

## The Ga Naming Rite

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Several recent papers on African *rites de passage* demonstrate the richness of such data for the explication of indigenous cosmologies. Often these analyses focus on initiation ritual at puberty and emphasize notions of sexuality (BEIDELMAN; TURNER 1962b). In this paper I present a descriptive analysis of another *rite de passage*, the infant naming rite, which effects a child's transition from the status of non-person to that of moral person. Although such naming rites are observed in many West African societies, I deal only with the naming rite of the Ga of southeastern Ghana and its implications for Ga conceptions of kinship and cosmological categories.

Before describing the rite, I discuss briefly some Ga notions concerning blood kinship and the relations between the sexes, between living and dead men, between divine beings and mortal men, and between certain cosmological categories.

### Some Ga Conceptions of Their Society

The Ga are a Kwa-speaking people inhabiting a series of coastal towns and inland villages on the adjacent Accra Plains<sup>1</sup>. Descent in Ga society is cognatic with ideological emphasis on patrilineal affiliation<sup>2</sup>. Basic to an understanding of cognatic descent in Ga society is the notion of blood as a quantitative substance. Ga say that a person is related by blood to each of his grandparents and through them to other kin. When Ga speak of blood

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<sup>2</sup> Following FIELD, previous writers on the Ga (POGUCKI; GOODY J. and E.) have described their descent system as patrilineal; for reasons which will be clear in the following discussion, I consider that this classification is inappropriate.