

THE ASANTE PRAISE POEMS The Ideology of Patrimonialism

KWAME ARHIN

Part I: The nature of Asante Political Authority

i. Introduction: The Praise Poems as a source of historical and political ideas

This paper examines the praise poems (Apaee) of the Asantehene as a source of historical and political ideas. "Historical" in this context means "relating to the past" and not systematized information about, and corresponding interpretation, of the past. "Ideas" means ideology in the sense of the *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (1964), "a pattern of beliefs and concepts (both factual and normative) which purports to explain complex social phenomena with a view to directing and simplifying socio-political choices facing individuals and groups". "Historical" and "political ideas" are here joined together because a purpose of the recitation of the past events recorded in the poems is to validate the political ideas also embodied in the poems; the poems both assert the august position of the Asantehene and also show how he has attained that position.

Praise poems have been reported from western and other parts of Africa as indigenous means for recording and transmitting historical information (Dalzel, 1793: xiii; Schapera 1965; Vansina 1965; 148; Awe, 1974: ff.). But it is generally accepted that the information contained in them is rather sparse (Alagoa, 1963: 1-3) and so selective that Vansina has called them propagandaistic (Vansina, 1965: 148). The focus of this paper is the ideology which I see in the poems, so that I am not very much concerned with the problems normally raised when a professional historian uses the poems as a source for historical reconstruction (Henige, 1982; Peel, 1984).

I see the praise poems as a starting point of enquiry into Asante history but the main object of the paper is to examine the nature of Asante political authority, in a search for institutional continuities between past and contemporary Ghanaian public organizations. My interest in institutional continuities derives from a concern with the failure of Ghanaian "modern" public organizations which has led me to the following supposition. "Social change" in Africa, as portrayed by the anthropologists and sociologists, is more a matter of form than of substance. This is to say, that the operational principles of these organizations are pre-colonial ones and not those subsumed in their counterparts borrowed from the erstwhile colonial powers. In concrete terms, an African state, or political party and associated public or semi-public organizations such as the numerous state enterprises, tend to be run as kinship or patron-client structures normally associated with indigenous polities.¹ Consequently, they tend to differ operationally from what may be expected from the structures and functions

¹ To test this hypothesis, one would have to study these organizations as a participant observer, for example, as a member of a board of directors of one of the state concerns over a number of years. If one uses formal interviews and questionnaire the results would yield modern normative principles. But see R. M. Price, 1975: 148; and Arhin, 1985.

set out in the “constitutions” and “charters” of what are avowedly modern organizations. In practice they tend to be “total” institutions as were the pre-colonial African polities and organizations.

Therefore an understanding of these public organizations requires a study of the indigenous principles of social organization from the viewpoint of the light they may throw on the present. This requires a combination of anthropology and history, social history rather than anthropology or history by itself (Evans-Pritchard, 1961; Goody, 1967; 179; Peel, 1984).

It is the belief in institutional continuities as crucial for understanding contemporary Africa that has inspired this study of the praise poems as a key to the nature of Asante political authority, which is one of the major components of the traditions encapsulated in the Ghanaian present.

The poems, which the Asante call *apaee*, the Akyem, *amema* (Danquah, 1928: 246–252) and the Akuapem, *amemadwom* (Antubam, 1963: 136), are Akanwide. Meredith, the British trader on the Gold Coast in the 1820's, quoted an Nzima praise poem in the early nineteenth century (Meredith, 1812: 67).² The poems are specialized variations on the songs of the minstrels, Kwadwomfo, (Rattray, 1923: 112) which Reindorf says the fifth Denkyirahene of the early seventeenth century invented, obviously in celebration of his military triumphs (Reindorf, 1895: 46).³ I concentrate on Asante for two reasons. Firstly, Professor J. H. Nketia has collected and mimeographed a set of the Asantehene's poems, which I shall use for illustrative purposes and later present in translation in part two of this paper (Nketia, 1966). Secondly, research on Asante has been more detailed than on any other Akan people, and I intend to relate the fairly settled conclusions about its political developments to the evaluation of the praise poems. In brief, I hope to show not only that the poems are summaries of Asante's military triumphs, but also that they reflect the increasing personalization of power, or the institutionalization of patrimonialism.

But although I concentrate, for the given reasons, on the Asante praise poems, I believe that what is said here about the formal functions of the poems will be found to be equally true of the praise poems of the other Akan states.

I shall proceed as follows. To put the poems in their proper context, I shall give a brief sketch of the extent of the Asante conquests and the political developments that followed the conquests. I regard the poems as ritual statements (Leach, 1954) and shall therefore give an account which, for the purpose of this paper, cannot be exhaustive, of the Asante rituals that show the Asantehene as the embodiment of the Asante state. This account is followed by a review of other Asante media for transmitting historical information, and finally an evaluation of the political significance of the poems.

2 The poem as translated by Meredith was:

We are night and day on the watch
to behold a king
as powerful as Quarshie
In vain do we watch for him
There is no man so great or so powerful
Yet he must die.

3 Asante traditional history of Kwadwom denies Reindorf's claim; see the *Asante Stool Histories Series*, AS No. 25, Recorded by J. Agyeman Duah, Institute of African Studies, (I. A. S.) Legon, 1963.

ii. Warfare and political developments

The Asante wars had their origin in the seventeenth century in the course of attempts by Oti Akenten and Obiri Yeboah to establish the power of their segment of the Oyoko clan, based in Kokofu in Amansee, in the area now covered by Kumasi City.⁴ Obiri Yeboah died in war with the Dorma people, then located within four miles of Kumasi, and was succeeded by Osei Tutu (died 1717). Osei Tutu defeated the Dorma⁵ (Reindorf, 1895: 50; Fuller, 1968: 2) and led the Asante to conquer Denkyira (Bosman, 1705), their south-western neighbour and erstwhile overlords, in 1699–1708, Poem xxxiii speaks obscurely of Osei Tutu's challengers, of the those who asked, "what did you come to do?", "I serve nobody" and "I have heard your [message] So what?"⁶ (Rattray, 1929: 335). Between Osei Tutu and Osei Bonsu (1800–1824) the Asante conquered or otherwise brought into subjection to the Asantehene (King of Asante), nearly all the peoples now inhabiting all the regions of modern Ghana and also east-central and south-western Ivory Coast (Rattray, 1923: 287–293; Priestley and Wilks, 1960; Fynn, 1971: 105, 155; Meredith, 1812; Wilks, 1975: 43–79)⁷. The poems mention the most prominent of the conquered rulers and the *Notes* attempt to locate them in present Ghana.

The external conquests made necessary an administrative reorganization which would enforce subordination of the conquered rulers to the Asantehene. For this purpose the Asante kings used an administrative staff recruited from their *gyase*, household organization, consisting of units of functionaries with appointive headships.⁸ These palace associations, called *afekuo* (Reindorf, 1895: 119; Rattray, 1929: 91), were recruited from free attendants, war-captives, purchased slaves, (*nmonkofo*) and other bondsmen; in other words, persons connected by "ties of personal loyalty" (Weber, 1947: 342) to the various Asante Kings.

From Opoku Ware (1720–50), To Kwaku Duah (1834–67), these personal dependants competed with, and replaced the holders of hereditary authority, occupants of royal stools (*adehye nnwa*), in Kumasi and in the component states of the Asante Union in the exercise of authority and the collection of tribute and other payments in the conquered territories. Wilks (1967: 211–214) has called this administrative organization the "Kwadwoan revolution" on the ground that it took firm root in the reign of Osei Kwadwo (1864–77) although it began in that of Opoku Ware, and has identified it as the emergence of Asante "bureaucracy".

But the household (*gyase*), organization was bureaucratic only in the sense that the component units were assigned definite tasks around the King's person and at court. It was not a

4 Information from A. C. Denteh, formerly of the Institute of African Studies, Legon, and a recognized authority on Asante traditions. But Asante traditions are not agreed on the predecessors of Osei Tutu: *Antoa Stool History* (AS. 34) mentions Kobina Amanfi, Oti Akenten and Obiri Yeboah but not Twum and Antwi. *Kaase Stool History* (AS. 35) says that "it is said that Twum was his real name but Antwi was an appellation". There is a fairly general agreement that it was Oti Akenten who led the migration of segments of Oyoko (Kumasi and Asante) and Bretuo (Asante Mampong) ruling clans north from the Amanseg district to the present Kumasi and Mampong district; see *Kokofu Stool History* AS. 44.

5 See *Ohwim Stool History*, AS. 18.

6 *Kaase Stool History*, AS. 35 says there was a continuous war between the Oyoko Dynasty in Kwaman, the later Kumasi, and Kaase from the time of Oti Akenten to that of Osei Tutu when the latter married a Kaase royal.

7 See the Government of the Gold Coast, *Papers Relating to the Restoration of the Ashanti Confederacy*, Accra 1935, *Appendices*, and *Proceedings of the Committee of Privileges* 1935; also *The Stool History Series*, I. A. S., Legon.

8 See *Asokwa Stool History*, AS. 1; *Ankobia Stool History*, AS. 2; and *Gyase Stool History*, AS. 15.

bureaucratic organization of the type associated with modern states, but patrimonialistic, an instrument of the extension of the King's personal authority. The heads and members of the various units replaced their fathers, and held their incumbencies and places at the King's personal pleasure. The administrative staff was more an instrument of the personalization of power, an extension of the King's household, than an instrument of an impersonal administration (Yarak, 1983, 1984).

The justification for the personalization of authority and the corresponding state aggrandizement of wealth was Asante expansionism which they regarded as the over-riding national purpose (Terray, 1975; Arhin, 1981, 1983).

iii. Political rituals

The personalization of power went with the status differentiation of the king from what Rattray called "the common herd, and even the great chiefs" (Rattray, 1927: 104), as may be seen in the rituals of Asante kingship.

Aspects of the enstoolment ceremony emphasize the king's distinctness from all others. Although it is essentially similar to that of his subordinate rulers, it is distinctive in its scale, embracing all of Asante in the rites. His contact with the Golden Stool in which, according to the myth, the soul of all the Asante people is forever enshrined and which, therefore, is the supreme Asante shrine, raises him above all other rulers (Rattray, 1923; Busia, 1951; Kyeremanten, 1969).

The Asantehene's distinct status is shown peculiarly in the funeral and burial rites for a deceased king. Rattray saw the object of the rites as two-fold: to emphasize the king's distinctness from all others; and to serve the need of the cult of the ancestral spirits which was the reason why "the king's remains had to be carefully and reverently preserved so that they might serve as a medium or shrine for his spirit when summoned to return to his people in times of national reunion or national emergency" (Rattray, 1927; 104). The rites also express the belief that a deceased person enjoys his earthly status in *smando*, the world of spirits (Bowdich, 1819: 262). But behind it all, is the active demonstration of the elevation of the Asantehene above matriclan, division, state, and the union, and as the head of the Greater Asante political structure.

iv. Media for transmitting historical information

Considered in this light, the narration of historical information in the praise poems and in the media to be mentioned in this section cannot be seen as propaganda, at least not in the vulgar sense. It must be seen as embodying statements about the political order, describing what the narrators conceive as the principles of the political structure. The composers and reciters of the poems are not academic or "objective" historians, but state functionaries with a functional view of historical enactment and recitation. Their function, as they see it, is to portray the ruler of the state as the symbol of the 'all-embracing unity' (Marx, 1964: 69).

Every Akan state has official custodians of its history. These include the heralds, the drummers and the executioners, said to have been created by *Odomankoma*, the creator, before the ruler himself (Rattray, 1923: 263), and the minstrels. The herald is present at all state occasions and has thereby become a storehouse of knowledge about public affairs; the

drummer ‘drums’ the history of the state on public occasions; and the executioner is a policeman, a protocol officer and a bard⁹ (Wilks, 1967: 231).

There are specific occasions for updating and presenting historical information, which consist of summaries of significant past and current events. ‘Significant’ is not a matter of linkages in the succession of events, or ‘truth’ or ‘proof’; it is measured by the degree to which an event advances the national purpose which, in the case of Asante, is the growth in the power of the ruler through military triumphs or other acts of state. The occasions for history-making are the *Adae* and *Odwira* festivals, as well as meetings of the national council, which normally also occur during the *Odwira* festival and during funeral rites for royalty.

The Asante distinguish between ‘private’ and ‘public’ histories. The minstrels’ songs¹⁰ are concerned specifically with the history of the royal dynasty, with the reigning king’s own segment of it, his family of procreation. The songs are sung in such a way – they have been likened to the humming of bees (Rattray, 1923: 103) – that they are extremely difficult to understand, even for court habitués. It has always seemed to me that the purpose of the minstrels’ songs is to remind the king of his incomparable pedigree relative to those of his audience and also to encourage him in ‘manly and heroic’ deeds, – as the praise poems put it – so that he can carry out the necessary acts of state. Such acts include passing death sentences, stripping erstwhile court favourites of their authority and wealth, and declaring wars. The minstrels’ songs are public only in the sense that they are sung at public gatherings: they are not understood by the whole public.

The praise poems are also semi-public. Recited by the executioners, they are addressed variously to the king, his subordinates, and the public at large. They remind the king of those heroic deeds of his ancestors that have led to his elevation to his august position; his subordinates of those events that have led to their subordination; and the public of the king’s elevation above all others and to urge them in their duty to him. To conceal the different messages, the reciters have recourse to different words; for example, poem xxxiii, line 484 refers to the ruler of Tafo, a Kumasi suburb, as *Aketekyire*, a name known only to a few courtiers.

Like the recitation of the poems, the *Adae* and *Odwira* ceremonies have both private and public aspects. But whereas the private and public aspects of the poetic recitals are verbally conveyed, in the *Adae* and *Odwira* ceremonies they are spatially separated.

The most public of the historical narrations is drumming, by both the *ntumpan* and *kete* bands. They perform to the hearing of all the adults at the public assemblies, and most adults can understand the drum language, and the songs of the *kete* band.

The annual *Odwira* festival, during which the whole nation gathers in the capital, is the greatest occasion for up-dating and communicating history. It occurs annually in September and serves the following purposes: to ‘honour’ and ‘propitiate’ deceased kings; to cleanse the whole nation of ritual defilement; to purify the shrines of the ancestral spirits (stools), of the national gods, as well as of the lesser nonhuman spirits. It is also a ‘feast of the dead’ which is associated with new crops and first fruits (Bowdich, 1819: 274–278; Rattray, 1923: 151–171; 1927: 122–143; Busia, 1951; 1954).

It is an historical pageant, as can be seen from the following activities. On Thursday, the 11th day following the Monday on which it is decided to celebrate the festival, a procession

⁹ *History of Asantehene’s Executioners, Abrafoo, AS. 27.*

¹⁰ *History of Kwadwom, AS. 25.*

of the Asantehene, his ministers and councillors, preceded by the Golden Stool, carried on the shoulders of its head carrier, visits the following houses to pour libation and make sacrifices: the house of the head carrier of the Golden Stool, where the myth of its descent from the skies is recalled and re-enacted; the house of the ruler of Dominase, conquered in the course of the establishment of the Oyoko (ruling) Dynasty; the Bantama Mausoleum, where some of the skeletons of the deceased Asante kings are kept. the house of the Akyeamehene, the head of the king's spokesmen, who is also a custodian of national historical knowledge, the houses of the fathers of deceased kings; the house of the *Ohemma*, female ruler, the king's counterpart; and the house of the chief executioner, also the guardian of the *ahemma gua*, the blackened stool of Nyarko Kusi Amoah, the mother of Osei Tutu. In addition to recalling the history of the dynasty, the procession is a statement about the social and political structure of Kumasi.

Second, on the following Sunday, there is a parade of all the skulls and masks of generals and rulers captured or slain by the Asante kings; some of the defeated enemies are mentioned in poem xxxiii. The parade is both *poatwa*, inexplicit statement of the king's incomparable status in the presence of the successors of the defeated enemies, and also a visual aid to the recall of the major events in the military and political history of Asante.

Third, and finally, the king's prayer to the Golden Stool at the general lustration of men and regalia recalls the past. On sprinkling water on the Golden Stool he says:

Friday, Stool of Kings, I sprinkle water upon you,
 may your power return sharp and fierce. Grant that
 when I and another meet [in battle] grant it be as
 when I met Denkyira; you let me cut off his head.
 As when I met Akyem; you let me cut off his head.
 As when I met Domma; you let me cut off his head.
 As when I met Tekyiman; you let me cut off his head.

As when I met Gyaman; you let me cut off his head. (Rattray, 1927: 138)

Throughout the eight-day ceremony, the minstrels, the executioners and the drummers repeat the private and public histories.

v. The political significance of the Praise Poems

The poems emphasize the identification of the Asantehene with the entire nation; attribute to him its collective deeds; and spell out the attributes of the ideal king and also of the ideal man. The poems invariably begin with "Behold the Great One!" and throughout attribute to him all the deeds of the Asante army. He defeated Asante's enemies, committed the atrocities of the Asante fighting forces, and suffered their calamities. As the embodiment of the whole nation, the king is all powerful; he can raise the lowly and humble the mighty (Poems ii, iv, ix, xxv, xxxii).

The king is above all a hero (Poems xii, xiii, xvi, xxvi). A hero is, above all things, a fighter (Ps. i, ii, viii, x, xxi, xxii, xxiv, xxviii). As a fighter he is fearsome and fearless (Ps. ii, iii, iv, viii, ix, x, xiv, xvii, xx, xxiv, xxv, xxvi, xxviii, xxix, xxx, xxxii). He is of great strength (Ps. xv, xviii, xxi, xxxiii) and nimble in his movements (Ps. vii, xxiii). He is a supreme strategist (P. ix); ruthless (Ps. ix, x); capable of great mental and physical endurance (Ps. vi, xvii); unpredictable (P. xix); dependable (P. xxii); and pitiless (P. xviii).

He is a jealous guardian of his own (P. iv) but generous to his servants (P. v); and he can inspire even the weak to great deeds (P. xxxi).

As a triumphant warrior trailing tribulation in the wake of his ceaseless wars, the king must expect and be able to endure calumny and hatred (P. vi).

The Drummer sums up the poems as follows:

He is Chief who is worthy of the title 'master'.

He is Birempon¹¹ who is worthy of the title 'master'.

Man among men.

Hero.

Royal of Royals.

The king is the embodiment of the highest virtues and these are essentially those of the soldier.

vi. The nature of the Asante Polity

Both Rattray (1929) and Busia (1951) suggested democracy as the essence of the indigenous Asante constitution. Decentralized authority was derived from the constituent units; political decision-making was consensual; and the right to remove rulers was a derivative of the right to make their own rulers by the ruled.

All this may have been so in the period before Asante military expansion, and paradoxically, under the colonial regime. Before colonial rule, the Asante constitution was, clearly, not democratic either in principle or in practice. Formally the Asante lived within a system of decentralized 'patrimonialism': that is to say, under the authority of hereditary rulers selected by the heads of the constituent units of the *oman*, the localized matrilineages, the villages and the districts who were, in the main, a gerontocratic body. The members of the various units also enjoyed rights of use in land. But the political history of Asante, from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the eve of colonial rule, was the history of the erosion of these political and economic rights. It was a history of the increasing personalization of power at the expense of the holders of hereditary authority and also of commoners.¹² The significance of the political rituals, including the poems, is precisely because they tell a story which is unwritten.

The political rituals and the poems do not suggest 'democracy'. The premise of democracy is the formal equality of rulers and the ruled. The rituals and the poems bespeak inequality. There was an appearance of democracy because the conditions for, and the instruments, of the exercise of physical coercion were relatively undeveloped. The instruments of political control were more psychological than physical, and the rites of the ancestral cult re-inforced the fear of authority.

Asante political organization was, at best, gerontocratic: all power and authority holders were, ideally, elders, *nananom* (*nana*, sing.; Arhin, 1983) and those who had any say in public

11 "Birempon" means "great ruler", also subordinate of the *Asantehene*.

12 Not understanding the political changes that had eroded their political rights, Dupuis' informants could only speak nostalgically of the "the wisdom and valour" of Osei Tutu, to whom incidentally, even present day Asante attribute all that is good in Asante society. Dupuis' informants said that the archetypal Asantehene was "the great, and the good; for, in his reign, justice was ever on the alert, and the claims of his subjects were listened to without distinction of rank or title". (Dupuis, 1824: 229–230) It may have been noticed that the poems always mention Osei (Tutu). He is the eternal Asantehene: Every Asantehene is 'Osei'. To the oldest living Asante, Osei Tutu is "Nyame Kese", "Great God".

affairs had the status of elders. “Wo see ne hwan na wobeka bi?” “What right have you to participate in public affairs” was [and is] very much the language of Asante courts; and “right” was a matter of rank (Ibid.). Asante government was no where near as absolutist as that of Dahomey (Lombard, 1967: 70–92) but it was not democratic. And the basis of both was militarism (Terray, 1975). Bowdich was right when he called Asante government a “military despotism” and Horton too, when he compared it with the governments of the Asiatic despotic type (Arhin, 1981). It was what Weber called patrimonialism and the praise poems proclaimed it.

To see this fully, there must be a thorough examination of the rituals of Asante kingship. The present study of the praise poems is intended as a step towards that study.

Part IIA: The twi text

i.

Ono no!
Mmírikisie a yeantumi anno a
na yefre no nsamanpo
Yede so de so na yeagya no so.
Osee Tutu wo oko ano oo.
Aborofo se yerenye no yiye.
Kàakaé Gyáámé a yede ntútúaa ko apremo ano.
Osee Tutu, yede apremo sum wo a,
wonko a, aawo!

ii.

- 10 Ono no!
Osunsum Akwa a wone no di
asunsumasunsum a
Osum wo to pàm-awúo so.
Opam Kótokuróbó Agyási Agyàbiré
ato mpéntene so
Ama Ampobi ato nkrumabre.
Okwadum Asamoa a ohwan afidie
ma torom-bedee ko adidie.
Otoromo Saakwa toto a,
- 20 ode ne mmen na eyie.
Osee Tutu, woakum Akwatia Kokoo.
Woakum Akwatia Kokoo ato abotan so.
Woakum Akwatia Kokoo a ohye nnareka.
Okafrafra!

iii.

Obanin Titiku ne Suman Titriku a
 wogye no akyinnye a, wo tiri fa,
Osee Tutu na wogye no akyinnye a,
 wo tiri yera.

iv.

Ono no!
 30 Okwampresu-kwampresu a oye n'bura a,
 obi ntumi nsa bi nnom.
 Anomaa birekuo a ne ntakra bu abugyen.
 Pe-nsem-ako e!
Osee Tutu, wotia dadee so a,
 ebu asiriasa oo,
Okafrafra!

v.

Ono no!
 Hwan ne noo!
 Hwan ne noo!
 40 Enye Osee Tutu?
Osee Tutu Amponyinamoa a ofa adee a
 ode kye n'abrafoo!

Ono no!
Obredwene ee!
Obredwene ee!
Osee Tutu yepem-yeya-wo.
Osee Tutu yepem-yeya-wo.
 Yeaya wo aya wo.
 Yeya wo a, wonno?
 50 Asianan bredwane a yeapem wo asan wo.
 Asiedu Katawere a wadi asempa na yeakyiri wo.
Osee Tutu, woato nkyene akye.
 Woato nkyene akye ma yede mako ada wo ase.
Enye se wonte?
Enye se wonhu?
Eye wo ya na wonse "Agyii"!
 Odwammara katakyi birekuo, wohon anini aben.
Osee Tutu, wo hon anini aben.
 Wohon anini aben a, edee!
 60 Apampammira a esi abura,
 Akosua di ayiye.
 Na Owusu nkommoo a odie ne Osee Tutu.

vii.

Ono no!
 Agya, nyane! agya, nyane!
 Agya, wonte se anwam resu?
Ose: Bui!
 See abofra yi, woye abofra pa.
 Mese wo se anwam na esu?
Osee Tutu Bediako ntahera retwa amantamfi a,
 70 wo se anwam na er'esu!
 Agya e! Agya e!
 Wotwa asuo a, so wo tuo mu oo,
 Na see Osee Tutu di mu na yereba.
Ono a!
 Adummo!
 Adanmo!
 Danka-we-abo!
 Afari a oko mpenten,
Osee Tutu, yetua wo mpenten so a,
 80 wote mu anopatutu.
Okoropagyan a yetua no nhema a, oté mu!

viii.

Ono no!
Otutu-kobo-soo ee!
Otutu-kobo-soo ee!
Osee Tutu, woatutu Dankyira akobo Wasa oo-!
Odum-fete
Odan-fete
Frede-fete!
 Hwan na obetumi adi nana aberewa abétenópa
 90 akoko anopatókwa?
 Hwan na obetumi agyina Osee Tutu Bediako
 nkodom anim akogye nkyèhémanopa?
 Ogya ani abaa denden
 Na ose nkommo a yedie ne Osee Tutu!

ix.

Ono no!
 Fiti-Adu ee!
 Fiti-Adu ee!
 Anno na orefiti abommofoo no oo-!
Ose: Agya nnunu me,
 100 Na Osee Tutu amfiri me yiye.
 Mese mereso me tuo mu, na Osee Tutu afiti.
 Woama akokoaa no asi afodoo so.

Woama yate akokoa tèsim ama ose adi
 Woamma Fiada anto Ata.
 Woama yede adukurosuo adware abamo.
 Yede adukurosuo dware abamo sen – ni o!
 Mmrane Afari a yebo ne din bo mmrane,
 Okafrafra!

x.

- Ono no!
 110 Omanso-nyenyen ee!
Omanso-nyenyen ee!
 Wone Osee Tutu twe manso a,
 wobo nyenyen oo.
Okoro-man-so-fone a wone no twe manso a wofon.
Opusu-adum-ako a yeto no nkwanta a,
 yebisa no,
 Ohwintinpraku a ote abunu te akokoo.
 Opuroposi-prempe a obu adupon non.
 120 Osee Tutu, wobu anini kon mu.
 Wobu anini kon mu, edee!
Opampammire a asi abura,
 Akosua di ayiye.

xi.

- Ono no!
 Hwan ne no oo?
 Hwan ne no oo?
Enye Oburuku ne Sàámòá?
 Oburuku ne Sàámoa fa abofu a,
Ode n'afokyee denkyemkye
 130 pae enopatutu.

xii.

- Ono no!
 Akosa mantam-mantam ne nkodwe rebobo
 mmienu ne mmiensa reko akodom ano,
 Odokoropagyan Aku Amanfo
 a ne nkodwe rebobo.
Osereboo Akuampon
 a yese no so dadee kodi aninsem.
Osereboo Sakyi
 a owe dadee da.
 140 Ohwinta-boo
 a otu dadee animu!

xiii.

- Ono no!
Osee Tutu, wo ho asem merete merete,
 wo ho asem te se onyinatan mmiensa
 so ahahan, awisi.
 Wo ho asem merete merete.
 Owuo na esi aso.
 Mete a, mete no ko so.
 Mete no akatakyie so
- 150 Okyere fa-nim-ako a wannane ko
 anto mpanin ne mmofra so,
 Okontonkurowi a oda mansan kon mu,
 Na amansan nkommo a yedie ne
Osee Tutu.

xiv.

- Ono no!
 Eno ee, Eno ee!!
 Monse Osee Tutu
 ma Osee Tutu nnyae me oo-!
 Na Osee Tutu annyae me a,
 160 Merennyae dua yi mu
 Nkútúwáfè,
 Mumu-anwoma a eye múmù.

xv.

- Ono no!
 Akosua ee! Akosua!
 Abenaa ee!
 Amma ee!
 Yaa ee!
 Fa me ntomaban bre me oo-!
 Wo abofra yi, manse wo?
- 170 Manse wo ne Osee Tutu agoro yi?
Ode ne nsa anaa ode ne nan
 anaa ode abaa na eboo wo seyie?
 Si wo tiri ase e!
 Si wo tiri ase ma mogya ngu.
Osee Tutu yee saa kum mogya-trede-koko
 ne n'ayamuyere

xvi.

Ono no!
Ampaa Dankwa a ne ho awereho-awérebàá,
Opempan-ade a opempam adee ne
 180 Asamanin Boafo a opempam ko
Ammo-wo-din!
Osee Tutu, yebo won din oo.
Yebo wo din a, yebo oko din.
Yema wo amo a, yema wo mo-ne-ko.
Boako Afari a woabo dom dwa!

xvii.

Ono no!
Obutu Kwá, Okyere Kwá,
N'akotoa ye tena.
Okwaa bosom, bosom Yirobi,
 190 a wotene wo nsa hwe n'anim a,
Osuo bo wo anopatutu!
Hwan ne no oo?
Hwan ne no oo?
Enye Oburuku ne Sàámoa?
Oburuku ne Sàámoa fa abofu a,
Ode n'afokyee denkyemkye
pae anopatutu.

xviii.

Ono no!
Osensereman asi nsuo mu asi booo so
 200 ama nan ayera.
Ntonkom si Amoa ne baako Kyereme,
Osee Tutu bobo- ko-homa a,
obo no awigyina.
Onwunu kodwo a, wabae mu ada.
Otwerempon so homa a, osono atwen no ako,
atwen no aba,
Opem-mená-mú a otu abe asee,
Osom-panin a asomufi asiane no,
Opirímú Ankoma Tibrekese,
 210 Osee Tutu woso ayeé ne ademmiere na enam.
Otipasare a wotirim awosee apa.

xix.

Ono no!
Opammiresiakwa a oreko ne baabi,
 na mmofra hu no a, yeredwane no.
Okyereben Aduesare Tententu
 a ne ho ye fe na n'ano ye ya,
Osee Tutu wo ho ye fe na woye barima edee!

xx.

Ono no!
 Pampamyi ee!
 220 Pampamyi ee!
Osee Tutu, yerebu wo fo a,
yebu no pampam so oo,
Okatakyie a yede tuo na eko no!

xxi.

Ono no!
Aye saa da.
Osee Tutu, wokoo Bana
 yeresuae, na wobogyese rewe adokoo,
 na erewe akommen.
 230 Osee Tutu, woyee saa bam no hwee ase
 maa no pen n'anan.
 Woamma Kwaku Apoto ne Tibo anni nkra,
 Odensu ee!
Osee Tutu, wowo do a, ma ebi mmra
 na edo aden

xxii.

Ono no!
 Ntwede Ampon, Nkyemfena Ampon,
Obaako nni n'asem.
Osee Tutu, yetwe boa na yene wo adi.
 Woka ni a, ka n'afe mmanin.

xxiii.

240 Ono no!
Osansa kurototiaka a yegye no afoofi
 na onni ne ho adaagye.
Osansa duru-Amponyinamoa duru-dwamu,
 Akwagyiramo a Takyirifa se onim asa
 nso osa a, nkura nhwe nhwe!
 Akwagyiramo a Takyirifa a yetware no a, osi.
Osee Tutu, yetwere wo a, wo si ta.

xxiv.

Ono no!
 Ankaadudwane a mmofra ko asee a yetu nnee
 250 na Osee Tutu da asee rebu mfumpaa no oo!
 Oti Mfrafo, Awirade Mfrafo,
 Akyiribi-né-Àkrána-né-Àkrána-Kódwo,
Osee Tutu de afena fa nipa kon mu
 ma no to akrana
 Woato afena abo bankatakyyie ama wahwe abéreta.

xxv.

Ono no!
Osee Tutu, woabo wo mu akukua
 ama yede brane ato apa so.
 Woabo wo mu akukua
 260 ama yede Adinkra ahye nwoma mu.
 Ako-yoo ote mpoani.
 Woama Owusu ahyiahya mmusuo.
 Woama Ferempon Ampon awu asi ne ho.
 Woama onipa ba Banin-Kyikyirifi
 afa ne ketego asa agye aburoo
 nkorenkore.

xxvi.

Ono no!
 Apitie anoma kwampire a odi ayuo a,
 n'ano da mu!
 270 Osee Tutu, w'afefoo mmarima se dee wosee,
 na yenyo dee woyo.
Okatakyyie a n'afe mmanin ato atuo atwen no.

xxvii.

Ono no!
 Ateebia suman kyiri bi na ennyaa no.
Ono na okyiri dowá na oda adosowa mu.
 Abirikyi-abraka suman yan wo a, emfata wo.
 Nso wokote twene a, biribi reto wo so.
Enye birikyie a eto atan mma so ne Osee Tutu!

xxviii.

Ono no!
 280 Opampam me ee,
Osee Tutu pampam Kwaku Ata
kokum no to Yompa.
 Yompa see se oma no mo-ne-ko.

Ne dee nye de nti na Nyankopon abu no aten.
 Okutukuruduo Gyinamp_{on} Dudodu gyina afuo so a,
yente ntodee.
Osee Tutu Bediako,
Obese kese a oto amaneabe gyina nkodom ano a,
yenni ne mene.

290 Mpem a edi ntintimma,
 Na Awusu nk_{ommo} a yedie ne Osee Tutu.

xxix.

Ono no!
 Hwan na obesen akoka no?
 Wokoka Osee Tutu a, woanya ko.
Obodweman foforo
Obanin a obanin suro no.

xxx.

Ono no!
 Onie-fira-nwoma,
 Yekosie-fira-nwoma.
 300 One Tatr_{adapabi},
 Tomfo_o apata ne nsa nifa
 Ama Daban abo.
 Yereko, yereko,
Okwaasese a wodi n'akyi a,
 wowie se_{edehua}.
Esere mu anoma teprefo-tentefo
Edom te wo nka a yete nteforo
Osee Tutu, edom te wo nka a,
yete nteforo, awo.

xxxi.

310 Ono no!
 Kwao ee-!
Osee Tutu pampam Kwao
 Wokyere Kwao.
 Woyee saa yee saa
 ma yede Kwao kotoo asuo mu.
 Woama soa-me-soa-me aka asuo mu.
Osu-biri ee!
Okantankrankyi Aye-boafo a
 woa_{twa} bi ato ohweamonini ani.
 320 Opo se oda wo ase a, awo!
 Asuo Ba_{anya} se woaye no aye-pa-mu.
 Otuo akantama Bor_{ofo} Asamoa

wode ko asem.
Osee Tutu, wofa w'ani a,
 anka woama opanin ama akodene.

xxxii.

Ono no!
 Okuntun-kantan-mmoho ee!
 Okuntun-kantan-mmoho ee!
Osee Tutu, woma onipa ye kuntunn,
 330 Na woama waye bohoo,
 Na woama yeafre no okuntun-kantan-mmoho.

xxxiii.

Ono no!
 Beyee-den ee!
 Beyee-den ee!
 Beyee-den ee!
Osee Tutu, woyee saa yee saa
 Kum Beyee-den.
 Woakum 'merensom-bi'.
 Woakum 'mate-a-mefa-ye-den'.
 340 Woakum panini a ode mmofra bae,
 Woakum panini To-koo
 Woakum Koroko nene yere Karaka
 ne ne wofaase Pipim
 Woakum Kwaaten a odi atuo
 agye ne suman Mframa.
 Woakum Donyina Komfoo
 agye ne suman Kakako.
 Woakum Sum, akum Hyen,
 akum Adekyee,
 350 Odua Mpantapananpa se nku no
 na onim akodo_o sen.
 Okomfoo Ak_omaa se nku no
 na onim aduro yam.
 Obiri Mireku se nku no
 na ob_ehoro wo yere nom nnwa.
 Menye Abaase se nku no
 na ob_eyam wo yere nom awio.
 Woakum bofo ate n'apiretwaa
 ab_o wodee so.
 360 Woakum Osemsewe a ote Aboaso.
 Woakum Kwasi Kasa a
 oye Nkwanta Gyaasehene.
 Woakum Bensua ba Ntim Gyakari.

- Woakum Adinkra Kasanpre.
 Woakum Adu Gyamfi a ote Bodwesaanwo.
 Woakum Abirimmoro a ote Sehwi.
 Woakum Aawo a, odi atofo kan.
 Woakum Wonsoo a oboo adee.
 Woakum Agyebirinti Mansa.
 370 Woakum Kwaku Ata ato Yompa.
 Woakum Kwao ato nsuom.
 Woakum Oburoni Mankata.
 Woakum Kwadwo Tibu a ote Asen.
 Woakum Komfo Tuuda.
 Woato tuo abo tuo ama otuo akomfan.
 Woama yede adukuro suo adware abamo.
 Woakum Beteiku.
 Woakum Kofi Kyekyei a ote Acherensua.
 Woakum Amansee 'Barima-ye-na!'.
 380 Woato tuo abo Atenka afa ne yere Sakyiwa
 Woakum Ntiriwaa Kwadwo.
 Woakum Agyei Nsumanfo.
 Woakum Saawisie a ote Asansoo.
 Woakum Ampatatwum a ote Foase.
 Woakum Sasraku a osi Abesoo.
 Woakum Butuakwa Kotwebae.
 Woakum Ohwim Ntiamoa.
 Woakum Kwame Antwiwa.
 Woakum Boaman Kwadwo Wea.
 390 Woakum Adwumakaase Yaw Nwanwa.
 Woakum Kwadwo Haa a ote Gyamase.
 Woakum Banna Worosa.
 Woakum Namontwitwi.
 Woakum Nsokote a ote Aboaso.
 Woakum 'se bi a onte' a ote Kotei Deduakoro.
 Woakum Burubaa a ote Kunso.
 Woakum Akorobena a ote Tapa.
 Woakum Kwaku Mansa a ote Akrodie.
 Woakum Kofi Ahwehwe a ote Kwaman.
 400 Woakum Wonoo Adu Gyamfi.
 Woakum Oboani Beretu a ote Dweaa
 Woakum Aketekiye.
 Woakum Surowoho a ote Kwaetuoase.
 Woakum Werekyerewerekiye
 ama okwan ho adwo.
 Woakum Akwatia Kokoo.
 Woakum Abo Kofi.
 Woakum Kwaakye Ameyaw.
 Woakum Domaa Kusi.

410 Woyee saa yee saa too tuo
 maa oforotee te too paa
 Maa Kontonfi see wo se “oohoo”!
 Odwammara Kasa a wohwe anini ase.
 Osee Tutu, wobu anini kon mu.
 Nana, wobu anini kon mu a edee!
 Owerebaanini Ohene Mmireku Asamoa a
 wodi akosem da.
 Okokwananya a yeko kwan a yenya wo.

Part IIB: English translation

i.

Behold the Great One!
 The virgin forest they cannot clear
 and call it an ancestral grove.
 They cut into it in vain.
 Osee Tutu is at the battle-front.
 The whitemen refuse to do him justice.
 We are Kàakaé Gyáámè
 Who withstand cannon with the musket.
 Osee Tutu, you stand your ground
 10 Even when pushed with cannon, *aawo!*

ii.

Behold the Great One!
 He is Akwa, the Invincible Wrestler
 Who invariably pushes his opponent
 on to dead bush-thorns.
 He pursued Kótokuròbó Agyàsí Agyàbiré
 and he quickly fell,
 and Ampobi, too, fell on slippery ground.
 He is Asamoa the Buffalo
 who upsets the trap
 20 for his mate to go feed.

- Line 5. All Asante Kings are identified with, and addressed as “Osei Tutu”. He was the archetypal king.
 Line 7. Kaákàe Gyáàmè, the sound made by the muskets or flint-locks used by, and therefore identified with, the Asante army.
 Line 8. “Withstand cannon with the musket”, allusion to the Asante siege of Anomabu in 1807.
 Line 10. “Aawo”, a term of address or response to the Asantehene.
 Line 12. Akwa, a common name; also used for wrestlers.
 Line 15. “Kótokuròbó-Agyàsí-Agyàbiré”, suggests a fearful opponent.
 Line 17. “Ampobi”, *ibid.*
 Line 18. Asamoa, common Asante name; also an appellation, *mmrane*, of the buffalo.

He is Saakwa the Bongo
 when he falls into a snare
 he frees himself with his horns.
Osee Tutu, you slew the Fair-skinned Dwarf
 You slew the Fair-skinned Dwarf on the rocks.
 You slew the Fair-skinned Dwarf in the chain mail.
 You are the Leveller!

iii.

He is the Hero Titriku
 and the Talisman Titriku
 30 whom if you doubt,
 you lose your head.
Osee Tutu is he
 whose challengers lose their heads.

iv.

Behold the Great One!
 He is the Path that skirts the stream
 from whose well none dares drink.
 He is the wood-pigeon
 whose scaly feathers
 break with sound!
 40 Hail the War-monger!
Osee Tutu, when you step on iron slab
 it breaks in three!
 You are the Leveller.

v.

Behold the Great One!
 Who is he?
 Who is he?
 Is it not Osee Tutu,
Osee Tutu, the Bountiful Earth?
 Who, when he makes a find,
 50 donates it to his executioners?

vi.

Behold the Great One!
 Withered Palm Frond

Line 21. "Saakwa", appellation of the bongo antelope.

Line 30. "Titiku", a minor deity, *obosom*, as distinct from Titriku, talisman, *suman*, Rattray, 1927: 11.

Line 48. The Asantehene is as generous as the earth, *asase*, also known as "amponyinamoa".

- Withered Palm Frond
Osee Tutu, they push and insult you.
Osee Tutu, they push and insult you.
 They insult you time and again.
 Do you not weary of insult?
 60 You are Asianan, the withered palm frond
 whom they drag about.
 You are Asiedu Katawere whose benevolence
 they repay with malice.
Osee Tutu, for your bounty of salt
 they give pepper in return.
 Is it that you do not hear of it?
 Is it that you do not see it?
 You suffer, but do not cry “Agyii”
 You are the valiant Odwammara, the wood-pigeon
 You break the horns of powerful animals.
Osee Tutu, you break the horns of powerful animals.
 70 You break the horns of powerful animals edee!
 You are the water-weed that clogs the well
 Then Akosua mourns.
 And Owusu laments of Osee Tutu.

vii.

- Behold the Great One!
 Father, wake up! father, wake up!
 Father do you hear the cry of birds?
 He says: “Bui”!
 You this child, you, really, are a clever child.
 Did I tell you that it was birds crying?
 80 It is the sound of the horns
 Of the hornblowers of Osee Tutu, the Warrior
 that you call the cry of birds.
 Father! Father!
 When crossing a river, hold your gun

- Line 58. “Asianan . . . ” the Asantehene’s manifold functions is compared with the many uses of the palm frond.
 Line 60. Asiedu, a common Akan name, with the appellation of “katawere”.
 Line 63. “To return pepper for salt” is a common Akan expression for the essence of ingratitude.
 Line 66. “Agyii” is a common cry when in pain.
 Line 70. “Edee” a respectful form of address or response.
 Line 72. Akosua, a common Akan female name; may represent women.
 Line 73. Owusu, an Akan male name; may represent men.
 Line 77. “Bui” = “Buei”, a cry of alarm.
 Line 80. “Sound of horns”, the Asante army went to war with drums and horns, Reindorf, 1895.
 Line 84. “When crossing a river . . . ”, an allusion of the ambush of Osei Tutu by an Akim army on the banks of the Pra c. 1712; Fuller, (1921) 1968: 23.

- Osee Tutu is in the advance column.
Adummo!
Adanmo!
 The gun-powder flask that chews bullets!
 You are Afari, the early riser
 90 Osee Tutu, when they early besiege you
 You elude them early at dawn.
 You are he that, early besieged,
 Eludes the siege.

viii.

- Behold the Great One!
 The Great Invader!
 The Great Invader!
Osee Tutu, you sacked Denkyira
 and besieged Wasa
Odum-fete
 100 Odan-fete
 Who can engage in a morning fight
 on an old woman's break-fast?
 Who can withstand
 the hosts of Osee Tutu, the Warrior
 and welcome the morning's salutations?
 They are like clubs hardened with fire.
 Then they say
 there is grievous talk of Osee Tutu.

ix.

- 110 Behold the Great One!
 He surprises Adu!
 He surprises Adu!
 It is Anno who has surprised the hunters!
 He says: "father, blame me not
Osee Tutu caught me unawares,
 Just as I reached for my gun
Osee Tutu was there'.
 He forced the infant on to the shrine,
 and made them sacrifice the infant
 120 and the father to swallow his sorrow.

Lines 86–87. Words used for dramatic effect; also suggest the commotion during the siege of a settlement.

Line 89. Afari, an Akan name, a generic name for a warrior.

Lines 99–101. The three words indicate restive activity in a besieged settlement.

Line 111. Adu, a common Akan male name.

Line 113. Anno, a common Akan male name.

Line 118. Made the infant commit a sacrilege.

He made Ata miss Friday
 He made them cleanse the twin's shrine with water
 from the pool under the tree
 But how cleanse the twin's shrine with water
 from the pool under the tree?
 He was the renowned Afari
 whose name resounds with appellations.
 The Leveller!

x.

Behold the Great One!
 130 The scourge of nations!
 The scourge of nations!
 He who gets into dispute with Osee Tutu
 becomes demented.
 He is the scourge of nations
 If one gets into dispute with him
 one becomes lean.
 He is the One
 who shakes trees in battle
 of whom travellers ask
 140 at the cross-roads,
 He is the Great Trap
 that catches the ripe and unripe fruit
 He is the Thunderbolt
 that breaks mighty tree tops.
Osee Tutu, you break the necks of mighty men
 You break the necks of mighty men, edee.
 You are the water-weed
 that clogs the well,
 and Akosua mourns.

xi.

150 Behold the Great One!
 Who is he?
 Who is he?
 Is it not Oburuku and Säämòá?
 When in anger,
 Oburuku and Säämòá don
 their cap of monkey and crocodile hide
 and declaim early at dawn.

Line 121. Ata is the Akan name for twins who are normally ritually cleansed on Fridays.

Lines 122–123. He forced the parents of the twins to commit a sacrilege.

Line 138. It was an Asante tactic for the fighting men to shake trees in order to simulate massive troop movements.

Line 153. Oburuku and Säämòá, names for the executioner, *obrani*.

xii.

Behold the Great One!
 He is Akosa who girds his loins and cuts bullets
 160 for the battle-front!
 He Odokorapagyan Aku Amanfo
 who cuts bullets.
 He is Akuampon the Grindstone
 on which we sharpen our swords for manly deeds.
 He is Sakyi the Grindstone
 whose daily feed is iron.
 He is the Hidden Grind-stone
 that blunts the sword.

xiii.

Behold the Great One!
 170 Osee Tutu, I hear endless tales of you.
 Tales of you scatter like the foliage
 of a copse of fecund silk cotton trees, *awisi*.
 I hear endless tales of you.
 Only death seals the ear.
 Tales of you are of war,
 of manly deeds,
 of heroic deeds.
 You are the Master Tactician who shirks not battle
 for the elderly and infants to fight.
 180 You are the Rainbow that encircles all nations
 and all the nations talk of Osee Tutu.

xiv.

Behold the Great One!
 Mother! Mother!
 Beseech Osee Tutu
 So that Osee Tutu may let me go.
 Should Osee Tutu not let me go.
 I shall not loosen my hold of this tree
 Nkutuwafe
 An ugly skin that is ugly.

- Line 159. Akosa is a common Akan name; the Asante cut bullets from lead bars obtained from the European commercial houses on the coast.
 Line 161. "Odokoràpágan . . ." appellations.
 Line 163. "Akuampon", appellation of the grindstone.
 Line 165. Sakyi is a common Akan name.
 Line 172. "Awisi", a respectful response.
 Line 188. "Nkútùwáfè", a fearsome ugly object, and therefore indicating Osei Tutu in his role as a warrior.

xv.

- 190 Behold the Great One!
 Akosua! Akosua!
 Abenaa!
 Amma!
 Yaa!
 Fetch me my cover-cloth!
 Did I not warn you, child?
 Did I not warn you
 of intimacy with Osee Tutu?
 Was it with his fist,
 200 or with his foot,
 or with a club
 that he struck you like this?
 Drop your head.
 Drop your head that blood may flow.
 Thus Osee Tutu slew a man
 his blood gushing out red
 and his beloved wife.

xvi.

- Behold the Great One!
 He is Ampaa Dankwa
 210 who brings both sorrow and joy in his wake.
 The creator of things
 is Asamanin Boafo who plans war.
 His name is unmentionable!
Osee Tutu, when men mention your name,
 they mention your martial names.
 When they bid you “well done!”
 they only say “well fought”!
 You are Afari, the harbinger of war
 who have assembled the embattled hosts!

- Lines 191–193. Akosua, Abenaa, Amma and Yaa are Sunday, Tuesday, Saturday and Thursday female day-names of Akan women.
 Line 209. Dankwa is a common Akan name; “Ampaa” is an appellation.
 Line 211. The Asante-Twi word translated as “creator” is ‘opempam-ade’ lit. “one who weaves continually”. But “creator” seems to me to be more appropriate in this context.
 Line 212. Asamanin and Boafo are both Akan male names.
 Line 213. “His name is unmentionable” . . . it is said of Osee Tutu, also called Osee Kofi, that the surname Tutu was never mentioned. Instead “Bediako” “the warrior”, “Bediako”, the “eater of guns”, “Hyeaman”, “the destroyer of nations” were used.
 Line 218. “Harbinger of war”; the Twi word is “Boako” lit. “helper of war”. But I consider “harbinger of war” more appropriate in the context.

xvii.

- 220 Behold the Great One!
 He stalks Kwa, and catches Kwa.
 His gun-powder flask is firm.
 He is Okwaa, the deity,
 and Yirobi, the deity.
 When men point their fingers to his face
 they get drenched in rain early at dawn.
 Who is he?
 Who is he?
 Is it not Oburuku and Sàámòá?
- 230 When in anger,
Oburuku and Sàámòá
 don their cap of monkey and elephant hide
 and declaim early at dawn.

xviii.

- Behold the Great One!
 The strong man stepped in the stream
 and stepped on the rocks
 without leaving traces.
 Sleep overtook Amoa and the lone child Kyereme.
Osee Tutu ties up his battle-rope in broad-daylight
 240 and loosens it at night to go to sleep.
 He is the rope-carrier whom the elephant stalks
 as he comes and goes.
 He is the deep hole that up-roots the palm-tree.
 He is the supreme functionary
 soaked in ear-fuls of dirt.
Osee Tutu,
 You are Opirimu Ankoma Tibrekese
 who bear wreaths of reeds on your journeys.
 You are Otipasare
 250 who shudder not with thoughts of pity.

Line 221. Kwa is a common Akan name.

Line 225. The Akan abhor pointing a finger at a person.

Line 238. Amoa and Kyereme are common Akan names: I am told that this poem is about Osee Tutu's escape from Denkyira, where he had been a page at court, after his flirtation with the king's sister's daughter, Bensua, resulted in pregnancy and Bensua warned him to flee. He is said to have killed his two young guides to prevent their revealing his route to his pursuers. The poem recounts his *akotroka*, tribulations. He is said to have worn a wreath of *summe* (*Costus* sp.) still worn by Asante royalty in mourning; see Fuller, 1968: 8.

Line 247. The words "Opirimu Ankoma . . ." suggest ruthlessness.

Line 249. "Otipasare", same.

xix.

Behold the Great One!
 He is the Black Mamba
 that blocks the path;
 Children flee from him
 even as he goes his way.
 He is Aduesare, the Great Mamba
 that is beautiful
 but has a fatal bite.

- Osee Tutu, you are comely
 260 But manly edee!
 Behold the Great One!
 The Great Pursuer!
 The Great Pursuer!
Osee Tutu, if they proclaim you guilty,
 they do so when in flight.
 You are the hero whom men fight
 only with guns.

xxi.

Behold the Great One!
 You once did it.
 270 Osee Tutu, you invaded Bana,
 and while we swore to you,
 your beard was stained with millet juice,
 to the sound of war-horns.
Osee Tutu, you seized and tripped him up
 and he fell.

- You kept Kwaku Apoto and Tibu
 from saying mutual farewell.
Odensu!
Osee Tutu, when afar, send re-inforcements
 280 to the shaky front.

xxii.

Behold the Great One!
 Ampon, the Dependable,
 Ampon the Shield,

Line 256. "Aduesare", an appellation of the snake.

Lines 270–274. I am informed that the poem is an account of a hardly fought war with Banda.

Line 276. Apoto and Tibu were two Assin chiefs who defying the Asantehene Osei Bonsu in 1806 precipitated the Asante war with Assin and the siege of Anomabu in 1807; see Ward's comment in Fuller, 1968: XIVII.

Line 282. "Ampon", the dependable; God is "Tweduampon", "he who upon whom we lean and do not fall".

Line 283. Nkyemfona; "nkyem" is shields, and *fona* is sword; *nkyemfona* therefore means shields against the sword.

No single man can settle a dispute with him.
Osee Tutu, to settle a dispute with you
 They mass together.
 When you throw a challenge
 it is to your equals.

xxiii.

- Behold the Great One!
 290 He is the Hawk, the Wanderer
 that has no leisure
 and is forced to take a holiday.
 The Hawk came down to earth
 and to the dancing-ground.
 Takyirifa, the Cat, says he dances well
 but however much he dances
 the mice refuse to watch.
 He is Takyirifa, the Cat,
 when thrown up, he lands on his feet.
 300 Osee Tutu, when they throw you up,
 you land on your feet.

xxiv.

- Behold the Great One!
 Where, under the withered lime tree
 even children warily tread
Osee Tutu rolls and cuts capers.
 He is Oti Mfrafo
 The Lord Mfrafo,
 and Akyiribi- and Akrana- and Akrana-Kodwo
Osee Tutu whirled his sword
 310 round the neck of a man
 and he fell dead
 He threw his sword at a giant of a man
 and he went down flat.

xxv.

Behold the Great One!
Osee Tutu, you bent low
 and they lifted a big man on to a platform.
 You bent low

- Line 290. "The Hawk . . ."; the hawk over-flies the village the whole day looking for prey.
 Line 295. "Takyirifa", appellation of the Cat.
 Line 306. Oti is a common name, and "mfrafo" an appellation.
 Line 308. "Akyiribi . . ." emphasizes fierceness.

and they hid Adenkra in a sack of hide.
 The slippery fighter sat in a boat on the sea.
 320 You made Owusu meet his doom
 You made Frempon Ampon fall dead on his side.
 You made the son of man, hater of dirt,
 take up his tattered mat
 and dance for single grains of corn.

xxvi.

Behold the Great One!
 He is the bird that hops by the way-side
 and cries while pecking at millet.
Osee Tutu, your age-mates talk as you do
 but dare not do what you do.
 330 You are the hero;
 your mates purchase guns
 and await your commands.

xvii.

Behold the Great One!
 Ateebia the Talisman had a taboo
 that seized him.
 Though his taboo is the piassava palm fibre,
 he wears a kilt of palm leaves
 The bullet-proof talisman may not fit a man,
 But when he throws it away,
 340 he gets into a swoon.
Osee Tutu is the convulsion
 that seizes ordinary mortals!

xxviii.

Behold the Great One!
 My Dreadful Pursuer!
Osee Tutu pursued Ata
 and killed him at Yompa.
 Yompa said "well fought"
 He was guilty
 and God has visited his judgment upon him.
 350 When the sky is lowering over the farm
 Men do not pick fruits for sale.
Osee Tutu, the Warrior!

- Line 318. It is related that during the Asante-Gyaman war of 1818–19, the slain Gyamanhene was hidden in the stomach of a woman so that his head would not be cut off.
 Line 321. Frempon of Akyem Kotoku.
 Line 347. Yompa is the ruler of Yompa.

He is the great ripe kola nut
 that falls at the battle-front,
 and men dare not pick and chew.
 The impregnable hosts!
 It is no wonder, then,
 that men talk fearfully of Osee Tutu.

xxix.

Behold the Great One!
 360 Who dares go to provoke him?
 Whoever provokes Osee Tutu
 invites war.
 He is the creator of a new nation
 as solid as fresh nut.
 A mighty man
 feared by mighty men.

xxx.

Behold the Great One!
 The renowned-clothed-in-hide
 They go to bury him dressed in hide.
 370 He is Tatrada-pabi.
 The blacksmith cleansed his right hand
 and the iron slab snapped.
 We are fighting!
 We are fighting!
 He is the closed jungle;
 when men walk through it
 they weary of scents.
 When the fighting hosts have wind
 of teprefo-tentefo, the savanna bird,
 380 they pick unripe crops.
Osee Tutu, when the hosts have wind of you,
 they pick unripe fruits, *awwo*.

xxxi.

Behold the Great One!
 Kwao!
Osee Tutu, you pursued Kwao
 and caught Kwao.

- Line 353. Kola-nut was a major item in the Asante fighter's provisions.
 Line 368. Allusion to the Gyamanhene, see note on l. 318.
 Line 370. "Tatrada-pi", the blacksmith's anvil.
 Line 371. That is, ritually cleansed.
 Line 384. Kwao is Kwao Safrotwie of Akuapem, see Ward in Fuller, 1968: XIVIII.

You kept on in pursuit
 and we drove Kwao into a river.
 You made the impatient water-carrier
 390 remain at the river-side.
 The Darkened River!
 You are *Okantankranyi*, the Mainstay
 You slew a man into the eddying current.
 The sea said, ‘thank you, thank you *aawo*’
 But Bãánya, the river says you left him without a gift.
 You are Asamoa, the Musket of the Whiteman,
 You inspire deeds of war.
Osee Tutu, were it your will,
 You would inspire even the elderly into fierce battle.

xxxii.

400 Behold the Great One!
 He that can make a man swell up
 and make him deflated!
 He that can make a man swell up
 and make him deflated!
Osee Tutu, you make a man swell up
 and make him deflated.
 And men say of him
 He was swollen up
 but is now deflated.

xxxiii.

410 Behold the Great One!
 ‘What did you come to do?’
 ‘What did you come to do?’
 ‘What did you come to do?’
Osee Tutu, at last, you slew
 the one who asked ‘what did you come to do?’
 You slew ‘I serve nobody!’
 You slew ‘I have heard it, so what’
 You slew the one who assembled children.
 You slew the old man with the red buttocks.

- Line 391. “Darkened river” apparently, with the blood of the slain, and hence the Pra river. Dupuis (1824) noted the following “bardic” song:
 And a river of perjured blood
 flowed from Miassa to the Pra
 and propitiated the wrath of the river God
 an allusion to the Assin war of 1806–1807; see note on line 276.
- Line 395. Bãánya, a river that enters the sea near Elmina in the Central Region.
- Line 410. Recited to me by an executioner; it is purported to be the summary of the Asante Kings’ military achievements.
- Line 419. “red buttocks . . .” suggests old age.

- 420 You slew Koroko
 his wife Karaka
 and his nephew Pipim
 You slew Kwaaten who ate bullets
 and took his Talisman Mframa
 You slew a priest of Donyina
 and took Kakako, his Talisman
 You slew Night
 Slew Moon
 Slew Daylight.
- 430 The tree Mpantapanampa said 'do not kill me
 and I shall carve grinding bowls for your wives'
 The Priest Akomaa said 'do not kill me
 for I know how to mix medicines'
 Obiri Mmireku said 'do not kill me
 and I shall wash the stools of your wives'
 Abaase of Menye said 'do not kill me
 and I shall prepare millet for your wives'
 You slew the hunter
 and took his satchel.
- 440 You slew Osemsewe of Aboaso
 You slew Kwasi Kasa
 the head of Nkwanta Gyase division.
 You slew Owusu Akyem Tenten.
 You slew Ntim Gyakari, son of Bensua.
 You slew Adu Gyamfi of Bodwesganwo.
 You slew Abirinmoro of Sehwi.
 You slew *Aawo*, the first to fall.
 You slew Agyebirinti Mansa.
- 450 You slew Kwaku Ata at Yompa.
 You slew Kwao in a river
 You slew the Whiteman McCarthy.
 You slew Kwadwo Tibu of Assin.
 You killed Tuuda the Priest.
 You fired a musket at a musket
 and the musket became crooked.

Line 420. Koroko was a ruler of Kwahu, an Asante province till 1878.

Line 423. It was believed that a talisman, particularly made with charms written in Arabic letters, could make a fighter invulnerable to bullets, see Dupuis, 1824.

Line 425. Donyina, a town southeast of Kumasi.

Lines 427–429. "Night", "Moon" and "Daylight" were said to be names of persons; they were probably executed for *ahomaso* selfelevation.

Line 430. "The tree Mpantapanampa" stands for the master carver.

Line 440. Aboaso, about 14 miles north of Kumasi.

Line 442. Nkwanta, Manso Nkwanta.

Line 444. Bensua, see note on line 238.

Line 445. Adinkra of Gyaman: the Brong say Adinkra "Kotopre" instead of Kasanpre.

- You made them cleanse the twin's shrine
with water from the pool under the tree.
You slew Beteiku.
- 460 You slew Kofi Kyekyei of Acherensua
You slew 'A Real-Man-is- Rare' of Amansee.
You slew Atenka,
and took his wife Skayiwa.
You slew Ntiriwa Kwadwo.
You slew Agyei, the Priest.
You slew Saawisie of Asansoo
You slew Ampatatwum of Foase
You slew Sasraku, who stood on the palm tree.
You slew Butuakwa the trouble-maker.
- 470 You slew Ntiamoa of Ohwim.
You slew Kwame Antwiwa.
You slew Kwadwo Wea of Boaman.
You slew Yaw Nwanwa of Adwumakaase
You slew Kwadwo Haa of Gyamase
You slew Worosa of Banna.
You slew Namontwitwi
You slew Nso_kote of Aboaso
You slew 'the man who, when told, would not listen'
of Kotei Deduakoro
- 480 You slew Buruhaa of Kunso
You slew Akoro_bena of Tapa
You slew Kwaku Manso of Akrodie.
You slew Kofi Ahwehwe of Kwaman
You slew Adu Gyamfi of Wonoo
You slew Obo_oni Beretu of Dweaa
You slew Aketekyire.

- Line 459. Beteiku was an Assin ruler.
Line 468. Acherensua, in the Ahafo district of the Brong Ahafo Region.
Line 466. Asansoo near Bekwai in the Ashanti Region.
Line 467. Foase, southeast of Kumasi on the border with Akyem Kotoku in the Eastern Region.
Line 468. Sasraku thought or pretended he had magical powers.
Line 470. Ohwim, four miles northwest of Kumasi.
Line 472. Boaman in the Offinso district in the Ashanti Region.
Line 473. Adwumakazse within eight miles north of Kumasi.
Line 474. Gyamase, 17 miles north of Kumasi in the Ashanti-Mampong district.
Line 476. "Namontwitwi", a restless character.
Line 477. Aboaso, north of Kumasi in the Sekyere district.
Line 479. Kotei Deduakoro, 6 1/2 miles south of Kumasi.
Line 480. Kunso in the Ahafo district.
Line 481. Tapa, capital town of the Ahafo Ano district in the Ashanti Region.
Line 482. Akrodie in the Ahafo district.
Line 483. Kwaman in the Offinso district.
Line 484. Wonoo 12 miles north of Kumasi.
Line 485. Dweaa near Foase.

- You slew 'Take care of yourself' who lived in the jungle.
 You slew Werekyerewerekyere
 and made the paths safe.
- 490 You slew Akwatia Kokoo.
 You slew Abo Kofi
 You slew Kwaakye Ameyaw.
 You slew Doma Kusi.
 You fired, fired the musket
 and the stag fell dead,
 and the monkey cried 'Ooohoo!'
 You are Odwammara Kasa who humbles mighty men.
Osee Tutu, you break the necks of mighty men.
 You break the necks of mighty men edee!
- 500 You are the Mighty Ruler Mmireku Asamoa
 whose daily chore is matters of war.
 You are the indispensable
 without whom we cannot go on journeys.

- Line 487. A man who left Kumasi to live in the jungle for fear of litigation and was executed for avoiding his civic and political duties.
- Line 491. Abo Kofi of Gyaman.
- Line 492. Kwakye Ameyaw of Techiman.
- Line 493. Dorma Kusi, the son of the Dormahene in the reign of Osei Tutu, when the Dorma were resident near Kumasi; see Ward in Fuller, 1968: XXXVIII.
 Indispensable – "Okokwananya" – a shrine in the Asantehene's place with a custodian who is also a palace chief.

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