

VARIOLATION IN GHANA

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by

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In the early days the illegal practice of smallpox inoculation was discovered from time to time, particularly among the Hausa people; it is uncertain how extensive this was or what its influence may have been, but it can be presumed that it resulted in both spread of the disease and increased mortality. In the Accra epidemic of 1920 a fetish woman had induced a number of people to accept inoculation with material obtained from the pustules of cases and in this instance there was a heavy mortality; the inoculation was made on the forehead. More frequently it was carried out on the back of the wrist, and there is a record of another method which was practised in West Africa, the insufflation of dried and powdered material from the desiccated pustules of variolous patients. The most recent discovery of inoculation being carried out in Ghana was in 1930. In that year, when the disease was introduced into the Yendi area of the Northern Region it was found that two Mallams were carrying out arm-to-arm inoculation in the district, and before the epidemic was over some 600 cases had occurred with 44 deaths; the inference being that their activities had made a considerable contribution to the size of the outbreak.