

Ghana

Response to Information Request Number:	GHA00002.ZNK
Date:	21 April 2000
Subject:	Ghana: Information on eunuch "bathers" of Queen Mothers among the Ashanti
From:	INS Resource Information Center
Keywords:	Ghana / Cultural heritage / Customs and traditions / Traditional authorities / Traditional practices affecting women

Query:

Please provide information on a tradition among the Eterrah group of the Ashanti in Ghana in which any male member of a town's royal family who is born on Wednesday, September 13, is a candidate to be recruited and trained to be a bather of the town's Queen Mother. Are these bathers required to be eunuchs? If they refuse to undergo the initiation ceremony, in which they are administered herbs for two nights and then castrated the third night, will they be captured by fellow villagers, forcibly castrated, and then forced to serve as bather for the town's Queen Mother?

Response:

For more information on the Queen Mother tradition among the Ashanti of Ghana, please refer to GHA00001.ZAR.

According to an Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Indiana University, there is no group among the Ashanti called the Eterrah. He also states that the queen mothers have never had bathers, but that in the ancient Ashanti empire, in a practice abolished before 1900, certain of the king's male servants would be castrated before becoming bathers of the wife of the king. The wife of the king was not a queen mother, and the professor emphasizes that these eunuch bathers were servants, and not members of the royal family (14 Sept. 1999).

An Associate Professor at the University of Ghana was also familiar with the eunuch bathers of the wife of the kings in the ancient Ashanti empire, yet doubts that any such practice is still extant (5 Aug. 1999). An Associate Professor of Folklore at the Folklore Institute of Indiana University also stated that she feels it is "doubtful" that any practice such as this would still exist (5 Sept 1999).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

References:

Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Indiana University, Bloomington. 14 September 1999. Electronic mail correspondence to the Resource Information Center.

Associate Professor, University of Ghana. 5 August 1999. Electronic mail correspondence

to the Resource Information Center.

Associate Professor of Folklore, Folklore Institute, Indiana University, Bloomington. 5 September 1999. Electronic mail correspondences to the Resource Information Center.

Other sources consulted:

Internet.

Minority Rights Group. 1997. *World Directory of Minorities*. London: Minority Rights Group International.

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