioned on p. 60, barren women took the food offered to mma and ate it, hoping to increase their chances of becoming pregnant. These women also maintained the mmaso and made occasional offerings of food to the sculptures, for the same purpose (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 72).

Marks on the torsos of mma are apparently indicators of sex. Most female figures have keloids on the torso, usually in elaborate and individualized patterns. Only three male figures have any marks on the torso, and these are single keloids on the chest, or between the shoulder blades. According to Holas's informants, Agni men never decorated
their bodies with scars.\(^1\) Amon d'Aby (1960: 69) claims that keloids on the torso indicate both femaleness and age: the \textit{mma} of old women had them, and those of younger women didn't.\(^2\) The practice of torso decoration was apparently abandoned some time ago. I never saw anyone in Agni or Abouré country who had decorative body markings, and I was told in interviews that this was once done, but it isn't anymore.

Facial scarifications on \textit{mma}, like nudity, present a problem. Almost all \textit{mma} have some facial markings,\(^3\) and many also have marks on the neck. The most common marks are rows of small keloids on the cheeks, the temples, and between the brows. These are nowhere visible on individuals today in Agni and Abouré country.\(^4\) They were apparently used in the recent past, because they are present in Agni and Akyé face masks as well as in \textit{mma} (Chicago, 1965: 64; Vogel, 1981: 78),\(^5\) and it is doubtful that the masks are more than 100 years old. Facial scarification, in the form of a small, etched "+" or "−" on one or both cheeks,

\(^1\) Holas remarked, however, that some male \textit{mma} have marks on their torsos which apparently represent scarification (1951: 12).

\(^2\) Though I haven't asked him about this, I suspect that Amon d'Aby identifies body keloids with old women because he saw only old women in his boyhood who had such markings.

\(^3\) Two exceptions are plates III-6 and 7, which I have already mentioned as stylistically aberrant, and probably of this century. They therefore confirm my hypothesis.

\(^4\) Holas (1951: 11) published a drawing of "old-style facial markings of an Agni woman", but never mentioned a source for his drawing.

\(^5\) Both of these masks are attributed to the Akyé, but both could easily be from either the Agni or the Akyé. Very little research has been done on Akan masquerades, and most attributions are based on stylistic opinions of "experts" who have not set foot in the field. Bédiat, who first collected the Chicago mask, bought much more actively in Agni country than among the Akyé.
is visible on some old people in Agni and Abouré villages, but it is far from common, and I was unable to find out whether it served any purpose other than decoration. This type of facial scarification appears infrequently in Agni mma. It is present on two of the goblet-shaped Agni pieces in Abidjan (III-41, 42) and on a head fragment (Abidjan reserves, D220). I have not seen it on Abouré mma.

I was told during interviews that the Agni used to decorate their faces with scarification, but that this is no longer done. I was told that kings never had these marks, even in the old days. For this reason, I was told that none of my photographs of mma represented kings.

There are two possible explanations for this apparent contradiction. First, the facial markings may have become a stylistic convention in mma, representing a type of body decoration which was abandoned in reality long before it was discontinued in art. Second, Coronel encountered the same problem in her study of Aowin mma in Ghana. She suggests (1978: 30) that the marks may be donko, "slave marks", placed on the sculptures to deceive evil spirits. However, she also suggests (1978: 31-32) that individualized elements in the sculptures might reflect "artistic decisions or personal styles of the sculptors", more than physical characteristics of the deceased. Neither Agni nor Abouré sources mentioned donko marks to me, so I assume that my first explanation of the marks is the more probable.

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1 Delafosse (1893: 410) mentions scarification patterns on the neck, shoulders, chest, arms, and hands of the Agni, but specifies that he never saw them on heads, or any other parts of the body.
Accoutrements worn on the neck and torso of some mma sometimes have symbolic meaning. Eighteen of the Agni mma in the sample wear necklaces of some sort, modeled in the clay of the sculpture. As discussed on p. 36, eleven of these are apparently Islamic amulets and two may be Christian crosses, worn as protective devices. Two are apparently beaded necklaces, worn for decorative purposes; none of these has any apparent symbolic value. However, the three pieces having bandoliers crossed under the arms (III-19, 30, 33) probably portray priests of the traditional Agni religion. Agni priests still wear decorations in this manner. In these three cases, the jewelry signifies the social status of the individual. Only two of the Abouré mma wear jewelry. The pendant shown in pl. III-50 has no apparent symbolic value. The Western-style key on a chain around the neck of the large, seated figure in plate III-59 can certainly be interpreted as a sign of prestige, since Western-style locks and keys were undoubtedly rare in Abouré country when the figure was sculpted. Moreover, it corresponds to the seated posture and large size of the figure. The key may also mark a specific individual, though I was unable to locate any legend mentioning a given Abouré leader and keys. The key itself probably has no symbolic meaning, beyond general associations with prestige and wealth. This distinguishes it from the other body accoutrements, which are emblems of protection and priestly status.

The headdress is the most conspicuous feature of most mma, because of its position, size, and formal complexity. Headdresses of mma are also the most variable element of the figures. I identified eleven basic types of headdress among the Agni mma in the sample, most
of which have variant forms. No two figures have exactly the same headdress. Though the number of Abouré figures available for analysis was too small to be considered a representative sample, the same variety of headdresses is apparent among the pieces which I did see. Obviously, the Akan considered the headdress a very important feature of mma. This apparently reflects a great concern for headdress in real life, as remarked by Delafosse:

As for their hair, . . . they cut and shave it here and there with sharp knives, making the most fantastic and varied designs on their heads. Some just have a little crown, and at the very top of the head, a sort of small tufted cone; others fashion a great loop over each ear and another on the forehead; still others shave parts of the head, so as to create bizarre patterns, made up of yellow stripes (where the skull shows through) and black stripes; finally, others fix their hair into a sort of crest like a cassowary's, which crosses the top of the head from ear to ear, rising a bit at the top of the head.

They take great care of these capillary edifices, and maintain them with little combs which they buy from Europeans or make themselves. One could say that the Agni, men as well as women, spend a good part of their time fixing their hair (1893: 408; translation mine).

The individualization of headdresses in mma is obviously due to their status as portraits. Because the headdress is the most individualized element of a mma, it can be interpreted as one of the major components of portraiture in the figure. Some headdresses apparently represent the social and/or political status of the individual as well, but not his or her sexual identity. According to the mma I have seen, the figures cannot be divided into male and female categories by headdress type. Amon d'Abý confirms this, stating that men and women traditionally had similar hairdos (1960: 69).

I use the term "headdress", rather than "hairdo" or "hat", because it is often unclear whether the headdress of a mma is one or the other.
Current Agni and Abouré headdresses are different from those visible in mma, in most cases. However, traditional hats and patterns of hair dressing are occasionally described or illustrated in early publications on the Ivoirian Akan (Delafosse, 1893; Fleuriot de Langle, 1873). Similarities between these descriptions and headdresses on some mma indicates that some of the headdresses probably have symbolic meaning. Specifically, they are the following: a shaved or undecorated head; a conical, decorated headdress; and, a Western-style crown.

Three of the Abouré mma in Abidjan are portrayed with no headdress at all; their heads appear shaved. The shaving of heads is traditionally a sign of mourning in Akan culture (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 93, Adjousson, 1944). These three figures apparently represent mourners. None of the Agni mma I have seen was originally without a headdress, though one piece in the sample (pl. III-27) has completely lost its headdress.

Three Agni mma in the sample (plates III-11, 25, 28) have a wide-brimmed, flared conical headdress, which is elaborately decorated with grooves and bosses. This headdress looks very much like a hat, rather than tressed hair. All these pieces are male, and all have beards. Three other pieces in the sample, also male, wear similarly-shaped, undecorated hats (plates III-26, 32, 35). This undecorated, conical

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1 It is worth noting here that the headdresses of both plates III-6 and III-7 are common in Agni country today. This strengthens my contention that these two pieces are more recent than the others.

2 Sotheby's sale catalogs of the Gourielli collection (1966a,b) describe headdresses of mma in considerable detail. For five of the pieces, no headdress is mentioned (cat. nos. 64, 139, 142, 152, 158). This may be because the headdresses are damaged or missing. It is definitely the case for their no. 139, which is my plate III-27.
hat is also present on two head fragments in Abidjan, both of which are male (one is bearded; the chin of the other is broken off), and on several heads in the Sotheby catalogs of the Gourielli collection. According to Amon d'Aby (1960: 69), mma representing young men were never bearded. These figures probably represent older men, because so many of them are bearded. The headdress, as he noted in a recent publication (1981: 79), probably represent the *bulalè-kélé*, or "iron hat", which was reserved for influential men. The iron hat therefore marks individuals of important political standing, as do seated posture, hands on knees, and large size in the figures. Amon d'Aby mentions two other symbolic hats on mma (1960: 69); a soft cloth hat, decorated with amulets (*sèbè-kélé*), marking older men of great importance, and the French képi or colonial helmet, which appears on mma of young men towards the end of the 19th century. I have not seen either of these headdress types on Agni mma.

A final symbolic headdress type is the Western-style crown, present in one male piece in the sample (plate III-30). The figure is large, seated, and bearded, all of which are attributes of kingship. He is also wearing a bandolier over the right shoulder, which is an attribute of the priesthood. His headdress resembles Western royal

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1 Abidjan acquisition nos. D183, 191; Sotheby cat. nos. 54, 140, 141, 147, 155, 160, 161.

2 I was unable to locate anyone who could describe a *bulalè-kélé* for me; the headdress was apparently abandoned some time ago. I assume it was originally inspired by European helmets, but have been unable to find proof of this.
crowns, which are worn by Agni kings on occasions of high ceremony. The king of Krinjabo has been photographed wearing both a single bandolier and Western-style crown during a new yam celebration (Amon d'Aby, 1960: pls. IV-V). Paramount chiefs of the Ghanaian Akan occasionally wear similar crowns on auspicious occasions (Cole and Ross, 1977: 210-211). This headdress undoubtedly marks figures of very high prestige; such crowns are worn only by kings today.¹

A final symbolic element of mma was their placement in the mmaso. They were "planted" in groups, after the death of a king, as effigy courts. Photographs of mmaso and mmawo taken early in this century (plates III-63, 64) and a description of the mmaso in Krinjabo (Lheureux, 1932) indicate no such orderly placement. Rather, many figures are crowded together with offering bowls under small shelters, in no particular order. These photographs and descriptions date from the early colonial era, and thus from a time when the practice of mma and maintenance of mmaso were abandoned in Sanwi and Aboure country. Hence, they cannot be relied upon as accurate descriptions of mmaso as they were originally intended to look.

During interviews in Ivory Coast, I was told that the figures were arranged in tableaux in the mmaso, as effigies of royal courts. My typological analysis supports this claim: large, seated figures, sword and staff bearers, musicians, and other standing attendants are all represented among Agni mma. Old photographs of Agni and Aboure courts

¹ I have been unable to determine a date for the earliest use of these crowns by Akan rulers.
(plate III-62) show the king and/or queenmother seated at the center of the group, flanked by sword bearers, staff bearers, musicians, and other retainers. Mma were undoubtedly placed similarly in the mmaso. There was a hierarchy of placement, with figures becoming increasingly important towards the center of the group. If my analysis is correct, there is also a hierarchy of size in mma, which corresponds to their placement. The largest figures were at the center of the group, and the smallest at its edges.

No unmolested Agni or Abouré mmaso has yet been discovered, so there is currently no way to confirm or disprove this theory. However, the accumulated evidence of this study and evidence from the Ghanaian Akan supports it. Coronel found evidence of symbolic placement at Nkwanta, an Aowin site, in the early 1970's (1978: 35-41). Also, Cruickshank (1853: Vol. II, 270-71) recorded the following description of a terracotta site in Ghana:

> Upon the death of a great man, they make images of him, sitting in state, with his wives and attendants around him. Beneath a large tree in Adjumacon we once saw one of these groups which had a very natural appearance ... No care is paid to their preservation after they have been set out for exhibition, but there they remain until they crumble to pieces.

I have included this last comment of Cruickshank's, because it may indicate why the Agni sites were found in such disorder early in this century.

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1 The term mmaso is used by the Agni and Aowin, their cognates in Ghana. It is not used by other Ghanaian Akan groups.
III.8.2 Cultural implications: My study of mma has revealed a number of cultural implications which are apparent in the tradition as it was practiced by the Agni and Abouré. They relate to the following three points: notions of portraiture, the relationship between the living and the dead, and the importance of royalty and of history in traditional Akan culture.

Regarding portraiture in mma, everyone with whom I spoke declared that the sculptures reproduced the exact likeness of the persons portrayed. I was told repeatedly that mma were "photos" of the deceased, which captured their likenesses as faithfully as a camera would. The sculptures themselves are remarkably uniform both stylistically and morphologically, making it obvious that physical likeness, in the Western sense of the term, is not important in Akan portraiture. The most individualized elements of mma are headdress, size and posture, and to a lesser extent, accoutrements. Body markings are individualized, but only among female figures. They should be considered an element of portraiture only in figures of women. Characteristics which are individualized in both male and female figures must be considered the key elements of portraiture in mma. Accurate depiction of a person's social and political status, rather than physical likeness, were the key elements of successful portrayal in mma. Akan society apparently considered the individual's role in society to be more important than the individual himself, or co-equivalent.

A second aspect of the Akan ethos apparent in the tradition and its practice is the relationship between the living and the dead. As representatives of individuals in their earthly social and political
roles, *mma* indicate that these institutions survived in the world of the spirits. The same social and political hierarchy that existed in life continued after death, expressed in the courtly hierarchy of *mma* and their placement in the *mmaso*. In addition, the spirits of the deceased continued to influence the lives of their successors in two ways, both expressed in the functions of *mma*. One of these was protective; the other was reproductive. Placed beside the main access routes to villages and reputed to have dangerous powers, the sculptures acted as guardians of earthly settlements. They also guarded the wealth of the community from being stolen (either by insiders or outsiders). This protective aspect of the sculptures was apparent in the traditional use of the *mmaso* as a storage place for personal wealth. *Mma* also increased fertility, in that women who maintained the *mmaso* and ate offerings of food which had been made to the ancestors had a greater chance of conceiving.

In both cases, the relationship between the living and the dead appears to have been direct, positive, and caring. It was also symbiotic. The payment rendered by the living, in the form of maintenance of the *mmaso* and proper respect for the statues and their power, insured the maintenance of this power and of the ancestors' memory.

Third, the tradition gives insight into the significance of royalty and history in Akan culture. The hierarchy of size and posture apparent in *mma* belies the notion that all the figures portray deceased kings and queenmothers. The large, seated males undoubtedly portray kings, and the large, seated females are queenmothers. Each of these figures was surrounded in the *mmaso* by a royal court of musicians,
sword and staff bearers, and other retainers. It is true that all mma represent "royals", because the status accrued to all members of Agni and Abouré royal courts. However, the vast and complicated network of Akan extended families allowed this "royal" privilege to practically everyone in any of the royal cities of the Agni and Abouré, because even the most distant relatives of kings are recognized as members of his family.* I was impressed by elders' insistence during interviews that only certain towns had the right to a mmaso, and these were the towns where kings traditionally held their courts. Royalty extended from the king, who was elected according to strict matrilineal guidelines (Histoire et Coutumes nd.: 30-31; Amon d'Aby 1960: 115), to all members of his extended family. In effect, this included practically everyone in the king's town. Thus, the notion of "royal" was attached to certain towns, which were the residences of the royal families. One mark of a town's royal status was traditionally its mmaso.

The mmaso is also a manifestation of the Akan preoccupation with history. The effigy courts in the mmaso were, in fact, historical tableaux, in which were recorded the royal genealogy of each Akan capital. Annual visits to the mmaso during the new yam celebration in Sanwi included a history lesson, in which the succession was recited by an official royal spokesman (called the asemoa bru). Absolute accuracy

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*I am not aware of any kinship studies of towns in the Agni or Abouré region. My impression is, however, that everyone in Krinjabo (where I visited most frequently) claimed to be related somehow to the king, except the foreigners. The "foreigners" included Agni whose family origins were in other towns in Sanwi.
was required of these speakers: the traditional punishment for mistakes was death. Today, the punishment is imprisonment (Amon d'Aby, 1960: 29). Ablé (1980: 243-247) records a similar public recital of the Abouré succession, which takes place during the annual celebration of the royal stools, also held during the new yam celebration. According to Ablé, the royal have replaced mma in Abouré culture as representatives of deceased royalty.¹

This use of mma as part of a regular historical celebration indicates the sculptures were more than mere portraits to the Agni and Abouré. Together with the recitations of royal succession, they formed the substance of Akan history in southeastern Ivory Coast. Their effectiveness is reflected in the ease with which Agni and Abouré elders, who were present at annual celebrations when mma were still an integral part of Akan culture, can recite their royal successions. Among these elders, awareness of Akan history before the exodus from Ghana is vague and general. Knowledge of history since the arrival in Ivory Coast (i.e., since the establishment of mmaso in Sanwi and mmawo in Abouré country) is definite and unerring.

III.9 Conclusions

Mma are terracotta funerary portraits, sculpted by Agni and Abouré potters for ceremonial funerals of deceased royals. The sculptures served as substitute corpses at royal funerals, when they were "planted" in the mmaso (mmawo in Abouré), or "village of the mma". This was

¹ Interview in Abidjan: 9/24/79.
beside the main access road to the village, on the opposite side of town from the masonou, where the protective deities of the village resided. The sculptures were arranged in groups in the mmaso, surrounding portraits of deceased kings and queenmothers. These effigy courts served several functions: they protected the village and its wealth, commemorated the dead, and helped assure fertility. The importance of the tradition manifests the importance of royalty and history in traditional Akan culture.

Morphologically, most mma consist of a solid, cylindrical body with rudimentary, outstretched arms, a long, ringed neck, and a large head, which leans back atop the neck. Some large figures are seated on royal stools; others hold musical instruments, staffs, or swords. Fewer figures consist of a pot-shaped vase, a long, ringed neck, and a portrait head. These apparently represent only women. Other figures are a goblet-shaped, hollow vessel, open at the top, with a portrait head modeled on the belly of the goblet. These portray both men and women.

The heads of mma receive most of the sculptor's attention, being finely modeled and greatly detailed. The sculptures are said to be absolutely accurate representations of the dead. Posture, gesture, accoutrements, and headdress are the most individualized elements in mma, and thus appear to be the significant elements of portraiture in the figures.

Mma and mmaso were royal prerogatives of villages which had kings in Sanwi and Aboure country. The tradition required human sacrifices during implantation ceremonies, and was abandoned around the turn of
the 20th century, probably due to pressures from the French colonial administration, Christian missionaries, and officers of the Prophet Harris. There is evidence of an attempted revival, about the time of World War I, which did not succeed. Mmaso are still maintained outside several royal towns in Sanwi, but most of the mma disappeared long ago, taken by traders and collectors. Annual offerings of food are still made to the royal ancestors during the new yam celebration. The sculptural tradition, however, is moribund.
Plate III-1
M.N.C.I. DL78
(42.2.200)
Plate III-2
M.N.C.I. D179
(50.2.81)
Plate III-3
M.N.C.I. D213-14
(50.2.1604).
Plate III-4
M.N.C.I. D217
(54.11.1439)
Plate III-6
Krinjabo
Plate III-7
Krinjabo
Plate III-8
Aby
Plate III-9
Musee de l'Homme MH X.43.27
Plate III-10
Musee de l'Homme MH X.43.38
Plate III-11
Musee de l'Homme MH X.43.39
Plate III-12
Musee de l'Homme 00.44.65
Plate III-13
Musee de l'Homme 00.44.67
Plate III-14
Musee de l'Homme MH 32.51.1
Plate III-16
Musée de l'Homme MH 62.122.2
Plate III-17
M.A.A.O. MNAN 64.3.46
Plate III-18
M.A.A.O. MNAN 64.12.5
Plate III-19
M.A.A.O. MNAN 66.1.2
Plate III-22
Private Collection, Oppem
Plate III-24
Private Collection, Riehen/Basel
Plate III-26
Metropolitan Museum of Art 60.106
Plate III-27
Lowie Museum, Berkeley 5-5287
Plate III-28
Private collection, New York
Plate III-29
Private collection, New York
Plate III-30
Private collection, New York
Plate III-31
Private collection, France
Plate III-32
Formerly Gourielli collection
present whereabouts unknown
Plate III-33
Formerly Gourieelli collection
present whereabouts unknown
Plate III-34
Formerly Gourielli collection
present whereabouts unknown
Plate III-35
Formerly Gourielli collection
present whereabouts unknown
Plate III-36
Formerly Gourielli collection
present whereabouts unknown
Plate III-37
Formerly Gourielli collection
present whereabouts unknown
Plate III-39
Private collection, New York
Plate III-40
M.N.C.I. D201
(50.2.856)
Plate III-42
Formerly Musee IFAN, Abidjan
present whereabouts unknown
(photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate III-43
M.A.A.O. MNAN 1963-221
Plate III-44
Private collection, Oppem
Plate III-49
M.N.C.I. D240
Plate III-50
M.N.C.I. D241
Plate III-51
M.N.C.I. D242
Plate III-52
M.N.C.I. D243
(56.1P.5)

D24.3
Plate III-53
M.N.C.I. D244
(56.1P.1)
Plate III-55
M.N.C.I. D246
(56.12.37)
Plate III-58
M.N.C.I. D249

D249
Plate III-61
(Photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate III-62
Amon Ndoufou and his Court
(from a 19th century photo)
Plate III-64

Mmaso, location unknown
CHAPTER IV: BA

IV.1 Introduction

I now turn my attention to ba, the terracotta funerary sculptures of the Akyé, and to related traditions of the Abbé. The term ba is used in the region around Alépé, and terms ba and mba are used interchangeably in the region around Adzopé. The southern Akyé, in the region of Anyama, claim not to know this tradition. Ba are similar to mma in that they are portraits modeled for the ceremonial funerals of notables. In contrast, ba were not kept in a special area of forest near the village. Rather, they were kept in the family compound after the funeral or placed on the grave. Following the approach used in the preceding chapter, I will discuss references to ba in the literature on Ivoirian art (section IV.2). A typological analysis of known examples will follow (IV.3), with a discussion of stylistic variations among ba (IV.4). Then, I will discuss their role within Akyé tradition (IV.5), with an iconographical analysis of the tradition, based on an examination of form and function, thus deriving information about traditional Akyé culture from them (IV.6). This analysis of ba will be

1 The elders in Nkoupé claimed that ba were kept in the village after the funeral (interview: 9/17/79). Acho Emmanuel describes equipment placed on a traditional Akyé grave after the funeral, including a goglet, but does not specify that the goglet should be sculpted in the image of the deceased (Cahiers Ponty #15, non-pag.).

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followed by a brief discussion of a related tradition among the southern Abbé (IV.7) and the presentation of a similar piece unearthed by chance near an archaeological excavation in Abbé country (IV.8). This will be followed by a set of summarizing conclusions concerning ba (IV.9).

IV.2 References to Ba in the Literature

Unlike mma, ba have never been the object of a study from either the art historical or anthropological point of view. Camille Dreyfus (1900: 119-125), who traveled through Akyé country late in the 1890's and wrote an account of his travels, discussed burial customs, but apparently never attended a ceremonial funeral nor saw any ba. Two recent ethnographic studies of the Akyé (Boni 1970; Ferrari and Thoret 1970) also fail to mention ba. Baumann and Westermann (1962: 358) illustrate a piece which appears to be an Akyé terracotta, but identify it only as a "jar with head from the Gold Coast", and do not discuss it in their text. Holas illustrates Akyé terracottas in several of his works on Ivoirian art (1967: 132-33; 1966: 38, pl. 141, pl. 154; 1975; 26-27, 112-113). He does not refer to the pieces as ba, but illustrations of Akyé terracottas in his books were identified as such by potters with whom I spoke during interviews in Akyé country. Holas's brief discussions of the pieces indicate their funerary purpose, either as containers for water of the funeral bath or for offerings of drink.

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1 Locations and dates of interviews are listed in section IV.5, p. 22.

2 This purpose was not known by any of the Akyé I interviewed. All were familiar with the use of the vessels as containers for offerings of drink to the deceased.
to the spirit of the deceased (1967: 132). According to Holas, the globular bases of the goglets are "reputed to manifest the concept of the divine mother, whose immense belly, filled with uterine water, contains the life-germ of all human generations" (1975: 112, translation mine). Holas also contends that this tradition was extant in Akyé villages as recently as 1950 (1951: 16).

Two "vacation notebooks" written by Akyé students at the Ecole Normale William Ponty in the 1940's (Acho, n.d.; Assy, 1944) discuss traditional Akyé funerals. Both mention that a goglet was placed at the head of Akyé graves, along with the tools of the deceased. Neither writer refers to the vessel as a ba, nor do they mention any funerary portrait of the deceased. Rather, the goglets are observed to be utilitarian objects from everyday life, with no special ritual significance.

Aside from these few brief mentions, I have found no other references to ba anywhere in the literature on African art.

IV.3 Typology of Known Examples

There are three separate steps to the procedure used in gathering my data on ba: first, the character and description of the objects studied; second, the typological characteristics used in the analysis

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1 The text in French is as follows: "... les récipients de ce type sont censés matérialiser le concept de mère divine dont l'immense ventre, rempli d'eau utérine, contient les germes de vie de toutes les générations humaines.

2 The Akyé potters I interviewed claimed that the tradition had existed within their lifetimes and that they could still produce such sculptures. However, they stated that there was no longer any demand for ba. They did not specify a date for the demise of the tradition.

3 The "Cahiers Ponty" is a collection of these vacation exercises, now in the IFAN library in Dakar.
of the data; and third, the analysis itself.

IV.3.1 The sample: During my inquiries in Akyé villages, I was told that ba are no longer produced by Akyé potters, nor are there any to be found in Akyé villages today. I was told that ba had been sold, lost, or broken long ago. While visiting art dealers in Abidjan in 1979, I was shown ba from time to time. Although the sculptures appeared to be genuine, rather than copies made for sale to tourists, they were not of very good quality and were not included in this analysis.

There are three pieces in the reserves of the Musée de l'Homme which appear to be ba. All three were acquired in 1947 and are of the same style, perhaps made by the same hand. The acquisition cards at the museum label the pieces as Akyé (Atié) funerary vases, which are modeled by potters for important funerals and have various ritual uses. The museum has no other information on the pieces. Because the three are very similar in form, one was used for the analysis.

The IFAN photographic archive in Dakar has photographs of ba which were once in the IFAN museum in Abidjan. The present whereabouts of these pieces is unknown; however, they all appear to be of very good quality, as the IFAN photographs include sufficient detail for analysis. Since several of these pieces expand the typology of ba significantly, they were included in the analysis, even though I could not examine

1 This contrasts with mma, which are copied in great numbers for sale to tourists.

2 Acquisition numbers: 47.25.1; 47.25.2; 47.25.3.
them directly.

The largest collection of ba is in the M.N.C.I. The museum has thirty-four complete pieces, and two fragments. All were acquired between 1942 and 1963, and all are labeled Akyé.¹

Aside from these pieces, I know of two ba in private collections, one in Paris, and one in New York. Because I was unable to obtain photographs or descriptions of these pieces, they were not included in the analysis. There are also two pieces in the Detroit Institute of Arts; both have stylistic affinities with the hands I identified for certain pieces in Abidjan, but both present certain problems.²

It is, then, that this typological analysis is based on forty-one ba: one from the Musée de l'Homme, six from the IFAN photographic archive, and thirty-four from the M.N.C.I.

IV.3.2 Formal characteristics used in the typological analysis:
The specific characteristics described in the typological analysis are presented here in outline form. Numbers in parentheses refer to the subsection in which each characteristic is discussed.

¹ The pieces are number D136 through D176 in Abidjan's second system of classification (based on the inventory of 1974). As discussed in Chapter III, it is questionable whether D141 is Akyé.

² Detroit's number SC73.77 is by the same hand that sculpted plate IV-21. The terracotta itself is authentic, but the netting, the encrustation, and the glued-on medallions are probably not original. Detroit's SC73.78 has stylistic affinities with my Hand C (plates IV-14, 15) but the decoration of the pot is different and face is more integrated with the neck of the pot. I have seen photographs of both pieces, but have examined neither piece directly.
I. Pot
   A. Height (IV.3.3.1)
   B. Base (IV.3.3.2)
      1. flat-bottomed
      2. flanged
      3. round-bottomed
      4. with humanoid feet
   C. Body of pot
      1. Shape (IV.3.3.3)
         a. round
         b. angle at shoulder
         c. angle at neck/tapered to neck
      2. Decoration (IV.3.3.4)
         a. none
         b. above shoulder
            (1) etched—grooves or patterns
            (2) bosses
   D. Size of pot (IV.3.3.5)
   II. Neck (IV.3.3.6)
      A. Length: long or short, relative to head size
      B. Decorations/scarification on neck
   III. Head (IV.3.3.7)
      A. Male/female characteristics
         1. Beard
         2. Earrings/holes in the ears
B. Features of the head
   1. Ears: placement and size
   2. Chin: present or absent
   3. Mouth: smiling or straight
   4. Nose: size; shape; presence or absence of nostrils
   5. Eyes
   6. Eyebrows
C. Scarification patterns

IV. Headdress (IV.3.3.8)
   A. Types of headdress (9 variations)
   B. No headdress

V. Spout (IV.3.3.9)
   A. Separate from the head
   B. Separate from headdress
      1. Top of head
      2. Back of head
   C. Integrated into the headdress
   D. No spout; hole in head

VI. Treatment of surface (IV.3.3.10)
   A. Rough; no polish
   B. Darkened with polish
   C. Polished (or partly polished) slip
   D. Unpolished slip
IV.3.3 Description of ba by typological criteria: Applying the typological criteria from the previous section to the forty-one ba in the sample, I derived the following analysis of ba.¹

IV.3.3.1 Height: The smallest pot is 23.8 cm. high; the largest is 37.7 cm. high. The pieces average 29.8 cm. in height, or 11 3/4 inches.²

IV.3.3.2 Base of pot: Thirty-eight pieces are flat-bottomed with a short "pedestal" base. Two pieces (pls. IV-40, 41) have humanoid legs and feet; the pot thus becomes the "body" of the piece. The base of one piece (IV-2) is broken.

IV.3.3.3 Shape of pot: The pots exist in two basic shapes. Twenty-one are either spherical (IV-34, 40) or flattened-spherical (IV-9). Twenty are lozenge-shaped in cross-section, with an angle at the shoulder (IV-33). Twenty-three pots are joined to their spouts at an angle, so that there is a distinct demarcation between shoulder and neck (IV-24). Eighteen are tapered gradually from shoulder to neck (IV-26).

IV.3.3.4 Decoration of pot: Four pots are undecorated (IV-6, 16, 20, 41). Two pots are entirely covered with surface decoration (IV-5, 18). Thirty-five are decorated between shoulder and base of neck with grooves or patterns which were drawn or impressed into the surface.

¹ Numbers in parentheses refer to pieces which exemplify the various formal characteristics. Plates for this chapter follow the text of the chapter.

² Because I was unable to obtain dimensions for the pieces in the IFAN photo archive, they were not included in this part of the analysis.
Six examples also have relief decoration in the form of bosses (IV-17, 20, 23, 24, 25, 31), however the bosses in plates IV-20 and IV-31 may represent jewelry worn around the neck, rather than relief decoration on the pot.

Two pots have what appear to be words etched above the shoulder of the pot, at the front of the figure. Plate IV-13 is etched with the symbols $P\!\!\!N\!\!\!T\!\!\!Y\!\!\!T$, and IV-7 is etched with $\omega\nu\omega\nu\mu$. Possible meanings for these symbols will be discussed in section IV.6.6.1.

IV.3.3.5 Size of pot: Seven $\text{ba}$ in the sample have small pots, only slightly larger in diameter than their necks (pl. IV-22, 27). Ten pieces have medium-sized pots, their diameter about twice that of the neck (IV-9, 11). The majority of the pieces have large pots which are at least three times the diameter of the neck.

IV.3.3.6 Neck:¹ The criterion used to determine whether a figure's neck was long or short was its length relative to the height of the head it supports. That is, what is the length of the neck from its base to the chin of the portrait head in relation to the head? If the neck was as tall as the head, it was classified as "long"; if it was shorter than the head, it was called "short". Twenty-eight of the figures in the sample have long necks; thirteen have short necks.

Two of the pieces (IV-16, 23) have undecorated necks; all others have striations, scarifications, or other marks. Ten of the pieces have striated necks; thirty-one do not. Among the ten striated necks, ¹ Neck refers to the neck of the portrayed notable, rather than to the spout of the goglet.
seven are marked horizontally (IV-6, 40); three are marked diagonally. In two cases (IV-27, 35), the marks form chevrons along the front of the neck. One piece (IV-29) has diagonal striations which ascend from right to left.

Thirty-two of the pieces in the sample have neck scarifications of some kind. The most common patterns are raised diagonal scarifications up both sides of the neck (IV-1, 5) and diagonal rows of cowrie-shaped scars, also on the sides of the neck (IV-22). Some figures' necks are embellished with foliate forms (IV-9), elaborate linear patterns (IV-10, 11, 17), cross-shaped motifs (IV-12), or patterns of crescents (IV-27). These motifs appear in great variety; none of them appears regularly among the pieces.

IV.3.3.7 Head: Two sculptures are definitely bearded, the beard tressed into two long plaits (IV-22, 36). Two more are either bearded, or have vertical scarifications on the chin (IV-37, 38). A fifth piece is either bearded, or has a prognathous jaw (IV-5). The ears of these five pieces are not pierced, nor are the ears of plates IV-6, 7, 12, 35, and 41. The remaining twenty-nine pieces all have pierced ears. The ears of IV-28 are pierced twice. IV-30 and IV-33 still have earrings or fragments of earrings in their ears. The other sculptures

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1 The necks of pls. IV-23 and 39 are marked with three horizontal grooves at the base. However, these appear to be part of the surface decoration of the pot, rather than neck striations, particularly in plate IV-23, where they echo the grooves on the base of the pot.

2 I was unable to determine from the photograph whether the ears in plate IV-40 are pierced or not.
with pierced ears probably wore earrings at one time. These pieces apparently represent women, whereas those whose ears are not pierced probably represent men.

All the sculptures in the sample have ears. On sixteen pieces the ears are placed high and forward on the head (IV-5, 8); on twenty-one they are low and placed back on the head (IV-9, 24). Twenty-seven pieces have small ears; only seven have large ears (IV-3, 5).

In twenty-nine of the pieces in the sample, the ears are pierced; in two of these (IV-30, 33) earrings or fragments of earrings remain. This characteristic did not correlate particularly with any of the others, but this may be because it is present in most of the pieces. However, on the six pieces with non-pierced ears (IV-5-7, 12, 22, 35, 36) several other characteristics did correlate. Two of these (IV-22, 36) are bearded, and this may also be true of a third (IV-5). One (IV-7) appears to be bald. These characteristics make it apparent that without pierced ears represent males; those with pierced ears, by extrapolation, must represent females. The pieces which represent males also have generally smaller pots: none of the six without pierced ears has a large pot.

Thirty-three pieces have narrow mouths; four have wide mouths (IV-6, 9, 28, 39). The figures in plates IV-8 and IV-14 are

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1 Information gathered in Nkoupé: September 1979.

2 The ears in plate IV-39 were apparently broken off, but it is apparent that the piece once had them.

3 For the remaining six pieces, either the ears were damaged, or I could not discern from the photographs whether they were or not.
open-mouthed; the rest are closed-mouthed. Nine pieces are definitely smiling (IV-1, 3, 9-11, 21, 28, 38, 41).

All pieces but seven in the sample have clearly defined chins. Those in plates IV-22 and IV-36 have no chins, but their beards indicate where the chins should be. The objects in plates IV-17, 27, and 31 were probably modeled by the same hand, and have no chins, and neither do those in plates IV-18 or IV-20.

Seventeen pieces have large, prominent noses, sometimes vary narrow and projecting far out from the face. This is most prominent in plates IV-10 and IV-11, and in a fragment in a private European collection (IV-42). Several pieces have distinctly "pug" noses: short, broad, and turned up at the end (IV-14, 20, 22). Twenty-one have nostrils, either modeled naturalistically (IV-1, 3) or simply pierced in the bottom of the nose (IV-9, 17). Sixteen pieces have either no nostrils at all (IV-23, 25), or damaged noses, in which no nostrils are apparent. In eleven pieces, the nose is connected to the brows (IV-6, 27, 41).

Only three pieces have eyes which appear open (IV-7, 8, 30). The eyes of IV-7 are inset with pieces of glass or glazed clay, and thus reflect as open eyes do. The eyes in IV-30 are circular bosses which give the piece a rather startled expression. Though IV-8 is badly worn, the eyes lend a similar expression to the piece. In the other thirty-eight pieces, the eyes are closed. Most of these take the form of

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These pieces appear to be by the same hand also. While all have narrow, high-bridged noses, there is considerable variation in size and shape among them.
cowrie or coffee-bean shaped bosses, applied to the surface of the face. This is apparent in plate IV-38, where the left eye has been broken off the piece, exposing the lower layer of coarse clay.

Thirteen of the pieces in the sample have no eyebrows at all; or, as in one instance (IV-20), the brows are indicated by a bulge in the forehead. Seventeen pieces have a double-arched brow, and ten have a single-arched brow.

Six pieces have high foreheads (IV-19, 20, 26, 28, 40, 41). One piece (IV-7) is apparently bald. Seven pieces have almost no forehead at all (IV-5, 8, 12, 16, 29, 37, 38). In the majority of pieces, the forehead is neither remarkably high nor low. It is always clearly delineated from the headdress, either by a ridge (IV-3) or by grooves (IV-19, 21).

Eight of the pieces have no facial scarification at all. Thirty-three have either etched or raised (keloid) decorations on their faces in ten different patterns. No two pieces have exactly the same facial marks. Eighteen have marks on the cheeks only. Variations in this pattern include the following: raised lumps with a cross etched in each (IV-1, 19); cross-hatchings (IV-3, 21); simple diagonal marks (IV-5, 18); parallel horizontal marks (IV-7); foliate marks (IV-9); parallel vertical marks (IV-13); and multiple diagonal marks (IV-27). One piece (IV-17) has multiple marks between the brows only. Two (IV-4, 26) have marks between the brows and on the cheeks. One piece (IV-12) has marks on the cheeks and chin; one at the temples and between the brows (IV-6), and three at the temples and on the cheeks (IV-29, 37, 38). Four pieces (IV-11, 22, 28, 36) have scars on the cheeks, between
the brows, and at the temples. One (IV-10) has them at these five places and at each corner of the mouth. Finally, two pieces (IV-2, 35) have marks on the chin, at the corners of the mouth, on cheeks, temples, and between the brows.

**IV.3.3.8 Headdress:**

Nine types of headdresses appear among the ba in the sample. Like facial scarifications, headdresses of ba are greatly varied; no two sculptures have exactly the same headdress. The most common is a crescent across the top of the head from ear to ear, which appears in eight of the pieces. It is raised from the surface and grooved (IV-17), scalloped (IV-26), hatched (IV-31, 33), or striated (IV-34). In three examples, the ears are integrated into the ridge (IV-4, 8, 27).

The second most common headdress includes a ridge across the forehead and several vertical ridges or lobes at the back of the head. This type occurs in six pieces. In four of these, there are three lobes at the back of the head (IV-1, 9, 12, 15). The object in plate IV-18 has four lobes, and the one in plate IV-14 has five.

The third type of headdress is a truncated conical arrangement of ridges or grooves placed horizontally on top of the head. This occurs in four pieces, with a number of ridges varying: five in IV-5; three (but only on the back of the head) in IV-32; two, both of which are...
split at the center, in IV-13; and four, as in IV-35. A variant of this type has two truncated, grooved cones, one atop the head, and one at the back of the head (IV-22, 36).

Four pieces have a headdress of close grooves or ridges which are placed vertically across the crown of the head. Three pieces (IV-19, 21, 30) have only the ridges; one (IV-10) also has a lump (or bun) at the nape of the neck.

The fifth headdress type includes a ridge across the forehead and a bun at the nape of the neck (IV-2, 20, 28). The sixth has bosses evenly distributed over the head (IV-3, 6, 29, 40). The seventh has a broad, raised crest from forehead to nape across the top of the head, and a crescent or circular boss over each ear. It is present in four examples, each slightly varied. Stylistically, three of these are probably by the same hand (VI-23-25); the fourth, in pl.IV-39, is probably by a different hand. The eighth headdress type is six ridges which radiate from the crown of the head. It is present in two pieces (IV-11, 16). Finally, one piece (IV-7) has a spotted band around the back of the head from ear to ear, creating a distinctly bald look.¹

IV.3.3.9 Spout: Only one piece (IV-6) has no spout and thus could never have functioned as a container. Based on the discussion in Chapter III, p. 48, it is apparent that this piece is more like Abouré pieces than Akyé, and its lack of a spout links it morphologically to the pot-based Agni pieces (III-8, 29). Its identification as Akyé

¹This piece also has no holes in the ears. It may thus be a portrait of a male.
is therefore doubtful. Of the total sample, two pieces (IV-30, 35) have stoppers. The stopper seen in plate IV-30 is shaped like a hairdo of cascading tresses; on the other hand, that in plate IV-35 looks very simply like a stopper.¹

Five pieces have spouts which are separate from the head, placed behind it on the shoulder of the pot (IV-23-25, 34, 39). Eleven have simple holes in the top of the head (IV-7, 31). In eleven others, the spout is integrated into the form of the headdress (IV-5, 11, 36). The other fourteen pieces have spouts which are on the head but separate from the headdress (IV-1, 29, 37).

IV.3.3.10 Surface treatment: While one of the pieces (IV-6) has no traces of surface polish at all, all of the others have been covered with a slip, which is in various stages of preservation. On most, the slip is chipping away from the surface. Two have a rather high polish (IV-9, 30), and one piece (IV-29) appears to have been coated with kaolin, traces of which remain on the face and neck.

In addition to these typological considerations, the morphological relationship between the neck of the goglet and the portrait head must be noted. In three pieces, all probably by the same hand (IV-17, 27, 31), there is no chin, and the head is a continuation of the cylinder of the goglet's neck. The features are applied to the cylinder with no clear delineation between the portrait head and the rest of the pot. The same is true to a lesser extent of nine other pieces, but the presence of a small chin (IV-8, 21, 28), a slight bulge indicating

¹ The two other pieces in the Musée de l'Homme (MH 47.25.1 and MH 47.25.2) also have stoppers, of like form.
forehead (IV-20, 22, 36), or cranial roundness (IV-8, 37, 38) adds a greater degree of naturalism to the portrait heads. In three pieces, the portrait face is completely separate from the pot's neck, applied almost like a mask (IV-14, 15, 39). As seen in plates IV-14 and 15, the hairdo is also separate from the pot's neck.

In the other twenty-six pieces, the head is also the topmost part of the pot. However, it is morphologically distinct from the pot, shaped like a human head, with a distinct jawline.

Finally, the angle of the head on the neck must be commented upon. In ten of forty-one pieces, the head tilts back atop the neck, so the face looks upward. This is sometimes pronounced (IV-9, 12, 16) and at other times slight (IV-1, 6, 41). The heads of the other thirty-one pieces sit vertically atop their necks. In one case (IV-26), the head is inclined slightly forward.

IV.4 Style

Several characteristics of ba must be mentioned in preface to a discussion of style. First, a ba unifies two sculptural functions into one—it is both pot and portrait at the same time. Yet, the two must be discussed separately, because the former is non-representational and decorative, while the later is representational and symbolic.

Second, since the information of provenance is either absent altogether, or very cryptic, the only dates given for the pieces are the dates of acquisition by various collectors or museums. Thus, like most traditional African art, the objects exist within a sort of museological time vacuum. Moreover, we have no information on the specific
location of a piece before it was first purchased; we do not know whether it was kept in a compound, found in the forest, or placed somewhere else. Further, names of artists and their villages are also absent; this is universally so, because of the way the market for traditional African art operates. Thus, correspondences between provenance and style, which could be used to establish typological and stylistic developments along with designation of regions and site, are not possible.¹

A third generally apparent characteristic is that a great stylistic diversity exists among the relatively few known examples of ba. This is most likely due to the fact that Akyé territory is large and populous with numerous villages.² Most villages would have had at least one potter who could model ba. If at least one ba was sculpted for each deceased notable, then we can be certain that we are working with a very small extant sample remaining from what was originally a very great number of pieces.

Despite this, certain conclusions can be drawn from the styles of the forty-one Akyé sculptures analyzed in this study. The nature of the pot's general decoration can be set forth as has been its form, and the naturalistic or schematic character of portraits can be characterized. In addition, even with the few extant examples there appears to

¹ In Abidjan's original acquisition records, provenance was marked by colonial administrative subdivision. Eleven ba could be compared with these records, six marked Alépé and five marked Agboville/Adzopé. However, no typological or stylistic characteristics distinguished either.

² The approximate area is 9,000 square kilometers; its population in 1970 was 151,000 (Boni, 1970: 10).
be the possibility of identifying individual sculptors' hands.

IV.4.1 Pot decoration: Four approaches to pot decoration were utilized by sculptors of ba. In the first, the pot is undecorated to the base of the neck. In all five examples of this type, the neck is striated above this point (IV-6, 16, 20, 29, and 41). In the single piece which varies from this type (IV-40), there is a double etched line at the widest point of the pot's belly; otherwise, the pot is left undecorated, with its neck being ringed.

In the second type of decoration, the pot is marked with horizontal grooves or ridges from the shoulder up, but no other decoration is present (IV-2, 19, 30, 34, 35, 37, and 38).

Twenty-seven pots in the sample are decorated from shoulder to base of the neck with grooves, crescents, bosses, and areas which are patterned or textured. The most common pattern is a series of broad bands which contain repeated crescents, either remaining plain (IV-1, 26, 27) or decorated with parallel grooves (IV-10 and 11), spots (IV-13 and 21), or concentric curves (IV-31, 33, 36). The great variation in decoration of pots leads me to the conclusion that inventive freedom in decoration was allowed, if not sought, as a determinant of the success of the sculpture.

The fourth type of decoration is present in a single example (IV-5). In this type, the surface of the pot is covered from base to neck with varied linear patterns. Here again, decorative inventiveness was apparently the strongest impulse guiding the sculptor's hand.
IV.4.2 Schematic vs. naturalistic portraits: The portrait heads can be divided into two stylistic categories: schematic and naturalistic. "Schematic" heads are characterized by their lack of naturalistic features and natural expression. Twelve pieces are of this type (IV-5, 6, 16-19, 23-25, 27, and 31). Among the other twenty-nine portraits, none is naturalistic in the Western sense of the term. However, each contains individualizing, naturalistic elements, such as eyes and nose (IV-1 and 4), nose (IV-3, 7, and 22), shape of face or head (IV-2, 9, 21, and 29), or expression (IV-8, 20, 30, and 41).

IV.4.3 Individual styles: A careful examination of the sample revealed six individual hands, each of which had produced more than one of the pieces. They are the following:

**Hand A** (IV-1 and 4) uses a medium-sized pot, naturally shaped head, headdress ridge descending to include ears, and a lipped spout at the top of the head. Both of these pieces were acquired by the M.N.C.I. from the same collector in 1942. Their provenance is noted "Agboville/Adzopé" in the M.N.C.I.'s acquisition records.

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1 "Expression" requires some definition here. As I use the term, it indicates formal qualities which communicate mood or personality. For example, though plate IV-8 has no specifically naturalistic qualities, its open-mouthed, "alert" aspect communicates individuality (or personality) to the viewer.

2 Because I was unable to examine plates IV-36-41 directly, they were not included in this part of the analysis. Plates IV-22 and 36 may indicate the same hand, as may IV-37 and 38.
Hand B (IV-10, 11, 42, and a fragment in the M.N.C.I. numbered D176) employs a low pot with a ridge at the shoulder, a long neck with complicated, delicate scarification patterns, and a fine-featured face with a very narrow, high-bridged nose. These pieces are all characterized by fine detail and artistry of very high quality, the terracotta being eggshell thin and evenly fired. The pieces in IV-10 and 11 were acquired in 1952 from a private collector. Their provenance is marked "Alépé" in the acquisition records.

Hand C (IV-14 and 15) uses a broad pot with a flat slope from shoulder to base of neck, decorated with punched patterns. The face and headdress are separate from the pot's neck; there are very small cheeks, mouth and jawline. The headdress ridge descends to include the ears.

Hand D (IV-23, 24, and 25) employs a narrow-based, very large, round pot, with raised and grooved decorations from shoulder to base of neck. The spout is behind the head on the pot's shoulder. The pieces have conical necks, ovoid faces, and schematic features, which are applied rather than sculpted into the face. Facial scarification consists of raised bosses with depressed crosses on the cheeks, and all three pieces have similar headdresses, which are variations of a high central crest.

Hand E (IV-17, 27, and 31) adopts a large, narrow-based pot with a ridge at the shoulder. All three pieces have complicated neck
scarification patterns of long, grooved keloids, no chin, schematic features, a single, prominent arched brow ridge, high ears, and low forehead. Features of the head are integrated into the cylinder of the pot's neck. The headdress is a scalloped ridge across the forehead.

Hand F (IV-5 and 13) uses a forward-thrust, sharply defined chin, and ears which are high, forward, very large, and bowl-shaped. Though both have very narrow noses, that of IV-5 is damaged. Both pieces also show expert modeling and refinement of detail. The provenance of both is marked "Agboville/Adzopé" in the M.N.C.I.'s records, but they were purchased from separate collections in 1942 (IV-5) and 1952 (IV-13).

IV.5 Manufacture and Function

The information for this discussion was gathered during visits to Memni and Alépé (10-12 Aug., 1979) and Adzopé and Nkoupé (17-18 Sept., 1979) by means of guided, open-ended interviews with village elders and potters. I also interviewed elders and a potter in Anyama and Ebimpé in southern Akyé country (18-19 Sept., 1979). Here, I was told that the southern Akyé do not know the tradition of ba. When I asked why this might be, they explained that the southern Akyé are closer in culture to the Ebrié, their more southern neighbors, than to the more northern Akyé. In each town, I spoke with several elders. In total, I spoke with five potters: two in Memni, two in Nkoupé, and one in Ebimpé.
In all the interviews but one, the elders were initially unwilling to discuss the real meaning of ba or even to use the term. At first, they claimed that these were simple goglets for carrying and storing water. The potters, who always spoke after the elders, said the same thing. They discussed the sculptures' funerary purpose only after I had shown them several examples (photographs of pieces in the M.N.C.I.) and had carefully explained my interest in the history and traditional culture of the Akyé. For some reason, the elders of Nkoupé discussed the tradition without hesitation, and the potters there followed their example.

All the people I interviewed were old enough to remember the pre-colonial era. The potters all estimated their ages at "more than seventy", claimed that they knew what ba were, and that they could make them. However, everyone interviewed stated that the tradition had died out "after the arrival of the whites". I saw no ba in the villages; I was told that they had all been broken or sold long ago. The information I was given was often vague and sometimes contradictory. I have included all of it here, under the following headings: manufacture (IV.5.1), function (IV.5.2), and ba and women (IV.5.3). In cases where the source of information seems significant, or when contradictory information was given, the name of the village is noted; otherwise, it should be considered general and confirmed through repetition by numerous informants.

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1 Ivory Coast officially became a French colony in 1897, but strong colonial influence did not penetrate into much of the interior until considerably later.
IV.5.1 Manufacture: Ba could not be modeled by any potter; they were made only by women known to possess special magical powers. When a sculptor wanted to make a ba, she isolated herself from the village, filled a pot with palm oil, and requested the spirit of the deceased to appear to her in the oil. What she then modeled was a portrait head of the deceased which reproduced his or her features exactly. The term most frequently used to describe this portrait quality was "photo". But as with mma, this must be understood as a naturalistic depiction of the spirit, or essence of the person. In Nkoupé, I was told that this portrait was used as an échantillon (specimen or pattern) by other potters, who then made several other portraits after it.

IV.5.2 Function: I was told that ba were not sculpted for everybody's funerals; they were for kings only. Upon further questioning, however, I was told that a king could be any rich man, and that ba were also made for his wives' and sisters' funerals. Thus, any notable, male or female, had the right to a ba. The objects were considered "sacré" (sacred). During the funeral, the ba was placed outside the village, but no specific location was mentioned. At some point during the ceremony, a human sacrifice or sacrifices were offered to the spirit of the deceased.

The ba itself served as a container for water. However, no use for this water was specified. On festival days, offerings of food were

1 The term félicheuse was used, probably best translated as "female controller of spirit forces". The Akyé term is beso amoon, which translates loosely to "priestess".
made to the ba as it was representative of the spirit of the deceased. This food was then sought out by women who had trouble conceiving, as they believed that eating it would help them become fertile.

Ba, like the ancestors they represented, were associated with certain families. After funerals, they were either kept close to the courtyard of the family of the deceased, as bodies were buried in courtyards (elder in Memni), or on the tombs of the persons they represented (which could also be in the family compound—another elder in Memni). One potter specified only that ba were kept "inside". Wherever ba were kept, they were considered to be powerful objects, even dangerous, because of their association with the spiritual force of the ancestors; they were avoided except on feast days.

IV.5.3 Ba and women: The evidence suggests that ba were closely associated with women. They were made by women, and most of them represent women. When I asked why women made ba, I was told that it is because women are potters, whereas men sculpt wood. This, a potter told me, is because wood is harder to work than clay. Another possibility, mentioned by a young man in Memni, is that pottery is associated with domestic tasks, and therefore it is the province of women.

When asked why the majority of ba represent women, the elders and potters in Nkoupé said they didn't know. An elder in Memni said it was because women are more closely associated with funerals than men, since

1 Women are not forbidden to work with wood altogether, though they do not carve it. For example, they chop all the firewood for cooking fires themselves.
they prepare bodies for funerals. This point will be further discussed in section IV.6.

IV.6 Iconography

A discussion of iconography in ba must be divided into two parts, one involving the symbolic elements in ba and their possible meanings, and the other the cultural implications of the information available on ba. Unfortunately, published information on traditional Akyé culture is very scant. Therefore, much of what is presented here is based on modern day oral tradition and my inferences from it, without the aid of previous documentation about Akyé culture. My inferences concerning symbolism in ba were discussed during interviews in Akyé villages, and thus have been confirmed as much as possible. However, verification of cultural implications will be possible only after further ethnographical studies of the Akyé have been undertaken and a more complete picture of the culture made available.

IV.6.1 Symbolism: Elements of ba which apparently have symbolic value are the following: words etched on the pot, scarification patterns on neck and face, and headdress. The angle of the head and the pot itself may also have symbolic value.¹

Two of the pots in the sample are decorated with symbols that resemble writing in the Latin alphabet. Object IV-7 has the symbols

¹ It may well be that the varied expression and open eyes of some pieces also had symbolic value, particularly when associated with a specific individual and his/her personality. However, conclusions about this on my part would be sheer speculation.
engraved into the shoulder of the pot below the face, and IV-13 has the letters on the shoulder, also below the face. The prominent placement of these on both pots indicates that the potters felt them to be important. The meaning of the symbols, however, is uncertain. The symbols on portrait IV-7 might represent the name Owusu or Ossé, a common man's name in Akan societies which is given to males of noble birth. Since this ba probably represents a male (cf. 163-64), it is unlikely that was his lover's name. It may have been his own name; more likely, it indicates his title or position, since the name indicates that he is a "prince", or of high social rank.

, on the shoulder of object IV-13, is more difficult to interpret. None of the Akyé with whom I spoke recognized the term, either as a name or a common noun in Akyé. The French word fraternité, however, has been in common use among Ivoirians since early in the 20th century. It is in the French Republic's national slogan, "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité," and was printed on the currency and every official document issued by the French in their colonies. I suggest that may be an interpretation of "Fraternité", but reasons for its inclusion on this particular ba remain a mystery to me. One possibility is that by relating to coinage, it correlates with the notion of "rich", which

The English orthography of Akan terms always presents a problem, both because of phonetic differences between English and the Akan languages and because variations exist within the languages themselves. Owusu is the most common spelling in English for the Ashanti name that means "prince". Ossé is the commonest spelling of its Akyé equivalent.

I also suggested PRATI as a possibility, with no positive response.
was associated with the figures.

Unlike some African groups, the Akyé have never used facial scarification for ethnic identification. Yet, there are certain facial marks which are common on older people in Akyé country today. These are usually small crosses or horizontal marks on the cheeks, just below the eyes, like those seen on some ba. On this evidence, the ba with diagonal marks on both sides of the neck might also indicate that scarification was once both common and more elaborate. These neck markings are present on fourteen of the ba used for this study. However, no such marks are to be seen today on anyone in the villages I visited.

All the Akyé with whom I spoke stated that the marks on face and neck were for beauty, rather than social or ethnic identification. One old woman in Memni explained to me that people did this in the old days, "because they had no clothes with which to beautify themselves". Thus, the scars were both aesthetically pleasing and marks which indentified specific individuals (as different syles of dress and hairdos do in Akyé country today). The great variation in patterns of scarification on the portrait heads would appear to support this observation. If they were clan or ethnic marks, a more systematic repetition would most likely be apparent. At the same time, cicatrization is also an element of portraiture in ba, since the individualized marks on faces and necks were undoubtedly a means of identifying individuals, and therefore a
kind of signature.

Most ba have headdresses that resemble hair, tressed and plafted into complicated patterns while conforming to the shape of the head. I was told during interviews that the hairdos represented on ba were old-fashioned and not done any more. The absence of specific repeated schemes for these hairdos, like face and neck markings, might be considered an element of portrait individualization, as well.

Four of the ba in the sample have headdresses which may represent crowns, rather than hair. The headdress seen in plate IV-33 is striated in a manner common to representations of hair, but its shape does not conform to that of the head beneath it; it has a decidedly hat-like form. However, I have not been able to determine whether it actually represents a hat or is a particular hairdo.

The headdresses in plates IV-5, 13, 22, and 36 are conical, arranged in horizontal tiers. Since these figures most likely represent males, it is possible that this is a form of "male" hairdo or hat. If the stopper seen in plate IV-35 can also be a part of the headdress, then this figure's headdress would be similar to those of the other four figures. None of these figures has pierced ears. Thus, there appears to be an association between this headdress, non-pierced ears, and maleness. A similar headdress appears on some Agni (plates III-43 and 44) and in the old engraving of an Agni king and his court.

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1 They were signatures only in that they were specific combinations of visual symbols which marked individuals. In New Zealand, this concept was carried to its logical conclusion by Maori chiefs, who "signed" documents by drawing their facial tattoos where they were to sign (Schwimmer, 1974: 93).
The Agni headdress is a hair arrangement, associated with male figures of very high prestige. Most likely, then, such a headdress had the same functional associations in Akyé culture.

Earlier in this chapter (p. 170), I noted that ten of the pieces have heads positioned so that they tilt back atop the neck. The elders in Nkoupé suggested that this is the way heads were positioned at the time bodies were displayed before burial. If this is so, such positioning indicates that the figure is dead. However, since all those portrayed 'in ba were dead at the time the sculptures were made, this should be a part of all ba, rather than a minority of them.

A more pragmatic possibility is that the heads of some figures were tilted back to make them more visible. Since these pots have flat bottoms, they were most likely placed either on the ground or on a low platform of some sort. As such, those with backward-leaning heads would be more directly visible than others. Considering that thirty-one pieces in the sample do not have this characteristic, it seems more likely that the upward-inclined heads are due to stylistic rather than iconographic considerations.

Holás proposes that ba served as containers of water for the funeral bath and as recipients of drink offerings to the deceased (1967: 132). According to my information, his first suggestion is incorrect. Ba could not have served this purpose because they were not modeled

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1 High tables and shelves are not a part of the traditional Akan culture. Things are either placed low, or hung from rafters or trees. Given the flat bottoms of ba, they were probably placed either at or near ground level.
until the ceremonial funeral, months or even years after the burial itself. Any association with washing would be strictly symbolic, rather than actual. His second suggestion appears to be correct, since the ba was accompanied by offerings of food. This food was probably offered in bowls, like the food at Agni ceremonial funerals. It could not have been in the ba itself; the shape of the objects makes this impossible.

Holas further contends that the pots of ba are symbolically uterine, as quoted on p. 155-56. There is undoubtedly some accuracy in this appraisal of ba's symbolic function. Ba are closely associated with the ancestors' spirits, which are capable of affecting human fertility. Moreover, women with fertility problems actively sought out food offerings to ba, the consumption of which was supposed to render them fertile. However, not all ba represent women. Some represent men. Moreover, the Akyé with whom I spoke denied emphatically that the pot is metaphorically a belly, much less pregnant. The piece Holas used to illustrate this point (my plate IV-30) does indeed seem to have a distended, though not necessarily pregnant, belly. However, this ba is morphologically unique. His generalization is therefore based on a false premise, i.e., that a majority of ba resemble plate IV-30 in form. In two other ba in the sample, plates IV-40 and 41, the addition of feet below the pot makes the pot the figure's "belly". However, these two ba, like plate IV-30, are the exception, rather than the rule. The connections between ba and fertility appear to have been magical in most cases, transcending direct physical symbolism.
IV.6.2 Cultural Implications: The analysis of form, function, and meaning of ba permit some conclusions about traditional Akye culture. These conclusions are based on the following characteristics: (1) the imbalance between male and female portraits; (2) the presence (or absence) of jewelry on ba; (3) aesthetics of ba; (4) ba as prestige objects; (5) ba as dangerous objects; (6) their influence on fertility; (7) ba as portraits; and (8) ba as an Akan tradition.

Eleven of the forty-one ba in the sample may represent males; only two of these (IV-22, 36) are certainly portraits of men. My questions about the apparent imbalance between male and female ba received inconclusive answers. Several possibilities exist for the imbalance; first, it is possible that more pieces representing women have survived by chance, or because they were more highly valued than sculptures of men. Both of these seem unlikely. The reason I was given in Nkoupé is that women are more closely associated with bodies than men. This seems equally unlikely, particularly since the sculptures are portraits. It is much more likely that the imbalance between male and female ba results from two factors in traditional Akyé culture: matrilineality, and polygyny.

Male ba were modeled for men of high status, and female ba for their sisters and wives. It appears to have been difficult for a man to achieve "kingly" status, for this came only with great wealth and demonstrated leadership. Once a man achieved this status, his notability was also accorded to his wives and sisters. Akyé society being polygynous, "kings" were likely to have several wives and numerous sisters, all of whom could have had ba because of one man's achievements.
This is the most logical conclusion to be drawn from the accumulated evidence.

Most of the ba in the sample have pierced ears; two still have fragments of earrings in the holes. Pierced ears are a sign of female-ness in Akan society today: girls' ears are pierced shortly after birth,¹ and women wear earrings throughout their lives. Thus, pierced ears are sex markers in ba. The earrings' absence in most figures could be due to several factors. It is possible that most ba never wore earrings, that the holes were sufficient. It is also possible that the metal (or thread, which is also used) deteriorated, and the earrings fell off most ba or were removed (or stolen) after the funeral. Bodies are adorned with gold for display before burial in Akan societies; it is possible that ba were similarly adorned for ceremonial funerals. This is particularly likely, since mma are known to have been so adorned. The gold earrings would have been removed after the funeral and returned to the family's treasury.²

Two of the ba in the sample (IV-20 and 26) appear to be wearing necklaces with pendants. A third piece (IV-41) wears a long decoration around the neck, crossed over the throat. All these ornaments are modeled in the clay of the sculpture. The fact that these figures wear jewelry is not extraordinary; most Akyé women wear jewelry around their

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¹ I was taught to identify the sex of infants in Akan villages by looking at their ears. Infant girls' ears are pierced, whereas boys' are not.

² Like most other Akan, the Akyé place a great value on the possession of gold. A family's wealth lies in its store of gold, which is passed on from generation to generation.
necks. Rather, it is strange that none of the other pieces is portrayed wearing jewelry. I suggest the case is the same as for earrings. Either most ba never wore necklaces, or the necklaces were real jewelry, separate from the sculptures, which deteriorated and fell off, or they were removed after the funeral.

Ba are products of traditional Akyé culture. Therefore, the aesthetics which are apparent in ba indicate aesthetic criteria which are important to this culture. These criteria can be discussed both as they apply to the pots and the portraits. Three criteria are apparent: refinement, control, and individuality.

The most readily apparent aesthetic criterion in ba is refinement. The surface of most pots is smooth and polished, and decorations are regular, rather than random. On most of the pots, decoration is etched very lightly into the surface, so that the shape of the pot is continuous, unbroken by visual interruptions. Where decoration is three-dimensional, it is applied in low relief, and in rhythmically repeating patterns (IV-9, 24, 25) in which curves predominate, rather than angles.

The same refinement applied to the portraits. Necks are long and slender, topped by small heads. Features are generally small and fine; mouths are narrow-lipped, noses generally narrow-bridged, ears small. Scarification, though greatly varied, is applied in symmetrical patterns, with one motif predominating. The hairdo is generally kept close to the head.

A concomitant of refinement is the apparent importance of control in ba. In examining most sculptures, one senses that the artist had
complete control over material and decoration. This is further communicated by the restrained expression in most of the portraits. Most eyes are closed. If the head is at an angle, the angle is slight.

The criterion of individuality complements the other two, both in the pots and the portraits. Though decorative patterns on the pots are restrained, they are never repeated. This is equally true within the work of individual artists. Though IV-23, 24, and 25 were apparently modeled by the same hand, the shape and decoration of each pot are slightly different. The headdresses of the three pieces are all of the same form, but each is slightly different.

The Akyé also applied this criterion to body aesthetics. No two headdresses are the same, and scarification patterns appear in great variety.

All ba were objects of great prestige, which ultimately derived from a person's achievement of "royal" status, usually based upon the status of the senior man in a family. This fact indicates that Akyé society had a class structure. However, this structure was apparently based more on merit than heredity, unlike the structures of Agni and Abouré societies.

I was repeatedly told during interviews that ba were dangerous objects. They were avoided, except on feast days, when offerings were taken to them. In Memni, one potter used the term "sacred" to describe ba, and said that they were "worshipped." But human sacrifices were made

\[^{1}\] The terms used by the interpreter were sacré and adoré. While these probably derive from his knowledge of Christian terminology, they indicate the reverence which the Akyé felt for ba.
before ba at funerals, and human blood is the most powerful sacrificial substance in traditional Akan religions. However, the objects themselves are only loci of power in that they represent the spirits of powerful ancestors. Ba possess no inherent power. Rather, they are manifestations of an invisible spiritual force which can have great influence on the living, and therefore must be treated with great respect.

The Akyé believed that consumption of food offerings to ba would render women more fertile. Thus, the spirits of notables could directly influence human fertility. The organic connection between the two worlds provides insight into the Akyé world view, in which an intimate relationship exists between the spirit world and the actual world, partially expressed through the agency of ba.

The Akyé use the word photo when they seek to describe the portrait quality of ba. Thus, the sculptures reproduce the essentials of an individual, that which is necessary for a likeness. They evidently consider the head as the only essential element of the portrait. The specific elements of portraiture in ba appear to include scarification patterns, headdress, and nose, for all those show great variation among ba. The color of the pieces, which varies from medium gray to black, may also be an element of portraiture in ba. This seems likely, because color of skin is usually the first physical characteristic used

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1 Jean-Paul Eschlimann described a similar phenomenon among the Agni-Bona, who live north of Ndénié. Here an unbaked terracotta portrait is modeled for funerals of notables, and colored to resemble the skin tone of the deceased (interview in Agnibillékrou: 9/11/79).
by Africans to describe an individual in conversation. Eyes and mouth are treated much more similarly in ba, and therefore appear not to be important in the portraits. Ears are markers of sex, and when they wore an individual's jewelry, they would also have been an important element in an individual's portrait.

IV.7 Yiwo Giyé: An Abbé Tradition

The region north and west of Anyama is inhabited by both Akyé and Abbé. I interviewed elders and potters in Ebimpé and Azaguie-Blida in September, 1979. The former is an Akyé village; the latter was originally Abbé, but has been increasingly dominated by Akyé language and customs in recent years. In Ebimpé, no one recognized photographs of ba from the M.N.C.I., nor had the potters ever made goglets with heads on top. When I asked why this might be, they explained that their culture is much closer to Ebrié than to Akyé. Their funerals involve dancing and singing, but no ceremonial meals and no pottery.

In Azaguie-Blida, I interviewed an Abbé potter who offered me two goglets for sale, which were morphologically very similar to ba. She said that she had made the pots about forty years ago, and that she had made more like them before that, but none since. Everyone at the interview (village elders and members of her family) agreed that she was the

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1 Where provenance is indicated in M.N.C.I.'s terracotta collection, it is either Alépé or Adzopé, never Anyama.

2 I purchased one of the goglets for the M.N.C.I. The other is still in the village, in the courtyard of the potter Yepié Essé Andrienne.
only potter in the village who could make these goglets,¹ and that she used to make them on order for clients in other villages. She had stopped making them, she said, because there was no longer any demand for them. These two had been kept as mementoes. Both pots had a heavy, crusty patina from being kept in a cooking hut.

The pots, which are called yiwo and yiwo giyé (pl. IV-44) are flat-bottomed goglets with a band of geometric decoration engraved into the shoulder and a groove at the base of the neck. The face is broad, with small features and a narrow, high-bridged nose. A ridge across the forehead extends down both sides of the head to become ears, and a prominent chin demarcates the bottom of the face. The ears are not pierced, but I was told that these pieces always represent females. Therefore, this sex marker is not necessary. Both pieces have head­­dresses which cascade from the crown to the back of the head, forming what look like thick tresses. The headdress of yiwo is less elaborate than that of yiwo giyé, and its nose is larger. Neither piece shows any evidence of jewelry or facial markings. Both pieces have stoppers that fit into the top of the headdress. Except for the kitchen patina, the two pieces are comparable in most ways to ba.

The function of yiwo and yiwo giyé, however, is quite different from that of ba. According to my informants in Azaguie-Blida, yiwo and yiwo giyé have nothing to do with funerals, nor are they portraits of specific individuals. They are gifts that were exchanged by young

¹ One of her daughters, who was present at the interview, is a potter also. However, she does not make pots like these.
men and women at the time of their engagement and marriage.

_Yiwo giyé_, which translates as "young woman", was traditionally presented to a young woman's father by her suitor at the time of their engagement. The pot contained palm wine. If it was not sufficiently pretty ("jolie"), the young man could be refused. The beauty of the pot apparently reflected the beauty of the intended bride, though it was not her portrait. It could also, by reflection, represent the fruitfulness of the intended union.

_Yiwo_, or "woman", was presented by wives to their husbands after the marriage, "out of love". The contents of _yiwo_ was water, rather than palm wine. It apparently represented the esteem a woman felt for her husband, and was thus a post-nuptial complement of the _yiwo giyé_. Just as the latter had potential fertility associations, it could be the same for _yiwo_. However, neither of these was mentioned during interviews.

Functionally, the Abbé tradition is different from the Akyé tradition. However, morphological similarities between the two indicate that terracotta traditions in southern Akyé and Abbé country merit closer study.¹

IV.8 A Related Archaeological Discovery

In 1971, archaeologists working under Bernard Saison and Jean Polet at La Séguié, near Agboville, discovered a terracotta head which

¹ My discovery of the Abbé tradition occurred at the very end of my research in Ivory Coast. The discussion is included here only as an introduction to the tradition.
had undoubtedly been the top part of a goglet (pl. IV-43).\(^1\) The head is hollow with a spout at the top. It measures fifteen cm. from top of spout to bottom, including a portion of the neck. The complete piece was probably considerably larger than known Akyé and Abbé pieces.\(^2\) The neck is non-striated, with five bosses in a row up each side, probably representing scarification. Other scarification marks are on the chin, in front of the ears, on the forehead, and on the cheeks below the eyes. All the marks are raised, probably representing keloids. The ears are small, low, and not pierced, the eyes are coffee-bean shaped bosses, the nose is narrow, high-bridged, and hooked in profile. The mouth is open with seven small marks impressed into the upper lip and five in the lower. Polet feels that these marks represent teeth (1974: 36-37). The headdress is a raised ridge across the forehead which descends to behind the ears. It is pierced seven times. The back of the head is covered with regularly-spaced points, perhaps indications of shaved hair. The spout is conical. The head sits vertically atop the neck. Its surface was covered with a polished slip.

In all ways but two, the Séguié head resembles the Akyé and Abbé heads in my sample. It is larger than any other head I know, and open mouths are the exception, rather than the rule among \(\text{ba}\). However, the keloids, headdress, eyes, ears, nose, and general configuration of the head are all typical of \(\text{ba}\).

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\(^1\) Polet 1974: 29-34 contains a report on the findings. The head is in a private collection, and I have not seen the object itself.

\(^2\) No other fragments of the piece were found. Polet assumes it was part of a goglet, based on the hollow interior and the spout.
The head was turned up accidentally, not dug up under controlled circumstances. No evidence was found to indicate its use or the exact location where it was found (in a hut, or in open air, for example). However, it was found within the confines of the defensive ramparts at the site. Thus, it had been kept within the village.

Sufficient evidence was not found at La Seguie to date the finds precisely, but Polet proposes a late 17th or early 18th century date for the occupation of the site. The head is probably of the same date. Polet feels it is "incontestably Akan" (1974: 39). My formal analysis of the piece agrees with this conclusion. If all this speculation is correct, the Seguie head would establish a tradition of anthropomorphic pottery vessels in the Abbé region, close to the present edge of Akyé territory, about three hundred years ago. No further archaeological evidence of the tradition has yet been discovered.

**IV.9 Conclusions**

*Ba* are terracotta funerary portraits, sculpted by Akyé potters for ceremonial funerals of deceased notables. The portraits are called "royal" by the Akyé because of the high social status of those they represent. Akyé society accorded this right to any man who had gained a position of wealth and/or leadership in the community, and to his wives and sisters by association. Probably as a result of this, there are many more *ba* that represent women than men. These portraits served as substitute corpses during ceremonial funerals, when a final meal was offered to the spirit of the deceased. Through the agency of *ba*, the spirits could influence the living, particularly by increasing fertility.
Morphologically, ba consist of a flat-bottomed pot with a long neck, topped by a portrait head. The portrait was considered to be an absolutely faithful representation of the spirit of the deceased notable. Individualized elements of the portrait included the headdress, scarification patterns, nose, and expression. Decorative patterns on the pot were also highly individualized, though they have no apparent symbolic value.

Ba were produced in northern and eastern Akyé country (the regions of Adzopé and Alepé) within living memory, but they are no longer made. The southern Akyé, in the region of Anyama, apparently do not know this tradition.

Reasons for the abandonment of the tradition are unclear, but they undoubtedly include missionization and colonization. Human sacrifices, which accompanied ceremonial funerals, were forbidden by the French colonial administration early in this century.

The southern Abbé produced morphologically similar terracottas until recently, but the pots, called yiwo and yiwo giye, were neither portraits, nor funerary in purpose. Rather, they apparently were nuptial gifts, which served as symbols of the successful consummation of marriages.

Archaeological evidence would seem to place a morphologically similar terracotta tradition in the Abbé region as long as three hundred years ago. There is no evidence of the function of these pots, but they were probably sculpted by Akan potters. Thus, Akan potters sculpted anthropomorphic pottery in the Akyé and immediately-surrounding
regions for about two centuries, from about 1700 to 1900. More evi-
dence of these traditions will probably come only after further
archaeological research has been conducted in the region.
Plate IV-1
M.N.C.I. D136
(42.2.201)
Plate IV-4
M.N.C.I. D139
(42.2.204)
Plate IV-5
M.N.C.I. D140
(42.2.205)
Plate IV-6
M.N.C.I. D141
(.CL.42.3.296)
Plate IV-7
M.N.C.I. D143
(52.2.105)
Plate IV-9
M.N.C.I. D145
(50.2.1601)
Plate IV-10
M.N.C.I. D146
(52.2.107)
Plate IV-11
M.N.C.I. D147
(52.2.108)
Plate IV-13
M.N.C.I. BI49
(52.2.114)
Plate IV-14
M.N.C.I. DI51
(52.2.106)
Plate IV-15
M.N.C.I. D152
(57.16.8)
Plate IV-16
M.N.C.I. D153
(57.16.10)
Plate IV-17
M.N.C.I. D154
(57.16.13)
Plate IV-19
M.N.C.I. D156
(57.16.15)
Plate IV-21
M.N.C.I. D158
(57.16.22)
Plate IV-22
M.N.C.I. D159
(57.16.23)
Plate IV-23
M.N.C.I. D161
(57.16.25)
Plate IV-24
M.N.C.I. D162
(57.16.26)
Plate IV-26
M.N.C.I. D164
(63.2.125.)
Plate IV-27
M.N.C.I. D165
(63.2.1257)
Plate IV-28
M.N.C.I. D166
(...126...)
Plate IV-30
M.N.C.I. D168
(63.2.1285)
Plate IV-32
M.N.C.I. D170
(63.2.1290)
Plate IV-34
M.N.C.I. D172
(63.2.12..)
Plate IV-35
Musée de l'Homme MH 47.25.3
Plate IV-36
Formerly Musée IFAN, Abidjan
Present-whereabouts unknown
(photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate IV-37
Formerly Musée IFAN, Abidjan
Present whereabouts unknown
( Photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate IV-38
Formerly Musée IFAN, Abidjan
Present whereabouts unknown
(photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate IV-39
Formerly Musée IFAN, Abidjan
Present whereabouts unknown
(photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate IV-40
Formerly Musée IFAN, Abidjan
Present whereabouts unknown
(photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate IV-41
Formerly Musée IFAN, Abidjan
Present whereabouts unknown
(photo: IFAN, Dakar)
Plate IV-42
Private collection, Oppem
Plate IV-43
Private collection, France
(photo: Jean Polet)
Plate IV-44

M.N.C.I.
(no acquisition no. yet assigned)
CHAPTER V: ASSONGU

V.1 Introduction

Assongu are small terracotta figures, sculpted to represent a spirit who lives on an island in the Aby Lagoon. Unlike mma and ba, assongu are not spirit portraits of any individual, nor are they connected with any funerary ceremonies. They are called "fetish" figures by the people who make and use them. As such, they are material representations of a powerful spirit force also called Assongu. This force is propitiated by means of offerings presented to the sculptures. The tradition exists among the Eotilé, the Agni of Sanwi, the Aboure, and the Nzima, all of whom live around the Aby Lagoon (see maps, pp. 2-3). In discussing these figures, I will follow the same format previously employed for other Ivoirian sculptures: bibliographic concerns (V.2),

1 Assongu is an orthography which I derived from the advice of Dr. Judith Timyan, a linguist and specialist in Akan languages at the Université d'Abidjan. It is based on the most common pronunciation of the term. I have also heard it pronounced "assong", "assom", and "assomou", in different contexts. Neveux refers to the tradition as "asoumou" (1926: 17), Amon d'Aby as "asom'"(1960: 38-39), Debrunner as "azongu" (1961: 46-59). The $ is always voiceless (as in snake); therefore, it is represented here with a double "$s$".

2 The term fetish is extraordinarily hard to define, and is not universally accepted by Africanists. I use it here because it is used by practitioners of assongu.

3 The tradition also exists in Abengourou, where it was recently imported by the king of Ndénéié. This will be discussed in section V.7.
history and legends of origin (V.3), typological discussion (V.4),
stylistic discussion (V.5), manufacture and function (V.6), and iconography (V.7), drawing general conclusions (V.8) at the end.

V.2 Bibliographic Discussion

The earliest mention of assongu in the literature is Neveux's "Religion des noirs: Fétiches de la Côte d'Ivoire" (1926).\(^1\) According to him, an "asoumou" is a totem, not a fetish, of the Abouré. He says it is represented by a small statuette and a small bowl, both of which are painted white; he includes no illustration of assongu. In support of his contention that assongu is a totem, he states that it is linked to families, rather than individuals, and its power is invoked to cure hematuria, a disease in which red blood cells are present in the urine.\(^2\)

The next discussion of assongu is by a missionary from Ghana, H. Debrunner, published in IFAN's Notes Africaines in 1953 (\#60, pp. 111-113). Some time during the 1950's, he visited an Nzima village near Half-Assini in Ghana, where he found small, crude shelters containing assongu in the bush, not far from the village. There were about thirty shelters, each containing from two to ten figurines (all painted white) surrounded by various collections of small earthenware bowls, bones, shells, bottles of gin, and "crude carvings". Debrunner was told that the possessors of assongu (his term, "azongu") had strong

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\(^{1}\) Reprinted from L'Ethnographie, series 2 \#6 (1922): 136-65.

\(^{2}\) As a physician, Neveux was particularly interested in traditional medicine; thus, he devoted his study to "fetishes".
magical powers, and that the figures were modeled for each child at the time of birth. Further, offerings were made to them on Wednesdays. A person could be expected to make offerings to the assongu of his or her father, even though there appeared to be no ancestor associations for the tradition. Debrunner never witnessed any offerings being made, nor did he discuss the "magical powers" attributed to the spirit and its practitioners. According to him, only about a third of assongu were well-made enough to merit any aesthetic interest, although he was particularly interested in those with "tufts" on their heads and attributed a symbolic meaning to these, one related to Holas's quotation of Meyerowitz to the effect that seven tufts represent the universe; further, based on his own readings of Rattray and Meyerowitz, he concluded that five tufts represent Nyamé, the creator (1953: 113).

Amon d'Aby (1960: 38-39) discusses the deity Assongu ("Asom'"), for whom he found that the Eotilé were responsible. According to him, Assongu is the god called upon to control syphilis and hemorrhage, recognized by the Eotilé, the Agni of Sanwi, and the Nzima, the Eotilé patriarch being Assongu's chief priest and the sole intermediary between the god and humankind.

Amon d'Aby goes on to discuss the installation of the chief priest and the rules regarding his domestic life: he must have only one wife (past menopause) and both must dress only in white. However, this author does not discuss the material culture associated with the deity,

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1 The spirit will henceforth be referred to as Assongu; the sculptures that represent it will be called assongu.
and he claims that Eotilé youth have completely abandoned the worship of Assongu, though the deity is still dreaded because of its great power to destroy.

To date, the most complete study of Assongu is by Vinigi Grottanelli (1961: 45-59). He studied Assongu (his term "asongu") in the Nzima village of Ekebaku, Ghana, late in 1954. He also found the shrines in a small clearing in the bush, not far from the village. Each shrine was a small rattan structure which contained several clay figurines and earthenware bowls, some of which held the remains of food offerings. Some shrines also contained chunks of kaolin and empty bottles of European manufacture. The shrines were in good repair and still being used. However, shortly after his departure, an Ivoirian prophet came through the region and destroyed all the shrines (1961: 49).

Grottanelli describes Assongu as small (95 to 120 mm. high), carefully-modeled statuettes of terracotta, made from a rather coarse paste and fired like domestic pottery. They were made by a priest, or his assistants, rather than by a regular potter. After firing, the figurines were covered with a thick coat of white clay, practically obliterating the features. In great details, he describes six examples and one fragment, all obtained by him during his visit to Ekebaku. Of particular note, he feels, is a cylindrical hole in the bottom of each piece, which may be used for the purpose of stabilizing the piece during firing (pp. 50-51).

Further, he notes that Assongu bear little formal resemblance to any other terracotta art of the Akan region and that the only pieces
that are formally similar come from the Sao culture, south of Lake Chad. He notes that the two cultures are separated by one thousand miles and almost as many years. However, the ceremonies described as being connected with Sao sculptures are strikingly similar to those connected with assongu (pp. 53-54).

In his discussion of symbolism, Grottanelli takes Debrunner to task for concluding that the number of tufts on assongu designate them as representative of the creator, Nyamé. According to Grottanelli, "...until new evidence of a positive nature is available, conjectures on the 'hair tufts symbolism' will have to be regarded as pure guesswork" (pp. 54-55). The two iconographic elements which he notes, however, are the use of kaolin (ewuole), as a "symbol of purity and sacredness," and shells, "credited by the Nzema (sic) with apotropaic virtues".

In addition, Grottanelli states that assongu is both the name of the figurine and the deity which it represents, "whose primary concern is with children's ailments and death" (pp. 55-56). Once a person is identified as a devotee of Assongu, he remains so for the rest of his life. According to Grottanelli, veneration of the deity is of relatively recent arrival among the Nzima, and the god's dwelling-place is understood to be the underworld. This distinguishes Assongu from the other minor deities of the Nzima, who are connected with the sea, lagoon, and rivers (p. 56). Finally, Assongu can be asked to punish evildoers, therefore performing one of the functions of a tutelary deity. However, some people are exempt from its influence in this respect, specifically the children who are viewed as having been given
by a god in response to prayers. Twins especially fall into this
category (pp. 58-59).

V.3 History and Legends of Origin

Several different accounts of the origin and spread of Assongu
were related to me during field interviews. Yet all of these sources
held that the deity appeared first among the Eotilé, then spread to
the Agni, the Nzima, the Aboure and, most recently, to the northern
Agni. Following is a detailed setting-forth of the information I col­
lected on the various origins of the spirit, presented in the order in
which the events are said to have occurred.

According to Emile Etchoua, an Eotilé priest of Assongu, the
spirit first appeared "in the time of Louis XIV",\(^1\) chronologically the
late 17th century. The Eotilé had been living as peaceful fishermen on
the shores of the Aby Lagoon for some time, when suddenly they were
visited both by Frenchmen, who wanted to establish forts and missions
in their territory, and by other Akan groups, who were migrating west­
ward from Ghana. Assongu appeared at this point in time, as a protect­
or of the Eotilé, to prevent the French from establishing an outpost on
the lagoon, and to punish the Akan who took fish and land from the
Eotilé, especially as they never paid for them. The spirit chased the
French off its island by infesting the place with either snails, snakes,
or crabs: the expulsion story remains the same, and only the agents
vary. Assongu punished the invading Akan by giving them a bleeding

\(^1\) Interview in Ngaloa: 8/23/79.
disease. This hemorrhaging persisted until they relented and paid the Eotilé for their fish and land.

Several historical facts lend credence to this account of Assongu's origin. Around 1700, the French did try unsuccessfully to establish an outpost on the lagoon, after building a fort at Assinie. About the same time, certain Akan also entered the region, and apparently found other Akan already living there. Moreover, today's understanding of the powers of Assongu is the same as that described in the legend: the spirit attacks with diseases which cause bleeding. It is also significant that this Eotilé origin legend is the only one which gives a reason for Assongu's appearance; all other peoples cite the Eotilé as the source of Assongu.

The Agni, Aboure, and Nzima agree that Assongu originated at the Aby Lagoon and was first known to the Eotilé. It is said that Assongu still belongs to them, though its cult is practiced by all these peoples.

None of my Agni sources spoke of any origin beyond stating that Assongu came from the Eotilé and from the lagoon. One Abouré practitioner in Bonoua told a story about an Eotilé fisherman and his son who were out fishing on the lagoon one day. The son left the boat at an island to urinate and was seized by the spirit, who later became known to the Eotilé as Assongu. A variant of this story, told by the same man, holds that the boy was the son of a fetish priestess, and that he was seized by Assongu one day while bathing in the lagoon.¹ None of my Abouré informants discussed the spread of Assongu from the Eotilé to

¹ Interview with Edgya Niamké, Bonoua: 9/15/79.
the Abouré, though they all agreed that its source was the Eotilé.

My Nzima sources told two different stories of Assongu's arrival among them. In the first, an Nzima woman named Anyima, who went to live among the Eotilé, procured Assongu to protect her against thieves and brought it back to the Nzima when she returned.¹ In the second story, the spirit was "sent to the Nzima from Agni country, in a shell."² None of the Agni, Abouré, or Nzima specified a date for Assongu's arrival among them, though they generally agreed that the spirit had been there for a long time.³

Assongu's arrival in Ndénéié, by contrast, is quite recent. When the king of the northern Agni acceded to the throne in the early 1950's, he felt he needed protection against sorcery, which is widely practiced among the Akan. He had heard of Assongu and asked the king of the southern Agni to send him some figures, for protection. Thus, an Assongu priest was sent north to install sculptures and train the king's agents in their care. This shrine is the only one that I know of in Ndénéié. It is also the largest Assongu shrine I saw, and the only evidence I found of someone asking to have Assongu's service exclusively as a protector.

It is significant, then, that it is only the Eotilé who discuss the origins of the spirit protector Assongu as a god rather than as sculptures, whereas the other groups discuss the arrival of sculptures

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¹ Interview in Azuretti: 9/21/79.
² Interview in Port Bouet: 9/21/79.
³ This contradicts Grottanelli's information for the Nzima in Ghana (1961: 56).
or shells, which represent the spirit. Except for the king of Ndénéié, none of these groups had any idea of how long the sculptures had been modeled to represent the spirit, except that it had been "for a long time". The implications of these differences in attitude will be discussed later (V.7).

V.4 Typological Discussion

The typological discussion of assongu is presented in three separate parts: the nature of the sample used for analysis (V.4.1), the typological analysis (V.4.2), and general characteristics made apparent by the analysis (V.4.3).

V.4.1 The sample: One hundred and seventy-five assongu are used for the typological analysis. All of these are in the collection of the M.N.C.I. They were collected in 1958 and 1963, reportedly in Nzima villages along the road from Abidjan to Grand Bassam.¹ Further, in 1979, I photographed assongu shrines and figures in Ngaloa (Eotilé), Bafia (Agni/Sanwi), and Abengourou (Agni/Ndénéié). However, these shrines were still in use and could not be disturbed. Thus, I was unable to measure or examine the figures at close hand; they are not specifically included in the analysis, although they served as confirming evidence. None of the assongu in the villages would expand the typology, as all conform to the types I had already examined and

¹ Specific data on the acquisition of these pieces (and, indeed, of most pieces in the M.N.C.I.) were not available, having been mysteriously destroyed sometime around 1970.
established at the M.N.C.I. The same is true for the assongu at the Museo Pigorini in Rome, collected by Grottanelli in Kekibaku during 1954.¹

V.4.2 Formal characteristics used in the analysis: The following outline indicates criteria which were used in the typological analysis:

I. General characteristics of the piece
   A. Height (V.4.3.1)
   B. State (V.4.3.2)
      1. intact
      2. worn
      3. damaged
   C. Clay color (V.4.3.3)
      1. beige
      2. orange
      3. brown
      4. gray
      5. dark gray
   D. Clay type (V.4.3.4)
      1. fine
      2. granular
      3. coarse

¹Six of these are illustrated in his article on assongu (Grottanelli, 1961: pl. 1a, c; pl. 2a-d).
E. Surface additives (V.4.3.5)
   1. kaolin
   2. sacrificial patina

II. Type of being (V.4.3.6)
   A. Animal
      1. snail/crab
      2. mammal
   B. Humanoid
      1. male
      2. female
      3. head and neck only
   C. Other (weapons)

III. Body
   A. Presentation of figure (V.4.3.7)
      1. leans back
      2. vertical
      3. leans forward
      4. base (V.4.3.8)
   B. Shape (V.4.3.9)
      1. base
         a. flanged
         b. straight
      2. body shape
         a. cylindrical
         b. conical
3. marks on body (V.4.3.10)
   a. groove on back
   b. grooves on sides
   c. navel
   d. breasts
   e. scarification marks

4. arms (V.4.3.11)
   a. none
   b. attached
   c. free-hanging
   d. hands

IV. Head

A. Neck: present or not (V.4.3.12)

B. Chin: present or not (V.4.3.12)

C. Mouth (V.4.3.13)
   1. prognathous
   2. grooved
   3. smiling

D. Nose (V.4.3.14)
   1. large
   2. small
   3. hooked
   4. nostrils: present or not

E. Eyes (V.4.3.15)
   1. large
   2. small
3. cowries
4. holes (deep into head)

F. Ears (V.4.3.16)
1. projections
2. holes
   a. shallow
   b. deep
   c. head is pierced through

G. Headdress (V.4.3.17)
1. none (plain head)
2. two lobes across head
3. tufts: various numbers
4. vertical groove(s) in head

V. Hole in base (V.4.3.18)
A. None
B. Tiny
C. Medium
D. Deep
E. Piece is hollow

V.4.3 The typological discussion: Using the typological criteria outlined above for examining the 175 assongu in the sample, the following became apparent: 2

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1 These are what Grottanelli refers to as "coffee-bean eyes" (1961: 51).

2 Numbers in parentheses refer to pieces which exemplify the various characteristics. Plates follow the text of the chapter.
V.4.3.1 Height: Assonugu are quite small, the smallest piece being 7 cm. high; the largest 14.8 cm. high. On the average, the pieces are 10.9 cm. high, or just over 4\(\frac{3}{4}\)".

V.4.3.2 State: Forty-one of the pieces are intact, the other 134 have either worn, broken, or missing features.

V.4.3.3 Clay color: All are either beige, orange, brown, gray, dark gray, or a combination of these colors. Ninety-four are of mixed color, resulting from clay of uneven consistency or uneven firing heat. Among the pieces of uniform color, there are 22 beige and 18 orange. Thus, these two colors predominate.

V.4.3.4 Clay type: A majority of the pieces in the sample (83) are made of very fine-grained clay, 62 pieces are of a medium-granular clay. Ten pieces are of a coarse-granular clay, and 19 are of mixed granular consistency.

V.4.3.5 Surface additives: All but seven of the assonugu have traces of kaolin remaining on the surface. Since the kaolin is easily rubbed off, it is safe to assume that all the assonugu in the sample were once fully coated with kaolin. Confirming this, my sources among the Akan mentioned kaolin coating as part of the process of making assonugu, and a "bathing" with kaolin and water which takes place annually, around the time of the new yam celebration.

Six of the assonugu in the sample possibly show evidence of what could be called sacrificial patina (V-25, 58, 66). The only place where

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The many cracked and broken pieces may have resulted from the same factors.
I saw this in practice was at the shrine in Abengourou, where offerings of whisky, rum, egg, or chicken or mutton blood are poured directly on the sculptures; as a result, these assongu have a heavy coating of such materials (cf. pl. V-83). This may be the explanation for the patina on the six pieces in the sample cited above. At other places where I saw offerings made, they were poured on the posts of the shelters or in front of the shelters, rather than directly on the sculptures.¹

V.4.3.6 Types of beings represented: The vast majority of assongu are human in form. However, among the sculptures in the M.N.C.I., two pieces represent snail shells (pl. V-39).² Since hermit crabs use snail shells as well as other univalves for shelter, the sculptures could represent either a snail or the shell that serves as the crab's shelter. I photographed similar pieces at one of the shrines in Ngaloa (V-86).

Two sculptures in the sample represent quadrupeds and are quite large as assongu go. The figure in plate V-56 (19.5 cm. long) apparently represents a spotted animal, the spots being evenly-spaced depressions distributed over its body. This creature has a large, rather fierce-looking maw, clearly marked male genitals, and an anus. It may

¹ I never saw blood offerings made; apparently, this is done only at the new yam celebration. During the rest of the year, whisky or coins are offered.

² I have been told that some assongu are actual snail shells, coated with kaolin. However, I have never seen any of these. In Ekebaku, Grottanelli collected a wooden object, phallus-shaped and covered with lime, which had a seashell and a coin tied to its base. He does not report whether it is an assongu or not (1961: 48).
represent a leopard, renowned for its fierceness in Africa. Plate V-74 shows a quadruped (16 cm. long) with a large snout and open maw. It has a thick, short tail and no genitals. The great simplicity of this sculpture is such that identification by species is impossible, but it is basically the same shape as that seen in V-56, and, therefore, may also represent a leopard.

I photographed two somewhat similar pieces at an Ngaloa shrine which, I was told, represent elephants (pl. V-87). These are long quadrupeds whose front legs are joined together as one (I could not see their hind legs). Each has a rather long, tubular snout, the end of which is pierced; this presumably represents the elephant's trunk.

Two sculptures in the sample combine human and animal forms (plates V-25, 27). In both cases, the quadruped is splayed out on top of the human figure's head, facing forward. The animal's maw is open and it has small, pointed ears. It certainly represents some sort of fierce beast; in these instances again, probably a leopard.

Among the human-form assongu, differentiation by sex is very difficult. Twelve of the pieces include representations of genitals, if in fact they are this. Indications are tiny and rudimentary, often making it hard to discern what kind of genitals are portrayed. However, a groove in the general area of the groin was interpreted as a vagina; it is present in seven pieces (V-61, 67, 76). A projection in the same area was interpreted as a penis, present in five pieces (V-49, 64).

These sculptures are almost identical in size: 10.6 and 10.7 cm., respectively. They were part of the same collection, and are probably by the same hand.
Testicles and scrotum are not present in any of the sculptures. Obviously, genitals are not the primary sex-markers in assongu.

Another possible indicator of sex is the presence or absence of breasts in the sculptures. Seventy-four of the pieces in the sample have two projections on their chests which probably represent breasts (V-17, 63). Three pieces (V-40) have only one projection on the chest, but all three of these show clear evidence of a second breast's former presence. The breasts are almost never large or pendulous, nor do they have nipples. Where both breasts and an umbilical lump are present (V-7, 28), all three are usually the same size.

I was told in the villages that one could tell the sex of an assongu by looking at the heads; females are portrayed with hairdos, males are portrayed plain-headed. Of the humanoid sculptures in the M.N.C.I., 42 have plain heads and 91 have some sort of headdress, either crested, grooved, or tufted. Among the seven pieces with female genitals, five have some sort of headdress, and one is plain-headed. Among the males, three are plain-headed, and two may be wearing hats (V-64, 66). Thus, there appears to be a weak correlation between female figures and headdresses, and plain-headed males. Of the figures with breasts, 50 have headdresses and only 16 do not. Again, the villagers' diagnosis appears to be correct in most cases: female figures generally have headdresses, males do not, with exceptions.

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1 The damaged pieces also show that the breasts were added to a piece as bosses, rather than pinched out from the central cylinder of clay.

2 The head of the seventh "female" piece is missing.
It is clear that there are both male and female assongu, and that they can be sculpted in male/female pairs, according to the directions of a priest. Among the assongu shrines I photographed in the field, the majority contained numerous sculptures. However, one shrine in Bafia (V-89) and one in Ngaloa (V-88) contained just two sculptures each, one of which is plain-headed, the other of which has a headdress. In both cases, the plain figure is the larger of the two. Furthermore, villagers often referred in conversation to the "wife of assongu". When asked whether all assongu have wives, they answer that this depends on the directives of the priest who orders assongu, and on the person for whom it is ordered. Assongu can, and often do, appear in male/female pairs. But this is not necessarily the case. Nor are the pairs necessarily humanoid. For example, I was told that the pair of elephants in plate V-87 are husband and wife.

Eleven of the assongu in the sample apparently have no bodies, but seem rather to be humanoid heads mounted on a cylindrical base. One head (V-9) sits atop a straight-sided cylinder. All the others are flanged at the base (V-5, 34). Five of these pieces have a navel-like (or penis-like, though this could never be determined for sure) projection on the cylinder (V-8, 34). The cylinders may thus be extremely simplified bodies. Eight of these pieces also have high, flat-topped heads of the same shape, typified in plate V-9. In six of the eight, the head is undecorated (V-8, 29, 72). In two, it is embellished with lumps (V-5, 35). Two others are round-headed (V-80) and one is broken off above the face (V-34).
Finally, assongu can be accompanied by cylindrical terracotta rods which are called "warriors of assongu". These are clearly visible in the shrine in plate V-86. They are called 'èkuonogbu, "those who take heads," and they represent the power of assongu to destroy its enemies (i.e., the enemies of its devotees). I was told in Ngaloa that they are "directed by Assongu". These warriors do not act independently. They thus appear to be accoutrements of Assongu, rather than assongu in their own right.

V.4.3.7 Presentation of figure: Among the human assongu, three postures are possible: backward-leaning, vertical, and forward-leaning. Ninety-seven of the M.N.C.I.'s pieces lean backward, at various angles from slight (V-54) to extreme (V-30). Fifty-six pieces are vertical, and eight lean forward. One piece (V-73) leans to the left. There appears not to be a correlation between sex and presentation of figure. Rather, the latter seems more related to stylistic considerations.

V.4.3.8 Base: Sixty-two figures in the sample are flanged at the base, some with a very pronounced flange (V-10), some with just a slight flange (V-8). Because the flange is most often present in pieces which lean backward, it is probably included for stabilization of the piece, rather than for symbolic reasons. There is no apparent relationship between sex and flanged bases.

Three of the pieces stand on what appear to be huge feet (V-61, 64, 66). These feet have engraved toes, and are attached directly to

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1 They are called this by the Eotilé. I have been told that only the Eotilé have assongu which take animal form, but the four animal representations in Abidjan probably come from Nzima villages.
the torso, rather than being at the end of legs. All three are on naturalistic pieces, and may have been modeled by the same hand. The piece in plate V-78 has buttocks, and may also have once had legs or feet projecting from the front of the base, but these are now missing. The pieces with feet are definitely standing, but no assongu appear to sit; they all "stand", on either feet, a flange, or a cylindrical base.

V.4.3.9 Shape of body: Two body shapes are most common among assongu: cylinder (V-40, 48) and truncated cone (V-16, 54). Among the pieces in the sample, thirty-six are cylindrical and one hundred are conical. Other pieces are more naturalistic in shape (V-61, 66), or fluid and irregular (V-57).

V.4.3.10 Marks on the body: Eleven of the assongu in the sample have a groove up the center of the back. Two of these pieces (V-21) also have grooves up each side, as do those in plates V-26, V-37 and V-68, which have either lateral grooves or engaged arms which were pinched out from the central core of clay. The back grooves probably indicate dorsal musculature; the lateral grooves, arms. Navels are present in 118 pieces in the sample.

Only three of the assongu in the sample have marks on their bodies other than those bosses and projections which probably indicate parts of the anatomy. Plate V-2 shows a figure with three horizontal grooves on the front; V-53's figure has multiple vertical grooves engraved into both sides, and V-78 has deep, engraved lines which curve downward from each side toward the front of the piece. These undoubtedly indicate a division between torso and "legs", though the figure has no real legs. The engraved lines seen on the figure in plate V-53 may indicate arms,
though they do not look like engraved arms on other assongu. (cf. section V.4.3.11). The horizontal marks on plate V-2's figure may thus be the only representations of scarification on the sculptures in the sample, but of this I cannot be absolutely sure.

V.4.3.11 Arms: Seventy-six of the pieces in the sample have no arms at all. Sixty-eight pieces have wing-like projections on each side of the body which probably represent arms, though these are occasionally placed so ambiguously as to represent either arms or breasts (V-20). These arm-like projections can be either vertical (V-16) or horizontal (V-32). Twenty-three pieces have lateral appendages that look like arms (V-49, 67). These pieces are generally more naturalistic than other assongu. Thirty-five pieces have some indication of hands, either modeled or engraved. Two pieces (V62, 70) have both arms and hands engraved into the sides of the body. In one piece (V-69), the arms are bent forward and raised onto the chest, reminiscent of a prayerful gesture.

V.4.3.12 Neck and chin: Forty-five pieces have an indentation between body and head which creates a neck (V-23, 57). The neck is generally very short. Twenty-five pieces have some sort of chin or boundary between face and neck or body (V-23, 27, 45).

V.4.3.13 Mouth: Except for three pieces, all assongu in the sample have mouths. The figure in plate V-68 has no mouth apparent, but the piece is very badly eroded and may once have had a mouth. Those in plates V-63 and V-71 are not particularly worn, but neither figure has a mouth.
The mouths occur in two basic types: prognathous (projecting forward from the face) or grooved. No real attempt is ever made at portraying lips. Sixty-five pieces have prognathous mouths; seventy-nine are grooved.

In seven of the assongu in the sample, the ends of the mouth turn upward to form a smile. This is very slight in five of the examples (V-9, 50), and pronounced in two (V-70).

V.4.3.14 Nose: Typological classification of noses among human assongu proved difficult for two reasons: First, because assongu are "washed" with kaolin and water, projecting parts of the sculptures tend to wear away as they get older; second, noses have often been broken off. Thirty-two sculptures have no nose left, though many bear evidence that a nose was once present.

Among the sculptures that still have noses, sixty-one have large noses (V-7) and seventy-nine have small ones (V-20, 44). Twenty-four pieces have high-bridged ("hooked") noses (V-9, 22). In four pieces, the nose is a simple ridge between the eyes (V-57, 76). Sixty-two pieces have nostrils which are pierced through to the interior of the head.¹

V.4.3.15 Eyes: Four eye types were discerned. Cowrie (or coffee-bean) eyes, which are added to the core of the piece and project from the surface are most common, being present in 82 pieces (V-4, 69). The other three eye types are all gouged out of the surface as tiny, punched

¹ My method for testing this was to insert the end of a paper clip into the nostril. They are often 2 cm. deep, or more. In pieces where noses are broken off, these "nostril holes" are often still apparent.
holes (14 pieces; V-57, 59), deep depressions (20 pieces; V-22, 73), or slits (19 pieces; V-5, 23).

Three **assongu** in the sample have tiny holes punched very close to either side of the nose; these may be either eyes or nostrils. Since none of these pieces (V-9, 29, 35) has both eyes and nostrils, the identity of the features is necessarily ambiguous.

One figure's face (pl. V-53) has deep depressions where the eyes would normally be. The slits on either cheek, slightly above the mouth, may be nostrils, or indications of facial scarification. If they represent the latter, however, this would be the only such example in the sample.

In two pieces (V-31), the eyes are different. The right one protrudes, and the left one is grooved.

V.4.3.16 Ears: Fifty-one **assongu** in the sample have no ears at all (V-16, 30). Fifty-one pieces have ears that project from the sides of the head, either as simple crescent-like bosses (V-7, 8) or as bosses which have ear canals pierced in them (V-24). These holes are pierced through to the interior of the head, rather than through the fleshy bottom of the ear. Therefore, they could not be earring holes.¹

One hundred twenty-six pieces in the sample have holes for ears, either combined with projections (38 pieces; V-38), as shallow holes (10 pieces; V-15), or deep holes (27 pieces; V-19). Twenty-five heads

¹ There is no apparent correlation with female sexual characteristics either.
are pierced completely through along a channel running between the ears.¹ Twenty more pieces are possibly pierced through the head, but the holes have been blocked by kaolin, probably as a result of ceremonial washing.

V.4.3.17 Headdress: Thirty-three of the human assongu are so damaged that no discussion of headdress is possible. Forty-three pieces are plain-headed. Generally, the undecorated heads are round (V-30). However, the head of the figure in V-47 tapers upward, with a dimple at the crown, and that of V-46 is concave on top, like a bowl. Of these plain-headed figures, three have male genitals; sixteen have breasts, though some of these are small enough to be called nipples; it seems there is a correlation between plain-headedness and maleness.

Among the 95 pieces that have elaborate headdresses, three basic types prevail: grooved, crested, and tufted. Eleven pieces have a groove running across the top of the head, creating two "lobes" (V-10, 11); one piece has two horizontal grooves. Five pieces have a vertical groove running from forehead to crown (V-6); one piece has two of these.

The heads of thirteen pieces taper to a high, horizontal crest, which is either plain and blade-like (V-9), curved forward toward the face, creating a "bonnet" (V-37), topped by a row of small tufts (V-5), creating a "crown", or flanked by large tufts fore and aft. At times, the crest resembles an Akan women's hairdo which is common in wooden sculptures from the region, and also appears in mma and ba (V-43; 

¹ The method of testing this was the same as for the nostrils: a wire was inserted into one ear. In 25 pieces, it passed through the head without resistance.

Six pieces have vertical crests. In one case the crest is flanked by multiple horizontal striations (V-28).

Fifty-five pieces in the sample have tufted headdresses. These include a single, bun-like tuft (V-81), a single tuft surrounded by a ridge (V-30), and pieces with two, three, four, five, six, seven, ten, or thirteen tufts (V-14). The tufts can be horn-like projections (V-22), or small knobs (V-14, 33).

Returning to the question of sexual identity and hairdo, I found a weak correlation between femaleness and elaborate hairdos. The criteria used were the hairdo and breasts. Only seven of the figures have female genitals. Of these, five have elaborate hairdos, but the number of pieces involved is not sufficient for the results to be conclusive in any way. Of the 95 pieces that have elaborate headdresses, 50 have breasts. Among those 50 which have tufted hairdos, 26 have breasts; among all other types of hairdos, of which there are 45 examples, 24 have breasts. In each case, slightly over half of the pieces appear to be female.

Three pieces in the sample (V-62, 65, 66) appear to be wearing hats: the head is topped by a flattened plate which has a dome-like projection at the center. All three pieces were a part of the same collection (M.N.C.I. 63-2). The figures in plates V-62 and V-65 are morphologically very similar in other ways, and may be by the same hand. Plate V-66 has much more naturalistic detail than the other two. Three other pieces from this same collection (V-55, 61, 64) appear to have combed, straightened hair. These three pieces may be by the hand
that sculpted plate V-66. Finally, two pieces in the sample have no headdress, but an animal lies on top of the head with legs outspread, facing forward (V-25, 27). These two pieces were collected in 1958 and 1963 respectively, but are so morphologically and stylistically similar as to probably be by the same hand.

**V.4.3.18 Hole in base:** Most human *assongu* have a hole in the center of the base; only 27 have no hole at all. Forty pieces have a tiny hole, as if the sharpened end of a stick had punctured the clay. Thirty-eight pieces have a medium-sized hole, about a centimeter in diameter and depth. Forty-one pieces have a large hole in the base, deep enough to insert the end of a man's finger, and twelve pieces are hollow, the body only a thin shell around a central cavity. None of the figures with feet has a hole in its base, nor do any of the animals, though one quadruped (V-56) has a clearly marked anus. Examination of the Abidjan sculptures reveals no correlation at all between sex and bottom-holes: different-sized holes are distributed randomly among the various headdress types, and among breasted and non-breasted figures. However, there is a correlation between hollowness and one particular style of *assongu*, which I have designated "ghostly" figures: hollow-eyed, crested types. Four sculptures in the sample are of this type (V-13, 22). The two figures that are topped with animals (V-25, 27) also have this ghostly aspect; both of these are hollow, as well.

I have already mentioned (p. 244) that Grottanelli felt the hole in the bottom of the piece was for stabilizing during firing. Certainly, a sculpture with a hole pierced in the base would be much less likely to crack than a solid piece during firing. However, the holes
apparently have iconographic significance, for I was repeatedly told during interviews that the hole is the "anus" of the piece.

V.5 Style

This discussion of style is divided into four parts. One contains a stylistic analysis of the assongu I have seen (V.5.1), while the second presents a discussion of personal styles, or individual sculptors' hands which are apparent therein (V.5.2). The third part contains a stylistic discussion of the pieces Grottanelli published in 1961 (V.5.3), and the fourth, the pieces that I saw in the villages (V.5.4).

V.5.1 Stylistic analysis: As Grottanelli has pointed out, assongu are very small sculptures, modeled by hand with very simple tools. As such, they incorporate summary representation, and thus are difficult to analyze stylistically. Moreover, because many have been washed regularly, causing the pieces to be quite eroded, stylistic analysis is often impossible; some of the pieces have been reduced to mere lumps of clay with almost no surviving features. Apart from this, the pieces in Abidjan represent works of considerable stylistic variety and can be placed into classifications based on aspect and/or conceptualization of the figure. From my analysis, the Abidjan collection contains seven distinguishable styles of assongu: (1) cowrie or "coffee bean"; (2) headed cylinders; (3) geometric; (4) ghostly or haunted; (5) naturalistic; (6) grotesque; (7) fluid or dancing.
The cowrie style appears most frequently among the 129 stylistically analyzable pieces. It is present in 40 sculptures. The style is characterized by a short-bodied, large-headed figure, with cowrie-shaped eyes and mouth. If ears are present, they are holes in the head. The arms, when present, are wing-like appendages, either horizontal or vertical. Navel and breasts can be present (though not necessarily so); they are more often present than absent. There is no apparent correlation between headdress style and sex in the figures, beyond what has already been discussed. The headdress can be absent, crested, tufted, or grooved. Plates V-1 and V-28 show good examples of the style. In a variant form, the sculpture is very small, and the features are reduced to nubbins (V-16).

The headed cylinder (29 pieces) and geometric (28 pieces) are the next most frequently occurring styles. The headed cylinder is characterized by a cylindrical body which has no features, or reduced ones. Breasts and navel are either absent, or tiny lumps. When arms are present, they conform to the shape of the cylinder (V-14). A "neck" separates the head and body in all cases, and the head is often modeled in great detail (V-23, 54). These are not to be confused with the cylindrical "warrior" rods, which have no features at all, and are stored horizontally in shrines.

The geometric style is characterized by a great simplicity of form. The whole sculpture conforms to a geometric shape, either

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1 These small pieces apparently do not represent "children". I heard no mention of children in discussions of assongu with the Akan.
cylindrical or bell-like. Features are often simple grooves, engraved into the surface of the piece. Plates V-48 and V-34 are examples of the two types. In a variant of the geometric style, the head becomes a high, wide horizontal blade, either unmarked (V-8, 9) or crowned with tufts (V-18).

The haunted style exists in four variants, three of which are characterized by deep, hollow eyes. The first variant is a cylindrical figure with very deep holes for eyes and ears (IV-13, 22). As already discussed, these figures are all hollow. The second variant is a human head which has deep, hollow eyes and ears, and an open-mouthed animal splayed out on top of the head (V-25, 27). Like the first type, these are hollow.

The third variant of the haunted style is a small figure with rounded body; rudimentary, wing-like arms; hollow eyes; an open, beak-like mouth; and a tufted headdress. Figures of this type all have a bat-like look (V-52, 76). They also tend to have breasts; this, in combination with the headdress, makes them apparently female. Only one piece of this type in the M.N.C.I. is hollow; the others have medium or deep holes in their bases.

The fourth variant of the haunted style exists in two examples (V-79). The figure is bell-shaped, with a deep hole in the bottom and rudimentary, wing-like arms (these were not classified with the geometric figures because their primary aspect is haunted). The head is plain, with a deep, open mouth that gives the piece a "hooting" aspect. Small eyes are punched on either side of a large nose. One piece has small holes for ears; the other has small projections with canals.
Ten of the figures in the sample incorporate much more naturalism than the others, either by inclusion of more anatomical detail such as free-hanging arms, or feet and legs (V-61, 66, 67), or in gesture and the detailing of the head (V-49, 50). They are naturalistic by comparison with other assongu, rather than in the traditional sense of the term.

The styles appearing least frequently are those which I will call the grotesque and the fluid or "dancing". The grotesque style is characterized by a very large-headed figure which has large, protruding features. These are modeled of a very coarse, granular clay, which erodes and breaks easily. Several pieces in the M.N.C.I.'s collection which cannot now be stylistically classified were probably once grotesque figures (V-41, 42). The best-preserved example of this style is in pl. V-21. The piece has a large lump below the mouth which may be a chin or navel. The same feature is present in a fragment as well, and it appears only in the grotesque figures.

The fluid or "dancing" style designation derives from the fact that all the figures have a curved vertical axis. This is usually a simple curve in which the figure leans either right or left (V-24), but it can be _shaped (V-57). Figures in the fluid style are small and delicately modeled.

V.4.2 Personal styles: Nine individual sculptors' hands are apparent among the assongu in the M.N.C.I. In addition to having a consistent modeling technique, each sculptor apparently limited herself to one particular style of figure. Because of this, there is a necessary
overlapping of the discussions in this and the previous section. The individual styles are as follows:

**Hand A** (V-8, 9, 29): The sculptor of the "blade" subdivision of the geometric style. All three figures were acquired at the same time, in the M.N.C.I.'s collection 58.2. All three are cylindrical figures with flared base and "navel"; projecting ears with ear canals; a narrow, grooved mouth; and, a narrow, high-bridged nose with a hole pierced on either side. These holes may be either nostrils, or eyes. The head leans sharply back, tapering to a high, horizontal blade. The modeling is refined. The pieces are of an evenly-fired, fine-grained clay, which was probably polished with a stone before firing. All three pieces also have a tiny hole in the base. The figure in plate V-35 is probably also by the same hand. It was part of the same collection and all stylistic and morphological characteristics are the same, except for the headdress, which is tufted.

**Hand B** (V-20, 24, 36, 44): All four pieces are in the fluid style, leaning backwards and either right or left. The figures were part of the same collection as those by Hand A. This sculptor treated the figure as a cylinder with flared base; all but the one in plate V-36 have medium-sized holes in the bottom; that in V-36 is very small. All four pieces have a large, umbilical lump. All but the one in V-36 also have high lumps which are either breasts or arms. The ears project from the head, with pierced canals. Eyes and mouth are simple holes pierced in the face; the nose is small
with nostrils. The headdress is a horizontal ridge with two or more bladelike, transverse tufts. Sculptures by this hand all have a "cute" quality which distinguishes them from most other assongu.

Hand C (V-60, 70): This hand produced what I term the fourth variant of the haunted style. Both pieces were part of the same collection, originally designated 63.2. They are rather crudely-modeled of a fine, beige/gray clay. The most characteristic feature of the hand is the deep, open mouth, pinched outward at the edges. The eyes of both pieces are uneven.

Hand D (V-57, 63): Produced two figures in the fluid style, of a very fine, dark gray clay. Both figures were originally part of collection 63.2. Neither figure has a hole in the base. Both have attached, wing-like arms. Plate V-63's figure has very big breasts; V-57's has none. The vertical axis of both figures is an "s"-shaped curve; this is much more pronounced in V-57. They both have a ridged nose, with small eyes punched close to either side, and holes for ears. V-57's mouth is grooved; V-63 has no mouth at all. The headdress of V-57 is a horizontal groove, and that of V-63 is tufted. These figures may be a pair, male and female.

Hand E (V-49, 67): Both figures were originally part of collection 63.2. Both lean slightly to the left of vertical. The bodies are conical in shape, with tiny, rudimentary feet at the bottom. Both have indications of navel and breasts; the one in plate V-49
probably has male genitals, but this is difficult to determine. The figure in plate V-67 has a prominent vagina and a protruding belly. Both figures have narrow, sloping shoulders, arms attached to the body, and free-hanging hands. The heads of the two pieces are almost identically modeled, except that the ears of V-67 have canals, whereas those of V-49 do not. Plate V-49 has no headdress, whereas V-67 has a tufted headdress. Like the pieces by Hand D, these two were probably modeled as a pair. In both pairs, the female figure is about one-half centimeter taller than the male.

Hand F (V-51, 52, 75, 76): This sculptor works in the small, bat-like variant of the haunted style. All four pieces were part of collection 63.2. The most characteristic feature of this sculptor's style is the treatment of the head, with its beak-like mouth, deep, hollow eyes, and narrow nose. The nose is actually a ridge between the eyes, rather than being an independent feature. Other elements in common are a short, rather round body with arms having hands and a very deep hole in the base of the piece. Three of the pieces are of a dark-gray clay; the one in plate V-76 is orange-brown in color and has a vagina, which the other pieces lack.

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1 This is the only example I found where holes pierced in ears of assongu might be earring holes, rather than ear canals, and thereby indicators of femaleness.

2 I was told by a Baulé sculptor that she always modeled her female figures larger than the males, "because that is the way things are." The same phenomenon has been remarked upon by Anita Glaze in Senufo figure sculpture (1975: 25).
Hand G (V-58, 61, 64, 66): All four pieces were originally part of collection 63.2, and are all large (the smallest is 12.8 cm. high; the largest 14.6 cm.). These are the most naturalistic group of assongu in the collection at the M.N.C.I. Three of the pieces have very large feet with engraved toes. The base of the figure in plate V-58 is broken; it too may once have included feet. The pieces have naturalistic torsos, which include arms, hands, genitals and buttocks. Only fragments of buttocks remain on one (V-58), one has a vagina (V-61), and two (V-64 and 66) have penises. These pieces have no bottom holes, but two have clearly marked anuses (V-61 and 64). All pieces but one (V-66) have navel and breasts; it has breasts only. All four pieces have shoulders and a neck. Compared with other assongu in the sample, all the pieces by this hand have remarkably naturalistic proportions, as well. The head/body ratio is between 1:3 and 1:4, compared to the 1:2 or 1:1 characteristic of most assongu. The modeling of the heads is naturalistic, with nose, ears, eyes, and mouth presented in clearly recognizable human configuration. The most distinctive characteristic of this hand is the headdresses of the pieces, which look either like straightened hair (V-61) or a hat (V-64, 66).

Hand H (V-25, 27): Working in a variant of the haunted style, she includes both human and animal forms in the same sculpture. Both pieces were originally part of collection 58.2. They are both modeled of a fine, gray clay and are almost exactly the same size. In both cases, the piece is essentially a human head with a
quadruped animal splayed out on top, facing forward. The smaller has three lumps below the head which presumably represent breasts and a navel, while the other has only an umbilical lump. Both pieces are hollow. The animal's maw is open in both pieces, also. The only difference between them is the angle of the head, which is vertical in the smaller, and slightly tilted to the right in the larger. Again, this is apparently a couple.

Hand I (V-59, 62, 65, 70): There are four pieces in the "headed cylinder" style, all part of collection 63.2. Each body is bell-shaped, with small lumps for navel and breasts. Arms and hands are engraved on the sides of all four pieces, the fingers reaching to the base of the piece. The head is round, above a neck depression, with projecting ears, a small mouth, and large, cowrie-shaped eyes. The headdress looks like a flat plate with a large knob at its center; this is broken in one (V-59); it is as if the figures were wearing hats. All four pieces have very deep bottom-holes, and one is almost hollow (V-70).

V.5.3 Grottanelli's pieces: Six of the eight pieces that Grottanelli collected in Ekebaku are illustrated in his article on assongu. One of these, figurine no. 2, is very heavily coated with kaolin, and not stylistically identifiable. Pieces I have seen in shrines in Ivory Coast are similarly coated; this indicates no special function for the piece, but that it is in active service, and therefore washed regularly. The other five pieces can be classified within my seven stylistic types. His figures 1 and 4 are both headed cylinders. Figurine 3 is geometric,
figurine 5 is grotesque, and figurine 6 is in the cowrie style. Two hands are apparent among Grottanelli's pieces: one hand modeled figurines 1 and 4; the other did figurines 5 and 6. Two of Grottanelli's assongu, figurines 5 and 6, are morphologically different from any of the assongu in Abidjan, in that their faces are concave, rather than convex. Otherwise, the figures illustrated by Grottanelli are similar in form to the pieces in the M.N.C.I.

V.5.4 Pieces seen in the field: Most of the assongu I saw and photographed in shrines were easily identifiable typologically, but so heavily coated with kaolin as to be stylistically unidentifiable (as discussed on the previous page: see plates V-86 and 91). In one shrine in Bafia, however, there was a pair of figures in a clearly identifiable style (plate V-89). Both are "headed cylinders", quite large and delicately modeled, with flat, upturned faces. Presumably, the figure on the right is the female or wife, judging from the tufted hairdo. Unlike some other pairs of assongu, the female in this case is smaller than the male. Neither this hand nor the hands that sculpted Grottanelli's figures are represented in the collection of the M.N.C.I.

In his description of figurine no. 6, Grottanelli notes that the headdress may represent a sort of hat. This "hat" is similar in form to the "hats" on several of the pieces in Abidjan (V-62, 65, 66, 70) (1961: 51). Four of the pieces Grottanelli collected in Ghana are currently in the University Museum, Philadelphia (their acquisitions nos. are 65.18. 1-4).
V.6 Manufacture and Function

The information for this section of the chapter was gathered during 1979, in the course of guided, open-ended interviews with village elders, sculptors of assongu, practitioners of Assongu, and "experts" on the subject; these interviews took place in the following regions and villages, with the individuals indicated.

Abouré

Bonous - elders, shrine viewed
Moosou - elders and practitioner

Agni/ Ndénéié

Abengourou - king and elders, shrine viewed

Agni-Sanwi

Aby - elders
Assouba - elders; shrines viewed
Bafia - potter/sculptors; shrines viewed
Krinjabo - elders and potter/sculptor

Eotilé

Grand Bassam - elders and expert
Ngaloa - expert; shrines viewed

Nzima

Azuretti - elders
Port Bouet - elders

No one seemed at all hesitant to discuss Assongu. Unlike mma and ba, whose practice was veiled by the secrecy of royal funerals and had been abandoned some time ago, the cult of Assongu is thriving in

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1 In all the villages I visited, the elders were consulted first. They either discussed assongu with me themselves, or sent me to an "expert", who was in some cases a potter/sculptor, and in others a "féticheur", or priest of Assongu. In Ngaloa, the expert was an older man; in Grand Bassam, it was a very old woman, who is renowned as the most powerful practitioner of assongu in the country.
southeastern Ivory Coast without official discouragement,¹ except from missionaries, whose voice is no longer official in any way. This section contains all the information I gathered on the manufacture and function of assongu. I have divided the information into three sections: discussion of manufacture (V.6.1), discussion of function (V.6.2), and discussion of inconsistencies and contradictions (V.6.3).

V.6.1 Manufacture: All but two of the Abouré, Agni and Eotilé with whom I discussed assongu agreed that the sculptures are modeled only by women.² These can be either potters or specialists in the modeling of assongu. Only the Nzima disagree with this, holding that assongu are sculpted by both men and women who are specialists in assongu.³ While I was told by some that the figures were sculpted of any potting clay, provided it is light in color ("white"), I was told in Bonoua and Abengourou that the figures must be made of clay taken from the Aby lagoon. This was because the deity originated there.

In all cases, the form of the sculpture is determined by a specialist, rather than the sculptor, unless the specialist is also a sculptor of assongu. The specialist who identifies Assongu also

¹ Government officials, particularly the police, have no reason to discourage the practice of Assongu, for it acts as a powerful agent of social control. During interviews, it was often called the "gendarmerie indigène" (native police force) by its practitioners, particularly as it discourages theft and black magic.

² F.J. Amon d'Aby disagreed with this, stating that women made mma, and men make assongu. The king of Ndénié agrees with the Nzima, that both women and men make assongu.

³ Grottanelli's article, based on research among the Nzima, implies that men make assongu in Ekebaku, rather than women (1961: 49).
determines the form its representative sculpture will take. I was told in Nzima and Abouré country that assongu are always humanoid in form. My Agni sources disagreed on this point. One sculptor in Krinjabo told me that they are always humanoid; the king of Ndéné said that they can represent animals, particularly simians. Among the Eotilé, both human and animal forms appear. The only animal assongu that I saw in shrines were in Eotilé country.

The sculptor models the figure according to the specialist's directions and fires it. It is then coated with kaolin and "planted" in a shrine. The sculpture takes effect only after this implantation, when initial offerings are made to the spirit.

V.6.2 Function: An assongu is sculpted for an individual when the spirit is identified as a force acting on that person's life. This can happen at any time, even before birth. If a pregnant woman gets sick after eating one of several forbidden foods of Assongu, then the child in her womb has Assongu, and a figure is made. If a child is born with closed fists and a white substance is found inside the fist, this is also interpreted as a sign of the spirit's presence. At any time in a person's life, the chronic presence of blood in vomit, urine, or feces is interpreted as a sign of Assongu's presence. The chief of

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1 These are called "totems" of Assongu. They are not totems in the strict anthropological sense of the term, because they have no ancestral or family associations.

2 This is a fairly common occurrence in newborn children. The substance is called vernix; it is a sebaceous excretion that protects the infant's skin in utero and collects in body crevices after birth.
Azuretti told me that children are especially vulnerable, and those who are born dead or die shortly after birth belong to Assongu. In Port Bouet, I was told that Assongu can attack a person's sex organs and will destroy them if not propitiated.¹

I was told that anyone can be claimed by Assongu, though the spirit limits itself mostly to the Akan. Even white men can feel its effects. Specialists in Bafia told me of a white man in Maféré whose nose had been destroyed by Assongu. Apparently, proximity to assongu can cause the spirit to claim a person. They often warned me to keep away from assongu shrines, lest the spirit claim me.²

Conversion to Christianity does not protect a person from Assongu, though Christian converts destroy their sculptures before they are baptized. An old Christian woman in Moosou told me she had destroyed her assongu in 1926, but she still believed in the power of the spirit. Children born to Christians are not exempt from attack by the spirit, either.³

Though the effects of an attack by Assongu are always the same, it attacks for two different reasons. On the one hand, it is claiming a

¹ This aspect of Assongu corresponds with Amon d'Aby's assertion that Assongu is the god of syphilis (1960: 39).

² Grottanelli was told the same thing. He was warned to be particularly careful because he had two small children, who are more susceptible to the spirit's influence than adults (1961: 48).

³ I received no information of the relationship between Assongu and Islam, but I assume the two are not incompatible. Bravmann (1974) established that other animist traditions coexist with Islam in the Akan region; the case is probably the same for Assongu.
devotee. When the proper steps have been followed and a statue has been planted in a shrine to the spirit, bad symptoms disappear. On the other hand, it can attack a thief or practitioner of black magic. In this case, it is acting on a request from one of its devotees, although the devotee does not necessarily have to have been the object of the malefactor's attack. Once the wrong is undone, the symptoms disappear.

There is no apparent logic to Assongu's choice of devotees, just as there is no logic to serious diseases. The spirit selects its targets seemingly at random. It is most prevalent among the Eotilé, but even there not everyone has Assongu. I was told in Grand Bassam, however, that all Eotilé participate in the annual offerings to Assongu, "just to be sure". This corresponds to Amon d'Aby's description of the annual celebration by all the Eotilé (1960: 38-39).

The proper response to an attack by Assongu depends upon the reason for the attack. In all cases, one must consult an expert, a priest or priestess of Assongu. If the attack has been in defense against wrongdoing, it suffices for the malefactor to confess, repent, and right the wrong. If something has been stolen, it must be returned to its owner. If black magic has been practiced, it must be neutralized.

If Assongu is attacking to claim a person as a devotee, a statue must be sculpted, and regular offerings made to propitiate the spirit. When a child is attacked, his parents perform this function until he reaches majority. Each adult who has Assongu must maintain a sculpture in its shrine. Most of the people with whom I spoke said that assongu are cared for after an individual's death by members of his immediate family. The chief of Azuretti disagreed, holding that the spirit's
force cannot be inherited.

After an assongu has been installed, it must be properly cared for. This involves maintenance of the sculpture in its shrine, the regular presentation of offerings to the spirit, and the observation of dietary restrictions. As long as the necessary procedures are followed, Assongu protects its devotees. If they are neglected, it renews its attack, which can eventually kill the devotee.

Assongu are kept in small shelters built of sticks and roofed with thatch or corrugated tin. Some shelters are walled, but most are open on all sides, with one principal side facing the village (see plate 84). Each shelter contains from one to several dozen assongu on a platform, all facing the principal side. These "houses" are arranged in small courtyard groups, like the human dwellings which they parody. They are kept in the bush, not far from the village. Thus, they are close enough to be easily accessible, but they do not share the village space, and can therefore be avoided by children, to whom they are dangerous, as well as women who are having their menstrual periods. Human blood is taboo to Assongu.

In Port Bouet, an Nzima community which was originally a small fishing village but has become a suburb of Abidjan, assongu are now kept in courtyards, because the bush no longer exists. In Abengourou, where the town has grown up around the king's assongu shrine, the small building is isolated in the middle of a large, uncultivated field (see plate V-82). In effect, a small parcel of bush has been created within the city. Thus, while the sculptures are traditionally kept in the bush, they can now be kept within the village, if necessary.
An individual's assongu is always kept in his native village. If a devotee moves away from the village, he returns periodically to care for them. At times when it is impossible, for example, when he is overseas, they are cared for by an agent. One doesn't necessarily have to be near his assongu to benefit from its protection, though this is preferred.

All my sources but one agreed that assongu must be visited once per year, just after the yam feast. According to the chief of Azuretti, the visit takes place twice per year. I heard this visit referred to as a "washing" and a "renewal", both of which are also associated with the yam feast, and with the other terracotta traditions of the region. The devotee dresses in white for the visit and rubs kaolin on his arms and face. Specialists in Assongu, who consult with the spirit frequently, always dress in white. I was told in Ngaloa that the color white associates Assongu with healers and proves that it is a benevolent spirit. When I visited the assongu shrine of the king of Ndénié, the man who addressed the sculptures was not dressed in white, but he removed his cloth before addressing it. He was thus, in effect, "naked", having divested himself of the trappings and dirt of the village.

During the visit, assongu is washed with a solution of water and kaolin and offerings are made to the spirit: sheep, chickens, cocks, eggs, and gin or rum were the offerings most frequently mentioned. The

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1 I remarked in Ngaloa that some assongu shrines have small piles of coins in front of the statues, and was told that people who cannot visit their assongu regularly often send money rather than the traditional offerings.
sculptors in Bafia said that they prepare a meal near the shrine, offer some of it to the *assongu*, and then eat the rest of it themselves. The spirit is asked to bring prosperity and protect against evildoers during the coming year.

In my visits to *assongu* shrines, I saw partially full bottles of rum and gin on the platforms and on the ground in front of the shrines, and quantities of animal bones, either on the platform or attached to the support posts of the shrines. Bowls in the shrines often contained bits of food. These, I was told, were the remains of previous offerings. At these shrines, the sculptures themselves were coated only with kaolin, and the shrines were quite neat in appearance. In Abengourou, the procedure is apparently different. Here, the sculptures themselves were coated with dried blood and feathers, and the interior of the shrine was very messy. My offering of gin was poured directly on the sculptures after the spirit had been addressed. After this, everyone present drank some of the gin, and the bottle was placed in the shrine.

Two foods are forbidden to all devotees of Assongu: gumbo and snails. Other foods may also be proscribed, depending on particular circumstances which were never explained to me. These are: elephant, white monkey, black monkey, crab, shark, ray, carp, and corn. An issue of blood following the ingestion of one of these foods can be interpreted as a sign of Assongu's presence in a person. The foods are avoided by devotees in order to avoid a recurrence of bleeding.

A final note on the function of Assongu is taken from Amon d'Aby (1960: 38). In his discussion of "Asom'", he described the installation
of Assongu's chief priest. The man is always the traditional chief of the Eotilé and before he becomes the chief priest he must divorce all of his wives but one, who must be past menopause.¹

For the installation, all the adult members of the tribe (Eotilé) go to Assongu Island in canoes. They remove their clothing, wash themselves, and paint their bodies with a kaolin solution. Dressed only in white loincloths, they proceed to the center of the island, singing the praises of the spirit. At the center of the island, they encounter a rock which looks like a man with three scars on each cheek.² From here, a priestess takes the candidate to a flat rock where an ancient boa lies coiled. This is the seat of the god. The candidate sits on the boa, and this act makes him the "sacred priest of Asom'" (p. 38).

V.6.3 Inconsistencies and contradictions: Several inconsistencies in the data I received on manufacture and function of assongu are minor, and appear to be unimportant. Such things as the number and sex of figures sculpted for an individual, whether or not animals are represented, the "totems" of the spirit, and whether men or women model them, could all represent local differences in the tradition, which is fairly widespread. The meaning and function of assongu are not significantly changed by these differences.

¹ This corresponds to the notion that menstrual blood is taboo to Assongu.

² According to Amon d'Aby, this signifies that the spirit was once a captive. However, he never expands on this point. I was unable to find any other information on this aspect of Assongu.
Another possible source of minor differences is the source of information itself. One Nzima source in particular varied from others on several points, but this person was not a specialist in Assongu, nor is he a devotee of the spirit, though three of children are. It was this source who told me that assongu are not cared for after a devotee's death, and that they are visited twice a year, rather than once. These individual contradictions should probably be disregarded in an analysis of the tradition's meaning and function. However, they are useful, in that they demonstrate an essential point: Assongu is a living tradition, whose practice encompasses a large area which is not dominated by any one culture. Therefore, variations in the tradition are to be expected.

Two contradictions do seem significant. These both relate to the basic attitude towards Assongu, which is markedly different among the Eotilé and in Ndéné. The southern Agni, the Aboure, and the Nzima all view Assongu as an intrusive element in their cultures, a fearful spirit which was imposed on them by the Eotilé. This attitude seems particularly strong among the Nzima, where informants constantly stressed the awful manifestations of the spirit's power. One Nzima source at first reacted very hostilely, refusing to discuss the tradition at all. He said that it was the Eotilé's fetish; if I had spoken to them, I knew all there was to be known. "For the Nzima, it comes, and it kills, and that's all there is to it".1 In contrast, the Eotilé

1 Interview with the chief of Azuretti: 9/21/79. Once he decided to speak with me, however, he was very straightforward in discussing the tradition.
view the spirit more as a protector than a destroyer. At times, their attitude towards the spirit seems to border on affection, as when they refer to it as "our Assongu".

In Abengourou, the attitude towards Assongu is much less emotional. The king expresses neither positive nor negative feelings towards the spirit; he uses it for protection against witchcraft and theft, much as he might obtain a Moslem amulet for the same purposes. His relationship with Assongu appears to be wholly pragmatic, with no emotional associations at all. Moreover, the king refers to the statues which represent Assongu as mma, rather than assongu, the term used in the South. This contradiction in terminology may result from the fact that mma are not a part of traditional Ndéné funerary customs. In Ndéné, mma apparently designates all humanoid terracotta sculptures made and used in Sanwi. Thus, both mma and assongu are included under the same rubric.

I believe that these differences in attitude stem from historical facts: Assongu originated among the Eotilé, and is a more recent arrival among the other groups. In Ndéné, its arrival is documentable to the 1950's. The spirit's function has been different among the Eotilé from its very beginnings, and thus their attitude is different. But this is a subject to be taken up under iconographic concerns, specifically in section V.7.2.

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1 The use of Islamic amulets by Akan rulers and warriors for protection has been common for some time. They are apparent in some mma, as is discussed in Chapter III, and also in royal regalia and war dress of the Akan (Bravmann, 1974: 89, 94; Cole and Ross, 1977: 16-20, 24).
V.7 Iconography

My discussion of iconography will be divided into two parts: a discussion of formal elements in *assongu* which probably have symbolic meaning (V.7.1), and a presentation of the cultural information which can be inferred for a study of the form, function, and manufacture of *assongu* (V.7.2).

V.7.1 Symbolism: The formal elements of *assongu* that undoubtedly have symbolic value are the following: the hole in the bottom of the pieces, the coating of kaolin on most pieces, the use of animal imagery, the posture and gesture in the pieces, the deeply pierced nostrils and ear canals of many pieces, and the greatly varied aspect of the sculptures. Unfortunately, information on the specific meanings of most of these symbols is not available. Very little cultural research has been done on the groups around the Aby Lagoon in southeastern Ivory Coast; extant publications are few and incomplete. Some information on symbolism in the sculptures was obtained during interviews, but this was a subject most informants were either unable or unwilling to discuss. Therefore, most of the statements in this section are based on inference, rather than on documentable facts.

The information I received on holes in the bases of *assongu* has already been mentioned in the typological analysis (section V.4.3.18). Everyone who discussed the sculptures with me assured me that this was *assongu*'s anus. When I asked why the holes are of different sizes, I was told one of two things: human beings are different, and so, therefore, are their *assongu*; or *assongu* are sculpted according to specific
instructions from the clairvoyant or priest, which may include the "anus". The same holds true for pieces that have no anus: the clairvoyant didn't specify that the piece should have an anus, so none was included. Discussants would not elaborate further on this point. It seems, however, that the anus is significant not only because it makes a sculpture complete in many instances, but that completeness is a relative notion, related in this particular case to the anus. Interestingly, wooden sculptures attributed to this region do not generally have anuses. The anus undoubtedly related to one of Assongu's commonest functions, power of affecting and preventing rectal bleeding.

Kaolin is ubiquitous in the ceremonies related to Assongu. It is used for its cleansing and purifying qualities. Sculptures are "washed" with kaolin at each visit, as are devotees. Lumps of kaolin are occasionally visible in shrines, priests of Assongu are born clutching bits of "kaolin", and they wear only white, the color of kaolin. The whiteness stands in direct contrast to the bloody, heated nature of the spirit's attacks, and helps control them. It also counteracts the practice of sorcery, one of Assongu's chief targets, which is associated with darkness and uncleanness. Kaolin "cools" both

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1 No study of Akan wooden sculptures from southeastern Ivory Coast has yet been published. Monica Blackmun Visona is currently doing doctoral research on Akyé wood sculpture.

2 During interviews, cleanliness and purity were cited as necessary conditions for a visit to Assongu.

3 Interestingly, kaolin is widely used in the West as an antidiarrhea medicine (as in Kaopectate). However, kaolin was never mentioned to me as a medicine used to cure diarrhea caused by Assongu.
Assongu and its devotees, and its regular use keeps the spirit's negative forces under control.

The animals used in assongu imagery are chosen either for their strength and fierceness, as the elephant and leopard, or for their protected nature, as the snail or hermit crab (leopards are portrayed with open muzzle, which emphasizes their fierceness). Attacking and protective: these two very opposed animal natures reflect the dual nature of Assongu: the spirit protects its devotees against thieves and sorcerers and attacks malefactors when they threaten. I was unable to identify either type of animal assongu with any function: one shrine in Ngaloa (pl. V-85) contained both elephant and snail assongu under the same shelter. While only the Eotile and Agni/Ndéné mention animal forms of assongu, there is probable evidence that the M.N.C.I.'s animal assongu are from Nzima sites. I was unable to associate either type of animal with any specific group.

Both posture and gesture could have iconographic significance in assongu, but my questions on this point received the same equivocal responses as most questions on meaning in the sculptures: they are sculpted as they are, because of specific instructions from a priest. As I have suggested for mma and ba, the majority of assongu may lean back on their bases so that they will be more visible, as they are placed on low platforms. The lateral contortion of a figure, as in plate V-57, may likewise have symbolic meaning. It is also possible that these characteristics are stylistic, rather than symbolic.

The same may be true for gestures portrayed in assongu, particularly since most pieces cannot gesture, having no arms. However, the
placement of the arms in one instance (V-69), where the arms are brought forward onto the chest, and in V-77 and V-81, where the hands are on the belly, could easily have symbolic meaning, though none was specified during field interviews.

Some assongu have deeply pierced holes for nostrils, ear canals, or both. In most cases, these are packed with kaolin, which undoubtedly results from repeated washing of the sculptures. These deep holes certainly help to keep assongu from breaking during firing, but not all pieces have the holes. Thus, they may also have some symbolic significance, perhaps to help "cool" the sculpture by providing access to its interior. It is tempting to associate these holes with bleeding diseases of the nose and ears, but my informants steadfastly warned against inferring any direct symbolism of this kind in the figures. None of the anuses, which also provide interior access and are possibly related to rectal bleeding, is packed with kaolin. Thus, this interpretation of the holes' meaning appears far from certain.

Finally, the great variety of aspect among assongu may have symbolic meaning. Figures in the haunted style and grotesque style in particular seem to reflect the more frightening aspects of the spirit's power. However, these can be present in shrines alongside figures in the other styles, and my attempts to associate horrific appearance with Assongu's destructive powers, and sweetness of expression with protectiveness, were met with the same resistance as my queries about direct medical symbolism. There is apparently no correlation between style and function in assongu; according to my sources, any assongu can protect or destroy, regardless of its appearance. This reinforces the
notion that Assongu's power resides not in the sculptures, but in the spirit that they represent.

V.7.2 Cultural Implications: An examination of the available information on Assongu permits some tentative conclusions about Akan culture and its history in the area around the Aby Lagoon.

First, the Eotilé were apparently one of the Akan groups that were already installed on the shores of the lagoon when the great Akan migration of the early 18th century took place. Part of their defensive reaction to the invasion was the creation of a new tradition, called Assongu, which they then imposed on the other Akan groups. This is reflected in the basic attitude towards Assongu, which is positive among the Eotilé and negative among the other groups (with the exception of the king of Ndéné, whose attitude is strictly pragmatic). Eotilé culture is giving way increasingly to Agni and Nzima domination of the lagoon. Most Eotilé now speak Agni, and Emile Etchoua, who is interested in preserving Eotilé language and culture, is recording the language for fear it may disappear. However, the Eotilé are renowned in the region as powerful practitioners of magic, so their cultural influence is still quite strong. Assongu appears to be the chief agent of this influence. It holds power of life and death over many people in the region and could eventually dominate there.

This last possibility is the more likely, because the tradition is spreading rather than disappearing. For years, prophets and

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1 Interview in Ngaloa: 8/23/79.
missionaries have attempted to wipe it out. The Prophet Harris destroyed assongu shrines when he passed through the region in 1914. Grottanelli (1961:49) reports the destruction of shrines by another Ivoirian prophet, called "dix-sept", in the 1950's. I was told of a third prophet, called Atcho, who ordered shrines destroyed recently in Bonoua. Devotees hid their sculptures and rebuilt the shrines after he left. Converts to Christianity are required to destroy their sculptures and shrines, but continue to believe in the power of the spirit.

Today, Assongu is discussed openly, it is not discouraged by any authority because of its powers as an agent of social control, and shrines are visible near many villages in the region. The tradition has also survived the transition from rural to urban Africa. Rather than risk the consequences of ignoring Assongu, the Akan have brought its shrines into urban compounds when there is no longer any bush. The king of Ndénié provides a documentable example of the tradition's spread in recent years. All indications are that Assongu is growing in influence, not dying out.

I was not able to determine when terracotta sculptures were first modeled to represent Assongu. Interviews with the Agni, Abouré, and Nzima lead me to believe that the spirit and the sculptures arrived among them at the same time. However, this is probably not true for the Eotilé. Several informants mentioned that Assongu was first represented by a shell, a protective symbol, and some assongu are still shells today. Exactly when did the figures in terracotta first appear?

1 Interviews in Moosou 9/8/79, and Azuretti 9/21/79.
Jean Polet has conducted archaeological excavations in Eotilé territory at a site which he tentatively dates to the 17th or 18th century and judges to be Akan (Polet 1976: 121-139). He found evidence of skillful clay modeling in pottery and pipes, so figures could have been made. He found no evidence of figural sculpture in terracotta, however. This does not necessarily mean that the art was not practiced at the time. The site is but one of many, and the absence of terracotta figurines there only proves that none were found in this dig. Moreover, the site may predate the appearance of Assongu, for it is east of the place where the tradition originated.

While the Agni and Abouré brought *mma* with them from Ghana, there is no such tradition among either the Eotilé or the Nzima. There are formal, iconographic, and functional similarities between *assongu* and *mma* which could indicate connection between the two traditions, however; this will be taken up in chapter VI of this study. It is possible that the first terracotta *assongu* were inspired by Agni and/or Abouré *mma*. It is also possible that *assongu* developed independently as a terracotta tradition among the Eotilé. Until more definite archaeological information is available on the origins and spread of the two traditions, neither case can be proved.

V.8 Conclusion

*Assongu* are small terracotta figures, sculpted to represent a spirit (and its power), which resides on an island in the Aby Lagoon. These figures are made by women sculptors of the Agni, Abouré, Eotilé, and Nzima, and represent a spirit which is also called Assongu. The
spirit, and possibly also the sculptures, first appeared among the Eotilé in about the year 1700, then later spread to the three other groups. More recently, it was taken to northern Agni country at the request of the king of Ndénié. The tradition is still very strong today, and it appears to be spreading.

Assongu can represent either humans or animals, but the extant majority are humanoid. Most figures include a cylindrical body and a head with human features. Most figures also have a hole in the base, but some also have arms, legs, hands, genitals, and other anatomical details. Assongu exist in a wide variety of styles and forms. The sculptures are kept in small shrines in the bush, near the living compounds of devotees. A sculpture is washed with kaolin at its installation and at annual visits thereafter, these usually connected with the new yam celebration.

The spirit Assongu has two functions. It protects against theft and witchcraft by punishing wrongdoers, and it claims devotees, seemingly at random, among the peoples that live around the Aby Lagoon. If Assongu claims a person, that person gets an illness that causes him/her to bleed. If the person should not respond by having a sculpture made and installed, that person will die. The same diseases affect thieves and sorcerers who are attacked by Assongu and only repentance brings remission of the bleeding or other diseases.

Symbolic interpretation of formal elements in assongu is difficult, because supporting literary and ethnographic evidence is not available in most cases. However, the evidence presently available on the tradition indicates that it originated among the Eotilé, in response to
invasions by Akan and Frenchman. Today, it survives because its devotees fear the consequences of abandoning it, and officials have allowed it to survive as it is a very effective agent of social control.

No definite evidence is yet available on the origins of the sculptural tradition, or of its possible relationship with royal portrait traditions of the Agni and Abouré. Further archaeological research in the region around the Aby Lagoon may clarify this point.
Plate V-1
M.N.C.I. D250
(58.2.6)
Plate V-2
M.N.C.I. D251
(58.2.7)
Plate V-3
M.N.C.I. D256
(58.2.13)
Plate V-4
M.N.C.I. D258
(58.2.15)
Plate V-5
M.N.C.I. D259
(58.2.16)
Plate V-6
M.N.C.I. D261
(58.2.18)
Plate V-7
M.N.C.I. D263
(58.2.20)
Plate V-9
M.N.C.I. D271
(58.2.31)
Plate V-10
M.N.C.I. D272 (front)
(58.2.32)
Plate V-11
M.N.C.I. D272 (side)
Plate V-12
M.N.C.I. D275
(58.2.36)
Plate V-15
M.N.C.I. D281
(58.2.43)
Plate V-16
M.N.C.I. D283
(58.2.45)
Plate V-19
M.N.C.I. D293
(58.2.45)
Plate V-20
M.N.C.I. D294
(58.2.60)
Plate V-21
M.N.C.I. D296
(58.2.62)
Plate V-22
M.N.C.I. D297
(58.2.63)
Plate V-24
M.N.C.I. D308
(58.2.78)
Plate V-26
M.N.C.I. D314
(58.2.87)
Plate V-27
M.N.C.I. D315
(58.2.90)
Plate V-28
M.N.C.I. D324
(58.2.105)
Plate V-29
M.N.C.I. D325
(58.2.106)
Plate V-30
M.N.C.I. D327
(58.2.109)
Plate V-32
M.N.C.I. D330
(58.2.112)
Plate V-33
M.N.C.I. D331
(58.2.114)
Plate V-34
M.N.C.I. D334
(58.2.117)
Plate V-35
M.N.C.I. D335
(58.2.118)
Plate V-37
M.N.C.I. D339
(58.2.123)
Plate V-38
M.N.C.I. D343
(58.2.128)
Plate V-39
M.N.C.I. D346
(58.2.133)
Plate V-40
M.N.C.I. D348
(58.2.135)
Plate V-42
M.N.C.I. D350
(58.2.137)
Plate V-43
M.N.C.I. D352
(58.2.139)
Plate V-44
M.N.C.I. D353
(58.2.140)
Plate V-46
M.N.C.I. D359
(58.2.148)
Plate V-47
M.N.C.I. D366
(58.2.160)
Plate V-49
M.N.C.I. D372
(63.2.1586)
Plate V-50
M.N.C.I. D374
(63.2.1578)
Plate V-51
M.N.C.I. D375
(63.2.1679)
Plate V-52
M.N.C.I. D376
(63.2.1680)
Plate V-53
M.N.C.I. D378
(63.2.1584)
Plate V-54
M.N.C.I. D379
(63.2.1586)
Plate V-56
M.N.C.I. D383
(63.2.1591)
Plate V-57
M.N.C.I. D385
(63.2.1593)
Plate V-58
M.N.C.I. D389
(63.2.7598)
Plate V-59
M.N.C.I. D390
(63.2.7599)
Plate V-60
M.N.C.I. D391
(63.2.1600)
Plate V-61
M.N.C.I. D392
(63.2.1601)
Plate V-62
M.N.C.I. D393
(63.2.1602)
Plate V-64
M.N.C.I. D395
(63.2.1606)
Plate V-65
M.N.C.I. D396
(63.2.1607)
Plate V-66
M.N.C.I. D398
(63.2.1610)
Plate V-67
M.N.C.I. D401
(63.2.1615)
Plate V-68
M.N.C.I. D402
(D402)
Plate V-70
M.N.C.I. D406
(63.2.1625)
Plate V-71
M.N.C.I. D408
(63.2.1627)
Plate V-72
M.N.C.I. D409
(63.2.1628)
Plate V-74
M.N.C.I. D411
(63.2.1631)
Plate V-75
M.N.C.I. D412
(63.2.1633)

D412
Plate V-77
M.N.C.I. D417
(63.2.1647)
Plate V-78
M.N.C.I. D418
(63.2.1642)
Plate V-79
M.N.C.I. D419
(63.2.1643)
Plate V-80
M.N.C.I. D422
(63.2.1647)
Plate V-81
M.N.C.I. D423
(63.2.1648)
Plate V-82

Abengourou - Assongu shrine of the
King of Ndéné
Plate V-83
Abengourou - Assongu shrine of the
King of Ndénié – interior
Plate V-84
Ngaloa - Assongu shrines viewed from the village
Plate V-85
Ngaloa - Assongu shrine interior
Plate V-86
Ngaloa - Assongu shrine interior
(detail)
Plate V-87
Ngaloa - Assongu shrine interior
(detail)
Plate V-88
Ngaloa - Assongu shrine
Plate V-89
Bafia - Assongu shrine
(interior)
Plate V-90
Bafia - Assongu shrine
(interior)
Plate V-91
Bafia - Assongu shrine
(interior)
CHAPTER VI: THEIVOIRIAN TRADITIONS COMPARED

A comparative analysis of the three major terracotta traditions of the Ivoirian Akan should indicate similarities and differences among them which would help clarify the history of terracotta sculpture in the region. In pursuit of this goal, I will present formal, functional, and iconographic comparison and contrast of mma, ba, and assongu in the following sections: formal (VI.1); manufacture and function (VI.2); and iconographic (VI.3); with my conclusions (VI.4).

VI.1 Formal Comparison

The three sample groups of mma, ba, and assongu are compared and contrasted according to the following criteria: height, sex, posture, presentation of figure, holes in the figure, treatment of surface, torso, upper extremities, neck, head, headdress, decorations on the body, and accoutrements. In cases where a criterion does not apply to a sample, such as upper extremities in ba and body markings in assongu, the absence of the characteristic will be noted.

The average height of assongu is just over 4 1/4 inches; of ba, 11 3/4 inches; and, of mma, 13 inches. Thus, mma and ba are much closer in size than assongu, which are about one-third the average size of the others. All mma and ba are anthropomorphic; most assongu are also.
The criteria necessary for determining sex were different for each tradition. For *mma*, a combined analysis of headdress, breasts, and genitals indicated that the sample included about the same number of male (16) and female (18) figures. However, when these same criteria were applied to all the fragmentary figures studied, females outnumbered males by four (100 pieces) to three (74 pieces). Three pieces in the sample were unidentifiable by sex, as were twelve in the total number of pieces.

The sex of *ba* was determined by presence or absence of beard and holes for earrings. According to this, females outnumbered males by three (30 pieces) to one (10 pieces).

Three separate criteria were used for determination of sex among *assongu*: genitals, breasts, and headdress. According to headdress type, females outnumber males by about two (91 pieces) to one (42 pieces). The variation is greatly narrowed when the other two criteria are examined. Of 175 pieces in the sample, fewer than half (77) have breasts; among pieces with genitals, seven are female and five are male.

This information permits one definite conclusion: in all three traditions, the number of female figures is greater than the number of males. This difference is greatest among Akyé pieces, where females outnumber males by three to one.

Posture was not determinable for most *ba*, because most pieces have no anthropomorphic body. Two pieces in the sample have anthropomorphic feet and legs, and both are standing. A similar problem was encountered among *assongu*. All figures but one are apparently
standing, but only a small number (8 of 175) have legs. The figure in plate V-78 may be seated, but the missing legs make the posture of the figure ambiguous.

The distinction between standing and seated figures among mma is much clearer. Among 36 Agni mma, 28 are standing and eight are seated, all on stools. Of eleven Abouré figures, three are standing and eight are seated, but only one of these on a stool. In my opinion, the numerical majority of extant seated figures among the Abouré mma that I studied is probably misleading. According to information I received from both Agni and Abouré sources, the seated posture was reserved for portraits of kings and queenmothers, while members of the court were portrayed standing. Seated figures should therefore be fewer in number than standing figures.

The presentation of figures is different for each tradition, and different between Agni and Abouré mma. A majority (23 of 37) of Agni mma have cylindrical bodies which have rudimentary arms; the figure is cut off below the navel. Only one of the Abouré pieces was presented thus; eleven other figures originally had both arms and legs. Two Agni pieces, and possibly one Abouré piece, consist of a head and neck on top of a hollow pot. All the Akyé pieces are presented in this manner, except that two have rudimentary legs below the pot. Assongu are generally cylindrical or conical, and most have neither arms nor legs (three pieces have feet, 68 have wing-like arms, and 23 have more naturalistic arms). Though each tradition is distinct in its conventions of figure representation, there is more morphological similarity between mma and assongu, where most figures approximate a partial or
complete human anatomy. Ba, in contrast, have only a head and neck above an abstract sculptural form. While this pot may be a body metaphorically, its form is clearly dissimilar from mma and assongu.

Most mma are solid, though a few have a narrow hole running up through the center of the figure, apparently where an armature was used. All ba but one are hollow, and could function as goglets. Most assongu have a hole in the base of the figure. This hole varies from very small to very large, and it is apparently symbolic, representing the anus of the piece. Assongu is the only tradition in which a majority of the figures have holes, and in which these holes have known meaning. The figures themselves are solid, like most mma. As with presentation of figure, there is morphological similarity between mma and assongu, and ba appear to be distinctly different.

Assongu are covered with a coat of kaolin while in use. All but seven of the assongu in the M.N.C.I. show some traces of kaolin. The assongu in the royal shrine in Abengourou are encrusted with sacrificial patina, and six of 175 pieces in Abidjan show possible evidence of this type of patination. The surface treatment of mma and ba is the same, and different from that of assongu. Figures are coated with a dark substance which is either a slip or paint. Most figures originally had a dark, polished surface. This is eroded in most museum

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1 Because most mma do not have this feature, it was not included in the analysis. Some sculptors apparently used a stick or palm-branch as an armature for the figure.

2 The identification of this piece as a ba is questionable, since the piece may well be an Abouré mma (cf. p. 48).
pieces. One ba in the M.N.C.I. retains traces of kaolin on the surface; no other mma or ba I have seen show any traces of kaolin at all.

Ba have no torsos. Thus, they were not included in this part of the comparison. The torsos of mma and assongu have a number of morphological similarities. They are either cylindrical (both traditions), or conical (assongu only). Torsos of Abouré mma are modeled much more naturalistically. Genitals are present in few figures; when they are present, they are tiny. Most figures have navels. Female figures have breasts, but these are small in most cases. Decorative scarification on the torso is common among female Agni mma, in greatly varied and complex patterns. Agni mma portraying males occasionally show scarification on the torso, but in much less complex patterns than the female figures. Most Abouré figures I have seen have no body scarification. When scars are present, they are few in number and in simple arrangements. Assongu show little evidence of torso scarification. This could be due to the fact that they represent a spirit, which should not have these "human" markings.

Only one ba in the sample has arms. In contrast, all mma (except some of the few which are morphologically like ba) have arms. These are usually rudimentary and outstretched. Larger figures, both Agni and Abouré, occasionally have long arms which hang down at the sides of the torso. More than half of the assongu in the M.N.C.I. have arms of some sort. Most of these are wing-like projections on the torso. Twenty-three assongu in the sample have discreet arms, which hang down at the sides in most cases. Like the arms of mma, those of assongu are rudimentary. A minority of figures in both traditions have hands
and fingers, either modeled or etched into the clay of the arms.

Most assongu have no neck at all. Among the 175 pieces in the M.N.C.I., 45 have necks, which are usually no more than indentations between the head and torso. Agni mma generally have long, cylindrical necks, ringed with striations. A minority also have keloid decorations on the neck, in diagonal patterns on one or both sides. Abouré mma have shorter, more naturalistically shaped necks. None of the Abouré pieces I examined had prominent neck rings, though two had fine horizontal striations.¹ Three of six had diagonal patterns of keloids, like those on Agni mma. Most ba, like most Agni mma, have long, cylindrical necks. A minority of these are striated; most are decorated with keloids, usually in diagonal patterns on both sides of the neck.

In all three traditions, the head is the most detailed element of the sculpture, and there is considerable formal variation among heads within each tradition. Certain morphological characteristics occur with notable frequency in all three traditions. Most significant is the positioning of the head atop the shoulders. The heads of most mma and assongu lean back, so that the face is turned upward. This is most prevalent among Agni mma, and least prevalent among ba, where less than 1/3 of the pieces in the sample "look" upward. Predictably, faces are much more naturalistic and detailed among mma and ba than assongu. Patterns of scarification on the faces and necks of mma and ba are often similar. In all three traditions, a small minority of figures are

¹ Some of the pieces photographed by Neveux in Moosou did have prominent annulations on the neck, but this trait appears to be far less common among Abouré mma than among their Agni counterparts.
portrayed with eyes closed. Certain morphological traits appear uniquely within each tradition, such as the extremely high foreheads of most Agni mma, the pierced ears of most ba, and the holes pierced through the heads of some assongu.

Headdresses occur with great variety of form in the two portrait traditions. I identified eleven types of headdress among mma and nine among ba. Some headdress types occur in both traditions. In both mma and ba, the individualized headdress is apparently an important element of portraiture. Headdresses of assongu are much less varied in form, existing in only three basic types. Most headdresses apparently represent tressed hair among mma, and all represent tresses among ba. This is less clear for assongu. The tufted headdresses of many assongu probably represent tressed hair, but the crested forms are less clear. Agni mma are the only tradition which incorporates hats or crowns that have apparent symbolic meaning. I was unable to draw conclusions about the gender of figures from an examination of the headdresses in any of the traditions.

Decorations on the body are most frequent among Agni and Aboure mma, where figures occasionally wear amulets, bandoliers, and decorative jewelry. Only two of the ba in the M.N.C.I. may be wearing decorative jewelry around the neck; none wear amulets. However, most were apparently once adorned with real earrings. None of the assongu I have seen wear any ornaments at all. Like the headdresses, jewelry may be a significant part of the individualization of figures in both portrait traditions.
Finally, accoutrements are present in the form of furniture, musical instruments, and ceremonial weapons in a minority of mma. Like the previous two traits, these are apparently part of the portrait image. No accoutrements are present in ba, but there is no place for them on the figures. Two assongu have animals atop their heads. The significance of this is uncertain, but it undoubtedly relates to the power symbolism of assongu.

VI.2 Manufacture and Function

All three traditions share two characteristics of manufacture: they are modeled by hand, of a fine-grained clay, and they are modeled principally, if not exclusively, by women who also work as potters. My impression is that fewer potters were able to make mma and ba than assongu, because of the special skills required for sculpting portraits. Assongu are modeled according to the directions of a priest of the spirit, and there is no apparent secrecy surrounding their modeling.¹ In contrast, mma and ba are modeled in great secrecy. The sculptor isolates herself from the village while she works and models the portrait according to an image which appears in palm oil, after she invokes the spirit of the deceased. Contact with others during this time would be extremely dangerous for the sculptor (and, one assumes, the other person) because she is in close contact with spirit forces during the process. In short, it appears that the modeling of mma and ba is dangerous because it involves sensitive communications.

¹ One potter in Bafia even offered to model an assongu for me while I watched her.
between humans and spirits, whereas the manufacture of assongu is viewed as a simple mechanical process.

The three traditions have one common function: all three are visited once per year, at the time of the yam harvest, and are offered a ceremonial, propitiatory meal. This ceremony takes place in the mmaso and at assongu shrines. The location of the ceremony for ba was not mentioned during interviews. The food from meals offered to mma and ba is thought to increase human fertility, through the powers of the spirits of the dead. Food offered to assongu has no such power. Assongu shrines can be visited and offerings made at other times of the year as well.

Mma and ba are portraits, used as substitute corpses at ceremonial funerals, and maintained as commemorative effigies. Assongu are physical manifestations of a spirit force, but have no portrait or commemorative associations. Human sacrifices were offered to mma and ba; animal sacrifices are offered to assongu. However, the spirit Assongu causes bleeding when it attacks a victim or devotee. Partly because of their association with human blood and bleeding, all three traditions are accorded great respect. Prolonged contact with both mma and assongu is avoided, for fear that spirits represented by the sculptures "will seize you". For this reason, mma and assongu have their own "villages", which are near human habitations, but isolated in the bush. Ba were apparently considered less dangerous than the other two traditions. They were kept in the village, and there was no mention during interviews of danger from too much contact with the sculptures. Because of their powerfulness, assongu and mma were also
viewed as protectors of their villages. This function was not men­tioned for ba.

VI.3 Iconographic Comparison

For all three traditions, the iconographic analysis was the most difficult to complete, for two reasons. First, literary and cultural information on Ivoirian Akan cultures is extremely scanty. Second, informants seemed loath to discuss symbolic form in the sculptures. Despite these difficulties, certain conclusions about symbolism in the sculptures became apparent as the study advanced, and some of these provide evidence for inference of relationships among the traditions.

For example, the portrait aspects of mma and ba consist largely of individualization of head, facial markings, and headdress. Both mma and ba are referred to as "photos" of the deceased, in reference to this individualization. It is therefore considered very accurate in both cultures. In addition, both traditions illustrate a close, caring relationship between the living and the spirits of deceased royals. The former provide the latter with annual ceremonies of commemoration, and the latter in turn increase fertility among the living (through the consumption of foods offered to them in these meals). Finally, both are royal traditions, indicating class-structured societies. The importance of this "royal" status for the sculptures seems more important for mma than for ba, reflecting the greater importance of royalty in Agni and Abouré cultures.

In most cases, iconographic symbolism in assongu appears to be different from that of mma and ba. The sculptures incorporate symbols
of power and its control, rather than prestige. There may be iconographic similarity between mma and assongu, in that posture and gesture are apparently symbolic in both traditions. I was able to identify some meanings for these characteristics among mma, but unable to do so for assongu.

VI.4 Conclusions

Formal, functional, and iconographic comparisons and contrasts among the three major Ivoirian traditions permit a number of conclusions; there are listed according to how they are shared among the three.

1. Characteristics of all three traditions: It goes without saying that all three traditions are Akan, from southeastern Ivory Coast. All three have terracottas which are primarily anthropomorphic, exhibit an imbalance between male and female figures (with more of the latter), and show a concentration on detail in the head of the figure (with most figures having closed eyes). All three types are modeled principally by women who are also potters. All are visited once per year, around the time of the yam harvest, when a ceremonial propitiatory meal is offered to the figures.

2. Characteristics shared by mma and ba: Both traditions have large figures with long, annulated necks, and elaborately

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1 Aboué mma are different in that their necks are shorter, and not generally annulated. They share all other characteristics in this category.
modeled heads and headdresses. Headdresses and scarification patterns are often similar. Sculptures in both traditions are finished with a dark surface polish. The sculptures are modeled in private, according to inspiration from the spirit of the deceased, a vision of whom is conjured in palm oil. The resultant portraits are believed to be so accurate, they are referred to today as "photos" of the dead. They served in both traditions as substitute corpses during ceremonial funerals, at which time human sacrifices were offered to the spirit of the deceased. Annual meals offered to the sculptures were thought to have a positive influence on human fertility in both traditions. Iconographically, both traditions indicate that Akan portraiture relies mostly on the headdress and facial markings for likeness, both indicate a close relationship between the living and the spirits of deceased royals, and both indicate class-structured societies.

3. Characteristics shared by mma and assongu: Both traditions consist largely of human (humanoid) figures which are relatively complete. Extremities and genitalia are rudimentary in both. Figures are generally nude. The sculptures are solid, and most lean backward, so the face turns upward. Both mma and assongu are accredited great powers, to "seize" the living who venture too close to them, and to protect their devotees. Figures are grouped in "villages" near human habitation sites, in the bush. The grouping of figures parodies groupings in society (family
courtyards for assongu; royal courts for mma). There is
certainly symbolic value to the posture and gesture of mma; the
same may be true for assongu.

Most of the formal characteristics shared by all three traditions
are also shared by wooden figural sculptures of the Akan (the latter,
however, are sculpted by men, rather than women). These appear to be
typical of Akan sculptures generally, rather than specific to the
terracottas. Thirteen major characteristics are shared by mma and ba,
indicating that the two traditions are variants of the larger Akan
tradition of royal commemorative portraiture. This will be discussed
further in Chapter VII.

No major traits are shared by ba and assongu. This indicates that
they are separate traditions, though both share basic Akan traits with
mma. However, the traits shared by mma and assongu deserve comment.
If the obvious stylistic and functional differences between the two
traditions are set aside, the two compare favorably in several impor­tant ways. It is known that the Agni and Abouré brought mma with them
from Ghana; according to tradition, the origin of assongu postdates
the arrival of the Agni in the region of the Aby Lagoon. No figural
terracotta tradition has yet come to light from Eotilé sites which
predate 1700, and assongu originated among the Eotilé. It seems
reasonable to suggest that mma were the inspiration for the first
sculpted assongu: small, humanoid figures, kept in their own "villages"
in the forest outside villages of the living, propitiated annually at
the yam harvest and greatly respected and feared for their power to
protect devotees. In this light, assongu appears as a folkish parody of the royal tradition of mma, or perhaps even as a defense against it. Assongu survived because of its ability to adapt to cultural changes; its model perished through political and cultural inflexibility.
CHAPTER VII: COMPARISON OF THE IVOIRIAN AND GHANAIAN TRADITIONS

Just as a comparison of the three major Ivoirian traditions helped to place them in historical context, a comparison of my data on the Ivoirian traditions with the available information on terracotta traditions of the Ghanaian Akan should help locate mma, ba, and assongu within the greater context of Akan cultural history. This comparison will be undertaken in the following manner: mma, ba and Ghanaian terracotta portrait traditions (VII.1), and assongu in Ghana (VII.2), with my conclusions (VII.3).

VII.1 Mma, Ba, and Ghanaian Terracotta Portrait Traditions

The earliest published report so far discovered on terracotta portraits of the Ghanaian Akan is by de Marees, who visited the coastal settlement of Mouree in 1601. He mentions food and drink placed on notables' graves, and portraits modeled from life in clay of all the members of their courts, "put in a row all around the grave... so that their sepulchres are like a house furnished as if they were alive" (1602: 93b). This establishes that a terracotta tradition existed in coastal Ghana in the early 17th century, one remarkably similar to mma in practice. Both Ivoirian and Ghanaian portraits were done in clay and grouped in court configurations, with food offerings being made.
The major difference between the two is in the placement of the figures: Ghanaian figures were on the grave, while Ivoirian were in the mmaso.

Since de Marees' report, many brief mentions of Ghanaian Akan terracottas and a few extensive studies have been published. I will compare the information drawn from these accounts with my data on the two portrait traditions of the Ivoirian Akan, noting similarities and differences wherever they appear to be significant. The comparison is arranged chronologically, from the earliest reports to the most recent.

Willem Bosman visited the Ghanaian coast late in the 17th century. He reported that earthen images were placed on graves in the region, and that these images were "washed" in ceremonies held one year after the funeral (1705: 232). Like de Marees, he locates the sculptures on graves. The "washing" he refers to is probably the annual commemorative ceremony, held at the new yam celebration.

Jean Barbot was in Africa in 1682, and his journal was published in 1732. In the journal, he mentions chiefs' graves adorned with "several earthen figures or images ... which are washed a year after the burial, when they renew the funeral ceremonies" (Barbot, 1732:285).

After these early reports, more than a century passes before any European mentions Akan terracottas, and when the subject is brought up again, it is missionaries and English colonial officers who do so, rather than Dutch and French commercial agents. Perhaps because these

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1 Garrard (1981: 30) points out that Barbot had recorded a similar description in 1688, in a manuscript preserved in the Public Record Office in London (ADM.7/830A,B; vol. 2, pp. 112-13).
man stayed longer and learned more about the local culture, their
descriptions are much more thorough than those of the 17th and 18th
centuries.

Brodie Cruickshank, a British colonial officer in Akan territory
form 1834 to 1852, published the following description of Akan terra-
cottas in his memoirs:

They also mold images from clay, and bake them. We have seen
curious groups of these in some parts of the country. Upon the
death of a great man, they make representations of him, sitting
in state, with his wives and attendants seated around him. Be-
eath a large tree in Adjumacon we once saw one of these groups
which had a very natural appearance. The images were, some
tawny red, and others of all shades of colours between black and
red, according to the complexion of the originals, whom they were
made to represent. They were nearly as large as life, and the
proportions between the men and women, and boys and girls, were
well maintained. Even the soft and feminine expressions of the
female countenance were clearly brought out. The caboceer and
his principal men were represented smoking their long pipes, and
some boys upon their knees were covering the fire in the bowls,
to give them a proper light. There is no apotheosis of the dead
intended by these representations: they are simply monuments to
their memory like the statues of our own great men. No care is
paid to their preservation after they have been set out for
exhibition, but there they remain until they crumble to pieces.
It is chiefly women who are employed in making these figures

Cruickshank's report is the first that mentions a commemorative por-
trait of the deceased notable, seated in state and surrounded by his
courtiers. This corresponds exactly to my hypothesis concerning the
groupings in Agni and Abouré mma. He makes no mention of graveyards,
but mentions a group of statues beneath a large tree in (near?)
Adjumacon. He also mentions the naturalism which was apparently very
important in Ghana as well as in Ivory Coast, though the figures he
describes are bigger than Agni and Abouré mma. His mention of female
artists, and the deterioration of these effigy courts after their installment also comply with my data on mma.

While traveling in Akan territory in 1874, A.B. Ellis found "a fetish shrine with a number of clay images of men and women, in every conceivable attitude, scattered about the ground ... They were exceedingly well-made, evidently by a native Phidias ..." (1881: 231). He attempted to take some of the terracottas away with him, but his bearers threw them away, fearing retribution by spirits. In his account, both the grouping of figures in different postures and the Akan belief in spiritual forces associated with the figures are similar to Ivoirian mma.

The Reverend Tschopp, a Basel missionary who was in Akan territory in the late 19th century, reported seeing, near Nkwatia, "a great heap of broken pots - the place where people threw the pots belonging to the dead. Further, there was a whole crowd of figurines 30 cm. to 1.3 metres in height, standing or lying, with a scrap of cloth round their necks, and neatly engraved faces" (abstracted in Jenkins, 1970: No. II, 134). Again in this case, the figures were associated with culinary pottery, near the town, and in a state of disorder. The "scrap of cloth round their necks" were probably remains of ceremonial dress, with which the figures were adorned for implantation, as in Amon d'Aby's description of the implantation of Ivoirian mma.

Robert Rattray wrote in the 1920's of a "family pot" (abusua kuruwa) which was used in Ashanti funerals as a container for the hair shaved from mourners' heads. This pot "generally has a lid or cover
which has been fashioned to represent the dead" (1927: 164). The pot was placed along with food offerings in the asensie, or "place of pots", near the grave of the deceased. This abusua kuruwa was installed six days after the burial. Thus, its function is not quite the same as Ivoirian mma and ba. However, in that it is both a container and a portrait sculpture, it seems closer to ba than to mma, which are strictly portraits. It also appears to be closer to ba in that there is no "court" of figures, and the sculptures are made for commoners as well as for kings. There is no doubt, however, that all these commemorative portraits are variants of a single Ghanaian Akan tradition.

Articles on Ghanaian terracottas were published in Man, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society, in 1924 and 1934. Both described terracottas which had been found on the Gold Coast, then donated to museums in Britain. R. Kerr (1924: 32-33) described four heads found in an abandoned graveyard near Sekondi. The heads had been placed on low burial mounds, and the Africans present at their discovery said that they represented dead chiefs and their wives, and that they were sacred. The heads themselves have closed eyes and annulated necks, like Ivoirian mma, but the head is flattened from front to back, to a disc in two cases. The pieces are hollow, and appear to have terminated in a conical base, rather than a body. Because the pieces consist of a portrait head on an abstract base, they are morphologically similar to ba; the base, however, is not a container in these pieces.
Wild and Braunholtz published a description of two heads from Fomena (southern Ashanti territory) in *Man* in 1934 (pp. 1-4). They are almost life-size, hollow, and richly detailed in decoration. No body fragments were found associated with them, but other heads found nearby were associated with limbs and torsos of terracotta. According to Wild's informants, such heads had been manufactured in Fomena until the late 19th century, to be placed on royals' graves. Food offerings were regularly made to the spirits represented by the heads. One of his informants called them *ntiri* ("heads" in Ashanti). Both these and the heads published by Kerr are similar in function to Ivoirian *mma*, but were apparently placed on graves rather than in a *mmaso*. Stylistically and morphologically, they are distinctly different from *mma* of Ivory Coast.

M.J. Field wrote in 1948 of commemorative terracotta portraits made by women in Akim Kotoku. These were modeled in absolute secrecy, for fear that they would represent the likenesses of witnesses rather than of the deceased. This corresponds to the secrecy associated with the modeling of Ivoirian *nnna* and *ba*. He describes their installation thus:

> At the Omanhene's funeral ceremony these images were brought out under great umbrellas in procession, each carried in a huge brass pan. Each image was dressed in rich clothes and some were represented sitting on little chairs. They were placed for a time under palm-leaf awnings in the square and their living friends came and saluted them and bade them farewell. Then they were carried in procession to the *barim* or royal mausoleum. The crowd waved and shouted good-bye with great emotion (1948: 44-45).

Except for the placement under awnings in the public square, this accords almost exactly with Amon d'Aby's description of the
Implantation of Ivoirian mma, quoted in Chapter III.

Another Ghanaian royal funeral was described by Frimpong in 1945, in *Africa*. In this case, the effigy of the Omanhene was displayed, wearing "a gold crown and royal robes adorned with costly jewels, carrying a gold sword of state in the right hand and canopied by two state umbrellas" (p. 83). Again, the installation of the Ghanaian terracotta portrait appears remarkably similar to the Ivoirian.

Davies (1956: 147-151) analyzed several terracotta heads from Ahinsan, and guessed that they were from a pre-Ashanti tradition, which had been interrupted by Ashanti advances in south-central Ghana after 1700. The heads analyzed by Davies are two-dimensional, with applied schematic features and no evidence of bodies. According to Davies, this tradition and the Aowin/Agni tradition (which he refers to as Enchi and Krinjabo) are separate, though both are commemorative portraits of royals (p. 151). The style of his figures is certainly different from that of Ivoirian mma and ba. However, his description of the modeling procedure indicates similarity between the two:

...according to one informant, when a man died, women gazed into a bowl of water at night and modeled heads according to the vision of his spirit (p. 147).

Sieber published discussions of Ghanaian terracottas in 1972 and 1973. In 1972, he limited his discussion to heads and figures from Kwahu, in east-central Ghana. Stylistically and morphologically, Sieber's Kwahu pieces fit the Ghanaian, rather than Ivoirian pattern. Further, he reports that they were usually deposited on graves after ceremonial funerals. As Sieber describes the portrait qualities of
Kwahu figures, however, they are similar to Ivoirian mma and ba; "women's ears are pierced, a man may have worn a beard, a chief a particular crown, and a priest most certainly would have had plaited hair, indicative of his office" (1972: 176-77).

In his article of 1973, Sieber surveyed the terracotta finds and sites in Ghana which were known to him at that point, and stated that more thorough archaeological and ethno-historical investigations would provide data for a better knowledge of the cultural history of the Akan. Most important to this study, Sieber cautioned that Western scholars must assume a relativistic attitude when considering Akan terracottas as portraits:

Obviously a naturalistic likeness was neither intended nor sought, for the context of use - public display in a funeral hut erected in the middle of the village - and the context of visual association - one or two attributes of the deceased - were sufficient to establish an adequate set of identifying marks (1973: 72).

As discussed by Sieber, the criteria for portraiture in Ghanaian terracottas resulted in images which were described as "photographs" of the dead by his Akan informants, just as Ivoirian mma and ba were described to me by Abouré, Agni, and Akyé elders.

Ameyaw's article on Kwahu terracottas in Ghana Notes and Queries (1966: 12-17) restated most of the observations made up to that time, and added comments on the recent history of Ghanaian terracottas which correlate with an observation I have made about Agni mma. He noted that recent figures are very different in style from those of the 18th and 19th centuries, when stylistic conventions were unaffected by the cultural influences of colonialism.
Calvocoressi reported on a Ghanaian site at Adansi Ahinsan in 1969. He had excavated the site in 1968, and found a large quantity of both solid and hollow heads. Unlike Ivoirian *mma*, the Ahinsan heads exhibited considerable stylistic diversity. However, like Ivoirian *mma*, they had rudimentary arms and legs, sex organs (breasts) were present on only one piece, and the headdress was the most detailed element of all pieces. Calvocoressi found no evidence of burials at the site, and concluded from this that these figures had been deposited in a "place of pots", rather than a cemetery.

Bellis excavated three Ghanaian sites in Twifo Hemang in the late 1960's and published his results in 1972. He identified two types of figures: large, naturalistic portraits, which he assumes to have been complete figures, and small schematic figures ("attendants") which were attached to ceremonial pots, and modeled from the waist up only. The smaller figures represented women only: the larger ones, both men and women (pp. 95-96). Information gathered by Bellis on the tradition in Twifo included the following: figural pottery was done by men rather than women (who made all domestic pottery); these figures were called *nsodea* ("things of ashes"); and, they were sometimes modeled from life, being made only for important individuals. The tradition was abandoned in Twifo in the mid-19th century (pp. 145-151).

Preston's writings on Akan terracottas (1968, 1981) have different orientations. His study of 1968 concentrated on "style regions" of Ghanaian terracottas, basically following the guidelines laid down by Sieber after his work in Ghana during the early sixties. He mentions
(pp. 13-14) that larger figures seated on Akan-style stools or Western chairs, clearly represent important personages, that bandoliers indicate priestly status (p. 38), and that erect seated posture with hands on knees is a "typical pose assumed by the Akan leadership class" — (p. 38). These incongraphic observations all correspond to my conclusions about posture and decoration in Ivoirian mma. In a more recent essay, Preston makes the following observation about style in Ghanaian terracottas:

In traditional African societies the conservative attitudes of patrons as well as the system of apprenticeship to senior artists tended to produce artistic styles in which a group consciousness prevailed over that of the individual. However, among the Akan terracotta artists, a vital tension existed between tradition and innovation resulting in some highly personalized versions of the group style (1981: 31).

This same generalization could be made about Ivoirian ba and Abouré mma, where stylistic diversity is remarkable. However, the stylistic uniformity of Agni mma indicates that the "group consciousness" or Agni tradition apparently prevailed over innovative stylistic impulses among sculptors of Agni mma.

The text of Cole and Ross's *The Arts of Ghana* relating to terracottas (1977: 117-130) was based on already-published sources, and includes information already discussed in this chapter. Four of the plates in the catalogue indicate similarities between the Ivoirian and Ghanaian traditions. The oil lamp (figure 262) is morphologically similar to ba, in that the container takes the place of the lower half of the figure. However, the figure has arms and breasts, which were present on only one ba I studied (pl. IV-30), and the lamp is very
unusual among Ghanaian terracottas; very few anthropomorphic oil lamps are known, and their function is uncertain. Though they are certainly ceremonial in function, it is not known whether they are used in funerary rites, nor is it known whether they are portraits. Cole and Ross also published two photographs from the Basel Mission Archives which illustrate asensie ("places of pots", figures 254-255). Similar to photographs of mmaso and mmawo in Ivory Coast, these are populated by a great jumble of figures, in no apparent arrangement. Unlike the Ivoirian sites, however, the asensie contain mostly heads; only one full figure is apparent (figure 254, right). This corresponds to their comment (p. 125) that in Ghana, "...heads alone comprise the majority of ceramic sculpture". Another illustration (figure 265) shows terracotta portraits of a chief, queenmother, and town crier, painted naturalistically, dressed in ceremonial robes, and surrounded by court regalia. This corresponds approximately to Amon d'Aby's description of the display of Agni mma before implantation, except that the figures are seated on real asipim chairs, rather than in brass vessels.

Coronel wrote a dissertation on Aowin terracottas in 1978, and published an article on the same subject in 1979.1 Hers is the most complete study to date of a Ghanaian terracotta tradition, and merits careful attention in my study. As Coronel has pointed out, Agni and Aowin are variants of the same name;2 there is a tradition of common

1 The article restates her arguments of 1978 and will not be discussed here.

2 Personal communication: January, 1980.
ancestry among the leadership elites of Sanwi and Aowin (1978: 86-89) that persists to this day.¹ The Aowin speak Brisa, which is in the Agni/Baulé dialect cluster of Kwa languages (Westermann and Bryan 1952: 78-81). This locates them closer culturally to the Ivoirian Akan than to the Ghanaians. The annual festival of new yams, called eluelié in Aowin and elwé-lié in Agni, is an important event of the ritual calendar in all Akan groups. As Coronel points out (pp. 94-95), the festival is remarkably similar between the Agni and Aowin. It falls at exactly the same time in the traditional calendar of both groups, and rituals and historic reenactments are also the same between the two. All this, combined with their tradition of common ancestry, "reaffirms the fact that these two people were once joined together" (p. 95).

The similarities between Aowin, Agni, and Aboure terracotta traditions are numerous. All refer to terracotta portraits as mma,² and to the place where they are kept as the mmaso (mmawo in Aboure). They are the only three Akan groups who use this terminology. Coronel's evidence points to Aowin terracottas' having been both standing and seated full figures with accompanying court regalia (1978: 16). Most if not all Aowin mma were sculpted by women (p. 22). Coronel remarks

¹ Nana Amon Ndoufou III, the recently deceased king of Sanwi, was born in Aowin territory. The man chosen by Sanwi elders to succeed him was recently rejected by the Ivoirian government because he was from Ghana, and was also an officer in the Ghanaian army (personal communication: Jonathan Burmeister; October, 1980).

² According to Coronel (1978: 14) mma in Aowin means "figure".
(p. 49) that symmetricality and frontality were apparently very important in Aowin mma, as I have noted for Agni and Abouré pieces. Moreover, the Agni and Aowin appear to have been the only Akan groups who sculpted musicians in terracotta (p. 49).

Coronel makes no mention of portrait heads alone; apparently, she found no evidence of them in Aowin. She states that smaller terracotta animals and objects may once have been part of other figures (as sword hilts, for example). Like Agni mma, Aowin mma often have jewelry modeled into the clay of the figures (p. 28). Also like Agni and Abouré mma, Aowin figures were originally placed in the mmaso as effigy courts. Coronel found evidence of this at Nkwanta, an Aowin site where the figures in the mmaso are still arranged this way today (pp. 35-41). Her case from Nkwanta is the only documented evidence of such grouping of terracottas for any Ghanaian group, though many literary sources refer to it. Tradition at Nkwanta holds that these figures were sculpted by an Agni woman from Krinjabo, but the style of the figures is not at all similar to that of Agni mma; they are larger, hollow, and more naturalistic than Agni pieces.

Differences between Aowin and Agni traditions are fewer. There is considerable stylistic diversity among Aowin terracottas. Coronel identified five basic style groups among the pieces she studied (pp. 57-58). In contrast, Agni mma are characterized by rigid stylistic uniformity. Most Aowin pieces are hollow; most Agni pieces are solid. Most Aowin pieces are portrayed with eyes open; most Agni pieces have closed eyes.
The larger, hollow, more naturalistic Aowin mma are morphologically similar to some of the Abouré mma I have seen. They are not stylistically similar, but the stylistic diversity which I noted among Abouré mma was also noted by Coronel among Aowin terracottas.

Coronel concludes that her "style 2" of Aowin mma, characterized by pinched-out features, facial scarifications, and elaborate, individualized coiffures, is closest to the style of Agni mma, and that these probably represent the style of terracotta modeling which arrived with the political refugees from south-central Ghana, around 1700 (p. 95). She feels her "style 1", characterized by more natural, larger figures, was indigenous to the Agni/Aowin area, practiced there before the 18th century, and superceded by "style 2" (pp. 96-97). She associates the style and size of Abouré figures (note, p. 105) with her "style 1".1

It is possible that Coronel's theory of the overlay of styles is correct. In this case, the larger Abouré figures and Coronel's "style 1" figures would represent a tradition which was replaced by smaller, more stylized figures (her "style 2", the predominant style of Agni mma). A major difference, however, is that Coronel's "style 2" figures are hollow, whereas Agni figures are solid. Moreover, her "style 2" figures look more like folkish imitations of Agni mma than like authentic Agni mma. The only Aowin figures which are said to

1 She does not identify those as Abouré pieces, though she cites Veit (1952), who does identify them as such. She apparently assumes that they are Agni mma.
have been modeled by a woman from Krinjabo, those of Nkwanta, are her "style 1", which is distinctly different from the style of known Agni pieces.

If Coronel's "style 1" was, as she contends, the "indigenous style", practiced in Western Akan territory before the political migrations of the early 18th century, then the same case might be made for the naturalistic Aboure mma. In this case, the sculptor of the Nkwanta figurines could have come from Agni or Aboure country. However, no information has yet come to light from the Ivoirian side of the border to indicate that such is the case.

Garrard's paper on the origin of Ghanaian terracotta traditions (1981) is the most recent study devoted to the subject. He examines all the available archaeological and documentary evidence, and concludes (p. 7) that Akan commemorative terracotta portrait sculptures probably date from the mid-16th century at the earliest, and that they originated on the coast, rather than in the interior of Ghana. Moreover, this tradition is far from universal among Akan groups (he points to its absence among the Ashanti, Brong, Baulé, and northern Agni), and there is no single term used to designate the terracottas (p. 10). He concludes that terracottas are part of an introduced cult, rather than an integral element in Akan tradition, and argues

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1 The paper has not yet been published. I am indebted to Mr. Garrard for sending me a copy of the manuscript.

2 In light of this, the labeling of most Ghanaian terracottas as "Ashanti", a common practice until recent times, should be reconsidered.
very convincingly that Portuguese statues of saints, first introduced in the late 15th century in Akan territory, could have been the original inspiration for the terracotta portraits (pp. 16-28).

Garrard's hypothesis is fascinating, and his arguments are well-stated and carefully documented. However, his paper has no direct bearing on this study. All my sources indicate that the Ivoirian terracotta traditions were brought by the ancestors of the Agni and Abouré, who came from Ghana in the early 18th century. By the time the tradition reached Agni and Abouré country, it was thoroughly Akanized.

VII.2 Assongu in Ghana

Very little has been published to date on assongu, and all these sources have already been discussed in chapter V.2. Neither Debrunner (1953) nor Grottanelli (1961) discusses the origins of the cult, though Grottanelli (1961: 56) states that it is a recent arrival among the Nzima of Ghana. Coronel (1978: 12-13) mentions asumbu, a "local god" in Jema, a village very close to the Ivoirian border of Ghana. The god is thought to be from the forests of Ivory Coast. This is certainly Assongu, though she mentions no sculptures associated with the spirit.

This reference to a source in southeastern Ivory Coast is reinforced by Amon d'Aby's discussion of Assongu as an Eotilé deity. My data confirm this. Assongu originated in the lagoon area of southeastern Ivory Coast as an Eotilé deity, and has spread gradually
northward and eastward. The cult's spread into Ghana is apparently recent, perhaps within this century, and limited to sites along the extreme southwestern border.

VII.3 Conclusions

The Ivoirian terracotta tradition which compares most closely to its Ghanaian counterpart is assongu. The tradition is virtually identical in Ivory Coast and Ghana. The attitude toward the figures in Ghana appears to be closer to Agni and Nzima than Eotilé, but this is to be expected. The Aowin and Ghanaian Nzima are not "owners" of the tradition. Assongu in Ghana is a relatively recent arrival, an extension eastward of the same tradition, which originated in the eastern lagoons of Ivory Coast.

Next in closeness is mma, as practiced by the Agni and Abouré. Points of comparison with Ghanaian traditions are the following:¹ the figures are portraits, in which great attention is paid to the head. The likeness achieved by artists is very successful, so much so that the figures are referred to as "photographs". Sexual characteristics of the figures are apparently unimportant. They are modeled predominantly by women, who do their work in secret, inspired by the spirit of the deceased. The figures are painted and dressed for ceremonial funerals, at which they are publically displayed as effigies of the

¹ These are not necessarily points of comparison for all Akan groups that make terracotta portraits, but they appear on both sides of the border with relative frequency. The same will hold true for points of contrast.
deceased, then taken outside the village for deposition, and offered a ceremonial meal. They are arranged in effigy courts, and regular offerings of food are made to them (at least once per year, at the new yam celebration). The terracottas represent powerful spirit forces, and contact with them is avoided for this reason. Their place of deposition is left to deteriorate after they are deposited. Finally, the traditions of the Agni/Abouré and the Aowin appear to be particularly close, in that they have a common terminology and identical place within the ritual calendars of their respective groups.

Differences between the majority of Ghanaian traditions and mma are the following: many Ghanaian groups placed the terracottas on graves, whereas the Ivoirians placed them in the mmaso. Many Ghanaian portraits are heads only, whereas most Ivoirian mma are full figures. Most Ghanaian figures (including Aowin mma) are hollow; Agni mma are solid. Some Abouré mma are solid; others are hollow. I found no mention for any Ghanaian group of terracottas having any influence over human fertility, and this is an important function of both mma and ba in Ivory Coast.

Least similar to the Ghanaian traditions is ba. In many ways, they are as different from Ivoirian mma as they are from Ghanaian terracottas. However, they qualify as Akan funerary portraits in a number of ways. They are of terracotta; the "portrait" is in the head, where great attention is given to individualized detail; and, they were associated with funerals of important people. However, ba seems a much more democratic tradition than the others. I found no
royal or court associations for ba at all. Like Ghanaian terracottas, ba exist in a wide variety of styles. However, ba is the only tradition in which the portrait head tops a goglet which can function as such. The Agni and Abouré mma which are similar in form are not truly goglets, as they have no open spout. Moreover, these Agni and Abouré pieces are rare. While ba are clearly a part of the greater Akan tradition of commemorative portraiture, they are morphologically unique.
CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSIONS

The Akan of southeastern Ivory Coast produced three major terracotta traditions: mma, ba, and assongu. These traditions were produced in the roughly triangular area from Abidjan, to Abengourou, to the Ghanaian border. This area is inhabited by the Agni and Abouré, producers of mma and assongu; the Akyé, producers of ba; the Abbé, producers of yiwo giýé; the Eotilé, producers of assongu; and, the Nzima, producers of assongu.

The collections of terracottas in the M.N.C.I. in Abidjan, augmented by Ivoirian terracottas from Western collections, formed the base for a typological and stylistic analysis of each of the three traditions. The data from these analyses were then compared with published information on the traditions and information collected during interviews with village elders, sculptors, and specialists in each tradition. These interviews were conducted in twenty villages in southeastern Ivory Coast between January and September, 1979.

Mma are terracotta funerary portraits of the Agni and Abouré, which commemorate deceased royalty. They were implanted during ceremonial funerals in effigy courts, in the mmaso (mmawo), outside royal Agni and Abouré villages, beside the main road into town. Mma served three main functions: protective, commemorative, and generative
(fertility-inducing). Most mma were full figures, with a large, highly-detailed head and rudimentary body and limbs. There is apparently a hierarchy of size and posture among mma, from large, seated figures to small, standing figures. The tradition was apparently abandoned around the turn of the century under pressure from the colonial administration and missionaries.

Ba are commemorative terracotta portraits of the northern and eastern Akyé, which were produced for the funerals of notables. Ba are morphologically distinct, in that the portrait is limited to the head of the deceased, which tops the spout of a flat-bottomed goglet. The sculptures served as substitute corpses at ceremonial funerals, and were probably kept in the village after funerals. The tradition died out in about 1900, probably because of pressures from colonial administrators and missionaries.

Assongu are small terracotta figures, most of which are humanoid. They represent a powerful spirit, also called Assongu, which lives in the Aby Lagoon. The sculptures are kept under small shelters, near the living compounds of their owners, but in the forest, because frequent contact with them is considered dangerous. Assongu attacks malefactors and its "chosen" devotees with diseases that cause bleeding. The tradition originated among the Eotilé around 1700, as a protective device against invasions into Eotilé territory by Akan and the French. It has since spread to the Abouré, the Agni, and the Nzima. It is still growing today, having recently spread to the northern Agni (Ndénié) and extreme southwestern Ghana. Assongu is renowned in the region as an extremely effective agent of social control.
Certain characteristics are shared by all three traditions: the sculptures are primarily anthropomorphic terracottas, modeled by Akan women. Detail is concentrated in the head of the figure. The spirits represented by all three are offered a propitiatory meal annually, at the new yam celebration. Characteristics shared by mma and ba locate them within the larger tradition of Akan royal funerary terracotta portraiture. No major characteristics are shared by ba and assongu, but traits shared by mma and assongu indicate that the former may have been the original inspiration for the latter. They are both small, humanoid figures, which have their own "villages" in the forest, near villages of the living. Both are also greatly respected, and feared for their strong powers.

When compared with their Ghanaian counterparts, the Ivoirian terracotta traditions exhibit varying degrees of similarity. Assongu is the closest: the tradition is identical in Ghana and Ivory Coast, as its origins are in the latter, and its spread to Ghana has been recent. Mma is next, comparing most closely to mma of the Aowin, cousins of the Agni in Ghana. While the Ivoirian and Ghanaian traditions served basically the same function, there are significant morphological and stylistic differences between mma and their Ghanaian counterparts, indicating that the traditions were probably separated some time ago. Ba are even more different, both morphologically and functionally, since they are potentially functional goglets, and are associated with neither a specific location (mmaso, asensie, or burial ground), nor with royalty and their courts, which are not a traditional part of Akyé culture. These differences may indicate an
even greater time separation for ba than for mma.

Based upon the results of my research, certain conclusions can be proposed concerning the history of the Ivoirian Akan and their material culture. It was from the Akan that the terracotta traditions sprang, reflecting the three cultural sources discussed in Chapter II: old (lagoon), new (forest), and hybrids of the two (both lagoon and forest).

The Eotilé are the sole remnant of "old lagoon" culture surviving today. Speaking the oldest form of the Akan language, they represent the last vestige of what was probably the original Akan culture. Their life is dependent on the lagoon and its fishing; their myths of origin state that they originated in the lagoon itself. Descent is matrilineal, and the ritual calendar is based on a six-day week. Their society has neither centralized organization, nor class structure. They claim to have been in place when the "new" groups moved into the region about three hundred years ago. As they have no royalty, they have no tradition of royal terracotta portraiture. In addition to the Eotilé, these autochthonous groups probably included forbearers of the Abouré, the Akyé, the Abbé, and perhaps the Nzima.¹

In about 1700 A.D., the "new" Akan cultures entered the region. Their ancestors had probably moved eastward out of this very region, at least 500 years before. While their language was still related to the old lagoon language of the Eotilé, their culture had changed

¹ Nzima language, however, is closer to Agni and the Ghanaian Akan languages than to the Lagoon cluster.
considerably in the intervening years. They emigrated westward from the Akan heartland in south-central Ghana, following a political upheaval. They spoke a modified Akan language, which had developed over the centuries, and was now identifiable as Twi. They were forest dwellers; their culture was agriculture-based, with particular emphasis on the cultivation of yams. Their social organization was centralized and hierarchical (i.e., "royal"). Following the tradition developed by the Akan in Ghana, they commemorated their deceased notables with terracotta portrait sculptures, which were placed in effigy courts near villages during ceremonial funerals. They, too, were matrilineal, but their calendar was based on six-week months, with seven days in each week. The purest surviving remnant of these cultures today are the Agni of Sanwi.

As the "new" cultures settled in the lagoon region and the forests north of the lagoons, the "old" and the "new" intermarried and produced hybrid cultures, which combined various elements of both. The Agni, as noted, remained the most Ghanaian, and even today continue to recruit their leadership from Ghana. The other groups became today's Abouré, Akyé, Abbé, and Nzima. All these peoples claim to have entered the Eburnean forests during the great westward migration, but their cultures indicate the assimilation of varying degrees of old lagoon culture as they settled in the region.

The Abouré live on the lagoon, and also farm the forests behind the lagoon. They have a centralized, hierarchical social structure, but they also have age-grade organizations, which are more characteristic of non-centralized (and therefore probably older) Akan culture.
Their language is one of the Lagoon dialects of Akan, older than Agni and Nzima. Their ritual week is seven days long, and they name their children for the day on which they were born. The Abouré also had a royal terracotta tradition, which links them further to the Akan of Ghana. They are a hybrid of old and new, a recent Eburnean offshoot (since 1700) of twice-displaced Akan culture.

The case is similar for the Akyé, but with a different hybrid of old and new. They are yam farmers and forest-dwellers. Their language is of the Lagoon cluster. They have no strong, centralized political authority, but are organized into relatively autonomous village units, each of which has its own age-grade organizations. They produce terracotta portraits for the funerals of notables, but the morphology and function of these are somewhat different than among the Agni, the Abouré, and the Ghanaian groups. This particular hybrid appears to be stronger in "old" characteristics than in "new".

The Abbé are forest dwellers and yam farmers. Their language is of the Lagoon cluster, and they are organized politically into autonomous village units, governed by age-grade organizations. They had no known tradition of terracotta portraits for deceased notables, but produced anthropomorphic terracotta water vases which are morphologically related to ba. These were apparently wedding gifts. Like the Akyé, the Abbé appear to be stronger in "old" than in "new" traits.

It is possible that the old lagoon peoples used goglets in funeral ceremonies, and that these were translated into humanoid forms by the addition of portrait heads after 1700. Thus, ba and yiwo gívé could be forms which were originally Ivoirian, though partly inspired by
Ghanaian (i.e., "new") material culture.

The Nzima of Ivory Coast are western brothers of Ghana's Nzima, who have been separated by the artificial barrier of colonial boundaries. They inhabit the lagoons of extreme southeastern Ivory Coast along with the Eotilé and Abouré, making their living primarily by fishing. Their language is Ghanaian, and their political organization is centralized and hierarchical. They have the seven-day (Ghanaian) ritual calendar, and children are named for the days of the week. Despite this prevalence of Ghanaian cultural traits, the Nzima have no known tradition of terracotta commemorative portraits. Their culture, like Abouré, Akyé, and Abbé, is a hybrid of the "old" and the "new", but with a predominance of the "new".

Assongu, as already discussed, apparently developed out of interaction between the old and new cultures. Initiated by the confrontation between the "old" and the "new", it combines control (ownership) of the lagoon with terracotta imagery, probably first inspired by the powerful groupings of mma which protected Agni and Abouré villages as they were established in the region. The tradition has spread north, east, and west from the lagoon during the last three centuries, and is still spreading today. It provides a further outward thrust of Akan cultural influence from its original source in the lagoons of southeastern Ivory Coast.

Finally, it must be stated that the "puzzle" of terracotta sculpture among the western Akan is far from completely solved. While the Agni, Abouré, Akyé, and Aowin funerary traditions have been partly clarified by Coronel's research and mine, no controlled archaeological
excavation has been undertaken at any terracotta site in these areas. As a result, there is no concrete basis for dating these terracottas. Coronel's hypothesis of a development from naturalism toward stylization in Aowin mma is attractive and well-argued. However, it remains a hypothesis. Moreover, there is no such stylistic development apparent among Agni mma, and the two traditions are otherwise similar. We have even less information on Abouré and Akyé traditions. Excavations of terracotta sites would undoubtedly help clarify the history of terracotta sculpture in the Western Akan region.

Studies of other clay objects would also further our understanding. Akan terracotta pipes and domestic pottery were produced in great quantity, and typological analyses of these, compared to typologies of terracotta sculpture, could produce positive results. In addition, excavation of habitation sites would be helpful, since stratigraphic dating might be possible, whereas it appears impossible for sites where terracotta sculptures are found. Further literary, ethnographic, and ethno-historical studies should also provide valuable information.

The work done thus far is survey research. The problems of style and date in Akan terracotta sculpture cannot be solved until scholarly investigation produces more definite information on all aspects of Akan culture and history. However, the framework for further studies has been provided by Coronel's work and my own. By thoroughly examining the basic types, styles, and cultural contexts of the major terracotta traditions of the Western Akan, we have established the foundations upon which a complete picture of the material culture history of these groups can eventually be built.
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