

particularly financial—is an ever present problem with Asians' (p. 245).

Reacting against the neo-colonial school of thought, which contends that despite the withdrawal of European imperial powers economic disengagement has not in fact happened, White emphasizes that his study of business-government relations 'actually suggests that there was a loosening of economic ties between Britain and Malaya in the decolonization era' (p. 272). In the aftermath of the Korean War boom in commodity prices, Malayan rubber, while still valued by the Treasury as an important asset of the imperial economy, 'was shifting down the agendas of top officials and Cabinet ministers' (p. 194). As Malaya declined in economic significance for the UK, the British business lobby became 'more and more peripheral', making Britain's withdrawal from Malaya 'that much easier' (p. 279). The extent to which the economic focus of metropolitan policy-makers had moved away from Malaya, argues White, is revealed by the decision in the 1950s to establish a synthetic rubber industry

in Britain in direct competition with Malayan natural rubber.

Government-business divisions were complicated further by fissures within the two bodies. On the one hand, government was 'just too dispersed, representing too many varied viewpoints, to support British business in Malaya with definitive policies' (p. 16). On the other, commercial associations were 'riven by rivalries between individuals, corporations, and industrial sectors and groupings' (p. 34).

Founded on an impressive range of archival sources, many of which have been used for the first time, White's *Business, government, and the end of empire* is all the more effective for its penetrating examination of the relevant literature on the subject. While no apologist for Malaya's business community, White does demonstrate that it was neither omnipotent, nor particularly sinister. Indeed, he observes that 'Business leaders were carried along by the tide of political events, at times in a state of near panic' (p. 137).

SIMON C. SMITH

AFRICA

M. E. KROPP DAKUBU: *Korle meets the sea: a sociolinguistic history of Accra*. xviii, 216 pp. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. £50.

Descriptions of multilingualism in Africa are numerous. What is rare is studies that propose explanations for how language choices emerge and are maintained over time. Dr Dakubu's dissatisfaction with this situation led her to write this splendid book which is the result of 30 years' intermittent research. Although it is not mentioned, it develops ideas outlined in her 1989 inaugural lecture at the University of Ghana—published as *Language and community* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press), 1996.

The book under review is about language use in Accra, the sprawling capital of Ghana, where, as in the rest of Africa, there is both societal and individual multilingualism. Dakubu has three main interests: (1) the factors that influence people's self-assessment and self-identification as speakers of a language or as members of a community, (2) the patterns of language choice, and, above all, (3) explanations for the emergence, changes and maintenance of multilingualism in Accra. The book illustrates the complexity and consciousness of the 'us' vs. 'them' distinctions by drawing on real politico-linguistic disputes from the recent history and everyday life of the Ga—the people of Accra. It contributes significantly to the current research themes in the social sciences of globalization, ethnicity and identity.

The Ga expression *Ekoolle yaa nshonj*, literally 'His/Her Korle goes to the sea', or its variant *Koolle nya nshonj* 'Korle is going to the sea',

serves as the leitmotif of the book. It indicates that someone is competent in Ga and is used as 'a warning from one Ga to another in the presence of a third ... who is not Ga' (p. 12). Dakubu presents an exegesis of the symbols, especially water, in this saying and shows, throughout the book, how it depicts the dynamics of language and ethnicity in urban, multi-ethnic Accra. Dakubu does not assert the importance of such talk about linguistic competence as a marker of group identity for sociolinguistics, presumably because speaking a language can mean different things, as is amply demonstrated in the book. However, the cross-linguistic prevalence of such expressions and the tendency for them to be based on the characteristic activities and geography of the group indicate their indispensability in research on ethnicity. The Ewe, for example, one of the immigrant ethnolinguistic groups of Accra, also refer to water in signalling people's competence in the language. In southern Ewe, where salt dredging is a characteristic activity *édua dze* 'She/he eats salt' is used. In northern Ewe, the person can also be said to drink the local water/river: '*Enoa tsia/Anu/Danyi/Dzibi* 'She/he drinks the water/Volta/Danyi/Dzibi'.

Dakubu's main argument, with which I agree, is that 'the methodological horizons of sociolinguistics can and should be widened in time and in ethnographic space' (p. ix). The relevance of history for resolving sociolinguistic problems is evident in the disputes discussed in the introductory chapter. La, one of the six states of the Ga, has recently opposed the name Labadi for its capital. They argue that English colonizers mistranslated 'Bonne' [bone], a Ga ancestral home between Nigeria and Benin, in La Bonne, as 'bad' under the influence of the

Akan word *bɔni* 'bad', yielding 'Labad' which later became Labadi. Reconstructions based on records from pre-English times indicate that Labadi might be an indigenous Ga term. Yet in asserting Ga identity the powerful elements—the English and the Akan—that are perceived as exerting pressure on the group are blamed for this toponym.

Based on surveys and observation of people's knowledge and use of languages in markets as well as homes, Dakubu presents the current patterns of multilingualism in Accra in chs. iii and iv. She calls into question several stereotypes of the linguistic habits of the inhabitants of Accra. She notes that the Ga are not shifting to Akan as many Ga fear. (See e.g. Isaac Nii-Moi Thompson, 'Do the Ga face extinction?', *Ghana Review*, World Wide Web.) Similarly, Hausa is not an index of northernness. Nevertheless, the surveys support the view that Akan adults, unlike people from other ethnic groups, do not learn any other Ghanaian language (p. 64). It is regrettable that the Accra market surveys were not compared with surveys in other West African markets presented in Louis Jean Calvet *et al.*, *Les langues des marchés en Afrique* (Paris: CNRS, 1992).

In chs. v, vi and vii, Dakubu provides keys to understanding the language situation in Accra. Chapter v traces the rise of Ga in a multilingual milieu. Dakubu argues convincingly for her hypothesis that 'Ga originated as Dangme in the mouths of Guang-speaking populations' (p. 100). For instance, the tense-aspect paradigm of Ga is almost identical to the system of Awutu, a Guang language, while the imperfective aspect system of Dangme is like that of Ewe. Moreover, the Ga ethnonym La historically designated Guang people. This view has ramifications for the debates on pidginization, mixed languages and genetic affiliations in contact and historical linguistics. In addition, it raises questions for those who claim that ethnicities in Africa are colonial and missionary constructs (cf. for example, Brigit Meyer, 'Translating the Devil', Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1995, on Ewe ethnicity).

Chapter vi is a treasure trove for anyone interested in the rise and fall of languages in contact. It describes the history of Akan and Hausa as second languages and explains how, e.g., political and socio-historical factors, like the British system of Indirect Rule, have made these two languages dominant in Accra. It further provides information on how the spread of Twi in trade centres in the Volta Region was sustained and promoted by mission choices for languages; and the complete shift from Dangme to Ewe in the Agotime area. Dakubu demonstrates that the Ga ideology of 'hierarchically structured order' reflected in the Ga tradition of elaborate exchanges of greetings, etc. is operative in the way 'immigrants' to the Accra area were integrated into the socio-political structure.

However, Ga and the Accra area were also influenced by languages from 'Beyond the Sea', as Dakubu puts it, alluding to the sayings quoted above. The penultimate chapter presents an excellent account of the contact between Portuguese and Ghanaian languages and a history of the spread of English and its

continuing presence in Ghana. I wonder how many Ghanaians know that the name Volta is Portuguese-based, or that the name of the river Ankobra derives from Rio Cobra 'River Snake', after its meandering course.

The concluding chapter argues that Accra should be viewed as a geographically unstable speech field containing a range of communities and linguistic varieties whose use in communication is determined by certain kinds of rules. Dakubu proposes a model to account for the way language spread takes place in this speech field, based on 'the patron-client relationship, enacted as the relationship between host and guest' (p. 166). It accounts nicely for the interrelationships among the various communities in Accra and could be applied to other centres in Africa. Earlier on (ch. ii), extreme multilingualism in (West) African urban centres over the centuries is shown to be motivated by political and economic relations rather than social ties. These views challenge the stable triglossic view of multilingualism in Africa which Dakubu justifiably criticizes for ignoring the social values and functions of the languages involved in communication. Besides, many languages function as a second language for an individual and the situations are not inherently stable, as is demonstrated here for Accra.

A minor criticism is that the ethnographic horizons are given less attention than the historical. Nevertheless, this readable book contributes significantly to our understanding of multilingualism, language contact and history. It is of interest to linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, archaeologists, demographers and town planners, among others. It is not only for those concerned with Ghana and Africa but should be read by anyone studying processes of urbanization and its implications for identity, culture, history and, above all, language use.

FELIX K. AMEKA

EISEI KURIMOTO and SIMOM SIMONSE (ed.), *Conflict, age and power in north east Africa*. (Eastern African Studies.) xiv, 270 pp. Oxford: James Currey, 1998. £14.95.

East Africa is the single most important area of the world in which age-systems survive, and they appear to be under imminent threat there. So, if only as survivals, they should provoke general interest but they do not: indeed, an interest in age-systems, as distinct from youth culture and aging, is thought to be a little eccentric. Perhaps this is so because African age-systems tend to be spiky, entwined growths and their study requires both close attention to detailed ethnography and getting to grips with complex series of untranslatable, technical vernacular words. This collection of essays is primarily a contribution to the study of age-systems but is also a mine of ethnographic and historical data on the Lokoyo, Loluba, Pari, Toposa, Nyangatom, Turkana, Jie, Kipsigis, Gabbra, Garre, Chamus, Rendille and Iteso. The essays also provide insights into some of