



Carl Edward Archibald Albrecht

# THE COW EATS THE CHAMELEON

Urban and peri-urban livestock production and marketing in  
Tamale (Ghana)

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© Coverfotos: Carl Edward Archibald Albrecht. Front: Oil painting by a local artist from Tamale unknown to the author. The original was bought as a souvenir and is still property of the author. Back: A curious goat in Ticheli. Picture taken by the author during the research project.

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*Dedicated to*

*Fatawu Mohammed*

*Field assistant, interpreter and friend*

*This book would not be what it is without your help*



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## Introduction

Every scientist is wearing blinkers. The way he or she was socialized and the kind of his/her education have influenced the way he/she thinks, the way he/she sees the world, the way he/she designs research projects and behaves in the field of research. Scientifically spoken he or she is biased. Who we are defines what we do. Every scientist will influence the objects of his/her research just as they will influence him or her. Real objectivity, however hard it is tried, is rare and if the objects of the research are alive is impossible to achieve. Animals as well as human beings react to the scientist and will interact with him or her. A veterinary will come to totally different results in the same surroundings as opposed to an agricultural scientist or an anthropologist. And even two anthropologists will come to different results at the same time under the same conditions. In difference to the laboratory where one can control the environmental conditions and mix substance A with substance B and always come to result C if one does it right, the anthropologist does research in surroundings that are constantly changing. Therefore the results can hardly be repeated (*Albrecht 2012, V*).

Concerning the following it is relevant to explain that the author was born as son of a dairy farmer and grew up on a dairy farm. He was trained to take care of cattle from the moment he could walk and was able to carry a stick. He worked as agricultural trainee on three dairy farms and studied Agriculture at Georg-August-University Göttingen with animal production as main subject. His Master thesis and Doctor thesis in Agriculture as well as his Bachelor thesis in Cultural Anthropology were related to livestock. This history of upbringing and education invariably takes its toll on the research and the results presented in the following chapters. The author's 'internalized livestock keeper' opened doors during the research that would have stayed closed otherwise. There is an old German saying that a heavy stone is placed on the breast of a newborn farmers' child to teach it to groan. When livestock keepers all over the world meet they usually talk about the problems they face in livestock production and discuss possible solutions. The author was seen as a colleague by the livestock keepers he interviewed, not as an anthropologist. This influenced the interviews as they saw the opportunity to talk about livestock related problems, possible solutions and support needed from outside to improve the situation.

Besides that the field assistant of the author was a son of the chief of Nyankpala. This might have added to the bias as he was recognized as being related to local authority.

This book is divided into three main parts:



Chapter I will provide basic information about Ghana, a brief history of Ghana with special emphasis on the Northern Region, its environmental conditions and the most important ethnic groups concerning the research. This does not mean that it deals with all aspects of Ghanaian history. Otherwise the title of this book would be ‘The epic history of Ghana’. Presenting a history of Northern Ghana is problematic anyway. The North of Ghana always was and still is a periphery. Most history books about Ghana concentrate on the coast and/or the Ashanti kingdom. There are two ‘classic’ historians who wrote about the Northern Region in 1931. One is *E. F. Tamakloe* and the other *R. S. Rattray*. Rattray is a problematic source. First there is the title of his two volume work ‘*The Tribes of the Ashanti hinterland*’. No Dagomba or Mamprussi nor any member of another ethnic group from the Northern Region would call their territory ‘Ashanti hinterland’ as the Ashanti never ruled over the Northern Region. However, Rattray came from the South Ghanaian British administration, had spent a lot of time in Ashanti Region and written a very successful book about the Ashanti. So, his Ashanti-centric point of view can be understood. Secondly there is the doubt about his research. According to his own statement *Rattray (1931a, VIII)* spent two years of research in Northern Ghana. On the other hand, according to the acting chief commissioner of the Northern Territories

*‘the opinions of Captain Rattray , who has only spent a day or two in Dagomba, and does not speak its language, should be disregarded’ (PRAAD, Tamale, NRG 8/2/32, Native Affairs, 1931-33, ‘Response by acting chief commissioner to the report of the Dagbon constitutional conference of 1930 cited in: MacGaffey 2013, 26).*

As Rattray is one of the few older sources on Northern Ghana available, he is cited several times in this book, but the reader should handle the presented information with the necessary care. Luckily for the author, some other historians wrote books about Northern Ghana’s history in the last few years. So, there was additional information available.

Chapter II is about Urban and peri-urban livestock (UPL) production in the Northern Region of Ghana. UPL production in Tamale area is characterized by unfavorable climate (e.g. erratic rainfalls, fodder scarcity in dry season), lack of infrastructure, subsidies, education and veterinary care. On top of that livestock keepers in Ghana are held in very low esteem.

After a general introduction about urban and peri-urban livestock production all different aspects of animal production are presented one after the other.

Chapter III shows the characteristics of Ghanaian markets in livestock and animal products. These markets are strongly influenced by prejudices, taboos and sacrifice in

Juju rituals as well as by a complicated system of fees and taxes. Therefore the chapter starts with an introduction into food taboos in general, their function and why they are so difficult to change, followed by the livestock keepers' perspective on the market, descriptions of various markets and the abattoirs of Tamale as well as the views of butchers, veterinarians and salesmen and -women.

The discussion will sum up the results of the research project and provide suggestions for further research.

All misunderstandings or mistakes this book might contain are mine and mine alone.



# I. Ghana

## I.1 General Overview

After having been divided into the British Gold Coast Colony and the German Togoland trust territory in early colonial times Ghana was united in the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa that gained its independence in 1957. It is bordering the Côte d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the North, Togo to the East and the Gulf of Guinea to the South. Ghana covers a total area of 283.533 km<sup>2</sup> including 272.533 km<sup>2</sup> land and 11.000 km<sup>2</sup> water. It had an estimated population of 25.758.108 people in July 2014. The population growth rate is 2.19%. The climate is tropical, warm and comparatively dry along the southeast coast, hot and humid in the southwest and hot and dry in the North. Most of Ghana is covered by plains. The highest point is Mount Afadjato (885m), the lowest at sea level. Only 20.12% of the land is arable. 309 km<sup>2</sup> are irrigated (*CIA world factbook 2015*). This means that only 3 percent of total crop production are irrigated. Less than 20 percent of irrigation potential is used (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos.308-310*).

Natural resources are gold, timber, industrial diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish, rubber, hydropower, petroleum, silver, salt and limestone. The North of Ghana is threatened by recurring droughts that severely effect agricultural activities. Improved drinking water is available for 92.1% of the city population and 80% of the rural population. Literacy is at a level of 71.5%. 56% of the population works in agriculture. Important agricultural products are cocoa, rice, cassava, peanuts, corn, Shea nuts, bananas and timber. The most important export commodities are oil, gold, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminum, manganese ore, diamonds and horticultural products. Main import commodities are capital, equipment, refined petroleum and foodstuffs (*CIA world factbook 2015*).

Agriculture in Ghana accounts for more than 30 percent of GDP and three quarters of the export earnings. 60 percent of the labor force work in agriculture. With an annual growth rate in Ghanaian agriculture of 5.5 percent it is more rapidly growing than non-agricultural sectors (*Breisinger et al. 2012, pos.2594-2596*).

The agricultural growth in Ghana is mainly due to land expansion, not through growth of productivity. Between 1994 and 2006 cultivated land increased from 4.5 to 7.2 million ha. The main growth was in cocoa production in the South of Ghana (*Breisinger et al. 2012, pos. 2604-2612*).

Cocoa can only be grown in the forest and part of the coastal zones of Southern Ghana, not in the North (*Breisinger et al. 2012, pos. 2647-2648*).

See **pictures I.01-I.04** for cocoa trees, flowers and fruits.

Cocoa and gold contribute two thirds of Ghana's export revenues (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos.314*).

The Northern Savannah Zone is the main producer of cereals and livestock. More than 70 percent of the countries sorghum, millet, cowpeas, groundnuts, beef and soybeans come from the North, while the forest zone provides a large share of cocoa and commercial poultry (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos. 1040-1042*).

Urbanization, population dislocation, commoditization of basic resources as land, water and human labor , intensification of communication and accelerated speed of movement have increased dramatically in Tamale. It is the fastest growing city in the region (*Oppong 2013, 154*).

Although non-agricultural growth is crucial for the economic transformation of Africa, the industrial sector may not provide poverty reduction despite growth, if not linked to the agricultural sector (*Diao and Thurlow 2012, pos. 6934-6937*).

A decline in the share of rural population does not necessarily mean a decline in the absolute number of rural people (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos.443-444*).

The role of agriculture in transformation seems to be even more important than it was four decades ago (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos.744*).

Bypassing small farmers during the process of agricultural transformation would marginalize a large segment of the rural population and is likely to lead to social tensions. It would complicate long term poverty reduction and the balancing of income equality, even if Ghana reaches a middle income status on average. Smallholder farmers, despite being potential entrepreneurs face many external constraints they cannot overcome by themselves and need supportive government policies and public investments. Public investment should include rural infrastructure and provision of agricultural research and extension services for the majority of farmers (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos. 747-755*).

Ghanaian households spend 40-50 percent of their incomes on food (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos. 1164-1165*).

Ghana has become a stable democratic state. In 2007 it ranked ahead of the regional averages of Latin America, Asia and Africa as far as governance indicators were concerned. Ghana is ranked among the top ten in Africa in freedom of press and

academic freedom. During the last years Ghana made remarkable progress in the banking sector, trade volumes and stock exchange. The domestic tax base has broadened making the government less dependent on cocoa export. Ghana is on the way to reach middle income country status. It has experienced two decades of persistent economic growth around 5 percent and has a positive per capita GDP growth (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos.283-297*). Therefore it is the first Sub-Saharan African country to reach millennium development goal 1 of halving poverty by 2015 (*Breisinger et al. 2012, pos. 2566-2569*).

Revenues from oil exploitation are likely to support further increase in public investment of 10-30% (*Breisinger et.al. 2011, pos.283-297*).

The country is divided into 10 Regions, 138 Districts and 230 Constituencies (formerly 200 before the 2004 elections (*Robert 2010, 85*).

As a large share of the population depends on agricultural labor and as it is necessary to import food, the improvement of **urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA)** seems to be a logical step for development.

## **I.2 Aspects of the history of Ghana with special reference to the Northern Region**

*Rattray (1931a, XIII)* believes that the indigenous population of the Northern Region of Ghana belong to two linguistic groups with almost identical social and political organization. They were grouped in totemic clans under priest kings of considerable influence and authority dependent on moral and spiritual non-physical punishment. Inheritance was through sister's sons. Not long ago there were two different systems of inheritance: One through the male and one through the female line. The male inheritance system was based on territorial classification and physical sanctions of the wrongdoer, while the female inheritance system was based on organization in totemic clans with spiritual sanctions.

Early settlement in Northern Ghana goes back to very ancient times. Among the indigenous ethnic groups were the Konkomba and Nanumba who lived in the valleys of Oti and Daka and the neighboring plains. Other indigenous groups were the Lobi and the Grunsi. All land north of the Black Volta was inhabited by Guan-speaking peoples like the Gonja, Choruba and Beri. The Ntribu lived in Krachi district. Indigenous peoples were dislocated particularly in the East of the country by bands of warriors coming from the Northeast around the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century who first settled in Gambaga. They imposed their rule over the remaining indigenous population and