Notions of cosmological order constitute a significant aspect of social systems. While cosmologies differ in their systemic qualities, they provide a means of classifying and interpreting the continuities and vicissitudes of human experience. Moreover, as Beidelman has observed “In any system of ideas ... concerning world order, there must be some account taken of the occasional exceptions to that order” 1). Anomalies represent disorder and consequently are considered dangerous and powerful but useful 2). Whether specific anomalies are interpreted as negative or positive sources of power varies between societies.

In many societies the birth of twins is regarded as an anomaly. Although the interpretation of such anomalous births varies widely in sub-Saharan Africa even among territorially contiguous peoples 3) everywhere danger surrounds these births. Invariably this dangerous state pertains both to those who give birth and to those who are born. In certain societies the danger inherent in multiple human births so threatens the established social order that one or both twins are destroyed 4) and the dangerous condition of one or both parents must be altered. In societies in which twins are not killed, the danger surrounding twins and their parents must be controlled in some way, frequently through ritual. Ritual constitutes both a means of creating order and thereby controlling disorder and an expression of order. Recent analyses of twinship ritual demonstrate that the symbolism of these rites frequently conveys fundamental differentiations and ten-


sions in the ideological and social orders of the social systems in which they occur 5).

The anomaly of multiple human births derives from the biological fact of excessive human reproduction: the existence of two where there should be one. How this physical fact is evaluated and how those who are born together are classified and thereby incorporated within the cosmological order differ from society to society in sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, two modes of resolving the taxonomic problems created by twinship have been theoretically influential in the anthropological literature on twinship. Certain African societies emphasize the structural and mystical unity of twins 6). Some African societies associate twinship with animals who normally produce multiple offspring 7). As Turner has suggested "You may... in some situations focus upon the duality of twins, and in others upon their unity" 8). Nevertheless, both the dual and unitary aspects of twinship arise from the empirical biological fact of the delivery of two offspring at one birth.

In this paper I discuss ideas associated with multiple human births in one West African society in which twin births are regarded as desirable anomalies and in which the structural and mystical duality of twins is emphasized. In order to show how the anomaly of multiple human births is resolved in the culture of the Ga of south-eastern Ghana, I present a descriptive analysis of a Ga twin ceremony, preceded by a brief statement of certain Ga beliefs and practices associated with twins. In describing the ceremony, I first outline the social context and procedure of the ceremony before presenting a detailed analysis of two episodes, followed by a discussion of the meaning of certain symbolic motifs and an analysis of some ideological and structural implications.

The Ga, a Kwa-speaking people numbering approximately 237,000,

6) Cf., e.g., Shapera, art. cit., 134-6; Turner op. cit., 45; Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Customs and beliefs relating to twins among the Nilotic Nuer, Uganda Journal 3, 1936, 230-8.